MARYPENG

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— *Intro*

Anna Gvozdeva

Curator of
Visual Art Journal

Hello dear reader,

I'm delighted to welcome you to the pages of Issue 27 of our magazine. And I say "our" for a reason — because this is truly a collective effort: the editorial team, the artists who took part, and of course, you — our readers, who support and inspire us.

We're standing at the threshold of summer, which in the northern hemisphere means a time of rest, inspiration, and solar energy that fuels the creation of new things.

Some will soak up every moment under the open sky, others will seek shade, and some will capture the sunlight on canvas — so that, come winter, it brings warmth and comfort just by its image.

Nature and weather are often powerful sources of artistic inspiration. What else is so close and yet constantly changing — evoking new feelings, moods, and memories?

Make yourself comfortable — over a hundred pages filled with art, color, and emotion await you. Happy reading!

On the Front Cover:
Mary L. Peng
A Song of Eternity
2023

On the Back Cover:
Julia Shilo
SEPIA IMMERSION
2024

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

Interview

Mary L. Peng

Your work often explores the delicate boundaries between reality and illusion, as seen in your Dimension Chi Dreamscape Collages. Can you describe how you approach blending the abstract with the physical in your art?

In my creative practice, I often return to what Nikola Tesla said, "if you wish to understand the Universe think of energy, frequency, and vibration. Perhaps the abstract and the physical are not opposites but two resonant frequencies of the same reality. Making spatial compositions where dreams and familiar physical scenes cohabitate pays tribute to that thought. I find that approach soothing and exhilarating at the same time because it's not about creating illusion for illusion's sake, but about rendering an alternate way of sense-making and seeing that still feels viscerally real.

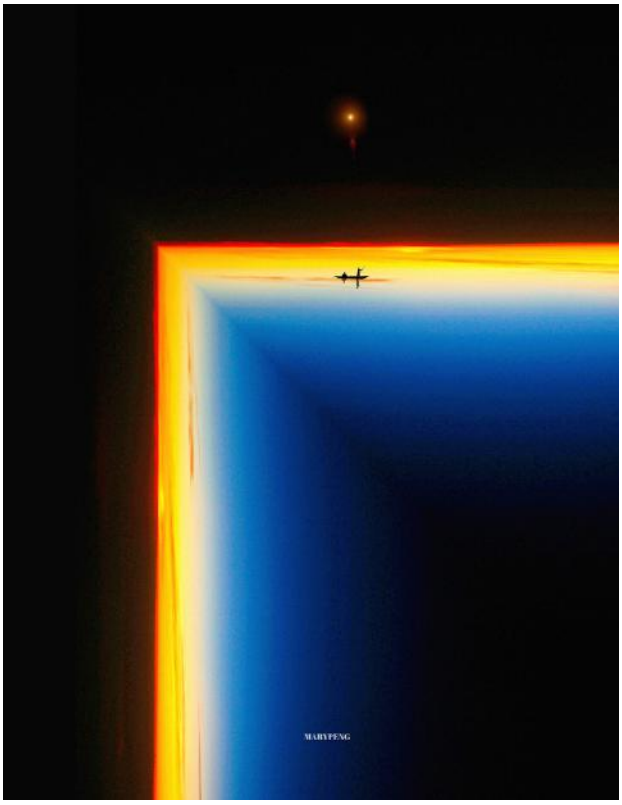
The Holographic Principle and Observer Effect are central to your Dimension Chi Dreamscapes. How do these theories influence your creative process?

I wouldn't say they are central to every piece, but they have definitely been sources of inspirations. I often find quantum mechanics extremely poetic. My understanding of these theories is of course limited in many ways, but they led me to reflect on the participatory nature of perception. The observer effect broadly refers the phenomenon where the act of observing or measuring a system influences the system's behavior. I try to approach my pieces as a kind of play with perception, where the act of how to look or where to look becomes a central part of the artwork itself.
The Holographic Principle—the idea that all the information in our three-dimensional universe could be encoded on a two-dimensional boundary, much like how a hologram contains a full 3D image—feels exhilarating to me. So I thought it might be fun to create compositions that visually show 3D spaces through "flatness", particularly by collapsing the boundary between surface and depth. Interestingly, the online community whimsically dubbed one of my series "flat earth," which I found hilarious and oddly genius. That unexpected nickname actually nudged me to dig deeper into the Holographic Principle and its philosophical implications. These concepts don't serve as strict guides in my work, but they open imaginative paths that allow me to play with visual experiences that feel fluid.

Mary L. Peng | Echoes of the Sky | 2025

What does the interplay between nature, perception, mysticism, and the human body mean to you, and how do you translate that into your multimedia pieces?

This is probably one of the weightier questions in this interview. I can never claim I know how to fully answer this question, but I will try to share my understanding, one that I hope will constantly evolve, to the best of my ability here. To me, they share the kind of relationships that feel fundamental to why we should never cease to harbor humility towards nature and the universe at large. Nature births the body; the body attempts to make sense of nature, both physically and cognitively, through perception; perception is inevitably limited, leading to a body that is rarely able to comprehend its connection with nature to the fullest extent. As an individual, nature grounds me, perception refracts my reality, mysticism keeps things beautifully uncertain, and the body is where all of it becomes sensation and memory.
Some of the things that often come to mind in this regard include: "The sound of water says what I think" (Zhuangzi, a prominent Chinese Taoist philosopher who lived around the 4th century BCE during the Warring States period); "Nature always wears the colors of the spirit" (Ralph Waldo Emerson, an American poet and philosopher who led the



Mary L. Peng | Immortal Twilight | 2024

Transcendentalist movement in the mid-19th century); "The ability to perceive or think differently is more important than the knowledge gained" (David Bohm, an American scientist considered one of the most influential theoretical physicists of the 20th century, known for introducing unconventional ideas to quantum theory, neuropsychology, and the philosophy of mind). In my creative practice, I gravitate towards that atmospheric expression, which is perhaps my body's way of honoring and grasping that something universal in our relationships with nature, perception, and our shared encounters with mystical thoughts.

You mention transcendentalism as a guiding philosophy in your art. How do the transcendentalist ideas of individualism and connection to nature shape your creative vision?

I believe in the inherent goodness of humanity, but also that within our experiences, we inevitably encounter the antithesis of that goodness. I feel most at ease when I'm in nature or in my imagination where I'm completely utterly overpoweringly immersed in nature or the outer space.
During my time studying abroad in college, I focused on 19th-century American and British literary encounters. I remember falling hopelessly in love with romanticist and transcendental poetry. At the risk of sounding insane, I felt such a live connection, a connection that felt alive, that felt saturated with the liveliest passion and excitement, with all the poets who of course had long since passed. That resonance, as I sat with it, perhaps came from a universal resonance that aligned with my perception of the world, our solitude and our oneness within it.
Rather than shaping my creative vision, I would say it grounds my creative goal. I create not to explain the world, but to stand still with it, in awe.

In your Light Forms and Cartographers of Life collections, you explore animate and inanimate bodies in ethereal forms. What do you hope the viewer takes away from these abstract representations of life and nature?

I hope the viewer feels a sense of oneness with nature, with light, with other beings, and a sense of suspended time and fractured separation —a momentary dissolution of separation between themselves and all else. By abstracting bodies and nature into light frequencies, I try to think of it as my way of writing love letters to a way of seeing and feeling life, one that is not as fixed, but as porous, luminous, connected, and entangled.

How has your experience with digital platforms, such as Adobe Creative Cloud and Photoshop, influenced the way you approach and execute your collages and digital works?

I used to think precision would be the greatest gift that digital tools could offer me but then I realized it's actually their fluidity that has fundamentally shaped my creative process, that "control Z" functionality and the myriad possibilities it creates. The simple existence of "Control Z" opens up a way of working that's more experimental, forgiving, and playfully nonlinear—more like thinking in layers than executing in lines. In a way, it's like how dreams work – where time and actions can be bent, undone, and reshaped without consequence. That dreamlike flexibility and fluidity is what digital tools have given my process: a space where revision becomes a form of discovery rather than correction.
As we're talking, I'm suddenly realizing—maybe that's why my pieces are called dreamscapes! It's kind of hilarious and thrilling to think the "Control Z" key might be the architect of my entire digital aesthetic. Medium is the massage! The process mirrors the architecture of dreaming itself: fluid, nonlinear, layered, intuitive, and forgiving. "Dreamscapes" aren't just about what the work looks like, but how it comes into being—through the same kind of malleable perception and sense-making that governs our inner cognition and dreams.

Your paintings explore the embodiment of abandon and the liminal space between sensibility and intentionality. How do you balance emotional expression with the intentionality of your technique?

When it comes to interacting with physical paint, my process is rooted in my hope to surrender, surrendering to not knowing how I'll get to that stopping point of completion or satisfaction, or whether I will ever get there at all. As for techniques, I don't really have any set techniques to be honest I rarely use paintbrushes; I prefer to use my hands or whatever's around me—scrap paper, paper towels, plastic bags, forks—anything that can help me create something that feels like motion. For me, there is no balance to be struck between expression and the intentionality of technique; there's no separation between them — they're one and the same.

Interview

Daniel Pastor Valero

Your work explores the intersection of technology, design, and photography. How do you integrate these different mediums into a cohesive artistic vision?

My approach always begins with a question. Sometimes that question arises from my relationship with and understanding of technology, which often leads me to explore emotional issues around how we interact with it. Design — through minimalist composition, the geometry of the egg, and negative space — helps me build a clear visual narrative. It becomes the framework that supports the emotional core of the image.
In that way, I bring together technology, design, and photography through an intuitive and emotional process.

Your project, "El Camino del Huevo," uses the egg as a powerful symbol. Can you elaborate on the significance of this symbol and how it relates to the themes of life and time?

Daniel Pastor Valero | Sal del marco

The egg is a fundamental symbol in my artwork — within its intriguing geometry it holds the promise of life, the fragility of existence, and the mystery of transformation into something new. In El Camino del Huevo, I use this symbol to explore two key themes:
Human fragility: The eggshell is both strong and delicate. It reflects how our thoughts can protect us from life's experiences, yet that same shell can sometimes crack.
Time and transformation: An egg is not a static object — something is always unfolding inside it. It speaks to the passage of time and the process of change. Each photograph captures a moment suspended in that timeline.
When looking at these images, viewers may find themselves reflected in different phases of their own lives, depending on their personal experiences.

You describe your creative process as intuitive and emotional. Can you walk us through how a particular piece comes to life, from the initial idea to the final photograph?

My creative process usually begins with an emotion or a question about the human condition. Sometimes it's sparked by personal experiences, other times by observing those around me. I capture that initial feeling through both verbal and visual sketches — combining notes in my notebook with a digital moodboard where I explore the shapes, light, and textures of the egg. From there, I design the composition using minimalist and geometric principles, carefully defining the frame, background, and lighting so that the ovoid shape becomes the narrative center.
In most of my photographs, I build the objects entirely by hand — they either share the scene with the egg or form the setting around it. I don't use digital postproduction or artificial intelligence in my work.
During the act of photographing, I also embrace minimalism

Daniel Pastor Valero | Es mío

— always using the same type of lens and the simplest lighting setup possible, often with just one or two lights.

In your artistic journey, you've received several awards and recognitions. How have these accolades influenced your approach to art, if at all?

Awards and recognitions are always a joy — a kind of external validation — but they haven't changed the way I create. What they have done is strengthen my confidence in continuing to explore this artistic path. Rather than influencing the content or style of my work, these acknowledgments have encouraged me to go deeper, to take more risks conceptually, and to commit to ideas that invite contemplation and reflection. In a way, they confirm that the emotional dialogue I'm trying to establish with the viewer is actually happening — and that's incredibly motivating.

Your photography aims to evoke curiosity and self-reflection in the viewer. How do you ensure that your work invites personal interpretation rather than providing straightforward answers?

I try to make each image an open door rather than a closed statement. Even though I always start from a clear idea, the themes I explore are universal, and that allows each viewer to respond in their own unique way. I work through minimalism, removing any unnecessary narrative elements and leaving space for the viewer to complete the meaning from their own experience. I'm not looking to illustrate a specific idea, but rather to suggest an emotion or a state of being. I also avoid using titles that might steer interpretation — I prefer the images to speak through what's visual and sensory, creating an internal dialogue within the viewer. Because to me, the most valuable quality of art lies in its ability to open up intimate spaces for reflection in those who engage with it.

You mention using minimalism to convey deep emotions. How does minimalism impact the viewer's connection to your work?

Minimalism, in my work, is not just an aesthetic choice — it's a tool to create emotional space. By reducing visual elements to the essentials, I leave room for the viewer to fill in the image with their own story, emotions, or memories. I believe that the less visual noise there is, the easier it becomes to hear what we carry inside. The egg, with its pure and symbolic form, fits perfectly within this approach: it suggests many things without stating any of them explicitly.

What is your personal relationship with the egg as a symbol in your work, and how do you think it resonates with a diverse audience?

My relationship with the egg as a symbol carries both a serious side and a light-hearted one, and I believe both coexist well within the project. Sometimes, when I mention that my photographic work revolves around the egg, it's not unusual for people to smile or even make jokes—there are so many wordplays around eggs. That initial reaction doesn't bother me; in fact, I find it valuable. It breaks the distance and sparks curiosity to know more about the work.
But then, when those same people see the images, they often discover a different dimension—more intimate, more reflective. That's when the symbol transforms. The egg stops being just an everyday object and becomes a powerful metaphor for who we are: vulnerable, in constant process, sometimes cracked, sometimes carrying something yet to be born. That dual reading—between the seemingly trivial and the deeply human—is part of what keeps me drawn to it. Because it connects with people in different ways, and that gives it a kind of universality.

Daniel Pastor Valero | Barreras invisibles

Anca Todrican, daughter of the painter Ioan Todrican, was born in Romania in 1985 and showed a strong passion for drawing and painting from a young age. In 2004, after completing her studies, she moved to Rome, where she began an artistic collaboration at the studio of master Fausto Battelli. In 2018, she held her first solo exhibition at the contemporary art space in Campo Boario, Rome; she then exhibited nationally and internationally, notably in Paris in 2024 at the Thuilleier Gallery. Over the past five years, her works have been acquired by collectors in Germany, France, Hong Kong, and Japan. In 2010, Anca Todrican opened her own studio in Rome and began her artistic career, experimenting with an abstract language imbued with a strong expressionist vein. Her works, born from a creative impulse and created using brush and palette knife, with a preference for acrylic on canvas, are dominated by the energy of gesture and color contrasts. They symbolize the power of nature and its ever-changing essence, expressed through rapid and intense strokes of color on jagged, shifting fields. This search conveys the connection between man and nature, representing the paths of life marked by a continual struggle between unstoppable events and the desire for harmony and peace. Her desire to delve deeper into the construction of visual space and to concentrate the expressiveness of color within a minimalist choice led Anca Todrican to transform her artistic language. Since 2023, she has been creating new works based on geometric compositions that have no defined limits, blending one color into another, creating large, essential shapes founded on a carefully sought balance between visual weights. White and black dominate, as contrasts of light and dark, giving dimension and strength to the painting, enriched by a single, surprisingly intense and luminous color, filled with energy, which creates defined and contrasting spaces, almost forming a third dimension. Each artwork has its own visual and expressive center, upon which optical constructions converge, characterized by a single, bold palette knife gesture. Her work is a reflection on existence and the need to express oneself; in the vast, timeless space of her canvases, the artist represents life itself, the need for boundaries and at the same time for the merging of souls, the desire for harmony and yet the expression of one's vital energy, ultimately marking one's own unique history through that solitary and intense gesture.

Polina Kniaz-Petukhovsky

Your work explores themes of childhood trauma and emotional struggles. How do you translate these intensely personal experiences into your art?

It would be more correct to say that I explore intense emotions, including emotions caused by childhood memories and acute situations which still linger in the body and mind. They not only cause internal dialogues but also affect our decisions and actions. I do not bring only personal experience to my work. I am susceptible, and I feel the states of people, how they think, and what problems they have. I aim to dig deeper. Afterwards, I imagine how these internal cartoons would look on canvas or in clay. However, I do not focus on the negative outcome; I work with trauma and transform it into an inspiring and beautiful configuration throughout my work.

Polina Kniaz-Petukhovsky | I See You | 2025

You often use vivid colours and symbolic forms in your compositions. What role do colour and symbolism play in your work, and how do they help convey the hidden meanings behind your pieces?

Vivid colours are natural for me as they cause the most intense response. Symbolic forms also come naturally to me as I do not think of the form when I draw. I focus on the transformation of forms, feelings, and meanings I would love to imprint into my work.

Feminist themes seem to be at the core of your practice. How do you approach the concept of womanhood and identity in a world that constantly challenges and questions them?

Feminist themes are essential for me as I am inspired by powerful women who gain more and more weight in society. Female feelings are also commonly considered to be too intense,

inappropriate, and vast. Women are taught to tame their inner monsters and voices instead of investigating what they call for.

Your work often involves surrealistic and dreamlike imagery. Can you talk about how you blend reality with fantasy in your art?

I used to blend reality with fantasy, but from now on, I decided to be bolder in my expressions and rarely use non-imaginary forms.

You employ clay and oil paints in your practice, using glazing techniques and meticulous detailing. What draws you to these mediums, and how do they help you express the complexities of your themes?

I love gradients and detailed work; they add volume and pleasure to my perception.

You've moved frequently and studied in different countries - how have other cultures influenced your artistic practice or your approach to creating art?

Polina Kniaz-Petukhovsky
Conception
2023

Polina Kniaz-Petukhovsky
Damaged Truth
2023

I have lived in six countries, including the UAE. However, my path to becoming a visual artist was not straightforward. Although I had always had a strong interest in art, I started my career when I settled in Dubai. In my visual practices, I do not look for inspiration from the outside; I focus on internal processes. So, I can say that my art is affected not by different cultures but by meeting different people and personal growth as a woman, a human, a wife, an entrepreneur, a rescue animal advocate and in other social roles.

Your works seem to provoke an intense dialogue with the viewer. How do you want your audience to feel when they engage with your art?

I love that everyone sees something unique in my paintings and that they provoke different opinions and thoughts. However, I want my audience to feel grounded, calm and inspired after an encounter with my work.

Daniel Bellman (b. 1977) is an Italian-American photographer based in New York City. Discovering a fascination for analog cameras and film at an early age, he started taking pictures in his twenties in his spare time, always working with analog cameras and film. His occasional but long-standing dedication to photography — mainly practiced on the street — is revealed by a distinctive style born of an innate skill for capturing harmonious compositions, a keen awareness of the subtleties of light, and a narrative quality stemming from a solid background in the art of filmmaking.

Project Statement
Bystanders is a series portraying random people in the act of standing, sitting, or walking by. Tiny figures enclosed within stark geometric settings, the subjects are caught in the act of walking away, waiting for something, or staring in the distance, giving the impression that all these separate individuals ultimately share a common desire: to break free of the confines of their isolation, and hopefully connect with their neighboring bystanders.

Daniel Bellman | Bystanders

Daniel Bellman | Bystanders

— *Interview*

Harry Simmonds

Your portraits are deeply expressive yet entirely monochromatic. What draws you to working exclusively in black and white?

Although my work is figurative, it's vital to me that the marks possess a spontaneity and life of their own — something that allows the paintings to function abstractly as well. Black and white helps me concentrate on that. When I first began making figurative work, I simplified things by focusing solely on drawing, starting with charcoal. Over time, I introduced Indian ink and eventually white paint. I'm not opposed to using colour one day, but I don't yet feel I've exhausted what black and white has to offer.

How do you choose your sitters? What qualities or energy do you look for in a person before painting them?

My current sitters are professional life models who approached me, so I didn't actively choose them — I didn't even know what they looked like before they arrived. The more time I spend looking at a model, the more I discover in their features, and they usually become increasingly compelling to me as subjects. I tend to pick up on how the model is feeling during the sitting — if they're uncomfortable, I can often sense it. Professional models are particularly helpful because they're used to holding poses for long periods.

Many of your brushstrokes seem impulsive, raw, even chaotic — yet they build incredibly coherent portraits. How do you balance control and spontaneity in your process?

To achieve that kind of mark-making, I need to enter an intense, focused state where I'm no longer self-conscious — where the marks emerge almost automatically rather than through calculated effort. Psychologists refer to this as a 'flow' state. It works best when I paint with feeling and instinct, rather than intellect alone. For me, painting is a process of discovery. I want to surprise myself. That's why I often relinquish some control — to allow for chance and accident.

Do you see your work as more psychological or emotional? What are you hoping to reveal about the sitter — or the viewer?

I think the best portraits do more than represent an individual — they also say something about humanity. Not symbolically or allegorically, but through a different way of seeing. Often it's because they avoid

sentimentality that they feel more truthful. Each time I look at a model, I try to imagine it's the first time I've ever seen a human being. That visual shock is what I aim to communicate. I hope the final painting carries a presence that feels almost physically tangible.
The artist's role, I believe, is to create something that others can connect with — to move them emotionally — but also to reimagine the world and help viewers see things differently.

How important is abstraction in your figurative work? Do you consider your portraits faithful likenesses or emotional interpretations?

I don't really think in terms of likeness — it's the model's presence that matters to me. I believe that to make a subject feel more real, some level of abstraction is necessary. Take Madame Tussaud's waxworks: they're incredibly detailed and accurate, yet they can feel oddly lifeless. I aim for something that feels more alive than literal.

Could you describe your process — from the moment someone enters your studio to the final brushstroke?

I typically have many paintings of a single model going at once — sometimes as many as ten — and I work on all of them in a single session. I ask the model to set a timer and hold each pose for a few minutes before moving on to the next, looping back again at the end. This fast pace forces me to work with urgency.

The process is very physical — my sitters often say it looks more like fencing than painting! I use all kinds of tools: brushes, rags, knives, spatulas, feathers, fingers, syringes — whatever produces the right mark.
It's easy to go blind to mistakes after staring at a painting too long, so I often check it in a mirror to see it with fresh eyes. I paint on paper, which I love for the way it absorbs paint. When the surface becomes too overworked, I tend to abandon it and start again with the same pose. So although the paintings may appear to be done quickly, they usually evolve over many days, weeks, or even months.
Sometimes a painting ends with a kind of crescendo — it's clearly finished. Other times, it feels like you're simply walking away. Painting is a bit like gambling: you have to decide whether to settle or take a risk to push it further, even if that means losing what you've already achieved. The best results often come from being willing to take that risk.

What role does discomfort, distortion, or ambiguity play in your compositions?

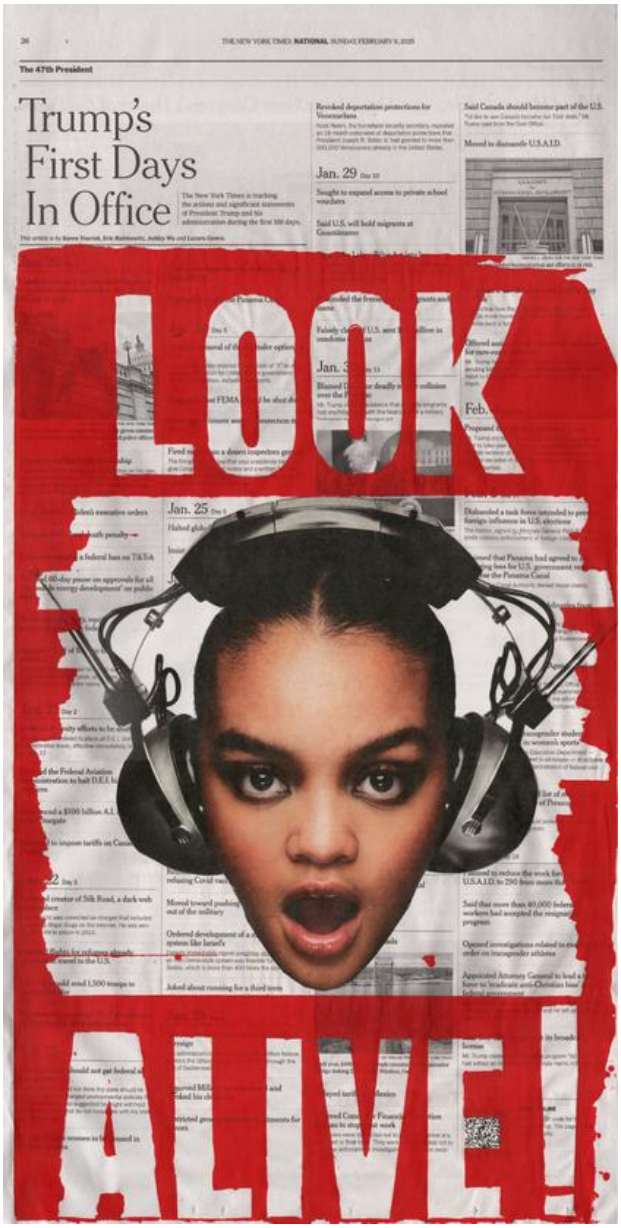
It's essential that the paintings function not just as figurative images, but also as abstract compositions. I'll often look at them upside down to assess the quality of the marks or the balance of the form. I don't set out to distort — I just do whatever I feel the painting needs in order to feel more alive.

Michelle Quirós
Self-portrait photographer & Visual storyteller Panamanian photographer and graphic designer based in Huelva for over 20 years. Her photographs tell a story mainly in black and white. From a more intimate perspective, she explores and documents, through details and self-portraits, the daily life and being a woman, female maturity and the emotions generated by the passage of time.

Project Statement
The Panamenian series is the nostalgia for the land, the longing for the roots and the blood that runs through the veins. Through these snapshots, you will discover the most unknown Panamanian culture: the beads made by the Ngäbe Buglé Indians, the traditional footwear of the Panamanian peasant, the pre-Columbian huaca as an amulet of good fortune and the sombrero montuno. Bare feet | Self-Portrait Nagua decorated with geometric motifs of the Ngäbe Buglé indians. The nagua, traditional Ngäbe dress, is a long robe made with bright colors and is distinguished by its elaborate and well-known designs of geometric figures. The Ngäbe Buglé indians, located in the montains of western Panama, are part of the largest indigenous comarca in the country. The are a living testimony of the rich culture and traditions of the indigenous groups of Panama, being one of the oldest indigenous cultures in Central America.

Michelle Quiros | Bare feet | 2023

Chelsea Ferguson



Chelsea Ferguson | Look Alive | 2025

How did your background in advertising and marketing influence your transition into visual art?

Advertising is one of the most ubiquitous, and pervasive, forms of visual communication there is. Working in the industry for so long taught me how to master a specific kind of visual language, one that's accessible given how familiar everyone is with it. Like it or not. Advertising is also about efficiency and effectiveness of messaging, which has greatly influenced my style.
In my current work I'm looking to do a lot, well, in one hardworking image. I'm using a lot of that same visual grammar I learned in Advertising to efficiently and effectively express myself, rather than communicate on behalf of a brand. I'd also like to think that beyond expressing myself, I'm working to advertise an idea, a concept. To market a point of view, in hopes that a viewer will recognize, understand, or connect with what I'm saying.

Your work often intersects with pop culture—what draws you to this subject matter, and how do you choose the references you include?

I like that pop culture, or the zeitgeist, creates a common language of shared references. And, it's one thing to share an opinion or a feeling, but adding a metaphor or simile using this common language allows us to add depth and layers of meaning to that opinion or feeling. In everyday conversation I'm constantly quoting movies, songs, TV shows to color what I'm communicating. On a canvas, it adds an intimacy to the conversational feeling of my work.
I definitely prioritize references that reflect my unique point of view. And I love how doing so helps keep the memory of important and valuable cultural artifacts alive. I also choose references based on how well, and how quickly, they telegraph a sentiment. Though, I am not afraid to ask the viewer to work a bit harder to get the reference. After all, I am not trying to introduce so much as I am working to remind. There's an expectation of familiarity that is also commentary on the references.

In your current series In Conversation, you use newsprint as a canvas. What does this material represent for you?

Newsprint is interesting to me for a lot of reasons: It's a larger format – providing a lot of room to get an idea out. It reveals a lot about my process in the final result – crinkling and creasing from paint or glue. It decays – showing the passage of time earning more and more color. And there is a lot happening within the content itself – the news that has been printed. All of these

Chelsea Ferguson | Make Me Wanna Holler...And Throw Up Both My Hands | 2025

things add a richness to the narrative I'm trying to construct and provide many levers to pull when it comes to making creative choices.

How do you balance personal expression with archival storytelling in your collages?

I'm not sure I feel the need to. I believe documenting my personal expression is archival storytelling. By responding to the moment, I am preserving it. Each of us, at any given moment, we're having a truly unique experience of the world. I think that's worth archiving in some form, because it will absolutely be worth looking back on for someone else. Even if just one person. Or a future scholar, or librarian.

You describe yourself as a memory keeper of Black popular culture. How does this archival role shape your creative process?

Black American culture is an incredibly high context culture. Even jokes have layers of meaning you often need multiple references to truly appreciate. With the internet, the speed of culture moves so fast, and there's a feeling of "losing recipes" that is often voiced. For me, when once iconic cultural references fall out of vogue, that common language I work in is eroded. My feeling of responsibility in preserving that language informs a lot of the references I choose to use.
As an example: On TikTok I post videos of my process, often soundtracked by a song the news article may have called to mind for me. While reading one particular article I found myself singing aloud, "make me wanna holler, way they do my life..." from Marvin Gaye's "Inner City Blues", and made a print trying to communicate that heartbroken sentiment I was feeling. I don't really care that I won't benefit from trending audio in using that song for a post, but I do care that the song is remembered and remains part of our shared cultural language.

Many of your pieces involve bold text and visual contrast—what role does typography and design play in your work?

Since each creative choice holds meaning, alone and also in relation to each of the other choices, I'm always looking for an opportunity to make a new choice. Whether it's the color of the ink, the size or placement of the letters, texture, dimension. Playing with typography and design reveal more creative choices that not only layer meaning, but also create the space for me to express more accurately. To that end, I have begun experimenting more with drawing my own characters. Me creating my own typefaces is probably the natural next step.

What is the significance of juxtaposing pop culture imagery with political headlines or historic newsprint?

Using pop culture imagery on newsprint, with advertising grammar, is all about my need to deconstruct the world/culture around me (the irony in who we elevate to "celebrity", the movies and shows we're watching, the ads we're seeing, what counts as "news"), reconstruct, and broadcast it in a way that feels most authentic to me.
The pages of The New York Times are a snapshot of history. And, if my work is about responding to the moment, what better canvas than where I am at once becoming informed of, and often viscerally reacting to, the moment. I'm using the visual language(s) I know to document what we're living through. What I think, what my communities think. How we see ourselves.

Interview

Victoria Kukuy

Can you tell us about the first painting you created after moving to Israel? What emotions or memories does it carry?

My first painting in Israel is titled “The Pink Dragon Rests Among Cotton Trees.” It was created during a time of deep transition. I had just repatriated, and everything around me felt unfamiliar and intense. The trees in the painting —massive and strong—were inspired by the local flora, which seemed almost otherworldly to me. In contrast, the dragon is soft, pink, and curled up peacefully. It symbolized vulnerability in this powerful, unknown environment. While it was an honest reflection of how I felt, I don’t consider the painting successful and I rarely revisit it. It brings up emotions that I’ve since moved beyond.

How has the Mediterranean light and architecture influenced your color palette and compositional choices?

Victoria Kukuy | Green eyes pomegranate | 2025

The Mediterranean light nearly blinded me when I first arrived—it was so strong and clear. I became captivated by the stones: sunlit stones, shadowed stones, stone walls and pavements. They seemed alive to me—full of history, strength, and beauty. I painted a lot of stone textures in the beginning. I’ve also fallen in love with Tel Aviv, the city I now call home. It’s lively, colorful, full of contradictions—sometimes messy, sometimes elegant, always bathed in sunlight. That vibrant energy and brightness deeply influence the way I see and paint.

Pomegranates appear in several of your works. What symbolic or personal meaning do they hold for you?

