VISUAL ART JOURNAL

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— *Intro*

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Curator of
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Hello dear reader,

In your hands is Issue #34 of our magazine, and we continue to introduce you to new and talented artists, sculptors, and creators from various fields and disciplines.

Can we separate art from social and political agendas? On one hand, of course, we can. The beauty of nature, the human form, and timeless themes of love and life's meanings remain constant, universal, and understandable to all. However, there is also art that speaks to the current moment. When art raises issues that are not just visual but aim to draw attention to a problem, it may not be easily understood by everyone, but only by those familiar with the context.

Should art raise such issues? Or is it solely meant for aesthetic enjoyment? Each person decides for themselves; there is no single answer to this. In this issue, we've included both: the beauty as it is and paintings that speak and make a statement.

Happy reading!

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Margaret Lipsey
The Shape Of Yes
2025

On the Back Cover:
Grazyna Tarkowska
In the rhythm of life
2025

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

Interview

Margaret Lipsey

You began your journey with painting during culinary school — how did that unexpected beginning influence your creative path?

After graduating from Howard University, I enrolled at the New England Culinary Institute in Vermont, where I immersed myself in a rigorous, hands-on culinary program. It was an environment of intensity, precision, and sensory engagement and one that ignited my creativity in unexpected ways. Amidst the choreographed chaos of kitchen work, I felt my creativity surge and I was compelled to buy paint and canvas to explore movement and color. Initially it was like I was capturing the feeling of being on the line in a restaurant, all muscle memory and instinct.
As I moved into my career as a chef, there was little time to deepen this exploration but dabbled in the next 15 years with poetry, knitting, and sewing. Coming back to painting once or twice but never really committing to anything. I think the biggest lesson of those 15 years as a chef was that those little curiosities, the hobbies that never quite took, were just building blocks. I was gathering information, I was learning my style, I was growing as an Artist, slowly and in what seemed like a disconnected way.
In hindsight, I can see how profoundly my culinary training shaped my artistic process. The way I build a painting by layering texture, experimenting with contrast, balancing color carries the imprint of those foundational years. There is an intentional composition to placing food on a plate or arranging hors d'oeuvres on a buffet. I can see how that attention to color and texture and form comes into my work.

Margaret Lipsey | Women gather | 2025

Your work often explores emotion through movement and color. Can you share what emotional states most often guide your brush?

In recent years, my work has become a vessel for reflecting not just on personal shifts, but also on the collective experiences of women navigating midlife. There's been grief for time lost, for versions of ourselves we buried to survive. There's been rage subtle at first, then louder: the kind that rises when

Margaret Lipsey | The shape of yes | 2025

we realize how much of our inner world we've set aside for the sake of someone else. There's been frustration too, that we feel invisible or less than simply because of the box someone else has chosen to put us in.

With the Wild collection, in particular, I intentionally went into the studio feeling these things. Embodying the rage of being ignored once too often, allowing the tears of betrayal to flow, sitting in the consequences of choosing peace over being right. These emotions are somehow universal and beyond the simple designations of sad or angry. They are linked to stories, they are a sudden recognition of a pattern, they are an attempt at loving another only to realize that love sacrifices your own happiness.

The interesting thing is that, while I go into a painting feeling these emotions, the act of painting releases them. Without solving the problem or confronting the ex or coming up with advice to give, I move out of the heaviness. I find my center again. Looking at the work on the canvas when it is finished, I can see beauty in that energy, the power in releasing it, and the breath of relief at surviving it.

How does intuition shape your creative process? Do you ever consciously resist it?

My painting practice, as it exists today, began to take shape just before my 40th birthday, which is around the same time I enrolled in a meditation course. That was a turning point. I began to understand, more deeply, the power of stillness the ability to find peace when chaos was all around me. Painting became a kind of moving meditation for me, a state of attunement where time blurs and the brush knows something my conscious mind doesn't yet understand.

Early on, I started filming my process, almost out of curiosity. I wanted to see what was happening, to observe how a blank surface became a story. What struck me most was how often the title of a piece, which usually emerges after completion, revealed something I hadn't yet admitted to myself. I have found beauty in discovering what might come out of me next and have let my intuition guide most of my practice.

I have resisted it at times but those are the paintings underneath my work. Those paintings never seem to become what I intended them to be; they fall flat. There is a refinement part of my process that is after the intuitive flow, but intuition leads nearly every painting that I have loved enough to share with the world.

In your statement, you speak of transforming anger, sadness, and joy into visual form. Can you share a recent work where this transformation was especially powerful?

Margaret Lipsey | Creation blooms out of nothing | 2024

In the healing process, time often moves painfully slow. It can feel like being trapped in a cycle of pain, with only brief flickers of clarity or calm. The Only Way Out is Through explores the heaviness of healing, the depth of the darkness that I faced after my divorce, taking responsibility for my pain, and recognizing that I had lost part of myself in marriage, motherhood, and trying to build a career. As I worked through those feelings there was a light that came from within. Remembering that woman I had been was the first step back to myself. That shining a light into the darkness of all that I did not want meant I could more easily see all that I desired. The piece itself is deep blues with all kinds of colors that come out of the depths, like pieces of myself beginning to re-emerge in that process of facing the truth and finally taking steps to move through it.
This painting really went on that journey with me. The deep blues give way to almost playful oranges and pinks. It reminds us that everything changes, and we can hold on tightly to our pain or loosen our grip and perhaps find joy again.

Your collections seem to respond to one another. Do you see your body of work as a personal visual diary?

From the beginning my work has been deeply personal. Sometimes it was therapeutic, working through old ideas and issues. Other times it has been nurturing, bring the essence of how I want to feel into reality.

Margaret Lipsey | Alternations | 2025

Margaret Lipsey | Almost completely disappeared | 2024

Because my practice is based on exploration and building, I find I naturally move to the edges in terms of theme, size, and style. So yes, the collections are in response to each other, and they are helping me to navigate where I am going as an Artist. Each painting, each collection teaches me something about how I want to use color, about how subtle or assertive I want my brushstrokes to be, about what it takes to make people feel deeply. They reflect where I am in that year, that day, or that instant. Which means that the fullness of who I am, the richness of the human experience, the possibility of what it means to be creative is as diverse as all the works I have created.

Do you consider your informal training an advantage in maintaining freedom in your expression?

For me, informal training combined with age have been to my great advantage. When I started painting in earnest at 40, I knew my taste, I knew the styles I wanted to explore, and I knew that I was unlimited. I started to call myself an Artist (with a capital A) and that meant I could do whatever I wanted. Over the past 10 years, I have played in watercolor, photography, wrote a poetry book, and explored hundreds of techniques. I think that if I had gone to Art school and started painting in my

Margaret Lipsey | Obstructed view | 2024

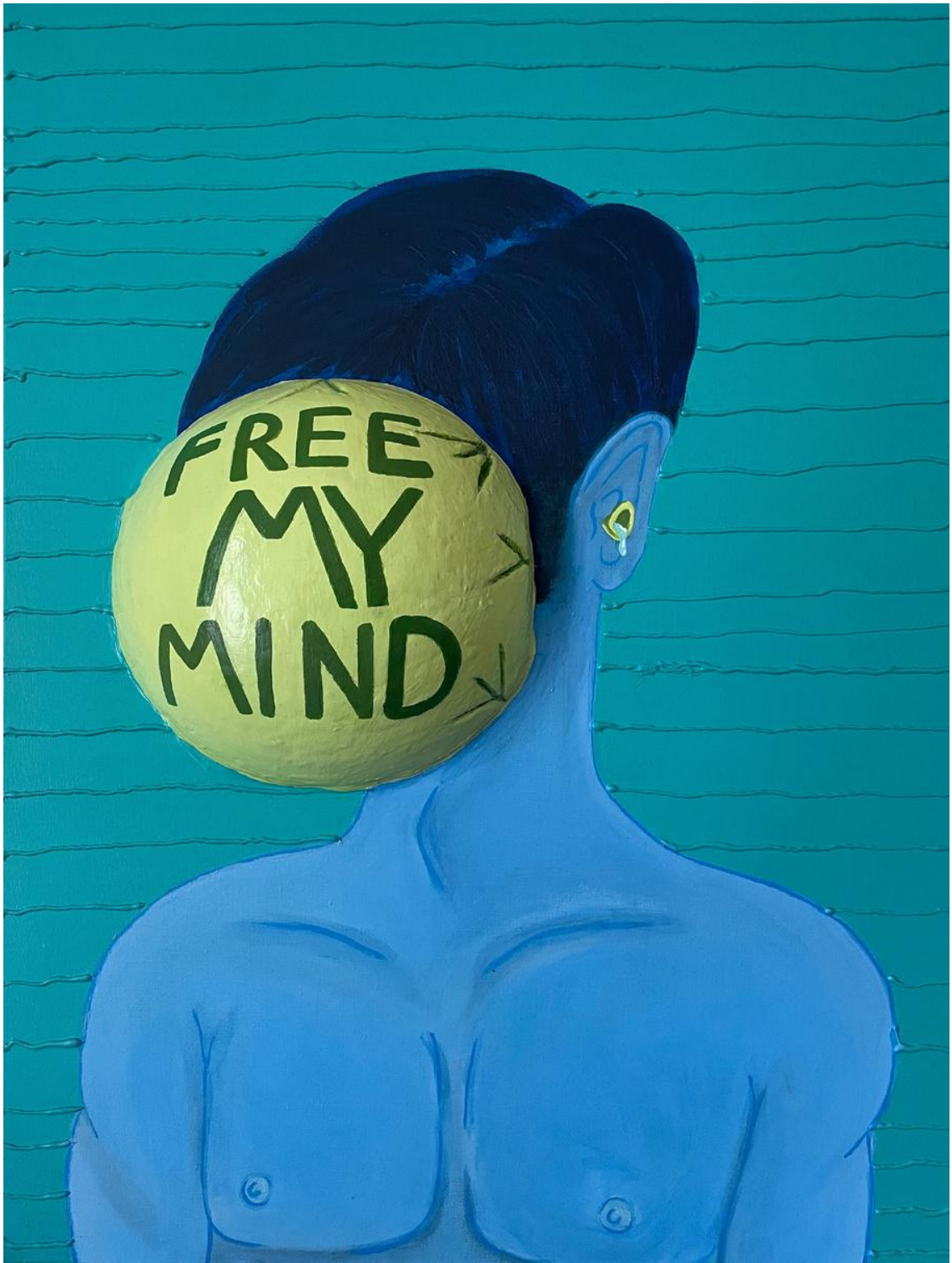
20s my voice would have been less clear through that exploration, or I would have felt more of the impact of critique and acclaim.
I would have loved formal training for the way it stretches the mind and pushes students to go beyond the process. That is part of what I loved about culinary school, it wasn't just watch and repeat, it required us to innovate. But I think there is value in letting curiosity guide me to the next technique, or theme, or collection. I fully immerse myself in the understanding and bring it into my practice in a more cohesive way.

What does "Emergence" represent in your current stage as an artist — emotionally and stylistically?

I went into the studio one day this year and I realized I was finished with feeling angry. I wanted something softer. I wanted to stand in my own presence instead of being a reaction to the world. I felt like I had been grieving and frustrated for so long but that day it didn't feel as true, I was a step away from it, I couldn't walk around in it the way I had the day before.
As I started painting Emergence textures and marks returned to the layers, I picked up a palette knife for the first time in years, the brushstrokes became less defined, muted colors started supporting more bold swatches. I felt the shift as I saw it unfold on the canvas, this call to be sovereign, to own the past and the future, and to sit in the power of this moment as it creates what is to come.
Emergence represents a grounded power, a deliberate pace forward, and the desire to be acknowledged by the definition I give.

Hannah Bömer
Hannah was born in 1998 in Germany and completed her Abitur in 2016. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in Interior Design in 2020 and went on to work as an interior architect assistant for one year. In 2021, she transitioned into the film industry, where she continues to work primarily as a standby props specialist and art director for independent film productions. Alongside her work in film, Hannah began seriously pursuing her passion for visual art in 2021. Her practice focuses on emotionally expressive portraiture, blending bold colors and stylized forms to explore internal states and human vulnerability. In 2024, she took part in her first group exhibition with At:ataxia in Berlin. Her work continues to evolve at the intersection of visual storytelling and emotional introspection.

Project Statement
I'm Hannah, a Berlin-based artist exploring emotion through a vibrant, often childlike lens. My work is a playful yet deeply personal translation of inner experiences—a kind of comedic coping mechanism that allows me to process and express feelings that are often hidden or suppressed. We're frequently taught that showing vulnerability is a weakness, and that emotions should be polished into something more palatable before they're shared. Through my art, I reject that idea. Drawing becomes a space of complete freedom, where I can release emotions without censorship or restraint. What fascinates me most is the transformation that happens when a piece leaves my hands and enters the world. A feeling I've drawn from my own story might resonate with someone else in an entirely unexpected way. That exchange—the moment when my internal world touches yours—is what keeps me creating. It's a reminder that even our most personal expressions can become shared experiences.



Hannah Boemer | Free My Mind | 2023

Hannah Boemer | Nonchalant | 2024

Samara Couri

Mirrors provide an experience of creating a scene and inviting viewers to become part of it, one way or another.

Your mirror paintings are incredibly striking. What initially inspired you to start painting on mirrors instead of traditional canvas?

My inspiration to work with mirrors stems from my fascination with film. I love how viewers can become absorbed in a scene or a moment between characters—how we sometimes resonate with the story or see different perspectives. Film is a medium of movement, and I sought that immersive experience in my art. I love painting on canvas and other surfaces but it wasn't quite capturing what I had in my thoughts and vision. As I was reflecting on this, I looked up at a mirror on my wall and it was then that everything clicked and I could see that vision come to life.

Samara Couri | Pele And Kanaloa

In your "Akua, Hawaiian Deities" series, you collaborate with cultural practitioners. How did this collaboration begin, and how does it inform your creative process?

This collaboration has been essential to my work and started after a short time being on the island, learning the different cultural practices and pursuing the importance of spreading that knowledge. It has opened a vast world of learning about the islands' ways of life, beliefs, and spirituality, especially the ongoing fight for self-governance and self-determination championed by grassroots group Ka Lāhui Hawai'i. They tirelessly address critical issues in Hawai'i, such as environmental disasters caused by the U.S. Navy—most notably the Red Hill water crisis—and organize protests to prevent the exploitation of sacred lands like Mt. Ka'ala, which is under threat from plans to build tourist attractions like gondola zip lines. These ventures prioritize profit over the wellbeing of Indigenous people and the land, which holds deep sacred and historical significance. With so much land and rights already lost, the greed from outsiders seems limitless. It's vital to educate oneself about these realities and not treat the islands as a playground. These are serious issues that Hawaiians face daily while fighting to protect their home under difficult circumstances. For those interested, please visit www.kalahuihawaii.net to learn more and support their cause.

Working closely with Kumu 'A'ai'i—a Hawaiian Cultural Practitioner, a Kumu Hula (Hula teacher), and Kapa Maker amongst many other gifts she has and does—has deeply enriched my understanding of the islands' philosophies, culture, and history, especially the true meaning of Akua and the interconnectedness of all things. She is also my oli (chant) teacher, guiding me through the powerful and precise art of chanting, where vibration, pronunciation, and execution are critically important. There is a chant for almost everything, further reinforcing connection. I feel I've only begun to scratch the surface of this knowledge, which is deeply rooted in the people, and I am committed to continually learning and faithfully representing these emotions and studies in my work.

How do you approach the responsibility (kuleana) of representing Hawaiian culture as someone from outside the islands?

Samara Couri | Respecting The Elements

My kuleana begins with the understanding that I am a guest on the island—something that's essential to acknowledge, especially given Hawai'i's history. As a guest, I strive to learn as much as I can and actively engage in cultural practices, whether through dance, oli (chant), or volunteering at beach clean-ups. This continuous learning is important because my work centers on Hawai'i and its people as a form of giving back and showing respect. I deeply empathize with the causes being fought for here. Hawai'i is a sacred and unique place, and it's essential to genuinely honour my role within it.

What do you hope viewers feel or experience when they see themselves reflected in your work?

My work is an immersive experience, one I hope viewers find engaging and exciting as they explore multiple physical perspectives and angles. This dynamic interaction often introduces a psychological dimension, prompting viewers to become aware of their own presence and thoughts in relation to the work.
It reflects the ever-changing nature of identity—there's always something new to discover and learn about ourselves and others. This awareness calls for openness to whatever we encounter, while also recognizing that change can happen at any moment, and we have the free will to respond. If you catch something in your reflection within the pieces, what will you do with it? Will you explore it further or leave it behind? Perhaps it becomes a tool for healing and prepares you for personal transformation. Often, it's the subtle aspects of identity that make the greatest impact.

Many of your figures have a strong and powerful presence. Can you share more about the emotions or energies you aim to capture in them?

There's a particular look or expression I try to bring out in each figure. There's always a narrative—one that exists within the piece, but that can shift depending on the viewer's perspective. I aim to capture a look that invites deeper thought and creates a sense of openness between the figure and the viewer. When I paint the figure—especially the face and eyes—there's a clear intention behind how I apply and express the paint. I want that intention to translate into a specific thought, feeling, or subject the viewer can engage with.

Your work creates a "psychological hall of mirrors." What role does introspection play in your art?

I invite introspection by creating spaces where viewers feel safe to connect in their own way. In many ways, the pieces become theirs in that moment—open to personal interpretation, feelings, and thoughts about what may unfold. This immersive experience between viewer and artwork creates a unique connection and layers of meaning. It might remain a private dialogue or become something they share with others, perhaps opening an entirely new world they hadn't noticed before.

How has living in Hawai'i influenced your artistic vision and practice?

Living in Hawai'i has awakened a deep consciousness in me about the islands' history, which informs much of my work. The Kingdom of Hawai'i was overthrown and illegally taken. This history remains central to many Kanaka Maoli (Indigenous peoples of Hawai'i), who strive to have their voices heard and their culture and language preserved after years of suppression. For me, being here means being mindful of this legacy and engaging however I can—through learning the language, hula, oli (chant), and more—to show respect and help ensure these traditions are not forgotten, and that sovereignty remains a possibility. Hawaii's rich and profound culture is deeply moving, making it impossible not to connect. Therefore, my work reflects my care for the islands, its people, their beliefs, and their causes. Living here is not just about oneself but about truly connecting and opening up that world, hence involving the viewer directly in the subject.

What has been the most meaningful response or interaction someone has had with your mirror paintings?

I've had many people open up to me in very personal ways. They often come in without knowing what to expect and sometimes spend quite a while engaging with the mirror paintings—looking through and around them, even returning on another day to try to better understand their own emotions and thoughts. The work seems to open something inside them, as if they've been seen in a way they hadn't experienced before, which helps them feel safe and able to trust the space.
They open up about personal struggles, relationships, and much more. It's incredibly fascinating to witness this, and it means so much to me, because the work then takes on a life of its own—becoming emotionally available to the people who engage with it.

Grażyna Tarkowska was born in Toruń and currently lives and works in Częstochowa, in the picturesque region of the Polish Jura. She is a graduate of the Institute of Artistic Education at the Pedagogical University in Częstochowa (now Jan Długosz University), where she earned her degree in printmaking under the supervision of Professor Ryszard Osadczy. She is a member of the Association of Polish Artists and Designers (ZPAP). Her artistic practice includes printmaking, drawing, and applied design, but painting remains her primary field of expression. She works mainly on canvas using acrylics and oils, and also creates with pastels. She regularly participates in plein-air painting workshops, especially the traditional Jura Plein-Airs held in the unique limestone landscapes of southern Poland. She has also coordinated one of these plein-airs, as well as an urban plein-air event in Częstochowa. Grażyna Tarkowska has taken part in over one hundred group and solo exhibitions in Poland and abroad. Her works have been shown at international art fairs in New York, Dubai, and Beijing. She has received numerous prestigious awards for her painting, including: • Artists at the Jubilee (Rome, December 21, 2024), • Artist of the Year 2025 (Florence, January 25, 2025), • The Great Masters in New York (New York, April 4, 2025), • Universal Artists (Milan, June 7, 2025). In addition to her artistic work, Grażyna Tarkowska is also an art educator. She teaches visual arts at two primary schools, where her students regularly win awards and distinctions in art competitions of various levels.

Project Statement
During my university studies, the focus was almost exclusively on realistic painting—landscapes, still lifes, and traditional subjects. While I appreciated the technical discipline, I quickly realized that replicating the visible world didn't truly inspire me. Instead, I was drawn to abstraction, where I could express a more personal, emotional reality. For me, painting recognizable subjects—whether landscapes, animals, or portraits—is often just a starting point, an excuse to explore my own inner world. In this world, colors are liberated from realism. I'm captivated by bold, expressive hues and striking contrasts. The final composition emerges from the tension between color and form, arranged intuitively in space. Viewers often tell me that my paintings lift their spirits. I believe these vibrant works reflect my vital energy and optimistic spirit. When I paint, I enter a state of deep focus, completely disconnected from the outside world. Afterward, I often feel physically drained, as if I've undergone intense exertion. While I enjoy exploring many genres of painting in museums, the Fauvists have had the most profound influence on my work. I also deeply admire Wassily Kandinsky and Joan Miró, whose impact can be seen in some of my pieces.

Grazyna Tarkowska | I am from here | 2017

Grazyna Tarkowska | Look | 2025

— *Interview*

Mrs. Helichrysum

How has growing up on a remote farm in Rhodes shaped your artistic voice?

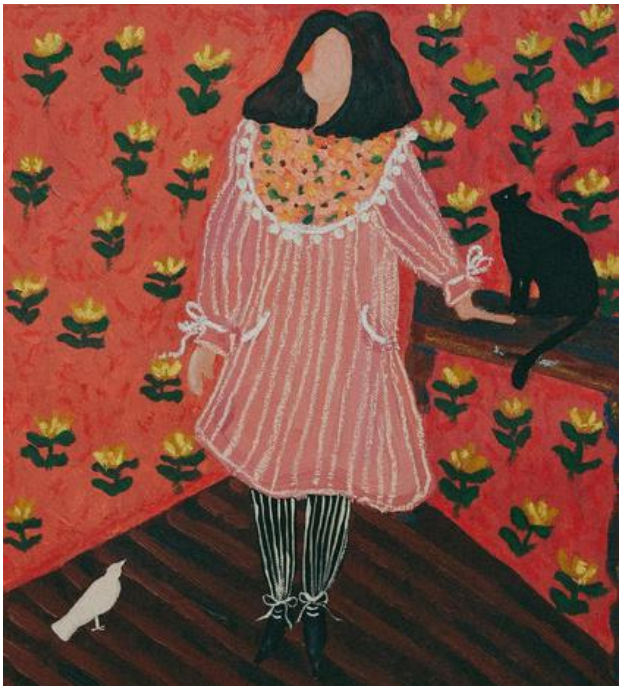
Oh, Rhodes! That sweet little bubble of childhood bliss. I think of it almost daily, it shaped my artistic voice in more ways than I can count. I was a wild, barefoot little thing (by choice, of course), not having much, but feeling rich beyond measure, the farm was my kingdom, and I lived in it fully, wandering off on imaginative adventures that no one could interrupt. We grew up surrounded by books, and my mother, ever the eccentric, saw the artist in me from the start. My parents nurtured it, gently and insistently, always encouraging me to draw, to make, to dream. Because a math whiz? That I was most certainly not. I quietly observed the local artists, learning from them without them even knowing, after all, I sat next to their children in school. I suppose my whole upbringing gave me something precious: room. Room to dream, to simply be, and slowly, to become. There were no city voices pushing me toward a path I didn't choose. Just the stillness of the land, the quiet freedom of the mountains, and a life that let me grow into myself, organically.

What kind of emotional response do you hope your art stirs in the viewer?

Mrs. Helichrysum is no cookie-cutter fairytale character. She's a little controversial. She has a grand snozzle, befriends the forgotten, and doesn't quite fit the mould, and that's exactly the point. I hope my art offers a soft place to land, for child or grown-up alike.

Your works often feature striped stockings and birds or fish. What do these recurring motifs represent to you?

The birds are symbols of truth, a reminder to hold loosely to the things that try to tie us down: the glitter, the trimmings, the pressure to fit into neat shapes. The fish represent society, always nudging, always pulling, encouraging, manipulating us to swim along without asking where or why. & then there's Mrs. H, with her striped stockings. It is her clear signature style so that when she appears in a painting, the viewer knows instantly: that's her. Unmistakably herself



There are layers tucked into every piece I paint. Gentle ones, sharp ones, thoughtful ones, memories (good and bad), it's meant to stir something, to make you pause, maybe even see yourself in her shoes. Because Mrs. H becomes who the heart needs her to be: a mother, a sister, a dear friend. To me, she is both stability and freedom. Over the past few years, she became my voice when I didn't quite know how to use my own.

You mentioned that your art is often accompanied by words. How do you approach the connection between text and image?

My paintings almost always carry words. It feels like a well-choreographed dance, one rarely moves without the other. The text is often poetic, sometimes figurative. Mrs. H is the prominent figure I almost always paint (her striped stockings gives her away) and the words become hers too, as if she herself is sharing the phrase, the poem, the memory... Just like that, the text and the painting grow together, until they belong to one another, like pages from the same story.

How has moving to Dubai influenced your art and creative process?

Dubai has shaped my artistic voice in ways I never quite expected. It's a place rich in diversity, and I've come to truly love that. I'll admit, part of me still longs for a window that opens onto mountains and fields, but the people here, their warmth and stories, make up for it. As an absolute introvert, this city has gently nudged me out of my shell, helping me grow in ways only a bustling place like this can. I'm grateful for the quiet corners of green it holds, for the unexpected calm in the chaos, and for the opportunities it's placed in front of me. In many ways, Dubai has taught my voice to be a little bolder.

What role does nature—both South African and Emirati—play in your work today?

Nature plays a quiet but powerful role in my work. The wild landscapes of South Africa shaped my imagination, open skies, farm stillness, and earthy textures still live in the way I create. In contrast, the UAE has taught me to find beauty in subtler, more unexpected places; desert light, hidden gardens, the people and the calm of curated spaces. Together, they've helped me balance boldness and softness, grounding my work in both memory and the present.

As a self-taught artist, what has your learning process looked like over the past ten years?

Oh, it's been a journey drenched in tears, self-doubt, and quiet comparisons, especially to those with impressive titles and clear career paths. But over time, I realised, there's room for people like me too. An artist... Once I embraced that, I began to create more freely. I've experimented with different mediums, explored various styles, and studied the work of illustrators and artists I admire. But mostly, I just sat down and drew, again and again, until something felt worthy enough to share. Some of the most beautiful things happen in the waiting, in the grinding no one sees. I'm not formally trained, and yet, Mrs. H exists. Not despite that, but maybe even because of it.

Cynthia Durán is a Mexican photographer currently based in Madrid. She studied Visual Communications in Florence, Fashion Photography in Barcelona, and later deepened her practice through a course in meditative photography in Nepal. Her multicultural path has shaped a visual language rooted in observation, emotion, and presence. With a background that blends design, fashion, and introspective storytelling, Cynthia explores themes of everyday intimacy, atmosphere, and the quiet beauty of life across cultures.

Cynthia Duran | Capadoccia | 2022

Cynthia Duran | Portovenere | 2022

Eva Oleandr

Your work blends anatomical elements with mythological symbolism and surreal imagery. What usually comes first in your creative process — a visual, a concept, or a feeling?

My creative process is quite simple, rooted in the natural flow of my thoughts. A visual and emotional spark usually comes first and inspires a concept. I tend to pull my ideas from everything that I find intriguing, such as philosophical arguments, and thus blend them together to forge new perspectives and even new realities. The world is truly fascinating and my inspiration; beautiful feelings, novel ideas, unique narratives can be found anywhere! Art is a powerful tool that can make anything possible for me.

Eva Oleandr | Comedy And Tragedy | 2025

How does your background in both Russian and UK cultures influence your visual language?

Studying and practicing art across both Russia and the UK has profoundly shaped my independent style of visual language. My Russian fine arts education was based on strict academic and traditional techniques, providing me with a solid foundation of technical skills and discipline. My UK art school experience embraced contemporary approaches that fostered creative freedom through exploration of self expression and personal growth. This combination of serious, intensive training with imaginative exploration has allowed me find my own artistic voice, the language spoken by my art, and to fall in love with art over and over again.

The themes of duality, transformation, and time seem to appear throughout your artworks. Are there particular philosophical ideas or thinkers that have shaped your worldview?

Duality, transformation and time are fundamental and inseparable aspects of existence, shaping the very fabric of our perceived reality. However, I have always been deeply curious about questioning the what, why, and how of our shaped human existence. All these questions always remain

Eva Oleandr | Eternal Present | 2025

open-ended, nothing is right or wrong, with countless theories ranging from something as simple as one's personal reflections to global, widespread beliefs. This dialogue is an endlessly fascinating landscape which I seek to continue journeying through. So, I'm certainly interested in metaphysics and ontology in particular. I have an affinity for Ancient Greek philosophy, particularly Socrates and Plato. In more contemporary thought, I'm interested in ontological design (A.M. Willis), which is a design and art philosophy that explores how our creations shape us, the human beings; in return, just like M.C. Esher's artwork "Hands." I also admire T. Fry's work, which explores existence and interconnectedness of everything through art and design.
Recently, I've been exploring Eastern philosophies, particularly Buddhism, so elements of these teachings could possibly show up in my artworks in future, too!

You often use recurring motifs — red thread, eyes, masks, fish, swans — what do they symbolize for you personally?

In my artworks, each small element is individually symbolic. I craft and then weave these meanings together to create a layered narrative that is understood only by the context of connectivity. So, the red threads that often appear in my art represent the entanglement and unseen ties all things have across time and geography. Eyes stand for wisdom, across many cultures. They are a representation of the desire for knowledge and understanding, serving as portals into interrogating deeper truths. Masks embody the complex nature of humanity — our transformative personalities, unpredictability, capacity for absorption, and tendency to mirror the world around us in flattering ways. Fish symbolise flow and balance, emphasizing the importance of harmony amidst constant chaos that surrounds our global circumstances. In my 2025 piece "Attachment," swans symbolise lovers caught in a delicate, but deeply unhealthy balance — an illusion of control and unity that ultimately reveals the fragility of their fading connection.

How important is storytelling in your art, and do you see your works as connected chapters of a larger visual narrative?

