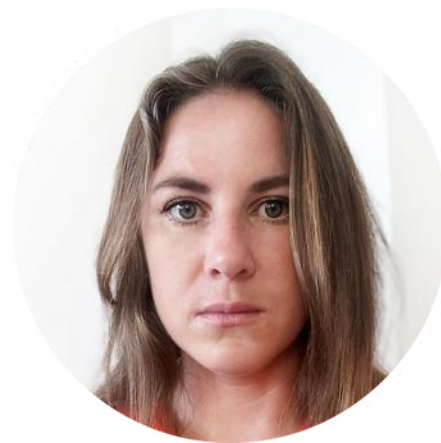


# VISUAL ART JOURNAL





# — *Intro*



**Anna Gvozdeva**

Curator of  
Visual Art Journal

Hello, dear reader,

I'm delighted to welcome you to the new year and confident that this year will bring us all new ideas, inspiration, and the realization of plans. Visual art knows no boundaries; it can be flat, three-dimensional, transformative, elusive. It can be made from natural materials or incorporate ultra-modern technologies we once couldn't even imagine.

An artist is always searching for ways to express themselves and their emotions. And the viewer, through some inexplicable magic, finds a way to understand them. Because regardless of the medium used to convey an idea, there are certain universal strings that, when touched, make everything instantly clear.

Ahead of you lies more than a hundred pages of experiments. Enjoy your reading!

*On the Front Cover:*

**Marcus Frost**

Inthemall

2017

*On the Back Cover:*

**Emma Shleyger**

Luca

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

# — Interview

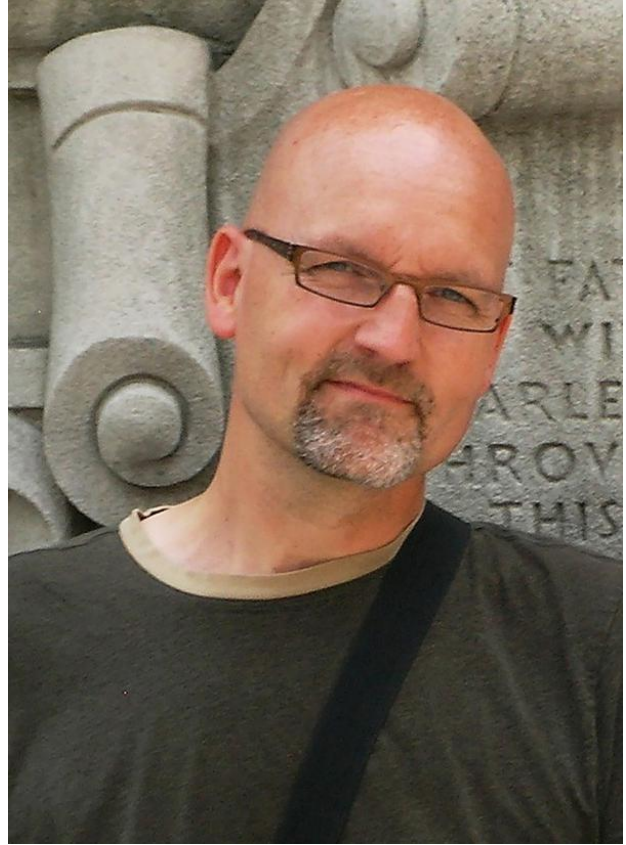
## Jens Vange

**You mentioned being fascinated with light since childhood when you used your Instamatic camera. Can you tell us about a specific memory that sparked your lifelong love for capturing light?**

I remember a summer day when I was probably in sixth grade, sitting on our front porch, mesmerized by a unique cloud show above. They were puffy summer clouds with blue sky above. The sun was hiding behind one of the larger clouds but something in the clouds made the sun's light fan out from behind several clouds with the rays shouting out from behind several clouds, looking like a group of spaceships. I grabbed my pocket camera and took photos to show my friends at school the next day and prove this really happened. Since then I have always kept an eye open for other unique and artful ways that light might present itself.



Jens Vange | Denver CO 003



**How has your experience as an architect shaped your photographic work, especially in terms of observing reflections and distortions?**

As I found more and more unique reflections in urban areas, I became curious why these did not always occur when I drove past some buildings. I knew that there were different pressures inside the buildings and outside depending on the temperature differentials. But how would that affect a stiff sheet of glass? I spoke with a few glass manufacturers I worked with and learned that the newer methods of tempering safety glass, the layers of materials behaved differently depending on temperature along with air pressure. Unfortunately for me, this also means that the best times to take my photographs are on extremely hot and cold days, which I discovered early on in my images from Doha and Minneapolis.

**Magritte, Escher, Monet, and Dali have been influential in your creative journey. Can you share how their work directly or indirectly impacts your photography?**

I've always admired how these artists took ordinary objects and familiar contexts and elements and created other worldly settings and compositions. I love finding reflections, especially large-scale, multi-story ones, that make viewers think the photo must be a collage rather than a single exposure. To note a similarly out of the ordinary dimension of my work, I take photos of what's behind me!

**What is your process for identifying and capturing the "unintended architecture" in urban environments?**

When I travel to a larger city, even ones that I'm familiar with, I first explore Google Earth and the web to evaluate locations of large-scale glass-clad towers, arenas, etc. Then I consider the sun angles and narrow down potential locations and timing. Recently, I have been scouting out multistory parking garages. There are amazing reflections (free of streetlights, people, etc.) a several stories above street level that most people don't even notice.

Once on location, I walk. And walk. looking up and down, sideways, and behind me, pausing every few steps. Reflections are fleeting and easily missed within a foot or two. When I find a promising view, I do the photographer's waltz: side-to-side shuffle, then forward and back, up and down to find the perfect view. I capture a rough composition on site, then work through the fine-tuning of crops, lighting, and color at home to recreate what I saw. There are too many distractions with people, cars, etc. moving around me to not pay attention to my surroundings for too long.

**You use a Sony A7iii and sometimes an iPhone for its immediacy. How does your choice of camera influence the outcome of your work?**

My first reflection photos were taken with my iPhone. They were decent quality, but feedback I received was that the long-distance shots were "soft." So, I soon invested in the Sony with a long telephoto lens. This has given me the flexibility to take shots within a few yards or across a harbor. I do miss the stealth of the iPhone. Walking around a crowded city sidewalk with a fully extended telephoto zoom lens always looks suspicious and makes me self-conscious. But if it's a



Jens Vange | Minneapolis MN 059

great shot, I power through the angst. I have often been approached by security guards asking, "whatcha doing?" But I'm friendly and open, and once I point out the reflection I'm shooting, they get quite interested and talkative. I still use my cell phone if I come across an unexpected view while out and about and hope for the best!

**Your work involves vantage points in major cities worldwide. Are there particular cities or buildings that you feel lend themselves best to your style of photography?**

Yes, large cities like San Francisco, Atlanta, Minneapolis, etc. are ideal because they typically have numerous glass towers, which are usually the canvas for the reflections of nearby buildings. They also tend to have numerous early 19th century buildings whose elaborate detailing can make for quite unique reflections. The city that really kickstarted this body of work was Doha, in Qatar. I was on a work trip and had six hours to kill one afternoon. It was crazy hot, and the streets downtown were deserted. This was also a relief, because you can't take pictures of people. I was relieved I had my iPhone there because it was very discreet. Every street was a fantasyland with otherworldly skyscrapers that inspired me every time I turned a corner. I could have spent a week there!



Jens Vange | Minneapolis MN 026

## Daniel Cleal

I'm a Black and White Caribbean British Graphic Artist born and raised in London. Currently living in West Florida. I'd say my art is somewhat reflects my life growing up in the 90's and my philosophy. That intertwines various cultures and spheres, marked by intense, luminous, and vivid collisions.

### *Artist Statement*

My principle theme of my paintings are an exploration of colour theory and how it can offer forms of enlightenment. I'd describe my painting style as an abstract lo-fi vibe that explores the way life, colours and changes our soul. How experiences, environment, emotions. That have been captured. Whether bright, vibrant and playful or dark, trauma or chaotic can always offer nothing or a form of awakening.





# — Interview

## Andy Dass

**Can you describe the inspiration behind your planetary paintings? How do they reflect the concept of an "active mind"?**

The concept for my planetary paintings came to me one day when I was overthinking, as usual. I thought to myself, how can I translate this idea of overthinking onto a canvas? The phrase "in his own world" came to mind, and I started painting literal planets as symbolism. At the time of inception, I was mostly creating figurative character-based works, so the planetary paintings became a new challenge for me. The compositions are always bold and jarring. When we overthink, we tend to receive thoughts in waves, or we dwell on the same thing repeatedly. I wanted the compositions in these paintings to reflect the idea of chaos in our minds. This is not to say that these paintings are only about "being in your own world," but this concept serves as inspiration as this style continues to evolve, and viewers alike have their own interpretations.

**Your work often evokes nostalgia. What specific childhood memories or moments influence your art the most?**



Andy Dass | Gothside



I grew up in the eighties and nineties, and much like anyone born in their respective era, I have fond memories of the times I experienced. To this day, everything from pop culture to fashion and films continues to draw inspiration from the eighties and nineties. I guess my artwork is somewhat a byproduct of these eras as well, but done with a modern painting style. I like to say, "Modern nostalgia," if that makes sense. My fondest memories are the simplest, and these memories inspire my art. I recall spending time as a child, playing all day in the park with friends, shooting hoops on basketball courts, watching Saturday morning cartoons, and buying exclusive fashion garments from barbershops, then coming home from school to enjoy a home-cooked meal from my mother.

**How do elements from 90s pop culture, music, and Saturday morning cartoons shape your visual style?**

The 90s were all about bold colors. Neon, purple, and turquoise can be seen everywhere in 90s artwork, from album covers to animation to retro-style posters. I like to draw inspiration from these colors and influences in my work. Fantasy, surrealism, and a sort of childlike naivety and playfulness are used to convey feelings of nostalgia. I like the idea of making paintings look like illustrations, my goal is to evoke emotions and feelings from a time when life was simpler and carefree.

**Can you explain how you balance humor, satire, and thought-provoking themes in your artworks?**

Life is just more enjoyable when we can all laugh together. I try to incorporate an element of silliness into my work, but on closer inspection, you can delve a



little deeper. I never want to take myself too seriously; I think there is enough of that in the art world already. For instance, the trees in my surreal landscapes have folds of fat on them, which can be humorous or disturbing. This is up to the viewer to decide. Some of my illustrative work has touched on mental illness, addressing coping with depressive thoughts and anxiety—stuff we all go through at some point.

**Your paintings transport viewers to whimsical worlds. How do you approach creating these imaginative universes?**

We all have those days when we just want to be somewhere else. I try to let my imagination run wild and think to myself: if I could create my own paradise or my own place to escape to, what would that look like? What can I create that would make someone want to envision themselves visiting there? For my landscapes, I always start with sketches and choose the one I am feeling at the moment. As for my planetary abstracts, these are sketched directly onto the canvas with no prior sketch, and I figure it out. This is to have different approaches to keep things interesting and challenging. I also pride myself on my color mixing, coming up with unique palettes for each painting and always mixing most of my colors before I begin to paint, rather than using them directly from the bottle.

**Could you elaborate on the symbolic significance of the trees, houses, and patterns in your surreal landscapes?**

Trees symbolize life. They play a role in providing us



Andy Dass | The Offering | 2021



Andy Dass | Befriending Demonz

oxygen, bearing fruit, and beautifying our world. My trees are somewhat deformed and almost human-like in their appearance; they are fat and imperfect but beautiful. We are all flawed, yet we do our best every day, and I guess my surreal trees somewhat represent this idea of perseverance. The houses represent the old homes we grew up in, our grandmother's house, or perhaps a close relative, a neighbor, upbringing, and our fondest memories locked inside these houses. Patterns are everywhere in our world, from fashion garments to architecture; even insects and animals adorn intricate patterns. Still, I guess the patterns in my landscapes resemble those on quilts—comforting.

**What role does collaboration play in your artistic journey, such as mural painting or working with Fashion Fights Cancer?**

I began my artistic journey by collaborating with a mural collective, which essentially gave me the courage to paint in front of others and learn how to work with fellow artists. I met artists from all walks of life within the graffiti, street art, and contemporary art scenes and learned a great deal from them. Collaboration is a fantastic way to not only acquire new skills but also to see art from different perspectives beyond your own creative biases. I always strive to give back when I can; Fashion Fights Cancer has been an excellent initiative to work with, as it collaborates with both designers and artists alike. I am happy to be a part of their family, helping those in need.

# — Interview

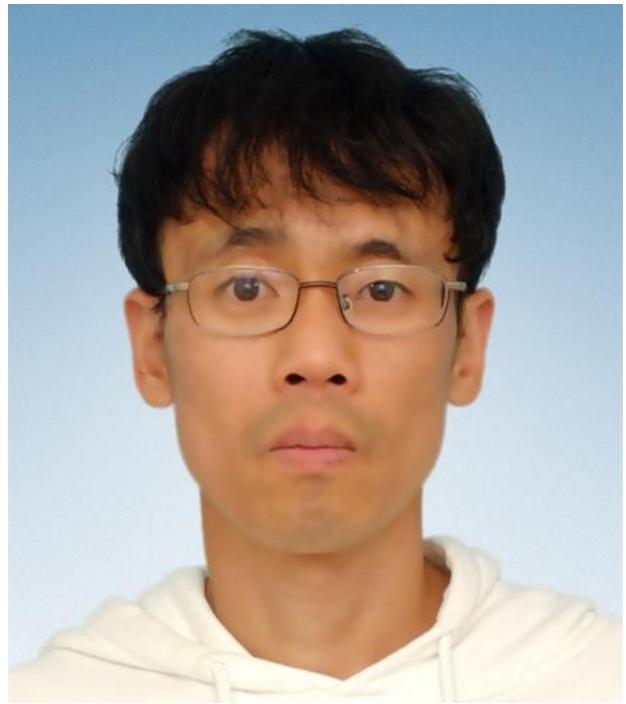
## Kazuhisa Oishi

**You started photography as a hobby, focusing on flowers. How did encountering Japanese wildflowers in 2020 change your perspective as a photographer?**

Before 2020, I mainly photographed seasonal flowers planted in botanical gardens, and even then, I enjoyed interacting with the flowers and taking pictures with my camera, but these were not professional activities, but simply one area of my expressive activities as a hobby. When I encountered Kumagaisou in my hometown in 2020, my perspective as a photographer changed from horticultural flowers to capturing the beauty of wildflowers, as well as their strength, gentleness, robustness, delicacy, and transience from my own perspective in photographs, and I shared my work with people all over the world on social media.

**What fascinates you the most about Japan's wildflowers, and how do you choose which flowers to photograph?**

Wildflowers bud, bloom, bear fruit, and leave offspring for the next generation, without being told to do so by anyone else, based on the programs built into their genes. They never exist to gain anyone's approval. I feel a sense of mystery, strength, robustness, beauty, and awe towards the entire cycle of life of wildflowers. When choosing wildflowers to photograph, I gather all kinds of information in advance, such as my schedule, the weather in the wildflower's habitat, and flowering



information, and make a comprehensive decision.

**Japan is famous for its four distinct seasons. Which season do you find the most inspiring for your work, and why?**

The seasons that inspire me the most for my work are summer and spring. In spring, wildflowers wake up from their sleep after a long winter, and as if celebrating the long-awaited spring, they bloom beautifully, gracefully, and elegantly, celebrating the joy of spring with their whole body. Spring is the season with the most wildflowers in bloom. The season progresses steadily with each passing day, and wildflowers bloom one after another. Even if I wanted to photograph all the wildflowers, I wouldn't be able to do so, so it's a busy and very enjoyable season for photography.

In Japan, the summer season is called early summer from late May, and the rainy season called the rainy season is from June to mid-July. When the rainy season ends in late July, the full-fledged summer season arrives. In the summer, the snow melts in the subalpine and alpine zones of Japan, and alpine plants are in full bloom. Alpine plants live in environments that are too harsh for humans to settle in most seasons other than summer. I also climb mountains in alpine zones at altitudes of over 2,000 meters. I am attracted to the beauty, strength, and fragility of the vitality of the alpine plants that grow in the alpine zone. I want to capture and share with you a glimpse into the lives of these plants as they struggle to survive in harsh environments.

**Your photographs beautifully capture not only flowers but also their surrounding landscapes.**

Kazuhisa Oishi | Rapeseed blossom in full bloom and Mt. Fuji | 2022



### How important is the environment in your photography?

In my photography style, the scenery and environment surrounding the wildflower subject are closely linked and are one of the most important elements. It is no exaggeration to say that the quality, theme, message, story, and uniqueness of the work are determined by the quality of the scenery and environment. By skillfully incorporating the scenery surrounding the wildflower subject, I believe it is easier to convey to the viewer of the photo the season, weather, location, and natural environment in which the wildflower blooms, allowing them to enjoy the work on a deeper level.

### Shizuoka Prefecture, where you grew up, has a rich natural environment, including Mt. Fuji. How does your connection to your birthplace influence your work?

Shizuoka Prefecture, where I was born and raised, has a warm climate all year round, stretches 140 km from east to west, and is rich in beautiful nature, including Lake Hamana, the Izu Peninsula, Mt. Fuji, the Southern Alps, Suruga Bay, home to a rich diversity of marine life, and numerous mountains. Having the beautiful nature of Shizuoka Prefecture so close to me was a commonplace sight for me. I grew up surrounded by beautiful nature, which nurtured the delicate sensibilities necessary for a photographer, gave me the opportunity to encounter wildflowers later in life, and I think this formed the foundation of my career as a photographer to this day.

### Your images reveal a deep sensitivity to nature. How do you approach capturing the essence of a flower or a landscape?

To capture the true essence of wildflowers, I aim my lens at them from the same eye level as the plants. As I aim my lens at them and take pictures, I have a conversation with them, concentrating my mind and sharpening my sensibilities to listen to what they are trying to tell us. With landscapes, I don't think about moments when I thought they were beautiful with my own eyes, but rather I just let my senses guide me when I press the shutter.



### Can you share a particularly memorable experience or story behind one of your photographs?

If I had to pick one memorable experience or story from my photography, it would be my encounter with Kitadakesou, Takanemantema, and Kanran. My encounter with Kitadakesou was when I first started climbing high mountains in earnest in 2022, when someone told me that Kitadakesou, an endemic species, grows wild on Kitadake in the Southern Alps. The Kitadakesou in the photo was pure white and pretty, and I was immediately drawn to its charm, and I had a strong desire to climb Kitadake at least once in my life and capture Kitadakesou with my own camera. The following year, in late June 2023, I had the opportunity to climb Mt. Kitadake in the Southern Alps, and the weather was perfect and I was able to take photos of Kitadakesou.

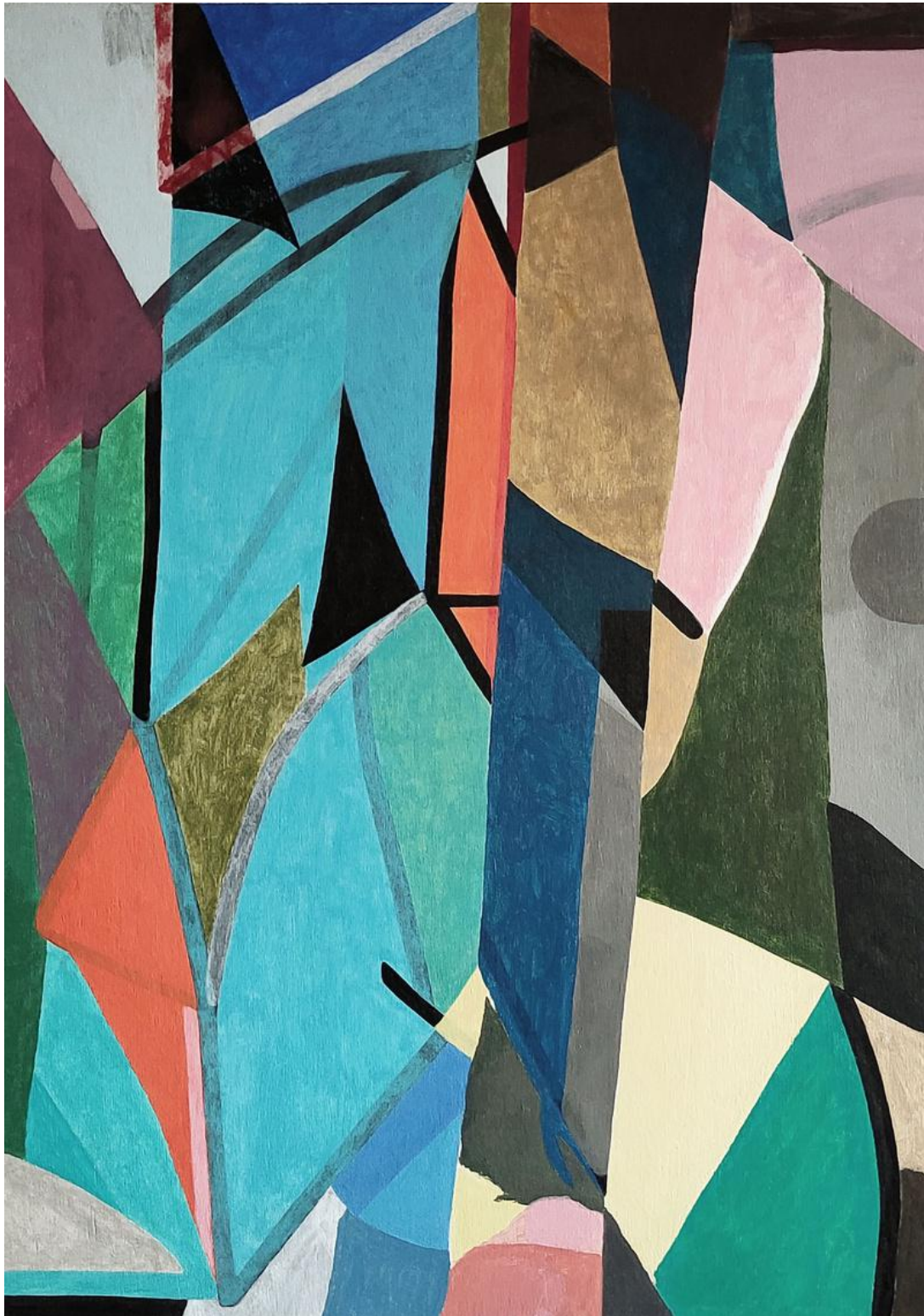
I knew about Takanemantema in 2022, but I was lucky enough to make a reservation at a mountain hut in late July of this year, 2024. Although it was past its peak, I was able to take a photo of Takanemantema, which is very rare in Japan, thanks to the good weather. However, Takanemantema is said to have fewer than 100 plants in Japan, and is also designated as an endangered species by the Ministry of the Environment. It was also an opportunity to seriously think about what we need to do to pass this species on to future generations.

Kanran is one of the famous wildflowers that has been highly prized among wildflower lovers in Japan for a long time and is traded at high prices. However, it is said that wild species are almost never seen in their natural habitat, and they are over-harvested for viewing purposes and are designated as an endangered species by the Ministry of the Environment. One day, the chance to see kanran suddenly came. I received information from a flower friend I know that kanran was blooming, and he guided me around, so I was able to see the real kanran. It was a very big and precious opportunity, as the chance to see a real kanran in bloom probably doesn't come often in a lifetime. Unfortunately, many of the wild plants that grow naturally in Japan are also victims of theft by unscrupulous people. It was also an opportunity to think about what can be done to protect wild plants from theft.



## Westley James Young

After graduating from City & Guilds Art School, London in 2005, I pursued a career as a teacher until starting to paint again in 2019.



Westley James Young | Crag | 2022



## — Interview

# Arkadiusz Gepchard

**Can you share the journey of your relationship with photography, from your early experiments in the bathroom darkroom to your current surrealist studio works?**

I began my journey with photography in 1980, when I took my first roll of film (which I still have to this day). Back then, learning came from books and mistakes. After assembling my darkroom equipment, I started making prints in my own bathroom, working only at night while everyone in the house was asleep. The enlarger was set up on the washing machine, and the photos were rinsed in the bathtub. Over the years, I gained experience and developed my skills, starting with nature photography and later photographing family and friends. I kept raising the bar for myself, taking increasingly challenging photos. After many years, I realized that I enjoy studio photography the most. Now, I control every aspect of an image, from concept to post-production. Sometimes, I spend weeks working on a single photograph. My apartment is only 26 square meters, and my studio measures 2.80 by 2.50 meters. Despite the limited space, I manage just fine.



