

# VISUAL ART JOURNAL







# — Intro

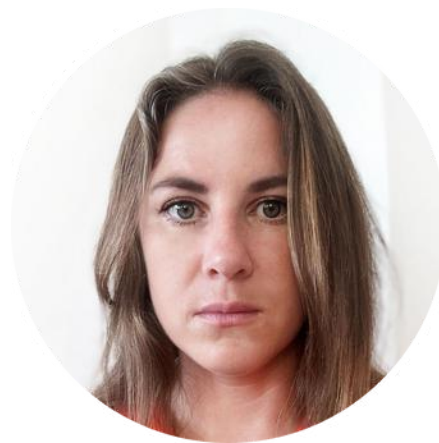
Hello, dear reader,

You are holding the 17th issue of the magazine, and I am incredibly happy that our project is growing and that we continue to bring together creators from all over the world.

No matter where an artist is located, they face similar challenges: how to find themselves, their style, their audience, and most importantly, confidence in their abilities and their talent. We've spoken with many creative individuals, and almost all of them have gone through periods of doubt. Perhaps the question "Am I good enough?" holds the key to a breakthrough? By asking this question, we open new doors behind which inspiration and ideas might await—ideas that might not have come to mind otherwise.

In this issue, as before, we've gathered a variety of talented people: those who are confident in themselves and those still exploring their path, those working in different techniques and those who know exactly what their tool is, those with support and those who go against the grain of the world.

Thank you for continuing to read us—more than a hundred pages of creativity and discoveries await you!



**Anna Gvozdeva**

Curator of  
Visual Art Journal

*On the Front Cover:*  
**Lauren McAndrew**  
Knotted Hair  
2024

*On the Back Cover:*  
**Nathan Penhall**  
Winter Jetty

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

**Enne Tesse (Antonella Piemontese)** works in a variety of two- and three-dimensional art media blending installation, sculpture, written word, and social commentary. She studied at the School of Visual Arts in NYC earning her Master of Fine Arts degree. Her works have been exhibited in museums and galleries in the US and Japan. She is a recipient of the Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant, the Arts Mid-Hudson Individual Artist Commission Grant, and the Arts Mid-Hudson Under-Recognized Artist Award. Exhibitions include Enne Tesse Animal Kingdom, Super Secret Projects, Beacon, NY; Unusual Threads, Southern Vermont Arts Center, Manchester, VT; Time Travelers, Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art, SUNY New Paltz; Go Figure, Jane St. Art Center, Saugerties, NY; Word, Gallery 44, Frederick, MD. She lives in Beacon, NY.

*Artist Statement*

Influenced by my sartorial heritage, my practice emphasizes handwork, functional materials, and focuses on human, animal, and plant anatomies. Fabrics and textiles are for me layers that can offer modifications and transformations. I produce my work by combining fabrics with other utilitarian materials through detailed use of the hand. My works generate from the transformative qualities of these functional materials.



Enne Tesse | Umbilical | 2024







# — Interview

## Nathan Penhall

**What inspired you to pick up a camera for the first time, and how has your perspective on photography evolved since 2013?**

My journey into photography began in 2013 when I acquired my first Canon DSLR in anticipation of a trip to Queenstown, New Zealand. This pivotal moment ignited a passion that continues to drive my exploration and dedication to capturing the essence of nature's most stunning landscapes. While I have always had a fascination towards the finer details, the way I now compose an image has evolved to capture the holistic interplay of the contrasting natural elements. This is quite often achieved through aerial vantage points.

**Your work emphasizes Australia's natural beauty. What draws you to these landscapes, and do you have a favorite location to photograph?**

I feel a very strong connection to the Australian natural environment. Departing the city to chase



remote landscapes is an exhilarating experience. Australia is a country of never-ending and continually evolving coastlines, which present opportunities to capture magical compositions. Through my eyes, Western Australia is a state of contrasting landscapes and natural beauty that is hard to beat. A grand expanse that has so much to offer a landscape photographer.

**How do you balance the artistic and technical aspects of landscape photography?**

Admittedly, this can be a balancing act at times! Photography has structured guidelines which should be followed to capture an admired composition. As my desire shifts towards capturing abstract images, the artistic element can become more dominant, with the hope that the viewer will share the same appreciation of the final image as I do.

**What role do you believe photography plays in raising awareness about sustainability and environmental preservation?**

There is an inner drive that I have to capture these landscapes in an abstract, almost otherworldly context, in the hope that the viewer will pause to understand and reflect on the natural beauty outside of our heavily populated urban areas, and how fragile they are to preserve. Each photograph is a fleeting moment frozen in time, a celebration of nature's own sense of composition and design. The images, shaped by the play of light, salt, and water, reveal a tapestry of fluid geometries, delicate hues, and organic patterns.



Nathan Penhall | Tyrrell Hues





**Could you share any memorable moments or challenges you've experienced while capturing Australia's landscapes?**

Chasing remote locations in Australia can present some serious challenges in a variety of ways, with personal safety being front of mind at all times. Preparing my journey with the necessary due diligence and having conversations with the locals to better understand the surrounding area is always recommended. The terrain and access to the final destination can be difficult. My favourite time of the day is sunrise, and many times I will have to walk through bushland in the dark to set up my equipment

before dawn. I have been forewarned many times about crocodiles, snakes, spiders, jellyfish and other local wildlife that call Australia home!

**How has your connection with Melbourne's building and landscape architecture communities influenced your approach to photography?**

My approach with client based work is very structured and adheres more closely to the technical aspects of photography. It's a Business to Business transaction, knowing that they are engaging my services in order to present and market their projects for the purpose of growing their own business. Delivering a premium service and final product to clients is a priority for me, and is something that has allowed me to organically grow my photography business.

**What advice would you give to aspiring photographers who want to develop their own unique style?**

Don't hesitate to experiment with new compositions or editing techniques. Be fluid in your approach to photography and learn what works for you. Have patience and enjoy what will be your evolving journey over the years to come. Most importantly, chase your passion!





**Matthieu Sené**, known as the artist "Hu/Lie," is a visual artist based in Gironde, France. His work explores the relationship between humanity and nature through a series of installations and paintings that examine the impact of human activity on the environment and societal values. Characterized by natural materials and striking aesthetics, his art oscillates between poetic contemplation and thought-provoking engagement. A graduate in Fine Arts, Matthieu develops his art at the crossroads of ecology, poetry, and innovation. Recognized for his commitment, he also leads art mediation workshops for diverse audiences – children, seniors, and people with disabilities – promoting inclusion and diversity. His work has been exhibited in galleries and institutions across France, including Bordeaux, Toulouse, and Strasbourg, as well as in contemporary art festivals. His current series, "Where the drop embraces the grain", created in collaboration with the ocean, embodies a groundbreaking approach that transcends the traditional boundaries of art.



Matthieu Sene  
L Amélie  
2024

### *Artist Statement*

My art is a dialogue with the ocean. Through my technique, I step aside to let waves and tides act as living brushes, expressing the erosion and environmental transformations shaping our world. This unique approach – where the ocean becomes a co-creator – captures the fragile beauty of shorelines while shedding light on the impact of human activity. My works are deeply influenced by my experience of disability. What some see as a limitation, I view as a source of strength and sensitivity. My physical and psychological disabilities have taught me to perceive the world differently, to listen the silences, and to value the invisible. They enrich my creative process and empower me to convey universal emotions through art. Inspired by interactions with coastal communities and observations of vulnerable ecosystems, my series "Where the drop embraces the grain" is a profound reflection on the fragility of nature and humanity. Applying for the HERALBONY Art Prize represents much more than an opportunity; it is a celebration of diversity and a recognition of the unique qualities disabilities bring to art. This prize affirms that our differences are strengths, capable of challenging preconceived notions and introducing fresh perspectives into the art world. Together, I believe art can raise awareness, unite people, and spark collective dialogue in the face of today's challenges.





# — Interview

## George Gamez

**Could you tell us about your journey as an artist and what inspired you to pursue art as a career?**

My journey as an artist began with a deep fascination for visual storytelling. Growing up in Tbilisi, Georgia, I was constantly inspired by the unique blend of historic architecture, urban landscapes, and the vibrant cultural energy of the city. These elements shaped my artistic sensibility and sparked a desire to interpret the world through art.

From a young age, I found myself drawn to creative expression as a way to connect with my surroundings. I began experimenting with various mediums, starting with sketches and paintings on the school walls (of course, the director of the school told me to tear down all the walls I had painted), and gradually expanding into more experimental forms of visual art. Over time, I discovered a profound passion for exploring the intersection between art and urban life, which became a defining theme in my work.

My decision to pursue art as a career was driven by an unrelenting desire to translate my vision into something that could engage and inspire others. Art, for me, is not just about aesthetic creation; it is a way to challenge perceptions, evoke emotions, and foster meaningful connections. It is a tool for storytelling that allows me to communicate complex ideas and emotions without the constraints of language.

As I continue to grow as an artist, I remain committed to pushing boundaries and exploring new ways to express my vision. Each project I undertake is an opportunity to delve deeper into the themes that resonate with me and to contribute to the ever-



evolving conversation around art and its role in society.

**How do you typically approach creating your artwork, and how do humor and social commentary influence your style?**

My creative process begins with observation and reflection. I take inspiration from the everyday world—its textures, contradictions, and unexpected juxtapositions. Whether it's a bustling urban street or a quiet, overlooked detail in a building's structure, I strive to uncover stories within the environment. My goal is to translate these stories into visual narratives that challenge the viewer's perspective.

Humor plays a significant role in my work, acting as a bridge between the artwork and the audience. It allows me to address complex or difficult topics in an approachable and engaging manner. Through irony, satire, or playful imagery, I invite viewers to see the world through a different lens, encouraging them to reflect on their surroundings with curiosity and openness.

Social commentary is another integral component of my art. I view art as a platform for dialogue, a way to engage with societal issues and provoke thought. By incorporating themes of cultural identity, urban transformation, or environmental concerns, I aim to create pieces that resonate on both a personal and collective level. The combination of humor and social critique allows my work to be both accessible and thought-provoking, striking a balance between entertainment and introspection.

Ultimately, my approach is about creating connections—between the artwork and its audience, between humor and critique, and between the individual and the broader social context. Each piece I create is a reflection of my perspective on the world and an invitation for others to share in that exploration.

**How has living and working in Tbilisi shaped your artistic vision and themes?**

Living and working in Tbilisi has profoundly influenced my artistic vision and the themes I explore in my work.



George Gamez | Family

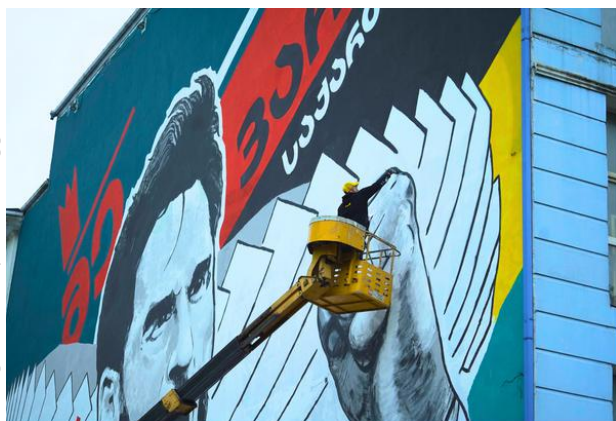
Tbilisi is a city of contrasts—where ancient history meets rapid modernization, and where diverse cultural influences converge to create a dynamic urban landscape. This unique environment has become both a source of inspiration and a canvas for my creativity. The city's architecture, with its blend of traditional wooden balconies and Soviet-era concrete structures, tells stories of resilience and transformation. Tbilisi's vibrant street culture and artistic community have also played a significant role in shaping my practice. My friends and I bring the city alive with graffiti, street performances, and public art that reflect the voices of its people. This raw and unfiltered expression has inspired me to incorporate elements of urban art into my own work, blurring the boundaries between fine art and street culture.

Additionally, Tbilisi's cultural heritage and the stories of its people have enriched my perspective as an artist. The city's rich history, coupled with its contemporary challenges, provides endless material for exploration. Whether addressing social issues, celebrating local traditions, or simply capturing the spirit of the city, my work is deeply rooted in the context of Tbilisi.

Ultimately, Tbilisi is more than just the backdrop to my artistic journey—it is an active participant in it. The city's energy, contradictions, and resilience continually inspire me to push the boundaries of my creativity and to tell stories that resonate on both a local and universal level.

**You are known for your graffiti and public artworks. What do you think makes urban art unique compared to gallery art?**

Urban art stands apart from gallery art in its accessibility, context, and dynamic relationship with the public. One of the defining features of urban art is its ability to exist within the fabric of daily life. It's art for everyone, unconstrained by the formal boundaries of museums or galleries. Urban art thrives in the open—on walls, streets, and public spaces—inviting spontaneous interaction from people of all walks of life.



George Gamez | Batumi biggest mural



George Gamez | BRUTALeaty

The context in which urban art is created and displayed is another key factor that makes it unique. Unlike gallery art, which is often viewed in controlled, curated environments, urban art is deeply rooted in its surroundings. It responds to the architecture, culture, and social dynamics of the space it inhabits. This connection to its environment gives urban art a sense of immediacy and relevance that is hard to replicate in a traditional gallery setting.

Urban art also carries an element of risk and impermanence that sets it apart. Public spaces are unpredictable—a mural might be painted over, weathered by time, or altered by other artists. This ephemeral nature lends urban art a raw, unfiltered quality that captures the essence of its time and place. Another unique aspect is the dialogue that urban art creates. It's not confined to the walls of an institution; it's out there, sparking conversations, challenging norms, and engaging with the public directly. Graffiti and street art, in particular, often carry bold social or political messages, using humor, irony, or provocation to reach audiences in ways that traditional gallery art might not.

While both urban and gallery art have their own merits, urban art's ability to break barriers, connect with diverse audiences, and transform ordinary spaces into extraordinary experiences makes it a powerful and unique form of expression.

**Your piece "Fisherman" is a tribute to Niko Pirosmi. How has his work influenced you, and what was your process for creating this tribute?**

Niko Pirosmi's work has been a profound source of inspiration for me, not only as an artist but as someone deeply connected to the Georgian cultural landscape. His ability to capture the essence of everyday life with simplicity and emotional depth resonates with my own artistic philosophy. Pirosmi's paintings, often depicting scenes of ordinary people, animals, and Georgian traditions, evoke a sense of timelessness and authenticity that I strive to emulate in my work.



When creating "Fisherman," I aimed to pay homage to Pirosmiani's unique vision while infusing the piece with my own contemporary perspective. What makes "Fisherman" particularly distinctive is its Simpsonized style, a deliberate choice to reinterpret Pirosmiani's art through a modern, pop-cultural lens. This stylistic approach allowed me to merge the simplicity and emotional depth of Pirosmiani's work with a playful, contemporary aesthetic that is uniquely my own. By incorporating this style, I sought to emphasize the universality of Pirosmiani's themes and their ability to transcend time and artistic mediums.

Additionally, my connection to Pirosmiani extends beyond individual works. I have created and published a unique book about Pirosmiani, which reimagines his art and life in the form of a comic. This book has been translated into Japanese and is currently available on Japanese Amazon as well as in bookstores throughout Georgia. This project reflects my dedication to sharing Pirosmiani's legacy with a global audience in innovative and accessible ways.

The theme of "Fisherman" itself draws inspiration from Pirosmiani's focus on humble, hardworking individuals. For me, the fisherman symbolizes perseverance, patience, and a deep connection to nature—qualities that echo throughout Pirosmiani's body of work. In the piece, I incorporated visual motifs that reference Georgian cultural heritage, subtly nodding to the artist's influence while making the work my own.

Creating this tribute was both a challenge and a joy. It required balancing reverence for Pirosmiani's legacy with my desire to reinterpret his themes through a contemporary lens. In the end, "Fisherman" is not just a tribute to Pirosmiani but a celebration of the enduring power of art to connect generations and inspire new stories.

### As a mentor and teacher, what advice would you give to young artists starting their careers?

As a mentor and teacher, my advice to young artists is to embrace both patience and persistence. The journey of an artist is rarely linear, and success often comes to those who are willing to experiment, fail, and grow. Here are some key principles I encourage aspiring artists to keep in mind:

1. **Find Your Voice:** Dedicate time to discovering what



makes your perspective unique. Experiment with different mediums, styles, and techniques until you find the language that best expresses your ideas and emotions.

2. **Stay Curious:** Art is a continuous learning process. Engage with other art forms, cultures, and disciplines to expand your horizons and keep your creativity alive.

3. **Build Connections:** The art world thrives on collaboration and relationships. Engage with fellow artists, participate in exhibitions, and don't hesitate to seek advice or mentorship from those whose work inspires you.

4. **Embrace Feedback:** Constructive criticism is invaluable for growth. Be open to feedback but remain true to your vision.

5. **Balance Passion with Practicality:** While creativity is at the core of art, understanding the business side of the industry—marketing, networking, and financial planning—is equally important.

6. **Resilience is Key:** Challenges and rejections are part of every artist's journey. Use them as stepping stones to refine your work and deepen your resolve.

Most importantly, create art because you love it and because it fulfills you. Genuine passion and commitment will always resonate with audiences, regardless of trends or market demands. Keep moving forward, one brushstroke, sketch, or idea at a time.

### Your work often includes social and cultural commentary. What specific themes or issues do you find most important to address through your art?

My art often serves as a mirror to society, reflecting on themes that are deeply rooted in the complexities of human life, culture, and the shared experiences that define us. Some of the key themes I explore include:

1. **Social Inequality:** Through my work, I aim to shed light on the disparities that exist within society—whether economic, racial, or gender-related. By highlighting these issues, I hope to spark dialogue and inspire change.

2. **Urban Life and Identity:** Growing up and working in Tbilisi, I am deeply inspired by the ever-changing urban landscape. My graffiti and public art often examine the relationship between people and their environments, showcasing the beauty and chaos of city life.

3. **Tradition vs. Modernity:** Georgia's rich cultural heritage and its juxtaposition with modern influences are a constant source of inspiration. I explore how these forces collide, coexist, and evolve, often blending traditional motifs with contemporary forms.

4. **Environmental Awareness:** I'm increasingly drawn to themes of environmental responsibility, particularly the impact of urbanization and industrialization on natural ecosystems. Through art, I aim to encourage a

sense of stewardship for the planet.

5. **Freedom of Expression:** At its core, my work advocates for the power of individual voices. Whether through humor, satire, or stark commentary, I aim to remind viewers of the importance of personal and collective expression in the face of societal constraints. Art has the unique ability to provoke thought and evoke emotion, making it a powerful medium for addressing these themes. My goal is to connect with people on a personal level, inviting them to see the world—and perhaps themselves—through a slightly different lens.

### Can you tell us about your directions and about your current projects?

My artistic practice is diverse and multi-dimensional, encompassing various creative directions that allow me to explore different facets of visual storytelling and design. My primary focuses include:

1. **Murals:** Large-scale mural art is a key part of my work, allowing me to transform urban spaces and engage directly with communities.
2. **Character Creation:** I specialize in creating unique characters that bring narratives to life, whether in illustrations, comics, or caricatures.
3. **Design and Art Conception:** Developing conceptual designs and visual frameworks is central to my artistic vision, whether for branding, projects, or exhibitions.
4. **Caricature and Illustration:** I enjoy capturing the essence of people and stories through caricatures and illustrations, often blending humor and social commentary.
5. **Comics and Doodles:** I love the storytelling potential

of comics and doodles, using them to create accessible, impactful visual narratives.

6. **Poster Design:** Posters serve as a dynamic medium for me to communicate bold ideas, often with a focus on activism, culture, or humor.

7. **Simpsonizing Individuals:** One of my signature styles is Simpsonizing people, blending pop culture with personalized art.

8. **Publishing:** Publishing is one of my most cherished directions. I have my own publishing house where I create and produce unique books.

### Current Projects

- **Pirosmani Biography Comic Book:** I've created and published a comic book biography of the iconic Georgian artist Niko Pirosmani. This book has been translated into Japanese and is currently available on Japanese Amazon, as well as in bookstores throughout Georgia.

- **Graffiti Book:** I'm working on a groundbreaking graffiti book featuring black-and-white photos of urban spaces, such as buildings, cars, and buses. The book invites readers to create their own graffiti on these templates, encouraging creative expression.

- **Sticker Books:** Various sticker packaging projects.

- **Street Art Sakartvelo:** I'm currently organizing a street art Sakartvelo event that will bring together talented artists to transform urban spaces, celebrate creativity, and engage the local community.

Through these directions and projects, I aim to continue innovating and pushing the boundaries of my creative practice while fostering meaningful connections through art and publishing.





## **Justyna Dżaman**

A young artist, designer, and student at the Academy of Fine Arts in Wrocław, Poland specializing in Glass Art and Design. Born on November 6, 2000, in Lubań Śląski, Poland. In 2020, she graduated with honors from the Fine Arts High School in Jelenia Góra, specializing in artistic glass. The same year, she began her studies at the Academy, where she explored the world of functional glass. During her studies, she completed an internship at the Ardagh Glass factory and participated in numerous demanding projects, including the International Glass and Design Symposium, the "Glass Without Borders" open-air workshop, and the "First International Student Glass Symposium in Kokava nad Rimavicou." In her work, she focuses primarily on exploring intriguing forms, the interplay of colors, and experimentation. She is determined to expand her knowledge and skills. She embraces unconventional combinations, and her innovative perspective on Polish design enables her to create objects often rooted in history. She is unafraid to work with diverse materials, drawing on the expertise of more experienced artists and craftsmen and collaborating with them. Her name frequently appears at international and national events and exhibitions, in which she participates with enthusiasm and dedication.

### *Artist Statement*

I mainly work with functional glass, from glasses and wine goblets to small pieces of furniture. I love experiments and challenges, so naturally, I love glass. This extraordinary material allows for a wide range of actions and endless learning. I focus on unique design, a fresh take on what already exists, and creating new things, often driven by bold and unconventional ideas. I always try to get the most out of glass. Even in waste, I see incredible potential, especially when it comes in vibrant colors. I collect everything! Whether it's scraps left over from blowing my own projects, others' work, or even old, broken, and damaged objects. I upcycle them and give them a second life. Among my works, you can find tiered trays made from pieces of old window panes and wineglass stems, or playful lamps made entirely from industrial glass waste. I often mix my projects and arrange them into colorful compositions. This is another glass thing that fascinates me about this material—how beautifully the colors glow and blend in glass! This is what guides me in my creations: color, intricate shapes, and the zero-waste philosophy. I create bold, modern objects, and what I do is authentic and comes naturally. I send my sincere regards to the artists and designers of the Polish People's Republic and the Bauhaus movement—they inspire me at every step. However, most of my inspiration comes from glass itself. This beautiful material awakens a creativity in me that nothing else can. Whether I'm designing, polishing, sculpting, or working with the furnace, I love the process.

Justyna Dżaman | Double goblets







# — Interview

## QR

### **What inspired you to start integrating QR code technology into your art pieces?**

In 2021, I was inspired by the work of multi-dimensional designer Will Selviz, who was selected as the Canadian featured artist for Nike's Air Max Day 2021 Worldwide Campaign. This campaign showcased a global live experience hosted on a micro-website, featuring programming from various artists worldwide. To commemorate the event, Will Selviz created an augmented reality (AR) postcard. However, the process at the time required users to manually type a URL into their browser to activate the AR experience. This sparked a simple but transformative question: "Is there an easier way to access the URL using a phone?" The answer I came to was the QR code—an already universally recognized, convenient, and intuitive tool. By integrating QR codes into my art, I bridged the gap between the physical and digital worlds, making it easier for anyone to use their phone and activate the augmented reality experience bringing my pieces to life. This integration creates a unique, interactive experience, inviting audiences to engage with the artwork in ways they may never have encountered before.

### **How do you envision the role of augmented reality in shaping the future of art?**

I see augmented reality (AR) as a transformative force that will redefine how we interact with art. Traditionally, physical art has been something to observe and reflect on internally. With my work, AR introduces a new dimension of interactivity, inviting viewers to actively engage with the piece to unlock its augmented reality experience. While it's not necessary to activate the AR to appreciate the artwork, doing so creates a deeper connection by unveiling hidden layers of meaning. This interactivity encourages viewers to move beyond passive observation, taking an active role in discovering and experiencing the art. AR brings a dynamic, immersive quality that challenges the conventional



boundaries of the art world. My goal has always been to blur the lines between reality and digital. Augmented reality makes that possible.

### **Can you describe the creative process behind embedding QR codes into your artworks?**

The process of embedding QR codes into my artworks happens near the end, once the piece is largely complete. While I always ensure there's a designated space for the QR code from the start, it's crucial that the integration feels natural and seamless, as though it's an organic part of the scene. Unlike some approaches where QR codes are prominently displayed or modeled into a scene, like in certain AI filter generators, my QR codes are embedded subtly, almost secretly. They are designed to blend into the artwork, often going unnoticed at first glance. This intentional subtlety makes discovering the QR code an engaging part of the viewer's experience. The QR code acts as both a gate and a key, unlocking access to the augmented reality layer of the piece. It bridges the physical and digital worlds in a way that feels integrated and meaningful, rather than disruptive or overt. In a world increasingly focused on loud and obvious statements, I find that the art of subtlety creates a much deeper connection.

### **What challenges do you face in blending the physical and digital aspects of your art?**

The biggest challenge I face in blending the physical and digital aspects of my art is, quite literally, file size. Platforms like Snapchat and TikTok, which support augmented reality (AR), have a file size limit of 8MB for filters. While this is an improvement from the 4MB limit Meta's platform had when I first started, it still presents significant challenges. Staying within these file size limits often requires careful planning and compromises. There have been countless instances where an AR experience for an artwork had to be modified or scaled down to meet the platform's requirements. Over time, I've learned—and continue to learn—digital art techniques to optimize file sizes without sacrificing the core experience. In my downtime, I enjoy watching videos about video game development, especially those that explore beta versions versus final releases, as well as videos on out-of-bounds exploration and cut content. These insights into how



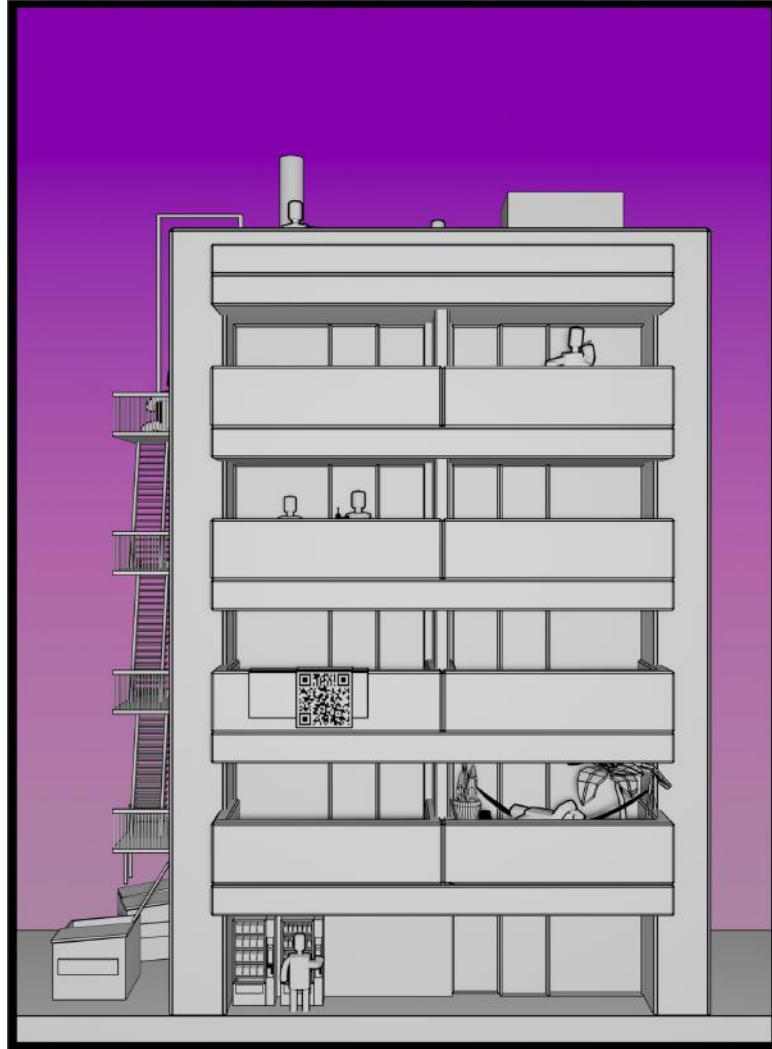
developers use tricks to optimize file sizes and create immersive worlds have been invaluable in refining my approach to AR art. Although challenging, I find it incredibly rewarding when I successfully create an AR experience that works seamlessly. Each challenge I overcome with one piece helps me improve the next, teaching me more about the platforms and how to best prepare an AR experience that stays true to the physical artwork viewers are engaging with.

