

VISUALARTJOURNAL.COM

# VISUAL ART JOURNAL



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# — *Intro*



Hello Dear Reader,

You are holding the 46th issue of our magazine in your hands. A new year has begun, and I am sure many of you have already made wishes - and some of you have even set clear goals for yourselves.

As always, we have worked diligently to bring together a vibrant selection of artists from all over the world and to share their creativity with you. Within these pages, you will discover both emerging talents and established masters. Observing the work of each is equally engaging.

Some artists impress with technical mastery, others with freshness of thought and depth of reflection. In any case, this issue has turned out to be truly captivating.

Make yourself comfortable - more than 100 pages of creativity await you.

**Anna Gvozdeva**

Curator of  
Visual Art Journal

*On the Front Cover:*

**Aoi Tashiro**

Warmth Beyond the  
Symbols  
2025

*On the Back Cover:*

**Sze Yek**

Dotonbori, Osaka  
2025

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

**Catia Giustiziero** is a digital artist living and working in Milan. Her research lies at the intersection of contemporary abstraction, sculptural thought, and digital experimentation, focusing on the creation of forms suspended between presence and absence.

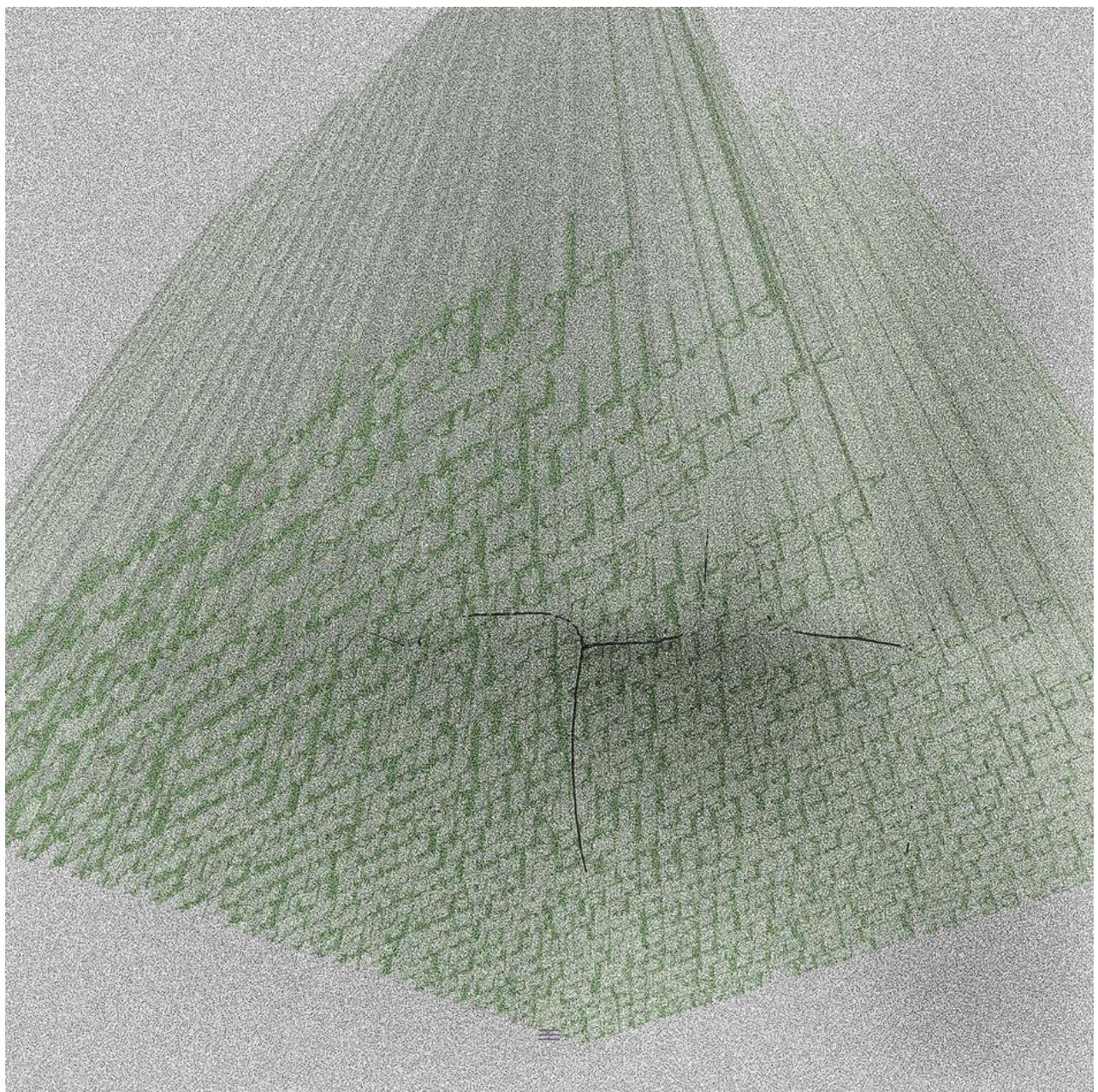
*Artist Statement*

Her practice explores form as a locus of tension: through digital sculpture and a minimal visual language, she investigates fragmentation, repetition, and balance to generate suspended compositions — neither fully resolved nor entirely abstract.

The works are conceived as autonomous objects rather than images, capable of engaging with spatial perception and material suggestion, even within a digital context.

Her research examines how reduced forms can convey emotional and relational weight without resorting to narrative or representation.

Catia Giustiziero | Explorationon Structure





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25  
/

## Hrisoula Mavromatis

Hrisoula is both a speech language pathologist specializing in acquired communication disorders as well as an artist. From her fine art studies during her undergraduate career to now, she currently explores mixed media while depicting iconic landscapes, portraits, and religious representations. In her art, Hrisoula frequently considers the quote, "She never looked nice. She looked like art, and art wasn't supposed to look nice; it was supposed to make you feel something." With this in mind, she strives to elicit specific feelings and revisit special memories. Hrisoula's technique hovers between an impressionist and abstract style with thick layers of paint, blotchy shapes, and technicolor highlights & shadows. This might mean leaving portions out or unfinished. With bravura in her brushstrokes, palette knife globs, or pastel swipes, she leads the viewer's eye to the magic in everyday moments she creates dynamic pieces that challenge the viewer's focus. More recently, Hrisoula has been inspired by Orthodox Christian Iconography and incorporates unique mediums to further highlight the celestial symbols and details via gold paint and beadwork.

Hrisoula Mavromatis | Lullaby | 2025





Hrisoula Mavromatis | Flower Bushes at Kafenio | 2025

# — Interview

## Maxim Tardiveau



**You discovered film photography through travel in 2023. What was it about film that resonated with you more deeply than digital when documenting your journeys?**

There are several things that make me particularly love film photography. First, the uniqueness of each shot. This leads me to carefully select what I want to photograph: does this shot deserve its place alongside the others? Also, the uncertainty surrounding the final result adds a touch of thrill and extra satisfaction when the shot turns out well. I also find that it's these small imperfections, which a digital camera would correct, that give film its charm. In short, I

feel closer to the scene I'm photographing with a film camera.

**Your photographs often focus on everyday moments in very different parts of the world. How do you decide when a "ordinary" scene is worth photographing?**

My camera is almost always with me. I love observing everything around me. As soon as something or someone catches my eye, I look at how the scene looks in my viewfinder and press the shutter. Most of the time, a particular interpretation emerges from that scene. That's what I try to do: reproduce it faithfully.

**Many of your images show people within vast landscapes. What role does scale play in how you think about humanity and place?**

Sometimes, the environment in which the subject moves is so special that it also deserves attention. It incorporates additional elements that lead to another interpretation for the viewer; by watching the subject move within this





environment, they can also imagine the rest of the scene, whereas the interpretation would have been more fixed if one had focused solely on the subject.

**When photographing people from cultures very different from your own, how do you approach the balance between observation, respect, and storytelling?**

I believe these three elements are linked to the practice of photography, at different stages. Observation is essential in selecting the subject I'm about to photograph. I respect this subject in the sense that I don't try to disturb it in order to photograph it from an authentic angle. I am also aware that it is the subject that allows the image to exist. Finally, it is by sharing this photograph that the narrative unfolds.

**Film photography requires patience and acceptance of imperfection. How does this process influence the emotional tone of your work?**

I would say that this element of imperfection is inseparable from film photography: the

uncertainty surrounding whether a shot will be successful or not before seeing it makes it all the more rewarding when it is. As I mentioned earlier, I also find that this element of imperfection lends a charm, a certain authenticity, that aligns with my style. I wouldn't say I seek it out, but I accept it.

**Traveling and photographing constantly can change how we see the world. How has this practice changed the way you experience your own daily life back home?**

I believe that doing film photography has allowed me to distinguish beauty in the ordinary. The emotions I seek to convey are all around us and everywhere else, and can be felt through different subjects: you just have to know how to transcribe them.

**What do you hope viewers feel - or question - about their own lives after seeing this series?**

My goal is for the scene to come alive when someone looks at it. Ideally, I hope people feel emotions through the photographs I share. That's what I aspire to: to touch people.

## Bradley Daniels

Brad is a contemporary South African artist working primarily in acrylics. His art combines stylised portraiture with graffiti-inspired elements, using oversized features, crown symbolism, and handwritten text to explore themes of identity, compassion, and inner strength. His work balances raw expression with intentional minimalism, creating pieces that feel both personal and universal.

### *Artist Statement*

My work reflects the quiet power of being human in a loud world.





## Agata Olga Kaczak

I am a self-taught, part-time artist who finds refuge from the pace and pressures of everyday life in creating objects of beauty. Drawn to creative expression since childhood, I work both as a painter and a dollmaker, exploring form, texture, and emotion through different mediums.

My paintings focus on the human face and the subtle ways light moves across the planes of the body. I merge figurative portraiture with whimsical florals, birds, and insects, inspired by their movement, delicate structures, and rich symbolism.

Each work begins with a quick acrylic underpainting, followed by slow, deliberate layers of oil paint, allowing me to build depth, detail, and atmosphere.

I create art for those who seek quiet intensity, beauty with meaning, and visual poetry—for viewers who wish to feel before they analyze.

### *Artist Statement*

My work explores the synergy between humanity and nature, blending the human form with elements of the natural world. I am fascinated by the human body, especially faces, and the way light moves across its planes, revealing emotion and identity. Through dynamic portraits, I capture the fluidity of human experience, merging figures with birds, flowers, and insects to symbolize freedom, growth, and the fleeting nature of existence.

The movement of flying birds and fluttering insects mirrors the constant change in life, reflecting the energy and transformation that shapes both the human spirit and the natural world. Using bold colors and expressive brushstrokes, I create paintings that pulse with life, vibrate with energy and motion. Acrylics and oils allow me to embrace spontaneity, adding texture and contrast to evoke the unpredictability of existence.

Through my art, I invite viewers to consider the delicate balance we share with nature, blurring the boundaries between human and environment. My goal is to express the beauty and complexity of life's forces – light, movement, growth – and to remind us of our ever-changing, interconnected world.

Agata Olga Kaczak | Freckled Skies | 2025



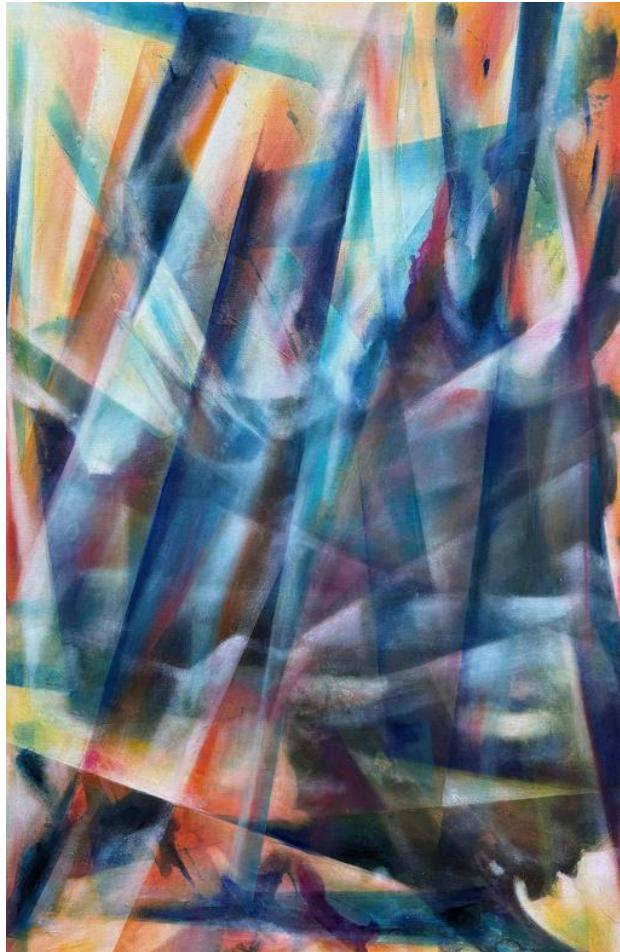


# — Interview

## Aazam Irilian

**Your work often explores the intersection of nature, memory, and invisible forces. When did you first become aware that these themes were central to your artistic language?**

I've always been a reflective person, constantly examining not only my life but also my art. Over the years, I noticed a common thread running through all my work—a sense of otherworldly presence, whether in the void of space or the quality of light at dawn and



Aazam Irilian | Shattered Dawn

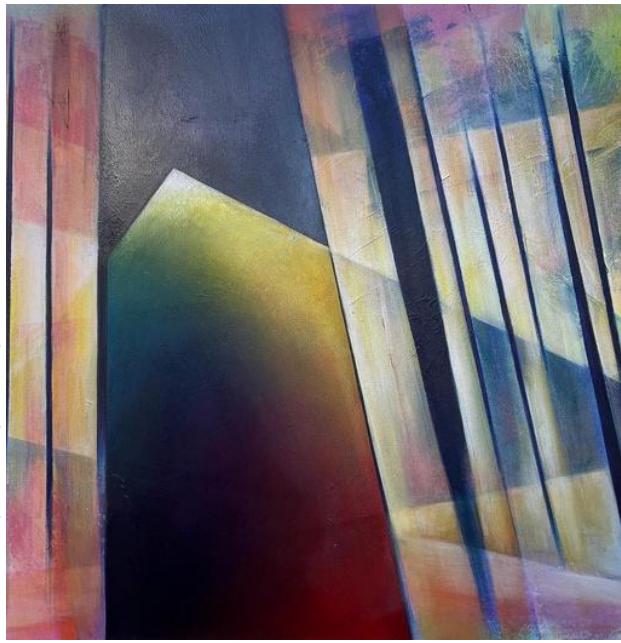
twilight. These moments mesmerized me, and I kept returning to them without fully understanding why. More recently, I recognized that the mystical dimension in my work stems from my cultural background. I was born in Iran and grew up in a culture where poets like Rumi, Hafiz, and Saadi are revered—their collected works found in almost every home, their verses memorized and used as everyday proverbs, recited during Nowruz and other celebrations. People seek guidance from Hafiz's verses by opening his Divan for wisdom during life's important moments. This isn't just literature—it's a living spiritual practice woven into the fabric of daily existence.

Understanding this connection—recognizing where my impulse toward the mystical and invisible came from—gave me clarity about my artistic voice. It not only made me comfortable sharing this aspect of my work openly, but it also made me a more intentional and confident artist. I stopped questioning these tendencies and instead leaned into them as my inheritance and my strength.

**You describe the veil as a threshold between visible and invisible worlds. How does this idea translate visually in your layered and translucent compositions?**



Aazam Irilian | Celestial Landscape



Science is just starting to catch up with what Indigenous cultures have known for centuries. Shamanic practices allow spiritual leaders to tap into a consciousness that couldn't be explained or understood through conventional frameworks—hence the negative view these practices often received. Shamanic journeys, dreams, and visions were described as passing through a veil where light expanded and there was a sense of unlimited love and connection.

In recent years, physicists have begun discussing the possibility of a multidimensional universe and multiple realities existing simultaneously. Whether we're talking about Indigenous wisdom or quantum physics, none of these worlds are visible to our physical eyes—they remain veiled from our ordinary vision.

Being intrigued by these ideas and experiences, I started envisioning how light might move through these hidden dimensions. My goal was to create a sense of depth that isn't based on mathematical perspective but on something more visionary—closer to atmospheric perspective, where layers of air and light create distance and mystery. By building thin layers upon thin layers, I'm able to show this kind of depth. As the layers accumulate, some areas become more dense and opaque while others remain translucent, creating a sense of looking through or beyond. Each painting is different, but some can have over a hundred layers of paint applied gently and thinly to achieve the effect I'm searching for—that sense of peering through a veil into something just beyond our sight.

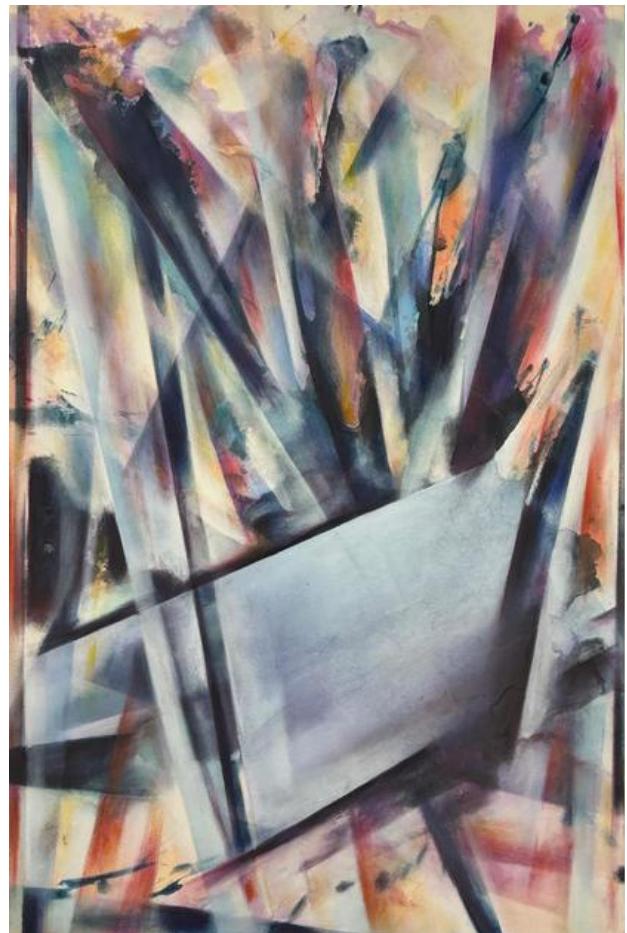
**Your process embraces spontaneity, surrender, and chance. How do you balance intuition with intention while working with unpredictable materials?**

I begin every piece by pouring thin layers of fluid paints onto the canvas. The colors are selected intuitively, without attachment to a specific outcome. This process allows the colors to move freely and interact with each other, creating a layered ground that I have no control over. From there, I start building additional layers, developing the sense of light moving through these invisible worlds. Throughout the painting process, I allow the piece to guide me toward what comes next.

There have been times when I feel lost, and I sit meditating, asking the piece to show me the next step—and most often, I can see what needs to happen. But I'm also a trained professional artist, so at a certain point my technical knowledge and education come into play. I begin to take more control, ensuring the piece is balanced, the colors are harmonized, and I'm achieving the sense of depth and dimensionality I'm searching for.

It's a dance between surrender and skill—the initial layers are about letting go and trusting the process, while the later stages require me to step in with intention and compositional understanding.

**You often use mineral solutions and salts to create texture. What draws you to these materials, and how do they contribute to the dialogue between art and science in your work?**





Originality was the main reason I started experimenting with a variety of household materials—coffee, salt, sugar, and more. It was by accident that I learned how salt solution interacts with paint to create intriguing textures. "Crystal Cove" was the piece where this transition began. From that point, I started asking the "what if" question and began experimenting with other minerals. I would make solutions with different saturations and use them like another painting medium. Each mineral reacted differently on the surface, creating distinct and exciting textures. This is a crystallization process that depends heavily on humidity and atmospheric conditions—the crystals are alive in a sense, changing with the weather. That experimentation taught me so much about letting materials have their own voice and surrendering control to natural processes. While I've moved away from working with minerals in my current bodies of work, that period of exploration deepened

my understanding of how art can reveal invisible forces at play. It opened doors to new ways of thinking about layering, texture, and the dialogue between intention and chance—principles that continue to inform everything I create.

**Many of your paintings feel like portals or spaces for contemplation. What kind of experience do you hope viewers have when standing in front of your work?**

I believe art can be a vehicle for change—socially or spiritually. My work is focused toward the latter. My goal is to bring a sense of calmness and beauty into this world, to create something that intrigues viewers enough to stop and truly engage with the piece. I see my paintings as invitations to pause and reflect on what lies beyond the visible—visual portals into the vastness of the natural world and the mysteries that connect us to it and to each other. In our fast-paced,



overstimulated world, we rarely give ourselves permission to simply be present and contemplate. If someone can stand in front of one of my paintings and experience even a moment of stillness, of wonder, or of connection to something larger than themselves, then the work has fulfilled its purpose.

I'm not trying to tell viewers what to see or feel. Instead, I hope to create an opening—a space where they can bring their own experiences, memories, and questions. The translucent layers, the sense of light moving through space, the depth that suggests other dimensions—these are all meant to invite a meditative state, a slowing down, a looking inward as much as outward.

**Having exhibited internationally and across the United States, do you notice differences in how audiences from different cultures respond to your work?**

Through my experiences and interactions with people from different countries and cultures, I've learned that we are more similar than different. We might speak different languages or hold different beliefs, but at our core, most people are looking for connection, meaning, and a sense of calmness in their lives. This is no different when it comes to viewing art—mine or anyone else's.

Regardless of location, I hear similar responses from those connecting to my work: "otherworldly," "spiritual," "like stained glass," "meditative." These words come up again and again, whether I'm exhibiting in California or across the ocean. During a recent trip to Italy, a curator told me my work would look beautiful exhibited in a cathedral—which speaks to that sense of sacred space and contemplation people seem to find in the paintings.

One moment that moved me deeply was when a professor at Antelope Valley College, where I had a solo exhibit, told me that he often finds students sitting in front of my paintings in the morning, meditating. That comment brought tears to my eyes—what could be better than making that kind of connection with the younger generation?

Similarly, at a recent exhibition in France, there was a sense of genuine surprise and delight from viewers. One older man told me, "This is the first time I understand abstract art." What a compliment! These experiences have confirmed what I've always believed—art doesn't know boundaries. It speaks a universal language that transcends culture, geography, and even age. When the work creates that moment of pause, that opening for reflection, it resonates the same way whether someone is standing in front of it in Los Angeles, France, or anywhere else in the world.

**As both an artist and an educator, how has**



Aazam Irlan | Infinite Realms

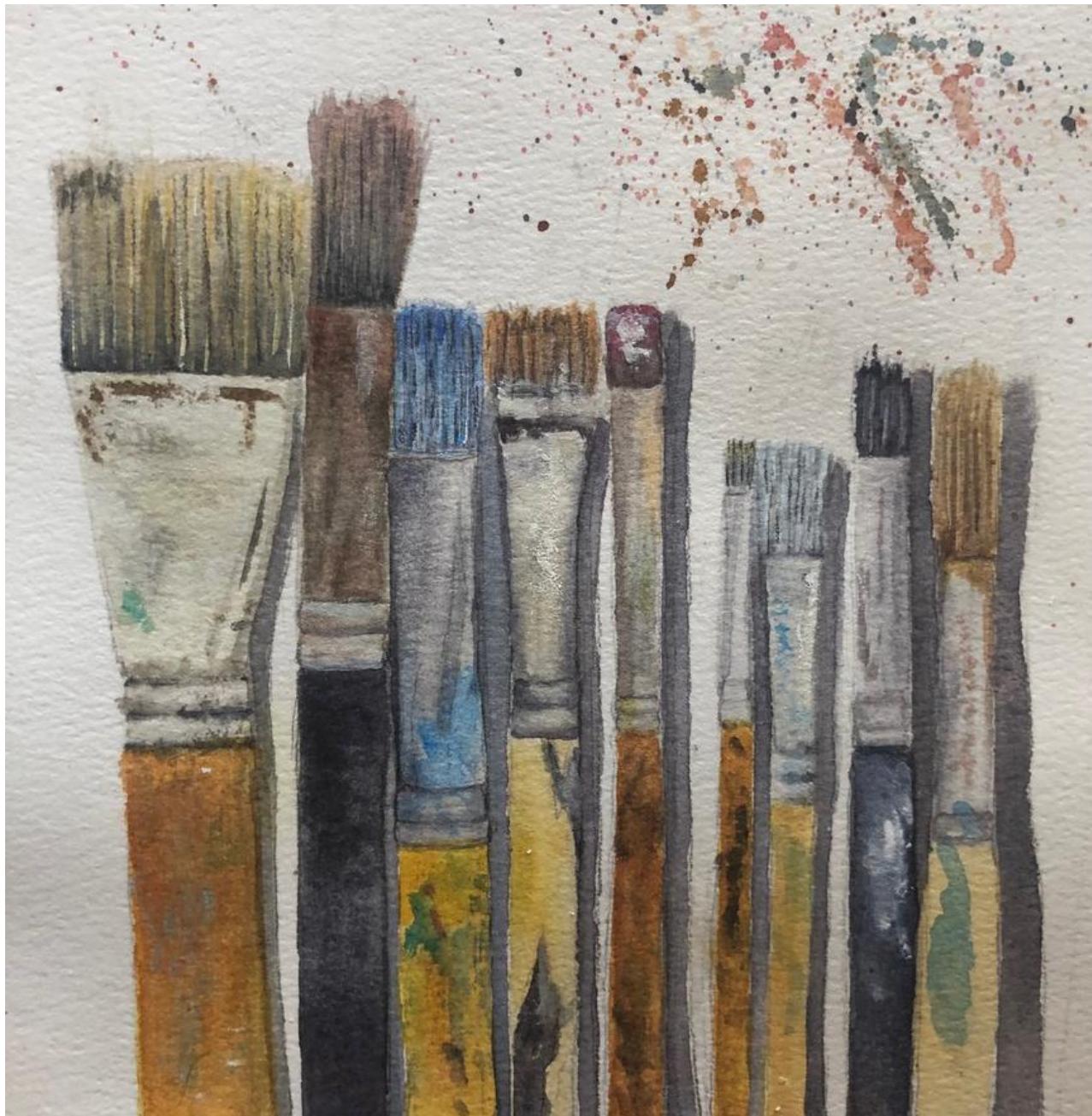
**teaching influenced your own creative practice over the years?**

