

VISUALARTJOURNAL.COM

VISUAL ART JOURNAL



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— Intro

Hello, dear reader,

You're holding the final issue of our magazine for this year.

The end of the year feels like the perfect time to reflect, assess the work we've done, and set goals for the year ahead. For our team, the past year has been an incredible milestone — the beginning of our magazine's journey. An immense amount of work was accomplished, sweeping us up like a whirlwind and carrying us forward.

We've thoroughly enjoyed collaborating with artists and creators, delving even deeper into the world of art and creativity.

We want to express our gratitude to everyone who has supported us and for whom we will continue our work in the coming year. Happy New Year! May the creative spark never leave you — whether it's behind the canvas, in the supermarket, or in the kitchen!

Every artist deserves the audience's attention and the chance to be heard. My team and I are committed to working toward that goal, developing and sharing this magazine.

Enjoy your reading!



Anna Gvozdeva

Curator of
Visual Art Journal

On the Front Cover:

Mengyi Wang

Velvet Sage in Memory
2024

On the Back Cover:

Jolien Müller

Peeing Human

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

— Interview

Lu Shouhui

What initially drew you to mixed media and paper as your primary materials for creating art?

Paper has existed in China for thousands of years. Papermaking is included in China's four great inventions, so paper is an ancient existence in China. From ancient times to the present, rice paper has been the main material used by Chinese painters and calligraphers. Some great artists have created many masterpieces using rice paper. I choose to use paper for creation. On the one hand, it is due to the influence of thousands of years of Chinese cultural tradition. Chinese rice paper has its unique attributes and charm, its flexibility and special response to ink. This is what attracts me. On the other hand, using the same painting materials will present different visual effects on paper with different properties. The inclusiveness and diversity of paper is also a place that attracts me. Most of China's paper paintings are based on traditional languages. Today, I want to use the most traditional materials to create a visual language that is in line with the present. Art needs to follow the times, so it is natural to use mixed media on paper. Something happened.

Your work often explores the themes of friction and contradiction in society. Can you share how these themes are reflected in your artistic process?

In my works, I do not intuitively present the frictions and contradictions in society. Instead, when I come into contact with a certain contradiction or a certain problem, I transform them into art through some of my own specific visual symbols and concepts. Language is presented, for example, the same image is put



together using two or more ways of expression to present it, just like the grafting of fruit trees, and the objects that carry these problems and contradictions are some items planted in life, or things in nature. Some things, such as various flowers, plants, seeds, trees, etc., in my opinion, these items are independent individuals. Whether they are living or inanimate, they are living individuals just like us. I use them to convey various problems that people encounter in society.

How do your personal experiences in Gansu influence the emotions and narratives within your work?

I live in the northwest of China. The geographical environment here is special. The vegetation is sparse and relatively arid. In the early years, there was severe water shortage. The land is vast and barren. Therefore, it has extremely strict requirements for the growth of plants. I have lived in such an environment since I was a child. I have decades of life experience, but I still love my hometown. I have loved the flowers and plants growing on that land since I was a child, because I think it is very difficult for them to grow. They are still alive and well under drought conditions. In the four seasons, those flowers and plants, like the farmers living on that land, work hard to grow and stay on that piece of yellow land for the rest of their lives. When I see them, I will think of us people. Human life is not difficult. Struggling through life. Therefore, in my works, the tenacity and difficulty of life that I have experienced since childhood have subtly influenced the formation of my works.

You mention the cycles of writing and erasure in life. How do these ideas translate into your artistic techniques and visual elements?

A person's life is very short. I have seen many joys and sorrows in life, as well as the fall of life. In my opinion, birth is the starting point, death is the end, and the end is also another starting point. This is a bit like Buddhist thought. So I say that human life has always been a return and

cycle. When life reaches the end, it also returns to the starting point. Regarding writing and erasing in life, specifically the way of visual presentation in my works, "writing" is the process of creating a work. An independent "individual" is always depicted in the picture. At the same time, in the process of depiction in my works, I mosaic a certain part of the image, or use mosaic to block it. Mosaic represents elimination, concealment and failure in my works.



Lu Shouhui | Above the Earth | 2024



Lu Shouhui | On-site | 2024

Pain and happiness are recurring concepts in your statement. How do you balance these emotions visually in your pieces?

In my works, the main image will be interspersed with certain things through the body, and the incompleteness of the image is all expressing the pain of the individual. I did not deliberately express happiness, because I think the pain in life will be more profound. Colors play a role in balancing them, with red, yellow and blue as the main colors to express the positive side of life. It also coordinates the visual elements of the entire picture.

Your art highlights the struggles of individuals in a rapidly changing society. Are there specific stories or events that have inspired your recent works?

In a very short time, I experienced extreme pain. My grandmother, grandfather, and father passed away one after another. I still remember my

father lying on the floor at home, lifeless. I went back to my father's life of being treated like an ox and a horse, which made me feel very emotional. I saw various struggles from the protagonists in the novel and many people in life. People are struggling almost every moment in their lives, from birth to death, marriage, work, family, choices, desires, various daily trivialities, etc. There are struggles. The various struggles I saw and myself are all factors that inspire my works.

If you could collaborate with another artist or movement, past or present, who or what would it be, and why?

There are many excellent artists, both in the past and now. If I have to choose one, I will choose Picasso, because he was the first artist to influence me. At that time, I was still in high school, in that remote place. I occasionally saw Picasso's picture album and bought it. His artistic concepts and works have had a profound impact on me.



— Interview

Lena Baker

Can you share the inspiration behind using Martian dust in your artwork? How did the idea come about?

The idea of incorporating Martian dust into my artwork was born from a desire to create a physical connection with Mars. Initially, I considered using Earth materials—like sand or rocks—to symbolize the link between our planet and Mars, especially since no Martian soil samples have been brought back to Earth yet. While researching the chemical composition of Martian soil to find comparable Earth materials, I stumbled upon the fascinating discovery of Martian meteorites.

These meteorites, which originated from Mars and landed on Earth, are often cut into smaller pieces, producing dust as a byproduct. I found a reputable company that has been selling certified meteorites since the 1990s and reached out to them about using their Martian dust in my art. They were incredibly supportive, and I ended up purchasing more than half of their available stock.

Incorporating genuine Martian dust into my paintings adds an unparalleled layer of authenticity and deepens the connection to the Red Planet. It's not just symbolic—it's a tangible fragment of Mars embedded within the artwork, bringing viewers closer to the landscapes I portray. For me, this element bridges the gap between artistic imagination and the scientific marvel of Mars.



What challenges have you faced in sourcing and integrating Martian dust into your oil paintings?

One of the main challenges with using Martian dust is its unique light grey color and how it reacts when wet. The dust can become muddy when mixed with oil paint, altering its appearance and creating unintended color shifts. For example, when I aim to create a light grey highlight, the dust can sometimes darken to a Raw Sienna-like brown if it absorbs too much oil from the paint. To avoid this, I've developed a precise technique: I make delicate tapping motions to apply the dust and wait for the paint to partially dry—usually a day or two—before integrating it. This careful process ensures the dust retains its intended visual impact.

Sourcing the Martian dust was another hurdle. It's sold in small quantities by only a few specialized companies, so I needed to secure enough to complete the entire Martian Treks series. While it's a significant investment, the inclusion of genuine Martian material adds unparalleled value to my work—both in its authenticity and its ability to connect viewers more deeply with the Red Planet.

The Martian Treks series is unique. How do NASA's high-resolution images influence your interpretation of Mars' landscapes?

When I first saw NASA's high-resolution images of Mars' landscapes, I was struck by their abstract beauty. These photos looked like they could be paintings, carrying a natural artistic quality that was both surprising and captivating. Despite their visual appeal, I couldn't find any artist who had created a dedicated series of paintings based on Mars landscapes interpreted through scientific data. That realization inspired me to merge the abstract aesthetics of the Martian surface with the precise details provided by science.

Mars is frequently discussed in scientific circles but remains underrepresented in the art world. With



Martian Treks, I aim to bridge this gap—highlighting the planet's unique beauty while bringing attention to its significance. By interpreting these landscapes, I hope to inspire a greater appreciation for Mars, not only as a subject of exploration but also as a source of artistic inspiration.

What is your process for transforming scientific data into impressionistic and textured compositions?

My process begins with selecting NASA's high-resolution images of Mars that intrigue me—photos that already carry a sense of abstraction or an unusual interplay of textures and colors. I study the scientific context behind these images, such as the mineral compositions or geological formations they depict. Understanding these details allows me to maintain a connection to the scientific data while interpreting it artistically.

When translating these landscapes onto canvas, I rely on a mix of impressionistic techniques and detailed layering. I build texture by incorporating oil paints in varying consistencies, and I use a palette inspired by the enhanced colors in NASA's images, which reveal features beyond human vision. Martian dust adds a physical and tactile layer, grounding the piece in the reality of Mars itself.

This process isn't about recreating the images precisely but rather capturing their essence. I aim to evoke a sense of otherworldly wonder while inviting viewers to explore the unseen and unfamiliar through art.

How do viewers typically react to the use of Martian dust and the concept of connecting art with planetary science?

Viewers are often intrigued and surprised when they learn about the use of Martian dust in my paintings. One of the most common questions I receive is about how the dust is sourced and whether it's truly from Mars. Occasionally, someone will ask about the legitimacy of identifying meteorites as Martian. I reassure them that this process is rigorously scientific—Martian meteorites are recognized by experts and even displayed in institutions like the National Air and Space Museum in Washington DC.

These reactions highlight how new and unfamiliar this area is for most people, underscoring the importance of bringing awareness to it. As Mars gains more attention in the space community and discussions of colonization grow, connecting art with planetary science offers a unique way to engage people and spark curiosity about the Red Planet.

Do you believe your art bridges the gap between

science and art for your audience? If so, how?

Bridging the gap between science and art is at the heart of my mission with the Martian Treks series. As an artist, I approach this connection from one side of the metaphorical bridge, offering my interpretation of Mars' landscapes and geological features. While I don't have the expertise of a scientist, I aim to inspire curiosity and invite viewers to see the scientific data in a new, more emotional light.

I hope this series serves as an outstretched hand, reaching toward the science community and anyone passionate about exploration, to create a shared appreciation of Mars through art. Together, we can form a meaningful connection that blends scientific discovery with artistic expression.

What advice would you give to artists who want to integrate scientific or unconventional materials into their work?

My advice to artists looking to integrate scientific or unconventional materials into their work is to embrace curiosity and boldness. Dive deeply into your subject matter, and don't be afraid to push boundaries. Think big, even if your ideas initially seem far-fetched—sometimes those "impossible" ideas lead to the most groundbreaking discoveries.

When I began brainstorming Martian Treks, I had no idea what resources were available to me. It felt almost absurd to imagine incorporating something as specific as Martian dust into my art. But by researching and following that seemingly outlandish idea, I discovered it was not only possible but exactly what my work needed to create a profound connection with Mars.

Be willing to explore the unknown, and trust that your curiosity will guide you to something extraordinary.



Lena Baker | Opportunity is Still Smiling | 2024

Ruth Timón

A self-taught collagist based in Madrid, Ruth Timón has been creating analogue collages since April 2021. In December 2021, she was selected by the international gallery Art in Places to be part of 'No Word from Glue', thanks to which she participated in face-to-face exhibitions in Brussels, Cork and London, in the virtual exhibition of the initiative, as well as in its commemorative e-book. 'No Word from Glue' had the collaboration of the multidisciplinary artist Silvio Severino and the support of the Cervantes Institute. In March 2022, the short fiction film 'Daño' was released at festivals and cinemas, and its poster was created from one of the artist's collages. 'UNIQUENESS, an international initiative dedicated to women artists, selects one of her collages to participate in multiple actions to disseminate and promote her work around the world. She is also included in the commemorative e-book for 2022. In October 2022 she was selected by the international art magazine for emerging artists 'Suboart Magazine' to be part of its section All eyes on, where some of her collages are shown. In June 2023 the magazine 'Asparkía. Investigación Feminista', of the Instituto Universitario de Estudios Feministas y de Género Purificación Escribano of the Universitat Jaume I, used some of her collages to illustrate issue 42: Ecofeminismos a través de la historia del arte: naturaleza, género y educación (Ecofeminisms through the history of art: nature, gender and education). The Collage Laboratory of Madrid invites her to participate with one of her works in the 'Fanzine 6', a commemorative publication of the World Collage Day 2023. Since 2024 she has been a member of El Club de las Mujeres (In) Visibles, a platform that promotes equality through art, makes women artists visible and acts as a link between the artist, the public and the professional art sector. Currently, some of her works can be found in the gallery Espacio punto nemo (Madrid) and she is preparing new exhibitions in other art centres in Madrid.





— Interview

Anna Voronina

Your work is deeply intuitive and improvisational. How do you decide when a painting is finished?

Also intuitively. I feel a painting is complete when the urge to keep refining it disappears. It's a kind of internal "click"—a moment when the work starts to "speak" for itself, signaling that it's ready. This feeling comes when all the elements are in harmony, and adding anything further would only disrupt that balance.

I often compare this process to reading a book: when the story is finished, you simply close the book, knowing that everything has been said. It's the same with art: a painting must tell its own story, and my job is to recognize the moment it concludes.

As a self-taught artist, what challenges have you faced in developing your unique style, and how have you overcome them?

As a self-taught artist, I have faced numerous challenges on my journey to creating a unique style. One of the most difficult tasks was the lack of an academic background and knowledge that could have provided a solid foundation. I compensated for this through constant self-education: attending exhibitions, studying the works of masters, reading art books, and watching instructional videos. This not only helped me master techniques but also gain a better understanding of what I wanted to express through my paintings.

Another difficulty was internal doubt—the fear that my work might not be taken seriously due to the absence of formal education. However, I turned this into motivation: with every new project, I aimed to prove to myself and my audience that art is not about diplomas but about passion, perseverance, and sincerity. Finding my style was also a challenge. I experimented with different genres—from realism to surrealism,



from graphic art to pop art. At times, it felt like an endless experiment, but I realized that my style is not a static concept but a constantly evolving reflection of my personality. It is the freedom to experiment and the desire to avoid limiting myself within boundaries that keep me moving forward.

The most important thing is not to fear mistakes. Every "failure" becomes a lesson and a step toward something greater.

You draw inspiration from everyday life, animals, and human emotions. Can you share a specific moment or experience that inspired one of your artworks?

Certainly, the most striking example is my painting "Novus Ordo Seclorum," which I worked on for almost a year, observing global events, my reaction to them, and people's behavior. The idea was born from everyday experiences and a deep anxiety about the direction humanity is heading.

At first, I was concerned about global issues: mountains of waste, environmental pollution, unemployment. It felt like chaos was becoming an intrinsic part of our lives. Then came the coronavirus pandemic, and I was struck by how people's behavior changed. For instance, I was outraged by scenes of people willing to stand in massive lines in freezing

weather for a burger—a symbol of consumerism that persisted even under extreme circumstances. Next came the war, and in my painting appeared images reflecting indifference, division, and fear. These events made me reflect more deeply on values, on how we respond to crises, and on how our world transforms in reaction to them.

This work encapsulates my emotions, anxieties, and hopes, which I tried to convey through symbols and imagery, allowing each viewer to find something personal within it.

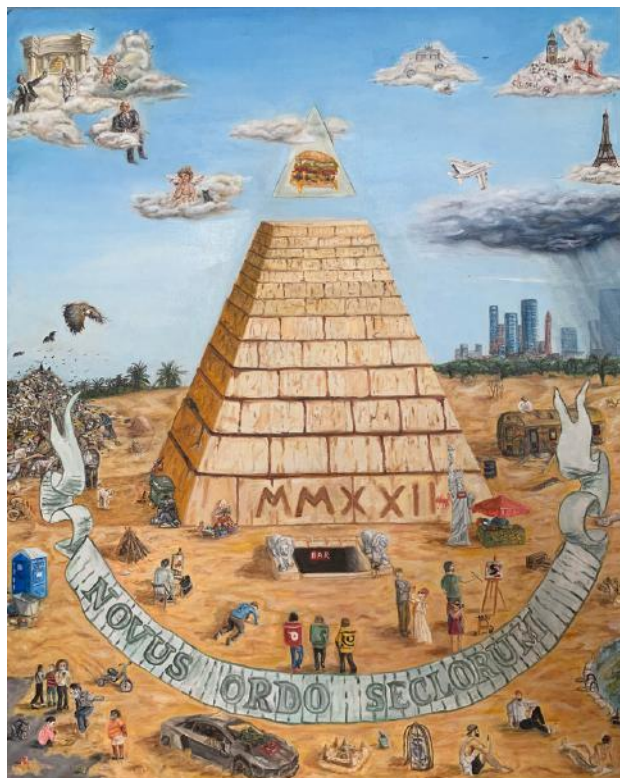
Your pieces have been exhibited internationally. How has this exposure influenced your creative process and artistic vision?

Exhibiting on an international level became a turning point for me. I finally began to believe in myself and embraced my identity as an artist. This experience opened new horizons and inspired me to move forward.

I have also built an artistic community around me where I can exchange ideas and receive feedback. As a result, my creative energy has multiplied, and my vision of art has become broader and deeper. The international experience has taught me to view art in a global context and to experiment more boldly with new forms and themes.

How do you balance the freedom of self-expression with the expectations of galleries and audiences?

There is no balance in the usual sense—I fully immerse myself in the freedom of self-expression. My paintings are born from my emotions and vision, and I create them in a way that feels right to me. However, when it comes to commissioned work, there is no such



freedom: I strictly follow all the client’s wishes and nuances to ensure the result fully meets their expectations.

The situation with exhibitions and galleries is similar: I paint for myself, the way I want and see fit, and then submit my work for consideration. The decision is up to the gallery—whether they accept the work or not. Thus, my creativity always starts with an internal impulse and only later finds its way to the viewer.

Your works are part of the Artseeker gallery collection. What does this partnership mean for you as an artist?

Collaboration with the Artseeker Gallery is a tremendous opportunity for an emerging artist to make a name for themselves and step onto the international stage. For me, this is an important milestone that allows my work to be showcased to a wider audience.

The gallery is relatively new, which means it is actively growing, offering numerous projects, and creating the most comfortable conditions for artists. This partnership provides not only professional growth but also the confidence that my art resonates beyond my usual environment.

You work in various techniques and genres. How do you choose the medium for a particular piece?

I choose the material for my work based on my inner desire and how I want to express the idea. Most often, I use oil paint because it allows me to convey depth and richness of color. However, if the idea calls for a different approach, I may turn to acrylic, graphics, or mirrored mosaic—everything depends on the mood and concept.

My name is **Aude Fourier**, I was born in France in 1978, I am a mosaicist artist; I have a degree in art history and archaeology and the desire to experiment with new artistic languages led me to take a mosaic course at the 3 Fleurons mosaic workshop; it awakened my senses and my curiosity. I then undertook the professional training of mosaicists at the Mosaic School of Friuli in Spilimbergo (PN) in Italy.

Project Statement

After graduation, I began a research on the form / non-form of the tesserae which led me to what I called the Intuitive Mosaic®. In my artistic work, intuition and materiality guides the gesture to give form and visibility to what is without words. Intuitive mosaic ® is a playful universe, a universe in which unlikely tiles give life to a game of spontaneous vibrations. The unexpected explores the heart and the different states of consciousness. From the materials (marble, enamel, bricks and tiles...) are born lines capable of opening and expanding the horizons of consciousness. My intuitive practice opens the doors to the imaginary, the intuitive and the creative, and leads to see and observe in a simple and natural way what is in the present moment.



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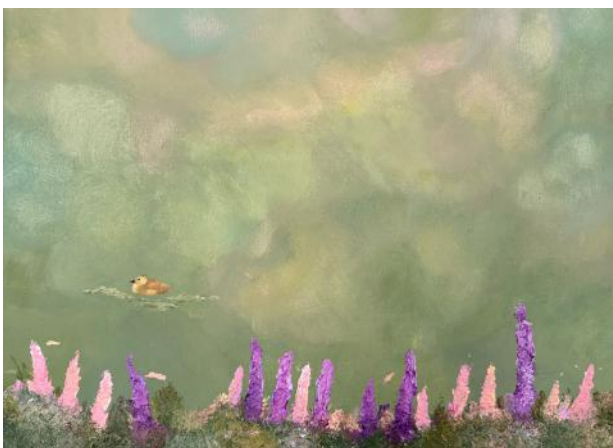
— Interview

Mengyi Wang

Your artwork reflects a beautiful blend of modern impressionism and traditional Chinese art. How do you approach balancing these two styles in your creative process?

I value balancing my art styles the same as how I balance my life styles. I always immerse myself in both the landscapes of impressionism as well as traditional Chinese art. Chinese art and calligraphy are the first art techniques I learned as a kid that have greatly influenced my expression through art mediums. Later in life, acrylic has become an important component of my creative mediums that I have been able to use as the overall framework to expand my main painting series. I measure modern impressionism as the framework throughout my creative inspiration for me to narrow down the composition of lighting and colors for each painting and using the style of traditional Chinese art to capture the detailed objects and to visualize the landscape to be ethereal.

Mengyi Wang | Sage in Fantasy | 2024



Growing up in a bi-cultural environment has clearly influenced your work. Could you share a specific memory or experience that inspired one of your paintings?

While living in California, going to the Summer Palace as well as the Forbidden Palace in Beijing have always been my core childhood memories that have inspired me to paint ancient palaces and villages in Beijing as my themes as a student. Exploring nature, especially admiring lotus flowers, has been in my roots to embrace my hometown as well as to explore California when I first moved there. When I spot the beautiful lotuses blooming at the Huntington Library in California, I especially recall my childhood memories spent with my family at the Summer Palace watching lotus in the pond and feel a strong personal connection that has profoundly shaped my journey as an Asian artist living in the U.S. It has inspired me to create my painting "Lotus in Memory" that blends different hues of green together just like blending my bi-cultural environment.

You often use empty space intentionally in your works. Could you elaborate on how this technique contributes to your storytelling?

Leaving empty space intentionally is an aesthetic technique and a symbol commonly used by traditional Chinese artists that delivers imagination as well as profound possibility. Throughout my education in art,

film, and global communication, I found myself always being a narrative and storytelling person. I see everything in a narrative way and would like to deliver my creative artwork through storytelling. While I create the artworks with my strong emotions built by my personal memories, the empty space symbolizes the connection between my artworks and my audience, inviting them to immerse themselves and find or recall their own personal memories beyond what's shown in the painting.

Nostalgia and memory are recurring themes in your art. How do you choose which memories to translate into your paintings?

I am always on the journey to find art inspirations that have emotional resonance and symbolic potential as my key art sources. As an Asian woman artist living in the U.S., I select memories that evoke strong emotions, whether feelings of joy or wonder, and objects that can connect my feelings and experiences both here and in Beijing.

Your recent series focuses on connecting personal memories with objects. Could you walk us through the inspiration and creative process behind one of these works?

"Oleander in Canyon Hills" is one of my recent life



Mengyi Wang | Lotus in Memory | 2024

reflections. Finding the beauty of nature has been my consistent goal within my old myth that beauty is only found in the great wide places. While taking a mental break close to home, standing on the stair in the park watching the pink oleanders blooming on the hill was the first time in a long while I got to pause and adore nature. It was the first time I realized beauty is in the little things I discover, no matter the size of the environment. That moment was profoundly sentimental and emotional, and I decided to transcribe it onto my painting.

What role does color play in conveying emotions and narratives in your paintings?

The color scheme is always an important component of my creative journey. Born in Beijing and residing in California, I absorbed the tremendousness of the historical capital and the fantasy of Disneyland. This inspired me to create a healing process with balanced color palettes featuring various green hues as well as vivid pink and purple shades. No matter where the viewers are when they are viewing my pieces, I invite them to walk through a calm and positive journey.

Having exhibited internationally, how do audiences from different cultures respond to your fusion of styles and themes?

Exhibiting internationally has shared with me many valuable insights into how audiences from diverse cultures respond to my paintings. I appreciate the joyful expressions when viewers with a Chinese cultural background recognize the traditional elements in my work, such as brushwork, the lonely duckling swimming in the pond, and the color palettes that symbolize Chinese culture. At the same time, I have received feedback from viewers with non-Chinese cultural backgrounds that they find the paintings fresh and innovative with the fusion approach and the storytelling narrative.



Mengyi Wang | Velvet Sage in Memory | 2024

Critical Review

Artist: Xinru Yang

By Anna Gvozdeva

Curator of Visual Art Journal

Xinru Yang's *Moonlit Solitude* and *Epiphany of the Present* are two striking works that intertwine themes of isolation, technology, and humanity's fragile relationship with its future. Together, they explore the intersection of introspection and societal progress, immersing viewers in a dialogue between stillness and transformation.

Moonlit Solitude portrays a haunting lunar landscape where the silence of the cosmos amplifies a profound sense of isolation. The towering moon, craters etched like ancient scars, illuminates a barren yet mesmerizing terrain punctuated by two futuristic structures. These stark and ambiguous structures symbolize humanity's relentless pursuit of the unknown—our drive to explore, adapt, and expand the boundaries of existence. The contrast between the cold, metallic forms and the ethereal glow of the stars highlights the tension between technological advancement and existential solitude. Xinru's use of shadow and light creates a liminal space that blurs reality and dreams, inviting viewers to reflect on their relationship with isolation, wonder, and the vastness of the universe.

In contrast, *Epiphany of the Present* shifts the focus to life on Earth, grappling with the fragility of existence in an era defined by both technological progress and ecological crisis. The central concept—the Life Archive—serves as a vessel of hope and preservation. By envisioning the rebirth of extinct and endangered species through advanced cloning, Xinru emphasizes the dual nature of technology: it casts shadows of destruction yet holds the transformative potential to reverse humanity's impact. The work transcends the visual, offering a call to action. We are reminded of the fleeting nature of life and the imperative of collective effort to shape a sustainable future. Xinru's ability to balance beauty and urgency elevates *Epiphany of the Present* beyond commentary, positioning it as a manifesto for change.

These works reflect Xinru's distinct artistic language—a fusion of contemplative landscapes and visionary futurism. While *Moonlit Solitude* explores the vastness of space and the inward journey of isolation, *Epiphany of the Present* looks outward, confronting the challenges of an endangered world. Xinru's art bridges imagination and reality, urging viewers to embrace introspection and action in shaping humanity's shared future.

— Interview

Xinru Yang

"Moonlit Solitude" captures a profound sense of isolation and wonder. What inspired you to explore these themes against the backdrop of the moon?

The moon's desolate yet mesmerizing beauty symbolizes humanity's unrelenting pursuit of the future and the unknown. In *Moonlit Solitude*, the stark lunar landscape and the infinite expanse of the cosmos reflect both the isolation of venturing into uncharted territories and the profound wonder that comes with it.

The futuristic structures subtly represent humanity's resilience and curiosity—our ability to adapt, explore, and dream, even in the most desolate environments. It is a quiet meditation on the mysteries of the universe and humanity's unwavering drive to uncover them.

In "Epiphany of the Present," you introduce the Life Archive to preserve life's essence. Can you elaborate on how the concept relates to the current environmental crises?

The Life Archive represents a conceptual vessel to preserve the essence of life amid the environmental crises we face today.



"Epiphany of the Present" responds to the fragility of Earth's biodiversity, threatened by human-driven changes like the Holocene extinction.

This concept reflects the dual role of technology: while it has contributed to ecological damage, it also holds the potential to safeguard life for the future. The Life Archive highlights the urgency to act now—preserving genetic material for a potential new genesis and protecting the ecosystems that sustain life today. It's a call to recognize this pivotal moment and our responsibility to shape a sustainable future.

Your work often juxtaposes the beauty of nature with the relentless march of technology. How do you view the relationship between these two forces?

I see the relationship between nature and technology as both interconnected and paradoxical. Nature inspires with its beauty and balance, while technology reflects human ingenuity and progress. Together,

they shape our world, often in tension. Technology has contributed to environmental harm, yet it also holds the potential to protect and restore, offering solutions to preserve biodiversity and address climate challenges. My work explores this duality, encouraging reflection on how we can use technology to coexist harmoniously with nature rather than in conflict. It's about finding balance in a world shaped by both forces.

The themes in your art encourage viewers to reflect on the fragility of existence. How do you hope your work will impact people's perspectives on climate change and technological advancement?

My work inspires viewers to reflect on the fragile balance between humanity, nature, and technology. By highlighting this fragility, I aim to encourage critical thinking about climate change and how technology can be used responsibly. Ultimately, I want to motivate action toward a more sustainable and harmonious future.

Could you share more about your creative process? How do you translate complex themes like isolation, extinction, and rebirth into visual elements?

I observe that most animals in nature instinctively seek "shelter," a safe space where they can thrive. Similarly, greenhouse plants flourish when their ideal growth conditions are carefully maintained. This inspired me to incorporate the concept of a "vessel" in my work—a symbolic shelter or sanctuary for life.