I prefer to create a single, complex piece of artwork that encapsulates a complete story, rather than relying on a series of images. My aim is to invite viewers into a space of exploration, encouraging them to ask questions, forge their own narratives, and discover symbols that could mean something different and something personal for themselves. I want my artworks to serve as a conduit for exploration and self reflection, encouraging viewers to dive deeper, interpret without judgement, and engage intimately with the layered meanings of mysteries embedded within each piece.

What role does nature play in your artistic vision today, especially considering your childhood spent close to it?

Nature and its boundless wonders remain as my greatest source of imaginative inspiration and it is my solace. I am endlessly captivated by its unquestionable beauty and its ceaseless peaceful flow. Through spiritual meditation, I tune in and observe, finding inspiration in the little details — a strangely shaped cloud, the shimmering texture of fish scales, a sudden gust of wind, two little crows engaged in a quiet fight, or a uniquely patterned rock I found by the river. These fleeting moments and precise details invigorate my imagination and my creative spirit.

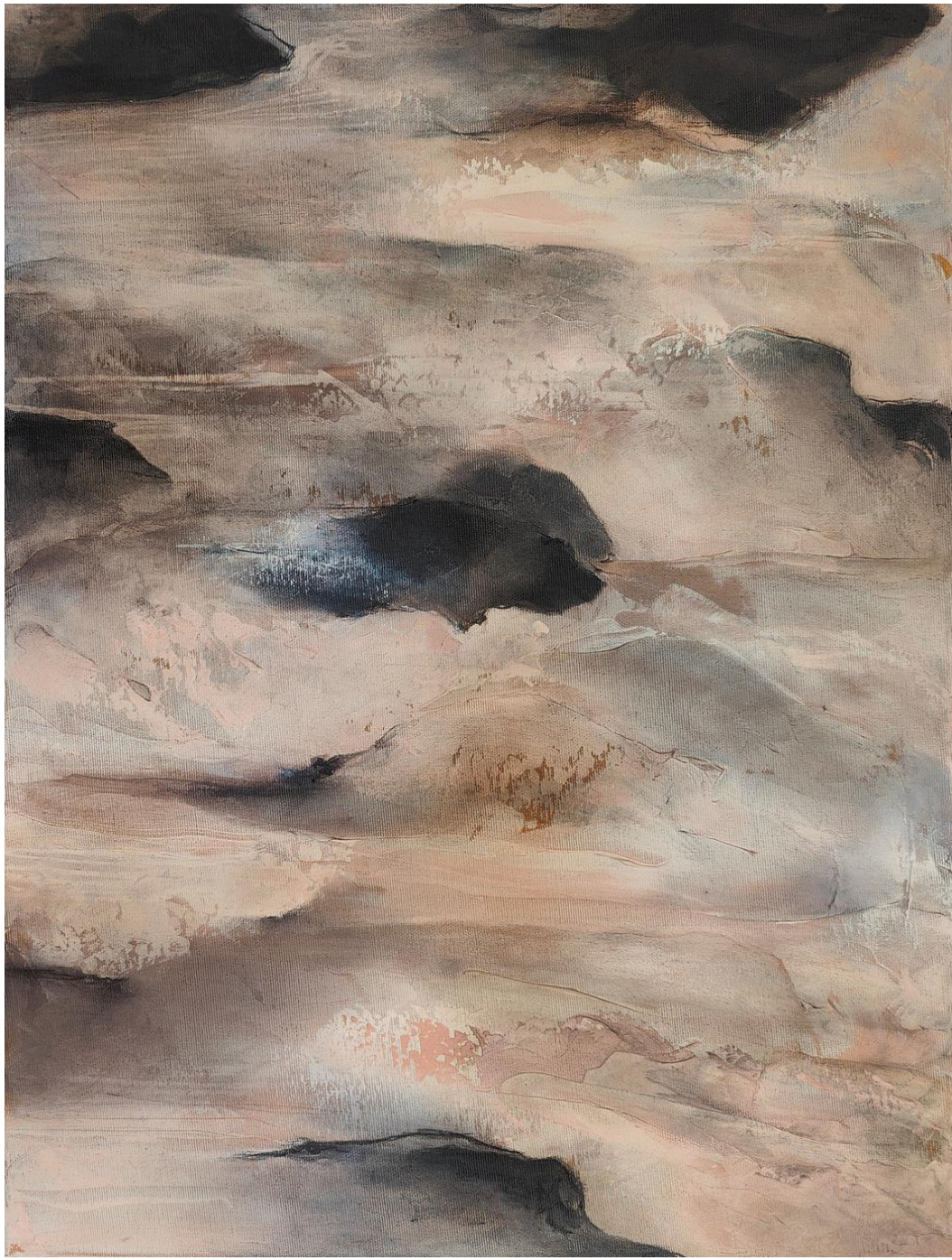
Eva Oleandr | Attachment | 2025

Shir Zalcman is a contemporary artist based in central Israel. Her artworks have been showcased in a variety of exhibitions. Her most recent showings were at the Ein Dor Museum in 2024, the London Art Biennale in 2023, and the Chianciano Biennale in 2022. Zalcman's work has been published in issues of APERO Magazine, COLLECT ART Magazine, ARTMAZINEIUM Magazine, AL-TIBA9 Magazine, ARToday Magazine, and LAISHA Magazine. She has also been featured in ITZUV, Israel's top magazine for house décor.

Project Statement
With intention and sincerity, Shir Zalcman’s artwork is a piece of herself. The forty-year-old Israeli artist uses her studio as a space to escape, to reflect, and to confront parts of herself through the process of painting. Mainly using acrylic paint and charcoal mediums, she uses palette knives and brushes to create depth through texture, layering and linework. She intuitively composes these textural patterns by layering them together to explore the visceral nature of feelings. She works in harmony with the fast-drying process of acrylic paint, building layers to be completed as a whole rather than in parts.

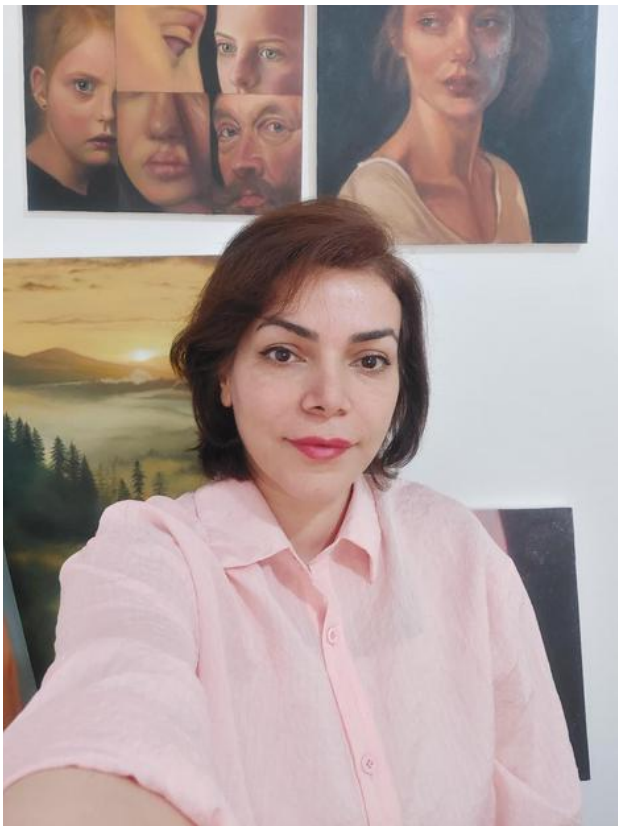
Shir Zalcman | Monochromatic Melancholy

Shir Zalcman | Nothing Breaks Like a Heart



Shir Zalcman | Hours and Hours and Flowers

Seddigheh Adish



The main inspiration came from my personal experiences and observing the lives of women around me. It has always been important to me to give a voice to the silent stories of women—to depict their pain, strength, and contradictions. "And Woman" was my response to the silence surrounding female identity, an attempt to show the coexistence of fragility and resilience.

What inspired you to create the "And Woman" series?

Seddigheh Adish | And Woman | 2021

How do you choose which themes or social issues to highlight in your work?

I choose themes from the social realities and the personal and collective experiences of women. Anything that speaks deeply to my inner self and evokes a strong emotion finds its way onto the canvas. Sometimes a piece of news, a glance, or a memory can spark the beginning of a painting.

The women in your paintings appear both vulnerable and powerful—what emotions or messages do you hope to convey through their gaze and posture?

I want to show that true strength can emerge from vulnerability. The women in my paintings carry unspoken words in their eyes; they have endured pain yet risen again. Their gaze and

Seddigheh Adish | And Woman | 2021

posture reflect a mixture of sorrow, hope, and resistance that speaks loudly even in silence.

Could you tell us more about the symbolism in some of the recurring elements, such as the law book, oxygen mask, or the padlock?

These symbols reflect social pressures. The law book represents the laws that sometimes fail to bring justice for women. The oxygen mask symbolizes the need for survival and breathing in a suffocating atmosphere. And the padlock together with the war helmet represents the persistence and constant battle required to achieve one's goals.

Why did you choose oil painting as your primary medium?

Oil paint feels like the most alive and profound medium for me. It allows for layering, texture, and the expression of complex emotions. It also has a timeless, classical quality that aligns well with the themes of my work.

How has your background in midwifery influenced your artistic practice?

Working as a midwife allowed me to witness the deepest human moments—birth, pain, hope, and life itself. This experience shaped my perspective on the female body, suffering, and strength, giving my paintings an emotional and human dimension.

What challenges did you face as a self-taught artist starting later in life?

I don't have an academic degree in art, but I attended non-academic painting classes. My biggest challenge was inner doubt and the fear of not being taken seriously. However, starting later gave me a unique perspective and emotional maturity that made my style deeply personal.

How do your personal experiences as a woman in Iran shape your artistic voice?

Living in Iran—with all its limitations and its beauty—gave me a more critical and profound view of female identity. My personal experiences taught me that art can be a form of resistance, transforming silence into image and voice.

Seddigheh Adish | And Woman | 2021

Kacper Kokoszka
I was born in 1997 in Warsaw, where I currently live and pursue my creative work. In high school, I completed a humanities-focused curriculum, which laid an essential foundation for my later artistic development. It deepened my interest in culture, history and society — elements that continue to inform my sculptural thinking and material choices. In 2025, I completed my master's degree at the Faculty of Sculpture at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, specializing in Sculpture in Architecture.

Project Statement
I mostly work with everyday objects, avoiding raw artistic materials whenever possible to reduce consumption. I prefer using abandoned items, waste, and leftovers from previous projects. My practice moves between two poles: reflective works that explore personal experiences and the state of the world, and humorous, satirical pieces that offer emotional balance. These lighter works bring joy — both to me and to my audience. Balance is central to my approach. I often create objects that seem on the verge of tipping — both physically and conceptually. It mirrors my search for equilibrium in life and art, in a world that constantly swings between extremes.

Kacper Kokoszka | Sights from Behind the Screen | 2023

Vera de Regt

Photographer Judith Harmsen

Your work often blends emotion and imagination. What emotions do you find yourself returning to most frequently in your art?

Lately, my work has been shaped and inspired mostly by grief. I often return to visualizing feelings of sorrow, longing, tenderness, intimacy, and comfort. These emotions keep resurfacing, and I try to give them space and form through my art.
Over time, I've come to realize that visualizing these kinds of emotions is the way I want to create art, it feels like the most honest and true expression of myself. While I really value beautiful illustrations, I want them to carry something deeper as well, to hold an extra layer of meaning or emotion. I try to do this through a form of figurative surrealism, using imaginative or symbolic elements to translate these feelings into visual stories.

Vera de Regt | Pottery | 2025

Nature appears frequently in your illustrations. What role does the natural world play in your creative process?

Nature is a theme I return to again and again in my work, especially the relationship between humans and the natural world. It's an endless source of inspiration with its different colors, shapes, and beings. But beyond that, in moments of intense emotion like grief, nature has felt healing and grounding to me, even like home. It offers a humbling perspective, reminding us that we're part of something vast and interconnected. I find that comforting, which is why nature often finds its way into my illustrations.
My background in anthropology and forest and nature conservation has also shaped the way I think about nature. It's enriched my understanding of how people relate to the natural world, not just as individuals, but across cultures and histories. It's helped me see nature not just as a setting, but as something deeply woven into our lives and identities. That perspective flows naturally into my creative process.

You describe your recent work as reflecting "quiet kinds of comfort." What does comfort look or feel like for you?

In the past few years I've learned what I need and what comfort really means to me. I find it in solitude, in having a quiet home to retreat to, where I can

Vera de Regt | Forest | 2025

reflect and just be. I find it in nature, which calms my mind with its stillness and vastness. And I find it in making, whether painting or doing pottery, because it brings me into the present moment. For me, comfort is about having time and space to feel, to slow down, and to simply exist.

As a self-taught illustrator, what were some of the biggest challenges and breakthroughs on your artistic journey?

I'm still at the beginning of my journey as an illustrator, even though I've always known, somewhere deep down, that I wanted to be one. For a long time, I didn't dare to take that step, partly because I hadn't studied art, and I didn't see myself as a 'real' artist. That hesitation held me back for years.
The biggest challenge therefore was learning to let go of fear and self-doubt. The real breakthrough came when I finally decided to share my work with the world and see what would happen. Since then, I've felt more like myself than ever before. The positive responses and new experiences have filled me with new energy and confidence, and now I'm only excited to see how this artistic journey will unfold.

How has grief influenced your work? Are there specific experiences that shaped your recent illustrations?

My mother passed away in 2018 from lung cancer. Ever since she got sick, I've been consumed by the complex emotions that come with grief. This process has deeply influenced my work. Creating has helped me express myself in ways that words couldn't, it's been a way to process everything, as a kind of meditation. My grief feels very personal and intimate, and sharing it through my work is scary and exposing. But I also know it resonates with many people. There's something beautiful in the way grief is both very intimate and universal at the same time.

Do you have a particular piece that feels especially personal or meaningful to you? Why?

My painting Eva. It was the first time I depicted myself in such a vulnerable way. It captures a feeling I've had often over the past seven years: a quiet, tender sorrow that fills both body and the space around me. There were many moments where I was trying to move through daily life but actually just wanted to lie down and rest my heavy head and heart. This painting was also the first time I created the blue character 'Eva' that represents myself. Blue is my favorite color, but here it also symbolizes calmness and sadness, both central to the painting's mood.

What artists, movements, or books have inspired you the most?

Artists that immediately come to mind are Hockney and Van Gogh. I'm especially drawn to their way of portraying nature and their use of color; the way they combine colors in expressive ways really resonates with me. Hockney's bright, bold palettes bring such a vivid energy to his work, while Van Gogh's use of color often feels more emotional and atmospheric. I admire how both artists use color not just to depict nature, but to evoke feeling, something I try to do in my own work as well.

Vera de Regt | Eva | 2025

Yana Mühl

I'm a Hamburg-based visual artist working in abstract expressionism, using textured surfaces and layered spray paints to explore emotion, memory, and transformation. My creative language was shaped by a life of reinvention. Born into a modest family in Ukraine, I was forced to migrate alone at 16, facing the challenges of early adulthood independently and later building a career in tech - a path dictated by necessity, not desire. Though accomplished, I felt like I had completely abandoned my true identity. After several life-changing events, I returned to the part of me I had buried: the artist. Now, each piece I make is layered with emotion and story - shaped by structure, but driven by intuition.

Project Statement
My work explores the emotional residue of lived experience - how feelings collect over time, how memory shifts in layers. To capture this, I first build a tactile texture that gives weight and presence to each piece. It grounds the work and invites emotional connection. Using only basic spray paint colors and a specific layering technique, I then create depth, light, and movement across the surface. These paintings are emotional landscapes, drawn from within. Each one holds a memory or feeling - transformed through texture and light to give form to the invisible.

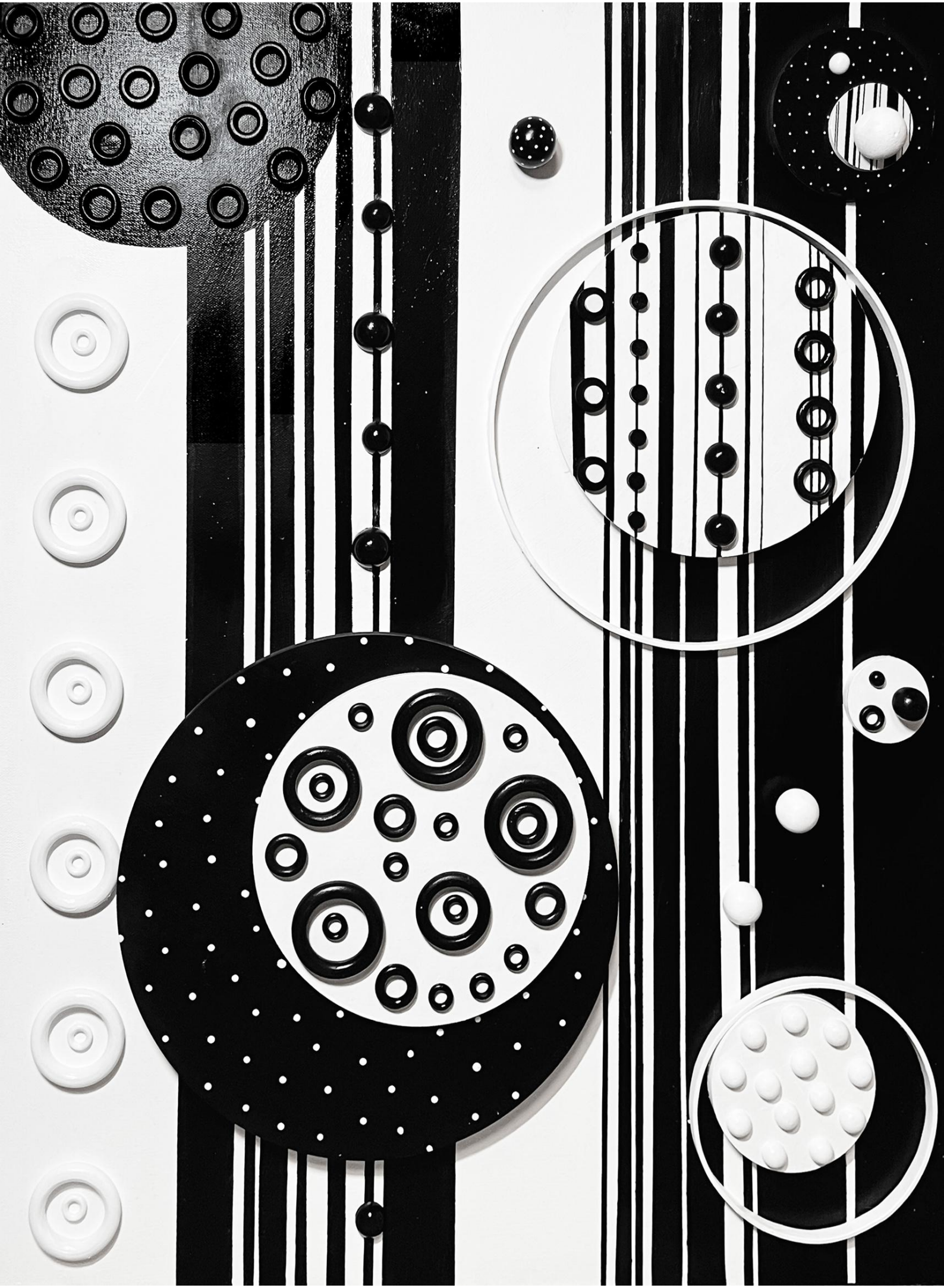
Yana Mühl | Embracing the Infinite | 2025

Yana Mühl | First Light | 2024

My Linh Mac is a Saigonsese multi-media artist, visual designer, and art educator based in Fort-Collins, Mac is best known for her digital paintings, traditional oil paintings, and her series of contemporary 'galactic /no-brush' paintings- Ranbu. As an accomplished painter, her works portray beauty in humble places with her signature style of deep and vibrant accent colors. Mac discovered nontraditional techniques bring further variety to her paintings through the use of color and medium manipulation and exploring different possibilities with hybrid-like presentation platforms. What makes her work stand out among young emerging artists is how she incorporates not only technical skills and knowledge from multiple creative fields of design, art, and technologies; but also, her personal experience and cultural exposure from different parts of the world as a traveler. My Linh's works have been displayed at art exhibitions and showcases around the world. She demonstrates an exceptional talent for creating depth and dimension in her iconic series 'Ranbu' (2019) and 'Constellation' (2022), incorporating traditional painting techniques and unconventional design elements to produce a unique visual language. Her abstract works are represented by institutions worldwide including the Queen Victoria Museum and Gallery in Tasmania, Australia, the Angard Art Hotel in St. Louis, Missouri, the Brauer Museum in Valparaiso, the Czong Institute for Contemporary Art (CICA) Museum in Gimpo, South Korea, and the Museum of Outstanding Design (MOOD) in Como, Italy.

Project Statement
Constellation Series (2022- current): Shapes are present in every part of our existence. They have significantly more power over our lives than we realize, as they literally mold our world into three dimensions. The circle is one of these forms that may be found in practically every part of life. Because it has no beginning or finish, the circle portrays development as a process of transformation from death to birth, ending and beginning. A circle denotes eternity in this sense. A circle represents the Divine life force or spirit that keeps our world moving in many cultures and spiritual beliefs. It represents vigor, fullness, completion, and perfection.

My Linh Mac | Apus | 2022



My Linh Mac | Puppis | 2025

Sean Bw Parker (MA) is a British artist, writer and musician specialising in painting, cultural theory and justice reform. After gaining a Masters degree in Fine Art from the University for the Creative Arts in 2003 he lived and worked in Istanbul for ten years, has released albums and performed at or curated festivals, given a TED talk, had work displayed at London's South Bank, and won a World Art Award (2025). His tenth book SOCIETY (portraits) was published in 2025. He was born in Exeter in 1975 and currently lives on the West Sussex coast.

Artist Statement
While I'm happy to write about other people's creative work, writing about my own feels somehow disingenuous, whether that's about painting or music. It's so much more interesting when the viewer gives you their own interpretation. That said, the cultural milieu influences my portraits, the paint itself influences my abstracts, and it's all at its best when I bring them together successfully - though success is a famously subjective term in art. I love the process of painting, and that having its own communicative style, rather than trying to find words to describe it. I try to add whatever is happening in the present moment to 'the world of art', in my own style. My work in painting (and poetry) tends to be: 'Make, then see what I've made' – concept follows production, via the subconscious - and my new motto is: If it doesn't look like it could have been made by AI, then it's 'successful' enough.

Sean Bw Parker | Mars, the Bringer of War | 2025

I am **Nadi**, a visual artist with an MA in Art from the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Tehran. For the past 18 years, I have worked professionally in the field of graphic design, while also devoting recent years to painting in the painterly style using acrylic techniques. I am also an NFT artist, and my artwork was selected for display at NFT.NYC 2025, showcased at the Marriott Hotel in New York City.

Project Statement
For me, art is not just a part of life — it is life itself. Art is love, spirit, and even a reflection of the divine in the moments of existence. My soul is deeply bound to art, and I am certain that if I were to be born again, I would once again choose to be an artist — again and again. To create is to breathe. Every idea, every technique, every brushstroke carries the flavor of life. Since the age of sixteen, I have constantly explored new artistic experiences — endlessly imagining and walking through diverse creative paths. Curiosity and an inner longing have always guided me on this endless journey — a journey from thought to creation. Art is my lifelong companion: A way of seeing the world, and a language through which my soul speaks.

Nadi | Unity in Diversity | 2025

Nadi | Carpet of Love | 2023

Yicong Li

Yicong Li | Witness | 2022

Your work beautifully blends fiber art with performance and ritual. When did you first realize fiber could be such a transformative medium?

I first began exploring wearable sculpture during the pandemic, when masks became a powerful symbol of both safety and intimacy. That moment made me reflect on how something worn on the body could offer not only physical protection but also emotional transformation: a way to shield oneself while also revealing the underlying consciousness. Around the same time, I discovered Chinese Nuo Opera, an ancient ritual performance in which villagers don hand-carved masks to embody deities and perform ceremonies of healing and protection. This traditional performance art practice deeply resonated with me, leading me to experiment with fiber as a medium for performance and ritual. Since then, I've been using fiber to explore ideas of healing, empowerment, and transformation—inviting the body to interact with texture, material, and myth.

Yicong Li | Connection | 2022

Many of your pieces resemble masks or second skins. What role does identity play in the way these forms are designed or worn?

Identity plays a significant role in my work. Many of my pieces function as masks or second skins precisely because I'm interested in how we present, protect, and transform ourselves. These wearable forms allow the body to shift, conceal, or expand beyond its everyday identity. When someone wears one of my pieces, they often move differently, inhabit space in new ways, or even take on another persona. This is inspired by traditions like Nuo Opera, where masks are not just decorations but vessels for transformation, allowing performers to become gods, spirits, or ancestors. In my work, I carry forward that sense of possibility. The pieces aren't just garments; they're invitations to explore aspects of the self that are hidden, vulnerable, or in transition. I think of them as soft armor, designed to protect while also revealing something more intimate and internal. Through texture, color, and scale, I try to create forms that feel alive, shifting identity not only for the wearer but also for the viewer.

You've mentioned being inspired by Nuo Opera and its mythological elements. How do you reinterpret those traditions in a contemporary context?

Yicong Li | Vegetate | 2024

In my work, I reinterpret those traditions by focusing on the emotional and psychological dimensions of transformation in a contemporary context. Rather than directly replicating traditional masks or rituals, I abstract their essence through fiber techniques: soft textures, layered surfaces, and sculptural forms that wrap around the body. I use materials like wool and mohair to evoke both comfort and protection, and I work intuitively, letting the materials guide the transformation. In the contemporary setting, I invite performers and artists from many different backgrounds to experience and activate my soft sculptures. In this collaborative space, the power of transformation is not bound by the specific cultural background I am exploring but is created through the interaction between my work and the individual wearing or moving within it—their personality, culture, and identity. This exchange opens up new possibilities and meanings, allowing the pieces to evolve and resonate in diverse ways.

Your piece "Vegetate" won First Prize at the Warwick Center for the Arts. Can you talk about the concept behind it and how it evolved during the making process?

I have always been deeply interested in nature, and many of my works are inspired by natural themes. Vegetate specifically channels the power of plants: ancient beings that have witnessed the Earth's growth since the beginning, yet remain so still that they are often overlooked. The title itself plays on the dual meaning of the word "vegetate": on one hand, to grow and thrive quietly and steadily, and on the other, to be inactive or overlooked. This duality reflects the tension between stillness and vitality that I aimed to explore. During the making process, I was drawn to fiber's ability to mimic organic textures and rhythms. Using knitting and crocheting techniques, I created layered, soft forms that suggest both roots and leaves, grounding and reaching simultaneously. I aimed to convey the energy of plants being still yet growing, actively living through the piece. As the work evolved, it shifted from literal representation to evoking a sense of gentle persistence and healing energy. Vegetate embodies the idea that growth often happens beneath the surface and that embracing stillness can be a powerful act of self-care and renewal.

As someone who teaches children, how do your experiences in the classroom inform your artistic practice?

Working with young students, especially those facing social and emotional challenges, has heightened my awareness of human resilience, vulnerability, and the many ways people express themselves beyond words. Observing their growth and struggles has made me more empathetic and attuned to the complexities of human emotion. I incorporate art and art therapy into my curriculum, making the learning process both fun and meaningful for my students. I encourage creativity and inclusivity by emphasizing that there are no wrong answers in the art-making process. This approach fosters confidence and open expression, values that also shape my own artistic work. Often, I reflect on my day with students while creating, allowing those experiences to influence the textures, forms, and emotions embedded in my pieces. Teaching and art are deeply intertwined parts of my journey toward understanding and supporting the human experience.

There's a strong psychological and healing dimension in your work. Have you ever witnessed a viewer or wearer have a particularly emotional or personal response?

When I first started crocheting masks, I brought one with me to a picnic in the woods with friends. One of my friends decided to try it on, and without any prompting, she began moving and dancing freely. It was a beautiful, almost magical moment. She seemed to dissolve into the environment, as if she, the mask, and the woods had become one entity. Watching her express herself so openly through movement and body language made me realize how powerful these wearable sculptures can be. Afterward, she shared that the mask gave her a sense of safety and space to explore her emotions and express herself in ways she normally would not, almost as if she were having a conversation with her subconscious.
That experience was truly transformative for me. It revealed the deep emotional and psychological energy that my work can hold and sparked my ongoing interest in exploring the connections between human psychology, subconsciousness, and art. Since then, I have been more intentional about creating pieces that invite healing, self-reflection, and empowerment, recognizing that art can be not just seen but felt and experienced on a profound, personal level.

Yicong Li | Bound | 2023

Maria Pitch

Born in 1996 in the city of Cheboksary, by the mighty Volga River. Graduated from Stroganov Academy of Art and Design. I live in Moscow. I am a contemporary landscape artist. In my work, nature takes on a symbolic quality, conveying human emotions and stories. I combine the technique of classical landscape and layered painting with contemporary approaches, collaging multiple states of nature into a single piece. I work both en plein air and in the studio.

