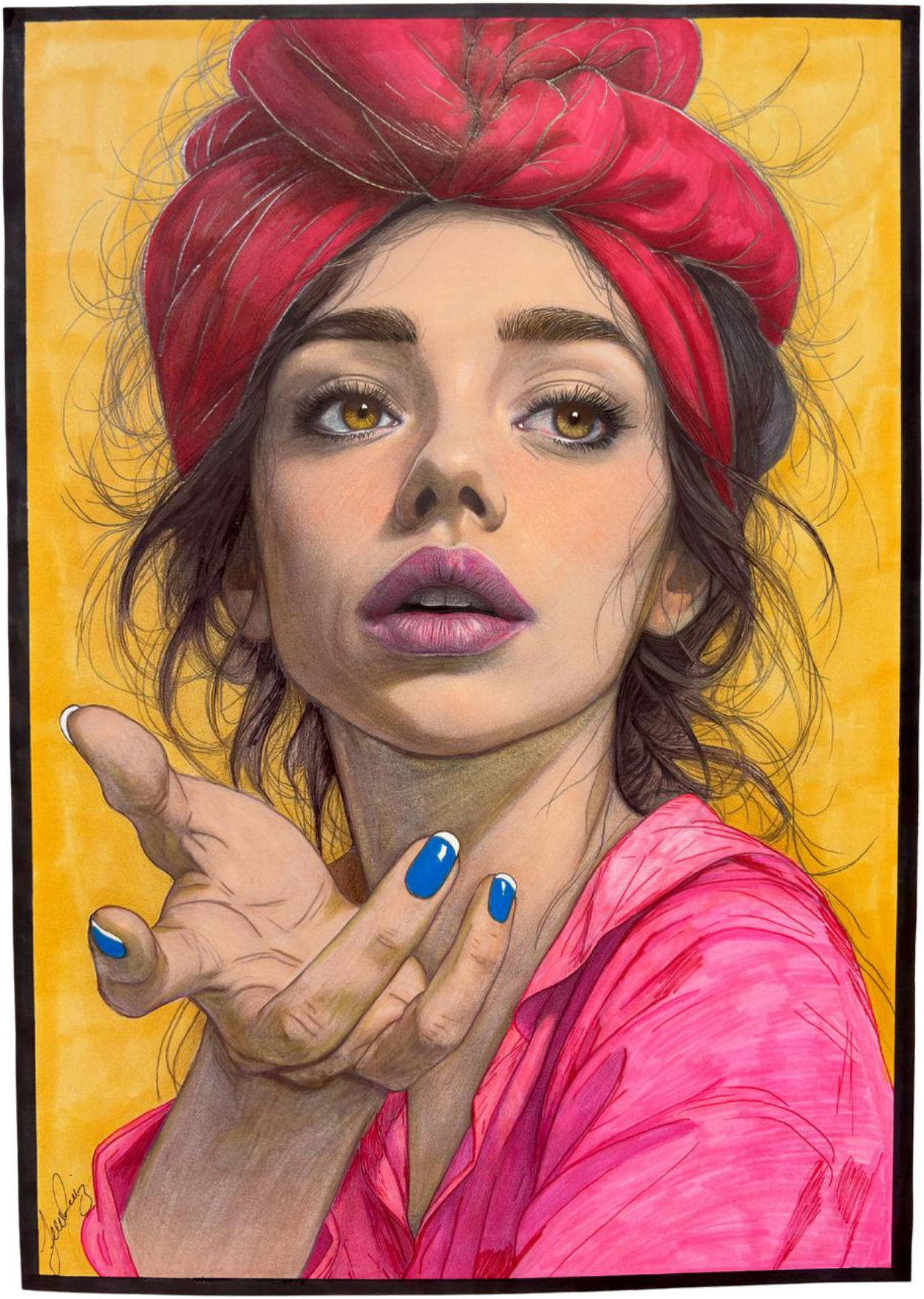
VISUAL ART JOURNAL



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— *Intro*

Anna Gvozdeva

Curator of
Visual Art Journal

Hello, dear reader!

In your hands is Issue 48 of our magazine. In it, we have brought together the work of talented artists from around the world, showcasing a wide range of styles and approaches in visual art.

Our team continues to work on reaching and connecting as many creators as possible, building a space for support and genuine exchange - of experience, energy, and inspiration.

As promised, we're launching new projects, and we'll be announcing them very soon on our social media pages. Thank you for staying with us!

As always, a wealth of beauty and thoughtful ideas awaits you ahead.

Enjoy the reading!

On the Front Cover:
Juan Ruiz

On the Back Cover:
Morpho
(Bruno Gouagout)
L'Arme À Fleur De Peau

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

Interview

Juan Ruiz

You describe painting as a form of refuge and breathing during the COVID-19 pandemic. How did that period transform your relationship with art on a deeper level?

During that time, painting stopped being just something I enjoyed and became something I truly needed. In the middle of isolation and so much uncertainty, it felt like the world was getting smaller, but when I sat down to paint, that space opened up again.
I began to use the canvas as a place where I could breathe without rushing, where the news, the fears, and even the clock no longer existed. Every brushstroke became a way of organizing what I was carrying inside, even when I didn't have the words to explain it.
On a deeper level, that period taught me that art is not only about the final result, but about the process itself. It's not just about creating something "beautiful," but about being present with myself while I create. Since then, my relationship with painting has become more honest. I no longer paint only to show something—I paint to understand myself, to keep myself company, and to remind myself that even in the hardest moments, I can always create a space of my own where I can feel calm.

Being a healthcare professional, how does your everyday contact with vulnerability, pain, and resilience influence your artistic vision?

Being a healthcare professional has given me a very particular way of looking at people. Being in daily contact with vulnerability, pain, and at the same time resilience, has taught me that behind every face there is a story that is almost never visible at first glance.
That directly shapes the way I create. When I paint, I'm not only interested in capturing an expression or an appearance, but in trying to convey something deeper: the emotional weight, the quiet strength, or even the fragility that we all carry inside.
It has also made me more aware of the value of time and presence. In a clinical setting, sometimes a small gesture can mean a lot, and in art something similar happens—a detail, a gaze, or a well-placed light can completely change the way a piece is read.
In that sense, my artistic vision has become more human and empathetic. I don't just paint what I see, I paint what I feel and perceive from people, with the intention that whoever looks at the work can recognize themselves, even if only a little, in it.

The female face is the central subject of your work. What does it symbolize for you beyond beauty?

For me, the female face goes far beyond an idea of aesthetic beauty. I see it as an emotional territory, a space where strength, vulnerability, history, and identity intersect. Each

face I paint is, in a way, a reflection of many women at once, but also of human experiences that we all share.
I'm especially drawn to the duality that exists in a gaze—it can be gentle and firm at the same time, open and protective, fragile and powerful. In the female face, I find a way to speak about resilience, sensitivity, and transformation without using words.
Rather than representing an ideal, I try to capture a presence. Something that makes the viewer feel that the face is not only being seen, but is also looking back, telling a quiet story that invites them to pause and feel.

Your portraits feel emotionally intense and intimate. How do you approach capturing emotions that are not immediately visible?

I believe everything begins before I ever touch the brush. I spend a lot of time observing, not just the image or the model, but what that person transmits to me. I pay attention to small gestures—the tension in a look, the way someone holds their face, or tilts their head. That's often where the emotions that aren't obvious tend to hide.
The best inspiration for my portraits comes from the women I live alongside every day, both in my personal life and in my work. Each one of them is, in her own way, my muse. Their stories, their strength, their silences, and the way they face the world stay with me and appear, consciously or unconsciously, in every face I paint.
When I begin working on the canvas, I do it slowly and very intentionally. Each layer is an opportunity to adjust not only the form or the color, but also the feeling I want to leave in the piece. Sometimes I step back and ask myself whether what I'm seeing feels "alive" or just technically correct.
I also put a lot of myself into the process. I paint from my own emotions, my memories, and my quiet moments. I believe that honesty filters into the portrait and allows the viewer to connect with something that can't really be pointed at, but can definitely be felt.

Eyes play a crucial role in your paintings. What do you believe eyes can reveal that words cannot?

I believe the eyes are where truth stays when words are no longer enough. In a single gaze, you can find things that even the person themselves may not know how to express—tiredness, hope, fear, tenderness, or determination.
For me, the eyes become a kind of silent bridge between the person I portray and the one who looks at the work. They don't explain anything directly, but they invite feeling, imagining, and completing the story through the viewer's own experience.
When I paint eyes, I'm not only trying to make them look "good" or realistic, but to make them feel present, as if they had an inner pulse. I want the person who looks at them to feel that the gaze recognizes them, questions them, or keeps them company, even though not a single word has been spoken.

Do your portraits represent specific individuals, or are they more universal reflections of shared human emotions?

I have worked for more than 20 years alongside wonderful women—brave, resilient, with beautiful souls—who give everything they have so that they and their loved ones can reach their dreams. Day after day, they teach me that they are among the greatest beings we can have on this planet, and that their strength and humanity deserve to be honored.
My portraits begin with real people, with specific faces, but they don't stay there. For me, each painting becomes a starting point for something more universal, a space where that particular face can turn into a mirror in which others can see themselves reflected.
That's why, when I paint, I'm not only trying to represent an individual, but to capture an emotion, a state of the soul, something that all of us, in one way or another, have felt: waiting, strength, doubt, calm, or hope. Every brushstroke I make is a tribute to each of those women and to the stories they have shared with me through their presence.
I like the idea that whoever looks at the work can think, "I don't know who this person is, but I know how they feel." That's where, for me, the real connection happens.