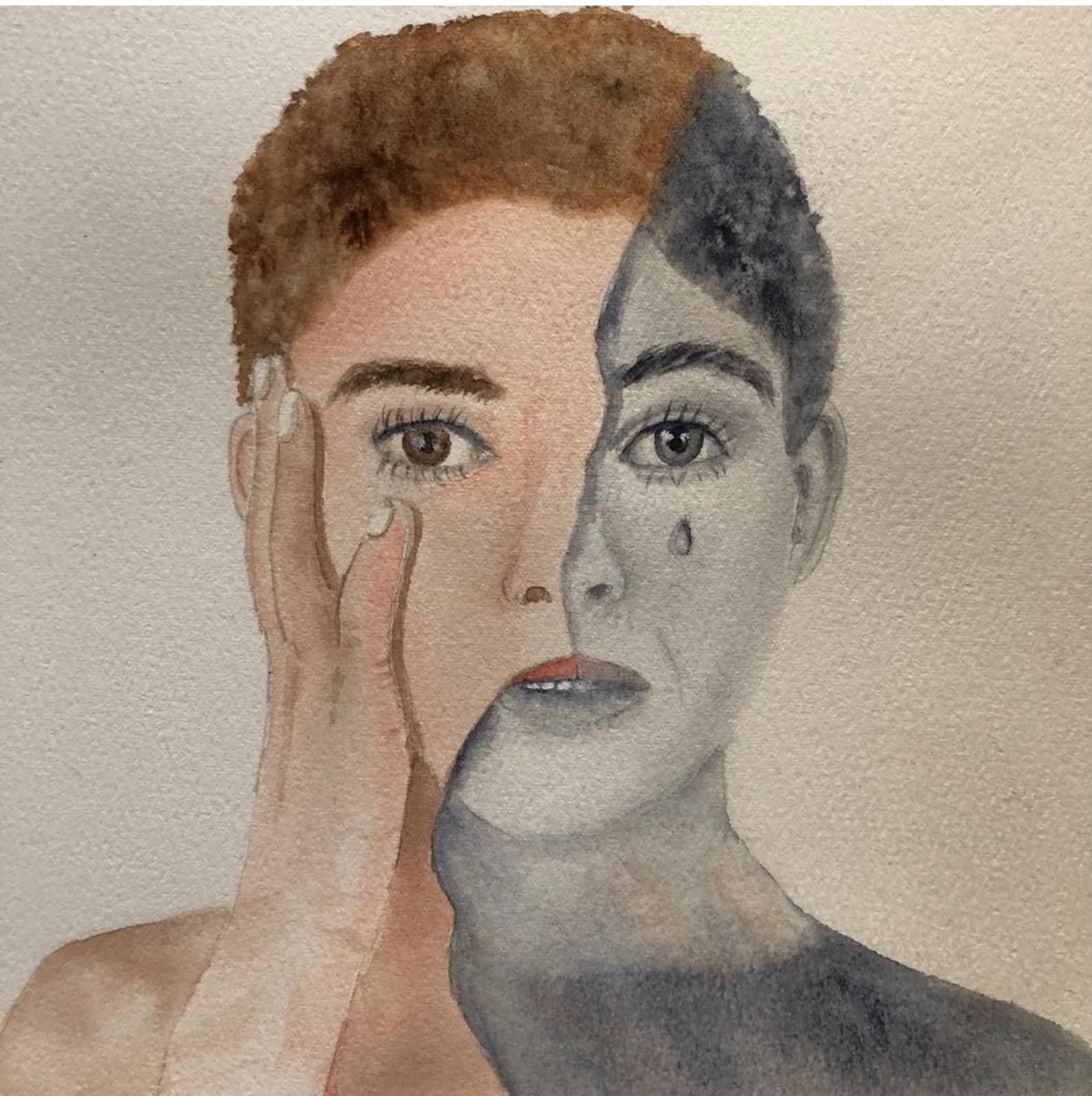
Teaching has taught me patience and reinforced my belief in the value of artistic training—not as a barrier, but as a tool that expands creative possibilities. I've always believed that creativity doesn't know boundaries—anyone can be creative, and I teach that wholeheartedly. At the same time, I've seen how understanding the foundational elements and principles of art and design can transform someone's ability to express what they're envisioning. This was confirmed through my students semester after semester. New groups would arrive in my classroom eager to express themselves freely, and I would ask them to give me ten weeks to learn about the elements and principles of art and design. They still had creative freedom, just with some new tools in their hands. After those ten weeks, the look of pride in their eyes told the whole story—they could see the difference in their own work.

Today, I still hold workshops on creativity that focus on expression, feelings, and the healing process rather than formal art education. That work is deeply meaningful and serves a different purpose. But for those who want to develop their technical skills further, I offer a more academic approach. Both paths are valuable—it simply depends on what someone is seeking from their creative practice.

## Natalie Jukes

Art has always been a big part of my life. My grandmother would be the biggest influence as she was a high school art teacher. I discovered watercolour painting last year by doing online tutorials. Since then I have been continuing my art journey by painting my own subjects.



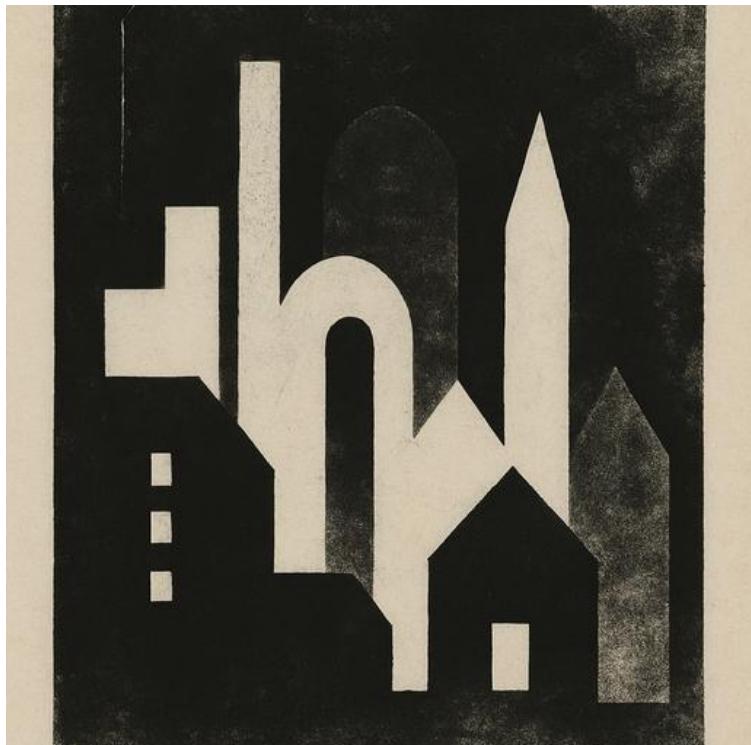


**Paraskevi Zerva** is an artist based in Thessaloniki, Greece. Her practice includes printmaking, photography, filmmaking, and ceramics. She has participated in group exhibitions in Greece and internationally, and her works are included in permanent collections of museums, galleries, and private collections. She has received awards for her printmaking work in artistic competitions.

Alongside her visual art practice, she designs and illustrates book covers, writes poetry, and translates poetic works. She has directed a short film addressing gender-based violence. She holds a PhD in Food Biotechnology and works as a quality management consultant.

*Artist Statement*

This series emerges from an ongoing engagement with geometry and repetition. The works are developed as variations on shared forms, where small shifts alter rhythm and balance. The series is approached as a unified body of work rather than as individual images.





# — Interview

## Sandra Kemmann



A work is complete when it no longer asks for decisions. There is a moment when tension and calm reach a fragile balance and the painting begins to resist me. Any further intervention would become explanatory or decorative. Completion does not mean closure, but a stable inner instability.

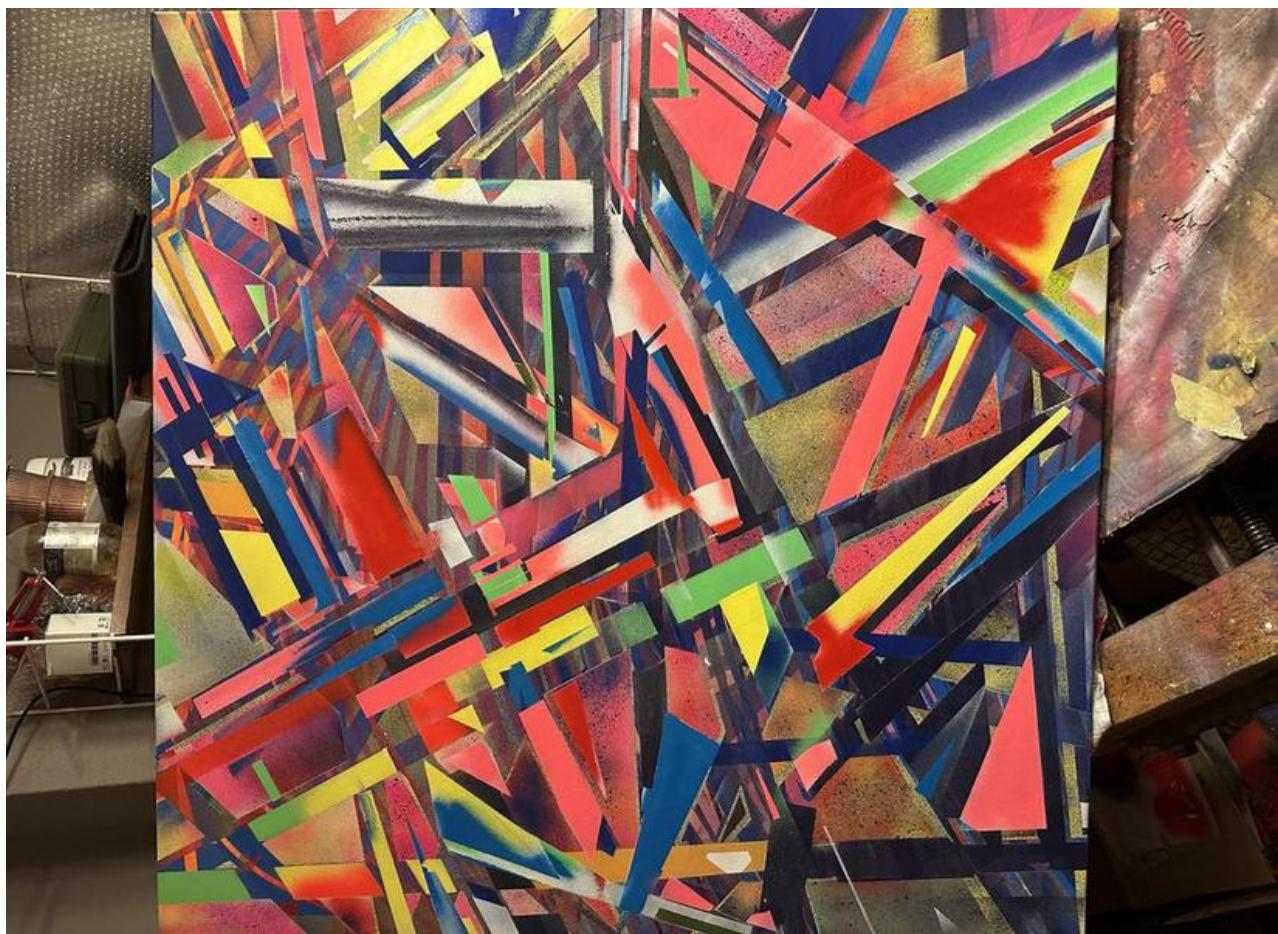
**You began your artistic path with sculptural thinking and by working as an assistant to a sculptor. How does this early experience still influence your approach to painting today?**

Sculptural thinking remains fundamental to my practice. I do not think of painting as a surface, but as a body. Layers have weight, lines have tension and resistance. Working in space, moving around the work, testing it from different distances—all of this comes directly from my early sculptural experience.

**In your series Linientreu, the line becomes a carrier of meaning rather than a purely formal element. What does a line represent for you on a conceptual level?**

For me, a line is a decision in time. It is trace, attitude, and persistence at once. In Linientreu,





the line is not about drawing in a classical sense, but about action—about orientation that simultaneously exposes doubt.

**Your working process has been described as both research-based and intuitive. How do intuition and method coexist in your studio practice?**

I do not see intuition and method as opposites. Method creates a framework in which intuition can become precise. I work serially and analytically, almost protocol-like, but within that structure I decide moment by moment. Intuition, for me, is not instinct alone, but trained perception.

**Many of your works appear dense, layered, and rhythmic—almost architectural. Do you consciously think about space and structure as something physical or spatial?**

Very consciously. Space is not abstract to me. I think in terms of compression, pressure, and permeability. The works are meant to carry a physical resistance, as if one could lean against

them or encounter an obstacle.

**Your works resist quick consumption and invite slow looking. What do you hope viewers experience when they spend time with your paintings?**

I hope for a suspension of quick judgment. When one stays with the work, it begins to shift and tilt. Ideally, a state emerges between focus and uncertainty—a moment in which meaning is not immediately clear, but something is unmistakably at stake.

**You have exhibited internationally, including in China. How does presenting your work in different cultural contexts affect your understanding of it?**

Different cultural contexts sharpen my understanding of my own work. In China especially, rhythm, repetition, and process were read very directly, often beyond biographical or Western art-historical frameworks. This strengthened my trust in the autonomy of the work itself.

**Nina Tokhtaman Valetova** is a New York based artist who holds a Master's degree in Art from the University BGPU in Ufa. Nina studied art and art history from the age of 12 at an art school.

At university, she received an education not only in art but also in philosophy and psychology.

The knowledge she gained from studying religion, mythology, and the cultures of different countries influenced the content of her paintings and drawings.

Nina Valetova's name is included among most investable and prominent artists in the Art Investment & Collectors Guide 2025 by Art Market Experts and Contemporary Art Collectors teams.

Nina Valetova is also featured in the 2025 catalog of Florence Contemporary Gallery's '50 Artists to Discover', and her name was included in the Art Leaders of Tomorrow issue of Contemporary Curator Magazine.

#### *Artist Statement*

The knowledge she gained from studying religion, mythology, and the cultures of different countries influenced the content of her paintings and drawings.

Nina's work explores the relationship between ancient cultures, mythologies, fantasy, metaphysics, and philosophy.

Her paintings and drawings cannot be classified within a particular framework of definitions or styles. In general, Nina's art defies categorization, and each piece is often created in several

styles. Nina is constantly searching for new ways to create art, and as a result, she has established the Synthesis Art Style in contemporary art, which combines suprematism, surrealism, cubism, abstract, and figurative arts.

Nina Tokhtaman Valetova | Creation of Another World





Nina Tokhtaman Valetova

Nina Tokhtaman Valetova | Chasing Time

## Liu Junyang

Born in Qianjiang, Chongqing in 1965, Tujia ethnicity

Member of China Photographers Association | Member of China Photographic Copyright Society

A long-term practitioner of photography, dedicated to capturing authentic and enduring visual narratives between social changes, nature, and humanity. His works adhere to an objective, serene, and perceptive approach, using sincere visual language to document the essence of the times and celebrate the truth of life.

### Major Exhibitions and Awards

Good News – Golden Collection Award, First “Tianyi Mobile Cup” National Photography Competition

Colorful Life – Selected for the 16th China International Photographic Art Exhibition

Miao Siblings – Bronze Award and Collection, China Ancient Architecture Photography Competition

Mountain Village – Exhibited at the 14th China Pingyao International Photography Festival

His works have been featured multiple times in professional photography media and are permanently collected by institutions such as the China Garden Museum. Published personal photography collection Post House...

Liu Junyang | Sweet Persimmon Undertaking Description | 2024





Liu Junyang | Sky Buddha Jike | 2025

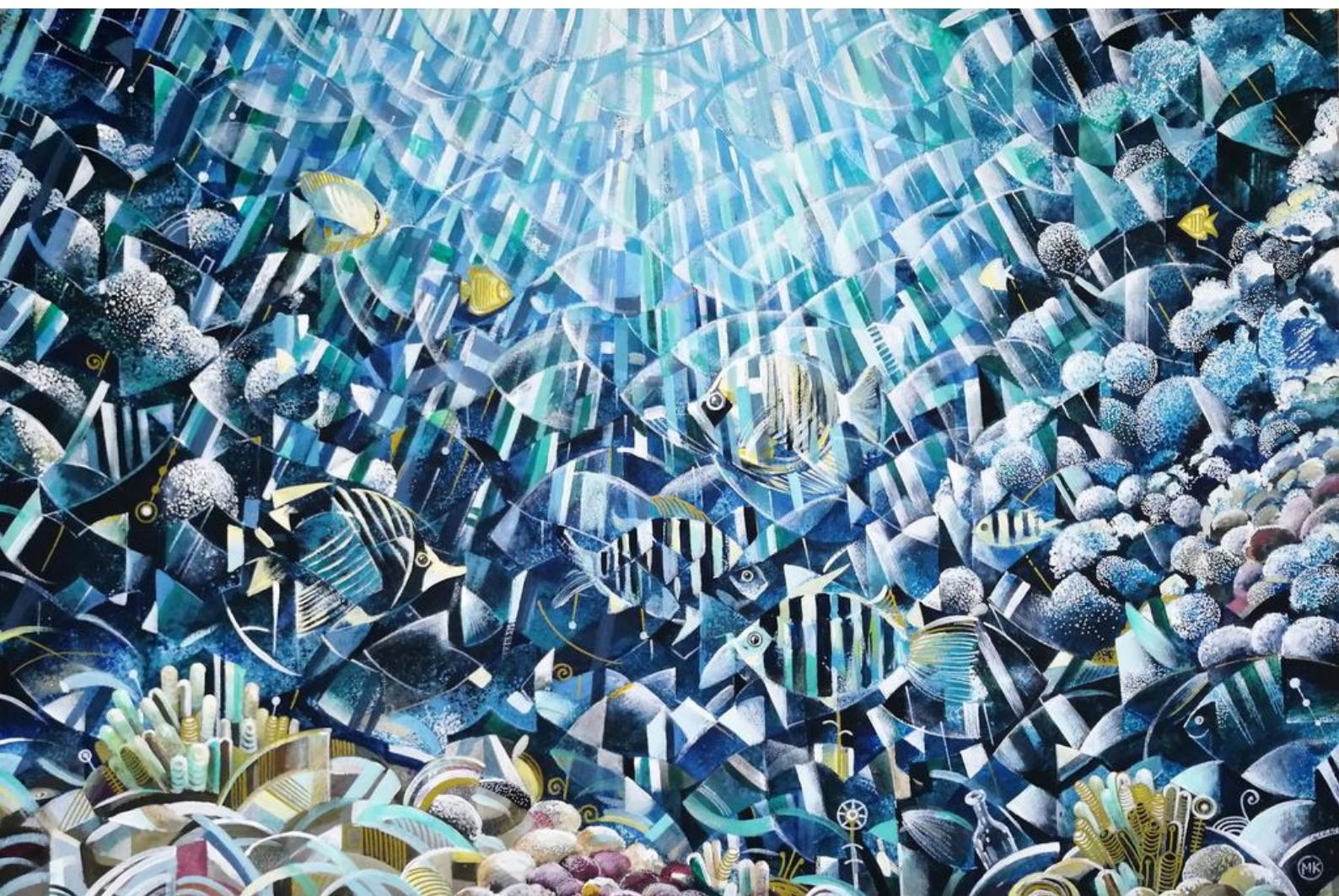
Liu Junyang | Melody in the Livestock Wagon | 2025

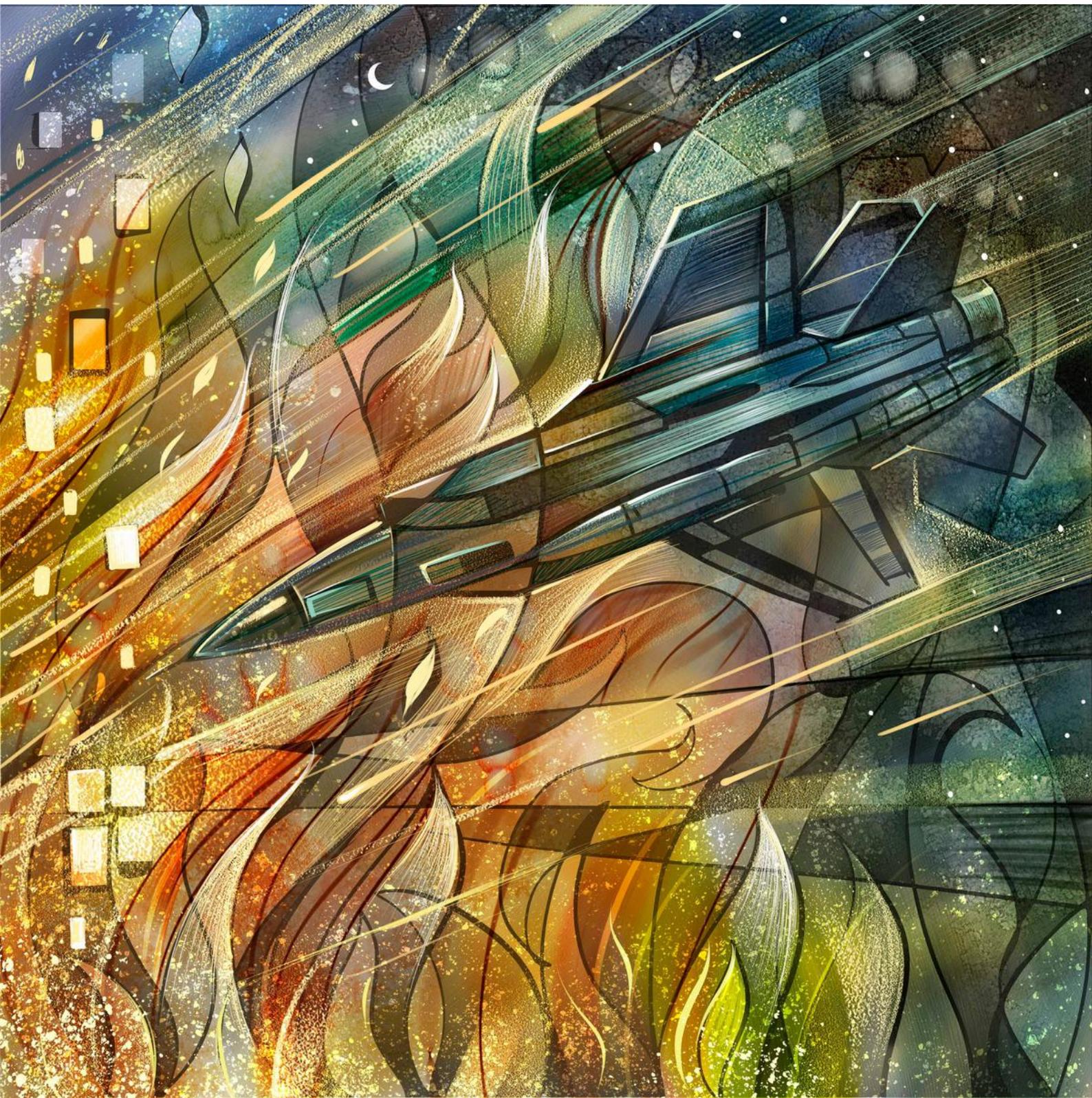
**Margarita Mikhailovna Kabelkova** (1990) was born and raised in Kramatorsk (Donetsk region). She studied at the Kharkiv Academy of Design and Arts (2008-2013). Occupation: illustration, graphics, and original works. I live and work in Lviv. I am currently a displaced person.

### *Artist Statement*

Publishing in the magazine will help me improve my work. We only become better when we interact with each other. My goal in art is to discover something new and reveal the beauty of my culture to the world.

Margarita Kabelkova | Light Penetrates into the Depths! | 2019





Margarita Kabelkova | Ukrainian Night | 2025

# — Interview

## Fausat Olanike Ladokun

**Your portraits feel very intimate and calm. Can you describe the emotional state you hope viewers enter when they encounter your work?**

I hope that when people see my work, they pause. I want them to take a quiet moment to look, without rushing to interpret or judge. That moment of calm is important to me because it allows the viewer to truly see the person in front of them, beyond their difference.

**You focus on women with vitiligo, alopecia, and tribal marks — identities often absent or misrepresented in mainstream art. What first drew you to these subjects?**



Fausat Olanike Ladokun | The Right To Be Seen, Facial Mark



Fausat Olanike Ladokun | Back To Our Roots

To be honest, it was the absence. These women are rarely shown in a gentle or respectful way. When they do appear, it's often framed as something unusual or extreme. I wanted to create work where they are simply present; not explained or defended, but seen and admired for their difference.

**The title “The Right to Be Seen” suggests both visibility and dignity. What does “being seen” mean to you on a personal level?**

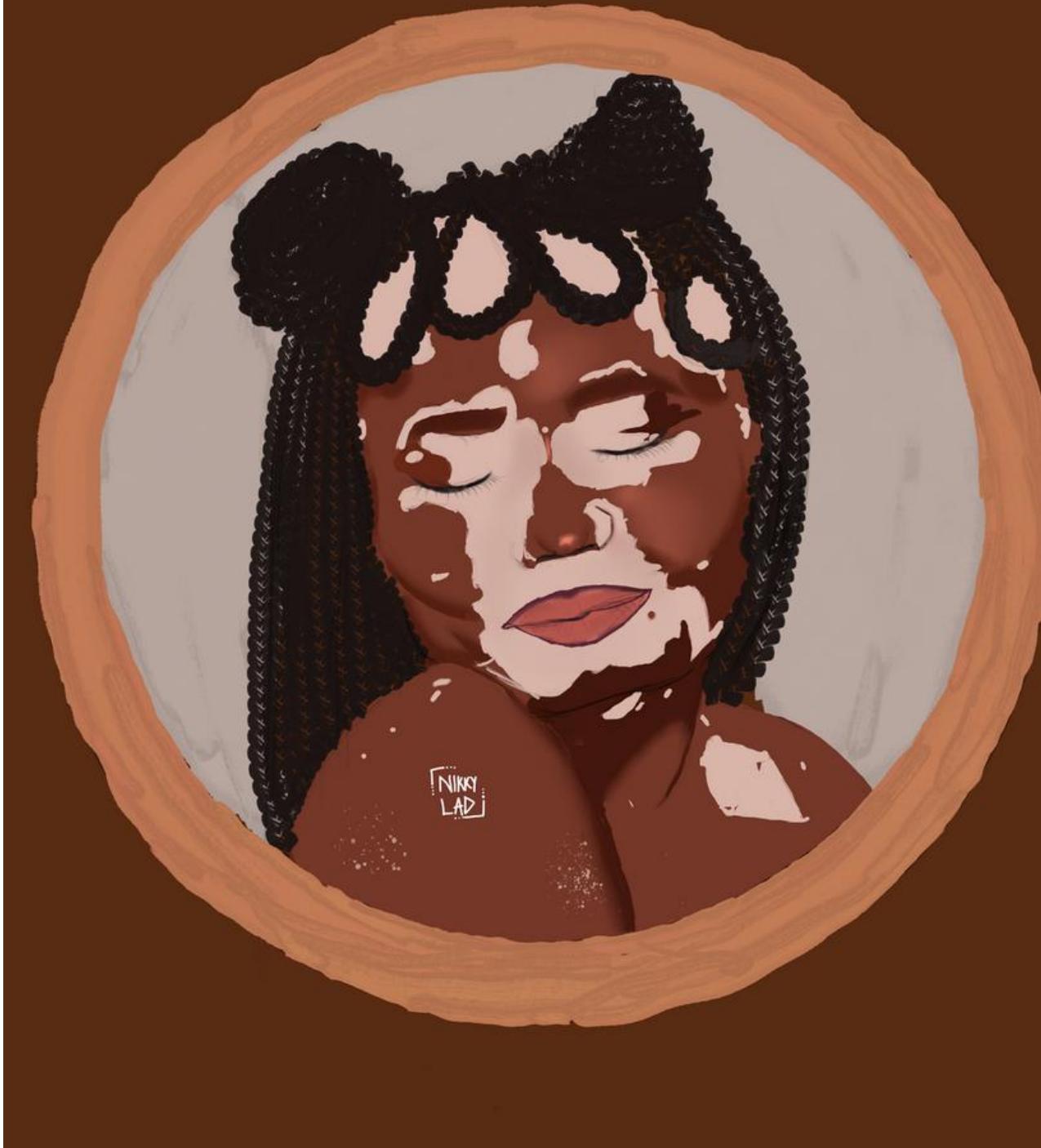
To me, being seen means not having to change or justify yourself to be accepted. It's about being acknowledged as whole, without being reduced to one feature. On a personal level, that feels deeply freeing; and that's the feeling I want my work to carry.