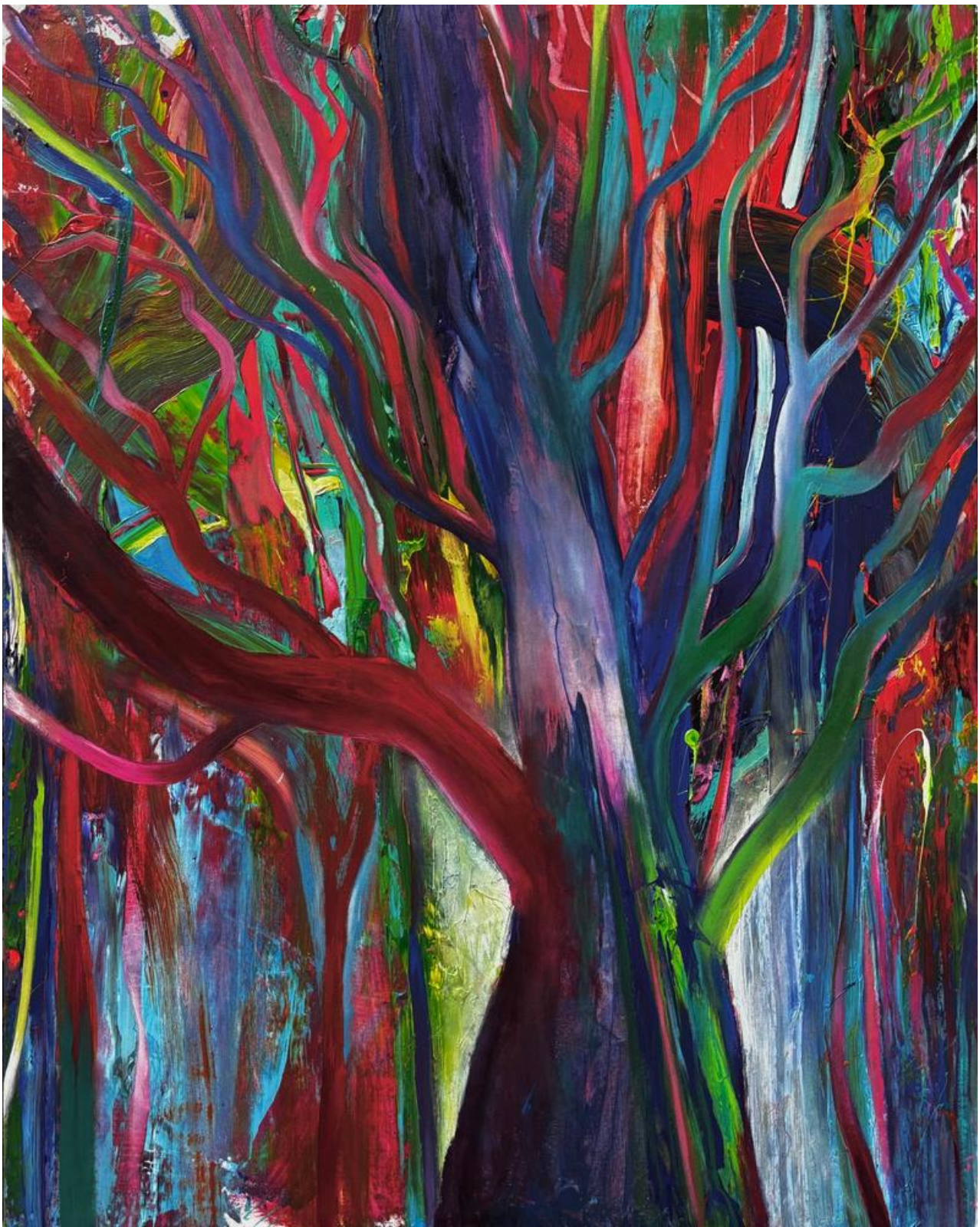
I also taught painting to children with special needs (Down syndrome, autism, cerebral palsy). I founded the SolArt System project, organized exhibitions for these exceptional children, launched a website, and sold their paintings—because they are truly extraordinary. I studied landscape painting under Stanislav Brusilov.

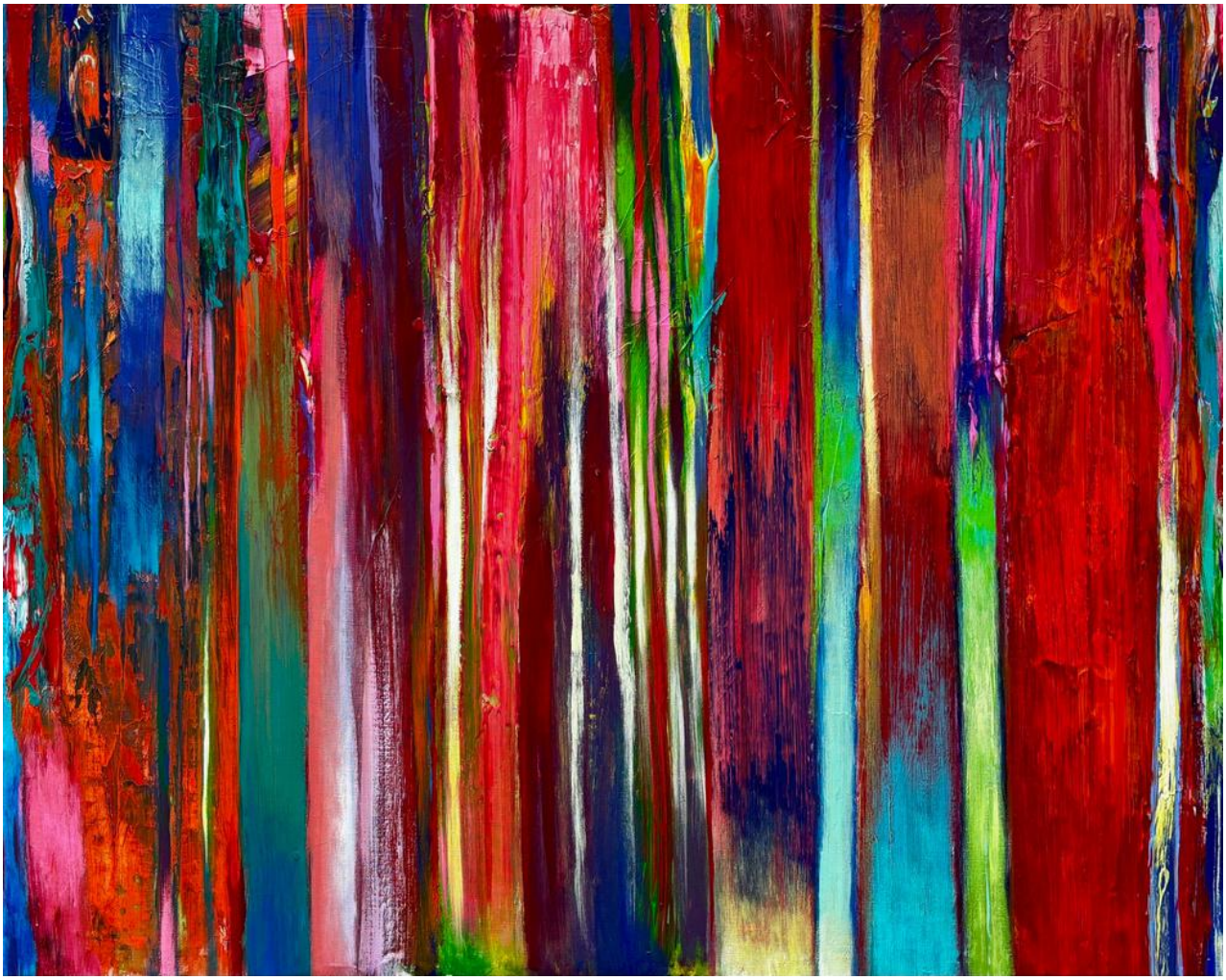
Maria Pitch | Reflection | 2024


Maria Pitch

Tony Henson

Professional artist in Tennessee. Abstract paintings based on nature and music. I have been represented by galleries in DC, Atlanta, Charlotte, and Nashville. I have shown in New York City numerous times and have collectors all over the US.





— *Interview*

Keran Woods

You've worked as a creative director in major advertising agencies. How has this experience influenced your personal photography and visual art practice?

Advertising celebrates the creative process and the importance of a visual language to capture a mood and feeling. My personal work allows me to explore, go further and to create. I enjoy pushing the boundaries like a release, a sense of freedom.

Your personal projects often carry a surreal or unexpected twist. What draws you to this kind of imagery?

I am drawn to life's everyday images, what we see and what we imagine and how the our mind see's the world.

How do you balance commercial work with personal artistic expression?

Commercial and personal have a similar process exploring ideas...one works with a brief, the other working from the heart.

Keran Woods | Manhattan Rescue

What role does illustration play in your overall creative process?

Illustration is the foundation of my work... drawing with light and shade knowing what to add what to leave out. None of my work is Ai-Generated.

You split your time between Melbourne and Manhattan — how do these two cities shape your artistic vision?

Melbourne is my familiar space everyday life on tap and changing my backdrop to Manhattan a city full of surprise and inspiration every second, I love the architecture the cars and the melding pot of people.

In the "Manhattan Rescue" image, the blending of urban environment with surreal elements is striking. Can you tell us the story or concept behind it?

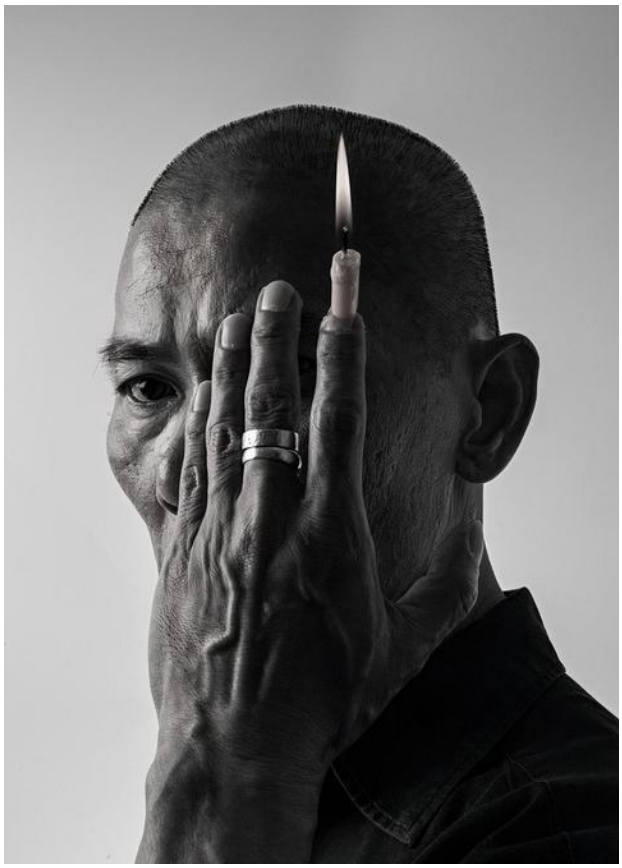
NoHo streetscape collides with the surf capturing the energy of the water as it fills the street... adding a sense of urgency with the running swimmer punctuating the energy of life in Manhattan.

In "Williamsburg Runway," repetition and identity seem to play a role. Was this a staged concept or spontaneous moment?

Spontaneous moment on the Williamsburg bridge, crossing paths with a blonde beauty on her daily commute transforming the bridge into a runway moment.

Keran Woods | Williamsberg Runway

Jason Lim



Jason Lim | Auto X2 Toned

Your work often engages with the five elements. How do you approach translating these intangible forces into material or performative form?

The elements—earth, water, fire, air, and space—have always been quiet guides in my practice, but I also see them as participants in a kind of ongoing alchemy. I don't try to represent them directly; instead, I create situations where they can be felt—where their presence shapes the process, the gesture, the form. When I work with clay, I'm working with earth—its density, its memory, its grounding force. Water softens it, invites change, teaches flow. Fire transforms it, sealing memory into permanence. Air and space offer breath, movement, and silence—they shape the atmosphere of performance, the invisible architecture around the body.

Taken together, these elements become a cycle of transformation—not just for the materials, but for myself as well. They move through stages of dissolution, purification, refinement. There's something deeply alchemical in that rhythm: matter changes, and the self changes with it. My role is to listen, to respond, and to allow the work to be a meeting point between the visible and the unseen. In the end, I think of each piece as a residue of that elemental conversation.

The piece we've seen here features a bell-like sculpture enveloping the performer's head. What does this gesture symbolize for you?

That gesture came from an urge to create a kind of inward listening. The bell is often used to call attention—to mark time or summon presence. But when it covers the head, it changes everything. It muffles the world, turns the body into a resonant chamber, and draws attention inward. It becomes a space of pause, of retreat. For me, it's about creating a moment of quiet concentration—a still point in a noisy world. There's vulnerability in that too, in allowing myself to be both hidden and exposed.

At the same time, the image is created as a performance for the camera. I'm interested in how the image resists easy reading. It's poetic, open-ended, ambiguous and almost dreamlike. It invites the viewer to project their own meanings onto it. So while the gesture is very much rooted in presence and embodiment, it also exists as an image—a kind of visual koan that asks, what does it mean to listen differently? What kind of silence is this? I don't offer answers—I prefer to leave space for interpretation.

How do sound and silence function in your work — particularly in this bell installation?

Sound and silence are like two sides of the same coin in my work. I think of silence not as the absence of sound, but as something active—alive and charged with presence. In the bell installation, Tintinnabulation Series JDZ, sound becomes internalized. It's less about what the audience hears, and more about what the performer feels: the amplified breath inside the bell, the vibration of a small movement, the imagined resonance when the bells are suspended and soundless. Silent space you can step into. It holds tension, memory and anticipation. I'm interested in how sound and silence can shape mood and perception. They slow things down. They ask us to notice more deeply.

Tintinnabulation Series JDZ was created during my residency in Jingdezhen in 2025. During this residency, I have also created a video work and the soundtrack is composed using the sounds of the bells themselves—their tones, resonances, and silences layered into a kind of auditory landscape. The images focus on the

Jason Lim | Tintinnabualtion Series

environment and people of Jingdezhen: the hands of craftsmen, old kilns, fragments of ceramics, both ancient and newly made. The footage moves between the intimate and the expansive—moments of stillness, gestures of making, and the quiet presence of place. The bells, both in sound and form, act as a bridge—connecting time, material, and memory. In this work, sound is not just something heard—it becomes a way of sensing, of remembering, and of honouring tradition.

Repetition and ritual seem central to your process. What does repetition mean to you as a creative act?

Repetition has always been a kind of grounding for me. It allows me to move past the surface of things. There's something in the doing—again and again—that reveals layers you wouldn't see otherwise. I see it as a kind of meditation, or maybe even a quiet form of resistance to the fast pace of contemporary life. Ritual enters when the repetition carries intention. Whether I'm shaping a vessel or repeating a movement in performance, it's about finding presence in that loop, letting it evolve, letting it wear away at the unnecessary. It's never the same—it's alive, always shifting.

You often work with clay, yet your practice extends beyond ceramics into performance and film. What draws you back to clay again and again?

Clay is where I started, and it still feels like home. There's a directness to it—a kind of honesty. It responds immediately to touch. It remembers pressure, warmth, even uncertainty. No matter how far I move into other media, clay keeps calling me back. It teaches patience. It collapses time. Working with it always reminds me of something fundamental about being human—about making, about fragility, about change. And because it's such a grounded material, it anchors even the more ephemeral parts of my practice, like performance or video. Clay holds the quiet voice in all of it.

Could you describe how slowness and meditative action shape the development of your pieces?

Slowness is essential to how I work. It creates space—for the work to unfold, and for me to meet it as it changes. When I slow down, I begin to notice more: the shift of light across a surface, the small choices made without deliberate thought, the quiet conversation between hand and material. Meditative action keeps me present in those moments. Whether I'm shaping clay or moving through a performance, it's not about producing something quickly—it's about being fully inside the act of making.

Slowness brings with it a kind of intimacy. It allows meaning to gather over time, not through grand gestures but through repetition, stillness, and quiet attention. And perhaps most importantly, taking time also allows for reflection while the work is still in progress. It gives me the chance to listen—not just to the materials, but to myself. In that reflective space, new paths often appear. I come back to slowness again and again, not as a method, but as a way of being with the work—a way of allowing it to become what it needs to be.

You have worked across cultures and continents. How do local traditions or landscapes influence your practice?

Each place I've worked in has left its imprint. Sometimes it's in the way a community approaches making—how skills are passed down, how care is given to the process. Other times it's in how rituals are seamlessly woven into daily life, or how silence is held and respected. I don't deliberately set out to incorporate these things, but they inevitably find their way into the work. It's less about taking, and more about being shaped—by the rhythms, the textures, the spirit of a place.

Landscapes speak in subtle ways. The humidity, the dryness, the changing light, the tempo of the seasons—all of these affect how I move, how I feel, how I create. I pay close attention to sound too. Listening has become a big part of how I attune myself to new environments: the murmur of languages I may not understand, the noise of traffic, the rustling of leaves, bird calls at dusk, the way water moves through a space. These sounds carry stories, and they inform the pace and tone of the work, often in ways I only realize much later. In that sense, the work becomes a kind of dialogue—with place, with history, and with all that unfolds quietly in between.

Natali Antonovich
Painter and Photographer

Project Statement
My works are designed for curious people, people with a cosmic attitude and fanciers looking for a key to reading the superreal. And also for those for whom the uniqueness of human being, his soul and connexion with the Earth and Heaven is important...

Natalia Antonova
2005

— *Interview*

Iride Scent

Your work seems to inhabit a space between memory and imagination. How do you approach this balance in your creative process?

My work is rooted in the fusion of ancient and contemporary techniques. The creative process begins by generating images that echo the photographic style of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, created using artificial intelligence — a modern and often controversial tool. From these images, I produce photographic negatives, which I then print using cyanotype, one of the oldest photographic printing methods, dating back to 1842.
This combination of AI and analog photography is essential to the final piece. Two mediums that, in different eras, have often been seen as threats to traditional art instead become powerful tools in my hands. In a time when it feels like everything has already been created, I believe these technologies offer the momentum we need to explore new forms of expression and open alternative paths for visual storytelling.

The use of cyanotype gives tangible, physical presence to what were originally digital images. Thanks to the age of the technique and its characteristic toning, the prints often appear to come from a distant past — like photographs found in an old suitcase tucked away in an abandoned attic.
I've always felt a deep nostalgia for eras I never lived through — a strange sense of belonging to an imagined past that doesn't truly belong to me, yet feels profoundly familiar. Through these processes, I give shape and substance to that emotion: it's a way of exorcising it, of making it visible and shareable. Art becomes the space where that longing is transformed into creation, into storytelling, into suspended time.
In my work, I seek to recreate a nostalgic, surreal, dreamlike, and impossible past — a time that never existed, yet somehow feels real. In the series "My Pets", for example, I imagine young girls dressed in Victorian attire who keep absurd and unexpected creatures as pets: dinosaurs, octopuses, bats, cockroaches... Improbable pairings that, through the lens of a vintage aesthetic, take on a sense of truth and invite the viewer to suspend disbelief and step into a world hovering between reality and imagination.

You describe your prints as "light, time, and chemistry speaking in forgotten tongues." Can you elaborate on what this means to you?

When I describe my prints as "light, time, and chemistry speaking in forgotten tongues," I mean that these images are not just visual — they are the physical result of a process that involves essential, ancient elements. Light is what impresses the image onto the surface; time is not only the duration of exposure, but also the memory, the history, the slowness of the gesture; and chemistry is the living substance of the print — it reacts, transforms, and makes each image unique.
The forgotten tongues are the photographic techniques of the past, like cyanotype, which today feel almost arcane, alchemical. They speak a different language from the digital one — a language made of waiting, imperfections, and direct contact with material. It's as if, through these images, we

could hear a distant echo — a voice from a time never lived, but imagined, and that we can now only sense.

As a Multimedia Lab teacher, how does your teaching practice influence your artistic work — and vice versa?

Teaching and artistic practice constantly feed into one another. Working with students pushes me to continuously question languages, techniques, and visual approaches — to explain, simplify, and deconstruct. This process helps me see my own work with fresh eyes and often leads to questions that fuel my personal research as well.
At the same time, bringing my approach into the classroom — one rooted in experimentation, in blending old and new, and in focusing on process rather than just outcomes — allows me to share a vision of art as something alive, open, and evolving. I deeply value mistakes, intuition, and freedom, and I try to nurture those same elements in both my work and my teaching.

What draws you to alternative photographic techniques, and how do they shape the stories you want to tell?

I've always been fascinated by analog printing. The darkroom, to me, feels like a small chamber of alchemy — a space where time slows down, and every gesture becomes part of a quiet ritual. When I immerse the paper into the baths, whether chemical or just water, the image slowly begins to appear, as if surfacing from a dream or a forgotten memory. It's a sacred, suspended moment that moves me every time. What captivates me most is the physicality of the process: watching an image come to life, quite literally, in my hands. Each print is unique, unrepeatable, even if made from the same negative. It changes with the conditions, the timing, the subtle imperfections of the hand. It's a slow, silent work that demands presence and attentiveness. In a time dominated by speed and digital perfection, I find something deeply poetic in this slowness — in the fragility of matter transforming into image. It feels as though each photograph carries a secret story within it, one that reveals itself only to those willing to pause and truly see.

How does wandering through Italy inform your artistic vision? Do specific landscapes or cities often inspire your work?

It's not landscapes that inspire me as much as what lingers in places when time settles and becomes memory. My greatest source of inspiration has always been my family home in Lucca, Tuscany — a living archive made of silence, echoes, and gentle dust.
As a child, together with my mother, I would rummage through old boxes hidden in furniture and closets: precious containers filled with yellowed photographs, handwritten love letters, forgotten sheet music, wax-sealed vinyl records, vintage clothes, framed portraits of ancestors I had never met.
Each object was a threshold. Each photograph, a world. There were stories woven like delicate threads: voyages to America, letters exchanged between distant loves, the war, bombings, the German occupation of the house. But also betrayals, illegitimate children, secret passions. My grandfather would tell me everything, in a voice that seemed to come from another era, as if telling these stories was a way to hold ghosts and give them back a face.
Those stories enchanted me from the very beginning. They were not just family tales; they were domestic myths, romantic echoes imprinted on fragile objects. I believe my work is born from that — from the desire to give shape to a past I never lived but deeply feel. The images I create are attempts to capture that suspension, that gentle vertigo felt when confronted with a memory that does not belong to us, yet speaks to us with a mysterious force.

What role does tactility play in your process? Do you see your works as objects as much as images?

Yes, I consider my works as objects, not just images to be passively observed, but tangible pieces with a physical presence and a story told through their very material. I like to think of them as "historical fakes": impossible, surreal worlds and eras where reality blends with imagination. In these imagined universes, the women I portray are often dreamy, sleepy, lost in their thoughts — figures suspended on the fragile border between dream and wakefulness.
Alongside them, unexpected and almost fantastical animals — bats, dinosaurs, creatures that defy time and logic — help create an unusual atmosphere, evoking the mysterious and unsettling charm of surrealism.
Tactility is an essential part of my process because I want viewers to feel a connection with the material and the passage of time, so that the work is not only something to look at, but also something that tells a different, more immediate and tangible story.

Is there a particular piece that feels especially personal or significant to you? Could you tell us about it?

There isn't a single piece that I feel is more personal or significant than the others, because my work is mostly about the relationship between the images within a series. It's the series as a whole that I find important, since each piece connects with the others, creating a larger, coherent story. The world I try to build is both new and old—a place suspended in time where past and imagination meet. It's a world that feels magical, almost like a fairy tale, and sometimes even childlike—as if I'm trying to recapture that sense of wonder and the ability to see the world with wide, amazed eyes.
This feeling fascinates me deeply and lies at the heart of my creative journey: it's not just about telling individual stories, but about creating a narrative space that invites the viewer to get lost and find themselves within this imagined world.

Alma Hoffmann is a bilingual designer, design educator, writer, letterer, artist, and photographer. She has a BA in Art Education from the University of Puerto Rico and a MFA in Graphic Design from Iowa State University. Currently Alma teaches typography, business practices, and various design classes at the University of South Alabama. Alma has won several awards and mentions for her client based design and artistic work. She also has written articles about the design and creative process, design thinking, and typography. Her book, Sketching as Design Thinking is scheduled for publication this Fall. She is also the editor for the Design section at Smashing Magazine, an online international magazine for designers and web developers based in Freiburg, Germany. On her free time, she enjoys a cup of coffee with her son, hanging out with her daughter, watching good shows with her husband, petting Sunny, long walks, dancing, and ice cream.

Project Statement
My work is largely driven by an intense curiosity to learn and identifying the connections between seemingly unrelated areas of knowledge. The need for learning has lead me and continues to lead me in pursuit of different areas of knowledge beyond the commer- cial route. Being an artist who is bilingual, a minority, and a mother, I use my work to express ideas, concerns, thoughts about the world that my children will inherit. My works are usually bilingual and using the written word in the form of lettering, calligraphy, watercolor, markers, and acrylics, in order that the text becomes texture and a map to my mind and soul. My hope is that my children see and learn that though as a minority they will experience challenges, the uniqueness of their contributions will make their world a richer place. The designer in me craves to communicate these thoughts because art changes minds.


Light

Manu Viorica Madalina

You began painting at a young age in Galați. How did your early experiences at the Robescu House shape your artistic identity?

In the quiet, high-ceilinged rooms of the Robescu House — home to the Galați Pupils' Club — I first dipped my brush into oil paints and discovered something that would stay with me for life: the power to create worlds on canvas. Those first paintings in oil were modest beginnings, but they marked the start of a journey that still continues, an exploration that feels as endless and necessary as breathing.
Much like other artists before me — even Constantin Brâncuși, who also began his path far from the great centers of European art — my early steps were rooted in simplicity, practice, and curiosity. I had no grand vision then, only an instinctive need to transform what I saw and felt into shapes and colors. It is a wonderful journey. Painting in oil felt almost magical: the smell of turpentine and linseed oil, the slow, deliberate blending of colors, the texture of the brush against the coarse canvas. It was a tactile, sensory discovery that pulled me into another world — a world shaped not by ideology or daily routine, but by imagination, history, and personal truth.
Inside the Robescu House — itself a testament to resilience and history, standing quietly for over a century — I began to shape not just images, but my artistic identity. My first subjects were often humble: still lifes, portraits, glimpses of everyday life, icons inspired by tradition. Each canvas taught me patience and control, and also how to let intuition guide the brush when words could not.

What does the act of painting mean to you today, compared to your early iconography work in Romania?

In my early years in Galați, Romania, I was introduced to the world of painting through the quiet, disciplined beauty of iconography. I learned to paint Orthodox icons with reverence and precision, understanding their sacred symbolism and the spiritual responsibility behind every brushstroke. Back then, painting felt like a ritual—something external, guided by tradition, form, and faith. It was a humbling experience that taught me discipline, patience, and the profound weight that images can carry.
Painting is now a more personal act—one of freedom, emotion, and inner exploration that adds beauty to my life. I see each painting as a living extension of my voice, a way to express the feelings words cannot capture—hope, love, wonder, longing. Like any form of communication, painting is a language, but it's one where the message is felt before it's understood.
And still, the foundation remains the same: paintings endure. They are not just fleeting moments of creativity—they become lasting pieces of ourselves, preserved on canvas. They carry our stories, our feelings, our beliefs. They are our legacy.

Painting today, for me, is a celebration of life's complexity and beauty. It is where tradition meets innovation, and where personal memory meets universal emotion. Whether I'm creating a vibrant mixed-media piece or a minimalist expression on recycled materials, the goal is the same: to connect, to communicate, and to leave something meaningful behind. That is how my motto evolved: Find the Art of Life!

Your painting style is deeply expressive and textured. What techniques or tools do you use to achieve this effect?

Now, with my brand, MVM3D, I am exploring new ways of expression, incorporating unconventional tools and media — from torn paper and metallic foil to natural fibers like rope or dried flowers, all carefully arranged to add depth and poetic tension to the surface.
Each work invites the viewer into a multisensory experience, where color, relief, and symbolism converge. The support itself — whether recycled cardboard, wood, or textured canvas — becomes part of the message, challenging traditional boundaries between painting, collage, and sculpture, crafting pieces that are both contemporary artifacts and emotional landscapes.

How do history and spirituality influence your art today?

The belief "Nihil sine Deo" — Nothing without God — has shaped not only the course of Romanian history but also the path of my personal life and artistic journey. This simple yet powerful truth speaks to something deep within me: the understanding that every gift, every inspiration, every act of creation comes from a place beyond myself.
Growing up in Romania, a country whose spiritual and cultural identity has long been intertwined with the Orthodox faith, I was immersed early on in a world where art and belief were inseparable. My first steps as an artist were in iconography, painting sacred images with reverence, care, and devotion. I learned that every color, every symbol, every gesture of the brush was more than technique—it was a prayer. That experience left a mark on me, one that still lives in my work today. My faith in God continues to influence my art in profound ways: giving me purpose, clarity, and a quiet confidence that I am part of something greater.

What role do nature and flowers still play in your creative process?

Now, with my brand, MVM3D, I am exploring new ways of expression, incorporating unconventional tools and media — from torn paper and metallic foil to natural fibers like rope or dried flowers, all carefully arranged to add depth and poetic tension to the surface.
Beauty, for me, is not about luxury or perfection. It's about authenticity, emotion, and intentionality. Each object in my home tells a story, holds a memory, or reflects a part of who I am. My art is born from this same instinct: to capture emotion, celebrate nature, and offer a quiet reminder that life itself is a work of art worth honoring.

How has founding "Artistry Gifts and Originals" transformed your relationship with art?

In 2022, I have started my art business, out of a deep desire to share my passion for unique, original and truly "wow!" art and fashion items with as many people as possible. This initiative started from the belief that art has more to convey to the world — and I, in turn, have something to say. I believe in the power of visual expression to move, connect people, and transform perspectives.
In an increasingly fast-paced and standardized world, I want each piece created under the MVM3D brand to bring joy, authenticity, and an invitation to see beauty in everyday life. Surrounding myself with beauty—whether in the form of a hand-painted canvas, a sculptural object, or a carefully chosen piece of furniture—nurtures my creativity and brings meaning to my everyday life.
Through Artistry Gifts and Originals and POSETE-TABLOU SRL, I extend that vision outward—offering others the chance to fill their spaces, too, with beauty that resonates, that inspires, that lasts. Because when we surround ourselves with beautiful things, we build a life that feels whole, grounded, and full of joy. That is why, I would describe my art in 3 words: ART OF LIFE.

What does "Find the Art of Life" mean to you personally?

Find the Art of Life reflects this personal evolution. It's a call to pause, to feel, and to discover beauty in everyday moments — in nature, in connection, in the stories we tell and the emotions we share. It's about more than creating paintings; it's about inspiring others to see life through a more meaningful, colorful, and hopeful lens.

Frederic Balsacq

I work around the female face, the gaze, that flickering, untouchable thing we call emotion. What gets me is how much a face says without ever opening its mouth. While I'm chasing that human presence, I also drift toward something else: raw, abstract, geometric shapes. It's a kind of visual meditation—no map, no destination. Just a need. A counter-rhythm to the intimacy of my figurative work. I call myself a collagist—though I stretch the term way beyond its usual edges. I collage images, textures, thoughts, scraps of memory… even contradictions. I paint with acrylics, scrape with transfers, rip up old paper, glue down cardboard and wood. I work with leftovers, with what's been discarded. These surfaces have already lived. That matters to me. I'm not out to preach—but apparently, some messages sneak into the work anyway. Fair enough. They tend to show up uninvited, like surprise guests at a party. My titles too often carry double or triple meanings—just to make sure nothing stays too comfortable. By training, I'm a photographer. But I've always had one foot in graphic art, both hands deep in glue, and my head somewhere in the early '80s. Punk, new wave, broken photocopiers… that's what raised me. My first pieces? 1980 to '83. I was barely out of school, scissors sharp, ideas chaotic, and everything felt urgent. My influences? Dada, surrealism, Bauhaus, mid-century design… I nod to them, borrow textures maybe—but I don't mimic. I'm more of a warped mirror: I absorb what moves me, twist it through my own filter, and spit it back out in images. I'd like to throw this whole visual concoction into a bigger arena. What I do is raw, honest, sometimes a little offbeat—but always made with heart. And if one of my pieces punches you in the gut, or makes you grin, or just leaves you wondering… then I figure I've done my job.