Arkadiusz Gepchard | Joker | 2022



Arkadiusz Gepchard | Punk | 2020

**What drew you to self-portraiture during the Covid-19 lockdown, and how did this experience transform your perception of yourself?**

During the lockdown, confined within four walls without physical contact with others, I had to find ways to stay sane. To grow, one must take lots of photos. I started by photographing hands and then moved on to creating surreal images. Previously, I disliked my appearance, but as I began taking self-portraits, I came to terms with it: "This is how I look, and that's fine." Too much here, too little there, normal, and I accept it. Thanks to this process, I began creating images tailored to my face, some humorous, others shocking.

**Your surrealist self-portraits incorporate humor and creativity. What inspires your choice of themes and props for these photographs?**

My first self-portrait was titled Extreme Sports, and I had a great time creating it while gaining valuable experience. Many of my portraits are inspired by fictional and cinematic characters. I try to incorporate a touch of humor into each photo because laughter is the best medicine. Creativity and inspiration come and go; sometimes, my mind is blank, while at other times, I have so many ideas that my head feels like it might burst. Often, I'll see a character or object, and my mind starts racing with ideas on how to incorporate it into a photo, and then I just do it. I design and create my

own props from materials found in dumpsters: cardboard, sticks, wires, etc. Some projects, like the mask and breastplate for Vader, take weeks to complete, while others, like the katana sword, only take a few hours. I also enjoy using theatrical makeup, especially for wounds and body injuries (as seen in the photo Siberia).

**How does your background in analog photography influence the way you approach digital photography today?**

I began my work with an analog camera, where there were only 36 frames, so choosing the right composition was crucial. With no automation and everything set manually, I never knew if the shot turned out until I developed the film in the darkroom days later. From that time, I've retained the habit of carefully framing and shooting with intention, even though I now work with digital cameras. While digital photography is undoubtedly easier, I still prefer manual settings, which give me greater control over the final result.

**You've participated in 44 exhibitions across Europe and North America. Which of these experiences has been the most memorable for you, and why?**

I've been fortunate that my photos have been recognized in many competitions, although I have yet to win first place, there's always more work to do. My solo exhibitions have covered various themes, from mountain landscapes to concert photos to nudes. Each exhibition brings immense satisfaction, particularly the interaction with viewers and hearing their thoughts about my work. The greatest reward is receiving news that, out of thousands of entries, my photo has been appreciated.

**What role does lighting play in your photography, and how do you use it to convey emotion or atmosphere?**



Arkadiusz Gepchard  
Darth Vader  
2024



Arkadiusz Gepchard  
Tea time  
2023

In my opinion, good lighting accounts for 80% of a successful photo. I love experimenting with light, which allows me to present a model in a unique or ordinary way. I frequently experiment with different lighting setups and diffusers. I particularly enjoy high-contrast lighting, transitioning from full illumination to complete darkness. By modifying the light appropriately, I can highlight the details and features of my subjects. Portraits and nudes often turn out beautifully, and I prefer minimalism, using a black background to keep the viewer's focus on the subject. In my self-portraits, I use one or two lights with a softbox and a honeycomb grid. This setup provides directional lighting that perfectly suits my style.

**How has living in France influenced your artistic style or subject matter?**

Since moving to France in 2015, I've been exposed to countless artistic stimuli, visiting many museums and seeing works of art I had studied in school. However, this hasn't significantly influenced my work, with a few exceptions. I've created two self-portraits inspired by great masterpieces: The Birth of Venus by Sandro Botticelli and The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp by Rembrandt. Even though my photos can be challenging to interpret, I create them with passion and always try to incorporate a bit of humor and satire. Despite this, I stick to my own style, which I would describe as "humorous surrealism."

**Maja Sajnkär**, born in Celje, Slovenia, is a watercolourist with a BA in Art Pedagogy (University of Maribor) and MFA in Stop motion animation from Arthouse college in Ljubljana, where she initially studied painting. She has had some minor exhibitions at local bars (MCC, KUD Underground, Tamkouciri, Spital), historical castle in Novo Celje and Hypo bank in Ljubljana in the years from 2007 to 2014, but was mostly painting without exhibiting and working on separate creative projects while later working as a restoration artist at Gnom, a firm specialised in restoring cultural heritage. Lately she has been fully focused on her own painting explorations, mainly working with watercolours. In December 2024 she participated in an exhibition in Boomer gallery in London with three of her works.

*Artist Statement*

This is a series of paintings I've made in a quite turbulent and transcendental personal storm, so they are very emotional and expressive, and very personal to me. More than what actually happened I depicted the journey through all sorts of strong feelings into the calm afterwards. In the process I also started choosing colours I wouldn't normally pick, contrasting my more usual timid colour harmonies with bright orange and magenta.







# — Interview

## Hira Jalil

### How do you balance your dual life as a scientist and an artist?

“Scientist by day and artist for a lifetime,” is a quote I came up with because that is what I do. I prioritise most of my day on my research and speaking to patients. So any time I have outside of that, I will always be dedicated to my photography: taking photographs, developing the film, planning my social media content, interacting with my followers on Instagram and looking for exhibition opportunities. I am lucky I love what I do both as a scientist and an artist so fitting all of that in 24 hours of my day is not impossible.

(Plus I never leave the house without my camera. If you look for beauty, you will always find it anywhere!)



Hira Jalil | Santorini in gold



### How does your scientific research influence your artistic vision and vice versa?

Greatly! Arts and sciences both allow me to integrate various skills into my investigative and creative processes in order to find new approaches, solutions and new ideas. Scientists and artists must be able to think outside the box and explore innovative possibilities using various thinking skills.

As a scientist, I analyse data and observations to formulate meaningful conclusions, and theories and evaluate the validity of theories and hypotheses. With the research findings, I disseminate knowledge and promote understanding to people.

As an artist, I analyse photo composition and colours to create harmonious work. I am constantly evaluating my work, seeking coherence, meaning, and emotional impact, and I aim to engage and provoke responses from viewers.

Both allow me to focus on observations and perception to capture details, ideas and understanding of the world. That is the beauty of it, they simply just work together harmoniously.

### What drew you to analog photography, and what does it mean to you compared to digital methods?

I grew up with analog cameras in the 90s! I love browsing through my old photos and each time I do that, I can still feel the moment and feelings as if I went back in time. That is when I knew I had to bring back this feeling again in the present day. I live alone far from my loved ones so capturing moments with them on film is a way to keep them close to me. The entire process of analog photography is so special. From buying your film, loading it into your camera,

and taking each photo mindfully as you typically only have about 36 shots per roll and the best part is developing the film! The element of surprise is also huge! You don't know how the photo will turn out and sometimes, you don't even know what you will find! Unlike in digital where you can take multiple shots and you also have the ability to browse through photos you have taken. I guess, analog photography reminds me to slow down in this fast-paced world. You take the time with the entire process to make something beautiful.

### **Can you share how you select and compose your shots?**

2024 was a year of experimenting (just like my scientific research!) I love photographing everything, from people to objects to landscapes and despite the amazing responses I get on social media, it feels off and doesn't feel like I am telling a story. Not until recently when I figured out street photography is my style. I don't compose my shots. If I see something that sparks my curiosity and wonder and makes my heart feel warm, I will then shoot it. Planning your shots feels scripted and doesn't feel right when you're trying to capture the real present moment. Even if the photos turn out blurry or out of focus, it only makes it special in its way. Took me a while to appreciate the imperfections. But if you don't like your work, how can others appreciate it?

### **You describe your photography as "painting with natural light". Could you elaborate on this concept?**



Hira Jalil | The magic of meteorora



Hira Jalil | Lost in thoughts

I absolutely love playing with sunlight in my photography! If I am a painter, those golden rays are my favourite watercolour to use. You almost don't see me photographing anything indoors or even at night. It made the photos feel warmer than the moment itself and, have I mentioned how much I love sunlight? Even my favourite film stock is "Kodak Gold 200."

### **What does timelessness in your photography signify for you as an artist?**

I want to be able to tell beautiful stories through my photos that will last for hundreds of decades to come. Just like how I get to re-live my childhood all over again through my old photographs, I hope others can do the same in the future too when they look at my work especially long after they have forgotten everything.

### **What challenges do you face in merging your scientific career and artistic passions?**

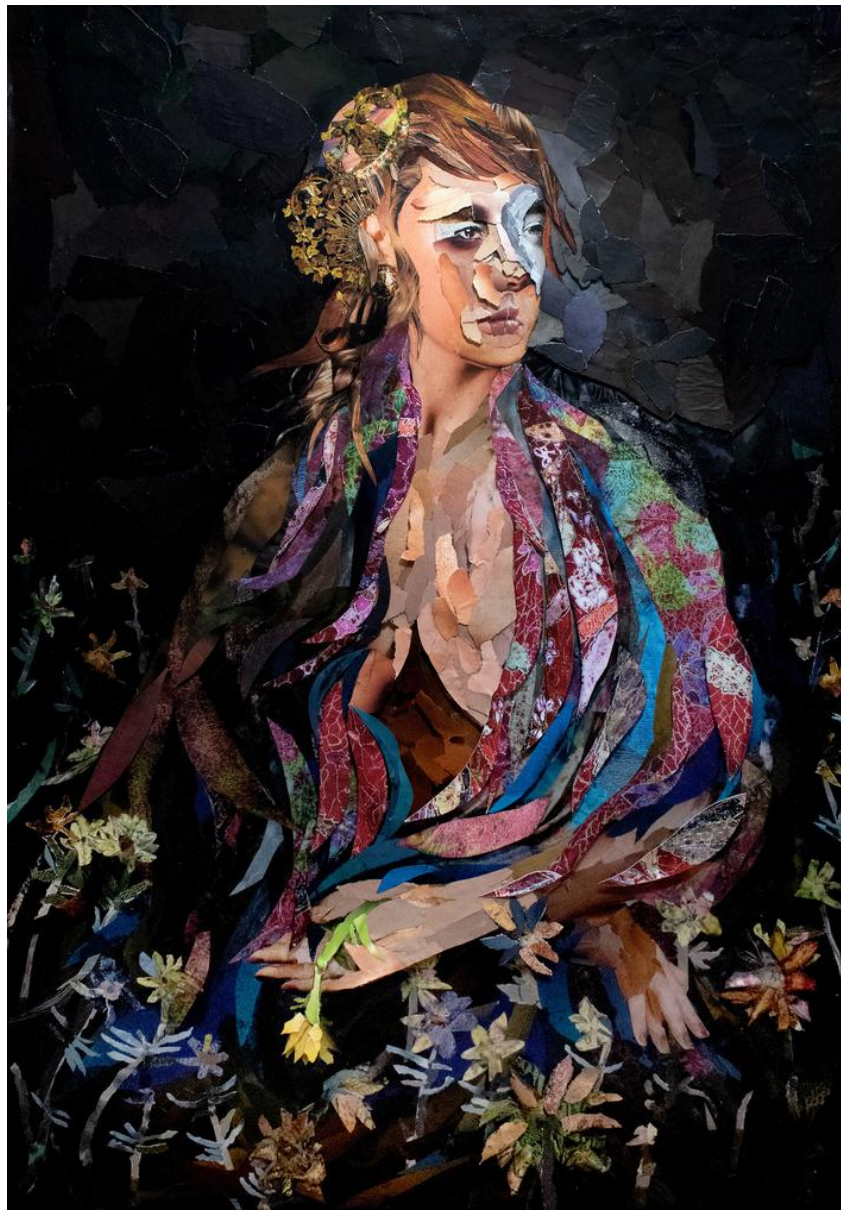
Thankfully I have not experienced any big challenges and I don't think there ever will be as the marriage of science and art truly makes wonder. They both compliment my career and passion and I am grateful for that. There are days when it gets difficult at work and finding the drive to photograph something feels hard and forceful. When I am not enjoying or feeling the moment, the photos will not turn out well. Timing in winter can be a challenge too. Days are short and thus most of the time when it is bright outside, I will be indoors working on my research and thus missing capturing the golden moments.

## Agnieszka Kicińska

I was born in 1996 in Bytów, Poland. In 2016, I chose Graphic Design at the Faculty of Graphics of the Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk. In the third year of study, I focused on works made of manual techniques, without the use of graphic programs, mainly works in collage and assemblage techniques. In 2019, I created my first larger series of works using this technique, entitled: nudity. This cycle initiated an interest in symbolic, existential and poetic art. This gave rise to more in-depth work on associative and metaphorical techniques, as well as a more thorough examination of the object – its meaning, features, appearance and diversity. The result of this work was another series of works created mainly in the assemblage technique – Of Poles Self Portrait. This cycle was created as part of a master's degree diploma and its referred to Polish traditions and famous personalities. In addition to creating collage and assemblage, I also do ink drawings and poetry.

### Artist Statement

Like the highest melodic voice in the choir, like the face of a martyr full of tragedy, like the moment of the greatest happiness and like the moment of inevitable falling into darkness, I would like to be a beauty for this world and a moment of reflection in such an obtrusive blind ticking of our mind.



Agnieszka Kicinska | Aphrodite | 2023



# — Interview

## Amy Yoshitsu

**Your work often addresses the intersections of power, economics, labor, and race. How do you navigate such complex topics while ensuring accessibility for your audience?**

Accessibility is always on my mind; I strive to create inroads for viewers through materials, colors, and imagery. In my photo-based sculptures and manipulated photos, images of publicly visible sights—city street objects, building facades, landscapes off freeways, construction zones, and industrial structures—include visuals that anyone can recognize and have associations with. I elevate these as sites of power and labor and hierarchical systems; they act as both self and collective portraits. A new viewer may react to the imagery, the scale, the movement, the busyness of a multitude of cut-outs that are twisted and sewn together. My work strives to nudge viewers to think about their own perception of their environment, their context. The Earth and what we have done on it, to it, in it, and (not often enough) with it, is what we are of. In *Inherited and Re-made*, a recent installation of 84 soft sculpture words—making up 9 quotations from family members and primary source documents (Congressional speeches, historical diaries, the U.S. Constitution, Executive Order 9066, and more)—the points of entry are the many shades and tints of yellow, the softness of the objects, and the experience of walking through strings of stuffed words. When viewers slow down to take in the language made

Amy Yoshitsu | *Inherited and Re-made* | 2024



Amy Yoshitsu | *Return and Schedule Self-Interest* | 2023

physical and learn the context, they start to understand the dialogue between global hierarchical systems and my family system.

**Sewing and textiles play a significant role in your practice. What drew you to these mediums, and how do they help convey the emotional and systemic narratives in your work?**

Sewing was taught to me at a young age by my mother and grandmother, the latter of whom was a seamstress after being Interned during World War II as a Japanese-American. I love the strength of the connection created through sewing, the conceptual value that threads provide, and that sewing, as a method, can be applied to many materials (not just fabric). As my work has become more language oriented, embodying text in its fellow language derivative, textile (from *texere*, to weave), reinforces the emotions, the delicacy, the flexibility, the power of our bedrock human communication system. The properties, uses and production of textile are parallel to thinking about the systems that affect us all and how they do so on individual and interpersonal levels. Fabric, cloth, and woven objects are versatile: they can range in color and texture, be decorative, or provide infrastructure and utilitarian functions. Textiles are often associated with the body and the domestic, and have a long and continuing history in the production of objects—from local, hand sewn

garments to industrialization to modern mass consumption and waste. The numerous threads that interlock to create a weave mirror how systems—language, social systems, physical infrastructural, the body—are dependent on each thread, each component, each individual.

**How has your personal heritage and identity as an Asian-American shaped the narratives and imagery in your art?**

My lineage drives my practice. Different threads of my family migrated to the US in the late 19th century (pre-WWI), early 20th century (between WWI and WWII), and mid 20th century (post WWII). Some of my ancestors' assimilative experiences in the US involved being the only or one of a few in their local geography, or the struggle of always being an outsider to either world—always in-between, never in. My inheritance has been an amalgamation of internalized shame of never being enough, and a hypersensitivity to all the ways that, within the US's hierarchical system, my assigned racial category is made a wedge between the two poles. My art practice has been the outlet for me to understand and unpack, a method towards healing. In the statement for my most recent installation, *Inherited and Re-made*, I wrote the following: Quotations from family members are visually signaled through machine-sewed, single-use plastic detritus textile. I make sense of these words as expressions of intergenerational trauma, internalization of hierarchies, and the coping with confusion as a result of immigration. For example, "It's understood" was commonly spoken during my upbringing to indicate that communication is not necessary as one should express their understanding of and love for family through enactment of expected behaviors and choices. These desires reflect the results of many strands of my lineage (the earliest starting in the 1890s) undergoing the process of assimilation—implicitly forced expeditions to discover and categorize what is normal (and not normal). Furthermore, in *Inherited and Re-made*, I include quotations from Executive Order 9066 "any or all persons may be excluded" and from Article 1, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution "three fifths of all other Persons". Because I am interested in learning and talking about the processes of creation, derivation and belief around key social infrastructures, such as race, my work often returns to the racial caste system embedded in the founding of the U.S., and in the roots of colonialism and capitalism that have become the undergirding of our contemporary context. I situate my family, some of whom were forced into Internment Camps, under EO 9066, as part of the narrative of the U.S., which began with genocide and chattel slavery. I seek to acknowledge and honor that my conditions



Amy Yoshitsu | Mountain Arrange | 2022

and ancestral story are intertwined with, echoes of, and rhyme with those of many, many other humans past, present and future.

**Your pieces deconstruct societal structures like taxation, electrical grids, and "racecraft." What research or processes go into representing these abstract concepts visually?**

Learning and understanding historical derivations are key to deconstructing social, economic, physical infrastructures. The mere existence of a creation process indicates the human-made intentionality driving control-seeking hierarchies, and the resources and effort placed into perpetuating them. I am fascinated by the histories of and theories about race, gender, capitalism and economic systems, climate denialism and its crisis, etc. I love reading and researching books, articles, primary source documents, related creations, and more, when preparing to make work about a specific topic (of the web of interconnected systems). Sometimes the research itself becomes the work. For example, *Return and Schedule Self-Interest* came about from reading Dorothy Brown's *The Whiteness of Wealth*, which details how the US tax system has been shaped by and is itself a tool that reinforces the US's racial hierarchy. I started reviewing the IRS instructions and forms both from the first years that personal tax returns were required, and from the past few years. This process led me to digitally modify 2022's Form 1040 by removing all numbers and words. Now with only lines and geometric shapes, the forms held abstraction, repetition, and became a site of meaninglessness onto which viewers were asked to fill in the meaning. I started experimenting materially and employed sewing as a drawing tool to facilitate increased scale. The natural linen, on which the

geometric pattern of the forms are embroidered, provided intimacy, creativity, a sense of fragility to government documents that are usually associated with anxiety, avoidance, dispassion and rigidity.

**Your works often reflect on diasporic and assimilative experiences. What insights do you hope to bring to your audience through these explorations?**

The private feelings of shame, guilt, confusion, and the mental and physical states of being isolated, can be some of the negative outcomes related to lineages and experiences impacted by diaspora, assimilation, colonization and imperialism. These painful seeds are often the initial driving forces of my projects. By expressing my perspective as I navigate the world, sharing snippets of my family history, and unpacking topics that have been the center of arguments and justifications during my upbringing, I reflect on the interconnections between my schema, and systemic

hierarchies and conditions. The processes of research, experimentation and reflection, embedded in creation, gifts me a path towards acceptance, compassion, and understanding for myself and my lineage. My work also seeks to expand beyond me by integrating materials, techniques, images that ask the viewer to simultaneously think about the interplay between a subject (me, them, their loved one) and the collective within capitalism, race, the allocation and use of space and resources, and more.

**How has your academic background at Harvard and CalArts influenced your perspective on art-making and critical thinking?**

The requirement and ability to study from multiple fields as an undergrad at Harvard, while focusing primarily on studio art and visual studies, laid the foundation for my practice to output objects and images after digesting and integrating concepts, observations, data, and hypothesis from history,







psychology, sociology, aesthetics, philosophy, economics, etc.

I am so grateful to the faculty and the visiting artists (of both institutions) who stewarded productive critiques, shared about their unique journeys, and exposed me to the approaches, contexts and choices of past and contemporary artists. These learnings have been integral to how I tackle concepts, research, materials, and how I talk about my work. Many of the artists I studied during my schooling continue to be ones that I think about a lot and that inspire my current practice: Agnes Martin, Eva Hesse, Nancy Rubins, Richard Tuttle, Gordon Matta-Clark to name a few.

My more recent works have direct conceptual throughlines to the sculptures and installations I made in my student years. In fact, I have been going back to my old creations and repurposing some of my past material choices for a series of detritus sculptures I am currently building.

**You've participated in various residencies across the U.S. How have these experiences shaped your artistic development or introduced new ideas into your practice?**

I deeply appreciate all the residencies and communities in which I have participated. From each residency, I have made life-long friends and art comrades. When I started to direct my focus more onto my art practice in 2020 and 2021, I did wonder if it was important for me to complete my MFA. Given the cost of formal education, I decided to throw myself instead into residencies and alternative art communities locally, nationally and online. I love that residencies can expose artists to practices of all kinds (both near and far from one's own medium and craft); can help artists sharpen their own point of view through the process of presentations, critiques and conversations; and can help artists learn about the unique paths each creator takes based on their geographic, family and economic circumstances. Through the time, space, focus, and opportunity for studio visits during a residency, each experience has moved a series or project forward. For example, I was able to make material progress on and built a maquette for *Inherited and Re-made* while at Vermont Studio Center in Spring 2023. I built, completed and presented the finished version of the installation as the result of *Vox Populi's* residency in Fall 2024 in Philadelphia, PA.

**Stéphanie Labé** is 49 years old. She lives in southwest of France. She has always been attracted to professions related to creativity. She has written several books, created scenographies for museums, led innovation workshops... But she has also worked in video games, in a casino and digital strategies! She has been practicing photography for 30 years for pleasure and since 2021 as part of an artistic approach. She now wants to devote herself entirely to photography, her passion.

#### *Artist Statement*

Having a strong sensitivity to Nature, she seeks beauty in the delicacy of a flower or the poetry of a flight of birds. Very inspired by the sobriety of Asian art, she leaves a lot of space for emptiness and values beauty in simplicity. Her photographs are made digitally, then transformed on a case-by-case basis. Her series are intended to offer a captivating universe where each image has its own energy and transmits a specific message to the viewer. The two images are part of the ongoing series "Inner Worlds". Presentation: "Man is not this external being who builds his sandcastle on an abandoned beach. He is the most sensitive, most vital part of the living Universe; it is to him that nature whispers its most constant desires, its most buried secrets. A reversal of perspective then takes place. While man becomes the interior of the landscape, the latter becomes the interior landscape of man." Freely inspired by this excerpt from François Cheng in his work "Five meditations on beauty", the series "Inner worlds" offers introspective images that invite us to empty our minds to reconnect with ourselves by soaking up the vital energy driven by Nature. Like a haiku, each photograph is a small poem to be experienced as a meditation on the evanescence of things and the lightness of Being. Photographs that are not to be seen as a representation of the outside world but as reflections of our inner world.

