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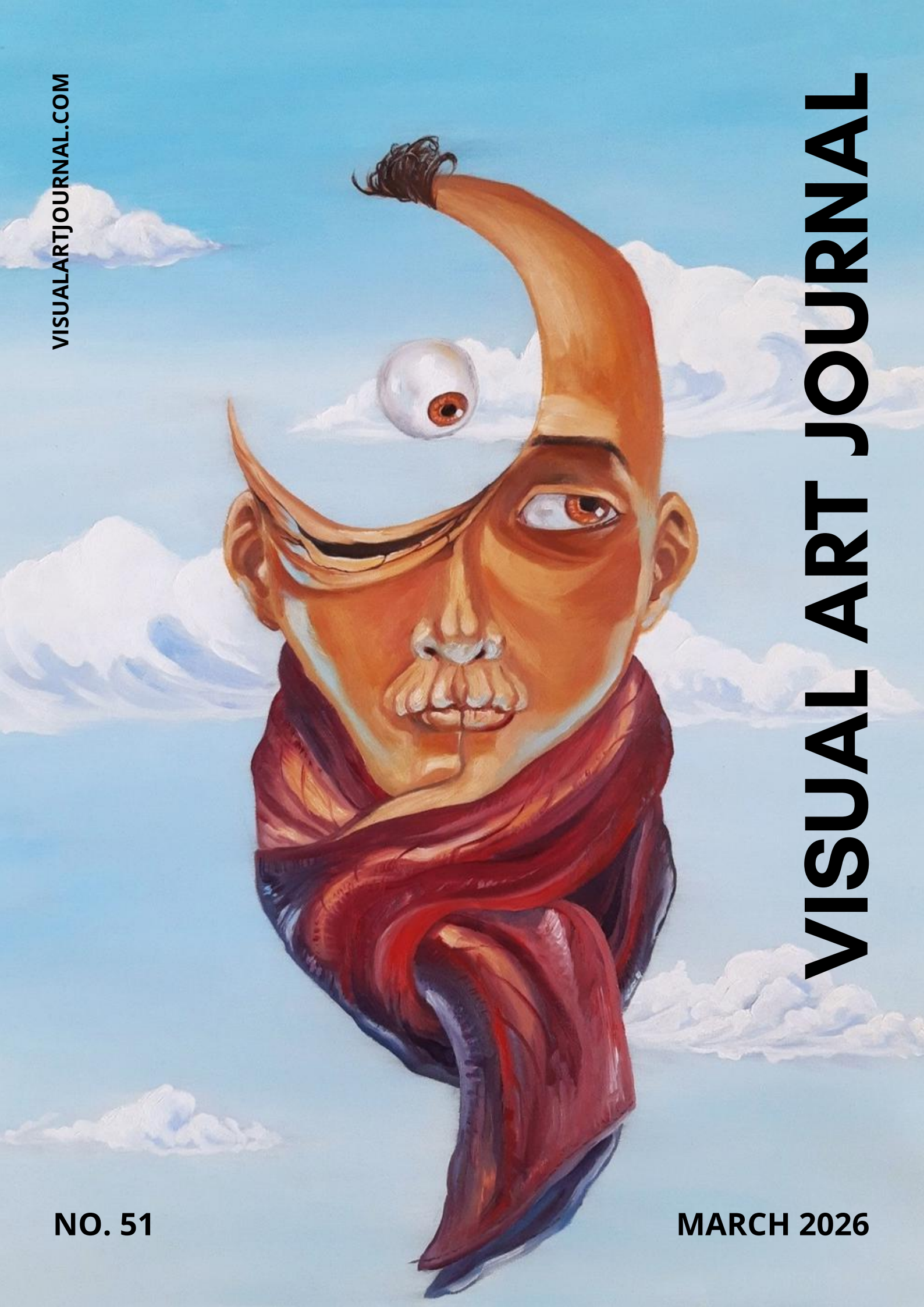

VISUAL ART JOURNAL

NO. 51

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— *Intro*

Anna Gvozdeva

Curator of
Visual Art Journal

Hello dear reader,

You are holding the 51st issue of our magazine, and it's hard to believe just how far we've come.

Spring has arrived in the Northern Hemisphere, and our team feels the same way - joyful, uplifted, and inspired. We truly hope you are also experiencing that surge of energy and that special sense of anticipation, when nature itself seems to promise something new and beautiful.

This issue is filled with vibrant colors, unexpected forms, and fresh ideas. Working with talented people is an incredible pleasure. When individuals are passionate about creating, it becomes a powerful energy that resonates and inspires everyone around them.

Make yourself comfortable - more than 100 pages of creativity await you. In these unusual times, we hope that art can become a bridge between people.

Enjoy the read!

On the Front Cover:
Franklin Silva
Lost

On the Back Cover:
TOVA
Unhurried woman

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

Interview

TOVA

Your background bridges finance, research, and art. How does your PhD in Finance shape the way you construct visual narratives in your paintings?

My background in finance shapes my artistic thinking in several ways. Finance, at its core, is a social science; it studies human interaction through models and systems. In both my research and my art, I explore how people relate to structure: the invisible frameworks that guide emotion, decision, and connection. I've always been drawn to the tension between rational systems and the intuitive, emotional world that exists beneath them.
In my paintings, geometric forms and structured compositions meet emotional gesture and fluid color. This mirrors the relationship between science and art, reason and feeling, rule and freedom. As a scientist, I work with a language of precision and structure, while my art translates that language into emotion and form. The two practices are not in opposition; they inform, balance, and deepen each other.

TOVA | RED Horisons of Structure

In your statement, you speak about structure sustaining emotion without governing it. How do you negotiate this balance on canvas?

I work through rhythm and intuition. I begin with a structural framework of lines, geometric grids, or layered compositions, and then allow emotion to move through it freely. It's a dialogue: structure provides the space, and emotion gives it breath.
Painting for me is a process of listening. I pay attention to when the form begins to feel too rigid or when emotion risks dissolving the structure. The balance is found not by control but by awareness, by knowing when to let go and when to return to precision.

Many of your works combine strong geometric frameworks with expressive, fluid forms. What draws you to this dialogue between control and spontaneity?

I'm drawn to the coexistence of opposites, the meeting point between order and movement. Geometry gives me a sense of stability, while fluid forms embody life, unpredictability, and emotion. Together they create a conversation, not a conflict.
This dialogue reflects human experience: we live between logic and feeling, discipline and freedom. My paintings are an attempt to hold both in the same visual field, to show

TOVA | HEART

that structure and spontaneity can coexist and even depend on each other.

The recurring use of stripes, triangles, and sharp lines suggests systems or boundaries. Are these forms symbolic of economic or social structures?

Yes, they often refer to systems and boundaries, the frameworks that shape how we interact, communicate, and live together. These forms speak about order, respect, and the patterns that define collective life. They mirror the social, economic, legal, cultural, and even familial structures that organize our existence, as well as the subtler frameworks we carry within? our habits, values, and unspoken rules.
Even details of everyday life – how we dress, speak, or move through urban space, reflect these invisible systems. In my paintings, stripes and geometric divisions acknowledge these boundaries while questioning them, asking how structure can protect without confining, and how freedom can exist within order.

Red appears in your work as both love and pain, flame and transformation. How do you approach color as an emotional language?

I experience color as something alive; each color has temperature, voice, rhythm, and emotional weight. When I paint, I speak with color almost as I would with a person. I ask how it feels that day: is it open or withdrawn, loud or quiet, warm or distant?
Red, in particular, holds contradiction; it can burn or heal, wound or awaken. I approach it carefully, allowing its intensity to guide me rather than dominate the work. Once I understand how a color wants to exist in a piece, I welcome it onto the canvas. This approach makes color not a tool but a collaborator in dialogue.

Your practice includes painting, music, poetry, and live performance. How does sound or voice influence your visual compositions?

Sound and image are different languages expressing the same impulse. When I write music or poetry, I work with rhythm, pause, and tone. The same principles guide the visual composition of a painting. The relationship between them is organic; they move together like voices in a shared conversation.
In time-based works, sound gives emotion duration. It allows visual gestures to unfold through time, bringing presence and vibration to what might otherwise remain still. Music and painting live together, each extending the other's world.

Having lived between London and Dubai, how does geography inform your sense of space and atmosphere in your work?

I've lived in five countries and changed many schools and universities during my education, so movement and adaptation are part of my worldview. Living in multicultural environments taught me that perception is never singular. Humor, language, even the meaning of color differs from person to person.
This awareness shapes my work. I invite individuals from diverse backgrounds to discover their own interpretations and emotional responses within abstraction. My paintings are not about one story but about shared presence, an invitation for each person to meet the work through their own sense of space and emotion.

TOVA | Horizins of structure

Lana Enns

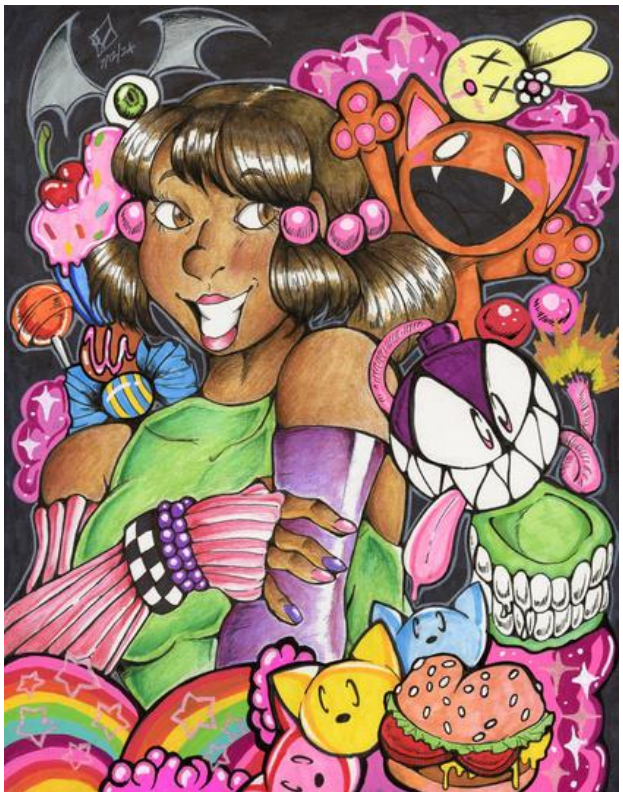
My artistic practice is built around the idea of giving materials a “second life.” I explore the city’s “soft waste”: plastic bags, packaging, and textiles. For me, these are not garbage, but carriers of memory, traces of human presence, and markers of the era of consumption.
In my works, I combine found objects with painterly techniques, creating multilayered compositions in which text, color, and texture enter into dialogue. I am interested in the conflict between the promise of “eco-friendliness” and the reality of a disposable world, as well as in the ability of soft materials to preserve the tactile memory of a place.
I work in mixed media, and I also create art objects and performances.

Lana Enns | Everything Is Expensive Now | 2024

Lana Enns | Imagination Rules the World | 2022

Interview

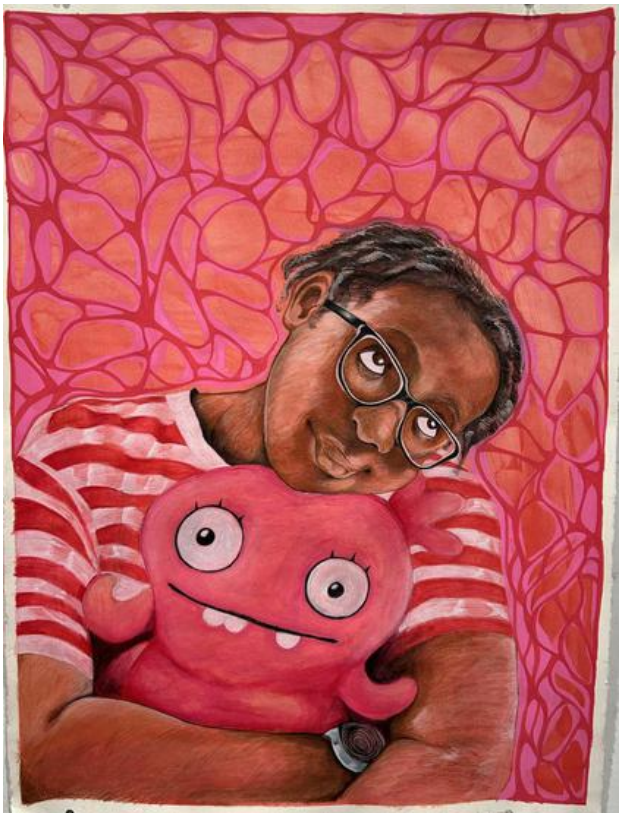
Jordan Young



Jordan Young | Inner Machinations Redux

Your work blends pop aesthetics with cartoon, comic book, and anime influences. When did you first realize that these visual languages would become central to your artistic identity?

Ever since I was younger, I've always been drawn to stylized, over-the-top, and saturated aesthetics. Monster High, Littlest Pet Shop, and Lalaloopsy dolls were my favorites growing up, which I believe subtly laid the foundation for my artistic taste in kitschy, fun art/design. I watched a lot of cartoons growing up, and drawing inspiration from such media helped pinpoint my own visual language. Since high school, I have developed a stylized anime-esque art style that blends innocence with the grotesque. As I started to expand my skills and interests during my undergraduate career, I began to look at other visual pop culture sources as inspiration within an academic and creative context. Looking into how "low culture" like comics and anime have been integrated into high culture spaces, with Takashi Murakami and Roy Lichtenstein as examples, I wanted to base my own practice on the concept. With the elitist undertones that the modern art world can bring, I created work that spoke true to my pop-influenced tastes without compromising my creative vision.

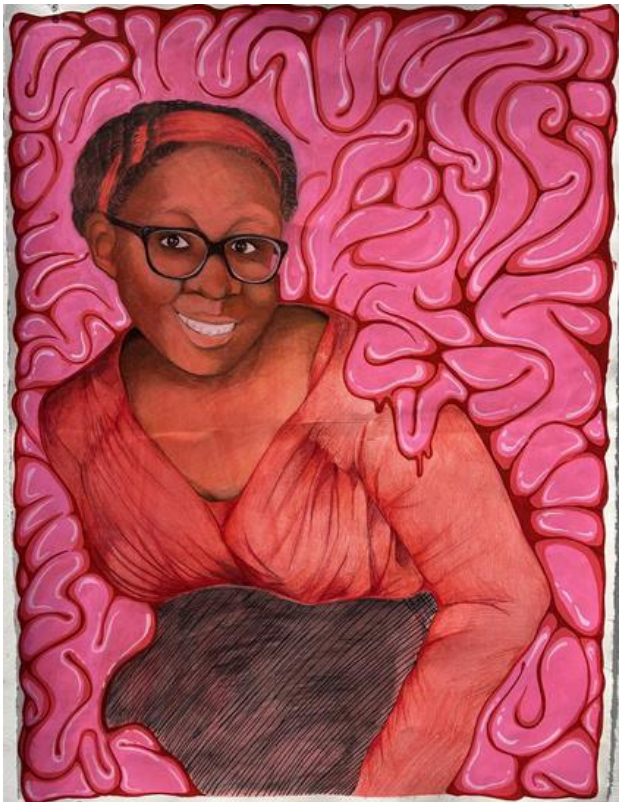


Jordan Young | My Friend and I

Many of your pieces feature nostalgic or toy-like characters alongside highly rendered portraits. How do you balance innocence and irony in your compositions?

When I first developed these series of illustrations, I initially used them to explore realism that deviated from my typical stylized work. The objects I depict, taken from my personal toy/trinket collection, are rendered via fine colored pencils and blending. The juxtaposition between the mass-produced plastic object and its sophisticated rendering elevates the subject to an artistic one, highlighting design elements that would be missed by the average viewer. My self-portraits also play on this, mixing highly rendered depictions of myself against stylized, near-grotesque imagery of veins and brain matter. My creative language balances the cutesy with the surreal/grotesque, sentimental objects with in-your-face saturation.

Bright, saturated color plays a major role in your work. What emotional or conceptual function does color serve for you?



Jordan Young | Brainiac Jo

In Pop art, bright colors are usually par for the course. Artists like Takashi Murakami and Andy Warhol utilize such palettes to draw on the loud and in-your-face nature of pop consumerism, especially when cartoon and anime aesthetics get involved. In my pieces, bright colors exist to highlight the playfulness of the objects I depict - to signal them as playthings, kitschy objects, and nostalgic memoirs. The colors are often associated with 80s/90s kitsch, bright neon colors with funky organic shapes. I wanted to use such visual language to emphasize the playfulness of my work.

In your statement, you mention a personal attachment to consumerism and nerd culture. How does your work critique or celebrate these influences?

As I've mentioned earlier, I've been engaging with nerd and fandom culture for years - from watching Littlest Pet Shop videos to joining a comic book club in college. My pieces as well as my portfolio is a memoir of my experience as a pop culture nerd and collector. These pieces serve to explore my personal collection of objects, from vintage stuffed animals to kitschy souvenir trinkets. They are less about critiquing consumerism (though it's not out there to suggest that in my work) and more about showing off my fandom-related interests and collections.

Some of your portraits are framed by highly stylized, almost "melting" or organic backgrounds. What draws you to these decorative, pattern-heavy spaces?

Since I was creating art based on collectible objects, I wanted to frame them via a composition that highlighted their decorative purpose. I based the framing on sticker and postage stamp designs because, like the toys I draw, they are collected and exchanged within the pop culture memorabilia space. I also wanted to create a cut-out feel to the pieces, like they would be actual stickers you can slap on a scrapbook. Whenever I start doing individual exhibitions, I plan to frame these pieces as if they belonged in a scrapbook.

Your characters often feel both playful and slightly uncanny. Are you intentionally exploring tension between comfort and discomfort?

I like to mix the grotesque with cutesy or innocuous subject matter, which is more apparent in my stylized anime, cartoon-esque pieces. This aspect of my art is meant to create a juxtaposition to explore blurring the lines between the saccharine and the disturbing. I explored this through my self-portraits, creating an air of child-like whimsy while including imagery reminiscent of bodily organs. I added these elements to explore my personal tensions with budding adulthood, holding on to the things that bring me joy while confronting the challenges of "growing up".

As a student in a Drawing and Painting program, how does academic training influence - or challenge - your pop-inspired visual language?

When I started my undergraduate career, I had only been drawing stylized cartoon and anime characters as a creative practice. I knew that going into a more professional and academic setting and relying on only this kind of visual language could limit my potential as a studio artist. I took several classes that helped build my realism skills, such as oil painting and figure drawing. These practices trained my eye and hand to depict physical objects in realistic settings, opening new possibilities for my visual language. Since junior year, I have created more diverse work that blended my stylized sensibilities while realistic rendering. I found my undergraduate art career to be humbling as it was influential in maturing my creative practice.

Jordan Young | Bobblin Bird

Viktoriia Melnik, working under the name NamelessTory, is a figurative painter based in Florida. She works primarily in oil on canvas, creating narrative scenes that explore memory, childhood, and quiet moments of everyday life.
Her paintings often depict children within carefully constructed environments that evoke nostalgia and a sense of timeless storytelling. Drawing inspiration from vintage imagery and cinematic composition, Melnik focuses on atmosphere, gesture, and emotional connection between figures.
Through her work, she seeks to capture fleeting moments that feel both intimate and universal, inviting viewers to reflect on memory, innocence, and the subtle poetry of ordinary experiences.

Project Statement
My work explores childhood as a space of memory, imagination, and fleeting emotional moments. Through figurative oil paintings, I recreate scenes that feel both familiar and slightly distant in time, drawing on imagery that evokes nostalgia and quiet storytelling.
Many of my paintings focus on children in moments of curiosity, play, or discovery. Rather than portraying specific individuals, these figures function as universal characters that invite viewers to reconnect with their own memories of childhood. I am particularly interested in gestures, expressions, and subtle interactions that reveal joy, anticipation, or wonder.
In works such as Carousel Ride and Cotton Candy Moment, movement and light help create a sense of excitement and innocence, capturing a moment that feels suspended between reality and memory. By combining narrative composition with a cinematic atmosphere, I aim to create images that feel intimate, timeless, and emotionally resonant.

Viktoriia Melnik | Carousel Ride

Viktoriia Melnik | Cotton Candy Moment

Barbara Luckyman

Barbara Luckyman | Punka

Your ceramic sculptures form a kind of personal "bestiary" populated by fantastical creatures. How did this imagined world first emerge in your artistic practice?

I think many people are waiting for something in their lives. Waiting until they have more money, more time, more energy, and so on. I was waiting too. Until something happened to me that happens to almost everyone – the death of my mother. That became a powerful impulse to act. I realized a simple truism: time passes and no one can turn it back.
After several years of not creating, I received a kind of "kick" from life through the irreversibility of death – a paradoxical jolt that pushed me back toward living. So I returned to the world of creation and ceramics. In fact, almost immediately, when after so many years I touched clay again, I knew I wanted to create "beasts," although at that time I did not yet call them that.

Barbara Luckyman | Sahara Boy

The first were the Bird-Women – female bird figures – and of course cats. Later came cyclopes and characters with fantastical and Halloween-like motifs. I have always felt a deep attraction to warm red and orange tones, dark art, black humor, and the courage to search for what lies behind the meaning of life, why all of this is happening. That is why entering the world of fantasy felt quite natural and easy for me.

Many of your works seem to exist somewhere between mythology, fairy tale, and contemporary imagination. What sources of inspiration most influence the creatures you create?

Above all, fantasy art and literature. But also Slavic mythology, which is full of demons and other supernatural beings that want to steal your soul somewhere in the marshes among the mists, or out in a field in the blazing sun, when the heat is so intense that you suffer sunstroke.
It is not a widely known fact that vampires are Slavic creatures that went on to achieve an international career in literature. I think that in the past people interpreted phenomena that are entirely natural in supernatural ways. But on the other hand, there is also a metaphysical side to human beings. It is there that many emotions, images, and beliefs reside, and it remains unclear whether everything can be explained scientifically, or whether magic truly exists? I feel all of these themes very strongly within myself.

Your sculptures combine playful forms with a sense of mystery and symbolism. What emotions or reflections do you hope viewers experience when encountering your work?

Above all, I would like to transport the viewer into a world of imagination, magic, and fairy-tale wonder. To detach them from an often sad or grey reality and carry them into another realm.
In today's world, the media, especially news outlets, love to sell fear, and some people live with a constant sense of threat. In my art I try to create a space where the viewer can

Barbara Luckyman | Sandworm

forget about this fear and about their everyday problems. I use strong, warm, energetic colours, which give the sculptures a joyful and positive energy.

Color and texture appear to play a crucial role in your ceramics. How do you approach the surface of a sculpture, and what does the glazing process mean within your creative language?

Glazing is very important to me. Above all, of course, colour is essential. It is what I was talking about earlier. Warm, energetic colours are, quite simply, energising.
Without the sun and light there is no life. When you observe the world, you can clearly see that in places where there is little sunlight, people tend to be quieter, more gloomy, and even prone to depression. In contrast, where there is plenty of sun, lush vegetation flourishes and people are more cheerful and happier. Even in cosmetology and medicine, colour therapy using laser or LED light is applied.
Where I live, there is sun in the summer, but winters can be long and sombre, and perhaps that is why I love strong, joyful, warm colours so much. In a sense, one can "warm oneself" in the colours of my sculptures. That is why I make a great effort to achieve solid, opaque colours. In my room I have several of my own sculptures, and when light falls on them they sometimes seem almost to glow. It is an effect that feels very soothing and relaxing to me.

Your background includes both ceramics and photography. Has photography influenced the way you think about form, light, or composition in your sculptural work?

I would say that it is rather the other way around – sculpture has influenced the way I think about photography. Photographing art is quite a challenge.
Sculpture, as a three-dimensional form, should be interesting from every angle, and the real difficulty is how to convey this in a photograph, which shows only one side of the work. Working with light, and especially with its intensity, is of course crucial. When documenting my pieces, I often wonder how far one can go. If a sculpture is photographed in very specific lighting conditions and then a viewer encounters it in "normal" light, will it still feel like the same sculpture?

When you begin a new piece, do you start with a clear vision of the creature, or does the form evolve intuitively during the process?

When I begin sculpting, I have an initial concept – a theme or a specific idea – but during the process I allow myself to be guided by the clay. I therefore combine conceptual thinking with intuition, the magic of the material, and the subconscious that directs the work of my hands.
Clay can sometimes be very surprising, and not everything can be predicted, especially in glazing, where you never fully know how the glazes will turn out. It is also important to me that my sculptures contain representational elements rather than being entirely abstract. I want the viewer to be able to recognize the figures I suggest, while at the same time leaving space for them to complete the image with what resonates with their own imagination.

Your works feel like objects from an unknown mythology or a fictional culture. Do you imagine stories or worlds behind these beings?

Yes, I live somewhat in a different world. I consciously gave up watching television and reading news portals because I felt they contained a great deal of fear and deliberate manipulation. Instead, I moved into the realm of my own creatures, magic, and fantasy.
The bird motif in my work is connected with the symbolic meaning of birds as mythical beings that link the worlds of the living and the dead. Halloween themes also refer to the connection between these two realms. Cyclopes and two-headed figures draw on fantasy worlds.
At the moment I am working, among other things, on a series titled Moss Folks, in which humanoid-like characters and their animals are taking shape. Within this series I want to build a kind of miniature tribe. Later, I would like to present them in a green outdoor space and invite viewers to interact with the sculptures. I also plan to write a short story for each figure, explaining who they are and what they do in the World of Moss.
Another strong theme in my work is post-apocalyptic imagery, including machine-animals and visions of a future world deprived of plants and animals as we know them today. This is beginning to become a real problem for the world, and unfortunately it is no longer happening only within my soul.

Barbara Luckyman | Sahara Up

Celine Car

Céline C. is a self-taught painter who works on pallet wood and other surfaces in a colorful, realistic, and animal-themed style.
She stands out for the originality of her medium and asserts her style by drawing inspiration from nature and wildlife.
She is taking on new challenges by creating portraits of women in her own unique style.
She is a passionate artist who has been developing her art over the years. The striking realism of her paintings never fails to captivate audiences.
Her artistic approach combines passion and technical mastery, resulting in a diverse body of work that reflects her commitment to contemporary art.

Project Statement
Each piece seeks to create a dialogue between matter, sight and emotion, inviting the viewer to an experience that is both visual and introspective.

