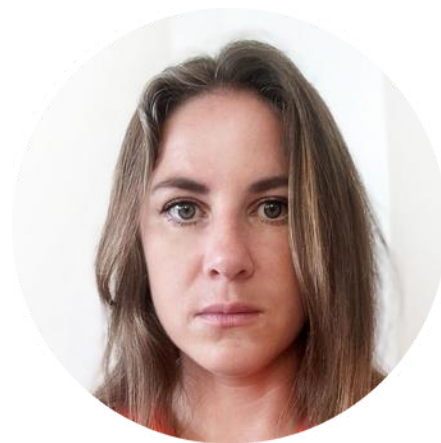


VISUAL ART JOURNAL





— Intro



Anna Gvozdeva

Curator of
Visual Art Journal

Hello, dear reader!

You're holding the 26th issue of our magazine. Looking back, I feel deeply grateful for the chance to meet countless talented individuals. Without this project, our paths might never have crossed, especially considering the wide geography of the artists who have contributed to our publication. I can confidently say that each of them has been a source of inspiration and has revealed a new facet of our world. I truly hope that our project has, in some way, also played a role in their journey.

It brings me joy to watch many of these artists grow, becoming more visible and self-assured. This only strengthens our belief that we're on the right path and gives us the energy to keep moving forward.

As always, ahead of you lies more than a hundred pages filled with art and delight. Enjoy the read!

On the Front Cover:

Aida Bari

Blue Heron
2025

On the Back Cover:

Maryna Riepnova

Serenity in bloom

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

— Interview

Hiroaki Iwasa

How did you first get into creating hand-cut paper collages, and what drew you to this medium?

When I started hand-cut collage, I imposed several conditions on myself when I thought about creating some artwork.

1. No brushes.
2. Inexpensive to make.
3. Make it with your own hands.

The hand-cut collage fulfilled these conditions. Also, I usually manage an apparel brand with my wife, and my roles are design and accounting. When I thought about making and selling my own works as part of my business, apart from design and accounting, hand-cut collage was the best solution for me.



Hiroaki Iwasa | Relocation 06 | 2014



Hiroaki Iwasa | Relocation 03 | 2014

I was also attracted to this medium because I believe that expressing my artwork and daily thoughts on paper is of the utmost importance. I thought this medium was beautiful to look at and would be the perfect medium to trigger a new art experience for the reader.

Can you describe your creative process when starting a new project? How do you choose the themes for your works?

I have decided that I will not use AI to create materials for my collages; I believe that if I use AI to create materials to my liking, my imagination and creativity will be impoverished. Even if it costs me time and money, my first priority is to go to secondhand bookstores to find materials, even if they are not harvested, purchase them, and make use of them. I do not have a particular theme in mind when creating my works. I decide on a theme after the work is completed. It is as if the finished work tells me what the theme is.

How does living in Fukuoka influence your work? Do you draw inspiration from the city and its culture?

Fukuoka City is currently undergoing a once-in-a-century urban redevelopment project, attempting to break away from the 20th century mindset (short-term mass production and short-term mass consumption).

It is trying to create new jobs and industries, support art, culture, and music, and change from a city of consumption to a city of creation and higher added value.

The atmosphere of the city has a positive influence on my current collage and clothing making. Specifically, I strive to create works and products with higher added value. We also try to enrich ourselves economically and culturally.

A comfortable and livable environment is certainly important, but I also want to be someone who is needed in the future Fukuoka, where like-minded people are engaged in friendly competition.

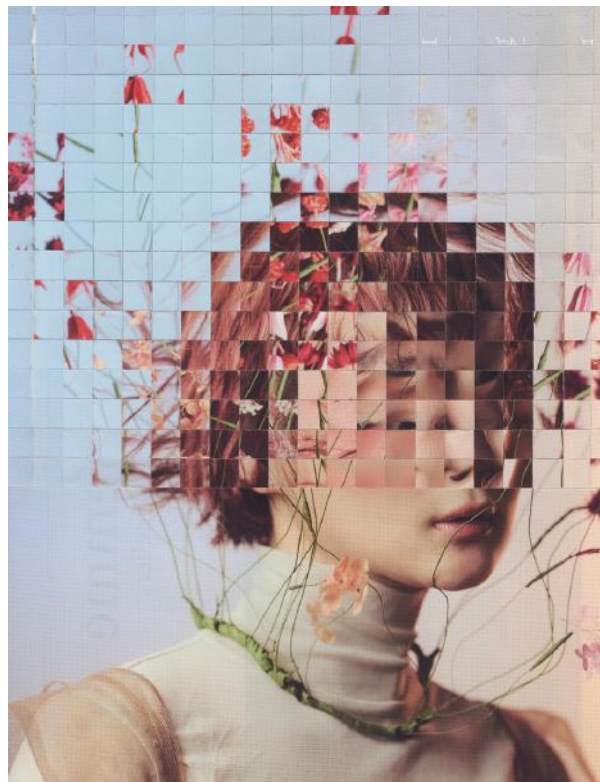
What challenges do you face while working with paper as your primary medium?

It takes me a very long time to get started on a production, regardless of whether it is a paper production or not. This is a problem with my personality. I have no high creative drive or desire to take the initiative in creating a work of art. I always work only when the deadline is imminent.

If there is one thing I am passionate about, it is proving that I can make a living by creating and selling artwork and products, even with such a personality.

How do you see the connection between your collages and the apparel brand you run? Are there any cross-influences between the two?

There is absolutely no mutual influence between collage and clothing making. They are completely



Hiroaki Iwasa | Relocation 02 | 2014

different businesses. The difference is that clothing-making takes a shorter time from the time the product is finished to the time when sales are made and the funds are collected. Collage takes more time to complete the work, make sales, and recoup funds. In our own work, we have created a system to reduce risk as much as possible by conducting businesses that take a short time to make sales and collect funds, and businesses that take a long time to make sales and collect funds.

What role do you think fashion and art play in expressing your personal identity or the message you want to convey?

I never thought it had to be fashion or art because I just happened to be good at fashion and art. The message I want to convey is, "Let's go from consumers to producers, from consumers to capitalists." So if I could convey this message, I was an architect, a barista, a potter, an editor, or whatever my job was, to be honest.

How do you decide on the color schemes and textures used in your collages?

We will try to avoid deciding on color schemes and textures as much as possible. I create in the dark, cut along the outline that comes into view, and only when I am satisfied with the result do I decide, "This was the right choice."

Therefore, my technique does not improve at all. I always feel like a beginner.



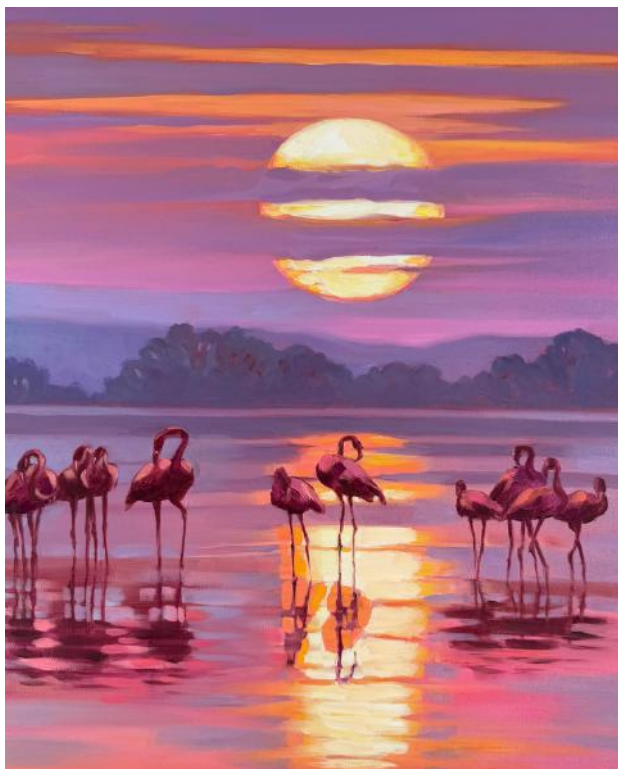
Hiroaki Iwasa | Relocation 04 | 2014

— Interview

Maryna Riepnova

Your 'Pink Mountains & Succulents' series blends surrealism with nature. Can you tell us more about what inspired you to explore these contrasts in your work?

You know, that series really came from a fascination with the quiet drama of the natural world, especially those still moments like sunrise. There's something inherently surreal about the colours and shapes you find in nature if you really look closely – the way a dune curves, the unexpected resilience of a succulent. I wanted to push that a little, to bring out the almost dreamlike quality that's already there and see what happens when you blend that with a touch of the unexpected.



Maryna Riepnova | Flamingos



How does your Ukrainian heritage influence your use of colors and forms in this series?

That's an interesting question. Growing up in the south of Ukraine, my art education was very much rooted in Impressionism. We focused on capturing light and shadow with bold, bright colours, often with a relaxed, sun-drenched mood.

I think that early immersion in such a vibrant and light-filled style definitely instilled in me a love for a rich palette and a way of seeing and interpreting forms that plays with sunlight. While the subject matter of this series might be different, that underlying feeling for bold brushstrokes and luminous colours, a direct result of my South Ukrainian training, definitely finds its way into my work.

What role does plein air painting play in your creative process? How does painting outdoors affect your work?

Plein air is absolutely vital for me. Getting out there, feeling the sun on my skin, seeing the light shift in real-time – it's a completely different experience than working from a photograph. It forces you to be present, to really observe the nuances of colour and atmosphere.

The imperfections that come with painting outdoors, the breeze, the changing light, they all become part of the piece. It adds a layer of authenticity and spontaneity that I don't think I could achieve otherwise.

The vivid pink hues in your landscapes evoke a dreamlike atmosphere. How do you decide on the colors and tones for each painting?

The colours often come from a feeling, an emotional response to a scene. Sometimes it's a real sunset that just takes my breath away, and I want to capture that intensity. Other times, it's more about creating a certain mood, a sense of wonder or tranquility.

The pinks, in particular, can be so evocative – they can be soft and ethereal or surprisingly bold. It's a very intuitive process, playing with the tones until they feel just right, until they capture the essence of what I want to convey.

In your artist statement, you mention creating works that encourage reflection. What message or feeling do you hope viewers take away from your series?

Ultimately, I hope my work offers a moment of calm, a little pause in the busyness of life. If someone can look at one of my paintings and feel a sense of peace or wonder, or if it sparks a memory or a feeling within them, then I feel I've achieved something.

It's about creating a connection, inviting people to slow down and appreciate the beauty that surrounds us, even in the unexpected places.



Maryna Riepnova | Serenity in bloom

How has living in Málaga, Spain, shaped the way you approach your art, especially in terms of landscapes and light?

Living here in Málaga has been truly transformative. The Mediterranean light is just incredible – that intense sun and the way it sculpts shadows, the explosion of vibrant colours in the flowers and the sea. It's a constant source of inspiration, and it's definitely pushed me to explore new ways of capturing light and colour. Interestingly, though the landscapes are so different from my hometown of Odesa, and the Spanish sun is much more intense, there's a similar feeling I get when working with the light and colours in both places. Perhaps it's a certain luminosity or a way the light interacts with the environment.

Even though the nature is distinct, that fundamental feeling, that spark of inspiration from the interplay of light and colour, feels surprisingly familiar. It's like tapping into the same source of beauty, just expressed through a different landscape.

What is your creative process like from the initial idea to the final brushstroke?

My process often begins with observing nature in its various states, really watching how it behaves – the way light shifts, the colours deepen in certain conditions. While my paintings are rooted in these real observations, I do like to enhance the colours, to dial up the drama and emotional impact. Interestingly, I rarely do preliminary sketches. Instead, I tend to dive straight onto the canvas with the main image in mind. I usually start by choosing a dominant mood colour, and that sets the tone for the background. From there, I begin to build the structural elements of the composition. Then comes the process of filling in the larger spaces with colour.

Once that initial layer is dry, I start to define the details. It's not unusual for me to revisit a piece over a few sessions. There's a point where I need to step back, let it breathe, and then come back with fresh eyes to understand when it truly feels finished.

Even though my work is based on real-world studies, there's always a significant space for improvisation and allowing the creative flow to guide the brushstrokes.

— Interview

Veronika Obushikhina

Your work explores the concept of antifragility, where strength emerges not in spite of pressure, but because of it. Can you share a moment from your life or your creative process where you experienced this transformation?

I know from experience that strength doesn't appear on its own — it takes shape in the moments when you face difficulty and keep going.

Each time I've entered a new stage — in life or in art — I've had to search, experiment, start over. Inspiration matters, but it's not what defines the result — it's effort, persistence, and honesty with myself that do. Pressure, whether internal or external, doesn't destroy



you if you learn how to lean into it.

My style emerged from this process — through doubt, through rejecting easy solutions, through the need for precision. The idea of antifragility resonates with me — not as a theory, but as a reflection of what truly makes us stronger: challenge, tension, sustained effort. These leave traces — and I capture them in form, in rhythm, in the line. Each of my works is a result of this inner work, where clarity and strength slowly come into focus.

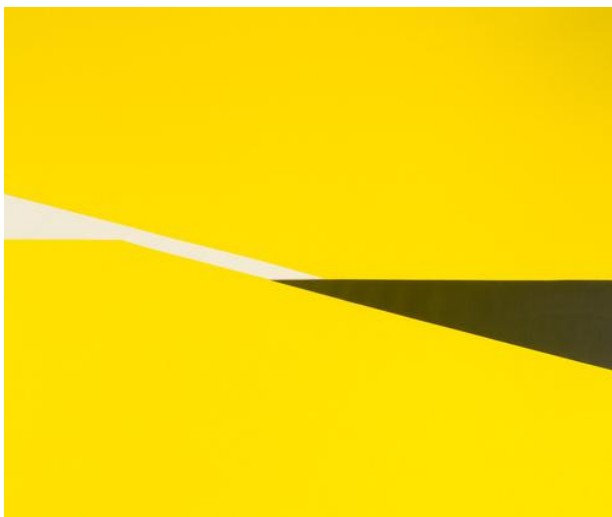
You mentioned that you seek strength in simplicity. Can you elaborate on how simplicity, pushed to the limit, communicates complex emotional or psychological states?

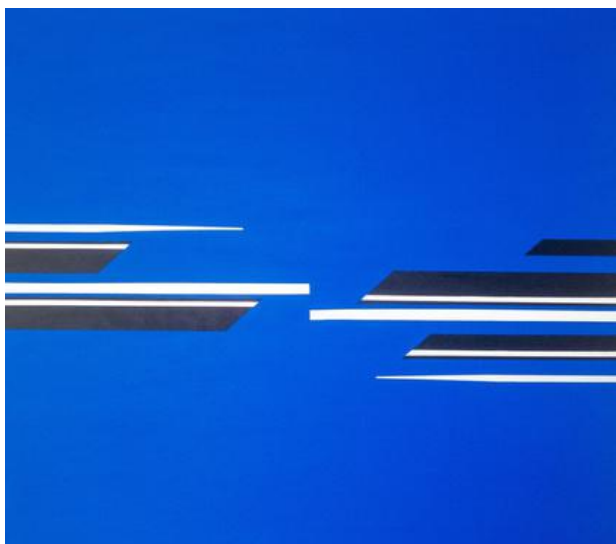
For me, simplicity is not about reduction — it's about the concentration of meaning.

When form is stripped down to its essence, everything that remains starts to resonate more strongly. I try to remove anything unnecessary until only what is truly essential is left — color, line, the tension between forms.

Emotion doesn't always need to be loud. Sometimes, it's silence, restraint, and pause that create a sense of tension, presence, and inner movement. Through simplicity, I aim to express emotion on a different level — deeper, more subtle.

Minimalism demands focus, discipline, and control —





and that's where I see strength. There's no room for randomness: every decision is deliberate, every element carries weight. When only the essential remains, it speaks with greater precision and intensity. That clarity becomes a source of inner energy.

Your paintings focus on intense tension, edges, and fractures. How do you express moments where everything shifts, yet remains on the edge of balance through your work?

For me, it's not just about showing fracture, tension, or shift — it's about finding a visual equivalent of an inner state where effort is present: restraint, resistance, pressure.

I express this through sharp lines, defined edges, and the opposition of forms. Everything is built on contrasts — but they don't clash; they support and balance each other.

I'm drawn not to stable, but transitional states — when the structure is still holding, but change is already taking place within. These moments of tension, on the edge, often reveal the most truth. There is still order, but it's under pressure. It's not destruction — it's the beginning of transformation.

How does the use of acrylic, with its ability to layer and control edges, help convey the inner effort and tension you describe in your works?

Acrylic is the material that lets me fully control the process.

Sharp lines and defined edges are essential in my work — acrylic makes that possible. I build each piece carefully, layer by layer, measuring every move. The paint dries quickly, doesn't bleed, and avoids accidental effects — this helps maintain clarity in form. I don't work impulsively — the tension in my work is internal. Acrylic gives me the control and precision I need to express that state on the canvas.

How do you think the intersection of strict form and aesthetic purity affects the way your work is perceived?

I believe it's the strictness and clarity that create a space where the viewer can pause and feel.

When the form is precise and the composition is focused, a kind of silence appears. This silence allows not only the visual to emerge but also the inner state behind it.

My works don't require decoding, but they don't offer direct answers either. They are built to let the viewer find their own point of tension, their own response. A strict form doesn't limit perception — on the contrary, it opens space for an internal dialogue.

What has been the most challenging aspect of transitioning from jewelry making and decorative techniques to your current minimalist painting style?

The hardest part was letting go of everything unnecessary.

In decorative techniques, it's about impression, effect, a variety of methods. But in minimalism, only what is truly essential works. I had to completely change my approach: to stop adding and start removing — to say more by showing less.

It meant retraining — not just technically, but mentally. Giving up visual expressiveness brought a sense of discipline, depth, and precision. Only then did I feel I had found my language.



— Interview

Julia Waltzman

Your early interest in fashion design seems to have evolved into a focus on 2D art. What prompted this shift, and how do you see the connection between fashion design and your current artistic practice?

I started learning how to sew and construct garments at nine years old. I relished in the tangible result it gave me, a dress to wear that I made by myself. Before sewing the piece came making its illustration, which is the part I fell in love with the most. It was fascinating



to me the way I could use an alcohol marker to indicate the texture of clothing. After years of illustrating, it became entirely what I did. I decided to minor in art in college so I could stay inspired. Now in my current work, I still constantly explore fashion and texture while combining other elements of 2D design, such as surrealist imagery and a general focus on contrast and arrangement.

Womanhood and candid moments are central to your work. Can you share more about the personal experiences or observations that inspire these themes?

Becoming a young woman has its trials and tribulations, so I deal with them through creating drawings I feel I can escape to. I resonate with the women I draw and even though I am not literally them, part of me is. I want my viewer to feel this same sense of connection when she looks at my art. It could be her. Even in the pieces that include something surreal, there is a realistic element from which to pull a feeling of relatability. The moments that inspire me often come from imagining or remembering where I feel I'd rather be.

Your mixed media works are a blend of acrylic paint, ink, and marker. How do you decide which medium to use for each piece, and what does each medium bring to your creative process?

The choice of medium comes in the moment. It's what I think will create the most contrast and visual interest.



Julia Waltzman | Vending Machine Toss-Up | 2024



Usually I start in black and white. The ink goes down first so I can see where the color fits best, if I include color at all. I like to keep the characters of the drawings without color so they feel timeless compared to the space they're in, giving human moments timelessness rather than the physical space in which they exist.

Your pieces seem to combine elements of both abstraction and representation. How do you approach finding the balance between these two styles in your work?

I feel more interested in the combination of abstraction with reality than either element on their own. Moments in life that seem so clear also carry so much abstraction in them. I attempt to represent this concept in subtle ways by giving more attention to the figures than the space they take up.

In your piece "Vending Machine Toss-Up," the juxtaposition of mundane and surreal elements stands out. Can you talk about your intentions behind blending the ordinary with the unexpected?

This piece is centered around cynicism while being presented through a woman's chic and nonchalant

demeanor. Behind her glasses she peers straight at the viewer, who has the opportunity to jump into a surrealist scene and make their own decision. The gun and sun chips could really be any two objects. Why is she choosing between only these objects? Why would she need to make this type of decision? I want to elicit confusion in the viewer that may slowly become a feeling of resonance as they look longer.

How do you feel your work has evolved since you began experimenting with 2D processes, and where do you see it heading in the future?

I think now that I really lean into playing with the blurred lines between reality and abstraction my art has seen a shift. I have been able to explore my style which has been super engaging and inspires me to keep creating. I am more confident in my skills now to imply detail than when I first started, and have honed in on being able to draw what I see around me while staying true to my style. I hope to paint more this year and have a studio space where I create large pieces. I intend to keep producing and not slowing the pace so I can create a vast portfolio with versatile media and subject matter.

What role does experimentation play in your creative process, and how does it influence the final outcome of your artwork?

I am constantly exploring texture in my artwork. I experiment with materials and use them to give my work a tactile feel. I am experimenting the whole time I move through making a piece. Usually I don't have a set plan, or if I do, I don't end up following it through. I just go where the drawing takes me as to not limit myself by doubt. Straying from the original image I have in my head for a piece can sometimes be discouraging. I make sure that while making changes in the moment and manipulating aspects of the piece I give myself grace to work freely and experimentally.



Fabrizio Coscarelli

I'm Fabrizio Coscarelli. I currently live in Rome, but I'm originally from Fuscaldo, a small town in Calabria, in the south of Italy.

Everything started with my father, Luigi Coscarelli — a unique artist known as a Scalpellino (stonemason) — who dedicated his life to creating art, especially through wood and stone sculptures.

Growing up, I had both an example to follow and the opportunity to learn, allowing me to develop my own vision of art — one that I aim to share with everyone, everywhere.

I like to consider myself a humble “creator” of ideas, combining traditional values with a contemporary spirit. My vision is to create sustainable art by reusing old materials and wood from dead plants, giving them new life through new forms.

Fabrizio Coscarelli | Separation | 2022





Fabrizio Coscarelli | Break | 2022



— Interview

Ekaterina Demishkan

Your work combines symbolic impressionism and philosophical allegories. Could you share the process you go through when deciding on the symbolism behind your paintings?

I don't work with pre-written sketches—I have only a general direction, information from the collective field, and an impulse that I latch onto at the beginning. In the process, interesting details and symbols "burst" into the image like flashes of enlightenment—they seem to ask to be on the canvas.

The plot and images develop organically, sometimes unexpectedly for me. It feels like connecting to a certain flow from which I "pluck" the necessary elements to build a cohesive, allegory-filled mythology on the canvas. It's an intuitive, yet deep and philosophical process of awareness, acceptance, and reflection.

Your art seems to be a bridge between tradition and innovation, especially with the use of digital art elements. How do you see the role of digital media in contemporary art, and how does it influence your traditional oil painting?

Each of my works invariably begins with classic, analog painting, but often "evolves" and takes on new forms. It's important for me to go beyond the flat surface of the canvas and allow my characters to "live" in other dimensions—sound, movement, interactivity.

Digital art becomes an extension of my thoughts, a way to enhance them and reach a new audience. It's not a replacement for traditional painting but an expansion of its possibilities. Thanks to the digital environment, I can delve deeper into the themes that concern me and more precisely convey the mood, atmosphere, and meaning.

You've mentioned that your art explores the cycle of life and hidden connections in the world. How do you translate these profound concepts into visual imagery in your paintings?

Each of my works is a story encoded in images and symbols. I rely on cultural, religious, scientific, and philosophical



Ekaterina Demishkan | Dragonborn | 2024

archetypes, but I process them on an intuitive level—translating them into a language of visual metaphors. Often, this happens automatically: a theory or idea gives birth to an image, which then grows with details and finds its place in the composition. The visual language allows me to express complex ideas about time, nature, and humanity, uniting them in a single symbolic narrative.

In your digital art, you experiment with animation and sound. How does the incorporation of movement and sound change the way your audience experiences your work?

Sound and movement enhance the sense of presence. Even a static image can be meditative or hypnotic, but animation and audio create the effect of full immersion. It's not just an addition—it's another way to "speak" the symbol, to reveal its potential. This multilayered perception allows the viewer to feel the narrative of the painting with their skin, helps "decipher" the symbols, and feel inside the image rather than just in front of it.

Your works, particularly those like Mermaid and Dragonborn, evoke a strong mystical and dreamlike atmosphere. Do you draw from specific cultural or personal experiences when crafting these mythical elements?

My images are formed at the intersection of personal experience, cultural memory, and the collective unconscious. I often rely on archetypes—those that appear in folklore, dreams, and ancient mythology—but they pass through my personal lens: memories, emotions, experiences, and internal states. It's an intuitive process where mythology becomes a reflection of the inner world, not just a cultural quote. Each of my works can be viewed either separately, as an independent piece filled with symbolism and references, or "leaning" on my identity as the creator. Both approaches guarantee an emotional roller coaster, but the second

approach definitely reflects a richer spectrum of feelings and experiences.

How do you balance emotional expression with intellectual reflection in your art? Is there a particular emotion or thought that often guides your work?

My art is born at the crossroads of intuition and analysis. Every time I sit down in front of a new canvas, I start a story where I ask myself questions, and as I paint, the answers literally "find" themselves inside me. It all begins with a question, an inner dialogue, where rational knowledge, experiences, and observations mix like ingredients in a vibrant cocktail, and in a moment of focused immersion, they "spill out" onto the canvas in the form of an artistic image. I am constantly accompanied by a sense of search, a desire to understand the complex internal and external connections—and it is this feeling that often guides my hand.

You have also been involved in organizing exhibitions and engaging with the art community. How do you feel that your role as an organizer impacts your own creative practice?

Organizing exhibitions, both personal and group ones, is a special form of dialogue with myself, other artists, and the audience. It requires responsibility, attentiveness, and endless empathy, as you work with stories and experiences, feelings, and emotions. It develops the ability to see from the outside, to be a curator of one's own creative path alongside the works of others. Thanks to this activity, I better understand the artistic context in which I find myself and feel more connected to the living process of contemporary art. It's not just an exercise in visual literacy—it's physical and emotional labor and endless growth.

What archetypes do you work with most often in your paintings, and why do you feel drawn to them?

I am drawn to the archetypes of the Seeker, the Shadow, and the Great Mother.



The Seeker is the part that constantly strives to go beyond the obvious and find the hidden. The Shadow is the dialogue with what we reject in ourselves, but which shapes us. And the Great Mother is the image of all-encompassing nature, the cycle of life and death, constant rebirth. These images I don't so much choose as discover. They seem to come to the canvas on their own.

If your paintings could speak, what would they say to the viewer?

They would say: "Don't rush to understand. Stop. Feel." My paintings don't require decoding; they offer a lived experience, a moment of inner recognition that may be more important than any verbal meaning.

Have you ever had the sensation that a painting "painted itself"? Can you tell us about this experience?

This happens quite often. The most vivid case is the work *The Great Recursive Error*. I started with one idea, but as I moved the brush, the character and the environment literally "burst" onto the canvas on their own. The symbolism, form, even the expression on the face—it all seemed to come from depths that I only realized later. It's the feeling that you are not the author but a conduit.

Which work has been the most unexpected in terms of its result or emotional impact?

Probably *The Rising Venus*. I painted it as an image of feminine transformation, but as I worked on it, it became an embodiment of inner loneliness and the longing for connection. The viewers, however, began to see in it an archetypal force and even something sacred. This taught me to trust the unpredictability of art.

