

VISUAL ART JOURNAL

VISUALARTJOURNAL.COM



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— Intro

Hello, dear reader!

You are holding the fourth issue of our magazine, and I cannot express the joy of seeing our project become so interesting to both viewers and artists.

In this issue, there is not only plenty to see but also plenty to read. This is because artists have much to say. Modern art is not just about the visual aspect; it carries ideas, meaning, and concepts. Therefore, we believe it is crucial to give artists the opportunity to express themselves, to reveal themselves to the audience not only through their art but also by sharing a piece of their biography, explaining where they draw their inspiration from, and what led them into the world of creativity.

So now, you are about to explore a bit more than 100 pages of art, interesting people, thoughts, and ideas.

Enjoy reading! I hope you find it as engaging as we did while working on the magazine!



Anna Gvozdeva

Curator of
Visual Art Journal

On the Front Cover:

Zoe Baer

Glowing Grace
2022

On the Back Cover:

Francesca Pisano

Brewed with the finest
anxiety
2023

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

Contents

Interviews

Wendy Kriz Evans	6	Elena Altshul	60
Narmin Kassam	14	Ida Straarup Rasmussen	66
Nika Nuova	20	Warrington "Max" Oliver	74
Niyati Froind	28	Zhuping Zhong	82
Polina Bulgakova	34	Mileva Roumer	88
Jackie Flavio	40	Harry T. Burleigh	96
Kseniia Stern	46	Aoccho	102
Philip Richards	52	Ronn Kools	110

Featured artists

Zoe Baer	10	Aleah Guzman	64
Lucia Cerda	12	Aurélie Prestigiacomo	70
Micol Fontana	18	Sandra Cavanagh	72
Francesca Pisano	24	INTO.SPRING	80
Penny Hetherington	26	Rothianee Lam	86
Liudmila Rabinovich	32	Dorota Kilichowska	94
Darija Stipanic	38	Mary Nash	100
Joice Cheung	44	Natalia Marie Smith	108
Veronica McLaren	50	Marina Efimova	114
Ashley Smith	58	Carmen Castaño Casco	116

— Interview

Wendy Kriz Evans

Can you tell us more about how you rediscovered your passion for painting after 30 years? What was that journey like for you?

Thirty years sounds like a lifetime, but it's as if I put down my brush, stepped into my career, and picked it straight back up again. I partied my way through the '90s managing to earn a maths degree and land a job in the City of London. Then came marriage, kids, a move to the countryside, a year-long stint in Toronto and a divorce.

With my new husband Tom and three bonus step-sons, I've rediscovered my sense of self. The dining table became a makeshift studio and I painted until I could no longer stand. That first weekend's work, though different from what I've done since, unlocked something within me.



How has your role as a consultant to insurers, including Lloyd's syndicates, influenced your artistic process and style?

Our culture often views holding opposing traits as odd. However, other cultures recognise these can be complementary, forming a dynamic system where the whole transcends the individual parts. While my structured job provides satisfaction and rigour, painting allows for freedom and creativity. The meticulous planning in my professional life enables me to start painting without a predetermined outcome. Lloyd's

rich history contrasts with my vibrant, modern art.

Daily decisive choices in consulting has given me the confidence to complete a painting. Sharing personal emotions through my art makes me feel vulnerable, so I use progress photos to gain perspective and refine my vision.

Your paintings have a very distinct texture and depth. Can you walk us through your process of building up layers and creating such tactile works?

I spread vibrant colours of paint with a palette knife. Then, using a tapping motion, I lift the paint away from the surface, creating initial texture. Each layer builds on the previous one, capturing and enhancing the paint rising furthest from the canvas. This creates a rich texture, resulting in the distinct tactile quality of my work.

What draws you to abstract art, and how do you find it peaceful and calming compared to other styles?

I truly find my voice through abstract painting. I love the limitless possibilities of abstract



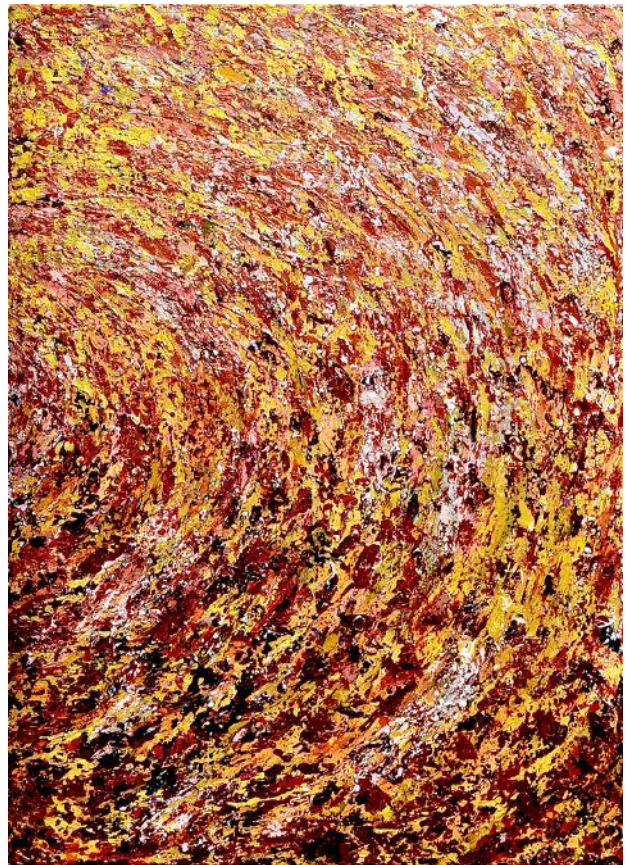
Wendy Kriz Evans | Study In Blue And Green | 2024

art, where it can be anything I imagine. One day, a pink line on a canvas might remind you of a pregnancy test, stirring feelings of anticipation, joy, or anxiety. The next day, you recall a cat scratch on your hand with memories of soft fur and playfulness. Abstract art gives me permission to let go of my worries and let my mind wander.

Can you share the inspiration and story behind some of your specific works like "Sun-Joy" and "Sun-Love"? What emotions and thoughts were you expressing through these paintings?

"Sun-Joy" was inspired by a rare sunny day, and the joy of feeling the sun's warmth. I also felt incredibly loved and supported as my husband had asked me to create the painting. These emotions are reflected in the vibrant colours and flowing curves of the piece. My choice of gold and the sunny day inspired thoughts of the sun's structure, which is echoed in the circles throughout the painting.

"Sun-Love" was similarly inspired. Tom was so pleased with "Sun-Joy"



Wendy Kriz Evans
Sun-Love
2024



Wendy Kriz Evans
Sun-Joy
2024

You mentioned that some of your painting was done 'en plain air'. How does painting outside influence your work compared to painting in a studio?

The natural light alters my perception, prompting me to paint in ways I wouldn't indoors. This challenges me to reconsider my artistic intentions, balancing the spontaneous outcome with my original vision. Being in the garden brings me immense joy, and this happiness permeates my work, making my art brighter in colour and rich with flowing, curved lines.

What advice would you give to aspiring artists who are looking to find their own style and voice in abstract art?

I struggled with this in school - now I focus on what brings me joy. I play with paint and colour until the piece naturally comes together, influenced by my thoughts. For instance, feeling guilty about spending time painting made me angry and led to dark red squares in the foundation of "Evolving Shades of Pink."

My advice is to just start painting.

Acrylics are great because you can layer and revise easily. My work often mirrors personal highs —like "Sun-Joy," and lows - like "Evolving Shades of Pink," which explores my struggles with femininity, particularly the challenging phase of menopause.

Even if you've spent 30 years working in insurance, you're subconsciously shaping your own unique abstract style. Every moment, every experience contributes to your art, making it uniquely yours.



Wendy Kriz Evans | Pink And Blue Waves | 2024



Zoe, the daughter of a British artist and writer, and a Swiss commedia dell'arte specialist and actor, was born and raised in Paris. Growing up in an environment filled with art, philosophy, and films from the Golden Age of Hollywood, Zoe developed a profound interest in the visual arts.

She began her academic journey by studying Film & Media in London, but her passion for drawing and painting led her to pursue art restoration in Paris.

Currently, Zoe divides her time between Paris and Luzern, where she is fortunate enough to immerse herself in art.

— Zoe Baer

Zoe Baer | Gaze of the Unseen Battle | 2024



My name is Lucia Cerda, I am originally from Argentina but moved to Spain when I was 7 years old to later live in Northern Ireland for 10 years. I now live in Barcelona. I studied Graphic Design and Illustration to later work as an Art Director in advertising. I have started drawing comics and vignettes over the last 2 years, and have worked as a freelance illustrator all these years.

I love finding the silly things in the everyday. I usually make connections and silly puns, normally related to animals and tend to go towards scatological themes!

Lucia Cerda
Stressed
2023





Lucia Cerda
Camouflage
2023

— *Interview*

Narmin Kassam

Could you tell us about your journey as an artist and how you first became interested in creating art?

My journey in art began in childhood. Initially self-taught, visual art became my passion. I was a very shy young woman and, like many, conscious about my body. Visual art became my place of safety, solitude, and a conduit to my true emotions. I felt most inspired - and most at peace - in art galleries. I became inspired by impressionist painters like Monet with vibrant and light-filled paintings, loose brush strokes, and an emphasis on atmosphere over detail. As I developed, I enjoyed incorporating paper into my artwork. I began discovering colours, textures, light, and depth as symbols of my deeper self. Art became a safe space for affective expression, a space of belonging and freedom.



How did your studies with Gordon Harrison influence your development as an artist?

I have been influenced by Gordon's bold, vibrant, and dynamic use of colour and fluid, with sweeping brush strokes. He taught me to dedicate time to paint consistently, use quality tools - paints, canvases, and brushes, and develop my portfolio of work. He encouraged me to find my unique style and refine my techniques. Although Gordon is primarily an expressive landscape artist, he was very supportive of me focussing on subjects and styles that resonated with me. He guided me to relax, loosen my brush strokes, and let

go of my fears. He believed in my talent. I was the first of his students to ever bring paper into his studio and glue it to canvases!

How do you choose the materials and techniques for your mixed media works, especially the textured and Japanese decorative paper?

I have always had a visceral connection with paper. Central to my process is my diverse collection of textured papers sourced from Japan, India, and other regions. I have a particular affinity for Japanese decorative paper because of its traditional hand-crafted methods that date back over a thousand years. The paper is known for its vibrancy, strength, and resiliency - like the women in my paintings. With their array of



Narmin Kassam
Beautiful Voice, Collection 1
2021



Narmin Kassam
Beautiful Voice, Collection 6
2024

colours and textures, the papers ignite my creativity as I run my fingers across them, connecting deeply with their unique qualities. This tactile engagement inspires the figures and shapes in my paintings, helping me envision forms and compositions. When translating these inspirations into paintings, especially of human figures, I emphasize texture and colour interplay. I also spend time curating the specific colours and patterns that enhance the figures in my artwork. For example, designing dresses and styles based on how the light will reflect on the paper to enhance each figure. Each

paper is cut to precision to blend and enhance the painted components of the piece. Each figure owns her unique style. By carefully choosing papers and employing techniques like palette knife work and layered acrylics (heavy to gouache), with varying opacity, and mediums (vitrail, gold foil, and moulding paste), I create depth and highlight the individuality of each figure, conveying a distinct story through varied textures and hues.

What role does meditation play in your artistic process?

Art is my meditation. Integrating paper with the visual burst of paint has become a meditative practice that has allowed me to express



Narmin Kassam
Beautiful Voice, Collection 3
2021

affect and experience a spiritual connection while staying grounded through life's endless struggles. When I make art, it clears my mind and helps me momentarily detach from the physical world. It will sometimes open a flow state, creating space for new insights. The process can have a calming effect, reducing feelings of stress and anxiety, which also allows me to experiment and take more creative risks. I have been living with chronic pain and art has been the key to day-to-day functioning by allowing me a space to calm my body and focus on the positivity of creation and inspiration.

How has your style evolved over the years, and what are some key factors that have contributed to this evolution?

Experimentation with different techniques and mediums has been key to my evolution; studying other artists, seeking mentorship, receiving critique from other artists, and allowing mistakes. I have been developing my recognizable style and making art that I want to make rather than the art others want me to make. I am pushing my boundaries. This is an evolution of my personal

development from subdued, structured, and perhaps restricted to brave, fearless, and bold. The canvas is where I sometimes see my soul. I invite viewers to catch a glimpse of theirs.

How do your personal experiences and background influence your art?

Perhaps inspired by my roots as an African-born woman and a refugee, each figure in my paintings represents the beauty and pain of this world. Her voice can be heard and expressed in thought, style, ethnicity, and shape. I live my purpose by translating inner thoughts into tangible artwork. Each piece mirrors my self-discovery journey, forging deep connections with myself and sometimes others. The process bridges my narratives with the outside world. Expressing my emotions on canvas creates space for healing and self-acceptance. As much as I embrace the solitude of my process, I also care deeply about my community - locally and globally. I have, at times, engaged communities through collaborative art in the form of murals, inviting others to explore shared experiences. This has enriched my



Narmin Kassam
Beautiful Voice, Collection 4
2024

journey and I hope to empower others to find their voice.

What advice would you give to emerging artists who are just starting their creative journeys?

Study approaches of other artists and take advantage of visiting galleries and museums. Find your unique style through the exploration of different techniques and mediums. Push your boundaries. Go beyond your zone of comfort. Don't play it safe by painting the same type of painting; it is ok to make mistakes and take risks. Paint as much as possible to continue to refine your technique and competence. Create the art that you want to create - that is meaningful to you. Some will resonate with it - others will not. And that is ok.

Micol Fontana from Rome, Italy. I'm a freelance illustrator and graphic designer. I have always felt the need to have a space to express myself through drawing so I directed my studies towards Comics and illustration; in 2019 I graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts of Bologna. During the Accademy I've self-published my works and through a lot of volunteering in festival and fair of publishing I fell in love with this world. In 2021, I grauated from La Sapienza University of Rome with a Master's degree in Publishing, Journalism and Cultural Management. I had the opportunity to work my way up in the publishing industry thanks to the university internship at the publishing house Le Maghette in Rome and working as a booth attendant, moderator for fairs such as Più Libri Più Liberi, Bologna Children's Bookfair, Fruit Exhibition and others.

"These illustration rappresent my essence, since I was a child i always fell a strong bond with nature and animals. And I've always illustrated fermale figure that are extremely connected with me life and Mother nature."

Micol Fontana | The discovery | 2022





ME

— *Interview*

Nika Nuova

Can you describe the moment or experience that made you decide to transition from product design to textile art?

Design offers the chance to replicate an idea and make it industrial. Every product has either an artisanal trace or an industrial imprint. This isn't inherently good or bad; it's simply a fact that shapes product design. I wanted to move away from the industrialization of art to create pieces that are more authentic and reflect me rather than following a trend. My love for textiles has always driven me. I adore fabric, especially vintage ones that carry extra stories. Creating fabric, making clothes from it, wearing them, storing them—it's a whole life cycle. I wanted to tell that story and give new life to the fabric, imbuing it with a new aesthetic



and form. While I admire classical tapestries, I aim to use existing fabric structures and motifs as sources of inspiration, transforming them into new art objects.

How has your background in classical art education and fashion design influenced your current work with textiles?

My education has had a direct impact on my current work. I spent a significant amount of time designing clothes, but eventually, I left that path. I craved more abstraction and freedom. Clothing is tied to the body, imposing certain limitations, it subjugates

the material to its function. The fashion industry is permeated with narcissism, leading to overconsumption and overproduction, which contributes to catastrophic waste. However, textiles themselves are one of humanity's greatest inventions, with their variety of patterns and meanings. This diversity fuels my art, allowing me to create something new from what already exists, similar to how Italian pasta might be derivative from Chinese noodles, but it has evolved into a culinary masterpiece in its own right.

Your work uses only recycled materials. What inspired this choice, and how do you source your materials?

I almost always use old materials as they provide ample inspiration. It began with items precious to me: my grandmother's clothes, my mother's clothes, and my fashion design work. These weren't always finished pieces—sometimes they were unfinished garments or fabric scraps. While these may not be the typical items people bring when moving, they held great value for me. At some point after yet another move to a new city, Rome I



Nika Nuova
Anxious Joy

think, I realized it was time to start a new project that would bring these cherished materials back to life, something I had longed to do.

The piece "Anxious Joy" seems to capture a complex mix of emotions. Can you elaborate on the feelings and process behind this work?

In creating this and my other textile works, I aimed to express emotion. I reflected on my experiences in various life situations, dissecting my feelings into different spectrums, and describing them through textures

and colors.