**Your art explores themes like identity and perception. How do QR codes enhance the storytelling in these themes?**

QR codes enhance the storytelling in exploring these themes by altering our perception. They unlock the digital augmented reality (AR) experience, challenging how we view reality, art, and the creation of digital spaces right before our eyes. The QR codes allow a deeper story to unfold, revealing hidden themes that, on the surface, might appear as just another art piece. Yet beneath the surface, so much more is happening. One of my favorite examples of this is my artwork **Lost Stories**. The title itself embodies the idea that the individuals depicted in the piece each have their own unique lives and experiences. However, without the QR code's ability and the viewer's willingness to interact, their stories remain untold—lost to the flow of time. This reflects society at large, where each person has their own identity and narrative, yet these stories are often drowned out by the billions of others playing out daily. By challenging how people engage with art, the experience reshapes their perception of what is possible, expanding the boundaries of self-expression and the interplay between tangible and virtual spaces. It invites viewers to consider their own role as both observer and participant, forging a deeper connection to the stories being told and the technology that brings them to life.

**How do you see your art engaging audiences who are not familiar with augmented reality or digital art?**

That's the beauty of it—you don't need to be familiar with augmented reality (AR) to engage with my art. Activating the AR experience is entirely optional. Many people view and



QR | Lost Stories | 2022

enjoy the piece for its physical form alone, which is perfectly fine and unique to those individuals. However, for those who are curious, for those who dare to engage further and venture down the rabbit hole, the AR experience is there for them. It's always an addition, never a requirement. I ensure that the physical artwork stands on its own as a visually engaging piece, while the AR experience offers an extra layer of depth and exploration for those who seek it. For those who want to learn and activate the AR experience but may not be familiar with the technology, we provide documentation to guide them through the activation process. My goal is to ensure everyone can experience my art, whether they prefer the traditional physical art encounter or are eager to explore the innovative fusion of art and technology.

**What role does pop culture or social issues play in your creative process?**

Together, by utilizing pop culture and social issues, I aim to bridge the gap between the familiar and the thought-provoking, creating a dialogue between the artwork and the viewer. Drawing inspiration from my personal favorite animes, shows, and movies, I strive to create something that resonates on multiple levels—something visually captivating yet layered with deeper narratives. My goal is to craft art that sparks curiosity, encourages reflection, and challenges perceptions, blending the aesthetics of pop culture with the meaningful exploration of social themes. As well, I draw from personal experiences to create pieces that hold personal meaning while also forming broader connections to the world, allowing my art to speak to both the individual and collective human experience.





**Mahshid Mirheli** is an abstract artist based in Berlin, Germany, whose Persian heritage and upbringing in Germany have deeply influenced her creative journey. Having lived in five different countries over the past decade, each experience has left a distinct mark on her art. Largely self-taught, Mahshid harnesses her intuition and exploration to communicate what words cannot. Her work delves into the relationship between chaos and control, capturing the tension and harmony that exists between the two. Through vibrant color schemes, bold contrasts, and varied textures, Mahshid creates compositions that invite personal introspection. Themes of balance, transformation, and connection—between past and present, tradition and innovation—are at the heart of her exploration. Each piece is an invitation for the viewer to experience and interpret the emotional landscape she creates.

#### *Artist Statement*

I am a Berlin-based artist working primarily in mixed media and contemporary abstract art. My practice focuses on creating an undefined, immersive world through color, shape, and texture, rather than mirroring reality. Acrylics are my primary medium, allowing me to work with speed and freedom. I enjoy layering various tools and materials to build rich, tactile surfaces that invite discovery. In my studio in Berlin, I am continuously experimenting, pushing my boundaries, and exploring new possibilities. For me, art transcends aesthetics—it's a means of expressing emotions and ideas that words often fail to convey. My work is deeply personal, shaped by my experiences and my perspective of the world. I embrace the unpredictability and surprises of the creative process, trusting that it will guide me to new insights. With each piece, I strive to create a space where viewers can engage with something deeper—an emotional resonance that transcends simple explanation.

Mahshid Mirheli | Deep Connection









## — Interview

# Lauren McAndrew

**Your artist statement discusses the balance between security and vulnerability. How do you translate these sensations into your compositions and use of color?**

I translate the balance between security and vulnerability into my compositions by focusing on intimate, private environments that evoke both comfort and exposure. My work often portrays moments of solitude or small-scale connections, such as one or two figures in quiet, enclosed spaces. These settings create feelings of safety while simultaneously revealing the subject's inner world, inviting the viewer into a vulnerable, unguarded moment. Color plays a significant role in achieving this balance. I use warm, rich tones to create an atmosphere that feels like an embrace—protective and introspective. These colors envelop the figures or spaces, blurring the boundaries between the subject and their environment to heighten emotional engagement. At the same time, areas of contrast—in light, texture, or negative space—introduce a subtle tension that mirrors the vulnerability of being truly seen. I



Lauren McAndrew | Knotted Hair | 2024

intentionally use what I feel are “hazy” colors, such as browns, greens, and golds to imply a film of age has been placed over the piece. The symbol of the halo emphasizes this older, reflective feel as if looking into the past. And my transitions between thick and thin paint give illusions of softness or “fading away.” By constructing these visual dynamics, I aim to make the viewer feel as if they are stepping into a memory or a deeply personal moment where security and openness coexist.

My current paintings focus mostly on the truth revealed about a person while they sleep—how that can signify the passage of time and how that passage of time changes relationships. I look at how the direction of a person's gaze or the absence of it, alters the emotional tone of the piece. Direct eye contact often feels harsh or confrontational. But a diverted gaze, or looking at someone with their eyes closed can imply thought, longing, and can sometimes even feel like an intrusion.

**Many of your paintings depict moments of intimacy and connection. Are these inspired by personal experiences, or do they reflect a broader narrative?**

All of my art is born out of personal experience and relates to something I have directly felt or thought about. I draw from family, nostalgic places, and moments of self-revelation, but my ultimate goal transcends self-expression. I aim to create a universal resonance, inviting viewers to project their own memories and emotions onto my work. By doing so, I foster a silent, shared connection between myself and



Lauren McAndrew  
I Can Hear Your Heart | 2024

my audience. It's not about who physically sits in the painting but who the viewer sees when they look at it. This instinct toward familiarity shapes emotional, physical, and spiritual aspects of life. By inviting viewers into these private spaces, I encourage self-reflection and connection, highlighting who we are alone versus how we perform in public. Ultimately, my work reflects a dual narrative—one personal and one universal—that invites viewers to explore their own emotional landscapes.

**How did your time abroad influence your artistic approach and the themes you explore in your work?**

My time abroad profoundly shaped my artistic approach by immersing me in both historical and contemporary art practices. Visiting museums like the Louvre and the Borghese Gallery allowed me to study figurative work and examine techniques that have stood the test of time. Just as impactful as studying the art was observing the people—their differences, their similarities, and the universal threads that connect us all. Looking at figurative work, examining technique, I always in my mind try to break down how the painter whose work I'm looking at accomplished the image before me. It's impossible to make great art without also looking at it just as it is impossible to understand people without observing them. These experiences deepened my appreciation for how art evolves in response to culture and history. While interning in Genoa, I blended the city's historical beauty into modern product designs, merging old and new. Similarly, during my studies in Rome and travels through Florence and Pompeii, I reimagined historical artworks through a modern lens, bridging centuries of artistic exploration. This balance between tradition and innovation continues to influence my work as I strive to create compositions that feel timeless yet relevant to today's world.

**Your work often features figures in contemplative**



Lauren McAndrew | The Rocking Chair | 2024



Lauren McAndrew | Lovers Kiss | 2024

**or emotional states. What draws you to portray these specific moments of human experience?**

I am drawn to contemplative or emotional states because they reveal the complexity of human experience. Capturing moments of introspection or raw emotion allows me to explore the layers of identity and connection to the world around us. My fascination with this complexity was nurtured through research on the perception of the "self," influenced by theorists such as Arlie Russell Hochschild and George Herbert Mead.

This passion was further enriched by my studies in art history, particularly my love for movements like Romanticism, Impressionism, and Realism, which deeply explore the human condition. I find inspiration in the works of old masters like Rembrandt and Vermeer, as well as contemporary artists like Jenny Saville, Marlene Dumas, and Lucian Freud, whose portrayals of human vulnerability resonate deeply with me. My work seeks to continue this tradition, inviting viewers into moments of introspection and connection while celebrating the beauty and complexity of the human spirit.

**Could you share more about the techniques and materials you use to evoke the depth and texture of human emotions in your paintings?**

To evoke depth and texture, I rely on techniques like glazing and fading. By building layers of translucent



paint, I create a sense of depth and luminosity that captures the subtleties of skin tones, light, and atmosphere. Fading edges and soft transitions enhance this effect, evoking a sense of impermanence and movement.

I also incorporate warm, rich tones and detailed textures. These choices aim to create moments that feel timeless and suspended. Through these techniques, I invite viewers into an intimate space where they feel welcomed yet tinged with a gentle sadness, encouraging both reflection and connection. Part of why I am so drawn to oil paint in particular is because of its versatility. It can go on as something barely there or as a thick glob, mixing with gamsol, linseed oil, or stand oil to give entirely different finishes. The surface is malleable and lends itself differently to different surfaces. With its slow drying time, things can always be pushed around and changed – it's impossible to ruin a painting. Given what I speak of in my work, oil paint felt the most fitting.

**You've also worked in design and print. How do these disciplines intersect with your painting practice, if at all?**

It was through experimentation in print that I discovered new directions in painting. Initially struggling in my introductory printmaking class, I began to experiment more freely in subsequent courses, becoming particularly fond of screen printing. This led me to explore how screen printing could be paired with other techniques to elevate my work. I began printing translucent sheets over finished images, cutting and collaging elements, and using the

narrative behind my imagery to guide the final outcome. I used different types of inks to create ghost images and considered my negative space more heavily. Even the mistakes I made became crucial to pursuing new ideas and techniques.

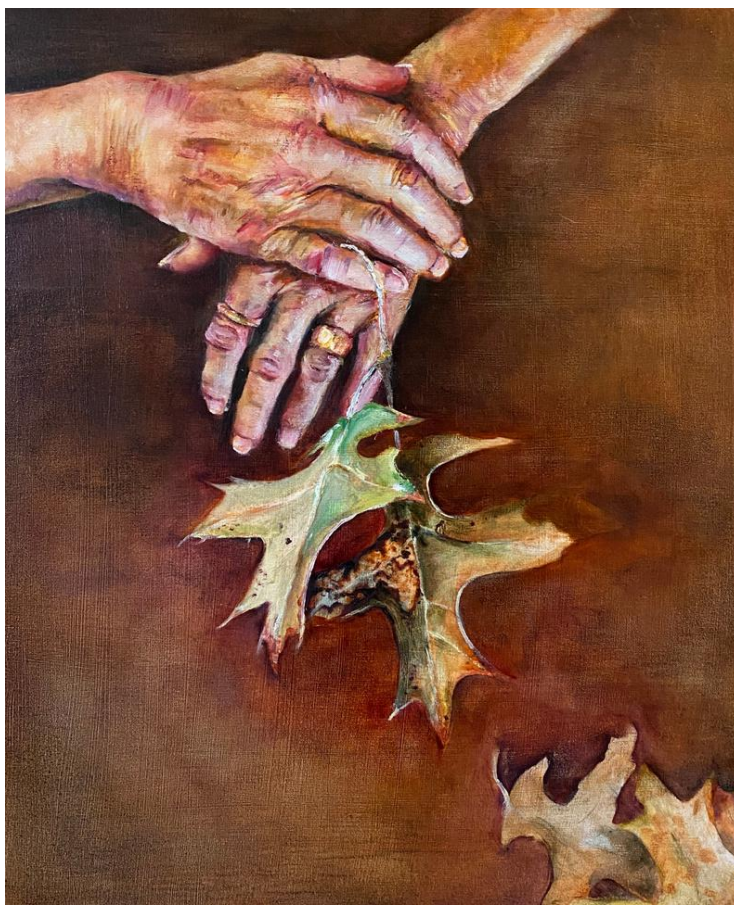
These experiments shaped my painting practice. Printmaking helped me establish my color palette, subject matter, and use of alternating tangibility. The halo symbol, a recurring motif in my work, first emerged in a print piece. Without this push into a new medium, my paintings might have followed a completely different path.

**Your project statement mentions combating loneliness. How do you hope your audience connects with your work on this theme?**

I hope my audience recognizes that while our experiences are deeply personal, they are also universal. Moments like falling asleep on someone's chest, sitting in comfortable silence, or allowing oneself to cry are deeply intimate yet shared across humanity. Through my work, I address the loneliness that arises from a lack of authentic interaction in today's world.

At the same time, I explore the value of solitude. In a society where much of life is performance, being alone strips away external expectations and leaves us to confront our truest selves. My work invites viewers to engage with these dualities—to find comfort in shared experiences while embracing the personal growth that solitude can offer. By fostering this reflection, I hope to ease the weight of loneliness and encourage connection and understanding.

Lauren McAndrew | Please Dont Go | 2023









**Davide Sozio** was trained as an art curator, having graduated with his MA in Visual Culture and Curatorial Practices at Brera Academy of Fine Arts in Italy. As a result, his artistic practice and curatorship are combined, blending personal expression with collaborative projects. His work focuses on large-scale paintings installations that explore themes of collective identity and memory, often involving participants from art workshops that engage communities facing challenges such as early school leaving, Parkinson's, autism, and more. Alongside his personal pieces, these collaborative artworks promote inclusivity and bridge societal divides, strengthening the connection between art-making and social engagement. They offer glimpses into familiar yet intriguingly complex futures, aiming to harness art's transformative power to connect people and communities. In addition to his artistic work, Sozio has worked as an art therapist for Albergo Cittadino, the European Solidarity Corps, and the Parkinson's Association in Vicenza. He is the co-founder of La Caienna, a cultural hub dedicated to fostering creativity and community projects. His work has been featured in exhibitions such as Chorus (2023) at the Chiostrì di San Lorenzo in Vicenza, Secondo Open Studio (2021), and Miniciccioli (2022) at La Caienna. In 2024, he curated Revolver at DoRobe, an outsider art exhibition showcasing the work of Lorenzo, an artist with autism.

### *Artist Statement*

As a visual artist specializing in large-scale painting and installation, my work explores themes of identity, memory, and environmental futures. Combining personal expression with collaborative projects, I am passionate about using art as a tool for inclusion and connection. With an MA in Visual Culture and Curatorial Practices from the Brera Academy, I bring a curatorial lens to my practice, fostering social engagement. Co-founder of La Caienna, a cultural space dedicated to participatory exhibitions and community-driven art. I've exhibited locally, including the curated outsider art show Revolver, reflecting my belief in art's transformative potential to bridge divides and foster dialogue.



Davide Sozio | Fruit Market Exhibition 'Il Mercato delle Idee' | 2024







## — Interview

# Anastasia Petrenko

**Your artistic statement mentions exploring the psychological structure of the human being. How do you translate such complex concepts into visual forms?**

I use various shapes and colors to convey emotions and states. For example, sharp lines and dark shades can symbolize anxiety or stress, while soft forms and light colors may reflect calmness and harmony. Color is a powerful tool for transmitting mood and emotions.

I strive to create simple, concise forms that evoke deep thoughts and interpretations, leaving room for personal perception.

Additionally, I employ visual metaphors that trigger associations, allowing viewers to interpret psychological states through their personal experiences.

All of this helps create visual imagery that conveys the complexity and multifaceted nature of human psychology in an abstract form.

**The interplay between image and background is central to your work. How do you approach creating this tension in your compositions?**

As an artist, I perceive the interaction between image



and background as a dance of entities, where each finds its place in infinite space. This tension arises from spatial relationships, which become a metaphor for the inner world, where every layer reveals new horizons of perception.

The interaction between the image and the background becomes an integral part of the artistic expression, with every detail playing its role in creating a shared emotional resonance.

**Your works feature biomorphic and archetypal forms. What inspires the shapes and symbols you choose to incorporate?**

I draw inspiration from the depths of human experience and nature. For me, biomorphic and archetypal forms reflect universal themes that permeate our lives.

I choose shapes that resonate with instinctive feelings, evoking associations with the organic and primal. These forms become a bridge between the inner world and external reality, allowing viewers to connect with something deeper and more meaningful. The symbols I use are based on archetypes familiar to all of us. They serve as a language that transcends cultural and temporal boundaries, creating space for interpretation and reflection.

Thus, my choice of shapes and symbols is not merely an aesthetic act but an exploration and understanding of the human essence, where every line and curve becomes part of a shared narrative that unveils new horizons of perception.

**How has your education and training, including the course in color theory at Toni&Guy and your**



Anastasia Petrenko  
The Spawning Season Sometimes Comes in Autumn  
2009

## studies at the Stieglitz Academy, influenced your artistic practice?

I see education and training as light that penetrates the dark corners of imagination, revealing new perspectives and opportunities. It is a process where knowledge becomes paint, and skills become brushes, enabling the creation of unique works. Education forms the foundation upon which the creative process is built, providing tools for experimentation and self-expression. It broadens horizons, allowing for the fusion, reinterpretation, and transformation of ideas, much like an artist blends colors on a palette.

Training also inspires dialogue between tradition and modernity, creating space for the interplay between the past and the future.

Thus, education and training are integral to the creative journey, where every encounter with an idea or technique enriches the artist's inner world, enabling the creation of works that resonate with the depths of human experience.

## What role does spontaneity play in your creative process, and how do you balance it with rational control?

Spontaneity in my creative process is the spark that ignites the fire of inspiration. It allows me to immerse myself in a flow of emotions and intuition, where every line and color emerges from an internal impulse, free from constraints. It's a moment when I allow myself to be vulnerable, open to new possibilities and unexpected turns.

However, as an artist, I also understand the importance of rational control. It acts as a compass that guides my exploration, enabling me to structure chaos and give shape to spontaneous ideas. The



Anastasia Petrenko | Sitting | 2024

balance between these two forces is a dance where spontaneity breathes life and control gives it meaning. I strive for harmony, letting spontaneity lead me while staying mindful of how it fits within the broader context of my work. This interplay gives rise to pieces that reflect both the inner world and external reality, creating space for dialogue and reflection.

## Your work often creates a conflict between flatness and perspective. What emotions or reactions are you hoping to evoke in the viewer?

I aim to evoke a sense of uncertainty, prompting the viewer to contemplate what lies beyond the visible. It's like gazing into an abyss where flatness becomes a window into a multi-layered reality.

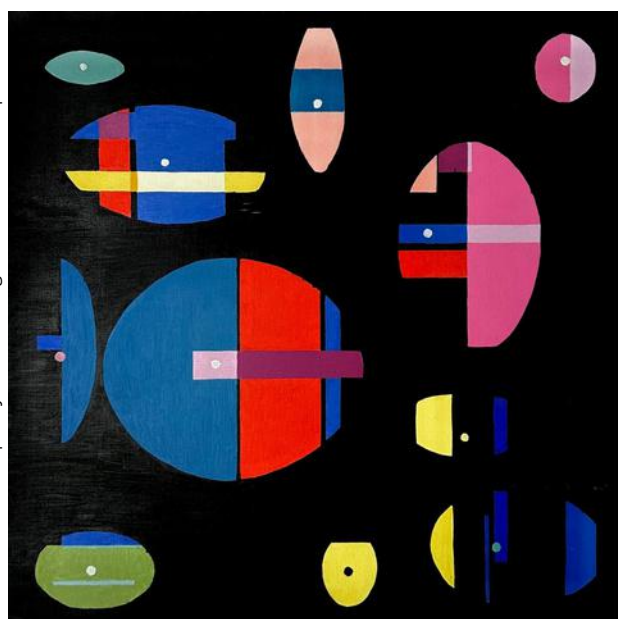
The emotions I hope to evoke are a mixture of wonder and introspection. I want the viewer to feel the tension between the familiar and the unfamiliar, between what seems recognizable and what raises questions. It's an invitation to dialogue, where everyone can interpret the work through their own experiences, creating a unique connection with the piece.

Thus, my artistic language becomes a space for exploration, where the conflict between flatness and perspective opens doors to new emotions and understanding, allowing the viewer to delve into endless possibilities of interpretation.

## How do you see the relationship between your art and the collective unconscious?

My art is a mirror of the collective unconscious, where every stroke and color becomes a symbol of shared fears and hopes. It creates a bridge between the individual and the universal, allowing viewers to recognize that their experiences are part of the broader human condition.

Engaging with my works awakens collective memories, weaving personal stories into a single thread that stretches across generations. Each interpretation is a step toward understanding our shared place in the vast canvas of life.



Anastasia Petrenko | They Are Watching Us from a Satellite | 2009



## Cecilia Balzani

I have a degree in Communication Design from the Politecnico di Milano and I am currently doing a Masters in Cultural Anthropology at the University of Turin. I have always been passionate about graphic design and illustration, and I would like to work in the social field and urban regeneration.









## — Interview

# Olesia Tverdokhlib

**Your work is deeply influenced by Jung's theories of archetypes. How did you first encounter Jungian psychology, and how has it shaped your artistic process?**

I first became interested in psychology when I started my own therapy journey, which I've now been on for five years. Through this process, I was introduced to Jungian psychology, and it deeply resonated with me. Jung's theories of archetypes and the collective unconscious offered a framework for understanding the recurring symbols and narratives that surface in both personal and collective experiences.

This perspective has profoundly shaped my artistic process. I see my work as a way of exploring and visualizing these universal patterns and archetypes—those deep, often hidden layers of the psyche that connect us all. When I paint, I aim to bring these elements into focus, blending realism with surreal, symbolic imagery to create pieces that feel both personal and timeless.

**In paintings like "Glory Box" and "The Good Boy," you explore identity and societal expectations. Could you elaborate on how you approach these themes visually?**

In paintings like "Glory Box" and "The Good Boy," I explore identity and societal expectations by visually navigating the tension between the legacy we inherit and the authentic self we strive to uncover. This theme is central to my \*Heritage\* block, which examines how family and societal values shape, support, or constrain personal identity.



Olesia Tverdokhlib | Glory Box



In "Glory Box," I use water as a symbol of the boundary between the conscious and subconscious, illustrating the struggle to reconcile inherited values and personal truth. The box represents a dowry of beliefs and traditions passed down through generations. Its dual role—as both a lens of self-discovery and a barrier obscuring true identity—captures the complexity of navigating our cultural inheritance. "The Good Boy" takes on the tension between external expectations and self-expression. The oversized bow, a symbol of societal conformity, constrains the figure, while the act of untying it signifies liberation. This visual metaphor reflects the inner journey of breaking free from inherited roles to embrace individuality.

Together, these works and others in the block, visualize the dynamic interplay between heritage and selfhood, encouraging viewers to reflect on their own experiences of identity formation and the societal pressures that shape it.

**You've exhibited internationally and been awarded by prestigious institutions like the Luxembourg Art Prize. How have these experiences impacted your career and artistic confidence?**

As an emerging artist, having my work recognized internationally by institutions like the Pinacothèque museum (Luxembourg Art Prize) has been incredibly validating. These experiences have not only opened doors to new audiences but also reinforced my belief in the importance of the themes I explore in my work, such as identity, heritage, and self-discovery.

While I'm still at early stages of my artistic journey, these milestones have given me the confidence to trust my vision and pursue opportunities I might have hesitated to seek before. They've also connected me with a wider network of artists and curators, whose insights and feedback continue to shape my growth. Each step forward reminds me of the power of art to resonate across cultures and experiences, and encourages me to further develop in both technique and storytelling.

**Your art merges traditional and modern elements. How do you strike a balance between these two contrasting styles?**

The combination of traditional and contemporary styles in my paintings creates a multi-layered visual experience. Realistic figures painted in a classical style provide a sense of intimacy, allowing the viewer to identify with the characters. At the same time, imaginary scenes filled with symbolic elements blur the boundaries between reality and the subconscious, immersing the viewer in the realm of dreams, fantasies, or hidden fears.

I use this contrast between detailed reality and fantasy as a technique to create strong emotions that allow you to reflect deeper on your inner world. It is important for me that my works offer not only aesthetic pleasure, but also the possibility of introspection, creating a space for a dialogue. This combination of past and present in styles gives the viewer a sense of familiarity, but at the same time opens up access to new, unexpected experiences.

**The subconscious plays a significant role in your work. Could you describe your process for translating subconscious themes into visual narratives?**

My artistic practice is deeply intertwined with my experience in psychotherapy, which first sparked my interest in psychology. Over time, creating art has become an extension of this journey—a way to navigate and explore my inner world. Through my work, I strive to see, define, and understand myself, often treating my paintings as a mirror. When engaging with subconscious themes, I focus on the imagery and sensations that naturally arise. The subconscious doesn't operate in words but in images; it is preverbal and symbolic. Because of this, these themes don't need to be "translated" into visual narratives—they already exist as images. In fact, visual expression often conveys more than words ever could, capturing emotions and meanings that language cannot articulate. My process often begins with creating sketches or compositions without consciously understanding their meaning. Insights reveal themselves later, as I reflect on the work. One of the most powerful aspects of this practice is the freedom to let go of control. In the meditative flow of painting, I allow my imagination—a direct link to the subconscious—to guide me, recording the imagery that emerges spontaneously. Through this process, art becomes both a method of exploration and a bridge to deeper self-awareness.



Olesia Tverdokhlilb | The Good Boy

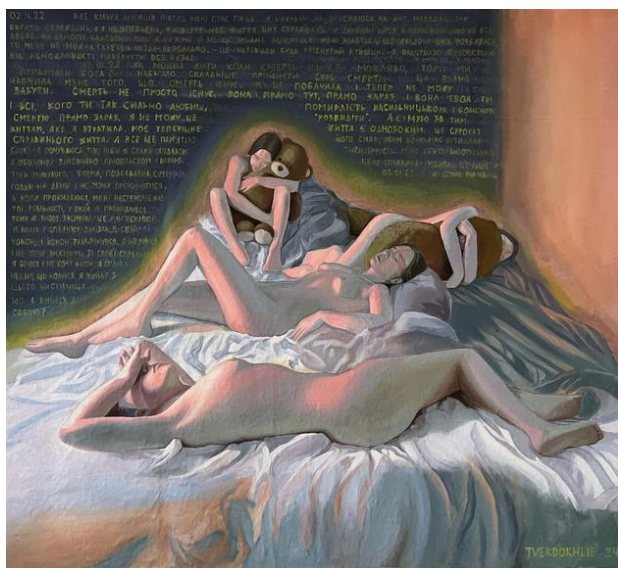
**How do you hope viewers interact with the emotional and psychological layers in your paintings?**

I hope viewers engage with the emotional and psychological layers in my paintings as an invitation to self-reflection and discovery. By combining realistic figures with dreamlike settings, I aim to create a space where viewers can confront their own emotions, memories, and subconscious thoughts. The familiarity of the figures offers a sense of connection, while the imaginative contexts encourage introspection and challenge viewers to interpret the layers of meaning based on their own experiences. My goal is for each piece to feel personal yet universal, sparking a dialogue between the viewer's inner world and the visual story I present. Ultimately, I hope my work inspires curiosity, emotional resonance, and a deeper exploration of the self.

**Could you share insights into your creative process? For example, how do you decide which medium—oil or acrylic—best suits a particular work?**

My creative process always begins with a sketch. I resolve compositional and color decisions before transferring the work to canvas, ensuring every element is intentional. Typically, I work with canvas rolls, which I prime if needed, stretch onto a frame, or leave unstretched and attach directly to the wall. This approach gives me the flexibility to customize the canvas size and surface preparation to meet the specific demands of each project, especially for larger works. I often use both acrylic and oil in the same painting, leveraging the strengths of each medium. Acrylic's fast-drying nature makes it ideal for initial color blocking, but it can also be limiting. For smoother transitions and refined blending, I turn to oil, which adds a certain ethereal quality to the work and complements techniques inspired by the old masters. If I want a more classical and polished appearance, I layer oil over the acrylic. However, this approach requires technical precision—acrylic, being water-based, must always be applied first, with oil layered on top to ensure the painting's longevity.

Olesia Tverdokhlilb | Incubation Period final





**Goran Tomic**, a self-taught artist from Sydney, Australia, creates collages that capture the chaotic beauty of urban life. His pieces, often made on the move—in cafes, pubs, or even on public transport—reflect the shifting dynamics of his surroundings and daily routine. Prompted by his transition from a spacious house to a compact apartment, Goran utilizes materials like cardboard, envelopes, and old book covers, blending them into distinctive compositions that embody the city's vibrancy. His art transcends mere visual expression; it is a journey through urban decay in search of the "Wilderness Robe," a symbol of authenticity in a constantly evolving world. Influenced by Robert Rauschenberg, Goran's installations and performances challenge viewers to rethink the boundaries between art and everyday life.

### *Project Statement*

The series I'm working on is titled "Mapping Approximation" which is a large expansive collection of Collages delving into the consciousness of the Modern Inferno that we inhabit and our oxygen giving participation to its flames. They are Compositions within compositions commenting on the current state of Technology, AI, Climate change, cheap and nasty architecture, disposable culture, medication as food, the new age Jungian world on our doorstep. This is Our Modern Inferno. You won't find Obvious images of Blood or War or Hell in this series, the underlying theme and Through Line is my personal interpretation of Dante's inferno.