In Israeli culture, pomegranates carry deep symbolic meaning—life, abundance, tradition. I find it important to incorporate such cultural elements into my work. You see pomegranates everywhere here: blooming on trees in the streets, in markets, in souvenir shops—and now in my paintings as well. They’ve become part of my artistic vocabulary, connecting me to the local visual language.

Your works often include elements of surrealism. How do you balance dreamlike imagery with realistic architectural forms?

Each of my paintings tells a story—always based on feelings and emotions. I want to express how

Victoria Kukuy | Old sity woman in red | 2025

I experience Israel, what it means to me, how I'm slowly getting to know it. I live in a world that feels both real and surreal, and I think that naturally comes through in my art. I don't try to separate dream from reality—they exist together in the same space on the canvas, just as they do in life.

What role does memory play in your creative process?

Memory plays a huge role in everything I create. I'm a person with life experience, personal stories, and a strong sense of historical and family memory. All of that inevitably comes through in my paintings. I don't separate memory from art—it's part of me, and therefore part of my work.

How has your experience as a self-taught artist shaped your artistic voice and approach to learning?

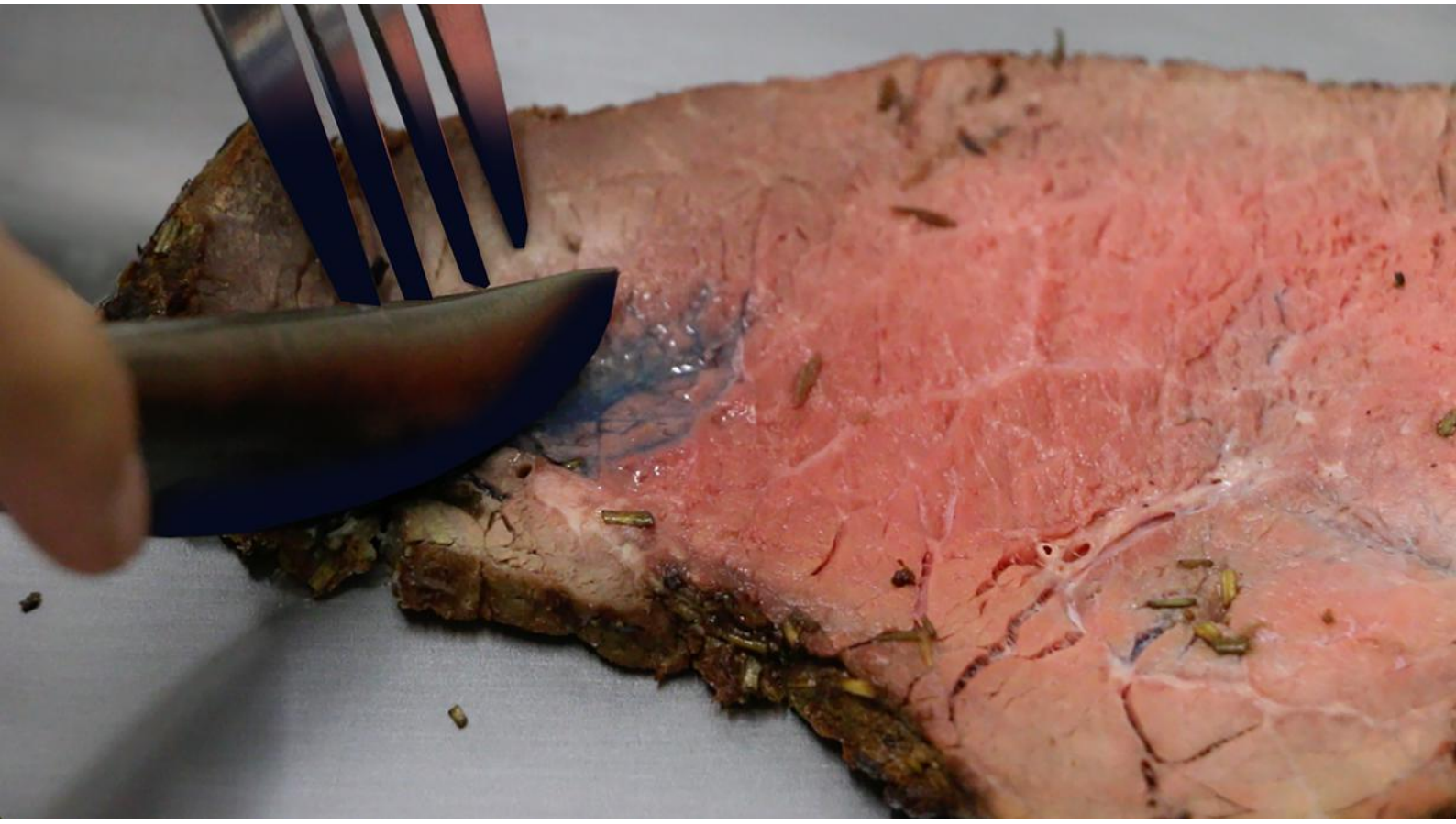
I still feel I have a lot to learn, and I embrace that. I constantly experiment, try new techniques, explore new directions. Being self-taught has made me very open and curious. Recently, I even explored naive art for the first time, trying to return to a feeling of simplicity and emotional safety. I'm always seeking, always developing. That's what being self-taught means to me — freedom to grow in my own way.

Have the urban and cultural textures of Tel Aviv changed how you perceive or depict space in your work?

Yes, absolutely. Tel Aviv has had a strong impact on how I see space and how I build compositions. It's a city full of contrast—culturally and visually—and I try to understand it through my painting. I want to tell its story through my eyes, through the filter of my emotions and experience. The city continues to shape how I create.

Purva Kundaje is an Indian-born, London-based architectural designer and artist whose practice explores the intersection of material, ritual, and power. Her work spans installation, performance, and speculative object design, often using familiar domestic forms—such as light, cutlery, and spatial structures—as quiet provocations. Working at the threshold between design and critical art practice, Kundaje's projects examine how objects shape behaviour, memory, and complicity. She is particularly drawn to the emotional weight of materials and the unseen systems embedded in everyday rituals. Whether through pigment-bleeding knives or sculptural lamps that speak of silence and narrative, her work disrupts functional expectations and invites viewers into subtle, sensorial conversations about control, authorship, and presence. Kundaje holds an MA in Design Products from the Royal College of Art (2021), where she deepened her research into storytelling through object and space. Her work reflects a multidisciplinary background in architectural design, informed by her experience working with traditional craft and material innovation. Kundaje's practice resists categorisation. It is at once sculptural and narrative, poetic and critical—asking not only what an object does, but what it tells us to do.

Purva Kundaje | Obedient Hands | 2024



Purva Kundaje | Bleed Studies | 2024

Project Statement

A fusion of function and provocation, Gesture of Power is a sculptural design series that transforms familiar dining tools into a visceral reflection on control, discomfort, and the aesthetics of quiet obedience. Created by London-based artist and designer Purva Kundaje, the work reimagines cutlery as a set of psychological triggers. Knives bleed pigment into raw meat, grips restrict the wrist into butcher-like postures, and forks demand force over grace. These objects are not simply deconstructed tools—they are scripts for performance. The dining table becomes a stage where civility unravels into confrontation. Drawing from the physicality of slaughterhouse labor and the repetition of domestic ritual, the series poses a quiet question: what systems are we rehearsing when we eat politely? And when does a tool stop serving and start conditioning? The project avoids spectacle. There is no gore, no sound, only the body responding to form. The violence is embedded, not illustrated. It lies in what the object asks the hand to do. Photographed in stark contrast—flesh, steel, pigment — the imagery reveals the beauty and brutality of design's soft authority. Purva Kundaje's practice consistently explores this threshold: between elegance and resistance, between memory and material. Her work invites stillness. Gesture of Power continues Kundaje's inquiry into how objects reflect and replicate structures of control. It is not a provocation for shock, but a reflection on complicity. A study in how deeply power can nest in the everyday. In this work, the table is no longer just a place to eat. It becomes a space to unlearn. The gesture—held, twisted, pressed—is not just a movement. It's a ritual we've been taught to repeat without question.

Interview

Kas Hermkens

How do you approach the merging of humans and their most valued possessions in your work? Can you explain the thought process behind this exploration of evolution and obsession?

I believe the connection we have with our objects and how we use them makes us human. It can be a very personal bond, the way you surround yourself with the objects and tools you love. We all build our own little personal habitats at home where we surround ourselves with what we love. In a way I see creation and development of objects by humans as part of evolution. It's like nature made us and now we turn nature into something new.

In your 'Objectus' project, you blur the lines between what is organic and non-organic. What drives your interest in this intersection, and how do you think it reflects our current relationship with materialism?

When putting yourself above nature like we as humans kind of feel like we do. Therefore, the sky's the limit in what we can dream of creating. We can develop technology to shape the world into what we want it to be. We can use resources till they are all used up. But nature also has a cruel way of showing us that we are not above it. Even evolution itself shows us that evolution does not always mean organisms evolve towards what we envision it will become. The blurring of what is organic and non-organic maybe in a way is nature showing us that evolution is not always fair, not always logical. But it adapts to what is needed of that organism to survive.
Evolution has always amazed and interested me in that way, an ever developing thing that cannot be stopped with no goals or mind to it. It just evolves.

Kas Hermkens | Caffeine World | 2025

How does the medium of stop-motion puppetry enhance the storytelling aspect of your projects? Could you discuss any technical challenges or creative breakthroughs in using puppetry for these stories?

Building the puppets has been a very informative development and fun collaboration in my creative process. I have really grown to love the craft of stop-motion and I learned a lot from working very close to Giulia Claessens, a Stop-motion creator. Building sets together and filming scenes was truly the most fun I ever had creatively .
By now Puppetry has become a starting point in creating new creatures. I see the collection of creatures as an ever growing collection. It starts with finding objects around my home or second hand stores. I mold the aluminium skeleton and latex body parts around the objects without having a certain design in mind. In a way I let the object itself tell me what kind of weird humanoid creature it becomes.

The creatures in 'Objectus' seem to embody obsession—such as the one made from scissors constantly cutting. Can you elaborate on how you see obsession playing a role in both the characters and the larger theme of your work?

Obsessions can sometimes be a simple humble

thing. Like the pair of scissors you had since you were a child and still use them. Or a special cup that you drink your morning coffee out of. Obsession surrounds an object and becomes part of you. It can be an innocent thing but also an obsessive compulsive thing. In my personal life I can be very obsessed with my own objects. I will not throw away stuff when it is broken, I use it and wear it till it is far gone. In the characters from Objectus' point of view their obsession becomes their whole world to the extreme. It is absurd but also real.

Your work suggests an alternate future where humans and objects are intertwined. Do you think this kind of transformation is already happening in our society? How do you envision the evolution of this relationship in the future?

I honestly don't know what the future of technological advancements will bring us. If you go the classic well known sci-fi route of robots, AI, lab grown meat and artificial body parts, who knows? I feel like we tend to romanticize these kinds of developments. They are still fun and exciting but If they are developed by the rich guys on top, like nowadays, then I am not so optimistic for these developments actually being good for us.
There are people who believe in the philosophical idea of singularity, a point where we as humans will eventually merge with all that we create. A point where our advancements get smarter than us and become uncontrollable and irreversible. I believe humans have a creative urge and a will to be dominant and not controlled by others. Maybe this will help us when there ever comes a point where there is no return?

Your creations often reflect on how materials and objects interact with the body. How do you envision the relationship between humans and their possessions evolving? What could this future look like in a more surreal context?

Kas Hermkens | Kistea | 2025

In a way I want to embrace the awkwardness of extending the human body. What we create to help us sometimes does not feel natural to our bodies. It can be awkward or annoying. But it still has beauty to me. We as humans are endlessly creative in the tools we create for ourselves. But this does not mean it has to be ultra advanced or high tech. It can also be something simple you just love around you.

What do you hope audiences take away from your work? Is there a particular feeling or realization that you aim to inspire?

I love chatting with people about alternative futures and people sometimes see poetic meaning in the stories of these individuals. I love it when people start fantasizing about the creatures they see or what they see in them. Some people also are a bit repulsed or too weirded out, they find it creepy. In a way I love at the same time finding deeper philosophical meaning behind the creatures but in the end it is all in good fun and letting myself and others just fantasize and have fun creating creatures (Without AI doing it for us).

Kas Hermkens | Caffeine World | 2025

Kas Hermkens | Objectus Kannea | 2025

Pamela Beck

Pamela Beck's practice taps into a lifelong love of contemporary art and the joy (and challenge) of creating. A native Angeleno, Pamela spent much of her career as a novelist, whose books include the New York Times bestsellers, Fling and Rich Men, Single Women. She has also written screenplays and developed/produced various film and television projects, including the adaptation of one of her novels for Aaron Spelling and ABC. Pamela approaches her art-making journey and her shift into working as a visual artist with the same passion and focus she poured into her literary career. As her art practice developed, she moved between dimensional compositions of black and white, the unexpected intersection of color and light, and the endless potential of abstraction. The work taps into a craving for experimentation and has become its own kind of storytelling. Pamela's work has been shown in numerous group and solo shows. Her work is part of some very substantial collections in Los Angeles, Indian Wells, New York, Florida, Mexico and Athens. Pamela serves as an Arts and Culture Commissioner for the City of Beverly Hills. She is a member of Los Angeles Artists Association. Pamela's influences have been the Light and Space movement which she personally collects.

Artist Statement: Pamela Beck's artwork explores the intersection of light and color. Fascinated by how colors merge and transcend the limits of their original hues, Pamela creates hallucinogenic abstractions composed of fantastical shapes, reflections, movement, and trippy explosions of color. As a self-taught artist and photographer, she embraces instinct and curiosity, breaking traditional rules to capture the unseen. Working in darkness, which she often does, her camera reveals that which is invisible to the naked eye. "It's an instant in time - something I can't recreate. I'm literally drawing with color and light." As Pamela began to tackle her FLOWER POWER series, she wanted to develop a contemporary body of work, voluptuous, alive with color and imagination. It wasn't going to be about arranging flowers for a still life. Instead, she wanted to experiment, creating and testing formulations for the flowers to drink, altering their color, and causing some to glow in the dark. Pamela seeks to explore light, color and dimension as she fashions compositions with these altered blooms, some lush and abstract, others bold and dramatic. "FLOWER POWER has become my mad scientist series, where I am constantly inspired by the notion of 'What if…'" While Pamela crisscrosses between several different series, each one builds upon the other, driven by curiosity, imagination and the thrill of invention. Pamela's work has been featured in numerous group and solo exhibitions and is part of some very substantial collections throughout California, New York, Florida, Mexico and Europe. All works are available in a variety of sizes as limited-edition prints. Commissions welcome.

Pamela Beck | Ariel's Garden | 2024

Pamela Beck | Daisyland | 2024

Pamela Beck | Hot Pink | 2024

Interview

Marika Kołonowicz

Your art often involves creating faces using the lineart technique. How did you first discover this method, and what draws you to it?

My adventure with lineart began quite unexpectedly, with simple prints on t-shirts and ceramics that caught my eye. The real breakthrough came when I discovered the inspiring works of Artist KOKETIT - Shira Barzilay on Instagram. What she created literally enchanted me! Pinterest opened the world of lineart projects to me and I thought: "Why not try?". It turned out to be the beginning of a fascinating journey. From hundreds of sketches of faces, eyes and silhouettes, through paintings, to creating unique jewelry with facial motifs. What I love about lineart is the magic of creating something absolutely one of a kind. This is the moment when a white sheet of paper and a black marker become partners in a creative dance.

You work with various surfaces like canvas, sand, and photographs. What influences your choice of surface for each piece?

The surface on which I work is not only the background, but also the co-author of my works. For me, the decision to choose the surface is a kind of dialogue with the material. The canvas invites you to apply layers of paint, to build a composition in a traditional way, giving you a sense of solidity. Working with sand is a completely different experience – its looseness and texture provoke experiments with form and light, creating works of unique, almost sculptural quality. On the other hand, I treat photographs as a ready fragment of reality that I can transform, add my own interpretation to it, discover new meanings by interfering with its structure or context. The story I want to tell and the emotions I want to evoke largely determine the choice of "ground".

The simplicity and elegance of your designs are striking. Do you see your line art as a form of minimalism, or is there a deeper narrative you're aiming to convey through these pieces?

Although the simplicity and elegance of my lineart designs may suggest minimalism, I see them as more than just a form of economy. For me, it is more about the essence, extracting the essence of the motif being presented. Each line has its own meaning and contributes to telling a story or capturing an emotion. Minimalism is one tool, but the goal is a deeper narrative, subtle but expressive, that resonates with the viewer.

Could you tell us about your project Art_Manialineas and what it represents for you as an artist?

The Art_Manialineas project is more than a collection of paintings. It is a philosophy of looking at the world, discovering hidden narratives in seemingly ordinary lines and shapes. The name itself is the key to this idea. It conceals a tender memory of my great-grandmother Maria, diminutively called Mania. It is a tribute to the past, to the roots that lie in every, even the smallest creative gesture. I believe that behind every creation there is a personal story waiting to be discovered.
The impulse to make Art_Manialineas public was born in the unusual times of pandemic isolation. Instagram became a window through which I could share my unique perspective

with others. What I create is not a figment of imagination. It is an attempt to capture the natural "sketches" that are constantly being created around us - on the bark of trees, in the folds of fabrics, in random arrangements of objects. You just need to slow down for a moment, sharpen your senses, to notice this subtle language of lines that tell their own stories.

My role is to notice these ephemeral traces, expose them, give them a new perspective. It is not just painting or drawing - it is a dialogue with the surrounding reality, an attempt to understand its internal rhythm and beauty, which often escapes in the daily rush.

I feel that this is just the beginning of my journey. Energy and ideas are buzzing in me, and each new work is another step in discovering the endless possibilities that simple lines hide. I believe that the voice of Art_Manialineas will resound stronger and stronger, inspiring others to look at the world more carefully and find their own, unique stories in it.

The Art_Manialineas project has had several smaller and larger successes: several exhibitions, including: exhibition of graphics at the Royal Rifle Factory in Gdańsk/Poland (2017), at the "House of Culture" of the Janowo Housing Cooperative in Rumia (2019), Internet exhibition (2019), exhibition of performance works at the Imperial Shipyard in Gdańsk/Poland (2022), participation in the collective exhibition "El Largo Camino Del Papel" in Lima/Peru (2023), participation in the collective exhibition "El Lenguaje del pincel" in Galerii Martin Yepez Lima/Peru, guest participation in the opening of the "Spring Exhibition Salon" (2024), participation in the exhibition "Źródła" at the Military Club of the 44th Naval Aviation Base in Siemirowice/Poland (2024), post-plein-air exhibition "OBOK" (2024), exhibition "Uncontrolled Sensitive Area" Słupsk/Poland.

Art_Manialineas - to również publikacje m.in. Zbiór Ekspresji i Twórczości (2022), Kalendarz (2022), "Międzypokoleniowe przestrzenie w naszym życiu" M.Grochowskiej (2023r.), Trenbook (22'/23'/24'), Magazyn New York PINK (25').

I am happy to announce a new chapter in my work! Soon my unique lines and patterns will come to life on stylish clothes and in original jewelry, thanks to cooperation with MariKoDESIGN.pl.

I invite you to follow our Instagram profiles: @art_manialineas and @marikodesignpl to stay up to date with upcoming collections and surprises that we are preparing for you. Be ready for a combination of art and design in a completely new version!

Can you talk about the significance of painted faces in your art? What do these faces mean to you and how do they connect with the audience?

Painted faces are a window into the world of human interactions and emotions for me. It is an attempt to capture the subtlety of relationships, from those close and full of warmth, to those marked by distance or even conflict. Through their diversity, I want to present the richness of the spectrum of human experiences – joy, sadness, surprise, contemplation. These faces are a record of moments, conversations, glances that shape our everyday lives. They are not portraits of specific people, but rather archetypes of human attitudes and feelings. They are a visual representation of the dynamics of our contacts, reminding us of the people who appear in our history – some for a moment, others for longer, and some for a lifetime. In fact, these painted faces are all of us, in different stages of our relationships and with different emotional baggage. They are meant to provoke reflection on our own interactions, on how we build bonds, how we communicate, how we influence each other. I believe that in these universal representations of human faces, the viewer can find a part of themselves, their experiences and relationships with others. It is an attempt to create a visual language that transcends the barriers of individual stories and touches on the common denominator of our humanity.

Your work has been described as thought-provoking. Do you intentionally try to provoke deep reflection in your viewers or is this a natural outcome of your creative process?

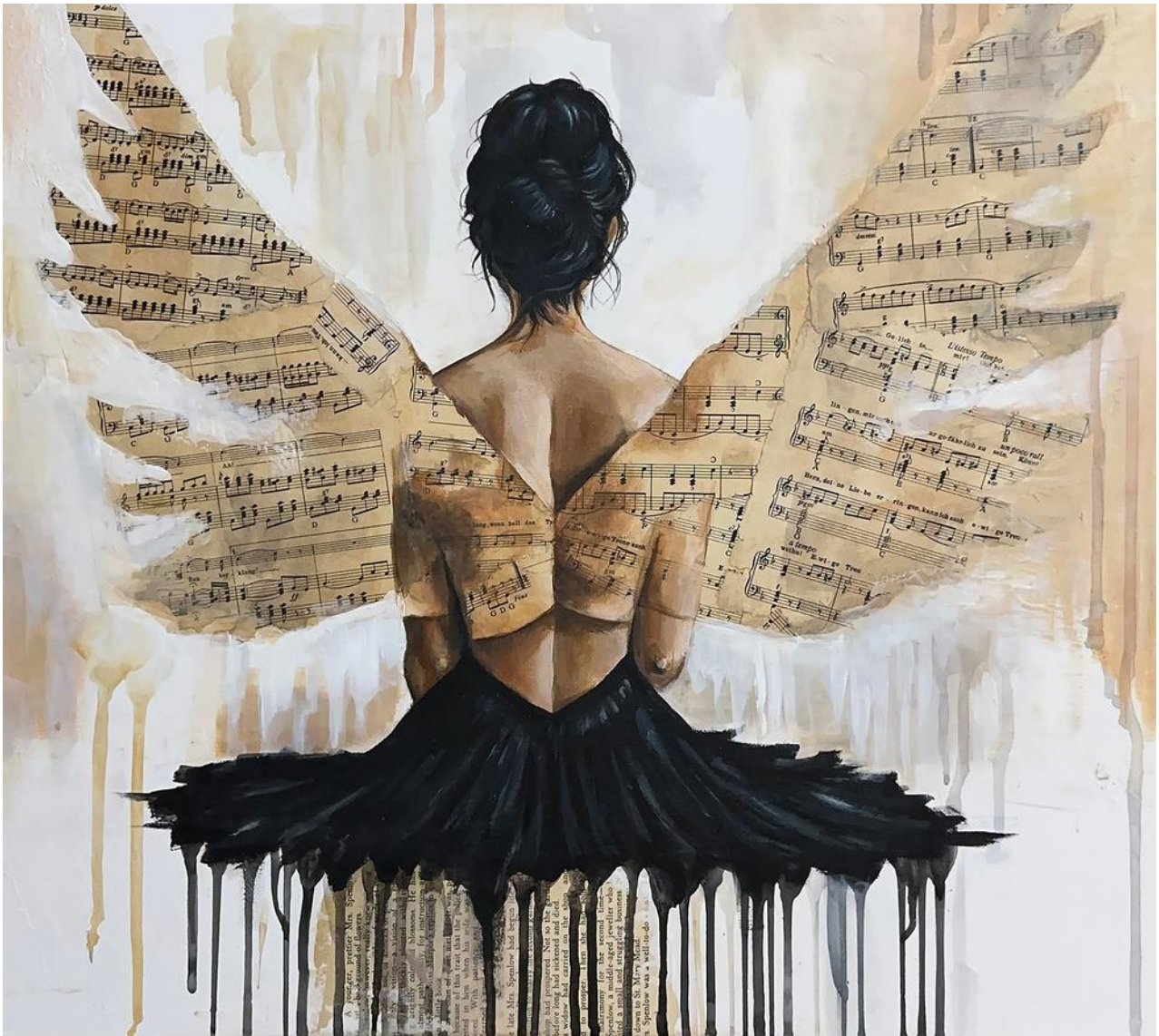
I see my work primarily as an open platform for dialogue with the viewer. It is not about dictating interpretations or imposing the only correct view on a given topic. My goal is rather to initiate a certain type of intellectual and emotional exchange. Through my works, I try to subtly ask questions, touch upon issues that I feel have the potential to resonate with the viewer's inner world. If this form of artistic communication leads to deeper reflection, to stopping and thinking about the issues I raise, then I feel that I have managed to establish a valuable thread of understanding. Therefore, it is not a purely intentional action in the sense of "provoking" for the sake of provoking. It is rather an invitation to a joint journey of thought, to explore different perspectives and discover our own answers to the universal questions that life and the reality around us pose to us. I believe that art in its essence should inspire thinking, and not just provide ready-made conclusions.

Your exhibitions have spanned various countries, from Poland to Peru. How do different cultural contexts influence the way you present your work?

Exhibiting my work in different countries, from Poland to Peru, makes me realize how deeply culture shapes the perception of art. The cultural context not only influences the interpretation of my works, but also the way they are displayed and received. I try to be a careful observer of these differences and adapt the presentation to create a space for authentic dialogue with the local audience, respecting their traditions and values.

Julia Shilo is a Ukrainian artist based in Bulgaria, specializing in portraits and figurative painting. Her work blends traditional and contemporary techniques, incorporating mixed media and collage. She integrates fragments of antique books, sheet music, stamps, and other vintage materials, creating a dialogue between history and modern expression while emphasizing timeless human emotions. Reflecting on the lost aesthetics of past eras, Julia explores themes of nostalgia, memory, and identity through symbolic elements. Julia's works are in private collections across the USA, France, Italy, Turkey, Germany, Bulgaria, Ukraine, and Russia. She exhibits and continues to evolve her artistic practice, creating thought-provoking, emotionally resonant pieces that bridge past and present.

Project Statement
Nostalgia is at the core of my creative process. I find inspiration in the purity of childhood memories—those untainted thoughts and emotions that existed before external influences shaped us. My work is a search for authenticity, a reflection on who we might have been if we had remained true to ourselves. I embrace mixed media techniques, incorporating unconventional materials such as fragments of antique books, sheet music, and handwritten letters. The layering of acrylic, watercolor, pastel, and collage elements allows me to create contrasts and hidden meanings within my compositions. These details invite viewers to look deeper, uncovering stories within textures and forms. I am drawn to historical artifacts—objects that carry the weight of time. By integrating vintage paper ephemera, I bridge the past and present, sometimes reinforcing an idea, sometimes creating striking contrasts that spark contemplation. My portraits and figurative compositions aim to capture both physical beauty and an emotional narrative, balancing realism with expressive abstraction. Relocating to Bulgaria reshaped my artistic vision. The sense of detachment from familiar surroundings led me to explore themes that resonate across cultures. My art serves as a reminder of the tactile world we are losing—a tribute to the significance of books, letters, and handwritten.



Julia Shilo | White immersion | 2024


aus der Oper
Georges Bizet

Shujing Shen

Shujing Shen | In the Park | 2025

Your series "In the Park" radiates serenity and warmth. What inspired you to create these digital scenes of everyday life?

The starting point was simple: I always want to capture the beautiful moments that often go unnoticed. When spring arrives in London and the sun comes out, people gather in the parks, meeting friends, lying on the grass, watching others pass by, simply enjoying the feeling of doing nothing. With an iPad, I can quickly record the scenes and easily document the atmosphere and my feelings of the moment.

You use digital painting in a very tactile, almost painterly way. How do you approach texture and colour on the iPad?

I like to skip the linework and draw with blocks of colour. I'm drawn to bright, high-contrast palettes, and I often choose colours that match how I feel. As I build the overall atmosphere, I layer in smaller strokes to create rhythm and depth. I use textured brushes to keep the composition light and to let the image breathe. I want each painting to feel lively and full of colour, vibrant but not too intense.

Shujing Shen | In the Park | 2025

Can you tell us about your experience blending Eastern and Western influences in your work?

I was born and raised in China, spent some time in New Zealand, and later moved to the UK. I've studied and worked in different fields, and these cross-cultural experiences have shaped both how I see the world and how I create. In my artwork, In the Park, the focus on stillness and atmosphere is influenced by East Asian culture. It's similar to the flow of Tai Chi—slow, fluid, and about finding quiet beauty in everyday moments. At the same time, the perspective of my artwork comes from my experience as an outsider observing Western landscapes. I want my approach to be free and relaxed, allowing the artwork to reflect that sense of distance and exploration.

Your art feels like a pause — a breath of quiet observation. How do you translate emotional presence into visual language?

Life in big cities is always fast-paced, and parks function as a container that allows us to slow down, pause, and take a break. I see my series In the Park as an artistic meditation. When I paint, I enter a state of emptiness, where I use blocks of colour and shapes to depict what I see, think, and feel. This process helps me translate emotional presence into visual language, capturing the quiet moments of reflection and stillness.

What role does memory play in your creative process?

I view my memories as colourful, scattered fragments that resurface when I paint. From the first stroke I paint, moments from the past mix with what I feel in the present. In the Park, the scenes combine what I see at the moment with memories of places I've been, people I've known, and emotions I've felt before. Digital painting allows me to easily reshape and reinterpret these memories through colour, light, and form.

As someone working with XR and immersive media, how do you see the relationship between digital environments and inner landscapes?

I see both digital and traditional media as my tools; they are just different kinds of canvases for expressing my inner landscapes. Whether I'm using a pen on paper, an Apple Pencil on an iPad, or VR controllers inside a headset, each medium allows me to translate what I feel and imagine into a visible spatial experience.

How does working in nature or observing outdoor spaces affect your visual storytelling?

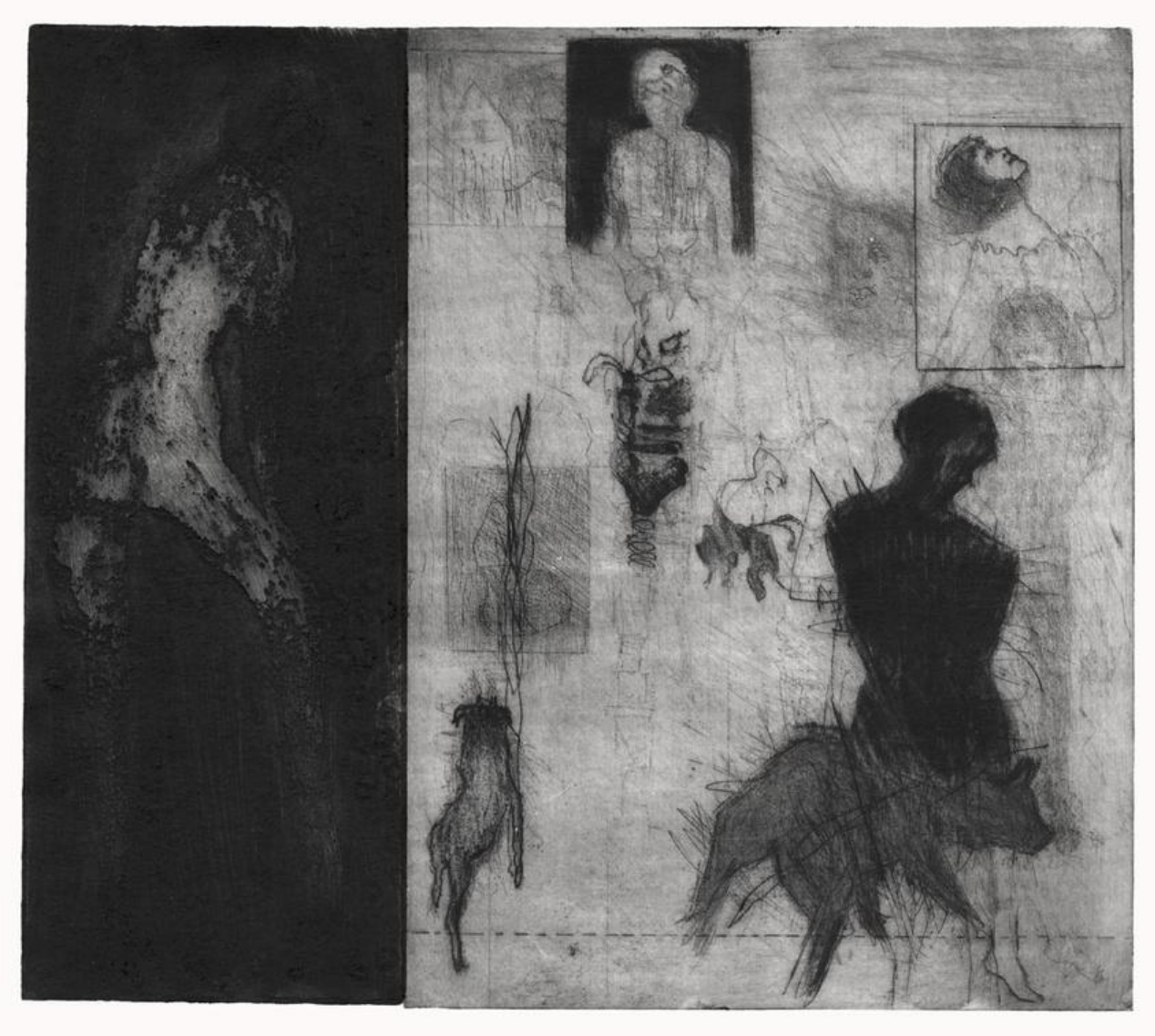
For me, being in nature or outdoor spaces is not just about observing but about tuning in, sitting, listening, and absorbing the atmosphere. It shapes how I feel and express myself. I focus less on what I see and more on how the space makes me feel. In the Park, the landscape I see influences the rhythm of the lines, the weight of the marks, and the quiet moments on the page. My painting becomes a visual journal that reflects my connection to the environment.