Frederic Balsacq | All Human | 2021

Frederic Balsacq | About Party | 2023

Sarah K. Clanton

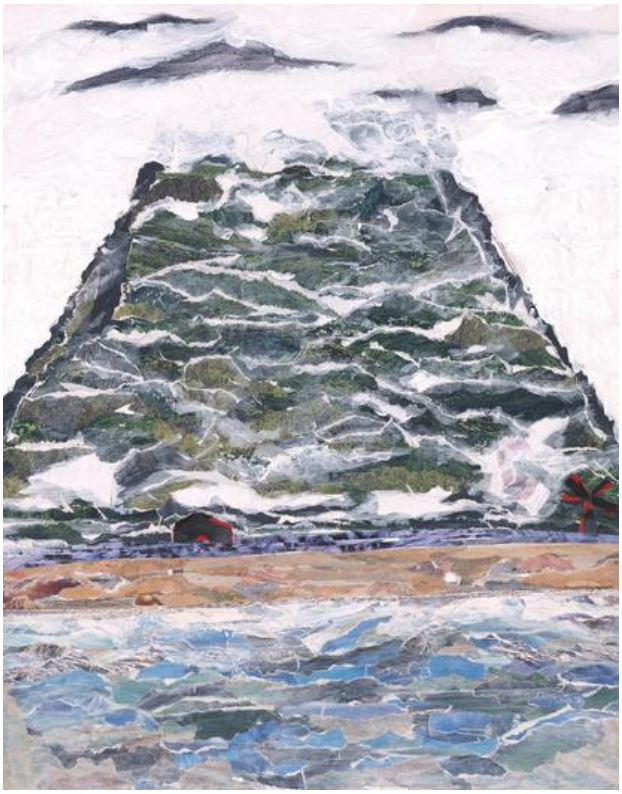
You often work with collage and acrylics—what draws you to these materials in particular?

Throughout my life I've been drawn to photography and I've been drawn to painting. In the late 1900's I would make tiny collages on lighters to deter lighter theft. It didn't work. Up until relatively recently, I would resist combining those mediums. Now, when I start a piece, no material or medium is safe from my wanting to see the thing I want to see. When I started to do collage, I used acrylic paint instead of glue. Not for any reason other than that was what I had handy. Once the image was pressed into the paint I needed to further "glue" it down by painting lightly over or along the edges. The unintended result pleased my eye. Rearranging ripped up creations, materials and found images affords me the chance to break away from planning a piece. Through this process, I find that the deeper meaning has a better chance of coming through without a plan getting in my way. I'm forever practicing getting myself out of the way. I find that when I'm working within that paradigm, my favorite pieces emerge. Also, once I use a found image or material, it's gone. The "one time only" aspect of every piece is important to my process and it makes it so repeating pieces exactly cannot occur. All that being said, I use acrylics because they dry fast.

Sarah K. Clanton | Coit Tower

How does your California heritage influence your artistic vision?

I'm a California Girl. I recognize the incredible and natural jewel that I am lucky to live inside of. I've always marveled at everything the eye can see here. Often, jerks have asked me if "I get out much". Here's the thing though, everywhere one looks there is a varied and stunning visual "show". All of this with the layer of human existence, struggle and joy, sitting precariously on top of it. There are a LOT of humans in California. Rich and poor. There are a LOT of soaring landmarks in California. Standing tall or in disrepair. When I read Umberto Eco's "Travels In Hyperreality" years ago, my eyes were further opened to America and California's "newness" on a global scale. Our ruins here are brand new, relatively. Our standing castles are essentially facades. However, the cliffs, lakes, rivers, ocean, deserts, valleys and mountains were here long before we humans decorated them. When I saw that people come from all over the world to see this place, I understood more why I have always been dazzled by it.



Sarah K. Clanton | Golden Gate Park

Your work blends landscapes with emotional and surreal elements. How do you balance the real and the imagined?

I don't know that I do. One of the things that I struggle with the most with my work is balance. I feel like as an artist, I am mostly voice. My voice usually has a lot to say at the same time. Often, it's too much. I was a professional cook for years and balancing flavors and elements is a necessary and practiced discipline. I'm not positive that I've figured that out with my art yet. Balance seems to be forever beyond my grasp. If it happens at all, it's more than likely an accident. The great thing about it though is I don't really care about that when I'm creating. I just want to see it.

What role does memory play in your creative process?

The role memory plays is huge.
I'm lucky. I remember. I remember smells and emotions. I remember "how the air felt" when I learned something new or saw something for the first time. It helps a lot with getting out of my own way when I want to see those intangible things on a canvas.

You mention "danger" and "romance" among your themes. How do you visually express these contrasting ideas?

In my opinion, romance IS dangerous. It's a place where we lose our ability to be practical. Humans throw themselves off of cliffs despite the probable pain of heartbreak and loss while hypnotized by romance. I think these themes are particularly strongly represented in "Sutro Baths". A couple poses for an engagement photo. Seemingly on the edge of the world. They are posing on a ruin. The churning ocean beyond them under the stormy sky. The relative calm of the reflection full of future hurts and triumphs represented by fabrics charged with hope and the grief of heartbreaks. This, this is romance AND danger.

How do you choose the found materials or textures that go into your collages?

I find old books and magazines at library sales, thrift stores, and my own way too large collection. I like the difficulty of using old paper. It's usually brittle and unpredictable. As far as the rest of the materials, it's usually whatever is within arms reach of my work table. I "choose" them because they help me see what I want to see.

Is there a specific landmark or landscape that you return to frequently in your work?

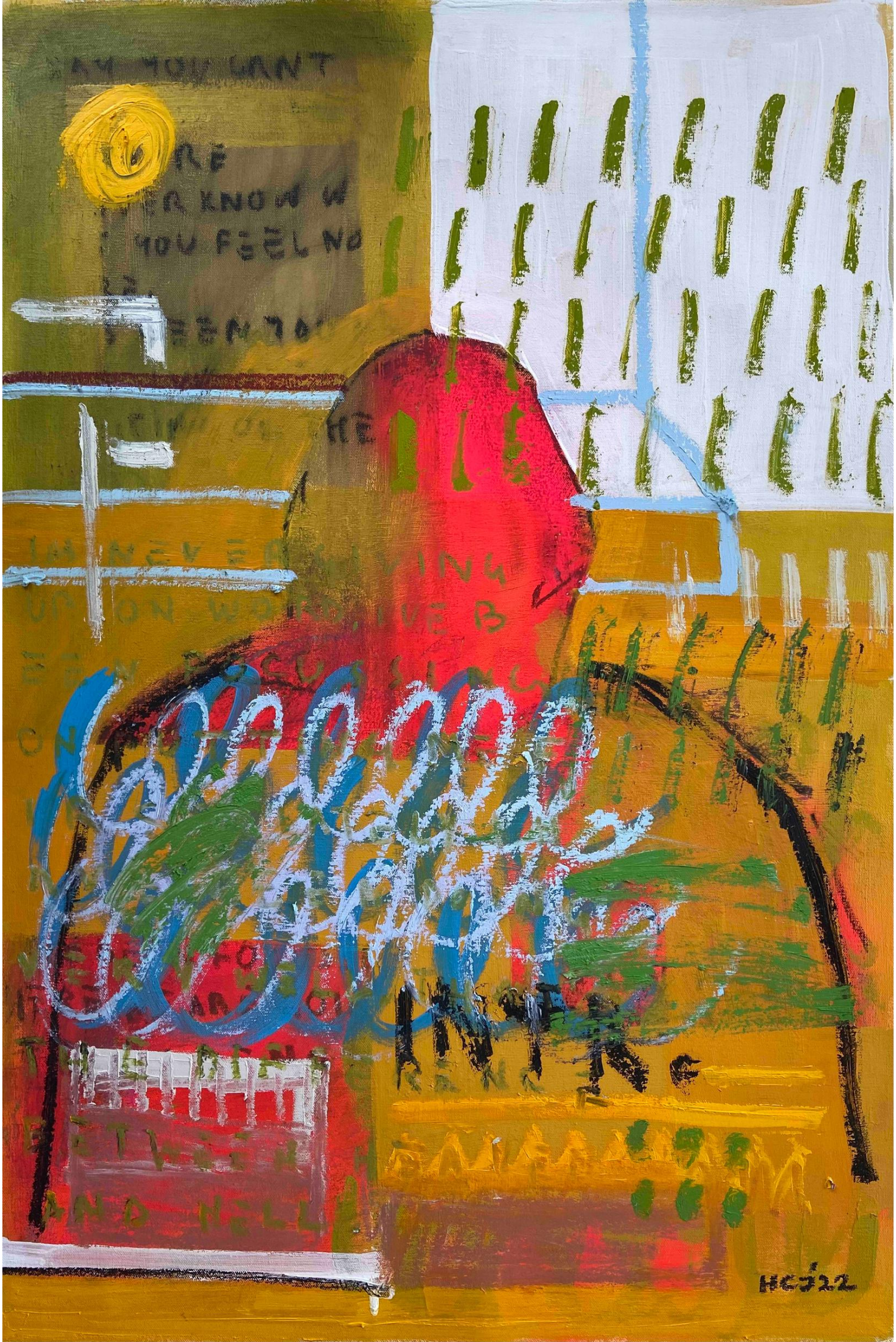
Other than the ocean and outer space, the Golden Gate Bridge pops up a lot. When I lived in San Francisco for many years, I would make sure that I looked at the bridge every day, because it changes every day. I would take an extra bus on my commute to my egg cook job early in the morning so I could stop and check it out. When I was a kid we would ride bikes across it, getting batted about by the wind. Or, I would be a passenger watching its construction elegantly expand and contract as we drove across. I think the reason why it pops up so frequently is because of the complicated nature of collective memory. Some people go to see the bridge and have no memories connected to it. Or, they have seen it in a movie or a photograph. Some people see it and they remember a loved one who jumped or rode over it for the last time right before they crashed into death. Some people have talked their loved ones or even strangers off the edge. Some people have been talked off the ledge. Some people surf under it everyday. Some people sail under it in tall ships coming from the choppy ocean to the calm bay. There are sharks and unpredictable currents under that bridge. Often it is completely obscured by fog. Occasionally it is sharp and vibrant. All of that and more is why I find it incredibly dynamic and beautiful and can't seem to get away from it. When I see or think about the Golden Gate bridge, no matter the weather, it's astronaut suit weather.

Sarah K. Clanton | Sutro Baths

Harsimran C Juneja
Harsimran's practice explores the impact of societal conflicts on the human condition, navigating the complexities of personal, political, social and cultural dichotomies. His work combines texts, objects, figurative forms and abstraction to challenge norms and offer spaces for reflection. Drawing primarily from personal observations, his art invites viewers to engage with conflict and its complexities. In 2022, Harsimran won the third prize for the Notable Artist Awards by Artbuzz Studios. A year earlier, he was named an "Artist to Watch" and interviewed by ArtConnect Magazine. His work has been widely recognized, with features in Homegrown.in (2022), The Hindu (2022), Architectural Digest (2022), and more. Harsimran's solo exhibitions include two virtual showcases: b/w desire and reality with Terrain.art (2022) and Memoirswith Gallery Mui (2022). His first physical solo show, Moo Point, was held at Pulp Society, India, in 2022. He has participated in notable virtual group shows such as only drawing will remain (Terrain.art, 2023), Remedy (Cream Athens, Greece, 2022), Emergent Realities (CA Chronicle, USA, 2022), and Group Show (Shrine, New York, 2021). His physical group exhibitions include Juxtapose (Terrain.art x Kafé Cerrado, Delhi, 2023), Mobocracy vs Democracy(Latitude 28 x The Upside Space, India, 2023), and Back of an Envelope (Edgeland Modern, UK, 2022). Harsimran's international debut was in the group show No Dead Artists at Jonathan Ferrara Gallery, USA (2021). Recent highlights include his participation in the Chennai Biennale (InKo Centre, 2024), the Busan Art Fair (2023), and A Perceptual Ode at Jeju Island, South Korea (2023). Born in 1995, Harsimran lives and works between Ahmedabad and Mumbai.

Project Statement
Life is layered with complexities that often manifest in dichotomies—good or bad, right or wrong, this or that. My practice delves into these opposing forces, exploring conflicts that arise in personal, political, social and cultural contexts. Through uncovering and depicting these tensions, I aim to spotlight the interplay between the self and society, inviting moments of self-reflection, opportunities to reframe perceptions and a reconsideration of fundamental questions. At the heart of my work lies an inquiry into the consequences of binary systems that demand definitive answers or alignments. My art does not seek to reinforce singular viewpoints; rather, it serves as a space to hold contradictions, to provoke thought and to observe without judgment. Whether in the form of paintings, drawings, texts, combines or new media, my pieces evolve into statements—not propaganda—representing my reflections on the conflicts I observe. Rooted in a contemporary visual language influenced by multiple periods in art history, my work oscillates between figurative and abstract, narrative and abstract. Text plays an integral role in my paintings, often tagging them in a manner reminiscent of street graffiti, re-contextualizing subjects and ideas. Memory threads through my works in all its associations with objects, spaces and people, echoing the experiences and interactions I've had across geographies in diverse contexts. And the amorphic figurative forms in my works challenge the notion of acceptance – norms, beliefs, traditions. A pivotal aspect of resolving conflict is the practice of "looping," a conversational method that fosters active listening and a deeper understanding of differing perspectives. In many ways, I wonder if my works can be analogous to looping, existing as a point of connection, bridging the gap between dichotomies and encouraging a broader exploration of the complexities that define our shared human experience.

Harsimran Juneja | Got This Feeling | 2022



Harsimran Juneja | Heaven and Hell | 2022

Interview

Monica Ocegueda

How has growing up in California's Central Valley shaped your identity and your artistic voice?

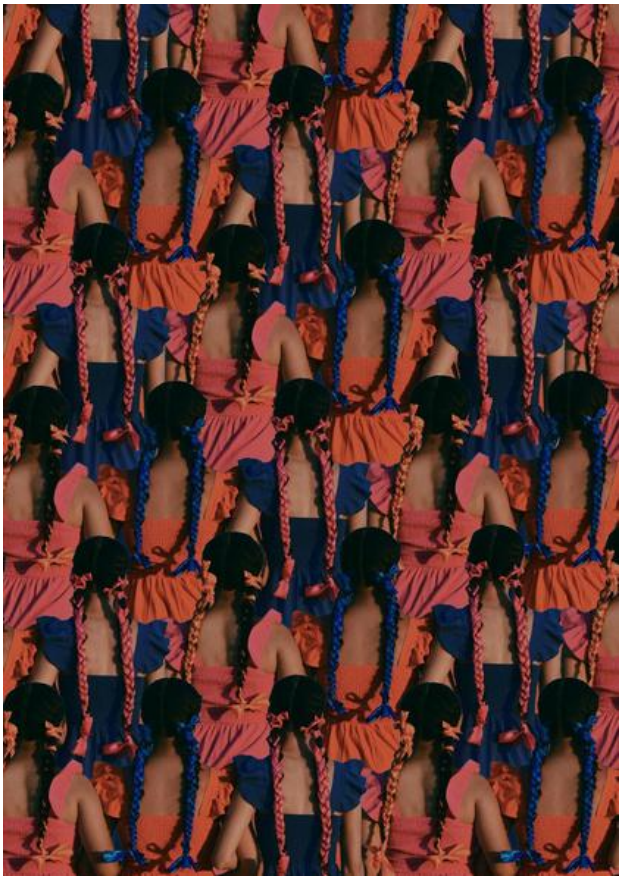
Growing up in the Central Valley definitely has had a huge impact on who I am today, both as a person and an artist. Coming from a small town, I was aware from a young age that I had a different set of experiences and customs compared to other people. The town was small, rural, and deeply tied to agriculture, and while there wasn't a lot of access to traditional art spaces or creative outlets, that environment still shaped my perspective in a way that I now value. There's a lot of pride that comes from being from a place like that, a place where community, family, and hard work are everything.

Now, living in a city like San Francisco, I've gained a new perspective, but at the same time, I've grown even more proud of where I come from. My identity as a Mexican American, especially being a daughter of immigrant parents, has become a significant force in my work. It's that duality I live with: being born here, but carrying my family's history and struggles, their sacrifices, their dreams. The sense of belonging and shared experiences in the Central Valley is something not often reflected in mainstream or fine art, especially when it comes to Mexican Americans. Our stories tend to be overlooked, misrepresented, or reduced to stereotypes. I want to tell those stories—our stories, from our own perspective.

Monica Ocegueda | Trenzas | 2024

Art has become a way for me to carve out a space for my community:those who identify with the immigrant experience, who know what it's like to navigate between two cultures, two languages, and two worlds. Growing up, we didn't see our Mexican culture celebrated in schools, and our language (Spanish) wasn't encouraged; in fact, it felt like we were being erased. For a long time, there was this unspoken shame attached to being Mexican. But through my work, I want to challenge that, to reclaim our narratives, especially for the next generation. It's important to me that young Chicanos and Chicanas feel proud of who they are, that they don't forget our roots, our culture, our history—even if the world around them tries to forget or dismiss it.

Being from the Central Valley keeps me grounded, though. When I feel disconnected or overwhelmed by the institutional spaces I occupy now, going back home to my family, reconnecting with the land, and remembering the hardworking people who labor in the fields reminds me of why I do this work. It's for them, for the community I came from, and for the generations to come. That's always been my motivation—creating something that speaks to and for my community.



Monica Ocegueda | Taking Up Space | 2024

In what ways does your Mexican heritage influence the stories you choose to tell through your work?

My Mexican heritage influences the stories I tell in my work in such a deep and personal way. A lot of it comes from generational trauma, especially from the women in my family. I come from a long line of strong women who have survived emotional and physical abuse, who've lived through machismo, and who weren't given the space or freedom to speak up. That history lives in me, and it shows up in my work. I've also experienced emotional abuse in my own life, and there came a moment when I decided that this cycle ends with me. I don't want my nieces, students, or any young girl, to grow up thinking that they have to diminish themselves. I want them to feel empowered to speak up, to be unafraid, and to take up space in places where they always dreamed to be.

So much of my inspiration comes from the resilience of the women in my family. They went through so much, but they carried themselves with strength and grace. Many of them lived during times where they couldn't leave abusive relationships, where they were taught to stay quiet, and to endure challenges and battles they weren't meant to fight.

With my current project, a black-and-white photography series called Dichos, I'm trying to honor those women while also challenging the ways in which they had been silenced. The project looks at traditional Mexican dichos, these sayings we all grew up hearing, that were meant to teach us lessons, but often carried really heavy, machista ideas, especially toward women.

With Dichos, I'm interested in what it means to reincarnate, to imagine what our ancestors could have been if they were allowed to speak their truth. It's about reclaiming those phrases, turning them on their head, and showing how Chicana and Latina women today are breaking these generational cycles. This project is a tribute to those who came before us, and a statement of who we are becoming.

Storytelling is everything in my work. It's not just photography, it's about the deeper layers of identity: being a daughter of immigrants, feeling like we don't fully belong, navigating relationships, womanhood, cultural traditions, and healing. These are the stories that don't often get told in mainstream media or fine art. Mexican American women are so often misrepresented or completely silenced in those spaces.

I've always craved that sense of sisterhood, of being able to sit with another woman and share what we're going through, knowing that she gets it because she's lived it too. That's the energy I want my work to carry. My art is about creating that space, one where we can be seen, heard, connect through shared experience, and heal our ancestral traumas.

Your work blends photography, installation, and mixed media. How do you decide which medium best suits each narrative?

My process for choosing which medium really depends on the narrative I'm working with and honestly the time I have. Sometimes the story calls for photography, other times it's installation, and often it's a mix of both. I don't like to force a medium onto the idea, I just go with my intuition.

Photography actually takes the longest, especially when I'm working on projects like Dichos or Trenzas, which center women. These shoots are really intentional and collaborative, and because I'm based in San Francisco, but my community is in the Central Valley, I'm constantly going back and forth on weekends to make it happen. My friends have full lives too, so I work around their schedules, and I honestly prefer it that

Monica Ocegueda | Unidas | 2024

way. It gives us time to really talk through the project, what it means, and why they want to be part of it. It's not just me taking a photo, it's a collaboration rooted in trust and shared experience. I don't want to take full control. It's more meaningful when we create it together, and that process builds community, sisterhood, and deeper connections. Installation work, on the other hand, usually comes together more quickly. I often use found objects—things like bandanas, dirt, clothing, or even feminine products and I build compositions that speak to different ideas. For example, I've spray-painted feminine hygiene products pink to comment on beauty standards and expectations. I've created an art installation with soil from the Central Valley and created a field with a bandana that says "Farmworkers Feed You" to honor farmworkers. That type of work is more direct in process, but it's still layered in meaning.
So for me, the choice of medium really comes down to what the story needs and how much time and space I have to tell it. Each artwork brings something different, and I like being able to move fluidly between them depending on what the narrative calls for.

You refer to art as "documentation" and "resistance." Could you expand on that idea—what are you resisting, and what are you preserving?

When I talk about art as documentation, I'm talking about capturing the moment, what's happening right now. Whether it's a feeling, a person, or an issue in my community, I see my work as a way to hold onto that moment, to say: this mattered. My art is shaped by the lives of women around me and the experiences of Mexican Americans, especially in the Central Valley. It's a form of archiving, not just history, but emotion, identity, and resilience.

Monica Ocegueda | Hope | 2022

Documentation, for me, is about visibility. Growing up, and being an undergraduate college student, I didn't see people like me represented in art or in art spaces, or even in the broader narrative of what was considered "important or successful." It always felt like I was left out or made to feel like I didn't belong or that my voice did not matter. I actually have never imagined I'd be in grad school right now, let alone getting an MFA in Art, because that kind of path wasn't shown to me. I am the daughter of immigrants, I am the first woman in my family to go to college, but I was also just expected to get my degree and then stop there. However, I wanted to get a higher education and go to grad school, become an art professor, and give back to my family and my community. So now, through my work, I'm preserving our presence—saying we exist, we've always existed, and we deserve to be seen. And I want future generations to know that too—that their stories matter, and that they can pursue whatever they dream of with passion and heart.
When I talk about resistance in my artwork, I mean that I'm resisting all the ways society tries to make us shrink ourselves. I want my community to resist assimilation, to resist being erased, to resist the pressure to be anything other than who they are. Especially for women, there's this constant messaging to stay quiet, to stay small, to make yourself more approachable to men in order to be liked. My work pushes back against that. It's about resisting silence, resisting invisibility, resisting oppression, resisting the generational traumas and reclaiming pride and healing in our Mexican roots, our people, and our voices. It's about reminding ourselves, and each other, that we don't need permission to take up space. We already belong.

How do you incorporate ancestral knowledge and family memory into your visual storytelling?

Ancestral knowledge, for me, comes through the stories that have been passed down over the years and through family photographs. My mom has so many photo albums, and I remember flipping through them as a young girl, completely amazed. Seeing the faces of my ancestors, some who had already passed has helped me connect the stories I was told to real people. It made those stories feel alive. I think that is why storytelling has always been so important to me. It is not just about the narrative, it is also about the characters. The people in those photos are there for a reason. They had presence, and even if I never met them, I felt like I knew them through those images. Kind of like how a person can relate to or be drawn to a character from their favorite movie.
I have experienced loss in different ways, not only through death but also through distance. There are people who I loved deeply who are still living, but for different reasons we have grown apart. So, I find myself holding onto photographs because they are a way of keeping those connections close, even if they exist now only in memory or in an image. Photography helps me preserve those moments. It is proof that those relationships were real, that those people were here, that love at some point existed and was real. When I make art, I think about how powerful it is to capture something that might otherwise fade. The way we pass down stories, the way we remember our loved ones, the way we hold space for people even after they are gone—those are all forms of ancestral knowledge. And through visual storytelling, I try to honor that, not just for myself but for my community as well.

Many of your images focus on women, sisterhood, and intergenerational connection. What role does feminism play in your artistic practice?

I don't always know if what I do fits the traditional definition of feminism, but what I do know is that I deeply believe every woman deserves the space to be exactly who she is. Growing up, my experiences with other girls and women were not always easy. I was bullied in and out of school, and my relationship with one of my sisters was difficult too. Those experiences made me long for real connection, for a sense of sisterhood that felt safe and genuine. Even through that, I always believed it was possible. I just wanted to be around women who lifted each other up instead of tearing each other down, women who were not threatened by one another but instead inspired by each other. And I am really grateful because I have that now. I have found a community of women who support me, who believe in my work, and who show up for me not just as collaborators, but as real friends. When my friends are involved in my artwork, I want them to feel empowered and at ease, free of judgment, and fully themselves. I want the process to feel like something we are creating together, a space of trust and connection. Because I know what it feels like to grow up without that kind of support, and I also know how healing it is when you finally find it.

A big part of my artistic practice is creating that space through my photographs. A space where women are seen, where they are heard, and where they feel safe to just be. If I succeed in something, I want my friends to succeed too. I really believe there is enough space for all of us, and that we are stronger when we root for each other rather than compete. To me, that is what feminism means. It is about care, community, and showing up for one another. And honestly, I could not do the work I do without my friends,

Monica Ocegueda | ÁRbol Que Nace Torcido, Jamás Su Tronco Endereza | 2024

Monica Ocegueda | Calladita Te Ves Más Bonita | 2024

they are a huge part of the reason why these projects even come to life.

Could you speak about the role of community—especially the Chicana and farmworker communities—in your creative work?

Community plays such an important role in my creative work, especially the Chicana and farmworker communities that I come from and still feel deeply connected to. I think being raised in the Central Valley shaped the way I see and value people. Growing up around immigrant families, around hardworking people in the fields, you see sacrifice, you see resilience, and you see love expressed in quiet but powerful ways. That stays with you.

When I create, I think about them constantly. I think about my parents, my friends, my ancestors, and the people who never got a platform to tell their stories. A lot of times, these communities are either invisible or misrepresented in mainstream spaces. So for me, making art about and for them is a way of saying, "We are here. We matter. Our lives are full of beauty and meaning."

Even though I live in the city now, I go back home as often as I can. My projects often involve my friends and people from my hometown. I work with women who are part of that same community, and it is important to me that they see themselves in the work, not as an outsider looking in, but as someone whose story is centered.

My artwork is about building trust, sharing space, and honoring the everyday experiences of people who are so often overlooked. Whether it is through photography, installation, or mixed media, I always want my work to feel grounded in the real lives of the people I care about. My art is not separate from my community, it exists because of it.

Maya Makarova, I am an artist from Moscow. I explore the theme of everyday life through contrasts and decorativeness. I work in the field of creative and graphic design, do illustration, and am actively developing my painting practice. I also participate in creating art objects and designing public spaces.

Project Statement
My works are dedicated to the contrasts that surround us: reality on the edge of fiction, rationality and naivety, a child's view of adult things, color within routine. I look for humor in the serious, festivity in the ordinary, and simplicity in the complex. I work with bold color, contrasts, simplifications, and decorativeness — and I always leave room for a bit of mischief.

Maya Makarova | About How the Moon Bathed in the River | 2024

Maya Makarova | A very serious person | 2024

Justin "JUST" Simmons

Can you tell us about your journey from graffiti to canvas art?

Transitioning from graffiti to canvas has been a challenging yet rewarding experience. Spray painting is fast-paced — you're working on uneven surfaces with cracks, textures, and unpredictable conditions. On the other hand, mediums like acrylic and oil require a slower, more patient approach. Learning to control a paintbrush and understanding how each paint behaves took time, and that adjustment wasn't always easy. It pushed me to grow as an artist.

How did growing up in Muskogee, Oklahoma, shape your artistic voice?

It wasn't so much the city itself but the era I grew up in that left a mark on me. The rise of Hip Hop culture during that time was full of creativity and expression. Movies like Beat Street and Wild Style, along with the TV show Good Times, laid the blueprint for how I saw the world and helped shape my identity as a painter.

What spiritual elements do you incorporate into your work, and how do they influence your process?

I draw a lot from Christianity as a foundation for my work. Biblical stories, themes of redemption, faith, and morality give me a deep well of inspiration to explore. They often guide the mood, message, or symbolism in my paintings.

Your paintings blend street style with fine art — how do you balance these two worlds?

I look to artists like Frank Morrison and Kevin "WAK" Williams for inspiration. They've shown how to fuse the raw energy of street art with the polish of fine art. Using bold, saturated colors and urban influences helps me keep that street vibe alive while elevating the work into gallery spaces.

How has digital art impacted your creative practice alongside traditional painting?

Digital tools have become a helpful part of my process. I often use Photoshop or design software to enhance my pieces for prints, books, or promotional material. When I have extra time, I like to experiment with Adobe Flash animation to create visuals that promote my shows in a more dynamic way.

What artists or movements outside of graffiti have inspired your work?

Music is a major influence. Hip Hop artists like Wu-Tang Clan and MF DOOM, jazz legends, and gospel musicians all play a part in fueling my creativity. I often listen to music while I work — it sets the tone and gets me in the zone before I even pick up a brush.

Do you see your art as a form of activism or social commentary?

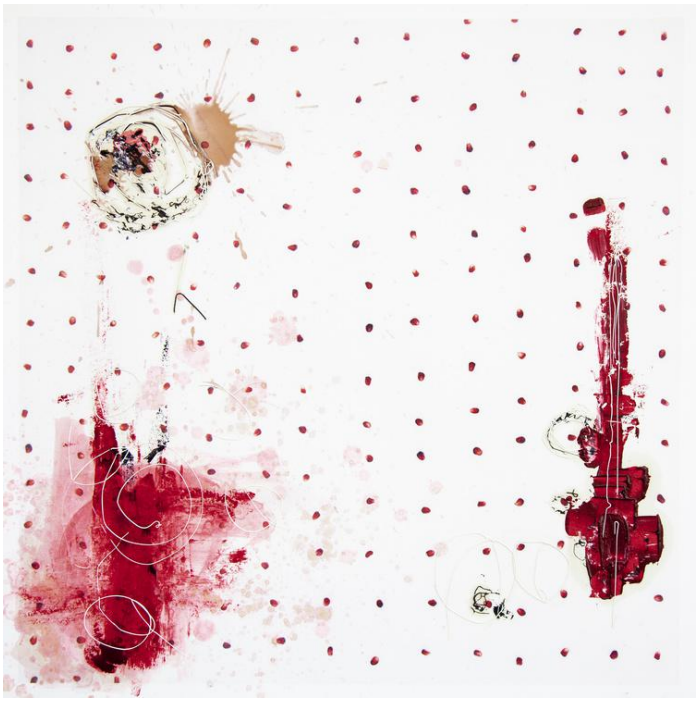
Absolutely — my work touches both. I use my art to highlight social and political issues, creating a space for conversation and reflection. I also enjoy collaborating with artists from different communities and cultures, using our collective voices to speak on what matters.