Goran Tomic | I Can Fly but I'm Not Free | 2024



Goran Tomic | The Best Thing I've Heard all Year | 2024





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# — Interview

## Kayla Ether

**Your art is deeply personal, exploring themes of transformation, resilience, and impermanence. How did your journey through Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome shape your artistic vision?**

Living with Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome has taught me to embrace the fragility and resilience of the human condition. The unpredictable nature of the syndrome parallels the themes in my art—transformation and impermanence. It has given me a deeper appreciation for life's fleeting moments and the beauty within those transitions. My work is a reflection of this journey, seeking to capture the raw essence of growth, decay, and renewal. My disease taught me that some things are out of our control, so it's necessary to let go. I portray that visually in my art. My body, constrained by this rare disease, endured severe physical challenges, leaving me to rely permanently on a cane. Art, for me, is not an escape from my circumstances. It is a necessity, a response to the persistent question: "Am I still here? Am I still something beyond the physical limitations that define me?" Art becomes my survival, my way of proving and reminding myself that my existence still holds meaning beyond this "temporary home." I believe that our bodies are but temporary homes for our spirits—our souls.

**The concept of "wither" and "ether" in your project statement is poetic and profound. How do these ideas manifest in your creative process and artworks?**

"Wither" represents the process of decay and decline we undergo, reflecting mortality and the passage of time. "Ether" symbolizes the immaterial space between the tangible and intangible that connects us to all things—the essence that transcends the body. The "Withers" I portray



in my continuous series of "Ether's Withers" are abstract entities—metaphoric ghosts and spirits, biomorphic forms inspired by critters, insects, and animals, even fleeting or permanent feelings and thoughts. Together they speak of the cycle of life—an ebb and flow between loss and renewal. In my creative process, these concepts come to life through my choice of materials and techniques. I embrace imperfections, natural wear and tear—the passage of time, allowing the materials to evolve organically and tell their own stories by observing the natural world more deeply.

**You exclusively use recycled and organic materials in your works. Can you share the inspiration behind this practice and how it reflects your philosophy?**

My use of recycled and organic materials stems from a desire to leave a positive, non-destructive environmental trace in this world. Growing up, I had to be resourceful with whatever I had. Waste is a dishonor to the gift of nature; we as people should challenge the disposable nature of modern consumption. Instead, we should look at everything around us as something that can be rebuilt and repurposed. The materials I collect or have found all have histories and imperfections that resonate with my artistic themes. By repurposing them, I breathe new life into what was once discarded, reinforcing my belief that beauty and purpose can be found in the overlooked and forgotten.

**How has your Afro-Latina heritage and connection to your ancestors influenced your artistic themes and materials?**

My Puerto Rican heritage is a vital thread in the fabric of my art, deeply connecting me to a lineage of resilience, creativity, and a profound relationship with the earth. As I continue to explore and learn about what has been lost over time, this journey of discovery fuels my creative process. Through my work, I pay homage to my ancestors

Kayla Ether | Guani | 2024



and the struggles they faced, both historically and in the more recent generations of my family. I incorporate organic materials and traditional practices that emphasize sustainability and resourcefulness, bridging the past and present. Each piece I create honors their legacy, while also reflecting the ongoing process of uncovering and learning from the lost pieces of our history.

**Your works embrace imperfection, drawing inspiration from Wabi-Sabi and other philosophies. How do you find beauty in flaws, and how do these ideas resonate with viewers?**

I find beauty in flaws by embracing things for what they are, rather than what they could be or once were. Imperfection, to me, is where true beauty lies—it tells the authentic story of life as it is, not as we wish it to be. Drawing from the principles of Wabi-Sabi, Mingei, and Sōdeisha, I celebrate impermanence, imperfection, and incompleteness as integral parts of the human experience. Mingei's focus on the beauty of everyday objects and the value of the hand-crafted speaks to me deeply, as does Sōdeisha's approach to non-traditional techniques, which honors the organic and evolving nature of the medium. These philosophies invite us to find worth in the raw, the real, and the imperfect. I believe they resonate with viewers because they mirror our shared human experience—our vulnerabilities, growth, evolution, and the inevitable passage of time. In this light, we all connect with the universal journey of life, coming to a place of acceptance and understanding.



Kayla Ether | Mollasse, molasses | 2024



Kayla Ether | Xibalba | 2024

**Living between cultures, from Puerto Rican roots to your life in France, how has this duality shaped your artistic identity?**

Living between cultures has given me a unique lens through which I view the world. My Puerto Rican and a touch of Italian roots ground me in tradition and heritage, while my life in France exposes me to diverse perspectives and artistic practices. This duality creates a rich interplay in my work, where contrasting elements—past and present, raw and refined—come together to form a cohesive narrative that reflects my identity. It's a constant balance that shapes my artistic vision.

**The loss of your grandparents had a profound impact on you. How does their memory live on in your art and creative practice?**

I lived with my grandparents for about a decade. I am eternally grateful to have experienced their love and care during such formative years as a child and teenager. My grandparents, Enrico and Aurelia, were the keepers of our family's stories, traditions, and values. They taught me through lessons and mistakes how to resource from what we had and what was around us—recycling, paying attention to what goes into our bodies, valuing what we have, and, most importantly, practicing appreciation and gratitude. Their influence is woven into every piece I create. Through my art, I honor their legacy by exploring themes of memory, loss, and continuity. Their resilience and wisdom guide me, reminding me to approach my work with intention, love, and a sense of connection to those who came before me. Living with my grandfather, an artist himself, guided and influenced me towards this path.



## James Birkin GRBSA – RBSA Graduate Artist

James Birkin (born 1991) is a painter based in the Coventry whose work explores the urban landscape in its many forms. After studying a Fine Art BA and a painting MA at Coventry University, he has been able to delve deeper into the subject matter that has been evolving since 2012. The artist has exhibited notably in New Art West Midlands 2014, Salon 2015, and the Coventry Biennial 2019 and subsequent local exhibitions.

Birkin's paintings focus on overlooked and unappreciated fragments of the British landscape that sit in states of disrepair and neglect, an all too familiar site in redeveloping post-industrial cities in the Midlands and the North. The buildings stand as monuments to a bygone era and exist in a state of limbo where their fate is still waiting to be decided. The buildings are primarily sites of leisure, cinemas, and pubs. Sites that were once an integral part of the local community gradually disintegrate as the world around them changes and they fall into obscurity and redundancy. They are products of a failed monetary system and a reflection of a dramatic shift in how people spend their leisure time in the modern world as the internet takes yet more prominence. Grand cinemas from the 1920s are swept away to make way for modern retail developments and luxury apartments. Old pubs are boarded up and demolished to make way for a new supermarket or student accommodation. The urban landscape is a battle ground for property developers and the paintings aim to capture the fragility of the fabric that ties the past with the present and questions if the built environment can be allowed to naturally develop and give disused buildings a second chance at life, to provide a new purpose. The paintings explore the melancholic story of a place that has reached the end of its days, awaiting an opportunity to rise again or fade away into history.

Birkin James | The Great Western





Birkin James | The Aftermath



# — Interview

## Anna Canary

**Your "Beyond Fruits" series beautifully blends vibrant colors with ancient symbols. Could you elaborate on the meaning behind the symbols in your work and their connection to universal themes like growth and transformation?**

In my work, ancient symbols are more than just decorative elements — they carry meaning, history, and blessings. Many of these symbols come from traditional crafts and designs, deeply embedded in the culture of my ancestors. They appeared on everyday items like spinning wheels, ceramics, and wooden boards, as well as in architectural details like roof carvings.

What fascinates me is that these symbols were not only aesthetic but also protective, acting as talismans, blessings, and amulets. They carried wishes for family well-being, harmony, and abundance.

The spiral symbolizes eternal growth, the cyclical nature of life, and inner strength.

The sun represents the source of life, power, and renewal, reflecting our potential.

Earth and seeds symbolize fertility and the



beginning of a new path, embodying the life cycle.

Feminine energy is depicted by the moon, symbolizing intuition, gentleness, and creation.

Masculine energy is represented by the fir tree, associated strength, protection, stability, and upward movement.

Prosperity is a symbol of stability, luck, and harmony, often depicted by a diamond.

Through my research, I've discovered that many of these symbols share similar energies and meanings, regardless of whether they originate from Mayan culture or other ancient civilizations.

Despite cultural differences, they often convey common themes.

I see these symbols as a bridge between the past and the present, a way to bring their protective energy into contemporary life.

**How has growing up surrounded by nature in a northern village and now living in vibrant Florida influenced your artistic vision and choice of colors?**

My life in a northern village shaped my intuitive perception of the world. Surrounded by forests, fields, and simple natural forms, I learned to find beauty in even the most ordinary things, those that might go unnoticed at first glance. This connection with nature and love for all living beings instilled in me a sense of unity with life.

Intuition plays a key role in my work. Even when the painting contains only a few simple shapes, they speak for themselves — they are clear and accessible to everyone.

For me, bright colors are like doses of joy and energy. Perhaps this is because I grew up in a place



Anna Canary | Not just a Orange

where winters were filled with snow, and in summer, nature appeared more restrained. I've always longed for bright colors, and now they help me convey emotions and energy.

Moving to Florida was a turning point for me. Here, I realized I could no longer delay my creative ambitions. Bright colors became an essential part of my art, and Florida's multiculturalism inspired me to see the world in a new way.

**You describe your work as being part of the "Dopamine Series," aiming to evoke joy and vitality. What role do emotions play in your creative process?**

The "Dopamine Series" brings bursts of joy and vitality into everyday life. Psychologists often say that bright colors spark positive emotions and energize spaces.

What makes this series special is its universality — anyone can find a fruit that resonates with them. These fruits become metaphors for individuality and self-expression. My goal is to create pieces that people not only admire but feel a personal connection to, evoking their own joy and energy. I named it the "Dopamine Series" because these vibrant colors are meant to trigger a positive emotional response, much like the way dopamine affects our sense of happiness and motivation.

**Your work features a strong interplay of texture and abstraction. How do you decide on the textures and materials to use for each piece?**

In this series, I aim to convey the sensation of fruit pulp through a combination of glossy and matte textures. Each detail invites the viewer to "touch" the painting with their eyes, feeling its depth and textures through their gaze. The smoothness and roughness, light and shadow become tactile for the eyes, as if they are running their fingers across the surface.

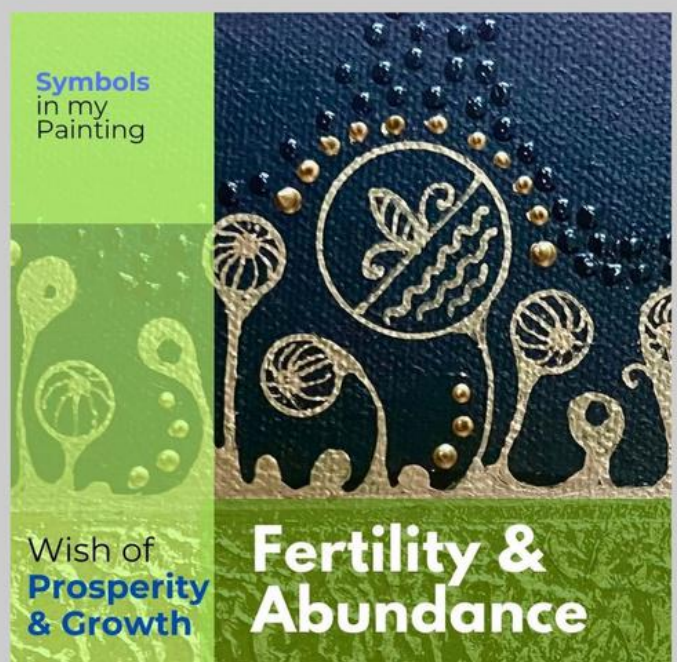
The golden outlines play a significant role, like a soft glow that gently transitions into a story that unfolds through symbols. These contours represent the unique worth of every individual, with the gold symbolizing the light and value that radiates from them.

The broken lines and geometric shapes in my work are meant to give the fruit a more abstract form, moving away from smooth curves to angular structures.

**The "Beyond Fruits" series explores themes of personal growth and cultural diversity. Can you share how your background in graphic design has shaped the way you approach these themes in your art?**

In graphic design, the main goal is to convey a clear and specific message that is understood in the same way by everyone. In art, however, each viewer has the opportunity to interpret the information in their own way, through their emotions and experiences. Drawing from my design background, I aim to create compositions where elements have a clear purpose, but also leave space for personal

## SERIES "BEYOND FRUITS"





interpretation.

Furthermore, just as in graphic design, where text serves as a direct means of communication, in my paintings, symbols play a similar role. They create not a direct, but a multilayered message, inviting the viewer to search for and find their own meanings.

**How do you see ancient symbols as a bridge between different cultures? Have you encountered any specific symbols that resonate with your personal journey?**

Ancient symbols often transcend cultural boundaries, acting as a bridge between different traditions and ways of thinking. For me, symbols like the spiral or the sun are universal and appear across many cultures, representing themes of growth, renewal, and life force. These symbols remind us of the common threads that unite humanity, even though each culture interprets them in its own way.

The spiral, for example, is a symbol of eternal growth and cyclical nature, and can be found in cultures from ancient Greece to Native American traditions. It's a visual representation of continuous evolution, which resonates with my own journey as an artist, constantly evolving and growing in my work.

For me, ancient symbols are not just elements of decoration but powerful tools that connect different cultures, forming a shared language of meaning that transcends time and space. They help me express universal concepts like transformation, prosperity, and strength—ideas that are fundamental to human existence, no matter where

or when one lives. These symbols invite viewers to reflect on their own understanding of life's cycles and their place within that larger, interconnected story.

**Why "Beyond Fruits"? What inspired you to create a series that uses fruits as a metaphor, and what is the deeper message behind it?**

When I moved to Miami, I was immediately captivated by its vibrant mix of cultures. Coming from a different background, I found myself surrounded by people with unique stories, traditions, and ways of seeing the world. At first, it was overwhelming—every person carried a cultural code that felt unfamiliar to me. But over time, this diversity became a source of inspiration and joy. I started to see the beauty in these differences and how, despite our varied origins, there is something universal that connects us all.

This experience became the foundation for "Beyond Fruits". To me, fruits are the perfect metaphor for individuality and shared humanity. They are diverse in shape, texture, and color, yet they all grow through a similar cycle of life. Each fruit in my paintings represents a person—a unique, vibrant being shaped by their own experiences, yet part of a collective whole. The juicy textures and bold colors are not just about the fruits themselves; they are a celebration of people, their identities, and their vitality. The series invites viewers to reflect on how, like fruits, we are all unique in our essence but deeply connected in our growth.

Living in a city like Miami, I've learned that we thrive when we embrace the differences that make us who we are. This series is my way of honoring that diversity while reminding us that, at our core, we are more alike than we are different. It's a visual reminder that, no matter where we come from, each of us has the potential to grow, transform, and shine.

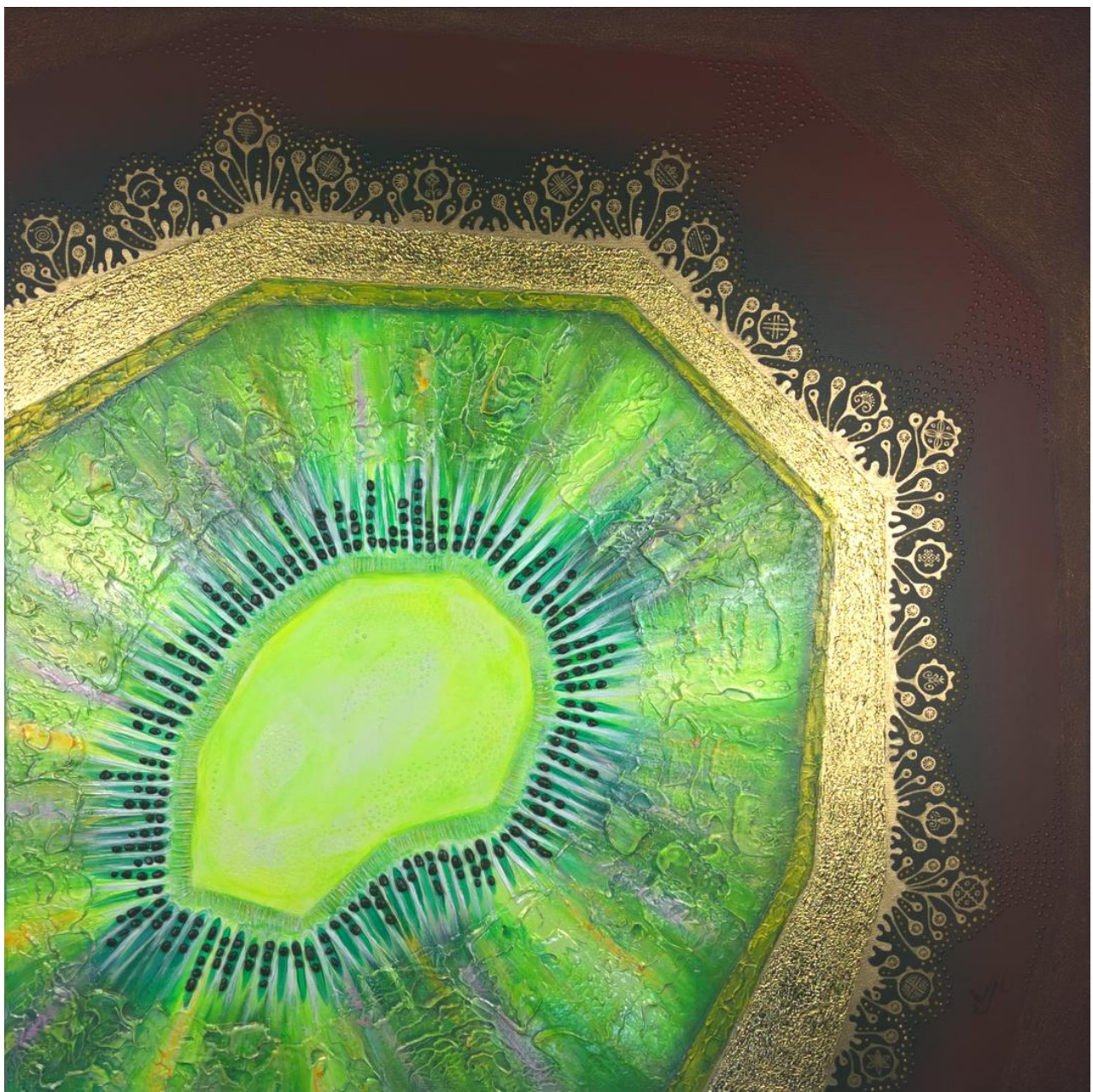
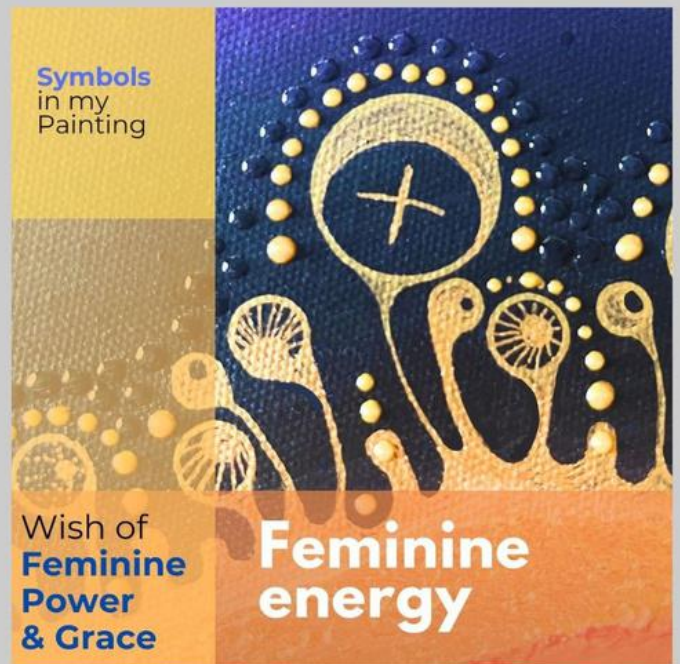
"Beyond Fruits" is about celebrating the vibrant individuality of every person and finding unity in our shared human experience.



Anna Canary  
Not just a Fig



SERIES  
"BEYOND FRUITS"





My name is **Björg Mohr**, I am 38 years old and I live in the Faroe Islands. I started drawing and painting in 2023. As a child I loved to draw, but even though I haven't been doing so for YEARS, I have always been creative in many other ways. In 2023 I felt my head was almost exploding with a desire to get something creative out of my head and onto paper/canvas and so I went to a local evening class and haven't stopped painting and drawing since. I get inspired from shapes I see around me and just from the way that I am feeling in the moment. It feels like therapy, sitting on my own, drawing thin, larger and more or less detailed lines that end up forming into something. I always let whatever happens, happen. My works are rarely planned ahead, I go where the pen takes me and create a mood from that. One of my very favorite artists is Egon Schiele, I very much enjoy the raw shapes and eyes. Right now, I am just open to trying out everything I can on my artistic journey, thoroughly enjoying drawing and painting.

JEAN-MICHEL BASQUIAT

Warrior 1984





## — Interview

# Zabih Habib

**Your work showcases a unique blend of gemstones and precious metals. How does your family's heritage in the Afghan gemstone trade influence your artistic process?**

My family's deep connection to Afghanistan's gemstone trade has fundamentally shaped my artistic vision and process. Growing up in a family that pioneered the gemstone trade, I developed an intimate understanding of these precious materials - their unique characteristics, cultural significance, and natural beauty. This heritage influences how I select and incorporate rubies, sapphires, and other precious stones into my sculptures.

Each piece I create represents a fusion of this ancestral knowledge with contemporary artistic expression. The gemstones aren't merely decorative elements - they're integral to the narrative of each sculpture, carefully chosen and positioned to enhance both the physical form and symbolic meaning.

This blend of traditional materials and modern sculptural techniques allows me to stay true to my cultural roots while creating art that speaks to contemporary audiences.

**What inspired you to sculpting animals and natural forms such as stallions and falcons?**

My artistic inspiration is deeply rooted in the experiences of my childhood. Before the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, I often visited a horse breeder on the outskirts of Kabul who raised full-blood Arabian horses. I was mesmerized by their elegance, strength, and spirit. After school, I



would spend hours watching them run, captivated by their movements and grace. These early memories sparked my lifelong fascination for Arabian horses.

During summer trips to northern Afghanistan, I also encountered falcons for the first time. Revered in Afghan culture as symbols of freedom, vigilance, and strength, their graceful flight and commanding presence left a lasting impression on me. These experiences with animals and nature became a foundation for my artistic vision.

While I specialize in sculpting falcons and Arabian horses, my work extends beyond these subjects. Over the years, I have created sculptures of eagles, black panthers, hawks, aquatic life, and other natural forms. Living in different countries throughout my life has broadened my perspective and deepened my passion for capturing the beauty and symbolism of nature in my art.

**Can you walk us through your creative process, especially when working with such precise tools and intricate materials?**

My creative process begins the moment I hold a raw gemstone in my hands. It feels as though the stone itself is speaking to me, guiding the

direction of the piece. Each gemstone carries its own story—its structure, color gradients, and natural inclusions offer subtle hints about what it wishes to become. I see this process not as an act of imposing my vision but as a collaboration between the material and my intuition.

Unlike traditional methods that rely on pre-designed sketches, I allow the uniqueness of each stone to guide me. I observe how light interacts with its surface, explore its textures, and sense the energy it emits. Sometimes, in those first moments, I can already envision the contours of a falcon in flight or the elegance of a horse waiting to emerge from within. Other times, the form reveals itself gradually during the carving process—a dialogue that evolves with every cut.

Working with such intricate materials and precise tools requires patience and respect for the stone's natural properties. Every cut must be deliberate, as there is no room for error. Yet, this challenge is what makes the process so captivating. It's a delicate balance between control and intuition—a creative journey where both the stone and my vision shape the final piece.

Ultimately, my goal is to honor the natural beauty of each gemstone while infusing it with



Zabith Habib | Um Al Arab

life and movement. The result is not just a sculpture but a harmonious blend of nature's artistry and human craftsmanship.

### **How do you approach combining traditional craftsmanship with modern artistic interpretations?**

I see my art as a bridge between the past and the present. Traditional gemstone craftsmanship forms the foundation of my sculptures, reflecting techniques passed down through generations. At the same time, I incorporate modern forms and abstract elements to give my work a contemporary edge. This approach allows me to honor the cultural and artistic heritage of my roots while pushing the boundaries of creative expression in a way that resonates with today's audiences.

### **Your sculptures and paintings often emphasize themes like resilience and cultural preservation. What messages do you aim to convey through these themes?**

My art reflects the resilience and strength found in both nature and human culture. Resilience is central to my work because it represents the



Zabith Habib | Echoes of Glory



ability to endure and thrive despite challenges. Growing up in Afghanistan, I was inspired by the perseverance of people and the beauty of the natural world around me, which continues to shape my artistic vision.

Through my sculptures, I aim to capture the essence of movement, strength, and grace found in nature while preserving cultural traditions. Each piece is a reflection of the values I hold dear—resilience, continuity, and the timeless connection between heritage and modernity. My hope is that my work inspires viewers to reflect on their own stories of perseverance and to appreciate the enduring beauty of both nature and culture.

**How has growing up in Germany influenced your precision and attention to detail in your art?**

Growing up as a teenager in Germany had a profound influence on my attention to detail and discipline as an artist. Germany's deep appreciation for craftsmanship and high-quality workmanship shaped my approach to creating art. This environment sharpened my eye for precision and inspired me to craft each piece



Zabih Habib | Dharrah Al Rih



with the utmost care.

Over the years, I've carefully studied the anatomy and movements of animals, ensuring that every detail in my sculptures reflects both accuracy and life. For me, German craftsmanship is defined by unparalleled precision, quality & dedication to your craft, values that I strive to mirror in my work.

**Which artwork are you most proud of, and why?**

I take great pride in all of my pieces, but there are a few from the past that I am especially proud of. One of my most distinguished sculptures was a falcon crafted from ruby and gold, which was gifted to a renowned president. I also had the great honor of creating artworks for the Sultan of Brunei, including a horse and an eagle made from ruby and onyx. Another exceptional piece was an Arabian horse, sculpted from lapis, gold, and diamonds for a Saudi sheikh.

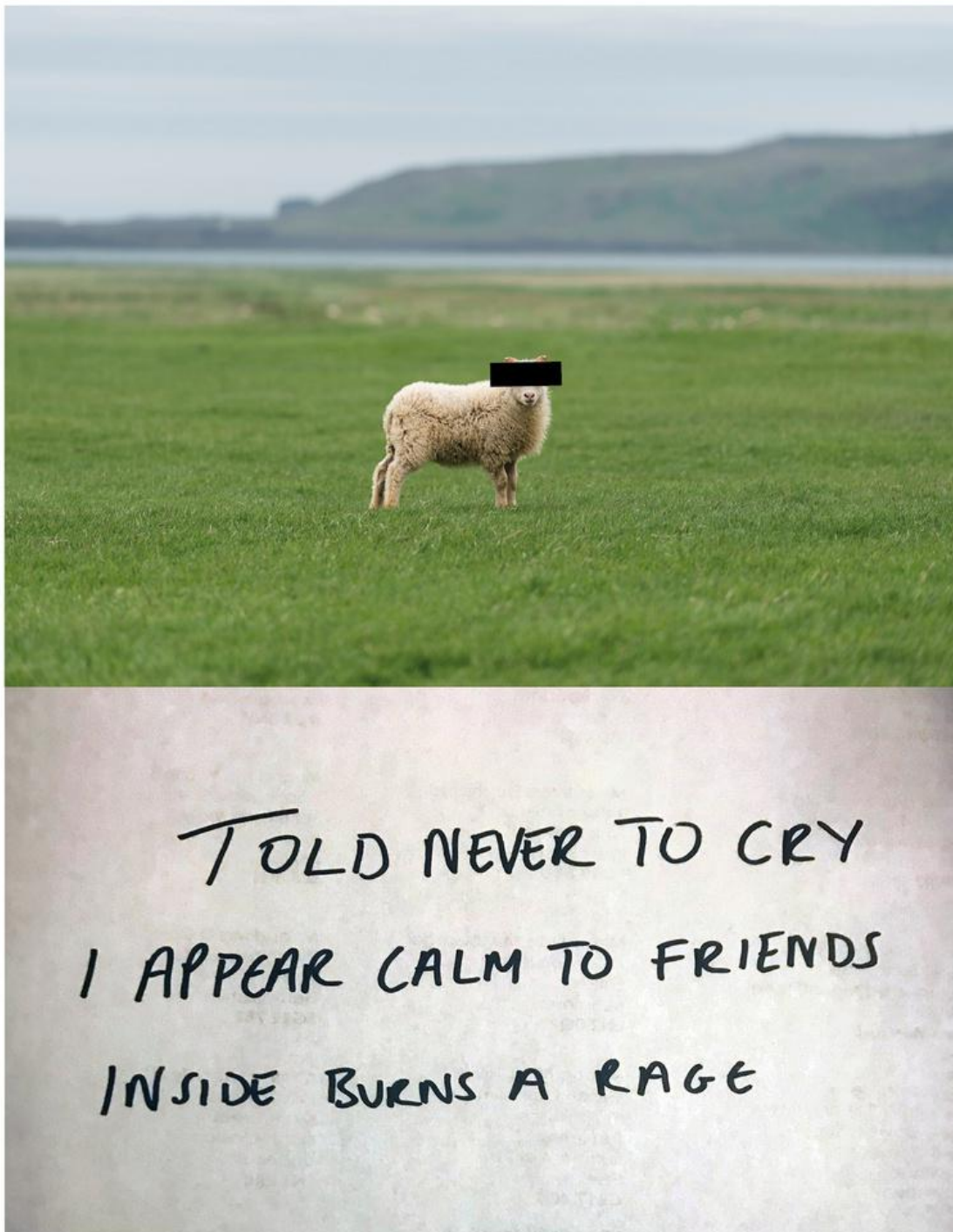
However, I believe that the two pieces I have been working on for over three years will be among my finest creations. One is a striking composition of fighting roosters—also known as gamecocks—adorned with a multicolor, multi-gemstone setting. The other is one of my largest works to date: a majestic American bald eagle. Both sculptures merge traditional carving techniques with modern design, capturing the power and elegance of these animals. They are particularly significant to me, as they showcase the full breadth of my skills while also serving as profound symbols of freedom, protection, and dynamic energy.