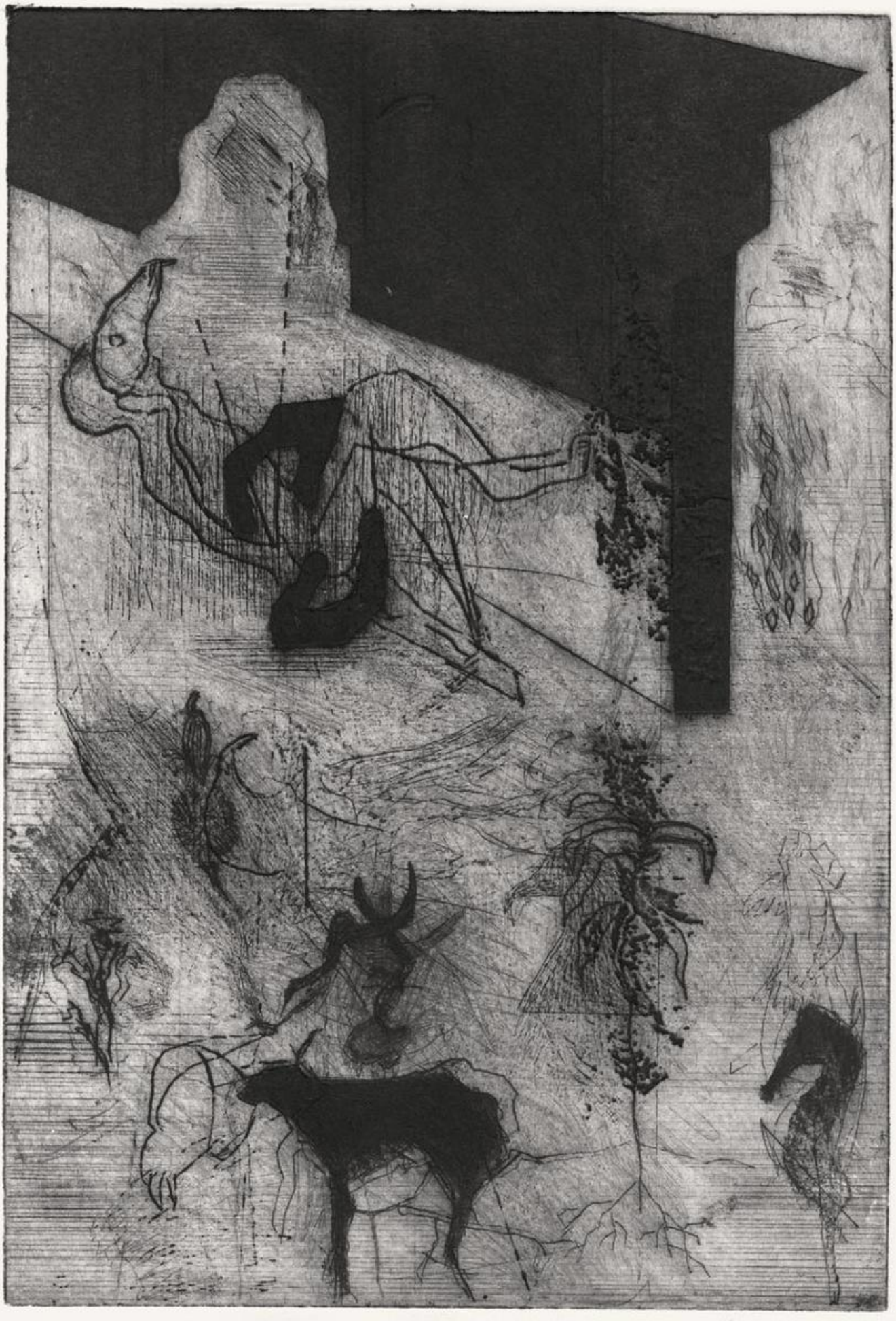
Shujing Shen | In the Park | 2025

Hava Zilbershtein

Born (1953) in Tel-Aviv. Graduated "The Midrasha" (1975), Art teacher (1975- 1995), 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.

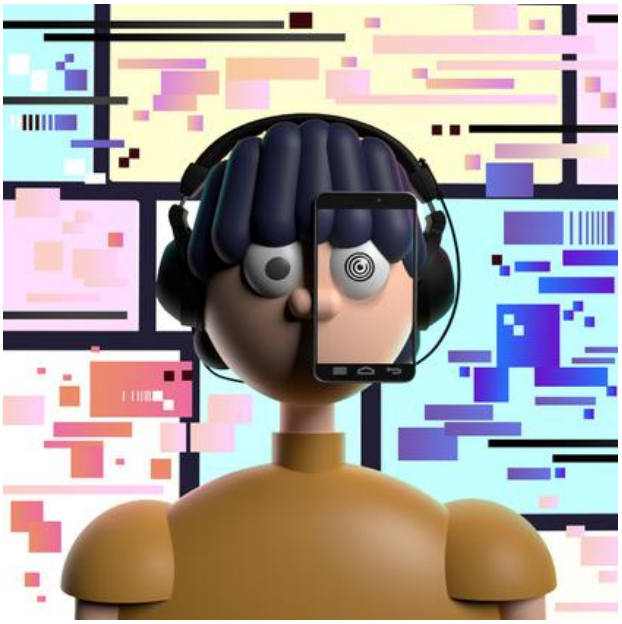




Mahima Jain

Your work explores the emotional landscape of introspection—how do you translate internal feelings into visual form through 3D illustration?

I start by locating a feeling that's hard to put into words, something like stillness, retreat, discomfort, vulnerability or hope. Then I build a space around it. 3D illustration gives me control over light, texture, and atmosphere, so I can shape environments that hold that emotion. I often use quiet scenes, minimal palettes, and subtle cues in posture or space to express what words might miss. It's not about realism, but about building a visual truth around a feeling.



Mahima Jain | In A Trance

Can you tell us more about the specific moment or experience that sparked this series?

This series began during a time of emotional stillness and uncertainty, when I was working remotely and feeling stuck in place. Each day felt like a loop, and I started creating these small scenes as a way to process what I couldn't express. At first, it was just a personal outlet. Eventually I realized these fragments were connected. They were all different ways of trying to understand where I was, internally.

How does your background in design and technology influence your approach to storytelling?

Design taught me how to communicate clearly and intentionally. Technology gave me the tools to build the spaces I could feel but not physically create. I use digital tools to bend reality toward something softer and more symbolic. My background helps me blend structure and emotion, logic and longing, in a way that feels natural to me.

The idea of "invisible confines" appears throughout your work—what do these boundaries represent for you personally and artistically?

They represent the quiet, often unnoticed limits we live with, like self-doubt, internalized expectations, social roles, perfectionism or mental loops. These boundaries are hard to

name but easy to feel. Artistically, I try to hold space for what it's like to live inside those constraints without giving in to them completely. There's resistance in simply observing them honestly.

Many of your illustrations show characters in stillness—how do you use quiet moments to convey deep emotional states?

Stillness can hold so much. When a figure doesn't move, the space around them becomes emotionally charged. The gaze, the light, the distance, everything becomes a container for feeling. I use stillness to invite reflection. These quiet scenes aren't empty, they're full of emotional tension and softness. They ask the viewer to slow down and feel.

What role does memory play in your visual storytelling?

A big one. I often draw from emotional memory, not how something looked, but how it felt. The scenes I create aren't always literal or specific, but they hold the tone of past experiences. I'm interested in the way memory blends clarity and blur, and I try to bring that quality into the spaces I create. It's a way of holding something tender without needing it to be exact.

Do you see your work as a form of resistance or healing? Or both?

Both. Creating from softness is a quiet form of resistance, especially in a world that often asks us to be guarded. At the same time, the process helps me heal. Visualizing emotions that usually stay hidden allows them space to breathe. That kind of expression holds power. For me, healing and resistance live in the same place, choosing to stay open and honest, even when it's uncomfortable.

Mahima Jain | Limbo

Quinn Moar

Student artist originally from Vancouver, but currently based out of Montreal. Mainly use oil on canvas with some acrylic

Roman Molvo

To begin with, I'd like to ask: what led you to art? What key turning points do you personally consider defining on this path?

I'll try to briefly tell how I became an artist. I come from a poor family and spent my childhood either in a small village or in a cramped, overcrowded communal apartment on the outskirts of Moscow. I was never interested in art, my only creativity was childhood drawings of monsters and toys I made out of wire. It was my way to escape reality, because most of the time people around me were drinking and fighting.

Roman Molvo | Your Favorite Shadow | 2021

As I grew up, I decided to become a doctor, but lost my place in the state-funded program. Later, I almost graduated as a psychologist, but again lost the funding. Once more, there wasn't enough money, and I had to work a lot.
When I turned 21, I got into a terrible car accident. I was sleeping in the back seat and got lucky. Two other passengers died. I also died — I had clinical death — but they managed to bring me back.
Since the moment I opened my eyes, I started seeing images on blank canvases, walls, sheets of paper. They appear from nothing, become photorealistic — I just need to concentrate a little. I began tracing these images, and later realized I could draw, and that this is probably my path. If I get lucky again, I might be able to contribute something to culture.
That's why for the last nine years I've been trying to create new works more often. Unfortunately, there's probably no magic... I have to spend many hours on a drawing to get even a small chance that the painting will turn out interesting. Curiosity pushes me to keep creating. It sounds romantic, but I wouldn't advise anyone to choose a path connected with visual art — being an artist is damn hard.

Your works explore deep psychological themes like hypnagogia and archetypes. How do these concepts influence the creation of your art, and how do you incorporate them into your visual storytelling?

Hypnagogia, the transitional state between wakefulness and sleep, opens the door to intuitive images and symbols that I use in my work. During this state, I allow my mind to wander, capturing the images that appear and transferring them onto the canvas. This allows me to create works that not only reflect but also explore subconscious experiences.

Roman Molvo | A Personality Unable to Live in Harmony with Itself | 2019

Archetypes as universal symbols — I use them to connect my work with the shared human experience, creating resonant images that can be perceived on an intuitive level.

You mentioned exploring the unconscious and shadow aspects. Can you talk about how these elements manifest in your paintings and sculptures?

If we recall Jung, shadows are the hidden, often repressed parts of our personality that can be both a source of fear and of concealed desires. Sometimes, shadowy beings appear in my paintings — usually they resemble black silhouettes, reminiscent of human figures.
In my work, I often use dark and rich colors to convey the grim and mysterious aspects of the human experience. These tones create an atmosphere of depth and draw the viewer into the world of their own thoughts.

Your art is described as an invitation to the viewer to explore unexplored territories of the mind. How do you envision the viewer's experience when interacting with your works?

Wow. I can't imagine what goes on in people's minds when they look at my drawings — I just hope they at least spark interest, not disgust.

The themes of legends and werewolves are fascinating. How do you connect these mythical elements to your contemporary approach to art?

It's a reference to childhood. As children, we all loved listening to scary stories and reading books about monsters hiding under the bed or in dark corners. These stories shaped our fears and stirred our imagination. I drew my first monsters when I was a child.
Keeping a child's vivid imagination alive into adulthood greatly helps me continue creating new drawings.
In this way, a love for dark myths and mystical stories becomes not only a subject of exploration, but also a way to connect our childhood perception of fear with contemporary questions of identity and inner struggle.

Can you discuss your exploration of automatic writing and how it relates to your visual practice?

Automatic writing is a practice and method of creating artwork that allows me to relatively safely go beyond ordinary perception. Let's call it a free flow of consciousness, when the writer lets their mind wander without controlling the process. Historically, automatic writing is associated with spiritualist séances, where participants tried to establish contact with spirits, allowing them to "dictate" the text. This creates a kind of connection between art, the psyche, and spirituality.
I use automatic writing as a way to create abstract works. When I begin writing, I don't think about the content or form of the text. I simply let my hand move across the paper, layer by layer, and at some point, I lose awareness of what I'm writing. This flow state allows me to go deeper into the unconscious.
An hour later, or by the evening, I notice that the work is complete—but the content of the text becomes unclear to me. Still, the effect creates something unique and filled with a certain message.

Your work spans multiple mediums, including painting, photography, and sculpture. How do these different media influence the conceptualization of your projects?

I always look for inspiration in various materials—whether it's old film rolls, newspapers, or other found objects. The most important thing for me is that something sparks interest and evokes emotion.
Each medium has its own characteristics and possibilities. For example, painting allows me to express thoughts through color and form. Photography, on the other hand, captures a moment and can tell a story or convey an atmosphere that inspires me. I enjoy experimenting with different techniques, including montage and collage, to create layered visual narratives.
Lately, I've also started editing short black-and-white video clips. This format allows me to explore movement and time—something that static media can't offer.

What role does introspection play in your creative process? Do you actively engage in self-reflection while creating your art?

Yes, I do engage in self-reflection from time to time when creating my work, as it helps me better understand my thoughts. But more often, I find myself unable to fully grasp the meaning of the images that appear in the painting. I can spend hours immersed in my imagination and drawing, yet the final piece may remain a mystery to me.
Still, it's this uncertainty and mystery that often become a source of inspiration. I believe that art can be multilayered and open to many interpretations, and even if I can't explain every detail, I trust the viewer to interpret them in their own way.
This dialogue between my work and the viewer is what makes the process of creating art especially valuable to me.

GRGY

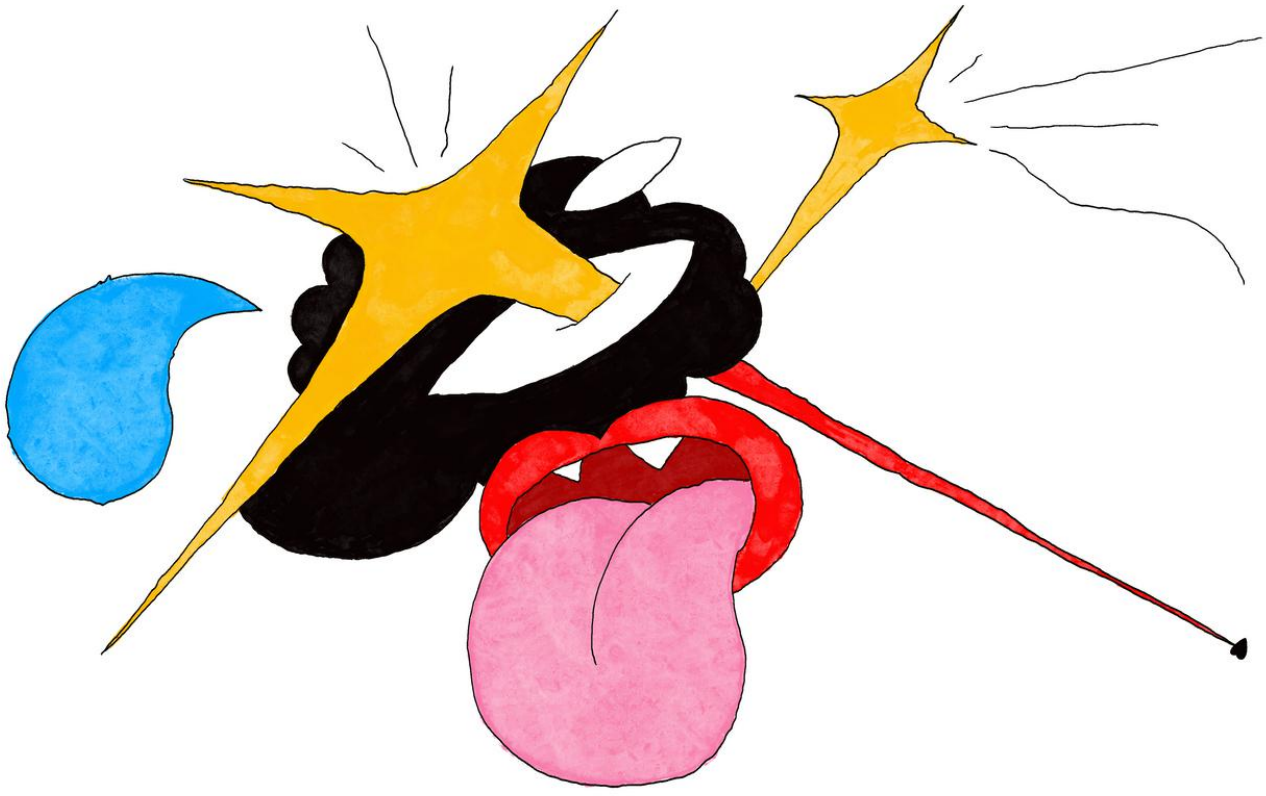
The central image of my work is Grgy — a black cloud with empty white eyes. Born in 2010 as a collective negative image, it symbolizes heavy emotions and experiences. Influenced by minimalism and Amedeo Modigliani's aesthetics, the character's eyes lost their pupils, gaining expressiveness and depth.

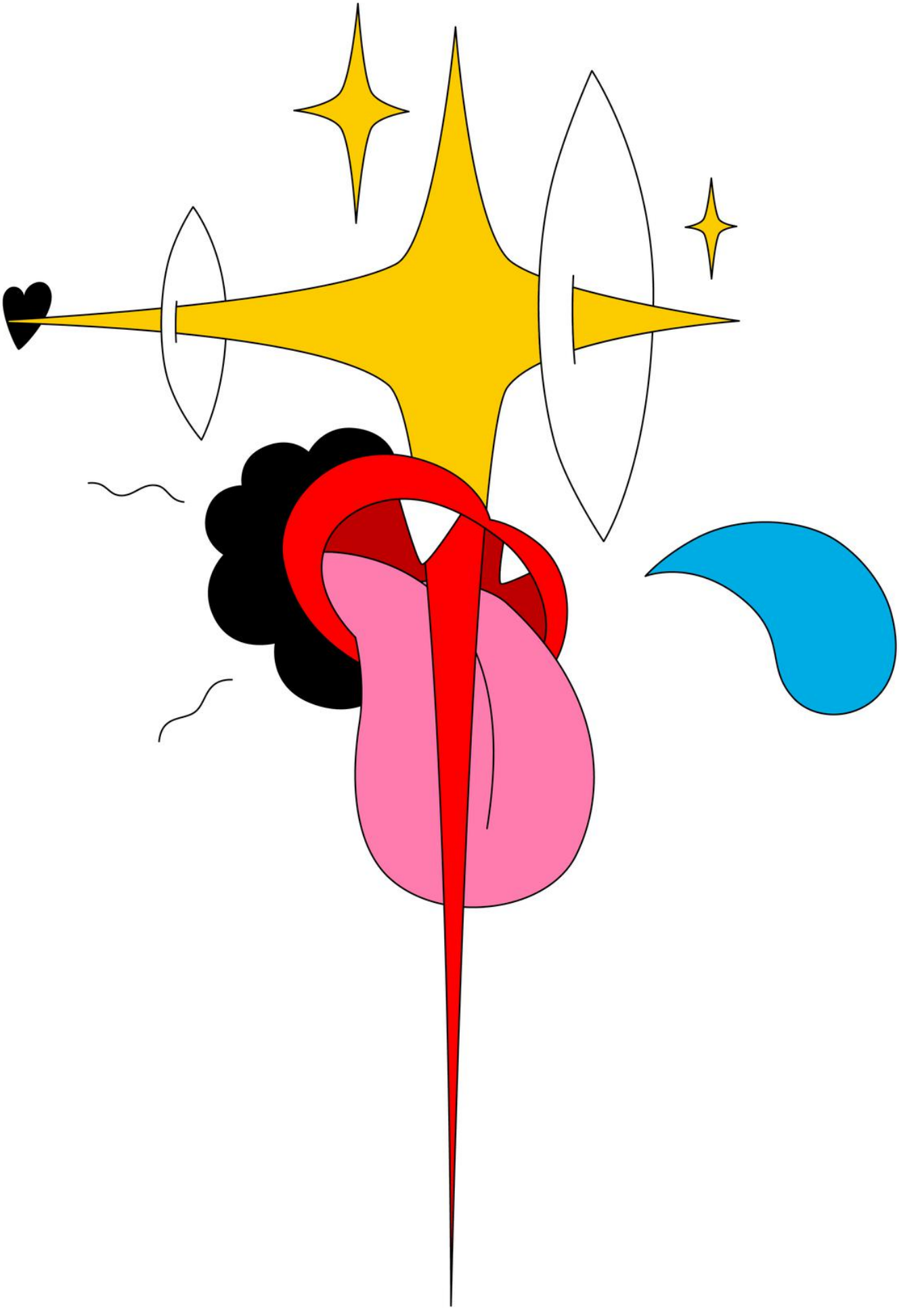
Grgy, evolving with me over the years, embodies human emotions and inner search. Initially reflecting brokenness and loss of trust in 2019, it now expresses more harmonious manifestations of love. Through Grgy, I convey my personal and emotional journey.

My art blends philosophical themes like love and death, religion and science, presented through minimalism, vivid colors, and contrast. I focus on composition and expressiveness to create memorable, cohesive images.

I work with various media — canvases, paper, walls, sculptures, digital projects — constantly experimenting and finding new ways to connect with the audience.

Inspired by minimalism and abstraction, especially by Mark Rothko, James Turrell, and light installations, I aim for my works to resonate, become part of personal collections, and connect with those whose emotions align with mine.





Christine Moog

What initially drew you to the history of women in printing, and how did you discover Susan Islip?

My interest in female printers started years ago when I stumbled upon a fleeting reference to typefounder William Caslon's wife. I stopped and reread the sentence as I thought I had misread it. A woman? Printing books? This was before the recent resurgence in the overlooked and undervalued. We know that women were printing books a mere twenty years after Gutenberg in the western Europe, yet their stories have been omitted from the historical narrative. As a female designer and design historian, the under researched area of women in the print industry is of particular interest. In terms of why Susan particularly, I actually had lists of other women from which I could have chosen. It was actually a process of elimination. I wanted to work on a London-based female printer who had printed more than a few books, but not hundreds, and I wanted to work on a printer in the 17th century. When I first started to research Susan only two or three of her books were known. I have since discovered that she actually printed ten books starting at the age of eighty. It is quite something. I think about all the other stories that still need to be told.

In Taped 1650, what role does materiality play in visualizing historical erasure and presence?

Materiality plays a large role. I am very interested in how practice can make visual these women that were erased from history books and our larger narrative. Only fragments of their lives exist in archives and we need innovative ways to recover and manifest their stories. My practice seeks to help combat historic inaccuracies—as absence is best expressed through presence.

Could you describe your process for transforming archival research into visual studio work?

Everything starts in the archive. Then, it is a process of research, reading, discussion, trial, error and reflection. Engaging with what is missing becomes an iterative process reimagining how omission can become visual.

What does it mean to "ungender" women's presswork, and how does that reshape our understanding of authorship?

To ungender women's work means to recognise their value and reclaim women's involvement in knowledge production. It helps to provide a more complete, nuanced and truthful account of history.

How do you see the relationship between graphic design and historical reclamation?

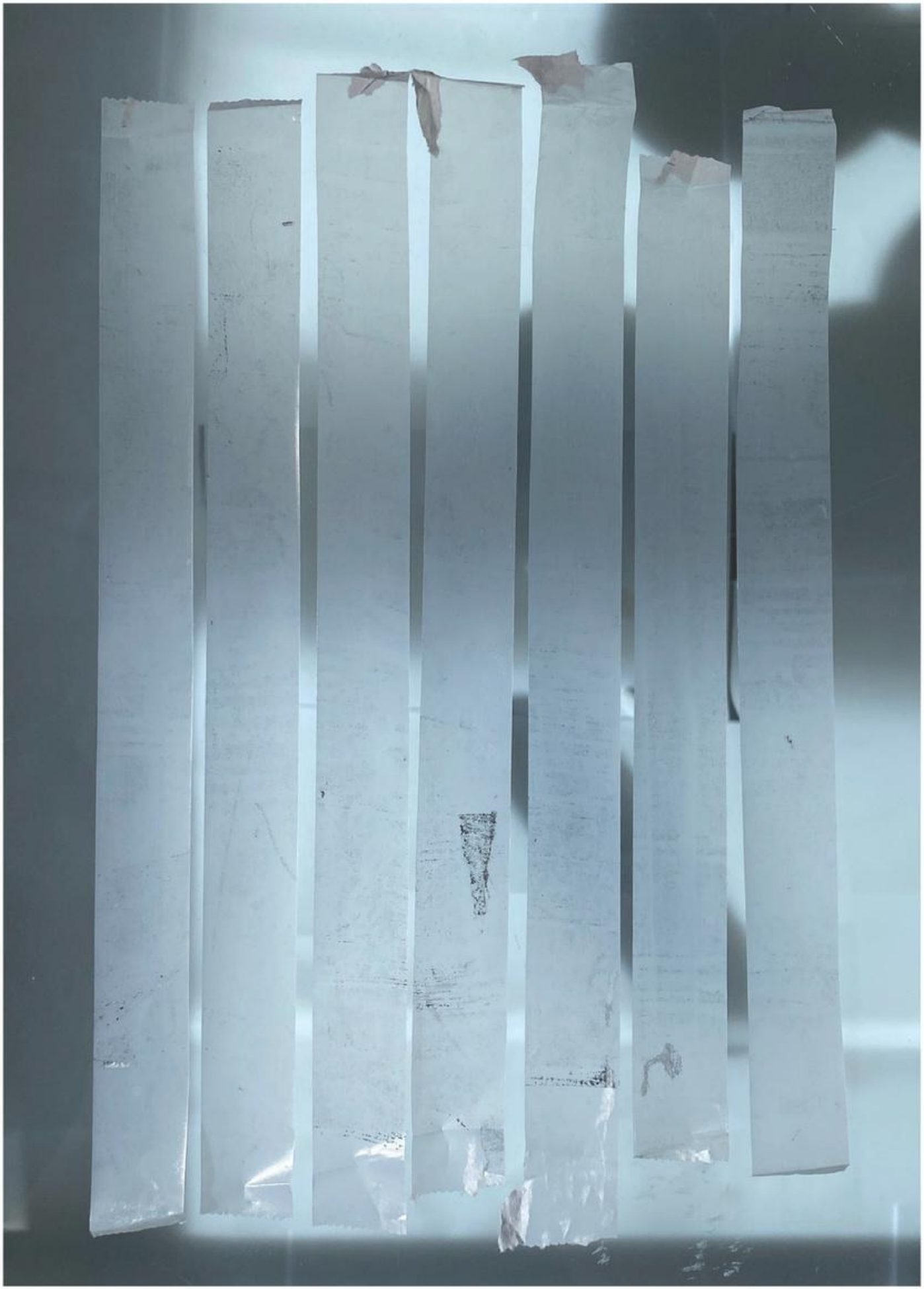
Design can challenge dominant visual languages, filling gaps in the archive. I think an aesthetic response can probe our missing past and design can be an integral part of female recovery, shaping how information is presented and absorbed.

What challenges do you face in making invisible histories visible through visual media?

Archival research requires a lot of time, a lot of detective work and a lot of digging. The paucity of information can be challenging. In piecing lives together i want to be careful not to assume, as one has to straddle the line between fiction and innovation.

How do you balance the roles of researcher, historian, and artist in your practice?

They all inform one another. They are in constant dialogue with one another. I don't think it's about balance as much as constant interaction.



Robert Sherwood, *A Dictionary English and French* London, printed by Susan Islip, 1650.

Karen K Wallen

Can you tell us more about how your early experiences in nature and family life influenced your artistic vision?

As a very young child growing up in small-town Stillwater, Oklahoma, I spent my days exploring the countryside with my siblings, and became enamored with the glorious essence of nature, as I climbed trees, biked—and sketched my surroundings with the artistic tools my parents provided.

What role did your fascination with Ancient Egypt play in shaping your aesthetic or conceptual approach?

I became totally obsessed with Egypt when, in 4th Grade, we took a deep dive into that Ancient World! We created hand drawn reports and illustrations of its culture which I still recall! Later, while visiting Egypt in my 30s, the fascination solidified!

Karen K Wallen | Lovely Country Afternoon

How did your time teaching in places like Korea and Seattle influence your understanding of art as a form of communication?

While living in Seoul and Taegu, Korea, traveling and teaching full-time, I became enchanted with this beautiful Asian culture and architecture, creating many watercolor and ink paintings which taught me the value of expressing my feelings and deep appreciation of other peoples and their artistic styles!

Why did you choose Abstract Expressionism as your current focus, and what does this style allow you to express that others do not?

I choose Abstract Expressionism because it allows me to splash my emotions onto the canvas, as they flow through my fingertips, brushes, sticks and all other tools I employ!

What emotions or reactions do you hope your audience experiences when engaging with your work?

I often experience a strong empathy with the people I interact with and paint; therefore, my characters and settings become my way of communicating those experiences— and relating with my audience in a fluid and nonjudgmental manner! In other words, I'm telling them that it's ok to be who they are—and to choose their own paths!

Karen K Wallen | High Tide

You often use your hands, brushes, and even sticks—how does this tactile process affect the emotional depth of your work?

I am a very "touchy-feely" person and artist; therefore, donning my blue surgical gloves and swirling my acrylic paints on the blank surface evokes excitement as well as strong satisfaction in me, as does scratching and dabbing with tree branches and brushes!

Many of your paintings reflect relationships and life paths—how do you translate personal or imagined stories into visual form?

When I execute paintings, I begin with several layers of brilliant acrylic colors, allowing each layer to solidify! During this process, human figures and emotions emerge in my eyes, and I envision relationships and live experiences as I literally circle the piece from every angle! The work speaks to me of love, passion—and the complicated human experience emerges!

Interview

Stacey Chen

Can you walk us through your journey as a multidisciplinary artist—starting from your background in industrial design and expanding into toy design, illustration, and fine art? How have these disciplines influenced and shaped your creative voice over time?

My journey began in industrial design, where I developed a strong foundation in form, function, and user experience. That training instilled in me a sensitivity to the physicality of objects—their proportions, tactility, and emotional resonance. From there, I became increasingly drawn to toy design, which felt like a natural evolution. Toys aren't just products—they're characters, stories, and emotional touchpoints you can hold in your hand. That experience taught me how to infuse personality into form and how to think narratively within physical constraints.