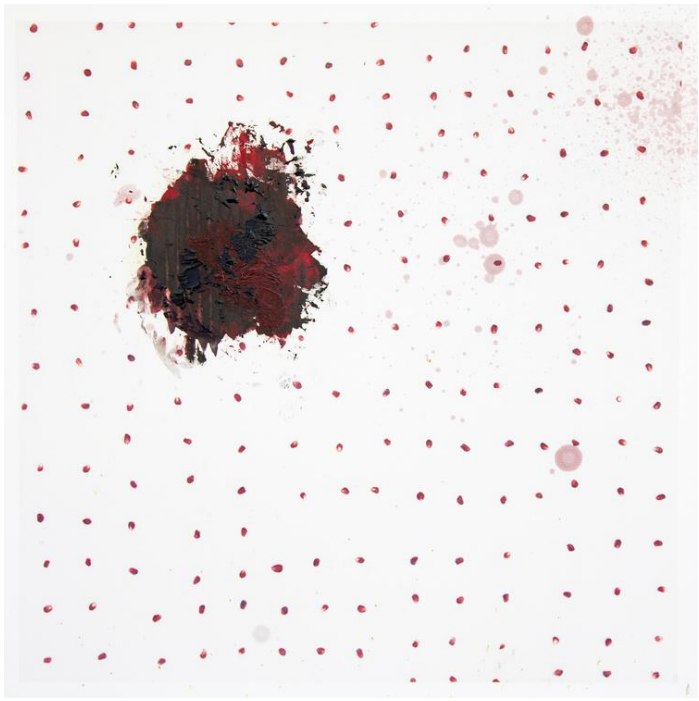
Sigal Ben-David + Les St. Leon

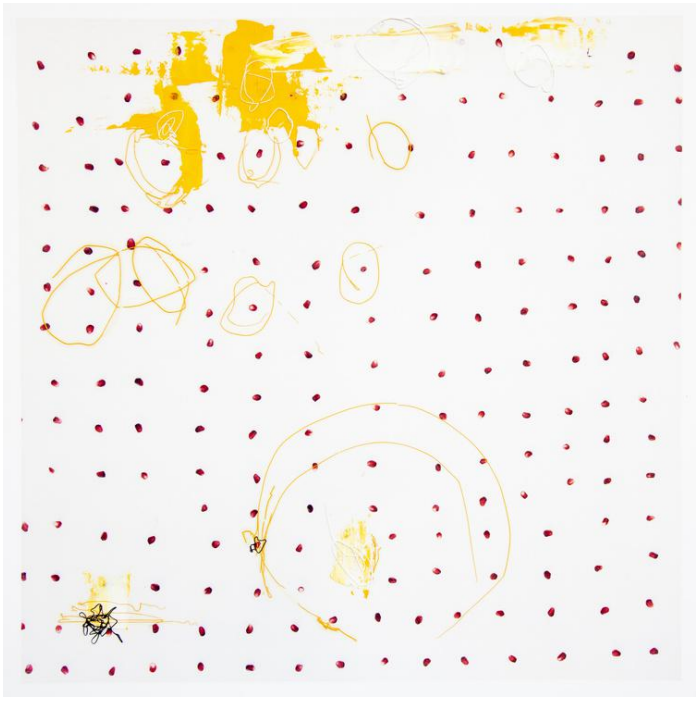
Sigal Ben-David (b. 1973, Tel-Aviv-Jaffa, Israel)
Sigal Ben-David's work is an investigation into the role of objects in constructing and deconstructing the narratives around which we organize our lives. Found objects reflect a curatorial instinct to preserve, and categorize. Emptiness lends value to everyday things that we use to structure and define identity. In a world that has been emptied out, opportunities are
multiplied for the creation of new meanings, whether implied or projected. Perhaps as a result of her upbringing in Israel, her images rigorously examine the role of a home and its absence - in how we structure and define our social and political identity. in how we structure and define our social and political identity.
Ben-David treats her work as landscapes - though the word is released from its traditional signification. Rather, landscape is here extended to mean the totality of ways in which we arrange both the natural and artificial aspects of our habitations, and their significance in how we conceive of ourselves. The landscapes, often created in the studio by reconstructing subject matter and substance, while experimenting with forms, shapes, textures, and patterns, through which she generates a dialogue between photography and FineArt, conceptual rigor and through which she generates a dialogue between photography and FineArt, conceptual rigor and playfulness, representation and abstraction. A reminder that what we are looking at is not reality per se, but a reality the artist created.
Sigal Ben-David graduated of Camera Obscura School of Art, Tel-Aviv, Israel, majoring in Photography, in 2009. And was a participant in an Art program - Digital Media Major in 2008- 2009 at the Kibbutzim Collage of Education, Technology and the Arts, Tel-Aviv, Israel. Her work has been shown in numerous exhibitions, including "Visual Culture", CICA Museum, Seoul, has been shown in numerous exhibitions, including "Visual Culture", CICA Museum, Seoul, South Korea, Group (2020); "Seen And Unseen", Collective Gallery, Woodstock, NY, Group (2018); “Through Compassionate Eyes”, The charter Oak Cultural Center, Hartford, CT, Group (2018); Limner Gallery, Hudson, NY, Group (2017); "Wish You Were Here 16", A.I.R. Gallery, Brooklyn, NY, Group (2017); "Undetermined Landscape",Two Moon Art House, Brooklyn, NY, Solo (2013); "DOF", Tokyo International Forum, Tokyo, Japan / Group (2011); "Preservation Jar", Artness Gallery, En Shemer, Israel, Duo (2011); "No.Where.Else", France Cultural Center, Nazareth, Group Nazareth, Israel, Israel, Group Group (2010); (2010); Tel Hai Open Tel Hai Open Museum Museum of Photography, of Photography, Tel Hai, Tel Hai, Israel, Israel, Group (2010); "Woman 3000", Garage Gang, Kiev, Ukraine, Group (2010); "Untitled", Ha’Chalalit Gallery, Tel-Aviv, Israel, Group (2009).
After living and working in New York City for over 13 years, Sigal Ben David relocated to Paris, where she lives and work for the past 2 years.

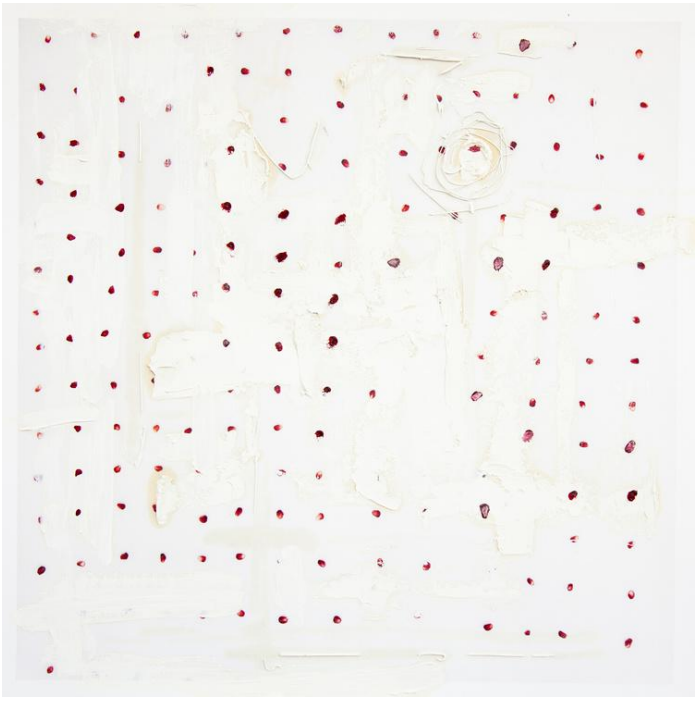
Les St. Leon (b. 1957, Pembroke, Ontario, Canada , d. 2024, Paris, France)
Les St. Leon was born in 1957 in Ontario, Canada, to a long line of circus performers, artists, and acrobats, which informed his keen attention to color, form, and lines. His unique visual and conceptual style was inspired by the intertwining of sculpture, painting, music, and dance.
He earned a B.A. in Fine Arts from Ringling School of Art and Design in Sarasota, FL, and later studied Computer Animation at the San Francisco Art Institute.
His career spanned both commercial and fine art, with notable projects for Disney and His career spanned both commercial and fine art, with notable projects for Disney and Universal Studios. He has participated in international exhibitions including "Visual Culture" at CICA Museum, Seoul (2020); "Seen and Unseen" at Collective Gallery, Woodstock, NY (2018); "Memories" at Loosenart Magazine / MILLEPIANI Art Space, Rome (2018); Limner Gallery, Hudson, NY (2017); "Wish You Were Here 16" at A.I.R. Gallery, Brooklyn, NY (2017); "Nudes" at Ybor City Warehouse Gallery, Tampa, FL (2012); and "Preservation Jar" at Artness Gallery, Ein Shemer, Israel (2011) among others.
Exploring the boundaries of perception through a dynamic visual language that emphasizes movement and continuity, St. Leon's artistic practice is rooted in an ongoing search for techniques that best express his conceptual ideas around space, time, and motion. His compositions often shift from mimesis to abstraction, obscuring the narrative context. St. Leon's latest works include urban landscapes and mechanical structures, reinterpreted through an abstract painterly lens. Over the past decade he has developed a distinctive through an abstract painterly lens. Over the past decade he has developed a distinctive technique akin to weaving, using oil paint to create thread-like patterns. Allowing the underpainting to peep through, this method conveys a sense of motion on canvas.
After living and working in New York City for 13 years, St. Leon relocated to Paris, where he died in 2024.

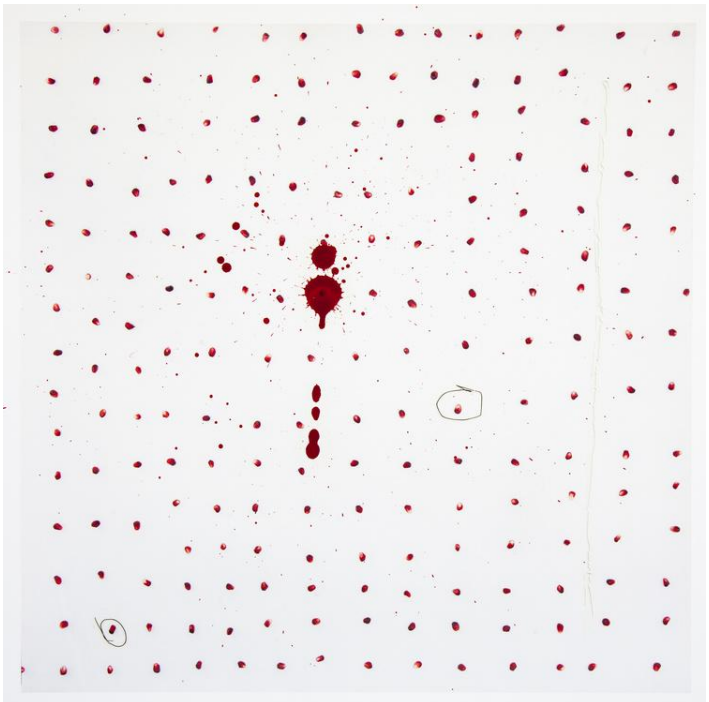
Project Statement
3 People Duet
Oil and ink on 120 mm color photograph
Archival pigment print on FineArt cotton paper
40x40 cm 40x40 cm
2018-2023
A collaboration with Artist Les St. Leon (1957-2024).
This series is the result of visual conversations, which took place in Ben-David and St. Leon’s transient studios in NYC, and Marseille, over the course of 5 years. It is a reflection on (social) interaction via the exchange of visual references rather than words.
The work, characteristicaly playful and disorderly, evolve with no definitive beginning or ending, taking shape through continues examination of modern anxieties, and overstimulation in today's eclectic and fragmented realities, while conjuring a state of mind.
In their new body of work Ben-David and St. Leon employ juxtaposition by bringing photography In their new body of work Ben-David and St. Leon employ juxtaposition by bringing photography and painting into dialogue and exploring the colaborative possibilities between the two mediums, establishing a versatilty between cohesion and confusion, disorienting abstraction and arrangment, which are intimately involved with our social constructions of the world, while experimenting with the overlap between the purely abstract and the representation of narrative.

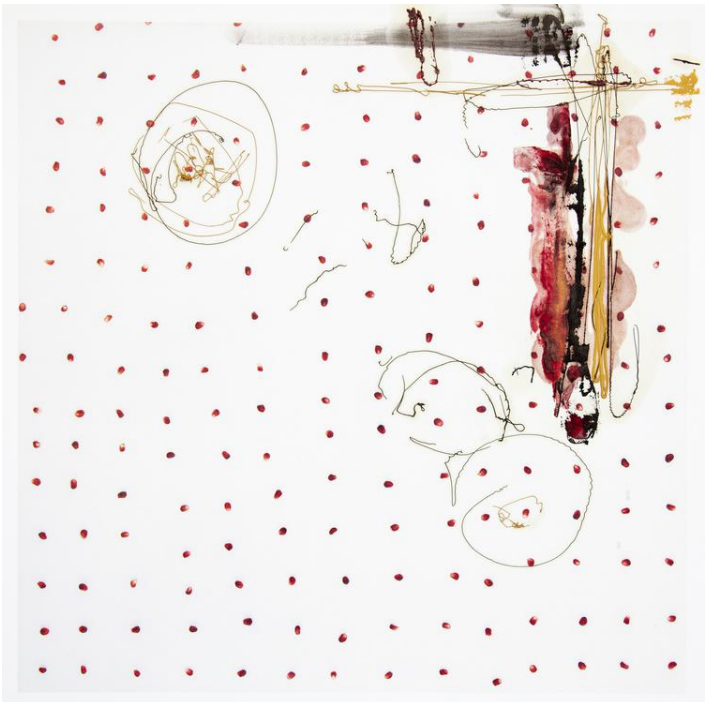








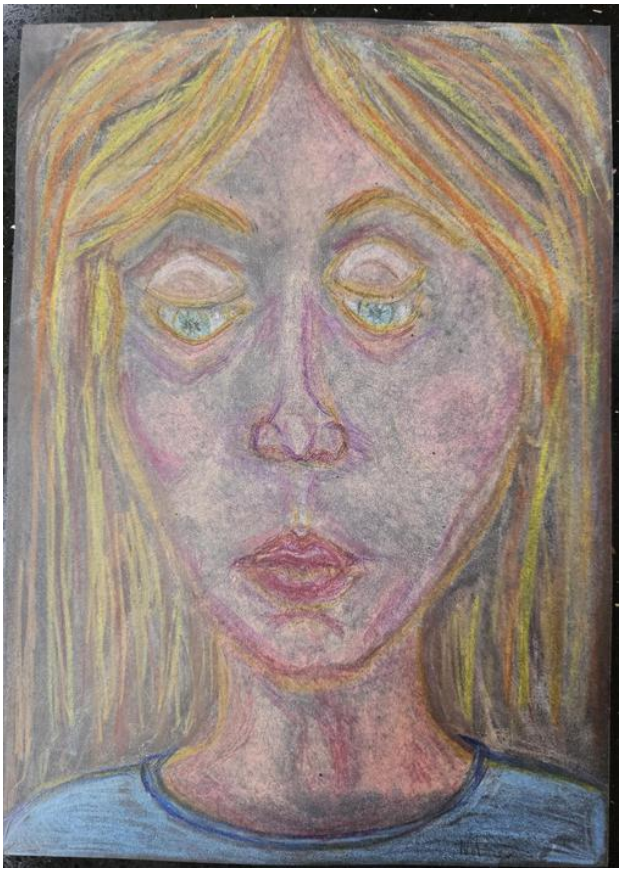




Michele Standen

The story behind my Artwork “reflective” was that I found myself in a painful position where all that I thought was there to protect & safeguard me wasn’t. I felt still & alone, no tears could fall, I didn’t scream or cry, I sat in stillness processing new feelings. The emotions and thoughts I was exploring were grief, betrayal, abandonment, powerlessness, injustice and I felt bereft. Then I painted the picture as I believe it helps to regulate any nervous system dysregulation. I certainly always feel lighter when I’ve got those icky feelings out and onto paper (or whatever medium).

Can you share the story behind your artwork “Reflective”? What emotions or thoughts were you exploring?



Michele Standen | Reflective

“Doctor Who” is a very expressive and textured piece. What inspired you to create it?

Doctor WHO is a very expressive & textured piece and the inspiration for that painting was channelling my rage and anger into a healthy cathartic process of painting. I was processing child trauma and had felt very targeted and therefore further insulted on top of assaulted. The whole painting process is very meditative to me and the clicking & clacking of palette knives hitting the wood was very satisfying during the painting of it. I felt like I was taking back my power and alchemising feelings of rage, anger, injustice and hurt back into power within my hands. At that time I couldn’t speak some words out loud because of shame, trauma & fear but now I can. Alchemising emotions through art is such a powerful tool we have.

How does your visual impairment influence your creative process?

My visual impairment influences my creative process massively because it’s so freeing when you

can't see detail without aids. You just get lost in the process without worrying if it's any good or not which in turn I feel allows for more expression. It's like a meditative process for me. No rights or wrongs just creating which is magical. But there are times I can't use my eyes at all and that's when I can write poetry and think about words more. It can be frustrating when my eyes have issues (for example I've had alot of ulcers on my corneas, from Lupus, I was told & then my remaining vision is completely blurred).

What tools or techniques do you find most helpful when creating your artworks with low vision?

The tools and techniques I find most helpful with low vision are Magnifiers and taking photo's and enlarging to see details I've missed. I also use a fair bit of texture as I can do that by touch. I see colours clearly so use colour as a tool for me. But my sight loss is from steroid induced glaucoma and glaucoma is optic nerve damage so I don't see black or grey like some eye conditions, I just only see with the little remaining vision I have left. Also with glaucoma you lose your peripheral vision first & tunnel vision last so using my remaining vision for art is easier for me than with a different eye condition I feel. Having said that we are all unique and brains/bodies are clever so we should use what works for us. Don't allow anything to be a barrier. I dislike tick box exercises as no individual fits neatly within a box that rhetoric is so outdated. I say blur the lines and create.

You mentioned art helps your wellbeing. Can you tell us more about the role creativity plays in your healing journey?

I did mention that art helps my wellbeing, I would welcome the opportunity to share how creativity helps in my healing journey thank you. I believe it is actually scientifically proven that pain, anxiety and creativity use the same side of the brain. So getting lost within the process of creativity is the best pain reliever there is (for me) and it's without side effects. Also I believe that when we are being creative we are alchemising any stuck or stagnant emotions so they don't stay trapped within the body where they could cause dis-ease. It's a very freeing process.

Do you approach visual art differently than your poetry or other forms of expression like interior design or gardening?

Yes I believe I do, with my art and poetry I am alchemising emotions so they don't stay stuck within my cellular structures whereas with interior design it has a different role to play and needs to be how we want to feel within the environment and what it will be used for. With my garden design I had permaculture over monoculture at the fore and I wanted to plant food and medicinal plants to create a nature lover's & wildlife wonderland for me. I'm a tree hugger and love them so I planted lots of trees. Interestingly to note that I never noticed the sacred geometry within flowers for example until after I lost my eyesight. I have to take photos and magnify them but I'm always in awe of Nature and her abundance.

What message or feeling do you hope viewers take away from your work?

I hope that they give themselves permission to start getting creative themselves and feel how freeing the process is. In my opinion you are gifting yourself wellbeing and time to rest, repair and heal. There's no right or wrongs with Art & Creativity it's all about the process and not the end result, that's a happy bonus. Surviving adversity and finding healthy methods to aid wellbeing is pivotal in our individual holistic wellbeing journey.

Michele Standen | Doctor Who

Anna Kono

Taiwanese-Japanese illustrator born in the US in 1997. Following the US, I have lived in Japan, Australia, and China. I currently live in Tokyo, Japan. I have always been pursuing drawing and studied AP Studio Art in high school and graduated from Waseda University in 2020. Although my college education was not affiliated with illustration, I have been drawing for the past several years as a fledgling illustrator.

Project Statement

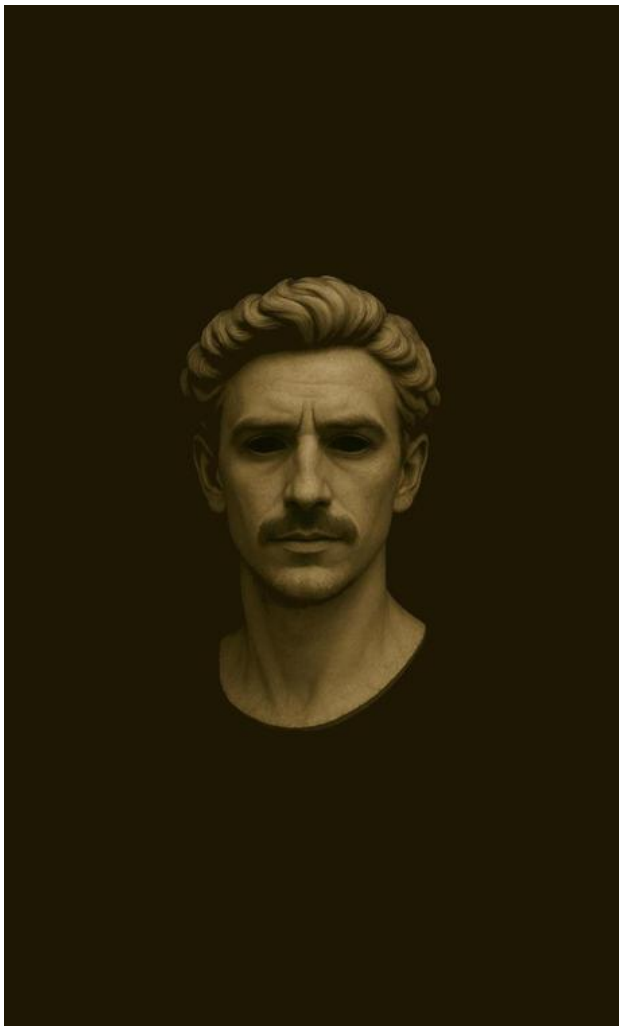
My international lifestyle has allowed me to not only come into contact with different cultures, but also close experiences with nature. The times I spent in America and Australia in particular have provided me close touches with rich wildlife and superb landscapes. As someone who has always been inclined to natural environments and company with animals, these moments gave me a sense of familiarity. Nature has profoundly shaped my art in the form of people coexisting with the wilderness in harmony or becoming part of it as transcendence. I often unite this component of nature with ambiguity - both in reference to the blurring of the lines between man and nature as well as the genders of the figures. Overall, my works exude a dreamlike, surreal air.

Anna Kono | Beneath the dappled shadows | 2025

Anna Kono | Lovers in the water | 2025

Anna Kono | Marine feeling | 2025

Robin Steven Moné

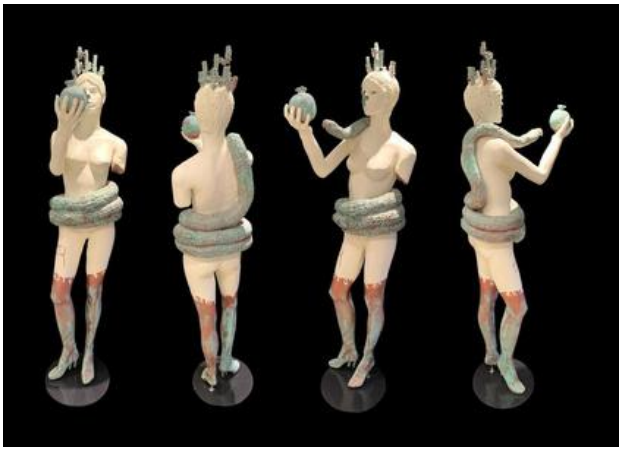


Your statement declares, "These works are not objects. They are wounds." Can you share a personal memory that shaped this philosophy?

I don't believe art must be autobiographical to be deeply personal. I've made painful experiences, yes - but they are not the source of my work. The source is something more pervasive: the quiet violence of being human.
I observe the absurdities, fractures, and blind spots in others - and in myself. What disturbs me is not what happened to me, but what happens constantly, everywhere.
My works are wounds not because I was wounded - but because we all are. I'm not interested in telling my story. I'm interested in digging beneath what we've agreed to ignore. You could say I'm an archaeologist of silence.

Much of your art deals with violence and psychological trauma. How do you protect yourself emotionally while creating such intense work?

For me, creating is not an act of catharsis - it's a process of observation and inscription. I don't create to process trauma, but to record what I discover. My work is not a therapy, but a form of documentation.



Robin Steven Moné | Eve

I can approach these themes - violence, trauma, existential absurdity - without fear, because I've already made peace with the nature of things. I don't resist uncomfortable truths. I welcome them. The world is fractured, brutal, absurd - and it has always been. But that doesn't unsettle me. I don't expect a clean answer from existence. I don't need meaning to feel alive.
My worldview is fluid. It has no fixed doctrine that can be broken. That openness - to every possible answer, even the painful ones - is what shields me.
In a way, truth itself is my armor.

You describe art as a mirror many cannot bear to look into. What reactions from viewers have surprised or stayed with you the most?

The most meaningful reactions are rarely loud. Sometimes it's a long silence. Sometimes it's someone walking away without a word. I've seen people become uneasy - not because the work is violent, but because it feels familiar.
I've been asked more than once: 'Why don't you make something beautiful?' And that question says a lot. It reveals how uncomfortable people are with what they see - not just in the work, but in themselves. On the other side, I've heard things like: 'These are difficult themes. But there's something impressive about how far you go.'
That contrast - between evasion and confrontation - stays with me.

Robin Steven Moné | Corruptions

I don't aim to provoke, but I don't soften the mirror either. The work doesn't ask to be liked. It asks to be faced.

What challenges have you faced as an artist who refuses to create commercially digestible work?

"The biggest challenge is that the world often rewards visibility more than substance. When you don't create to please, you move slower. People don't always know where to place you. But that's a risk I accept. I'm not here to decorate spaces or feed a market. I'm here to confront what we usually avoid.
Commercial digestibility was never a goal - not because I'm against success, but because I don't want to dilute the work to reach it. I believe there's value in resistance. Even if it means walking alone for a while.

How do you want people to feel after confronting one of your pieces—guilty, awakened, empowered, disturbed?

I don't expect people to feel anything specific.
My work is not there to guide or instruct - it reflects. How someone responds says more about their worldview than about the piece itself.
If a viewer sees violence and feels confronted, perhaps it's because that violence is familiar to them - in their actions, in their past, or simply in what they choose to ignore.
Someone who has nothing to hide might walk away untouched. Someone who recognizes themselves in the piece might not.
That said - I never aim to hurt those who have already been hurt. If someone feels unease because the work touches on something they've lived through,
I hope they feel seen, not judged. The discomfort I seek is not for the wounded - it's for the ones who wound.

Do you ever destroy or censor your own pieces when they become too raw or personal?

No - I don't destroy a work because it's too raw. That's exactly the reason I make it. My role as an artist is not to soften reality, but to expose what usually stays hidden.
I don't create to reassure. I create to reveal.
Of course, I avoid sensationalism. I'm not interested in shocking for its own sake. But I believe a certain directness - even a level of discomfort - is necessary. Many works I see feel too vague, too neutral, too careful.
I think art should dare to say something. Not everything - but something. If I ever destroy an artwork, it's not because it's too strong - it's because it doesn´t speak at all.

What do you hope your legacy will be-not in the art market, but in human memory?

I don't think much about legacy in institutional terms.
The art world has its rhythms - I respect that. But I don't create for its approval. What matters to me is memory.
If someone carries a fragment of my work in their mind - a question, an image, a discomfort they can't quite name - then something real has happened. I don't aim to be remembered as a personality. I'd rather be remembered as a presence. Not loudly, not everywhere - but deeply, and in the right minds.
I believe the moment an artist starts creating to be accepted by the market, something essential gets lost. Not success - but the core.
The work doesn't have to reach everyone. But when it does reach someone, I want it to stay.

Robin Steven Moné | Relic 001 Shattered Innocence

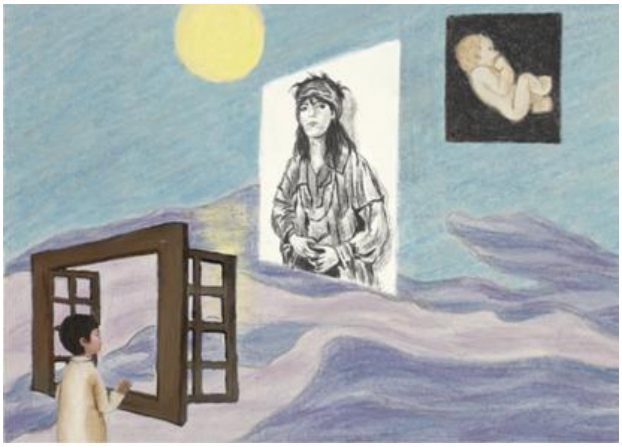
Luna Xue

Luna Xue | What Was Taken

Could you tell us about your early artistic experiences and how your grandfather influenced your creative path?

I grew up in Ningbo and was raised by my grandfather. He was a traditional artist specializing in Chinese calligraphy and ink painting, and he was also my earliest artistic guide. We often went sketching in the mountains or visited exhibitions together. He taught me to understand emotions through visual perception and encouraged me to freely express my inner experiences. This immersive artistic education in my early years deeply shaped my understanding of "seeing" and "expressing." My artistic practice has always been about storytelling, and that storytelling was first rooted in family memory.

How did your studies at the Edinburgh College of Art shape your artistic style and direction?