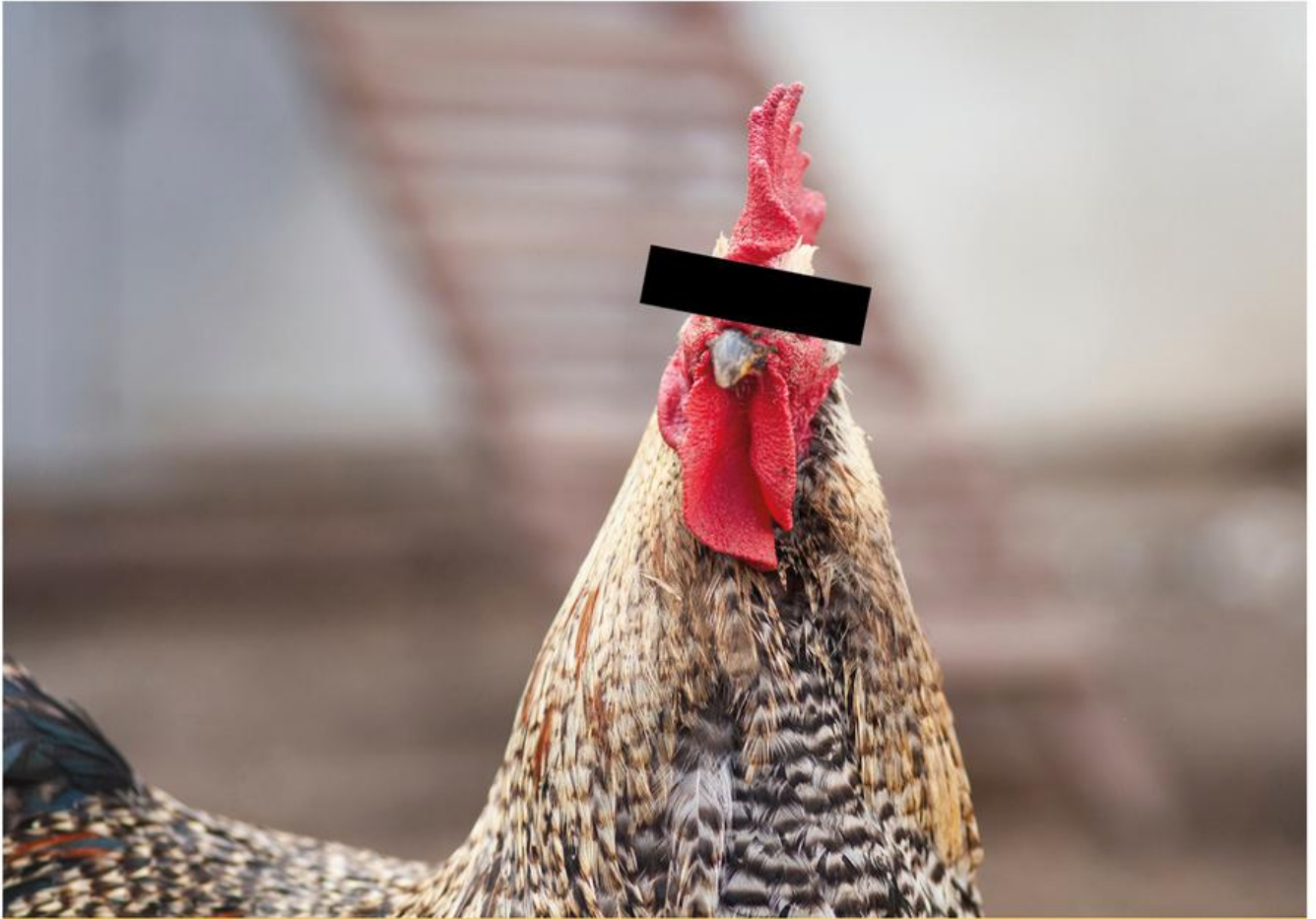


**Dan Berg** is a London-based artist whose work delves into the complexities of human thought through a surreal lens. By channelling inner dialogues into imagined voices, Berg's work translates personal emotions into accessible, thought-provoking reflections. His art intertwines dark humour with introspection, inviting viewers to confront the subtleties and vulnerabilities of modern life. Through these surreal perspectives, Berg opens a deeper exploration of the often hidden aspects of the human experience.

Anonymous Animal Haiku Confession  
by 'Alex'



Anonymous Animal Haiku Confession  
by 'Robert'



CLUB NIGHTS LEFT BEHIND

DINNER PARTIES TAKE THE HELM

I MISS YESTERDAY



# — Interview

## Phoebe Riel

**Can you tell us more about how your Kwakwaka'wakw and Ojibway heritage influences your art?**

My identity as a Kwakwaka'wakw and Ojibway artist shapes not only how I view and connect with the world but also how I create. Growing up with roots in these rich cultures, I've always been surrounded by stories that connect us to the land, animals, and each other. These stories, passed down through generations, taught me the power of visual language and the importance of storytelling as a way to preserve and share our heritage. Being Indigenous is not just where I come from but who I am, and reclaiming that identity through art is an act of revitalization for me and my community. In this age of cultural resurgence, I strive to reflect our stories in meaningful ways that inspire others to celebrate their heritage. Through blending Indigenous storytelling and ways of being with my own style—whether exploring trickster figures like the Raven or celebrating the resilience of salmon—I aim to honour the stories and symbols that have shaped me, while staying true to what feels authentic and natural in my creative process. It brings me so much joy to contribute to this cultural resurgence, and I hope my work carries that same joy to others.

**How does storytelling, passed down through generations in your family, shape your creative process?**

Storytelling is the foundation of my creative process. My family's stories taught me how narratives connect us to



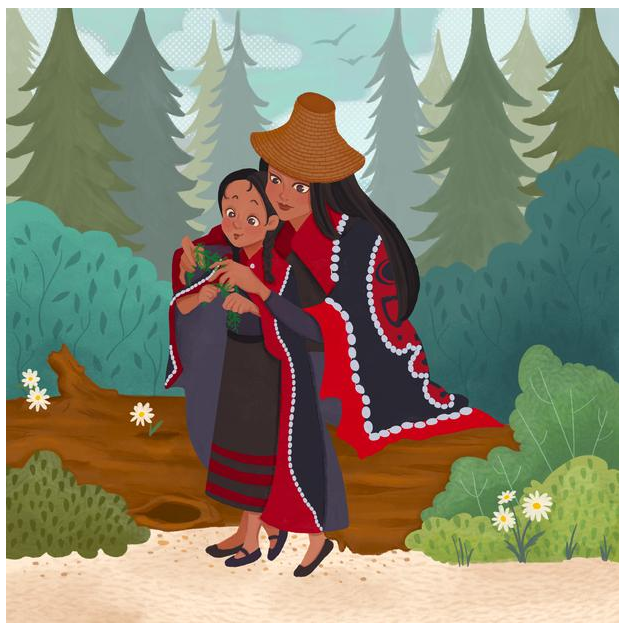
our values, our land, and our ancestors. When I approach a project, I think of it as a living thread that ties the past, present, and future together. Whether I'm working on a children's book or product design, I focus on telling a story that feels authentic and alive, using visual language to capture the spirit of these teachings.

**Your work often features themes of nature and nostalgia. What draws you to these subjects, and how do you make them accessible to all ages?**

Nature is one of my greatest teachers. I've learned so much from the natural world, Indigenous knowledge keepers and elders, and I believe everyone can deepen their understanding of themselves and the land by adopting a reciprocal relationship with it. I find immense joy in being outside—swimming in cold Canadian waters and getting to know our relatives on four legs, wings, fins, and those who stand rooted in the earth. Nostalgia resonates with me because I believe children are deeply connected to creativity and spirituality. Creating takes me back to that childlike state of curiosity, especially when sketching or brainstorming. My childhood, spent exploring the Rocky Mountains and coastlines, continues to inspire my work. To make my art accessible, I focus on storytelling elements like color, lighting, and expression to evoke universal emotions. My goal is to create art that invites people of all ages to reconnect with a sense of wonder.

**How did your education in Visual Communication Design and Illustration at the Alberta University of the Arts prepare you for your artistic career?**

My time at AUArts was pivotal in shaping both my creative vision and professional skills. The program introduced me to talented artists and educators whose mentorship was invaluable, helping me grow as a storyteller and designer. Through classes in illustration, animation, graphic design, and character design, I gained a well-rounded education that encouraged me to experiment with different art



forms while strengthening my foundational skills in visual storytelling, concept development, and attention to detail. Beyond technical growth, the program also gave me space to explore my identity as an artist. I was able to connect my cultural heritage to my work in meaningful ways, drawing from Kwakwaka'wakw and Ojibway traditions to inform my creative process. The Lodgepole Centre, the Indigenous student centre at AUArts, played a crucial role in this journey, connecting me with Indigenous community members, Elders, and opportunities like student art shows. These connections enriched my perspective and gave me the confidence to take on culturally significant projects, such as public art and children's books. AUArts' collaborative and interdisciplinary environment prepared me for the versatility required in a freelance career. I left the program with not only technical skills but also the ability to adapt, learn from others, and communicate stories that resonate with diverse audiences. These experiences have been instrumental in shaping my artistic voice and career path.

**As a neurodivergent artist living with chronic pain, how do you navigate the challenges of creating art while maintaining joy and connection in your work?**

Living with chronic pain and navigating neurodivergence has profoundly shaped my approach to creativity and work. Art has become both my refuge and my way of connecting with others. It allows me to channel my energy and find balance, even on tough days. My neurodivergent mind is often an asset—it gives me the ability to hyper-focus on projects and fully immerse myself in my work. However, it also means I'm highly motivated by interest and novelty, which can make it challenging to stay organized or stick to rigid routines. To manage these challenges, I've created an unconventional work schedule that prioritizes flexibility. I use tools like planners and schedules to keep myself on track while allowing room for rest and creativity. A more structured, traditional work environment, like the one I experienced in grade school, was much harder on my well-being in my experience. Working from home and sharing my art digitally has been transformative for me. It allows me to connect with people in ways that would otherwise be much harder,



Riel Phoebe | Salmon Girl | 2024

creating a sense of community that enriches both my art and my life. Ultimately, my challenges have taught me to embrace softness while celebrating resilience, themes that often appear in my work. By focusing on projects that align with my values and inspire me, I've built a career that lets me share joy and connection with others, even on the hardest days.

**What was your experience like illustrating *Astina*, a children's book rooted in land-based teachings?**

Illustrating *Astina* has been both challenging and rewarding. The story celebrates resilience, reciprocity, and the power of gift-giving, which required me to delve deeply into Plains Cree culture and pre-colonial life. Balancing historical and cultural accuracy with childlike imaginative storytelling was a challenge, but it was also deeply fulfilling. This project also strengthened my relationship with Woodland art, guided by my uncle, Dean Sayers, who encouraged me to honour my ancestors throughout the process. Collaborating with Grant Berg, whose family stories from his grandmother inspired the book, added another layer of depth. His passion for uplifting Indigenous women in the children's book industry is incredibly inspiring, and it has been a great pleasure working alongside him to bring this story to life. I'm truly excited for *Astina* to debut and hope it inspires young readers while teaching essential life lessons of reciprocity, kinship with the land and animals, and the value of bravery, kindness, and resilience, as embodied by Astina.

**What advice would you give to aspiring Indigenous artists who want to celebrate their heritage in their work?**

Trust your unique voice—our stories are powerful, and no one else can tell them the way you can. Don't hesitate to connect with local opportunities, Indigenous mentors, and your community. Applying for everything, even when it feels daunting, can lead to surprising and affirming opportunities. Lastly, embrace your journey—experiment, learn from the land, and honour the stories that shape you.



Riel Phoebe | kutala | 2024



**Gabriela Rytarowska**, a graduate of the Institute of Fine Arts at the University of Rzeszow, Poland, majoring in Visual Arts. An author of artistic diploma 'Jalaloddin Rumi. Angel intoxicated. Mystical tales. Illustrations', awarded in the 16th edition of the competition named after Jerzy Panek for the Best Diploma of the Institute of Fine Arts at the University of Rzeszow. Participant of collective exhibitions in Poland, Hungary and Slovakia, including a series of exhibitions accompanying the 'Art & Science: Art of Origin of Life' initiative, organised by the Marcell Nencki Institute of Experimental Biology of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw.

### *Artist Statement*

The subject of my work are experiences and emotions that accompany them. In creating, I explore the possibility of expressing my own emotions and those, that are shared by humanity as a collective. In art I am searching for deeper connection and understanding with another human being, a potential viewer, based on the contemplation of an image and sharing the emotions it contains. Artistic expression appears to me as a unique form of communication, bypassing language on the way to achieving understanding between people - creator and viewer. Artistic expression appears to me as a unique form of communication, bypassing language on the way to achieve mutual understanding. Extremely valuable in this ritual are the colours, luminous waves, carrying emotional significance that is recognized intuitively by all human beings. I love the art of symbols, images carrying a message, developed throughout the history of art. I want to formulate an artistic statement that can benefit a potential viewer who shares anxiety about fate of the world, galloping in an unknown direction.



Gabriela Rytarowska | The Dream | 2024







## — Interview

# Arata Nakamura

**Could you tell us about your journey from music production and DJing in Tokyo to becoming a collage artist? How did these fields intersect in your creative process?**

Throughout my music career, I undertook numerous design projects. Punk rock has been a cornerstone of my musical journey, profoundly influencing my approach to fashion and design. Jamie Reid played a pivotal role in shaping my understanding of punk aesthetics; by emulating his work, I discovered the art of collage. Thus, transitioning from music to becoming a collage artist felt entirely natural, even inevitable.

**Your work merges music, visuals, and historical elements. How do you select the materials and themes for your collages?**

When I first decided to become a collage artist and started creating pieces, I found myself overthinking the theme for each one, which made it difficult to get



Arata Nakamura | Play real music

started. Even when I managed to complete something after much deliberation, the results often felt lackluster and uninspired. Having introduced myself as a musician for so long, I believed that to call myself a collage artist, I'd need to hold a solo exhibition. But at the pace I was working, I became increasingly anxious about how few pieces I had.

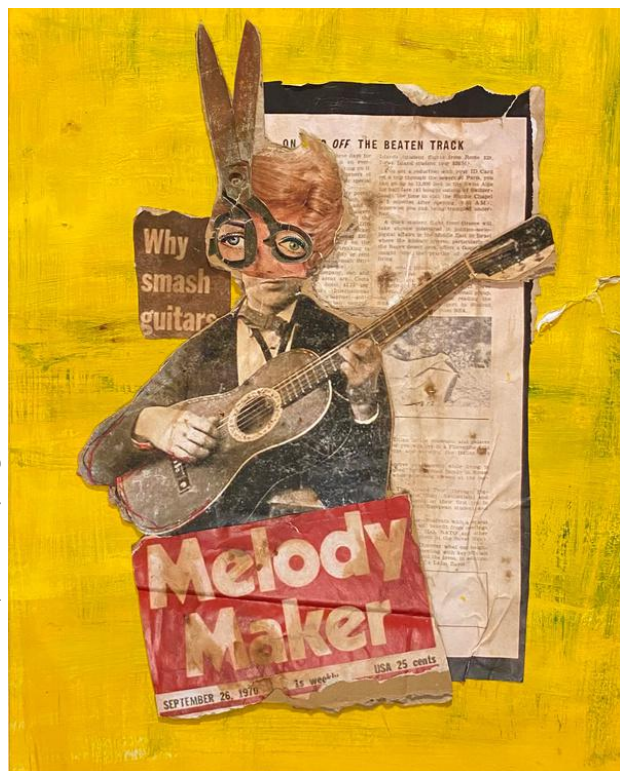
One day, my wife recommended a book. It was written by an unknown Japanese author and focused on how ordinary people can make a living doing what they love. The book suggested imagining your daily schedule 10 years from now. When I did this exercise, I realised I needed to drastically increase the pace at which I was finishing my work. To do that, I had to stop overthinking and simply start creating.

So, I began with one piece. When it was finished, I showed it to my wife. She asked, "What's the theme behind this one?" I replied, "Honestly, there isn't one. I wasn't thinking about any theme at all." She then said, "Well, that's fine, because everything you love and everything that makes you you is already in this piece."

That moment shifted everything for me. Since then, I've stopped setting specific themes for my work. What I create now comes naturally, and it reflects not just music but the history of music, fashion, and my passion for vintage. It's a direct expression of who I am.

**What role does nostalgia or history play in your art, especially in the context of modern digital culture?**

Digital culture has profoundly influenced me, becoming an indispensable part of my life. In music, I've always been keen to experiment with electronic sounds, and the same applied to my design work. However, as I've grown older, I've found myself feeling somewhat fatigued by the digital world and increasingly drawn to a sense of human



Arata Nakamura | Mr. Sampling Man



warmth and authenticity. I started gravitating towards music from the '60s and '70s, allowing it to influence my compositions. Similarly, my art, which I had previously completed entirely on the computer, began to incorporate more analogue techniques.

Working with analogue methods reminded me of something I'd forgotten—the beauty of human imperfection: the slight distortions, the irregularities. I'm not here to deny the remarkable achievements of the digital age—far from it. In fact, I still use computers to create blueprints and initial designs, which I then bring to life through analogue processes.

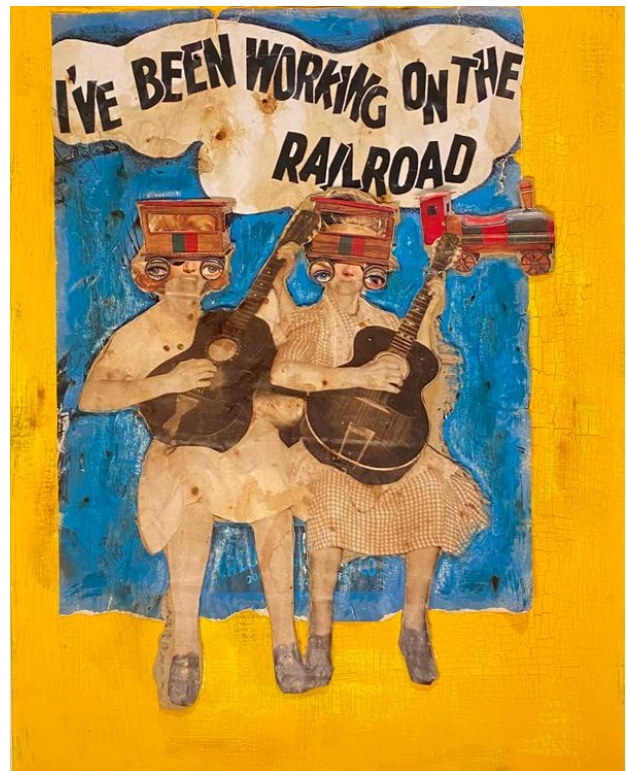
For me, nostalgia and history are essential tools to help navigate the digital world without losing touch with the human spirit. It's my way of maintaining a balance—embracing progress while staying connected to something timelessly human.

**How does your background in designing event flyers influence your current artistic style and approach to collage-making?**

It all comes down to the importance of first impressions, really. I think I've unconsciously developed a sense of balance that allows things to be instantly understood at a glance. In advertising, text plays a key role, and perhaps that influence is why elements of text often find their way into my work as well.

**Many of your works feature bold colours and layered imagery. Could you walk us through your creative process from initial idea to finished piece?**

This might overlap with things I've mentioned in previous interviews, but both my ideas and use of colour naturally stem from my past experiences in music and design. I



Arata Nakamura | I've been working on the railroad

make a conscious effort not to overthink things and instead trust my sense of balance.

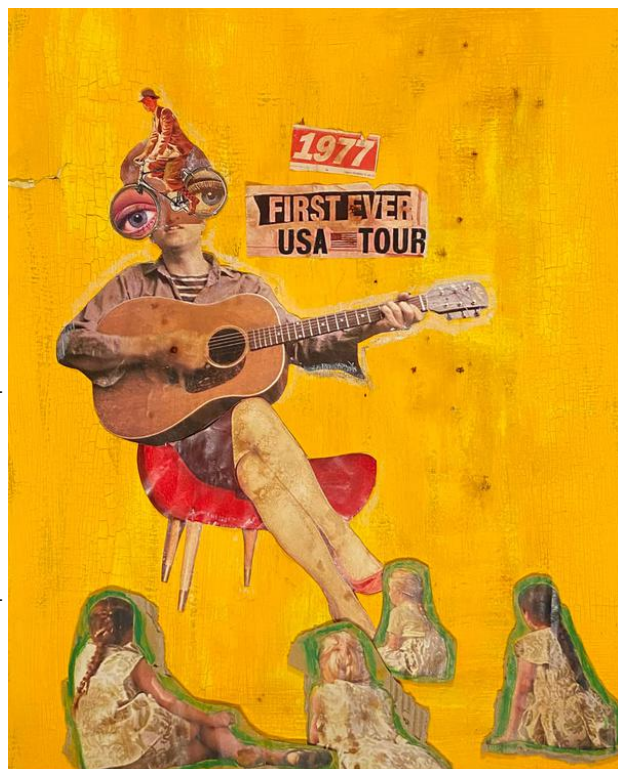
One thing I'm particularly mindful of is avoiding a slick, overly modern feel, even though I work with digital tools. For example, I often stain my printed or painted pieces with coffee, repeating the process several times to build up layers. What I focus on most is the delicate balance of imperfections—the subtle warping or tearing of the paper. Getting that just right is where I place the greatest care.

**Have you faced any challenges transitioning from commercial design (flyers and posters) to creating art for gallery spaces or collectors?**

While I avoid setting specific themes for my work, I do consciously aim to weave in some form of message. In commercial design, it's relatively straightforward to craft a message, as the artwork is developed alongside elements like company names or slogans. However, in my personal creations, conveying a clear message can be a bit more challenging.

**Do you see a connection between the rhythm of music and the composition of your collages? If so, how do you translate that rhythm into a visual format?**

I don't consciously consider rhythm in my work, but I do imagine certain musical genres coming through. For instance, I might envision a person holding an acoustic guitar, contemplating how forcefully they're strumming the strings, which chords they're playing, or the quality of their voice. In that sense, perhaps rhythm plays a role as well.



Arata Nakamura | First ever USA tour | 1977



## Lula Sarnia

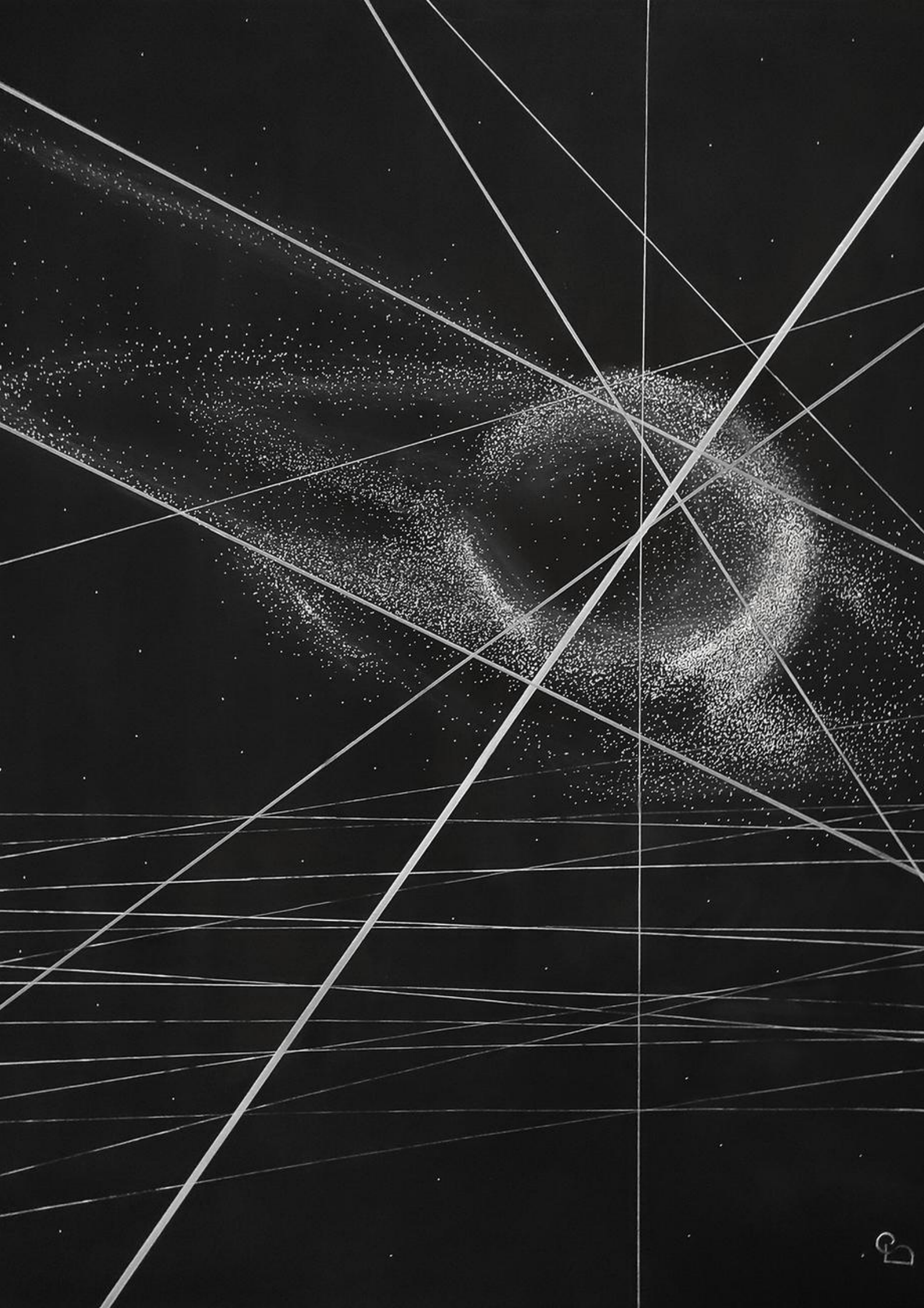
A visual creator that focuses on high contrast and monochromatic color using liquid acrylic, ink and oil with an attention to lines and light. She specializes in visual art to explore the relationship between humans and space in the 21st century. She participated in collective exhibitions, including Czestochowa Painting Triennale, Peru Design Biennial, Seoul International Poster Design Triennale and Intercontinental Biennial.

### *Project Statement*

Lula Sarnia and the Inkart series of works, this series of works, created with ink on paper or canvas, explores the relationship between humanity and space in the 21st century. The infinite universe is represented through deep blacks, while flashes of light symbolize connections between the inner and outer worlds. A central element of the series is the line, which bridges these two dimensions, infusing the compositions with dynamic movement.