How has your experience at events like the London Design Festival influenced your approach to art, especially in conveying messages about technology



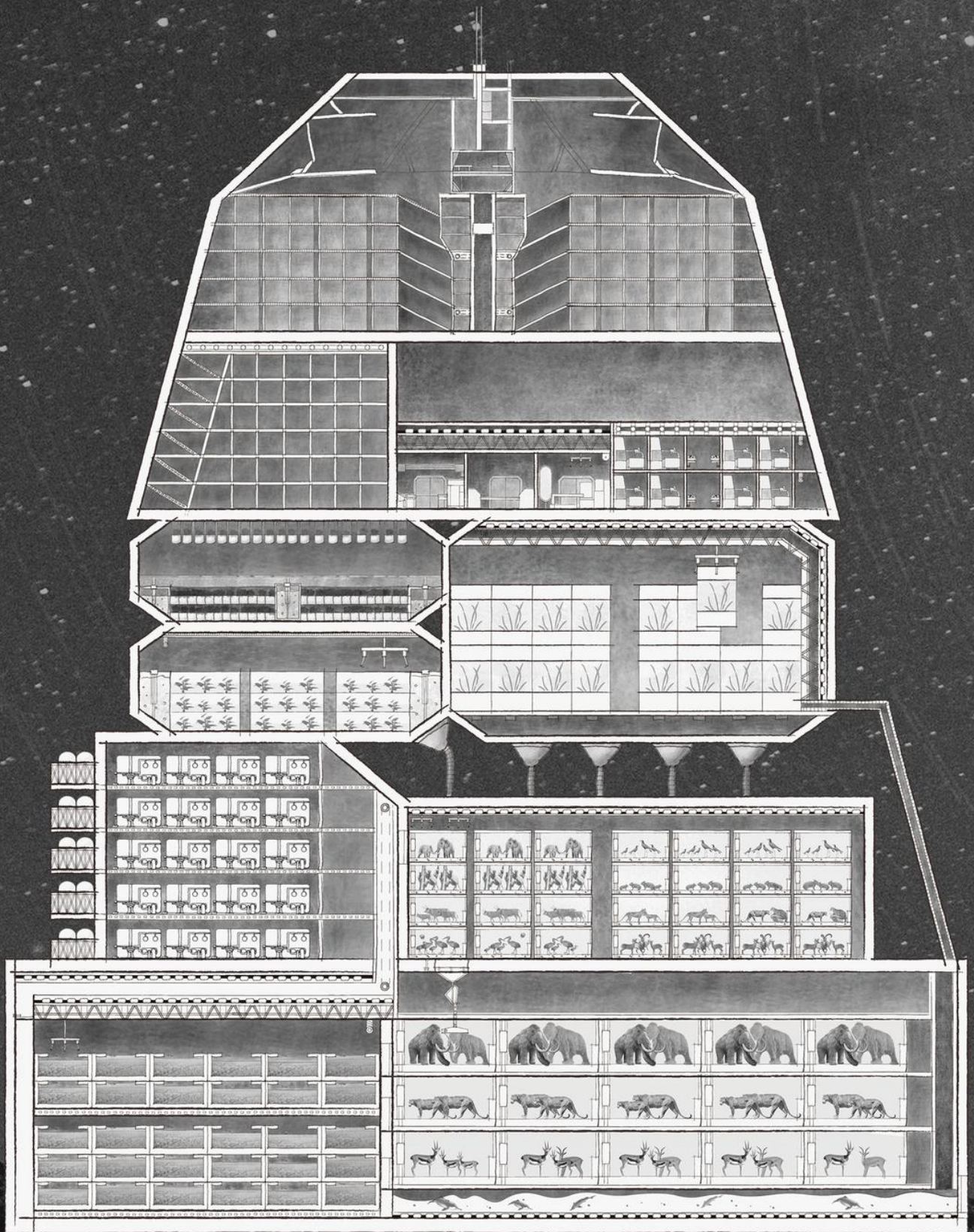
Xinru Yang | Moonlit Solitude | 2024

and nature?

Events like the London Design Festival have deepened my understanding of storytelling and engagement in art. They've inspired me to refine how I convey the relationship between technology and nature, emphasizing emotional connection and fostering dialogue about sustainability and our shared future.

In "Epiphany of the Present," you address the idea of transformation and collective action. What do you see as the role of artists in inspiring societal change?

Through art, we can challenge norms, provoke thought, and motivate action, making more tangible abstract issues like climate change and technological ethics. I believe artists are responsible for creating work that reflects the world, inspires hope, and empowers people to envision and act toward a better future.



— Interview

Vladimir Lebedev

Could you share with us your journey as an artist and how your engineering background influenced your artistic practice?

The path of the artist has coincided with my life since I can remember. I have always done something artistic - drawing, painting, modelling and other things. My father and then my schoolteachers helped with advising me on how to depict things that were difficult for me. While at school, I thought about my future career in architecture, and I worked to improve my skills in technical drawing and learnt about architectural styles. Also, I was active in participating in interschool art competitions at that time.

However, close to the end of high school, I decided finally to build my career in nuclear energy. I was successful in STEM disciplines, and such a decision was not incredible for me.

Thus, I went to St Petersburg to study nuclear engineering at the institute. It is a city filled with art. Street artists, beautiful buildings, bridges, museums, sculptures in gardens - all this gave a lot of inspiration. In the Hermitage I got acquainted with Impressionism. I saw paintings by great artists - C. Monet, H. Matisse, V. Van Gogh, Edgar Degas and many others. There I



realised the wide variety of art, the diversity of forms and methods.

As far as engineering experience in my creative life is concerned, it has always been very useful.

My skills in technical drawing and descriptive geometry helped me to create the composition of my pictures. An understanding of the movement of the medium has allowed me to better depict water flows, water surfaces, shadows and light spots. The knowledge of mechanics came in handy when drawing buildings, bridges and towers.

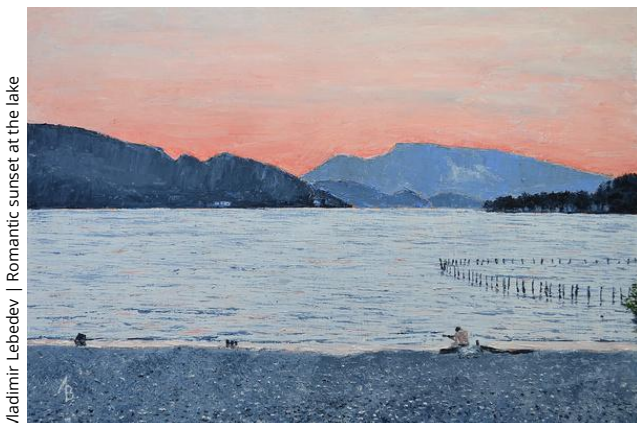
I believe that knowledge of the nature of things and phenomena gives a fuller understanding of how to depict nature or architecture.

After graduating from the institute, while working at a company I drew a few pictures, as I was focused on engineering.

The main creative period in my life as an artist relates to ten-year living in France. The first artistic impulse arose during the Covid-19 confinement. Without leaving the house day after day, I tried to paint, and it was a kind of flash for me. Since 2021 I have been painting regularly in various techniques. In 2023 I returned to Russia and here I continue to create.

What inspired you to explore Impressionism and Realism in your work, and how do you balance these two styles?

Initially I tried to maximise the resemblance to the objects in my pictures. To achieve this resemblance, I



Vladimir Lebedev | Romantic sunset at the lake

carefully worked out details, repeating shapes, shadows and colours as deeply as I could. My work was definitely done in a realistic manner then. This changed dramatically when I discovered Impressionism.

My first introduction to Impressionism was during my student period of life in St Petersburg. Visiting museums, I looked in detail at how the great artists were able to express their vision through patches of colour and relief brushstrokes rather than fine detail. However, their paintings looked even more alive than classical landscapes, they just needed to look from a distance. Since my previous experience was connected with classical art school, I needed time to digest it all. These bold paste strokes, the incompleteness of the forms, sometimes just hints of them - it was all so new and unusual.

In the St. Petersburg and then Moscow museums I learnt the techniques of great Western artists - C. Monet, H. Matisse, V. Van Gogh, E. Degas, as well as Russian artists - K. Korovin, I. Levitan, V. Serov and others.

When I started painting in the manner of Impressionism, even trying to imitate the techniques learnt, I kept pointing out details in my works. It was a kind of mixing of styles.

While in France, I had the exceptional experience of being exposed to the greatest works of Impressionist and Realistic art. This allowed me to refine my



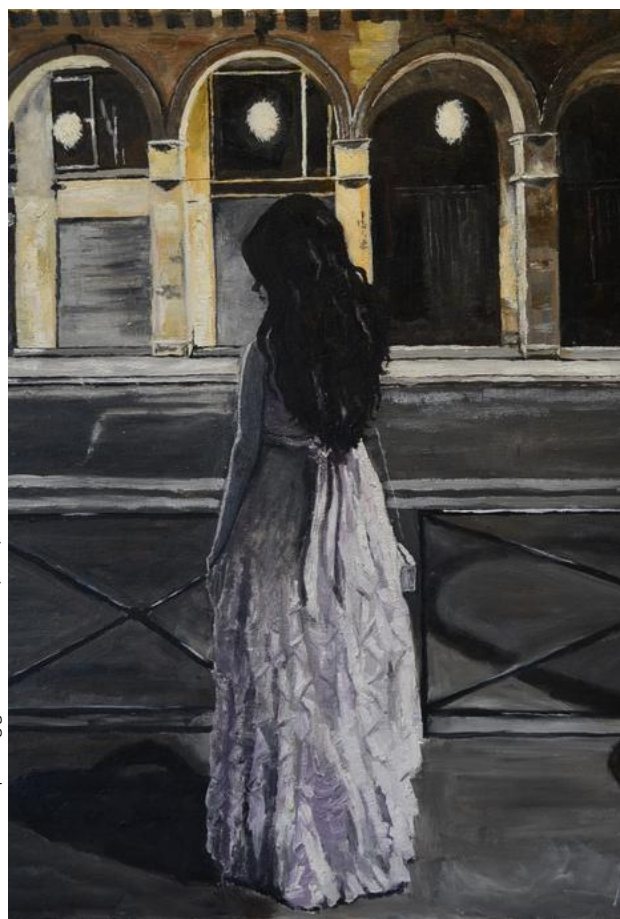
Vladimir Lebedev | Magnificent gingko

technique and forced me to look for new forms and methods. To this day, I still pay as much attention to detail in my work as is appropriate.

So, I would describe my style of work as impressionistic with a touch of realism, and in each work, I balance these two styles. Some of my paintings look more impressionistic, while others have a noticeable amount of realism.

Living in France for a decade, how did the country and its culture shape your artistic vision?

The first, longer part of the France period, I accumulated impressions, travelling around the country and beyond. Museums, cities, villages, nature - everything made a huge impression, but there was still a need for a little push to return to artistic creation. To answer how France and its culture have influenced my vision of the artist, I would first quote one quite famous in Russia person. He said that 'France is a country kissed by God'. And that is the best description of this country for me. It has influenced not only my vision of art, but also entered deeply into my soul, and became a part of me. In my youth, I learnt a lot about France. I loved French authors - A. Dumas, J. Verne, V. Hugo, G. de Maupassant and dozens of others. So, I was delighted to be able to see the places featured in their books, as well as places of historical events. During the French period, I took the opportunity to visit the most famous museums and places where the



Vladimir Lebedev | Young girl at Rivoli Street (Paris)

impressionist artists stayed and worked (e.g. Barbizon, Pont-Aven, Giverny, Saint-Paul-de-Vence, Saint-Tropez, Antibes, Moret-sur-Loing) and many famous sites in France – natural and artificial.

I visited the grandiose exhibitions held in Paris - the Morozovs' Collection, E. Degas and E. Manet, I. Repin and many others.

In France I was impressed with many Russian traces, left by the masters - I. Pokhitonov, K. Korovin, M. Bashkirtseva, I. Pryanishnikov, M. Chagall and many others.

I think that France and its brilliant culture have so improved my artistic vision, feelings and inspiration as if I had graduated from an art school.

How do you choose the subjects and locations for your paintings? Are they based on personal experiences, emotions, or historical significance?

I collect subjects for paintings while travelling through the country. Vacation family trips were planned to visit significant natural and historical places. Each journey intended to explore the local sites in search of landmarks. Another source of inspiration was my business trips abroad, which I had a lot of and gathered new subjects. Also, I went to plein-air and sketched in Paris or around.

The main criterion for choosing the painting subjects is the depth of emotions. I always paint the places I have visited myself including sites connected to great artists. I imagined myself next to them watching his canvas turning into a painting.

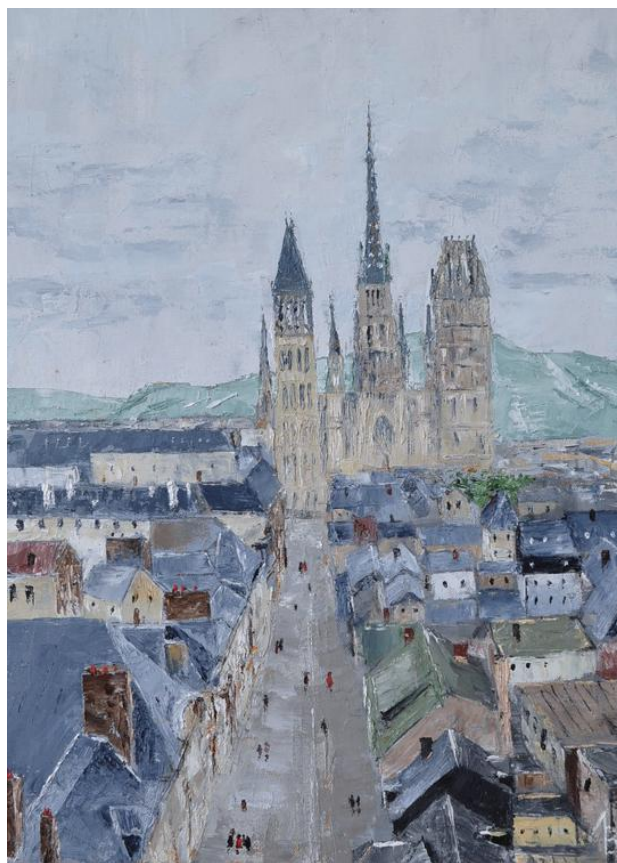
Often, I just stop, look and enjoy the beauty of a place. It becomes so personal, so profound, that I feel the need to paint and share this place with others, this moment, light and shadows and breath of the life around me.

As a self-taught artist, how did you develop your techniques and skills? Are there specific artists or movements that you studied or admired?

At the beginning, I used primitive techniques. Year after year I found ways to depict things - various surfaces, foliage, clouds or something else. Transferring from childhood to adolescence, I learnt how to operate various tools, how to work with paper, canvas, etc.

In museums and exhibitions, I looked as close as possible how artists made the strokes, reflecting shadows, texture or hues.

When working on my paintings, I tried to use my skills to better express my vision. Having no theoretical knowledge, I discovered the techniques used by artists (e.g., glazing, blending, wet and dry watercolour). I learnt from my experiments that everything can be a painting surface or a tool, even your fingers, just try it.



Vladimir Lebedev | Old Rouen wakes up. View of Notre-Dame Cathedral from the bell tower in the morning

I am still developing my specific techniques and hope to make it my individual one. I am still learning. Of course, the great artists influenced my artwork - C. Monet, C. Pissarro, E. Manet, A. Sisley, K. Korovin, V. Van Gogh, B. Morisot, E. Degas and many others. One of the recent lessons was from the style of Robert Luton. I used his method in a couple of my works, la grattage sur le carton, and it was a very new experience for me.

So, I would characterise my techniques as something that is alive, evolving and growing. And I am still in search of my style.

What message or feeling do you hope to convey to viewers through your paintings?

As an artist, I express myself through available mediums in my work.

Through my art, I strive to convey the beauty of the sights I have encountered, transporting viewers to these magnificent places and evoking in them the same joy and inspiration they have brought me. My journey as a self-taught artist is one of observation, practice and love of art.

What I hope to convey to the viewers is: Please, forget about your work, politics, news and other daily activities. Feel the beauty of these sites through my eyes, discover or rediscover them. Let's walk around together, see and enjoy the diverse of the world. Observe how the light and shadows play their game and present their magical patterns. View a landscape

or an old town and imagine how incredible they were to me - the guy who was lucky enough to see them. Perhaps, you would feel them even more strongly than I did.

I will be glad if my humble efforts support your interest in these views. There may be something very important just a stone's throw away from you.

Could you share a story about one of the paintings that holds special significance for you?

Since each of my works reflects my personal perception of the subject, I would say that almost all of them are meaningful to me.

However, I would single out one painting, 'Young Girl in the Rue de Rivoli (Paris)', created in early 2021.

It is the first painting created after a long artistic break,

during Covid-19 pandemic, when I needed something to occupy myself besides my job. This painting acted as the kick-start to return to my artistic endeavors. It was therefore particularly meaningful to me.

In addition, I used some of my accumulated artistic knowledge and skills and realised my capacity to do it. This painting carries a very strong emotional charge. It depicts a young Russian girl in a beautiful evening dress, appearing on the Rue de Rivoli in Paris in the deep evening after a school ball. She has just graduated from school, and it is her last walk with her classmates. They say goodbye to each other, but not only that. She freezes, turning half a corner back, as if she is about to turn around and say 'bye' to her childhood before taking her first step into another life. This moment was so touching that I decided to capture and preserve it.



Vladimir Lebedev | Perfection of the dead and triumph of the living

— Interview

Edoardo Petracca

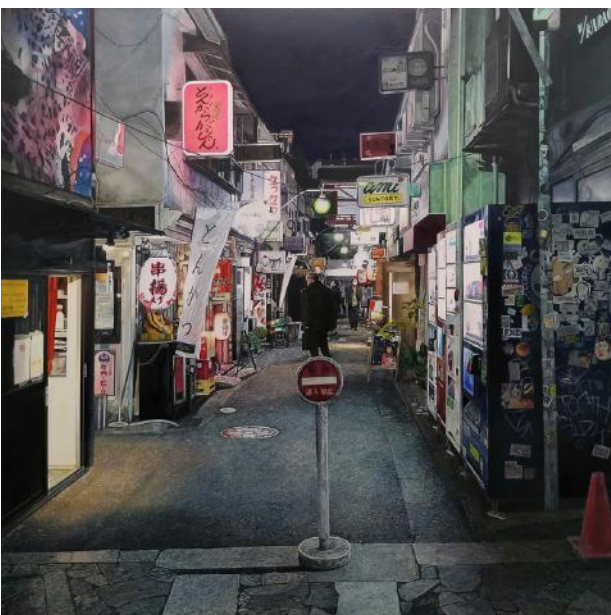
Can you tell us about your journey as a self-taught artist? What inspired you to start painting in 2008?

I always liked to draw since I was a kid, through the years, I developed an interest towards hyperrealism, this technique is not taught in common art academies, so the only option I had, was to learn by myself; I thought that maybe with efforts and discipline I could be able to learn, that is why I started to paint using oil colours in 2008, before this date I used other media.

Your paintings reflect an incredible attention to detail. How do you decide which elements of reality to highlight in your work?

Details are some of my favourite things to paint, anyway I do not highlight some details instead of others, I just paint the scene as it is, closer details will be sharper, the ones in the background more blurred, but always with an homogeneous and natural result; often my paintings are more detailed than the photos used as references, when some things are not visible, I do researches for paint even those parts and details.

Edoardo Petracca | Halo | 2024



How has your technique evolved over the years, and what motivated you to incorporate old techniques in a hybrid and modern way?

My techniques are in continuous evolution, I learn with every painting I do, trying always different things and making a lot of experiments, starting from the preparation of the canvases, that I make smooth like a sheet of paper, to the new techniques I am developing.

My approach to painting can be considered uncommon, I do not follow the typical stereotypes or rules, contrary to what is commonly believed, for many parts of my paintings I can already obtain an hyperrealistic effect painting alla prima, for example I can paint windows, windscreens and similar things with this technique, and they can be considered finished, I paint the first layer in this way, instead of a more traditional loose block-in, paint in a detailed way since the beginning gives a better result for me, after the first layer made like this, is refined adding more layers, transparent layers and glazings, that are an old technique invented by old Flemish painters, where colours are obtained painting thin layers of transparent colours over a previously dried one, this is called optical mixing, but results are difficult to control in this way, so the modern difference is to previously mix the correct transparent colour for match the one in the reference image and paint directly with it.

You emphasize replicating reality without distortions or alterations. What challenges do you face in achieving this “perfectly imperfect” representation?

These are two different things, when I say that I replicate reality without distortions, I mean that I paint a scene as it would be seen by the human eyes, for

example if you take a photo of a landscape, cityscape or a portrait, especially using a wide lens, you will see that the photo shows lens' distortions, so it is different from what you really see, this and other defects of photography, are not found in my paintings, this also proves that contrary to what some people think, hyperrealism is not just copy a photo, but looking at my paintings you see that scene exactly like you would see it with your eyes if you were there in person. Instead when I say that I paint perfectly imperfect things, I mean that I do not modify things that can be considered ugly for make them look better, these can be the rust on a pole, dirt, broken things, or physical characteristics of people, I paint the reality as it is, accepting the beauty that can be found in imperfections, as expressed by the wabi-sabi philosophy.

How do you balance between technical precision and artistic expression in your paintings?

I do not think that technical precision is a limit to the artistic expression, as I do not think that other styles of painting are more expressive than hyperrealism just because do not have technical precision, for example an abstract painting looks like a dirty palette, or a monochromatic canvas is exactly like one of those colour's samples you can see at the paint shops, they are not even art, do they also have an artistic expression? Jan Van Eyck's paintings are highly detailed and centuries ago he reached a technical precision unknown before him, do his paintings lack artistic expression because they have these characteristics?

In a world dominated by digital and AI-generated imagery, why is it important to you to depict reality as it is?

I am not interested in AI and AI generated imagines are not art, with their development will be more difficult for people to distinguish what it real and what is not, fake things are not for me, I prefer to paint real things that exist in real life with real colours and real brushes.

What role do light and color play in your process, and how do you approach layering to achieve such a life-like effect?



Without light and colours there will not be a painting, a realistic effect is achieved also by painting value and chroma correctly, so are of a fundamental importance, I use a limited palette and in this way I can replicate every colour I need; layering is also very important because in this way you can create various effects, that can be textures, reflections, reflected lights, transparencies, more depth, if you watch my painting "Halo" you will see many examples of this, because is fully made with glazings, for example, if I had painted the sign up on the left with opaque colours, it would not have been so luminous and transparent, giving the impression that there is a real light inside it, same thing for all those coloured reflected lights on the walls or the asphalt, another example can be the escalator in my painting "X" or that sky that was made applying five layers of oil paint, plus three layers for the clouds, for certain things, more layers you apply more real they will look.



Edoardo Petracca | I got lost | 2022

Colleen Hoffenbacker is an award-winning artist based in Bellingham, WA, who blends traditional fine arts with digital tools to explore innovative creative possibilities. Her work has been featured in New Visionary, Create!, Art Seen, Suboart, and Modern Renaissance and is included in the prestigious Lunar Codex collection. Recognized internationally, her paintings are showcased in galleries, museums, and private collections. A passionate advocate for conservation, she contributes a portion of sales to environmental organizations.

Artist Statement

Through oil paintings that unite pigments and algorithms, I create fantastical gardens where Earth's hidden beauty comes alive—vibrant, layered, and surreal. With an Alice in Wonderland-like twist, my work distorts nature's forms, turning flowers, leaves, and vines into curious, dreamlike metamorphoses that invite viewers to lose themselves in a world where reality is fluid and the boundaries of the natural world are reimagined.





Colleen Hoffenbacker | Floragen 2.0.2 | 2023

— Interview

Nova Ma

How did your background in architecture influence your transition into ceramics and mixed media art?

My interest in sculpture originates from the meticulous process of architectural model-making, where I developed an appreciation for crafting tangible forms to represent spatial ideas. Exploring space, structure, and form has always been a central focus of my practice, both in architecture and in my transition to ceramics and mixed media art.

However, the shift from architecture to sculpture presented a unique challenge. Architectural design is inherently functional, following a structured process of identifying a target issue, analyzing it, and providing a solution. This



problem-solving mindset initially made it difficult to embrace the more open-ended, conceptual nature of art-making. The transition required me to unlearn the emphasis on functionality and instead delve into the abstract, allowing me to engage with materials and ideas more intuitively and experimentally.

What inspired you to explore the relationship between space, materials, and sensory experiences in your work?

While humans are predominantly visually oriented, other senses—such as hearing, touch, taste, and smell—play equally significant roles in shaping our perception of the world. This holistic sensory engagement has always fascinated me, particularly in how space and materials can evoke emotional responses and create immersive experiences.

In my work, I am particularly intrigued by how different forms and textures—such as intricate patterns, soft fabrics, or the contrasts between smooth and matte glazes—can evoke tactile sensations in the mind. This approach allows me to experiment with how materials communicate on a sensory level beyond sight, offering new ways to engage with physical spaces and objects.

Could you share the story or thought process behind your project "Joint & Junctions"? How did you conceptualize the interplay between porcelain clay and hemp?

In Joint & Junctions, I aimed to exhaustively explore the possibilities of combining two materials with contrasting properties—porcelain clay and hemp—on both macro and micro levels.



Nova Ma | Supend | 2024

This included investigating structural joints and connections and the microscopic interplay, such as the integration of clay particles with the fibres of hemp fabric.

A key focus was to examine the tension between the materials—the rigidity and fragility of porcelain versus the flexibility and resilience of hemp—and how their inherent properties interact and challenge each other. This exploration allowed me to test the limits of their compatibility and to highlight their dynamic contrasts.

Fragility also became an integral part of the sculpture's narrative. The unstable and imperfect joints evoke a sense of vulnerability, which invites viewers to reflect on the delicate balance of connections. This instability engages the audience on a sensory level, sparking a dialogue that transcends the physicality of the work and resonates with their own perceptions of materiality and form.

In "Suspended!" you freeze moments of dynamic stillness. How do you approach capturing this tension in static forms?

The Suspended! series centres on abstracting the essence of the parabolic curve to embody moments of dynamic stillness. For instance, the instant when a pendulum reaches its apex represents a fleeting equilibrium—an almost imperceptible microsecond of tension before motion accelerates once again. This delicate balance between movement and stillness is the foundation of the series.

This idea is to materialise through asymmetrical parabolic forms that suggest a sense of momentum. These curves create a visual acceleration, evoking energy and motion even within the static nature of the sculptures. Unlike stable geometric shapes, which convey predictability, the curves introduce an intentional instability, hinting at flow and transformation. Additionally, the physicality of stoneware plays a crucial role in reinforcing this balance. Its inherent weight interacts with the curves, contributing to the overall equilibrium of the piece. This interplay between material properties

and form brings the sculptures to life, encapsulating the tension between stillness and motion, stability and fragility, in a cohesive and resonant dialogue..

What role does sustainability play in your practice, and how do you integrate sustainable materials into your works?

Sustainability is a fundamental aspect of my practice, explored on multiple levels. For instance, I deliberately avoid using adhesives in my works, ensuring that all materials remain in a recyclable state. In ceramic production, I incorporate recycled clay whenever possible, minimizing waste and extending the lifecycle of the material.

As part of my residency at superSATELLITE.rca, I've integrated sustainability into my Tactile Memory - Capturing Textures through Clay Impressions workshop series. This involves using discarded materials from construction sites in Southwest London as part of the tactile art-making process. By repurposing these locally sourced materials, I aim to highlight their



Nova Ma | Suspended! | 2024

sensory qualities while fostering a dialogue about the material's origin and its connection to the surrounding environment. This approach not only reinforces the value of reusing resources but also emphasizes the tactile and cultural specificity of materials in artistic practice.

How do you balance the structural elements of your pieces with their emotional or sensory resonance?

I don't see structure and resonance as opposites but rather as complementary forces. In my practice, this balance often emerges through specific formal strategies, such as adjusting visual weight to create the illusion of being "off-balance." This slight sense of instability not only challenges the viewer's perception but also conveys an emotional undertone of tension or uncertainty. On the other hand, when I opt for more symmetrical or fluid forms, they tend to evoke feelings of calmness and equilibrium, offering a sense of inner stability.

Beyond form, materiality and colour play crucial roles in enhancing this balance. For instance, I might use rough or highly textured materials to



Nova Ma | Joint & Junctions | 2023

evoke tactile associations, making the emotional aspects of the work more tangible. In contrast, smooth or matte surfaces bring a contemplative softness to the piece. Also, colours add another layer of nuance. These details enable structure and emotion to engage in a dialogue, while maintaining a hint of ambiguity, rather than existing as separate aspects of the work.

Your work often pushes the limits of material flexibility. Can you share any challenges or breakthroughs you've faced during this exploration?

Working with materials like clay inherently involves dealing with uncertainty and uncontrollable factors. For example, clay's shrinkage rate during drying and firing, the changes in hardness as it loses water, and the internal stress within the material can all lead to unexpected results. These challenges required me to adapt my approach and embrace the material's unpredictable nature.

Through extensive trial and error, I conducted numerous prototypes to identify the exact limit of clay slabs' curvature before they would crack or collapse. This process not only determined the final forms of my sculptures but also dictated how elements could be joined, ensuring both structural stability and aesthetic coherence.

These explorations deeply connect to the broader narrative in my work, which often revolves around themes of tension and fragility. The limits and vulnerabilities of the material mirror the precarious balance I aim to capture, turning technical challenges into integral aspects of the piece's conceptual expression.



