

VISUALARTJOURNAL.COM

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VISUAL ART JOURNAL



— Intro

Hello, dear reader,

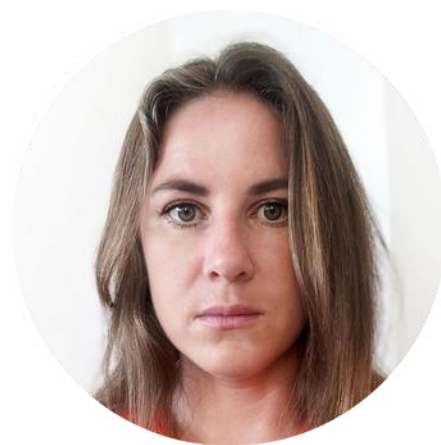
We are delighted to present the 39th issue of our journal — a collection of unique artists and personalities who shape and transform our understanding of creativity.

It is an immense pleasure to work with people of art. Every day brings new moments of wonder, admiration, and inspiration. Throughout the making of this issue, our horizons have expanded countless times, introducing our team to new movements, styles, schools, and artistic tools.

Recently, we ourselves have ventured into new territory — organizing showcases in New York. The success of these events has encouraged us to develop further projects, which we will be announcing very soon.

As autumn settles across the Northern Hemisphere and Pumpkin Spice Lattes return to coffee shops, it's the perfect moment to get cozy and immerse yourself in reading. As always, you will find over a hundred pages filled with art and inspiration ahead.

Enjoy your reading!



Anna Gvozdeva

Curator of
Visual Art Journal

On the Front Cover:
René Romero Schuler
Solveig
2025

On the Back Cover:
Tabarak Mansour
The box I built
2023



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

— Interview

Josh Hy

You describe art as a “sacred playground where the spirit of creation dances freely.” Can you share a moment when you first felt this divine connection to your creative process?

I used to create with a structured vision of what the result would look like, down to the colour, the story behind the art, all that good jazz. And it worked for a while, until I the next step arrived. That level up. This was the moment I've been waiting for, except it was the divine spirit waiting for me to enter flow. I was working on a piece called Izreal in Wonderlust, still in the sketching stage, when suddenly an abrupt silence filled my mind, completely lost all thoughts of what the piece should look like. I was frustrated, but rather grateful. I felt like a leaf flowing in a river, no resistance, or constantly making adjustments, just



Josh Hy | Night Rise | 2022



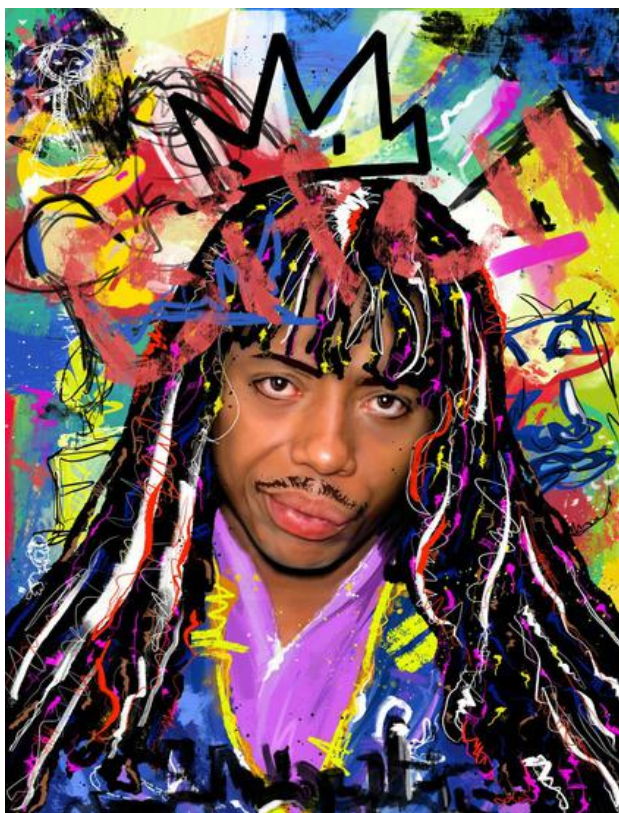
effortless movement in my hands and colours presenting themselves in a sequence of their own.

How has your Jamaican and Panamanian heritage shaped your visual language and the themes you choose to explore?

I feel my Caribbean heritage is the vibrant colours taking center stage. Jamaica and Panama are among the most highly sought-after countries in the world for their culture, food, music, and value they provide. Very welcoming countries, my art welcomes the individual to connect to their authentic selves, move with boldness, and make statements, but is playful at the same time. We all remember Usain Bolt's charisma in a similar way my art resembles that Caribbean flare. My themes are based on freedom of self, something that Jamaica and Panama fought and won. I create with a sense of freedom and exploration of cultures across the world.

Your work blends painting, digital media, and graphic design. What draws you to mix these media rather than focus on just one?

I taught myself to draw and paint using the traditional tools (pen, pencil, brushes) on paper or on canvas. I was drawn to digital media due to the vibrant colour gamut it offered and the challenge of transferring my



drawing technique to a hand-drawn digital format. The next challenge I faced was transferring my hand-drawn digital art back to a traditional medium where I could add the textures of paint, diamond dust, Swarovski crystals, and elements of 24kt gold. The knowledge of graphic design helped me set up my canvas for the high-end fine art print production. I see the mediums as one body working in a symphony to create one medium. The challenge of mixing multiple elements to create one element is the real focus.

Many of your works incorporate crowns and bold gestural marks. What symbolic meaning do these recurring motifs hold for you?

My father often referred to me as “young Master Joshua” growing up. The crown originally was a part of my signature before moving into my works. The crown symbolizes my commitment of creating my absolute at that point in my life. A reminder to myself, this is me, and I am grateful for besting my prior work. The bold gestures symbolize uncertainty, surrendering control.

You often mention that your art is about creating an authentic experience for the viewer. What do you hope people feel when standing in front of your works?

I want them to feel a reflection of themselves, an intimate connection corresponding to an experience. When they experience my work, they will stop and feel the energy resonating on the canvases, let the story

flow into their emotions that have connections to past events, triggering the memories of their senses, creating the perfect space for the art to become an unforgettable narrative.

Mentorship is an important part of your practice. How does teaching and guiding young artists feed back into your own creativity?

It’s a mirror of when my father would talk with me and help, that feeling of being seen, someone I look up to giving me their time. Now I have the opportunity to give back that feeling to the younger generation. My art is rooted in experiences, and mentoring and guiding a creative or inquisitive audience adds a new layer of experiences. In my eyes, I see a symphony of lines, colours interacting in the now, telling me a story which in turn will become a memory that is a part of my being, and a part of my art.

How do you balance intuition and planning when starting a new piece—do you begin with a clear vision, or does the work evolve spontaneously?

I begin with the size, how big do I want this to be? I already know what the portrait will mostly look like. The rest... I wouldn’t say spontaneous, but rather effortless. Listening to me, similar to a conversation when you’re really in the moment, you’re excited, and you’re telling the listener(s) how you’re feeling, and it just comes out, you don’t have to think, you just do.



Vaylet Rain

My artistic practice is built on a careful observation of the world and an exploration of my own perceptions. I am inspired by life itself—random people and details, architecture, forgotten objects. In my drawings, I capture these images, infusing them with irony and lightness to soften the weight of everyday life. Through art, I strive to emphasize the value of fleeting moments and to remind us of the need for a mindful attitude toward nature and the space around us. This series of works draws attention to familiar urban places where, if you look closely, hidden beauty can be found. Bright, graphic images convey warmth, movement, and the tenderness of everyday environments.

Vaylet Rain | Secret Place | 2025





— Interview

Daniela Azuela

Your work combines traditional Mexican textile techniques with contemporary design. How do you balance honoring ancestral traditions while bringing in new, modern elements?

For me, Mexican folk art is a cultural cornerstone, born from communities and collective traditions, with techniques passed down through generations. These foundations give me stability, and from there I bring in my personal vision, incorporating global and



contemporary elements. It's not about choosing between tradition or modernity, but weaving them together into a single visual language.

Sacred geometry is central to your art. What draws you to these geometric forms, and what meanings do they carry for you?

Sacred geometry is the universal language that connects the cosmos to craft. I am drawn to it because it finds its deepest expression in Mexican textiles: in Wixárika nierikas, Zapotec grecas, or Mazahua diamonds. For me, these patterns represent harmony, order, and at the same time curiosity—an invitation to explore what lies behind the forms.

Many of your pieces feature vivid color and intricate repetition. How do you select your color palettes, and how do they influence the rhythm of your compositions?

Color is probably my favorite part, but also the most complex. My starting point can be nature, fashion, architecture, or ceramics. Sometimes I test palettes digitally, but often I follow intuition—choosing the thread that feels “right” in the



Daniela Azuela | Honeycomb | 2023



moment. I'm drawn to contrasts and unexpected combinations. Color sets the mood of the piece, while repetition creates a rhythm that feels almost musical.

You trained with master artisans. What is the most valuable lesson you learned from them, and how has it shaped your own artistic language?

The most valuable lesson was patience. Textile art requires time and energy, and I learned that the process itself gives meaning to the result. I also came to appreciate the depth of knowledge embedded in each technique and the importance of respecting it.

Your works invite reflection on craft, memory, and cultural continuity. What personal memories or stories influence your designs?

I grew up in a family deeply connected to dance, poetry, music, and traditions. Those rhythms and values have always stayed with me. That closeness fueled my fascination with Mexican folk arts and later inspired the creation of a physical space for my textile project and cultural

promotion, just before the pandemic.

What challenges do you face when creating large-scale thread-based installations, and how do you overcome them?

The volume challenge is significant: spending hours weaving or moving large pieces requires discipline. Maintaining thread tension and pattern precision is another difficulty. I usually divide the process into smaller stages, take notes, and remind myself to pause for rest, food, and water. Even though I immerse myself deeply in weaving, that level of dedication is also reflected in the final energy of the piece.

How do audiences usually react to your works, and what kind of dialogue do you hope to create with viewers?

Many viewers describe my pieces as meditative or bold, saying they can lose themselves in the patterns. Others ask about the symbols or share the ways in which the colors connect them to personal memories or emotions. What I value most is creating a space for dialogue where each person can experience curiosity, calm, or even complexity in what they see or feel.

Louis Ogayar

Ogayar is a Spanish artist known for his emotionally charged expressionist works that explore themes of vulnerability, resistance, and existential intimacy. Born on October 30, 1993, in Seville, Spain, he is recognized as a rising figure in contemporary painting. His practice is defined by a vigorous gestural approach and a refined chromatic sensibility that transcends literal representation.

Ogayar's visual language synthesizes the intensity of expressionism with a pared-down, poetic clarity. In one work, the human form dissolves into gestural and coloristic tensions, evoking states of fragility and defiance. In another, a cat wearing an Elizabethan collar becomes a quiet emblem of dignity and emotional resonance. Condensing complex emotions...



Louis Ogayar | The cat on the roof



— Interview

Jan-Luca Thomas

Your painting journey started only in 2023. What inspired you to pick up the palette knife and devote yourself to painting at that moment?

The last time I had anything to do with art was at school. However, the lessons were so dry that creativity hardly



played a role – as a result, I quickly lost interest. 2023 was an eventful year for me: a lot of work, two moves. I wanted to set up my office in my new apartment, and an empty wall opposite my desk appealed to me. At the same time, I came across some inspiring works on social media, and the idea of painting myself wouldn't leave me. Originally, I wanted to try something along the lines of Jackson Pollock – because there's supposedly less room for "mistakes". But in the end, I fell in love with another work, picked up a brush – and was immediately captivated.

The creative process was a revelation for me. I had been looking for a long time for an outlet alongside my full-time job to clear my head. Painting allowed me to switch off in a way I had never experienced before. Hours flew by, and I was completely at one with myself. At first, I painted on the floor with canvases and spatulas from the hardware store. Today, I've upgraded my equipment and even have a small studio in the basement. What started as a spontaneous hobby has become a lasting passion.

Many of your works convey a sense of stillness and suspended time. How do you decide which fleeting moments to capture on canvas?

There are certain moments when I feel as if time is slowing down or even standing still. This can happen in a busy city center, during a hike, or in the middle of a large event. It's almost like a movie effect: for a moment, I feel as if I'm watching from the outside. It is precisely this relaxation and beauty of the moment that I want to capture in my pictures.

For me, it's not about perfect, realistic reproduction, but about the mood, the atmosphere of that moment. When I look at my finished works and am transported back to that feeling, I know I've captured the right moment.

You work with both monochromatic and vivid color schemes. What influences your choice of palette for each painting?

That depends on many factors – the season, my mood, or the theme of the work.

Bright, colorful images usually appear more accessible



Jan-Luca Thomas | Bronx Depression | 2025



and euphoric. However, darker tones are not an expression of melancholy for me. Even my gray- or black-dominated works convey a sense of security and tranquility to me. For example, even when the sky outside is gray and it's raining, I can feel warm and comfortable under an umbrella.

I find it particularly exciting when viewers describe their own impressions to me – even if they differ from my intention. For me, that's what art is all about: triggering emotions in very different ways.

Could you describe your typical creative process — from the first sketch to the final textured layers?

In short: chaotic and impulsive – quite unlike my actual character.

I keep a growing list of ideas on my smartphone – from motifs and techniques to organizational notes. I find inspiration everywhere: in a TV series, in a conversation, or in the midst of everyday life. Some ideas can be implemented immediately, while others take weeks or months to mature.

At some point, the moment comes when a thought is “ripe” for the canvas. Some pictures are created in a single session, others wander back into the corner until the spark ignites again. And if that doesn't happen, there's always the option of painting over them and starting again.

The process takes different amounts of time depending on the size and level of detail. I usually work my way from rough structures to increasingly finer details until, in the end, all the elements fit together seamlessly.

You mention a balance between structured planning and intuitive decision-making. How do you know when to let intuition take over?

At the beginning of every work, there is a brief moment when I pause. The sketch is on the canvas, the first areas are in place – and then I realize: the planning is complete, now I have to let go.

From this point on, I begin to add details and accents intuitively. Interestingly, the best results come when I focus less on perfection and trust my instincts more. My process is like a pendulum: it begins in a structured

way, transitions into free, intuitive work, and ends again with targeted, planned steps in the finishing touches.

Texture and light are key elements in your work. What techniques do you use to create depth and movement with the palette knife?

The basis for this is a thick application of paint – the so-called impasto technique. The impasto layers create a relief-like surface that refracts light and casts minimal shadows. This makes even highly impressionistic works appear immediately vivid.

For motifs involving water or rain, I use reflections created by applying different layers of paint. This develops a dynamic of its own.

I also work with compositional elements such as vanishing lines or deliberately placed accents that guide the viewer's gaze. Spontaneous splashes or abstract elements can also energize a work and create depth.

Your subjects range from quiet city streets to dynamic urban skylines. What draws you to urban landscapes as a source of inspiration?

Cities hold a special magic for me. The mixture of monumental architecture and the small, fleeting moments of the people within them never ceases to inspire me.

I have spent a lot of time in Berlin and Cologne. Even though I personally prefer a more rural life, my thoughts keep drawing me back to the big cities. The chaos, the colors, the coexistence of hustle and bustle and tranquility – all of this can be wonderfully translated into painting and creates a moment of mental digression for me.



Gustavo Miro

Gustavo Miro is a Spanish artist known for his hyperrealistic pencil and charcoal drawings, as well as handcrafted clay models and figurative sculptures. Born in April 1975 in Palma de Mallorca, Spain, he studied at La Escuela de Artes y Oficios and at La Escuela Libre del Mediterráneo under the mentorship of Joaquín Torrens Lladó. Miro's work reflects a deep technical mastery and a classical approach to realism, capturing both physical detail and emotional nuance.

He has exhibited widely in Spain and Poland. His solo exhibitions include a permanent showing at the Jaime III Gallery in Palma, a 2022 exhibition at the Astro Centrum in Chełmiec, and a 2016 presentation at the Edyta Stein Museum in Lubliniec.



Gustavo Miro | Nude



— Interview

René Romero Schuler

Your paintings and sculptures are described as both self-portraits and universal expressions of human emotions. How do you balance the deeply personal with the collective in your creative process?



René Romero Schuler | Panchita | 2025



I believe that is what we are all doing every day of our existence. Living is a constant balancing act. And yes, I certainly bring that all into my practice—tapping into my past and my own stories, with those at the core of every piece, and I always allow other influences to play their part, which allows the figures that emerge to develop personalities all their own.

Feminine figures appear consistently in your work. What do these figures represent for you on a symbolic and emotional level?

Women and girls are perpetually marginalized, and I am always working with the mission of healing and grounding myself—first and foremost—and also to bring those healing and grounding energies to all who encounter my work, especially women and girls. I want people to see a little bit of themselves in each piece: to feel heard, felt and understood, and to see that they are beautiful. The imperfect nature of the figures I create are a direct reflection of who we are as human beings, all scarred and flawed and beautiful.

The textured surfaces of your paintings, with their scraped and carved layers, seem to embody scars and resilience. Could you share



more about how this technique connects to your own life experiences?

The word resilience always bothers me. Somehow it seems to imply that I just naturally bounce back from adversity. Maybe I have to some extent, but it has always taken effort to endure, survive and overcome. The scars—inside and out—linger, and those are very much a part of the work that I do. It's important for me to bring this into each piece, as this symbolism is what people can see and feel and relate to. None of us escape unscathed in this life. I just want to show that we can always strive to do it with strength, grace, and beauty. Every scar, wrinkle, handicap, and hurt is a part of the beautiful being we are. All things shape the one...this is what I paint (and sculpt).

How has your challenging childhood influenced your artistic vision and the themes you return to in your art?

Tapping into the energies of a challenging past is an integral part of creating work with genuine depth. Living with pain, heartache, regret, guilt, confusion—these are just realities that all of us deal with, right? I channel these things into the work because it puts something so real at the core: it heals...and as I process these feelings, what emerges is a being that is stronger, better and more beautiful for doing the work.

You've said that your art is open to interpretation. Have there been moments when a viewer's interpretation surprised or deeply

moved you?

Oh my gosh, more times than I can say! It's actually hard to repeat some of them here because they feel so deeply personal. People connect with the work because they see a bit of themselves in it, that's for sure. There is stuff at the core of each one of us who can really see the underlying energy in my work, and it is a powerful, even visceral experience. People feel seen...understood (and they are).

Your work is represented internationally, and you've exhibited across the U.S., Europe, and Asia. Do audiences in different cultures respond to your art differently?

I believe the response to be pretty universal. What people are connecting to is the common experience of just being human. We all come with baggage.

Your figures are faceless yet full of presence. What role does anonymity play in how you want viewers to connect with them?

Anonymity in my figures came naturally as I worked. I didn't give this any deliberate thought at first, but when people started asking about it, I guess I explained that if I were adding overly discernable characteristics to my figures, that would be "portraiture," and that is a different thing altogether. For me, it is important to be able to identify with a work of art. There is something almost primal in that sensation, and I want that to be what people come away with when they encounter my work.



Eri Papadopoulos was born in 2001 and raised in Larnaca, Cyprus. She graduated from the School of Fine Arts at the Cyprus University of Technology in Limassol and holds a master's degree in the Education Sciences – Arts in Education, from the University of Nicosia. Her work bridges traditional and contemporary approaches, incorporating both abstract and realistic styles. She has participated in exhibitions in Greece, London, Cyprus, France, North Macedonia and Andorra. She has received awards such as the Jouenne Prize, presented by the Michel Jouenne Foundation in Marseille, as well as represented Cyprus in the 9th Art Camp for UNESCO in Ordino, Andorra 2025. Her art explores landscapes as metaphors for culture, memory and identity, reflecting a deep emotional connection to her surroundings. Her works can be found in private and public collections.

Project Statement

'In this body of work, I explore the layered relationship between place, memory, and personal identity. Painting from landscapes both real and imagined, I trace how environments, natural or domestic, shape the human experience and reflect the invisible architecture of memory. My work seeks not to capture a literal place, but rather the atmosphere and sentiment it holds. Nature, home, and the in-between spaces become portals into both past and present, suspended moments that blur the boundaries between the real and the surreal. Through this series, I aim to evoke not just physical settings but psychological landscapes that speak to belonging, absence, and the complex dialogue between human and the surrounding world'.

Eri Papadopoulos | Inner Landscape | 2025





Eri Papadopoulou | Day Dreaming | 2025

Eri Papadopoulou | Sunset | 2025



Έρι Παπαδοπούλου

— Interview

Barbara Drobot

How did your background in architecture and urban planning shape your artistic vision and the way you construct space on the canvas?

My experience in architectural and descriptive geometry still affects the way I approach painting. The balance, precision, and restraint I initially applied to city planning now echo on the canvas. The geometric shapes I employ are not accidental; they resemble architectural drawings, measured and carefully crafted. I often feel that my paintings carry the same sense of order and structure as a restrained balance of lines and subdued calmness that holds the composition together.

Why did you turn to the theme of corporeality and the 'fragile threshold of human states' in your work?

I did turn to the theme of corporeality because it became the most authentic way of speaking about my own mindset and sharing it with others. We live in a world where it is too inappropriate sometimes to place ourselves at the center, where selflessness is praised and self-revelation muzzled. In



that environment, sensations are neglected or suppressed. To me, body painting was a way of giving feelings life. Migration made it even more urgent.

When we are not home, we wish to take care of loved ones but in doing so we forget about ourselves. The body never forgets, however. It is the only temple we will ever have and it both feels the visible burdens of external pressures and the intangible burdens of internal thoughts. By using the body to represent the vulnerable edge of human states, I am constructing an image of resilience — the body as both site of suffering and vessel of survival.

How do silence and inner rhythm manifest in your paintings?

Silence in my paintings is about presence. My paintings contain no one but me, and this creates an open space in which both I and the viewer can at last meet each other only with ourselves. In that encounter, there is no external noise. Just the internal quiet beat of life.

To me, this is essential: in a world that's perpetually full of demands, comparisons, and distractions, art is a pause, a moment of pause. The rhythm of the body, of breathing, of thought, governs the composition more than any external story. I want the canvas to be a mirror where one can begin each day from personal needs and desires.

That inner rhythm is subtle but unceasing, a kind of pulse that I silence, I am not subtracting meaning but offering a return to the most intimate rhythm of life: the dialogue between the self and the body.

Why do you often choose to depict parts of the body — hands, feet, gestures — rather than complete portraits?

I rarely paint complete portraits because I believe that in public life we wear masks the whole time. Society forces us to present some face. Even when we tense, even when we want to scream, run, or escape, we smile. It is one of our means of



Barbara Drobot | The Threshold | 2025



living among people, every one of us with his own cause and burden. The face is the mask of politeness, but the body is not a liar. Hands, feet, and gestures betray what words and sentences conceal. A clenched hand, a restless position, the way a foot pushes against the ground - all these betray discomfort or dammed emotion. The body discloses what we try to control: happiness, terror, vulnerability. With the focus on pieces, I am not diminishing the human presence, but I am increasing its authenticity. These limbs tell the truth of what goes on inside in ways that a face sometimes cannot. To me, gestures are more honest, more real. They whisper what the mask in the portrait conceals.

Your surfaces show textures, erasures, and frictions. Could you talk about your technique and how it supports the idea of suspended emotion?

My oil technique is strongly watercolor-influenced. I started in watercolor, discovering the transparent flow of it through my architectural training, and that art affects my technique in oil. When I turned to oil, I wanted to work with transparency, layering, and lightness—almost as if emotions themselves could be veiled. The surfaces I create are delicate layers that resemble shadows or veils. They conceal and reveal at the same time, like emotions suspended between being spoken and being silenced.

This layering, for me, is a metaphor for internal life: shadows wiped marks and the transparent surface reflect how we mask and conceal from our feelings. Below every layer, there is always something showing, like a memory trace of feeling that refuses to disappear.

These textures and erasures embody suspended emotion—present yet unexpressed, hidden yet not obliterated. I invite the viewer to sense that ephemeral tension: the balance between what is revealed and what remains concealed, the fragile transparency through which we greet one another yet so often fail to truly see.

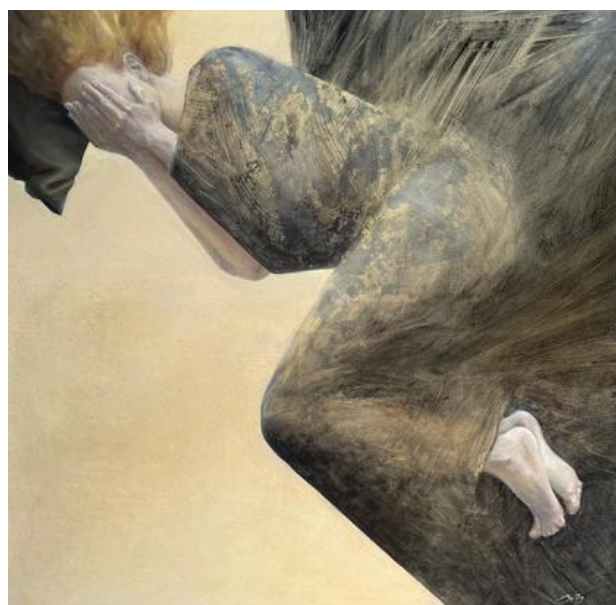
How do teaching and working with students affect your own practice and the way you think about the human body and emotions?