Lula Sarnia | The future is now







## — Interview

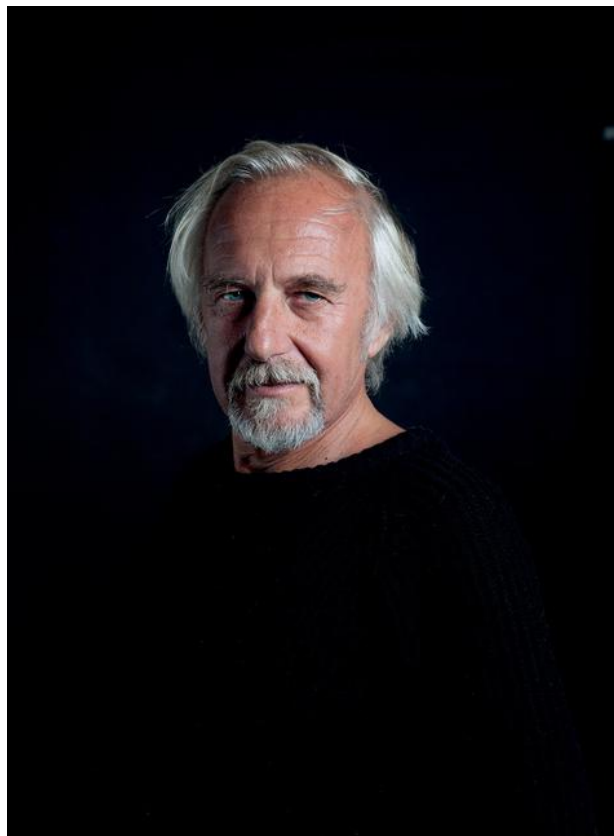
# Paolo Mariani

**Your journey into art has been diverse, from graphics to restoration and sociology. How do these experiences influence your artistic vision today?**

In 1965, at the age of 13, I became acutely aware that my life would inevitably be dedicated to art, alongside the myriad experiences that my "free spirit" yearned for. I understood during this period that a single lifetime would not suffice, and thus found a way to live at least four lives concurrently. This required optimizing time, carefully evaluating every choice, and offering employment opportunities to collaborators who would facilitate this approach. I had to become my own patron, constantly studying, working, and experimenting to realize the numerous dreams that impetuously manifested throughout my life (canoeist, sailor, seaplane pilot, hang glider, skydiver, surfer and so on). The skills I acquired over time (art diploma, advertising graphics, industrial photography, geometer's diploma, technical restoration, sociology degree, etc.) were never enough, and each proved fundamental in achieving all my predetermined goals. My artistic vision has been fundamentally influenced by two factors: the technical, derived from my knowledge of advertising graphics, which necessitated a perfect balance between rigor and creativity; and the emotional, stemming from the countless experiences and situations I lived and recorded in personal and work agenda, awaiting the opportunity to finally "liberate" and artistically realize them.

**You've experimented with materials like polyester resins and fiberglass. How do these unconventional materials contribute to the meaning of your artworks?**

I learned to use polyester resins and fiberglass at the age of 14 to build the canoes I used in sporting competitions. This knowledge proved invaluable



initially for the construction of prototype lamps and artistic artifacts, and subsequently in certain sectors of monumental restoration.

Working with fiberglass pleasantly reminds me of the role reversal that momentarily occurred with my modeling professor at the time, the sculptor Lorenza Pagano Bonvicini, who, fascinated by this material, wanted to learn its secrets and create a bas-relief of Wiligelmo in pigmented resin together. Knowledge of these and other unconventional materials has greatly contributed to my current artistic choices, granting me the freedom to move without the constraints imposed by the limitations of certain traditional techniques.

**Restoration plays a significant role in your career. How has working on historical monuments and landmarks shaped your understanding of art and its role in society?**

The role of restoration in my career has fulfilled multiple needs. The daily contact with Beauty is an indispensable nourishment for an artist. Working on monuments or historically significant works has made me feel like a privileged person. and the personal and professional enrichment gained from collaborating with the best designers in the field has further amplified my creative desire.

Perhaps the only word that can encapsulate the objective complexities of this question is 'awe'. An awe linked to the unique and singular world that revolves around each work I have encountered, standing in constant opposition to our increasingly codified and

generalized daily life.

**The symbols and colors in your works seem highly evocative. What do they represent, and how do they connect to your personal or societal themes?**

The symbols and colours in my works are always linked to dynamic or contemplative moments, reflecting the uniqueness of my days. Loving life, I am drawn to sunny and primary colours, which, in contrast to the more twilight tones, best represent me. In my compositions, elements of 'disturbance' sometimes appear, generally linked to temporary restlessness: black stripes, as in 'Ronzo Chienis' or 'Versilia', barriers that prevented me from experiencing those places and moments as I would have liked. Despite these barriers, the allure and magic of these 'elsewheres' are still present, and I strive to make them visible and understandable

**What role does your love for Verona play in your art, especially considering projects like the restoration of Juliet's Balcony?**

My love for Verona is complete. The water of the Adige River that flows through the city has been, and still is, an endless source of life, emotion, and inspiration. I could never live in a city without the water of a river, lake, or the sea! Verona, seen from within the bed of its river, reveals itself as unique, magical, and captivating in every season. When, for work reasons, I had the opportunity to contemplate this river from the top of the 'rampart walk' inside the battlements of the Castelvecchio bridge, I remembered the nursery rhyme by Carducci about King Theodoric, who admired the Adige from the top of his castle. From this small experience, for example, I drew inspiration to create the work 'The Green Adige at Castelvecchio.' The work was exhibited in the foyer of Verona's Teatro Ristori during the presentation of the film 'La città



Paolo Mariani | Arrival in Macerata at 9 p.m. | 2023

macchina' and will soon follow it in an exhibition at MAXXI in Rome.

In 2017, as a token of my love for Verona, I gifted the city the complete restoration and structural assessment of Juliet's Balcony. Bringing this dream to life required more than two years of work. In addition to the design phase and its subsequent approval, the bureaucratic and administrative procedures also took a considerable amount of time and patience. However, the actual construction work proceeded as planned, adhering to a very strict schedule. When, on November 16, 2017, the protective coverings were finally removed and "Juliet" was able to return to her restored balcony, the satisfaction I felt was immense and more than repaid all the efforts made.

**Your paintings feature a fascinating interplay of color, texture, and layered compositions. What is the process behind constructing these intricate visuals?**

My layered compositions are born and realized in the same way that a project unfolds. Starting from an initial note, jotted down in my agenda, I mentally, or with the help of quick sketches, try to find the best solutions to graphically convey the emotions of those situations or places that I wanted to immortalize. Sometimes, the image has already been developed over time, and all I have to do is proceed with its physical realization. Other times, in a kind of daydreaming state, I find myself thinking for hours during the night, trying to find the right placement for shapes and colors until every part of the whole satisfies me completely.



Paolo Mariani | Versilia | 2000



## **Amber Banks Brumby GRBSA – RBSA Graduate Artist**

Amber Banks Brumby is a photographer and educator based in rural Staffordshire, West Midlands. Her practice explores environments, people, and nature, focused with a documentary approach to photography. She graduated from Nottingham Trent University in 2014 with BA (Hons) in Photography.

With a passion for angling and a 45% rise of female anglers in the UK, Amber has set out to help change the demographic profile of fishing within a male dominated sport, addressing barriers and changing mindsets. This rise still only contributes to less than 20% of total anglers in the UK in comparison to 80% of men, women are still the minority, this needs to change.

So far, Amber has captured an abundance of inspirational women anglers across the country, hearing their stories and connecting with nature in so many immersive ways. Angling is proven to boost emotional well-being and is now prescribed as a treatment on the NHS. The therapeutic value of angling is bigger than ever, yet many women have still never considered it for themselves; visualising this change in stereotypes will only help this recreation grow and reach more people.

Through interactions and Amber's own experience, she found that angling increased women's wellbeing through contact and connection with nature and the landscape. It has helped them escape or recover from stress, trouble, or illness, to gain social communities, to feel present, it has even saved lives. Amber's aim is to empower these women, and to raise awareness of the beauty of the recreation, to change the image of 'fisherman', to let women know that there is a type of angling for everyone, regardless of gender, age, demographics, and knowledge. Nature is always present and will welcome anyone to its waters.

In 2020 Amber's series Peacocks Cry was published by Out of Place Books, which offers a personal and intuitive exploration of rural life in a tiny hamlet in Staffordshire. The series takes place on her family farm in the English countryside where daily life, and death, play out to the backdrop of changing seasons.

Amber has been teaching photography for eight years. Her work has been shown most recently with: RBSA Gallery Photography Prize 2023, FORMAT Festival, East Meets West Master Class 23, Shutter Hub, 120x120 – Singapore, RBSA Gallery Photography Prize 2021, No Go Press, Print Magazine and Black River Magazine.



Banks Brumby Amber | 1 From Female Anglers Series



# — Interview

## Debashis Rout

**How has your Indian heritage influenced your artistic style and the themes you explore in your work?**

One of the most immediate ways Indian heritages could influence an artist's work is through color and symbolism. In Indian culture, colors are deeply symbolic, often representing emotions, spiritual states, or specific deities. Indian art is also full of symbolic motifs, from the lotus (representing purity and spiritual growth) to intricate mandalas (symbolizing the universe and unity). As an artist for me this background may use these symbols in abstract or stylized forms, exploring themes of inner peace, interconnectedness, or the cyclical nature of life.

**What inspired you to combine traditional art forms with contemporary techniques in your practice?**

I love this question, and I think it gets to the heart of how artists can push boundaries while honoring tradition. If I were to imagine a scenario where I am the artist, the inspiration to combine traditional art forms with contemporary techniques could stem from a few key entities.

*The Desire for Dialogue Across Time:* Traditional art forms, whether it is painting, drawing, sculpture, or others have such a rich history. But in our current world, where technology is so intertwined with daily life, there is a natural desire to incorporate these contemporary tools into art.

*Expanding the Language of Art:* Traditional art often carries deep cultural significance, whether it is the craftsmanship of a painting or the symbolism in classical sculpture. By incorporating contemporary techniques like digital media,



mixed media, or even augmented reality the artist can expand the language and impact of the work. My goal could be to reach a wider audience or to explore new ways of telling stories that are complex and multifaceted.

*Reinterpreting Tradition:* I often look to history for inspiration, but rather than replicating traditional styles or methods, they might reinterpret them in new contexts.

*The Fusion of Material and Concept:* Contemporary techniques often give me new ways to experiment with materials and concepts. I work with both oil paints and digital projections. It is also a way of addressing how art functions in a world where digital and physical realities intersect.

The real inspiration behind blending these forms, though, is the desire to experiment, to see what happens when I mix the old and the new, and how that combination can yield something powerful, exciting, and unexpected.

**You've been painting for over 35 years. How has your style evolved during this journey?**

It sounds like I am imagining a long journey in the world of art, which is fascinating. I can imagine that for an artist with 35 years of experience, the evolution of style would be a deeply personal and dynamic process.

Early in one's career, I was strongly influenced by school teachers. As time goes on, the foundation of technique might remain, but their voice and perspective begin to mature. They might experiment with different mediums or genres, leading to new ways of expressing their ideas. Over time, personal experiences, changes in the world, or simply a greater understanding of their own desires and influences could lead to shifts in style.

Petter Terrin, Nancy Madina & Katheleen Rietz whose classes inspired me with the rich colors combination in terms of art. Also a student of Elli Millan to learn abstract painting. My greatest inspiration for ART are the famous artist named Turner, Leonid Afremov mostly on Knife painting and cold wax techniques

As an artist sometimes I blend the old with the new, fusing traditional methods with modern techniques like digital or mixed media.

**Can you share the challenges of balancing your career as an IT professional with your passion for art?**

*Challenges are*

*Time Management:*

One of the biggest hurdles is finding time to dedicate to art, especially with the demands of a full-time IT career. IT often requires long hours, problem-solving on tight deadlines, or dealing with unforeseen technical issues. After a long day managing projects, the energy required to switch gears and dive into a creative mindset can be tough. But Honestly saying painting energizes me to reduce stress and its my passion in a true way.

*Mental Energy Shift:*

IT work tends to be highly logical and analytical, requiring a different set of cognitive processes than art, which

### **How do you approach abstract concepts in your paintings, and what do they represent to you?**

When approaching abstract concepts in painting, I see them as an exploration of emotions, thoughts, or universal themes that resist easy categorization or literal representation. For me, abstract art becomes a way to communicate experiences or states of being that do not have a direct or tangible form. The brushstrokes, colors, shapes, and textures convey a mood or an idea, often relying on intuition rather than strict representation.

As for what abstract concepts represent to me, they often mirror the complexities of the human condition: the subconscious, inner conflicts, or the interplay between order and chaos. Sometimes, abstract works might represent an exploration of time, memory, or even nature in a way that moves beyond the literal to the emotional or sensory realm.

### **How do you see the intersection of traditional art forms and modern technologies influencing the future of art?**

The intersection of traditional art forms and modern technologies is profoundly shaping the future of art in many ways as below:

*New Mediums:* Artists are using technology to create new forms of art, such as digital painting, virtual reality installations, and interactive pieces that engage audiences in unique ways.

*Preservation and Accessibility:* Technologies like 3D scanning



and digital archiving allow for the preservation of traditional art forms and make them accessible to a global audience, breaking geographical barriers.

*Collaboration:* Modern technologies facilitate collaboration among artists across different disciplines and locations, merging traditional techniques with innovative ideas and methods.

*Audience Engagement:* Technology enables artists to interact with their audience in real-time through social media and immersive experiences, making art more participatory and dynamic.

*Education and Resources:* Online platforms and tools provide artists with resources to learn traditional techniques as well as modern digital skills, fostering a diverse skill set.

### **What advice would you give to aspiring artists trying to find their unique voice?**

Here are some valuable advice for aspiring artists looking to discover their unique voice as:

*Explore Different Mediums:* Experiment with various materials and techniques. Allow yourself to play and find what resonates with you, whether it is painting, digital art, sculpture, or mixed media.

*Study Art History:* Familiarize yourself with different styles, movements, and artists. Understanding the past can inspire you and inform your own artistic choices.

*Create Regularly:* Develop a consistent practice. The more you create, the more you will discover your preferences and style. Do not be afraid to make mistakes; they often lead to breakthroughs.

*Reflect on Personal Experiences:* Your unique experiences and perspectives will shape your work. Draw inspiration from your life, emotions, and thoughts; they can be powerful sources of creativity.

*Seek Feedback:* Share your work with others and be open to constructive criticism. Engaging with fellow artists and audiences can provide valuable insights and encourage growth.

*Stay True to Yourself:* Authenticity is key. Do not try to mimic others. focus on what feels genuine to you. Your distinct voice will emerge when you create from a place of honesty.

*Keep Learning:* Attend workshops, take classes, and keep pushing your boundaries. Continuous learning will help you refine your skills and expand your artistic vocabulary.

*Patience and Perseverance:* Finding your unique voice takes time. Be patient with yourself, and stay committed to your journey, even when it feels challenging.



Based in Texas, **Morakoth Aryana Chev** is a digital artist, illustrator, and animator known for her vibrant exploration of Eastern art, seamlessly merging it with bold, textured urban aesthetics to create dynamic and captivating visuals. Her work is a compelling fusion of mixed media, drawing from diverse influences and unique artistic expressions. Through her projects, Morakoth explores a wide range of themes, from cultural narratives to personal stories, all conveyed with a distinctive flair that infuses energy and joy into the visual experience.

### *Project Statement*

Blossoming Dance is an art piece that is inspired by my cultural heritage in traditional dance. The work captures the hand's gesture resembling a petal or flower bud that is often used in Khmer Royal Ballet, symbolizing the steps toward growth—be it personal, spiritual, or even intellectual. I incorporated a golden textural tone to represent the hand, highlighting its connection to deities that are frequently depicted in the ballet. The petals emerging from the deity's hand symbolizes the hope for harmonious growth and prosperity to all.





Morakoth Aryana Chev | Blossoming Dance



## — Interview

# Sebastian Giraldo

**How has your upbringing in Colombia influenced your artistic style and storytelling approach?**

Colombia is a land where the indigenous, European, and African cultures intertwine in a rich tapestry of traditions and stories. Growing up in this vibrant environment, I was surrounded by an abundance of color, music, and folklore. These elements seeped into my consciousness and have become the heartbeat of my art. Colombia is a place where expression is woven into the fabric of daily life, and this ethos of storytelling through art profoundly shapes my creative voice.

**What role does your current life in Brussels play in shaping your art and creative process?**

Brussels, with its multicultural vibrancy, has become a fertile ground for inspiration. It is a city where the streets hum with diverse languages, and every corner reveals a new perspective. This diversity has infused my work with contrasting narratives and broadened my creative horizon. Here, I find myself drawn to the juxtaposition of old and new—the grand Gothic facades against



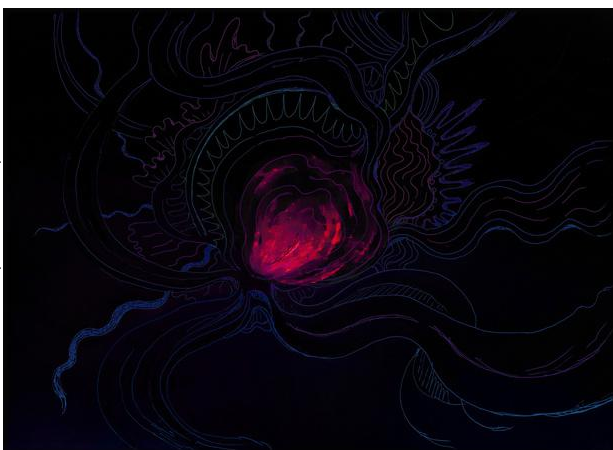
modern art installations—which mirrors my own exploration of blending traditional and digital techniques. The city's artistic energy, from its galleries to its graffiti, pushes me to experiment and evolve continuously.

**Your work bridges traditional and digital techniques—how do you decide which medium to use for a specific piece?**

My process often begins with traditional techniques, as they allow me to physically connect with my ideas. Watercolors, pencils, and ink are my tools for capturing the raw essence of a piece—its soul. There is something almost meditative about the tactile nature of traditional mediums. Once the initial vision is formed, I transition to digital techniques, where the possibilities seem infinite. Here, I experiment with color palettes, refine compositions, and explore harmonies that elevate the piece to its final state. The choice of medium is intuitive, guided by the story the artwork wants to tell.

**Surrealism is a central theme in your work. What draws you to this style, and what messages are you trying to convey through it?**

Surrealism speaks to the language of my inner world—a realm where the ordinary dissolves and the impossible takes shape. It is the domain of dreams and imagination, where logic gives way to



raw emotion. Through surrealism, I can express feelings and thoughts that words cannot capture. My work often explores themes of longing, transformation, and the interplay of light and shadow within the human experience. It is a reflection of the unspoken, a visual diary of the subconscious. In this space, I invite viewers to journey into their own imaginations and connect with the untamed parts of their spirit.

**Your pieces evoke strong emotions. How do you balance chaos and beauty in your compositions?**

The dance between chaos and beauty is one of the most delicate and rewarding aspects of my creative process. Chaos brings movement, unpredictability, and rawness, while beauty introduces harmony, structure, and resonance. To strike this balance, I often use color harmony and motif repetition as anchors amidst the turbulence. Recently, I have been drawn to symmetry—a tool that paradoxically organizes and amplifies the chaos. It's like a conversation between wildness and order, where both elements exist in dynamic equilibrium. This interplay creates a visual tension that draws the viewer deeper into the narrative.

**Can you share a specific piece that holds a deep**



Sebastian Giraldo | Burro | 2024



Sebastian Giraldo | Juegos | 2024

**personal meaning for you and explain its story?**

One of my most cherished works is titled El Burro (The Donkey). This piece depicts a little donkey surrounded by music, festivity, and the exuberance of life. It is a love letter to my homeland, embodying the spirit of Colombian culture—its warmth, resilience, and unyielding joy. The donkey, a humble and steadfast creature, symbolizes the perseverance and vitality of the people. The vibrant colors and rhythmic composition echo the festivals and traditions that shaped my identity.

**How do cultural intersections influence your choice of colors, textures, and themes?**

My art thrives at the crossroads of cultures. When drawing inspiration from Colombia, I lean into warm, vivid colors that pulse with life—reds, yellows, and earthy tones that evoke sunlit landscapes and festive atmospheres. Conversely, when I delve into themes like solitude or introspection, my European influences emerge. Here, muted tones, intricate textures, and contemplative compositions take center stage. These cultural intersections are like conversations in my art, each one bringing its own voice, yet harmonizing in a way that feels uniquely mine. They remind me that identity is fluid and enriched by the diversity of experience.



## — Interview

# Chiara Ceddia

**How has growing up in Varese and your experiences in Turin and Milan shaped your artistic journey?**

My artistic journey began in Varese when I was just a child, but it was somewhat understated at first, often perceived as a hobby or just a talent for drawing. It was a passion I nurtured privately, shaping my personality and the woman I've become today, even though I couldn't express it as fully as I would have liked, given the small-town, somewhat provincial context. However, it was in Turin that my style and the subjects of my work truly took shape. There, I discovered a cosmopolitan environment open to innovation and art for art's sake, free from ulterior motives. I also met people who became my closest friends and muses, encouraging me to take a leap of faith in my art. Later, Milan gave me the final push to share my work with the world, first through social media and eventually by participating in calls for artists and exhibitions. That said, it was Turin that hosted my first solo exhibition, a truly unique and fulfilling milestone in my career.



**Comics seem to have deeply influenced your style. Could you elaborate on how this passion is reflected in your work?**

I've loved comics from a very young age. When I first learned to read at the age of three, my first encounter with storytelling was through a comic strip—specifically a vignette of Lupo Alberto, the beloved character created by the Italian cartoonist Silver. During my teenage years, I not only read comics avidly but also created my own comic adventures, channeling my imagination onto paper. Among my favorite works, I must highlight *Strangers in Paradise* by Terry Moore, which had a profound impact on me due to its complex, multifaceted female protagonists, and *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi, whose autobiographical approach I greatly admired. The aesthetics of comics, particularly in portraying female figures, have been a major source of inspiration for me. This influence is evident in my use of bold, hand-drawn outlines paired with vibrant, pop-inspired digital coloring. Pop art has also played a significant role in shaping my style, especially through Roy Lichtenstein and his use of comic and cartoon characters in his works. Additionally, DC Comics have been another strong influence, not only for their artistic style but also for their complex female characters like *Thorn* or *Raven*, whose layered personalities continue to inspire me.

**Your collaborations with "Imperfetta Project" emphasize the uniqueness of women. What inspires you most about femininity in your art?**

I believe that femininity, in all its forms, is unique and unrepeatable. Centuries—if not millennia—of patriarchy have led us to view the feminine as a weakness or something to be subjected to the desires and approval of others. In reality, the feminine exists within all of us, regardless of gender, and is one of the most beautiful and powerful aspects we possess. Through Imperfetta Project, I began illustrating women who are unique both inside and out, focusing on portraits and female faces. The intent is to send a message to the viewer: after centuries



of reducing women to their bodies, it's time to look them in the eyes—directly and unapologetically. Femininity embodies a kind of strength rooted in resilience, a power not necessarily physical but one that has long been the glue of countless social bonds. The solidarity and connections that arise among women, biological or not, are a remarkable example of this strength. That's what I strive to convey in my work: solidarity. I want my muses to feel seen, heard, and fully acknowledged in all their radiance and power.

**"Sentences of Gazes" and "Echoes of Heritage" explore significant female figures. How do you select the women and themes you wish to portray in your exhibitions?**

Whenever I create a portrait, I always seek a personal connection with the subject. The person must, in some way, have been part of my life and left a meaningful imprint. In both exhibitions, I included portraits of notable figures who inspired me and imparted valuable lessons, as well as portraits of people dear to me—friends, family members, colleagues. These are individuals who have profoundly influenced me and left a lasting impression. This will always be a fundamental criterion for selecting the subjects of my works: they cannot be strangers to me. They must have had a relationship with me, however brief or profound, and contributed something that I've internalized and treasure.

**Your work "The Empress" was featured in "Art Now." What does this piece mean to you, and how does it align with your artistic vision?**

The Empress is a deeply meaningful piece to me for many reasons. On one hand, it portrays one of my best friends, Malvina, in the guise of the Empress tarot card—a role that reflects many of her positive qualities. On the other hand, it was the work that marked my decision to fully embrace my artistic journey and present myself to a wider audience. It served as my introduction to greater media exposure, competitions, and exhibitions. It's a piece I love and will always cherish, one to which I'll forever be grateful.

Not only does The Empress align with my artistic vision, but I would even say it serves as a manifesto for it. It represents the portrait of a strong woman, serene yet commanding, with the features of someone I deeply care for and consider one of the most beautiful people in the world. It weaves together my passion for tarot—a theme close to my heart—with their profound symbolism and unique aesthetic.

**Can you share your experience of exhibiting "The Stars" internationally, including the reception it received in Paris and other cities?**

Taking "The Stars" to Paris was a dream come true. My first international exhibition took place at Galerie Thuillier in Paris as part of a collective show. It was an incredible



Chiara Ceddia  
Ondina

opportunity to connect with and stay in touch with many talented contemporary artists who continue to inspire me.

Experiencing Paris's vibrant art scene firsthand allowed me to immerse myself in an environment that embraces novelty with enthusiasm and openness, rather than suspicion or resistance. This welcoming atmosphere was both refreshing and motivating. I hope to always encounter spaces like this, even in Italy, though I recognize it can be more challenging. My aspiration is to be part of a wave of emerging talent that gains recognition both within their own country and internationally.

**"Ondina" merges mythology and personal narrative. How do you balance these elements to create a connection between your audience and the subject?**

What I strive for in my works is that, in one way or another, they tell a story to the viewer. Each story is unique, and while the starting point may be a mythological figure, a narrative, or an autobiographical element, their fusion creates an entirely new story—one with distinct features but also aspects that shift depending on the perception of each viewer.

The key to balancing these elements and fostering this connection is the gaze. It is always direct, facing the audience, and everything stems from there. It's a gaze that cannot be avoided and, in some way, always elicits a response.



## Kseniia Romashova

Artist living and working in Moscow. I primarily work in traditional mediums. In my works, I aim to transfer my inner warmth onto the canvas through colors.

### *Artist Statement*

Behind the cloud, it may be hard to see, but the sun always shines. Each of my paintings is an attempt to show that everything is okay. That inner peace provides a sense of protection. And that even in the darkest times, one must love their inner sun, which lights the way.

Kseniia Romashova | Binded | 2023









# — Interview

## Pegah Saebi

**Can you describe the inspiration behind your project "Dancing Scripts"? How did it evolve from traditional Persian calligraphy exercises into a multidimensional art form?**

The inspiration behind "Dancing Scripts" lies in pushing language beyond its traditional role as a mere vessel for meaning, transforming it into an immersive, tactile experience. Evolving from the traditional Persian calligraphy exercise of Siah Mashq, which focuses on mastering technique through repetition, the project reimagines Persian calligraphy as a tangible, physical presence. It captures the fluidity of Farsi script, where form and meaning coexist in a constant state of transformation and evolution.

**Your work bridges storytelling, cultural exploration, and emotional connection. How do these themes shape the way you approach your art?**

I Believe our lived experiences inevitably leave their mark on the work we create, often in ways we don't even realize. The spaces, cultures, and traditions I am most familiar with naturally find their way into my work because they are part of who I am. When an idea begins to take shape, I see it as a living character with its own story, something that has existed before and will continue to evolve. The deeply personal nature of



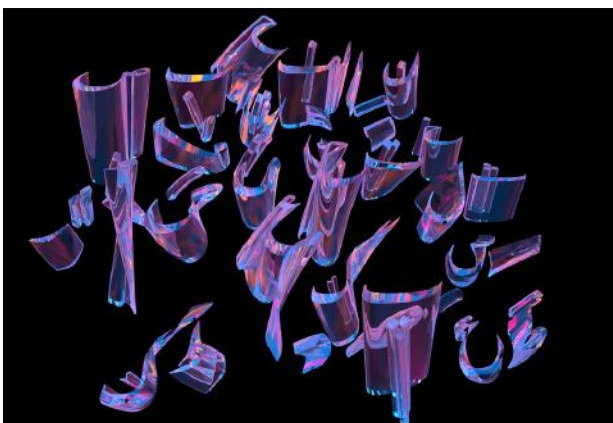
these ideas carries an emotional weight that others can sense. Emotions transcend language, acting as a universal thread that unites us all.

**What role do your Iranian roots play in your creative process, and how do you integrate traditional motifs with contemporary design?**

Persian calligraphy, architecture, miniature painting, and many other brilliant forms of Iranian art are such powerful and timeless sources of inspiration that I constantly draw from. I often reflect on how these elements can connect with today's world, merging traditional and contemporary aesthetics while using modern tools like virtual reality. To me, It's about creating a dialogue between the past and the future.

**"Dancing Scripts" emphasizes the physical presence of language. How do you think this transformation of Farsi typography into a tangible form impacts the viewer's experience?**

Language, once fleeting and intangible, is transformed into something more substantial, given form, weight, and texture. It evolves from a series of abstract symbols into a physical presence that can be seen, touched, and felt. Transforming Farsi typography into a tangible form lets viewers experience the script beyond traditional reading. This shift challenges the idea that legibility is the sole purpose of typography, inviting new ways to engage with language as an art



form.