Nova Ma | Suspend | 2024



Romy McIlroy is a Melbourne, Australia based, multidisciplinary artist with a strong photographic practice capturing fine art imagery. She has a background in the performing arts industry for singing, acting, and dancing on both stage and screen, which allows for creative exploration in all aspects of her life. Her work considers the human condition and what it means to perceive one another through the lens of an audience. Through an exploration of the multi-conscious mind, she aims to create visually interesting narratives that challenge the viewers understanding of reality and the fictional realm. She is drawn to societal voyeuristic tendencies and is heavily influenced by the perverse nature of human complexities.

Artist Statement

My work focuses on the process of 'becoming other' in the performing arts and the multi-consciousness behind a performance. The audience watches the actor, the actor watches the character, the character watches the audience. I am intrigued by the psychology of voluntarily becoming something or someone other than who you are, and how that process may affect an individual. Curious about our draw to the fictional world, my work delves into how this can develop into a form of self-deception and avoidance of one's day-to-day life, ultimately becoming detrimental to one's view on reality. The Performative Alien is a concept where we as performers take on a role that is ultimately alien to us until we fully embody the character, therefore becoming a performing alien to ourselves, and a form of entertainment to another.



Romy McIlroy | The Performative Alien | 2024



— Interview

Tiana Jones

Can you share how your childhood experiences, such as drawing on walls and making up pictures from books, influenced your current artistic style?

I've always had a vivid imagination, making up pictures and allowing myself to create helped me bring everything I've created in my mind to life. This resulted in me starting to draw on the walls as a kid- I found the paper was never big enough for my imagination. Being able to express my imagination and creativity at such an early age allows me to now create a colourful, stylistic, illustrative flow that I bring into my current art



practice. - I'm always referencing this feeling of nostalgia.

What were the most impactful lessons you learned while studying fine arts at Centennial College?

Every single professor I had at Centennial impacted me and my art practice in such a powerful way. But the most impactful lesson I took away from my studies was to promote yourself. Nobody makes art like you, and there is no "bad art" Don't be afraid to share you and your creativity- even if you feel like no one's looking at or appreciating it, someone always will and you never know how beautifully that can turn out for you.

How do you choose the subjects for your portraits, and what inspires your selection of colors and chaotic backgrounds?

I take inspiration from my everyday surroundings. I live in a very diverse city so my art often reflects the people I see. The sometimes chaotic colourful or childlike backgrounds in my works are always an ode to my childhood art pieces, I always want to feel free while doing art so putting colours down in this way is that for me.



Tiana Jones | Love Letters & Polaroids | 2024

Could you elaborate on your exploration of relationships through the lens of different camera screens in your current works?

The question I tend to get about my current works: "Love through a screen" is why camera lenses? Well, my answer is in this generation to feel we've lived through a moment we must capture a picture or video of it to feel it's real. But who can blame us? As someone who's a hopeless romantic, you absorb this media with constant perfect moments in relationships being represented and sometimes it feels like it'll never happen in real life. So to wrap it up me using cameras as canvases is me referring to both capturing perfect moments we never want to end and a reference to those perfect movie moments we see in media.

How do you ensure your artwork communicates the energy, joy, and nostalgia you aim to convey?

I always strive to make sure my artwork sparks joy. I do this by choosing bright colour palettes



Tiana Jones | Ghost | 2024

and visually representing a joyful scenery. The nostalgia usually comes from the subjects I choose whether it's an old movie, song or old family photos. I want my pieces to feel like a warm happy memory.

What draws you to use acrylics, oil pastels, and colored pencils, and how do you decide which medium to use for a particular piece?

I love working with mixed media in general. Although my usual go-to is acrylic paint this is mostly because I love the fluidity and the dynamics of it.

Sometimes when I want to add different textures or feelings, I'll add pencil crayons or oil pastel on top. But I think it does boil down to what I want the final outcome of the piece to be and how I want the piece to feel and that's how I choose my mediums.

Do you find digital art offers different opportunities for expressing your themes compared to traditional mediums?

Digital art and traditional art for me are drastically different. I find digital art more challenging for my style just because I think there's so much to learn with it that I haven't yet that are much easier for me to do traditionally. I think once I hone that skill it'll definitely open up a whole new set of opportunities for more clean illustrative designs I want to create in the future.



Tiana Jones | Love | 2023

Inga Ulevičiūtė

Born in Vilnius capital city of Lithuania, started my painters life since 2019. I do call myself self-made artists, because I have never studied art, I was always more into management thinking I am not good enough as an artist, not good enough as performer, because I don't have any academic background. After reading Julia Cameron book "The Artist's way" I have gained inner trust that I can and must be unapologetically artsy as I am, because that creative energy is so vital inside of me, and I can not ever shut it down, I need to express myself. That is how I have started my way, within getting totally lost in creation, gods will, universe higher vibration, the calling...Now I have around 45 pieces painted, and almost everyone of them is charged with my emotion and feelings. Painting has become in one way a therapy session, in other way a process of letting go and getting to meet myself on canvas as a human with flaws and imperfections and sometimes chaos inside of me. All of the charged diversity within me became many pieces of abstract expressions without any rules. My goal is to show my artwork not only locally but as well globaly. Had my first personal exhibition in 2022 at venue "Arts printing house" in Vilnius, could not have been more prouder of myself and at the same time more humble before people who came to see my artwork. I feel gratitude towards community that surrounds me, where I have been growing as an individual and as an artis, and the feeling of blessing when finally things, that had forms in me became forms that can be seen by others and can touch others uniquely, is tremendously rewarding. I have been looking for opportunities to show my painting as much as I possibly can while making a living working in different field. In year 2023 my painting "swimming through pain" has been hanging at virtual gallery "art without roof" at Go Vilnius platform, as well at 2022 I have submitted my artwork for Luxembourg art prize and received positive and encouraging certificate in recognition of my high artistic quality.

Inga Ulevičiūtė | Self-portrait swimming through pain | 2022



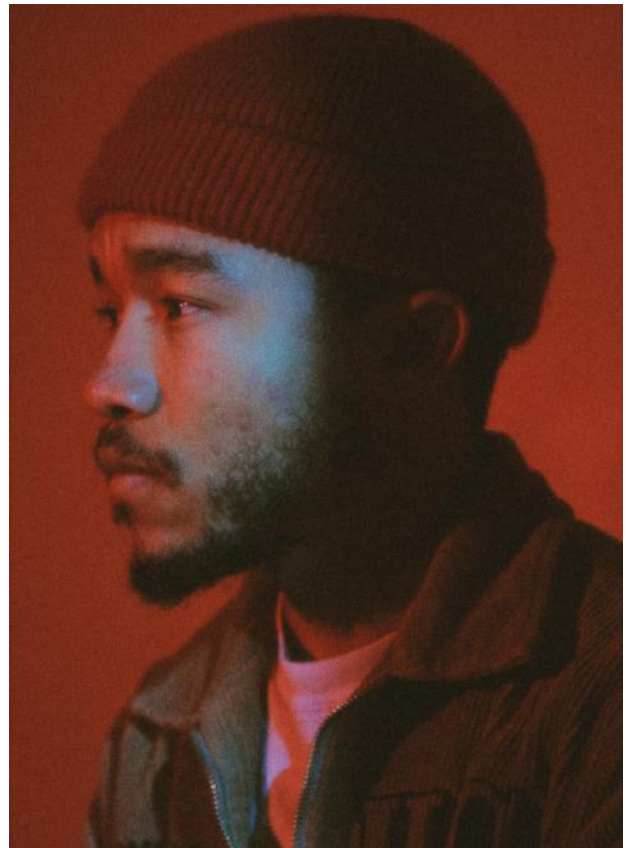


— Interview

RJ Gardner

What drew you to photography as a medium for artistic expression back in 2017?

I got into photography towards the end of my senior year of high school back in 2012 around the same time that Instagram first started and began to become the social media platform that it is now. I found out about photographers/visual artists such as Elise Swopes, Greg Noire, and Dan Marker-Moore through Instagram and I instantly fell in love with how their work/photography looked. I wanted to do something similar with my

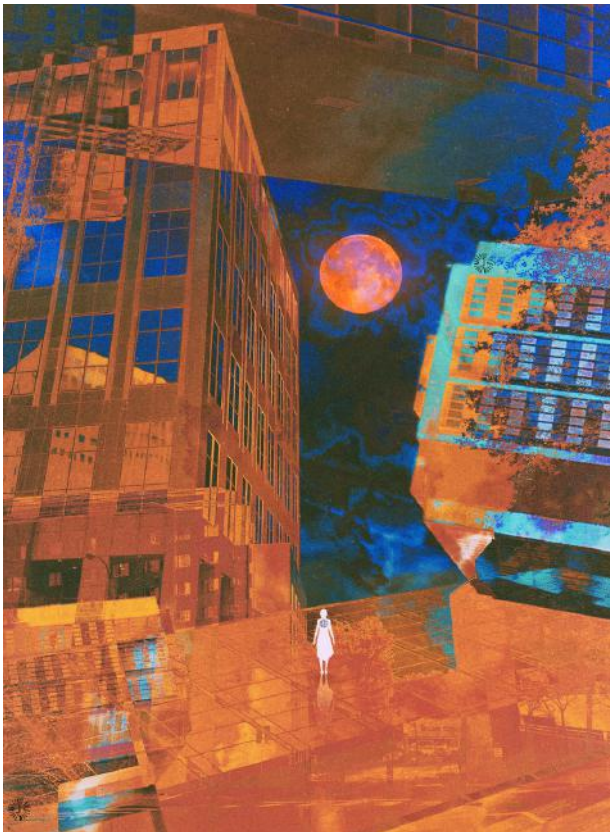


photography but in my own way so that it wouldn't be carbon copies of their work and styles. Something that would kind of stand out on its own while still respectfully drawing inspiration from them.

How do you balance between digital, film photography, and Photoshop to bring your visions to life?

The digital photography is more of my go to when it comes to creating my art pieces. I use both my old but, reliable Canon Rebel T3 digital camera and sometimes I even use my iPhone to shoot photos with. I also use my iPhone as a way to create my artwork by using mobile photoshop apps such as Adobe Lightroom, Adobe Express, ArtStudio, and an app called Photo leap, which used to be a favorite app of mine to use for years but now that they've kind of become more AI driven I may need to find a replacement for it. I do hope to use more film photography in my work in early 2025 as well. It's fun to experiment with but can be a bit expensive when it comes down to the cost of film.

Your work often feels dreamlike and surreal —how do you approach creating such pieces?



RJ Gardner | Different Hues Pt VIII | 2023

What inspires these visual narratives?

I believe my best art pieces are the ones that I don't force if the inspiration isn't there at the moment. To me, if you force it then it's not going to be something you're satisfied with. The main inspirations behind my artwork are films such as; Inception, Interstellar and Doctor Strange and any sci-fi movie really. Movies like that take you to a different world with great stories to tell and that's what I try to do with the artwork I've been creating for almost a decade now.

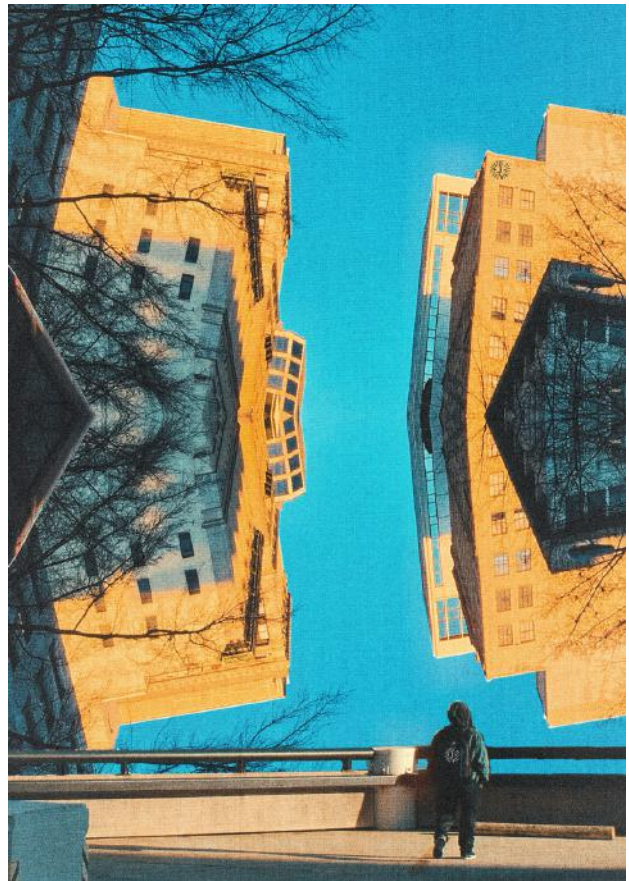
How has your creative process evolved since you first began creating art?

I can honestly say it's changed tremendously compared to when I first started back in 2017. From the layering of my work, the different array of colors within my work, as well as my photography constantly improving. It's been amazing to take a step back sometimes and see how far my artwork and I have come since I first started.

You mentioned exceeding expectations as a goal—what expectations do you challenge most: your own or those of others?



RJ Gardner | Which Way Pt I | 2019



RJ Gardner | Mirrored Pt I | 2024

I'd say my own more so than others lately. That part of me that wants to prove myself to people that I'm good at this and that I'm constantly improving is still there but, as of lately I've been trying to prove to myself that I deserve to be here in the world of art and that I'm going to be here for a long time.

How do you hope viewers interact with or interpret your art? Do you prefer leaving it open to their imagination?

I try to make it a world they can see themselves in. Something that people can resonate with on a deep level whether it be emotionally, personally, and mentally.

Your art has been appreciated internationally—how do different audiences respond to your work?

Thankfully it's been accepted in a very positive way no matter where it goes. Whether it's here in Richmond, VA, Brooklyn, NY, Houston, TX, Paris, France, or London, England I've been met with a lot of positive feedback about it and I'm blessed to experience it.

— Interview

Nicholas D. Todd

Your artistic journey started early with a Pokémon fan art publication at 12 years old. What motivated you to pursue art from such a young age?

I always wanted to be an illustrator since I was four or five years old, having grown up watching so many hand-drawn cartoons such as Looney Tunes and Inspector Gadget, before being influenced by whatever anime you got on a Saturday morning here in Australia, such as Pokémon, Digimon, and Dragon Ball. At the time, wanting to draw felt easier for me because, when starting out, I did struggle to draw in the same manner as any comics you'd read in the West. Manga and anime offered a chance to draw more loosely, as proportions weren't as restricted.

What were the biggest lessons you learned during your studies at the Adelaide College of the Arts?

The only real lesson I could have taken from my studies then was how to experiment with mediums. To be perfectly honest, I struggled with many drawing



classes during my degree because we were learning how to draw rather than just drawing. I hated using charcoal and was always picked on for not getting scaling right, as I struggled with working on A1-sized paper, having worked with A4 most of my life (these days, I work on both A4 and A5-sized paper). Eventually, I got to a point of avoiding traditional drawing materials altogether and focused on wet media such as inks, paints, and sometimes dishwashing liquid. Experimenting with wet media was a more forgiving process during my studies, as it taught me it was alright to work directly.

You transitioned from digital design to calligraphy and Japanese Sumi-e painting. What drew you to this traditional medium?

I was drawn to it through a calligraphy group held by the Japanese Australian Friendship Association (JAFA) in my hometown, which met twice a month to practice. It was something I did to pass the time until I got accepted into TAFE again (what we call vocational college) after dropping out the first time because I didn't like the idea of going to a dark classroom to learn something I had already learned in high school. When I did get accepted into the Adelaide College of the Arts in 2013, I went on a five-year hiatus before coming back in late 2018, where I've been ever since as a form of therapy for myself, drawing on the side as I keep up my Japanese skills.

How has the practice of Sumi-e ink painting influenced your broader artistic style and



perspective?

Sumi-e, as a technique, has been more forgiving in how I approach illustration. Practicing with kanji has been helpful; when learning to write, we are taught about the stroke order, which is important as you have to learn about the spacing of the individual strokes that build up a word. It's the same with drawing in the Sumi-e style—you get a feeling of flow and balance.

Many of your works focus on simple yet bold strokes. What inspires the themes and forms in your illustrations?

I'd admit a lot of what I draw comes directly from my head. A single stroke might make me think of a nose or the fringe of someone's hair, so I would base the character around how thick a stroke is, which also inspires their body language. They tend to be a type of knee-jerk reaction in my head. If I'm talking to people about something or reminiscing on something, like a time I went to a pachinko arcade in Kanazawa, I might be inspired. Sometimes, I'm inspired by scenes from movies and TV, having grown up watching a lot of it and being part of the film industry as an extra (Mortal Kombat 2021, The Royal Hotel). For example, "Straw Hat in the Rain" is reminiscent of any film by Akira Kurosawa or Hayao Miyazaki, where there's a lot of rain.

Nick Todd | Country path | 2019



Nick Todd | Deepwali | 2021

How did the 2020 pandemic impact your artistic process, and what was it like working with FOREVER ELVIS magazine in Tokyo?

Not a great deal. Sure, we had lockdowns here, but unlike the rest of Australia, which was cooped up for eighteen months, my hometown, Adelaide, was able to go outside again a lot quicker because we followed the restriction guidelines and shut down early enough to curb cases. We were able to go back to art galleries and return to normal(ish) after only three months and could rejoin my calligraphy club with some juggling involved. Working for FOREVER ELVIS has been, and still is, a very open experience, as I had been friends with its publisher for almost twenty years beforehand. He was more than happy to publish illustrations for him once they got to him. My first picture was posted in July in time for his birthday that year but didn't get there until October due to the pandemic. However, with restrictions lifted over the years, it became much easier to submit images, like ones from Blue Hawaii and Speedway, on a biannual basis.

As a self-taught artist in calligraphy and Sumi-e painting, what advice would you give to aspiring artists looking to explore new mediums?

In terms of calligraphy, whether it's Chinese or Japanese, don't be afraid to try writing any character you come across in everyday life, as it's great practice for spacing and control. For those interested in Sumi-e, just have faith in the strokes you make and let them be your guide.

Astrée Augereau

My studies in literature have led me to focus on the frenzied romanticism in 19th-century poetry in France. Passionate about visual arts, particularly photography, I seek to express the dreamlike and fantastic dimension that haunts our perception of reality.

Artist Statement

For me, art is a vector of imagination and an exploration of our inner night as well as our emotions. By blending urban exploration and photography, I aim to find poetry in ruins, emotion through matter, and also an imaginary space, tinged with dreams, through these remnants of the past.





— Interview

Tatiana Semkova

Your artwork reflects both fairy tales and deep emotional experiences. Can you tell us more about the themes you explore in your paintings?

In my work, I truly explore themes that at first glance may seem contradictory. On one hand, there is the enchantment, lightness, and charm of a fantastical world, and on the other, profound emotional intensity reflecting real life. For instance, in the painting "The Princess's Bath," I delve into the fragility and simultaneously the strength of a woman. Heroism and vulnerability go hand in hand. At its core lies the theme of societal expectations and the weight of the masks one must wear.

The flowers surrounding the characters can symbolize the beauty and abundance of life, but they also serve as a reminder of its fragility and impermanence. Through such contrasts, one can partially grasp the essence of my work: fantasy always walks alongside reality, and behind every vibrant, lively moment, darkness and uncertainty inevitably linger.

You describe your princesses as fragile but strong at the same time. How do you express this duality through your use of color and composition?

I strive to convey the duality of princesses



through a combination of contrasting elements. In "The Princess's Bath," for instance, there is a female figure set against a vibrant red and golden background. The deliberately crimson hue evokes associations with life energy, passion, or even blood. The golden elements lend the work a sense of majesty and divinity. At the same time, the absence of a face in the protagonist hints at her anonymity—an anonymity that borders on a loss of individuality.

I use smooth body lines to emphasize the tenderness and vulnerability of the heroines, while rich colors like deep blue, gold, or bright red speak of their strength and inner resilience. Compositionally, I often create a sense of "enclosed space"—as if the character exists within their own world, surrounded by patterns and symbols. This symbolizes both the hero's sense of protection and their isolation.

Many of your works seem to balance fantasy and reality. What role does

symbolism play in your creative process?

I believe that symbolism plays a key role. I derive deep satisfaction when a piece not only provides aesthetic pleasure but also presents itself to the viewer as an encoded story, one that can be read and unraveled, revealing something new each time. For instance, in the painting "Saudade," the dove in the heroine's hands becomes a symbol of peace, freedom, or hope, while her black silhouette symbolizes mystery and an inner world hidden from the viewer's eyes. The background in my paintings plays an important role. Being inseparable from the characters, it more fully and vividly reveals their images, thoughts, and emotions. Golden elements are not only a reference to something sacred but also a symbol of light, abundance, wisdom, and the pursuit of something greater. Flowers point to the cyclical nature of life, the beauty of a moment, and its transience. The language of symbols allows my paintings to contain multiple layers of interpretation, ranging from simple visual pleasure to reflections on the meaning of life.

You mention that behind the bright colors and fairy-tale motifs, there are themes of sadness, disappointment, and



Tatiana Semkova | Waves of Life



Tatiana Semkova | Parade of Worlds

war. How do you reconcile these darker themes with the outward beauty of your work?

I believe that in life, as in art, there is no clear separation between the beautiful and the tragic. These aspects always coexist. In my works, external beauty often acts as a mask or facade, behind which deeper, more complex, and sometimes heavy emotions are hidden. For instance, in the painting "Parade of Worlds," soft colors, geometric shapes, and shiny elements create a sense of uplift, purposefulness, movement toward a goal, and an ordering of existence. In contrast, the main characters appear as sad, bodiless shadows—lost entities filled with detachment from their surroundings and a deep discomfort bordering on suffering. We do not know why the characters are in such a state. Is it external circumstances beyond their control that led them to this, or are they simply like this by nature? Or perhaps the world around them is not as beautiful, orderly, and reliable as it seems? This contrast allows me to show that even in the darkest times, it is possible—and necessary—to seek beauty and inner strength. Life is full of such contrasts, and

through my works, I strive to speak about the complexity of human nature and life experience as a whole.

What is the significance of the recurring floral motifs in your work, especially in relation to the emotional and psychological themes you explore?

For me, flowers are a universal symbol of life, beauty, elegance, and fragility. They can be interpreted in various ways: as a sign of the celebration of life, love, fertility, or as a reminder of the transience of existence. In "The Princess's Bath" and "Saudade," floral motifs enhance the sense of nature's presence, while simultaneously becoming part of a decorative ornament that frames complex human emotions.

Flowers can also serve as a kind of barrier between the subject and the viewer. They create a sense of distance and space that must be traversed to understand the essence of the artwork. I enjoy this effect—it invites deeper reflection and establishes an intimate dialogue between the work and the viewer.



Tatiana Semkova | Saudade



Tatiana Semkova | The Scarlet Flower

You have been working in design and creative projects for 20 years. How has your experience in design influenced your painting style?

I am a multidisciplinary artist, and painting has become one of the key areas of my work. Design and creating designer products alone were no longer enough for me—I felt a profound need to communicate with the audience specifically through painting.

My extensive experience in design strongly influences my painting. Design taught me to appreciate composition, color harmony, and attention to detail. For example, the recurring patterns and vibrant color accents in my paintings originate from my many years of work in textile design. Now, the themes of my paintings are transforming into fabric prints and patterns that I incorporate into my collections of home textiles and clothing.

International recognition provides confidence that my creations are both original and in demand, and that my work resonates with the audience. Engaging with diverse cultures inspires me to experiment, helps me see the universality of my themes, and teaches me to communicate in a language that is accessible to everyone. This influence is evident in my work today, especially in the way I blend traditional imagery with a contemporary approach.



Tatiana Semkova | Friday

Emily Geirnaert is based in Paris. She uses discarded fragments of the past and present which are reimagined in accidental or deliberate juxtapositions to create new images – surreal worlds inhabited by exciting new possibilities. Emily is also a set designer. She creates analogue collage. Cut or torn imagery and paper is juxtaposed, sometimes layered and reassembled. The underlying theme of her work explores and references memory and dreams. How memories are stored over time, how they can surface at any given, random moment and how they are lost (some temporarily) or become fragmented often into smaller memories. A collage can begin with a specific idea or theme or it can be triggered in response to imagery that catches the eye.

Artist Statement

Emily Geirnaert's collages practice explores the realm of memory. Drawing upon the surrealistic tradition, her pieces are imbued with a dreamlike quality, where seemingly disparate objects and figures are combined to form poetics compositions. Geirnaert's work captures the intangible and elusive energy of our thoughts, emotions, and subconscious beliefs. This unseen force endows her work with a magnetic pull, drawing the viewer into the psychological scenes she constructs.





— Interview

Angele Lautier

What inspired you to create the Femella series, and how did the concept of vulnerability as power come into focus for you?

Most of my work is autobiographical. I wanted to create a community of women that depicts a genuine side of what women go through in their various stages of womanhood; adolescence, motherhood, middlescence and invisibility. I draw on my Maltese heritage where the Goddess of Fertility is the most recognised statuette on the Maltese islands. The voluptuous curves are a symbol of fertility, enforcing the idea of childbearing as a beautiful and our survival. The characters in the Femella Collection are all naked which makes them vulnerable and powerful at the same time. Furthermore, these paintings measure 120 x 90cm which also makes them powerful.



Angele Lautier | Cathara



Could you walk us through your creative process when designing these surreal female portraits?

Each painting is created around a specific issue or theme. Research contributes to a large part of the process. It is imperative for me to be informed on what I am working on; it empowers me and underpins the work more concretely. These paintings take a long time to complete. The concepts starts to form and I ruminate over it for a period of time. In order to achieve the flat blocks of colour, it takes about 5 or 6 coats of paint until I am satisfied with the result. I sketch the ideas on paper but when I upscale it to the canvas, the composition sometimes changes again. It needs to work in the new larger size.

How do the surreal elements in your paintings relate to the real-world themes you explore, such as motherhood, humanity, and migration?

I want my audience to 'work' with my art works. Adding surreal elements raises questions. I am very interested in these questions because I also engage in research in social studies; human behaviour and particularly, phenomenology. When I exhibit the work, the viewers' interpretations of the work are valuable contributions. Motherhood is about relationships with themselves in their new space as a mother, as well as with their new environment in reference to, being uprooted from a working and social environment to a domestic and isolated setting. The latest topic I am researching is migration which similarly deals with

change, the journey and resilience. The essence of humanity runs as the common undercurrent feature in both areas. Information about the new body of work that is emerging in relation to migration can be found here on my instagram: @angele_lautier_artist or on my website: www.angelelautier.com.

The Femella collection delves deeply into the complexities of womanhood and motherhood. How have your own experiences shaped the narratives in your art?

All my work is my way of processing issues that are important to me. Being an artist gives me a therapeutic platform to unpack and process narratives. The Femella Collection provides a safe space to shed light on taboo subjects, brings women together to share their experiences and generates conversations that make women realise that they are not alone. I have certainly drawn on my own experiences in Femella, whether they are personal or collective.

You mention blending pain and pleasure in your work. How do you balance these emotions visually in your paintings?

The first impression and impact of the bright and bold colourful palette I use, is a joyful and playful one. The flat forms and appealing shapes encourage the viewer to be drawn to a positive energy. By using a surreal approach in the composition, I disrupt the elements which keeps the viewer engaged in an attempt to resolve and understand what the work is about. There



Angele Lautier | Bounteous

is a lot of symbolism and recognisable objects that are not usually put together. The balance is therefore in the composition and the colour palette. I feel it is important to make work that on the surface is joyful and when one sits with it for longer, the pain and pleasure is slowly revealed.

How did 16th-century royal portraits influence your Femella series, and how do you reinterpret their themes for contemporary audiences?

Most of the compositions of 16th century royal portraits centre the female figure, returning our gaze. Some of their costumes alter their physical proportions. For example, the waist is narrowed by the constraint of a corset giving the female torso a triangular shape. A bustle or crinoline exaggerates the pelvic and rear area of the body. Through a study of these garments, I embedded these shapes into the Femella portraits. Cathara was the first portrait painting of the collection. Her long narrow triangular torso was also inspired by the shape of a hunting horn which is hard to blow. She screams from the pit of her stomach.

Your work often invites viewers to empathize with your subjects. How do you hope your audience will interpret and connect with your art work?

As a multidisciplinary artist, my practice moves across different media and materials, and deals with complex issues which have originated from a lack of empathy. Since my research plays a vitally significant role in my work, the content is rich and therefore makes the work generous to explore and engage with. I am currently working on the theme of migration in which my audience's empathy is essential. It connects us through a humanitarian lens.



Angele Lautier | Bounteous Offspring

— Interview

Andrew Yeung

Growing up in Hong Kong and studying in the United States, how have these cultural experiences influenced your artistic style?

I think I have been influenced heavily by Japanese sub-cultures such as Harajuku fashion, JRPG (role-playing video games) original art, art & design magazines, Japanese music as well as their music videos during my teenage years in Hong Kong. These things had a huge impact on me, whether it's the visual quality, the use of vibrant colors, or pattern making.

While studying art school in the US, I have learned a lot of techniques and execution of creating artwork, from sketch to finishing, and how to handle various illustration project.