Teaching also taught me, initially, that every process is time-consuming. Mine included. Observing students makes one realize that art is never meant to create a picture; it is about dealing with a theme, a method of questioning and discovery. I am grateful to be able to introduce a new philosophy of art to students. All of them arrive eager to do nothing more than create a 'beautiful picture,' but they find out before long that art is a way of speaking wordless to convey emotion, idea, and philosophy. It is a form of communication to others without words. In teaching, too, I learned to be more attuned to the body as a mode of unspoken emotion.

Students might smile when things go awry, but their hands, their posture, or even their voice might give away frustration or vulnerability. Pedagogical training has shown me how to see these subtle hints, to respect them, and to answer with empathy. This tuning goes back into my own practice: I see the human body not as shape, but as an emotional instrument, humming with truths that cannot be expressed at all times.

What role does time play in your work—both in the slow process of painting and in the stillness you invite the viewer to experience?

Personally, time is the most precious resource in the creation of a painting. There is a tendency in our culture to want to do things quickly, to have something to show that others will approve of. But if we consider art as research - essentially a creative-scientific inquiry - then we need to accept that research takes time. It's about trying an idea in different ways, seeing what happens, and then keeping that process open to dialogue with ourselves and the world. In painting, time teaches patience and failure and demonstrates that there are no finite answers - no solely right or wrong results. There are only facts, tracks, and interpretations of a particular concept. This is what I also present to the viewer: though I begin from my personal concept, every person who is faced with my work can recognize something personal - a sentiment, a fear, a joy. They can 'test' my concept through their own experience. In this way, time is not only what builds the painting, but also what occurs in the viewer's experience, who is forced to slow down and undergo a process of discovery about himself.



Dorota Klamka

I am a writer and lyricist who, since 2025, has been creating original collages. My visual work explores layered narratives and poetic fragments, translating my background in literature and songwriting into images. In September 2025, I held my debut exhibition in Warsaw.

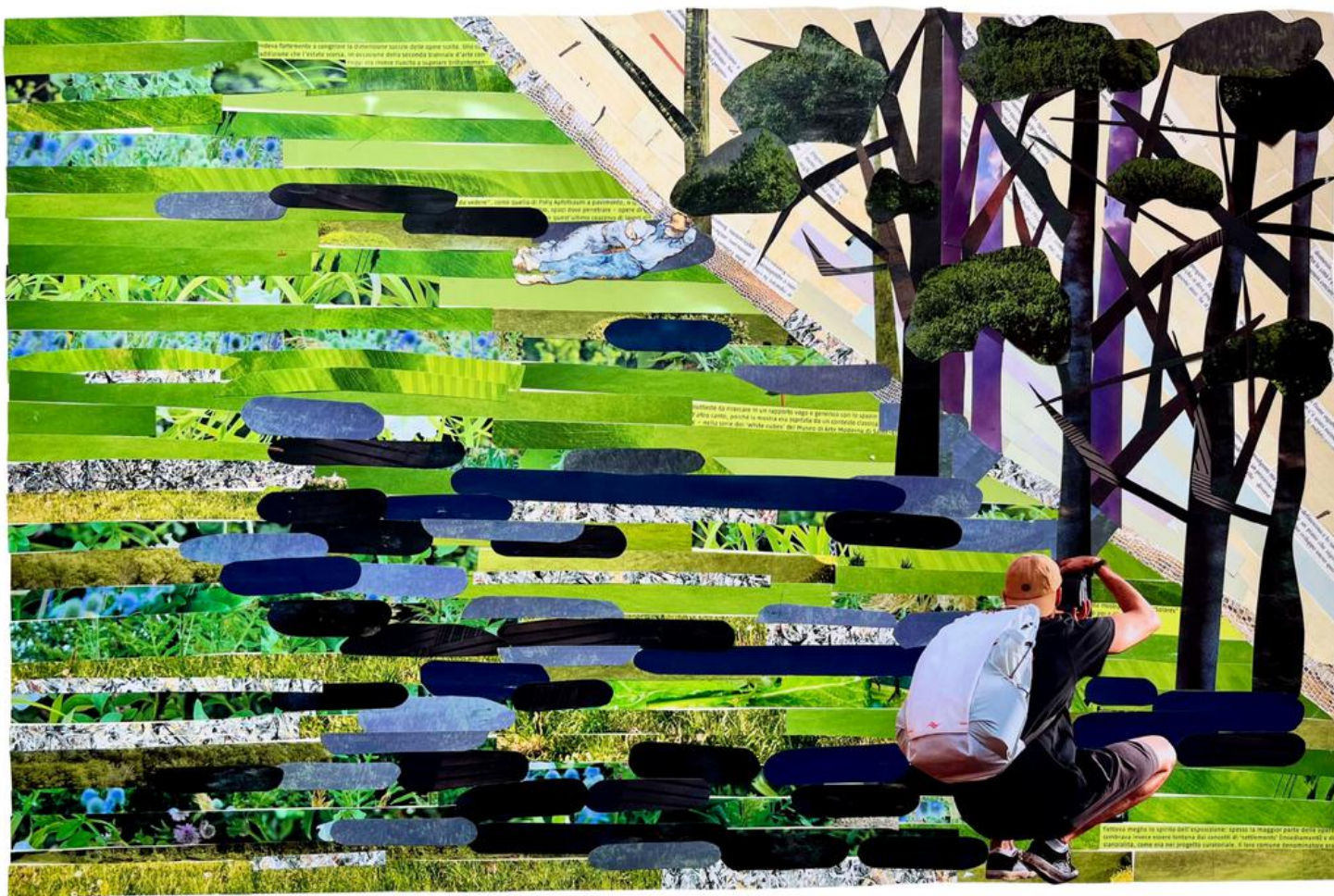
Alongside my collage practice, I write children's songs, radio plays, and lyrics, including collaborations with vocalist and composer Ewa eM and the project Bjerki, or Ballads and Lullabies—a jazz interpretation of Björk's songs performed across Poland with the artist's official approval. I am a recipient of a ZAiKS scholarship and a Polish Radio award for a children's radio play.

Project Statement

I piece the world back together.

Dorota Klamka | Touch the Dawn





Dorota Klamka | Catch the Light

— Interview

Flora White

Your background includes fashion and interior design. How did those experiences shape your artistic style and the way you compose a painting?

Even as a very small kid, I was always drawn to painting & drawing people. I was an only child living with my grandparents and so, I guess that, doodling people made me feel less lonely at that time. This is sorta funny but my ultimate dream, even as a tiny 3-year-old toddler, was to flee to Paris and become a famous painter! Sadly, all the adults around me got me convinced that being an artist wasn't a real job and that I had to have more practical future goals. My favorite play things, besides my color pencils and paint brushes, were my dress-up paper dolls so, growing up, I was



Flora White | Hope | 2022



pretty sure that I wanted to be a fashion designer, until I've been there as a young adult and realized that it wasn't it for me. Since my school also offered interior design classes and that I already had a small sideline business of mural painting and creating custom sponge design walls, I thought; why not give it a try. But this was the very beginning of the 90's, with very basic DOS computer programs so, rooms & home designs were more in the lines of building miniature models and shopping around stores for swatches & furniture. I fast figured out that this wasn't what I had expected neither. Nonetheless, being obsessed with fabric draping, textures & patterns for so long stuck with me in the long run so, even if it's been over 3 decades since my studies, this is something that still transpose through in my art. I enjoy working on such details.

You mention that painting became a full-time commitment only in 2018. What inspired this decisive transition?

It was severe health issues & surgeries that had forced me to quit my job two years prior. I was a very active and adventurous person and just like that, overnight, I found myself confined to a wheelchair for a while. I was going insane just sitting there doing nothing so, I had initially started painting again as a hobby and in order to mentally survive, not knowing if it was going to be a permanent condition but then, out of nowhere, I began to collect awards, jury mentions and even a notable bursary thus, being an avid believer in destiny, I figured that life probably had this weird way of taking me back on the path that what was originally meant to be. I therefore went full throttle with it!

Many of your works combine realism with a gentle, almost naïve illustration style. Why is this balance important to you?

As I mentioned previously, when I first started painting again, I had major health problems, some of which were related to contracting Lyme's disease. This afflicted me with severe motricity issues & spasms in my hands & fingers and so, I couldn't control my brush at times but still didn't want to take the easy route through abstraction so I pushed myself, persisted & persevered. My portraits were terrible at first; even the easiest landscapes were a struggle. I had taken art classes for 5 years in the past; I was knowledgeable but I could no longer put any of it into practice. To my immense frustration, I was no longer able to draw or paint what I used to create but overtime it got a bit



better and it led me to develop a very define style that I kinda stuck with overtime because my first solo exhibits (some of over 50 paintings) needed to be coherent as a whole. So I've adopted this style and I just kept going, doing my best to refine it overtime. Since then, it has become my signature and people now recognize the uniqueness of my work by it. I'm honest and very transparent so I'm not ashamed to admit that this is why my art is so static and lacks fluidity & dimension. It's part of my journey and who I've become as an artist. I now embrace it as a gift that makes my art different from the rest; I ceased to see it as an obstacle.

You often portray children in challenging or touching situations. What draws you to these subjects, and how do you approach depicting their emotions respectfully?

My youth wasn't very happy; in fact, some of it was pretty traumatic. I'm an emotional person and I'm very empathic so, seeing sadness, abuse, exploitation & misery in other children really gets to me on a personal level as I can relate to some extent. I've dedicated most of my life to different charities & community organizations throughout the years, as well as working with children in various fields. I simply can't accept that innocent beings still fall victim, in countless ways, of men's greed, selfishness and destruction in this day & age. I'm no longer able to actively & physically get involved as much as I used to, so my art is my way of still making a difference by bringing awareness to the human condition, mainly children & women of all backgrounds, ethnicity & religions. My art is a statement of solidarity, a voice for human rights and welfare. It's a cry for justice, equity & equality and most of all, it calls for peace. I cherish our diversity and value what can't be bought; it's what makes us human.

Why do you prefer acrylics, and how do you adapt this medium to both delicate and intense emotional scenes?

Younger, I first started painting with oils but unfortunately, members of my household were allergic to solvent (even the odor free type), so I began to use acrylics. Over the recent years I've developed a technique of my own and decided to stick with it. I dilute my paint into cream or liquid and work mostly by layers & small sections at a time. When I'm done, I usually dirty-up most of my paintings either with a black, grey or white veil, depending on the light & subject, in order to

harmonize the whole image, cut down the contrasts & make the colors less vibrant. I sometimes use acrylic spray paint as well in my work.

I like for my art to be accessible; the messages it carries are clear, simple and easily understandable to the general public. For me, that's what matters the most since a lot of schools & families visit my exhibits. Even as an artist, I find that there's nothing more dull and annoying than to look at artwork that no one in the room understands, other than its creator. In my humble opinion, art should be able to speak for itself.

Do you usually paint from photographs, memories, or live sketches when creating such vivid and detailed works?

I seldom paint from photographs & live sketches. I often get my spark of inspiration from images & documentaries I come across, either randomly or through research. I also get inspired by my own travel experiences or life accounts & narratives I'm being recounted by migrants and homeless people that I come across. Most of my characters are improvised, they don't represent anyone in particular but I generally have a good idea of the whole portrait & scenery I'm going to paint before I paint it. I also enjoy painting various random emotions for no other reason than I'm feeling them in that moment.

I generally start with the eyes, which for me reflect the soul and then I slowly build around them. I'm frequently told, often by children, that most of the little girls in my artworks, even African, Asian or Indian ones, look like me somehow. I guess that, unconsciously, we all paint a bit of the reflection we've been seeing our whole lives in the mirror. There is indeed a little bit of myself in every single one of my paintings.

Travels and encounters strongly influence you. Which journey or meeting has most profoundly shaped your art so far?

I have a very multi-cultural entourage and family to begin with, so, this is the root of my creations. But it was mostly getting involved with a local Women's center, mainly teaching art and providing them with support & resources for over two decades that truly deeply got me interested in other cultures and migrant women's life journeys; How they grew-up, how things are in their home country, how they've made it here, what their struggles are, what they value, what they believe in, what they want for their children & their children's children.



Yehya Talbi

Algerian amateur photographer.

I started photography at a very young age, but I entered the world of professional photography in 2015.

My passion for photography led me to love this profession, which I still practice with passion and the desire to immortalize fleeting moments.

I have participated in numerous national (Algeria, Béjaïa, Annaba, Biskra, Aïn Témouchent, among others) and international (Jordan, Tunisia, Libya, Morocco, Belarus, Turkey, Switzerland, and Europe) photography competitions.

- I won first prize at the Annaba Arab Photography Fair in 2020.

- I won the 2024 World Forum on the Information Society Award.

I enjoy photography in all its forms, but I also enjoy documentary photography, which generally documents the customs and traditions of the regions I visit. I also have extensive experience in nature photography, in which I find great comfort and relaxation.

Yehya Talbi | Camel Herder's Friendship on Screen | 2024



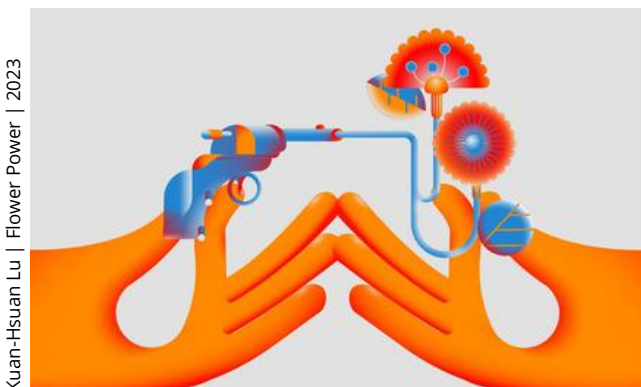


— Interview

Kuan-Hsuan Lu



Could you share how your background in graphic design led you to explore illustration and visual storytelling?



Kuan-Hsuan Lu | Flower Power | 2023

My background in graphic design gave me a strong foundation in composition, typography, and visual hierarchy. Over time, I felt the need to express more personal and emotional ideas beyond branding or commercial work. Illustration and visual storytelling allowed me to translate my inner thoughts and narratives into images that carry deeper symbolic meaning.

What personal experiences most strongly inspired the themes of growth and resilience in this series?

This series was inspired by my own experiences of being hurt, and the gradual realization that those who hurt me were often carrying wounds from their own families. Through this process, I learned how to understand others, to forgive, and to grow. It also helped me recognize my own needs more clearly, push past my limits, and focus more deeply on myself. These reflections shaped the themes of resilience and growth in my work.

Your works use vivid colors and symbolic forms like flowers breaking through barriers. How do you develop these metaphors?

I often start from a feeling or a life moment. For



example, when I felt trapped by certain circumstances, I imagined flowers breaking through glass. These symbols grow from my personal emotions but also carry universal meaning, so viewers can project their own experiences onto them.

What role do color and texture play in evoking emotion in your illustrations?

Color is central in my work—it's how I translate emotions into visuals. I use bold, contrasting hues to represent energy and hope, while softer tones suggest fragility and vulnerability. Texture adds depth, reminding viewers that growth and resilience are rarely smooth, they're layered and complex.

How does your Taiwanese background and current life in New York influence your visual language?

Growing up in Taiwan exposed me to rich cultural symbolism, patterns, and traditions. Living in New York, I've been surrounded by diversity and constant reinvention. My work blends these two worlds: the symbolic and poetic nature from my Taiwanese roots, and the bold, experimental edge I've developed in New York.

Do you view your art as a bridge between different cultural identities?

Yes, very much so. My art reflects the in-between space of cultural identity, where East meets West, tradition meets modernity. For example, I often use contemporary illustration styles to symbolize the suffocating, repressive aspects of traditional Asian education and upbringing that I have observed and heard from others. By transforming these heavy experiences into modern visual metaphors, I hope my work resonates with people who are navigating multiple identities and shows that beauty and strength can emerge from that intersection.

What emotions or reflections do you hope viewers carry with them after experiencing your work?

I hope viewers can feel strength, encouragement, and a sense of emotional release. Even when facing confinement or struggle, growth is never out of reach, it's always possible to believe in oneself and overcome any obstacle. If my work can inspire resilience and hope in others, that would be truly wonderful.



Arina Tsymbal

My work in photography grows from observation and attention to detail. I am interested in how an image can capture not only a moment, but also the atmosphere and unspoken emotions behind it. For me, photography is about silence, fragments, and subtle gestures that build a visual narrative. As an emerging photographer, I want to create images that are not decorative, but communicative: photographs that make people pause, reflect, and feel. My artistic vision is to use the camera not only as a tool of documentation, but as a way to build empathy and connection through visual storytelling.

Project Statement

A fleeting presence dissolves into radiant gold, where light overwhelms detail and nature's forms expand beyond perception. The figure lingers at the edge of disappearance, suspended between the visible and the intangible, as silence crystallizes into form.



Dominique Gipson

Could you share how you first got into street photography and what keeps you inspired to stay in this genre?

I was first drawn to street photography during my photography studies, where I explored the work of various influential artists. I was particularly inspired by the work of Vivian Maier, as her compelling style helped me discover the



Dominique Gipson | Solitude In Transit | 2025



power of documenting daily life in the streets. Further study of artists like Henri Cartier-Bresson and Nan Goldin deepened my understanding of how photography can communicate raw emotion and unique perspectives. I remain inspired by the ever-changing nature of the streets, and the continuous opportunity to capture spontaneous moments and unexpected truths. This element of discovery is what consistently drives my work in this genre.

What draws you to working with both film and digital mediums, and how do you decide which to use for a particular shoot?

My interest in working with both film and digital stemmed from my desire to broaden my photographic approach. While I started with digital, I was drawn to film for its unique style and nostalgic authenticity. I select my medium based on the story I want to tell. Digital is ideal for capturing crisp, vivid moments, while film is better suited for evoking a sense of drama or nostalgia. Ultimately, the choice between the two is a creative decision that serves the specific narrative I'm aiming to convey.



Can you describe your process when you go out to photograph—do you plan locations or follow spontaneous moments?

My process is a blend of both planning and spontaneity. I make a point of always having my camera on hand, as some of the most compelling shots occur unexpectedly. For specific locations that require more attention, particularly in a busy city like Atlanta with parking constraints, I will scout and plan a return visit. This two-pronged approach allows me to capitalize on immediate, spontaneous moments while also capturing planned scenes that demand a more deliberate approach.

Your series pairs presence with absence. How did this idea of diptychs come to you, and why is it important for conveying solitude?

The idea for using diptychs to explore presence and absence came to me while studying the technique and reflecting on my existing body of work. I realized I had images of subjects within a space, as well as images of that same space when empty. Pairing them became a powerful way to tell a complete story. This approach is effective for conveying solitude because it juxtaposes two distinct perspectives: that of the solitary subject and that of an observer viewing the isolated space. This pairing highlights the universal experience of solitude from both an internal and external viewpoint.

In these images, black and white plays a key role. What does removing color reveal to you about emotion and space?

I've always been drawn to black and white photography, and I chose it for this series to emphasize the themes of isolation, calm, and

quiet. Removing color allows for a more dramatic, serious mood that encourages the viewer to focus on the emotional essence of the image. For this particular project, I felt that color would have been a distraction, pulling focus away from the intended narrative of solitude. By stripping away the vividness of the world, I was able to convey a more powerful and relatable emotional experience.

How do you choose which two images belong together as a diptych?

After developing the concept for the diptychs, my selection process became deliberate. I would photograph a scene with the subject present, then wait for them to leave so I could capture the same area empty. The diptych is created by pairing these two photos, which show the identical space but highlight the distinct difference between presence and absence. This process allows me to create a narrative that speaks to the viewer on a deeper, more conceptual level.

How has living in Atlanta shaped the way you see and photograph the city's hidden corners?

Living in Atlanta has given me a unique perspective on the city beyond its flashy, mainstream image often portrayed in media. I've discovered a rich diversity in its neighborhoods and learned to look beyond the surface to capture the streets' hidden truths. My experience of seeing less-traveled, quieter corners of the city directly influenced my series on solitude. While Atlanta is known for its vibrant events, it is in the moments of calm between the activity that I find a powerful sense of isolation. My work captures that specific feeling, offering a more nuanced and introspective view of the city to my audience.



Agnieszka Mojsik is a self-taught Polish artist whose work blends pop culture, folklore, and dream core surrealism. Working primarily in oil paint, she creates vibrant, symbolic compositions where recurring motifs—such as eyes and distorted figures—reflect on perception, identity, and the subconscious. Inspired by the richness of Polish folklore, her works weave myth, ritual, and collective memory into a contemporary visual language that oscillates between playful, pop-inspired color fields and darker, graphic explorations. She has exhibited in the Biegas Museum in Warsaw, Desa Unicum, and the Converse Pop Art exhibition. Her work might be found in a collection of Branko Roglić, founder of Orbico Group. Living and working in Warsaw, she continues to explore the interplay of fantasy, folklore, and cultural symbolism in her evolving artistic practice.

Agnieszka Mojsik | Pop-Culture Cottage Cheese | 2025





— Interview

Syed Ayaz Fatmi

For readers meeting you for the first time, what core question does your work keep returning to?

I keep coming back to our growing relationship with technology. It feels like we're bound to it, like we can't live without it. At the same time, we're losing basic survival skills as human beings. In a strange way, it feels like we're advancing while circling back to a new kind of stone age.



Syed Ayaz Fatmi | Hair Saloon | 2024



Your statement contrasts online performances of care with real-life empathy. What experiences pushed you to foreground this theme?

You can find millions of videos of accidents, violence, and mishaps online. People shout about them on social media, but very few take action in real life. We've become more invested in performing care online than in being social human beings who actually know their neighbors. Day by day, people seem to be getting more self-centered and pretentious.

Why machines? What does the language of gauges, pipes, and conveyor belts let you say about people that other symbols do not?

Machines are a symbol of modern mechanical life, where everything is time-bound and production-driven. They give me a literal way to express the dilemmas of life in mechanical terms.

You work across motion, interactive media, and still images. What does each medium allow you to do, and how do you decide which form a concept needs?

Each medium feels infinite, and I keep rediscovering them. There isn't a fixed formula, but usually I start from a poetic angle, then imagine it visually. Whatever feels most effective and natural for the idea becomes the medium. It's like breaking something apart and



then searching for the right glue to put it back together.

You explore cultural identity and evolution. How do your experiences in Dhaka and in the U.S. surface in the textures, objects, or humor of these images?

The cultural shock wasn't huge for me when I came to the U.S. Gen Z is probably the fastest-growing global culture. It's full of revolutionary energy, and with such easy access to resources, its potential feels limitless. Humor, especially visual humor, and even the use of language, are evolving in surprisingly similar ways on both sides of the world.

"Insecurity" is one of your themes. Where does

vulnerability enter your process or the narratives you construct?

It's less about vulnerability entering the process and more about the narratives escaping from it. My ideas come from lived experiences and close observations, and the work follows those threads out of the vulnerable state.

If one of your machines could exist in the physical world, which would you build and what human habit would it measure or change?

If one of my machines could become real, I'm not sure which one it would be, but it would probably confront our moral and ethical values and the carelessness we show toward our own lives.

Luisete Álvarez

Luisete Alvarez Manzanares is a Spanish illustrator whose bold, kinetic visual language channels the spirit of extreme sports and outdoor adventure. Born in 1988 in Ciudad Real, Spain, she holds a degree in Fine Arts from the University of Seville and completed her Artistic Baccalaureate at the School of Art of Jerez. Since 2012, she has worked as a freelance illustrator, collaborating with brands such as Glassy Europe, Soul Surfboards, and Essencia Surfshop on projects centered around surf culture and outdoor lifestyles.

From 2008 to 2015, Alvarez Manzanares worked at Single Fins Factory, designing and painting surfboards for major brands including Rip Curl, Bear, and Rusty. Since 2015, she has continued to merge her artistic vision with board construction and customization, employing techniques like airbrushing and marker illustration.

Her work captures the energy and rhythm of sport and nature, rendered through a vivid aesthetic rooted in Art Pop and comic culture. Dynamic compositions, saturated color palettes, and expressive linework reflect her commitment to portraying the freedom, movement, and visual storytelling inherent in the lifestyles she depicts.

Luisete Álvarez | Drawing





Brookelyn Muir

Can you tell us about the moment you first realised art was your way to express emotions and connect with people?