Adult joy is complex, involving both unrestrained happiness and the anxiety of responsibility. Joy surfaces, bringing out our inner child who revels in the moment, rejoices unconditionally, without looking back, and experiences the full flush of these positive experiences. But then in a matter of split second the inner adult's anxiety and sense of responsibility catch up with this joy and makes you doubt everything you are feeling. This tension makes joy more intense and multifaceted, after it prevails, being a positive and vivid emotion.



Nika Nuova
Clouds

"Clouds" has a very different aesthetic compared to your textile works. What draws you to create in such diverse mediums?

The concept of this painting required different materials—more pure and simple. I wanted to capture the lightness and contrast between sea and sky, needing a graphic medium to convey this ethereal quality. Paints, unlike textiles, offer a clean tool for this purpose. I believe an artist shouldn't be confined to one medium; different ideas require different expressions. Art, for me, is about exploring these varied embodiments and being open to experimentation. That's what art is for me.

In "Faith," you use old newspapers to create the piece. What significance do these materials hold for you, and how do they relate to the theme of faith?

As I mentioned, the choice of material follows the idea. I started with thin white paper to symbolize lightness, tenderness, fragility, and purity. Then, I added old newspapers, sent to me from

various countries and in different languages, representing the barrage of repetitive, regurgitated information imposed on us from the outside. White paper stands for pure, untouched faith, which becomes muddied by conflicting information, true and fake, creating a gray, dirty backdrop that stifles thought and freedom to breathe and fly. Weaving these elements together was a deliberately chosen technique to illustrate the entanglement and constraints of added information.



Nika Nuova
Nika Nuova City



Nika Nuova
Nika Nuova City

How do you see your work evolving in the future, and are there any new themes or materials you are eager to explore?

This is a challenging question, especially for an artist. On one hand, I'm disciplined and treat my art as a job, not waiting around for inspiration. On the other hand, envisioning a marketing strategy for my art is tough. The key is to avoid falling into mere craftsmanship while not straying from aesthetics towards pure concept. Maintaining this balance is crucial for me.

I'm an Italian artist and illustrator based in a small village not far from Verona. I started drawing at a very young age and then decided to pursue an artistic career by enrolling in a Fine Art Academy. I have a degree in Techniques of Decoration as well as a Master degree in Painting and Art History. I have mainly worked as a freelance illustrator for online blogs, social media accounts and magazines, but I have also created artist's books that have now travelled throughout Europe. Painting is like a second language to me, that's why I try to use shapes and colors to tell stories, convey bits of emotions, feelings, thoughts and states of mind in a kind of a funny, asymmetrical and a bit of sarcastic way. I like the idea of talking through my illustrations, to have people identify with what is painted and that's why I mainly draw expressive portraits and daily life scenes or objects. I also love using very bright, saturated colors with high contrast not only to catch immediate attention, but more importantly as a means to emphasize what I want to recount.

— Francesca Pisano



Francesca Pisano | On a Night Stroll Catching Stars | 2024



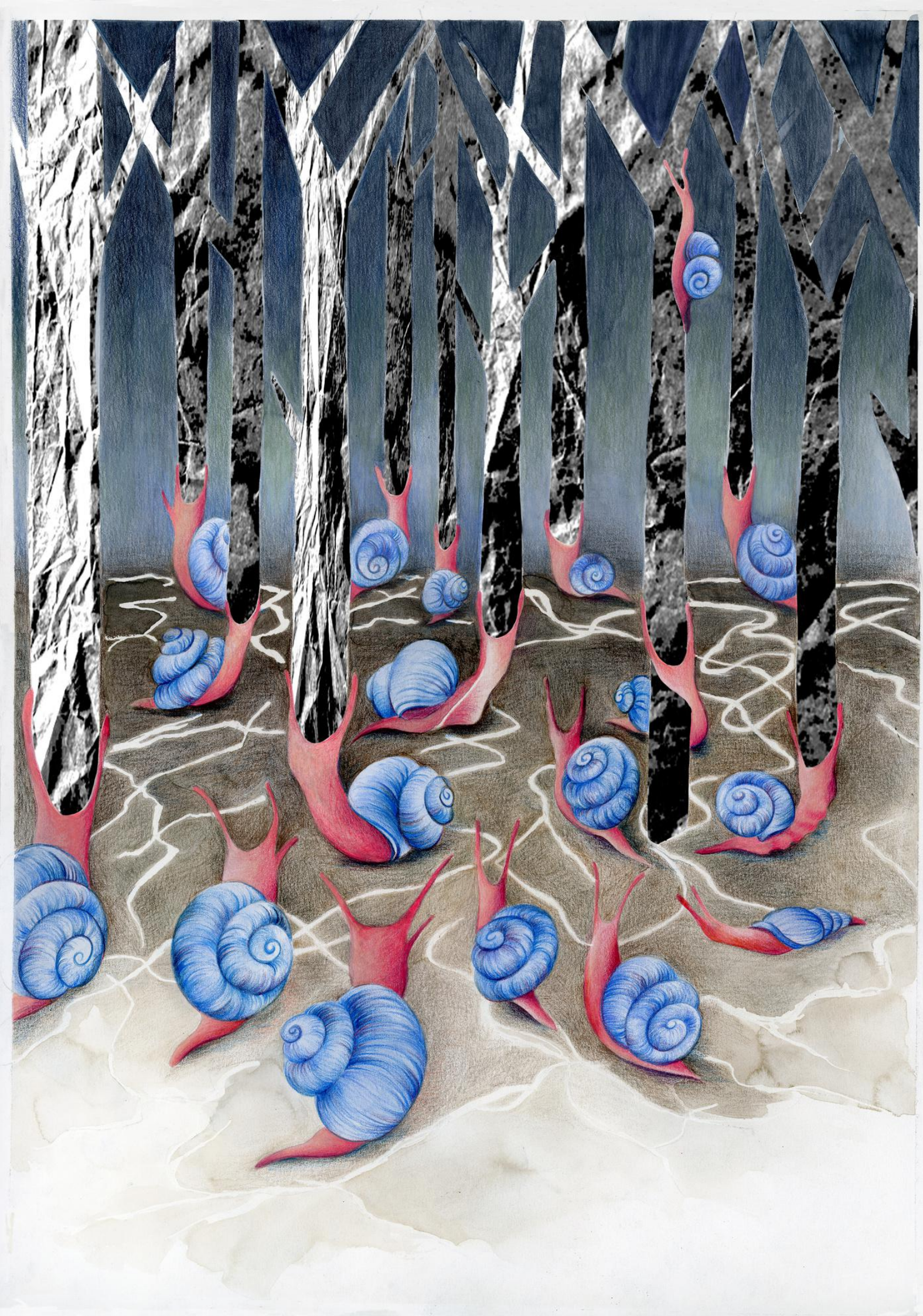
Penny Hetherington is a passionate and versatile artist whose work delves deep into the exploration of the human spirit throughout history. With a vivid imagination and a keen eye for detail, Penny brings historical and emotional narratives to life through a diverse range of mediums, including colorful paintings on canvas and paper, crochet and papier mâché sculpture. From a young age, Penny was captivated by the stories and emotions that define the human experience. This fascination grew into a lifelong commitment to art, where every piece serves as a journey through time, capturing the essence of humanity in its many forms. Inspired by the richness of different cultures and epochs, Penny's work often features vibrant colors and intricate details that invite viewers to connect with the past and reflect on their own place in the world. Penny's paintings are a celebration of life, capturing moments of joy, sorrow, triumph, and introspection. Each canvas and sheet of paper is a testament to the artist's ability to blend historical accuracy with imaginative expression, resulting in works that are both educational and emotionally resonant. In addition to painting, Penny has a remarkable talent for crochet and paper mâché sculpture. These tactile arts allow Penny's art to explore form and texture in unique ways, creating three-dimensional representations of the human spirit that are as engaging to touch as they are to see. The crochet pieces often depict historical figures or abstract concepts, while the paper mâché sculptures bring to life scenes from history and mythology with a whimsical yet profound touch. Penny's work has been exhibited in various galleries and art shows, earning recognition for its creativity, depth, and ability to evoke a strong emotional response. Whether through a detailed painting, a delicate crochet piece, or an elaborate paper mâché sculpture, Penny continues to inspire and captivate audiences, encouraging them to explore the depths of the human spirit and the richness of our collective history.



Penny Hetherington
China Girl
2012



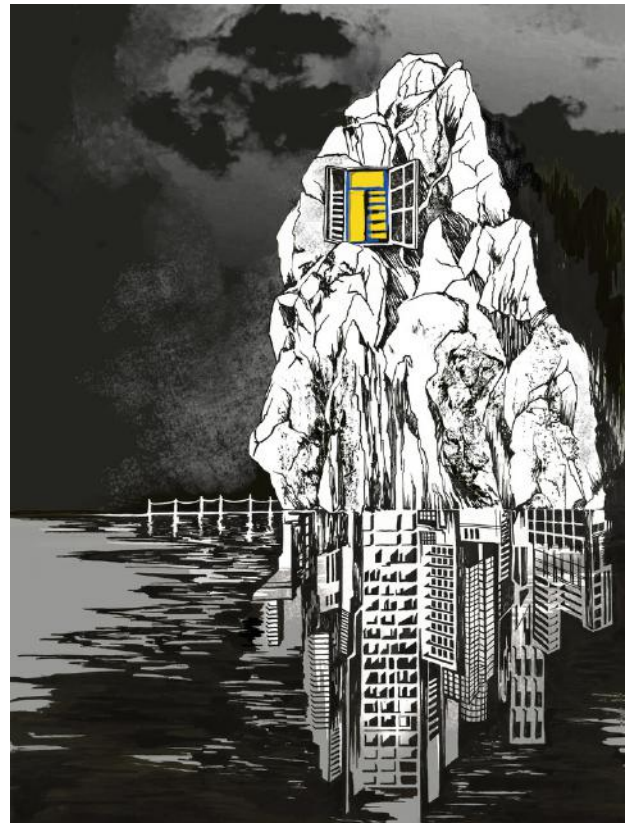
Penny Hetherington
Garden Hermit
2024



Niyati Froind

Can you tell us about your journey as an artist? How did you get started in illustration?

I have been drawing ever since I can remember myself. When I was 3 or 4 years old I made a drawing of a house and a sun in a blue sky, and a line of ants walking in the grass. My mom told anyone who would listen - “she’s going to be an illustrator”. But - it didn’t happen right away. I first studied arts and jewelry design and worked in the jewelry industry for a few years. I made jewelry out of rusted iron and participated in contemporary jewelry exhibitions. Then I met my husband and we had a precious metals refinement business. I only went back to drawing during Covid-19, that is, 4 years ago.



Niyati Froind
Foreign Language
2022

Who or what are your biggest influences in art and illustration?

I love everything by Beatrice Alemagna. Her style is so liberated and free! My style, or better said - my natural inclination - is to be very precise and “color inside the lines”. Whenever I want to ‘let go’ a bit in my drawings I look at her work and get inspired. I also admire the work of so many others that there is not enough space to mention them all - Aya Gordon Noy, Shirley Waisman and Natalie Pudalov are just three of them.

How did your education at Shenkar College of Design and Meayrimim illustration school shape your artistic style?

Shenkar gave me a sense of discipline and academic understanding of design. At Meayrimim - the illustration school of Liora Grossman - I found my creative soul. This school is mostly dedicated towards children's books. Liora taught me everything I know about children's books - from building a composition through character design and picking a meaningful color scheme. And the most important thing - how to create a line of illustration that either works independently of, or is intertwined with the text.



Niyati Froind
Foreign Language
2022

What significance do colored pencils and rusted iron hold in your work?

I think they both have the same rustic and "true" feeling. I love grainy textures with a tactile quality. The technique I'm working with requires many layers to reach saturation, and I love doing that for hours.

Are there any new mediums or techniques you're excited to explore in the future?

I've just started learning writing for children with Yotam Shwimmer - a great kid lit editor and I'm excited to be able to both write and illustrate my own stories.

I'm always taking classes and learning new stuff. I feel like there is so much more I want to know! These days I'm playing and experiencing with pastels.

Can you describe a particularly memorable moment or turning point in your career?

At 'Meayrimim', Liora introduced me to colored pencils and I swear I could have heard the click sound when I first used them. It was love at first sight! Since then it has become my 'go to' technique.

Can you tell us about the stories behind some of your favorite pieces?

Yes! Color doesn't come to me easily. So, when I illustrated my interpretation to the famous Israeli children's book "Mitz Petel" ('Raspberry Juice') I was struggling with the color scheme and accidentally picked up a pink pencil. I was drawing a lilypond... but, since colored pencils are unerasable, I just went on with it. It was only when I finished that I realized I had picked a "raspberry theme". Since then, pink (which I never wear...) has come to my rescue many more times.

Niyati Froind
The pink lilypond





Liudmila Rabinovich '24

Liudmila Rabinovich | Windowview autumn | 2024

In my work, I find it interesting to observe how landscapes and things change as I think about them and process them, transferring them to canvas or paper. For my works, I usually choose the simplest possible subjects and simple forms. For me, form is filled with color, and it is color that I pay the most attention to. I also like to use different techniques and get different results when depicting the same scene with different materials. Most of the works presented were made from life and depict my everyday things and my windowview.

— Liudmila Rabinovich



Liudmila Rabinovich | Still life in a hotel room #1 | 2024



Liudmila Rabinovich | Pears | 2024

— Interview

Polina Bulgakova

How did attending an unconventional art school shape your approach to art?

In the beginning it actually felt weird, I didn't feel that I have enough academic skills, felt like I'm painting with "mistakes" in lighting, composition etc. I did have talent, but thought that it's not enough, and that they don't actually "teach"; us in the classic definition of the word. My teacher, Viktoria, could come to my desk and say: "Give it more expression! More life!", and I had no idea what it means and how do I do it. Only in more mature age I realized that she taught me to work from my feelings and emotions, work intuitively, and this is the key aspect of my works now. Sometimes I make an artwork without any realization of what I'm doing, and after some time I look



at it and I realize what I was feeling and where does it come from. This unconventional approach to art helped me to build my artistic style.

What drew you to digital 3D art, and how does it compare to traditional media?

When I was living in Russia, I worked mostly with oil paints. I loved it so much, even though it's smelly, dirty and dries slow. Once I moved to Israel, I didn't have enough space in my apartment. No chance I could do oils there. I then moved to watercolors, but it didn't have the bold texture I used to with oils, and it's so gentle – you can't change much after the layer

dries. Then I tried to paint in Photoshop. It was nice to have CTL+Z button, control of the layers, but I started to feel it's not enough freedom for me, I felt like I want to actually dive into my works. When Covid started, my office let us all work remotely, I suddenly had 2 additional hours in my day and more energy (traffic in Tel Aviv is insane). I watched few tutorials on YouTube just for fun, but finally I felt like this is IT. I could build my own worlds, define my own physics, literally anything felt possible (and it was). I still paint by hands sometimes, it helps to relax and re-connect to myself, especially when I have many projects. Nothing can replace the kinetic aspect of art, and I think it is necessary for any artist to do it from time to time.

How do you blend elements from Russian and Israeli cultures in your art?

I reflect on my memories and feelings a lot. It's not easy to live in immigration, especially when the countries are so opposite. Russian folklore, history and evolution of arts is extremely colorful, and I love to interpret it. From the other side, I have a unique point of view



Polina Bulgakova | 99 Luftballoons

on Israeli culture, as a person with such opposite background. I pass the reality I live in through this inner filter, and express it through my art. Thanks to Viktoria, I know how to mix unmixable and work from my feelings and emotions, and I hope my art helps people stay open-minded.

How do you approach the idea of disregarding the laws of physics in your creations?

Sometimes I just look at an object/scene/situation and ask myself, what would make me say "I didn't expect this?". Sometimes I start with a traditional ordinary scene, and say "Now, what would not fit here at all in any ways?".

This happens much more often, to be honest, many times I have a certain idea in my mind, like "I really want to make some mountains/interior/still life", and from that I reimagine reality.

Can you talk about a specific piece that was particularly challenging or meaningful to you?

This year I made the most honest and most meaningful for me piece, "The Wanderer". I made it in the beginning of 2024. By this time, I felt a little confused with my life, a lot was going on and I couldn't make an order. I felt like I'm falling apart, I missed my homeland so much, yet I realized that after last events I probably wouldn't be able to visit another year or two at least. At the same time, last time I visited in September 2023, I didn't feel connected there. And I never



Polina Bulgakova | Dreamer

felt 100% connected here in Israel, as I am very different from the locals. And I'm a very dynamic person, I go over changes all the time, my taste changes quickly, my hobbies and passions.