I am glad that I have had the opportunity to observe and adopt a mixture of Eastern and Western art perspectives that shaped my art style today.



Andrew Yeung | Exotic



Fashion, music, food, and culture are central to your inspiration. Can you share a specific moment or memory that has deeply inspired your work?

I have always been influenced by many things, though the most inspirational moment I would say, is when I first discovered my favorite illustrator & artist Yoshitaka Amano's art when I was playing JRPG when I was little (he was working for Final Fantasy's original art all these years).

The color palette, mixture of unique patterning, figurative drawing the moment I discovered his art deeply inspired and changed my view of art.

Your artworks are known for their vibrant colors and organic patterns. How do you approach creating such dynamic pieces?

I have always enjoyed listening to music while I draw, especially in the brainstorming and sketching stage.

I love to draw out unique patterns while I listen to genres like Bossanova and Shibuya-kei music. Then I would draw along with the music flow, sometimes referencing random patterns that I have seen in magazines or on Pinterest, etc. such as paisley, unique mix of checker prints, and polka dots, to pair up with the doodling that I feel right at

the moment.

What was it like collaborating with renowned brands like Harvey Nichols and Fresh? How do you balance your artistic vision with their brand identities?

Whether I am working with personally commissioned pieces, or big brand projects and campaigns, I always remind myself to 'not lose my art style and myself'.

As an illustrator, we always need to hold tight to our art aesthetic and pull off the best way possible for any project.

Understanding the project outcome, the aim, and the project brief is always the most important when it comes to collaborating with brands, also last but not least is to ENJOY the creative process.

I believe that good art always comes from enjoyment.

Your first art storybook was published in 2021. What motivated you to create this book, and how does it reflect your journey as an artist?

I was very lucky to be offered by an author&psychiatric therapist back in 2020. It was a very meaningful book project about art therapy with metaphor stories of five animals.



Andrew Yeung | Moderati



Andrew Yeung
Poison Night

Never have I thought that I would be a part of one of the best-selling books from the publisher, and I was able to participate in various book fairs and events back then.

I have received many different comments and praise from the audience and that definitely boosted my confident.

Having showcased your art across Asia, how do audiences in different cities (Hong Kong, Tokyo, Taipei) respond to your work?

I have received various views and responses in different cities during all my showcases and exhibitions. Statistically breaking down, I think in Tokyo, I have sold much more artprint, merch than Hong Kong and Taipei.

What advice would you give to young illustrators looking to find their unique voice in the art world?

I am not good at expressing myself in words, but I would say to try out as many art mediums as you can, do not limit yourself to just digital or analog, find inspiration from your favorite artists, and never compare your art with others because everyone's style is unique.

Mocchi Mocchi

Sachiko Mochizuki (born 1974) and **Junko Mochizuki** (born 1975) are an artist duo based in Kyoto, Japan. After studying at the Masa Mode Academy of Art, the sisters began creating works together and discovered the technique of silkscreen printing. Their artistic journey was deeply influenced by meeting master printer Joji Imaizumi, from whom they learned the craft and developed their own unique style. In addition to producing and selling prints, they have collaborated with both domestic and international companies, expanding their reach into various fields. After the passing of their mentor, they inherited the workshop and continue to run their own printmaking studio in Kyoto. The differences in their sensibilities serve as a source of originality, which is expressed through their collaborative process. They actively participate in exhibitions both in Japan and abroad and are dedicated to promoting the technique of silkscreen printing. Moving forward, they aim to blend traditional methods with modern design, seeking to present their work on the international stage. Their expression of everyday motifs in simple forms with delicate textures resonates deeply with many, evoking a sense of empathy and connection. While based in Kyoto, they continue to take on new challenges both domestically and globally.





Ulanis Ulanis - 4/0

— Interview

Chris Janssen

Your artistic style breaks away from traditional norms. What inspired you to embrace imperfection and reject conventional rules in your work?

I am naturally interested in other people, what drives them, the thoughts that flow through their mind. I try to see and evaluate things from different angles. I am an optimistic person, cheerful yet also a deep thinker.

You mention that your work is influenced by years of experience with criminals, victims, and everyday people. How have these experiences shaped your artistic vision?

My experiences at work have certainly influenced me. In my working environment, people stay in a small space. This allows you to see all emotional facets: cheerful, sad, joyful, angry, aggressive, or desperate. I try to see people from all sides and capture what I see in my paintings. Who is the



one walking past me and lost in thought? What is he/she thinking about? Why does he/she think like that?

A person without adornment is also beautiful. The same goes for my paintings: they don't always have to be colourful to be beautiful. Ask yourself: what does a look say without words? Or if no words are spoken, what does that look actually say? Make your own colour, colour it yourself! Because of the work I did, I never wanted to go completely out there and be discoverable or visible to everyone. Now that I have taken a different path, I have made the choice to show my work—and therefore also myself.

In your art, you aim to make people think and reflect. What emotions or thoughts do you hope to evoke in your audience?

I hope that people will stop at a painting and take the time to really look. What thoughts come up when you look, what does this evoke? The intention of my paintings is to capture the moment when one gets lost in thoughts. It would be nice if I could achieve that with the viewer.

Your statement, "Try not to be perfect,"



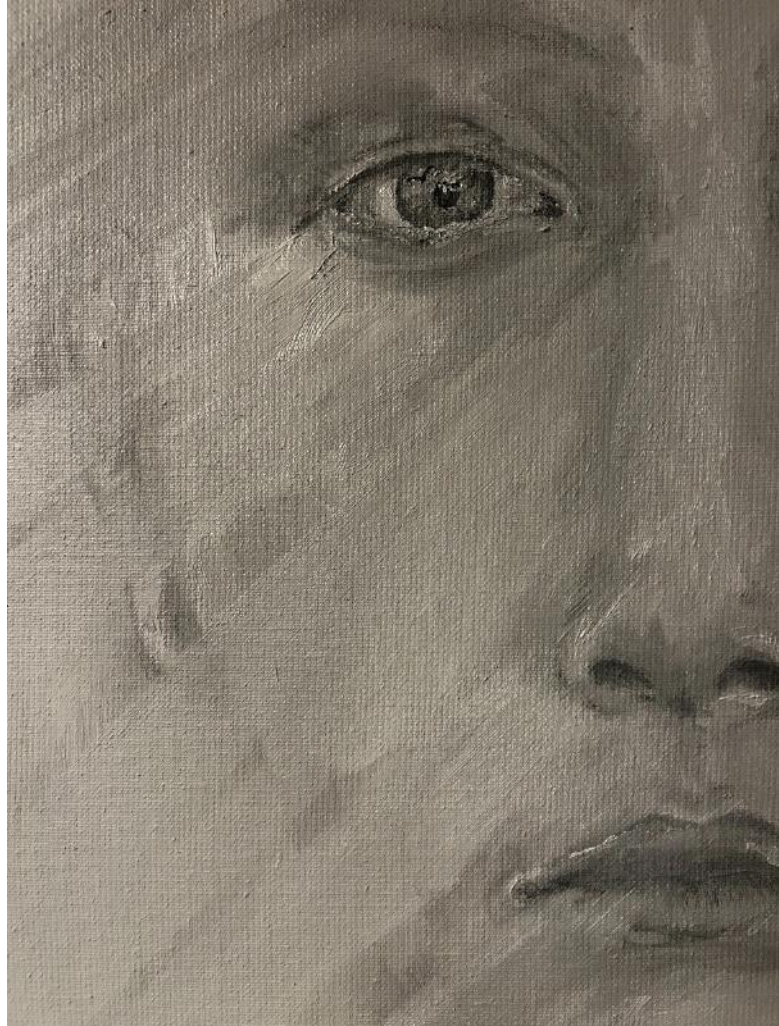
Chris Janssen | Art of Silence

reflects a strong philosophy. How do you incorporate this idea into your creative process?

Every person has an edge, and that's where imperfection comes to the fore. No one is perfect, and my paintings are not a perfect representation of a person either. You can stop at each painting and wonder whether it is correct—for example, whether it is anatomically correct. What is correct and what is incorrect? The edge of imperfection is what inspires me and above which I want to float.

Why is it important for you to leave your artwork open to interpretation, without providing specific explanations or titles?

Art is personal. It either affects you or it doesn't. It gives you a feeling, it generates thoughts. That's different for everyone. If it touches you, gives you a certain feeling, or generates certain thoughts, you develop a personal bond with it. Then it becomes your painting. That is what I do not want to influence by moving the other person in a certain direction with my thoughts and feelings. Let it be your own.



Chris Janssen
Gold and silver blind the eye (Close up)

You explore the edges of your medium and style. Can you describe a moment when you pushed your boundaries and discovered something unexpected in your art?

Unexpectedly, an intense gaze can also be beautiful and not necessarily sad or heavy, as my paintings are often described. A dreamy look can also imply intense happiness. Look carefully and don't judge too quickly. One day my work is sad, and the next day that same work is intensely happy, depending on your feelings and thoughts at that moment.

How do you balance the freedom of creating without rules with maintaining your recognizable style?

My style and also my strength is the silence that I put in a painting. The quieter the work, the greater the thought. That is the place for feelings, dreams, and questions.



Chris Janssen | Gold and silver blind the eye

— Interview

Kaya Ro

Could you share how your journey as an artist began? What inspired you to pursue ceramics and sculpture?

Sculpture and work in clay—it was love at first touch. I studied art at the University of Warmia and Mazury. Previously, I took classes in painting and drawing, but in the field of sculpture, the offer of educational classes in my city was not available, and I learned sculpture only during my studies. Sculpture as a spatial form was something new and fascinating to me. It was extremely easy for me to work with clay, as if it wasn't the first time I was doing it, but rather as if it was something I had always known how to do. It was a perfect combination of matter and idea from which a new creation was made. I could spend several hours in the studio. It calmed me down and relaxed me, but it also gave me such a great sense of fulfillment and freedom. My adventure with sculpture began during my studies, and with ceramics a few years later, when, as a young mother and teacher, I decided to create a place where I could create together with others. I loved ceramics for its usefulness, delicacy, decorativeness, and even for the fact that not everything always works out and there is a surprise waiting at the end.

Your works often balance between utility and art. How do you approach this duality in your creations?

I chose ceramics because somewhere along the way I became very critical of non-usable things or forms. When I was creating something, I asked myself, "Why am I doing it?" "What is it for?" And so I started creating functional ceramics and began teaching others how to create such ceramics. However, my love for sculpture is still there, because sculpture does not limit me and gives me more scope to express myself. When something is utilitarian, it



Kaya Ro | Maska

also puts certain limits on the materials, glazes, and paints I can use. I can express myself creatively in sculpture; I can create with various materials, combining ceramics, metal, and stone. Although ceramics are the main core of my works and over the years of creating functional forms, the utility of sculpture is clearly visible.

What inspired the title of your latest solo exhibition, "#Płytkasztuka"? How does it reflect the themes in your work?

The series of ceramic paintings #Płytkasztuka was created two years ago. ("Płytkasztuka" in Polish is understood as a thing and as a character trait, a feature of a thing.) Ceramic tiles, as a typically utilitarian element that is also intended to play a decorative role in the interior, have become a product valued per square meter. This deals with its superficiality and at the same time reduces the value of the work created by a graphic artist or designer, because it is made in repeated series. The objects presented at this exhibition are flat ceramic structures with a unique pattern, often with a banal inscription straight from the Internet. Sometimes it is a wordplay with a similar meaning or even one might say "shallowing." The play of light, structures, and colors shows the world between what is useful and what is artistic. #Płytkasztuka (#ShallowTileArt) refers to the depth of images, the depth of words, and the depth of processing the world in a way that is useful to everyone.

Can you tell us about the techniques or materials you most enjoy using in your ceramic art?

Kaya Ro | #plytkasztuka II



I definitely focus more on form than color. My works are not particularly colorful, but in the #Plytkasztuka series, I focused on colorful clays. I like control, which is very difficult to achieve in ceramics. The glazes gain their color only after firing. Applying the glazes, we must imagine what it will look like after firing, because all the colors are gray and brown. Only in the oven at temperatures above 1000 degrees Celsius do they gain juicy reds, oranges, purples, yellows, and blues. When I use colored clays—blue, green, red, etc.—I can control the final effect at the modeling stage. I control not only the shape but also the color, although as I said earlier, there is often a surprise waiting for me at the end. Sometimes I catch myself making some trivial mistakes. Out of haste, I do something that shouldn't work, and I secretly hope that maybe it will work out this time. Unfortunately, along the way, it cracks, bends, the enamel melts or bubbles. Sometimes it turns out great, and I'm extremely happy with the experiment, but most often it ends with a big flop. I humbly start over again. In my work, I use the electric kiln firing technique, but I love outdoor firing using the Japanese raku technique. Here, the end result is surprising and exciting. We are dealing with real fire. It's a real element.

Your art has received recognition in the form of awards like the "Talent of the Year." How has it influenced your artistic career?

These types of awards always give you wings. As artists, we are constantly assessed by critics, but also by ordinary audiences. We face fear and concerns about whether it is really good, valuable, and whether the direction of our artistic path is right. When the artistic community and people of culture notice you, it helps a lot; it opens more doors. You start counting.

You have more creative freedom and open your mind to new possibilities. You leave the frame that we, as artists, somehow put ourselves into and begin to explore the space of art with greater courage. It gives you the feeling that your work is worth something and makes sense. This is very encouraging.

How do you see your work contributing to the art community in Warmia and Masuria?

I am a member of the Association of Artists of Warmia and Masuria, where we work with artists to develop the culture and art of my region. This makes me belong somewhere, and it places me very firmly in an artistic space where I can grow freely. After my last exhibitions, I



Kaya Ro | ciałolubność II | 2024

received a lot of messages from friends and strangers that my art is valuable, that it comforts someone, that it gives them joy. I know my artistic community very well. I have been conducting cultural programs on local radio for years, and there have been hundreds, if not thousands, of these conversations about art. I think that when I entered salons and galleries with my art, people saw me as an artist, a sculptor, and not only as a culture journalist or an art teacher, because a large part of my professional life is also occupied by my work as a teacher. Being a creator is extremely difficult but at the same time it is an enjoyable task, especially when you are welcome with open arms.

Can you describe the significance of your educational and artistic projects? What role does art education play in your life?

Since 2014, I have been running an open ceramics studio, where I teach children and adults ceramic art and sculpture. This place is the fulfillment of my dreams, and being a teacher and instructor is my great passion. I like watching beginner ceramicists at work—it's very inspiring. What's more, their lack of experience means that they have no limitations in their minds or fears that something may break or crumble during the process. Sometimes they create things that shouldn't work, but they do. It also gives me more courage in my own work. I also educate future instructors who will open their own studios and teach the next generations of ceramicists. Someone mean would say that I am competing with myself, but I don't have that approach. A friend of mine once told me that if there were more artists in the world, there would be fewer wars. And I will stick to it.

Kaya Ro | #plytkasztuka IV



— Interview

Konstantin Kravtsov

What inspired you to become an artist, and how has your artistic journey evolved over the years?

Since my childhood, I was attracted to nature by its mighty beauty and diversity, I could walk alone for hours and enjoy specific vistas. I wanted to learn how to depict nature as it is in reality. In addition, I enjoyed simply depicting everything I see and think about. I can say that I have always been fascinated and captivated by the beauty of nature and the opportunity to capture it on canvas or paper, thus expressing my feelings. My artistic journey began with simple drawings, where I first learned to depict nature on my own then I entered art school, where teachers helped me develop the basic techniques. In school, it took me about four years to enter art college, where I met talented professors.



Konstantin Kravtsov | In winter | 2021

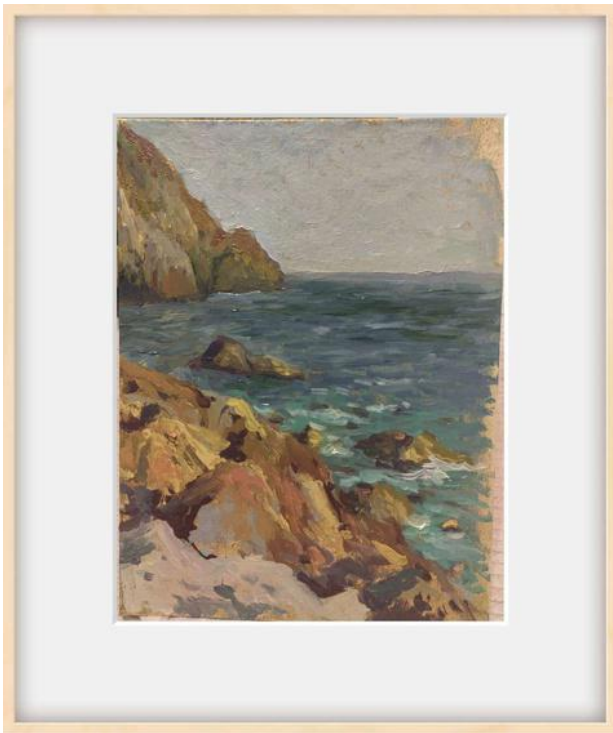


Why did you choose landscapes as your primary subject matter, and how do you select the scenes you paint?

Landscapes have always been my main and favorite subject in art due to the infinite variety and inspiration they bring. There are several reasons why I choose the landscape genre. The sense of harmony: nature itself is harmonious, for example, an old park or secluded corner of the forest; changing light: the same moment looks different; the harmony of mood: the state of nature is always in tune with the mood of the artist; free element: I am drawn to nature and the fact that it is not always subject to human beings, thunderstorms, storms, not only frighten but also inspire; the opportunity to work in nature: this enriches the choice of motifs and gives me the opportunity to embody my impressions. I choose scenes to draw based on the emotions they evoke in me and the feeling of tranquility they bring.

Can you describe your creative process from initial inspiration to the final painting?

My creative process begins with searching for inspiration in the world around me, whether it is a breathtaking sunset or a majestic forest. Then I create sketches in several options so to choose a suitable idea for a future painting. After that, I compose the composition, applying colors and textures to bring the scene to life on the canvas. I mainly work with oil. If any landscape catches my eye and I don't have the necessary tools at hand, I take a photo of that moment and save it for future works.



Konstantin Kravtsov
Off the coast

I was fortunate to receive positive reactions from people who saw my paintings, many of whom expressed a feeling of calm, peace, warmth, and kindness while looking at them. One of the memorable moments was when a viewer told me that my painting reminded him of his childhood home and how many pleasant moments were associated with those memories.

What advice would you give to aspiring artists who want to focus on landscapes?

I would like to give some advice to aspiring artists. First and foremost, it is necessary to study the basics of color theory, as this will allow you to learn how to mix and match different shades. Study different styles and techniques in order to find inspiration and develop your own style. Try to observe nature as much as possible, as this will help improve your observational skills and teach you to notice details and colors. And the last, but not least important piece of advice is to practice more. Devote as much time as you have to creating new works, and over time you will notice that you have become more confident in your skills and creative perception!

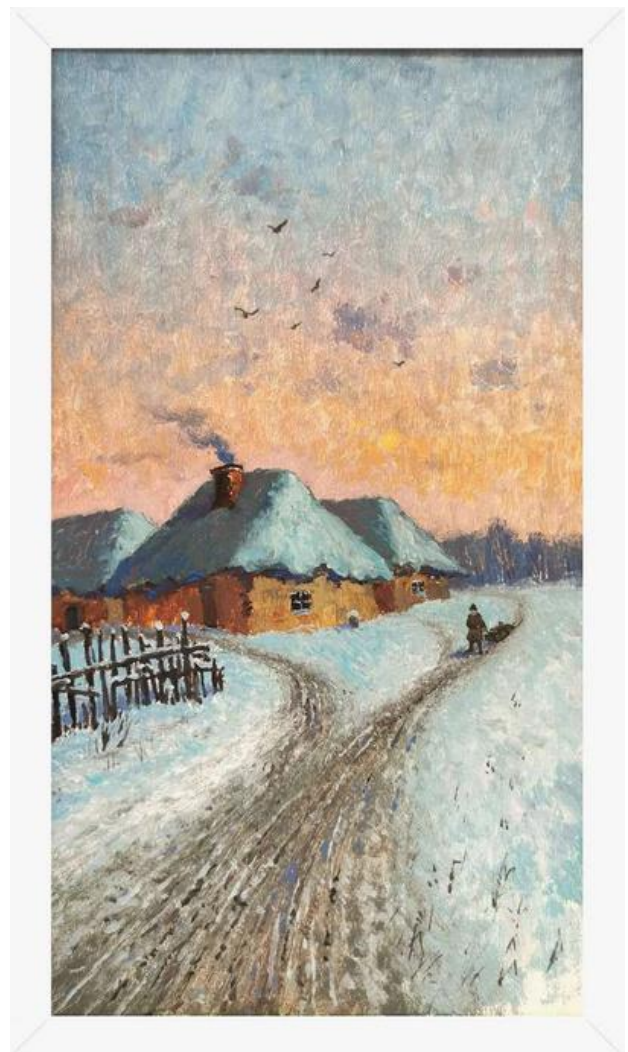
Your art emphasizes the beauty of nature. How do you think art can contribute to raising awareness about environmental conservation?

I believe that art has the ability to draw attention to environmental issues, demonstrating the beauty of nature and reminding viewers of what is at stake. Through my paintings, I hope to inspire others to appreciate and protect our world. With my art, I want to show how beautiful and unique our planet is, and how diverse nature is, thus emphasizing the importance of caring for and preserving the environment.

Do you have any particular artists or art movements that have influenced your style?

I studied the works of other artists and artistic movements. This helped me better understand myself as an artist, my tastes, and preferences. For myself, I have chosen one artistic direction that is interesting for me in search of my own style. It is realism, to depict reality or the peculiarities of nature as accurately as possible. My favorite artists are I. Levitan, A. Kuindzhi, and Y. Klever. The choice of these artists and artistic direction has had a profound impact on my own style.

Can you share any memorable experiences or reactions from people who have viewed your paintings?



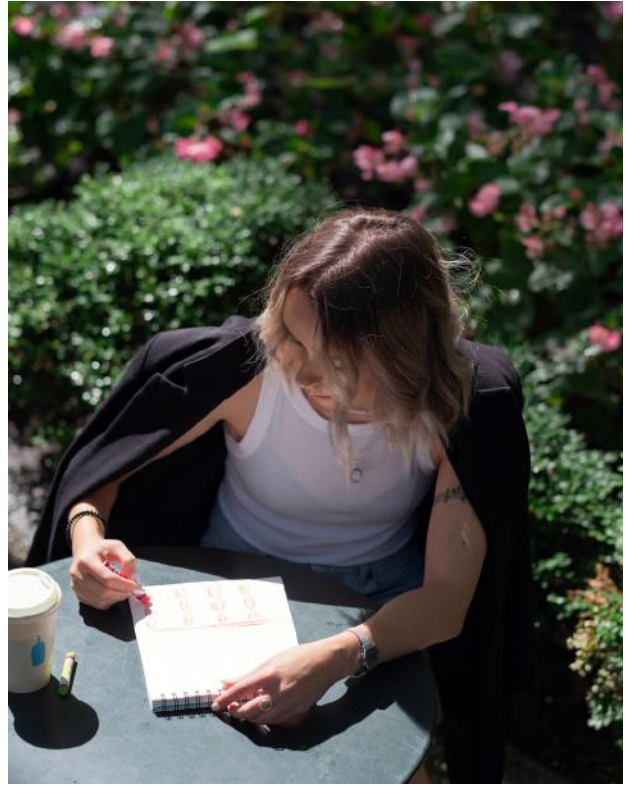
Konstantin Kravtsov | At dawn

— Interview

Juliet Faldin

How has your background in design and art direction influenced your transition into fine arts and cinematography?

Transitioning from design to fine arts or cinematography feels natural because many foundational principles overlap. For example, working with color involves similar considerations—whether aiming for contrast or complementarity, the goal is to achieve balance. Similarly, an understanding of composition and visual hierarchy applies seamlessly, whether you're designing a UI, creating a painting, or



setting up a scene during filming. This background gives you a strong starting point, making it easier to pick up new mediums. It's like having a set of tools you already know how to use, so you can dive right into sharpening your skills and exploring creative ideas in fine arts or cinematography without feeling lost.

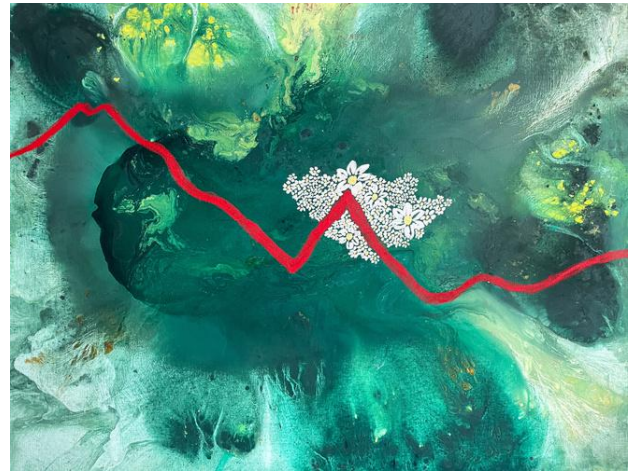
Many of your works explore themes like feminism, politics, and human relationships. What personal experiences or observations inspire these themes?

I feel it would be easier to talk about each theme separately. Let's start with **feminism**. Honestly, as a woman, the older I get, the more I notice how unfair the world is to us. It's everywhere. Women's health doesn't get studied enough, and even the painkillers we're prescribed are mostly tested on men. There's barely enough data to rely on for conditions that only affect women. Then there's the constant fear—walking home at night, checking if someone's following you, dealing with catcalling like it's just a normal part of life. And the statistics are heartbreaking. Most women who are killed lose their lives in their own homes, at the hands of someone they trust. In



Juliet Faldin | Point here | 2024

places like Afghanistan, women aren't even allowed to sing, but birds can. Imagine that—a bird has more freedom than a woman. It makes me so angry, and I don't always know what to do with that anger. So I paint. It's how I process it, how I let it out, and how I try to make people feel something about it too. Moving to politics. I'm originally from Ukraine, so politics and war are deeply personal for me. A lot of my work—sometimes intentionally, sometimes subconsciously—reflects that. War has shaped my life in ways I never wanted it to. My homeland is invaded, my home city has been bombed, my loved ones are in danger, and I live with the fear of what might happen next every single day. I read horrifying stories about what people from one country have done to people from another, and it's hard to process. Living in London adds another layer of complexity. For many people here, the war in Ukraine is just another headline, something they hear in passing while they have their morning coffee. I don't blame them—it's hard to feel connected to something you've never experienced. But that disconnect can feel



Juliet Faldin | The wounds we weave | 2024

isolating. That's why I created a piece called *Grow an Eye*. It's about actively seeking out global news, being curious about what's happening beyond your own safe corner of the world. Living in a first-world country, it's so easy to assume everything everywhere is fine. I remember when I first moved to London, I was struck by how calm everyone was. And then it hit me—they haven't experienced the kind of corruption and instability I've lived through. They don't know what it's like to wake up one day and find your home under attack or your government working against you. I'm not saying that's their fault. But I do think it's important for all of us to educate ourselves about the world—not just about Ukraine, but everywhere. There's so much we don't know, and understanding it makes us more human. Finishing with **Human Relationships**. This one's a bit simpler. I think the emotions we share with others—love, hate, friendship, isolation—are universal. We've all been through some version of them. We've all loved someone deeply, been hurt, felt lonely, or regretted not appreciating our parents enough while they were still around. We discover ourselves through the people around us, and those connections shape who we are. One thing I love to do at exhibitions is to ask people what they see in my abstract paintings before I tell them what inspired me. Their interpretations are often so personal yet somehow resonate with what I originally intended. It's not because I've done something special—it's just how abstract art works. Viewers bring their own emotions and experiences into the piece. I think the reason their interpretations often



Juliet Faldin | MULISM | 2024

align with mine is that, at our core, we're all so similar. Abstract art has this amazing ability to connect us—to communicate shared feelings without showing anything literal. Just through colors, strokes, and textures, it speaks to something universal in all of us. That's what makes it so powerful.

What attracts you to abstract and expressive styles, and how do these approaches help convey your message?

What I love about abstract art is that there are no rules. You can do whatever wild idea pops into your head, start with no plan at all, just improvise, and still end up with something meaningful. That freedom is amazing. And what's even better is how open it is—everyone sees something different in it, something that feels personal to them.

My favorite thing, though, is when people say, "My cat could do that" or "I could do this—why is it in a museum?" It always makes me laugh because, honestly, artists like Mark Rothko get so much hate for the same reason. I always tell them, "Okay, then do it. Grab a blank canvas, get some paint, and go for it." But most never actually try. And that's the thing—abstract art might look simple, but once you give it a shot, you realize there's so much more to it than meets the eye.

Could you walk us through your creative process? Do you have any specific rituals or practices that guide you when creating art?

Most of the time, the idea or vision comes to me at night. I'm usually too lazy to get up and sketch it, so I just try to remember it. I have this belief that if the idea is strong enough, it'll stick with me—I won't be able to stop thinking about it until I bring it to life.

Sometimes I'll do a quick sketch with oil pastels to figure out the colors or composition, but since I use dripping techniques, it's not something I can fully plan out on paper.