Over time, I found myself wanting more freedom of expression, which led me deeper into illustration. Illustration gave me the space to exaggerate, distort, and inject humor without worrying about manufacturability. It allowed my characters to breathe on their own terms. Eventually, that evolved into fine art, where I could fully explore more abstract, emotional, and surreal themes—unbounded by function or format. Each discipline fed into the next, and now they coexist fluidly in my practice.

Has your training in precision and functionality through industrial design ever clashed with the more emotional or abstract instincts behind your artistic work? How do you navigate that tension?

Absolutely. Industrial design taught me to think systematically—every decision needs a rationale. But art thrives in ambiguity. At times, it's felt like a push-and-pull between logic and intuition. I used to struggle with giving myself permission to create something purely emotional or absurd, without a clear "use case." Over time, though, I've learned to see that tension as productive. The discipline of design brings structure to my creative chaos, while my art practice injects playfulness and unpredictability into my design thinking. Together, they help me tell richer, more layered stories.

When beginning a new project, how do you decide which "hat" to wear—designer, illustrator, sculptor—or do you find that these roles have started to merge into a more fluid creative process?

Those roles have definitely started to blur. I rarely enter a project thinking, "this is just an illustration" or "this is purely a product." Instead, I start with a character, a feeling, or a visual impulse, and then I follow it through the lens that best suits the idea. Sometimes that means building it out as a sculpture or prototype; other times, it lives best as a drawing or digital composition. I've reached a point where my

Stacey Chen | Wacky Medusa

process feels more like world-building than category-making—each medium is just a different way to explore that world.

Are there any recent works you'd like to share that illustrate how your multidisciplinary background comes together in practice?

Yes—my Wacky Medusa series is a perfect example. It began as a set of expressive character illustrations, but the way I approached her—thinking in terms of collectible poses, toy-like accessories, and exaggerated emotional cues—was deeply informed by my toy design background. At the same time, the composition and layering of text and symbols reflect my graphic design instincts. And conceptually, the piece opens into more symbolic territory—channeling mythology, internet culture, and identity—which is where my fine art practice starts to take shape.

Wacky Medusa feels like a character that could leap off the page into 3D. How has your experience in toy design shaped the way you think about character development, physical form, and emotional expressiveness in that series?

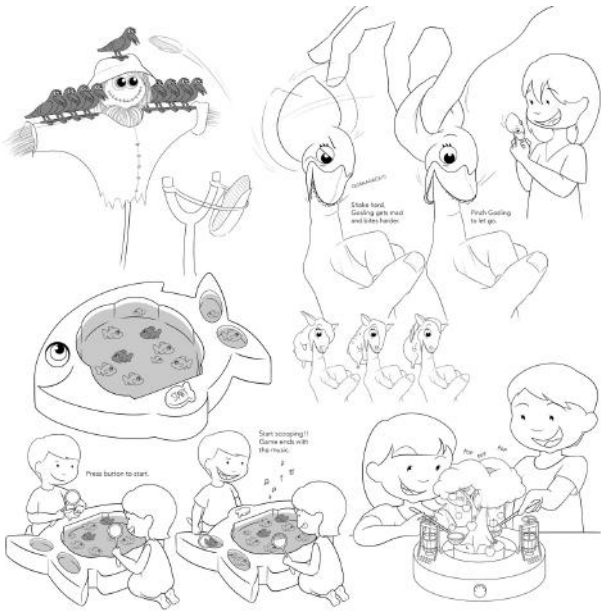
Toy design taught me how to create characters that feel alive—even when they're still. When I designed Wacky Medusa, I thought about her as a physical object: how would she stand? What would her silhouette look like from every angle? What parts of her design could be interchangeable, like accessories or mood variants? Her expressions are intentionally exaggerated because I've learned that clarity and emotion need to be instantly readable in both toys and illustrations. That design sensibility helped me bring a sense of dimensionality to her even in 2D form.

The blending of Chinese phrases, manga aesthetics, and Western mythology in Wacky Medusa feels intentional and layered. How do you see cultural hybridity influencing the humor, tone, or impact of the series?

As someone with a cross-cultural background—growing up Taiwanese and now working internationally—I often move between cultural languages, visually and literally. In Wacky Medusa, I intentionally mash up references from East Asian pop aesthetics, classical mythology, internet meme culture, and traditional Chinese phrases. Humor, for me, often lives in those collisions: what feels sacred in one context might feel ridiculous in another, and vice versa. I think cultural hybridity adds both friction and richness. It's not just about visual style—it's about navigating multiple identities and using humor to subvert or reclaim them.

Looking ahead, are there any formats or mediums—like animation, sculpture, AR, or something else—you haven't explored yet but would love to experiment with in the future?

Definitely. I'd love to bring my characters—especially ones like Wacky Medusa—into more immersive or interactive formats. I'm particularly interested in sculptural or collectible pieces that blur the line between art object and toy, and I'd also love to explore short-form animation to expand her personality through motion and sound. Down the line, experimenting with AR or interactive web-based experiences could be a fun way to let viewers "play" inside these imagined worlds. I'm always looking for new ways to bring my characters to life—tactilely, digitally, and emotionally.



Shanxuelian (Shirly) Han

Your work often evokes a sense of disorientation and overload. Is this a reflection of your personal experience in today's world?

Yes, It's both a personal response and a shared experience of our time. For me they are not something to fear or panic about- they are messages and signals. Disorientation is an opportunity for transformation, the overwhelming is the beginning of awakening.

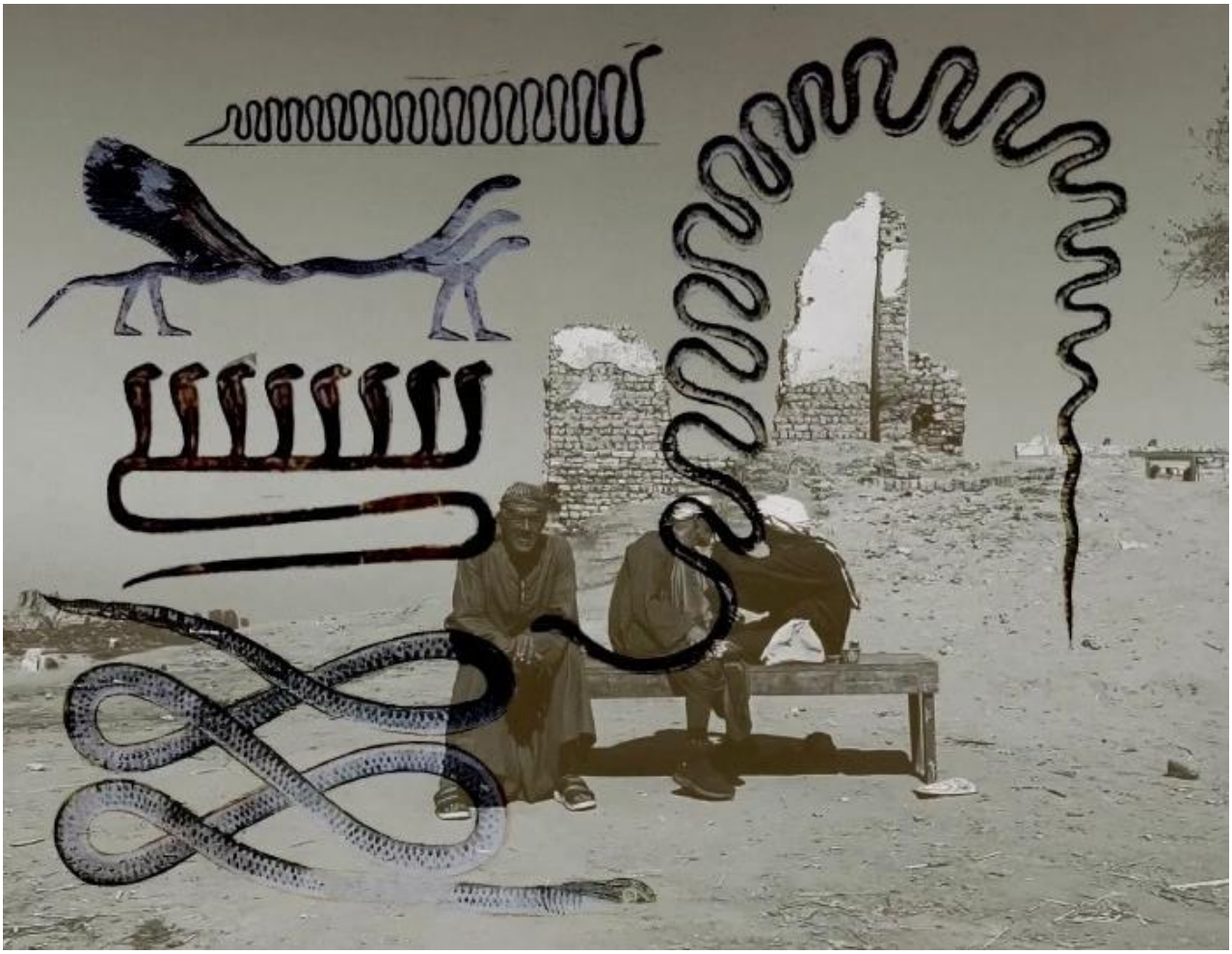
How do you approach combining sound, space, and visual elements in your installations?

Shanxuelian (Shirly) Han | Landscape with Pines | 2023

I began my practice in painting and sculpture, but music has always been a significant influence on my visual expressions. As sound became more integrated into my work, I realised that I approach sculptures, paintings and installations in the same way I approach producing sound, and vice versa. In my installations, I treat all elements as a unified whole. There's fade in and fade out, shapes have voices, different soundscape creates distinct spaces. The way we look, comprehend and process visual information is akin to varying volumes and beats, there is different speed in every sculptures and paintings. My interest in clubs and dancing is important as well, – as dancing spaces can both be spaces of intense connection and rebellion, and commodified, isolating spaces. All elements exists symbiotically, creating an immersive environment while leaving room for individual interpretation and response.

You describe your work as playing semiotic games. Can you share an example of a symbol you re-contextualized in a recent piece?

Certainly. In a recent exhibition, I presented a video work titled Fishman's Rhyme, which combines text, video, and electronic music. The concept draws from a book of the same name published during the early Qing dynasty, designed to teach children to write poetry. It pairs huge amount of words and



objects in the universe based on rhymes, elements or other connections between the existence of things. I re-contextualized this idea to explore the words, signs and sentences produced in the currently era, The work invites viewers to engage with urban and natural landscapes in poetic or even unconventional ways, serving as a reminder that even in chaos, there's potential for new and meaningful beginnings.

There's a unique tension between seriousness and playfulness in your sculptures—how do you strike that balance?

I think that tension is essential to my work. I like to craft a space where viewers can oscillate between joy and contemplation, it's about playing with 'seriousness' and 'rules' in a way that feels both liberating and thought-provoking.

How has your education in both Beijing and London influenced your artistic language?

The cities themselves-and the life within them-influenced me more than the actual education, I learnt from the streets, from the weather, from people's stories, these experiences became an endless source of inspiration for both my work and life.

What role does absurdity or nonsense play in your creative process?

Nonsense, absurdity or foolishness can be precious in the world like this, they create a space of rebellion where I can explore and express with freedom and possibility. For me, embracing the absurd is a form of resistance and a way to invite curiosity, it's a playful yet powerful tool to expand reality.

In your sculptural works, how important is material choice in delivering the conceptual message?

I enjoy experimenting with different sculptural materials, both traditional and non-traditional as each carries its own information. Some have been formed for tens of thousands of years, and some were just manufactured yesterday. The time span contained therein is very interesting, and I use them to introduce the dimension of time into my work.

My name is **Yasmin Schöttner**, and I work under the artist name Pessigoisten. I'm a visual artist based in Berlin, Germany, where I maintain an independent studio practice. While largely self-taught, my creative path has been shaped by an ongoing engagement with contemporary abstraction and a curiosity for unconventional materials and processes. Since presenting my debut solo exhibition Bipolar at SBZ Motorenprüfstand in 2018, I've remained active within Berlin's grassroots art scene. I've participated in group exhibitions such as n0thing at Sari-Sari and have independently developed a growing portfolio of expressive, mixed-media works. My paintings often incorporate acrylic, structure paste, tape, chalk, and found materials, exploring texture, surface, and layered imagery. Beyond the studio, I regularly collaborate with other local artists and organize small independent projects, focusing on alternative spaces and experimental formats. Berlin's diverse and constantly shifting art culture continues to influence my approach, offering a space for risk-taking and introspection. I consider each new series an opportunity to rethink my relationship to material, form, and atmosphere.

Artist Statement
I work within the language of abstraction because it allows me to communicate in ways that exist beyond words — through texture, color, rhythm, and the physicality of materials. My practice is rooted in the desire to give form to emotions that are often unspoken, contradictory, or unresolved. Each piece begins as a response to an internal state or tension, but it quickly becomes a conversation between myself, the surface, and the materials in front of me. Acrylic, structure paste, tape, chalk, marker, and found materials are central to my work. I'm drawn to how these substances can create depth, capture movement, and leave traces of both deliberate and accidental gestures. Texture is particularly important in my process; I think of the surface of a painting as a kind of skin — something that can be scarred, softened, built up, or worn down, holding its own quiet narrative beneath the visible image. The act of painting for me is deeply intuitive and physical. I rarely begin with a finished composition in mind. Instead, I let each mark inform the next, embracing both control and disruption. Symbols, fragments of text, and scientific notation sometimes emerge within the work, but they function more as abstract anchors or interruptions than as literal content. They are reminders of structure within emotional chaos, or hints at a larger, unseen system behind human experience. Through this process, I aim to create works that hold a sense of presence and emotional weight. I am interested in how abstraction can evoke memory, longing, fragility, and resilience without relying on representation. Ultimately, my work is about honoring the complexity of feeling — its beauty, its discomfort, and its constant state of flux.

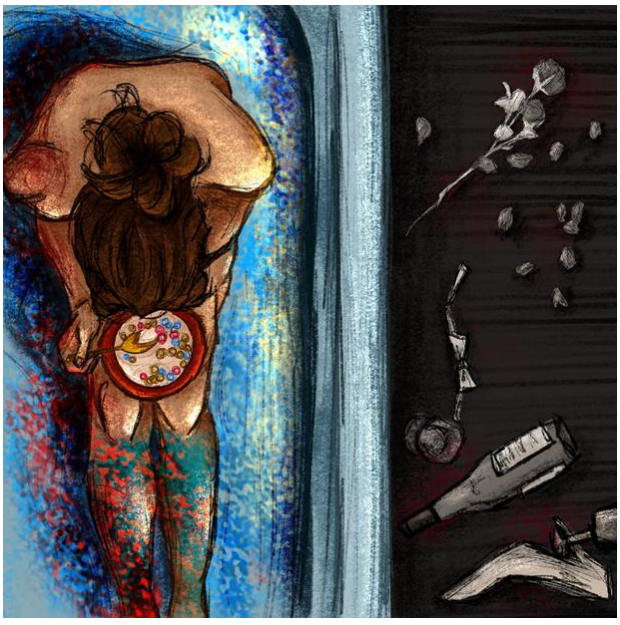
Pessigoisten | blå[en] | 2023

— *Interview*

Eylül Ada Yılmaz

Your work often explores themes of sensitivity, self-discovery, and healing. How do these personal experiences influence your creative process?

These themes are usually at the core of my work. Emotions that I couldn't fully express with words find their way into my art. As a result, my work is deeply personal. Each piece originates from a feeling — sometimes joy, sometimes pain, and even my regrets — and the visual narrative is built around that base emotion. Over time, I've come to appreciate my art as a form of healing through storytelling. At times when I felt lost in my own emotions, my art became the light that guided me. I've realized that my feelings and past experiences affect me more than I consciously acknowledge. The details in my art often surprise me; they've revealed my deepest anxieties, regrets, and even moments of happiness that I hadn't fully appreciated at the time.



What role does digital art play in expressing emotions that might be hard to communicate with words?

Digital art offers a unique freedom — it's the only medium that truly allows me to make mistakes. I'm aware of the prejudice against it, but once I started layering textures, light, and colors to mirror emotional complexity, I knew I had found the right medium. There are no limits to my creativity, and mistakes become another key to growth. Whether it's paint, a brush, or a canvas — if I can imagine it, I have it. Digital brushes, in particular, allow me to create entire atmospheres, even entire worlds, that capture my emotions without the need for explanation. To sum it up, the limitations of words are less binding in digital art. Creating new textures and canvases is much easier than inventing entirely new words.

Your art has a dreamlike quality, with soft colors and gentle compositions. How do you decide on the visual language for your projects?

It's very intuitive, often based on the core emotion of the piece. I start with a base color — red for bold feelings, baby pinks and blues for love and affection, glowing yellows for hope, etc. The composition grows organically from there. The color wheel guides the process. I enhance the piece by using softer shades to create gentle edges, and I employ intense light to produce the dreamy effect where each piece shines. I love visual metaphors and creating a sense of stillness in chaos — in other words, the surreal settings I create. I adore the concept of a world made of dreams, and so the colors and compositions align with that idea.

Many of your works feature quiet, reflective moments. How do you think stillness and solitude contribute to the stories you're telling through your art?

Stillness allows for depth. It's in these quiet moments that we confront the parts of ourselves we usually hide. Our most vulnerable emotions — hidden tears, unspoken truths — are often buried in silence. I aim to capture the moment just before healing, or that brief moment after realization. The scenes I depict aren't crowded or loud; instead, they are everyday moments filled with emotion. I want to highlight these moments, as they are often overlooked in our fast-paced lives. After all, more important decisions are made in quiet car rides filled with emotion than in crowded bars full of cheers, right?

What do you hope viewers take away from your art? Is there a message you want to convey through the soft, glowing worlds you create?

I hope they feel seen. I want them to feel that their emotions are valid and to recognize their own moments of joy, sorrow, and fear, knowing they aren't alone. Even in the darkness of their struggles, I hope they can focus on the light peeking through from the most unexpected places. You just need to keep going to find that brightness. My message is simple: it's more than okay to feel deeply. You just need to find the beauty in your sensitivity and vulnerability, even if the world around you demands a hard shell. Won't that she'll eventually change you? There are enough shells in this world, but you and your feelings are rare.

How has your transition from traditional art to digital media shaped your work? Are there any unique challenges or freedoms you've discovered?

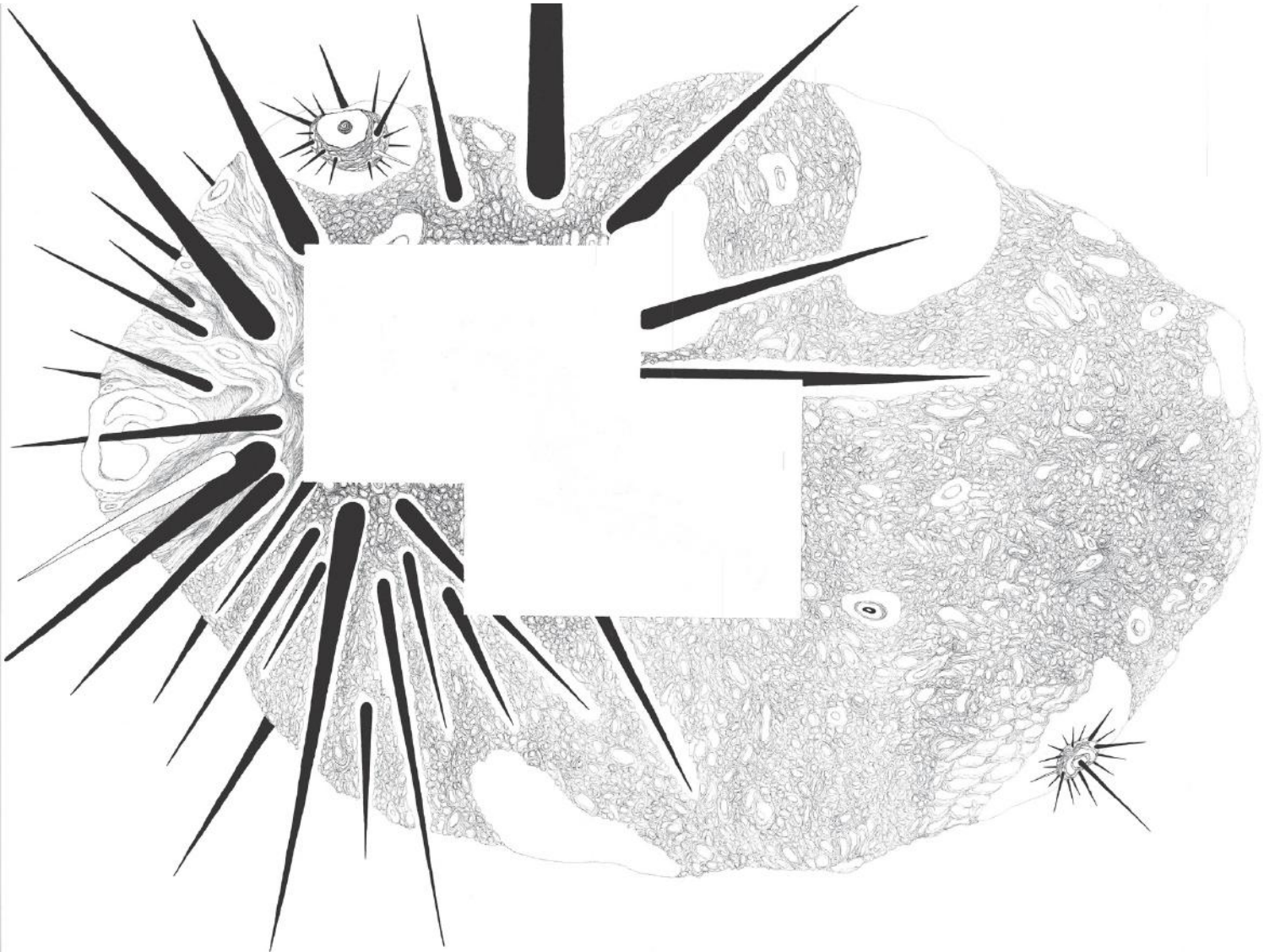
Transitioning to digital was like unlocking a new dimension. The mood in my head, my feelings, and every little fleeting thought of mine were finally captured by the endless possibilities of color and texture in digital mediums. I experimented endlessly with light, shadows, and textures until I felt like I had found my frequency. The biggest challenge for me is always knowing when to stop. Digital media offers limitless opportunities, which can be overstimulating at times. Learning when my work starts to speak for itself has helped me recognize the finish line and say, "Hey, it's okay for this one now!" The unique freedom for me lies in playing with layers — duplicating them, creating different versions of a piece, and adjusting the story with every small change.

Your art has a certain magic to it — how do you define "magic" in the context of your creative expression?

Magic is the invisible thread between emotion and image. I have this theory that there's a shimmer in every moment, regardless of whether it's sad or happy. I try to capture that shimmer and preserve it forever in my work. It's that instant of connection when someone looks at a piece and immediately clicks with it without needing to know why. I use lighting, bold colors, and contrasts to capture this magic. It's alchemy — not to turn something into gold, but rather to transform something internal into something shared.

Da Dalto is an Italian multidisciplinary researcher operating in the dimension of intersection between technique and consciousness. He defines his practice as Poetica di Meditazione-Meccanica (Poetics of Mechanical-Meditation), a visual research that uses handmade automatic writing as a tool to explore the interaction between the physical dimension of the gesture and the psychic perception of the same. The aim is to generate hybrid forms of life that oscillate between oneiric and organic dimension, crystallizing states of consciousness that take shape like a lucid dream within what he has defined as Immaginario Onirico-Organico (Organic-Oneiric Imaginary).
Immaginario Onirico-Organico melts two apparently divided dimensions: the intuition of the subject (which is characterized by an impulse of liberation) and the structure of nature (which is characterized by a condition of constraint). This approach considers the subject and the environment as elements of an original unity that can be recomposed through the therapeutic power of symbolic production and within this perspective conceives the subject as a particular type of environment for consciousness' exploration. From the perspective of Immaginario Onirico-Organico, the biological alphabet is not an abstraction of nature but is an extraction from the consciousness thanks to the seismographic activity of the sign that is used to explore the deepest layers of the subject's genetic memory. In this way the painting is transformed into a cybernetic epidermis and the canvas turns out to be a liminal portal that activates a circle of energetic exchange between physical and psychic dimension allowing the elimination of their apparent division.

Da Dalto | Criptogenetica X | 2024

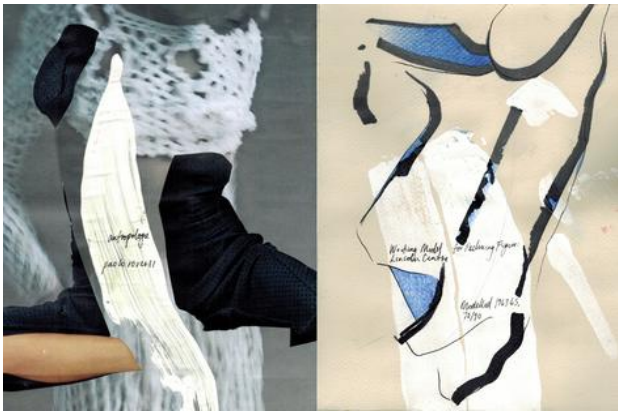


Jackie Cheng

Your works seem deeply personal and introspective. How do you begin a new collage or painting? Is there a specific memory or emotion that typically triggers the process?

My work is deeply personal and introspective because, in their most reductive form, they are essences of my thoughts on a page. My sketchbook becomes essentially my brain displayed visually, and finished works are completed explorations of a thought, an experience, or an idea. Most of my pieces begin with a specific person in mind. It's not necessarily a single memory or emotion that triggers it, but rather a single being for whom, in a way, this piece is being created for. The identity of the subject and whether or not the subject sees the piece becomes irrelevant throughout the process. The final iteration of the work often presents itself as a documentation of an idealised, reimagined, and often unspoken rumination between my sense of self and fundamental themes of identity, desire, loss, and grief.

You use a wide range of materials—from posters and editorials to classical art references. What guides your selection of found imagery?



Jackie Cheng | Figure study | 2024

I am constantly sourcing and searching for imagery. I have binders of miscellaneous papers and cutouts, organised by colour, that I use regularly in my practice. Much comes from everyday life—receipts, ticket stubs, maps, postcards, etc. Others are more methodical, like magazines and publications, where hours are spent flipping through countless issues, examining each spread, and deciding which to save and what to discard. This process has become an intuitive one for me, after flipping through thousands of pages regularly, colours, textures, and forms that are compelling become recognised instantaneously. This practice also allows me to continually grow and develop my eye, as the depth and breadth of my visual rolodex and references are constantly being defined, refined, and ultimately, augmented.

Many of your works include handwritten notes or fragments of text. How do words and language function in your visual storytelling?

Words and language function as just another visual tool I use in my practice to reflect the diaristic and introspective aspects of my work. Drawing on the connotations of handwritten notes, messages, and letters—the intimacy, notions of sincerity, suggestions of secrecy—they act as another mark-making technique. Often used in lieu of a paint stroke, I think of it akin to photo transfers. Many times, the intention behind the text is not even for the viewer to read. Although all texts relate to the subjects of the pieces, their addition is always first and foremost, intended to add depth and texture.

Your layering technique creates a tactile and emotional depth. Can you talk about the relationship between concealment and revelation in your work?

Jackie Cheng | Figure study | 2024

Much like any introspective process, whether it be through writing, speaking, or reflecting, there are always moments of revelation, discovery, and confession that occur. The relationship between concealing and revealing in my work explores that. Simultaneous to the painting process is this constant editing, revising, and layering of collage elements, photo transfers, and text. Through this approach, both the formal and conceptual become defined and refined. Even the dichotomy between the finished and unfinished becomes part of my visual language. As a result, my practice and stylised sensibility becomes one that embraces the ongoing, ever-changing, and open-ended while allowing hidden and unspoken thoughts to reside.

How do you navigate the boundary between design and fine art in your practice?

There really aren't any boundaries between design and fine art in my practice. My process weaves in both artist and designer spaces, with inspirations, influences, methods, and resolutions coexisting in both.

Several of your pieces reference iconic sculptures and artists (e.g., Henry Moore, Maillol). What role does art history play in your exploration of self?

Those pieces are exploratory collages created after experiencing a Moore and Maillol exhibit. Part documentative and part diaristic, the analysis and connection to the history of art and other artists play an integral role in my exploration of self. Through this dialogue, artists of the past become present in the contemporary, allowing my process to exist amongst their practice, ideologies, and techniques. As a result, this allows me to ground my work while providing frameworks of form, perspective, and composition to push and explore.

Can you speak about the role of the body—especially the fragmented or abstracted body—in your visual language?

Both the female and the male figure, simultaneous to the female and male gazes, are a constant source of stimuli and dynamism in my work. Themes of intimacy and sexuality that are often associated with nude forms are also important in my visual language. Through their abstraction and fragmentation, I am able to examine them both formally and conceptually. My depictions of nude figures reflect not the literal, but rather, surreal imaginings that transform images of the past into a reflection of my emotional interior. Through this documentation of both emotional history and the history of bodies, the work redefines itself to not only be the sum of lived experiences, but a collective of connections, losses, and secrets. As a result, it aims to prompt the viewer to redirect their experience internally and recall their own past connections, lost connections, and current connections.

Kristin Marie Steinke

Watercolor is one of your foundational mediums—how does that influence your digital work?

I love the fluidity of watercolor—the way pigment, brush, water, and paper all interact. I often start each collection with a brainstorming session or mind map, sketching and playing with storyline ideas. Watercolor usually comes next because it satisfies that tactile craving to hold a brush and play with color. After painting, I scan my work and manipulate it digitally in Photoshop and Procreate. That lets me paint messy and freely—I don't worry about drips or pencil lines because I can refine later. For Allyship in Color, my palette was actually inspired by my paints—Opera Pink is a personal favorite. Even though this collection is fully digital, the spirit of watercolor is in every layer.

Kristin Steinke | Rise | 2025

Why did you choose a risograph-inspired aesthetic for this digital collection?

I've always been drawn to vintage aesthetics, and risograph printing has that perfectly retro vibe. On a recent tour of California College of the Arts—where my kid is studying illustration—I got to see the real machines, huge ink drums, and the time-consuming, beautiful mess of the process. I was instantly hooked. I don't have access to a risograph machine, but I knew I had to channel that energy into a digital collection inspired by the look, feel, and joyful imperfection of risograph prints.

How does the natural environment around Bend, Oregon influence your color choices and visual style?

Bend is a beautiful, sunny place—high desert, full of nature and craft beer! But while I enjoy kayaking the Deschutes or soaking in mountain lake views, I'm not exactly outdoorsy. My happy place is sitting in a Paris or Florence café, people-watching and absorbing the world's colors and textures. Living in

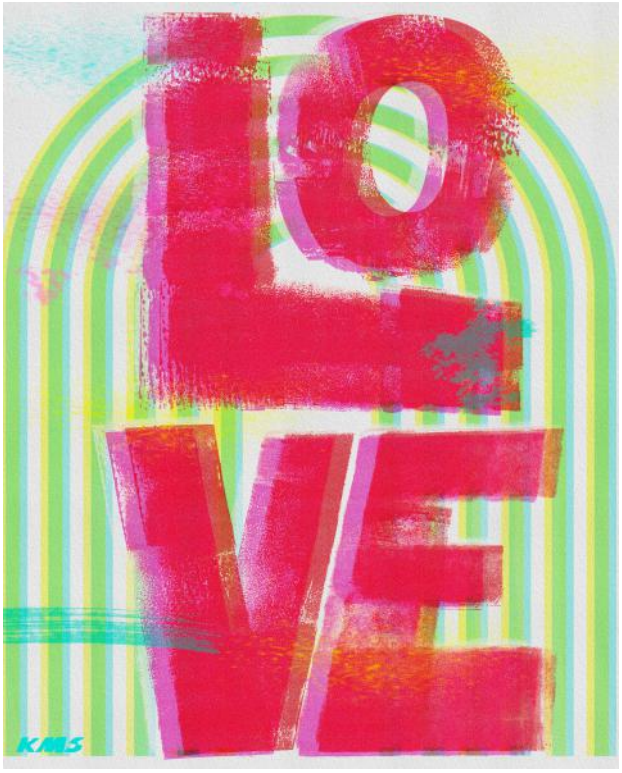
such a quiet place gives me mental space to create, while my art becomes the colorful, expressive outlet I crave. I travel often to stay inspired, but coming home to the stillness of Bend helps me center and recharge.