Stéphanie Labé | Mondes Intérieurs #6 | 2024



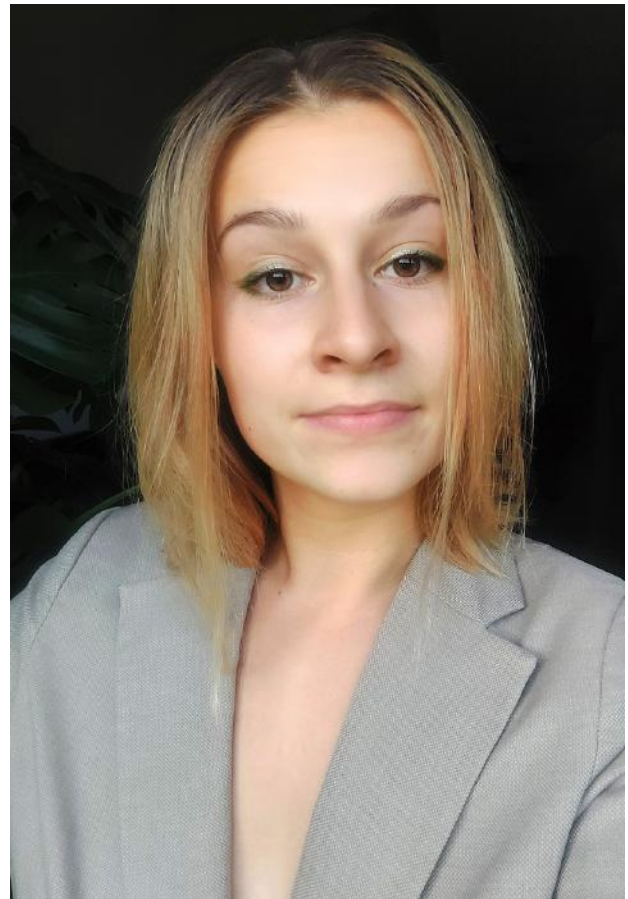


## — Interview

# Natalia Szerszeń

**Can you tell us more about your series "Weakness"? How did you conceptualize the connection between the anatomical and metaphorical aspects of weakness?**

The subject of the series of objects is "Weakness," which serves as a significant point of reference for both my artistic project and theoretical considerations. It is a central theme in my artistic objects. This concept is derived from two contexts—biological, related to the anatomy of a horse, and metaphorical, as an expression of the human condition. To elaborate on the idea behind "Weakness," I would explain that it refers to both a physical form—the weakest part of an animal's body, the sensitive area of a horse where the kidneys are located—and a symbolic state of fragility or resignation. Through the objects, I present forms shaped like deformed horses, which, through their posture and arrangement, suggest a moment of submission and collapse under the weight of gravity and their own mass. It is precisely this pivotal moment of "submission to mass" that is most significant. In my installations, I have captured the final moments before a symbolic fall—the point where the body can no longer resist the



force of gravity and the weight becomes relentlessly overwhelming. The process, depicted through the distorted forms of horses, reflects on the state of the human body and mind in moments of surrender. In this series of objects, the anatomical and metaphorical aspects of weakness converge into one complete whole.

**What inspired you to use horses as a symbol in your work, despite your statement, "I'm not a horse girl"?**

"I'm not a horse girl" is the symbolic title of my 2020 series of objects, the one featuring the blue horses. It's a humorous phrase I often repeated while working on these pieces, and it became something of an inside joke for me during the creative process. I chose the figure of the horse as the protagonist of the situation because, in Polish culture, the horse is often portrayed as a noble and beautiful animal. The noble symbolism of the horse can be recognized, for instance, during the era of Sarmatism, when the nobility admired purebred horses, and artworks often depicted heroic, military, or triumphant themes. After all, we all associate paintings where the horse is interpreted as the embodiment of a



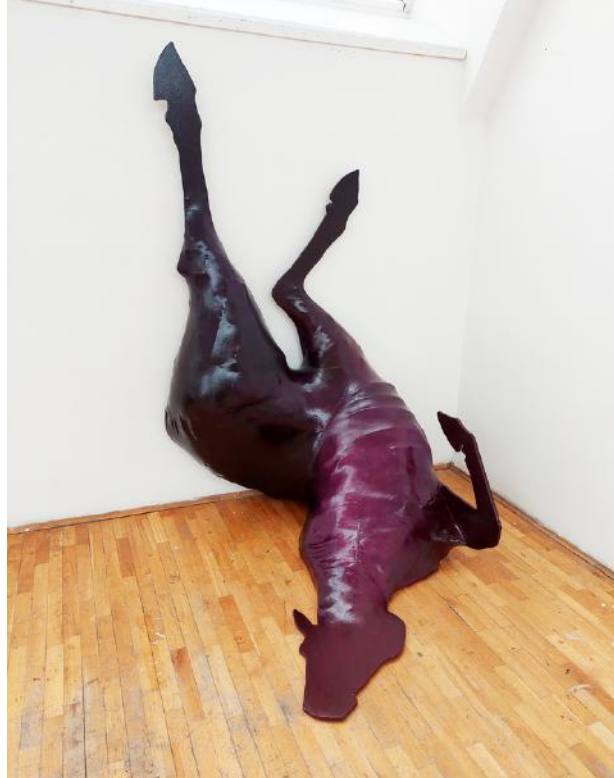
ruler—a symbol of noble lineage, reflecting chivalry and wealth. In my work, I present another side of this animal, showing it as a draft animal or one often the first to die on the battlefield. I use the horse as a puppet, depicting a kind of ugliness inherent to this being while also highlighting the naturalism of life. I compose the animals in dramatic poses, as if frozen in the final seconds of their triumph.

### **How did your technical background in ceramics influence the creation of these large-scale mixed media objects?**

I think that references to ceramics can be seen in every piece I create. I love glossy surfaces reminiscent of the transparent glaze used to coat clay. The horses also have the shape of fleshy masses, as if they were crumpled clay spreading outward. I feel the biomorphic quality of their form, and I don't rule out the possibility that one day I might create smaller versions of the "Weakness" series in clay and fire them in a furnace. My first stage of exploring new shapes usually begins with a piece of paper, plasticine, or clay. Before the final works are created, I spend a few weeks sketching and sculpting small clay or plasticine models. I've never fired these models in a ceramic furnace. I treat them as sketches and as a time to search for balance and the shape of the sculpture. Maybe I should cauterize and glaze them? I'll think about it.



Natalia Szerszeń | I'm not a horse girl | 2020



Natalia Szerszeń | Weakness | 2024

### **Could you elaborate on the process of designing and creating these deformed horse sculptures? What materials and techniques did you find most challenging or rewarding?**

I treat the horses as painterly objects—their construction begins with wooden frames, onto which I stretch cotton fabric and adhere it with rabbit skin glue, turning them into my three-dimensional canvases. I finish them using my own technique, applying a custom blend, the composition of which I'll keep as a little secret. The use of traditional canvas construction techniques and the nobleness of object conservation inspired me to create nearly life-sized horse figures. I focus on lightness—each weighs a maximum of 50-60 kilograms. Some of them are additionally padded, but more often I rely on hand-sewing and stretching the fabric. I don't hide the stitches, seams, or exposed elements of the framework; I treat them as marks that add a sense of gravity to the work. Their realistic size further emphasizes their symbolism—these horses are life-sized, which amplifies their emotional impact and makes their presence in the space truly striking. I deeply value the time I spend hand-shaping the piece for hours; it's a process of becoming familiar with the object, its resonance, and its emotions. I hand-stretch and sew the pieces of cotton; this sewing and shaping process is the most important and labor-intensive part. When I feel exhausted after a full day in the studio, it's a sign that it was a successful day, and I can tell myself,

"Good job."

**The idea of "submission of mass" is central to your work. How do you see this concept reflected in human experiences or emotions?**

The concept of "submission of mass" in my work refers to the physical and metaphorical tensions associated with weight, force, and limitation. In human experiences and emotions, I see it as a reflection of moments when an individual struggles with pressure—be it physical, psychological, or social. It can represent a fight against one's own limitations, surrender to a greater force, or the moment when mass, both in a literal and symbolic sense, becomes a tool for transformation. This feeling of being overwhelmed, yet also finding strength in surrender, is fascinating to me, and I strive to capture it in my works.

**How did your specialization in "art in public space" shape your approach to these installations?**

I graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk. I studied at the Painting department, specializing in Art in Public Space. This specialization shaped my approach to installations by sensitizing me to the context of the space, its history, function, and interaction with people. When creating my works, I strive to make them an integral part of the space in which they are placed, encouraging viewers to engage in dialogue and to connect with them on an emotional or intellectual level. I think of the space as a co-author of the work—its physical characteristics, the dynamics of people's movement, and the symbolism influence the form and message of my installations. I want my works to be accessible to a wide audience, to provoke reflection, and to elicit strong, individual reactions from diverse viewers. In the case of "Weakness," I aimed for the works to be realistically close in size to the mass of a horse, and the pieces are made in such a way that viewers can sit on them and touch them. The relationship between the viewer and my objects is most important to me—let us allow people to touch art in a space, because there is nothing more real than touch.



Natalia Szerszeń | Weakness | 2024

**Your sculptures seem to evoke strong emotional responses. What do you hope viewers feel or think when they interact with your work?**

"Personification" is the word that describes the feelings of the viewer when looking at my horses. Each of us has experienced moments of fragility in our emotions and reached a point where the feeling of weakness dominated our mind and body. Dante, in *The Divine Comedy*, wrote: "One will leave as much trace of himself as smoke in the air, or foam on the water," and I believe this formulation reflects the thoughts of my viewers when they look at "Weakness." The horse, which is usually associated with being a majestic and beautiful animal, shown in a state of physical weakness and submission, symbolizes the psychological fragility of humans and the surrender to the weight of mass. Viewers first find emotional or physical traits in my works that they can relate to, and then contemplate the fragility and transience of the human condition. When thinking about my works, one cannot overlook words that describe them, such as withering, vanity, or frailty. These words guide the viewer's thoughts toward feelings of being overwhelmed, the loss of vitality, transience, and ultimately, death. The perception—both emotional and physical—is very broad, allowing for the experience of many feelings and thoughts in relation to my objects.



**Daniel De Cort** is a Belgian photographer. With nature as a starting point, he combines forms and colors into his own creations. In addition street photography is always his other passion.

### *Artist Statement*

As an artist I want to capture the unpredictable and dynamic nature of emotions and forces of nature. My goal is to create a work that can evoke both rest and unrest, depending on the viewer's state of mind. The energy and movement are meant to communicate a sense of freedom and expression, while the colors and textures offer a deeper, more contemplative experience.

Daniel De Cort | Stormy weather | 2023







## — Interview

# Laura Ferrari

**Your artistic journey began in childhood, but you later pursued a career in law. What was the turning point that brought you back to painting?**

In reality, the return of creativity in my life happened gradually. I started painting again in 2016, at the beginning of my professional career. Several evenings a week, I felt the need for a creative outlet. I would set up on my terrace or at my living room table and enjoy painting flowers, small animals, etc. using watercolor. Then, in 2020, lockdown happened. A tidal wave that, on a collective scale, forced us to confront ourselves and gave us time to refocus. It was at that moment that I reconnected with my childhood dream of becoming a painter. I truly immersed myself in creation and took numerous online courses. Since then, I haven't stopped taking steps toward realizing that goal: sharing my work on Instagram since October 2021, taking part in exhibitions, opening my online store, and so on.

**How do your experiences as a lawyer influence your artistic perspective or creative process?**



I believe that my experience as a jurist has nurtured my “why.” If I hadn't been anxious because of my job, I probably wouldn't have searched so diligently for serenity through art. This experience led me on a quest for freedom and inner peace that I now want to share through my art. This is reflected in the soft shades of blues, greens, or purples, and the emphasis on movement, symbolizing the freedom I was perhaps seeking, in contrast to my former, much more structured profession.

**Your works are described as dreamlike and poetic, evoking serenity and gentleness. How do you balance these qualities with your personal emotions or stress when creating?**

These qualities correspond to the intention I put into creating my paintings. I see creation as a cathartic process that allows me to transform negativity into something positive—to alchemize my emotions and stress into works that soothe and convey gentleness and serenity.

**You draw inspiration from Impressionist masters like Monet and Morisot. What specific aspects of their work resonate with you most?**

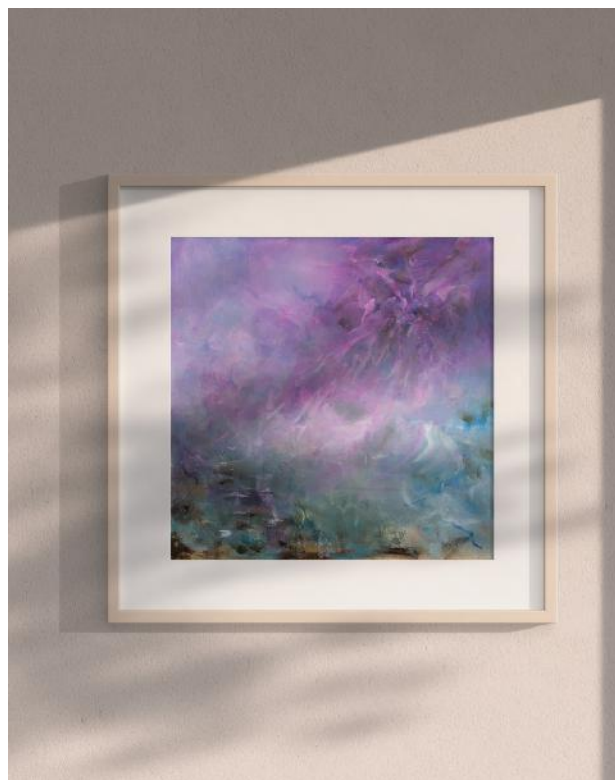
I particularly resonate with the Impressionists, especially in their use of color and light. I'm deeply moved by the emotions that emerge from their works. Monet's Water Lilies are an endless source of inspiration because they are contemplative pieces that radiate a certain light and possess a universal beauty.

**Nature plays a significant role in your art. Can you share a particular natural setting or moment that inspired a specific painting?**

Nature inspires me because it has always been part of my life. I grew up near a beautiful park where I often went for walks. I remember my parents' garden, the flowers my mother planted, and the smell of freshly mowed grass from my grandfather... There's something slightly nostalgic about it. This subtly shows up in my work, with motifs evoking clouds, flowers, lakes, or even imaginary landscapes.

**Your layering technique creates transparency and depth in your works. Could you describe your creative process from start to finish?**

Before starting a collection, I create a mood board for inspiration, with a theme and the emotions I wish to convey. After this preparatory phase, I move on to painting on canvas, using



acrylics. My creative process is very intuitive. I need small rituals to immerse myself in a state of flow: lighting a candle, listening to instrumental music (for instance, Chopin, Ludovico Einaudi, Hans Zimmer...). Practicing yoga and meditation also helps me reach this state more easily. I work on several canvases at once and apply a series of thin layers of paint. This process takes time. Layer by layer, my eye perceives which direction the canvas needs to go and how to refine the composition. I consider a painting finished when it seems to radiate light and evokes a special emotion in me, something close to bliss.

**As a self-taught artist, what advice would you give to others pursuing their creative passions despite non-artistic careers?**

I think I would advise listening to that little voice inside. Pay attention: does pursuing an artistic career answer an inner calling? I would also advise being curious. There are so many resources, books on creativity, online courses, and so on. You have to draw on them and learn to sharpen your eye and your attention to see all the beauty around us. In short, if you want to create, just do it. Don't wait for anyone else's approval. And most importantly, share it! If it feels good for you, it could also do good for others.

## **Natali Antonovich**

Painter and Photographer

My works are designed for curious people, people with a cosmic attitude and fanciers looking for a key to reading the superreal. And also for those for whom the uniqueness of human being, his soul and connexion with the Earth and Heaven is important...

Natali Antonovich  
...silence...  
2006



Natali Antonovich  
2006

## — Interview

# Lena Widmann

**Your work blurs the boundaries between art, sculpture, and fashion. What inspired you to explore these intersections, and how do you decide which medium to use for a project?**

Like most who create, I realized early on that I could draw. But restless by nature, I quickly found two-dimensional work unsatisfying, so I began searching for other ways to give things shape. From a very young age, I felt a strong need to express myself differently from those around me. To turn those ideas into reality, I taught myself to sew. I started making my own outfits - probably looking ridiculous to the outside world - but I loved the power of transforming my appearance through the clothes I created. My sewing experiments became a rebellion against the limitation of my surrounding - a way to reshape not just fabric but my identity.



Textile as a medium has never left me; it's the literal red thread running through my life. Over the years, I've designed and created clothing, accessories, shoes, lingerie and now even art objects out of textiles - it's the working process that comes most natural to me. There's something deeply satisfying about turning a flat, two-dimensional idea into a three-dimensional, tangible object—moving from sketch to pattern to something wearable or visually compelling. I have to admit that I also enjoy challenging the intellectual dismissal of fashion. Fashion tends to be looked down upon, but it's everything - it defines the relevance of something in a specific moment. Fashion is essentially Zeitgeist, and nothing - not even art - can exist without being relevant to the time in which it's created and discovered.

**Nature and the human body play significant roles in your creations. How do you approach balancing these two elements in your designs?**

To me, they are one. As humans, we like to believe we exist beyond nature, but aren't we just biological outgrowths of this planet, living with a slight delusion of grandeur? The more we disconnect our physical and mental selves, the unhappier we seem to become. In my work, I visually channel the instinctual, physical side of myself and connect the nature within me to the nature in everything around me. To disrupt this harmony, I like to introduce the unnatural—working with elements women use to enhance their beauty or “civilizing” my plants by potting them. It's a deliberate clash: a forceful imposition of civilization onto nature.

**You draw inspiration from 20th-century female surrealists. Could you share how their works influence your creative process?**

A few years ago, I stumbled upon a work by Leonor Fini - an illustration for a book called *L'Étranger* (The Strangers) filled with drawings of animalistic creatures, many of them clearly rooted in femininity. I became fascinated by how differently Fini, as a woman, depicted other women compared to her male surrealist contemporaries, who often relegated women to mere decorative elements in their compositions. It's a perfect example of the "male gaze" we're so accustomed to in art: men drawing women from the outside looking in.

As I explored the works of female surrealists more deeply, I noticed how they worked from the inside out, capturing a perspective that felt far more natural to me. In their art, beauty becomes less important - or is used only as an ironic standard to be challenged - and there's an honesty I could truly connect with. For instance, in Unica Zürn's monstrous doodles, you feel raw pain, while in the dreamlike worlds of Beate Bachem, there's an unmistakable sense of pleasure. Without starting to collect the drawings of these women, I don't think I would have dared to begin my own artistic process. Their works opened a door for me, showing that art could be both deeply personal and profoundly surreal.

**Your textile sculptures are both surreal and tactile. How do you think the sense of touch enhances the audience's experience of your art?**

In contrast to the general 'do not touch' rule of art, my textile flowers are soft and delicate. The silk they're crafted from captures the exciting tactility of real flowers, making them feel inviting to touch. For me, the idea of touch is deeply vulnerable - it strips us bare. Even a visual suggestion of touch can evoke discomfort or fear.

In my upcoming projects, I aim to invite the audience even closer. I'm working on a much larger, interactive installation that will not only engage touch but also incorporate other sensory experiences, creating an immersive encounter.

**The female body in moments of vulnerability is a recurring theme in your work. How do you navigate the fine line between sensuality and surrealism in your designs?**

I've always had a complicated relationship with what people typically call reality, because most of my youth has been defined by experiences you could call rather surreal. Since the age of 16, I've been living with epilepsy - though I've been incredibly lucky to be seizure-free for over 10 years now. This condition added a strange layer of absurdity to my life. With major seizures and absences coming and going, I would frequently slip away from what most agree is

reality, into moments that were both terrifying and mind-bending. These experiences felt like a rollercoaster ride, adding unexpected color and unlocking doors to parts of myself that might have been better left untouched.

Opening yourself up to the surreal inside you inherently involves both sensuality and vulnerability. It allows access to a deeply personal, hyper-individual world - a perspective that can differ from the one society collectively agrees upon.

The one thing that always brought me back and grounded me was my physical being - when you feel you're real. It was only natural to channel that connection into my sculptures, blending these fragmented elements of self into something tangible and whole.

**As a designer and a serial entrepreneur, how do you balance the commercial aspects of your work with your artistic expression?**

Every creative project I take on starts with a clear goal: understanding who it serves and sketching out a roadmap to get there. The approach I use is always the same, but the goals differ. While my goal with creating sculptures is purely egocentric - I need to get the ideas out - my aim with a commercial design project is often more practical and connected to goals and deliverables.

In my daily work as a design manager for a large fashion brand and when working on a commercial collection, the biggest challenge is balancing a



consistent brand identity with figuring out what the customer will want, rather than simply repeating what they've wanted in the past. It's a subtle process that requires a lot of fine-tuning and gradual changes, but I enjoy the challenge of setting myself aside to create a collection that's right for someone else.

With my independent design projects, like my nightwear and lingerie brand Lenagerie, the boundaries are looser, but they still exist. Getting the right fit and sustainable fabrications for many different body types and needs, working with premium European manufacturers to produce in small quantities, and still achieving affordable designs are all challenges that require creative solutions.

Design, with its focus on functionality, grounds me and connects me to the world, while art gives me the freedom to connect with myself.

**If you could collaborate with any artist, past or present, who would it be and why?**

That's a tough question! To narrow it down, I'll choose

a living artist: a few years ago I've discovered the work of Colette Justine, a performance and world-building artist, and even purchased a lithograph of one of her creations from the 1970s. I'm fascinated by how she transforms spaces using fabric, creating organic, dream-like environments with a unique sense of color. I also admire how she incorporates her own nudity into these scenes and plays with gender rules, making her art deeply personal and immersive. Collaborating with her to transform rooms into womb-like, floral spaces would be an incredible way to make textile art interactive and experiential.

However, if I could go beyond the visual arts, the possibilities would be endless - don't get me started, as I could lose myself in words as well! For example, I would love to create an interactive space inspired by the emotionally raw yet intellectually sharp writing of the fantastic Sibylle Berg. Connecting her words with tactile, immersive elements would be a fascinating way to bridge literature and textile art in one of her theater productions.







**Luz Bolo** is an emerging artist and specializes in digital art. Her debut piece "Our Significance" was featured at the 2024 Expo Metro Amsterdam. This milestone work captures juxtaposed and abstracted profiles of all female members from her mother's lineage underlining their countenance and mettle. Other works were simultaneously shown in exhibitions in June 2024: "Rust Dust" as a participating piece at the ArtBox Basel 3.0 in Basel, Switzerland, and a couple of submissions to the competition Francisco Mantecon Terras Gauda Biennale in Vigo, Galicia in Spain. Throughout 2024 other artworks have been exhibited in Melbourne, New York (at 4 separate shows), Palma de Mallorca (2 separate shows), Zurich, Venice, Berlin, Paris and Milan. Luz is one of the recipients of the Best Digital Artists of Our Generation competition hosted by Archiv3 and The Hug, with an exhibition in New York. Largely self-taught, her fascination for how notions as well as emotions can be conveyed in colours and digital textures shaped Luz's interest with new media art. Luz digitally crafts to tell and translate stories, and usher viewers into experiencing a moment of reflection and ideation. In addition to creating digital art, Luz works as a Program Coordinator for various programs in medical education at the University of Calgary.





Luz Bolo | Perception | 2024

## Steef Offerhaus

As a multidisciplinary designer based in Rotterdam, I draw inspiration from the raw environment and the unique individuals who surround me in my personal life. My work, ranging from murals and clothing design to video productions and sculptures, highlights the countercultures and bold personalities that shape my creative and social world. Each piece I create tells a story about freedom, individuality, the struggle for recognition, and the beauty of imperfection. In my personal quest for authenticity within a society that rewards conformity, I deliberately seek out the fringes of society. Here, I encounter those who defy the norm. Through my art, I explore challenging topics, break stereotypes, and shine a light on countercultures, dissenters, prejudices, and taboos. My themes range from the exploitation of teen stars and gabber culture to our repressed obsession with sex. My approach is sometimes analytical, sometimes intuitive, but always unguarded. My work challenges viewers to think and, much like my own creative process, encourages reflection and dialogue. In a time where connection and understanding are crucial, I see my art as a tool to foster self-awareness and open conversations about our differences.

### *Artist Statement*

Series of drawings portraying icons of the south of the raw and industrial Dutch port town Rotterdam.





## — Interview

# Sangeeta Dasgupta

**Can you tell us about your journey from being an economist to becoming a full-time artist? What inspired this transition?**

Art was always a part of my life. As a child I was fascinated by colours and creating something new excited me. It was a joyous experience to present handmade greeting cards, posters and gifts for family and friends.

All the while art was just a hobby. Most of my time was dedicated to academics, research and eventually my job as an Assistant Professor in Economics. The big change was brought about when my sister and I decided to start an art academy. Since then, I started thinking and working like a professional. This provided me with the opportunity to continue with my profession as well as passion for art. But often passion had to be compromised for profession. During those years I did feel the urge to work full time as an artist and to create artworks that can live forever. Now when I look back, I feel God had a plan for that major shift in my life. I got married and started a new phase by relocating to South Korea in the year 2021. As I was preparing to make a fresh start, I was faced with a crucial question. It was not easy to decide whether to continue with my career as an educator or pursue my lifelong dream of working as a full-time artist. I'm glad that I followed my heart and decided to pursue art full time.