I wanted to make a piece that will embrace my inner contradictions and help me accept them. I wanted something that will say: "Hey, I'm a traveler yet homestead person. I love beach and snow. I love stability yet I love changes". This is how The Wanderer was born. He moves all the time yet stays inside his inner space. He transforms constantly yet has the core that stays the same. I deeply connected to this work, and never ever I made something that express the real me.



Polina Bulgakova | The Wanderer

How do you see the evolution of digital art in the next few years?

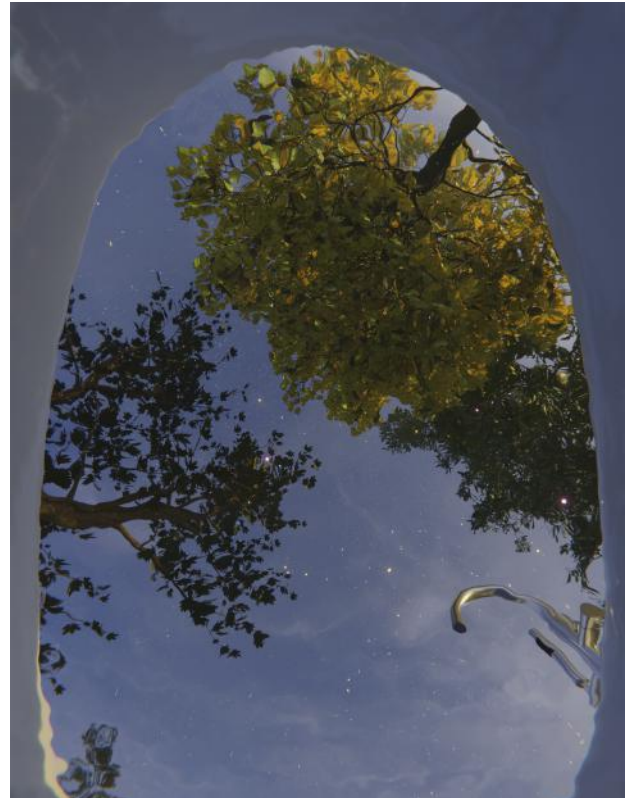
Well, it's hard to say, as the industry changes so quickly I can't even follow up on it fully. But I think it will thrive. With the help of AI tools, it's much easier now to make references and sketches, with the art streaming platforms it's easier to get visibility and exposure. I do think though that traditional art will get its advantages from it – as more and more artists move to digital, the traditional ones will be more and more appreciated too. In the end it's all cycles, and will flip many times, in my opinion.

What advice would you give to aspiring digital artists who want to explore surrealistic realism?

Just think about what could never happen and make it real. What could be unnatural – and do it. When a glass breaks, it shatters? Make it sound like an ocean wave. See a cloud in the sky? Make it behave like a liquid. Start with something small, and don't judge it. Make-no-think approach helps me a lot when I feel like I'm in a creative hole. In the beginning you probably will abandon a lot of

projects you started, and it's okay – I promise you will get back to them one day.

A lot of times I find myself overthinking a project/scene, and this is the moment I say "that's enough" and just do something, no matter what. Also, I learned it in a hard way though, - 90% of what you think is visible, is invisible to others. The wrecked angle, broken perspective, not exact color you were planning to use – you are the only one that will see it. So, don't overthink, just go on.



Polina Bulgakova
Melancholia

Maiden name Brajan, born 1973. in Rijeka, Croatia. Graduated at interdisciplinary study of Fine Art and Art History of the Teacher Training Faculty at the University of Rijeka, Croatia in 1997. Had several sole exhibitons and participated art exhibitions in Croatia and foreign countries .Received few awards and recognitions for her art. Member of Croatian visual art society in Rijeka.

Artist Statement

Creating art is my life. It is the inner need that drives me. That is the need for expressing emotions and experiences. It is research, it is a game, it is a challenge and need for frequent change. Sometimes my motivation to make art is the interpretation of nature that I see. In other cases, it's just my internal life; thoughts and beliefs.

— Darija Stipanic

Darija Stipanic | Krivo je more | Sculpture oak wood | 2016





— Interview

Jackie Flavio

Can you share a bit about your journey as an artist? How did you get started in illustration and painting?

For as long as I can remember I have sought out opportunities and experiences that pull the creativity out of me. Some of my earliest memories are of fabricating complex worlds by eliciting the help of toys, construction paper, sequins, and sometimes our family dog. I began drawing and painting around 6 years old and haven't stopped since. It quickly became very clear to me, even as a child, that creating is a calling for me, something I am born to do.

What childhood stories or movies had the most significant impact on your artistic style?

While there were countless stories that made a lasting impact on me, the most notable ones are the



picture books that were read to me as a child. The illustrations in these narratives became my first experiences with art and creativity. The imagery contained within these stories told epic tales of adventure, friendship, love, and self-discovery.

One story that has left an everlasting mark on me creatively is "A Chair for My Mother" by Vera Williams. This story is told from the perspective of a young girl that longs for her mother to have a comfy space to rest after her long days at work. The girl, her mother, and grandmother, save up for a chair by collecting their extra coins

in a glass jar, every day, until they have enough to buy the perfect floral armchair. Adorned with quilt-like borders that represent the events taking place on each page, and a loose style filled with expressive color and texture, the artwork in this book excited me and made the story truly come to life. It was through children's books like these that I began to see the power of images and their ability to form new worlds.

Some of my other early childhood inspirations include stories and illustrations by Eric Carle and Lisa Frank. More recently, I have been drawn to the narrative work of Sha'an d'Anthes and the whimsical mixed media style of Petr Horacek.

Your work often features playful narratives with charming animal characters. How do you come up with these stories?

While my stories, characters, and ideas can come from many different places, most of them come to me through my daily sketchbook practice. It is in this disciplined experience of play that I feel most free and able to delight in a mindset of experimentation. During my sketchbook practice I



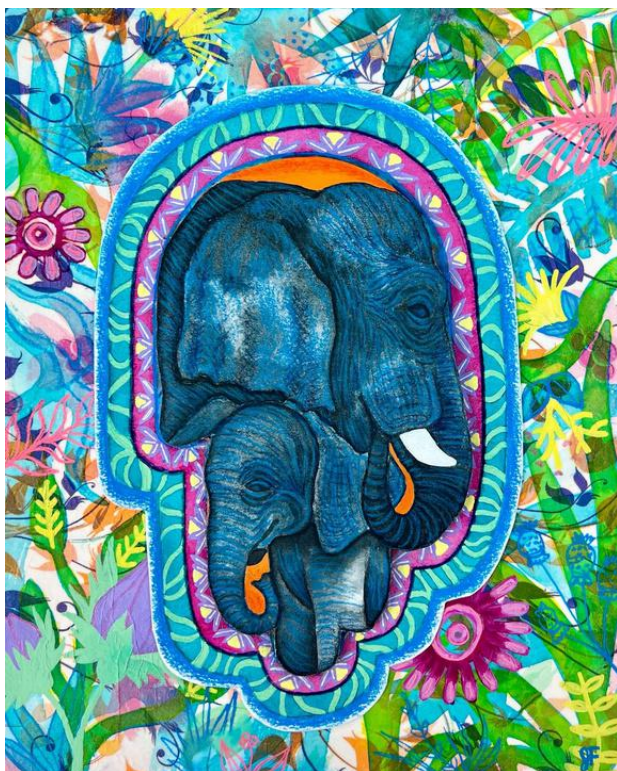
write, read books, collect imagery from various magazines and brochures, sketch from observation and pictures, paint with tea, draw with my non-dominant hand, collage found materials together, anything to keep the mind loose and in a state of free-flowing creativity, without judgment.

Animals have a way of reminding us to live in the present and not take life too seriously. While animals are so intriguing to me they are also a great mystery. It is because of this, their genuine heart, and playful spirit, that I am inspired to invent stories about

them. Stories that make them more relatable, more accessible, but also simple, sweet, and full of joy.

What role does fantasy play in your art, and how do you think it impacts the viewer?

My whimsical worlds exist in a place between fantasy and reality. They seek to bring the viewer in with familiar elements like textures, eyes, plants, trees, and other objects. Once the viewer connects with something memorable, they can then delight in the absurdities of personified animals and fantastical landscapes.



How has your experience as an art teacher influenced your own work and creative process?

My experience as an art teacher was one of the most rewarding and challenging seasons of my life. It has allowed me to stretch and grow as an artist in a myriad of ways. Inspiring young people to keep creativity in their lives encouraged me to make creating a priority. Engaging in painting, drawing, and any other art discipline is often a difficult task for many people as it forces them to put aside their fears and self-doubt to simply create for the sake of creating. Instilling a love for creativity without the drama of self-criticism for my students, enabled me to find the lightness, ease, and joy of making for myself.

Being a teacher puts me in the position to inspire people to find their stride, to create because it's

fun and not because you are trying to prove something to anyone. While I have recently left the school system and I am no longer a traditional art teacher, teaching will still remain an important part of my identity going forward. I intend to include art education in my artistic practice once again in the near future.

What advice do you give to your students who aspire to be artists?

For my students seeking to be artists, writers, musicians, and any other form of creative individual, I tell them to practice every day, and to never lose sight of the passion they have for creating. For it is in our creative moments where we are fully alive, fully present, and fully able to tap into our own imperfect power. This state of free-flowing ideas and action is where the magic of being human resides.



Started Chinese paintings at 5 and graduated from the University of the Arts London, Joice Cheung (b. 1993) transcends the boundaries between Chinese calligraphy and Western abstraction by intertwining colour, space, light, and movement in duality.

“From little things, big things grow.” Inspired by nature, Joice Cheung loves to observe the subtle things in life. Even if it is little, after accumulation, it will gradually converge into a power that can turn the situation around, like the power of a seed moving bunches of soil. This, is the power of life. Her works exude tenacious vitality and capture the continual transformation of life.

Joice Cheung | Quiet Black Stimuli IV | 2024







— Interview

Kseniia Stern

How did you start your journey in naive art?

Since childhood, I have been interested in painting. I looked at artists' works with admiration, actively visited galleries, and collected books about artists. My favorites are Vincent Van Gogh, Salvador Dali, and Frida Kahlo. My creative journey as an artist began in March 2022. At that time, I left my job, where I had worked for the past five years, and I had time, energy, and resources to try something new. I chose painting, something I had always dreamed of but was afraid to try. While creating my first work, I realized how much I enjoyed it; it filled me up and captivated my attention. But the most significant discovery was that I had a talent for it.



Can you describe your creative process when working with oil and a palette knife?

At the beginning of my creative journey, I used a palette to mix colors to get the desired shade. However, over time, I realized that the best shades are created directly on the canvas. So, I just take the colors I need and mix them right on the canvas with palette knives to achieve the shade that resonates with my inner vision.

How do you choose the themes and subjects for your artworks?

I draw the themes for my paintings

from my internal experiences, feelings, and life events, as well as from my travels. Some of my paintings have come to me during meditation or in dreams. Interestingly, I have had several remarkable experiences related to Dubai. For instance, after painting certain scenes, they manifested in real life. For example, I have a painting called "Awakening," featuring a pink-blue spiral as the background and main element. I saw an identical spiral from my hotel room window during a trip to the UAE a few days after painting it—an illuminated Ferris wheel, Ain Dubai, which looked the same as in my painting. Another example is my painting "Meditation," which depicts a flight over the sea and city, referencing my spontaneous helicopter ride over Palm Jumeirah.

Can you explain the significance of the techniques you use, such as impasto, strokes, and gradient?

Impasto is my favorite technique for applying oil and my signature style. It gives the painting texture and volume, making it deep and vibrant, capturing the viewer's attention. This technique invites



Kseniia Stern | Excitement | 2022

viewers to explore the plot and color depth. I use strokes sparingly, only in certain elements where impasto would be "excessive." With impasto, I create smooth transitions of shades, while "rough" strokes allow me not to mix colors, showing the viewer the contrast of adjacent shades. I use gradient or color stretching mainly as a background for the sky or water, in scenes where a subtle application of oil does not distract from the key elements of the painting.

How does your work in the Olive Marketing Agency influence your artistic practice?

Rather, my artistic practice

influences my work in marketing. Our agency provides a full range of marketing services, including design and website development. My experience in branding and artistic awareness helps me improve the quality and speed of our work in these areas.

What advice would you give to aspiring artists who want to explore naive art?

Listen to yourself and your desires. Do you genuinely want to do this? It is essential to ask this question in any activity. If your answer is "Yes" and you gain a lot of energy from creating art, it fills you up, makes you happier, and brings inner harmony, then you are on



Kseniia Stern
Pool
2022



Kseniia Stern | Kiss | 2022

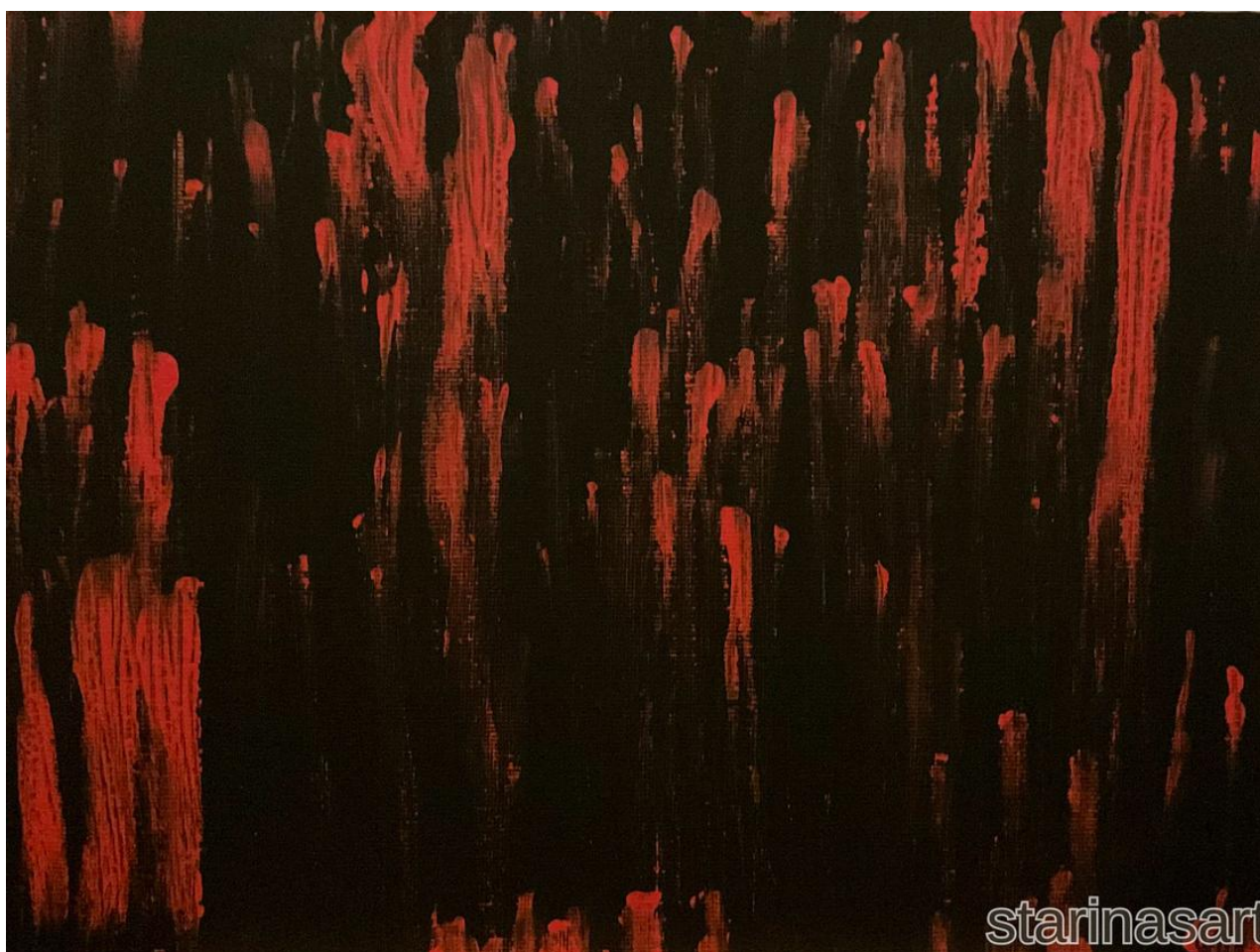
the right path. Be patient, keep doing what you love, and do what you can, and your audience will notice and appreciate you.

Is Kseniia Stern your pseudonym?