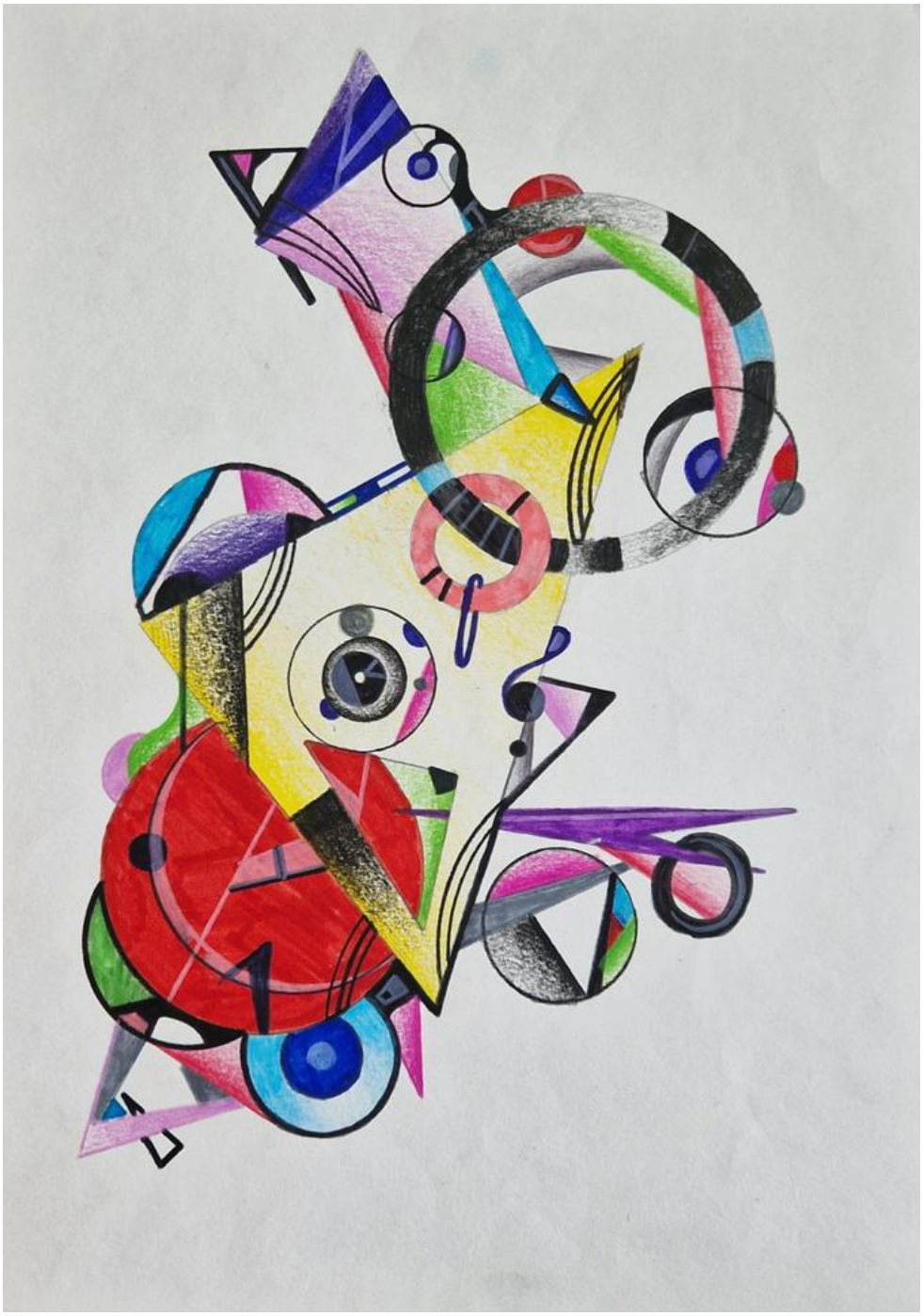
What emotions do you hope remain with the viewer after encountering your work?

I hope that, after encountering my work, the viewer feels that the painting is alive at every moment. As if it were not just a still image, but a presence that breathes, that observes, and that keeps them company.
I would love that when they take my work into the space where they choose to display it, that place becomes filled with the best sensations, emotions, and positive energy that each of my pieces carries. That it's not just a painting on a wall, but a presence that transforms the atmosphere and makes it feel warmer and more human.
I also hope there is an emotional echo left behind—a blend of calm, tenderness, and strength. Something that doesn't fade when they step away from the work, but continues to accompany them, like a quiet energy that invites them to keep feeling.

Goja Dabkute
I am 24 years old. I grew up in Vilnius, Lithuania. After high school, I decided to study Art History, so I went to the Netherlands for my studies. There, I completed my BA in Art History and my MA in Art History & Curatorial studies with a 'cum laude'. During the time I was studying, I never stopped creating and became a self-taught artist. I still create and learn new things everyday which brings me immense joy.

Artist Statement
Creativity has been with me since childhood, even though I never studied art professionally. However, no one could have prepared me for the art I have been creating for the past eight years. Abstraction and Suprematism-Constructivism appeared in my life after a traumatic event—when I was diagnosed with an incurable disease. I lacked peace, order in my life, and a way to disconnect from my problems. And then I found a lifeline in the boundless ocean—geometric shapes and colors.
In my work, every shape, line, or dot has its place and function, and every color has its value and brightness. When put together, they create a whole that gives a sense of order and clarity. Creating such works requires a lot of thought, and this brings the peace and order that I seek in my work. If you tilt and place one triangle in the wrong place, or apply one color too brightly, everything falls apart, and it is almost impossible to restore it. This is what I strive for in my work—constant order and the feeling that everything is where it should be (which is what I wish for everyone). After all, we all need harmony in our lives!

Goja Dabkutė | Wheels Are Turning | 2024



Goja Dabkutė | The Same Car! | 2025

— *Interview*

Tayib Alias

You began painting after your retirement in 2021. Can you describe the moment when painting shifted from a casual activity into a meaningful artistic practice for you?

At the beginning, after few art jamming painting sessions during the post Covid, my children encouraged me to continue painting considering that my pieces of artworks had shown an artistic skills that can be developed as way to pass time. I realised that it was not a bad idea then. I started to thinking about painting when I wasn't doing anything. That's when I begin to look at YouTube to look for art tutorial and begin to start painting, trying mixing a new colour, or improving a technique. Painting slowly became part of my daily routine and gave my days structure and purpose. That was when I understood it was more than just a hobby—it had become meaningful to me.

As a self-taught artist, what were the most important discoveries or challenges you encountered while learning independently?

I learned a great deal from YouTube tutorials and by observing other artists. One of my biggest challenges was understanding colours, especially the different shades and how they work together. I often doubted myself and had to experiment repeatedly to get the colours right. Over time, playing with colour taught me

patience and helped build my confidence. I learned that making mistakes is part of learning.

Landscapes play a central role in your work. What draws you to this genre, and what do landscapes allow you to express that other subjects might not?

Landscapes speak to me in a quiet and personal way. They allow me to express emotions such as calm, longing, and reflection without needing words or people. I enjoy painting open spaces, skies, and horizons because they give me a sense of freedom and stillness. Landscapes allow me to slow down and be honest with my feelings.

Your paintings often evoke calm, stillness, and reflection. How intentional is this atmosphere, and what emotions do you hope viewers experience when engaging with your work?

This atmosphere comes naturally from how I feel when I paint. I paint slowly and quietly, and that feeling finds its way onto the canvas. I hope viewers feel a sense of calm and peace when they look at my work—perhaps a moment of rest or reflection in their busy lives.

How do memory and personal experience influence the places you choose to paint? Are your landscapes inspired by real locations or imagined spaces?

Most of my inspiration comes from places I have been, places my children have visited, and even requests from my children. Some works are also inspired by photo images from library archives and social media. Often, I combine these references with memory and imagination. I focus more on how a place feels rather than painting it exactly as it is.

Working with acrylics requires both control and spontaneity. What do you enjoy most about this medium, and how does it suit your way of working?

I did try watercolour, but I found it difficult to control. Acrylics suit me better because they allow me to experiment, make changes, and explore colours freely. I enjoy playing with colours and discovering new combinations. Acrylics give me confidence and flexibility in my work.

You've mentioned hoping to inspire retirees and late bloomers. What advice would you give to someone who feels it's "too late" to begin a creative path?

It is never too late to start. You don't need experience or talent—only curiosity and the courage to try. I started painting after retirement, and it gave my life new meaning. The most important step is simply to begin.

Interview

Clare O'Leary

Your work is deeply inspired by nature, water, and landscape. What first draws you to a particular scene or environment before you begin a painting?

When I start a painting and I am looking and working in the environment the most important thing for me is the atmosphere created by the forms and light. I also look at the way different plants interact with each other and patterns made through this. Predominately I try to capture the place and give the viewer a sense of it, almost like they could be there with me.

You were born in the Far East and later settled in Suffolk. How have these two very different landscapes shaped your visual language and artistic sensibility?

Living in two very different environments has made me better at looking. The completely diverse forms and colours means I tend to notice things in a more detailed manner. I am still draw to the tropical plants and seek these out in England using places like Kew and Cambridge Botanical gardens to stimulate ideas. The heat and richness of colour in the Far East are something which stay in your mind and appear that much brighter on a cold dark winter day in Suffolk. The landscape of East Anglia is beautiful and my passion for trees is realised in my visits to ancient woodlands sites. There is a magical quality to these places and capturing this is something I am keen to develop further.

Memory plays an important role in your practice. How do childhood memories influence the way you observe and paint nature today?

Childhood memories create a separation from reality, having slightly disjointed images, but predominately it is the feeling of being immersed in nature. I wanted to be part of it, being within their environment and looking up towards the light was something truly magical for me as a child. Making dens in the hills, in trees and sitting amongst the plants as the edge of water looking at reflections and shapes distorted has remained as a memory for me and continues to inspire my practice.

Many of your works focus on reflections, ripples, and layered surfaces. What does water represent for you, both visually and symbolically?

When I think of water I think of us and how we grow in liquid, are born into air but still have water within us. As a woman I feel we are drawn to nature in a particular way.

The moon governing the tides which govern our menstrual cycle. So the link ties us to water. It moves and can be still, it can be shallow and have deep depths, it can reflect a truth and distort a truth through ripples and movement. These aspects symbolise for me our own nature and how we can present ourselves or hide ourselves. It is also the beauty of water and its changing nature which I can't resist and I am constantly drawn back to it. I love the way plants grow at the edges and because of this are reflected on the surfaces become part of the water. The confusion of what is in the water and what is on the surface, what is reality what is imagined. The juxtaposition of these ideas and thoughts just as what is real and what is hidden in ourselves.

You often speak about the interconnection between plants, water, and sky. How do you translate this idea of interconnectedness into composition and color?