Xuran Guo - "Don’t Mirror Back" (2026)

by ***Anna Gvozdeva***

Presented within the group exhibition Don’t Mirror Back at The Koppel Project in London, Xuran Guo’s works articulate a compelling investigation into the instability of communication and the fragmentation of meaning in contemporary social contexts. Situated within the exhibition’s broader curatorial framework - examining "language becoming hyper-affirmative" and trapped within recursive structures - Guo’s paintings and sculptural elements operate as visual interruptions, resisting the closure of fixed interpretation.

At the core of Guo’s contribution is Exulansis (2024), a large-scale painting that presents a biomorphic, almost corporeal form suspended in an ambiguous spatial field. The composition is neither fully abstract nor representational; instead, it occupies a liminal space where figuration dissolves into fluid, organic matter. The soft gradations of oil and acrylic, combined with charcoal’s subtle abrasiveness, create a tactile surface that oscillates between solidity and dissolution. The pale, almost flesh-like central mass appears both vulnerable and resistant, suggesting a body that is simultaneously emerging and disintegrating. The faint blue contour encircling the form introduces a sense of containment, yet it is unstable - more of a trace than a boundary - echoing the exhibition’s concern with the failure of language to fully enclose meaning.

Xuran Guo | Exulansis

This tension between containment and rupture is further intensified through Guo’s sculptural intervention, a suspended object resembling a fragmented torso or conjoined forms. Dripping, viscous material disrupts the clean geometry of the gallery space, introducing an element of decay and temporality. The sculpture functions as a physical manifestation of breakdown - of language, of the body, of coherence itself. Its placement in dialogue with Exulansis creates a spatial conversation: the painting’s internal tension is externalized and materialized in three dimensions, reinforcing the notion that meaning is not fixed but constantly negotiated between surface and structure.

In contrast, The Mute Fish (2025) introduces a darker, more volatile visual language. Here, Guo shifts toward a more expressive, almost violent palette, dominated by deep reds and murky greens. The composition evokes a sense of internal eruption, with gestural marks suggesting both organic growth and destruction. Unlike the quieter ambiguity of Exulansis, this work confronts the viewer with a more immediate emotional intensity. The title itself—The Mute Fish—suggests a paradox: a creature inherently silent, yet charged with expressive potential. This tension reflects the exhibition's thematic focus on communication that fails or refuses to articulate itself within conventional linguistic systems.

Xuran Guo
The Mute Fish
2025

Guo's practice, informed by her academic trajectory from Pennsylvania State University to the Royal College of Art, demonstrates a sophisticated engagement with both materiality and conceptual inquiry. Her works resist the didactic tendencies often found in contemporary painting, instead embracing ambiguity as a productive space. The absence of explicit narrative allows the viewer to confront the instability of interpretation itself, aligning with the exhibition's notion of "cracking mirrors" as moments where new meanings can emerge.

Xuran Guo | The Mute Fish (right)

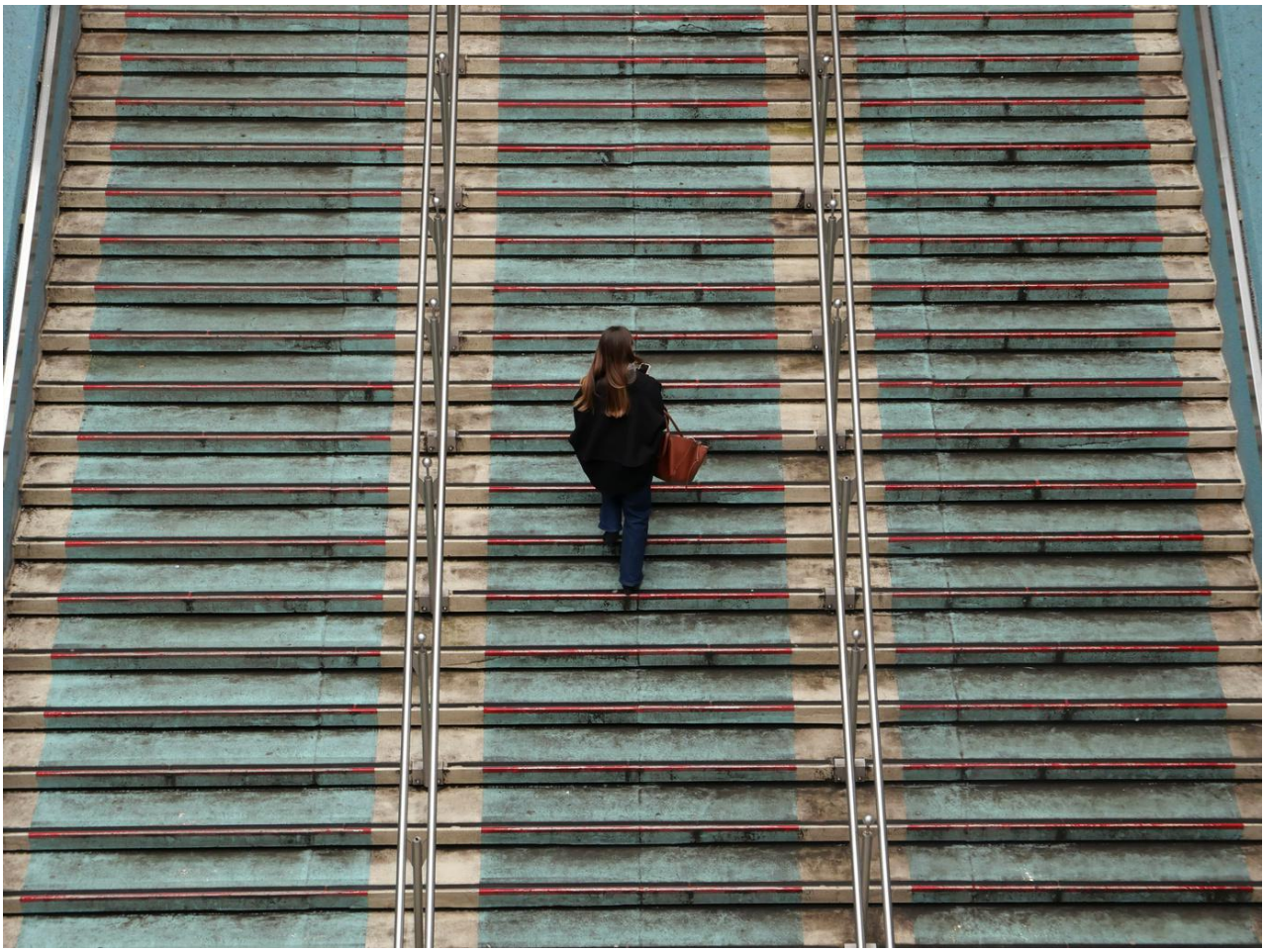
However, while Guo's works are conceptually aligned with the exhibition's framework, there are moments where the visual language risks becoming overly internalized. The reliance on abstraction and ambiguity, though effective, occasionally limits the accessibility of the work, potentially distancing viewers unfamiliar with such visual strategies. Yet, this tension may also be understood as intentional - an extension of the very communication breakdown the exhibition seeks to explore.

Ultimately, Xuran Guo's contribution to Don't Mirror Back is both visually and conceptually cohesive. Through a careful balance of painterly subtlety and material disruption, she constructs a body of work that not only reflects but actively challenges the conditions of contemporary communication. Her practice underscores the necessity of uncertainty, suggesting that meaning is not something to be mirrored back, but something to be continually reimagined.

Thomas Jenny is an interior designer with a passion for architectural photography. Since starting out with a Canon AE1, a gift for his 20s, he has dedicated himself to capturing the horizontal and vertical lines that structure urban spaces.
His stay in Mexico City in 2018 marked a turning point in his photographic practice, particularly through his exploration of the works of architect Luis Barragán. Then, between 2019 and 2022, while living in Hong Kong, he developed a photographic series entitled A R C H I (HK...), which highlights the city's architectural beauty through plays of lines and colors.
Thomas Jenny primarily creates his photographs on paper, offering his works in limited editions. His work has been exhibited at the French May Art Festival in Hong Kong, as well as in Paris, where he presented his personal and symbolic vision of urban architecture.
Her artistic approach thus blends her expertise in interior architecture with a photographic sensitivity that values the geometry and harmony of forms in urban environments.

Project Statement
This series, entitled "Up & Down", was created at the Maine Montparnasse shopping center in Paris, in 2026. Seen from above, the colorful staircases of the abandoned center offer us a new perspective on going up and/or down the stairs, and also an architectural testimony.

Thomas Jenny | Up & Down



Thomas Jenny | Up & Down

Thomas Jenny | Up & Down

Piotr Storoniak

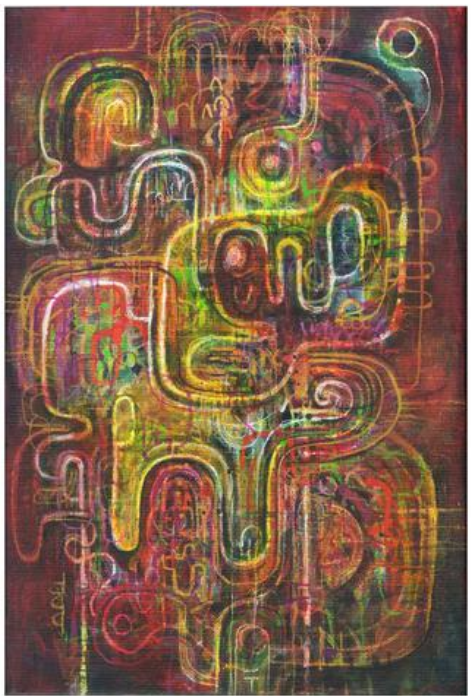
Your works often resemble complex labyrinths of lines and symbols. What first inspired you to develop this visual language?

This visual language emerged quite recently in my art. It emerged imperceptibly and spontaneously, as if it were a resonance of my soul with colors and patterns beyond time, or as if it were an answer to whispered questions brought to earth by background microwave radiation. The motif of the labyrinth has accompanied humanity for a long time, and for me it holds a multidimensional mystery. However, I feel that the true inspiration is hidden from me.

Piotr Storoniak | Faces from the pasti | 2025

You describe your paintings as existing between "prehistoric dreams from cave walls" and patterns shaped by cosmic rays. Could you elaborate on how these two seemingly distant worlds meet in your work?

These two seemingly distant worlds, in my opinion, connect within each of us. Regardless of the advancement of civilization, we were, are, and will forever remain children of the Universe, intertwined with it in the circulation of matter and the flow of energy. We are both immersed in the cosmos and constitute the cosmos ourselves.
In this context, I would like to point out that the number of cells that make up the human body (10,000 billion cells) exceeds the number of stars in our galaxy (200 to 300 billion stars)!
A cursory glance at our reality reveals its banal aspects, but a deeper look reveals unprecedented complexity and interconnectedness.
Patterns from the microworld repeat in the macroworld.
In my opinion, even the art on cave walls is created as a reflection of reality beyond the visible world.



Piotr Storoniak | Aztec Robot | 2023

How has your background in chemistry influenced your artistic thinking, processes, or understanding of materials?

Studying at the Faculty of Chemistry is a truly valuable experience that influences my perception of the world. As a result, reality for me is one vast and coherent scientific and artistic project. The structure of the human body and its functioning, viewed on the scale of chemical molecules, is a symphony of scientific beauty.
One could put it this way: science and art inspire each other.
When it comes to the technical side of painting, it is, of course, pure chemistry. Using acrylic paints, you're dealing with quite modern chemistry, as they are a relatively recent invention. Compared to oil, acrylic painting can be more challenging for me because the effects are sometimes unpredictable when the layers mix and dry. Unfortunately, I don't know what chemicals the individual colors contain, so it's impossible to predict the interactions between them.

Many of your compositions feel like maps of thoughts, emotions, or invisible systems. Do you see your paintings as a form of visualized inner landscape?

Thank you so much for sharing your impressions, and I'm glad you feel this way about these paintings, as it's close to my intention. These paintings are undoubtedly a manifestation of the spiritual world. The term "inner landscapes" aptly captures the nature of these works. One can imagine them conveying the trajectories of thought, the intricate journeys of depolarization signals along the brain's pathways, triggered by feelings, premonitions, and dreams, into the visible world.

The swirling acrylic forms in your paintings sometimes look organic, almost like living structures. How do you approach the balance between control and spontaneity in your process?

The structures in these paintings often grow like living organisms, forming themselves like intestines, brain coils, or long organisms. This happens very spontaneously in the first stage of painting. But then comes the stage of organizing and balancing the composition and colors. Sometimes it takes several months to complete a painting because I fail to achieve the right balance of shapes and colors. During this time, I look at the painting every day and imagine possible finishing options.

Many viewers might see references to ancient scripts, biological forms, or technological networks in your work. Are these associations intentional, or do they emerge naturally during the process?

Everyone who views these paintings will, of course, have different experiences and see something different. This is very interesting because it demonstrates how different we are in terms of sensitivity and emotionality. I believe that paintings, as an expression of the spiritual world—as I mentioned above—are psychoactive and influence our biochemical reactions.
Therefore, the goal of my painting is to create works that will both beautify the viewer's life and heal their soul. The images we surround ourselves with, the images we gaze upon daily, are crucial. I hope that buyers of my art will feel the positive influence of these mysterious and ancient labyrinths.

Piotr Storoniak | Labyrinth 0004 plasmind | 2024

Yaeli Gabriely (b. 1987) is a photographer based in Haifa. Her work focuses on staged self-portraiture, using the body and constructed or found spaces to explore the boundaries between reality and fiction. Gabriely's practice based mostly on self-portrature and investigates the fragile interplay between perception and representation, inviting viewers to question what is real, what is fabricated, and how meaning is produced in contemporary visual culture. She holds a B.Ed.Des in Photography from the Neri Bloomfield School of Design and an MA in Philosophy from the University of Haifa, and has exhibited internationally in London, Los-Angeles, Oslo, Dresden, and Erfurt.

Project Statement
In this series of self-portraits I use my body and surrounding spaces to explore a question central to contemporary life: what is real and what is false. I embrace the fake, the artificial and the performative, layering manipulations until it becomes difficult to locate any original truth beneath them. The alterations I perform on my body are mostly physical acts carried out on location and are therefore ostensibly 'real', yet they openly declare their own falseness. I also construct or alter the spaces and deliberately introduce defects and glitches that appear digital. The work suggests that distinguishing between real and fake has become meaningless. Simulacra have surpassed their sources and appearance has become the new essence. Even the title of the series, "Things That Never Weren't," poses this paradox.

Yaeli Gabriely | A Very Tall Woman | 2026

Yaeli Gabriely | Holes | 2021

Franklin Silva

Franklin Silva | Pride

I believe that creative people have creative bursts all the time. There have been several ideas in my head that I ended up not executing because I couldn't find a style to express them.
Therefore, I believe that time spent thinking and observing is the start to begin developing a new idea. After that, the development period is random, because I never know how long I will need to execute an idea, whether it's an individual piece or a new series and artwork.

Your works often explore the relationship between nature, human beings, and society through fragmentation and surreal imagery. How do you develop these symbolic compositions, and where does the idea usually begin?

There was a time in my life when I spent a lot of time observing nature, and I realized that we walk together. The act of observing so much and knowing that we are part of it all helped me create the series Nature and Humans.

Franklin Silva | Stop

You mentioned that surrealism has been a strong influence since childhood. What draws you to surrealism as a language of expression, and how has your interpretation of it evolved over the years?

Surrealism allows me to dream, to believe that everything that exists in my mind can be true. I don't need to follow labels, I just imagine that at some point in my head I take a picture and transfer it to the canvas as an impression! Thus, we understand that each canvas is a fragment of this world of fantasy without limitations.
Surrealism also allows me to use signs to direct reasoning in the form of art. Every element present was thought out, it wasn't inserted to look "pretty". If something is there, there's a reason for it!

Many of your portraits seem to exist between dream and reality. What role does the subconscious play in your creative process?

Franklin Silva | Lost

Our subconscious is an accumulation of things and situations. I think it plays a fundamental role in my artistic work. A good part comes from the subconscious, and at other times it comes from research and studies on the subject matter.

In your statement, you describe your artistic path as a "journey" with pauses, detours, and returns. How did your period of distance from art shape the work you create today?

I believe that everything in life has its proper time. Over the years I've noticed that this is becoming more evident. The moment I stopped drawing allowed me to return with more strength, and ideas accumulated in my mind came to the surface. I don't regret having stopped drawing for approximately 12 years. I know that everything has a reason or purpose. And I know that the moment I returned to what I love to do, my mind was better prepared to create, compose, study, redo, finalize, and share with everyone what I have to say.

You work with a wide range of techniques - charcoal, ink, oil, woodcut/linocut, and digital media. How do you decide which medium best expresses a particular idea?

Oil paint is definitely my passion! The feel, how the paint behaves, the gesture, always fascinates me. Now with digital art, it's a pre-draft before doing the oil painting. Digital allows us to try various things without extra material costs, so as soon as I'm sure of what I want to do with the work digitally, I make the final version of the classic with oil paint.
I still want to do a series with woodcuts, but I'll need more time to work on a series with this medium.
So, oil is my greatest love, and digital is my greatest ally in creating my works.

Some of your works appear emotionally intense, dealing with fatigue, vulnerability, and inner conflict. Is art for you a form of self-reflection, social commentary, or both?

I believe both.
Because producing art gives us one vision and idea; consuming art gives us another vision and idea. Some of my works contain a piece of something from a particular event, but others are simply the desire to talk about something important, even if it's just a small piece of an event from someone else!

You have experience as an art instructor and community-based artist. How does teaching and engaging with others influence your own creative practice?

We have so much to learn from others. Not ignoring this allows us to learn faster and think of other ways to do artistic work. I am very happy to have an active community that practices art challenges. The fact that I can have a glimpse of other people who often don't work with art is fascinating. Practicing in a group allows me to rethink ways to bring something to them more efficiently.

Franklin Silva | Pans

46 Koning
I am a young Brazilian artist from the city of São Paulo. Art is my life and my passion, I love drawing on things, acrylic paitings, digital works, animations, and pretty much anything that involves art. I draw for me and for those who relate to my visuals. My style is original and speaks for me.

Project Statement
I do not create art because I want to; I create it because I must. Whether drawing, painting, or spraying, the medium does not matter—every day I need to free my mind through my hands. From a very young age, drawing has brought me peace and the self-esteem I needed to persevere in the chaotic environment in which I grew up. Expressing my thoughts through bold drawings and imaginative characters has always been the most natural thing for me to do. I create to prove to that same young boy that this is truly what he was born for, and that this is the purpose he is meant to fulfill.
For most of my life, markers and pencils on paper have been my closest companions, but over the past three to four years I have become deeply engaged in acrylic painting. My style is authentic, highly distinctive, and cartoon-inspired—recognizable as my own at first glance. About five years ago, I also began working with digital art, which allows me today to create digital illustrations, 2D animations, and video edits. I am currently studying 3D animation in college. In addition, I produce wall art using both spray paint and acrylic markers applied directly onto walls. I am able to draw without preliminary sketches, working instinctively from my mind straight onto any surface.
No matter the day, the medium, the surface, or the material, I will always create. Art is not only my passion; it is my nature and my talent. I aspire to show the world what I am capable of and what I was born to do. As long as I breathe, I will continue to draw—for those who love art as deeply as I do, and for everyone who connects with my visual language and expression.

46 Koning | Trowning Smile

Eszter Bóra Paál

Eszter Bóra Paál | Lung of the Shell | 2025

Your work frequently explores the idea of the microcosm. What first drew you to this concept, and how does it influence the way you construct your artworks? First, while observing our world, I noticed the pattern outlined by the concept of the microcosm.

Even as a child, I was attracted to everything where science, philosophy and art met just like a magnet. I loved, for example, astrophysics, I read books about it, however I was so small that I couldn't understand most of it, but still it made every cell in my body tingle. I looked for recurring patterns, things that visually belonged together, like the branches and the roots of trees, the veins of leaves and the veins of rivers. Or the walnut kernel, which is like the human brain, or our skin, which resembles the dry soil of the desert if observed closely. Of course, I didn't always have the words for this, and it wasn't even conscious, I just constantly wanted to understand the world and the people in it. How we are the same and how we are different from nature. Who is this God that everyone talks about, and yet no one seems to know anything about? I don't know when my metaphysical desire took shape, but it all happened organically and inevitably. I wrote my thesis on the influence of Hermetic philosophy and occult teachings on fine art. In my works, lines of force and composition are paramount. They always carry significance. Whether it's the right side or the left side, where the triangles point, the position of the crosses all structure the artwork along the way of analogical thinking. I like to work in symmetry because for me it makes even the profane seem altar-like, and this state of balance calms me.

Eszter Bóra Paál | Topogó Universe | 2025

Boxes appear as recurring elements in your practice, functioning almost like self-contained universes. What does the box symbolize for you, both visually and conceptually?

In the beginning, it was just the most obvious way to birth collages into space. Before I finished my first box piece, I went to the bulky waste collection event to throw out some old boxes. Here in Hungary, this is like Christmas, the street sides get filled up with unwanted items, and until they're taken away the next day, crowds of young and not-so-young people go hunting for treasure. The first thing I picked up was a woody smelling drawer from an antique desk, and from then on I spent the whole evening looking for drawers. The intimacy of the drawer as a symbol became obvious to me. Peeking into someone's secrets, memories, and soul through their objects. Since then, I begun to see the 'box' as a complete universe, it is like a drawer, or like a window, a true dimensional gateway. On the other hand, it's also a beautiful embodiment of our unconscious and our thinking. I put what I don't want to deal with in a drawer, pack it away, shove it deep into a box. It's beautiful because it harbours secrets and thus dissolves them. I often paint on the back and the sides of my boxes only for the very curious to notice. It's a kind of game. Box art for me is an abstract manifestation of the principle of "as above, so below".

Many of your works incorporate found objects with their own histories. How do you select these objects, and how do their previous lives influence the narrative of the piece?

They come across me and I put them away until their time comes. If I like a small piece of trash or a giant heavy piece of architectural debris, I'm sure to take it home, and many funny stories have been born from this. Often the texture of the given object touches me, or

Eszter Bóra Paál | The golden ratio of the mind | 2024

the place where I find it, and it has happened several times that something was almost too beautiful a symbol and got an entire project, other times it just played a supporting role in someone else's finale. When something really touches me in the present because, for example, it is connected to the flow of my thoughts at the time, I immediately incorporate it into an artwork, but more often an object or piece of trash waits for several years before I use it. I have very small scraps and pieces of the city put away, each one neatly catalogued. Each part carries the whole, which is why all such objects are inseparable from their previous lives, their transgenerational experiences, if you like. For example, I once found someone's complete personal archive in a soggy shopping cart. It contained beautiful sheet music, and love letters and pictures, and there it was, thrown out by the railroad tracks. It was a sad but amazing sight. I dried everything at home and used these pieces for the Lovers' box of the Topogó Univerzum. The picture, which only shows the negative of the couple, is glued to the back, because I wanted to memorialize that person, and how others threw away their memory. Through three lives, the memento arrived at the happy conclusion of an immortal but impersonal presence. I am grateful that these opportunities found me.

Your practice combines printmaking techniques such as monoprint, linocut, and etching with collage and installation. How do these traditional methods shape the conceptual depth of your work?

This is the synthesis of the past and the future. It shows the relativity of time on a broader spectrum. On the other hand, most classical graphic techniques are very clear, strong and associative. Based on dualistic thinking, the existence of one pole is conditional on the existence of the opposite pole. And for example, from a linoleum sheet, by removing the negative of the image, you give life to the forms that were hidden within it. Collage is jazz, in the sense that each piece sings about its own story. The parts that make it up are individuals, but most of the time we still focus on unity. My installations are also collages, only on the canvas of space. But overall, I started experimenting with this pairing along the axis of past and future, personal and collective experiences.

In your artist statement you mention the influence of hermetic thought and archetypes. Which philosophical or symbolic traditions have had the strongest impact on your artistic language?

It is difficult to give a clear answer to this without synchronizing our concepts. By Hermetic philosophy I generally mean late Hermeticism, which was not only concerned with interpreting the teachings of Hermes Trismegistus, but also explored the cosmic and spiritual nature and regularities of man through the complex system of the entire collective intellectual heritage of humanity. In this way, late Hermeticism integrated all the major esoteric concepts of its time, such as Kabbalah, alchemy, magic or astrology. For me, therefore, the source of inspiration is not clearly graspable, since all of them influenced me at the same time and continue to influence me to this day. Usually, different traditions become guiding principles on a project-by-project basis. However, the world of Tarot cards is especially dear to my heart, I have already designed a deck and the symbol system of the Major Arcana has appeared in several of my projects, because it is the purest cross-section of spirituality, the collective unconscious and art. It is such a simple and pure concept. I often reach for Tarot because it is accessible to more people because the archetypal images allow us to easily connect with our unconscious selves. It is not a matter of faith, but of self-awareness and psychology, hence in many cases it is a better communication channel than other traditions.

Many of your pieces evoke the feeling of sacred or meditative spaces. Is spirituality an intentional component of your work, or does it emerge naturally through the process?

If I have a conceptual starting point, I often consciously weave in symbols and gestures that represent the intellectual connections that form an integral part of the narrative. On the other hand, when the medium inspires me, it is usually not my goal for my work to talk about a specific topic. I often meditate on a technique or material to tune in to it and let it start telling me a story. In such cases, incorporating spirituality into the work is not conscious, but my pure investigative curiosity that stems from my being usually leads me there. It would be very difficult for me to leave my own person out of the work, because the work itself is a microcosm of the artist. So it is no wonder that the object of my interest intrudes into my works, whether intentionally or unintentionally. I don't know if I have ever made anything that did not at least include the polarity of the dual worldview.

Your projects often take the form of series, where individual works function as parts of a larger structure. How do you approach building these interconnected bodies of work?

