



[VISUALARTJOURNAL.COM](https://VISUALARTJOURNAL.COM)

# VISUAL ART JOURNAL

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# — Intro

Hello, dear reader,

You are holding the fifth issue of our magazine, and I cannot express the joy of seeing it grow and become increasingly popular.

As you flip through this issue, I invite you to reflect on what art conveys to the viewer. Is it reality? Is it fiction? Or is it reality filtered through the artist's perspective? Sometimes, a fictional reality can better convey the existing truth because it has tools that our real life lacks. And a picture from life can let our imagination paint other worlds.

Should an artist alter reality for the work to be considered art rather than a mere depiction of the existing world? What do we expect from art? Ready answers to our questions or, on the contrary, questions themselves? I hope today you can not only enjoy beautiful works but also delve a little deeper and ponder the role of art in our lives.

In this issue, we have gathered numerous works created in entirely different styles, offering a dive into the worlds of the imagined and the real.

Ahead of you are more than 100 pages of visual delight. Enjoy your reading!



## **Anna Gvozdeva**

Curator of  
Visual Art Journal

*On the Front Cover:*

**Gís Marí**

Janus

2022-2024

*On the Back Cover:*

**Jhoanna Monte**

A Late Lunch in the Sun

2024

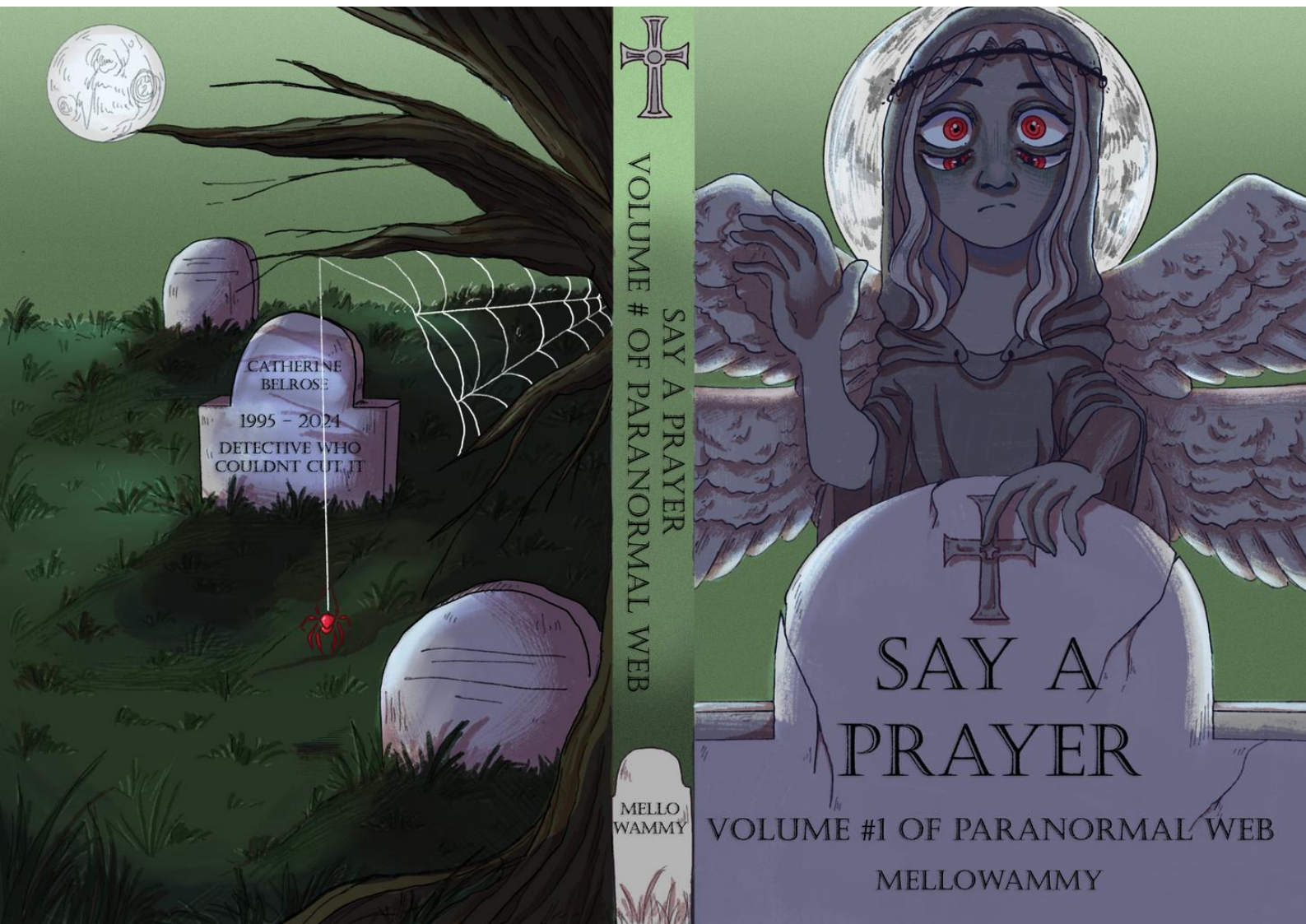
We invite artists to submit their works for publication in our magazine: <https://visualartjournal.com/call-for-artists/>

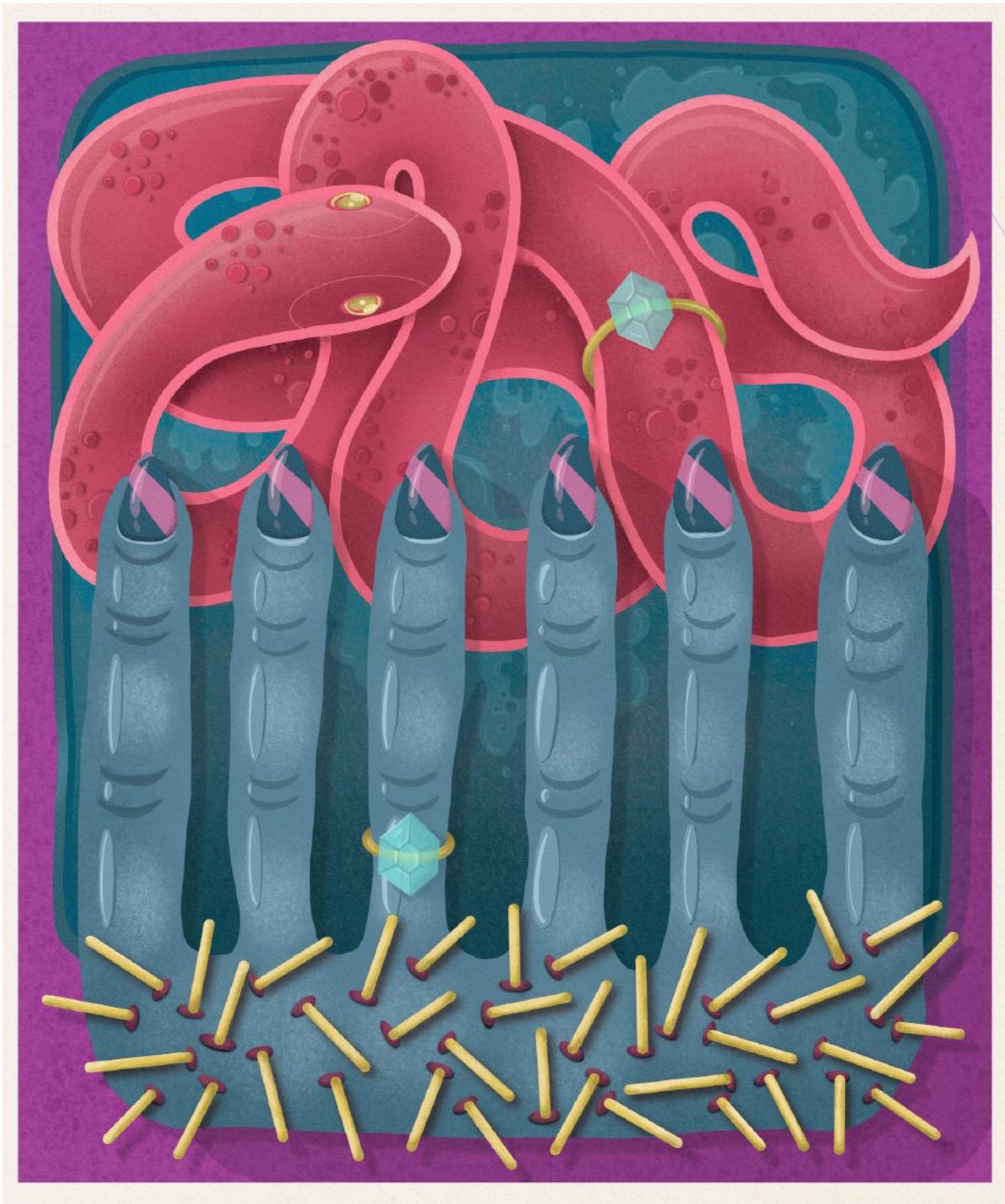


My name is Victoria Caughman and I am a Mexican-American artist pursuing a degree Bachelor of Fine Arts as of writing this. I am a digital illustrator who enjoys creating characters and telling their stories within my colorful works.

— Victoria Caughman

Victoria Caughman | Say a Prayer | 2024





Andrew Carnwath  
Tickle The Snake  
2024

## — Interview

# Andrew Carnwath

**Can you tell us about your journey from working in the art department on feature films to becoming a digital artist?**

My journey into art and production design began in the late '90s at Virginia Commonwealth University, where I graduated with a BFA. I always loved illustration, drawing, painting, and sculpture. During college, I discovered my passion for art direction and production design through elective film classes. This perfect blend of fine art and film led me straight into the film industry after graduation.

Fast forward 20 years when COVID-19 hit, film production paused, and I found myself at home with my family, anxious about the future. My 12-year-old daughter asked to get Procreate for her iPad, and I decided to try it too. I was immediately hooked. Drawing with Procreate became a meditative escape, helping me manage my nerves during the pandemic.

Even after film production resumed, I continued to draw every night. Today,



Andrew Carnwath | Gaffers Bar And Grill | 2024

drawing on my iPad is a deeply personal and cherished activity. It's my creative space, free from producer approvals and budget constraints, where I can express myself fully.

**How have your experiences working with renowned directors influenced your approach to digital art?**

Working on movies has its downsides: it's an incubator of stress, long hours, and creative fatigue. However, the positives greatly outweigh the negatives. I have always been impressed with the talented professionals in their respective departments and how they bring order to chaos. This is best exemplified by the directors. It's inspiring to watch a director steer the ship and realize their vision with the actors and crew. As for my art, I channel that same passion, albeit on a smaller scale.

**Your art explores themes like power, money, greed, love, and death. What draws you to these particular themes?**

These themes are certainly broad and universal. I'm not inclined to delve too deeply into them. Instead, I prefer to explore the surface or just beneath it when developing my concepts. My focus is on composition, color, and form, finding ways to subtly weave these themes into the work.

**How do you incorporate influences from street art, outsider art, and illustration into your work?**

It's strange, but when I create using the iPad, my work leans more into illustration, letting the digital platform influence my style. I find that my digital pieces tend to be cleaner and less gestural compared to my works on paper or canvas. I'm heavily influenced by street art and outsider art, loving the bold colors and freedom that street art offers. Additionally, I am deeply inspired by untrained artists and their approach



Andrew Carnwath | Pulp | 2024

to their medium, which is typically uninfluenced by mainstream critics and processes. Their work is 100% the artist's vision and often speaks volumes with zero pretension.

**You've worked on commercial projects for major brands. How do these experiences impact your personal art practice?**

The brand's impact may be more of a cumulative experience of problem-solving, color blocking, visual kerning, and composition. These are elements we consider in all our projects, and I assume these practices naturally work their way into my own artwork.

**What was the significance of receiving the AICP Award for Best Production Design for you?**

Honestly, this award came at a time



Andrew Carnwath | Facehead | 2023



when I really needed an ego boost. While we do receive appreciation and praise from coworkers and clients, it's rare in the commercial world to be recognized at a major award ceremony. Having the award and the commercial preserved in The Museum of Modern Art's Department of Film archives is particularly exciting and meaningful.

**Can you discuss a specific piece of your artwork that you feel particularly proud of and why?**

I'm proud to have rediscovered my

passion for fine art. It was easy for me to recognize what I love about other artists, but harder to see those same qualities in myself. I've truly enjoyed creating art again, even if my audience is only a few hundred followers. I feel like I've finally reached a point where my art is authentically my own, uninfluenced by other artists or peers. While I still grapple with self-doubt and feelings of worthlessness, I've found that my process has finally found its rhythm, and I now know when a piece is complete.



Andrew Carnwath  
Watermelon Cactus  
2024

I create art as a hobby, both to completely disconnect from my corporate job and to reconnect with my inner child who loved to draw, design, imagine and make. I'm self-taught, with a love for the different modern western art movements that occurred between the late 1800s and in to the first half of the 20th century. My intention when I paint is not necessarily to recreate a realistic scene, but to bring the viewer into the painting to experience a fleeting, yet common human feeling, thought or observation - a familiarity to remind us that we're not alone in our experiences. To express this, I like to play with colour and loose brushstrokes, and be open to a range of styles from landscapes and figurative paintings, to still lifes and abstraction. After completing a Masters Degree in Art History in 2020 I realised that there are so many other kinds and styles of art that inspire me and for which I hope to continue studying and reflecting in my own practice. I aim to learn something new with everything I create, which is what motivates me to continue to make art.

— Jhoanna Monte



Jhoanna Monte | Alone in Density | 2024



## — Interview

# Francesca Busca

**Could you tell us about your journey from being a city solicitor to becoming an eco-artist and mosaicist?**

I always practiced art as a way of life. Whether selling my drawings on the street or collecting the wax from the candle trays in churches to re-melt and model as a child, drawing huge drapes with medieval life scenes for a medieval fair by using material and techniques of the time as a teenager or frantically modelling clay as a solicitor, art has always played an essential role in my life. For some perverse misconception, I always thought that art came too easy and was too much fun to be a job. So, I chose what suited me the least instead, to make up for 'lacks' in my character, and I studied and/or practiced Law in Padua, London, Paris and NYC.

After the children - and a striking visit to the mosaics in Aquileia, in Italy - I finally gave in to my nature and graduated with distinction in Mosaic and Fine Arts at the London School of Mosaic in 2019, where I also lectured the Mosaic Fabrication module in 2021/22.<sup>7</sup>

Having explored various professions throughout my career, ranging from interior designer to in-house legal working with ex-CIA and ex-SAS agents,



from City Solicitor to mosaicist and lecturer, I have finally found myself. Embracing unconventional paths and pioneering endeavours has been a recurring theme in my journey: and while I have achieved success in each undertaking, I have often felt like I was inhabiting someone else's shoes, and this Impostor Syndrome is both daunting and fuelling my drive to continuously explore and expand my knowledge. Also, art is only the last step in my journey - and this is why I call myself an eco-artist, rather than an artist. *Gesamtkunstwerk, my eco-activism encompasses every aspect of my life:* vegan, using 100% renewable energy, wearing second-hand clothes, being plastic free wherever possible, seeking local food and saving water, growing a vegetable and wildlife garden, experimenting with permaculture, fostering a passion for evolutionary ecology and vegetal neurobiology and not flying for the past 4 years, as I strive to live as sustainably as possible.

**What inspired you to create artwork**

## entirely out of waste materials?

Since nowadays we plunder more than twice the sustainable amount of Earth's resources worldwide, I wanted to minimise my impact as much as possible. I noticed that the viewers were more intrigued by the material used than the meaning conveyed by the artworks, which were inevitably focused more and more on the need to reconnect with the eco-system and to shift from an anthropocentric society to one focused on the common good of the whole, until this urge I feel for it simply and naturally overtook my life.

## How do you select the materials for your projects? Do you have any criteria for what kind of waste you use?

I try to use as un-recyclable a material as possible. For example, I stopped storing cans as metal is the only infinitely recyclable resource at the moment, though I still use caps as they are not yet recyclable - at least in the UK. I keep telling my clients who get an artwork made with them that they are not only getting an artwork, but also a stash of material which is becoming increasingly precious with time ;).

I love the challenge of trying new materials, although I have indeed tried most already. My favourite is probably my mum's plastic medicine vials, which she takes once a day. I like having to wait for years to use them, knowing that in a given number of years there will be exactly that certain amount to use. Otherwise, most of my projects are



Francesca Busca  
A Monumnet to Summer  
2024

material driven, so they influence the size and/or the shape of the artwork consistently. When on an Art for Trash commission, I love to think on my feet. Though of course I go through phases, I do appreciate constant stimuli with new materials and especially environments. Residencies are so much fun, and such boost to creativity! Now that my children have grown up enough, I am really looking forward to new experiences in new spaces, as varied as possible.

## Your project 'Payment in Kind(ness)' is quite unique. Can you explain how it works and what inspired this concept?

In May 2018 I launched the Payment in Kind(ness) initiative at my Little Things solo in the lobby of Bridgeman House on High Street Kensington, in London. The spirit of this exhibition was to foster the public's attention to what I called 'Little Things', namely eco-friendly gestures, as

an incentive to Re-thinking, Re-using, Re-purposing and Reducing (ideally pReventing!), and I started accepting Little Things as a “Payment in Kind(ness)” towards any of my artworks on sale. And I keep it going: there is a list of Little Things on my website, and if you are interested in one of my available pieces I will accept any of those towards the price of the artwork. All you have to do is to 1) take a picture of your Little Thing, 2) tag me on IG (@francesca\_busca) or LinkedIn, identify it as #littlethings #paymentinkindness and its number, and I will keep track!

**Can you share some insights from your year-long collaboration with the Institute of Marine Sciences in Venice?**

It was a truly enriching experience. Born from the idea of an Art for Trash project, which is another initiative of mine whereby I make artwork for corporate,



Francesca Busca  
Cinderella Tries the Shoe (Impostor Syndrome)  
2024



Francesca Busca  
Sea It!  
2024

institutional and residential premises by using the client’s waste, I spent a year collaborating with the institute both to understand what each researcher and lab did and to see what waste they produced, so that we could decide which items they could then keep on the side for me. It then culminated in a 2 weeks’ residency at their institute in May, whereby I made the artwork in loco by using such waste from their labs, offices, research platform and vessel, and even some grout and debris which had fallen from their XV c. building at the Arsenale. “Sea It!” was then shown at the Venice Boat Show 2024, acting as a bridge between science and the public and opening a dialogue with and between both worlds on the state of our seas, and what we could do to help. We also created a training for trainers, available for free from the Institute (please contact me if you would like a copy! The institute would be thrilled) which aims at fostering knowledge, love and care for our seas and oceans. Personally, I enjoyed the collaboration tremendously, as the researchers were extremely welcoming, helpful and

collaborative. Not only the legacy of what I learnt will keep developing and inspire me in my work, but I also feel that we established a lovely and vibrant bond which in fact brought the institute to ask me to collaborate with them further in the next few years, also with some prestigious art institutions in Venice. I am over the moon!