I think the way nature arranges itself to support and connect between species is something we can all learn from. Reading Suzanne Simbard's work finding the Mother Tree really made me wake up to this idea and try to communicate it through my paintings. The colours flow across the composition which is densely packed with foliage, I link colours by layering them over each other and the harmony is reflected in the way the colours are repeated through the composition. Plant sit close to each other touching and sharing the resources, I leave very little background to create a composition which is brimming with colour and forms.

Living and working in Suffolk, how does your immediate environment continue to influence your current body of work?

I am very privileged to live a beautiful part of the world and count my blessings every day. The opportunity to be in nature and sit under the wide skies watching the colours play across is something I am grateful for. I am reminded of the great East Anglian artists who have come before me and feel a yearning to continue their investigation. I seek out places where I feel inspired because of the colours and light and I am currently working on images with trees as the main focus, these are my true love and I always feel my spirit lift when I am amongst them.

Your work is held in private collections worldwide. How does it feel to know that your personal reflections on nature resonate across different cultures?

It is always an honour when people collect your work. It makes you feel you are not working in isolation. A connection is formed with the person or people and I feel a little part of me now lives with them. It is a joy they appreciate the work and have made their own connection with it. It might be they see it in a very different way to me but that is ok as they have their own journey and thoughts around it. As long as they feel something that is the most important thing for me.

Moe Fard
I illustrate my understanding of human life in the world, often exploring existential themes.
I am an architect, and from the beginning of my career, I have used illustration to explain ideas and convey the diverse concepts behind projects. Sometimes, I also experiment with typography, shaping words into visual forms to express both meaning and feeling.
Today, my focus is on understanding different human worldviews (emotions, attitudes, and behaviors), and I try to depict my interpretation of texts and poetry on these themes through imagery, so that multiple concepts can be seen and felt simultaneously.

Project Statement
In this work, I explore existential anxiety, influenced by Irvin Yalom's philosophy. It depicts a human at the moment of collapse, where defense mechanisms shatter. The explosive forms in the periphery represent the unbearable weight of reality, a truth so raw it pushes the mind to the brink.
I rendered the face as fragmented, colorful masks to show how identity breaks into a thousand pieces under pressure, each acting as a facade to hide inner tremors. Amidst this chaos, I sought a spark of life. The touches of blue and green represent the "meaning" one must personally create in an indifferent world to survive.
The piercing, weary gaze is the heart of this piece. It is "authentic awareness," an eye that, despite the exhaustion of carrying existence, still dares to stare into the truth. It tells the story of a soul struggling to preserve its essence as it falls apart.

Moe Fard | The Sphere of Fragmentation | 2026

Moe Fard | The Sphere of Fragmentation | 2026

Interview

Dave Black

Your work often feels cinematic, as if it captures a suspended moment from a film. How does cinema influence the way you construct an image on canvas?

Cinema influences how I construct an image rather than what I depict. I approach a painting as a framed moment, similar to a film still taken out of context. For me, composition and color are the main tools to create atmosphere and emotional presence. The way elements are positioned in the frame and then combined with specific color choices. It allows a certain mood to emerge without relying on narrative. The cinematic quality in my work comes from this construction of space, tension, and feeling not from direct references to film.

You mention that you are more interested in emotional tension than in literal narratives. How do you know when a painting has reached the right level of tension?

Dave Black | California Stillness | 2025

I don't approach emotional tension as something that can be measured or planned. I usually start a painting because I'm carrying a certain image or feeling and the act of painting is a way of releasing it. I know a work has reached the right level of tension when that internal pressure disappears and when the image no longer occupies my thoughts. At that point, adding more would feel unnecessary. The tension isn't resolved visually, but it is resolved for me internally.

Many of your works balance between control and chaos through strong lines and high contrast. Is this balance intuitive, or do you consciously plan it during the process?

I usually begin a painting with a rough idea of the color palette but this changes continuously throughout the process. I spend a lot of time deciding where specific colors belong, so there is a strong sense of control during most of the work. The balance between control and chaos becomes most visible toward the end. At that point, I deliberately introduce an uncontrolled gesture by applying red paint in a way that I can no longer fully direct. I don't control where the red splatters land and that loss of control brings a final layer of tension into the painting. Chaos is not accidental in my work. It is consciously invited at the moment when all structure is already in place.

Automotive culture and Californian imagery appear repeatedly in your work. What do these symbols represent for you on an emotional or

Dave Black | Hollywood Cruisin' | 2021

psychological level?

Automotive culture and California are deeply connected to a sense of identity and emotional belonging for me. My fascination with classic cars started at an early age and never disappeared. I used to own several old Chevy vans and I now own a Volvo Amazon from 1966. They represent more than objects, they carry ideas of freedom, memory, and individuality. A car is both movement and solitude at the same time.
California functions in a similar way. It feels less like a destination and more like a psychological landscape. Whenever I'm there, it feels like coming home rather than visiting a place. The atmosphere, the light, the openness all of it resonates with how I experience the world emotionally. In my work, these elements become symbols of longing, escape, and familiarity rather than literal references to a specific place or object.

You work both with vibrant color compositions and black-and-white portraits. How does your mindset change when you move between color and monochrome?

My paintings in color are often an explosion of energy and can feel intense or busy. I balance this with black-and-white works, which are calmer and provide a visual contrast in exhibitions. The use of color brings immediate vitality and presence, while the monochrome pieces convey a quieter, more introspective energy. Shifting between the two allows me to explore different emotional states and gives the overall body of work a dynamic rhythm.

Music is listed as one of your inspirations. Do you listen to specific music while painting, and does it shape the rhythm or mood of your work?

Music plays an important role in my painting process. I always create a specific atmosphere in my studio, using both lighting and music to set the right mood. Most often I listen to rock music like Neil Young, Deep Purple, Lynyrd Skynyrd and so on. These songs immerse me completely in my own world, shaping the rhythm of my gestures and the emotional tone of the work. Music helps me enter a focused state where the atmosphere and energy of the painting emerge naturally.

You have exhibited in Europe and have works in collections in the United States. Do you notice differences in how audiences from different cultures respond to your work?

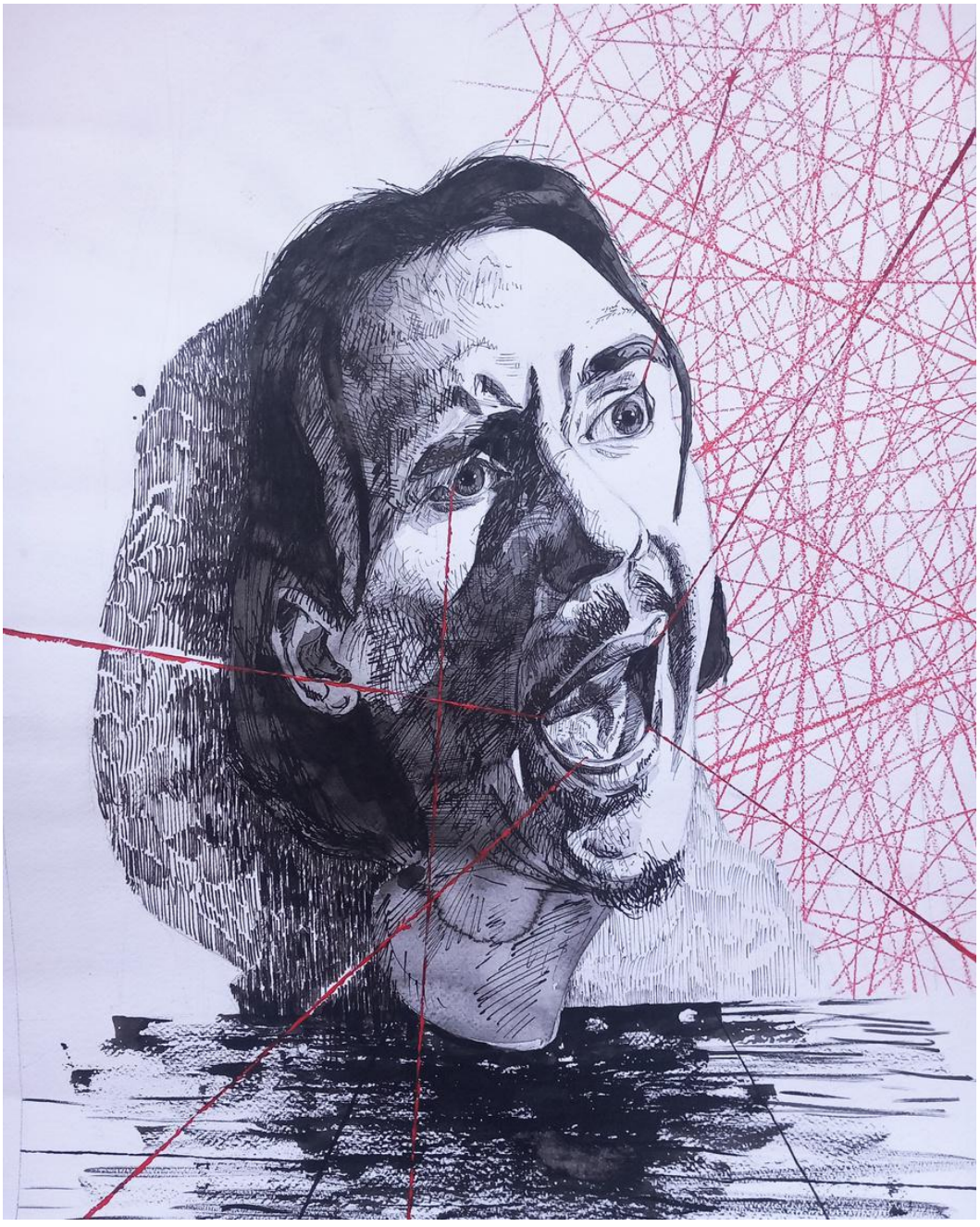
In my experience, most viewers who connect with my work respond in similar ways, regardless of where they are from. While cultural context can subtly influence interpretation, the core emotional impact of my paintings, the tension, energy or atmosphere seems to resonate universally. People engage with the work primarily through feeling rather than through specific references, which makes the response surprisingly consistent across audiences.