**Your work explores themes of identity and memory. How do you see these concepts evolving in your future projects?**

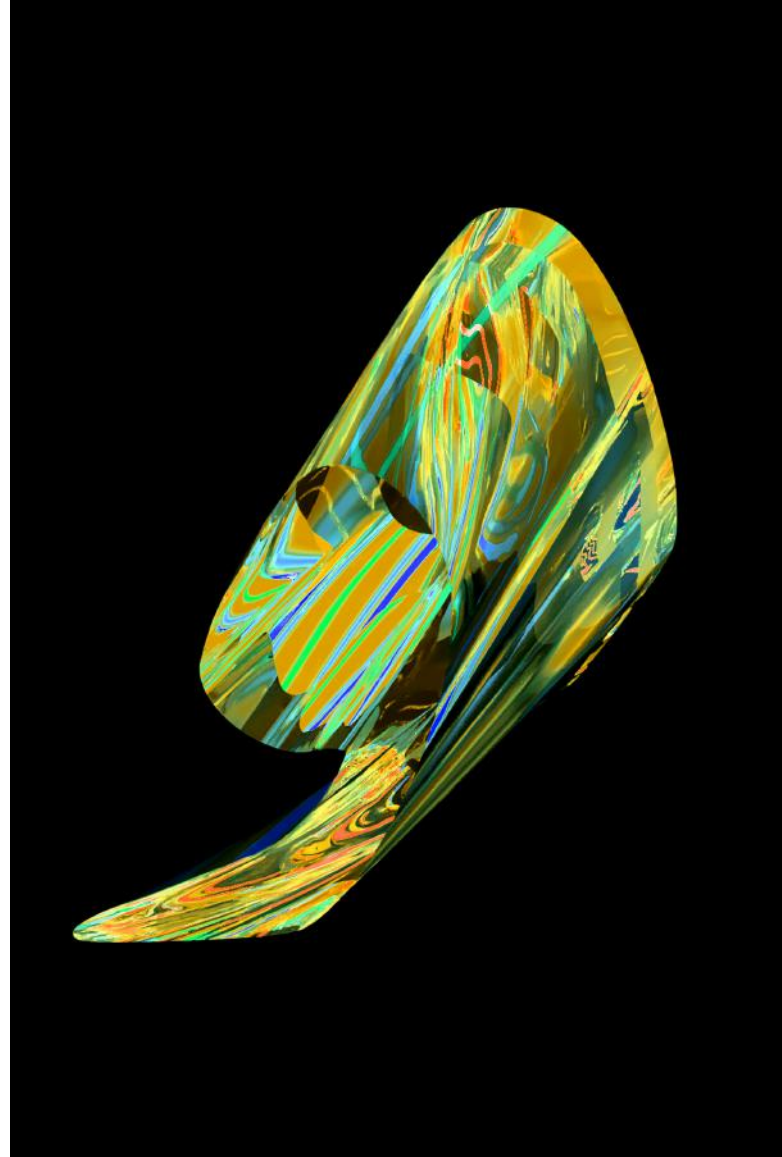
Immigration has led me to reflect more deeply on my sense of self and my connection to the world around me. Being away from home, I've come to realize how deeply our memories and identities are tied to the places we come from. Even from a distance, these landscapes continue to shape us. As I explore these themes, I feel they are evolving in ways I can't yet fully predict.

**What techniques and tools do you use to achieve the intricate textures and forms in your digital compositions?**

I enjoy blending hand-drawn and digital techniques, often beginning with sketches or scanned textures before refining them digitally. For "Dancing Scripts," however, the entire process was digital. The translucent materials and lighting were especially important in bringing texture and depth to the piece.

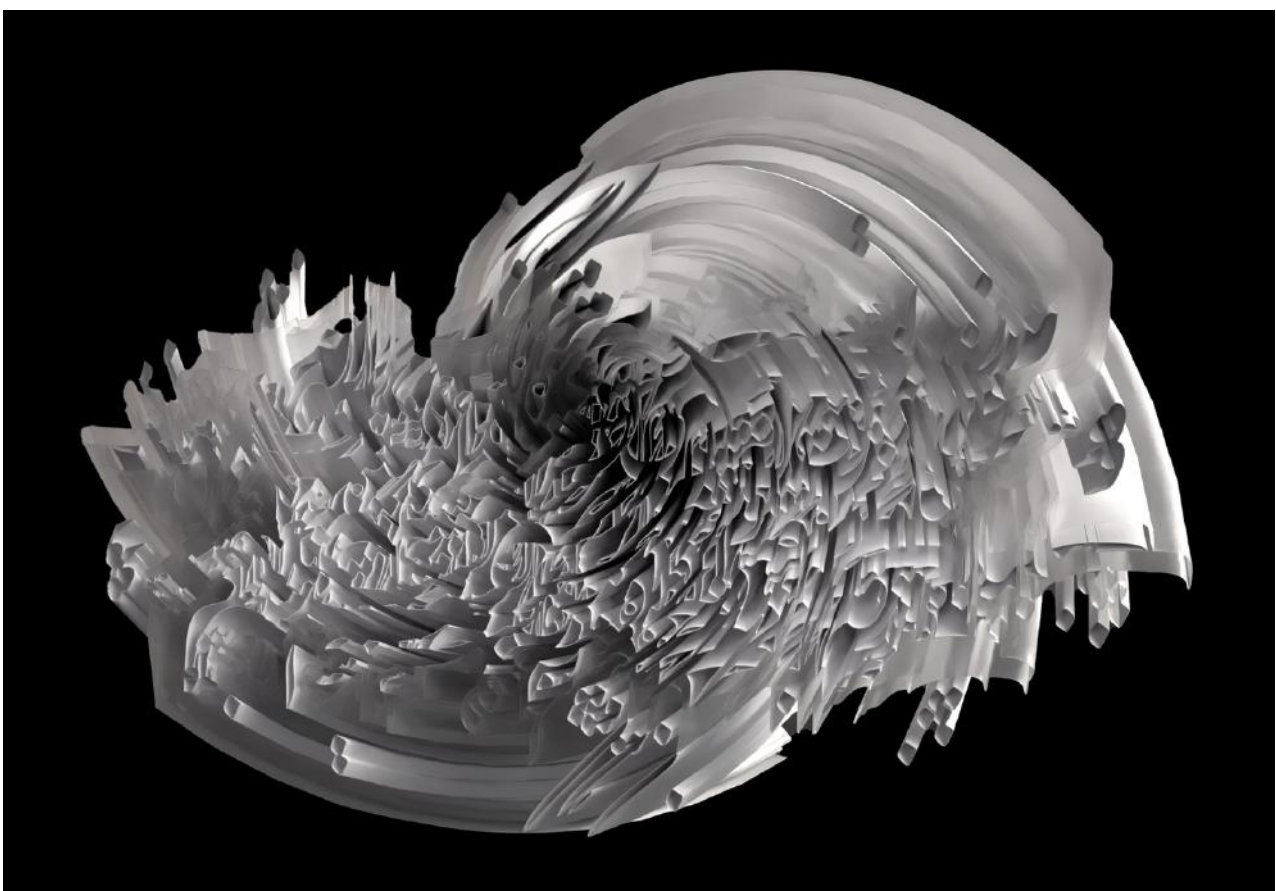
**What advice would you give to emerging artists who wish to explore their cultural heritage through contemporary art?**

My advice would be to step outside your comfort zone and embrace experimentation. Don't be afraid to try new techniques, challenge your creative limits, and allow your work to evolve. The more you explore, the more you'll discover about your own style and



Pegah Saebi | Dancing Scripts No. 4 | 2024

connection to your heritage. Stay open to the unexpected, sometimes, those unplanned moments are where the true magic happens.



Pegah Saebi | Dancing Scripts No. 1 | 2024



My name is **Cristina Rizzi Guelfi**, I am a self-taught photographer born in Switzerland. After graduating, I obtained a master's degree in directing at EICAR. I have exhibited in Italy, France, United States and Japan some of my works are currently exhibited in various locations. I approached photography by chance, I wanted to give "life" to the things I wrote, in the end I preferred it to writing.

Cristina Rizzi Guelfi | Flaneur





Cristina Rizzi Guelfi | Flâneur

### *Project Statement*

lâneur [out of context] The flâneur establishes a particular relationship with the city, inhabiting it as if it were his own home. His path does not coincide with the rest of the multitude; what for the passerby is a predetermined path with a precise destination, for him it is a labyrinth that changes shape with every step: he is guided by the color of a facade, the disturbing uniformity of some windows. The city journey, therefore, is not only a movement in space, but also a mode of perception: it is observation, listening and reading of metropolitan life, with its inhabitants and its spaces, but also of the texts that the city offers for reading and texts about the city.



# — Interview

## Ludovico Desideri

**Could you tell us about your journey into visual anthropology and what inspired you to pursue this field?**

During my study in Turin, I had the opportunity to cultivate my passion for cinema by attending the university's video-ethnographic laboratory. From this experience, the idea was born to create my first documentary, "Natura viva, natura morta" dedicated to the fragile beauty of the infiorata of Poggio Moiano. Infiorata is a Catholic tradition from a pre-industrial past. It consists of creating floral mosaics on the ground that reproduce images of saints and symbols of Christianity along the main streets of the village. My adventure within popular traditions is continuing with research on the sword dance in northern Italy, an ancient ritual linked to the fertility of the land. What has always fascinated me about cultural anthropology is the possibility of knowing what moves the spirit and imagination of other people, belonging to different cultures and epochs. Every culture has its own language, imagery, and mythology that allow people to understand and imagine the world. Through my research, I have tried to give a voice to these different narratives, using the language of film. It often allows better than writing to restore the emotional and sensory universe in which a culture is immersed.

**How has growing up in Rieti, Italy, influenced your artistic perspective and creative process?**

My first source of inspiration was the village where I grew up, Poggio Moiano, near Rieti, in the heart of the Alta Sabina, a land of small hills on which ancient stone villages are nestled. I still have vivid memories of long



walks in the oldest part of the village, a place born at the base of a hill and now almost entirely abandoned. It is a poor place, almost as if it is a natural extension of the nature in which it is immersed. For me, it was the place where stories of witches and werewolves, which I had heard from the elderly, came to life. Around the village, I came into contact with another inspiring muse: nature. Wild and spectacular, every season has its own colors, scents, and sounds that captured my senses and imagination. Other sources of inspiration include films, cartoons, museums, and video games. Together with a friend, we had fun imagining our village as the backdrop for the adventures we saw in video games or creating new stories, setting them right in the streets and landscapes of Poggio Moiano.

**Your documentary "Natura viva, natura morta" received an honorable mention at the Cefalù Film Festival. What was the inspiration behind this project, and what did you hope to convey through it?**

The inspiration for "Natura viva, natura morta" comes from my deep-rooted passion for the flower carpet festival in Poggio Moiano, a tradition that has been an integral part of my life since childhood. As mentioned, this festival takes place on the last weekend of June. It involves creating stunning floral mosaics along the town's main streets using fresh or dried flowers. It could be said that the ritual of the flower carpet festival unfolds over the entire year, beginning with the conception of the work, which determines the variety of flowers. During the celebration, the flower artists compose artworks by placing flowers on the ground, following the outline of a sketch drawn on the ground. As a child, I was enchanted by the sight of the town decorated with colors, sounds, and fragrances, thanks to the work of the flower carpet makers, who spent hours carefully arranging each petal. It almost seemed as if the town was a magic place, and I felt transported to another dimension, perhaps a dream. I have tried to recreate this atmosphere, to lead the viewer into the rhythmic and poetic force of the tradition. It is a celebration that effectively evokes the human journey, from its blossoming in childhood to its rapid fading in old age.

**You work across different mediums, including photography, collage, and film. How do these**



## mediums complement each other in expressing your artistic vision?

I find it stimulating to work with different expressive mediums and to allow myself the time to immerse in the creative process. As David Lynch suggests, ideas don't "come" but are "caught," like fish swimming in the deep ocean: the unconscious. Each artistic medium represents, in other words, a different place to fish. When I make collages, I catch fish towards the dreamlike world, exploring the deepest parts of the psyche. My photographs, on the other hand, arise from a direct dialogue with the sensible world: I start from the reality that surrounds me, trying to bring out what it evokes in me. With cinema, I change register: as a visual anthropologist, I try to combine a scientific approach with a poetic one, aware that truth resides more in poetry than in a presumed objectivity that does not exist. These languages integrate with each other, allowing me to explore different aspects of my artistic vision.

## Can you share the creative process behind your digital and analog collages? How do you decide on the themes or elements to include?

I try to carefully arrange each element, as a set designer would prepare a theatrical stage. This stage, like the world and the places we pass through every day, seems subject to an alchemical process, in which each element interacts and relates to the others, giving life to something unique. Walking in a forest, for example, we perceive the wind rustling the leaves, the scent of the trees, the sunlight illuminating the flowers, making them shine. All these elements combine with each other to create a particular atmosphere. The same happens in the artistic process: I try to balance colors, shapes, and symbols to obtain the image I am looking for, guided more by the emotions and sensations I want to evoke rather than by a defined theme. Dealing mainly with landscapes, I first look for perspective elements that give depth to the collages, a "platform" where I can set the story. I generally try to create collage with a painterly effect, combining photographs with painting and other graphic elements to create dreamlike and surreal atmospheres. Nature, with its cycles and mysteries, is one of my greatest sources of inspiration, and through it, I explore universal themes such as birth, death, and transformation.

## Your work often explores themes of nature and its relationship with human imagination. What drives this focus in your art?



Ludovico Desideri  
Walking City | 2024



Ludovico Desideri | Underwater Cathedrals | 2024

As a child, my father took me into nature often, and those places, with all their vitality and mutability, became the protagonists of my photographs. Our culture has taught us to admire the great monuments of cities, which, however imposing, remain immutable, always the same. Walking in a forest, on the other hand, you discover something completely different: a living place, which changes with the seasons, revealing new faces and new stories every time. This deep connection with nature has shaped my vision of the world, which has never been marked by modern disenchantment. The spiritual connection I have with the natural world is manifested in my creations, where I rework fragments of lived experiences, intertwining them with the images and symbols that emerge from my unconscious, including dreams I have had. Moreover, I happen to experiment with what I find. Once, while walking near a cave, inspired by the landscape, I created a giant circle of stones with a monolith in the center. Some time later, I learned that someone believed the circle was the work of primitive men.

## How does your background in cinema influence your approach to photography and collage-making?

The technique of collage is similar to film editing because it is an assembly of images that contribute to composing a work. Secondly, by mainly creating landscapes, I work like a set designer who has to set up a film set. Certainly, the experience with cinema has led me to study the composition of images well and how to arrange elements in space in both photographs and collages. In films, I cannot reproduce what I can do with collages, but it would be interesting if one day my films resembled my collages more.



**Ivan Kalinkin** is a visual and performance artist, born in 1992 in Kalach-on-Don, Russia. Since 2013 he has been living and working in St. Petersburg, where he actively develops his creative practice. From an early age, Ivan was immersed in the world of art: he was involved in choreography, interested in theater, photography and psychology, which played an important role in shaping his unique approach to work. In 2019, he made a conscious decision to dedicate himself to the arts, deepening his knowledge and skills in visual practice. In 2023, Ivan took a course in acting and dramaturgy at Part Academy, and in 2024 he graduated from the Institute of Visual Arts, becoming part of Eduard Kopysov's mentorship program. In his work, Ivan raises important social themes and explores complex aspects of human nature. He works with the memory of the body, exploring trauma and its impact on the personality. The duality of the universe, such as silence and chaos become the main focuses of his art, allowing him to create deep and multi-layered works. Ivan is also active in filmmaking and acting, painting, staging and participating in performances and theatrical productions, creating clothing with his works, and performing plastic improvisation, exploring the body as a source of memory and sensation in space.



Ivan Kalinkin | August | 2024







## — Interview

# Robbin Trotter

**Your journey began in fashion design but later transitioned into visual art. How has your background in fashion influenced your artistic style?**

Art was actually my first love while fashion design was my first professional pursuit. I went back to art looking for inspiration for my fashion line but then I just stuck to art completely. My artistic style comes from my personal style.

**You often use recycled materials in your artwork. What inspired you to incorporate sustainability into your creative process?**

I've always created things out of random objects that I had on hand since childhood. Experimenting and figuring out my art as I



Robbin Trotter | Wave | 2019-2023



go along is how I end up with unused mixed paint that dries out or crafts that don't look the way it was intended to. But I realized that anything can be art. So as long as I collect dried unused paint and don't throw away failed projects I never have to feel guilty about wasting materials. HAHA!

**The COVID-19 pandemic inspired you to create functional art pieces. Can you tell us more about your art decor line and the asymmetrical mirrors?**

COVID-19 lockdown scared me into believing that my art would not sell because it was not considered a necessity. Still determined to launch; I decided to create something that people actually used. I came to the realization that people don't leave the house without looking in the mirror so I started

creating them! My struggle with precision in my craft caused me to lean into organic shapes for my mirror frame design which made me realize that they could be hung several different ways and the designs can be one of a kind. This means no two people will get the same design. I mean everybody likes to feel special right? They come in a variety of shapes, sizes, colors and hang between 2-4 different ways.

**Your artworks combine literal and abstract approaches. How do you decide when to lean toward one style versus the other?**

My literal approaches are meant to be playful and pretty straightforward. My abstract work sends a message that at times is more personal. Both are meant to make you think deeper. Both are chosen based on the mood I am in. I can be as transparent as I like but you have to figure out the message on your own! Hehe!

**The use of bright, saturated colors is a key feature of your work. What role do colors play in expressing the themes you explore?**



Robbin Trotter | heART | 2023



Robbin Trotter | Agave Have It | 2023

The subject matter of my work often involves nature so naturally the colors I use are bright. But overall I am drawn to brights and pastels so the goal is for those colors to stand out. I just like the art to really pop.

**You describe your work as reflecting 'what life feels like or what it should feel like.' Can you elaborate on this idea and how it influences your creative process?**

Life mirrors plant life in all aspects of the growth process. I also think the same applies to alcohol consumption and addiction. It feels like creators benefit in their creative pursuits just as much as they suffer. Either way it signifies a growth of something impressive or a tragedy.

**As an artist residing in Brooklyn, how does the local art scene inspire or shape your work?**

Brooklyn's local art scene does not influence my art as much as my personal life does. But the majority of the art, artists and art events I am exposed to is in the heart of Brooklyn. I am more so exposed to the culture while still maintaining my own aesthetic.



## — Interview

# Joshua Kennington

**Your work focuses on memory, nostalgia, and fleeting moments. What initially drew you to these themes, and how do you approach them in your art?**

Ever since I began producing art, specifically with my photography practice, I've considered the value of memory, and how photographs become these sort of elements of nostalgia as time moves on. They become symbols of moments, fleeting from the present, forever lost in the past, but still close to us in terms of what they mean to us as memories, reminders we were there when that image was taken. I've always appreciated that sentimentality of the image, and how one cherishes it through their life. I kept in mind this notion of memory and sentiment when producing my paintings, perhaps not in a totally representational approach, as to recreate a memory, but perhaps say, in using more gradual colour tones, or trying to simplify my imagery so as to emulate how memory by its very nature won't necessarily capture every detail in a specific time and place.

**Can you elaborate on how your local environment and subconscious influence your abstract landscapes and dreamscapes?**

My artistic practice is informed in part by my experiences of exploring and running about the river valleys near my home since childhood. I've always appreciated nature, and seeing different landscapes and ecosystems. I've volunteered for a few local organizations over the years, managing ecosystems in the Credit and Don River Valleys in the Greater Toronto Area. At the same time, I've always been a city kid, used to taking subways to get around the city, and the bustling, busy roads of my local neighbourhood. I



choose to represent elements of both of these environments in my work, in part to recreate them as memories of their own, and to celebrate the mundanity of them. My practice is influenced as well by dreams, specifically the idea of the dream as an alternate, warped, but sometimes almost life-like representation of our own lives at times. Up until the pandemic, I used to have rather odd dreams that stuck with me, to the point where I almost had a fear of dreaming in my sleep in high school. When I first began to paint, I wanted to represent these mixed emotions I had, but also try to think of dreams as what could be, and sort of this point of imagined reality. In spite of my background in photography, I don't desire representational painting, partly because I find there's something so telling about looking at a painting which doesn't leave every detail open to the viewer. I think in some ways, looking into one's dreams is to see something inside them, something you wouldn't see on a surface level.

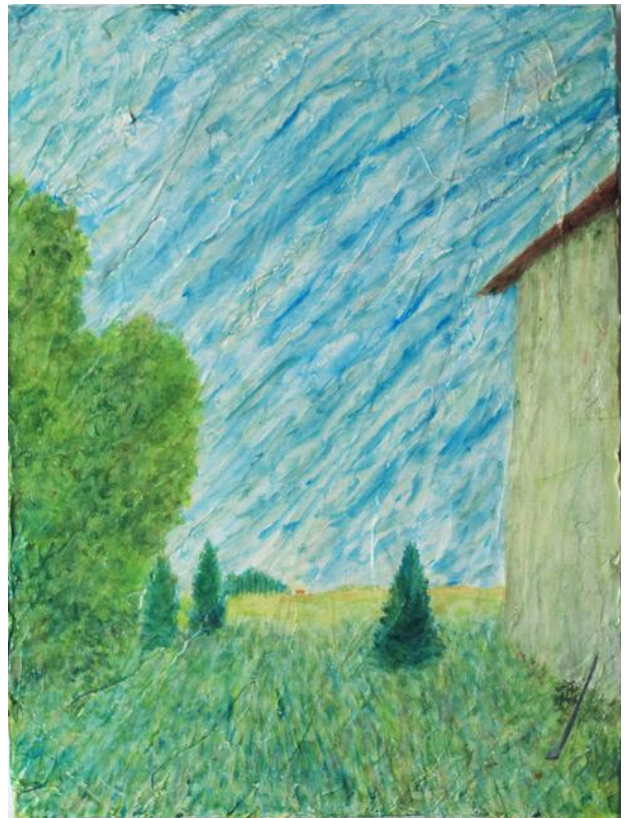
**You describe your work as a synthesis of natural and man-made forms. Could you share an example of a piece where this synthesis is most evident?**

Much of my work generally skews toward one type of form, but one of my oil paintings, called Terminus Oppidum (which is Latin (roughly) for Frontier Town), captures both identities well. It's an abstracted representation of the street I live on, as it passes through my local river valley, with allusions to a city in the distance. It was an experimental work for me, with many light layers of paint used to create perspective,

and a convincing field of view. At first glance, the repeating forms of trees are apparent as they flank an illuminated yellow road, which rises as it exits the valley. A swirling confluence of clouds pours from the top of the valley, filling the sky in smokey greys. Man-made intervention into this landscape is most prominent from the yellow road, but a distant skyline of repeated yellow lines floats in the sky to the left, behind the clouds but very prominent nonetheless. I used tape in this work to emulate a sense of large, man-made constructions that were nearby, perhaps, behind the curtain of clouds. In that sense, this work feels rather light, and to me, a bit theatrical.

**Your background in photography informs your focus on light and composition. How do these photographic principles translate into your paintings?**

Ever since I began drawing, I've kept a few aspects of photography to heart. These translated over to my paintings, even though I mainly draw representationally, and paint in abstract form. Perhaps the single most important element to me is composition, and how every object and form in my paintings relate to each other. I've come to really value giving form space to breathe, whether it's the smallest line of paint on a canvas to represent part of an object, or even to provide enough space for a diptych to comfortably be situated in a space, I always try to consider different viewpoints in my work. I generally follow the rule of thirds in my work, but I'm more open to pushing this principle as hard as it is for me. The other principle I constantly yearn to achieve in my work, is a convincing sense of lighting or luminance in my work. I used to practice this by never painting with white paint, using the black canvas of my painting as the original light source to illuminate my scenes as I choose. I still maintain this technique, but use white in some of my works if necessary. I've also come to appreciate different colour tones through photography, which have informed my colour palette in my paintings, like different gray tones, yellows and



blues.

**Impressionist painting and abstract symbolism are central to your practice. Which artists or movements have had the biggest impact on your work?**

When I first began painting, I felt lost and unsure of where to start, until I began looking into surrealist painters, like Yves Tanguy and Max Ernst, and Impressionists like Monet. I resonated with the colour schemes used by these artists, and as I began to do more research and practice painting, I moved toward a more deliberate, methodical system of blending paint. In the last few years, I've found inspiration through Romanticist J. M. W. Turner, and to a lesser extent, the work of Mark Rothko and Philip Guston. I think semiotics and different signs we identify with in painting can be so important in shaping how we see work. It's these associations which can either resonate with a viewer, or remind them of another work or idea explored in another which I find so interesting. This idea of connecting to an audience, creating meaning through one's work by ensuring some sense of meaning is instilled within it, it fascinates me. It's obviously not possible as everyone's perception of a work is different and informed by their own experiences, but I still believe the power of symbolism in painting is something remarkable and often irreproducible in any other medium.

**You often use sculptural techniques to ground**





**your work. Could you explain this process and its significance in conveying your ideas?**

Before I begin any painting, I apply heavy body gesso to my work, whether my canvas already has a layer of pre-applied gesso, or not. I usually apply several layers to give my work some depth, and use this kind of gesso because I want my work to have grooves and ridges to influence the final outcome of my work. This process was born out of an accident, as one day I'd forgotten to smooth over my base layer before painting, but I found the resulting texture interesting, and it gave the work a new meaning in my eyes. I began experimenting with this idea of leaving out a step in my grounding process, and over times began to use more, and eventually a denser type of gesso in my paintings, using a palette knife to smooth over my base layer. As I paint over this base layer, the ridges do shift to a degree, but they also shift my brush strokes and lines depending on where and how I'm painting. These paintings begin to resemble maps almost, as if I'm painting routes over rolling hills and mountain ranges to get from one side of the canvas to the other. These grooves, bumps and intrusions from a flat, pictorial plane act as a symbol of the perception, the memory of this landscape or abstracted reality I'm

creating. It's almost as if one had a photograph of, say, a farm, but they were seeing it through the perspective of the original owner of that farm, with each ridge and groove representing their lived experience and perception that shifted their understanding of the work. To me then, these textures act like the rosy coloured lens of nostalgia, looking back to a dreamscape or landscape, not quite seeing the composition as it truly is, but still grasping the essence of that time and place.

**What advice would you give to emerging artists interested in exploring similar themes of memory and the ephemeral?**

Given how universal these themes are, I suggest to anyone interested in these ideas to really just make art, look into artists from history who explore these themes, and don't be afraid to push your ideas. Every work you make will make you more confident in finding your path forward. These are topics with a wide breadth of interpretations, so there's many ways to approach these themes. It'll be a long process to figure out where and how you want to explore these ideas, but you will find your path.









## Ekaterina Fedoseeva

The emptiness within gnaws stronger than a starving beast. This feeling compelled me to create several sketches in a burst of emotion, searching for some kind of anchor within myself, something to hold onto in order to keep living. All of them shared common details—dry, lifeless trees and creatures whose blank eyes stared straight into the soul. At different moments, I turned to these sketches and saw different things in the eyes of the watchers: judgment, a call to action, curiosity, or indifference. They were merely mirrors for me, reflecting my own feelings and emotions. And yet, the watchers in my works remained impartial, for they are dead.

Thus, Darkwood was born—a world where souls are cleansed of memories as they await their return to the world of the living. This is a place full of allegories and metaphors. A world crafted from kraft paper and alcohol markers, so grim and emotionless. But it doesn't repel or frighten; rather, it lures the viewer to peer through the arch formed by trees, into the world of the dead, while still alive.

From the void in my soul emerged a world with its inhabitants and stories—a world that resonates with those who have felt something similar, as well as with those who ponder life, death, and what comes after.

Ekaterina Fedoseeva | Before Death | 2020









# — Interview

## Annie Yu

**Can you share more about your journey from painting as a child to discovering ceramics while studying industrial design?**

I started painting when I was a kid, mostly using acrylic paint, but also other mediums like sketching, watercolour and oil paint. I remember really enjoying the process of getting lost in creating and feeling accomplished after completing new artworks throughout my childhood. I was really lucky to have encouragement from my parents and friends to continue practicing, refining and exploring artistically. Later on, I attended a few ceramics programmes for kids during a handful of school holidays and thoroughly loved it, but it kind of trailed off when I got older. Oddly, it wasn't until going to study a Bachelor of Industrial Design where I rediscovered my love of ceramics in the university's wet labs. I played with clay in my free time between lectures and assignment work as a way to procrastinate, and got excited by the endless possibilities. Making things like jewellery that I could use felt wonderfully direct and connected me more to these objects. After graduating, I joined a collective ceramics studio as a way to continue exploring ideas through clay in a dedicated space.

**You mentioned exploring the relationship between natural and geometric forms. What draws you to this interplay?**

Exploring the intersection between natural and geometric forms allows for some new harmony to arise both visually and conceptually. I've always been drawn to the concept of human made products, artifacts, systems being integrated harmoniously with nature, and aim to convey this idea in my work. It's a chance to make something that is not simply identifiable as only natural or only man made, but a fusion of natural intelligence and beauty, and geometric practicality.