The belief that art is the medium through which I can meet the next best version of myself inspired this transition. My artworks have given me an identity in a foreign land.

**How does your background in economics influence your artistic process or themes?**

Economics and art are diverse disciplines. But if we look closely, we can find some interrelation. First, every piece of art has an economic value.

Study of Economics trained my mind to think about optimal use of limited resources. This has helped me to always think about ways and means to optimize the use of art materials. Economic decisions involve trade-off (a situation where one thing must be given up to get something else). Selection of theme, medium and tools to create a particular piece involves such trade-offs. Understanding the trade-off for my decisions help me to ensure that I'm using my resources wisely to achieve the desired result. My experience as a researcher was a real test of patience and perseverance. I feel these are essential qualities required to

create a beautiful piece of art. Every piece that I create is an outcome of hours of dedicated work.

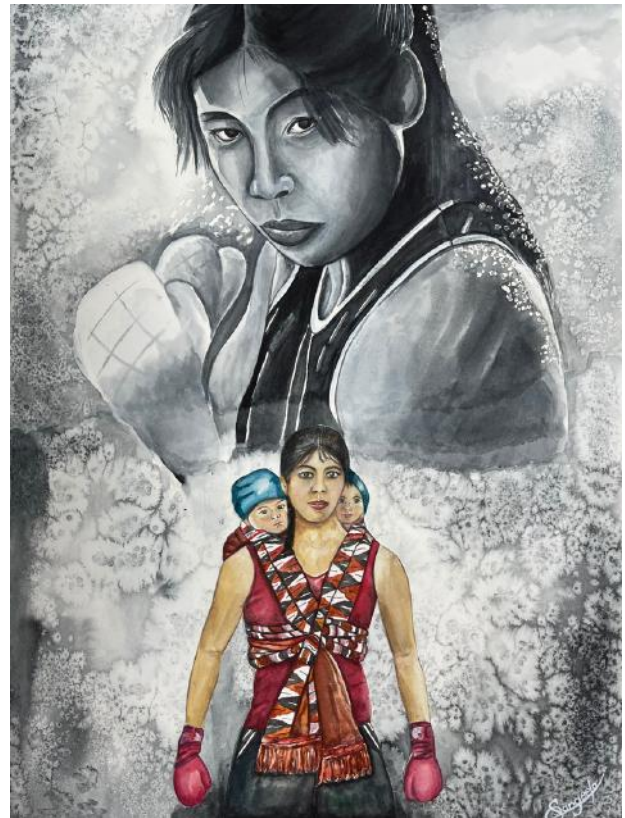
**You mention that nature is your biggest inspiration. What specific aspects of nature captivate you the most and why?**

We are an integral part of nature. But each of us experience nature differently. For me natural world is full of inspiration, wonder, vibrancy, tranquility, and harmony. Nature is complex, intricate, diverse, yet simple. I can instantly connect with nature, and it has a profound influence on the artist in me. Thus, my nature inspired paintings are reflections of these unique experiences. I try to create artworks which can connect with the viewer instantly and evoke a sense of wonder and tranquility.

**Your works reflect a deep connection with the subject. Could you describe how you immerse yourself in your subjects while painting?**



Sangeeta Dasgupta | A piece of autumn | 2024



Sangeeta Dasgupta | Mary Gold | 2023

Yes, I do feel a deep connection with the subject while painting. It is not easy express it in words. But I will give it a try.

I often use reference images which helps me to connect and look deeper in the layers in a particular scene or object. The brushstrokes, the detailing, and the colour scheme in my paintings serves as reflection of a deep connection with the subject matter. I mostly work on one project at a time. So, each piece that I create gets my total attention.

**You've participated in various exhibitions worldwide. Which exhibition experience has been the most memorable for you, and why?**

'Borderless' exhibition, September 2023 edition, was one of the most memorable experiences, where my watercolour painting 'Mary Gold' was on display. Exhibition merged the tangible with the digital. Artworks were exhibited simultaneous in premier 3D galleries in Seoul, South Korean & Oslo, Norway. It was a wonderful experience to be a part of such hybrid

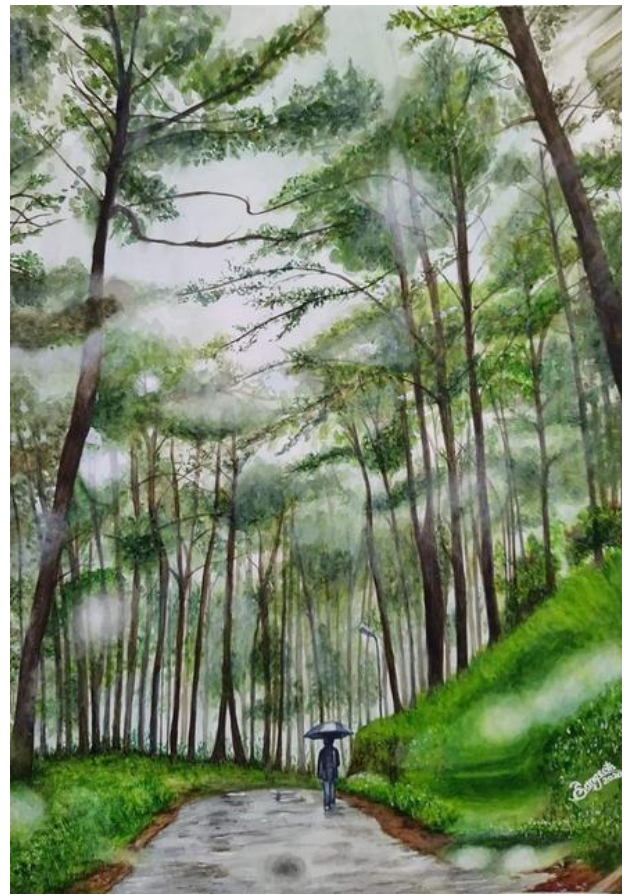
exhibition.

The theme of the exhibition was 'Momentum: The art of manifestation'. The exhibition focused on artworks that questions societal norm & self-imposed limitations, emphasizing the power of belief, self-confidence & determination. My painting 'Mary Gold' portrayed the most celebrated Indian boxer Mary Kom, who fearlessly pursued her dreams and took upon herself to break stereotypes & become a crusader of women empowerment.

**Your work highlights the importance of conservation and preservation. How do you hope your art impacts viewers in terms of environmental awareness?**

Nature is all around us and we are intensely connected to it whether we realize that or not. Our modern-day lifestyle is highly influenced by technology. We spend more time indoors glued to the screens. This can make us feel disconnected and separate from nature. Creating connections with nature through art is a pleasing experience for me. My nature inspired paintings are a 'piece of nature' for the collectors. They are not only work of art but also visual tools to bring attention of the viewer back to the natural world. Once we revive our bond with nature, realization of the importance of its conservation & preservation follows intuitively. I would like to create artworks which can encourage viewers to take a step for themselves as well as the environment. It could be a small step like taking a walk outside, planting a tree or starting a balcony garden.

**You've experimented with various**



Sangeeta Dasgupta | Solitude | 2020

**materials and techniques. Can you share one technique or material that was particularly challenging yet rewarding to work with?**

The golden rule of watercolour is 'Work from light to dark'. While working on my painting 'Solitude', I could bend this traditional approach to building up a subject in watercolors. To order to create the misty scene, I had to use lighter shades especially white on top of darker ones. The work was challenging but I could achieve it while maintaining the required shades on the background.

'Solitude' was a part of many online as well offline exhibitions including 13th 'All Women' Art Exhibition-January 2024, organized by Light Space & Time Online Art Gallery.





**Yin Lu** is a visual artist, art & craft teacher and mural artist based in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia. Her Chinese heritage significantly inspires her artistic practice, which uses a bold and contrasting style to express and amplify her cultural identity. She synthesizes diverse influences from Western art and Eastern aesthetics, gaining new insights with respect to both natural and historical perspectives.

*YINFINITE CARDS* - Human life can be likened to a game of chance, where each individual is dealt a set of cards that they must use to the best of their abilities. For me, the process of creating art is akin to opening a new chapter in a book or receiving a fresh deck of cards. The outcome is less important to me than the creative process itself. When presented with a blank canvas, the possibilities are endless. I aim to utilise vivid colours and boundless imagination to express my passion for art and bring to life a unique deck of playing cards, rendered in my own style.



Yin Lu | Five of Hearts - Peacocks in Love | 2024



## — Interview

# Josh Allain

**Could you tell us about the primary themes and inspirations behind your artwork, particularly the influence of astronomy, music, and psychedelia?**

It boils down to taste, actually. When I was child, I learned about the solar system and music in grade school. My parents even had music playing in the house. Watching The Beatles' animated Yellow Submarine movie was my introduction to psychedelia. In my view, it was a huge departure from the Disney animated films that I had watched previously. Most of the vibrant, solid colors of the characters drew me in, and I was motivated to come up with similar imagery. And, of course, I



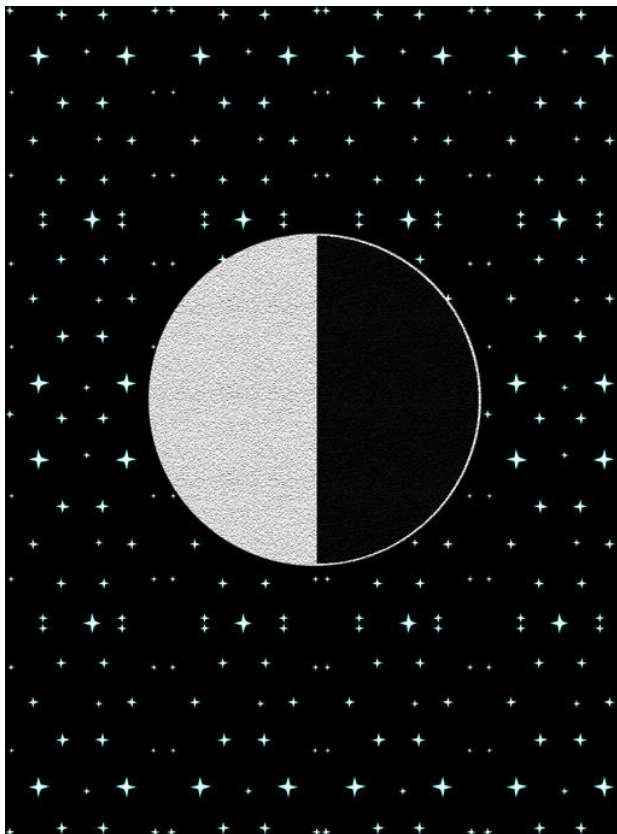
watched a lot of cartoons on television. So during high school and college, I started applying my personal interests into my artwork. I discovered visual artists such as Roy Lichtenstein, Salvador Dalí, and Alex Grey and science communicators like Carl Sagan and Neil deGrasse Tyson.

**How has your grandfather, Ramsey Lewis, influenced your artistic journey, if at all?**

My grandfather (1935–2022) was masterful in his craft. He knew at an early age that he wanted to be a jazz pianist, so his parents (my great-grandparents) made sure that he took piano lessons and learned how to read and write sheet music. At the age of 21, my grandfather released his debut album in 1956 and became a massive mainstream success at 30 in 1965 with his *The In Crowd* album. If he could succeed in his creative passion and bring everyone together with his music, I can do the same as an illustrator.

**You use a variety of mediums, including pencil, Sharpie, collage, and Photoshop. How do you decide which medium to use for a particular piece?**

In high school and the first half of college, I combined pencil, Sharpie, and Photoshop in my early pieces after deciding that traditional paints, colored markers, charcoal, and colored pencils weren't for me. It's much easier to incorporate solid colors with Photoshop. When it came to adding collage into the mix, it wasn't



Josh Allain | Last Quarter Moon | 2022

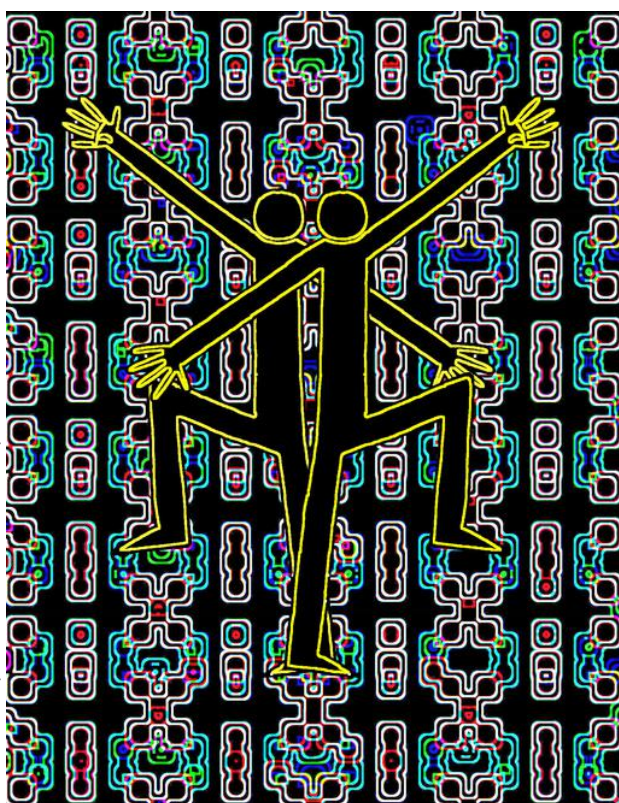
until after I tried LSD in November 2013 that I started scanning magazine cutouts into my computer and manipulating them with Photoshop filters to create the desired complex, psychedelic patterns.

**Can you walk us through your creative process, from initial idea to completed work?**

While music is playing, I gather source material from books, photos from the Internet, etc. and start drawing with pencil and paper as soon as an idea strikes. After going over the pencil marks in black Sharpie, I scan directly into Photoshop and add color digitally.

**Your works have been exhibited in group shows since 2017. How has participating in exhibitions shaped your career and your approach to art?**

Participating in group exhibitions has kept me inspired. It has shown me that there's always room for experimentation and risk-taking. It has also given me the ability to network with a supportive community of visual artists from all walks of life.



Josh Allain | March Somewhere | 2023



Josh Allain | Hazel | 2024

**As someone who grew up in Upper Darby Township, how has your environment influenced your art and perspective as an illustrator?**

Upper Darby Township's official motto is "the world in one place", and I couldn't agree more. I was raised in this diverse community, and I got along with everyone regardless of cultural differences. This aspect carried into college as well, and it's something that I'll hold onto until the day I die. All in all, there's something for everyone as far as subject matter is concerned.

**Many of your pieces have a striking visual style. How do you balance traditional techniques with digital tools to achieve this effect?**

For me, it feels more natural to draw by hand with traditional materials as opposed to working strictly with a drawing tablet. I put a lot of emphasis on precision when it comes to drawing the outlines on paper.

My name is **Daria Piankowska**. I come from Poland, I live here and study intermedia at the Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk. I'm twenty-one years old. My adventure with art began with winning an award in the national photography competition in 2021. Over the last few years I have tried various techniques. I create animations, collages, sculptures, fabrics, but I like the cyanotype technique the most. In my artworks I try to discuss important topics. The starting point for conversations about universal issues are my personal experiences. I am fascinated by nature, as well as man as a being experiencing many complex emotions and states. Through my art, I want to awaken the recipient's sensitivity and encourage him to further reflection.

### *Project Statement*

"Anxiety" is a series of artworks made in the cyanotype technique. It concerns anxiety states accompanying people struggling with trauma. The world then seems scary and unreal, and reality resembles a dream from which you cannot wake up. This artwork shows a long way to taming fear.

Daria Piankowska | Anxiety | 2024





Daria Piankowska | Anxiety | 2024

## Samantha Villalobos

Self-taught 18 year old artist from the Rio Grande Valley. UTRGV Student majoring in Visual Communication Design. All my pieces are an extension of myself and a cathartic method for the concepts within my head. I've done art for 8 coming on 9 years and it is a massive part of who I am as a person.



Samantha Villalobos | Shattered Self | 2024





# — Interview

## Maja Wolf

**Can you share how your upbringing in Grudziądz, Poland, influenced your journey into the world of art?**

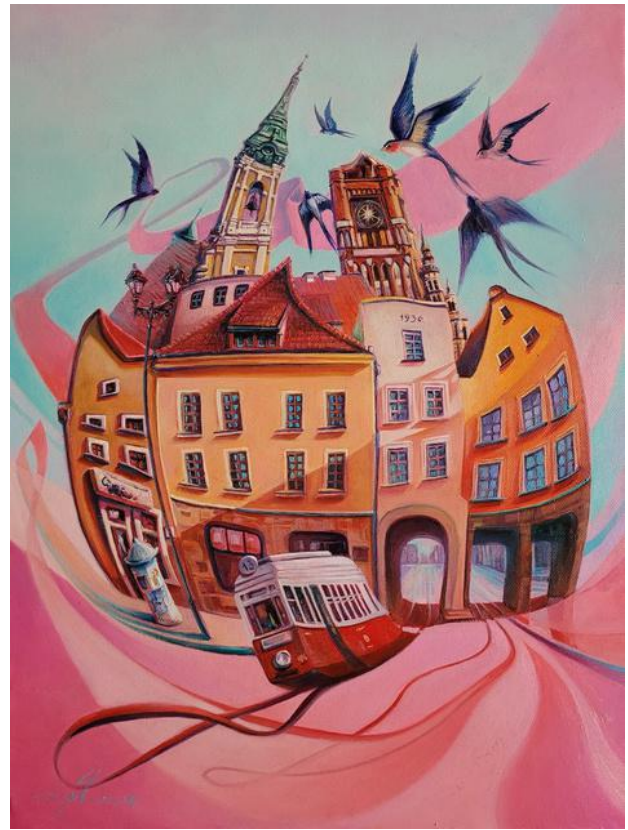
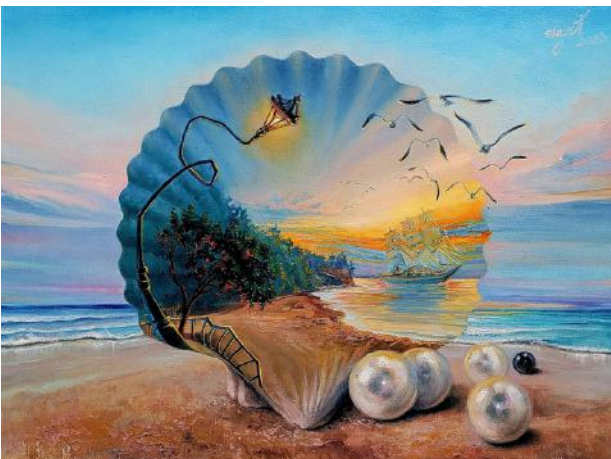
Quiet, well-behaved children often have a rich inner life. What is not visible on the outside, they express through art. I was such a child. My passion for drawing and painting was supported by my teachers and parents, even though no one in my family was an artist. This is how my adventure with art began.

**What inspired you to pursue surrealism as your primary artistic expression?**

The art that made the greatest impression on me as a child was surrealism, particularly the works of artists such as Salvador Dalí, Wojciech Siudmak, and Jacek Yerka.

**How do you develop the ideas for your surreal paintings? What role does imagination play in your creative process?**

Maja Wolf | Black Pearl | 2023



Maja Wolf | Lucky swallows | 2024

Travel is currently my greatest inspiration. That is why I often travel, explore, observe, and taste. Then I put these experiences on paper. Imagination is a basic tool in my work. It can also be developed through practice. People say that practice makes perfect, and I am an example of this.

**Can you describe the techniques and materials you most enjoy using in your work?**

I specialize in drawing with pencils and pastel crayons. In painting, I currently prefer to use the oil technique.

**What motivated you to open Maya Gallery in Toruń, and how has it evolved since 2009?**

The turning point in my professional career was moving to Torun. During this time, I received a lot of orders in my studio. I wanted to help my fellow artists sell their art and surround myself with the work of various creators. I organized exhibitions and got to know more and more new artists. However, running an art gallery in Poland is a

very difficult challenge, especially if you have no experience.

The market is very unstable and sensitive to any economic turmoil.

That is why I decided that the Maya gallery must have income from various sources.

I painted pictures, drew portraits and caricatures, sold art by other artists, organized exhibitions, framed pictures, led drawing lessons and painting workshops.

Thanks to this, I gained a lot of experience.

Over time, I decided to limit my activities.

For several years now, I have been focusing on my work again, and the gallery is transforming into more of an author's gallery.

I only work with a small group of artist friends.

I do what gives me the greatest satisfaction and am achieving greater and greater success.

I'm happy.

### **How do you guide young artists to discover and develop their unique artistic voices?**

For many years, I have helped my students: children, young people preparing for university, and adults by running workshops, consultations, competitions, and plein air sessions.

Over 300 people have passed through my studio! I helped artists who already had their own style and were starting their careers to enter the art market and sell their paintings.

Several talented Polish artists made their debut with an exhibition in my gallery.



Maja Wolf  
From Down to Dusk  
2023

I am currently preparing online courses that will be available soon. I am also writing an e-book to guide beginner artists who would like to become professionals.

I used to give people fish; today, I prefer to give them a fishing rod.

What message or emotion do you aim to convey through your surreal works?

The thought that constantly accompanies me while creating is the transience of the moment—the passage of time, changeability, and fluidity. Life consists of moments, small pleasures, and remembered images. I would like to hold on to them forever, to capture the world as it is in my imagination, because in a moment it will disappear...

Maja Wolf | One sec From Dusk Till Down | 2024



Name: **Marcus Frost**

Date of Birth: December 15, 1986

Place of Birth: New York, United States

Profession: Fantasy and Science Fiction Novelist

Biography: Marcus Frost grew up in New York, surrounded by the vibrant urban life and rich cultural history of the city. From a young age, he showed a great interest in literature and fantasy and science fiction stories. He spent hours in the local library, devouring books by authors like Arthur Conan Doyle and Agatha Christie. Marcus is self-taught and has dedicated countless hours to studying literature on his own. He found inspiration for his own stories in the solitude of the night, creating worlds and characters that come to life in the nocturnal quiet. Marcus is the author of the science fiction novels "The Red Wall" and "Galatea," both stories inspired by the classic sci-fi art of the 1950s. These works have been acclaimed for their originality and depth, capturing the essence of a golden era of the genre.



Marcus Frost | Dhalia poster New Edition | 2024

### *Project Statement*

"Red Wall is my science fiction novel initially published by Editorial Caligrama, Spain. I am currently releasing a new edition. The Red Wall project consists of a novel that contains original art, a comic, and an animated film inspired by 90s Japanese animation. In the year 3025, machines and large tech companies hold the power, but everything falters after the escape of Genesis. Amid the chaos, a soldier and a fugitive will join forces to secure the future of humanity."



**Martina Boothes** is an award winning filmmaker and writer from Memphis, Tennessee. Her short films and screenplays were selected and screened at many film festivals around including internationally. She has written several articles for horror obsessive as a contributor, and as an artist, her artwork has been featured in a Magazine based in London and showcased in an art exhibit in New York City. Aside from her creative work, she is also an alumni member of the film fatales Memphis and a mentor for the indie Memphis crew up program.

### *Project Statement*

This abstract piece is called, "The voices in war with the mind." We all hear those voices in our minds that tells us right from wrong, but then we also hear those voices that tells us the ugly things about ourselves that keep us stuck in a dark state of despair that we don't understand how to cope with. Sometimes, even with the heightened awareness of our intuition, we still do the opposite things and get stuck with the same lessons over and over until we start to question our existence and stop going from within and go seek for answers through either people or other sources making it even more complicated to understand anything at all. I created this piece when I got tired of seeking, and was going through a challenging phase in my life. I had no idea what I wanted to create, I just wanted to create an image of how I felt that day mentally, and all the mixed emotions that was running through my brain at the time that'll make a sane person go insane.