Dave Black | The Producer | 2023

Nikola Milanov
He was born in 1995 in Nish (Serbia). He graduated high school of arts, majoring in Painting Technician. He later enrolled in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Nish, where he graduated in 2023 from the Painting department as an award-winning student for overall artistic achievements in academic painting studies. Currently is pursuing master's studies under the mentorship of Professor Katarina Djordjevic. He lives and works in Nish, where, in addition to his artistic work, he also works as an occupational therapist in an institution for individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities. Through the art and creative workshops he conducts, he encourages emotional expression and regulation, which is particularly significant for individuals who cannot express themselves verbally. He exhibited in over 20 collective exhibitions and 9 solo exhibitions.

Project Statement
The main objective and purpose of my work is to examine human emotions through the intertwined content of art and psychology. Portraits with emphasized facial expressions, as the focus of my drawings, depict in a caricatured and narrative way how an individual reflects their own feelings onto the external world. Personality psychology as a science significantly influenced my creative work and became the foundation of my practice. A wide spectrum from white to black clearly indicates an individual's affective state and presents it differently from how they perceive themselves. Red threads, as a symbol and leitmotif, represent the pure emotion experienced by the individuals in the portraits. This depiction, common in my drawings, characterizes individuals as puppets of their own emotions. The grimaces that appear on the face are determined by emotion and an affective tone, thus each facial expression is connected with threads that pull a specific part of the face and further emphasize the already depicted emotion.

Nikola MIlanov | (Dis)organization of Emotions | 2024



Nikola MIlanov | Anxiety | 2023

— *Interview*

Michel Guy

Your figures appear to exist between emergence and dissolution. How do you know when a painting has reached its "truth" and is finished?

For me, a painting is finished when it no longer demands what is essential to its existence. There comes a moment when a presence asserts itself, when the body acquires its own existence. As in an encounter, I allow this presence to appear and come toward me. Through tension, a gaze, or a posture, it affirms what it is moving toward, what it is in the process of becoming.

Throughout the process, an invisible dialogue takes place between what appears and myself: a silent exchange around what must be, what must emerge, and what must take form. If I continue or insist beyond this point, I risk losing what is essential. A moment of disorientation is sometimes enough for the presence to dissolve, leaving behind an inert material, deprived of necessity and meaning — no longer a painting, but a surface deserted of all life.

You describe the human figure not as portrait but as a site of resistance and tension. What is this figure resisting today - socially, psychologically, or materially?

For me, the body and the face are sensitive territories, carrying the traces of life: lived experiences, deeply buried emotions, and tensions that are sometimes hidden. I do not seek resemblance or the precision of features, but what they contain, what they retain, what they carry within.
This presence resists the obligation to be immediately legible, identifiable, or acceptable. Psychologically, it opposes simplified narratives of identity and refuses to be reduced to a single interpretation. It also exists in direct confrontation with the painting itself, faced with an invasive materiality that constantly threatens to erase it, dissolve it, or cause it to disappear.

Materiality plays a central role in your practice. Can you describe how acts of scraping, erasure, and accumulation function emotionally during the painting process?

These gestures are directly linked to the emotional state of the moment.
The canvas becomes a site of confrontation, sometimes a true battleground, where I accept losing my bearings, no longer resisting, and allowing myself to be guided by what is seeking to appear.
Accumulation often manifests as a need to cover, to delay appearance, to maintain tension without resolving it too quickly. It allows the presence to be kept at a distance, not

Michel Guy | Fragmented Portrait | 2023

delivered immediately.
Scraping and erasure intervene at other moments, as sharper gestures. They imply a decision: to remove, to destroy, to relinquish what seemed to be working in order to allow something else to emerge.
These gestures require accepting loss, uncertainty, and sometimes the complete disappearance of what was in the process of being built.
Emotionally, the process constantly oscillates between attachment and detachment.
Painting then becomes a space where one accepts that something may transform, shift, or disappear, in order to allow what truly needs to take place to appear.

Your works often balance muted, tender backgrounds with aggressive, almost violent facial distortion. What kind of dialogue are you creating between these two forces?

The softness of the background — or what may appear as a form of neutrality or minimal space — is not meant to soothe, nor to occupy an undefined area. On the contrary, it serves to intensify the disturbance and to expose the vulnerability of what appears.
Conversely, the violence of the features brings the presence of this environment into focus, sometimes its coldness, sometimes its indifference. The face then seems to exist in relation to a space that does not protect it, does not support it, but surrounds it and reflects it silently.
This dialogue creates a tension between what appears harmless through the absence of excess and what is deeply disturbed.
It makes visible an inner contradiction, an uncomfortable coexistence that does not seek resolution.

Having worked extensively in film as a set dresser and decorator, how has your understanding of constructed space influenced your approach to pictorial composition?

Since childhood, cinema has always held an important place in my life, alongside painting. For a long time, cinema offered me a space of escape, a possibility of withdrawal from the real world. Painting, by contrast, has always required a more intense form of presence, reflection, and critical attention.
Although a dimension of staging exists in my pictorial work, it does not operate according to a narrative construction in the cinematic sense. In painting, the subject asserts itself. It is not a matter of directing or organizing a scene, but of allowing what must come into being to appear.
My experience in cinema has nonetheless taught me that every element within a space matters. In painting, this awareness translates into particular attention given to structure, to voids, and to zones of silence. Even when the painted body appears isolated, it is never out of context: it is always situated within a considered, constructed space, almost scenographic.
I consider the pictorial surface as a precise site, where a presence must be able to exist, hold, and breathe.

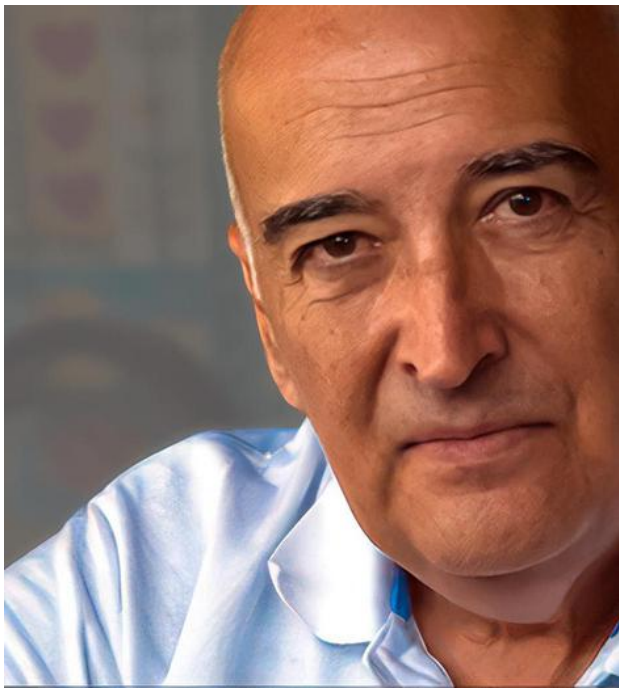
Many of your faces feel wounded, scarred, or fragmented. Do you see these marks as traces of trauma, survival, or transformation?

The faces do not seek to illustrate an event nor to produce an effect. They function as surfaces of manifestation, as sites where inner states are deposited without being named or explained. Painting becomes the space where something intimate—often unspoken, ignored, or marginalized—finds a form of existence without passing through narrative.
Marks, alterations, and deformations do not stem from an expressive intention in the psychological sense, but from a pictorial process. They appear as visible traces of a state in transformation, inscribed within the material. The face then acts as a sensitive surface, traversed by tensions, shifts, and resistances.
It is not a matter of producing an effect or designating a specific event. What appears in the painting is not a rupture, but a state in transformation. The painted presence does not disappear; it is altered within the material, sustained through other forms, at the very core of the pictorial process.

What do you hope remains with the viewer after encountering your work - an image, a feeling, or a question?

Above all, I hope that what remains is a question, a reflection. An image can be forgotten and an emotion can fade, but a question continues to work within the one who carries it.
I hope that the painting leaves a lasting trace, not in the form of a message or an explanation, but as a presence that persists beyond the act of looking. If the viewer leaves the work with something unresolved—an indeterminate sensation that does not fully close—then the encounter has taken place.
What matters to me is not the immediate effect, but what endures over time.

Patxi Navarro



Your work consistently explores tension between structure and entropy. At what point does a system become visually interesting for you - when it is stable, or when it begins to break down?

I find this an interesting question, although it is not one I consciously ask myself while working on a piece. When I begin a new project, I always start from a very open idea: I have an intuition of what I am looking for, but I do not visualize a specific final result. This is probably related to my working process, which is largely based on repeatedly modifying the image until it reaches a point that feels right to me, or until I decide to abandon it entirely.
I am very aware that "beauty" is not my priority. And for someone like me, structurally quite Cartesian, this often means deliberately moving away from formal structures and searching for a certain degree of disorder within the work.
To answer the question directly, my works evolve from an initial seed, and in most cases, if I cannot reach that state you describe as "breakdown" — if the piece does not convey entropy — I prefer to abandon it. And it is not only important that the system breaks down, but how it does so.

Patxi Navarro | Fractured System | 2025

With a background in physics and digital technology, how do scientific thinking and system-based logic influence your approach to abstraction?

My academic background is in physics and computer science, and scientific thinking has therefore always shaped the way I understand systems and processes. I am particularly interested in how complex structures emerge from simple rules, and how small variations can destabilize an apparently stable system.
This way of thinking influences my approach to abstraction more as a mindset than as a direct reference. I do not illustrate scientific concepts; instead, I work with ideas such as balance, instability, accumulation, and transformation.
Digital technology allows me to work iteratively, testing limits and observing how an image reacts when it is pushed beyond control. In this sense, abstraction becomes a space where intuition and system-based logic are in constant negotiation.

Many of your works suggest grids, flows, or modular structures that appear to collapse or

Patxi Navarro | Material Shift | 2025

deform. What role does control versus loss of control play in your creative process?

Control is present at the beginning of my process, when I establish an initial structure or framework. However, I am not interested in maintaining control throughout the entire development of the work.
As the piece evolves, I deliberately allow that structure to be stressed, distorted, or partially lost. The most interesting moments often appear when the image starts to behave in unexpected ways, forcing me to respond rather than to impose decisions.
For me, the work exists precisely in that tension: between what I try to organize and what resists being fully controlled.

