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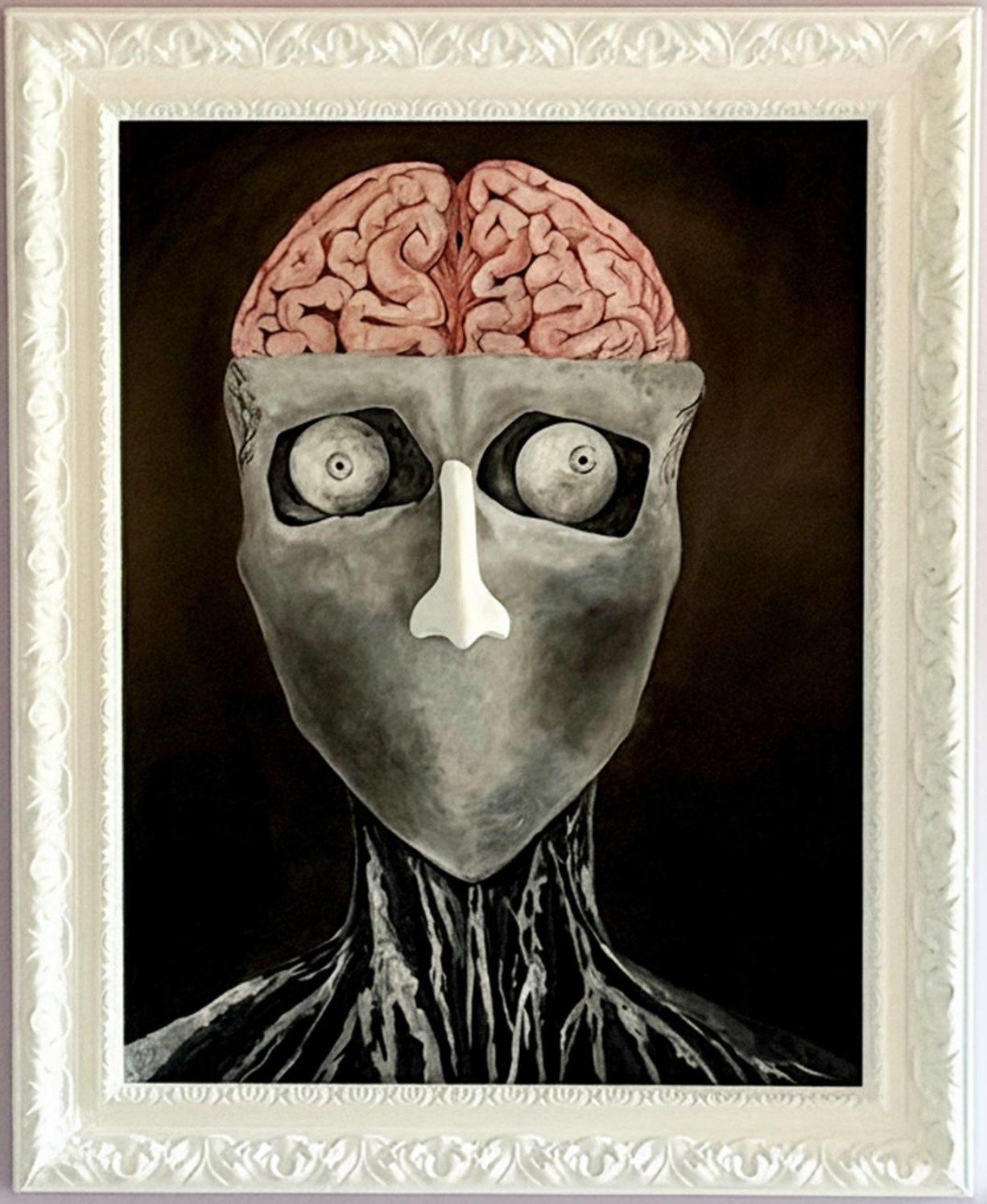

NO. 52

APRIL 2026

— *Intro*

Anna Gvozdeva

Curator of
Visual Art Journal

Hello dear reader,

In your hands is Issue No. 52, filled with works by artists from all over the world.

This spring, our project expanded: we held a pop-up exhibition in Vienna. It was our first experience of this kind, and after receiving such a warm response, we realized that we should continue. As always, you can find all announcements on our social media pages.

Spring is gaining momentum, and it feels as though the long-awaited summer is just around the corner - a time that brings warmth and allows us, at least for a while, to step away from our concerns. Like an annual break from the worries of the world. We hope it will be just that, and that everyone will have a chance to pause amid the constant flow of troubling news and events.

In the meantime, we have prepared a wonderful issue for you - about creativity, beauty, and the many facets of our world.

Enjoy reading!

On the Front Cover:
Mad Riande
KE= 1
2025

On the Back Cover:
Sylvianne Blum

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

Interview

Sylvianne Blum

Your work demonstrates a striking level of realism using dry pastel. What initially drew you to this medium, and what challenges does it present?

I previously worked in oil painting, but I was always curious about soft pastel. When the opportunity to take a course arose, I embraced it—and from that moment on, I have not stopped. It has been a journey of several years, marked by continuous learning and dedicated practice to refine my technique. Even now, I remain a student; learning never truly ends.
Soft pastel is a unique and intimate medium. It places you in direct contact with the pure pigment and the surface of the paper, creating a deeply personal and immediate artistic experience.

You often photograph your subjects yourself. How does this process influence the final artwork compared to working from external references?

When I photograph my own subjects, I establish a much deeper connection from the very beginning of the creative process. I observe closely—it is not simply about capturing a beautiful image, but about shaping an intention. At times, in the studio, I can carefully choose the light and atmosphere with a very clear purpose; at others, I allow myself to be surprised by what life presents. I return to observing, analyzing, and envisioning the final work.
This process allows me to convey a more personal and intimate narrative. The emotion and energy of the moment are reflected in the final result. By contrast, working from external references can be equally valuable, but it involves interpreting someone else's vision. When the image is my own, the work emerges entirely from my perspective, giving it a deeper sense of authenticity and coherence.

Many of your portraits capture people within their own environments. How important is context in telling the story of your subjects?

For me, the environment is an essential part of the story I want to tell. It is not merely a background, but an element that brings context, identity, and depth to the subject. The setting speaks as much as the person—it reveals details of their life, their culture, and their essence.
By placing people within their own environments, I seek to capture a more authentic truth. There is a natural connection between the individual and their surroundings that enriches the visual narrative and gives the work greater emotional strength.
In this way, the painting does not simply portray someone, but suggests a broader story, inviting the viewer to pause, observe, and connect beyond the image.
At the same time, I also find it meaningful to completely

remove the background. In those cases, all the focus rests on the person: their gaze, their expression, and their presence gain a particular intensity. It is a way of distilling the image to its essence, emphasizing what is fundamental and creating a more direct and powerful connection with the viewer.

Your use of color is both vibrant and precise. How do you decide on the color palette for each piece?

I do not rely on a fixed palette; instead, I allow each image to guide my choice of color. The tones emerge organically from what I observe and from the atmosphere I want to convey.
I work with a variety of soft pastel sticks and pencils from different brands, building the surface through layered applications. As the piece develops, I respond intuitively—selecting colors based on the texture I aim to represent and the subtle tonal variations I perceive.
In this way, color becomes both a responsive and deliberate element in my process, balancing precision with a sense of spontaneity.

What do you look for in a subject before deciding to create their portrait? Is it emotion, story, visual character, or something else?

Before deciding to create a portrait, I pay close attention and try to feel what the image will convey. I am drawn to a combination of elements rather than a single one. Emotion is often the first connection—it is what allows me to feel something genuine and worth translating into a painting. But I am equally attentive to the story behind the person and to their visual character: their expression, their presence, and the subtle details that make them unique.
I look for an authenticity that goes beyond appearance, something that suggests a deeper narrative. Sometimes it is a quiet intensity in the gaze; other times, it is the atmosphere surrounding the subject or a fleeting moment that feels meaningful.

Ultimately, it is an intuitive process. When these elements come together and resonate with me, I know there is a portrait waiting to be created.

Travel and meeting new people seem to play a role in your practice. Can you share a particularly meaningful encounter that influenced your art?

I am deeply inspired by traveling and encountering new people and traditions. The way people dress, their celebrations, their food, and their way of life are expressions passed down through generations—each community carries its own unique identity. Traditions are essential, as they shape the spirit and cultural essence of a place.
One particularly meaningful encounter took place in the Sierra Tarahumara, in northern Mexico. I approached a young Rarámuri girl, and after spending some time speaking with her, I asked for her permission to photograph her. She smiled, said yes, and began to pose. We formed a very special connection in that moment.
At one point, she suddenly jumped forward and embraced me. It was a completely spontaneous and genuine gesture—one I will never forget. That brief encounter stayed with me, not only as a memory, but as a reminder of the profound human connection that can exist beyond words.

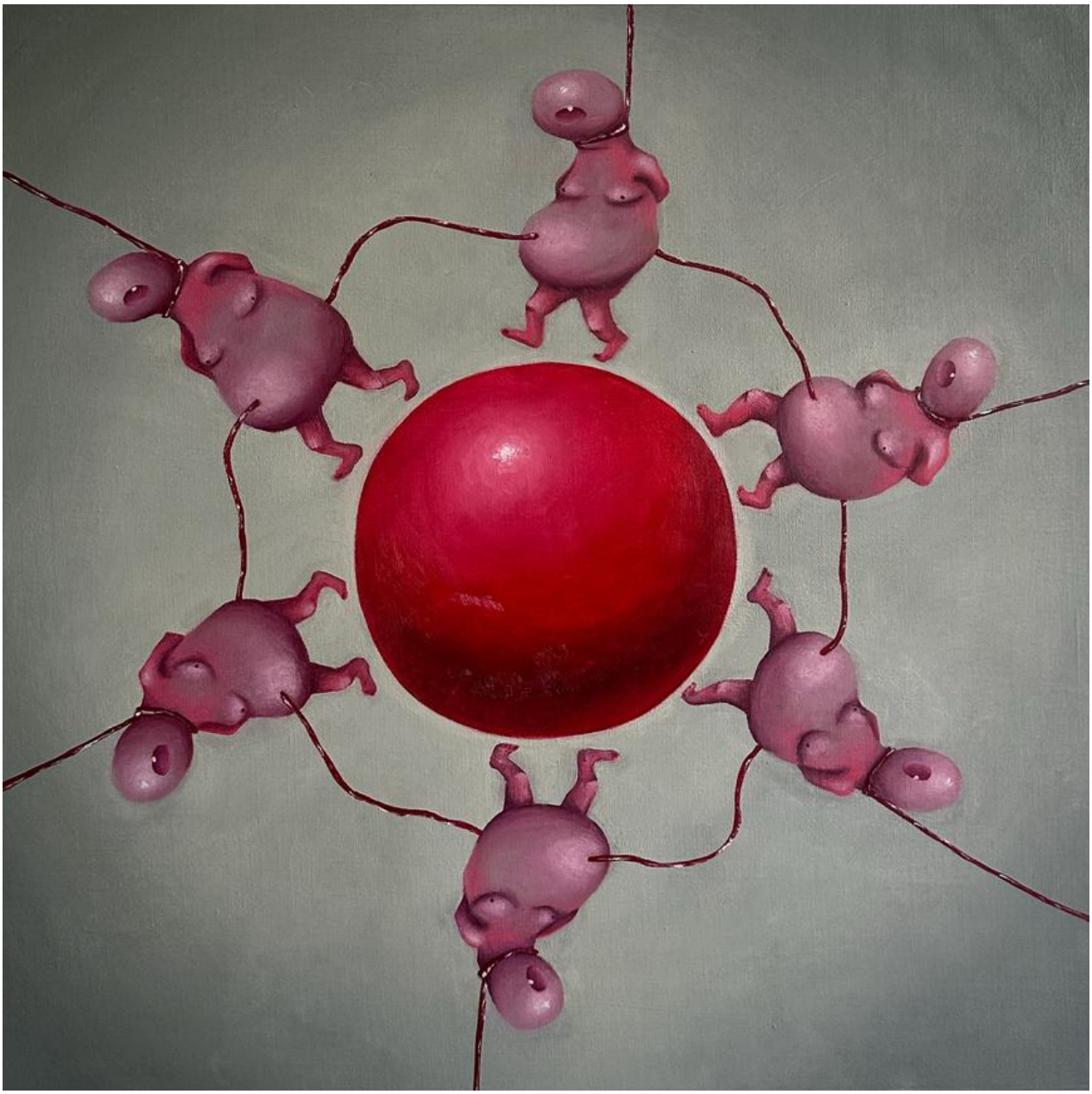
What emotions or reactions do you hope viewers experience when engaging with your portraits?

I hope, first and foremost, that the viewer pauses in front of the work. It is often the colors, textures, and details that initially draw them in—elements that invite a closer look and create a moment of stillness.
From there, I hope the gaze becomes a bridge. The eyes of the subject can create a connection that goes beyond the surface, allowing the viewer to engage on a more emotional level. It is in that exchange that something deeper can happen.
Ultimately, I wish for the work to evoke a feeling or a sensation—something personal and intangible that resonates with each viewer in their own way.

Iryna Via has been holding a brush for as long as she can remember. Her path as an artist began with a lifelong passion and formal training in art school, but it truly took shape through her journey across Europe Moving from Belarus to Lithuania and eventually settling in Germany, Iryna became an observer of people. She noticed that while every culture has its own rules, the core of the human experience, the struggle to find ones identity and the drive to pursue true passion is universal. Now working primarily in oils, Iryna creates pieces that might seem dark and eerie at first glance. However, she uses this moody aesthetic to explore the deeper, often hidden parts of life: the tension between who we are and who society wants us to be. Her art is less about the darkness itself and more about the emotions we find within it. Today, her work serves as an invitation for viewers to slow down, look past the surface, and find their own interpretations.

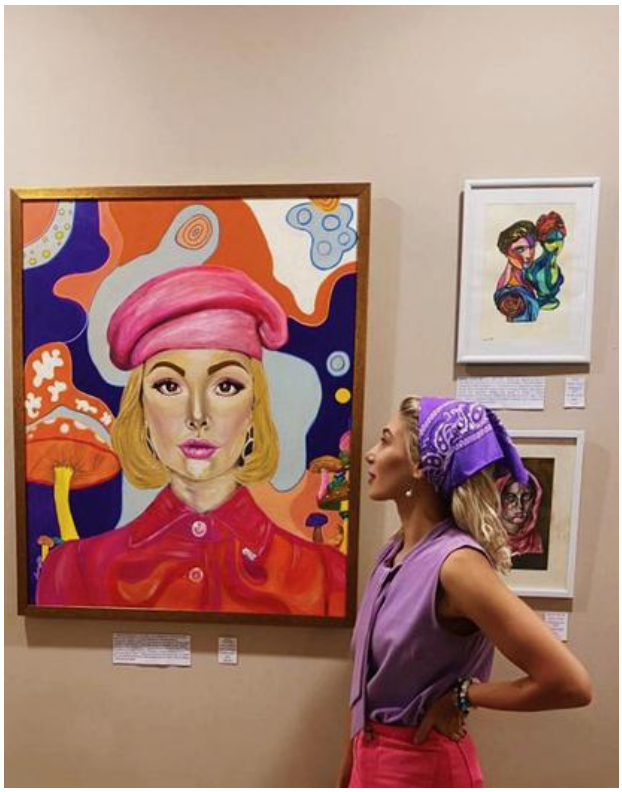
Project Statement
I've always noticed that we tend to hide the most honest parts of ourselves. For me, painting with oils is a way to slow down and explore the parts of being human that we don't always talk about, the messy, internal work of figuring out your own identity when the world around you is constantly changing, and the search for a passion that makes us feel alive. My work is often seen as unsettling, but I don't view it as gloomy. Instead, use those moody tones to get past the surface of daily life and focus on how we actually feel. Having lived in different countries and experienced various cultures, I've learned that while our backgrounds may differ, we all face the same deep questions. I don't want my paintings to tell you exactly what to think. My goal is to create a feeling that lingers. I want you to look at the canvas and find a piece of your own story that you've been hiding, to see that even in our most isolated moments, we are rarely as alone as we think.

Iryna Via | Centrale | 2025



Iryna Via | Shrine | 2025

Daniella Husam



You describe your practice as a conversation with material. Can you recall a moment when the material completely changed the direction of a work?

I think that moment happens more often than people realize. I've had pieces crack, collapse, or completely shift in the kiln, and instead of resisting it, I learned to listen. One work in particular started as something controlled and structured, but it partially gave in during the firing process. I remember looking at it and realizing it felt more honest in its "failure" than it ever did in perfection. That moment changed how I work. I stopped trying to dominate the material and started collaborating with it. There's something about clay and matter in general that mirrors life in that way. It refuses control. It teaches you to adjust, to accept, to respond instead of impose.

Daniella Husam | Mushroom | 2022

Color plays a powerful emotional role in your pieces. Do you approach color intuitively, or are there underlying associations guiding your palette?

It begins intuitively. Color, for me, is emotion before it is anything else. I don't sit and plan it academically. I feel it first. But over time, I've realized that my choices are deeply tied to personal experiences and emotional memory. Colors carry weight. They hold tension, softness, fear, comfort. I think we all understand color emotionally before we intellectualize it. It's something we learn as children, and I try to hold on to that instinct. I don't want to lose that direct emotional language. Colors speak louder than words.

Your work moves between painting and sculpture. How does your thinking shift when working in two versus three dimensions?

Painting feels like entering a dream. It's psychological, atmospheric, and layered with symbolism. Sculpture is more physical. It's about presence, weight, and confrontation. I actually chose sculpture during my studies as a challenge, and it became a way for me to process some of my most difficult experiences. It taught me problem-solving, patience, and how to translate emotion into form. Even though I move between both, they feed each other constantly.

There is a strong sense of surreal, dreamlike imagery in your paintings. Do these visuals emerge from specific memories, or are they more subconscious constructions?

Daniella Husam | Reverie in red poppies

They come from a mix of both. I've always been someone who lives a lot in her imagination. As a child, I even had an imaginary friend, and I would spend hours building entire worlds, often with animals as the central characters. That world never really left me.
What appears in my work now feels like fragments rather than complete memories. They dissolve and recombine into something unfamiliar. I also research symbolism quite deeply, but I never use it in a detached way. Every symbol I include is personal. It comes from lived experience and traumas; from questions I still don't fully have answers to.

Texture seems central to your practice. What draws you to tactile surfaces, and how do they shape the emotional experience of the work?

Texture makes the work feel alive. It creates a physical reaction before anything else.
I've always been drawn to surfaces that feel imperfect, layered, or even uncomfortable. That tension creates intimacy, which is important to me. It pulls the viewer closer but also makes them slow down. You can't just glance at it and move on. Texture holds emotion in a very direct way. It's almost like memory made physical.

As an educator, how has teaching influenced the risks you take in your own artistic process?

Teaching changed everything for me. There was a point where I lost my own creative voice because I was trying to fit into what the market expected. I felt like I wasn't enough. But my students, especially the younger ones, reminded me what art actually is. They didn't care about perfection or being "good enough." They were fearless with color, with ideas, with expression. One of my students once asked me why I wasn't a full-time artist, and that question stayed with me. It made me reflect on everything.
They pushed me back into my own practice and reminded me to take risks again. Teaching changed everything for me. There was a point where I lost my own creative voice because I was trying to fit into what the market expected. I felt like I wasn't enough. But my students, especially the younger ones, reminded me what art actually is. They didn't care about perfection or being "good enough." They were fearless with color, with ideas, with expression.
One of my students once asked me why I wasn't a full-time artist, and that question stayed with me. It shifted something. When I later moved to Muscat, I made the decision to step away from teaching, at least for now, to fully commit to my own practice. It felt necessary. Teaching gave me a sense of belonging, but it also made me realize I couldn't keep pouring into others while neglecting my own voice. That transition pushed me to take risks again, not just as an artist, but in how I choose to live.

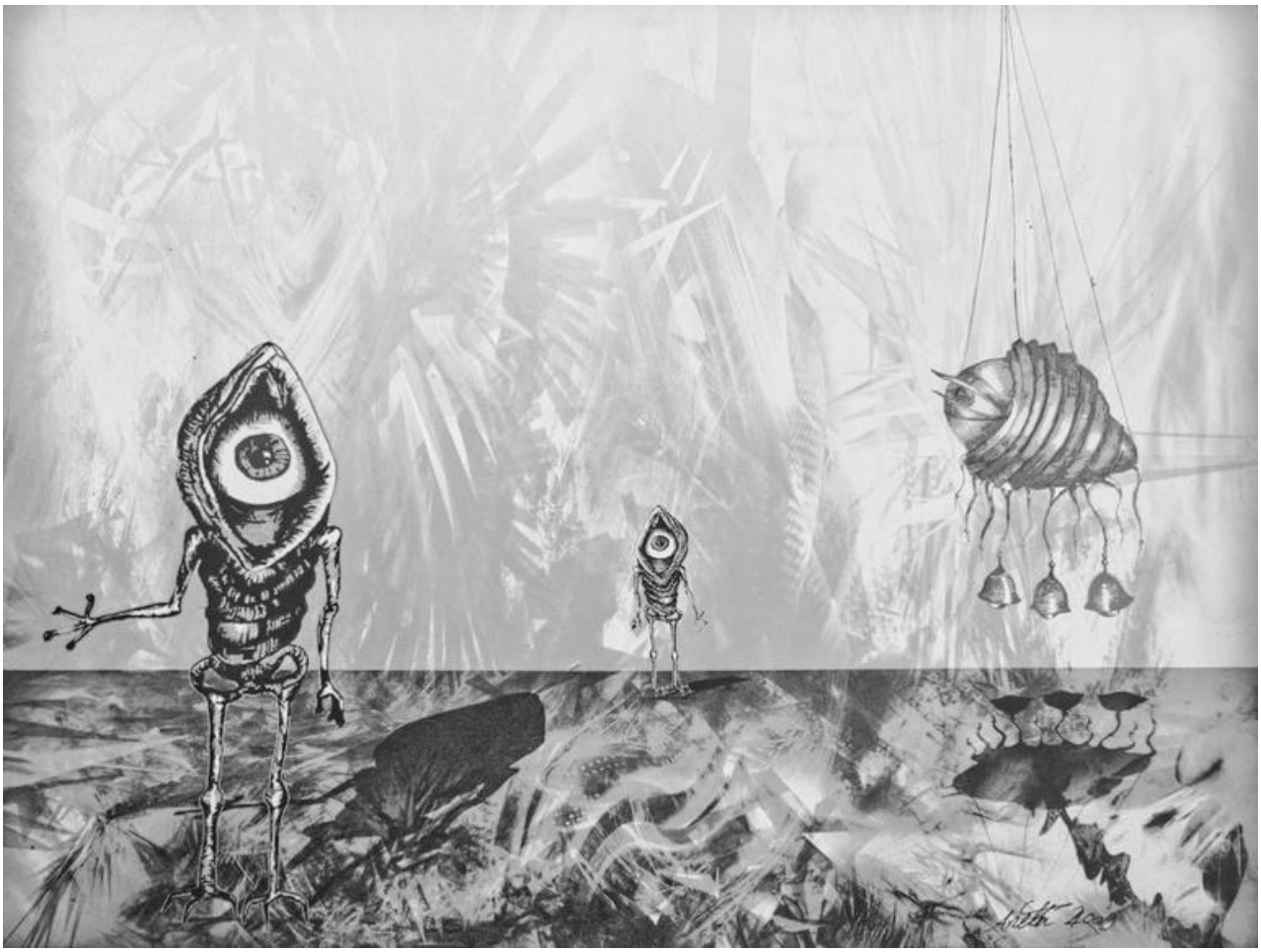
Your project Clay and Chaos reveals the raw side of creation. What made you decide to share such unfiltered moments with your audience?

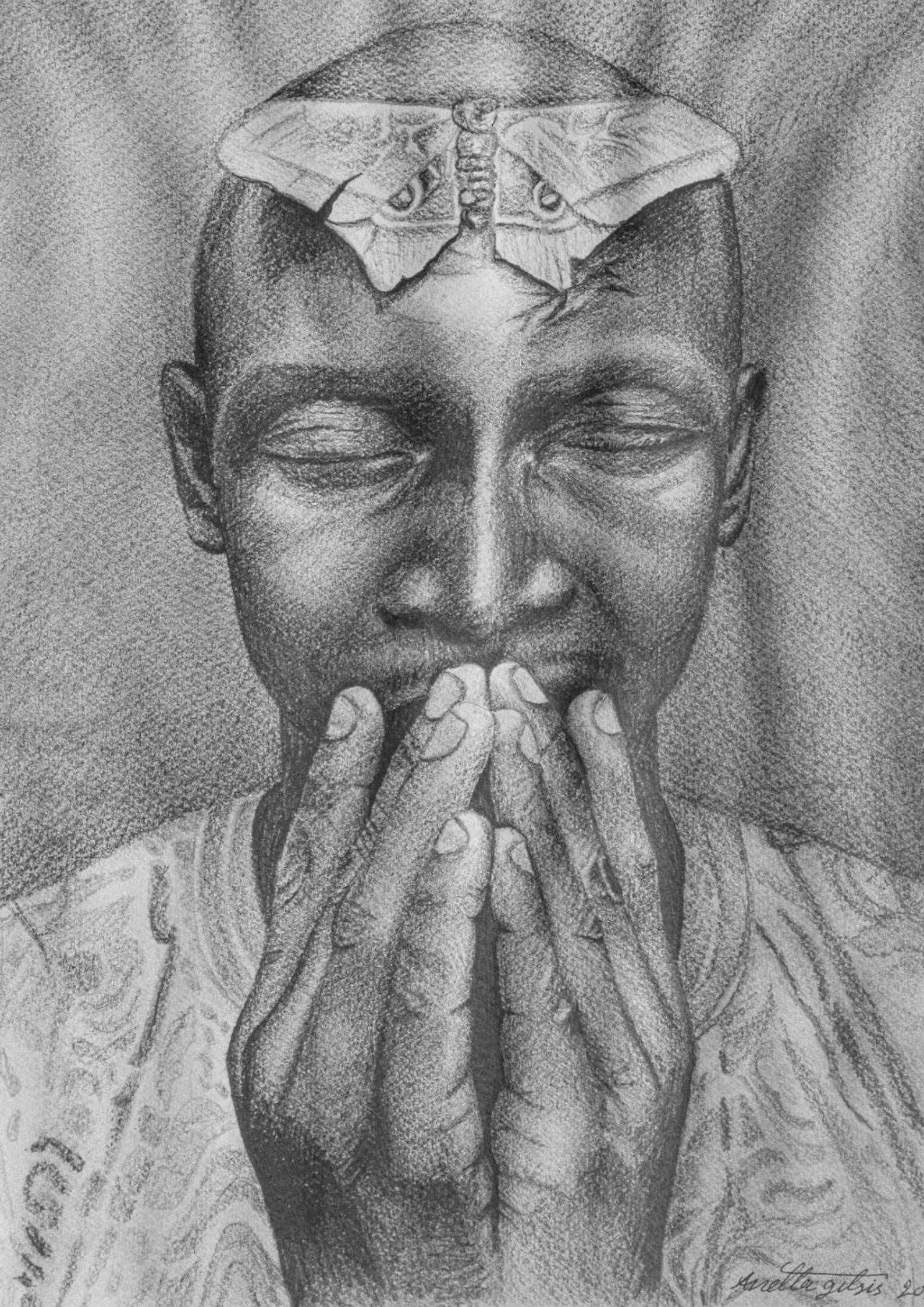
Because the reality of creating is not polished. There's frustration, doubt, failure, and a lot of vulnerability. Clay and Chaos, which I created with my brother Omar, came from a need to show that side. It was also a moment where I allowed myself to fully let go and use clay almost as a form of therapy. I wasn't trying to impress anyone. I was just responding to my emotions in real time. I think it's important for people to see that art isn't just the final piece. It's the process, the chaos, and everything in between. A lot of my work is shaped by lived experience, including trauma, and I don't separate that from the act of creating. I don't see art as decoration or performance. I see it as action. As a way of survival. It's how I process, translate, and sometimes even transform what I've lived through into something that can exist outside of me.
I think there's something important in showing that art is not only the final image or object, but a way of staying emotionally and mentally alive in a world that often feels overwhelming. For me, making work is not optional. It's necessary. Art is not just something I do. It's something I rely on.

Daniella Husam | Madam monarch

My name is **Anetta Shwartzman**, and I am very interested in entering your showroom and contest. I would like to share a bit concerning about my artistic background.
I was born in Chernovtsy city, Ukraine, when I was a Baby, my parents were holocaust survivors, and they chose to move to Israel. I grew up with two cultures at home – Russian European and Israeli.
From a very young age I was drawn to art and classical music. At the age of five my kindergarten teacher noticed my artistic ability and introduced me to charcoal drawing, showing me to explore light and shadow and working in three-dimensional form while the rest of the children were working with crayons. This early guidance sparked a lifelong passion for art.
I was fortunate enough through high school that my teachers took notice of my work and took me under their wings to nurture my talent with the use of light and shadow. I studied drawing, painting in oils, charcoal and pencil. In high school I chose to study art and design.
My education continued in college where I expanded my knowledge of illustration, color theory, visual communication, art history and design. I later received a BA in humanities and social sciences, also studying UX/UI and AI-related tools.
Professionally, I work in architectural branding and world design. I draft design glass and wall graphics for international organizations as Palo Alto Amsterdam, Amazon Israel, Google Israel, Broadcom Israel, including banks and health clinic offices.
Drawing was and will always be my deepest passion.
When I draw my imagination takes over and time no longer exists.
The artists who I admire and inspire me are Asher H. Kalani, Salvador Dalí and H.R. Giger.
Over the years I have sold my work to private collectors who always told me I should show my work through international outlets. I feel I am now ready to share my art amongst those who appreciate imaginative thought-provoking work.
To sum it up I will use a quote by Albert Einstein that I hold close to my heart: “Knowledge is limited but imagination circles the world.” I would love to reach out and inspire viewers, people to view my work and open their minds about the physical world because isn’t escaping reality a good thing? I for one think so!
Presently two of my drawings have been chosen by the Clover online art gallery to be featured in their "Light in progress" exhibition. I felt honored to have won this competition and shown respect. I hope you will enjoy seeing my drawings too.

Project Statement
Feeling a new dawn and horizon





Interview

Valantia Moraitaki

Your project Esoterikos explores the idea of masks as both revealing and concealing. How did this concept first emerge in your practice?

The concept of masks in my project Esoterikos emerged from my fascination with the tension between what we show to the world and what we keep hidden within ourselves. I was interested in how emotions can be both expressed and suppressed, and how masks—literally and metaphorically—can capture this duality. Working with clay allowed me to physically explore the interplay of concealment and revelation, transforming the mask into a space where vulnerability and identity coexist.

Many of your works carry strong emotional expressions. Do these emotions come from personal experience, observation, or imagination?

The emotions in my work come from a combination of personal experience, careful observation, and imagination. I draw from my own inner world and experiences, but I also pay close attention to the emotions and stories of others. Imagination allows me to transform these observations into visual forms that express universal feelings, creating a dialogue between the internal and external worlds.

You reference ancient Greek theatre and mythology. How do you reinterpret these historical influences in a contemporary context?

I reinterpret ancient Greek theatre and mythology by focusing on their timeless themes: identity, emotion, and human conflict, and translating them into contemporary visual forms. Through masks, photography, and sculpture, I explore how these

stories and archetypes resonate with modern experiences, highlighting the emotional and psychological depth that connects past and present.
My work aims to create a dialogue between history and today, showing that the concerns of ancient myths are still relevant in understanding ourselves and society.

Each mask seems to have its own identity and name. How do you approach naming your works, and what role do these titles play?

When naming my masks, I focus on the emotions, character, or story each piece conveys. Each mask has its own identity, and the title helps to give it a voice, guiding the viewer's perception while leaving room for personal interpretation. The names act as an invitation to engage with the work on a deeper level, highlighting the tension between what is revealed and what remains hidden.

Your masks often appear fragmented or distorted. What does this fragmentation symbolize in relation to identity?