## — Interview

# Vian Borchert

**Your artwork is described as a form of visual poetry. Can you elaborate on how poetry influences your creative process?**

Yes, I've always described my artwork as a form of visual poetry from early times of my art practice in the 1990's till now. Ever since I was young, I had taken to the written word along with the visual world. Through writing poetry, I was able to write down my thoughts without expressing them out loud in words. And, through drawing and painting it was also a means by which I can express myself visually without speaking out-loud my thoughts. I grew up in traditional times, and I was a very shy child and I am still shy even as an adult. Thus, resorting to writing poems and creating images of my thoughts, I was able to express myself in a creative manner transported to the canvas while the words, sentences and stanzas become lines of poetry. My childhood experiences of being a quiet child who found a sanctuary in creating art and writing poems become *mélangé* together in my art practice and the art that I do. Hence, naturally, when describing myself as an artist, poetry makes center stage in the introduction. I remember throughout growing up, when I was sad, I would go to my room and sit at my desk and write a poem. Other times, I would go to my studio and paint the day away. Escaping to the varying forms of art be it poetry or painting has been a therapeutic and meditative process for me from early on and till now. Moreover, I grew up in an art household where my mother (an artist herself), we were always surrounded by intellectuals and thinkers. I remember visiting my mother's friends who some were poets and there would be piles of poetry books in their homes, and I would just start reading their poetry and taking in this unique way of expressing themselves. Other times, they would recite their poems over a cup of coffee. Conceptual thought always fascinated me. Hence, my upbringing and childhood experiences clearly created the person and the artist that I had become.



**Many of your works are inspired by nature. How does nature influence your emotions and artistic expression?**

For me everything stems from my childhood and how I grew up. When I was a child and as far as I can remember, my father would take us kids to the countryside where we would roam free and play, and hike and explore the wild so to speak. I remember going on picnics with my cousins in the countryside and exploring what nature has to offer. We would climb hills, mountains, discover fields of wildflowers, smell the roses that crossed our paths and look out to nature and its offerings. The love for nature is almost genetic for me, it comes from my father's side. My uncle and even my cousins all love nature. Growing up in California, we would go to the canyons overlooking the Pacific ocean while exploring the flora and the habitat of the area. Even my grandmother was a nature lover, I would sit next to her on the balcony overlooking the beautiful ocean views of the Pacific Palisades beaches while listening to her sing folkloric songs about the beauty of the sun as we look over at the vast ocean and its endless horizon line that laid in front of us. When I plant in my garden, just going through the dirt and smelling the earth reminds me of my childhood and the nostalgia of all the beautiful moments I shared with my family along with my own experiences as a child exploring nature. For me, nature ignites my senses, not only through the visual experience but also through the olfactory receptors as well. Naturally, the emotions and all influences and experience of my voyages and walks in nature make an appearance through my art.



**Your pieces have been showcased in prestigious venues worldwide, such as the Louvre and the Venice Biennale. How do you feel your art resonates with international audiences?**

I have always believed that strong art is relevant everywhere and in every space. Additionally, I firmly believe that effective art is also a form of visual language and dialogue meaning that good art resonates with all types of people. I feel my art doesn't belong to a specific country or reflective of a certain nationality. I've always felt my art is global and transcends borders turning into a blanket that covers all. I am the type of artist that aims for her art to be universal and not limited. My vision is for all who see my work to feel emotions of rejuvenation and elevation while allowing the art to transcend one into a higher elevated world. I am very grateful, honored and delighted to have seen my artwork in prestigious venues such as museums like the Louvre and in the Venice Biennale, and other esteemed world museums. All of these wonderful experiences and appreciation along with admiration of my art make me want to give more of my vision and art back to the world.

**You mentioned that art serves as a universal language. Can you share an example of how your art has connected with viewers across cultural boundaries?**

I have been doing art for decades now, and I can attest from my own observation and of course my expertise and experience that art is 100% a universal language by which all comprehend. Similar to music which is also a form of universal language where as well comprehend. Case in point, by listening to a piece such as a classical one, let's say Beethoven's 9th symphony, one feels the emotions of the ups and downs and the power of music and its transformative



Vian Borchert | Clouds Over Ocean | 2024

ways. Same thing like art, good effective art can take one visually to places, memories and experiences. To illustrate, sometimes in art openings I stand in the distance to see how visitors react and gather around my art. I've seen total strangers become friends while conversing about the piece ahead of them - my art definitely becomes the conversation pieces that ignite connection from the viewers. I am the type of artist that wants this experience for the audience, for the viewers on their own to connect with the work and allow themselves to be immersed in this artistic experience. I am all for the viewers to express themselves and interpret the art from their point of view. Art, after all, is a form of expression. In such, it is definitely pleasing to see that my art manages to grab the viewer and connect with them across cultural boundaries.

**Your works often convey themes of time, movement, and memory. How do you approach these abstract concepts in your art?**

I've always liked abstract thought rather than literal representation, that is also the reason why I like poetry and write poems since it is through the lines and words an abstraction of a theme and a story emerges. I like my work to be suggestive where the viewer can fill in the blanks so to speak rather than give you all there is through absolute realism. Realism doesn't interest me. Dreamy representation via my abstracted style of my memories and past nostalgic experiences are what I seek. My abstract work allows my subconscious to make an appearance onto the canvas and come alive. My art encompasses my past memories, my current present and my aspiration for an unknown future all *mélanged* in one - that is the experience of a Vian Borchert painting. It is the overtake of all in one, the emotions of love and the trepidation of an uncertain future vis-à-vis the



Vian Borchert | Two Happy Clouds | 2023

concreteness of the now all take place in my work. In a gist, my work is a philosophical take on existentialism, my own journey of what I was, what I am and what will become of me. Such philosophical thoughts occupy my conscious and subconscious mind and influence my art. In earlier writing about my art practice and concepts on art, I concluded that for me abstraction is the vehicle that connects me to my subconscious and to infinity and beyond.

**What role does your educational background at the Corcoran College of Art & Design play in shaping your artistic philosophy?**

I am grateful that I have the proper education and structure to spring out into my art career and my artistic journey. At the Corcoran, I was blessed to have great professors, some who no longer are with us today and in their own right acclaimed and distinguished artists. It is through the teaching of some of my professors and their guidance that my art took shape and my style became more refined. As an art instructor myself with over a decade of teaching experience, teaching adults painting and drawing in the DC area, I see firsthand that my philosophies, my teachings and art have profound influence on the budding artists and prove to inspire them for years to come as they embark on their artistic journey. I see it over and over again, budding artists echoing what I have taught them... it is totally a domino effect. My art and philosophies become almost like wildfire reverberating through communities near and far. A good education is essential in shaping one's direction in life.

**As an art educator, how does teaching influence your own artistic journey?**

I've been teaching for over 18 years. At the onset of my early teaching days, my DMV community was almost like a small town where people who liked to dabble in art took classes. It is safe to say through my teaching career and throughout the years of giving it my all, art in my community has come a long way from its sleepy days to its current vibrant happenings. For me, art was always serious because for me art is holy and essential. I teach art similar to the old masters, I want people to be knowledgeable about their materials: what they are made of and what they can do, as well as teach them the techniques and skills needed to transform them from a novice to an advanced artist. I've seen my community grow so much through my teachings and through the influences of my philosophies. I've seen my community bloom and develop into a vibrant one where art and its practices become more serious, not just a passing momentary thing. I have seen students come back to me over and over again to thank me for opening their eyes to see the world in a different and more elevated way. I recall a student telling me that when she drives, she now looks at the moon in a totally different light, to see its beauty, its luminosity, its shape and its importance. I have students who battle with depression and after taking my classes, they thank me for the therapeutic aspects that the class has given them. Some start becoming even more social and open-minded. Art is truly wondrous and can change lives.

Vian Borchert | Clouds by the Sea | 2024





## **Nellie Rouillard**

I am an emerging artist with a visual arts certificate from UQAM and soon a bachelor's degree. My interdisciplinary practice explores concepts like memory, time, and fragility using materials such as acrylic, plastic, and transparent surfaces. I focus on the tension between the visible and invisible, inviting viewers to reflect on perception, absence, and transformation.

### *Artist Statement*

My artistic practice explores the materialization of abstract concepts such as memory, time, and fragility. I am interested in how these ideas can take form in space, playing with the boundaries between the visible and the invisible. Through elements like transparency, layering, and light, I aim to highlight hidden dimensions and create objects and images that capture the fleeting while preserving traces of the past. Through these principles, I also explore intangible phenomena such as perception, instability, and invisible dynamics. I seek to make tangible what often escapes our view, materializing subtle and complex emotional and psychological states. My creative process focuses on the interaction between materials and their environment, trying to understand how states of presence and absence can coexist. Using fragile and transparent materials, I aim to create tension between what is shown and what remains hidden, inviting the viewer to immerse themselves in a sensory experience. This approach captures fleeting moments, opening a space where dualities meet. It questions perception and memory in a world in constant transformation.

Nellie Rouillard | Érosion 2 | 2024





## Michael Wagner

Born in Heidelberg in 1953 and fascinated by the fine arts from an early age, I used every free minute for artistic studies during my studies of social work at the Mannheim University, and then concentrated entirely on the fine arts after completing my degree. I have been living and working as a freelance visual artist (self-taught) in Heidelberg since 1981.

### *Artist Statement*

For me, photography is a means of poetic expression. I am interested in images that reveal something that goes beyond everyday experience. Images that raise questions instead of providing answers. And images whose appearance evokes a meditative gaze rather than rationality. I like to use photography as an experimental medium. My aim here is not to depict, but to visualize. In this way, I mainly make use of macro photography, motion blur and double exposure. These photographic means promote the ambiguity, the complexity of my work. Basically, I am interested in the open picture, in a creative approach whose aim is to create content that gives the viewer considerable scope for interpretation. This leeway is, so to speak, part of the creative process. This results in photographs that are ambiguous in a certain way and yet have a firm character and suggest a clear goal.



Michael Wagner | Wet paint - Interaction of colors | 2024



## — Interview

# Darya Zhauneryk

**How did you first become interested in creating Blythe dolls, and what drew you to this particular form of art?**

I first became interested in Blythe dolls when I saw them on Instagram. I was struck by their big, enchanting eyes. These dolls have a special magic that immediately grabs attention and makes you see more in them than just toys. Their unique design and expressiveness make them truly memorable.

**What inspires you the most when designing a new doll, and how do you decide on the personality or story behind each one?**

Creating a new doll is truly an engaging process, and inspiration can come from a variety of sources. For example, the environment often suggests unique color palettes and textures that serve as a starting point for a new design. Movies can also spark the imagination with their atmosphere, characters, and storylines. Sometimes a particular scene or character captivates me so much that they become the foundation for creating a doll with a specific story or personality. Just as often, my children become a source of unusual and bold ideas. Their ability to see the world in a new way awakens the desire to bring their dreams and fantasies to life. Children's spontaneity often inspires me with unexpected solutions and themes. When I choose a personality or story for a doll, I try to combine all these sources of inspiration. For instance, observations from nature often merge with themes from a movie, while a child's imagination adds unique character traits. In this way, each doll acquires its own unique story and personality, creating connections with those who see or create it.

**Can you share more about your creative process? From initial concept to the final touches, how do you bring your vision to life?**

Here's how the work usually develops: 1. Idea and Concept: It all starts with inspiration. I try to come up



with a story or image that will be unique for each doll. 2. Preparation: At this stage, I choose a base doll for customization. Typically, it's a Blythe doll with factory makeup that I plan to change. 3. Removing Makeup: The first step is to remove the standard makeup. I use special solutions or delicate abrasive materials to prepare the surface for new layers. 4. Facial Sculpting: This is the main creative part. Using special tools, I modify the doll's facial features to make them more expressive — altering the shape of the nose, lips, or eyes. 5. Painting: The new makeup is applied in several stages, starting with base shades and finishing with small details such as freckles or shadows. I use acrylic paints and pastels for painting, sealing each layer with a clear varnish. 6. Creating Outfits and Accessories: I select or create clothing and accessories to fully match the intended image. Sometimes this involves custom tailoring or making jewelry. 7. Hair Styling: Often, I replace the doll's original hair with better quality wigs or reroot new hair. This allows experimentation with new haircuts and colors. 8. Photoshoot and Presentation: After completing all the details, I arrange a small photoshoot to capture the doll in all its beauty. This helps not only to showcase its appearance but also to convey its character.

**You've mentioned experimenting with different styles and materials. Which have been the most challenging or rewarding to work with, and why?**

One of the most interesting stages for me is creating the costume or completing the look. This is when I



have the opportunity to express my creativity by combining fabrics and details to highlight the doll's individuality. It is truly an inspiring process to see how the doll's character is accentuated by the style and colors of the chosen clothing. However, photographing the doll is also an important part that brings great pleasure. Through the camera lens, one can capture its unique beauty and convey the mood. Each shot allows the story behind the look to unfold, and this opportunity for creative expression inspires me with new ideas. Customization, however, is the most challenging part of creating a doll. It requires patience, precision, and attention to detail. This process is accompanied by unpleasant dust because it often involves working with plastic, a scalpel, and sandpaper. Nonetheless, despite its laborious nature, customization brings the greatest sense of satisfaction. Creating something unique from scratch is a true reward for all the effort invested.

**How has participating in exhibitions in the USA influenced your work or perspective as an artist?**

Participation in exhibitions in the USA has had a significant impact on my creativity and worldview as an artist. Thanks to these events, I have gained many regular clients who appreciate and support my art, which makes me very happy. I would say it has greatly strengthened my self-confidence and helped expand my creative horizons. The Blythe doll exhibitions always provide a powerful energy boost. Participating in them is not only a chance to showcase my work but



also an opportunity to immerse myself in an atmosphere of art and connect with like-minded people. Each such exhibition fills me with inspiration and energy that lasts throughout the year.

What's your favorite part of interacting with collectors and other doll enthusiasts at these exhibitions?

I enjoy interacting with collectors and other doll enthusiasts at exhibitions because it provides an opportunity to share experiences and passion for collecting Blythe dolls. Participants share interesting stories about their finds and collections, and often discuss rare or unique items. This creates an incredible festive atmosphere.

What advice would you give to someone who is just starting out in the world of doll-making?

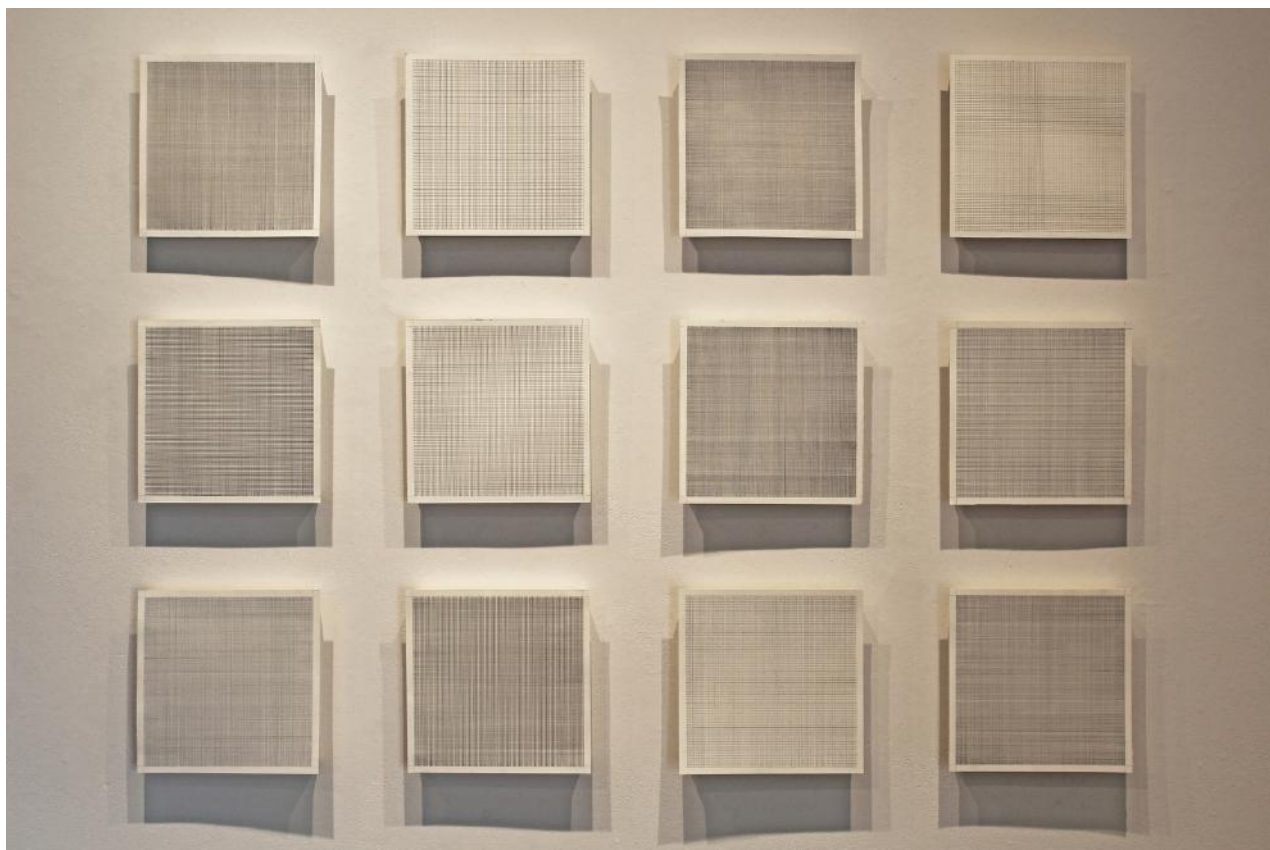
At the beginning of your creative journey, it's important to remember that growth takes time and requires patience. Don't be afraid to try new things and experiment—this will help you find your own unique style. Avoid comparing yourself to others, as every artist moves along their own path. Learn to take constructive criticism as a lesson, and see mistakes as opportunities for growth. Connecting with other creative individuals and finding inspiration in their work can be beneficial. Manage your time and strike a balance between work and rest to avoid burnout.



**Riddhi Patel** is a visual artist based in Edmonton, Canada. She received an MFA from the University of Alberta, Canada. Riddhi maintains a diverse studio practice that includes drawing, painting, photography, and sound works. Her work exploration is deeply rooted in the subtle intricacies found within grids. Drawing inspiration from her daily observations, architectural influences, and her background as a Kathak dancer, she weaves a rich tapestry of analogies within her work. The grid serves as a foundational element within her work. Reflecting on its presence as a ubiquitous repetitive feature within every surrounding, it occupies every space and terrain, leaving no room for escape. In a sense, grids have shaped the constructed ecosystem. Considering the grid as the epitome of the constructed landscape, she explores its sensibilities and aesthetic perspectives by drawing various analogies.

#### *Artist Statement*

Riddhi Patel's work encompasses a collection of artworks that center around inherent sensitivities and the use of repetition to foster a conducive mental environment. It grapples with questions such as 'How does the eye visually experience a touch?' and 'How does one visually interpret a sound?'. From the lens of a visitor and newcomer to Canada, Edmonton (Treaty 6 Territory) has generously offered visual discoveries of repetition in daily observations of land and architecture. Drawing from her knowledge as a Kathak dancer, her body of work conceptually informs and integrates her practice with these observations. Ink, graphite, gouache, threads and subtle tones of paint are some of her preferred mediums. The grid serves as a foundational element within her work. Reflecting on its presence as a ubiquitous feature within every surrounding, it occupies every space and terrain, leaving no room for escape. In a sense, grids have shaped the constructed ecosystem. Considering the grid as the epitome of the constructed landscape, she explores its sensibilities and aesthetic perspectives by drawing various analogies. Moving beyond the physical structure of the grids, she delves into its more profound significance as a system that aligns with the orderly arrangement of movements and beats found in classical Kathak dance. Her work navigates the space between the physical presence of the grid and its implied meanings, thus fostering a dialogue that transcends mere visual representation.



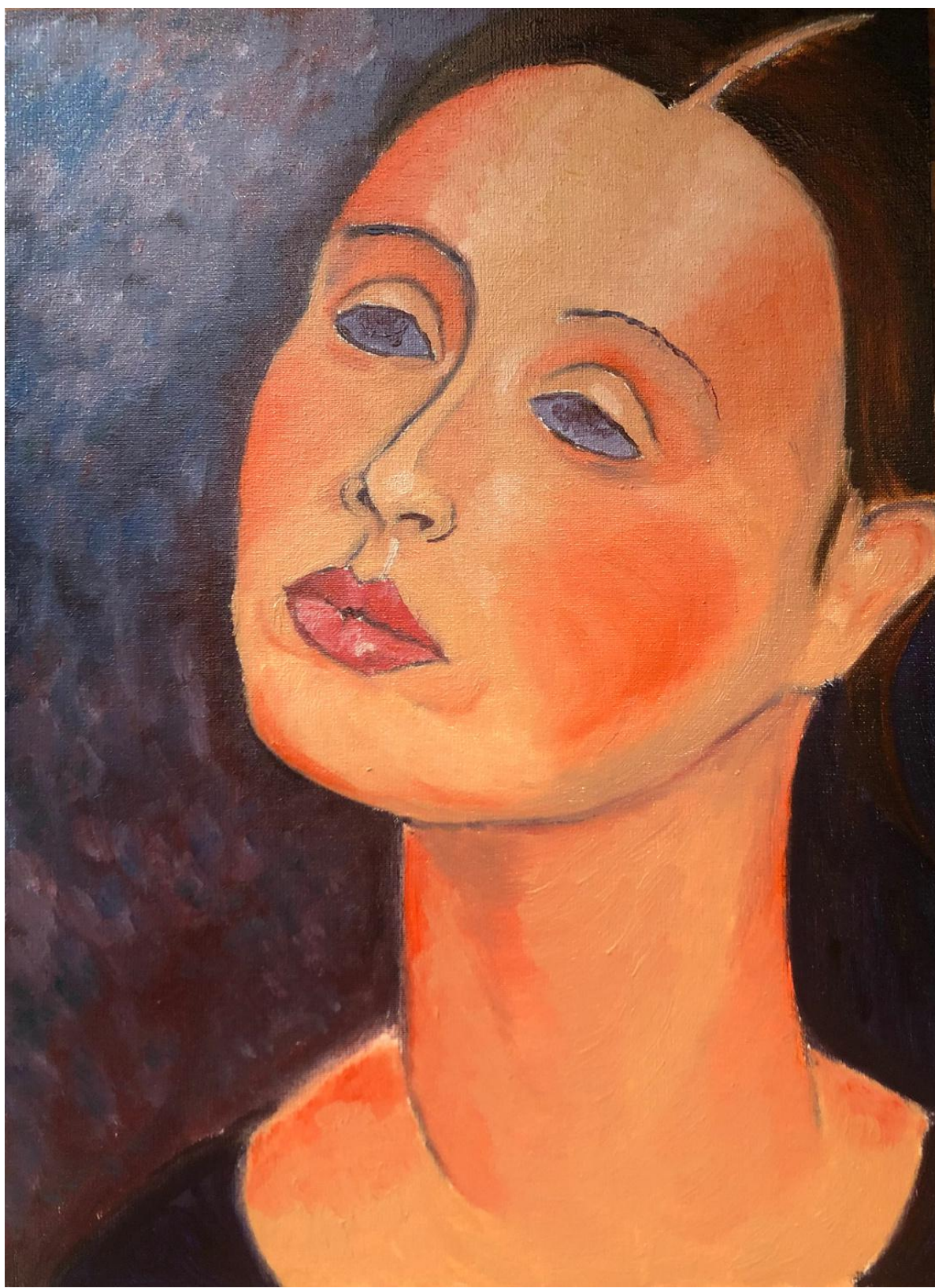
Riddhi Patel | Sounds like grids



Riddhi Patel | At the tour

## Bohdan Znachok

A painter whose work is driven by the joy and fulfillment he finds in the creative process itself. The canvas is a space to explore human, emotions and experiences. Philosophy is to paint with an open soul, much like a child with pure, unguarded curiosity. Believing in an open heart both in life and in art, embracing the vulnerability of being human. Hoping to encourage viewers to look within themselves and the people around them. Who we are and who are those around us? Do we see ours and their beauty? Or what do we see?



Bohdan Znachok | Waiting | 2024



WINE  
IN  
MY  
blood

# — Interview

## Vivian Cavalieri

**Your artworks often address complex global issues like immigration, climate change, and social justice. What inspired you to use miniature three-dimensional scenes as the medium for these topics?**

My choice of presentation reflects two aspects of my personality — shyness and a need to find order in chaos. More inclined to whisper than to shout, I encourage viewers to approach by creating small-scale, attractive works that trigger a conversation. Often overwhelmed by the topics themselves, I seek to reduce each issue to its essentials, raising awareness and leaving viewers to decide how to respond.