You describe human presence as a "residue" or trace rather than a subject. What does this absence - or dissolution of the human - represent for you in a contemporary context?

I am not interested in representing the human figure directly. Instead, I am drawn to what remains once explicit presence disappears: traces, pressure, density, or collective movement.
In a contemporary context saturated with images of identity and individuality, this dissolution of the human allows me to shift the focus toward systems, environments, and forces that operate beyond the individual. The human is still there, but indirectly, embedded in structures rather than depicted as a subject.
This absence is not a denial, but a way of speaking about our condition through what we leave behind.

Your images resist harmony and instead propose friction and perceptual tension. Why is discomfort or instability important for you as an artistic strategy?

I am not interested in images that offer immediate resolution or comfort. For me, harmony often closes the experience too quickly.
Instability and friction keep the image open, forcing the viewer to remain engaged and alert. They introduce uncertainty, which I consider essential in a time when visual consumption is fast and passive. Discomfort is not a goal in itself, but a tool to prevent the work from becoming decorative and to maintain a space for questioning rather than affirmation.

Having started your career in photography and now working exclusively with digital art, how has your understanding of "image" changed over time?

When I worked primarily in photography, the image was closely tied to observation and capture. Over time, my interest shifted from recording reality to transforming it.
Today, I understand the image less as a document and more as a construction. Photography remains the starting point, but it is no longer the end. Digital processes allow me to work with images as mutable material, open to revision, erosion, and reconfiguration.
This shift has expanded my understanding of what an image can be: not a fixed representation, but a field of operations.

You have exhibited both in gallery spaces and major contemporary art fairs. How does the context of display influence the way your work is perceived - or does it?

Inevitably influences perception. A gallery space invites slower viewing and reflection, while art fairs operate within a more accelerated and competitive environment.
However, I try to develop works that maintain their internal tension regardless of context. If a piece depends too much on its setting, it risks losing autonomy.
That said, scale, installation, and material presence become especially important in public or crowded contexts, where the work must assert itself without explanation.

Patxi Navarro | Dense Accumulation | 2025

Haejung Lee is a Korean artist whose practice explores visual narratives shaped by cultural memory, material experience, and imagination. Working across illustration, print based media, installation, and sculptural processes, she investigates how images and materials can function as spaces for reflection rather than fixed meaning. Her work is informed by Korean mythology, shamanism, and the porous boundary between life and death, approaching these elements as living structures that continue to shape contemporary experience. Through repetition, layering, and material transformation, Lee creates open situations that invite viewers to project their own interpretations, positioning art as a mode of thinking and sensing rather than purely visual expression.

Haejung Lee | Lingering Attachment | 2024

Haejung Lee | Whisper from Seoul | 2024

Morpho (Bruno Gouagout)

When do you know that a work has reached its right balance between form, meaning, and perception?

Morpho (Bruno Gouagout) | Genre!

For me, balance appears when the sculpture invites the viewer to move by themselves. It is a symbiosis between the message, the material, and the aesthetic of the work. Once these three elements are united, the sculpture comes to life. As in Socratic maieutics, it is a process that, by changing perspective, allows one to give birth to their own truth. The artwork becomes a dialogue, and balance is found in this shared journey between the work and the one who contemplates it.

You describe yourself as a metamorphic sculptor rather than an anamorphic one. What does this term change philosophically?

Being a metamorphic sculptor means embracing profound transformation. Just as a caterpillar becomes a butterfly, my works do not merely distort an image as anamorphosis does: they change in nature. For example, a weapon becomes a flower when one changes angle. Philosophically, it reminds us that by changing perspective, we transform ourselves. And like the butterfly, art invites us to rise, free... Art gives us wings.

Many of your works involve simple but profound symbols. How do you choose symbols that support multiple interpretations?

My intention is to select forms that are simple yet

Morpho (Bruno Gouagout) | L'Arme À Fleur De Peau

universal. I also choose them for their emotional and memorial charge, for what they awaken unconsciously rather than for what they explain rationally. The symbols I choose speak to our deep memory. They are the ancestors of words and writing, and they act directly on our cellular memory. A symbol evolves over time: what was once reassuring can become disturbing, and vice versa.
By confronting, opposing, or associating them, my works open a space for nuanced reflection. They invite us to go beyond what seems obvious and to question what we take for granted. I often draw a parallel between the power of symbols and that of words. For me, behind each symbol hides a library.

What role do honesty or transparency play in your artistic process?

Honesty lies in the fact that I do not hide anything; I offer a space where the observer makes their own journey. I provoke curiosity: it is up to the person to have the experience. One only knows that fire burns by approaching it. My role is to be transparent: I impose nothing, but I create the space where one can denounce, question, and resist. My artistic universe invites this first step, so that each person, through curiosity, confronts their fears, questions injustices, and finds their own path. According to Socratic maieutics, I like to think that I help bring into the world what the person who contemplates my work already carries within.

Your personal life and your experience of illness have deeply shaped your artistic path. Do you see art today as a form of resistance, healing, or dialogue?

For me, creating is existing. Faced with an early awareness of death, art becomes a way of devouring life and extracting meaning from it. It is a form of healing, because while the body can be destroyed, it also possesses a profound capacity to repair itself. It is an opening to dialogue, because speaking about death confronts us with the most fundamental existential questions. And it is not a frontal resistance, but a resilience: each work is one more step toward transforming fear into vital energy.
I deeply believe that the day we stop creating, having projects, and above all dreaming, is the day we begin to grow old — and perhaps to die. And what if the only mystery were not the after, but the intensity of the before?

Your works encourage viewers to question the idea of a single truth. Has creating metamorphic sculptures changed your own perception of reality in your personal life?

Inspired by Plato's allegory of the cave, my art seeks to transcend our perception and reveal deeper and more spiritual dimensions of reality. Along this path, I have learned that experience and the power of intention in the present are essential for discovering oneself. As the proverb says, the true explorer is not the one who travels around the world a hundred times, but the one who manages to travel around himself at least once.
For me, single-minded thinking inevitably leads to a form of extremism. It traps us, as if we were looking at the world through a keyhole. By multiplying points of view for a more holistic vision, I have expanded my field of thought and opened my field of possibilities. By transforming white into black, I have become more sensitive to shades of gray. The anamorphic process pushes me to avoid sterile debates — where the strongest seeks to impose their truth — and to enter into constructive dialogue, capable of bringing about consensus rather than sacrifice.

If entering your universe is 'the beginning of a metamorphosis,' what kind of transformation do you hope the viewer will take with them after discovering your work?

If entering my universe represents the beginning of a metamorphosis, I hope above all to provoke a deep and authentic emotion in the viewer. Indeed, the message conveyed by emotion does not go directly to the brain and the mind, but penetrates deeply into the heart. The heart thus becomes an open door to plant a small seed in the viewer's soul. Over time, if this seed is watered by its host, it may blossom, awakening a deeper awareness. It is this inner transformation that I wish to offer through my art.

Pouria Darvish (born 1990, Rasht) is a painter and visual artist based in Tehran. He began his artistic education with a diploma in Painting from the Tehran Visual School of Art and continued his studies, earning a Master's degree from the University of Science and Culture.

Darvish initially focused on figurative painting and printmaking. Gradually, drawing inspiration from the worlds of caricature and animation, he developed a unique visual language—a painterly blend of humor, vibrant color, and playful expression.

His works have been featured in numerous group exhibitions, including "Rouz-e No" (New Day) at the LajevardiFoundation, as well as galleries such as Homa Gallery and Keiman Gallery.

Pouria Darvish | Drunk Man and Athletes | 2024

Pouria Darvish | Typical Day | 2020

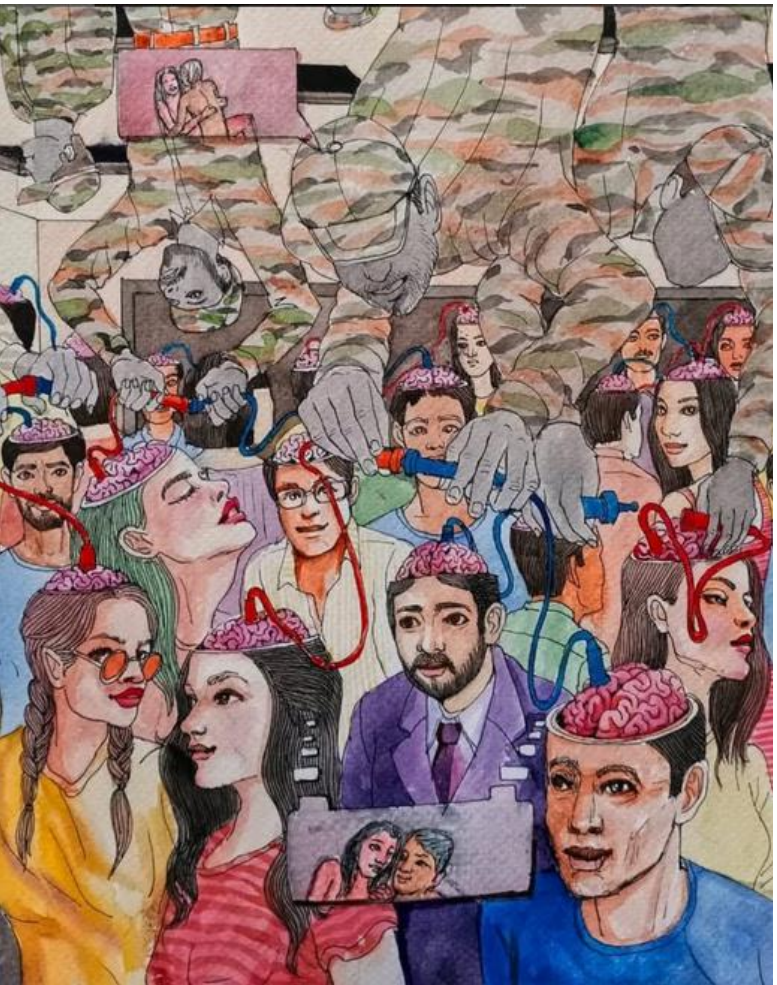
— *Interview*

Vriddhi Toolsidass

Your practice is shaped by migration between Hyderabad and Bahrain. How has this movement influenced your relationship with cultural memory and ritual?