Brookelyn Muir | NO 32



High school was full of the stretch marks of growing up. Friendships were shifting, I was living away from home at boarding school, and there were always so many emotions swirling around that I didn't know what to do with. I had a habit of bottling things up until they spilled over. When I felt completely overwhelmed, I tried going to the school counsellor a couple of times. But the words never came out the way I wanted, and the sessions never really gave me the release I needed. So I'd shrug it off, head back to the boarding house, put my headphones on, and sit down with whatever project I was working on in art class. In hindsight, I realise that art was the only place where I felt safe enough to pour out what I couldn't express. It gave me a language that words never quite managed. It's cliché to say, but art became my therapy. I wasn't just drawing or painting; I was untangling my own emotions on paper, finding a way to process them without needing to explain them to anyone. That hasn't changed. Even now, instead of journaling in the mornings about how I feel, I make art in the evenings. It's become a rhythm in my life, almost a ritual. And the headphones are just as important as the pencil; music tunes out the noise of the world and helps me sink into that private space where my emotions can finally breathe.

How does your New Zealand environment influence your creative process and the energy of your works?

I grew up on a farm, surrounded by a beautiful rural landscape. My childhood was gumboots, motorbikes, and swimming in lakes instead of pools. Later, I went to boarding school in the city. I learned to embrace living in opposite environments, but I also realised that it was never really about where I was. What mattered most were the connections around me.

At home, I'd see my dad in the mornings coming back from milking, covered in dirt and sweat. It was humble work, honest. Then I'd return to school, where conversations between certain people felt more like performances, where even something as simple as what drink bottle someone used could carry weight. The contrast was stark. I think that's when I started craving honesty. Rawness. Authenticity. I didn't always find it in the people around me, so I began to look for it elsewhere. And without realising it, that craving shaped the way I approached art. I became interested in capturing the parts of life that aren't polished or posed, the parts that feel real and unfiltered. My environment, in all its extremes, gave me that lens, it taught me to search for truth and to express it in a way that felt genuine.



Your art captures “raw, unfiltered human expression.” What draws you to such loud and vulnerable emotions?

What draws me to those loud and vulnerable emotions is love. All kinds of love; platonic love, romantic love, self-love, a love of life, of opportunity, of connection. Love is the most honest force I know. It strips away the performance and the armour we carry; it pulls back the layers until only truth remains.

That's what I want to capture in my work. That feeling of being completely free, unguarded, and raw. To me, love isn't always soft or delicate. It can be messy, overwhelming, and loud, but it's always real. And that's what excites me. My art is my way of holding up a mirror to those moments, translating that energy into something visual. In a way, I'm always trying to draw love itself, in all the ways it shows up.

Music and self-expression are key themes for you. Could you share a specific song or musical moment that has shaped a recent piece?

A\$AP Rocky, especially his album AT.LONG.LAST.A\$AP, has had a big influence on a recent piece of mine. His music reflects the environment he grew up in, but also connects to bigger cultural ideas. And even though I'm all the way in New Zealand, with a quick swipe we're linked to events happening thousands of miles away.

I've also started experimenting with typography again, inspired by Rocky's use of text in album art and lyrics. The rumored title of his next album, Don't Be Dumb, really stuck with me. It's playful but also a challenge, and I like the way it leaves room for interpretation.

Because of recent developments in America, I've found myself unconsciously surrounded by the American flag. To me, it feels like it holds two sides, unity but also division. Seeing it in protests, rallies, even fashion, made me want to explore that tension in my own work. I'm not trying to make direct political art, but I am interested in how those things ripple outwards and influence the way we think about freedom, identity, and honesty.

Many of your works combine drawing, digital illustration, and mixed media. How do you decide which medium to use for each idea?

It usually starts with the idea itself; the feeling or concept I want to get across. Some emotions feel more immediate or raw, and that comes out best through drawing. Other ideas need more layering, manipulation, or effects that I can only achieve through digital tools, like text, collage, or colour shifts.

For me, the medium always serves the feeling, not just the visuals.

What is it like to translate emotions like joy, defiance, or absurdity into bold graphic forms?

It's just fun, honestly. I think we get so wound up in life. Sometimes it's just about a work having the ability to break through the routine; not only for myself, but for the viewer too. To see something bold in its unconventionality. A negative point of view I've noticed is the reaction: “Oh, that's not very flattering, why would someone draw something like that?” But that's exactly the point. It's honest.

You also paint on unconventional surfaces, like skateboards. What excites you about bringing art into everyday objects?

It's about exploring the bounds of edges. When I'm exploring certain themes, sticking to a canvas doesn't always feel right, sometimes it just doesn't fit. Finding objects that enhance the idea helps me bring my point of view across, while also developing the energy of the work and challenging the viewer in new ways.



— Interview

Mahsa Dehghan

You began with graphic design, oil painting, and animation. How have these early experiences shaped your current visual language?



Mahsa Dehghan | Untrimmed



Starting out with graphic design, oil painting, and animation gave me a really broad visual foundation. Graphic design trained my eye for composition, typography, and clear communication, while oil painting taught me patience, depth, and an appreciation for texture and color. Animation pushed me to think about storytelling and movement—how visuals can guide emotion over time. Together, these experiences shaped a visual language that's both expressive and purposeful: I aim for designs that are visually striking but also deeply communicative, with a painterly sensitivity to color and texture and a motion designer's sense of flow. It's a mix of fine art intuition and design strategy that I carry into every project today.

How does your Iranian heritage continue to inform your work today, even as you live and create in the United States?

My Iranian heritage is an endless source of inspiration for me. Growing up surrounded by such a rich visual and cultural history—Persian calligraphy, intricate tile work, vibrant textiles, and centuries of storytelling—taught me to see beauty in detail and meaning in pattern. Even



now, living and creating in the United States, those influences naturally surface in my work: the bold use of color, the layering of textures, and the emphasis on narrative all trace back to that heritage. It gave me a deep respect for craftsmanship and symbolism, which I now weave into contemporary design and motion graphics, creating a dialogue between tradition and modernity.

The circle as a symbol has many meanings in different cultures. How do you interpret it in your own art?

In my work, especially the collection Circle of Existence, the circle is a symbol of life's cyclical nature rather than a straight, predictable path. To me, it represents how we move through repeating stages: birth, growth, joy, suffering, loss, freedom, and restraint that are all interconnected. Endings aren't final; they're simply transitions into new beginnings. The circle also speaks to the uniqueness of each person's journey. We might see someone radiating joy while they quietly carry unseen struggles, or witness hardship that hides remarkable strength. The circle holds these contradictions at once: passion and despair, hope and fear, creation and collapse. Recognizing this circle means accepting life's

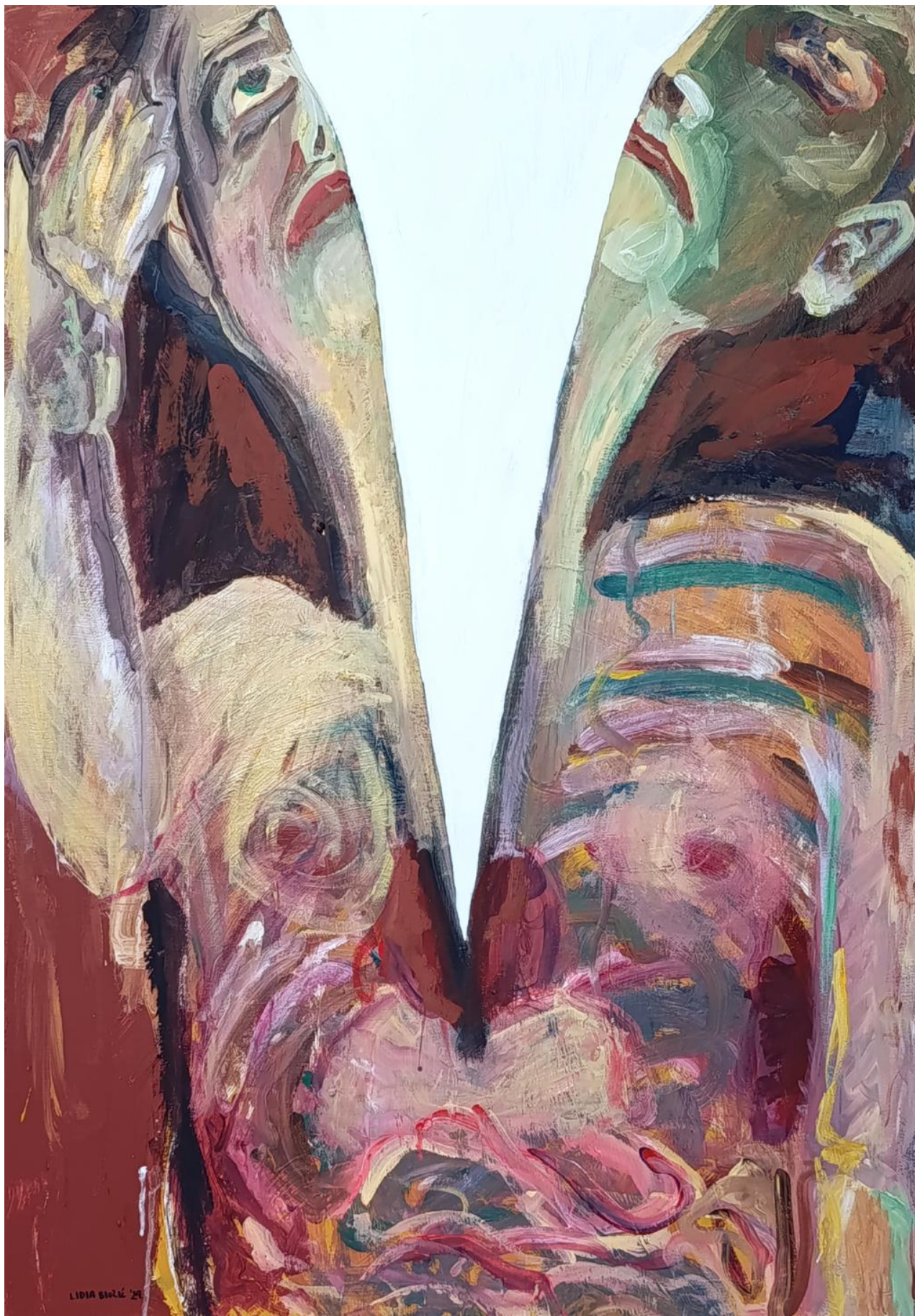
rhythm: everything transforms, nothing is permanent, and no single moment or experience reveals the whole of who we are. It's a reminder of humility and empathy, that behind every face is a story we can't fully know.

You have a strong career in professional graphic design. How does that experience influence your fine art practice?

My professional graphic design experience shapes my fine art practice in a big way. Design has taught me composition, balance, and how to communicate visually with intention. The discipline and problem-solving skills I developed working on client projects now help me approach my fine art with clarity and purpose. Right now, I have three exhibitions running: Falling for the Ozarks at the Springfield Art Council, where I'm showing The Bird Will Carry Me; RED, featuring my collection The Circle of Existence; and the Wet Paint exhibition with Colors of Humanity Art Gallery, showcasing my Untrimmed series. These projects let me explore deeper emotional themes and storytelling without the boundaries of commercial work. For me, design and fine art constantly feed each other, design gives my art structure, while my art brings emotion and experimentation back into my design work.



Lidia Biocic (born in Split, Croatia). Graduated as a Bachelor of Fine Arts at the Academy of Fine Arts in Split, Croatia in 2003. Since 2009, I've been working at the School of Applied Arts and Design in Zadar, Croatia, where I teach professional subjects at the Department of Painting Design. I participate in numerous school and extracurricular activities. I had 4 solo, and 15 group exhibitions in Croatia.



Lidia Biocic | There Is No Point in Fighting | 2024



Lidia Biocic | Say Yes to No | 2024

Urszula Kalinowska



Your statement mentions creating “a small, new world” from daily situations. Could you describe how an ordinary moment evolves into these abstract visual narratives?

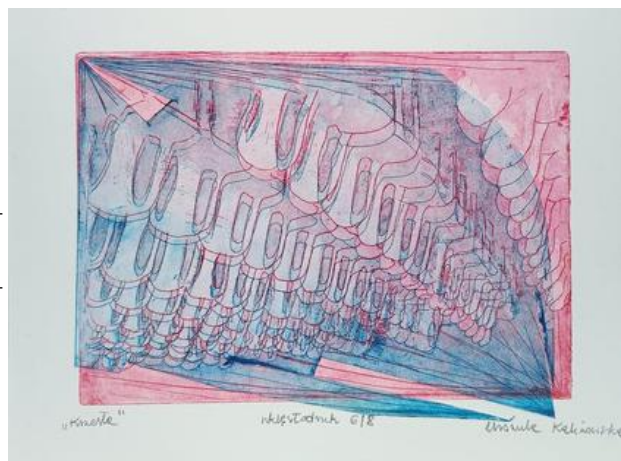
Yes, that's true, I always describe my graphics as “a small new worlds” that I'm trying to build and afterwards show to my

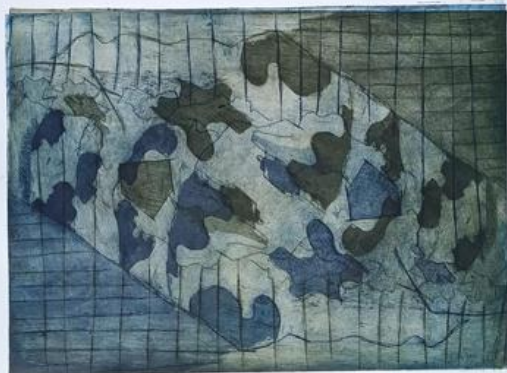
viewers. In my mind and my art language, graphics are always about small moments. I look at home pets or public transport and I think to myself: “ohh this lines there are impressive” or “I love this colour”. For a long time I was wondering if other people can see that too? I tried to talk to my friends or relatives and I learned that not always. That was the moment I decided to work on project that can show what I see on ordinary world, that we sometimes miss being in a hurry. So basically to summarise what I want to say, I see some object and I look for contrasts and create a picture out of it.

What role does experimentation play when working with multiple metal plates in your etching process?

For a long time I was learning that experiments are not always bad. Previously I had a plan what I wanted to paint or draw. In photography you also can control what you're picturing. With etching is always a small part of mysterious action that you can't do much about. It's because not only you can decide what you're doing. What I mean is that you can be the most precise but in the end once the printing machine is on and press the paper and plate together the power of pressing can move plate. And in the end the final effect can be slightly different from what you were thinking about. The same story is also with paint that I use to print because the colour, I see mostly in the end because the printing process is about press the paint into plate. In my particular case is also about the fact that I'm printing not only once at one paper. I use multiple metal plates that can move and make the final “child”, how I often name my works, looking a bit differently. Honestly I need to say that's the thing I like about etching probably the most. But directly answering the question, experimentation plays a huge part of whole process.

What draws you to etching as your primary medium, and how do you approach color layering and line work?





At first it was about to learn new technique, than painting, and find myself a place where I can experiment and create works that I also can use as my tattoo designs. Afterwards I leaned how peacefull and lovely technique that is and I drowned in this colourfull world with endless possibilites. Mosty I'm in love with the fact that it feels always really close to me, almost like something mine. Almost like I invented, this whole process od printing mulple paterns on one paper. From the very first begining when I draw with cheep, oil crayons on walls at my grandmas flat I was attached to colour. As a kid I didn't know quite well what I want to do with that but as a adult and more "self-shaped" artist I decided which path I want to follow. First I look for lines in world that's surrounds me. In faces, public transport, ect. And then imagine how thick or thin this line can be when it will play the main role. With colours is always easier because I just think about combinations that fit to each other in my head and I give them a try.

How do you decide on the composition and the number of plates for a particular work?

That's a good question, but I think there is no good answer for it. My whole journey with etching I started from one plate and black. And I felt like in a trap. Everything was in my opinion sad, without story. It just wasn't me. Afterwards I decided to give two prints a try. It was still a one plate but suddenly I had a courage to print it twice, one print on the other. It wasn't easy and clean proces at the beginning. A lot of tries and frustration guided me to a place where I learned how to move my hands not to destroy print. Usually I follow my instinct and create composition from plates I have and then I print. Sometimes I say "stop" to myself before I finish with the plan, because I find something already good. Sometimes I add more because the space feels empty. Again it's about experimetation and my personal taste. I just play with it and wait for the effect.

Which artists, art movements, or everyday experiences have most influenced your approach?

As a first artist, who inspires me, maybe not in a direct sens, but as a person, I will name Rene Magritte. He is for a long time one od my favorite artists. I was always truly impressed by his ideas and compositions. How he can play with his art and things that people think about his works. I need to say that I like to look at cubistic art pieces, moslty because of the lines that are hidden and in playfull sens build the image.

How do the cities where you live and study—Gdańsk, Lübeck, Kiel, Warsaw—shape your creative vision?

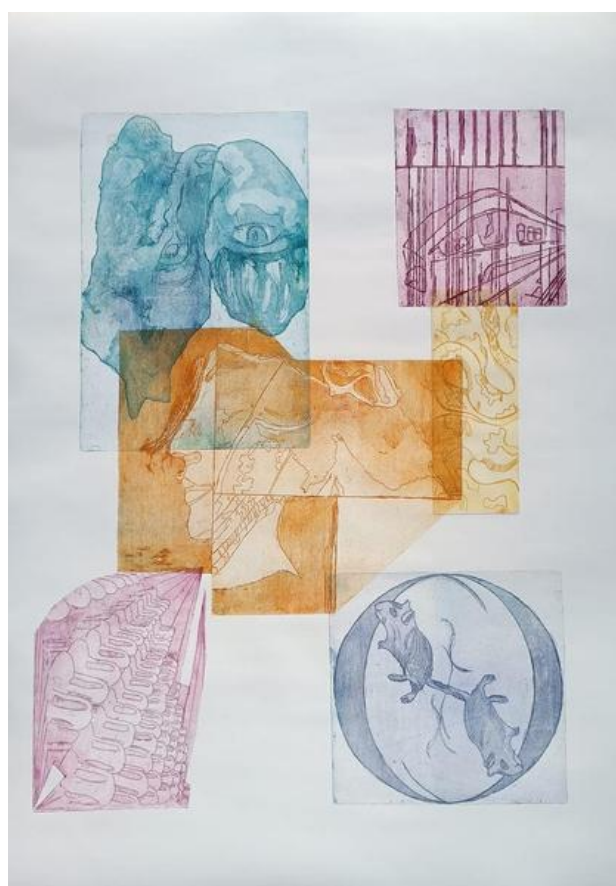
Here I definitely need to name my profesor, from master studies in Gdańsk. Her name is Magdalena Hanyasz-Stefańska and for almost four years I was taking her class, the basics od graphics. Her approche to students made me feel listend and I was able to consider what I want to do in my graphics. For a two semesters I was also listening to advices from Hanna Kur, her assistant, she also helped me a lot with practicing my printing method.

I need to say that I learned a lot of beeing connected to the colour during my erasmus time as well. About what I want to say and how I feel with certain shades.

To speak about cities, where I lived, Warsaw, Gdańsk, Bremen, Kiel and finally Lübeck, I need to say that old towns and friends that I've meet had biggest impact on my art. I always liked to sticke art, and not only art conversations that often drived me into ideas for another plate.

Your works invite different personal readings. Are there hidden symbols or recurring motifs that you hope viewers will notice?

In my works I'm tring to base on universal topics that can be read by anyone. Sometimes I use one plate more often but it's mostly because it fits im my opinion to composition or I like the story which is behind it. I wouldn't say that in my works are symbols that are having some hidden message. My goal was always to achive some kind of unrealistic mosaisk, that everyone can read on his own. My works doesn't contain any symbols but when somebody find something in the "jungle" of lines and colours I'm always more than happy for it.



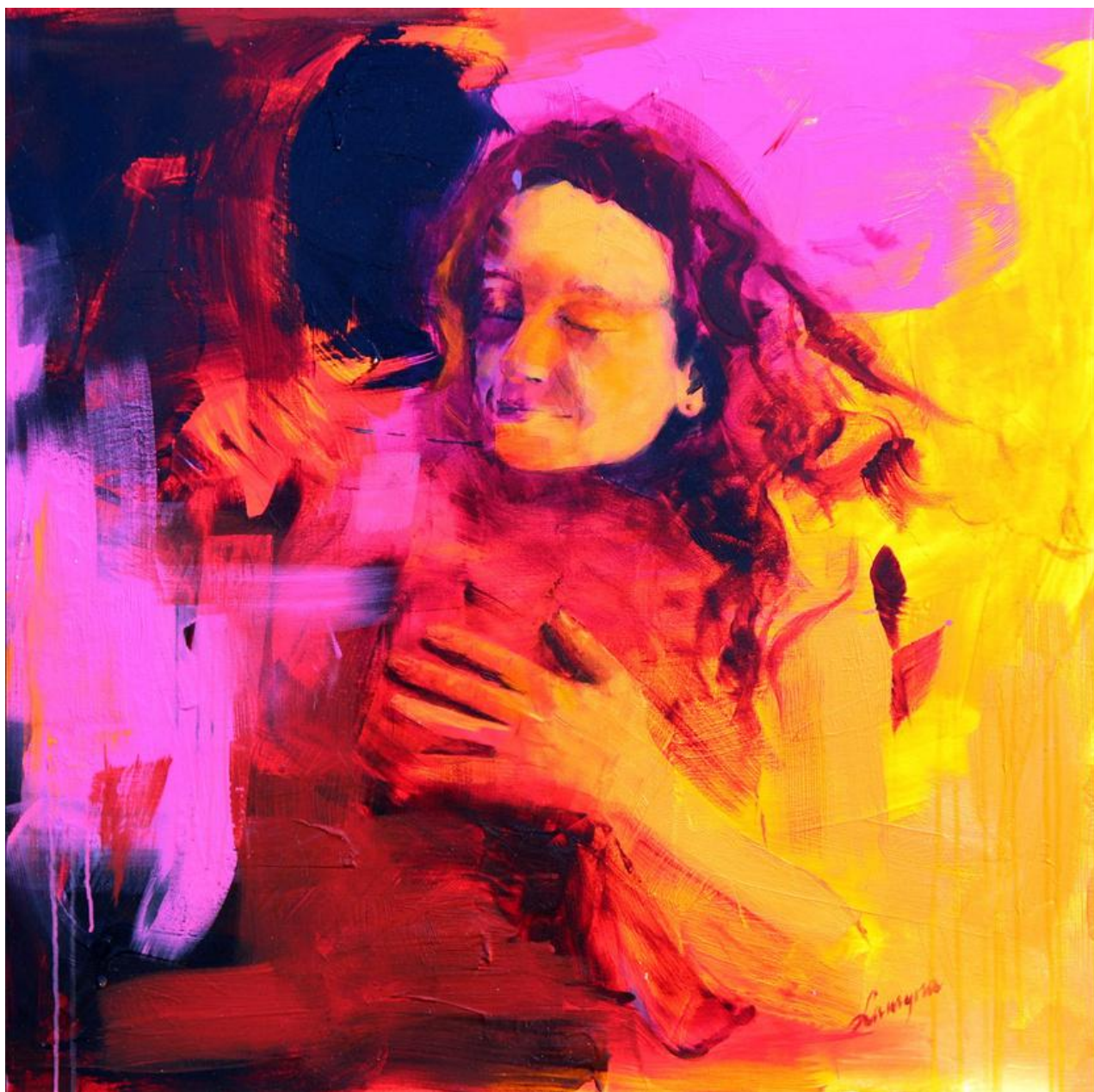
Lauryna Rakauskaite

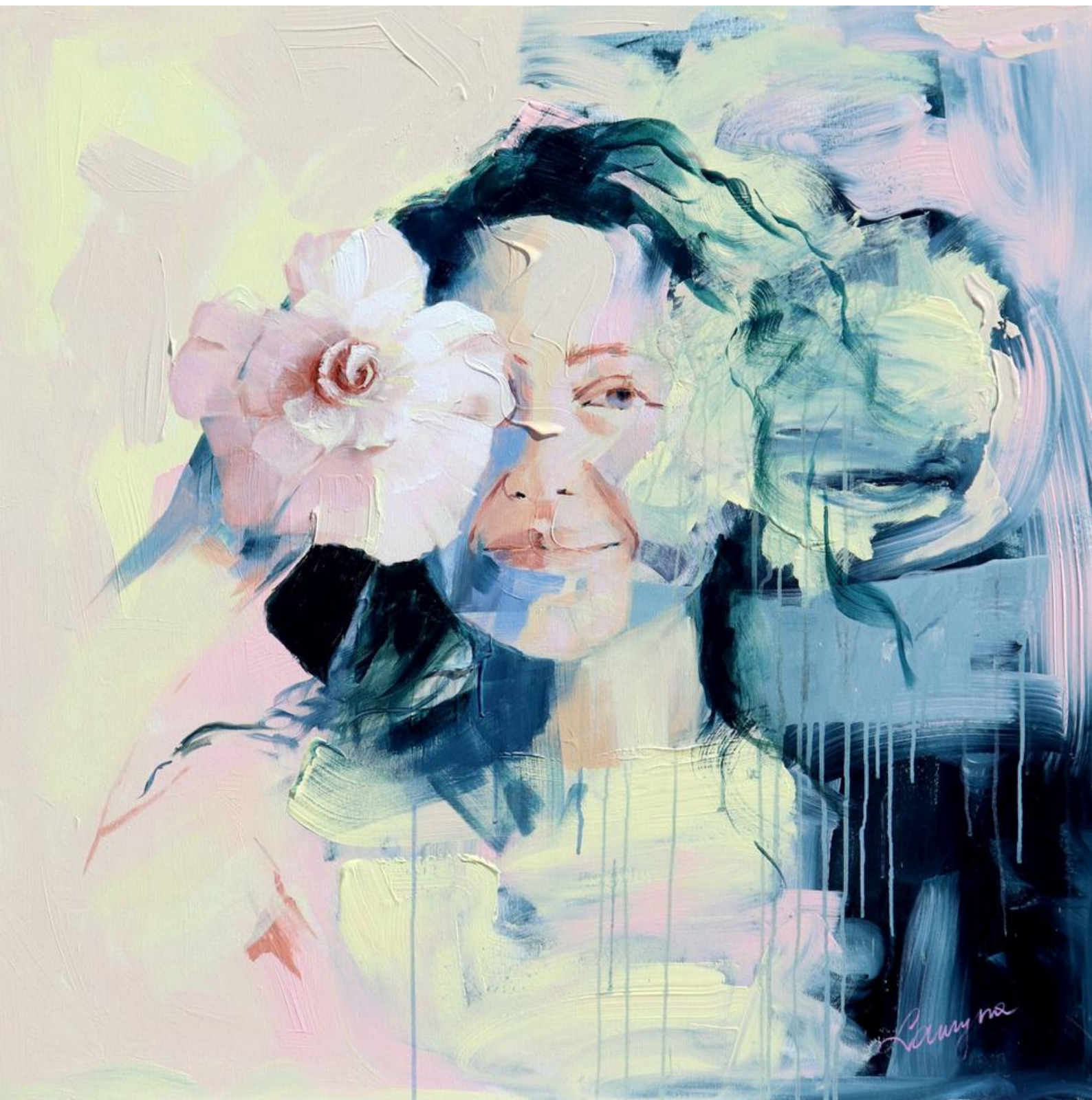
I have been working in a managerial position for a long time, although creativity has been with me since childhood. I have been attending private painting lessons for a year. I held my own personal exhibition in Lithuania in 2025.