**How has your Venetian heritage influenced your choice of palette and design in your artworks?**

Venetian style is ornate and ebullient, featuring blues, greens, amber, red, rose, and gold. Instinctively, I tend towards that color palette, and the high-quality components in my designs contribute to a sense of opulence and joy notwithstanding the highly structured nature of my assemblages.

**You often incorporate pieces of your handmade jewelry into your scenes. Could you share the significance of this element in your work?**

For 10 years, I designed ornate necklaces reminiscent of the Venetian “torsades” — numerous strands of



Vivian Cavalieri | The Misguided Coyote | 2023



tiny, identical Murano glass beads that, when twisted, reflect light and make the eye dance. My necklaces, while incorporating a broad range of other components, create much the same effect — sparkling and emitting a joyful vitality. Wishing to confer meaning into objects created solely for their beauty, I decided to include them in the conceptual assemblages I began creating. Their presence contributes to the attractiveness of the overall scene — which draws in viewers — and starkly contrasts with the commercially manufactured items that dominate many scenes, essentially enabling me to insert a piece of myself.

**Can you tell us about the process of selecting dollhouse miniatures, fabrics, and other objects for your assemblages? How do you ensure they carry personal and symbolic meaning?**

I start with a theme which inspires the palette and selection of objects. For example, with “Born Free,” I wanted to raise awareness of the crib-to-prison pipeline that traps so many young Black males. I developed an overall design — a nursery scene in which a crib with protective slats contrasts with bars intended to confine rather than to protect. Reviewing my large inventory of dollhouse miniatures, I selected a gold birdcage. I chose fabrics and soft colors commonly found in a nursery to create an overall sense of warmth and security. But I included a subversive detail — the door of the empty birdcage is glued open and the inhabitant nowhere in sight.

## How do you strike a balance between inviting dialogue and avoiding a didactic tone in your work?

To soften my voice without softening my message, I rely on symbolism (as previously mentioned regarding “Born Free”) and humor, as in “The Misguided Coyote.” There, puzzled dogs look on at a coyote baying at a streetlamp rather than at the nearby moon. The work addresses serious themes — light pollution and the destruction of habitat that forces forest animals into urban areas — but it does so with a light touch. The small-scale nature of my work also contributes by encouraging viewers to approach just as a whisper would.

## What challenges do you face when transitioning from small-scale assemblages to immersive installations?

Each conversion has its own challenges based on the installation size and the desired impact. For example, I wanted to convert “The Diner (Coming to America)” into a life-size diner where visitors can record their own immigration stories. Deciding that I wanted a perfect reproduction of the scene, I turned to a fabricator familiar with theater set design. My desire for a set that could be deconstructed and shipped from one location to another required certain adjustments such as reducing the desired height by several feet. I am now seeking advice from an audio/visual expert on how to record and retain visitors’ stories as well as legal advice on compliance with the laws on accessibility. Once these mechanics are settled, I plan to search for an appropriate site for the installation.

I faced very different challenges in converting “Staycation” into an installation. While I may eventually create a larger installation, at present I am redesigning the artwork to be placed atop a 9-inch cube of ice in an 18-inch cubed glass aquarium where, as the ice melts, the water level rises and eventually approaches a polar bear. Intending the piece to be used multiple



Vivian Cavallieri | War & Peace (Strings)

times, my first concern was what to use as a base. It had to fit within the aquarium, sink evenly as the ice melted, be wrapped in fabric, and survive repeated use. Following the advice of a carpenter, I decided to use cedar (which doesn’t buckle when submerged) and weighed it down with stones to counteract the tendency of wood to float. I next sought a fabric similar in color and texture to the one used in the assemblage that, once sewn to resemble waves, would retain its color and shape despite repeated submersions in water. Having wrapped the base in the fabric and attached the polar bear, I calculated the time it took for 9 inches of water to freeze in that sized aquarium. I placed the completed base on top of the block of ice and am currently calculating the time it will take for that block of ice to melt.

## Your work often involves references from multiple cultures due to your international upbringing. Can you provide an example of how this has shaped one of your recent pieces?

Growing up exposed to a variety of languages and art forms — primarily European and Chinese — I instinctively select items that suit a given artwork without considering their origin. References are often subtle: a French game board in “The Raven (Nevermore),” a Chinese painting in “Nature vs. Art — The Striped Tulip,” paintings by British and French artists in “Civilized Dogs,” a classic Italian painting in “Be Still My Heart,” a chair designed by a Scottish architect and designer in “Nature Inside and Out,” and a French poster and a chair by an Irish designer in “Transformations (from Bibendum to The Michelin Man).”

Vivian Cavallieri | Transformations (from Bibendum to the Michelin Man) | 2022



I am **Kim Bredius**, and I am an up-and-coming contemporary abstract painter. Originally from the Netherlands, I have been living in Australia over a decade, and I love colour and bold expressive marks and shapes. Living where I live and being around nature in all forms, from beach to bushland, it gives me inspiration for movement in marks in my painting. My journey started years ago but has been evolving in the last few years to where I have been lucky enough to find the style that suits me now best. You can describe my work as 'colour-popping-abstract'. My love for the colours Fluro Pink and Gold come back in almost every work and are unmissable to me as they give the positive and happy vibes to the works I make. And besides colours, I am in love with flowers, almost all of them, of which my favourite ones the daisy and the sunflower. They can make every moment brighter on any day. I have entered art prizes and had some works hanging in galleries during open exhibition art prize shows. Further, I did a collaboration with Sydney pianist Kat Choi, where I created paintings to the (classical) music she was performing. I want my works to bring you happiness and positivity, exactly what it brings me when I create them.



Kim Bredius | Bad Vibes Dont Go With My Personality | 2024





Lambert

Drama

**Aliyyaa Maya** is a Brooklyn-born textile artist and self-taught sewist that has been creating abstract art reflective of her Haitian and African American roots for years. Her style of vibrant, festive self expression reflects her upbringing as an African street festival kid where her family has built community with the borough over decades. Within her years of artistry she has been featured in publications such as Suboart International Arts magazine; shows and festivals like Blue Lilith Productions, International African Arts Fair, Bed Stuy Art House and the Better Than Yesterday organization, Trade Desk: Noire Soiree, STOOPS Bedstuy Block Party exhibits.

*Artist Statement*

I work with printed textiles for its bold eccentricity, adaptability and strength. Textile's ability to be modified by being cut, glued, torn, stretched and sewn into a new phase of itself makes it the best medium in representing the resiliency of my culture, the African Diaspora. I am inspired by the history of African American quilt makers who used their patchwork skills as tools for economic growth and freedom. I am also motivated by Solar Punk, an artistic movement that envisions a sustainable future amongst nature hence why my art is nature-titled. Collaging a confetti of Caribbean and African fabrics pieces I create a kaleidoscope of abstract images expressing not just the individual uniqueness amongst my people but the beauty of harmony amongst the world as a whole. Community is what makes us safe and solidarity is what will lighten our load.



Aliyyaa Maya | Island Flower



Aliyaa Maya | Her

**Emma Viktorovna Shleyger** is an artist with 12 years of experience, a member of the Eurasian Artists' Union, and a member of the Professional Artists' Union. Since 2021, she has actively participated in watercolor painting exhibitions in Vietnam. Starting in 2024, she has taken part in exhibitions in Russia as well as international exhibitions and competitions. Currently, her primary focus is on classical painting and graphic landscapes, unified by the theme of folklore and traditions in the modern world.



## project fish

**Your work often reinterprets Edvard Munch's themes. Why did you choose Munch's art as a foundation for your exploration of screaming and the human condition?**

As part of my art training, I reinterpreted some old masters in my own style, to absorb classical techniques about how paintings are composed and made. As an emerging artist I continued with this method, turning my practice towards Edvard Munch, because he made paintings in series, so forming a collection.

Wanting to explore the same method, I investigated how Munch formed his themes, which often concerned women, and famously, screaming and cries of anguish and anxiety. Then I developed my own approach, which foundation theme is Underwater, since being underwater, I associate with screaming.

Underwater started with my painting about Fraumünster Church in Zurich, a building that once faced the possibility of being submerged, due to incessant rains, snow melt and resultant flooding. I thought this idea of an important cultural icon, such as Fraumünster Church, being Underwater should cause a scream of anguish in society. A scream at the loss of heritage to invading water.

This idea of a such a scream reinforced my choice of reinterpreting Edvard Munch's 'Scream', as this is a symbolic icon of screaming. So, I built on Munch's 'Scream' to narrate a story, to and about the women of Zurich, or women anywhere in the world. Who may scream, loudly or silently, at the thought of water permanently submerging their church or drowning their offspring. Furthermore, I thought a scream should be a

response to rising sea levels, and these are part of what is called the climate crisis. I imagined a scream of terror at the idea that climate change flooding or rising sea levels may put, not just cultural icons such as Fraumünster under water, but people, including mothers and their offspring. The notion also is that when they were underwater, drowning, short of oxygen, they would want to scream but they dare not open their mouths, for fear of swallowing water. I had also an idea of a various screams of frustration. These at what seems to be our global political inability to take rising sea level matters seriously. Or at what seems a general political disregard for the lives of future generations, to whom governments bequeath the mess society is making of the planet. The resultant mess in society, is one that may be made by the planet's oceans on the rise, invading coastal cities, submerging urban architecture Underwater. This also led to an idea of a future scream of outrage, from those not yet born. Who after being born and maturing into adults, then scream in anger at their ancestors. Looking back at these prior generations, and realising these ancestors sat on their hands about being Underwater; their ancestors seemingly did not care about future generations, the climate mess these generations would inherit or what price these future generations would have to pay. Nevertheless, there are a multitude of other reasons to scream and build on Munch. Screaming is part of the human condition; screaming is an emotion, and the human condition is basically, one of emotion. Art is about emotion, so art can be about screaming. These all are factors in my choice of Munch's art.

**The human scream is a recurring theme in your art, symbolizing both birth and existential fear. How do you see this primal expression connecting with modern into societal concerns, such as rising carbon levels?**

A scream by a mother is a vocal emotion connected to her giving birth, and natural birth is a primordial event. Birth for the womb occupant is about leaving, migrating from a womb world, in which the body in the natural womb is underwater, the natural water of amniotic fluid. The word body, for an occupant of a womb, I usually capitalise as Body to distinguish it from the mother's body.

Bodies being born from natural wombs has been a constant across millennia and will hopefully continue to be so, unless humanity contrives its own extinction. Which would be another reason for future or current generations to scream or be fearful.

Natural wombs are smaller than 80cms in length. A newborn may not be much longer than 50cms. A birth canal against which women struggle in pain is typically smaller than 20cms. Within these dimensions are screaming metaphors and narratives, waiting to be found in art, for the

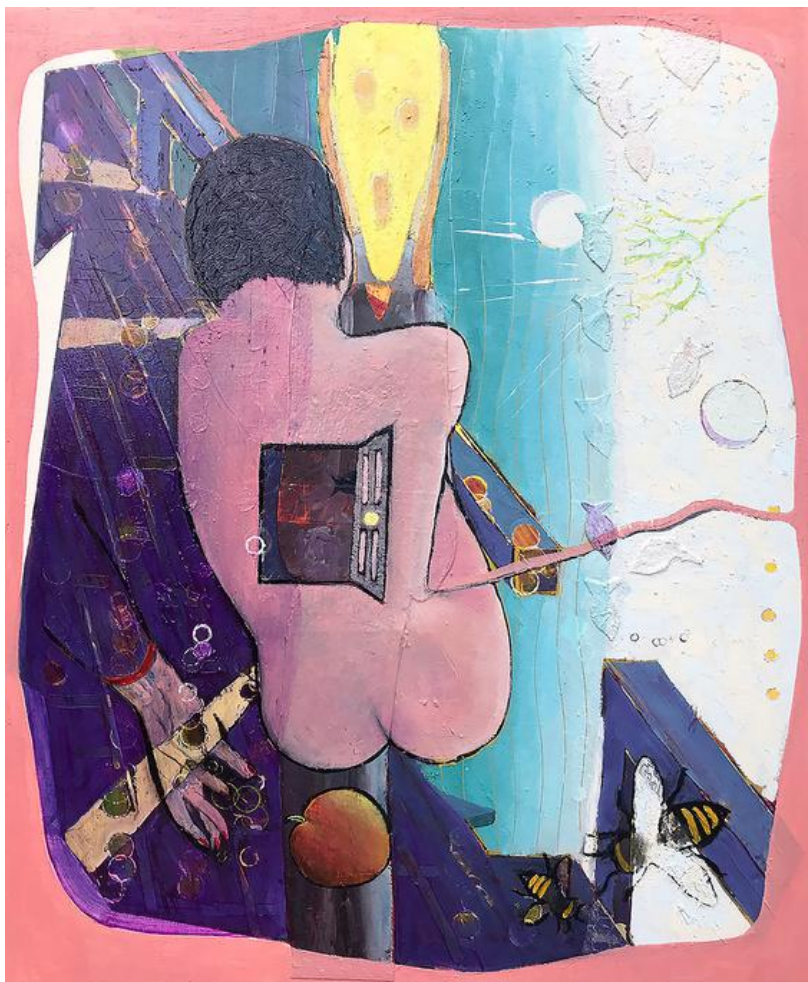
condition of being Underwater in a womb, which involves dimensions of less than 80cms. At the same time, 20-80cms is insignificant when measured against the trillions of centimetres that define vast oceans.

Ocean science tells us that without dams to keep water out, increasing storms and 20-80cms of sea level rise will flood coastal cities, they will be Underwater. These city societies should be concerned; New York is already planning for walls to keep out the Atlantic. By 2050, land that is home to 300 million people may flood regularly; these 300 million should be concerned. Their future scream, not necessarily in cities, may be imagined.

Modern concerns of society include artificial wombs, falling birth rates, and couples who are unable to have children by natural means. Which inability may cause couples to scream, at what seems to be their loss. Thus, women resort to artificial IVF to mitigate their situation. Artificial wombs are intended to help women at health risk during pregnancy.

The occupant of an artificial womb is still Underwater but is under natural amniotic water. In artificial wombs the liquid is synthetic amniotic fluid. In this artificial womb space existence, the Body-not-yet-born is separate from and

project fish | Fish & Scream



independent of the mother. The Body, an insubstantial thing perhaps in a natural womb, may be transferred to an artificial womb, to allow gestation to complete, without the mother's participation. Who may scream at this separation.

Thus, fantasy technology advances culture, health care and so disrupts, and redefines what it is to be a woman or a mother. As women would no longer be essential to the act of birthing their Body and women may scream at this redundancy; the social and cultural house of traditional motherhood is on fire, being burnt by technology, which incendiary may evoke a scream. With no water on hand to calm the emotion or to put out the fire. The notion of gestating humans in an artificial womb may cause a scream.

Artificial wombs are artificial surrogacy for women unable to carry out their primordial role. This failure may lead to mental disturbance or cries of despair.

Sometimes in my images, alluding to touch, a female hand reaches, cupped, for an apple. This may be Eve's hand from the garden of Eden, reaching for the fruit; and because of eating that harvest arise the masculine, historical, controversial, and theological opinions about women necessarily suffering the pains of childbirth. About which opinions there may be a feminist scream to be heard. Yet, the Body's back is turned to the hand, protesting at being left alone, in an artificial womb.

Carbon levels in the atmosphere have continued to rise, inexorably for the last thirty years, during which time art, science and society have talked incessantly about how this carbon increase is bad. But nothing changes, atmospheric carbon levels continue to rise. Someone or something is not listening. The planet is not listening. That may be another reason to scream or be fearful. A scream or a cry thus connects with modern society at various levels.

**You mention ambiguity as a prized feature of art. Can you elaborate on how ambiguity plays a role in your work, particularly in relation to embryos, IVF, and reproductive medicine?**

The gender of the Body in my work is

ambiguous. The Body in a womb knows nothing of gender. For the first year of its life outside a womb, a Body is just a foetus, and the newborn Body is a foetus outside, not inside, a womb.

Thus, in my work the gender inside the womb is just as ambiguous as gender outside the womb, from the point of view of the Body. Even though mothers may point at a Body, bestowing on it a gender.

Gender is a construct of society which the Body only encounters after birth. A Body on maturity is free to choose its gender, not have it imposed by my work. Irrespective of a mother's concerns or choices about imposing gender. Which imposition may in later life make a Body scream. Society's concerns may invade ethical matters related to embryos, IVF, and reproductive medicine when sex selection or other choices happen. Over which the Body has no voice, and no choice; someone else's choices drown out a Body's concerns for human life in a Body. My work is about hearing the voice of the Body, which can only be silent in the womb. Otherwise, the Body may scream at being denied its right to choose, a right gifted to mothers.

**The concept of water seems central to your practice, connecting oceans to the womb. How do you use this metaphor to address the 'disorderly relationship' between water and the human condition?**

The power of water can disorder the human condition. As Szent-György says, water is life's matter and matrix, mother and medium. There is no life without water. Life left the ocean after growing a skin, a bag in which to take water with it. We still live in water, the water now inside.

I say that bag may now be an artificial womb. These womb bags disorder the human condition of mother and Body. Without water the fact is that humans, mothers or Bodies, die, and dying apart from seeming to invoke a scream, is a disordering event, as is being submerged Underwater. Except, ambiguously, water is an ordering material in the womb.

The womb water in which I once lived was natural amniotic water - not salty, ocean water or fresh water from melting glaciers, lakes, and rivers, all of which conspire to cause rising sea levels. The same womb truth applies to all



mothers and Bodies of the past and those currently alive. From these ideas I derive metaphors for the discord in the relationship in rising sea levels, between water and the human condition, except there is no discord between the human condition and water in the natural womb.

**Sustainability and the future of 3.5 billion newborns between 2025 and 2050 form a critical part of your focus. What message do you hope your art conveys to current and future generations?**

To current generations of mothers, I hope my art conveys messages about screaming, as mentioned, that change how and what they think about oceans and wombs. Thinking that these are connected not separate.

I hope my art conveys to women, different tales about women and this connection. Water is after all associated with the feminine. Nevertheless, other tales await discovery in the imagination of female creative minds.

My work, as a man, is for creatives and is aimed audaciously at women, and my writing pseudonym is project fish. Rupturing and disrupting feminist womb boundaries by addressing, through mothers, those not yet born, who may cry on being born.

My art considers the next generation are a cultural institution. Between 2025 and 2050, Underwater expects 3.5 billion new-born-Bodies to arrive, globally, into a world of rising sea levels. With their mothers I hope they inspire the collective, cultural institution of Bodies to drive the creation of new images, and new stories about screaming, about being submerged and the avoidance of being under sea water. Invisible emotional currents flow between mothers, between mothers and those not-yet-born - when they are united as one in a natural womb - and between those not-yet-born. The current needs to avoid the obstacles that block social education and literacy about the world of rising sea levels, wombs, and fish. These are currents of future urban life.

**How does your collaboration with poet**

**Robert Fred influence your creative process and the stories you tell through your art?**

My creative process involves poems. Some Underwater poems I write. These poems are about Underwater images. I explore narratives about fish life Underwater. Other poems are composed by Swiss poet Robert Fred. Who expresses in short French poems an intimate dialogue, his response my Underwater images. Fred seeks the voice of conscience and a change to perceptions of the world. Inviting the reader to look at himself, the responsibility of women and their role in nature, making a voice that sparks change, for a better world. These Fred stories influence in turn my creative process, and my process influences the creative process of Fred. Female artist collaborators are welcome in project fish.

**Surrealism is a strong element in your work. What draws you to surrealism, and how do you think it helps communicate the complexities of the human condition?**

The Body in my work is Underwater. Curled in a foetal position as if in a womb, and this curl refers to the work of Mina Loy, a 20th century feminist, artist, futurist and surrealist. Although I was first drawn to surrealism by Sean Theodora O'Hanlan in "The Shipwreck of Reason". In this O'Hanlan links Surrealism and Andre Breton with the oceans, and these my art practice has linked with Munch. Thus, creating surrealist interpretations of Munch's Scream. Shipwrecking the Scream in Underwater currents from rising sea levels, and the artificial. My new directions were sprung from the O'Hanlan claim, that what the Surrealists took to the depths was 'a coordination and tension between a sense of modernity as a shipwreck and the pursuit of salvage and renewal'. My art coordinates and tenses also but does so between the tension created by rising sea levels and artificial wombs affecting humanity and the tension of coordinating the sustainability of human life in the face of the power of water. About which we may scream.

**Melissa DiMatteo** has a passion for art journaling, mixed media, collage, and acrylic painting. Through experimentation and dedication, Melissa has developed an artistic voice that blends textures, bold compositions, and personal storytelling. Art journaling, also known as creative journaling, has been at the heart of Melissa's art journey, serving as a therapeutic outlet and a space for endless exploration. With a love for playing with paint and embracing imperfection, her work reflects a sense of freedom and a willingness to push herself. From acrylic splashes to intricate collages, Melissa believes in art's ability to transform emotions and spark creativity in others.

### *Artist Statement*

I create art to express, explore, and let go. My journey has always been about embracing imperfection and letting go although at times that is hard to do. I am drawn to art journaling because it offers a freedom—if you don't like a project or creation, you can simply turn the page. I create mixed media projects with many materials like collage, acrylics, and watercolor. For me, art is about trying new things and letting go of the old. It's a safe space to break rules, explore emotions or thoughts, and evolve as both an artist and a person. My hope is that my work inspires others to pick up a brush, rip up some paper, or splash a little paint—and to find their own stories within the pages of a journal.



HOME IS NOT  
A PLACE, IT'S  
A FEELING...  
FAMILY



# — Interview

## Manman Li

**Your works often explore the intersection of technology, identity, and memory. How do you approach blending these themes in your interactive installations?**

For example, in my recent exhibition at the National Art Museum of China, *The Dance of Paper Kites: An Interactive Awakening* (玩趣·交互蝶代), I transformed the museum's collection of traditional butterfly kites into an interactive installation. Every day, thousands of visitors engage with it. The installation combines the latest gesture recognition technology with a game engine, using projections to showcase the charm of Chinese folk art in an innovative way. These paper kites are not just kites—they carry the memories of the Chinese people, embodying a deep sense of cultural identity and connection. By using modern media and new technologies, we can bring these long-forgotten artworks back to life, allowing more people to appreciate and experience them. As an interactive artist, this is one of the most rewarding aspects of my work.

**Exhibiting at the National Art Museum of China is a big honor for any artist. Could you please share more details about the creation process and the exhibition setup for this piece?**

This experience was truly a mix of luck and challenges. As an artist based in California, I couldn't believe it when I first received an invitation from the National Art Museum of China, one of the most prestigious art institutions in my home country. It felt surreal until Ms. Chen Zhen, the director of the Folk Art Department, personally reached out to invite me to create an interactive installation for their Spring



Festival exhibition. That's when I realized this incredible opportunity was real and began dedicating myself to the project.

As an interactive artist, I worked closely with the curator to discuss the theme and details of the exhibition, titled "Four Seasons of Play" (四时玩趣). We ultimately decided to use the museum's collection of butterfly kites as the creative material. In my work, these butterfly kites were transformed into an interactive installation where visitors could control the movement of the kites in a projection using hand gestures. This added an engaging and playful element to the exhibition.

Of course, the project wasn't without its challenges. There were two major hurdles:

1. Tight schedule: From finalizing the concept to completing the installation, I had only five days. This included extensive testing to ensure the equipment could handle interactions from a large number of visitors without any issues.
2. Lack of equipment: This was the museum's first time inviting an artist to create an interactive piece based on their collection, so there wasn't any suitable hardware available. We had to rent a computer, which involved strict approval processes. Fortunately, everything came together in the end.

I'm deeply grateful to the curators and the Folk Art Department team for their support and encouragement. Without their help, I wouldn't have been able to complete this project within such a tight timeframe.

During the setup phase, everything went surprisingly smoothly. Although setting up interactive installations can be complex due to the multiple devices involved—such as projectors, computers, and motion-detection equipment like Leap Motion—the museum staff were incredibly experienced and efficient. They quickly devised practical solutions and executed them flawlessly, ensuring the installation was ready on time.