### **What are some challenges you face when creating art from waste materials?**

As some of these materials are quite tricky to hold together, they require thorough thinking and experimenting with the adhesive. For example, as you might know, there are hundreds of different kinds of plastic which behave very differently from one another to different adhesives and surfaces. The risk is that the waste, probably sectioned even further by me, will then fall off and pollute more than before I worked on it. Also, I cannot solve the problem lightly by using toxic glues, as again, that would create even more pollution. Personally, I



Francesca Busca | Sea It! | 2024

resort to washable PVA wherever possible, or otherwise to eco-friendly cement, even when the material still does not stick to it: in that case in fact I fold or shape the material in such a way that the tiles are kept to the board by being stuck under the layer of hard cement. I thoroughly enjoy this challenge, even if it means having to work in small sections with lots of weights and supports around and above them, and having to wait a few hours between sections, until the adhesive is dry, before resuming.

### **What advice would you give to aspiring artists who wish to work with sustainable materials?**

Please do!!! Waste can be such beautiful material, and using it is like shopping at a vintage store, offering you all sorts of styles and colours. And when you do, please think carefully about the impact it can have, by using the most eco-friendly adhesives, tools, exhibiting devices, etc. Should you need advice, please do contact me and I will be thrilled to share tips if I can! You can find me on [@francesca\\_busca](https://www.instagram.com/francesca_busca) on Instagram. Get in touch!



Francesca Busca | Red Tape | 2024

I'm a multidisciplinary artist born in France in 1993. My artistic journey started as a music producer in the bass music & lo-fi hip-hop scenes more than 13 years ago. I'm now running two associative music labels (EYESOME and Lo-Fi Clouds) with long-time friends, working for other musicians & producers as a sound engineer. In June 2024, I became a Doctor in Aesthetics and Art Sciences after defending a PhD on hip-hop culture in the United States at Paris Sorbonne Nouvelle University. Since early 2024, I began testing a new lifestyle, embracing a nomadic existence in an old Mercedes van. Within, I've established a creative haven to produce music, art, and writing while immersed in nature.

### *Artist Statement*

The core of my approach lies at the intersection of technology and the natural world, where I explore the limitless possibilities of both realms to create surreal, whimsical, and colorful artworks. I use cutting-edge technology to bring my artistic visions to life, resulting in pieces that blur the line between reality and imagination.

This specific artwork is called "Submerged Desires" and here is the writing associated with it: Hands outstretched, grasping for salvation amidst the tangled foliage that ensnares them. Fingers trembling, embodying the Jungian shadow, whispers of unacknowledged desires and fears. In their uncertain reach, a dance unfolds between conscious intention and the depths of the subconscious, where takes place the complexities of the human psyche, beckoning towards a journey of self-discovery amidst the darkness.

— Lohan Le Galloudec





## — Interview

# Louise Renée

**You taught French Literature for over 30 years before becoming a full-time artist. How has your background in literature influenced your artwork?**

Literature is a grab-bag of all the disciplines rolled into one. It gives me a deeper understanding of history, philosophy, psychology, and even music and art history. It teaches me that personal experience can reach universal significance. It also helps me reflect on my own work. After completing a painting, I write a short text that emerges naturally from each piece, as if the painting were speaking to me. So in a sense, my paintings lead back to literature! In case you'd like to read these short texts, they accompany each painting that I've posted on my website at [www.louiserenee.com](http://www.louiserenee.com).

My love of literature has also inspired some of my paintings, for example, "Revolting Rhinos." I depicted the rioters of the January 6 insurrection as rhinoceroses. After WWII, the Romanian-French author Eugène Ionesco wrote a play about perfectly decent French people turning into rhinoceroses. He wanted to convey the idea of how easily people could swallow fascism and turn



into unthinking beasts. Powerful metaphors find a natural home in both art and literature.

**What inspired you to transition from teaching to painting full-time after retirement?**

When I was 18, I was torn between majoring in art or literature. I chose literature because I also love teaching. In my literature courses, I often chose novels that drew attention to social and ethical issues. I wanted my students to challenge their own assumptions and to think about making the world a better place.

The art courses that I took over the years were wonderful, but when I turned 64, I realized that I needed to devote myself entirely to my other passion before it was too late! And there was no turning back. I've loved every single moment that I've devoted to art. Art has become my retirement sanctuary, which I tried to express in the first painting I did after

retiring (“Autumn Sanctuary”). Ever since, I’ve tried to convey joy, enthusiasm, gratitude, but also critical thought.

**Your art often reacts to current events and aims to convey hope for humanity. How do you balance a critical commentary with a message of hope?**

I feel so strongly about what is happening around the world. In my Ukrainian series, I condemn the aggressor unequivocally. I try to convey the idea that so much potential goodness is wasted because of this war. But the goodness is there. Hope lies in the courage of the people who resist tyranny and oppression. I also do many paintings depicting joy, love, and the beauty of nature that counterbalance the horrors of the world. I cling to the hope that humanity will one day come to its senses and see the miracle of ordinary things that give life so much meaning. After the Ukrainian series, I focused on floral close-ups to immerse myself in colour, energy, and sheer beauty (for example, in “Life”). We must be aware of everything that’s going on, but we need to remind ourselves of the



Louise Renée | Life



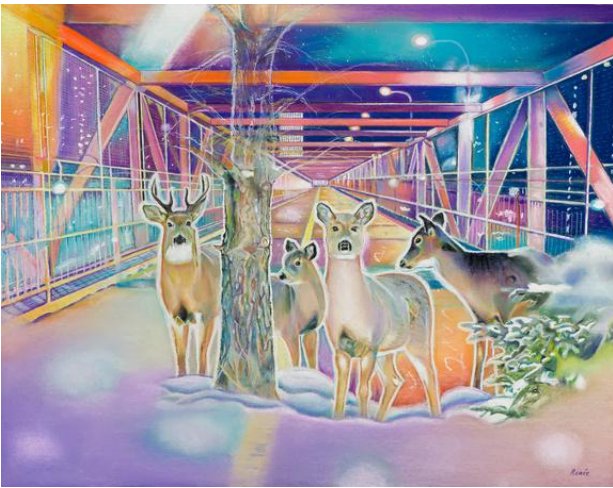
Louise Renée | Autume Sanctuary

good things in life and not wallow in despair. Without hope, we have already given up. Even when I tackle difficult subjects, the very act of painting fills me with hope.

**Can you tell us more about the symbolism in your painting “The Clown President”?**

In November, 2020, I composed a still life to represent what I thought of the American president. The milk can: he has milked the system for all it’s worth. The milk can lid: a clown’s hat. The fake red flower in the melted-looking vase: his ubiquitous red tie in layers of fat. The suitcase: it’s time for him to go. The skull: the death of democracy.

And now, in 2024, he’s become even more dangerous, openly admiring other autocrats and using their insidious tactics to brainwash his followers.



**“Beyond” is a tribute to your father. How do personal experiences and memories influence your work?**

I think we’ve all been deeply moved by certain people in our lives, people whose voices continue to echo in our minds long after they’re gone. During the pandemic years, I felt the need to go back into my family history and remember the good times we shared. I painted my father giving my mother rides in an old rusty wheelbarrow when they were in their sixties. For me, this scene epitomizes their love and the fun they had together (“The Best things in Life are Free”). I did a painting of my mother still baking bread at 85 years old (“Let the Sun Shine In”). Recently, I painted my cousin and his little grandson (“Snug as a Bug in a Rug”) because I also had the experience of becoming a grandmother for the first time. Often, I have an experience of awe before the incredible beauty of nature. A fire will burn in my heart until I’m able to express it in a painting (“Birdbath Kaleidoscope”, “New Beginnings”, “Nature’s Blend”). I’ll also choose a subject because of strong emotions that

need an outlet, such as “Buddy”, a humorous portrait of myself and my dog.

**You’ve received many awards for your work, including first prize for a pastel painting. What does this recognition mean to you?**

These honours encourage me to continue growing as an artist. They let me know that other people are as moved by a painting as I was while creating it. Awards make me feel that I’m in a community that understands how art connects us despite our differences.

**Do you have any advice for aspiring artists who are looking to make a transition similar to yours?**

Yes! You can already guess my answer – it’s never too late! You won’t regret it. Art is one of the most fulfilling activities you can possibly imagine. You lose track of



time. You bypass your intellect and allow creative energy to take over. You learn something with every single painting. There's no limit to what you can produce. It's a fountain of youth in your old age!

**Art has mysterious powers that often transcend our grasp.**

At times, I choose a particular subject and I have no idea why. Some mysterious impulse calls out to me, and I don't try to understand it. And then, after the painting is done, I sometimes have astonishing surprises. For example, an old friend of mine had recently retired from her optometry clinic. Her adult children asked me to do a painting to celebrate her retirement. They wanted me to use one of her own photos as inspiration. I asked them to send me as many as possible because I had no idea what would strike a chord in me. My friend had been all over the world and had taken amazing photos that could have been prize-winners. But for some strange reason, a very modest little photo of a pine twig caught my eye. There were two pinecones on the twig, one half-eaten by a squirrel. I worked



Louise Renée | The Clown President

away at the painting, exaggerating the astonishing colours hidden in the pinecones and marveling at the vibrant, energetic lines of the needles. As I was finishing the painting, I wondered if, by chance, there was any possible connection between pinecones and eyesight, since my friend was an optometrist. Lo and behold, the pinecone is the symbol of the Third Eye which is related to the pineal gland. The Third Eye is said to connect the inner and outer worlds. Intuition, psychic ability and wisdom are said to permeate from it. It is considered to be the "seat of the soul" – the symbol of spiritual enlightenment. My friend's children gave her the painting just as she was returning from a trip, not even having had time to unpack. She gasped as she tore off the wrapping paper. She opened her suitcase and said, "You won't believe what I brought back as a souvenir – a pinecone!"

Louise Renée | Perseverance



I began experimenting with photo editing, using old material and new photographs. This led to "Photographika": series of thematic illustrations created based on photographs. Regarding the series of works on Photographika: "If a city has a face, it is here, in the architecture of buildings, the intersection of streets and destinies... everything is expressed in images. Flight, movement, wholeness - these are the feelings that inspire a person to create."

— Irina Khovrina

Irina Khovrina | From the series "Piter-2"





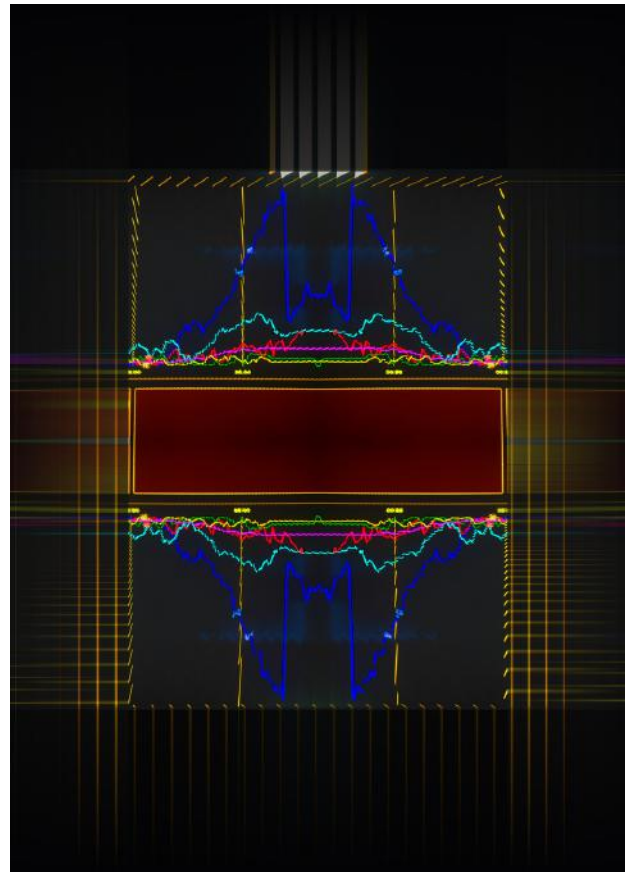
Irina Khovrina | From the series "Piter-1"

## — Interview

# Maximilian Vermilye

### Could you tell us about your journey into the world of photography and digital art?

I have been taking photos since I was a young kid with a camera my mum got for me when I was 12. I would always try and capture a moment so as to preserve it. As I got older, I tried different forms of art, with a brief career in fashion as a personal stylist. I learned about color theory and visual weight. I looked on the high street for inspiration and studied the way people brought different ideas and cultures together through their clothing. Then, as I grew older, I found a rekindling with photography, ideas that went quickly from my head to creation from fashion I saw in photography. I realized that in my pocket I was always carrying a powerful computer and camera, my phone. That was when I went beyond just capturing moments; I could have an idea, capture the image and there on the spot craft the idea from my head onto the screen in front of me. Physically swipe with my fingers to find the right angle, the adjustments, and fine-tune details, turning my entire hand into a brush at times. It was during that process that something clicked with me.



MaxPhV | Synth Heartbeat

All the angles and visuals that I had been accustomed to looking at the street for, now I was looking all around myself. It is with this that my step into serious photography and digital art was born.

### What inspired you to develop the concept of psychodynamic photography?

Taking the age-old time sink on long journeys of looking out on the clouds and then trying to see creatures or faces in them and playing out stories in my head as the world passed me by, I began to apply that to everything. From building corners where the right light turned on would lend the look of an eye or the twist of a tree branch looked like the face of a creature at an angle. From there I kept searching more to find these stories hiding in the world around me. It was a rabbit hole that I fell into, one



where when I showed my artwork, seeing one thing in my work, others would look at what I had made and would see something completely different! This reinforcement loop made me excited to create canvases to let people play with what I created, let their minds discover something hidden, and reveal a little something about them. A Rorschach painting, but instead of blots, a world turned in on itself by my hand and left to roam free with people's imaginations.

### **How do you feel your background in liberal arts enriches your artistic expression?**

My time in liberal arts education gave me the chance to experiment. Constantly. I was never the best at one particular subject and lord knows I was quite varied in my academic studies. The sciences I found were for creating a rigid world structure, and my studies of the arts helped me see the gaps between the structures. No one subject ever satisfied my curiosity but I knew I had to know a little of everything. I believe I can best describe the time I spent in my studies, which helped to reinforce for myself a rigor of trying to see the world through as many lenses as possible, an attitude that I have carried into my adult life. One focused discipline alone can never give enough of an understanding to have a holistic picture.

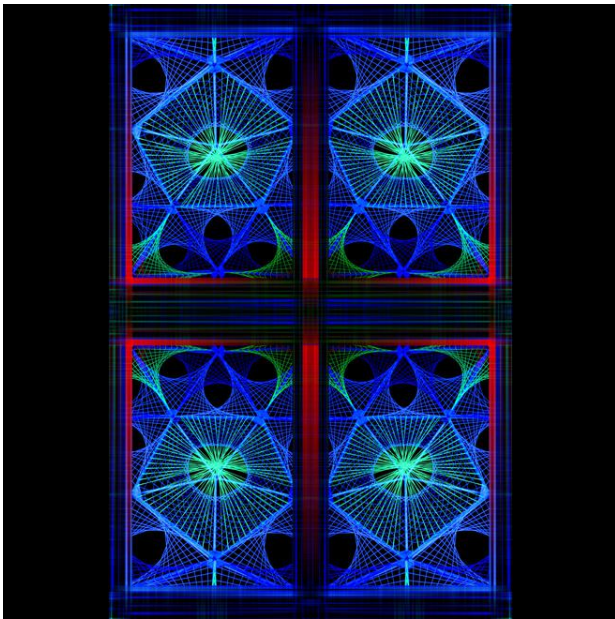
### **What significance do symmetry and repetition hold in your work?**

Symmetry and repetition turn the world



MaxPhV | Frost Giant

from being a point-and-click picture into something that I can truly find both weird and wonderful, even uncanny. Any object has likely already been photographed a billion times from all possible angles, but by making the world fold in on itself, I can suddenly get access to angles and pieces that are new, and the mundane suddenly becomes a whole new canvas to find angles that beforehand would have been throwaways. In my study of photography, one of the key aspects we are taught for a good photograph is the golden ratio, a balance of an image that makes it visually pleasing and a form of symmetry in the asymmetrical. With my new 'lens', shots that were thrown out for breaking this rule, off-angle captures suddenly show new possibilities, making the pool of photographs I can pull from to create vastly more expansive. What I capture can now both purposefully follow the golden ratio or ignore it as I desire. It has broken me free of my chains of the perfect photograph as every single shot holds the opportunity for me to grasp the hidden in its details.



MaxPhV | Twist

**Can you discuss any particular project or piece that holds significant meaning to you?**

Early on in my photographic artistic career, when I had just begun to elaborate on the psychodynamic concept, I was in France on a visit to an old castle in Brittany. Drawing back on my studies of history, I imagined what discussions and conspiring had been held within its halls and what wisdom had been shared through the ages as I walked through. I wanted to capture this, but I could not find a single photo that captured this essence. Then, in a moment, when I walked away from my group for some personal exploration of the castle, I reached an empty staircase drawn in originally from the light shaft that was shining through. I remembered looking up to see the flow of the stone staircase circling above me, and it was in that instant that I had a flicker pass through my mind. Something simple and yet so elegant to capture it; and grabbing my phone looking up, I grabbed a shot of

the stairs directly upwards. I raced onto an editing app I had recently downloaded and was still learning, and there I rushed to capture the inspiration and give it form. There, within 10 minutes of pulling out from my pocket this tiny device, I had one of my proudest creations, The Owl. A creature that has represented to me wisdom and eternal observation and captured my feelings perfectly of the aged grounds I was on. A lightbulb moment when I knew that I could do this. That I had something that worked and gave me an itch to keep searching for that next flash of inspiration. And the rest is history, as you would say.