If you were asked to decorate a building's facade, what would you depict?

It would be a massive symbolic and sensory landscape resembling an altar wall: with images of the elements, the cycle of the seasons, and inlays of symbols that reveal the theme of the unity of all living things. I would make the facade a breathing space, where each passerby could find something personal—a question, an answer, or a reflection.

Kristian Zara

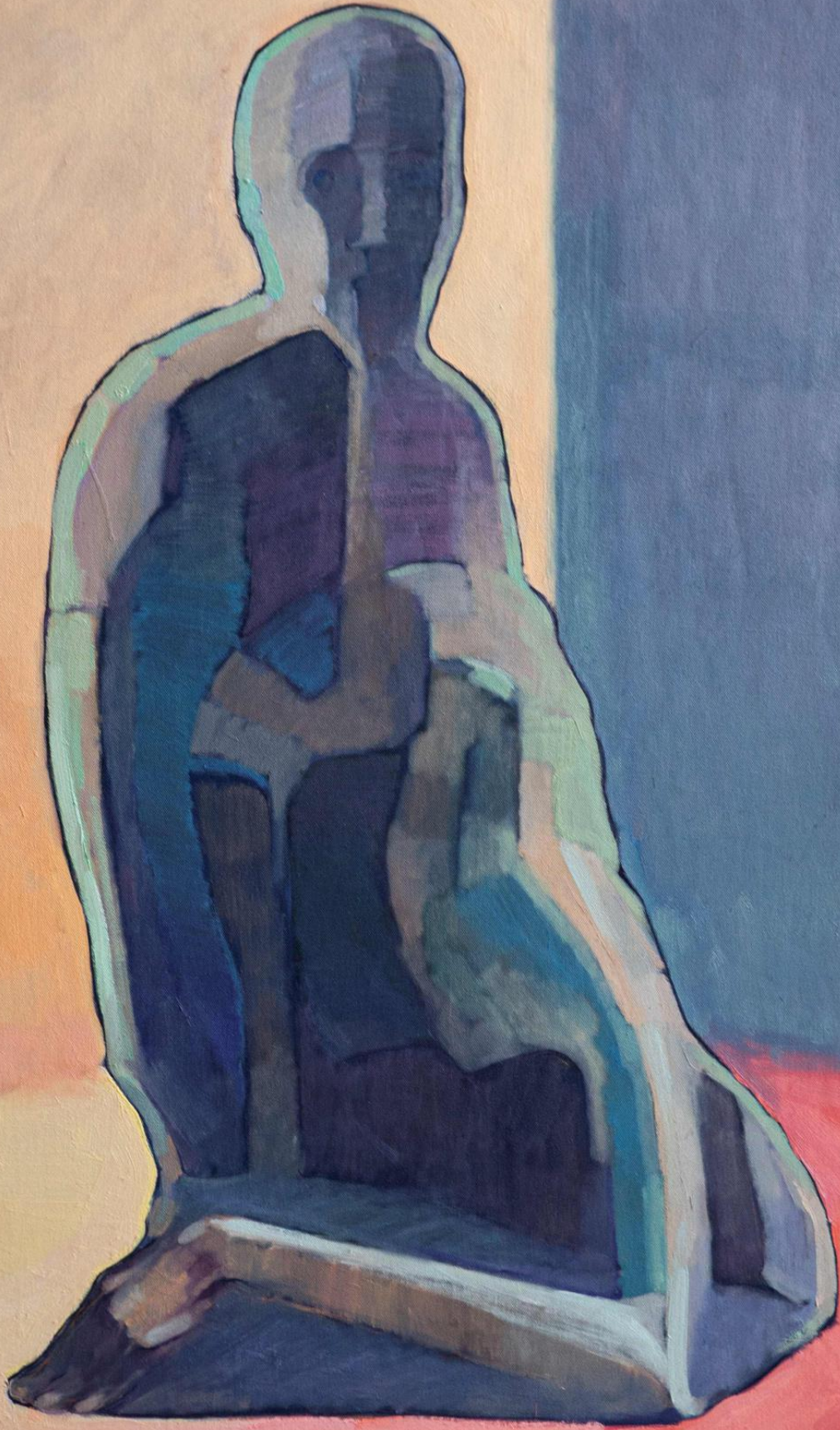
I was born in 1986, in Elbasan, Albania. During my teenage, 2000-2004, I went to the Onufri Art High School to learn to draw and painting. In 2005, I moved to Athens, and in 2006 I became a student of the Athens School of Fine Arts. During my studies, I explored mostly the mediums of painting, sculpture, expanding my interest in stage design, and photography as well. In the 4th and 5th year of my studies, there was a turning point into art and psychoanalysis that has hence influenced significantly my artistic perspective. While being a student, I worked as an art teacher and collaborated in theatrical projects. Also, I worked for the National Opera of Greece, in 2011 – 2012, as a stage technician, production assistant, and plastique painter and sculptor for theater productions. I finished my studies from the school of Athens in 2011 and then moved to Edinburgh in Scotland in 2014. There I worked as a sculptor assistant at ESW and participated in organizing Syn Festival Edinburgh until 2017, and the Polyphonic Murders scientific Project in 2018. During 2016-2017, I completed a second Master's Degree at the University of Dundee in Scotland. There, I focused on independent artistic research and practice. Additionally, the MFA program helped me to expand my knowledge into creative writing, curation, and public art. In the fall of 2018, I return to Elbasan. In my hometown, I rent a studio and spent three years deepening my artistic research and practice. From 2023, I am continuously involved in cultural projects, art activities and discourses, project research and writing, films and theatre production design, and public art commissions.

Artist Statement

Formation, like words taking form according to functional needs of a language, presents a continuous transformation of previous artworks. It follows the work developed around the concept of the "Collective Unknown", in 2022. In the world of phenomenon, Formation can represent the transformation of the same thing throughout time, appearing with new elements and new artistic language. While in the form of thinking, these new elements undergo themselves a transformation through layers of ideas and concepts. This is a process often driven by new knowledge or understandings. Intentionally, art practice becomes artistic research, expanding to territories where past and present, memory and perception blend together to form certain persisting psychic states. Things, in the sense of feeling and sensations, part of past experiences still existing within you. Formation connects conscious process in artistic research, activating the mechanism of processing abstract elements (traces) that move within internal world of an individual. These parts, which I call remains or remnants, can be seen as information that remains in the human unconscious. In the psychic world, everything intertwines with "personal osmosis diffusion", taking mental or imaginary forms, being clothed with different emotional and sensational nuances. Over time, in human memory, all past and external inputs lose most of their details, leaving then, traces that encapsulate the essence of this or that event. If we imagine a reservoir existing within us and filled with emotional memory, or a kind of feeling representing self-reflections, we will see it forming single visual manifestation. This works, of the year 2023, have been developed around the search for a figurative language of things that exist, move, develop, and remain within me.



Kristian Zara | Formation 2 | 2023



— Interview

David Mason

Can you tell us about your early exposure to photography and how it influenced your artistic development?

I grew up around art and in a creative environment. Both of my parents were creative. I found an old manual rangefinder camera and figured out how to use it. I was around 11. As I used the camera more I felt confident in how I saw things. I guess that is what lit the fuse, so to speak. I stuck with photography into and past college, so I was quite comfortable with a camera and the pics I could take. My eye and distinct way of seeing things really formed with photo. I have a natural aesthetic and photography and seeing through a viewfinder really fostered that.

How did growing up in Carmel and having artist parents shape your approach to creativity?

Growing up in a creative environment and having access to supplies and tools felt natural. It was always around and easy to pursue or get lost in a project. I was always drawing.



David Mason | Buckaroo



Carmel itself is a very special place, pretty and picturesque, so there was something always inspiring for a young photographer. I think that through high school when I was always out shooting pics it really helped me adapt to how strongly I see things. The beauty of the coastline, the moodiness of the foggy weather were always inspiring. I was lucky to have that environment and experience that.

What drew you to combining realism with minimalism in your work?

In the beginning of taking pictures I was encouraged, by a mentor, to hone in on what I was seeing. With that advice I started to realize that I see things in a singular way, driven by details, so minimalism in essence, without realizing it. Maybe that's a reflection of being a creative which can be a singular path. As my drawing progressed and I was more conscious about that aesthetic the simplicity of a composition is something I like. I always thought if you can make simplicity sing in its own way that was a big accomplishment. I love realism and detail and I think that is why I liked photo, initially, more than drawing/painting.

Without really realizing it my drawings always leaned more towards a singular subject and focussing on the richness of the details. Providing and understanding a level of realism that creates connection, but remains a drawing. I'm not trying for photo realism. It's important that it still shows as something hand made, beautifully imperfect, if you will. Craftmanship is important to me.

How has your background in photography impacted your style of drawing?

One of the aspects of photography that I love is that you see through a viewfinder, so there are these built

in boundaries, visually, that you have to work with, and adapt to. Since I started taking pics when I was so young I just adapted to composing through a viewfinder. It made perfect sense to me. When I started drawing from my photos my photo composition aligned with my compositional sense towards my drawing. Now as I am taking pics I am already applying that to the possibility of how it will apply to the piece. In a way I have discovered how I can use the photo process as my sketchbook.

You mentioned experimenting with texture and color in your work. Can you share more about the process of finding the right balance?

Initially this train of thought was a way to add dimension to the negative space in my pieces. With singular subjects and a sense of minimalism it is easy to get stark, if you're not careful, adding to the negative space can help create a new idea about balance. The first tries were to use gold and silver leaf. By doing this my backgrounds came alive and interacted with light in a whole new way and also my image would just pop off the page. This led to all kinds of ideas, solid colors, patterns, and also different colors of leaf. I found that as long as my composition was strong the shape of the negative space was always interesting in its own way, so the idea was to bring the dimension and then the balance would establish itself. Our vision likes a certain amount of complexity, so by keeping the overall piece driven by simplicity and making the background complicated gave my pieces a different weight and impact.

Since you are self-taught, what has been the most challenging part of developing your artistic style?

Luckily I think being self taught has helped me more to establish my own style. I was a photographer becoming in touch with my creative voice as an artist.



David Mason | Stranger Things

I was already very uncommon because of this, so I stuck with it and followed what I knew I could do. Another bit of mentor advice that I learned was to always make or produce what you liked. As a kid photo helped me find my own voice and attraction and discovery of subjects that I liked and related to. Developing my style early. My style transferred to my drawing and grew from my photo experiences naturally. I was so comfortable seeing things and composing at that point, so I was lucky that this was a natural part of the process and my style formed organically. It helped me always stick to my style or sight as a foundation to grow from. Once I was conscious of this coming together I protected myself from what other artists were doing and stuck with what I liked. Luckily always trusting in how I see things. By doing this my confidence and skill grew. At some point you feel strong and comfortable enough in your footsteps and that allows you to push yourself and learn as you go. This taught me a way to challenge myself and always test my voice. Since I work on one piece at a time this just fosters that mindset and how I push and get my style to grow.

Could you explain your process for mixing media, especially with color pencils, to create the painterly effect in your drawings?

Part of being self taught is an unconventional approach. Because I don't know how to paint, but I am comfortable with drawing, in order to achieve the look I wanted I leaned towards medias that I knew I could figure out how to work with. The first big one was using oil pastels, the firmer types that you can draw and blend with. By using thinner to break them down and take on transparent qualities or watercolor feel I started to see what they contributed. Then as they dry I found I can draw over them with success. That led to metallic leaf and acrylic in the backgrounds. These new medias all let me still focus on the drawing and using color pencils as the primary media.

Now over time I have learned how the color pencils can layer and blend over each other and that has brought a whole new aspect to how I execute my drawings. I can lay down layers of color and grays to start my shadow process. By doing this I can use less graphite in the shading process, so that lets the tones of the colors to set the mood and contrast levels. Focussing on the process and maximizing each step has helped me discover how to draw more efficiently and a better path of growth. Fostering this growth mindset is so important because this is how I started initially. This determination to teach myself more and be open to change and staying dynamic makes me happy. I love doing the work, the creative problem solving. Still can't paint, but I do see things and the possibilities of color in a painterly way.

— Interview

Elena Mi

Your art explores the theme of imaginary, non-human civilizations and other worlds. Could you share more about how these themes first captivated you, and how they've evolved in your work over the years?

Since early childhood, I've felt a strong pull toward what lies beyond the visible world. Fantasy books, science fiction films, and theories about the existence of other life forms shaped my sense that the universe is far more complex and strange than it appears. Over time, this fascination evolved into a visual language. I stopped searching for "real" forms of the extraterrestrial and began creating my own civilizations, entities, and artifacts — drawn from dreams, from silence, from fragments of what defies rational explanation.

You mention that your works are inspired by dreams and visions of distant universes. Can you elaborate on how dreams influence the compositions of your paintings?



Elena Mi | Life forms



Dreams are a portal. They bring me images whose logic is alien to the waking mind: spatial paradoxes, beings without beginning or end, landscapes where gravity doesn't apply. I try to preserve that fragile dream structure in my compositions — its unexplainable nature. My paintings are rarely fully planned in advance; more often, they evolve through association, like a dream itself, where one element echoes into another.

How do you balance the mystery of the cosmos and the themes of loneliness and detachment in your work? What emotions do you hope your viewers experience when encountering your art?

For me, space is not merely a physical realm, but a metaphor for inner emptiness, mystery, and isolation. My beings and landscapes are not lonely because they've been abandoned, but because they belong to a different logic of existence. I want the viewer to feel a strange calmness and a subtle unease — to sense being in a place where no one speaks a human language, and yet there is harmony and meaning. It is a touch of the unknown.

You describe the worlds in your paintings as existing beyond time and space. Can you tell us how this concept impacts your creative process and the techniques you use to portray these expansive worlds?

When I create my worlds, I start from the idea that they don't follow the laws of physics, perspective, or linear time. These are spaces beyond human logic — where everything can be



different, yet still perceived by the viewer as “real.” To enhance this effect, I often strive for hyperrealism — making the alien feel tangible, almost photographically precise. Airbrushing helps me achieve this: it allows for smooth, even transitions, and creates the illusion of depth, air density, surface moisture — sensations the viewer can almost feel on their skin.

The dark palette and soft, diffused glow play a crucial role — they evoke a sense of deep night, vacuum, and silence. Everything appears frozen, yet exists in a state of constant, slowed motion. These techniques help me blur the line between reality and imagination — making the unreal believable, and the dreamlike physically palpable.

As an artist who previously worked in a variety of fields, from PR to motorcycle painting, how have these diverse experiences influenced your artistic approach and subject matter?

To be honest, my current artistic work didn't emerge because of my previous experiences, but rather in spite of them. I spent a long time searching for my place — trying myself in different fields. All that time, there was a lingering sense that I was heading in the wrong direction. Only when I allowed myself to paint what I truly see — worlds alien to our own, strange beings, unfamiliar structures — did I feel like I was finally returning to myself.

But of course, those experiences didn't vanish without a trace. Airbrushing, which I first encountered while painting motorcycles, became an important technical tool for working with texture and visual realism. And my background in PR —

understanding marketing and organization — now helps me build a structure around my art: exhibitions, presentations, and meaningful dialogue with the audience.

What role does texture and color play in evoking the vastness and mystery of the universe in your paintings?

Color and texture are not just artistic tools for me — they are the foundation of the atmosphere in my work. I deliberately choose a dark, cool palette: shades of indigo, graphite, dull silver, deep blue, and black. These colors evoke space, emptiness, eternity. They don't so much create an image as a sensation — one of unease and detachment, as if the viewer has found themselves alone in the universe, with no familiar points of reference.

I want the darkness in my paintings not to be frightening, but meditative — like a silent vacuum in which you hear only yourself. The textures also contribute to this feeling. It's all a way of bringing the viewer closer to a state of stillness, where they can sense the vastness and alien nature of the infinite.

Your use of symbolism seems deeply rooted in the cosmic and otherworldly. Could you tell us more about the meanings behind some of the recurring motifs, such as the mysterious creatures and objects in your work?

I never set out to create a specific symbol — they emerge on their own. Spheres often appear in my paintings, not as geometric forms but as entities that carry emptiness and infinity within them. Their drifting through space creates a sense of weightlessness, surrealism, and detachment from the real world.

Forms resembling nautilus shells or spirals arise as echoes of eternal structures — the golden ratio, Fibonacci numbers — but not as mathematical calculations; rather, as the natural breath of alien organic life. These elements serve as a reminder that even in the strangest worlds, there can exist an inner harmony beyond our comprehension.

The beings in my paintings are neither protagonists nor mythological figures. They are more like emotions that have taken shape. They defy identification — and that's precisely where their power lies. I want the viewer not to recognize, but to feel.



Aida Bari

Ottawa based painter, Aida Bari, has been honing her acrylic and watercolour painting skills for over 15 years. At age 7, she took art classes at the National Theatre in Abu Dhabi, which kick-started her passion for all things artistic and entered her first exhibition in high school. She is known for her realistic paintings of flowers and birds which are usually paired with a striée colour wash as a background. Currently exhibiting at two galleries in her city, she is looking to grow her presence and reach a wider audience.

Project Statement: My current body of work aims to capture the serene beauty of wild birds, mostly cranes, through paint. With a heavy focus on simplicity, each painting features a bird against a simple background, allowing the bird's form to take centre stage. Each piece uses a tight colour palette, and I use calculated brushwork to create depth and capture the movement in the feathers. The project aims to evoke a sense of grace and sophistication, highlighting the crane's elegant posture.





— Interview

Sachiho

Your work blends both painting and design, creating a unique balance between the two. How do you navigate this duality in your creative process?

For me, the roots of my work go back to the art classes I took as a child. I've drawn many pictures, including watercolors. I studied design at university and created many graphics for my advertising design work.

What I find most interesting is the simplicity and sharpness of the designs, and their ability to convey things and information through simple expressions. I often get ideas from dreams or flashes of inspiration, and often I draw what I saw in my dreams exactly as it is and it is already a finished design.

However, the problem is that very emotional and painterly ideas come to mind, and when I draw them I feel like they are somehow different, so I often end up deforming or adjusting them as if it were an occupational hazard to finish them into designs. There are also works that I have created by converting hand-drawn drawings into design data. I guess my style is to take something as if it were a painting and finish it into a design.



Can you explain the meaning behind the recurring use of color and shape in your artworks? How do they connect to your message of love and life?

Blue, yellow, and red are the colors that often appear in my work. The great masters of the past have expressed these three primary colors in various ways. As I moved my hands freely to paint as I wanted, these three primary colors came naturally. Eventually, my own meaning of the colors developed, and later I was surprised to learn that many great masters used the three primary colors in their own ways.

For me, the three primary colors represent:

Blue - Earth, love, reality, physicality, human ugliness, sadness, grief, hatred, chaos, the power to overcome and heal them;

Yellow - dark, unconditional love, gratitude, bliss, abundance, joy, happiness, Amaterasu (The Sun), high vibration;

Red - passionate, enthusiasm, anger, resentment, roughness, strong energy.

What I express is always non-physical energy, the emotions people have, and the wisdom from the origin of the universe that transcends human understanding, and I paint them as I feel them. The wisdom from the universe is always made of love from the universe that looks down on us, and it teaches us that even the most difficult things are filled with the essence of a wonderful life.

When I am working on a piece, I receive the wisdom of the universe through inspiration and images of the issues and worries I am working on at that time, and these become the title of the design or work, or a message-like sentence. The universe is myself, and the fact that the universe of my inner self resonates with the vast universe (reality) that spreads out in the sky also tickles my curiosity.

So although I can never do anything great like make someone happy, I would be very happy if the messages I receive could have some kind of impact on people's hearts.

How has becoming a mother influenced your artistic



journey? Do you feel that your experiences as a parent have shaped the themes in your art?

All of this artistic endeavor came about after I became a mother. Before that, I never even allowed myself to paint, which is what I love. I was too busy, materialistic, believed hard work pays off, and was always unhappy.

As I had children, I was confused and bewildered at first by the constant task of remembering my original, unique self.

It was my children who guided me in my exploration of the non-material world. Before you know it, people forget what is important and start chasing only visible results, but even for us, even as humans, our material bodies are only 5% or less of the whole, and no one pays attention to the grander self, including the non-material mind, emotions, consciousness, dreams, etc., but only focuses on plated trophies and banknotes with numbers on them. Even though if we really want those things, it is essential to look at what we cannot see. Everything I experience through children is the source of my current work. Children just came from space! I've been used to the earth for 40 years, so I'm ingrained with humanity. It's most effective to have children teach me about high-vibe non-physical things.

You've been selected for notable exhibitions, such as the 50th Lahti International Poster Triennial and the FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION Poster Exhibition. What does being part of these exhibitions mean to you and how do they impact your approach to art?

For me, being selected for or entering an overseas exhibition expands the possibilities for meeting friends and people who have similar sensibilities to me. It also gives me confidence and courage to create art. I sometimes think about this when I'm painting abstract paintings.

I wonder how my non-verbal communication will spread, or whether it is just self-satisfied and complacent. However, if I broaden my horizons, I see that many countries, including Europe, have cultures that use the same non-verbal communication, metaphysics, and non-

physical communication as art, so I always try with the faint hope that if many people see my work, they may be able to understand what I want to say.

In your artist statement, you mention conveying profound messages about life and love. How do you ensure that these themes resonate universally with a global audience?

I myself am constantly experimenting with how my work will resonate with people. The energy of colors and shapes is immeasurable. They captivate people and stimulate their imagination.

The works I create with love have my own intentions and contain many messages, the hints of which can be found in the titles and the texts I sometimes accompany the works. However, by allowing people to freely view the works, the viewers' feelings will be expressed as impressions, which are different for each person. This conversation with one's inner self is the love I want to convey, and a gift from the universe. Some people may have an idea of "what to do."

We all have the ability to feel free, live freely, and be rich. I hope to be one of those artists who have conveyed philosophy and universal wisdom to their audiences through their works.

How has your background in design influenced your approach to creating artwork, and what challenges or advantages does that background bring to your creative expression?

I studied design at university and after graduating, I worked in advertising design for a long time.

This has given me more variety in the way I finish my work, but sometimes it has left me unsure of where I want to finish.

Each time I do this I come into contact with the works of other artists, and the works that I am drawn to include those of minimalist artists such as Yves Klein, Kandinsky, and Alvar Aalto. I feel as though artists of the past are always teaching me that it's okay to live that way.

As I answered in the previous question, their works are eloquent and give the audience many ways of living and philosophies. I always want to be like that. I would like to further improve my work so that the non-material message can be easily conveyed to many people.

Looking towards the future, what do you hope to explore next in your art? Are there any new mediums or concepts you're eager to dive into?

For me, creating art is my life itself, so I don't think I'll stop exploring this until the end of my life. Ideas come to me every day, and I draw every day. In the future, I would like to try using more colors, and I think the shapes will become more diverse.

More than anything, I would be happy if I could be filled with love, and spread that overflowing love to others as well. Thank you. I love you.

Chloé Marchal

Born on July 7, 1994, in Mâcon, France. Currently based in Montreal. Chloé Marchal is a photographer, writer, and film producer. From a young age, she has been driven by a passion for visual arts, making her first films at the age of 12 and starting her first photography commissions at 15. Her work has been recognized through collaborations with award-winning production companies, press publications, and art galleries. With a sharp creative eye and a deep interest in storytelling, she approaches composition with a unique sensitivity, whether in film or photography. Influenced by the raw intimacy of Diane Arbus, the poetic wanderings of Josef Koudelka, the cinematic depth of Nan Goldin, the candid authenticity of Vivian Maier, the humanist vision of Mary Ellen Mark, and the painterly storytelling of Mark Tennant, her street photography and portraits capture the essence of unique individuals. A particular awareness of the power of travel and human encounters shapes her work, always carrying the story of the spontaneity of a moment.

Artist Statement

For me, photography is more than just a visual tool—it's an extension of the eye, a means of capturing the often-overlooked fragments of reality that are hidden in the rush of everyday life. These fleeting moments, when observed closely, reveal profound human stories. My goal is to preserve these pieces of life, giving them unique significance and weaving them into a visual narrative. My approach to photography goes beyond aesthetics; it is rooted in a sociological reflection. Influenced by my personal convictions—feminism, social justice, and the power of representation—my work seeks to amplify voices that are often left unheard. In a world saturated with noise and superficial imagery, I believe it is essential to carve out space for those whose stories remain invisible. Each image I capture is an invitation to a silent dialogue, where the viewer is free to interpret the scene through their own lens. I am particularly drawn to individuals who carry a unique presence—those whose faces, postures, and expressions suggest untold stories. Whether in a fleeting glance exchanged on the streets of Montreal or an intimate portrait captured during my travels, I aim to reveal the beauty and complexity of those who often go unnoticed. Inspired by the cinema of Hitchcock, Wim Wenders, and Agnès Varda, my visual approach merges storytelling with composition, creating scenes that invite curiosity and contemplation. From Vivian Maier to Nan Goldin, Diane Arbus to Josef Koudelka, these photographers have taught me the art of discreet observation—capturing moments without disrupting their flow. In post-production, I adopt a painterly approach, enhancing colors and contrasts to bring out the raw expression of my subjects. Each image becomes a space for exchange, a place where the unheard can finally be seen and understood.

Marchal Chloe | New York Curfew | 2020





Marchal Chloe | The Invitation | 2013

Marchal Chloe | Reflections of an Historian | 2021



— Interview

Natasha Tresadern- Jones

Tea as a medium is central to your work. What led you to choose tea as your artistic medium, and what does it represent for you personally?

I first began working with tea during my second year at university in Swansea, back in 2011. It started almost by accident. I was feeling a bit lost creatively, the practice I had been pursuing ran out of direction, and I found myself searching for something new. One day, while drinking tea (which I did constantly), a splash landed on some paper I had lying around. I doodled a rough compass map into it, and something just clicked. From that moment, it naturally evolved into a central medium for me.



Natasha Tresadern-Jones | Tenacitea | 2025



Over time, tea has come to hold deeper personal layers. I associate it with memories of specific mugs in different places, the comfort and sense of home that a cup of tea can offer. It became a symbol of familiarity in moments of uncertainty. In my third year, I also explored tea as a social ritual, contrasting traditional Chinese tea ceremonies with the casual British 'cuppa', and how tea can create a social interstice, a space outside the norm where people connect. I explored this concept in my dissertation. There's also something powerful for me about the unpredictability of tea stains — even after working with them for so long, they still surprise me. I like that tea can leave ephemeral marks, stains that might be wiped away before they're fully dry, like something unnoticed. It echoes both the emotional uncertainty I often feel and the quiet, often overlooked presence of my work within larger exhibitions. Tea's unpredictability and fragility mirror my own approach to life and art: I rarely have a rigid plan, and instead, I follow where the process leads me.

Your work often explores emotional intensity and self-expression. How do you feel that tea as a medium captures these emotions, especially when paired with the fire-haired female figures?

With this most recent series, I've been moving through a period of intense transformation and transition, and meeting a lot of resistance along the way. There's been this constant feeling of 'the system won't let you' or 'you can't do that,' and the emotional intensity behind these works really became an act of rebellion.