**You mention choosing not to alter your subjects' features. How does this decision challenge conventional digital beauty standards?**

Digital art often pushes perfection, symmetry, and sameness. Choosing not to alter my subjects is my way of stepping away from that. It's a reminder that beauty doesn't need correction, and difference doesn't need polishing to be worthy of attention.

**How do your Nigerian cultural background and traditions influence your visual language and storytelling?**

My Nigerian background shapes how I see the body;



Fausat Olanike Ladokun | The Right To Be Seen, Vitiligo

as something connected to history, culture, and identity. Things like tribal marks aren't flaws; they carry meaning and memory. That understanding naturally shows up in my work and in how I tell stories visually.

**Since starting your artistic journey in 2021, how has your relationship with womanhood and self-representation evolved through your work?**

It's become more gentle and honest. At first, I was very focused on expression and impact. Over time, I've learned to allow softness; to show women, including

myself, without forcing strength or explanation. Just presence.

**Do you see your work more as personal storytelling, social commentary, or a form of quiet resistance — or all three at once?**

For me, it's all three. It starts from something personal, but it naturally speaks to wider issues. And I see it as a form of quiet resistance; not loud or confrontational, but steady. Sometimes simply choosing who you show, and how you show them, is powerful enough.

**Ana Djapovic**

Born in Belgrade, Serbia (1988.) Graduated from the Faculty of Applied Arts in Belgrade in 2011, specializing in wall painting. She has been an independent artist since 2013 and is a member of several art associations (ULUS, ULUPUDS..) Her work focuses on painting, and she has participated in over 100 group exhibitions and numerous solo exhibitions internationally. Her works are held in various private and public collections.

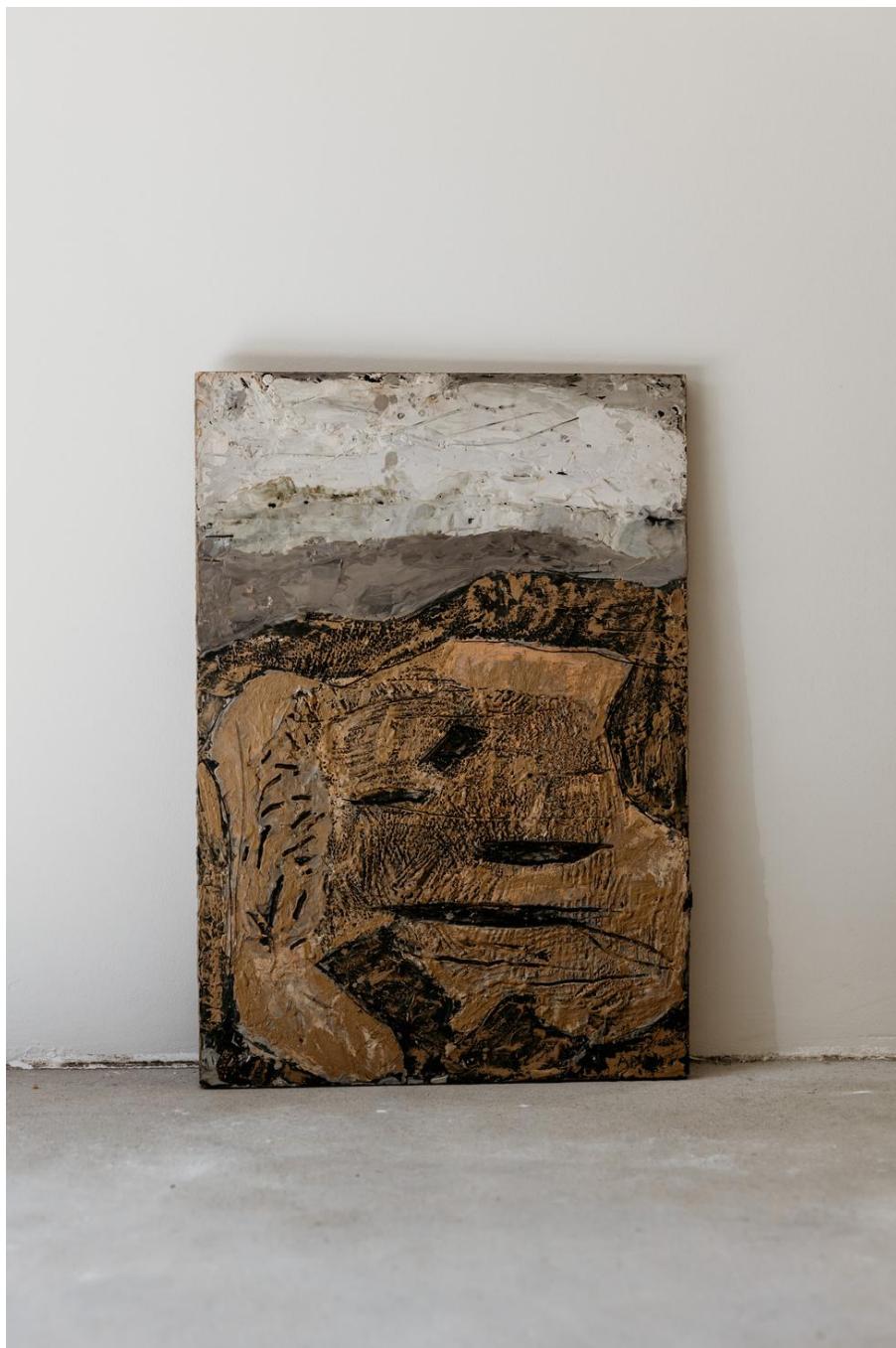
She has received several awards for her painting, most notably the ULUS "Zlatna paleta" (Golden Palette) . In 2020, she won second place in an international art competition in India for her painting "Udah" (Inhale).

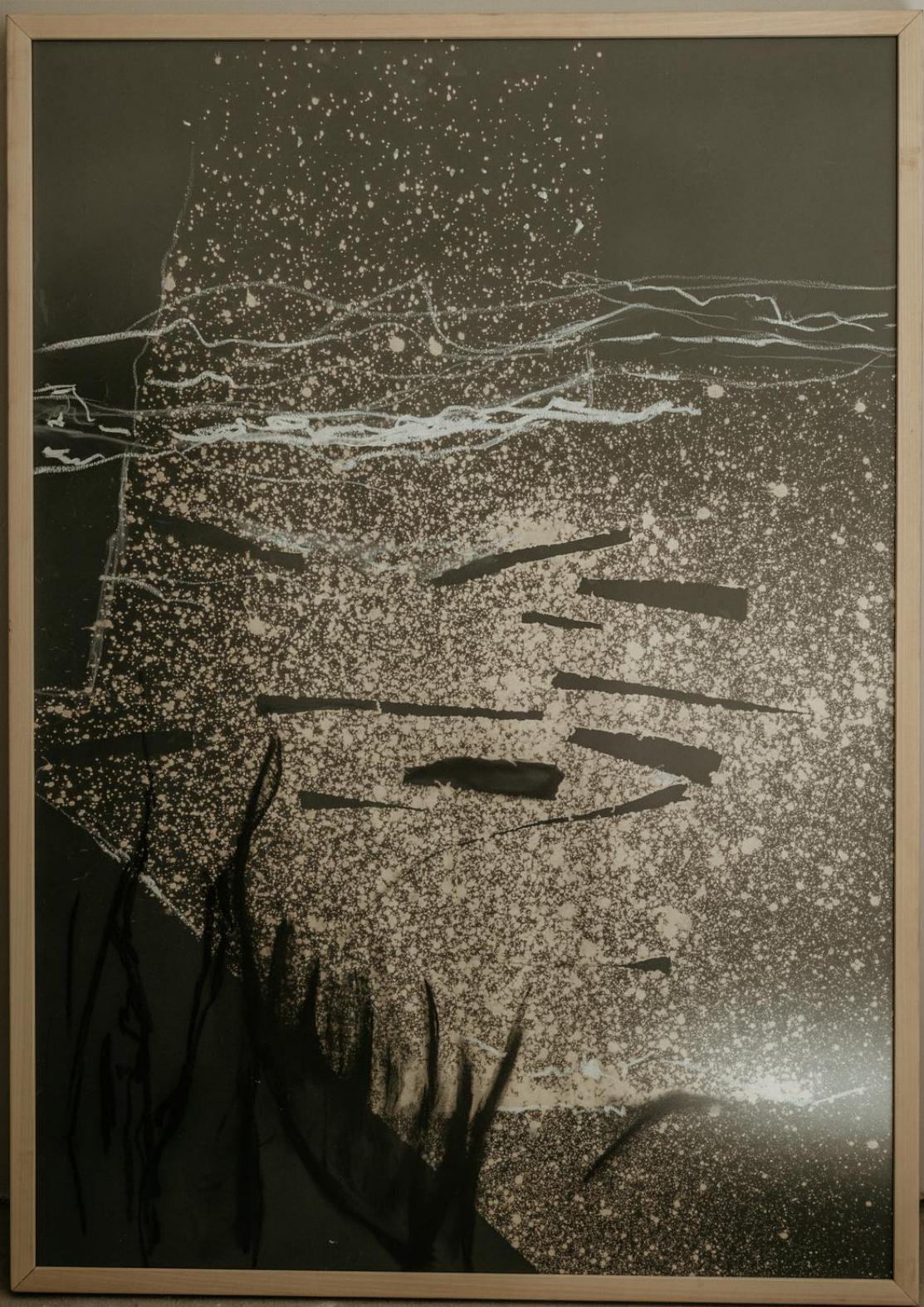
Her art often reflects her interpretation of life, with a deep interest in human nature and spiritual development. Live and work in Belgrade.

*Artist Statement***SOIL**

The ground is the point of support where I try to emphasize the association with nature and the landscape in the close-up shots. Nature is an inexhaustible inspiration for various artistic researches. Using a combined technique, layers of wax, charcoal, pastel and acrylic and different textures of earth excavations, I show traces of the past, but also the greater source of life. I want to draw attention to the invisible world beneath us. The works aim to evoke not only the material, but also the emotional and ecological dimensions of the soil. – how our actions affect the soil and how, in turn, the soil shapes us. By exploring the soil, I seek to remind us of the deep connection we share with the natural world and the responsibility we hold in caring for it. Nature in natural materials is a kind of escape from the reality of the urban environment into an idyllic landscape.

Ana Djapovic | Dig | 2019





## Aoi Tashiro

Based in Japan, the artist explores the intersection of daily consumption and tactile memory through sculptural textiles. A graduate of Kyoto City University of Arts, they have received acclaim including the Mayor's Prize. Their work repurposes thermal paper receipts into woven forms, transforming traces of labor and personal history into art. By utilizing the fading nature of thermal ink, the artist captures the shifting rhythms of time and the beauty of accumulated moments. With a global exhibition record including the International Triennial of Tapestry in Poland, their practice bridges traditional weaving with contemporary reflections on the invisibility of everyday life.

### *Artist Statement*

Weaving is my daily practice akin to shaping the invisible by hand. In my work, I use receipts to weave sculptural textiles, incorporating accumulated traces of daily consumption into each piece. The receipts document not only what I have consumed, but also the labor of others. As the text printed on thermal paper fades and transforms over time, it acts as a metaphor for the changing rhythms of everyday life where I find beauty through the accumulation of daily moments.

Aoi Tashiro | Just a Taste | 2024





**Kenneth Courtney Hutley** is a visual artist that was born in Brooklyn, New York and now resides in Atlanta, Ga. He is a painter, Illustrator, and retired educator. He has a BFA in Illustration from Parsons School of Design and MFA in painting from Lehman College. He has also studied at The Art Student League of New York.

*Project Statement*

Ken's paintings explore the intersection of black artistry and the vibrant textures of textiles focusing on the unique characteristics of the human form. Through dynamic compositions he captures the beauty, resilience, and diversity of the African American experience. His painting on fabric serves as a testament to the power of art to heal, uplift, and connect us all together. His medium of choice is acrylic paint however he also explores oils, pastels, charcoal, and other mixed media. Ken's statement: "Throughout the years as an artist, I've always loved working with the figure. The complexity and grace in anatomy, the variety of movement, shape and expression in the eyes and face has always fascinated me. People will always be the primary subject of my work, and I will continue to be inspired by the beauty and warmth of the people that surround me". To contact and view more of Ken's artwork go to his website [www.kennyhutleyart.com](http://www.kennyhutleyart.com)

Kenneth Courtney Hutley | Saint Toussaint | 2025





## *Interview*

# Jefimija Stoicic

Your works seem to capture fragments of inner dialogue — urgent, emotional, sometimes chaotic. How do you decide which words or symbols become part of the final composition?

When I begin painting, I rely primarily on the emotions carried by the theme I am working with. I don't think about words immediately; instead, I allow them to emerge naturally during the process. Painting can sometimes take months, and the words that appear often reflect momentary emotional states, which may even contradict one another, as they are not the same at the beginning of the process as they are at the end. At times, this feels like a dialogue I am having with myself — questioning previous decisions and evoking memories of specific places and people. The words that appear in my paintings often function as characters; sometimes they are not sufficient on their own, but exist in relation to the image and the emotional space it creates.



Many of your paintings combine text and figures in a raw, expressive manner. What comes first for you — the visual image or the written phrase?

Most often, it is the figures that come first. They are meant to express fundamental emotions — human suffering, anxiety, love, desire, fear, happiness, calm. The theme I explore is not always purely personal; sometimes it is focused on a specific “problem” that I want to address and, in a way, resolve through my work.

These figures become the protagonists of the story I want to tell — whether it is a personal issue, a desire, a fear, a dream, or a problem I observe within society and feel particularly sensitive toward. Ultimately, it always depends on the theme itself.

**You often explore fragility and transformation. How do you translate such invisible psychological states into visual form?**

For me, fragility and transformation are states that cannot be directly depicted, but only suggested. I don't try to translate them into clear symbols; instead, I build them through the process itself — through changes that happen within the painting. The figures I create often appear unstable, unfinished, or caught in a state of transition, as these conditions feel closest to inner psychological processes.

Transformation in my work is rarely sudden; it is slow, sometimes barely noticeable, yet constant. Fragility appears in the tension between what is said and what remains unspoken. In that in-between space, I try to preserve emotion — not to explain it, but to give it a form that can be felt.

The color red appears frequently in your works. Does it carry a specific symbolic meaning for you?

Yes, red is a color I often use in my work. I perceive red as the color that can most clearly express the emotions carried by human beings across the entire color spectrum. And no — I don't mean only the conventional symbolism of red as love or resistance. For me, red represents something primal, something that cannot be easily altered. I am referring to the "codes" we



Jefimija Stoicic | Dead Don't See | 2022

are born with — something that lies deep within us and exists as long as we exist. Human beings are inherently changeable; our opinions and attitudes are shaped over time. Yet that inner spark, the basic structure of our existence, remains constant and influences all the aspects of life we try to change. At our core, we remain the same — the variables appear on higher levels of intellectual development. My “red” is precisely that.

Your art evokes both childlike simplicity and existential tension. How conscious is this balance between naivety and intensity?

As I mentioned earlier, we all carry certain fundamental "codes" that follow us throughout life. As children, we simplify complex emotions and allow ourselves to express them in the most basic way possible — and that is where the beauty lies. Adults tend to overcomplicate things that should, in essence, remain simple.

On the other hand, complexity enters through the themes I explore. When I paint, I try to break down the questions I am dealing with into their simplest elements and then recombine them in search of an answer. This process is very spontaneous and natural; while working, I don't consciously think about selecting elements, but rather allow emotion to guide me.

**What role does spontaneity play in your creative process? Are your gestures instinctive, or do you plan compositions carefully?**

Although I consciously choose the themes I work with, spontaneity is a central thread that guides me. I genuinely enjoy the process of creation because I never know where it will lead — whether a piece will be finished in five minutes or over several months or even years.

That is why I often return to older works and continue to rework them. I simply feel that some pieces expect that from me. My artwork is a living matter — it continuously renews and transforms itself.

The texts in your paintings often mix languages — Serbian and English. Is this linguistic layering intentional, and how does it affect meaning?

This is a very interesting question. Sometimes, I must admit, I don't think much about which language I use. At times, I experience my work as a kind of personal diary — an imaginary world where language is not essential. On the other hand, it often happens that during the creative process I hear lyrics from a song I'm listening to and realize they perfectly describe the emotion I am expressing, so I incorporate them into the work. Essentially, the language I use to address myself or the viewer is not crucial to me.

An interesting moment occurs when the viewer, perhaps not understanding one or both languages, tries to interpret the message based solely on personal experience and perception. That is where the magic lies. It's like passing by a graffiti you can't read at all, yet still experience it very strongly on an emotional level. In that case, text becomes a new visual element, freed from a fixed meaning. That is why a single work of mine often allows for multiple interpretations.



Efimija Stoicic | Only Pride Remains | 2022

**Sharon Howard** (72) is a Florida-based artist trained in traditional lamp-making techniques in Japan. She blends this craftsmanship with natural materials to capture the radiance of light through illuminated sculptures created from harvested branches and vines covered in vibrant Japanese washi paper. Each piece is carefully constructed to allow light to filter through a kaleidoscope of swirling pigments dancing across the textured surface of the washi paper, creating a glowing, ethereal effect. Her work explores the harmony between nature, shifts of light, and shadow, with a focus on evoking a sense of serenity and mystery. Through her sculptures, Sharon Howard seeks to express the fleeting, radiant quality of light in a unique and meditative way.

Sharon Howard | Valiant | 2025





Sharon Howard | Jewel | 2025

**Mervenchy** was born and raised in urban Miami, Florida. Growing up as a young black girl in an environment that did not accept art as a compliment, Mervenchy faced constant challenges in pursuing her true passion. Despite living in a community plagued by violence, crime, and the illusion of a luxurious lifestyle, Mervenchy remained dedicated to her love for art.

With determination and perseverance, Mervenchy overcame the obstacles in her surroundings and continued to pursue her artistic dreams. Through her work, she found a way to express herself and share her unique perspective with the world. Despite the lack of acceptance in her community, Mervenchy remained resilient and used her art as a form of self-expression and empowerment.

Today, Mervenchy's art serves as a powerful testament to her strength and resilience in the face of adversity. Through her work, she continues to challenge societal norms and inspire others to embrace their passions, no matter the obstacles they may face. Mervenchy's journey is a reminder that true artistry knows no boundaries and can flourish in even the most challenging of circumstances.

### *Artist Statement*

"The pressure to have it all together" is a constant reminder of the expectations placed upon women. This piece illustrates the capacity of a woman juggling various roles in her life, doing her best to save face but the pressure has tears rolling down her face. She is surrounded by the demand to meet career milestones, celebrate everyone around her, fighting for financial freedom in the midst of the U.S greatest financial crisis, finish grad school, believe in herself and not be overstimulated to the point she takes it out on her children. It is a never-ending cycle of self-sacrifice and duty, but she does it with love and determination. This piece captures the struggle and strength of women who are expected to have it all, even when it feels impossible. It serves as a reminder of the resilience and power that lies within each of us, as we navigate the complexities of modern life.



STOP  
PRESS  
ME

# — Interview

## Agnieszka Duchnicz



**You describe yourself as being in between worlds - still a student, but already stepping into adulthood. How does this "in-between" state influence your artistic thinking and visual language?**

Okay that's a really interesting approach to my situation, I think that it allows me to experiment with mediums and different artistic styles. I still haven't really decided what I like about art the most. I love this state in which I am able to explore everything that

inspires me. On the other hand "being in between" also brings some kind of instability and uncertainty, and that's why sometimes my art might seem isolated and darker than I intended it to be.

**Your works often feel like fragments of thoughts, dreams, or internal dialogues. Do you see your art as a form of self-conversation or self-discovery?**

I always think that my art need to communicate something to the world either if that's emotion or a thought. But when I look at it from a broader perspective and after some time has passed, I definitely see some of my quirks and qualities in it that I'm not always aware of. So it really depends if my art is "freshly" made yesterday or a month or a year ago. If I had to choose one I would probably choose self-conversation that lasts a really long time.

**Many of your pieces combine collage, illustration, and graphic elements. What attracts you to mixing different mediums instead of focusing on just one?**

I love creating, actually I don't really have a favorite medium. As long as I can just do something with my hands, I feel like a whole. Also many artists from different cultures and countries inspire me at the same time, so I'm quite a mix of them all. I really admire polish XX century artist, from art deco to modern and also I like the Pre-Raphaelites ,and Middle Ages manuscripts artists with their sometimes very funny depictions of animals and people. So for now i'm trying to find my niche and while doing that, I try to have a lot of creative fun.

**Silence, observation, and inner focus seem to play an important role in your imagery. What does**

Agnieszka Duchnicz | Scrolling The Night Away | 2025





### **silence mean to you as an artist?**

Silence is something I really admire, because it's the state that makes daydreaming and inner dialogue possible. I often use my imagination to create most of the portraits and graphics- I feel quite uncomfortable when drawing something from a reference. Also the state of silence is crucial to me when I need to reevaluate my art and my current state of being. To find some silence i often meditate and love to go for a run in a park. In this times when everyone is trying to sell and show you something it's important that, I have the ability to look inward.

### **Technology, screens, and modern symbols appear in your work alongside very human emotions. How do you see the relationship between the digital world and inner life?**

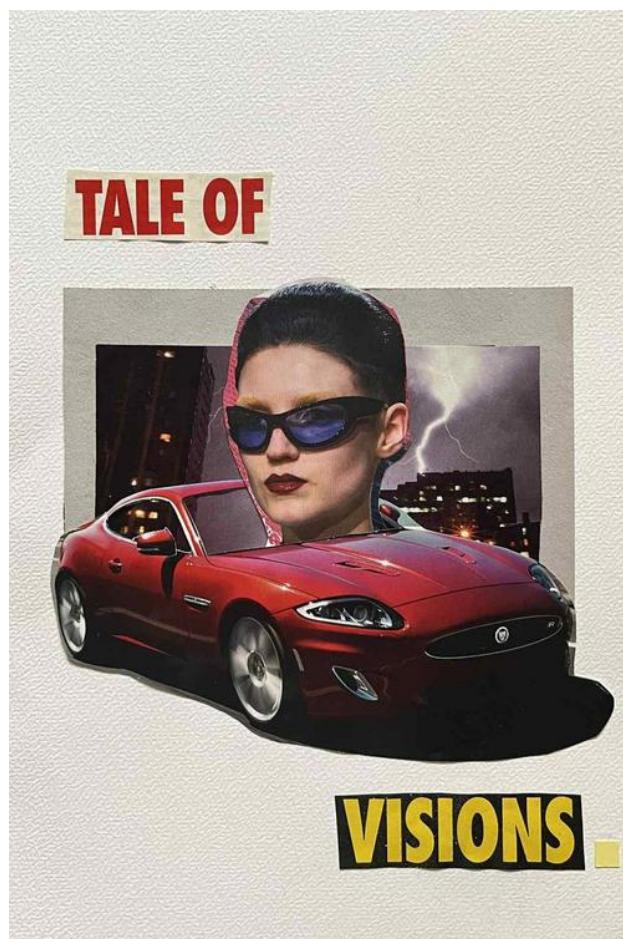
I am an observer to this world, and I try to take inspiration from modern life. We are no longer living like we did 15 years ago and digital world forms our opinions, gives us ideas and the ability to make our lives as convenient as they could be. Most of the time this relationship between our smartphones and inner self is balancing on being harmless and pretty dangerous, for example to our ability to think and our self-esteem. For artists is especially hard because we often see our followers as a confirmation of our artistic success, most of us in that situations aren't thinking about the very first reasons why we started creating. That's why is very important to take a step back and reflect on the constant stream of content that we see online.

### **Some of your characters look isolated, absorbed, or deeply inward. Are these figures reflections of yourself, or are they more universal portraits?**

I'm not making it consciously, although after receiving this question I started to wonder if that's how I feel recently. In first question you said that I am in this "in-between" state, maybe this is the answer to my art looking this way. Being in your early twenties might be really exhausting and for me it is! I have a lot of new situations to process, decisions to make so it's sometimes easier to hide for a little bit and look inside at my introverted soul and childhood memories. I hope that more people feel like me and could relate to my art because of that. In this pretty busy world this is my way to cope and express myself.