Project Statement

I create from the heart. My artistic journey is guided by intuition — it often feels as if something inside me simply knows what to paint and how to express it. I'm drawn to vibrant colors and positive energy, which I aim to reflect in every piece I make. Working with acrylics and brushes, I strive to be bold and fearless with my brushstrokes, allowing each painting to carry a sense of joy, movement, and authenticity. Through my art, I hope to spread kindness, light, and goodness into the world.

Lauryna Rakauskaite | Embraced





Lauryna Rakauskaitė | I Feel It

Charlie Milgrim

You describe your practice as “restless by nature.” How has this restlessness shaped the different phases of your artistic journey?

I respond to any materials which inform and inspire my practice. I permit myself to often shift



Charlie Milgrim | Edge | 2024



Charlie Milgrim | Looking Down On Steel Cradle | 2025

conceptual directions, never limiting myself to particular themes which might inhibit the direction of my work or the way it's perceived. This process maintains my passion for making art.

How did your upbringing in New York City and your move to the Bay Area influence the themes and aesthetics of your work?

My mother was an English professor and a passionate, but self absorbed teacher's union activist. My father was a stay at home concert pianist who rarely left his Steinway bench. His devotion to his craft laid the groundwork for my own art practice, empowering me to feel I could devote all my time to my work. Each of my parents and the frenetic pace of New York City life influenced who I eventually became as an artist. Living in Oakland, California steered my interests to environmental concerns, while returning to New York several times a year helped me to find art in unlikely places such as subway floors and amorphous street markings, as in my Streetcode photo series.

Bowling balls appear consistently in your



work. What first drew you to them as both a material and a metaphor?

I had been fascinated by the concept of the disposal of nuclear waste after visiting the proposed Carlsbad New Mexico site. While in graduate school at U.C. Berkeley, I was invited to do an installation at the former Western Union telegraph facility in San Francisco. I spotted a black vinyl stripe on the floor and immediately thought of a bowling alley. I instantly drew a connection to the kinetic energy that is symbolized in the aggressive motion of a bowling ball coming down the lane and the explosion of pins upon impact. This level of destruction is a perfect metaphor for the futility of burying this extremely hazardous material in salt catacombs. My piece, Carlsbad Lanes, incorporated real bowling balls which had the words EARTH, AIR, WATER and FIRE, sandblasted into them as metaphors for the elements that would make this type of disposal very unstable over time. The balls were headed towards fifty gallon steel drums, covered in rock salt, and a metronome that mimicked dripping water. After this exhibition, I thought of myself as rescuing these perfect and beautiful spheres from landfills and found many other materials to combine them with to bring life to them through my work. I hung them, dropped them off rooftops, and used them to represent gravitational forces, body parts and other biological forms.

What inspired you to begin creating nests from repurposed materials?

The “nests” present an ironic twist to the concept

of sanctuary. Since birds and wild animals struggle to find organic materials to construct their shelters in our built environments, I satirically propose through these pieces how they can repurpose our items of former utility.

How do you choose which discarded or industrial materials to use for each nest?

The materials I choose are primarily composed of random objects left out on the street to be reclaimed and reused by other humans. I try to imagine how a bird might utilize these human discards for their own sanctuaries. Some of the objects I choose are antithetical to the concept of safety, while others are just disturbing or challenging on some level.

How do you balance the conceptual side of your work with the very physical process of assembling heavy or unwieldy objects?

It all references our innate relationship to the delicate balance of our perceptions of weight and gravity. Thus, I allude to the precariousness of the concepts I wield, in my actual antigravitational sculpture.

How do viewers usually respond to the combination of playfulness (color, form, bowling balls) and seriousness (ecology, survival) in your installations?

Frankly, people generally respond to the visual cues in my work more strongly than to any underlying message I may try to convey. I am okay with my concepts being subliminally perceived.

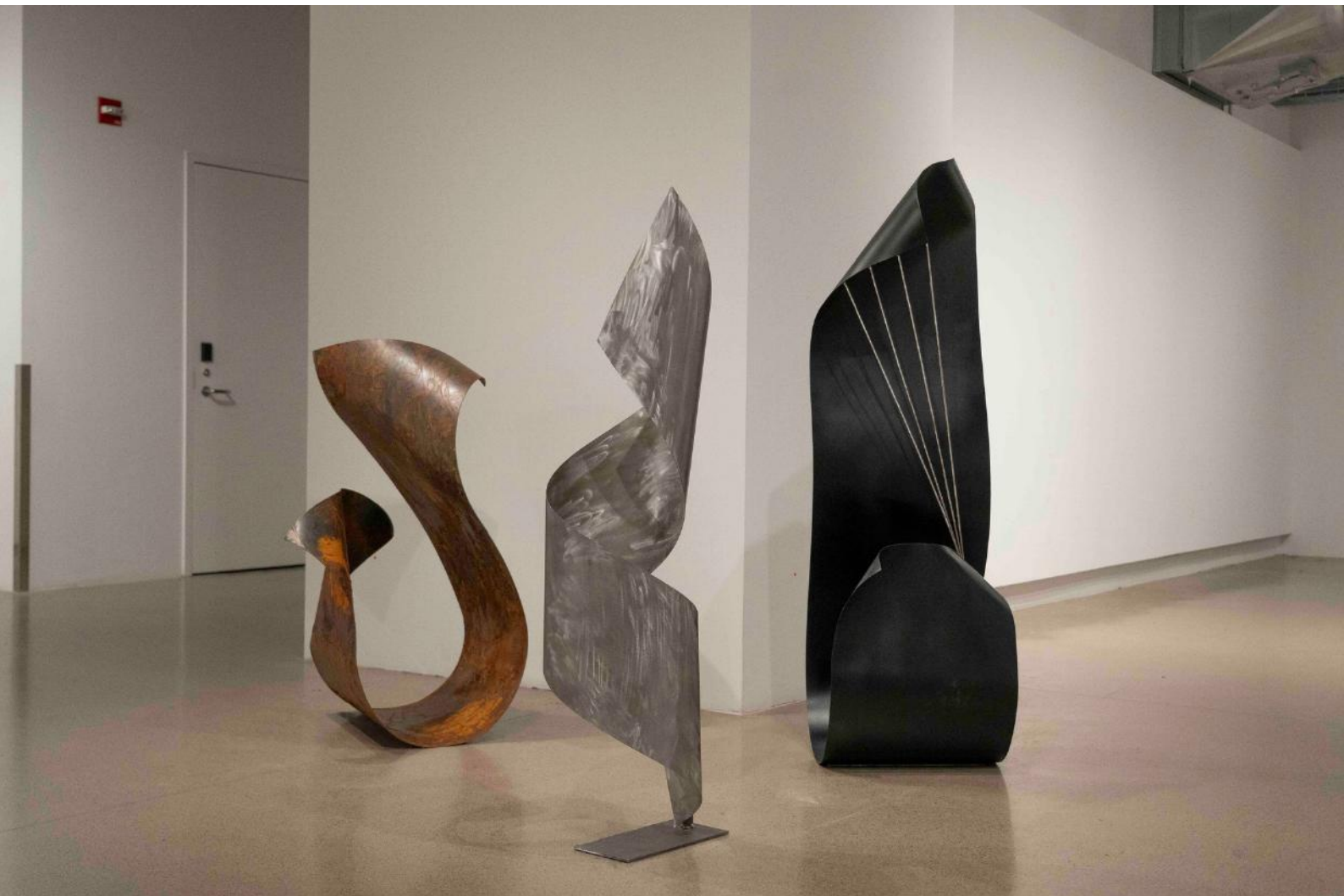


Rea Silvia Emmanouil is a Greek interdisciplinary artist based in Chicago. She graduated with distinction from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where she was an honors student and merit scholarship recipient. Working primarily in sculpture, her practice explores how rigid materials can be manipulated into fluid, dynamic forms. Through this transformation, she creates large-scale works that carry both strength and movement, inviting viewers to experience materiality as something alive and shifting. Drawing on her background in painting and digital media, Rea Silvia infuses her sculptures with layered complexity and spatial sensitivity. Her recent work expands into public art and large-scale installations that interact with both architecture and the natural environment. Engaging the tension between the organic and the industrial, her practice pushes the boundaries of contemporary sculpture, redefining how matter can embody flow, rhythm, and transformation.

Project Statement

Rea-Silvia Emmanouil explores the intricate relationship between nature and femininity, creating sculptures that transform rigid steel into fluid, organic forms. At the core of her practice is the tension between strength and softness, permanence and impermanence. Through force and manipulation, she bends solid materials into shapes that echo the rhythms of the natural world, embodying both movement and stillness. Her work reflects on transformation, the coexistence of decay and regeneration, restriction and release, often mirroring the curves of the female form without direct representation. Deeply influenced by her Greek heritage and the serenity of its landscapes, she seeks to create spaces of pause within motion, inviting viewers into moments of reflection. Increasingly working on large-scale and public installations, Rea-Silvia aims to craft sculptural experiences that move beyond form to evoke emotion, offering a dialogue between material, body, and environment.

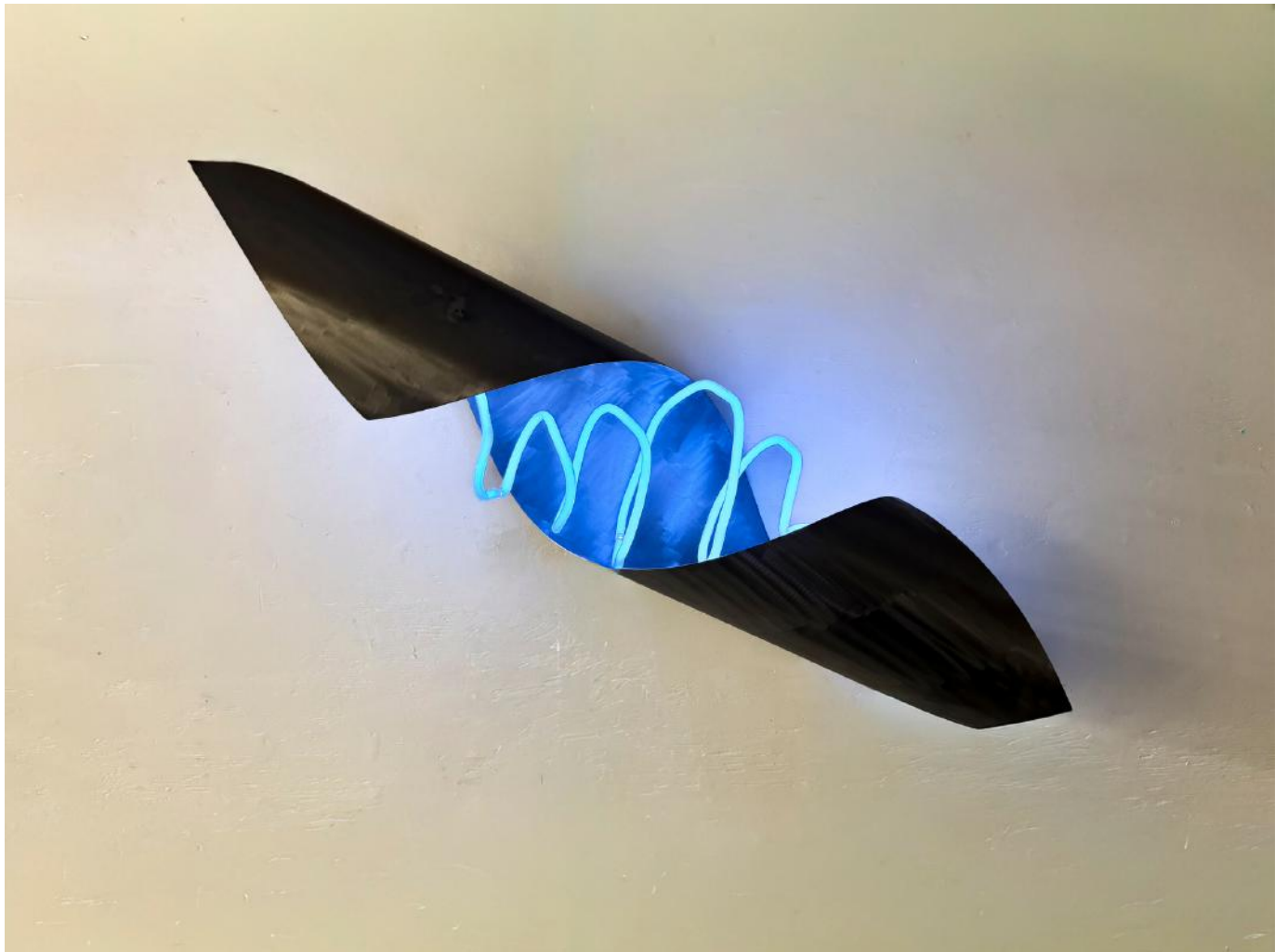
Rea Silvia Emmanouil | Transformation, Installation View





Rea Silvia Emmanouil | I'm Twisted, Steel

Rea Silvia Emmanouil | Do I Look Blue, Steel



Tabarak Mansour

You began creating art in Baghdad and have worked across sculpture, painting, glass, and more. How did your early experiences and training in Iraq shape your artistic vision?

I studied Fine Arts for nine years in Baghdad, and I learned painting, sculpture, printmaking, glass painting, and design. The formation there is intensive, comprehensive, and rich, giving the student a wide foundation of experience at an early age—and these experiences were essential in shaping me. But honestly, the classical style was dominant in our curricula, and it made me feel bored, and we had to adhere to pure realism; I felt that I needed a wider space to create my own language. I started, as a student, to paint as I felt, with my own colors, releasing my shapes and emotions without hesitation.



Tabarak Mansour | Veiled Body | 2025



Tabarak Mansour | Who Deserves The Light | 2024

It was not easy to learn under the conditions of sectarian war, to go on our way to education and witness the destruction and the tense situations over the long years. But I feel that this was a great motivation for me: to witness all this death, and to insist on life and on art.

In your statement you describe masks and boxes as metaphors for hidden and revealed identities. Could you share how this idea first emerged for you?

The idea began with very small details. We had a large wooden trunk at home—a trunk for storage and decoration. My mother kept in it my father's belongings: the olive-green war bag, old letters, photographs, and things of her own and my father's. She rarely allowed us to approach it, and it remained a mystery to me.

Over time, I realized that what we hide in trunks mirrors what we hide inside ourselves. In later years, amid war and the weary faces around me, I saw how people wore masks to keep going—and I was among them, with my own mask to cope with a society I do not quite resemble, and my own trunk where I dwell, from which I emerge whenever I wish.

That was when I understood that trunks and masks are not just objects, but symbols of our identities—what we reveal and what we keep in the shadows.—How do war, fear, and social changes in Iraq and the Middle East inform your exploration of identity and transformation?

How do war, fear, and social changes in Iraq and



the Middle East inform your exploration of identity and transformation?

Iraq has gone through wars and sanctions, and although I have lived more than 30 years in this environment and have seen all these painful images, and witnessed all the changes this society has undergone, in a way I became accustomed to the scene. Yet inside I know that I never truly grew accustomed to anything, and that one day I want to gain my peace far from what I have seen.

I do not believe that a sensitive artist is capable of changing a society so deeply consumed by wars. The corrupt politician is the one who has altered the values of this society.

Certainly, what wars and social transformations in the Middle East have left upon me is not good—fear and a lack of integration. This made me hide often, searching for a civil society, and perhaps I paint this civil society in my dreams and in my artworks.

Do you think of the “box” more as a place of protection, a prison, or something else entirely?

The box is my private joyful room, and also my dark room; the place that protects me, and the place where I am imprisoned. I always try to get out of it, but after that I return to it again, because I have learned that I can open it whenever I want.

How do color choices—especially your vibrant contrasts of black, grey, and rich jewel tones—support the emotional impact of your pieces?

I am a somewhat organized person, and I choose everything with order. The work has stages for me. I draw the sketch in a preliminary way, then I transfer it

professionally in its final form onto white paper with a pencil, and afterwards I transfer it again onto the canvas, and then color it. I can imagine the colors of the work before I begin it, but sometimes the colors impose themselves on my imagination and appear in an unexpected way. Even my palette is organized and ready, but it changes when my mind sinks into something while I am painting, and then the painting becomes instinctive and spontaneous, and the colors emerge one after another.

How do you balance the personal and the political in your art?

Many Iraqi and Arab artists have introduced politics into their works and artistic projects. I feel that I cannot embody it in my works, as I do not like it. When I want to read, I prefer to read about politics and what happened in my country, what the causes of the region's conflicts are, and what the beginnings of the divisions between religions and sects were. I try to understand from a distance without taking any side other than the side of peace. Meanwhile, the personal side prevails in my works, and what matters to me is the psychology of the human being, this strange creature, and the decoding of its secrets.



Joséphine Dolmaire was born in Vernon in 1996. Having always practiced visual arts and nurtured a passion for painting, she entered the Olivier de Serres School in Paris to obtain a diploma in decorative arts specializing in fresco and mosaic, then continued her studies at the EESAB, École Nationale Supérieure des Arts de Bretagne, in 2019. There, she completed her DNA in Quimper and later her DNSEP in Rennes. Upon returning to Paris, she interned as a design assistant at the CTC style office, where she currently works as a color and materials illustrator. Since the summer of 2024, she has been devoting herself to fashion illustration and her artistic practice.

Artist Statement

My approach is traditional; I consider myself a painter who bears witness to her time. Deeply influenced by the history of painting, I see painting as a medium of resistance — a way to communicate light, immortalize our existences, and depict humanity in its entirety and truth. With a strong inclination toward the absurd, I seek to paint, with humor and tenderness, the paradoxical and dark aspects of existence through themes such as mental health, the representation of women, comfort, and our relationship with material things. The human figure is central to my work — facial expression, the theater of the body, or posture are all precious elements. It is a pictorial practice, even when it takes sculptural form, strongly connected to domestic life and the everyday, in order to question our contemporary habits and customs.

Joséphine Dolmaire | Blossoming Anxiety | 2023





HAAA



— Interview

Maria Leite

How did your background in set design influence the way you approach painting and mixed-media art today?

My academic training and professional experience in set design provided the foundation for my development as a visual artist. It exposed me to multiple artistic languages, including photography, painting, and more. What most strongly influences my current exploration of abstract art is the idea of manipulating perspective and the way lighting transforms a space. Lighting, in particular, inspires many of my black-and-white abstracts. I enjoy combining flattened images with converging perspective lines that often lead to nonsensical vanishing points. Many of my paintings reflect this willingness to defy formal technique in favor of pure expression. I also draw inspiration from photography—particularly images of light and shadow—which connects back to my collaborative experiences with lighting designers during stage productions.

What inspired your move from Brazil to the United States, and how has this international experience shaped your creative perspective?

Maria Leite | Ghost City | 2023



I originally moved to the United States as a student, although my degree at the time was in education, not in art. After graduation, I became a K-12 art teacher, an experience that allowed me to connect my background as a set designer and art educator in Brazil with new knowledge I was acquiring in the field of Special Education. This experience ultimately led me to complete a Doctor of Education degree in curriculum and diversity studies, in which I explored photography as a method to support data collection in qualitative research. In 2022, I had the opportunity to exhibit my research photographs in a solo show at the A. Quinn Jones Museum and Cultural Center in Gainesville, Florida. Living and working internationally has broadened my understanding of cultural context and has deeply shaped my creative and academic practice.

How do your academic interests in curriculum, diversity, and social justice connect with your artistic practice?

When I first began teaching at a theater school in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, I quickly realized how much I needed to grow my knowledge of pedagogy as it applied to the scenic arts. My undergraduate training prepared me to be a set designer, but I had to learn to teach by doing the work. During the past 20 years in the United States, I have developed curriculum and pedagogy



knowledge significantly, which allowed me to revisit my earlier teaching experiences with a more critical lens. During the pandemic, my former theater school colleagues and I reunited remotely to reflect on our teaching practices. This collaboration led to a book chapter (Leite, Fraga, Laranjeira, & Sareta, 2023) in which we collectively explored theater education through a decolonized perspective founded in both literature and in our own early experiences as artists and educators. Diversity and social justice are inherently present in my art as well—many of my pieces reference political turmoil, social injustice, and anti-oppression discourse.

Your artworks often combine layered textures and a bold use of contrasts. What materials or techniques do you most enjoy experimenting with?

I enjoy experimenting with painting techniques, layered textures, and high contrast. Many of my pieces feature intersecting straight lines that create a sense of multiple dimensions—this can also be seen in my photography. Collage is another process I enjoy, especially when combined with drawing or painting. Additionally, I have been curious about incorporating recycled materials—such as paper, plastic, and even concrete—to create three-dimensional objects.

Do you see a dialogue between spontaneity and structure in your work, considering your set-design training and academic research?

Absolutely. There is an ongoing dialogue between intuition and structure in my work. Some of my pieces are carefully planned and structured, while others are born entirely from intuition, allowing me to create freely and respond to the process in the moment. Afterward, I often reflect on these intuitive works, analyzing them and occasionally shaping them into a more structured series or process. This analytical approach likely stems from my years of experience in higher education assessment, which has influenced how I evaluate and refine my own artistic practice.

What messages or emotions do you hope viewers take away from your abstract compositions?

I hope my art invites viewers to engage with their own narratives and reflections. My pieces often tell stories that are not obvious, encouraging contemplation at a social, emotional, or political level. Some of my pieces hold hidden narratives that I plan to explore further in the future, serving both as reminders of the past and as guidance for the future.

How does the idea of “decolonizing art education” influence your own artmaking?

For me, decolonizing art education means recognizing and valuing the cultural heritage, traditions, and unique experiences of each individual. In my work as an art teacher and set designer in Brazil, I collaborated with students and colleagues to create theater productions that reflected local culture—even when the curriculum emphasized Eurocentric classics. To me, decolonizing art education means embracing representations rooted in African and Indigenous traditions, reinterpreting the classics through popular culture, and honoring the community's vision of itself. In my artistic practice, this philosophy manifests as respect for individual creativity and freedom, encouraging works that are deeply personal and culturally situated.



Marian Gayk

"Binding" is a striking collection of digital designs by Marian Gayk, born from his first solo exhibition held in Tokyo from December 2024 to March 2025. This intimate book, with its 60 pages (including the front and back covers), showcases 55 captivating digital works. Each design is carefully printed to reflect the essence of Marian's journey over the past few years, offering an accessible space for designs that previously lacked a platform.