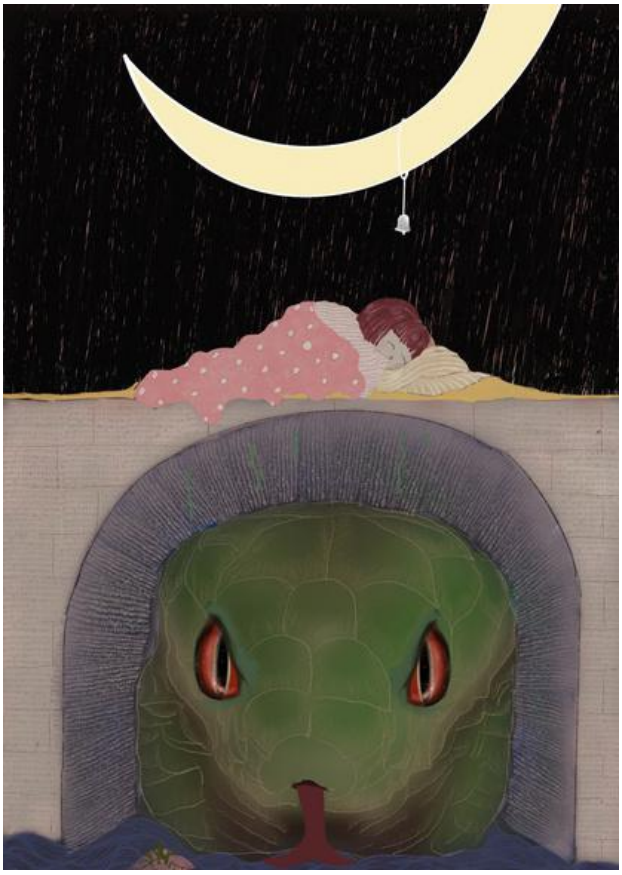


Luna Xue | Kids Talking

During my MA studies in Illustration at Edinburgh College of Art, I began to understand image-making from a more conceptual and research-driven perspective. Gradually, I moved beyond representational imagery and turned to multi-disciplinary forms such as installation, sound, and text, attempting to build a "narrative field" through multiple dimensions. At the same time, this experience also led me to re-examine my own cultural identity and gendered experience, placing personal narratives within a global context. Though the forms of my practice are diverse now, narrative remains its core.

In your practice, how do you balance traditional techniques with contemporary themes?

I don't see traditional techniques and contemporary themes as oppositional. In my paintings and installations, one often finds calligraphic brushstrokes, symbolic structures, or the use of negative space—these all stem from my perception of Chinese visual traditions. Meanwhile, the themes I explore face the contemporary moment head-on: gender-based violence, intergenerational trauma, or societal silence. I try to weave bodily experience and cultural memory together, forming a visual text that is both emotional and critical.



Luna Xue | What Was Taken

Many of your works explore intergenerational trauma and female identity. How do you approach such deep and complex personal topics?

For me, individual trauma is never isolated—it reflects structural silencing and cultural suppression. For instance, in Kids Talking, children's voices are played on loop in a disembodied way, detached from physical presence. This method of "de-corporealized" speaking is meant to expose how society continues to suppress language around gender, violence, and consent. This is not merely a "women's issue"—it's about how language is constructed, denied, and distorted. I try to make silence itself into something that can be sensed.

What challenges do you face when translating personal memory into visual narrative?

The biggest challenge in transforming memory into artwork is finding a balance between honest expression and avoiding emotional excess. I don't want to objectify or commodify trauma. That's why I often use indirect visual language—fractured narrative structures, blurred imagery, delayed and disrupted sound. These strategies prevent the work from being a "reproduction of the past" and instead present a structural rendering of silence, absence, and deferral. I'm more interested in how "stories that cannot be told" might visually surface.

Have you noticed different interpretations of your work from audiences with different cultural backgrounds?

Definitely. In exhibitions in Europe, audiences often interpret my work through psychological or psychoanalytic frameworks, whereas in East Asia, many viewers more naturally associate it with family culture, gender roles, and mechanisms of silence. I welcome these diverse interpretations—they're a vital part of cross-cultural dialogue. My work does not attempt to convey a singular position; rather, it opens a space that can be entered through multiple lived experiences.

Which materials or media do you currently feel most connected to?

I currently work primarily with imagery, sound, and hand-crafted materials. Painting remains a foundation, but I increasingly use sound installations, collages of old objects, and even books and embroidery. For example, Triptych of Silence was created with minimal, desaturated tones to express an emotional spectrum in the aftermath of sexual violence—numbness, rupture, and echo. What I seek in these media is not "effect," but the residue of experience. Materials carry meaning; they are vessels of narrative.

Luna Xue | Resonance

I am **Daniel Varela**, a visual artist and artistic photographer. Through visual expression, I develop a practice rooted in the continuous search for new perspectives and aesthetic languages. My work is driven by a deep passion for art and photography, with the aim of capturing beauty in its most authentic and complete form. As part of this evolving creative process, I have incorporated contemporary digital methods that expand the traditional boundaries of artistic production. The use of advanced technologies has allowed me to create singular and immersive works that explore territories where the visual becomes experience. My works not only reflect a personal inquiry but also a desire to inspire other artists and audiences who are sensitive to the image. I view art as a space for dialogue, sensibility, and cultural contribution, and each piece I create seeks to actively participate in that collective fabric.

Project Statement
These works emerge from a space of deep contemplation, where the feminine figure merges with the elements of an inner landscape. They are not portraits of someone, but embodiments of a state of soul - the calm after the wind, the memory of what blooms and fades, poetry suspended between water and air. I work with digital languages to create images that speak to the painterly, the dreamlike, and the intangible. In this series, the body becomes fertile ground: flowers arise, contours dissolve, and silence becomes visible. I am drawn to that subtle threshold where the human and the natural intertwine without hierarchy, revealing a beauty that does not seek to impress - only to remain. These pieces are part of a broader pursuit: to create images that breathe, that whisper, and that invite the viewer to pause — to see with the eyes of the soul.

Daniel Varela | Be Reborn

Daniel Varela | Breeze

Martine Kasmin

Your abstract paintings are rich in color and texture. Can you walk us through your process when starting a new piece?

I am primarily an intuitive painting. So, the painting and the creative process leads me through the journey from start to finish. I begin each piece with a thin wash of oil paint which covers the entire canvas. Covering the canvas in this way, ensures that I will work on the entirety of the painting and not focus on small parts that don't add up to a strong whole. Once the canvas is covered, I make marks with pencil or oil stick. The marks help me to work through compositional ideas. I want to be certain that the final painting has a beautiful combination of large and small shapes, and that it leads the viewer's eye around the canvas in an interesting way. The marks lead to adding more color, typically I focus on using complementary colors at this stage. Recently, this has meant either an orange and blue, or red and green color theme. These color themes transition nicely to flesh tones as I work: burnt sienna, cadmium orange, and Naples yellow combine to create warm flesh tones. While my paintings are at first look, entirely abstract, there are female figures, and to a lesser extent landscapes alluded to in each painting. From there, I vacillate between mark making with a variety of materials, (oil stick, oil pastel, pencil, charcoal), and oil paint to hone the image. I also think about the texture and surface to create variety, viewer interest, and movement throughout each painting. As I continue working, the process becomes not only additive, but subtractive in nature. I scrape paint off to create interesting textures and line work. Throughout the process, I continue to think about the elements of creating interesting and powerful paintings, until the image feels beautiful and complete. Each painting can take a few days or a few months.

Martine Kasmin | Figure, Ground | 2025

You mentioned drawing inspiration from both classical painters like El Greco and modern artists like Cecily Brown. How do you balance these influences in your own work?

It's amazing how much artists, especially painters can have in common with one another even if they painted

Martine Kasmin | In The Hot Sun, August | 2025

hundreds of years apart. If I look at both El Greco and Brown's work, the passion and power that each artist conveys through the use of paint is remarkable. El Greco as a painter in the 16th century was unique for his ability to convey emotion just by painting a sky. Additionally, the movement of his brushwork and his unique interpretation of the figure created emotionally powerful works. Cecily Brown, too is unique for her time. Her powerful use of color and her non-traditional drawing style also set her apart from other artists of her time. it's actually a pretty seamless way to look at art. I look at beautiful paintings as beautiful paintings, no matter when they were created. Painters offer ideas to other artists about how to use paint and how to tell stories, and those things will always transcend time and artistic movements.

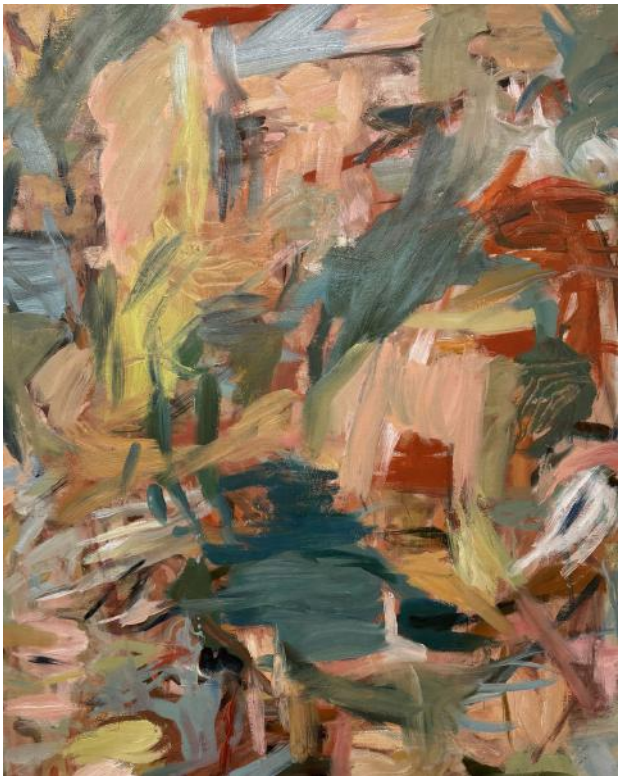
Nature and personal memory seem to play an important role in your paintings. Is there a specific memory or experience that has deeply shaped your recent work?

I wouldn't say specific memories are referenced in my work. But, I think it's more of a file folder full of memories. I think there's a vulnerability in my recent work that comes from my life experience as a woman in the world. If you look closely at my paintings, you can see nude female figures in them. The nakedness of these women alludes to this vulnerability, to being exposed. My experiences with depression, sexuality, friendship, freedom, and fear of freedom, all come through in my painting. These themes, and feelings, are where the power of my work stems from. The use of the female form also makes reference to the history of painting the female form throughout art history. Landscapes too, are sensuous in color, form and feeling. Memories of lush landscapes also play a role in my work for this reason.

Your use of line and gesture is very expressive. Do you approach painting more intuitively or with a structured plan?

Someone once described my work to me as, "controlled chaos", I think that's pretty accurate! There is a self-created structure in this approach. The "always" aspect to creating each painting. Always start with a thin wash of paint, always add interesting marks, always be aware of creating powerful color combinations. However, within that structure is a lot of room for spontaneity! While I'm working, I will reach a point where the purely intuitive will take over. It can feel as if I'm not actively thinking at all, that there is a direct link between my hand and my mind. The subconscious mind is a very powerful part of the creative process! That's where the expressive line, gesture, and emotion in each painting come from. Without the subconscious, intuitive piece, my paintings would probably not be very interesting! One of the things you must become comfortable with as an artist, is trusting that part of your mind. It can feel pretty scary at times, because you really have to let go of where you think the painting "should" end up and allow the journey to run its course. Interestingly, often I find that the end result does relate to something I've been consciously thinking about all along! Then. I discover that I really was thinking during the entire painting session. I just didn't actively realize it, because the ideas and thoughts were so imbedded in my subconscious mind. This is one of the most wonderful parts of the creative process! In my practice, I utilize both an intuitive and structured approach.

Martine Kasmin | Down the Rabbit Hole, Spring | 2025



Martine Kasmin | Feeling Upside Down and Backwards | 2024

How has your background in illustration and working with magazines influenced your current fine art practice?

I studied illustration and fine arts at the School of Visual Arts in New York City. At the time, I thought that illustration would be a more practical direction for my art. But, I struggled with this idea a great deal during my time at SVA and immediately afterwards. While I was in college, I already had a natural affinity for abstract art. Nevertheless, I did some commercial illustration after graduation. I had a painting teacher while I was at SVA whose advice to me was that for some artists the work starts with something internal and for others it is inspired by something external. He went on to say that one isn't better or more valid that the other, but it appeared that my work came from within myself and not from an external inspiration. I think that's true. When I committed to being a painter, I rejected almost everything I did as an illustrator. If there is one thing I held onto, it was the value of having some sort of a plan at the start of a piece. But, in order for me to be a successful painter, I needed to allow the intuitive piece to take over. For me, that's where the magic of making art occurs.

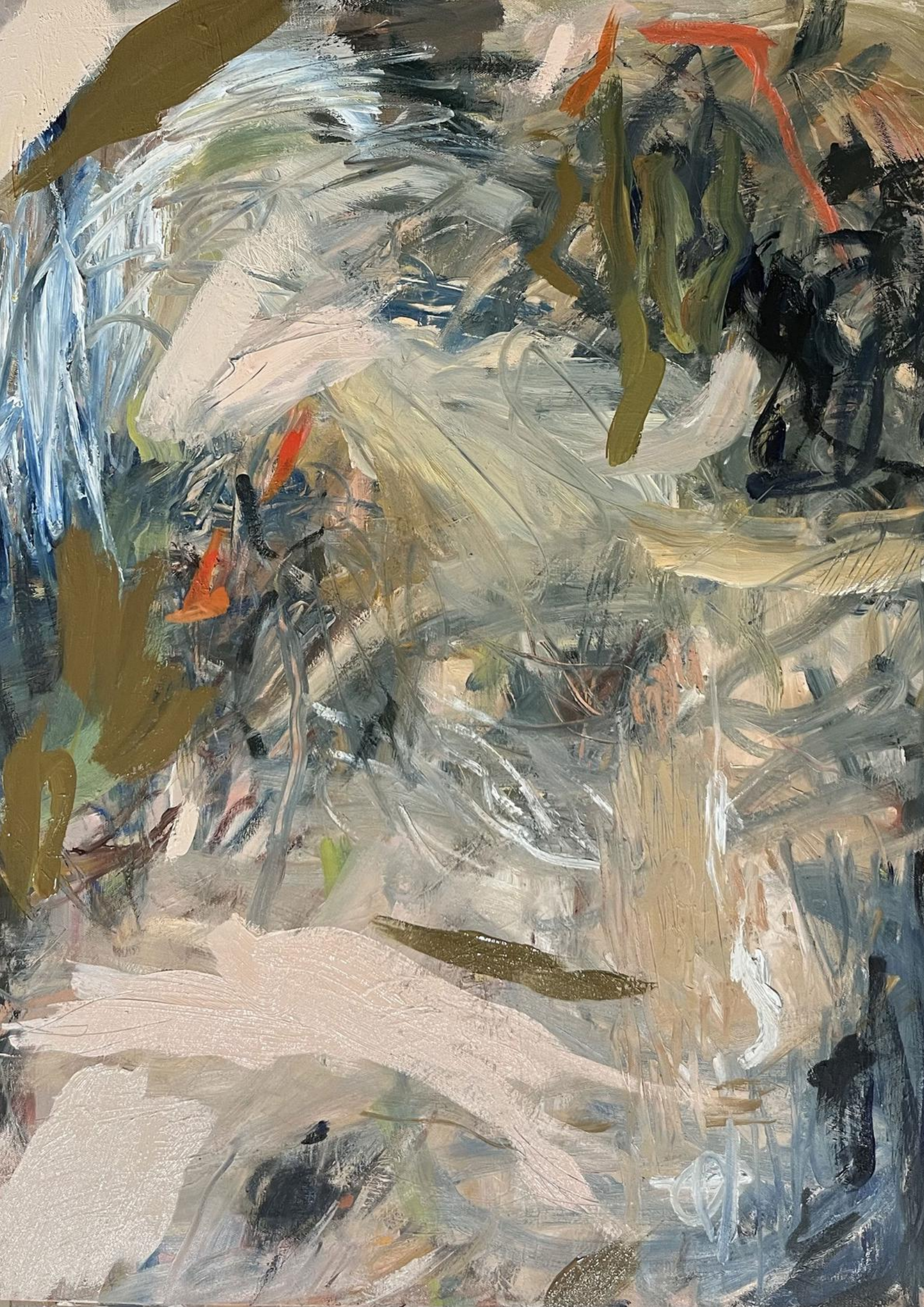
Can you tell us more about your upcoming solo exhibition in Montclair in Fall 2025? What themes or ideas are you planning to explore?

I've always been an artist. However, I took a step back for many years and worked as an illustrator, a teacher of students with special needs, as a mom to twins. But, even while I was doing these things, the pull of being an artist creating work for no other reason than because it was a personal need, kept calling me back. COVID, which in almost every way, was horrible, brought me back to painting. It gave me the gift of time! I was able to get back into my studio, to be serious about my art again! My show and my art celebrate that theme: freedom of personal choice, freedom of expression, freedom to be creative in just the way you want to be, without restrictions. I. hope people feel this when they look at my work. An unbridled force of energy, creativity and expression. If you look closely at my work, you will also notice that it isn't entirely abstract. There are female forms embedded in each painting. They are experiencing this freedom for better, and at times, for worse. When you are free, you are responsible for all of your decisions. Thus, there is a positive and negative vibe present in all of my work. Freedom in all its forms and with all its challenges is explored.
I'm really looking forward to having my solo show! It will be opening on September 11, at Academy Square in Montclair, NJ and will run until November 2025.

Abstract art often invites multiple interpretations. What do you hope viewers feel or experience when spending time with your work?

I think that people will have many different feelings and responses to my work and that's great! Each individual will bring their own background, life experience, and knowledge to my paintings. It is one of the reasons I love making and looking at abstract art. But, overall, I hope the viewer feels a pull to stay with each painting and spend time with it due to the powerful emotion and sensuousness the movement of paint that is intrinsic to each piece.

Martine Kasmin | Slow Dance | 2025



Anasuya Pless was born in Poggibonsi in 1996. After graduating from the Porta Romana State Art School in Florence, she graduated in photography in 2022 from LABA in Florence. Her current research focuses on portrait photography and Brand photography. She collaborates with Incontri di fotografia, assisting Valeria Pierini in artistic direction and logistics. Recent exhibitions and publications include Zerofeedback, Gallery – art on the bus by Autolinee Toscana, and Love exhibition with Barbagelata Contemporary Art Foundation.

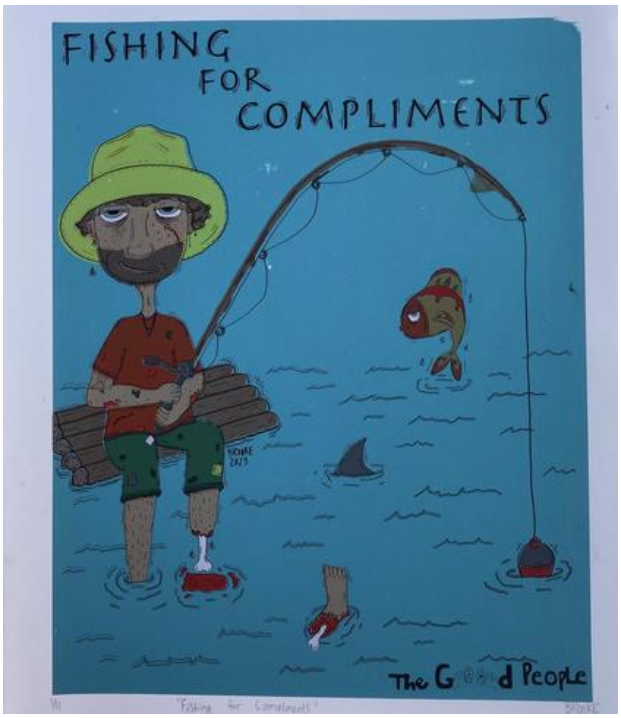
Project Statement
36-23 Freedom, peace, love and affection, these are the meanings of the white color and of the flower, fundamental elements for growing up peacefully. The two portraits: the little girl (1936) and the woman she is today (2023). Water: a living element, it brings life and takes it away, it reflects reality, a reality in this case lived at the age of twenty, too young to be lived: the war (1940 Soviet occupation of Latvia). The white disappears, to be replaced by hard and dark borders, which divide, which remain heavy. Finally, the eye that remains constant, that remembers what it has seen, that like water reflects reality.

Interview

Brooke Pennington

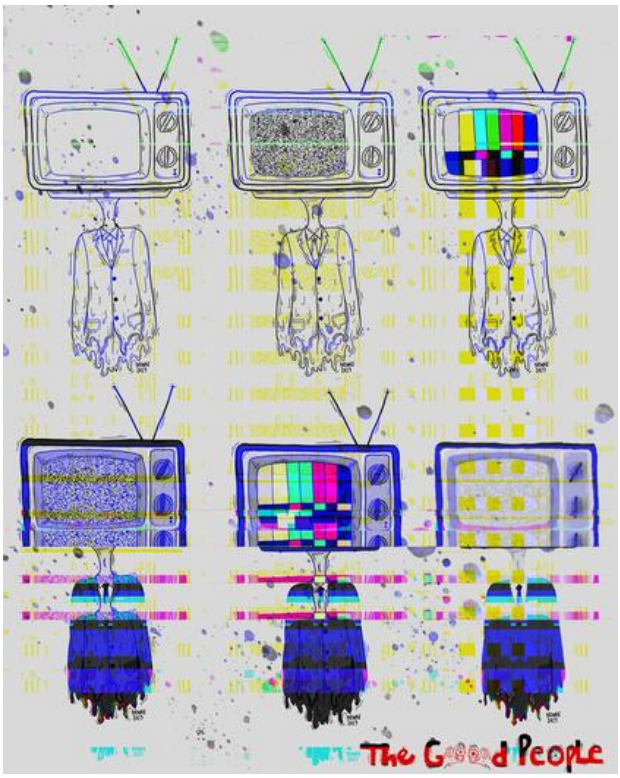
How did "The Good People" project start, and what inspired its name?

The Good People started when I was in high school during my time in quarantine. Mentally I wasn't great and was confused about what I should pursue after graduating. I became more and more obsessed with creating again to feel happy and distract myself from my thoughts and worries, and started to consider it seriously for college. I used to want to be a scientist of some sort, imaging that now seriously makes me laugh. I watched many youtube videos of artists creating their own characters and I was inspired that they all had their own style of art and I craved that for myself. I didn't know where to start in making my own so I looked at my favorite artist and art styles from people like Vexx, Gawx and other cartoons. I chose pieces I liked and changed them to fit what I had in mind. After making my first character, Jimmy, I felt a sense of attachment to it, like I just created a whole entity with a personality. (The eyes in my logo come from this character, also probably why I make so many things with eyeballs). I decided after that I wanted to create a whole world of characters and develop my own sense of style to be unique and more recognizable to me.



Brooke Pennington | Fishing For Compliments | 2023

The name was developed on a napkin during my high school restaurant job when I was telling my friend about my desire to pursue art seriously. Since the ideas I had for my characters were slightly disturbing and unsettling I wanted the name to be slightly contradictory to what you see. The characters I draw may be fucked up in some way or another, wether they are trying to rip their own eye out, or they think the worms are controlling them, they are not bad people and don't mean harm. They are actually good people and just want to be friends with everyone, they just don't know any better.



Brooke Pennington | Tv Heads Corrupted | 2025

Your characters often seem unfazed by disturbing or surreal events. What message or emotion do you hope viewers take from this contrast?

I feel like I don't often consciously think about what my art conveys. I enjoy when people tell me what they think about my art and the feeling or message they get from it. I do like when people say that it is odd and a bit unsettling because it is. But to me, the characters are comforting, I know they are good, and I hope viewers can feel or see that too. To me they are great people or things, even though they are a little fucked up, but who isn't, really. They just want to be friends with everyone, as I like to say. Half the time when I make something or come up with an idea I don't know what it means. I draw conclusions and thoughts after it's done and then I notice things about what I've created, or when others tell what they think of the piece. I enjoy hearing everyone's perspective on my art and what they experience when engaging with it.

I am the gateway between the distorted reality of what I create, and this world. That doesn't mean others can't get something from my characters. I like when other people interpret my art. I like hearing what others have to think. It builds a sort of understanding of who my characters are in this world, but ultimately they aren't in this world, they are on their own. I take comfort in knowing they can never quite be

Brooke Pennington | Jungle Madness | 2024

described in just words.

Many of your pieces feature a blend of humor and discomfort. Why do you choose to explore this emotional duality?

Honestly I'm not sure why I originally decided to create my art in this manner. I don't even like scary things and can barely sit through a horror movie. I don't want to make my pieces too gruesome and scary, just a bit unsettling, to the point where it makes the viewer think about whether they are okay or not. I wanted the characters to be friendly and appealing, even though they are slightly disturbed. Perhaps to feel relatable, and affirm that it's okay to feel certain ways in whatever situation or place you are at. I believe what I create is just patchworks from my brain, of the ways I think with anxiety, overthinking, nostalgia, things I find cool, and lots of other things that I can't quite pin point. They tend to just come out that way because that's what I think would look cool and weird. I like to think positively even though the world is shit sometimes, so I guess my drawings are also a reflection of that mindset I strive for.

What role do intrusive thoughts and overthinking play in shaping your characters?

I'd say I'm a pretty avid overthinker which can lead to some pretty crazy intrusive thoughts, so I think they pour into my ideas for an art piece. I also tend to overthink my art and ideas but I think it makes it better. Kind of the opposite of what happens when I overthink in real life. I think my ideas get weirder, maybe more unsettling, the more I think about them, every scenario they could be in, or what they could possibly be doing. Maybe that's just having an avid imagination, I don't know. I think overthinking/obsessive thinking is a positive thing when it comes to my art. It allows for a positive outlet for the intrusiveness of my thoughts. I think my ideas come at the most random of times and often by accident. I may have seen something and that sparks a random idea and it starts to snowball from there. Or if I'm talking with someone about something I'll get an idea in the middle of a conversation because they might have said something to spark an idea and then my mind starts the spiral. I feel it's hard for me to describe my art and say why I did something the way I did. But hey, I'm not a writer or a talker, this is why I create with my hands.

Can you walk us through your process of taking a character from a sketch to a 3D object or sculpture?

When I create 3D objects or sculptures I tend to pick a character I have drawn, or part of one to make. After choosing what I want to create I'll do rough sketches of the design in different angles and multiple iterations. I then move onto a 3D modeling software like Rhino or ZBrush. I digitally sculpt my idea in these programs based on references (either drawings, or 3D scans I took) or starting with a basic shape and modeling from there- this depends on what I am designing. After creating the model I then use different fabrication techniques to bring the piece to real life. This can be through a combination of 3D printing, CNC milling, or laser cutting. Then the stage of post processing happens through many different methods depending on the desired results of the piece such as, sanding, gluing, filling, priming, assembly etc. After that I do the finishing of the piece, this can polishing, painting, adding extra details like lights, wires, clear nail polish, laser cut acrylic etc

Which medium do you feel most connected to—drawing, printing, sculpture, or digital modeling?

It's hard to pick a medium I'm most connected to because I like experimenting with everything. I like testing and exploring so many different mediums because one, I want to learn everything I can to grow my skillset, and two, I enjoy seeing my designs in different materials, textures, colors, and dimensions. With that being said though, I think I like to see them most going from the 2 dimensional world to the third dimension. I love working with hands and being able to feel like I built something and put in a lot of work. Through obtaining my degree I fell in love with digital design and fabrication. Starting with an idea on paper, digitally creating that idea and figuring out the best course for actually making this "thing" to then actually fabricating the creation. The satisfaction I feel when it's all done really pushes me to keep going.

Are there any artists or creators that have particularly influenced your aesthetic or worldview?

Artist like Vexx, Gawx, Alex Pardee, and Audrey Montoya, and brands like Ripndip, Killeracid, Santacruz, Toy Machine, Garbage Pail Kids, and other skate brands, I tend to find inspiration from whether it's their designs or aesthetic. I would like to consider my art one day as a skate/street brand.

Evgeniya Korkunova

Evgeniya Korkunova | Vacuum

I suppose it's obvious, that artist's works reflect his perception of reality in common. When speaking about minimalism I always try not to "overweight" the work: it often has one main accent, and supportive objects. And I often leave the place for a small miracle, a surreal one, and it becomes accented on its own. Sensuality is my daily routine that I'm living with) By the way, this is the theme of my current project "Oversensitive" that I've started recently.

Many of your pieces are set in nature and use soft natural light. What draws you to work in natural environments, and how do you choose your locations?

Nature location is where my inspiration comes from, that's why I start thinking the idea over with the Place. Nature, its colours and textures is the endless source of inspiration for me. No matter which season is now, the weather conditions just help me to realise the concrete idea.
The location scouting is an important part of creative process, it's like to find the main hero. And when you find the suitable place, that you began to fill the space with your vision, make it 3d.

In your installations, objects often take on symbolic roles. Could you share an example where an object became central to the meaning of a project?

If we talk about still life and making installations for them it's a little different. It's fully intuitive process for me. When dealing with objects you follow your vision and viewing experiences, picking up the opposite objects that may unexpectedly match with one another by the form or texture. It becomes a sort of meditation for me, so it reflects my current

Your work often combines minimalism, surrealism, and sensuality. What inspires you to blend these elements, and how do you balance them in your compositions?

condition. To me the most vivid images that became the characters of their own are the works from my first project I am.

How did your background in documentary photography influence your current artistic voice and vision?

First and main thing is catching the moment. Following the impulse, inner voice, intuition- whatever it is called. When you capture the street scenes this is the most important - to react immediately, not to think whether it's needed or not - just push the button.. Even if it seems strange at first sight - trust the voice).

You've collaborated with various artists across different regions. What do these collaborations bring to your practice?

All of them influenced in their own way, but it always has been a self-discovery.. Sometimes it was a kind of therapy, sometimes a real challenge that you should go through. But in the end the result has always been valuable.
I remember our mentor's statement: "You're in the woods, you have sticks, leaves and 2 hours left: give me a masterpiece". At least it makes you think hard, as a result - stresses your imagination.
All this experience formed me and gave the basis, how to approach to the idea.

How do you know when a project is finished, especially when it starts as an intuitive journey?

To be frank I never feel it's finished. Sometimes my projects find the continuation in the next ones. Some of them grow from one another. So answering the question - it's still exist intuitively)

What role does the viewer play in your art? Do you aim to provoke specific reactions, or do you prefer to leave space for personal interpretation?