### **How intuitive is your creative process? Do you plan your compositions carefully, or do you allow them to evolve spontaneously?**

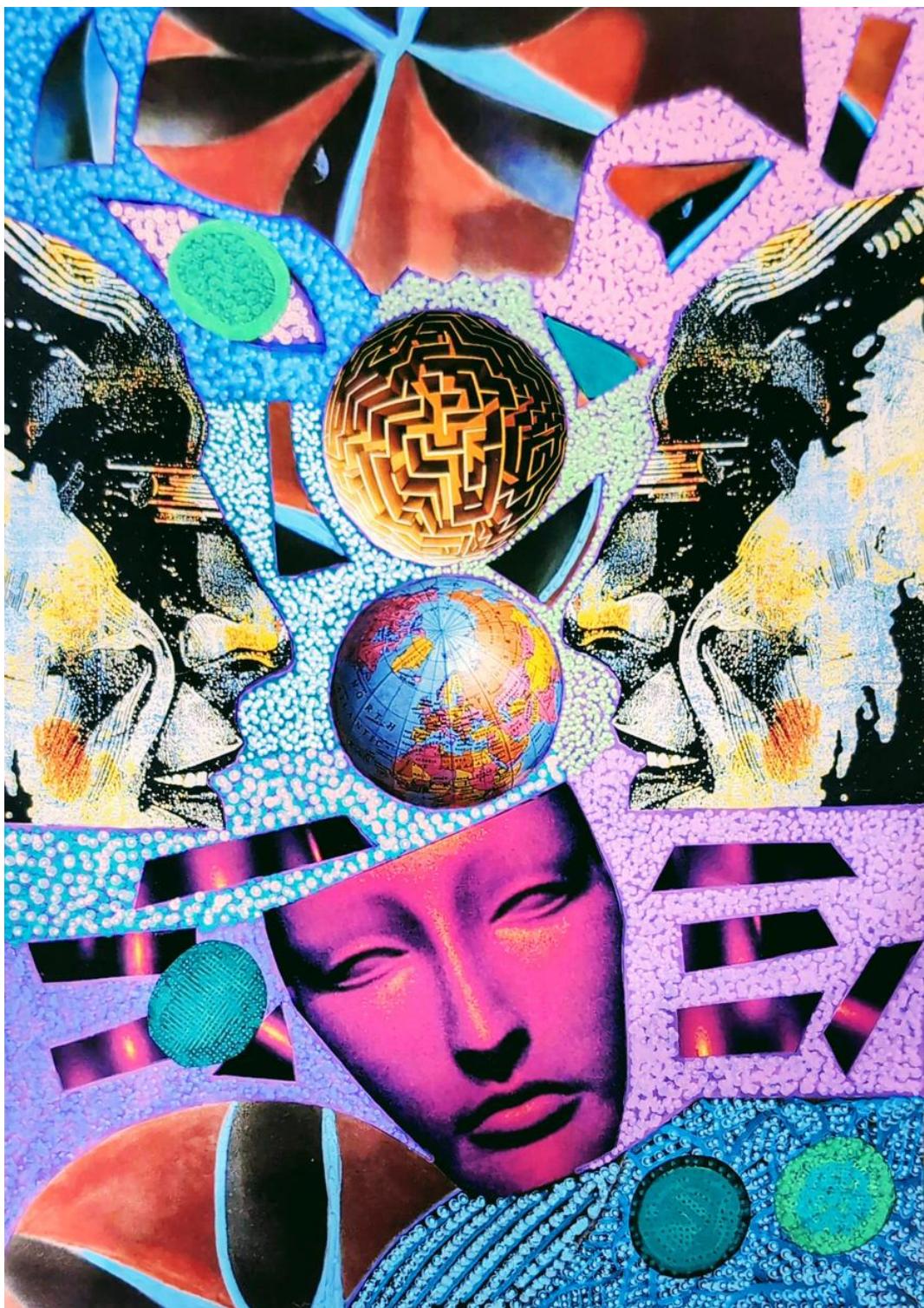
I often do what my heart tells me, sometimes it's an idea that can't wait- in that situation I grab my notebook and do a fast sketch there to remember about this in the evening when I usually have more time. On much rarer occasions I plan my compositions and colors that I am going to use- this works often takes me a lot longer to complete, because the first emotion about that artwork has changed or completely vanished. That's why I like simple characters and backgrounds, they often makes a great canvases to put current feeling or thoughts.



## Laura Salvai

Psychologist, psychotherapist, clinical sexologist, and EMDR therapist. I love stories, and I enjoy listening to and telling them. This is why I have a passion for cinema, reading and writing, photography, and the creative arts (especially amigurumi and collage). I have had several books of short stories published, and my Polaroids have been featured in a book and selected for international exhibitions. In 2026, a series of Polaroids themed "Utopias" will be exhibited at ArtCity Bologna, and in Athens, a selected Polaroid of mine will be exhibited alongside those of artists from around the world at an international instant photography exhibition on Eros.

Laura Salvai | Mental Exploration | 2025





# — Interview

## Lori Wakefield

**You've described your first encounter with Pop Art at the age of five as a turning point. What do you remember most vividly about that experience, and how does it still echo in your work today?**

While looking at the pop art show Ed Ruscha's painting SPAM caught my eye I though i can do this I want to be a painter. I loved the bold colors, strong style of pop art not the subject matter.

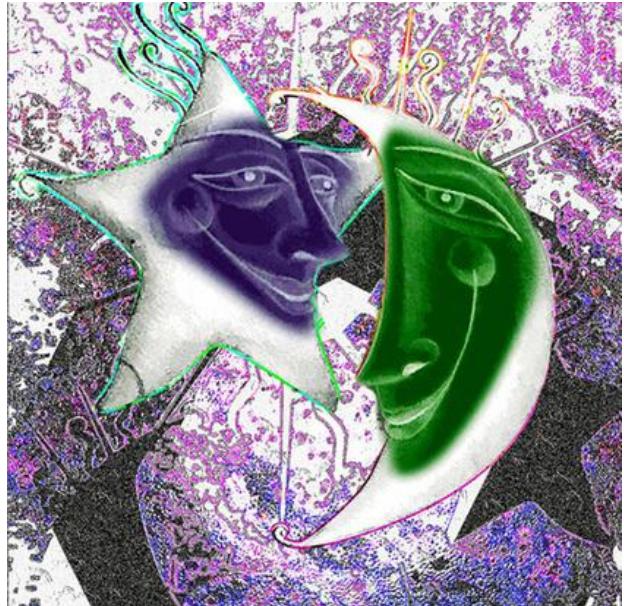
**Color seems to be a driving force in your paintings. What does color allow you to express that form or narrative alone cannot?**

To me colors are emotions like music it goes straight to our hearts.

**Music - particularly Marvin Gaye's What's Going On - played a crucial role in helping you find your artistic voice. How does music continue to influence your painting process today?**

I have always liked the depths of music can reach with emotions music has been and always will be inspiring to me without music life would not be worth living i always listen to music while i paint.

**Many of your figures appear emotionally charged, exaggerated, or psychologically layered. Are these characters rooted in**



Lori Wakefield | Dancing with the Moon

**personal experience, observation, or imagination?**

My art comes from experience observations as well as imaginations feelings and inspiration the agony as well as the ecstasy, I learned classical sculpture so I could know the rules and break them.

**You studied and worked across many disciplines - from sculpture and printing to digital design. How have these diverse practices shaped the way you approach painting?**

Sculpture helped with perspective, computer graphics is a quick and dirty way of working on ideas mostly for social media but some painting have came from it. Probably the most important skill I use all the time is drawing many painting comes from sketching I can work things out in drawing before i paint.

**Looking back at your long artistic journey, what does painting mean to you today - personally and spiritually?**

Painting and creating is my lives gift to humanity Spiritually I let GOD WORK THROUGH ME for me staying healthy mentally spiritually physically lets me go through the trials and tribulations of being an artist.



My name is **Isabella Czesany**, and I come from Innsbruck. I discovered my artistic voice through my studies in architecture, which I have continued to pursue consistently since graduating. During this time, I began to engage deeply with inner processes and to give space to my creative expression.

My master's thesis on trauma processing became a turning point, revealing the layered nature of our existence and the importance of reconnecting with past versions of ourselves. This journey first led me to my inner child. In my work, I explore a childlike way of perceiving the world—one that is often overshadowed in everyday life by expectations of strength and seriousness. Through photography, I capture ordinary moments and introduce childlike imagination through subtle drawn interventions, often using a single line or pen. My works invite viewers to rediscover openness, curiosity, and a sense of inner vitality.

Czesany Art | Red Riding Hood





# — Interview

## Art bureau Absurd

You describe yourself as a self-taught artist who “lives” in the digital realm rather than

Art bureau Absurd | State Of Dream | 2025

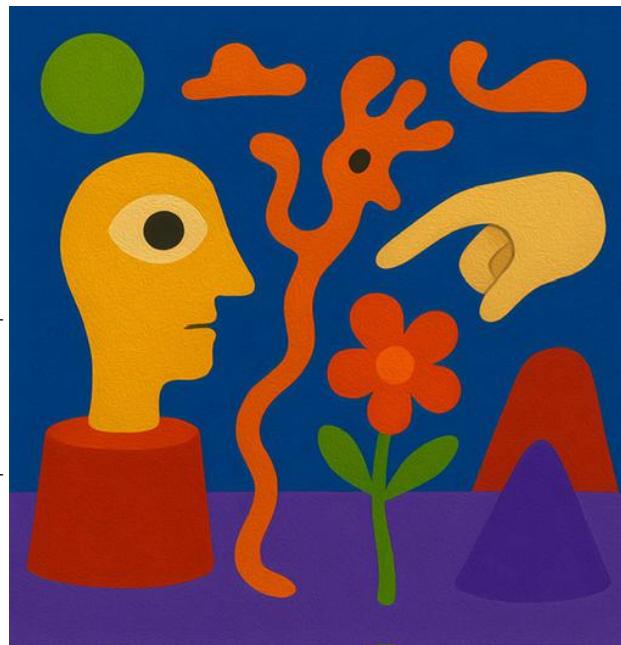


**simply working in it. How did this way of living inside digital space shape your visual language over time?**

Yes, that's absolutely right. Today the entire world—every individual—is part of the digital environment, and I am no exception. I have always viewed digital innovations positively, as I see them as offering limitless possibilities for an artist to realize ideas and thoughts. Since I began bringing my concepts into the digital space, I have started paying greater attention in my works to fine details, the depth of the images, and the meaning I embed in every element of the composition. So if you notice a particular stroke or spot, know that it is not accidental—there is a continuation of my thought within it as well.

**Childhood imagery appears strongly in your work - toys, simple figures, playful forms - yet the atmosphere often feels unsettling or melancholic. Why is this tension between innocence and discomfort important to you?**

I believed—and still believe—that children’s drawings possess a genuine energy and power; I



see depth in simplicity. Abstraction and unpretentious forms play with the viewer's perception, prompting them to discern what lies hidden behind surface naïveté. I deform familiar images from childhood to a degree that evokes a subtle sense of unease and discomfort. I always emphasize that my works operate on two levels of perception. The first is visual contact with the piece; the second is reflection. The first is guided by childlike naïveté, while the second is shaped by a melancholic thought concealed behind a bright façade. Through this tense coexistence within my works—innocence and discomfort—I allow my idea to be read through entirely different paths, so each viewer sees something of their own, in their own way. I do not seek to impose my vision; rather, I invite the viewer to choose their own path when engaging with my works.

**State of Dream is described as a three-part journey through different phases of the dreaming mind. How did you define these phases, and did they emerge intuitively or conceptually?**

"State of Dream" is an intuitive triptych designed to immerse the viewer in the chaos of our dreams. I would prefer not to speak in more detail about each of the three works, as I want everyone to discover something of their own.

**Dreams often feel deeply personal but**

**strangely universal. When working with dream symbols, do you think more about your own subconscious or the collective experience of dreaming?**

In this triptych, I drew upon my memories, desires, fears, and emotions—purely personal experience.

**Your color palette is bold, saturated, and almost childlike. How do you choose colors, and do they carry emotional or symbolic meaning for you?**

Yes. Color plays a very important—if not the central—role in my work. I deeply admire the art of modernists and abstractionists; the way they worked with color is truly monumental. I share Kandinsky's view that color directly affects human emotions. That is why the entire color palette in my works is intentional, and its primary purpose is to draw emotions out of the viewer.

**Your work balances humor, absurdity, and existential unease. Do you see these elements as tools to protect the viewer, or to confront them more directly?**

By no means do I seek to protect the viewer, however selfish that may sound. The combination of the incompatible gives rise to thought processes. That is why I aim to confront the viewer with my works face to face.



**Katrin Rymscha** is a visual artist working in the field of abstract and decorative painting. She was born in 1979 in the Siberian region of Russia and graduated from the Novosibirsk State Academy of Architecture, Design, and Arts (NGAUDI/NGAHA) in 2022 with a degree in Monumental and Decorative Arts.

Immediately after graduation, she founded her own ceramic studio, Ognetsvet, where she collaborated with artists to create original handcrafted ceramics. Years of working with clay shaped her sensitivity to form, volume, and texture — qualities that later became defining features of her pictorial language.

In 2009, Katrin relocated to Saint Petersburg, where her path as a painter fully emerged. Since 2016, she has actively participated in regional and international exhibitions, art projects, and plein-air programs. Alongside her artistic practice, she taught painting to both children and adults and later founded her own art school. She went on to join the team of the Interior Painting School "ERA," working as an instructor, technologist, and practicing artist. She is also a member of the painters' collective DAK.

Travel has become a meaningful part of her artistic development. Katrin has been deeply influenced by Asia — with India becoming her central source of inspiration. Eastern philosophy, ornamentality, and the rich, vibrant visual environment of India form the foundation of her new ongoing series. Today, she divides her time between India and Russia while continuing to expand her artistic practice.

Her works are featured in online galleries and held in private collections in Russia, Europe, and Asia.

#### *Artist Statement*

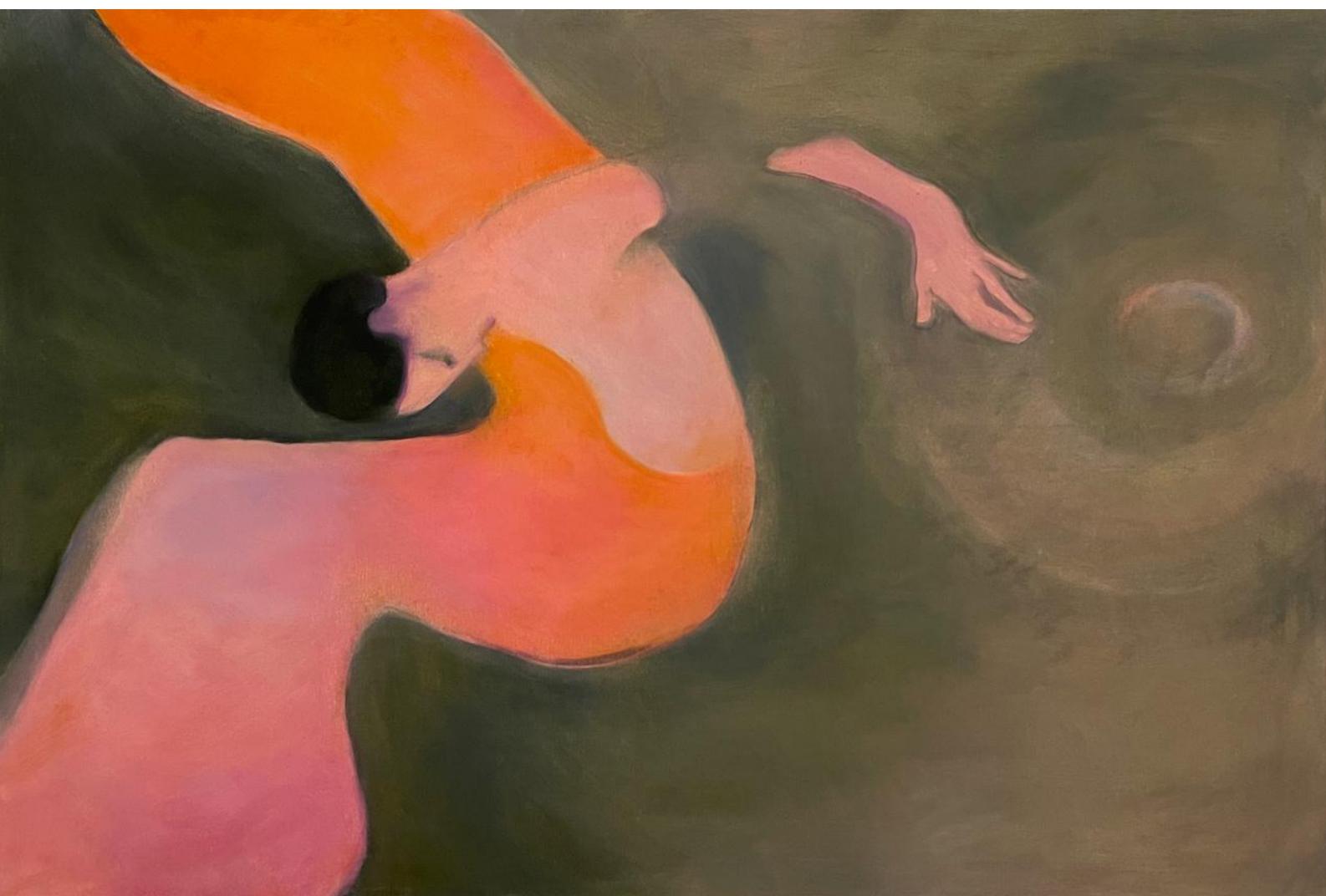
My painting practice is a journey through time — a process of release, immersion, and entering a flow where new realities take shape.

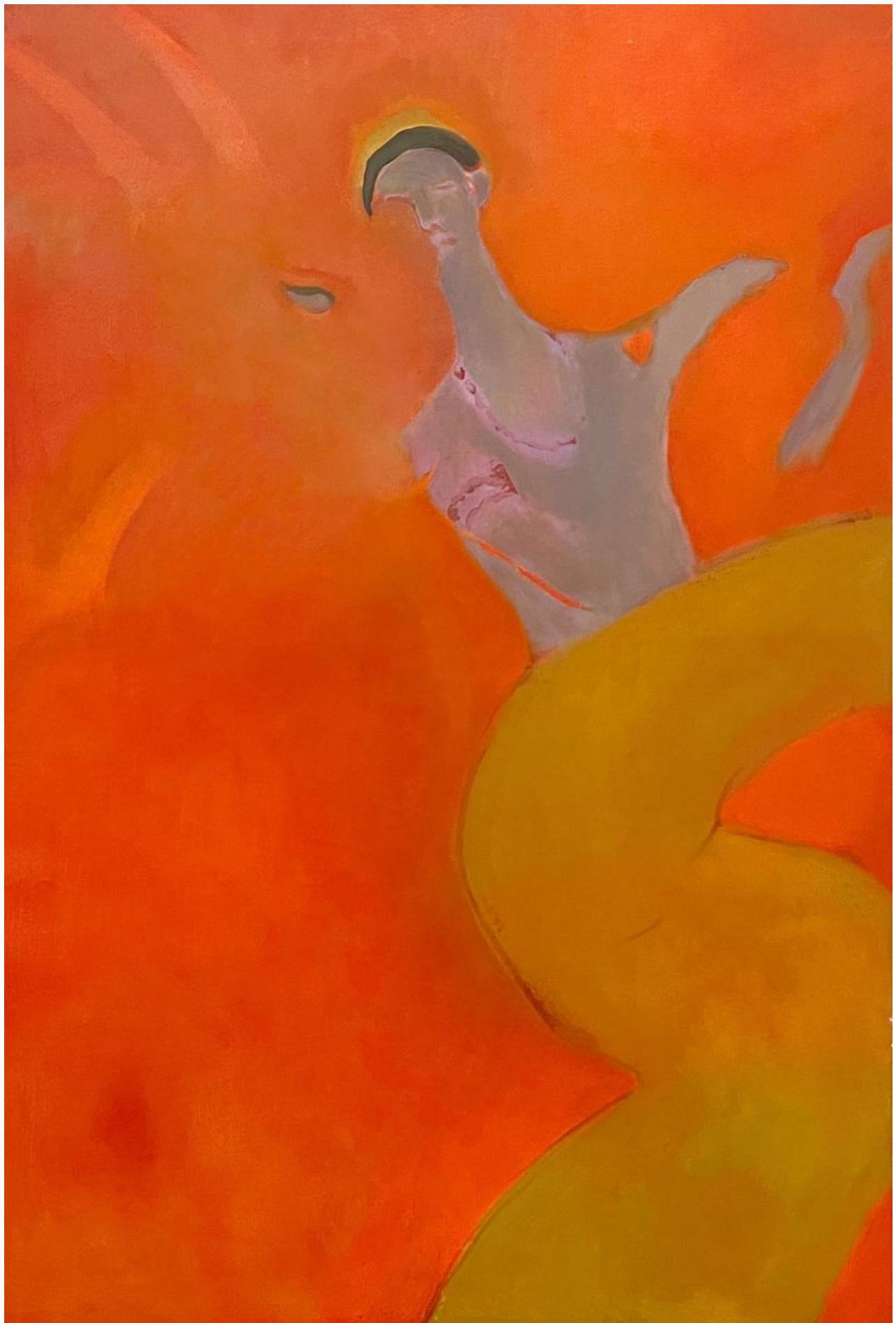
I am inspired by ancient civilizations and the cultures of early peoples. In them, I find knowledge, symbols, and meaning. My travels across Asia have had a profound impact on my work: I was moved by the power of ancient monuments, the authenticity of everyday life, and the presence of archaic forms and symbols. Reinterpreting these impressions, I brought them into my art, creating several series dedicated to India.

By exploring the past, I discover answers to questions that matter to me and feel the unbroken continuity of time. In my paintings, time dissolves, transforms, and shifts, leaving only its trace

— expressed through symbols, signs, and fluid forms. Figures and images fade into space, losing their physical boundaries.

In my work, I create a space free from unnecessary detail, where energy emerges through color and shape. This space remains open to the viewer — a place to slow down, to reconnect with one's own sensory experience, and to listen for an inner response.





# — Interview

## Alexandra Struber

**Your artistic journey began in childhood. What are some of your earliest memories related to watercolor, and how do they influence your work today?**

My first connection to watercolor began with a book I read as a young girl. It told the story of three girls traveling through Italy by car, and one of them always carried a sketchbook and a small watercolor set. Wherever they stopped, she captured her impressions in watercolor sketches. That image stayed with me deeply. It awakened a strong desire to try watercolor myself, because it represented freedom, lightness, and something inherently poetic.

Other artistic practices were already present in my childhood home—my mother painted ceramics and furniture and worked with reverse glass painting—but watercolor felt fundamentally different. Its fascination did not lie in technique, but in its openness and delicacy.

Today, the aspect of painting while traveling is less central for me, as I integrate watercolor primarily into my everyday life, alongside work and family, in consciously created moments of time. The medium itself, however, remains simple and clear to handle, without the material heaviness of techniques such as acrylic or oil.

What is essential for me has not changed. The central point of watercolor is its lightness—its transparency, restraint, and its ability to create atmosphere with very little. This sense of lightness continues to define my relationship with watercolor and remains a fundamental element of my work.



**After rediscovering watercolor two years ago, what felt different compared to your earlier approach to painting?**

When I returned to watercolor two years ago, the process was no longer uncomplicated. This second approach was far more demanding, especially toward myself. I wanted to understand the medium thoroughly and to master its techniques with precision.

I worked consciously with different types of paper, a wide range of pigments, and various materials, including mixed media such as ink and charcoal. Exploring these combinations allowed me to better understand the limits and possibilities of watercolor and to develop greater technical confidence.

As part of this process, I chose to study with a professional painter. I attended a structured course and still return to it from time to time. This disciplined learning phase was essential—it transformed watercolor from an intuitive practice into a deliberate and technically grounded artistic language.

**Nature seems to play a central role in your work. What draws you most to animals and landscapes as your primary subjects?**

Nature has always held a central place in my artistic practice because it represents authenticity and presence. I am particularly drawn to animals and landscapes not only for their forms but for the quiet moments they reveal—the stillness, the subtle gestures, the light and atmosphere that define a place or a being.

Many of my subjects come from direct observation, whether it's birds on a rocky coastline, cormorants drying their wings, or a fleeting encounter with wildlife during a walk. Other times, photographs or sketches help capture moments I





cannot observe in real time. But in every case, I focus less on literal representation and more on conveying the essence of what I see—the mood, the rhythm, and the balance of a scene.

Watercolor is especially suited to this because of its transparency and unpredictability. It mirrors the fragility and fluidity of nature itself, allowing me to work with both control and chance, which is central to how I interpret the natural world.

**Living in Rome since 1998, how has the city and its artistic atmosphere influenced your creative development?**

Living in Rome has had a strong influence on my artistic development. The city is layered with centuries of art and history, from classical architecture to contemporary expressions, and this constant presence of creativity shapes how I observe and compose my work. Rome has taught me to see time and space as layered rather than linear, which helps me perceive light and atmosphere more consciously. A particularly important element is Rome's unique light. Its constant presence, in summer as well as in winter, together with the city's proximity to the sea, strongly influences how I perceive color, mood, and space. It has a clear effect on how I interpret nature and my subjects.

Life in Rome is very different from my time in Austria until 1998. Rome is a busy metropolis: everything moves quickly and must be planned. Austria, by contrast, offered quiet and open space, and my childhood there—surrounded by nature and stillness—shaped the way I see and paint. This combination of fast city life and quiet childhood memories naturally flows into my work and influences how I observe and depict my subjects.

**You have participated in exhibitions from Barcelona to**

**Paris and Cologne. How have these experiences shaped your artistic vision?**

Exhibiting internationally has been both inspiring and instructive. Showing my work in different countries allows me to see how people respond to nature and watercolor in diverse cultural contexts. I have noticed that the emotional impact of light, atmosphere, and quiet moments is remarkably universal.

These experiences have reinforced the importance of maintaining a clear and personal artistic voice. While I value exchange and feedback, I do not adapt my work to trends. Exhibitions also provide insight into the professional aspects of being an artist—preparing works for display, presenting them coherently, and engaging with a wider audience. What is particularly meaningful for me is that painting allows me to enter a world I would not experience as a teacher. Connecting with other artists, surrounding myself more fully with culture and art, and engaging in dialogue on a similar level opens new perspectives and enriches my work deeply. Ultimately, each exhibition deepens my awareness of what is essential in my work and strengthens my confidence in the choices I make as a painter.

**Watercolor is often described as an unpredictable medium. What do you find most challenging - and most rewarding - about working with it?**

Watercolor is a medium of immediacy and delicacy, and that is both its challenge and its reward. The greatest challenge is letting go of complete control. Unlike other techniques, watercolor reacts on its own with water, pigment, and paper. Every stroke involves chance, and the final result is never entirely predictable.

At the same time, this unpredictability is what makes watercolor so rewarding. The medium allows the work to breathe and preserves a sense of life and spontaneity. The surprises that watercolor offers are not to be underestimated: it is incredibly satisfying to look at a finished painting after it has dried and see effects that formed on their own, which I could not have directed.