Juliet Faldin | Mr. V. | 2024

Before I start painting, though, I like to be really clear about what tools I'll need. Will it be brushes or knives? Regular acrylics or pouring ones? That part is pretty deliberate.

Once I start, I have two "rules" I always follow: 1. There are no mistakes. I know not everyone would agree with this, but for me, if the painting doesn't go as planned or I don't like how it looks, that's just an opportunity to discover something new. I always find a way to make it work—even if it's not what I originally imagined.

2. The phone test. This might sound silly, but when I'm close to finishing, I take a picture of the painting and look at it on my phone. Since I work on big canvases, seeing it small helps me step back and figure out if the composition feels right or if it needs more color in certain areas.

There are probably a lot of little things I do without even thinking about them, but these are the two that stand out the most when I think about my process.



— Interview

Lea Capelli

What initially drew you to photography, and how has your relationship with it evolved since 2021?

As a kid and as a teenager I enjoyed taking random pictures of my friends, but in 2021 I decided to try film photography for the first time in my life and bought a cheap point and shoot 35mm camera. I remember that my first roll came out a mess, and thinking about it now makes me smile. My relationship with photography evolved gradually and naturally. I practiced and improved by shooting pictures daily of what picked up my interest. Now I always carry a camera in my bag, because I like to be ready to take pictures in case I see something to frame.

Can you share how your Italian and French heritage influences your work or approach to capturing images?

When I think about my heritage, I mostly think about my family and the cities I've been to the most: Bologna and Paris. Bologna is a very small and cozy city compared to Paris, while Paris is a big and distinguished one. Staying in them feels



different and each one highlights some parts inside myself in a different way than the other. Bologna is the city I know the most between the two, while Paris still holds an air of mystery to me. I long for both the known and the unknown and I think one can perceive it from my work.

What do you find most captivating about analog photography, and how does it differ from your experience with digital photography?

Digital photography is more convenient in many ways, it gets the job done and it is more forgiving. It is a wonderful tool. However, analog photography feels different to me. I see it as a different process : slower, and more poetic. It feels like a mindful way to connect more with the world around me. By holding the negatives in your hands, I think the pictures can feel even more "real".

Your journey into photography is also

one of self-discovery. How has photography helped you understand yourself better?

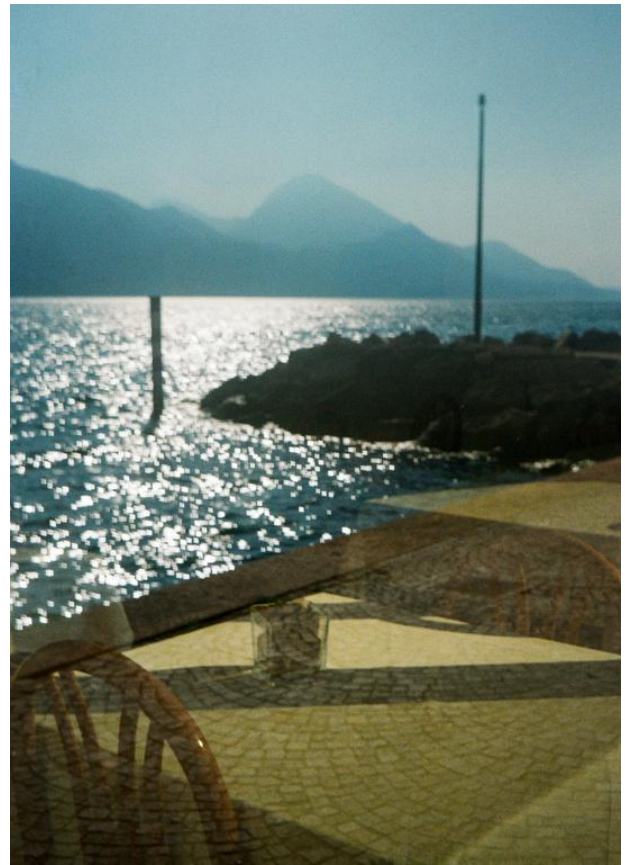
Photography helped me focus more on the present and to experience what I am feeling in the moment in a more insightful way. It is a way of saying "I am here and I see you" to the world. And a way of feeling part of it.

How do you decide on the moments you want to capture? Is it instinctive, or do you have a particular process?

I personally think that the process of photography lays a lot in trust. Trust in the process, in yourself, your gear, and in the subject you are portraying. When I capture moments while street photographing, I try to blend in with my surroundings. When I capture portraits of people, most of the times I try to connect with whom I have in front of me. There have been moments in which taking portraits of someone came instinctively to me, as if in that fragment there was only them, my camera and myself.



JLea Capelli | Soul Gazing | 2022



Lea Capelli | Linear Coalescence | 2023

Many of your images have a serene, reflective quality. What emotions or ideas do you hope to convey through your work?

My goal regarding other people seeing my photos is to make them feel. I might be able to convey some feelings or thoughts with my pictures, but most of it is not really dictated by me, instead it has more to do with the perception and the experience of the person seeing it. Nevertheless, I feel like my work is a reflection of how I see the world from my sensitivity regarding it.

Is there a particular subject or theme that you find yourself returning to frequently?

I love taking portraits of people. I try to shoot portraits whenever I can, even though street photography (and travel photography) is what I've been capturing most. One day I hope I'll get the chance to explore reportage photography.

Haiping Jiang

Female, born in Yantai City, Shandong Province, China in 1990. I began to learn traditional meticulous painting at the age of 10 and later studied Sketch, sketching, oil painting, etc. I graduated from the university of Shanghai Theatre Academy, College of Creativity, Media Creativity Major (Contemporary Art and Experimental Video Direction). Study tours in Italy and Taiwan, China. In the early stage, I was engaged in the work of film and television screenwriter and director. Later, I lived in many countries and turned to serious literature and contemporary art. I uses various media, such as digital media, conceptual photography, installations, paintings, etc., to express social thoughts. My themes involve anti-war, class solidification, marine protection, civilization retrospection, etc., and my works have been exhibited in art exhibitions at home and abroad.

Haiping Jiang | Two love stories | 2024





Haiping Jiang | Evolution 4 | 2024

— Interview

Lucille Fradin

Your artistic journey began in the world of Political Science and Political Economy. How did this background influence your work as a collage artist, if at all?

I do have a background in Political Science and Political economy but my artistic journey began when I moved back to France. While I've always been very creative and in need to do something with my hands, collage has never been something I had in mind, it started intuitively after experimenting editing software like Photoshop.

I do not think my academic background influences my work, but if it does, it's more in opposition to it as I've become quite sceptical of the political world, its processes and its rules.

You describe your process as intuitive and improvisational. Can you share a specific instance where an unplanned moment led to a particularly satisfying artwork?

The whole process of making collage is about improvisation, which is something I paradoxically find hard to do in my everyday life... I never have a precise idea of what I want to achieve, I either start with a background or pre-cut elements that inspire me and build on that, while always trying to tell a story and be a little provocative. The process is also made intuitive and ad-lib due to the jumble of papers resulting from endless cutting. I constantly have to navigate through scraps of paper, which makes the process fun and always a bit accidental. For instance, it happens that two elements end up side by side or superimposed and work perfectly together.

The theme of renewal and reinterpretation is central to your practice. How do you decide which discarded materials to incorporate into your collages?



I choose materials that speak to me—old, abandoned pictures found in antique shops, worn magazines, and vintage books from secondhand bookstores. I often say I "murder" these materials, breaking them out of their original context to give them a new life. By removing images from their past narratives, I can reinterpret them, creating something entirely fresh and allowing them to rebirth in a new form through the collage.

The human body, especially the female form, plays a significant role in your work. What draws you to this subject, and how do you aim to represent it in your art?

The human body, is central to my work because I find beauty in its diversity and its fluidity, not bound by any singular notion of ideal or sexuality. I'm drawn to the body in all its types and forms—whether full or slender, young or old, marked by age or untouched by time. Each body tells a unique story, and I see these forms not as objects of desire, but as representations of strength, resilience, and natural grace. What specifically attracts me to the female form is the way its curves seem to flow, like a continuous line or a movement in space. There's something inherently dynamic about these shapes—the soft undulations of the waist, the gentle curves of the hips, the natural lines of the arms and legs—that feel alive, almost like they're constantly in motion. I aim to capture that

sense of flow and energy in my work, celebrating the form in its most organic state, without reducing it to something sexualized or objectified. In my collages, I try to represent the body in a way that's both abstract and evocative. I might fragment the body, break it into parts or reassemble it in unexpected ways, yet always with a touch of humor.

Ultimately, my aim is to challenge traditional representations of the female body, presenting it not through a lens of desire, but as something powerful and self-contained, a form that flows freely and exists beyond the constraints of societal expectations.

Your work captures the tension between order and chaos. How do you navigate this balance when creating a new piece?

I navigate the balance between order and chaos by embracing both as essential elements of the creative process. I start with a loose structure or concept, but allow room for spontaneity and intuition. The tension arises as I layer materials, creating moments of control through composition, while letting other parts evolve unpredictably. This interplay between intention and randomness adds energy and depth to the work, reflecting the way order and chaos often coexist in life.

In your opinion, what role does symbology play in collage art, and how do you use it to communicate



complex ideas?

In collage art, symbology plays a role in conveying complex ideas by layering meanings through visual elements. I use symbols—whether they're found objects, textures, or fragments of images—to evoke specific emotions or narratives. These symbols allow me to create a dialogue between the past and present, the personal and universal, adding depth and complexity to my work. By juxtaposing familiar and unexpected elements, I aim to communicate layers of meaning that invite the viewer to interpret the artwork from multiple perspectives.

As a self-taught artist, what were some of the biggest challenges you faced, and how did you overcome them?

I would say that my biggest challenge has been overcoming the feeling of illegitimacy. The term "artist" is so broad, and yet, at times, it feels like it carries such weight. I often struggle with the question of whether I have the right to call myself an artist without the traditional academic background that many others may have. There's this constant tension between the desire to create and the self-doubt that sometimes creeps in, making me question whether my work is valid or worthy of being called art.

I've found that the best way to overcome this challenge is simply to keep creating. The more I focus on the process of making and the joy that comes from bringing something into existence, the less I allow those doubts to define me. I remind myself that art isn't about credentials or formal training; it's about the connection it creates with the viewer, which can transcend technical or formal knowledge. By letting go of the pressure to fit into a specific mold and embracing the authenticity of my own journey, I've come to realize that the legitimacy of my work is rooted in the act of creation itself—not in any external validation.

— Interview

Jing Wang

Your background spans UX design, art, and architecture. How do these disciplines influence each other in your work?

User-centered experience design, as its name indicates, is a design field to solve problems through respecting, highlighting, and prioritizing users' needs and wants. So, it naturally focuses on people's feelings, behaviors, habits, etc., and it is a very comprehensive discipline. For me, UX is more than just design; it's a methodology—a way of switching to various stakeholders' perspectives, combining different thinking abilities, uncovering essence from the surface, design delightful, sleek, engaging, and meaningful user experiences with strategies integrated. It has given me a deeper understanding of how people respond to dynamic environments. With a background in architectural design, I've always been sensitive to urban context, space, light and shadow, and the environmental art. UX design has further expanded my understanding of how people interact in a city, not just functionally but also emotionally, experientially, and behaviorally. Art lies as the foundation of both fields. Over years of practice in design and art, I see art as not only a source of inspiration for design taste and sensibilities, but also as a way of thinking. This thinking process has also enriched my art creation, allowing my work to be exhibited globally and gain recognition.

Can you tell us more about your belief that 'thinking must come before the work itself'? How does this perspective shape your creative process?

I believe the vitality of an artwork lies in its ability to offer a unique lens to see the world. This embodies the exploratory, critical, and creative nature of an artwork. Humans are shaped by society, with their environment playing a key role in shaping their perceptions, thoughts, behaviors, as well as their limitations. Art, however, can transcend the limitations



Jing Wang | Art NO.4 | Walking Path B & An Expecting Profile

of time and space, conveying its unique perspective to viewers and inspiring profound reflections. This is the vitality and value of the artworks.

Thanks to my UX design experience. It has further enhanced and deepened my understanding of things in different levels. At its core, design is about solving problems by digging beneath the surface, breaking down complexities, and unveiling, reconciling, or fixing underlying key challenges in the system and human nature. A designer's sensitivity to what's flawed or unreasonable is crucial.

For me, art is not just an expression. It merges critical, heuristic, creative thinking ingeniously and unrestrainedly. It can also be strategic, holistic, exploratory, and human-centered. Art is thinking itself. More importantly, art reveals our hidden feelings from the subconscious and presents them in front of us intuitively. As a designer, this is extremely important to us, because the hidden feelings uncover the things that need to be aware of, and only when we are aware, we will explore and think and make corresponding adjustments to improve the design.

This thinking process equally empowers my art creation. The dynamic, multifaceted, logical, exploratory, and critical nature of thinking, combined with the non-linear, concurrent and intuitive nature of sensibility, are directly reflected in my artworks, making them more thought-provoking, exploratory, and meaningful.

You've received multiple prestigious awards this year. How do these recognitions impact your approach to future projects?

This year, I've been received multiple prestigious awards. I'm truly happy and deeply appreciative, as they represent meaningful recognitions of my design

ability.

The project that received most of the awards this year is a B2B market intelligence platform with a vision to help businesses in achieving a seamless energy transition. This design fully respects and embraces the iterative nature of researching, empowers users on making informed decisions with greater flexibility and precision.

In this project, I delved deeply into users' pain points across different levels, leveraging the latest AI technology and designing interconnected feedback loops and multiple end-user controls with interactive data visualization for an intuitive, efficient, and inspired user experience. This design was proven to increase user engagement rate, retention rate, and received multiple positive user feedback. I believe that's why I got recognition and won the awards. In my view, the ability to uncover essence beneath the surface through thorough analysis of user pain points, recognize and respect the nature of human behavior, emotion, and psychological activities, design and improve strategies and mechanisms through continuous testing and observation is the key of impactful UX design. Moving forward, my future UX design projects will continue to follow these principles, fostering critical insights to drive creative problem-solving.

I also believe that it's essential to approach every project with an open mind — an empty-cup mindset. While past experiences and methods are valuable, they should never turn into limitations. Each project requires a multidimensional perspective that is specific to its target user group. Beyond understanding users' pain points, needs and wants, knowing the dynamic interplay between a product and its market ecosystem with a developing mindset is crucial, especially as the characteristics of the target user group may evolve over time.

Therefore, the empty-cup mindset is vital, which helps me adopt the proper design methods to solve problems creatively. For example, in my latest UX design project, Pattern Leap, after rounds of user research, I identified the gap between cultural awareness and cultural experience; besides analyzing through creating user journeys and mind maps, I employed the art creation process to rethink the cultural ecosystems of cities, which included but was not limited to local businesses, communities, cultural gene accessibility, sense of curiosity and exploration, interpersonal interaction, and their dynamic influence on daily experiences. This artistic approach not only inspired my design thinking and helped me to find leverage points across dimensions and dynamics, but also seamlessly incorporated the artworks into the design, creating a fun, engaging, and shareable user experience.

In your work, you emphasize the importance of cultural and historical experience in the AI era. How do you integrate these elements into your designs?

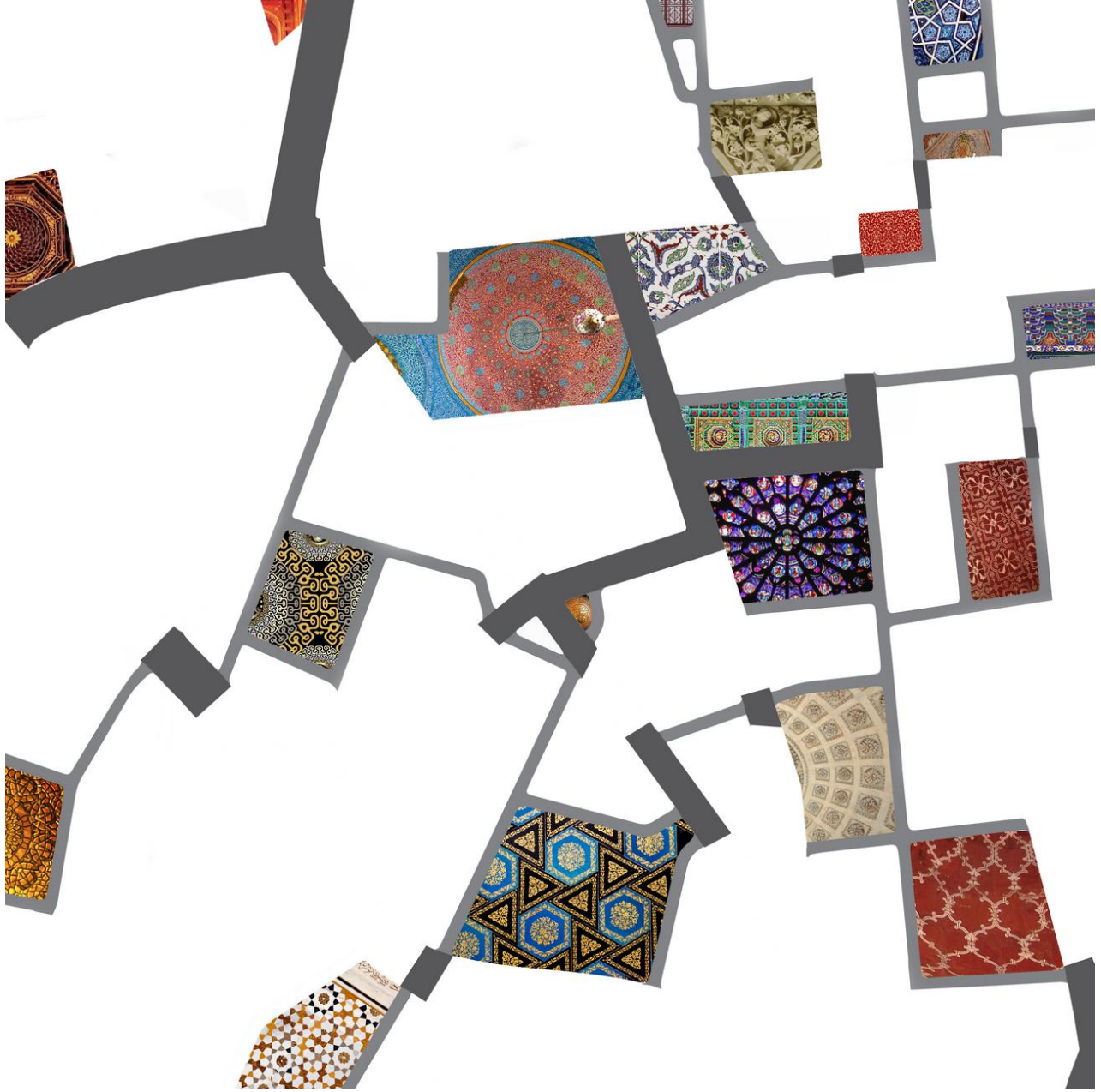
In my design work, cultural and historical elements are not just visual components; they play a key role in designing the cultural ecosystem and the corresponding user journey. The deep purpose is to foster well-established cultural awareness and integrate cultural experiences into the details of public mass' daily life.

In my Pattern Leap UX design project, local businesses, art workers, and the general public coexist and flourish within the designed cultural ec. Additionally, these cultural interactions, seamlessly woven into daily life, help businesses in the city flourish. Business and culture can complement and enhance one another, and culturally empowered commerce gains deeper significance and enduring vitality in the AI era. While some cultural tags might provoke questions, discussions, or even criticism, this is an essential part of building cultural awareness and enriching cultural experiences. In a broader sense, Pattern Leap plays a role both as a buffer zone and a bridge, driving the meaningful integration of business and culture, fostering their mutual success.

My art creation practice, as a way to think through UX design, allows me to creatively and intuitively piece together various elements flexibly, prompting me to reflect deeply on the insights derived from these combinations. In my artworks, rather than depicting everyday objects we commonly encounter, I go directly to the roots and use well-known historical and cultural symbols: the patterns, to arouse cultural awareness and broader human experience: we connect with the world through all dimensions.

Jing Wang | Art NO.1 | The Hidden Genes of City





Jing Wang | Art NO.2 | The Connection VS Disconnection

Could you share more about your project 'Interpreting Time through Interaction and Media' and its exhibition at the Memor Museum?

In the "Interpreting Time through Interaction and Media" exhibition at the Memor Museum, both my Pattern Leap artworks and UX design project were displayed. To align more closely with the exhibition's theme, the content focused on two time dimensions: exclusive individual timeline — emphasizing the uniqueness of personal cultural experiences and their intersections within a single day of city life; and inclusive cultural timespan — linking cultural roots from various eras and regions worldwide through engagement with cultural symbols and symbols derivatives.

The showcased video included a story of a couple meeting for the first time on a date at a modern Islamic restaurant. Through scanning the restaurant's Pattern Leap QR code, they accessed and discussed the modern Islamic design and its cultural and historical genes, successfully breaking the ice and enjoying their first date. This example illustrates my

interpretation of "Interpreting Time through Interaction and Media": media can serve not only as an interactive object but also as a bridge that fosters meaningful and positive interpersonal interactions, deepening mutual understanding and appreciation. My aspiration is to forge meaningful connections among people through the shared cultural and historical exploration, enabling to have a broader sense of human experience in the detail of daily life. In turn, this expansive cultural engagement, transcending time and place, empower cities with strong cultural confidence by creating positive synergies among local businesses, art networks, broader communities, and daily life experiences.

You mentioned that walking through the city connects us to cultural symbols. How does this idea manifest in your work?

Through extensive user research, I discovered that having cultural information in our lives and being aware of it are two different things. This led me to reflect: what causes such a gap between cultural

awareness and cultural experience? Is it because we are too busy to notice, or due to a lack of fundamental cultural and historical knowledge accessibility? One thing is undeniable—only with well-established cultural awareness can cultural experiences truly thrive in our daily lives. Therefore, finding the anchor point that integrates culture into people’s everyday lives is essential.

Pattern is an art form, it shows as cultural and historical symbols and symbol derivatives. The common pattern we encounter daily, more or less, can be traced back to one or more relevant historical and cultural information, or could be regarded as their intersections and derivatives. It is the perfect anchor point to connect us with diverse cultures in details of our daily lives.

Through the art creation process, I explored how people in a city engage with cultures from different times and places through patterns. This engagement in my UX design can happen through appreciation, dining, shopping, communicating, etc. As long as these experiences involve patterns, or the products or businesses are part of the Pattern Leap network, users can access the corresponding cultural genes behind patterns anytime, anywhere.

Beyond inspiring my UX design work, my artworks ultimately became an integral part of it. Combined with location tracking function (once users enable it), users can map out their “pattern journey” for the day based on their walking routes. Users can also share their pattern journeys with friends, and if their friends also use Pattern Leap, they can overlap their journeys to see if they’ve had similar cultural experiences. This

not only adds an element of fun but also enhances interactivity in their cultural lives. Each pattern journey can be saved as a unique cultural keepsake, which is deeply personal and closely tied to the users’ life experience.

With rapid advancements in AI, where do you see the role of human creativity in future design?

It’s undeniable that AI demonstrates remarkable creative capabilities, but whether it can effectively solve human-centered problems within complex, multidimensional, and ever-changing environments remains uncertain. As everything is constantly evolving, AI—reliant on existing data—may struggle to adapt to the transformative shifts that AI itself brings to the ecosystems. Human needs and wants, both basic and profound, will also evolve with the impact of AI. As a silicon-based life form of the future, AI’s understanding of humans might disconnect over time due to the lack of concurrent data on newly emerging human experiences and needs. Thus, human creativity will remain vital in design as long as the targeted audience is human.

Likewise, AI’s creative outputs and its ability to endow artworks with meaning cannot be equated. In the AI age, the value of art will be redefined; while technology will influence it, the value system will be still determined by humans. Therefore, I believe that human creativity will continue to be indispensable, whether in design or art.



Jing Wang | Art NO.3 | Walking Path A & A Smile Face

— Interview

Hoho Kuo

How has your father's influence as an artist shaped your artistic journey and your approach to visual arts?

My father is an artist who hasn't found much success. Although he has received many professional awards, he hasn't pursued a career in the art world consistently. However, this is fortunate for me because he had more time to talk with me, be there for me, and support my growth. With his rich life experience and knowledge, he'd always spark these amazing ideas in me. For example, he would say, "The patterns on the tiles resemble a human face! The wind, clouds, and light can transform into unexpected shapes." Like many Chinese artists of his generation, he was heavily influenced by the Peredvizhniki of the late 19th century. He loved creating artwork with solid, powerful core forms, then blending it with the style of Impressionists like Monet - and this approach really shaped my early foundations in painting.

You have a background in both stage design and directing. How do these disciplines influence your visual art practice, particularly in handling space and light?

If I think of stage design as the long shot and film as the close shot, then my flat canvas gains a deeper awareness of three-dimensional space and inner emotions. Light is the foundation of all art. Working on professional lighting for film



projects has shifted my understanding of light from a passive to an active role. These experiences deepened my understanding of spatial hierarchy and the balance of compromises.

Could you describe the techniques or materials you used in creating the "Freehand Brushwork of Xiuding Fragments" series?

Located at the southern foot of Qingliangshan Mountain in Anyang, Henan Province, stands the Tang Dynasty Pagoda of Xiuding Temple, renowned as China's first decorated pagoda. This masterpiece of Eastern aesthetics gained renewed attention after being featured as a scene in "Black Myth: Wukong," the winner of TGA's Best Action Game. The entire pagoda is adorned with molded glazed floral bricks, carved with magnificent scenes of deities and celestial beings. In my creation process, I used acrylic paints with a freehand brushwork approach. I simplified the complex patterns of the decorative bricks, leaving traditional Chinese blank spaces at the four corners. The base was laid with gold leaf, then glaze with metallic paint to create a contemporary decorative contrast. The focus is on the dynamic and radiant essence of the

horses, apsaras, and foreigners as they interact with different lighting.

Eastern aesthetics and architecture play a significant role in your art. How do you balance traditional elements with your unique contemporary perspective?

In my exploration series of Eastern aesthetics and Chinese traditional architecture, I avoided grand narratives. Instead, I chose to present cultural symbols and elements that personally resonated with me through a contemporary perspective. This made me see my cultural roots in a new light and strengthened my cultural identity. It also gives me a real sense of my position in the world from a broader perspective. That's why I keep working on this series.

As someone who works across multiple roles—director, painter, art director—how do you integrate these different experiences into your art?

I'm someone who likes to find connections between different things. Whether it's as a director, art director, or painter, they all belong to the field of visual arts. For me, bringing a film crew together to make a great film is just like combining elements on a canvas to create a good painting. Both require careful decisions about what to keep and what to leave out. My



solid art foundation since childhood is one of the main reasons I can switch between these roles so easily.

What role do you think art can play in preserving or reinterpreting cultural heritage for future generations?

I think it serves as a contemporary perspective. It's really about providing a way to interpret and understand things for our time.

What advice would you give to young artists who wish to explore themes of cultural heritage in their work?

More and more people are showing interest in Chinese ancient architecture and Buddhist culture. You can even see quite a few people sketching on-site, just like in art museums where they copy the works of the masters. It's similar to the timeline of world art history, stretching from ancient Greece to modern art. I believe it's essential for us to understand our visual roots and heritage, rather than blindly following what's trending without any foundation. In my view, contemporary art is about expressing personal feelings, not about following a particular style or format.

Hi there, my name is **Asia Hays**, and I'm an illustrator based in Ontario, Canada. I recently graduated from OCADU with a bachelor's degree in design! I am very drawn to using themes of nature and curiosities of the outside world to communicate and symbolize one's internal workings and emotions. Experimentation is important to me as I always strive to refine my style. Bold colours and detailed marks usually characterize my work, and as I develop my process, I embrace the unique energy that imperfections can bring. Some of my dream illustration projects are book covers, album art and packaging design. In my free time, I love watching horror movies and going for walks.





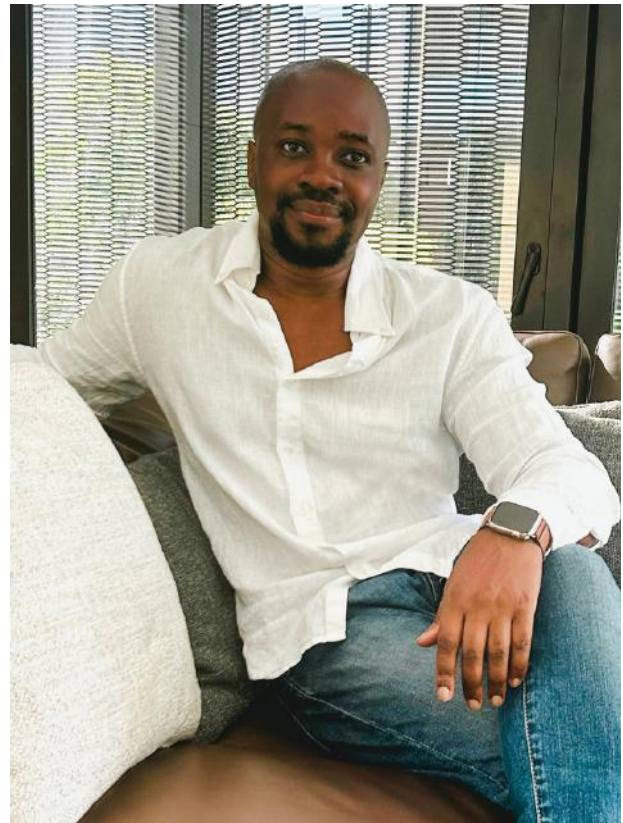
— Interview

Raymond Edusei

How have your experiences living in Ghana and the UK influenced your artistic vision and themes?