**How do you see the future of digital art evolving, especially with advancements in technology?**

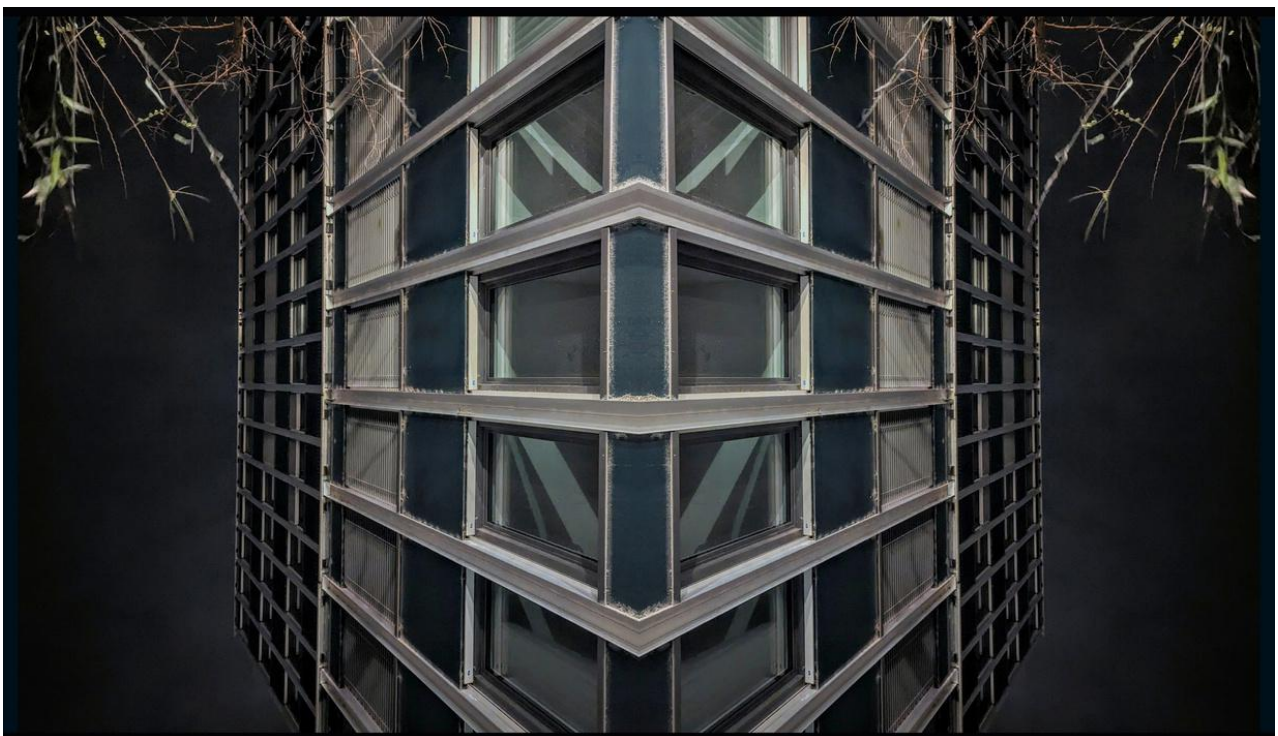
The advancement in the ever-shrinking of daily electronic devices and, in contrast, the power they wield are exponentially growing. I have seen in my own lifetime programs that I remember as a child having to boot up on the old family computer and wait patiently through loading screen after loading screen to be able to access. In opposition, today opening up the same programs is a mere press of the finger and a flash instantly to the start menu running on something no larger than a pocketable small letter. In addition, the change from keyboard to touchscreen has been instrumental in bridging the digital art gap for artists as we humans are creatures of touch by nature, molding with our very hands the world we want to create our reflections as we

have done for ages beyond memory. There is a more personal touch on our 2D worlds when we can interact with them like children did with brushes discovering colors for the first time. These breakthroughs, I find, are both a blessing and a deadly dagger for artists today. The tools you need to create digital art have never been easier to acquire and use; the average mobile phone holds more power than the computers that were used to render the groundbreaking CGI back in the first Jurassic Park films. In contrast with this, we have ever easier ways to share and have our art shared with everyone, and to rise above the noise is even more difficult than it used to be as there is so much more competition. This leads me to my next answer.

**What advice would you give to emerging artists who want to explore digital photography?**

In today's world, you can have your

digital work seen by just about everyone. However, everyone does not share the same tastes or appreciation for the craft. No, I think the days of global superstar artists like Picasso and Salvador Dali have passed us. But do not fret, for I believe we are in a new age. There has never been a better time in history for artists in the niche. Fringes are stronger now than I believe they ever have been, and the reward for daring and experimentation is rewarded far more greatly than before. Those who will find and appreciate your work, in large part thanks to how art is discovered these days through algorithms and data, will be far more enthusiastic. Embrace the weird; no idea is too out there. Remember, today, you do not need the latest and greatest to create the best; only have the drive to create. So if you are to dream, dream big, dream bold. And never let your vision settle for second best. You already have the tools to start in your pocket.



MaxPhV | Are You Good Enough

I'm excited to be sharing a new series I've worked on while in an art residency in a jungle of Costa Rica, titled State of Nature. It consists of eight illustrations, in ink, graphite and collage, that explore the contrast between the concrete-heavy environment I'm used to, as a city dweller, and the seclusion of the wilderness I got to experience during my residency in Central America. In my work I aim to celebrate the mundane and explore the humdrum of everyday life, with a particular focus on our behaviors around each other and how we handle setbacks, conflict and uncomfortable situations. A core message I aim to convey when depicting these slice-of-life scenes is that there is always a chance of breaking free and landing on your feet. I am endlessly stimulated by life in a big city and find great inspiration in interactions with other people. Lisbon, the city where I grew up, has a large metropolitan area but always had the feel of a small town. The diversity I encountered in New York was very stimulating and made me pay closer attention to what was happening around me. These experiences translated into compositions where people are always at the forefront, because that is my favorite subject, and in depictions of moments heavy with melancholy. I counterbalance this by magnifying the expressions of my characters to a grotesque degree and looking at them and their struggles through a humorous lens.

— Pedro Gomes







# — Interview

## Gís Marí

**Can you tell us about your journey from studying psychology to becoming a full-time painter? What inspired this dramatic career shift?**

From early on in my life, I had a certain reluctance to unthinkingly accepting the things I was taught at school.

I found myself dreaming, zooming out, and abstracting the knowledge, but I never had a voice to express these inner thoughts.

After graduating from high school, when I started studying and experienced more freedom in planning my own time, I found that in the world of the arts, the dreaming that was seen as a flaw before is now a power.

I started buying paint and spent long nights painting in my student apartment, experimenting with the structure of the paint, the interaction between the paint and the canvas, and looking for strong shapes and colour combinations.

This was a world where nobody taught me what to do or think—a world with endless possibilities. Freedom.

I started missing classes and lost the motivation to study.

By my early 20s, I had dedicated my life to painting.



**Your works are characterised by large-scale abstract expressionism. How do you approach the creation of these paintings, and what techniques do you employ?**

I start out loose and energetic, but I am extremely focused. I apply a thin layer of paint and look for a form and suitable color palette.

I see painting as a conversation between me and the canvas. I apply a stroke of paint and listen to the reaction, then the next stroke. I oversee the development and the conversation continues for hours to days.

It is a process of searching and feeling. In that period, the line between mistake and success is extremely thin. I try to find what the canvas has to offer, and along the way, the canvas becomes more profound and gains personality. I use oil paint, so a layer of paint takes time to dry. I let the canvas rest and start

working on another in the meantime. Then, over time, as the painting gets more mature, the intensity and risk of the strokes need to be the same as in the beginning.

This is why I disagree with the cliché story that a painter is scared of a blank canvas—it's when the canvas is blank that there is nothing to lose. The more personality the painting develops, the harder it becomes to take risks because you have this already half-existing personality to lose.

If I make a mistake, even in the last phase after months of work, I cut the canvas into pieces.

But if there is no mistake, there is a time when, after weeks of contemplating, I decide that the painting is finished.

I add my signature and never repaint the work again; it is born.

**You mentioned your discomfort with the gentrifying, speedy, and money-**



Gís Marí | Janus | 2022-2024

**driven environment of Amsterdam.**

**How has moving to southern Europe, particularly Porto and Figueira da Foz, influenced your artistic practice?**

First of all, I like to move, live in different environments, and encounter different cultures.

For me, life in the South is more physical and more real. People are less rushed and more respectful towards each other. I think one should not create in a rush; you should oversee and contemplate your work.

I also like to be an outsider. It feeds my curiosity and drive to explore.

**In an era dominated by social media, you choose to avoid it and believe in the physical interaction with your paintings. Can you elaborate on this philosophy and its impact on your career?**

For me, art is physical and needs to interact with the viewer in the flesh.

When you reduce a 2-meter painting to a 10-cm phone screen, you lose a lot of its intensity and profundity. Moreover, the effort of going to a gallery to see a painting contributes to the experience. Of course, I understand that this is the world we live in, and I need to participate in it to a certain degree. I have a website, and my current gallerist uses Instagram. But the most intense art experiences I have had were all physical.

I truly hope that way of perceiving art will never die.

**You spend months, sometimes years, on a single painting and destroy those**



**you aren't satisfied with. Can you explain this rigorous process and how it contributes to the quality of your work?**

I need this time to get in contact with the painting and develop a relationship. Also, with the use of oil paint, each layer of paint needs time to dry before I can apply the next one.

When working on a painting, I am a perfectionist. Every inch of the canvas needs to contribute to the whole.

In order to achieve that, I look, paint, erase, and repaint infinitely.

That takes a lot of time.

**Could you share your thoughts on the relationship between psychology and art, especially considering your background in psychology studies?**

What I liked about psychology was the use and exploration of empathy. As an artist, being empathetic is important; a



Gís Marí | Tango entre rio e mar | 2023-2024



Gís Marí | Natura artis magistra | 2023

piece of art doesn't come merely from yourself.

It is valuable to listen to others, whether directly or through books or other media.

Weigh their thoughts, explore them, and eventually compose your own.

**What advice would you give to aspiring artists who are trying to find their own voice and style in today's art scene?**

Don't be afraid to be alone. Find your inner voice and elaborate on that.

Listen to others, but don't let them direct you. Always keep your freedom.

Work, sweat, and don't give up. Being an artist is not as sexy as it seems to the outside world.

It is hard work, often done in solitude, and is a constant struggle.

But when you succeed, it is the most beautiful thing there is.

Creating is magic.

I am an illustrator from New England with a passion for depicting food, buildings, and scenes from urban life. I graduated from the Massachusetts College of Art and Design in 2023 and am looking into the editorial industry. I love to work with a combination of digital and traditional techniques and experiment with new mediums.

— Mylee Setzer

105 PETERBOROUGH ST





## — Interview

# Orzhikhovskaya Ekaterina

**Your work features a blend of traditional cultural ornaments and modern avant-garde execution. What draws you to this unique combination?**

I have always been interested in mythology and history. As a child, I would immerse myself in fairy tales and legends, imagining magical worlds. As I grew older, this interest evolved into a love for various cultures and traditional ornaments, many of which have sacred meanings understood only by specific groups of people. Delving into their study and depiction is like opening a secret room. Avant-garde execution, in turn, can be compared to a bridge between the art of the past and the present. It involves reinterpreting patterns created by people who lived long ago and placing them in a contemporary context. Additionally, I love bright colors – they are often lacking in everyday life.

**How has your formal education influenced your artistic style and technique?**

My first education is in painting, so I



have always preferred working with paints over graphic materials. Acrylic is an amazing material that combines the transparency and smooth transitions of watercolor with the thickness of oil paints. It also dries quickly, which allows for very efficient work on ornaments. Besides this, I have an education in advertising. During my studies, I was most attracted to the study of poster art of the 20th century. The works of Alphonse Mucha, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, and Soviet artists had a huge influence on the formation of my artistic style. Combining color and graphics, decorative and real. Maximum expressiveness in every line.

**Could you describe your creative process from conception to completion of a piece?**

Everything starts with inspiration, be it an object, photo, song, or feeling. Anything can serve as a trigger. Then an

image appears, along with an irresistible desire to transfer it to the canvas and show it to the world. Next comes the sketching stage, first tonal and linear. Then the search for color solutions and palettes, finding references, ornaments, stencils, and creating the final sketch with acrylic paint. After that, the final stage begins: transferring the composition of the future painting onto the canvas. I carefully and accurately outline the pencil sketch with a marker, so that during the painting of the undercoat, the sketch does not get lost – it will show through the paint layer until the final stage. I fill the canvas with large color spots, make an underpainting. Using the dry brush technique, I work on shadows and textures. I meticulously detail the ornaments and apply stencils. In the final stages, I apply metallic paints and make necessary linear outlines to emphasize compositionally important areas. When the painting dries, I cover it with an acrylic-based varnish, and my work is ready to be shown to the viewers.



**You have been a part of various exhibitions and competitions. Can you share an experience from one that was particularly memorable?**

For the past two years, I have been helping to organize the exhibition "Inspiration from Ornament," which features works by completely different participants: adults, children, professionals, and amateurs – all whose creativity is infused with a love for patterns. When you are not just an artist whose works are being displayed, but also a teacher whose students are exhibiting, and an assistant organizer responsible for the composition of the exhibition space – it is incredibly challenging and exciting. Organizing your own exhibition is a very responsible process that requires a lot of effort and energy. If you take on such a task, be prepared to negotiate with museums and their conditions. Many artists can be





scatterbrained and forget an important detail at the last moment. But also remember that all the effort you put in will return to you twofold. The gratitude of the participants is worth it. This is a valuable experience for your psyche and stress tolerance.

### **As an art teacher, how do you balance your teaching responsibilities with your own artistic practice?**

In reality, it is very challenging, as working with children takes a lot of energy, and teaching is a field where you often have to take work home. But I love my job. My students are an extension of myself; I motivate them to be creative and work hard. Therefore, I try to inspire them by my example, because if I can achieve something, then my students can even more so. This makes me work harder on my own creativity. During the school year, I mainly try to create sketches, and sometimes I manage to find time for full-fledged work on paintings. However, the main part of my time that I leave for myself is the

holidays. Fortunately, teachers have two months of them.

### **What advice would you give to young aspiring artists who look up to you?**

The answer will be cliché: believe in yourself, track your personal growth. Do not throw away your old works, keep at least a few to reminisce and see your progress. And there is always progress if you are working. We, creative people, easily succumb to despondency and disappointment in ourselves. After all, by creating something new, we give a part of ourselves to this world, and that is a very energy-consuming action. Find what energizes you and do not be afraid to show the world what you do. The main thing is to find your audience. If you do not show your work, how will they find you?

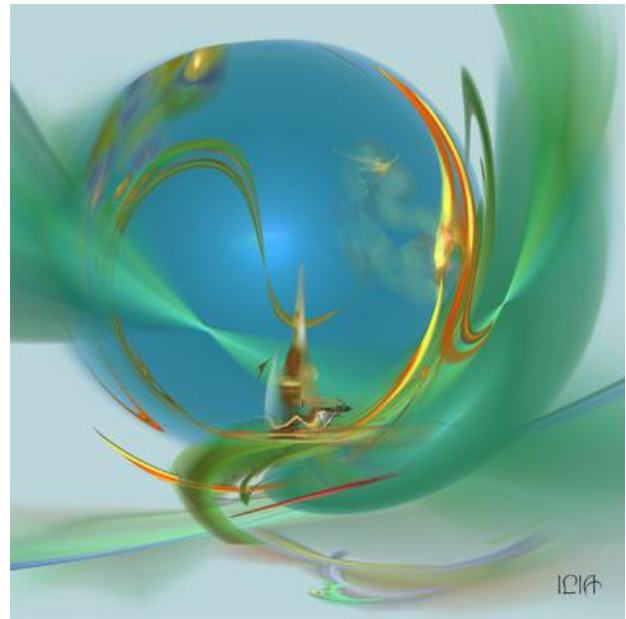


## — Interview

# ILIA aka Leigh Ann Edrich

### **Can you tell us more about your early influences and how your relationship with Ralph Grimes shaped your journey as an artist?**

My early influences were my Mother (painter and crafter), Aunt (poet and singer) and Two Uncles (both were artists and poets). I had sky high dreams of what I wanted to create and my goals in different areas of The Arts (I'm a writer, poet, sculptor and fine artist). Being naive and trusting in my teen years throughout my early twenties, I would happily tell others my dreams. What happened was my dreams were smashed, invalidated, I was told that I'll never make it, I wasn't good enough, kindergarteners are better at painting than I was, asked if that was all I could do, told I should get a real job, that my art was worthless, my writing wasn't good, on and on it went. Year after year the weight of the accumulating messages added up until I gave up. I stopped creating completely. I became a roofer and also held other jobs but never felt right doing any of them.



ILIA aka Leigh Ann Edrich | Eternal Gift | 2022

Ralph was working at the same place I was and we had the very same morning habits: drink a cup of coffee and read until it was time to start working. We became very good friends. After a while I had to move to a different state, so we became penpals. This period of time was magical! First Ralph told me he was a closet poet and sent a wonderful poem. So, I wrote back and told him the same, sending along one of my poems. After a while, I sent along one of my "doodles" (a pencil drawing). Ralph did send back his feedback on it, instead he hung my "doodle" up in his very busy office and wrote about the responses of others! First a person would see my art, walk up to it to see it, step back about three feet and look at it from there, walk up close again and would tell Ralph good things about my creation!

Ralph used encouragement and validations, he told me what I was doing right and I grew as an artist. After my first sale, I was on my way as an artist. I had Ralph at that time what it was that he did to revive me and he said that he



used the "Validate the Rightness" method. He ignored any "not quite right" things that I painted and validated the good things that I did. In doing so, by putting my attention on the good, the "bad" disappeared.

I also found out that Ralph held an MFA from Columbia University. That he learned there in the early 1940's before the teaching method was changed to the "if an artist can't take criticism then he shouldn't be an artist" method. Ralph taught me many areas of The Arts and Performing Arts. My love for classical, jazz, blues and big band music came from this. Also, music is a part of every creation I make.

Because of the care I received from Ralph, I also mentor artists - in all fields and in any country. I have found that the Validate the Rightness method can help artists be the best they can ever be.

**You mentioned that life is a canvas. Can you elaborate on how this philosophy influences your art?**

Life is a Canvas!  
My inspiration when creating is drawn from the antics of wildlife and also the butterflies, bugs, bees and hornets that kiss me but never bite me. My beautiful gardens. The artists that are now winning because I mentored them. Music! Colors and more.

The beautiful melodies of life inspire art.

**How do music and your choice of composers like Mozart and Vivaldi**

**influence your work?**

It's been said by many viewers and collectors of my dreamscapes that I captured music in my dreamscapes. Some ask how I did that!

A Dreamscape needs classical music in order to create it. Classical sonatas, concertos, instrumentals are my top choices.

Without music as one of the main inspirations there is no dreamscape.

**Can you tell us more about the techniques you use in your digital fine art?**

"ILIA's creations blend elements of the natural world with fantasy, earning her recognition across the globe. Each piece requires 50 to 100 hours of meticulous work, involving the editing of individual components that are then combined into one cohesive Dreamscape. This process produces vibrant visuals that engage viewers in color and form."

I figured out this technique by starting with "what if..." It has expanded since that point. My earlier attempts were pretty good but the later ones really have a message that communicates to many from kids to elderly in all walks of life. As the old adage goes, practice makes perfect.

"I make games for a living. As part of that career I've come across a huge variety of digital art built in many different programs and encompassing many different styles. ILIA's dreamscapes are

unique and distinctively hers. They're unlike anything I see anywhere else." J.J.

**Can you share more about your first commissioned work, 'Cosi Fan Tuti,' and how it impacted your career?**

The sale of Cosi Fan Tuti was a very joyful time at the beginning of my art career. Ralph had been validating the rightness, my painting-ability had continued to increase and then I made that sale! It was very exciting. It was also a very big validation of my creations

that knocked out the previous comments that stopped me cold as a creative individual. I was able to move forward from that time using many different techniques and materials in order to perfect my message.

**You mentioned helping other artists make a living with their art. Can you share some insights from your book, "The Art of Mentoring"?**

I love helping other artists to make a



ILIA aka Leigh Ann Edrich | Serenity | 2024

living with their art! There's nothing like seeing an artist attain dreams and goals.

The very first thing an artist needs to do is: don't listen to others that are trying to get you to stop. A person that would do that is not being friendly or helpful no matter the guise.