The fragmentation and distortion in my masks symbolize the complexity and multiplicity of identity. Identity is not fixed; it is layered, shifting, and often contradictory. By breaking and distorting the forms, I aim to reflect the inner struggles, vulnerabilities, and hidden aspects of the self, showing that who we are is never entirely whole or easily defined.

How does living in the Netherlands influence your work compared to your Greek cultural background?

Living in the Netherlands has exposed me to a diverse, multicultural environment and a contemporary art scene that encourages experimentation and dialogue. This contrasts with my Greek cultural background, which deeply informs my fascination with mythology, history, and classical aesthetics.
The combination allows me to blend ancient influences with modern perspectives, creating work that is both rooted in tradition and responsive to the present, bridging two worlds in a personal and artistic way.

Your work invites viewers to reflect on the "masks" they wear in everyday life. What kind of response or realization do you hope to evoke?

Through my work, I hope to encourage viewers to recognize the layers of identity and emotion they carry daily. I want them to reflect on the ways they present themselves to the world versus what they keep hidden, and to feel both empathy and curiosity for their own inner complexity.
Ultimately, I hope the masks spark self-awareness and a deeper understanding of the shared human experience of vulnerability and concealment.

— *Interview*

Raasuke

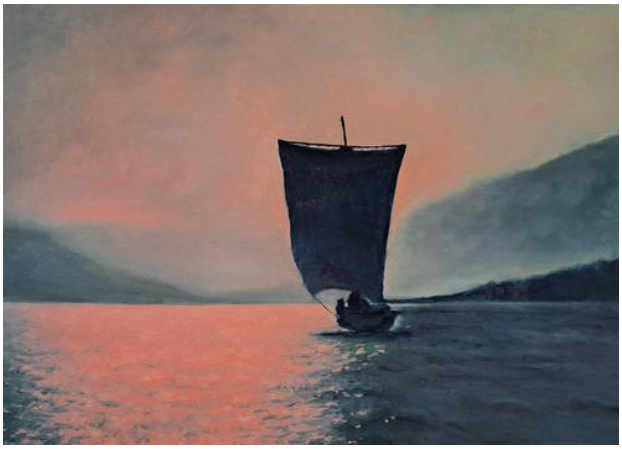
Your artistic journey began outside formal academic institutions. How did this independent path shape your visual language and creative freedom?

Indeed, I did not come to art through academic education, although I hold great respect for it. It simply happened that my life's goals were initially connected to a different field: for more than 30 years, I dedicated myself to voluntary educational work.
Painting became part of my life in a very natural way. For example, when I reach certain depths inside me, I don't feel the urge to sing or dance. It immediately becomes color, form, an inner image that demands to be released onto the canvas, where this state can acquire visible density.
My visual language is born from freedom—not as a rejection of rules, but by giving myself space to explore with curiosity. It grows out of an ongoing dialogue with myself, with the poet Toivo Arumets, with whom I have a wonderful creative collaboration, and with artists of the past and present.
I ask myself simple yet uncomfortable questions: what and why. Toivo adds his own why, which complicates everything even further. When I look at the works of other artists, I study their solutions, how things are done, and I inevitably ask myself: how would this resonate in my own visual language?

Raasuke | Attention!I'm in full flow now | 2026

You describe yourself as a metamodernist artist embracing "new sincerity". What does this concept mean to you in your daily practice?

When I think about who I am in art, I recall Kandinsky'swords: "Attempts to revive the principles of past art, create, et their best, works that resemble a stillborn child." Art lives alongside life. It continually reinterprets timeless values and our human experiences.
I resonate with David Foster Wallace's idea that the exhaustion with irony (characteristic of postmodernism) can be overcome only by being sincere. This speaks to me personally, and I believe, to our contemporary society and to a new stage in art.
For me, metamodernism is a return to sincerity through searching and vulnerability. It is about



Raasuke | The Best Road Is the Road Home | 2025

forming a holistic perspective that can freely hold opposing attitudes, emotions, and styles—bringing together the real and the abstract.
In my daily practice it means that my inner emotional state urges me to create, that is my sincerity, while constantly asking: what? why? for what purpose? Personal experience becomes an equal artistic material alongside the social and the conceptual. In dialogue with tradition, I clarify rather than submit. My forms may be simple or "quiet," but behind them there is always depth and a sense of aesthetics.

Your works often feel intimate and dreamlike, almost suspended between reality and memory. How do you approach creating this atmosphere?

One of my guiding principles in life is: "A joyful heart always has a feast." Our feelings are an extension of our thoughts. This is not about ignoring difficulties. And not all complex emotions are harmful. Rather, it is about conscious choice. I understand that my emotional resources are limited, and it matters deeply where I direct them.
Sometimes I think of it as a house with many rooms: I can choose which one to enter and where to spend my day. The same happens in my art. I invite the viewer, as a guest, into the brightest spaces of my inner world —places where the air feels lighter, where there is a sense of pause. These are the rooms where one can briefly return to childhood, to feel wonder, ease, safety, and inner warmth.
This is why I often turn to a childlike way of seeing theworld as a source of sincerity and vivid perception. It is a way of looking without cynicism, with curiosity and humor. In this state, things do not lose their complexity, but they gain transparency and fragility.
I am also fortunate to work closely with my husband, the poet Toivo. We work at the intersection of painting and ekphrasis. Our process is filled with dialogue, humor, and mutual trust. Ideas are born in an atmosphere of love and understanding. It is a great happiness for me to be engaged in a shared creative endeavor with someone so close.

Among the artists I like to return to is Peter Doig. What resonates with me in his work is that he is not concerned with accurately reproducing nature, but with conveying his own sensations of a places and the fantasies connected to it.

The idea of the "inner child" is central to your artistic identity. How does this presence guide your decisions while painting?

I remember the words of a professor from an art university who once said in an interview that what upsets him most is precise copying of a landscape, a portrait, or anything. Because painting is not retelling. It is poetry. That thought gave me courage to stop being correct and to start trusting my inner child.
For me, this state is not about childishness, but about freedom from excessive control. It removes the fear of making a mistake and opens space for risk: to play with form, color, rhythm, visual rhyme. In this state I am not making decisions but allowing them to happen.
Very often it is the spontaneous brushstroke, the sudden feeling, the moment of sincere wonder that turns out to be more accurate than any carefully constructed plan. I don't try to correct it or force it to fit an idea, I follow it.
In a sense, the inner child helps preserve sensitivity, not to grow numb and to keep my painting from turning into a formula. Because of this, my works remain fluid, vulnerable, alive—and the viewer recognizes this feeling.

Having lived in multiple countries and worked with people from diverse cultural backgrounds, how have these experiences shaped your understanding of humanity in your art?

Over time I realized that almost all of my paintings include a human figure, and without it something in the composition feels incomplete. For me, a human is the most astonishing and beautiful creature, with immense potential. And because people and their lives are inseparable, that connection naturally appears in my work.
It's hard for me to judge how deeply I understand human nature, because people's view of life and their values can differ so dramatically. Just like sometimes it is impossible to convey the exact meaning of a world in another language, living in different countries makes you notice subtle shades of meaning in traditions and everyday habits that you simply didn't notice before. What once seemed like the only "right" way to behave, to value things, or to express emotions turns out to be just one of many possibilities. At first this can create inner resistance, but with time you begin to see the beauty of the other types of

behaviors.
For example, I became interested in Ruth Benedict's ideas about shame-based and guilt-based cultures. Of course, both mechanisms exist everywhere, the difference is only which one is more prevalent. I grew up in a culture built on an internal sense of responsibility, where a person evaluates their own actions. So, at first it was difficult for me to understand societies where the external opinion, the reaction of others plays a larger role. But once I understood that this is simply another way of perceiving and living, I began to see its harmony and beauty: the strength of family ties, the care shown both to loved ones and to strangers, and the resilience and richness of traditions. This experience taught me to feel and respect differences and at the same time to look for what connects us. In this sense, my perspective has become more whole — less dividing, more unifying. Despite all our differences, something deeply human remains: vulnerability, the desire for closeness, the need to be seen and understood. What matters to me is not so much speaking about differences, but finding those inner states that resonate beyond language and geography.

You mention that you often paint with your fingers. What does this physical, direct interaction with the material give you that brushes cannot?

When I paint with my fingers, I'm literally in direct contact with the painting. I feel the paint with my skin, its thickness, its viscosity, the way it yields to movement or, at times, resists it. It's a very physical, almost instinctive process, where the hand becomes an extension of an inner emotions.
A brush brings a certain discipline, while fingers return me to a more intuitive, almost childlike way of interacting with the material. With fingers I do more than depicting the form, I live it: smearing, pressing, dissolving edges. There's something very raw in it — as if you're learning to feel the material all over again, learning to trust it.
For me, there's a special honesty in that: when an image is born not from control, but from being physically present in the moment.

If your art is a "self-portrait", as you describe it, what do you hope the viewer discovers about themselves through encountering your work?

I've learned a great deal from artists for whom art was a form of inner expression. Frida Kahlo said that her paintings reflect her personal story and her feelings. In Egon Schiele's paintings, even his depictions of other people feel intensely personal, almost like extreme self-portraits. And the remarkable Jenny Holzer captured perfectly this movement toward sincerity: "I gave up generalities and began to speak in the first person."

Raasuke | Moon's Lullaby | 2026

This approach resonates with me. Honesty and speaking from one's own experience create an emotional bridge with the viewer — they build trust and a sense of inner calm.
When someone encounters my work, I hope they discover a kind of inner permission to feel joy. The sincere light in art gives an important message: gentle, bright emotions are just as real and meaningful as the complex and contradictory ones.
This positivity isn't superficial, it almost always comes through experience. It doesn't deny complexity — it includes it. That's why my paintings feel more like the peace after tension rather than an attempt to escape reality. In this sense, there's also an element of emotional restoration: a chance to exhale, to feel warmth, to regain inner balance.
I asked my friends what they find in my art. They all spoke about the synergy between painting and ekphrasis, about the sense of rhythm that emerges from my collaboration with my husband — a rhythm that feels like a harmonious whole.
To be honest, Toivo is still surprised that he's a poet. He started writing poems for my paintings simply to make me happy. We share similar spiritual values and life goals, and perhaps that's why our work reflects harmony, lightness and humor.
Sincerity always carries a risk. I know I might seem too open, yet I choose this path anyway. For me, it isn't naivety but a conscious, living practice of speaking through art.

— *Interview*

Mad Riande

I am drawn to the body as a site where multiple systems—biological, psychological, and technological intersect. Rather than viewing technology as external, I see it as already embedded in our perception, cognition, and embodiment. My work explores transitional states in which the human body becomes a laboratory of co-evolution, reflecting both our internal psychological landscapes and the external technological forces that reshape them.

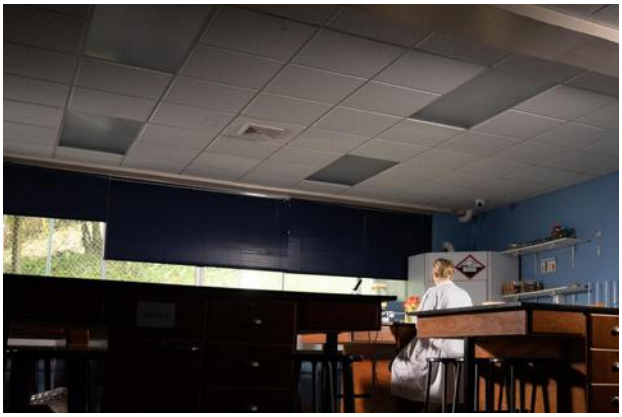
Many of your pieces suggest a hybrid future between organic and artificial systems. Do you see this future as inevitable, or as something we still have agency over?

I view this hybrid future as both emergent and contingent. Technological evolution progresses rapidly, but the forms it takes are shaped by cultural, ethical, and psychological choices. My practice explores this tension highlighting how we can engage, intervene, or reflect on these convergences before they become normalized, while acknowledging that some degree of transformation may be unavoidable.

How does your background in industrial design influence your artistic approach and material choices?

Your work often presents the human body in a state of transformation. What initially drew you to this intersection between biology and technology?

Mad Riande | Cyborgism | 2023



Mad Riande | Cyborgism | 2023

Industrial design trained me to think critically about materiality, structure, and systems, which I now bring into my artistic practice. I experiment with diverse materials not only for their aesthetic or tactile qualities, but as part of hypotheses about perception, interaction, and transformation. This approach allows me to construct works that are simultaneously rigorous, playful, and exploratory, integrating form and function into the conceptual inquiry.

You work across multiple mediums, including interactive systems and Arduino-based works. How important is interactivity in shaping the meaning of your work?

Interactivity is central because I treat objects as living hypotheses rather than fixed expressions. Materials, forms, and interfaces are in dialogue with the viewer, responding, breathing, and evolving through engagement. Arduino and other responsive systems allow the work to extend beyond static materiality, creating feedback loops in which the viewer becomes part of the work's behavior. Interactivity transforms the piece from an object into a dynamic system, existing at the threshold between control and unpredictability.

In your practice, exposed anatomical elements appear frequently. What role does vulnerability play in your artistic narrative?

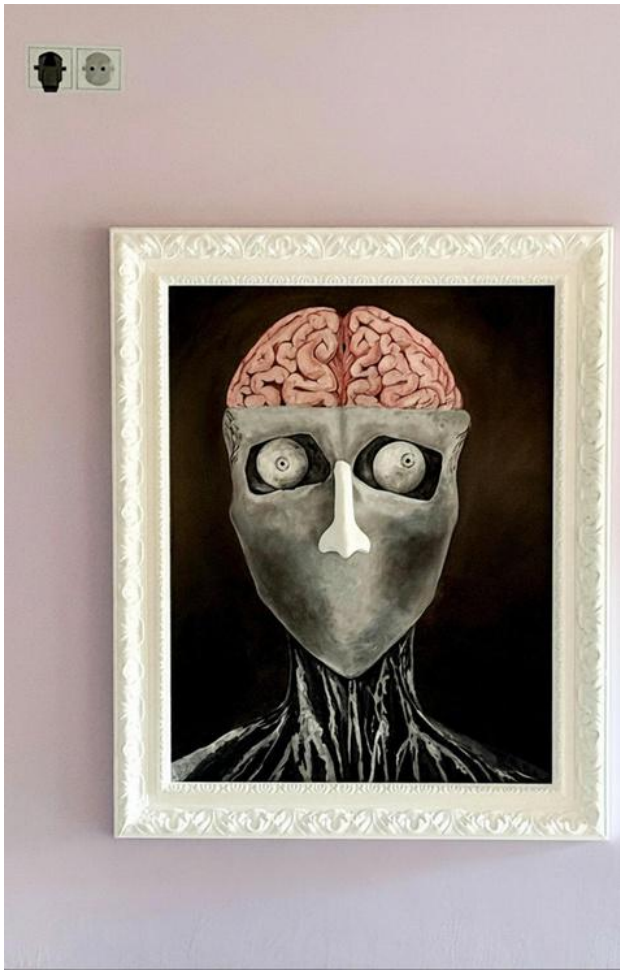
Vulnerability operates on multiple levels: physical, psychological, and technological. Exposed anatomy makes visible what is usually hidden, inviting reflection on fragility, transformation, and adaptation. It also positions the viewer to confront uncertainty and contingency, emphasizing that vulnerability is not weakness but a site where emergence and new forms of embodiment become possible.

Many of your works evoke discomfort or unease. Is this reaction something you intentionally seek from the viewer?

Yes, but indirectly. Discomfort functions as a tool for perception, opening a space for contemplation and engagement. By unsettling familiar notions of the body, cognition, and identity, the work encourages viewers to critically reflect on how technological, biological, and psychological systems co-evolve without prescribing a single moral or emotional response.

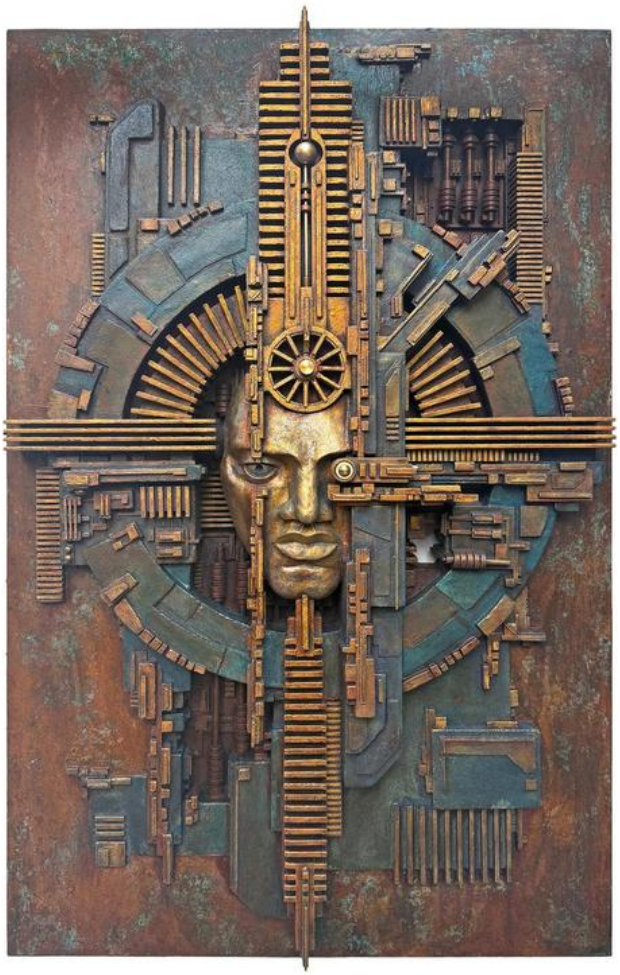
Do you see your work as speculative fiction, a warning, or a reflection of present realities?

My work occupies all three registers. It speculates on futures shaped by the convergence of mind, body, and technology, reflects present realities of embodied cognition and digital mediation, and invites consideration of ethical, existential, and ontological implications. In this way, the work functions as both inquiry and proposition, situating artistic practice as a mode of research into evolving forms of human subjectivity.



Mad Riande | KE= 1 | 2025

Robert Obier



Robert Obier | Ghost of the Singularity from the Digital Deep | 2025

Your work exists at the intersection of craftsmanship and advanced technology. How do you personally navigate this balance during your creative process?

I like to view the work as a merging of craft and technology, the handmade and the computer generated. The degree of each of these influences may vary greatly from one art piece to the next, both from the standpoint of the specific inspiration and also the particulars of the construction technique. There is a continuous interplay between what I am trying to achieve and express with the particular choice of material, finish and construction methodology. All must work together to achieve a complete, unified and fully resolved work.

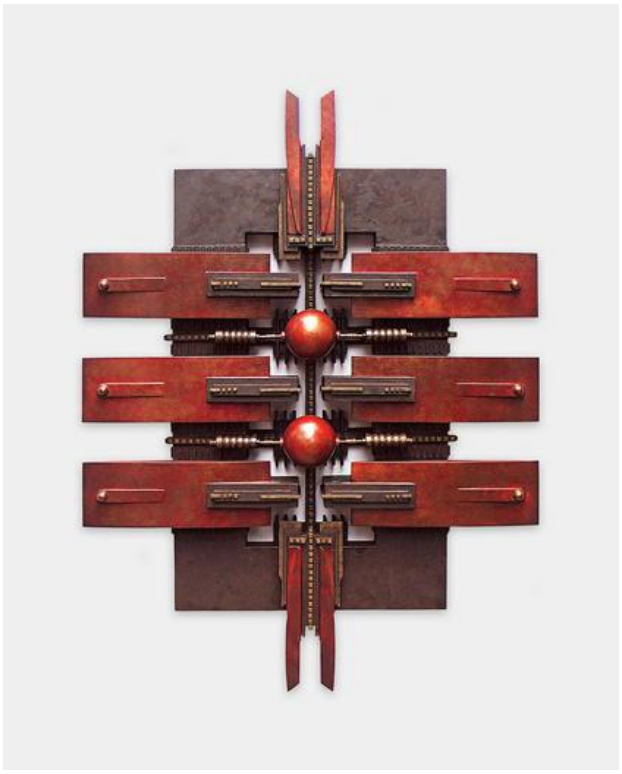
Robert Obier | Primus Deco | 2022

With a background in architecture and industrial design, how has this experience shaped your approach to sculpture as an artistic medium?

I am first of all a designer. I consider my artwork to represent the fusion of the disciplines of architecture, industrial design and fine art. The sensibility and particularly the organization principals I developed through architecture are essential to everything I create and continuously inform the discipline that gives shape to my work.

Many of your pieces feel like artifacts from imagined worlds. What role does storytelling play in your work?

Sometimes a story is a particular message such as a warning of the possible dangers presented by artificial intelligence implemented without sufficient guardrails. Other times, the “story” may be more of a mysterious feeling that triggers a memory or perhaps a meaningful suggestion somehow created by a piece. I often refer to this quality of memory and suggestion as the scars of a past life.
This sense of story is an essential ingredient in my work. I think, perhaps, the meaning we convey through the stories we choose to tell provides an inescapable expression of who I am as an artist and who we are as individuals. In the end, my work reflects some elemental view I have of existence and the human experience and that will be the story I have told.



Robert Obier | Dynamo XL | 2021

You reference both Leonardo Da Vinci and contemporary studios like Industrial Light & Magic. How do historical and futuristic influences coexist in your practice?

These references certainly do coexist in my heart and mind. For me, they represent the scope of human invention and imagination while providing a continual source of inspiration. Particularly the actual designs themselves. Not simply the form or the final result, but the process as well: the continual evolution and refinement. Art is essentially a process of decision making, evaluation and moving forward toward an objective, often not fully envisioned until the very end. At least, that is how it is for me. That is actually the magic of it. It can be a revelation for the artist as well as the viewer. I love to study the process and to see how the final result affects others.

The surfaces of your works often suggest aging, weathering, or a "past life". What is the significance of time in your artistic narrative?

I believe time to be the structure of the narrative of our life and of all human existence. We have the ability to study and experience remnants of the past. We live our lives moment to moment in the present yet we imagine and dream of the future. We view the world through an ageless lens. The past, the present and the future are always with us. This is the basis for who I am as an artist and a primary theme I hope to achieve in the work.

How do digital tools like CAD modeling and CNC fabrication expand - or challenge - your creative freedom?

Twenty years ago, I attended the industrial design graduate program at Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, CA, for the primary reason of expanding my modeling skills and understanding these (still new) manufacturing technologies. Art Center is one of the top design schools in the world and the experience was far more than I ever had hoped for. When I decided to pursue art-making, I believed that I would rely more heavily on these technologies than I have to date. While I have indeed created a series of pieces that are machined using CNC resources, I have found that I very much enjoy the spontaneity of developing an art piece as part of the process of making. This, of course, is not afforded by the rigors of 3D modeling and the necessity of completely planning the piece beforehand. However, I expect to build a series of a few pieces that fully incorporate both approaches later this year.

There is a sense of both familiarity and mystery in your objects. What do you hope viewers feel or question when encountering your work?

The idea that the pieces embody both familiarity and mystery is exactly what I would hope for. I want viewers to feel like, first of all, this is a very compelling piece to look at and to study. Perhaps not knowing exactly why. Then to feel like they have seen it or something like it somewhere but not sure where exaclty. Perhaps it just reminds them a bit of something. But after some reflection they come to realize they have never seen anything quite like it. So what is it? Where did it come from? I guess I don't really know, but it intrigues me. I have been told by some that certain pieces remind them of Star Wars or maybe Game of Thrones. Even both at the same time. A favorite response of mine is when someone says the piece feels "powerful."

Robert Obier | Talisman | 2023

Uliana Novak

You describe art as a new language that replaced sociology for you. What can painting express that words and research could not?

Painting offers a unique form of expression that goes beyond the limitations of words and research by engaging emotions, intuition, and visual storytelling. While sociology relies on structured analysis, art allows for a more fluid and personal exploration of ideas. In my work at sociological centers and conducting research, I was often bound by the specific themes of the projects at hand. Even when writing my PhD dissertation on a topic I chose myself, there were numerous constraints of various kinds. In contrast, art provides a remarkable sense of freedom. It creates an immediate connection with viewers, inviting them to interpret and engage with the work on their own terms. This visual language can evoke empathy, provoke thought, and inspire change in ways that written or spoken languages sometimes cannot.

Your background in sociology clearly shapes your perspective - how does this academic experience influence your approach to painting today?

My sociological background deeply impacts my approach to painting by offering insights into social behavior, cultural influences, and human interactions. This knowledge helps me infuse my artwork with themes related to identity, society, and community. By understanding societal patterns and relationships, I can create paintings that explore individual experiences while also addressing larger social themes. This perspective allows my art to resonate with viewers on both personal and societal levels, making it more engaging and meaningful.

Uliana Novak | Carpet | 2023

The image of the window is central in your work. How did this motif first emerge, and how has its meaning evolved over time?

Initially, the window in my art served as a symbol of the division between personal and public spaces, reflecting my introverted nature and the challenges I face in interacting with the outside world. Over time, it has also come to represent my connection to the world—a lens through which I observe from a comfortable distance. I communicate silently through my paintings, viewing the world the way I feel genuine. Additionally, the window has evolved into a metaphor for the shifting boundary between past and present. In my work, I reference well-known classical paintings from European, Russian, or

Uliana Novak | Window | 2023

Finnish art, reinterpreting them in a contemporary context.

Many of your paintings reference classical artworks placed "outside" the window. What draws you to this dialogue between past and present?

As a sociologist, I'm drawn to the dialogue between past and present because it allows me to use classical artworks as a means to comment on contemporary societies and the people living in them. By placing these classical references "outside" the window, I create a bridge between historical context and contemporary interpretation. This approach enables me to explore how timeless themes and values from the past can shed light on current social dynamics and human behavior. It also provides an opportunity to recontextualize these works, inviting viewers to see them through a fresh lens and consider their relevance today.

Your works often feel both intimate and unsettling. How do you balance personal narrative with broader social or historical commentary?

I guess I achieve this by intertwining my own experiences and emotions with universal themes that resonate on a larger scale. The intimate aspects of my art allow viewers to connect on a personal level, while the broader commentary invites them to reflect on societal or historical contexts. This approach creates a dynamic tension that makes the work both relatable and thought-provoking, encouraging viewers to engage with multiple layers of meaning.

Being diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder later in life - how has this influenced your artistic process and self-representation?

Receiving an autism spectrum disorder diagnosis later in life offered me a new perspective on myself and my artistic process. It allowed me to stop conforming to social standards and shedding the masks I had worn for so long. Instead, I began to embrace my true self, focusing on what genuinely interests and fulfills me. This shift has opened up new avenues for growth and exploration within the art world, enabling me to express myself more authentically and pursue my passions with renewed freedom and creativity.

There is a strong sense of observation in your works, almost like a researcher analyzing reality. Do you still feel like a sociologist when you paint?

With ten years of studying sociology and the professional education I've received, the influence of my background is deeply ingrained in me. I often find that my sociological perspective naturally informs my artistic process. This background allows me to observe and analyze reality through an artistic lens, enriching my work and enabling me to explore social dynamics and human behavior in a unique and meaningful way.

Uliana Novak | Window | 2023

Claudia Pope

Your work blends abstraction and pop art - how did you arrive at this visual language, and what draws you to combining these styles?

I have always been drawn to the boldness of pop art and really began experimenting with styles during my relief printmaking class during myundergraduate studies. I was drawn to the immediacy and visual directness of pop art and how it communicates quickly and unapologetically, while abstract work gives me the ability to work intuitively and the freedom to respond instinctively. As I began with pop art and then experimented with abstracts, I have now found that I bring that intuitive feeling of abstracts to my pop art creations. Combining these two allows me to move between control and spontaneity. The pop elements ground the work in something recognizable and the abstract layers allow ambiguity, gesture, and more of a personal kind of expression. I like working in that in-between space where opposites can coexist in one space creating surface and depth.

Claudia Pope | Lucky Strike | 2025

Many of your pieces evoke a sense of nostalgia. What role do memory and personal experience play in your creative process?

Memory and nostalgia play a big role in my process, but not strictly in a literal way. I am not as interested in documenting specific moments, though some works may bring that to viewers, but to try to capture the feeling of remembering. Memories blur, overlap, or become slightly distorted over time, but I want to create a space where something feels familiar but you can't always fully place it. The objects I've painted, cigarette boxes, billiard balls, and skylines, carry a kind of built in history and cultural memory. Even though they are not directly tied to a single personal memory, they evoke a shared sense of the past, suggesting moments, environments, and eras without spelling them out. I am drawn to how familiar objects can trigger emotion or recognition in different ways for different people.

Your compositions feel both intuitive and deliberate. Could you describe how a typical work begins and evolves?

My typical work begins either with an object or moment that I feel connected to or a color scheme. I begin my pop art focused works with a symbol or object that feels nostalgic or memorable and think how the surrounding area can enhance the moment.

Claudia Pope | Black 8 Ball | 2025

When combining that abstract element, I work with colors that are complimentary but contrast to expand that memorable feeling.

Objects like the 8-ball or cigarette pack appear in your work - what attracts you to these symbols, and how do you reinterpret them?

I am drawn to these symbols because they are instantly recognizable but loaded with associations. Gravitating towards objects that feel familiar but a little charged. They all come with preloaded meaning whether it's about chance, risk, vice, or even identity. They become less about the object itself and more about the feeling or tension it holds.

How has your experience at Pratt Institute influenced your artistic direction and experimentation?

Through my studies at Pratt, I have been surrounded by so many creative people that have pushed me to take risks. My experiences thus far have prompted me to think outside the box in terms of process and supplies. In my first semester at Pratt this fall, we took a day to explore Materials for the Arts, a nonprofit arts organization in Queens, where I was inspired to use materials not traditionally put on canvas. This space invited me to think creatively and sparked the ideas of using the recycled material of metal wire to create my first abstract series, The Wired Series. Experimenting with the malleable material to create texture and bringing the abstract forward off the canvas brought me out of my comfort zone and into the experimentation of shape and form.

Your abstract works often suggest landscapes or environments. Are these imagined spaces, or do they reference real places?

I wouldn't describe them as representations of specific places, but exist in the in-between spaces of memory and invention. I don't go into the painting process trying to recreate a specific landscape but they emerge intuitively through the process. They might echo something real but they're filtered through abstraction and intuition, so they shift and evolve as the painting develops. I am more interested in creating a sense of place than representing one directly.

How do you balance personal storytelling with openness, allowing viewers to interpret your work in their own way?

For me, it's about not over-explaining. There are personal references behind the work that inform the imagery and process, but as I paint I let it shift and loosen. I think my use of imagery and abstraction naturally creates a space for other people to enter the work. Not everything is clearly defined, and I prefer that approach because it means someone else can see something completely different than I do. For me, openness is essential because it keeps the work from becoming closed or uninterpretable.

Claudia Pope | Herd | 2025

Anastasia Yunkina

Your recent series is dedicated to childhood, adolescence, and youth. Which emotions or memories were the most difficult to relive during the process?

The most difficult for me was reliving the period of youth. It is a time of inner conflict—when you want to resist everything, yet you still don't fully understand yourself. During this period, vulnerability is felt especially strongly, when any external evaluation is perceived painfully and almost as defining. The emotions of youth turned out to be heavier than childhood memories because they are sharper and more conscious. That is why this painting and the period associated with it were the most difficult to revisit during the process.
While working on the series, I had to return to these states and moments that in everyday life have already been suppressed or reinterpreted. This made the process not only creative but also, in a sense, therapeutic.

Anastasia Yunkina | Childhood | 2025

You started drawing at 17, and after a break fully returned to painting. How did this experience influence your artistic language?

Before fully immersing myself in painting, I worked in artistic tattooing for 8 years. This experience had a strong impact on my artistic language. Tattooing taught me to make decisions more quickly and trust my intuition, since there is no opportunity for endless corrections.
My painting became more structured and confident. I began to work more with composition, complicate the form of the work, and think more about how the image is perceived by the viewer. This resulted in a bolder and more concise visual language.
Meeting a large number of people also helped me better understand human nature, which I later used as a central theme in my work.

Your works appear deeply psychological and introspective. What role does personal experience play in your creative process?

Personal experience is the foundation of my work. I start from my own emotions and transform them into visual images when developing a new series. For me, it is important not only to capture an emotion but to understand it—its nature and its cause.
This analytical process becomes part of the preparation and

Anastasia Yunkina | Quaesitor | 2025

directly affects the final result. In a way, each series is an attempt to structure internal experience and visualize it on canvas.
I believe that without a well-thought-out concept, it is impossible to create something truly meaningful—something that invites exploration, recognition, or contrast. That is why I carefully collect my own emotions and feelings and try to express them as clearly and precisely as possible.