My appreciation for bold colours and the abstract themes in my art, i can trace back to when I was a child. We used to get gifts when relatives visited from Ghana, I was fascinated with some of the artworks, the wooden carvings, masks, fabrics etc. and when I visited Ghana I'd feel the vibrancy everywhere i went.

Being born and raised in the UK, I've been exposed to many different art forms from around the world and I've gained a deeper appreciation for the similarities and differences. Blending principles from Cubism, and various forms of street art as well as west African sculpture are reflective of all these synergies.



Today a lot of us live with multiple cultural identities, and I believe that art is a powerful medium to share our stories. I want my art to make people realise that we have more in common than differences.

Could you share how your travels have shaped the cultural and stylistic diversity in your work?

I've always been fascinated by culture, and I approach travel through that lens. Art is a great way to learn about culture, and to bridge divides I've been based out of Asia for most of this year and I'm currently exploring themes that highlight shared traditions in fabric styles and patterns—like the rich heritage of Batik

Growing up British with Ghanaian roots and traveling the world, you come to understand how fluid identity can be. How you're perceived shifts depending on your environment—your identity becomes whatever room you're.

Your "Fly Girl" series explores themes of femininity and empowerment. What inspired you to focus on these themes?

I've always been inspired by women—they embody a dynamic range of qualities that I find endlessly fascinating. Growing up in a matriarchal culture and a household of women, I've witnessed the dualities

Raymond Edusei | Mother, Fly Girl, Series | 2022



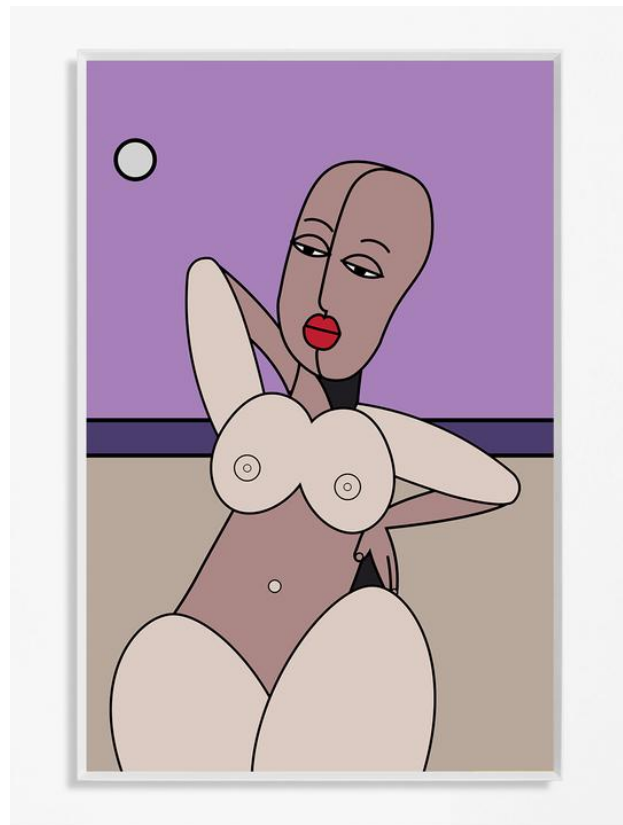
they navigate and the challenges they overcome. These themes often find their way into my art. Painting women allows me to challenge traditional narratives, presenting them in ways that feel both empowering and relatable. It's my way of honoring their stories and individuality, and the roles they play in shaping the world around us. My first exhibition in London, Fly Girl, was particularly special. It sparked meaningful conversations about gender roles that felt deeply rewarding as an artist.

The use of muted colors in your series creates a reflective tone. How did you decide on this color palette?

I love experimenting with color palettes and in my practice I've taken a lot of time to curate specific palettes that I feel would allow me to interact with the viewer of my work. For the fly girl series for example, the muted tones are meant to allow for more introspection and for the viewer to look beyond the surface of the imagery and be one with the subject in the piece.

Can you walk us through your process of blending abstract and figurative art to convey complex emotions and narratives?

Ever since childhood I've always connected with visuals that surround me. Some of my favourite works have started out as memories, visions or dreams that I then



Raymond Edusei | Beach, Fly Girl, Series | 2022

materialised into an artwork. In that sense, the blend of abstract and figurative is intuitive and also very distinctive of my style.

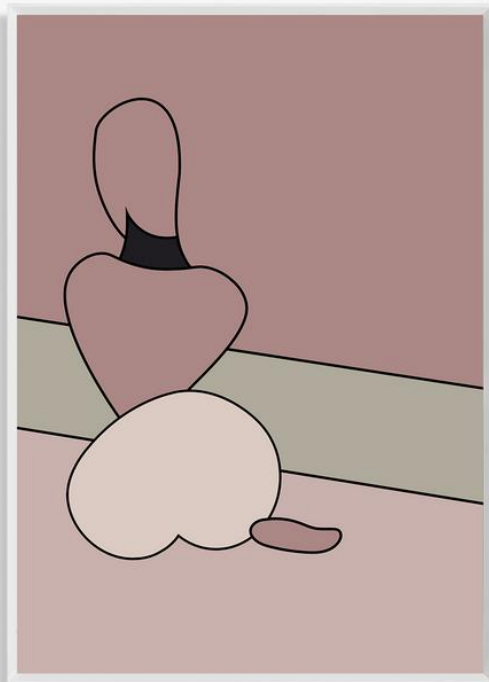
How do you decide which medium—acrylic, spray paint, pastel, or digital—to use for each piece?

I'm very experimental on my choice of medium and I'll often try multiple mediums for a piece to see what fits best. Each medium has its place, for example while acrylic conveys the depth of a piece and also makes it more unique given the imperfections that come with it, digital can make an artwork more accessible to all and as someone who believes that art should be within reach, I will definitely continue to have it play a bigger role in my portfolio.

What emotions or messages do you hope viewers take away from the "Fly Girl" series?

Art is deeply personal, and I believe each viewer's reaction to the Fly Girl series will reflect their own emotions and state of mind at that moment. I named the series Fly Girl because every woman has that cool, magnetic, mysterious energy inside her and it can come through in daily life - no matter what her role or where she is.

Raymond Edusei | Thoughts, Fly Girl, Series | 2022



Sofie Citlalli Karlsen Segovia

Hello there! I'm a Danish-Mexican artist and medicine student currently based in Denmark (but I'm a traveler at heart, so hopefully will move soon!).



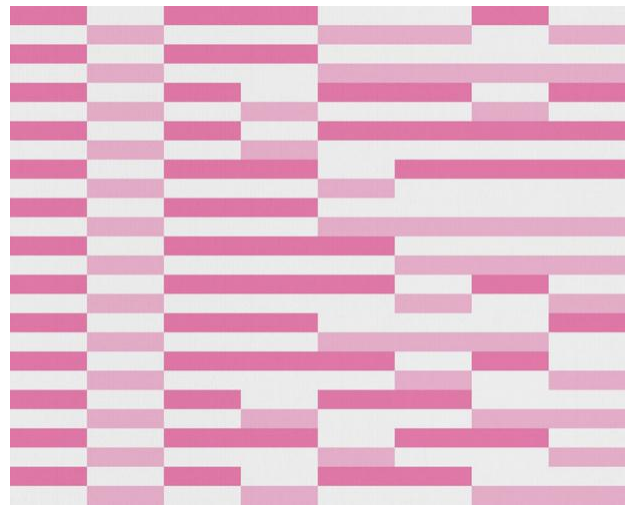
— Interview

Kris Kim

Could you describe the process of creating your abstract pointillism paintings? How do you integrate data visualization into your work?

The process of creating these paintings involves a unique blend of art and data. Semiotic signs are transfigured into color values using mathematical and numerical codes. This algorithmic mechanism sublimates the text into quantifiable data, which is then reshaped visually into abstract forms. Each painting is both a work of abstract art and a record of the coded information.

The color values derived from the coded text build up the canvas through the pixelation, where distinct planes of color are placed to create a larger image. This introduces proliferating vestiges of the text, with each point constituting a piece of the overall puzzle. This is like a creative unfolding that progresses through interpretation and interaction. Rather than being a fixed endpoint, each work is open-ended, evolving through the interplay of data, form, and perception while existing in a state of flux. The original source is a catalyst for the creation of new meaning as it emerges and solidifies an unfolding narrative. The painting finds its completeness in the process of ongoing interpretation, where the viewer's



Kris Kim | Morphogenesis | 2024

personal resonance becomes a vital part of it.

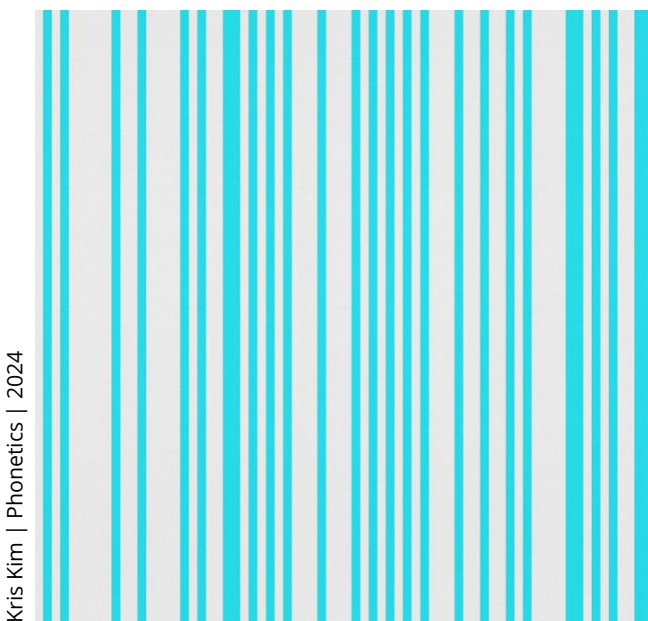
How do you select the numeric data you visualize, and what role does it play in shaping the final composition?

When selecting the numeric data to visualize in my work, I draw from a diverse range of materials, including literature, mythology, history, everyday words from social media, and other cultural texts. The sources often contain layers of meaning or a tapestry of ideas that can be explored through re-envisioning. Whether it's the timeless narratives found in mythology or the complex dynamics of contemporary events, both carry sociocultural, historical, and metaphysical implications. By drawing from these texts, the painting weaves together diverse threads of meaning, allowing one to engage with the artwork on multiple levels. The reimagining of them creates space for personal interpretation, inviting the viewer to reflect on how they resonate in their perception.

Simultaneously, text becomes more than abstract content in the painting; it metamorphoses into a physical, visual form on the canvas as materialized information. The semiotic components, once extracted from these antecedents, are morphed into color values through pixelation, allowing it to emerge as an abstract dimension. This process of converting data into visual art reconstitutes it from the subtextual, logical state into a medium for aesthetic exploration.

Your work merges verbal and non-linguistic information. How do you decide on the balance between the two in each piece?

The balance between verbal and non-linguistic information creates a liminal space between language and abstraction. The verbal information, drawn from literal text, is encoded into numeric data, which ultimately influences the visual composition through



Kris Kim | Phonetics | 2024

color, form, and structure. The non-linguistic information is the visual language of the painting, and the process of reshaping it into a hylozoistic pulse takes place in one's perception.

The non-linguistic information—the visual language of the painting—becomes the focal point, allowing the viewer to experience the work as a perceptual procession. The transformation of this visual language occurs in one's cognitive process, creating a space that is open to a spectrum of meanings. The relationship between the verbal and non-linguistic is not fixed but remains fluid, with the text and visual elements transubstantiating. This approach enables a polyphonous experience, where the verbal and non-linguistic elements coexist and constantly evolve.

What inspired you to explore the connection between documentary materials and abstract imagery?

The connection between textual source and abstract imagery paves the way for a more dynamic exploration of how we experience and interpret the world. Informational data is often seen as concrete and rooted in facts. However, when reimagined through abstraction, it opens up new possibilities for interpretation, where the lines between actuality and perception begin to converge. This merging of the factual with abstract creates a more layered understanding of both the material and the intrinsic dimensions of human experience.

When semiotic materials are reinterpreted through abstract forms, they prompt one to engage with the idea that understanding is not fixed or static. Instead, it is perpetually unveiling, shaped by personal experiences, intuitive responses, and shifting perspectives. Abstraction allows for this crisscrossing by dissolving boundaries between the literal and the conceptual, considering the complexities of reality from multiple viewpoints.

The viewer is invited to move beyond the surface level of a text or image and initiate a meaningful, self-reflective experience. The combination of factual elements with abstract forms activates a process of discovery, where meaning is not simply presented but is actively shaped by the viewer. This interaction reflects how we continually reinterpret and reframe our understanding of the world, suggesting that perception is not a fixed epistemological state but rather an ongoing, multifaceted experience that is always in motion.

Illusionistic space is a strong element in your paintings. How do you achieve this sense of depth through flat tessellated planes?

The paintings are composed of tessellated planes built

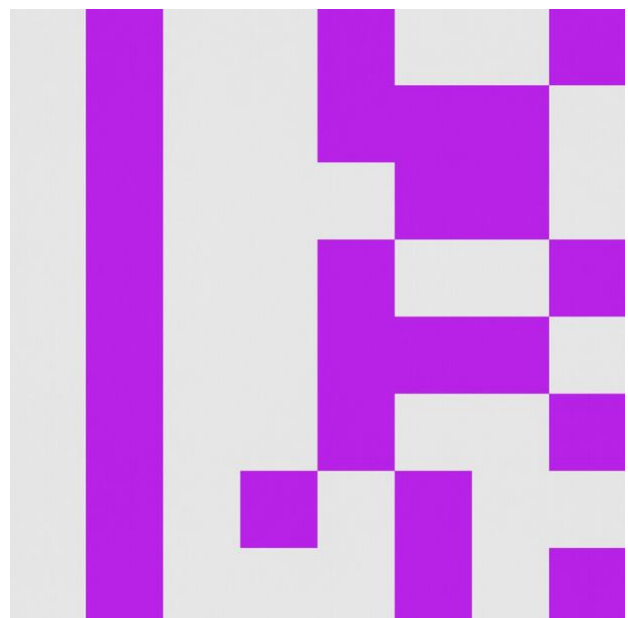
from square-shaped "pixels," evoking a sense of depth and space through the interplay of color contrast, arrangement, and repetition. I focus on the relationships between these colors and their fragmentation to create an optical rhythm and fluidity.

The juxtaposition of chiaroscuro colors forms a unique topography and sense of perspective, while the procession of bites and bytes builds a perceptual spatiality as the viewer's eyes navigate the work's surface. The visual effects of transposed colors and the gradients of pixels, with the blocky structure, induce tension between the grid-like surface and the suggestion of depth, leading to an interplay between symmetry and shifting dimensionality.

How do you see the relationship between reality and simulacra evolving in your art?

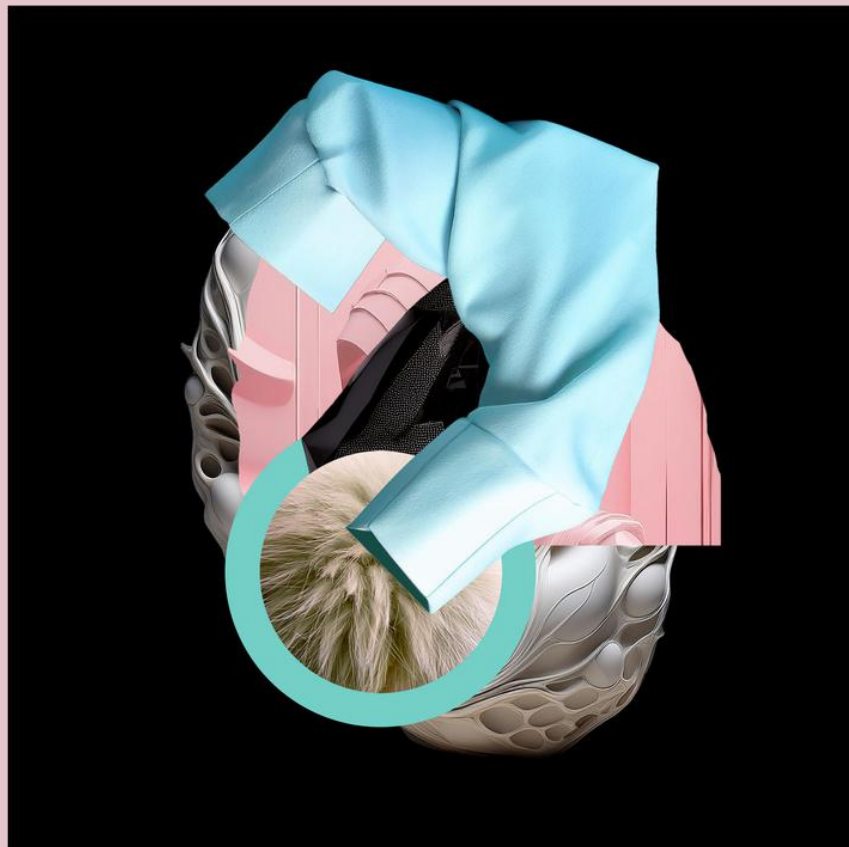
It is an exploration of how we perceive and engage with the world through layers of abstraction and representation. The lines between what is original and what is a reimagined version or reflection of it are blurred. The semiotic sources, such as literal text or data, are grounded in the work as tangible, definable information. However, once sublimated into abstract color and form, these materials become a new entity—distilled representations that are no longer tethered to their meaning, but instead take on open-ended interpretations.

In an age where the meaning of data, symbols, and images are constantly reshaping, the boundary between the source and icon becomes increasingly shifting. The painting reflects this cadential nature by incorporating both the factual and the abstract, the denotative and the arbitrary, simultaneously. It reveals how we construct meaning from both the literal and the abstract, catalyzing a renewed understanding of the realities we engage with in our everyday lives.



Iris Weigel

How freely can we move, and to what extent are we shaped by external circumstances? By deconstructing established structures and patterns, Iris Weigel creates new approaches from their fragments. Her work spans collages, poems, objects, and installations, all characterized by a sense of alienation from the everyday. Iris Weigel studied at the Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design and currently lives and works in Vienna.





— Interview

Jas Turk

How did you first discover analog collage as your artistic medium? What drew you to this form of art?

So, this is an interesting story! What led me towards analog collage as my artistic medium, was linography. Some years ago, in 2022 to be exact, I was working on a linocut print and I wanted to add some additional complexities to that current piece. I have always been quite the exploratory artist, open to mixing materials and mediums to articulate my messaging, so the thought of experimenting with a few analog components felt quite fertile.

I gathered various collage materials, and immediately got to work. As I began to map out a complimentary concept for the linocut, I realized that not long after beginning, I was now mapping out concepts for complete other works, absent from the previous project and its accompanying materials. I found myself completely captivated by collage and swallowed by the immediate attunement that the artistry allows for. I was no longer surrounded in my workspace by carving tools, rubber stamps, or linoleum, but instead by fragmented pieces of paper, adhesives, vintage photos, and magazines.

The extra funny thing is that the collage elements that I intended to use for the linocut never made it to the print, nor do I think that I have engaged in that artform since. I highly respect the medium, however collage spoke to me as an artist, in a completely different way. While collage was the wrong medium for the piece, it was absolutely the correct medium for me as a creative. I am grateful for that day, and for that happy accident. That trial and error experiment



opened me up to indulge in a practice that continually proves itself to me as beautifully expansive, rangeful, and imaginative.

Your work integrates archival photographs and repurposed materials. Can you share the significance of these materials in your storytelling process?

Absolutely! I have found throughout my practice that incorporating archival photographs and repurposed materials into my work fosters a sense of foundation and dynamism that allows for storytelling. I enjoy using vintage photos rather than more modern ones because I feel as if they embed a sense of groundedness and cultural familiarity into each piece, for viewers to witness and hopefully be able to attest to.

I have found over the years that we can learn a lot from our past, and create a sort of pathway to the future when we ebb and flow from understanding where we've been in the past, and compare it to where we stand in the present. Additionally, pairing memories of the past with contemporary ones allows for a third, liminal space to be birthed—this space is also what contains and allows for the storytelling, for viewers to reflect on what is occurring and/or being conveyed throughout my artwork.

As a Cultural Sustainability Practitioner, how do you see your art contributing to Black ancestral remembrance and preservation?

My collages are based off of and rooted in memory work. I use a lot of vintage archives from past decades, and use past stories to paint reminders and educational experiences for contemporary times, as well as future endeavors and legacies.

Recently, I have created and rolled out a campaign that is centered around advocating for “collage + archiving as a vehicle for storytelling” and “memory + remembrance as a means of ancestral bonds.” In this series I create and pair relevant collage art with a range of topics that are centered around sharing Black diasporic histories and traditions with the world, working towards sustaining Black cultural preservation and remembrance.

In your opinion, what role does art play in amplifying cultural voices, particularly those of marginalized communities?

Art cements and often legitimizes our experiences. For me, it allows me to see myself and my community, regardless of the culture or subculture, represented—and I think that many people could likely relate to this take on the subject. Art is so honest and so raw that you cannot hide someone’s voice or presence in it; expressions cannot be denied—so it plays a large role in amplifying cultural and/or marginalized voices. However, those expressions must be supported and uplifted by others and by those with access and privilege to do so.

Art creates reverence. It fosters collective and communal, cultural preservation; and it advocates for continuity. Regardless of medium, it is such an important tool for education, advocacy, thought provocation, and communication. Marginalized communities need and deserve that, we all do.

The piece ‘Angel in Cotton Clouds’ is visually striking. Can you tell us about the inspiration and message behind this particular work?

Thank you! I appreciate and receive those kind words. This piece has multiple meanings. It was a piece that I arranged when I found myself daydreaming a lot. I found myself wonderfully lost in the clouds and created a series of several pieces over multiple months that incorporated the sky as the focal point of each piece.

Some pieces conveyed an essence of darkness, while other pieces provided a pith of lightness, and/or something ambiguous and in-between. This piece is one of the ones that felt more ambiguous. Sometimes I look at the piece and I find it joyous, while other times I stare at it and unearth a sort of sadness in the angel’s contemplation and in the branches of cotton that morph into the clouds. For me, this piece intends



Jas Turk | Angel in Cotton Clouds | 2024

rumination. It intends for viewers to consider the entanglement between how visually and aesthetically appealing things can sometimes possess complication and convolution.

What stories or emotions do you hope viewers take away from your creations?

More than anything, I hope that when viewers take in my creations, that they sit with them and understand that Black stories and experiences are not monolithic. I hope that viewers see the range of emotions, storytelling, and fervor embedded throughout each piece.

Do you have a specific process for sourcing archival photographs and recycled materials? How do you decide what elements to incorporate into your pieces?

My process changes and does not look the same, day by day, or piece by piece. I have a bank of images that I have cultivated over time, so sometimes my process looks like thumbing through that photo bank to look for what images will support the execution of an idea that I have already conceptualized. Other times, my process requires that I source additional imagery through archives, vintage and contemporary magazines and newspapers, or more. Most recently I have begun to sew and incorporate textiles and fabrics into my collage work. I incorporate and source what speaks to me. My process is truthfully, somewhat that I have no process. My creativity is sometimes sporadic and fluid, and I believe that is what keeps my practice in alignment and attunement with my concepts.

— Interview

Mia Bruce

Can you share a memory or experience that solidified your connection to art at a young age?

I truly identified the importance of art when I was 9 years old. That's when I had my first art class. Before the class, art was just doodles, scribbles, zigzags, and swirls of crayons. But that class taught me empowerment within art. That mysterious source of strength for me was the usage of color. Color became real to me. Minimizing and maximalizing the brilliance, the hues, and the saturation to entice the viewer into your subject became extremely exciting. I can provoke, invoke, disgust, and excite with color. One color has the power to vitalize or depress the subject. One color has the strength to challenge, empower, strengthen, or defeat the viewer. One color can turn skies bright and luminous or dreary and dark. I began to see the world in color because of artwork. Give meaning and expanded connotations to simple, ordinary things in my life. Though there's little I can recollect from that small classroom, the one thing I can reminisce about is that it was the breeding ground for my mind in the arts.

How did art become a therapeutic outlet



for you, and how do you encourage others to use it in the same way?

Nothing consoled me the way art consoled me. Words only express and define so much. Nothing can explain the abstraction that lies within the inner man. There are pacifiers to keep you from crying aloud your woes, but even with a pacifier, you are still crying. Art is as clear as it is vague. Art was a source of relatability in my youth as it was able to depict unspeakable emotions, concerns, thoughts, and prayers. As much as I would love to bottle everything up, I need a vent. Everyone needs a vent. Art became that vent for me. Choosing colors, subjects, style, and medium in an art piece gives you full rein on its outcome. This power continually strengthens how I make decisions. I encourage creative mediums for everyone because there's freedom within them. There are no rules or regulations, but rather, they allow you to be your true self. To embrace your true self. To find your true self. Without artwork, I would not be who I am today. I

encourage anyone who's reading this to take to their passions as therapeutic outlets. Those passions are an innate part of you and ought to be embraced and recognized as a part of yourself. In that embrace, you find your identity and purpose.

Your work often leans towards abstractionism and expression. What drew you to these styles rather than traditional realism?

Innately scattered and by default chaotic, I always identified in the artwork that was akin to the soul. The soul is, in itself, undefined, unpictured, and unfiltered. Abstractionism and expressionism are the most real portraiture styles because they capture the inner man. The traditional styles, though beautiful, are unattainable for humans to identify with because it forces you to clean yourself up and chisel away at the rough edges. Abstract works embrace the rough edges and proudly showcase them to the world.

Figures, colors, and emotions seem to be central to your work. How do you decide on your color palette and the figures you incorporate into each piece?

I curate my color palettes on the mood behind the piece. I hardly plan pieces; I tend to jump straight to the canvas if I need to get



Mia Bruce | To Crouch | 2024

an outburst of emotion or energy out. In deep contemplation, the canvas becomes my brain. Using subjects and colors to pick apart matters weighing heavy on my mind. The figures are extensions of myself, choosing how and where to place them depends on the moment. The artwork is a captured image of my heart, soul, and mind in that moment. I intend to be raw and vulnerable in each piece, to be aware of my role in my decisions and the consequences that may occur. Figures and colors are motifs of decision in my work. Reminding me to have the right intentions in my actions.

You mention decoding the hieroglyphics of your mind through art. How do you translate your inner emotions and thoughts into a visual medium?

The mind is an unfixing medium. The mind shifts with the wind of the moment. The mind wavers in every movement made. The mind is an endless subject to depict because it's endless in length and width. It's always changing, always growing, and always moving. I ought to remove all expectations to capture the emotions in an image. For example, if I am angry and destructive mentally but have an expectation that I will create a cohesive palette, I'm already combatting the conflicting emotional state I'm in. I can only translate my inner



Mia Bruce | War! | 2024

mechanisms by being in tune with who I am in that moment of creation. Otherwise, I will be creating a false reality that is not personifiable with the viewer and myself. I take to the canvas to create a reality that resonates with the world my mind is in at that moment.

Your art captures raw glimpses of the soul. How do you balance emotional vulnerability with the technical aspects of creating your pieces?

Technicality is the least of my concerns when creating a piece. I use my figures unharmonious with proportional, real anatomy to demonstrate the “out of body” nature art has. I aim for the throat with emotion over precision. I seek relatability in my artwork based on man’s imperfections, especially my imperfections. I curate my imagery on myself in the moment. One piece titled, “In Death, There is Life” uses imagery of overly-muscular humans at odds with another. Paired with animals such as horses, a snake, and a dove. I chose the humans to have emphasized muscles because muscle, to me, is a symbol of pride. “I flex my strength to overwhelm yours.” In that, I’m revealing to the viewer my troubles with pride. The horse represents the freedom that in dying to myself, there is life in living for a deity worthier than I. The snake is the representation that I am prone to the temptations of this world, especially the temptation of carrying myself to be this grand person of unmatched strength. The dove is a symbol of grace. The grace bestowed to me is undeserved but given that I may have life instead of death. The symbols are an example of my thinking process in an art piece. I choose symbols and colors that correlate with one another to create an image true to the moment.

You speak of divine intervention in your artist statement. How has spirituality or belief shaped your artistic journey?

Being human, we are prone to dealing with the insecurities of our skin. In my teenage years, I found myself to be in constant anguish over image, morality, mortality, and identity. Though I was raised in a healthy home, raised in the Christian faith, I never came to that personal revelation that the faith I was raised with was truly my own. Battling with this internal war of my beliefs versus the beliefs I was raised with, the question of my identity in this world was ever-imposing. I found myself in a deeply depressed state and fed into that depression enough to become suicidal. Harboring darkness kept me closing myself off from my community, but art became that community. In artwork, I was able to make sense out of the insensible. In the artwork, I was able to clarify the rough, jagged edges of my thoughts. It was in artwork that I found the beauty of creation. In creation, there must be a creator. I recognized that I was created in the image of God. Created for my own individual purpose in life for a collective reason, and that reason is to glorify the God who gave us life. Once I believed in the life of Jesus Christ, the gift He provides of eternal life and a purpose on this earth, I was brought out of the caverns of depression. From the state of constantly wishing for death, I found that in Christ alone is this sweet surrender of image, morality, mortality, and identity. As humans, depression is a natural default in hard times and difficulties. In those seasons that make me unstable, I turn to the canvas to arrange my thoughts and methodically clean the house of my mind. In creating, I’m reminded of the ultimate creator who purposed life for each of us.



