VISUALARTJOURNAL.COM

VISUAL ART JOURNAL

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Intro

Anna Gvozdeva

Curator of
Visual Art Journal

Hello, dear reader,

You are holding the 55th issue of our magazine.

Another summer lies ahead, and for each of us it will mean something different: new impressions, emotions, wonders, and expectations. For some, it will be a time of rest; for others, a season of activity, movement, and new connections.

In today's world, it is not easy for an artist to gain attention. The competition exists not only among fellow creators, but also within an endless stream of content constantly fighting for the viewer's gaze. And yet, our time has another side: never before has an audience been so accessible. From one side of the planet, an artist can reach someone on the other simply by sharing a work on social media.

This attention may be brief — sometimes lasting no longer than a single second before a post is swiped away — but those who manage to capture it may find themselves seen by millions of viewers and countless new eyes.

However, this accessibility also has its reverse side. Attention is not always kind, because art is viewed by many different people. An artist may face a level of criticism for which they are simply not prepared. Whether that criticism is deserved, or whether the public is not yet ready for the artist's vision, is a question that only time can answer.

But today, we would especially like to remind our readers: every comment left under someone's work is not just a caption beneath an inanimate object. Behind every artwork there is a person — their feelings, experience, doubts, and the courage to share something personal with the world. So let us treat our words with greater care. Words can wound deeply. And, by the way, they can also heal.

As always, ahead of you are more than 100 pages filled with creativity, reflection, and inspiration.

Enjoy reading!

On the Front Cover:
Paul F.
Brothers' Painting Completed

On the Back Cover:
Gevorg Tadevosyan
Stubborness
2025

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

Interview

Thomas Occima

Your work explores the tension between structure and dissolution. How do you understand this tension in relation to your creative process?

For me, this tension is at the core of the creative process itself. I often begin with a sense of structure, direction, or control, but during the act of painting, parts of that structure begin to break apart, transform, or dissolve. I do not see this as destruction, but as something necessary and alive. The work becomes more honest when it moves beyond pure control.
I am interested in the balance between intention and unpredictability — between what I consciously build and what emerges instinctively through emotion, movement, and reaction. In many ways, the painting develops through this constant negotiation. The tension between structure and dissolution is not something I try to resolve; it is what gives the work its energy and depth.

Thomas Occima | Chaos | 2016

Many of your compositions seem to balance chaos with an underlying sense of order. How do you decide when to let the work become spontaneous, and when to regain control?

It is not a decision that belongs entirely to me. The process is more like an ongoing dialogue between myself, the work, and the canvas itself. I often think of it as a dance — no single element is fully in control. The painting develops step by step through tension, reaction, and intuition. Sometimes spontaneity takes over, and sometimes structure naturally returns. I try to listen to the work rather than force it into a fixed direction.

You describe abstraction as a way to approach what resists direct visibility. What kinds of invisible forces or states are you most interested in translating into visual form?

Emotions are at the center of my work. Almost all of my paintings emerge from strong emotional states.

Thomas Occima | Angelo | 2023

Emotions are often invisible in everyday life — you may recognize anger, sadness, or tension on the surface, but you rarely know what is truly happening inside another person. That hidden inner world deeply interests me. I see painting as a way of giving form to those invisible emotional forces that cannot always be expressed through language or direct representation.

The Capricorn appears in your practice as a conceptual anchor rather than a literal symbol. How did this idea enter your work, and what does it allow you to express?

The Capricorn represents a combination of how I see myself and what I want to communicate through my paintings. To me, it symbolizes resilience and persistence. It is a figure capable of surviving and creating life even in hostile or difficult conditions. If I had to summarize the idea in one word, it would be resistance — not only in the sense of struggle, but also endurance, discipline, and the ability to continue moving forward despite obstacles.

In your paintings, lines, splashes, and layered surfaces often create a sense of movement or mapping. Do you see these marks as traces of energy, memory, or something else?

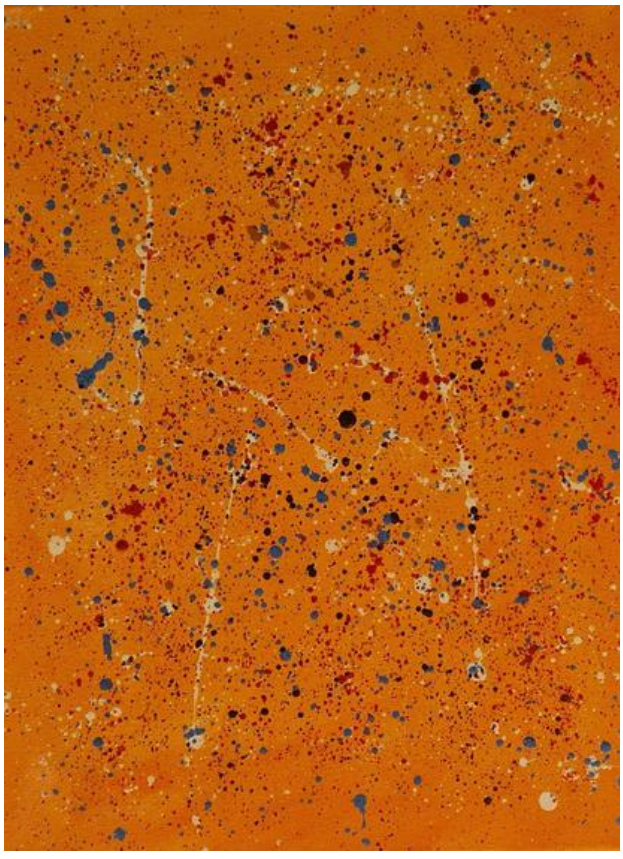
I see them as traces of emotion, energy, and life itself. The marks are not purely formal elements for me; they are physical remnants of a moment, a movement, or an emotional state. They carry intensity and rhythm, almost like fragments of lived experience transferred directly onto the surface.

How important is the physical act of painting in your practice - the gesture, the rhythm, the repetition, and the contact with the surface?

It is extremely important. The act of painting is almost a sacred ritual for me. I usually work with only limited planning because I want to leave space for instinct, emotion, and discovery. The physical movement, the repetition, the direct contact with the surface — all of it becomes part of accessing a deeper emotional and creative state. The process itself is just as important as the final image.

Your works invite prolonged engagement rather than immediate interpretation. What kind of experience would you like viewers to have when they spend time with your paintings?

I want viewers to feel that things are not always what they seem at first glance. Some experiences require time and attention before their deeper layers become visible. I hope my paintings encourage people to slow down, look longer, and discover different emotional dimensions within the work. Even though the paintings originate from my own emotions, I believe they can also function as mirrors for the viewer — reflecting something personal back to them if they are willing to spend enough time with the work.



Thomas Occima | The I | 2025

Beljohn Dean, a provocative, rebellious emerging South African artist. He grew up in Durban, South Africa and currently resides in the Western Cape. Roused by an inherent Romanticist nature, he observes life and its continual struggle while seeking out hope and beauty.
Working in Oils, using references or his imagination, he employs a wide range of styles which enable him to create his unique, witty, and mystical pieces.
His work offers a revealing insight into the artist's life-record as well as remaining timeless visual gems conjured out of the Dream Merchant's treasure-box.

Beljohn Dean | Into the Garden | 2026

Beljohn Dean | Appelliefie | 2024

Maciej Wichnowski

Picture yourself stranded somewhere where you have all the time in the world to do whatever you want. What do you do? This is a fundamental question regarding our existence which provides us with endless distractions rather than opportunities to focus. This is infinity.
I always paint with this thought in my mind, ready to continue until I'm completely worn out. Along the way it's the saturation of colors, their glow and gloss of the paint structure which keeps me hooked. This is intensity.

Your works often feature highly saturated, almost glowing color palettes. What role does color play in shaping emotional or psychological impact in your work?

I've noticed a pattern – color dominated compositions refer to my experiences and emotions whereas the toned-down ones are much more intellectually based. Some paintings fall somewhere in between. In general, yes, the colors definitely provide a psychological setup for the story, and I tend to treat colors in a painting as nature approaches the feathers of a bird of paradise or the skin of a poisonous frog. They are primal, draw the viewer in.

You have worked across many fields - animation, murals, ghost painting, festivals. How have these diverse experiences influenced your current artistic voice?

It has helped me to look at the creative process from a distance.
First and foremost it allowed me to form boundaries of what a painting can be and what it cannot. Paintings are flat, colored objects able to carry artificial space. The question is how far and in which direction will I take one along those boundaries.
Secondly, I realized I'm not actually the hand and a brush. The medium is only a choice and a field of expertise. It's

Your series Solarizations is described as exploring "infinity and visual intensity". How do you define these concepts in your painting practice?

Maciej Wichnowski | Judith Without Holofernes | 2024

Maciej Wichnowski | Of Roots And Dreams | 2026

just that painting provides me with the biggest amount of freedom and allows contact with color in its rawest form. There are numerous other ways in which this learnt versatility comes in handy.

What prompted your decision in 2024 to fully dedicate yourself to your personal artistic practice? Was there a turning point?

Having ended the production of the animated movie "The Peasants", I realized that I had just finished 5 years of consecutive daily pro painting practice and had a considerable amount of money set aside. Given the perfect circumstances I thought I'd give myself a few months to see what I'm capable of. At the same time my personal life was very tumultuous and heartbreaking. This kind of pushed me to double down on the idea since art was all I was left with at the time.
The same year I got into the final of a nationwide art competition. I also initiated and organized a successful group exhibition, and then a few months later I received a municipal art scholarship. It would have been remiss not to push further.

The human figure is central in your work, yet it often appears transformed or otherworldly. What draws you to the figure as a subject?

Primarily it's anthropocentrism and sensitivity to the human condition. Figures as a visual language have lots of potential to be relatable and understood by the viewer. The directness of representation also allows me to arrive easier at the depth and profoundness of meaning.
What's more, people are infinitely intriguing. Our psychology, relations, physicality – we're an endless source of inspiration, really.

Having studied art across different continents and traditions, which artists or movements have had the most lasting influence on your work?

It always comes down to the Polish op-art master Wojciech Fangor. The idea of a "machine" designed only to be looked at resonates with me deeply because it provides a sensible and instinctive answer to the question of why to paint. Fangor provides me with the framework for visual, intellectual and personal voyages.
I also have a soft spot for Bollywood, in which over-the-top is the norm and it's precisely that which keeps the audience engaged. The whole history of Indian culture is packed with intensity which might be foreign to Westerners. Same goes for the spontaneity and intensity of Latin culture. In comparison to those worlds, the traditional western art history can look almost bleak, snooty and uptight. One of the creative movements which always is at the back of my mind whether I want it or not is modernism. My city for over 30 years, Gdynia, has been wholly built and decorated in this style.

What challenges do you encounter when working with such intense visual language, and how do you maintain balance in your compositions?

I follow excitement and my own visual pleasure which can lead to situations where I can't technically saturate a color enough at a given tone. Sometimes there also aren't enough colors on the visible spectrum to choose from. The compositions I preplan geometrically and then carefully balance out the given elements. The design of the figure comes first and it dictates the dimensions of the canvas needed in order to crop and assemble the figures properly.
As a result, when I commence painting, I am able to focus a 100% on the act.

Maciej Wichnowski | Jockey

Diana Dimova TRAXI

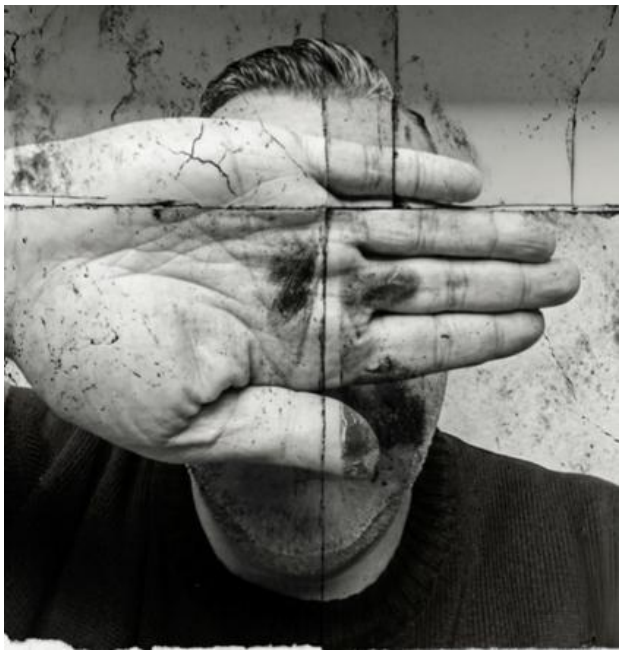
TRAXI is a contemporary abstract artist based in Bulgaria, Europa. Her work explores emotion, transformation and the invisible connections between nature, human experience and the five elements of life — Water, Earth, Air, Fire and Spirit.
Through expressive textures, layered movement and intuitive painting, she creates immersive visual worlds balancing chaos and harmony, silence and intensity. Her paintings often move between abstraction and emotional landscape, inviting the viewer into states of reflection, energy and becoming.
Alongside her independent artistic practice, TRAXI develops conceptual series and art projects that connect contemporary abstract art with personal transformation, atmosphere and human emotion.

Project Statement
Fire is part of my ongoing exploration of the Five Elements — Water, Earth, Air, Fire and Spirit — works, inspired by the emotional and energetic states shaping human existence.
For me, Fire is not destruction. It is light, rebirth and the beginning of transformation. It is the warmth of the sun, the energy of awakening and the invisible force that moves life forward.
Through abstraction, layered textures and intuitive movement, I explore the moment when something new begins to emerge — when darkness becomes clarity and emotion transforms into energy.
These paintings are not representations of fire itself, but emotional landscapes of becoming. They speak about inner renewal, courage, vitality and the continuous cycle of transformation present in both nature and human experience.
Within the language of the Five Elements, Fire becomes a symbol of life force — the quiet power of renewal and the eternal possibility of a new beginning.

Diana Dimova TRAXI | Fleck of Sunlight | 2025

Diana Dimova TRAXI | Portals of the Sun | 2024

Róbert András Czirok



I chose the face because I deeply believe that every story begins with a face, and often, that is where it ends too. A look, a half-smile, or even a smudged pair of eyes can tell us so much more than we think. With the ARC.OK?! project, (...in his exhibition titled ARC.OK?! or fACE.OK?! -a bilingual pun on 'Faces' and 'Are they OK?')- I wanted to push the boundaries of contemporary portraiture in today's age of digital noise and impersonal social interactions. There is a very intense tension between our individual identity and our social "mask-wearing." What led me to this topic was a question I asked myself: what is left of our faces when we completely strip away the pressure to conform, the filters, and our everyday roles? Is everything really "OK" with what we show to the outside world? These were the questions that launched this series.

Many of your portraits appear fragmented, layered, and emotionally intense. Do you see these faces as portraits of specific people, or rather as psychological states?

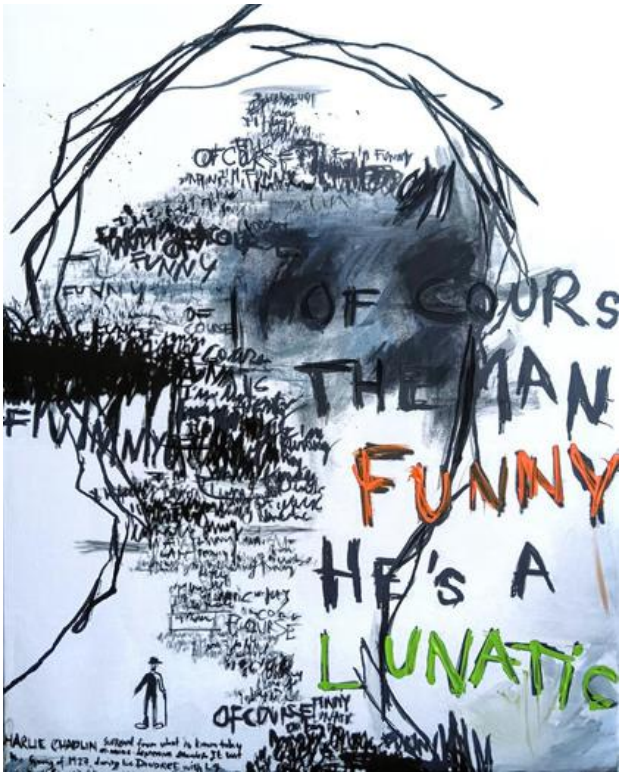
These are definitely not portraits in the traditional sense. For me, faces are not representations of characters; rather, they are imprints, mind maps, layers, and psychological states or fleeting moments. When I give pieces titles like "Francia" (The French), "Remény" (Hope), or "Talány" (Riddle), I am talking about emotions that vanish in everyday life. Yet, if the viewer stands attentively in front of the canvas, these states seep back out to them. Through gestures, distortions, and textures, I look for the exact point where the face ceases to be a mere aesthetic object and transforms into a raw, honest channel of communication—a psychological imprint of sorts.

Your background as a tattoo artist and graphic designer is very present in your paintings. How have these practices shaped your visual language?

These practices have become fully integrated into my hands and my way of seeing; they directly define the mixed media technique I use. My background in graphics and tattooing brings a definitive linework, the use of ink, and a bold handling of contrasts, which then meet more painterly

Your ARC.OK?! project focuses on human identity and the power of the gaze. What first led you to explore the face as a central subject in your work?

Róbert András Czirok | Gondolatok Az Időről | 2024



Róbert András Czirok | Egy Elme Titkai | 2024

materials like acrylic or collage. Tattooing and design taught me disciplined, precise form-making. On the canvas, however, I am free to use this knowledge to deconstruct and layer the faces. The structured nature of commercial graphics and the raw, direct visuality of tattooing thus blend into a completely unique, contemporary texture in my paintings.

Graffiti-like marks, handwritten text, and expressive lines often appear in your works. What role does text play in your compositions?

For me, texts, archival lettering, handwriting, and graffiti are essential tools for "dialogue." The ARC.OK?! exhibition is a kind of dialogue between the past and the present, old book pages and modern acrylic paint, tradition and urban noise. The letters and scribbles are not just decorative elements; they create context and bring into the paintings the digital and urban background noise we all live in. These visual fragments help the images ask questions of the viewer—sometimes awkwardly, sometimes cheekily, sometimes deeply—urging visitors not just to look at the shapes, but to actively interact with them.

Your paintings often balance beauty and disturbance, control and chaos. How do you build this tension on the canvas?

If someone looks at one of my paintings and asks, "What is that smudged stuff above the eye?", my answer is always: yes, chaos is part of my life, so it is naturally part of my paintings too. I build this tension by juxtaposing intact and ruined surfaces. Control is represented by deliberately structured anatomical foundations and clean tones, while confusion and chaos are introduced through the unpredictability of acrylic spray, drips, scribbles, and collages. I am most fascinated by the point where classical beauty begins to break down but just barely holds its structure—this is what gives the works their true, tense vitality.

Your wine paintings are deeply connected to the Szekszárd wine region. How important is local identity in your artistic practice?

It is extremely important; local identity and regional collaborations fundamentally define my experimental projects. Although I examine red wine or coffee as organic pigments within a global context, my roots and raw materials are tied to Szekszárd by a thousand threads. For instance, my coffee portraits (the Zaccart series) were made possible thanks to Sándor Tóth, a multiple-time barista champion, and the expertise of A Kávé Háza (The House of Coffee) in Szekszárd. They provide me with a special raw material rich in extracts, sourced from Sanyi's own plantation in Costa Rica, from which he roasts a specific blend exclusively for my paintings. When I paint with wine or coffee, the flavor and spirit of Szekszárd seep into the images. Just as in Szekszárd winemaking, it is the respect for the land, the climate, and local characters that gives my art its true depth.

You move between fine art, tattooing, commercial graphic design, and wine label design. Do you separate these fields, or do you see them as parts of one continuous creative practice?

I don't separate them at all; to me, this is a single, continuous, and organic creative practice. Every field feeds on the same internal creative energy; only the means of expression and the mediums change. When I work with wine or coffee on paper, I am essentially pushing the boundaries of the monochrome watercolor technique, where organic materials (like wine pigments) live a life of their own even after drying, oxidizing and evolving until they reach their final, expressive sepia state. This kind of experimentation and search for textures is just as present on the canvas in the ARC.OK?! series as it is when I design a wine label as a graphic designer, or when I work on skin as a tattoo artist. The different mediums permeate and enrich one another: in my work, professional discipline and artistic freedom go hand in hand.

Róbert András Czirok | Az Utazó | 2024

Jesslyn Lettan is an Indonesian illustrator with a background in graphic design and a BA in Visual Communication Design from Tarumanagara University. Over the past year, she has worked across freelance illustration and graphic design while continuing to develop a visual language rooted in storytelling. Her work focuses on editorial and conceptual illustration, often exploring themes surrounding human experiences, nature, imagination, and emotions in life. Combining metaphor with expressive color, symbolism, and rich textures, she creates imagery that balances emotional depth with visual clarity. Through her practice, Jesslyn approaches illustration as a medium for storytelling, reflection, awareness, and visual communication.

Project Statement
The Dreamer is a digital illustration series exploring the relationship between ambition, hope, faith, and inner peace. Inspired by the song Dreamer by the Jacksons, alongside personal reflections and imagination, the series transforms these ideas into visual storytelling. Through symbolic and narrative imagery, the works reflect on the quiet experience of carrying dreams and aspirations through trust, love, and a hopeful outlook toward the future. The series explores finding meaning and peace within the journey itself and embracing the possibilities that life holds within reach.

Jesslyn Lettan | Dreamer | 2026

Jesslyn Lettan | Peace | 2026

— *Interview*

Nick Carr

Your practice is shaped by travel and curiosity. What first drew you to photography as a way of understanding the world around you?

I was first drawn to photography around 30 years ago, mainly through abstract work. Discovering Jeanloup Sieff opened my eyes to how an ordinary scene — a simple landscape or everyday object — could become something timeless through mood, grain, and composition. Later, Aaron Siskind pushed that even further for me. His ability to turn decay, texture, and surface into the main subject made me realise that photography could reveal layers of the world most people walk past. Those early influences taught me that the camera isn't just a tool for recording; it's a way of noticing, questioning, and understanding the world in a more attentive way.

Many of your images focus on overlooked textures, shadows, structures, and everyday details. How do you decide that a seemingly ordinary moment is worth photographing?

Most people move through their day without really looking, and I've developed the opposite habit — constantly scanning for lines, textures, shadows, and shapes that sit quietly in the background. An ordinary moment becomes worth photographing when something about the light or structure suddenly stands out and feels alive in its own right. It's rarely planned. It's more like recognising a small visual shift that others might miss, and knowing there's a story or atmosphere hidden in that overlooked detail.

Black-and-white photography plays a central role in your work. What does monochrome allow you to express that colour sometimes cannot?

Monochrome strips a scene back to its essentials. Without colour, the viewer pays more attention to form, texture, contrast, and emotion. It gives an image a sense of timelessness and removes the distractions that colour sometimes brings. For me, black-and-white creates space for imagination — it lets the subject feel deeper, more atmospheric, and more open to interpretation.

You mention that you also shoot in colour, but later decide whether the image should remain in

Nick Carr | Ceylon Highway

colour or become monochrome. How do you make that decision?

We live in a world full of strong, vibrant colour, and sometimes that colour is the story. Urban art, weathered paint, or fading signage often rely on colour to show their character and history. When I shoot, I don't decide immediately. I look at the image later and ask what carries the emotion or narrative. If colour adds meaning — if it shows decay, energy, or personality — I keep it. If colour gets in the way or distracts from the structure and mood, then monochrome is the better choice.

Your photographs often contain strong contrasts, grain, and a sense of ambiguity. How important is imperfection to the emotional impact of your images?

Imperfection is central to my work. We live in a time where everything is expected to be polished and flawless, especially online, and I'm drawn to the opposite. Slight underexposure, grain, and ambiguity feel more honest to me. They reflect how we actually experience the world — imperfectly, individually, and sometimes unclearly. Those imperfections invite people to interpret the image for themselves rather than being told exactly what to see. It's my way of saying that difference, roughness, and uncertainty have value.

In works such as the temple and architectural photographs, there is a strong dialogue between human-made structures and time. What attracts you to places where history, decay, and permanence meet?

I'm fascinated by the way time leaves its mark on structures. Nature always finds a way to reclaim what humans build, and you can see that slow conversation between permanence and decay in old temples, ruins, and weathered architecture. The textures, erosion, and gradual takeover by nature create a rich visual story. There's something powerful about capturing a moment in that long process — a reminder that everything changes, no matter how solid it once seemed.

Since photography is not your primary profession, how does that affect your creative freedom and the way you approach your photographic practice?

Because photography isn't my main profession, I don't feel pressure to constantly produce work or chase trends. I'm not hunting for images — I'm discovering them as I move through daily life. That gives me a certain freedom. The downside is that for years I didn't always have the time or energy to shoot as much as I wanted. But now, with my children grown and encouragement from people around me, I'm finding more space to return to photography with fresh enthusiasm. It feels less like a task and more like reconnecting with a part of myself.

Gevorg Tadevosyan, a skilled sculptor, creates burnished bronze and iron pieces blending allegory and realism. With over a decade of experience, he creates indoor and outdoor installations inspired by nature, striving to infuse static forms with the illusion of life, creating dynamic, captivating works that engage discerning viewers.

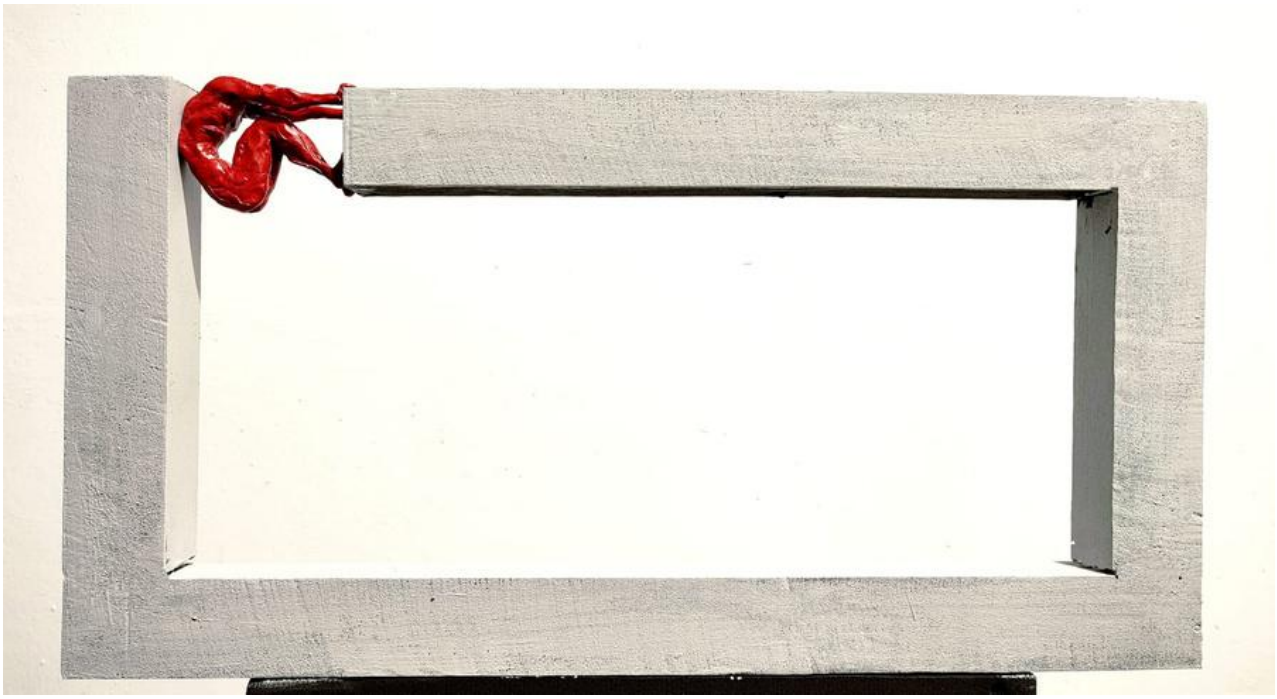
Born in Armenia and a graduate of Yerevan State Academy of Fine Arts, he is a dedicated sculptor who has spent over a decade refining his craft.

Gevorg creates indoor and outdoor installations which are inspired by the dialogue between nature and sculpture. His work gives great aesthetic pleasure, while also appealing to unique and discerning tastes. "My top priority is to create a conversation between the lines and forms that captivates and interests the viewer." Gevorg Tadevosyan

The style and energy of Gevorg's pieces allows them to flourish among their surroundings, decorating private and public parks and gardens. Recent installations include Jardin d'Etretat (Normandy, France), Parque de Europa d'Almacelles (Almacellas, Spain), and Skulpturenpark Wassenberg (Wassenberg, Germany) as well as within the permanent collection of Il Museo d'Arte di Chianciano Terme (Italy.)

Gevorg seeks to infuse movement into his creations. While recognizing that art in its physical form is static, unable to move or change position, he strives to imbue his pieces with the illusion of life. This philosophy breathes vitality into his sculptures, making them come alive with a mesmerizing dynamism.

Gevorg Tadevosyan | The Last One | 2025



Gevorg Tadevosyan | Muse | 2025

Israa Shaikh

You grew up in Oman as the daughter of expats. How did this multicultural environment influence the way you see the world and create art?

Growing up at the crossroads of two starkly different yet harmonious cultures not only impacted my childhood, socioeconomic views, and livelihood, but also the way I created and made art at its core. Having studied ancient

Indian art in school, I found that the techniques I learnt subtly bled into my work. And it wasn't just my technique that was affected; the subject matter and issues I wished to portray through my art shifted monumentally as well. Suddenly, I wanted to touch on more social and emotional Issues through my paintings.