Why did you choose charcoal, water, and dry brush for this series? What do these materials allow you to express?

The series "Three Ages" was created as a memory of a long-lost and forgotten world of childhood, filled with nostalgia and warm recollections. Charcoal, water, and dry brush create a sense of sharpness and the fleeting nature of time, which is sometimes difficult to keep up with, while water adds fluidity and blur.
This material was new to me—just like everything we experience in childhood—and I believe it perfectly reflected my memories. Together, they help convey the fragility of memory.
It was important for me that the materials work on a sensory level, not only on a formal one. Their behavior on paper is largely unpredictable, which adds a sense of vitality and naturalness. This approach allows me to avoid excessive precision and preserve spontaneity, which is close to the nature of memory.

Many of your portraits include blur and fragmentation. Is this related to memory, identity, or something else?

Yes, this is directly connected to the theme of memory. Memories are rarely complete, so I express this through form —breaks, drips, and the absence of clear boundaries.
It is important for me to preserve a sense of openness, allowing the viewer space for their own interpretation. Fragmentation here is not a flaw but a method of engagement—the viewer completes the image internally. This makes the perception more personal and subjective.
I am particularly drawn to combining textured and graphic elements with very soft and fluid transitions, as seen in the "Three Ages" series, where paint flows sit alongside rough brushstrokes.
This reflects my personal sensations and memories. In my life, they are always two opposing facets forming a single whole, and I aimed to convey that same feeling on paper.

How do you convey emotion in portraiture without relying on detailed rendering?

I deliberately avoid detailed rendering in order to preserve the feeling of a living emotion. The drawing therefore cannot be perfectly refined or constructed. It will contain roughness, inaccuracies, blurred outlines—everything that corresponds to the emotional state a person experiences.
Emotions are always a complex interweaving of many elements, and just like in life, they are difficult to separate. A freer form allows me to convey a state rather than a specific expression.
For me, this contains a greater sense of honesty, because emotions are rarely clear or complete. In portraiture, it is more important for me to convey a state, so I express emotion through form and texture rather than detailed depiction.

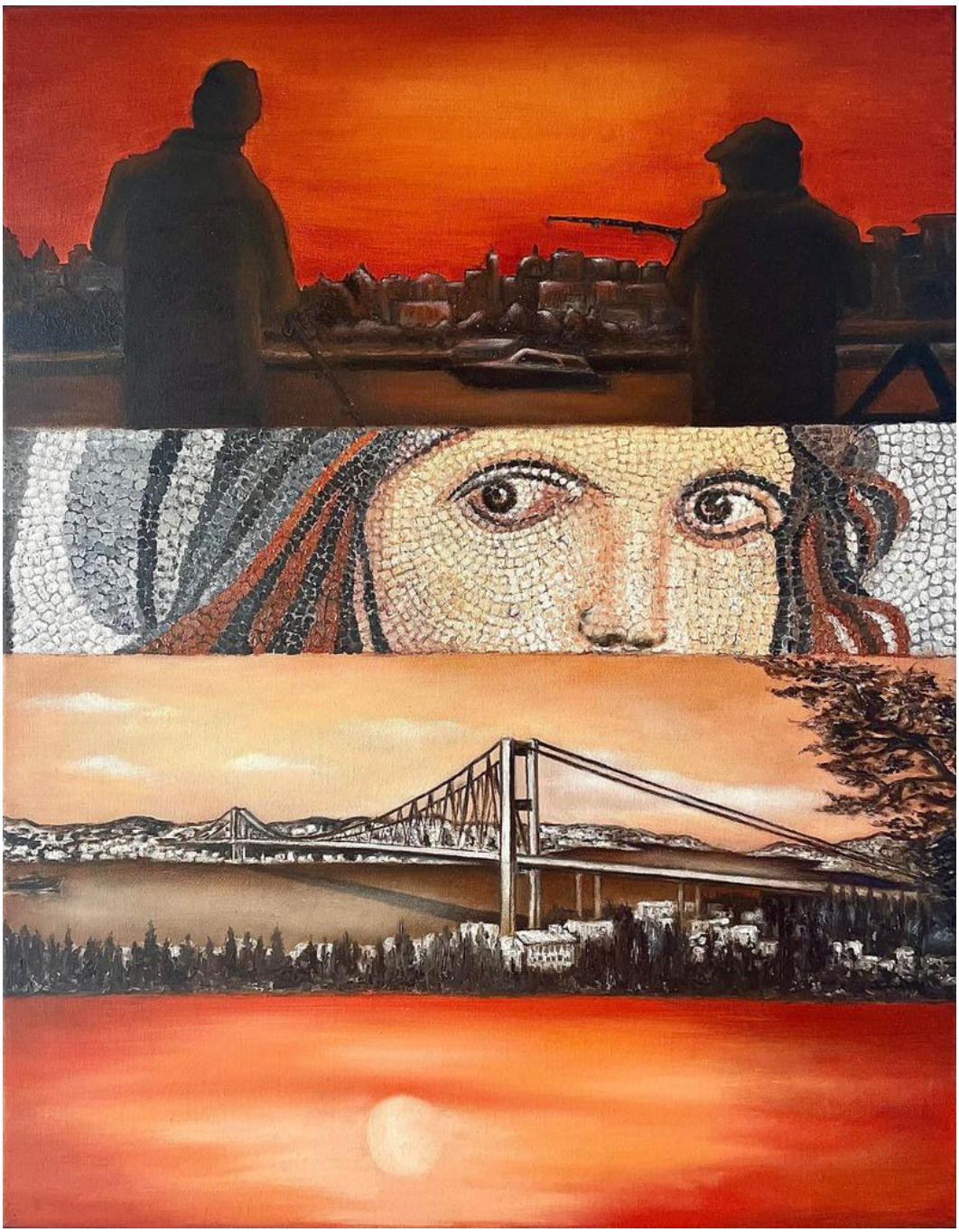
What would you like the viewer to feel or reflect upon when engaging with your work?

It is important for me to create a point of connection where the viewer can relate what they see to their own experience. I do not aim to provide a definitive interpretation; rather, I prefer to leave space for a personal response.
In this dialogue between the artwork and the viewer lies the main value for me. I would like the viewer, when looking at any of my works, to immediately understand what it is about and find a reflection of themselves.
These emotions and sensations may vary, but what matters most to me is to be understood and heard—to find my viewer, whether they share my values or reject them, but never remain indifferent. I want the viewer to recognize themselves in these works and not remain unmoved. Any reaction is important to me—engagement, disagreement, even rejection—but not indifference.

Anastasia Yunkina | Adolescence | 2025

Veronika Otcuoglu was born in Istanbul, Türkiye in 2001 and has Armenian-Greek origins. She grew up in a family of artists and musicians, in an environment that deeply inspired her creative sensibility. From an early age, she studied piano and later expanded her artistic vision by learning the violin.
Her academic journey began at the Lycée Français Pierre Loti d'Istanbul. After moving to Montreal, Canada, at a young age, she earned a French Baccalaureate from Collège International Marie de France. She then completed an apprenticeship at the Visual Arts Centre of Westmount in Montreal before beginning her undergraduate studies. In 2024, Veronika graduated from the extended program of the Painting and Drawing Department at Concordia University's Faculty of Fine Arts and had her BFA. She participated in a group exhibition at Concordia University's VAV Gallery, where her artwork "Ceramic Waterfall" was exhibited. One year later, she was selected for the Global Art League competition at the Montreal Art Center & Museum, where she exhibited alongside other finalists. Her work "Equity" was recently featured in the third edition of the Arts to Hearts Project book, titled 100 Emerging Artworks of 2025. Then, she was featured in the 40th edition of Artist Closeup Contemporary Art Magazine with her work, "Türkiye".

Project Statement
Veronika Otcuoglu is a visual artist and painter based in Montreal. In her practice, she draws on cultural elements from her home country, Türkiye, as well as symbolic references inspired by her origins—including its art, history, mythological motifs, and political realities. Her art style is mostly realistic, but she enjoys mixing different styles and artistic techniques, such as combining surrealistic figures, objects, and ideas with realistic ones. She is currently working on various themes, including nostalgia, culture, landscapes, portraits, and abstract compositions related to Türkiye.

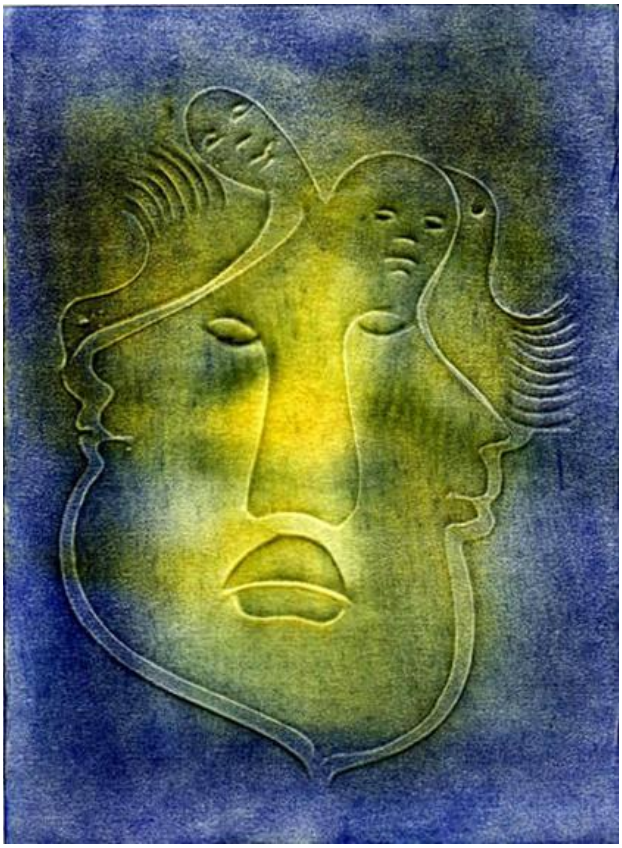


Veronika Otcuoglu | Türkiye | 2023

Veronika Otcuoglu | Lost in the Past | 2023

Shree Mehta

Your work combines natural materials with imaginative storytelling. How did your journey into leaf painting begin?



Shree Mehta | Voices of Silence

My journey into leaf painting didn't begin in a professional studio, but rather under the sprawling canopy of a massive Peepal tree that stood like a silent guardian in my schoolyard. As a young student, I spent nearly every break sitting in its shade, lost in my sketchbook. In those days, I didn't have a fancy palette to mix my paints. Like any resourceful young artist, I looked to the ground for a solution. I began picking up the fallen Peepal leaves scattered around me, using their broad, sturdy surfaces as a natural palette to test my colour shades before applying them to my paper.
The 'aha' moment came quite unexpectedly. One afternoon, after finishing a sketch, I looked down at the discarded leaves at my feet. They were no longer just debris; they were vibrant, jewel-toned fragments of art. The way the pigments settled into the intricate skeletal veins of the leaf was mesmerizing. They looked so inviting and full of life that I couldn't bring myself to throw them away.
I remember thinking: 'Why am I using the paper as the final destination and the leaf as the tool? Why not flip the script?'
The very next day, I returned to my spot under the tree with a new purpose. I selected a perfect leaf and painted an entire composition directly onto its surface. Boom—the result was magic. It was a 'one-of-a-kind' piece that felt like a collaboration between me and the tree. When I showed it to my family and friends, their reaction confirmed what I felt: they were captivated not just by the image, but by the tactile, organic nature of the canvas itself. It invited them to reach out and

Shree Mehta | Krishna's Melody | 2022

touch the art. That childhood curiosity turned a simple fallen leaf into a lifelong gateway for my storytelling.

What drew you specifically to Peepal leaves as your primary medium? Do they hold any symbolic meaning for you?

The Peepal leaf is more than just a canvas to me; it is a storied fragment of the earth. What first drew me to them was their iconic, heart-shaped silhouette and the intricate, lace-like network of veins that acts as a natural guide for my brush. Unlike paper, which is silent, a Peepal leaf has its own voice and texture that invites the viewer to look closer and even reach out to touch. Symbolically, these leaves represent the eternal cycle of life. In many cultures, the Peepal tree is known as the "Tree of Life," symbolizing enlightenment and the bridge between the physical and spiritual worlds. By choosing a fallen leaf, I am working with something that has technically "passed," yet through art, it finds a second life. Unlike other foliage, the Peepal leaf is remarkably less brittle, allowing it to withstand the delicate pressure of a paintbrush. The most rewarding part of the process is their longevity; once the leaves are properly flattened and treated, they become incredibly durable. They don't just wither away; they transform into a permanent, organic parchment that lasts for years.
It's a beautiful metaphor for resilience and transformation—taking a piece of nature that would otherwise return to the soil and preserving its story forever. Every vein tells a tale of growth, and every stroke of my paint is a tribute to that history. Using them allows me to blend imaginative storytelling with a medium that already carries its own ancient, mystical soul. It's a collaboration with nature that feels both grounding and divine.

Painting directly onto such a fragile surface without sketches must require great control. How do you approach this process mentally and technically?

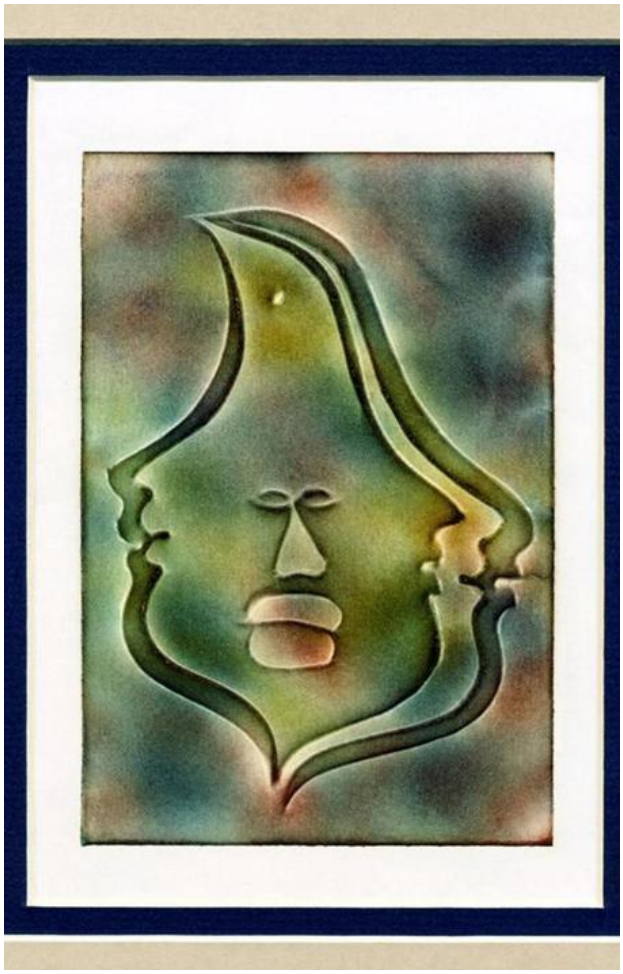
Painting on a Peepal leaf is a high-stakes dialogue between my brush and nature. Mentally, I enter a state of meditative focus; since there are no do-overs or pencil sketches, I must visualize the entire story before the first drop of paint touches the surface. It requires a "surrender to the leaf," where I respect its natural veins and contours as part of the composition. Technically, the process is one of extreme precision and restraint. I use specialized miniature brushes and professional-grade pigments that won't compromise the leaf's integrity. Because the surface is porous yet delicate, my hand must be feather-light to avoid tearing the skeletal structure, yet firm enough to ensure the color adheres. I often hold my breath during the most intricate details, as even a slight

Shree Mehta | Frosted Heaven | 2006

tremor could ruin weeks of preparation. This disciplined control is what transforms a fragile, fallen fragment of a tree into a sturdy, timeless masterpiece. It is a balancing act of patience and agility, where the physical limitations of the leaf actually push my creativity to its highest level.

The natural veins of the leaf play a visible role in your compositions. How do you balance control and spontaneity when working with these organic structures?

Working with the natural veins of a Peepal leaf is like dancing with a partner who already knows the steps. I don't view the skeletal structure as an obstacle to be covered, but as a pre-existing map for my story. My approach is a constant shift between technical control and organic spontaneity. I start by observing the leaf's unique ribbing; sometimes a curve in a vein perfectly mimics the flow of a garment or the bend of a tree branch, and I let that natural geometry dictate where my brush goes. Technically, I must maintain a firm grip on my medium, ensuring the paint sits precisely where intended without bleeding into the delicate "cells" of the leaf. Yet, there is a beautiful spontaneity in how the organic surface absorbs the pigment. Sometimes, the leaf resists or accepts the colour in ways I didn't plan, and I have to pivot my narrative to match its character. It's a process of listening to the material. I provide the vision and the steady hand, but the leaf provides the soul and texture. This balance ensures



Shree Mehta | Emotional Echoes | 2024

Shree Mehta | Magical Moments | 2005

that no two pieces are ever the identical; each composition is a bespoke collaboration between my artistic intent and the tree's original design. By the time I finish, the veins and the paint are so intertwined they become a single, breathing masterpiece.

Your leaf paintings often depict peaceful landscapes and quiet moments. Are these inspired by real places or imagined worlds?

My landscapes are a delicate bridge between vivid memories and imagined sanctuaries. Since migrating from India to Canada in 2005, my work has been profoundly shaped by the transition between two worlds. I often find myself blending the warm, mystical energy of my Indian roots with the breathtaking, vast serenity of the Canadian wilderness. The rugged coastlines, the towering pines, and the shifting light of the northern seasons—specifically the ethereal, hushed beauty of our "snow-scapes"—have become a constant source of fresh inspiration for my Peepal leaf canvases. These quiet moments are rooted in the peaceful energy of real places I've encountered, but once my brush touches the leaf, reality transforms. The leaf's natural veins might suggest a flowing glacial river or a frosted mountain range that doesn't exist on any map. These are ethereal worlds where time stands

Shree Mehta | Divine Blessings

still, designed to offer the viewer a sense of "refuge and reflection." I aim to create a space that feels familiar yet mystical—a place where one can escape the noise of the modern world. Ultimately, these paintings are emotional landscapes that map my journey across continents. Whether inspired by a real horizon in Ontario or a dream of home, the goal is to capture the feeling of peace rather than a literal geography. By blending my personal memories with these "imagined realms," I try to turn each leaf into a portable sanctuary that invites the viewer to step inside and find their own quiet moment of zen.

Your self-developed Nail Painting technique is very unique. How did you discover or invent this method?

My Nail Painting technique is a deeply personal innovation that feels like a conversation with my past. The seeds of this method were planted in my childhood, watching my father, a self-taught yet extraordinary artist. He had a fascinating ritual of sketching incredibly intricate floral designs with a simple pen on small, circular laboratory filter papers from his workplace. Seeing him create such immense beauty on such a tiny, unconventional scale taught me that art doesn't require a traditional canvas—it requires a keen eye and a steady hand. I inherited his fascination for the miniature and the detailed, but I wanted to push the boundary of "tools" even further.

One day, while experimenting with my paints and lacking a brush fine enough for the microscopic details I envisioned, I began using my own thumb's nail as a precision tool. I discovered that by honing the edge of my nail, I could achieve a level of delicate line-work, depth & texture that even the finest synthetic brushes couldn't replicate.
It is a technique born of necessity and heritage. Mentally, it connects me to my father's legacy of finding art in the everyday objects around us. Technically, it requires a rhythmic, tactile control where my body literally becomes the instrument. This "Nail Painting" allows me to etch life into a special kind of rough funnel paper with a closeness and intimacy that feels like I am breathing the story directly onto the surface without any pre-sketch work, curves start getting elevated as per my thoughts, embossing some fantastic abstract visuals. It is my way of honoring my father's quiet creativity while forging a unique artistic identity of my own.

Working without traditional tools like brushes changes the relationship between artist and material. How does using your own nail affect your creative expression?

Working without traditional brushes has allowed me to pioneer a self-invented art style where my body literally becomes the instrument. This technique is an intense interplay of etching and embossing artistic curves using only my thumb-nail, creating a tactile experience that traditional tools simply cannot replicate. By engraving directly onto a special kind of rough funnel paper without any pre-sketching, I allow my imagination to flow instantly onto a blank surface rotating into my palm. The accurate pressure of my nail causes the paper to elevate, portraying intensely unique abstract visuals that represent a highly evolved stage of the techniques I have defined & mastered over the years.
What makes this style truly evocative is the unconventional shading process. In this method, wax-based powder colours are spread over a cloth, and the embossed artwork is rubbed over it with different pressure points to generate unbelievable depth and textured effects. This combination of creative engraving and wax shading transforms each piece into a mystery, adding an element of emboss that pushes the image beyond the confines of two dimensions into a 3D artistic illusion. It takes tremendous patience and immense concentration—sometimes days—to etch distinct details that capture the spirit of human emotions, divine existence, and intricate floral or animal patterns. This unusual yet unique style doesn't just represent my subjects; it breathes a tangible, sculptural life into them, making the invisible textures of my imagination visible and touchable.

Robert Solomon

Robert Solomon | Sunshine stream | 2026

All my previous work has given me an opportunity to reach audiences in an emotional way. Painting allows me to reach an audience sensually, emotionally, visually, and intellectually. Being a generalist in college at Penn State, I was in love with every form of art and eager to experience everything radical and of the moment. I studied architecture at UCLA, and the mechanical drawing we practiced I sometimes use in the beginning of a painting to indicate ideas about composition and dynamism. I would not say sculpture or design directly influences my painting practice. I did evolve from printmaking to painting and from paper to canvas. I developed a ground which has paper -like qualities. Everything in my past gave me an opportunity to exhibit my work and receive input from an audience. Painting is a most useful currency in the artworld today and allows for development and experimentation.

Your artistic practice spans sculpture, printmaking, installation, and theater. How have these disciplines shaped your approach to painting today?

Robert Solomon | April

You mention that nature serves as an entry point into your paintings. Can you describe how an observation of the landscape transforms into abstraction in your process?

I have made several paintings about the stream running beside my studio, each time becoming less attached to the reality of the outside world and more abstract and involved with the color, paint, and canvas. “Sunlight on morning stream” uses a “top down “viewpoint that is a hallmark of modernist painting, just as is frontality. The sky and its reflection exist on the same plane and the loosely brushed cluster of trees is obscured by masses of green paint. My intention to paint from

Robert Solomon | Newgrowth pink

nature is to resist representation while exploring an abstract language that reflects to my experience in nature. This is how I can paint: keep rooted in the physical world and allow the process to become disengaged with it.

Your works feel both structured and intuitive. How do you balance control and spontaneity while painting?

Control is that skill that you hone over time. Drawing is a learned skill and drawing the figure helps with confidence and brush work. Control is preparing your mind before the painting begins: thinking about color choices and paints. Having the brushes clean and ready. Deciding which mediums and binders to use. Also, being somewhat clear on the subject matter and the purpose of the painting is important. The spontaneity begins almost as soon as I pick up the brush. Every color choice suggests the next one. Intuition drives the painting because choices are made quickly and with trust. Some parts take longer and need slower thought.

Living and working in rural Southern New Jersey, how does your immediate environment influence your palette, forms, and compositions?

At first, I was taken by the interesting things present in my environment. As my work progressed, I am less tied to the physical nature of things and more involved with my internal feelings and the work has become more abstract. I have discovered a new language to interpret the outside world.

Some elements in your paintings suggest organic systems or topographies. Are these references intentional, or do they emerge subconsciously?

Yes, I intentionally seek tension between organic form and a grid like or cubist composition. The canvas being square or rectilinear sets up interesting problems with organic abstract forms. The “New growth” paintings are painted from a “look down “viewpoint. The thick meandering lines denote the boundary between land and water and set up the organizing principle of the painting. Circles and elementary shapes are grouped in patterns that suggest movement and life forms. “Forest carpet” has freer boundaries with its cursory red lines yet has areas I associate with a forest floor.

How has your artistic language evolved since your early work in the 1970s?

My early work responded to the revolution happening in the arts of that time, which included music, theater, and film. I used historical art references and political-social references. There was an avant-garde coming from European sources and the art world was much smaller. My work was much more surreal and subversive in content. With time and a physical studio, I wanted to achieve more convention goals such as skill, consistency, and focus. What I did achieve in emotional complexity I wanted to retain and explore in painting. A greater happiness and appreciation also change ones position in the world; in some ways I strive for the innocence and awe of my late teens.

Robert Solomon | Old railroad on canal

Martin Málek

The study of the properties and processing of glass represented for me one of the ways to gradually build discipline and a relationship with material. I focused mainly on the final finishing of glass, where precision and control played a key role – principles that I carry with me to this day.
After school, I devoted myself to drawing for a long time, especially portraiture. It taught me to perceive detail, work with shadow, and develop patience. I approached painting with respect, which was also connected to my perfectionist nature.
Painting returned to me after years through experimentation. I began to explore acrylic as a material – its structure, layering, and behavior over time. Gradually, I found in it a medium in which I seek depth and quality, often associated more with oil painting. That is why my work sometimes appears as if it were created in a different medium.
A natural outcome of this process is also my visual signature – a structured framing that is a fixed part of the canvas itself.

Your work demonstrates exceptional technical precision. How has your glassmaking background influenced your approach to painting?

Martin Málek | Rhinoceros

You describe your style as rooted in the atmosphere of "Dark Baroque." What draws you to this aesthetic, and how do you interpret it in a contemporary context?

The aesthetics of Baroque, especially the work with light emerging from shadow, attracted me already during my studies. I was fascinated by the precision of the old masters and their ability to create tension, through which the image feels almost alive.
At the time when I was devoted to drawing, I did not fully realize this connection. With the transition to painting, this principle returned to me as something that had been present from the beginning.
For me, Baroque represents a natural way of thinking about light, space, and the presence of the image, which appears in my work in a contemporary, personal form.

The male figure appears as a central motif in your paintings. What symbolic role does it play in your work?

Martin Málek | Searching for the Muse

The male figure represents a conscious choice for me. In the contemporary visual environment, I perceive that the male element is receding into the background, while in the past – from antiquity to classical painting – it held a firm position.
In my work, I naturally return to this line. The male figure represents for me a way of presence within the image and a motif to which I feel personally close.

Many of your compositions appear monumental, almost sculptural. Do you think of your paintings as objects as well as images?

I perceive my paintings as images that also have a strong physical presence. Each work represents for me a defined space with its own boundary.
In the process of creation, I also work with where the image begins and where it ends. This boundary determines how the work exists in space and how it affects the viewer.
The framing, which is directly part of the canvas, is therefore an essential element. I perceive it as my signature, which closes the image and gives it a clear structure.
The image thus gains its own presence, close to an object.

Your works often balance beauty with tension or unease. How important is contrast in your visual language?

I perceive contrast as a reflection of my own way of thinking. I am naturally drawn to movement between different positions rather than remaining in a single direction.
The images can therefore feel calm and unsettled at the same time. This creates space for individual perception. Someone once told me that if they went to the right, I would go to the left. Rather than a contradiction, it is an effort to understand both directions and find my own position.
The space between them is essential for me.

Do you begin with a narrative, or does meaning emerge during the process?

Each painting originates from an initial idea, for which I gradually search for a concrete form. During the process itself, which often lasts several weeks, I return to it and continue to develop it.
The meaning thus becomes more precise and transforms throughout the work. During the process, I also write down short notes that help me later articulate more precisely what the image carries.
After completing the work, I sometimes encounter a layer that I was not consciously looking for at the beginning.

The painting Rhinoceros presents a strong symbolic image. What ideas or commentary are contained in this work?

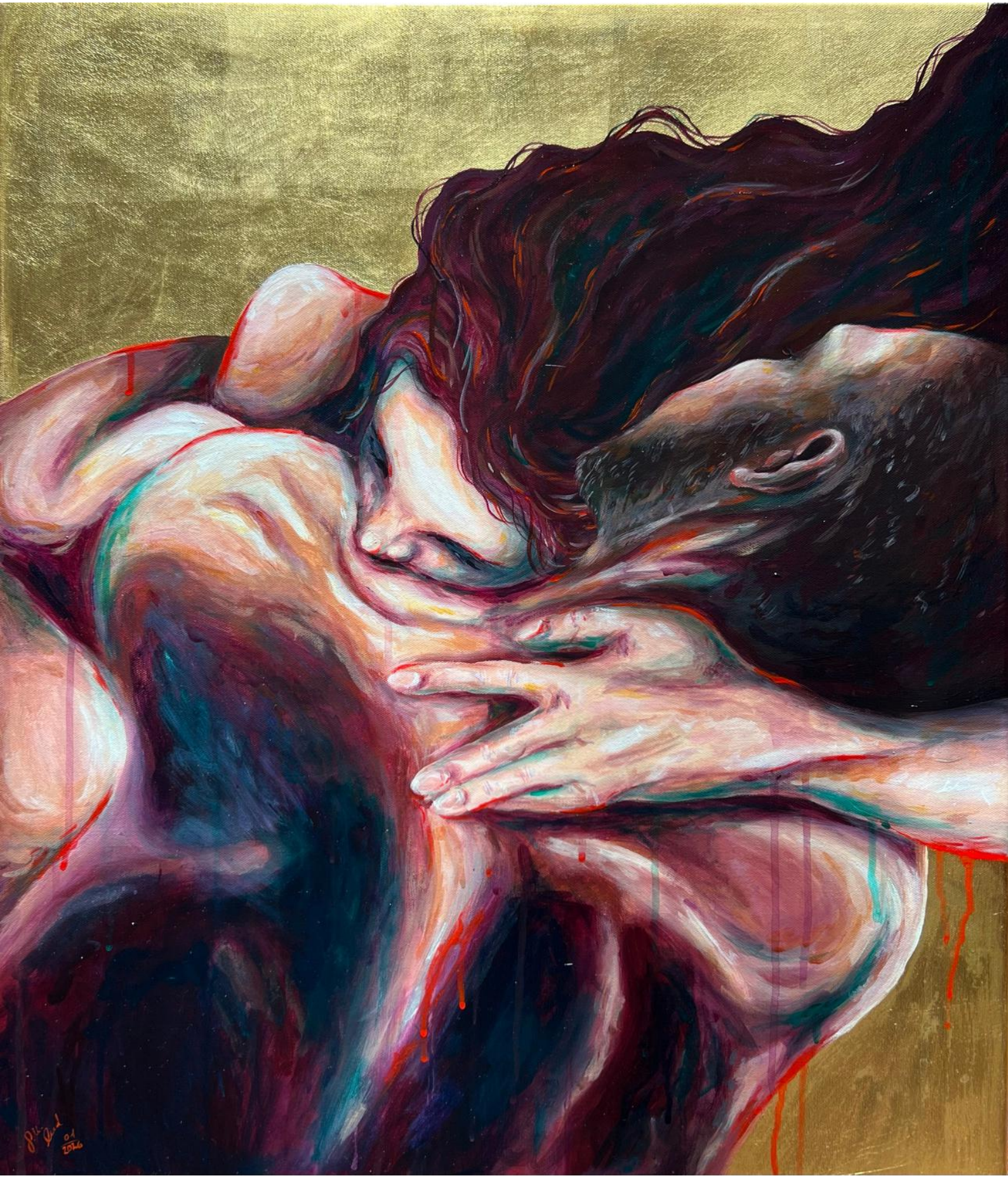
The painting Rhinoceros originated from a reflection on human greed and the value we assign to things around us. I covered an animal that has its natural space with a material associated with immediate pleasure.
This contrast opens a question of how easily we intervene in the environment we share for the sake of our own comfort. A situation that repeats itself in various forms.
For me, it is an impulse to reflect on the value of the decisions we make.

Martin Málek | Caesar

Svenja Andreas is an artist based in Upper Bavaria, Germany. Working primarily with acrylic while moving fluidly across media, she develops a symbolic visual language shaped by mythology, art history, music, film, literature, dreams, and lived experience. Her practice explores transformation, duality, and vulnerability, creating spaces where sensuality and spirituality converge. Through layered imagery and intuitive processes, her work invites reflective engagement and open interpretation. She is particularly drawn to tensions between opposites—strength and fragility, light and shadow—and how these dynamics shape inner and outer worlds. Her paintings open contemplative spaces where meaning remains fluid and deeply personal.