The fire-haired women in my work represent the version of myself I know I can be: resilient, strong, and defiant. They're like rising phoenixes, but even that image feels too polished; these women are raw, enduring forces who blaze their own trails. Sometimes they're aspirational versions of myself, other times they're reflections of women I admire, or they feel like a collective energy, a whole generation ready to rebel, to challenge the expectations placed on them. Tea stains as a medium capture all that intensity perfectly. Its unpredictability, the way it stains, bleeds, resists, mirrors the strong, volatile emotions that fueled this series: anger, resistance, defence, defiance. There's a real tension between the delicate nature of tea and the tea ceremony, and the fierceness impacts that create the stains and the figures, and that friction, that push and pull, feels vital to the emotional impact of the work.

In your statement, you mention the process of creating these pieces has been cathartic. Could you describe the emotional journey you experience while creating this series?



Natasha Tresadern-Jones | Dominica | 2025



Natasha Tresadern-Jones | Inevitabilia | 2025

I create the works over two to three stages, often across a number of weeks. It begins with a very physical, emotional release: I set up several cups of boiling water with teabags and work into a small sketchbook. I focus on whatever emotions or challenges I've been facing, and then I physically collide the teabags with the pages. Depending on the heat of the tea, the teabags might be dropped, released, or even launched at the paper. It's a quick, instinctive, sometimes chaotic process and it's crucial to capturing the raw intensity of the feelings. Each teabag can only take a few impacts before it explodes, and while I try to avoid that (as it leaves overly dense marks), the unpredictability is part of the experience.

After filling the sketchbook with these initial emotional impressions, I come back later to assess each piece, sometimes adding more layers where needed.

The final stage is more careful and reflective: I draw in pen over the top, considering how they sit within the stained environment, how they can enhance or contrast the underlying emotions. The first stage is cathartic, energetic, and freeing — I try not to overthink — whereas the final stage demands more thought, precision, and respect for the marks already there.

I don't usually experience fear or resistance during the initial expressive stage; it's very liberating. But when it comes to drawing the figure, there's often a moment of hesitation or fear of making an irreversible mark. Once a



piece is completed, though, there's a real sense of pride. I've taken something born from struggle or negativity and transformed it into something resilient and alive.

The only real ritual I follow during these stages is working alone, and if I'm building a cohesive series, I'll stick to using the same type of tea throughout to maintain a consistent atmosphere.

You refer to tea stains as resembling ancient maps. Can you elaborate on how these stains connect to the concept of journeys to other times and places?

There are a few different layers to it for me. It goes back to one of my earliest tea stain experiments, the mark reminded me partly of a compass, and partly of an old, sepia-toned map. A literal map, hand-drawn with a certain flair, like something Tolkien might have created for Middle Earth — it's a combination of imagination and grounded reality.

At the same time, the stains also feel like emotional maps. They can read like a series of islands, spaces to be explored and understood. They're records of emotional journeys, of time passing, of things lost to time. Sometimes they feel like a whisper of a moment, a fragment of a bigger conversation that was never heard, or something that needed saying but never found its voice. The tea is spilt, but there's no clear

evidence left behind.

I don't consciously think about the viewer when I'm making the work; in a way, it's a very selfish process. These are my own explorations, my own feelings and emotions. I know they'll inevitably be read and interpreted in different ways by others, but at their heart, the pieces are maps of my own internal adventures.

The figures in your artwork embody strength and defiance. How do you view the role of women in your work, and what do these characters represent for you in today's context?

There's definitely one figure in this series that feels like a self-portrait, but overall, these women are also collective symbols of defiance. They represent the fight for equality, which is something we still haven't fully achieved. Even today, there are still glass ceilings that haven't been shattered, and I'm surrounded by strong women who continue to face challenges they shouldn't have to.

So there's also a stubbornness, a fierce defiance in these women. They have a refusal to be diminished. These women are the fire that keeps you warm, the spark that lights the way. They're the ones who burn down the forest so we can see what's beyond, the beginning of a rebellion. They're both strong and nurturing: unstoppable in pushing against the limits placed on them, but also the beacon of hope in a dark tunnel.

The figures in my work are always unbound, uncontained, like the emotional force behind them. They do evolve, depending on the energy of the piece. This series has been quite fiery, but you can also see a softening happening, a fluidity emerging, though they remain raw and unfiltered.

How does your background in Fine Art and Photography influence your approach to this project? Do you incorporate any photographic techniques or concepts into your tea-based artworks?

I've always had a strong awareness of composition, and that directly influences how I approach the tea stains. When I'm working with

the tea, I try to guide it within a certain frame, much like I would if I were composing a photograph. I think a lot about how the stains will look once they've dried, considering whether they lend themselves to the figure I want to draw or if something else will emerge organically within the marks.

I pay close attention to the depth of the stains — during the second pass, I can feel when it doesn't quite sit right or when the layering needs more attention.

The key is in finding a balance. I've learned that trying to control the process too much leads to frustration, and often doesn't give the desired outcome. It's like working with light and shadow, there's an element of intuition, letting things unfold naturally, but also knowing when to guide them. The tea, much like light, can be unpredictable and hard to pin down, and that tension is part of what makes the process so interesting.

You have previously explored performance art. How do you feel the intimacy of working with tea in small-scale pieces compares to your larger performance pieces?

Tea has always been central to my performance art as well. The act of making tea itself became a kind of performance for me. Though the ritualistic nature of tea has faded from the traditional Chinese customs, there's still something deeply intimate about it. Each cup made for a different person has its own nuances — the brand, milk, sugar, and the order in which it's prepared, all tailored to individual preferences.

I find comfort in that intimate nature, and that's why I prefer to work in smaller-scale pieces, or rather, true-to-size pieces. The tea doesn't scream to be noticed or overstated. It's simply there, as it is.

This current series feels more personal and inward compared to my previous performance pieces, though the themes and elements do repeat. For example, during my time in Swansea, I participated in a collective art piece called 'Disruption,' with various pop-up works across the city. My first disruption was quite oppositional. I set up a table with chairs on the street, offering tea to anyone who wanted it,

with no expectations or strings attached. In a world obsessed with speed and convenience, it was a moment to pause, to converse or not, with no pressure. It's rare now to find a place where you can enjoy a cup of tea without being asked to believe in something or buy something. In the second iteration, I took a more radical approach, setting up a performance in a post-apocalyptic world where trade had collapsed, and there was no tea. I prayed to the last tea plant, offering my body and empty mugs as tribute. But in the bleak world we've created, where we've failed to nurture the earth, the plant died. This piece took a darker turn, with shattered mugs and words raised in anger, illustrating the madness of a world without connection or conversation.

In comparison, my current tea-based works are more inward and personal, focusing on the quiet intimacy of tea itself. The performance elements are still there, but they are more private now, allowing for a deeper personal connection to the material. I find myself letting the tea be what it is, without trying to force it into a performative framework, but the process still has echoes of that ritualistic, performative energy.



Natasha Tresadern-Jones | Audacitea | 2025

Cher Xu (born 2002 in Toronto) is a painter based in Los Angeles. She works with acrylic, oil, and watercolor. Cher grew up in Beijing and received her BFA from CalArts in 2025. Her recent paintings focus on people, their spaces, everyday objects. She uses line and color to flatten pictorial space, often leaving areas unpainted to invite the viewer's mind to complete the image.

Artist Statement

My recent body of works feature artists in my community. I focus on bringing their physical likeness, personal spaces, and collected objects to life. The paintings are filled with tools, everyday objects, and references to other artists' works. In some areas, I delineate forms with lines alone, choosing not to fill them in with color. This choice is my way of asking the viewer to see with the brain as much as with the eyes, engaging perception as both a visual and cognitive act. I begin each painting on a warmly-toned ground, which helps mediate and balance the colors used throughout the composition. By flattening the pictorial space, I give equal emphasis to each element in the painting. The equal weight given to every detail invites slow looking—taking time to notice what books someone is reading, how fabric folds on a body, or the way a hand holds a brush. The people and objects in each space radiate together, holding and expressing their unique interconnectedness.

Cher Xu | Erika's Studio | 2025





TO DO EVENTUALLY

- go down and get a old car - relax
- visit website
- time for reading + drawing

SHELLS

Can an Old Problem
Help Us Solve
A New Problem

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Blake Brenneman is a bookbinder, paper maker, and sashiko artist specializing in handmade one-of-a-kind pieces. He teaches classes--both for groups and private lessons--and has expertise in book restoration, aesthetic rebindings, and custom journals and sketchbooks. Drawing on a rich background of art history, business, and as a magician, Blake combines traditional techniques with modern, small-batch sensibilities to create truly unique, utilitarian pieces of art. He lives in the greater Washington DC metro area with his wife and their beloved dog.

Artist Statement

Inner complexity and outward simplicity are the North Stars that guide my work. There is boldness in attempting perfection, even in its simplest forms. With books, the building of the process stays consistent: folding signatures, sewing pages, making book cloth. Yet, the most visible parts of each book allow limitless degrees of expression and creativity. In the pursuit of that understated boldness, I layer Japanese sashiko--elegant, traditional stitchwork designed for mending and elevated to art by generations of artisans--with Western bookbinding methods. In bookbinding, there is always a dichotomy between aesthetic and function. At each crossroads of creativity, at each step in the process, I build layers of the utilitarian and the exquisite. Bookbinding allows me to encapsulate a universe within stitched pages; and each book created becomes more beautiful in the hands of the person using it. Each of us leaves an indelible impression upon every book we hold; the bookbinder is just the first.

Blake Brenneman | The Book of Broken Glass | 2025





— Interview

Valeriia Popova

Your art blends the elegance of the '50s and '60s with the energy of modern life. How do you balance these two distinct influences in your work?

Honestly, I've always been in love with the elegance of the post-war Golden Age—late '40s, '50s, early '60s. That era had this timeless charm. People dressed with intention, music had soul, and everything felt more glamorous. I still get goosebumps listening to Sinatra or Elvis—sometimes that's where a whole painting starts, with just a song. Then I'll see a scene from an old movie like *Breakfast at Tiffany's* or even a vintage ad, and something clicks.

But I live in the now—and I want my art to speak to today's confidence, ambition, and edge. So I add a modern twist. Maybe it's a cartoon character, maybe it's a luxury fashion item, or even a touch of irony. It's about mixing the soul of the past with the hustle of today. Glamour, but with attitude.

Your project statements often focus on themes of ambition and playfulness. How do these elements manifest visually in your pieces?

I see art as more than just something pretty for a wall. I want it to inspire. I want someone to look at my work and feel like, "Damn—I want that lifestyle. I deserve that confidence." Whether it's a character sitting like a boss, or an old-school icon with a modern twist, the goal is to empower.



Playfulness, for me, is about not taking it all too seriously. Life is heavy enough. I like adding a wink—a little joke, a clever detail, something unexpected that makes people smile or say, "Wait, is that...?" Humor gives the work soul.

You mention that your background as a professional swimmer has influenced your art. Can you elaborate on how the discipline and focus from sports are reflected in your creative process?

Absolutely. I was a sprinter—I swam competitively for 13 years. That life teaches you how to show up, even when it's hard. You train when you're tired, when no one's cheering, when you just want a break. That mindset never left me.

Now, when I'm in my studio, I bring that same drive. I can paint for 10 hours straight without even realizing the time. I'm obsessive about detail, about finishing strong. Swimming also taught me how to tune everything out and just focus—and that's what painting is. It's my lane now.

You describe your art as a bridge between past and present. How do you decide which elements from the past to include in your contemporary pieces?

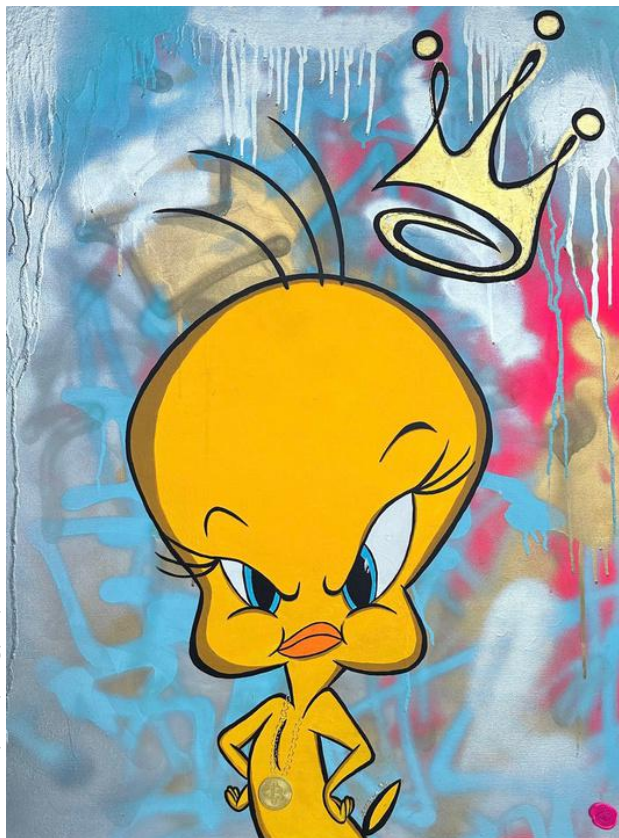
It's instinctual, honestly. I just love the vibe of the past. Sometimes I'll hear an old song—like Ronnie Hilton's *The Wonder of You*—and it just takes me away. Or I'll see a photo or a frame from a black-and-white film, and something about it sparks something in me emotionally.

I'm not trying to recreate that era exactly—I want to take its essence and give it new life. I start thinking: how can I make this speak to someone today? How do I add a bit of humor, or something bold and unexpected, while still honoring that classic aesthetic? It's like remixing a vintage song with a modern beat. You still feel the soul, but it hits differently now.

With your wide range of interests from fashion to sports, how do these varied passions come together in your artistic practice?

They all show up on the canvas. Fashion gives my work texture and aspiration. I love luxury not just as a material thing—but as a symbol. It's about taste, confidence, and identity.

Sports gave me discipline and competitiveness—I want to be better with each painting. And the adrenaline from things like boxing or shooting keeps me sharp. I'm not a passive person, and neither is my art. It's bold. It moves. It has attitude.



Valeria Popova | Kingpin | 2024



Valeria Popova | Us Against The World | 2024

What role does nostalgia play in your work, and how do you use it to connect with viewers emotionally?

Nostalgia plays a big part in what I create—it's that emotional anchor that pulls people in. I think there's something comforting about seeing a familiar style, an old-school mood, or even just a color palette that reminds you of another time. It brings people closer to the artwork before they even realize why.

For me, it's not just about referencing the past—it's about evoking a feeling. A lot of my inspiration comes from vintage music or old movies, and I try to bring that same atmosphere into my paintings. Once the viewer feels that connection, I like to gently shift the focus—add a modern twist, a touch of irony or ambition—so it becomes something new. Something that feels both personal and fresh.

How do you use luxury fashion and pop culture in your artwork to create a dialogue about modern life?

I think luxury fashion and pop culture are such a big part of how we express ourselves today—they say a lot about what we value, what we dream of, or even how we want to be seen. For me, it's not about promoting brands or status, it's more about capturing that energy—what success and identity look like in the modern world.

Sometimes I mix these elements with something humorous or nostalgic to create contrast or to invite people to reflect without it feeling too heavy. It's a way to explore ambition, image, even vulnerability—but in a visual language people recognize and connect with.

Kenzie Morgan

Kenzie Morgan is a visual artist from London specialising in photography and digital art.





Steven Seidenberg

Your project "The Architecture of Silence" explores the aftermath of the Riforma Fondiaria land reform. Can you share what initially drew you to this subject matter and how it shaped your creative vision?

My first encounter with the remnants of the Riforma policies came with a visit to Puglia in 2009. This was in the context of other work, but I found the presence of these abandoned, modern structures in and around the agricultural fields of Basilicata and Puglia curious, and the general reticence of residents in the area to discuss the history of these structures piqued my interest.

Soon it became apparent that the character of that response had very much to do with the reasons for the abandonment, the radical upheaval in so many communities where such ill-conceived land reform policies were enacted by the newly formed republic in the aftermath of WWII, and the shame that victims of such tragedy often feel in confrontation with the traces of the policies or circumstances that led to their victimization. It immediately seemed clear to me that a project imaging this aftermath could serve as the basis of a broad visual consideration of the same neo-liberal agenda as we experience its contemporary effects, and that I could make the images in accordance with my vision of the aesthetic possibilities of the photograph more generally. It took some years to make the connections and get the funding to pursue the project, and I was able to return with my partner, the anthropologist and archeologist Carolyn White, in 2017, to make the images that would form the project as it stands.



Steven Seidenberg | Plain Sight | 2017

The images in your series evoke a sense of haunting beauty. What role do you think the concept of silence plays in your photographs, and how do you convey this feeling visually?

For me, the silence of the photograph is an important part of its power, its way of allowing the viewer to surrender to the illusion of a world delimited by the frame and the compositional elements within it. My goal is to emphasize the character of each image as a kind of caesura, if you will—an imagined pause from the noise of temporal flux. All photographs do this in one way or another, or so I would contend. My approach is to put this pause in the forefront of the image, through various compositional choices, which allows each image to evoke the absence of any voice but that of the photographer and the viewer, in silent conversation with each other.

How does your background in writing influence the way you approach photography? Do you see your photographs as an extension of your written work?

My work as a writer and an artist are not just interrelated, but are, from the perspective of generative impulse, indistinguishable from one another, which is to say I don't see either as an extension of the other, or not exclusively so, as the form of each is entirely coincident with my notions of compositional structure generally. This is not to say the practices are joined—quite the contrary, I do not combine my writing with my images in any project—just that they are echoes of each other, that I

recognize the formal similarities of each. The use of repetition, for instance, is important in both practices, as the iterative character of such repeated elements allows for subtle shifts in meaning that would otherwise be impossible to realize. In this sense, I might compare my various approaches as artist and writer to musical minimalism (rather than visual or literary)—there may be a great deal of perceived motion in the prosody, for instance, or relatively little negative space within the field of view, but the repeated elements across the series of images or fragments creates a kind of syntactical/structural background in which the subtleties of divergence yield significant semantic effects.

Many of your photos feature abandoned buildings and overgrown environments. What do you hope to communicate about the impact of the Riforma Fondiaria through these images?

There is, of course, a long history of photographs of abandonment, and the emotional space that opens up around such work is often tinged with aestheticized self-satisfaction and mawkish cliché—something one must be aware of and carefully avoid in the making of such work. For my purposes, this is accomplished by the voicing of my particular compositional/technical concerns within the images; my goal for the series to present the dream of those enticed to the promises of the Riforma by emphasizing the relationship of the interior spaces to the world outside, and equally to proffer a feeling for tragedy of its failure by contextualizing the series in the political policies that led to the dislocation of those whose remnants and traces are left behind. I hope in turn that the present-day use of the structures by migrant workers helps to draw attention to the commonalities between internal migrations of laborers and undocumented migration across international borders, each in deference to the vicissitudes of those capital interests whose unshared prosperity is evidenced in the fecundity of the fields surrounding the Riforma developments.



Steven Seidenberg | Development in the Fields | 2017



Steven Seidenberg | Blue Room with Fig | 2017

The failure of post-war land reforms has historical and social implications. How do you think photography can bring attention to such forgotten histories and spark conversations about social justice?

As a working artist, it's difficult to navigate one's dependence on the moneyed interests that coordinate and fuel art markets without accepting the collusion of those interests in the messaging of the work. Even where that message is not patently or coherently revised to suit such influence, there is an intrinsic consciousness within the movement of capital that pushes towards the co-optation of any seemingly counter-hegemonic practice—it is all-consuming, and there is little one can do to countermand its seductions and effects. Thus the photographer's disadvantages in the activity of selling—the fact of multiplicity and infinite reproducibility that neutralizes the fetish impulses of collectors of unique forms—proves an advantage with respect to their commitment to unconcealing the causes and impacts of material inequity. Our work is easily spread and shared, and its implied indexical relationship to the world beyond the limits of the frame allows for a uniquely poetic condensation of meaning and sign interposed within it. This is the demand and privilege of the form—coordinating ideological and aesthetic positions in equal consideration of lived material conditions, bringing the viewer of the work into a powerfully empathic response, without compromising other aesthetic concerns and correlations.

The structures you photograph often seem to stand as monuments to lost potential. How do you feel about the notion of abandonment in the context of your work?

I have done a lot work in contexts of abandonment, but also of reuse, in various squatted buildings and occupations in and around Rome, for instance—in abandoned factories, hotels and office buildings, now occupied by various cultural and familial communities or a disused parking lot behind Tiburtina station, host,

to a tent city for those awaiting asylum hearings, before being swept away by the cops on a fascist whim...

Let me put it this way; structures that are not presently abandoned soon will be. All inhabitation—all engineering just as well—is temporary, and all present use will be transformed by decay and dislocation, by reuse and reconsideration through novel practices and ineluctably repeated modes of disinterment and destruction. My work, when successful, is overlaid by the sense of lost potential, as you say, or failed hope, but also by the anticipation of future transformation, regardless of the present state of occupation or operation, of utility or disuse.

Your images are not merely documentary but have a painterly quality. How important is the artistic interpretation in your work, and how do you balance documentary precision with artistic expression?

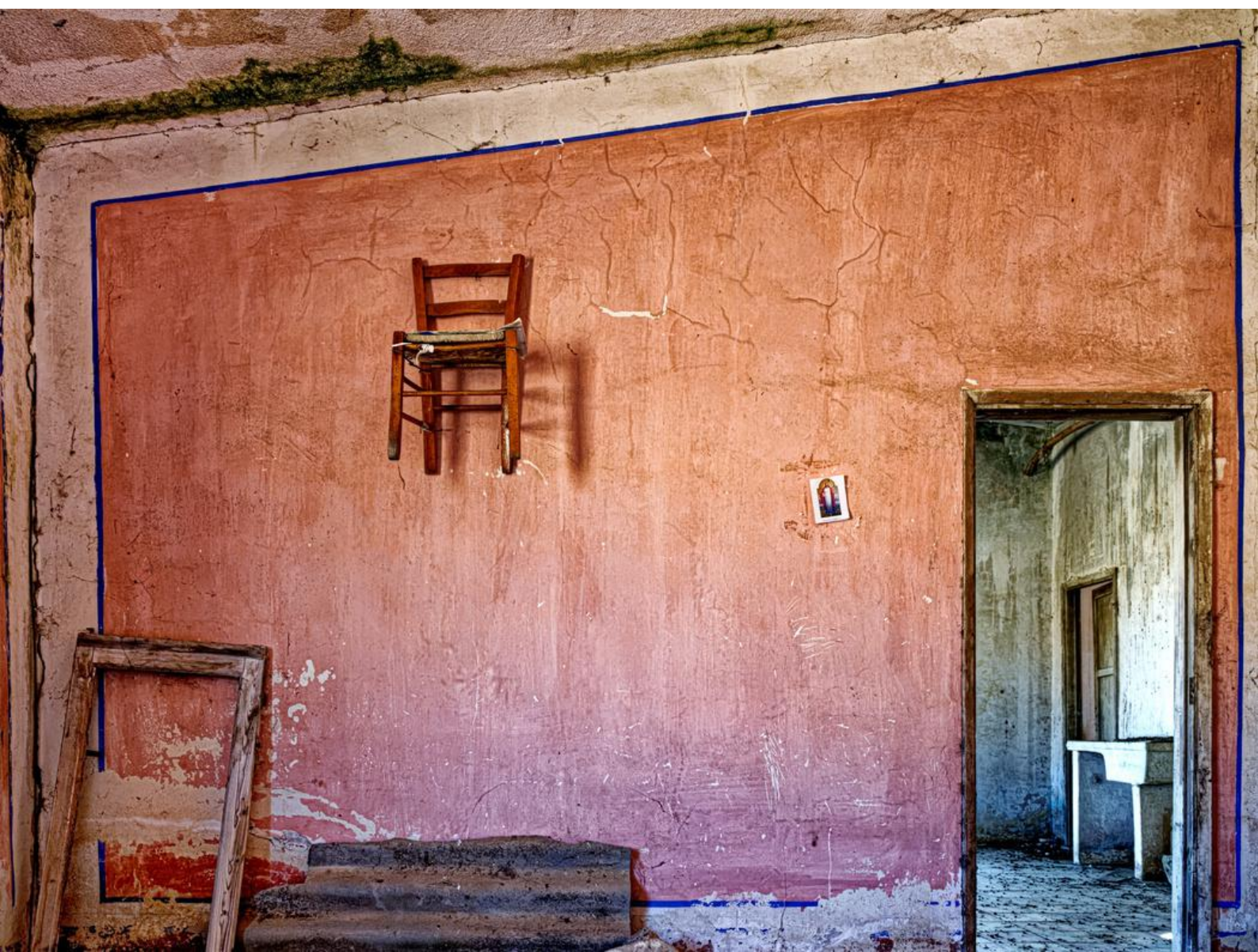
This is one of the most compelling joys, but also the greatest challenges of the practice—balancing the indexical or documentary characteristics of the work with the compositional elements that give each piece a

manifestly voiced distinction, that center each image in its series, and each series within a body of work that reads as most definitively mine, if you will. That voicing is not to establish reputation, or to inculcate commercial innervation, but rather allows for the many bodies of work that carry such stylistic exuberance to speak together and to one another, to overlay thematically not just to form a series (in which I always work) but the series of series, adding to the meaning of the next in line, and each next in line acting as addition to the previous.

That said, every individual image in a series is a source and object of the same sort of compositional restraint—as the painterly quality of which you speak results from imposition of such limitation across the range of parameters at my access in the photographic medium, in the making of the image, then the print that is its final form. The tools of any medium are particular, of course—but every flat field composition, regardless of its source, is in consideration of the same compositional constraints, constraints that are only successful when they propel the semantic engagement of one's interlocutors, oft to lines of inquiry unbeknownst even to the artist before that engagement has engendered such response.



Steven Seidenberg | The Opening of the Field | 2017



Steven Seidenberg | Hanging Chair and Madonna | 2017

Anouk Vigneau is a French paper artist working under the name **Kauri Paper Studio**. Her intricate, nature-inspired creations—especially coral reef worlds—blend elegance, serenity, and detail. Each piece is a meditative journey, inviting viewers into a poetic, dreamlike universe. Follow her work on Instagram: @kauri_paperstudio

Artist Statement

Through Kauri Paper Studio, I create intricate paper artworks that explore the fragile beauty of nature, with a particular fascination for the textures and rhythms of coral reefs. Each piece is a meditative process—an invitation to slow down, observe, and reconnect with a sense of wonder. Paper, with its softness and versatility, becomes my tool to sculpt dreamlike landscapes that evoke serenity, patience, and inner calm. My work balances precision with poetry, blending organic forms and meticulous craftsmanship to tell visual stories that transcend language. Inspired by the ocean, the natural world, and the passage of time, I seek to build immersive worlds where stillness and emotion coexist. My creations aim to spark quiet contemplation and offer viewers a moment suspended—where imagination takes root and beauty unfolds in silence.

Anouk Vigneau - Kauri Paper Studio | Souffle marin | 2024





— Interview

Anja Werner

How did you decide to pursue a career in the arts, and what inspired you to specialize in wood and sculpture?

My path into art began very early, inspired by my grandfather, who returned from World War II blind and began to sculpt animals from clay—powerful figures like bulls, gorillas, or toucans. I grew up in East Germany, and he lived in the West—unreachable to me, but his works stood in our home. As a child, I believed: this grandfather could perform magic.