The book's limited edition of 25 copies was self-published to gauge audience reception, and with 18 books already sold, Marian plans to release a larger edition in the future. In an era where physical art often struggles to find space, "Binding" brings digital creations into the tangible world, allowing art enthusiasts to engage with them in a more personal and affordable format.

At its core, "Binding" is not just a collection of designs; it is a reflection of Marian's desire to provide a lasting home for his work, making it available to those who truly appreciate it. Available exclusively through his business, this book marks the beginning of a new chapter in Marian's exploration of digital art and its place in the physical world.





Ekaterina Bazhul

How did the decision to start photography in 2024 change your personal and creative life?

My decision to take up photography changed my whole life. I have always tried to look at people and nature from a different angle, I have always been interested in deep moments. Photography allowed me to show myself and others without words that it is possible to be different. With the help of photography (I photograph a lot of women in the nude art genre) I have revealed myself from different sides. Realizing that every woman is different and I manage to find beauty in completely different women, I accepted my different features. I felt a great acceptance of myself and different parts of myself, acceptance of different women and men. This profession has liberated me a lot and made me realize that there are no boundaries. It had a great impact on my creative development, as I began to realize ideas that I would not have dared to do before. It also affected my life in



general, because I started to treat my family, my husband and my son in a completely new way. Photography allowed me to go deeper into a person, to feel his gut, sometimes to get away from the visual story and feel the soul, which allowed me to see very subtle and intangible things in a solid sense.

Could you describe your typical process when you create a new series—from the first idea to the final image?

Usually I don't put any initial meaning into the shoot, I just shoot. I like to do different plans, but more close-ups, I really like to do shots lying on the ground, from below. I like to participate in the process myself, so I always show the model how to stand up, lie down, if I ask her to climb somewhere, I first test it on myself to see if it's possible. In the process of shooting I observe the model, sometimes I ask her personal questions, for example, what she feels at this moment, I am a very sensitive person and in the process of shooting I try to emotionally immerse in the state of the model. I don't do retouching, I like to do cropping, and to crop on the most unusual places, I like to explore color, so I do color correction. In a series I do each frame separately and never use one preset for the whole series, because I believe that each frame carries its own vibe and speaks about a particular moment and the whole series simply can not be in one color. I try to do the series quickly while my emotions and feelings are fresh. Sometimes it can be ready on the day of the shoot, sometimes I wait for the right state within myself for the series. I like to put all the photos in the series in the order in which they were shot, so that the story I want to show in the series is true, dynamic and as it was at that moment.

Do you prefer to work spontaneously or to plan each composition in detail?

I like to give myself some time before shooting. Since I shoot a lot outdoors, I like to visit a location beforehand, to



understand what it means, how it feels. I like to prepare myself emotionally, be inspired by art, sometimes learn something new before the shoot to try it out. So yes, I like a little preparation, but not in terms of composition.

Your work explores the idea that “we are nature itself”. How do you translate this belief into visual language?

I try to visually fit a nude figure into a space or a natural object, such as a rock, so that the image gives the feeling that the figure has always been there. So that the shot doesn't look like it was planned on purpose, but gives the feeling that it has always been there. When working with a model, I often ask her, for example, when she is next to a tree or a stone, to try to become it and improvise. I believe that such a moment in terms of energy or “spirit” also immerses you in the context of nature itself, it can be felt in a non-verbal way.

What does nude photography mean to you beyond the obvious visual form?

For me it's a very vulnerable genre and it's just as strong! For me, nude photography is about the present moment, without masks, without personal style in clothes, without roles, it's about honesty, about the possibility to be naked mentally, about emptiness, about acceptance and the power to be yourself. This genre for me is about the ability to accept your flaws, about revealing your new sides, about exploring yourself, your feelings. Nude photography for me is about the fact that you have to think when you look at it. It evokes a lot of different emotions from excitement to disgust, it makes you look at yourself from different sides, from all the models you shoot. It's a genre that shows you have the utmost confidence in yourself as a photographer. For me, Nude photography is power!

In your opinion, what makes the female body a powerful metaphor in contemporary art?

For me the female body in contemporary art is a metaphor for almost any aspect of our life, through the body you can see absolutely everything, but since I associate the female body more with nature, I can say that the body is like a whole planet and this is the biggest metaphor for me. A woman lives through different cycles like a planet from spring to winter, the body has different surfaces like mountains and plains, it can be compared to the landscape of a planet. Rivers with wrinkles, any imperfections with skin imperfections. Any natural pattern, like the texture of a leaf, with skin and its circulatory system and so on. The emotional part of our body can be compared to different weather phenomena: hurricanes, volcanic eruptions, elements and at the same time natural silence. A woman, as a whole planet, includes absolutely everything and also connects nature and civilization with the help of her body.

How did participation in exhibitions—from New York projections to shows in Bali and Russia—shape your view of your own art?

Participating in various exhibitions strengthened my self-confidence and allowed me to develop my own style. Since I have only been involved in photography for a little over a year, these exhibitions gave me tremendous self-confidence. I am pleased that there are people who share my worldview and principles, who become involved in my creative work. I have made many new acquaintances in the field of photography. All of this has allowed me to dream, plan my development in this field, and take further steps in this direction.



Michael Wagner

Born in Heidelberg in 1953, I used every free minute during my studies of social work at the Mannheim University for artistic studies, and then concentrated entirely on the fine arts after completing my studies. Since 1981 I have been living and working as a freelance painter, graphic artist and photo artist (self-taught) in Heidelberg.

While in the beginning I worked in the representational field, depicting landscapes and people, I gradually developed an artistic conception that focuses on color and its many possibilities of action. Today, living abstraction has become a conviction and a need for me. It inspires and fascinates me to create my own special pictorial world from the body of color. A world of pure color, a world free of objects, which draws its meaning from the attitude, from the approach of the artist, who thus gives color power and content. Today I see myself as a poet of color.

Michael Wagner | It's a Small World | 2023





Michael Wagner | INTEGRATION | 2024

— Interview

Micheala Clair

Could you tell us a bit more about your artistic journey—how did you start creating art and what inspired you to become an artist?

I've enjoyed creating since early childhood, and visual art is something I've been drawn to as far back as my memory serves. From sketching at my desk during elementary school, to painting at kitchen tables with friends - art was something I spent a lot of time indulging in during my younger



years. As I've gotten older it's remained a constant driving force in my life, a motivator in good times and a crutch during life's tribulations. No matter how much time passes or where I find myself, creation in its various forms is always something I return to.

You work in a variety of mediums and cover diverse topics. What attracts you to experimenting with different materials and styles?

I typically start with an idea for a new piece, and then choose a medium that will lend itself to that vision. Once I can picture an image in my mind's eye, it usually becomes obvious which materials and styles will work best for the project. I have always found covering different topics ranging from life drawing to comics style inking to be interesting subject matter, and being able to leverage various mediums is one of the things I enjoy most about art.

The painting Good Days radiates warmth and introspection, while Medusa explores myth and tension. How do you choose the emotions or narratives you want to express in each work?

It's often a combination of internal and external experiences. Usually my ideas stem from either personal experiences or something I've witnessed. A lot of my projects start as "spur of the moment" concepts and evolve over time. Sometimes this means I am working on many projects at once, or none for an extended period of time.



Micheala Clair | Good Days | 2021



What role do symbolism and mythology play in your art?

Symbolism and mythological figures to me are a way to convey abstract thoughts and complex emotions through a single image. It stems from the notion that “a picture is worth a thousand words”, and also provides the opportunity for individual viewers to take away something different from the same piece. I like to leave things open to interpretation.

How do your Canadian roots and surroundings influence your creative vision?

My surroundings are one of the primary influences in most of the artwork I do, so living in Canada provides unique experiences and outputs through the diversity of our landscapes and people that I get to meet. Whether through consuming Canadian media via music and visual arts, or taking in the beautiful scenery we are so lucky to have - it all subconsciously feeds into the work I do. For example, the colour palette chosen in “Good Days” was heavily influenced by the fall leaves from the forest near my home.

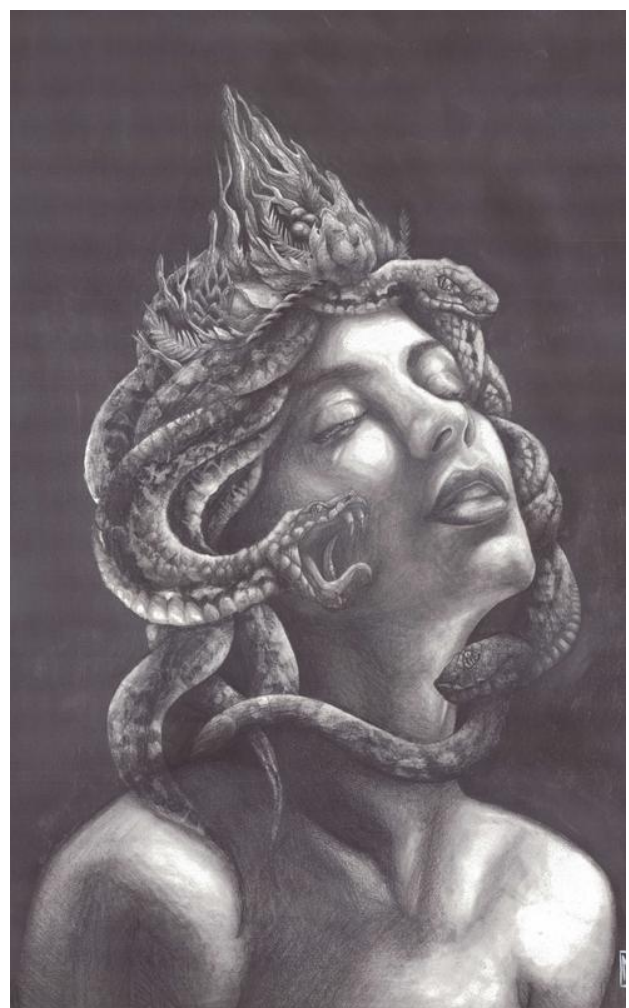
Can you share a moment or project that significantly shaped your artistic identity?

A timeframe that stands out for me would be

around my late teens to early 20’s. At that time I hadn’t really shown my work to any sort of audience outside of friends and family. However, I was lucky enough to be introduced to an artist and organizer of a local art collective who not only participated at local art shows but also supported various charitable events through their art. I went on to join this group and volunteer at a lot of these events myself, including art auctions for charity as well as drawing for live audiences to gather donations, as a way of giving back to the community. These types of events were a key focus of what this collective represented, and instilled in me the importance of using creativity as a positive force in my community.

What do you hope viewers feel or think when they encounter your art?

I typically don’t set out to try and invoke a particular thought or feeling. My only hope is that my work is not met with indifference, but rather that it offers some sort of intrigue. As mentioned, I really enjoy leaving it up to the viewer to determine what it is they think and feel when they see my work.



Atilla Dur (b. 1993, Istanbul) is a visual artist and photographer based in Turkey. He is currently pursuing his Master's degree in Photography at Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University. His practice explores the intersections of memory, body, and contemporary visual culture, often combining experimental techniques such as cyanotype with conceptual narratives. Dur's works have been featured in exhibitions and publications that focus on visibility, censorship, and the limits of representation.

Project Statement

This selection of works explores the tension between the body and censorship. Through photography and experimental processes, it reflects on how visibility is controlled, how desire and intimacy are regulated, and how self-expression is shaped by both external and internal forms of restriction. The works aim to reclaim the body as a site of resistance and presence, transforming censorship into a space of critical reflection.

Atilla Dur | The One | 2025





— Interview

Gabriela Farnell

You describe yourself as self-taught. What key moments or discoveries shaped your development as an artist without formal academic training?



Gabriela Farnell | De Picas | 2025



The joy of drawing that was typical of childhood, in my case, was preserved over the years. I drew constantly and uninterruptedly, acquiring a remarkable skill with practice that continued to develop. In adolescence, when you're supposed to discover your vocation, it was obvious to me that all I wanted to do was keep drawing. At 15 or 16, I tried to enter an art academy, but it didn't work out. I wanted to continue drawing my way, freely and whimsically, experimenting and learning from mistakes. But above all, I wanted to maintain the joy, the total delight in doing so, the playful pleasure of drawing for the sake of drawing, which fortunately persists to this day.

Borges and the idea of “universalism” appear in your statement. Which authors, thinkers, or visual artists—Argentine or international—have most inspired your creative outlook?

Borges is a great teacher of readers, a kind and confident guide to delving into universal literature. Borges encapsulates the spirit of Buenos Aires at the beginning of the 20th century, curious and open to all cultures, eager to discover and incorporate the manifestations of art in all its disciplines. Victoria Ocampo, Xul Solar, Macedonio Fernández, and Bioy Casares are exponents of a wonderful era, where education and culture went hand in hand. Borges extended that spirit to my generation, who grew up in houses with libraries where Stevenson, Carroll, Poe, Hugo, Baudelaire, and Rimbaud lived. And in Buenos Aires, you can visit glorious works by Eduardo Sívori, Prilidiano Pueyrredón, and de la Cárcova at the Museum of Fine Arts, and even enjoy several Rubens, Goyas, and a Van Gogh. I am privileged to have grown up in a city where culture is something that inhabits its streets every day.



Paper is central to your work, and you subject it to fire, water, and intentional tearing. Can you share what attracts you to these transformations and how chance accidents influence the final piece?

There's a lot of play and challenges in my creative process. Starting with a sheet of paper, drawing on it, and then intentionally destroying it with fire, to see what remains. And from there, reconstructing the image, overcoming the obstacles of paper fragmentation and scorching. On the one hand, I constantly challenge myself to improve, to overcome the difficulties of drawing on a broken support. But at the same time, reconstructing a damaged image, perhaps definitively ruined in the eyes of others, and recovering it more defined, powerful, and more beautiful, enriched by the work done, represents an allegory for me of the human spirit in the face of life's difficulties. They can hit you, break you, give you up for lost, but you can always remerge, better than before, more authentic and unique. We are all what we have laboriously rebuilt after our personal shipwrecks.

Your recent series blends meticulous drawing with collage-like layers of text and symbolism. Could you walk us through the typical stages of creating one of these works?

My work tends to mix everything, from the different types of paper supports to the design, where I fuse classic portraits with symbols, icons, and texts of cultural significance. This combination, like a collage of overlapping and blended but entirely drawn images,

attempts to tell the viewer a story, which will be translated from the viewer's own experience, giving it an absolutely personal significance. As if it were an intimate interplay between the work and each person who stops to contemplate it. As many stories as there are people who connect with each work, the possibility of multiple dialogues between them.

You speak of decoding universal culture from "the southernmost south of the Americas." How does living and working in Buenos Aires shape your global artistic vision today?

As I mentioned before, Borges symbolizes the universality inherent to Buenos Aires, where almost all of us have grandparents from some European country, where our neighbor comes from the Middle East, and at school we share classrooms with children from almost every country in the Americas. Buenos Aires is a city of fusion, of generous blending, where we summarize universal culture around a bar table, where we all meet over a coffee break. Blending, kindness, and a desire to share the game are the environment where I grew up and live, and they definitely mark and define my work.

Many of your images feature powerful female archetypes like queens and goddesses. What do these figures mean to you personally and conceptually?

In recent years, I've been working on the aesthetics of the 1930s and 1940s, using the faces of actresses from that era as a model, with their languid yet powerful expressions. Women who convey a wealth of experience behind a distant gaze or a hint of a smile. Women who, even when they found themselves within a structured system, found a way to break away and assert themselves through their individuality, breaking historical and cultural impositions. I try to capture in my work that infinite possibility of the feminine spirit, of being and doing many things at once without losing calm.

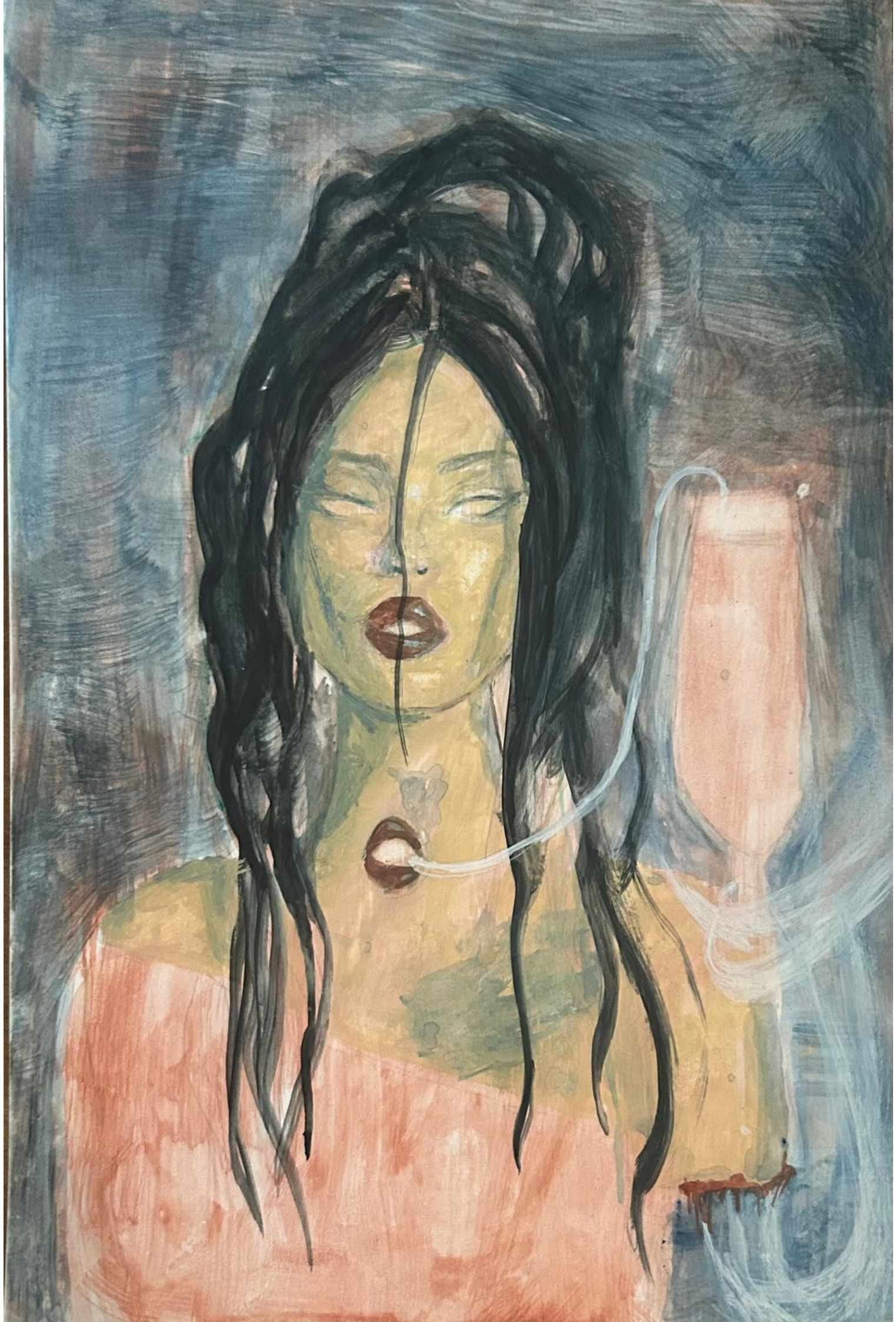
You have exhibited since 1992 and embraced the "democratization" of the art market through the internet. How has the online art world transformed your career and the way audiences experience your work?

The internet has become a wonderful tool. I've been able to experience the before (when we were limited to showing our work in a single, local location and relying on third parties—art dealers or gallery owners—to cross physical borders) and the after, the now, when we can freely interact with people from all over the world and show our work without restrictions. This exchange can be challenging in that you expose yourself to rejection and criticism, but that's precisely what allows your work to mature, to define itself, to advance toward a universal language, that possibility of being accessible to anyone, regardless of their tradition or origin, which I believe is what defines art.

Dianne Hernandez is just a 19 year old Canadian who loves to paint when she is stressed out.

Dianne Hernandez | Boycake | 2025





Nadezhda Mursalimova



I sketch gesture-based strokes on a tablet, then refine structure and rhythm in Illustrator, building a half-drop repeat at 300 dpi. Color is managed with custom ICC profiles and verified on swatches before full-width roll printing. I subliminate onto 100% polyester sateen via calender press at ~200 °C for ~60 s, which locks dye into the fiber for a zero-hand finish. Afterward, I cut and sew with pattern-matched seams and edge finishing, so the print's geometry reshapes on the body and completes the design.

How do you choose color palettes for your prints, and what emotions or associations do you aim to convey through them?

Color for me is a language of emotions. I often choose bold contrasts - pink with black, yellow with emerald - because they create rhythm and vitality. I build palettes from research notes and swatch studies, often pairing high-contrast complements (e.g., pink/black, yellow/emerald) to create visual cadence. Each hue has a functional role: structure, lift, rest. Palettes are defined in Pantone and checked for contrast and legibility across substrates, so the emotional intent, movement and transformation, survives from screen to fabric.

What first drew you to sublimation printing, and how do you see its possibilities compared to other textile-printing methods?

I use disperse-dye sublimation for its saturation, permanence, and unchanged hand. Because the dye bonds inside polyester, detail and gradients

Your prints feature mesmerizing flows of color and form. Can you describe the process of creating these fluid patterns, from digital concept to finished fabric design?



Nadezhda Mursalimova | Crossbody Bag



stay crisp through wear and washing. Versus reactive or pigment printing, it's water-lean and excels at soft transitions; versus screen printing, it favors complexity over special-effect inks. The tradeoffs are real, primarily polyester substrates and light grounds, but for my visual language, sublimation is the most faithful translation of digital nuance to textile.

Swallow Blue combines design experimentation with scientific research. How do your academic studies in textile printing technologies influence the artistic side of your work?

My training in physics and print technology taught me how materials respond to temperature, pressure, and structure. This knowledge gives me freedom to push boundaries in color blending and pattern precision. Science brings discipline and accuracy, while art allows intuition and spontaneity. Swallow Blue exists exactly at that intersection, where research meets creative transformation.

Your accessories, like bow ties and fanny packs, turn digital art into wearable objects. What inspired you to bring your prints into fashion and everyday life?

I wanted my work to step off the digital canvas and enter people's lives. Accessories like bow ties and fanny packs are close to the body, visible, and personal. They turn abstract art into

something intimate and expressive. In this way, everyday life itself becomes a gallery.

As a Russian-born artist now based in the U.S., how do your cultural experiences shape the aesthetic and conceptual aspects of your collections?

I carry a discipline of craft and ornament from Russia, attention to line, repetition, and structure, and combine it with the U.S. environment of cross-cultural mixing and risk. The collections balance those forces: motif logic and engineered detail alongside freer, improvisational color.

How do you balance working with both physical materials and purely digital media in your creative practice?

For me, digital and physical are not opposites but two stages of the same process. Digital media allows me to experiment endlessly, test scale, and refine details. Physical craft like printing, cutting, sewing brings unpredictability, tactility, and human touch. The dialogue between them is what makes my work complete.



Kareena Solanki

Your work often questions sites of sacredness. How do you personally define the sacred in today's world?

That's a great question. My main argument is that the sacred is defined through our tangible, physical experience of the world, even as we reach for something beyond it. The boundaries of the sacred are constantly shifting for me, leading me to question where these boundaries actually lie. I notice embodied beliefs in flux, enmeshed with daily life—like stickers of Jesus on subway trains, religious idols on streets, or the mix of traffic noise with sounds from churches, mosques, and temples. These instances inspire reflection on how the sacred and the profane intertwine in our environment and everyday experience.



Kareena Solanki | Labyrinth



Kareena Solanki | Labyrinth

In your artist statement, you mention exploring the “psychic and the political, the sacred and the profane.” Could you share a concrete example from your practice where these polarities collide?

My body in performance remains the psychic medium as it draws upon improvised impulses, while its physical presence in the material world remains political. I use everyday, mundane materials – fabric, plywood, acrylic paint, and sand, which are then transformed through religious mythology and rituals in performance, collapsing the space between the sacred and profane. I question where the boundaries of definition lie. Through an interplay between materiality and process, I explore ideas of translation and transformation. The body translates into performance, artefact, sculpture and installation. The characteristics that lend themselves to these materials in different stages of ‘becoming’ are the stage for the collision of these polarities. Sand is an ordinary material, but when it is used in a ritualistic act of release through a vessel, its meaning is altered. I am interested in these moments of transformation.

Many of your works resemble rituals, both in performance and in material installation. How do you approach the creation of a ritual in your art?

I approach ritual through daily observations of the body in space, drawing from simple gestures – walking, sitting, standing, moving in circles. I observe and question how the body interacts with its environment, which is the inspiration for a lot of the installation work. These gestures are then transformed through reflecting upon existing sacred mythologies and spiritual rituals. In *Pantheon*, one is surrounded by a much larger dome that envelops them, while in *Labrynth*, the body traverses a winding space to the centre and back out. The visitors engaging with these spaces are invited to perform their own rituals within them. For me, ritual isn't separate from our everyday being, but is transformed through the act of awareness, embodiment and presence. Brushing our teeth, going to work, cleaning, cooking, everything is essentially a ritual in itself. A ritual is created through daily living and repetition in our everyday lives that, in turn, shapes our entire being. Stained glass, embroidery, and wood-carving have all been processes in creating sacred relics due to their painstaking, laborious, repetitive nature, which itself becomes an act of meditation.