You describe discovering art as a child while spending a lot of time indoors. Do you still see art as a form of escape, or has its meaning changed for you over time?

Art came naturally to me. This was something I realised even as a child. With a brush in my hands, I was able to communicate through the canvas. Everything I hadn't been able to put into words now lay before me in streaks of acrylic and watercolor. It was cathartic, in a way. Art understood me. And for the first time, I was able to say exactly what was on my mind. And I fell in love with it.

Your works often feel very emotional and atmospheric. What emotions do you usually try to express through your paintings?

I am a firm believer that beauty is in the eye of

the beholder, especially when it comes to art. What you feel when you look at my work is what is being conveyed. Every interpretation is accurate. My art is about you. And what you feel is valid regardless of what I intended. Even If my piece is trying to convey a specific idea, the perspective that the viewer has with that artwork is personal in my eyes. And that's what makes art precious as a visual language.

You work with different media and techniques. What attracts you to experimenting rather than staying within one artistic style or medium?

I love broadening my horizons and exploring all possible opportunities. I seek novelty and creative ways to use art techniques across mediums. For example, exploring watercolor made me understand the subtleties of working practically with color theory. That, in turn, vastly improved my digital work. If I had limited myself to a singular medium, my art would not be as good as it is today.

Several of your works combine darkness with glowing or luminous elements. What does this contrast between shadow and light mean to you?

I wanted to highlight that tug of war between two opposing poles. Ying and Yang, Light and dark, water and fire- It exists everywhere. In nature, in laws of physics, and even in ourselves- our morality, faith, and essence. Good and evil, saint and sin, life and death. Light in my work is a medium through which I convey juxtapositions or polarity between ideals or values. I also use it to draw emphasis on the subject.

Some of your works have a dreamlike, almost cinematic quality. Are you inspired by dreams, memories, films, literature, or personal experiences?

I would say everyone is a culmination of everything they've ever consumed, interacted with, or been exposed to. The same is true for me. If I had watched different films or read different books, my art wouldn't look how it does. I am particularly fond of film and literature, and it has definitely played a part in influencing my work and how I present my ideas visually.

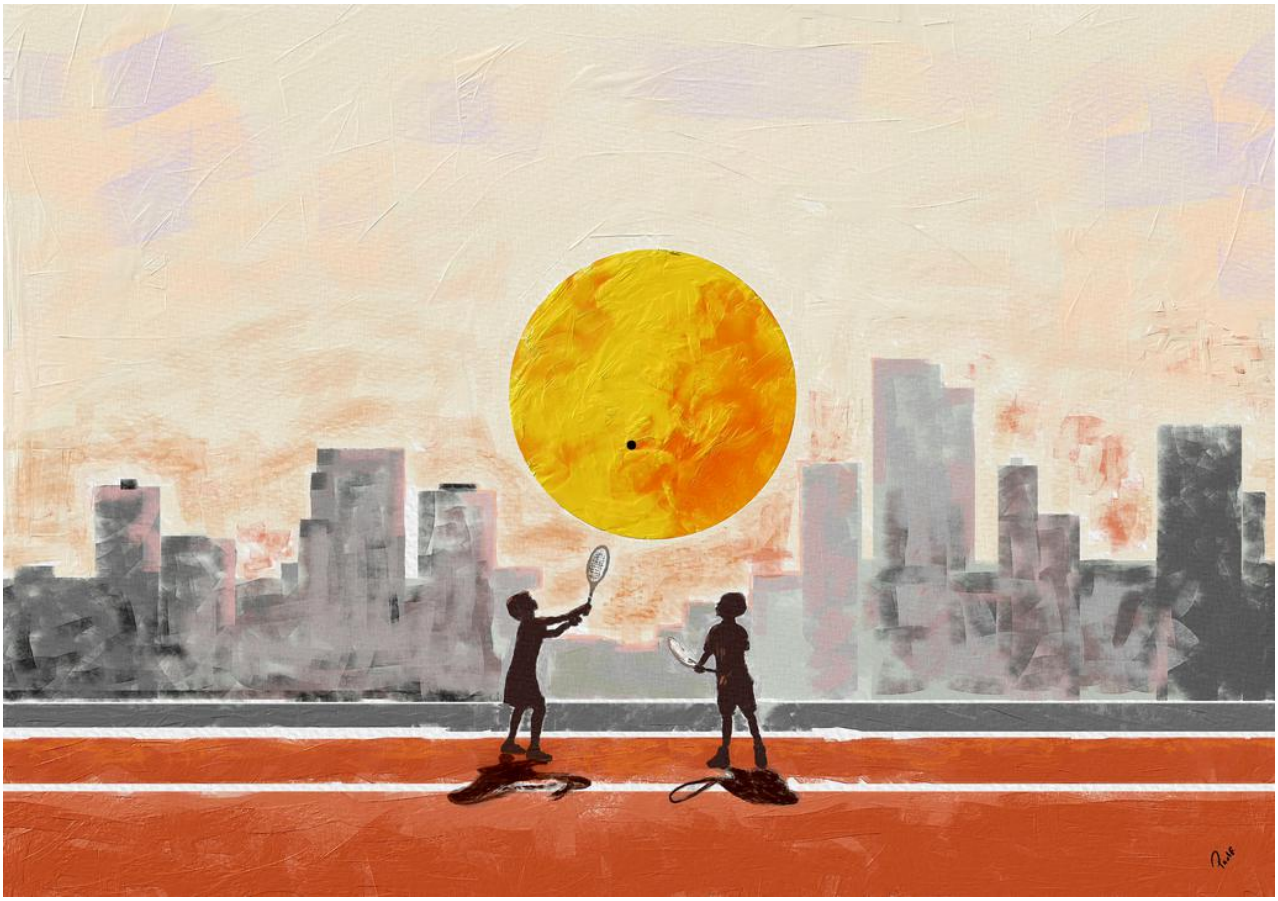
You mention the idea of finding your "magnum opus" - one piece that can connect hearts. What kind of connection do you hope to create between your artwork and the viewer?

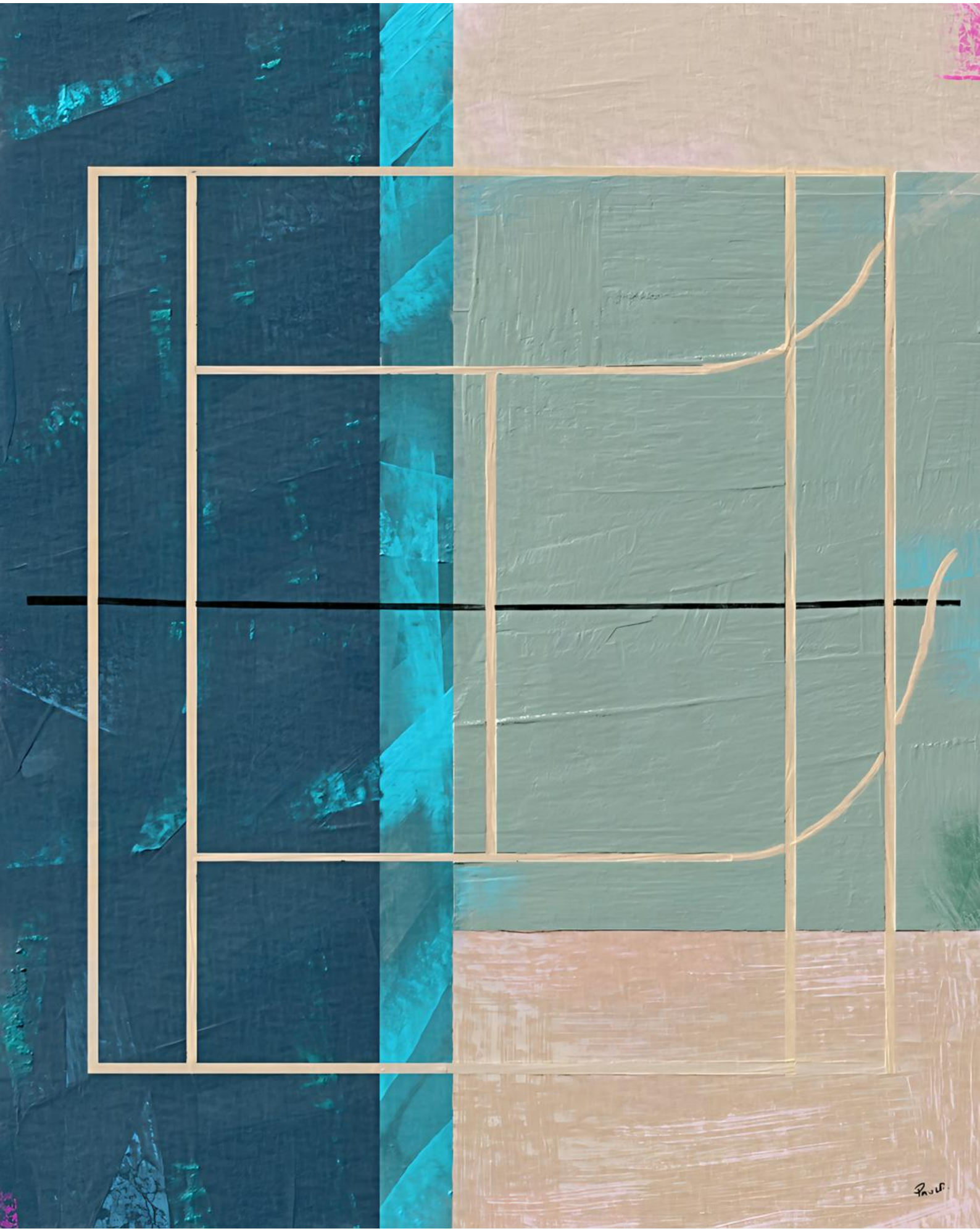
One that is entirely personal between the viewer and the piece. I want to create a piece that when the viewer looks at it, they are able to connect to it, relate to it, feel it, and experience it in a way that's unique to them. A piece that connects hearts and ties everyone together. To remind us that humans, at our core, despite all the differences, war, and bloodshed, share something in common. A heart.

Paul F.

Art has been part of my life for as long as I can remember, a way of expressing emotions, interpreting experiences, and translating what words often cannot. Alongside this lifelong connection to art, I developed a deep passion for tennis, not only for the sport itself, but for the emotional complexity it carries. The intersection of these two worlds became the foundation of my artistic practice.
My work seeks to capture the essence of tennis beyond the physical movement of the game. I see tennis as a reflection of life itself: moments of control and uncertainty, balance and pressure, silence and intensity. In a single point, everything can change, much like in our own personal journeys. Through my art, I aim to translate these emotional and psychological nuances into visual form.
Using expressive textures, bold compositions, and contemporary visual language, I transform the energy of the court into works that evoke movement, tension, memory, and emotion. My intention is to create pieces that resonate not only with tennis enthusiasts, but also with collectors and viewers who connect with the deeper human narratives behind the sport.
Each artwork is an attempt to preserve the unpredictable beauty of tennis, not merely as a competition, but as a metaphor for life itself.

Paul F. | Brothers' Painting Completed





Paul F. | The Court Finished

Yulia Filyushchenko

The pandemic period was difficult for everyone. I felt a great deal of anxiety about the health of my family and my parents. Through painting, I was able not only to distract myself, but also to devote more time to myself.

You returned to painting during the pandemic in 2020. What brought you back to art at that particular moment?

Yulia Filyushchenko | Istanbul Square | 2026

Why did watercolor become the medium that captivated you after your earlier experience with oil painting?

As a very active person, I needed a medium that could give me a faster result. That is why watercolor captivated me — especially the possibility of creating a work within a short period of time.

You do not have a formal art education. How has this shaped your artistic path and your way of learning?

At the beginning, the absence of fear helped me a lot. I was not afraid that something might not

Yulia Filyushchenko | Istanbul Tower | 2026

work out. I painted every day on my own, and at that time it seemed to me that my works were wonderful. I keep all my works and never tear them up or throw them away, so that later I can compare the results and see the experience I have gained.
Now I look at my first works and smile. With experience came the fear of a blank sheet, and the fear that a work might not turn out well. There is now a lot of self-criticism in every piece. If a work is within my reach, I always have the desire to correct it.

Your works often focus on urban landscapes. What attracts you most to the atmosphere of a city?

Everything depends on my mood, inspiration, or the place where I am. In the urban atmosphere, I am especially attracted to light and shadow — the search for a certain mystery.

The Istanbul series has a strong sense of light, architecture, and movement. What was your personal impression of Istanbul as an artistic subject?

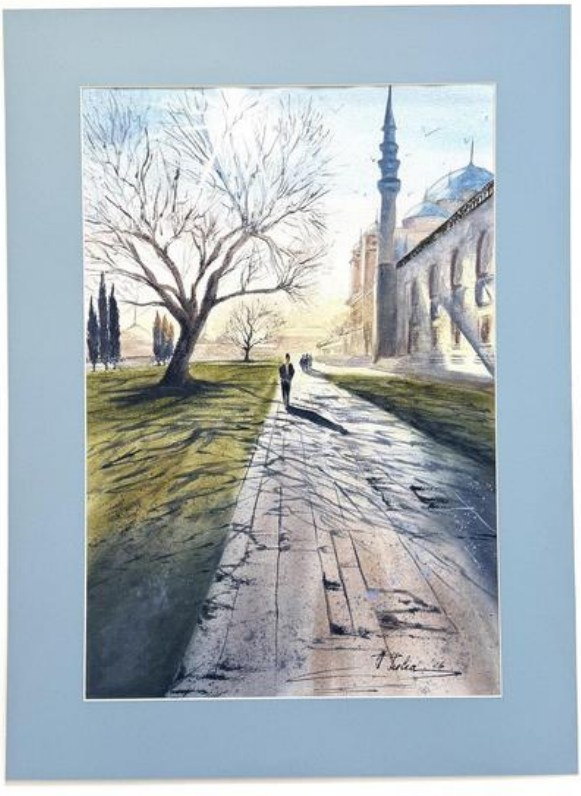
Istanbul is a city of colors. I was there for the first time, and the air and wind of the Bosphorus made an unforgettable impression on me. After the trip, I created a series of 20 monochrome works featuring the places in Istanbul that inspired me the most.

Watercolor is often associated with spontaneity and unpredictability. How do you balance control and freedom in your technique?

It is precisely the spontaneity and unpredictability of watercolor that fascinates me. I love the possibility of guiding the paint on the paper and allowing myself to do whatever I feel like doing. Even an unsuccessful work can be turned into a sketch by using a black pen. And it is also important to remember the principle that perfection is the enemy of the good.

You have studied with various watercolor artists and schools. Which lessons or approaches have influenced your practice the most?

I am still studying at Anastasia Kustova's school. I consider her the best teacher and watercolor artist. Every course, lecture, plein air session — everything she gives — is filled with energy and love for her work. With Anastasia, I reached a new and higher level: independent practice and a deeper understanding of everything connected with watercolor.



Yulia Filyushchenko | Istanbul | 2026

Bart van Gompel

Bart van Gompel | Untitled | 2026

I choose materials mostly intuitively, starting from second-hand shirts, curtains, and other textiles that have already had a previous life. What attracts me is that a fabric carries a history through its earlier use, a presence of the past that subtly remains in the material. At the same time, the material also needs to be technically suitable to be cut, braided, and brought together again. I look for combinations of colors, patterns, and textures. Through small experiments, I explore how materials relate to one another when they are connected. This process of making and adjusting shapes the further development of the work.

What draws you specifically to textiles that already carry traces of use, history, and previous function?

Used textiles already had a clear function and context before I started working with them. A garment has lived around a body, a curtain has divided or shielded a space. When the material is no longer in use, that function disappears, but for me something of that context still remains.
What attracts me is that a material can carry a history that does not have to be literally visible, yet still remains present. By reworking the material, its meaning shifts. It does not become a reconstruction of the past, but a new form in which that earlier context continues to resonate.

In your practice, used textiles are transformed into sculptural forms. At what point does the material

Your work begins with discarded textiles and second-hand clothing. How do you choose the materials you work with?

Bart van Gompel | Second Form | 2026

Bart van Gompel | Second Form | 2026

stop being "clothing" and become sculpture for you?

For me, the transformation begins as soon as the material is cut apart and loses its original function. Through braiding and connecting, a form gradually emerges that is no longer read as clothing, while it's origin still remains perceptible. I am interested in how the material continues to balance between recognition of its original function and abstract form.

Many of your works refer to bowls, pots, urns, and vessel-like forms. Why are these shapes important in your artistic language?

I often begin from a certain direction or form, although it can shift during the making process. Through building and weaving, organic forms emerge without hard edges, and it is precisely that softness and fluidity that appeals to me. As a result, many works refer to bowls, vases, pots, or urns. These forms continue to return in my work because they possess something recognizable and timeless, while also evoking a subtle sense of connection to the past.

Although your objects refer to functional forms, they are not meant to be used. How do you understand the relationship between function and sculpture in your work?

Although the forms sometimes refer to functional objects, they are not intended to be used. In my work, function shifts from practical value toward an attention to the form itself. The sculptures are not made to do something, but to exist as forms. What interests me is that a form can suggest function while simultaneously existing as a sculptural presence. This tension between recognition and non-functionality is part of the work. Ultimately, the focus lies on the aesthetics and the presence of the form itself.

Sustainability is a natural part of your practice. Do you see your work as a response to the overproduction and waste of the fashion and textile industries?

I do not see my work as a direct response to overproduction and waste, although I do consider it an important global issue. That is one of the reasons why I choose not to use new materials when not necessary. Used textiles carry a history and physical quality that are important within my work. I do not find that same layered quality in newly purchased fabrics. Working with existing materials also comes with limitations, which can sometimes be inconvenient, but those limitations ultimately shape the process and strengthen the work.

What do you hope viewers feel or think about when they encounter your textile-based sculptural objects?

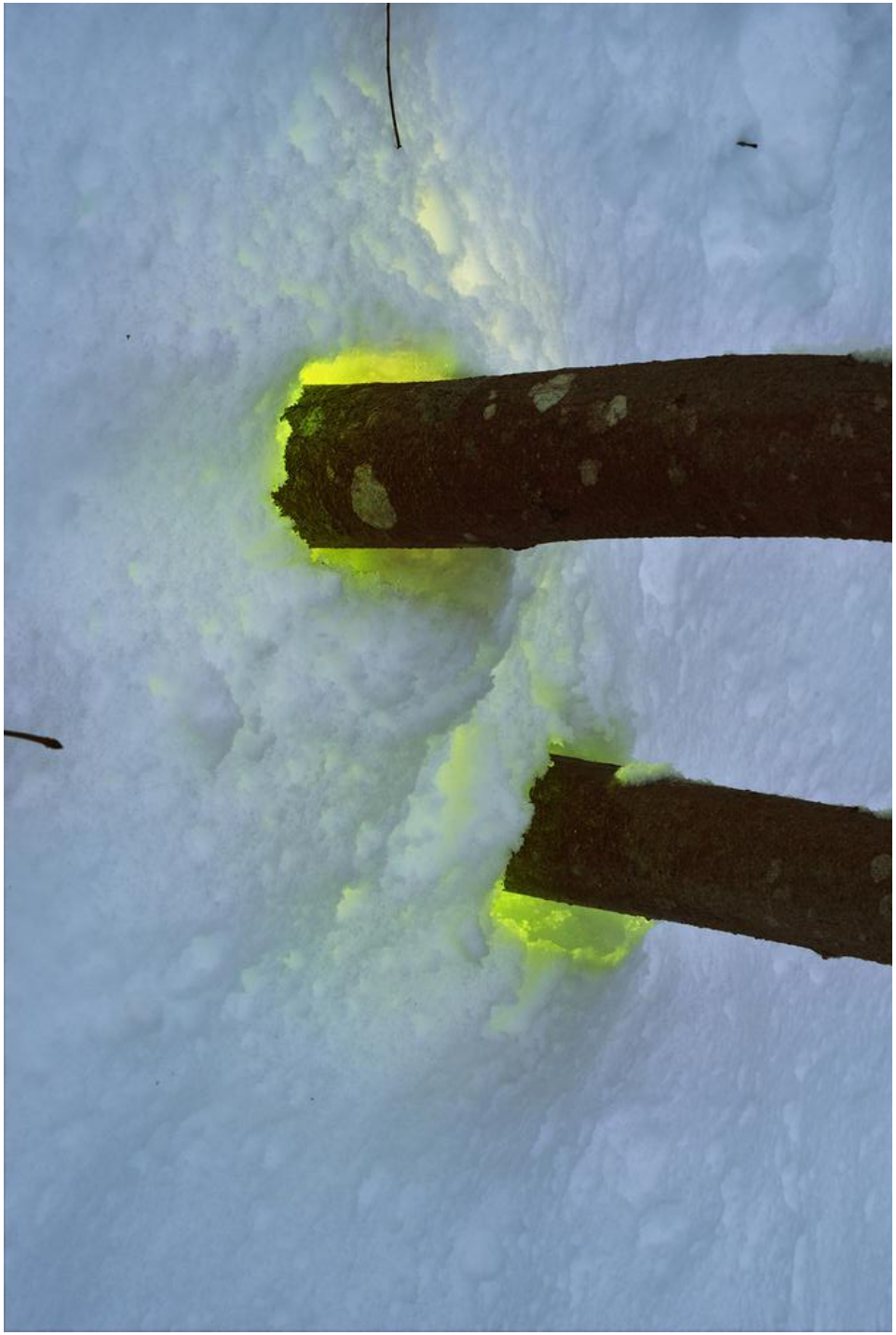
I hope a sense of recognition emerges through the materials and forms, without them being fully identifiable. The work balances between familiarity and estrangement, and I prefer to leave that tension open to interpretation.

Bart van Gompel | Second Form | 2026

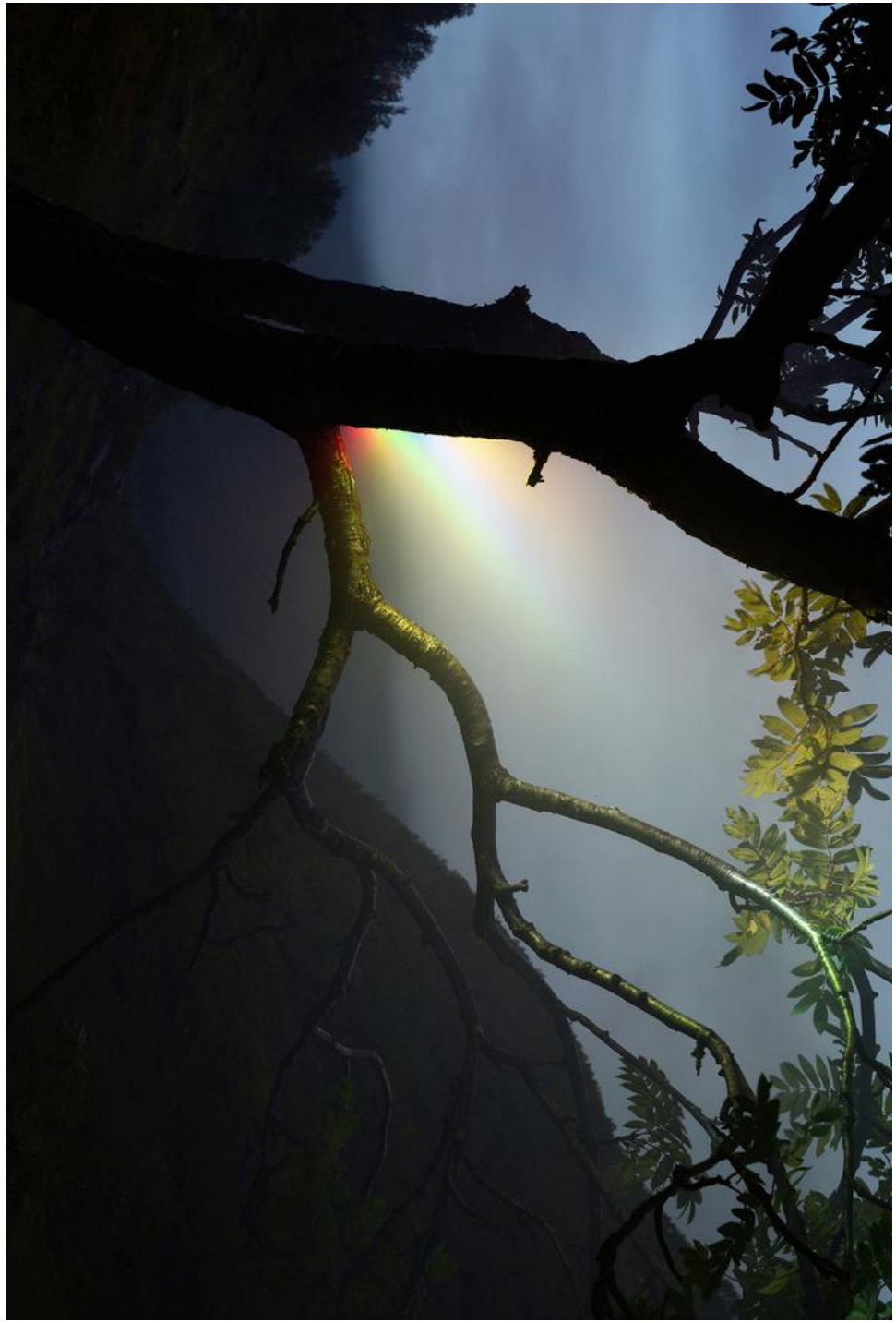
Gjert Rognli is a multidisciplinary artist who draws inspiration from his Arctic Northern Norwegian roots and Sámi cultural heritage. He works with film, photography, sculpture, and performance, earning international recognition and exhibitions – including showcasing his films at COP27 in Egypt. The force of nature is the heart of his artistic practice, and his work floats between surrealism and mythology, exploring the intersection of realism and myth. Rognli has received numerous international art, photography, and film awards, and has exhibited at the Louvre Museum in Paris, among other places. His practice reflects a deep engagement with nature, cultural belonging, and the liminal space between reality and imagination.

Project Statement
In his photography project What Nature Knows, the artist draws on his connection to Arctic Northern Norway, exploring themes of light, darkness, and the shifting seasons. He transforms familiar landscapes into enigmatic, otherworldly spaces, guiding viewers on a visual journey through evening light and the atmosphere of the night. Working at the intersection of photography, environmental art, surrealism, and sculpture, he employed techniques such as smoke cartridges and long shutter speeds. Through these methods, the artist sought to comment on the fragility of the present, reimagining ordinary landscapes as peaceful yet mysterious places.

Gjert Rognli | Arctic Glow



Gjert Rognli | Fade into Winter



Gjert Rognli | Forces of Nature

— *Interview*

Nika Nuova

Your project frames cross-stitch as a metaphor for invisible labor. At what point did you realize this medium could carry such a strong social statement?

It felt almost inevitable. Cross-stitch, like many crafts, tends to be met with dismissiveness – it can't possibly be art, people say; it's just a pastime. And society treats women's work in exactly the same way: as something unimportant, something done on the side.

The idea of the "second shift" runs deeply through your description. How do you translate this invisible, repetitive labor into visual rhythm and composition?

The chosen technique is key. Modest, unobtrusive, conforming to stereotype – all of this underscores the role so often assigned to women: to serve society quietly and without fanfare, to create comfort, to take on additional responsibilities day after day, stitch by stitch.

This work is created collectively. How did collaboration influence the final visual language of the piece?

Each participant created their own section in their own style. The sections all turned out slightly different, reflecting the life of each family, with their own traditions and customs, yet all existing within the same world and governed by the same social norms. The result is a single canvas made up of many different voices.

Each stitch is described as essential to the

Nika Nuova | Ode to women's labor | 2025

whole. Do you see this as a political statement about individual contribution within society?

Yes, absolutely. It was important to me to emphasise that domestic work is work – and should never be dismissed as unimportant or as a lesser achievement. Managing a household or raising a child can be far more mentally demanding than many career accomplishments. That is precisely why it deserves to be taken seriously.

The surface of your work resembles painting from afar, yet reveals labor-intensive stitching up close. How important is this shift in perception for the viewer?

I enjoy playing with contrasts in perception and scale. In that sense, this piece isn't so different from my other work – except that instead of different fabric patterns, I've used different techniques within a single embroidery. You can read the overall picture, or you can examine each individual piece of the puzzle.

The palette feels soft, almost delicate, while the concept is quite critical. How do you balance aesthetic beauty with conceptual weight?

It's just like in real life, where a woman embodies warmth, love and tenderness. But at the same time, she is a pillar of support, and sometimes even the backbone of the whole structure. That is precisely what I wanted to convey in my work. The first aspect through the colours, and the second through the project as a whole.

How do you think the meaning of this work changes when viewers learn about the collective process behind it?

I think it deepens the understanding and truly brings the idea to life. So many women – all different, from different countries and communities, different social backgrounds, different careers – have used embroidery to make their voices heard. They have shown that every contribution matters and should never be taken for granted.

Erika Szentgyörgyi painter (1972)
I visited the Hungarian University of Fine Arts in Budapest. I graduated as a painter in 2002.
I have been a member of the National Association of Hungarian Artists since 2002,and Associazione Internazionale Mosaicisti Contemporanei, Ravenna 2013.

Project Statement
There are many Styrofoam wrappers in the trash. Electronics and household items are protected during transportation by Styrofoam holders shaped into patterns on the top and bottom, which we throw away after purchase. I cut these Styrofoam household and electronic wastes pressed into the mold to a thickness of 3 cm, then formed different compositions from the pieces, glued them to a surface, and then painted on the relief. These shapes were given to me, I called them found shapes, so these shapes are true-to-the-time impressions of today. I intentionally did not carve my own shape, but used the existing one. So my hand was tied in a certain way. And with my painting, I made them more personal. In addition to the shapes, the Styrofoam sheets are marked with codes and inscriptions, which I incorporate into my composition. It might be interesting to examine later what my work was based on before and where it traveled from. Furthermore, in my work, it is also thought-provoking to consider how long it will be visible, when it will start to decompose. It also became questionable to me whether the value conveyed in it, i.e. the object of use or my work, will have a longer lifespan.