Project Statement
For as long as I can remember, words have felt limiting, while art has offered a sanctuary for expressing what words cannot. Painting became a way to return to parts of myself that had faded. It allows me to lose myself while remaining fully present. So it became a form of therapy, meditation, and prayer.
I often translate the chaos within and around me into visual form, embracing the ebb and flow of change—shedding and becoming, trusting in the transformative power of art. Surrendering to the process, I work intuitively, sensing my way through each painting. Its symbolism often reveals itself only after the work is complete, offering both personal and universal insights.
Recurring motifs such as butterflies and moths reference metamorphosis and transitional states, being drawn to the light, and a connection between the physical and the unseen. Kintsugi—the Japanese art of repairing pottery by highlighting cracks with gold—serves as a guiding metaphor, revealing the beauty hidden in our evident flaws and scars.
Furthermore my work explores the unity of opposites. We can be both: broken and healed, sinner and saint, sensual and spiritual, heaven and hell. Vulnerability becomes essential to connection, allowing for deeper presence and the possibility of being fully seen.
My hope is that my work resonates on a deeply personal, emotional, or sensual level, inspiring new thoughts and feelings in those who experience it.

Svenja Andreas | Diptych of Hope and Despair



Svenja Andreas | Devotion

Tatayna Chizh

Tatayna Chizh | Fragment | 2025

Your work explores how memory and identity become inscribed in material. When did you first become aware of clay as a medium capable of holding these traces?

It didn't happen in a single moment.
I just noticed that clay doesn't forgive — it keeps everything: pressure, hesitation, unnecessary movement.
At some point it became clear that these are not flaws, but a language.
That's when I began to feel that the material can hold not only form, but also the state in which it was made.

Tatayna Chizh | Faceless | 2026

You transitioned from a career in marketing and advertising to fully dedicating yourself to art. How has this shift influenced your artistic language and way of thinking?

Marketing taught me to think in structure and precision — to understand how attention works and how it can be directed.
But at some point it became more important for me not to control perception, but to leave a gap in it.
In art, I still think through logic, but I use it to open meaning rather than to close it.

Many of your works seem to carry a sense of pressure, distortion, or transformation. Is this something you consciously construct, or does it emerge intuitively during the process?

It feels more like a conversation with the material than a predefined result. There is a sense of pressure that everything begins with. After that, the form starts behaving on its own.
Sometimes I hold it, sometimes I let it go.

Can you describe your relationship with

Tatayna Chizh | Faceless | 2025

chamotte clay and porcelain? What draws you to these materials specifically?

What matters to me is their contrast.
Chamotte is about weight, resistance, about holding.
Porcelain is about fragility, light, almost disappearance.
When they meet in one piece, a tension appears that interests me — as if strength and vulnerability exist within the same form.

Since moving to Serbia and fully dedicating yourself to art, how has your environment influenced your work?

The move left a feeling of disconnection and instability.
When you find yourself outside your familiar environment, many things cease to be obvious—and this is very noticeable internally.
The works increasingly explore themes of distance, trace, absence, and memory.
This isn't about a specific place, but about the state that arises when you almost coincide with reality.

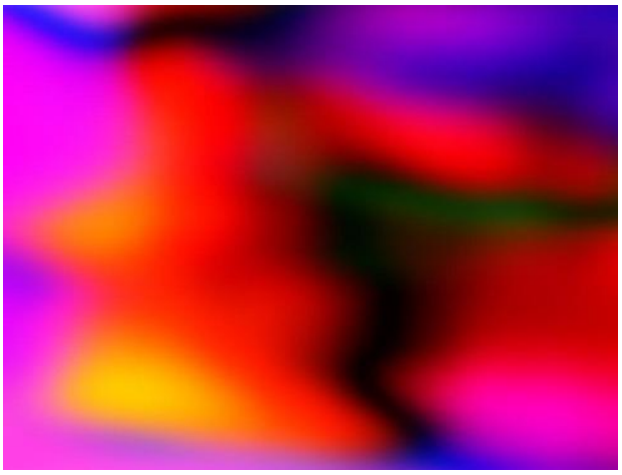
Your sculptures invite interpretation rather than delivering a fixed meaning. What kind of dialogue do you hope to create with the viewer?

I don’t want to fully explain the work.
It’s important for me to leave space where the viewer can enter with their own experience.
When a form is not fully defined, it becomes stronger — because everyone completes it differently.

Do you approach each piece as part of a larger conceptual series, or does each work exist as an independent exploration?

I think in series.
Even if the objects can exist independently, they usually emerge within a shared investigation.
Each work is a variation, a shift, or a refinement, rather than an isolated statement.

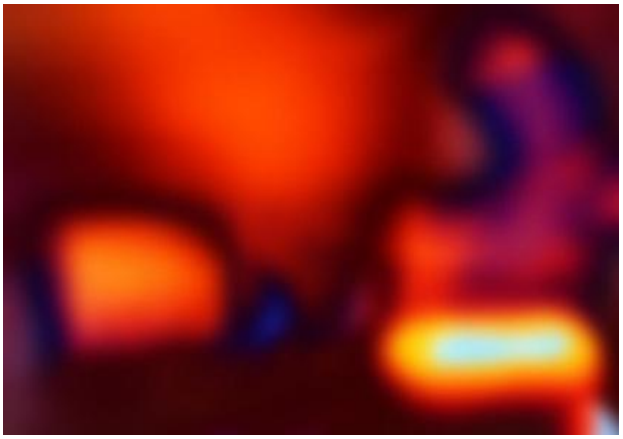
Lucrezia Nebbia



Lucrezia Nebbia | Fosfeni | 2026

Your project Flashes of Light – Phosphenes explores the edge of vision. What first drew you to this fragile and unstable visual experience?

I was drawn to phosphenes because they represent an extremely elusive form of vision, which deeply resonates with how I experience images. I am interested in everything that exists on the threshold between what we actually see and what we perceive internally, through emotion and imagination.
In phosphenes, I found something incredibly powerful: a light that doesn't describe the external world, but instead seems to emerge from within, like an intimate and unstable trace. It is precisely this ambiguity that struck me from the beginning; it opens up a space where vision ceases to be a merely optical event and becomes a personal, emotional, and almost mental experience.



Lucrezia Nebbia | Fosfeni | 2026

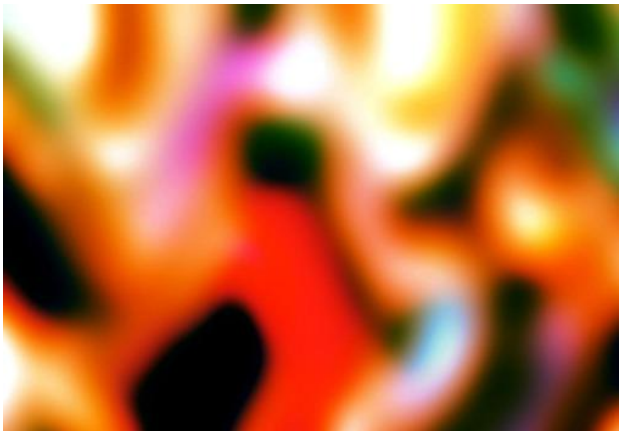
How do you translate something as intangible as inner perception or fleeting light into a photographic image?

For me, it's not about a literal translation of the intangible, but rather an attempt to evoke it. Internal perception and fleeting light are unstable experiences, difficult to grasp, so I wanted the image itself to retain this fragility.
My process involved avoiding excessive definition, instead leaving room for ambiguity, vibration, and something that could be felt rather than explained. In this journey, photography became a means to give form to a sensation, while digital intervention allowed me to push the image beyond the visible, toward a more interior and mental dimension.

In your works, light seems less like illumination and more like a presence. How do you approach light conceptually in your practice?

I approach light as something that goes beyond its descriptive function. I am not merely interested in it as a means of revealing form, but as a presence capable of altering perception and creating an emotional state.
In my work, light does not necessarily clarify the image: at times, it interrupts it, alters it, and renders it more fragile and unstable.

Can you tell us more about the role of memory and imagination in shaping the images in this



Lucrezia Nebbia | Fosfeni | 2026

series?

In this series, memory and imagination are fundamental because I was interested in moving beyond the idea of the image as a simple recording of reality. What we see never remains identical within us; it is filtered, transformed, and absorbed in a personal way. Memory preserves certain traces, yet often returns them in a partial, fragile form, while imagination intervenes almost naturally—completing, shifting, and reinventing.
In my work on phosphenes, this dynamic was particularly important because I wanted the images to have the quality of something that surfaces rather than something that imposes itself. For this reason, I sought to create a series where the visible is constantly crossed by a mental and emotional dimension, and where memory and imagination become tools to give form to what is unstable, fleeting, and difficult to grasp.

Your journey includes a period of self-doubt and pause. How did returning to photography influence your artistic voice?

Returning to photography has had a profound impact on my artistic expression; it wasn't simply about taking photos again, but about reclaiming a part of myself that I had set aside. After a period of insecurity, where I felt I wasn't 'enough' or that there was no real space for me in this field, coming back to photography forced me to look more sincerely at both my work and myself.
I believe this hiatus changed my creative process. It made me more aware, perhaps more vulnerable, but also freer. I stopped thinking solely in terms of judgment or external approval and began to see photography as a necessary language—a medium through which I can authentically express emotions, questions, and perceptions.
In this sense, the return to photography has made my gaze more intimate and personal. It made me realize that fragility is not a limit to be hidden, but can instead become a vital part of the creative process. Perhaps that is why, today, my work is closer to who I truly am.

How did your academic background in graphic design and photography at IED Turin shape your current visual language?

My background in graphic design and photography has deeply influenced my visual language, as it taught me to merge structure with sensitivity. Graphic design provided me with a keen eye for composition, balance, and the construction of an image. At the same time, studying photography at IED in Turin helped me develop a more personal and conscious gaze, both on a technical and conceptual level.

How important is ambiguity in your images? Do you want the viewer to interpret them freely?

Yes and no—ambiguity is fundamental to me because it reflects how we truly perceive things: not in a fixed or totally clear way, but often through impressions, intuitions, and sensations that remain open-ended. In my images, I don't seek a single or completely controlled reading; I am interested in maintaining a space of uncertainty, because that is where, in my view, the image becomes more alive and engaging.
I want the viewer to be free to interpret the work. I like to think that everyone can enter it in a different way, bringing their own gaze, memory, and emotions into the image. For me, this margin of freedom is essential, as it allows the work to not be exhausted by a single meaning, but to continue generating possibilities, questions, and personal resonances.

Lucrezia Nebbia | Fosfeni | 2026

Denis & Julia Zelenykh
Lorrrem is an art group founded by Denis and Julia Zelenykh, designers originally from Donbas. With over ten years of experience in communication and product design, the authors have created projects for major companies across the CIS, Europe, the United States, and Japan.
Working at the intersection of art, design, and technology, Lorrrem combines CGI, 3D object design, and augmented reality to create hybrid artworks that exist simultaneously in physical and digital space. Their practice explores themes of human connection, the relationship between individuals and the universe, and ideas of growth, light, and mutual support.
Lorrrem's works are exhibited in galleries across the CIS and presented as editioned art, where viewers can acquire miniature fragments of larger installations, becoming participants in a unified artistic system.

Project Statement
Lorrrem
Art group founded by Denis and Julia Zelenykh
Lorrrem is an art group founded by Denis and Julia Zelenykh, designers originally from Donbas. For more than ten years, they have worked in communication and product design, creating projects for major companies across the CIS, Europe, the United States, and Japan.
Alongside their professional practice, the authors are engaged in teaching. Denis and Julia conduct educational programs and participate in academic initiatives in collaboration with Tomsk State University, Moscow State University, and Yandex educational programs. Their pedagogical work is closely connected with research into new forms of visual communication and interdisciplinary design.
The creative activity of Lorrrem is deeply intertwined with their professional background. The authors work as CGI artists and object designers, using 3D technologies, digital sculpting, and augmented reality. In their projects, physical objects are combined with digital layers, forming hybrid artistic forms that exist simultaneously in material and virtual space.
Lorrrem's works are exhibited in galleries across the CIS and are positioned as a special format of editioned art. The original artworks are not available for purchase — viewers can only acquire a fragment of the exhibition in miniature form. This approach transforms collecting into participation, where each acquired piece becomes part of a larger artistic system.
At the center of Lorrrem's artistic statement is the human being and their place in the universe. The authors explore connections between people, the relationship between individuals and the cosmos, and ideas of personal growth and inner development. Their works address themes of light, mutual support, and creation, inviting viewers to reflect on the role of a person as a carrier of meaning, energy, and goodwill toward others.
Lorrrem forms a visual philosophy in which design, technology, and art merge into a unified space — a space of exploration, dialogue, and inner movement.
To view the works presented in this publication, scan the QR code and then point your camera at the images.

Denis & Julia | Flower Man

SCAN TO LAUNCH

Denis & Julia | Cosmo Main is the Universe

Shannon Hack

Your practice moves fluidly between metalwork and mixed media. How do you decide which material best serves an idea or concept?

Much of deciding on what material would be best comes down to the environment the piece will be in. If it's a wall hanging piece, the expectation is that it will always be indoors in a controlled environment allowing for a vast range of materials that can be chosen based on fitting in with the intended narrative of the piece. Other works, such as Missing Piece, have multiple display capabilities such as a sculpture placed on a pedestal or the ability to be worn as a bracelet which means the choice of materials becomes more limited because I have to take into account factors like oil from skin or other things it may be exposed to.

Shannon Hack | Missing Piece | 2024

Many of your works seem to explore fragmentation and reconstruction. What draws you to these themes?

I believe it happens more subconsciously than having an actual plan to execute these themes specifically. The constant reemerging and exploration seem to come down to the simple explanation of that's just how life is. At some point everyone will have to face reconstructing some aspect or viewpoint in life whether it's mentally, in their career, or their day to day. I think that's what draws me back again and again is that everyone can relate to the growth and evolving that comes from conquering life's obstacles.

How has your background in architectural sculpture influenced the way you approach form and space in your work?

It's definitely made me more mindful when I'm creating a piece about how it will interact with a space and other works around it. It also makes me more conscious of the negative and positive space not just within a piece, but the environment around it. An architectural sculpture designed for an entry to a building may not translate or be suitable for use in a traffic circle where the sun's glare could and cause a hazard for drivers. It's made me think more about how pieces can be adapted to their settings.

Shannon Hack | Daydream | 2023

Your pieces often combine industrial materials with organic or emotional narratives. How do you balance these contrasting elements?

It's a lot about choosing the correct materials to make a piece out of that will tell the story to the extent of its abilities. For example, if my piece Anxiety were made of metal, it wouldn't convey the same story and engage the audience the same as it does. The choice to use 3D filament discard was to not only give use to the waste created from printing but also due to its twisting form reminding me of how having anxiety feels like a jumbled mess of emotions. I believe that could be said for a majority of my pieces, that the material can make or break the narrative I'm looking to create.

Can you tell us more about your experience working with NASA's Psyche Mission and how it shaped your artistic perspective?

The internship I completed was early on in my art career and I was able to design and complete four works for the mission. Since I was still early in my journey when the opportunity arose, I put a lot of experimentation into what I created because I was still at the point of finding myself as an artist. The result of this was four works in utilizing different media. I hand beaded one piece, made stained glass for another, created a box diorama, and made a kinetic sculpture utilizing lights and movement to depict the journey. It was the kinetic piece that had me choosing sculpture as my medium. This experience shaped my perspective in that I want to create pieces that express a narrative and not just be making art for aesthetic pleasure.

Public engagement appears to be an important part of your practice. How do you approach making complex ideas accessible through art?

For me, it all starts with dissecting the idea into groups and determining what information would engage the biggest audience when translated into an art piece. This could be anything from what would hook the viewer and educates them or what intrigues them enough where they educate themselves by doing their own research. Many times, there are no guarantees to be able to express the whole idea into a singular piece so I have to pick and choose what to include or break it down into segments and create a unified series where each piece pertains to a unique part of the main overall idea.

As a single mother, your personal journey is deeply intertwined with your career. How has this experience influenced your artistic voice?

During the early years of motherhood, raising a child on the spectrum, there weren't any communities to help support parents and/or caregivers emotionally and art became a therapeutic outlet for me. When my son reached an age where I could pursue it as a career, it made me want to create artworks that share my personal journey in hopes that it can help others, convey to them they're not alone, and just bring attention to the weight parents carry.

Shannon Hack | Used to be a Cow | 2024

Nimra Abdullah is a contemporary artist exploring the delicate tension between material existence and spiritual awakening. Her abstract works capture transformative moments where illusion dissolves and deeper truth emerges. Drawing inspiration from introspection, philosophy, and subtle Sufi thought, her art reflects themes of duality, consciousness, and the search for meaning beyond worldly definitions of success. Through symbolic forms and emotional depth, she creates visual spaces that invite viewers to pause, question, and reconnect with their inner reality. Each piece acts as a quiet dialogue between the visible and the unseen, expressing her belief that art is not only to be seen, but deeply experienced.

Nimra Abdullah | Epiphany | 2026

Nimra Abdullah | Fanaa | 2026

Divya Vinod Gilatar

My practice emerged through a sustained engagement with Indian philosophy, yoga, and the study of ancient cultural systems. During my academic work in Ancient Indian Culture, History, and Archaeology, I became increasingly interested in how different cultures have used geometry as a way of understanding the cosmos.
This led me to explore Hindu yantras, Buddhist mandalas, Chinese spiritual traditions, and even the geometric principles embedded within medieval European cathedrals and Mughal architecture. Across cultures, I found a recurring belief that geometry is not merely decorative, but sacred and foundational — a way of structuring both the visible and invisible world.
A philosophical idea that deeply resonated with me is often attributed to Plato: "God geometrizes continually." Tracing these systems back to the yantra, I began to see geometry as a spiritual language. Combined with my personal practice of yoga and meditation, this naturally evolved into a visual practice where sacred geometry became the core structure of my work.

Your practice is deeply rooted in sacred geometry and yogic philosophy - how did this direction first emerge in your artistic journey?

Divya Vinod Gilatar | Ajna Chakra The Third Eye Portal | 2022

The Chakra Mandala Series explores the subtle body through visual form. How do you translate something intangible, like energy, into structured geometry?

For me, energy is not abstract or intangible — it is something I experience as a continuous presence. I approach the body not just as a physical form, but as a field of structured energy. Geometry becomes a tool to give that energy a visual architecture. The mandala, in particular, offers a system of balance, symmetry, and repetition that mirrors the organisation of the subtle body. Rather than "translating" energy, I see the process as mapping it — creating a visual structure through which it can be perceived, contemplated, and experienced.
At the centre of this process is Shakti — the primordial life force that animates all form. My work seeks to give visual coherence to this dynamic energy, allowing it to be

Divya Vinod Gilatar | Anahata Chakra The Heart Portal | 2022

experienced not as abstraction, but as presence, movement, and inner vibration.

Can you describe your creative process - is it more intuitive, meditative, or mathematically constructed?

My process is a synthesis of intuition, meditation, and structure. It begins in a highly intuitive and meditative state, where I approach the work almost as a form of devotion. I spend time in stillness, allowing the form to emerge rather than forcing it. From there, the geometric and mathematical construction unfolds as a natural extension of that state.
I do not separate intuition from structure — the geometry is not imposed, but revealed. In this sense, the act of creation becomes both contemplative and precise: a balance between surrender and discipline.

Each chakra carries specific symbolic meanings and emotional states. How do you approach color selection and composition for each energy center?

Colour is central to the emotional and energetic resonance of each piece. While each chakra is traditionally associated with a specific colour, working within a predominantly monochromatic palette requires a more nuanced approach.
I focus on subtle variations in tone, saturation, and luminosity to generate depth and movement within a single colour field. The intention is not simply to represent the colour of a chakra, but to evoke its vibrational quality — whether grounding, expansion, expression, or stillness.
In this way, colour operates as both a symbolic language and an experiential field.

Your work references ancient systems like yantra and tantra. How do you balance respect for tradition with contemporary digital expression?

I approach these systems with both respect and continuity. Yantra and tantra are not static historical artefacts; they are living frameworks of understanding.
My use of digital tools is not a departure from tradition, but an extension of it. By translating these principles into a contemporary visual language, I seek to demonstrate their continued relevance and accessibility in the present moment. The intention is not to replicate tradition, but to activate it within a contemporary context.

Your works are described as portals into inner stillness. Have you observed how audiences interact with them in exhibition spaces?

These works were originally created while I was living in the Himalayas, during a period when I was working as a yoga educator. They emerged as digital mandalas for meditation, and as tools to support work with energetic blockages in the body.
In exhibition spaces, I have observed a similar response. Viewers tend to slow down, often spending longer than expected engaging with the work. There is a subtle shift from looking to experiencing, where repetition and symmetry generate a meditative pull.
This aligns closely with my intention — to create moments of stillness within a fast-paced visual environment.

As your work reaches international audiences, how do you navigate cultural translation of deeply rooted Indian spiritual concepts?

Rather than relying on explanation, I focus on universality. While my work is rooted in Indian spiritual systems, the visual language I use — geometry, symmetry, and colour — exists across cultures.
This allows the work to be experienced intuitively, regardless of cultural background. I see my role as creating a bridge between cultural specificity and universal perception, where viewers can engage with the work on both an intellectual and experiential level.

Divya Vinod Gilatar | Manipura Chakra The Stomach Portal | 2022

Xilichen Hua: Ecological Fable

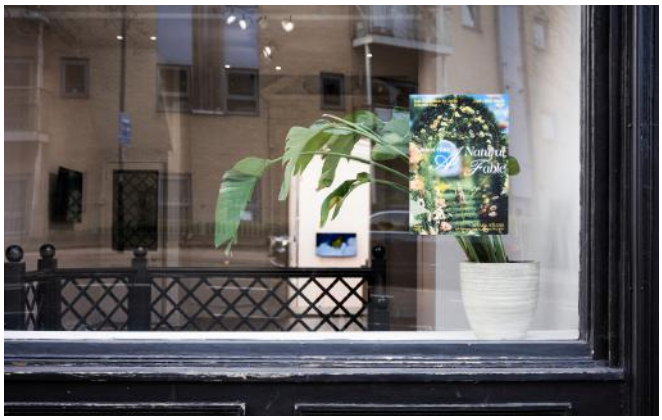
by Anna Gvozdeva

The exhibition Ecological Fable was successfully held at Apsara Studio in London from 23 March to 28 March. This exhibition focuses on the perceptual transfer and identity generation of female subjects in the natural world, and constructs an ecological narrative space between reality, dreams, and mythology through visual language.

Fragile Harmony: An Ecofeminist Call, 2026. Installation view at Apsara Studio. Courtesy of the artist.

In the visual practice of artist Xilichen Hua, narrative often begins in a relatively enclosed internal space and gradually extends outward, forming a perceptual field constructed by plants and female bodies. With the advancement of images, a dimension of life between reality, dreams, and mythology gradually emerges, and the boundary between humans and nature is constantly reconstructed and negotiated within it.

In this visual system, nature no longer exists solely as a narrative background but becomes an important participant in actively shaping perceptual structures. The female subject constructed by the artist based on herself travels in different natural environments, engaging in intimate interactions with flowers, insects, and vegetation. These scenes with fairy tale narrative characteristics simultaneously carry the poetic dimensions of mythology and allegory and re-examine the long-standing hierarchical relationship between humans and nature from the perspective of contemporary ecological thought and ecofeminism.



As an ecofeminism multimedia artist, Xilichen Hua's creations revolve around the intertwined relationship between the female body, natural life forms, and perceptual experiences. Through visual media, she constructs a slow and flowing visual narrative structure, gradually loosening and dissolving the perception of time, space, and body. In the work, flowers, insects, and plants do not appear as decorative natural symbols, but as entities that share the same life logic with female subjects. They together form a 'Living World' - a highly permeable field of life where humans, nature, and imagination constantly blend to generate a constantly changing ecological network.

Fragile Harmony: An Ecofeminist Call, 2026. Installation view at Apsara Studio. Courtesy of the artist.

In these works, visual narrative unfolds from the inside out: a microcosm is slowly revealed and gradually extended into a flowing and uncertain natural universe. Artists present a delicate and fragile state of existence through audio-visual language that lies between fairy tales, ecological fables, and perceptual experiments, a constantly generating, reorganising, and evolving system of life relationships. The successful hosting of this exhibition provides the audience with an immersive ecological and perceptual experience, while further highlighting Xilichen Hua's unique practice in contemporary visual art and ecofeminism.

Tricia Seymour-Barrier, PhD, EdD

Your background combines transpersonal psychotherapy and abstract art. How does your psychological practice influence the way you approach painting?

My foundation in transpersonal psychotherapy deeply informs how I approach painting. This perspective honors the integration of the psychological and the spiritual, viewing each person as a multidimensional being. In my art, I use non-objective abstraction as a language to access those deeper emotional and energetic layers of experience. Each piece becomes an exploration of inner landscapes - an intuitive process of translating what is often unseen or unspoken into color, texture, and movement. For me, painting is not simply expression; it is a contemplative practice and an ongoing inquiry into wholeness, consciousness, and the subtle realms that shape our lived experience.

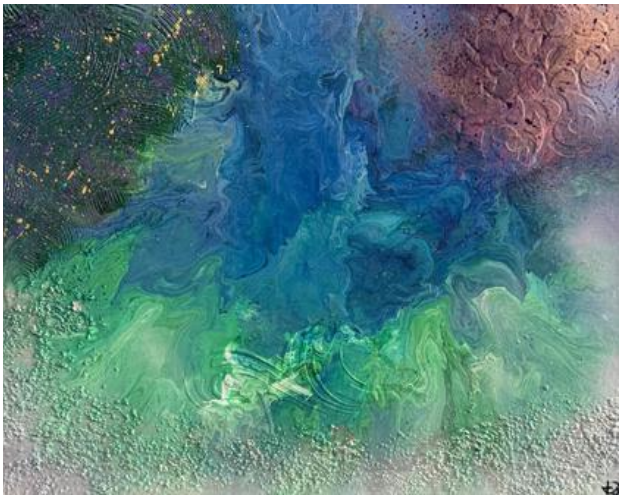
Tricia Seymour-Barrier | Geometric Alchemy | 2026

You often describe your paintings as emerging through listening rather than control. What does this state of "listening" look or feel like while you are working?

When I speak of “listening,” I’m referring to a state of deep presence and receptivity. Rather than approaching the canvas with a fixed plan, I enter into a kind of dialogue with the work as it unfolds. I follow intuitive impulses, gestures, shifts in color, and changes in energy allowing them to guide the process. It feels less like constructing and more like uncovering something that already exists beneath conscious awareness. In this state, I’m attuned to subtle emotional and energetic currents, translating them into visual form. The result is work that invites viewers beyond interpretation and into a direct, felt experience.

Texture plays a central role in your work. What attracts you to tactile surfaces and layered materials as a way of expressing inner experience?

Texture allows the work to move beyond the purely visual and become something more immersive and embodied. I’m drawn to layered, tactile surfaces because they mirror the complexity of our inner lives - there is depth, irregularity, and a sense of connection within each piece.



Tricia Seymour-Barrier | Mystical Sanctuary | 2026

These surfaces invite the viewer to slow down and engage more intimately, almost as if they could step into the painting. The interplay between texture and color creates a dynamic energy that pulls the eye inward, transforming the work from something observed into something experienced.

Many viewers sense a spiritual or meditative atmosphere in your paintings. Do you consciously seek to create this space, or does it arise naturally through the process?

It is both intentional and intuitive. I begin each painting by grounding myself through practices such as breathwork, music, or creating a calming sensory environment. This allows me to enter a receptive state where I can attune to the energy of what wants to emerge. I often sense an impression, an inner image or energetic signature, that guides the beginning of the piece. From there, I allow the process to unfold organically. I sometimes describe myself as an intuitive alchemist, translating subtle emotional and spiritual experiences into physical form. The meditative quality arises naturally from this way of working, as each piece is created within a space of presence, openness, and connection to something beyond myself.

Your artistic journey began relatively recently, yet you have already produced a large body of work and participated in numerous exhibitions. What motivated you to fully dedicate yourself to art at this stage of your life?

I often describe myself as a late bloomer in my professional art career, although creativity has always been central to who I am. I began fully dedicating myself to painting in 2024, in my 60s, after a lifetime of creative exploration expressed through other avenues. I grew up in an environment that encouraged curiosity, imagination, and authenticity, and those values have stayed with me. I have always been an entrepreneur. I was constantly creating, building, problem-solving, and bringing ideas into form. Transitioning into painting felt like a natural evolution rather than a departure. At this stage of my life, I felt a clear calling to devote myself more fully to this form of expression and to share that work more widely.

Some of your compositions evoke landscapes, cosmic spaces, or organic structures. Do these associations interest you, or do you prefer the viewer to experience the work without specific references?

While I'm aware that viewers often perceive landscapes, cosmic environments, or organic forms within my work, I'm more interested in allowing the imagery to remain open and expansive. Each viewer brings their own experiences, memories, and inner world to what they see. If the work evokes a sense of vastness, movement, or connection to something greater, then it is doing what I intend. I hope the paintings act as portals or spaces where viewers can explore their own interpretations and perhaps feel a deeper connection to the larger field of existence.

As someone who views painting as a form of meditation, how do you hope viewers engage with your work when they encounter it in a gallery?

I hope viewers engage with my work in a way that invites stillness and presence. Rather than analyzing or trying to define what they are seeing, I encourage them to simply feel into the experience. If a painting can create a moment of pause, where someone senses a shift, a resonance, or a quiet expansion, then it has fulfilled its purpose. Ultimately, I hope my work offers a space for connection: to oneself, to something greater, and to the subtle, often unseen dimensions of being.