What role do your dogs and your home studio play in your creative process?

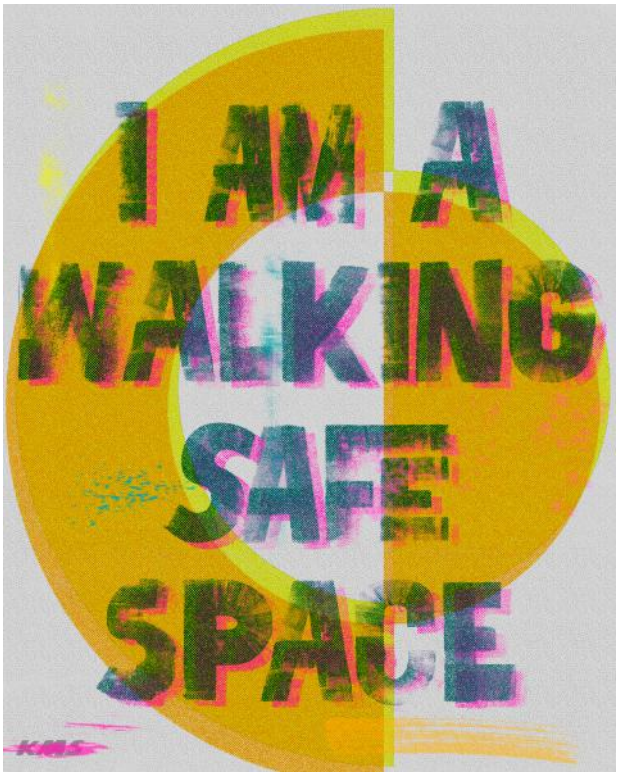
My studio is my happy place. I turned a spare bedroom into a creative sanctuary that's colorful, messy, and ever-changing—right now, the walls are pink! I have three dedicated work zones: one for painting, one for iPad sketching, and one for computer work. That structure keeps my creative flow moving. And my dogs? They're everything. Their snoring keeps me company, and their internal clocks keep me grounded—they make sure I take breaks, go on walks, and stop working when it's time to play or rest. Who needs a watch when you have a dog?

Your work bursts with color and texture—how do you approach building a composition from scratch?

I usually begin with mind mapping—just writing out phrases, emotions, or themes that feel important. For Allyship in Color, I asked myself, "What does being an ally mean to me?" The answers came fast. My challenge was to stay hopeful and loving. Anger is easy—but I wanted this series to be an



Kristin Steinke | Love | 2025



Kristin Steinke | Safe space | 2025

open-armed embrace for a community that's feeling vulnerable. The risograph-inspired look guided my color choices—bold, bright, and grounded in tradition, but turned up in saturation and spirit.

Many of your pieces incorporate bold typography. What draws you to text as a visual element?

This is actually my first full collection where text takes center stage. I felt a deep need to say something, not just suggest it. Symbolism wasn't enough—I wanted these pieces to speak directly to both allies and LGBTQIA+ folks. I wanted to create mantras for allies who may not know what to say and visual declarations of love and solidarity for those who need to hear it.

If viewers take away one thing from your work, what do you hope it is?

Allyship matters. Say it out loud. Show up. Be seen loving loudly.

Luciana Fabiilli is an Italian figurative artist who received a Bachelor Of Fine Arts Honour's Degree from York University, Toronto Canada. She is the recipient of several awards, such as Dallas Critics Choice Awards, Texas, The Artist's Magazine, out of 13,000 entries Honorable mention award National, USA. Creatio Magna, Masterpiece Laurete from Lumen art gallery, Turkey. She was selected for featured article in The Artist's Magazine, Encyclopedia of Living Artist's inside front cover, California, Dallas Women's Magazine, Plano Profile Texas, Tervarna gallery honorable mention, Distinctive award gallery4percent, San Francisco..etc. Luciana continues to grace with her paintings that speak of the soul. Her intention is to inspire and paint a brighter world.

Artist Statement
My paintings are an artistic journey into the spiritual realm. My paintings speak of the soul. The women portrayed are of feminine energy, strength and inner beauty. They are what Luciana calls Muses of Inspiration.

Luciana Fabiilli | Green with Envy

Luciana Fabiilli | The Gaze

Richard Gibson

Your works blend photography, painting, and digital manipulation in a very visceral way. What is your process for creating these hybrid images?

One day I realized that the photographic medium alone was not enough for me to express a visual idea and emotions. While studying modern art, I learned how Marcel Duchamp added a moustache to a postcard of the Mona Lisa in 1919, combining drawing and painting within the framework of art, and creating a new statement. This knowledge gave me the desire to complement the photograph with a drawing, and later, studying photography and collages, I began to experiment with the print itself, crumpled it, cut it, even set it on fire. This expanded the boundaries of my expressive language. And digital manipulation and processing have been natural since childhood, as is drawing.

Richard Gibson | Collage series | 2024

How has your background in video design, directing, and marketing influenced your fine art practice?

Great question. My commercial experience became more and more burdensome to me over the years, as I moved away from the arts while doing marketing. My passion for the history of painting, photography and contemporary art helped me resist the advertising I was creating. The desire to leave a mark on the arts by expanding its boundaries was much greater than the desire to add another creative video to my portfolio. I would say that my career has forced me to creatively sublimate myself in art.

You mention the Kuleshov effect in your artist statement. How do you apply this cinematic concept in your collages?

In photography, I like diptychs that provide visual metaphors. For example, I placed a photo of a bird taking flight next to a portrait of a girl, which gave the heroine in the photo notes of freedom, lightness, that is, a metaphorical reading of the portrait arose. In my collages, I most often combine female images with expressive drawings, paint drips, I can crush the print itself with force, apply author's techniques that complicate the original photograph. It seems that I have visually learned to add expression and express my attitude, and I like this technique.

Richard Gibson | Collage series | 2024

Many of your portraits feature erased, fragmented, or distorted faces. What themes or emotions are you aiming to evoke through this?

I owe my techniques with deconstruction to Robert Rauschenbersch and his legendary work "Erased de Kooning Drawing". Deconstruction allows me to leave something unsaid, to open the viewer's gestalt, giving his imagination space for interpretation and fantasy. Distortion of the face also allows me to move away from individuality towards a stereotypical familiar image, leaving the use of a photo of a specific person as a symbol, something common and inherent to all of us. Thoughts about our identity are revealed in the book "Alien Face" by Kobo Abe. The unsaid and incomplete are much more interesting than a finished, understandable image.

What role does femininity and the deconstruction of form play in your visual language?

The female image and female role in the modern world are changing most of all, I am interested in playing with feminine images, for me they will always conceal mystery, desire, danger, the unknown.

How do you integrate AI tools like neural networks and AI video into your artistic process without losing the personal, emotional core?

Please remember Marcel Duchamp and his "Fountain". He invented the relief-made by bringing the toilet into the sphere of art, giving it the author's meaning. I think that neural networks are an excellent relief-made, with thousands of variations, but it is the choice from an infinite number of images that creates the author's statement. And it correlates with the ideas and emotions of the author. We can get to know a person by studying his collection of something. Or, for example, simply by studying the interior of his home, where there will be hundreds of traces of "choice". Neural networks provide a space of options, but the author's choice is always unique. For the first time in our history, we are no longer trying to answer the question "How was this created", and the answer to the question "What do we want to say" comes to the fore. The dictatorship of many years of art education has finally fallen. Now every person has gained the right to vote, everyone can enter the "God mode" and create their own artistic Universe. And it will be unique. Like our homes, our choice, our taste, our focus of attention. An artist is now like a curator, carefully creating his personal exhibition, expressing his inner world visually, without limiting himself to the framework of artistic skills. Without unnecessary importance, without the desire for approval of our drawing skills, people are able to open up and be heard with the help of neural networks. We are judged in society by our taste and choice - what clothes we wear, what car we drive, what we listen to and where we dine - all life is a series of choices, and now everyone is able to express their taste and choice thanks to neural networks. "What to create" and not "How to create" is much more important, finally.

You reference both Impressionism and Color Expressionism—how do these historical movements shape your contemporary visual vocabulary?

There are about 10 series in my creative portfolio. In most of them you can see color beyond the reasonable, wild fauvism, color as the main way of influencing the viewer, influencing even before understanding the image, shocking and surprising color. Impressionism is about the author's perception of what he saw, in fashion photography, for example, I used dozens of lenses, prisms, glasses to transform reality. I never wanted to just take photos, reflecting raw reality. One of my hobbies is cooking, so I wanted to "cook" reality, artistically rethink it through the camera, express my attitude and leave something unsaid. But when I reached the level of collage, I really had enough techniques to create art, and not just "steal" this reality by pressing the button of the camera.

hoodTRONIK is a new media and XR artist blending digital photography, 3D design, and augmented reality experiences. His work explores the intersection of beauty, emotion, and emerging technology, inviting audiences to engage with art beyond traditional frames.

Project Statement
"Flower Queen" is a digital portrait created using an AI LoRA model and enhanced through an augmented reality experience. The piece captures a timeless moment of beauty and celebration — a woman adorned in a gown of living roses. When activated, the image comes alive: flower petals drift from the sky, the figure moves gently, and a musical score fills the space, inviting the viewer into an intimate dreamscape. 'Flower Queen' blends visual storytelling, technology, and emotion, offering a layered experience that extends beyond the traditional frame. An interactive WebAR experience accompanies this piece. Viewers can scan the QR code provided. The AR experience brings the artwork to life with falling petals, gentle motion, and ambient music, extending the emotional impact into a hybrid digital space.

hoodTRONIK | Heather FlowerGown

Interview

Natalia Marginalia

Your work often explores the tension between destruction and renewal. Can you elaborate on how these themes have evolved throughout your recent projects, particularly in relation to global and personal crises?

I started working with the theme of destruction because it became a huge and terrifying part of my physical reality - political repression, the pandemic, wars, people forced to protect themselves physically, people becoming radicalized, and, before all of that, the collapses brought on by motherhood. I've seen all kinds of reactions - some people become more destructive, others more creative, and some just freeze or observe. All of it seems like a way to regain a sense of control.

Natalia Marginalia | It's the Right Time to Kiss | 2025

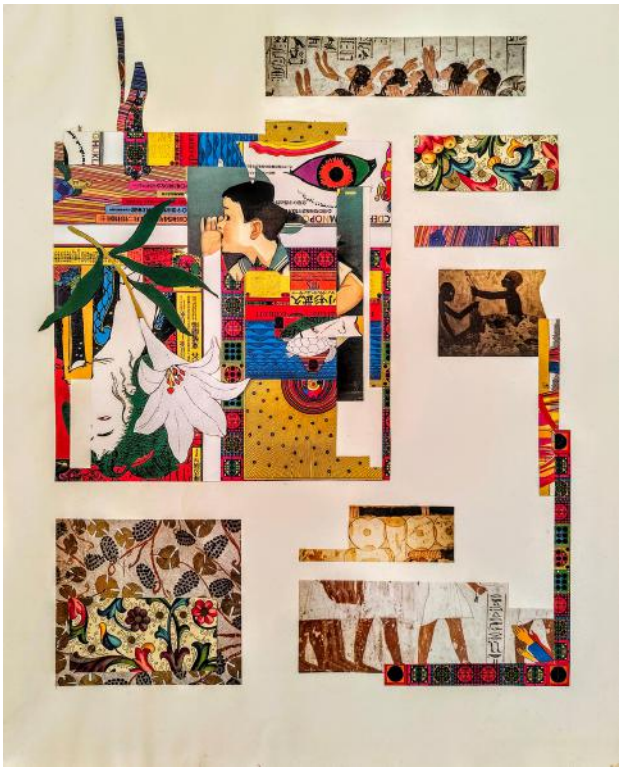
Natalia Marginalia | Freedom of Breath Struck | 2023

That got me thinking - can destruction ever be positive? Can it exist alongside creation? In my current project, I'm exploring hospitals as places where destruction - whether from illness, injury, or even treatment - is dealt with using tools that can also feel destructive. I find the line between harmful and helpful destruction to be very thin. It depends on how something is done, and whether it helps more than it hurts. I believe that the everyday struggle to find balance and stay open to uncertainty leads to better outcomes than letting our definitions of 'good' blind us, make us insensitive, or cause us to overreact.

You mention that your artistic process has become a "ritual-like search for new lifecycles." Could you describe what that process looks like on a day-to-day basis?

I often pick up objects people have thrown away - metal, wood, different kinds of paper, fabric, even old canvases left near trash bins or abandoned in the desert sun. These things have already lived two lives: one as something important to someone, and one as trash. Before they can be reborn, I feel they need to be broken down again.
It reminds me of nature - nothing just disappears, it transforms and becomes part of something else. That's what I try to do. I look for these things, take them, sometimes destroy them more, and then create something new. That's also how I deal with the inevitable finitude of things dear to us - moments, feelings, communication, life. I look for ways they can keep living in another form.

In your collage work, you incorporate both figuration and abstraction. How do you decide when to balance or blend these two elements in your compositions?



Natalia Marginalia | Hospital | 2025

I usually start by marking some key points of meaning with figurative elements, then connect them using abstraction. After that, I add more figurative pieces - like a second focal point after the general feeling expressed by the abstraction - and they make things feel a bit surreal or magical-realistic. I can usually explain what each part refers to.
Honestly, I don't think much about how to blend while I'm working. It's more about feeling things with my hands, staying present with the material, and reacting in the moment. I think it also connects to my own experiences with derealization and depersonalization - it's a blend of clarity and blur, sense and confusion, and that shows up in how I build the images.

You often use found, altered, and handmade materials in your art. How do these materials reflect the themes of care, survival, and communication that you explore in your work?

To me, survival is about adapting. The materials I use already had a purpose, but now they have to change. It's about figuring out what we can do with what we already have, instead of always going back to some painful starting point.
Care shows up in how I work too. I gather, explore, destroy, and recreate these materials in between everything else - talking with my kid, cooking, walking the dog, doing laundry, teaching English, hiding from missile attacks, and dealing with all kinds of abruptness caused by life itself, war, my husband's work schedule, and my limited productivity. I used to think these things were distractions from art. Now I see them as essential parts of it. They ground me. Without that connection to real life and care, my work would be either a lie or a stream of constant pain - and I don't think that helps many people.
Art is also how I communicate. I start with something familiar to everybody - their trash - and shape it into something people recognize, like a cup, a blanket, or a piece of fencing. It's a way of looking for shared experiences.

Your project Horizon addresses the search for stability in a divided world. How do you view the role of art in creating spaces for unity amidst such divisions?

Art can help us notice what we have in common. That's important, because when we begin from our differences and uniqueness, we tend to label each other - "wrong," "dangerous," "other". And once that happens, the conversation often stops.
But if we start from what we share, it becomes easier to be curious about the differences too - to learn where they come from, rather than trying to fix or fight them.

How has your background in the humanities influenced the way you approach collage and assemblage as mediums of expression?

Studying history and culture taught me that we're always building on what already exists. We can't act like the past didn't happen just because we want to. Collage and assemblage are perfect for that - they take parts of the past and combine them with new material to say something about the present. It's the same with human experience. We carry it with us and reshape it as we go.

Many of your works seem to reflect on fleeting moments. How do you translate this impermanence into something tangible through collage?

I portray the body's reaction to a moment, and the objects around us that become witnesses and evidence of that time and place. The choice of objects or their parts reflects this fleeting nature - like I don't consciously choose what my mind captures in the moment, and these elements may appear in my work as figurative or more symbolic forms. It's just like when you're falling from a bicycle or kissing, and there is a random limited set of details your brain notices in this moment - and I play with this way of perception.

Taylor Williams is an artist, writer, and cat mom who currently lives in Pasadena, CA. She recently graduated from Cal State Long Beach with a Creative Writing degree. Her artwork usually consists of vibrant portraits done on her iPad featuring female-presenting figures with a dash of surrealism. When time away from the iPad is necessary, she loves experimenting with traditional mediums like oil pastels and watercolors. She had digital artwork published in 101 Artbook: Portrait Edition, Troublemaker Firestarter, and Midnight Fawn Review. She also had an opportunity to showcase her work in a digital exhibition for The Holy Art Gallery.

Artist Statement
Taylor is very inspired by the strength and vulnerability of femininity, expressing this through bright colors and exaggerated features. Being that strength and vulnerability are two sides of the same coin, her artwork consists of both bold and soft elements. The characters she illustrates often stare right back at the viewer with wide open eyes. Many of her works are vibrant portraits of feminine figures that explore fantasy, emotion, and the dramatics of femininity. Her work is often inspired by different phases in her own life and the experiences of those around her. At times, the portraits hint at a particular emotion or a specific idea.

Taylor Williams | Ana | 2024

Mike Efford

Mike Efford | Flowerpot Island

Your career spans graphic design, coin design, and 3D animation—how did these disciplines influence your approach to sculptural landscape art?

My first art job was designing and sculpting coins. Lasted for 4 years, in a Canadian company called Interbranch International Mint. A private mint! Go figure. There were maybe 3 or 4 in all of North America back then. Us, Franklin Mint and Sherritt Mint out in Alberta. It was at the height of the gold boom in the late 70's, early 80's. Which is back! Anyway, beyond designing in the round, the skill set required was bas relief sculpture. Now, relief sculpture is unique and full of paradox. Far less depth than in-the-round figure sculpture, technically, yet capable of pictorially illustrating vastly more depth, an entire landscape or scene! Check out Ghiberti's Gates of Paradise doors in Florence, (which I saw many years ago) you'll see what I mean. So that approach to 3 dimensional art never really left me. Wall sculpture is a cousin to relief sculpture. Essentially frontally viewed but capable of suggesting nearly infinite depth, especially as a work of 3D collage. And 3D animation uses wireframe models, built in multiple layers, which are related in many ways to the multi part structures I create today.

What initially drew you to explore landscape through a non-traditional lens?

Mike Efford | Tides

A lot of the graphic design and 3D motion graphics work I did involved multiple viewpoints and montage, and I found I could create with that mindset using real world materials to make sculpture. I think there are so many ways to interpret landscape beyond the usual stuff you see out there, no matter how well executed. I became aware of the later sculptural work of Frank Stella, just to give an example, that showed what you could do if you just took that leap! So I did.

Many of your works integrate forms that resemble scientific diagrams or maps—how do you see the relationship between nature and data in your practice?

Nature is the source, data is humankind. To me, science, technology and even agriculture are mark-making. All of them involve some form of drawing, within and upon nature. A jet's wing displaces air to create lift through vectors, giving flight to the aircraft, which then draws a line through the sky. A tractor draws parallel lines on land. Drawings! The aerial view frees up vision, I find. So maps, seen from above, are humankind's grand conceptual drawings, overlaid upon the geography of the earth. It's intrinsically beautiful. And limitless. I find mining geology visualizations quite fascinating, for example. There's an unconventional viewpoint for you, right? A view deep inside the earth, not necessarily of the surface appearance at all. Some of the technologies that locate veins of ore deep in the ground, are visualized on computers with transparent colour shapes, lines, textures and graphic symbology that react to unseen bodies of the same metals used in fine art sculpture. Again, mankind's drawing, and a unique kind of technological landscape art. All of it inspiration for sculpture, to me.

Could you describe your process of translating digital landscapes into physical mixed-media sculptures?

Sure, so these days actually I generally start with a line drawing, the fastest route from the subconscious to a

Mike Efford | Terrain Aeriality #2

concept. However I did for several years take digital photography and process it with filters and such, to create my own language of texture, which by the way I often carry forward into my present work. And before that I used the same digital tools I used for 3D animation models, to improvise land forms, then apply digital processing, to create landscape prints. But these days I sketch, gesturally and pretty loosely, I guess, to kickstart an idea. Then I look at the lines, and in my head I conjure up form from them, very similar to how I worked on screen doing digital landscapes. But instead of different layers in a CAD file, I see different areas and materials, each working together to compose a landscape. I tend to evolve, but not necessarily discard.

Your pieces often incorporate flowing lines that resemble rivers, veins, or energy—what do these lines represent to you?

Line to me is the most indivisible, irreductible element in all of art, and also the most direct expression of form. Put it to the test! You have one second to express a sphere. Go! What did you do? You drew a circle. You didn't shade anything, right? Line is this universal language. So versatile! And beyond a shorthand for form, it perpetually astonishes me how even a compact, casual scribble can exude massive energy. Like the kind of energy surging through a river, or the path of a bird wheeling and swooping through air. Line is magic. Line to me is a revealer of energy. Even when it's just used to outline something. One thing I have done all my life is randomly scribble on paper, it's a nervous habit, and an expression of raw energy I guess. But that turbulent, flowing line brings landscape to life. And in ways you might not expect.

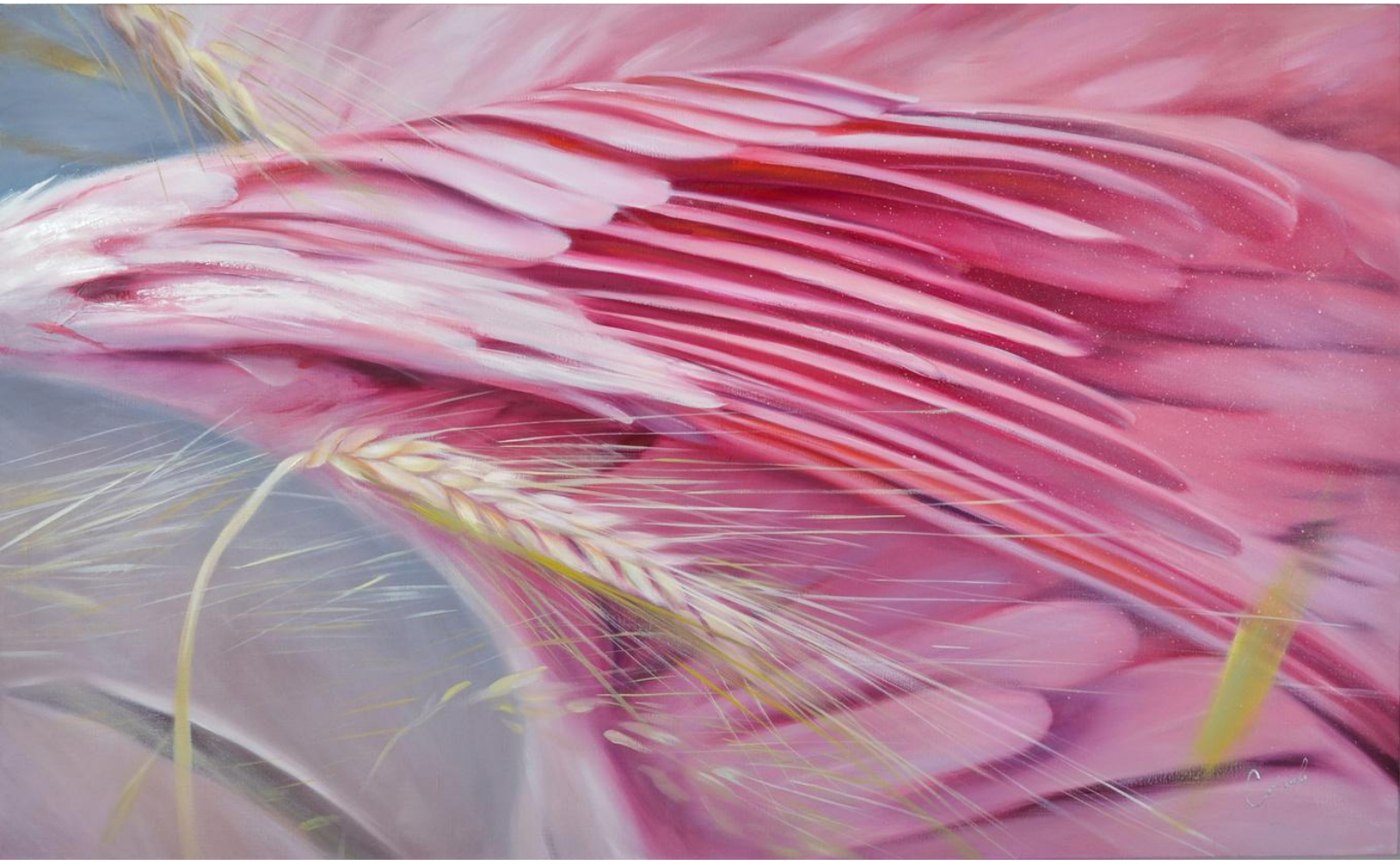
How does your background in 3D animation affect your sense of space and layering in sculpture?

I was a computer animator for 26 years. I focused initially on motion graphics, much of it 3D flying logos and 3 dimensional graphics, and for the last 15 of those years worked with technical subjects, marketing new technologies, many of them yet to be even prototyped, let alone manufactured. Pure concept stuff, many times to pitch investors. Especially with the technical stuff, 3D models actually consist of a layered set of parts. It's standard with pretty much all file formats. You open a 3D object file and you can click through sometimes dozens of separate elements or sub-components of the model. And working that way truly became part of my spatial DNA! Very different process from a sculptor who works in granite, for example, taking one large block and chiseling away at that monolith till the subject emerges, all in one piece. So this layered digital approach quite naturally led to a similar approach with real materials, and I began to make multi-part 3D collages of landscape. I'm essentially the kind of sculptor who likes to put things together. Even 2 dimensional collage is an assembly, and my process certainly is an additive one. Regarding my sense of space, many 3D animation projects I worked on involved building a full, realistic landscape in order to showcase some piece of tech moving or flying through it. So you kind of get a really expansive sense of sculptural space doing that. And since my work is essentially collage, I typically combine elements that reference a diverse set of viewpoints, all into one sculpture.

What role does materiality play in your practice? Why basswood, resin, stainless steel wire?

I'd say I'm actually not the kind of sculptor who really showcases the intrinsic qualities of his materials, the way David Smith brought your attention to wire-polished, welded steel, or the way Noguchi made the material granite take on a life of it's own, regardless of the shapes he created with it. I'm more agnostic, and also part of me is still a painter. Colour and texture matter enormously to me, and my process allows me to turn on a dime, to change my mind on the fly as I play creatively with the finishes of of the various components I'm working on. Something you can't really do if you're locked in to the qualities of one material. Halfway through carving a block of granite you can't just say, naw, colour here is off, needs to be more reddish. I keep colour options and even material choices open as long as possible, and try and conduct them like musical instruments in an orchestra. And the instruments themselves? Well, basswood has almost no grain, it's easy to carve, and can be super smooth. Resin is my newest playgraound, massively versatile, especially for transparent bits of course. And stainless steel wire lets me express that energy of line I mentioned before. All told, there are entire worlds to be explored when these things are combined into landscape sculpture.

Irina Sazonova is a painter whose work emphasizes lightness, airiness, and the emotional tone of imagery. Her background in graphic design has shaped her sensitivity to composition, typography, and visual harmony. In her paintings, she explores themes of inner balance, spiritual elevation, and romantic intuition. In the Fly Higher series, the artist combines abstract forms with text-based elements resembling QR codes, within which positive messages are “encrypted.” These works function as visual mantras, serving as objects that fill the space with light, hope, and a sense of protection.



Irina Sazonova | Eat Pray Love

Lily Curtis

Do you remember the first artwork that made you feel proud? What was it?

The first artwork I remember being proud of, was actually a drawing from our first art lesson in year 1 of primary school, so I would have been six years old. We were learning about warm and cool colours, and it was of a fish. I do not remember much else, except that it was very fun, and I was very proud that my colouring was neat.

What role did your secondary school art teacher play in shaping your artistic journey?

I studied with my secondary school art teacher from year seven to my first half of year twelve. I always felt safe in her classroom to try new things and express myself. It was always the highlight of my day when she admired my work. It was even better when in my last two years of secondary school, we got a lot more freedom in what type of art we made. On Friday mornings, we had art first up, and she would bring in a trolley of tea and coffee to help ourselves.

Lily Curtis | Seaside | 2024

You describe your style as expressive and vibrant—what inspires your use of color and emotion?

I'm not sure how my style has come to be as it is, as when I started drawing, I stuck to graphite pencils. But when I would go to galleries, I would always look around and go bee-line to the most colourful one I can see. Now, I love experimenting with colour, simply because it is fun. I love to be expressive and use emotion in my work simply because, if I'm asked, 'what is art?', I always say, its a way of expressing yourself.

How has your time at TAFE influenced your technical growth and artistic confidence?

My time at TAFE has certainly, in a way, forced my hand into focusing on technique. In some of the first weeks, my digital art lecturer showed us how he makes some of his digital works, and how to really focus on colour, and it really changed how I make digital art, which is now a lot more detailed. As one of my classmates has said, instead of a teacher teaching art, we have practising artists teaching. It has very much

helped my confidence, as I've always felt my technique to be my weakest point.

What does a typical day in your art practice look like?

Most of my art practice is going with the flow, as of course, it started as just my hobby. I've grown to do some research if I want to make a large work that requires a lot of planning, some sketches, notes and references, but a lot of the time I'll put on music and go where the art takes me, as that is how I've created some of my best work.

Do you find that certain emotions or experiences influence your subject choices?

While I consider myself to be a very bubbly person, I do have some works that are very personal, that include ideas about bullying, body shaming and harassment, which I have experienced. I find I tend to lean towards strong emotions when making art, which I like to portray by using symbolism, especially colour symbolism.

Which artists, past or present, do you feel most connected to?