My name is Ksenia Konovalova, but I use the pseudonym Kseniia Stern in my artistic practice. The first name is just translated into English, as it is the international language that helps us communicate worldwide. Stern, translated from German, means star. I was born on July 17 and have been interested in esotericism since childhood. Seventeen is the arcana of the Star, representing creativity, which is why I chose this "surname." Additionally, 17 is my lucky number.

Introducing "Strigoi", an interdisciplinary series focused on various aspects of death and vampirism. The works reference rural folk beliefs as well as early U.S. social and cultural practices from the 18th and 19th centuries. While the mediums vary with each piece, the series is linked by a consistent theme and meaning.

— Veronica McLaren



Veronica McLaren
Consumptive
2023



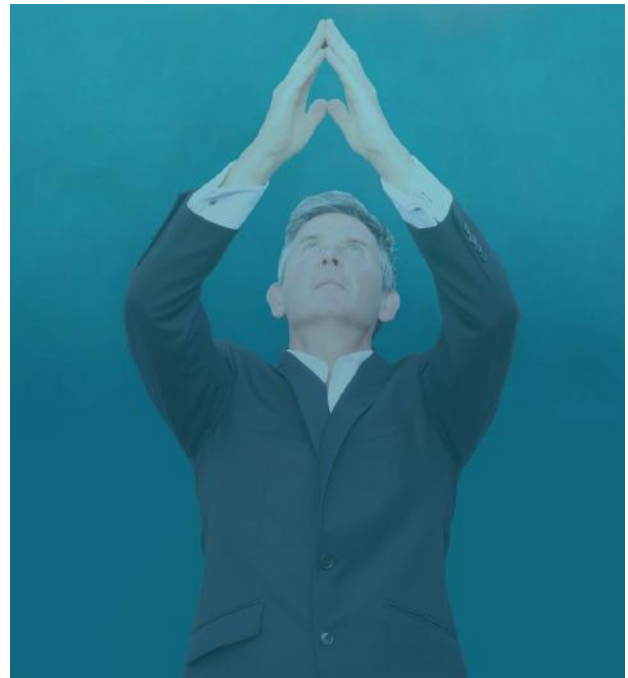


— Interview

Philip Richards

How did your studies in architecture influence your approach to art, particularly in sculpture and mixed media?

Studying architecture provides a great foundation to understand a myriad of themes, such as spatial awareness, form and structure, along with material knowledge and working with a variety of materials, including concrete, wood, metal, and glass to name a few. Combined with the design principles such as proportion and scale, rhythm and repetition the designer/artist can create some balanced and harmonious forms, whether large or small, a building to a sculpture. The most practical element of the design process was developing the skills in drawing and creating physical scaled models that helped to plan and visualize the design before



executing it, leading to more precise and measured artistic creations. By integrating these aspects, an architectural background provides a solid footing that can create works that are not only visually and conceptually compelling but also technically sophisticated, innovative and boundary pushing.

What prompted you to transition from architecture to art, and how has that transition impacted your creative process?

Depending on the scale of the building, from initiation, concept to final completion, the process sometimes takes a long time, and

we are talking months to years, in which some cases the initial concept has morphed into something else, due to the constraints related to the budget, material changes or the client requirements, which is very frustrating. The realisation that the most enjoyable part of the process for me was the early concept stage, involving sketching, physical model making, 3D modelling and photoshop for the concept presentations. All this under my belt created an easy transition which fulfilled my desire for creative freedom and personal fulfilment where I am my own client and author.



Philip Richards
War and Peace
2022

Your exhibitions often explore the intersection of religion, technology, and dystopian futures. What inspired you to delve into these themes?

From an early age I have been intrigued and confused by the concept of religion, fond memories of being mesmerized by the Greek mythologies and ancient stories of old. Then later, brought up on the ingrained doctrines of Christianity, the one God, the only God, the God that is everywhere, always watching you, wherever you are

and whatever you are doing. With today's accelerating progression of technology, I've questioned if there is the same correlation between religion and technology? Could this new technological hold on the masses be the successor, and the beginning to a new world of Control? Are we embarking on or already living in an uncontrollable George Orwell's 1984 sinister surveillance state or an Aldous Huxley's Brave New World's vacuous consumerist culture? Or both!! Reflecting on the current events around the world, are we now living in these entwined dystopia's?

"The Watchers" is an artwork that appears to have a strong message about surveillance. How did this project come about, and what do you hope viewers take away from it?

The concept originated from a desire to comment on the increasing presence of surveillance technologies in public and private spaces and how it affects human interaction and individual privacy. The CCTV heads symbolize the intrusive nature of surveillance, where even personal interactions are under watch. The act of these figures looking at each other suggest a mutual awareness or a critique of how pervasive surveillance has become. The business attire and briefcases represent the power dynamics inherent in surveillance practices, where those in positions of authority monitor and control others, often for profit or security. Viewers are likely meant to take away a heightened awareness of how surveillance infiltrates daily life and its implications on privacy and freedom. The artwork invites reflection on the balance between security and privacy, questioning the cost of constant monitoring on personal freedoms and social



Philip Richards
The Watchers
2022

norms.

How do you balance the portrayal of dystopian futures with a message of hope and the need for change?

I consider my works to be a series of visual stories, to provoke thought and inspire reflection, raising awareness, and inspiring collective action towards a better future.

By addressing all these themes that are happening around the globe, inviting the viewers to contemplate the profound changes occurring, the ethical and spiritual challenges we face, and

the potential futures we are creating through our technological advancements and social choices. To balance this subject matter to a lighter tone for the viewers, there is a lot of subtle humour and irony in my work to counteract the grimness and dystopian direction, along with hints of surrealism and pop art. For the viewer it's all about the message and the inspiration to evoke hope, resilience and growth, as well as being visually and mentally entertained and stimulated.

What advice would you give to emerging artists who are trying to gain recognition and find their voice in the art world?

One of my favourite quotes that summarises what I believe in is by Oscar Wilde -

“Be yourself; everyone else is already taken.”

Remember, the art world is vast and diverse, and there is room for many voices. Stay passionate and dedicated to your craft, and your unique voice will eventually find its audience. For emerging artists seeking recognition and a distinct voice in the art world, the journey can be challenging yet rewarding. It's all about patience as well, creating art that is authentic and meaningful to you. Avoid altering your work to fit trends or expectations, as genuine expression often attracts more attention and appreciation. Following that, share your work on social media and online art platforms with consistent posting and engagement with your audience that can significantly increase your visibility.



Philip Richards | Hope | 2024



Philip Richards | Post Raphaelite Ophelia | 2024

What message or feeling do you hope viewers leave with after experiencing your art?

In a dystopian-themed art exhibition, my hope is that viewers leave with a profound sense of introspection and perhaps even a bit of discomfort. Dystopian art often serves as a reflection of our current society's potential pitfalls or as a warning of possible futures. I would want viewers to feel a sense of urgency to contemplate the themes presented—whether they relate to social issues, environmental concerns, political

landscapes, or technological advancements gone amiss. Ideally, they would question the direction in which our world is heading and consider the consequences of our actions as individuals and as a collective society.

Furthermore, I hope that the art prompts viewers to engage in critical thinking and dialogue about how we can prevent dystopian scenarios from becoming reality. It's about stirring emotions, sparking discussions, and fostering a desire for positive change and a better future.

Ashley Smith is a Connecticut-based journalist and photographer. She combines technical skill with a keen eye for storytelling. Throughout her career, Smith has worked as a digital producer, multimedia producer, and assignment editor, roles that have honed her ability to convey compelling narratives through visual media. Their work is a celebration of the ordinary moments that define Connecticut's unique charm, from bustling town centers to serene natural landscapes. An avid hiker and nature lover, Smith moved to Connecticut, drawn by its beautiful wilderness and strong conservation efforts. Her photography often highlights the state's diverse wildlife and picturesque scenery, bringing attention to both well-known and hidden gems. Through Her lens, everyday scenes are transformed into captivating stories, showcasing the beauty and tranquility of Connecticut life. Her photographs serve as a visual diary, inviting viewers to explore and appreciate the simple yet profound moments that make Connecticut special.



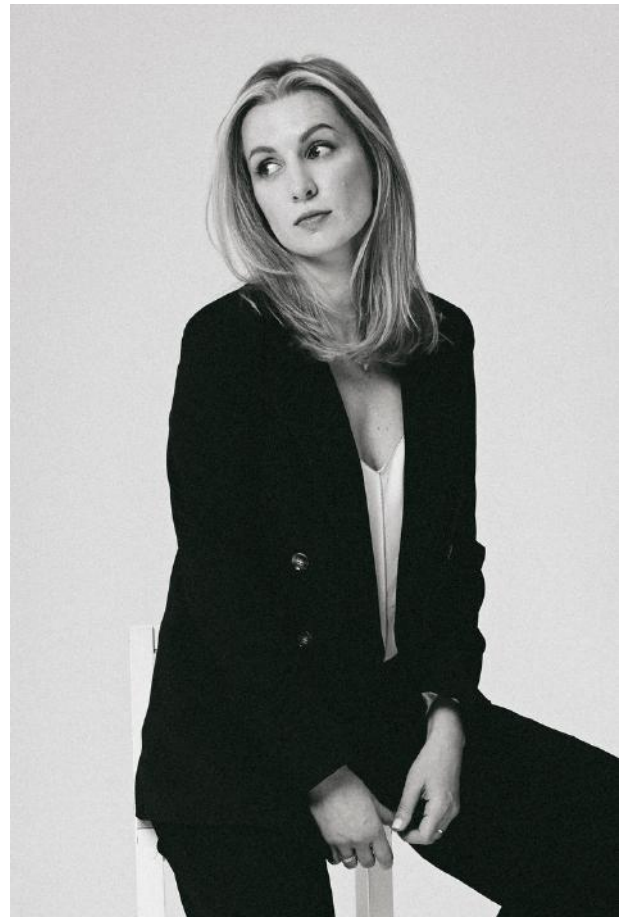


— *Interview*

Elena Altshul

Can you tell us about your journey from photojournalism to collage art? What inspired this transition?

I initially studied mining engineering, but I never worked in that field. After the birth of my children, I became seriously interested in photography and pursued a second degree in photojournalism. I often photographed travels and my children, and in 2018, I even had a solo exhibition dedicated to children, titled "Present Continuous," at the Omelchenko Gallery in Moscow. Later, I studied at the Fotografika Academy in Saint Petersburg, where I became acquainted with project-based photography and learned to "think in projects." One of the lectures was dedicated to the art of collage, and it was love at first sight.



Your work often explores themes of family, corporeality, and memory. How do you approach these themes in your collages?

I believe that an artist can only talk about what truly concerns or deeply disturbs them. Probably, this is the only way to create sincere and compelling projects. Currently, the themes of memory, family, and corporeality remain a priority in my work. I enjoy the process of rethinking my own life experiences through the creation of artistic statements.

You mentioned that your work serves as a therapeutic process for you. Can you elaborate on how creating art helps you deal with past and present traumas?

When creating a piece, it's as if I separate a certain experience from myself, "live" it on paper from different angles, forms, and colors. I then independently transform it until it becomes something cohesive that reflects my specific emotion. This is probably where the therapeutic effect of art lies for me.



Elena Altshul
Delete 2
2020



Elena Altshul
Delete 1
2020

Your collages often combine your own photographs with elements from magazines, newspapers, and old notebooks. How do you decide which elements to include?

Initially, I created collages exclusively from my own photographs. Now, I enjoy finding interesting details in magazines, newspapers, and books. This results in more diverse combinations. This way, I have more opportunities to express thoughts through images.

Who are some of the artists or movements that have influenced your work the most?

I can't say that any specific artist had a huge influence on me. I enjoy the work of various artists: Salvador Dali, Henri Matisse, Jackson Pollock, René Magritte, and so on. Among collage artists, I would mention Hannah Höch, again Henri Matisse, Robert Rauschenberg, and probably David Hockney.

What advice would you give to emerging artists who are just starting out?

I have Pablo Picasso's words printed above my desk: "Inspiration exists, but it has to find you working." So, don't wait for the Muse to decide to visit you! You need to monotonously, in small steps, but every day, move forward on your own.



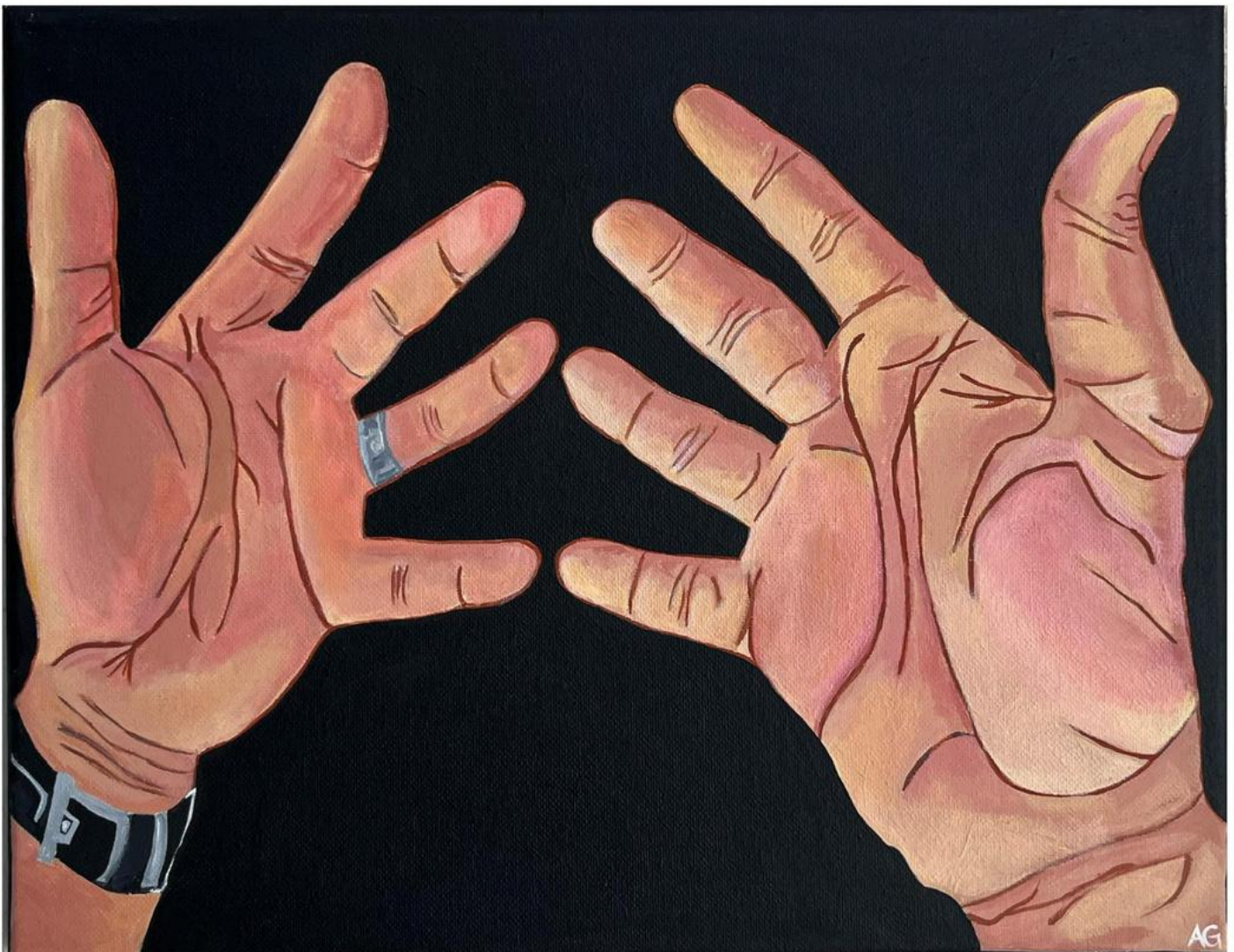
Elena Altshul | Delete 5 | 2020

My name is Aleah Guzman a self taught artist based in San Antonio, Texas. Primarily working with acrylic, graphite, pastels and digital work. I am an emerging artist with a passion to create and capture moments.

Artist Statement

My main goal of creating art is to make art that people can relate to and feel connected to it. I find inspiration in the world around me and the people who fill my community.