**Could you tell us more about your interactive installation *The Dance of Paper Kites: An***



**Interactive Awakening (玩趣·交互蝶代)? What emotions or experiences do you aim to evoke in the audience?**

Thank you for your interest in The Dance of Paper Kites: An Interactive Awakening (玩趣·交互蝶代). This piece was created to bring the beauty and cultural significance of traditional Chinese butterfly kites into the digital age. Using advanced hand-tracking technology and a game engine, the installation allows audiences to control the movement of the kites through simple hand gestures, creating a dynamic and immersive experience. The work is designed to evoke a sense of wonder and nostalgia. On one hand, it celebrates the craftsmanship and history of Chinese folk art, reminding viewers of the deep cultural roots embodied in these kites. On the other hand, it invites reflection on how technology transforms the way we interact with and perceive traditional art forms. I aimed to create a space where audiences could not only appreciate the beauty of these kites but also feel a personal connection to them. By actively engaging with the installation, they become part of the artwork, experiencing the interplay between heritage and innovation. This combination of interactivity, cultural storytelling, and technology sparks curiosity and joy, making art more accessible and relatable to people of all ages.

**Your art emphasizes fleeting moments and human connections. How do you translate such abstract concepts into visually engaging digital installations?**

Fleeting moments and human connections are universal experiences, yet they are deeply personal and ephemeral. Translating these abstract ideas into digital installations requires a balance of technology and storytelling. I often begin with a narrative or emotion I want to convey—whether it's the transient beauty of a butterfly's flight or the subtle ways we connect in a digital space. Then, I use technology as a medium to bring these ideas to life. For example, I incorporate dynamic elements like motion, light, and sound to

create environments that respond to the audience's presence and actions in real time. These sensory interactions mirror the delicate and ever-changing nature of human experiences. Interactivity plays a key role. By inviting the audience to engage with the artwork—whether through gestures, movement, or other forms of participation—I aim to make the abstract tangible. The experience becomes deeply personal, as each person's interaction shapes their unique journey within the installation. Ultimately, my goal is to create spaces where people can pause and reflect on the beauty of these fleeting moments, fostering a sense of connection both with the artwork and with each other.



Manman Li  
Bully Machine  
2023



Manman Li  
Manipulate  
2022



Manman Li  
Flow for You  
2024

## Jason Bryant

A photo, a fingerprint, a signature, and DNA are all methods we use to identify a person, but they are just a means to match a name or face to an individual, not to describe who they are or to translate their identity. For as long as I have been using portraiture as the main focus of my paintings, it is not the identity or recognizable face in which I use to describe my portraits, but more of a blueprint of how I approach portraiture. Many levels go into what makes a person's portrait. It's a fabric of many layers, intertwined with a person's favorite foods, music, and movies. I have used all of these concepts in building my portraits. Stemming from my lifelong love of the cinema, many of the subjects of my paintings are actors and actresses. However, I am not commenting on celebrity or the star system, but I use the celebrity as a hook to bring the viewer in. My work has never focused on the face to describe or examine a portrait. Instead, by cropping or hiding certain features of the face, I add more mystery to the portrait, bringing us to question who we are and what's beneath the surface.

In my recent series of paintings, I have incorporated my love of skateboarding to explore themes of portraiture. With vibrant visceral iconic skateboard graphics coming from behind or bursting through the elegant black-and-white images of various actors and actresses, I've merged two of the most important parts of my life, skateboarding and art. I use the traditional format of the portrait to simultaneously comment on identity and create portraits that mean so much more than just the individual being painted. With most of my paintings, the figure is the focal point, but when all of the elements of the painting come into play, the work really explores the identity of others, not the subject being painted. There is so much to be learned from a person's portrait, information that goes well beyond the face.



Jason Bryant | Don't look up | 2018



Jason Bryant | A rooftop in Brooklyn | 2023

## — Interview

# Yuriko Yuco Yoshikawa

**Can you share your journey as an artist?  
How did your experience in nursing  
science influence your creative process?**

I have been working as a nurse in Japanese hospitals since 1984. In 2000, I graduated from The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center's Wound, Ostomy, and Continence Nurse Education Program and worked for many years in Japan as a WOC nurse. Later, in 2004, I earned a Master's degree in Nursing from the Graduate School of Medicine and worked for a year as a lecturer at a university nursing faculty. However, due to illness, I retired and began pursuing art. A year ago, I started posting daily senryu (a form of Japanese poetry) on my blog, and I have also been creating various handmade works such as paintings and sewing projects, sharing my creations on Instagram (@lucalito2022).



Yuriko Yuco Yoshikawa  
Smiling  
2024



Yuriko Yuco Yoshikawa | Floating | 2024

**What inspired you to combine abstract,  
colorful forms with intricate black-and-  
white linework?**

My long experience working in hospitals and as a visiting nurse made me deeply reflect on life, aging, illness, and death. After falling ill myself, I came to cherish the happiness of living in the present. I began to paint what I feel through my own sensibility and the inspirations that come to me.

**How do your emotions or experiences  
translate into the vivid colors and shapes  
in your works?**

After taking up painting, I discovered printmaking, specifically etching, which allowed me to create monochrome line-based works. However, as I love bright and colorful tones, I began freely adding colors to these works. By placing colors wherever inspiration struck, different shapes emerged. Bright colors have the power to energize people, and I hope that those who



see my paintings can draw strength from them.

**Could you describe your creative process? Do you begin with sketches, emotions, or specific ideas?**

My creative process involves two approaches: unconsciously moving my hand to construct lines or starting from a title that comes to mind as inspiration and building the imagery around it. Sometimes, I also express my emotions of the moment in my work.

**Can you talk about the pieces you created in 2024? What stories or emotions do they convey?**

When I became ill, I disposed of nearly all the artworks I had created up until then, leaving nothing behind. In Japan, I believe in



Yuriko Yuco Yoshikawa  
Phoenix  
2024



Yuriko Yuco Yoshikawa  
Smail  
2024

Daikokuten, the god of both destruction and creation, who teaches that new creation arises from destruction. Therefore, since 2024, I have been creating new works.

**How has your background in science shaped your perspective on art?**

I see art as a drop that creates ripples, spreading outward. I would be delighted if my works could evoke feelings or thoughts in those who view them. I want to create pieces that convey a message or even music to the viewer.

**What message or impact do you wish to leave through your artistic journey?**

By cherishing the happiness of living in the present and feeling gratitude for life, I wish for love and peace for people all over the world.

**Antonio Rosato** was born in Salento in 1984 and lives in Città di Castello (PG, Italy). Passionate and scholar of analog photography, he expresses his creativity by materializing in images and material works, suggestions and personal thoughts that explore both natural and anthropic reality and inner emotion. His artistic research uses various mediums like Polaroid and 35 mm film.

#### PRESS

Finalist in the Fine Art category in the URBAN PHOTO AWARDS 2024 and published in the paper catalog "URBAN UNVEILS THE CITY AND IT'S SECRETS" 2024 with the "Achronic Symbiosis-Piazza Matteotti".

#### AWARDS

Third place (Bronze) in the category Non-professional-Fine Art/Collage in the ANALOG SPARKS AWARD 2024 with the "Achronic Symbiosis". Third place (Bronze) in the category Innovation in the CONTEMPORARY COLLAGE MAGAZINE AWARDS 2024 with the "Achronic Symbiosis".

#### TITLE SERIES: ***Hidden Flowers***

Hidden Flowers is a work in which the natural element, contrary to classical aesthetics, is not represented for its and in its external beauty but is used as a tool (like the 35 mm film in film soup used) to evoke a hidden, sensual and unexpected beauty. The light flatters the photographed object, caresses it, immersing it in a sort of liquid universe; it wets it and envelops it, in a jam of colors and pulsations. The object abandons itself, bends and lets itself be transfigured, loses its shape becoming only pure color; saturated, almost acidic. It is an intimate, vibrant and powerful vision that we witness in secret as if we were voyers, who devour the surface of the vision.

Antonio Rosato | Hidden Flowers





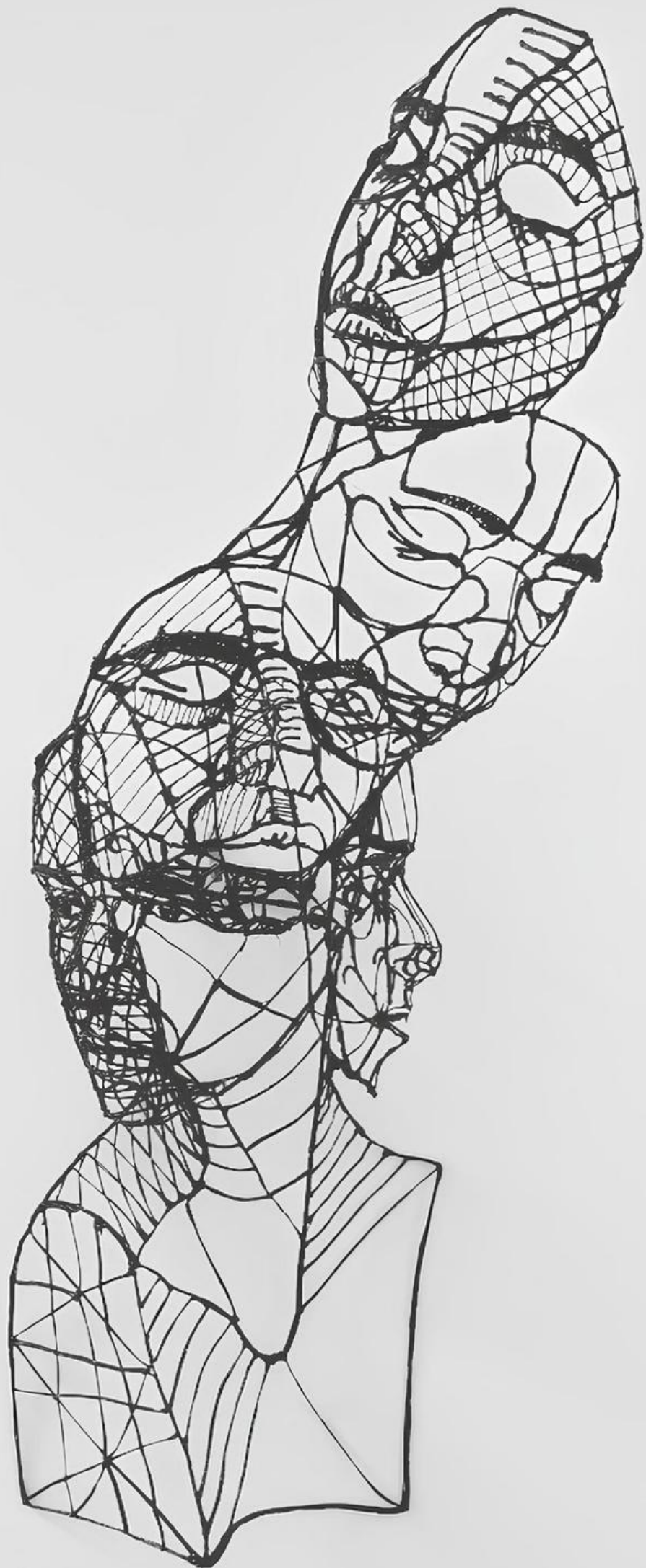
Antonio Rosato | Hidden Flowers

**Angelo Scardino** was born in 1986 in Grottaglie, the land of ceramics, where he took his first steps in his artistic career. After graduating from the "Lisippo" Artistic High School in Manduria, he obtained a first-level academic degree with top marks (110/110 with honors) in the 2007-08 academic year at the Academy of Fine Arts in Lecce. At the same academy, after completing a two-year specialization program in Sculpture, he earned his second-level (specialized) degree in the 2009-10 academic year, again with top marks (110/110 with honors). His thesis was divided into two parts: a theoretical dissertation titled "The Sculpture of the Void" and a practical project focused on creating models of void sculpture. In 2012, Scardino moved to Mantua, where he began working as a teacher at the "A. Dal Prato" State Institute of Art in Guidizzolo. Sculpture is the discipline through which he seeks to express his inner world via objects. Each of his works becomes a snapshot, capturing the dynamic flow of emotions and intellectual elaborations born from his constant observation of the surrounding world. Initially, Scardino's studies focused on the human figure, but over time, his works began a process of abstraction, exploring the interplay between fullness and emptiness, and the relationships of forms in space. This formal exploration led him to experiment with new materials. This evolutionary process is especially evident in his recent sculptures, where the materials themselves often inspire new forms. As a result, it is impossible to trace a singular design style in his work—each piece may exhibit a distinct style or even multiple styles within the same creation. This is because, for Scardino, form is the fundamental element in sculpture.

#### *Artist Statement*

Sculpture approaches the artwork from a new perspective. Instead of emphasizing its material, the work is analyzed for the void it contains—a void that gains substance through the act of creation and writing. We navigate back and forth between images and words. Sculpture truly occupies a space, filling a void and simultaneously creating one. Each piece arises from the constant interplay between fullness and emptiness. Regardless of the material, the artist always works in relation to the void. If the purpose of art is to reveal truth, we can also debunk the myth of beauty in art.





# — Interview

## Jie Chen

**Your journey in art began at a very young age. Can you tell us about the first time you felt inspired to create something, and how that initial spark evolved into your multidisciplinary practice today?**

The first time I felt inspired to create was in third grade, influenced by the Japanese anime *Cardcaptor Sakura*. Seeing the characters illustrated with pretty faces and unique outfits in each episode left a lasting impression on me. I began imitating the anime style and designing fashion looks for the characters I created. Before long, my classmates noticed my sketches and started sharing them, which gave me some popularity and truly sparked my passion for fashion design. Around the same time, I was inspired by the Flash Player video game *Mole Manor*, a dress-up and adventure game where players could change clothes, complete missions, and make friends. This inspired me to create my own version in my sketchbook. I designed maps, user interfaces, and characters for the game and invited my classmates to join. I created unique avatars for each of them and introduced a token system they could use to “purchase” fashion designs from my virtual clothing stores for their avatars.

This experience became my first multidisciplinary project, combining illustration, fashion, and interactive game design. It made me realize how much I enjoy blending different creative disciplines to make art and design fun, interactive, and engaging.

**How has your experience of moving to Canada at 15 and later studying at Parsons School of Design influenced your artistic vision and storytelling?**

In Canada, the supportive educational environment allowed me to fully immerse myself in art and explore my creativity. I experimented with various mediums—acrylic painting, collage, and pastels—drawing inspiration from both teachers and renowned artists during museum visits. These experiences ignited my imagination and deepened my commitment to art. My storytelling journey began in my final year in Canada with a series of themed paintings for my AP Art Drawing class. I learned how a single frame, through its composition, character-object interactions,



and use of color, could spark the audience’s imagination and invite personal interpretations. This series earned me top scores on the AP assessment and inspired my ambition to develop a unique artistic language for storytelling across multiple mediums. At Parsons, where I majored in fashion design, I expanded my storytelling to fashion, exploring new forms of media. Exposure to diverse electives and working studios, equipped with various tools and techniques, broadened my creative vision, enabling me to merge different art forms to enhance the narrative. The resources available at both schools gave me the freedom to experiment and push my artistic boundaries.

**Your work often explores dualities like life and death, chaos and order. What draws you to these opposing forces, and how do you balance them in your art?**

I am an eclectic individual, deeply intrigued by the duality and polarity inherent in everything. As humans, we often exist in the space between opposing forces—a “grey area” that sparks my curiosity. It is in this tension, the interplay of black and white, that I find profound intrigue. Though these extremes may be theoretical or abstract, I am captivated by their pure, outside-of-reality nature. I believe exploring these extremes, both in narrative and concept, pushes the boundaries of understanding and opens up new perspectives and ways of thinking.

In my creative process, my goal is not to simply balance opposing forces, nor to choose one side over the other, but to embrace their interconnectedness. As I explore these contrasts, I allow the narrative or concept to evolve by moving away from one extreme, only to eventually return to its opposite. This cyclical return reflects the philosophy of Yin and Yang—the idea that opposing forces are not in conflict, but are interdependent and complementary. Through this approach, I aim to reveal how the tension between extremes can uncover a deeper, more dynamic truth.

**Your series NEO·GENESIS is a deeply personal reinterpretation of the universe's origin. Could you walk us through the process of creating this series, from concept to execution?**

Before creating this project, I delved into a wide array of theories about the origin of the universe, exploring scientific hypotheses, philosophical ideologies, historical studies, and even extraterrestrial concepts. My curiosity led me to study the Bible for nearly a year at a local church, all in pursuit of answers to the ultimate question of the universe's creation. As an eclectic person, I often find that no single hypothesis fully resonates with me, which inspired me to blend diverse perspectives into a unique genesis story—one that feels both authentic and personally meaningful. The entire story came together in just an hour, late at night, in my sketchbook. Emerging from my subconscious, it was shaped by all the ideas I had absorbed. Like assembling a Lego structure, I pieced together elements of varying shapes and forms to build my own Tower of Babel—a genesis story that is uniquely mine.

Throughout the conceptual process, I drew inspiration from Norse mythology, where the universe originates from the clash between ice and fire. To explore the emergence of key concepts such as time and space, I deviated from the Biblical creation narrative in which God creates space and illuminates the universe. Instead, I introduced an inhuman creature—the god beast—imbued with the ability to transcend time and space. This creature runs at incredible speeds, shaping the universe as it moves. The space it traverses becomes the map and boundaries of existence, while the sparks of light it creates regulate universal time, establishing the speed of light as the fundamental force.

For human creation, I explored the duality of human nature—flesh and spirit—and how they are created through different processes. The randomness and complexity inherent in human nature is reflected in the spirit, which is drawn from a vast, divine spirit complex. Each fragment of this complex carries



Jie Chen | Chapter 3 neogenesis-explosion

varying proportions of good and evil, cold and passion, reason and instinct. This combination makes each spirit unique in its personality and nature. The flesh's randomness is granted through the spirit's journey of self-exploration, as it discovers its talents and forms within the framework of time, symbolized by the ten burning candles. These candles represent the ten months of pregnancy, with the energy of the Tree of Life (symbolizing maternal nourishment) sustaining the process. During this period, the spirit freely explores and collects its abilities in the dark chambers, discovering its appearance in a magical mirror. When the spirit and flesh unite, they form the human body, illustrating the complex fusion of contrasting forces that define humanity. The entire genesis story is actually rooted in basic cognitive references, with metaphor narrative and replacement as execution.

**The god beast in NEO·GENESIS is a central figure in your narrative. How did you conceptualize its design, and what does it symbolize to you personally?**

In the initial design of the god beast, I wanted to fuse the elements of ice and fire, inspired by the duality found in Norse mythology. These opposing forces would be embodied within the creature, forming a double-natured core. This core was visualized as a heart divided into two halves: one side cold and icy, the other fiery and intense. The ice could represent

Jie Chen | Chapter 4 neogenesis-division



the pure blue skies of heaven, while the fire evokes the chaotic, destructive flames of hell. However, the duality extends beyond these literal interpretations, symbolizing the extremes of human nature—good vs. evil, cold vs. passionate, reason vs. instinct, and so on. As I developed the first tangible form of the creature, I drew a connection to the goat, an animal often used in sacrificial offerings to God in Christian tradition. By incorporating the goat as a prototype, I sought to imbue the beast with a sense of divine significance. The goat, in this context, serves as a symbol of spiritual sacrifice and the idea of a return offering—a gift from beyond our universe, embodying the beast's intricate, sacred nature and profound mystique. The creation of this figure stems from my ambivalence about the existence of a higher power. I wrestle with the idea of a deliberate, omnipotent creator versus the possibility that the universe emerged through random, calculable events, akin to Laplace's Demon. This god beast embodies a synthesis of these ideas—a divine figure that deviates from the traditional notion of God. While possessing the ability to create, it does so without intent, shaping the universe through accidental, random occurrences.

**In your work, storytelling is foundational. How do your visual narratives influence your fashion designs, particularly your unisex garments blending glamour and utilitarianism?**

To preserve the narrative essence in my fashion design practice, I break down my stories and illustrations into chapters, with each chapter inspiring a complete look. Each look conveys the essence of its chapter, seamlessly integrating storytelling into the design process. Unisex garments are a core principle of my approach, rooted in the belief that clothing styles should transcend traditional gender distinctions. I aim to break free from the conventions of women's and men's wear, focusing instead on universal design. By



Jie Chen  
Chapter9 neogenesis-ten candles counting down

incorporating metaphor into my illustrations and visualizing narratives graphically, I streamline the research process. While other designers might create mood boards from external images, my illustrations serve this purpose directly, providing a foundation for silhouettes and garment forms.

When storytelling elements—such as fire or mythical beasts—anchor the narrative, I translate these motifs into the design features and silhouettes of the garments. To push the boundaries of structure and functionality, I've incorporated 3D pop-up book mechanisms developed during my NEO·GENESIS project, where I created a 3D pop-up book of my illustrations. These mechanisms have enriched my creative process, inspiring designs that fuse pop-up techniques with garment patterns to achieve a dynamic blend of utilitarian functionality and high-fashion glamour.

The pop-up concept reflects the explosive nature of universe creation, embodying the narrative's theme of cosmic expansion. It unites form and concept, with a single page transforming into unexpected dimensions—mirroring the dramatic clash of ice and fire that gives rise to the universe and humanity.

**You integrate 3D technology into your fashion creations. How do you think technology is reshaping the future of art and design, especially in the context of sustainability?**

I think the act of creation is both exhilarating and challenging because it inherently consumes resources, which can sometimes feel limiting. There's always that concern about wasting materials, especially when working on experimental art or fashion pieces. Many of these creations, while conceptually exciting, often lack functionality and end up as "art trash" once their purpose is served. This thought can be disheartening and sometimes holds back the freedom to push boundaries.

That's where I feel 3D technology becomes a game-changer. It's incredible to think about how this digital tool allows designers like me to bring wild, conceptual ideas to life without worrying about material waste. With real-time simulation, I can see how a design might move, how shapes might interact, and even test out bold concepts that might have felt too risky in a traditional medium.

What I love most is how it transforms the prototyping process. Instead of spending time and resources on multiple physical models, I can iterate in a virtual space, tweaking and perfecting as I go. It's like having an infinite canvas to explore creativity without the guilt of excess or waste. For me, 3D technology doesn't just ease the technical process; it gives me the freedom to think bigger, push boundaries, and focus on innovation without compromising sustainability.