The most precious thing for me as for the artist is to touch the soul in some way. Let it be the intimate, personal experience of the spectator himself, I don't want to impose any points. The last thing I want is to declare something literally «head-on». For me this kind of "literature" makes visual art insufficient and useless: if you can't make the viewer feel something when looking at your work, why doing it?
I wish I could make the viewer feel and make this dialogue memorable...

Evgeniya Korkunova | Feeling Confused

Shan Lyu

Your work often explores the intersection of sound, space, and information. What initially drew you to these themes?

One obvious reason is that I'm drawn to the unknown. Personally I am an enthusiast of aviation radio. When listening to ATC (where legal), I am often astonished by the intensity and precision in the exchange of information that can be carried through language and audio. These networks are deeply embedded into mundane daily life with high repetition and structure, and it creates a sphere of information flow. The more flight activity expands globally, the harder it becomes to grasp the enormous scale and complexity of simultaneous travel, all of which is supported by meticulous systems of planning, coordination, and communication. The flow of communications, the activities of transmitting and receiving map out a architectural structure that is invisible, and remain exclusive with coded language and specific transmission formats that is inaccessible to most people. It's almost colonial.
The codes and the encrypted languages are usually veiled. What appeals to me the most is the concealed, the unknown, the things we can sense but not fully decode.

How does your background in music production influence your approach to visual or installation-based work?

I'm actually not an expert at playing musical instruments, but I do play and practice a lot. The act of practicing with this medium is an insight and revelation of my muscular sensitivity. Music, sound and listening is, for me the most dominant sense in all the sensory perceptions. My visual works and installations are designed as vessels for sounds, where the two mediums intersect to construct a space to emerge sensitive insistence of unconscious attention to the experience itself. The visual presentation is the interpretation of listening, while soundscape fluidly generates a guiding, immersive image as a whole. Theoretically it's inter-disciplinary practice. However, it's not just about the dimensions in the installation-based works, it's a model I want to demonstrate that visual output and music can be inter-changeable.
Most of my installations are sound/ interactive installations, and I link up audio and visual in a macrocosmic view. In this setting the visual presentation incorporates the symbolism of the content being listened to, so in my arrangement the installations have to be holistic in terms of being able to constitute the harmonic sequence, together with sound. This can be found in many of my notation works that connects visualisation and sound system. For example, in 'The Real Perform', there's a video of a conductor conducting a piece digital, pre-recorded music. It's an experiment in the audience's conscious and unconscious perception. This audio-visual setup tests the degree of attention paid to the visual and auditory senses, and how a cooperation is established. My practice isn't bound by disciplines—it's about dissolving them.

Shan Lyu | Little Pipe | 2023

In your statement, you mention "intimate sonic perception." Can you expand on what this means for you and how you engage it in your works?

I was influenced by the phenomenology of 'intimate immensity' that Gaston Bachelard described in his book "The Dialectics of Inside and Outside". The concept of "intimate space" is a type of space that is closely connected to our emotions, memories, and sense of self (closet, wardrobe etc.). It is often within this small and enclosed space, through the emotional connections that we experience the feeling of spaciousness or vastness.
In my work it means dialogue between "I", as the subject for intimacy, and the vast discourse of "non-I". It is reflected in many of my works when considering the physical set up and environment of the showcase. One of which is "A Theme of Hacking", where there is a combination of live capture of aviation radio from airport (represents the distant and vast audio information), and electromagnetic microphones that detect the small electronic devices that audience carry (represents the intimate signal). The tension of intimacy and

immensity arises from the intersection between global audio communication and intimate sound. It is a dynamic system that is constantly restructured by audience presence and movement—where each visitor's interaction subtly disrupts and reshapes the sonic environment.
The intimate perception is a subtle sensation and it does require some arrangement.

Several of your works transform transportation systems into visual scores. Could you describe how you translate transit data into musical structure?

Musical scores are fundamentally mathematical and alphabetical sequences arranged along horizontal and vertical axes. as long as the database can be plotted on a Cartesian coordinate system, it can be transformed into a visual score under ranges of pitch and tempo with no limit. The statistical data in my work 'Transport 14.24.22' is based on the latitude and longitude as raw data. Longitude corresponds to pitch, while latitude corresponds to time and tempo. When this data is mapped onto a piano roll, it creates a visual representation of musical progression that you see a lot in DAW. This process is like creating a new map through sound. This process also connects to alchemical and philosophical traditions, which I've been exploring in recent studies. Think of Pythagorean theory, where music and mathematics are closely connected, where numbers are music and proportion becomes interval. I like working in this logical system while still allowing space for intuitive interpretation, perceiving and shaping the score not only as data, but as an expressive medium.

How do you think sound can shift or reframe our perception of urban environments?

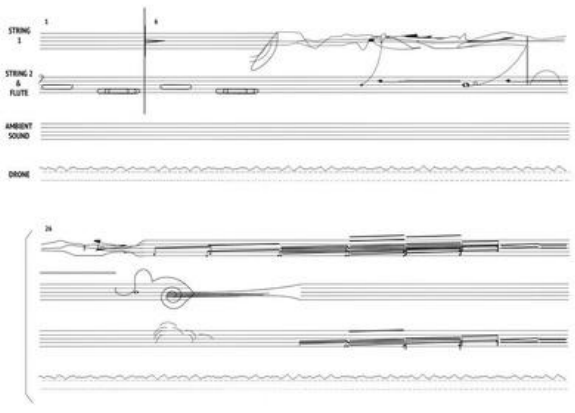
I think it depends on the medium of sound and methodology. For instance, field recordings, either captured live or played back in a public setting, can intervene with the existing urban soundscape and reshape our understanding of what we call "noise". If you gather field recordings from various points within a small urban area, you'll notice striking differences in sonic texture and sonic ambience, revealing that noise itself can be narrative.
There's also a growing body of research about urban sonic and scoring the urban soundscape. In cities, sound behaves as a signal that interacts with architecture. It bounces off surfaces, refracting around corners, and creating a sonic topography that mirrors the physical layout of the space. This allows for a re-imagining of the city as a kind of acoustic map. In my works, sound reflects infrastructural layers like wireless signal networks and human migration which are concealed but can be listened to. These networks are fundamental to the shaping of urban topography and cultural movement integrated in the daily life.

Could you talk about the process behind "The Real Perform" and how you integrated performance, projection, and sound?

The sound part is a composition of four electronic music tracks, each of which has a main sound (or instrument) type, and is played by four different speakers. The video is a conductor conducting these four speakers and is projected on the wall. I also created a visual score for the music as a guidance for the conductor, but it's an abstract guidance of sound strength and pattern instead of accurate execution. This gives the conductor a flexibility in responding to the sound piece in their own body language.
The sound tracks and the video of the conductor are recorded in advance. The key point is that what is exhibited is not a live orchestra, but just acoustic equipment, while what is presented is a conductor conducting the piece of music (from speakers) to produce a performance in the form of live orchestral concert. There is immediacy of the conducting, so the audience's first sense is a direct and reasonable behaviour between a conductor and the sound. In fact, the video and music in the work are recorded separately, so it creates a detached immediacy. The rational existence of immediacy is due to the guidance of the conductor's body movements in the video and the audience's perception of the sound of different channels in the scene.
The idea of this work is based on the relationship between visual and auditory perception and consciousness, and how the attention is paid to audio and visual at the same time. At first sight, audience instinctively and consciously understand the work as a whole, but if we take a step backwards and disassemble the sound and video of conducting, we will be using the unconscious mind. In the unconscious mind, audience pay equal/separate attention to the visual and auditory senses (Freud). That is to say, when the audience see the work, they first consciously understand the sound and video as a whole conducting performance, while in the unconscious perception, the conductor and sound are understood separately, becoming detached immediacy.

How do you design installations to guide or influence the way an audience listens?

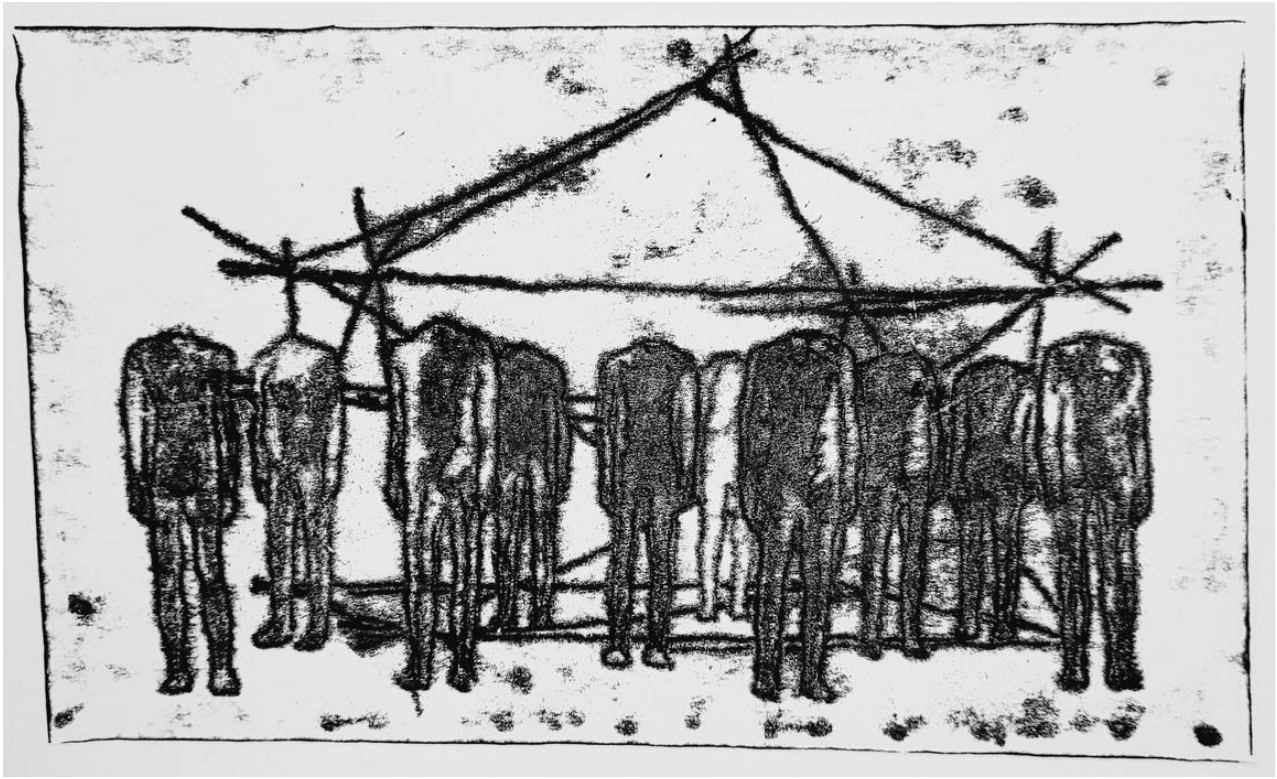
As I mentioned in earlier answer, I approach installation as a macrocosmic composition. In general I'm finding find a balance between visual and auditory presentation, designing each element so that it contributes to a holistic, harmonic experience. Rather than drawing the audience's focus to either the visual installation or the sound alone, I want both to function as integrated parts of a unified sonic architecture. My installations are often minimalist in form, to guide the audience to the sound source, or acting as a hinge for the narrative context within the sonic material. For example, in 'A Theme of Hacking', the arrangement of speakers, antennas, and microphones forms a pentagram, a geometry drawn from alchemical references to the "microcosm." It is a small detail but I want to turn the installation into a resonant instrument that represents the unity of sensory perception and bodily awareness.



plsn.plsn (Arina Bashashina)
Born in 2000 in Yekaterinburg. In 2020, she graduated from the Shadr Sverdlovsk Art School with a specialization in easel painting. The same year, she entered the Ilya Repin St. Petersburg Academy of Arts, Faculty of Graphics. Currently, she is a sixth-year student in the studio of A. S. Zastavsky. She lives and works in St. Petersburg. Arina works with both graphic and painting mediums. Her approach is clearly figurative. The artist sets herself the task of exploring universal human concepts and sublimating personal experience. Literary works of fiction also serve as a source of inspiration, allowing her to expand her search for timeless themes to analyze.

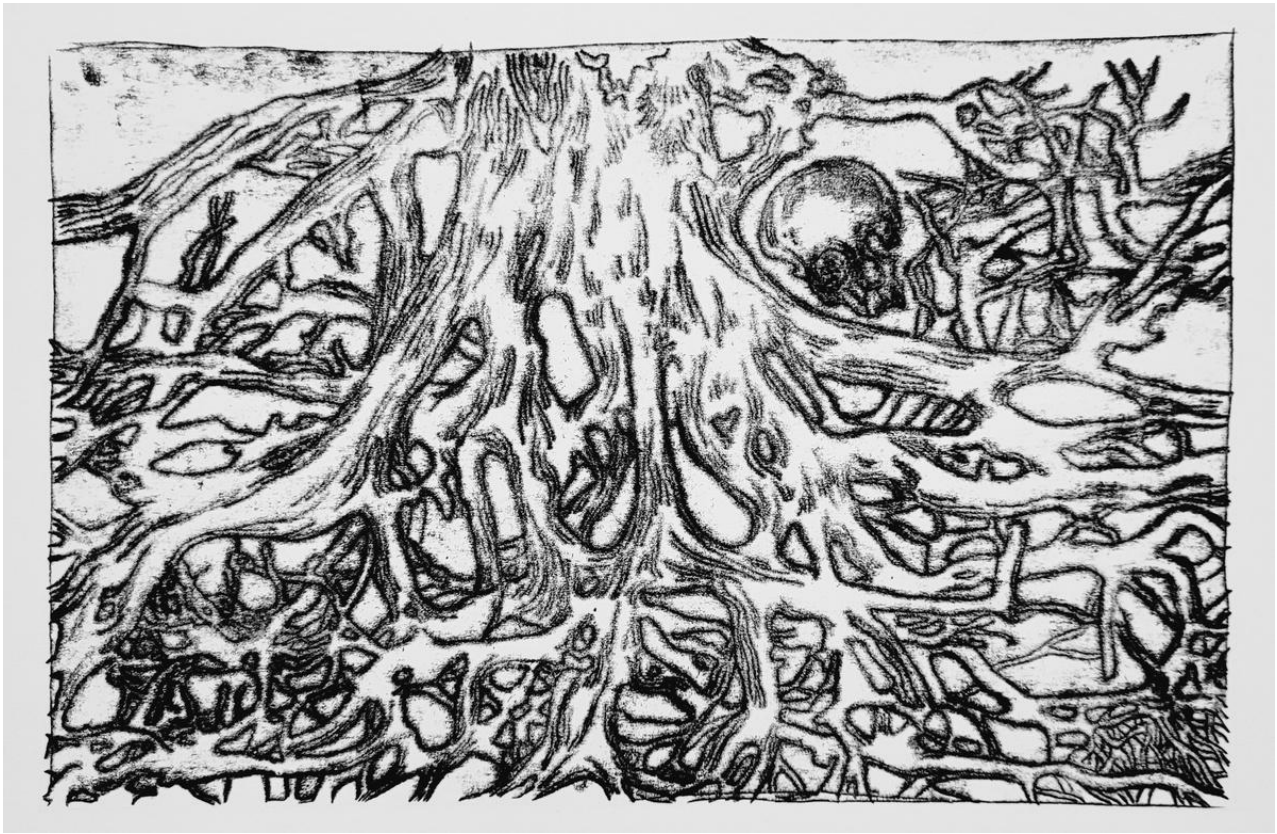
Project Statement
The series “Dialogue” is inspired by the Old Testament biblical story “The Book of Job.” Illustrating this ancient biblical narrative turned out to be an intriguing yet challenging task. Job is a righteous man who faces the trial of true faith. For me, the title of the series reflects the nature of the interaction between man and God in this story and reveals the essence of the book itself. The works are created using the technique of diatype.

Arina Bashashina | And sat in the ashes | 2025



Arina Bashashina | And the house fell upon the youths | 2025

Arina Bashashina | Roots | 2025



Kevin Hamilton

Your work combines precision and abstraction. How do you balance structure with creative experimentation?

It is important to me that my work is a creative bridge, figurative and abstract qualities side by side in the same piece. My work is most successful to me when it retains small just recognisable details of the structure or location that is taken from. It is the viewpoint and the combination of reflection which moves the piece away from simple documentation and more into the realm of abstraction. Finding that bridge is the aspect of the work that can take the longest; experimenting with the viewpoints taken, balancing the documented details with the radical new shapes and forms created with reflected imagery are the real creative aspect, the voyage of discovery. Making subtle changes in the arrangement or zooming into a small detail is the real magic for me. It still fills me with awe, the same awe I had when looking at the world through a kaleidoscope with mirrors and coloured glass.

Could you describe your process—from selecting a building to the final composition? How do you decide which details to highlight?

Reasoning behind the choice subject matter is a difficult to pinpoint, it is a difficult process. In a structure I am looking for sharp crisp detail, perhaps a decorative cornice or frieze this is particularly important in looking at white structure. Colour is the next thing; it could be in the use of warm sandstone quoins or jambs with a carved keystone. However, this is not always the case I have found beautiful forms within the rusty riveted structures found on bridges and around docklands or modern glass and steel structures devoid of traditional decorative can reveal the most interesting combinations of texture and pattern.
Once settled on a location I record it photographically, isolating the detail examining the subject from every angle or perspective. Mapping the building returning to the location at differing times to record the effect of light and contrast. From the 300 to 500 shots of the location I can then start building the kaleidoscope composition of the location. In the choice of shot I am looking for patterns and textures or repetitive forms, often settling on shot which show contrasting layers of pattern and colour- views looking through arches, perhaps catching a contrast of light and shadow.
When I have made my choice of image then it's a case of making finer adjustments, contrast, colour balance, further zooming in to reveal the hidden beauty. To create a piece I would have numerous sketches, test pieces working out

What first drew you to photographing architecture, and how did your practice evolve into creating kaleidoscopic compositions?

From an early age I have always been drawn to buildings and structures. I am from a family of architects and builders as a result I developed an appreciation of all types of traditional and modern architectural styles from an early age.
Photographing my environment was a natural way for me to study buildings around me. Having grown up in Belfast at the height of the 'Troubles' I was very aware of tradition; how that term was a way dividing people rather than something to be celebrated.
Where I am from locations and buildings have a history and association with one cultural side or another. I want my work to be a celebration of beauty which has been lost previously. I took details from locations which had traditional links to differing cultures; such as Stormont castle, (which had been the administration centre for the British government) or Millfield (An Irish Republican site). I wanted to create work that focused on the beauty within the structures not its historic affiliations, I honed in on small overlooked details and created compositions divorced from the one sided histories.
A voyage of discovery does not necessitate the travel to far off places but can start by just learning to see what we know and take for granted in a new way, revealing beauty which had been hidden from sight.

Kevin Hamilton | Belfast | 2021

Kevin Hamilton | Venice | 2023

which photograph transforms into a kaleidoscopic collage. For me success is a piece that has that very fine balance of abstraction and figurative quality. Each work must have a documentary element; something that is recognisable. Coupled with this, a uniqueness of form which is revealed through the reflected of the detail giving a whole new perspective a whole new way of seeing.

Many of your works feel like visual mandalas. Do spirituality, meditation, or symbolism play a role in your creative vision?

I personally find the whole process from the taking of photographs to the creation of the kaleidoscopes genuinely uplifting. Photographing buildings such as cathedrals, universities or civic buildings gives me the opportunity to truly see and truly marvel at the beauty within the structure, at times taking my breath away.
My first contact with a location is generally contemplative, just looking; enjoying the structure taking in the forms, the patterns, the texture. Really looking is such an important part of the process, which sometimes is overlooked, quiet contemplation is highly recommended. This meditative way of seeing is the best way I believe to appreciate what I do. Each kaleidoscopic piece I do has an air of intrigue, a fragment of recognisable form which links the piece to the location. Often this can only be seen after genuine meditative examination.

How do the cities you photograph—like Venice, Amsterdam, or Belfast—influence the tone or structure of each piece?

I have been extremely fortunate to see and record so many wonderful and amazing locations. One cannot but be influenced by the surroundings one is in; in Barcelona my work was influenced by the vibrant light and colour, from Vienna my work is drawn from the shapes and forms of the Imperial grandeur. Each location is different and provide a myriad of aspects and perspectives. When photographing in different locations I must approach each location with a very open mind, without preconceptions. A location may not be as expected; at times it is not the highly decorated or well documented aspects of a location but a small apparently insignificant detail such as a glimpse view through an archway or a hinge on a door which provide me with the best subject matter and the most unique piece. I find it is often the case I see more potential when revisiting a second or third time.

Your art invites viewers to "look again" at familiar places. What reactions have you observed from people recognizing a landmark in an unfamiliar form?

My work is not commonplace, although photography is my medium it is not a documentary tourist shot, I want my work to be a signpost, to help people recognise the beauty around them. In my work I am analysing and then reconstructing locations that people apparently know, by creating a different perspective I am challenging my audience to see all environments differently. What I really want to see is everybody really looking. Appreciate the world around, see the beauty, take your focus from your phone.
I have seen bemused disbelief on the faces of many who see the work, trying to work out or reconstruct the location in their head, often places they see everyday seem completely different.
One solo show at the gallery from the Linen Hall Library was based on the Victorian centre of Belfast, each piece was presented without a title or name plates. The gallery goers were encouraged to find the location from each piece by raising their eyes and actually taking notice of the environment. Feedback from this show was very positive, helping all who were involved appreciate small details.

How do you see your work contributing to the dialogue around urban space, memory, and cultural identity?

Notions of Culture or Heritage have in the past, where I am from, been distorted into labels or even a stick to beat 'the other side' with. Through my work I am challenging us to see where we live in a new way. In Ireland we are more than thatched cottages or flags, my work takes what we know and turns it on its head… literally. My work creates a different way of looking at what we see every day; everybody in Belfast knows the City Hall or the GPO in Dublin, but seldom do we actually look at the detail or beauty of our built environment because of the perceived cultural links with one or other tradition. I want people to celebrate the environment we live and work in.
I want everybody to be aware that the miraculous is all around, all you have to do is look or know how to look, my work emphasises the positive aspect of our culture. The legacy of the past has been a source for many artistic works, For years terms such as culture or heritage have been abused in the North, 'culture' has been used as a political stick to divide communities. Heritage and culture is the focus of my work but not in a 'traditional' way. Through my work I am challenging us to see Ireland in a new way, my work focus's on the dynamic and positive highlighting the best of Ireland. I take the traditional and redefine it showing the intrinsic beauty which can be appreciated by all.
The world can be seen in a different way only if you try and really see, I hope my work can help us move towards a greater appreciation of all environments around us.

Milton Swami Parraga

Milton is a Houston based artist originally from Mexico City. Milton is a fiction writer, a filmmaker, and a painter. He spends his time attending the cinema, the theater, and bookstores. Milton is currently working on his first novel. His publications include: Microfiction Monday Magazine, 50-Word Stories, and Defunkt Magazine.

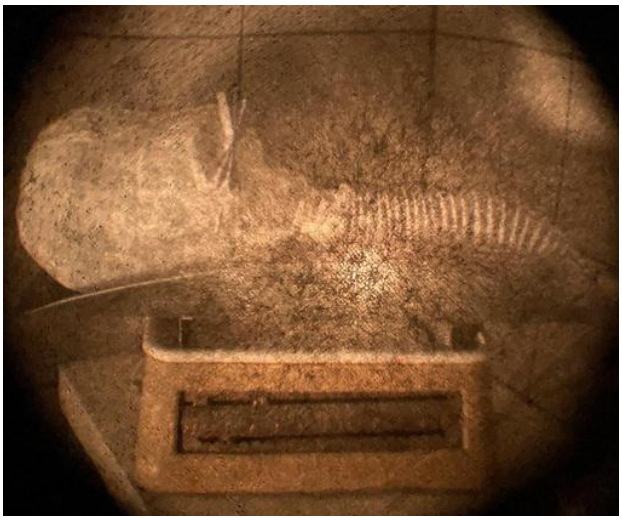
Project Statement
By observing the world around me, I seek to render the colors inhabited by my subjects onto a blank page. This collection of illustrations is part of a notebook that travels with me. Each illustration is crafted with pens and markers. My goal is to bring each of my subjects into a dimension of simplicity by stripping away any attempt of realism, and focusing on the element of play. The result is how I imagine a child might see the world. Through the eyes of my inner child, I hope to regain a sense of wonder of even the most ordinary things.

Milton Parraga | Nightcrawler | 2022

Leo Bacharach

Your background bridges music, physics, photography, and fine art. How do these disciplines influence your current artistic practice?

Absolutely everything I can absorb into my mind—from the fields you mentioned, or any others—affects my art. My consciousness is a black box. Information enters it, and art emerges as the output—my subconscious's way of processing all those impressions and data. I cannot know exactly how everything influences my work, but the fact that it all has an impact is beyond doubt. Music plays a huge role in my life, especially rock music and 20th-century classical music (Schoenberg, Cage, Berio, etc.). Their conceptual clarity and precision in musical expression certainly influence the conceptual nature of my photographic work.



Leo Bacharach | Newborn baby | 2024

What inspired you to represent human life through symbolic head sculptures?

The trigger for this series was the war in Ukraine. I myself was born in Ukraine, and many people around me have been affected by this theme. I especially want to mention the film Let's Leave it for Better Times by Dirk Großer. Even though he is German, he traveled to Ukraine multiple times to interview contemporary artists and explore how the war influences art. I thought something like, "I'm Ukrainian, and also an artist. I need to do something or say something about this!" That's how the idea arose—to portray the horror and senselessness of war. Initially, I explored ways to depict the death of an abstract soldier, which led to the sculpture that became the "Death" phase. Later came the idea to generalize and create a series of different phases of life.

Can you tell us about the materials and techniques you use in your works?

I started with classical black-and-white film photography, then switched to digital. But even now, I occasionally return to analog methods. For example, this year I learned how to do cyanotypes. And right now, there's a box on my desk I'm about to turn into a

Leo Bacharach | Death | 2024

pinhole camera. Regarding the photographs of abstract heads specifically—they're mostly digital photographs captured using a handmade semi-transparent intermediate screen, which creates an additional effect: the images move away from realism and begin to resemble paintings. The base of each sculpture is ultimately a foam head bought from a store, which I modified in various ways. The most fascinating part was creating the "Death" phase out of charcoal for grilling. The mold I used to shape that charcoal sculpture—from fabric soaked in acrylic varnish—became the foundation for another phase that precedes death, called "Broken".

The series seems to follow a chronological path — from soul to death. Is there a narrative or philosophical concept guiding this progression?

Just as I dislike being preached to, I also avoid preaching. I believe art should be as self-evident as possible—so that the meaning of a piece can be understood without lectures about "what the author meant." That's why my photographs don't contain ethical, political, or philosophical messages. They're simply depictions of "typical life" through archetypal images of its phases. Each person is free to meditate on them, relate them to their own life, and draw (or not draw) conclusions.

Do any of the stages in your series (e.g. Teenager, Death, Adult) hold personal meaning or are based on autobiographical elements?

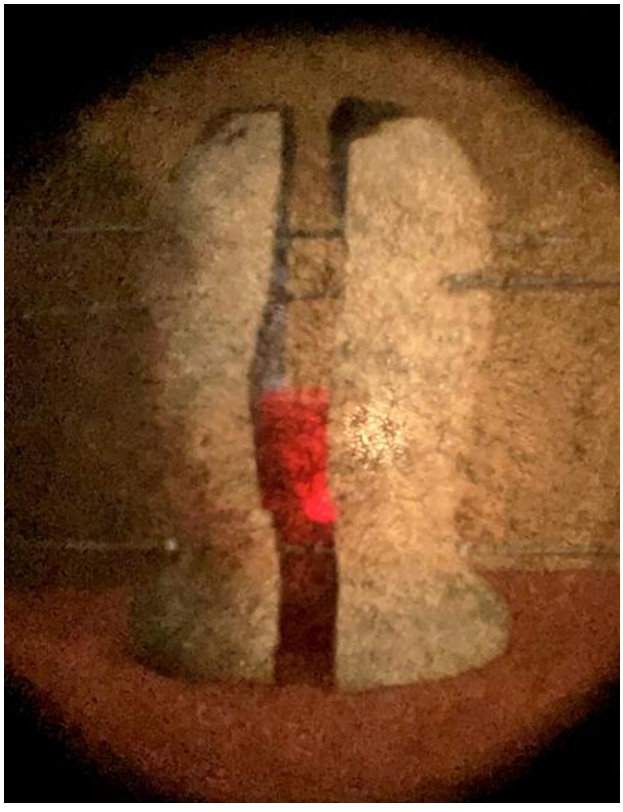
No, not really. Though of course, I didn't just conjure the imagery out of thin air—I saw, absorbed, or experienced many of them. For example, the children's scale against tiled walls—I remember that from my childhood, when I had to stay in the hospital for a month at around age seven. That photo turned out very eerie. It's honestly my favorite in the series.

Your images have a theatrical, almost ritualistic presence. How important is symbolism in your work?

I love symbolic, minimalist, and conceptual art. My favorite artist is Giorgio de Chirico from his metaphysical period. Philosophically, my world includes Freemasonry, Kabbalah, and tarot cards. I wouldn't want to be pigeonholed, but yes—symbolism and theatrical clarity in artistic expression are extremely important to me.

You've worked on a software for artistic tessellations. Does digital technology play a role in your sculpture work as well?

In this series of abstract heads, I hardly used digital technology—only to crop the images and make slight adjustments to contrast, brightness, and saturation. The sculptures I photographed were created without any digital tools: just foam templates, glue, varnish, and a variety of additional materials.
That said, I do have one sculpture that was shaped based on a tessellation pattern generated by my software.



Leo Bacharach | Broken | 2024

Lyubov Belova

Graphic designer, illustrator, ceramics artist. I was born in Chelyabinsk and graduated from Art college there. After that I came to St Petersburg to study at the Saint Petersburg Stieglitz State Academy of Art and Design. I fell in love with this city and stayed here forever. I graduated from the Academy (Graphic Design Department). And I am happy to combine my work as a graphic designer with ceramics. I teach a whole range of artistic disciplines and participate in exhibitions. I love travelling, especially if it is a visit to natural areas, combined with eco-orientation, or a local history excursion. I spend every summer in the Ladoga Skerries National Park like a forestfire fighter volunteer. I combine travelling and ethnographic work. In travelling I collect inspiration for ceramic projects. Nature and history are endless sources of inspiration for me.