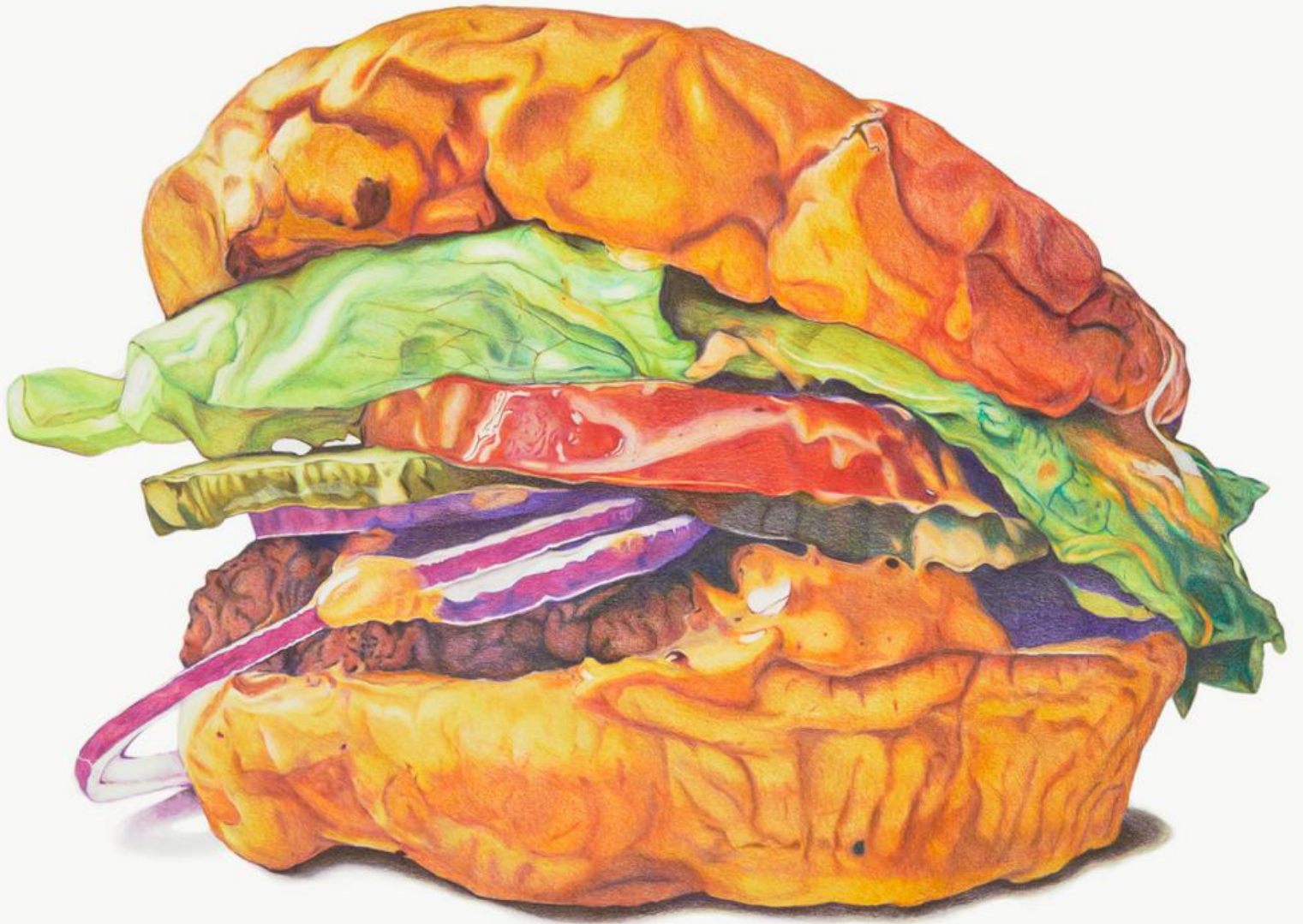
Aleah Guzman | Dad's Hands | 2023





Texas
Tea
Bucket

Bill Miller
Bar-B-Q



— Interview

Ida Straarup Rasmussen

Can you tell us more about your background and what inspired you to pursue a career in art and illustration?

Both my parents are engineers so naturally my first thought was that I needed to become some sort of engineer. I started studying Industrial Design, but it turned out that I didn't fancy the technical part at all. I switched to Graphic Design - that was a good switch! It was the first time I ever really felt at home in my field. I distinctly remember, during one of my first courses about color theory, thinking "wow is this really university learning about colors"! I have always been drawing a lot as a kid. But for some reason I never really considered it a career path. I got my bachelor in Graphic Design in 2020 and have been working in that field the last couple



of years. This year I stumbled upon the Masters in Illustration at LABASAD and again it sparked something in me - "can you really get paid to draw"! I feel like I somehow have made a full circle returning to illustration. I have unlocked something that my younger self already knew, but my adult self didn't really dare to believe. I'm very excited to see where this journey will take me.

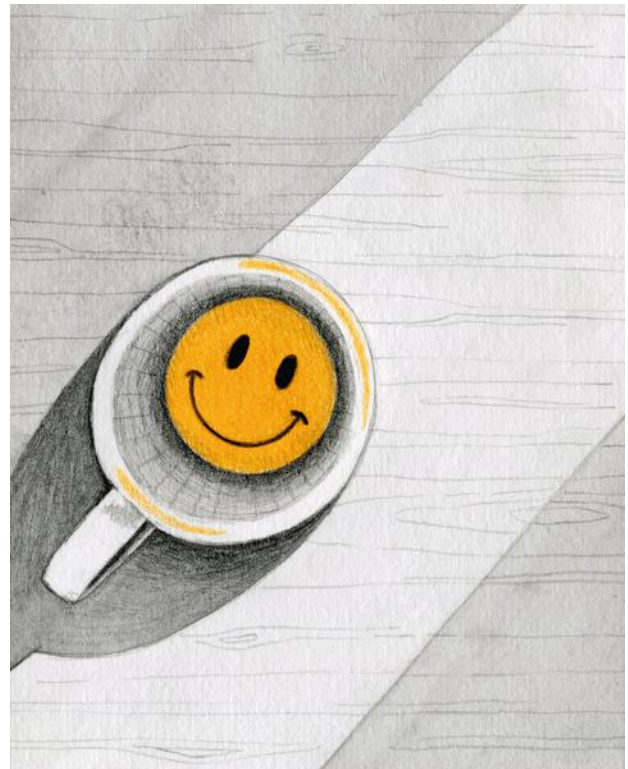
Can you walk us through your creative process from concept to completion?

I'm a very strong ideator. I will always get a lot of ideas at the

beginning of a project. The trick is to select the “right” one for me. I will usually go with my gut and choose whichever concept speaks to me the most. The development phase is where I’m most likely to get stuck because I really want to get to the finish line. Even though I know the importance of doing the groundwork and experimenting with your concept. It’s easy for me to get stuck in a rut where nothing I do looks cool. That is when I try to remember to take a step back and gain some perspective. It also helps me to have a time limit on this phase. Development and execution often overlap for me. I love to immerse myself in the details, but at some point I’m just done. It has taken some practice to figure out when enough is enough. I use my signature as a last seal of completion.

Can you discuss any particular piece or project that holds a special significance to you?

Yes, I recently made an illustration with the title “MOAR”. The illustration depicts a tired lioness with her cub. MOAR is the Danish sound for when a child calls its mum and of course also a take on the lion's ROAR. I became a mum



Ida Straarup | Happy 4 | 2024

in 2023 and so the tired lioness was inspired by my own experience. I also chose the lion because it’s my son's favorite animal.

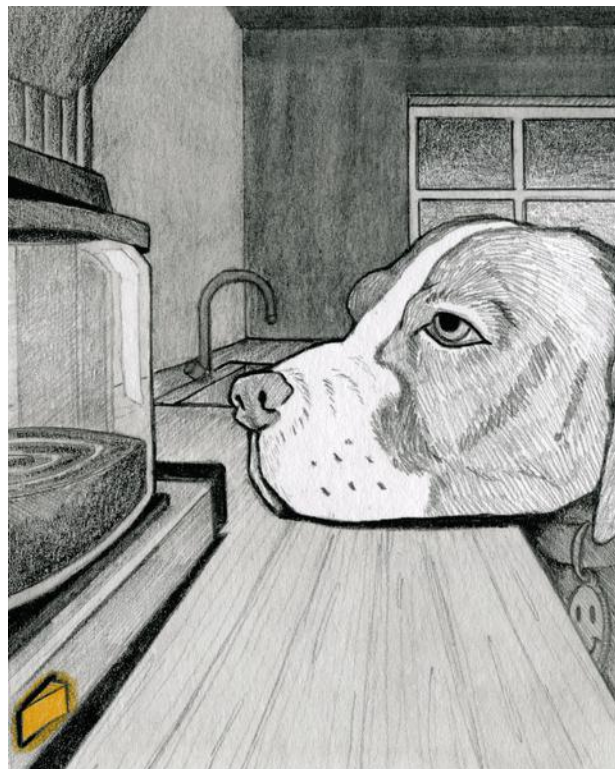
How do you balance your artistic career with your family life?

I feel like I’m lucky to be studying illustration right now, because this means that I naturally get to use my time illustrating. Also I have become way faster at making creative decisions, because I don’t have as much time as I used to. As a perfectionist I feel like this is a healthy practice for me. At some point I want to share my passion for drawing with my son. He is only 1 year old but we’ve already

started drawing together.

As someone who loves burgers, do you ever find that your personal interests and hobbies influence your artwork?

Absolutely. My everyday life fuels my artwork. I have drawn a giant burger and pasta dish, both inspired by two of my favorite go-to restaurants in my neighborhood. I have also drawn Snape and Dumbledore of course because I am a huge Harry Potter fan! I feel like it is when you put something personal into your art it



Ida Straarup | Happy 2 | 2024

becomes interesting.

Do you have any advice for aspiring artists looking to break into the field of editorial and advertising illustration?

Haha, I feel like this is me, an aspiring artist. I can share the best advice I've got so far:

- Go with your intuition
- Whatever you do is your style
- Don't overthink it and allow yourself to make mistakes

I am very much still learning so I do not know the way. Illustrations and art speak to me when you can sense the story or the illustrator behind. So that's what I'll try to do, I will try to find my own voice and pour it into my illustrations.



Ida Straarup
Henriette
2024

I draw sunshine and women

I would have liked to start with "ever since I was little, I've been drawing," but that's not true. In fact, the only exam I had to retake during my school years was in drawing. Which is quite funny when you think about it.

My work is characterized by the pursuit of intensity, expression, and emotion through expressive forms and subjective colors. I love working with pure and vivid colors, not aiming to imitate nature or our environment, but to interpret them. Influenced by Fauvism, my work combines art and design. My drawing becomes simplified, my palette evolves towards freer and more intuitive colors, and my brushstroke becomes more lively and pronounced.

My women come to life in warm and comforting landscapes, exuding both power and fragility. Always expressive and often nude, they reveal their emotions, moments of joy and sharing, behaviors sometimes exuberant, sometimes intimate.

Sometimes more colorful, sometimes more sober, acrylic paint allows me to bring out both my fiery and lunar sides. It's a sweet blend of powerful colors and voluptuous curves, all in a minimalist, contrasted, and luminous setting that invites one to travel.

— Aurélie Prestigiacomo



Sandra Cavanagh was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Her early life was pitched on a growing awareness of the prevailing political instability, an overbearing patriarchal society and the dangers of state sanctioned brutality and censorship. Cavanagh read Social Sciences at the University of Belgrano, emigrated to California and later to the UK. She is a Fine Art graduate from K.I.A.D, University of Kent. Since 2010 she's worked and resided in New York City.

Sandra Cavanagh | After Eden III | 2024



I sustain a mostly figurative focus in reaction to current and historical narratives, including my own. Recent global events have led me to considerations of mortality and loss of innocence in cross generational stories, the usefulness of art's centuries old regard of myth, foundational stereotypes and the mundane occurrence of violence. Maintaining a consistent practice, I have developed a large portfolio of work including paintings, drawings and prints. I take intervals with the painting of still life and portraiture. Interested in the pairing of form and message, and formal variations on a theme, I have often worked in series, creating pictorial storylines with some urgency to exhaust the subject and form to the point of understanding or unburdening myself of it. The result is an annotation of feelings underscoring a dramatic approach to form and message.



Sandra Cavanagh | After Eden 4 | 2024



Max Oliver | Furthering Heights | 2023

— *Interview*

Warrington "Max" Oliver



Your style combines dark realism with classical luminism. Can you elaborate on what draws you to these particular styles?

To me, Dark Realism represents something of a starting point as a sarcastic reminder of a time in my life when the more realistic things were, the darker they would seem in my mind's eye.

Once I rediscovered oil painting about ten years ago, I was instantly drawn to all the “painters of light,” also known as luminists. Not just the 19th-century landscape painters, for whom the term was first created, such as Kensett, Lane, and Bierstadt, but also all the classical Renaissance painters of light, including Da Vinci, Caravaggio, and Rembrandt. These painters introduced me to the term *chiaroscuro*, which basically

means the contrast between light and shadow.

Around the same time, I was introduced to sobriety, which cast a beam of light over all the darkness I had always known. That’s why my art gravitates towards illustrating images that articulate this principle of *chiaroscuro*.

Many of your works depict a transition from reality to a whimsical world. What inspires this shift in your paintings?

I suppose using these transitions serves as a reminder that we all need to lighten up about things. To me, almost anything, no matter how serious, has a playful quality to it if you look hard enough. I believe it softens the eyes, softens the spirit, and brings a disarming quality to the outlook of almost all

situations, enough to make you willing to believe in the possibility that everything could turn out all right.

How has your background in assisting with mural projects for schools and businesses impacted your approach to smaller, more personal pieces?

My mother has been a mural artist since before I was born. I grew up watching her paint; I guess you could say I served as her apprentice during much of my upbringing. I observed as she transformed a mere dining room into a beachfront restaurant. I quickly learned how to condense the same types of images onto a smaller scale while delivering the same impact. I could write War and



Max Oliver | The 4th Step | 2019

Peace into a comic book. Her whimsical and playful approach has not only shaped my technique but also inspired me to see the world through a more imaginative and light-hearted lens. Today, her influence is evident in my art, where I strive to infuse the same sense of wonder and creativity that she brought to every mural.

Can you discuss a specific piece of your work that holds significant meaning to you and why?

If I had to pick the one piece that holds the deepest, most long-term, metaphorical backbone in relation not only to the philosophy of my artistic journey but to my life in



Max Oliver
Zenith
2021

general, I would choose the 24x18" oil on canvas titled "Furthering Heights."

The composition and concept of this piece are quite simple and direct. It depicts nothing more than a silhouette of a man standing on a stone pathway that leads to a door at the edge of a cliff. The general body language of the man's silhouette gives the impression that, after traversing the pathway that led him to this door, he is now contemplating whether or not he should continue this journey and find out what lies beyond the doorway. The viewer

sees nothing in the background other than a wall of distant thunderclouds with a beam of light shining down from above, leading to what appears to be a dark abyss below.

The concept that this piece is hitting on is simply faith. This man has obviously been traveling this road that led him to the door, and now he must decide. He cannot turn around. He must discover what is beyond the door. He can ascend to a higher place than he's ever dreamed of, or he can plummet back into the pit. There comes a time when we all must decide to open that door and walk through it. What fate awaits us is whatever we have put our true faith into.



Max Oliver
Nanette
2022

How did pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Fine Arts influence your technique and artistic perspective?

The pursuit of my bachelor's degree in Fine Arts influenced my technique and artistic perspective in several ways. I learned fairly early from many of my professors that my overall approach and technique were highly flawed. I found that I had been far too tight,

polished, and controlling in my overall approach. I discovered that I needed to loosen up and learn to paint with my arms and entire body, rather than just "chicken scratching" with my fingers, as I had been accustomed to for far too long.

Regarding artistic perspective, I almost instantly developed a fascination with studying the old masters. This involved not only learning about their history and the cultural circumstances in which they created some of their most influential pieces but also attempting to reproduce some of

those pieces or to create original work in emulation of their style. Undergoing exercises like these gave me a brand new appreciation for how truly brilliant many of them were.

What advice would you give to aspiring artists who are dealing with personal struggles similar to yours?

"Good artists borrow, great artists steal."