For me, the most poetic aspect of watercolor lies precisely in this balance. Its transparency, lightness, and responsiveness mirror the fragile and fleeting qualities of nature, allowing me to translate observation and emotion into something immediate yet enduring on paper.

**How do you choose the animals or scenes you portray? Do these subjects come from personal encounters, photographs, or imagination?**

In practice, I almost always rely on photographs to paint animals, because capturing them accurately on site is extremely challenging. Animals move too quickly to depict them from memory, and their gestures and proportions are difficult to translate without a reference. Only in broader scenes, such as landscapes with distant birds like seagulls, can I work directly outdoors.

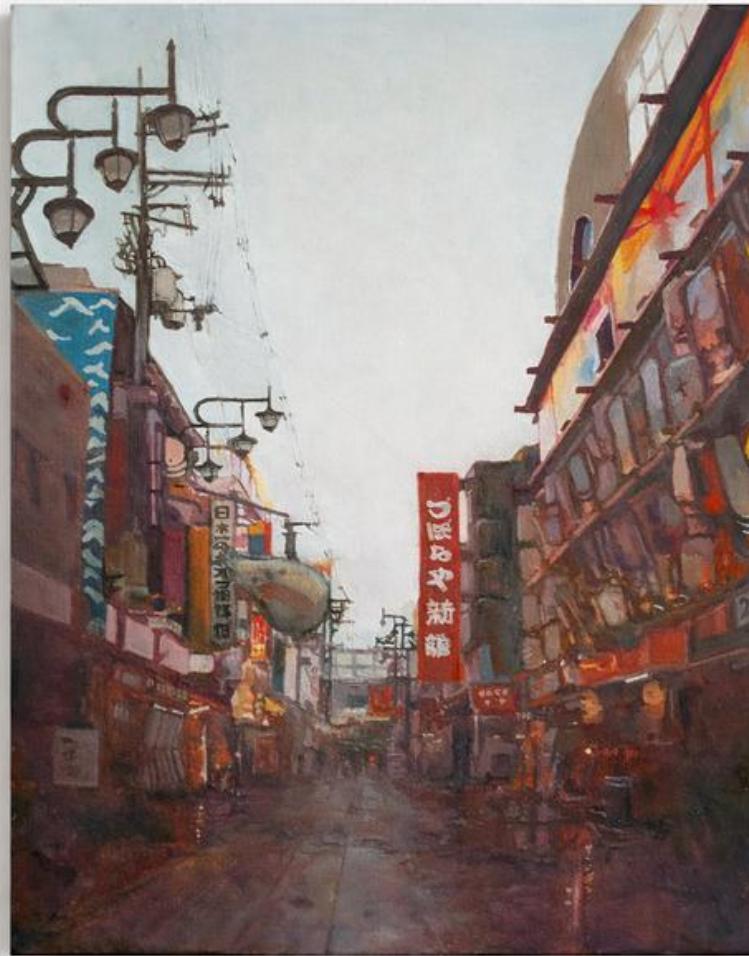
Photographs allow me to preserve the details, movement, and character of the animals, which I could not otherwise depict from imagination alone. Once I have this visual reference, I combine it with my memory, observations, and artistic interpretation to create a composition that conveys both the reality of the scene and the mood I want to express.

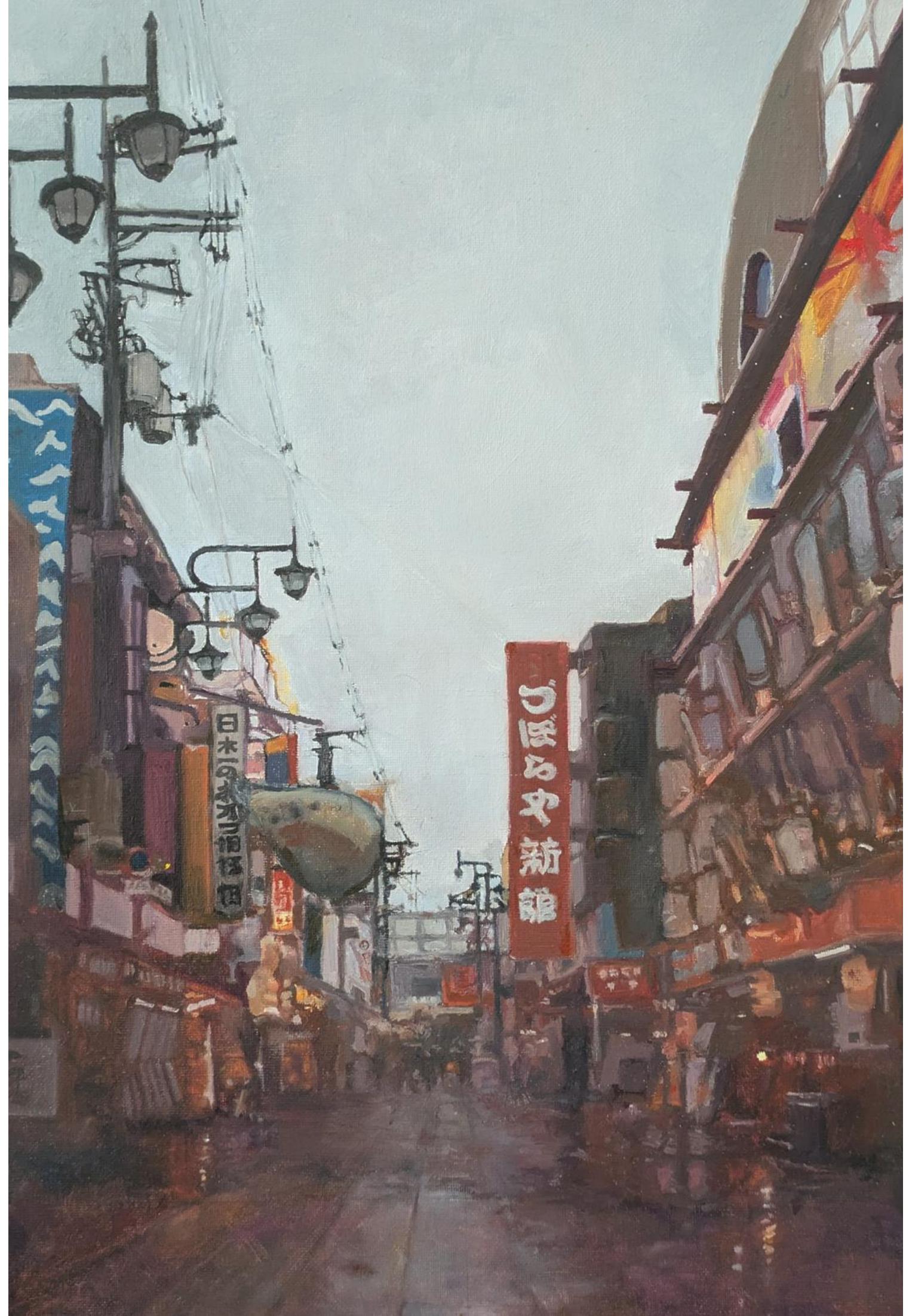
**Sze Tjin Yek** is a neurodivergent artist and designer whose practice is guided by intuition, aesthetic sensitivity, and spiritual inquiry. She holds honours degrees in Fine Arts and Industrial Design, and works across culinary practice, industrial fabrication, and the visual arts. This interdisciplinary approach enables the production of works that are formally diverse, materially experimental, and conceptually unified.

Her practice is driven by the ambition to create—and to create space for—objects that are intentionally superficial yet beautiful, challenging hierarchies of value and seriousness in contemporary art. These works aim to leave a lasting sensory and emotional impression, asserting beauty as a legitimate and enduring mode of meaning-making.

*Artist Statement*

An oil painting of Dotonbori, Osaka, a bustling district taken during a quiet time.





# — Interview

## Olesya Novikova



Yes, indeed, this series of works—like many others—is inspired by childhood sensations. The images that fill my works are often drawn from the present day, but the core idea was born precisely from the feelings and memories of a small child.

**You often work with ornamental rhythms and repeating patterns. How do these visual structures relate to memory, comfort, and the feeling of safety?**

The theme of ornaments and patterns feels close and deeply interesting to me—I see both aesthetics and meaning in it. The orderly arrangement of elements in an ornament always catches my eye; it is mesmerizing, like a beautiful dance frozen in time.

Many people probably have childhood memories connected to staring at wallpaper or a carpet hanging on the wall. You only need to evoke this, and suddenly “that very carpet,” with its fanciful labyrinths, can come back to life in your mind with surprising clarity—followed by other memories. When I was a child, I had a ritual: my mother reading books to me before bedtime. This daily act, like a repeating motif in an ornament, gave me a feeling of a cozy nest and calm. Mother, a book, a blanket—one of the formulas for a happy childhood.

Memory is a curious thing. It's amazing that the subjects of my paintings reach into the farthest corners of memory and bring the best, most positive

**Your project “Sundresses of Sleep” is deeply rooted in childhood memories. Can you recall the very first image or sensation that triggered this series?**





moments of life into reality.

**Textiles, coverings, and fabrics play a key conceptual role in this project. What does the idea of "cover" or "veil" personally symbolize for you today?**

"Pokrov" is an archaic word for a coverlet. Figuratively, it means protection and intercession. The theme of the pokrov—as a central concept of unconditional protection—is widely developed in Orthodox religion and art, especially in icon painting. In "Sarafans of Sleep" I focus on a personal perception of the pokrov: a mother's embrace and the feeling of home. For me, this word is a synonym for warmth—both physical and spiritual. This cannot be a matter of fashion or trend; I relate the theme of the pokrov to timeless values.

**Many of your characters - animals, plants, human figures - resemble fairy-tale protagonists. Do these figures emerge intuitively, or do they carry specific symbolic meanings?**

The characters are most often composite images. There's no point in redrawing anything specific. I'm interested in combining different elements, building compositions from them, and creating a new ornamental visual language. Sometimes I take a fragment of an ornament and twist the narrative around it, making it the main protagonist. Some shapes and outlines emerge intuitively. I almost never make sketches. When there's room for improvisation and spontaneity, the work becomes truly alive.

**You mention the influence of childhood rituals such as bedtime stories. How has storytelling shaped your artistic language and visual narratives?**

It all influences me directly. In my work, I often turn to the theme of the multifaceted nature of personality—to the aspects that shape it. Everything that surrounds a person from the very first days of life is imprinted deep in the subconscious and later reveals itself in every sphere of life. For example, one of my favorite books was *Tales of the Peoples of the World*. It featured incredible illustrations—an entire world of unheard-of creatures, ornaments, the characters' costumes, and curious, wondrous objects. Books are a person's most important companions.

**Your work balances abstraction and recognizable imagery. How do you decide when an image should remain abstract and when it should become figurative?**

I like to keep a balance by combining different genres. In an abstract image, for example, there is more space for the viewer. But a recognizable form also has to emerge so that the meaning isn't lost. It's a constant dialogue with the painting as I work on it. For me, knowing that the balance has been reached and the painting is finished is an inner sense of measure.

**Many viewers describe your works as meditative. What emotional or inner state do you hope the viewer experiences while engaging with your paintings?**

A state of nostalgia for something that has passed—something dear. I want to give the viewer an impulse to search and to travel into the forgotten corners of their own memory. In the context of the series "Sarafany sna" (Sundresses of Sleep), this is an address to one's inner child—its way of feeling, remembering, and perceiving the world. Childhood is something everyone has had.



## Mr. Deonta Head

Today, Deonta is celebrated for his signature style—a striking visual language that resonates with a loyal and diverse global following. His paintings do not merely occupy space; they command it, inviting viewers into a dialogue with his unique perspective on the world.

His trajectory is marked by milestones that mirror the scale of his ambition: his work has been chronicled in over thirty prestigious publications, projected across the luminous expanse of New York City's Times Square, and showcased in the cultural epicenters of Los Angeles and London. Yet, through this international acclaim, Deonta remains anchored in the belief that art is a shared human heartbeat, transcending borders and mediums alike.

### *Artist Statement*

"Too Fly" is an exploration of the ultimate status symbol: I examine the parallels between high fashion and the internal metamorphosis. Just as luxury is defined by rarity and exquisite craftsmanship, the journey toward one's highest self is a bespoke process—an intentional shedding of the ordinary to reveal the extraordinary.

Through this work, I invite the viewer to see evolution not just as a necessity, but as the most profound form of luxury—the ability to take flight in your own truth, adorned in your own light.



# — Interview

## Cezar Marcilio

**As an art teacher, how does teaching influence your own creative practice, and how does your personal art shape the way you teach your students?**

Teaching art is my profession, and it pushes me to draw and paint every single day in a careful and thoughtful way so that my students can clearly understand me. This habit helps me maintain my skills at a high level — one that I would likely never reach by creating art only for myself. Another challenge is the



Cezar Marcilio | Brazilian Woman | 2021

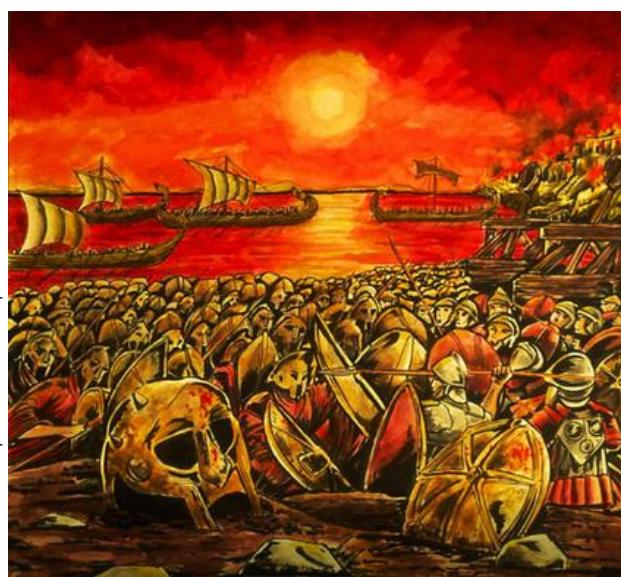
fact that my students and I come from different generations, which means my teaching method must strike a balance between my own artistic vision and the world they live in. I always teach art based on what they enjoy most, but at the same time, I guide them to stay focused and to pursue beauty in their work — whether they are drawing realistic portraits, manga, or comics. I have also learned a great deal from them.

**You experiment with a wide range of materials and techniques. What usually comes first in your process: the idea, the subject, or the medium?**

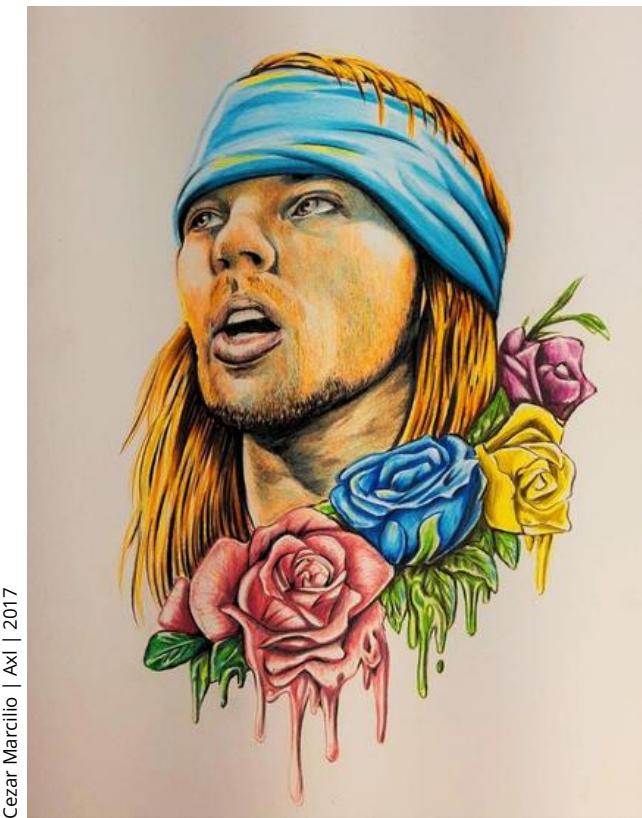
For me, the most important element — and the first one — is the idea. After that, aspects such as technique, subject, and medium come naturally to my mind.

**Many of your portraits feel deeply connected to identity, ancestry, and cultural memory. How important are these themes in your work?**

It is extremely important to know and preserve the origins of our city, our country, and even the place where we work. Walt Disney encouraged his employees to study the beginnings of the Walt Disney Company, and American schools guide their students to learn about the great achievements of the Founding Fathers. Those who value their origins seek to improve their present in order to build a better future.



Cezar Marcilio | Battle In Rome | 2017



Cezar Marcilio | Axl | 2017

Unfortunately, in my homeland, Brazil, most schools do not properly value the country's early history, such as the stories of the first explorers, the Jesuits, Indigenous peoples, and the Imperial Family. I feel a responsibility to use my art to bring attention to this forgotten part of our history.

**Living abroad in New Zealand and the United States seems to have been a turning point in your life. How did those years transform your artistic vision?**

Living outside Brazil, especially for someone like me who comes from a humble family, is an expensive and challenging undertaking. I was not an artist in those countries; I was a regular employee, doing various simple jobs. However, it was a great opportunity to face the fear of being far from family and friends, to meet people from different cultures, and to overcome many difficulties related to finding work and paying the bills. These experiences changed the way I see people and societies around the world. As a result, they also transformed the way I think about art, both as a visual artist and as an author.

**Nature appears as a recurring presence in your works — forests, butterflies, organic forms. What role does nature play in your visual storytelling?**

I like to include nature and some of its elements in my artworks to help people realize that these elements should always be part of our lives, especially for those

who live in cities. Many of us believe that nature exists only far away, in places like the Amazon or Africa, for example. However, we can care for nature close to us — whether in our backyard, a window box, or the nearest park to our home.

**You are also a published science fiction writer. Do you see a connection between your literary imagination and your visual art?**

Being an author involves observing society — and the technologies around it — and trying to predict what the future might look like. In addition, I always try to convey something meaningful through my stories. When I create conceptual art, the process of bringing my imagination to life is very similar. I enjoy encouraging people to reflect on different subjects when they observe my artworks.

**What advice would you give to young artists who are trying to find their own voice while learning technical skills?**

Although my profession has led me to learn many techniques, I advise young artists to specialize in just one technique and one theme at first. Over time, they will feel confident and comfortable with their choice, and then they can gradually explore other techniques and themes. Do not be afraid to be yourself, and invest your energy in what you truly enjoy most.



Cezar Marcilio | Rain Of Butterflies | 2025

My name is **Aleksandra Źmuda**. I was born in 2002 in Sucha Beskidzka. I graduated from the Fine Arts High School in Krakow. I am 4th year student of painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Katowice.

**Awards:**

Scholarship of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage 2021/2022,  
Józef Kluza Scholarship 2021/2022,

**Exhibitions:**

Exhibition of the "Stacja Kultura" project at the Press Center of the Polish Press Agency, Warsaw, 2023,

Curator of the "Stacja Kultura" exhibition at the Katowice train station, Katowice, 2023,

4th International Student Drawing Triennial, Rondo Sztuki, Katowice, 2023,

Group exhibition "Interferencje" Silesian Philharmonic named after Henryk Mikołaj Górecki in Katowice, 2024,

Individual exhibition at the headquarters of the Babia Góra National Park, Zawoja, 2025,

Group exhibition at the gallery at the Castle in Sucha Beskidzka, Sucha Beskidzka, 2025,

Group exhibition Jasiński&Friends, ToTuart gallery, Warsaw, 2025

Digital group exhibition on screens "Forma Nova", Golden Duck Gallery, SORS Gallery, CITYgalleryVIENNA and NYLO Apartments, Budapest, Vienna, New York, 2025

***Artist Statement***

The subject I'm addressing is incredibly close to my heart, stemming from spending time with horses as a child, learning about their behavior, observing, and teaching. Their effortless strength and causal power are what inspire me. Their spontaneity.

I'm constantly seeking new solutions and expressions in my painting. Expressions that can be achieved with line and stain. My inquisitiveness about the possibilities of paint and the medium allows me to transcend traditional oil painting representations. I feel constantly connected to them because of the disruption of painting traditions established in European culture and the introduction of calligraphic representations of shapes.

Aleksandra Źmuda | The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse | 2025





Aleksandra Źmuda | From the Cycle: Horses | 2025

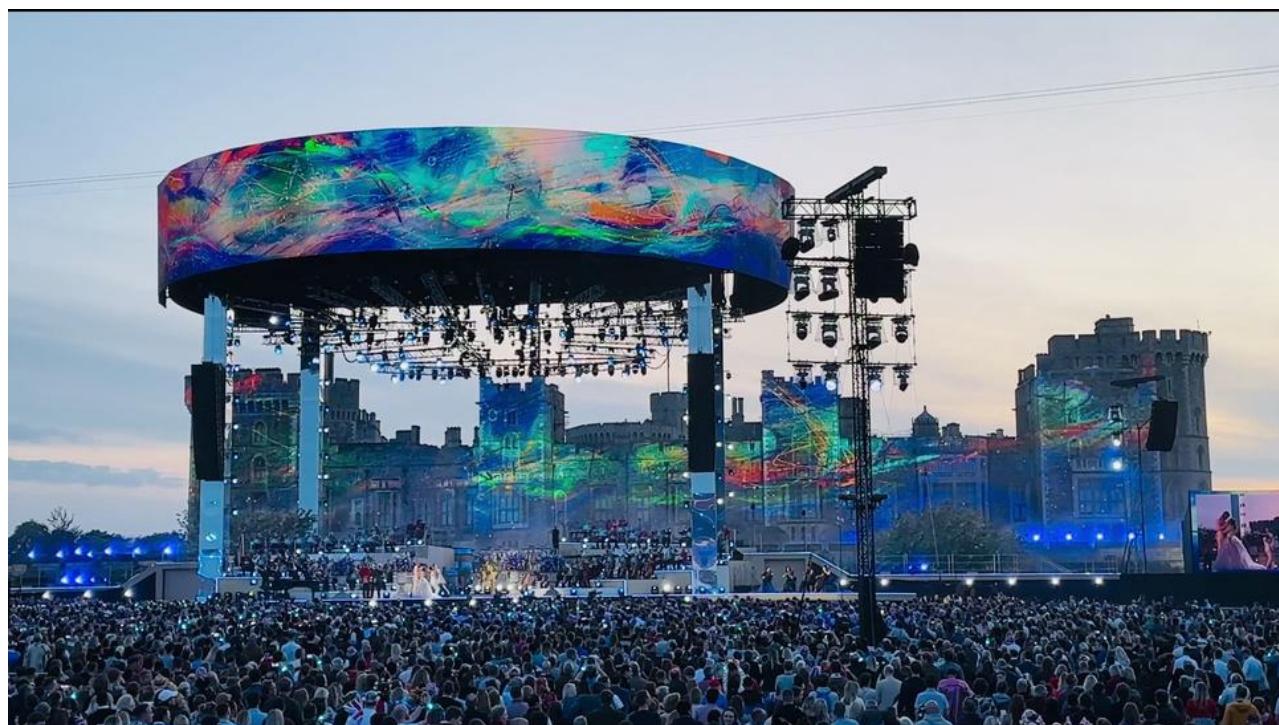
# Critical Review: Ashraf Malek

By Anna Gvozdeva

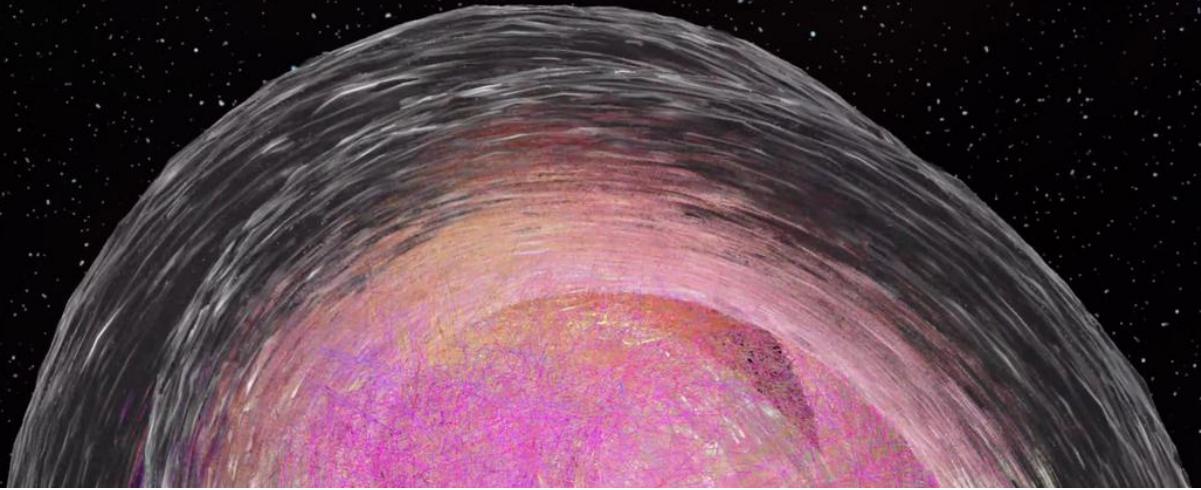
Ashraf Malek's multidisciplinary practice emerges from a rigorous architectural foundation, yet consistently resists architecture's traditional imperatives of stability, function, and closure. Trained within spatial systems and structural logic, Malek does not abandon architectural thinking; rather, he subjects it to continuous destabilization. Space, in his work, is never a neutral container but a contested and mutable construct—shaped by ideology, belief, memory, and technological mediation. His transition from architecture to an expanded artistic field marks not a rejection of structure, but a critical reprogramming of it.

A formative turning point in Malek's trajectory occurred following his relocation to Vancouver, where his engagement with the Vancouver Art Gallery exposed him to institutional frameworks and contemporary curatorial discourse. This experience catalyzed a shift toward a practice that operates across digital projection, painting, 3D modeling, moving image, coding, and filmography. Rather than treating these media as discrete disciplines, Malek employs them as interoperable systems, allowing concepts to migrate fluidly between formats. This hybridity reflects his core concern with meta-locality: spaces that exist simultaneously across physical, digital, and psychological registers.

Central to Malek's work is an investigation of space as a destabilized condition—one that resists fixed orientation and singular meaning. His speculative environments often evoke what might be described as hyperobjects: spatial entities that exceed direct comprehension, unfolding across multiple scales of time, perception, and technological mediation. These environments function as fragmented destinations, suspended between the real and the imagined. They are not places one arrives at, but states one passes through—constructed by the unconscious and activated through belief, ideology, and perception.



Until The Path Becomes | Digital Projection | 2023



Viscous Horizon | 2023

Digital distortion, glitches, and spatial deformation play a critical role in this process. In Malek's practice, disruption is not a failure of the system but its primary mode of inquiry. Glitches operate as epistemological tools, exposing the instability of representation and the limits of perceptual certainty. By embracing distortion, Malek foregrounds the artificiality of spatial coherence and challenges the authority of dominant visual and ideological structures. Space becomes elastic, fractured, and contingent—mirroring the cognitive and political conditions of contemporary life.