Materials in my work embody these rituals of repetition with the hand and machines, opening up space for a deeper reflection of the present times.

The stained-glass-like pieces evoke both mythological figures and futuristic beings. What role do mythology and technology play in shaping your imagery?

Technology to me is modern-day mythology. The images of religious symbols embedded in the stained glass works are AI-generated and are printed alongside the stained glass works onto transparency film to create faux stained glass. I intentionally generate images with imperfections and flaws through AI to reflect on the gaps in our systems. I question the role of AI and the algorithm in shaping our truths through an interplay between the original stained glass and its imitation. By doing so, I reflect upon sacred scriptures and our understanding of them. The glitches revealed in these processes allow reflection on the power that is upheld by the presumed infallibility of these systems. My work invites viewers to ponder the increasing AI-crafted myths surrounding us and shaping our beliefs, which may or may not be inherently flawed. I was inspired by a game in which we whisper into each other's ears, and with the effects of transfer and translation, the final message is entirely different from the original one. AI too draws from an existing pool of information, remixing and regurgitating what already exists, as an intelligent language model. I question what would happen when it draws from data it has generated, and how mythology will be created through warping the original data - what purpose would it then serve? And to whom?

You speak about glitches in identity and the fallacy of immutability. How has your own transcultural experience influenced this exploration?

I always embraced my identity as being in constant flux, absorbing some impulses and releasing others. Growing up in a multifaith, multicultural environment of Mumbai, India, brought about an awareness of the multifaceted aspects of human existence and identity. During my convent school days, I recited catholic prayers at the start and end of each day. I visited hindu temples, heard muslim chants, and later began practising Buddhism. After moving to the US, I experienced an even larger ecosystem of transculturation. Acute observations about

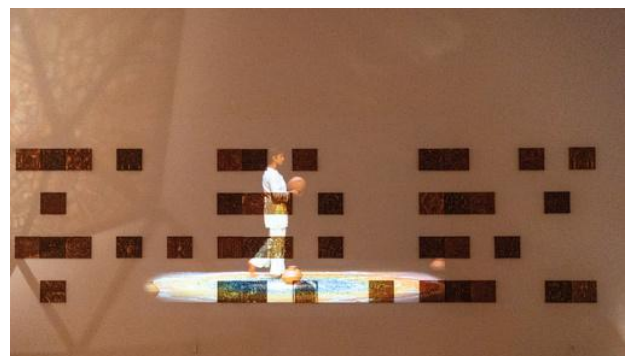
caste systems back home and segregation in the US, along with research about colonialism and its intrinsic ties to religion, prompted further inquiry into the reliance of oppressive systems on the immutability of identity. This led me to question the fallibility of these systems through glitches, revealing underlying human error and erroneous beliefs.

Craft and neo-craft, authentic and AI-generated — how do you balance these opposites when working with materials and technologies?

I am interested in the tensions between craft and neo-craft and how the times we live in blend both media. I intentionally introduce machine-crafted elements in my work to question the means of mechanical reproduction of belief systems. I translate AI-generated imagery onto synthetic fibres with an embroidery machine and engrave it into plywood through a CNC machine. Yet, these works are finished by hand. Through this process, I question what is lost in translation as the information goes through multiple layers of transfer and treatment. I also translate AI images onto stained glass using the Tiffany method, inserting my interpretation into an image generated through many data points, prompting questions about originality and authenticity in art.

Your installations create immersive environments that invite the audience into unfamiliar states. How important is the role of the viewer's body in completing your work?

The work is incomplete without the viewer's body within it. I create large immersive spaces with artificially generated imagery to draw our engagement from a virtual screen into a physical embodied experience. In today's attention economy, I question the role of our physical presence and its increasing translation into a digital entity. Bringing the body into the artwork is a way of resisting a complete transcendence into the digital realm, questioning the boundaries of an ever-increasing online lived experience that separates us from our immediate surroundings. I am interested in how this duality of being fractures our understanding of self, our relation with the larger community and ecosystems. I bridge the gap between the digital and physical mediums to reflect on the impacts of our separation from our senses, continually altered by artificial means.



Natali Antonovich

Painter and Photographer.

Project Statement

Life changed riverbed
Paper, Ink. 2021

Illustration to poetry of my daughter Natalya
Hrebionka.

The eyelids are heavy.
A thought-find has burst in,
Tearing the veil of sleep.

The rivers are dry.
But the fishing boat
Again is full of poems.

Life has changed its channel.
Only dreams of the past.
Became a piece of art
Forgotten ferry.

© Natalya Hrebionka, 2022



— Interview

Fabian Kindermann

What first drew you to painting, and how did you develop your practice as a self-taught artist?

I first picked up painting in late 2021, without a background in art education, but with a strong curiosity. In the beginning, I was just



experimenting - playing with colors and textures after long days at work. Very soon, the practice took over, and I realized it gave me something essential. My best breakthroughs came when I allowed intuition to lead instead of analysis. Over time, trial and error evolved into a language of its own, rooted in gesture and subconscious impulses.

How has living in Vienna influenced your artistic path and the themes you explore?

Vienna is my city of birth, where my roots lie. The city has shaped my whole life—from childhood to my studies and professional path. Here I met the people who have accompanied me since I was a child, and they remain an essential part of my journey. Vienna has a rich historic center, renowned museums, and the “green lung” of the Prater, but what influences me most are the people around me. For that, I am deeply grateful.

You often combine abstract and mixed media. What materials or tools do you most enjoy experimenting with right now?

I work with a wide range of media—acrylics, crackle medium, acrylic gel, oil pastels, watercolor. Recently, I've been exploring water-based techniques that blur the boundary between control and accident, leaving room for



chance to intervene, while experimenting with how they can be combined with steadier materials.

How does chance—like accidental marks or textures—shape the final composition?

Chance is more than accident in my work—it's a collaborator. I often begin with uncontrolled gestures, stains, or textures, and from there hidden forms emerge. Pareidolia plays a central role: I perceive faces, figures, or structures where others might see only marks. These surprises lead me deeper into the painting than conscious planning ever could.

How do you decide when a piece is finished, given the spontaneous nature of your process?

A painting is finished when it resists further change. I work in cycles of layering, waiting, and reworking until the piece “speaks back” to me. Often there is a final gesture—a line, a form, a highlight—that locks the composition into balance. At that point, I step away.

How do you hope viewers will interact with or interpret your paintings?

I hope viewers approach my work as open fields of perception—spaces for their own associations. Just as I perceive hidden forms emerging, I want others to encounter their own subconscious reflections. My paintings are less about giving answers than about evoking encounters with what usually remains unseen.

What role do you think abstract art plays in today's fast-paced, image-saturated culture?

Abstract art slows us down. In a culture dominated by instant images and surface impressions, abstraction asks for depth, patience, and ambiguity. For me, it resists easy consumption and invites another rhythm—one that reconnects us with intuition and with what lies beneath language and immediate meaning.



— Interview

Marina Berezina

Could you share the moment when painting first became more than a hobby and turned into a true way of life for you?

In my life, painting turned from a hobby to a true way of life during my sailtrip to Kamchatka. I was on a sail boat, admiring the hills, volcanoes, fogs, storms, and wildlife



Marina Berezina | Dance Of The Underwater Currents



around me, and I've realized that I could capture the colors, scents, and sensations in two ways: through words - stories and narratives, and through sketches and studies created in the moment. It's important to note that I initially embarked on this journey rather than a specific open-air setting. I had no intention of painting. But looking around, I realized that without paints and brushes, I wouldn't be able to convey what I feel and see at the same time. I realized that no photo neither video couldn't capture my inner experiences and sensations. However, I could express them through colors, creating my emotions on canvas in the moment. This is how my life with paints and brushes began, where I use them to capture my experiences, emotions, and feelings in every new place I visit. New places, cultures, people change me, it means that all my sketches are also changed and born in a new technique, in a new approach.

Your biography mentions that traveling is a major source of inspiration. Which destination has most profoundly influenced your art, and why?

I can definitely say that Zanzibar and Madagascar had a very strong influence on my perception of colors and light. Africa itself sounds like colors. It is musical in its multicolor, in its polychrome. When I first arrived in Zanzibar, I was shocked by the colors, their diversity, and their abundance! I immediately fell in love with the dark skin of the locals, which so vividly and fully accentuates the color of their clothing. In comparison, tourists look dull and uninteresting. The colors of the ocean. The colors of the sky. The colors of fruits. The hum of voices. The slowness of my movements. All of this made a deep impression on me and greatly influenced my painting. I find myself bored with black and white colors, tones, and halftones. I love the drumbeat of colors in my



paintings!

Each of your paintings seems to capture a story or a feeling. How do you decide which emotions or memories to translate onto canvas?

I don't look for a special reason to start painting. I don't wait for any muse or any idea. I grab my paints, brushes, and canvas and start painting whenever I have a free moment, time limited by other businesses. I create sketches during the 20-30 minute breaks between sailboat races to capture the intense emotions of the competitions. I paint when I arrive home exhausted, and the only thing I want to do in the moment - is lie on the couch and watch TV, but I choose to stand in front of my easel. I paint when my husband is cooking dinner, and I enjoy the free time. I don't look for any idea. Usually, the idea comes to me as soon as the first traces of paint appear on the canvas. Colors are more important to me. The idea comes from the relationships of colors, not the other way around. I never look for the right technics and rules; I trust my intuition to decide what is beautiful and what is not. Of course, the emotions from my travels influence the creation of my paintings. For example, after returning from Italy, I can paint the baobabs of Madagascar, but I'm afraid that my subconscious will pull me into the labyrinths of vivid memories of the narrow streets.

And of course, the first thing I put on the canvas is color. It's the color that defines the idea of what I'm going to paint next. If I see a pair of yellow shoes or a red pencil, I'll start painting them if their color touches my soul. But at the same time, even the color of a wilted flower can be more beautiful than any lipstick if it evokes memories of a particular moment.

From the first idea to the final brushstroke, what does your creative process look like? Do you plan each step or allow improvisation?

Just as there is no universal formula for raising children, there is no universal process for painting. There are art-works that appeared in a few minutes, and I even didn't understand how it has happened. There are works standing in a corner for years, because I've stopped at a certain point and wouldn't know how to go next. Then, after several years, I finish them with a few brushstrokes. However, there are also works that I painted step by step. This is the most dangerous, because often in this technique you dig into the details and lose touch

with the fleetings and impressions. That's why I prefer to work on the time limit when I need to finish paintings very quickly – in this case, I definitely do not have any extra pettiness and details, which can drag on themselves the focus of attention from the emotions and colors of the picture.

You have learned from many contemporary masters. Which techniques or materials from these studies have become central to your own style?

All the artists I studied with said the same thing: you need to paint NOT objects, but impressions of what you see. Working with various masters, I did nothing but learn and memorize this truth. Thus, I learned to understand that materials and techniques are not important but the nature. It is more important to learn how to transfer your emotions and impressions to the canvas! And in this regard, no one's techniques, neither knowledge and the material is not important. To tell about your impressions, you need your own techniques. Just as you can't tell someone else's story with someone else's words. Each person will have their own words for the same story. Similarly, no one can teach you how to express your feelings in painting. If you understand this, you will paint in your own style. If you don't understand it, you will paint objects, which is much more successful for photo in today's world.

Your works often have vibrant colors and dynamic contrasts. How do you choose your palette to convey mood and movement?

When I start working from nature, I pick up colors and a palette unconsciously, because all this is in front of me, in front of my eyes, but moreover, all these make to birth feelings inside. And my feelings have colors and shades. Therefore, in nature I always get 100% into the color of my feelings. Sometimes, when I return home from a trip, I find sketches that I had intended to throw away when I first created them, because they seemed ugly to me at the time. This is a common experience for me, as I often see the Beauty created by God and realize that I cannot reach it with my brush. I feel powerless and talentless at the same time. However, my teachers have taught me to grit my teeth and not destroy my work under the pressure of my emotions, but to bring them home and revisit it later. So, when I return from my trips, even the most ugly sketches, in my first opinion, are filled with energy and color, because they convey emotions. And I like them.

Several of your paintings combine natural motifs with abstraction. How do you find the balance between recognizable forms and free expression?

There is no balance. There is a great desire to make the viewer feel. It is not necessary for the spectator to feel the same way as I do. My paintings are as a starting point for reflection. They are like a train station that takes the viewer on a journey of imagination. I want everyone to have its own experience, so I don't focus on detailing every aspect of the painting. Instead, I use abstraction to bring the idea to life, making it transformable and dynamic. A painting that makes the viewer live and feel, rather than just collect something to see.

— Interview

Kristanja Çene



Could you tell us about your early artistic journey? What first drew you toward working with multiple mediums like painting, sculpture, and installation?

Since childhood, I have been surrounded by art. My father, Adrian Çene, is a painter, and painting has always



Kristanja Çene | No Justice | 2023

felt like an inseparable part of my life, something that would always be there. After completing four years of studies at the Artistic Lyceum in Tirana, I often felt judged by others who believed my path was easier because of my father. That's why, when I entered university, I chose to continue my journey in the atelier of conceptual art with Professor Vladimir Myrtezai, a highly respected artist in Albania. It was a conscious decision to step out of my father's shadow and build my own identity as an artist.

During those five years (which I consider the most beautiful period of my life), I discovered the richness of working with different mediums and materials. This exploration confirmed to me that art is truly my path, and that, regardless of everything, I would shine through my own journey.

How did your studies at the University of Arts in Tirana shape your current conceptual approach?

For many people, the years at the University of Arts in Tirana were seen as a difficult period, but for me they were truly formative. It was the time that allowed me to open my horizons, to understand more deeply what art could be, and to genuinely feel the freedom of creating. University gave me the right space to experiment, to try, to fail, to explore, before stepping out into the art world. That period shaped my conceptual approach, because it taught me to see beyond the traditional boundaries of painting and to embrace new ways of expressing ideas through different mediums.

Your practice often deals with power structures, justice, and freedom of speech. What personal experiences or observations most strongly fuel these themes?

Both my brother and I studied at the Artistic Lyceum, and we have always felt the need to live as free artists, without prejudice. My brother, even more so, through his personal



style, the way he dressed, his hairstyle, and the tattoos he chose to wear.

One night, while driving through our neighborhood, we were suddenly followed by several police patrols who assumed we might be drug dealers, judging us purely by our appearance. They stopped us and carried out a one-hour search in the middle of the street, without any explanation, treating us like criminals. None of the officers had identification numbers visible, except for one. His number 26937, stayed with me, and it later became part of a painting, because he was the only face I remembered from that night.

After the search ended, I felt devastated and powerless to seek justice. I remember going back to my studio in tears, and I decided to “kill them” through my work, the only act of revenge I could take against the humiliation and fear they caused us in front of everyone. That’s how I created the piece Fuck the Police, because that night I experienced the police not as protectors, but as part of the crime itself.

You mention a fascination with metals, industrial scraps, and welded structures. What attracts you to these materials, and how do they influence the final form of your works?

I’ve always had a strong desire to work with welding, to the point where I even enrolled in a professional welding school. The motivation came from my diploma project at the University of Arts, where I wanted to create a life-sized tank, a challenge both to myself and to all the men who believed they could do more simply because they were men. When I entered welding school, I discovered I was the only woman there, and I later learned that, over the years, there had only been one or two others.

I’ve always seen myself as a strong woman, unafraid of challenges, and I perceived metal as a material that could truly test me, but at the same time allow me to create powerful, solid works. Industrial scraps, welded structures, and metals carry a kind of rawness and permanence that deeply influence the final form of my work. They embody both strength and resistance, while also holding space for transformation.

How do you balance the figurative and abstract elements in your compositions?

For me, the form or style itself is not what matters most. What’s important is to create in the moment I feel it is necessary, and to express my emotions honestly. Sometimes that takes the shape of figuration, other times it moves into abstraction, but in both cases, the essence is the same: to give shape to what I feel in the most authentic way possible.

Several of your pieces incorporate theatrical or surreal imagery. What role do symbolism and narrative play in your art?

Symbolism and narrative in my paintings emerge only when I can’t fully express something with words, or when I feel powerless to act. Everything I imagine, I bring onto the canvas and transform it into my own world of wonders, a place where I can do anything I want. It’s like entering a dream, but this time everything is in my hands, and I become the queen of my own desires.

You co-founded Satellite Zone to support emerging artists. How does your curatorial work feed back into your own artistic practice?

I believe Satellite Zone is one of the best initiatives I’ve ever undertaken, not only for myself but also for young artists in Albania. The art market here is saturated, compromised, unfair, and lacking imagination. That’s why we wanted to take a more European approach, by exhibiting abroad and learning more about European curatorial practices. For me personally, this has been incredibly valuable. Through Satellite Zone I’ve had the chance to exhibit in countries such as Germany, Austria, and Sweden. Being part of a collective makes things more achievable and the support system stronger. It has also allowed me to gain new experiences, to see what contemporary art looks like today, to understand how the art market actually functions internationally, and ultimately to open my mind even further and push myself to think on a larger scale.



Janki Mashruwala

Growing up in Gujarat, how did the textile hub environment influence your artistic perspective?

I think living in Gujarat, especially Surat, which is known as the textile hub of India as well as my family working with the manufacturing of fabrics played a huge role on how I perceive patterns, shapes and forms. I believe them being embedded at such a young age in my memory helps me draw them. These patterns usually use flowers, leaves, mango and elements as the base form. As a child my mother used to take me along to get fabrics for 'chaniya choli'. Chaniya choli is the traditional outfit mainly from Gujarat. As a child I always wanted to wear new clothes and chaniya choli every day, I think my fascination for fashion began there. Also I think my mother's choices in colours and design gave me a perspective because she usually goes for secondary colours and then she would also choose different fabrics and I think my dad also has a good taste when it comes to colours. Growing up with these experiences also helps me correlate those shapes in different compositions. Living in the older region of Surat city where the houses have intricately carved doors and furniture got me acquainted and inspired which often reflects in my illustrations.

You mentioned being fascinated by colours and their effect on human emotions. Can you share a moment or project where this fascination shaped your work the most?



I try to inculcate colour psychology in all of my works but my graduation project, a graphics novel based on the history and culture of Udaipur, also called the lake city of India stands out in that subject. This project uses colour theory as most of the characters are depicted by silhouettes and the colours. They convey the overall mood and intentions of the scene or a person. For instance, black used to show evil and red used to show danger this makes it easier for the audience to understand the overall mood of the story. I find the impact of colours on human emotions and how they affect their mood very intriguing.

How do you usually choose the colour palette for your illustrations? Do you follow intuition, theory, or both?

I tend to use both. I think I used to struggle with differentiating between art and design. To understand that art is meant to express the feelings of the artist while design is to express the brand persona and appeal the audience. When I make something to express myself I usually start with intuition and then use theory. However when I design for a brand, I follow the process. To create a good design, the context is extremely important. Thus, while designing something, I use theory and then use my intuition to make it aesthetically pleasing. It is essential to use both in order to have a good outcome in both the

cases for it to be original and lucid.

The breakfast table illustration comes from Kaamini's Cookery. What inspired you to visually interpret this cookbook?

Kaamini's cookery is a project that's very close to me as Kaamini is my mother's name and most of the recipes in the book are hers. I think just working along with her on this project was so wholesome. While making that cookbook, I was living in a different city, so sometimes my mom would take photos of the ingredients and that's when I realised that she can take amazing food pictures. And sometime I used to go back home to work on it and she would have to make another delicious dish for the book at the same time we all ate a lot of treats. The idea behind Kaamini's cookery is that, the cookbook explains the process in the form of infographics. I believe that food shouldn't have barriers and learning to cook shouldn't be limited to one language. Thus, Kaamini's cookery uses text only wherever necessary. Helping people who don't understand English but can still understand numbers can also interpret the method of cooking these recipes.

When creating food illustrations, how do you balance between realism and artistic expression?

I think i have made a lot of food illustrations for menus of cafés, I tend to have a specific style in mind from the beginning so it's usually to achieve a desired outcome and it's oriented towards that. Also because I worked with Nomads Cafe, Surat, for two years and there they changed their menu every season, which is why I had to diversify my style making it not repetitive for the viewers. I like making food illustrations because I make them like I make food, gradually putting different ingredients on layers. I think that is also the reason why I enjoyed working on Kaamini's cookery. While making the illustration 'The Breakfast Table' I didn't start working on the cook book. I just started making a breakfast table putting different elements each day and then I went with my intuition.

Which mediums do you most enjoy working with, and how do they differ in the way they allow you to express your ideas?

I think I enjoy working with microns or just different pens on paper the most because it feels very natural to me to just start doodling or make line drawings. I believe the reason behind that might be, ever since I was 4 years old, my parents put me in art classes and as you advance they make you practice lines. I remember filling two drawing books just practicing to make confident strokes. I often enjoy working with

different mediums like paints, pencils, digital art or even scrapbooking. I think it helps me express myself in different ways and is often therapeutic. I think I paint with soft pastels when I really want to focus and channel my energy on a canvas, while I doodle when I feel the most like myself and I use acrylics when I just want to sit down and do something with nothing in mind but just paint. I believe these mediums reflect more on how I feel at a certain moment more than what I feel comfortable with. Digital art is the easiest because I can undo a lot of unwanted strokes but when I paint on canvas with acrylics or any other medium, the mistakes that i improvise and the originality of the outcome feels more rewarding.

Has your knowledge of textile patterns influenced the way you design details in your artworks?

Yes, I believe being exposed to textile patterns for my entire life influenced the way I design in a major way, the observations that I've been making consciously and subconsciously often reflect in my designs especially whenever I design something that needs such patterns. It comes very naturally to me. Often times when I doodle I see those patterns showing up repeatedly. I think the use of such elements is inevitable for me because it's embedded in my mind. I take this in a very positive way because knowing these vivid and beautiful elements have only made my work more versatile and aesthetically pleasing.



Janki Mashruwala | The Breakfast Table

— Interview

Tea Silagadze

You began painting quite recently, in 2020. What inner impulse first led you to create art during the pandemic?



Tea Silagadze | Born From Roots To Take Flight

I started painting during the pandemic—a time when the whole world suddenly stopped and silence filled the air. For me, that silence became an inner call. I felt an overwhelming need to express emotions that had no words: fear, hope, transformation. Picking up the brush wasn't a planned decision; it was a natural response to life itself. Art became my way of breathing in uncertain times.

How did your creative process evolve from your first paintings to the large-scale, symbol-rich canvases you create today?

At first, I painted purely by intuition, without preparation or a clear concept. Over time, my process grew more layered and symbolic. I began researching myths, personal memories, and social themes, weaving them into complex compositions. My canvases became larger because I needed more space to fully express ideas—almost like entering another dimension where symbols, colors, and emotions coexist.

As a self-taught artist, what advantages and challenges has this brought to your practice?

Being self-taught has given me freedom. I've never felt bound by academic rules or traditional approaches, so I could explore in my own way, guided only by



intuition. Of course, there were challenges—technical hurdles, learning through mistakes, and moments of doubt. But this independence ultimately shaped my authentic voice. My art is truly mine, unfiltered.

Mythology and transformation are central to your work. Which specific myths or legends inspire you most, and why?

I'm deeply inspired by Georgian myths, especially those connected with mountains, heroes, and transformation. The legend of Mount Khvamli fascinates me—it's said to be a mystical place where divine treasures and secrets are hidden. I also draw from universal myths of metamorphosis, such as the Phoenix rising from ashes. These stories resonate with me because they reflect cycles of destruction and rebirth, both collective and personal.

Many of your paintings portray metamorphosis and rebirth. How do these ideas reflect your own life experiences?