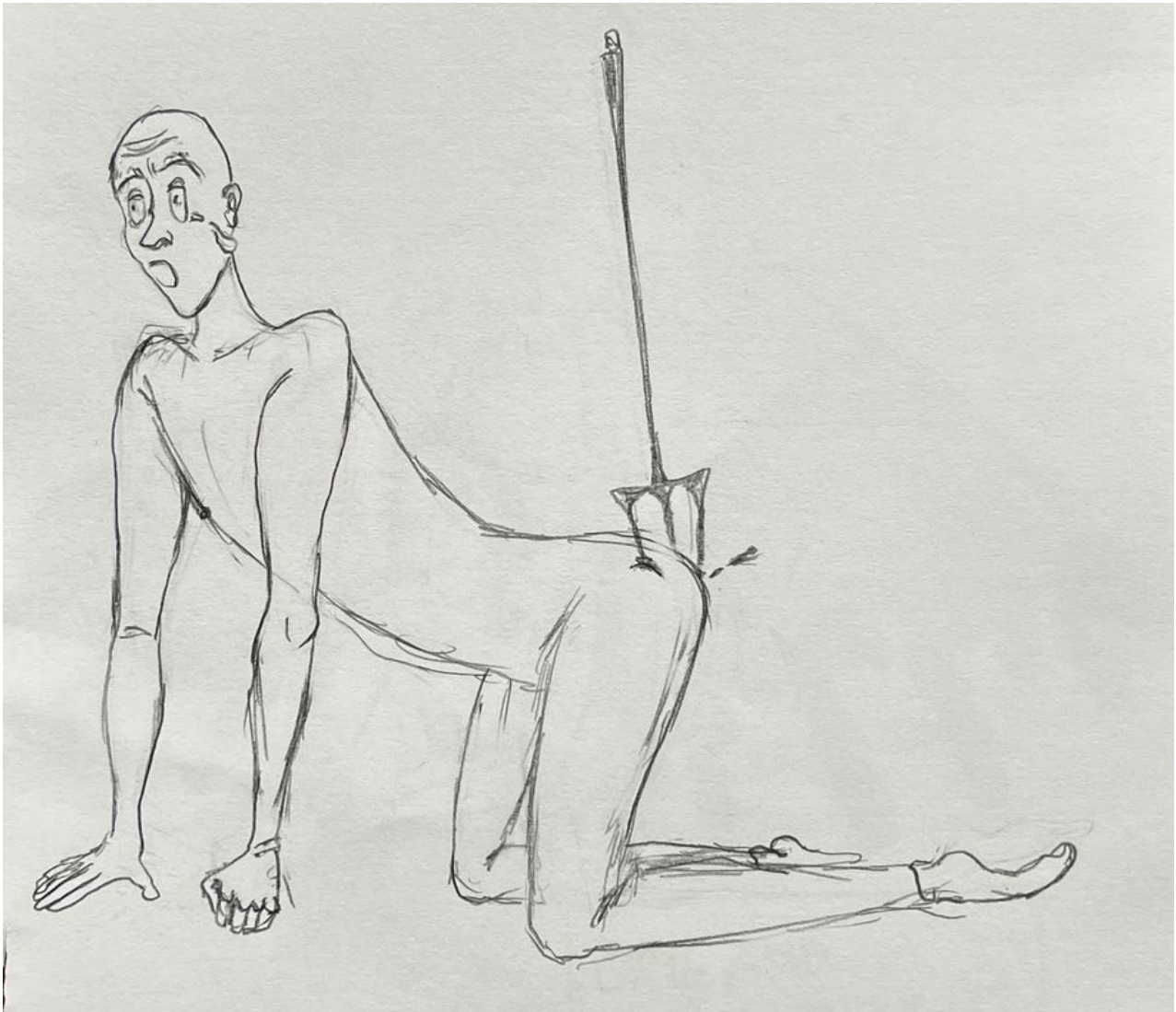
I feel most connected to Artemisia Gentileschi, a Baroque painter, because she is an Italian artist, as I have some Italian ancestry, and because I admire her resilience during the trail following her rape, in which she was tortured to verify her testimony. I admire her confidence to make feminist artworks during that time period, and I'm sure is an inspiration to many other artists. I also feel connected with is Vincent van Gogh, as he was largely unrecognised for his work while he was alive, which reminds me of society's general view that artists aren't important.

Lily Curtis | Country Trees | 2025

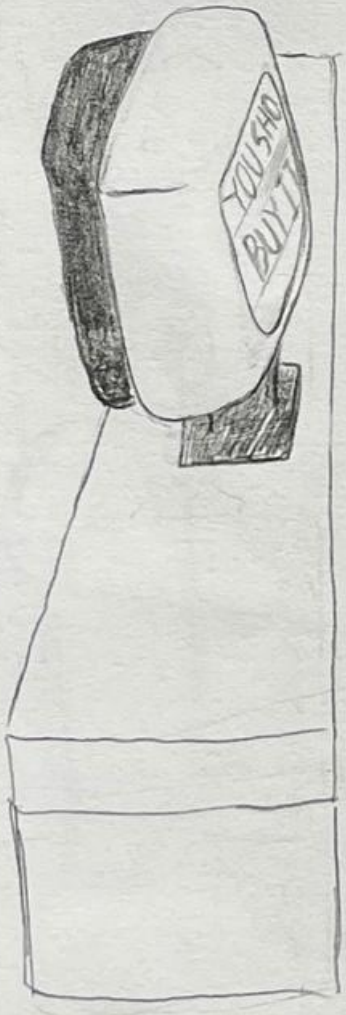
cynico vaseline

I am a self-taught artist, driven by a passion to express my thoughts and emotions through visual art. Coming from an English major background, I have no formal art education or financial support, but my lack of traditional training allows me to approach art with a fresh perspective. My work explores themes of self-expression, freedom, and social issues, often reflecting raw, unrefined emotions. Through my art, I aim to challenge conventions and break away from the constraints of perfectionism, focusing on what truly matters: the message I wish to convey.

Project Statement
"Fuck It, I Don't Care" represents my disregard for technique and precision in this series of works. It's about expressing my inner world and my views on social issues, without worrying about fine details or technical refinement. As a result, the pieces are intentionally raw and unpolished, reflecting my unfiltered thoughts and feelings. This approach highlights my desire to prioritize meaning and emotion over formalities, allowing for a more honest and direct artistic expression.



cynico vaseline | Fuck It, I Don't Care | 2025


YOU SHOULD BUY IT

— *Interview*

Mila Gromysz

Can you tell us about your journey into conceptual art and how your background in computer science and gender studies influences your creative process?

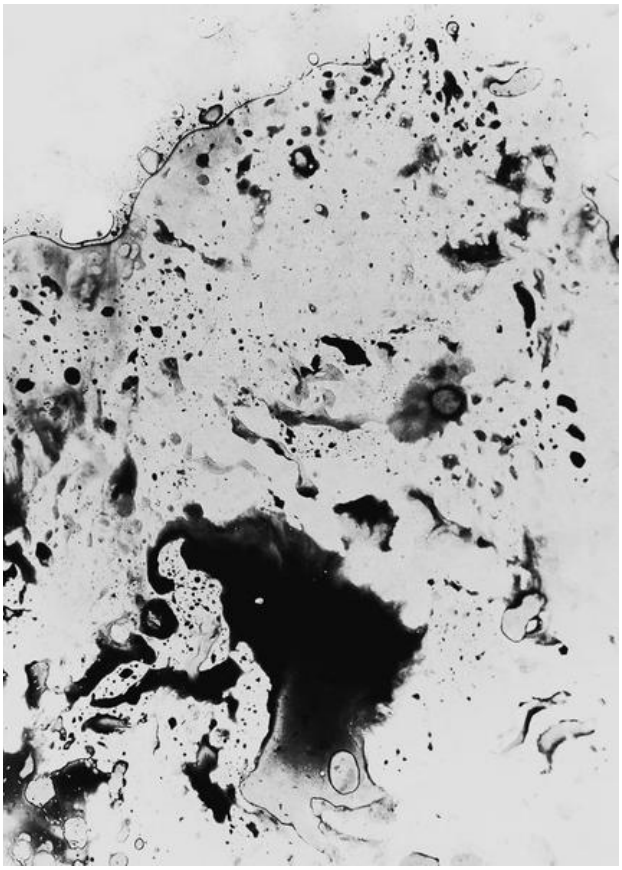
I have never truly been interested in recreating reality, although I do appreciate the technical aspects of realistic drawing lessons and compositional exercises. Conceptual art, however, seems to me the highest form of art—the closest to the very definition of art itself. For me, conceptual art answers the question of what art should be. The process of creation is just as important as the final effect and message of a given piece.
As for my studies, gender studies have unquestionably helped me fully understand the culture around me and the rules that govern the modern world. Gender studies are the missing element in cultural studies, significantly influencing the messages I want to convey through my art.
Regarding my engineering background, it undoubtedly plays a role in my creative process—where I approach a work like a scientist, planning each stage meticulously, while also allowing myself the freedom for spontaneity and chaos.

Your work often explores perception and undefined forms. How do you balance the abstract and the tangible in your pieces?

I strive to ensure they harmonize with each other. In the case of images created using the liquid light show technique, it was very important to me how they would look in their physical form—I went through a series of tests, print trials, and paper selection processes. It was crucial for me that the abstraction created digitally would gain greater clarity in reality, becoming deeper and more engaging for the viewer.

In your artist statement, you mention avoiding curatorial ideologies and clichés. Can you elaborate on what that means to you and how it shapes your work?

I believe that artists are unfortunately often tempted to conform. Today, social media plays a significant role, setting trends that can influence what an artist creates. The same applies to curators and the art gallery world,



where trends and what is currently selling are crucial. In a way, there is a constant attempt to box artists and art into predefined labels. I sincerely hope to resist that.

"Episode" is your first album of liquid light posters. How did this project come about, and what do you hope your audience takes away from it?

I wanted to present the premiere of my artwork in a distinct form, and I chose an analogy to music albums. I call each poster a "track," each with its own title, while the entire collection forms an album. This project was, in part, a way to bring back an idea I had shelved a few years ago, yet the works themselves were created in 2024, making them fresh and reflective of my current moods. By publishing the album, I aimed to offer my audience something intriguing—to captivate them and provide a strong dose of aesthetics that resonate with me at this moment.

How does your background in programming contribute to the way you create art? Do you see connections between art and technology in your practice?

It will undoubtedly serve as a bridge to conceptual art. Theoretically, by using simple frameworks in both programming and art, we can create ... anything. Additionally, we can precisely control what is concrete and what is entirely abstract.

You describe being an artist as a fleeting state. How do you navigate this concept in relation to your ongoing body of work?

For me, creation always stems from necessity. There are months when I remain outside of the process entirely. Of course, the mere need to create is not enough—there are moments when I feel the urge to make something, yet the result is completely unsatisfactory. Struggling with artistic material is something every artist faces, but I cannot imagine creating nonstop.
What is equally important to me in being an artist is experiencing life, learning, gaining knowledge and experiences, and immersing myself in the art created by others. In those moments, I am not actively creating, but they are essential to the creative journey.

Can you describe the role of audience engagement in your work? How important is the reaction of your audience to the final piece?

Oh, I certainly won't pretend that my artistic ego doesn't sometimes crave a bit of appreciation. When it comes to audience reactions, I genuinely enjoy them—I like discovering how people engage with my work, which is why I love publishing art, showcasing it at exhibitions, and sharing it online.
While I am very committed to ensuring that my art reflects exactly what I feel and how I want it to be, I also want it to be seen—to capture attention and hold the viewer's gaze.

Thierry SARRA is an artist based in Ivry-sur-Seine, specializing in collage art that revolves around imagination, popular culture, and the collective unconscious. His works are created using recycled old newspapers and paper scraps, incorporating a variety of reclaimed materials. His preferred media are paint, glue, and cardboard. His practice is rooted in a sensitive search for a certain nostalgia and freely explores a wide range of themes, from the rare to the familiar. A self-taught artist, his creations are prolific and brimming with inventiveness, often drawing on dreamlike imagery and symbolism.

Project Statement
Through a bold and innovative technique, Thierry SARRA redefines the traditional norms of collage as an artistic discipline. As an emerging artist, his approach is to share his vision of the world through a unique and increasingly subjective aesthetic. His inspiration is largely drawn from experimenting with various forms of spirituality, along with a personal inventory infused with the supernatural and mysticism.

Thierry Sarra | Le marchand de jouets | 2023

Thierry Sarra | Appel des troupes | 2022

Thierry Sarra | Julia | 2024

Interview

Alexandra Schaffer

You mentioned that light in your paintings is not just a tool but a space of expression. How did you come to this unique understanding of light?

Yes, light is something very special to me. I love light. I love the sun. I love the play of light – that has always been the case. Light, for me, has something alive, almost spiritual. It is not just a means to make things visible, but a space where emotions can arise and intensify.
Even before I devoted myself intensely to painting, playing with light was a theme for me – for example, in photography, which I have always loved. I realized early on that light can tell a story without words, without many details.
In painting, this means for me: conscious omission, playing with white space, with shadows and suggestions. I believe that reduction holds great power. When a part of the face disappears or is merely hinted at with a few lines, the light

suddenly gains a voice. It becomes the true bearer of emotion – not an accessory, but the centerpiece.
This special understanding of light didn't emerge from theory, but through practice. Through painting, over and over, and through consciously letting go of photographic precision. I never wanted to paint hyper realistically. So I started to experiment – with surfaces, with contrasts, with openness. And over time, these bright zones developed, which today are a central means of expression in my work.
This has created a space for me where light does not just illuminate – it tells a story

What inspired your transition into full-time painting only two years ago, despite art always being important in your life?

Painting has always been a part of me. From early on, I felt a fascination for capturing people and their faces. I grew up in a creative environment – my father was a commercial artist in Austria and still paints with great passion. This artistic atmosphere at home had a profound influence on me. Art, drawings, colors – all of that was always present.
Later I worked as a special education teacher and speech therapist – a profession that is also very close to people, their emotions, their expressive power. This closeness to the human element has never left me. But there was hardly any space for my own artistic work. Life, family, daily responsibilities – all of that takes precedence at first.
About two years ago, I reduced my working hours to create more space for myself. And suddenly it was there – the urge to paint. It overwhelmed me. What began with a few paintings quickly turned into a deep passion. Today, I use every free moment to paint. It's as if I rediscovered something that had always been inside me – but is now finally allowed to be.

Your portraits use intentional white space and soft transitions how do you balance realism with abstraction?

I don't use light to show something – but to make something felt.
For me, omission is just as important as what is visible. I love those intentional white areas in my paintings – they're not accidental, but a central part of my visual language. Often, a part of the face remains almost unfinished, merely suggested through light, shadow, or a few lines. The ear, the contours, sometimes even an entire side of the face dissolve into white. This creates a field of tension: between what is present and what is missing. And my work moves precisely within that space – between realism and abstraction. I'm not trying to achieve photographic perfection. What interests me is what resonates within a person: their emotion, their essence.
I believe that great power lies in reduction. The viewer is invited to fill in what is not shown with their own perception. And that is what creates depth. The balance between the tangible and the open-ended emerges almost naturally – from a feeling.

Emotions play a central role in your work. Do you begin a piece with a specific emotion in mind, or does it emerge through the process?

Yes, emotions are central to me – not just in my art, but in my life. I have always been fascinated by people. Perhaps that's also due to my profession: As a special education teacher, it's about truly engaging with each person and finding their individual access point. I bring that same approach to my painting.
When I start a piece, I don't intentionally search for a specific emotion – but I choose a subject that stirs something within me. It has to touch me, captivate me, immediately create a connection. That is the starting point. But during the painting process, much changes. I bring myself into the work – my inner world, my perspective, my feelings.
Each painting thus carries a part of me. The emotions evolve during the process – they condense, shift, deepen. It is my interpretation, my experience that ultimately becomes visible on the canvas.

How does your background, growing up in Vienna and now living in Rome, influence the themes or style of your artwork?

In Vienna, I grew up with art .... in Rome, I'm surrounded by it. I was born in Vienna, a city of deep cultural richness, and I've been living in Rome for 24 years – for me, the heart of art. Even in Vienna, art was a natural part of my life: my home, my surroundings, the tradition, the drawing – all of that shaped me. But Rome opened up something entirely new in me. Here, art is everywhere. Whether it's architecture, painting, or sculpture – in Rome, you live in an open-air museum. I love this city, its sensuality, its history, its warmth – and the great Italian painting tradition. All of that has broadened my view, influenced my visual language, and enriched my expression. I consider it a great gift to live between these two worlds. Different cultures, different languages, different approaches to art – all of this flows into my work. It has changed me as a person and as an artist – and that's exactly what characterizes my work today.

Many of your works depict children and women with a deep, almost silent intensity. What draws you to these subjects?

Many of my works depict women and children – not as a conscious choice, but because to me they embody a special presence of silence and inner truth. Their faces often carry a deep, almost silent intensity that touches me again and again. Perhaps it's precisely this quiet language of emotions that fascinates me so much – what lies between the words, between gaze and gesture. In a time where much is quickly consumed, I want my paintings to create a counterbalance. A moment of slowing down, of pausing.
My figures don't speak loudly, yet they tell so much. They don't demand attention – they invite you to look. Truly look. Because I believe there is great strength in vulnerability.
I'm not concerned with outer perfection, but with the inner world. With what remains when everything external falls silent. That's where I find the true portrait of a person.
And perhaps that is the most beautiful task of art: to remind us that, in all our differences, there is something that connects us – the feeling of being human.

Could you tell us more about your technique with acrylics that achieves such softness and atmospheric depth?

At first, working with acrylic paints was primarily a practical decision for me – because I paint at home. They might be considered less refined than oil paints, but despite the initial challenges in achieving the desired gradients, they allowed me to find my colors. Colors I wouldn't want to do without today.
What fascinates me most about this medium is its versatility and expressive power. I've learned how to create a special softness with acrylic – almost like a veil gently laid over the face.
Over time, the faces in my paintings have changed a lot. At the beginning, they were more subdued in color, closer to the natural reference. Today, I work more freely, more boldly. I use stronger tones, moving further away from realism – not deliberately, but simply because that's how it unfolds.
The technique evolves along with me. I feel that my way of painting is becoming increasingly intuitive. And that's exactly what makes acrylic so fitting for me: I can work quickly, build up layer by layer, keep transitions soft, and let emotional depth emerge. It's as if the paint itself helps shape the work.

Jenny Ping Lam Lin
Jenny is a Hong Kong and UK-based visual art artist and curator with a Global Talent visa. She graduated from the University of Leeds in 2022 with an MA in Art Gallery and Museum Studies and holding a BA in Photography from the Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology. Jenny's photographic style is characterized by the presentation of documentary images rooted in her senses and vision. She explores diverse experimental methods to showcase images, emphasizing the emotional interplay between images and individuals. Her thematic focus revolves around emotional expression, female growth, and pertinent social issues. Through her unconventional presentation techniques, she prompts viewers to challenge preconceived notions and expand their perspectives.

Project Statement
My artistic creations centre around ongoing events in the real world, with a particular focus on the subtle emotional changes that occur in everyday life. The social roles of East Asian women and the stratification within society have always been the major influences on my creative process. In my photographic works, I strive to capture the intricate interplay between my personal experiences and the socio-cultural landscape that has shaped me. Being an Asian woman, I draw inspiration from exploring the nuanced emotions associated with my personal growth, navigating the delicate intersection of tradition and modernity. Through my lens, I aim to portray the multifaceted aspects of being an Asian woman in the contemporary world, while also sharing the complexities of my own personal narrative. In essence, my work seeks to document the imprints left by societal conventions on the lives. I aim to shed light on the struggles and triumphs of individuals navigating a path between tradition and progress. Through the visual medium, I strive to contribute to the broader dialogue surrounding the human experience and the complex journey of self-discovery. In the ever-changing fabric of life, my photographs serve as reminders of the influences that shape us, leaving a lasting trace of the unique journey of an Asian woman coming of age in the 21st century. My art explores the impact of societal norms, oppressive education, and social stratification on Asian youth. I focus on the pressures that shape their lives, perpetuating inequality. Through photography, I hope to capture the effects of expectations, rigidity, and hierarchies on their emotions, particularly for Asian women, revealing their complex experiences in a stratified society. In my recent series, "The Garbage," I explore the profound impact of oppressive educational systems in Asia on personal growth values. This body of work serves as a visual commentary on the repercussions of a rigid and pressure-laden educational environment that stifles creativity and authentic self-expression. Metaphorically, "The Garbage" captures the discarded dreams, aspirations, and individuality of young minds caught in the relentless pursuit of academic excellence.

Jenny Ping Lam Lin | The hill

Jenny Ping Lam Lin | Top of the

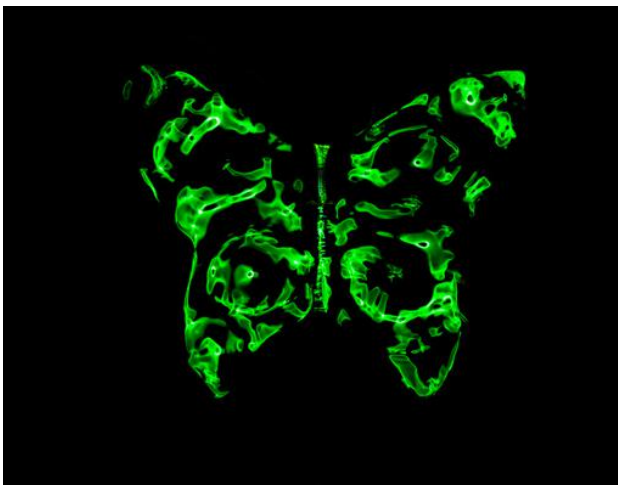
Interview

Gianfranco Merati

Gianfranco Merati | A Tribute to Piero and Wassily

Your photographic practice explores a variety of abstract and conceptual subjects. How do you choose which phenomena or materials to focus on for each project?

I tend to read quite a bit of literature, spanning from scientific articles, to books that explore how form is created in Nature, to physics and its parallels with mysticism. It is in these explorations that I often encounter phenomena, materials or concepts that I then explore through the medium of photography. This is not always the case, however. Sometimes, ideas occur without a specific trigger. For example, the series "The Goodness Inside", where I look at the inner beauty of common fruits or vegetables. In this case the idea came simply by observing a grapefruit, while I was eating it and reflecting on how beautiful its inner structure looked. Another example is my tribute to Kandinsky and Manzoni, in the series "A Tribute to Piero and Wassily": that idea just popped into my mind. I am not even sure how. Finally, a third example of this is my project titled "A Portrait of My Garden": I was walking in my garden when, for the first time in my life, I noticed a rotting leaf on the ground and observed how beautiful it was, as it was revealing an intricate inner architecture. That was the spark; then the project developed from there.



Gianfranco Merati | Resonance, III

You've mentioned that some projects take several weeks or months to complete. Could you walk us through the creative process of a particularly long-term project you've worked on?

Sure – One example is my series titled "Resonance". In this project I explore a phenomenon called Faraday Waves, studied at length by a British scientist called Michael Faraday (1791 – 1867). In essence, when water (or other fluids) is vibrated vertically inside a container, so called standing waves develop. These waves take various shapes, from simpler to more complex and intricate, mostly depending on the frequency and the intensity of those vibrations. The idea was to capture these shapes, making images of them. However, the equipment required is very specific and not readily available locally (or online). In searching, I found a British academic involved in this branch of science and understood that he and his team produce precision equipment designed to generate Faraday waves in water. The price for such equipment is substantial. We are talking several thousands of pounds. I therefore tried to persuade the scientist to let me access his lab, perhaps over a weekend or when the lab was not in use, so that I could capture these shapes. However, my request fell on deaf ears and the project stalled. I then began studying how these kinds of equipment work, and I slowly attempted to simulate their dynamics, but with things that I could buy in everyday shops and at reasonable cost. Fast forward, I am now able to consistently produce Faraday Waves and capture them on camera, as I had envisaged. This whole process (and I skipped some steps to keep things brief) lasted well over 18 months, and it is not

Gianfranco Merati | Nature's Network

yet complete, as I am now experimenting with some interesting shapes and pursuing even more interesting scientific hypotheses.

Your images seem to hover between reality and the surreal. How do you maintain the balance between these two aspects while staying true to your artistic vision?

Right. If I was interested in representing reality with precision and stopping there, I would produce scientific images. Like the ones one sees in scientific papers or in forensics. But that is not what I am interested in.
What you highlight as a possible paradox is the crux of my research. Through the abstraction and the invitation to enquiry, to know more, I get closer to my ultimate goal, which is to understand our "reality" more profoundly. But I do not want to manipulate such reality. I simply present it in ways that may be unusual, surprising, sometimes odd. Whatever the case, the reality is very much as it exists, I just present it in my own way, but I keep it real. In my post processing, I only play with colours, exposure and I clean-up dirty portions of images, when necessary. Apart from those small changes, all you see in my work is raw and real.

You often explore natural elements in your work, like insects' wings and decaying leaves. What is it about the natural world that captures your attention in a way that inspires your photography?

Nature is a great inspiration to me. There are limitless possibilities for exploration and discovery in Nature. And, as my objective is to understand "reality" more profoundly, exploring Nature is a good way of approaching that objective.
However, as you can see in my body of work, I often explore things that are not part of the natural realm. From materials to phenomena that were invented by humans, the creative canvas provides almost limitless possibilities for creative enterprise.

Your work is highly technical, using both high-tech methods and basic techniques. How do you incorporate such varied methods to create a unified and cohesive aesthetic?

From a strictly photographic perspective, my equipment is pretty standard. When I talk about high-speed photography, the high speed is achieved through lights – flashes, in layperson's terms – not by some sort of special camera.
It is true that I sometimes resort to special shooting techniques, to help achieve the result I want, but most of the tech belongs to the object or phenomenon captured.
As for my cohesive aesthetics, I would say that that is my visual language. Therefore, similarly to what a music player does, I combine the technical mastery of the "instrument" with a more instinctive creative process to "speak" my visual language. It is indeed the blend of those two elements that allows me to express my messages, visually.

You've received numerous awards for your work. How does recognition shape your creative journey, and what motivates you to keep exploring new ways to reveal beauty?

For the first ten years of my creative practice, I did not show my work to anybody, beyond friends and Family. In more recent times, I opened-up to the world a little more and the awards are useful platforms to get one's work seen. It is therefore a useful tool in getting my messages into the world. However, I never design my work in function of what award it could win. First and foremost, there is my research. If that produces work that gains traction, that is a great bonus, but is definitely not the key objective.
My exploration is self-motivated. I have an obsession to know more, to explore, to understand our reality more deeply. And that is what motivates me to keep searching.

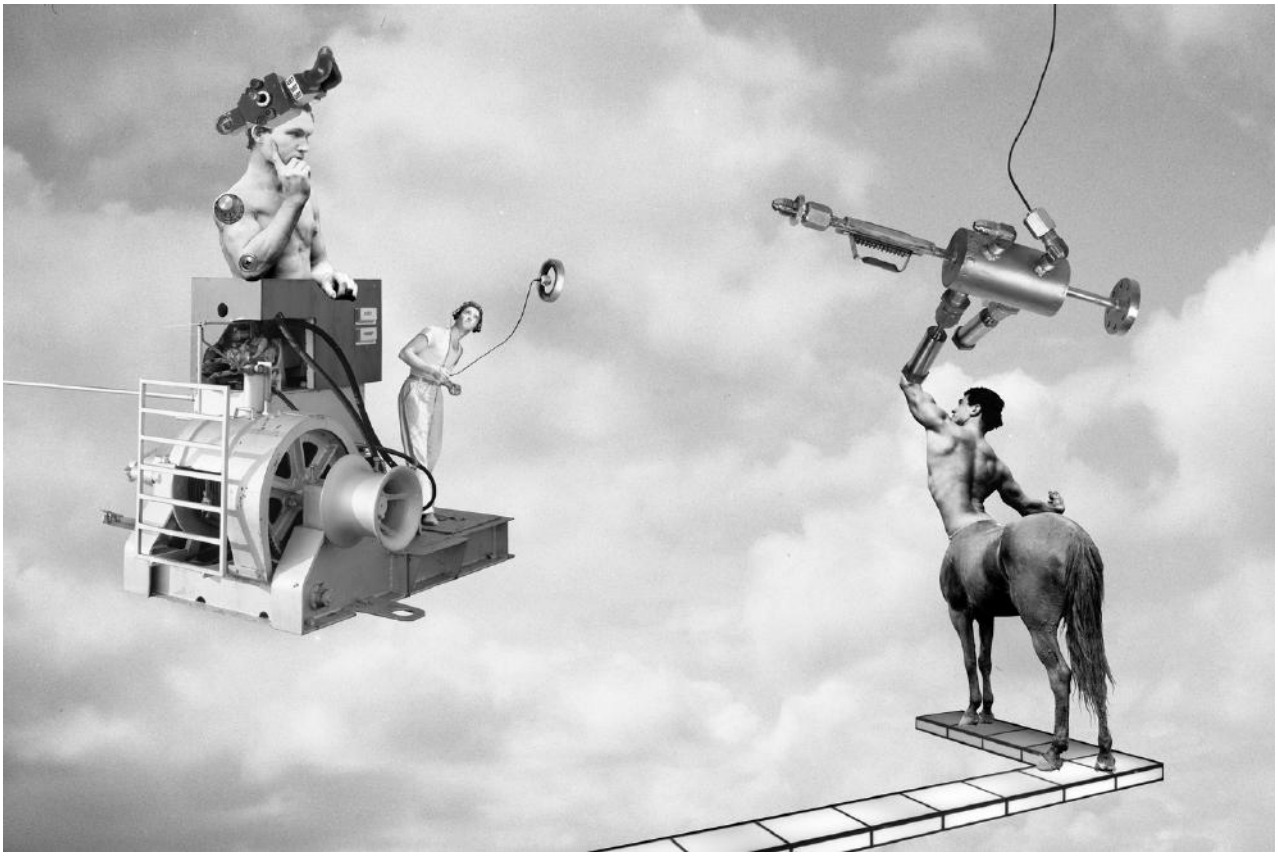
Could you tell us more about your approach to abstraction in photography? How do you decide when an image transcends the literal and enters the abstract realm?

I do not decide. I let my instincts drive.

Nikola Gocic (born in Nis, 1980) is an architect by formal education and a film reviewer, collage artist and film festival curator by passion. He has frequently and successfully collaborated on film-related articles with filmmaker Rouzbeh Rashidi – the founder of the Dublin-based company Experimental Film Society, with five of his essays published in the book 'Luminous Void: Twenty Years of Experimental Film Society' (Dublin, 2020). As a collage artist, he has created numerous promotional images for NYC-based underground artist Martin Del Carpio. For Hungarian avant-garde filmmaker Péter Lichter he designed the poster for his found-footage feature 'Empty Horses' which was shown at the 2020 edition of International Film Festival Rotterdam. He has also worked alongside German composer and film director Martin Gerigk on his animated shorts 'Otonashi' (2021), 'Once I Passed' (2022) 'Demi-Gods' (2022), 'Demi-Goddesses' (2023) and 'Demi-Demons' (2024) which have been screened on more than 400 festivals around the globe, and received numerous accolades. Five of his solo exhibitions were presented in 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2024, and from 2019 onward he has co-curated International Festival of Analog Experimental Cinema 'Kinoskop' based in Belgrade, Serbia. A couple of his short collage comics – 'Exhausted Peace' and 'F Mode' – were exhibited at the Belgrade International Comics Festival in 2018 and 2019. His collage 'Ultrafantasia: The Spirits Gathering' was selected as one of the 10 finalists for the Artbox.Project Venezia 1.0 exhibition held in Tana Art Space, Venice, during May of 2022. Following were two group exhibitions – Kaos, international festival of modern collage in Slovenia, and 'Collage 2022' at John B. Aird Gallery (online) based in Canada. As a semi-finalist, his 2023 piece 'The Axis of Imagination' was a part of Artbox.Project New York 2.0 exhibition (April 17-26, 2023). His works have been published in Artist Portfolio Magazine, Contemporary Collage Magazine and Trois Points Magazine. In 2024, his collages were once again picked for John B. Aird online event, as well as for the Kaos festival, and by the end of 2024, as well as during the first months of 2025, several pieces have been digitally presented in Paris, Berlin, Dubai, Palma, Zug and New York via Artboxy partner galleries and events.

Project Statement
Conceived on September 30 of 2019 and finalized in June of 2024, encompassing 1001 chapters, BIANCO/NERO is my most voluminous and obsessed-over series of digital collages – a mysterious, shapeshifting (meta)world of seemingly endless possibilities. Taking cues from a number of various sources – myths and fairy tales, religious, pulp and surrealist art, steam- and cyberpunk aesthetics, Brutalist architecture, alternative music and avant-garde cinema, just to name a few, it strives to blur or erase the boundaries between personal and universal, poetic and banal, physical and spiritual, profane and sacred, real and imagined, earthbound and extraterrestrial, order and chaos, life and death, miracle and apocalypse, the past and the future. This wild, yet hopefully refined collage-mammoth of irregular evolution embodies both broken and still breathing dreams, inexplicable whims, undisclosed desires, repressed memories, scattered thoughts, contrasting ideas, spatio-temporal ruptures, the elusive 'color' of inner voices and illusory 'words' from beyond the realm of possibility. A reflection and refraction of my interrelation to Art and its omnipresence, the pieces of BIANCO/NERO are often turned into a sort of a visual manifesto that stubbornly refuses to be clearly expressed.

Nikola Gocic | Complesso temporale | 2023



Nikola Gocic | Il Sogno del Centauro | 2022

Nikola Gocic | La brutta illuminazione | 2022

Nicole A. Saenz

Your work is deeply informed by your experiences in both the psychiatric and artistic realms. How do you balance these two roles emotionally and creatively?