Erika Szentgyörgyi | Dishes Waiting to Be Washed: Still Life from the Artist's Kitchen| 2026

Erika Szentgyörgyi | Mouth of Truth| 2026

Kasia Dudura

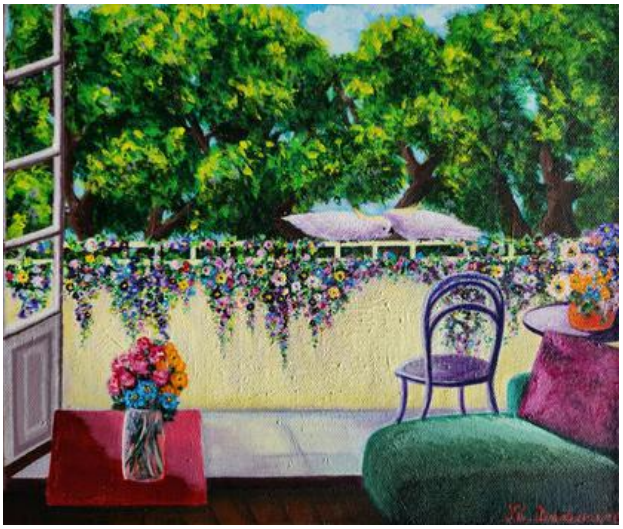
Painting and photography are closely connected in the way I observe the world. Photography has taught me to notice fleeting light, atmosphere and quiet emotional moments, while painting allows me to reinterpret those moments more intuitively through colour and texture. Both mediums are ultimately about mood and emotional presence for me. My photography works 'Innsbruck Old Town' and 'Autumn Garden' reflect this same interest in atmosphere and connection to place.

You often focus on atmosphere and fleeting moments. What draws you to these subtle, ephemeral qualities?

I'm drawn to the emotional feeling certain moments can hold - a particular light or the atmosphere of a place at a certain time of day. I'm interested in preserving not only what something looked like, but what it felt like emotionally. I think this also comes from childhood memories of becoming immersed in storytelling and gardens. One of my earliest inspirations was Shirley Barber. I grew up getting lost in her whimsical books filled with enchanted gardens and hidden worlds, and that sense of wonder still exists in my work today. I'm also inspired by my travels throughout Europe. Walking through old courtyards, laneways and historic gardens left a lasting impression on me, and that romantic atmosphere often appears in my paintings, particularly 'Spring Cottage Garden'.

Can you tell us more about your return to painting and how this shift has affected your artistic voice?

Your practice moves between painting and photography. How do these two mediums influence each other in your work?



Kasia Dudura | Balcony Garden

Kasia Dudura | Innsbruck Old Town

I painted throughout high school but stepped away from it for many years while life became more career-focused. Returning to painting in my thirties felt emotional and instinctive, and reconnected me with a part of myself that had been dormant for a long time. Since returning, my work has become more intuitive and emotionally honest. I'm less interested in realism and more interested in atmosphere, colour and feeling. I've also realised I'm quite an intuitive painter. How I feel often determines whether I paint and how I paint. I've also undertaken some art classes, but I discovered structured timeframes and rushed environments don't suit my process. Painting has to happen naturally and in my own time. Painting also places me into a state of flow where time disappears. I can paint for hours effortlessly without noticing time passing, and often the hardest part is knowing when to stop.

Your painting Balcony Garden feels both intimate and dreamlike. How do you balance real observation with imagination in your work?

My work often begins with observation or memory, but I allow emotion and imagination to reshape the scene. I'm less interested in documenting a place exactly as it appeared and more interested in translating the emotional experience of being there. In 'Balcony Garden' and 'Spring Cottage Garden', colour, atmosphere and softened space create a dreamlike quality that sits somewhere between memory and imagination.

You mention influences such as Matisse, Bonnard, and Vuillard. In what ways do these artists shape your approach to color and composition?

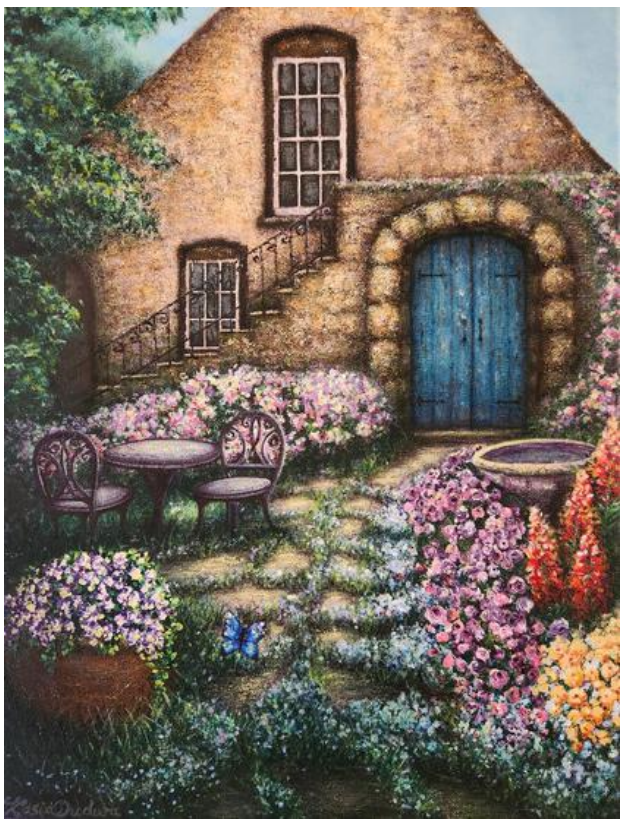
I'm inspired by the emotional and atmospheric use of colour in the work of these artists. Their paintings feel immersive and emotionally alive. They've influenced my interest in expressive colour, intimate spaces, decorative rhythm and allowing atmosphere to carry emotional meaning rather than relying on strict realism.

The presence of the cockatoos in Balcony Garden adds a narrative element. How important is storytelling in your work?

Storytelling is important to me, although I prefer it to remain open-ended and emotional rather than literal. I'm interested in creating paintings that feel inhabited and suggest a larger emotional world beyond the frame. In 'Spring Cottage Garden', storytelling and a sense of wonder appears more subtly through the winding path, hidden corners and inviting blue door, encouraging viewers to imagine themselves stepping into the scene.

Your work transforms everyday scenes into emotionally charged images. What do you hope viewers feel or take away from your art?

I hope viewers feel a sense of warmth, nostalgia and emotional connection. I'm interested in elevating ordinary moments and environments into something more atmospheric and emotionally resonant.



Kasia Dudura | Spring Cottage Garden

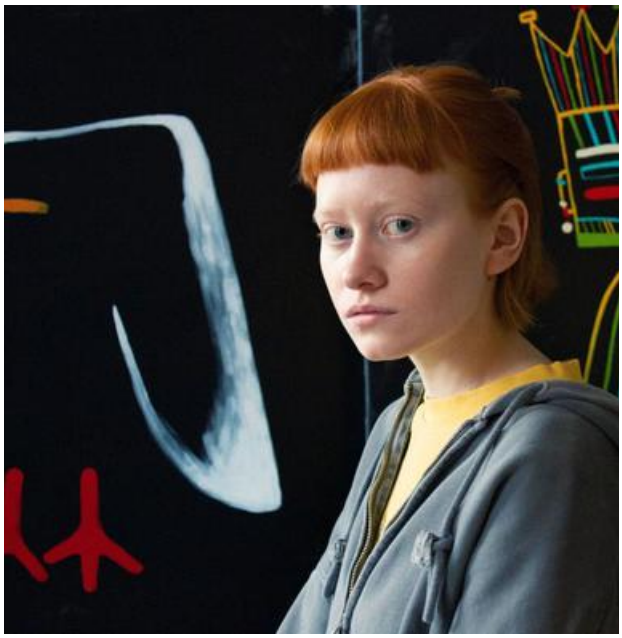
Kyra Hall
Kyra started becoming interested in art early on in elementary, only seriously pursuing it as a viable option in high school and community college. They were raised in Aptos, California, before moving to Laguna Beach to attend art school at Laguna College of Art and Design in 2024. As a kid, their art was clumsy and involved cats for the most part, and they were largely self taught until they started to take art classes in junior high after school. At that point, they messed around with some other mediums, and started enjoying acrylic paints. In college, oils became standard since they're seen as more professional, but they look forward to being able to spend more time exploring art supplies this last year before graduating.

Project Statement
Working with a variety of mediums in order to mold the human form, I work to blend the disturbing parts of the human body with its beauty. I seek to capture the raw feelings revolving around self image expressed using body horror and anatomical knowledge. I want to both show vulnerability, but also have viewers experience that same sense of weakness, while learning to accept their flaws and how those unique oddities are what makes us human. Branching out from traditional fine arts with oil paints as a primary education is freeing to allow experimentation with other mediums, while continuing to use paint for some projects. Everything becomes a playground to explore moving the components of humans into something more evocative than what is typically thought of as fine arts figure paintings.

Kyra Hall | Safe Space | 2025

Kyra Hall | Crashing Out | 2025

Ksenia Pamphil



You describe yourself as a self-taught artist. How did the absence of formal art education shape your creative freedom and personal visual language?

I believe that creativity should initially be free from rules. A child does not know about composition or the relationship between color and tone. They create as they feel and as they see, and sometimes their works evoke more emotion and contain more depth than perfect paintings created according to the canons of academic art. An adult artist, especially one trained in art institutions, is often afraid to move away from the rules they have learned. Their art becomes mechanical and impersonal. The creation of a work turns into a clear sequence of steps.

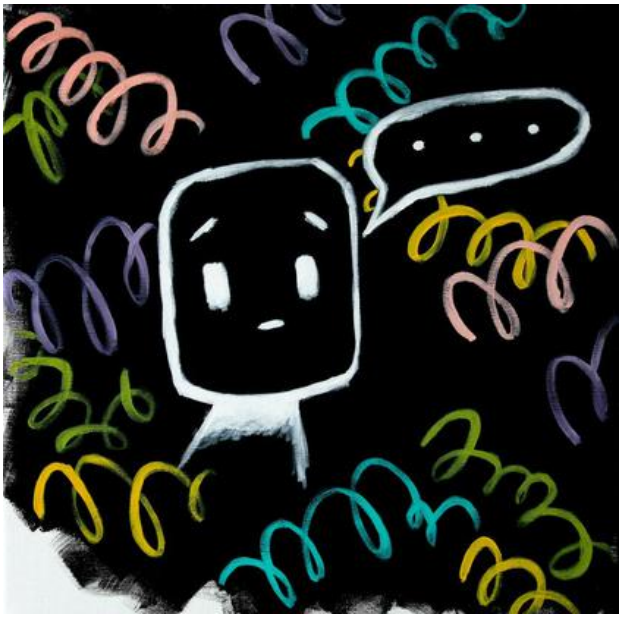
As a child, I tried several times to attend classes at an art school, and each time it was difficult for me. I understood that I could draw vases and fruit, study the construction of objects — it was not difficult — but I did not enjoy it. I felt resistance and wanted to create something different. Eventually, after giving up those attempts, I felt a sense of freedom. I felt even greater freedom when I freed myself from the imposed idea of what a "real artist" should be and what and how they should paint. Gradually, my own style and visual language began to form. I started experimenting with different new materials, combining them, and, roughly speaking, breaking all the rules established in Russian art universities. Simple examples include the ideas that you should not use white watercolor, smudge pencil or charcoal with your fingers, or break the composition.

I know that some people believe you first need to master the basics and only then break the rules and introduce something new. But I feel closer to the opposite order. I think it is better to first understand what your soul is drawn to, what it wants to say or express, and then look for a way to realize it through trial and error, paying attention to your own feelings. After that, you can add theory if you still feel the need for it. In this order, you do not lose your voice. Besides, personally, I find it much more rewarding to come to discoveries and realizations on my own than to receive dry theory quickly without understanding it or arriving at it through practice.

Ksenia Pamphil | Penguin | 2025

Your works often feature unique characters — animals, masks, or mysterious beings. How do these characters usually appear: do you plan them in advance, or do they emerge intuitively during the process?

I never know what my next work will be about. I usually have prepared paper or canvas ready so that when inspiration suddenly appears, I can capture the idea. Usually, there is a general mood or state that I want to convey, and I sit down to



Ksenia Pamphil | ... | 2026

make sketches in order to find a way to express it. At that moment, different characters are born from scribbles and sketches. Later, I may forget about them, see them again, and decide that the image should be transferred to a larger format. I do not try to copy them exactly, but their essence and inner content remain. At the same time, I like that they are a little “crooked” and imperfect. It catches the eye and adds life to the works.
There are also simply funny accidents. The work Penguin, for example, was born from accidental drops of paint that fell while I was customizing clothes. I saw the silhouette of a penguin in the white paint. Then I transferred it to canvas, adding a beak and feet. The initial accidental line acquired an image and emotional content already during the process of working on the canvas.

Many of your works combine a sense of naivety with deeper emotional tension. How important is this contrast in your artistic practice?

I like not saying things directly and not using loud, obvious symbols. It is more interesting to suggest and to hide deep feelings, an understanding of the world, and an attitude toward it behind a fragile and harmless character. People often do not notice such characters in life; they judge them superficially and think that everything is clear. But if you are more observant and curious, you can discover depth and be surprised. I think this is unconsciously one of the ideas I want to convey to the viewer through my works: that one should not judge by appearances. Kind does not mean stupid or weak. Strange does not mean bad.

Your visual language seems to bring together expressionism and symbolism. What attracts you to these directions, and how do they help you express inner states?

When I began creating my works, I did not know what artistic movements existed or what they were called. At some point, when I had to describe my art in words for the first time and find points of reference to explain it to viewers, I began to study and realized that my process of creating works is close to expressionism. I always experience a strong emotional surge when I paint. Even after going through a powerful emotional experience, with tears in my eyes, I may suddenly realize that I need to paint a picture right now, because my feelings and perception become heightened, and in such moments I can reflect this in the work.
Also, when I simply want to reflect and show different ways of perceiving the world, I have noticed that I often turn to symbols. I have already developed a small series of works with masks, and I never get tired of using them. Each of them not only captures an emotion and a feeling, but also refers to questions of human essence, the perception of reality, religion, culture, and mythology. A mask is an object that carries an incredible number of meanings. But how to interpret this symbol is up to the viewer.

The black background in your works creates a strong emotional and visual atmosphere. What role does darkness play in your compositions?

A black background can be a neutral element — for example, silence and emptiness in which an image is born. At other times, it represents darkness, the modern world filled with human vices, against which bright characters appear and enter into confrontation with it. Sometimes the pure canvas even shows through this black layer, which is also quite symbolic. It all depends on the prism of your perception when looking at the work. I myself see both versions at the same time.

Some of your characters seem fragile, silent, or isolated, while others feel playful or protective. Do you see them as reflections of personal emotions, universal feelings, or fictional beings?

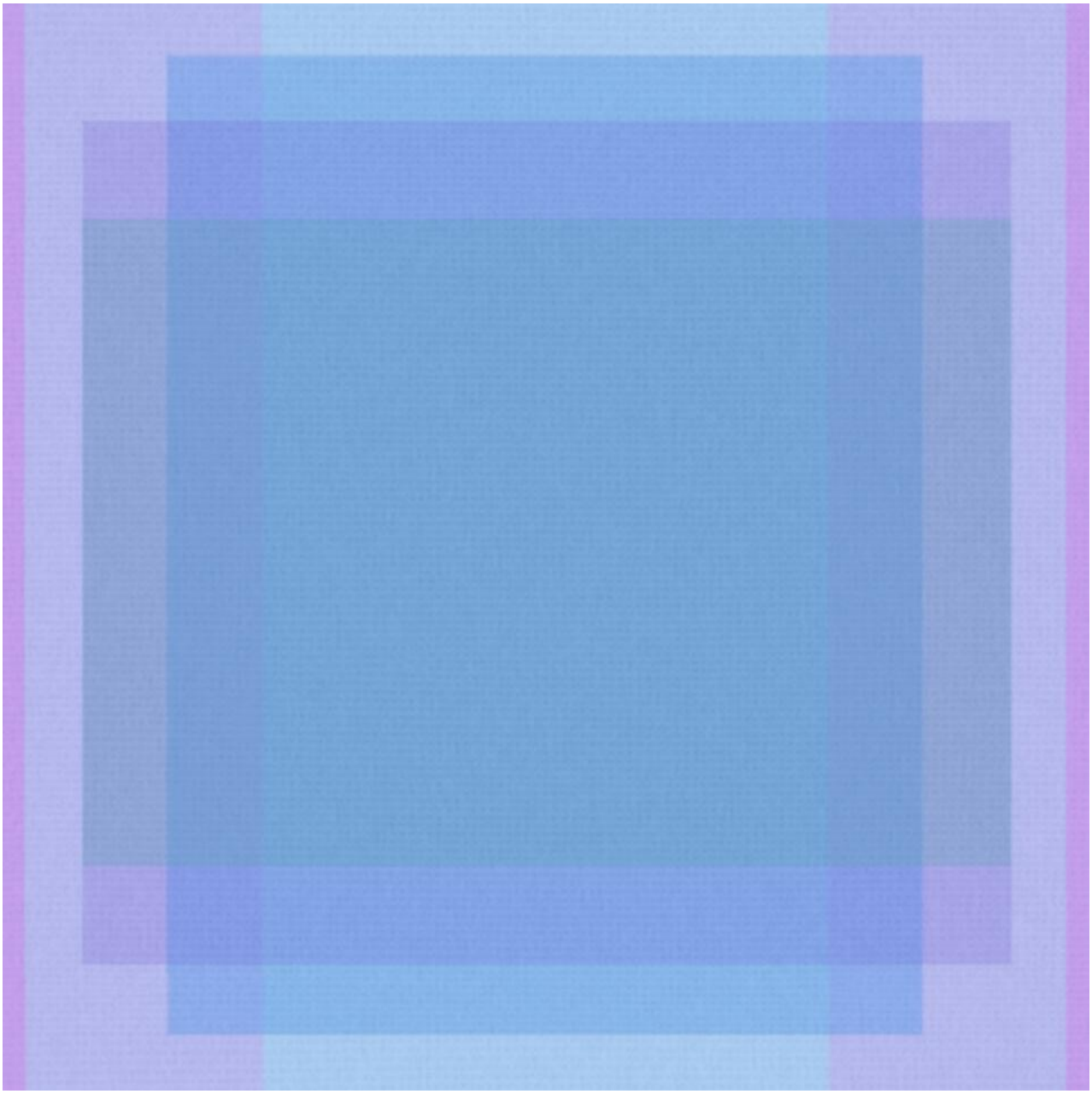
At the beginning of creating a work, I am sure that I am reflecting only one emotion or feeling embodied in an image. But during the process, I notice that more and more facets are added — shades of feelings, emotions, and thoughts. Eventually, they transform into an independent image, separate from me. After that, which facet the image and the work as a whole will reveal depends only on the viewer’s prism of perception. The character may even become an observer itself and look at the viewers from the canvas.

You work with painting, graphics, and mixed media. How do different techniques influence the mood and meaning of your works?

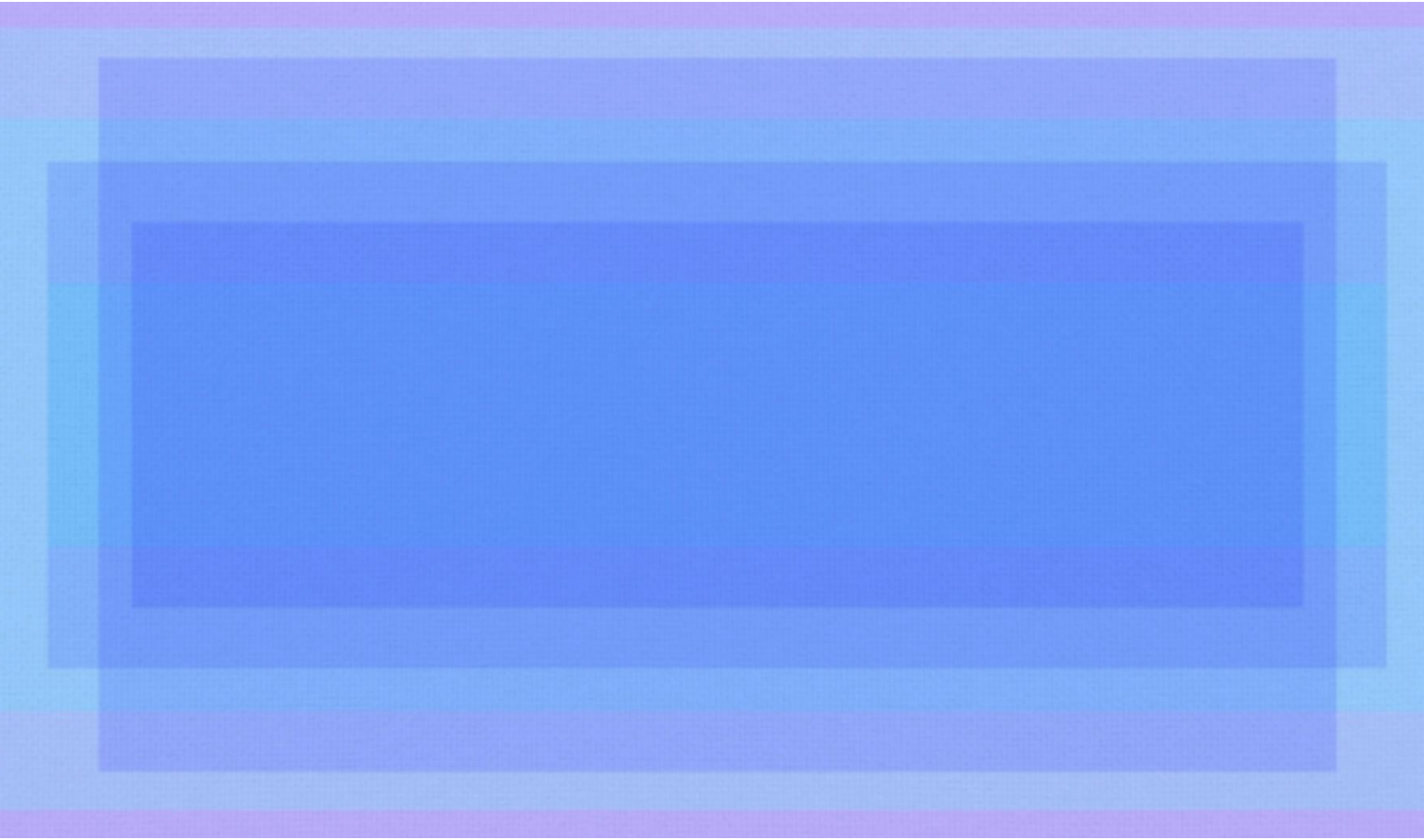
The choice of material depends on two things: time and freedom of use. Acrylic, which I use for large works, does not require a long wait before applying the next layer, so there is less chance that I will lose the mood and state needed to create the painting. However, I also like moving into graphics and combining it with any other materials I have at hand: acrylic markers, colored pencils, oil pastels, and so on. In this case, I am free to experiment with the texture and surface of the work, and different moods and atmospheres become mixed within it.
I also believe that a fresh perspective is important in creativity. When I work with the same material for a long time, sooner or later I get used to it and become tired of it. I want to switch to other techniques, and then inspiration appears again. It is like a breath of fresh air. And these feelings are reflected in the works.

Aeon Kim

In Kim’s artworks, the vitreous layers interlace on the surface into liminal phenomena, as optical anisotropy creates the refractive spectra that suspend a state of diaphanēs. The composition mediates the threshold between materiality and immateriality, dispersing light to encapsulate shifting simulacra of emptiness. The superimposed planes construct a hauntological space where the void permeates the density of plenum.



Aeon Kim | Reflection | 2026



Aeon Kim | Reflection | 2026

Interview

Mildreth Sarahi García García

Your work combines dream symbolism, folklore, and psychological tension. How did your interest in the dream traditions of Santo Domingo Tlaltinango begin?

My interest emerged from having grown up within this town, surrounded by its traditions and cultural practices linked to oral storytelling, superstitions, and the symbolic interpretations of dreams, all of which are deeply rooted in the daily life of this Oaxacan community. For many of its inhabitants, as well as for my own family, dreams were understood as warnings or spiritual messages.

Mildreth Sarahi García García | Weaving Of Anxiety | 2026

Mildreth Sarahi García García | An Omen Of Death | 2025

Over time, I became interested in the way these symbols and beliefs acquire meanings capable of shaping collective identity and being passed down from generation to generation. Painting then became both a technical and conceptual medium through which to explore and illustrate these practices from an artistic perspective. However, this practice does not emerge from a psychological or Freudian perspective, but rather from a cultural dimension. In my community, dreams are part of an inherited system of knowledge transmitted through oral tradition, beliefs, and everyday practices. They are not perceived merely as manifestations of the subconscious, but as warnings, messages, or connections between the individual, nature, spirituality, and collective memory. In this way, the interpretive value lies in the symbols that appear in dreams, rather than solely in personal experience. These elements possess meanings of their own that, once identified, allow people to understand both the broader and the particular context of the dream, anticipate events, and determine the ritual actions that must be carried out.

In your paintings, childhood imagery often appears alongside disturbing or unsettling elements. What draws you to this contrast between innocence and fear?

I am interested in the way fear is often introduced from a very early age through memory, culture, family stories, or personal experiences. Images from childhood allow me to speak about vulnerability, curiosity, and imagination, while the unsettling elements represent the anxieties, tensions, or inherited fears that coexist with those memories. I believe dreams function in a similar way: something familiar suddenly becomes strange or threatening.

Animals and symbolic creatures play an important role in your visual language. How do you choose which figures appear in your compositions?

I choose animals based on their symbolic weight, their emotional presence, and their relationship to the narrative of each painting. Many of them originate from folklore, religious imagery, dream symbolism, or observations of human behavior reflected through animals. I am interested in how certain creatures can embody instincts, fears, social structures, or emotional states in a more direct way than human figures. Their presence helps construct a language that feels both personal and universal.

Many of your works feel deeply narrative, almost like fragments of dreams or memories. Do your paintings begin with personal experiences, written stories, or spontaneous images?

The paintings in this project emerged partially from personal experiences, but primarily through oral accounts collected by means of written interviews and audio recordings conducted with people from Santo Domingo Tlaltinango. These narratives were fundamental to the conceptual development of the work, as they contain the interpretations, symbols, and meanings surrounding oneiric traditions within the community.
Based on these testimonies, the compositions, scenes, and characters were developed with the guidance and collaboration of inhabitants of the town who possess a deep understanding of the cultural context of each dream and the beliefs associated with them. For this reason, the paintings do not seek to invent an external imaginary world, but rather to construct an artistic interpretation grounded in experiences, stories, and forms of knowledge that continue to live within the collective memory of the community..

Your project explores collective beliefs and inherited symbolism. How do you balance preserving cultural traditions with creating your own contemporary interpretation of them?

For me, balance lies in understanding that these traditions are not static elements of the past, but living systems of knowledge that continue to transform within the community. My relationship with them also emerges from personal experience, since I belong to and come from Santo Domingo Tlaltinango, and I grew up within a family where these beliefs and ways of interpreting dreams were part of everyday life. My intention is not to literally reproduce the stories or symbols. For this reason, much of the project was built through testimonies, interviews, and conversations with inhabitants of the town, who guided different symbolic and narrative aspects of the works.

Mildreth Sarahi García García | Tongues That Crawl | 2026

Mildreth Sarahi García García | Loss And Absence | 2026

From there, painting functions as a contemporary medium that allows me to visually explore these beliefs through my own experience and artistic sensibility. The contemporary aspect of my work does not emerge from modifying or "modernizing" these traditions, but from the way I engage in dialogue with them through image, composition, and pictorial construction.
I am interested in showing how these symbolic systems continue to exist in the present day and still influence the way people interpret reality.

Some of your figures appear trapped between reality and nightmare. Do you see dreams as warnings, reflections of trauma, or a way of understanding identity?

I consider dreams to be primarily warnings and a way of understanding identity. Within the cultural context in which I grew up, dreams are often interpreted as messages connected to everyday life, spirituality, nature, or future events, rather than as mere manifestations of the subconscious. They function as a form of inherited knowledge that influences the way people perceive reality and understand their experiences.
At the same time, I believe that dreams can reveal aspects of both individual and collective identity. The symbols, fears, animals, and situations that appear within them often reflect the values, beliefs, tensions, and cultural memories of the community. In my work, the figures that seem trapped between reality and nightmare exist precisely within that tension: between the visible world and the symbolic meanings that people project onto dreams in order to understand their surroundings.

What do you hope viewers experience emotionally or psychologically when standing in front of your paintings?