Around the age of ten, I began drawing and carving myself, using a pocketknife to uncover figures from bark and wood scraps—beings hidden in the material. Later, I spent many years apprenticing with a wood sculptor during school. Wood was never a conscious choice for me—it was simply always there, my material, just as clay



was his.

I trained as a carpenter with the goal of studying wood design afterward. It always felt right. I never had a Plan B—the path of art was mine from the beginning.

You've had the opportunity to study and work in different cultural settings, such as with the Makonde carvers in Tanzania. How have these experiences influenced your creative process and artistic vision?

During my design studies, I traveled to the Makonde carvers in Tanzania—with nothing but a backpack and my carving knife. Very quickly, I realized that I wanted to work in a freer, more narrative, and artistic way with wood than my design studies allowed. Fortunately, I had a professor who supported me and guided me into a new world of creation.

Among the Makonde, I encountered a deep appreciation for handmade, lovingly crafted everyday objects—not industrially optimized design products, but one-of-a-kind pieces with emotional and cultural value for their owners. At the same time, I experienced a visual language that floated between reality and surrealism, between life and poetry. This artistic approach was a turning point for me: it meant freedom—because it made everything possible.

In your project statement, you emphasize freedom of expression and the exploration of boundaries. How do you feel your work pushes these boundaries, and can you share an example of a piece where this is especially evident?

I see boundaries as those created by upbringing, family background, societal norms, and political structures—contexts into which we are born without choosing them. As we grow, we come up against what we can endure, and we begin to question patterns, change behaviors, and shift perspectives.



Anja Werner | Paloma, Täubchen | 2025



I continuously try to look at these inherited structures from new angles. The material wood helps me in this—it is willful and communicative and reveals things to me only through the act of making. I am particularly moved by the role and perception of women. These themes seduce and inspire me to reinterpret them through art. An example is my most recent piece: PALOMA—Spanish for “my little dove.” This figure is round, soft, voluminous, and confident. She does not conform to conventional ideals of female beauty, and yet she is exactly that: beautiful. Because she is content with herself. The wood shows traces of worms, some rot, and missing fibers—yet that is exactly what makes it beautiful.

Your sculptures often integrate human figures with natural elements like wood. How do you balance the organic nature of the material with the human form in your work?

I feel a profound connection between wood and the human being. Wood is alive, carries a story within, is willful, sometimes stubborn, but also generous and full of surprises. It gives me shapes, but it also takes them away when I ask too much. This is where its honesty lies. The human figure is similarly multifaceted—soft and brittle, hard and vulnerable, full of strength and at the same time fragile. When I work with wood, I sense this kinship: two beings meeting, respecting, and shaping each other. Ideally, a sculpture emerges from this encounter that makes something internal visible—something that belongs neither to the wood nor to me alone, but arises between us.

The idea of “exploration and discovery” seems central to your artistic practice. Can you share a moment

in your career when such an exploration led to a breakthrough or a significant change in your work?

I've always felt like a seeker—and eventually a discoverer. I find great joy in small things, in connections and logics that may be well known to others but that I've worked to uncover for myself. I'm particularly fascinated by the logic of perspective drawing. It's a deeply enriching moment when you can depict spatial complexity on a flat surface—when ideas become tangible. In my teaching, I've developed a guidebook that I'll soon publish, which helps others access this way of thinking and drawing. There's deep satisfaction in realizing that we, with our own hands, can visualize mental processes—something no digital tool can truly replicate.

What role does teaching and sharing knowledge with others play in your practice? How has this experience shaped your approach to creating art?

I was fortunate to have inspiring teachers who supported and guided me on my artistic path. I want to offer that same kind of support to young, aspiring artists—a chance to walk part of the way with them and offer encouragement.

In every lesson, I learn something too. It's a profound joy to enter into a respectful exchange, to celebrate others' ideas, and to support their development. These encounters enrich my own artistic work and open up new perspectives again and again.

You've exhibited your work internationally, including in Beijing and Miami. How do you approach displaying your sculptures and woodwork in different cultural contexts, and how does this influence the reception of your art?

For me, exhibitions are places of encounter and exchange between different cultural perspectives. That's why I never tailor my exhibitions to a specific location—but to the story I want to tell.

My perspective remains the same—whether in Beijing, New York, or Strasbourg. I believe this openness creates fertile ground for dialogue. Just as I bring my narrative with me, I hope to discover the artistic worlds of other cultures in return. It's a mutual exchange that constantly enriches and evolves my work.



Anja Werner | Taubenhaucher und Angela | 2025

BOURDEAUDUCQ

Author photographer in search of new horizons and new practices and approaches to discover. I love poetry above all else.

Project Statement

"Beyond appearances" is a pause in the tumult of life. An urgent need to contemplate the beauty of things, to commune with the elements and to discover the poetry in everything.





— Interview

Stephen A. Born

Can you tell us about your first creative exploration with photography and how it shaped your approach to art today?

My first photographic experience was with my grandfather's Argus 35mm camera, which I used to take pictures of my toy soldiers in elaborate battle scenes I created in my parents' backyard. After three decades as a professional photographer and now retired, I am rediscovering my passion for personal photography projects. A nearby urban lake and surrounding park could be considered my backyard, as I visit this location almost daily. Like the imagery I created as a child, I am now exploring my immediate environment, intending to discover the "extraordinary in the everyday ordinary."



Stephen Born | I open my mind | 2023



Your project, "A Tale of Two Lakes," has a deep connection to nature and the environment. What inspired you to focus on these two lakes, and how did the COVID-19 pandemic influence this decision?

During the COVID-19 pandemic, I needed to get out of the house and get some fresh air and exercise. I would often go walking around Lake Harriet, which is about 1.5 miles from my home. With repetition, I began to notice details I had not seen previously. I wondered if other people were experiencing the same phenomenon.

I decided to take photographs during my walks and share them online with my neighbors as a distraction during the pandemic and to reconnect with my community. To give the photos a more personal vibe, I started writing Haiku poems and invited viewers to respond to the images, Haiku, or even contribute a Haiku poem of their own creation. The response has been fantastic. This was the birth of the "Lake Harriet Haiku Project."

Living in Minnesota, "The Land of 10,000 Lakes" and more specifically, Minneapolis, "The City of Lakes," it quickly becomes apparent that water is part of our DNA. To broaden the scope of my project and include more Minnesota residents, I decided to create a similar situation with a lake in northern Minnesota that my family visited often when I was a child. I then decided to combine these two projects into one and call it "A Tale of Two Lakes."

Although the photos were created in Minnesota, many have a universal appeal, and it would be difficult to place their point of origin. The metaphorical nature of the Haiku poems also gives the images a more universal appeal.

How do you blend your background in professional advertising photography with your current artistic practice of combining photography with Haiku poetry?

I love learning and exploring. I have dabbled in sculpture, welding, neon, furniture making, creative writing, and more. I also like blending several skills to develop a new form of expression. Photography's visual form of storytelling (whether for advertising or fine art) is a natural fit with the literary form of storytelling. I chose Haiku for its simple structure and accessibility for beginners such as myself.

How does the process of creating Haiku poems to accompany your photos enhance the overall narrative of your images?

Adding Haiku poems to my visual creations gives the viewer a peek into my soul. Many art patrons want to make a personal connection with the artists they discover. The story behind the image creation can be as fascinating as the image itself.

What is the most significant insight you've gained from engaging your community through "The Lake Harriet Haiku Project" and inviting their creative contributions?



*On extended wing
I dance the fog shrouded sky
Chasing silent winds*

© 2023 Stephen A. Born

Stephen Born | On Extended Wing | 2023

Damn, I love these questions! How late did you stay up thinking of these mind benders? The most significant insight I have gained is how something as simple as a photograph and a poem can deeply affect so many people's lives in such a profound manner. Frequently, I receive comments telling me how much people look forward to Friday mornings when I post my images/Haiku. They love the beauty of the photos and the intellectual challenge of writing their Haiku poems in response and posting them online. Others express the thrill of rediscovering their neighborhood and seeing the "extraordinary in the everyday ordinary."

How do you see the relationship between urban and rural environments reflected in your photographs, and what do you want viewers to take away from this comparison?

If you are not a Minneapolis or Northern Minnesota resident, you might be hard pressed to distinguish where each photo was created. Many of these photos could have been created in many parts of the United States, Europe, or other international locations. That was one of my goals with this project. Often, the line between urban and rural, southern and northern, American and Europe, or Asia, is not very distinct. Regardless of location, we need to be aware of our surroundings, take notice of their unique qualities, and celebrate them.

Your work often focuses on everyday scenes, capturing the extraordinary within the ordinary. What advice would you give to other artists looking to find beauty in the mundane?

The advice I would give to artists or non-artists searching for beauty in the mundane would be the same. If you have a favorite location you visit frequently, go there at different times of the day, week, or month. If it is safe, go there in the middle of the night. Go there with a friend and listen to how they react to that environment. If you start in the same spot, try a different starting point. If you wear hiking shoes, try different footwear. If you go there to walk and exercise, bring some food to eat while watching the environment change over several hours. Bring a book to read. Bring a blank notebook to write your thoughts. Bring your paints or camera. If you are a visual artist, give yourself some assignments, such as picking out the most mundane thing, such as a drinking fountain or a park bench, and see if you can create something extraordinary!

Sonia Viccaro

Sonia Viccaro was born in Rome. After having graduated from an artistic high school in 1978, she began working as a graphic artist in advertising. In 1981 she went to London where she continued her studies in design, photography and had training in antique painting restoration. She went back to Rome in 1986. Since many years she works in visual art. She had several group shows in Italy and abroad, and solo shows in Italy.

Artist Statement: My work was born first as a search for forms in space, understood as geometric shapes. The space-time relationship, understood as Spatialism, from which we are by no means strangers. The wall is also often present in my works, to underline the traces left by man since ancient times. I have a lot of projects besides painting and sculpture. I like working with different materials and methodologies, from sculpture, to creation of objects on wood, metal, resin, as design objects.

Sonia Viccaro | Still life player | 2024





— Interview

Tianxi Wang

Your artwork explores themes of identity, memory, and emotional connection. Can you elaborate on how these themes are intertwined in your work and how they manifest in your creative process?

My work is deeply rooted in personal experiences and the nuances of everyday life, which I translate into symbolic and surreal visual narratives. Themes of identity, memory, and emotional connection are central to my practice—they're not treated as separate ideas but rather as interconnected threads that shape how we experience the world and relate to others.

By incorporating surrealism and symbolism—such as distorted landscapes or exaggerated human forms—I aim to reframe the ordinary, giving emotional weight to otherwise familiar scenes. This approach allows me to explore the subtle dynamics of human interaction and our often fragile relationship with our environment. Through these visual metaphors, I invite viewers to reflect on their own memories and identities, and how these inform their perception of the spaces and people around them.

Ultimately, my creative process is about amplifying the emotional undercurrents of daily life—elevating quiet moments into compelling narratives that resonate on both a personal and universal level.

How do you decide on the materials you use? What role do oil paint, acrylic, and collage play in your exploration of texture and materiality?

My choice of materials is often guided by curiosity and intuition. Initially, collage was simply a way to create mood boards—an exercise in visual brainstorming. But I quickly became fascinated by the process itself: combining found imagery to form new, unexpected narratives. It felt both spontaneous and experimental, which is something I deeply enjoy in my practice. My love for fashion played a big role in this evolution, especially after discovering



Tianxi Wang | The man lying on the ground | 2024

the work of Jacky Marshall. Her fashion collages inspired me to push the boundaries of the form and develop my own voice in that space. The process is unpredictable, and that's part of what excites me—sometimes the most striking compositions happen by accident. Eventually, I began integrating collage into my painting practice. I often start with magazine cutouts and play with compositions through sketches, exploring different stories that could emerge from even just two images. That phase is very playful and generative—there's a lot of freedom in imagining what could be built from fragments.

When it comes to painting, I enjoy working with both oil and acrylic for their distinct qualities. I'm particularly drawn to texture—whether it's the smooth blendability of oil or the more immediate, layered feel of acrylic. Each medium allows me to experiment with surface and materiality in a different way, adding depth and emotion to the work. Ultimately, it's the interplay between control and chance, between material and meaning, that keeps me engaged with these different approaches.

You describe your painting process as meditative. Can you walk us through your process from the initial idea to the final brushstroke?

I approach painting as a meditative process—a space for reflection and emotional processing. My work often begins with personal experiences, everyday objects, and moments of self-reflection. These elements serve as bridges between my inner world and the broader context of society and environment. Objects from daily life carry emotional weight and cultural meaning, while themes like family and connection reflect the ways in which relationships shape our sense of identity and belonging. I often use self-portraits and human figures as emotional mirrors, expressing states like calm, stress, or uncertainty through form, gesture, and color. These figures become symbolic vessels through which I explore the fluid, ongoing dialogue between internal emotion and external experience. In my paintings, I focus on capturing subtle emotional states through the use of color, composition, and expression. I'm particularly interested in how mood can be conveyed without words—through the posture of a figure, the tension in a gesture, or the atmosphere created by certain hues. Everyday scenes and objects often appear in my work, not just as background elements, but as meaningful representations of personal memory or emotional weight. A quiet room, a piece of clothing, or an empty chair can become metaphors for



Tianxi Wang | The Eager Diner | 2025

connection, absence, or longing. By combining these elements with a focus on the inner self, my aim is to create visual narratives that evoke a sense of familiarity while encouraging viewers to reflect on their own emotional landscapes.

In your work, there is a balance between the surreal and the tangible. How do you navigate this dynamic and what do you hope to convey through it?

Balancing the surreal and the tangible allows me to explore emotional and psychological states in a way that feels both grounded and expansive. I often start with real-life references—objects, spaces, or people that hold personal or cultural significance—and then reimagine them through a surreal lens. This blending of the familiar and the fantastical creates a visual tension that mirrors the complexity of human emotion and perception. Surreal elements, such as distorted figures or dreamlike environments, help me to exaggerate or amplify feelings that might otherwise go unnoticed in everyday life.

Through this dynamic, I aim to invite viewers into a world that feels intimate yet open to interpretation. The tangible aspects make the work relatable, while the surreal touches encourage a deeper, more introspective engagement. By pushing the boundaries of realism, I hope to evoke emotional responses that go beyond the literal—to create a space where personal memories, emotions, and subconscious thoughts can surface. Ultimately, it's about using visual language to explore the in-between spaces—the quiet, layered moments where the internal and external worlds intersect.

How does your background in illustration influence your approach to mixed media, and how do you see your style evolving in the future?

My background in illustration has had a strong influence on how I approach painting and mixed media. Illustration trained me to think in terms of storytelling, composition, and visual clarity—all of which continue to shape how I build narratives within my work. Even when working with abstract or surreal elements, I often begin with a structured visual idea or sketch, a habit that comes from my illustration practice. This foundation helps me to layer emotional content and symbolic meaning with intention, even as I allow for spontaneity in the process.

As I continue to explore mixed media, I see my style evolving

toward a more fluid and intuitive approach. I'm becoming increasingly interested in how materials, texture, and color can carry emotional weight on their own—beyond the illustrative structure. While illustration gave me the tools to communicate visually, mixed media opens up new possibilities for expression that are more tactile, raw, and experimental. Moving forward, I hope to push the boundaries between figurative and abstract, combining disciplined techniques with freer, more instinctive mark-making to create work that feels both emotionally honest and visually layered.

Can you tell us more about the emotional landscapes you create in your work? How do you capture the complexities of human experience through color and form?

The emotional landscapes in my work are shaped by an ongoing exploration of inner states—feelings that are often difficult to articulate with words. I use color and form as emotional tools, allowing them to carry the weight of moods like vulnerability, anxiety, calm, or nostalgia. For me, color is never just aesthetic; it's deeply intuitive and tied to emotion. A muted palette might evoke stillness or melancholy, while vibrant contrasts can express tension or inner conflict. I rely on these visual cues to create an atmosphere that speaks to the viewer on a visceral level.

Form and figure also play a key role. Whether through a subtle gesture, an ambiguous expression, or a slightly distorted body, I try to convey emotional nuance—the kind that exists in everyday moments or quiet reflections. I'm drawn to the complexity of the in-between, the spaces where feelings overlap or contradict each other. Sometimes, I incorporate everyday objects or domestic scenes to ground the work in something familiar, making the emotional undercurrents more accessible. Ultimately, my goal is to create a space where viewers can sense something deeply personal yet universally human, inviting them to connect with their own emotions through mine.

You mentioned that your art is inspired by both lived experiences and cultural influences. How do these elements manifest in your pieces?

My art is deeply shaped by both my lived experiences and the cultural environments I've been part of. Having lived in places like New York, Edinburgh, and London, I've absorbed a wide range of influences—each city offering its own atmosphere, rhythm, and visual language. The architecture, social dynamics, and even the light in these places have left subtle imprints on how I perceive space, emotion, and human interaction. These impressions often find their way into my work, not always in literal representations, but in the mood, color palette, or emotional tone of a piece. I'm especially interested in how different cultural contexts influence our sense of identity and connection. Moving between these places made me more aware of what feels familiar versus what feels foreign, and that contrast often appears in my compositions. Sometimes it's through fragmented imagery, or through figures that seem caught between states—between places, emotions, or identities. These elements reflect my own experience of navigating multiple environments, and they also allow me to explore broader themes of memory, displacement, and belonging.



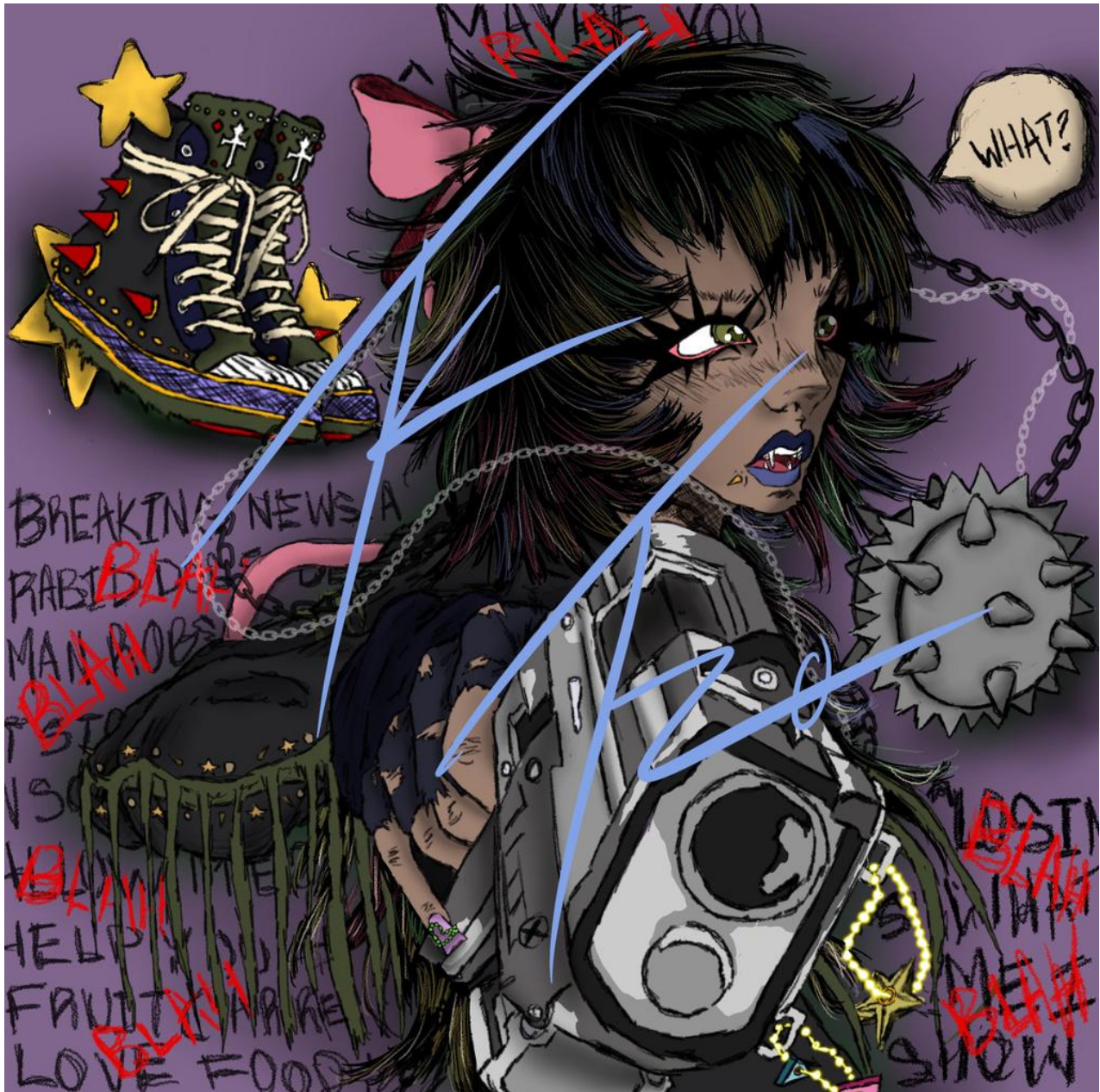
Tianxi Wang | Run Run Run | 2024

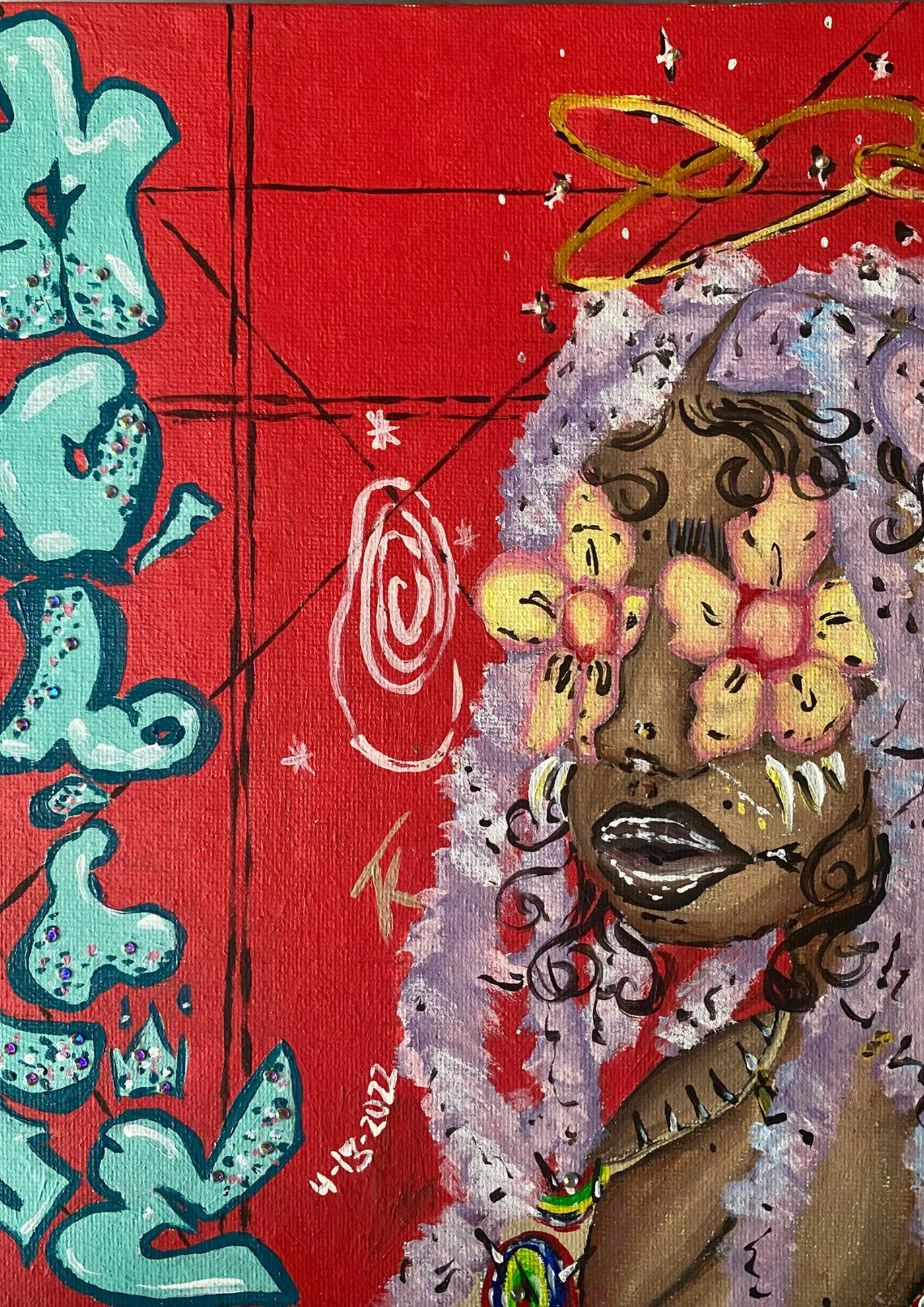
Tori Carlisle (tzoxart)

Tori Carlisle is a visual artist born and raised in Maryland. She attends Coppin State University to continue her knowledge and network in the arts. By experimenting outside of the norm of different mediums, she highlights the human brain and how its processes work. Carlisle ties her city lifestyle to the visual arts awareness of her background. She achieves her technique by integrating painting, illustration, and digital art to capture different audiences, displaying artistic control of bringing light to those who come from an urban background.

Artist Statement: Life can be unpredictable, and so can my art. Throughout the entirety of my visual artist career, I've grasped the despair of mental health and how someone who lives in an urban community feels. My craft turns a tragedy into a beautiful piece to hold. Each piece tells its own story, whether painting, digital art, or illustration, and nothing is alike. Individuality is portrayed to make it unique, and its emotions are true to oneself. In some, I featured gluing charms, fabrics, or yarn into the piece. Glorifying what was once "junk." My work requires you to think, create your own story, and connect to how such a unique piece can be so interesting.

Tori Carlisle | Blah Blah Blah





— Interview

Stephanie Danielsen

Can you tell us more about the moment you saw your mother's soul through your inner eyes and how that influenced your artwork?

The first time I saw her soul was almost two months after her death. It was a very difficult time, because my mother and I had always had a very close bond, and I was terrified that I had lost her forever. However, I increasingly felt her presence, so I asked for a sign in front of her picture that would reassure me that she was really there.

The next moment, I felt an incredible chill, even though it was in the middle of summer, and I knew it could only be my mother. As I continued to look at her picture, I noticed that the image was transforming through my inner eyes. There were clouds, colours and lots of light penetrating the dark clouds. It was absolutely beautiful, and I knew I had to paint it.



So, Mom's soul became the first one I portrayed. But I quickly realized that I also saw these images in other pictures, mementos or graves, and I've been capturing them on paper ever since. Today I can say that this moment completely changed my life. Not only have I been in contact with my mother again since then, but I've also been given this gift, which I can combine with my passion, painting. I inherited my creative streak from her. She herself could paint and draw beautifully and taught me at a very early age.

How do you approach the process of painting soul pictures? Is there a specific technique or energy you try to channel during your work?

First, I try to connect with the soul and ask if it's okay that I paint it. For me, it is very important to treat them respectfully, because they are and remain living energy and not an object without a will.

Some souls now even guide me to them specifically, like recently when I felt the urge to go to a cemetery I had never known before. I went straight to the children's graves, even though I couldn't have possibly known where they were. I stopped in front of the grave of a little boy and knew he desperately wanted to make contact with me so that I could paint his soul for his parents. He had used me to show them that he was well now and that he was always with them.