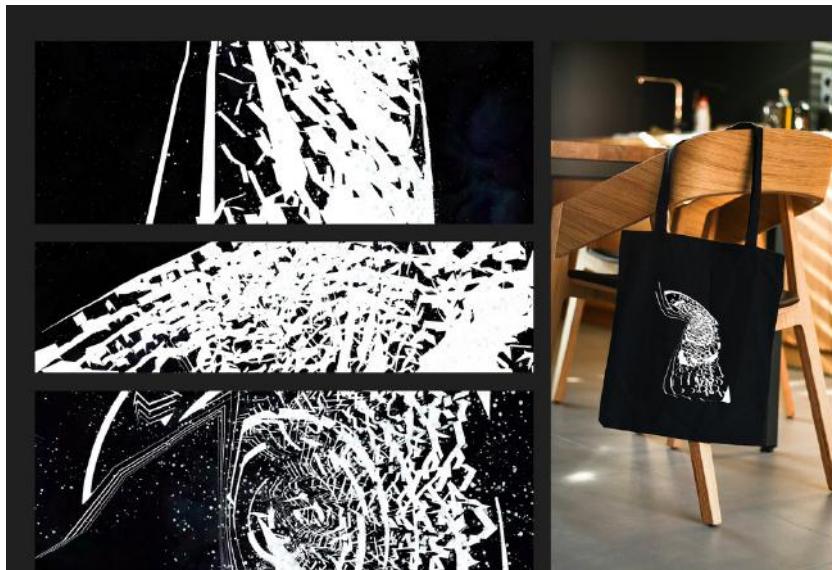
The figure of the avatar recurs throughout Malek's work as an abstract extension of the self. Detached from stable identity, the avatar functions as a proxy through which belief systems, faith, and ideological convictions are spatially encoded. These abstracted bodies and fragmented forms resist narrative closure, instead operating as carriers of affect and conviction. In this sense, Malek's work does not merely depict ideology; it spatializes it, rendering belief as an inhabitable condition rather than a fixed doctrine.

Malek's critical engagement with artificial intelligence and emerging technologies further complicates questions of agency and authorship. His work does not present technology as a neutral tool, nor does it adopt a purely dystopian stance. Instead, it interrogates how algorithmic systems reshape perception, decision-making, and spatial awareness. By situating AI within speculative environments, Malek highlights its capacity to reconfigure mental landscapes as much as physical ones, challenging viewers to reconsider their own positions within technologically mediated systems.

The presentation of Malek's work across major cultural platforms—including Tate Modern, the Coronation Concert of King Charles III, and Genesis Cinema—underscores its resonance within both institutional and public contexts. The Royal College of Art's selection of his work for a commemorative tote further situates Malek as a distinctive voice within contemporary practice, capable of translating complex spatial and conceptual inquiries into widely accessible yet critically rigorous forms.

Ultimately, Ashraf Malek's practice operates as an ongoing dismantling and reassembly of space itself. His work invites viewers to inhabit uncertainty, to navigate fractured environments where meaning is provisional and perception is continuously renegotiated. In an era defined by technological acceleration and ideological fragmentation, Malek constructs spaces not of resolution, but of critical suspension—spaces that demand awareness, reflection, and active participation.

Ethereal Constellations



**Daria Petrova**

27 years old

I work in the styles of symbolism, magical realism, and performance art.

Experience: commissioned paintings, preparing series of works, organizing private art events

*Artist Statement*

In the modern world, everyone faces internal crises and depressive episodes.

The main goal of this series of works is reflection, turning destructive emotions into symbolic images.

Daria Petrova | The Mermaid | 2023





Daria Petrova | What Paradise Looks Like | 2021

**HsinYing Lin** is a London-based artist. Her research focuses on the human body, poses, and hand gestures, exploring how the subjective inner world can be externalised. She juxtaposes objects and poses across different cultures, viewing their interactions as vibrant movements that invite conversation. She is also interested in the power of communication embedded in gestures, spoken language, and cultural signifiers. Her work often uses the human body as a material through which to explore how people connect with the world. Performance is one of her main approaches, and her practice spans multiple disciplines, including painting and moving image.

#### *Artist Statement*

My painting series explores the symbolism of objects. Using a subtle, fleshy colour palette, it creates a surreal world that is soft yet rich and vibrant. Fading and merging between different objects are common, as if in a dream. Organic shapes in the background communicate emotion and atmosphere. Natural fruits and flowers are used alongside human-made architecture. Hands and limbs appear repeatedly throughout the series, flowing and floating among the objects, with their gestures hinting at different states of mind. The separation of body parts suggests a sense of fragmentation and a broken state.

HsinYing Lin | River | 2021

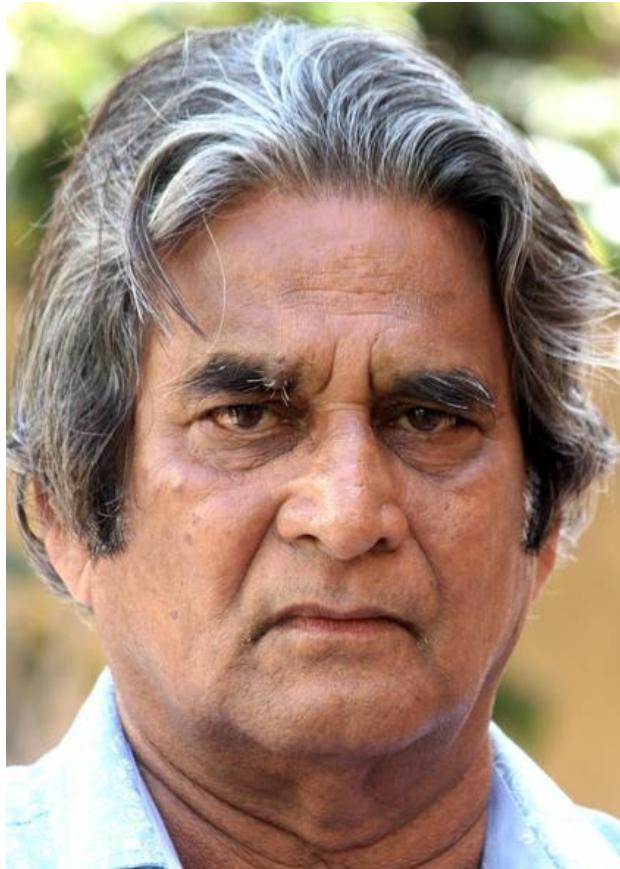




# — Interview

## Anand Manchiraju

**You have worked with painting, photography, and experimental techniques for many decades. How do you decide which medium best suits a particular idea or emotion?**



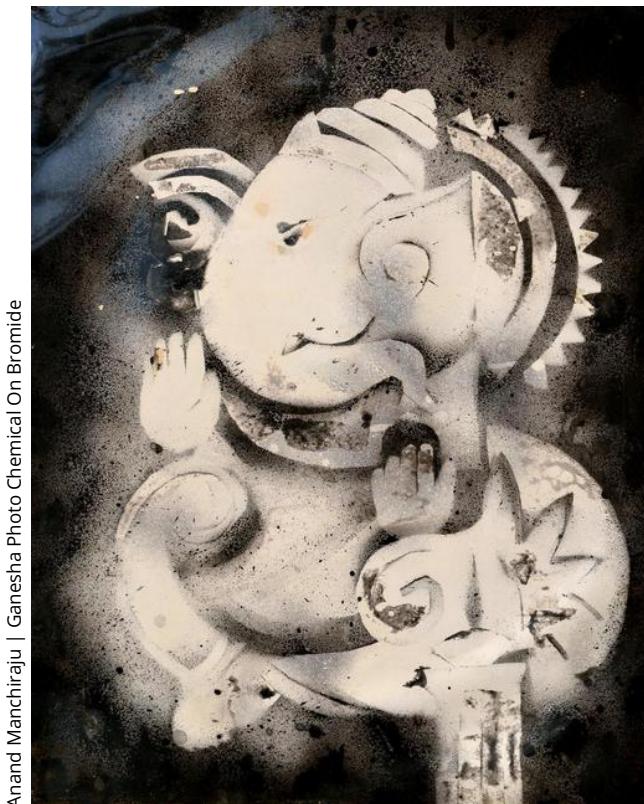
When an idea or emotion begins to take shape, I first observe the nature of my imagination—how it feels, moves, and demands to be expressed. Each concept carries its own rhythm and intensity, and I allow that inner vision to guide me toward the most suitable medium. If the emotion calls for depth, texture, and physical engagement, I naturally turn to painting, translating those feelings into expressive strokes and layered surfaces. Working with acrylics and oils, especially through palette knives, allows me to build textures that echo the energy, mood, and movement of the idea. For me, the medium is never chosen in advance; it reveals itself through the emotional and visual language of the imagination I am responding to.

**Your concept of “photo-paintings” using bromide paper, x-ray film, and photographic chemicals is quite unique. What initially led you to merge photography and painting in this way?**

My journey toward creating what I call “photo-paintings” began during my formal training in photography at J.N.T.U. While studying traditional photographic processes, I had an accidental yet transformative encounter: I noticed a piece of photo bromide paper lying on the floor with photographic chemicals spilled on it. The chemical reaction had created unexpected shapes and tonal variations. That moment sparked my curiosity and planted the seed



Anand Manchiraju | Waiting Photo Chemical On Bromide



Anand Manchiraju | Ganesha Photo Chemical On Bromide

for a new way of image-making.

Over the last decade and more, I have continuously experimented with photographic chemicals on fogged photo bromide paper—without using a camera, lens, or darkroom. All the work is carried out in room light. In this process, the bromide paper replaces the canvas, and photographic chemicals take the place of conventional artist colours. Because of this hybrid nature, I describe these works as “photo-paintings.” What fascinated me most was the unpredictability of the medium. Through extensive experimentation with both black-and-white and colour bromide papers, I gradually learned to control the image by adjusting the strength of the chemicals and the methods of application. The most challenging and exciting aspect of this process is that the drawing must be completed before the image reveals itself. Only after the chemical reaction is fully complete do I see what I have created, making the process both intuitive and meditative. This exploration naturally expanded into working with reprocessed X-ray films. Using acrylic paint, photographic chemicals, and scraped film surfaces, I began creating works that embrace transparency, layering, and ethereal textures. These materials—often discarded—gain new life through experimentation, allowing light, movement, and emotion to emerge in abstract forms. By merging photography and painting in this way, I move beyond traditional boundaries of both disciplines. The process allows me to engage deeply with chance, control, and transformation, creating works that are as much about discovery as they are about expression.

### **Having started painting in childhood under the influence of your father, how has that early exposure shaped your artistic philosophy today?**

My artistic journey began in childhood under the quiet yet profound influence of my father, who was a renowned artist. I spent countless hours observing him at work—watching his process, his discipline, and his relationship with the canvas. When he finished painting, I would pick up the same brushes and attempt to create my own images. Those early moments were not lessons in technique alone, but in seeing, patience, and respect for the act of creation. This early immersion shaped my belief that art is a way of life rather than a separate profession. From a young age, I followed my passion instinctively, which later led me to formally study photography from JNTU, Hyderabad. My education, combined with hands-on exposure, encouraged me to explore beyond conventional boundaries and remain open to experimentation.

Throughout my career—including my time as an Artist Executive at IDPL, Rishikesh—I remained deeply connected to creative practice. Whether experimenting with photographic chemicals on bromide paper, painting on reprocessed X-ray films, or creating landscapes and abstract compositions, I have always embraced curiosity and risk as essential parts of my philosophy.

Today, my artistic approach is rooted in that early exposure: a belief in learning through observation, honoring tradition while constantly experimenting, and allowing passion to guide the process. I consider



Anand Manchiraju | Blue Bird | 2022

myself fortunate to have discovered my calling early in life—and even more fortunate to have transformed that lifelong passion into my profession.

**Your artworks often feel process-driven rather than result-oriented. How important is experimentation and unpredictability in your creative practice?**

Experimentation and unpredictability are central to my creative practice. I believe that every artist draws inspiration from a different source—some from wildlife, others from pure imagination. For me, inspiration comes from the life unfolding around me. It may be the serenity of the Himalayan ranges and the spiritual flow of the holy Ganges, or the dynamic energy of cityscapes like the Chicago skyline and the constant urban hustle.

Once an idea is conceived from these experiences, the process becomes an open exploration rather than a fixed plan. I engage with a wide range of tools—palette knives, coconut leaves, broomsticks—and work across mediums such as acrylics and oils, allowing each material to influence the direction of the artwork. Color, texture, and gesture evolve organically as I respond to what the surface reveals at each stage. Unpredictability plays an essential role in this journey. I move back and forth with the work, adjusting, layering, and reimagining until the image on the canvas aligns with the vision in my mind. The process often stretches across days and nights, beginning with ideas conceived at dawn and unfolding gradually through sustained engagement.

For me, the final result is meaningful only because of the process that leads to it. The act of experimentation keeps the work alive, authentic, and deeply connected to my lived experiences—making the creative journey as important as the finished artwork itself.

**You have produced thousands of artworks over your career. How do you personally define growth or evolution as an artist after so many years of**



Anand Manchiraju | Us Ballet | 2010

**practice?**

After producing thousands of artworks over many years, I define growth as the ability to remain responsive—both to inspiration and to the world around me. There are countless subjects between the earth and the sky, and my evolution as an artist lies in my openness to explore them as they reveal themselves at different moments in time.

I choose my subjects intuitively, guided by the inspiration I feel at the beginning of each creative process. That inspiration is never fixed; it changes with my experiences, surroundings, and emotional state. At the same time, I remain aware of the broader context in which art exists—market trends, collector interests, and the cultural climate of a particular period. Engaging with these realities does not restrict my creativity; instead, it challenges me to adapt, reinterpret, and communicate more effectively through my work.

For me, artistic growth is not about repeating a signature style endlessly, but about evolving with time—experimenting with new themes, materials, and approaches while staying true to my core sensibility. Even after decades of practice, the desire to explore, respond, and reinvent keeps my practice alive and continually moving forward.

**Your statement speaks about freedom—freedom to create and to express. Do you feel this freedom has expanded or changed with time?**

Yes, my sense of freedom has both expanded and deepened with time. When I reflect on my long



Anand Manchiraju | Crows Crows And Crows | 2025



association with art, I realize that the creative process itself has always been as intriguing and rewarding to me as the final outcome. From the very beginning, there was a strong inner urge to create—one that persisted even during moments when others attempted to dissuade me from this path.

Over the years, this internal drive has shaped my understanding of freedom in art. It taught me to value exploration, patience, and openness to uncertainty. Rather than being focused solely on results, I learned to trust the journey—to allow ideas to evolve naturally and to embrace experimentation without fear of failure.

Today, freedom in my practice is not just about choosing subjects or mediums; it is about the ability to express myself honestly and intuitively. With time and experience, that freedom has grown into a deeper confidence—one that allows me to create without external pressure and to remain true to my inner voice. This ongoing creative and explorative journey continues to define my relationship with art as an act of personal expression and liberation.

#### **How do spirituality and daily life coexist in your work, and where do you find the balance between the two?**

In my work, spirituality and daily life are deeply

interconnected rather than separate paths. Spirituality plays an essential role in my creative practice because it strengthens focus, willpower, and dedication—qualities that are vital for sustained artistic work. When practiced regularly, it becomes a grounding force that naturally flows into the process of creating art. At the same time, daily life provides the situations in which this spiritual grounding is tested and expressed. Spirituality keeps me motivated during challenging periods and helps me remain optimistic in moments of uncertainty. It allows me to respond creatively rather than feel limited by circumstances. A clear example of this balance emerged during the COVID period. When I was unable to access conventional art materials such as canvas, I adapted to the situation instead of stopping my practice. Drawing on inner resilience and creative clarity, I began painting on daily newspapers and developed an entire series of works, including the Ballet Dance series. This experience reinforced my belief that spirituality nurtures flexibility and acceptance, while daily life offers opportunities to translate those values into action.

For me, balance is found when spiritual discipline supports creative resilience, and everyday realities become catalysts for artistic expression. Together, they allow my work to remain both grounded and transcendent.

**Katja Klassen**, 39 years old

Cologne, Germany

Katja was born in Syktyvkar, in the northern region of Russia.

She has always been passionate about photography, but in the past two years this interest has intensified significantly. In spring 2024, Katja resigned from her job in the financial sector to devote herself entirely to her true passion — photography.

Her work has been published in magazines such as Jute Magazine, Figgi Magazine, Edith Magazine, Marika Magazine, Quadro Magazine, and many others.

In October 2023, she presented her first photography project, "Motherhood from a Different Perspective," at the group exhibition Supernova, organized by Katharina Mikhrin in Cologne.

In March 2024, her project "Our Heritage: Waste" received significant attention at a photography exhibition in Aachen. One of the works was selected among the Top 40 of the SPC Awards in Cologne in October 2024 and was even sold there.

In September 2024, Katja showcased her series "Krav Maga Girls" at the city gallery SUPERRAUM in Dortmund as part of the extended Supernova exhibition.

In January 2025, she presented her new project "Alone with Oneself" again at SUPERRAUM.

In April 2025, works from "Our Heritage: Waste" were shown to an international audience at the Art Expo New York, and from July 11 to 16, 2025, they were exhibited at the Boomer Gallery in London.

Since October 2025, two photographs from the project "Our Heritage: Waste" have been included in the digital UNESCO Mondiacult Library, where they are available for viewing.

From October 5 to 31, 2025, a photograph from the project "Alone with Oneself" was part of the group exhibition "Ethereal" at the Glasgow Gallery of Photography in Scotland.

From October 25 to November 14, photographs from the project "Our Heritage: Waste" were exhibited at the district office of the City of Cologne and presented to a wide local audience as part of the art funding project "Kalktopia."

***Artist Statement***

This photo project explores the perception of the world through the eyes of an 11-year-old boy in his neighborhood. The images reveal his dreams, hopes, and his curious view of the future—a future whose reality he does not yet know, but which will inevitably come his way.

At the heart of the project lies the question of what kind of world we, as today's generation, will leave to the children of tomorrow. What opportunities do we offer them? What dangers exist? And how long will it take before a child begins to understand how complex, contradictory, and often disappointing this world can be?

Through the boy's innocent perspective, the photographs make visible the wide gap between childlike hope and social reality. They are meant to encourage reflection on our responsibility as adults: What have we done so far to make the future safer, more peaceful, and more livable for children and young people? And what have we—consciously or unconsciously—failed to do?

The project sees itself as a visual invitation to self-reflection. It not only presents a child's point of view but also holds up a mirror to us: it raises the question of the world we are shaping and the future we enable—or deny.

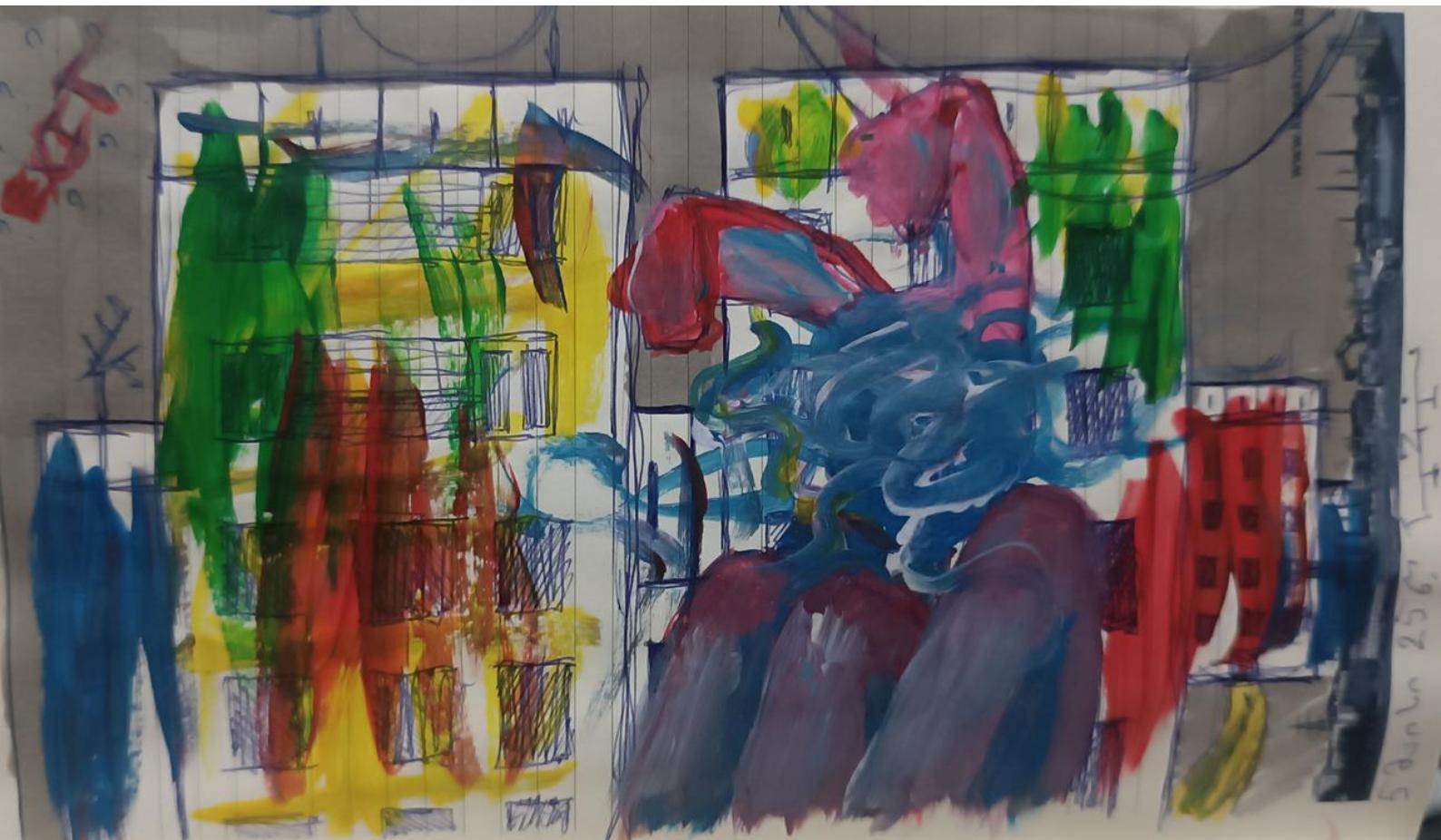




I'm **Lizi Natsvaladze**, 20 years old. I'm from Georgia and study at The University of Georgia on English Philology course.

### *Artist Statement*

My drawings are regarding how one feels in their own skin and in society in general, alongside with existential crisis.



Gargoyle  
dinner



## Ngoc Thien Anh Vu

I am a Vietnamese illustrator and painter currently based between the United States and Vietnam. I work with oil painting and digital media, focusing on themes of transformation, memory, and quiet emotional states. My practice is shaped by my experiences as a student and freelance artist, with influences from graphic design and illustration. I have participated in several exhibitions, most recently the international juried group exhibition In Collaboration in Rochester, NY.

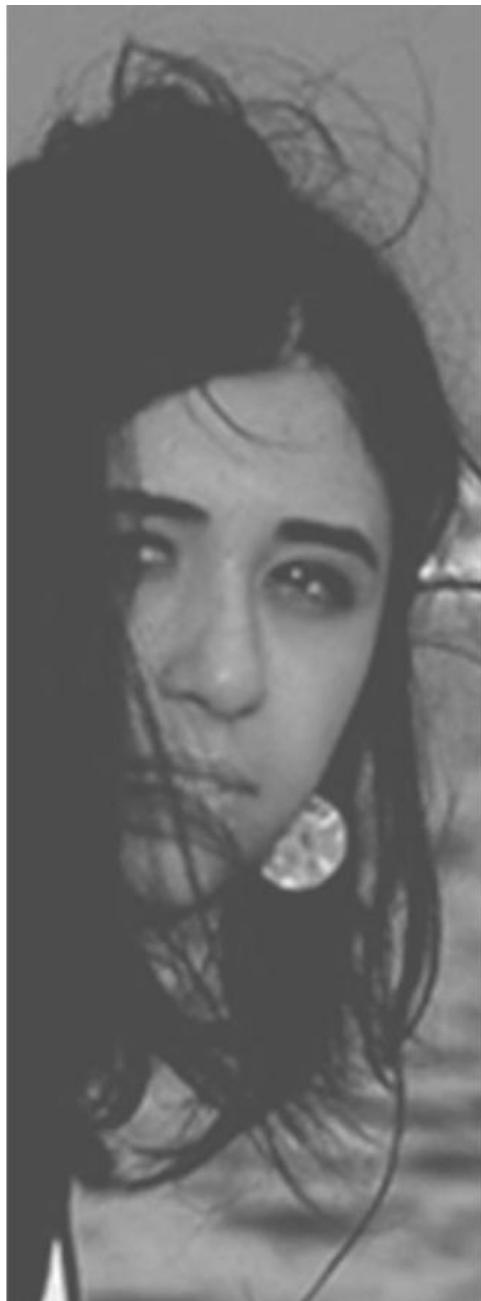
### *Artist Statement*

The work explores the fragile space between protection and restraint as a tender inner self begins to form. The cocoon-like shell acts as a parent figure, a shelter and a limit, keeping her safe while also slowing her forward motion. By revealing this tension, the piece invites empathy toward the complicated experiences of childhood and transformation. The deep red background becomes the heat of change, the painful pressure that shapes a new identity. Soft, drifting light passes over her like uncertain memories or half-seen futures, suggesting a path felt more than clearly seen. This is a moment of becoming: the self stretching, straining, and slowly cracking open toward who she is meant to be.



# — Interview

## Zeynep Karaboğa



**Your works often feel like records of movement rather than fixed images. How do you understand the idea of time in your painting process?**



Zeynep Karaboğa | Resim

Yes, my works are snapshots of a brief moment. It's like recording time with your instantaneous movements. The transformation of internal impulses into gestural expression in the moment, that is, the action itself, is the image formed on the surface. Because this practice occurs so quickly, it creates a sensation beyond the traditional perception of temporal time.

**You work with pen, ink, watercolor, acrylic, and calligraphic gestures. How do these materials influence the emotional rhythm of your compositions?**

I can create shapes using these materials with an automatic approach and an experimental attitude, along with a free brush style. Specifically, I allow the brush and ink to create their own shapes on the paper with their own fluidity, only guiding the rhythm of the material. Therefore, the rhythm I give depending on the material is actually an internal



foresight and expression. Because I work very quickly, I use water-based materials (acrylic, watercolor, ink); water is both calming and dynamic, naturally contains contrast, which can lead the viewer to a natural flow of emotion.