Moving between Hyderabad and Bahrain meant that cultural practices were never entirely anchored to place. In Bahrain, many of the rituals that might have been public or communal in India became private and improvisational. They existed in kitchens, bedrooms, and storage cupboards rather than temples or community spaces. Because of this, cultural memory became something I learned through observation and repetition rather than instruction. I paid attention to how objects were handled, how fabric was folded and saved, and how certain materials were never discarded. This experience shaped my understanding of ritual as something sustained quietly over time. In my practice, I return to these small, persistent gestures. I am interested in how memory survives through care, through the continued use of materials, and through practices that adapt rather than disappear when displaced.

Vriddhi Toolsidass | Mission Mindconnect



You describe textiles as operational vessels of labor, time, and devotion. When did you begin to see fabric as a system rather than a surface?

This shift happened when I began working closely with textiles that already had a life before me. Handling worn saris and hand-printed cloth made it impossible to ignore the layers of labor embedded in them. I became aware of how much time is required not just to make fabric, but to maintain it. Washing, drying, folding, storing, repairing, and repurposing are ongoing acts of care. Fabric organizes daily routines and carries physical traces of these interactions. Seeing this changed how I approached design. Cloth was no longer a neutral surface to decorate but a system that held history, labor, and devotion. I began to work in dialogue with the material, allowing its constraints and rhythms to guide the process rather than imposing a fixed visual outcome.

Can you explain your Ritual Systems Methodology? How does it guide your artistic decision-making across different media?

Ritual Systems Methodology is rooted in the idea that meaning emerges through repeated action over time. Instead of starting with a finished image or object, I begin with a set of gestures such as printing a block repeatedly, stitching by hand, or inviting others to participate in the making. These gestures become the structure of the work. The methodology helps me make decisions by asking how labor is distributed, how time is experienced, and how care is enacted throughout the process. When working across different media, I return to these same principles. Whether I am creating an installation, a textile, or a participatory workshop, the focus remains on accumulation, presence, and relational exchange. The work is shaped slowly through use and interaction rather than completion.

In The Slow Thread Collection, slowness is positioned as both an aesthetic and an ethical stance. Why is slowness a form of resistance today?

Slowness resists contemporary systems that equate value with speed, productivity, and scalability. In many design and production environments, speed becomes a way to disconnect objects from the labor and resources behind them. In The Slow Thread Collection, slowness keeps labor visible. Each piece requires sustained attention and cannot be rushed without altering its meaning. Slowness also resists disposability. It encourages viewers to spend time with the work and to consider the conditions under which it was made. Choosing to work slowly is an ethical decision. It prioritizes care, accountability, and respect for materials and people involved in the process. In this way, slowness becomes a refusal to participate in extractive systems of making.

Your textiles carry visible traces of the hand such as imperfections, repetitions, and variations. What do these marks communicate that industrial perfection cannot?

These marks communicate time, effort, and decision-making. They show where the body adjusted, where a gesture was repeated, and where fatigue or care shaped the outcome. Industrial perfection aims to erase these signs in favor of uniformity and control. In contrast, variation acknowledges the presence of the maker and the reality of human labor. For me, these traces are not mistakes but records of process. They allow the viewer to sense how the work unfolded and to recognize making as an ongoing, embodied act rather than a flawless result.

As someone trained in fine art, UI UX, and strategic design, how do you navigate the tension between human-centered design and systems of surveillance?

My training in UI UX and strategic design exposed me to how human-centered frameworks often rely on data collection and behavioral optimization. While these systems claim to prioritize users, they frequently reduce people to patterns and metrics. In my art practice, I intentionally work against this logic. I design experiences that cannot be easily measured or tracked. Participation is voluntary, outcomes are open-ended, and attention is not directed toward a single goal. This approach allows me to reclaim human-centeredness as something grounded in consent, presence, and care. The tension between these fields continues to shape my practice and keeps me questioning how power operates within designed systems.

How do you imagine viewers physically and emotionally engaging with your installations and what kind of awareness do you hope they leave with?

I imagine viewers engaging with my installations slowly and attentively. I want them to notice weight, texture, and proximity, and to become aware of how their bodies move through the space. Many of my works encourage touch or close observation, which creates a sense of intimacy and responsibility rather than distance or passive viewing. The installations are not meant to be consumed quickly. They ask for patience and presence.

Emotionally, I hope the work fosters care rather than spectacle. I want viewers to feel a quiet attentiveness toward the materials and the labor embedded within them. Textiles, film, and repeated gestures make visible the time, devotion, and human effort that are often hidden within everyday objects. Ideally, viewers leave with a heightened awareness of how materials carry histories of labor and belief, and how these histories are shaped by larger systems of production and circulation.

I also hope the work prompts viewers to reflect on their own pace and habits of looking. By slowing down their movement and attention, the installations create space to question how power operates within designed systems, including who is made visible, whose labor is overlooked, and how care can exist within structures that often prioritize efficiency and control.

Marydeer is an illustrator and digital artist based in Saint Petersburg, born in 1992. She works across digital and physical formats, exhibiting illustrations and animation internationally, as well as a small number of acrylic paintings locally.

Project Statement
Through illustration and animation, I explore imagination, movement, and everyday observations. Influenced by street art, my practice moves between digital and physical processes, focusing on energy, emotion, and play.

Marydeer | Ducky Duck & the Crocs Croxy

Marydeer | Spirit's Ember

Valeriia Popova

Many of your works reinterpret globally recognizable cultural icons. How do you decide when an image becomes your image rather than a reference?

I don't really "decide" in a technical way — it just evolves. Ideas simmer in my head while I'm still finishing another piece. Inspiration can come from music, classic films, or even an old magazine image that just won't leave me alone.
It feels like a slow puzzle assembling itself in my imagination. When the picture finally becomes clear, I start sketching and refining until it no longer feels like a reference but like my own vision — usually charged with humor, sarcasm, or that big, dream-like energy I love.

Valeriia Popova | Red Dot Miami

Your characters often project confidence and control. How important is the idea of the female gaze in your work?

I don't really think about my work through a strict gender lens. What attracts me is confidence, attitude, and power. In "We Can Do It (Reimagined)" I wanted a woman who isn't just strong — she's composed, stylish, and completely in control of her world.
How I portray a figure always depends on the idea. Sometimes I elevate feminine elegance as power; other times I lean into a more traditionally masculine sense of control. It's not about picking a side — it's about what the artwork demands.
At the end of the day, power for me isn't gendered — it's an energy.

Your work balances glamour with subtle irony. How does humor function in your visual storytelling?

Humor is my secret ingredient. Glamour pulls you in, but irony keeps you thinking. In "We Can Do It (Reimagined)" the luxury Birkin bag in Rosie's raised fist is intentionally playful — it blends historic grit with modern aspiration.

Valeriia Popova | We Can Do It (Reimagined) | 2025

I like that moment when a viewer first thinks, "Wow, that's beautiful," and then realizes, "Wait... that's actually funny." That tension is where my storytelling lives.

What emotional reaction do you hope viewers experience first — attraction, nostalgia, or confrontation?

A smile. Always. If people smile or smirk first, I know I've connected with them. After that, they might feel nostalgia, attraction, or even start questioning what they see — but humor is the door I want them to walk through.

Working in pop art today means existing in an image-saturated world. How do you keep your work from becoming just another "beautiful image"?

In an image-saturated world, I'm very aware that beauty alone isn't enough. I care a lot about visuals — color, composition, mood, and that immediate impact — but I never stop there.
Each painting begins with an idea that excites me, whether it's the confidence and ambition in "We Can Do It (Reimagined)" or the emotional stillness in "Curtain Call." I work at the intersection of strong visuals, clear ideas, and raw energy. That balance is what makes the work feel meaningful rather than just decorative.

Miami has a very distinct visual and cultural energy. In what ways has living there reshaped your artistic voice?

Miami is a city of contrasts — relaxed yet ambitious, sun-soaked yet fashion-driven. That duality definitely feeds my work.
Art Basel Miami was a huge turning point for me before becoming a full-time artist. Seeing that level of creativity made me believe I could truly exist in that world — and push my art further.

Many of your paintings feel cinematic, almost paused mid-scene. Do you imagine narratives before you paint, or do they emerge during the process?

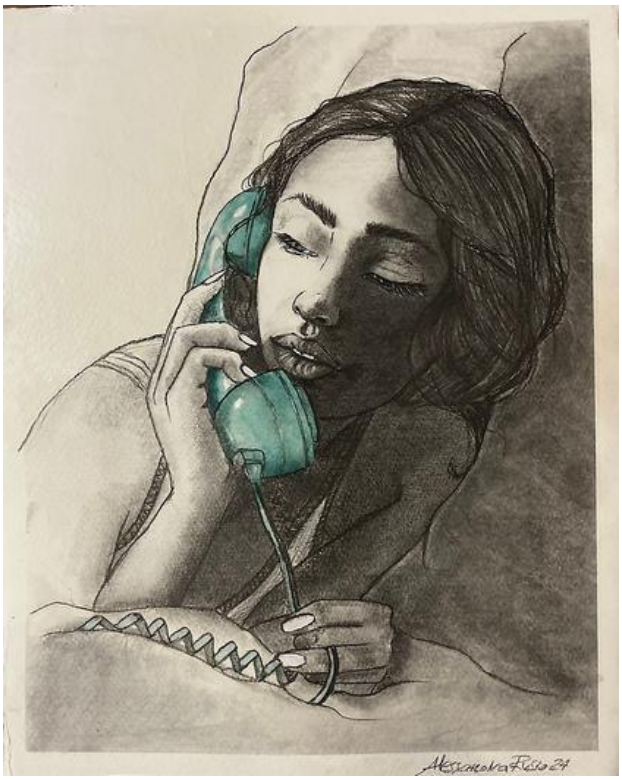
The story usually comes first. With "Curtain Call," I imagined that exact moment after a performance — when the applause fades and the spotlight softens, revealing something more honest beneath the persona of an icon like Elvis Presley.
I build the scene in my head like a film director before I ever touch the canvas. By the time I start painting, the narrative is already alive — I'm just bringing it into the physical world.