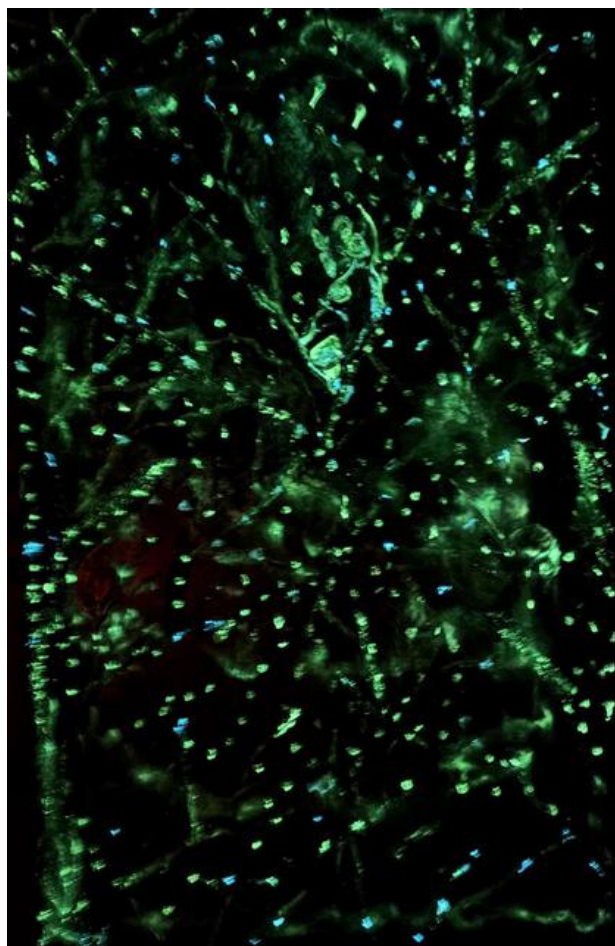
Metamorphosis for me isn't just a theme; it's a lived reality. I've gone through many inner transformations—times of pain and silence, but also of renewal. Each painting is a mirror of those inner changes. Through art, I turn personal struggles into images of hope and resilience, showing that from darkness, new light can always emerge.

You often use fluorescent and phosphorescent paints, creating works that transform between day and night. What drew you to this dual-light approach?

I was fascinated by the idea that a painting could have two lives—one in daylight and another in darkness. Life itself has these two dimensions: the visible and the hidden, the conscious and the subconscious. Fluorescent and phosphorescent paints allow me to capture that mystery. When the lights go out, the painting doesn't disappear—it transforms, just like people do in their inner worlds.

You've addressed social issues, such as violence against women, in your publications. How do you balance personal symbolism with social commentary?

For me, personal symbolism and social commentary are inseparable. When I paint about violence against women, I'm not only addressing a collective issue but also expressing empathy, pain, and the longing for transformation. The symbols I use—broken wings, metamorphosis, rebirth—speak both to individual healing and to society's need for change. My art becomes a dialogue between the inner and the outer world.



— Interview

Guanqiao

Your work moves between performance, installation, and personal narrative. How did this interdisciplinary approach develop, and what does it give you that a single medium cannot?

I started from performance practice, but along the way I gradually realized that the body alone was not enough to carry the complexity of what I wanted to express. The integration of installation, sound, and space allows me to construct a more complete atmosphere. In fact, the elements I use always emerge quite organically—they are not imposed but necessary. This approach enables the audience not only to see an action, but to enter a constructed time-space. Working across disciplines gives me the ability to address themes that cannot be fully articulated through a single medium—especially those related to intimacy, memory, and identity.

What was the first spark or memory that led to the creation of *Moonrise Sunset*?

The work began with reflections on time and relationships. The first spark actually came from a very uncanny experience of intimacy—a relationship that I



am not even sure should be called intimacy. One evening in Miami, I witnessed the sun setting while the moon was rising at the same time. That overlapping moment made me realize how similar natural cycles are to human emotions—always intertwined with alternation, overlap, and absence. I asked myself: what is the rhythm that belongs to Guanqiao? I still do not know. But one thing I do know is that love does not seem to follow this rhythm.

The work draws on the cyclical rhythms of nature as a metaphor for human relationships. How do you translate natural cycles into movement, sound, and spatial design?

I use repetition and breathing rhythms to construct movement, letting the body ebb and flow like tides. In sound, there is a background layer that has been processed from intimate recordings—my own voice with “that man” in bed. At the center of it all are the twelve magnetic devices: magnets of the same pole are placed on top of each device, repelling the magnet I hold in my hand. This repulsion sets them into rotation, creating a cycle with no end—like sunrise and sunset, like moonrise and moonset, always in motion, never fixed.

In space, these devices are arranged to form a rhythmical order. Fans generate airflow that moves the fabrics and carries sound, reinforcing the sense of endless circulation. My body follows the same repetitive rhythm, echoing the motion of tides. Together, these elements create a natural cadence



that does not ask the audience to “understand,” but instead to feel.

The performance resists a fixed narrative. How do you guide the audience’s emotional journey without a traditional storyline?

I believe emotions are not carried forward by linear storytelling, but evoked through atmosphere and sensory experience. Rather than following a plot, the audience breathes with the energy, rhythm, and tension of the space. The core tension comes from the magnetic devices themselves—their spinning is both beautiful and unsettling. They refuse closeness, yet maintain connection.

Meanwhile, the tension between materials—the pull of the wires, the drifting of fabrics, the airflow from the fans—constantly reminds the audience that what they are witnessing is an event that could shift at any moment. This way, the audience can let go of narrative expectations and instead project their own experiences, memories, and emotions into the work, finding their own resonance within a wordless atmosphere.

How do the materials—fabric, steel wires, oscillating fans—shape or even challenge your own movements during the performance?

All these materials ultimately serve the magnetic devices. The pull of the steel wires often forces me into stillness; the fabrics drift in the airflow, echoing

the rotation of the devices; the fans themselves generate both air and sound. They continuously disrupt my sense of control, putting my body in a state that can always be interrupted. This challenge makes me realize that the core of the work is the relationship between human and environment, between human and object.

What role do improvisation and chance play during your performances?

Moonrise Sunset is almost entirely pre-designed. I try to keep every element within my control, from my movements to the operation of the devices, so in a strict sense, improvisation barely exists in this work. But I do believe that in performance there is something like an “aura” that cannot be rehearsed or planned. No matter how much I prepare in advance, the atmosphere of the live event always produces its own qualities—the breathing of the audience, their emotional responses, and the subtle shifts in my own state. These cannot be rehearsed, they can only arise in the moment. For me, such “chance” elements are not improvisation but a flow of live energy, determining how deeply the work can connect with the audience.

Have audience reactions ever shifted the direction of a performance or inspired changes in future works?

In Moonrise Sunset, not really. The seating I arranged placed the audience on both sides of the space, at some distance from the devices, which limited the possibility of direct interaction. However, in other works, audience reactions have indeed influenced the performance. Performance art is inherently interactive, and the immediacy of the audience can sometimes alter the rhythm or atmosphere of a piece. This is, for me, one of the most compelling aspects of performance art—the audience is never just a passive receiver but part of the work’s becoming. In the future, I also want to explore ways for the audience to more directly touch or intervene in my works, allowing their bodies and perceptions to enter the performance itself.



Jessica Pirkle

My day (night) job is as a university police dispatcher, but when I have free time, I can be found making art. Lately I have been focusing on paintings, but my heart will always belong to printmaking. My artwork tends to be a strong mix of inspiration from nature and mythology.

I received my MA in Art & Technology from the University of Oklahoma and my BFA in Interdisciplinary Arts from New Mexico Highlands University. One day, I would really like to put my degrees to actual use.

Jessica Pirkle | The Cupcake Thief | 2025



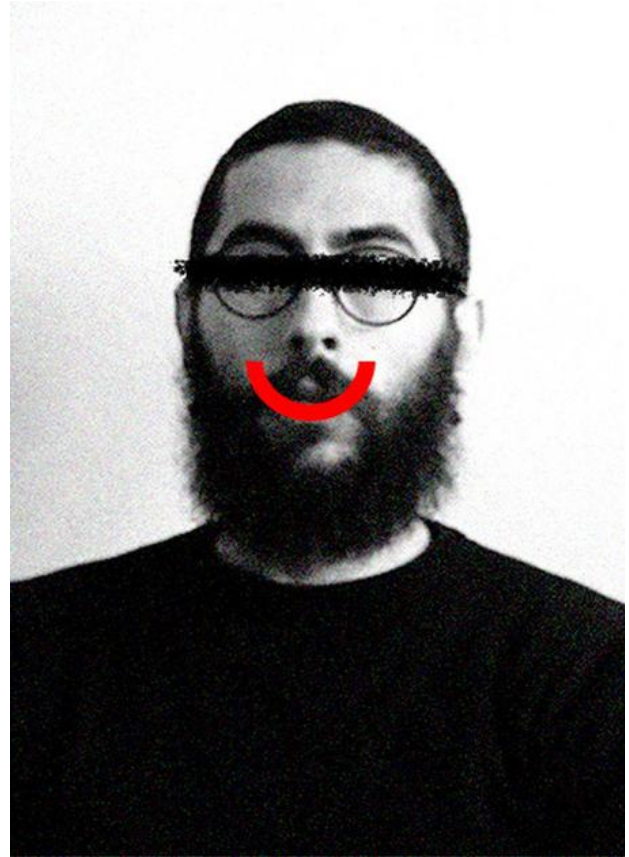


Jessica Pirkle | The Gentle Rhinoceros | 2019

— Interview

Simone Sanna

How did your studies at the University of Sassari (UNISS) and your PhD research in Alghero shape your approach to architecture and design?



I see my university years as the time when I discovered and nurtured my passion for architecture. I was immediately drawn to composition and representation, and ongoing dialogue with peers pushed me to improve and to keep exploring new directions – what I like to call a “serious game,” borrowing a colleague’s expression. My PhD focuses on Generative AI applied to architectural drawing; it lets me pursue lines of inquiry I had only glimpsed during my studies. So far, these super-digital tools haven’t radically changed my approach: substantial visualization work – graphic or more design-oriented – still starts by hand, to steer results toward the original idea.

What drew you to focus your doctoral research on the intersection of Generative AI and Architectural Design?

As mentioned, my research centers on the intersection between Generative AI and architectural drawing. Throughout my studies I was committed to representing architecture in a way that conveys space – and the feelings it can evoke. The possibility of generating those elements with super-digital tools struck me as worth investigating, especially given how widely these tools are spreading across many fields. In contexts like this – outside a strictly academic setting – design isn’t excluded; I frame it as a search for spatial and material coherence across the synthetic images



produced. In practice, it's hard to represent without designing, and hard to design without drawing.

How do you integrate generative artificial intelligence into your design workflow?

This is exactly what my dissertation explores. Here, "design" mainly means graphic design. It isn't simple to assign these tools a precise place; figuring out how to integrate them critically is the core of my work. I find them very interesting and useful when used consciously, but it helps to look beyond surface aesthetics and ask whether what they produce is truly useful for work or research. Right now, these tools come in at the final stage of the graphic-design process: I first sketch and build a visual concept by hand; imagining composition and atmosphere helps me craft a better prompt and reduce unwanted hallucinations. That said, letting yourself get "lost" in certain synthetic "hallucinations" can also open up unexpected viewpoints.

Can you share an example of how AI tools have inspired or transformed one of your recent projects?

The image I presented originally had a different setup. The graphic project is based on a contest organized by the student association at the Department of Architecture, Design, and Urban Planning in Alghero, built around the theme *Nomade*, understood both as "unfinished" and as "nomadic." The mood and key elements – like the pink drapery and water – were already there, but the architectural scale differed: the

initial idea envisioned a series of abandoned urban pavilions. AI-generated suggestions made me rethink the scale, allowing me to translate the original idea into an image that was more evocative and more consistent with the intended references.

In your opinion, what are the biggest opportunities and challenges when architects use AI?

Opportunities are numerous: an almost limitless library of sources, continuous feedback from these super-tools, ongoing research to "train" one's eye, and the need to define the project clearly up front. All this fosters constant reflection, improves skills and knowledge in an active, evolving process alongside the machine, and reduces arbitrariness. The biggest challenge is preserving authorship: moving past immediate aesthetics and pursuing coherence between intention and outcome – between the mental image of the project and the synthetic image produced.

Your artworks blend architectural space with dreamlike natural and aquatic elements. What inspires these imaginary environments?

The project stems from the *Nomade* competition, but I've long been fascinated by futuristic and dystopian visions of cities where nature reclaims the built environment. That sense of what could happen – a nearly surreal take on reality – has been with me since my final university years, and cinema has also helped shape this imaginary. The aim here was to reveal the possible beauty within that vision: architectures of the past turned into shelter for a nomadic population, holding traces of what once was and hosting emergent forms of re-naturalization.

How do you see AI-driven architecture contributing to sustainability and environmental responsibility?

AI doesn't help much without a clear design direction. What I find compelling – always with a critical eye, and specifically regarding Generative AI for graphic output – is the chance to reinterpret certain "hallucinations." Trained on vast image datasets, and through the semantic link between prompt and image, these models sometimes surface ideas we hadn't considered – like the change in architectural scale in the image discussed earlier. Giving yourself room to shift perspective and visualize alternative scenarios helps bring current issues and possible interventions into focus, turning suggestions into practical developments. That step back to recalibrate one's gaze is, in my view, one of the most valuable contributions these tools can offer.

Don Barnes

Concrete Noir Digital Art lives where shadows meet the hiss of a spray can. It's the collision of street grit and digital glow, where concrete walls are reimagined in pixels and darkness becomes a canvas. My work pulls from midnight alleys, flickering neon, and the restless energy of the city—capturing both the raw edge of graffiti and the sleek precision of digital art. Each piece is a story of contrast: decay and reinvention, silence and noise, shadow and light. This is my way of turning urban chaos into visual rhythm, giving concrete its own voice in the digital age.

Project Statement

Cowgirls in the Rain is a digital art series exploring strength, solitude, and resilience through the figure of the modern cowgirl. Set against storm-soaked backdrops, each piece captures the tension between grit and grace, tradition and reinvention. The rain serves as both barrier and symbol, amplifying their defiance while transforming the scene into something cinematic and surreal.





Min Park

Your works often blend elements of dreams, identity, and fantasy. How do you usually begin developing a new piece—does it start with an image, a story, or an emotion?

I usually begin with an emotion. A feeling of longing, confusion, or even wonder will often spark the first image in my mind. From there, I sketch loosely, allowing the emotion to guide how the composition unfolds. Sometimes the story comes later, as I connect the imagery with fragments of memory or dreams.

Having lived in both Korea and the United States, how have these cultural experiences influenced your artistic style and subject matter?

Living between two cultures has deeply shaped my work. From Korea, I carry influences of traditional aesthetics—minimal lines, symbolism, and a respect for negative space. From the U.S., I absorbed the openness of contemporary storytelling, where personal narratives can take on universal meaning. My art reflects this in-between space, where two cultural languages overlap and sometimes clash, but also create something new.

Many of your artworks have a surreal and layered quality. Could you share your process for combining different visual elements into a cohesive composition?

I think of my compositions like collages of memory. I start by layering sketches or watercolor washes that don't necessarily connect at first, but reflect different parts of the idea. Then I refine the connections—using recurring motifs, color harmony, or linework to weave them together. It's almost like piecing together a dream: fragmented but, in the end, emotionally coherent.

You draw inspiration from cartoons, movies, and novels. Can you tell us about a specific story or scene that has significantly influenced one of your works?

One example is Hayao Miyazaki's *Spirited Away*. The way it visualizes identity and transformation. Where the main

character forgets her name and has to reclaim it. It resonated with me deeply. I created a watercolor piece inspired by that sense of losing and rediscovering the self, which paralleled my own experience of living between cultures.

How do you see the role of social media in your artistic career, especially in connecting with your audience of over 26k followers?

Social media has been essential. It allows me to share not just finished works, but also my process, thoughts, and daily sketches. The instant feedback and support from a wide audience motivates me, and it also creates a dialogue—people share how the work connects to their own identity or dreams, which in turn shapes how I approach my practice. It feels like building a community around art.

Your participation in exhibitions such as "Power in Number 5" and "Wonderful Days" has brought your work to diverse audiences. How do you adapt your presentation for different cultural contexts?

I try to stay true to my themes, but I pay attention to how viewers in different places might connect differently. I feel like in the U.S., audiences often focus on the dream-like fantasy aspect. In Korea, people respond more strongly to the cultural references and symbolism. I adapt the framing of my presentation by my artist statements, titles, and even scale of the work. So that people can find a way in, no matter their background.

The themes of longing and identity are central to your art. What personal experiences shape the way you explore these concepts?

My own experience of moving between Korea and the United States has been central. That in-between feeling of not fully belonging to one place or another creates both longing and possibility. I also draw from everyday memories: family, childhood, and the small cultural rituals that define home. Those moments remind me that identity isn't fixed; it's layered, shifting, and often dream-like, which is what I try to capture in my art.



Svetlana Kudrjavceva

I was born and live in Riga. I used to work as a teacher. After retiring, I took a drawing course on the iPad. I'm very passionate about this art and want to bring joy to people.

Project Statement

Painting - drawing (A4) on iPad





GKudr
@svetlana_kudrjavceva

— Interview

Prof. Shirley Yeung

Your works often combine the themes of nature, resilience, and sustainability. What first inspired you to integrate these concepts into your art?

My Chinese calligraphy technique embodies a fusion of nature, resilience, and sustainability, inspired by my master calligraphy teacher as well as my experiences at SDG x ESG conferences organized by the UN and UNESCO.



My calligraphy paintings and apparel are not merely artistic expressions; they serve as a bridge connecting intangible cultural heritage (ICH) with modern technological innovations such as AI and blockchain. Drawing on centuries-old Chinese calligraphy, I aim to deepen the understanding of life, values, and character—especially the importance of persistence, patience, precision, and the natural flow of energy (chi) in brushwork.

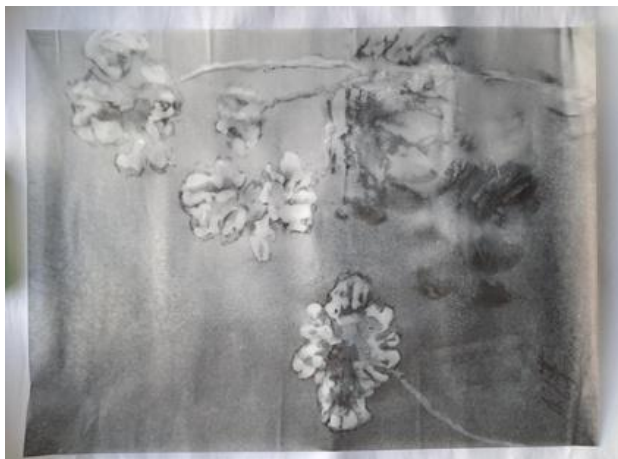
My thoughtful use of green, blue, and black, along with detailed strokes and a philosophical approach, reflects a deep appreciation of the cultural significance embedded in each stroke. These elements symbolize structural harmony, resilience, and the aesthetics of nature.

Ultimately, I continue to refine my mastery of Chinese calligraphy and environmentally friendly pigments to symbolize the integration of tradition and innovation. By strategically applying NFTs, blockchain, and AI, I believe education can become more personalized, secure, and culturally enriched. My artistic principles—observation, experiential learning, and patience—suggest a new paradigm of teaching and creativity, leveraging technology to unlock learners' potential across cultural and digital landscapes.

Could you describe your creative process—how do you go from a concept related to SDGs to a finished painting or installation?

The techniques in my calligraphy—controlled brush movements, ink gradation, and spatial balance—highlight the balance between environmental awareness (for example, in the choice of sustainable materials), and social partnership, such as supporting women in arts and technology through blockchain and AI. These methods become powerful metaphors for digital innovation.

By refining and contextualizing these skills, I show how art can act as a catalyst for educational transformation and help each artist develop a unique creative identity.



Feedback I have received confirms that my work inspires artists, educators, and technologists to move beyond conventional methods and explore the meeting point of tradition and modernity.

You are known as both a Life Artist and a sustainability expert. How do these two roles support and challenge each other?

Life is about experiences and invention of solutions, while sustainability is the reflection of how we live in relation to nature—putting ideas into action to create a fuller, more meaningful life.

Could you share an example where your art has directly influenced environmental or community action?

Through my project *genesis-one.co* and blockchain-based SDG x Carbon initiatives, I have brought Chinese calligraphy paintings and apparel (enhanced with AI models) to women, students, professors, small enterprises, and NGOs in Cameroon, Dubai, the EU, Kenya, Indonesia, Pakistan, Thailand, and other regions, including Muslim communities. This work encourages both cultural appreciation and sustainable practices.

What was your experience like as the only Professor/Artist from Hong Kong represented at the UNESCAP project?

It was an inspiring and encouraging experience to present my virtual exhibition on *Spatial.io* with UNESCAP. As a Professor of Practice and Artist from Hong Kong, I focus on merging artistic expression with academic inquiry to transform teaching methods. My approach integrates art, culture, and business with active audience engagement, emphasizing experiential, reflective, and participatory learning. Representing Hong Kong at the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)

allowed me to promote dialogue, cultural understanding, and sustainable development—for example SDG 3 (well-being), SDG 4.7 (knowledge transfer), SDG 9 (innovation), and SDG 16 (peace)—through Chinese calligraphy.

This project enabled me and my audience not only to experience art but also to collaborate on real-world solutions. It reinforced my commitment to lifelong, life-wide learning and to using artistic practice combined with reflective inquiry as a framework for social engagement, cultural preservation, and inclusive policy-making.

As a professor and an artist, how do you integrate art education with new technologies (Art Tech) and entrepreneurial thinking?

In education and entrepreneurial communities, merging art with blockchain, NFTs, and AI opens revolutionary possibilities. NFTs and intellectual property tokens can serve as secure, verifiable certificates of authenticity and achievement for unique works. Artists and entrepreneurs need to understand how to use blockchain and eco-friendly materials to sustain their creative process and communicate their intended message.

It is also important to document creative credentials, life experiences, and reflections in learning portfolios. AI can personalize learning, analyze engagement, and generate adaptive content for each individual.

By combining these technologies with the disciplined yet fluid techniques of Chinese calligraphy and other forms of intangible cultural heritage, we can build an innovative, holistic pedagogy. This fusion transforms education from a linear process into an interactive journey, encouraging creators to honor tradition while embracing new digital tools.

Ultimately, inspiration fosters growth, and a deep connection to nature strengthens creativity and authenticity. These values are essential for nurturing future innovators.

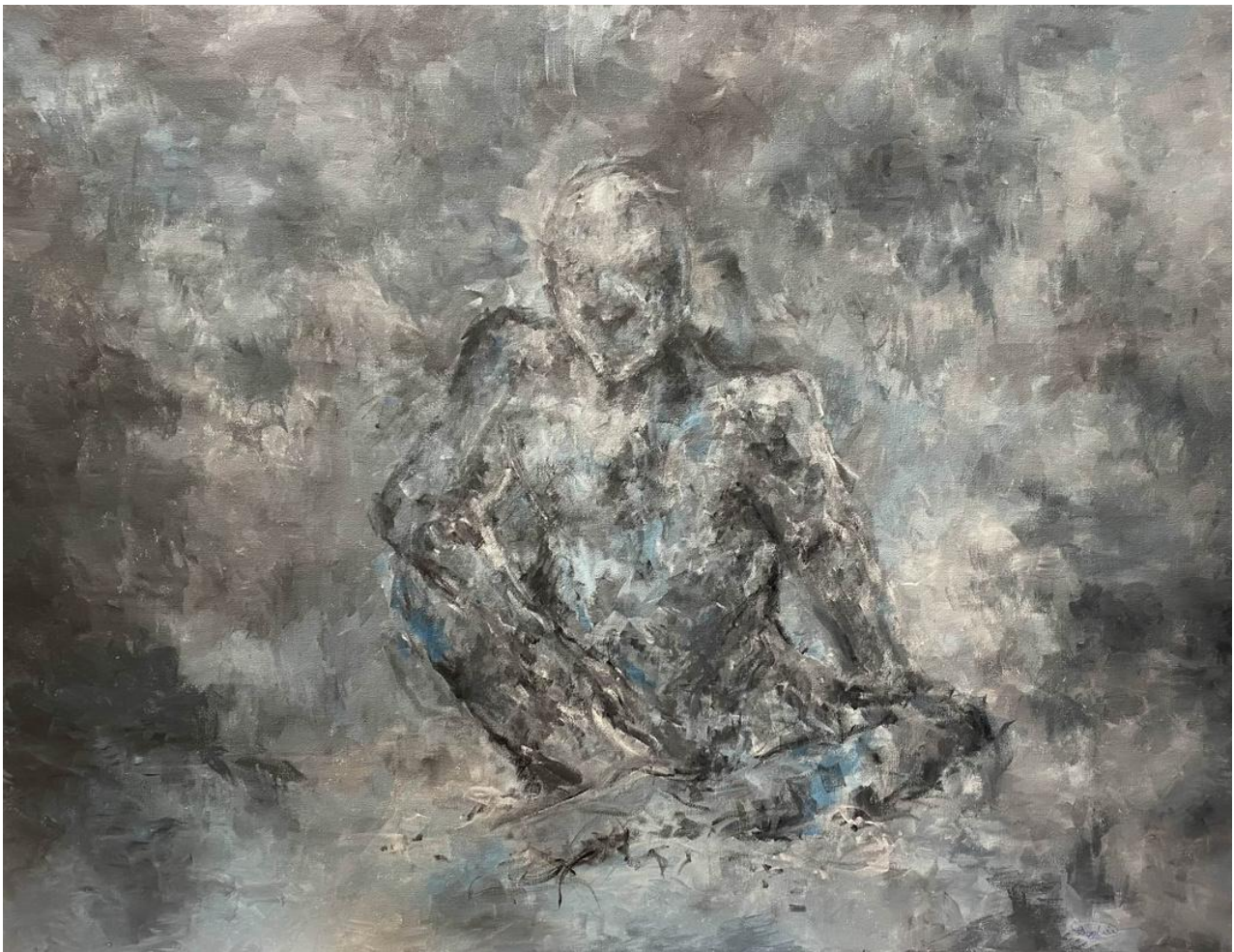


Sophie Stewart was born on April 2nd, 2007. Since she was a child, she had always had a passion for drawing. Coming from a family of divorce and various fights with mental illness, she attended an Early College Option for high school at River Parish Community College. In her attendance, she was apart of her parish's Talented Arts Program where she improved her artistic abilities over the years. During her junior year, she had taken an Introduction to Fine Arts college class which helped further develop her art style. She was inspired by the old infamous painters and was intrigued by the more abstract pieces of art. Later, she went on a trip to New York where she met a tour guide who was very passionate about the art world. The tour guide told her of the her companions who had built up their artistic career and their connections. This engulfed Sophie in motivation to create as she would go on to create her paintings at a consistent rate. Today, she is enrolled at the LSU School of Art.