Like anything else in my creative practice. In the light of hermeticism, man is a microcosm of God. When I feel that a world cannot be expressed on its own, I start thinking in series. I consider the installation aspect of series important, in what order do they convey what message. How they can best communicate with each other. This is also the most difficult part, because I often imagine something, plan it, and by the time I am finished, the objects have changed in a lot of ways and the chemistry between them is no longer the same as when I dreamed up the concept. In such cases, they have to find a new home. My style is quite eclectic, and this caused me great ego struggles to accept or to change, whether something was a conscious choice or just a veiling of my uncertainty. Working in the form of series helped me with this, because through my creative process I learned to accept that everything has a meaning for me, the medium, the form, the colors, the definiteness or chaos of the guided lines. This is of course common in art, but it still caused me conflict that I couldn't label my art. Then I realized that it wasn't necessary, because things that belong together retain cohesion, and thus thinking in series blew away the fog of self-doubt in me, and I was able to be free in my work again.

Mari Givens is an illustrator whose work explores expressive characters, nostalgia, and emotional storytelling through bold color and whimsical forms. Drawing inspiration from 90s pop culture, animation, and everyday human experiences, her illustrations balance playfulness with introspection. Her visual language centers on stylized faces and symbolic details that invite viewers to question, feel, and reflect. Working in both digital and traditional mediums, she creates vibrant narrative driven pieces that celebrate individuality, imagination, and the strange beauty of being human. She is currently based in the United States.

Project Statement
My work centers on expressive characters and imaginative storytelling. Through illustration, I explore personality, humor, and emotion by creating figures that feel both strange and familiar. I am drawn to bold color, playful compositions, and slightly surreal situations that allow everyday feelings like anxiety, curiosity, and joy to be expressed visually.
Much of my work is inspired by vintage cartoons, children's book illustration, and narrative art. I enjoy building small worlds around my characters, placing them in environments that suggest a story just beyond the frame. These scenes invite viewers to interpret the characters' experiences and bring their own sense of humor or memory to the image.
As an illustrator, I am interested in creating artwork that is accessible and engaging to a wide audience. In public spaces especially, I believe art can spark curiosity, offer moments of humor, and make shared environments feel more imaginative and human. My goal is to create work that feels welcoming while still encouraging viewers to pause, look closely, and enjoy the unexpected.

Duke Windsor

Your background spans the Marine Corps, museum exhibition design, opera performance, martial arts, and visual art. How have these seemingly different disciplines shaped your approach to painting?

My approach to painting is deeply informed by the breadth of my lived experience, ranging from my service as a Marine Corps combat illustrator to my work in museum exhibition design, my training as an opera performer, and my long-term practice in martial arts. Each discipline has contributed to foundational principles that manifest in my visual art in distinct but interrelated ways.

Duke Windsor | An American Icon

My time in the U.S. Marine Corps as a combat illustrator trained me to observe quickly, synthesize information under pressure, and distill complex scenes into decisive visual forms. That background sharpened my sense of composition and narrative clarity, both of which remain central to my cityscapes and figurative work. The military environment also instilled discipline and work ethic that supports the rigor of my studio practice.

Years of designing and preparing exhibitions in major museums strengthened my understanding of how artwork exists in space, how viewers move, perceive, and engage with visual information. This curatorial sensibility influences how I construct pictorial space and how I integrate gold leaf to guide the viewer's eye. Exhibition design taught me to think not only about making an artwork, but about orchestrating an experience.

My training and performance experience in opera cultivated my sensitivity to rhythm, tone, and emotional pacing. Painting, much like music, operates through movement and resonance, qualities I explore through brushwork, layering, and the luminous counterpoint created by gold leaf. The performance of opera also informs the emotional register of my figurative and narrative works.

My long-term practice in martial arts contributes a sense of balance, intentionality, and physical awareness to my artmaking. Martial arts emphasize economy of motion and clarity of purpose, principles that parallel the deliberate gestures in my painting process. The discipline also reinforces patience, repetition, and mastery over foundational forms. Together, these experiences shape a practice that is simultaneously disciplined and expressive, structured yet intuitive. They inform the way I construct images, how I use light and material, and how I frame ordinary subjects with a sense of reverence. My work becomes a convergence point where technical rigor, performative sensitivity, spatial intelligence, and embodied discipline meet on the canvas.

The hamburger is both ordinary and iconic. What drew you to this subject as the central focus of your series Nothing's Impossible?

Artists such as Warhol, Van Dyck, Van Gogh, Louise Moillon, and Cézanne all explored the still-life tradition, using food to reflect the cultural values of their time. From ancient Egyptian carvings of crops to the Dutch masters' hyper-realistic fruit, food imagery has long served as a window into everyday life.

Duke Windsor | Lets Eat

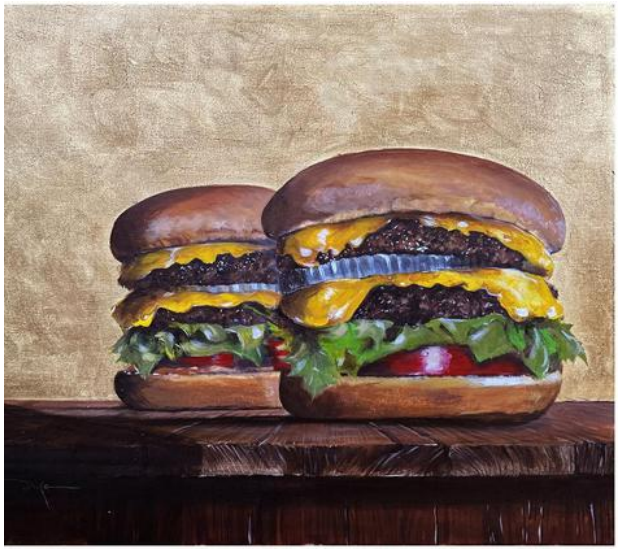
A visit to a museum exhibition of Russian icons, with their luminous gilded surfaces, deeply influenced my work.
Although gilding is often viewed as merely decorative, I draw on these techniques to evoke a sense of reverence and radiance in my paintings.
My focus is not on isolating ingredients but on capturing the sensory anticipation of a first bite. Can paint provoke desire, allowing viewers to "taste" and "smell" with their eyes? My intention is to create a visual experience that stirs the senses, from my palette to the viewer's imagination.

You elevate a fast-food staple through the use of gold leaf, referencing Klimt and Russian iconography. What does this transformation say about contemporary culture and values?

I've been working on an essay about this. Here's from my notes on what I've been working on to approach this question:
Transforming a fast-food hamburger, a symbol of convenience, mass production, and American consumer culture, into a gilded, icon-like object fundamentally reframes how I look at everyday objects. When I elevate a burger using gold leaf and visual references to Klimt and Russian iconography, I find that several cultural conversations begin to emerge.
I use gold leaf because it has historically signaled the divine, the untouchable, and the spiritually significant. By applying it to a fast-food item, I intentionally create a tension: What does it mean when something disposable is treated like something sacred?
This transformation reflects my belief that contemporary culture often places reverence on consumption itself. In a society where brand loyalty, convenience, and indulgence are celebrated, the humble burger becomes, in my hands, a modern-day "icon."
My use of gold leaf also underscores how consumer culture has become a kind of devotion. Fast-food chains function as global institutions with their own rituals, symbols, and shared meanings. By presenting the burger as a precious object, I invite viewers, and myself, to consider: Have consumer goods become our new symbols of identity? What do we worship today, transcendence or convenience?
By drawing on the visual language of religious icons, I highlight how advertising and branding often mimic the aesthetic power of spiritual imagery.
Referencing Klimt and classical iconography places my work in dialogue with artistic traditions known for their opulence, craftsmanship, and spiritual weight. Placing a burger in that lineage challenges the traditional hierarchies that define artistic worth.
It forces me to ask: Why do we revere some images and dismiss others?
By merging fine-art techniques with everyday subject matter, I push against the boundary between "high" and "low" culture and question who gets to decide what is worthy of artistic elevation.
Gold has always symbolized purity, wealth, and permanence, qualities that starkly contrast with the fast, disposable nature of fast food. This juxtaposition allows me to comment on how quickly we consume, how little we value durability, and how often we prioritize immediate gratification.
Through this lens, the artwork becomes a mirror of contemporary values: shiny, enticing, and fleeting.
By gilding a burger, I also reconnect with the longstanding tradition of food as symbolic subject matter. Historically, still life conveyed abundance, mortality, or spirituality. My work updates that tradition for the 21st century, reminding viewers that our "everyday objects" reveal just as much about us as grapes and goblets once did for the Dutch masters.

Your paintings feel both reverent and playful. How do you balance humor with a sense of grandeur in these compositions?

The balance between reverence and playfulness in my work comes from my interest in elevating the ordinary without stripping it of humanity. I'm drawn to subjects, like burgers, alleys, everyday objects, or working-class scenes, that are grounded, familiar, even humble. By pairing these motifs with gold leaf and a sense of dramatic lighting, I frame them with the visual language of grandeur, almost as if they're receiving the same treatment traditionally reserved for sacred or historical subjects.
The humor comes from the contrast: when something as everyday as a cheeseburger or a cluttered alley is given the glow and solemnity of a Renaissance altarpiece, the viewer



Duke Windsor | SEEING DOUBLE-DOUBLE

can't help but smile. That moment of recognition, 'Why does this humble thing feel so exalted?', is part of the spark I'm after. The humor isn't parody; it's an invitation. It encourages the viewer to engage, to look closer, to recognize beauty in places they may have overlooked.
The sense of grandeur emerges from my technique. The gold leaf carries an inherent history of reverence; it immediately shifts the visual weight of the composition. My layering process, attention to light, and impressionistic handling of form all work together to create depth and atmosphere. In this way, the composition holds a certain dignity, no matter how playful the subject might be.
For me, the real art lies in holding both tones at once, allowing humor to coexist with a sincere appreciation for the subject. I'm not mocking the everyday; I'm honoring it. The playfulness keeps the work accessible, while the luminosity and compositional rigor give it emotional and aesthetic resonance.

Food has long been a subject in art history - from Dutch masters to Warhol. Where do you see your work positioned within that tradition?

Food imagery has a long and complex lineage, from the symbolic opulence of Dutch Golden Age still life to the ironic mass-culture commentary of Warhol's Pop Art. My own food paintings, particularly my burger still life, occupy a space that draws from both traditions while recontextualizing them through materials and contemporary cultural lenses.
Like the Dutch masters, I approach food as an object worthy of contemplation. Their still life used meticulous detail, dramatic lighting, and symbolic materiality to elevate everyday items into meditations on abundance, mortality, and beauty. In a similar way, I use controlled lighting, careful compositional structure, and layered acrylic painting to give my subjects, often humble, familiar foods, a heightened presence.
The key difference is that instead of referencing vanitas symbolism, I position contemporary food icons, like the cheeseburger, as artifacts of modern desire and culture. The act of elevating such a commonplace object disrupts expectations and invites the viewer to consider its aesthetic and cultural weight.
My work also speaks to the Pop tradition, particularly Warhol, whose depictions of soup cans and hamburgers treated consumer items as emblems of American identity. Where Warhol approached these objects with an ironic flatness, I bring them back into the realm of the painterly and the luminous. By rendering mass-produced food with impressionistic brushwork and gold leaf, I blend the sacred and the commercial.
In doing so, I'm acknowledging Pop Art's legacy while resisting its detachment. My intention is to let the viewer experience delight, humor, and reflection, not merely commentary on mass culture.
The incorporation of gold leaf is where my work diverges most sharply from earlier traditions. Borrowed from religious icon painting and illuminated manuscripts, gold leaf creates a sense of reverence and grandeur. When applied to food imagery, it produces a deliberate tension: the sacred and the mundane collide.
This tension positions my paintings in a hybrid space, one where the visual rhetoric of the sacred is applied to the symbols of everyday American life.
So, within art history, my food paintings stand at a crossroads:
- They carry forward the Dutch masters' sense of still-life drama and reverence.
- They engage in the Pop Art exploration of consumer culture.
- They use gold leaf to introduce a contemporary, almost liturgical sense of importance.
The result is a body of work that both honors and gently disrupts the tradition of food painting, recasting familiar subjects in a way that is humorous, reflective, and visually elevated.

Duke Windsor | WHERE S THE BEEF

Duke Windsor | Nothings Impossible

Many of your burgers are depicted at the moment just before the first bite. Why is that moment of anticipation so important to you?

Many of my burgers are portrayed now just before the first bite, and that instant of anticipation carries deep meaning for me. It's a charged moment, brief, intimate, and universal. Before the burger is consumed, it exists in a perfect state of promise. It represents desire, hunger, nostalgia, temptation, and the pure potential of satisfaction. Once the bite is taken, that perfection disappears. But in that suspended second beforehand, everything is still possible.
I'm fascinated by how this moment mirrors the broader human experience. We often find ourselves caught between wanting and having, between longing and fulfillment. That tension reveals something essential about contemporary culture: our relationship to consumption is not just physical,

Duke Windsor | XXL DELIGHT

it's psychological, emotional, even spiritual. By freezing the burger at the brink of its transformation, I'm highlighting the ritual, the impulse, and the reverence we attach to everyday indulgence.
On a visual level, I treat that pre-bite moment as a contemporary still life, not yet altered, not yet "ruined" by action. It allows me to elevate a familiar object to the level of contemplation and symbolism. It becomes a standing for desire itself. The gold leaf amplifies this, turning a simple burger into something iconic, sacred, and almost untouchable. It reframes hunger, not just for food, but for comfort, identity, pleasure, and belonging.
By focusing on this exact moment of anticipation, I'm inviting the viewer to pause with me, right there at the edge of satisfaction, and consider what we're hungry for.

If viewers walk away from your exhibition remembering just one thing, what would you hope it is?

If viewers walk away from my exhibition remembering just one thing, I hope it's the realization that even the most ordinary objects in our lives carry layers of meaning, cultural, emotional, and spiritual, when we truly stop to see them. I want them to understand that a simple hamburger, something fast and disposable, can become a mirror reflecting our desires, our habits, our values, and the things we quietly worship without noticing.
If they pause later, maybe in a restaurant, maybe in their own kitchen, and see an everyday object differently, with a little more awareness or reverence, then my work has done its job. I hope they remember that beauty and meaning aren't reserved for what society labels "important." They're already embedded in the world around us. My paintings simply hold up the gold leaf so the light can catch it.

Bonnie Cooke

Bonnie is a Vancouver-based analog collage artist with a focus on surrealism. They create their pieces using thrifted National Geographics, vintage home and fashion magazines, and travel and botanical books. By reimagining these images, Bonnie builds new worlds that bring together people, animals, and nature in unexpected ways. While collage is Bonnie's newest creative adventure, they've always been a maker—from designing jewelry to singing and playing guitar. They love the process of taking a forgotten page from an old book and giving it a second life.

Bonnie Cooke | Morning Commute | 2026

Bonnie Cooke | No Return | 2026

Xuerui Chen

Your practice often explores how individuals coexist with external influences. How has your personal experience shaped the way you approach these themes visually?

Most of my work grows out of moments when my personal life intersects with the outside world. Some of these influences come from family and emotional relationships, others from social structures, and increasingly from the digital environments we live in. Through these personal experiences, I gradually realized that many of these tensions are shared by others as well, which led me to reflect on how external forces shape the individual.

I tend to understand these experiences through tactile and visual sensations. In my work, I look for materials and visual metaphors that can convey the feeling of being influenced or shaped by something beyond oneself. Layering, repetition, and tactile elements allow me to suggest how external forces slowly permeate everyday life, while handmade traces and irregular details represent the subjectivity that persists under pressure.

This approach also reflects my own experience of growing up —learning, little by little, how to hold on to my own voice amid expectations and influences.

Xuerui Chen | An inescapable tangle

In A "Toxic" Relationship, you examine the dynamics between care and control in a mother-daughter bond. How did embroidery and layered fabric become the right language for expressing intimacy and boundaries?

Textiles are among the first tactile experiences we encounter in life. Compared with many traditional painting materials, they feel much closer to the body and to memory. The layering of fabric naturally creates a sense of proximity and distance: a thin, almost transparent layer can soften a relationship while also creating a subtle barrier, whereas heavier fabrics can produce a feeling of pressure or suffocation.

Embroidery, meanwhile, is a form of drawing directly onto fabric. Thread can mend and repair, but it can also tighten and restrain. It carries both tenderness and tension.

Through the interaction between thread and fabric, emotions such as intimacy, dependency, restraint, and boundaries can be translated into a visual language that retains warmth and tactility.

Welcome, My Emotions reframes emotions as "visitors." What inspired this metaphor, and how do you hope children (and adults) respond to it?

This metaphor came from a very personal emotional experience. After a strong feeling had passed, I suddenly understood why it had appeared in the first place, and I began to learn how to observe myself when emotions arise. There is a Chinese saying: "Among three people walking together, one can always be my teacher." When I stopped seeing emotions as problems that needed to be eliminated and instead regarded them as signals or reminders, I realized that each emotion could teach me something about myself. Emotions often arrive suddenly and leave just as quickly. If

Xuerui Chen | A Toxic Relationship

we can learn something from them, they become like visitors passing through our lives.
Through this story, I hope both children and adults can gradually learn to observe their emotions. Emotions should not become the final straw that overwhelms us. They are not flaws, but visitors that remind us of something important—sometimes even teachers and companions along the way.

Your illustrations balance softness with psychological depth. How do you maintain empathy and humor while addressing heavy emotional themes?

For me, heaviness does not necessarily mean despair. It feels more like a layered experience with multiple entry points. Softness becomes a way for people to approach these emotions, and also a small but persistent form of hope.
I believe emotions are never a single weight, and neither are the situations or phenomena surrounding them. What interests me is their complexity and completeness—the tension alongside moments of looseness, tenderness, or quiet reflection. For that reason, I choose materials carefully for each theme, allowing the materials themselves to become extensions of emotion.
The textures of mixed media, the softness of fabric, and the breathing space created by lines introduce a sense of warmth into the image. They allow heavy themes to be visible without overwhelming the viewer, keeping the work approachable and open to empathy.

In 0101 Instructions, you use binary code and predator-like animals to critique digital advertising. Why did you choose animals as symbols of invisible persuasion?

Animals are instinctive, alert, and fast-moving, yet they often remain hidden within their environments. This characteristic allowed me to visualize the instinctive and predatory mechanisms behind digital advertising. Like predators, these systems observe targets, study habits, detect weaknesses, and react faster than the subjects they watch. This closely mirrors the "monitor–predict–deliver" processes of algorithmic advertising.

Using animals as metaphors allows this influence to feel more organic and subtle than direct technological imagery. It conveys the sense of persuasion that operates quietly and gradually.
At the same time, animals are essential parts of ecological systems—removing even one species can destabilize the whole environment. In a similar way, the algorithms behind digital advertising constantly operate in the background: their presence is continuous and powerful, yet often barely visible.

The visual language in 0101 Instructions feels immersive and slightly unsettling. How do you design compositions that reflect the subtle invasion of digital control?

In some ways, the compositions mimic the way advertising gradually infiltrates everyday life. Repeating shapes, layered color blocks, and patterns that slowly expand across the image all play a role.
I often place the subject in a state of being surrounded. The figures tend to sit near the center or slightly off-center, while geometric forms, translucent layers, animal gazes, or antenna-like shapes move toward them—almost like streams of information closing in.
At first glance, the viewer may simply notice color and rhythm. But as the eye moves deeper into the image, a slow sense of encroachment begins to appear.

Many of your works leave space for reflection rather than offering direct answers. How important is ambiguity in your storytelling process?

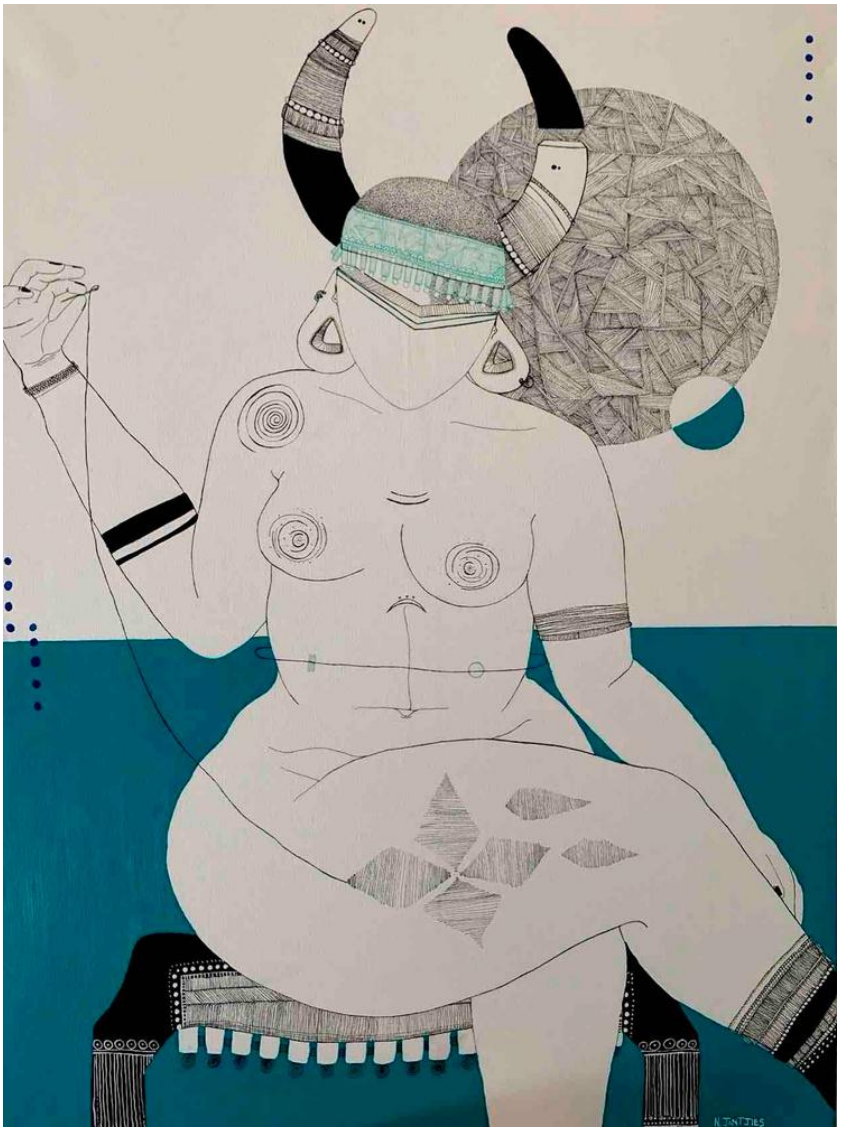
For me, ambiguity creates a space for interaction with the viewer. A work is not a finished conclusion; it is more like a starting point, and the rest of the narrative can be continued by the audience.
People respond to the same situation in very different ways, and I want that diversity of interpretation to remain possible. My work sometimes addresses social phenomena or uncomfortable realities, but I still want the work to remain open rather than fixing a single meaning. In this sense, I prefer my work to stay in a state of "still happening," where viewers can bring their own experiences and participate in completing the story.

Xuerui Chen | A Toxic Relationship

Artist **Nandipha Jantjies** (b.1998) is a painter and multi-media digital artist and creator. The prolific artist is also know by the name 'Neferuda' which is a character that inspires and features prominently in her digital artworks. Jantjies was born in Bloemfontein, South Africa and later relocated to Welkom. She currently resides in the Johannesburg where she has set up her artist studio and practice. Nandipha graduated in Studio Art and Design at CUT, South Africa. Her works symbolically traverse space and time, and mediate culture and ancestry in the contemporary.
Nandipha Jantjies has been a part of a few group exhibitions within the years in Cape Town and one recently in Johannesburg. She has collaborated with Spier Wine and Woolworths which included her artwork on the packaging. She is working on making a global impact with the art she creates and some day make a mark.

Project Statement
I would love to start with the significance of skin. Skin is a home and carries us from falling apart and also playing the role of being a soft shell, an armour. With that being said, skin or the nakedness of a human presents what I stand for, expressing the beauty of the body and flesh in it's natural state.
My work can also involve culture, spirituality, nature and the philosophy of what a soul is. Challenging topics like “how one should carry themselves in terms of society, or how one's culture/traditions are constantly appropriated" are one of the things I love putting out there, but mostly I embrace the woman's body.
My signature style is inspired from the complexity (overlapping lines) of this beautiful Earth, from the traffic to marching ants to different faces you meet on a daily. All of those are complexities, in all their shades of beauty.
The horns I include in my paintings represent strength, a sense of boldness, royalty and yet I create them in a way that the feeling you get once glancing on them is serene. Horns are protective. I mostly use a Nguni cow, a mountain goat or a buffalo. A bit of my culture is included within the Nguni horns, which is isiXhosa. The baSotho tradition or culture is one that I include too, I tend to play around with ”Nkgo" an African beer pot, nonetheless my love for animals is important in my practice .
My medium is, ink, acrylic paint, wool and beads on a canvas.
I've recently started playing around with wool and beads on my artworks. They were inspired by my grandmother who used to knit jerseys and blankets, but I do know as time goes by
they will add a heavy signature to my work.

Nandipha Jantjies | Embroidered Culture | 2021



Nandipha Jantjies | Know Where You Come From | 2021

Manuela Prince (Alma Colours)

You describe yourself as a self-taught watercolour artist. How did your journey with watercolour begin, and what drew you specifically to this medium?

My watercolour journey started during a long period of health uncertainty. For years I had been searching for answers, with symptoms repeatedly dismissed by doctors, until I was finally diagnosed with a rare genetic disorder, Ehlers-Danlos syndrome (EDS). Then my young daughter received the same diagnosis. I remember the strange mix of relief and grief: having a name for the pain, while also knowing what it might mean for her.

I was referred to a therapist who specialised in supporting people living with chronic illness. In one of our conversations, she mentioned that some of her patients had found painting helpful in their healing process, and I could not stop thinking about that on the way home.

Drawing with pencils was one of my favourite pastimes as a child, but painting was entirely new to me. One day, after a few online tutorials and some reading about art as therapy, I picked up my children's watercolours and simply began to play, with no plan and no expectations.

What drew me to watercolour immediately was its sense of movement and light. I was captivated by the way it flows across the paper, its transparency, luminosity, and how it seems to have a mind of its own. I experimented with realism for a few months, but soon realised I wanted something more evocative. My work gradually evolved into a blend of observation and imagination, rooted in nature but filtered through feeling. That is what feels unique about this medium: it holds both precision and softness, reality and dream.

Manuela Prince (Alma Colours) | Butterfly and Eucalyptus Study

Manuela Prince (Alma Colours) | The Messenger | 2025

Your work is deeply inspired by nature. When you observe flowers and butterflies, what do you look for first: their form, their colour, or their symbolic meaning?