I always have watercolour pencils in my bag so I



can draw spontaneously. On sunny days, you can find me armed with pens and paper at various cemeteries or in the forest cemetery. I then transfer the resulting sketches to my tablet to create a digital image of it. This is especially useful when relatives want to have the portraits printed or made into cards.

What does your art symbolize for you, especially in the context of grief and healing?

When working with souls, energies play a very special role, as they consist of one hundred percent pure energy. This can sometimes be very exhausting, especially in places with multiple souls.

I usually invite the souls to reveal themselves to me. Sometimes only a few accept the offer, and sometimes I can't escape from the souls that insist on being painted. I often don't even have five minutes to sketch out an initial picture because so many images suddenly pop up in my head at once. But I don't use any special technique to connect with them, I just approach them very openly.

How has your personal experience with loss shaped your perspective on life and death, and how do you convey that through your art?

For me, my works symbolize the hope of a reunion, that not everything simply ends after death, but that we only change our form by freeing ourselves. The souls usually show themselves with a great deal of light, shining through thick clouds, leaving all the heaviness behind. It is as if a new chapter begins,

detached from the worries and fears here on earth.

I personally think that this thought is very comforting for many relatives, knowing that their loved ones are not completely lost, but continue to exist in another form and remain part of the family. I am convinced that souls can show us very impressively that love, as poets often write, really does overcome death and that the bond we share with them endures far beyond.

That is why so many souls use every opportunity to send signs to their loved ones and try to get in touch with them. They feel our pain and grief and want to ease it for us, to make us understand that we should continue on with them in our hearts and not stand still in our grief.

Of course, my paintings can't simply take away anyone's grief; the loss is often too great for that. But they offer a chance to look forward again in their grief, to the light, just as the souls themselves do.

Here in Germany, we have a saying: "Let go of what you love; if it comes back to you, it belongs to you forever." I think that's exactly what the souls show us so impressively. We must let go of their earthly form during our grieving process so that we can learn to accept their new form for ourselves. Only then can we see or feel the signs and learn to live our lives with them, rather than without them, because no soul wants to be forgotten, they want to remain a part of their loved ones.

My attitude has changed fundamentally since then. I think I now try more to live each day as if it were my last, but at the same time, I've lost my fear of death. This may sound strange, but I appreciate both more than ever today.

I think you can sense this in my paintings, which virtually unite life and death. They aren't gloomy and dark, as the subject of death and dying is so often treated in art, but rather they sparkle with light and joy of life, even though they only come into being after death. My paintings can also be seen as mirrors that show us what awaits us after our death. It is not our end; we merely change our form.

At the same time, we should always keep in mind that without life there is no death, but we also need death to truly live.

You've already exhibited your work in galleries in Germany and will soon be represented in Barcelona. How do you hope your art will impact people during these exhibitions?

Exhibitions are a wonderful opportunity to show the beauty of the portrayed souls and to make them accessible to a wider audience and thus to preserve them from posterity. My main goal is to take away people's fear of death and show them that they have nothing to be afraid of.

On the other hand, exhibitions or fairs offer a great platform for the deceased as a kind of remembrance. Some of the portrayed souls died violently or in complete solitude; they deserve to be remembered and for people to learn about their story. Many souls want that; they want to remain not only a part of their family, but also of the society they lived in for so long and to show that their story matters.

So I always tell people who want to buy such a portrait that they not only buy a piece of art but also a piece of the soul I had the honour to paint. For example, you bring home a portrait of a very joyful, happy soul, then you will feel it, your feelings will change when you are in the same room as the painting.

I also want to encourage the visitors of the fair to think about their lives, about life in general, and to confront them with death, a theme that is often suppressed in everyday life because it is still a fearful subject for many people.

Can you share any particular piece or experience from your exhibitions that deeply moved you or had a significant impact on you as an artist?

What truly impressed me was a woman in her early 30s whom I had the pleasure of meeting at a fair on the topic of death and dying. During the course of our conversation, she told me that she didn't have long to live and she had come here with the deep desire to lose her fear of dying, because she was so terrified that everything would suddenly end. She called it "the black hole" into which one disappears and where there will be no reunion.

Especially because of her family, she found this thought terrifying, and therefore she saw this fair as her last chance to realize that there might still be a spark of hope, that she does not disappear completely very soon. After we spoke and she looked at my paintings, she began to smile as tears ran down her cheeks, and she said to her husband, who had accompanied her: "Look, I have found what I was searching for. Now I know that I can still stay with you and our children forever."

This really touched my heart and encouraged me to continue sharing my paintings with the public and making them accessible to many people.

What role do you see art playing in the healing process for people dealing with grief or loss?

Art, in whatever form, can play a significant role in the healing process for people who deal with grief and loss because it is a language of its own, one that goes deeper than any normal spoken word. Especially when it comes to grief, many people lack the right words. Dying and grieving people are often unable to express their feelings through words or easily feel that those around them do not understand them.

Our language as we know it is very rational, it is controlled by our head, and this quickly reaches its limits when it comes to emotional topics. This is where art comes in. Art is controlled by the heart and switches off the rational mind in the first instance.



Here, the focus is not on understanding, not on right or wrong, but primarily on feelings. If it succeeds in deeply touching the viewer, it can then stimulate them to reflect and think about it and thus act as a bridge between heart and head.

However, it can not only be a way for those who are grieving to express themselves, but also to become aware of themselves, to sense their own feelings, and to recognize what would be good for them at that moment.

As an art therapist, I frequently accompany grieving processes, and it is always fascinating to see how the works change over time and encourage them to engage more deeply with themselves and their grief.

Art, whether created by oneself or simply viewed, opens up access to one's own soul through the

heart because only here can lasting healing processes be initiated, something our everyday language often fails to achieve. It sticks in our minds, but it is not very effective if we constantly tell ourselves that we feel better now but our heart, figuratively speaking, still resembles a pile of rubble.

When you lose someone you really love, it feels as if you are shattering into a thousand pieces. We will never be as whole as we were before, but art, and I include music and poetry in this, gives us the chance to at least reconnect the broken pieces into a form, so that we not only function, but also rediscover our inner strength and beauty. Art is hereby like the warm ray of sunshine that embraces us and announces calm after a stormy and wet night.



Sofia Erto

Sofia Erto is a self-taught, Berlin-based photographer, who is currently enrolled in the Ostkreuzschule für Fotografie in Berlin. She has already been featured in different art magazines and had small personal and group exhibitions both in Germany and in Italy, for example in Berlin, Trieste and Rome. Her preferred genre is street photography. What attracts her most to this genre is the aesthetics of the everyday, the "normality" of the situations, the complex simplicity of the scenes, the raw beauty of the urban.

Sofia Erto | Al Mare | 2023





— Interview

Natali Khas

Your work often blends vibrant textures and natural elements. Could you tell us more about your creative process when you begin a new piece? What role do textures and contrasts play in your art?

I am deeply influenced by nature and the details I notice in everyday life. I find inspiration in the simplest yet most amazing things: the smooth transitions of color at sunset, the intricate patterns on the surface of a stone, or the play of light on water. I try to capture these moments by photographing them or simply observing, so I can later translate them onto canvas. They evoke emotions and associations in me, which become the foundation for my work. My creative process begins with an idea that forms in my head or in a sketch. I don't start working until I can see the composition in my imagination and feel ready to express it through painting.

Textures play a key role in my paintings. They enhance the sensual perception, making the painting not only a visual but also a tactile experience. I often play on the contrast of surfaces, combining smooth and textured elements, and use color contrast to enhance the emotional impact. These techniques are characteristic of nature and familiar to all of us, which makes my works understandable and easy to perceive. At the same time, they remain layered and interesting — people want to look at them again and again, discovering new details and meanings.



You've dedicated many years to studying architecture and design before focusing on abstract painting. How has your architectural background influenced your approach to abstraction and your use of space in your artworks?

My architectural education and many years of experience in interior design have given me the opportunity to understand more deeply how composition and form affect the perception of space. I have learned to work with colors, fabrics, and textures, which have become an important part of my artistic approach. Additionally, I understand contemporary trends well and know which paintings can seamlessly complement modern interiors.

As a designer, I specialize in minimalist modern spaces where abstract paintings and textured artworks look particularly organic. I now have the opportunity not only to design interiors but also to fill them with art that I have created. This allows me to create spaces that fully reflect my vision and concept.

Meditation and inner peace are important themes in your work. How do you convey such personal experiences through your art, and do you believe your viewers can connect with those emotions through the textures and colors you use?

My life has always been busy, and due to constant

busyness, I gradually lost the ability to truly relax, even during rest. Over time, I realized how important it is to find moments of peace and harmony, and I understood that this need is relevant for many people in the modern world.

I create a series of paintings dedicated to meditation and harmony. For such works, I choose neutral, soft shades that do not overload perception. Materials are usually matte, and white, if present, is subdued and natural, creating a sense of naturalness and tranquility.

Textures and layers in my paintings help enhance this mood. I add irregularities, abrasions, and multiple layers of paint so that the surface of the painting resembles an old object that makes you want to examine and study it. These details help slow down time, immerse in the moment, and feel harmony — this is exactly what I strive for in my work.

Your recent works seem to explore both simplicity and complexity, balancing vibrant details with tranquil moments. How do you decide on the level of abstraction and detail in each piece?

Currently, I am working on two series, each reflecting different aspects of life. One series is dedicated to meditation and the state of inner peace, while the other focuses on achievements, overcoming challenges, and contradictions. These are two sides of the same coin, always present in our lives. It's important to accept and experience them since they complement each other.

The meditation series is executed in a minimalist style. I use a restrained palette, simple shapes and lines, emphasizing textures and subtle nuances of color. These works are highly abstract, creating an

atmosphere of tranquility. The series dedicated to life's complexities, on the other hand, is more vibrant and expressive. I use bright colors, complex compositions, and numerous details to convey energy, dynamics, and tension. These paintings are filled with emotion and drama.

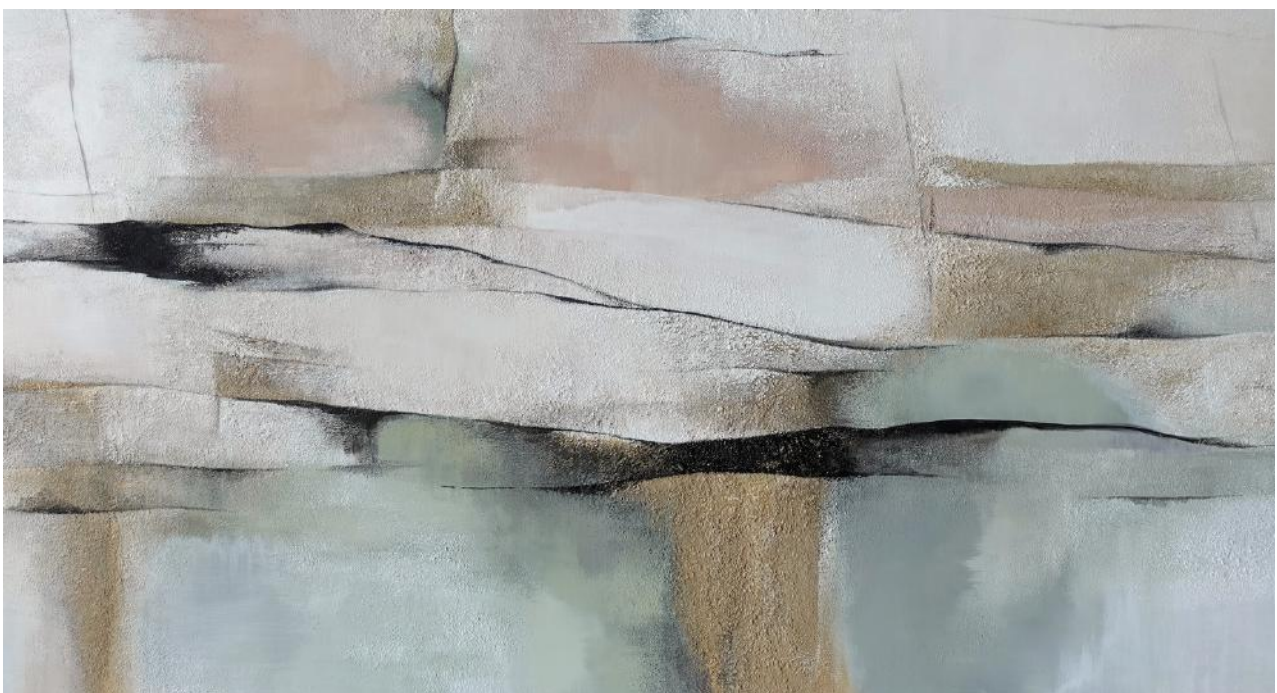
Despite their differences, both series share a focus on sensory perception. Viewers can find reflections of their own emotions and experiences, making my works relatable and understandable to everyone.

Your background in psychology of color perception is fascinating. How does this influence your choice of colors and the emotional impact you wish to convey in your art?

Colors have a tremendous impact on our perception, widely utilized in various fields—from advertising and cinema to architecture and interior design. I study the psychology of color with great interest, as it helps me understand how colors affect a person's emotions and mood more deeply.

In my works themed around meditation and inner peace, I often use calm, muted shades. These are natural colors that appear soothing to the eye and create a sense of harmony, helping to build an atmosphere of peace and tranquility.

However, in certain works, I employ more saturated and contrasting colors. Life is multifaceted, and not all emotions are easy and positive. To convey complex experiences or vibrant moments of joy, I use shades like emerald, black, vivid blue, pink, and other expressive tones. Occasionally, I use metallic paints such as liquid silver or gold leaf. These create effects of depth and layering, enhancing the emotional impact of the painting and adding a special dynamic.



Natali Khas | A life line | 2025

In your statement, you mention the importance of "being present" in a world filled with distractions. Do you think your artwork serves as a reminder of the present moment? If so, how do you hope your viewers will experience this through your paintings?

The modern world dictates a frantic pace of life. Every day we're faced with a torrent of tasks, messages, advertisements, and events that distract us from the most important—ourselves. We stop noticing the beauty of nature, forget to enjoy moments, and lose touch with our emotions and sensations. My paintings are an attempt to slow down this pace, giving people the opportunity to pause, feel alone with themselves, live through their emotions, and awaken memories. I want viewers to focus on themselves, rather than the outside world. The textures in my works enhance the effect of presence in the moment, drawing attention and captivating the gaze. Color combinations and contrasts evoke certain emotions, awaken sensuality, and add mindfulness. All of this helps viewers detach from external hustle and immerse themselves in their feelings.



Natali Khas | Believe in Myself | 2025



Natali Khas | Fantasies | 2025

What challenges have you faced transitioning from a career in design and architecture to abstract painting, and what has been the most rewarding part of this artistic journey?

The biggest challenge for me has been the lack of time. I have many ideas and projects I want to bring to life, but unfortunately, my time resources are limited. I continue to design residential interiors and combine that with my work as an artist. Another difficulty is that the contemporary art market in Russia is not yet as developed as the interior design market. Therefore, earning a living as a designer is easier than as an artist. But I continue to pursue both paths, as they are equally important to me.

The transition from interior designing to abstract painting was natural for me. Even before entering university, I studied graphics, painting, and composition for 10 years. Although I didn't become an artist right away, I've always known that I would return to it one day. In recent years, there has been growing interest in art in Russia, especially in the context of decorating interiors, and this inspired me to take up painting again.

A particularly significant moment for me was during a period when I fell ill and temporarily lost my sense of smell. Even food stopped bringing pleasure, and I realized how strongly this affected the quality of life. This state was close to depression, but painting helped me return to life. During that challenging period, I consciously began using textures and colors as a means to enhance sensuality and impressions—through tactile and visual perception. This compensated for the lack of emotions caused by the loss of smell. Now, I create works so that they awaken sensuality and amplify emotional effects in a person. These sensations are an important part of our lives.



Natali Khas | Obsession | 2025

I am **Shabnam Miri**, a visual artist born in August 1993 in Tehran, Iran. I hold a BFA and MA in Painting from the Art University of Tehran in Iran and am currently pursuing my MFA in Painting at the University of South Carolina. My work focuses on human relationships, everyday life, and storytelling in painting, often with a feminist perspective. I am deeply interested in capturing the emotions and experiences of people, using narrative and aesthetics to reflect on identity, gender, and society. I am the founder, head, and art director of Miri Art Institute in Iran, where I have been involved in teaching, curating, and organizing art programs. Working closely with students and artists has shaped my approach to both painting and education. Over the years, I have participated in various group and solo exhibitions, both in Iran and internationally. My paintings are often inspired by literature, personal experiences, and the people around me, blending observation with imagination.

Artist Statement

From the inception of my artistic journey, I have delved into humanity and its emotions, the examination of human relationships and their everyday lives, emphasizing the role of narrative in painting. The reflections of these studies are evident in my works. I have consistently sought the nexus between daily life and aesthetics in the contemporary world. My experiences have allowed me to view the world and society around me with a unique perspective. My educational and professional journey inspired me to depict people and their daily lives, seeking aesthetics in the heart of daily life and the ordinary existence of humans. My paintings are born from the fabric of society and living with diverse individuals with various thoughts and emotions. The role of women in my country's society has consistently captured my mind and become a central theme in my work. Moreover, I firmly believe that delving into women's experiences, emotions, and feelings can offer a deeper understanding of myself as a woman and my place in the world. Throughout my artistic life, I have been influenced by various individuals, from university professors and numerous artists throughout history to students and children whom I teach. Notable painters like David Hockney and Lucian Freud have had a significant influence on my artistic style. In addition to visual arts, my personal interest in literature, especially reading novels by my favorite author Fyodor Dostoevsky, has had a substantial impact on the thematic elements of my work. This interest emphasizes narrative and storytelling, capturing a moment from life within my art. In this process, I strive to take on the role of a storyteller, narrating stories about my existential concerns, including identity, gender, and human reflections. In my paintings, I usually emphasize the act of freezing and preserving a moment from everyday life by depicting my friends and family (often involving staging, photography, and then collaging scenes together). Additionally, by utilizing interior spaces and drawing objects that are as detailed as the figures, I consciously place objects and figures on an equal level of importance to further highlight the ordinariness of life. Empty spaces and flat surfaces create a stronger emphasis on the figures, while their gaze enhances viewer engagement. Moreover, the colors in my works, whether intentional or subconscious, convey the spirits and personalities of the depicted figures and their mutual feelings. Generally, my domains of interest include the daily life of humans, the relationships among people, their emotions and feelings, the role of storytelling in human lives, as well as women and feminism. In creating my artworks, I embrace creative freedom, avoiding self-imposed constraints and allowing the process to unfold serendipitously. The creation of art for me typically takes shape through spontaneous and experimental exploration. Ultimately, art has always been a game for me a realm where I could challenge and set my own rules. Transforming my visions into reality, capturing the essence of human existence, emotions, and feelings is the ongoing journey of self-expression.





— Interview

Karl Pont

Your artistic practice spans a diverse range of media, from painting and sculpture to photography and performance. How do you decide which medium is most suitable for a specific project or idea?

The choice of medium is deliberate. I select the one that can achieve the strongest expressive power and best convey the impact of the motif, always in harmony with the setting where the work will be shown and influenced by the emotional state in which the work arises.

In official projects, such as biennials or major exhibitions, it is especially important for me to move and fascinate people, ideally by appealing to all their senses. I often combine several artistic disciplines. One example is the installation “The Call from Lake Constance”, which I created for a major solo exhibition in Austria. Visitors pick up the receiver of an old rotary phone and hear the sounds, voices and waves of Lake Constance, the lake tells its stories to the listener. At the same time, a video projection of the lake plays in sync with the sounds.

The telephone rests on a bed of gravel collected from the lake’s shore. Next to it lies driftwood, and a bit farther away, reeds rise. Original fishing gear such as nets and rods hang on the sides and in front of the projection, creating an immersive and authentic



environment. A gentle breeze is felt through targeted ventilation, and with the use of scent, the room smells like the lake, even taste plays a role in the experience. For a moment, one forgets everything else and becomes one with the artwork. In works like this, I find the power of combining media most evident when it creates a coherent and sensory experience.

You mention that your works evoke emotional moods in others, stemming from your own experiences. How do you go about translating these personal feelings into visual art?

I want to share with the viewer the feelings and moods I experienced while creating the artwork. My goal is to transfer the emotional impact that the surrounding environment had on me to the person standing in front of the piece.

In the series of four acrylic paintings titled *Sunset on the Shore of Lake Constance*, for example, I used strong contrasts and dynamic brushstrokes to set the entire image in motion. The forms are abstract and suggestive rather than clearly defined, as the background is not the focus. What matters most is the atmosphere, the emotional intensity of that moment, and the movements of the ether.

If a visitor looks at the artwork with fascination, if they are moved emotionally, then the piece has achieved its purpose.

Your art reveals the beauty of the inconspicuous. Can you elaborate on how you select seemingly ordinary objects to explore their deeper meaning in your work?

We live in a very fast-paced world. Many people have forgotten how to enjoy the moment, to slow down and pay attention to the small things along the way. We rush straight ahead in the hamster wheel of life, just trying not to fall. But living in the moment, being aware of the things and people around us, is so important.



I often work with driftwood from Lake Constance. The wood has been shaped and prepared by the elements. Most people would simply walk past it without a second thought. But I see forms in it, faces, creatures, mythical beings. They fascinate me. I take the wood into the studio and work on it so that the forms I see become visible to others as well.

It's amazing to witness how these overlooked objects suddenly draw attention in an exhibition, how visitors stop, admire them, and even experience an emotional response. The inconspicuous things by the side of the path become something meaningful and alive.

You've described your art as dealing with themes of freedom, vastness, and the longing for stillness and balance. How do you maintain this balance in your own life, and how does it manifest in your work?

Maintaining balance is an art in itself. I am also a cog in the system, but I consciously make time for the things that truly matter. It's important to recognize what really counts.

We are all artists of life in a way, but many people no longer listen to their inner voice. My head is full of creative ideas, and the more I manage to bring them to life, the calmer and happier I feel.

I often work in the evening or late at night, simply because it's the only time available. I try to use that time intentionally. And I also try to inspire others through art and involve them in creative projects, because sharing creativity creates connection and balance as well.

How do you approach the concept of 'losing boundaries' in your work? Is it more of a philosophical or emotional concept for you?

For me, losing boundaries is both a philosophical and an emotional concept. It is about becoming free, free from pain, free from pressure, and free from the feeling of being just a small part in the machinery of modern life.

In my art, I seek moments where the boundaries between inner and outer worlds dissolve, between self and surroundings, between body and spirit, between reality and dream. This openness allows for transformation and connection.

I believe that true art can create spaces where we forget our limitations for a moment and become part of something larger, something that speaks to the soul rather than the mind.

You have received numerous awards for your work. How do these accolades affect your creative process, if at all? Do they push you in a certain direction, or do they reinforce the path you are already on?

The many awards and recognitions I have received feel like a deep appreciation for my work. They show me that the countless hours, the energy and effort I put into my projects and artworks were not in vain. Winning first and second place at the international snow sculpture competition in Harbin, China, second place in the competition in Rorschach, Switzerland, or receiving the Hessian State Prize at the German national competition for literature and art, these and many other awards confirm that I am on the right path and that the commitment has been worth it.

Your project appears to be deeply reflective, almost meditative in its essence. How do you find a moment of stillness in a world that often feels chaotic? Do you find that this reflection makes its way into your art practice?

I spend a lot of time in nature, at Lake Constance or in the surrounding mountains. Nature gives me both peace and strength, but also endless inspiration for new artworks. I take time to observe and let the atmosphere affect me.

If you happen to find yourself in the forest or by the lake sometime soon, close your eyes and just listen. There is so much we have forgotten to hear.



— Interview

Miho Murakami

What inspired you to pursue a career in both painting and fashion design?

Art has been my passion for as long as I can remember. As a child, I assumed pursuing it as a career would be easy. Fashion and beauty have always captivated me. I spent countless hours playing with dolls, watching animations like Sailor Moon, Super Gals, and Paradise Kiss, and obsessing over the Spice Girls and other stylish artists on music channels. Inspired by their outfits, I found joy in dressing up, documenting my looks through photos, sketching, and reimagining designs. I eagerly collected fashion magazines as well, drawn to the creativity in their pages. From a young age, I knew with certainty that I wanted to become a fashion designer.

How has your multicultural background influenced your artistic style and themes?

I studied in Japan until I was seven, where schools strongly supported and encouraged the arts from an early age. Later, I moved to the Philippines, where the educational system was entirely different, yet I still found ways to express and nurture my creativity. Growing up in a tropical country might have influenced my artistic style. Our home at the foot of the hills, overlooking the Manila skyline, probably shaped my appreciation for organic beauty and vibrant landscapes. At the same time, returning to



Tokyo every year where people freely express themselves through fashion without fear of judgment, I think has also played a significant role in shaping my perspective. I see my art reflects these contrasts, merging natural and urban influences into a distinct visual.

While I can't pinpoint a single origin for my artistic style, I believe my multicultural background has also given me the confidence and curiosity to explore the world.

Traveling alone, immersing myself in different cultures, and experiencing/seeing diverse art, fashion, and architecture have expanded my creative vision. I also have people telling me during my art expositions that they see the Japanese side, Filipino side, and the fashion background in my works. Which surprises me still.

Your works are filled with vibrant colors and natural elements. What role does nature play in your creative process?

I have a deep appreciation for nature, but I find it fascinating and a little ironic that what inspires me most is also something, I fear. While nature's beauty and complexity captivate me, I've never been the type to fully immerse myself in it, especially alone. The thought of being surrounded by it, with no barriers, feels overwhelming to the point where I

believe it might be traumatic. It is so strange when I grew up literally enclosed in nature. For instance, I'm scared of large trees! The feeling of their looming presence above me sends shivers down my spine. Oversized leaves, like those of monstera, yam plants, and lotus terrify me. A leaf bigger than me feels unsettling, almost surreal. I imagine that encountering a wild, gigantic leaf up close might make me faint.

It's as though I'm drawn to love and admire nature from a safe distance. The vibrant colors, intricate textures, and organic shapes will forever inspire my work, but the idea of being completely enveloped by them is too much for me to handle. Someday, I'd love to understand the science or psychology behind this strange dichotomy on how something can be so deeply inspiring and yet so deeply unsettling for me at the same time.

Can you tell us more about the transition from creating art for personal expression to launching your clothing line?

While I had formal education in fashion design, my art style came first. entirely selftaught and developed through years of experimentation. Though I started young, it wasn't until my late 20s that I seriously committed to creating art. After 3–4 years of consistent painting, I began to define the brand I wanted to build. In 2024, I started transforming that vision into reality by working on my clothing line.



Miho Murakami | Frogs & Fables | 2024

I entered fashion school at 17, certain that fashion was my path. I created beautiful ensembles, but looking back, they lacked a strong identity. At the time, I wasn't mindful of trends or engaged in deep design research. I was simply making what I wanted without considering a broader narrative. More than that, I had completely set aside art.

If I had nurtured both disciplines together, my approach would have been different. It wasn't until years later, during my time in London, that I truly understood the importance of research, storytelling, and creative evolution. That experience reshaped my perspective, helping me refine my aesthetics and build a brand with depth and intention.