**Having completed both a master's degree and a PhD in painting, how has academic research shaped - or challenged - your intuitive practice?**

During my academic research process, I had the opportunity to meet many artists and concepts who had a place in art history and worked experimentally with similar feelings to me. I particularly researched Abstract Calligraphy (providing emotional communication in abstract form) conceptually. In this context, I discovered the similarity of the shapes and forms created with my previous works. The fact that the forms appearing on the surface in these works are not expected to mean anything or contain a symbolic meaning is very similar to the process of formation of my application works. This discovery also guided me in examining the methods of Far Eastern calligraphy.

**Many of your works suggest a dialogue between control and spontaneity. How do you negotiate this balance while working?**

The stains in my paintings can make feel different meanings depending on the viewer's personal perception. This situation can also be considered as a physically controlled energy management that is 'done without thinking', 'outside of thought'. In fact, the basis of managing this controlled energy is possible by ensuring cooperation between the hand, heart and brain. The essence of my work is actually this phenomenon.

**Calligraphy seems to play an important role in your visual language. Is this influence, more cultural, spiritual, or purely formal for you?**

Calligraphy is known as the art of beautiful writing, I think writing and painting are instinctively similar. Calligraphic line is found in the works of many artists, especially those who produce informal works. Ink, which is identified with calligraphy (Calligraphy Art), is also a plastic element in expressing the inner world of artists. It is a material that allows abstraction and improvisation and strengthens expression in action painting. However, I did not act with any

thought about calligraphy while creating my works. My works were created spontaneously, that is, by freeing the unconscious, without boundaries and without the need for a focal point. This situation can be thought of as visual experiences in which I express the existence of possibilities and randomness through material.

**Your abstract works often evoke landscapes, figures, or architectural forms without depicting them directly. Do you begin with an image in mind, or does it emerge during the process?**

My works are not created with any view in mind, but the natural views that have taken place in my subconscious (rocks, sea, grass, wind, clouds, dust, the natural environment I live in, social environment, journeys, colors, sounds, impressions, etc.) and atmospheric events can be considered as factors in the formation of my paintings. My improvisational approach to the creation of my works is similar in all my paintings. My paintings are visual creations that reflect my personal and emotional experiences. My works, which are created without any intuition or rules, can be evaluated completely from a feeling and emotional perspective.

**How do you see the relationship between Eastern and Western painting traditions reflected in your current practice?**

The formation and development of my current painting practice is the result of many years of work, a strong inner strength and breadth of feeling. As a painter who was introduced to Western art history and painting techniques at the beginning of my education process, as the process progressed, I learned that the Far East has a much longer history in painting. In fact, I discovered the interest in Eastern arts of many painters who made their names in history in the West. Along with this discovery, I also wrote a thesis about how artists with close feelings who lived in distant geographies communicated with the development of transportation and communication, and their common ideas, works and exhibitions. As someone who was born and raised in a city that combines East and West, the effects of traditions on our current life and thoughts are undeniable. But no matter what art form you are dealing with, your geographical location, or the time period you have lived in, it is your inner experiences and soul that guide you.



**Diana Casmiro** was born on December 13, 1984, in Susa, in the province of Turin. After training in drawing and painting, in later years she turned her attention to current issues such as environmental and social issues, expressing herself through more conceptual works, which currently constitute her artistic vein. In this field, she has received numerous awards, participating in group exhibitions including biennials, solo shows (such as at Venaria Reale in 2024), and artist residencies (with the patronage of the Michelangelo Pistoletto Foundation). Finally, noteworthy is her selection and presence in the 2024 Atlas of Contemporary Art, directed by Daniele Radini Tedeschi and curated by Stefania Pieralice, where she appears on a full-page spread alongside artists such as Carlo Carrà and Felice Casorati.

Diana Casmiro | Target | 2025



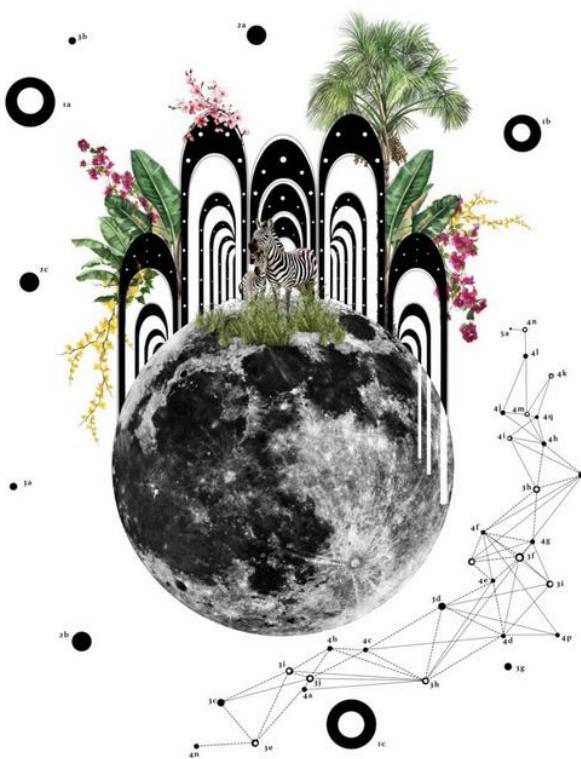


Diana Casmiro | Globes | 2022

# — Interview

## NEFILAND by Angie Vanezi

**Your works often depict miniature cosmic worlds where nature and the universe merge. How did this visual language first emerge in your practice?**



This visual language emerged from an ongoing curiosity about scale and coexistence. I was always drawn to both vast cosmic imagery and intimate natural details, and over time I began compressing these extremes into contained worlds. Bringing galaxies, landscapes, and organic forms into a single frame allowed me to imagine environments where the infinite and the earthly collapse into one another. These miniature worlds became a way to explore how imagined futures and environmental aftermaths might coexist, not as opposites, but as interdependent realities.

**You describe your interest in the collision between utopia and dystopia. How do you consciously balance beauty and unease within a single composition?**

I'm interested in the tension that exists when something feels seductive yet unstable. Visually, this often means pairing harmonious geometry and luminous cosmic elements with signs of fragmentation, erosion, or imbalance. Beauty becomes the entry point, it draws the viewer in, while subtle disruptions introduce unease. I try not to resolve that tension; instead, I let both states coexist, reflecting how utopian ideals often carry dystopian consequences within them.

**Geometry plays a key role in your work, both visually and conceptually. What does geometry represent for you beyond its formal structure?**

Beyond its formal clarity, geometry represents a kind of universal language. It's a system that exists in both natural growth patterns and human-made structures, bridging the organic and the constructed. Conceptually,



geometry helps me hold together fragments of imagined futures and altered environments. It becomes a stabilizing force, an underlying order within worlds that are otherwise shaped by chaos, decay, and transformation.

**With a background in architecture and academia, how has this training shaped the way you construct your imagined worlds?**

My architectural and academic background has deeply influenced how I think about space, structure, and narrative. I approach each work almost like a constructed environment rather than a flat image, considering how elements relate spatially and conceptually. This training also instilled an attention to systems, how parts support or destabilize one another, which translates into the layered, often speculative worlds I create.

**Nature in your work appears powerful and resilient rather than fragile. How does this perspective influence the narratives you build?**

I see nature not as a passive victim, but as an active, enduring force. Even in damaged or altered environments, nature adapts and continues to sustain life. This perspective shifts my narratives away from pure loss and toward resilience. The worlds I build often reflect cycles of collapse and regeneration, suggesting that while human systems may fail, nature persists in unexpected and transformative ways.

**You work across both 2D collages and 3D dioramas. How do these formats differ in terms of storytelling and viewer experience?**

The 2D collages function more like portals, they offer a framed glimpse into an imagined world, encouraging contemplation and interpretation from a distance. The 3D dioramas, on the other hand, are more immersive and physical. They invite the viewer to move around them, to experience shifts in scale and perspective. Each format tells stories differently, but both are concerned with constructing layered realities that unfold over time.

**Can you walk us through your creative process, from the initial idea to the final visual outcome?**

The process usually begins with a conceptual tension, an idea about coexistence, collapse, or resilience. From there, I gather visual fragments: cosmic imagery, natural forms, and geometric structures. I experiment intuitively, allowing forms to suggest relationships and narratives as they come together. Whether working in 2D or 3D, the final stage is about balance, ensuring that wonder and decay, order and chaos, are held in equilibrium within the world I've constructed.



**Mahbube Parnian** is an Iranian interdisciplinary artist based in Michigan whose work explores identity, memory, and embodied experience through drawing, textiles, sculpture, and mixed media practices. She creates immersive, sensory environments that investigate the tension between fragility and resilience. Her practice incorporates layered mark-making, stitched surfaces, eco-printed textiles, and a dialogue between strong materials (such as metal and plaster) and fragile elements (such as mirrors, dried plants, and ceramics). These material contrasts reflect both personal and collective narratives. Engaging themes of diaspora, cultural memory, and the body's relationship to material and space, Parnian uses collaborative and relational processes to invite audiences into tactile and contemplative encounters that connect across histories and experiences.

*Artist Statement*

My artistic practice examines the complex interplay between resilience and fragility, revealing the traces of lived experience through tactile, embodied processes. Working with diverse materials, I create immersive installations that hold personal memory, collective histories, identity, and the spirit of womanhood. Centered on questions of visibility, I use women's bodies as sites of both vulnerability and strength.

In my practice, material becomes a record of gesture, presence, and time (an archive through which memory and human experience endure). I engage with hand-driven processes that activate the body and senses, shaping intimate narratives and sensory encounters.

Through drawing, stitching, dyeing, and layered media, I explore visibility and concealment and the relational bonds between personal and collective histories.

This ongoing practice transforms lived experience into resonant, shared encounters, offering viewers a space to reflect upon and witness the enduring rhythms of resilience and resistance.

Mahbube Parnian | Presence | 2025





# Paris Archive by Yilun Liu

Critical Review by Anna Gvozdeva

In Paris Archive (2025), Yilun Liu interrogates the mechanics of contemporary travel, memory, and authorship through a subtle yet incisive interplay between digital simulation and physical presence. Rooted in her interdisciplinary practice - bridging architecture, performance, and embodied spatial inquiry - the project exposes how digital interfaces do not merely mediate experience but actively construct belief, intimacy, and trust.

The work originates as a digital performance staged entirely within Google Street View, where Liu fabricated an imagined journey to Paris. Through algorithmically warped imagery, discontinuous perspectives, and temporal glitches inherent to the platform, she generated a series of "travel logs" disseminated via social media. These posts circulated as plausible documentation of a trip that never occurred. Viewers encountered the work unevenly: some accepted the journey as authentic, while others slowly recognized fractures in spatial logic and visual continuity. This oscillation between belief and suspicion is not incidental - it is the conceptual engine of the project.

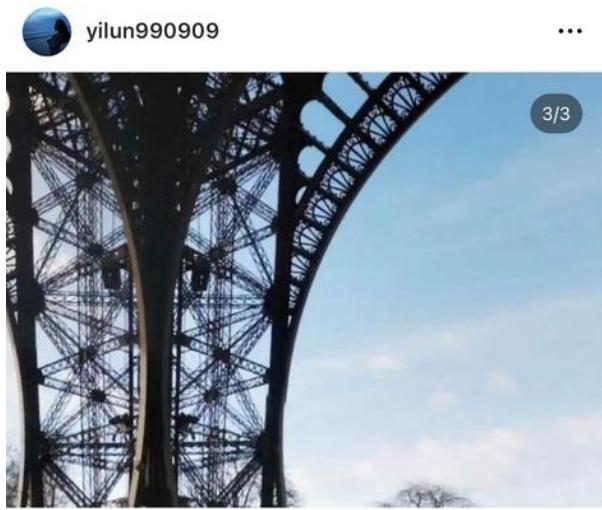


Liu's choice of Google Street View is critical. As a tool designed for navigation and verification, it carries an implicit authority rooted in cartographic precision and technological neutrality. Yet Paris Archive reveals this authority to be fragile. The distorted bodies, stretched architecture, and mismatched temporal fragments expose how digital infrastructures flatten lived experience into manipulable data. In this sense, Liu's work resonates with contemporary critiques of post-photographic truth, where images no longer function as evidence but as performative propositions.

The exhibition version extends the digital performance into physical space through a restrained yet effective material strategy. Images from the online journey are printed and arranged across three laminated sheets, layered to produce subtle shifts in depth and alignment. As the viewer moves, images partially obscure and reveal one another, echoing the parallax effect of Street View navigation. This translation from screen to object does not attempt to "fix" the digital instability; instead, it preserves and amplifies it. The laminated surfaces act as membranes—neither fully transparent nor opaque - mirroring the ambiguity between presence and projection that defines the project.

Importantly, Liu avoids spectacle. The scale is intimate, the gestures precise. Rather than overwhelming the viewer with technological excess, Paris Archive invites close looking and slow recognition. This restraint reflects Liu's architectural sensitivity to spatial sequencing and bodily orientation. The viewer does not encounter the work as a static image but as a durational experience, activated through movement, proximity, and perceptual adjustment.

The project's engagement with social media further complicates its reading. By allowing the fabricated journey to circulate organically among friends and strangers, Liu implicates the audience as unwitting participants. The work unfolds not only in the gallery but within networks of sharing, liking, and commenting - spaces where authenticity is often assumed rather than examined. In this context, Paris Archive functions as a quiet critique of how digital travel imagery constructs aspirational identities and collective fantasies, often detached from physical experience.



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Ultimately, Paris Archive is less about Paris than about the conditions under which place is imagined today. Liu does not position herself as a deceiver but as a choreographer of perception, exposing how easily trust is produced through familiar visual languages. The work asks pointed questions: What does it mean to "be" somewhere in an era of remote access? How do digital tools reconfigure memory before it is even formed? And where does authorship reside when experience is assembled from pre-existing data?



Through its elegant synthesis of performance, spatial design, and material translation, *Paris Archive* affirms Yilun Liu's position as an artist attuned to the subtle politics of perception. The project lingers not as a revelation but as a destabilization - an invitation to reconsider how we navigate, remember, and believe in the spaces we never quite inhabit.

## Weird Sumbuk

I was born on Eglin Air Force Base in 1953. Dad was transferred so often wanderlust captivated my imagination at an early age. However, each duty station had another teacher urging me to stand before class; reluctant to be introduced as the new target! During the sixth grade introduction I realized Moms' insistence on dwelling among civilians provided experiencing different regional life styles. Kids my age out-drawing black-hatted outlaws; capturing enemy soldiers; hitting ninth inning home runs, I travel our back yard poking holes in the ground with a stick to plant imaginary apple seeds. My hero Johnny would be proud...Mom? Her Beauty, Kentucky twang yet echoes, 'Boy! You are one weird sumbuck!'

The moment before graduation in 1971 from FMHS, 'I'm going to be a poet' slipped out of my head to Her ear, the anticipated tirade explosion only a fizzle. 'Boy, I give you a beginning and an ending; sure hope you can fill in the middle!' The middle? Drifting through a decade supposedly gathering scenes worthy of creating word images, though experiencing scenes wishing for a camera. Purchased a used Nikon EM with two lenses in 1983. I heard a call from deep and have carried a camera with me since. My wife at times complained about the camera taken a seat from one of our six kids. Other times she jokingly(?) said 'your hands shake more unzipping the camera bag than my dress!'

My photography education consists of reading books. Studying real photographers images; paying attention to television scenes; and exposing many rolls of film, which admittedly provided many 'what not to do' moments! I confess, no assignments; dead lines; or clients to please prompted any of my images. Scenes provided to my eye, were my focus.

In 2001 a co-worker loaned me his digital Nikon, which regulated my film Nikons to be displayed on shelves. Prior to this, my outlook was 'Digital isn't real photography!'

### *Project Statement*

Wyoming offers many scenes to photographers.





## Salim Tairov (slimowsky)

Salim - AI & 3D Creative Director

As a Creative Director specializing in Generative AI, 3D, and Design, I seamlessly blend technology with storytelling to create cutting-edge visuals that captivate and inspire. With a decade of commercial experience, I've worked with global brands like Toyota Germany, TÜV Nord, Telekom, Kia Motors, Martini and Pepsi, delivering high-impact visual experiences across industries. Based in Germany, my expertise spans AI-driven creativity, motion design, immersive environments, and real-time visualization. I push creative boundaries, transforming concepts into innovative digital experiences that shape the future of visual storytelling.

### *Project Statement*

#### *Neo-Mythos:*

**The Gods We Have Become** In an age where humanity no longer waits for evolution but engineers its own transcendence, we find ourselves at the threshold of something greater—and perhaps stranger—than we ever imagined. We are no longer bound by flesh alone; we are forging new identities, rewriting the mythologies of self with metal, glass, and circuitry. This is not the future—it is the now, an era where divinity is no longer granted but built, adorned, and claimed.

These beings are echoes of our own metamorphosis, reflections of a world where beauty and terror intertwine, where the sacred and the synthetic merge. They challenge our deepest fears and desires: the longing to be more than human and the dread of what we might lose in the process. Are we ascending, or are we vanishing into something unrecognizable? The answer lies in the gaze of our own creations.





**Marcos and Maikon dos Santos (Santos Brothers)**

They were born on September 30, 1995, in Brazil, in Matupá, a small inland city in the state of Mato Grosso. Always self-taught, they challenge themselves to produce short films, digital collages, comics, and short stories. They have participated in the fantastic and horror film festivals Boca do Inferno and Guarufantástico; in the Off Flip award anthologies, organized by the Festa Literária Internacional de Paraty; in The Latin American Fine Art Competition, organized by Agora Gallery; and they have published the suspense comic book "Coisas Estranhas Acontecem à Noite" (Publisher Viseu) and the poetry book "Espero Que No Paraíso as Coisas Estejam Melhores" (Publisher Ases da Literatura).

*Artist Statement*

The collection investigates the social construction of affect, violence, and identity through reproduced and manipulated images: archival photographs, icons of mass culture, and anonymous figures are fragmented, revealing the instability of what we call the "contemporary subject." The works explore the tension between intimacy and spectacle, pointing out how private emotions—fear, melancholy, desire, loneliness—are mediated by normalized visual regimes, juxtaposing the beautiful, the violent, and the banal. A political stance is taken by treating the normalization of emotional and social collapse as a visual spectacle. The viewer is called upon to recognize not the other, but the logic that produces them. Between simulation and trauma, the collection affirms that the real no longer disappears: it is continuously reenacted in image consumption.



Marcos and Maikon dos Santos (Santos Brothers) | Everything Is Fine, Just as It Always Has Been | 2021



Marcos and Maikon dos Santos (Santos Brothers) | So Alone in This Overcrowded World | 2021

**Seohyun Cho** (b. South Korea) is a New York-based artist currently residing and working in Manhattan. She is completing her BFA in Fine Arts at the School of Visual Arts and will graduate in May 2026. Cho's practice explores fragmented perception, provisional sense, and the construction of associative experience through sculpture. Her work has been exhibited in Autumn on Orchard at Van Der Plas Gallery in New York (2025) and in Support/Surface Redux at SVA Flatiron Gallery (2024). Cho's sculptures operate at the intersection of material accident and cognitive association, inviting viewers to reflect on how meaning is formed in conditions of uncertainty and overload.

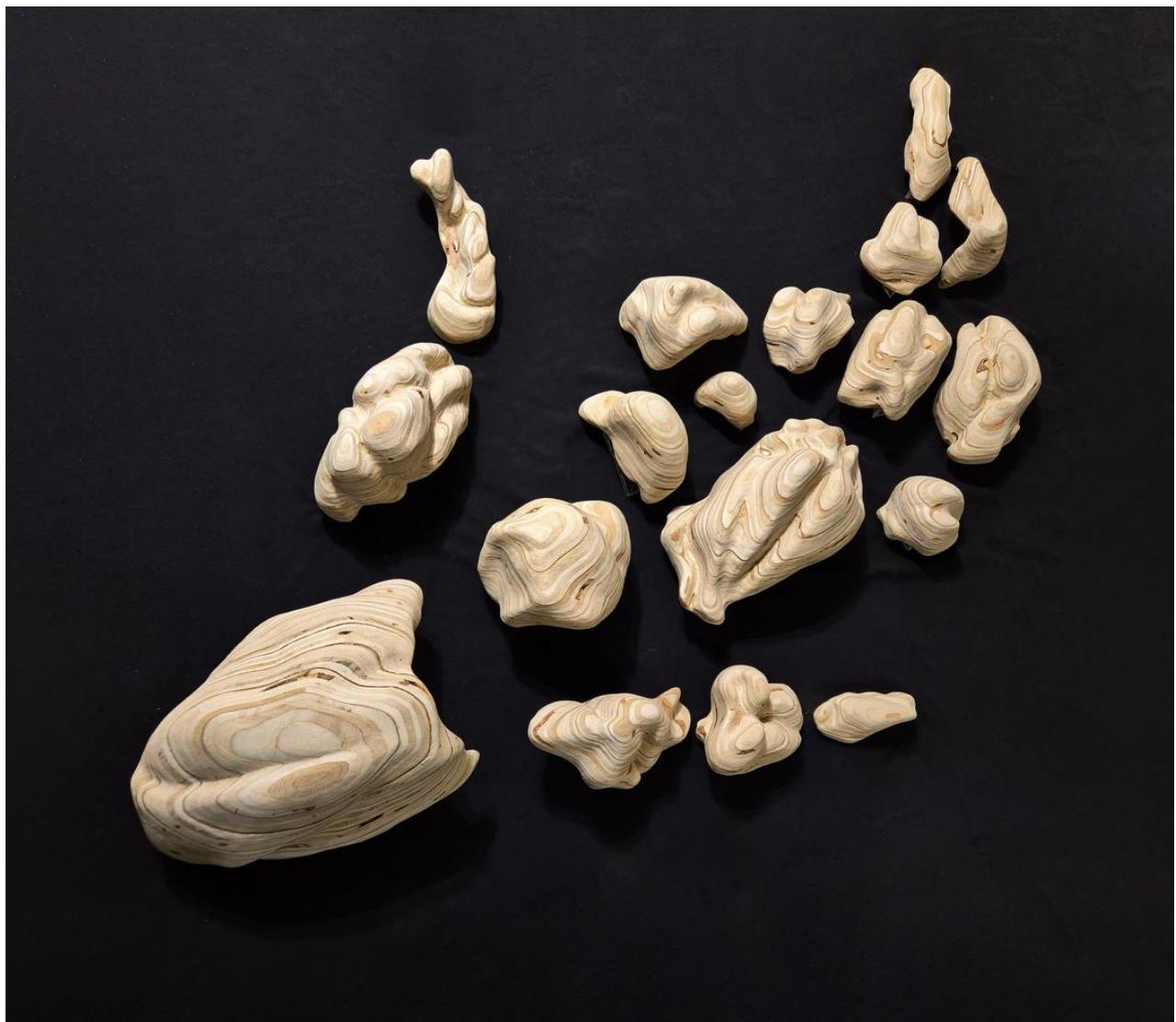
*Artist Statement*

My sculptures evoke a sense of familiarity through shape, color, and scale. They remain almost familiar, yet never enough to be named, allowing multiple associations to arise without settling on a single referent.

I want only that part. Driven by momentary obsession, I dismantle the surrounding context until the system that once held it together collapses, leaving only pieces without orientation. Anxiety, at its root, this mode of thinking leads to repeated fragmentation rather than resolution.

I materialize this process by creating sculptural presence from easily modifiable materials. As one association is present in physical, another emerges, driving further adjustment. I then gather and re-interpret these fragments through juxtapositions and reconfigurations. My sculptural work does not aim to clarify meaning, but to hold it in suspension, allowing perception to linger and reorganize over time.





Seohyun Cho | Pupa Entity | 2025

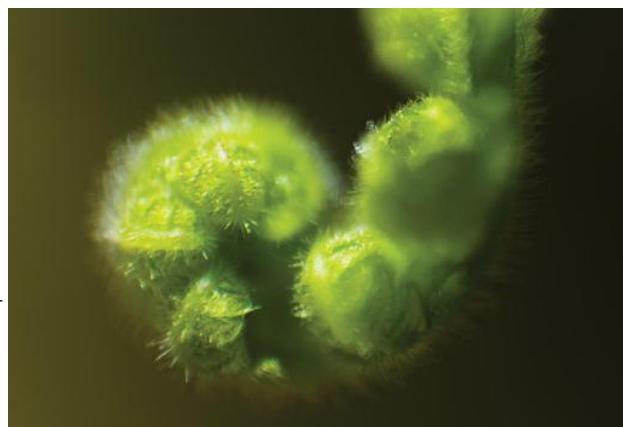
Seohyun Cho | Dream Creatures | 2024

# — Interview

## Wei Chen Lou

**Your work focuses on the minuscule rather than the monumental. What first drew you to macro photography as a way of seeing the world?**

It began with a kind of quiet burnout: I'd spent years chasing life's "grand narratives", the milestones, the "purpose" we're taught to prioritize, only to feel like I was grasping at smoke. The world felt loud, and my place in it felt smaller by the day. Then, on a hiking trail I was so familiar with, I picked up a macro lens and pointed it at the frayed edges of flowers and plants around me: the tiny, barbed fibers, the way they caught the diffused light like a constellation of minuscule stars. That's when it clicked: macro photography isn't just about magnifying the small—it's about reorienting how we value it. Those overlooked fragments (a thread, a crack in pavement, the fuzz on a leaf) aren't footnotes to the "bigger picture". They are the text itself. When I frame these details, I'm not just capturing a moment; I'm reclaiming a way of being: one where the tangled, unpolished, easily dismissed parts of life are the ones that hold our truest selves. For me, macro photography is an act of slowing down; it is a reminder that when the world feels overwhelming, the answers we're chasing aren't always in the monumental—they can also be found in the things we brush off our sleeves.



Wei Chen Lou | To Feel



Wei Chen Lou | Study

**Growing up in Zimbabwe, how did your early environment shape your sensitivity to nature, texture, and quiet forms of beauty?**

Growing up in Zimbabwe, nature wasn't just a backdrop. It was my first language. Without the overwhelming amount of screens and noises, I learned to read the world through texture and colors: the rough, sun-baked grain of baobab bark, the vibrant fuzz on the back of a cheetah, the way dust and light tangled through the foliage on the safari. I wasn't just watching; I was leaning in, letting those quiet, unscripted details seep into how I see beauty, less as something to admire and more as something to meet. When I first picked up my camera, that instinct shifted. I stopped just observing and started translating, turning the soft, unspoken weight of those moments into images that hold the feeling of being rooted in something bigger than noise. My work isn't just a documentation; it's my way of immortalizing the quiet, living language I learned before words.