- Pablo Picasso

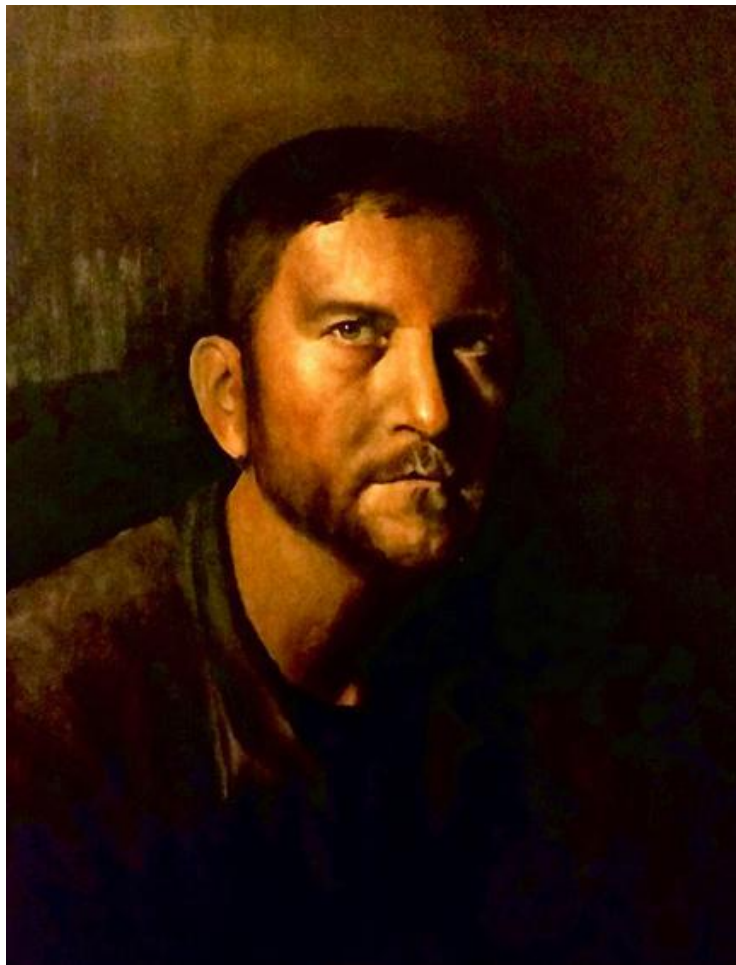
I couldn't resist beginning my answer to this topic with that

Max Oliver | Harvest | 2022



quotation. It sums up my philosophy in relation not only to almost all artistic endeavors but also for anyone who is in the process of attempting to reassemble their lives in the wake of some kind of massive life readjustment. In my case, it was the process of recovery from alcoholism. One of the first things I was taught at the beginning of that journey remains one of the most invaluable lessons that I carry with me to this day. That lesson is very simple: find someone that you admire, someone who has things that you'd like to have, and

practices principles that you would love to implement in your life. Talk to them, find out how they arrived at the place in their journey that you find desirable, and try to emulate them the best you can. If it's a historical figure, read all that you can about them or their work. If it's an artist, recreate a favorite piece that they did. The important thing is a bit corny but couldn't be more true: someone has already traveled this same road before you did. Do your best to discover how they did it, and put your own spin on it.



Max Oliver | SelfPortrait | 2018

INTO.SPRING brings ceramic sculptures in abstract organic shapes. The theme in work arises from the dynamics between people inspired by nature. Often using natural colors and glazes, also the glazes in Delftsblauw, in the tradition of the existing more conservative ceramic heritage. Going along with the morphology, free in form, organic, flowing. The light and cast shadow always create a new composition. Where the owner of the work himself puts away a new story in shadow, a combination of sculptures and his own narrative. This maker finished Art Academy. After years of 2D works nowadays 3D is the work that is being made.

Project Statement

"Movement in blue" About all the blue, all the waves coming together at the same point. The blue refers to the traditional Delftsblauw. The morphology is contemporary in organic shapes. It flows. Exactly where beauty can be found, exactly what is challenging. the movement.



— Interview

Zhuping Zhong



Zhuping Zhong | Woodland Society | 2023

Can you tell us more about your background and how your journey from Shenzhen to Shanghai and then to New York influenced your artistic practice?

I was lucky enough to start my art education in primary school in Shenzhen. At that time, education was a happy, free experience for everyone. The teachers were really encouraging and let us try out different mediums and themes of our own choosing. I really do think that without this happy period of enlightenment, I might not have made the firm choice to be an artist that I did. Later on, when I moved to Shanghai, I had the chance to briefly study at a really challenging but great studio. The education there was all about exam preparation, which was a very different experience from the

happy education I had received before. I found the sudden increase in boring technique training a bit too much to take in, so I decided to leave. I ended up coming to the US to start a more structured education at an academy. At SVA, I had the chance to learn so much from several wonderful professors! I gained a deeper understanding of color concepts, toner and charcoal techniques, and compositional skills. The mixed media I use most often now are gouache, acrylics, charcoal and pencil, which I couldn't have done without the training I received at SVA.

You are planning to pursue further studies at Goldsmiths, University of London. What do you hope to achieve or explore during your time there?

I'm not sure how far my work will go in the future, but I do have some goals for now! I'd love to keep exploring different forms of expression, including working on larger scales and trying out different mediums and materials. I'd also love to try out some small installations and make them interactive with my paintings and the viewer. It's also my goal to keep exploring the possibilities of my subject matter. I'd like to keep dividing up the smaller themes within the larger ones and creating series of works. At the same time, I want to think about how to make my work more relevant to the viewer, to people and to society.

What challenges do you encounter when exploring the notion of otherness and the boundaries outside safe zones in your work?

I think the biggest challenge at the moment is to keep myself in a peaceful state of mind. I might show some anxiety in my work, but I'd really love to try to convey a neutral, rather than negative energy. I find that if I can stay calm, it helps me to convey that to the painting and then to the viewer. I really hope my paintings make



Zhuping Zhong
Tree as a cage, bird fly away
2023

people feel calm or happy.

What are some key influences or inspirations in your artistic development?

I would like to share about how I developed my technique. I'm really grateful for the influence my professors at school had on me, but I also study other more established mixed media artists. From 2021 to 2022, I work exclusively in acrylics. It wasn't until 2023 that I started looking for a breakthrough, when I visited the wonderful Jenny Brosinski's exhibition at the Almine Rech Gallery in Shanghai. I was instantly

captivated by the freedom of her brushstrokes and the depth of her effects. I felt the urge to layer more mediums on top of the acrylics I already had, which led to a series of works that I'm still exploring to this day.

How do your experiences and observations in different cities shape your view on the dynamics between individuals and groups?

In terms of my personal experience, I have been entering new environments. I first came to Shanghai from Shenzhen, where I was most familiar, and joined an established classroom community as a stranger. Then I came to New York, this time not only with an unfamiliar environment, but also with an unfamiliar language and



Zhuping Zhong
Swirl
2023



Zhuping Zhong
Flying over
2024

culture. As a person who is not good at socializing, I needed to make a lot of attempts to integrate into the new environment, and a lot of complex emotions arose in the process. Meanwhile, through my long-term experience and observation, I believe that individuals and groups are transformed into each other. Individuals form groups and groups break down into individuals. Individuals can be held hostage by the group, but the choices of the group can also be influenced by individuals. In any case, there is no separation between people and society,

between individuals and groups. As an individual, the various stories or emotions that arise from the interaction with the group are the themes that I am currently exploring.

What role does color and composition play in conveying the emotions and themes in your artwork?

Every painting I create is unique, with its own color and composition. I love using a range of colors in my work, from calm, soothing hues like blue and green to vibrant, lively shades like pink and yellow. I find that these colors help to create a sense of calm or joy in my paintings, which I hope resonates with my viewers.

Can you share an experience or story behind one of your artworks that had a significant impact on you?

I'd love to share this piece of artwork I created during the school application stage:



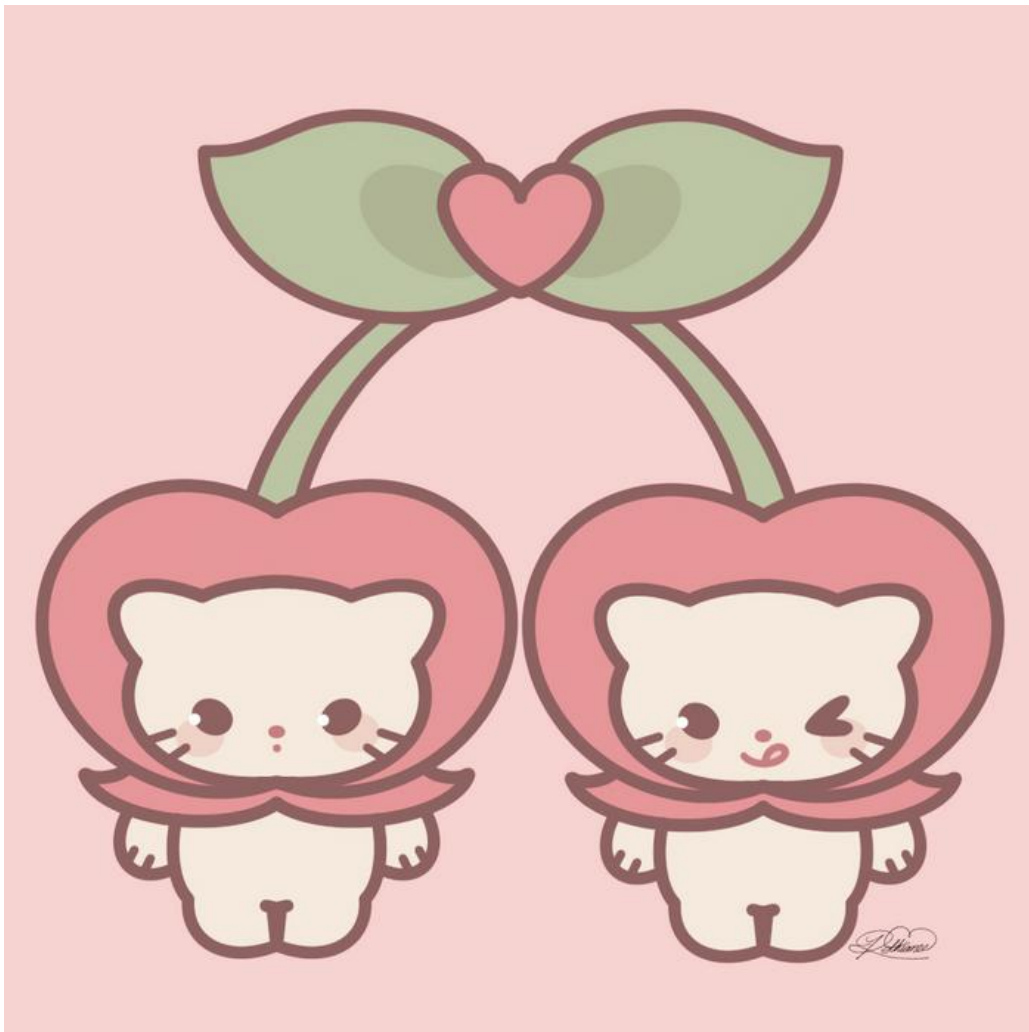
Zhuping Zhong
Inside the Safe Zone
2023

In this work, I have created a harmonious social environment. A luminous river guides the viewer's eye as a source of life, and symbols representing plants and birds freely surround it. On the right side of the picture, I have placed two squares which are abstracted railings indicating the boundaries of the safety zone.

Everything within this zone is orderly, peaceful and cheerful. It also reflects my state of mind at the time: I was focused on creating with the support of my family. I am so grateful to my family for supporting me in my decision to continue my education.

I'm an artist based in Canada, who has a sweet tooth for strawberry related desserts. I love the colour pink, and creating cute art! I believe that no matter what, "cuteness" will never die, and will always be something that is embraced and adored by all ages. I hope that my art will be appreciated by all ages. As I grow as an artist, I aspire to continue creating art that brings joy not only to myself, but to others as well.

— Rothianee Lam





Deliance

— Interview

Mileva Roumer

Can you tell us about your journey as an artist and how your background in visual art from CVM, Montreal has influenced your work?

Art was something intuitive for me, something that resonated deep in my core, so personal and so needed to face the adversities and systemic challenges of the world. I had so many passions: psychology, philosophy, agriculture, photography, writing and so on. When I heard for the first time the word "Visual, art" I felt like for once I wouldn't have to pick one thing and I could just be me, multifaceted.

I thought that art school would bring the light, even more passion and understanding. If some teachers stood out to me, it was a terrible experience that made me for a time hate painting and making art. It took me 2 years



to come back and find again my touch and my intuitive spark that I started with. This experience was so important because after that I realized that this connection needed to be protected and I needed to create space where my passion was fueled and where I was unapologetic about it. Without that and the difficulties, I would not have pursued art, since it was just my own hidden experience and I never saw it as a career or as something that I could do for people's gaze. Choosing to not fall into the scholar art path and to nurture my unique touch was the first step to me that crafted my journey, despite the outside

pressure to conform. The experience of presenting my projects and highlighting my curiosity in my work was needed to influence my strength, ease and confidence in my practice.

How did your hunger for art, connection, and literature transform into your current multidisciplinary practice?

Leaving my country behind at a young age, living through the turmoil Haiti has been put through by the international force and understanding that in the international scale justice is a play, an illusion that is fed to keep us asleep. I needed to cope with my anger with this world that didn't make any sense to me, with my sadness seeing injustice sit at everyone's table without any repercussions. The tactic of dehumanization that I saw on a world wide scale felt so frustrating and made me lose hope sometimes.

To find new ways to keep my inner child, my hope into the world blooming. Art and literature was how my misunderstood voice that I suppressed to others but kept intimate with my brushes and my



Mileva Roumer | The leave stalkat night | 2024

sketchbook, held my questioning and my curiosity of the world. From a broken teenager feeling hopeless under the weight of the world, my work evolved to seek connection, to highlight the inherent spiritual link we have with mother earth and nature, poetry became the driving force I used to make the change that I wanted to see. I understood how our lives are all the same from our needs, to be seen, to be loved, to find purpose, we were all looking for those things. Some emotions were distorted with the early challenges faced but the source was all the same.



Mileva Roumer
Orange generation
2024

Your work often touches on themes of nature, ecology, and humanity. What inspires you to explore these themes in your art?

Since I was young, I felt connected to nature, to animals that were immediately drawn to me. I always took it as mother's earth's love letter, watching over and wiping the loneliness I had to face early on. Humanity is the only destiny. We are learning everyday to be human, to process heavy emotions and to go to the root of

compassion, of care and to transition toward the energy of love. We are becoming human everytime that we understand what drives us and find singularity within the roots that we all share. We are all one after all, branches and different leaves but from the same source. When we think it that way we can overcome everything, with the genocide of sudan, congo palestine, the orchestrated violence in so many countries like Haiti. Time is asking us to come back to another, war has no heart, but our flesh is alive, our spirit is sparkling. Our soul knows that children and the world doesn't deserve to witness the collective slaughter of our humanity.

How do you use your art to transcend social barriers and foster a sense of connection and change?

My first poetry book "Filaments of self" was written with the intention to dive deeply into healing, my works always come with poetry that has affirmations or words to align within oneself. I struggled when I was younger with extreme fear of humans, betrayal, violence and so much pain was witnessed by my younger

self.

I was so terrified of people, I could always think that they would hurt me. It took me my own strength, to go beyond myself to trust in life again. Experiencing those extreme fears, the overwhelming weight of separation and isolation so early on. Those are the same emotions that helped me ironically to walk the path of understanding others, deep to my core, for seeing others. Through my art and the themes of my exhibitions centered around healing, connecting with oneself, I want to help in my own way to bring light into the world, to embody it and to inspire others to let down the walls we were thought to build. We are social creatures for a reason. That's how we move mountains when we are connected, not separated.

Can you walk us through your creative process when starting a new piece? How do you decide on the mediums and techniques to use?

My art is truly intuitive, I listen to what my inner guidance tells me, depending on the theme some mediums feel better. When it's time to create work that is more



Mileva Roumer
Portals of the soul
2024

conceptual I use acrylic on canvas, when it's time for works that focus more on the emotions and the details I focus on illustration. Sometimes I write the poem first and it inspires me the painting that comes out of it. And sometimes it's the other way. After contemplating and meditating making sure that my energy is totally vibrant and ready to be purposeful I set my tools and I am ready to immerse myself into a world that bridges into my reality. My art is before all intuitive and a process of time. I always allow myself to not rush the art and to let it take time, as long

as it needs to come through. Some of my best pieces took years to form and to mold into their best versions and those are the ones exhibited that proved that anything made with genuine intention will shine through.

What upcoming projects or exhibitions are you most excited about?

I started my brand Zantray, highlighting the artistic representation of nature in my environmentally conscious handcrafted conscious jewelry and sculpture. As adornment is a spiritual act of self love and of honoring one's body, it felt so rewarding to take my passion to



Mileva Roumer
Between the waves and
the water of the earth
2024

the next level. The official launch of "Filaments of self" will be in Montreal and is also coming with the french version "Les filaments de l'etre" With exhibitions planned and collaborations with magazines and authors. I am also working on my upcoming poetry book: "Earth, do you hear my voice?"