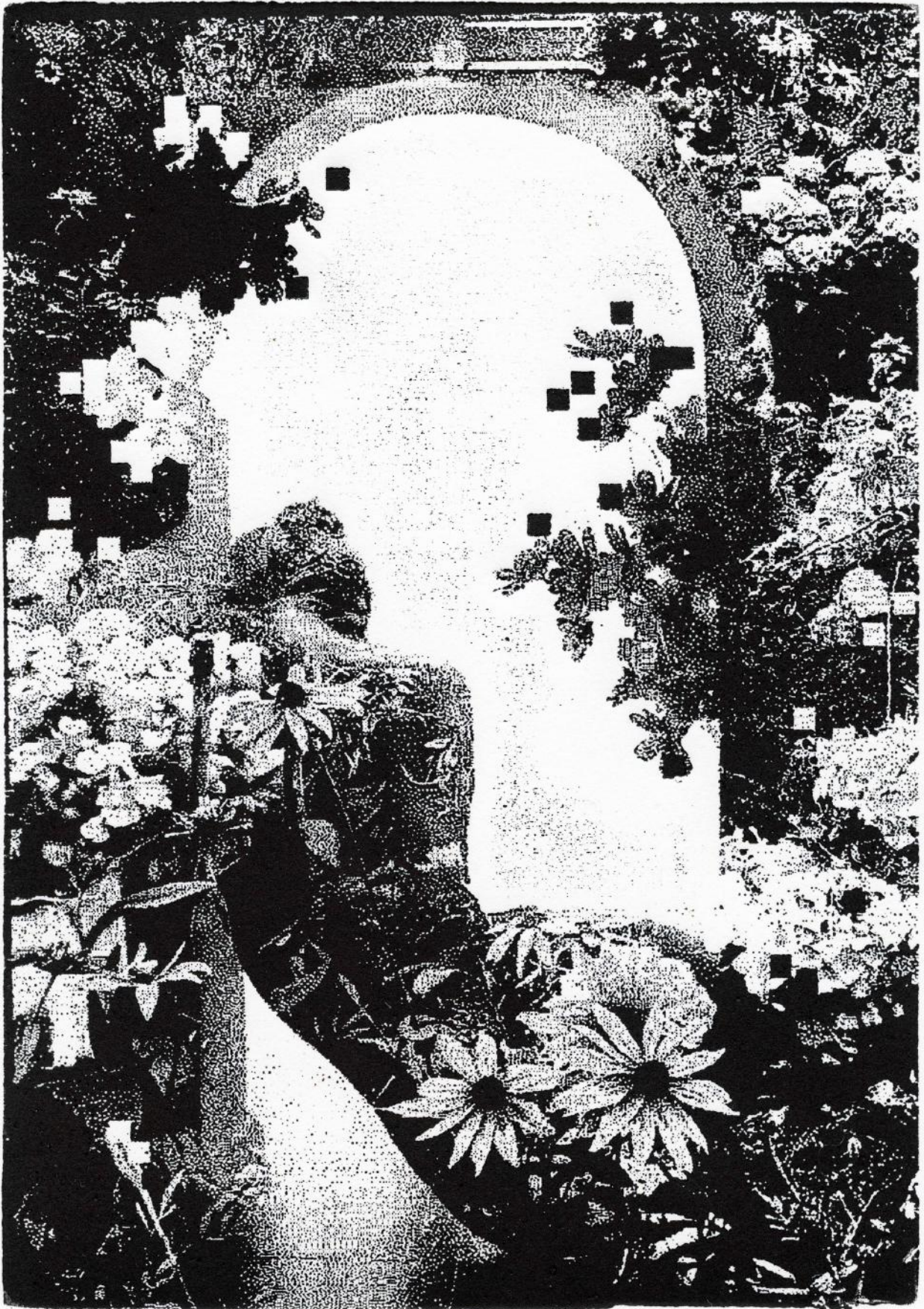


## Marta Chubata

I studied at the Academy of Arts in Lviv, earning a Bachelor's degree in Graphic Design. During my studies, I focused on posters and typography. I participated in many art competitions, won several awards and interned at various companies to gain professional experience. Additionally, I studied as an exchange student in HSLU Lucerne, Switzerland. Later, I was selected for the "Leopolis for Future" exchange working program, which led to an internship at Sensei as an illustrator. Currently, I work as a graphic designer and illustrator at Home&You. After a two-year break, I resumed my education at the Academy of Arts in Gdańsk, where I am now pursuing studies in the Department of Graphics.

Marta Chubata | Mirage | 2024





Marta Chubata | Garden | 2024

## Severine Verel alias Elviranka

I'm based in Perpignan when I'm not travelling around the world. I have been passionate about photography since 2016 following a horse-riding trip to Mongolia. My practice is built around a nomadic lifestyle centred on discovering nature and its inhabitants. I have travelled to different countries in Europe, South America and more recently, Oceania. I find my main sources of inspiration in nature, travel and literature. My approach to photography is like a metaphor whose form is nature and whose theme is essentially introspective and imaginary. I live this passion as a game between fascination, chance and light, with the aim of expressing that which is always escaping, like the horizon towards which we travel without ever reaching it.

Elvirankathe | Fog Invitation | 2024





## *Project Statement*

Elvirankathe | Calling of the Roots | 2024

woodland appearance

The forest, whether described in terms of its dark and mysterious aspects or as a healing and protective force, exerts a profound fascination on the human imagination. This monochrome series explores the evocative and symbolic potential of the forest. Navigating between the real and the imaginary, the mundane and the marvellous, this succession of images is presented as a fictional approach to 'the world of the forest.' In the shade of trees along waterways from Brazil to Spain, Thailand to France, nature is revealed as a vehicle for the marvellous. The common thread running through these immersive images, somewhere on the border between the possible and the magical, is above all an emotion, the presence of nature as the key to a journey towards the unconscious. After years of photographic travel and immersion in the wilderness, the desire to associate the imaginary with natural spaces became obvious. By superimposing different shots and associating them not in chronological order or geographical proximity, but as a poetic juxtaposition. The idea is to blur the lines of the representative landscape photograph and turn to the evocative potential of each element to compose a visual ode to the forest. From waterfalls to roots to bridges, the elements collide, juxtapose and bend to represent the forest in ways that no longer depict just one type of landscape, but a habitat, a setting and a protagonist of indefinite legends into which we can plunge in the same way that we let ourselves be carried away by these tales that evoke enchanted places.

# — Interview

## Azul Nogueron

**Your art reflects both romance and grief. How do you balance these two contrasting emotions in your creative process?**

For me, you can experience grief with love. I often reminisce about past loved ones that taught me lessons about love and it helped me become the person I am today. The way I lead with love is a reflection of who I used to be and how much I've grown since then. Feeling grief when it comes to romance is something so embedded in who I am and handling those emotions personally has never felt still. Everything feels intertwined but at the same time, fireworks exploding internally. I try to demonstrate that in my work as best as I can. When creating work about love, there are elements of a previous life I used to live in the paintings: they may be subtle from the way the people in my paintings look away or they can be more confrontational like my use of color to evoke emotion. Experimenting with surrealism in my work, I try to balance both emotions by creating a dynamic composition that's chaotic and passionate but also deep in feeling. I try to mimic that feeling of everything being intertwined within each other to the best of my abilities.

**How does your use of vivid colors contribute to the emotional narratives within your portraits?**

Color is a form of language for me. As someone who experiences synesthesia, I correlate colors with memories



Azul Nogueron | Fotos y Recuerdos



and it triggers feelings for me. I am someone who feels things intensely so the use of color is very important in my work. I am intentional to use hues that replicate the feeling I am experiencing in the work and often those are very saturated colors. It doesn't make sense for me to mute colors because the feelings I have are strong and passionate. In some cases, having neutral tones helps balance the painting from an explosion of color, but for the most part, I want my works to be vibrant and remind people of what it's like to feel so deeply. I feel like my work provides a packed punch of emotions through the use of vivid colors and helps push the narrative of unconditional love, community, grief, and intimacy.

**What role does your cultural heritage play in your artistic expression and themes?**

For me, it makes sense I make work the way I do because I was very influenced by other Latino artists like María Izquierdo, Frida Kahlo, Pepón Osorio, and more! Reading about these artists allowed me to paint my truth and also link my heritage into the work. While it's not outwardly about my culture, you can see cultural references in the paintings. Also, growing up in a Mexican household, I was surrounded by colorful decorative items so you can see how it also influenced my work. I'm fascinated by all the beautiful artisan work that local Mexican artists do and it allowed me to experiment with different methods of painting.

**Your pieces explore the concept of acceptance. How has this theme evolved in your work over time?**

Over time, I've allowed myself to make work about self-love, a concept that I strayed away from because I wasn't mentally in that space for a lot of my life. When I first started my journey with acceptance, I didn't necessarily have positive feelings in my paintings. I focused more on the anxiety of accepting myself in a world that often told me I wasn't good enough. However, certain experiences

allowed me to heal from that anxiety and become more demanding for acceptance. In my painting “fat bodies,” it shows a combination of larger bodies in different positions, and it took me about four years to complete. I was angry for a long time while completing that piece because I felt like I needed to demand space for me to exist when I should have already had it in society. So slowly, I worked on the piece and helped work through feelings I was having about my own body. That painting was a thought that said “We are here to take up space and be seen as beautiful.” As the journey continues, I still try to make work that focuses on the concept of acceptance. It is a feeling that is a constant work in progress but I have found myself surrounded by external affirmations from my friends, family, and partner. This love that surrounds me helps push me to create more work that is a reflection of their ongoing support, thus helping me accept myself more. So, future works might look different from my anxiety-induced paintings. There may be softer tones used to create that fuzzy feeling of being truly seen and accepted. For now, though, acceptance in my work is just surrounding myself with loved ones.

**What role do emotions like fear and curiosity play in shaping the narratives within your paintings?**

Curiosity is prominent in my work and works in tandem with fear. I often question my actions and emotions when making work about romance and grief. What does romance look like for someone who’s had terrible heartache? What anxieties come up when it comes to showing love to my community? Those questions help me understand more what it means to lead with love as someone who has a lot of grief. My curiosity about my emotions helps me understand what I want to do next in my painting. It chooses the composition, the color, and the narrative I am trying to convey. I try to get to the root and paint those emotions instead despite my initial fears. You can see that in my painting “Te Lo Pido Porfavor,” which is a piece about making a situation bigger than it actually is. What I was feeling when making that piece was anger: feeling as if I wasn’t seen or heard. Pushing on that fear that I was being misunderstood helped me figure out the composition for that piece as well as colors that spoke



Azul Nogueron | Te Lo Pido Porfavor

to the delusion I was feeling. Allowing myself to question my emotions and feel that fear is vital for my art practice. It allows me to create the narrative for the work and to experiment with how I want the painting to look.

**How do you feel your work contributes to broader conversations about the intersection of art, religion, and queerness?**

My work is a vessel for conversations to be made about religion, queer identity, and art. Everything is intertwined within itself, in a way. To talk about one’s art, you talk about identity and what everything you experienced led to that moment. There are so many queer people with religious trauma and complex feelings of self-worth that express that through the form of art. Whether that be visual art, writing, music, or other forms, queer people are begging to be heard. We are here and always have been, and nothing can stop us from being present.

**What does your typical creative process look like, from initial concept to finished piece?**

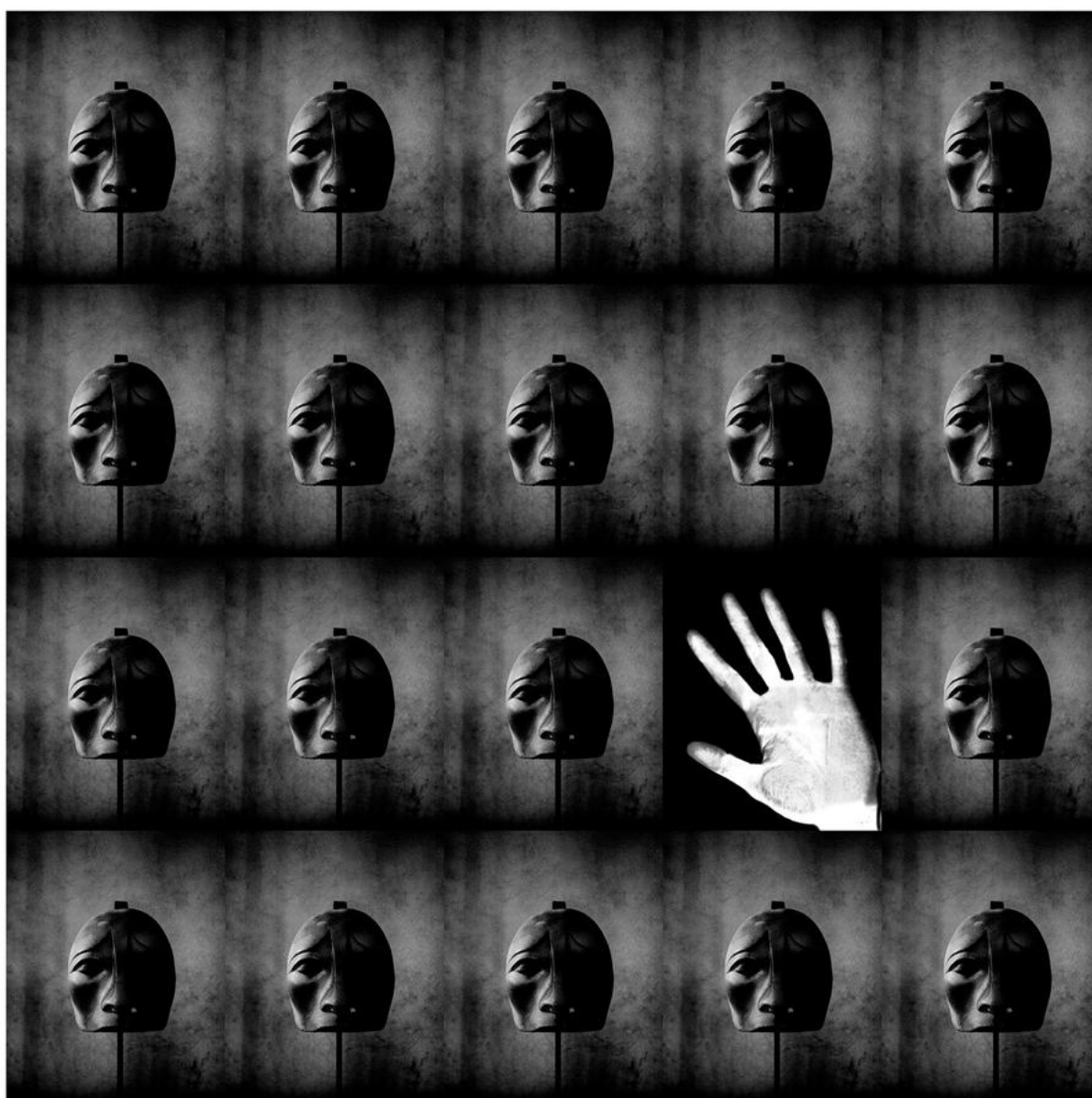
To get my initial concept, I reflect on my past and how much things affected me. When reflecting, I ask myself how much it impacted my present and if these emotions still linger. I question my emotions I was experiencing at the time and then sketch an idea of what I want my narrative to be. However, the sketch is a very loose idea of what I want the initial piece to be because usually as I start painting my work, my memory of the said situation becomes clearer and it influences my choices. Sometimes I have a sketch of a painting and by the time it’s finished, it looks completely different from what I initially thought it would be. As I am creating the work, I journal about my experience and highlight emotions that come up for me. Different emotions have different colors, and I do my best to choose the best combination of colors to invoke those emotions. Also, I experiment with composition to see if there are more ways to push the narrative of the work while remaining true to the situation. The creation of a painting requires a lot of reflecting and experimentation, which is pretty fun for me. I often find myself saying, “Am I doing the painting justice?” and that only encourages me to get more complex about the piece.

Azul Nogueron | Guilty Pleasure



**Lorenzo Ballin** ([ballinlorenzo@icloud.com](mailto:ballinlorenzo@icloud.com)).

I was born near Venice in 2000, I began my education at the Majorana Corner linguistic high school in Mirano and I continue, still today, with the studies of Fashion Design at IUAV in Venice, even though I learned the craft of dress making from local tailors' shops and continue to practice my experience on the creation of clothes and clothing accessories. I am planning a publication of a collection of my clothes under the name Mija Shunya, the collection mainly reflects on the relationship between the vital and the apparently inanimate and how they coexist, on how the relationship between subject, object and self-image, can lead, over time, to explore one's own shadow, one's unknown part. My education and the enrichment of my thoughts are accompanied by studies in the Psychological and Philosophical fields. The seminars attended, from 2021 onwards, vary: Psyche and Body, Family Constellations, Psycho-emotional Well-being, Hypnosis, Art and the relationship with the psyche, Bio Psychosomatics, The revealing dream, Philosophy of the Voice, Society and the Individual in comparison. I attended courses in Photography and in the use of the complete Adobe package, with specialization in Photoshop and retouching. My studies, aim to shape and combine Photography, Fashion and Human Essence with a new vision of the body and its idea in space at the same time in relation to its inner and surrounding world, and vice versa, as indisputably necessary and indispensable to continue to smooth the sides of the enigma of life. None of the photos feature the use of artificial intelligence of any kind.

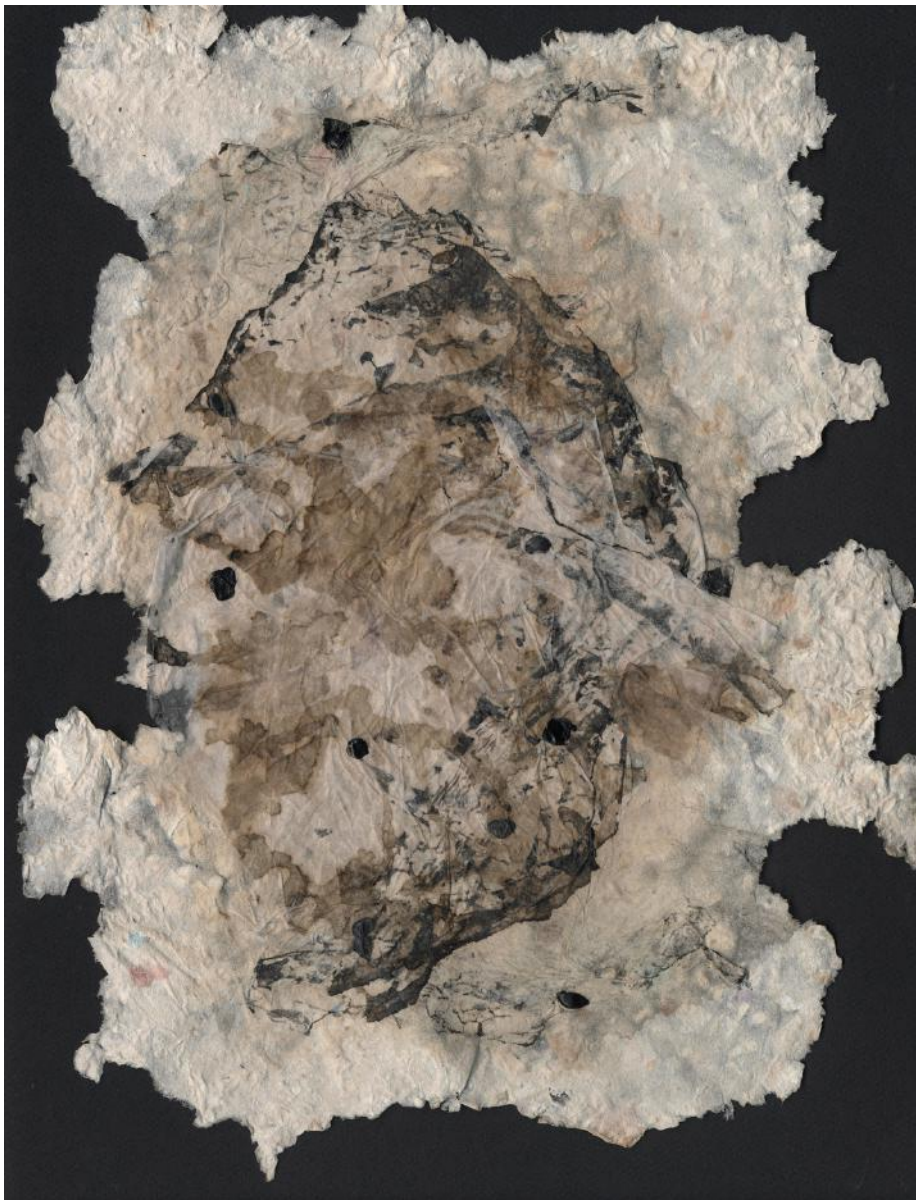


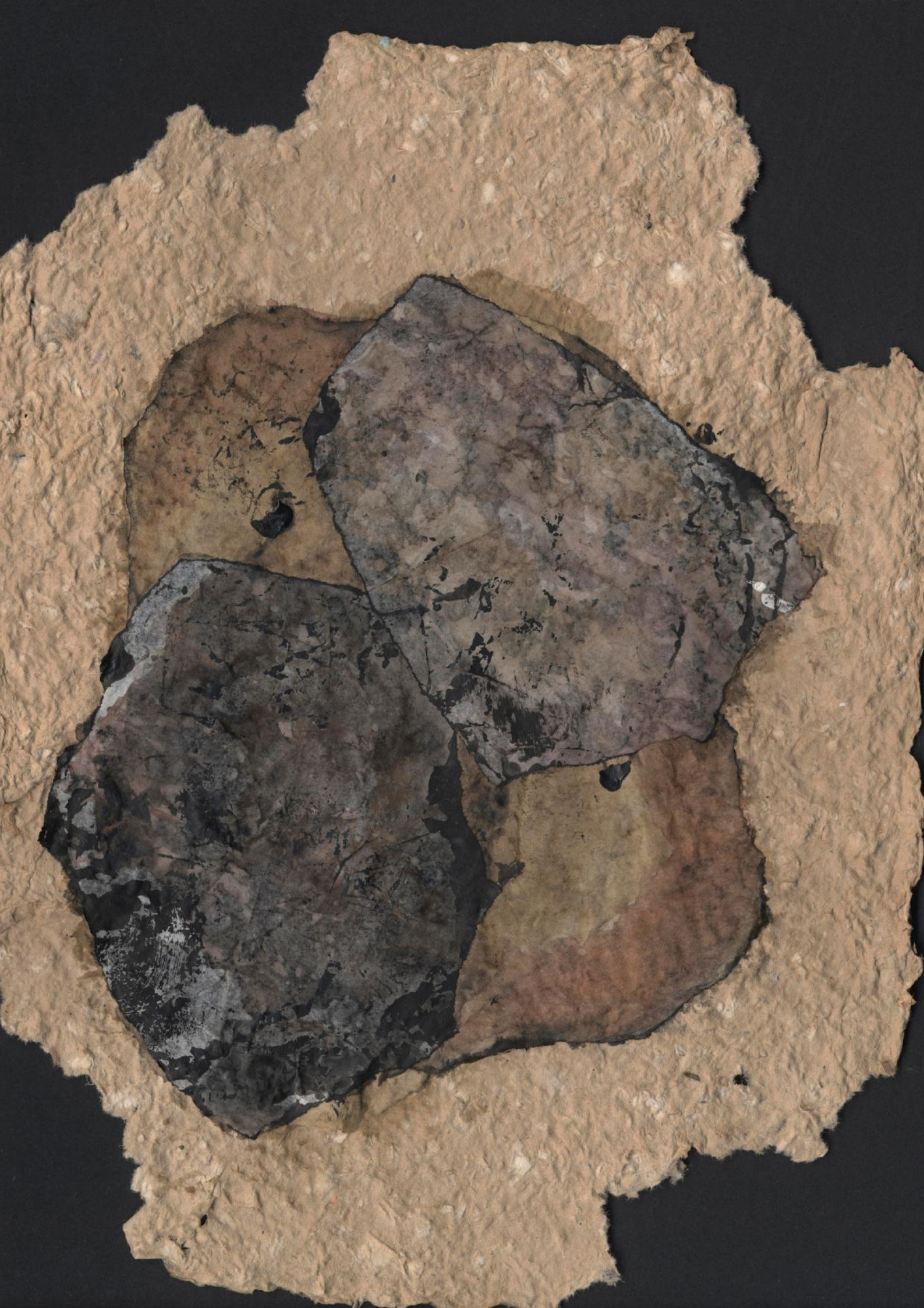




## Alsu Kouki Amri

"Elusive Moment" Alsu Kouki Amri's global study of the material's plasticity is continued in the series "Elusive Moment," which explores memory, reflection on the past, and the brittleness and fuzziness of remembrance. Alsu uses a distinctive blend of painting and graphics for her primary media; she breaks up her earlier artworks into pieces and builds new compositions by piling objects on top of one another. The artist continually revises her creations, which represent a fleeting moment in time or a memory. Gouache, pencil, stain, and bits of previous works—from which one can infer a lengthy narrative—are all applied to Soviet paper and gathered into a single composition that is meticulously "packed" with textured Soviet tracing paper, much like the most priceless and delicate items are. Every piece in the series consists of multiple elements that suggest various connections and meanings; these include visual intersections featuring petroglyphs, skin, and birthmarks, as well as references to abstract painters of the 20th century. Our life is made up of various fragments that vary in color, texture, clarity, and illusory nature. Experience and time are also layered on top of these fragments, which occasionally shift in our consciousness and become permanently imprinted in our memory. Alsu is seeking to demonstrate what each person leaves behind and how to use this material.





**Walter Schauer** was born in January 1957 in a small town in the Schilcherland region of southwest Styria in the Styria region of Austria. He is essentially self-taught, but has taken courses from well-known artists and enjoyed private training. Like his earlier idols Schiele, Kokoschka and Gerstl, he can be assigned to Austrian Expressionism. His subject areas are allegorical. Depending on the theme, they alternate between representational and partial abstraction. Means of expression are strong colors in the sense of the theme, or a high-contrast interaction between pale colors on a dark background.

### *Artist Statement*

Austrian artist on the to reinterpret expressionism based on the traditional style but rethought.





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