I've always believed that creativity is a continuous evolution. Whether in my paintings, personal style, or fashion brand. My fascination with bold colors and prints has always been at the heart of my process, naturally evident in every aspect of my work. Now, I'm returning to the core of my passion with a clear vision: to integrate all these elements in a way that feels cohesive and authentic. My goal is to create a seamless fusion of my artistic expressions, where each piece works together to reflect my evolving creative identity.

How do you incorporate sustainability into your art and fashion designs?

In my years of studying fashion, I've come to understand that achieving 100% sustainability is going to be challenging, given the many factors involved, such as design, materials, carbon footprints, and more, especially in the current state of the industry. I plan to incorporate sustainability by sourcing environmentally friendly materials and using deadstock fabrics. I also want to repurpose trims and leftover materials, striving for zero waste. I also aim to encourage people to take better care of their garments, by being mindful of care tags, and educate them on the best ways to care for their clothes. The goal is to create pieces that are stylish, versatile, and built to last.

I'm a thrift shopper myself and have been avoiding fast fashion for some time now, and it has made a significant difference. It fuels creativity in styling, fosters a sense of responsibility in my choices, helps me understand materials better, and I can say that it has improved my quality of life. I've found my style and no longer feel the need to chase trends that don't suit me. I believe that the small changes I've made in my own life have paved the way for this advocacy and a more mindful approach to creation.

As for my art, I enjoy visiting recycle shops, where I often find old paintings for sale. I repurpose them to create something new.

That said, I feel a deep responsibility as a designer to

care for our planet. I cannot create something truly beautiful at the expense of the environment. Sustainability is and will always be a continuous learning process for me. I remain hopeful that one day we will find ways to make fashion entirely sustainable. After all, what's the value of creating beautiful things if we're left with an ugly world?

Many of your pieces empower women and celebrate diversity. What messages do you hope viewers take away from your work?

As a woman of mixed race and culture, I've experienced both the good and the challenging aspects of being a woman in two different worlds. I remember years ago when I read the phrase "all the women in me are tired" by Mexican-American poet Erika L. Sánchez - I felt that deeply. It's true; it is exhausting to not feel safe, to struggle with societal expectations, cultural pressures, low-key racisms and not to mention our personal challenges. Many people are not well-educated about womanhood, race, or diverse backgrounds. At times, this ignorance can seem rude, but I remind myself that people often haven't been taught enough. That weight is not ours to carry, yet we do. Despite it all, women rise with beauty, strength, and grace even in the face of adversity, and it naturally reflects on my works. It also sickens me to hear stories of abuse and violence against women. Perhaps this is why womankind has always been at the heart of my work, both in art and fashion. I truly believe there is a

greater mission and purpose behind what I create, and the drive to continue is growing stronger. I will keep creating until my work becomes a channel for helping women and children in need.

It is important for me to add that I've always been grateful to my parents for the privilege I grew up with, as it allowed me to pursue a career in art and fashion. Despite the common stereotypes that art is financially unsustainable, unnecessary, or requires a fortune to break into, my parents were always supportive and nurturing. They encouraged me to follow my passion, and I want everyone to have the same opportunity, regardless of their background. My goal is to create something that helps others develop their skills and knowledge not just in these fields if I can. These visions and the visuals I create are what drive me forward.

I am hoping that someday when people see my artworks, they would recognize them not just visually but for the message and the mission behind it as well.

What advice would you give to other artists looking to combine multiple creative disciplines?

Make time for everything you're passionate about. Listen to the little creative nudges when it occurs. It might be intimidating to start another project which is totally different from what you're actually good at, but you don't need to be perfect from the start, discipline and consistent practice will take you far. One skill or idea often leads to another, and you'll find that what you learn in one area will inspire and enhance your work in another. I wouldn't have found my painting style without my background in fashion and I wouldn't have created my clothing line without my paintings. The vision for my brand only became clearer through my travels, the challenges I faced, and the solutions I wanted to offer. It's all connected and that's the beauty of embracing every part of yourself when you're a multidisciplinary artist. Over time, you'll build a bridge that connects all your interests in ways you never expected.

Also, for those who still get confused. It's completely normal to love many things!

You don't have to choose. Embrace them all and make time for each one! When you restrict yourself, it creates stress, which leads to self-doubt, and eventually, you lose the energy to create. I've always believed that the talents and skills we're given aren't accidental, they're meant to be explored and used so honor what you've been blessed with. Callings don't fade. They will keep calling until you finally answer. Don't ignore them. Start with what you have and the universe will bless you with the tools you need along the way and you'll be amazed at what you create and who you attract.



Miho Murakami | Haunted Reef | 2023



Anthony Acri is a cartoonist, illustrator and a social critic, in the terms of Croce or Vidal, who lives in the suburbia of Pittsburgh Pa, with his sister and brother and are all that is left of a family of Italians who had coddled and both warned him of the quagmire that he was going to be dealing in and with as a boy.

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— Interview

Leanne Violet

How did your background in textile art influence your exploration of memory and legacy in your work?

My practice spans a variety of mediums, but the central theme that runs through all my work is memory. I am fascinated by how relationships shape our understanding of ourselves and how personal and collective histories inform our sense of identity. As a multi-disciplinary artist, I choose materials that resonate with the themes I explore. Textiles, in particular, offer a tactile quality that feels inherently connected to human presence, care, and time. These materials often carry the weight of stories, traces of wear, and memories from those who handled them before. In this way, textiles provide a poignant vehicle for investigating memory – they hold the imprints of life.

The theme of generational resilience is a central part of your practice. How do you feel this is expressed through the materials you use, such as fabrics and embroidery?

Materials that have already lived a life carry a unique energy of endurance. When I work with old clothing or embroidered linens, I feel a connection to something that has outlived its original function. These materials reflect domestic histories and the often-unseen labour of (mostly) women – the quiet strength it takes to care, preserve, and create beauty despite limitations.



Embroidery itself is a slow, patient process passed down through generations, often learned through repetition. This tradition has survived despite being undervalued, yet it continues to hold space in both culture and personal experience. I was deeply moved by *Threads of Life* by Clare Hunter, which illuminates how embroidery has historically been a form of resistance. By repurposing and layering fragments of these materials, I'm not just reimagining their visual stories, but also honouring the resilience of those who wore, stitched, and preserved them. It becomes an act of remembrance and a celebration of the endurance of care across generations.

The pansy, used in your piece "Love in Idleness," symbolizes thought and remembrance. Could you tell us about the significance of this flower in your work, and how the all-seeing eye fits into this symbolism?

The pansy has long been associated with remembrance and thoughtfulness. In *Love in Idleness*, it became the perfect motif to anchor the piece. Its name, derived from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, speaks to both emotional vulnerability and enchantment. The pansy is also known as "Heartsease" in herbal medicine, a remedy for cardiovascular issues, symbolising the healing power of care and connection.

I am drawn to the pansy's ability to carry such weight despite its delicate nature. For me, Love in Idleness isn't about inactivity but about a form of love where stillness becomes a kind of presence. It represents the comfort of simply being with someone – where no performance is needed and quiet companionship becomes restorative.

In this piece, the pansy represents moments of quiet reflection, much like the way memory works – soft, layered, and persistent. The all-seeing eye introduces a sense of watchfulness, but not in an intrusive or sinister way. It evokes gentle, continuous emotional attentiveness – suggesting the presence of someone who sees and remembers even when we are not aware of it. The pairing of the pansy with the eye creates a dynamic between reflection and observation, between being seen and seeing. Because to be seen, in this context, is to be loved.

Your work often revolves around the idea of quiet rituals of care. How do you see these rituals being represented in the more intricate labour of needlework versus the themes of emotional idleness?

The tension between slow, labour-intensive work and themes of idleness is central to this project. The type of love I am exploring in this project is one rooted in stillness, quiet, and comfort; it is built over time, through small, consistent acts of care. The needlework becomes a metaphor for this: each stitch is an act of attention, a quiet offering that gradually contributes to a larger picture.

Embroidery's rhythm and repetition reflect the unnoticed rituals of care that shape relationships—

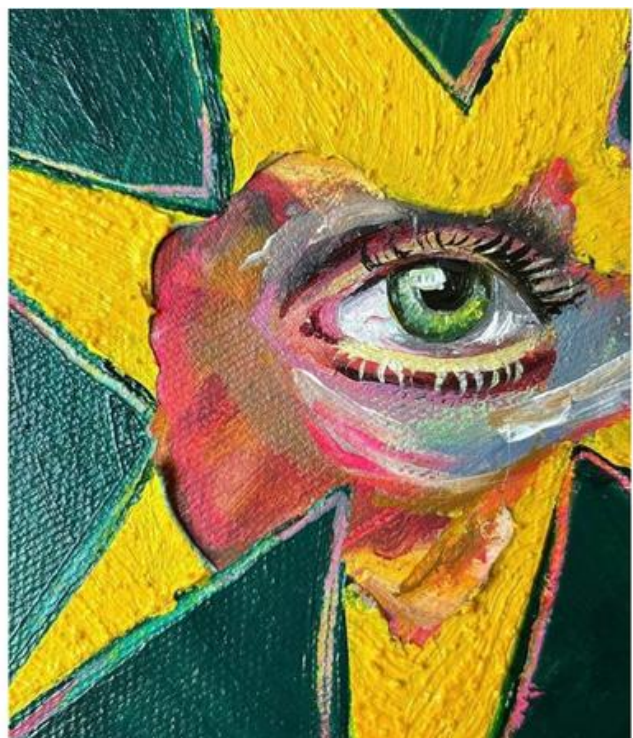
small acts of devotion, like stitches building up to form a bond. What may appear as stillness is, in fact, the result of layered effort: a space made safe through time, patience, and intention. These quiet acts of care, though subtle, are essential in maintaining emotional connections.

Can you walk us through the process of creating one of your textile collages? How do you decide on the scrap fabrics you use, and what role does each piece play in the overall narrative?

For this piece, I started with my scrap fabric basket, which is filled with worn-out clothing that's no longer suitable for repair or donation. I also collect materials from local charity shops, particularly from one store that bundles random fabric scraps together. I enjoy the surprise of not knowing exactly what I'll find in these bundles, and there's something exciting about the unexpected quality of the materials.

I'm particularly drawn to hand-embroidered linens, which often tell quiet stories of care. I think about the people who made them – spending hours carefully stitching a tablecloth to be saved “for best,” only for it to be forgotten and sold later for a few pounds. These linens have a quiet history, and I love the idea of breathing new life into them.

My process begins with sketches and a loose sense of the composition. From there, I select fabrics that fit the colour palette forming in my mind, seeking visual interest through layering, texture, and pattern. I cut my sketch into pattern pieces, pin everything down, and start embroidering. I avoid using glue or fusible backing because they stiffen the work, preferring instead to let the fabric move naturally, allowing for a



Leanne Violet | Texture Experiment | 2024

sense of motion – particularly in organic shapes like petals and leaves.

The process is slow, and it's intentional. It's a labour of love, worked on during lunch breaks, on the bus, or whenever I have a spare moment. The portability of the process – the gradual accumulation of time and touch – feels essential to the narrative. It mirrors the way memory forms: layered, imperfect, and deeply personal.

The contrast between intricate handcraft and emotional themes is striking in your work. How do you balance these seemingly opposing elements to create a cohesive piece?

The balance between intricate handcraft and emotional themes is crucial to my work, but I approach it in a fluid way. The craft is technical – every stitch, pattern, and fabric choice are deliberate – but it is also part of the emotional narrative, not separate from it. The meticulous nature of the needlework reflects the layered, slow-building quality of emotions like memory or love.

However, emotional themes are not always neat or linear. Memory is fragmented, and love is complex. The handcraft itself embodies these complexities – there are moments when stitches go off-course, or the fabric doesn't behave as expected, but I embrace these 'mistakes' as part of the emotional truth of the work. The process is not always flawless, but that is reflective of life and relationships - love and memory.

I hope this balance conveys that both emotion and handcraft require time, care, and engagement with the process, even when it feels uncertain. This dynamic allows me to explore how emotion and memory can be reconstructed and reimagined, how labour can deepen our understanding of these themes.

In "Love in Idleness," there is a sense of introspection and watchfulness through the eye. How do you hope viewers will engage with this concept when experiencing your work?

The all-seeing eye in Love in Idleness represents a continuous, quiet awareness. It's not an intrusive gaze but one that observes with care and presence. I hope viewers will engage with this concept by recognising that to be truly seen – without judgment or expectation – is an act of love in itself. The eye invites reflection on how being watched, in this gentle way, can serve as a form of emotional attentiveness, reminding us that we are loved even in moments when we are not aware of being noticed.

The eye also speaks to unconscious way our brains collect memories – how it watches, stores, and recalls without demanding attention. It prompts viewers to think about how observation and memory are interconnected and how quiet, unnoticed acts of care shape our relationships and histories. Through the eye, I want viewers to reflect on the act of seeing and being seen, and how these simple acts of presence and attentiveness are integral.





RAMÓN RIVAS

He was born in the land of Don Quixote (Castilla-La Mancha, Spain). His roots are deeply rooted in a land rich in literary and artistic heritage, famous for being the setting for the literary works of Miguel de Cervantes. His family environment and the multidisciplinary influence of his professional activities - in sport, music, engineering, inventions and art - in Castilla-La Mancha and Madrid have been decisive in his artistic creation, a very personal and distinctive style called Rivismo, based on the application of the experiential brushstroke. Over the last twenty years, his research has strengthened the concepts and philosophy that prevail in Rivismo, giving prominence to material elements to which he has assigned aspects, functions and human values. Renowned art professionals have recognized the exceptional originality and aesthetic appeal of Ramón's work. His unique vision and exceptional skills have not only captivated audiences around the world but have also significantly contributed to enriching the art world. Ramón Rivas's art is not simply a visual feast; it is a revolutionary act, a space where the imagination is unleashed and the spirits of both creator and viewer merge in a dance of vibrant creativity. He proves to be a master of linguistic plurality, developing his own unique language. Ramón Rivas's creativity thrives on differentiation and working on artistic proposals that surprise, captivate, and interact with the viewer. His personal style favours mixed media and large formats to encourage participation and a visual journey through the pictorial scene. His talent has been recognised through solo and group exhibitions in several countries, including Spain, China, Japan, South Korea, Italy, Denmark, France, England, Netherlands and the United States. He has actively participated in art fairs in the United States and his art is proudly displayed in private collections in museums in Spain, Denmark and South Korea. His work has successfully exceeded the expectations required for participation in prestigious international exhibitions and publications, and has been recognized with multiple prestigious international awards.





— Interview

Chiara Dalla Costa

Can you share more about the journey that led you to create the Major Arcana Card Deck and how it connects to your personal experiences and spiritual path?

I've always felt attracted to mystical things, symbolism and rituals, and I can definitely say that all of these are now integral parts of my everyday life. My first connection with forms of divination happened many years ago when I got in touch with Runes, through a very special book I received as a present. I created my own set of Runes made out of stones collected by the sea, which I still use today. Since that time, I would say my interests have been deeply focused on spiritual practices, combining them with art, which carries a deeply healing power for me.

The exploration of Tarot cards came into my life a bit later, also through a book: *The Castle of Crossed Destinies* by Italo Calvino. In the story, there is an enchanted castle where no one can speak, and the only way the characters can express themselves is by choosing Tarot cards to tell their stories. I found this idea deeply fascinating and started seeing the cards as a unique and special language that can tell a story and truly speak to us. We just need to know how to ask and be open to listening.

That book sparked something in me: the idea that each Major Arcana card is like its own little world, full of symbols, emotions, and meaning. From that moment on, I started diving deeper, reading everything I could find, researching about their symbolism, and exploring how each card speaks for itself and also in relation to the others. Over time, it became more than just a curiosity. It turned into a spiritual tool, a language, and eventually, a creative calling. For me, it was — and still is — a full immersive



journey. Creating my own deck felt like giving birth to something that had lived inside me for a long time. I am also very curious about how other artists interpret Tarot symbolism. I'm always searching for new decks, and I love when these universal symbols are translated into the unique visual language of the artist. At the moment, my favourite deck is one by the Italian artist Elisa Seitzinger, *The Symbolic Soul Tarot*. The visual world she creates is deeply inspiring and definitely influencing my work.

The creatures you depict in your artwork seem to carry a strong symbolic energy. How do you decide on the symbolism for each card?

The symbolism in each card is the one contained in the Rider Waite deck. I began with the deck's traditional symbols and then allowed the creative juices and intuition to freely guide the process. Drawing from this foundation, I gave birth to *Tiny Mystic Creatures* that embody the essence of each Arcana, integrating my own vision with the timeless archetypes the cards represent.

Each Major Arcana carries a deep lesson, and through my work, I aim to offer the viewer a direct and personal encounter with these universal meanings. For centuries, the cards have served as a tool for divination, a way to explore the present moment and gain insight into the future. Their symbolic power remains just as potent today, and my intention is to show how these ancient techniques continue to

resonate in our contemporary world. I want the audience to engage not only with the visual aspect of the cards but also with their inner meanings. Through this interpretation, I hope to invite reflection and spark curiosity about how Tarot can be used as a tool for introspection and daily guidance.

Also, the illustrations were created through pencil sketches followed by ink on paper, without a fixed draft. From time to time, while working directly with the pen, unexpected marks or what I initially saw as "mistakes" would appear. Instead of correcting them, I chose to integrate these moments into the drawing, which often led to the birth of new symbols. Much like life, things rarely unfold exactly as planned — but it is in embracing the unexpected that we begin to understand the full picture. And within that larger picture, everything finds its place, in every moment and in its own time.

What was the most challenging part of translating Tarot symbolism into the visual language of your Tiny Mystic Creatures?

To be quite honest, I wouldn't describe the creation of the Tiny Mystic Creatures Tarot cards as challenging. It felt more like a channelling process! ;)

For me, it felt as though the visual language of the Tiny Mystic Creatures was already a language through which the Major Arcana were speaking to each other. Each card includes the main symbols connected to its

archetype, but I also used a visual translation that connects certain cards together. There are recurring artistic choices shared between The Empress and The Emperor, The Sun, The Moon and The Star, or between The Devil and Death.

It is a project that took years to unfold, and maybe it is still unfolding (the entire family of Minor Arcana is still waiting!). When I drew The Fool, the very first one, I never imagined that they would come so fully to life. I followed the traditional order of the deck, beginning with The Fool and ending with The World, which can be read as a symbolic journey through human experience. That is exactly what it felt like to me as I was drawing them — a profound journey of transformation.

Nothing about the process was forced. Each drawing followed its own rhythm. I would spend time reading about the Major Arcana, diving into their meanings, their symbolism, and the archetypes they embody. Only once I felt a connection would I begin to draw. Sometimes this moment arrived after just a weekend, other times it took months. It was not really me deciding the timing. There were times when I completed three cards in two weeks, and others when a single card took three months to emerge.

The only real challenge came when I tried to create from a place that did not feel fully aligned. I could feel it immediately. And in those moments, I knew it was time to pause. I would leave the Tiny Mystic Creature aside, allowing them to work on my subconscious level, and return to them only when the moment felt right again.

If I had to choose one word to describe my approach, it would be curiosity. It reflects not only how I moved through this project, but also how I navigate life. After immersing myself in the story and symbols of each Arcana, I was always curious to see how it would translate onto paper, reimagined through the lens of the Tiny Mystic Creatures.

In your statement, you mention that your creative process is influenced by practices like astrology, art therapy, and shadow work. Could you elaborate on how these elements manifest in your art?

Some time ago, I remember reading a quote: "My art is an extension of who I am." It stayed in my mind for a long time until it slowly moved down into my heart. I clearly recall the moment I looked at the Tiny Mystic Creatures and truly felt that they are, indeed, an extension of who I am. They shift, evolve, and transform, just as I do. Creating this deck was deeply therapeutic and it unfolded alongside my exploration of divination practices and my ongoing spiritual and personal journey.

I would also love to share what 'Ritual' means to me,



Chiara Dalla Costa | The Magician

as it is such a huge part of both my art and my life. For me rituals are acts of presence. They are invitations to pause, to ground, to make space for something beyond the visible. They do not have to be majestic or immersed in clouds of incense. A ritual can be as simple as snapping your fingers when you cross a certain part of the city. It can be showering with the intention of washing away what no longer serves you, sipping your tea in silence, or opening a book to a random page and reading the first sentence that catches your eye. For me, rituals are a way of gently reminding myself that magic exists in everyday moments. They help me connect with something greater, something unseen but deeply felt. These little gestures open a doorway to the invisible worlds and allow me to carry a thread of enchantment through even the most ordinary days.

I also came to realize that creating art is always therapeutic. I truly believe it is healing for all of us, which is why we all need to make more of it. When I let creativity flow through me, something always shifts inside. It's as if something unspoken is released, something that only I could express in that exact way. That, to me, is incredibly powerful.

Astrology is another deep interest of mine. I find it endlessly fascinating to explore the different layers of the self and dive deeper into understanding who I am. And when you start venturing down deeper and deeper, shedding layers, there necessarily comes a moment when shadow work begins — when you meet



Chiara Dalla Costa | Strength

the parts of yourself you've never seen, the most unpleasant ones. The ones that you need to face and integrate in the way that resonates the most with you. For me one of these ways is making art out of it. To me it feels like walking through the dark muddy waters of a Black Lake. That is when the Tiny Mystic Creatures appear. They blink at you from the shadows. Sometimes they ask you to listen. Sometimes they guide you somewhere unexpected. And other times, they simply show up to remind you they are still there and they will always be there — quiet companions walking beside you, whispering that you are not alone.

The "Tiny Mystic Creatures" are described as guides and protectors. How do you personally connect with these creatures and their messages?

The very first Tiny Mystic Creature appeared to me in a dream. It was a long time ago, and at that time the name "Tiny Mystic Creature" had not come to me yet. But thinking about it now, that is exactly what it was. It felt like a vision, with two deep black eyes and a body that seemed to be made of delicate, transparent layers of paper. I woke up with a strong urge to draw it, to bring it onto paper, to make it alive. That first drawing is still sitting next to my bed. As time went by, the image of the Black Lake began to take shape in my mind. It became clear that this was the place the Tiny Mystic Creatures came from. And



Chiara Dalla Costa | The Hermit

then they started to appear more frequently. More and more of them arrived, with many eyes watching me gently from the dark waters, present along my path. Their shapes and appearances change, but the eyes always remain the same.

I am literally talking to them and know they are good spirits. I describe them as guides and protectors, like little friends along the way. I have drawn most of them, sometimes including the words they say. By now, I understand that they are a part of me and in some way...they are me. Then I created the Tiny Mystic Creature Major Arcana deck. I carry it with me, and from time to time, I pick a card to see what they want to tell me.

You mentioned that synchronicities influenced the development of your art. Can you describe a particular synchronicity that guided your artistic journey?

I wouldn't say there is one specific synchronicity I would highlight, but rather a succession of episodes, events, people I have met, and moments that have led to something else. For me, it is always fundamental to follow my instinct. There have been times when my mind would question, "Why would you do this?" because, from a rational point of view, there was no clear outcome. And yet, by simply showing up, I might meet someone with whom I connect or encounter a hint that gently guides me in a new direction. Synchronicities tend to appear when we pay attention. And to truly pay attention, we need to be present. We also need to stay curious. Curiosity plays a huge role in my life and is one of the qualities I consider a superpower. When I find myself moving through muddy waters, I sometimes lose that open and non-judgmental perspective. But then I remember the energy of curiosity, and suddenly, everything feels a little more playful. That lightness helps me move

through difficult moments with more ease.

I try to maintain a curious mindset when experiences come my way and ask myself what lessons they might hold. When we bring curiosity into our approach to life, the lessons begin to reveal themselves naturally. You might overhear a piece of conversation on the street that resonates with something you needed to hear, or take an unfamiliar path home and witness something small yet magical.

To me, these three qualities — presence, curiosity, and an open heart — are what invite synchronicities into our lives. And at the end of the day, no matter what it may have brought, I try to greet it with gratitude.

How do you approach creating the eyes of the Mystic Creatures, and why do you find them to be such a central part of the drawings?

When I start drawing a Mystic Creature the eyes are always what comes first to the surface. After the first draft where the eyes and the shape are marked, everything is realised directly ink on paper. This technique taught me that there is no wrong line, even when something was not predicted, it was a chance to re-route and follow the direction the Mystic Creature wanted to take. Every 'mistake' is going to be integrated in the final drawing. Also, this allowed me to embrace the fact that in the creative process, as in life, you can never go wrong. All is how it is meant to be.

The eyes are the central part of the drawing because it is the only thing that in all the Tiny Mystic Creatures remains the same.

It is the very first part that I draw, and as soon as the eyes are there, the Tiny Mystic Creature is alive. It speaks to me and by drawing the rest, I listen to it. Then comes the shape and the symbolism contained in it, letting the Tiny Mystic Creature emerge from the waters and appearing on the surface of the paper.

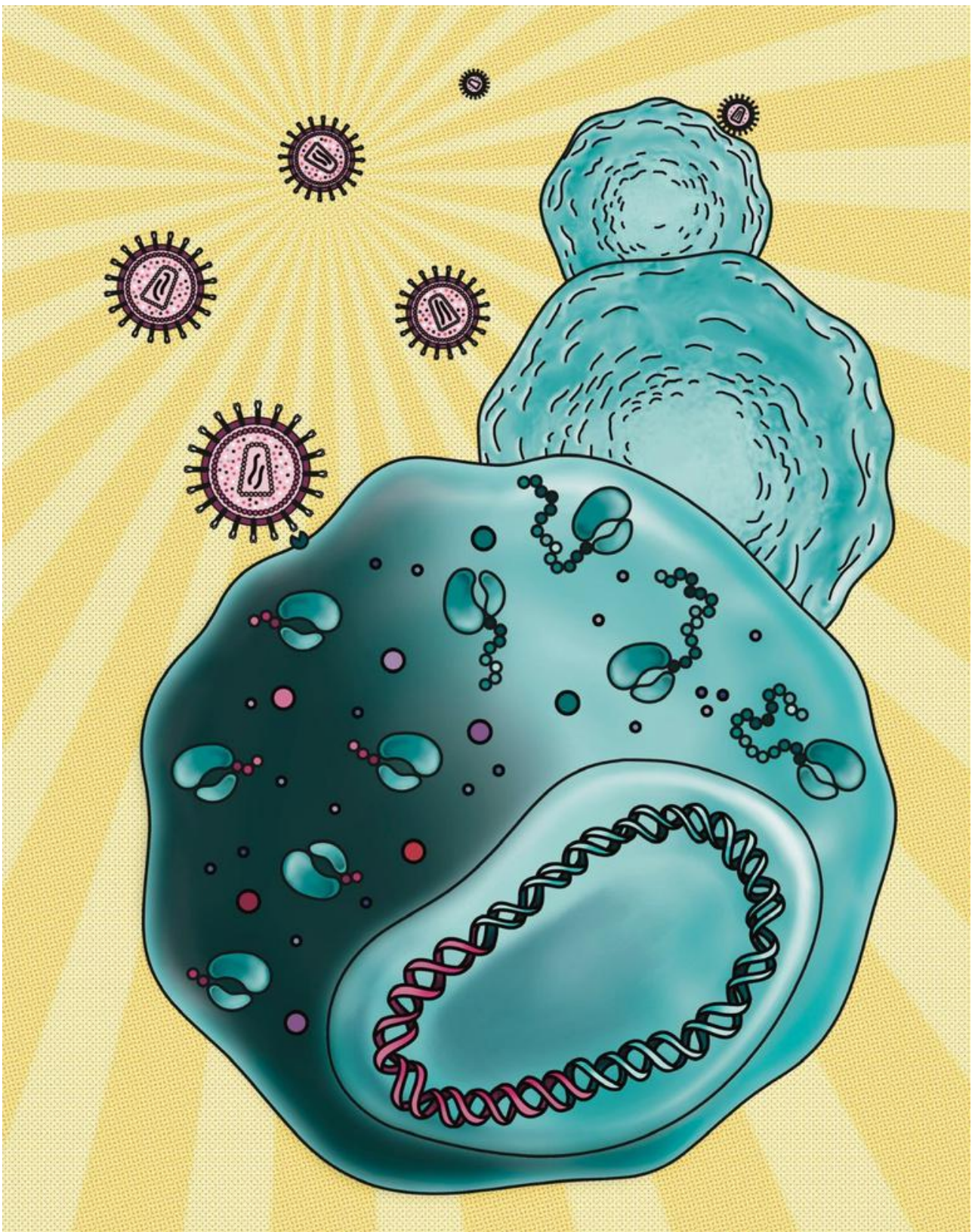


Chiara Dalla Costa | Tiny Mystic Tarot

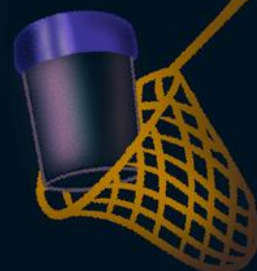
Sonhita Chakraborty

Sonhita Chakraborty is a Toronto-based biologist who seeks new and interesting ways to meld two of her biggest passions – science and art. While completing her PhD in plant molecular biology at the University of Toronto, Sonhita took to making whimsical watercolour and digital paintings of cells. Her first science illustration was featured on the cover of the university's undergraduate lab manual. She has since made many editorial illustrations for different scientific journals.