I hope the viewer experiences a sense of intrigue, curiosity, and emotional reflection when standing before the paintings. Beyond the visual atmosphere of the works, one of the project's central intentions is to invite people to think about the importance of preserving cultural traditions and inherited systems of knowledge. The dream interpretations and symbolic beliefs represented in the paintings originate from Santo Domingo Tlaltinango, where these practices continue to function as part of the community's cultural identity and collective memory. Through this project, I am interested in encouraging the viewer to recognize the value these traditions possess, not merely as folklore or superstition, but as forms of cultural heritage that allow communities to remain connected to their history, beliefs, and ancestral roots.
At the same time, I am interested in allowing the paintings to open a space for personal interpretation. During the development of this project, I came to understand that many people outside my community also associate dreams with warnings, symbols, emotions, or spiritual meanings. Because of this, I hope viewers may reflect on their own beliefs, memories, and symbolic interpretations while engaging with the work.
In many ways, these traditions are threatened by contemporary systems of thought that tend to invalidate or replace local forms of knowledge. For me, painting becomes a way of preserving, commemorating, and reinterpreting these practices within a contemporary artistic context without separating them from their cultural essence. Ideally, I would like the work to invite the viewer not only to question the images, but also to reflect on the importance of protecting cultural diversity and intangible heritage, both of which continue to shape the identity of many communities.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Between Impulse and Permanence: Mylene Costa

by Anna Gvozdeva

Mylene Costa's recent sculptural work presents an artist in full command of her formal vocabulary — and one acutely aware of its limitations. Working primarily in pigmented automotive resin and marble powder, Costa constructs objects that resist easy categorization: they are neither figurative nor fully abstract, neither finished nor deliberately raw. This productive ambiguity is at the core of her practice, and it is both her greatest strength and, at times, her most demanding challenge.

The works in the Nebra series — spanning Nebra 1999 (2025) and Nebra I (2026) — are among the most conceptually layered in the selection. By invoking the Nebra sky disc, an artifact discovered in Germany that encodes Bronze Age astronomical knowledge, Costa positions crumpled automotive resin as the contemporary heir to ancient mnemonic objects. The conceit is compelling: matter that absorbs time, holds gesture, and refuses to unfold. Yet the work succeeds less through explicit reference than through formal conviction. The fragmented, upright forms are genuinely tense: they appear arrested mid-collapse, and the small perforations punctuating the surface of Nebra I introduce a welcome porosity, a breath within the compression. The pale aquamarine pigmentation, consistent across both pieces, evokes patinated bronze without mimicking it — a subtle and effective choice.

Mylene Costa | Nebra 1999 | 2025

Mylene Costa | Nebra I | 2026

Mylene Costa | Rubra | 2025

Where Rubra (2025) operates through confrontation. Cast in deep crimson automotive resin with a high-gloss finish, the sculpture reads as both body and wound, garment and wreckage. The lacquered surface amplifies every dent and compression, turning the industrial material against itself. It is the most visceral work in the selection, and arguably the most immediate. The glossy red creates an unsettling seduction: the eye is drawn in before the mind has time to resist. One might question whether this directness risks becoming decorative — the drama of the color absorbing the complexity of the form — but Costa's attention to the internal structure of the piece holds. The hollow passage at mid-torso grounds what might otherwise tip into spectacle.

The two marble powder works, Vertice and Crust (both 2026), represent a significant material shift and, in many ways, the most mature statement in the body of work presented. The matte white surface removes all the seduction of color and gloss, demanding that the viewer engage with form alone. In Vertice, the swirling drapery is genuinely architectural: the upward spiral reads as both rising force and contained collapse, a form that concentrates rather than expands. The material's relationship to classical marble sculpture is intelligently handled — the work does not imitate antiquity but rhymes with it. Crust is more earth-bound, its compressed and folded mass evoking geological rather than bodily time. Set on its circular black base, it reads as a small monument to accumulated pressure — a core sample of force.

Mylene Costa
Vértice
2026

Taken together, this body of work reveals an artist navigating a productive tension between process and concept, gesture and structure, eruption and permanence. The recurring black steel bases — square for the resin pieces, circular for the marble — are understated but considered: they stabilize forms that appear on the verge of movement without domesticating them. Costa's greatest formal risk — the deliberate rejection of the body as legible subject — is also her most rewarding. The works do not represent presence; they enact it. Whether the artist can sustain this rigor as the series expands, resisting the pull toward formula, remains the central question. But on the evidence presented here, the sculptural language is genuinely hers: disciplined, taut, and alive.

Mylene Costa
Crust
2026

— *Interview*

Eugenia Polyakova

Your practice is shaped by both marketing and art history. How do these two fields influence the way you build an image?

Eugenia Polyakova | Golden Hour | 2026

I think my work exists somewhere between those two worlds. I'm interested in how an image can attract someone, but then slowly reveal something more psychological, emotional and meaningful underneath.

You have worked in media production and visual storytelling. How has this professional experience affected your artistic language?

Working in media production gave me a strong visual confidence very early on. Being constantly surrounded by image-making, storytelling, and fast creative decisions taught me not to be afraid of experimenting or trusting my instincts. It made creativity feel natural and fluid rather than something precious or rigid.

Your works often combine intuitive gestures with a strong sense of structure. How do you balance spontaneity and control in your process?

Usually the process begins very instinctively. I work fast in the beginning because to bring the emotional energy of the piece. Then later comes the more analytical part - removing, covering,

Eugenia Polyakova | Eternal Ritual | 2026

balancing, rebuilding.

Many of your compositions feel layered, tactile, and almost sculptural. What role does texture play in your work?

Texture plays a big role in my work. I like to mix different mediums and sculptural elements because I want the surface to feel almost archaeological, like something that has been built, damaged, preserved, and rewritten many times. The materiality becomes part of the emotional language of the work.

Symbols, signs, and fragmented forms appear frequently in your paintings. How do you choose the visual symbols that enter your work?

Symbolism definitely takes big role in my work. I'm interested in symbols because they survive across generations even when meanings change. Some come from ancient visual languages, some from contemporary media culture, and some are completely personal.

Your art explores memory and emotional perception. Are your works connected to specific personal memories, or do they come from more abstract emotional states?

Emotional states often become the real structure behind my work, most of the times it all begins with a very personal memory or feeling, but during the process it becomes more universal and abstract.

How does living and working in the UAE influence your creative perspective?

Living in the UAE for over 12 years exposed me to a very unique cultural environment where tradition and extreme modernity exist side by side. There is a constant sense of transformation here - architecturally, socially, emotionally. I think that influenced my sensitivity to themes like identity, memory, and constructed realities. The multicultural atmosphere also made me more aware of how symbols and visual languages shift depending on cultural context, while still carrying universal emotional meanings.

Alison Toft Davies

The skies of SW France - where I live for half of the year - gives me an endless source of different atmospheric effects at twilight and dawn. I'm particularly fascinated at the moment with evening light & reflections on broad expanses of wet estuary sand. This environment is so powerful for mood which I like to link to emotions; melancholy, a sense of hope or anticipation for example.

Your 'Estuaire Abstrait' series is inspired by the estuaries of South West France. What first drew you to these landscapes and their atmosphere?

Alison Toft Davies | Night Falls | 2025

Light seems to play a central role in these works, especially the light of early morning and twilight. How do these moments of transition influence your painting process?

I have to keep focusing on achieving a sense of freshness by not overworking the paint, so I favour a palette knife using brief strokes or a large plastic spreading tool. I also find using glazes with either linseed oil (if there's no rush for the surface to dry) or liquin, which reduces the drying time. I've learnt from the great masters like Vermeer and Rembrandt. They used glazing to create luminosity and express light by applying thin, transparent layers of colour mixed with linseed oil over a dry underpainting. It allows underlying colours to show through, creating a glowing, rich depth that makes colours appear to glow from within and gives a sense of luminosity.
Often I start the work in acrylic paint, laying down the lights and darks, then oil paint can be worked over this - which again reduces the chance of overworking. A feel of transience and even better, ethereality, is

Alison Toft Davies | Dawn Treads A Path | 2025

always a goal. And beauty, if I can reflect the beauty of the natural world whilst express inner feelings I am satisfied.

The series explores the idea of traces left behind as day and night pass. What kinds of "traces" are most important to you - emotional, physical, visual, or symbolic?

They are all important in that there is always more in painting than just a representation of the physical world, for me there should always be a connotation of something other.

Your paintings balance abstraction with a strong sense of place. How do you decide how much of the landscape to reveal and how much to dissolve into abstraction?

There is currently less and less 'real' landscape and greater abstraction, which I regard as progress. One of the greatest painters of the abstract, Piet Mondrian, aimed to go 'always further', which is highly liberating for the artist. And yet, the sense of place is at the root. The place need not be a real place in the geographical sense, for me the place can be a state of mind or concept e.g. 'Lost Horizon' could be the loss of the physical and a journey towards the unconscious (rather than just literally a lost horizon between the sea and sky).
I try to equate landscape with mood and feeling, so it's not just representational but emotional. JMW Turner and Charles Daubigny are great leaders for this. Even if your work is quite abstract I really believe more 'traditional' artists can fire up ideas and be a driving force in your own interpretations of similar themes.

Texture is very present in your paintings. How do you build the surface of the canvas, and what role does texture play in expressing memory and transience?

Texture is intrinsic to the idea of traces: My practice is often to build subtle textural layers with a palette knife & a minimum of brush work. Previous layers of textures become traces upon which to work. I like the idea of physical technique linking to the psychological aspect of traces. This could be a memory or just the idea of what has been before. For example recalling the incredible colours of an evening summer sky in the middle of a bleak winter ('What Fades Stays') or how morning light reveals nature and indeed ourselves in a raw state - as we really are - before the day takes over ('Dawn Treads a Path').

Your works reflect the human desire to hold onto moments, while nature itself is constantly changing. How do you explore this tension through colour, light, and composition?

I think in a way artists need massive egos to be able to indulge so single-mindedly into their practice, whilst simultaneously we understand our insignificance in the face of nature and infinity. So I try to grasp moments in time knowing this and this is enough.

What does becoming a full-time artist mean to you now, after many years of artistic, educational, and community-based practice?

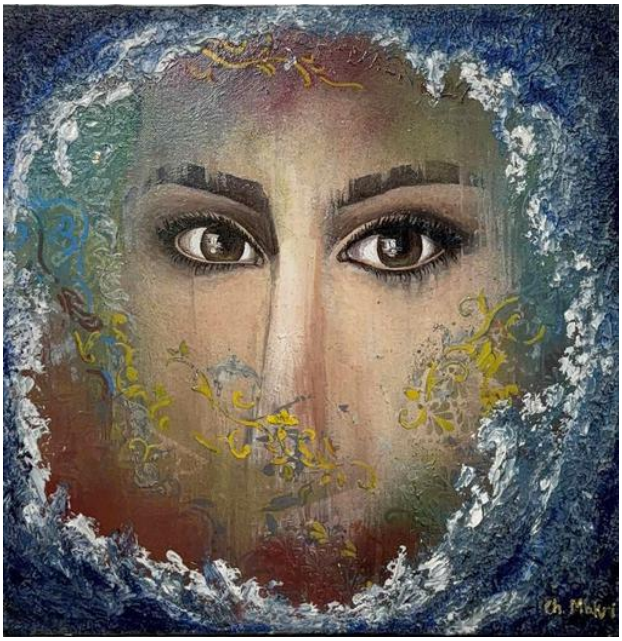
I knew it was going to be important but could not have imagined how much so. Painting is something I live and breathe. It's also interesting how much tutoring and encouraging young people to succeed artistically prepared me to fully indulge myself in a personal journey as a painter.

Alison Toft Davies | What Fades Stays | 2025

Charis Makri

I usually begin with a specific idea or symbol that I want to express. From there, I build the composition in a way that supports that meaning, placing the symbols clearly so they are present and readable within the work.
At the same time, I do not follow a strict plan. I allow the process to guide me, and the piece develops naturally as I work on it. The narrative is there from the beginning, but it remains open and flexible, allowing the work to evolve organically.
What matters to me is not to define a single interpretation, but to create space for the viewer to approach the work through their own perspective and experiences.

Your work blends abstraction with symbolic storytelling. How do you balance intuition and narrative when creating a piece?

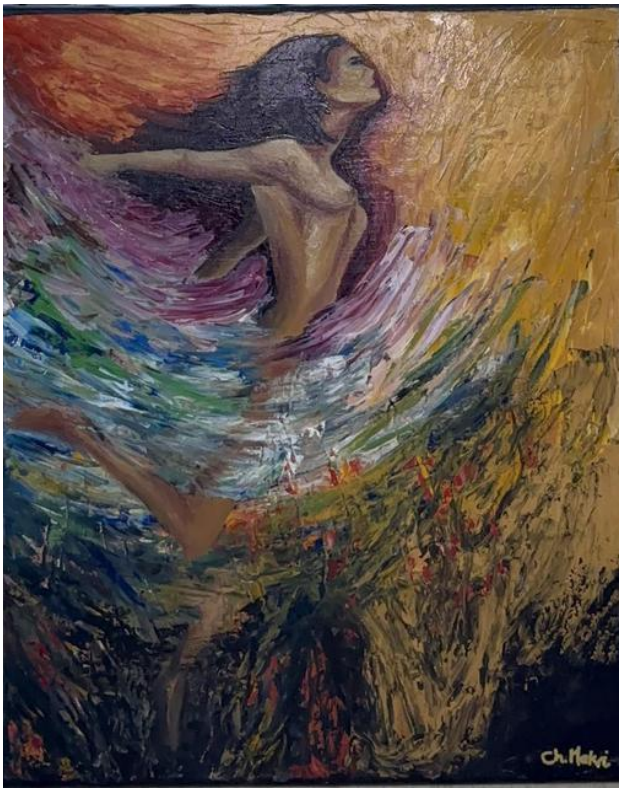


Charis Makri | Through The Silence | 2020

As a self-taught artist, how has your independent journey shaped your visual language and creative confidence?

Being self-taught gave me the freedom to explore and experiment without limitations. I learned by observing, trying different approaches, and following what felt right to me at each stage.
Without a structured academic path, my visual language developed in a more instinctive and personal way, which I consider an essential part of my identity as an artist.
My confidence grew gradually through practice and by trusting my instinct. Over time, I realized that this way of working allows me to stay connected to what I truly want to express.

Your paintings often feel emotionally intense. Do you begin with a specific emotion, or does it emerge during the process?



Charis Makri | Rising | 2016

I usually begin with a certain feeling or idea, but it does not remain fixed. As I work, that feeling can grow, combine with other emotions, or even change depending on what I experience during the process.
Sometimes something new emerges while I am painting, and I choose to follow it. In that sense, the emotional aspect develops together with the work rather than being defined from the beginning.
What I feel while I am creating has a strong influence on the final result and becomes part of the overall expression of the piece.

Can you describe how texture and layering contribute to the storytelling in your work?

I use texture and layering to create depth, both visually and conceptually. They help build the structure of the painting and support the meaning I want to communicate.
In some works, texture becomes more prominent when I want to introduce a stronger sense of realism while still maintaining the symbolic dimension of the piece. For example, in Endurance, the texture on the olive tree trunk enhances its physical presence, while at the same time supporting its symbolic meaning. The layering in that work, including the use of gold leaf and red paint, was intentional and adds a stronger symbolic weight to the overall idea.
For me, these elements allow the surface of the painting to connect with what exists underneath it, both visually and conceptually.

The human figure appears frequently in your art. What role does it play in expressing identity and vulnerability?

I use the human figure because everything ultimately relates to the human experience. Emotions, memories, and personal journeys are all connected to our inner world. The body becomes a way to express these elements through posture and movement. I sometimes focus on the gaze, as it creates a direct and immediate connection with the viewer, as seen in works like Gaze.
I believe this makes the work more relatable. Even though each person experiences things differently, there is a shared emotional ground that allows the viewer to recognize something of themselves within the work.

How does your environment in Cyprus influence your color palette, mood, or themes?

I believe that Cyprus influences my work in a subtle and often unconscious way. Living in a Mediterranean environment, surrounded by the sea, strong natural light, and constant sunshine, I find myself naturally drawn to color palettes based on blues, turquoise, and similar tones, even when I initially intend to explore something different.
The presence of the sea, which has been an essential part of life since childhood, along with the landscape and atmosphere of the island, shapes this connection.
At the same time, my process remains intuitive. I do not consciously try to reflect my surroundings, but they become part of the work naturally as I follow the flow of the painting.

What do you hope viewers feel or reflect on when they encounter your work?

I hope that viewers feel a sense of connection when they encounter my work. I want them to engage with it through their own experiences and form their own interpretation. For me, it is important that the work feels like it is communicating with them, creating a kind of dialogue between the viewer and the painting.
I am not interested only in the technical aspect. I want the work to evoke something deeper, whether it is a feeling, a thought, or a personal reflection.
I place my own energy and symbols into the work, but what matters most is what the viewer receives and takes away.

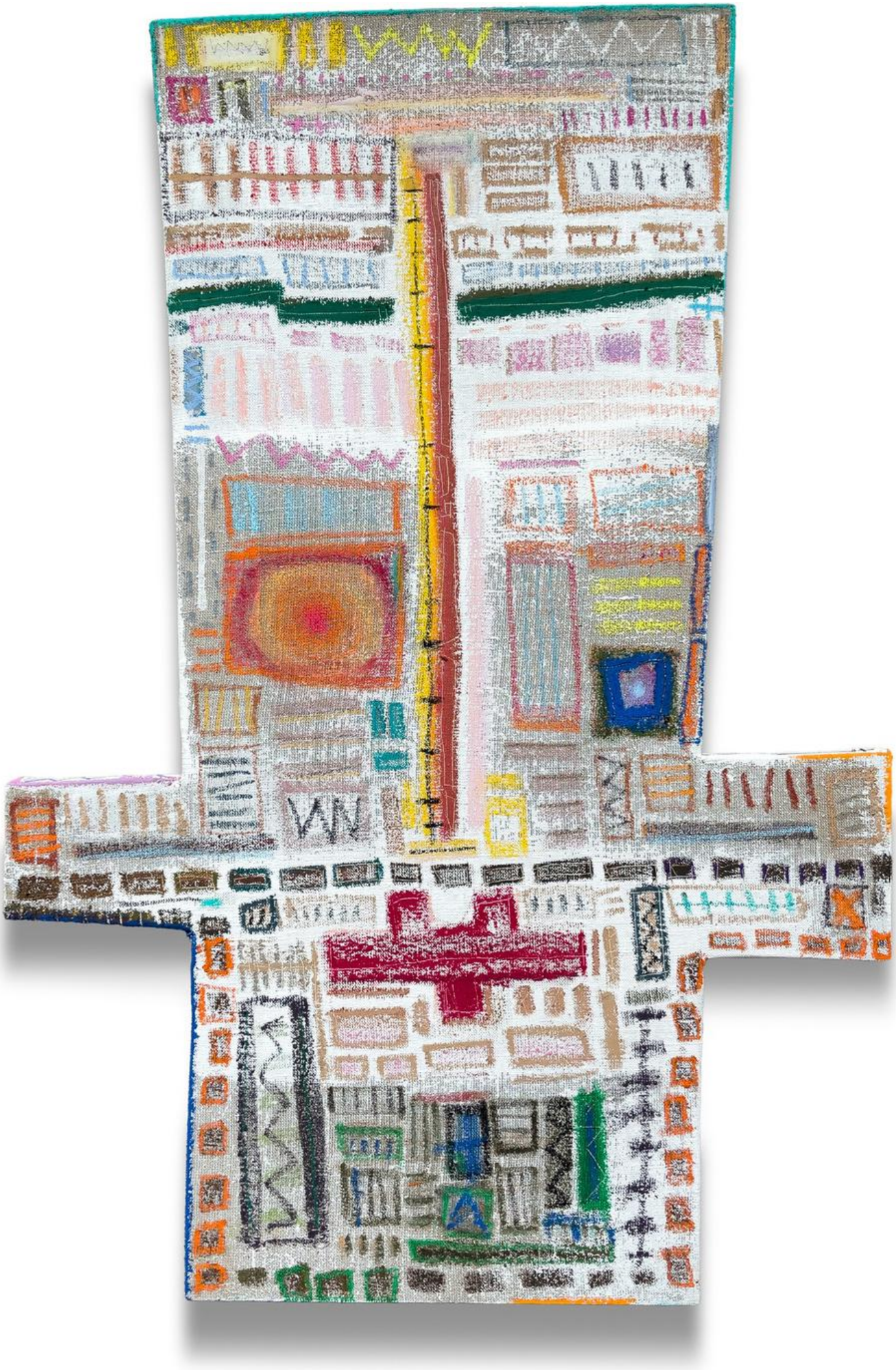
Charis Makri | Untamed | 2026

Iaroslav Sinyslav

Yaroslav +Sinyslav (b. 1992) is a multidisciplinary artist based in Moscow. Works with painting, text, and spatial processes.
His practice approaches the icon as a condition rather than an object, exploring how a sacred state can emerge beyond religious institutions. He refers to this methodology as New Icon.
He developed independent curated exhibitions, residencies and self-initiated formats.
His recent work exploring form of the New Icon saints.

Project Statement
My research extends beyond the space of the church and its traditions. I seek a new kind of response, similar to the one I experience when encountering a Christian icon.
My practice traces a presence in which a sacred experience exists outside of fixed forms, even if the image or physical object is lost. In this state, any surface — or the human being — can become a “New Icon,” as the imprint remains either where it appeared or within the one who perceives it.
I translate spiritual experience into a bodily and visual process.
During my travels, I find myself in places without churches, icons, or studios — with only oil pastels and found surfaces available. Within these conditions, I create a space for the sacred. I experience the state of the New Icon through an emotional gesture, allowing it to emerge as a trace previously inaccessible to the ordinary gaze.
In my practice, I build a process through observation and direct contact. Reflection within the object reveals to me an image that feels untouched by my intention.
Its indistinctness is formed through highly precise sense, through which I enter into contact with it.
I then limit the material to hold an image of a new kind — unstable, unfixed, existing between manifestation and disappearance. Gesture and the rubbing of color become repetitive actions that generate a state close to ritual.
I further intensify its presence: gesture and the rubbing of color become repetitive actions that generate a state close to ritual.
The combination of oil, pigment, and wax — typically found in oil pastels — plays a key role in this process, carrying a personal commitment, though it does not limit it.
This realisation emerges from personal experience: I approach the sacred as a transitional condition, yet within the church I feel a limitation of my spiritual space, where solitude can be interrupted and contact with the sacred disrupted.
Outside of the temple and its traditional environment, I continue to encounter this state, which leads me to explore an experience that does not belong exclusively to an institution and can exist beyond the canon.
In this way, I shift the icon from the realm of tradition into the realm of experience, where the image is not predetermined but emerges through observation of what is taking place.
By reflecting these images through oneself, a person can become a space for their emergence.

Iaroslav Sinyslav | 2026



Eduardo Delacruz

Your work blends influences from tattoo art, lowrider culture, and fine art painting. How do you balance these worlds while maintaining your own artistic identity?

I look at tattoos and lowrider culture as fine art. The human body and a car, are just canvases that move. So my artistic identity comes from how I do my shading, how I'm not afraid to go deep with my darks and shadows. How I build depth and realism with thin layers of color. I also take traditional elements from both cultures and add them to my work. For instance, there may be an area in my piece that may need more weight, so I can add some roses or filigree, both of which are prominent images in both tattoos and Lowriding. Or do a deep dark background to get a better depth of field, which a lot of photorealistic tattoo artist do to add depth and separation between images. So my work blends many elements from both art forms, color, composition and depth that allows me to stand out among other artists.

You mentioned that symbolism and storytelling are central to your work. What kinds of stories or emotions are you most interested in expressing through your art?

In my most recent work, the stories I'm aiming to tell are of myself. Different elements of who I am or the emotions that make me— sadness, overworked, multitasking, rebuilding. When it comes to client work, I try to take the piece they want done and add as many elements of them into it. Their culture, heritage, religion, interests, family, anything that connects their real story with the story of the artwork. This gives my artwork a unique perspective tailored to the client or myself, depending if its a commission or not. With my piece "Silent Wisdom" the emotions in that painting are rebirth, lighting my own path and braking out from behind the shadows of the main stream artists that I have painted for. In "Silent Wisdom" an important part of telling my story of rebirth, the only bit of color is the flames. This symbolizes light down the path to solo success in the Fine art industry.

Having worked professionally with airbrushing for more than 20 years, how has your relationship with the medium evolved over time?

Over the last few years I have seen that airbrushing has a place in more than just the automotive industry. Early in my career I was very naive and thought airbrushing was just for custom painting cars and motorcycles. But as I have grown and matured in my craft I've realized that automotive industry is just a small area where the airbrush can perform. So once I was able to realize that I was able to learn and grow more as an airbrush artist. I was able to learn and use different techniques in my work that are used in other industries, like how skin texture is done in the FX industry, or drop shadows in sign painting. By having an open mind and seeing the wide uses of an airbrush, I have been able to make my work more unique in a saturated market.

Artists such as Mister Cartoon and Carlos Torres have influenced your artistic language. What specific elements of their work resonate with you the most?

Mister Cartoon for me, was the first artist I saw in a magazine that looked like me. When I discovered him and his artwork I was in my late teens. It made me realize that a Latin kid like myself, who grew up in the neighborhood I did, could make it into a magazine and make something of himself. Then I started seeing the murals he was doing not only on cars, but on walls, skin and clothing. I quickly saw that the sketches I was doing in my school books could be more. And that is what pushed my to never give up on being an artist and trying to get into a magazine. With Carol Torres, I discovered him years later on an YouTube interview. Carlos's tattoo style is so unique on it own. The way he makes his tattoos look painted, as if the brush strokes are actually there. I was so very drawn to that. I loved how he would do full on illustrations or paintings before he would tattoo them. His deep use of blacks and heavy shadows, and the way his introduces lighting into his artwork is amazing. This made me explore more in my shading and build depth of field in my artwork. As well as blend fantasy and reality to make a believable illustration. To blend the confidence I gained from watching Mister Cartoon and the skills I taught myself from watching Carols Torres is what you see today.

Your owl painting carries a strong sense of mystery, movement, and symbolism. What inspired this particular piece, and what does the owl represent to you personally?

I've been painting high end artwork for very famous and well known sculpture artists in the fine art industry for a few years. And I don't get the recognition for the work because at the end of the day its their name on the artwork. This painting is the start of me starting to building for myself. To take my wisdom and light my own path in this industry. And show the art world what I can do.

As Creative Director and head painter for Carole Feuerman, you've contributed to internationally recognized fine art projects. How has this collaboration influenced your own personal body of work?

The Biggest influence for me being the Creative Director for Carole Feuermen isn't the projects themselves, its the artisans I get to work with on a daily basis. They're all extremely talented in there own crafts and at what they do in the studio, that I'm always able to bounce ideas off of them or get there critic on a personal piece. One of these artisans was interviewed and published in the Visual Art Journal, Lauren McAndrew. She's actually taught me how to stretch my own canvases. Which I now because of Lauren, stretch all my own canvases in my studio. I have recently experienced a bit of burn out at a painter, do to a large project I worked on, where I was airbrushing 15 hour days for about 6 months, to keep my creativeness flowing I turned to photograph. Adding photography to my portfolio helps keeps my creative mindset flowing by diversifying my work day, which keeping me from getting fully burnt out.

Your art is deeply connected to car, street, and tattoo culture. Why do you think these visual cultures continue to inspire so many people worldwide?

All of these cultures all are a form of identity and self expression. There is a story to be told for each individual, whether it was a car that there dad or grandpa had, or a tattoo of a chapter of there life, or their uncle took them to a car show or drag race and you feel in love with the smell of race fuel or burnt rubber. A tattoo can be honoring a time in your life or someone in your life, or telling the story of rebirth. Its all how we tell our story of life and what we've been through.

Eduardo Delacruz | Silent Wisdom

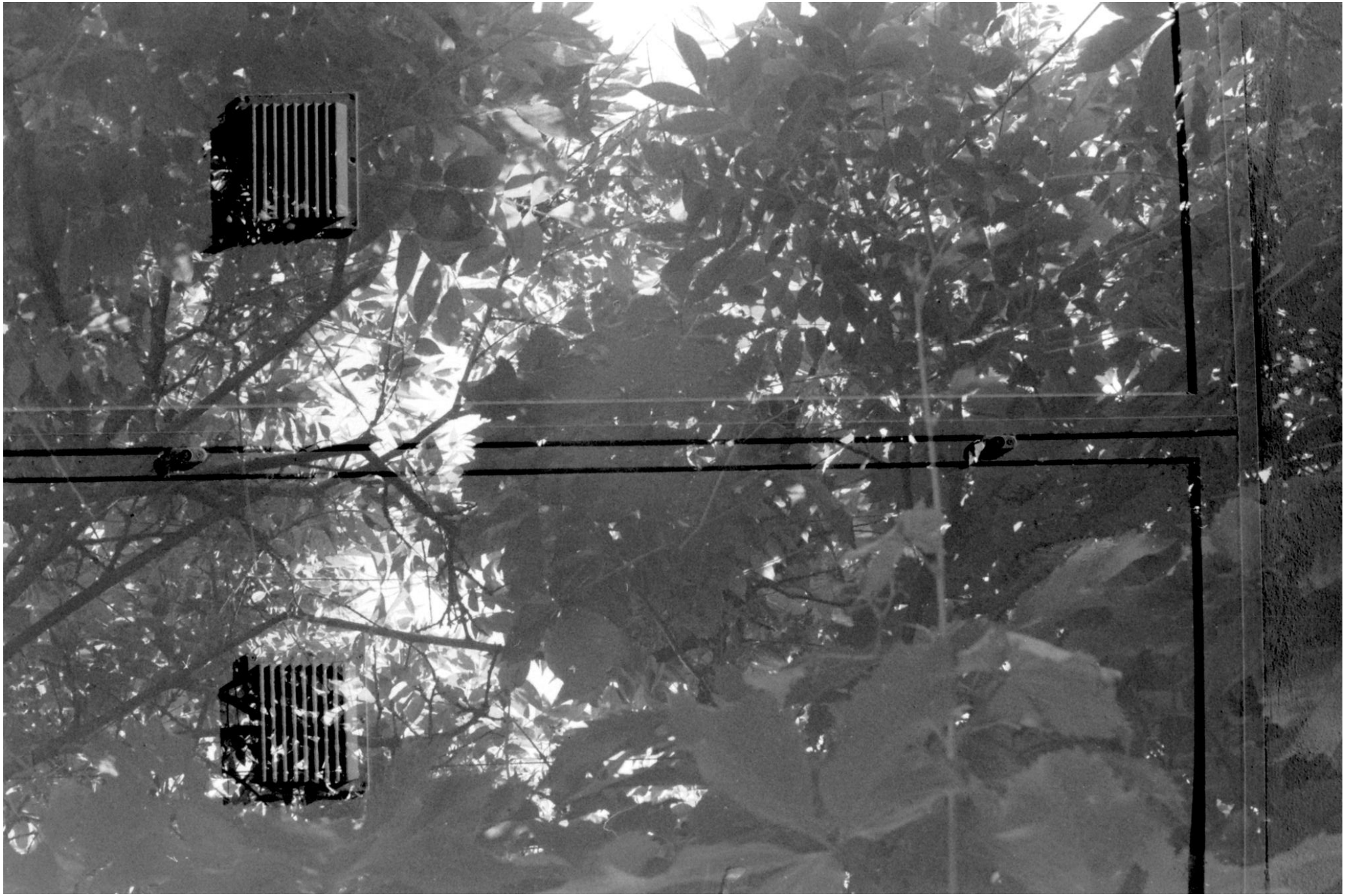
Athanasios Aléxo

Apart from photography, I also been interested in and occupied with video art, installation, performance, sound and sculpture. experimentation and exploration through various techniques and languages is at the forefront of my research. Study, polymorphous connections, and presentation through different modes of expression have equal value and importance to me in my work.