It's really a combination of all three, but colour is usually the first thing that catches my eye, because it can suggest a feeling before anything else. A soft pink feels very different from a bold orange, for example.

Then I look more closely at form, movement, and character. I love observing nature in everyday life, and whenever I go for a walk, I'm constantly taking photographs of flowers, leaves, and anything with an interesting shape or rhythm that feels both beautiful and emotionally expressive. This is often when I get an idea, or a concept I want to explore. I am also incredibly lucky to spot many butterflies fluttering by where I live; some of my regular "friends" are the Blue Pansy and the African Monarch, both already on my painting list!

Symbolism comes in once I feel connected to the subject. Sometimes I already know the meaning of a flower or butterfly, and sometimes I research it after I've chosen it. What matters is that all three elements support each other. If one feels out of sync, I keep searching until everything aligns.

In The Messenger Collection, each butterfly acts as a carrier of emotion. When you begin a new painting, does the message come first, or does it emerge organically during the process?

In The Messenger Collection, the message came first. I began with a clear emotion I wanted for each piece — peace, love, friendship, and hope — and then I chose the butterfly and botanical pairing that could translate that feeling visually. The series grew from my belief that nature communicates without words, in small moments we often overlook: a butterfly passing by, dew drops on a petal, or a colour that

Manuela Prince (Alma Colours) | With Love | 2025

appears only at a certain hour.
That said, while the message stays consistent, the way it comes through evolves as I paint. Watercolour has its own voice, and decisions made in the process, such as how soft the edges are, how much detail to add, and how light or saturated to keep the palette, ultimately shape how it is felt in the final piece.

The olive branch, tulips, sweet peas, and daffodils each carry strong symbolic associations. How do you choose the botanical elements for a new piece, and do their meanings ever evolve for you personally?

I would say it's a mix of intuition and research. I'm intrigued by the language of flowers and I have a few books in my studio for reference. I read about what they represent across various cultures and traditions, then check what feels true for the painting I'm working on.
For The Messenger Collection, I chose the olive branch as my starting point because it's such a recognisable, widely understood symbol of peace. This seemed especially important to me in a world increasingly marked by conflict,uncertainty, and division. Peace is something we long for collectively, but also something we seek within ourselves.
I then looked into the flowers that could express the other emotions in the series: pink tulips for tenderness and love, sweet peas for friendship, and daffodils for hope — those bright early blooms that arrive when winter still lingers.
Their meaning does evolve for me. Once I've painted a subject and lived with it for hours, it stops being "just a flower" and becomes tied to my own memories. That is one of the things I find most fascinating about art: it may begin as a shared message, but it becomes, in the end, deeply personal.

Butterflies appear in every painting in this series. Has their symbolism changed for you over time, especially in relation to your own life experiences?

Butterflies have always felt magical to me! As a child, I saw them almost like tiny fairies: beautiful, delicate, free, and enchanting. But over time, especially during more difficult chapters in my life, I've come to understand why butterflies, throughout history, have been associated with the soul and transformation.
Their metamorphosis is a powerful lesson: becoming takes time, change can be painful, and most of the time it happens out of sight. Living with chronic illness has taught me that transformation can be slow, disorienting, and full of recalibration. Your body changes, your plans change, your identity shifts. You adjust expectations and daily routines, and you learn how to begin again inside new limits. Yet it can also lead to a strength you didn't know was possible, and a deeper self-understanding.
When I paint butterflies now, I think of them as messengers of resilience as much as beauty. I notice how they hover from flower to flower, constantly having to choose where to land, when to move on, and how to stay safe. In a way, we all make similar decisions as we navigate life, adjusting, adapting, and finding our way forward as circumstances change.

What role does healing play in your creative process? Do you see painting as a personal ritual, a message to others, or both?

Painting has definitely become a personal ritual, one that grounds me. When I sit down at my desk, I feel my nervous system settle. Wetting the paper, mixing colours, testing a wash, watching pigments move and dance together: it helps me focus when everything else feels unpredictable, and it reconnects me with that feeling of wonder we sometimes lose as we grow up.
At the same time, I'd like my paintings to speak beyond my experience. I believe in the therapeutic power of art, not as a luxury reserved for artists, but as something fundamentally human. We are all creative as children; we explore, experiment, and make instinctively. Part of healing, I think, is finding our way back to that open, curious part of ourselves. Many people stop making things because life gets busy, or because they convince themselves they're not good at it. I would love for my art to remind them that creativity is still there, and it's never too late to return to whatever brings them joy.

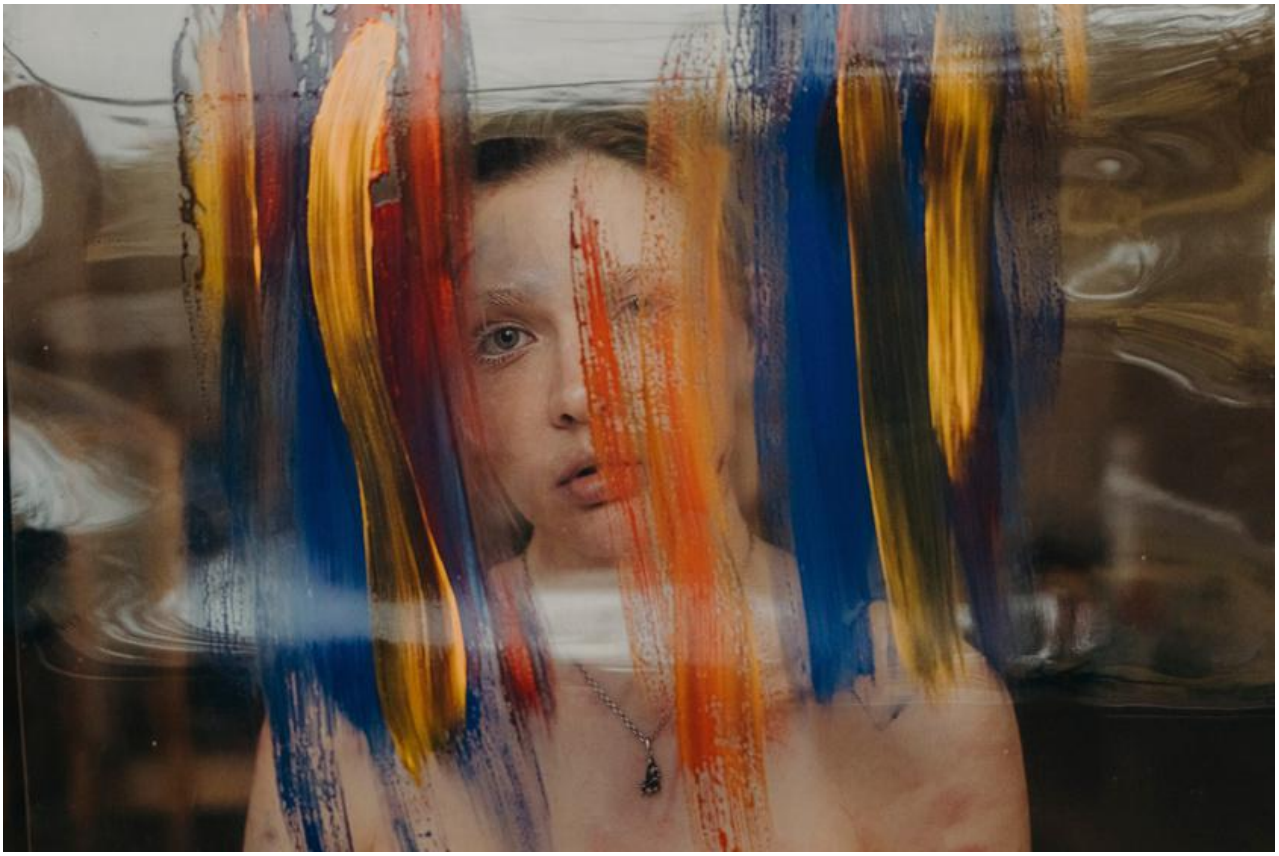
When viewers encounter The Messenger Collection, what kind of emotional response or reflection do you hope they experience?

Art is very personal, so even though each piece has a theme, I don't expect viewers to interpret it in one fixed way. I hope the collection gives people space to reflect so they can bring their own stories to what they see.
Someone might look at the olive branch and think not only of peace, but of forgiveness. Perhaps the tulips bring to mind a person they love deeply, or someone they miss. The sweet peas may trigger memories of friends who showed up when no one else did. And the daffodils may land as a reminder that seasons change, even when it doesn't feel like they will.
I'm always interested in the different ways people respond to a painting, and that's the beauty of it. But if it prompts a memory or a thought, and someone leaves with a little more light than they arrived with, even if they can't quite explain why, that's a meaningful outcome for me.

Tatiana Kolennikova

What do I actually do? You know, I’m a big fan of experimentation, planning, and taking notes in a notebook. Creating images through words is my way. But the truth is, most of what I shoot is done for one reason: to see how it looks in reality. It’s a case where research = preparation = photography.
And then it needs to be refined. And refined again.
My camera is a diary of observation. What matters is that the image exists. That it is there. That I can see how it exists. Sometimes it’s a frame that makes your heart slow down for a second; sometimes it’s surrealism, where it’s unclear what the author meant. My life motto of “you have to try everything” looks exactly like this.
Right now, my portfolio consists of images that carry a certain mood.

Tatiana Kolennikova | A Girl Who Looks Like a Dream | 2024



Tatiana Kolennikova | The Heart Beats Somewhere in the Fog | 2018

Tatiana Kolennikova | A Gentle Exhale into Nowhere | 2023

Shu Wang

Shu Wang | Hermit | 2024

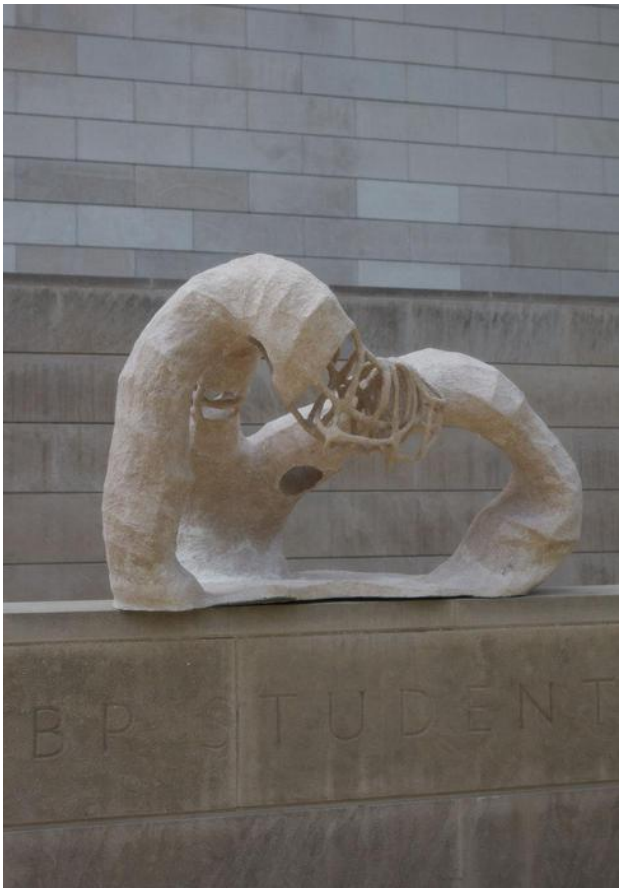
Your practice moves fluidly between large-scale wearable sculpture and intimate jewelry. How do you decide which scale a particular idea needs, and what changes when a concept shifts scale?

Scale is never predetermined for me. I begin with a situation and a tension I want to make perceptible, and I only decide on scale once I understand how the body needs to meet that tension. When a work requires posture, proximity, or spatial negotiation to shift, it naturally expands; in that expanded form, large-scale wearable sculpture can reorganize the body's relationship to surrounding space and make social tension physically legible through the way the body moves, occupies distance, and becomes visible. When the idea calls for intimacy rather than immersion, the work contracts—jewelry sits close to the skin and functions almost like a mark or a trace carried through daily life, where the intensity doesn't lessen so much as it concentrates. The concept stays consistent across these shifts, but the radius of impact changes: sometimes the structure surrounds the body as an environment, and sometimes it stays with the body as a close, continuous presence.

Shu Wang | Project气(QI) RISE StillLife

You often describe the body as a site where emotion, structure, and social tension intersect. When you begin a new work, do you start from an emotional state, a bodily sensation, or a material constraint?

Emotion usually arrives before language for me, beginning as a subtle pressure—something unresolved between internal feeling and external expectation. Rather than trying to represent that emotion directly, I pay attention to how it registers physically: it might compress the chest, alter posture, or change distance, and from there I look for a structure capable of holding that condition. Material constraint tends to enter once that structural direction is clear, and at that point material becomes a collaborator rather than a neutral carrier, because it introduces resistance, limitation, and sometimes clarity; the process



Shu Wang | Humanazation | 2023

becomes a calibration between intuition and structure. In this approach, the body is never an abstract idea—it is the site where tension is already occurring, and the work gives that ongoing negotiation form.

Many of your works activate ideas of restriction, weight, and pressure. How important is discomfort—physical or emotional—in your creative process?

Discomfort isn't the goal for me, but it is often the starting condition. Weight, restriction, and pressure are not metaphors in my work; they are physical conditions placed on the body, and each one changes awareness in a specific way—weight slows movement, restriction reorganizes space, and pressure sharpens attention. Because these conditions interrupt habit, they return attention to presence, and emotional discomfort operates similarly: I'm drawn to the moment before resolution, when something remains unstable, and instead of eliminating that instability I try to structure it. The work doesn't aim to overwhelm the body; it aims to make the condition undeniable, so that within that recognition, discomfort can shift into clarity.

Interaction plays a central role in your practice. How do you imagine the relationship between the wearer and the viewer, and what kind of shared perception do you hope to create between them?

I think of interaction as a field rather than a fixed exchange, because the wearer isn't simply "activating" the object—the object reorganizes the wearer's posture, gesture, and visibility, while the viewer's perception shifts in response to how the body negotiates the structure. Shared perception emerges in that triangular relationship: the viewer doesn't only observe, they adjust, becoming aware of distance, tension, and proximity as part of what they're seeing. I'm not interested in prescribing interpretation; what I hope to create is a condition in which both wearer and viewer can sense the same structural pressure from different positions, so that perception becomes shared rather than singular.

Your background in engineering and material science is quite distinct from your later training in jewelry and sculpture. How does this technical foundation influence your approach to form, structure, and experimentation today?

Engineering trained me to think in systems, and that training still shapes how I approach form and structure. I learned how materials behave, how force distributes, and how structure stabilizes, so I rarely treat form as purely aesthetic—every line and junction has its own logic. At the same time, my work in jewelry and sculpture brought embodied inquiry into that logic, because structure is not only mechanical; it is also social and psychological. The technical foundation gives me confidence in construction and removes hesitation: if I can conceive a structure, I can test it, and that makes experimentation precise rather than accidental. For me, structure becomes a framework where vulnerability can exist without collapsing.

As a woman navigating different cultural contexts between China and the United States, how have cultural norms shaped your understanding of the body and visibility?

Living between China and the United States has made me more aware of how context acts on the body. In China, I learned to anticipate atmosphere, where adjustment often happens quietly and preemptively, and the body becomes attuned to expectation; in the United States, navigating independently shifted that perception, and I encountered a different relationship to visibility and self-definition, where adjustment is no longer the only response. These experiences don't cancel each other out—they coexist as overlapping conditions, and across both contexts, gender adds another layer because the body is often read before it speaks and expectation and scrutiny can accumulate subtly. Rather than narrating these dynamics directly, I translate them into structure: visibility can be redistributed, exposure and protection can coexist, and the body negotiates rather than retreats.

Wearable sculpture in your work often appears almost architectural. Do you see these pieces as environments for the body rather than objects placed on it?

Yes. I often think of these pieces as environments, because the body doesn't simply carry the work; it enters it, and the structure can define spatial boundaries, direct movement, and alter perception, creating a temporary condition within which the body operates. In that sense, the work functions architecturally, but I'm not interested in isolating the body inside a structure; the environment remains porous, mediating between internal sensation and external visibility. These pieces are less about ornament than about constructing a situation—the body does not decorate the structure; it negotiates it.

Daria Morkovina

In my childhood, I was often given books with vivid illustrations, where I could spend a long time looking at the images and imagining what happened next to the characters, inventing how the worlds of these stories might continue. This greatly influenced my decision to become an illustrator.
The main theme of my illustrations is the reinterpretation of fairy tales, epics, and legends from various cultures.
I mostly work in traditional graphic techniques. For me, drawing has become a kind of meditation, as psychologists often note that self-awareness develops through movement and touch. The tactile sensation of materials under my fingers, the precision of each movement from which images emerge - all of this creates a special connection with the process, where an inner dialogue with myself takes place.

Daria Morkovina | “Bandersnatch” — Illustration from the “Jabberwocky” Series | 2022

Daria Morkovina | Flowers of Evil | 2022

Interview

AJ Samarco

Your works often feature expressive faces and intense emotional states. What draws you to exploring human emotions through distorted or surreal facial forms?

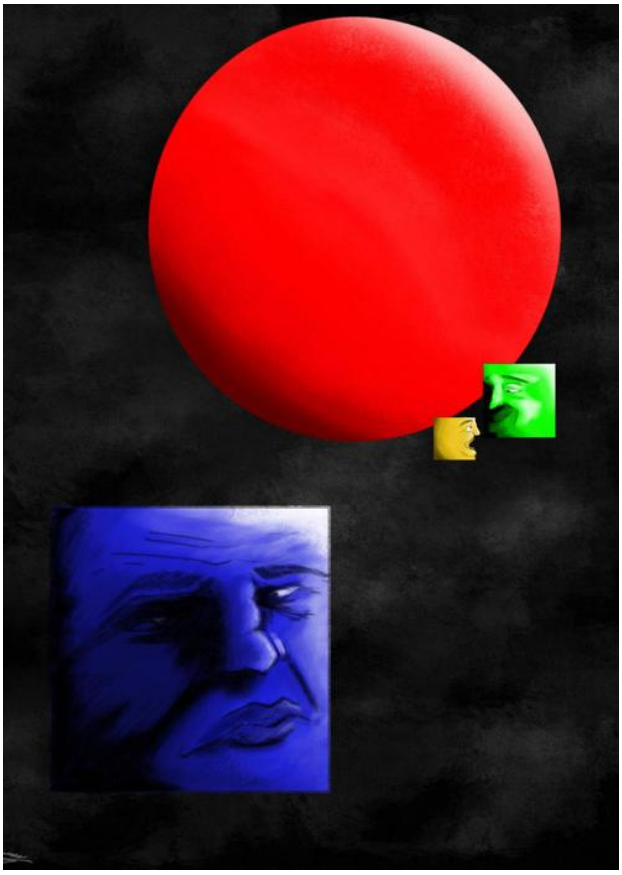
AJ Samarco | Always There | 2025

It's easier to show my emotions through distorted forms because they aren't easy to navigate or explain with words. Having faces as the focal point in my artwork is because they're one of our main sources of connecting. Using faces to depict emotional states lets me go to the unfiltered feelings that give off a sense of chaos or uncertainty. Being able to stretch or distort a face allows me to give the complex emotion I need for my artwork.

Your practice combines semi-realistic drawing with surreal and fantastical elements. How do you balance observation from reality with imagination in your compositions?

Most of my drawings are spontaneous so I prefer to dive into the composition so I can capture my idea immediately. I lean into that process by allowing my emotions and imagination to lead the composition, balancing it out by using realistic light and shadows to cast on the shapes to give my shapes a sense of weight and believability. Allowing me to set the mood I want with the light to make the fantastical elements feel real but still set the specific emotional mood I want for the piece.

Many of your artworks rely on strong, contrasting colors such as red, blue, and yellow. How do you choose your color palettes, and what role does color play in conveying emotion in your work?



AJ Samarco | Bored | 2025

The colors are bold and grab your attention, just like emotions can be loud and contrasting with each other. Emotions are never a straight forward thing to me, things that make you sad can make you angry when you think about how unfair it could be or how anger can turn into sadness, just like the faces some of them have colors that reflect the opposite of what colors are usually associated with. Like some faces are blue but laughing while another is red but sad, and one is purple showing a mix of sadness and anger. It shows the mix up on how I feel on certain problems, this mashup of emotions and memories clashing with one another making it hard to navigate on how I truly feel.

You describe your process as intuitive and spontaneous. Can you walk us through how a typical piece develops from the first sketch to the final image?

The beginning of the idea for a drawing usually starts with what bothers me. It isn't about controlling how I feel but more just letting the feeling of the emotion happen and what faces would best represent how I feel about it. Starting with drawing faces and seeing what works, what doesn't then to arrangement, sizing, positioning, and the perspective of the faces. Once all that is set in place then I draw my shapes for the faces to be on and any set pieces that will go along with it next is refining all my faces and shapes and coloring them in. Thereafter is picking where the light source is coming from and where the shadows would be casted. Lastly would be just doing small touch ups on coloring, lighting, or shadows before being finished.

Your abstract digital works are described as "deep dives into your psyche". How do you translate complex emotions into visual form?

I translate my psyche by using my canvas as a doorway into my mind, Leaning into the aesthetics of Weirdcore and Uncanny Valley. Creating artworks that feel familiar and unsettling and using faces that feel Uncanny to the viewer. The cluster of faces going through different emotions and looking distorted at times, acting like a visual manifestation of my inner struggles. When viewing my artwork, I want the viewer to feel like they're in a liminal space, being confronted with frightening and confusing imagery that makes them ask questions rather than finding the answer.

The characters in your work often appear fragmented, distorted, or placed in unusual spatial environments. What do these visual distortions represent for you?

The fragmented, distorted characters in my work represent the internal conflict and confusion that memories bring us. Using multiple faces that clash with each other shows that we don't feel one emotion at a time but rather a collision of many. Visualizing the 'mental noise' that comes with looking back on the past, showing how one memory can be interpreted with more than one emotion.

When viewers encounter your more abstract or emotional pieces, what kind of reaction or reflection do you hope they experience?

To think to themselves of what the meaning could be of my pieces and converse to others about it, but more importantly draw conclusions themselves. Having a viewer have their own interpretation of my work while examining it deepens the connection they'll have with the work. While my interpretation of my own work will be the final say of what it means, having other people find something in the piece that speaks to them is more important.

AJ Samarco | Don't You Think I Know | 2026

Ekaterina Kosheleva

My paintings are imbued with an atmosphere of melancholy and gentle, comforting sadness.

Feelings of loneliness, apathy, anxiety, and doubt are present in every person's life. In my work, I depict this side of life, because I am a melancholic, and my paintings are a reflection of myself.

I reveal what is usually unseen, hidden from others' eyes. Faceless characters and small creatures often appear in my compositions. They are harmless and simply observe people, symbolizing their inner emotional states.

Ekaterina Kosheleva | It Was Evening; They Had Nothing to See | 2026

Ekaterina Kosheleva | One, Two, Three, Come Play with Us | 2026

Interview

Mohsen Saeb

Mohsen Saeb's practice is shaped by a sustained interest in how emotional, social, and political realities can be translated into atmosphere, form, and embodied experience. Working across installation, moving image, sound, graphic language, and handcrafted artifacts,staged photography, he explores the fragile threshold between the personal and the collective, often focusing on subjects such as memory, displacement, identity, and contemporary human experience. Rather than treating these themes as fixed concepts, Saeb approaches them as unstable conditions—layered, shifting, and deeply felt.
What distinguishes his work is the way it resists straightforward explanation in favour of emotional and spatial complexity. Saeb does not simply communicate ideas; he constructs environments in which meaning unfolds gradually through movement, sequence, and sensory attention. His practice is marked by a sensitivity to fragments, transitions, and subtle gestures, allowing physical objects and spaces to carry psychological weight.
Formally restrained yet affectively rich, his works create room for ambiguity, intimacy, and reflection. In this way, Saeb's practice offers not closed narratives, but carefully composed conditions for recognition—spaces in which viewers may encounter something unresolved, and profoundly human, within themselves.
Anna Gvozdeva (curator)

Your practice spans many different artistic mediums. What draws you to immersive experience as a mode of expression?

Immersive experience helps me bring different parts of my practice together in a way that feels more natural and complete. I work with image, object, sound, moving image, and space, and for me they feel most alive when they can speak to each other rather than exist separately.
What keeps drawing me to immersion is that it lets meaning grow through experience, not only through explanation. Some emotions or tensions are difficult to hold inside a single image or object; they need atmosphere, rhythm, movement, and the presence of the body. So for me, immersion is not just a formal decision, but a more honest way of expressing how experience is actually lived and felt.

Your work often translates deeply personal experiences of migration into shared spaces. At what moment did you realize that migration would become a central theme in your artistic practice?

It became central when I realised migration wasn't staying in the "past tense." It wasn't just something people did; it was something they continued to live inside. When I started documenting oral histories and interviewing 15 Iranian students who had left in the last few years, I saw how the emotional intensity of migration is compressed into a very short period, but the impact doesn't end.
Their stories weren't only about moving countries; they were about a permanent shift in perception — of home, of self, of belonging. As an artist, I wanted to translate that invisible inner landscape into something physical: an experience people can step into, move through, and feel.

This project uses hand-crafted objects like passports and boarding passes as key elements. What do these objects symbolize for you beyond their functional role?

For me, passports and boarding passes are already poems — compressed biographies reduced to a few official fields, stamps, and permissions. They hold bonds, and even visually they carry traces of history and culture: older illustrations and identities that get covered over by new layers of permission—visas, stamps, new borders—like fresh layers of story hiding what came before.
Boarding passes are brutal in a quiet way. They get torn, and you keep a small piece. That fragment—your last physical bond—becomes proof that you crossed a line, and a reminder that nothing will be the same again. By crafting these artifacts, I pull them out and return them to the body: touch, fragility, labour, memory.They stop being neutral documents and become intimate carriers of identity and absence.

You describe the installation as participatory. How important is the viewer's physical presence and movement within the space to completing the work?