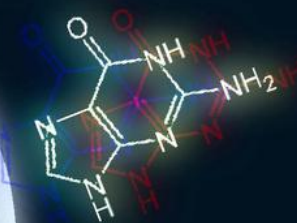
Artist Statement: As a scientifically informed illustrator Sonhita is deeply passionate about helping scientists communicate their discoveries through accessible and engaging visual formats. She wants to break down complex biological concepts into simple playful renderings that highlight the beauty of the biological systems she's passionate about.



START



FINISH



Mireia Allende

Mireia Allende is a multidisciplinary artist and designer whose work navigates the intersections of identity, gender, and social critique through a distinctly narrative and experimental lens. With a background in fine art and a current focus on design, she explores how personal and collective experiences can be translated through visual storytelling, often incorporating 2D and 3D design, augmented reality, and spatial composition. Allende's practice is informed by a holistic approach to creativity—one that weaves together research, collaboration, and visual sensitivity across disciplines. She frequently works with musicians, designers, and filmmakers, taking on roles that blend art direction, concept development, and visual execution. This collaborative mindset is shaped by her ongoing studies in Design for Art Direction at the University of the Arts London (UAL), where she continues to experiment with new mediums while refining her critical perspective. Her multidisciplinary perspective is rooted in both self-taught foundations and formal training, shaped by a deep curiosity for how visual culture can interrogate and reimagine dominant narratives. Whether through commissioned work or personal projects, her practice remains anchored in a desire to provoke dialogue and foster meaningful encounters with visual media. Her work has been exhibited at venues such as Itsasmuseum (Bilbao), La Perrera (Bilbao), Peckham Digital, The Factory Gallery (London), St John's Church in Hyde Park, and has been featured in the UAL Prospectus, among others.

Project Statement: This multidisciplinary project explores the tension between authentic self-expression and societal norms, using clubbing as a lens to examine the limitations placed on female joy by patriarchal expectations. Through 12 paintings paired with augmented reality (AR) 3D models, I aim to disclose how identity and sexuality are performed, negotiated, and constrained in spaces of supposed liberation. The use of multiple mediums favours effective storytelling through interactivity: each painting can be scanned using a QR code that will reveal a 3D asset manipulating the original image. Drawing from saturated, maximalist visual language, the work juxtaposes moments of brightness with the underlying tension of inhibition and pressure. By critically observing how young girls cope, endure, and prevail within these frameworks, the project unveils layers of vulnerability and resilience. It invites the audience to uncover the ways these dynamics manifest, encouraging a critical and evaluative perspective. It's a critical look at the implicit performativity in heteronormative night spaces. The three main aims of the following are the following: 1. Highlighting common unspoken experiences that involve intimidation, constraint, gender performativity and negotiation due to patriarchal rules 2. Making my intended audience of young girls feel seen, understood and to articulate visually things they had not been able to articulate in their heads 3. Committing to action: looking at our own small communities critically and sparking a conversation.





Mireia Allende | Martu Panchi

Mireia Allende | Ane

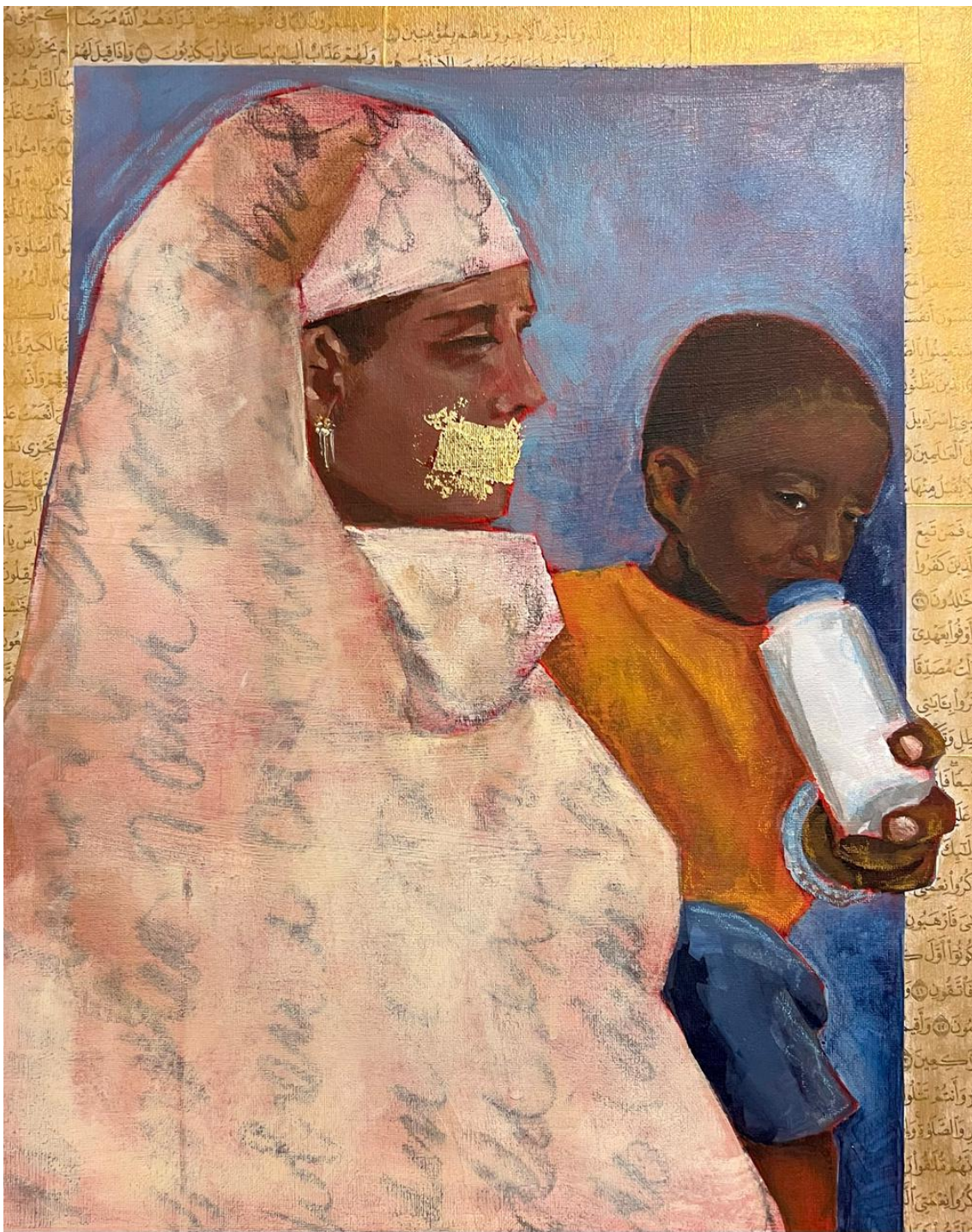


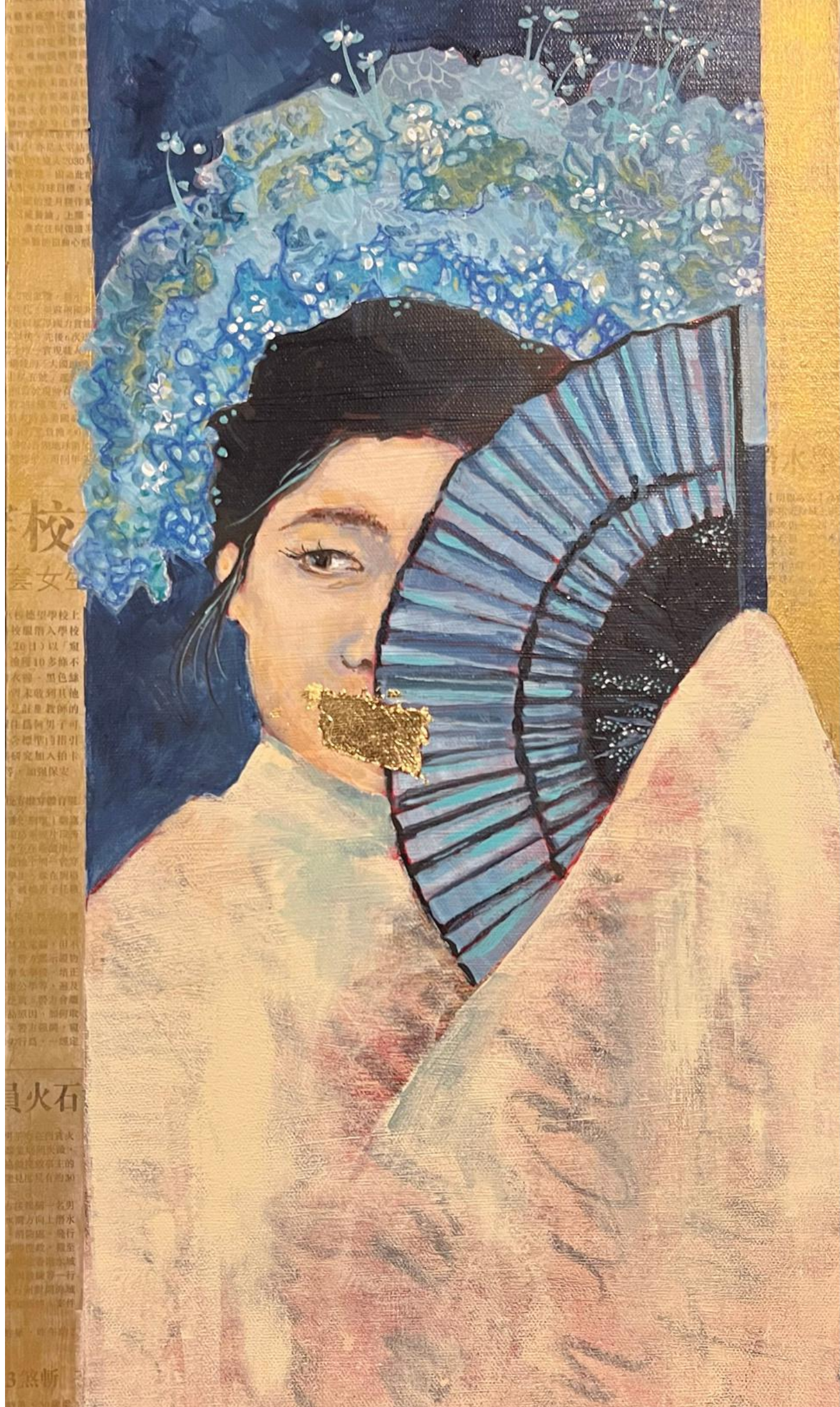
Terri Goodness

Terri Goodness is a mixed media artist. Combining elements of painting and collage, her work explores themes of connection to the earth and the human experience. Drawing inspiration from nature, personal narratives, and cultural symbolism, Terri's art captivates audiences with its intricate textures and layered storytelling. Her artistic journey began at an early age, influenced by a deep appreciation for both traditional and contemporary art forms. Over the years, Terri has honed her unique style, blending diverse materials and techniques to create pieces that challenge and inspire. She has a BFA from Cardinal Stritch College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Currently she splits her time between living in Wisconsin and traveling to Costa Rica where she lived with her family for 14 years. Beyond the studio, Terri is passionate about travel and discovering new cultures and ideas.

Artist Statement: As a mixed media artist, I am drawn to the interplay of texture, color, and form to tell stories that words cannot fully capture. My work is a reflection of life's complexities—layered, intricate, and ever-evolving. By combining materials such as paint, paper, and found objects, I create pieces that invite viewers to explore themes of connection and transformation. I find inspiration in the natural world, the rhythm of everyday life, and the emotions that weave through our shared experiences. Each piece begins with a spark—a memory, a feeling, or a question—and evolves intuitively, allowing the process to guide me. For me, art is both a personal journey and a bridge to others, offering moments of reflection, discovery, and understanding. Through my work, I aim to encourage dialogue and invite viewers to find their own stories within the layers. Art has the power to connect us to each other and to ourselves, and I am grateful to contribute to that connection through my creative practice. My current project is a reflection of the times in which we live as women. My work examines the complex role of silence—what we are taught as children (children are to be seen and not heard) as well as its capacity to harm. In particular, I focus on the silences imposed on women, born of misogyny and a culture that demands compliance and complicity. These silences instruct us to police our tone, dilute our rage, and suppress our truths. Society insists that we shrink ourselves to fit the comfort of others, forcing us to carry the weight of unspoken pain and unseen injustices. I wish to confront the moments when silence shifts from being a sanctuary to a lie. Using collage of holy texts, delicate patterns, and portraits of women with gold leaf masking their mouths, I explore the spaces between what is said and what is withheld. Each piece challenges the viewer to question the cost of staying quiet and the courage it takes to break the silence.

Terri Goodness | Silence of Motherhood





— Interview

Xinyi Liu

Your project Khi draws from Chinese metaphysics and Buddhist philosophy. How do these philosophies shape your approach to photography?

Khi is deeply shaped by both Chinese metaphysics and Buddhist philosophy—not just as intellectual frameworks, but as lived, sensory practices. These traditions emphasize the interconnectedness of all things, the flow of energy (氣), and the impermanence of form. This understanding guides how I approach photography—not as a tool to document, but as a means to attune to the subtle dynamics of space, light, and consciousness. Working with film and natural morning light, I allow the environment to unfold slowly before me. Light moves gently through windows, casting shifting shadows across flowers, surfaces, and still objects. In those fleeting moments, I'm not trying to capture a subject, but to sense and respond to the breath of space itself—how light pulses, how energy lingers in silence, how perception opens when we become fully present.

Xinyi Liu | 燕 khi



Xinyi Liu | 燕 khi

Buddhist meditative awareness informs the pace and presence of the work. The process is intentionally slow, contemplative, and embodied. Rather than imposing control, I practice a kind of visual listening. Photography becomes a way to participate in the quiet dialogue between body and space—a trace of consciousness as it merges outward into the world.

Ultimately, Khi offers a space for viewers to pause and step into this subtle field of awareness. In a time of constant acceleration, the work invites stillness. It speaks to the dissolving boundary between self and environment, suggesting that consciousness isn't isolated within us—but flows, like light and shadow, through everything we touch.

What does 'attunement' mean to you in the context of your visual practice?

In my visual practice, attunement is about entering into a subtle, intuitive alignment with space—it's the process of harmonizing myself with the environment, sensing not only what is visible, but also the energetic field that holds everything together. It's a quiet dialogue between myself and the space, a form of



coordination and merging where boundaries soften, and I begin to feel the presence of the field of energy that surrounds and connects all things.

When I photograph, especially in Khi, I'm not trying to capture an image in the conventional sense. Instead, I allow my body and senses to open up, letting light guide me, observing how it flows through a space, how it rests on objects, how shadows stretch and disappear. This process is slow and contemplative, almost meditative. Through attunement, photography becomes a form of presence—a way to trace the invisible resonance between body, consciousness, and environment.

Ultimately, attunement for me is about feeling the rhythm of a space, merging with it, and letting that shared energy guide the image into being.

You mention using film and natural morning light—what role does light play in your exploration of consciousness?

Light, for me, is more than a visual element—it's a carrier of presence, a subtle language through which consciousness reveals itself. In Khi, I work exclusively with natural morning light because it holds a particular softness and transience. It

enters space gently, shifting slowly, casting delicate shadows that seem to breathe. This quality of light mirrors the meditative state I try to enter during the process—quiet, open, and aware.

Light becomes a way to sense the invisible. It reveals how energy moves through a space—not in a fixed or literal way, but through texture, temperature, and rhythm. When I photograph with film, I embrace its sensitivity to these nuances. Film has a certain slowness and imperfection that aligns with how I experience consciousness—not as something sharp and defined, but fluid, layered, and always in motion. In essence, light in my work is both subject and collaborator. It animates the space, opens a window into what's just beyond the visible, and invites the viewer to slow down and feel. Through light, I explore how consciousness extends beyond the mind—how it merges with environment, and becomes part of the world around us.

Many of your images evoke stillness and quiet. How do you cultivate that sense of presence in your process?

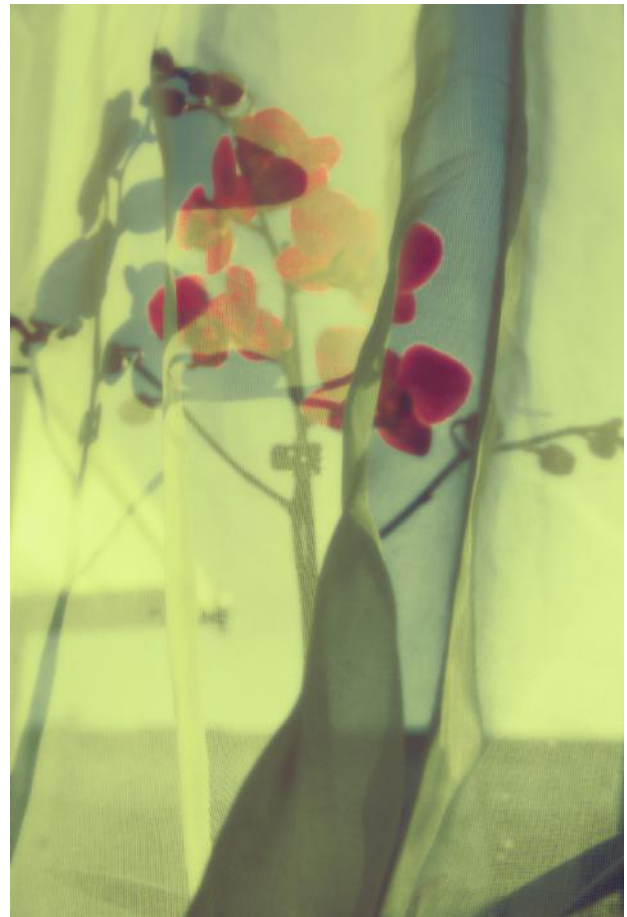


Stillness and quiet are not just aesthetic choices in my work—they're the ground from which the images emerge. To cultivate that sense of presence, I begin by slowing down—both physically and mentally. I often work early in the morning, when the world is quieter, and the light is soft and unhurried. This time of day allows me to enter a meditative state where I can listen, observe, and feel the space without expectation. The process is intuitive and embodied. I spend time just being in the space—breathing, noticing how light moves, how shadows stretch or retreat, how the air feels. I don't rush to take the photograph. Sometimes I wait for something to reveal itself, or I move gently through the space until I sense a moment of alignment—a quiet resonance between myself, the environment, and the camera.

I think of it as a form of tuning in—letting go of control and allowing the energy of the room, the stillness of an object, or the flicker of light to guide me. Film photography supports this slowness; every frame feels deliberate, almost sacred. In that way, the images become traces of presence—of a shared stillness between body, breath, and space.

Why was it important for you to work with shadows, curtains, and delicate textures in this series?

In Khi, working with shadows, curtains, and delicate textures was essential because they embody the quiet, often unseen forces that shape our perception. Light and shadow, in particular, are central—they're not just visual elements, but metaphysical symbols. In Chinese philosophy, light and shadow represent yin and yang—two complementary energies that exist in dynamic balance. This duality is at the heart of the series. I see photography not just as capturing objects, but as sensing this shifting balance—the way light softens into shadow, the way stillness holds quiet movement. Curtains play a subtle but powerful role—they filter and shape the light, creating thresholds between interior and exterior, known and unknown. They remind me of the veil between consciousness and what lies beyond it. The textures—whether from cloth, flowers, walls, or air itself—offer a material sensitivity. These



Xinyi Liu | 燕 khi

delicate surfaces become sites of resonance, holding traces of breath, energy, and silence. By focusing on these elements, I wanted to invite viewers into a slower, more attuned mode of seeing—one where the intangible becomes briefly visible. In this way, the series explores 炁 not as an abstract theory, but as a lived, sensory experience—one that arises in the quiet interplay between softness and structure, presence and absence, yin and yang.

Khi seems to hover between material and immaterial—how do you define the “energy” your images seek to capture?

To me, the energy in Khi is not something abstract or symbolic—it's something I feel as a lived, embodied presence. It's the magnetic field between things, the subtle 场域 (field) that exists within and around all forms. In Chinese metaphysics, and also in many animist and Buddhist philosophies, there's a deep belief that everything—objects, spaces, even shadows—holds 灵 (spirit) and carries a unique energetic frequency. This is what I'm attuning to when I photograph.

I often describe it as a kind of magnetic atmosphere—something you can't see directly, but you can sense when you slow down enough to feel it. It's in the way light moves through a curtain, how a shadow lingers on a wall, or how a flower seems to exhale in silence. These aren't just visual moments—they're energetic expressions. Film photography allows me to register these vibrations gently, slowly, without over-defining them.

So, when people say the images feel suspended between material and immaterial, I take that as a sign that the energy is working. I'm not trying to depict something literal, but to open a space where viewers can feel what's usually invisible—the quiet presence that exists in all things when we take the time to notice.

What does a typical day in your practice look like when working on a meditative series like this?

When working on a meditative series like Khi, my days are intentionally slow and quiet. I usually begin early in the morning, when the light is soft

and the world hasn't fully awakened. That time of day holds a kind of stillness that I try to carry into the entire process. I don't start by shooting right away—instead, I spend time just being in the space, observing how the light moves, how shadows begin to form, how the energy of the room feels.

I often sit in silence for a while, almost like entering meditation. I allow my breath and body to sync with the space. This helps me become more sensitive to subtle shifts—to the movement of light across a curtain, the flicker of reflection on a surface, the quiet vibration of still objects. I treat the camera like a listening device, responding only when I feel a moment of resonance or alignment.

Because I work with film, there's no instant feedback. That helps preserve the contemplative rhythm—I'm not chasing images, but allowing them to reveal themselves. After shooting, I often write or reflect, noting how the space felt or what thoughts arose during the process. It's as much about cultivating presence as it is about creating images.



Xinyi Liu | 燕 khi

Jennifer Taylor

Background Jennifer Taylor was born in Paris, France to a French mother and American father who served in the Navy. Though raised in northern Wisconsin, her work has been compared to Mexican art, most likely stemming from her fascination of catholic iconography. With a Theatre Arts degree, Jennifer Joan Taylor (screen name) earned a living as an actor and appeared on stage, in commercials, films and TV shows including *The Edge of Night*, *Chicago Fire*, *Empire* and *Dark Matter*. In 1983, while living in New York, her husband, Garry Henderson, gifted her a sketch pad and oil pastels, which sparked a burst of creativity within her. She became obsessed with drawing for hours on end. After moving to Los Angeles, she transitioned to painting with oil on canvas. After their son Riley was born, they moved to Chicago in 1990 to be closer to family and in 1991, after their daughter Lily was born, they moved to Riverside, IL where they founded the Riverside Arts Center, proudly in its 32nd year. In 2015, Jennifer and Garry were drawn to Gary, IN by the stunning beach dunes of Lake Michigan as well as the vibrant Miller Beach community. There, Jennifer purchased an abandoned house and adjacent lot, transforming them into an art studio and garden. After a complete rehab, the house was painted fuchsia and adorned inside and out with fragments of mirror, costume jewelry, and other shiny objects generously donated by friends and members of the community. Today, the house is used by local organizations, as a vacation rental and occasionally open for tours. The garden is free to the public and features walls made of wine bottles, a greenhouse constructed of old windows, garden art sculptures, and Jennifer's backyard personal art studio/gallery.

Project Statement: Statement In between everything there is a moment; the moment before water boils, before a bubble pops, before the vision is seen. The closest I have come to 'being in the moment' is during the creative process when my mind disappears, and my hands take over to paint, build, glue and melt things into an interplay of colors, textures, forms, and scenes. It is here where my inner truths reveal, and clarities of self-conflict emerge to offer me a deeper understanding of myself and the world – in this moment – on the brink. My paintings, which I consider to be subconscious self-portraits, reflect my background as an actor, and portray colorful characters frozen in moments of anticipation or aftermath. It is this intersection of scene and sentiment, where humor and curiosity meet, that I invite viewers to interpret and find personal meaning, much like deciphering a dream.





— Interview

Mag Wilk

Your work reflects a deep connection to the places you've visited and experienced. How do you choose which locations to paint, and how do they resonate with you personally?

That's right—my painting is mostly about landscapes, whether it's nature or city views that I've personally experienced. Most often, these are places close to home—paths I walk often, sometimes even daily. I really enjoy being a tourist in my own city. I look around a lot, and when something catches my eye, I take a photo—or a few. I usually stop for a moment to really look at it. Later, at home, I go through the photos and think about which shot really deserves more attention. I play with the composition through sketching to see what works. I don't paint places that don't belong to me, so to speak. These days, the internet is full of beautiful photos—perfect shots, heavily edited, filtered, or even AI-generated. But those aren't my places. I have no personal connection to them, and without that connection, I simply don't feel the motivation to paint them.



Mag Wilk | Dad with His Daughter | 2024



You mentioned that painting is a way for you to "pause, reflect, and preserve fleeting moments." Could you elaborate on how you capture the essence of those moments in your landscapes?

Most of the places I paint are familiar to me—spots I visit often and at different times of day. I walk a lot, and I ride my bike too. Every morning I go for a walk in the same park, and I never get tired of it. I love watching the seasons change, but I also find comfort in seeing the same people at the same time every day. That gives me a sense of stability. It feels like life is flowing naturally—and yet, it's always changing.