Project Statement

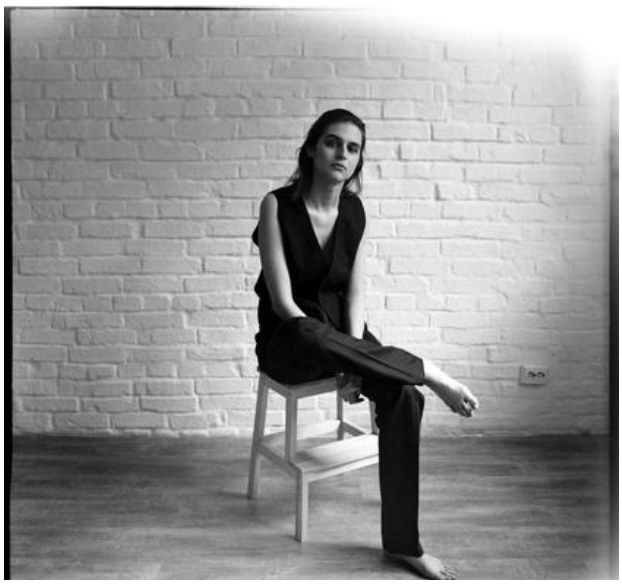
Experimentation and exploration through various techniques and lan- guages is at the forefront of my research. Study, polymorphous connec- tions, and presentation through different modes of expression have equal value and importance to me in my work.
in my sphere of reality, creative curiosity is fundamental to the process of consciousness. I try to cross theoretical or visual stereotypes.
Listen, observe, think, search and act.

Athanasios Aléxo | Composings | 2025



Athanasios Aléxo | Omotopia | 2023

Liza Gruzdeva



I am developing my own universe, in which the distortion of space is one of the main artistic methods. Through it, I can convey an inner state, an emotion, or the idea of the multidimensional nature of existence — things that, in my view, cannot be fully expressed through a realistic image that appears "correct" to the eye.
In my practice, spatial distortion can be seen in the flexibility of lines, in the intersection of several planes, and in the combination of different scales within a single painting. You also will not find a conventional horizon. All images seem to float in the air, even when there is a hint of a floor.
Each painting has its own meaning. But in general, everything takes place beyond visible space.

You mention that architecture taught you to understand space in order to later distort it. What does "distorted space" mean to you as an artistic method?

Liza Gruzdeva | Library

Your works often seem to exist between dream, myth, and inner psychological landscape. How would you describe the world that appears in your paintings?

My universe is built around the idea of a shared reality — a space where only we and our experience exist.
My paintings are thematic rooms within this universe. Each one reveals a separate fragment of its "lore," yet together they form a single network. Through these rooms, the viewer can enter the infinitely white space of reality — the pure, primordial fabric of being.

In your paintings, figures, animals, masks, ornaments, and architectural fragments seem to merge into one symbolic environment. How do these images appear - intuitively, through sketches, or through a carefully planned composition?

I suppose I should thank my surprisingly active subconscious. Everything I have seen, read, and felt throughout my life is processed and stored. Later, when my personal experience makes me reflect on a certain process or concept, my subconscious almost instantly presents me with a completed work. At first it is not entirely clear, but as the process unfolds, everything becomes more defined.

You describe your first important painting, "The Lady in an Apron as Part of the Whole", as a turning point. What did you discover in that work that continues to define

Liza Gruzdeva | Prayer

your artistic language today?

"Lady in an Apron as Part of a Whole" was my first independent, non-academic work. In it, I allowed myself for the first time to paint the way I see and feel.
This work marked the debut of the principles that would become the foundation of my artistic language: the infinity and multilayered nature of space, the absence of horizon and gravity, and hidden images that reveal themselves over time. Key symbols also emerged here: the egg as a person's picture of the world, the hand as possession or responsibility, and the "cabbage" as a ribbon of life energy.
The work laid the foundation for my artistic language and became the starting point for my subsequent explorations.

Your artistic language, as you say, does not change but becomes deeper. What themes or questions have become more important to you over time?

A sense of constant immersion is generally characteristic of my creative journey. It is reflected in the re-reading of paintings I have already created: meanings seem to catch up with me and gradually reveal themselves. This is also true of the way I choose new themes.
As I grow older, I gain new experiences. For example, five years ago I became a mother. Now I find myself reflecting on the miracle of a new human being coming into the world. Memories from distant childhood are also being revealed and analyzed. At the moment, this material serves to expand my universe.
I am searching for the connection between the divine miracle and our perception — both then, far back in childhood, and now, when we have become adults.
In May of this year, I created the painting Someone Who Cannot Be Seen, but Can Be Felt, which is precisely about this. It has two interpretations. The first is our experience in the mother's womb: we cannot see or even imagine our mother, but we can feel her care and tenderness. The second interpretation is that the painting is about a person who has already been born, who feels God but likewise cannot imagine Him.

The checkerboard floor, mirrored elements, and surreal perspectives in your works create a sense of transition or instability. Are you interested in the idea of crossing between different realities?

Yes, this is literally the foundation of my artistic perception. I am not afraid of instability or transitions into the unknown — on the contrary, I always feel joy when I experience something like this.
It comes to me in different ways: through dreams, conversations with loved ones, meditation, good films, philosophical texts, or even story-driven video games. For me, all of these are not merely impressions, but separate realities that enrich my library of the unconscious and gradually shape my worldview.

You write about the desire "to see the authentic behind the visible". What do you hope the viewer will discover when looking beyond the surface of your paintings?

I truly hope that the viewer will find themselves there — in an endlessly white space where there is only the viewer and their own experience. Ideally, they will discover not only their personal experience, but also the collective unconscious. This is what I strive for as well — a sense of unity, rightness, and authenticity.

Liza Gruzdeva | Someone Who Cannot Be Seen, but Can Be Felt

Juan José García TL

Your work often blends animals with floral and organic elements. What draws you to this fusion of nature and symbolism?

What draws me to the fusion of nature and symbolism is that since I was a kid I always spent a lot of time with both animals and plants. My father is a nature person and at his ranch we would regularly help out at the greenhouse, the cornfield, with the cattle, chickens and other animals. Also, he would take us to the zoo often. Nonetheless, my great grandmothers' flower garden was one of the few places where I would be calm and quiet as a child. Therefore, at an early age plants became a happy place where I would unwind. My "Blossoming Animals" collection was inspired from my love of both flora and fauna. I was the weird kid that would ask books for birthday or Christmas; many of them full of mythology, legends and fairy tales. They introduced me to the world of the archetypes I've been using within my work for a long time.

Juan José García TL | To Dissociate Or To Not Dissociate

Many of your paintings feel both vibrant and slightly surreal. How do you balance beauty with deeper, sometimes darker themes?

I don't balance beauty and darker themes consciously to be honest. I mainly try to think of what I want to evoke from the viewer. Whether is a dark or lighter tone subject matter, I'm always driven by the narrative. However, the narrative is always open for interpretations way beyond just my idea or original motivations. I'm definitely not the kind of artist where my original intention is the right one. I enjoy hearing the way the viewer interprets the artwork. Many of my paintings have some darker tones and themes but I tend keep the use of vibrant colors since that's part of my style and approach. I guess the only balance I create in my work is the intention of the art being able to change according to the viewers interactions and that includes both positive and negative reactions.

You studied film before focusing on visual art. How has cinema influenced your storytelling and composition?

My cinema studies influenced my creative process in many ways. The approach to my ideas is very narrative driven, therefore, a story is often within the concept for my art; the starting point. Then I begin to experiment with composition, which is likewise very cinema driven. I try to think of many ways to tell the story within the painting in an interesting and

Juan José García TL | Blossoming Rhino

evocative way. It is similar to how a storyboard artist and a cinematographer prepare compositions before filming.

Your use of color is very bold and expressive. How do you approach building your color palettes?

I approached the building of my color palette in a different way depending on the painting I am working on. Sometimes I use very extensive color palettes where I mix many different colors, while other times I'll use two or three hues and no more than that. Nevertheless, I'll definitely use many color variations within those hues, especially with greens or blues. Most of my color palettes are surreal and not dictated by reality. They typically consist on mixing them in a way where one color will stand out creating a focal point. For example, in all the paintings of my cloaked character "The Red Figure" the only red in the composition is the figure itself. Moreover, I play with the temperature of the colors to create contrast or, when it's a limited color palette, I tend to choose complimentary colors that will contrast each other as well.

Animals appear as central figures in many of your works. Do they represent specific ideas, emotions, or aspects of identity?

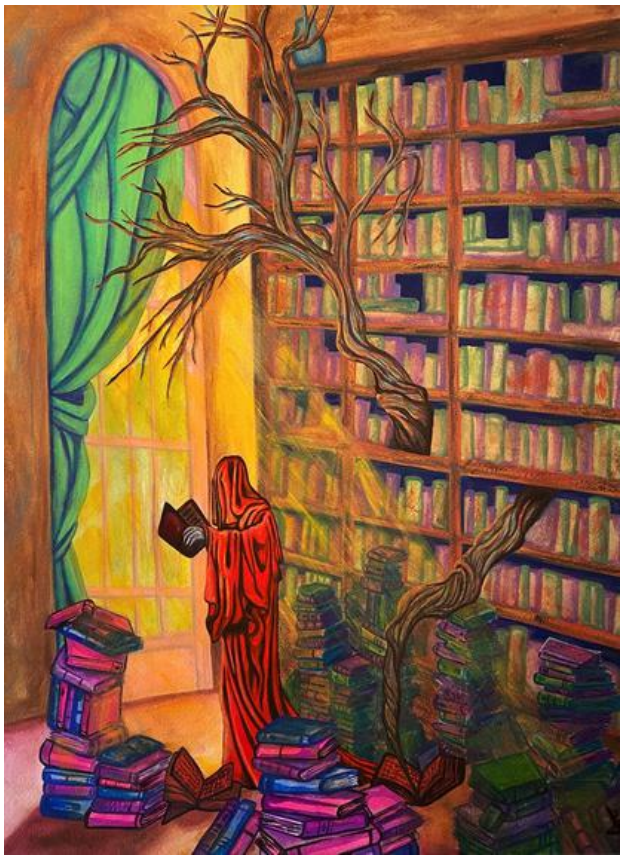
Animals in my work are mainly chosen by the preference of my admiration towards that animal for its unique shape or strength. As an example, I painted a pink Rhino covered in tulips and this created a nice contrast of a very "feminine" color palette, with very elegant flowers on a very tough looking animal. As simple as it may sound, my animal choices are from creatures I find visually beautiful and interesting to look at, or also with animals I have interacted with closely like giraffes, tigers or flamingos. Interacting with them effectively helps when depicting the animal even when covered in flowers and plants.

How has your artistic journey evolved since your time studying in Los Angeles?

My artistic journey since studying in Los Angeles has evolved in many different aspects. I've been more open to embrace my darker side in terms of ideas and self expression. I've been more honest with my own demons and have let them out more freely. Before, the fear of those art pieces not finding an audience would stop me from creating them in the first place. Although now, I've learned my lesson: many people can connect to those dark paintings. Up to today, most of the pieces I've sold were born from those fears. So creating more genuinely rather than thinking to paint what people would buy has really helped me grow as an artist since I graduated.

What role does Mexican culture or your background play in shaping your artistic vision?

I'm proud to say that my culture and background had influenced my creativity since day one. A lot of my work is influenced by death and the iconic Day of the Dead, which is my favorite Mexican holiday. This unique perception of death became a part of my daily life after my brother's death twelve years ago, where my work started to express darker feelings that I have never felt before. Likewise, my devotion to use colors boldly is a result from growing up surrounded by color all over my country whether is on clothing, crafts, fabrics, birds, flowers, or food. Many Mexican artists used surreal symbolism and expressed their pain through their art such as José Clemente Orozco, Frida Kahlo, Leonora Carrington and many more. Like them, all of this inspiration became part of my everyday life while growing up in Mexico.



Juan José García TL | Books Full Of Life

Irina IOSIP (born in 1957) graduated from the "George Enescu" National University of Art from Iași with a master's degree.
She currently works as a visual artist, in her own studio in Bucharest, Romania.
Her preferreD working medium is in the pastel, which best expresses the vibration of emotions and renders the changing shades depending on the light.
Existential questions such as: "due to which powers and laws and for how long do we exist? from what, for what and how are we? is the truth that we are part of and how much of the whole-whole are we? what is our role and destiny in this immense ubiquity?, is the truth immutable, forever and everywhere the same?" are part of the artist's concerns. Her search for answers has not stopped and will never stop.
Throughout her experience, she has learned that "All truth lies within us, part of which we can become aware of and rationalize in the form of our own truth, which we recognize and externalize through our thinking and actions. Another part, that of our subconscious, is revealed through our emotions and sensory perception."
Some of her works are grouped around the primordial element water, because waters are magical: they are life and give life, they are inside and outside, they can let light pass through, they can reflect or retain it, they can change their form, state and energy and, like legions of angels, them can cleanse the living and the non-living of what is not beneficial, in agreement with the supreme good.
Over 20 years of exhibition experience includes participation in salons, biennials, group or personal exhibitions in the main cultural centers in the country (Alba Iulia, Bacău, Bârlad, Brăila, Bucharest, Buzău, Cluj, Iași, Satu Mare, Timișoara, Tulcea, etc.) and abroad (Bulgaria, Italy, Poland, Russia).

Project Statement
Art is a sublime form of emotional, spiritual and cultural awakening.
Memory retains and encapsulates elements of reality: images, sounds, thoughts, feelings, ideas that do not survive time in their original integrity, size and form. Artistic reconstructions are remodelings according to the structure and inner rhythms of the author.

Irina Iosip | The Silent Call | 2025

Ilrina Iosip | Alive Water | 2025

Sveta Silence

Sveta Silence | I Am My Own Border

By the way, you noticed the ideas of protection and limitation very accurately. For me, stripes are a visualization of boundaries and external pressure. When the stripes in a painting move onto the body, it is about the moment when external pressure becomes internal. These stripes also carry the symbolism of traces and marks left by lived experience. In one of the works, the stripes are white — this is about rebirth: pain becomes experience, something that simply remains with you.

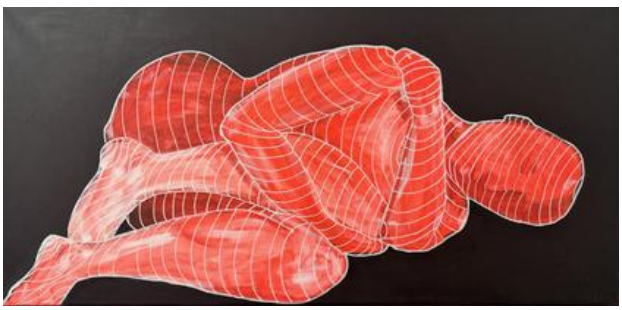
You describe your work as "psychological figuration". How do body poses and physical gestures help you communicate emotions that words cannot express?

The body almost never lies. Imagine someone saying, "I'm fine," while sitting completely hunched over — you would immediately understand that things are not quite so simple. In the series Living Through, I do not focus on faces; instead, I try to express the idea entirely through posture. These poses — the fetal position, a figure pressing against invisible walls, arms wrapped around oneself — are states that most viewers understand without translation. I do not need to explain what this red figure feels. The viewer either recognizes themselves in it, or they do not.

Red, black, white, and later blue and yellow play a major role in the series. How do you approach color as an emotional language?

Red is my favorite color. It is life and energy. It is not about aggression or blood at all. It is the color of

The striped figures in your paintings feel both protected and trapped. What do these lines symbolize for you?



Sveta Silence | I Have Myself

Sveta Silence | Keeping It All Inside

vulnerability and of something alive. Black is silence, a safe emptiness, the darkness in which you can curl up, be alone with yourself, calm down, and stop being afraid. White is the external world — neutral, although sometimes oppressive. Blue is calm, exhalation, rebirth, and positive processes. Yellow is new energy, the first bright light after a long night.

Many of your figures appear compressed within the borders of the canvas. How important is the relationship between the human body and surrounding space in your compositions?

For me, this is a metaphor for how we exist in the world. Sometimes external circumstances press so strongly that you literally do not fit — this is the idea behind the work Nowhere to Breathe. Sometimes you shrink yourself in order to become small and invisible, and the surrounding space no longer matters — this became the work Everything Inside Myself. And sometimes boundaries become internal, and you focus on yourself, almost embracing yourself — not because there is no one else to do it, but because you need to come into harmony with yourself. This is exactly what the painting I Have Myself is about. I also think that the 40 x 80 cm format of the paintings, stretched horizontally, intensifies this feeling of compression.

Your background includes psychology and art therapy. In what ways do these disciplines influence your artistic process and the themes you explore?

My practical psychology education is currently at the diploma stage. It is not so much the education itself as the knowledge of the basics that gives permission for vulnerability. In psychology and art therapy, there is no shame in speaking about burnout, helplessness, or the feeling that you have curled up into a ball and do not know how to unfold again. When I began painting Living Through, I allowed myself to be as honest as possible with my emotions. That is why these works are not about looking at suffering beautifully. They are about the fact that suffering is part of the path. And, of course, they are also about the fact that it is possible to emerge from a difficult moment and continue moving forward.

Your works often balance minimalism with deep emotional intensity. How do you decide what to leave out of an image in order to strengthen its impact?

I simply remove everything that distracts and paint only the essence. No faces, no details, no unnecessary colors. I leave only the figure, the posture, and the color. I think that behind this minimalism, the most important and honest things remain.

Viewers online described your works with words such as “rebirth”, “cocooning”, and “the darkest hour before dawn”. How important is audience interpretation in your practice?

For me, this was a very valuable moment in the creation of the series. I showed the works without explaining anything and asked, “What do you feel when you look at them?” Many people wrote exactly what I had intended. Many also added their own meanings connected with “cocooning” and “rebirth.” After all, art does not end on the canvas — it lives in dialogue. And if a viewer saw in one of the works not simply a person curled up, but someone ready to spread their wings, then it means I did everything right, and our dialogue took place.

Moozhan Gholinataj

Moozhan Gholinataj | Sky Is Watching You | 2025

Your paintings balance between recognizable human features and abstraction. How do you decide when a figure should remain visible and when it should dissolve into gesture and color?

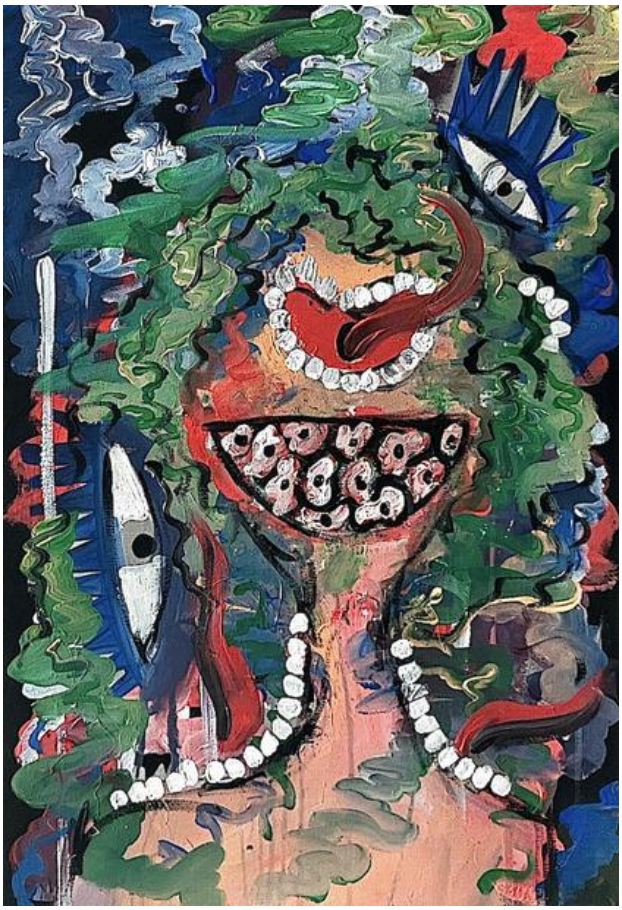
I let the figure disappear when the emotion becomes too heavy for anatomy to contain. Sometimes a face can carry the weight of a feeling, and sometimes it breaks under it. I am interested in that moment of collapse — where the human form stops behaving like a body and starts behaving like memory, like a wound, like a distortion.
For me, color and gesture are not decorations around the figure; they are extensions of its psychology. A brushstroke can sometimes say more than an eye or a mouth ever could. I keep parts of the figure visible so the viewer has something human to hold onto, but I allow the rest to dissolve because emotions are never experienced in perfect clarity. They blur, fracture, fade, and return. My paintings exist somewhere between recognition and disappearance, because I think that is where the most honest version of a person lives.

Many of your works feel emotionally intense and psychologically charged. What role does emotion play in your creative process?

Emotion is the beginning of everything for me. I do not start a painting with a fixed image in mind — I start with a pressure, a tension, something unresolved sitting inside me. Painting becomes a way of confronting it before it disappears or hardens into silence. Sometimes I feel like I am not painting faces or bodies at all, but emotional states trying to become visible.
I am not interested in creating calm or perfect images. I am more drawn to contradiction, fragmentation, vulnerability — the parts of being human that people usually try to hide. That is why my works often feel psychologically intense. I want the canvas to carry traces of conflict, hesitation, memory, and even violence in the way the layers interact with each other. For me, emotion is not an addition to the work; it is the structure of the work itself. Without it, the painting feels empty, no matter how visually successful it is.

Your background in architecture seems to influence the structure of your compositions. In what ways has architectural thinking shaped your artistic language?

Architecture taught me how to think about tension, rhythm, balance, and structure — not only physically, but emotionally. Even when my paintings appear chaotic or fragmented, there is usually an invisible framework holding them together. I think architecture trained my mind to search for relationships between forms, empty spaces, weight, movement, and direction.
At the same time, painting became a place where I could break away from the precision and control that architecture often demands. In architecture, everything needs to function. In painting, I am more interested in emotional function rather than physical function. But I still carry architectural thinking



Moozhan Gholinataj | Smile | 2025

into the canvas: layering, composition, spatial depth, and the way elements communicate with each other. Sometimes I feel like I am constructing psychological spaces rather than buildings — spaces made out of memory, emotion, distortion, and confrontation instead of concrete and steel.

The faces in your paintings appear fragmented, layered, and constantly shifting. What attracts you to distorted representations of the human figure?

I think distortion feels more honest to me than perfection ever could. Human beings are not emotionally stable or visually fixed creatures — we are constantly shifting between different versions of ourselves depending on memory, fear, desire, pressure, or even the way we are perceived by others. I try to capture that instability. A fragmented face feels closer to the truth of being human than a perfectly controlled portrait.
I am drawn to the moment where a face begins to fall apart but still remains recognizable. That tension interests me deeply, because it mirrors the way identity behaves in real life. We carry contradictions, hidden emotions, fractures, and multiple selves at the same time. Through distortion, I can push the figure beyond documentation and closer to psychology. The layers, smudges, and broken forms become traces of emotion rather than just physical features. In a way, I treat the human face almost like a landscape of pressure, memory, and confrontation.

Your use of color is bold and confrontational, yet also deeply expressive. How do you approach color emotionally and conceptually?

For me, color is emotional before it is visual. I do not use it to recreate reality — I use it to distort reality until it begins to feel emotionally true. Sometimes a violent red can carry tension better than a facial expression, or a sickly green can communicate psychological discomfort more honestly than realism ever could. I think of color almost like another language operating underneath the figure.
I am attracted to colors that clash, bleed into each other, or create discomfort, because human emotions are rarely clean or harmonious. At the same time, I try to balance confrontation with vulnerability. Even the most aggressive colors in my paintings usually contain something fragile underneath them. Conceptually, color becomes a way of exposing internal states that cannot always be explained through form alone. It allows the painting to exist somewhere between beauty and collapse, intimacy and violence, attraction and unease.

Your paintings often evoke ambiguity rather than clear narratives. How important is interpretation and imagination from the viewer's side?

Interpretation is extremely important to me because I never want the painting to feel closed or fully resolved. I am not trying to give the viewer a fixed story with a single meaning. I want the work to behave more like memory or emotion — something unstable, fragmented, and open to projection. The ambiguity creates space for the viewer to confront their own experiences inside the painting rather than simply observing mine.
I think the most powerful artworks are the ones that continue changing depending on who is looking at them and what they carry within themselves. That is why I intentionally leave gaps, distortions, and unresolved tensions in my work. I want people to question what they are seeing instead of consuming it passively. In a way, the painting is only completed when the viewer brings their own imagination, fears, memories, and emotional history into it.

Living and working in Istanbul, a city shaped by contrasts and layered histories, does the surrounding environment influence your practice?

Absolutely. Istanbul feels like a city constantly existing between different realities at the same time — between continents, histories, cultures, decay, modernity, chaos, and beauty. I think living in an environment with that much tension inevitably shapes the way I see and create. There is a kind of emotional density in the city that I connect to deeply. Nothing ever feels completely stable or singular here, and I think that sense of fragmentation naturally enters my paintings.
What influences me most is not necessarily specific buildings or locations, but the psychological atmosphere of the city itself. Istanbul can feel overwhelming, intimate, melancholic, aggressive, and poetic all within the same moment. I think my work absorbs those contradictions. Even the layering in my paintings sometimes feels connected to the layered nature of the city — histories existing on top of each other, identities colliding, things constantly being built while other things disappear. Living here has made me more sensitive to tension, contrast, and emotional complexity, which are central to my artistic language.

Roisin Derbis

Your paintings often focus on the sky and its movement. What draws you to the sky as a central subject in your work?

Roisin Derbis | Storm Over Huron | 2025

I've been exploring the idea of human connections across landscapes and it seems to me that the sky is our common link. Across countries, over oceans and forests or jungles, the sky is shared. The sky in its infinite mystery, represents wonder and longing. It has been a connecting force where humans, through time, have built a rich history of looking to the sky for answers to all kinds of mysteries. It's the heavens, it holds our childhood wishes, we study its astrology and formations. I find that quite fascinating. Wherever I've been in the world, in different climates and landscapes, there are still clouds and sunsets, winds, rain and the same ranges of blue. It's our constant in the natural world.

How does your childhood experience of growing up close to nature influence your artistic vision today?

I consider myself lucky to have grown up in the 80s where childhood was spent outside and imaginations ran wild. We were encouraged to use our curiosity daily and I've carried that over into my painting. Though I do often use a particular landscape or memory to guide a painting, there's a lot of my own interpretation put into the composition, and it's all learned imagination. Since I was given the freedom to explore so much in nature as a child, it's become a part of me. I need to immerse myself in a forest or by a body of water or just be barefoot in my yard to be able to find my balance. Being in nature throughout my life has given me appreciation and love for the wilderness around me and built an understanding of my connectedness with the earth. If I can share that in my art, then I feel like I'm following my path.

Your brushwork gives a strong sense of motion and energy. Can you describe your process when capturing the changing sky?

I try to think about what kind of sky I'm hoping to bring out in my painting. Is it calm, are the colours changing, is it stormy? My brushwork tends to mimic that mood. Very often, I put

Roisin Derbis | Funchal, Madeira | 2025

the paint directly on the canvas and mix the colours as I go, almost intuitively and not always very planned. I hope to convey the opposite of stillness and once I have the basics of colour layed down I overlap the area with quick brushstrokes to create the energy I want.

Many of your works evoke both calm and intensity. How do you balance these emotional contrasts in your paintings?

It is all about balance. The natural world is full of contrasts that function together beautifully. When I'm starting a new painting, I consider what I want to be looking at from where I'm standing. What's the focus? What's the experience? If you think about being in a beautiful landscape, imagine where you're standing and what's around you. I want to stand in the landscape of my paintings and be part of it, just as I would be standing in a field; my feet in the grasses and looking up and out to the horizon. There in the natural world, there is balance so I try my best to bring that out. Earth is the grounding force with the sky always, moving and changing above.

After stepping away from painting for some time, what inspired you to return to your artistic practice?