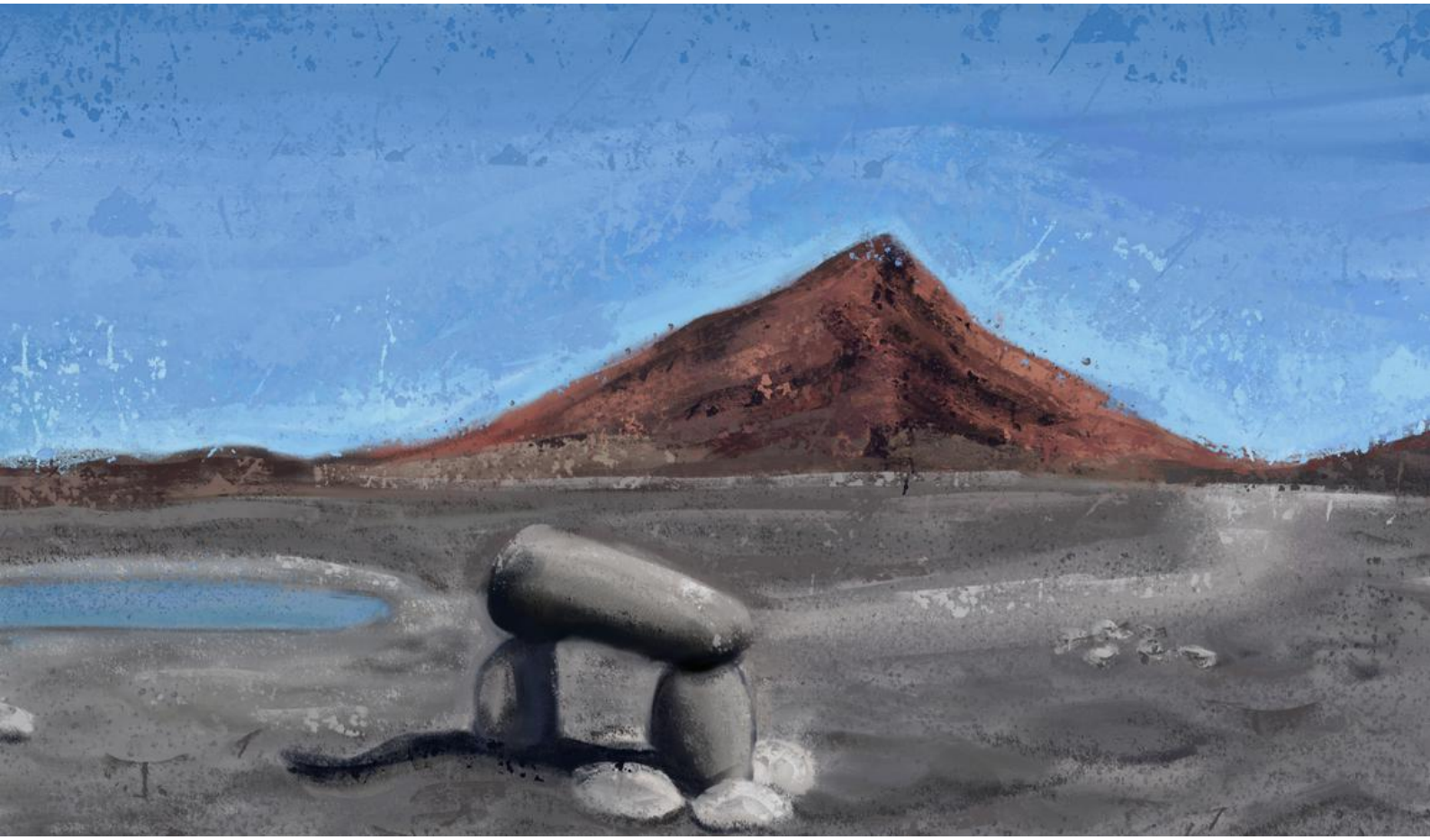
Tricia Seymour-Barrier | Magic Carpet | 2025

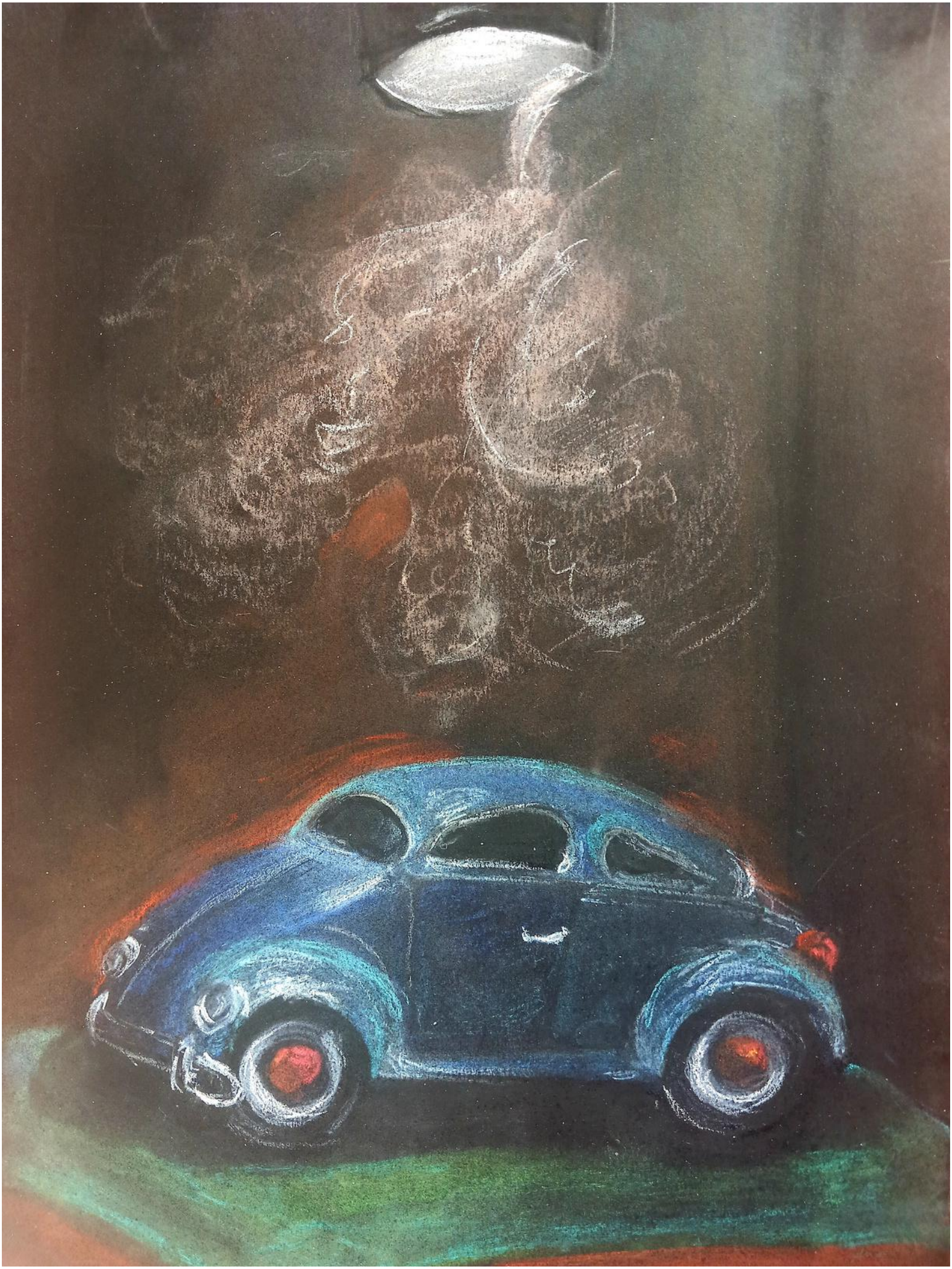
Ivana Adžić

Born in 2004, Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina. From early chhildhood was fond of art. I took a big turn in my life when I finished Medical Highschool and decided to go to Academia of Arts in Banja Luka. Now I'm a freshman in college.

Project Statement
Mostly doing soft pastel techinque. Inspired by Claude Monet, Edgar Degas, mostly working with light, dark, brightnest and contrast. Feeling free to use other techniques.

Ivana Adzic | Canary Island | 2025



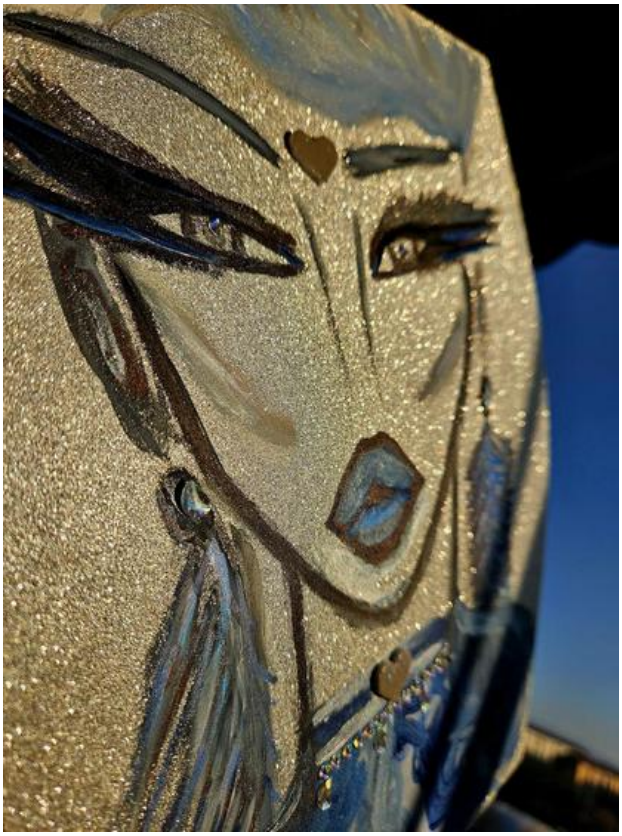


Ivana Adzic | Miniature of a Car | 2025

Cecilia Pitt

You describe your figures not as portraits but as presences. How do these presences emerge when you begin a painting?

They never arrive as portraits. They arrive as presences.
When I approach a canvas, I am not trying to represent someone. I am listening. There is usually a moment of suspension, a quiet threshold where something subtle begins to gather beneath the surface.
Then the first gesture appears. A line, a fragment of color, a gaze that was never planned. Slowly a presence negotiates its way into visibility.
I often say that I do not invent these figures. I host them. Each painting becomes a temporary portal where something unseen chooses to inhabit form. What emerges is not a representation, but a presence carrying its own energy and intention.
The canvas is the meeting point between the visible and the invisible.



Cecilia Pitt | Celestine | 2026

Your background is rooted in psycho-socio-anthropological studies. How has this perspective influenced the way you approach identity and symbolism in your work?

My studies certainly shaped my thinking, but they mainly amplified something that already belonged to my nature.
I have always been an extremely curious and introspective person, what I sometimes like to call an intronaut: someone naturally drawn to exploring inner landscapes and the symbolic structures that shape human identity.
Before painting, my first expressive language was always writing. For many years I explored ideas, emotions and archetypes through words. Literature, anthropology, psychology, spiritual inquiry and cultural observation all became part of the inner mosaic that later flowed into my visual work.
Painting eventually became the place where all those fragments converged.
Identity, in my work, is never singular. It is a constellation composed of personal experiences, cultural memories, intuitive insights and symbolic narratives.
In that sense, symbolism becomes the bridge that allows those layers to communicate visually.

You began painting only in 2024. What triggered this moment when ideas and observations finally transformed into visual form?

The beginning was completely unexpected.
Painting was probably the last thing I imagined I would ever do. Since childhood I had always expressed creativity through other forms, especially writing. Words were my natural language. Drawing and painting, on the other hand, never seemed to belong to me.
At school my attempts at drawing were often considered unconventional, even “wrong” or simply not good. Eventually I internalized the idea that visual art was not my path. I continued to create in many other ways, but not through

Cecilia Pirt | Eira | 2026

painting.
And yet I always looked at those who could draw or paint with a kind of quiet awe.
I remember once saying, almost jokingly, that maybe in another life I would learn how to draw. Someone replied, “Why not in this life?”
Strangely enough, I cannot remember who said it. And I usually have a very good memory. Sometimes I wonder if it was not a person at all, but something my own unconscious whispered to me long before I was ready to hear it.
Then, in February 2024, something happened.
Out of nowhere I felt an impulse so clear it almost felt like a call. One day I simply said to myself: okay, I’m going to buy canvases and acrylics and see what happens.
There was no plan. No training. No expectation.
Just a sudden inner pull.
That is why I often describe the beginning of my painting journey as a kind of whisper from above. Something subtle but undeniable that invited me to open a door I had never imagined opening.
What started as an intuitive experiment soon became something much deeper.
It was as if a language that had been waiting quietly in the background of my life had finally decided to speak.

Many of your figures feel archetypal, almost mythological. Are they connected to personal experiences, collective memory, or something more intuitive?

They exist at the intersection of all three.
Sometimes a painting begins with a personal emotional landscape, but very quickly the figure expands beyond autobiography and enters a more archetypal territory.
As the process unfolds, she begins to resemble something ancient and symbolic: the warrior, the oracle, the mystic, the rebel, the healer...
At that point the figure no longer belongs exclusively to me. She becomes part of a larger symbolic language connected to collective memory.
Many viewers tell me they feel as if they recognize something in these figures, even when they cannot explain exactly why. That intuitive recognition is what interests me the most.
Also, many of them tell me: "It's you, the painting it's you". Well, in a way it is. The many me are feasting all together.

Color and gesture seem to play a powerful role in your paintings. How do you decide on the emotional rhythm of a piece?

I rarely decide it consciously.
Color arrives almost like a pulse. Certain tones insist, others withdraw. Gesture becomes the breath of the painting, the movement through which emotion travels across the surface.
In many ways the process feels closer to composing music than constructing an image.
The rhythm emerges through contrast, repetition and tension. Each figure seems to guide its own emotional tempo.
There is also a vibrational dimension to the process.
I have always been very sensitive to subtle energies, and that sensitivity inevitably becomes part of the creative language.
Sometimes a painting feels less like an act of control and more like tuning into a certain frequency.
Color, gesture and intuition become a kind of vibrational dialogue.

What do you hope viewers feel or discover when they encounter your work for the first time?

Transformation, even if it happens in a quiet and subtle way.
Whenever we create something, I believe it is important to ask: what purpose am I serving?
For me, art carries the possibility of inspiring, awakening and sometimes even consoling.
I hope that when people encounter my work they experience a moment of resonance, a feeling that something within them has been gently touched or awakened.
Art can sometimes act as a quiet healer.
Not by offering answers, but by reminding us of the richness and complexity of our inner worlds.
If a painting opens even a small interior door, it has already fulfilled its purpose.

As an artist who recently began painting, how do you see your visual language evolving in the coming years?

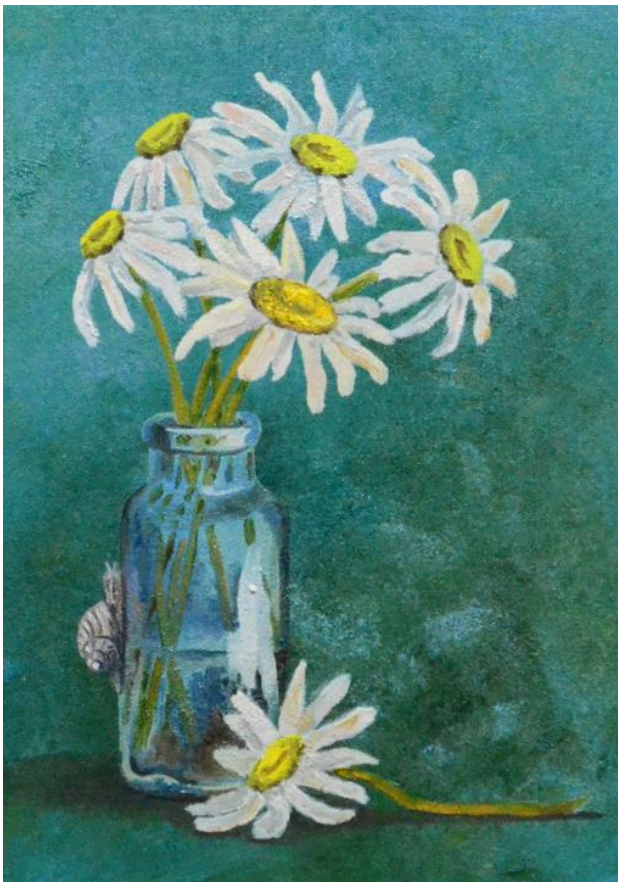
I feel that I am only at the beginning of a much larger narrative universe.
I imagine the fugures inhabiting more complex worlds, interacting with environments, symbols and definitely with each other (that felt sort of natural in the beginning of my art journey, yet).
Storytelling will likely become even more central.
Narrative is the frame that holds everything together. It is where all the fragments of my journey converge: my studies, my readings, my spiritual curiosity and my intuitive exploration.
Each painting becomes both an image and a chapter in an evolving post modern mythology.

Jean-Philippe Lavergne (JPL paintings)
I have always maintained a deep connection with the arts—music, literature, drawing, photography, and painting. My creative journey began with the guitar at the age of eight, leading me to perform in a band for seven years. Music remains an essential part of my life, and I continue to compose regularly in my home studio.
In 2019, a turning point came when painter Stephen Babin introduced me to acrylic painting. What began with a portrait of my dog quickly evolved into a true artistic pursuit under his mentorship. Since then, I have explored a wide range of subjects, from wildlife and portraits to pop culture and landscapes.
Sharing my work online led to growing recognition and numerous commissioned pieces, each one embraced as a creative challenge and an opportunity to refine my craft.
Today, I continue to develop my artistic voice. For me, art is a language—while music was my first, painting has become another powerful way to connect, express, and communicate emotion from my world to yours.

Project Statement
Inspired by culture in all its forms—cinema, music, and literature—I occasionally explore portraits of figures who resonate with me. Curious and observant by nature, I allow inspiration to emerge freely, often leading me toward new and unexpected subjects.
I approach each work with an open mind, seeing it as an opportunity to better understand and connect with my subject. My artistic universe is wide-ranging: from still life and wildlife to vintage objects and iconic films, anything can become a starting point.
Through my paintings, I aim to evoke emotion and create a connection with the viewer. Every brushstroke reflects my passion for life and art, capturing that energy in the details.


REMO
STEVE
HILL

Olga Sahnova



Olga Sahnova | Daisies in a bottle

Can you tell us about your artistic journey and how your early experiences influenced your path as an artist?

My artistic journey began in early childhood — I have been drawing ever since I could hold pencils and markers in my hands. I drew always and everywhere: in sketchbooks and notebooks, and when I ran out of paper, I drew in books, magazines, and even on the wallpaper in the hallway. It was a kind of inner need: I drew everything I saw, everything around me. I believe that these first childhood impressions shaped my way of seeing the world — I learned to notice beauty in everyday life. Sunlight reflections, flowers and trees, books, cups — everything created by nature and human hands evokes in me a sense of admiration, beauty, and harmony.

Although you received a technical education, you continued to pursue art. How did this dual path shape your creative vision?

Olga Sahnova | Blue dress

Yes, my main education is technical. As a child, when my parents realized that I was constantly drawing and organizing "home exhibitions" (I would hang my drawings on the walls of the corridor and living room), they sent me to art school. However, I had to enroll in a technical university, as in a family of engineers, other options were not even considered. I believe that higher education gave me a lot: discipline, attention to detail, and structure — all of which greatly help in working with composition and color. I realized that art is not only inspiration but also work and constant self-improvement. That is why in my works I pay great attention to realism and detail, while also trying to convey mood, atmosphere, and a kind of romance hidden in everyday life.

Your works often focus on everyday objects and quiet moments. What draws you to these subjects?

Oh yes, I truly love depicting simple household objects and modest landscapes of my homeland. What attracts me is their simplicity and authenticity. Ordinary things — a cup, a book, an apple on the table, an old chair, or a broom in the corner — hold traces of time, the stories of people who used them, and their energy. When I paint a still life, I try to capture and convey the beauty and harmony of each object. Landscapes with everyday views of my city, region, or places I travel to also resonate with me, and I want viewers to feel that same harmony, comfort, and beauty in these moments.

You mention that even the simplest object can tell a

Olga Sahnova | Flowering branch | 2025

story. How do you approach storytelling in your still lifes?

Creating a narrative for a still life is almost a ritual that combines observation, intuition, and reflection. It all begins with choosing objects: an old book with yellowed pages, a ceramic cup, a dress carelessly thrown over a chair — all of them are characters with their own stories. I imagine who drank from that cup and why it has a chip, where those apples came from, or who read that book and why they marked certain pages. It is incredibly fascinating to uncover the story behind each object! This is how an inner narrative is born — not always obvious, but I believe that within the simplicity and sincerity of everyday subjects lies a special power: to remind us of the beauty and significance of every moment in life. And that is something to cherish.

How would you describe your interpretation of romantic realism in your work?

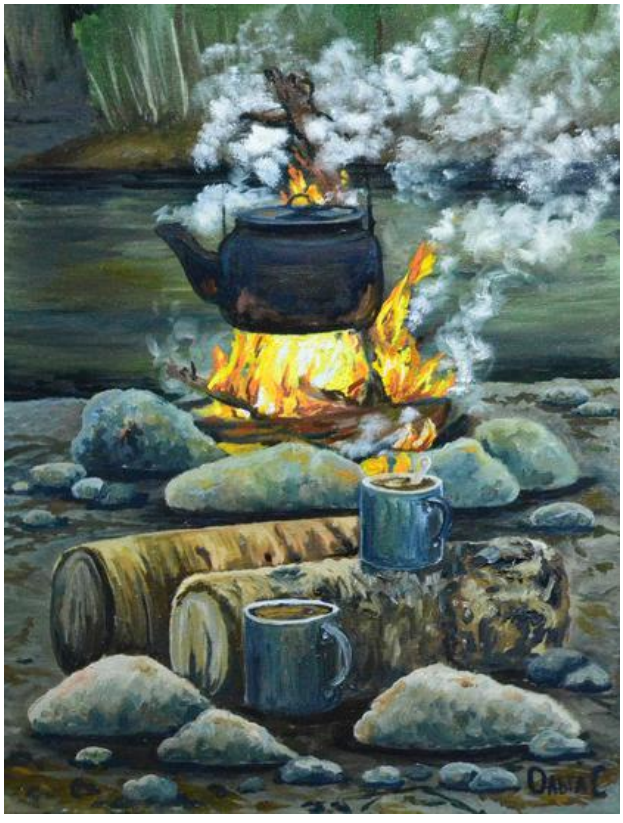
Romantic realism for me is not just the name of my style — it is a way of seeing and expressing the world, where rough, sometimes harsh reality intertwines with romance, positivity, and the beauty of everyday life. It is an attempt to show not only what we see but also what we feel. The foundation of my approach is realism: I pay great attention to details, form, light and shadow, and texture. It is important that the viewer believes in the materiality of the depicted world. The romantic aspect of my work lies in how I convey atmosphere, mood, and emotional impression. Romantic realism becomes a balance between precision and feeling — an attempt to see the extraordinary in the ordinary, to tell a story through simple things, and to capture and preserve the beauty of a fleeting moment.

How do you balance commissioned work with your personal artistic projects?

Balancing commissioned work and personal projects is always a search for harmony between discipline and freedom. Commissioned work requires precision, meeting deadlines, and considering the client's wishes. This experience keeps me sharp, develops my technical skills, and teaches me how to communicate with different people. Personal projects, on the other hand, are about freedom — time for reflection, experimentation, and learning. That is why after completing commissioned work, I always dedicate time to my own projects. Sometimes ideas for personal paintings are born during commissioned work, and one naturally flows into the other.

What do you hope viewers feel or reflect on when they look at your paintings?

I want viewers to awaken memories and associations connected with simple yet meaningful things: the warmth of home comfort, the scent of flowers and fruits, light playing on the wall, the quiet rustle of river waves, or the noise of city streets. Let my paintings become a повод for someone to recall something personal — childhood, loved ones, or places where they felt happy. If my works bring a smile or simply make someone pause and look a little longer, then I have succeeded in conveying what matters to me — the beauty and harmony of everyday life.



Olga Sahnova | Tea while camping | 2025

Apollinaria

I am an artist originally from Syktyvkar, Republic of Komi, Russia. Over the years, I have gained substantial experience in the creative field. My artistic education began at an art school, where I took part in numerous creative competitions. My works attracted attention not only in Russia, but also in countries such as Japan, Sweden, Bulgaria, and Finland.

In 2014, I moved to Saint Petersburg, where I earned a Master's degree from the Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia, Faculty of Fine Arts. I currently work as a professional teacher, conducting classes in painting and drawing.

From 2023 to 2024, I was a participant in the art residency "Mauvais Ton".

In December 2023, I took part in exhibitions such as the pop-up exhibition ENCHANTE.

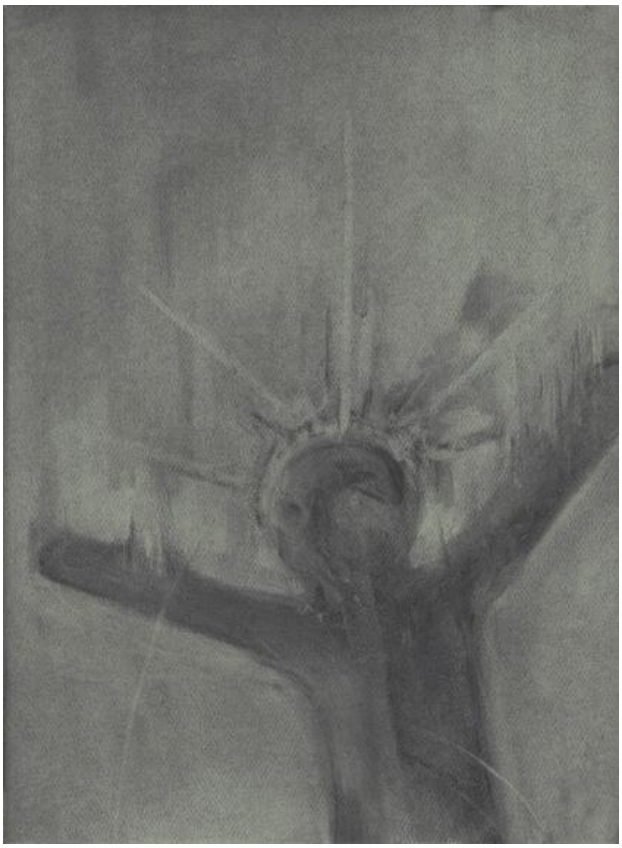
In April 2024, my solo exhibition "Evening Moments: Life After Work" was held at Mauvais Ton.

In 2025, I participated in the "Paper Fest" festival in Vologda.

In 2026, I took part in the exhibition "Wet Floor" in Saint Petersburg.

David Bipolo

Your series "Il revient! Bi so yang!" ("He is coming back") reflects on the religious hysteria surrounding the idea of the parousia. What initially compelled you to respond to this phenomenon through art?

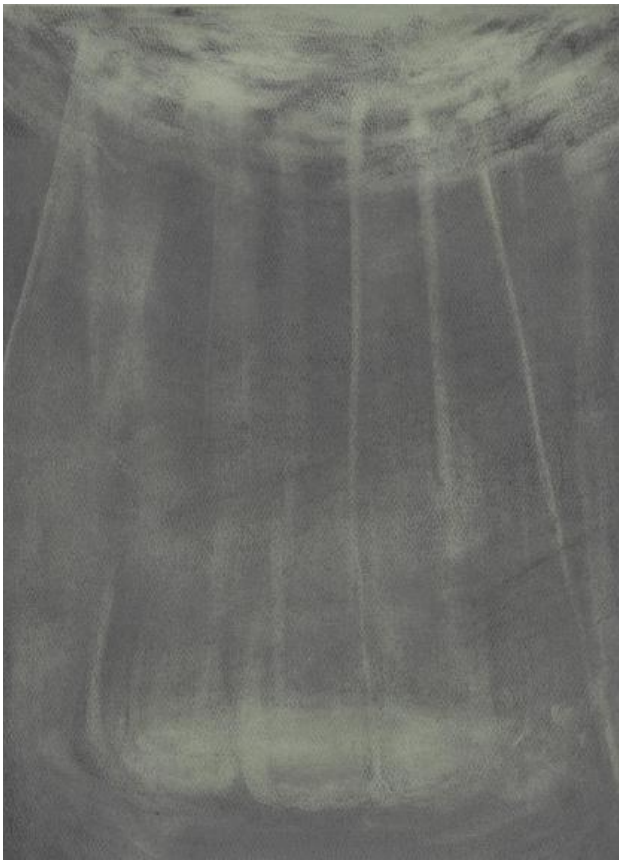


David Bipolo | Il revient! Bi so yang! | 2025

It is the impact of media in an interconnected world. I saw the repetition in the phenomenon, understood the history, and couldn't stop thinking about it. It wasn't just another trend on social media for the pleasure of consumption and recognition. The hysteria and the fear were tangible for the victims of the mystification. The craziness was seen online, but the consequences were real. In a way, I related to this crowd's feeling of abandonment.
Drawing is the only way right now I have found to project something that is not explainable.

Many of the works appear almost ghost-like or blurred, as if emerging from memory or mist. How does this visual atmosphere relate to the idea of collective psychosis or prophetic anticipation?

It is a transition. A blurred object is a thing between the visible and invisible. Anticipation is also a transitional state. Good creation can be found in those "in between."
These people were living in a different reality, a truer one in their perspective. A crisis, a faith crisis, was seen through our screens. Faith is also



David Bipolo | Il revient! Bi so yang! | 2025

something that lives in the "in between." That is what I'm trying to illustrate: this state of being, being at the junction.

Why did you choose graphite and charcoal as the primary medium for this series? What expressive possibilities do these materials give you when dealing with themes of belief, hysteria, and uncertainty?

Accessibility and simplicity. I wanted something that is quick to reach and that can let me move freely. The lightness of those items is also useful for me right now. It's a physical thing. It also limits my tools, which is paradoxically freeing.

Your imagery includes references that may evoke religious iconography and figures of salvation. Were you inspired by any specific historical or cultural visual traditions while developing this series?

I was raised by two Gabonese and Christian parents that work in critical history and education, for the short answer.
For the long answer, talk to my mother. Hi, Ama!

You describe faith as something that operates between sensitivity, madness, and lies. How do you personally position yourself between belief, skepticism, and observation as an artist?

In the belief part, made from dust part. Jesus, if you didn't get it. But yeah, faith is hard, faith is real. We all need faith, to believe in something, especially in times of change. Skepticism is also necessary. You cannot get answers without questions.
As an artist, I don't think too much about finding a deeper meaning in the process. Creation is already metaphysical enough.

Having grown up between Gabon and Canada, do you feel that your cultural background influences how you perceive religious narratives and collective belief systems?

Yeah, it is a foundational aspect of the work. Again, it is living in the intersection. It makes you question your experiences and interrogate your stature in hectic spaces. It puts in front of you the fears, the falls, the feelings. To migrate, man, it's a heavy let go. Faith stays, the manifestation of it does change, every day, every time.

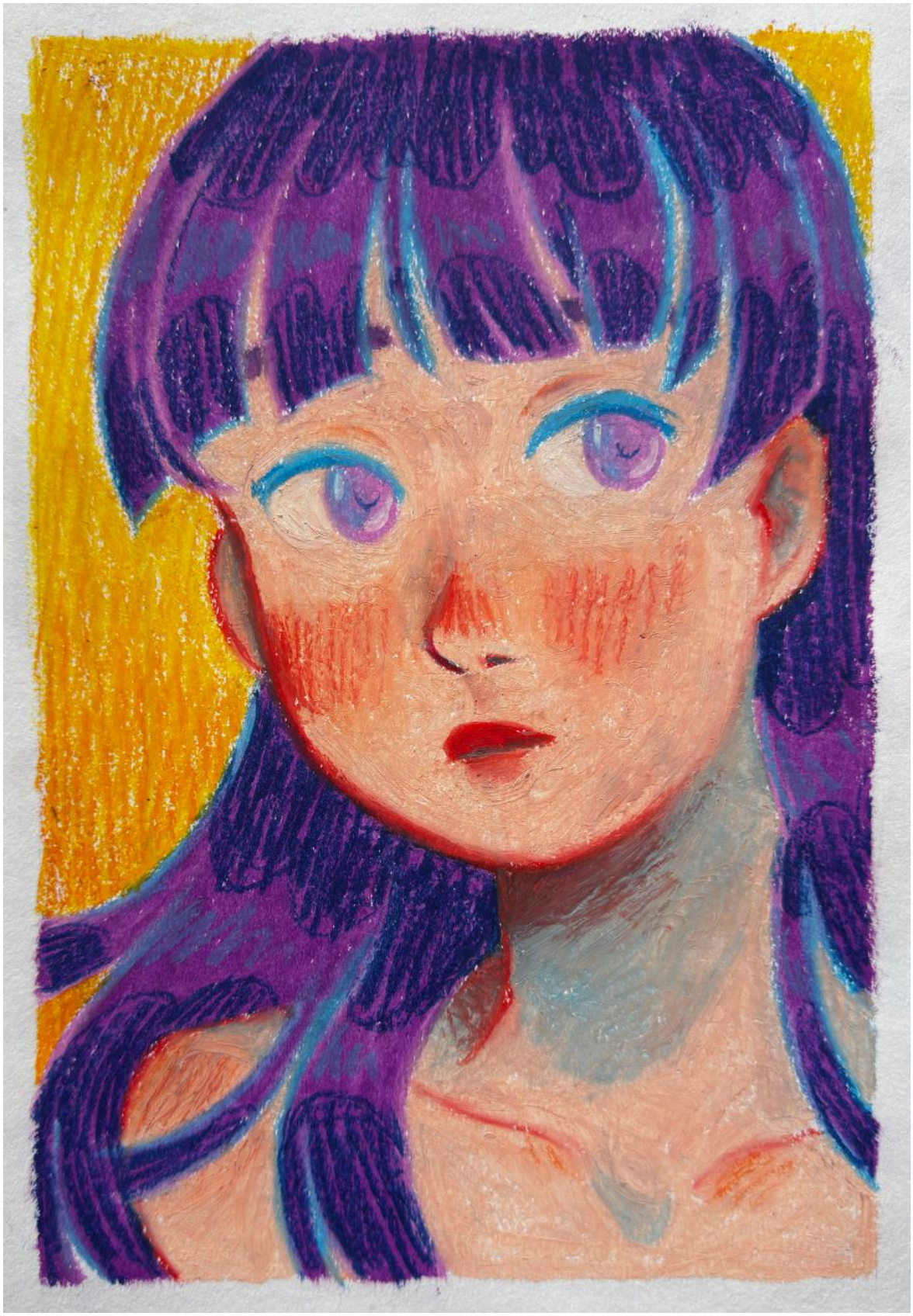
What kind of emotional or intellectual response do you hope viewers experience when encountering this series?