Valeriia Popova | Curtain Call | 2025

Alessandra Russo

Can you tell us about your transition from architecture to visual art? What inspired you to take that step?

I worked for many years in architectural design, with satisfaction and passion. I consider architecture to be art, nourished by the same sources that lead to the creation of paintings, music or literary texts: passion, inspiration and technique.
However, the transition from this to painting and illustration was not so immediate, even though I had continued to nurture my love for the visual arts.
When I moved from my hometown of Milan to Ferrara, I recalibrated my needs and realised that, in addition to architecture, what really made me happy was creating. I started picking up pencils and brushes again and decided to follow my inner flame.



Alessandra Russo | Analogica

How did you background in architecture influence your current artistic pratice?

The design greatly influenced my initial choice of materials with which to express myself.
I initially chose to use ink, a legacy of my previous occupation, creating portraits and characters inspired by both references and my imagination, using lines, hatching and smudges.
I still love both drawing and painting with ink, although since I devoted myself to visual art, landscapes and architecture have not been my primary focus.

You often work with watercolor, ink and soft pastels. What draws you to these materials, and how do you choose which to use for a given piece?

During art school, before choosing which university to attend, I came into contact with some of these techniques. When I decided to make art my profession, the first technique I used was ink, which was most familiar to me.
Since I am basically self-taught, I was intrigued by watercolour and its many uses, so I started watching tutorials and videos, and finally enrolled in a short course where I became familiar with the technique and tools.
Dry pastels were an approach I felt I had to try because of the highly pictorial results, similar to oil paintings.
I took several courses with Luce Tedde, a distinguished artist and teacher, who generously shared her knowledge of this magnificent painting method.
If I have to choose between the different styles, my first choice is watercolour, because after years of study, it is the one I know best, even technically; but if I want more realistic results, I cannot ignore soft pastels. Of course, in the case of a commission, it is the person who wants my painting who decides which technique appeals to them most.

Your art seems to fa us heavily on portraiture. What is it about faces and people captivates you?

It's true. Portraits have always fascinated me greatly. I've always enjoyed observing people, in an artistic and even somewhat sociological sense. I find them fascinating and complex. I didn't deliberately choose to paint portraits, but

Alessandra Russo | Perdita

doing so gives me a lot of motivation and peace.
I have a boundless passion for anatomy and its study applied to art. I follow online sessions of live poses with professional models, but it is the face that fascinates me the most.
The different expressions, the asymmetrical features, the colour of the complexion and, above all, the eyes lead me to wonder about the person's life. Their emotions and attitudes are a puzzle to be deciphered, and I love trying to do so.

You mentioned the realism is not your goal-can you tell more about your artistic philosophy and what you try express in your portraits?

Realism is too often used as a “lanterna per le lucciole” (lantern for fireflies), an Italian phrase that means showing off the best to attract without having enough to offer.
This type of realism does not interest me. If a portrait has to be overly realistic, then I believe that the art of photography can offer much more heart and feeling.
I have done realistic portraits in charcoal and, sometimes, in watercolour, but it is more of an exercise in style, sometimes required.
With watercolour and ink, but also with soft pastels, you can touch and capture the essence of a person, even if the portrait will always differ from the original, the artist is less constrained in expressing themselves freely. I try to express how I see and perceive the subject, nothing more. I do not seek exact morphological correspondence but rather what a face or body expresses, what comes to me from it, which I translate with water and colours.

How do you self-paints differ in approach or feeling from portraits of others?

I have never portrayed myself. I don't know if it's because I'm shy, because I don't see the need to, or because I still feel too immature to do so.
I am more interested in other people's faces, perhaps simply because I already know my own! Joking aside, I am a very introspective person and I find myself debating about myself and how I am now compared to the past, the experiences I have chosen compared to those I would have liked. I think it may be because I'm not interested in it right now, I feel that I'm still changing and, although many artists portray themselves on several occasions, I find a little bit of myself - even physically - in the portraits that come from my imagination.

What role does imagination play in your work, especially when creating characters from your mind?

When you create characters from scratch, imagination is one of the forces that catalyses all other characteristics.
I also draw on other people's aesthetics, especially from people I admire as artists, from all eras and fields.
I really enjoy combining different aspects of my personality. For example, I might be interested in painting with a single colour, so I have to try to create something that is not too complicated, because I am practising understanding that colour.
I love cinema and literature, so sometimes quotes inspire my paintings.. I am also very interested in dark fantasy: I love Stephen King's novels and short stories, the Gothic style and creatures of the night. Without imagination, all my passions would remain merely exercises in fair copying, but by reinventing and introducing what I am interested in communicating at that moment, I am able to create a character with a story, even without being a comic or an illustrated book.

Alessandra Russo | Vanessa

Katherine Clara

I am currently 24 and based in Michigan, U.S.A.. My art practice first began as a photographer at the age of 13. I was looking for new techniques to incorporate into my photography when I found collage. As a child I made a couple collages in art class like anyone else but what I saw when I began looking at other collage work really changed my view of the medium. I began experimenting with it and quickly fell in love. After making a few analog pieces I shifted to digital collage and never looked back. I've been making collage pieces for six years now and I definitely think it will be a permanent fixture in my artwork. I am very inspired by vintage materials and use them throughout my work. I really enjoy working with advertisements from the 1940's through the 1980's.

Katherine Young |Suit in Bloom | 2026

Katherine Young | City Smoke | 2026

Dave Behm

Dave Behm | Sliced | 2025

I'd always been curious about leaning more into the artistic side of my personal work. Funny thing is, I'd had an iPad for years and barely touched it for drawing. Then one day I watched a coworker casually creating these beautiful pieces for her project, and it lit a spark. I picked up my iPad that night and just started drawing, I was hooked.

You spent many years working in graphic design. At what point did you feel the need to move toward a more personal artistic practice?

Dave Behm | Into the wild Lion | 2026

How did drawing on the iPad change your relationship with the creative process compared to traditional design work?

The iPad took away a lot of the friction. It let me stay in the moment longer. I could experiment, follow instincts, and see where things went instead of worrying about strategy. In my design work, I'm usually thinking about outcomes, constraints, and objectives. Drawing this way shifted my relationship with creativity from solving problems to simply discovering things as the piece develops.

Your works often feature fruit, animals, and botanical elements. What draws you to these quiet, everyday subjects?

It's funny, I never pictured myself drawing this kind of work. I used to want to draw skulls and

Dave Behm | Into the wild Tiger | 2026

gritty, grungy stuff. Then I took a Procreate class by Freya.art, and the very first project was… an apple. I honestly surprised myself with how it turned out and how relaxing it felt to draw. The class focused on nature and fruit, and something about it just clicked. It felt natural in a way I didn't expect.

Many of your compositions feel calm, balanced, and timeless. Is this an intentional emotional goal when you start a new piece?

Yes, very much so. I'm drawn to how a piece makes you feel when you look at it. It can inspire you, give you hope, make you happy, or even a little sad. When I'm drawing, I'm chasing that same feeling. It's incredibly therapeutic for me.

Your art translates naturally into home décor and lifestyle products. Do you think about functionality or interiors while creating, or does that come later?

Honestly, both. I'm a big fan of home remodeling and decorating shows, and sometimes I'll see certain colors, styles, or products and the ideas just start flowing. Other times, a piece comes from a feeling or a mood I'm in, and I'll think, "Oh yeah, that would make a great kitchen print," or "That would look perfect on a lampshade or as bathroom wallpaper."

How has your background in branding and commercial design influenced the way you approach composition and detail in your art?

Working at agencies really trained my eye to care about the small details and make intentional choices. Even when a piece feels loose or organic, there's usually some structure holding it together. I still think about things like hierarchy, rhythm, and negative space, which all come from years of branding work. The difference now is that those rules are there to support the feeling, not lead it. And with my personal work, I get to be both the client and the agency, so I'm seeing each piece from both sides.

What do you hope viewers feel when they spend time with your work in their homes or everyday spaces?

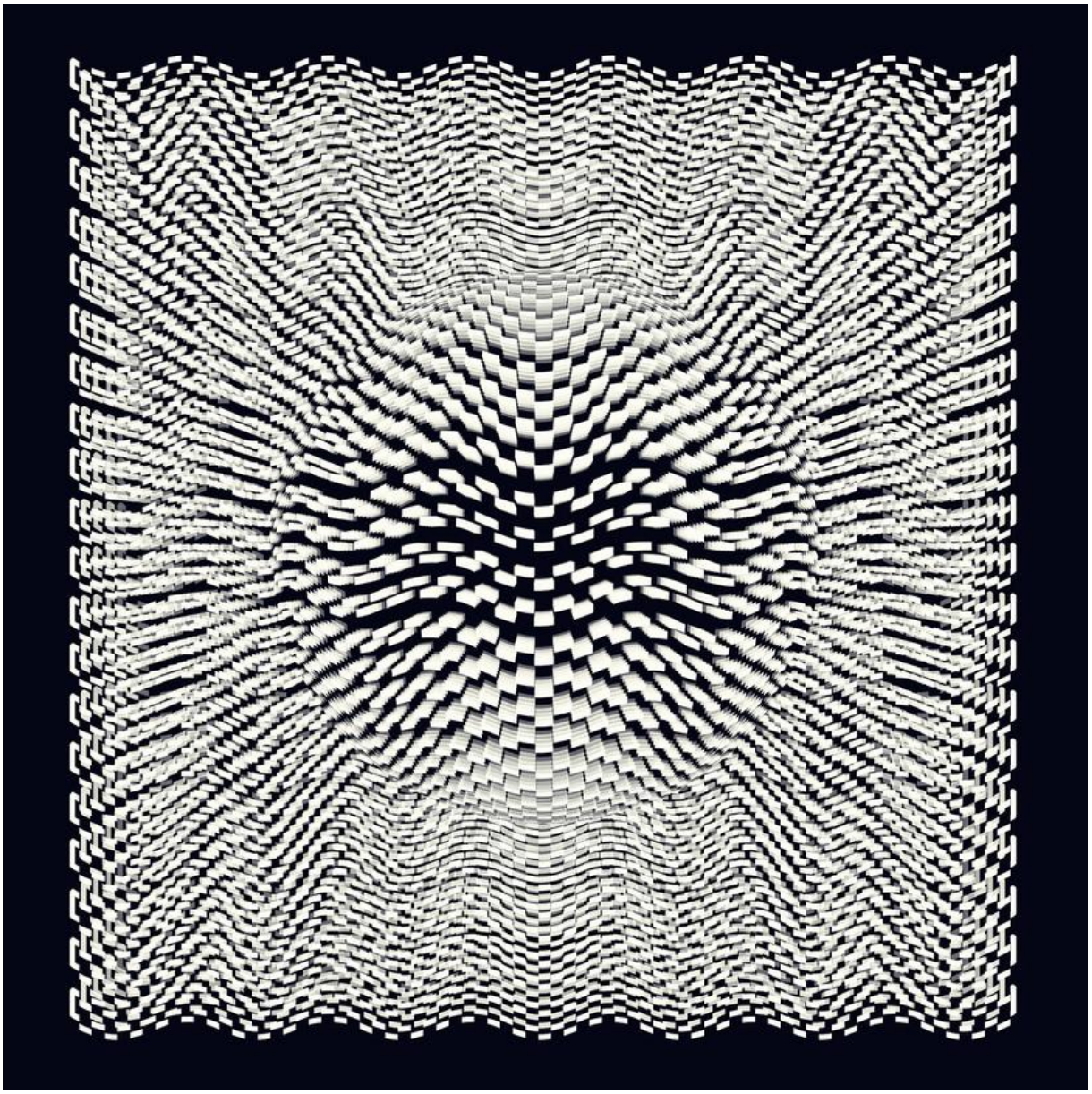
My tagline is "Find Calm and Live Boldly," and it reflects how I try to approach life. We all face challenges and obstacles, and staying calm helps create the confidence to move through them. At the same time, I believe in living fully and pushing ourselves to be the best we can be.