It's essential.
The work isn't meant to be understood from a distance, because migration itself is not a distant idea. It's a sequence you move through, and I wanted the audience to feel that physically. I've learned that nothing creates empathy like being present inside a space: you don't just understand it, you absorb it.That's why I structured the installation in three phases "Queue, Border, and Departure" so the audience's body performs the logic of the journey: waiting, crossing, and in the final phase, they're asked to tear the boarding pass and keep a small piece. It's a simple gesture, but it carries irreversibility — That bodily involvement is where empathy becomes real.

Airports appear as a conceptual reference in this project. What emotional or psychological states do you associate most strongly with airports, and why?

Airports are the most intense form of "in-between." On paper they're almost non-places—spaces we pass through without story—but in migration they become unforgettable. In the interviews, people remembered airports in extreme detail, because that's where the last moments happen: the last goodbye, the last face, the last physical connection to a familiar world.
At the same time, airports are spaces of control—queues, labyrinths behind border checks, and that strange silence when a passport is stamped and your identity becomes "accepted" or "rejected." For immigrants, that single moment can hold happiness and sorrow at once.Airports compress grief, hope, fear, and transformation into one architecture.

Your work has been exhibited in different cultural contexts - from Tehran to London. How do audience reactions differ across these locations?

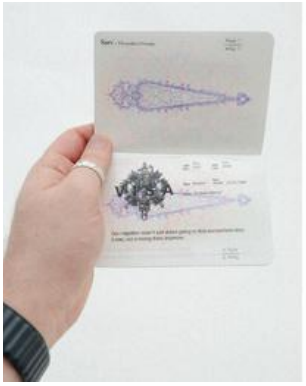
It was really interesting to see how viewers' culture and nationality shaped their reactions. For people from Iran; and for others who've experienced migration more widely in recent years the work often feels immediately lived. They recognise the emotional texture without needing much explanation, and their responses can become personal very quickly.
For some audiences, especially those with less direct connection to migration, the first entry point is the installation language itself—space, sound, objects. They engage through the atmosphere and the structure, and then connect it back to their own stories of movement, family separation, or belonging.
But the most surprising reactions came from people who had never experienced displacement at all. For them, the work sometimes became a first real confrontation with how complicated migration can be. And when tears appeared, it wasn't about familiarity—it was empathy breaking through their assumptions.

As someone living between cultures, how does your own experience of displacement or adaptation shape your creative decisions?

Living between cultures teaches you that identity isn't stable — it's negotiated every day. You're always translating: language, behaviour, humour, even silence. It also makes you aware of how meaning can slip, and how nostalgia can become both support and distortion.
That's why my works often relies on fragments and linking objects — small artifacts or gestures that carry an emotional weight. And it's also why I work in hybrid forms: physical craft alongside moving image, sound, and light. My own adaptation isn't one single medium; it's a layered condition. so the artwork has to be layered too.

What do you hope visitors carry with them after leaving this installation - emotionally, intellectually, or even physically?

I'd probably answer this from the way I naturally make work. Most of the time, I'm not trying to send a message in a straight line from me to the audience—as if it travels one direction and arrives "complete." What I'm more interested in is building an atmosphere: a space where feeling, memory and meaning can appear gradually.
The "sequence" audiences experience in my works isn't only storytelling—it's a way of feeling the work. It becomes an emotional environment that can hold different layers at once: the visible and the invisible, the personal and the collective, the physical and the psychological. Somehow it grows from the grey areas between experiences—those multi-layered moments where things aren't fully clear, but they're deeply real.And it's rarely one-sided.
The work isn't finished without the audience. Their presence —how they move, where they pause, the pace they choose, even their hesitation—becomes part of it. In that sense, the atmosphere is shared. It's less about delivering one fixed truth, and more about creating the conditions for recognition: a moment where someone can enter, feel something human, and maybe understand it before they even have the words for it.



Kasper Kruse is a contemporary Danish painter whose work explores the melancholic undercurrents of the human experience. Earlier this year, he debuted his work at a gallery in London. Kasper holds a Masters of Arts (MA) from the University of Southern Denmark.

Project Statement
Kasper's paintings are driven by a rigorous dedication to storytelling. "I often describe my paintings as images that resemble frozen stills from an experimental stage performance and/or a surreal TV-series from the 1980-90s," Kasper explains, "The motifs never reveal the full narrative, but rather capture fragments of a larger story. As a viewer, you are unaware of the events that led up to the depicted moment, yet you sense their weight. At the same time, the paintings invite reflection, encouraging viewers to project their own interpretation of what might unfold next."
Kasper's colour palette is deliberately deep and vibrant, creating a contrast between colour and narrative. From a distance, the paintings appear visually pleasing due to their vivid colours; up close, a more dramatic and emotionally charged story emerges beneath the shiny surface.
As a subtle reward for the particularly observant viewer, Kasper often incorporates discreet references to both classical sources as well as contemporary cinema, each in their own way supporting the painting's internal narrative.

Kasper Kruse | Underpass | 2026

Kasper Kruse | Red Room | 2026

Kasper Kruse | Flower Child | 2024

Born in 1987 and a graduate in creative direction and communication, **Marion Pons Koch** lives and works in Paris. While her photographic practice is rooted in portraiture and documentary — notably with the series Deux Genres ? Dé-genres ! or Un Autre Jour Viendra (exhibited in 2017) — she underwent a decisive shift in 2024 toward a career as a visual artist and photographic author.
She now explores a liminal universe, where the figurative meets the symbolic. Her approach revolves around photography, painting, and writing to explore the resonances between mental health, memory, and the body. Through plastic intervention and the subversion of mythological references or vintage photographs, she strives to give form to the "unspeakable" and transform the image into a space for resilience and projection.
The year 2025 marked an acceleration of her international recognition. Her work was featured in the United States by the Too Tired Project (curated by Heather Evans Smith) and at the BBA Gallery in Berlin, following her nomination for the One Shot Award. After an artist residency at the Openbach Gallery where she initiated her painting cycle Monstresses, she was selected for the Woman Artist Award (Arts to Hearts Project) and published in the third edition of Women Artists on the Rise.
In 2026, she was selected for the 101 Artbook: Photography (Arts to Hearts Project) and joined the Art Confidential agency as a represented artist.

Project Statement
I define my practice as figurative and symbolic, evolving within a liminal universe. My approach is structured around photography, painting, and writing—mediums that dialogue to explore the resonances between mental health, memory, and the body, three pillars I consider inseparable.
My work seeks to repair through artistic intervention. As both a visual artist and a photographer, I do not limit myself to a single technique; I explore the character of a specific medium—oil on canvas, acrylic, or ink—or provoke their encounter. Depending on the narrative, I physically intervene on the paper or canvas by adding or removing matter, allowing techniques to layer or fade away.
In my series Gueules pimpées, the use of mixed media becomes a gesture of care, restoring dignity to faces broken by history. This drive for reconstruction guides my entire practice, as I seek to give form to the unspeakable. As a photographer, I place the image at the heart of my storytelling, as seen in the series Un Monstre sans corps, where I explore the depths of depression. There, my photographs dialogue with vernacular imagery to enrich the narrative and give it a universal resonance.
My paintings, such as the Monstresses cycle, serve as a counterpoint to this fragility while integrating it. Rooted in a feminist approach, these works transform my interior states into totemic figures. By subverting folkloric references and female archetypes, I use the figure of the monster as a space for projection and protective power.

Marion Pons Koch | Monster Without a Body

Marion Pons Koch | Made-Up Faces

Deshon Washington

Your work blends realism with fantasy. How do you decide where reality ends and imagination begins in your drawings?

It's a 40–60 balance between the two. Fantasy basically complements the reality portion so things don't get too out of hand. On the flip side, fantasy gives the reality part a fun message to think about.

You often describe reality as the "blueprint" for your art. Can you explain how fantasy transforms that foundation in your creative process?

How I use fantasy — it acts as a "What if — within boundaries." For example, the feeling of burning anger can be seen as a person's hand on fire, or someone's spirit animal walking alongside them.

Many of your portraits explore intimacy and emotional connection. What draws you to these themes?

I grew up with 90s and early 2000s R&B. A lot of the themes in the music videos I saw are my source of creativity on those subjects.

Deshon Washington | Dark Rose | 2024

African culture and the Black American diaspora are important influences in your work. How do these cultural roots shape the stories you tell through your art?

Both Black American and African cultures, stories, and views on connection interest me — both how they differ and how similar they are to each other.

Butterflies, flowers, and elements of nature appear frequently in your drawings. What symbolic meaning do these elements hold for you?

I feel like nature can influence our mood and thoughts — the seasons, the animals and insects, the temperature. Everyday elements speak to our emotions in ways we don't notice. It's those feelings I like to illustrate.

As an artist working between portraiture, tattoo aesthetics, and fantasy imagery, how do these different visual worlds influence one another in your practice?

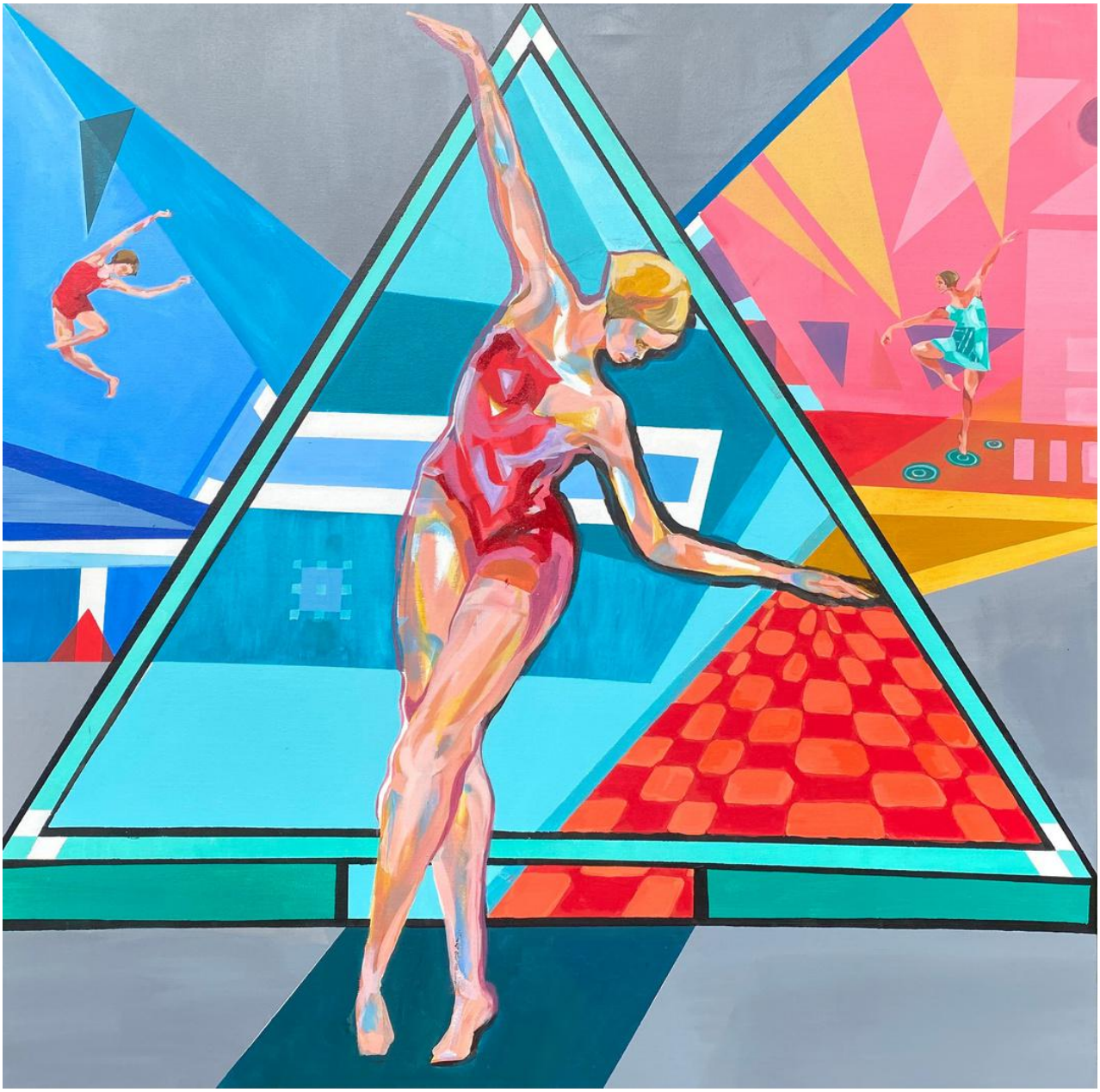
There's a lot of ideas to draw from between the three. Not all of them translate well on paper or skin, but with technique and a healthy balance there is some extraordinary imagery that can be made.

When viewers encounter your artwork, what kind of thoughts or feelings do you hope it awakens in them?

A feeling they've experienced, a feeling they're chasing, or running away from. Maybe it gives closure, motivation, or a brief escape into a different reality.

Milica Ilić artist name **Milica Alimpić Ilić** was born in Šabac in 1984.
She is a member of the Association of Fine Artists of Šabac. She graduated from the High School of Applied Arts in Šabac, and subsequently from the College of Fine and Applied Arts of Vocational Studies in Belgrade, earning the title of Professional Fine Artist. To date, she has held seven solo exhibitions in Serbia.
She has participated in numerous collective exhibitions in Serbia, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Canada, Turkey, Poland, Argentina, Mexico and Japan. She has led art workshops for children and adults, created murals, and illustrated picture books. She is the founder and organizer of the art colony in Nakučani,(Šabac , Serbia), and has participated in art colonies across Serbia, Bulgaria, and Macedonia. She received a commendation for her work at the 19th Spring Salon of the CZK Masuka Gallery in Velika Plana, Serbia. She was also awarded the "Art Fenix„ Skopje, Macedonia award in 2015 for the theme "Carnival„
First prize in painting “PrimaverARTE„ 2024 at the Gisel Duran Gallery in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Project Statement
As an artist who has been intensively creating various scenes in oil and acrylic in my country and abroad for fifteen years, I approach my canvases as a space where different motifs, movements and freedom meet. My greatest inspirations are family, the beauty of travel and the energy of each new day, which allows me to convey the authenticity of the female figure and the nature around her to a format of different dimensions. Through harmonious, dynamic, but also calm color tones, I strive to portray the balance between the power of movement and the inner peace of my figures. Each work is created completely spontaneously, guiding me through the process of creation without a precise plan, in order to ultimately obtain a work that exudes true life. My ultimate goal is to evoke sincere emotion in the viewer, sharing with them a part of my world through each brushstroke.



— *Interview*

Aliya Kauanova

Your artistic path began outside the traditional art education system. What led you to leave economics and fully devote yourself to mosaic art?

My artistic path developed outside the traditional academic system, but creativity has always been part of my life.
By nature I am a structured person who values clarity and order, yet my parents always encouraged my creative curiosity. As a child I studied violin, attended art studios, and explored traditional crafts such as beadwork, tapestry weaving, and silk batik. I also write poetry and later became a member of the Union of Writers of Kazakhstan.
Today I work with mosaic in a wide range of materials: natural stones, glass, and smalti, while continuing my career in civil aviation with Air Astana as a senior flight attendant and recruiter. Rather than choosing one path over another, I learned to weave together different parts of my life. My education in economics never disappeared; on the contrary, it helped me develop the ability to thoughtfully structure and connect these different elements, allowing my life and practice to remain multifaceted without sacrificing any of its dimensions. In many ways, this approach mirrors the essence of mosaic itself - bringing separate fragments together to form a cohesive whole.

You have worked as an international flight attendant for many years. How did constant travel shape your artistic vision and the themes in your mosaics?

Well, I entered aviation almost immediately after graduating from university. While many of my classmates were celebrating their graduation, I

chose instead to attend safety training in order to begin working for the airline. I may not have a photograph wearing a graduation cap, but today I have fourteen years of flights behind me.
These years of constant travel have profoundly shaped the way I see the world. Aviation allows you to encounter different cultures, landscapes, and people almost every day. My eyes meet hundreds of new faces, and this kaleidoscope of diversity teaches you to notice beauty in many different forms. The more I travel, the more complex and fascinating the world appears to me.
At the same time, a life of constant movement often means being far from the people you love. In those moments, the mind begins to search for something equally meaningful and grounding. When I return home, I transform the impressions gathered during my travels into mosaic.
For me, mosaic becomes a way of preserving these fleeting experiences in stone, creating something far more enduring than a photograph.

Many of your works incorporate stones collected from different cities around the world. Could you tell us about the process of selecting and integrating these materials into your compositions?

Some of the stones I use were collected many years ago during my travels to different places around the world. My father is an architect and has a deep understanding of minerals and geological materials, so from a very early age I was fascinated by stones and shells with unusual shapes or colors, objects, that seemed to carry their own character.
So, over time I began collecting them almost instinctively. It gradually became a personal tradition to bring back stones from my travels, even when I did not yet know how they might be used. What I have come to understand is that none of these stones are accidental. Each one eventually finds its place within a composition, just as in life every person has their own place, purpose, and path.
When I begin working on a mosaic, the process involves a careful analysis of the sketch and composition, the choice of technique, and the direction of the tesserae (the individual pieces of stone or glass that form the mosaic surface). I also consider the selection of materials, subtle variations of color, and the dialogue between textures and surfaces in order to achieve visual harmony. Through this process the mosaic becomes more than an image. It transforms into

a gathering of places, sensations, and memories. As an artist, I am fascinated by the moment when fragments of the world, materials that may be thousands of years old meet within a single work and form something entirely new and unexpectedly harmonious. For me, this process reflects how travel shapes our understanding of the world, just as a mosaic is built from hundreds of tesserae, our perception of life is formed from countless encounters, landscapes, emotions, and memories that eventually come together to create a single whole.

Mosaic is an ancient technique with a long history. How do you position your work within this tradition while addressing contemporary themes?

Mosaic is one of the oldest visual languages humanity has created. Long before photography or digital images existed, people were already assembling fragments of stone to create images that could endure for centuries. For me, working with mosaic feels like entering into a dialogue with time itself.
Sometimes it seems as if the image already exists somewhere in the universe, and my task is simply to assemble it. The process reminds me of gathering the fragments of a broken vessel, or even a broken heart, carefully returning each piece to its rightful place. Once assembled, the mosaic may appear fragile, yet in reality it can survive for centuries. Perhaps this is why I feel that every mosaic carries a small part of my own heart within it...
More broadly, my practice stands at the intersection of tradition and contemporary experience. The technique itself may be ancient, but the way we experience the world today is shaped by movement, global connections, and constant change. My mosaics attempt to express this modern condition through a very old language.
Each tessera carries the weight of geological time, stones that were formed thousands or even millions of years ago. When these fragments come together to form an image, the work becomes a meeting point between deep time and the present moment. In this sense, mosaic allows me to slow down and reconnect with a more natural sense of time, creating

something that feels grounded and lasting within an increasingly fast-moving world.
In an era dominated by rapid images and endless scrolling, I am drawn to a medium that requires patience, precision, and quiet attention. Mosaic reminds us that meaning is not created instantly; it emerges gradually, fragment by fragment. In this way, the ancient technique remains deeply relevant today, inviting us back to a more human rhythm of making, seeing, and understanding.

Your practice explores the relationship between fragmentation and wholeness. How does this concept relate to personal identity and human experience in your work?

The relationship between fragmentation and wholeness becomes very clear during the actual process of building a mosaic. Mosaic begins with fragmentation. The image does not appear all at once; it emerges gradually from hundreds of individual pieces that slowly find their place within a larger composition.
As I work, there are moments when a tessera that seemed perfect at first no longer feels right within the overall harmony of the image. Even if its size or shape fits technically, I sometimes remove it and replace it with another piece that better serves the composition.
This process often reminds me of how personal

identity is formed. Our lives are also built from many fragments: experiences, decisions, encounters, and lessons. Over time we reconsider some of these elements, keeping certain qualities while letting others go. Sometimes this also means rethinking our environment and the relationships around us. Just as in a mosaic, some pieces that once seemed to belong must sometimes be let go when they no longer fit the harmony of the whole.

In this sense, mosaic becomes a reflection of human growth. Just as a mosaic artist carefully chooses each tessera, a person gradually shapes their own character and identity, deciding which parts of themselves to nurture and which directions to follow. Wholeness does not appear instantly; it is formed slowly, through conscious choices and constant refinement.

As both a poet and visual artist, do words and poetry influence the narratives behind your mosaics?

You know, poetry has always been closely connected to my visual practice. In many ways, both poetry and mosaic are built from small elements that together form a larger meaning. I often think of a poem as a small architectural structure... Something carefully built from rhythm, pauses, and meanings that exist between the lines, which prose cannot always express. Mosaic works in a similar way: each tessera plays the role of a word, and together they create a visual sentence.

Writing poetry has taught me to think in images and metaphors. Sometimes the idea for a mosaic begins not only as a visual concept but as a feeling or a thought that could almost exist as a line of poetry.

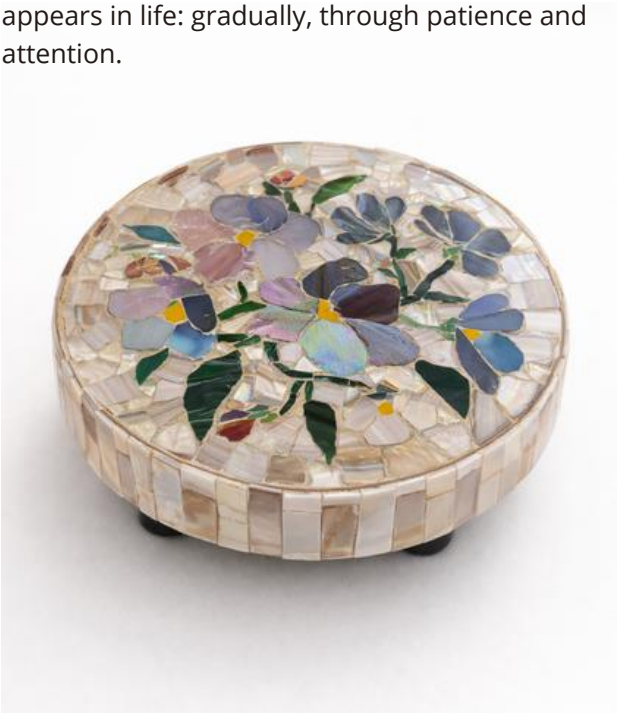
Even my signature reflects this connection. In some of my works I leave only a single logo letter “A.” For me, this gesture is similar to the final line of a poem: minimal, quiet, but carrying the presence of the author.

Mosaic is a slow and labor-intensive medium. What does this slowness mean to you in an era dominated by speed and digital images?

Much of my life moves within very fast systems. Economics follows the rhythm of global markets, and aviation operates within precise schedules where every minute matters. In such an environment, life can easily become filled with constant movement, pressure, and noise.

For me, time spent with mosaic becomes a kind of inner space. It is a pause within the constant movement of everyday life, where attention can settle and thoughts become clearer. In that quiet concentration, the work grows gradually, almost organically.

Perhaps this is why mosaic feels so meaningful to me. Its slowness allows the image to emerge piece by piece is the way meaning itself often appears in life: gradually, through patience and attention.



Grace Mulheron

I am an artist who loves to work with oil paints and watercolours in a surrealistic style. A lot of my work have meanings that correspond to what is happening in my life at that moment, I draw inspiration from my experiences and put them into my art.

Grace Mulheron | Transfigured Feathers | 2024

Haoyue

Haoyue | Escape from the Panopticon | 2025

Your collection Escape from the Panopticon uses a powerful architectural metaphor. What first drew you to the idea of the panopticon as a framework for understanding contemporary youth identity?

My design inspiration usually comes from reading. I first came across the concept of the panopticon when reading Foucault's related theories. When I began to explore the origin and development of this concept, I found it to be a very "malicious yet intelligent" design. What interested me most at first was its form. Existing prison designs based on the panopticon concept show a high degree of consistency, where circles and regular hexagons are everywhere. What I am interested in is how to break and reconstruct this extremely stable and orderly structure, which coincides with structuralist styles in design. Such formal breakthroughs imply psychological and spiritual breakthroughs.

Haoyue | Escape from the Panopticon | 2025

At the same time, what shocked me was the operating principle of this structure. In a panopticon, each prisoner has the same possibility of being seen at any moment, but does not know when they will be seen or who is watching them, so they carry out self-surveillance all the time. In this situation, only one or two people are needed to control hundreds or even thousands of prisoners. The observer stands in the central tower of the prison, and no one can see him.

When I first read about it, I felt it was terrifying, because in my view, visible, external constraintscan be broken, since people at least know the force they need to resist is right in front of them. However, internalized, self-imposed surveillance and repression are often much harder to recognize and change.

Walking on the street and seeing surveillance cameras, or observing how people voluntarily replace sensitive words with other expressions or emojis under sensitive topics online (this may

Haoyue | Escape from the Panopticon | 2025

be more obvious in East Asian cultural contexts), I began to realize the true power of the panopticon.
Today's young people, including myself, face the most dangerous form of discipline, which is invisible normalization, like being placed in slowly heated warm water. This is the starting point of everything.

You describe each era as having its own "prison". In today's digital society, what do you see as the most subtle or invisible forms of control shaping young people?

Each generation has its own panopticon because no era is completely free, although humanity has always been striving for freedom. For people in the 1970s punk era, economic recession brought a repressive and conservative social atmosphere, along with outdated and rigid cultural norms and stricter social control, which generated anger and frustration among young people with nowhere to release it. That was their prison.
In today's digital society, the most obvious point is that I often feel that each internet user is almost exposed without protection. You do not know who is reselling or observing all of your personal information. On the other hand, in recent years, relatively conservative ideological and political climates have resurged globally. In many places in the world, people have been punished for their thoughts, and "thought crimes" are not rare cases.
Perhaps the internet has made surveillance easier, and increasingly mature education systems have also made social discipline more subtle and internalized. The term "discipline" here is not purely negative; it is more like an inevitable result of socialization. What I care about is that the will from governments, schools, and cultural systems can penetrate more easily through the reach of the internet.
The boundary between "granting freedom" and "teaching rules" is very vague, and the collective influence over individuals is also difficult to notice. I do not intend to oppose education or completely reject universal values. I only hope that young people can think about the logic behind every so-called absolute truth and the limits of self-repression.

Many garments in this collection balance exposure and concealment through layering and controlled transparency. How do you translate psychological tension into material structure?