My work is a reflection of the deep emotional and creative interplay between my roles as an artist and a psychiatric nurse. I don't see them as separate paths, but rather as parallel currents that feed one another. When I'm working with patients, I encourage expression in all its forms—speech, writing, drawing, movement—because many of them have never been truly heard. They carry trauma, stigma, and profound emotional wounds, often with no support system. Society has let them down, over and over.
When I return to the studio, I carry that compassion with me.

Nicole Saenz | Moonlight Ecstasy | 2024

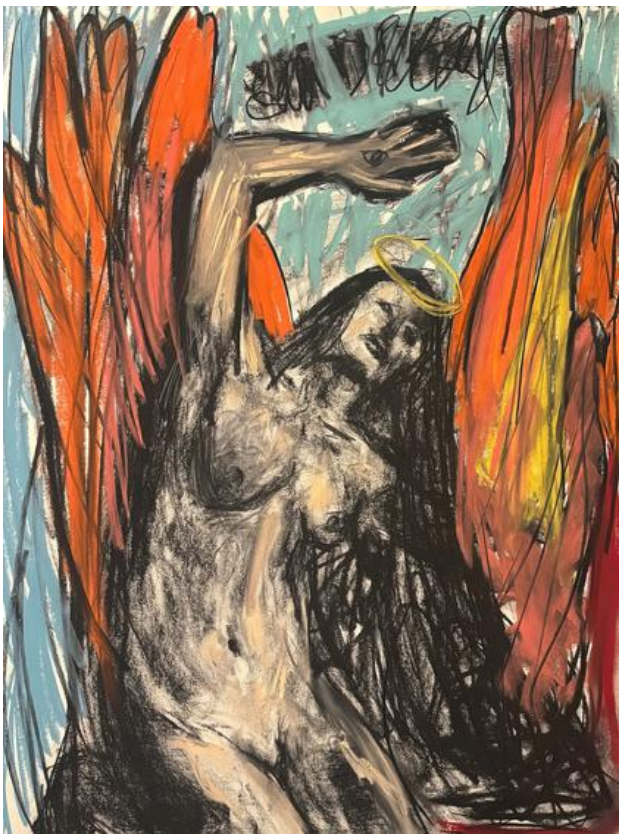
Each mark I make comes from a place of meditation, of holding space for those voices. The lines and textures are quiet tributes to stories I cannot always share but never forget. My art becomes a place where care and grief and beauty can coexist.

You mention that memory is not a reliable narrator in your work. Can you share how this concept shapes your creative process and visual language?

We are constantly reexamining and reexperiencing our memories through the many selves we become as we grow and age. What felt true in one season of life can feel unfamiliar in another. Emotional pain, in particular, has a way of distorting memory, bending it through the lens of heartache or confusion. Our moods, our mental state, the weight we carry in our hearts—all of these influence what we remember and how we understand it.
In my creative process, this uncertainty becomes part of the visual language. My work often reflects layers, fragmentation, and ambiguity—echoing how memory refuses to be pinned down. When things are in flux, chaotic, or unresolved, it becomes nearly impossible to create a concrete narrative. And yet, we rarely forget the emotional imprint—how someone made us feel, even if the details blur. My art holds space for that feeling: the residue of emotional truth when factual clarity fails. It's less about documenting memory and more about honoring the echoes it leaves behind.

Life drawing appears to play an important role in your practice. What does the act of drawing from life bring to your exploration of trauma and perception?

Life drawing plays a grounding and joyful role in my practice. It allows me to reconnect with the beauty of the human form—not just anatomically, but emotionally and spiritually. In the context of exploring trauma and perception, this act of drawing from life becomes a kind of celebration of our shared humanity. Amid the heaviness I often carry from working in psychiatric care, life drawing offers a moment of bliss, a reminder that the body itself holds grace and presence, even after pain.



Nicole Saenz | Earth Angel | 2025

Using charcoal feels especially liberating. There's something playful and visceral about dancing the charcoal across the page. Sometimes it feels like I enter a kind of spiritual trance—my hand moving intuitively, as if guided by something beyond thought. That flow state connects me to a deeper current beneath the surface of perception. It's less about control and more about surrender—about honoring the sacred in the ordinary. Life drawing, for me, is not just a technical exercise, but a ritual. It helps me hold space for both suffering and beauty, and to find the humanity threaded through both.

Many of your figures appear fragmented, contorted, or partially erased. What role does distortion play in your storytelling?

The distortion in my figures is intentional—it speaks to the fragmentation of identity under the pressure of external forces. These contorted or partially erased bodies reflect how the psyche is constantly shaped, splintered, and sometimes erased by the world around us. We live in a society oversaturated with messaging: relentless advertising, monetization of even our quiet moments, the omnipresence of media that claws at our attention with every click. These forces blur the lines between self and projection, between choice and conditioning. Identity becomes fluid, but not always in liberating ways—often it's disoriented, conflicted, under siege.

For women especially, the effects of patriarchal dogma—through religion, legislation, and ingrained societal norms—continue to demonize the feminine, casting softness or intuition as weakness, and power as a threat. These distortions in the body reflect the distortions in how we are allowed to exist. My figures bear the weight of all that pressure. They show how identity is not just personal—it's political, emotional, and constantly in negotiation. The erasures and contortions are not just aesthetic choices—they're testimonies. They show what happens when the self is pushed and pulled by forces bigger than it, yet still insists on showing up on the page.

You incorporate elements of spiritual practice, such as New Age philosophy and shamanic healing. Do these influence your imagery or method of creation?

My process is deeply intuitive and shaped by spiritual practices, including New Age philosophy, and elements of shamanic healing as well as Jungian ideas. I view art as an alchemical act—a way of acknowledging parts of the soul that have been hidden, fractured, or silenced. Through that acknowledgment, healing can begin. It's less about aesthetic polish and more about emotional truth, about transmuting pain into presence.

Much like in a shamanic healing circle, where participants share their stories and bear witness to one another, my work seeks to portray pain honestly—to hold space for it. In doing so, it connects with something larger: the wisdom of nature, of the body, of the self. There's a reverence in this practice, a sense that nothing—no emotion, no experience—is by chance. Each mark, each gesture becomes part of a larger ritual, drawing on an inner knowing that's beyond intellect. This kind of creation is raw and sacred. It's about tapping into the mind-body connection, and letting the image emerge as a mirror—not just of the self, but of the collective human condition. In this way, my work becomes a dialogue between personal experience and the larger, spiritual fabric we're all woven into.

How do you approach the use of charcoal versus acrylics? Do different mediums serve different emotional or narrative functions for you?

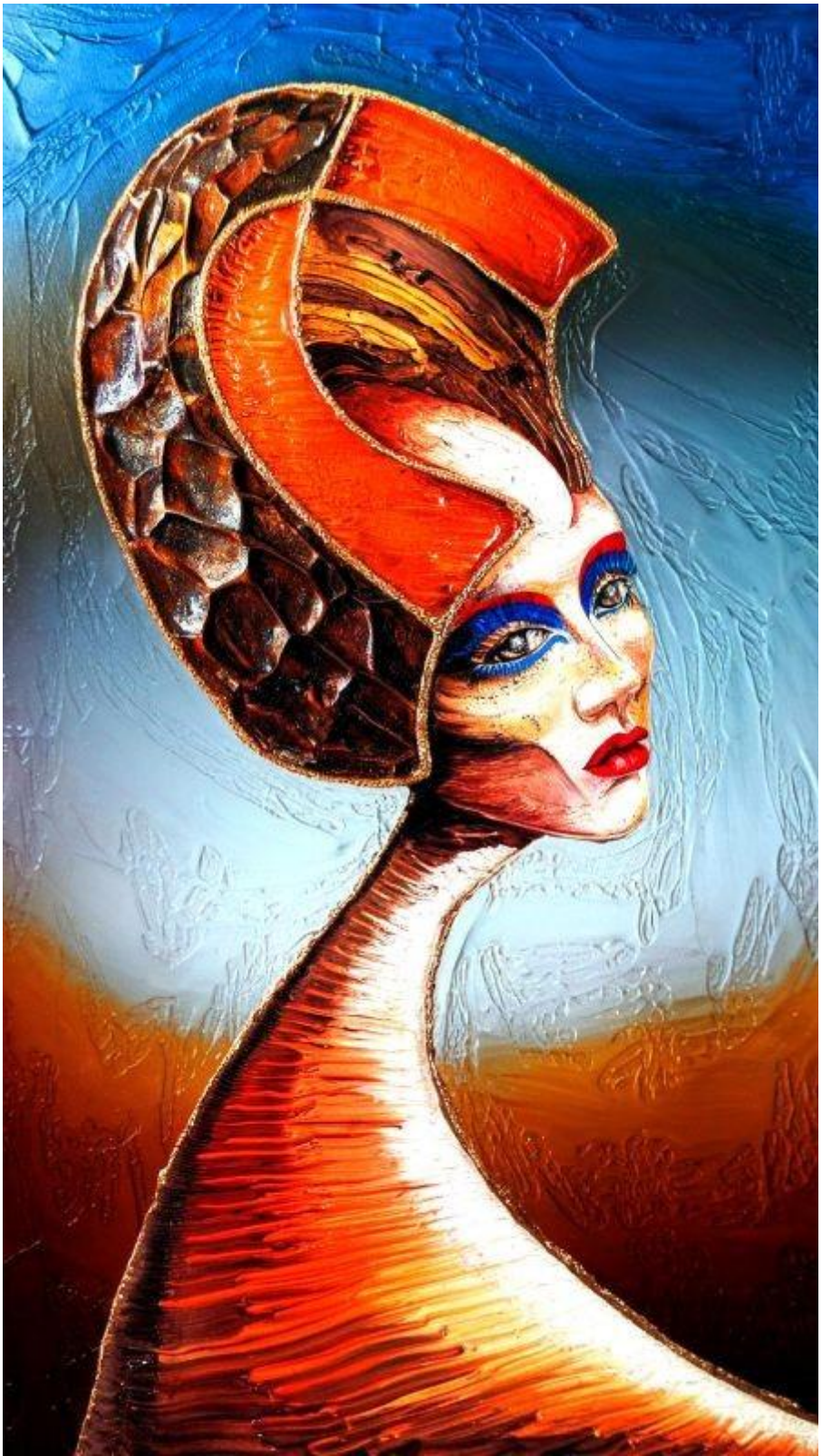
Charcoal and acrylic serve very different emotional and narrative roles in my practice. Charcoal is like a conversation—open and responsive. There's a sense of play in it, a lightness and immediacy that lets me explore form and emotion in real time. It allows for revision, for the work to breathe and shift as I'm in dialogue with it. The act of drawing in charcoal can feel spontaneous, like dancing with the page—messy, expressive, and deeply intuitive. It mirrors the experience of processing something that's still unfolding, uncertain, or in flux.

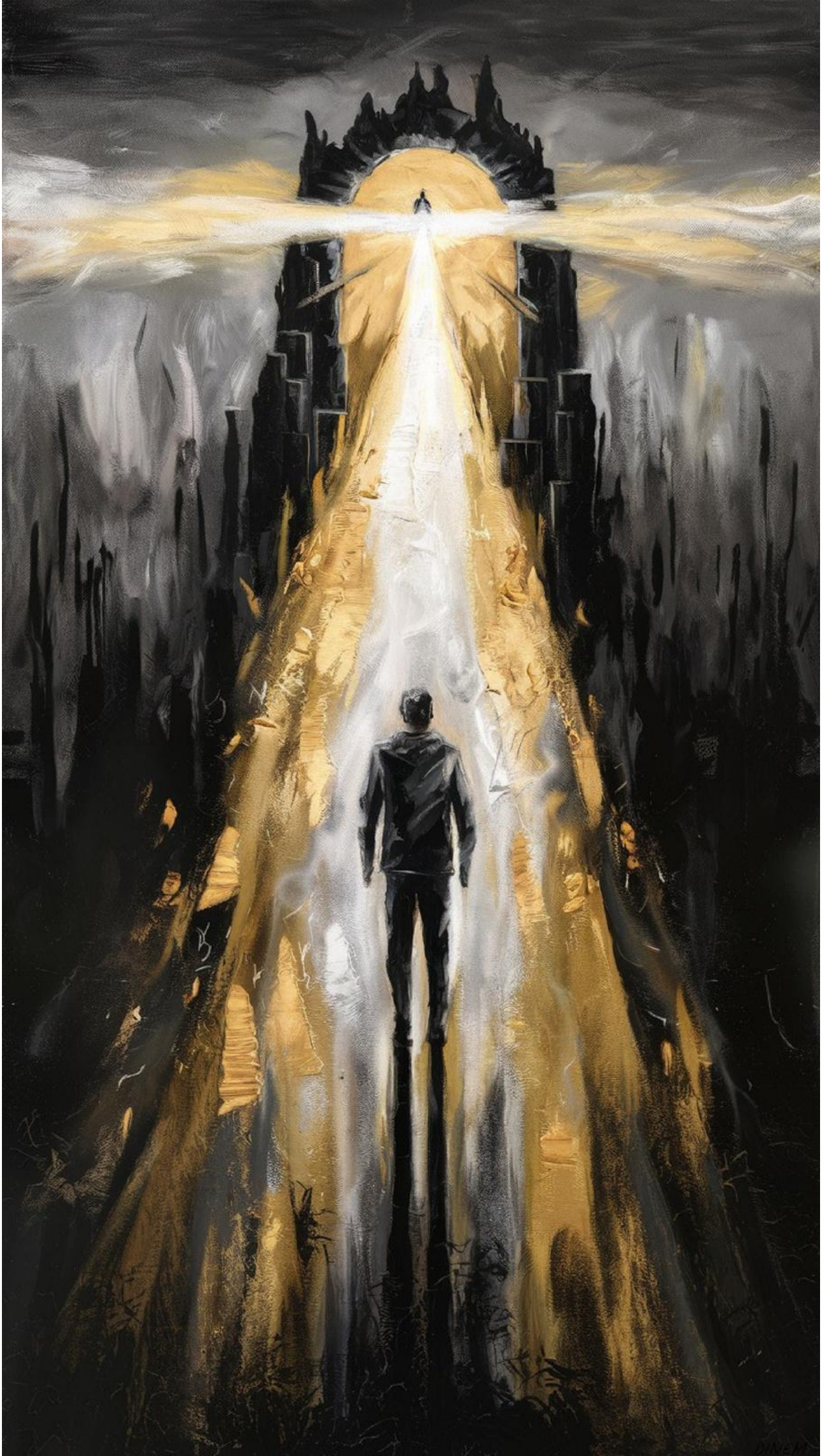
Acrylic, on the other hand, feels more declarative. It's a statement—a thesis. There's a weight to it, a sense of commitment. Once laid down, it's more permanent, more final. It carries a kind of authority, like a full sentence that has been spoken and can't be taken back. In this way, acrylic becomes a container for clarity, for resolution, for moments that feel fully formed—a gestalt. It can embody closure or conviction in a way that charcoal resists.

I move between the two depending on what the work is asking for—whether I need openness or certainty, dialogue or declaration. The medium becomes part of the message, and part of the emotion I'm trying to translate.

DINEM

I create digital works using various means (photomontages, collages, AI images, etc.) with the aim of giving free rein to my creativity. But I also enjoy offering original works and images, as well as works inspired by other artists. I am self-taught; I create to relax, for my own pleasure, and also for the pleasure of others. Art is a link between reality and imagination, where technology can become an extension of the creative spirit.





Maria Oliveira

Your series is inspired by ancient Basque witch lore and sacred plants. What drew you to these themes, and how do they resonate with you personally?

Growing up in the Basque Country, I was surrounded by stories of the "Sorginak", our witches, who felt like guardians of the land. They were strong, free, and tied to nature, and their tales, told against the backdrop of the beautiful mountains in the region, are part of who I am. I'm also fascinated by mythology and shamanism from all over—Nordic, African, Amazonian to name a few—and the sacred plants like Datura, Henbane, Belladonna, Amanita Muscaria, and Ayahuasca, among others that show up in their rituals. These plants, used by either by European healers or shamans worldwide, grab me because they're beautiful but dangerous, almost as if they hold secrets. They feel personal, like they mirror my own mix of strength and softness, my need to find something sacred in wild, messy places. This series is my way of connecting to my Basque roots while celebrating the spiritual ties that link people everywhere. It's about honoring the land I come from and the bigger human story that I feel in my heart every time I pick up my camera.

Maria Oliveira | The Protector (Sage) | 2024

How do you choose which plant or mythical story to visualize in each piece?

Picking a plant or story feels like listening to a quiet voice inside me, shaped by my love for myths from different cultures. I spend time thinking about the Sorginak's stories—maybe a witch dancing under the moon—or learning about rituals from places like Peru or Siberia. A plant calls out when it feels alive: Datura's spooky flowers for dreamy vibes, Henbane for something darker, or Ayahuasca for vivid, mind-opening feelings. I match them with stories that fit—a Basque witch flying amidst the clouds might go with Belladonna's scary beauty, or a shaman's spirit journey might feel right with Amanita Muscaria's bright red cap. I picture how clouds, all colorful and swirly, can make the image feel trippy, like the plant's effects. It's a gut thing, trusting that the right plant or myth will find me, whether it's from my Basque background or the worldwide traditions I love learning about. Each choice is like a step deeper into the magic I want to share.

Each composition is a self-portrait. What role does your physical presence play in the storytelling process?

In every self-portrait, my body tells the story, carrying the Sorgina's strength or the plants' wild energy. Self-portraits aren't easy, so I often shoot lots of photos of myself and piece them together in Photoshop to get the pose or look just right. I'm not just in the picture—I'm part of the myth, my hands holding Datura's flowers or my body blending into Ayahuasca's parallel realities. By putting myself in these trippy, cloud-filled scenes, I make the stories feel real and personal, like I'm living them. I'm the link between the human world and the magic of these ancient tales, inviting people to feel the same wonder I do through my presence.

What emotions or inner states are you trying to capture in your digitally composed worlds?

Maria Oliveira | La Yerba Del Diablo (Datura) | 2024

I want my images to feel alive with big emotions: wonder for the sacred, joy in connecting to something bigger, and the excitement of changing inside. My love for mythologies from different places inspires me to capture the awe of a Sorgina's ritual or the wild, profound and intense spiritual experience of an Ayahuasca trip. I want the viewer to feel the pull of wanting something deeper, the thrill of stepping into a new world, and the quiet strength of being true to your wild side. These images are like my heart on display, showing my own journey through the bright, magical worlds of human stories from all over.

Could you describe your creative process from the initial concept to the final composite?

My process is like a big, colorful journey, mixing camera work with a kind of spiritual search. It starts with a feeling—maybe a Sorgina story, a Siberian shaman's song, or the way Datura's petals catch the light. Walking alone in nature helps me come up with ideas, and I draw quick sketches to plan how the image would look like.
I always start with the background, where usually I set the scene and once that's completed, in the studio at home, II proceed to shoot my self-portraits which very often I have to composite them later to get the right vibe. Finally, I put it all together, layering my body with the background and I play with colors, make shadows darker, and tweak the light until the image feels alive, like a mix of magic and spiritual energy.

Photoshop plays a central role in your work. What does digital compositing allow you to express that photography alone cannot?

Photography is amazing for capturing a single moment, like freezing a piece of the world in time, but Photoshop's digital compositing lets me build entire imaginary worlds that come straight from my heart and mind. It's like having a magic wand to create scenes that feel alive with emotion and wonder, going way beyond what a camera can catch in one shot. Self-portraits are tough, so I often take several photos of myself and stitch them together in Photoshop to get the exact pose or expression I need to tell the story. I can blend my body with different elements and setting them against vibrant backgrounds that add a dreamy, colorful energy to the scene.
This process lets me create images that feel like they're from a myth or a fairy tale. I can place myself in a glowing, misty scene or make it look like I'm standing in a vivid, cloud-filled sky. My backgrounds aren't just there for looks—they bring a sense of movement and feeling, inspired by the stories and traditions I love studying from cultures all over the world. With Photoshop, I can make the contrast between light and dark really stand out, creating deep, moody shadows that feel full of mystery and bright, glowing colors that pop with life.

Your visuals are both dark and luminous. How do you balance mysticism and beauty in your imagery?

My work thrives in the interplay of darkness and light; a visual language rooted in chiaroscuro. This technique—where deep shadows embrace luminous highlights—shapes the delicate balance of mysticism and beauty in my imagery, conjuring an ethereal world that feels both haunting and divine.
The dark shadows add a sense of the unknown, suggesting hidden stories drawn from the myths I love studying from cultures around the world, sparking curiosity about what lies beneath. Meanwhile, the glowing light brings out a warm, vibrant beauty that feels alive and inviting. I craft glowing, colorful backgrounds in Photoshop that burst with vivid hues, adding a lively, almost magical energy that makes the scenes feel dynamic and enchanting. Each image is designed to sit between these two moods—partly wrapped in shadow to hint at the mysteries of nature and folklore, and partly illuminated with rich, vibrant color to draw you in with its charm. This balance invites viewers to explore the wonder of the world through my art.

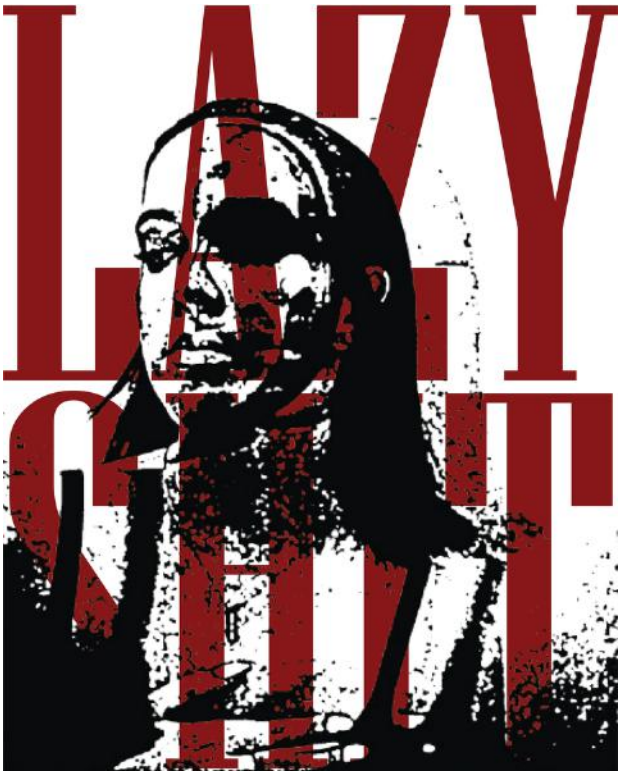
Maria Oliveira | Yage The Vine Of The Soul | 2024

Sophie Ocksana

Sophie Ocksana | Expelling | 2025

What inspired you to begin your journey as a digital artist, and how did you discover that digital art was the best medium for expressing your emotions and experiences?

I've had a love for the arts for as long as I can remember. I was shy growing up, and art was my favourite form of expression.
During high school I experienced a lot of friendship issues and bullying; the more I wanted to hide from the world, the more I fell in love with art. It was, and remains, my escape from the real world.



Sophie Ocksana | Indolent | 2025

Digital art programs feel instinctive to me. My brain works fast creatively, and they allow me to multitask during the creative process in a way that I couldn't with more manual mediums. Although sometimes my brain works so fast that my computer can't keep up!

Your art reflects deep personal experiences, especially related to abuse and bullying. How do you feel when revisiting these painful memories through your art?

It really depends, usually it goes one of two ways. Sometimes it's very painful and feels like reliving the experience over again; other times, it's therapeutic and there's joy in creating something beautiful out of something so ugly.
My creative process in this situation usually begins with a hurtful phrase that was said to me. I often don't have any creative plan, I just start and let the piece evolve.
When reliving the emotions of a certain experience are triggering, to protect my mental health I either listen to happy music and create using my instincts and subconscious, or I stop and come back to it when I'm ready.
Most of the time I find it cathartic though, and it

makes me happy that I have found such a beautiful and purposeful way to heal from the pain of my past.

How does music influence your work? Are there specific genres or songs that you find particularly empowering or therapeutic when creating art?

As I always have a deep emotional connection to the art I am creating, I often use music to escape the realities of the topics I'm exploring. My artistic intuition and subconscious take over in this instance. Music has, along with art, helped me immensely through challenging life experiences. I am happiest when creating and listening to music, no matter the topic of the art. Sometimes I listen to sad music that I relate to and that relates to the artwork I'm creating. This helps to inspire me and ensure the emotions I am aiming to portray are felt through the artwork. I tend to listen to music by Dean Lewis, especially his songs Empire and Waves. Matilda and Little Freak by Harry Styles also mean a lot to me, helping me get into the right headspace when creating emotionally powerful works. When You Love Someone by James TW and Parents by Sam Fischer remind me a lot about the relationship between my parents which significantly impacted my childhood and inspires

Sophie Ocksana | Capture&Release | 2025

Sophie Ocksana | Liberate | 2025

my art immensely. A Little Too Much and Life of the Party by Shawn Mendes both remind me a lot of my experiences and mental state in high school, which helped me a lot with this collection. At other times, upbeat music helps me feel happy and relaxed when creating. I use this music when I'd prefer to escape the specific memories of the experience I am drawing from. In these instances, I tend to fully zone out and dissociate from my art and take the time to enjoy the beautiful mix of digital art and music. I then come back to my art with no music to refine my ideas and focus on technical design elements.

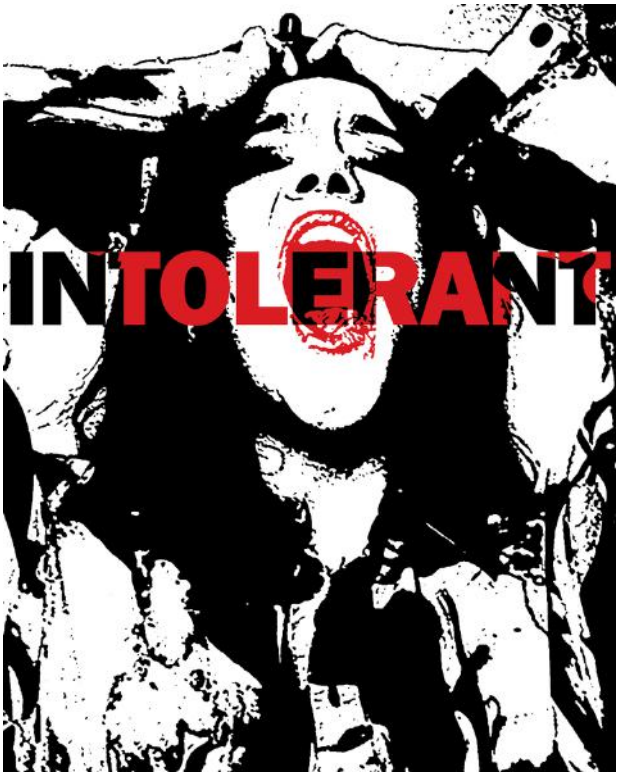
Your colour palette often consists of black, white, and red. What does each of these colours represent for you emotionally, and why do you choose them for your work?

The colours chosen in my work are completely instinctive. I began creating this collection with the idea of using hurtful words or phrases that were said to me, to help me work through that pain. The first piece I created started with an image of me screaming. I edited it to be intentionally abstract, and black and white were the boldest contrast.

With my background elements being black and white, I wanted a bold colour to be the focus of each piece and bring more life and emotion to them. I associate the colour red with anger, as I'm sure many others do. I love the intensity and power the combination of red and black provoke. I find white works well as a clean base, creating an intriguing contrast to the black and red, which are typically the focus.

What do you hope the viewer takes away from your art? Are you looking to evoke a specific emotional response or spark reflection on certain issues?

I hope my art makes others feel something – even if that feeling is sadness or discomfort. Evoking uncomfortable and painful emotions can usually spark important conversations, or insightful self-reflection.
Acknowledging abuse, bullying and depression are very important to me. Initiating conversations and raising awareness of these issues can be uncomfortable. Everyone should feel safe to share their story and express their feelings.
It can be suffocating to feel you can't share something that has happened to you because you're worried about other people getting hurt. If something hurt you, it hurt you. And you can decide how, when and where to express that hurt. Don't let others stop you from healing.
My goal is for people who have not experienced hurt, trauma or depression to become aware of the different and more subtle forms of abuse that aren't talked about enough. Maybe these people will take the opportunity to reflect on their own relationships and realise they may be causing other people pain.
I also hope that my art makes people who have been made to feel the way I have realise that it is not okay. Hopefully they feel comfort in knowing they are not alone and that they deserve better.
Positive and negative emotional responses to my art are both welcome. I hope that whatever you feel, you use it to do better, or heal. A favourite saying of mine is "the opposite of depression is not joy – it's expression".
Feel what you feel and if you need to, make a change.



Sophie Ocksana | Baying | 2025

How do you feel about sharing your personal story through your artwork? What kind of reactions or connections have you experienced from others who view your work?

I love that I've found something that helps me heal from difficult events and people that caused me hurt, but also makes other people feel seen. The hurt and challenges I've experienced have shaped who I am and inspire my creativity, but I acknowledge that there are many others who have experienced far greater and more severe forms of bullying, hurt, depression and abuse. To those who have experienced any form or level of abuse, I am so sorry.
I would love to one day help others share their stories through art, but for now I share mine and hope that those people feel less alone. I hope that they see my art and know that there are others that have been through similar experiences to them, and know that there are people out there who care for them and acknowledge their pain.
I've noticed that some people are intrigued by the fact that my pieces feature edited photos of myself and feel a desire to know the story behind that choice. The person who inspired my piece Baying, featuring a digitally edited photograph of

myself screaming with the word “Intolerant”, questioned the meaning of the piece. The person who had called me that, a word that has stuck with me and impacted my sense of self greatly, had no recollection of doing so. Their interpretation of the piece was simply that it was an expression of “teenage angst”. Others expressed finding the piece haunting and anger provoking.

I like that my art is open to interpretation and can elicit different types and intensity of emotions. I believe what people get from my work is particularly dependent on their own lived experience.

You aim to raise awareness for victims of abuse and bullying. How do you see the role of art in social change and activism?

All forms of art are powerful, and art is intertwined in all parts of the human experience. With the ever-growing world of artificial intelligence, a lot of people are taking the opportunity to value artists even more. I’ve found that a lot of creatives are fighting the growth of AI by using their creative skills to combat the ever-growing world of technology and social issues. Inspired by that, I would like to do the same.

There are forms of abuse – such as verbal, emotional and psychological, that are rarely talked about. They are also rarely acknowledged by victims, who are often left to feel like they deserved the abuse, or feel ashamed to admit what was said or done to them. I hope to bring a voice to these most often “silent” forms of abuse. In the words of Dr Gabor Mate: “Trauma isn’t what’s happened to you. It’s what happens inside you, as a result”.

I’ve decided to use the opportunity I’ve been given with my art platform to donate 10% of all my art sales to Orygen. They are an Australian charity devoted to redefining what’s possible in global youth mental health research, policy, education and clinical care.