I always knew that I only wanted to paint, but didn't have the gumption to pursue it full time. I got into art school twice when I was younger but couldn't afford to go, so I ended up going through college online later with a completely different focus. Through my years working with young children with special needs, I was still sketching and painting often. Then the early years of motherhood felt consuming and exhausting and deeply fulfilling at the same time. Now my kids are older and I'm learning to give more time to myself. It's a balance that takes patience but I feel a lot of calm and joy when I'm painting, so I'm being sure to lean into that.

How has your experience as a mother influenced your perspective as an artist?

Well I want to be a good example for my kids. As in nature, life is full of balance and it's important for them to see me as a whole person, not just Mama. I think that it's easy for children to consider their parents without knowing that we're all just people navigating our lives side by side. It's important for them to know that I am a complex person with dreams and interests outside of my title as Mama. Also, I love taking my kids to museums and can see the effect that looking at art has on them. I want to evoke similar reactions in others who might stop to look at one of my pieces.

You have traveled to various countries for inspiration. How do different landscapes (Europe, Africa, New Zealand) shape your visual language?

Yes, I've been really lucky to travel and feel like that has given me perspective on a lot of things. I've seen all kinds of landscapes and cities and humans experiencing wildly different lives from mine. It grows appreciation but also an understanding that we're not all so different. It's easy to live in a bubble in your own world and not see the interconnectedness of the earth and everyone on it. Regardless of the landscape at the bottom of many of my paintings, the skies I do are quite similar. I hope that resonates to portray that connection across continents and oceans. We're all living here together, regardless of distance, all breathing the same air. I hope that someone looking at my art will pause and think about how precious the sky and our natural world is. Hopefully, we can collectively agree to look up and toss some gratitude into the sky and take better care of it all.

Roisin Derbis | Athabasca Glazier | 2025

— *Interview*

Anabel Morey

I arrived in São Paulo during the pandemic. My first impression was of an enormous, silent city, streets emptied of the 22 million people who supposedly lived there. A city holding its breath.
When restrictions lifted, something shifted. People didn't just return to public space they reclaimed it. Weekends brought entire avenues closed to cars, filled instead with cyclists, skaters, dancers, vendors, families, artists. Every tribe, everybody, every story occupying the same asphalt. I had never seen anything like it coming from Caracas, Venezuela, Quito, Ecuador and, from Porto Alegre, Southern Brazil, cities that learned to contain themselves. São Paulo doesn't contain. It announces. And it was in that announcement in the way people dressed, moved, adorned themselves, that I found my project.

Your project began after moving to São Paulo. What was the first thing you noticed about the city's visual rhythm and the way people occupy public space?

You often photograph fragments of the body, clothing, tattoos, gestures, and small details rather than complete portraits. What attracts you to this fragmented way of looking?

When I photograph a fragment, a tattooed neck, a pair of crossed arms, a chest covered in symbols, I'm not hiding the person. I'm finding where their statement lives.
People in São Paulo inscribe their identity on specific parts of their body deliberately, through tattoos, clothing, accessories, the way they layer jewelry or fabric. Each is a chosen territory. The fragment is not a reduction. It's a precision.
I am drawn to that precision because it tells me exactly what the person wants the world to see and that, for me, is where the photograph begins.

Anabel Morey | Identidad | 2025

How does São Paulo's energy influence your perception of individuality and self-expression?

The first time I walked down Avenida Paulista on a Sunday, when the city closes its most iconic avenue to cars and opens it to everything else, I understood São Paulo. In a single afternoon I saw cyclists and skaters, artists painting on the sidewalk, musicians performing, Hare Krishna processions, capoeira circles, political demonstrations, families spread across the asphalt as if it were their living room. All of it happening at the same time, in the same space, without conflict. That avenue became my key to reading the city. This city has no interest in making you smaller. It simply makes room. And that freedom, that radical acceptance of coexistence, changed the way I look at people. I stopped seeing individuals and started seeing declarations. Every tattoo, every accessory, every gesture became legible to me as a form of self-authorship. The city gave people permission to be visible, and they took it completely. My camera followed.

Your images suggest identity without fully revealing the person. How do you balance anonymity and presence in your photographs?

Every image in this project is a collaboration. The person made a choice about their body, a tattoo, an accessory, a way of standing in the world. I made a choice about where to look. By not showing the face, I protect the intimacy of the encounter while honoring exactly what they chose to make visible. The face withheld is not an absence. It is an invitation to look more carefully. And in that careful looking, identity appears more completely than any conventional portrait could reveal.

Many of the works focus on visual markers such as tattoos, hair color, accessories, fabric, or posture. What do these details reveal to you about a person or a city?

A city is not only its skyline or its statistics. It is also the sum of the choices its people make about how to appear in the world. In São Paulo, those choices are radical, layered and unapologetic.
When I look at the details people choose to wear and carry, I'm not reading decoration. I'm reading autobiography. Each visual marker is a fragment of a personal history, a belief, a belonging. A tattoo tells me what someone considers permanent. An accessory tells me what they want the world to notice first.
Together, these details reveal a city of profound diversity, not just of origin or race or class, but of thought, of identity, of worldview. A place where people have decided, consciously or not, how to wear themselves in public. That is what draws my camera.

Do you see these images as portraits, even though the faces are often absent or hidden?

Absolutely. A face can be performed. A tattoo chosen years ago, a piece of jewelry worn every day, these are harder to fake. They are, in many ways, more revealing than a face ever could be. When I photograph a detail of a body, I am making a portrait. Not of a face, but of a decision. Of a life that left its marks visibly, deliberately, on the surface of a body that moves through one of the most complex cities in the world. That, to me, is the most honest portrait there is.

What would you like viewers to feel or notice when they encounter these fragmented images of human presence in the city?

I want them to pause. Not just to look at a tattoo or an accessory or a detail of clothing, but to recognize that behind every fragment there is a person who made a choice, about their body, their identity, their place in the world. A person who, beneath all those layers, is still just a person. São Paulo taught me that diversity is not a problem to be managed. It is the natural condition of human life. Twenty-two million people, each one carrying their own history, sharing the same streets, the same Sunday avenues, the same city. And somehow, it works. Not despite the differences, because of them. If these images can do anything, I hope they make someone look at a stranger differently. To see the tattoo, the turban, the rings, the fabric, the hat, and instead of feeling distance, feel curiosity. Recognition. The understanding that we are all, in our own way, writing ourselves on the outside so that the world can begin to know us. The layers are different. The need beneath them is the same.

Daria Novikova

For as long as I can remember, I have always been drawing, but I began to engage with art consciously when I realized that I could not breathe without experimentation. I am studying interior design, but at the moment my heart belongs to painting. I work with different materials and am not tied to a single technique. My works are an attempt to unite the incompatible: construction nails and medical bandages, clay and wax crayons, canvas and acrylic.

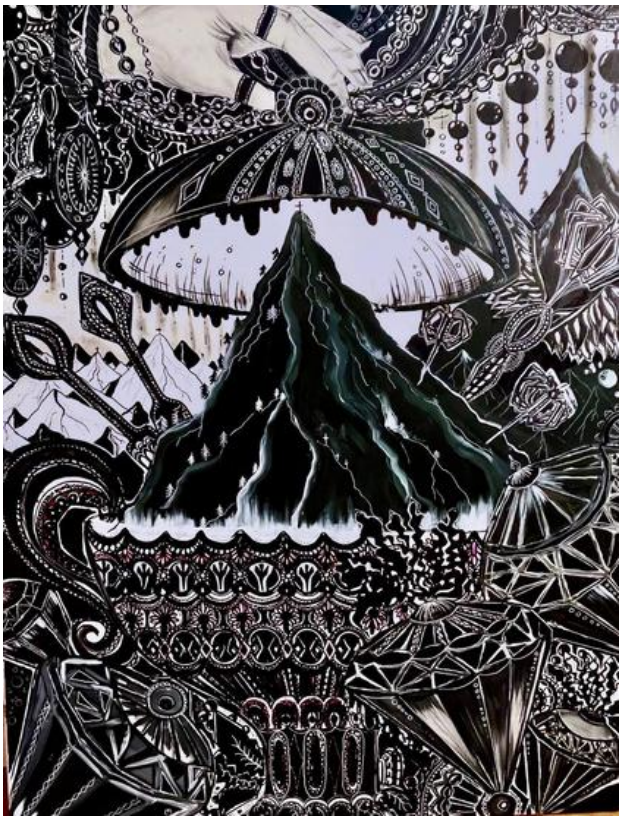
Artist Statement
I combine the incompatible: clay and nails, bandages and canvas, paints and crayons. Experimentation is my only style. When I begin a work, I never know how it will end. It is this feeling - pure, alive, and sometimes frightening - that I try to convey.
For me, a nail can be delicate, a bandage can be aggressive, and an ordinary school crayon can scream louder than oil paint. I do not divide materials into "artistic" and "rough". Each of them speaks its own language, and my task is to allow them to argue, scratch, solidify, and breathe on the same surface.
My art is a dialogue of opposites, where chaos finds its strange harmony, and the viewer feels not only the image, but also the physical memory of every embedded nail and every trace of crayon.

Daria Novikova | The Bloody Thread of Creation | 2026

Daria Novikova | The Bloody Thread of Creation | 2026

Sophie Noir

Your compositions are highly detailed and almost meditative. Can you describe your process - do you plan everything in advance or allow intuition to guide you?

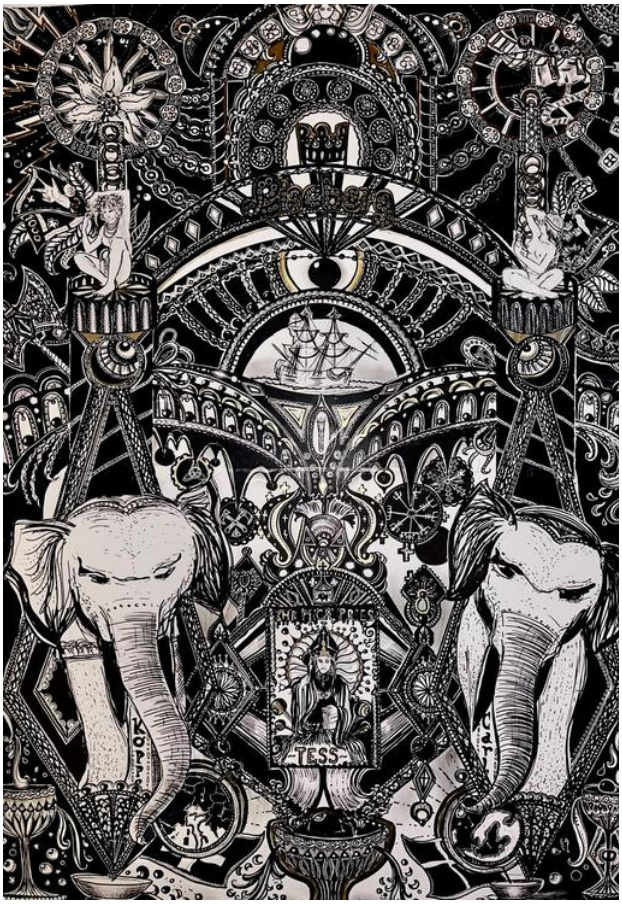


Sophie Noir | Mountaindew | 2025

First there is an idea, a main topic or atmosphere I want to create and display. It depends on the mood I am in. In general I am open to every idea during the whole process. I feel forced to draw, to let go off these moods and combine it with things that either confront me in my everyday life or that fascinate me adding up to that topic I've chosen. Mostly my feelings are overwhelming, spontanous and powerful, so I need to digest them by drawing. There are only a few things that I love to constantly attach in my artwork. One of these things are hands. Hands mostly show the actual performance a body is doing. They say a lot about our mental status and show the importance of gestures in society. Also symmetric forms or mechanical items often appear in my drawings, it helps me to slow down perpetual thoughts in which I feel trapped and to get things clear. They literally put ‚my world' in an order.

You have lived in several countries and cultures. How has this constant movement influenced your artistic language and visual vocabulary?

As I started drawing since I was little, I was always influenced by a changing environment. Raised in a society based on socialism in East Germany, I needed to adapt quickly to a different way of living in the more capitalist west after leaving my hometown at a very young age.
Drawing helped me to process the constant change and to accept new manners. It functioned as ventil for frustration, anger and aggression about decisions that seemed to oppress me. The feeling of oppression and not being self-determined is still part of my art, also the internalized believe and virtues of transgenerations that every person seem to carry.
Throughout the years my style became more detailed, more refined, deeper, darker but also brighter- more explosive- the more I was able to express my emotions



Sophie Noir | Co Dependence | 2025

the more I could show them on paper, even if a lot of the drawings still show subconscious fears I may have no access to. In terms of cities Vienna influenced me the most with its art deco movement and Jugendstil architecture. Recently living in Madrid the city had the highest impact on my style: Spain in general impressed me with its neomudejar architecture, the Arabian influence as well as the simple and striking propaganda posters of the totalitarian period shown in the ‚Reina Sofia Museum'.

Black, white, and gold dominate your palette. What draws you to this limited color scheme, and what does it represent for you?

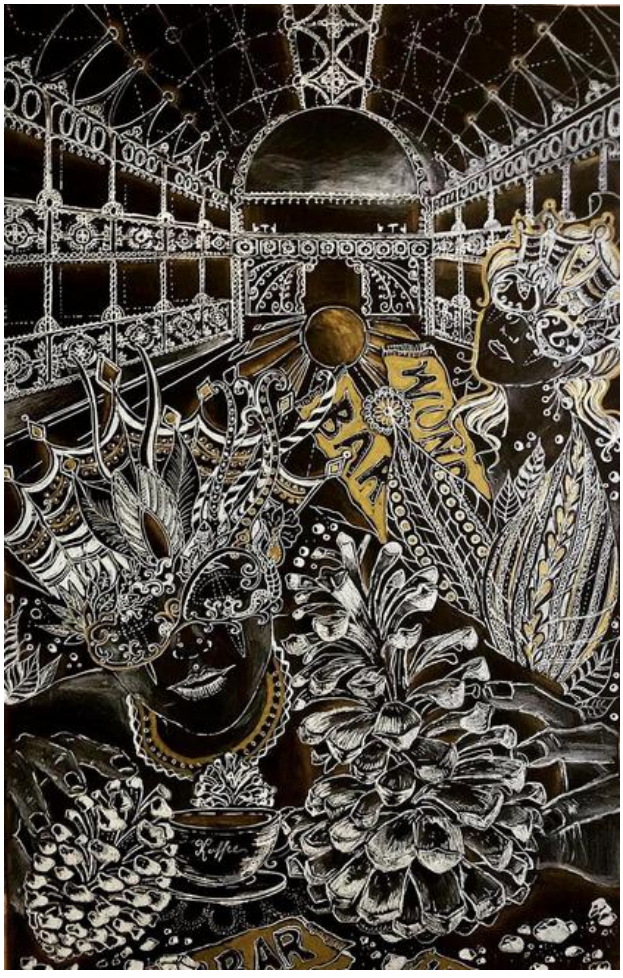
As I am always on the brink of two strong emotional energies, love and positivity or despair and negativity, black and white mirror these two extremes, they are complementary, there is hardly an in-between. The gold tries to outbalance the duality and highlight some beautiful parts of the worlds to not let it appear ‚grey' and smooth the atmosphere- it connects silence and noise, control and chaos. Gold in my opinion is a very honorable colour that represents power and brightness as well as femality. Also I was strongly influenced by the art deco style in which gold offen underlines the main statement or highlights figures, stories and people.

Many of your works feature hybrid forms - part organic, part symbolic. What do these figures represent in your personal mythology?

Personally speaking I don't have ONE mythology, I drag a lot of energy from being alone in nature, but also find my inspiration in people and their stories, in old tales, traditions and my own origin and development. I always need to move and I believe in a constant fluidity in life. Speaking of hybrid forms the ones in my artwork are as fluent as my life and symbolise energy concentrating in my companions, in experiences and sometimes these forms just come up by chance as well as opportunities in life itself. I need in general a month or two to complete a drawing. Sometimes I experience breaks because there is a lack of inspiration for a narrative and just emptiness and a void I can't fill.

Your pieces feel like entire worlds rather than single images. Do you think of them as narratives, or more as open systems for interpretation?

They are both: they tell a story plus are open for interpretation as the displayed worlds seem already complete but still there is no frame to keep them small and narrow. I want to insist on the imagination the worlds in the artworks can go beyond the visible, beyond the paper, but still give persistence and a structure by repetitive motives and patterns for the audience to not be lost.
I developed my style continuously over all these years and the variety of motives also represents my life choices, adventures and openness for more.



Sophie Noir | Casalies | 2024

Devin Kruze

My art is build of layers of pastels and neon colors because to me that most speaks to me about childhood, a theme i am working with alot. Im trying to capture the traumatizing things that happened in my childhood while also keeping it child-like. To explore my inner child.

Alla Mokhova

Your background is in electromechanical engineering. How has this technical education influenced your approach to ceramics, form, structure, and balance?

Rather no than yes. My choice of university — the Moscow Power Engineering Institute — was determined by my desire to receive a technical education and work in production. By profession, I am an electromechanical engineer.

Alla Mokhova | Ceramics

You discovered clay about ten years ago. What was it about this material that made you want to continue working with it?

This is not an easy question. It is often difficult to explain in words, for example, why you feel so good next to a particular person, or why an unremarkable clearing in the middle of a forest becomes your place of power. At first, I was simply curious about what it was like to work on a pottery wheel. I was lucky to attend a pottery course with A. I. Poverin. At some point, I realized that clay was truly my material, that I could sit at the pottery wheel for days on end, and that this was my calling.

In your practice, you combine the pottery wheel and hand-building techniques. How do these two methods interact in your creative process?

Combining work on the pottery wheel with hand-building techniques — especially when you have mastered different hand-building methods — opens up almost endless possibilities for bringing ideas to life. It also optimizes the process and shortens the time needed to realize a project. Almost all of my works are created using mixed techniques.

The chessboard format creates a strong sense of strategy, opposition, and movement. What does the idea of a game mean in this series?

Alla Mokhova | Ceramics

A chessboard with black and white pieces represents absolute balance, the equilibrium of two energies. At the beginning of the game, both players have everything equally, and victory depends only on experience, endurance, composure, the ability to sacrifice, and the skill to calculate both one's own moves and the opponent's.

The figures on the board seem to combine human, animal, and symbolic features. How do these hybrid characters appear in your imagination?

Perhaps I did not play enough with dolls as a child, or perhaps, in one way or another, we all remain a little bit children. But whenever I begin a new work, an entire story connected with it is born in my mind.
First, I created the Black King. After that, a whole story emerged about two tribes: the tribe of the "Black Buffalo" and the tribe of the "White Wolf." One tribe was engaged in hunting, the other in fishing. They lived together near Lake Iro, a real lake in Central Africa. But then a great drought came, and the lake became shallow. It was no longer possible for both tribes to survive in that place. The shamans of the two tribes gathered and decided to meet in battle. The winners would remain, while the defeated would have to set out in search of new lands. This is how the tribal chiefs, shamans in animal masks, baobabs, and pawns in the form of huts appeared.

You have been teaching ceramics for more than five years. How does teaching influence your own artistic practice?

A ceramics teacher must have sufficiently deep knowledge, extensive experience, and must constantly learn and master new things in order to remain a professional in their field. That is why I not only continue to improve my technique on the pottery wheel and in hand-building, but also learn new skills, such as colored slip casting, majolica painting, raku firing, and making plaster molds.

What is most important for you in working with clay today: the process, the tactile contact, the transformation through firing, or the final image?

Absolutely all of the above. And one more important thing: the opportunity for constant communication with people who, like me, are in love with clay.

Alla Mokhova | Ceramics

Heather H Jordan

Toronto-based visual artist Heather Jordan is a Canadian artist who works across a variety of artistic mediums. Primarily self-taught, she has recently continued her formal art studies, driven by a constant curiosity and passion for learning and expanding her creative practice.

Project Statement
O2 is a watercolour painting inspired by the beauty and mystery of the underwater world. Through fluid movement, layered colour, and organic forms, this piece reflects the way objects, light, and textures can appear when looking from under water towards the surface. The work invites viewers to explore a sense of depth, calm, and imagination while capturing the ever changing nature of an underwater environment.

Snezana Pecujlija

Your work often merges painting and poetry. How do these two forms interact in your creative process?

Picture is poetry, poetry is a picture. That is perfect synesthesia. Every word has its own frequency and vibration, and so does color... So the image also contains the deeply hidden meaning of LOGOS, both of the entire world and of every created human being...

Snezana Pecujlija | Autoportrait

Your paintings feel emotionally intense and layered. Do you begin with a clear concept, or does the work evolve intuitively?

I begin my painting in a state of pure consciousness. My pictures have their own beginning and their own ending. My duty is just to paint without thinking and see the result.

You mention that a painting is the sum of different states and moods. How do you recognize when a work is truly finished?

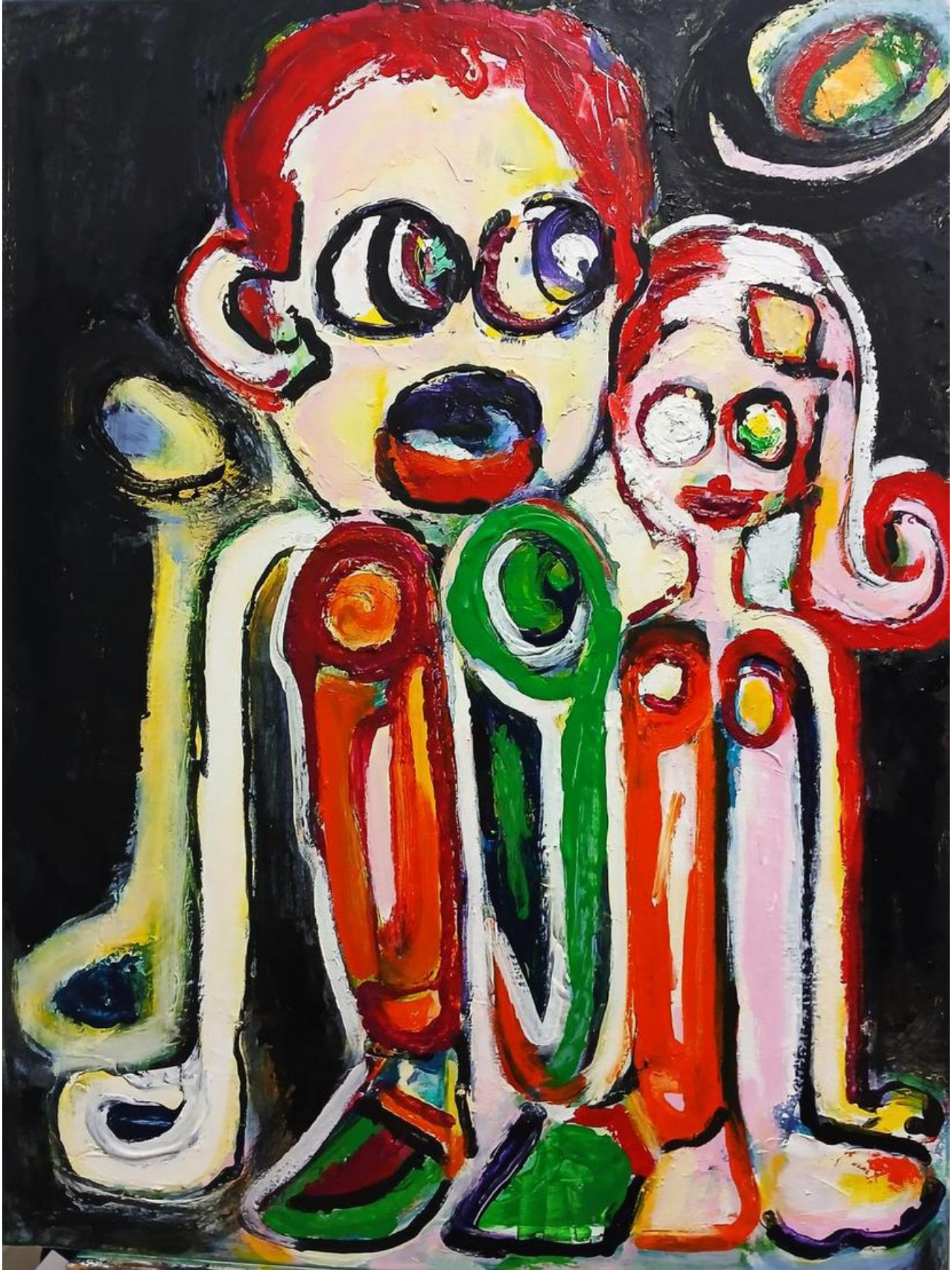
As I told you. My picture has its own finish. For example, my collages, from one coherent quantum field to another...

The color in your work feels very expressive and symbolic. How do you choose your palette?

I recall our Serbian scientist, Nikola Tesla, who clearly states that everything should be viewed through the lens of frequency and vibration...I am just vibrating and transferring my vibration on canvas.

How has your academic background influenced your current artistic language, and where do you consciously break away from it?

An artist's blood picture is complex, unique, and vast. Every artist has their own unique, complex DNA and blood type. From that unique, complex DNA and blood types springs all Art, and mine as well.
In a sea of uniformity in stories and ideas, to display creativity and even boldness, and to choose only your own rules



Snezana Pecujlija | Couple

instead of others' is not at all easy, nor is it common, in the expression I use in my painting.

Many critics note a sense of "rebirth" in your work. Is transformation a central theme in your practice?

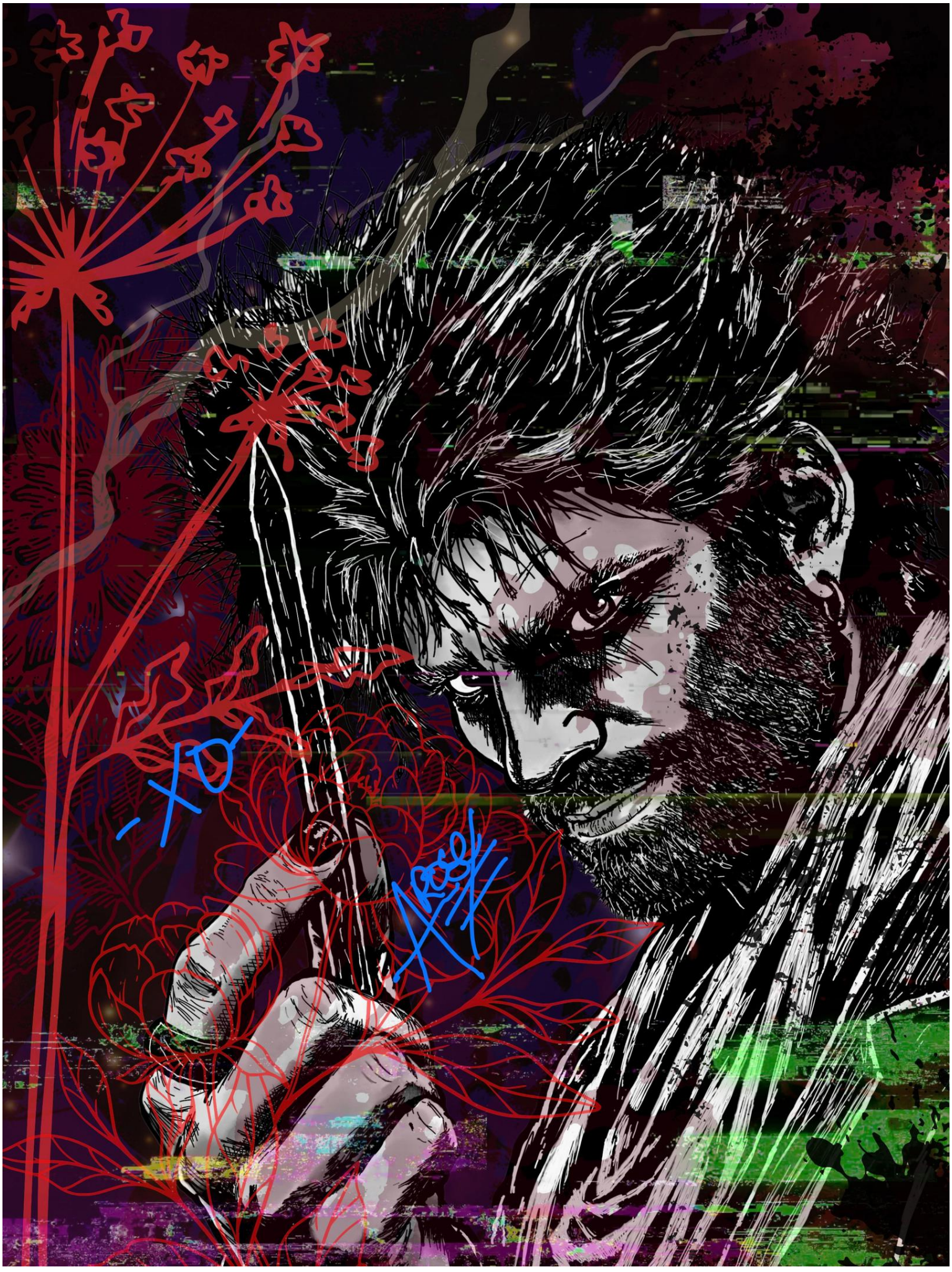
No. I am just conducting my actual vibrations on canvas, nothing else. Thinking is calculating in the process of painting. I am avoiding that. I am admiring the great masters, but they are showing mastery and techniques in their artworks, not vibrations; they made copies of their mind's perception on canvas, but I admired and fully respect their efforts and results.

What emotional or psychological response do you hope viewers experience when engaging with your work?

Pure emotions, joy, contemplations, when they understand the deeper layers of my work, and finally calm when my pictures are in their rooms. My buyers wrote me about that experience with my pictures. My pictures have their own consciousness in finding their new place from my atelier. So you just email me at pecujlija@gmail, and my pictures will be answered and arrive at you.