In my design, I used a lot of irregular knitting structures, which are exposed rather than hidden. Within the dense, opaque gray denim, these knitted elements can be understood as relaxed, partially broken prison barbed wires, or as windows that break outward from the body, allowing observation from the inside.
I hope that these highly metallic, durable, yet re-formable and stretchable sheer knit structures

Haoyue | Escape from the Panopticon | 2025

allow the entire design to breathe more freely. At the same time, this collection also includes fabrics that I modeled in Rhino and produced using flatbed printing technology. The three-dimensional red triangular shapes simulate the skin of an armadillo. In the oral history of punk culture Please Kill Me, punk artists mentioned that their bold makeup was actually a protection for their fragile inner selves, much like an armadillo. This made me realize that rebellious people can still be vulnerable, and I wanted to use this fabric to create a layer of armor for brave individuals.
Meanwhile, the extensive use of zippers also serves as a tool to create both enclosure and exposure. Opening a zipper becomes a form of outward presentation. This concept also helps enrich the structural complexity of the garments.

The body in your designs seems to function as a site of negotiation between autonomy and surveillance. How do you approach the relationship between garment and body during your design process?

The human body itself is a very important field. To a certain extent, it is socialized and serves as a platform for display. In Foucault's Discipline and Punish, he mentioned that the body has long been a site where rulers demonstrate punishment and ideological control. At the same time, it is undeniable that a person's body should also belong to themselves and remain private, which creates a tension.
In my design, I place greater emphasis on the subjectivity of the body. Wearing this collection is meant to encourage people to express themselves bravely and resist rules they question. During the photoshoot, I told my models that they did not need to appear sweet or seductive, but instead should embody anger and aggression — as if they were trying to break this world apart.
At that time, they were located in an abandoned school in Atlanta that had been unused for twenty years. The walls were covered with countless graffiti created by different people over two decades. This setting perfectly echoed my design theme. Nothing represents the collapse of order better than an abandoned school.

Haoyue | Escape from the Panopticon | 2025

Showing this collection at New York Fashion Week placed it within a global fashion system. How did the runway context affect the way the concept was perceived?

For a young designer, one of the most important things is to have their work seen by more people. Showing at a platform like New York Fashion Week is especially meaningful because the work can be presented to audiences from diverse cultural backgrounds.
As a designer from an East Asian cultural background, I sometimes feel that many designers and artists from China, Korea, and Japan are more inclined to explore the tension between the individual and the collective — a complex emotional relationship that involves both resistance and dependence.
Escape from the Panopticon is also connected to this theme. I hope that my work is not limited to expressing ideas that only people from specific cultural or regional backgrounds can understand. Instead, I want it to speak to shared human issues. New York Fashion Week provides the best platform for receiving such feedback.

Youth identity is often associated with radical gestures. Why is it important for you to portray youth as conscious and reflective rather than purely rebellious?

Young people tend to have stronger rebellious tendencies because they have spent a shorter time entering the large, strict, and relatively softly disciplined social system. Perhaps human nature is inclined toward the pursuit of freedom. When people find that their personal will conflicts with various surrounding rules, rebellious feelings naturally emerge.

We have probably all seen forms of so-called radical or pure rebellion. For example, violating school dress codes by wearing extremely exaggerated clothing, running away from home, or in more serious cases, drinking excessively or trying prohibited substances.
The reason I believe such behavior has limited meaning is that it often originates from instinctive resistance, emotional impulse, and inner frustration. However, if one does not reflect on the source of this frustration, does not understand what actually causes the pain, or even does not understand what one wants to express or change through such actions, then from an individual perspective, the pain can never be resolved.
Instead, young people may burn themselves out like a flame, ultimately being forgotten or ridiculed in a reckless and undignified way. Courage that is not guided by reflection may become impulsiveness.
On a larger scale, pure behavioral rebellion without systematic reflection and calm thinking is unlikely to create meaningful impact within a "panopticon-like" system composed of historical traditions, education, social culture, and reward-and-punishment mechanisms.
I often think that courage is certainly worthy of praise, but what is the direction of that courage? When we combine courage with thinking about the logic behind rebellion and understand the structure of the panopticon, we may find ways to break through constraints. Such approaches can take the form of literature, art, music, social action, or becoming someone capable of changing structural systems.

Haoyue | Escape from the Panopticon | 2025

In your view, can clothing genuinely alter the way individuals perceive themselves within social systems? If so, how?

Actually, my graduate thesis also discusses this kind of question, and I believe it is undoubtedly meaningful.
Clothing should always be examined within a social and cultural context. Historically, clothing can serve as a means of ideological education and reinforcement of social order, but it can also become a symbol of awakening and resistance. In many cultural contexts, clothing has been used to demonstrate and define social hierarchy. For example, various versions of European sumptuary laws and the clearly differentiated official robes worn by different ranks of officials in ancient China.
In modern secular societies, most regions no longer enforce such explicit hierarchical dress rules, but uniforms used to unify collective identity and shape group consciousness are still a manifestation of the instrumentalization of clothing.
On the other hand, clothing can also be used for self-expression. Examples include the SAPE movement, where people in economically disadvantaged regions such as Congo maintain dignity through elegant and extravagant dressing, and the unique rebellious aesthetics formed in punk culture.
Specific clothing styles inevitably convey specific meanings. Dressing according to social expectations, following norms, or choosing to express individuality and defiance will visually generate different emotional tensions.
This is also why I chose to work in fashion design and why I never view fashion purely as consumerist culture. Clothing should not be something that exists only to satisfy the desire to "look more beautiful." It is a tool of resistance, a channel of expression, and a form of armor.

JAMES VAN IPO is an Austrian artist whose practice connects digital image development with physical materiality. Rooted in a technologically informed aesthetic, his works move between portraiture, abstraction, and object. Algorithmic visual language, fragmentation, and relief play a central role in his practice. Through the use of mixed media, acrylic, epoxy resin, and industrial materials, he translates virtual image worlds into tangible, embodied surfaces. His work explores the tension between code and reality, construction and presence, and examines how identity becomes visible in the age of digital images.

Project Statement
The submitted works are part of the ongoing series Between Code and Reality. In this body of work, JAMES VAN IPO explores how digital image culture can be translated into physical form. Moving between portraiture, abstraction, and object-based surfaces, the works investigate fragmentation, perception, and the unstable construction of identity. Through layered mixed-media processes, acrylic, epoxy resin, and industrial materials, digital aesthetics are transformed into tactile, embodied images that exist between technological construction and physical presence.

Yana Bila

The contemporary artist was born in 1986 in the Ukrainian city of Mykolaiv, surrounded by two rivers and picturesque nature. She studied art and art history at school and university. In 2022, she moved to Austria due to the war. She had a passion for drawing since childhood and studied it, but found her true passion when she discovered watercolor as an adult. This technique captivated her with its fluidity and unpredictability, reminiscent of nature itself – eternal, changeable, and harmonious. In her works, she explores the interconnectedness of people, animals, and plants, conveying the movement of life and the miracle of birth. Her paintings invite you to look deeper: first impressions can be deceiving, but if you hold your gaze, new, unexpected details will unfold.

Project Statement
Series BLOOM
This series explores the themes of femininity and the journey of embracing oneself as a woman. Each piece reveals the human being as an integral part of nature and the world in which she lives, grows, and evolves. These works reflect how, while adapting to an ever-changing environment, one can discover an inner light, unfold one's potential, and allow oneself to bloom.
It is a path from a hidden bud to full blossoming — a moment when a woman accepts all her features and differences, finds harmony within, and begins to shine with her unique beauty. Every piece in the series symbolizes this transformation, adding color and enriching the world around us.

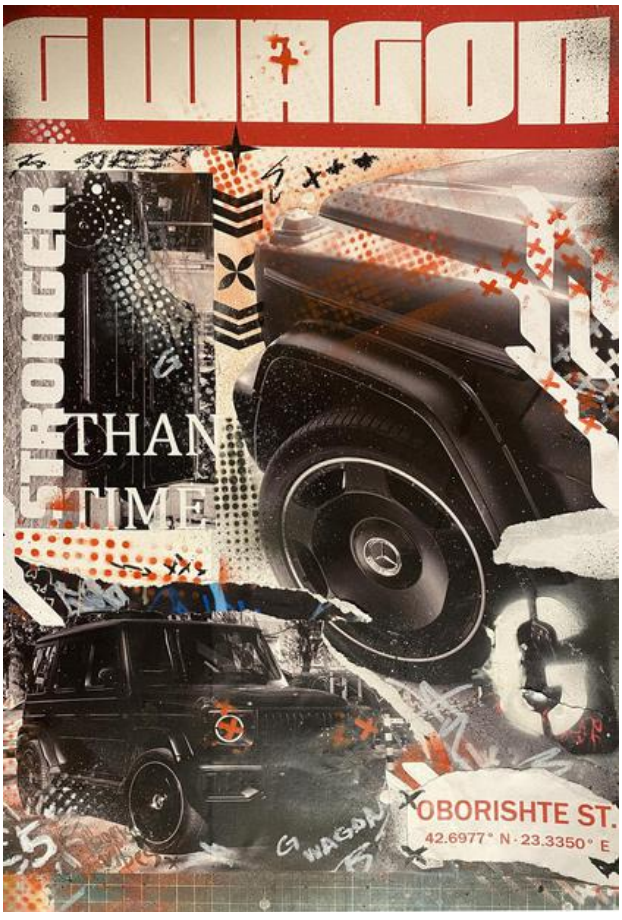
Yana Bila | Breath of Spring | 2026

Yana Bila | Fragility | 2026

Kristian Angelov

Your work blends urban culture, automotive imagery, and graphic design. What first attracted you to this combination of visual languages?

It actually started quite spontaneously. One day I decided to experiment with a billboard that I had taken from the advertising agency where I was working. It was from a Guess campaign, and I began adding my own elements to it using acrylic paints and markers.While working on that piece, I realized how interesting it would be to combine the street culture that often inspires me with cars, which have always been a big passion of mine. After a few experiments, the collages started to come together naturally, and that combination slowly became a central part of my visual language.



Kristian Angelov | Wagon | 2025

Cars appear frequently in your compositions. What do automobiles symbolize for you within the context of contemporary culture and identity?

Cars are much more than a means of transportation. In contemporary culture they often represent identity, freedom, and personal expression. People often express themselves through the cars they choose to drive.For me it's very similar. I've been passionate about cars since I was a child. In my work they function almost like cultural icons that carry stories about status, speed, nostalgia, and the emotional connection people have with movement and progress.

Many of your works incorporate fragmented typography, logos, and editorial elements. How do these graphic fragments contribute to the narrative of your pieces?

Typography and graphic fragments reflect the visual noise of modern life. We are constantly surrounded by advertisements, headlines, brands, and digital imagery.By taking these elements apart and recombining them, I try to recreate the way we actually experience visual culture

Kristian Angelov | Retro Glamour | 2026

— fragmented, layered, and fast. These fragments become part of the narrative, suggesting ideas about media, identity, and the influence of branding in everyday life.

Your compositions often feel fast, energetic, and dynamic. How do you visually translate the concept of speed into a static artwork?

Speed is not only about motion, but also about rhythm and tension. I translate this idea through composition — diagonal lines, overlapping layers, strong contrasts, and cropped imagery.These visual choices create a sense of movement within the frame. Even though the image itself is static, the viewer's eye continues to travel through the composition, which creates a feeling of momentum.

Your practice sits somewhere between street art, poster design, and contemporary collage. How do you personally define the artistic space in which your work exists?

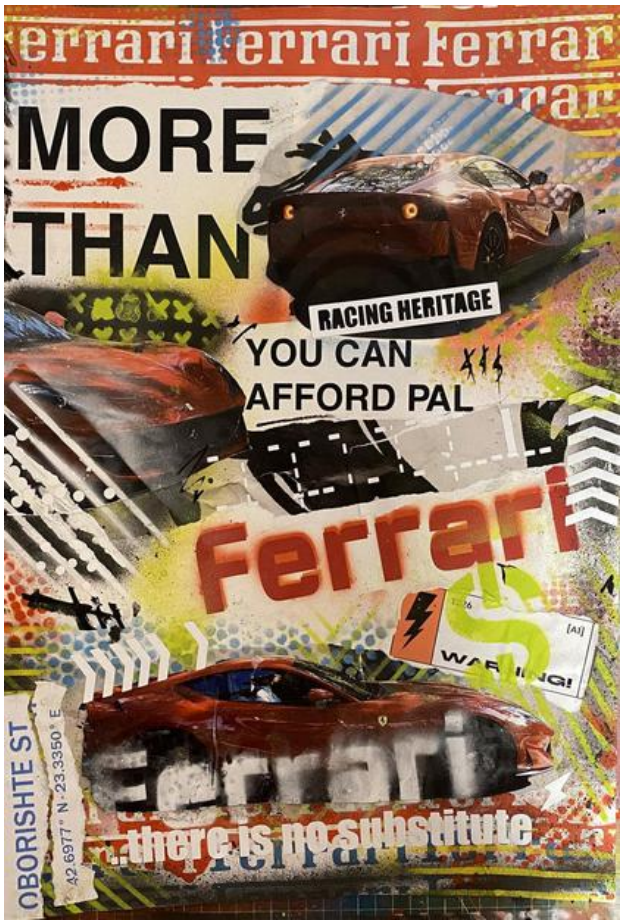
I see my work existing somewhere between contemporary art and visual culture. It borrows elements from street art, graphic design, and editorial imagery, but uses them to build more layered narratives.Rather than fitting into a single category, I'm interested in exploring the boundaries between these disciplines and how they influence one another. Many of my works are presented as posters, because the way I combine collage with graphic elements is similar to designing a poster in a graphic design program.

Branding and luxury symbols appear alongside raw urban textures in your works. Are you critiquing consumer culture, celebrating it, or exploring the tension between the two?

I'm more interested in exploring the tension between those two worlds. Luxury symbols and branding are powerful cultural signals, but when they appear next to raw urban textures they begin to tell a different story.The contrast between them is very strong, especially today. For me, that combination creates an interesting visual dialogue, and I enjoy experimenting with that contrast in my work.

Urban environments seem to play a strong role in your visual imagination. Are there particular cities or places that influence your work the most?

Cities have always been a major source of inspiration for me, especially places with a strong visual identity. New York and some of the larger American cities have a big influence because of their history and connection to street culture. At the same time, many European cities inspire me as well. Sofia, where I currently live, is also an important part of my inspiration. I enjoy combining influences from both cultures, because they are quite different, yet they create a very interesting dialogue when brought together.



Kristian Angelov | More Then You Can Afford | 2025

Federica Spada (Sicily, 1987) is a contemporary Italian artist whose pictorial research explores the relationship between color, emotion, and spirituality. After an initial phase rooted in figurative painting, her artistic language gradually evolved toward abstraction, where gesture, chromatic vibration, and the intensity of color became the central elements of her visual expression.
Her works, characterized by vibrant and dynamic chromatic compositions, investigate the inner dimension of human experience, transforming painting into a sensory and emotional journey.
Spada has participated in numerous exhibitions and artistic events in Italy and internationally, including the 1st Biennale of Creativity in Verona (2014) and the International Biennale of Palermo (2015),curated by Paolo Levi. More recent exhibitions include White Space Chelsea Gallery, New York (2021); the group exhibition QUID at Bibliothe in Rome (2022); the solo exhibition Unum Signum, curated by Francesco Gallo Mazzeo at Bibliothe in Rome (2022); Concept Art Brera, Milan (2023); Miami Art Week, Miami; Nicoleta Gallery, Berlin (2023); and the solo exhibition Kairòs in Palazzolo Acreide (2024).
In 2020 she was awarded the First International Ofelia Prize. In October 2025 she received the Mameli Prize, promoted by ENAC – National Cultural Activities Organization.
Her work has been featured in several art magazines and publications, including Effetto Arte, Eccellenze curated by Paolo Levi, Annuario d'Arte Contemporanea curated by Vittorio Sgarbi, I Grandi dell'Arte, and the Atlante dell'Arte Contemporanea 2026 (Giunti edition).

Project Statement
My artistic research is a continuous journey through color, form, and memory, where painting becomes a mirror of deep emotions and inner perceptions. In my works, the pictorial gesture is not simply a visual act, but a sensory experience that invites the viewer to immerse themselves in a universe where intuition, energy, and memory merge into a boundless creative flow.
My work is nourished by the tension between the immediacy of the act of making and the timeless dimension of meaning. Through the use of vibrant colors, chromatic traces, and archetypal symbols, I seek to evoke not only images, but also sensations, intuitions, and profound connections that transcend ordinary perception. Each canvas is conceived as a moment of kairos—an opportunity to capture the essence of the creative instant and share it with the observer.
For me, abstract painting is a language of liberation: a space where the intimate dialogue between mind, heart, and visual matter is transformed into works capable of speaking to anyone who approaches them without preconceptions, inviting a personal and transformative visual and sensory experience

Federica Spada | Full Immersion | 2024

Federica Spada | Kairòs | 2024

Navida Bhatnagar is a Canadian-based contemporary artist known for her layered colour palettes and expressive abstract approach. She uses different mediums of acrylic on canvas and focuses on depth, dimension and texture. Her paintings draw inspiration from nature, florals, personal experiences, and travel.
Navida has had a passion for painting since childhood and found herself drawn to anything art- and science-related. If it sparked her curiosity and creativity, that is where you would find her. Professionally she holds a BDSc in Dental Hygiene from the University of British Columbia and has been a Dental Hygienist since 2008. She later pursued becoming a Dental Hygiene Educator. Alongside her career, she completed her Yoga Teacher Training in 2018, including certifications in Meditation and Kundalini Yoga. Throughout her journey, she could no longer silence the call for painting and expression. Today Navida shares her work as an extension of that calling. Navida's paintings have been featured both locally and soon to be internationally. In March of 2026, her paintings were exhibited at an art gallery in Downtown Vancouver, BC, Canada, highlighting the use of her extensive colour palettes. Navida is set to exhibit at an art gallery in Manhattan, New York in May 2026. The exhibit will display four of her paintings and highlight her use of layers, textures, depth and dimension.
In her spare time you can find her exploring the abundant nature of British Columbia with her daughter and husband, biking, travelling, enjoying time with her family and friends, reading and trying out local cafes and restaurants.

Project Statement

"My name is Navida and I am a contemporary artist based in Canada.
To me, Art is expression – it's in everything we do. When you dance to your heart's song it becomes a tune only you can play, which makes your expression the most you and nobody can replicate that. It's really beautiful.
Painting has been a way that I continue to create in a state of flow. For me painting is a form of meditation, a creative outlet, an escape and a place to land. I come to a canvas with a plan or idea, only to realize it changes as I go along – often for the better, which tends to mirror much of life. Each stroke is a different direction, a different decision, each coming from the one before. I find there is an interesting parallel with art and life. We create and paint our life story each day, how we interact with the colours and each other is what makes our own picture meaningful and unique.
My intention is to create pieces and moments that allow for presence and connection. It's in the simplicity of these moments that remind us that life may not be beautiful in its entirety, but truly is beautiful in its moments. In this we are able to feel life, give it meaning and experience the beauty that surrounds us each day."
- Navida Bhatnagar

Navida Bhatnagar | Beachcombing | 2026

Navida Bhatnagar | Night in the Garden | 2026

— *Interview*

Charlotte Gausseran

Charlotte Gausseran | Bambous urbains

Your works feel very intuitive and organic. How does your creative process usually begin when you start a new piece?

My process often begins with an emotion or an atmosphere that I feel rather than with a precise image. Sometimes it is simply a color that I feel like using. I can be inspired by the color of the sky at sunset, a conversation, or simply the desire to create something joyful in response to the surrounding gloom or after a day that was a little less good than usual.
I usually start by drawing without a specific plan, letting the acrylic pen “move” across the paper as it wishes. The shapes then emerge naturally — a line becomes a plant, a scribble transforms into an imaginary building. I enjoy this spontaneity because it leaves room for surprise. It feels like a conversation between me and the paper or the canvas.

You mention influences from Fauvism and Cubism. In what ways do these movements shape your visual language today?

Fauvism inspires me in the use of color, with the idea that color does not need to be realistic in order to be true and make the artwork beautiful.
I do not use colors to reproduce nature or what actually exists, but to express an emotion that I feel.
Cubism, in turn, showed me that forms can be reorganized to create a new reality. In my work, I combine these two ideas; it is my way of saying that reality is never linear — it is colorful, complex, and multifaceted.

You began sharing your art publicly only recently. What gave you the confidence to start showing your work in 2023?

Charlotte Gausseran | Eclats de vie

In reality, I have more or less always been drawing. But only in private, because I was afraid of judgment, afraid that it wouldn't be "good enough" in the eyes of others.
But in 2023, I realized that authenticity is what truly matters, not perfection. I began timidly sharing my work with people around me and then on social media, and the reaction surprised me. People found my work interesting, even beautiful — not because it was perfect, but because it was sincere and colorful, and because it brought them joy.
That gave me confidence. I understood that my art had value, not because it would please everyone, but because it could touch those who needed it. That was the moment everything changed for me, and I started sharing more and more of what I was creating. It wasn't easy at the beginning, but now I truly enjoy it.

Your compositions often include flowing lines, plants, stars, and imaginary landscapes. What attracts you to these natural and dreamlike motifs?

These elements fascinate me because they represent the balance between what is real and what is imagined. Plants symbolize growth, life, transformation, and development—themes that resonate deeply with me.
Stars and dreamlike landscapes are my way of saying, "there are other possible worlds," worlds that are more joyful, more colorful, more magical. I believe that today, in real life, in our adult lives, we often forget how to dream. My art is an invitation to dream, to imagine, to believe in magic, and in a way to reconnect with one's deeper nature and childhood dreams. It is my language for expressing joy and hope.

Color plays an important role in your paintings. How do you choose your color palettes when creating a new artwork?

It's very instinctive. I start with a color—often one that calls to me that day—then add another. There are periods when I love turquoise green, and others when I'm more drawn to fuchsia pink or orange (maybe I'm lacking vitamins at that moment—who knows!).
For me, colors represent life. Just look at what we eat: vegetables, fruits, spices—everything is extremely colorful and brings nutrients and things essential to our health.
One thing is certain: I try not to use the real color of what I'm drawing. For example, I very rarely make green plants or brown tree trunks.
I like unexpected combinations, and I enjoy being surprised by the final result myself. A fuchsia pink building with electric blue—that's what makes my work recognizable. Color is my signature.

Many elements in your paintings seem to blur the line between abstraction and landscape. How do you see this balance in your work?

I'm not trying to choose; in fact, I usually take a long time when I have to choose between several options (in a restaurant it's a nightmare!!). This ambiguity is intentional. It allows each person to see what they need or want to see. And that's the magic of art. Everyone sees what speaks to them at the moment they look at the work.
I remember that one of the paintings I exhibited last summer in the Pyrenees was perceived very differently by the people who looked at it: some saw a whale, others an island, others a galaxy, and someone even told me it looked like a submarine.
That's what I love about abstract art — all interpretations are possible and true for the person who is looking at it. And it always opens up discussion; it creates a connection between people. That is also the beauty of art: creating connections between human beings.

When working on larger formats, does your approach or mindset change compared to drawing on smaller surfaces?

Yes and no. It is rather my way of working that changes. Small formats do not require me to move around constantly from one end of the canvas to the other. I also do not need to step back in order to see the painting or drawing as a whole. But each drawing, each painting—regardless of its size—gives me the same feeling: I enter a kind of timeless pause, a parenthesis outside of time, from which I only emerge once what I needed to paint or draw that day has come out of me and settled onto the paper or the canvas. It is a very meditative process.
And in the meantime, it could have been one hour—or three —that have passed.

Charlotte Gausseran | Eclosion

Havva Halaceli
She received her BSc in Textile Engineering from Cukurova University in Adana, Turkey in 2001. She earned her MFA degree from Dokuz Eylul University in Textile and Fashion Design Department submitting her thesis “The Innovations in Textile Materials and Clothing Fabrics with the Technologic Concept After 1970” in which she emphasized the importance of culture and information society for the high-tech fabrics. She started PhD study in Textile Design in 2005. During her PhD study, she achieved Fulbright Scholarship and worked as a visiting scholar at Purdue University, Indiana, USA. Her artworks are exhibited in USA, Italy, Poland, France and Ukraine. Her design and research interests include techno textiles, designer oriented design and experimental weaving methods in the scope of three-dimensionality. Currently she is working as a professor at the Department of Textile and Fashion Design, Cukurova University with a focus in woven textile design and she teaches weaving design courses. Her works focus on three dimensional surfaces by using weaving and hand-forming methods.

Project Statement
This project is based on my daughter's pictures when she was 6 months, 1 year, 1,5 years, and 2 years old. The works are executed on a hand-manipulated jacquard loom, conveying a baby's pure, naive look. These works show the inherent connection between mother and baby.

Havva Halaceli | Age of Innocent | 2023

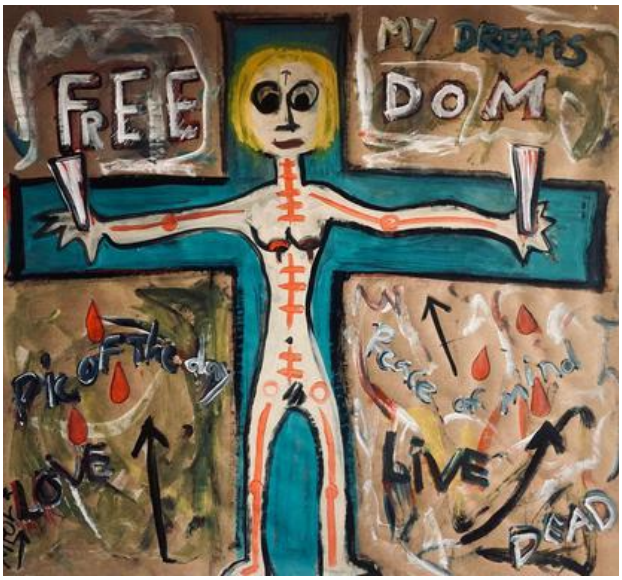
Havva Halaceli | Happiness | 2022

MARGA POL

Your work explores the intersection between chaos and solitude. How do these forces manifest in your creative process and images?

Chaos is the starting point. I paint without sketches, without trying to control the outcome too much. I need to dirty, to break, to let the gesture appear.
Solitude is the space where this happens. When I stand in front of the canvas, I am alone with what I feel.
That is where chaos becomes form.
I do not paint to explain chaos — I paint to move through it.