That they be intrigued, maybe perplexed.

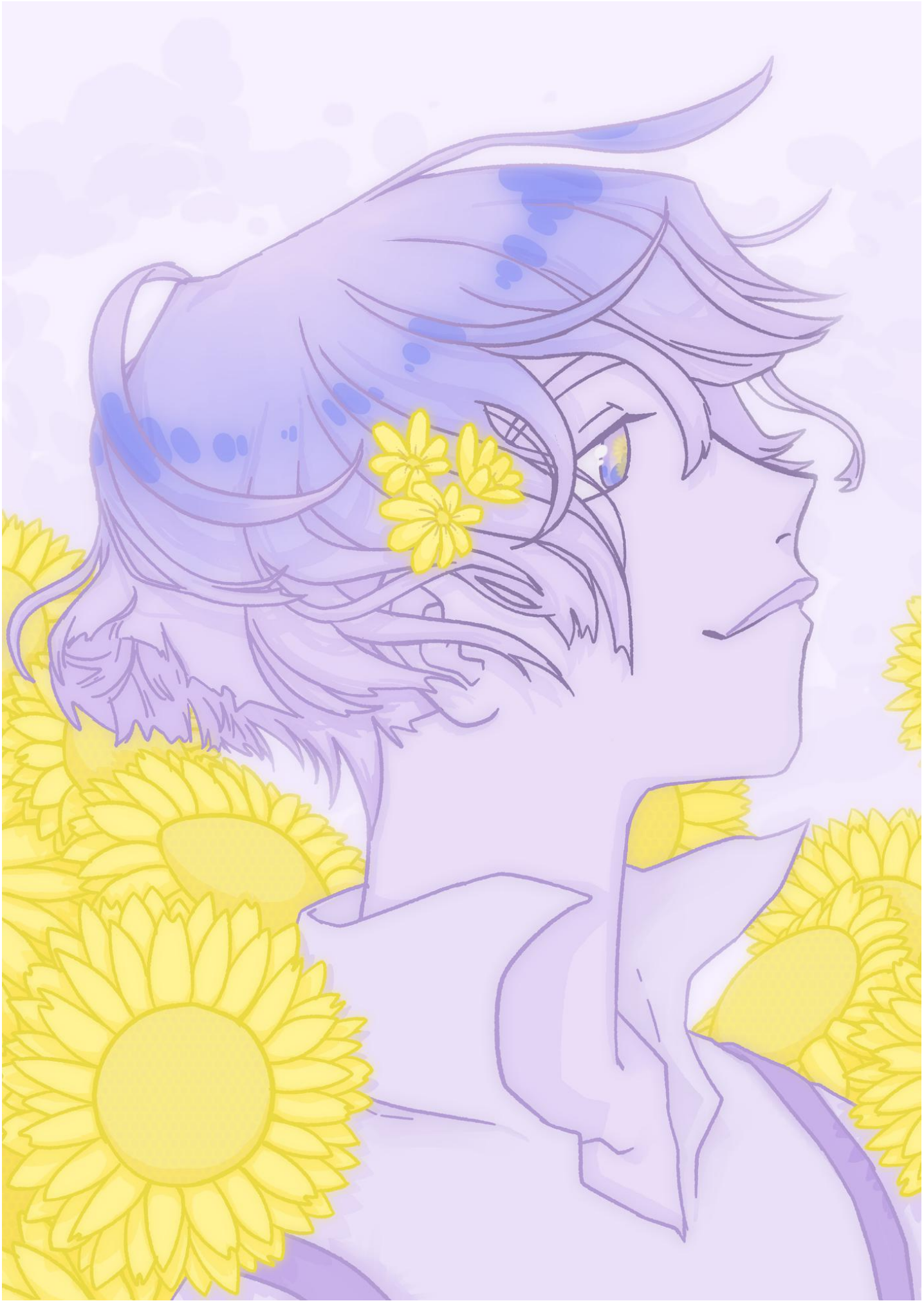
David Bipolo | Il revient! Bi so yang! | 2025

Auguste Terry (he/they) is an 18 year old Franco-Chinese artist from Singapore, currently studying 2D and 3D animation in Montréal.

Project Statement
The world is made up of an infinite amount of details, set into movement by time. In my art, I try to capture moments slowed to a stop by observation, the split second before breathing out.

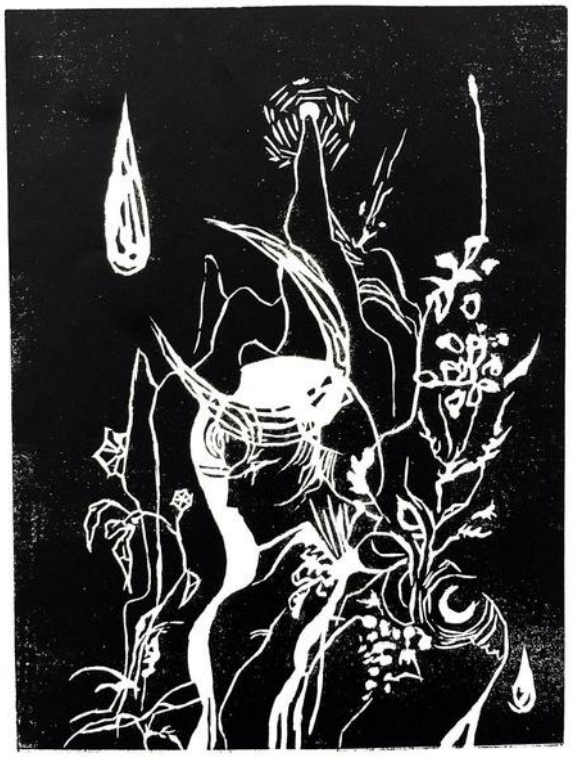


Auguste Terry | Glow | 2025



Auguste Terry | Summer Breeze | 2023

Ruqing Yan



Ruqing Yan | Mute | 2025

I first became aware of this fracture in elementary school, when we were asked to begin writing essays. I realized that my own thoughts and interests were not valued under a meritocratic lens, so I began experimenting with indirect forms of expression: acrostic poems and small, stream-of-consciousness stories.
They recorded only the most ordinary details of life, or fleeting thoughts, yet through careful linguistic packaging, people would accept and even praise them without knowing their actual meanings. Precisely because only I could decode them, I was able to preserve a private space for my inner world.
This early engagement with selecting and playing with language, imagery, and metaphor led my later visual practice toward a similar sense of indirection. From there, I developed an interest in folk art and symbolism. They established a consistent tone in my work: I select available symbols and elements, transform and reconfigure them, and begin to tell my own stories while leaving space for interpretation.

Your work often explores the tension between private expression and socially accepted forms of language. When did you first become aware of this fracture, and how has it shaped your artistic practice?

Ruqing Yan | Recording a birth of a sun | 2025

Many of your works feature recurring motifs such as birds, organic forms, or fragmented bodies. How do these symbols evolve over time within your personal lexicon?

While receiving a modern (or perhaps more precisely, Western and academic) art education, I have also continuously felt the force of so-called “primitive” and folk art, and have been deeply nourished by them.
These forms of expression often carry an animistic sensibility, emphasizing connections between humans and nature, and between the inner self and the external world. I often feel that the world itself resembles a river that contains everything: that at the end of life and the self, all things become interconnected.
Through references to folk and so-called primitive art, as well as the internalization of my personal philosophy, I frequently depict images of overlapping and transforming bodies and entities. Humans may become animals; animals may emerge

Ruqing Yan | Living Funeral | 2026

from trees or stones.
Birds, with their lightness, function as symbols of liberation. They escape from bodies that are melting, dissolving, or fragmenting, leaving their containers behind and moving toward another side of the world, or another page of the story.

Your compositions often feel suspended—neither fully resolved nor entirely chaotic. How do you approach creating this balance between control and openness?

I tend to follow the flow of the image. Earlier in my practice, I preferred clear boundaries and defined forms, hoping to make narratives more visible. Now, I choose to retain a degree of ambiguity through intentional blank space, intuitive color balancing, and allowing chosen imagery to undergo further transformation and abstraction.
I have received feedback that viewers can see their own imagined figures and narratives within my work, so my work in this case is almost like a Rorschach test. This is indeed the result I hope for. I want viewers to have the freedom to interpret while engaging with my narratives.

How have your experiences moving between northern China and New York influenced your relationship with visual language and meaning?

When I was in China, I often felt that because we possess such an extensive history and an overwhelmingly rich cultural heritage, we can become overly proud of what already exists, while rarely approaching it with a renewed perspective. This makes it difficult to merge or generate new visual languages. I deeply love the art and culture of my homeland, whose beauty lies in its depth. The beauty of New York, in contrast, lies in its breadth: chaotic, inclusive, and astonishing.
After coming to New York, I began thinking about how to "forget" certain ingrained knowledge and assumptions. I also started experimenting with nonlinear, collage-like narratives in my work.
Although I primarily work in 2D now, I have previously explored a wide range of materials and techniques, like woodworking, metal welding, ceramics, weaving. The possibilities of combination excite me. The richness of New York continues to create aftershocks in my practice. I am still learning to sense and respond to these ongoing waves.

Your work references religious and folk imagery. Are these references intuitive, or do you actively research and reinterpret specific traditions?

I tend to actively research and re-examine the religious knowledge I encounter. Religious stories and traditions often carry didactic purposes, but I am more fascinated by the tensions within the narratives themselves, as well as the space they allow for reinterpretation.
Hermann Hesse's Siddhartha and Marguerite Yourcenar's Kali Decapitated have been particularly inspiring to me.
In my recent work, I came across the idea in Buddhist culture that peacocks are considered sacred birds because they consume poisonous creatures, transforming toxicity into the richness of their plumage. I reinterpret this as a kind of predicament: the peacock becomes bound by its own beauty, compelled to continually ingest poison.
Beauty turns into an obligation, even a shackle. If it ceases this act and loses its beauty, it also loses its identity and becomes an ordinary bird. This reinterpretation reflects my ongoing interest in shifting identities and conceptual transformation.

In some of your pieces, the body appears fragmented, transformed, or merged with other elements. What role does the body play in your symbolic system?

The body, especially the human body, functions as a container in my symbolic language. It often represents manipulation, loss of autonomy, and constraint. As a result, it appears incomplete, sometimes requiring rupture in order to be reconstructed in other forms.
I see the human body as a limitation, something that restricts the freedom of thought and spirit. In my work, I often construct a contrast between the illusory body (the human form) and the "true" soul, which may take the shape of animals, flowing colors, or shifting elements.

How does your approach differ when working in drawing versus printmaking? Do these mediums allow different types of "language" to emerge?

Painting requires more patience from me, and also a greater degree of self-compassion. Working on canvas involves significant labor. I usually build my own canvases, so the preparation itself takes time. I also use water-based media, including gouache, to achieve subtle grain and gradients, which makes layering and correction more difficult compared to oil or acrylic painting.
Each painting feels like a ritual. I prepare offerings (canvas, pigments, digital drafts, my full attention) and hope for a desired outcome.
Printmaking, on the other hand, feels much more relaxed. It offers me the possibility of starting over, and within its reproducibility, I find a certain sense of release. I experiment with different papers, ink colors, and layered compositions. New possibilities constantly emerge, which excites me.
In terms of "language," I feel that my paintings tend to present more complete and continuous narratives. Each work is like an open door into a story. In printmaking, however, I am still exploring its potential, and tend toward more fragmentary and symbolic expressions: a birdcage, a tiger, a collapsing castle. These feel like close-ups of specific elements within a larger story. I present them, but do not explain them.

Antoine Marelle is a multidisciplinary artist whose work revolves around photography, painting, and printmaking. A graduate of the Rouen School of Fine Arts, he now lives and works in Meung-sur-Loire, where he develops an aesthetic exploration centered on form and matter.
His practice explores the tension between presence and erasure, seeking to capture the trace of passing time. Through compositions often marked by a profound chiaroscuro, he transforms organic elements or abandoned places into veritable visual sculptures.
Whether depicting flowers frozen in cold light or interiors laden with silent stories, his works navigate between realism and symbolism. Through digital manipulation and the interplay of textures, he invites the viewer to introspect on the fragility and persistence of memory.
His work, distinguished by an unconventional approach to lighting, has already captivated numerous collectors. This recognition underlines the uniqueness of his vision, capable of revealing the melancholic beauty of the ephemeral.

Project Statement
My work explores the resilience of form in the face of the erosion of time, seeking to capture the moment when organic matter and pure light unite to transform the ephemeral into an eternal icon.

Antoine Marelle | The Chosen One | 2026

Antoine Marelle | The Throne of Silence | 2026

Welmoed Boersma

Your work feels deeply rooted in observation. How do you choose the moments or subjects that are worth capturing?

I observe my surroundings in order to understand them better. I find it interesting to look at why a shadow falls the way it does, or why my reflection is more visible in one window than in another. I also enjoy watching animals doing their own thing, without being distracted by people. A cat grooming itself and suddenly startled by a sound, or a crow dropping a nut from a tree to break it. I've noticed that I'm often easily distracted by the things around me, and I've learned to embrace that. When something distracts me, it means I find it interesting, and I often take a photo of it. This does mean that I frequently stop when I'm on my way somewhere, and that I'm sometimes late for work. But I think it's a shame to let these moments pass without taking them in. I like to give them the attention they deserve by incorporating them into my illustrations.

Welmoed Boersma | Panther Chameleon | 2025

Many of your artworks depict animals in quiet, almost intimate settings. What draws you to these creatures, and how do you approach portraying them?

In my work, I focus on the animal. I try to capture its nature and personality. I want to portray the arrogant gaze of a seagull or the stubborn expression of a cat. I try to make sure the animal looks at me when I take a photo, so that the viewer of the resulting work feels more connected to it. I usually depict the animal in a human-made environment. For example, a mandrill in a zoo or a cat on a chair. I find the way animals navigate life in the human world very interesting. It creates a contrast between humans and nature. It can also feel uncomfortable—, ou might feel sorry that animals have to live in the human world. Observing and communicating with animals also gives me a sense of calm. It is free from social expectations.

There is a strong sense of stillness and atmosphere in your illustrations. How do you create this emotional tone?

The atmosphere that often emerges in my work is not intentional, it just happens. I think it comes from the fact that I'm not very fond of busyness. I'm quite a calm person (on the outside, not on the inside), and I enjoy quiet environments. This is reflected in my work. I choose calm reference photos, or I filter out the busyness. The emotional tone, however, is something I do choose consciously. In my work, it's often important how the animals feel about being observed. This often brings out a kind of vulnerability. With that vulnerability, I want to create a stronger connection between the viewer and the animal. I want them to reflect on their impact on the

Welmoed Boersma | Mandril | 2024

animal's life.

How important is your immediate environment in shaping your work? Do you actively seek inspiration, or does it come naturally through observation?

I like to use references from my immediate surroundings. When I see something that appeals to me, I take a photo and save it for when I need inspiration. By using my own photos as references, each work is also tied to a memory. This gives me more enjoyment in the process. Most of these moments simply occur while I'm walking down the street, but sometimes I deliberately seek them out. For example, I was in Edinburgh a while ago, and I set myself the goal of photographing every seagull I saw. The photos didn't have to be good, as long as the seagull was recognizable. I chose this because I found the contrast between the seagull and its urban surroundings interesting. On another trip, to Prague and Vienna, I searched for beautiful windows in which I could see my reflection. In that way, I captured the architecture of the city while simultaneously creating self-portraits. When I don't have inspiration for these kinds of projects, I return to focusing on the small things in my environment.

In your artist statement, you mention love and appreciation as key drivers. How do these feelings translate into your visual language?

I use my work as a way to better understand an animal. I believe it's important that an animal is seen and appreciated for what it is, not for what you want it to be. My love for animals draws me toward them again and again. I appreciate them in their small moments, when a cat catches a scent in the wind or when a jackdaw picks up a crumb. Often, it's the animals that go unnoticed by most people that appeal to me the most, such as the different birds you encounter in everyday life. I like to give them the attention and appreciation I believe they deserve.

Do you see your work as storytelling, or more as capturing a moment or sensation?

Primarily, I capture a moment in my work, but you can also see the story surrounding it. The story lies in the atmosphere and meaning of the work, more in some pieces than in others. An example of this is the work "Human" (or "Mens" in Dutch). This piece evokes a sense of confusion. You might wonder why the human is inside the terrarium. Did she end up there by accident? Does she enjoy being there? I could create an entire story around it if I chose to. Capturing a moment is, of course, a snapshot, but something happened before and after that moment as well. When I capture a moment, those surrounding moments are inherently part of it.

What would you like viewers to feel or reflect on when they look at your illustrations?

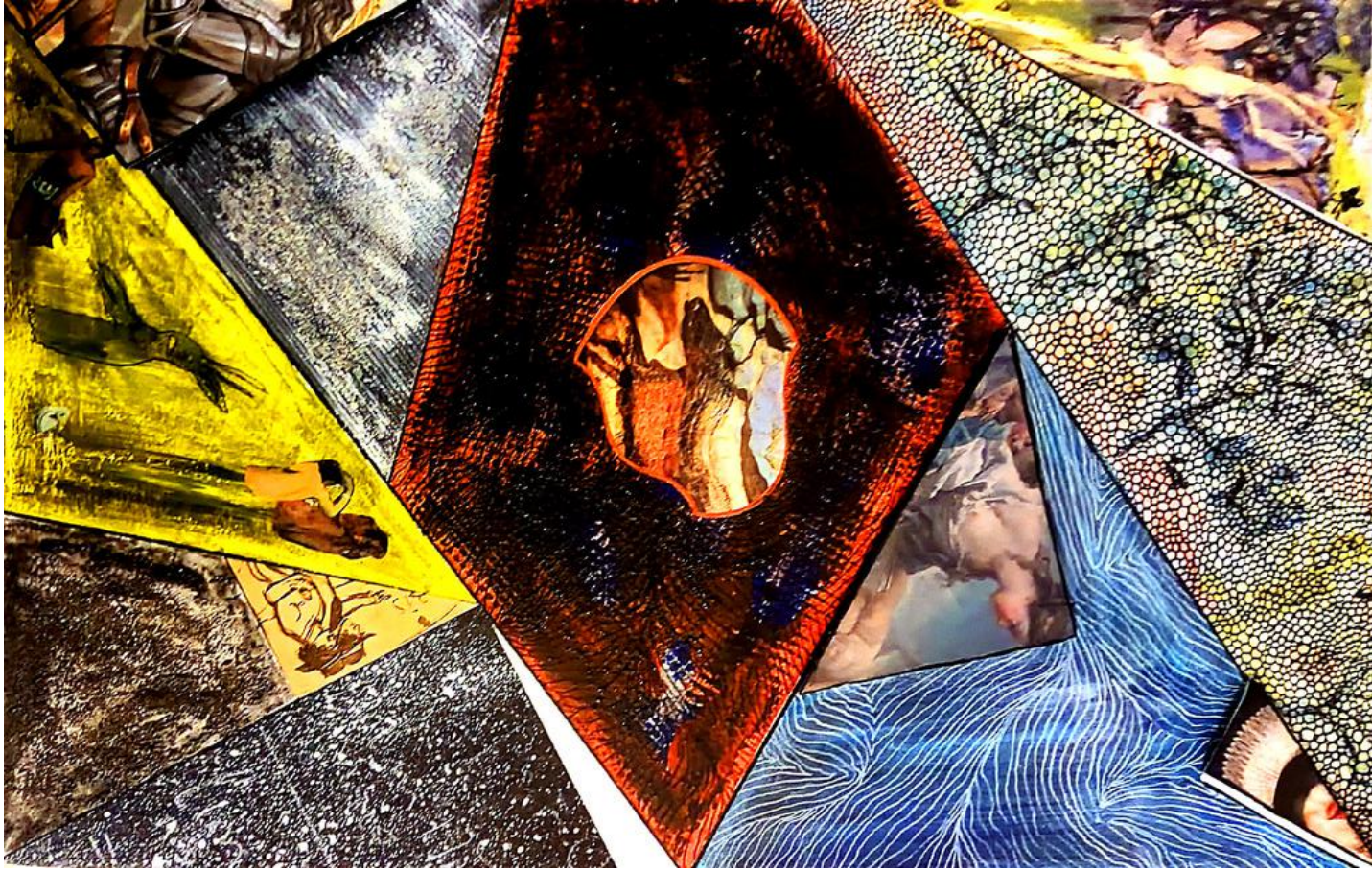
I would like my work to spark curiosity and encourage viewers to think. In my animal-focused work, I want viewers to reflect on the role they play in the lives of animals. I want them to think about how they perceive animals and how they treat them. Animals have just as much right to a good life as we do, but what that means is different for them than it is for us. People often find it difficult to imagine that animals function differently than humans. For example, they might think a monkey feels connected to them when it looks at them, while it may actually experience that as threatening. I want people to realize how strange it is that we consider pigeons to be pests, or that we keep chameleons in terrariums. My animal work is an invitation to look at the animals around you with more appreciation. At the same time, a large part of my work is also simply meant to be beautiful and to decorate your wall.

Welmoed Boersma | Mens (human) | 2025

A contemporary artist originally from Tunisia, **Jihene Bouden** develops a constantly evolving artistic practice, rooted in an experimental and sensitive exploration of image, material, and the imagination. Through collage, scribbling, and sculpture, she explores the interactions between forms, materials, and emotions. Her work places central importance on the spontaneity of gesture and freedom of expression, giving rise to compositions where intuition engages in a dialogue with matter.

Project Statement
Wrecks of the Mind is a triptych created using collage and mixed media techniques, combining fragments of images, acrylic paint, sand, and graphic intervention.
The work explores the layers of memory, imagination, and emotions through a fragmented composition where images meet, overlap, and transform. Each section acts as a mental territory where figures, textures, and symbolic landscapes intersect.
The spontaneity of the gesture and the intuitive assembly of fragments play a central role in the creative process, allowing the work to construct itself as an inner cartography. Through this triptych, the artist explores the traces left by human experience, these "wrecks" of thoughts, memories, and sensations that drift through the mind.

Jihene Bouden | Wrecks of the Mind | 2025



Jihene Bouden | Wrecks of the Mind | 2025

Jihene Bouden | Wrecks of the Mind | 2025

Mariola Szreiber-Zdziebłowska

Your work is described as a "victory over emptiness." What does emptiness mean to you, and how does art help you overcome it?

Emptiness was a state I inhabited after loss – after the death of my daughter, the suicide of my husband, and falling into the darkness of depression. At that moment, I was invisible to the world and to myself. Picking up a camera became the turning point. This passion filled the void, becoming my salvation. Today, that space is no longer empty; it is filled with creation, which has become the material cementing the cracks in my soul.

With whom or what do you conduct a dialogue when you create?

I conduct a dialogue with myself – with the woman who once didn't have the strength to get out of bed. My works are a letter and a manifesto of hope. Using my own example, I want to show that returning to the light is possible, but it requires setting a goal. This goal becomes the engine that pulls you upward when you lose your footing. I create to release emotions, but also so that others can see that it is possible to emerge from the deepest darkness back into life.

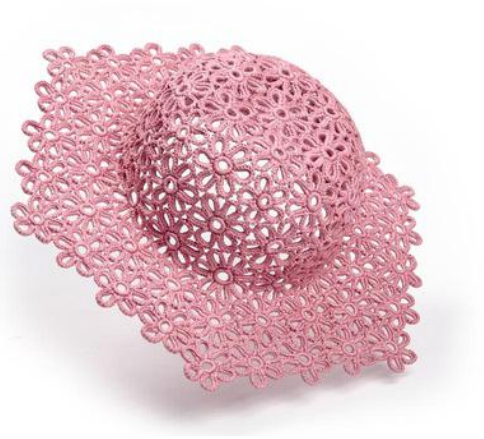
The idea of transforming hardness into fragility is very strong. How does this transformation manifest in your artistic practice?

This is most evident in my works featuring concrete. Concrete represents the hardness of the fear and blockages we carry within us. Breaking through this layer is painful and requires immense strength, but it is worth it. On the other side of that concrete, freedom awaits. My art documents the moment when what is hard and impenetrable cracks, revealing a fragile, saved soul that has dared to burn with its own light once again.

Texture and layering: how do visual materials or surfaces contribute to the conceptual depth of your work?

The layers in my work reflect the complexity of human experience – what is on the outside (the mask) and what lies beneath (the truth). The texture of concrete or peeling skin symbolizes the process of "shedding" what once limited us. By materializing these feelings in an image, I give them a tangible form, which helps me – and I hope, my viewers – understand the process of internal transformation.

Alla V. Kolpakova



Your work combines crochet techniques with mathematical principles. How did this intersection between craft and mathematics develop in your practice?

Crocheting has been my passion since childhood. What attracted me to this technique is that it allows you to create absolutely any idea that comes to mind, whether it's a flat pattern for clothing or a three-dimensional flower for decoration. Crochet itself requires mathematical calculation. It's comparable to a person's handwriting—the result depends on how tightly or loosely you crochet, whether your stitches are higher or lower. Even a simple circular pattern needs to be adjusted and tailored to your own hand because for one person the result may form a cone, while for another the edge may ripple. And if the pattern is more complex, adding or subtracting a few stitches may not be enough.

You mention three approaches in your work - problem solving, shifting perspective, and combining ideas. How do these methods interact when you create a new piece?

Using a combination of these methods in my creative process led me to the creation of mathematical art. Mathematical art is an interdisciplinary field that involves an approach combining ideas from different areas. I didn't like the large gaps between flowers in the classic symmetrical way of joining motifs, so to solve this problem, I rotate one flower by 30 degrees and connect it asymmetrically, which is a form of shifting perspective. I also use combinations of 5-, 6-, and 7-petaled motifs to achieve a specific shape for the object. The exhibition "World in Lace" represents something intermediate between the Eastern Islimi ornament and the English Tudor architectural style.

Many of your works explore circular symmetry and 3D forms. What fascinates you about transforming flat patterns into spatial objects?

2D art is beautiful—you can look at it and immerse yourself in it endlessly. When I find a painting I like, I want to jump inside it and become part of it. Objects with complex shapes evoke a desire to have a different experience; you want to touch them, hold them, play with them. My first idea came while creating a

garment. I didn't like that there was no dart, so instead of a six-petaled flower, I inserted a five-petaled one, which created a slightly conical shape for a women's dress in the bust area. The fitted garment looked much more interesting than a straight cut; it invited you to touch it and put it on.

Growing up in Kazakhstan, you were inspired by wildflowers and traditional ornamentation. How do these early visual memories influence your current work?

In childhood, we traveled a lot through Central Asia. Ornamentation is everywhere, but the architecture of Uzbekistan, especially the girih patterns, made a special impression on me. Later, in school, I realized that every angle of this design is constructed with geometric precision, and even where the pattern seems chaotic, there is a certain mathematical sequence that is not immediately visible. As I studied school subjects, it became clear that everything in living nature follows certain patterns and has a complex structure. Examples of structuring rules include fractals and Stephen Wolfram's Rule 30. Steppe flowers and shrubs in Kazakhstan are somewhat more subtle and graceful compared to forest flowers and trees. They have thin leaves and stems, weightless flowers. Such flowers harmoniously fit into mathematical forms.

Your pieces often resemble delicate organic structures, almost like living forms. Do you see your work as closer to nature, mathematics, or something in between?

Eastern ornaments developed in several directions: one is the plant-based Islimi, known in European countries as arabesque; another is geometric girih; and the third is the written Kufic/calligraphic style. My art is an attempt to unite geometric and plant styles into a single whole. You can add asymmetry to motifs, making them not perfectly symmetrical or slightly irregular, following the principle of "Pythagoras' wind-blown tree." This makes the composition rhythmic and adds naturalness to the structure.

Can you describe your process when developing a new pattern? Do you begin with a mathematical idea, or does it emerge intuitively through making?

I see intuition more as the ability to quickly analyze information and relate it to existing experience, rather than as a gift of foresight or a sixth sense. In my case, it's quite straightforward. I rely on knowledge and existing experience and, out of curiosity, try to create more complex objects or structures. I experiment while simultaneously studying and discovering new properties. If I like the result of the experiment, I then use it as existing knowledge to create a new, more complex work.

Do you see your work as functional objects, sculptural pieces, or conceptual explorations - or all at once?

Initially, it is a concept, and time will show what form it will take. I already have experience creating clothing; now I am creating art. But I also see the possibility of creating interior objects and architectural elements. Perhaps this will require knowledge of visualization software. At the moment, I design objects in my head, so to speak, using an analog method.

Corinna Schilling is a self-taught artist based in Ulm, Germany, whose creative journey began at an early age. Growing up in a family where talent and passion for art were ever-present, she developed a natural sensitivity to visual expression and a deep appreciation for drawing as a personal and emotional language. What started as a childhood fascination gradually evolved into a lifelong artistic pursuit shaped by curiosity, observation, and dedication to her craft.
Working primarily with graphite and colored pencils, Corinna creates intimate and expressive drawings that focus on the human presence—most often the face. She uses color accents to guide the viewer's attention and reveal the individuality of her subjects. Her inspiration comes from people themselves: their expressions, stories, and the quiet moments that make each face unique.
Through patience, careful observation, and a genuine connection to her subjects, Corinna Schilling's work captures both realism and feeling. Her drawings invite viewers to pause, look closely, and discover the emotion behind each line, reflecting an artist whose passion continues to grow with every portrait she creates.

Project Statement
Hel (2024) - The art work is based on a portrait of a girl dressed up as Hel, the nordic godess of death. Hel is usually depicted as half alive, half dead. The alive half of Hel's face is the face of a young woman, crowned with a lively, colorful crown of fresh flowers and leafs. Whereas her other half, which is facing away from the viewer, shows her more dark side, depicted as skull with dull, withering flowers on top of her head. The dedication for the dress-up as well as the contrast between life and death, vivid color and monotonous wilting seen in the flowers and the face, made me draw this art work.
The White Rose (2026) - The painting is a portrait of the young German opportunist Sophie Scholl. Sophie Scholl died of young age under the German nazi regime during the Third Reich. Together with her brother she was part of the students' resistance group "The White Rose". Sophie and the White Rose displayed the crimes of the government and called the public to resist with the infamous flyers they spread in their university and in their hometowns. Stunned by her story, I chose to dedicate to her my time and passion. I chose to depict wild roses, rather than common ones in the art work, to emphasize Sophie's young and rebelous spirit. The quote reads: "Ich würde es genauso wieder machen." According to historians, a sentence Sophie Scholl said during the days of her trial.
Cat's in the cradle (2025) - This drawing captures the quiet intensity of a first meeting: a newborn son resting in his father's hands. I wanted to preserve the tenderness and vulnerability of this intimate moment—the beginning of a lifelong bond and the first memory held still in an image. Because of the emotional weight of the subject, I felt a strong pressure to render the scene with care, honesty, and gentleness.
All pieces are graphite pencil and colored pencil on paper (240 x340 mm)

Corinna Schilling | Cat's in the Cradle | 2026

Corinna Schilling | Hel | 2024

Corinna Schilling | The White Rose | 2026

Zeynep Altın

I always painted bodies, always abstract in a caricature form and always with tons of colours. It was almost a compulsion. My first idea for a painting came from this doodle I made while I was in an English class in middle school, it was a distorted face of a traveller and I liked it so much that I just kept doing more but I'm not exactly sure where that interest for these distorted figures came from, maybe from all the magazines and cartoons I consumed. The idea to combine the vegetation with body didn't come to me until a few years ago. I think at the time I was a bit concerned with showing my paintings to some of my relatives because one of my aunts told me that I should be painting landscapes instead of ugly, disfigured bodies but then I was thinking actually a lot of things in the nature look like parts of bodies so why not make the body the landscape instead.

Your paintings combine the human body with flowers, vegetables, and other natural forms. When did this visual language first appear in your work?

Zeynep Altın | Flower Head | 2023

You mention that caricature magazines from your childhood influenced you. How did humor and satire shape the way you see the human body in your paintings?