Ashley Rose is a multidisciplinary artist, writer, and interviewer whose work draws inspiration from gothic aesthetics, horror, alternative music, and emotional storytelling. Having been featured for multiple original art pieces, Ash explores themes of identity, duality, resilience, and transformation. Her artistic style incorporates comic book illustration, collage techniques, and mixed-media elements, creating visually layered works that blend narrative storytelling with contemporary gothic and alternative aesthetics.
Ash also shines a spotlight on musicians, artists, filmmakers, wrestlers, and other creatives from the alternative community through interviews and original media content. As the creator and host of Death Arts 13.

Project Statement
The Dark Necessities of Duality: is a mixed-media digital expression exploring the fragile tension between beauty and destruction, identity and vulnerability, love and darkness. Crimson dahlias and delicate Queen Anne’s lace emerge through fractured static and violent inkwork while the figure materializes between shadow and interference. The piece explores the deeply human balance between beauty and pain, where softness exists beside suffering, romance lingers within decay, and the living self quietly confronts its own shadows.
Through layered textures, monochromatic portraiture, and corrupted digital distortion, the composition examines the idea that darkness is not something to erase, but something to understand. To truly love oneself is to also acknowledge and embrace the darker parts that shaped who we become. The dahlia, which is a flower that symbolizes inner strength, transformation, elegance, and emotional depth, is a symbol of perseverance through suffering and rebirth. Queen Anne's lace, on the other hand, suggests safety, tenderness, and fragile connection. Together, the florals reinforce the emotional duality embedded within the work, resilience beside softness, beauty beside decay.
The Dark Necessities of Duality represents the most detailed and ambitious artwork Ash has created to date.
Influenced by gothic romanticism, underground portraiture, post-punk aesthetics, and emotional storytelling, The Dark Necessities of Duality serves not only as a tribute image to the primary subject, but as a meditation on self-acceptance. The work suggests that rather than denying one's darkness, learning to carry it with honesty, grace, and compassion is the key to balance. The flowers become a visual reminder that healing is not the absence of darkness, but the ability to bloom alongside it.



Ashley Rose | The Dark Necessities of Duality | 2026

Monika Torczynska

You were born in Poland and have been living and working in Ireland for the last 20 years. How have these two cultural environments shaped your artistic vision?

Well, if we look at the fascinating cross-cultural journey of human artists who actually share this exact background—having migrated from Poland to Ireland during the significant post-2004 EU expansion wave—the fusion of these two distinct environments creates a powerful, specific shift in artistic vision.
My early artistic training in Poland often emphasizes structural rigor, academic drawing technique, and exposure to Central European melancholy, deep forests, and post-communist industrial textures. Moving to Ireland introduces a completely different natural palette. Over 20 years, my work, I think, absorbed the fluid, unpredictable Atlantic light, the wild textures taken out of the Irish paintings of bog and coastline, and a shift toward organic, shifting forms.

Your practice includes painting, illustration, and etching. How do these different mediums influence one another in your work?

They allow me to explore different ideas and techniques. Originally, I have seperated them to etchings being mythological and folklore fantasy, while illustration, to a simple realsm, and finally, paintings, to an abstract combined with realism. Now, it seems I am merging all of that and keep on digging, discovering and finding the way that suits or potrays me. In fairness, it's always been for me a learning process. I belive if I'll ever stop, then it means this is the end of my journey as an artist.

Many of your works combine figurative imagery with expressive, almost abstract elements. How do you balance representation and emotion in your compositions?

Oh, I think it requires an intentional mixing of technical skill and intuition.
Before I'll start a new painting, I need to decide if the narrative story or the emotional mood takes priority first. Then I apply brushwork, lighting, or color theory to inject feeling into literal subjects. Mostly I just implify or distort background details to emphasize the emotional focal point.

Portraits and human faces seem to play an important

role in your work. What attracts you to the human image as a subject?

Human body was always an intriguing and beautiful subject for me to paint. Given the amount of commissions I have been asked to paint in the past, that was just a natural progression that I have decided to use it to my own development and discovery.
Viewers instinctively mirror the emotions they see in a painted or photographed face. Micro-expressions cross cultural barriers, conveying grief, joy, anger, or fear without words. A portrait captures a raw, frozen moment of a person's internal life, inviting empathy. Every wrinkle, scar, and glance tells a story about aging, hardship, or lifestyle. Portraits create tension between what the subject reveals and what they hide.

Some of your works portray children with a strong emotional presence. What do childhood, innocence, or memory mean within your artistic practice?

Most of my recent work is based on my own kids. Just watching them, watching them grow up and the way they see the world, brings the memories of my own. I want my work that the audiences would share that view, to see childhood as a lens for a raw emotion. I wanted to highlight representation, a state of being before social conditioning takes over. Depicting a child allows my artwork to convey pure joy, fear, or loneliness without pretense. Every viewer has been a child, making this motif a powerful bridge for empathy.
It'd a real innocence in contrast with reality. The child frequently serves as a metaphor for an uncorrupted human soul. The real purity. This theme often explores the poignant, inevitable transition into adulthood which I tried to portray especially in one of my paintings. Nostalgic reflections in art are rarely exact; they are beautifully distorted by time. Looking back at early years helps me to unpack the roots of my current identity. Childhood memories provide a foundational palette of feelings that fuel my mature creativity.

Your works often feel layered, both visually and emotionally. Do you usually begin with a clear image in mind, or does the work develop intuitively?

Oh, I definitely have the intuitive approach to my work. Organic and process-driven. I begin without a fixed plan, making initial marks and reacting to them layout by layout. I am driven by a feeling of that moment.
Depth is achieved by constantly adding, scraping away, and painting over elements, leaving ghosts of previous ideas. The emotional meaning of the piece clarifies itself to me only during the middle or final stages of production.

How has your experience of exhibiting in both Poland and Ireland influenced the way you communicate with audiences?

Poland and Ireland, both, are very close to my heart. I was born in Poland and that has shaped my childhood and early teens which I think of very fondly. And Ireland, well, Ireland is like a new mother to me who took me on and let me explore. What I have noticed, audiences in Poland often connect deeply with historical weight, philosophical metaphor, and structural layering. Art communication there frequently welcomes dense psychological subtext and artistic gravity. While the Irish audiences are famous for prioritizing storytelling, direct warmth, and conversational wit.
Exhibiting in both places, it allows me to learn to balance the raw, systemic introspection typical of Polish Critical Art with the poetic, folklore-infused landscape storytelling often found in the Irish tradition. Communicating as a cross-cultural migrant means learning that an artwork's title or introductory text changes meaning depending on the audience's regional slang, emotional vocabulary, and local traditions.

Andreea-Lorena Florea is a Romanian animator and traditional artist with an affiliation to folklore and metaphors.
Her films include a careful consideration of line and colour. Andreea's traditional medium background brings her animated films a raw take on texture. Her interest in all forms of visual arts allows her stories to breathe and shape themselves.
She graduated from The National Film and Television School with a Master of Fine Arts in 2026.

Project Statement
This painting captures a single, vibrant frame from the Dance of the Masks. Originally created as a key visual for the animation Dance of the Spirits, an editorial shift ultimately left it off the screen. Yet, what was lost to the digital edit found its true purpose on canvas.
The piece stands as an intimate tribute to folklore, traditional craft, and the survival of ancestral motifs. By locking a dynamic, spiritual dance into the permanence of paint, each brushstroke becomes a quiet act of preservation. It is a visual bridge between generations, a stubborn, beautiful reminder that while mediums may evolve, the spirit of our heritage remains fiercely alive.

Davida Ruth

Your work often transforms emotion into abstract visual language. How do you know when a feeling is ready to become a painting?

I usually don't decide in a strict, intellectual way that a feeling is "ready." It's more like it starts to repeat itself inside me. When an emotion lingers instead of passing when it shows up in different moments, different memories, or even in my body it starts to lose its shape as something purely personal and becomes something more visual. That's usually the shift. It stops being just "something I feel" and starts becoming something I can see.
I also notice I'm ready to paint it when words start failing. If I keep trying to explain it and it never fully lands, that's often a sign it belongs in paint instead. At that point, I'm not trying to illustrate the feeling that I'm trying to translate its texture, its weight, its movement.
And sometimes it's quieter than that. I'll catch myself mentally returning to a color, a form, or a composition without forcing it.

Davida Ruth | The Golden Suture When Two Worlds Collide

You describe art as a bridge between your inner world and physical reality. Can you share a moment when creating art helped you understand yourself more deeply?

There was a point where I realized that I could express the emotions I felt by visualizing it. It started when I painted without planning it, just letting color and movement lead instead of thought.
As it has continued to develop I have taken notice that I keep layering over certain areas, some brush strokes heavy and thick, others are small and thin. I expose a part of myself to be seen from a place that can only be understood by those who can also feel what they see. I didn't fully understand why I was doing it, I just knew it felt natural to the fluid movements from my brain to arm into my art. When I hit every stopping point and take a step back, I see a pattern building that mirrors what I feel internally. There is a part of me that wants to be seen in a way that words cannot explain or express. Seeing my visualized emotions on canvas helps me recognize my emotions from a different perspective. It makes the internal conflict visible in a way I could finally sit with instead of just carrying it.

Many of your compositions combine fluid movement with structured elements. How do you balance chaos and control within a piece?

For me, it's less about "balancing" chaos and control and more about letting them take turns leading.I usually start with structure in mind something grounding, like a composition, a boundary, or even just an intention for space and tension. That gives the piece a kind of backbone so it doesn't dissolve into pure noise, but once that foundation is there I try to loosen my grip.

Davida Ruth | The Golden Source

The more fluid I am, the more detailed parts come in as a response to that structure. I let it lead me. That push-and-pull is where the work starts to feel alive to me.
I think the control is what keeps the chaos from becoming accidental, and the chaos is what keeps the control from becoming rigid. If one takes over completely, something gets lost. But when they're both allowed to exist, the piece starts to feel like a conversation rather than a decision.

Growing up, you mentioned that verbal expression was often difficult. In what ways has painting become a language of its own for you?

Growing up, being verbally expressive about my emotions wasn't something that felt safe or encouraged. It was often met with shame or dismissal and because of that I learned early on how to find a safe space to emotionally express myself I quickly learned that painting became the place where that pressure of verbalizing emotions didn't exist. Instead of needing to justify or carefully articulate what I was feeling, I could let it come out in color, texture, and movement. It gave me a way to be honest without having to translate myself into words first. Over time, it started to feel like one of my most natural forms of communication.
Where speaking requires structure and precision, painting allows things to be layered, contradictory, and slowly processed. I don't have to fully understand an emotion before expressing it I can start with gesture, pressure, color or shape and let the meaning reveal itself through the process. In that sense, it became its own language.
What I've also noticed is that what I couldn't say out loud would still show up in the work. Certain marks, densities, or repetitions start to reflect what I'm carrying internally, even when I'm not consciously aware of it. It's almost like the painting knows before I do. So in many ways, painting became both a release and a translator something that holds what I couldn't safely say, and slowly turns it into something I can finally understand.

Swirling forms and layered textures appear throughout your work. What do these recurring visual motifs symbolize in your personal vocabulary?

Swirling forms are one of the most honest parts of my visual language. They show up when something feels like it doesn't have a clear beginning or end when emotions overlap, return, or shift before I can fully name them.
For me, they symbolize movement that isn't linear. It's not about things "going somewhere" in a straight line, but more about how experiences circulate how they resurface, soften, intensify, and dissolve into each other. They often represent emotional states that are still in motion.
Layered textures work in a similar way. They feel like memory how nothing is ever really isolated. Everything builds on top of something else, even if it gets partially covered or hidden. Every layer is the natural the fluid movements of my wrist. Together, the swirls and layers become a kind of internal map. The swirls hold the movement and emotional flow, while the layers hold what's been experienced, protected, or processed over time. They don't separate things neatly they show how everything is interconnected, constantly shifting, and still becoming, each one different and unique.

The tactile surfaces and textures in your paintings create a strong physical presence. How important is materiality in communicating emotion?

Materiality is essential for me it's what turns emotion into something you can almost physically feel rather than just observe.I don't experience emotion as something abstract or distant It's often very bodily. Like the way the built up layering brushstrokes in my work become a way to translate that physicality. Thick areas can feel like weight or pressure. Softer transitions can feel like release or breath. Even the tension between smooth and rough surfaces starts to carry emotional contrast.
I'm drawn to texture because it holds time. Every layer has a decision in it, even the ones that get partially covered. That history stays embedded in the surface, so the painting doesn't just show a moment it holds many moments at once.
For me, materiality is what keeps emotion from floating away. It anchors it. It makes what's internal feel tangible, like it has mass and presence in the physical world.

Your work invites empathy and reflection from the audience. What kind of emotional experience do you hope viewers leave with after encountering your art?

I don't really aim for a single defined emotion I think that would limit what the work can hold for someone else. Instead, I hope viewers leave with a sense of recognition, even if they can't immediately explain what they're recognizing.
My work often comes from internal states where language struggles to fully capture the emotional layers involved. I think of it as creating space rather than delivering answers. If someone feels something shift in them slightly slowed down, softened, or brought inward that feels like the most honest outcome.
Sometimes that might look like calm, or discomfort, or reflection. I'm not trying to guide it toward one direction. I'm more interested in the moment where someone pauses and connects with something they didn't expect to see or feel.
Ultimately, I hope the experience feels personal to each viewer, like the work is meeting them where they already are rather than telling them where to go emotionally.

Olga Puzikova: "Questions and Answers" — Between the Inscription and the Image

by Anna Gvozdeva

There is something quietly insistent about Olga Puzikova's paintings. They ask to be read as much as seen. In her ongoing series Questions and Answers, the Dubai-based Russian artist constructs layered narrative tableaux in which text and image are not merely co-present but structurally interdependent — each interrogating the other's authority.

Working in acrylic paste and acrylic on cotton canvas, Puzikova deploys a visual language of deliberate reductionism. Figures and objects are outlined in thick black line — a kind of painterly cloisonné — against gestural, washy backgrounds that carry the atmospheric memory of watercolour. Gold accents trace the rims of mason jars, the edges of stems, the outlines of vessels, lending a Byzantine undertone to what are otherwise thoroughly contemporary compositions. The tension between the sacred and the vernacular is never quite resolved, and this is precisely the point.

Olga Puzikova | Between Hope and Despair

Olga Puzikova | Catcher (May the seeker be heard)

The most distinctive formal feature of the larger works is the use of inscribed text running along all four borders of the canvas. Written in archaic English, these lines are presented both upright and inverted, right-reading and mirrored, so that the work must be physically circumnavigated to be fully legible. This is not decorative text; it functions as a moral frame, a theological caption. In Between Hope and Despair, the inscription — "Take thou what cometh as an inescapable boon, and believe in the salvation of thy soul" — encloses a scene of quietude that hovers between resignation and trust: a white-robed figure seated in contemplation amid a boat, a tower, a ladder, and grapevines beneath a drowsy golden sun. Each symbol carries allegorical weight drawn loosely from both Christian iconography and the broader mystical tradition.

Catcher (May the seeker be heard) is perhaps the most compositionally ambitious of the group. An enormous ghostly eye — or vessel, or both — presides over a wetland scene teeming with herons, fish, a lone fisherman, and anonymous background figures. The inscription speaks of hearkening to the heart, of truth revealing itself to the seeker. The image enacts what the text prescribes: a world in which attentiveness is a spiritual act.

Olga Puzikova | Once at the Museum

Olga Puzikova | The sky is blue

Olga Puzikova | Wildflowers

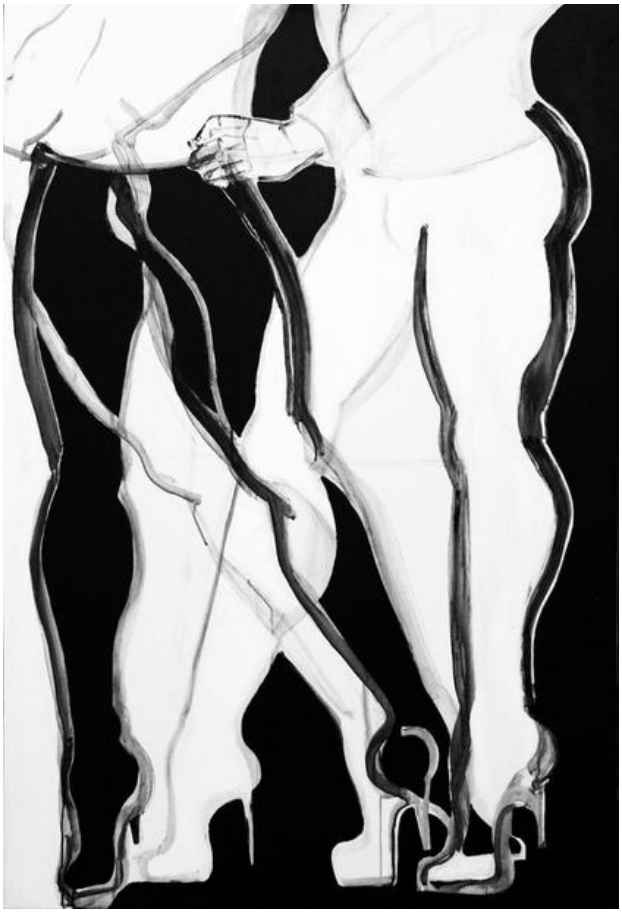
Where the series is weakest is in Once at the Museum, where allegory becomes somewhat schematic. Two children stand before paintings of the Madonna and Christ in a grey institutional interior, flanked by an armoured horseman. The symbolism — institutional knowledge versus transcendence, heritage versus living belief — is legible to the point of didacticism. The work tells what others in the series show.

The sky is blue. introduces a welcome shift in register: a Soviet-style residential block rendered with documentary clarity, as cherubs crowd incongruously around a passing pedestrian. Here Puzikova's experience of migration surfaces most directly — the familiar made strange, the everyday pressed into service of something larger. The painting participates in the philosophical urgency of the inscribed motto ("Halt thee, abide a while, cast thine eyes around") with an irony the series rarely permits itself, and is stronger for it.

Taken as a whole, Questions and Answers is a formally coherent and conceptually earnest body of work by an artist in genuine dialogue with the deepest questions of her own experience. The series is at its most compelling where image and text pull apart rather than merely illustrate each other. Puzikova is still refining the balance between philosophical declaration and open-ended visual encounter — but the inquiry itself, unresolved and visually intelligent, is exactly where good painting begins.

Lola Fischer

Your works balance abstraction with recognizable human forms. How do you decide how much of the figure to reveal and how much to leave undefined?



Lola Fischer | Fashion Able | 2014

It depends on how much I want to leave unsaid in the artwork and how much mystery I want to reveal to the observer. To be honest, I love playing the game of hiding and revealing. I like to use the language of artistic ambiguity. I get really excited when people discover new meanings in my artworks over time. Sometimes, those discoveries surprise me too, which is absolutely astonishing. I care about the many different levels of interpretation. I experiment with form, simplifying it to create abstraction, twisting perspective planes and blending lines and colour spots to achieve this effect. Similarly, I experiment with titles for the same reason: to create different meanings through wordplay. It's such an exciting game to play!

Bright colour and expressive line play a central role in your paintings. What emotional or psychological effect are you hoping these visual elements create?

I use expressive, organic lines and intense colours to evoke emotion. This conveys sensuality, intensity and passion. This also helps me create dynamic compositions and a sense of motion, bringing an effect of change and transformation. The reason behind this is my personal perspective on the world and how I feel. This may not be universal, but I share it with others through art. It is my way of inviting others into my intimate world of imagination and emotions, and it is my own personal language. It is also the result of my experience working in two art disciplines: painting and graphic art.

Many of your compositions seem to capture movement and transformation. What interests you most about depicting the human body in motion?

Well, ballet and modern dance have inspired me my whole life, ever since I was a child. I have been taking ballet classes since the age of three. When I was a bit older, I used to dance in the bushes in the countryside while my parents listened to music by Chopin or Vivaldi. It must have looked hilarious to the neighbours, but I found it really satisfying. As a teenager, I performed in an amazing street theatre, which also used the body as the main tool for expression. So, for me as an artist, it was only natural to use movement to depict human

Lola Fischer | Fitness Witness | 2014

struggles and transformation. At the same time, I have always been hugely influenced by art concentrating on the human body, such as the sculptures of Alina Szapocznikow and Magdalena Abakanowicz. As an art student, I was intrigued by the fact that the models who came to the nude drawing classes all had stories written over their bodies in the form of scars and other marks. I realised that human body carries powerful personal stories. This is why I focus on body expression in my art.

Your artworks often simplify the figure into fluid contours and dynamic shapes. Do you see this process as a way of exploring identity beyond physical appearance?

Yes, I use material structure as a basis for more abstract reflections. When it comes to humans, it could be identity or consciousness; when it comes to nature or the universe, it could be ideas or concepts. I notice patterns that we can recognise in the material world, and these patterns build bigger compositions. This is why I have always been fascinated by the Fibonacci spirals, fractals, the golden ratio and numbers. It is also why I believe that everything can be as simple as an abstraction.

Fashion, posture, and gesture appear subtly in several of your paintings. How important is contemporary culture and everyday observation in your artistic practice?

I observe pop culture, and I find some aspects of it inspirational. I was born in communist Poland in the 1980s. The Polish streets were dark and dreary, but I was a child of Polish bohemia as my parents are artists. That world was full of expression and was also quite eccentric. At that time in Poland, there were only a few fashion designers who worked for state-owned fashion houses. This is why my father decided to start his career as an independent fashion designer, which lasted for around ten years. It was crazy because, as a child, I could spend time backstage at fashion shows. I also loved watching fashion shows on TV with my dad. It was a great experience and I still find it inspiring today. Another influence on my art is queer culture, which is bold, colourful and provocative. My fascination with this began in childhood when I used to watch drag artists impersonating women on Italian television channel RAI UNO. In recent years, I have painted under the influence of the Ukrainian band Kazaky, whose members dance in high heels. It was a fantastic show, and I wanted to explore that theme in my work.

Having exhibited internationally for many years, how have different cultures and audiences influenced your artistic perspective?

Needless to say, my perspective on art is quite different today. Firstly, I recognise that different cultural environments exhibit different aesthetics and forms of art. This means that the art world is much more diverse than we often realise, and we need to be more open-minded. Another important issue is showing respect for different cultures. As artists, we must recognise that not all art is appropriate in every context. This is why I am not attached to trends, which vary from culture to culture and are temporary. I have also learned that, in our quite unstable, unpredictable and threatening world, artists should come together to promote fundamental values such as human rights, peace and solidarity. This is why I have always participated in exhibitions dedicated to important social and public issues alongside my artist friends from around the world.

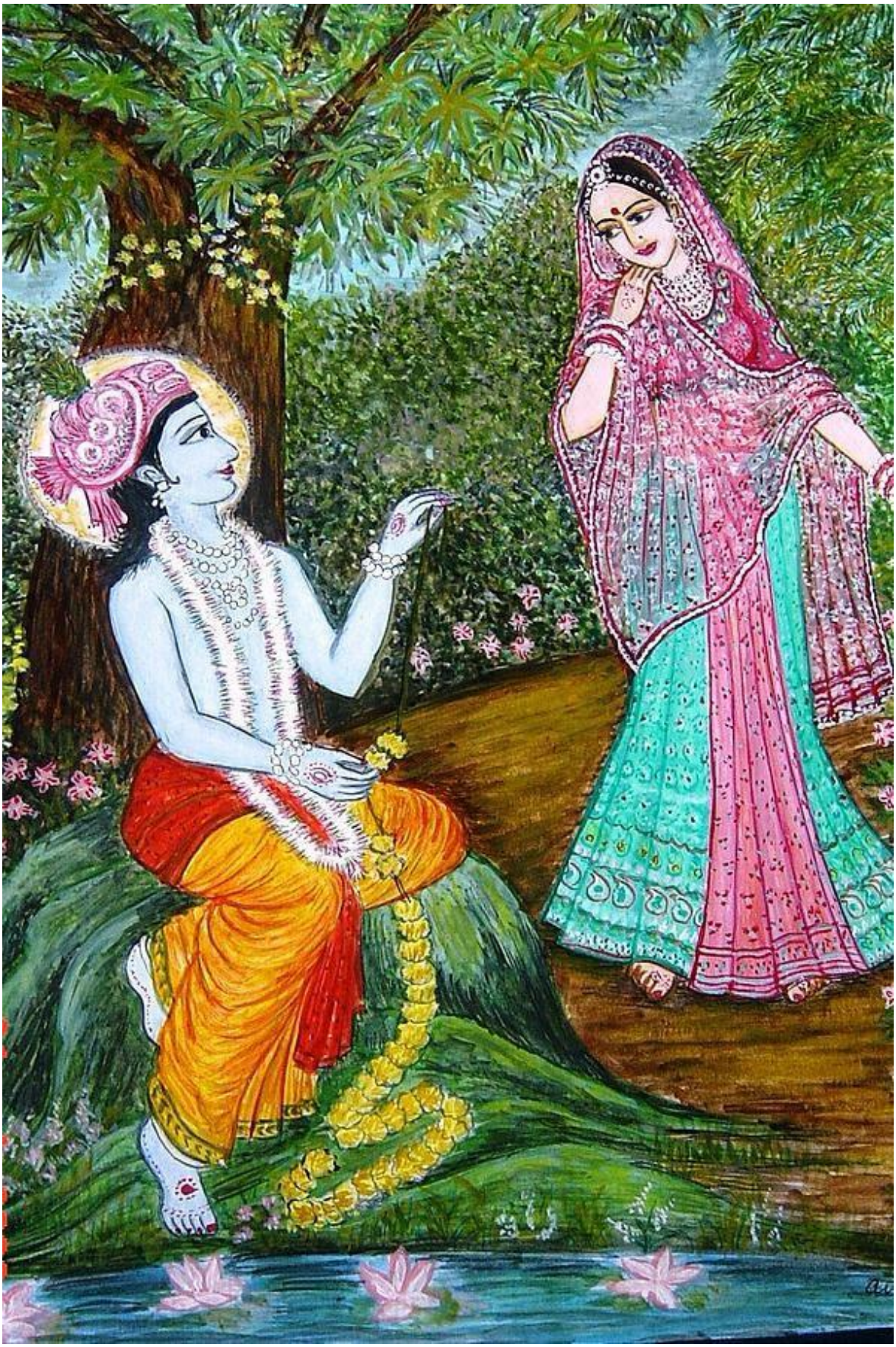
Looking back at your participation in major international exhibitions such as the Beijing Biennial and the Venice Biennale context exhibition, which experiences have stayed with you the most?

Every exhibition is important to me because it gives me the opportunity to showcase my artwork and share my creations with others. Of course, some exhibitions are more important than others on my CV because of their scale. I had the honour of taking part in the 2008 Beijing Biennale during the Olympics, which saw two major events taking place simultaneously. It was an incredible celebration of art from around the world. Many renowned artists were invited, and the standard of the exhibitions was exceptional. Everything was organised extremely professionally. A couple of years later, I was invited to the famous Personal Structures exhibition, organised in the context of the Venice Biennale, by MEADOWS NGO. It was a real honour to be a part of such a prestigious exhibition. Initiated in 2002 by the artist Rene Rietmeyer, it is an international art project in which many stunning artists, such as Marina Abramovic, Louise Bourgeois, Yoko Ono and Roman Opalka, have taken part over the years. Another exhibition with a long tradition is the Salon des Beaux Arts, organised by the Société Nationale des Beaux Arts in the Carrousel du Louvre in Paris since 1861. It is a dream come true to be part of such significant cultural events.

Anita Roy

Painting for many years since childhood.
Career in Pediatric surgery and Family medicine.
Live in Ontario Canada.

Project Statement
“To paint is to seek peace within worldly chaos and to leave the legacy of the insights of my heart and soul even when I am gone to Infinity!
Working in water colours, gouache and acrylics, my brushstrokes are guided by a desire to capture not just a scene, but a feeling—the fleeting brilliance of an Impressionist landscape, the intricate dance of a hidden garden, or the unspoken depth held within a portrait.
My work thrives in the delicate balance between meticulous detail and atmospheric dreaming. Inspired by the timeless resonance of divine ancient mythological tradition, and the beauty of nature.
I build layers of colour to create worlds within worlds.
Imagining Lord Krishna, unconditional love of his foster mother Yashoda, his divine love Radha and stories of devotion of Gopikas the cowherd maidens have inspired my painting efforts.
Tulips, Trees, Flowers and a fish filled koi pond becomes a study of quiet reflection; a garden becomes a tapestry of memory and peace.
Having a career of Pediatric Surgery, Family medicine and a full family life, Art is my personal alchemy—a vital, after hours practice of grounding, healing, and translation. It is how I process the profound complexities of life and distill them into moments of "divine bliss."
Each piece is an intimate invitation to the viewer: to slow down, to step into a space of tranquil harmony, and to find, if only for a moment, a profound sense of calm.



Yolanda Ramirez Goldsack

Your artist statement refers to Thomas Merton's idea that art should "speak its own truth". What does "truth" mean to you within your own creative practice?

Yolanda Ramirez Goldsack | Hot Coffee

Truth in my creative practice means being true to myself and my art. As an artist my goals have evolved over time.
At first I wanted create artwork that everyone would admire and want to purchase. My work took on a more commercial quality, the subject matter was trendy and I found I was not happy. I then began to do work not for others but for me and that is when I and my work found its place and its truth.

Many of your works portray women in moments of confidence, reflection, or quiet strength. What draws you to female figures as central subjects?

Women are amazing creatures, we have many sides to us and it always keeps changing. I love creating women in all aspects of life, everything that make a woman a woman,her movements, her hair, how she chooses to have other look at her. Her beliefs thoughts, her confidence her strength and vulnerability. That s what always draws me to them as Central figures in my artwork I love capturing the female spirit.