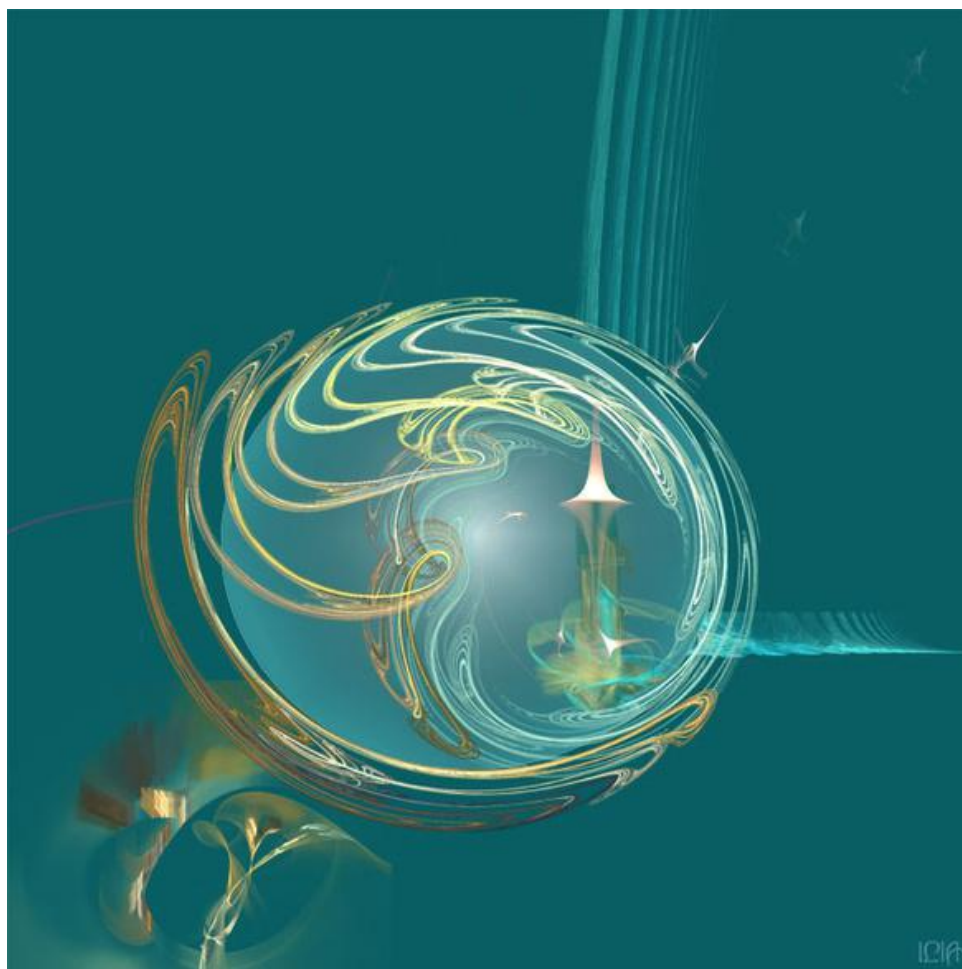
Don't stop is key.

If you have stopped, start again.

Art in its many forms gets created which then inspires the inventors and scientists with the new ideas. Take space travel, it started being written about in the 1940's, by the mid-60's a man landed on the moon. You get the idea. You are important.

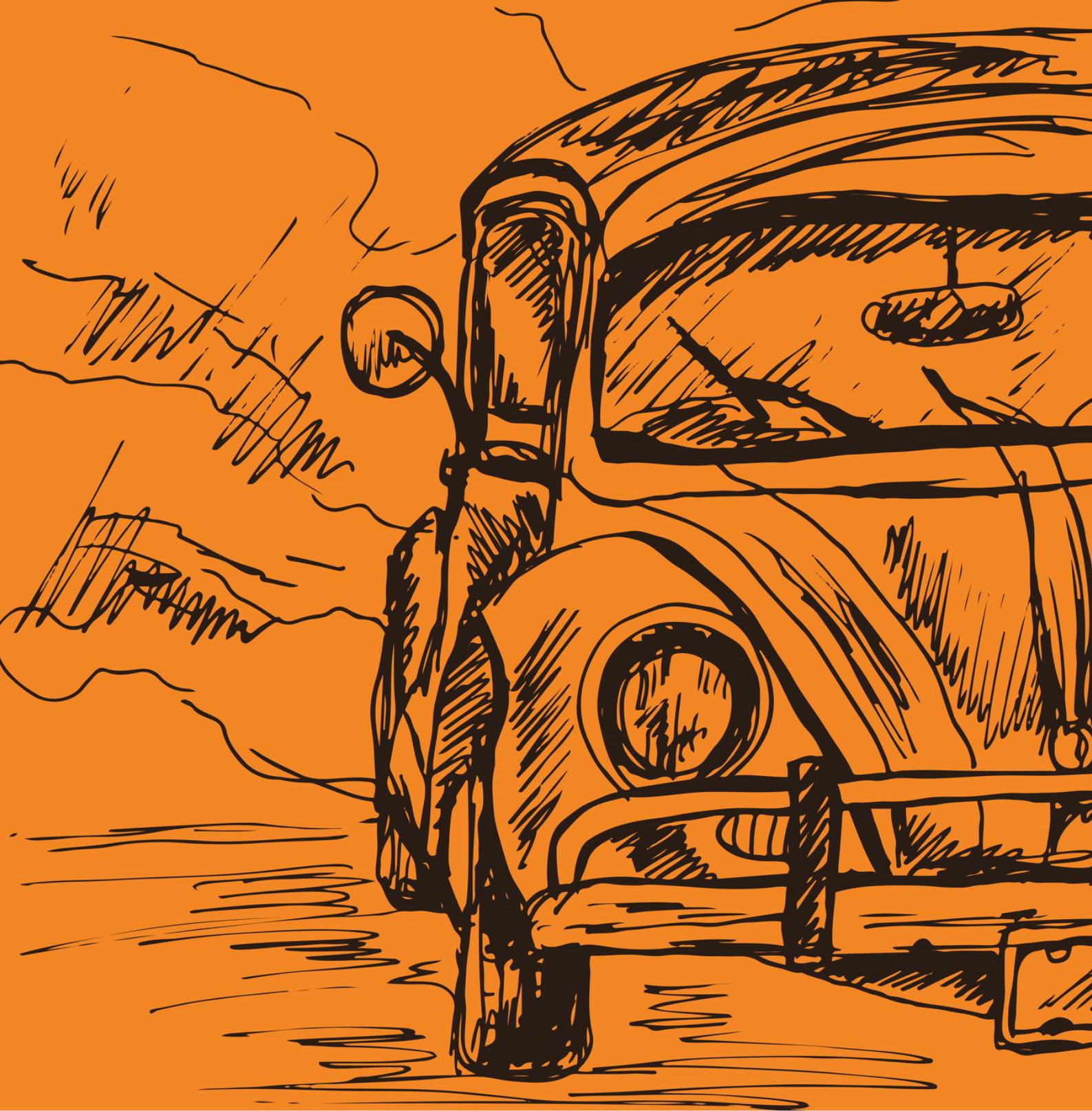
### **What advice would you give to emerging artists who are trying to find their own voice and place in the art world?**

Get The Art Book. It can be found on Amazon. Study it. Focus on your message - both formulating it and getting it across to others via your art. Use the Mood Lines in the Appendix of the book to help you with getting your message across. Then ask for feedback to make sure your message did get across. Doing this will help you to achieve your goals and also give you the certainty you need, no matter what.



ILIA aka Leigh Ann Edrich | Dream Foretold | 2024

Maria Lukina (LUART) - designer and illustrator, participant in numerous competitions and festivals, winner of 1st place in the Interior Painting category at the International Festival Great Britain "Golden Time Talent," and 3rd place at the International Festival Spain "Dali's Mustache." She has participated in numerous exhibitions, both solo and group. Maria's works are held in private collections as well as in gallery collections.



**HE PANTONE**

Russet Orange

My artwork is inspired by ornamentation in art history and how artists have previously used patterns, repetition, and shapes to express various kinds of narratives and stories in an indirect manner. Using this inspiration in my work, I create fine linework and details that utilize all spaces and colors to the extreme, taking meaning behind every action while also directing my next artistic moments on chance or automatism. The pieces presented use this method to deliver a story about a journey one takes as a wanderer, moving between different worlds and having different lives to direct each time. Each piece presents a parallel world where our sense of reality is transformed into an almost abstracted impossibility.

— Kate Yeungee Oh

Kate Oh | In Another Life | 2023





A 24-year-old graphic design student from Italy, who transitioned from traditional art to digital. Rather than focusing solely on graphic design, I enjoy drawing chickens and exploring themes from my daily life.

— Lisa Toll

Lisa Toll | Cool Chicken | 2023







happy  
little.  
bean



Irina Reshetnikova | Differences | 2024

**Irina Reshetnikova.** Painter and digital artist. Born in Novosibirsk in 2005. Currently pursuing an education in college, majoring in graphic design. Specializes in drawing people in the realism style. However, due to a strong love for mythology since childhood, her works often feature mythical creatures, rituals, and ceremonies. She began her artistic journey about four years ago, working independently. Now, art occupies her entire life, and this year she has actively started participating in exhibitions and competitions for her self-realization.



My name is Robbe and I'm a 2d frame by frame animator and illustrator from Belgium who loves to create life through art. Art has always been a mayor part in my life but since last year I really fell in love with 2d frame by frame animation and comic book illustration. Even though I still have a lot to learn I am always eager to become better and open to learn from anyone.

### *Artist Statement*

Art is about sharing. Sharing your emotions, ideas, interests and what you believe in after all. Either with yourself or with others. I hope through my art I can share my soul to you so you can do too.

— Robbe Bruers



"Unconscious Collages" is a collection of digital collages purely dedicated to the unconscious, that psychic dimension containing thoughts, instincts, representations, behavioural models, which are often the basis of human action, but of which the subject is not fully aware. It is an overlapping of images, words, elements which refer to sensory atmospheres, phobias, dream evocations and fragmented memories, as the thoughts that are crowd in the mind. There is not a logical key or a unique meaning, there is no objectivity in her works. The user thus has the possibility of finding his subjective interpretation and personal identification.

— Francesca Patanè

Francesca Patanè | Protection | 2024



DE AR SI CI LY



In my works, I reflect thoughts and images that arise while listening to music, transforming the fleeting picture in my mind into a conscious and deeper depiction. I believe that art, while it should provide food for thought and make people ponder many things, can also bring a bit of joy by creating something simple, which is equally important.

— Yulia Syrkina



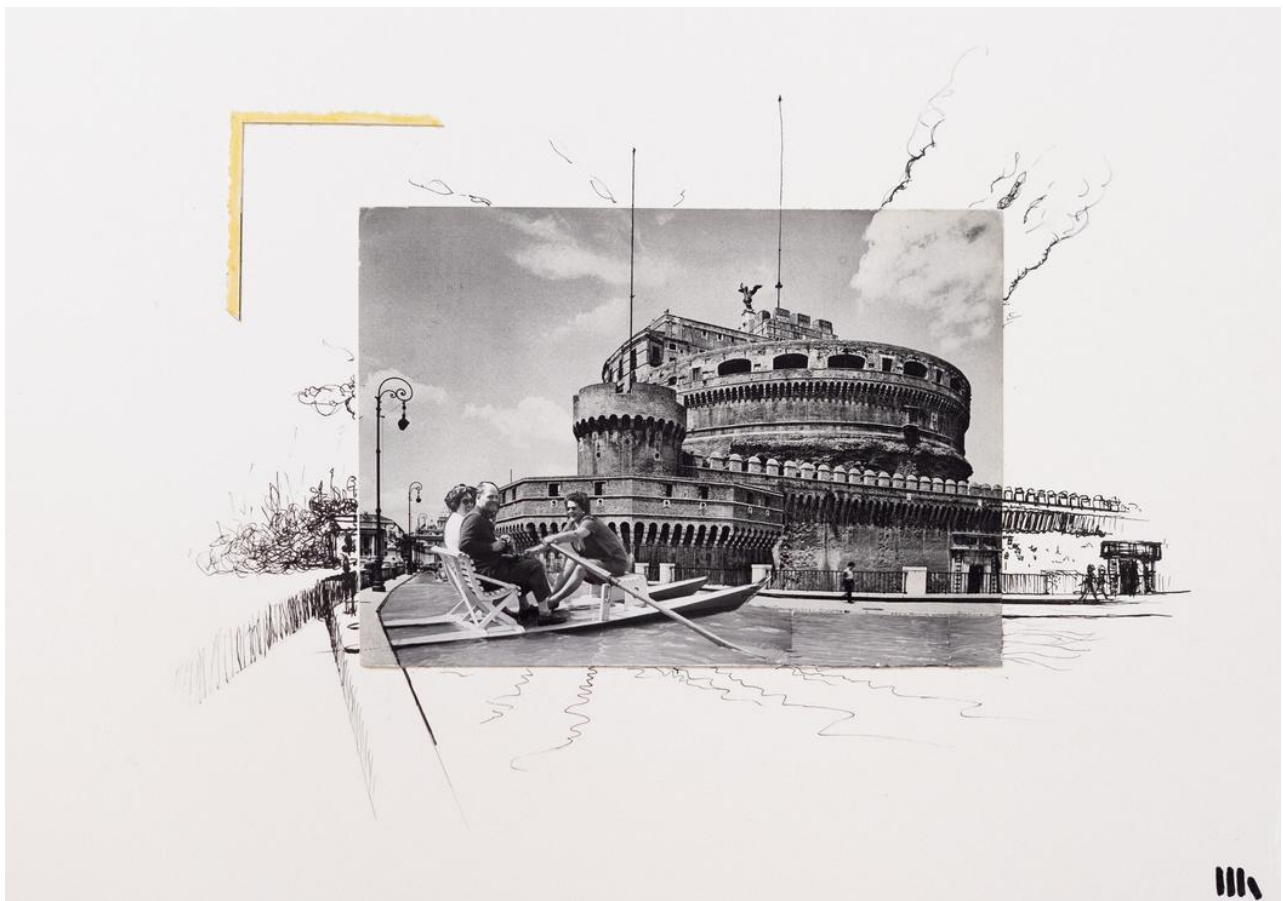


Creative director and director, I have always been involved in communication. I design and create interactive places and spaces. I have always been designing, drawing, producing and three years ago I started my "new stories".

### *Project Statement*

My "new stories" are made with 1 postcard that "has travelled" and which has its own personal story, given that it was chosen and sent... it is unique. Then I look for a photograph of one or more people that represents an intimate moment or a holiday... she too has her own personal stories and she too is unique. I combine them and then draw freehand to broaden the boundaries, imagine spaces and indicate new emotions...I create a "new story".

— Michele Rigoni



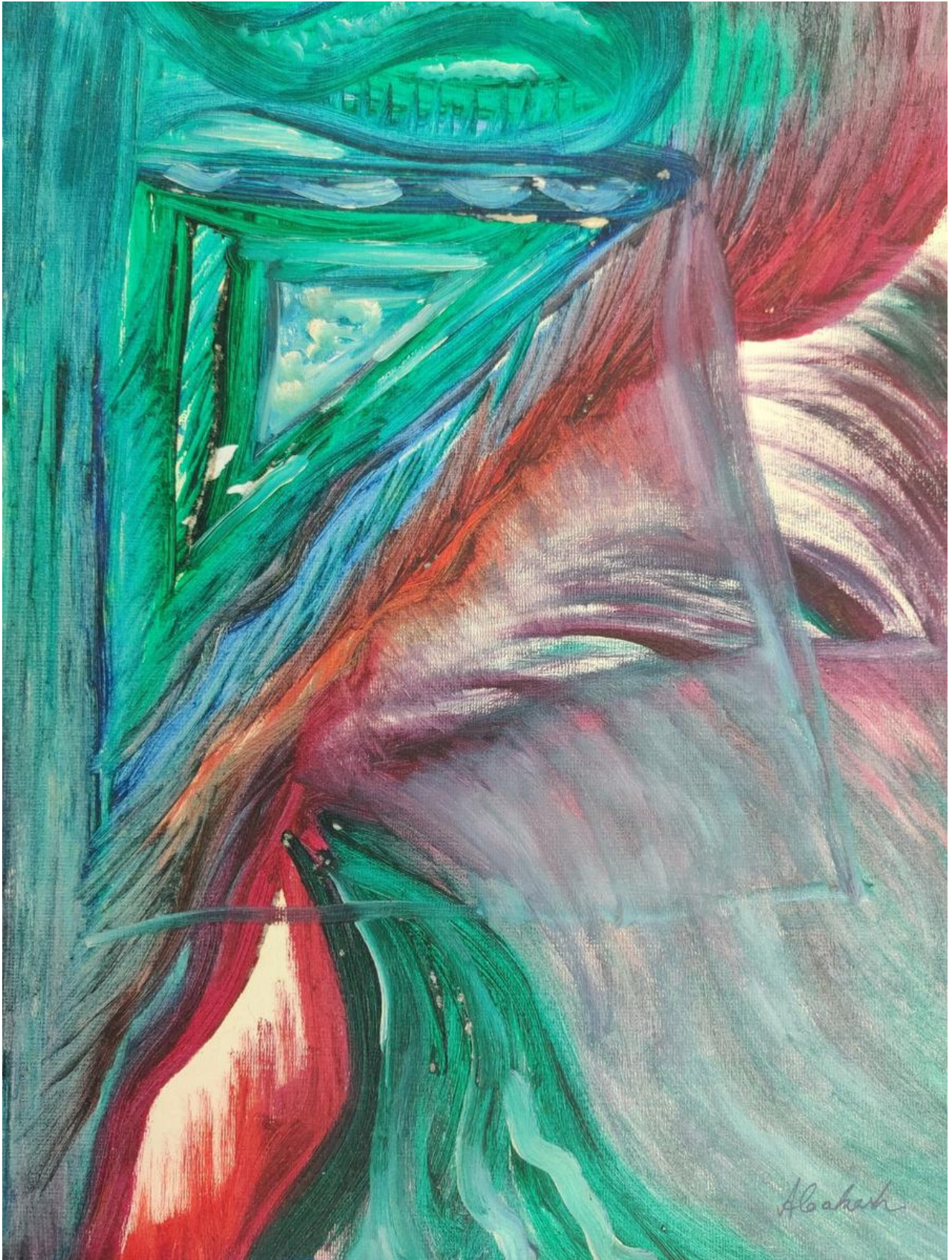


III

Name of the artist: Dr. Susmita Chatterjee, alias Aloakash Dr. Susmita Chatterjee alias Aloakash is a meanderer of waves through meanings, from the third person to first and vice versa. An academician by training, she completed her Ph.D on the warrior goddess Durga, from Jawaharlal Nehru University, India. In her doctoral and post doctoral works, Dr. Chatterjee challenged the lenses which categorise the reverence of the female and feminine as a 'castrating mother'. Profusely acquainted with Western and Indic philosophical praxis, she started exploring the feminine voice within. Her writings and paintings cover different genres, both in form and content. She has over 400 artworks to her credit, which include oil paintings, water colour on paper, dry pastel on paper and line drawings. She uses her paintings, along with narration and/or, songs and music composed by her to heal people from different parts of the globe. And that is how Aloakash is born. Aloakash is a moment of becoming. Aloakash is a non moment of the recognition of the cognitive, that defines who am I. Aloakash is also the cognition of differences of the different eyes that constitute a plurality of I in the singularity of body -space. The brush moves on the canvas. Strokes. I look for me. I have opted to display my artworks in gallery mode, only recently. Treasuring the open of the journey of different i-s, I welcome you all in the travelogue.



Susmita Chatterjee | Involution | 2013



Susmita Chatterjee | Mirror rage | 2014

I consider the portrait to be the most interesting genre. In the process of creating a portrait, the artist studies the model in detail, scrutinizing the face, pose, and gesture, trying to convey the person's character as accurately as possible. The height of skill is the ability to depict the subject organically and characteristically. That's why I prefer long studies over sketches; they lend themselves to capturing a likeness and appear more complete.