Türkiye has always felt a bit chaotic to me, both politically and socially but we all loved those caricature magazines (Penguen and Uykusuz were the most popular in my time) because they always softened the harsh realities of life, made them more digestible and the disfigurement of the bodies were always the part of humour. Stuff like popped out eyes, noses as large as the heads, etc. were the part that made the joke funnier for me. Emphasizing certain body parts to embellish the humour was what were the comedians doing and I think I subconsciously used it in my own expression.

Many of your figures feel playful yet slightly surreal or unsettling. What kind of emotional reaction do you hope viewers experience when they encounter your work?

I honestly never aimed for anyone to feel something certain when they view my work. I look at a tree or a face, and I write a story in my mind. It makes life more enjoyable for me. Sometimes I write a joyful story and sometimes a darker one,

Zeynep Altın | Flower Woman | 2023

sometimes a bit of both. I want to put it out there and people are free to feel and think whatever they do but I want them to escape from reality for a moment, like playing a video game, because I think that's essentially what I'm doing when I paint.

You work professionally as an architect. Does your architectural training influence the way you construct composition, form, or space in your paintings?

If it happens, I'm sure I don't do it on purpose. When I was in university or as I work in the office now, the forms that I had to and have to work with are very angular and everything about the project is tied to its surroundings. Many detailed and focused works come together to build a singular construct that's almost alive. On top of that architecture is very collaborative. I liked to think I paint in a very contrary manner. I'd like to get away from the idea of this precisely planned, perfected object and focus more on the almost fluid, exaggerated form and adjust the background to it, creating this unreal surrounding that only I have a say in.

Nature appears as a living, almost mischievous character in your works. What draws you to flowers, vegetables, and plant forms as recurring motifs?

The answer is a bit tied to my previous answer. I love that nature is crazy, wild and anarchical. It provides the absolute escape from the strict cities that I have always lived in. Not that I don't like to live surrounded by tall buildings, especially that I consider Vienna to be one of the prettiest cities, but my mind gets bored of the construct of civilization at times. When I look at flowers at the park or the vegetables in the supermarket, it reminds me the colour of life.

Living in Vienna for more than a decade while being originally from Turkey, do you feel that your cultural background influences your artistic voice?

I wouldn´t say I do this to be in touch with my cultural background or to make a statement about my immigrant background, it is more of an individualistic thing to do for me. Maybe if the inspiation strikes, I can experiment with traditional motives but one thing that I think comes from my culture is this connection to nature. There are a lot of references to nature in the Turkish folk art but I dont think my art is traditional in any way. It feels as it should, I am a very typical Turkish woman and feel connected to my roots, but "painter" feels like a separate identity. Maybe because appreciation for art wasn't exactly encouraged in Turkish society while I was growing up. Obviously, there is an audience out there that appreciates it and a lot of Turkish artists that work very hard too, but my impression is that painting is widely considered as more or less a "hobby thing".

Humor, body imagery, and political caricature can sometimes be provocative. Do you see your work as social commentary, or is it more about imagination and personal expression?

I used to think that art should make people think and provoke them to be more politically correct but I let that ambition go after seeing Caravaggio´s painting Narcissus in real life and hearing Leon Battista Alberti`s quote that is mostly used to interpret it: "What is painting but the act of embracing by means of art the surface of the pool?" In short to me my work is a selfish endeavour, I don't want to give people a message other than "I'm here too and the way that I see the world matters." My work is just my vision of the world that reflects on the canvas. Like that time I saw these beautiful thistles on the side of the road and to me they were dancing in the wind and by accident I saw them in the middle of their dance, so they were embarrassed to be caught off guard and naked but someone else can look at it and think "a woman pressured and policed by society, free and vulnerable but puts her hands up high like she's ashamed and guilty for being herself" And if that´s what people see that matters too.

Zeynep Altın | Dancing Thistle | 2023

Fiorella Cogliandro is an illustrator from south Italy. She devotes herself to drawing as an intimate research. After graduating in Liberal Arts, she studied Illustration in Florence, moving between drawing and literature. She has participated in several international group exhibitions in art spaces in Italy and abroad, including the Milano Design Week 2026, the Comics Museum in Cosenza, the IYN Gallery in Osaka, and the Guild Gallery in Kitchener, Canada. She is also a colorist for several graphic novels for the publisher Green Moon Comics, while also working as an illustrator for various independent publishers, foundations, magazines, and webzines. Her illustrations focus on the intertwining of humans, animals, nature, and personal subjects with a fantasy, fairy-tale like style.

Project Statement
I believe drawing is a powerful tool for exploring one's inner self and expressing something that cannot be expressed in words. In most of my drawings, I create a contrast between softness and angular shapes, seeking balance and harmony, and I find this contrast particularly effective in female figures and animals. I've loved animals since I was little and drew them often, but in a naive way. Now I see animals as symbols of incorruptibility and purity when they are alone; as symbols of something controversial and obscure when associated with humans.

Fiorella Cogliandro | Cranes — Postcards from Edo | 2025

Fiorella Cogliandro | Summer Solstice

Kristina Ushakova

When it comes to my story, I would definitely say that some things choose you before you ever have the chance to choose them. Glass found me. I didn't seek it out. When I was applying to university, I hesitated between departments until I landed, almost at random, in the Glass Art Department. I had no idea that this spontaneous decision would become a turning point in my life. In glass, I found my language as an artist. Over time, I found my opponent, as glass is a demanding and unforgiving material. But I've never been one to step away from a challenge. The deeper I go into the history of glass — from ancient furnaces to the fearless experiments of the 20th century — the more certain I am: glass has no limits.

You work across different techniques and formats. How do you decide which method best expresses a particular idea or concept?

Actually, the choice of technique is rarely one-sided. Ideas tend to come to me when I'm already diving into a material — the material itself gives me clues: "Look, here it could be like this, and here - something else." So I make a mental note to give it a try. In that sense, the technique becomes less a tool for executing a ready-made idea and more of a catalyst. While working on one project, I come up with several others. And sometimes it plays out the other way around: there's a vague image already in my mind, and I go through materials like filters, trying to see which one will amplify the feeling I'm after.

Glass is both fragile and resilient. How do these dual qualities influence your artistic thinking?

I think the best way to put it is: "We turn defects into effects." That's how we go about things in our department. Glass is a capricious material, one that always introduces its own adjustments. When I start a project, I understand from the very beginning that the original idea will transform many times during the process. I often leave space for the glass to express itself just in case the material behaves unexpectedly (this can work in a positive way or a negative one).

Your work bridges materiality and storytelling - how did your journey into glass art begin, and what drew you specifically to this medium?

Kristina Ushakova | Eco of the wind

Kristina Ushakova | Dragons

Could you walk us through your creative process - from initial sketch to the final glass object?

A lot depends on the project. No two follow the same path. Let's take the glass sculpture Echo of the Wind as case in point.

- The first stage was creating sketches at the zoo.
- Then came a long process of stylization and searching for form. I spent a lot of time studying the art of the Scythians and Etruscans. It was at this stage that the artistic image took shape: "A deer swept by an icy northern wind." The form emphasizes the gust of air, while the material evokes the north, ice, and the crystalline cold ringing in the air.These two stages took me over a month, and by then there wasn't much time left before the deadline.
- I began working with the material:

To create this piece, I sculpted two mirrored forms using sculptural plasticine. Then I made two positive plaster molds from them. (They're called "positive" because if you lay glass into them, you get exactly what was sculpted in plasticine.) Next, I created negative molds and, in addition, made refractory frames to prevent the glass from spreading in the kiln. I coated all the elements — both negative molds and both frames — with kaolin, which is necessary to keep the glass from sticking. After that, I fritted the glass (in this case, a crystal dinnerware set), placed it into the mold, and put it in the kiln. The technique of melting glass in or on a mold is called slumping. After that came a long and grueling process of grinding, desticking, edge finishing, assembly, and polishing.

To sum it up:

· Sketches, studies, concept development
· Stylization and design
· Sculpting the master model in plasticine
· Working with plaster
· Slumping the glass
· Cold working

How has your education at the Stieglitz Academy shaped your artistic vision and technical approach?

My education at the Academy had a profound influence on me. I started thinking in terms of imagery and form, noticing stylization in the world around me, and applying it myself. I grew to love large formats, scale, seriality, and purity of form.

What challenges do you face when working with glass, and how do these challenges shape the final result?

Working with glass is always about compromise. Let's go back to Echo of the Wind — the project earned a second name, "Murphy" (after Murphy's Law), because everything went wrong. Problems kept cropping up one after another: the molds seized up, cracked up, fell apart; I ran out of glass; the parts didn't line up; and the icing on the cake was two cracks showing up in the final piece. A lot of it boiled down to the fact that I used several types of glass, even though technically you're not meant to mix them. There were also difficulties stemming from the imperfections of the kilns. Each problem brings in its own change to the original concept — in this way, the work takes on its character as it comes to life.

What themes or ideas are you currently exploring, and what directions do you see your work evolving toward in the future?

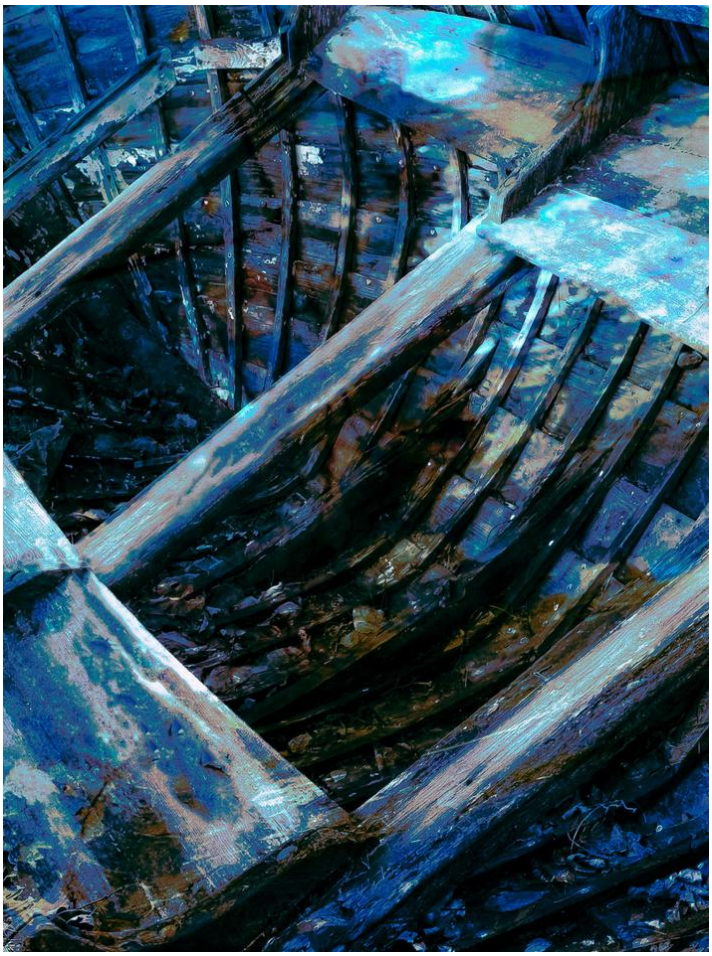
For me, the central theme is the north. I'm ready to explore its different facets endlessly. That could mean visualizing Celtic music or reinterpreting the woodcarving found on Viking galleys. Right now, I'm working on a project for a glass partition in a residential interior, inspired by the ice drift.

Kirsty Paterson

After taking a freighter from Vancouver to Alaska, Kirsty emigrated from Scotland to Canada. She has also travelled to Europe, Africa, the Middle East and the Arctic. Kirsty has explored different avenue of healing, including certification in horticultural therapy, and working as a trained art therapist. I digitally paint my photographs, using long and double exposures to convey movement and the passing of time; and storytelling with dramatic contrasts of light, colour and texture. My biggest inspiration are the local mountains, forests and sea as well as my Nordic Celtic background. I'm currently learning to create collage with Japanese Washi paper and watercolour.
I have shown my work in Vancouver, BC, Canada Lower Mainland galleries, breweries and coffee shops; and will have an image in this year's April/May issue of BFS Horizons magazine, UK. More of my art can be seen on Instagram: @the_light_echoes.

Project Statement
"Boatz" is a collection of my photographs taken around Vancouver, BC, Canada. This city and parts of the Lower Mainland are coastal, so there are lots of opportunities to record boats.
"Old boat" shows an abandoned rowboat in a fishing village where the fishermen sell their fresh catch off their boats - shrimp, salmon and even sea urchins. The craft's textures echo Steveston's rich history as a global canning fishing hub with a work force from Japan, China and Europe.
"Between voyages" is an example of working vessels near where I live. Tug boats guide container ships into port, crossing the lanes of a paddle wheeler and the Seabus ferry. In more open waters,local kayakers have seen grey whales.
"Big ship, bigger sea" was taken on a ferry trip from the Mainland through the Gulf Islands and on to Vancouver Island. I wanted to show how the vastness of the ocean dwarfs and isolates even such a large vessel.
"Gantry at work" shows a boat in the process of being repaired at the Mosquito Creek marina which belongs to the First Nations.
"Shipyards" symbolizes the local shipbuilding industries where icebreakers, science and coastguard vessels are being built. This image show the effects of time, weather and salt on metal.
How can one ever tire of photographing the many moods of the ocean, and the variety of the boats navigating its challenges?

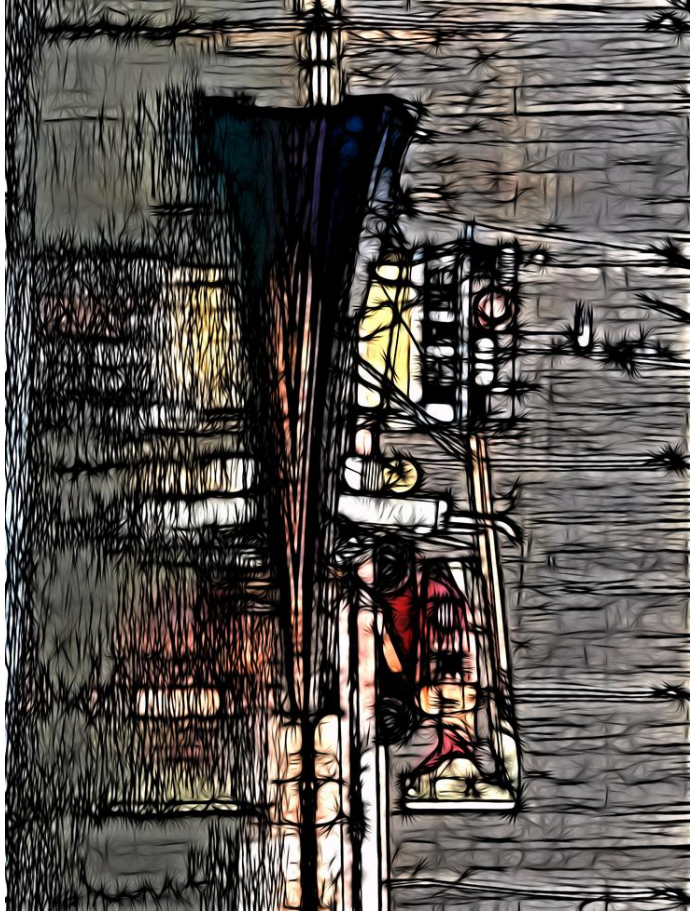
Kirsty Paterson | Gantry at Work| 2023



Kirsty Paterson | Old Boat | 2022

Kirsty Paterson | Shipyards | 2022

Kirsty Paterson | Big Ship, Bigger Sea | 2022



Kirsty Paterson | Between Voyages | 2023

Monique Rilke

Then I sort what to draw and what not, at least for the moment.

Your work is deeply rooted in personal photographs. What draws you to a particular moment or scene when deciding what to capture?

When I am deciding what to capture I usually let myself be enchanted by the moment and feeling, the atmosphere etc.

Monique Rilke | With Vojtěch Beyond the Fields | 2026

You describe yourself as a "full-time dreamer". How does this mindset influence your artistic process and final compositions?

My "full-time dreamer" personality affects me a lot. In the beginning of every painting I usually look at the original photo to let the inspiration do its work. In process it often switches to some kind of surrealism and I let it flow as it comes.

Color plays a very strong emotional role in your paintings. How do you choose your color palettes for each piece?

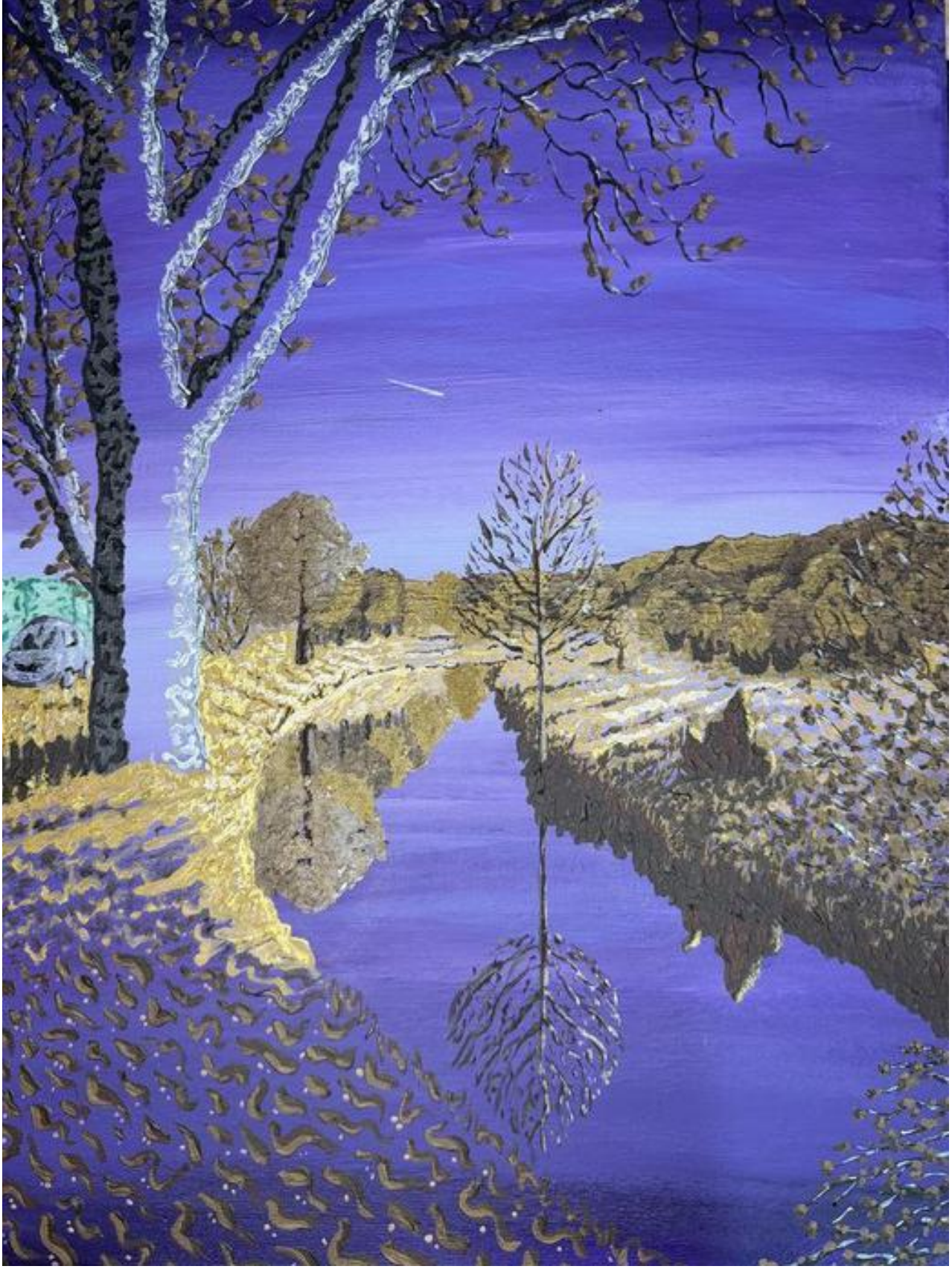
I really like vibrant colours and experimenting with them. But because I really love the game of coincidence, I try to challenge myself with it. Every painting has base of three colours from different brands. I made a list of all colours I own and then I put them randomly together (according to same number in list) and I try to compose what I feel and see, at least for now. In future, who knows.

Many of your landscapes feel both real and slightly surreal. How do you balance observation and imagination in your work?

In my painting there is both realism and surrealism and I don't know in advance what's going to come. I often let my hand and my mind do what they want. It's like project of two different personalities and I like this "everytime surprise".

Nature appears to be a recurring subject in your work. What does the natural environment mean to you personally and artistically?

Nature plays a major role in my paintings. If I don't paint



Monique Rilke | Jaroslav Felled Trees in the Meanders | 2026

landscapes, it's usually close-up of some flower, sky with buildings etc. Nature enviroment is place where I can let myself be inspired and to breathe freely. So personally it's freedom and joy and artistically it's inspiration, coincidence and colours.

Your paintings often evoke a strong sense of atmosphere and stillness. What emotions or experiences are you hoping to convey to the viewer?

I would like to bring calmness and imminence to the viewer, moment that feels like forever but lasts a blink of eye. These are always moments when I have to take a little deeper breath than usual.

Some of your works feature unusual color choices (such as purple skies or golden landscapes). What role does abstraction play in your practice?

Abstraction plays some role in my practice. Most of time it's my imagination what makes it. For example what it would be like to live on a different planet? And what if sky was not appering blue? What if plants were not green etc. Imagination is my best friend.

Dmitry Kostromin was born in 1970 in Saint Petersburg.
During his studies, he worked in oil, creating classical cityscapes that convey the unique and mysterious atmosphere of Saint Petersburg, Pushkin, and Vyborg. Over the course of three years, he produced more than 50 works, 36 of which are now held in private collections in Russia, Finland, and Sweden.
After receiving his Interior Design diploma, he has always approached each design project creatively, placing special emphasis on art within interior spaces. In neoclassical interiors, masterpieces of painting appeared on the walls in the form of artworks and frescoes.
For interiors in contemporary styles, new solutions were required, leading him to explore abstract painting and sacred geometry.

Artist Statement
“Art is a bridge between the microcosm and the macrocosm. My goal, when creating paintings in a meditative state, is to manifest energy on the canvas and to show that the inner world of each person is an exact reflection of the infinite cosmos.”

Dmitry Kostromin | N

Murielle Mobengo - Ellébore Guimon

Your work blends Renaissance chiaroscuro with Eastern sacred iconography and Central African visual language. How did this synthesis emerge in your practice?

The language of light in painting was something I encountered early on. I've always been drawn to drama in art —the way black and white act like "metacolors," from which all colors emerge or fade. There's a power in seeing opposites —light and dark—reunited on a single surface, telling a story that's both symbolic and aesthetic.

I remember standing in front of Veronese's The Wedding at Cana at the Louvre. The sheer scale and the way the light filled the canvas left me in awe. It wasn't chiaroscuro, but the luminosity and epic dimension of the scene stayed with me. Later, I discovered Caravaggio, and with him, the depth of clair-obscur, chiaroscuro. His pale figures emerging from darkness taught me how opposites can create a powerful, cinematic and emotional charge.

But it's only recently that I began to explore how different skin tones interact with light. Using dark-skinned sitters in chiaroscuro adds complexity and mystery, and yet I love all skin tones. Each one brings its own beauty and challenge. Ultimately, I'm trying to capture what I call the "divine look"—an inner state that's unique to the sitter but also universal.

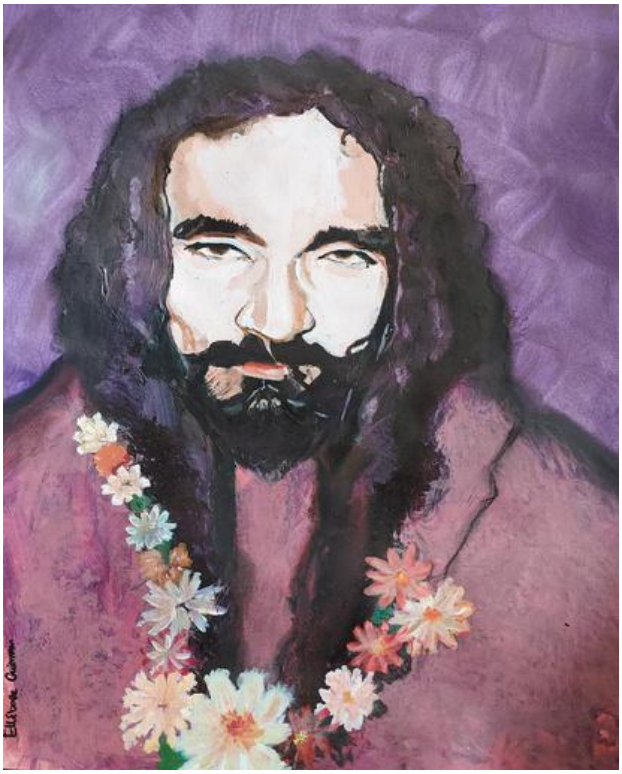
As Eastern sacred iconography entered my practice through philosophical and inner inquiry, I found that these traditions aren't separate. They naturally converge, and my connection to Central African visual language lives in my hand and eye as intuition and memory. Over time, Eastern, Western, and African aesthetics began to feel like a shared visual intelligence. What I'm doing isn't a fusion so much as a recognition—a recollection of something that exists across cultures, but has been historically fragmented.

Murielle Mobengo - Ellébore Guimon | Divine Phalguni | 2023

You describe your paintings as "contemporary icons". What does it mean to create an icon in today's world?

Traditionally, an icon represents a human figure who has undergone an inner transformation so profound that they come to embody something beyond the individual—something worthy of contemplation or veneration.

To create a contemporary icon is to suggest that this possibility has not disappeared. It is not confined to the past,



Murielle Mobengo - Ellébore Guimon | Brahmleen | 2026

nor to a select few. There is, in every human being, a dimension that exceeds circumstance—a presence that is not entirely defined by biography, time, or form.
My work is concerned with making that dimension perceptible.
In a world saturated with images that are immediate and quickly consumed, the icon functions differently. It slows perception. It introduces stillness.
It is constructed with intention—through proportion, light, and symbolism, often expressed in the crown or in the chromatic structure—so that the viewer is not simply looking at a figure, but is gradually drawn into an inner state.
In our hypermodern world, where so much feels overstimulating or triggering, it can be hard to find that sense of stillness—but I believe it's still possible, and that's what I try to evoke.

How does your background in Theology and Philosophy influence your visual language and choice of symbols?

It gives a philosophical framework to my artistic practice—coherence, narrative, perceptive power, and discipline. In other words, it allows me to share ideas through forms. Let me explain.
Theological and philosophical traditions do deal with lofty subjects that seem abstract or disconnected from everyday life. But thinking itself is a constant process within us—silent, invisible, and so fast we hardly notice it. Theology and philosophy slow that process down. They're liminal disciplines that let us reflect deeply on our lives, identity, and actions. Thinking about God, the soul, or consciousness consistently leads us to act on those reflections.
For an artist, that means seeking symbols that encapsulate these abstract thoughts. It's like a treasure hunt—captivating, challenging, and deeply rewarding when something clicks. It becomes a kind of inner archaeology, but one that can be shared through art.
In my experience, when informed by philosophy and strong inner experiences, artistic creativity—whether in art or poetry—becomes a kind of sixth sense: the capacity to synthesize the visible and the invisible, action and thought, spirit and matter. In that process, the possibility of expressing and sharing Beauty emerges.

Many of your portraits feel both intimate and transcendent. How do you approach capturing this "liminal state" between the individual and the divine?

I spend time with my subjects, talking with them (or to them), listening to them, and sometimes guiding the conversation toward more existential topics. I've noticed that the "liminal state"—what I call the divine look—often emerges from those genuine exchanges, where we connect on a deeper level.

As a self-taught artist, how did you develop your technical approach, especially in mastering light and shadow?

By observing and drawing constantly. Da Vinci's Treatise on Painting insists that structure comes before painting, and observation and draftsmanship are essential. I find that to be true even 500 years later, although it's not easy.
I study painters who mastered light, shadow, and color, and the real learning comes from repetition—drawing, correcting, pausing. I'm also exploring oil now, which brings new challenges.
I move between realistic and semi-realistic approaches. Semi-realistic work is closer to symbol, rawer, and more intuitive. That's why I'm drawn to Kerala Mural painting, where light serves vibrant color. My painting Durga intérieure—later renamed Apotheosis, God in Jaisalmer Dress in its semi-realistic form—reflects this process, shifting from an Old Master's technique to Kerala Mural style inspiration. I consider Kerala Mural painting a very noble art, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to learn it from authentic artists.
Among the European Old Masters, I admire Caravaggio most, and the Renaissance painters in general. I also love the Pre-Raphaelites—John Collier, William Holman Hunt—who balanced light, color, and shadow beautifully and portrayed the feminine with such power. And I have a very strong admiration for Gustave Moreau, Alfons Mucha, and Nicholas Roerich for his unique rendition of light.

Your works suggest a dialogue between cultures and traditions. How do you navigate cultural references while maintaining authenticity and respect?

Each tradition—European, Indian, African—has its own logic: proportions, symbolism, relationship to the sacred. I read and study these systems and reach out to contemporary artists who carry these traditions forward. It takes time, study, and humility. It also means recognizing that these traditions aren't isolated—they often respond to similar questions, even if they express them differently. Authenticity and progress come from that depth of engagement, which can only happen in a peer culture. I also consider travel to be essential for my artistic perception.

What kind of inner experience or reflection do you hope viewers encounter when engaging with your work?

An opening. A gentle invitation to turn inward.

Vladislav Biskup
@biskup2h

I consider myself an intuitive artist, because I am not interested in being “correct.” It is more important for me to capture a state than to prove that I can draw.
My territory lies in naïve art and abstraction. Here, not only the experience matters, but also the visual construction: taste, irony, and how the work holds together as an image.
I work with oil, acrylic, and pastel, but I am not attached to any of them — I continue to experiment and discover new approaches.
Color is both my artistic practice and my profession: I work as a colorist in a printing house, where I deal with precise color correction, formulation, and preparation for print.
The themes are not always predetermined — sometimes I shape them myself, and sometimes they emerge from reality and inner tension.
I work not so much with representation as with a response to color and form — quickly and without unnecessary hesitation.
A work should hold — it should have its own weight, rhythm, and visual logic. I do not leave an impulse raw, but bring it to a state in which it begins to function as an image.
At the same time, humor and absurdity are important to me: they disrupt the smoothness of a “correct” statement, introduce paradox, and make the image operate not directly, but with a gap — with a smile or a sense of absurdity.
It is important for me that the work has both meaning and taste — that it is not only driven by feeling, but also comes together as a cohesive visual composition, does not fall out of the space, but reads and continues it.

Vladislav Biskup | Summer is over | 2025

Vladislav Biskup | Rat | 2024

Elise Rowland

Your crochet portraits have a strong graphic, almost pixelated quality. Do you plan your compositions digitally beforehand, or do they evolve directly through the crocheting process?

Nothing you see is ever freehand when it comes to the art of tapestry crochet. It's a meticulous process to be honest. First I choose the photo and edit it in photoshop. Most of the time I make the background solid and heighten the contrast. I use a website called Stitch Fiddle that helps you transform pictures into grids. From there, you can adjust the brightness, contrast, stitch count, colors, and more. It can be a lot of trial and error. After that, I will follow the grid to make the tapestry!

Elise Rowland | Harry styles tapestry

Many of your works reinterpret recognizable figures through yarn. How do you decide which details to simplify and which to preserve to maintain likeness?

It honestly really depends on the size, subject, and what I think is right for the project. With my Heated Rivalry tapestries, I wanted to make sure they were immediately recognizable. Because Connor Storrie and Hudson Williams have very distinct facial features, especially their lips and eyes, I simply had no choice but to make these big, intricate pieces! It's kind of the same for my Scream cardigan. Everyone knows Scream and its iconography so I had to make sure there was more than enough detail to make the legendary Drew Barrymore's face. For my Harry Styles "Kiss All The Time, Disco Occasionally" tapestry, I wanted something simple and almost abstract because the focal point wasn't really his face. I also made it in a time crunch and didn't want the project to be too big. That's why it's not as detailed as my other pieces. Like I said, it all depends on the project!