Mia Bruce | Thoughtless Hoarding | 2024

Ayiana Viviana Porter (b. 1984) is a Philadelphia based emerging abstract artist whose work focuses on the exploration of thoughts, emotion and human connection. Most of her work begins with free-form lines which interconnect and allow room and space to dig deeper into the psyche as she explores personal storytelling in her pieces. Her art strongly encourages the observer to identify and perhaps unearth their own deep seeded thoughts and emotions. Ayiana's works consist primarily of acrylic based paintings and drawings on canvas or heavy weight acrylic paper. Her work is an overarching quest to find significance and meaning in the chaos of life and give personal significance to what we see and experience around us while fostering and encouraging vulnerability and human connection. Ayiana is also an avid writer and a photography enthusiast.

Artist Statement

I've always been a storyteller. If memory serves me correctly - and sometimes I'll admit, it does not - the first time I told a story with scribbles and words was when I was 6 years old. I approach my art with the same mindset by saying through my work, "Here is a story that needs to be told." The way that presents itself in my work is usually in one of two ways. Either there is already a story inside of me inspired by a myriad of things in the world around me that I am wanting to tell visually. Other times, it's simply a desire to create that is present. An inner knowing that the story will unfold as I create, becomes the driving factor in my creativity. My work is a free flowing exploration of shape, color, stories, emotions and our shared human experience.



— Interview

Jolien Müller

Can you tell us about your journey into the world of design and art? How did your experiences at Central Saint Martins and Design Academy Eindhoven shape your creative perspective?

My surroundings have always been the source of my inspiration, both materially and socially. This interest manifested in my childhood where I was drawn to the interplay of form and color. Growing up, I knew I wanted to pursue this subject matter more deeply and refine my instincts. Central Saint Martins provided me with an environment that celebrates bold experimentation. The school enables an interdisciplinary dialogue and exchange. Engaging with people, peers, and mentors from various cultural and creative backgrounds that would challenge my assumptions made me grow confidence in taking risks and pushing boundaries, eventually finding my voice as a designer.



Design Academy Eindhoven, following a more methodology-focused approach, taught me to see design as a tool of societal change. It made me observe my surroundings and analyze how they are being reshaped. The school encourages delving into the identity of materials—their physical properties, meaning in society, personal memories, usage throughout time, etc. So, how does our environment reflect the state of our existence as individuals and a community? This is a question that has been crucial throughout my studies. It has made me recognize the power of storytelling through design without limitations of specific media or disciplines, as every story asks for a unique translation. Together, these experiences have shaped my creative perspective into one that values collaboration, exploration, and the profound connection between people and the world around them.

Your work challenges taboos and societal norms. What inspired you to explore these themes, and how do you choose which taboos to address?

My work is deeply rooted in the desire to deconstruct societal norms, especially those that remain unspoken. Taboos reflect collective fears

and power structures that have evolved over time. In this way, taboos can be described as a mirror of society—a mirror that does not show the prettiest version, but the whole picture. It reveals the unaccepted parts and vulnerabilities of humankind too.

The inspiration and choice of the subject often stem from personal experiences and observations where I've come in contact with these invisible boundaries. I find this realm extremely intriguing as it deals with the intersections of identity. Art became a way to challenge these beliefs and create spaces where these difficult conversations can unravel. Research, conversation, and dialogue guide me through the process and in deciding on the approach to tackle these issues.

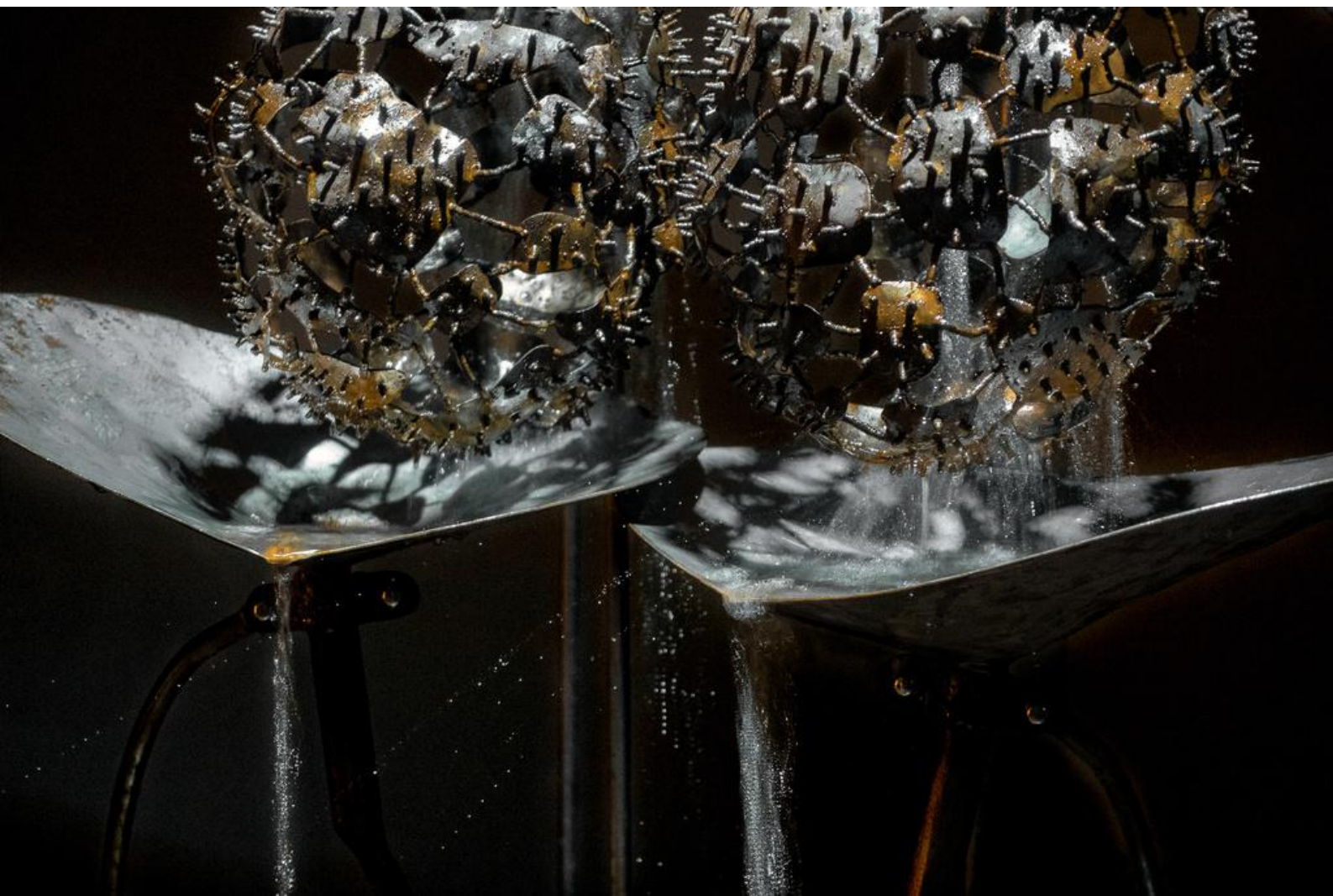
My aim is not to shock people but to create a safe space for curiosity and growth, where viewers can confront and perhaps even redefine their beliefs.

Your use of materials such as clay, metal, and glass is quite distinctive. How do you decide on the materials for each project, and what do they symbolize in your work?

The choice of materials and techniques is determined by the narrative of the project and the emotional resonance I aim to evoke. In *Peeing Human*, for instance, it was important to me to work with materials that both exist in a fluid/malleable as well as solid stage to capture the motion of fluids traveling through your body. In addition, the shapes and material intersections were inspired by the disconnect I've experienced in human-made spaces—in this case, toilets—and ourselves juxtaposing nature and technology. The goal was to reunite mind and body not only as human beings but also in our surroundings. In summary, materials are more than mediums; they become the narrators of the story and guide the dialogue between the artwork and the viewers.

What challenges did you encounter during the creation of 'Peeing Human,' and how did you overcome them?

One significant challenge was finding the right balance between realism and abstraction concerning the shape language, as *Peeing Human* is not intended to be a literal depiction of



human anatomy but rather seeks to rekindle a spiritual interpretation of this bodily experience. Therefore, instead of only looking at the factual world, I explored the spiritual body through writing, reflecting, and visualizing experiences and emotions linked to urination.

Additionally, the process of creation felt similar to assembling a body composed of individual cells to form a whole. This presented me with the challenge of solving a 3D puzzle, balancing composition and relations in shape and scale. Whenever I am presented with this challenge, I often become the piece to imagine its scale and direction through my body movement.

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

A lot of people were sharing very intimate and personal stories with me. I remember a woman telling me about her experience of treating herself by drinking her urine and the benefits of urine for skin eczema. Another man shared with me that he watered his plants with his urine, as this would make the nutritional value more suited for them. I was super happy to see people opening up about this subject without any fear and sharing their experiences with me and one another. It truly created a safe space for conversation.

Further, lots of people shared various projects and inventions revolving around excretions, such as poop being used for compost or even plane fuel, which was super inspiring too. I am always happy to hear about another "pipe poopoo fellow."

A common thread was also that people told me how their urge of having to pee grew while listening to Peeing Human. So, even if people did not share their thoughts directly with me, I hope they can take this idea with them to their next bathroom visit. I don't want to force people to interact or engage with my work but instead invite them to immerse in this new context as far as they feel comfortable.

What is your ultimate goal as an artist? What message or legacy do you want to leave through your work?

We are all humans and we have so many different experiences of life, but still, we can relate to each other, which to me is one of the most beautiful things about being alive—sharing experiences with people and forming connections.

I want to create spaces that allow this junction and to make people feel more comfortable with the parts of themselves that might have been neglected or even frowned upon. My work promotes body positivity and full acceptance of our humanness. To create a ground for people to share their stories is what drives my work. Eventually, I see storytelling as a way of healing. To me, the conversations around my work are the real change, the real art.

Do you see your work as a form of activism or education, especially in breaking taboos and reshaping societal norms?

With these "big" terms, I like to go back to the root.

Activism stems from the Latin word *activus/actus*, which means "a doing, to drive, draw out or forth, move." In this way, I can relate to this term in some way, as my work is supposed to cause change or reform society in its beliefs. However, I don't see it in a purely active way, as I want the change to come from the people themselves. My work is like a seed that is planted and carried on. It doesn't just move forward; it spreads in all different directions.

Education comes from the Latin word *educare*, which not only translates to teaching but to growing and nurturing. Nowadays, the term education is often associated with factuality; however, isn't sharing individual perceptions a form of growing one's own perspective?

In conclusion, I can relate and not relate to a lot of terms, but eventually, I would describe myself as a gardener of society, digging in the soil, studying the roots, weeding, planting, watering, growing, and healing.



— Interview

Melanie D Berardicelli

Can you share more about how the loss of your brother in 2020 influenced your artistic practice and your exploration of faith and grief through your art?

In November 2020 I had lost my older brother, Christopher Berardicelli, to brain cancer. He was only 34 years old. Being nine years older than me, he was my role model. I looked up to him all my life- both in the literal and figurative sense. As you can imagine, I was absolutely gutted; how could someone so kind and pure of heart die such a horrible death at a young age? What was I going to do without my big brother? Nothing seemed to make sense to me, and I felt completely lost. Prior to my brother's passing, I had painted and animated scenes of different interior scenes at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and before that, figures surrounded by vibrant florals. It felt ingenuine to continue with either theme; I needed to address my grief head-on rather than hide it behind such cheery imagery. Thus, I was searching for something religious that focused a bit more on the human aspects of faith and death. During that time, it was incredibly hard for me to talk about my brother's death, or to even let my peers know he had passed; but, where words fail me, art speaks.

What drew you to the Roman Martyr Catacomb Saints and Paul Koudounaris's work? How did they shape your creative direction?

What didn't draw me in? The Roman Martyr Catacomb Saints were a perfect blend of my love for the ornate, my faith, anatomy, painting, sculpting, and sewing. It was everything I had been looking for! Being a student of the New York Academy of Art at the time, I was- and still am- deeply intrigued by anatomy. In my personal taste, more is more is more. I spent hours poring over Paul Koudounaris's book, admiring the shining, glittering, glowing gems, jewels, golds, and intricate



Berardicelli Melanie | From The Heavens Looking Down

embroidery. The sheer level of detail is utterly mesmerizing, and it was a literal investigation of the "riches of heaven." I love intricate detail work in my paintings; I'm known for always having my beloved 20/0 Princeton Spotter Brush handy for the smallest of marks. It felt like destiny to paint these pearls, rubies, and brocade costumes. This inspiration has pushed my technical skill and attention to detail, as well as my bravery in confronting imagery that some might find intimidating or macabre.

Your art combines sculpture, painting, embroidery, and beading. How do these mediums interact in your work to express themes of devotion and memory?

The nuns of the German-speaking countries who received the remains of believed Christian Martyrs had spent years painstakingly hand-sewing and bejeweling ornate outfits to adorn the skeletons. Often, these nuns, as well as patrons of the church, would give up their own jewelry for these saints. This really struck a chord with me; if you truly believed you were tasked with the job of clothing a saint, wouldn't you do the same? Thus, to properly honor the tireless dedication of these nuns, I hand-sew glass beads and gems into both painted canvas and original sewn outfits for sculpture. It's a time-consuming process, but also a meditative one. I actually gave up a pair of my own earrings for the eyes of my piece,

"Katakombenheiligen (Saint Severin)." In my painted works, I usually hand-sew gems located in the foreground, and allow the painted gems to rest back in space to push the senses of depth and illusion.

Can you describe your process of creating the resin-cast skeletal écorchés and their intricate costumes? How do you select materials and design each piece?

It's a lengthy process, but I love good, hard work. The sculpture begins initially in plasteline. I'll usually spend several months perfecting the skeleton, paying attention to details the viewer doesn't necessarily have access to in the finished piece (vertebrae, ribs, the pelvis, etc.). Then comes the casting process. The plasteline can't last as an independent sculpture for exhibition itself, as it never "dries" and is therefore always malleable, and by extension susceptible to being squished or ruined. Thus, I create a rubber mold using silicone; this layer captures all of the details I sculpted in the plasteline. A mother mold of epoxy dough is sculpted next on top of this silicone layer; I prefer epoxy over plaster as it's lightweight and easier to sculpt shims with. Once all the layers have cured, the mother mold is cracked open, and the silicone layer is sliced along the shim line to release the original plasteline sculpture. The entire mold creates a perfect negative of the original, and allows the artist to pour any medium of their choosing into this shell to create a brand-new positive. Pouring is the tricky part;

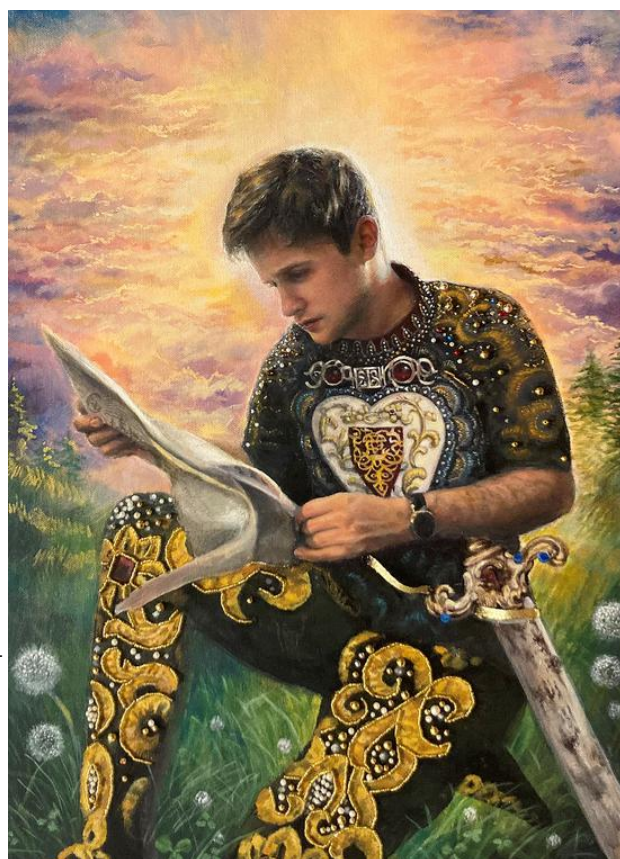


Berardicelli Melanie | Copy of Saint Anny

so much can go wrong in this next step. I take my time to ensure that the silicone and mother molds have aligned properly, pour the resin, and keep my fingers crossed that no air bubbles have accumulated. Carefully crack open the mold again (so as not to accidentally break the more fragile parts of the sculpture), clean up the seamlines, and voila! A brand-new skeletal sculpture! From here comes painting the resin surface to create a more illusionistic skeleton and sewing. I first design a pattern for the outfit on tracing paper, which I use to cut fabric. My designs are inspired by the pleated skirts, puffed sleeves, and ribcage-windows typical of the outfits that adorn the Roman Martyrs. Fabrics are selected for color and texture which best reflect such outfits. The pieces are sewn together and fitted to the skeleton. Then, I hand-sew glass beads, sequins, and gems into skirts and torso pieces; these beads and gems are similar to what I'd use to sew or create bracelets when I was a young girl. Final details, such as crowns or swords, are sculpted with Sculpey; a simple, yet honest material that can be baked in a toaster oven at home. From start to finish, a project such as this can take me six months.

You reimagine the identities of saints in your work. How do you approach giving these figures a new narrative inspired by the heroic people in your own life?

I usually consider the nature of each skeletal saint I observe in my studies. For example, in my painting, "Sir Stephen," I decided to paint my long-time friend, Stephen Schmitt, who has always been dear to me. I can't help but paint from the heart. In the Church of St. Verena there are a pair of Roman Martyrs, a male and a female, who have been displayed as a divine couple. Their design is a little more unique than most other Roman Martyrs;



Berardicelli Melanie | The Time Traveler

rather than a ribcage window, they bear large matching hearts on their chests. How touching! I always consider the personality of my subjects; Stephen is depicted with a sword, as he is a defender, and looks to the heavens in deep thought, true to his character. A faint golden light surrounds his head; this hero is enlightened.

Other times, I consider the name of my friend and the name of the saint. When the Roman Martyr Catacomb Saints were first sent to Germany, there was no way to tell what their original names were; thus, the church would christen them after names of saints in the bible, or simply called them "Saint Incognito." In the same manner, I depict John as a Saint John, or Severin as a Saint Severinus, or Stephen as a Saint Stephen.

How does your background in anatomy and your work with Audrey Flack influence your artistic vision and technical approach?

This is an interesting question! Not many people know this, but I had painted many of Audrey Flack's Post-Pop Baroque paintings before she had passed. Audrey had hired me as a studio assistant after I had graduated from the New York Academy of Art in May 2021; she had been my Painting IV professor and was looking for someone who could help her with a new project. At the time, Audrey had just turned 90 and was unable to do much work on her paintings due to her health. Thus, I became Audrey's "hands," painting what she directed me to do. The very first piece I began painting independently for her was "Self Portrait with a Flaming Heart." She, like me, was meditating on the concepts of religion, hope, the grieving heart, and death. The last piece I helped with was "A Brush With Destiny," which at the time we simply called "Queen Elizabeth" in the studio. This was a fun project for me! I spent the summer of 2022 painting over 300 pearls and sculpting the brocade for that piece; Audrey and her studio manager, Severin Delfs, had nicknamed me "pearl girl." For all of Audrey's pieces, I was painting acrylic on canvas. I had to learn how to be efficient in handling this medium due to its quick dry time- as well as Audrey's expectations for quick turnover! Thus, I became a lot more efficient in my own work. A lot of my pieces are oil and acrylic on gessoed paper or canvas; I begin my portraits in the same manner I did for Audrey with acrylics but push them further with my background in oils to create more illusionistic flesh tones, highlights, and juicier color. I also collage my compositional elements similarly to how Severin and I would when mapping out a new piece for Audrey; a gem here, a sword there, all, of course, inspired by the actual outfits that adorned the Roman Martyrs. From 2021-2022, I was simultaneously assisting Cynthia Eardley at the New York Academy of Art for her Structural Anatomy courses (this is before I



Berardicelli Melanie | Heart of Hearts

became an MFA Structural Anatomy professor myself in Fall 2023). For this class, students sculpt a 24" écorché- meaning "flayed flesh"- to study both bone and muscle anatomy. We start off with basic geometric shapes for the head, ribcage, and pelvis to capture accurate proportions prior to delving into the finer details and nuances of each bone. When I draw the skeleton, I think like a sculptor, focusing more on planes and volumes before line weight, light value, and likeness. Once you have a solid foundation, that's when you can go wild with details; a suture line here, a tubercle there. Teeth are my absolute favorite to paint and sculpt. Every skull is different, and equally exciting for me to study through my work. Thus, the catacombs are an anatomist's treasure trove, as there is always something new to discover!

What role does your experience as an educator play in your art practice? Do teaching and creating intersect for you in meaningful ways?

Often my demonstrations I create for my MFA, CFA, CE, and SURP students lead to interesting experiments in my own work. In summer 2023, I taught a few portrait sculpture classes through the New York Academy of Art's Summer Undergraduate Residency Program. In any class I teach, I like to balance rigor with creative expression; what's the point of art if you're not enjoying it and letting your own voice shine through? For my demo, I decided to try out a theory I had of reversing the forensic process; could I strategically remove clay to the depth of standard tissue markers to reveal the shape of the skull underneath a face? This led to the creation of my sculpture, "Saint John." Other pieces of mine- "Katakombenheiligen (Saint Severin)," "Skull Reliquary No. 1," "The Time Traveler"-were created initially to serve as class demonstrations. New discoveries I make in my demos always influence the development of my personal work, and vice versa.



Berardicelli Melanie | The Hermit

— Interview

Anning Song

Your project delves into the influence of internet acronyms on youth. What inspired you to choose this specific theme?

In today's rapidly developing internet era, many young people are enthusiastic about using short words and internet acronyms to communicate. During my online chats with friends, I gradually noticed a decline in my ability to organize language and a reduced vocabulary. This phenomenon sparked my strong interest in the topic. After conducting some research, I found that internet acronyms have a significant negative impact on the youth group. The excessive use of these abbreviations not only disrupts the structure and norms of language but also severely affects young people's literacy and writing skills.

An interesting phenomenon is that teenagers generally tend to follow "trends." They imitate and adopt the language style of the group, using emerging online language to maintain social connections with each other. This trend has led to the widespread use of Internet language, but at the same time, it has also intensified the simplification and informalization of written expression. Therefore, I have decided to focus on exploring the negative impact of the proliferation of internet acronyms on teenagers' behaviours and language abilities, to raise public awareness about the potential harm of language abbreviations.

How do you approach exploring societal issues through your design practice?

I have always greatly appreciated the human-centred design philosophy, which emphasizes starting from people's needs and deeply exploring those needs and pain points. In this process, as a designer, I place myself in others' experiences, striving to view the issues from their perspectives. In the different projects I have worked on, some have been approached from a first-person perspective, focusing on my own



experiences and discoveries, exploring behavioural patterns, and collecting data to explain phenomena. Others have been inspired by the stories and experiences of others, prompting me to deeply reflect on the issues they face. Therefore, I hope that my designs can have a tangible, positive impact on society, using projects to better understand social behaviours and phenomena.

In terms of design principles, I focus on distilling the core information of the topic, extracting key elements, and blending aesthetics with the expression of social behaviours. This approach drives deeper thinking about the issues at hand, which is then put into action. Through this process, I strive to closely integrate functionality with humanistic care in design, creating works that are both meaningful and impactful.

What challenges did you encounter while translating the abstract idea of linguistic degradation into a visual narrative?

The biggest challenge I faced was how to cleverly combine acronyms with characters to effectively illustrate the impact of acronyms on the teenager group. In the design process, I had to consider not only the layout of text and images and the cropping of shapes, but also explore adjustments to text deformation, positioning, and size. After a series of experiments, I ultimately decided to adopt a narrative approach. By distilling the key behaviours and reactions of teenagers at each stage of interacting with acronyms, I created a sketchbook that links relevant

graphics to keywords. I used playful and engaging visuals to metaphorically represent the behavioural changes of adolescents when using abbreviations.

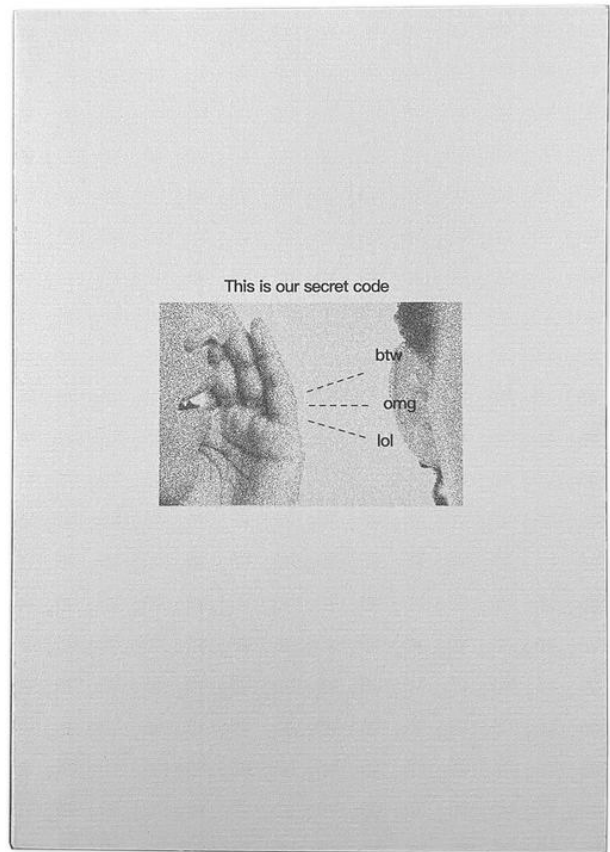
Your work focuses on human emotions and societal connections. How do you ensure your audience resonates with your message?

In my design projects, I tend to adopt a storytelling approach, which is not only a design method but also the core way for me to express my thoughts and emotions. Every design element and piece of information is rooted in thorough research on the social issues at hand. Therefore, I often extract the key concepts from the topic and use metaphorical design techniques to hint at and suggest the content of the story. This approach not only stimulates the audience's thinking and empathy but also helps me focus on the needs, pain points, and potential social issues within human society.

In my view, the visual effects of a design and the choice of medium are closely intertwined; together, they determine how the audience resonates with the work emotionally. The visual effects must not only stay true to the essence of the topic but also enhance the message through elements such as form, color, and composition. Meanwhile, the choice of medium depends on the nature of the topic and the target audience, as the medium needs to effectively communicate the core idea of the design.

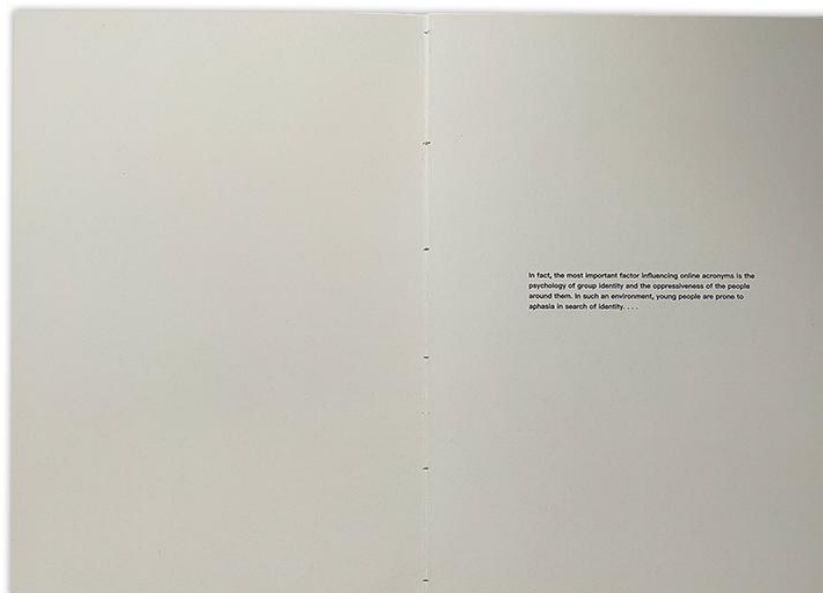
Can you elaborate on the process of researching and extracting the elements of youth group behavior for this project?

First, I conducted research on frequently used internet acronyms, and reviewed data reports on how teenagers use these acronyms. I also distributed an online survey about internet acronyms, collecting 264 valid responses. By analysing the data, I was able to summarize the reasons why teenagers prefer to use



acronyms. Afterwards, I interviewed 3-4 teenagers to understand their views on using acronyms, and I read several academic articles and reports to investigate the social factors influencing the trend of acronyms use among teenagers. Ultimately, I summarized the reasons for the spread of internet abbreviations within the adolescent group, traced the process of their diffusion, and explored how this phenomenon affects changes in teenagers' psychological state and behaviour.