— Olga Berkovich

Olga Berkovich | Life | 2023



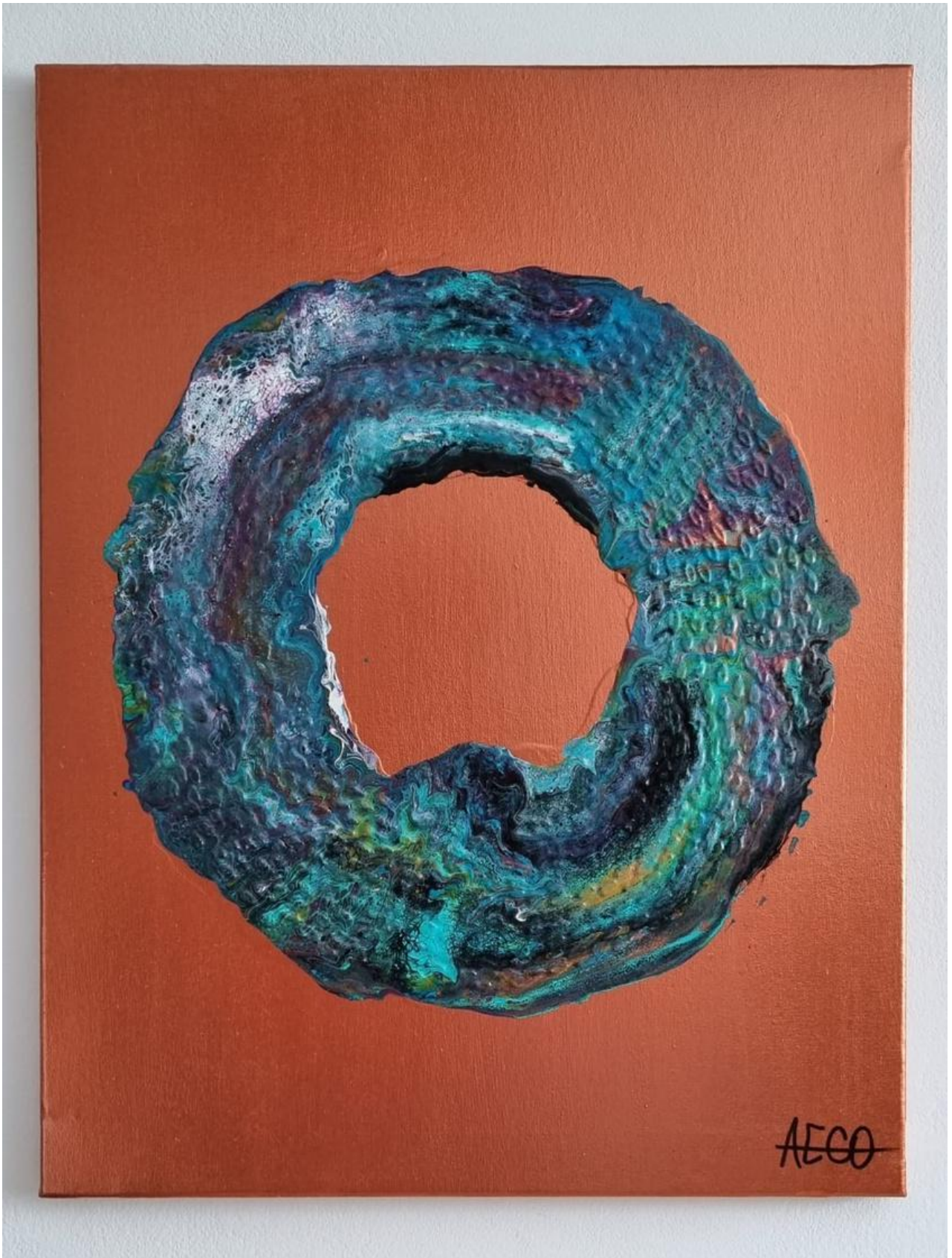


Born in Brazil, AECO had always art present in their life due to her mother being an artist. In college, studied cinematography, since photography was one of her passions. After being a part of a collective exhibition at the Uruguay embassy in São Paulo, AECO had to distance herself from the art scene. After at the age of 35 and living in Barcelona for 4 years, she decided to get head first back to art, this time bringing the knowledge her mother gave her and start studying more with acrylics. In 2023, AECO was part of the collective exhibition for Art Number 23 BCN, taking the first steps to start and show the city and the world her work.



AECO | Ouroboros 2





AECO | Ouroboros 1

## — Interview

# Heloise O'Keefe

**What initially drew you to the female form as your primary subject in your artwork?**

Although I had been interested in the human form since I started art lessons at school, it wasn't until I spent a bit of time living in Amsterdam and started taking life drawing lessons that I realised this was what I wanted to do, and this was the sort of artwork I wanted to explore and create. I had a brilliant teacher who encouraged me to not just document what I saw but to create expression and flare in the work I was producing. I also had some of the most brilliant art museums and galleries at my fingertips and I spent a lot of time walking around and taking in works of artists I had never seen before. I was particularly inspired by an exhibition at the Van Gogh Museum called Easy Virtue, prostitution in French art, 1850-1910. It explored how prostitution became a central subject for



male artists, like Picasso, Manet, Renoir, Degas and Toulouse-Lautrec in Paris at the time. It seemed obvious to me that these works would be centred around the male gaze, overly sexualised, voyeuristic and purely from a male perspective. It made me think how nothing much had changed in today's society and it made me want to be part of the narrative that was redefining how we saw women and women's bodies and I was determined as a female artist to have a say in this.

**How did your time studying at Sarum Studio and LARA influence your artistic style?**

I learnt so much during my time at Sarum Studio and LARA. My time

studying was all about technique, practice and putting in the hours and I am extremely lucky to have had access to this training and to such brilliant teachers. It emphasised my love for drawing, documenting and representing the human form on paper or canvas and I found myself obsessing over accuracy and anatomy.

However, it took me a long time after I finished my training to find my voice as an artist. I knew I didn't want to only create classical works and there were so many contemporary artists I was discovering and was being hugely inspired by.

Now being a lot more comfortable in the sort of work I am creating and the sort of artist I am becoming I always go back to my training as a base point for a lot of the work I create. The skills I learnt during my training will always be with me and I am hugely grateful for it.



Heloise O'Keeffe | Annie II | 2022



Heloise O'Keeffe | Pencil Study of a Seated Woman | 2021

### **Can you elaborate on the impact of artists like Jenny Saville, Lucian Freud, and Rembrandt on your work?**

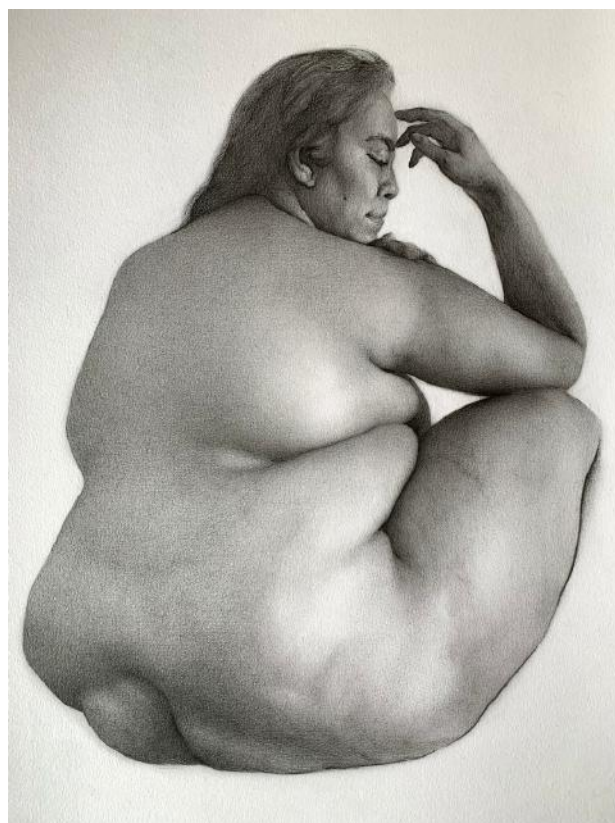
I first saw a print of one of Jenny Saville's works when I was about twelve years old, and I instantly fell in love with it. I don't think I had ever seen anything like it before. It was so raw, real and so different to any images I had seen of women's bodies. I was so used to seeing airbrushed, altered images of women and was very aware as a 12-year-old on the cusp of being a teenager of what sort of woman society wanted me to be and look like.

As I became more and more interested in art and especially painting the female form Jenny Saville became a constant go to for inspiration. Not only for allowing women the space to explore the themes of body and identity in a much more real

and empowering way but also because of the texture of her work and her painting techniques. The fleshy quality to her work is something I also see and love about the works of Rembrandt and Freud. These artists weren't afraid to show human beings in their most vulnerable, frail and real moments. To me this is extremely empowering as a female artist working with my subject. Exploring that raw, organic, sometimes crude and vulnerable side to being alive to me is what it truly means to be human, and I think sometimes we forget that. We are so obsessed with perfection, and unrealistic expectations we forget how beautiful something real can be.

**What challenges do you face when trying to redefine societal views of the female body through your art?**

Oh, there are a few, but I'll go for the first one that came to mind and something I have a love hate relationship with, social media. Instagram for example is all about visual beauty and perfection and showing very unreal but enticing snippets of people's lives. I've used the platform as an artist because it's so visual and can be a brilliant way to showcase a portfolio of work and introduce people to what you do. But it's also the biggest social platform for promoting negative and unrealistic views and expectations of women. That's not to say there aren't some incredibly talented artists out there using the platform to inform and empower women, we just need more of them out there!



Heloise O'Keefe | Eliana | 2024

**Your work has been exhibited across the UK and Europe. How has the reception of your work varied in different cultural contexts?**

I have been fortunate enough to have exhibited work in some amazing places and have received some incredible, encouraging and motivating receptions of my work. It's such a lovely feeling when someone understands your work and what you are trying to say, and it is certainly one of the things which keeps me motivated to keep working as an artist.

However, it is interesting being asked this question, because I certainly do see differences in how some countries receive certain artworks and artists. London and Paris for example. In my experience, after exhibiting in both cities it was fascinating comparing the art scenes in both. My grandfather was half

French and being brought up with a huge French cultural influence in my life, I was very aware of some of the differences growing up and I have to say I do see this slightly in the art world. I personally find Paris slightly more open and liberal to the more daring works. They seem much more likely to celebrate the female form in its raw and true sense, whereas London maybe has a bit more of a commercial approach to this. This is just my experience though and both cities have amazing art scenes and it's a privilege to have been part of both.

**Can you share any memorable reactions or feedback you've received from viewers of your work?**

This is an interesting question because of the subject matter of my work. In a professional context, at galleries, and exhibition openings I have received such touching, inspiring and kind comments about my craft. However, on social media, from people who aren't in the art world it's a different story. I'm sad to say mostly from men, making comments, like "she's not my cup of tea" ... or "I don't want to see that sort of woman on here". I've even had one collector who refused to pay me for a major piece of work unless I went for a drink with him, another telling me he could make my career if he took me for dinner, one sending me inappropriate messages, linking it back to my work as if I had somehow asked for it and another giving me unsolicited advice about the sort of work I should and shouldn't be doing. These sorts of comments and interactions used to make me nervous,

doubt myself and question being an artist. Especially when you first start out and have limited avenues to go down, you can feel helpless, and it does knock your confidence. However now, it just spurs me on, and makes me even more determined to keep doing what I'm doing, to use my work as a tool to empower women and to change the narrative and redefine the way we see the female body. We obviously still have a very long way to go.

**What advice would you give to emerging artists who are interested in exploring similar themes in their work?**

Be yourself. I spent years after art school, trying to figure out what sort of artist other people wanted me to be and what sort of work other people wanted me to create. Not only was the work not very good but I wasn't enjoying what I was doing. I think in some ways, given my subject matter I was nervous about doing the sort of work I wanted to do, because of the reception I might get, and I still have many more boundaries I want to push and many more things I want to say with my work. As soon as I began to create work that was authentic to me that's when things really clicked in place. Believe in yourself and believe in your work.

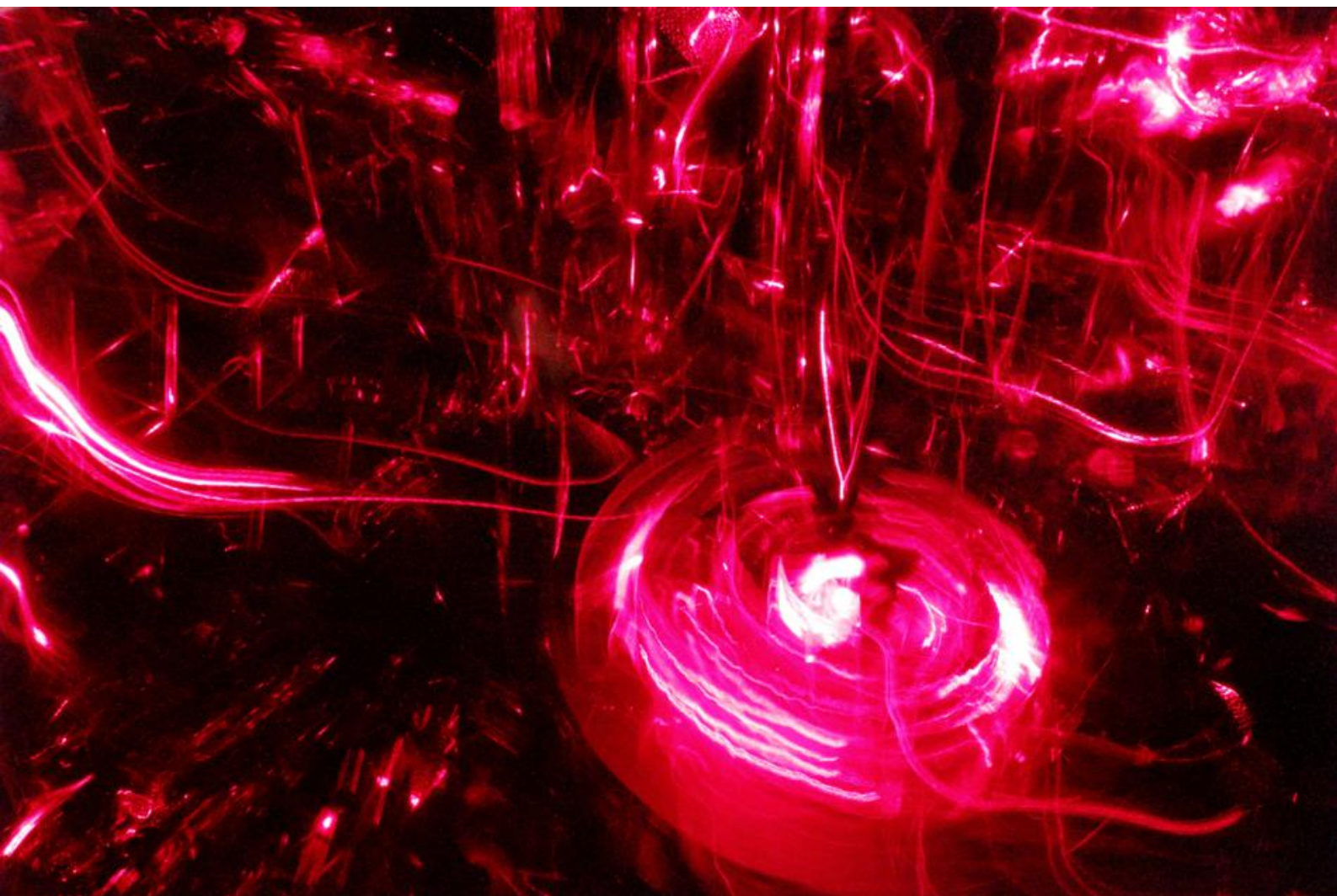
My name is Nelly Blanksma and I am an artist from the Netherlands. Right now I am a student and my hobby is painting. I have been painting since I was fifteen years old. My art can be symbolized in the style of magic realism or romanticism.

### *Project Statement*

Butterflies embody the spirit of transformation and renewal as seen in the painting. I find inspiration in dreamy landscapes that are between reality and fantasy. My work is something that lies beyond everyday perception. This piece is a gateway to ethereal beauty.



Nelly Kolody | Transformation | 2023

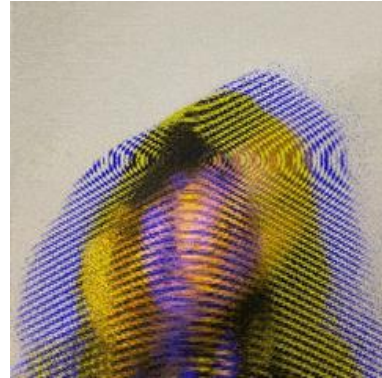


Jinyun Li | Redshift | 2019



# — Interview

## Jinyun Li



**Can you tell us about your journey into the world of art and design? What inspired you to pursue a career in this field?**

My journey into art and design began in my childhood, where I was always surrounded by creativity and expression. My parents encouraged my interest in drawing and crafting from a young age. As I grew older, I became fascinated by how art could communicate complex emotions and ideas. This passion led me to pursue formal education in design, and eventually to a career where I could blend my love for art with practical applications in UX and product design.

**Your work spans across various mediums, including painting, sculpture, and digital art. How do you decide which medium to use for a particular project?**

The choice of medium often depends on the nature of the project and the message I want to convey. For instance, if a project demands a tactile and immersive experience, I might lean towards interactive installation. Digital art is my go-to for projects that require

precision and the ability to iterate quickly. Painting, on the other hand, allows me to explore more abstract and emotional concepts. Each medium has its own strengths, and I choose based on which can best bring my vision to life.

**As a Product UX Designer, how do you integrate your artistic vision with user experience principles in your projects?**

Integrating artistic vision with user experience principles is about finding a balance between aesthetics and functionality. I start by understanding the users' needs and behaviors, then blend this understanding with creative design elements that enhance the overall experience. It's about creating interfaces that are not only beautiful but also intuitive and easy to use. My background in art helps me approach problems with a unique perspective, allowing me to create innovative and visually engaging solutions.

**Your education at Parsons School of Design must have been quite influential. How did your time there shape your artistic and design philosophies?**

Parsons School of Design was instrumental in shaping my approach to both art and design. The curriculum emphasized critical thinking, experimentation, and the importance of context in design. I was exposed to a diverse range of ideas and perspectives, which broadened my understanding of what design can achieve. The collaborative environment at Parsons also taught me the value of feedback and iteration, which are essential to my creative process today.

**Your work often explores the intersection between design and technology. Can you elaborate on how you approach this theme in your projects?**

I approach the intersection of design and technology by focusing on how technology can enhance the human experience. In my projects, I often experiment with new tools and platforms to create interactive and immersive experiences. The goal is always to use technology as a means to amplify the impact of the design, making it more engaging and accessible.

Jinyun Li | Maze | 2019





Jinyun Li | Island

**How does being based in Miami influence your work and creative process?**

Miami's vibrant culture and dynamic environment have a significant impact on my work. The city's diverse community and rich art scene provide endless inspiration. The natural beauty of Miami, from its beaches to its architecture, often finds its way into my projects, adding a unique local flavor. Additionally, being in a city that embraces innovation and creativity encourages me to push the boundaries of my work and continuously explore new ideas.