I am excited about the reception and the kindness and the love my projects received. It is definitely a testament it is important to honor our gifts and to be kind to our progress, our process and to trust the journey ahead.

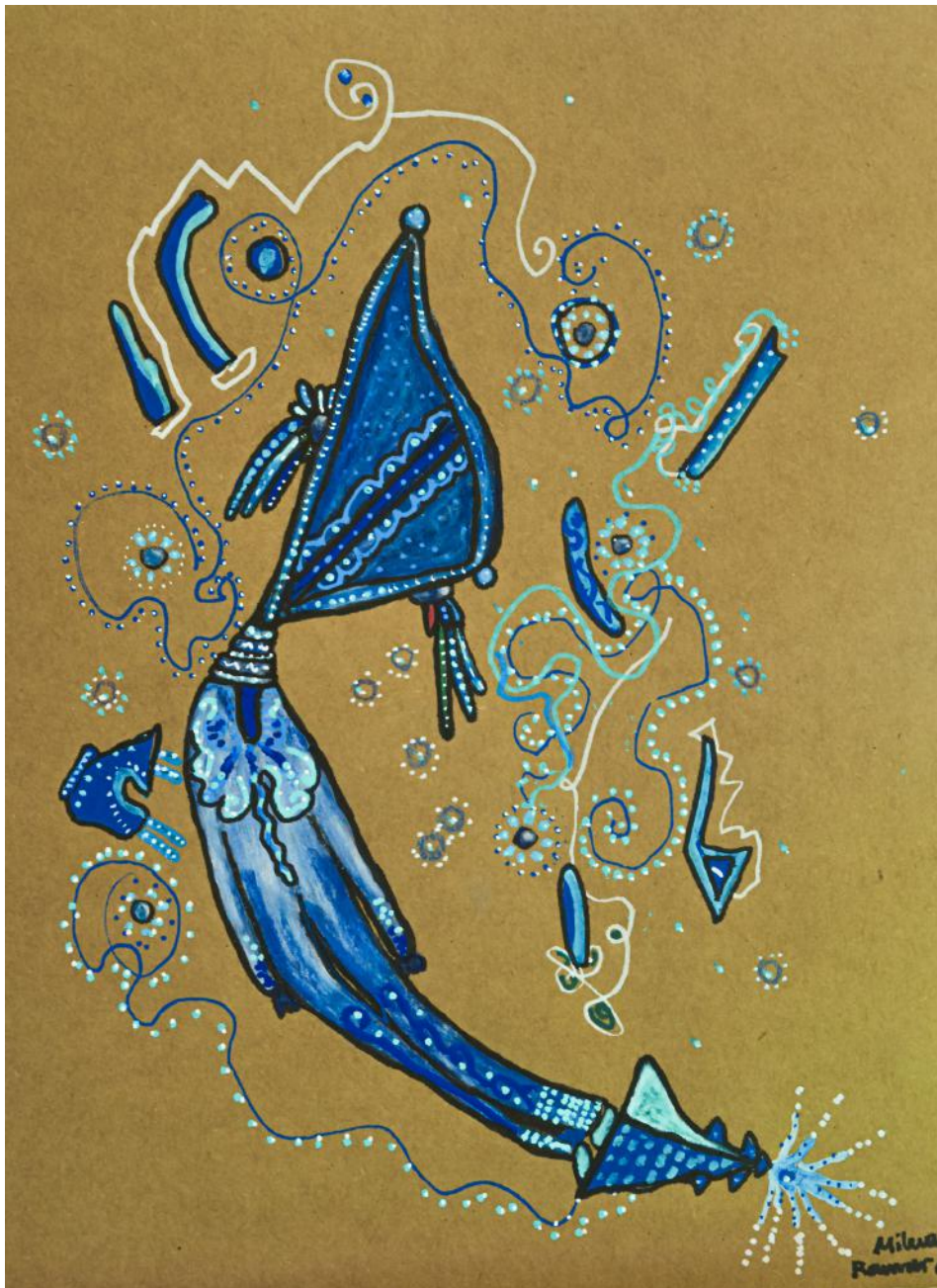
What does art mean to you on a personal level, and how has it impacted your personal journey of healing and self-love?

Art was the friend I sought for, for a child that felt so alone, left with the world to navigate with, with no mentor to seek and the difficulty to come to terms with an artificial life, where separation and behaviors that lead to pain and hate is promoted as a tool of control. Art gave me the chance to explore what I wanted.

It was something that made me feel alive and permitted me to explore and understand all the palette of my emotions. To me this

is the kindest and also the most challenging gift that I was given, the one to understand myself and others through how I pour my flowing experience with my surroundings and my environment into tangible matter. If my visual art is about showing our world, my poetry is a travel within the deep, the core of the world and the exploration of what

makes us human. Showing myself authentically without the fear of judgment, from my way to express my inner world to my art, breaking the ice of the fear to be seen, of the fear to be known was a journey with my art as a witness, it helped tremendously to integrate and accept my path with care and love.



Mileva Roumer | Hit of blues | 2024

I create analog collages in the zero waste trend. All materials come from the second cycle. I make collages by hand in only one copy, and I sell the originals.

— Dorota Kilichowska



Dorota Kilichowska | 2 lips (Polish: Dwuustość)





— Interview

Harry T. Burleigh

Can you tell us more about the role of music in your creative process?

Music plays an integral role when I'm creating. While some artists prefer to work in silence, I don't really have that option due to a condition of tinnitus, a constant ringing in the ears, which to my dismay, developed back in the early 2000's. For me the right piece of music can trigger a relaxed state of concentration whereby I am able to work in synergy with whatever medium I'm dealing with. Often times, I'll be taken aback the following day when I view the work and don't fully remember having crafted part of the end result.



Harry T Burleigh | DMT Launch Pad | 2024

You mentioned that your pieces are unplanned and you let the brush dictate the direction of the piece. Can you elaborate on this process and how it influences the final artwork?

When painting, I will prepare a few pigments and begin making some random marks on the canvas. Then I turn the canvas a few times and take a few steps back to see if anything comes to mind. I continue this process until I spot the first hidden gem. If I believe that it has merit, then that's the part of the canvas that I begin

painting with conviction. I continue to turn the canvas periodically to see if any additional images need to be brought forward. I'm cautious with this process because I don't want the painting to appear too busy. I let those images that I've elaborated on dictate the end result.

How do you balance the use of traditional and contemporary practices in your work?

When it comes to materials and techniques, I am unapologetically not a purist. While I believe in good craft and respect certain historical



Harry T Burleigh
Women, Spirit, and Earth
2006



Harry T Burleigh | GAIA-Italy | 2023

values, I also assert that by only following the ways of the old masters, limits the ever evolving potential and expansion of fine art.

You work with a variety of mediums including oil, acrylic, mixed media, and digital imagery. Do you have a preferred medium, and if so, why?

Oil on canvas is king. I have the whole kingdom at my fingertips. The scent of the oils and turpentine. The brilliance of color and texture of brushes. Controlling the chemistry and drying times. An

exchange takes place between the canvas and myself, and when the palette knife, maul stick, and sables come down, only then is it determined if I become knighted by royalty, or simply handed the role of court jester.

What do you hope viewers take away from the silent and discreet conversation with your art?

I'm not really seeking accolades. I don't have a big ego when it comes to what other people think about my work. Like it or roast it, I'm bulletproof. I wouldn't mind however, stopping them in their tracks just long enough to show an interest, good or bad. Ultimately, I've produced the artwork for myself. It's part of what was going through my mind. It can't possibly be translated in the same way by the viewer, and I can totally respect that.

Your artist statement mentions an innate pareidolia, where you see faces and figures in random surfaces. How does this influence the themes and subjects of your work?

Seeing images in textures and surfaces that others may not, once I get past the annoyance of it, has ultimately worked to my advantage. While I seldom follow themes when I work, Those things that I see, if they present themselves in a way that I feel is complimentary to my style, then they can actually become the subject matter of the finished work. In most cases, if I don't bring them forth visually, there's a good chance that no one else will ever see them.

How do you stay motivated and inspired in your artistic journey?

I'm constantly inspired by the world around me. It really is absurd. There's so much to take in, both positive and negative, but inspiring nonetheless. I also bombard myself with thousands of images online and through my own photography. I don't try to emulate other artists because I want my own style to remain intact.

My motivation comes from knowing that I have many more ideas for art in my head than I will ever be able to get out in this lifetime.

Mary Nash is a nationally and internationally exhibited and awarded artist whose work has been shown in over 100 exhibitions. Nash's art work has been reviewed and/or illustrated in over 100 art publications.



Mary Nash
Eye of Night
2024



Mary Hall

— Interview

Aoccho

Can you describe your creative process from the initial idea to the final piece? How do you translate a single word or audio clip into a dynamic visual artwork?

Actually, I use words and music as my sources of inspiration. When I have a feeling or an idea from a piece of text, a single word, or a piece of music, I always first sense the mood that the text or music brings me. Then, I slowly begin to analyze this mood and try to describe it step by step. By detailing my feelings, I can generally help set the tone for my work.

First, what kind of atmosphere does this mood create? Is it heavy? Light? Joyful? Or interesting? By clarifying the atmosphere, I can naturally have an idea of what kind of color impression this atmosphere brings me. This color



impression then becomes the color palette for my work. Next, I consider the rhythm of this atmosphere. Does it start with a consistent pace and then have an emotional twist? Or does the emotional pace rise and fall with twists and turns? After confirming these three steps, I usually can visualize the scene that this mood brings me. Then, I start creating this scene and apply the color palette I clarified earlier. Since I use motion graphics to present my work, after the basic scene is completed, I move on to the animation part. In the animation, I also follow the rhythm of the

mood I determined earlier to guide the presentation and creation.

During the creative process, there are always many experiments and new ideas that emerge. The final product might differ from the initial concept, but essentially, detailing my feelings and the mood is my first step in starting the creation of a piece.

How does your multicultural background influence your work, particularly in the way you explore language differences and phonic experiences?

I believe that having a multicultural background gives me the opportunity to be exposed to different cultures and languages. This also makes me realize that the tones and feelings expressed by each language are closely related to the culture from which they originate. Therefore, each culture's language has its unique characteristics. During the process of switching between different languages and cultures, I also discovered that the descriptions of the same state or thing in different languages can be vastly different. Even just listening to the



Aoccho | In the Zone, Entrance | 2018

expressions of the same thing in various languages can reveal the unique personalities of different cultures. This discovery has made me pay special attention to textual descriptions and sounds/music, which have become sources of inspiration for my creations.

Can you elaborate on your fascination with infographics and how it has shaped your approach to animation and motion graphics?

Actually, at that time, I was wholeheartedly aspiring to become a historical researcher. My research topic mainly focused on 17th-century nautical charts. After completing several research presentations and reports, I had a question: Is there a more interesting way to present my research? After all, my research was about navigation and nautical

charts, and using traditional PowerPoint presentations made it difficult to convey the dynamic nature of maritime activities. Moreover, I felt that if I could communicate my research in a more engaging way, the audience would find it easier to understand and resonate with my work.

Coincidentally, I came across the term "infographics" and, being a bit of a bookworm, I researched it thoroughly. This led me to discover motion graphics and animation. I realized that motion graphics were exactly what I was looking for to replace still images. Motion graphics really opened up a new world for me, and because I found it so fascinating, I decided to change my career path from historical researcher to motion graphics!

Your piece "Before even beginning" visualizes the moment a new idea emerges.



Aoccho | In the Zone, Forest 1 | 2018

Can you walk us through the creation of this artwork and the concept behind it?

This series of works is actually a commemoration for myself. When I decided to start creating as an artist under the name Aoccho, I wanted to make a piece to mark the beginning of it all. So, I came up with the concept "Before even beginning." I started thinking about how my inspirations and ideas form and evolve before I actually begin a project. I also wanted to take this opportunity to visualize my thought process.

I thought about how, when I have an idea, it suddenly bursts into my mind like a point. In the first few seconds, the idea might come too suddenly, and it is not yet stable or fully formed. But this idea slowly disperses and spreads, transforming from a bursting point into expanding segments. Once the idea stabilizes, it becomes a line. Although the idea is stable, it might still undergo deformations and changes, so the line will have noise and color variations.

At this point, even though the idea is stable, there are still uncertainties and doubts that cut

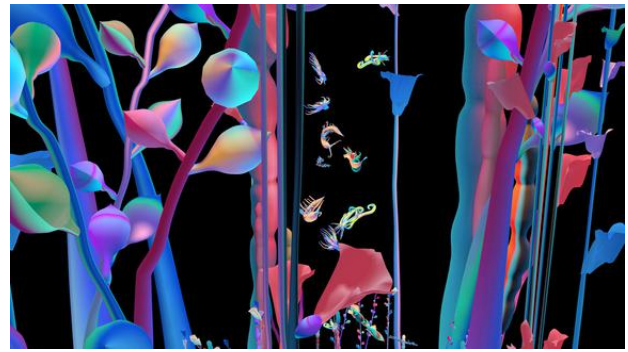
the lines into uneven blocks. However, once the doubts are eliminated and the idea becomes more certain, it transforms into softer and more diverse lines with more consistent color changes, indicating certainty.

After all the preliminary ideas are confirmed, the next stage is to try some deformations and explore other possibilities, which will serve as the foundation for the first step of creating the actual work.

So, this is what I want to express in "Before even beginning" – visualizing my thought process for new ideas and commemorating my official activities as the artist Aoccho.

The "In the Zone" series presents a vibrant, surreal environment. What inspired these works, and what message do you aim to convey through them?

Actually, "In the Zone" is a 3D animation. The still images you see now are from this animation. This is my first 3D animation. At that time, I wanted to create a work that could represent myself. Then I thought about how I switched from

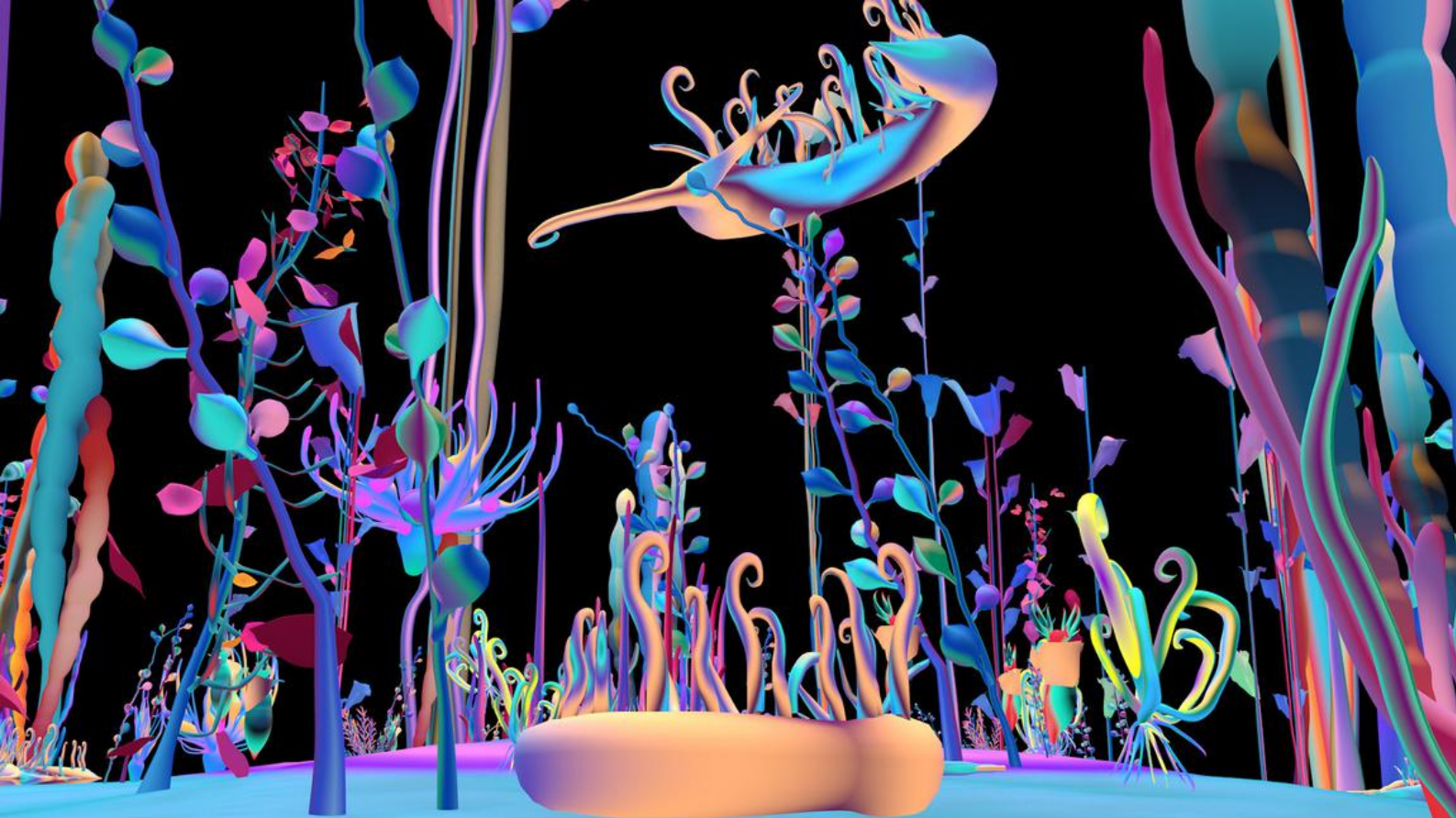


Aoccho | In the Zone, Underworld 1 | 2018

the field of historical research to motion graphics. You could say it was a transition from a "boring and rigid" field to a "lively, imaginative, and dynamic" one. Both of these aspects are part of me. So, this work is actually a statement of my personal characteristics.