I start to notice the small shifts in my surroundings, and that gives me a feeling of control over my world. And when I paint a little piece of that world—something that happens to look especially beautiful in that moment—it's like I'm pressing pause. I'm giving meaning to that fleeting moment. It makes me feel like I haven't wasted time, or that time isn't just slipping by. I show what I found beautiful. I highlight a tiny piece of reality. That gives me a sense of fulfillment.

As someone with a background in interior architecture, how has this influenced your approach to composition and technique in your paintings?

As an interior architect, I have theoretical knowledge not only of art history and architecture

but also of construction and building techniques. I make sure the buildings in my paintings are with the right perspective. It's in my blood now.

Your work has a unique balance of modern form and traditional landscape painting. How would you describe the evolution of your style over the years?

My artistic education is quite classical, and sometimes that feels like a burden. That's why I often paint in square formats, which I find more modern. I dream of making my work more contemporary and less realistic. I hope that with time, as I keep painting, I'll get there.

You've participated in several prestigious exhibitions, including the Toronto Outdoor Art Festival and your solo exhibition in Kraków. How have these experiences shaped your artistic journey and public reception?

Participating in events where I could sell my work alongside other artists has been a very valuable experience. Pricing my paintings is an art in itself. There were times when I sold several pieces, and other times when I didn't sell any. These experiences have taught me humility.

You state that you don't paint for the market and create out of pure passion. How do you stay true to your artistic voice while navigating the commercial aspects of the art world?

Given that making a living from painting is very difficult, I try to have an additional source of income. Some art dealers consider this



Mag Wilk | Night Walk | 2019

inappropriate, believing that a serious artist should be full-time. I disagree. Because I don't have to worry about every sale, I can paint exactly what I want—what resonates with me. And that is true creative freedom.

Could you tell us more about your creative process from the moment inspiration strikes to when you finish a painting?

As I mentioned before, my creative process starts with observing the world, walking, and exploring my surroundings—but in real life. I need to see, feel, observe, and be present in a place and space. When something catches my attention, I take a few or several photos. The next day, usually not immediately, as I like to gain some distance, I go through the photos to see if there are any shots that align with the images I've formed during my walks. Often, I already see the finished painting in my mind and paint it in my imagination. When it comes to the actual creative process, I'm essentially just transferring what's in my head onto the canvas. However, I try to remain open to what the creative process brings. What can be challenging is the moment when I have to accept that the painting is finished. There are times when I feel I've overdone it—when I've painted for too long, and the freshness is gone. The painting becomes overworked and exhausted. That's something I want to focus on in my future work—learning to stop at the right moment.



Mag Wilk | Fast Tram | 2024

Paraframed

We're sisters and lifelong artists whose passion for creativity has been a thread through every chapter of our lives. We grew up sketching side-by-side and experimenting with colors, textures, and stories. Now, we've teamed up to blend our talents into one collaborative vision. These works reflect a shared inspiration and a love for storytelling through art that's as heartfelt as it is bold. Together, we're creating pieces that speak louder than words.





— Interview

J. Legay

You returned to art after a 30+ year career in social services. What emotions accompanied that transition, and how does it influence your work today?

Transitioning from a 30+ year career in social services back to art brought a mix of emotions—excitement about returning to a long-held passion, alongside some uncertainty about navigating a new path. It was both challenging and rewarding to reestablish myself creatively after such a long hiatus.

My background in social services continues to deeply influence my work, often inspiring themes of empathy, resilience, and human connection. This experience has enriched my artistic perspective and helped shape the messages I aim to convey.



J. Legay | Bird of Stone



Overall, reconnecting with art has sparked personal growth and renewed creative energy, guiding my current goals to create meaningful, impactful pieces.

You mentioned that your journey into digital art began with a young neighbor's suggestion. What was it like shifting from traditional to digital mediums?

Shifting from traditional to digital mediums was both exciting and challenging especially since I would soon be entering my sixties and knew little about the digital age. Initially, adapting to new tools and software presented a learning curve, but it quickly opened many creative possibilities. Digital art allowed me greater flexibility with colors and undo options, which was a significant advantage.

My young neighbor's suggestion was instrumental—it encouraged me to explore a new medium I had not considered before, shaping how I approached my work to this very day. Over time, this transition influenced my artistic style by blending traditional techniques with digital enhancements. Although I still appreciate traditional art, digital mediums have become an integral part of my workflow.

Your compositions often feature bold central subjects with blurred, atmospheric backgrounds. How did you develop this signature style?

The style featuring bold central subjects with blurred, atmospheric backgrounds developed over time as I looked to create a strong focal point while evoking a sense of mood and depth. I was inspired by both classic portraiture and contemporary photography techniques that emphasize selective focus.

Using a combination of controlled lighting and depth-of-field effects, I aim to draw the viewer's attention directly to the subject while allowing the background to complement without distracting. This approach helps to



convey emotion and atmosphere, enhancing the overall impact of the piece.

Refining this style has involved experimenting with varied brushes and tools to achieve the desired balance between clarity and softness. It continues to evolve as I explore innovative ideas and techniques.

Animals play a central role in your work. Why are they so important to your artistic vision?

Animals hold a significant place in my artistic vision because they embody both personal and symbolic meanings that resonate deeply with me. They serve as powerful metaphors for themes such as freedom, vulnerability, and the interconnectedness of life, which I often explore in my work. Emotionally, I feel a strong connection to animals, seeing them as reflections of human experience and emotion.

From an aesthetic perspective, animals bring dynamic forms and textures that enhance the visual impact of my pieces. Additionally, my creative process is inspired by observing animal behavior and their environments, which informs both the style and narrative aspects of my art.

You describe your process as starting with the background. What does that reveal about the way you view the world?

What a thought-provoking question. I begin my work with the background because I see it as the foundation that anchors the entire piece. Starting there allows me to establish the context and atmosphere, which in turn shapes how the other elements interact and convey meaning.

This approach reflects how I view the world—as layered and interconnected, where environment and context influence feeling and experience while trying desperately to work in harmony. Philosophically, it emphasizes that the broader setting informs individual components, mirroring how circumstances shape people and events.

For me, the background carries emotional weight and sets the tone, grounding the narrative before focusing on details. This method aligns with recurring themes in my art that explore relationships between individuals and their surroundings.

Unlike artists who start with central figures or objects, I prioritize the surrounding environment first, which often leads to a more cohesive and immersive composition. A personal example is how certain landscapes evoke memories or feelings that guide the development of the entire piece.

Some of your works feature surreal, hybrid creatures—like birds made of stones or origami birds in cosmic skies. What inspires these whimsical combinations?

The inspiration for these pieces often comes from a mix of nature, mythology, and dreams. I'm fascinated by the way seemingly unrelated elements—like stones and birds—can be combined to create something new and unexpected. These surreal creatures allow me to explore themes of transformation, coexistence, and the blending of the natural with the fantastical.

Subjective experiences and emotions play a big role as well. Sometimes, these hybrids emerge from moments of reflection or a desire to capture the fleeting, magical aspects of life. Artistic influences like surrealism and traditional paper art also guide my creative choices, inspiring me to experiment with texture, form, and space. In terms of process, I simply enjoy layering dissimilar materials and techniques, through digital collage to bring these imaginative visions to life.

How do your experiences in homesteading and gardening appear in your digital paintings?

I often incorporate elements from nature—like plants, soil textures, and natural light—that I engage with regularly on my homestead. These themes inspire much of my subject matter, often focusing on the cyclical rhythms of growth and change that I witness firsthand. The colors I choose are usually earthy and vibrant, reflecting the lushness and subtlety found in a garden throughout the seasons.

Personally, these experiences keep me grounded and connected to the natural world, which translates into a sense of calm and mindfulness in my work. For example, spending time nurturing plants teaches patience and attention to detail—qualities I bring into my painting process.

Technically, I enjoy using digital brushes that mimic organic textures, allowing me to blend traditional, tactile elements with the flexibility of digital media. This fusion gives my artwork a unique balance between hands-on experience and modern creativity.

Overall, my lifestyle infuses my digital art with a mood of tranquility and respect for nature's cycles, which I hope resonates with viewers as something both familiar and inspiring.

Toshihiro Moteki

Toshihiro Moteki Born in Japan in 1983. exhibitions: 2013 Toshihiro Moteki "floating images" Gallery Yamaki Fine Art, Kobe 2015 Toshihiro Moteki "HIDDEN" Gallery Yamaki Fine Art, Kobe 2022 BankART AIR 2022 Spring Yokohama 2023. "Yokosuka as a parent and child: Works born from child-rearing (group exhibition)" Yokosuka Art Center, Yokosuka

Artist Statement: I have a slight eye disease. I draw and record the noise I see with my own eyes. I repeat the process of drawing and recording on paper. Through drawing and recording visible noise, I think about the meaning of "vision."





— Interview

COOLBYRON

How do you approach blending traditional techniques with digital technologies in your artwork, and what impact does this fusion have on the final piece?

It seems that major art movements in the last 100 years have been the results or impact of untraditional materials and applications like Pollack. I believe that the DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY is a current advancement applied to THE ARTS. This is not A. I. It is B. I. Byron Intelligence. The idea is developed from ART AND TECHNOLOGY OF DESIGN. I appreciate the options to develop color and incorporate forms as never before with digital assistance. This is not the traditional easel painting. So I can plot the images on canvas to look like real art right. But in MY ART, it has become a composition of generational design and



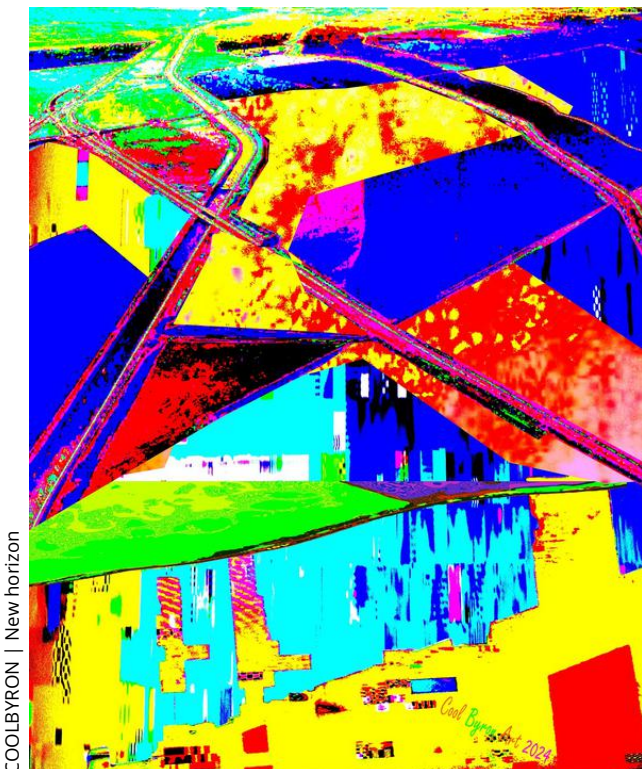
developments. I may have first generation for hand works. Then I have second generation for digital design and developments. Sometimes there is a third generation back to hand applications. Each level has a great visual impact and coordination. But the nuisances discovered with digital applications is beyond the hand ability. Well it is all accomplished by MY HAND. The fusion is really an INTEGRATION OF ART DESIGN similar to Mixed media. But it can be a super challenge to FEEL the relationship of all elements and components. This is not merely pushing buttons in Photo Shop.

Can you elaborate on how the concept of "intrinsic value of space" informs your creative process and the way you approach each composition?

This is a very personal advancement and theory in design. It was developed in architecture since I am an architect. But this concept can be incorporated in all of the arts that I participate. The key word is INTRINSIC means what you cannot see. If you combine extrinsic and intrinsic criterias into the design application, you will create a comprehensive solution that is far more effective and competent. So applied to MY ART, it combines the visual and emotional relationship in a Color Strategy.

Your work incorporates elements from both Abstract Expressionism and Hard Edge Abstraction. How do these two styles complement each other in your pieces?

As an ABSTRACT ARTIST, I have learned these two art movements very well. But they are different movements. Abstract Expressionism deals with color fields. Hard Edge Abstraction deals with geometric forms. So I have integrated the best of each. When these two concepts are interfaced, they create a super contrast and tension to promote spatial and dynamic visual experience. This can be considered INTEGRATED PAINTING.



COOLBYRON | New horizon



Could you explain the significance of color in your work and how you use color strategy to evoke emotions and depth in your compositions?

COLOR IS TO BE PAINTERLY. This is a simple statement but a very difficult objective. You are limited to developing color by hand techniques and applications. I focus on advancing the characteristics of color. Now I can expand the dynamics and options of the color. I can extend the scale, pattern, integration and mass that is almost impossible by a brush. Now THE COLOR has a greater potential to be MORE THAN JUST THE COLOR. This is not Photo Shop. Now the impact of THE COLOR can advance the compositional creativity of the image. It integrates the spatial aspects to promote depth, perspective and proportionalism and to explore the nature of Color. My focus is the COLOR ADVANCEMENT to create new artistic image and form.

You mention investigating "Man's Impact on Nature" in your artwork. How do you interpret this relationship visually, and what message are you hoping to convey through your art?

Every artist and designer has to learn and determine their SENSITIVITIES. I have some main objectives that I have determined in architectural design. And in the arts, I have some main objectives in visual design. I share everything that I know in all of MY ARTS. I guess that the theme of MANS IMPACT ON NATURE is my main focus. It is not always deliberate or obvious in the composition. But it is underlining most of my compositions. In most cases, it is the contrast and tension developed in the compositional imagery. It is an internal tension and dynamics that are integrated for spatial and compositional conclusion. Yes, there has been many issues in contemporary life that show mans impact on nature either positively or negatively. I am not trying to make a political statement.

How do you perceive the role of technology in contemporary art, and what potential do you see for the future of art with the continued advancement of digital mediums?

I have described the role of current digital technology is MY ART. But what I find to be fantastic aspect is the idea of integrating all of the arts. The advancements in my visual compositions can be expanded to sculpture and macro art installations and even back into architecture. There are no limitations. Example: I have advanced my sculptural designs with the 2D imagery incorporated with the 3D constructs. It is magical. It becomes MURALIZED CONSTRUCTS or CONSTRUCTIVE MURALS. Which came first the chicken or the egg? The form can be reduced in the construct and expanded to a new spatial and visual composition. As with any new advancements in materials and applications, there are endless complications and problems to BRING THE ART INTO REALITY.

What was the inspiration behind creating the new style of "Techno-Expressionism," and how does it distinguish your work from traditional forms of abstract art?

I developed this ART STYLE in 2013. Simply, it the name of the concept that I use in MY ART restating all the information above. This is TECHNO because of the digital technology incorporations. This is EXPRESSIONISM because of the artistic range in abstract art. It is both IMPRESSIONISM and EXPRESSIONISM. But to be successful, I have had to know all of the arts. I know traditional painting very well. But it is too slow and limiting in the compositional directions that I want now. I did not jump off the cliff but I went beyond the horizon. I want to break through the boundaries of contemporary art. ART IS A LIFELONG ENDEAVOR. I am a NOT SO FAMOUS ARTIST yet.



Alexandre Galtay

I'm 44, french, living and working in Paris since 2007. I started drawing in 2017, I followed courses of morphology at La Grande Chaumière, with a teacher. My first series of drawings was based on people I observed in the parisian subway. I did it until the pandemic, then I participated to regular workshops of gesture drawings, where I could meet other artists and proposed to models to work with me on this idea of "The woman and the puppet". I've been working with more than 20 different models and made almost 150 drawings on this series. At first I wanted to challenge myself to work and focus on one theme only, and see how long I could force myself to work on it, but now I've been too much involved to stop now and will probably continue for a year or two. I'm also heavily influenced by comic book artists (Guido Crepax, Liberatore, Battaglia, Robert Crumb, Olivier Coipel, Frank Frazetta, Dave Stevens, Travis Charest, Adam Hughes), 19th century literature, classic cinema.

Project Statement: The 6 drawings are taken from a much more important series, "The woman and the puppet". The idea comes from the eponymous book written by french author Pierre Louÿs in 1898, and a few watercolours by the belgian symbolist artist Félicien Rops. I started the drawing series the first day of spring in 2022, and since that day I've been pursuing this dream. The work is still in progress to this day and visible on Instagram. Each drawing is based on reference pictures taken by me, during sessions with live models. I work exclusively with traditional tools on paper (no digital) : pencil, ink, markers, screentone, collage, watercolor, gouache...

Alexandre Galtay | A Choreographic Study | 2025



Alexandre Galtay | Fetal Nature | 2025

Alexandre Galtay | Flaming Telepath | 2025



Alexandre Galtay | Morning of Drunkenness | 2025



Alexandre Galtay | Long as the Blade | 2025



Alexandre Galtay | Wind Bath | 2025

— Interview

Xiuzhuo Zhou

Your photography often carries a profound introspective quality. How do you translate inner emotional states into visual imagery?

Photography, for me, is an introspective process—like writing a diary with light and shadow. My internal emotions frequently guide my lens. When I feel lost or calm, I turn to nature to seek scenes that resonate with my inner state. For example, a thin mist at dawn in the woods or a solitary tree may become reflections of my melancholy. Through composition and lighting, I strive to transform intangible emotions into tangible visuals, allowing viewers to sense the emotional waves beneath.

In your artist statement, you mention a fascination with identity and temporality. How do these themes manifest in your series like "Autumn's Breath" and "Ephemeral"?

In "Autumn's Breath," I explore themes of wandering and seeking roots. Created in the autumn forests of Southampton, this series captures my personal feeling of drifting, likening myself to a small boat floating in foreign lands. Born and raised in Hubei, China, later moving



abroad, I experienced a persistent sense of displacement. The golden leaves and towering trees in Southampton symbolized a harbor where I hoped to anchor my wandering life. Through this series, the forest metaphorically represented stability and belonging.

In the "Ephemeral" series, created in Hallstatt, Austria, I reflect on the transient beauty and impermanence of life. Inspired by a traditional Chinese phrase, "Colorful clouds scatter easily, glass shatters quickly," I captured fleeting moments—such as a swan gliding gracefully across the lake, soon disappearing into the mist. These scenes emphasize how swiftly beauty, human connections, and shifting identities fade. This series is an expression of my profound realization that all encounters and beauties in life are ephemeral.

Growing up in Hubei, China, how has this cultural background influenced your perspective and composition?

Hubei, with its deep historical roots as the cradle of Chinese bronze civilization and a modern industrial powerhouse, shaped my unique perspective. From an early age, I was fascinated by ancient legends and bronze artifacts seen in local museums, fueling my interest in history and memory. Simultaneously, living in a rapidly industrializing city, I learned to seek tranquility amidst chaos and historical traces within modern landscapes.

My frequent childhood relocations for schooling further intensified a sense of rootlessness,



Xiuzhuo Zhou | Autumn's Breath | 2022



Xiuzhuo Zhou | Arctic Veins | 2024

prompting me to seek familiar, timeless elements like skies, sunsets, and solitary trees in unfamiliar places. This upbringing influenced my composition style, favoring elements that carry a sense of timelessness and narrative depth.

Many of your works depict powerful natural landscapes. What draws you to these remote, pristine environments?

Compared to urban bustle, I am deeply drawn to nature's rhythms. In remote, pristine landscapes, time seems to slow down, allowing me to synchronize my breath and heartbeat with the surrounding mountains and wilderness. This tranquility enables complete immersion in capturing fleeting beauty. I find power and purity in these untouched places, free from human alteration, offering me a sense of enduring certainty.

For example, photographing Antelope Canyon in the American Southwest deeply moved me—not only for its breathtaking beauty but also for its historical significance to the Navajo people. Standing beneath its narrow openings, I could almost feel the heartbeat of those who once sought refuge here. My photograph "The Eye of the Earth" aims to provoke reflection on this painful history, using the landscape as a medium to narrate past struggles.

"Antlers and Ice" features symbolic tension. How did you find harmony between traditionally opposing elements?

While observing two reindeer battling fiercely in the icy expanse of northern Norway, I initially saw raw chaos. However, looking closer through my lens, I discovered an inherent harmony in their confrontation. Their interlocking antlers created symmetrical, almost choreographed movements reminiscent of a primitive dance. This realization

resonated deeply with me, as someone who appreciates certainty and order within chaos. In "Antlers and Ice," I captured a perfectly mirrored moment amidst their struggle, framing conflict within tranquility. The serene snowy landscape emphasized harmony beneath surface tension. Through this work, I express the idea that seemingly opposing forces—chaos and order, strength and softness—can coexist beautifully.

In "Gaze," you address uncertainty between observer and observed. Do you see photography as mutual perception?

"Gaze" originated from a profound encounter in a Danish greenhouse. Face-to-face with a Victoria crowned pigeon, I found myself momentarily disoriented by its quiet yet intense stare. Typically, we assume photographers actively observe, while subjects passively receive scrutiny. But at that moment, roles reversed—I became keenly aware of myself as the "observed."

This encounter reshaped my understanding of photography as fundamentally mutual perception. The camera serves as a bidirectional eye, simultaneously capturing external realities and reflecting internal states. Through this piece, I wanted viewers to ponder their own experiences with observation: when we look at images, do we feel a gaze returned?

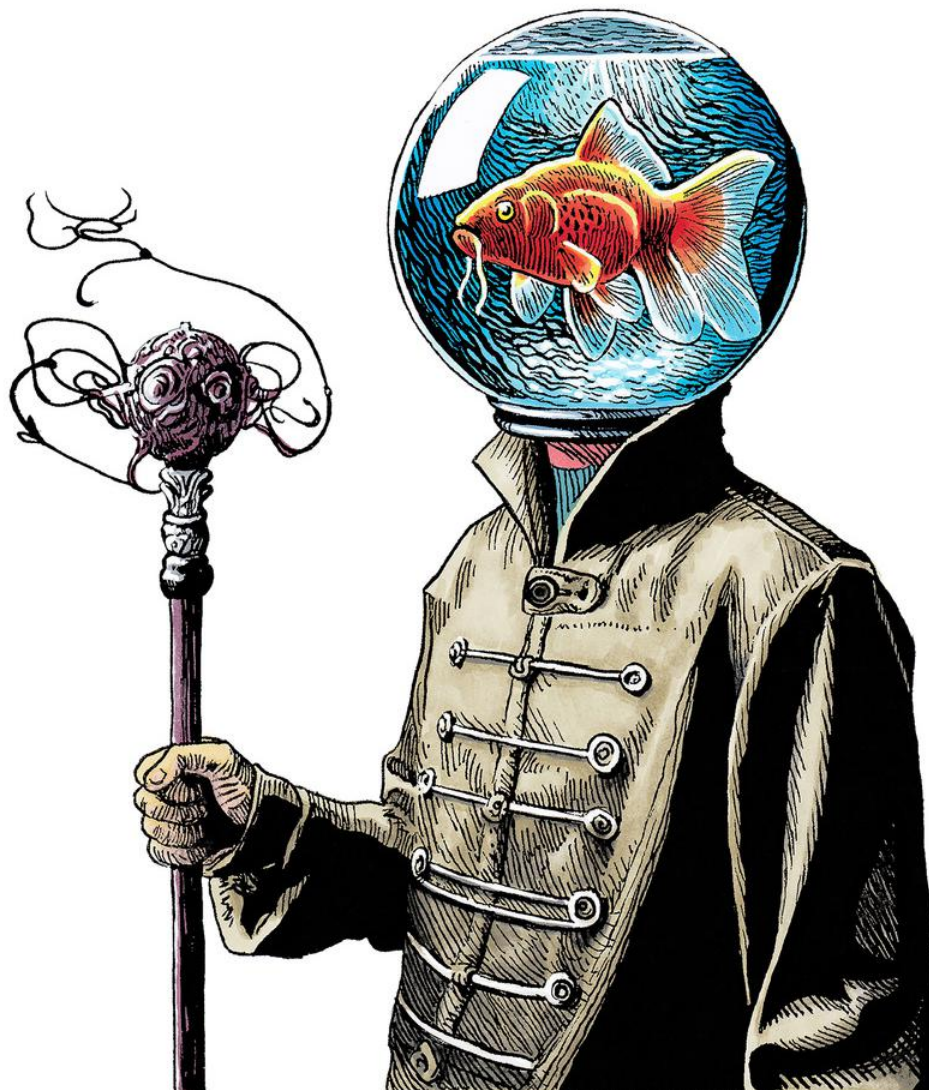
When combining traditional photography with AI or collage, what is your creative process?

My creative process with AI begins by training models on my extensive photographic works, enabling AI to generate images matching my artistic style. This collaborative approach offers surprising variations that maintain my emotional tone, especially the serene, introspective atmosphere I cherish. Currently, I'm exploring extending these static images into dynamic videos and interactive environments, potentially within gaming. For collage, my method differs significantly. I assemble various elements—personal photographs, archival imagery, textures, or even AI-generated visuals—to create a montage of memory-like experiences. This practice frees me from a singular moment's limitation, allowing me to construct layered, temporally complex narratives. Ultimately, blending traditional photography with new media enriches my expressive capabilities, bridging tangible realities with imaginative possibilities.

SpaceCat

Leon Laria, aka SpaceCat, is a versatile artist and illustrator. Born in Italy, he studied Fine Arts and History and was active as an artist and curator in solo and collective exhibitions. After moving to Tunis, he immersed himself in Arabic language, calligraphy, and decoration, which led to the publication of his research on image and aesthetics in the Arabic-Islamic culture. Seemingly destined to an academic career between France and Maghreb as a teacher/researcher, he unexpectedly shifted directions and started an even more nomadic lifestyle, exploring different experiences in several countries and cities. Now once again based in Amsterdam, he works as freelance translator and illustrator.

Artist Statement: Drawing is an obsessive-compulsive behavior. There's no telling why I draw. Drawing is something that I just do – and always did. Something that I must do, without reason and beyond reason. If I had to describe my work in few words I'd say: visionary, oniric, eclectic, meticulous. I make visionary art as a conscious way to escape reality. Inspired by dreams and our relations with nature, non-human animals and our own consciousness, I draw human-animal hybrids and imaginary creatures to contemplate the mysteries of this world, taking our relation with nature and animals as a window into our own consciousness, aiming at stirring up the basic questionings: What is consciousness? What is real? What is our place in the world? Addressing the mystery of being animals, I wish to explore the mystery of being humans. I wish to make these drawings as visual tools for meditation, visual cues to take a step back and assess our being. A reminder for mindfulness. For what connects us to the surrounding reality. Mixing hand drawing with a touch of digital enhancement, in these works I often go from absolute black to absolute white – and inversely – in a sort of alchemical process; extracting white from black and black from white, letting them emerge from each other. Ultimately my visionary artwork is an attempt to explore the invisible, including the invisible borders between reality and consciousness, human and animal. Technically, this means rendering the visible as a relation between black and white, empty and full, flat and plastic, and of course, visible and invisible.





Aline Barge

I am a french artist, living in germany. Self-taught I paint since forever and find the inspiration from my travels, daily life scenes or my deep interest in other cultures. Since a few years, i am spending more time with my passion as a part-time artist during my spare time and after work. I have also started to exhibit in France and Germany and showing my art through my instagram profile to connect with the people and exchange with other artists.

Artist Statement: I like to translate the emotions transmitted by an expression or a landscape by luminous and warm color. My aim is to show the beauty of everyday life from all around the world and bring positivity, optimism and inspiration to others through my creations.



Aline Barge | Couleurs Marrakech | 2023



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