**In "Sublimity in Focus", you describe the filaments as a metaphor for life itself. At what moment did these abstract forms begin to feel symbolic rather than purely visual?**

It happened on a day I had almost written off as "uninspired." I was kneeling in the field, adjusting my lens



to shoot a clump of dried, tangled plant fibers, something I'd initially seen as just a jumble of texture, a play of light and shadow. But as I inched closer, the lens sharpened: one filament curved, another frayed, a third looped gently around the first, like a quiet collaboration.

In that moment, they stopped being "fibers." They looked like us—messy, connected, fragile in the best way. The ones that bent instead of breaking? A reminder of resilience. The way they wove together, even when some stood apart? It was the beauty of community. It wasn't just a visual; it was a story—one I'd been trying to tell without words.

That's when I realized photography doesn't just show me the small. It lets the small speak—about life, about us, about the quiet truths we miss when we're too busy chasing the "big." That frame became less about what I saw, and more about what it taught me.

**Your images feel suspended between abstraction and realism. How important is it for you that the viewer recognizes the subject—or is ambiguity essential?**

Ambiguity is the bridge, not the barrier. I don't want viewers to fixate on "what" it is, whether a thread, a petal, a sliver of bark, because that's where the magic fades. Letting the subject hover between recognition and mystery mirrors how we experience life: we rarely see ourselves, or each other, in sharp, unblurred focus. We're all a little abstract, a little unnameable, and that's where connection lives.

If someone looks at these filaments and sees a memory, a feeling, or a piece of themselves they can't quite put into words? That's the point. Recognition would box it in. Ambiguity sets it free, letting the image be whatever the viewer needs it to be, in that moment.

**You speak about urban noise and distraction. Is this series a form of resistance to that environment, or a way of surviving within it?**

This series isn't about waging war against the urban noise and its ceaseless distractions. Resistance implies a futile battle against an ever-encroaching tide. Instead, it offers a new prism through which we can view our existence. We've all tried to shield ourselves with gadgets and routines, only to find those distractions seeping back in, like water through a leaky dam.

The series aims to illuminate a path towards living fully in the midst of this chaos. It's about finding beauty, purpose, and meaning in the small, overlooked corners, even as the world around us clamors for attention. It's a way of saying that we don't have to escape the urban environment to thrive; we can carve out our own spaces of tranquility and discovery within it. By focusing on the minuscule, we can create a counter-rhythm, a quiet pulse that keeps us centered and connected to what truly matters, allowing us to co-exist with distractions without being consumed by them.

**How do you balance technical precision with emotional intuition when photographing something**



## so fragile and fleeting?

Technical precision is the safety net. It ensures that the image I capture is sharp, well-lit, and composed in a way that does justice to the subject. But it's the emotional intuition that breathes life into that technical framework. It all begins with respect. When I approach a subject, whether it's an elephant wading through the water, or a flower blooming in the red sand desert, I'm acutely aware of its transient nature. I see myself not as an outsider taking a picture, but as a participant in a moment. This emotional connection allows me to anticipate the perfect instant to click the shutter, to sense when the light will hit just right, or when the subject will reveal its most vulnerable and beautiful self.

Technical precision comes into play when I adjust the aperture to control the depth of field, ensuring that the subject stands out while maintaining a dreamy, soft background that echoes its fleeting quality. Or when I fine-tune the ISO to capture the right amount of light without introducing too much noise, because these fragile subjects deserve a clean, unblemished representation. But I never let the technical aspects overshadow the emotional core. The camera settings are tools, not the blueprint. They're there to help me translate the feelings I have in that moment into a tangible image that can evoke the same sense of wonder and connection in the viewer. In this way, technical precision and emotional intuition work in harmony, each enhancing the other to capture



Wei Chen Lou | Study

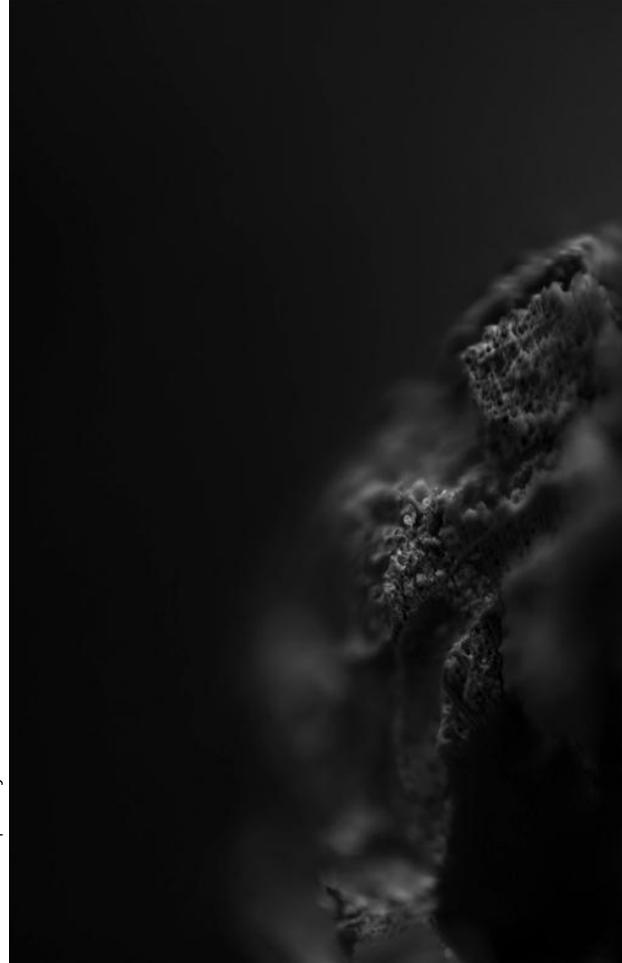
the essence of these delicate, passing moments.

## Do you see macro photography as a political or philosophical act—an insistence on paying attention where society usually doesn't?

Macro photography, for me, isn't about making a political statement in the traditional sense. It's not about rallying for a particular policy or ideology. However, it is deeply philosophical. In a world that often rushes towards the grand and the obvious, focusing on the minuscule is a conscious choice. It's a nudge to society to slow down and look closer.

Photography is indeed a mirror of the photographer's mind. With this macro series, I'm inviting viewers to engage in self - reflection. We're so often caught up in the big picture of life, chasing after goals and societal expectations, that we overlook the small, individual elements that shape our identities. These details are like the building blocks of our existence. By highlighting them, I'm suggesting that true understanding and self-awareness can be found in the overlooked. It's a stance that says our worth and uniqueness aren't defined solely by the broad strokes of our lives, but also by the intricate, often unnoticed details that make up our daily experiences.

So, while it may not be political, it is a philosophical statement about the importance of paying attention to the overlooked aspects of ourselves and the world around us.





## **Sabrina Leong**

16 year old from Singapore experimenting with realism.

### *Project Statement*

Fur study of a cat.

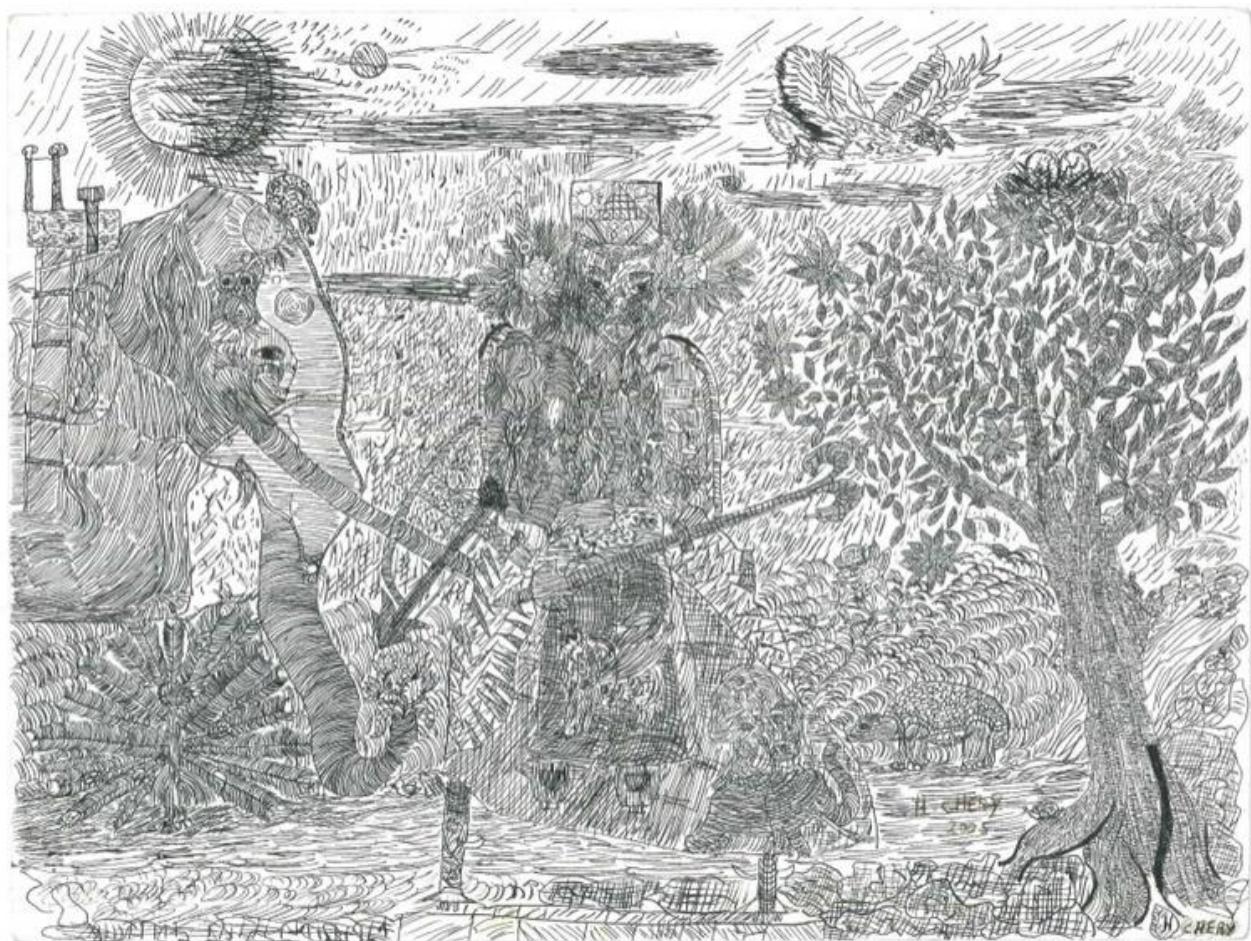


# Hermann Chery

I am an artist creating artworks in India ink using a dip pen.

Hermann Chery | The Old | 2022





Hermann Chery | The Hummingbird | 2008

# — Interview

## Takuya Inoue Higa

**You describe your practice as beginning from sound and emotion rather than a fixed idea. Can you walk us through what usually happens from the moment you hear music to the first brushstroke on paper?**

Takuya Inoue Higa | Don't Stop The Passion! | 2025



Takuya Inoue Higa | Scream | 2025

Yes, I can describe the process that leads me from the initial urge to paint to the moment I begin working.

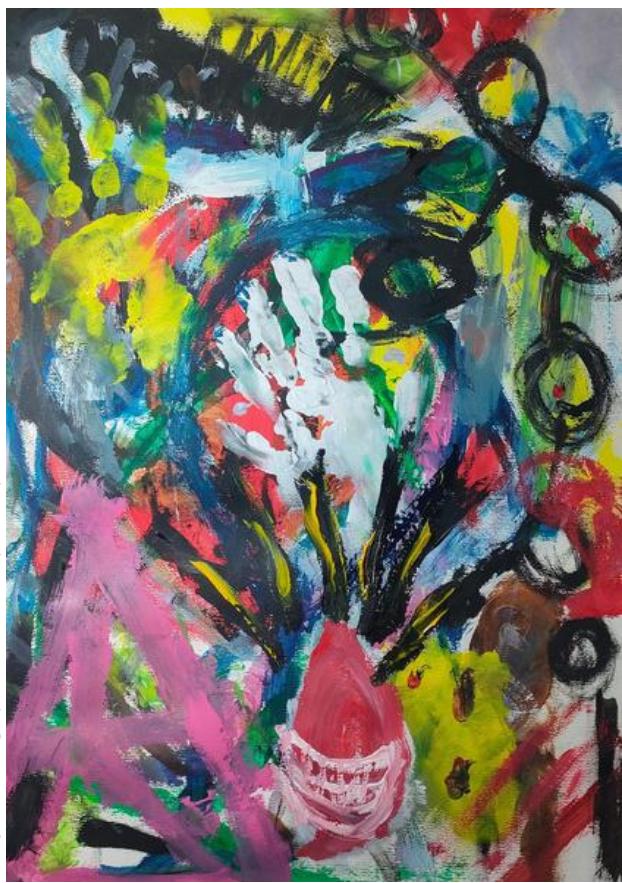
I often associate music with color in my mind. Some people might describe this as a form of synesthesia, although I am not certain whether I truly possess it. Still, there have been times when live performances or songs heard in bars have evoked the foundations of color and form within me.

I subscribe to a music streaming service, where I have created a folder titled "Sources of Inspiration." It currently contains around 340 tracks—songs I personally love as well as pieces with distinctive performances—and I expect this collection to continue growing.

I usually work late at night. In a completely dark studio, I prepare a small, reading-lamp-like light and sit in a comfortable chair. Wearing sealed headphones at maximum volume, I select a piece of music that either closely matches my current emotional state or feels emotionally comfortable to me. I then put a single track on repeat and sit quietly, breathing deeply in a way that resembles meditation, while staring at a completely blank canvas (watercolor paper) placed on the easel. My gaze is fixed on the canvas, but my concentration is entirely devoted to the music.

At some point, a rough foundation of colors and forms begins to emerge in my mind. I usually begin painting at the moment this internal image appears. If I attempt to fully define the image beforehand, I lose flexibility during the act of painting itself.

In most cases, the time between starting the music and applying the first color to the canvas is within three to five minutes. Sometimes, the image appears almost instantly, the moment the music begins to play. On other occasions—



especially when working on very large formats, such as F50, where pressure and hesitation are greater—I may proceed more cautiously, taking up to an hour before making the first mark.

#### **How does being neurodivergent shape the way you perceive color, rhythm, and composition in your paintings?**

I have been diagnosed as neurodivergent, specifically with ADHD and ASD, and I have also experienced schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. Throughout my life, I have gone through many difficult periods as a result of these conditions. This is my personal perspective, but in Japanese society, communication often relies less on direct language and more on atmosphere, social niceties, and the ability to read unspoken intentions or subtle dishonesty within conversations. For people who, because of their traits, find it difficult to navigate these implicit expectations, adapting to society can be extremely challenging. Building close relationships, finding a partner, or maintaining stable employment can become particularly hard. I also acknowledge that my own personal shortcomings played a role, and there were periods in which I became deeply isolated.

Ironically, however, the very experiences of isolation, sadness, and inner struggle that arose from my neurodivergence have become deeply embedded in my artistic expression. The emotions I lived through did not disappear; instead, they accumulated and found a place within my work.

At the same time, being neurodivergent has also had positive aspects. I experience strong impulsivity toward painting, periods of intense hyperfocus, and what I might call a form of

artistic dependence—if I do not paint, my emotional state becomes unstable. While the loneliness that accompanied this had clear disadvantages, it also provided long stretches of time for introspection. This, in turn, allowed me to deepen my personal philosophy.

To prevent my mental state from collapsing, I actively sought ways to strengthen my inner balance: reading to sharpen my rational thinking, training my body, practicing meditation, and engaging in philosophical dialogue with ChatGPT to broaden my perspective. Through these efforts, I accumulated knowledge, values, passion, and a sense of challenge and adventure. I believe these elements directly influence how I perceive color, rhythm, and composition.

There is one more aspect that is difficult for me to express, but important. While I am not good at telling lies and they are often easy to see through, more importantly, my experiences of being hurt by dishonesty have made it impossible for me to deceive others without causing harm. I do not know whether this trait is directly related to neurodivergence, but I believe it contributes to my need to translate the fusion of music and message honestly into color and structure, without distortion.

**Many of your works feel like emotional outbursts - almost visual screams or songs. Do you see your paintings as a form of communication where words have failed?**

As a neurodivergent artist, I often experience significant difficulty in verbal communication due to my traits.

For example, despite living with disability, I still wish to experience romantic love and to love someone deeply. However, because of my neurodivergence, understanding and acceptance are often difficult to achieve. I am also unable to hide my disability through lies, and as a result, many people instinctively keep a certain distance from me from the very first introduction.

As I mentioned earlier, because I cannot rely on atmosphere or unspoken cues to communicate, I must express myself clearly in words. At the same time, because my life lacks stability, I have come to believe that I am fundamentally unlovable. But is it truly right to give up on the desire to love someone, even after understanding these conditions? People may laugh and call such a desire ugly—but is it really ugly? And who has the authority to declare that it is?

While painting, these questions begin to surface. They turn into cries, emotional eruptions, and acts of resistance against the merciless norms of society. The works that emerge from this process are what I later share on Instagram.

In other situations, when interpersonal difficulties lead me into depression, I sometimes become unable to create anything at all. However, when even a small margin of emotional energy returns, I channel those feelings into painting. As I work, my brush moves as if encouraging me, transforming cries, wishes, and prayers for recovery into visual form. The messages that appear at those moments are recorded instinctively rather than rationally, often as brief written notes. When I later revisit the work during another low point, I feel as though I am being encouraged by my own paintings.

If viewers, from their own perspective, experience similar feelings of encouragement or deep resonance through my work, I believe that would be the greatest fulfillment I could experience as an artist.



Takuya Inoue Higa | My Sister | 2025

As another example, in my work Super Vocal, I had once aspired to become a vocalist myself and came to understand the intensity of devotion to singing and the greatness of pouring one's entire body, soul, and spirit into a voice. I believe that this experience was reawakened through the music that served as inspiration and emerged together with the underlying colors and message of the painting.

In Fighting Spirit, after three years of continuing to paint without selling a single work and being rejected from every open call, I found myself emotionally withdrawn. At that time, a particular song gave me a powerful sense of encouragement. Passion surged through my body, and a message took form: "This is no time to cry or sink into despair. Even if no one recognizes me, I will never break my brush. Even if I never enter the mainstream, I will continue to fight. Fighting spirit. Passion does not die. I will fight alone if I must. Look—this style is my art. This is me. I will rise again and again. I will fight again and again."

That message became a forceful cry—something that, I believe, could convey more than words alone ever could.

**You mention that messages emerge naturally during the process. Do you recognize these messages only after the work is finished, or are you aware of them while painting?**

In response to your question, I am often already aware of the message while I am painting. For example, works such as Super Vocal, Fighting Spirit, Scream, and My Sister clearly fall into this category. On the other hand, in a piece like Madness and Explosion, I first painted intuitively as an abstract work, following pure inspiration. Only afterward did I reflect on my past experiences and ask myself what this painting wanted to tell me, and what I wanted it to express. Even in that case, however, I believe there was a faint sense of direction embedded in the work from the beginning. Overall, I feel that

the former approach—being aware of the message during the process—occurs more frequently for me.

The thoughts that emerge while I paint are deeply connected to my everyday life and past experiences, as well as to reflection, introspection, and dialogue. As I move from colors evoked by the music that inspires me to the shapes that continue to form while painting, I often pause and look closely at the work, asking myself, "What is this painting trying to tell me?" During these brief pauses, ideas shaped by my own philosophy and experiences begin to surface, encouraged and pushed forward by the colors on the canvas. By the time these short breaks end, an internal dialogue has taken place—almost like a backpacker freely choosing a path without a fixed destination—and I arrive at an expression that feels closest to the message I truly want to convey. In this sense, my process often begins with instinct, driven by musical inspiration, and then gradually shifts toward the middle and final stages, where reason and presentation come into play as I make conscious choices to shape the work.

Additionally, when I post my paintings on Instagram, I include a written message alongside the image. Whenever a thought or message arises during the painting process, I make sure to record it immediately in a memo on my computer.

**Music plays a central role in your practice. Are there particular genres, artists, or sounds that repeatedly influence your work?**

Music plays a central role in my creative practice, and I listen to a wide range of songs based on personal preference. One important aspect of my process is that the same piece of music can generate completely different inspirations at



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different times. For this reason, I do not impose a strict rule such as “one song for one artwork, never to be used again.” By allowing time to pass before returning to the same track, I can create new works that carry different messages. That said, while painting, I always repeat a single piece of music on loop.

I am able to draw inspiration both from music with lyrics and from instrumental sound. However, I believe it took time for me to become comfortable generating inspiration from songs with lyrics in my native language. In contrast, foreign languages often feel closer to instrumental sound to me. I have worked while listening to songs sung in Japanese, French, English, German, and Spanish, and regardless of whether lyrics are present, I now find it easy to enter an inspired state.

When it comes to genre, I do not have strong preferences or limitations. I listen to a wide range of music, from Japanese enka to video game soundtracks, as well as Western music. This includes hard rock, oldies, and even music inspired by Asia, such as pieces featuring the Chinese erhu. I have experimented with many styles. If I were to highlight some particularly memorable influences, I would mention the Japanese rock band The Back Horn, background music from the Touhou Project game series, The Phantom of the Opera: Overture, as well as passionate styles such as flamenco and tango.

Another characteristic of my process is that the emotional direction of the music—whether it is bright, melancholic, or intense—often determines the nature of the resulting work. The messages I convey emerge from the paintings themselves, which are born from musical inspiration, and in this sense, music and the messages I wish to communicate are indirectly but deeply connected.

As one example, in my work *Scream*, the source of inspiration was the song *Gekkou* by Onitsuka Chihiro, a Japanese female artist. The song conveys a tragic atmosphere and expresses the fragility of continuing to live within a cruel world. While the lyrics themselves were important, I was especially influenced by the emotional inflections of her voice and the accompanying performance. From this, I was able to attach the message, “To all my fellow companions who suffer from disability,” and convey both shared pain and a sense of solidarity through the painting.

The place where I currently live, Okinawa, has a long history of exchange with many countries, both Eastern and Western. Over time, people from diverse backgrounds have visited and interacted here, making it what could be called a “mosaic of cultures” within Japan. For me, having roots in such a place—and also having had the opportunity to study abroad in the

past—may have formed the foundation that allows me to resonate with music from around the world. Moving forward, I want to continue searching for new sounds, repeating cycles of experimentation and adventure, and continuing to paint in dialogue with music.

**Your paintings often balance intensity and vulnerability. How do you navigate these two forces during creation?**

To be honest, until I received this question, I did not have a clear awareness of this balance within myself.

I had felt that there were differences in intensity and vulnerability—such as expressions of passion or sadness—from one work to another. However, realizing that both intensity and vulnerability coexist within a single piece was a new discovery for me. Thank you for bringing this to my attention. In response to your question, I would like to reflect on this aspect of my process more carefully.

From my perspective, my paintings often begin with instinctive inspiration, which brings an initial sense of intensity. As the process continues, I then make conscious choices guided by reason, selecting direction and structure. I believe that this combination results in works where these two forces—instinct and reason—are clearly interwoven. As mentioned partially in my answer to question four, this may be a phenomenon that arises from the way instinct and rational thought are alternately used during the act of creation. Beyond this structural process, I also feel that the messages embedded in my paintings are not composed solely of strength. Vulnerability is allowed to coexist alongside it. In other words, while there is something I strongly wish to assert or convey, there is also a part of myself that has not reached a complete or absolute certainty, and that presence remains within the work.

**How do you feel when viewers interpret your work in ways that differ from your original emotions or intentions?**

To be honest, when viewers interpret my work in ways that differ from my own emotions or intentions, I do feel a slight sense of disappointment at first. However, I make a conscious effort to quickly respect and empathize with their interpretations and emotional responses. Rather than opposing the feelings or meanings they derive from the painting, I try to communicate my own intentions through dialogue. If my perspective is not accepted, I choose to respect their sensibility and way of seeing.

Of course, I do want to make an effort to express my own intentions as clearly as possible. Because, as a neurodivergent person, I am often the one who struggles to be understood in everyday life, I feel it is important to extend the same understanding and consideration to those who view my work.

At its core, I believe that art is a vast form of entertainment. If someone receives an impression from my work and, from that impression, expands their own imaginative world and enjoys it, that alone is something to be genuinely happy about. And when the message I wish to convey is understood, I believe it can lead to an even deeper level of resonance—where joy or sorrow is shared, where philosophical insight is awakened, or where the work becomes a source of warmth that gently accompanies someone at the depths of their sadness. That level of resonance is my greatest ideal.

**Elly Lau** is an amateur, self-taught artist from Hong Kong whose work reimagines the ordinary through conceptual photography and object-based play. Without a formal art education, she builds her practice intuitively, creating humorous and subversive images that explore consumer culture, femininity, and the quiet absurdity of everyday life.





**Rose LaBarbera** is a Multidisciplinary Artist with projects spanning from Photography, Ceramics, Painting, Performing Arts, Costume Design, and Music Production. In an effort to strengthen her art skills and earn her BFA, Rose is currently studying at Alfred University majoring in Art & Design, and minoring in Music. She has a strong portfolio of fine arts and makeup arts, including special effects makeup as a highlight of her repertoire. She grew up in Cold Spring, NY, and has now relocated to Yorktown Heights, NY. She is looking forward to her upcoming graduation in May, 2026.

#### *Artist Statement*

For Suffocation: "Suffocation is a feeling I know all too well. The struggle to completely reveal yourself to the world surrounding you. Many of us know how it feels to be stripped of our color. To be battered and bruised due to this color. To have this impenetrable bubble restricting you, because of this color. Suffocation is for those of us who have felt this way; you are seen, and you are heard. I hope you find solace in these images and know that you are not alone. Suffocation is, and forever will be, the silent color of the world. I dedicate this project to the suffocated." For Obsession: "Obsession is a visual representation of body dysmorphia. The shower is a death sentence. Revealing the skin underneath the clothing and being forced to look and feel what holds you back the most. A constant reminder that what you look like is something you cannot hide from. Though others will see the form in its entirety, your version is slightly skewed, and you can't change that. Avoidance is only a temporary answer. You have to face it when it comes to the mirrors. Every curve and concave form the lines of the monstrosity that only you call yourself. Your family thinks you are beautiful, but that's your family. Even they will constantly compare you to an ancestor and decipher who gave you the prettiest or unfortunate features. A competition of favorable genes and the ones you wish would diminish with each generation. But the shower shows you, in the shimmer of the water, those same features that you wish were not there. The scum on the bottom of the shower floor cannot hug you tight enough to forget about your reflection in the water. I dedicate this project to the obsessed."

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