**Your works seem both fragile and strong—what role does materiality, especially paper clay and**



**brass, play in your creative process?**

Paper clay works well for complex sculptures, and is less prone to cracking while the piece dries, but is nevertheless still fragile when made into the thin pieces I make. Patience is key. The brass is a decorative element that I sometimes use to reconstruct or mend bits of the fragile ceramic parts that may have broken during the firing process. I think the warmth of the brass pairs really nicely with the satin browns and neutral greens I like to use on my ceramic pieces. The contrast in these materials serves as a display of decorative mending, as well as an echo of the idea of opposites combining, of strong and fragile entities fusing to become one unique thing.

**Your sculptures evoke a sense of liveliness and emergent intelligence. What experiences or ideas inspire these qualities in your work?**

The act of repeating a simple action over and over can create beautifully complex forms and patterns. I love the simplicity of this principle used in design. For example, a spiral staircase is made by repeatedly applying the same simple procedure of duplicating a step, raising it slightly, and rotating by a small set degree. The resulting artifact of this simple repeating act is something much more complex and different than any one of its basic components, an emergent form that is perfectly suited to function as stairs. Similarly, any living being begins with basic components, or cells, but when multiplied and given parameters to function under, becomes this 'new'



organism that can think and feel for itself. This feels like a kind of magic to me! Creating a sense of liveliness through applying this principle to otherwise 'dead' objects is my way of recreating this magic.

**Your work seems to mirror both the intricacies of life and nature. How does this reflection influence your artistic philosophy?**

I've gravitated toward embracing simplicity of tools and materials when creating complex structures. This 'essentials only' approach ties in with the emergent principles I apply to my objects; using simple things to create complexity. Simplifying the tools and materials I have helps push me to be creative with how I use them, and makes the workflow more dynamic, seeing how my ideas can shape the materials and vice versa. Through my practice, I also unravel my thoughts on how precious, mysterious and miraculous life in any capacity is. Reflecting on how nature's intelligence can become overlooked in our day to day lives, yet provides so many iterations of what life can look like that we as humans can draw upon as inspiration to live more harmoniously. In a similar vein, it's fascinating to think about the mechanisms and turning points of how simple components become defined as a united, living entity. I wonder where exactly the complex 'self' begins to emerge out of the many smaller components of a body or organism. I ask how can I use simple clay to produce an object with a soul?

**How important is functionality in your work? Do**



Annie Yu | Skeleton of Life | 2023



Annie Yu | Growth of a Network | 2023

**you see your ceramics as more functional or sculptural?**

Functionality plays a significant part in what I tend to make. I like the idea of objects that can serve a purpose, while also being a sculpture when not in use. I see my ceramics as a hybrid of both functional objects and sculpture, I feel like it invites people to engage more tangibly and personally with an object if they choose. Function can be a source of inspiration for what I want to make; through reimagining ordinary household objects through unorthodox forms, methods and material.

**What reactions or feedback have surprised you the most from viewers or collectors of your work?**

I haven't yet heard any feedback that surprised me necessarily, but some people have said the sculptures are smaller in person than they realised from seeing it as a photo! Maybe it's the angle I take the photos or something about the structural feeling of some pieces that make scale hard to tell. People also usually say, "wow that looks fragile!" which is interesting as the object somehow is stronger than it appears. I enjoy the juxtaposition of those two opposing ideas, and that despite its fragility, the object still manages to keep existing, just like us.

## Kseniia Ross

My "Garden of Illusions" is a metaphor—a reflection on eternal questions about love, faith, happiness, and beauty. On what is true and what is illusory. The fruits are both beautiful and poisonous at the same time, as represented by the plant prototypes I use in my work. The faces that animate the flowers point to the human nature of illusions. I am both the garden and the gardener in this space. I am the cause and the effect. What is my illusion—a poison that taints the soul or salvation in my own magical world?









# Joanna Li

## Can you describe how your upbringing in Taipei influenced your artistic perspective and storytelling style?

Growing up in Taipei, I was surrounded by a rich blend of traditional and modern influences. The city's vibrant streets, bustling night markets, and historical temples instilled in me a deep appreciation for the coexistence of old and new. This duality often reflects in my work, where I blend traditional storytelling techniques with contemporary themes. The layered textures of urban life in Taipei taught me to find beauty in everyday moments, shaping my visual language and narrative approach.

## Your work spans multiple mediums and concepts. How do you decide which medium best expresses a particular idea?



Joanna Li | Crescendo | 2021



Joanna Li | The present moment | 2021

The concept always dictates the medium. When an idea emerges, I consider the emotions I want to evoke and the most effective way to convey the story. For instance, if I want to capture fleeting memories, I might use photography to freeze moments in time. For introspective or abstract concepts, video installations allow me to weave together layers of sound and visuals to immerse the audience fully. It's a process of trial and instinct, guided by what feels most authentic to the idea.

## Storytelling is central to your art. Can you share a specific story behind one of your pieces?

One of my favorite pieces is *Reminiscence*, a video installation exploring the passage of time and fleeting nature of human connections. The inspiration came from a childhood memory of my grandmother sharing a difficult decision she made, which over time shifted from feelings of regret to a sense of gratitude for how it shaped our family. This idea became a key theme in *Reminiscence*, highlighting how our understanding of the past evolves as we grow older and gain new perspectives. The work emphasises that memories are constantly reshaped by the present.

## How do you strive to create emotional connections with your audience through your work?

I aim to evoke a sense of shared experience by tapping into universal emotions like nostalgia, longing, or resilience. I often use elements such as soft lighting, organic textures, or ambient sounds to create an intimate atmosphere that draws the audience in. I also like to leave space for interpretation, encouraging





viewers to bring their own stories and emotions to the work, fostering a deeper, more personal connection.

**Your art often interprets your ideas about yourself and the world. How has your perception of the world evolved through your creative journey?**

My creative journey has deepened my understanding of how interconnected we all are. Early in my career, my work was more introspective, focused on exploring my identity and personal experiences. Over time, I began to see parallels between my stories and those of others, which shifted my perspective outward. Now, my work often seeks to highlight shared human experiences and explore themes of collective

Joanna Li | Encounter | 2021

memory, showing how our individual lives are part of a larger narrative.

**Many of your works seem to explore urban landscapes and daily moments. How does living in London shape your creative process?**

Living in London is a constant source of inspiration. The city's mix of old and new—historic buildings standing right next to sleek modern skyscrapers—always catches my eye. I love exploring different neighborhoods, each with its own vibe and character. Wandering around with my camera, I'm drawn to little details like how the light hits a brick wall or a fleeting moment of interaction between strangers. The energy of the city keeps me motivated, and its vibrant art scene offers so many chances to connect, collaborate, and learn from others.

**What advice would you give to aspiring artists who want to explore multiple mediums and themes in their work?**

Stay curious and embrace the freedom to experiment. Each medium has its own language and strengths, so don't hesitate to step out of your comfort zone. Focus on the story or emotion you want to express, and let that guide your choice of medium. Seek inspiration from a variety of sources—art, music, literature, and even the small moments in daily life. Most importantly, trust your instincts and enjoy the journey; through exploration, you'll uncover your unique voice and perspective.





**Alanoud Naif** captures nature and its beauty through impressionistic eyes using the technique 'impasto' creating: dynamic landscapes, vibrant cityscapes, and seascapes using a palette knife and thick paint to create rich textures with bold and expressive strokes that bring each scene to life. Each painting created invites the viewer to explore the fleeting moods of nature With a deep appreciation for color and movement.





Alanoud Naif | Dancing Petals | 2024

**Jan van Schooten**  
**Peinture de Lumière**  
**Capturer la beauté magique du monde**

Let me introduce myself, my name is **Jan van Schooten**. I was born as a third-generation photographer on the 26th of July 1964 in the Netherlands, so I am Dutch. I finished high school in Canada in the mid-'80s and took a photographer's education back here in the Netherlands, getting my degree in 1990.

When I was a child/young adult, I loved drawing and painting and never considered photography as an art form—just a registration or reproduction of what already exists. I started my career as an analog commercial photographer, but within 10 years, digital manipulation of images became the norm, and the art of being a real photographer became obsolete. Manipulation of photos became mainstream. These days, with the rise of Artificial Intelligence, my job as a photographer changes fast.

Photography has been around for 200 years. The word is derived from the Greek language, and it literally means "drawing of light." Peinture de Lumière means just that—a drawing or painting with light. And that just ties right in with my childhood love of making real art.

I started experimenting with movement and long exposures around 2000, just for fun, and made several shots of my daughter that I was very pleased with. In the years that followed, I shot some pictures in this style, but I was more focused on my regular commercial day-to-day photography and getting food on the table.

Until late 2021, I had just started dating Dorine, and we went for a short trip to Luxembourg. It was in the middle of the COVID pandemic, and I was bored with just regular photos. I wanted to produce a different kind of image, something that would stir my imagination. She immediately loved the outcome of my experimental ICM (Intentional Camera Movement) photos, and my first fan was born!

So, just for fun, we started what we now call the Peinture de Lumière pictures during our trips around the world. I want images that fuel my imagination. It's like reading a book instead of seeing the movie! I want the viewer to dream away at my pictures, fantasizing and seeing their own story in my images. I want to provoke imagination.

I'll tell you a little story about how this worked for me. In early 2024, I wanted to do some street photography just to sharpen up my skills, but I was very disappointed by the results. It was the same as all those pictures on Instagram, and it didn't have my own feel. After a long and disappointing day of shooting, my girlfriend and I went out for dinner and came across a beautifully lit wet street. We shot some Peinture pictures, and I instantly fell in love with the result. Dorine said, "I saw that spark in your eyes when you saw the result, and that is what you should go after—don't try to copy other people's work. Make your own art."

The funny thing about this particular street shot is that I sold this image at my very first exposition.

In August of this year, a long-time friend, art director, and AI artist, Leon Baaren, called about an exposition and mentioned there was room for other artists to showcase their work. So, I jumped at this opportunity! At this exposition, I got a lot of positive feedback and was able to sell three of my artworks and two photo books filled with Peinture de Lumière art.

In our fast and ever-changing world, new media comes and goes. Just as the Impressionist art form started when photography came to rise (there was no longer a need for artists who could paint or draw real-life situations), I see my Peinture de Lumière art the same way. AI will be able to produce real-life commercial images in no time without the expensive costs of a real photographer, props, models, locations, waiting for good weather or light, and so on.

For me, letting go of all those stringent rules for photography feels like freedom—an escape, like those Impressionist artists felt at the end of the 19th century.

Dorine and I travel a lot, and we want to share with people what we encountered in the world—the beauty and the feeling of a fleeting moment. My muse is usually the main subject, photographed from behind because the image conveys what we see and feel at that moment.

**Cross Town Traffic (2024)** was a very busy intersection at the gate of Jaipur, India, with lots of traffic, noise, and obstacles to conquer.

**Khari Baoli (2024)** is a chaotic spice market in New Delhi—wall-to-wall people, shops, and the smell of exotic spices filling the air.

**Rouen (2022)** is the Grand Horloge underpass in the middle of the pandemic on a peaceful, sunny, but chilly day in January.

**Shiva (2022)**, the god of creation and destruction, is a picture at the Hindu flower market in Mumbai.

**Safdarjung (2024)** is the entrance to the mausoleum of the emperor Safdarjung, with other people on the left and right.

My discipline is as follows: we shoot the images as we walk through beautiful and inspiring places. I develop my images in Capture One, enhance the colors and contrast, and sometimes manipulate the image if there are unwanted items or elements in Photoshop. Then I get it printed on high-grade textile canvas on a wooden frame so it looks like a real painting.

In conclusion, I want to thank my girlfriend Dorine. She is truly my muse; she inspires, motivates, and believes in me and us producing beautiful art.





Jan van Schooten | Shiva



Jan van Schooten | Rouen



Jan van Schooten | Khari Baoli



Jan van Schooten | Safdarjung



Jan van Schooten | Cross town traffic

## Aoife Carthy

I am an Irish visual artist living within a diverse community of artists. My practice is concerned with the marriage of community and art as a transformative healing force. My work is rooted in sustainability and repurposing of discarded, everyday materials to challenge the conventional notions of art-production while emphasising the deep interconnectedness of people, place and nature. By transforming organic, man-made materials, into a man-made form of nature, I aim to return them to the community they came from. This cyclical relationship between creation and environment mirrors my belief in art as a means of preservation and connection. My focus on community as both subject and context aims to challenge the gentrification of cohesive communities, like my own home, in large, industrial environments like London. Within our communities we can seek great meaning, and therefore healing, in creating.









## — Interview

# Yixin Zhang

**What inspired you to create Mega Foundry, and what message do you hope to convey through this project?**

A few years ago, I was living in Beijing, surrounded by artists and intellectuals, but I started to feel like I was stuck in a bubble. One day, I visited Yiwu for the first time, and it completely changed how I saw China. It wasn't the skyscrapers or trendy galleries that defined the country—Yiwu showed me a different kind of reality—one driven by production, trade, and sheer human effort.

**How has your experience in documentary filmmaking influenced the way you approached the visual narrative of Mega Foundry?**

The observer is also a creator. I've always believed in letting visuals do the talking. The camera is like a quiet observer. People's daily lives hold so much poetry if you look closely. For Mega Foundry, I leaned into that—capturing the hypnotic hum of machines, the repetitive motions of workers. There's no dialogue, no storyline, not even a protagonist, yet the meaning unfolds through the visuals.

**The film explores the relationship between humans and the objects they produce. How do you view this relationship evolving in the modern era of mass production and technological advancement?**



It's getting more complicated. The more things we make, the more we become part of the system. As technology advances, we're increasingly defined by what we buy, what we wear, and what we consume.

**Can you elaborate on how the imagery of dolls and factory settings symbolizes human existence and materialism?**

The dolls were one of my favorite parts to film. They're like symbols of standardized beauty—flawless, identical, and endlessly replicated. In a way, we're all part of this production process. In the past, machines were tools for humans; now, they're shaping how we think, work, and even what we desire. AI, in particular, has accelerated the process of mass production, making it faster and more efficient. But the more efficient we get at making things, the more we seem to lose track of who we are in the process. People are becoming just another part of the machine—our time, our labor, and our desires are all products being processed and consumed.

**What were some of the biggest challenges you faced while creating Mega Foundry, both technically and conceptually?**

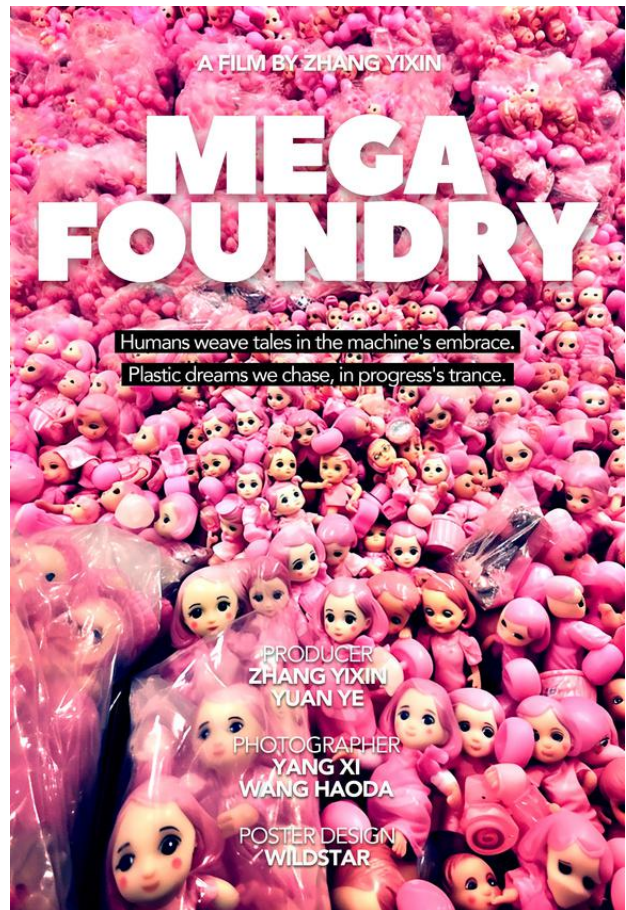
Technically, shooting in factories was tough. People in Yiwu are very busy, and they neither have the time nor the understanding for filming. I spent a lot of effort making friends locally. I needed so many locations and had to get filming permissions one by



one. In the end, I had no choice but to shorten my original 40-minute film to just 10 minutes because many scenes I wanted to capture, like factories related to birth products and factories connected to death-related products, were inaccessible. And I ran out of money—from filming commercials—to continue. Conceptually, it was a challenge to avoid oversimplifying the story. I didn't want to just say, "Factories are bad" or "Materialism is evil." It's more nuanced than that. One vendor joked that I should quit filmmaking and start selling products like him. The people I met in Yiwu have real pride in their work. It's their livelihood, their identity. Balancing that complexity was probably the hardest part. I spent a lot of time with them, and they convinced me: films are meaningless, and no one cares. Especially for non-entertaining ones like this, there's no market. I set the footage aside after a not very successful shoot. I was also working on a feature-length project called "Singing for Silence". I filmed Mega Foundry in 2017. It wasn't until 2024, when a curator friend encouraged me to submit it for an exhibition, that I finally finished it.

**How do you balance dramatic storytelling with the documentary aspects of your filmmaking style?**

I actually love creating stories—it's where my heart lies. But somehow, documentary subjects keep finding me. These projects capture my attention and end up sharing a big part of my life and creative energy. Maybe that's why I haven't made a narrative film yet. With Mega Foundry, it all started with the overwhelming visual impact of the landscapes in Yiwu. The endless factories, the piles of products—almost surreal. A non-narrative approach felt like the best way to express that. It wasn't about telling a single story but about creating a sensory experience, letting the visuals and sounds speak for themselves.



**What role do you believe filmmakers play in addressing social issues and sparking meaningful conversations through art?**

Film is one of the most accessible forms of art—it reaches people from all walks of life. It takes complex social issues and translates them into something emotional and relatable. A film doesn't have to lecture but open doors—create space for people to see the world through a different lens and start conversations they might not have otherwise. It's not about providing answers but sparking curiosity and connection.

**What's next for you after Mega Foundry? Are you exploring similar themes in your future projects?**

Besides the documentary I'm about to finish, "Singing for Silence", which tells the story of hearing-impaired children and their relationship with music, I'm interested in continuing to explore how people and systems intersect. AI is speeding up the world's shift to being system-driven. How will it develop?

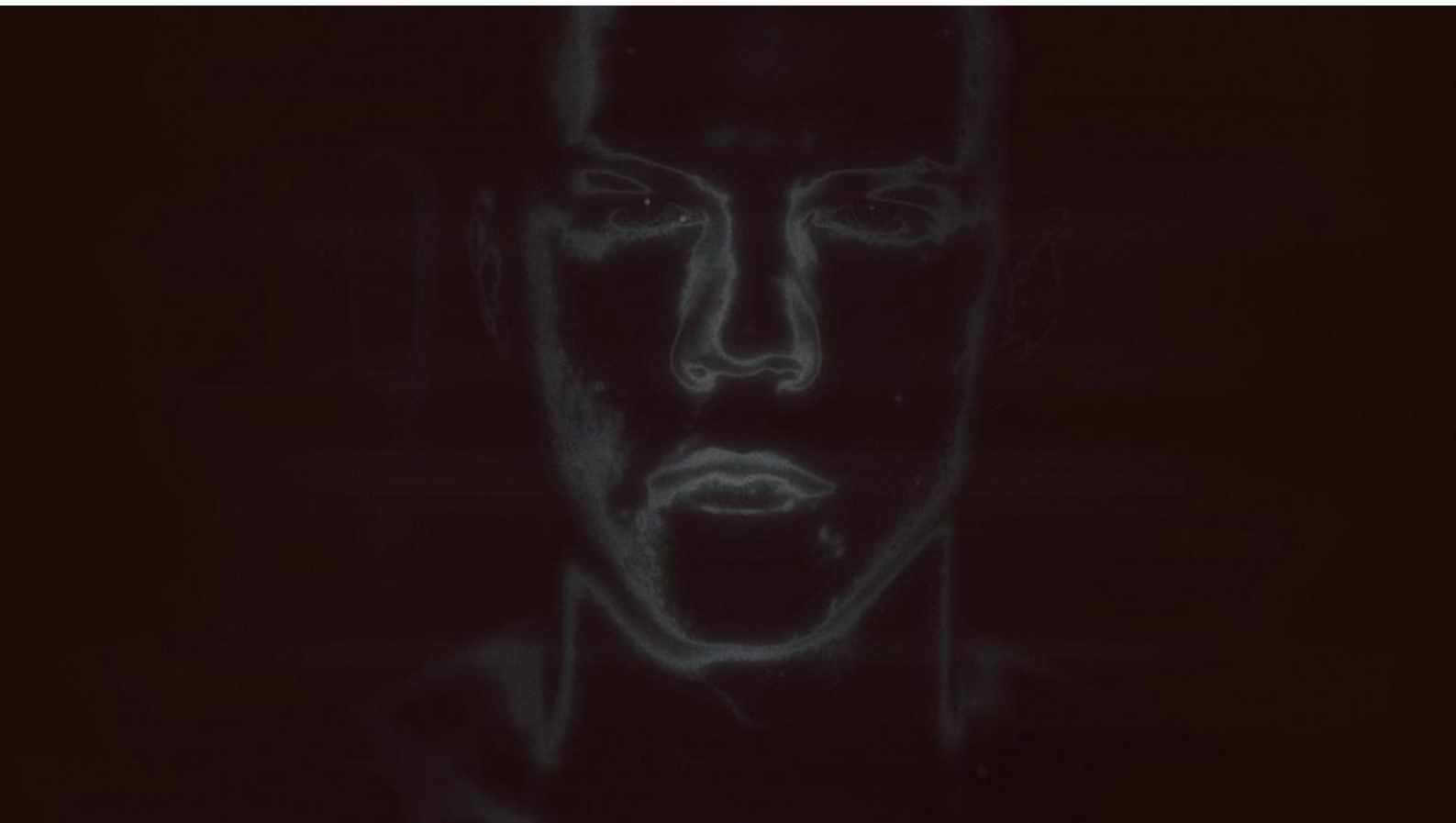


**Roman Lykov** is a visual artist whose work explores emotions, time, and memories, often framed by subtle drama, introspective dialogues, and reflections. He draws inspiration from light, cinema, and literature, whose narratives and characters have become an integral part of his identity. Roman began his artistic journey by studying people through portraits. Capturing male and female subjects, he sought to explore their inner worlds, and in doing so, discovered reflections of himself. This formative experience became a key step in his artistic development, encouraging him to delve deeper into complex themes and experiment with new creative forms. His artistic style is characterized by experiments with various optics and light, which create a sense of fragmented and lost memories—recollections of moments that have yet to happen. He combines this aesthetic with storytelling and 3D elements, using them as metaphors for thoughts, emotions, and reflections. Through his art, Roman aims to immerse viewers in his world, inspiring them to reflect on the themes he presents while enjoying a rich visual and emotional experience. Over time, he expanded his practice to include screenwriting, poetry, and 3D art, gaining a deeper understanding of himself and his artistic vision. Inspired by nature and by people who appreciate the beauty of the world, Roman seeks to connect with like-minded individuals through his work. Looking ahead, he envisions creating large-scale projects, such as music videos and conceptual art pieces, that reflect his thoughts and embrace intertextuality. His ultimate goal is to create art that resonates universally, offering a space for reflection and emotional connection.

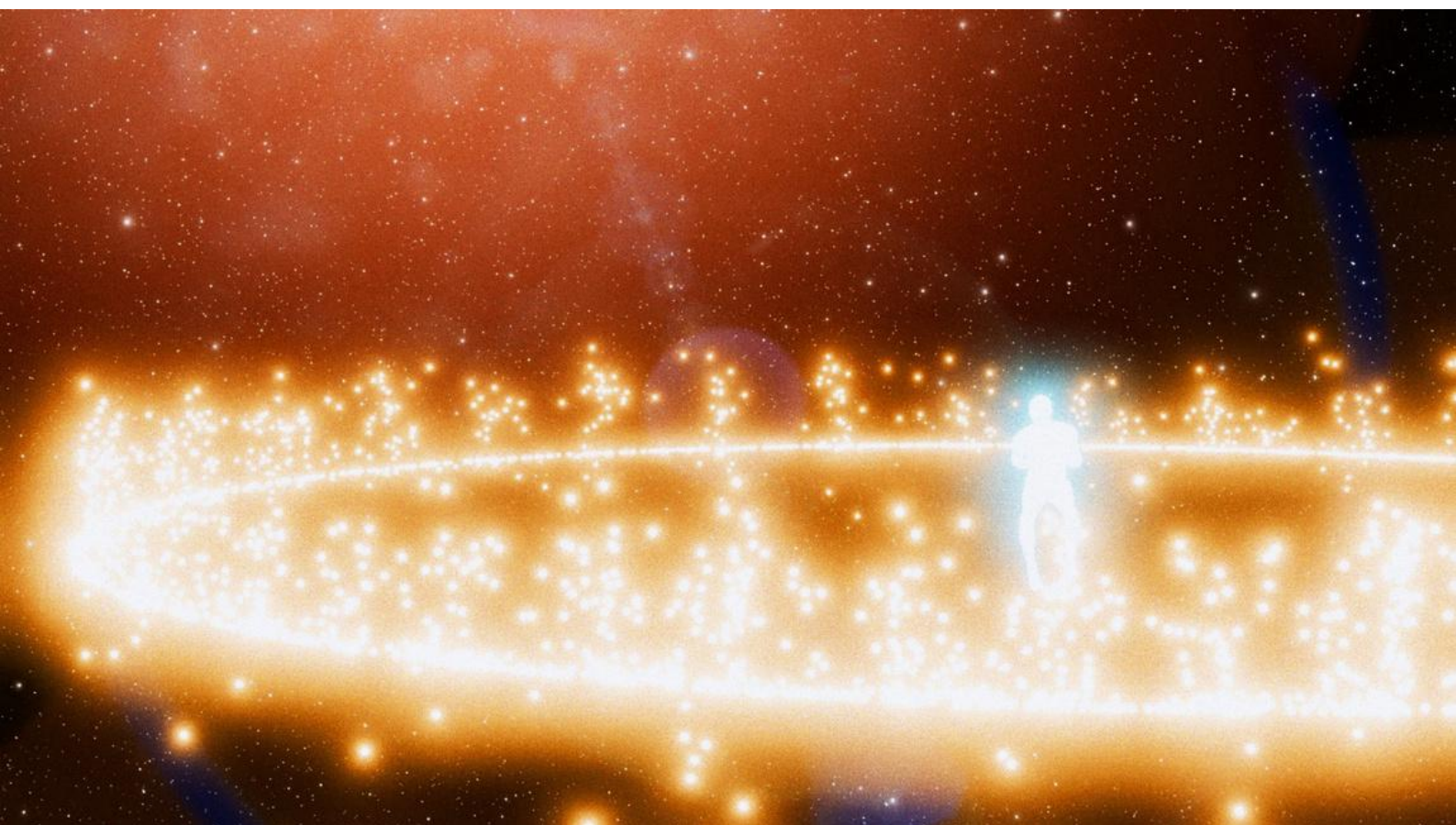
#### *Artist Statement*

I am like a character in a book, contemplating time, where my thoughts are the text of an unwritten story, in which the future feels like the past, and the present lasts only as long as a cigarette burns. All these feelings give me a ticket on a high-speed train of cinematic narrative, where the final destination in this story is the station of melancholy. The view from the carriage, through fogged-up glass, obscures the landscape; only rays of light pierce through, letting you glimpse and feel warmth, as if spring has finally arrived. My art is an attempt to preserve eternity in the present, visually conveying reflections and memories. For me, time is the interaction of the past, present, and future. It is not linear but cyclical, where the past and future collide in a single moment, creating a sense of an eternal loop. I create dramatic narratives inspired by cinema, where the plot becomes the quintessence of emotion. For me, it is not about a linear script but a way to extract the core of a story - its essential experience. These are films that do not showcase a sequence but focus on the sensation. Melancholy is not just sadness but the poetry of contemplation, loss, and memories. It embodies both complexity and simplicity. It fuels my inspiration and becomes the foundation of the stories I create. I use blur, light, and textures inspired by the effect of film, to immerse the viewer in a state of nostalgia and the ephemerality of the moment. My art invites contemplation, immersion in atmosphere, and reflection on the story, with the echo of these details making the world feel more deeply.





Roman Lykov | Serenity #19 | 2024



Roman Lykov | Singularity #7 | 2024

# — Interview

## Jen Dauberman

**Your work often incorporates natural materials like twigs, leaves, and fabric. How do you decide which materials to use for each piece?**

I let the day, the hike, and my discoveries guide my work. When I explore nature, I collect a variety of natural objects like twigs, leaves, or other interesting things that catch my eye. Kayaking is one of my favorite ways to gather materials because it allows me to slow down and notice the small details in my surroundings. Once I've gathered my collection, I lay everything out and start experimenting. I let the materials themselves inspire the direction of the piece, often pairing elements based on textures, shapes, or colors that feel right together. I enjoy playing with these contrasts and combinations, allowing the tactile qualities of each material to guide my decisions. Each item I use holds a memory of where I found it or what I was doing that day, making my artwork deeply personal. These materials serve as both creative inspiration and a way to preserve moments from my time spent in nature. When I look back on my finished pieces, they become a kind of visual journal, reminding me of the places I've been and the things I've seen along the way.