Many of your pieces combine materials such as vinyl, pencil, and synthetic enamels. What attracts you to these materials?



MARGA POL | Freedom

I am drawn to the fact that they are not "noble" materials.
They are direct, industrial, physical. Vinyl sticks, spray is immediate, pencil is intimate.
This combination creates tension, like life itself.
The material is not decorative — it is part of the message.

Your works appear simple at first glance but reveal complexity over time. Is this tension intentional?

Yes.
I am interested in creating work that enters quickly through the eyes but does not exhaust itself in a second.
Simplicity is a door. Complexity is what remains when you stay longer.
Like emotions: they seem clear, but they never fully are.

Does music play an important role in your process?

Music is not background — it is energy.
When I listen to intense music, the gesture becomes faster, more visceral. The line comes out without thinking.
If the music is atmospheric or slow, the rhythm of the painting changes: there is more silence, more space, more breath.
I do not paint what I hear, but the body responds to sound. And the body is the one who paints.

How does your background in graphic design influence your approach to composition, color, and form?

My training in graphic design gave me a strong sense of structure.
Even when the painting appears spontaneous, there is a clear compositional base: balance, tension, visual

MARGA POL | Connection

hierarchy.
I also have a very direct relationship with color. It is not pure intuition — there is decision, there is criteria. Design taught me to synthesize. To remove what is unnecessary.

How has living and working in Mallorca influenced your vision, palette, or themes?

Mallorca is light and memory.
The light is brutal, direct — it does not forgive. This is visible in my palette: strong contrasts, vivid colors, breathing whites.
There is also the inner landscape: the sea, the wind, the silence of the villages.
I do not paint landscapes, but I paint from this place. From an island that is both refuge and limit.

What do you hope viewers feel or reflect upon after seeing your work?

I do not expect them to understand anything specific. I hope they feel something real.
If a piece makes them stop for a moment, if it unsettles or moves them, that is enough.
I paint to feel alive. And if someone, looking at it, feels a little more alive too, then the work has fulfilled its purpose.

Pastel Kitten

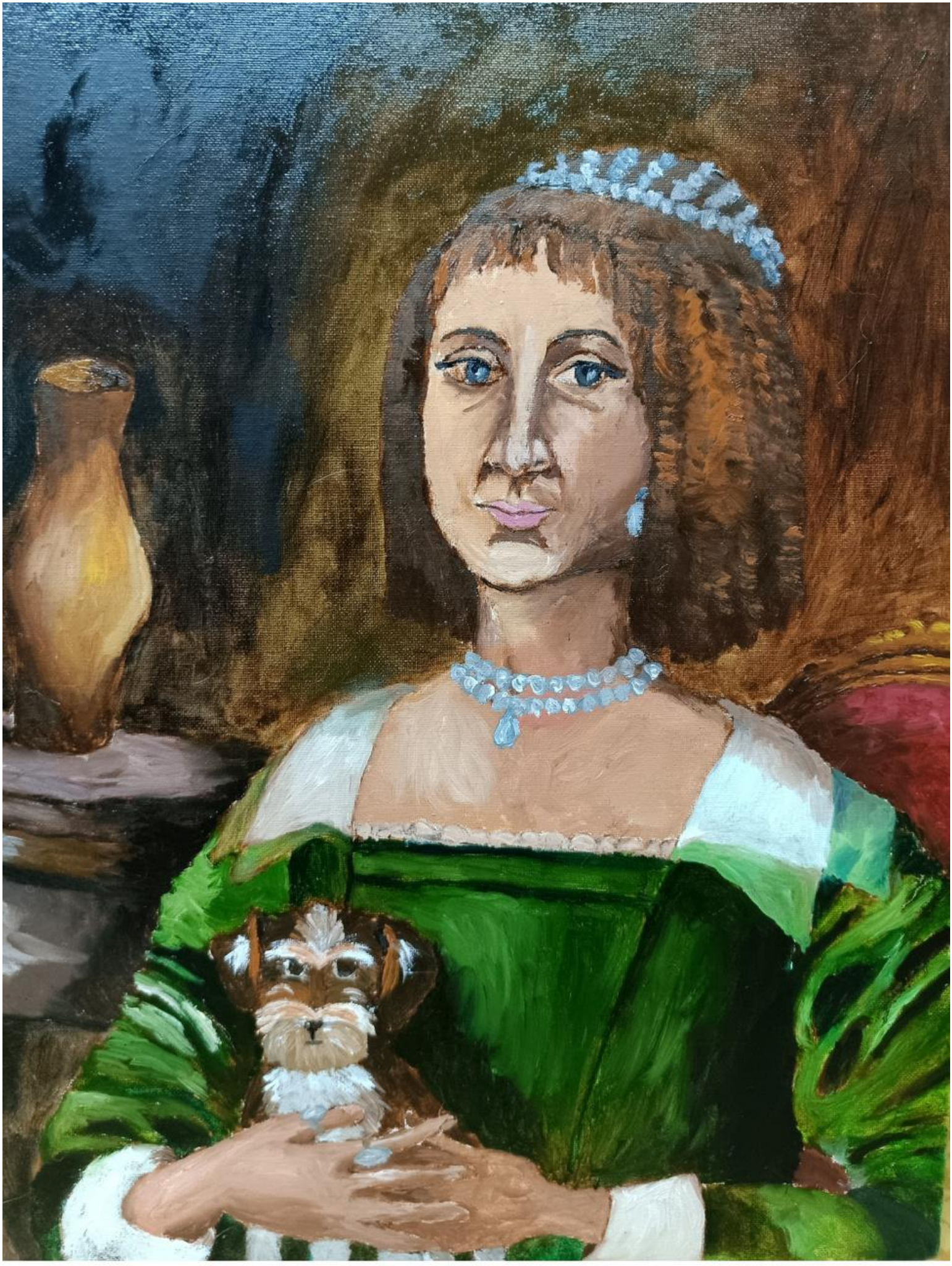
Recently fullfilled her dream of moving to Barcelona. Using all kinds of media to visualize my raging AuDHD.


SUNDAY
MONDAY
TUESDAY
WEDNESDAY
Changing
Daily
SEARCHING FOR MY
SEARCHING
authentic
SELF

Victoria Sapegina
Vidoite Paintings is an art brand created by me from Novosibirsk. Vidoite is a combination of my name "Victoria" and the French word "droit," which means "law." Theo and Gray are my two cats. I usually accept this name to hide my personality instead my paintings.
As a child, I expressed my thoughts through drawing and was inspired by the works of artists such as Franz Xaver Winterhalter, Diego Velazques and Ilya Repin. In school, painting was my favorite subject, but later, my focus shifted to history. Despite my lack of formal art education, in 2023, after earning a bachelor's degree in law, I decided to revive my artistic skills. All the paintings are inspired by the works of old masters and feature animals, historical figures, and cultural characters.
Name:Date of Birth: 8th May 2001
Education Tomsk State University Graduation Year: 2023
Exhibitions
• Saint Petersburg Art Week, Imperial Society for the Encouragement of the Arts, St. Petersburg, Russia (July 15-20, 2025)
• ArtExpo. Russia in China, China Millennium Monument, Beijing, China (August 7-16, 2025)
• “Aesthetics" in Contrast City Gallery, Ekaterinburg, Russia (October 1-25, 2025)
• Generation of Contrast New Year's Exhibition in Contrast City Gallery, Ekaterinburg, Russia (December 10-January 10, 2025-2026)
• Collective exhibition at the Holy Art Gallery (February 13-16,2026)

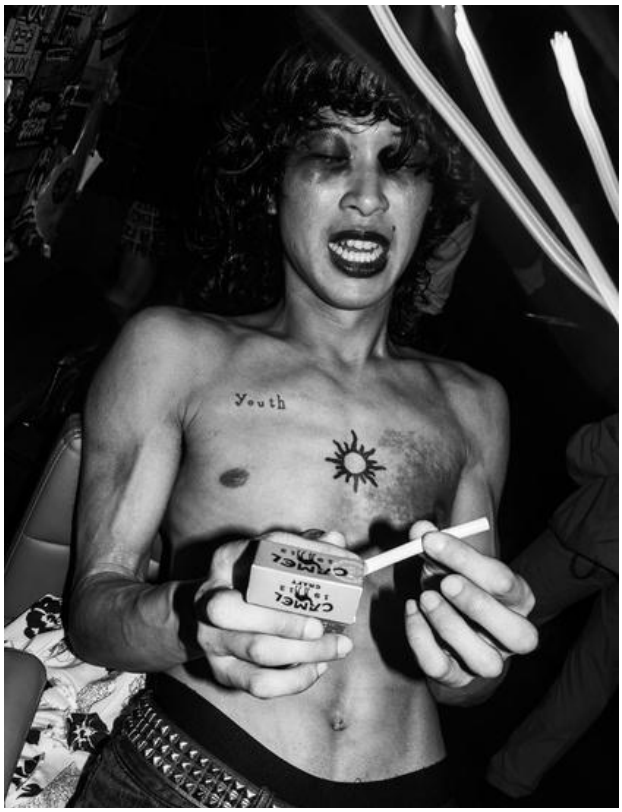
Project Statement
"Strength and Freedom" presents a profound analysis of women's imagery in art through the lens of historical, mythological, and contemporary imagery. Each painting explores various aspects of femininity—from moral strength and resilience to rebellion and the desire for freedom.

Vidoite Paintings | In a Monastery



Vidoite Paintings | The Lady with the Dog

Henry Demos



Henry Demos | Again

I grew up reading every music magazine on the shelves. I idolized those huge rock and roll behemoths. Unfortunately, the only chances to see music was in a filthy basement. The thing is the small touring bands playing there gave everything. They moved and were wild. There was no restraint. That era in my life taught me to take huge chances and risks in my art.

You describe yourself as being shaped by DIY shows and dirty basements. Can you tell us about those early environments and how they formed your visual language?

Henry Demos | Again

Being fully self-taught and "always a student" suggests a continuous process of experimentation. How has learning outside formal institutions influenced the way you approach photography?

My approach to photography has been pretty straight forward: try everything and see what sticks. From home film development to cobbling together DIY lenses, nothing is off the table. My journey is just about joy. If it rules, you bet your ass I am going to keep doing it. Right now concert photography has me in its grips and that is fine by me!

There is a raw immediacy in your work that feels almost confrontational at times. What are you chasing in that moment when you press the shutter?

Henry Demos | Again

I appreciate that! I wish there was more more to it than... I just want this moment to never end.

In Slackers, you focus on The Slacks as both ordinary workers by day and "agents of chaos" by night. What first attracted you to this duality?

Aren't we all attracted to duality? The lie? I have seen The Slacks be wild animal degenerates. The fact that these guys have day jobs makes no sense in my brain. How can these truly free people work for the man? Holy hell that is interesting.

The energy in these photographs feels explosive and intimate at the same time. How do youposition yourself within such chaotic spaces without disrupting the authenticity of the scene?

Even one second can totally mess that feel up. You are exactly right. My actual method is just take my camera right into the mouth of the beast and be as wild as any other concert goer. My presence could be seen as annoy with all my use of flash but... the way I slam dance makes up for it. I haven't lost a camera yet... Though I did lose my glasses last week!

You mention wanting to show that Japanese culture is "far more than meets the eye". What misconceptions or surface impressions are you responding to through this project?

Japanese kids are just as wild as anyone on the damn planet. Give the some beer, some mics, and amps and you better believe chaos will happen.

Punk ethos seems central to your practice. Beyond music, what does "punk" mean to you today, especially in the context of contemporary Japan?

Punk ethos is just getting it done no matter what. Nothing will hold it back. It might be beat up around the edges but the message is clear. There are a lot of young kids in Japan that live this attitude and hot damn is it inspiring. Japan is going to have a renaissance pretty soon I assure you.

Ximena Aguilar Schiffer (born 29 September 2005 in Veracruz, Mexico) is a self-taught artist whose work focuses primarily on painting and illustration. She has participated in international initiatives such as Secret 7” (2022) and has contributed illustrations to children’s books. Her work was exhibited at the Museum of Contemporary Art of Querétaro (2024), and she recently represented her university at the international visual arts event BADA (February 2026). She is currently studying Industrial Design at Tecnológico de Monterrey.

Project Statement
My work draws from the memories and emotions of childhood, and from the nostalgia for a time when fairytales and magic felt like the laws of the world. Through painting, I seek to encapsulate narratives that portray life through the romantic lens of storytelling. My work often explores the boundary between the human and the unknown, where reality and fantasy begin to blur. I believe we are shaped by the stories we inherit, the stories we tell, and the stories we continue to write every day.

Ximena Aguilar | Hipocampo

Ximena Aguilar | Silent Siren

Jeanne Bertrand-Faure

Your practice combines collage, photography, and fragments of text. What first attracted you to working with this intersection of image and language?

I have always been a writer, even before I engaged in visual arts. Sometimes I write automatically and using images after helps me make sense of the writings I have produced, sometimes it is the other way around. I feel like my practice is a representation of the way my mind works, as an aggregation of images, memories, feelings, poetry. Creating helps me put together all these scraps and create a visual story to share.

Jeanne Bertrand-Faure | Erasure

Jeanne Bertrand-Faure | Crowd

Black-and-white imagery plays an important role in your work. What draws you to this visual language instead of color?

There is a sort of directness and purity that I really like in black and white images. Usually we associate color with meaning: blue with peace, green with nature, yellow with joy. Here, the brain doesn't have a specific color to associate with a mental category because that color is not there, hence the image has a lot interpretative potential. It can at times be dramatic, peaceful, dark or chaotic according to what we are feeling. Moreover, I associate black and white with memories. I want to convey the feeling of when you close your eyes before sleeping and some shapes define themselves on a black screen. It is nostalgic but also full of potential, something that brings you home while showcasing possible futures.

Your project "La brute ou l'amour silencieux du monde" is inspired by a novel about a blind, mute, and deaf man. What aspects of this story resonated most strongly with you as an artist?

As an artist as well as a person, I rely on my senses a lot. So to imagine living without them was a challenge : is it not our senses that make us truly human? What can the world look like? How do you cope with everyday life ? But the biggest challenge was trying to go beyond them. One particular part of the story was really striking to me, which is the part where the narrator tells the great love story of the main character. A feeling that does go beyond words or visuals, that can happen through touch and scent. Seeing his story being told by others who couldn't really guess what he must have felt was eye-opening because it was very raw, focused on physical appearance.

Jeanne Bertrand-Faure | Coup de coeur(s)

Many of your works incorporate pages from books directly. How do you choose the texts that become part of your collages?

I work strictly with secondhand objects. Most of the books I use are found in the street or in charity shops for a few euros. My process kind of resembles the way I pick clothes : I look at the cover first, the colors, the shape, the size of the object. Then I read the titles, and if I'm intrigued, I will read a few pages to see if the writing inspires me. Then I try to imagine the kind of work I could produce with it. I think I started to use this material to desacralize the idea of the book that you read once and never touch again. I've always been a big reader, but it has always broken my heart to let them get dusty on a shelf, I yearned to give them a new purpose. I also have this perfectionist view of words. There are so many poems or novels I've never finished because I wasn't able to convey my exact feelings yet. Now, I can destroy books if they make me angry, turn the words into something of a new nature, make it fit into my world. I can make a final product with an unfinished thought, or an unfinished collage with a finished book -which also becomes a well of inspiration when I lack it.

In your collages, fragments of text often appear partially erased, isolated, or rearranged. What role does erasure or fragmentation play in your artistic process?

Erasure is very symbolic in my work because it represents a choice. In real life, you don't really choose what to remember or not, your unconscious does it for you. Why is it that some memories are so clear while others remain blurry? Why do we remember certain moments and not others? Sometimes we also unconsciously choose to forget. Fragmentation then becomes complementary to erasure: when a memory is not effaced, it most likely has been rearranged in our minds, and put into words to make it an eligible story to tell others. We reminisce, shed a certain light, choose for certain words or touches to remain. I have to admit; I even choose a song to go with it like it's a movie scene sometime. Lastly, I think these two principles of erasure and fragmentation go against everything we praise in today's society where images rule. We take pictures to remember everything, and either we have trouble erasing certain things, or we think that erasing the picture will erase the story. We don't really praise fragmentation or paradoxicality. Social media has trained us to have one homogenous image, one personal brand, an objective, a balanced life. I think as artists it's also our duty to show that being fragmented, lost and contradictory is not only okay but inherent to our human experience.

Your project invites viewers to imagine the sensory world of someone who cannot see, hear, or speak. What do you hope viewers reflect on when experiencing your work?

After reading this book I wanted my work to reflect the depth and diversity of experience. Maybe viewers could feel that even though they have nothing to do with the main character or have not read the book, that some of that experience can still be relatable.

Do you see your collages as narrative works, or are they more like fragments that the viewer must complete with their own interpretation?

I definitely encourage viewers to complete the works with their own interpretation. My collages ae not finite stories. It would be even more interesting if other artists could use them again, to create something new. I want the stories and images to circulate rather than create an exact meaning.

Jeanne Bertrand-Faure | Childhood

Kauri Krishnar is a multimedia artist based in Etobicoke, ON, who strives to blend art and technology. Her practice is inspired by the concept of layering - how individual people, places, and identities are molded through one-of-a-kind combinations of genetics, memory, and circumstances. Recently, she began volunteering at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection assisting workshops for autistic young adults to broaden her understanding of identity and people. Currently, Kauri is completing her HBA in Art and Art History from the University of Toronto and has been awarded the Catherine Quesnel Prize in Art and Art History and Excellence in Photography I.

Kauri Krishnar | The Golden Temple | 2025

Kauri Krishnar | Lineage | 2026

Yidi Wang

Your work moves between performance, digital fabrication, and speculative design. How do these different mediums help you explore questions of identity and the body?

In my practice, performance and the body itself are my primary mediums. I treat my own body as a material—one that carries memory, vulnerability, and lived experience. Through performance, the body becomes a site where social expectations, gender roles, and personal history are enacted and questioned in real time.

Digital fabrication functions as a way for me to extend the narrative of the body beyond its physical limits. Using tools such as 3D modeling, printing, and sculptural installation, I create objects and environments that expand the body into speculative forms. These works allow the body to exist outside itself—as fragments, organs, or technological extensions.

Speculative design is less a medium and more a method of thinking and research in my practice. It allows me to imagine alternative biological and social systems, asking questions about how bodies might exist in future relationships with technology, non-human organisms, and artificial life. Through this approach, my work explores the shifting boundaries between the human, the technological, and the ecological.

In your statement you describe yourself as "a feminist, a cyborg, and a post-human." How do these identities coexist within your artistic practice?

My feminist thinking comes from my personal background. Growing up in an East Asian family, I became very aware of the cultural expectations placed on women—especially around care, sacrifice, and family roles. These experiences shaped my understanding of gender and power, and they naturally became part of the narrative in my work. In this sense, feminism in my practice is deeply connected to my own cultural and personal history.

However, I do not want to stop at feminism alone. My work extends toward post-humanism, which offers a broader philosophical framework that moves beyond human-centered thinking. Post-humanism questions the structures that divide beings into hierarchies—whether those divisions are based on gender, race, species, or other categories.

If we begin to see non-human creatures—animals, microorganisms, or artificial systems—as entities that share ethical significance with us, the traditional divisions that structure human society start to lose their authority. Gender binaries, racial hierarchies, and human dominance over other forms of life can all be reconsidered from the root.

For me, identifying as a feminist, a cyborg, and a post-human is also a way of positioning myself within these possible futures. It is not only a theoretical framework, but also a way of experiencing and embodying these ideas through my own practice. Through performance and installation, I place myself within these speculative conditions, exploring what it might mean to live and exist within these evolving relationships between humans, technology, and non-human life.

Many of your works investigate the intersection of gender, reproduction, and technology. What initially drew you to these themes?

My interest in these themes begins from a feminist perspective. I am interested in questioning the traditional structures of reproduction, which have historically defined women's roles through biological expectations such as motherhood and caregiving. By examining reproduction critically, I want to challenge these systems and rethink how gender roles are constructed.

For me, questioning reproduction is also a way of challenging gender binaries at their root. Many social hierarchies and expectations are built upon the assumption that reproduction must follow a specific biological and gendered structure. When we begin to rethink reproduction, we can also begin to rethink the frameworks that define gender itself.

This is where post-human thinking becomes important in my practice. Post-humanism allows me to imagine forms of life, kinship, and reproduction that extend beyond strictly human or biological systems. The development of technology—whether through biotechnology, artificial reproductive systems, or hybrid technological bodies—is part of what shapes a cyborg or posthuman world.

Through my work, I explore how these emerging possibilities might allow us to rethink reproduction, care, and kinship in ways that move beyond traditional gendered structures.

Your own body frequently appears in your performances and installations. What role does vulnerability play in your work?

My body is one of the primary mediums in my work, and vulnerability becomes an important part of how the ideas are experienced. Much of my research challenges traditional concepts of reproduction and motherhood as a way to question gender structures. In order to explore these ideas, I place my own body within the work and allow the audience to witness the process.
In my performance Post-Birth, for example, I constructed a speculative form of motherhood through bacteria cultivated from my own body. By nurturing these microorganisms as a kind of non-human offspring, the work imagines an anti-human-centered perspective, where non-human life can be considered as sharing ethical significance with us. Through this gesture, I explore the possibility of a post-human world where hierarchies such as gender binaries, race, and other human divisions begin to dissolve.
Motherhood in my practice becomes an experimental framework through which these philosophical questions are tested. This theme appears repeatedly in my work, and it is also deeply connected to my personal experiences and reflections.
To apply these ideas in practice requires experimentation and exposure. I must perform, test, and inhabit these speculative conditions myself. In this process, vulnerability emerges naturally. It exists not only within motherhood, but also within the female body, the human body, and even within non-human organisms. By revealing these states of vulnerability, my work attempts to create a shared space of empathy and reflection across different forms of life.

You often invite audiences to actively engage with your performances. How important is the viewer's participation in shaping the meaning of the work?

Audience participation is important in my work because the meaning of the piece does not exist independently from the people who experience it. Many of my performances and installations are structured as systems of care, observation, or relational interaction. When viewers enter the space, they are not simply observing the work—they become witnesses to the processes that are unfolding.
In works like Post-Birth, the audience observes acts of nurturing, maintenance, and daily care. Their presence transforms the performance into a shared experience. The audience becomes part of the environment in which these speculative relationships between humans and non-human life are revealed.
This participation is not always direct or physical. Sometimes it exists through attention, empathy, and reflection. By witnessing these processes, viewers are invited to question their own assumptions about bodies, reproduction, care, and the boundaries between human and nonhuman life.
In this sense, the audience helps activate the work. Their presence completes the relational structure that the piece proposes.

In an age where technology increasingly mediates our bodies and identities, do you see the idea of the "post-human" as liberating, troubling, or both?

I see the idea of the post-human as both liberating and complex. On one hand, post-human thinking offers the possibility of moving beyond human-centered hierarchies that structure much of our world. These hierarchies often divide beings through categories such as gender, race, species, or technological difference.
Although post-human discourse often appears alongside technological development—such as biotechnology, artificial reproduction, or hybrid technological bodies—the philosophical core of post-humanism does not depend entirely on reaching a certain level of technological advancement. The idea of moving away from human-centered thinking, and recognizing that other forms of life may hold ethical significance equal to our own, is already a liberating shift in perspective.
When we begin to consider animals, microorganisms, or other non-human entities as sharing the same right to exist and participate in the world, the rigid hierarchies that structure human society can begin to dissolve. In this sense, post-humanism offers a way to rethink how we coexist with other forms of life.
At the same time, technological development also raises difficult questions about control, ethics, and responsibility. Because of this, my work does not present the post-human as a simple solution. Instead, it explores it as a space for experimentation and reflection, where we can begin to imagine new relationships between humans, technology, and non-human life.

What role does research play in your creative process, especially when working with new technologies and biological concepts?

Research is the driving force behind my practice. Many of my projects begin with theoretical inquiry, particularly in feminist studies, post-human philosophy, and discussions surrounding biotechnology and emerging technologies. These investigations shape the conceptual foundation of my work and guide the questions I want to explore.
The materials and mediums I choose—whether the body, technological tools, or biological processes—are all determined by the research itself. In this sense, I would describe my practice as research-driven. I select the medium that best allows me to visualize a particular idea and communicate that language to the audience.
Because of this, I do not set strict limitations on media within my practice. Performance, digital fabrication, biological experimentation, and installation are all tools that help translate theoretical questions into tangible experiences. The medium becomes a way to materialize research and invite viewers to engage with these ideas in a physical and emotional way.

Zaripova Tatyana

Russian artist. Member of the AVS creative association based at the Art Visual Studio.
A regular participant and prize winner of russian and international exhibitions.

Project statement:
"Paleosymmetry", oil on canvas, 100 × 120 cm, 2026

Interview

Nicole Traver

Your journey into art began during the Covid pandemic when you discovered acrylic pour painting on YouTube. What was it about this technique that immediately captured your imagination?

During the Covid pandemic, like many people, I found myself searching for a new creative outlet. I've always been drawn to art, but when I discovered acrylic pour painting on YouTube, something about it immediately captivated me. The technique felt both spontaneous and expressive—the way colors move and interact on the canvas creates results that are never completely predictable. I was especially drawn to the abstract nature of it. Each piece becomes open to interpretation, and I love that different people can look at the same painting and see something entirely unique. That sense of color, movement, and individual perspective is what first pulled me in and continues to inspire me today.

Your life story shows incredible resilience, especially after many surgeries and years of physical therapy. In what ways has your personal experience shaped your artistic voice?

I was born with spina bifida, and my life has included many surgeries and years of physical therapy. Those experiences have shaped who I am, both personally and creatively. Living with a disability has taught me resilience, patience, and determination—qualities that naturally carry over into my art.

I don't see my disability as something that limits me creatively. In many ways, it has made my voice as an artist stronger. Through my work and my journey in the art world, I hope to show that being different or having a disability doesn't mean you can't succeed. If anything, those challenges can give you a unique perspective and strength that shapes what you create. My goal is to use my creativity not only to express myself, but also to inspire others to see that limitations don't define what you're capable of achieving.

Acrylic pouring often embraces unpredictability. How do you balance control and spontaneity when creating your compositions?