Your use of bold, contrasting colors is very striking.

Elise Rowland | Heated Rivalry tapestries

How do you choose your color palettes for each piece?

Everyone always asks me this question on Instagram and the truth is there's not really a method to my madness when it comes to colors. I've been an artist since I was a kid so I'd just say I have a good eye for color and I'm a really big fan of hot pinks, purples, and blues. Before making tapestries, my yarn basket was full of neon and pastel colors because I was making bags, cardigans, and other miscellaneous items. Now that I've made over 20 tapestries, I know what colors will create a cohesive look. I stick with 4 to 6 colors in a tapestry because using any more than that will make me lose my marbles.

Crochet is often associated with craft rather than fine art. Do you see your work as challenging this distinction?

Absolutely. I could definitely go into a rant about misogyny but I won't. I will say that fiber art is heavily associated with women, older women especially, and is often underappreciated. Fiber artists tend to undersell their work because most people would choke hearing the prices crochet and knit pieces should be. In a world riddled with AI, fiber art should be uplifted. To answer your question, I do see my work challenging this distinction. My tapestries are being purchased and used as wall decor, the same as any other fine art painting. My tapestries have been praised by the people they're inspired by, as well as thousands of others. Why is it not considered fine art?

Your pieces feel both nostalgic and contemporary. How important is nostalgia in your work?

I'm inspired by various nostalgic elements like vintage comic art and Andy Warhol's pop art but that might be the only thing creating a sense of nostalgia. I'd say it's a big part of my inspiration so it's pretty important but not required for me to make something.

In your opinion, how does translating pop culture imagery into fiber change the way viewers perceive it?

Not to be biased here but I would say fiber art makes pop culture imagery like scenes/characters/etc more interesting and visually striking than some other forms of art. You're turning a 2D something into a physical manifestation. My sister always says I'm making 3D pictures and there's only one version of it, so it's almost comparable to a polaroid picture.

Imperfections and texture are inherent in crochet. Do you embrace these qualities or strive for visual precision?

Although I can certainly be a perfectionist, I tend to embrace imperfections more in crochet than any other art form. Sometimes I'll miscount a row and redo it. Sometimes I'll miscount a row, shrug it off, and keep following the grid. Realistically, one wrong stitch won't hurt a giant tapestry. With traditional art, you can always paint over your mistakes. With digital art, you can hit the undo button. Crochet allows me to make mistakes, accept them, and keep moving forward.

Elise Rowland | Heated Rivalry Shane & Ilya tapestry

April Surać is a New York–born multidisciplinary artist whose work spans photography, textile art, film, and mixed media. Her practice explores materiality, perception, and the relationship between environment and identity. Influenced by early exposure to craftsmanship, she integrates physical textures and visual storytelling to create work that exists between fine art and lived experience. Her pieces often examine subtle human moments, using layered mediums to reflect complexity, tension, and presence.

April Surac | Double Exposure | 2025

April Surac | Ecuadorian Parade | 2025

Dina Goldstein

Your work often combines pop surrealism with sharp social critique. How do you balance visual seduction with discomfort or confrontation in your images?

It's truly a fine balance. The photographs must be compelling to draw in the viewer. The message is clear to those that see beyond the first impression. The work can be experienced on many levels. The photograph itself can be pure entertainment, or become the subject of an academic paper.

Having started your career as a photojournalist, how does that documentary background continue to shape your approach to staged, cinematic photography today?

While I value my roots in photojournalism, I recognize that our relationship with the 'authentic' image has shifted. In a world that is hyper-aware of the camera and now complicated by AI capturing a raw, un-self-conscious moment is increasingly difficult. I've found that by moving toward staged, cinematic photography, I can achieve a different kind of precision.
My documentary background still dictates my 'deep dive' into research, but the theatrical methodology allows me to build a specific, intentional storyline. I'm no longer waiting for a story to happen; I'm constructing a visual language that addresses complex themes like power and belief with a clarity that spontaneous photography sometimes obscures. The beauty of the aesthetic acts as an invitation for the viewer to engage with a much deeper, more difficult narrative.

Your images frequently address themes of power, gender, consumption, and belief systems. Do you begin a project with a clear message, or does the meaning evolve during production?

I'm deeply fascinated by how Western culture's collective imagination shapes characters that become instantly recognizable icons. My process usually begins with an intuitive theme, but the specific narratives are always anchored in my lived experience as a woman and a mother.I don't start with a rigid message; instead, I place these archetypes into a modern context and allow them to confront the 'challenging existence' of the 21st century. For instance, Fallen Princesses was born from watching my toddler daughter's early encounters with Disney tropes, while In the Dollhouse emerged from observing my second daughter's play with Barbie and Ken. My work in Gods of Suburbia shifted that focus toward belief systems after an art residency in Mumbai sparked an interest in how personal gods function within our landscape of technology and hyper-information. The meaning always evolves through the character's struggle.

Your production process is described as highly precise, from pre-production to post-production. Could you walk us through how a single image typically comes to life?

My process is a disciplined cycle of Research, Production, and Post-production. It begins with an intensive deep dive into the subject so I can shape a narrative with total authority. The casting is perhaps the most critical stage; whether it's a professional actor or someone I've scouted on the

Dina Goldstein | Mistresspieces, Galatea at the moment of creation

street, they must possess a lived-in quality that makes the character believable.
I approach the environment with that same level of scrutiny, either scouting a location that breathes life into the story or building a set from the ground up. Every detail, from the 'set dec' to the texture of a costume, the makeup and hair, is a deliberate narrative choice. Finally, I shoot in digital plates, which gives me the technical freedom to 'knit' the image together in post-production. This is where the story truly crystallizes; I can layer in those small, essential details that guide the viewer's eye and complete the world I've built.

The scale and complexity of your tableaux are striking. What role do collaboration and direction play in realizing your visual worlds?

The scale of my work naturally demands a high level of collaborative synergy. I view my role much like a film director; I provide the initial vision, the research, and the narrative boundaries, but I rely on a team of experts—stylists, set builders, hair and makeup artists—to help bring that world into the physical realm.
For a tableau to be successful, every collaborator must be on the 'same page' I spend a significant amount of time in pre-production communicating the emotional subtext of the series so that when we are on set, every choice contributes to the overall commentary. While I am precise about the final frame, I value the creative problem-solving my team brings to the table. Realizing these visual worlds is a communal effort, but my direction ensures that the final 'succinct' image remains true to the core message I'm exploring.

What questions do you hope viewers ask themselves after encountering your work for the first time?

Ultimately, I hope viewers ask themselves: 'How much of my identity and my beliefs have been shaped by the myths I've been fed?'
I want my work to act as a mirror to the collective imagination. When someone encounters a 'Fallen Princess' or a 'God,' I want them to move past the initial aesthetic beauty and start peeling back the layers of the narrative. I hope they ask why these archetypes feel so familiar, yet so out of place in our modern, consumer-driven reality.
If a viewer walks away questioning the authenticity of the 'perfect' lives we see on social media, or reflecting on how technology has become a new form of worship, then the image has done its job. My goal isn't to provide an answer, but to spark a personal interrogation of the power structures and belief systems we navigate every day.

Aditya Tayal

I'm a British Asian guy from the UK, sharing some of my photography from around the world as I have been solo travelling for about 2 years.
Essentially the topic around my theme focuses on Nature, culture and colour. These pictures gave me a lot of joy, and inspiration and hence my entry into this field.
I am just an amateur at this; photography, which for me is a useful and wonderful hobby.
I hope you can draw some inspiration, awe and wonder, just like how I have felt mesmerised in travelling the world.

Aditya Tayal | Stairway to Heaven | 2026

Aditya Tayal | 4000 Islands of Don Det | 2026

Aditya Tayal | Culture & Colour | 2026

Anastasia Grigorash

Your project Cabinet de merveilles references the historical tradition of curiosity cabinets. What drew you to this concept, and how does it resonate with contemporary society?

When I visit exhibitions or museums, my attention is inevitably drawn to sculptural works with a high level of detail. This love of examining intricate details is reflected in the aesthetic of the Collector's Cabinet installation for the Cabinet des merveilles project.
The project began with the free sculpting of flowers. There was an inner desire for high detail, beauty, contemplation, and even possession. Through these sensitive impulses, I arrived at the theme of collecting and the cabinet of curiosities. I began studying photographs of famous European cabinets of curiosities from the 16th–17th centuries. Beyond the collected objects themselves - sometimes astonishing (such as a mermaid skeleton) - I was deeply captivated by the way these collections were presented: carved furniture, whimsical stands, and an abundance of delicate curves and details. All of this fascinated me. I wanted to observe and be amazed, and eventually felt the urge to create my own personal cabinet de merveilles.

My project explores the deeper mechanisms of human behavior through the lens of collecting, viewing it as a complex psychological and philosophical model. The concept revolves around a fictional collector who hunts golden humanoid creatures. Although he has not yet managed to capture them, he has assembled a collection of various creatures from their world. The Collector's Cabinet installation, styled as a cabinet of curiosities, symbolizes both the historical tradition of collecting and its spiritual role as a repository of knowledge and cultural values. Here, the collector is not only an owner of rare objects but also a researcher who documents his perspectives and values, striving to understand and preserve unique elements of reality. The installation includes 25 vintage frames with three-dimensional depictions of reptiles and insects, a cabinet filled with cloches, and cages with birds of paradise.
The second part of the project is a video artwork that presents the natural habitat of these creatures—the forest - as well as the being the collector is hunting. This creature turns out to be a human wearing a mask, belonging to a forest tribe. Will the collector be able to stop once he realizes he is hunting someone like himself - a human?
The concept of the project raises questions about the ethics of owning rare species and the boundaries of exploiting living beings for aesthetic pleasure. This issue is particularly relevant today, when, alongside climate change and the ecological crisis, the extinction of rare animal species

continues to be driven by human exploitation and barbaric hunting.

You began your professional path as an engineer working with reinforced concrete structures. How has this technical background influenced your artistic thinking and the way you build ceramic installations?

My technical education taught me to think logically and spatially. Thus, when sculpting complex objects, I mentally construct a system of reinforcing ribs or think through deformation joints that can reduce changes in form during drying and firing. I experiment with creating interactive ceramic objects, and when creating installations, spatial thinking comes into play, helping me visualize and harmoniously integrate objects into the surrounding environment.
However, despite my developed logical thinking, in my creative work I adhere to a post-rational approach. First comes the image, then through reflection I ask myself where this visual impulse comes from, and eventually I arrive at developing the concept of the project. I believe that such an approach helps to better reveal artistic abilities and create more vivid and sincere works.

Ceramic sculpture plays a central role in your practice. What attracts you to this material as a primary medium for expressing complex philosophical ideas?

For me, ceramics are not only a material but also a metaphor for human nature: they require patience, attention, love, and constant work on oneself, and it is through this process that I learn to better understand myself.
By its nature, clay possesses a unique tactility - each work becomes a reflection of an emotional state. Therefore, I primarily work with hand-building techniques. Works created by hand help restore a sense of human closeness, vulnerability, and authenticity, which is becoming increasingly rare in the modern world.

Many of your works depict hybrid or imaginary creatures What do these beings represent, and how do they reflect aspects of human identity or behavior?

My fictional creatures live in a world that reflects our own reality - a kind of escapism into a mirror realm. They symbolize the inner contradictions, dreams, fears, and desires within each of us. Through these characters, I explore the multifaceted nature of personality - both the light and the dark sides of human character. These creatures become conduits for understanding human behavior within society.

Your installations combine ceramics with found objects such as shells, branches, and other materials. How do these elements expand the narrative of your work?

I work in the style of magical realism - an artistic approach that combines realistic depictions of everyday life with the inclusion of fantastical, mystical, or absurd elements. In this way, real found objects make the installation more vivid and tangible, creating a sense of presence and enhancing the viewer's immersion, blurring the boundary between the real and the imagined.

The theme of collecting runs throughout Cabinet de merveilles. Do you see collecting more as a poetic act of preservation or as a reflection of human obsession?

I find it difficult to give a definitive answer to this question. I perceive collecting more as a tool for exploring the dual nature of human beings, which lies in the coexistence of two opposing principles: instincts and needs versus reason and morality. The project presents a hyperbolized, artificially constructed situation that exposes this dualism to the extreme; however, in real life, we are unlikely to ever be able to imagine such a scenario.

Many of your installations create an intimate and almost ritualistic atmosphere. What kind of emotional or psychological experience do you hope visitors will have?

In my projects, I strive to establish the closest possible connection with the viewer and to create a space of trust for experiencing my work. It is important to me that my art fills the viewer with deep personal reflections, encourages self-exploration and reflection on the surrounding world, and also focuses attention on the importance of preserving humanity in society.

Olga Zhdanova
A visual artist and director born in Siberia.

Membership of Russian Artists
Member of the Eurasian Union of Arts

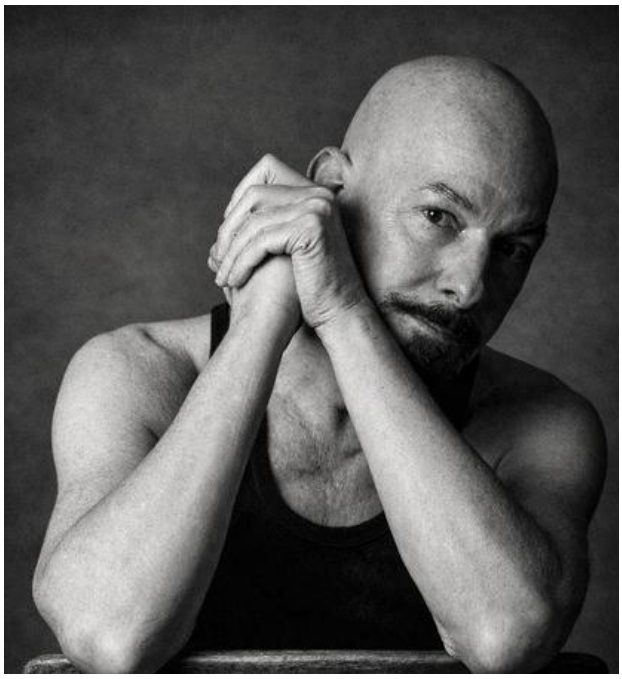
Her education in social work (RSSU) demonstrated a profound understanding of the individual and their role in society, which is also reflected in her work. For over 15 years, she has been practicing photography, creating images that explore the inner alchemy where the body acquires a living language of experience. Her works are not simply visual; they tap into sources of energy, provoke reactions, and activate deep internal processes.

Project Statement
«Alchemy of the Body» is a place of transformation, a sacred act. Through flesh to revelation.My art is an act of transformation, where the body becomes not a subject but a living language of experience. The body is like a laboratory of internal alchemy: here feelings are broken down into their components and distilled into pure form. Everything once lived becomes the source material for new meaning. Each work is a ritual of undressing, a sign of power.I do not strive for beauty for the sake of aesthetics. Beauty is a byproduct of deep honesty. My images do not pose; they confess. I work with flesh like a sculptor with clay, allowing emotions to color every gesture. In a space where the inner becomes visible. A path through vulnerability, in which armor is born, not for protection, but for truth. It is a mirror. The language of those who know how to listen to the silence within themselves. A place where feelings take shape, and in this shape lies intimacy and truth. An invitation not to watch, but to feel. Not to observe, but to participate.

Olga Zhdanova | Transformation | 2025

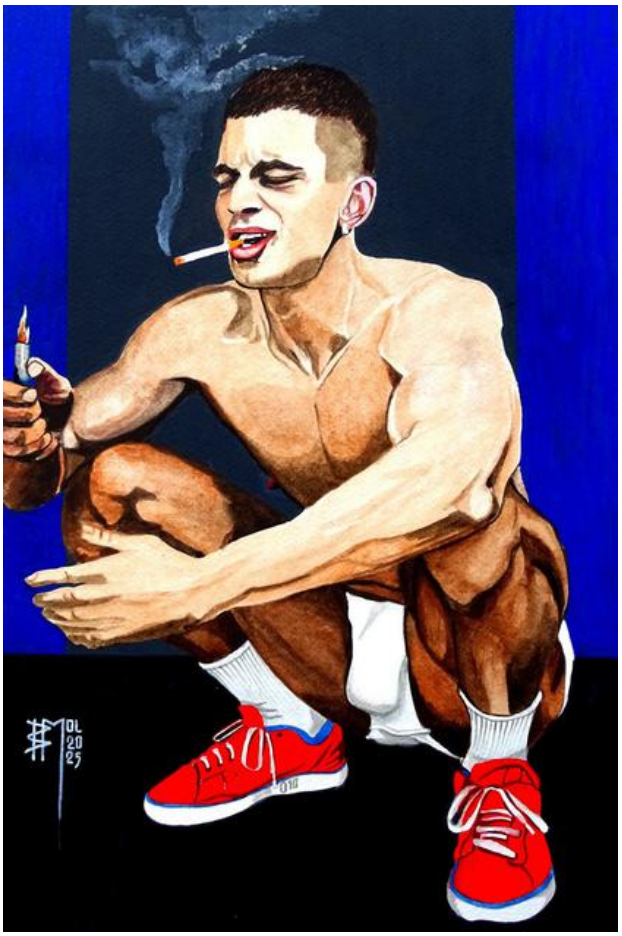
Olga Zhdanova | Butterfly | 2025

Bastiaan Mol



Your work focuses strongly on the male figure. What led you to dedicate your practice exclusively to this subject?

I have been drawing and painting all of my life as far back as I can remember. While other children played outside, I was always busy with my drawings inside.
Already as a young child I knew I liked boys and not in the same way as girls. But of course at that time it wasn`t sexual at all. I talk about sex, as the question asks for the explanation of why my main subject in my art today is the male figure and why I paint the men the way as I do. The subjects in my paintings changed drastically over the years, from child, to the man of 71 years that I am now. Looking back now, you can notice waves of different subjects in stages of my age and the interests I focussed on at those times. As a child they were often fairytales and I was always drawing and painting purely from my fantasy. I think the vision of the story of Cinderella inspired me the most, seeing her in my fantasy with her beautiful ballroom gown descending from the stairs in a hurry, loosing her glass slipper.
I must have painted that scene a hundred times, just as I painted the witch that was the evil stepmother of Snowwhite. I have always LOVED witches, trolls vampires and all sorts of monsters. And one of the next stages in my art would be just that subject. Later on when I got older it would be fashion.I wanted to become an illustrator of fashion. When I actually went to get my art education I wanted to be educated to be a costume designer for stages, and theatre. The teacher that tought that subject told me there would be no work at all in that direction, once finished after 4 years. So I chose illustration design. Produce art, not for on the walls persé, but to be used for recordcovers, posters, bookcovers, etc. So thats what I did at the Academy of Arts in Antwerp Belgium (from 1986-1991, I already wasnt a young man anymore). As the times werent right at the moment, there werent jobs for me as a starter at that time, so I always had other jobs next to my painting. I already went full on as a gay man and to get some money while studying at the academy of arts, I worked as a discjocky in weekends in a gay dancecafé in Antwerp. The oldest gaycafé of Antwerp actually and today all of the interior of that venue now is part of the collection of the MAS museum there.
As men became increasingly more important in my live I also started to paint them. Of course at the academy we always had to sketch and paint nudes three times a week. My very first solo exhibition was in the Antwerp COC, a social club for gaypeople. And as I wanted to sell, I picked all of the subjects that could be of interest by eventual buyers there. Leatherguys, but also romantic drawings inspired by films such as Viscontis Death in Venice, and even a nude transwoman with a penis. Years later, subjects would be stars from the golden age of Hollywoods silent movies and divas from the world of music, such as Eartha Kitt, Edith Piaf, Josephine Baker, Zarah Leander, Theda Bara, Hildegard Knef,



Bastiaan Mol | Model Felix with a cigaret | 2025

Bastiaan Mol | Garçon Adidas | 2020

Italian singer Milva, to name just a few. I would buy there records, see their films, read their biographies and became inspired. When Im inspired, I also am totally inspired and passionate. It is always ONE subject at a time for me. I find it hard to focus on more than one subject. Much later, I discovered painting animals, specifically birds - and I painted a LOT of them through the years. Again later I discovered the Portuguese music form of the FADO. I became involved to that music, and read books about the origines, etc. I eventually collected a very large collection of fado CDs, went a lot to hear the fadosingers especially in Lisbon, Portugal. Ant I became friends with many of them, discussing the fado, its lyrics and melodies. Eventually I started to paint some of my friends fadosingers. And that became the start of 10 years of painting a total of 66 painted portraits of socalled 'FADISTAS' (from 2013-2024). Most of these portraits went to Portugal exept for a few that I still keep, but three of them are now part of the main exhibition in a small fadomuseum in Lisbon, the Associação Alfredo Marceneiro, of which I was made a member of honor. I closed that subject in 2024 and dont paint any fadosingers anymore.
After that subject was done I totally went to paint the sensual men that I am now known for. Many of my paintings of sensual men went to all corners of the world, mostly to private collections, in USA, but also Belgium, France, Bulgaria and even Bangkok. Private collectors became very important to buying my art of men. I am aware the collectors will often be gay men and obviously they see something they like and desire and want to have in their homes. I have always painted handsome men, but not in the way I do in the last 10 years or so. As ever, when I have a subject for my art, I am extremly passionate about totally getting involved in it. Only a year ago I decided for myself that I will dedicate the rest of my life - God knows how long I will still have for that at my age - to painting the sensual male figure.
All of my life I felt the artworld, but also social world tried to keep me from painting that subject. And as times went more prudish, also in art, to me I felt it important to raise my voice and paint what the world can not see, often due to religion groups. I feel it strongly as a way to shut the mouths of groups of artists and I won`t have it.

You often depict men in vulnerable, sensual, or intimate moments. What emotions or ideas are you trying to convey through these portrayals?

I don`t think I work in a different way in my painting than a heterosexual man is painting his beautiful women or girls. I see a desirable boy of man and I paint him the way I like it and also the way I think other people would find beautiful. I get my models from the street, or the gym, or the café, or via social media. I just ask them if they want to pose. They don`t need to be GAY at all. I want to use their looks for my paintings. They are not subjects of love interest for me. I am quite serious in that matter.
Of course it is all in MY mind. Years and years it were only women that were painted as the subject for artists. And WHY? Probably they, the artists, were heterosexual and just liked painting girs or women they found attractive as a subject. So as for me, there isn`t much of a difference, just that I paint men instead of women. And of course, as the world is used for many centuries in seeing mostly beautiful women in the arts, graceful, serene, as godesses or nymphs, that subject became more and more natural to see in the arts. Heterosexual men have difficulties in watching other men in paintings or sculptures in a sexual or sensual way. And that fact works all over the world. Men are tought to be macho. Not vulnarable, but super heros. They must like sports and be good in it and they must be attractive - and attracted - to women. They should not cry or feel lonely and when they ARE, they definately should not show it to others.
But the world changed. There is not just MEN or WOMEN. More and more the world becomes concious that there are also women that were born in male bodies and vice versa. And there also is a whole variety of people in between male and female, seeing themselves in other ways than 'just' a man or 'just 'a woman. I very much like to paint men in other ways than what the bible (or the koran, or other religions) wants to teach the world. Men don`t need to be depicted as a hero, They also can be soft, romantic, showing their feelings. And can also even be painted in a erotic way, as desirable beings. Not overly strong, but inviting,sweet or sensual.

How has your classical training at the Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp influenced your current visual language?

As sayed before, at the academy you get sketching nudes 3 times a week as a trainting. In my case, my teacher was a Jewish male. But not orthodox, he was a free spirit. But in my second year hw married a Jewish orthodox American woman and he became inside and outside orthodox jew himself too. Because of his religion he was not allowed in seeing other women in the nude, other than his own wife. From that moment on, we only got male models to sketch in the nude. Or if there wasn`t a model availble we would sketch other students. Being Dutch, Netherlands were a tiny bit less classical in teaching art as it was in Belgium. But as I got my study in Belgium, what I was tought was what I actually needed to become a illustrator. I always liked the old illustrators from around 1900-1920 and to work with the materials they worked with. And I still do. Computerized art is

not for me and also A.I. is not for me. I will never go into a discussion about that, as it is what I feel and not how others will feel about that subject. I like to work in a organic way, with real materials, not digital.

Many of your paintings are based on live models. How does working from life shape your artistic process compared to working from photographs?

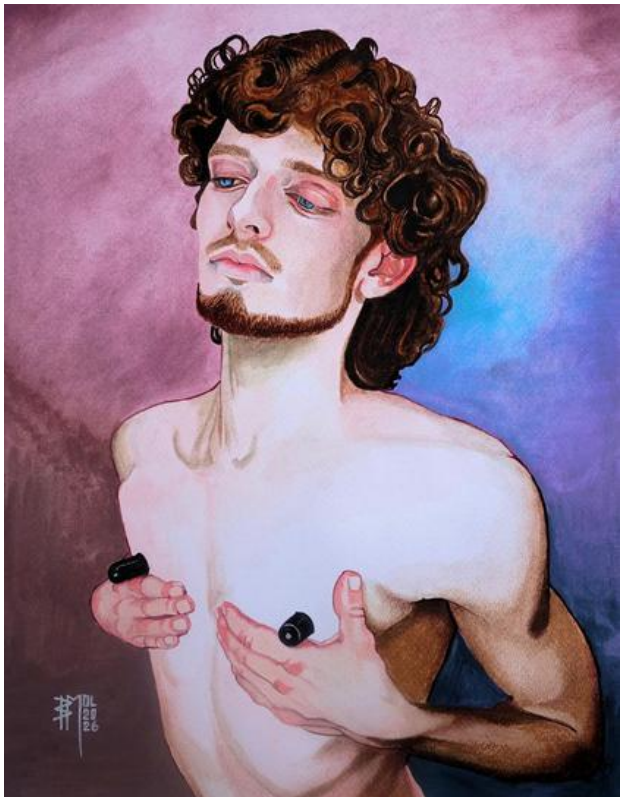
That I find a very good question. As I use both ways. I need the live models for my inspiration and their vibes live give me more than a photo alone will do. Models vome and pose for me, I put them myself in various poses, give them clothing to put on, or a hat, or cap, or even a helm or a gasmask sometimes, just how I would see their type and also to get more variety in it. I change the lightings while they pose, I put on certain music I use for the occasion and create an atmosphere which I find utterly important in order to get the right vibes to work on. BUT: I also take photos of the model. As a referrence to painting the right shadows, the right colours, etc. Later I change much while I am painting. The model poses against a black, or a white background, but while painting I create other backgrounds, that come into my mind while busy painting. This will come in a spontaneous way, I dont think much or dont have it already in my mind before starting the painting. The only thing that is already in my mind, are the colours that I will probably use. When I see the model, standing beford me, immediately I get colours, surrounding them, in my mind. Those will probably the colours that I will use, while painting. So, while I do also use photographs, nothing is certain in what I will be using of them. And I could never go, without the live model himself and his personality that comes over to me, as that is also what I can recall afterwards, while painting.

You have spoken about censorship and the difficulty of exhibiting nude art. Have you personally experienced restrictions, and how do they affect your practice?

Yes, I have had difficulties all of my life in showing what I would have liked to show of my paintings.
I always felt it never was a problem when it was about female nudity. But a full male frontal nude always was a big problem. I was only able to show one or two of my males, when the largest part of my work would be females, portraits and animals. I have never felt WHY this would or should be. Especially when it isnt about a painting in which you dont see a sex act, but just a simple human being without his clothes. And it is always only about the penis. Many venues that show art are venueasthat are open to everyone. But laws here today become more and more specific in what you can show or can not show. Being 71 myself, I grew up in a time that became more and more open, also sexually. Everything should be possible and should not be secret or should be covered. You had the flowerpower movement and also in Holland everything became free. Women`s bras were openly burnt on the streets, to name something. And also the gays became more open and free. The netherlands became the first country where gay people were officially could marry. But after that, groups of people from other countries came to the Netherlands and other countries in Europe and they were much against all of that freedom. And also showed that. Today, as a result the world became more and more prudish in showing nudity. And I feel very much we are going big steps back in time and also in the arts.
For me today it is extremely difficult to show my paintings of male nudes and actually almost impossible as no artgalleries want to show that side of the art. What they say to me is: it is GAY art. We dont have costumers for that and they would not want to see this kind of art. I than think: HOW can you know if you dont show it in the first place? Women also like to see a sensual looking men, if the male public doesnt. And there is also a gay public. Or, dont galleries want a public that is gay and buy - what they call - GAY art? As for now gay artists showing sensual men, need small spaces, often hidden in the back of gay venues, while the rest of the world dont get to see all of this art. On social media this kind of art always is blocked, neglected and oppressed by algorithems, secretly of even openly hidden.The artist himself even get punished for showing his art and gets blocked. It happened to me more than once and one time even for a duration of 2 months on social media. As a result artist must curate what they can or can not show there. That is not freedom of opinion or choiceto me. I dont feel like a martir, but I sometimes get angry about it. As I feel it is an oppresion of artistic freedom in what an artist can show or is not alowed to show.
And, talking about my own art: it is quit innocent actually. Not that much of a difference to the naughty female pin-ups that were already painted in the 1950s and were to view everywhere, from magazines to billboards. So the world and certaintly the artgalleries need to change their view, and soon!

At this stage of your life and career, what continues to motivate you to paint every day?

Well, it is simply what I do. I created art all of my life from 3 years old up to now. It never bores me, I can express my feelings in it and never have a 'artist`s block'.
I always know what to do and indeed I work every day on my paintings. Always one at the time, as that is the way I work.



Bastiaan Mol | Model David | 2026

Bastiaan Mol | The Joker | 2025

But as soon as one painting is nearly finished, I already abandon it in my head and my thoughts already are at the next painting. I never get tired of that. At my age, I can not tell how long I will have left to paint what I paint. And to me it is extremly important to show the world that there are also other subjects that needs to be seen OPENLY. Not hidden.
I sometimes think about a time when maybe my hands begin to tremble and it will get impossible to use the small, thin brushes I always use for details. To me that seems like a dark hole. I prefer to be optimistic in that and I mostly am, but sometimes reality makes other choices.

How do viewers typically react to your work? Do responses differ between countries or cultural contexts?

Some of the questions before, I answered and told how different groups can react to what they see in my art. It can also be quit personal how people react. And to me that is fine. I myself also dont like all art. In a artmuseum I often skip many paintings as I dont find them that interesting. Each his own ans tastes can and should be personal. I also like it when people see a painting I did and make up their own story to it. Often quite different from what I myself had in mind actually. I can find that amusing. I see things never that serious and I hardly can believe why some groups are making such a fuzz about a sheet of canvas or paper and some strokes of paint on it. Why does it make some people happy and other people so angry they would like to burn that piece of art? It obviously is not the painting itself, but the intention of the artist to that painting that gets opposite opinions. And thats how it should be. But trying to skip or hide parts of art that were created to be seen is certainly not the way. We live in a democracy and what the world is doing now to gay artists or to nudity in the arts is not democratic.
Why than is it neccesary to teach artstudents drawing and sktechin the nude body? Just to when their study is finished not to be able to show what they learned? That could never be intended that way.

Heidi Järvinen is a Finland-based visual artist working primarily with ceramics and sculptural objects. Her practice revolves around familiar, often trivial things — food, consumer goods and everyday objects —which she transforms into something excessive, dysfunctional or slightly absurd. Through humor and material exaggeration, her work questions ideas of use, desire and value, asking when an object stops being a product and becomes something to be looked at. Järvinen lives and works in Forssa, Finland.

Project Statement
Only Murders in the Shoe Department
This project examines desire, violence and consumption through staged scenes where familiar objects appear disturbed, damaged or displaced. High-heeled shoes and domestic environments form situations that suggest something has already happened — or is about to.
The works balance between humor and discomfort. They mimic the visual language of crime scenes, advertising and everyday snapshots, while resisting clear narratives. The objects are recognizable, yet their purpose becomes unstable.
The photographic works originate from staged images created in 2006, now revisited, digitized and reworked, forming a dialogue between past and present.
Alongside this series, I continue to explore similar themes through ceramic works and object-based compositions. While not part of the same photographic series, these works extend the same logic into physical form, where familiar things become dysfunctional, shifting from product to image — from something to use into something only to look at.

Heidi Jarvinen | Blade | 2006-2026

Heidi Jarvinen | Thirsty | 2025

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