**How do you see the relationship between technology and art evolving in the future?**

I believe the relationship between technology and art will continue to grow stronger and more symbiotic. As technology advances, it will open up new possibilities for artistic expression and creativity. Artists will have more tools at their disposal to create interactive, immersive, and personalized experiences. Additionally, technology will make art more accessible to a wider audience, breaking down traditional barriers and allowing for greater collaboration across disciplines. The future of art and technology is one of limitless potential and exciting innovation.

As an artist, I am passionate and encouraged to create stunning and storytelling work. Began Art as an adolescent, but later shifted my focus to my athletic & academic career. By the beginning of my secondary school career, I decided to pick up the brush again— determined to pursue my passion for Art further by studying at Schyuler Fine Art School & Academy of Art University, which gave me the confidence to showcase more of my art skills through Art. Since then, I have continued pushing the boundaries of my creativity and breaking barriers by getting out of my comfort zone to explore new techniques and mediums. As an artist, I see more of my future work to be more versatile instead of sticking with a particular style; the goal is to showcase my abilities in ways that bring Inspiration through my lens and create a story that others can relate to.

### *Project Statement*

This series represents the variegation to inspire story-telling and inner connection with one's self through Mind, Body, and Spirit through the appreciation of Moss & Foam that construct the telling of one's story. The focal points of each painting are the moss, soil, and oil paint, which are the main details. Unlike most of my previous projects, which use more modern and experimental color(s), the whole House of Akiara collection represents supplemental abstract and vibrant- natural tone descriptions. This series aims to capture an understanding of the uncomfortableness and appreciation of one's body through the healing and reforming process. This collection seeks to acknowledge the form of the shedding layers of our skin as we continue to learn and redefine ourselves through our lens.

— Diamond Booker





## — Interview

# Aprille McShane

**Can you tell us about your journey as a self-taught artist? What inspired you to start creating art?**

I was raised by a busy single mom, so I spent a lot of time playing outside, gathering petals for perfume, building fairy circles, or drawing inside. As I got older, the focus shifted to working rather than studying. I trained in business administration and soon started working in creative environments like fashion, architecture, and television. It was fulfilling for a while, but in my thirties, my desire to be creative couldn't be ignored anymore. I trained in make-up artistry and design, enjoying many joyful years working in film, television, music, and fashion.

When I had my daughter, I didn't want to spend long hours away from home. My relationship with her brought me back to my childhood and rekindled my connection with nature and its magic. That's when I discovered printmaking as a way to explore my creative thoughts.

**Your work prominently features floral motifs. What draws you to flowers as a subject?**

I'm fortunate to live in a green city, where I can walk into woodlands and



stroll along the river within just five minutes. Watching the seasons change and seeing the flowers bloom and the trees come to life always fills me with hope and joy, inspiring me to capture it all through art. Even when the flowers fade and the leaves fall, there's still a beauty that inspires me to create prints.

**How do you choose the colors for your monoprints? Is there a specific mood or message you aim to convey through your color choices?**

My color choices are deeply influenced by my mood, which shifts with the changing seasons. Nature provides an incredible palette of colors that never ceases to inspire me. Whether it's the vibrant hues of spring flowers or the rich, earthy tones of autumn leaves, there's always something beautiful to capture. I'm constantly looking for new inspirations and documenting my daily

walks with Minnie, our lively springer spaniel. These walks not only bring me joy but also offer a treasure trove of colors and scenes that find their way into my art.

**What challenges have you faced as a self-taught artist, and how have you overcome them?**

I've come to realize that an arts education provides a solid foundation to build upon, and without it, it's easy to doubt yourself. This self-doubt, or 'imposter syndrome,' has sometimes held me back from applying for exhibitions, residencies, and even creating work. Thankfully, my strong drive to be creative has kept me going. Now that I'm in my middle years, I care less about what others think and more



Aprille McShane  
WaterLily  
2023

about what truly moves me and what I'm passionate about.

**Your artist statement mentions a balance between control and spontaneity. How do you achieve this balance in your work?**

Most of my floral artworks are created by cutting or tearing paper cutout motifs. I like to keep this part of the process loose and let my scissors do the work. I can spend hours tearing and cutting shapes inspired by what I've seen on my daily walk. Next, I mix colors to ink each motif, using either a brush or a roller, and then I collage all the paper motifs onto my inked printing matrix. The inking and collaging take time, and the whole process can be quite laborious, but I find it to be a meditative focus that I truly enjoy. The endless joy in printmaking for me is in that pull of paper. You have a good idea of what to expect, but you can never be completely sure, and I find that thrilling.



Aprille McShane  
Geraniums  
2023



**Can you talk about any specific pieces that hold special meaning for you or have a unique story behind them?**

My practice revolves around moving with the seasons, often revisiting the same flowers. A plant from my childhood that still entralls me is stinging nettles. The smell of the woods changes when nettles appear, transporting me back to my free-range childhood, making dens and trying to avoid getting stung. Nettles have lovely little flowers that hang like frilly ribbons, often intertwined with Bindweed. I have a piece called \*Nettle & Bindweed\* that I'm particularly fond of.

**What do you hope viewers take away from experiencing your artwork?**

My art is deeply embedded in the natural environment, which has been a source of magical wonder for me since childhood. I predominantly choose to paint flowers because they are so captivating. Watching flowers emerge and unfurl brings me pure joy and keeps me hopeful and moving forward. Their vibrant colors and intricate forms never fail to inspire me.

Through my art, I aim to capture that same sense of wonder and bring it to others. I hope that my bursts of color and bold forms convey a sense of joy and inspire people to go outside and appreciate the beauty around them. Whether it's the delicate petals of a blooming rose or the striking hues of a wildflower meadow, there's always something magical to discover in nature, and I strive to reflect that in my work.



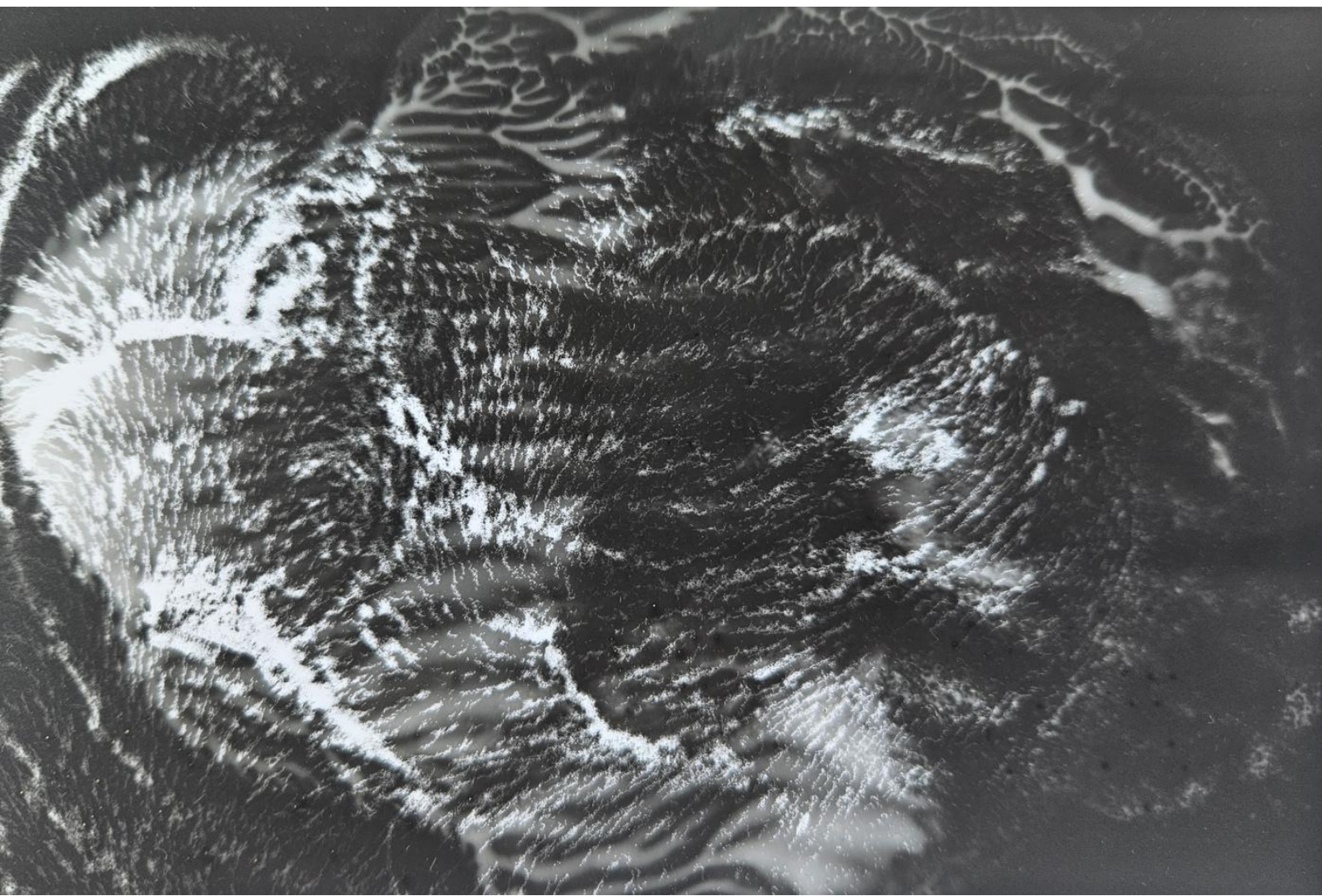
Aprille McShane | Nettle and Bindweed | 2023

The techniques I employ are not mere aesthetic choices but deliberate attempts to evoke the complex dance between light and darkness within the human soul. Shadows, in my work, are more than visual contrasts; they signify the hidden, often suppressed aspects of our identity. They embody the duality of our existence, suggesting that light gains its meaning and significance only in the presence of darkness.

I aim to capture the ephemeral moments where the visible and the invisible meet, inviting viewers to confront their own shadow selves. My Rayographs seek to reveal the silent dialogues between our outward personas and inner realities, prompting introspection and a deeper understanding of the self.

In essence, my work is a visual manifestation of Jungian thought, a poetic exploration of the shadow that lies beneath the surface, urging us to embrace it as a vital part of our wholeness.

— Morvarid





## — Interview

# Teresa Mandala

**Can you tell us about your journey as an artist and what led you to explore multiple mediums?**

My journey as an artist began with a deep-seated curiosity and a desire to express myself through various forms of art. Initially, I was drawn to traditional drawing and painting, where I developed a love for color, composition, and storytelling. These early experiences laid the groundwork for my exploration of other mediums.

As I continued to grow as an artist, I was inspired to expand my skill set and explore new materials. Creating in wood allowed me to experience the tactile nature of the material and the satisfaction of crafting three-dimensional forms. This initial fascination with wood was followed by an interest in ceramics, where I enjoyed the challenge of shaping and carving clay, and discovered that this material also allowed me to paint and carve visual stories on them.

Each new medium offered a fresh perspective and challenged me to think differently about form, texture, and design. This curiosity led me to explore



metal and glass, where I found new ways to experiment with light, reflection, and structure. Watercolor, acrylic, and oil paints have continued to be integral to my practice, allowing me to express ideas with fluidity and depth.

Ultimately, my journey as an artist is defined by a passion for learning and a willingness to explore the unknown. This has led me to work with multiple mediums, each offering unique possibilities and enriching my creative expression.

**How does your work in ceramic, wood, metal, glass, watercolor, acrylic, and oil paints influence each other?**

Working with various mediums like ceramics, wood, metal, glass, watercolor, acrylic, and oil paints has created a rich tapestry of influences within my artistic practice. Each material has unique properties that inform and inspire my

work in others.

Ceramics and wood share a tactile quality that influences how I approach structure and texture. The process of carving and shaping these materials informs my understanding of form, which translates into my work with metals, where I explore sculptural possibilities and intricate details. My experiences with glass and metal encourage me to think about light, transparency, and reflection, which profoundly influence my painting techniques. When working with watercolor, acrylic, and oil paints, I often incorporate layering and blending techniques inspired by the glazing and surface treatments in ceramics and the reflective qualities of glass. The interplay between these mediums fosters a dynamic creative process where techniques and ideas cross-pollinate, leading to unexpected solutions and innovations. This integration enriches my work, allowing me to create pieces that are both visually compelling and conceptually rich. By embracing the distinct qualities of each medium, I am able to push the boundaries of my artistic expression and create a cohesive body of work that reflects the synergy between these diverse materials.

**Can you share a particularly memorable experience or project that significantly impacted your artistic development?**

A particularly memorable experience that significantly impacted my artistic development was moving from Kansas



Teresa Mandala  
Guided By Celestial Depths  
2024

City to St. Petersburg, FL. Relocating to the east coast after spending my entire life in the Midwest opened up new opportunities and allowed me to reach a wider audience with my work. Shortly after the move, I connected with a gallery in Key West, FL, which began showcasing my work. This exposure was a turning point for me, and the gallery has since sold over 100 pieces of my art, even after relocating to Port Angeles, WA.

In St. Petersburg, my work has been featured in numerous galleries, including the Florida Craft Art Gallery, providing me with an invaluable platform to share my art with diverse audiences. Additionally, I was commissioned to create a piece representing health equity for the Center for Health Equity in St. Petersburg, which now holds a permanent place in their collection. This project was particularly meaningful, as it allowed me to engage with important social issues through my art. Receiving a grant from the St. Petersburg Arts Alliance and an Emerging Artist grant from Creative Pinellas further accelerated my artistic growth. These opportunities enabled me to create new

bodies of work and showcase them in prominent venues, such as the Creative Pinellas main gallery. Each of these experiences has enriched my artistic journey, allowing me to explore new themes, refine my skills, and connect with the community in profound ways.

**Can you tell us more about your experience running a virtual advertising studio alongside being a studio artist?**

As an artist who wears many hats, running a virtual advertising studio alongside being a studio artist allows me to share visual stories that evoke a response. My skills in storytelling and visual communication seamlessly translate into both my advertising work and artwork, enabling me to connect with audiences on multiple levels. I appreciate the variety this dual career path offers. Working on the computer to develop conceptual campaigns provides a nice balance to the hands-on experience of creating art in the studio.

This diversity keeps my work dynamic and fulfilling, as it satisfies my need for both strategic thinking and creative expression.

Managing both roles also helps balance my workload. During times when advertising contracts are between projects, I can focus my energy in the art studio, dedicating time to create new pieces. Conversely, when I'm uncertain about how to progress with a particular artwork, I can shift gears and work on the computer, channeling my creativity into advertising projects.

Admittedly, there are times when finding the right balance is challenging.

However, this way of working allows me the freedom to choose who I work for and what I create, which is incredibly rewarding. By managing both roles, I can maintain a diverse and flexible practice that keeps me engaged and inspired.

**Can you share how nature and personal experiences influence your creative process?**

Nature and personal experiences are fundamental to my creative process, serving as a constant source of inspiration and reflection. The natural world, with its vibrant colors, intricate patterns, and dynamic forms, deeply influences my work. Living in St. Petersburg, FL, I am surrounded by lush landscapes, diverse wildlife, and the serene beauty of the coastline, which continually inspire my art. The connection I feel to nature is often reflected in the themes and subjects of my work, such as the intricate details of tree roots or the graceful movement of

Teresa Mandala | Beyond the Path | 2023



an animal.

Personal experiences also play a significant role in shaping my art. Each piece I create is a reflection of my journey, emotions, and interactions with the world around me. My work often explores themes of intuition and energy interaction, drawing from moments that have impacted me personally. These experiences provide depth and meaning to my art, allowing me to express complex emotions and ideas in a visual form.

Incorporating elements of nature and my personal narrative into my creative process enables me to create art that resonates with viewers on an emotional level. By sharing my perspective through my work, I aim to evoke a sense of connection and curiosity, inviting others to see the beauty and complexity of the world around us.

### **How has living in different places, such as Rockford, Kansas City, and St. Petersburg, influenced your art?**

Living in different places like Rockford, Kansas City, and St. Petersburg has profoundly influenced my art, each location contributing unique experiences and perspectives that have shaped my creative journey.

Growing up in Rockford, art became a crucial outlet for me to process difficult experiences and explore emotions that I found challenging to express openly. The simplicity and beauty of the natural world around me, along with its landscapes and seasonal changes, further instilled in me an appreciation for nature's subtle details. This early



Teresa Mandala | AIR | 2023

connection to art and nature continues to inspire my work today.

Kansas City offered a vibrant arts community that exposed me to a diverse range of artistic styles and techniques. The city's rich cultural heritage and dynamic arts scene encouraged me to explore new mediums and experiment with my artistic voice. It was here that I first began to understand the importance of storytelling in art, using visual elements to convey emotions and ideas.

Moving to St. Petersburg, FL, marked a significant shift in my artistic journey. The Gulf Coast's vibrant colors, lush landscapes, and coastal scenery have greatly influenced my work, infusing it with a sense of energy and movement. The thriving arts community in St. Petersburg has provided me with numerous opportunities to showcase my work and connect with other artists, further enriching my creative practice. Each of these places has left an indelible mark on my art, shaping my perspective and inspiring me to create pieces that reflect the diverse experiences and environments I have encountered. Through my work, I aim to capture the

essence of these places and share the beauty and stories they hold with others.

**What advice would you give to aspiring artists who are looking to find their unique voice?**

Finding your unique voice as an artist is a journey that involves exploration, experimentation, and self-reflection. Embracing a wide range of mediums, techniques, and styles can help reveal different aspects of your creative identity. Don't hesitate to experiment and don't be afraid to "fail"; each new experience can bring you closer to discovering what resonates with you. Reflecting on your personal experiences, emotions, and perspectives is also crucial. Your unique voice often emerges from your own life and passions, so let these elements guide your creative process.



Teresa Mandala  
Owl  
2024



Teresa Mandala | EARTH | 2023

Staying curious and open-minded is important, as inspiration can come from unexpected sources like nature, people, or everyday moments. While honing your technical skills is essential, as proficiency allows for better expression of your vision, it's equally important to be authentic. Trust your creative instincts and remain true to yourself, rather than trying to mimic others or making something you think will sell. The journey may come with challenges and moments of self-doubt, but perseverance is key. Embrace these challenges as part of the process and remain resilient. Engaging with a supportive community of fellow artists and mentors can also provide valuable insights and encouragement. Remember, finding your unique voice is an ongoing process. Allow yourself the freedom to evolve and grow, and trust that your authentic voice will naturally emerge as you continue to create and explore.