Acrylic pouring is a fascinating balance between intention and unpredictability. Before I begin a piece, I make several creative choices that guide the direction of the painting. I carefully select the color palette and decide which pouring technique I want to use, whether that's an infinity pour, open cup pour, ring pour, or another style. Those decisions create the foundation for the composition.
Once the paint begins to flow, however, I allow the process to unfold naturally. Part of the beauty of acrylic pouring is that you can't completely control how the colors interact or how the patterns form. I've learned to embrace that spontaneity and trust the process. Often the most beautiful moments in a piece are the ones that happen unexpectedly.

Your works feature flowing lines and vibrant colors that create a sense of movement. What emotions or ideas do you hope viewers experience when they look at your paintings?

One of the things I love most about abstract art is that every viewer brings their own perspective to a piece. When I create a painting, I'm drawn to movement and vibrant color because they naturally evoke energy and emotion, but I don't try to dictate exactly what someone should feel when they look at it.
What fascinates me is how the same painting can inspire completely different interpretations from different people. One person might see a landscape, another might feel a certain emotion, and someone else might see something entirely unexpected. Hearing those different reactions is incredibly meaningful to me because it shows how personal the experience of art can be. In many ways, the viewer becomes part of the creative process through their own interpretation.

You began by painting on canvases and later expanded to objects like vases, coasters, and ornaments. What attracts you to experimenting with different surfaces?

I originally started by pouring on canvases, but over time I began thinking about ways to share my artwork with others in a more personal way. I had the idea to start giving some of my pieces as gifts for birthdays and holidays, and eventually I began participating in craft fairs around the state. While I still love creating on canvas, I realized that objects like coasters, vases, ornaments, and flower pots make beautiful and functional gifts that people can use in their everyday lives. Experimenting with different surfaces also opened up new creative possibilities. Each material—whether it's canvas, glass, wood, or even plastic—interacts with the paint in its own unique way and can create completely different patterns and effects. I really enjoy exploring those differences and seeing how the same technique can produce something entirely new depending on the surface.

Many viewers describe acrylic pour paintings as almost geological or cosmic in appearance. Do you see natural or universal forms reflected in your work?

I think it can really vary depending on the colors and techniques used in each piece. Different combinations can create very different visual impressions. Sometimes the flowing patterns and cells can look almost cosmic or galactic, while other times they feel more earthy, like stone, lava, or natural landscapes.
I've definitely seen both reflected in my work, and viewers often point out things I hadn't even noticed at first. That's one of the things I enjoy most about acrylic pouring—the way it can mirror forms we recognize from nature or the universe. Some of my titles even reflect that inspiration, like "Out of the Lava," "Cosmic Amethyst," "Galactic Dreams," and "Into the Fire." Those kinds of images seem to naturally emerge from the movement of the paint.

Your story is also about overcoming limitations and redefining possibilities. What message would you like your journey and your art to send to others who face challenges in their lives?

One of the biggest things I've learned through my journey is that challenges don't have to define or limit what you're capable of. Everyone faces obstacles in life, but those experiences can also shape your strength, perspective, and creativity.
Through both my story and my art, I hope people see that it's possible to build something meaningful even when life doesn't follow the path you expected. For me, art became a way to express myself, find joy, and connect with others. If my journey shows anything, I hope it's that challenges can become part of your strength rather than something that holds you back.

Michael Ksooizelu

I am an artist, exhibitor, pianist, and winner of international music competitions. In music, I value the interpreter's creative approach to the works, my own unique approach to interpretation. Regarding my visual art, my drawings lack conventional beauty, cozy landscapes, or criteria such as color saturation, nuanced chiaroscuro, and so on. My works are independent of the familiar patterns of postmodernism and the aesthetic algorithms of the avant-garde and naive art. Furthermore, my works feature unique imagery and mystical motifs, as well as new biological bodies. However, given the short format, I would like to focus on the following topic: my drawings contain various effects, aesthetic phenomena, special meanings that are not immediately obvious to the viewer, and depictions of specific natures and materials. With experience, I have come to realize that these expressive qualities are not always readily apparent to the viewer. This is partly why I create explications, so that the viewer can better understand the content. My work is the embodiment of a unique style, where phenomena manifest themselves as individual natures of the imagination, previously unseen in the surrounding environment. I primarily use a pen, but it is merely a convenient tool for depicting phenomena that have no relation to the direct pictorial properties of ink. That is, I directly realize, authentically embody on paper the nature and matter of the imagination, rather than engage in formal depiction with a pen-like instrument. Some images seem strange or insane—but this is only a projection that sometimes occurs to the viewer, a meaning that is not my goal. The works are not abstractions: the drawings contain specific contents, and it is in this, in my opinion, that the main value of the works lies, and the task of the viewer is to penetrate and try to explore this "universe.”
Email: michaelksaoizelu@gmail.com

Kim Chan

Your works evoke a dreamlike and magical atmosphere. When did you first realize that art would become an important part of your life?

I have always been drawn to the small details in nature whenever I travel or visit new places. Flowers, textures, colors, and quiet moments often capture my attention, and even the scent of freshly watered plant or grass can transport me to a magical place.
I began creating nature-inspired art little by little after my regular 8-to-5 job. It started as a personal escape from daily routines and gradually became a sanctuary for my soul. Over time, I realized that art allowed me to express emotions and atmospheres that are sometimes difficult to describe with words. It became a way to capture a sense of wonder and imagination and I slowly understood that art would always be an essential part of my life.

Kim Chan | Fairy Happy Flower Enchantment | 2026

Many of your artworks feature angels, fairies, flowers, and elements of nature. What do these symbols represent in your artistic language?

These elements represent gentleness, hope, and the quiet magic that exists in the natural world. Fairies, witches, and angels symbolize guidance and an ethereal connection to something peaceful and uplifting. Flowers and plants represent life, renewal, and the beauty of fleeting moments that remind us to cherish the present.
The mystical figures in my work often have a small companion... perhaps a butterfly, bird, or another delicate creature. For me, this symbolizes the idea that no one is ever truly alone and that there is always a presence of support and connection around us.
Together these symbols create a visual language that reflects harmony, comfort, friendship, and a sense of grounding in nature.

Kim Chan | Angel under the tree | 2026

Your work often conveys a sense of calm, wonder, and emotional depth. What emotions or experiences do you hope viewers will feel when they encounter your art?

I hope viewers experience a sense of calm and gentle pause when they encounter my work. In a fast-moving world, even a small moment of stillness and wonder can feel meaningful. Ideally the viewer may feel comfort, curiosity, and perhaps even a return to a sense of childhood imagination... like discovering a hidden enchanted world that becomes their own quiet refuge. My intention is for the artwork to offer a soft emotional space where people can reconnect with beauty and tranquility.

Nature seems to play an important role in your work. How does the natural world influence your imagination and artistic vision?

Nature is one of my greatest sources of inspiration. The changing colors of the seasons, flowers and leaves discovered during walks in the park, or even scenes from nature documentaries can spark ideas for new compositions. These small details remind me that beauty often exists in quiet and simple forms. I try to carry that sense of natural harmony into my work allowing nature to guide both the atmosphere and the storytelling within each piece.

Your mixed-media pieces combine painting with natural materials and textures. What attracts you to working with layered materials and tactile elements?

I enjoy working with layered materials because they allow the artwork to feel more alive and dimensional. By combining painting with natural elements such as dried flowers, botanical textures, and layered surfaces, I am able to create depth and a tactile presence.
These textures bring the artwork closer to nature itself. Each layer adds its own story and character allowing the piece to feel like a small preserved moment of the natural world.

Many of your compositions feel like small enchanted worlds. Do you see your artworks as stories or narratives in visual form?

Yes, in many ways they are visual stories. Each piece feels like a tiny world where imagination and nature meet. The fairy, witch, or angel figures often become gentle guardians of these spaces, surrounded by flowers and natural elements that suggest a hidden narrative.
I enjoy leaving a sense of mystery within the artwork so that viewers can imagine that they could be those characters or their own interpretations and emotional connections.

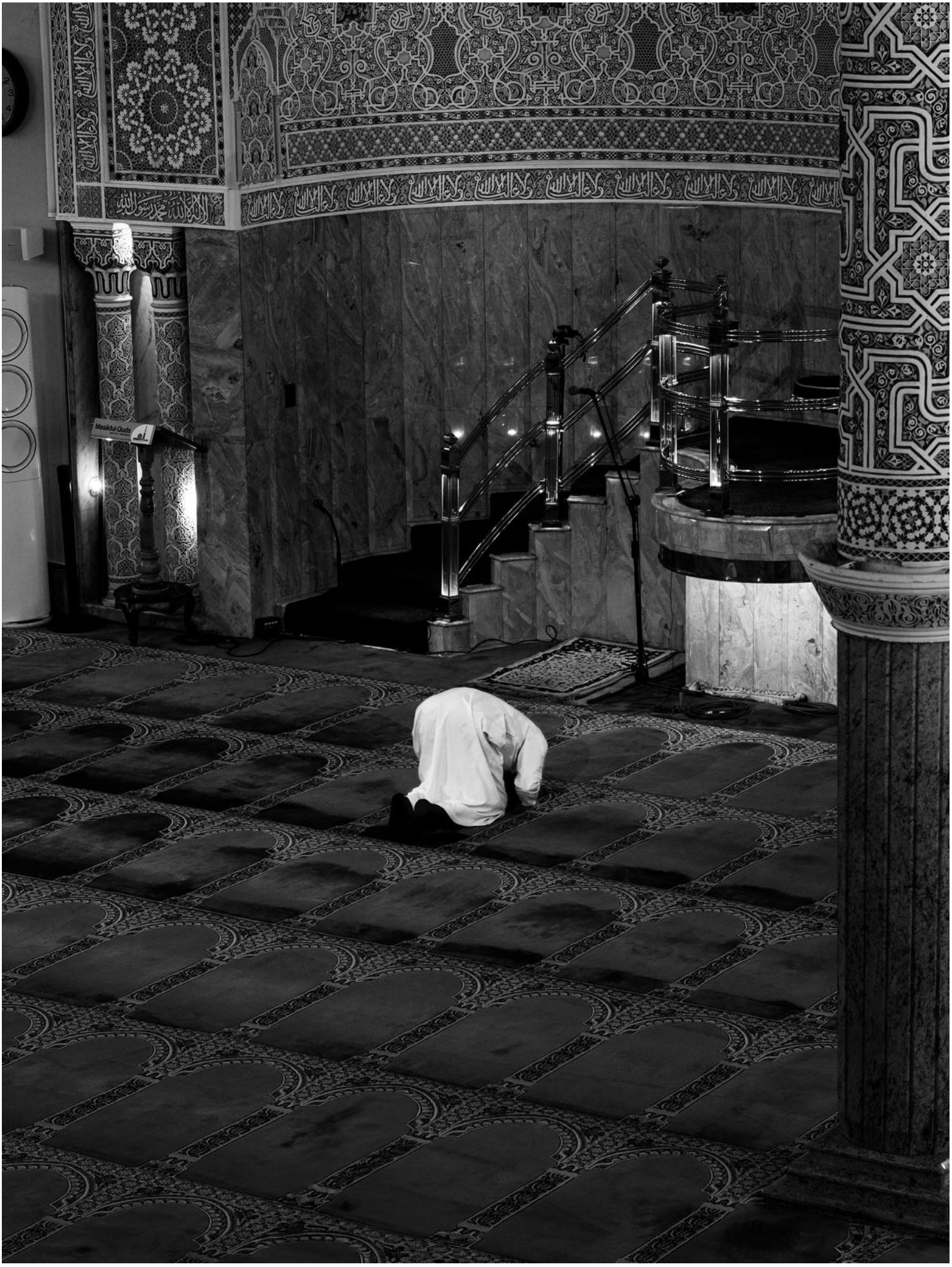
What message or feeling would you like people to carry with them after experiencing your art?

I hope people leave with a sense of peace, wonder and appreciation for the beauty of nature. Even the smallest flower or delicate leaf can hold extraordinary beauty.
The small companions that appear beside the mystical beings are also meant to remind viewers that they are never truly alone. If my artwork encourages someone to slow down, notice the natural world around them, and reconnect with a feeling of magic and hope or even spark an inspiration for them to create, then I feel the piece has fulfilled its purpose.

Kim Chan | Angel Magic Wishes | 2026

My name is **Salma Francis-Adams** and I am a student at the Red & Yellow Creative School of Business in Cape Town, where I am pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in Visual Communication. Over the past few years, I have developed a strong passion for photography and storytelling. Through my work, I focus on capturing everyday routines and the people within my community, using visual narratives to highlight the depth, identity, and authenticity of our local culture.

Project Statement
Bound by Prayer is a narrative photography series that explores the beauty, simplicity, and unity within the Islamic faith. Captured inside a mosque in Cape Town during one of the daily prayer times, the work reflects how people from different walks of life come together, equal before God, in a shared act of devotion. The project seeks to communicate that within these sacred moments, all distinctions of status, age, and background disappear - what remains is a profound sense of spiritual togetherness.



Salma Francis-Adams | Bound to Prayer | 2026

Hubert Gregorczyk

Your artworks are filled with vibrant colours and expressive landscapes. What role does colour play in conveying your emotions and ideas?

First of all I have to mention that vibrant colours are some sort of a trademark of my art. I simply love colours, it's visible not only in my paintings, but also in my outfits and even decorations at my home. And already when I was making my first steps into art people around me were complimenting the colours I were using. Now I often use colours to express how I feel about something, but I also use them to make things seem a bit magical. I even have a project in which every painting presents a different emotion as forest in a different colour. So to sum up colours might be considered one of the most important parts of my paintings and if you try to analyse my painting you should take a moment to analyse the colours used as they are usually chosen for a reason.

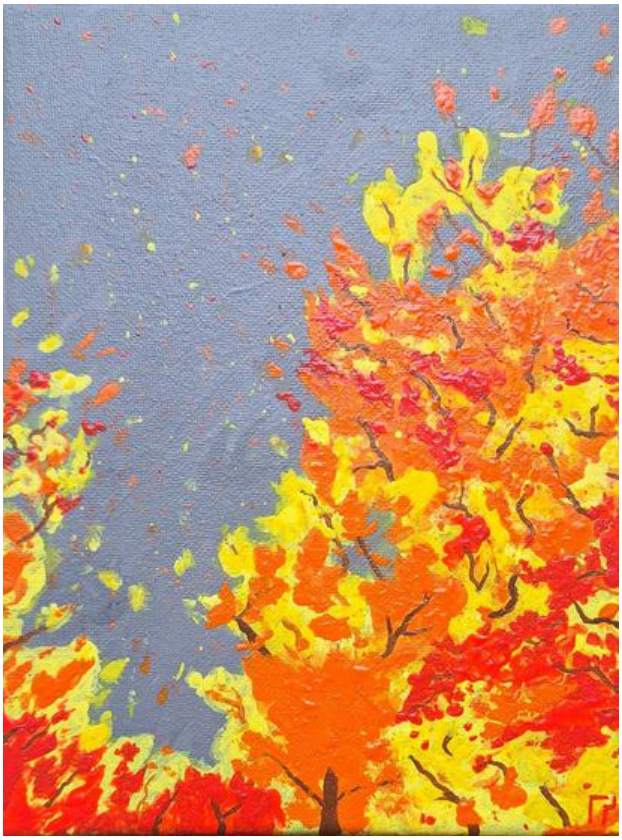
Hubert Gregorczyk | Ireland | 2025

You mention that most of your paintings come from imagination. How does your creative process usually begin when you start a new artwork?

It's a great question. In general it starts with a thought of something, usually a word or a sentence. When I think of that sentence my imagination creates a picture of it. If I like that vision I start the actual process: I write in my notes what I want to put in the painting, and pretty often I also draw a sketch in my notebook. When I feel ready I put the idea on canvas. Sometimes my ideas have to wait months to "travel" from my notes to the canvas (especially when I'm having tones of them at the same time). But I believe that the universe always lets me paint them at the right moment.

Landscape appears to be a recurring theme in your work. What attracts you to landscapes as a subject?

I think I'm attracted to landscapes as a subject, because of my love for our world or more like my love for its nature. The beauty of nature has always been a huge inspiration for me. The colours of flowers, the sound of the Baltic Sea, the unique shapes of tree branches and finally the sunset sky, all these things never fail to impress me. And as much as I enjoy living in a big city, I feel so good when I'm wandering in a forest or a field of flowers and I'm always very excited to travel anywhere. Perhaps that's the reason why landscapes express my ideas the best.



Hubert Gregorczyk | An Autumn Day | 2024

Your painting An Autumn Day was inspired by a poem by Lina Kostenko. How does literature influence your visual language and artistic thinking?

Literature is a huge part of my life as I'm doing my master degree (and I graduated with the bachelor one last year) in Ukrainian Studies specialising in literature. You already know my imagination plays an important role in my creative process and I believe reading a lot of books helps in developing it even more. I always imagine the storyline in my head, even when it's a short poem it makes me think in the language of images. With An Autumn Day the story is even more interesting, because except for the Kostenko's poem a huge role was played by autumn leaves falling around me while I was walking in my area on a random autumn day, it reminded me of that poem and made me want to paint it. In short words literature stimulates my imagination and brings me new ideas to paint.

Music also plays a role in your inspiration, as seen in Jaz Sem Ti Si Veronika. How does music affect your mood and the atmosphere of your paintings?

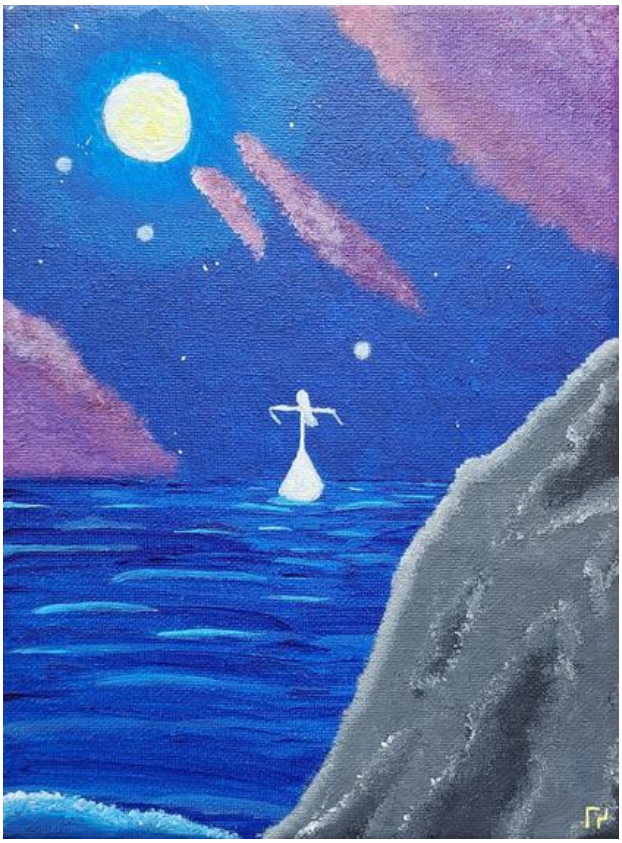
Oh yes, music is one of the main sources of inspiration for me. And just like while reading books I imagine the whole plot, listening to music makes me imagine the story the song talks about. If I don't understand the language the song is sung in (I'm a huge fan of Eurovision, so it happens a lot) I can still imagine some colours, lights or maybe even a whole scenery, but sadly I can't put everything I see in my head on canvas, just one scene. Answering your question, I think music doesn't affect my mood directly, though it helps me regulate my emotions (i.e. when I'm frustrated I listen to some rock/metal etc.). When it comes to the atmosphere of my paintings, well, when a painting is inspired by a certain song I always try to present the atmosphere I feel while listening to that song. But when a painting is not inspired by a song – the music I listen to most likely won't affect its atmosphere. I listen to a lot of dark music while my paintings are still rather bright and colourful.

Your works often combine calm landscapes with deeper emotional or symbolic meanings. Is symbolism an intentional element in your paintings?

The answer is both yes and no. It really depends on a painting, sometimes I prepare a very long note with all the symbols I'd like to include in a painting, and sometimes I just have a picture in my head, I put it on canvas and only then I realise that there are objects that can symbolise something deeper, yet still corresponding with the main message of the artwork. Oh by the way, one of my lecturers once asked me about my paintings and I told her about the deeper meanings behind them and she called me a symbolist, I was very glad to hear that, and later I learnt that one of her scientific interests is actually the language of symbols.

Acrylic paint is your main medium. What do you find most exciting about working with acrylics compared to other techniques?

It's the most comfortable medium for me. You can use it in many different ways and you have a lot of control over it. I think also the effects I can expect from acrylics match my ideas the best. When it comes to other techniques, I gave a try to oil paints once, but I wasn't ready for them yet and the experience wasn't as exciting as I hoped (but I'd love to try it again one day). I enjoyed working with watercolour and gouache paints. I believe these two mediums are good for pieces in which I don't need that much control over the paint.

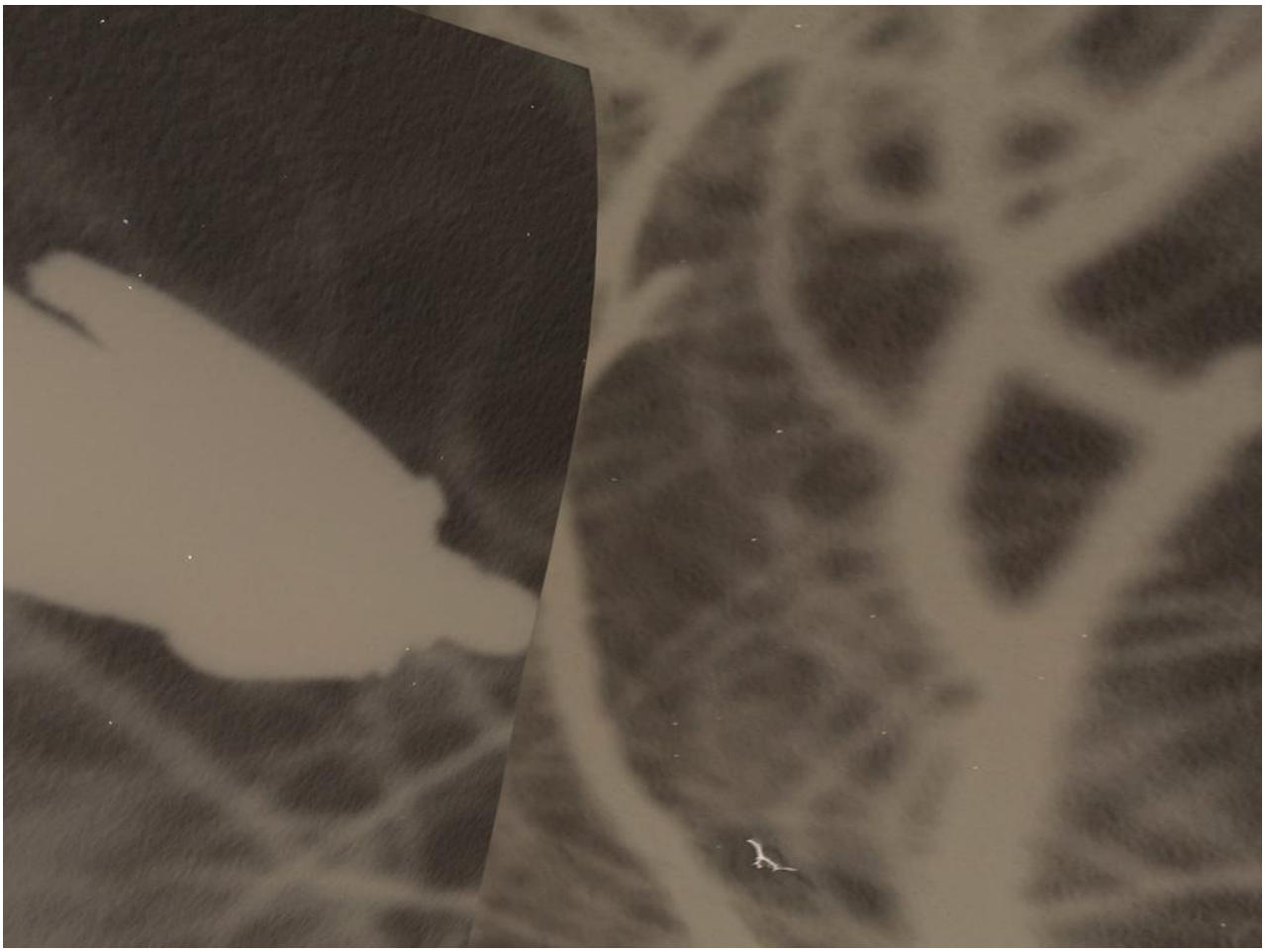


Hubert Gregorczyk | Jaz Sem Ti Si Veronika | 2025

Bing Lu (鲁冰) (b. 1999) is a Chinese photographer from Beijing, China. She received her BFA in Photography from Massachusetts College of Art and Design and her MFA in Photography, Video, and Related Media from the School of Visual Arts in New York. Her practice began with portraiture in Boston. After moving to New York City, Lu expanded her exploration into abstract photography, incorporating alternative processes and material experimentation. Through fragmentation, her work examines how images are constructed, altered and perceived within contemporary visual culture. Her work has been exhibited at Gallery 60 NYC, Syosset Library Gallery, Raynham Hall Museum, and PH21 Photography Gallery, and featured in publications including Float Photo Magazine, FIGGI Magazine, and Roundcube.

Project Statement
'What remains after the image' is my latest ongoing photographic series shaped by the experience of living in separation from a significant other. It is made from archival images exchanged between us, and developed through sustained observation and material experimentation. The photographs go through processes of cutting, folding, dodging, burning, scanning and recombining. Questions of persistence, direction, and what comes next guide each image, informing decisions to preserve, alter, or erase visual information. The images examine how memory shifts under conditions that resist instant resolution, and how emotional presence can continuously firm even when images no longer refer to a specific time or place. A shadow cast across snow, earth after a storm, a path disappearing into fog... From something intimate to the sweeping force of vast and unknowable, each image desires wonder and revelation. The work seeks for how photographic meaning is formed through slowness, friction, and embodied experience, and in what absence makes reveals, rather than what it leaves behind. The series considers photography as a gradual progress that resists instant gratification, and retains the traces of the maker's hand.

Bing Lu | Silhouette



Bing Lu | Silhouette

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