My storytelling is divided into eight sections, primarily using character collages and the group formations of acronyms to illustrate the issue. The first section depicts how teenagers begin to explore new acronyms and form small groups. I used the element of friendship bracelets to represent the bonding and connection between them, followed by the use of acronyms to symbolize this gathering. The second section shows how teenagers gradually form a sense



of group identity. I incorporated elements of social media tools, such as mobile phones and computers, and used collages to depict the interactions and behaviours of teenagers within the group. The third section illustrates how small groups of teenagers gradually exclude others from outside their circle. I combined acronyms with images of people looking down at their phones to show this process of exclusion. The fourth section portrays how teenagers outside the group feel excluded and start imitating the behaviours of the group. I used the metaphor of an expanding mouth to represent their tendency to follow. The fifth section shows how outsiders attempt to replicate trendy language, using popular acronyms to seek a sense of belonging. I used the shape of merging hands to represent this tendency to group together. The sixth section reveals how small teenage groups begin to adopt uniform behaviours and language, strengthening the group's distinctiveness. The seventh section reflects how, with the increase in group size, the original acronyms lose their novelty. I expressed this shift through expanding speech bubbles. The eighth section discusses how, as the group grows, its members begin to search for new abbreviations, and the group dynamic is further solidified. This creates a recurring cycle of following the group, which ultimately influences a large portion of the adolescent population.

In what ways do you hope your book will influence how society views the use of internet acronyms?

My book uses a combination of acronyms and character collages to illustrate the phenomenon of vocabulary degradation and the decline of language skills in teenagers' everyday communication. Through the relationship between acronyms and characters, I tell the story of how teenagers form groups using acronyms, which then gradually spread. I want to convey to the audience that internet acronyms emerge in an environment of fast information flow, and that

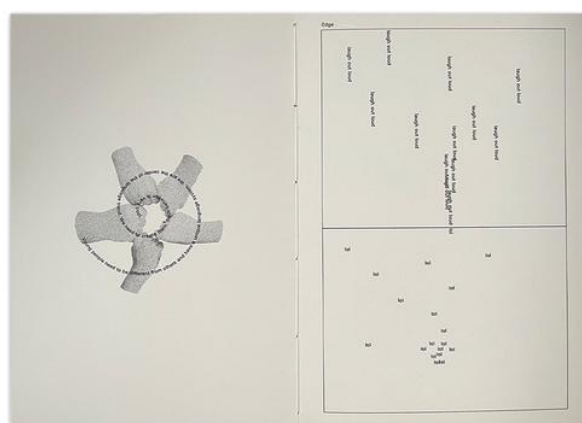
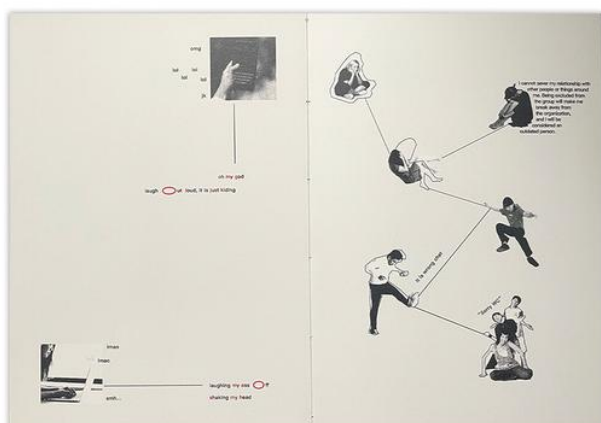
teenager, who are immersed in an era of fragmented information, are affected in their ability to think deeply, making it difficult for them to tackle complex issues. The prolonged use of simplified language may also lead to problems such as a lack of emotional expression.

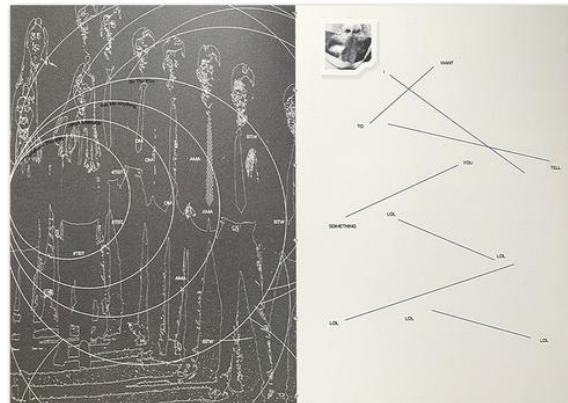
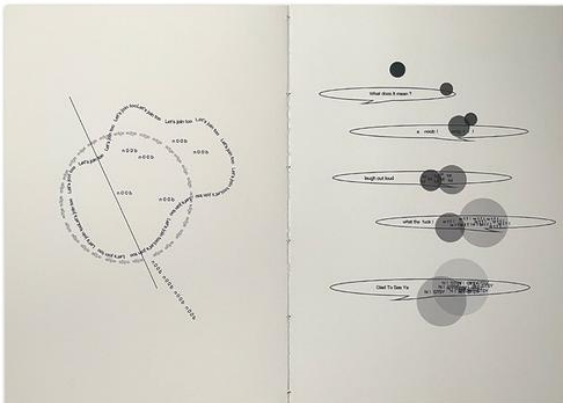
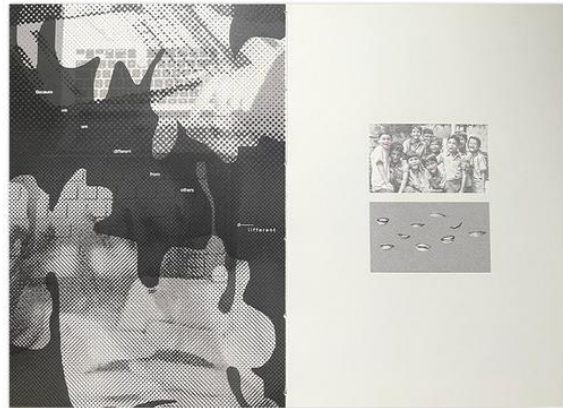
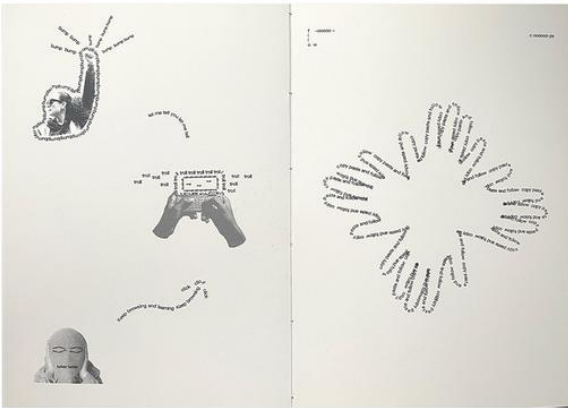
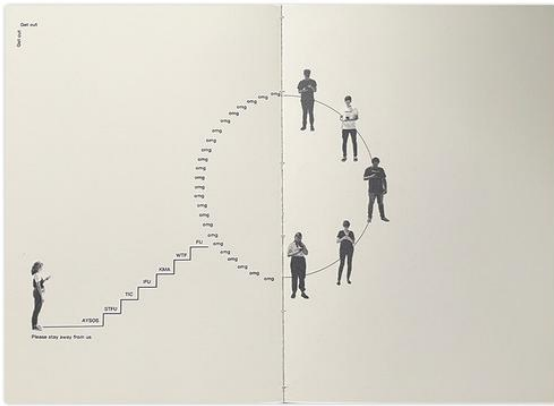
I hope this book will prompt the audience to reflect on abbreviations and their potential impact on the future of teenagers, especially regarding how to cultivate teenagers' language skills and depth of thinking. I want people to realize that language ability is crucial to teenagers' cognitive development, and the excessive use of acronyms could impair their thinking and emotional expression, ultimately affecting their ability to navigate a complex world.

Looking ahead, are there other societal issues you're planning to explore through your work?

I have always been interested in the topic of social identity, as it reveals the complex emotional connections between individuals and groups. Social identity is not just a label; it is the way people find a sense of belonging, recognition, and value within a group. Human emotions are complex and often involve deep psychological needs, social backgrounds, and cultural identities. Many marginal issues and hidden problems are often overlooked, such as those related to social class, the voices of minority groups, or individual psychological pressures. Due to social development or cultural biases, these issues are often not openly discussed.

I hope to explore these overlooked emotions and topics through art, as art can break down language and cultural barriers and express unspoken feelings. Through my creations, I aim to tell the stories of these emotional and identity struggles, helping the audience understand the inner worlds of different individuals. Storytelling is a powerful tool; it reveals the complexity of human emotions and fosters understanding and empathy for others' feelings.





As the blind obedience of young people using online acronyms continues to increase, to a certain extent, it will affect the accuracy and broadness of the outside world's perception of young people's use of non-standard language, the dismemberment of language, and eventually silence.....

— Interview

Alisha Jade

What inspired you to focus on legends and oral traditions from the African continent for this project?

My biggest inspiration is my mother and her family who immigrated to Canada from South Africa, giving me a fond personal connection to the continent. Earlier this year I created a colouring book that celebrates fashion from cultures around the world and there was a lot of positive reaction to the African countries featured in the book. People were really interested in learning more about African fashion and culture! This pleasantly surprised me and I jumped at the chance to create educational material that could still be considered art and fashion.

It's no secret that African textiles and garments are commonly copied and deemed "original" all the time. I want to create something within fashion that celebrates African culture without discrediting those it belongs to. Originally, I imagined this concept of creating a digital collection that depicts African gods and goddesses as modern day superheroes each with a connection to a precious gem from their respective country/region. Kind of like how some cultures depict Buddha with gold and jade statues. As I dove into this concept and started doing research I realized that there are so many untold and legendary stories from the continent. Which helped me come to the conclusion that a better format for these illustrations would be a book rather than a digital collection, giving me



the chance to add context to the characters and revive their stories.

How do you approach the process of turning traditional myths into modern-day superhero illustrations?

It all starts with researching each god, myth or legendary figure and compiling as much background information as possible. I try to find out what the person or being is associated with, their powers, well known tales or achievements and any physical traits available. Once I get a snapshot of the character I enter fashion design mode. I choose fabrics that the character would wear or that relate back to their country or tribe. When I feel like I have enough colour and texture in my fabric swatches I start my illustration. By this time I've built an idea of how the character should look based on research and my personal fashion design aesthetic.

Could you share how your background in garment construction and digital design influenced the character designs in this series?

Being a fashion designer greatly influences how I approach both the character designs and the process of compiling my illustrations. I create these characters the same way I would create a garment. For me research for the character and

creating a snapshot is the same as creating a sketch for a garment. The next step is sourcing fabric. Sometimes I photograph a swatch, or sometimes I create an illustrated fabric. Then I work on the body of the character aka the “mannequin” followed by creating the silhouette of the outfit. Once I’m content with the silhouette I layer the fabrics onto the design which is like draping layers of fabric onto a mannequin. The last step of producing a garment is stitching everything together and adding final details which is the same with my illustrations. The last stage is always adding decorative elements and shading. The fact that I’ve created two digital collections and two coloring books prepared me for creating illustrations in a consistent style that flow with each other and accurately depict important cultural elements.

What kind of research did you conduct to ensure the accuracy and cultural authenticity of the stories and characters?

Some of my illustrations are based on real people and kingdoms which provided me with a lot of books, journals and web resources to compile background information. However, researching gods, goddesses, monsters, and



Alisha Jade | The Lovers | 2024

myths is a bit more complicated. A lot of explanations are vague or origin stories conflict each other. In these cases I always go further and find different travel blogs and forums from people who have visited tribes and heard their stories in- person. From all the information I gather I create a snapshot of what that character represents and from there I let my artistic style and interpretation of the character kick in. My intention is to include all African countries (and surrounding islands) in my book so before drawing a single thing I chose to create a master spreadsheet of my findings. This spreadsheet includes months of research on every countries tribes, their gods and goddesses, textiles, prominent myths, precious gems and major pre-colonial kingdoms or events. My own map to the legendary continent of Africa.

To be honest the amount of information I gathered was beyond what I expected and it amazed me how much I was learning. While I was still in the research stage I made the decision to create a first book celebrating African myths and legends and a second book celebrating African tribes and textiles. The intention is when both books are side by side they'll paint a beautiful picture of each country in



Alisha Jade | Self Portrait | 2024

Africa. With so much history and culture to be shared I felt inspired to give all of these elements the proper highlight they deserve.

Why do you think it's important to revisit and celebrate pre-colonial African stories today?

Pre-colonial African history is often missing from history classes and books. Apart from Ancient Egypt I can't say I learned about a single African kingdom, royal family or tribe throughout my younger school years. It was only when I went to university that I learned about the scramble for Africa and how modern day borders were created. Should western-centred history be common knowledge while it's so deeply and darkly connected to the African history that's ignored?

Today's education system focuses a lot on colonialism, globalization and how the world became the machine that it is. We forget the great cities, kingdoms and civilizations that prospered before they were plundered. And if history can make us forget real events that happened and real people that lived, then the oral stories, myths and legends barely stand a chance unless they are highlighted and celebrated.

What message or emotions do you hope viewers take away from this collection?

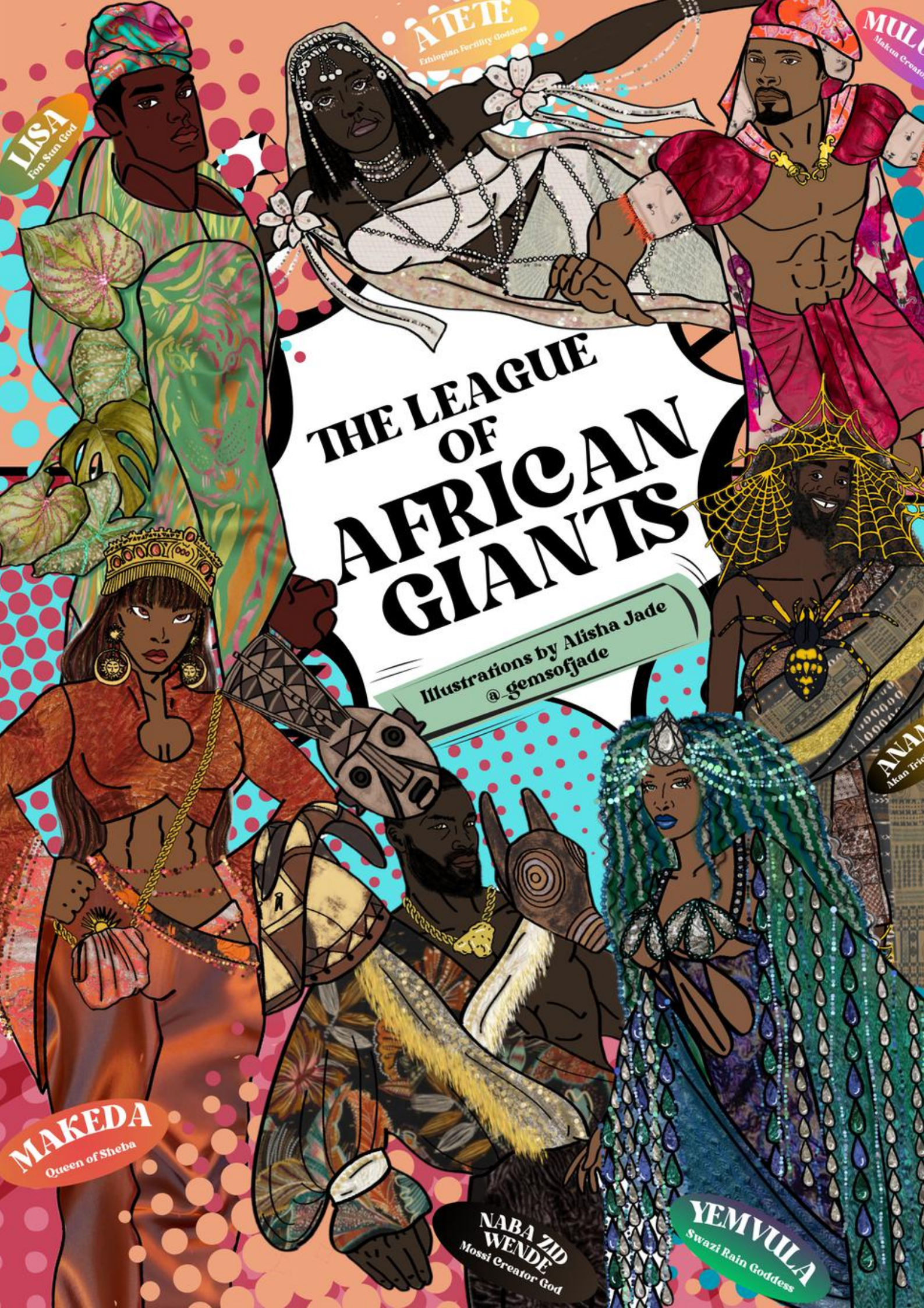
I hope that with this project I can peak the viewers interest, introduce them to someone or something they have never heard of before and inspire them to take a deeper look into the history of Africa. Hopefully seeing all the amazing people and stories from the continent will also create a feeling of pride and excitement.

Do you see your illustrations as a way of bridging the gap between fashion, art, and cultural education?

I think in recent years there has been a lot more coverage and access to African culture for people outside the continent through music and films. Creating this project from a fashion and art standpoint, to me is an opportunity for these stories to reach a different audience. I think that creating these African Giants can bring awareness to real kingdoms and legendary people as well as myths and legends that tribes still honor to this day. Hopefully, my designs can create enough visual interest to grab a viewers attention and the story behind it will teach them something new.

Alisha Jade | The Magicians | 2024





ÀTÈTÈ
Ethiopian Fertility Goddess

MULU
Makun Creator

LISA
Fon Sun God

THE LEAGUE OF AFRICAN GIANTS

Illustrations by Alisha Jade
@_gemsofjade

ANAN
Akan Trickster

MAKEDA
Queen of Sheba

**NABA ZID
WENDE**
Mossi Creator God

YEMVULA
Swazi Rain Goddess

— Interview

Dana Hangle

Can you tell us more about your journey from teaching high school English to becoming an artist? What inspired you to start creating?

As a very young person, I became exposed to poetry and art through the books my mother had at home which included Leonard Cohen and Aubrey Beardsley. I majored in English in university and began my teaching career in 1993. I became sick in 2013 with a rare brain condition. In 2017, I had brain surgery and wasn't able to teach anymore. Besides occupational, speech and language, and physio therapies, I also went through counselling. It has been quite the process to examine and cope with the "new" me. Art has given me a sense of purpose and is also very therapeutic.

How has your brain injury influenced your creative process and the way you approach photography and other media?

Initially, I started with landscape photography. I was always drawn to Ansel Adams' work; however, I also loved elements of surrealism. Unfortunately, due to my brain injury, working with photography, apps, and general editing results in an increase in my symptoms of brain injury including pain, migraines, and fatigue. Thus, these works are hugely important because of what they represent, but also because I may not complete many more.



Dana Hangle | Fraser River Viewing | 2022



What does the Fraser River mean to you personally, and how does it inspire your artwork?

The Fraser River begins in the northern part of the province of "British Columbia" and empties into the Pacific Ocean in Vancouver. To see the river carve its way through St'at'imc Territory is spectacular! The river once provided Indigenous peoples with an abundance of salmon but, due to various environmental degradations, is virtually void of sustenance.

Your work reflects a deep connection with the St'at'imc Peoples and their land. How have your relationships with the Indigenous community shaped your art?

I am a white settler, an uninvited person on Indigenous land. Living here has given me a tremendous understanding of my privilege and position in "Canada". The pieces in Visual Art Journal represent many aspects of my relationships with the land and people. It means a lot to me to have these pieces in print as I am not interested in, out of respect for the St'at'imc People, selling or profiting in any way from the images in the journal.

The use of symbols like the television and the planet in "Fraser River Viewing" is striking. Could you elaborate on their significance and how they tie into your message?

There are several layers to "Fraser River Viewing". First, the Fraser River itself is not in the work, only the shore which demonstrates our inability to face environmental issues. Thus, the television is two-fold; it represents pollution and garbage in and on the Fraser River, but it also represents our attention being

diverted from overwhelming issues. By no means do my statements diminish the hard work of Indigenous people, grass roots organizations and local clean-up committees who bring attention to the plight of the Fraser River. The planet represents colonialism. The planet, in my mind's eye, dropped missionaries and government officials from Britain and France to commit genocide and seize land and resources. Settlers are the aliens from this planet who committed unspeakable crimes.

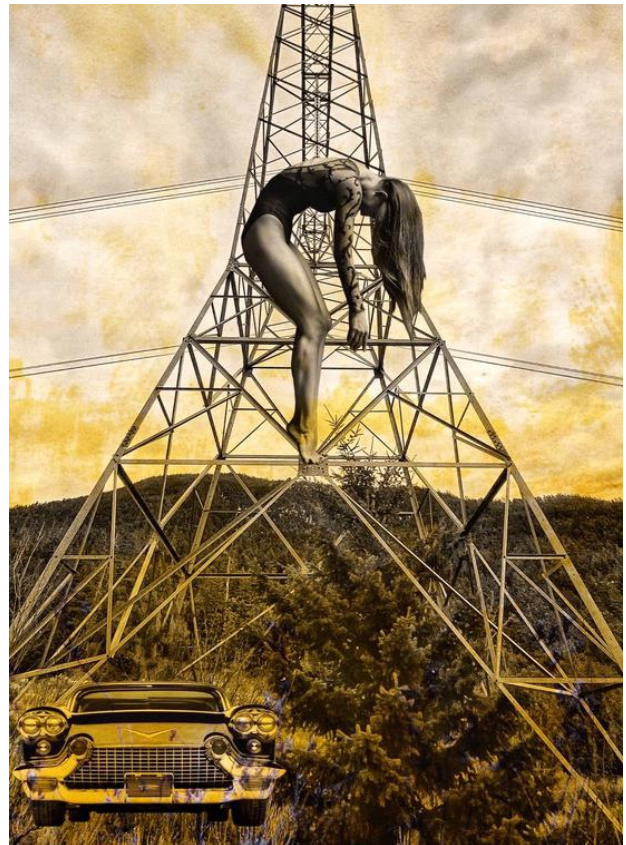
What role does the app, Dada, play in your creative process, and why do you prefer it over traditional photography techniques?

For me, as a disabled person, finances are quite tight. The Dada app is not only free, but the graphics are comprehensive: colourful, imaginative, and plentiful.

The Dada app is also easy to use. I also use Snapseed, Prisma, and other free applications.

How do you see art as a means to pay homage and foster understanding about the history and culture of the land you live on?

I really wanted to use art as a way to honour the people and the land. However, this art can be very triggering for Indigenous peoples, so I have not placed "Fraser River Viewing" and "MMIWG2S" in our local gallery. As well, I don't want to be seen as a "performative ally". Therefore, no one really knows about the two aforementioned pieces. I gifted a different piece of art (not seen here) to a local,



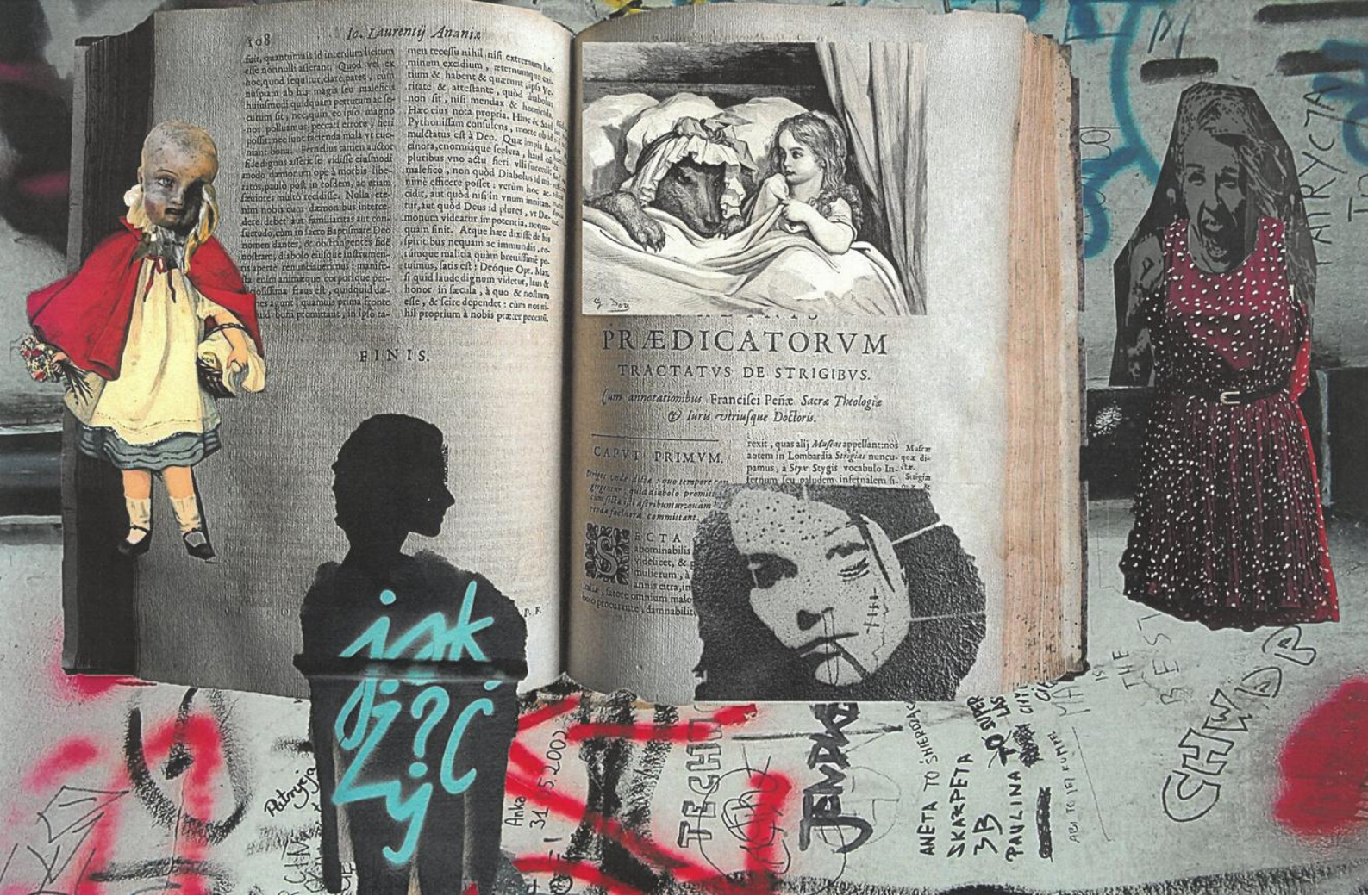
Indigenous family who lost their daughter under mysterious circumstances. I did that very privately as well. I don't feel everyone needs to know about certain creations for them to hold value; through the Visual Art Journal, my art will be revealed slowly and in the right time. It has taken me many years, but I feel I am learning to demonstrate reverence toward St'at'imc people in appropriate ways.



Anna Banasiak. Photography graduate. Master of Sociology at Warsaw University (Poland). Participated in many collective and some individual exhibitions. In her art she talk about important social issues. Her main area of interest is not only classic photography, but also mix-media collages. Her last exhibition focuses on the subjects of transgenerational trauma related to what happened during second world war, especially the problem of war rape.

Anna Banasiak | Leda and the Swan | 2024





Anna Banasiak | Little Red Riding Hood | 2024

Project Statement

This project is a about women in the context of rape culture. I talk about some myths related to the way women are perceived. Unfortunetely some theories from 19th century are still alive in the world today. That's why in my project there is a story about Sleeping Beauty and Little Red Riding Hood. My collages refers also to some greek mythology. Project still in progress.

Contents

Interviews

Lu Shouhui	4	Konstantin Kravtsov	62
Lena Baker	8	Juliet Faldin	64
Anna Voronina	12	Lea Capelli	68
Mengyi Wang	16	Lucille Fradin	72
Xinru Yang	18	Jing Wang	74
Vladimir Lebedev	22	Hoho Kuo	78
Edoardo Petracca	26	Raymond Edusei	82
Nova Ma	30	Kris Kim	86
Tiana Jones	36	Jas Turk	90
RJ Gardner	40	Mia Bruce	92
Nicholas D. Todd	42	Jolien Müller	98
Tatiana Semkova	46	Melanie D Berardicelli	102
Angele Lautier	52	Anning Song	106
Andrew Yeung	54	Alisha Jade	110
Chris Janssen	58	Dana Hangle	114
Kaya Ro	60		

Featured artists

Ruth Timón	10	Mocchi Mocchi	56
Aude Fourrier	14	Haiping Jiang	70
Colleen Hoffenbacker	28	Asia Haye	80
Romy McIlroy	34	Sofie Citlalli Karlsen Segovia	84
Inga Ulevičiūtė	38	Iris Weigel	88
Astrée Augereau	44	Ayiana Viviana Porter	96
Emily Geirnaert	50	Anna Banasiak	116



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