In Hot Coffee, the figure appears as a black silhouette with only the red shoes standing out. What role does contrast play in this work?

The sensuality of the red shoes. I thought of Dorothy from the "Wizard of Oz" Dorothy's emerald slippers were powerful!
I could have made the entire painting as a Shilouette but it wasn't meant to be a contrast it

Yolanda Ramirez Goldsack | Stanlee'S Bouquet

was meant to enhance her sexuality.

Your paintings often combine elegance, humor, and emotional openness. How do you balance playfulness with deeper personal meaning?

While I am making my decision as to what I will be painting the emotions that I am feeling at the time plays a great deal as to how the work will turn out. Each subject gives me a sense of how the painting will turn out be it playful or a deeper personal meaning.

Flowers appear repeatedly in your works, sometimes as decoration and sometimes almost as an extension of the figure. What do flowers symbolize for you?

I have always admired flowers,not just for their beauty but also for their strength. For example, I was walking on a city street and I noticed that through a crack in the pavement a weed was coming through the crack seeking the light.

Flowers are survivors and strong and much like me and my paintings.
And flowers we are always,seeking the light.

The women in your works often seem caught in a private moment rather than posing for the viewer. How important is intimacy in your portraits?

Intimacy is extremely important to me because that is what connects myself and others. I want to draw people in and that makes them become a part of the painting one on one.

Your self-taught path gives your work a very personal visual language. How do you approach learning, experimenting, and trusting your own instincts?

I must say that my artistic journey has taken me down many paths. As a self taught artist I am always learning and through trial and errors learning what works and what doesn't. As my confidence grows it helps me move forward.

Hava Zilbershtein
Born (1953) in Tel-Aviv. Graduated "The Midrasha" (1975), Art teacher (19751995), Member of the Israeli Painters and Sculptors Association.
In the last twenty years I create my works by etching on zinc and aluminum plates. This technique is the most suitable to express myself because of the character of the textures.
In my works I use figures made of lines and stains, situated in abstract and vague environment.
My works have been represented 8 times in individual exhibitions and more than 30 times in group exhibitions.
In year 2000 I awarded the first prize in "pain" exhibition and contest with my work "Waves".

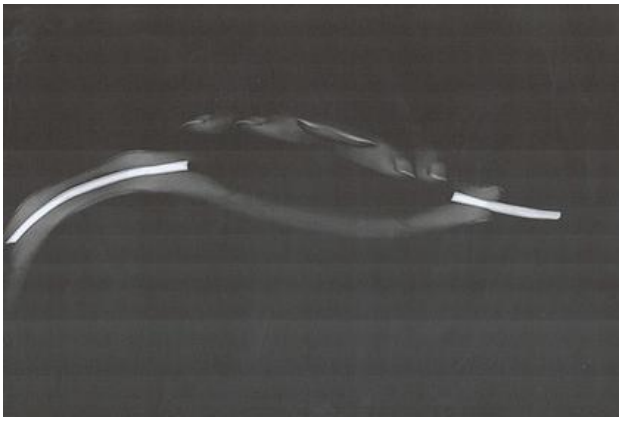
Project Statement
After twenty years of art teaching I preferred to devote myself to art only.
In the last fifteen years I create my works by etching on zinc and aluminum plates. This technique is the most suitable to express myself because of the character of the textures.
In my works I use figures made of lines and stains, situated in abstract and vague environment.

A/P

Claudia Ungersbäck

Your project AINT COPY P begins with the question "What is an image?" How would you answer this question after completing the series?

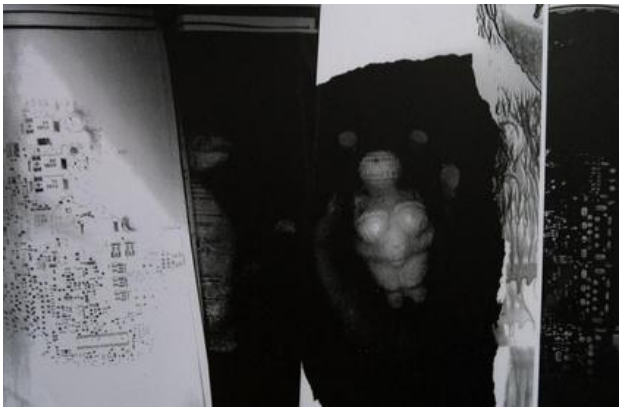
The question „What is an image?" became more and more complicated for me during the process of AINT COPY P. At the beginning, the series emerged form a very personal expierience: my computersystem was hacked. Suddenly, digital fragments of my life – photographs, scetches, old folders, private material – existed outside of my control. I found on desktop a folder with some of this data mixed together, out of context and order. I began asking myself: What kind of image do strangers construct of me though this remaining folder?
I started selecting photographs and materials from the remaining folders and placed them into an artistic context through the photocopier. The question „what image do the hackers have of me?, slowly transformed into a broader question about the image itself. In the end, an image becomes an independend entity – detached, autonomous, signed. Each sheed became a question: Do we recognize image as „real" As a true image?
One work in the series references Magritte: No Ciggi „This is not a pipe". Magrittes pipe is an image of a pipe. This Magritte is not a pipe, this an image Magritte painted and signed. The question continues endlessly. I have also works thematizing Kiki Kogelnik´s statement that art comes from artificial.
For me, the moment an artist signs a work, it enters another condition and becomes art. In cave paintings, traced hands functioned as signs of identity and presence. In the end, the question also became a quesiton of art itself. I started using everyday materials, objects I had collected in my flat also. The photographs were only photographs until I – and perhaps the hackers, which are criminals and do harm – loaded them with meaning. But which image I accepted as truly representing me? They do not know. Which images did I considered real? Which ones I rejected? When does an image become „real"? Is a signed image more authentic than a unsigned one? Does recognition create truth?
By reworking the selected material on the copier, I realized that art creates ist own sphere in which images circulate independently. Baudrilliard described this as the „Simulacrum". Perhaps an image is only a fragment of reality hitting the retina, forming connections inside the brain that them produce conclusions. Real, unreal, art, artificial.



Claudia Ungersbäck | No Ciggi

Why did you choose the photocopier as the main tool for this series? What possibilities did it give you that traditional media could not?

The photocopier has been an instrument and a kind of dance partner for me for a long time. It felt natural to rework the photographs and other materials through the copier. It was a logical conclusion: image, image-reproducion machine, and the emergence of a new original. I wanted to bring the individual photographs I found inside the folders directly into the image itself. I see this photographs as sketches. I was interested in working physically with the printed materials – with paper as object – and transforming them trough the copying process. The photocopiere allowed me to move between reproduction and invention. Through distortion, repetition, gesture, and physical interaction with the machine, the copied image became something autonomous again. The copier was never just a technical device for me, it



Claudia Ungersbäck | Venus

became part of the artistic process itself.

Many works in the series appear as fragments, distortions, or traces of movement. How important is the element of chance in your process?

Chance is a very important factor in my work. Many of the pieces emerge accidentially, trough the process itself. Francis Bacon once said something similar – that he often had a fixed idea of what he wanted to produce, but in the end something compleately different appeared. Many works emerged from movement, rhytm, pressure, timing or technical imperfections that could never have been fully planned in advance. Sometimes a failded copy contains more thension than a perfectly controlled image.

The series works with the relationship between original, copy, and representation. Do you see the copy as a loss of the original, or as a new independent image?

The copy is definitely a new work – an original itself. Even through machines are highly precise, they are never precice enough to reproduce every shadow, light, trace, or movement in exactly the same way. There are always slight shifts, losses, disortions, or unexpected details. I do not see the machine as a neutral tool, but as a partner within the process. Together with the machine and it´s own characteristics, imperfections, rhytms, and technical limitations, I create a new original.

Your images often create a sense of temporality, as if the picture is moving or disappearing. How do you work with time inside a still image?

Time in my works emerges through rhytmic movement. The process is similar to making music or dancing with this moving instrument of light that scans the image. I can directly and physically influence the movement, and every material I work with carries an inner sound – to quote Kandinsky.
The photocopier has ist own rhytm, and I have mine. The work develops trough the interaction between this two rhytms. Movement, timing, pressure, interruption, and repetition all become part of the process.
Form e, the copies are almost like frozen tones within a musical composition – brief moments of movement captured inside a static image. Even trough the final work appears still, the temporality of ist creation remains visible trough blurs, disortions, traces and gestures.

Your educational background includes fashion design, printmaking, animation, and philosophy. How do these different fields come together in your artistic practice?

I originally graduated in fashion design, which fundamentally involved a grad deal of drawing: sketches, technical drawings, pattern construction and finally sewing. All of this requires spatial imagination, geometry, craftmansship, and a strong sense of composition.
After studying printmaking and animation, I worked in costume departments for theatre productions. Through experimental theatre productions, I expanded my understanding of design, composition, atmosphere, and staging.
At the same time, philosophy, literature and poetry always deeply interested me. I decided to pursue another course of study. During that period, I realized that alongside reading, writing , and discussing ideas, I was missing something physical and tactile. This realisation made me understand that I would remain an artist.

What do you hope viewers will experience when looking at these works: recognition, uncertainty, memory, discomfort, or something else?

I do not think very much about the viewer in a general sense. But during creation of AINT COPY P, there was also a great deal of anger connected to the intrusion into my data, my life, my work, and my privacy. Where does contact begin, and where does it become intrusion and violence? At what point des one begin to leave a position of powerlessness? And it is that even fully possible?
AINT COPY P is more than simply translating an experience into images or trying to provoke emotions. The series also became a reflection of perseption itself. I worked with sheets involving mirroring and reflections, ranging vom Velásquez to Gerhard Richter, who once said that art is like a mirror. I think the interpretation of that sentence depends entirely on who is looking.
What I truly want is to genuinely see when I look at something – whether at myself of at something unfolding before me. In a way, the folder left on the desktop revealed more about the hackers than about me, just as what others say about my art often reveals more about them than about the work itself.
AINT COPY P also gradually became a feminist series. This development emerged though the sketches, references and materials I consciously selected and transformed – not through the desktop folder itself.
AINT COPY P
PAINT COPY.

Claudia Ungersbäck | Still Move

Hanen Abu Murshed

Hanen is an emerging oil paint and gouache artist. Primarily self taught, her work explores monotone shading, and realism. She draws inspiration from daily life and natural landscapes.

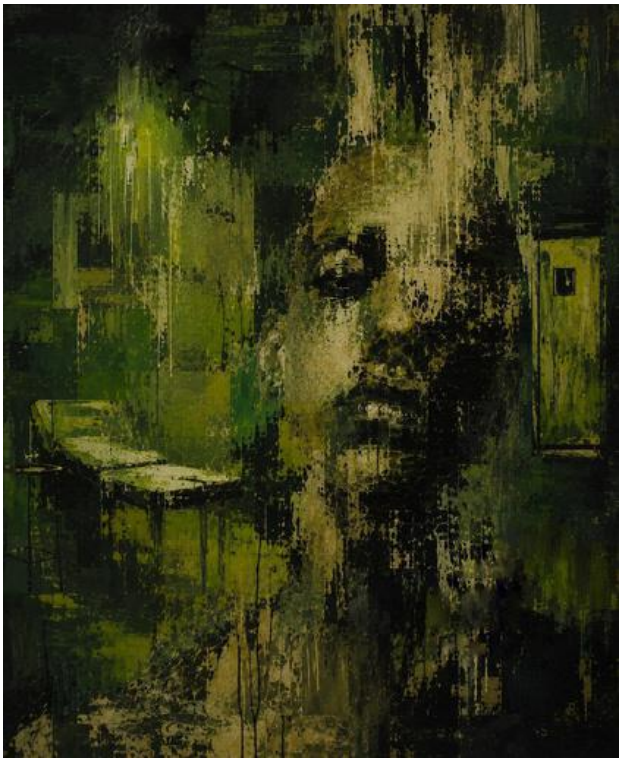
Project Statement
I like creating artworks that have a spin on realism and reality.

Hanen Abu Murshed | Pink Dunes

Gabriela Reginata

Your work brings together dermatology, anatomy, and visual art. How did your medical background begin to influence your artistic language?

Medicine trained me to look closely, but art allowed me to look inward. Through years of observing patients, I became increasingly aware that the body is never only physical, it also carries emotion, tension, insecurity, and personal history. That realization slowly transformed the way I approached painting. Instead of treating the body as something anatomical or descriptive, I began using it as a language for exploring human presence and emotional complexity.

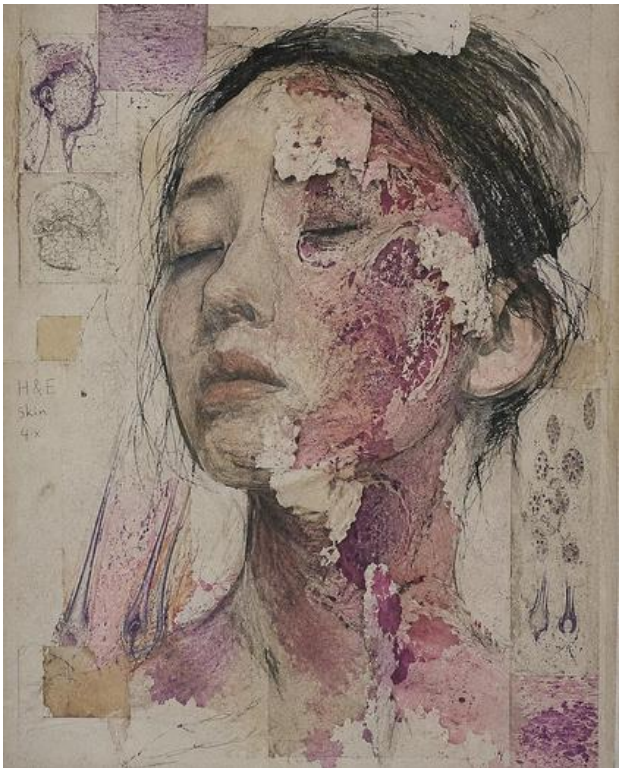


Gabriela Reginata | Green Room | 2025

Skin appears in your works not only as a physical surface, but also as an emotional and psychological space. What does the idea of "skin" mean to you as an artist?

I see skin as the most intimate threshold of the human experience. It is where the internal and external worlds meet. Skin can protect us, but it can also expose us, emotionally as much as physically. I'm interested in how it absorbs traces of time, touch, fatigue, and memory. In my work, skin becomes less about anatomy and more about sensitivity, perception, and the quiet vulnerability of being seen.

Many of your portraits are fragmented, layered, or partially obscured. Why is fragmentation important in the way you represent the human body?



Gabriela Reginata | Microscopic Self | 2026

I'm drawn to fragmentation because it feels closer to the way people actually experience themselves. Identity is rarely stable or fully visible; it is layered by memory, emotion, and social perception. By interrupting or partially concealing the figure, I want the body to feel unresolved and psychologically alive rather than complete or fixed. The fragmented image allows space for ambiguity, which I think is essential to the human condition.

Your paintings often balance beauty and vulnerability. How do you approach this tension in your creative process?

I'm interested in beauty that feels fragile rather than perfect. During the painting process, I often build delicate surfaces and then disrupt them through erasure, layering, or distortion. That tension between control and instability is important to me because it mirrors emotional experience itself. I want the work to retain tenderness, but also a sense of discomfort or emotional exposure beneath the surface.

In your statement, you mention that your works are not meant to document disease, but to translate human experience. How do you avoid a purely clinical reading of the body?

Clinical observation seeks precision and certainty, whereas my work is more concerned with atmosphere and emotional resonance. I intentionally avoid presenting the body as something to be analyzed or diagnosed. Instead, I use abstraction and ambiguity to shift attention toward sensation, memory, and psychological presence. Even though medicine shaped the way I observe details, painting allows me to move beyond the clinical and into something more poetic and human.

How does your experience of observing patients affect the way you understand identity, fragility, and memory?

Working with patients made me aware of how deeply the body shapes a person's sense of self. Small physical changes can alter confidence, intimacy, and the way someone occupies space in the world. Those encounters taught me that fragility is not exceptional, it is universal. I also became fascinated by how memory seems to exist physically, through posture, tension, scars, or gestures that reveal experiences words often cannot articulate.

What do you hope viewers feel or question when they encounter your work?

I hope the work creates a moment of pause, a space where viewers become more aware of their own relationship with the body, perception, and emotional exposure. I'm not interested in giving fixed meanings. Instead, I want the paintings to feel open, intimate, and slightly unresolved, so that each viewer can enter them through their own experiences, emotions, and memories.

Gabriela Reginata | Lunar Anatomy | 2026

Leo Arcelay-Christiano

Leo Christiano is a multidisciplinary artist working across digital and physical media. Having been out as a transgender man since the age of thirteen, his work draws from years of navigating gender dysphoria, masculinity, sexuality, and the complicated relationship between the body and self-perception. Through intimate and emotionally driven imagery, Christiano explores discomfort, vulnerability, transformation, and identity, often using fragmented figures and distortion to reflect the tension between familiarity and disconnection within the body.

Project Statement
In Between Skin is an evolving series of digital artworks exploring gender dysphoria, body dysmorphia, sexuality, and the shifting relationship between the body and self-perception.

Lilah Levesque is a mixed media artist known for creating colorful and illustrative works in a variety of styles and subject matters. Her subject matters range from more illustrative character focused work to her playful food illustrations as seen in this journal. She doesn't work in a specific medium because she loves the ability to blend traditional and digital mediums to create interesting textures, and color schemes.

Project Statement
This collection of pieces is my love letter to all things desserts and sweets. I wanted to create this playful series about sharing food and forming community around food and the memories that we associate with food and time. I hope that each piece might remind the viewer about a dessert that they shared with someone and how so much memory is not only tied to the people in a moment but also what we were eating. Donuts being the main desserts because donuts are a communal dessert.

Lilah Levesque | A Box of Donuts | 2026

Lilah Levesque | Sprinkles and Donuts | 2026

Lilah Levesque | Kids Collage | 2026

Yasmine Ammar

Your work is deeply rooted in cultural dialogue and spatial storytelling. Growing up in Casablanca and traveling extensively, how have different cultures shaped your design philosophy and the way you approach space?

I was born and bred in Casablanca, which is one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the region, and learned three different languages at a young age. That combination inevitably attunes the mind to new cultures and perspectives, and makes it insatiably curious about the world. I've also traveled extensively, and beyond visiting historical sites – which I love – I make a point to fully immerse myself in the local scene, meet new people, and hear their stories. The most fascinating ones have come from those with whom I share very little in common. We can learn so much, both about ourselves and the world around us, if we simply have the empathy to listen. And at its core, storytelling is rooted in empathy. The stories I've heard – from an elderly fisherman in a small coastal town in Sicily to a Greek monk living an eremitic lifestyle – are pieces I've gathered to shape how I tell stories through the spaces I design, each deeply anchored in a historical and/or cultural context. The goal is to create work that moves, teaches, informs, or ideally, all of the above, and resonates over time.

Yasmine Ammar | Dar Fez Hotel Bathroom | 2022

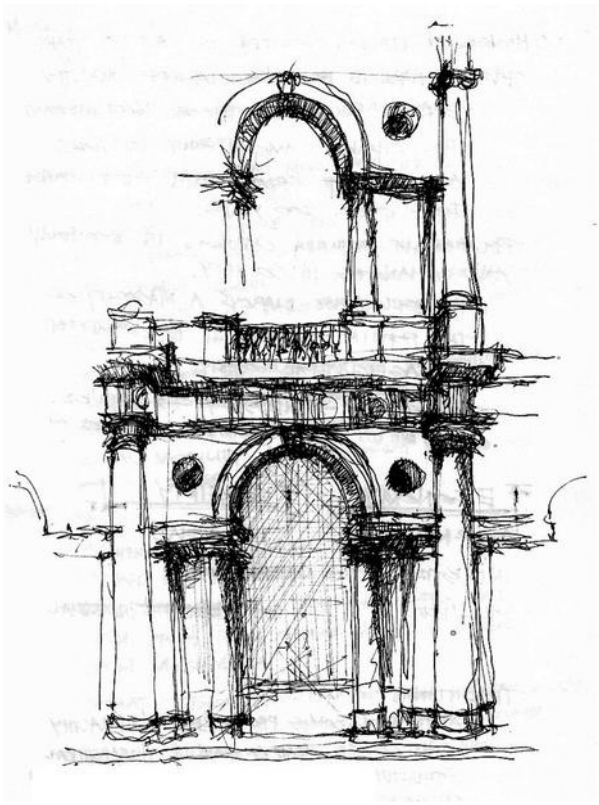
Yasmine Ammar | Palm Springs Residence Living Room | 2022

Your projects often unfold as carefully choreographed journeys, guiding visitors through sequences of transition and transformation. How do you design these spatial narratives, and what role does architecture play in shaping emotional or even psychological change?

The guest's journey is the soul of my work. In architectural terms, it's known as the architectural promenade. It's a modernist concept introduced by Le Corbusier that describes a choreographed journey through a space where different perspectives unfold and reveal themselves in a deliberate, rhythmic sequence, almost like a narrative or musical composition. My aim is to do just that: create a compelling program, narrated through a carefully choreographed sequence, that allows users to experience the program gradually rather than all at once. In that sense, architecture goes beyond spatial organization. It subtly shapes perception, how one feels, and how one experiences a space as they move through it.

The idea of thresholds - transitions between states, spaces, and experiences - appears to be central to your work. What draws you to this concept, and how do you express it architecturally?

As we enter new phases in our lives, we encounter and traverse multiple thresholds. Some of my design approaches are simply an ode to the idea of transition itself. What draws me to thresholds is that they exist in-between states; they are neither here nor there, but something in motion. Conceptually, they carry profound meaning: they are the portals through which change is experienced, not as rupture, but as a gradual unfolding. Spatially, I express this through sequences rather than static moments, through shifts in light, scale, texture, scent, and rhythm that gently reorient the



Yasmine Ammar | Palladio Basilica | 2018

body. The aim is to make transition felt rather than simply passed through.

In your Palm Springs residence, you combine mid-century modern, Bauhaus, and elements of cinematic glamour. What interests you about bringing these aesthetics together, and how do you ensure harmony between them?

This one-story home is located in Old Las Palmas, Palm Springs, and is rooted in its immediate context, where mid-century modernism is inseparable from the desert landscape and its emphasis on indoor-outdoor living. From there, a dialogue was created between mid-century modern and Bauhaus influences, which naturally align in their clarity of form and structure, to create harmony between the architecture and its interiors. Subtle references to California's cinematic history and New Hollywood glamour are woven in through materiality, tone, and sequencing, rather than applied as an overt stylistic layer. I'm a bit of a film and fashion buff, so working on a project where I could draw inspiration from those two worlds was a dream. The intention was to let all of these influences coexist in harmony, so the experience feels elegant, grounded, and specific to place.

Your work moves fluidly between expressive, almost sculptural gestures and refined minimalism. How do you navigate this tension, and how does it influence the final spatial experience?

I'm interested in the tension between expressive, almost sculptural gestures and refined minimalism, and I don't see them as opposing forces. For me, the most compelling spaces come from combining both, rather than committing to a single, fixed language. I think that contrast creates depth and intrigue, and keeps the work from feeling monolithic and dull. Most of my projects also integrate smart systems that support wellness and sustainability goals in ways that feel seamless, intuitive, and human-centered. Ultimately, I'm less interested in rules than in creating spatial experiences that evoke a reaction; if a space makes you feel something and leaves you longing to return after you've gone, then it has achieved its goal.

When working with clients who have strong creative backgrounds, such as in your Palm Springs project, what challenges and opportunities arise in the design process?

It can be both fun and challenging at the same time, especially when working with clients who come in with a strong creative vision of their own. In this case, there's a real dialogue that forms, and at times, interesting push-pull moments that do bear fruits when handled carefully. I actually find that part of the process very enriching on both ends. I'm always up for a good challenge, and I see it as an opportunity to push myself forward while staying focused on a shared end goal.

Your sketches feel spontaneous and emotionally charged, while your interiors are highly controlled and precise. How do these two modes of expression inform one another within your practice?

My sketches are almost always instinctive and capture subjects and first ideas without constraint. The interiors are where those impulses are refined into something more controlled, precise, and intentional, as significantly more time and work go into them. When working on a project, sketching is essential because it allows me to brainstorm tangibly and through an iterative process, give form to an idea and what the final product could become. This conversation reminds me that I need to pick up Formgiving by Bjarke Ingels Group. It's essentially a visionary manifesto that explores how design can "give form" to the future through sustainability, technology, culture, and speculative thinking. I think everything Bjarke touches turns to gold, and if you're a design nerd, you should definitely check it out.

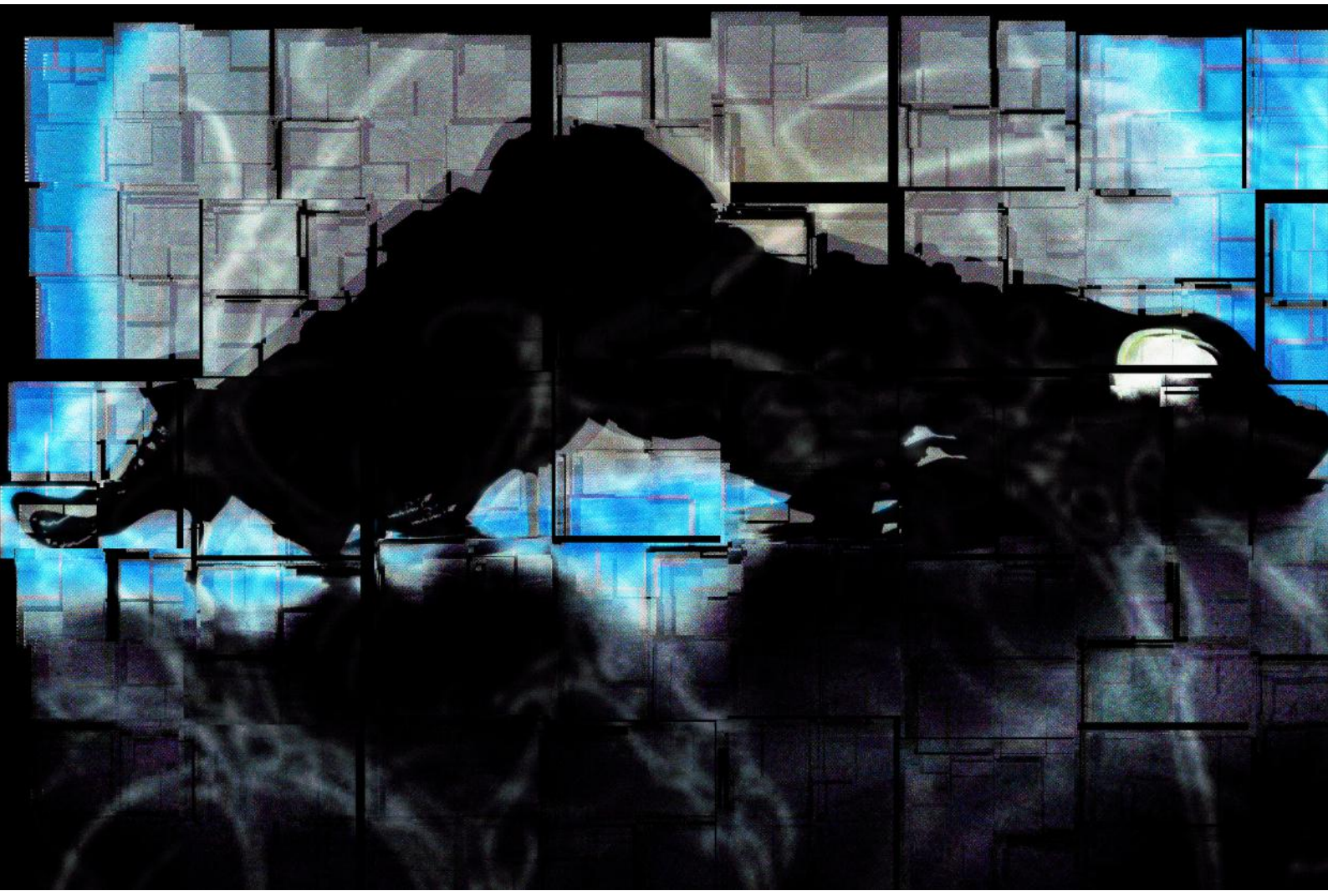
Ultimately, what kind of emotional or sensory experience do you hope people take away when they enter a space designed by you?

My approach is narrative-driven and tech-forward. Once I have a compelling story, informed by thorough research into the cultural and historical context and usually held together by different pillars, I know I have a solid foundation on which to build the rest of the work. The dots connect themselves after that point, and the rest of the design process becomes fluid and cohesive. Ultimately, I hope people feel fully immersed in the spaces I design, both emotionally and sensorially. I want the experience to go beyond the visual and awaken a deeper awareness of atmosphere, materiality, light, sound, and movement. If a space creates an experience so rich and layered that it makes someone feel something, whether that's curiosity, nostalgia, calm, tension, or awe, and stay with them long after they've left it, then I've achieved my goal. But the truth is, creative processes are never truly finished, and artists, designers, architects — the ones who are deeply passionate about their craft — know this. I can only abandon a project, never truly finish it.

Eli'as Wonglicht

Born and raised in the city of Ufa, Republic of Bashkortostan. I have been drawing and photographing since childhood; art has been my breath throughout my life. Many of my works reflect my perception of the world and the states of my soul.

Project Statement
Ghost of Storm is a work inspired by the sea, seashells, and future technologies. It reflects a mind immersed in the digital world and shows how the soul becomes distorted under the influence of other worlds that are beyond human understanding. The work was created in January 2024.



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