Jen Dauberman | Threads of Cyan & Earth | 2024



**"Threads of Cyan & Earth" highlights connections between nature and human stories. Can you share a personal story or memory that inspired this piece?**

A memory that inspires some of my woven pieces in general is the connection I long to still have with my mom, who I lost to breast cancer in 2011. She had a deep love for our ancestry and preserved every family heirloom you could imagine. After she passed, I found myself looking at these items with fresh eyes, appreciating their stories and the hands that made them. Among them were quilts meticulously labeled with notes like, 'Your great-great-aunt Fanny made this in 1901.' My mother was buried with a quilt her own mother had made from pieces of her childhood dresses—a gesture that felt like a tangible connection between generations.

When I weave, I feel like I'm continuing that tradition, threading together stories of love, loss, and resilience. Nature often intertwines with these pieces as well, representing the cycles of growth, decay, and renewal that mirror our own human experiences. This piece, 'Threads of Cyan & Earth,' feels like a bridge between those personal stories and the larger, universal connection we all share with nature and our ancestors.

**Cyanotype is a unique medium. What drew you to this technique, and how does it contribute to your storytelling?**

I've always loved working in a darkroom and learning about photography and the chemical process. There are so many alternative processes to explore, but I was especially drawn to cyanotypes because of their rich, deep blues. I also love how simple the process is—you don't need a darkroom since it's sensitive to UV light, which means I can create almost anywhere. Using the sun as part of the process, leaves me feeling connected to nature, which is a big part of my work.

I enjoy working with negatives I make from found objects, and the flexibility of cyanotypes lets me experiment with



printing on all kinds of surfaces. That's perfect for me because I'm not someone who sticks to doing the same thing over and over. Cyanotypes allow me to keep exploring and growing as an artist.

Of course, there have been plenty of funny challenges along the way. One time, I was teaching a cyanotype workshop in Seattle, and it was snowing and overcast—not exactly ideal conditions for a process that relies on UV light! We had to improvise and borrow UV flashlights from another group just to make it work. It was chaotic but also a great reminder of how adaptable and creative you have to be with this process.

Then there was the time early on when I was experimenting with cyanotypes and dyed a bunch of fabric for a piece. I was too impatient to let it dry overnight—it was dripping everywhere and making such a mess—so I thought putting it in the dryer would speed things up. Let's just say I learned my lesson when I accidentally dyed my entire dryer blue! Even now, my impatience gets the best of me sometimes, and I end up with blue-stained hands as a little reminder of how hands-on (literally) this process can be. Moments like these make me laugh and keep me grounded in the joy of experimenting and learning.

For storytelling, cyanotypes are a natural fit. They allow me to combine my love of mixed media with endless experimentation, which means every piece has its own unique voice. I use found objects, photographs, and even hand-drawn elements to create negatives that act like fragments of a larger narrative. These fragments come together to tell stories about connection, memory, and nature.

The rich blue tones of cyanotypes feel timeless, almost like they hold a piece of history. That's important to me because my work often explores themes of ancestry and the natural world. By layering different materials or printing on unconventional surfaces, like fabric or wood, I can add depth to the story I'm telling. Each layer becomes part of a conversation between the past, the present, and the materials themselves.

Cyanotypes also encourage spontaneity, which is key to my storytelling. The process is hands-on and unpredictable at times, with the sun and weather playing an active role. That element of chance mirrors the way stories evolve naturally—through unexpected twists, found moments, and new discoveries. This flexibility allows me to approach each piece with curiosity, weaving together materials, textures, and emotions in a way that feels honest and authentic.

**Weaving and fiber arts play an integral role in your creative process. How do you see these crafts connecting to tradition and innovation?**

Crafts like weaving, sewing, and quilting connect me deeply to tradition, particularly to the women in my life and history. These practices remind me of the skills and creativity passed down through generations. I think of quilting circles where women gathered, not just to create, but to build community and share their lives. That sense



Jen Dauberman | Blue Kyanite ring | 2024

of connection continues today when I have art nights with my friends. It's a modern version of those circles, a place where creativity and friendship come together.

At the same time, I'm deeply inspired by innovation and how technology can reimagine traditional art forms. For example, in my cyanotype work, I use digital tools like Photoshop to manipulate and design negatives before printing them in this historic photographic process. Photoshop allows me to adjust contrast, layer textures, and even combine multiple images, creating complex compositions that wouldn't have been possible with traditional methods alone. By layering and experimenting digitally, I can push the boundaries of what cyanotypes can communicate, blending past and present in a single piece.

I also see digital tools as a way to personalize my work and make it unique. Whether I'm designing custom negatives for cyanotypes, or digitally enhancing my photography, these tools help me take traditional methods and make them my own. This process feels like a dialogue between history and the future, where I honor the roots of these crafts while exploring new possibilities. For me, art is about this balance—respecting tradition while embracing innovation. The weaving of past techniques with modern technology allows me to tell new stories, share new ideas, and connect with both the history of craft and the evolving world around me.

**As an art teacher, how do you balance your personal art practice with teaching and inspiring your students?**

It all started with a commitment to growing as an artist. I signed up for classes to challenge myself and develop

new skills, and this journey led me to transformative opportunities like Wild Acres in Little Switzerland, NC. I discovered the Redux Contemporary Art Center in Charleston, which hosted weeklong art retreats for adults, and without hesitation, I signed up for jewelry-making. That experience changed everything for me. Since then, Wild Acres has become a sacred refuge where I reconnect with my creativity every summer. It's a bubble of inspiration, free from distractions, where I spend two full weeks immersed in making art from sunup to sundown. It was there that I rediscovered how much my soul craves creating.

While teaching is my greatest passion, nurturing my students' voices and helping them develop confidence in who they want to become, I also recognize the importance of being a lifelong learner myself. Staying curious and open is essential to my growth, not just as a teacher but as an artist. I am deeply grateful to the incredible mentors who have guided and inspired me, such as Sandi Shackelford, Catherine Cross Tsintzos, and Olivia Ruxton Cramer. These women helped me step out of my comfort zone, embrace my potential, and thrive as both an artist and a teacher. I believe everyone deserves to have mentors who lift them up, challenge them, and encourage them to dream bigger.

Balancing teaching with my personal art practice means finding grace for myself and letting go of rigid expectations. Creating should never feel like a chore, so I make it a priority to protect time for my art. One of my favorite traditions is a modern take on the old quilting circle: I meet up with friends every Saturday at a local coffee shop, where we work on whatever creative projects bring us joy. It's a sacred time to connect, create, and recharge, reminding me that art is as much about community as it is about individual expression.

Sometimes, I'm fortunate to work alongside my students in the studio. I think it's essential for them to see me as not only their teacher but also a working artist who continues to explore and grow. These moments of shared creativity help demystify the artistic process and encourage my students to see art as a lifelong journey.

In our area, we are lucky to have supportive galleries that exhibit student work alongside professional artists. This collaboration not only validates their creative efforts but

also shows them how their voices are part of a larger artistic community. Watching my students step into these spaces with pride is one of the most rewarding aspects of my work.

Ultimately, the balance comes from making room for both roles—teacher and artist—and understanding that they feed into one another. By pursuing my art practice, I model for my students what it means to live a creative life, and by teaching, I find endless inspiration from their energy, ideas, and potential.

**Your exploration of jewelry making combines wearable art with metalsmithing. How do you approach designing these pieces compared to your mixed media works?**

Designing jewelry feels very different from creating my mixed media works, but there's a shared foundation of storytelling and experimentation. Since I'm still early in my metalsmithing journey, I approach each piece with a beginner's mindset—open to learning and embracing the process. Jewelry requires me to think differently about form and function, especially how a piece will move with the body or be worn comfortably. Unlike mixed media, which often occupies a fixed space, jewelry is wearable and personal, which adds an exciting new layer of intention to my designs.

**How does living and working in South Carolina influence your art, especially regarding the materials and themes you explore?**

Living and working in South Carolina has had a profound impact on my art, especially in how I connect with materials and themes. Being close to the beach and spending time kayaking allows me to immerse myself in the natural beauty of the area. The textures, patterns, and colors I find in the ocean, marshes, and coastal landscapes often make their way into my work, whether it's through cyanotypes, mixed media, or jewelry. The act of being out in nature—watching the way the light changes on the water or finding small treasures like shells or driftwood—deepens my appreciation for organic forms and reminds me to stay curious and observant.

South Carolina's vibrant artistic community and rich traditions also inspire me. Local artists and makers here have such a strong sense of connection to where they're from, and their work encourages me to explore my own roots and stories. There's a deep appreciation for craftsmanship in this region, and it serves as a reminder of the importance of honoring heritage while innovating. Living here has taught me to celebrate the beauty of the everyday and find ways to weave those moments into my art. Whether I'm experimenting with materials influenced by the landscape or pulling from the spirit of creativity that surrounds me, South Carolina is always present in what I make.

Jen Dauberman  
Wet Cyanotype of a luna moth "Luna" 2024









## Hannah Derechin

Based in NY, NY. I received a B.S. in Studio Art at Skidmore College with a concentration in digital media. My work focuses on creating meaning through combining elements of digital collage, photography, and animation. Currently, I am interested in masking pieces of symbolic photos to design digital textiles.



Hannah Derechin | Quilt







## — Interview

# Elise Rowland

**Can you share what initially inspired you to start crocheting in late 2021, and what made you persist despite initial frustrations?**

If I remember correctly, I purchased a few crochet cardigans on Etsy in late 2021. I was trying to build my wardrobe a little more for my job. I've honestly always wanted to create clothing of some sort, whether it was going to be from sewing, knitting, crochet, or something else! Crochet is the easiest in my opinion. What made me persist despite initial frustrations was the desire to prove to myself that I could do it. I'm always trying to prove that I have the capability to do anything I set my mind to.

**How does your crochet work, such as "Waffle House Date," differ in process and concept from your other art forms like acrylic painting and digital art?**

Obviously traditional painting, crochet, and digital art are completely different mediums, but the process begins the same way. I see something that creates a spark of inspiration within me and I go straight to brainstorming.



As for the concepts, my traditional and digital work will reference all sorts of things such as pop culture, my own personal life, pop art, and more. At first my crochet work was just fashion, plushies, and miscellaneous items. With my pieces "Ellie" and my One Direction cardigan, I've branched out into pop culture references. The processes and concepts are quite the same, they're just expressed in different ways!

**Could you describe the creative process behind "Waffle House Date"? What message or story were you hoping to convey through this piece?**

The creative process was unique with this piece. I had already created the waffle for a separate project I never finished. Honestly, this piece meant nothing when I started creating it. I made it in a time crunch when I decided to join my artists' guild's December member show. I chose to make a plate of Waffle House food because of the already-made waffle piece, but also because it would be easy and recognizable. Everything on the plate is what I usually order: grilled cheese, waffles, bacon, hash browns, and a side of pickles (not always all of this food but always pickles!). It was always there for me after



Elise Rowland | Waffle House Date | 2024



marching band competitions, college, adulthood, and for all the impromptu hang-outs with friends and dates with partners. Waffle House has been a constant in my life, so I thought it would be a good muse.

**"Ellie" was inspired by the video game character from The Last of Us. How do you approach combining pop culture references with your artistic vision?**

I really try not to copy things entirely when it comes to approaching references. Like with traditional art, I'm personally not a huge fan of realism. Sure there's a great deal of technical skills required for that kind of work, but there's rarely any creativity or individuality. I made "Ellie" for one of my good friends as a gift. I knew I wanted Ellie's face from The Last of Us 2 video game promo, so I chose to create a tapestry instead of a detailed painting or something digital. The tapestry is not detailed at all as I only used 4 colors, but I think this adds to the uniqueness of the piece and you can still tell that it's Ellie.

**The One Direction-themed cardigan for your sister is a unique project. What challenges do you face when creating wearable art, and how does it differ from your other crochet projects?**

Wearable art can be a paradise or a prison haha! Wearables need measurements, sturdy but comfortable yarn, the correct number of stitches, and so many hours of weaving in yarn-ends! I enjoy making things for myself because I know what I like, I know what works for me, and there's



Elise Rowland | 1D | 2024

no pressure. If I create wearables for anyone else, I create unnecessary anxiety for myself. Other crochet projects like plushies and accessories are great because there aren't as many expectations.

**How has being part of an artist guild influenced your crochet journey and your approach to creating art?**

Being part of the artists' guild has given me motivation to experiment with my crochet work because I'm surrounded by incredibly talented artists with various mediums. They give me the confidence to explore the crochet world in an unconventional way. To be honest, my Waffle House piece is the first crochet piece I've created for the artists' guild! I'm excited to see what lies ahead for me with the artists' guild and my crochet journey.

**What do you find most rewarding about working with crochet compared to other mediums like painting or photography?**

The most rewarding part of creating crochet work is genuinely the process. I love the steps of making a granny square bag or a hexagon cardigan. I love the journey of crochet more than actually finishing the project. The repetition of stitches helps regulate my nervous system, and crocheting is almost like always having a fidget toy too! With crochet, I feel like I can always fill my time doing something productive. I also find people's reactions and appreciation to be one of my favorite parts of the process as well! I enjoy making crochet gifts more than I enjoy making them for money.



Elise Rowland | Ellie | 2024



## — Interview

# Karen Mooney

**Could you share your journey as an artist and how you discovered your passion for mixed media?**

I've been captivated by color and texture since childhood and have experimented with many mediums. Although I decided not to pursue art as a career, I continued to create throughout my life. On June 2, 2000, the unthinkable happened. My 17-year-old son was killed in an accident. I threw myself into my artwork without restraint, trying to find relief. The grief was unrelenting.

At that time, I was introduced to Glass Art through Sculptural Beading. Glass beading resounded deeply within me, but not being satisfied with making art in one medium, I bought a tabletop kiln and learned to make fused glass pieces. My obsession with color and texture prompted me to work with watercolor pencils, acrylics, and Wool Felting. The meditative process of creating gave me moments of relief from the grief that was constantly with me.

In 2008, I decided to go to College. I'd become interested in all aspects of Glass, from hot to cold. In hindsight, education was the most valuable aspect of enhancing my growth as an Artist. Salem County Community College has a highly recommended Fine Arts Glass Program and is well-known for its annual International Flameworking Conference. I discovered that SCCC is the Alma Mater of Paul Stankard, famous for his paperweights and exquisite flameworking skills. When I began my first semester, I learned that he had recently returned to teaching and that I would have him as a professor. I studied Fine Arts Glass under him for four years and pursued a second degree in Studio Arts. This seemed a natural progression as it fed my love of mixed media.

After graduation, I participated in Laura Donofer's Glass Fashion Show at the 2012 GAS Conference. I created my piece, Joseph's Cloak of Many Colors, and walked the runway wearing it. In 2013, Laura took the show to the Renwick in Washington, D.C. Fluehr Bressler, a well-known art collector, purchased it and recently donated the cloak to the Mint Museum in Charlotte, NC.



Struggling through my issues was difficult, but in 2022, I began working on the Listening Shawl and completed it in January 2024. It was included at a gallery opening and exhibition at the SCCC Fine Arts Gallery. Afterward, I began submitting it to Open Calls and had much success.

I'm currently working on a multi-part piece called The Armor of God. I will walk the runway at Laura Donofer's next fashion show, scheduled for 2026.

**How did studying under Paul Stankard influence your artistic practice and perspective on art?**

I will always treasure having the opportunity to study under Paul Stankard. A renowned artist and multifaceted man, he eloquently shares his techniques and inspirations. Through lectures and classwork, he inspires his students to think outside the box. Harvey Littleton coined one of the many quotes Paul shared: "Technique is cheap." Paul explains that while mastering technique is important, content is more so. Content enables the artist to allow their personal voice to find expression. A strong advocate of education, Paul exemplifies the rewards of being a lifelong student.

Audio aids have been instrumental to his continued education and have helped him overcome dyslexia. His autobiography, No Green Berries or Leaves, and the honesty he employs while sharing his struggles with students enabled me to accept my own learning disorder. This led to a life-changing realization that I'm not "broken", a pivotal moment in my life. His hunger for education is inspirational, and lit a flame in me to expand my horizons. His work,



dominated by the mysteries of the plant kingdom, is focused on beauty and spirituality. The themes of sex, death, and God are intricately woven into his artistic vision. He spends time in the woods discovering the beauty and teachings of nature.

Paul Stankard is credited with being one of the most influential artists to emerge from the American Studio Glass movement. He elevated the botanical glass paperweight into the fine art category and stressed the importance of staying current in contemporary art. He credits his success to the support and love of his wife. As a woman, I find this devotion to his wife endearing.

Spirituality and art are deeply intertwined in Stankard, and he sees his artistic journey as a spiritual quest. His artwork has become a "physical prayer" to glorify the Almighty. He was the first person that I heard espouse this theory, and it has become the most important and influential lesson I've learned from him.

Although it was years before I could adopt this practice, it remained in my mind. Hearing my teacher share that his first act upon sitting at the torch is to pray was enlightening. It took years before I could adopt this practice myself, but I have heard it echoed by many people I also hold in high regard. Many people have influenced me over the years and there are many whose words have helped me stretch my limits, but Paul Stankard holds a special place in my heart.

**Your piece, *The Listening Shawl*, holds deep symbolism. Could you elaborate on the story behind its creation and what it means to you?**

During the creation of the Listening Shawl, my 89-year-old mother was diagnosed with stage four Uterine cancer. My father was 91 and he had a stroke a few years earlier, so they both required some extra care. My siblings and I decided it would be best if one of us were always there with them. Early in my mother's treatment, the inspiration for *The Listening Shawl* came to me.

Working on its creation filled all of my spare time. Sitting on their living room couch, I listened to Bible Apps and Christian music for hours while beading. My mother's treatment was brutal, and it was difficult to bear witness as the side effects from the chemo and radiation were intense. I depended heavily on God to be strong for her and alleviate my fears.

My mother's resilience was impressive. Her beautiful smile still came quickly despite constant nausea and sickness. She showed no remorse when she lost her hair, explaining that she didn't mind as long as her cancer was cured. Her example helped me to see that my habit of focusing on my grief and the physical pain I suffered from was toxic. Watching her journey, while at turns sad and terrifying, ultimately inspired me to

view things in my own life differently.

Before my mother became ill, I had been praying that I would recognize the voice of God when he spoke into the chaos of my mind; that I would pay attention and do his will. It took me over a year to complete the shawl. Over the course of that year I learned to recognize the calm voice that spoke into my anxious, panicked thoughts and brought me comfort. Although I had become a Christian at the age of 21, my understanding of God and how He wants me to live increased exponentially during this time.

Deciding to listen to the command to praise and thank God no matter my circumstances was challenging, especially when we were told that my mother's cancer had metastasized. But the lessons of the past year echoed in my mind and in my heart. I did my best to practice the same resilience and gratitude I saw my mother exude despite her challenging, brutal year of cancer treatments. That experience made the miracle of learning my mother was cancer free 3 months later that much sweeter.

Having previously existed in depression and fear, I now experience joy in my life daily. Dry spells and lack of inspiration no longer plague me. My artistic voice continues to mature, and my ability to experience the beauty of life and other people continues to grow. My spirituality and creativity have always been closely linked but have grown wings. My love of God and Art inspires all I do.



Karen Mooney | Follow





**Glass is a unique medium with its own challenges. How do you navigate its unpredictability and collaborate with it in your creative process?**

The most important part of working in any medium is the knowledge of its characteristics and the intrinsic laws by which it operates. Glass is a difficult medium to fully understand. It is very versatile and can be worked in different temperatures, but this variety also brings different laws to follow depending on the form you work with.

The properties of cold glass are incredibly different from those seen in its hot or warm forms. In addition, the various glass textures also have their own methods. Incorporating all of this knowledge when working with glass can become very confusing. The techniques used to create with glass powder differ pretty radically from those employed with the torch. At first these differences are overwhelming, but with patience they help to make this medium a new and exciting adventure every time. Using glass beads is an entirely different way to work with glass. Asking tiny shapes to form a more significant piece that is appealing and flows easily has its own unique trials and triumphs.

My love of Mixed Media Art has helped me navigate the intricacies of glass in all its forms. I find great satisfaction in combining mediums and I've learned to

view each as a separate entity or a large group of individuals, each with their own style.

Glass will always allow experimentation, but break one of its laws and you have a price to pay. The magic is in combining your ideas with an understanding of its properties. A give-and-take between the artist and the medium feels like a good partnership, one that I find incredibly satisfying.

**You mentioned that your artwork became a way to express grief after the loss of your son. How has your creative process evolved since then, and what role does spirituality play in your art?**

My artwork exhibited extreme mood swings after my son's death. Bold colors and textures still inspired me, but emotionally I was in a very dark place. I had suffered from depression and anxiety disorders before my son Donnie died. I had a back surgery at the beginning of that year that failed; fibromyalgia and narcolepsy plagued me as well.

Shortly after Donnie's death, I had a debilitating flare-up of all my health issues. I became disabled, lost my job, and was experiencing constant horrible physical pain. All of this in addition to the unrelenting emotional nightmare of losing my oldest son. For the next 20 years, the suffering continued and I felt that I could not find my way out of it.

When I started College, my work was primarily dark and depressing. My peers often told me that my art was morbid. It was filled with self-portraits that I had disfigured and mutilated. When I began my Doodle Series, I felt compelled to include reminders of death and horror in everything. These were constant themes in my life and subconsciously sought expression in my work as well.

Joseph's Cloak of Many Colors was the only artwork I created within the last 20 years that didn't include reminders of life's pain. It was transformative. 2015 was the year I turned my life back to the Lord, and I began to experience hope again. Paul Stankard's words resurfaced in my mind; I started to do all things as if I were doing them for Jesus.

Focusing on God and making my artwork a "physical prayer" has been incredibly rewarding. My struggles with inspiration became a thing of the past. I can't say confidence, joy, or peace returned to my life because this was something new. I feel like a "new creation," and my life and artwork now express that.

I'm so grateful for the gift of art. Art has provided me with an outlet to speak of my pain. I know that without this gift I would have been unable to purge myself of grief and anger. The world of art, art of any type, enabled me small moments of peace. Art was therapeutic in many ways and kept me connected to God.



**What inspires your use of bold and contrasting colors to symbolize different ethnicities and cultural backgrounds?**

Color has always been one of my greatest inspirations. I think of myself as a Visual Artist working in many mediums. Some of my earliest memories involve sitting at the kitchen table with a massive box of Crayola crayons and blank white paper. I loved scribbling and mixing all the colors I could on one paper. Seeing the colors meld into a cohesive whole fascinated me. I used color to express emotions when I began working with fused glass. I experienced a shift later as I began to create my first glass costume, Joseph's Cloak of Many Colors. My perception moved towards seeing people as expressions of humanity, showing the wide variety and shades of all ethnicities. Attempting to visualize the biblical description of heaven, I was inspired to see the gemstones described become symbols of the many skin colors throughout our world. Placing colors that aren't traditionally perceived to go well together with intentionality and thought is how I express my belief that God intended we value and respect each other when He created the gorgeous mosaic of life.

**What advice would you give to aspiring artists who wish to incorporate their personal experiences and spirituality into their art?**

My journey to find my artistic voice was a long, rugged path and sharing my struggles and triumphs with other aspiring artists is a privilege. My earliest dreams were of becoming an artist. Unfortunately, my lack of confidence and difficulties focusing convinced me that

I should give up on my dream. Understanding how difficult this career path would be made my decision easy.

I continued to make art throughout my life, constantly jumping from one medium to the next. At the time, I considered this a handicap. My belief was that if I had enough passion, I would fall in love with one medium and pour all of my efforts into refining that talent. To my surprise, that never happened.

I've always considered myself to be a spiritual person. In retrospect, it was apparent that before Donnie died my tendency was to fall away from God when things got hard. After he passed away, I had to acknowledge that I absolutely could not survive without God's help. My only reason for creating became survival.

I had no other expectations and I threw myself into my artwork. I had two other sons at home that needed me, and I didn't want to leave them motherless. My relationship with God, my sons, and my artwork are what drove me and kept me hanging on during this. These things are always inextricably linked together. I've discovered the beauty of life only with the help of God. Focusing on the beauty of creation and not on my pain and grief has allowed me to experience life joyfully and care deeply for others. My artistic voice and love for humanity grow stronger as time passes. An intimate relationship with the One who gave me life and knows me completely has changed me. I start each day by going directly to him and putting my life and talents in his care. Life is now a great adventure in which I experience joy and contentment on a daily basis. The feeling of love and acceptance that only God can give is so valuable and I'd encourage all aspiring artists to examine their beliefs and lean into God.



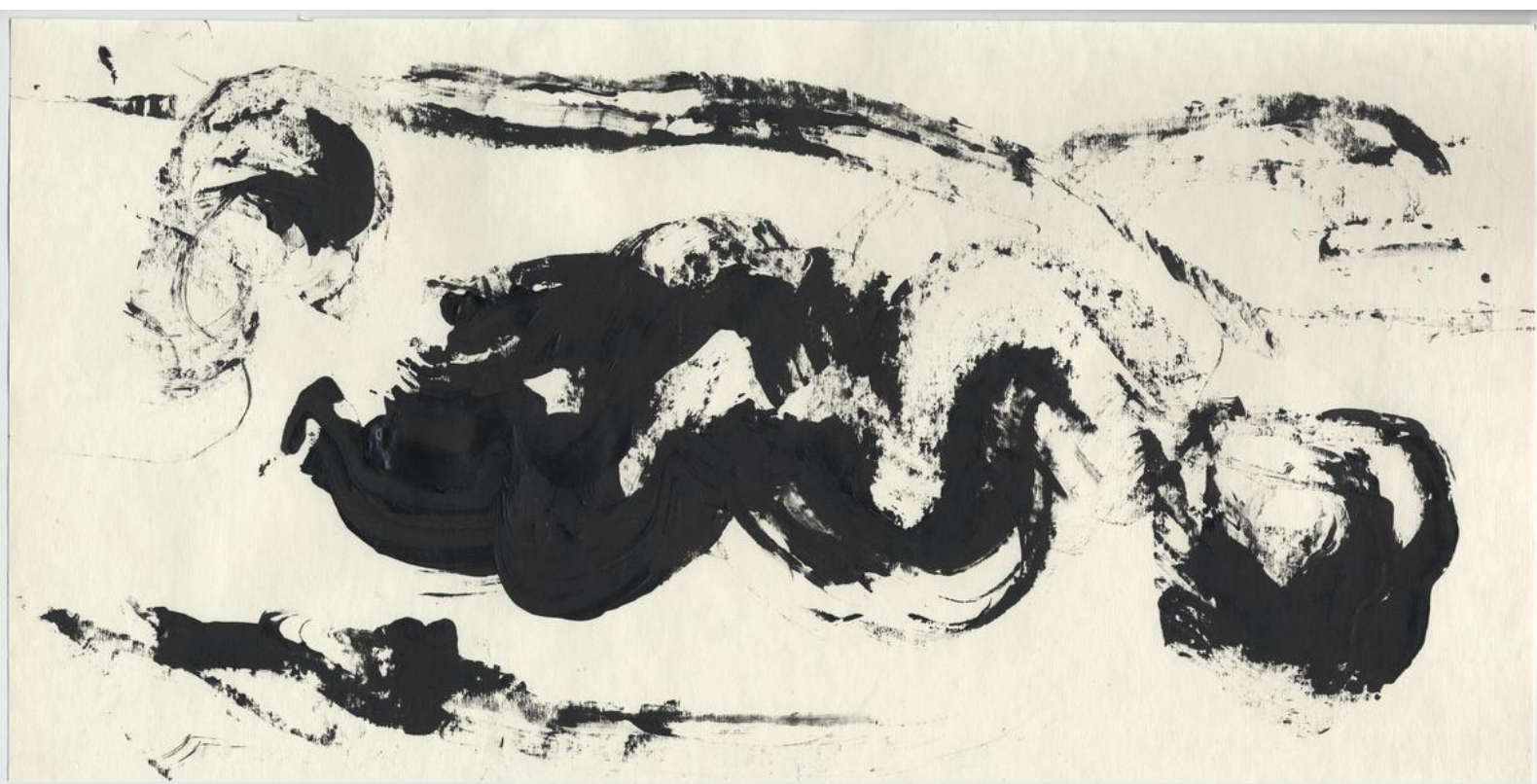
Karen Mooney | The Listening Shawl



## Ekaterina Kotalevskaya

Abstract Artist. Using mixed media techniques, I strive to highlight the diversity of natural textures and patterns. I am deeply intrigued by the subtle nuances of the surrounding world, memories, and reflections on time. I enjoy observing nature and capturing its fleeting moments.

Ekaterina Kotalevskaya | Clouds









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