I'm a woman who lives in Miskolc, Hungary. I don't like to call myself artist but I'm connected with art in many points as well. I started with art major in the primary school and besides I participated in drama club and chorus too. After the primary school I continued my studies in a totally other way because unfortunately I didn't believe in myself. Though my university entrance was successful to tourism and hospitality major in the University of Miskolc, I followed my heart and I continued my studies in a 3 year Fashion Design Course in Miskolc. After that there was a long break in this area because I started to work in Budapest and I have to make a decision that I continue the fashion design or singing. Unfortunately I hadn't enough time and money to handle with both of them. That moment I chose singing. During this time I spent many years in administrative jobs that I hated them but I didn't believe that I can get another, more suitable job as well. I escaped from these soul-destroying job and turned back to the fashion design and art due to an autoimmune disease, covid and my mental trauma and distress. In 2019 I started a Stylist course in Mod'Art Fashion School in Budapest but me and my teachers realised that my way is fashion design first. During the covid I tried to do ice dyeing technique because I had a desire for creating and I loved the final result so I made a clutch bag from this ice dyed textile and my friends, Tímea Gyulavari (who was the stylist of this bag photoshoot) and Mátyás Szabó (who was the photographer) helped me to take some professional photos of my bags. I started to draw again at last year because I suffered distress and I wanted to decrease it. I started to draw different patterns after a Victor Vasarely exhibition that has a big effect on me. And this pattern drawing helped me to reduce my distress. Honestly I don't know what I do just I do. By the way I like to learn new things, develop myself constantly. I'm open to almost everything in art and in the world as well. There were hard times in my life in the past 4 years due to my disease and my bad financial situation too but art and the beauties of the world (like a colourful flower) always helped me to fight with difficulties.

— Barbara Oláh





## — *Interview*

# Levan Jamelashvili

**Can you tell us about your journey into photography and visual art? What initially drew you to this medium?**

I started taking pictures back in high school. At that time I was photographing everything and didn't really know what exactly attracted me to photography. A little later, I tried to become a commercial photographer, but my attempts were unsuccessful. I became disillusioned with photography and abandoned it. Only a few years later, I bought an old film camera and my passion for photography reappeared. I really liked the slowness of the process, the limited number of frames in a roll made me perceive photography differently, I had to carefully think through each frame and build a composition.

My first film camera was a Soviet Zenit. It was quite heavy and I began to leave it at home more and more often and rarely carried it with me. When I noticed this, I realized that I needed a camera that would always be at hand. And then I



discovered the world of point and shoot cameras. Since all such cameras are fully automatic, I did not have to spend much time setting up the camera. It could take less than 5 seconds from the impulse to take a photo of something to pressing the button on the camera. This brought photography to a new level in my life. The camera began to accompany me at any moment. I just put the camera in my pocket and shot everything that attracted me.

So the years passed, I just photographed everything in sight without any particular idea. But then I began to comprehend my work. I began to look for themes that resonate with me, began to think about my visual language, looked for ways to distinguish photography as a medium in contemporary art.

**How do you balance between capturing reality and incorporating**

## **elements of dreams and memories in your work?**

I try to convey in my work the feeling that we experience while in dreams or fantasies. We cannot fully understand where the line is when reality turns into imagination. We also do not understand what exactly distinguishes a dream from reality.

I cannot pinpoint exactly what creates such a feeling in my pictures. Many factors must come together: the setting, time of day, light, objects, landscape, interior, etc.

This can also be achieved technically. I shoot a lot on film, on old cameras. And the combination of film texture with old optics creates an image that can blur the feeling of reality as closely as possible. While photographing, I may not even fully understand whether I will ultimately be able to get the desired vibe from the pictures. And only when selecting photographs do I understand that the photo reveals the feeling, the vibe that I am looking for in photography.

It often happens that after shooting I put

a cross on the photo and put them in my archive. And only after a few years I notice that the photo has revealed the potential that I did not notice before.

## **Your work explores themes like escapism and maladaptive daydreaming. Can you elaborate on how these themes are reflected in your photographs?**

Escapism is an escape from everyday routine into a fictional world, a special activity. For me, photography has become such an escapist process. I started picking up a camera to transport myself to a world without routine or pressing problems. I didn't need much preparation, I just shot what surrounded me and tried to find beauty in ordinary things.

I rarely photograph people or portraits. I'm more focused on capturing the environment, place, objects. I like to find detachment even in the most densely populated place. That's why I try to show a lot of space and I like to create a feeling of loneliness in my pictures.





**How has photography helped you stop living an imaginary life and anchor yourself in reality?**

Most of the time my head is filled with different thoughts and surrounding noise and it is very difficult for me to just turn off all thoughts and be in reality. I can often recall a fragment from some stupid video that I watched a year ago and have never thought about it since. At such moments I don't understand why this information is stored in my head at all.

Photography has become one of the most meditative processes for me. When I walk around the city with a camera in my hands, I have a goal — to catch cool shots. At this moment, I unconsciously turn off all the unnecessary background from thoughts and just focus on the process.

It turns out to be a kind of vicious circle: photography for me is both a form of escapism and something thanks to which I escape from reality, and at the

same time a tool thanks to which I can feel reality as strongly as possible. Paradoxically, but it is so.

**The “Watch your step” project was inspired by a personal accident. How did this experience change your perspective on your surroundings and influence this series?**

In winter, I was walking down the street, slipped on an icy sidewalk and cut my eyebrow. When I got to the hospital, the doctor told me that I was very lucky. I hit the hardest part of my skull and if I had fallen a little differently, everything could have ended much worse.

When I was discharged from the hospital, I noticed that I began to walk very slowly. Most of the time, I thought about how to move more safely. I began to take each step more consciously and at the same time began to pay attention to the world around me.

The endless stream of thoughts in my head, which had always prevented me

from perceiving real life normally, began to stop. Before that, I felt like I was in my thoughts most of the time, not in reality. When I took my camera out of habit and went to take pictures on the street, I started taking a lot of pictures of what was under my feet. I noticed that my gaze was constantly directed downwards, and I was taking a lot of pictures of the road, the ground, the grass, etc.

That's how the "Watch Your Steps" project was born. The idea of the project is two things at once:

1. We need to be more attentive to the things we don't pay attention to or do automatically. We don't think about the fact that something bad can happen to us out of the blue.
  2. We need to pay attention to what is around us, and not be constantly immersed in thoughts. We need to notice the beauty that surrounds us and that manifests itself in everything.
- It may seem that the entire project was filmed in one place and at one time. But in fact, more than a month passed

between the parts of the shooting, and they were even filmed in different cities. This project was shot on film and when I developed it, I was surprised how well the photos from different places matched. I immediately had an idea of how to combine the shots so that they complemented each other better.

### **How do you think photography can contribute to a better understanding of modern social issues?**

Photography is the most universal language that can be spoken in any country in the world. The same image can be perceived in completely different ways depending on whether we know the context or not. For example, you can find some photo project or photo book and look only at the photographs, without reading the description of the project, without learning anything about the author and without going into the details of that period.

After viewing the images, you need to try to understand what this project was







about and what the author wanted to say. And only then you need to familiarize yourself with the context of the project, read the annotation and learn more about the meaning of the work.

Such an exercise will help you understand how strong the subtext is in photography and how much we endow with meaning even those pictures that at first glance may not display anything at all.

Through photography, you can talk non-verbally about any topic. And the viewer, entering into a dialogue with the author, can complement his idea.

The author leaves the viewer with a virtually unlimited field for interpretation and speculation. The author creates a framework and places hooks, and the viewer himself creates the final meaning. It turns out to be a kind of creativity. In other forms of art, this is also present, but in my opinion, in photography, it manifests itself most strongly.

**What advice would you give to young photographers and artists who are just starting out?**

It's more interesting to watch photographers and artists who have their own voice and talk about their personal experiences. I think it's much more important to talk about topics that are directly related to you and that interest you. And not about those that are popular now.

Perhaps because of this, success will come much slower, but you will be much more interesting as an artist when you develop in this. You will be able to talk about things that no one else can talk about, or talk about general topics, but in a way that only you can.

If you don't have topics that you can talk about and you haven't found your voice, don't get hung up on it. If you don't have your own style, this doesn't mean that you are a bad photographer or artist. Absolutely everyone has a unique style, you just need to give it time to manifest itself. Style is formed throughout your life and consists of everything you've seen, read, watched, and where you've been. I also believe that you shouldn't set a goal to find your own style. You just need to strive to do a good job, and your individuality will emerge.

Myles Arsenault is an 18 year old Canadian artist who uses various visual art mediums as a means of expressing his own internal struggles with his personal sense of identity as a trans man, and the experience of growing up. Each of Myles' artworks use surrealist elements along with vibrant colours and distorted physical features in order to reflect upon different events in his life. In doing so, creating art becomes a reflective and therapeutic practice for Myles.

Myles Arsenault | Entropy Of Money | 2023





Myles Arsenault | Elderly Myles | 2023



## — Interview

# Bridget Tremblay

**Can you tell us about your journey as an artist? How did you start, and what inspired you to focus on visual art?**

I have always enjoyed creating art. My mother is very artistic, and I grew up watching her create art. She also always had colourful and unique works of art up on the walls at home, so visual art was something that has always been a part of my life, it just feels natural to me. During the Covid Pandemic, when we were all at home, suddenly I was trapped in the house, like everyone else, and I realized that I now had more time to pick up the paintbrush. I have never been very good at expressing my emotions verbally, and so I started to use my art as a way of expressing and dealing with my emotions and feelings.

**How did growing up in Northern Ontario influence your artistic style and themes?**

Northern Ontario is a very beautiful place. I grew up surrounded by nature, large bodies of water and trees. I think the bold colours of the different seasons in Ontario really influences my work. I often use bold colours in my paintings.



Bridget Tremblay  
Free

**Your work is described as deeply personal and emotional. Can you elaborate on how you channel your emotions into your art?**

As I stated earlier, I often have a difficult time expressing myself verbally, and so I started expressing myself through my art. I often start a painting with an emotion or feeling that I want to get across, choose the colours and the pose of the body that I think best express the emotion and go from there. I have a tendency to start a painting and keep working on it straight through until it is finished (when possible) so that way I don't lose the feeling or emotion that I am trying to get across. I can truly say, that when I create a painting, I am

leaving a piece of myself on the canvas. When you look at one of my pieces, you are seeing my thoughts and emotions on the canvas.

### **How has becoming a mother influenced your artwork and artistic perspective?**

When I was in my early 30's my husband and I were told that we wouldn't be able to have children, we were heartbroken. Then, all of a sudden, I was 39 and we found out that I was pregnant, it was a truly joyous time. After I had my son, I moved from painting to pencil drawings, simply because I suddenly didn't have the time to set up and complete a painting, but I would have a few minutes here and there to scribble with a pencil. I remember being so exhausted after



Bridget Tremblay  
Queen



giving birth, and recovering from a C-Section, while caring for a newborn, and thinking to myself that I may never have the time or energy to paint, or draw again. I thought my time as an artist was done, but then my Warrior Women Collection was born, and I wouldn't have been able to create them, without experiencing the birth of my son.

The series 'Warrior Women' reflects the roles and responsibilities placed on women. Can you share more about the inspiration behind this series and what you hope to convey through it?

I had a difficult birth that ended up resulting in a C-Section. It took me quite some time to recover afterwards and during this time I talked and confided in some of my friends that had also had difficult births. Hearing their stories, and the things that they went through, while

still 'showing up' for their children and their families everyday caused me to start to focus and think about the women in my life and the women around me.

Women have to deal with so many things in life all while they continue to 'show up' and carry on. Women have to deal with difficulties getting pregnant, as well as being asked 'What's wrong with them?' if they choose not to have children. Women give birth, somehow bounce back and care for their children and their families. A lot of women also have fulltime careers as well as caring for their families, and they somehow give 100% to everything they are doing all of the time.

I honestly look around at the women in my life, and think, 'we are all warriors'.



Bridget Tremblay  
Teacher

### **What message or feeling do you hope viewers take away from your 'Warrior Women' series?**

I hope that any woman who views my 'Warrior Women' series, feels strength and power and that they feel proud to be a woman.

How do you balance your work as a teacher of the blind and partially sighted with your artistic endeavors?

I worked very hard to get where I am in my career. I love my students and the work that I do. In the past I would focus on my art in the evenings and on the weekends. Right now, I am home with my son while I am on maternity for a short while longer. I am on my son's schedule right now, and I get my art done here and there when I have the time. Right now I end up stopping and starting projects a lot. When I go back to work, I will be balancing being a mother, working fulltime and my art. I will make it all work, somehow.

My photographs aim to delve into the emotional and artistic resonance of the natural and human worlds, which can be seen through the lens and artistic interpretation in a collage. Organic forms penetrate humans and vice versa; we constantly deny this connection, but we cannot be without it even in the age of artificial intelligence and ultra-fast speeds. The beauty and expressive power of nature are a powerful source of strength and inspiration, especially for the creative being that is the human being. Humans are capable of capturing the emotional essence of nature, and this is their point of support. While working on this project, I somehow got closer to Roland Barthes' thesis about the origins of photography: that as a medium, photography is close to theater in the sense that the first actors were distinguished from the people who depicted the dead, using white makeup, rice paper, and other decorative methods. Similarly, my photo collages are a frozen image from my mind and my imagination about the connection between humans and nature. I would like to further explore the philosophy of the connection between nature and the human being in collage. Do they exist separately or are they inseparable, do they complement each other or are they antagonists?

— Anna Tut



Anna Tut | Human Nature | 2024

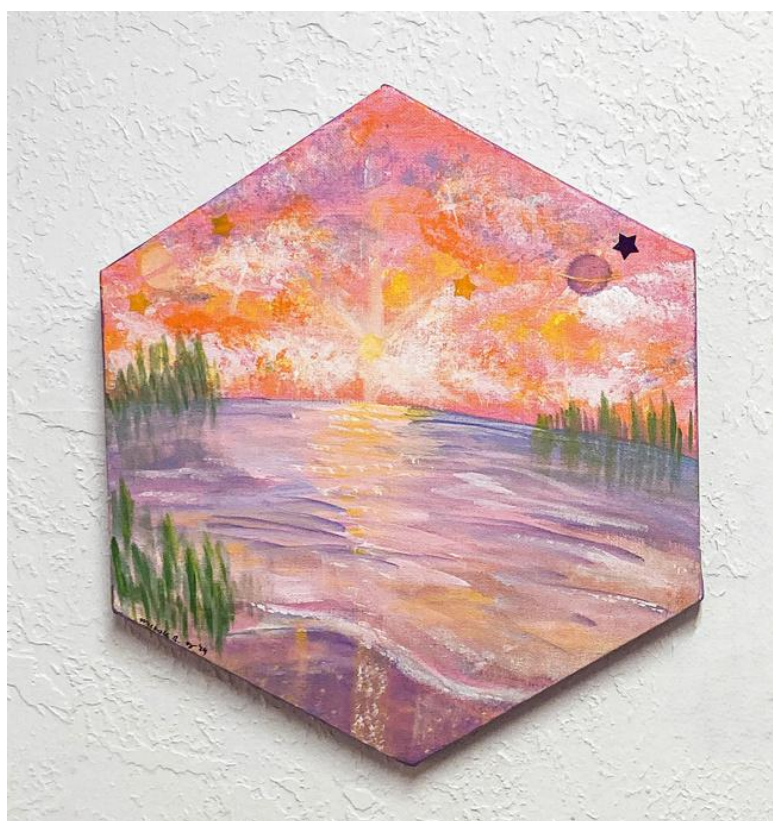




**Michelle Ramirez** is a 24-year-old Mexican-born artist. She is self-taught and specializes in fine art focusing on oil and acrylic. Now residing in Texas, she uses art to express and voice out the struggles immigrants face. Her goal is to shed light on current world topics in a way that can touch the hearts of her audience. She hopes her art can be a force for people and society to lean on for support and understanding.

### *Project Statement*

Chapter: 1 is a collection of fleeting memories and experiences I encountered at a young age. At a glance, I have captured the essence of childhood life in the early 2000s. In normal circumstances, that would be all there is to it, but my circumstance is anything but normal. 20 years ago, I immigrated to the United States at the age of 4. 18 years ago, at the age of 6, I did it again, except that night turned into one I would relive often during the next 18 years. My work is about shedding light on a subject that ironically goes unnoticed in the RGV. At a glance, you see glitter, pink, butterflies, rainbows, anything but the memories and experiences I have gained as an immigrant. Given my circumstances, my art is the only outlet where I can have a voice. It has been a struggle every day, but it is worth it if it means I get a chance to fight for the life that 4-year-old me and all other immigrants should be living. I invite you to reminisce, wish, cry, dream, and heal with me.



Michelle Ramirez | shhh... | 2024



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## — Interview

# Robbie McKinstry

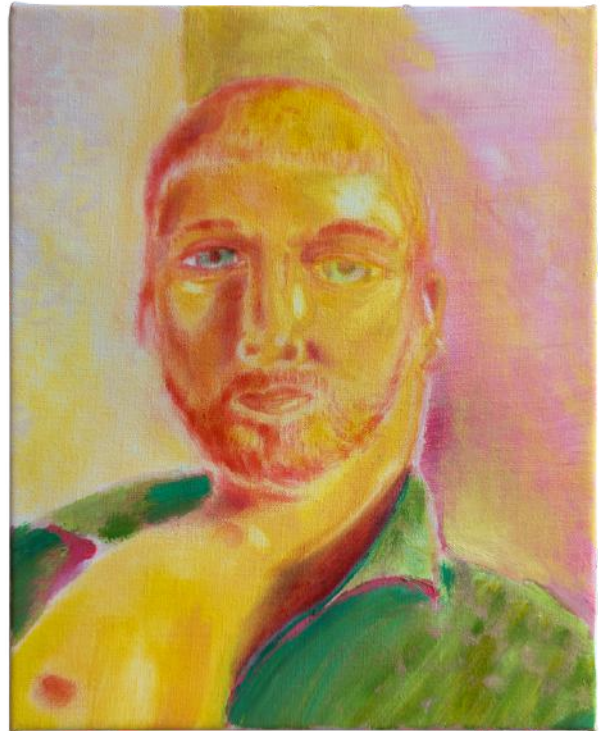
### **How has your formal education in Animation influenced your painting and drawing techniques?**

Often painting feels like the opposite of animation, I started painting to find an outlet different from the fast-paced digital nature of animation. There's a challenge in having to labour and build over a single image that isn't quite the same in animation. That being said, years of animating have helped develop my drawing practice to help me plan the paintings, it can also be very experimental which is something very important to my practice.

### **How do the everyday moments and daydreams influence your artwork?**

I like capturing moments that seem quite normal and thoughtless, but have a beauty in their intimacy. The daydreams and memories are often loaded with desire, which I try to capture on the canvas, through the image and how the paint is applied on the surface.

### **Which aspects of early 20th-century modernist art resonate with you the most, and how do they influence your work?**



Robbie McKinstry | Self Portrait

I'm always inspired by the way people took modernism from Europe and used it to give them a sense of purpose or belonging in their communities. Australia has a wealth of modernist painters. These are often what you would see growing up, and eventually, I started to idolise them, but every country has its unique modernists. There is a sense of community and an ability to express individualism and diversity that excites me.