Project Statement

My artwork is presented under the medium of abstract-expressionism. I create uncanny figures and colorful, complex environments to portray different emotions, topics, and personal experiences using acrylics and utilizing line in my pieces. The way I draw out these uncanny figures are meant to resemble a specific state of mind. The rhythm of my pieces whether energetic or still are a reflection of my mentality on a canvas towards different issues I've faced throughout my life concerning mental illness, spirituality, and gender discrimination. In the production of my work, I make sure that the background and figures in my pieces overlap, yet remain two separate distinguishable elements.

Sophie Stewart | Isolation | 2024



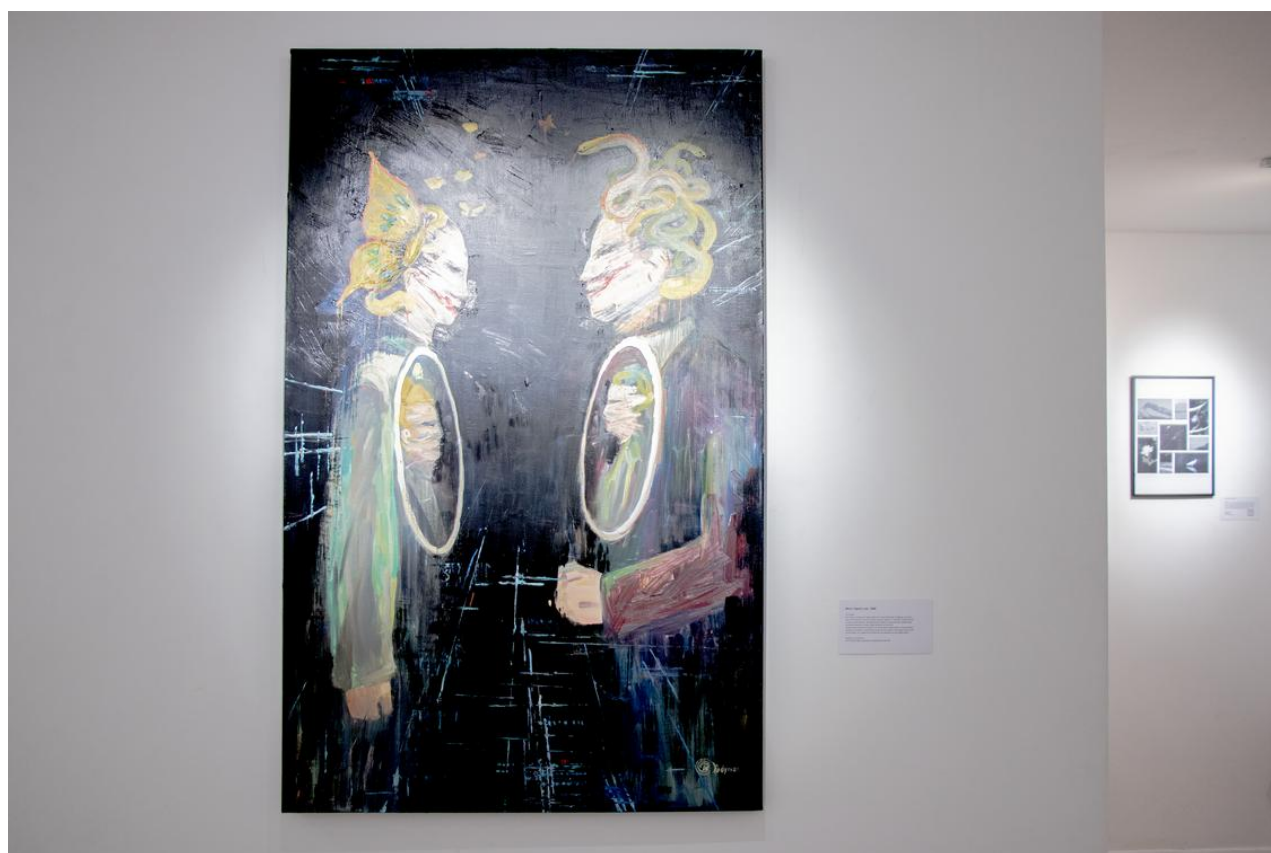


Critical Review of Curator Hongqian Zhang

by Anna Gvozdeva

Hongqian Zhang (b.1998, China/London), founder of ArtFlow Studio Ltd., stands out as a curator who treats exhibitions not merely as presentations of art but as living infrastructures of care. Her practice consistently integrates cross-cultural dialogue, sustainability, and identity exploration. This approach situates her among a new generation of curators who see art as a social process and a shared responsibility rather than a mere display of objects.

Zhang's exhibitions demonstrate both conceptual rigor and sensitivity to lived experience. Her celebrated project "404 Not Found" at Fitzrovia Gallery in July 2025 exemplifies this duality. By transforming the gallery into an immersive "error page," she created a metaphor for disconnection in the digital age. The multi-artist, multi-media environment compelled visitors to experience the very rupture it examined, from fragmented images to incomplete installations. The show was more than an aesthetic event: it was a psychological experience that invited audiences to reflect on the paradox of hyper-connectivity and isolation. Zhang's ability to orchestrate such a complex narrative with limited resources—working late nights with volunteers, improvising to overcome technical obstacles—underscores her tenacity and collaborative spirit.



Exhibition "404 Not Found" at Fitzrovia Gallery

Equally telling is her exhibition "Brighter than White, Darker than Blue: The Cobalt Cosmology of Cheng Linyao" (Fitzrovia Gallery, August 2025). Here Zhang bridged traditional Jingdezhen porcelain techniques with contemporary art language. She framed the show as a "cosmology of cobalt," using the material's historic symbolism to create a dialogue between East and West, past and present. The meticulous logistical coordination required to ship and install fragile ceramics reinforced her capacity to navigate international complexities without

compromising curatorial integrity. More importantly, the exhibition exemplified her conviction that curation is cultural translation—an act of building bridges and enabling authentic encounters across geographies. Projects like “Metamorph” (Espacio Gallery, May 2025) and “Echoes Between Us” (Batsford Gallery, 2025) further reveal Zhang’s commitment to plural narratives. Whether exploring identity’s fluidity or emotional reverberations between individuals, she foregrounds underrepresented voices—especially Asian women artists and cross-cultural practitioners—within thoughtfully constructed thematic architectures. Each exhibition is conceived as a narrative zone where identity, perception, and truth intersect, offering audiences layered experiences rather than linear conclusions.



Exhibition “Brighter than White, Darker than Blue: The Cobalt Cosmology of Cheng Linyao”

Zhang’s curatorial philosophy is rooted in the belief that art must be nurtured as a shared cultural good rather than consumed as a commodity. Her practice acknowledges the very real challenges of independent curation—restricted budgets, complex shipping, and institutional barriers—yet she consistently turns these constraints into opportunities for solidarity and innovation. By fostering communities of support among artists, collaborators, and volunteers, she embodies the ethos of care that she advocates.

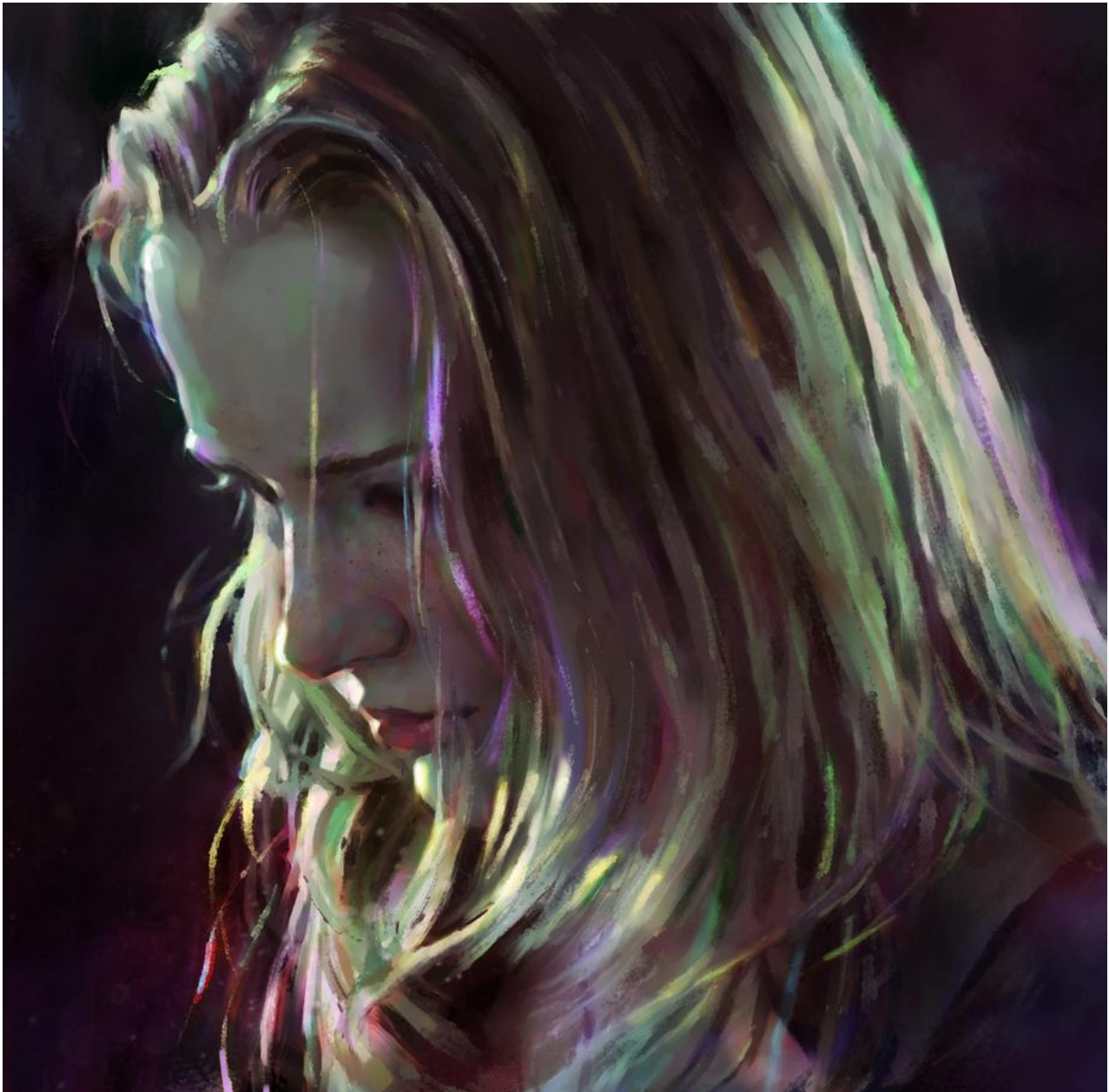
Exhibition “Metamorph”



Through ArtFlow Studio, Hongqian Zhang has collaborated with over fifty artists from China, the UK, and Europe, reaching diverse audiences and earning recognition in international art media such as Aesthetica Magazine, Our Culture, and Visual Art Journal. Her exhibitions are not only conceptually rich but also socially resonant, creating spaces where cultural memory and contemporary urgency meet. In an art world often driven by spectacle or market trends, Zhang’s practice affirms the power of thoughtful curation as a catalyst for empathy, dialogue, and transformation.

Darja Tšerenkova (2002) is a young Estonian artist who graduated from the Tallinn Old Town Art School (2017) and is currently a III year student at Tallinn University's Institute of Baltic Film, Media School, studying Integrated Arts, Music and Multimedia. In her works, she uses many different techniques and their combinations. The main ones are digital art, graphics and painting. According to her, as an artist, she focuses on the visual and aesthetic style in the creative process, not on giving her creations a deep meaning, so to speak, or searching for a conceptual idea.

Darja Tšerenkova | Thoughts | 2024





Darja Tšerenkova | Dreamlike | 2023

Darja Tšerenkova | Dreamlike | 2023



— Interview

Dragoş Nicolae Ilie

You originally studied mechanical and electrical engineering and work as a project manager in the petrochemical field. How do you feel your engineering background influences your approach to painting?



Dragoş Nicolae Ilie | Traditions And Technology | 2025



Being graduated in Engineering since 2012, I have gained along with the time, the ability to observe, dimensioning, deep-detail orientation, scaling of objects and creativity.

You began painting for your own home in 2016 and later joined a professional art studio in 2025. What motivated you to take this important step from a hobby to a more serious artistic practice?

I created over +60 painting during my amateur period (until 2025), most of paintings have been donated to the friends, family or job colleagues. Then, i decided to be become professional in order to become more visible on the local arts market, to participate and to gain trophies to national and international art contest and to remain in the memory of my country as a promising painter.

You also studied the violin for four years. Do you find any connections between music and your visual art?

For sure, the music has a strong connection with the arts. For example, i gained the ability to feel the every small movement of the hand in order



to perform a detail by brush, the knowledge to use my patience and the ability to observe and anticipate the next step in the creation. For both of arts passions, i had to dedicate myself alongside with a hardwork.

How do you choose your subjects, from still lifes and portraits to imaginative historical scenes like Crusader Battle from Arsuf?

Well, I have been addicted to still life and portraits painting since my childhood, but i never thought I will become a arts student in the future.

As a Romanian and Eastern European citizen, i was a deeply impressed by our national painter artist such as Nicolae Tonitza, Theodor Pallady, Nicolae Grigorescu, Stefan Luchian and others, so, I have the moral duty to continue my Romanian art mission for classic and traditional art concepts.

Also, i was fascinated by the Crusaders historically campaigns, being inspired by movies, video games and books. I intend for my portopholio to add around 10 oil paintings with diffrenter Crusaders scenarios.

Who are the artists or art movements that have most inspired you?

To be honest, I have been inspired mostly by my painting professor and contemporan Romanian artist, Vali Irina Ciobanu.

In contemporan period, i was influenced by Romanian artist such as Mihai Olteanu, Maria Jarda, Mariana Papara and my mentor, Vali Irina

Ciobanu.

Since July 2025 you have already won national and international art contests. Which experience has been the most memorable or meaningful to you so far?

I have started to participate and gain trophies as arts amateur since August 2025. My first and most memorable contest until now have been the internationl arts contest held in Cluj Napoca county, August 2025.

I remember that i was counting every day left until the results since i have starting the registration into the contest. I was my first trophy won, being a memorable experience for my confidence.

What do you hope viewers take away from your art when they encounter it for the first time?

I would like that the viewers to appreciate my hardwork, time spent for studying a difficult and serious art discipline.

I have learned that behind every initiation student arts period, there is around 80% hardwork, passion, patience, then remaining 20% is about native talent.

So, the viewers, mostly, will ask me about the hours spent for each artwork, rather than price or final destination of painting.



My name is **Iman Betigova**, I'm a 23 year old French artist. I was born in Grozny, Russia, and I came to France when I was three years old. Growing up here, I discovered art very early on. Painting has always been my biggest hobbies, long before I even understood what it meant to be an artist. Since childhood, I've never stopped creating, it has always been part of who I am.

I've always been fascinated by nature. Its colors, everything about it inspires me. I have carried this passion with me throughout my life, and it continues to shape my work every single day. For me, painting is not just about technique or aesthetics, it's about connection to the earth, to the sea, to everything that surrounds me.

Since I was little, I've dreamed of living on an island. Without even realizing it, that dream became a part of my art. Most of the paintings I created over the years have always represented the ocean in some way, as if the sea itself was speaking through me. The ocean has become a constant presence in my work sometimes calm and soft, other times wild and infinite. It reflects my emotions, my inner world, and my way of seeing life.

Through my art, I want to share this feeling of freedom, of timeless beauty, and of belonging to nature. Every canvas I create is like a window into this dream a reminder of how deeply connected we are to the world around us.

Project Statement

I am currently developing a new collection titled "HOUSE EDITION", a series focused on houses placed in a variety of natural settings. Each piece explores how architecture interacts with its environment, capturing houses as part of forests, mountains, gardens, and open landscapes. The project aims to highlight how structures coexist with nature, showing both contrast and harmony between human-made forms and the organic world around them.

In my work, I rely primarily on a palette of blue and pink. The blue tones evoke calm, depth, and space, while the pinks introduce warmth, softness, and a sense of presence. Together, these colors create compositions that are striking and balanced, drawing attention to both the houses and their surroundings. The palette is central to the project, giving the series a distinctive visual identity and an immersive quality that encourages viewers to notice details, colors, and forms.

The two works presented here are the first in this series, establishing the foundation for the larger House Edition collection. Each upcoming piece will continue to explore houses in different natural environments, examining how light, atmosphere, and color shape the perception of these spaces. The goal is to build a cohesive series where each work contributes to a broader exploration of space, form, and environment, offering viewers a chance to see familiar structures in new and unexpected contexts.

HOUSE EDITION is designed to be experienced both individually and as a series. The houses serve as anchors in diverse landscapes, inviting viewers to consider the interaction between built structures and the natural world. Through this collection, I aim to create a sense of presence and observation, emphasizing the forms, colors, and textures that emerge when architecture meets nature.

Ultimately, this series is a growing body of work. It captures the intersection of architecture, color, and natural elements, providing a fresh perspective on how spaces exist within their surroundings. The ongoing development of this project allows each piece to add to the narrative, building a visual exploration of houses in the context of their environments, and offering viewers a new way to experience these familiar forms.



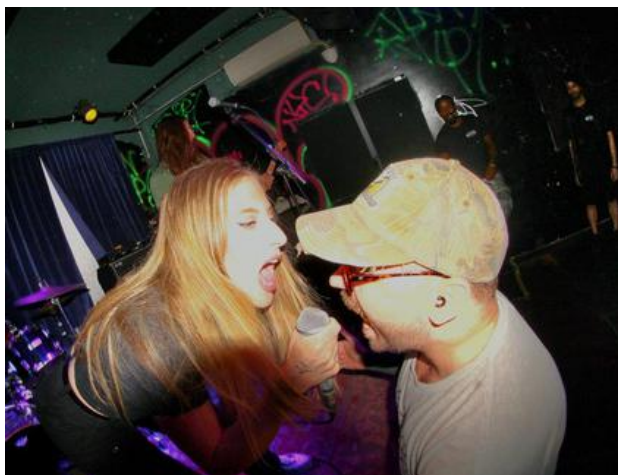


— Interview

Thorn Cross



How did you first get into photography, and what drew you to concerts as your main focus?



I was fortunate to go to a high school where I had access to both a darkroom and digital photography classes. During high school I discovered my love for portraits, there is something so lovely about capturing time. In college I found the local music scene, I witnessed a community forming and knew I had to capture the energy.

What is it about the Hudson Valley DIY music scene that inspires you most?

The community bond for sure. It's really refreshing to see musicians and artists view each other as peers rather than competition. It's a very welcoming environment, we always encourage people to join the scene.

Can you describe the energy and challenges of photographing live shows, especially in small venues or basement gigs?

It can be extremely difficult to photograph some shows, sometimes the stage is awkwardly shaped or crowded with equipment. I am also 5 feet tall so getting the higher angles on a crowded stage is a bit difficult. When I am on stage, half the job is making sure I'm not



knocking anything over and trying not to trip on wires.

You mentioned that your love for portraits comes from the idea of remembering people “like this.” How do you bring that philosophy into your concert work?

I don't only photograph concerts, it's really important to me that I document my everyday life as well. I try to take at least one picture a day and if my camera isn't in your face, my phone camera is. We are so lucky to live in a time that you can freeze time and hold on to it forever. We aren't going to be able to mosh like this forever, eventually we will be old and frail; and I need photos to show my grandchildren how cool my friends and I were.

Do you find differences between shooting analog (film) and digital photography when it comes to capturing concerts?

It's actually super similar! I shoot on a fish eye lens, I manually change my settings to adapt to the light and there is no zoom. I started analog photography well before getting into digital which I feel gave me a massive leg up on mastering my camera and my fish eye which I've been told is my “signature style”.

What's the most memorable or meaningful photo you've taken at a concert, and why

does it stand out?

Tunnel Vision is the photo that changed it all for me. I was shooting for John Newhall's show at The Roosevelt in Beacon. I don't know what prompted me to, but mid-shot I flicked my wrist almost in a turning-a- doorknob like fashion. Since then, I have used this technique at every live show and I am recognized in the Hudson Valley DIY scene as “the girl who's photos kinda look like records.”

How do you balance being part of the community while also documenting it through your lens?

It's definitely an interesting balance of work and play. Sometimes it is hard not to feel like I'm just a camera. But over time I've found my people, now I have friends that support and respect my work, time and friendship.



Galina Tuzikova

Your painting captures a deeply personal moment from your youth. How did it feel to return to this memory on canvas, and did you discover something new about that time while painting it?

You know, when I paint, I always feel joy. At the same time, creating a work about my youth and my hometown evoked special emotions, as if I had returned to that time when happiness overflowed and everything felt too much and over the top. All doors were open and all roads awaited us. Back then, time felt very unstable, it flowed like the melting clocks in Salvador Dalí's painting, and there was enough of it for so many things! Yes, every stage of life has its joys, but that time was truly magical, because the greatest potential lies precisely at the beginning.

You described the scene as “retro,” yet it feels timeless. How do you balance a sense of personal nostalgia with universal emotions in your art?

I think it's all about time again: it lasts forever, and what happened to me yesterday may have happened to someone else the day before, today, or may happen tomorrow. Each of us is part of this world, so the story

of a man and a woman is an endless, eternal story understood by every person.

Light and color are striking in this piece — the golden illumination of the garlands and the soft winter palette. Could you talk about your approach to conveying atmosphere and mood?

Before starting each work, I ask for help from the saints (our family is Orthodox Christian). Of course, I plan the details, the arrangement of the characters, and the palette. But the secret is that at some point the painting begins to live its own life, as if it shows how things should be. And I realize that my initial plan has changed significantly — and that's good. Therefore, I cannot define or describe an exact algorithm for creating the atmosphere and mood.

The title mentions your husband's “sable hat and leather jacket.” What do these details mean to you, and how do they enrich the storytelling of the painting?

Indeed, these details are a feature of that time; many people wore such things, and I also had a sable



hat and a leather jacket. But my husband's hat and jacket were not particularly fashionable; rather, he had to wear them. Those were not easy times for his family, and he needed to dress warmly because Kemerovo is in Siberia, where winters are quite cold. However, such conditions — unfashionable clothing and cold weather — could not overshadow the joy of our meetings or shake our belief in a happy future together.

Your works have been exhibited internationally. How do audiences abroad respond to such intimate, family-centered subjects?

Viewers respond very warmly to these subjects. I am very happy that people everywhere in the world generally respect family values. Our family loves to travel, just like many others. We enjoy seeking authenticity, communicating with different people in the countries we visit, and learning about their culture and daily life. We like to rent a car and travel the roads of a new country. And wherever we have been, we have seen that the greatest value for most people is their loved ones, family well-being, and mutual understanding.

How does being both a professional artist and an art historian influence your creative process and interpretation of your own work?

I don't know how to answer this question exactly. Perhaps an art historian can be critical of an artist's work. But you know, sometimes the secret of perfection lies in imperfection. What some see as a flaw, others perceive as a charming feature. It's like with the people we love. We know that in some ways they are not always perfect, yet in our eyes they remain the most beloved. And I love all my works very much.

Family life is central in your biography. How do your husband and three children inspire or participate in your artistic journey?

Yes, that's true: family plays an important role in my life. My husband and children are the main admirers of my work. First of all, they have to be: every free space in our homes is filled and decorated with my works. Secondly, there are pieces that I created on the request of my husband and children. And without my husband's support, I might never have exhibited my works anywhere and would have continued to paint just for myself. He believes in my abilities more than I do. In addition, my family is a source of inspiration. I gladly paint my children and my husband. I have a painting depicting my husband and sons on a beach during a trip to Mexico. As it happened, in an international competition that took place in Mexico, this painting won third place.

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