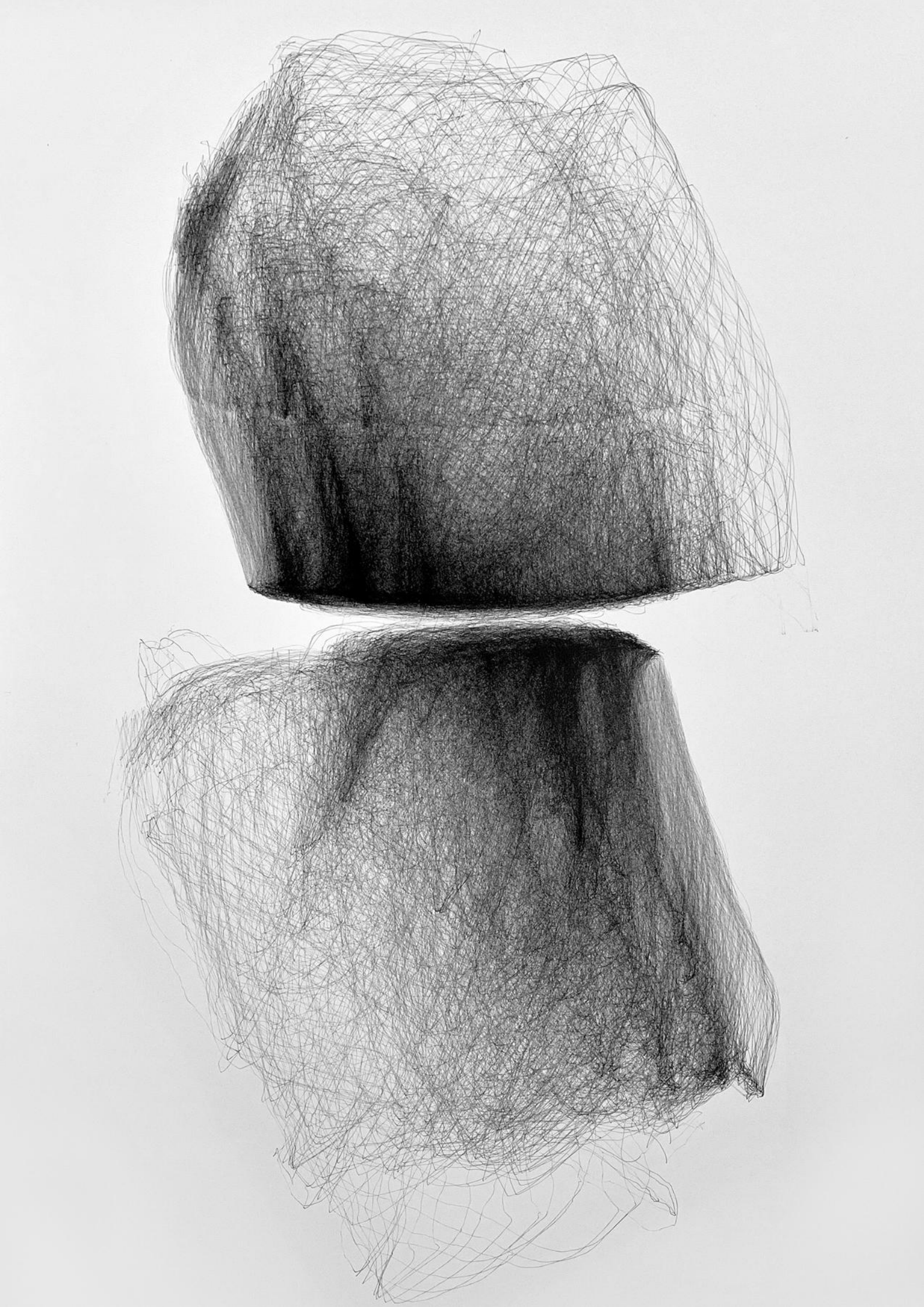
Sophie Ocksana | Anew | 2025

Machinic Protocols - Edouard Cabay

Machinic Protocols is a computational drawing investigation focused on architecture and computational art installations. Edouard Cabay's work lies at the border of art and architecture, disciplines that he practises and teaches in Barcelona. In 2016, he initiated Machinic Protocols, a body of research work which uses drawing as a tool to create collective interactions between people, machines and computers. He uses protocols, algorithms and automation to cultivate a sense of indeterminacy into creative processes. Thus encouraging the production of new forms and figures - critical objects of the new relationships between science and nature. Edouard Cabay (Brussels, 1979) is based in Barcelona, his work has been widely exhibited in places such as Kanal, Centre Pompidou in Brussels, Mysk Art Center in Riyadh, Arte Laguna in Venice, Biennale of Architecture of Venice, Paris and Tallinn, Arts Santa Monica in Barcelona, Expo Dubai and at the Barcelona Gallery Weekend.

Artist Statement: In a time where society and culture are undergoing radical shifts, and due to the inevitable advancement of technology and its forceful intrusion within our lives, the research presented here uses drawing, a creative practice known to all as a tool to explore and understand questions that can be intimidating to some, and exciting to others: What is the status of our relationship to technology today, and how can it enrich our practices, beyond optimization and efficiency? In a process involving both humans and machines, what are the limits of their respective roles? Machinic Protocols gathers experiments that have been developed by numerous contributors ranging from the fields of computational drawing, to architecture, arts and design. They have been produced by different means including people, robots, computers, and even by forces of nature. The experiments have come in the form of computational art installations, collective interventions, exhibitions or publications. Despite the differences of how they are made, the final form of these drawings can never be anticipated, they are therefore all unreproducible or unique. However, in their finality, all the drawings are no more than the traces of an automated process. The real intention of this work surpasses the act of drawing; it is about developing an attitude towards creation where one designs and relies on a process rather than envisaging an outcome.

Edouard Cabay | Scripts Process | 2017



Guodong Fu

Guodong Fu | Metamorphosis | 2022

You mention that painting is as natural as breathing. How do you maintain that spontaneity and instinctiveness in your work after so many years of painting?

I have never needed to maintain spontaneity and instinctiveness—just as I have never needed to maintain the spontaneity and instinctiveness of breathing, walking, or eating. The only thing I need to do is to perceive and remove the obstacles that hinder this spontaneity and instinctiveness.

Guodong Fu | Wrathful deity | 2022

Traditional art education, for me, was such an obstacle—haha. I first picked up the oil brush purely out of instinct, without any background in formal art education. I painted simply because I needed to paint—without it, I couldn't survive. It was only after many years of artistic practice that I chose to enter art school for formal education. And then I realized I didn't need that education—haha. I have no regrets; many things must be experienced before one can know. But the obstacles brought about by art education are ones I've had to consciously identify and remove. In other words, I've had to take what I learned in art school and move it out of my head.

Especially when I realized that known techniques, methods, and concepts could actually become a prison for vibrant, lively creative energy.

That's just one example. Different obstacles arise at different times and places. I am always prepared.

You have created close to 50,000 works of art. Can you describe your creative process and how it has evolved over the years?

When I first instinctively picked up the oil brush, I simply felt that the painting experience was extremely mysterious and exciting. I was fascinated—maybe even obsessed—with the experience, but I didn't understand what I was doing. In other words, I didn't know how that spontaneity of creation and expression was happening, nor did I understand my own works. In the early years, the only thing I knew was: I had to paint. Nothing could stop me.
But over many years of artistic practice, I slowly began to decode the subconscious language expressed in my paintings. The process of summoning and perceiving the invisible unknown contents of the subconscious feels like treasure hunting in a vast underground world—it's exhilarating. No worldly pleasure can compare to this secret exploration.
When old subconscious patterns arise, I can immediately recognize them in the act of painting. Over time, I've been able to interpret more and more—and still, the unknown continuously emerges. The known and the unknown are constantly intertwining. That's why, to me, creativity can never run dry. The realm of artistic exploration is human consciousness itself. And if human consciousness is infinite, how could art practice ever come to an end?

Guodong Fu | The enlightenment in storm | 2019

Guodong Fu | The burning pyramid | 2022

In your statement, you describe your paintings as a form of psychological research. How do you feel when you observe what emerges in your works?

Let me use a metaphor. Through painting, I access the shadowy world of the subconscious. During this process, I may discover treasures, but I also encounter beasts and demons. Often, I must pass through trials set by the beasts and demons before I can open the treasure doors. This metaphor accurately reflects my years of painting experience.
Painting reveals the wildest, most chaotic, and darkest parts of the subconscious. But once I make it through that terrain, there's a whole other world on the other side. This is the repeated process of destruction and reconstruction, death and rebirth, that happens within my painting practice.

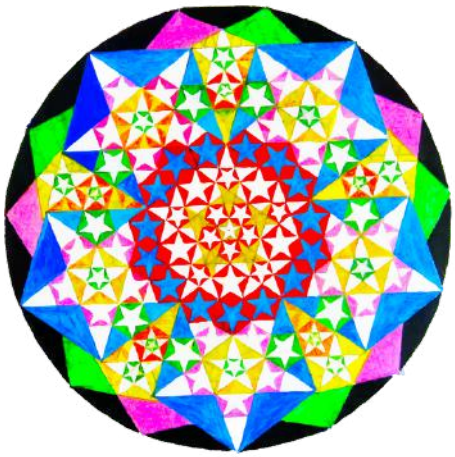
You emphasize that art is about making the invisible world of consciousness visible. Can you share more about what this means to you and how it affects your work?

My entire approach to art is deeply influenced by Tibetan Buddhism and Jungian depth psychology.
I once lived in Tibet for a year, visiting many places and seeing a vast number of thangka paintings. To me, the visual language of thangka is entirely symbolic—it communicates the teachings and wisdom of Tibetan Buddhism

through symbols and metaphors. The depth of consciousness and wisdom contained in Tibetan Buddhism is so profound that I don't believe language can fully express it. Yet thangka paintings manage to do it through their unique symbolic visual language.
For me, Tibetan thangka art is a miracle in the entire history of human art—a model of translating the invisible world of consciousness into visible visual form.
Being born in China and having the opportunity to be in close contact with the mystical culture of Tibet has been a unique stroke in my artistic journey. My ability to fluidly shift between and organically fuse Eastern and Western cultural perspectives is also what makes my art distinctly different from others.

Your work is driven by intuition rather than logic or analysis. How do you trust and interpret your intuition during the painting process?

First, I want to clarify—what exactly is intuition? True intuition comes after one has gone through sufficient logical analysis and rational thinking. It arises from a clear understanding of the limits of logic and reason—and only then does one choose to let go of attachment to logic and surrender to the unknown. So true intuition transcends logic and reason; it's not a rejection or avoidance of them, nor is it a lack of analytical ability.
Applied to artistic creation, intuitive painting is born out of an understanding of traditional techniques, methods, and concepts—and then, an awareness of their limitations, followed by a conscious choice to set them all aside and allow the creative process to step fully into the unknown.
All trust is based on understanding. Staying within the traditional, the known, the logical—it's safe. But leaping into the abyss of intuition and the unknown—fear is inevitable.



Guodong Fu | Fu Stars | 2019

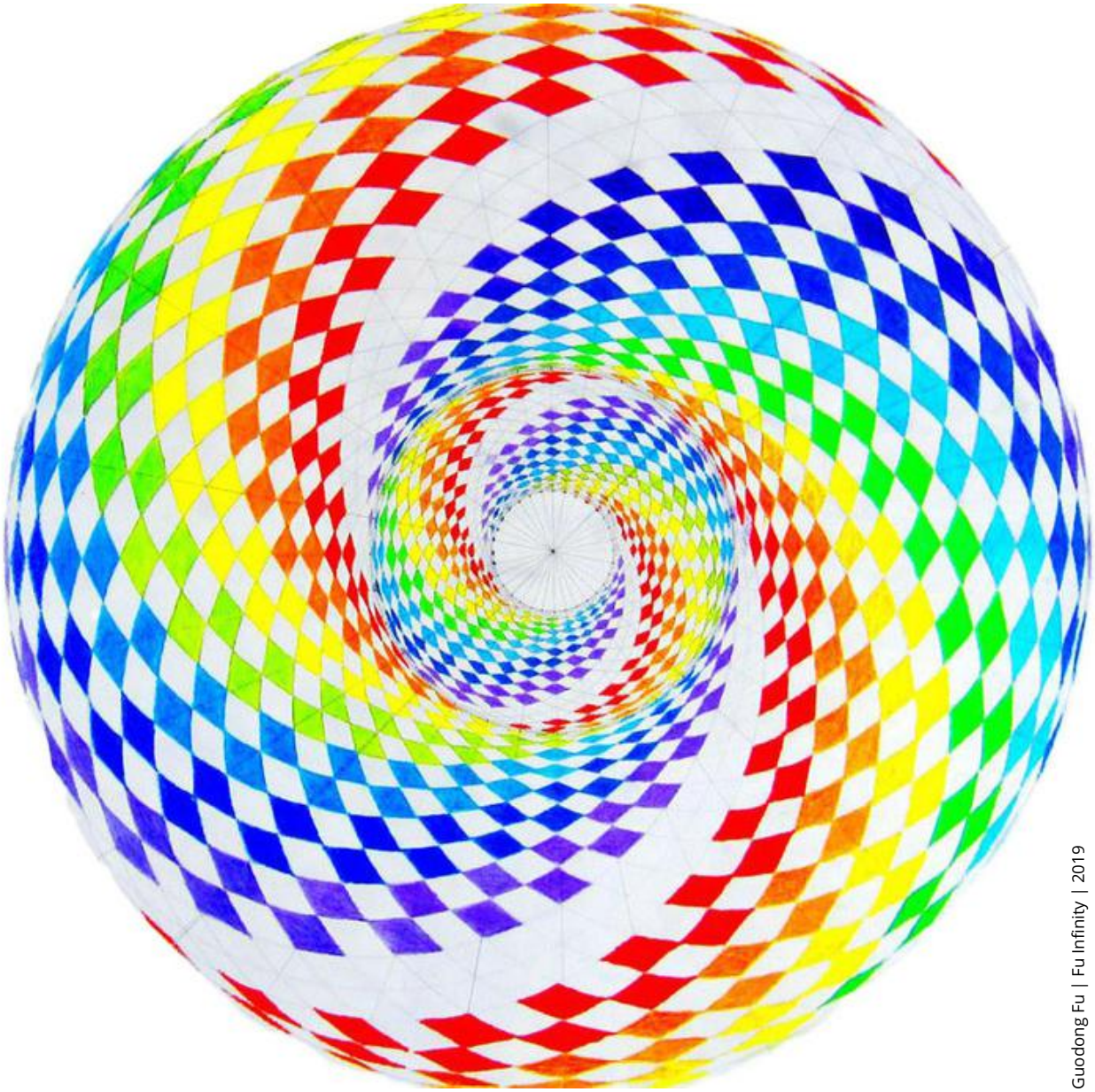
In your view, what is the difference between your method of working with art and the more traditional approaches in psychology or art therapy?

The most essential difference lies in how I define my role. I have always identified myself as an artist—not someone engaged in art therapy. The reason I repeatedly mention the healing power of art is because it's an unshakable truth: wherever real art takes place, genuine healing inevitably follows. This has been one of the most precious experiences in my artistic journey.
But art is not just that. What I mean is, the potential of art goes far beyond healing.
Let me give you one example. In 2024, I had a landlord who habitually oppressed and emotionally abused his tenants. Due to some irreconcilable conflicts, we ended up in local court. I still vividly remember the moment I stood in the center of that courtroom and presented to the judge the hundreds of paintings I had created in response to that oppressive landlord-tenant relationship. What I felt in that moment was power. Art can support me at any level, and in any form.
My aspiration for the role I play in society is this: by demonstrating the unconventional relationship I have developed with art, and by sharing my unique experiences, I hope to inspire more people to explore their own unique and unknown relationship with art—in their own way. Only in this way can the possibilities of art continue to expand, rather than being confined within tradition and the already-known, which honestly bore me deeply.

You intentionally avoid explaining the specific themes or content of your work. How do you think this contributes to the impact of your art on the audience?

The most direct reason I avoid explaining the specific themes or contents of each painting is because I've created too many works. The content spans such a wide range of conscious realms and levels that I simply don't have the patience to explain them all.
However, after years of artistic practice, I can abstract and integrate everything into a framework and share that with viewers—distilling the content and presenting only the core information.

Of course, my core belief is: images can directly engage in subconscious communication without the need for verbal language. This is a human instinct and requires no effort. But that brings us back to the first question—instinct is easily blocked. Any instinct that is denied or suppressed for too long will eventually atrophy. So if I truly want to give my art a chance to communicate with the public, then providing some essential verbal interpretation is helpful. Just as I'm doing in this interview.



Guodong Fu | Fu Infinity | 2019

Marina Kuznetsova

Interdisciplinary artist, color consultant, and curator.
Participant in both group and solo exhibitions.
In my work, I apply my knowledge of color, which helps convey the essence to the viewer. I am inspired by travel, nature, and emotions. I work with textures, volumes, and various materials.

Artist Statement
I invite the viewer to take a closer look at reality. To pause in the flow and sense the surrounding world. Each of us finds our own meanings, shaped by our individual experiences.

Marina Kuznetsova | Lemons.Print | 2025

Marina Kuznetsova | Ryzhik | 2023

Jiaxi Zhang

Your work blurs the line between object and experience. How do you decide which materials best serve the emotional tone of a project?

For me, materials are never just formal tools—they're emotional instruments. I often begin with a question or a feeling I don't yet have words for, and the material choice comes from how that feeling wants to be held. Softness, fragility, or resistance—these are not just textures, but emotional tones.

Because my practice is rooted in sensory and embodied experience, I'm drawn to materials that carry affective weight: velvet, conductive yarn, fiber, botanical elements, or even found objects. They speak through temperature, pressure, memory. I often spend time touching, bending, printing, or simply being around materials until I feel something click—when the emotional logic of the piece meets the physical logic of the medium.

In Where's My Shelter, I used soft circuits, plant-based forms, and interactive textiles connected to Arduino and conductive yarn—not for the sake of technology, but to let grief be both heard and held through contact. I let the materials carry what language couldn't. That's often how it works for me: I don't impose a material; I let it emerge through emotional clarity.

Can you tell us more about how communication theory shapes your artistic process?

Communication theory has shaped how I approach both meaning and audience. I don't start a project by asking what I want to say—I start by asking how something might be felt, or how presence might be shared without words.

Rather than thinking of art as a message to be delivered, I think of it as a space for relational experience—where attention, slowness, and sensory engagement become ways of communicating. This shift came directly from my study of communication: understanding that meaning isn't always in the content, but often in the interaction.

In that sense, my practice isn't centered on delivering fixed messages, but on creating spaces for felt communication. Whether I'm working with textile, installation, or film, I ask how people engage, perceive, and respond—how a work communicates not through explanation, but through atmosphere, proximity, material presence, and the audience's own movement.

In your installations and textile works, softness and slowness are recurring themes. What draws you to these concepts, and how do you translate them into physical form?

Softness and slowness are emotional structures in my work, but they are also technical decisions. I often begin with feelings that resist verbal articulation—grief, hesitation, care—and I look for materials that can hold those emotions without overwhelming them. Textiles allow for that. I use tufting techniques and yarn-based materials to create softness—not just visually, but physically. The density, texture, and pile of the surface invite touch and absorb presence, allowing emotional tone to be felt through material weight and depth. Techniques like tufting or flocked printing give the surface a tactile depth, and hand-finishing slows the process down—not just physically, but emotionally. Slowness also appears in how I shape interaction. I build installations that don't demand immediate reaction. Instead, they respond to presence—sometimes with subtle sound, sometimes just through material tension. I often use Arduino, sensors, or

Jiaxi Zhang | NEFELIBATA | 2023

Jiaxi Zhang | Where's My Shelter Series | 2022

conductive yarns, but always in quiet ways, where technology supports stillness rather than spectacle. Softness and slowness allow me to make space for what doesn't need to be explained. Grief, memory, or tenderness aren't resolved—they're held, shared, and allowed to linger.

How does living between London and Shanghai influence your approach to themes like care, marginality, or shared presence?

Living between London and Shanghai has expanded both the emotional and methodological scope of my practice. London has given me detachment—a way to observe and reframe familiar questions from a different cultural lens. It has taught me the value of articulation: how to be intentional about presence, care, and context.
Shanghai, on the other hand, grounds me in the tactile, the intuitive, and the socially embedded. It reminds me that intimacy can happen informally—in proximity, in tempo, in collective rhythm. It's where experimentation often comes with urgency, but also deep instinct.
I think about how to create spaces where difference is not erased, but held. Where presence doesn't require performance. Where care can happen softly, even in public. This duality isn't something I resolve—it's something I live through, and build from. Together, these two places allow me to move between perspectives—between distance and immediacy, clarity and ambiguity. That movement continually informs how I approach themes like marginality and shared presence—not as fixed identities, but as felt relations.

Many of your projects involve participatory or relational elements. How do you design for intimacy in public or gallery spaces?

For me, intimacy in a public space doesn't come from grand gestures—it comes from offering people quiet, optional ways to engage. I think a lot about attention: how it's invited, how it's held, how it's respected.
I create spaces that slow people down. To encourage slowness, I work with soft materials and subtle entry points—elements that invite presence without asking for performance. I don't ask viewers to perform interaction; I build environments that respond to their nearness, their breath, their small decisions. That's where intimacy begins—not in spectacle, but in permission.
In galleries or public settings, I see intimacy as a form of care. Not control. It's about creating the conditions where someone might feel safe enough to linger, to feel something, even briefly.

Your wearable publications are especially intriguing. How do you see the body functioning as a site of memory and storytelling?

I don't see the body as something that wears the work—I see it as part of the work's language. In my wearable publications, the body becomes a medium of memory and emotion: it holds gesture, tension, and presence. The project I'm referring to was shaped around extraversion—not as loudness, but as spatial behavior. I was curious how extroverted personalities construct visibility: through openness, movement, and the will to be noticed.
So the piece expands outward. Folded structures unfold like social gestures; bold surfaces function as visual volume. The body doesn't just support the work—it completes it. It becomes part of a shared environment, extending energy rather than broadcasting it. In that sense, the work doesn't decorate the body, but amplifies its desire to be seen, felt, and mirrored.
My wearable publications let me explore how identity is not only displayed, but narrated—bodily, silently, and relationally. I think of the body as a moving text: something that tells its story through posture, hesitation, rhythm. The storytelling here isn't verbal—it's structural, spatial, and sensory.

What role does failure or unpredictability play in your practice, particularly with tactile or ephemeral materials?

Failure and unpredictability are not setbacks in my work—they're generative forces. When I work with tactile or time-sensitive materials—like scent, sound, soft fibers, or sensor-based interaction—I invite chance to shape the experience. A tuft might come loose. A scent might fade faster than planned. A sensor may misfire. Each of these moments reveals something: about the material's own logic, and about how little we truly control.
Instead of correcting these disruptions, I often incorporate them. A delayed sound trigger or an unraveling stitch becomes part of the work's rhythm. In Where's My Shelter, these fragile moments mirror the emotional themes—grief, tenderness, impermanence. The unpredictability doesn't weaken the work; it makes it more alive.
By allowing these fluctuations, I create spaces that feel present rather than fixed. The audience isn't told what to feel—they're invited to notice, to stay a little longer, and to find meaning in what shifts, decays, or refuses to settle. In this way, failure isn't an error—it's a collaborator.

Jiaxi Zhang | Where's My Shelter Series | 2022

ESS22 is a visual artist known for their figurative paintings and art cards. Influenced by German expressionism, printmaking, tattoo, and textiles, ESS22 focuses on creating their artwork using acrylic and ink on paper.

Alex Smith | Polaris | 2022

Labanya Das

Can you tell us about your earliest memory of creating art? What first inspired you to pick up a brush?

My journey of creating art began when I was three years old. I remember that one day I woke up and saw the mesmerizing, vibrant, and polychromatic hues that filled the sky—the oranges, pinks, purples, and blues all melting into each other like a living painting. That moment I realized there was something deep inside me that longed for freedom of expression. I didn't have the words for it at the time, but I felt an overwhelming urge to capture that beauty. Then I picked up the brush and captured the beauty of the sky. The picture was bereft of any artistic technique, but it was filled with my admiration for beauty and the warmth of nature. That sunrise became the spark that ignited my journey into art.

Your paintings reflect a deep love for nature and emotional storytelling. What themes do you find yourself returning to again and again?

I am a nature worshipper living in the jungle of concrete. That's why I have chosen my art to be the medium to express my latent desires to reconnect with the beauty of nature. The other themes that I often return to in my paintings are the abstract emotions—the mixed, anonymous, and inexplicable emotions. Freedom, both in spirit and expression, is central to my artwork. Another recurring theme of my artwork is love—love for the people, love for the unknown, love for freedom, and love in its true sense.

You also write poetry. How does your writing influence your visual art, and vice versa?

Poems are the paintings of our mind, and paintings are the poems of our expression. Thus, both the poems I compose and the paintings I create complement each other. Poetry allows me to explore the ideas in their unadulterated and raw form through the tools like rhythm, rhyme, figures of speech, and wordplay. This in turn expands the imaginative faculties and helps me to give shape to those expressions and emotions

through brushstrokes. The same happens when I paint. -whether it's nature or my emotions rendered in vivid colors, the act of painting feeds my mind with ideas, texture, emotions, and a mood to work with.

One of your artworks combines portraiture with symbolic elements like birds, kites, and butterflies. What do these symbols mean to you?

In my artwork I use symbols like birds, kites, and butterflies. Birds stand for freedom, unbounded by the clutches of drudgery, with an open access to the wide blue sky. Kites also symbolize freedom and the longing to breathe in the open air. But it still is not bereft of human connection. The kites act as a bridge between unended freedom and the grounding. The butterflies represent In my artwork I use symbols like birds, kites, and butterflies. Birds stand for freedom, unbounded by the clutches of drudgery, with an open access to the wide blue sky. Kites also symbolize freedom and the longing to breathe in the open air. But it still is not bereft of human connection. The kites act as a bridge between unended freedom and the grounding. The butterflies represent transformation and personal growth. Together, these symbols reflect my belief in the power of freedom, growth, and the fluidity of life.

How does your Indian heritage influence your artistic choices in color, composition, or symbolism?

My Indian heritage significantly influences my artwork in color, composition, and symbolism. The vibrant hues of yellow, red, and blue

represent the cultural and traditional significance of India, her passion, her glory, and my admiration for the nation. India is a multicultural and diverse country with a multitude of languages, cuisines, art forms, ethnicities, and identities of people. Still, there is a sense of unity that I strive to capture by blending the core essence of both mother-nature and human nature, traditions and modernity.

You work across different formats—from traditional nature scenes to stylized human figures. How do you decide what style or medium to use?

It all flows from the emotions I want to convey. If I want to convey the soft palettes of nature, I choose watercolor as my medium. I use acrylic colors to depict bold human figures, human texture, and raw human emotions. I don't follow a fixed personal style. But generally I believe in traditional modernity. That's why I love to blend traditional and modern art to symbolize the true essence of freedom.

What role does emotion play in your creative process? Do you paint from feeling, memory, or imagination?

Yes, emotion plays a significant role in my creative process. Emotion guides my brush and shapes my vision. Often, I paint from feeling, memory, and imagination. Sometimes memories drive my emotions, and fleeting feelings become the spark. Imagination weaves these three elements together and helps me to express the unforeseen and unexplored domains of the mind.

Nora Feys
A stylist and pattern maker by training at the Roubaix School of Fashion Arts and Techniques (ESMOD), and after working in the luxury ready-to-wear sector in Paris, Nora Feys decided to pursue a year of additional training at the Mons School of Arts (Arts2) in visual and graphic communication. Throughout her career, she opened up to different artistic perspectives and developed her personal project in November 2017 in Lille. Her intention: to create a unique universe centered around nature, beings, and poetry. Transdisciplinary, she shares her taste for experimenting with diverse materials but never strays far from her favorite medium, textiles, which maintains an important place in her projects and gradually diversifies over time, moving from clothing and the singularity of being to wall art as interior decoration, while bringing meaning and questioning to it through a quest for self-construction.

Project Statement
For several years, Nora Feys's artistic approach has been guided by a desire to take a fresh look at our surroundings and our daily lives, to experiment with and transfigure the representation of Nature as ephemeral beauty, a fragile force, as a permanent link to our own harmony, and as an initiatory quest to "Reveal the brilliance in each being." Constantly seeking to unite meaning, narrative, and the enhancement of craftsmanship and the handmade, a love of words is also evident throughout her creations, like an entrance into a universe that is intended to be poetic and unique. Weaving these connections over time and blending tradition and modernity is a constant source of inspiration in her approach. Transdisciplinary, she shares her taste for experimenting with various materials but never strays far from her favorite medium, textiles, because being a trained stylist and model maker, it keeps an essential place in her projects and gradually diversifies over time to move from clothing and the singularity of being to wall works as interior ornamentation, while bringing meaning and questions to it through a quest for self-construction.

Nora Feys | Jardin d enfance | 2025

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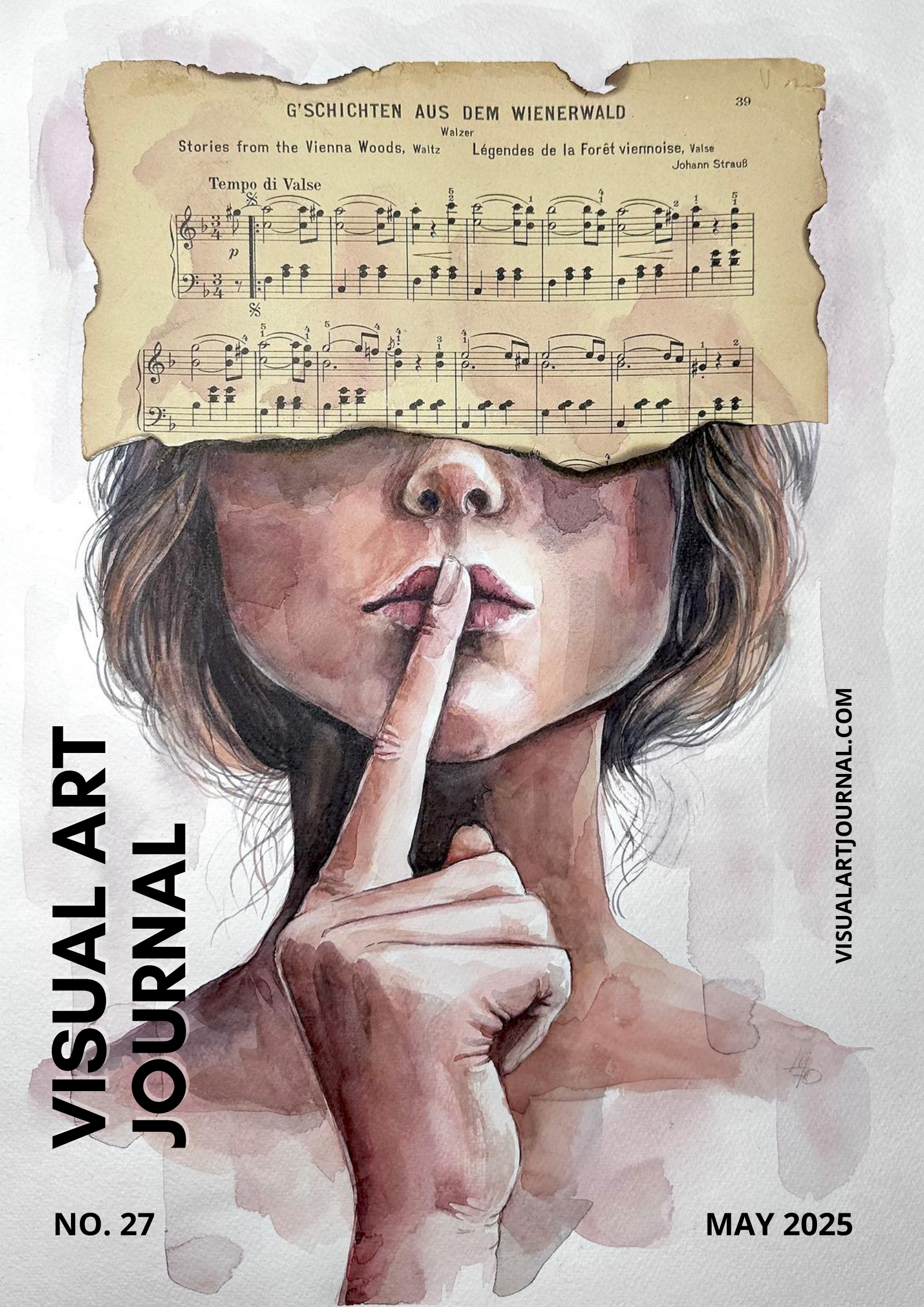

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