Project Conception

The story is built around the temporality, transience and changeability of what is in my hands. It is a story about how my emotions change while I am waiting for a better chance. The fruits wither and spoil, showing that life is fleeting. As I look at the row of fruits from fresh to rotten, I realise that somewhere along the way a very important moment has been missed, and feelings change from joy to sadness, regret, and disappointment.

Liubov Belova | Lost moment | 2024

Marija Jojić

Your work often centers on performative femininity and identity. What first drew you to these themes?

Great question! Themes surrounding womanhood have always been important to me. At a young age, I noticed unfair expectations and inconsistencies in the way the world treats women. It imposes certain standards that make us feel as if we are constantly performing, while ridiculing us for our femininity at the same time. Even in the art world, it has always seemed to me that femininity is either undervalued or seen as unserious. Playful brushstrokes, vibrant colors, the use of pink, and similar elements are not well-received at an academy that values tradition. I felt compelled to challenge that. Throughout art history, the female nude was a central motif, yet the woman was always seen as a muse, rarely as an artist herself. We need more femininity that speaks for itself, and for that reason, I think that being a woman and an artist, and exploring self-portraiture and female figuration, is inherently a political act.

How has your personal experience of being in your 20s shaped your creative process and artistic voice?

My coming-of-age story was all about deciding what I wanted from life, making the right choices, and ultimately finding peace with myself. There was certainly a minor identity crisis of being “not a girl, not yet a woman.” I felt the need to choose the right career, the right aesthetic, and an artistic style. I pressured myself to figure out exactly what I needed

to do to shape my identity in the most authentic way possible. I did a lot of self-work: reading, learning, therapy, and deeply introspective art. Now, I feel like I'm on the right path, and I've realized I don't have to have all the answers.

In your self-portraits, you seem to balance vulnerability and strength. How do you approach that tension in your work?

They go hand in hand. Being vulnerable requires the most strength. We live in a world that commends stoicism, seriousness, and pragmatism (which is great), but many people seem to be afraid of their own emotions. Being open and vulnerable is what makes us truly seen, and I would never want to rob myself of experiencing that. I try to approach my visual language with that same honesty, and I hope that people can read all the different emotions that go into these artworks and relate to them.

You use both oil painting and ink drawing. How do you choose which medium to work with for a particular idea or emotion?

There are several factors. I like to experiment with different media, as it helps me stay motivated and curious. There is also the question of practicality and space. For example, when I'm working from home, I don't like using oils because of the fumes, so I turn to sketching and drawing. It also has to do with the price of different materials—I work with what I can afford at the particular moment. But no matter the medium, the starting point is always similar. First, I search for inspiration in books, movies, and the world around me. Then, I sit in front of the blank paper or canvas and really think through what I want to present. The finished product is never identical to the original idea, but that's the beauty of it.

What role does the body play in your visual language, and how has your perception of the body evolved through your art?

In the first two years of my studies, it was mandatory to do live model studies and learn human anatomy. It wasn't until recently that I realized how significant that practice really was. For me, the human body is one of the most complex subjects in art. It definitely challenged me the most. It is suggestive of human nature and emotion; it is bilateral but never fully symmetrical; and it consists of many parts that have their own movement. While there are some established rules for drawing the human body, every body is unique. Trying to paint my own body as accurately as possible and looking at myself more objectively helped me overcome some insecurities and stop emphasizing them.

Several of your pieces suggest emotional introspection. Is art a therapeutic process for you?

For sure. I enjoy solitary moments of creation. I don't think the process is relaxing per se, but there is a therapeutic element in feeling the urge to create and express yourself, and then getting that dopamine rush once it's done. I love thinking about what I'm going to paint, the philosophy and symbolism behind the ideas, and the elements that make a good artwork. It is never finished until I feel satisfied—I love searching for those answers within.

You've exhibited in residencies in Prishtina and Sićevo. How did these experiences influence your perspective as an artist?

Lately, I've been drawn to expanding my practice beyond the studio. I like workshops and residencies because I find it very beneficial for a young artist to travel, socialize, and connect with others. It's good to remove yourself from the monotony of everyday life once in a while and surround yourself with unfamiliar people and fresh perspectives. I cherish the memories and connections I've made during these experiences, and I will continue to travel and meet new people and cultures in the pursuit of knowledge. I'm grateful these kinds of opportunities still exist for emerging artists.

Lena Langer

Endless attempts to find a modern Russian identity — and the impossibility of fully grasping it — are at the core of my artistic search. As an artist, I am deeply concerned with the feeling of disconnection between Russian culture and how it is perceived today. Is it possible to reinterpret this culture and integrate it into a contemporary context? How can it become engaging for a broader audience?

I explore the cultural code: folklore, beliefs, traditions, omens, rituals, and holidays. But my perspective is that of a person living in 2025, immersed in digital culture — far from the idea of putting on bast shoes and walking around Moscow with an armful of firewood. That's why I bring tradition into a new dimension — through the language of memes, jokes, and play.

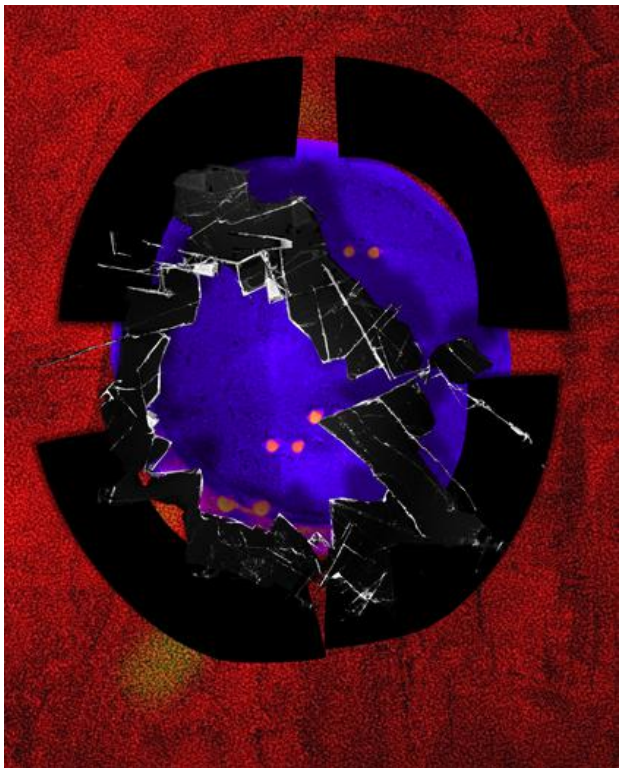
I use acrylic and markers because they speak to brightness, simple forms, and recognizable colors. They reflect the aesthetics of memes and digital illustration — a visual culture that resonates with today's audience. I consciously avoid traditional painting methods that require meditative viewing. In a world where attention dissolves in seconds, I need expressive, simple, flat, and memorable images that immediately capture the viewer's eye.

Why memes? Because if we talk about traditions with solemnity and ask everyone to wear sarafans and kokoshniks, we'll meet complete rejection. No one associates themselves with that image. But if we make it part of contemporary culture, it can take on new meanings. This is the foundation of my artistic method: I take the cultural code, transform it into a form that modern viewers can relate to, and return it to everyday life — now as a vibrant and ironic symbol.

Lena Langer | Through the forests, across the seas | 2024

Lena Langer | Seasons. Autumn | 2025

Teeyo Williams



Teeyo Williams | Right cornea | 2025

recall a time when it guided you through something difficult?

I recently lost my grandfather and it's still really new. Some days blur together and emotions show up uninvited. On top of that, the pressure of content creation, trying to keep up, and just existing in the current state of the world; it can be a lot. But creativity has been the one place where I can just be. I'm not creating to avoid it all. I'm creating right in the middle of it. It gives me somewhere to place the feelings, the tension, the confusion. Every time I make something with my hands, I feel grounded.

Your art blends storytelling, sculpture, and emotional expression. How do you decide what medium to use for each piece?

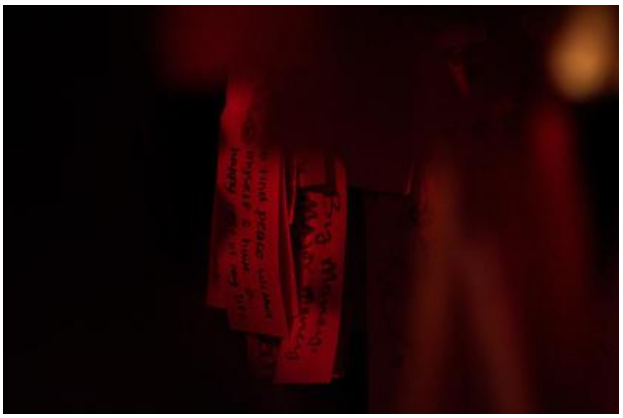
There was this one time I was supposed to be at an event, and I started spiraling because I thought I wasn't going to make it. I could feel that frustration creeping in, but I stopped myself. I thought maybe God is slowing me down on purpose. So I sat at my table and started working on a piece for an upcoming exhibit. It was a turntable I had sculpted out of foam, and I had been stuck trying to figure out what could hold the tonearm. Then I looked over and saw a matchbox just sitting there. It was perfect. Like it had been waiting for me. I ended up making it to the event on time. And stressing would've been for nothing. That whole moment reminded me that the medium really does choose me. I don't force it. I just try to stay present enough to catch the magic when it shows up.

What role does spirituality play in your creative process? Is it intentional or intuitive?

Your work often speaks to the inner child. What does that phrase mean to you personally?

It speaks to that curious and adventurous spirit. That part of you that turns elevator buttons into a face or sees a scratch on your grandma's coffee table as an island surrounded by a sea of mahogany colored mud. My intention is to keep that spirit alive, to nurture it, and to speak life into it. I think there's freedom in remembering that imagination used to be enough. I create spaces and pieces that give people permission to reconnect with that version of themselves, the one that still exists under all the layers.

You describe creativity as your compass. Can you



Teeyo Williams | Big money | 2025

Teeyo Williams | Tired | 2025

It is both. Sometimes I come to the table with intention, like I am opening the door for something sacred to show up. Other times, it moves through me without warning and I only realize afterward how spiritual the moment really was. Creating feels like a quiet kind of communion. Even in the small things, like gluing something down or choosing a color, there is this deeper conversation happening. I just try to stay open to it because even when it is subtle, it is always there.

How do children respond to your workshops or exhibitions? Do you have any moments that stayed with you?

I ran a workshop where the kids built their own boats. I brought in all these little materials and let them go wild figuring out how to put it together, testing what floated and what sank. I loved watching them navigate the whole process. The loud ones were leading, the quiet ones started opening up, and before I knew it, they were taking direction from each other and working like a team. One of my kids got frustrated when her boat started taking on water. Before she could storm off, I called her back. We sat down and had a real talk. She was ready to quit, but I saw myself in her at that moment, the way I have to talk myself through setbacks too. We went back and forth, trying to figure out what was going wrong. Sometimes you just have to pause and look at things differently. The fix is not always obvious on the first try. She did not win the race, but she stayed. That was the win for me. Watching her walk away proud not because everything went perfectly but because she pushed through is the kind of moment that sticks with you. That is what keeps me showing up.

What does healing through art look like to you—personally and communally?

Healing through art looks like giving myself permission to be messy and real without judgment. It's about showing up for the parts of me that hurt, the parts that are scared or broken, and letting them speak through colors, shapes, and textures. Personally, it's a way to hold space for my own growth and release. Communally, healing through art is about creating a safe place where people can come as they are, share their stories, and find connection without needing words. It's the unspoken understanding that we all carry wounds, but through creativity and shared experience, we can begin to mend together. It's messy, it's beautiful, and it's necessary.

Much of your work carries a sense of layered symbolism. Do you create with specific messages in mind, or do you let the viewer decide?

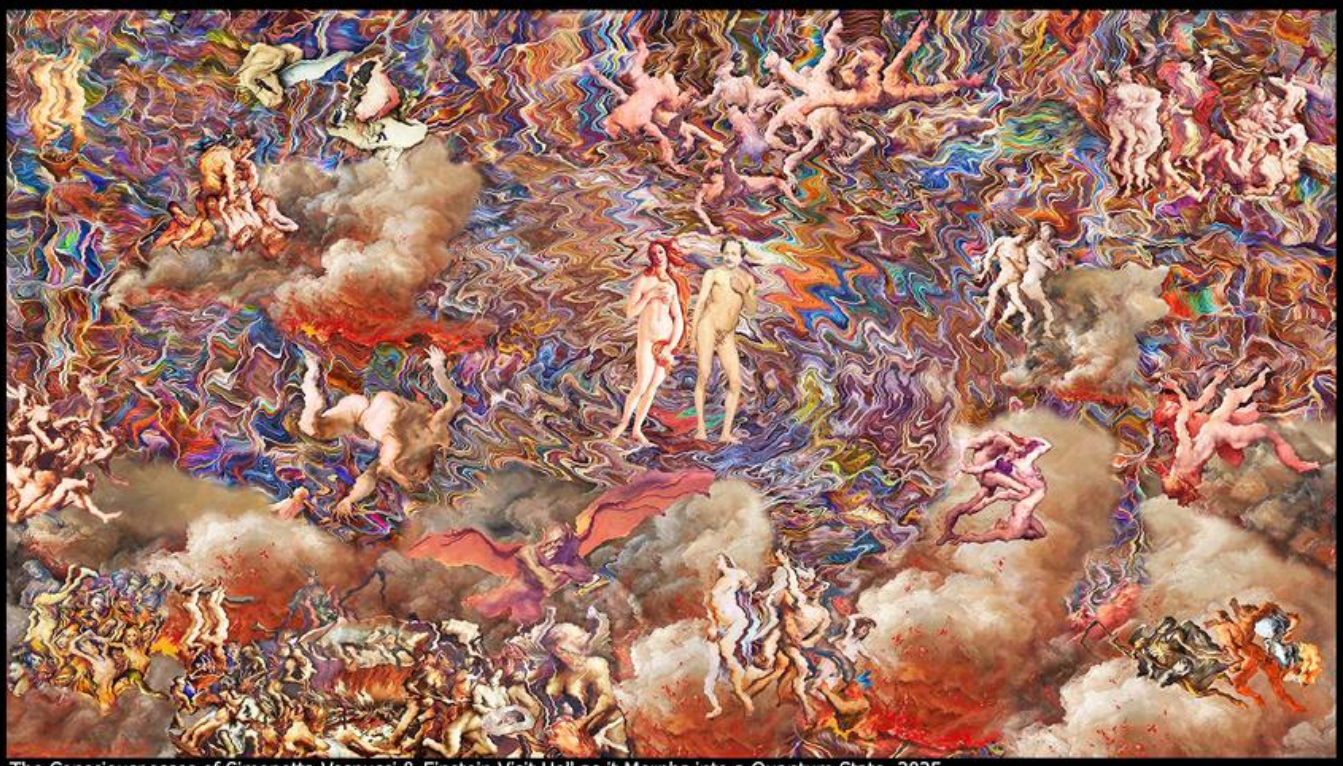
For the pencil I made for Trinidad James' Hommewrk store(Atlanta), I didn't use paint. I used fabric, chains, and old, faded "Admit One" tickets I found in my friend's garage. The body was wrapped in yellow gator skin, which gave it a bold texture. I added gold chains to the ferrule, not to overdo it, but to nod to All Gold Everything in a subtle, intentional way. I wanted to honor that moment in his career without making it the whole story. The "Admit One" tickets felt symbolic. Even though they all said "one," there were so many of them. That reminded me of how Hommewrk leans into the idea of learning through experience; how one moment, one lesson, or one person can open the door to more. It felt like a visual way to echo "each one, teach one." I think he expected a prop, but what he got was a piece of art that felt personal. Unapologetically him. That's how I create. Sometimes the meaning is clear from the start, and sometimes it finds me while I'm working. Either way, I love how the viewer brings their own experience to it. That exchange keeps the piece alive.

Teeyo Williams | Fathers Day | 2025

William A. Brown left graduate school in psychology to become a photographer in the 1970s. He received a MFA from the University of Florida in 1972. He went on to become a founder of the Contemporary Art Center in Atlanta and the studio program at Emory University where he taught for over 40 years. His work merges conventions from photography, film, sculpture, and painting. Mr. Brown has an extensive international and national showing history primarily in video. His current project, Paintings for a Robot, pioneers the use digital techniques to generate montage images that are rendered by the first practical robotic painting device.

Project Statement
'm an artist who is a first adapter of a robotic oil painting system that I believe will radically change the way paintings are made going forward. I create photoshop files that I secure as NFTs. These digital masters can then be rendered, in any number, by the NFT owner as archival oil paintings utilizing a new technology developed by Art Matr in Brooklyn, N.Y. These works can also be printed using traditional photographic printing techniques directly from the master file. This brave new world of machine fine art painting signals a new singularity between photography, digital image manipulation, and oil painting. Distinctions between these seemingly unique media will collapse I believe.

God Playing Dice with the Solar System Literally: 36 Orbs Randomly Sorted Using a Random Number Generator. 2025



The Consciousnesses of Simonetta Vespucci & Einstein Visit Hell as it Morphs into a Quantum State 2025

Gravity's Quantum Rainbow 2025

Geoff Langan

Can you tell us about your artistic background? How did you come to focus on photography?

I had been a professional portrait/reportage photographer in London for most of the 1980's and 90's. Most of my work was editorial for magazines such as Marie Claire, Cosmopolitan, and Tatler, as well as the Saturday and Sunday colour supplements. This was a fascinating time, as I had the opportunity to meet people I would not normally encounter. One day I could be photographing the Governor of the Bank of England, the next day a feature on Transvestites and their Wives, then a three-star Michelin Chef in his kitchen. Those days were golden.
After our first child was born, we moved out of London to a small town near Bristol, Southwest England. My photographic work had been dwindling, and I tried to reinvent myself as a food photographer. It worked for a while, then...it didn't. Looking back, I could have blamed the era of digital photography, which made photography seem cheap and easy, which in turn, devalued professional photography. I could have easily blamed the introduction of giant photo

Geoff Langan | Kampachi Dori, Tokyo

Geoff Langan | Konishi Sakura Dori, Nara

libraries, which turned stock photography into high-end, affordable images for clients. I could have blamed the universities whose annual coterie descended on London's magazine and newspaper world eager for a chance to do work, even if they didn't get paid. The person I didn't blame was myself.
With the lack of photographic work, I had time on my hands, so I decided to volunteer at Barley Wood, a residential drug and alcohol rehabilitation unit. They immediately offered me a job as a Support Worker, and that was the end of my photography career. The relief was enormous. During my time at Barley Wood, I learned so much about the true nature of addiction. I also discovered that I was an alcoholic. I was so inspired by the work at Barley Wood that I went to university and studied to become a Counsellor. I spent the next ten years specialising as an Addiction Counsellor.
Time passed, circumstances changed, and I grew frustrated with Counselling. I started a company with a friend offering Online Virtual Tours using a Matterport Camera. We started to get asked for still photography, so I borrowed my son's camera, and the spark was reignited. Technology had advanced so much, and I was infatuated with what it could do and how it would allow me to express myself.
I call myself a photographer, but I don't feel like one. In truth, I try to avoid conventional photography if possible. I'm more interested in how far away from photography I can get, while still using a camera. I welcome and embrace Artificial Intelligence, and I believe it is the next giant creative step for me.

What draws you to urban and industrial landscapes in particular?

I grew up in a small town just outside Dublin, Ireland. As soon as I left home, I moved to London, where I lived for over twenty years. I loved London and it never let me down. Cities feel like the heart of a nation, where all the lifeblood flows. A healthy city like London can support all walks of life and allow them to breathe. True, it has its poverty, crime, and desolation, but it also hosts some of the most outstanding achievers, the finest minds, the most creative artists (of all disciplines) and gifted sports people. In healthy cities, there is room to grow, room to flourish. If you want a snapshot of a country, visit its cities.

Your work feels very intentional in its composition. How do you approach photographing a new city?

When I go to a new city, I want to experience it in the most visceral way I can, without being noticed. I'm aware of the contradiction in what I have just said, but I like to wander, to drift wherever I want to, stop whenever I feel like, without

Geoff Langan | Kamigyou Ku, Kyoto

distraction. I once spent three days in Nashville, and on the last day, I realised that, other than ordering food or asking for directions, I hadn't spoken to anyone in all my time there. As an only child, I can tolerate my own company for extended periods.

I like to research extensively before visiting new places. This includes examining top tourist destinations, consulting guidebooks, exploring areas on Google Maps, and watching YouTube guides. I used to think that researching the place would spoil the surprise, but good knowledge means that I don't miss anything important.

All that said, I rely heavily on my intuition and perception when I am there. I might have a route in mind, but it's not about the destination. I am aware of what is happening around me..... most of the time.

And of course, there is the element of pure chance! When I started out as a photographic assistant, I worked for some excellent Still Life photographers. It was all about perfection, endlessly pursuing a predetermined result. It took me years to shed that rigid thinking. In Japan, I would regularly just point my camera straight out the window, not knowing what was coming up ahead and allowing chance to dictate what the camera captured.

Post-production is a much more considered time. That's when I can easily spend hours on a photograph applying colours, contrast and composition until it 'feels' right. I can never decide which is more satisfying: photography or post-production.

You mention perception and memory—how do these concepts influence the way you frame or process an image?

I envy people with good memories. I wish I could recall, at a moment's notice, the details of a conversation, an event or even a place. I have such a poor memory, to the extent that I have rewatched films and still cannot recall a single detail of them. The benefit used to be that our collection of DVDs lasted for years without having to spend more money.

My latest work is from a trip I did to Japan. I had bought myself an excellent compact camera, especially for the trip, but when I got there, I quickly found it wasn't the right tool for me. I started experimenting with the panoramic mode on my iPhone 15 Pro. As we travelled around by bus, taxi and train, I pointed the camera straight out the window at the passing cityscape. The pictures I took expressed perfectly how I saw Japan, a series of broken and fragmented images assembled into a single photograph. The photographs were bizarre, elongated, and fragmented, showing slices of buildings, people, cars, and shopfronts. This was also how I remembered Japan. Rarely was it in one continuous story line, but instead it was lots of tiny episodes compiled into a single image or memory. I don't know if anyone else sees new places the way I do.

Why did you choose to present the photographs as objects, encased in resin and plaster? What does this physicality add to the work?

When my family took a holiday on the glorious Achill Island, off the West coast of Ireland, I bought a photograph by the artist John Michael Nikolai (https://www.nikolai.com/). It was unusual as it was encased in resin with a hardwood backing. It was, and still is, a beautiful object in our home. I have always wanted a reason to adopt this technique for my own work. The images from Japan seemed the perfect opportunity to use them.

The photographs I took in Japan didn't resemble anything I had seen before, so I wanted to present them in a unique way. It took me months to learn how to use resin, and I am still learning. I use plaster on the reverse as I want to give it an aged and distressed look.

The idea behind this is that I wanted to create an object that people could hold. Much of photography is a 'hands-off' medium. From the lens to the camera, to the computer, to the final print, it feels like a 'hands-off' piece of art. I wanted something visceral, something a viewer could physically engage with. I also like the idea that it has the appearance of an artefact from a different place, a photograph that has been 'taken' from elsewhere.

Do you consider your images more documentary or abstract in nature?

I love this question as it has made me focus on what my photographs really are. Initially, I saw them as abstract images, but they evoke strong memories for me, and they are how I perceived the city. I now consider them somewhere between abstract and documentary. For my next planned trip, I intend to include more people in my photographs.

Is there a particular city or place that has left a strong impression on you?

Ever since I was a teenager, I had always wanted to visit Tokyo. I was disappointed to find it was nothing like what I had imagined. It was far from the amine depictions of dark, gothic, rain-soaked streets. But of course...Tokyo was bombed during the Second World War, and 60% of the city went up in flames. However, when we got to Kyoto, the ancient capital, I was spellbound. Much of ancient Kyoto remains intact to this day, despite being constantly rebuilt due to its wooden structures. If I go back to Japan, Kyoto will be my first stop.

Geoff Langan | Anamorifureai Street, Tokyo

Alexandra Albertsen
I have founded A Sleepy Spirit Art in 2010 and have been posting art on my blog on Wordpress ever since. I have exhibit my artwork to various local exhibitions and artmarkets in Denmark.

Project Statement
A Sleepy Spirit Art is more than art. A Sleepy Spirit Art is the art of thoughts, dreams and feelings. A Sleepy Spirit Art has its own artistic way. It's not changing to fit the current times, it's not created to fit with the furniture in your living room, it's not created in order to look good on walls, it's not following any classic and traditional artistic rules, it does not belong to any artistic current, it's not created to fit with the concept of art galleries. A Sleepy Spirit Art is a concept. A Sleepy Spirit Art is created for the souls of the people who can see beyond the colors and the shapes and dive in into the deep symbolic meanings.

Alexandra Albertsen | Death from The Book Thief

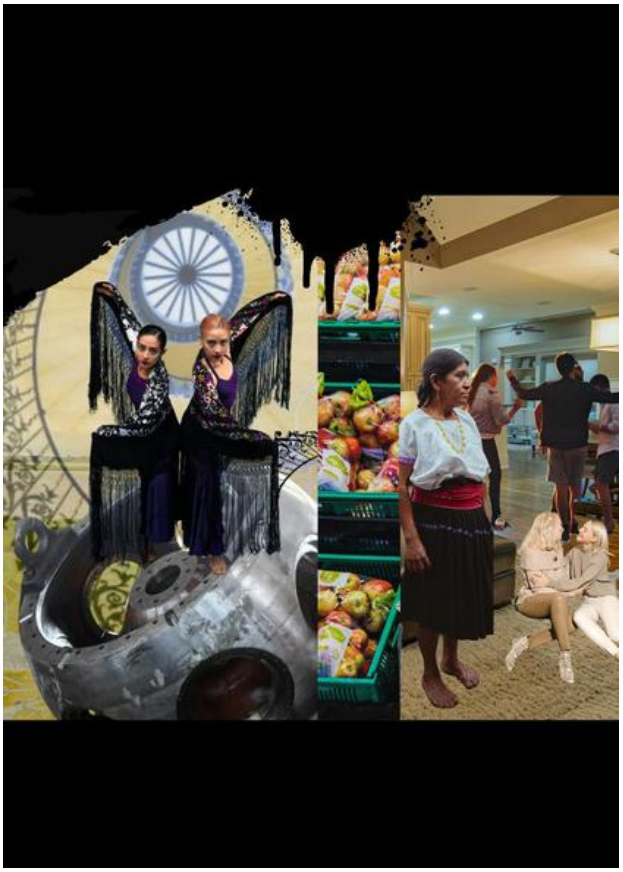
Alexandra Albertsen | Castle of the Prince

Michael Owino

Photographer: Maria Rand

I'm drawn to moments that are rarely celebrated in contemporary art — like a grandparent's pride, the emotional shift in a father realizing his child is queer, or the quiet understanding between siblings. These are moments of deep emotional intensity that often go unnoticed in a world obsessed with speed and spectacle.

Your work often explores overlooked moments of life — how do you choose which moments to highlight?



How does your background in storytelling influence your sculptural and mixed media work?

I started as a painter, then moved into music, and later writing — all before returning to the visual arts. That sequence is essential because it shaped how I understand narrative. Each sculpture, each piece of mixed media, is part of a larger story. I don't just create forms — I create characters, conflicts, settings. Even without text, there's a narrative structure embedded in the materials and composition.

Many of your works feature themes of emotional intimacy and family. Are these inspired by personal memories?

Often, yes. I'm fascinated by what happens behind closed doors. I was raised by a loving but complex father, and I grew up as a rainbow child myself. I don't see these stories reflected enough in the art world — especially not through sculpture. So I tell them. With honesty and without sentimentality.

Michael Owino | Sisiters

Can you tell us more about your creative process — how do you balance sculpture, painting, and writing?

I live and work in a combined studio apartment, so the materials are always near. I work on sculpture with metal at an external workshop, but everything else — canvases, books, collages — is right at hand. I sketch and plan obsessively, so when I begin a piece, I know exactly where I'm going. It's not chaotic — it's more like a composer with a score.

What role does your home-studio setting play in shaping your practice?

It allows for constant immersion. I can wake up and start working within minutes. My bed is in the center of my studio for that reason. There's no divide between living and creating. That freedom is vital for someone like me who needs total focus. It's also a practical response to the way I live — as an artist, not as a tenant or guest in my own life.

The contrast in your collages — between beauty and struggle, tradition and modernity — is powerful. What are you trying to communicate through this tension?

Life is contradictory. A father's joy can sit right next to his grief. Beauty can rise from oppression. My work isn't about resolution — it's about coexistence. I'm interested in how we carry contradictions in our bodies and homes and families. And how art can hold those contradictions without smoothing them out.

Your works are both deeply personal and universally relatable. Do you consciously aim for this duality?

I aim for truth. I believe that if I go deep enough into something personal — a father's guilt, a child's liberation, a couple's bond — it becomes universal. That's where the power is. Not in making something 'for everyone', but in being so precise and honest that others recognize themselves in it.

SHabnam Mehrvar is an artist and a Designer with a background in engineering.Art has always been her passion and a part of her life.From her childhood at (during every school vacation) to her university degree, she has learned many artistic techniques from various artists, including portrait drawing, colored pencil, watercolor and oil painting.She did her further design training at Switzerland.Then she practiced and experimented with different materials and techniques until she found a new technique of her own that she is currently writing a book about.As she loves nature, she has mainly focused on upcycling/recycling art in recent years.Therefore she creates collages, assemblages, mixed-media and objects from upcycled/recycled materials collected in her household.She has participated in international group exhibitions and congresses.Her artworks have been published in international concepts.She hopes that her artworks will draw the attention of viewers to the topic of environment and sustainability.With each artwork, she wants to emphasize that everyday paper, plastic and metal can be reused, embodying a sustainable life and offering countless possibilities.She believes that, such artworks in addition to their aesthetic perception, can inspire reflection and creative efforts to stimulate the responsibility of each individual and also illustrate the impact of each individual as a sustainable consumer at.She is the winner of the 2023/2024 Swiss Recycling Art Competition.She was recently awarded the title of Creative Excellence in the international competition “CFA Artist of the Year 2024” in recognition of the remarkable creativity of her artwork, which is awarded among the artists of all art categories.

Project Statement
Brain,
Collage/Assemblage from upcycling pills on cardboard, ca. 50*70 cm, 3D

SHabnam Mehrvar | Brain | 2024

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