### **Can you discuss your method of starting with quick sketches and developing them into full-fledged pieces?**

I spend most mornings drawing ideas on paper and throwing them on the floor, then when I get stuck I shuffle through the pile looking for something that might help. Sometimes to work out a composition I have to draw it a few times, moving things around on the

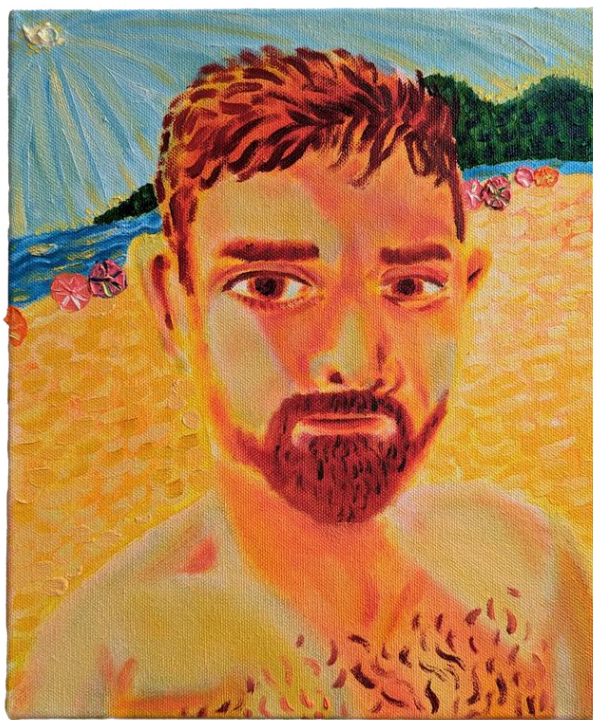
page. When that happens it feels like the same process of animating.

### **What role does your reference image folder play in your creative process?**

The reference images often help me when I get stuck on how to paint something, or what colours to use. I'll also just recreate a painting through my drawings and adapt them into new pieces. I try to keep a folder so that I don't get lost looking for references online.

### **Which contemporary artists do you find inspiring, and why?**

Cecily Brown is somebody I can always obsess over. Somaya Critchlow was somebody who made me realise how powerful small works could be. Recently I've been looking at a lot of Victor Manand Matthew Wong. A lot of artists in NYC blow my mind, so I'll just leave it

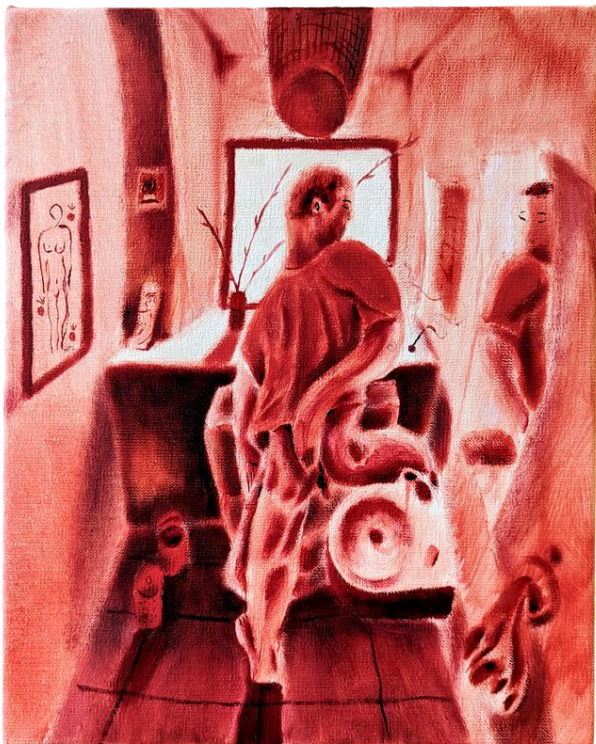


Robbie McKinstry | Luciano

at Doron Langberg is a literal god. Rong Bao had a show recently that really blew me away. It's normally people who don't hold back and aren't afraid to show it all, that gets me inspired. Adult content creators as well, I think they've influenced art in an amazing way that often gets left unsaid.

### **How does living in London influence your artwork compared to your experiences in Australia?**

London has access to such a huge amount of art that you just don't have the ability to see in Australia. It works both ways because Australia has an incredible ecosystem of art that you can't see anywhere else, but it's nice to finally be able to see a lot of the artworks that have inspired me for years in person. There's such a rich history of artists moving to London to find their paths despite its difficulties, and that energy can be felt in so many ways across the city.



Robbie McKinstry | Red Bathroom | 2024

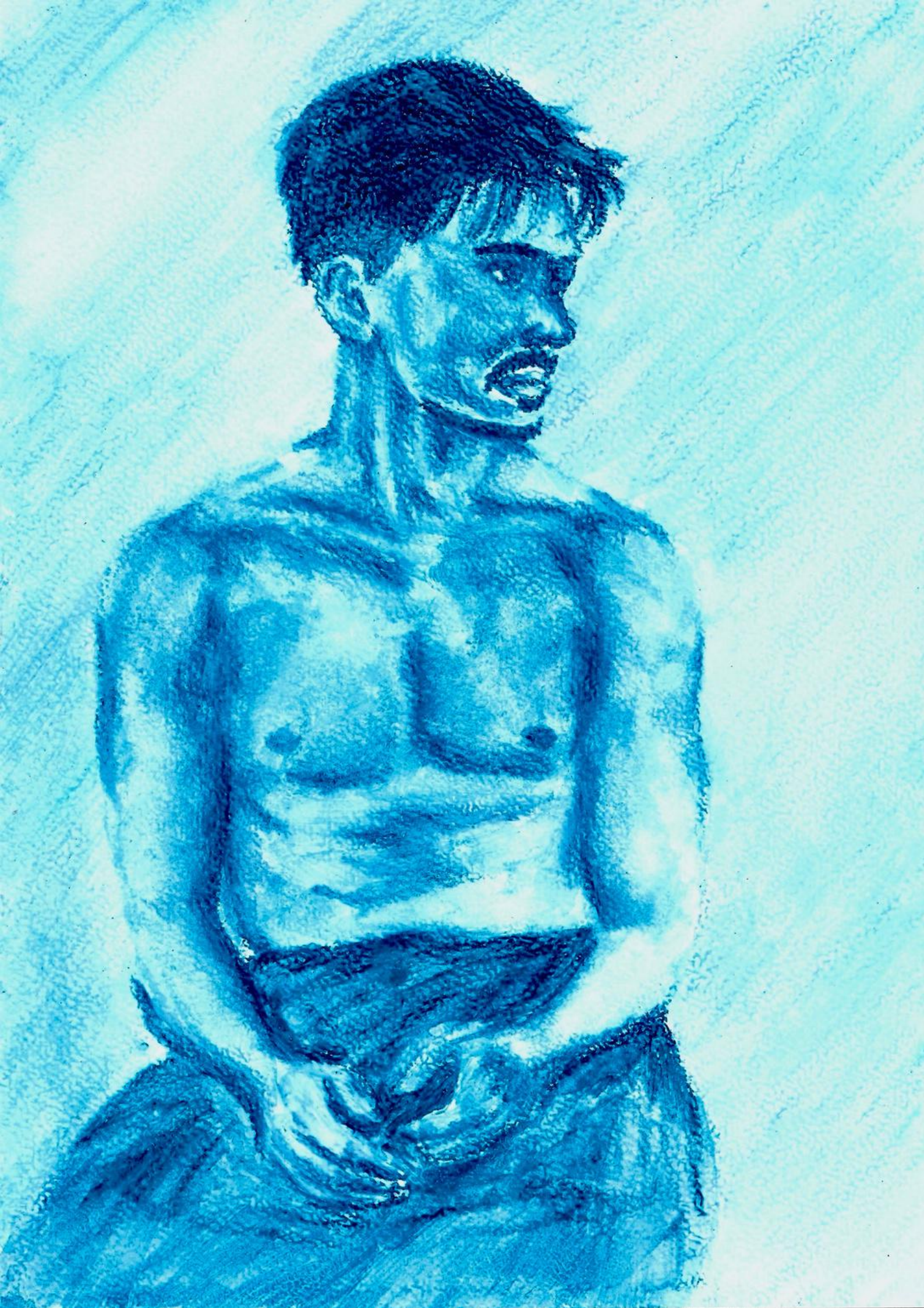
Mandy Merkel, born in East Berlin in 1986, has a strong bond with her city, where she has lived ever since. Despite early creative adventures, she didn't consistently pursue art. In 2020, after a decade without serious practice, she returned to creating. She is continuing to explore new artistic directions, especially in photography, painting and fabric art, and developing a more consistent art routine by working on art or art-related activities every day. Currently, Mandy Merkel is working on a series of small animal paintings. This project aims to enhance her technique and explore the use of a limited color palette. She is particularly intrigued by the ghostly appearance of the animals, which contrasts strikingly with the vibrant backgrounds. This contrast brings a unique dynamic to her work, emphasizing the ethereal quality of the subjects against lively, colorful settings.



Mandy Merkel | A hare | 2024



Mandy Merkel | Sleeping beauty | 2024





## — Interview

# Cesar Vianna

**Can you tell us about your journey from Sao Paulo to Canada and how it influenced your artistic career?**

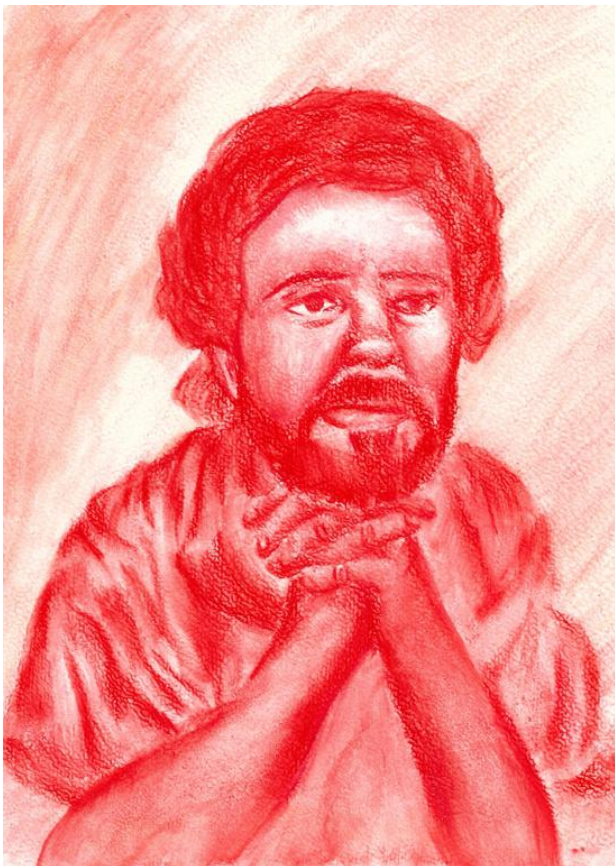
In São Paulo, Brazil, I studied at the School of Architecture at University of Sao Paulo - USP, where I graduated with skills in graphic design and object design. At that time, my artistic focus was mainly on illustration. Life in a bustling metropolis was fast-paced, leaving little time to dedicate to developing my art. My passion was drawing but I didn't have the time or the money to invest in it. Arriving in Quebec City, Canada, I opened a new window to a different reality. I completed my equivalencies at the School of Visual Arts at Laval University. During this period, I began exploring new materials and disciplines. Drawing remained my primary focus, but I started working in a different way. Previously, I worked on large-format paper; in this new environment, I learned to work on smaller formats with much more detail. My body movements changed, becoming more delicate and refined, which gave my work a "fine arts" and delicacy qualities it previously lacked.



**Your work includes a wide range of techniques and materials, from traditional to unconventional. How do you decide which medium to use for a particular piece?**

Many artists I know dedicate themselves to a single type of material, defining their identity based on that choice (for example, being known as a painter, sculptor, or printmaker). My horizons broadened when I arrived in Canada and began exploring different materials in search of a unique identity. However, I realized this wasn't necessary. My work is constantly evolving and developing, so I decided it was better to free it from such labels and allow myself to vary according to the moment and my inspiration. Naturally, the choice of materials involves a rational reflection on the desired outcome of each piece. Sometimes, I recreate the same work with different materials to evaluate the

results and the impact each one has on the observer. Every individual sees the world uniquely, and a work of art is a translation of that perspective, allowing others to see what the artist sees. The choice of material affects this translation. I am not always satisfied with the first result, and at that point, I start over with different materials. Unconventional materials present limitations that force me to devise innovative solutions, thereby stimulating my creativity. These challenges compel me to think "outside the box" and approach problems in new ways. The process of working with unconventional materials leads to personal growth by encouraging me to step out of my comfort zone, take risks, and embrace the unknown. This journey is incredibly rewarding both artistically and



Cesar Vianna | Dreamer | 2024

personally. Additionally, I believe it has helped me develop an original and unique style.

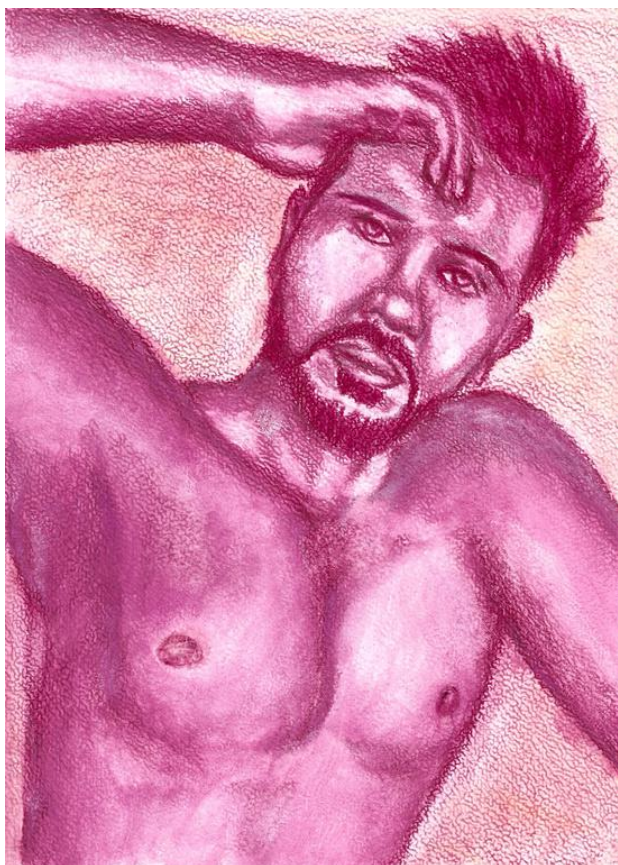
### **What role does illustration play in your art, and why do you consider it the most important among your multiple skills?**

As a graphic designer, illustration plays a pivotal role in my life. It not only communicates concepts but also creates impactful campaigns that engage the audience. As an artist, illustration is my most powerful form of expression. Since my childhood, I have collected comic books and animated films. The style of animators from Hanna-Barbera studios in the 1970s, as well as other animators from the 1950s, has always fascinated me. In my earliest memories, I am holding paper and a pencil, drawing characters from shows I watched or magazines I read. It wasn't until my teenage years, after years of practice, that I achieved accurate representations. This passion for the work of these artists always drove me to develop a style inspired by this recent past but with my unique touch. Studying art history further fueled my ambition. Not because I wanted to imitate other artists, but because I was inspired by the challenges they overcame and sought to achieve something similar. Drawing has always been central to this pursuit. I draw not only with pencils or pens but also with brushes, scalpels, and pyrography pens. The technique may change, but illustration remains a constant in my work. My drawings are a reflection of how I perceive and interpret the world

around me. They capture my unique perspective, allowing others to see through my eyes and understand my vision.

### **How do your Brazilian and Canadian identities influence your artistic style and themes?**

The advantage of being a citizen of two countries is the cultural richness it brings to my personal perspective. Aesthetic sensibility is deeply influenced by culture. As an artist, I can say that my aesthetic is not distinctly Brazilian or Canadian but a mix of both. In Brazil, my artwork was heavily geometric, with a strong focus on perspective, influenced by my studies in architecture and life in a bustling metropolis. However, transitioning to a more serene and rural environment has led my work to become



Cesar Vianna | Contemplator | 2024



Cesar Vianna | Glam | 2024

more organic and fluid. Brazil is known for its colors and joy, which is clearly reflected in my work. I always incorporate color as a key element, favoring vibrant and strong hues over pastels, even in monochromatic contexts. Without a doubt, my artwork was more colorful and vibrant when I was in Brazil. I recall that upon starting at Laval University, I received critiques during a project evaluation regarding the intensity, saturation, and brightness of the colors I used. During one of the lockdowns in 2020, I developed a series of monochromatic works. Among the many messages I received on social media, one follower, referencing this aspect of my work, thanked me for bringing color to a world darkened by the suffering of COVID-19. Conversely, Canadian aesthetics have influenced my

work in a more classical manner, emphasizing realism, attention to detail, and the integration of natural elements. Over the years, my work has become increasingly meticulous and delicate, infused with the joy and vibrancy of my earlier experiences.

**What inspired you to start using non-traditional materials like eye shadows in your work?**

Since childhood, I've always used different materials for my drawings. I didn't always have pristine sheets of white paper, so I used whatever was available—old appointment diaries, cards from the laundry inside my grandfather's dress shirts. Unbeknownst to me, I was already embracing the concept of sustainable development. I began accessing professional materials when I entered college, but I still occasionally mixed professional and found materials. In 2020, I became an artist member of the Brooklyn Art Library, which launched a series of online challenges for artists, sometimes encouraging the use of unconventional materials. This led me to create collage works and use coffee and various teas as painting mediums. One of these pieces was even published in a book by the institution. Exchanging knowledge with other artists spurred me to explore further. For instance, I was introduced to using eyeshadow by a local artist, Daniel Sigouin, who suggested it because of its color palette (which closely resembles human skin tones) and its shimmer. Thanks to this suggestion and my curiosity, I developed extremely realistic

and delicate portraits.

**Your recent works are inspired by real people from different countries. How do you choose your subjects, and what stories are you trying to tell through your art?**

Since 2018, I have been focusing on developing works that use the human figure as a reference. I aim for perfection in representing the forms and proportions of the body in various poses and situations. With the digital revolution prompted by COVID-19, I began attending online life drawing sessions. Many of the individuals depicted in my works come from these sessions. The models often request copies of my work and share their lives and impressions with me. However, a considerable part of my work since 2020 has been based on commissions from people who asked me to create their portraits. In these cases, beyond the artistic work, I engage in conversations and learn about the person. My first sketch is usually quick and simple, capturing the immediate essence. However, through our interactions, I can refine the work to reflect the personal nuances of our conversation. Typically, I do not choose my subjects; they seek me out.

**Can you share a memorable experience or feedback you received from someone who connected deeply with your art?**

I have many stories of people who have deeply connected with my art. One such

story involves a young man who once asked me to create a portrait of him (a commission). He was so enchanted by the work that he asked if I could create a family portrait. This was for the family of his best friend, who had died in a car accident. He was so moved by my work that he wanted to give this family portrait to his friend's parents. Naturally, I agreed, and they were very touched by the gift.

On another occasion, a Russian man started following my Instagram account. He began messaging me to inquire about commissions and how the process worked. After a few days of silence, he contacted me again, explaining that due to the war against Ukraine, he couldn't pay me. He thanked me for the information and expressed his wish to have a portrait done by me someday. I made the portrait without charging him because I could tell he was sincere and it was not his fault. A few days after I sent

him the digitized image, he posted my work on his Instagram account. It was the first time I saw my name written in Russian. He still follows my work and interacts a lot with what I share.

In another instance, a young man who was one of my first models discovered that he had cancer. He faced significant challenges starting treatment due to the pandemic. He told me how he found solace in Saint Sebastian, a saint known for surviving arrow wounds and a symbol of homoerotic art in classical times. I ended up making a pyrography portrait of Saint Sebastian inspired by the image of this model. This touched him deeply because of his personal history and the relationship we had built. This piece was featured in two exhibitions (one in San Diego and another in Montreal) and was later acquired as part of the art museum's collection in the city where I live.



Cesar Vianna | Skeptical | 2024

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*John*