This series mainly divides into two stylistic directions. One side features regular shapes with dull colors, while the other side, which you see now, is vibrant and surreal. In the animation, there is a character that travels between these two worlds, representing my transition between the two fields. Therefore, "In the Zone" is a statement of my personality and experiences.

I am currently focusing on showcasing the surreal series, probably because I feel that the lively, imaginative, and dynamic



Aoccho | In the Zone, Underworld 2 | 2018

motion graphics represent my current life and world. This style reflects who I am right now.

You have worked with notable clients like Paul McCartney, Jenny Holzer, and Virgil Abloh. How do you balance client projects with your personal artistic endeavors?

When working on client projects, many graphic assets are usually pre-determined by the client. However, since I do motion graphics, my main task is to animate these graphics in various ways to tell the story and convey the feeling that the client wants to

express. So, even though the graphics for client projects are controlled by the client, the way the story is told and expressed is something I have control over. In my view, this is similar to my personal works because, in my personal artist work, I aim to describe a state and visualize a feeling. For me, this is just another way of storytelling.

Can you share any memorable experiences or challenges from your collaborations with high-profile brands and individuals?

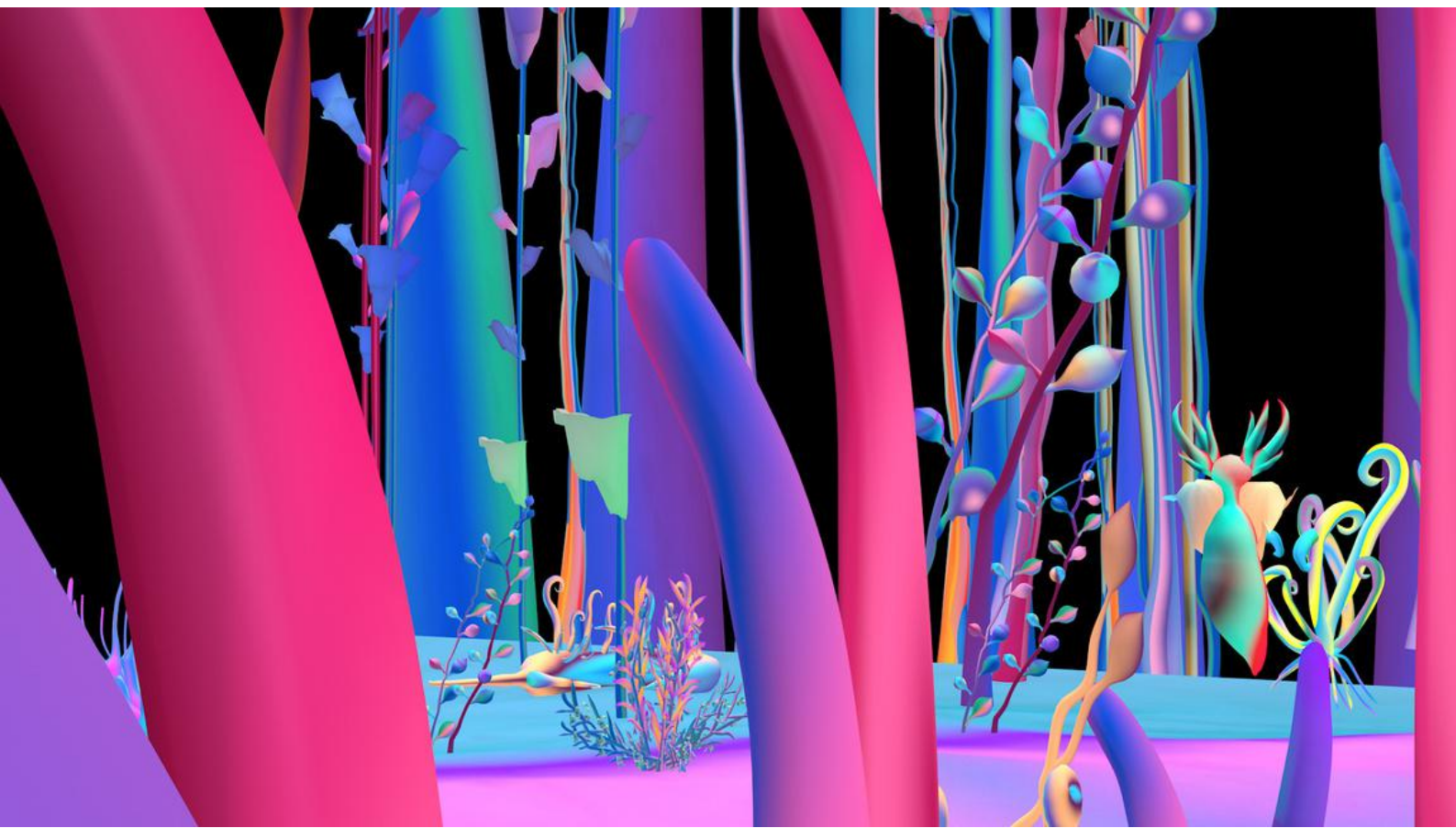
One of the most challenging projects to talk about was Jenny

Holzer's installation in the lobby of New York's 7 World Trade Center (7WTC). It was a 36-hour-long art installation displayed on a 65-foot-wide, 14-foot-high fortified-glass security shield. The production itself was quite challenging, and after ensuring that all the video outputs were flawless, I worked with an IT team from Vancouver to test and make adjustments on the screen. It was a very interesting experience.

So far, the clients and collaborators I've worked with have all been very talented and friendly. Even when I was just a newcomer in the field, they respected my expertise. I have had

the honor to participate in different types of motion graphics exhibitions, some in public places and others on social media platforms, websites, or apps. Some projects allow us to know the viewership and participation rates, while others do not. Among the measurable numbers, the most impressive was the work I did for Maybelline on two TikTok videos. One video garnered 40 million views, and the other 28 million views. To this day, they rank as the first and third most-watched videos on that account. These quantifiable numbers have left a lasting impression on me.

Aoccho | In the Zone, Underworld 3 | 2018



Natalia Marie Smith, born in Calgary, Alberta, is a multidisciplinary artist working primarily in acrylic and oil paints. Her work focuses on themes of identity, relationships, rest, and femininity. She often incorporates the figure as the central subject to manifest these ideas through depictions of the body. She currently resides in Lethbridge, Alberta where she is obtaining a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at the University of Lethbridge.



Natalia Smith | Anna B | 2023



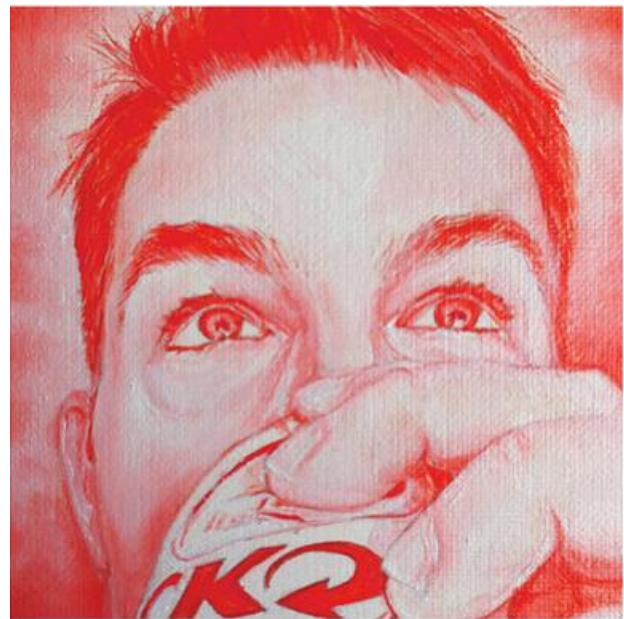
Natalia S.

— *Interview*

Ronn Kools

Can you tell us more about your background and how it has influenced your work as an artist?

I started painting on canvas when I was studying at art-school; in Rotterdam (NL). I didn't paint at the academy itself, but in my small room at a place I shared with my brother. After art-school I moved to London (UK), then to São Paulo (BR), and then to Lisbon (PT). It was only in Lisbon where I started painting again; oil on paper. The rich cultures of all the places I had been had inspired me, but it was in Lisbon where I finally found the peace, I needed to start expressing my own thoughts in an artistic way again. After 3,5 years I moved from Lisbon to Recife (BR), where I was offered a solo-exhibition with all the work I had created in Lisbon. The show was called Till Death Do Us Part. It was a series of ink- and oil-paintings, about the missing of people we love and care about.



After the show I mainly worked on commissioned artworks; experimenting with different techniques and subjects. When I moved to Amsterdam (NL), about 3 years ago, I decided to truly start painting for myself again, and that the work would express a personal message.

My work since then is influenced by the question if there is a place for the sensitive and vulnerable man in today's society. After having lived in England, Brazil, and Portugal over the last two decades, and being part of the LGBTQIA+ community, I had experienced personally that this question is more relevant now than ever. The men in my work own the moments of vulnerability they are confronted with. Their fragile state becomes their strength. The

paintings I am making, since I am back in The Netherlands, advocate more tolerance and acceptance.

You mentioned that you were born in a small village in the Netherlands but feel that London is where you first felt free. How have these different environments impacted your artistic expression?

Growing up in a small village as a small kid is great. Everybody knows everybody, and it's very safe. But when I started developing into a teenager and realized that I liked other boys, and that that made me "gay" -that thing people in the village joked and whispered about- the then extrovert kid I was then quickly turned into an introvert teenager. It was only years later, after I finished art school, when I won a flight ticket to London, through an online competition, that I decided, there and then, that I wasn't going to hide anymore, and that I was going to be fully me again, to live my life, to love whoever I wanted to love, and express myself as an artist. It could perhaps explain that because of the loneliness in my adolescence most of my artworks only portray one single person.



Ronn Kools
Inevitable
2024

And perhaps because I went to London, and since then, started expressing myself as an artist, and as someone of the LGBTQIA+ community, that most of the subjects in my paintings are guys. But I am no psychologist.

How did your journey from studying graphic design to becoming a painter shape your artistic approach?

It's an interesting question. As most artists I have always been drawing. At high school I was drawing instead of taking notes. I knew I wanted to become a recognized artist, and to be able to

express myself, but I was a quiet and shy teenager. After high school I started studying graphics and illustration in Antwerp (BE). There I was taught all different kinds of techniques; which I loved. My education continued at the Willem de Kooning Academy in Rotterdam (NL). I wanted to study painting there, but my parents wanted me to have more job security, and told me to study graphic design. I did, but as I told you in the previous question, I started painting on canvas in my free time at the place I lived back then. The academy didn't teach me how to paint, but it did teach me about composition and concept.



Ronn Kools
Paper-heart
2024

As a painter I would say I am self-taught. My paintings carry a mixture of my own technique and emotions.

Are there any particular artists or movements that have influenced your work?

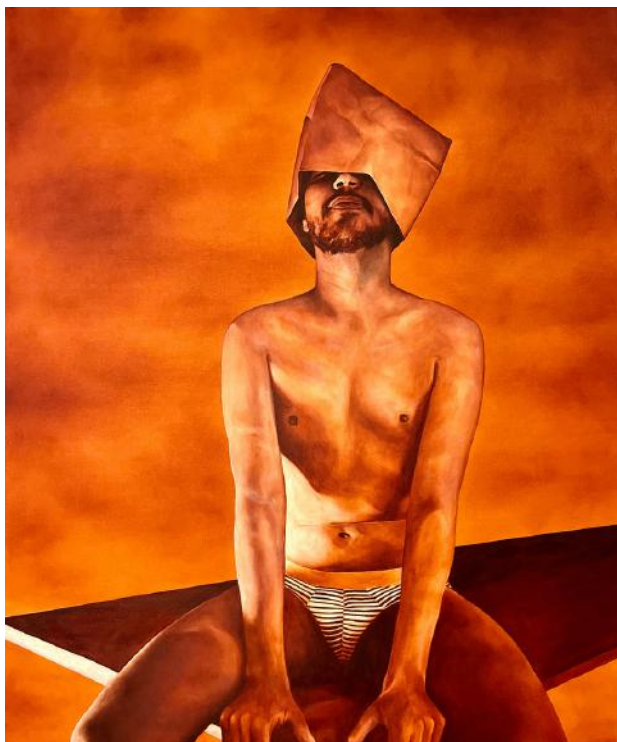
Figurative art, which pushes the audience to have a feeling of empathy with the artwork has always captured my interest. When I paint it's like I am having a nonverbal conversation with the soul of the person I am painting. Their soul has to be expressed in the painting as well as just their exterior. Empathy is key. The viewer has to connect, and feel what the person in the painting is feeling, or at least what he or she thinks this person is feeling.

What role do you think art plays in advocating for tolerance and acceptance in society?

Visibility of the truth breaks down preconceptions. History has mostly shown men as strong and powerful. The vulnerability of men was mostly shown with young boys or very old men. It was seen as a weakness. However, this is slowly changing. In today's society we see

that more and more people are standing up for equal rights; for women, for people with a different skin color, for the disabled, for people from the LGBTQIA+ community, etc. More people start seeing that everybody is the same in being different. Women can be strong, and men can be vulnerable. The men in my paintings may seem vulnerable at first glance, but they are actually the ones controlling the narrative.

Can you share a memorable experience or feedback you've received from someone who has viewed your work?



Ronn Kools
Cheap-stripes
2024



Ronn Kools | Our-hands | 2024

A memorable moment for me was when I showed a yet -up to this date- unfinished painting to one of my best friends recently, and he said he could feel the love between me and the model. He said being painted in a captured moment like that is the love letter only few of us will ever receive.

What advice would you give to emerging artists who are trying to find their voice and style?

Create what you want to create. Don't be influenced by what might sell well, or by what might do well on social media. There is a market out there for everyone and everything. You do you.

I love nature; it inspires me to create. Every time I am in nature, I find new ideas and create new graphic works. Most of all, I love sketching from life with a black gel pen. I believe this tool opens up new possibilities for me in the world of graphics.

— Marina Efimova



Marina Efimova | In the park, paper/black gel pen



My name is Carmen, and I was born and raised in a small town in Cordoba, southern Spain. At the age of 18 I entered the Faculty of Fine Arts in Granada, where I graduated. This year I graduated after four years of study. My next step will be to continue my studies by taking a master's degree in Digital Art Curatorship at the ESDI school in Sabadell, Barcelona. As an artist my first exhibition was “¡A la calle! 2024”, where I presented my work “Anima bendita”. A group exhibition that I also had the pleasure of curating. Following a solo exhibition “Sólo me queda el recuerdo de la ausencia de tu voz” at Espacio Lavadero gallery in Granada, where I presented a six square meters mural.

Carmen Castaño Casco | EN LA BARRIGA DEL BUEY | 2024



Artist Statement

I am an artist from Córdoba, Spain, being painting the field where I develop my artistic project. The common thread that I follow in my work is the simile between the body and the being of the infant and my own present, pursuing an objective of self-knowledge and research.

— Carmen Castaño Casco

Carmen Castaño | Casco ya no me cabe variación | 2024







An artistic illustration of a white teacup with a gold rim and a floral pattern on the side, sitting on a matching saucer. A stream of golden-brown tea is being poured from a teapot into the cup, creating ripples. The tea is filled with various pink and purple flowers. A silver spoon with a decorative handle is positioned above the cup. A small square signature 'FRAN P.' is visible on the left side of the cup. A tea tag is attached to the cup with a string.

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FRAN
P.

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with the
Finest
Anxiety

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