Dave Behm | Into the wild Panther | 2026

Luciano Caggianello born in Siena, Italy, is an artist and designer who began his activity interacting with different professional fields: Advertising, Illustration, Graphics and Design (industrial and car-design). At the same time he embarked on a path of artistic research which, after initial and assiduous frequentations at the Academy as well as studies and ateliers of Turin artists, led him to evolve various representative and visual themes, allowing him to also validate an articulated national and international exhibition itinerary.
He is also accompanied, in this path, by the publication of some books (“Intermediario Immateriale” 2003, “Parole altrove” 2014, “Aporia e Metamorfosi dell’Arte” 2019, “Fenomenologia del Quotidiano 2020, “Pubblicità .jPig” 2021)which serve as an aid to reflection and deepening of one's conceptual and philosophical research.
In recent years, his recognition has essentially become a work of prevalent perceptual and conceptual synthesis that re-elaborates all the didactic, cultural and intellectual interactions also coming from his various training fields (from Applied Industrial Physics, to Architecture, to the Visual). Furthermore, this approach, by identifying the artistic objective of a thematic-conceptual planning and an experimentation inserted between concrete "poverty" and digital art, turns out to be much more related and relevant to concepts of presentation than of representation.
He lives and works in Turin, Italy.

Project Statement
The project narrates, through geometries and images, our contemporary world and the fervent daily life through a narrative of concepts.

Luciano Caggianello | Geometric Undulation



Luciano Caggianello | Afghan Dog - Matist

Ryta Slobodiana

Your work often speaks about "brightness as a state of being." When did this idea first become central to your artistic practice?

The concept of brightness as a state of being emerged gradually, during a period of both personal and societal uncertainty. It is not merely a visual or decorative choice, but a conscious assertion of clarity and emotional presence. Brightness in my work functions as a conceptual anchor — guiding composition, color, and emotional tone. It allows me to engage with fragility and resilience simultaneously, highlighting the coexistence of light and shadow. This approach became central when I recognized that my paintings could serve as spaces for reflection, offering both myself and viewers a sense of presence and attentive awareness, even amid chaos or instability. Over time, this idea has shaped not only my visual language but also the thematic direction of my entire practice.

Ryta Slobodiana | Garden Owl | 2025

Owls are recurring figures in your paintings. What personal or symbolic meaning do they hold for you?

Owls in my work operate on multiple conceptual levels. They symbolize harmony, wisdom, and inner strength, reflecting the relationship between humans and nature. I am particularly drawn to their ability to observe quietly, to remain fully present in darkness, and to navigate complexity without haste. In my paintings, owls are not merely illustrative; they are psychological presences that embody attentive awareness, memory, and the cumulative experience of perception. Conceptually, they encourage viewers to slow down, reflect, and engage with the subtle rhythms of life. Within a broader cultural context, this recurring motif resonates with contemporary concerns about balance, mindfulness, and conscious engagement, extending its relevance beyond personal narrative to shared human experience.

Many of your works are highly detailed and layered. How do you know when a painting is complete?

The completion of a painting is determined by internal coherence rather than external deadlines or external feedback. Each layer, gesture, and mark must align conceptually, structurally, and emotionally. I often spend weeks refining textures, adjusting tonal relationships, and negotiating the interplay of

Ryta Slobodiana | Folk Owl Couple | 2025

foreground and background elements. A painting feels complete when it can sustain its presence independently — when nothing more is required to clarify its intent or emotional resonance. This approach is rooted in both intuition and disciplined observation, and it reflects my belief that a finished work should be capable of communicating directly with the viewer without intermediary explanation.

As a self-taught artist, how did you develop your visual language and confidence in your own style?

Being self-taught provided both freedom and responsibility. Without formal constraints, I could experiment with form, color, and composition, yet I had to develop rigorous self-discipline and critical assessment. My visual language evolved through iterative practice: constant observation, sketching, and reflective engagement with my own work. Confidence emerged not from external validation, but from sustained dedication and from seeing my visual concepts consistently materialize on canvas. Over time, I recognized that originality is not invented but uncovered — a process of uncovering patterns, motifs, and emotional truths that are uniquely my own.

You mention trusting emotion over control. Can you describe a moment when intuition completely guided a painting?

Intuition often serves as the guiding principle during the earliest stages of a painting. One memorable work began without a pre-conceived composition — only a feeling, a rhythm, and a color palette. I allowed gestures to emerge spontaneously, responding only to what felt necessary in the moment. The resulting painting achieved a balance and coherence that could not have been planned or imposed. Experiences like this reaffirm my belief that intuition, when anchored in experience and technical skill, can lead to deeper authenticity than deliberate control alone.

How do you want viewers to feel when they spend time with your work — especially during slow, attentive viewing?

I aim for viewers to experience a state of attentive presence. My paintings invite prolonged engagement, allowing individuals to connect with subtle textures, color harmonies, and layered meanings. Ideally, viewers feel a pause from external pressures, entering a space that encourages introspection, reflection, and a deeper awareness of perception itself. The emotional impact is subtle, often quiet, but intended to resonate long after the initial encounter. This approach aligns with my belief that art functions as both an aesthetic and reflective space, bridging personal experience and collective contemplation.

How have exhibitions and awards in recent years affected your artistic confidence or direction?

Exhibitions and recognition have affirmed the broader relevance of my work and reinforced my commitment to depth and conceptual clarity. Being selected and awarded demonstrates that my paintings resonate beyond personal contexts and hold significance within contemporary artistic discourse. This professional acknowledgment has strengthened my responsibility to maintain integrity and originality, guiding the evolution of my practice while ensuring that each work continues to reflect meaningful engagement with both aesthetic and cultural themes.

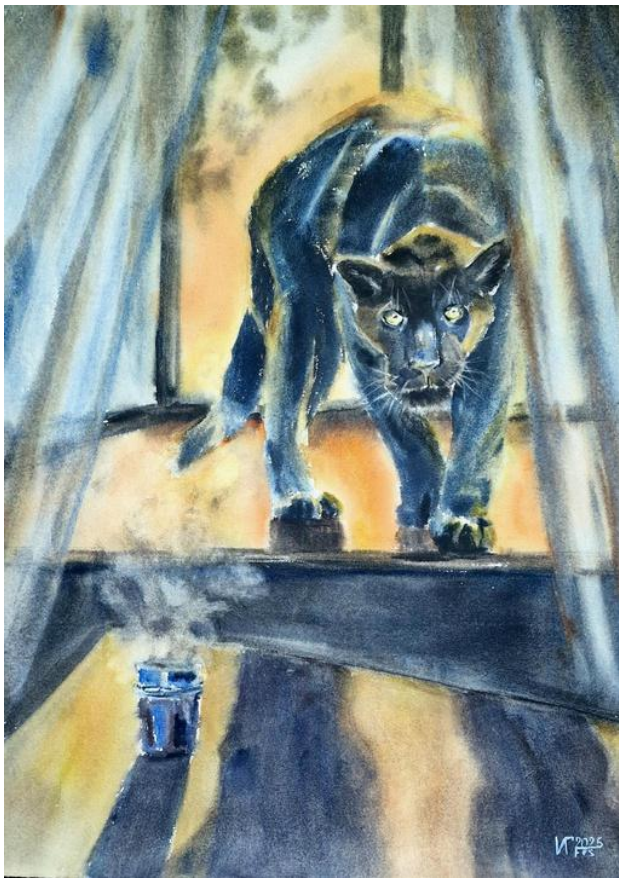
Ryta Slobodiana | Crazy Owl | 2024

Mariam Anwar Al Amin, a UAE born emerging digital artist in Pakistan, currently pursuing arts as a larger part of her career and her life to be more communicative with her portraits to the audience.

Mariam Anwar | Saluer

Mariam Anwar | A Yellow Friend

Iryna Grytsenko



Iryna Grytsenko | Excitement | 2025

Your background is in architecture. How does architectural thinking influence the way you construct emotional narratives in your watercolor works?

My architectural education taught me to think in terms of structure and storytelling. In architecture, a building is always created as a narrative: from the foundation to the roof, from an idea to a form, from the inner meaning to the outer shape.
In my works, I do the same, but instead of constructing buildings, I construct emotional spaces.

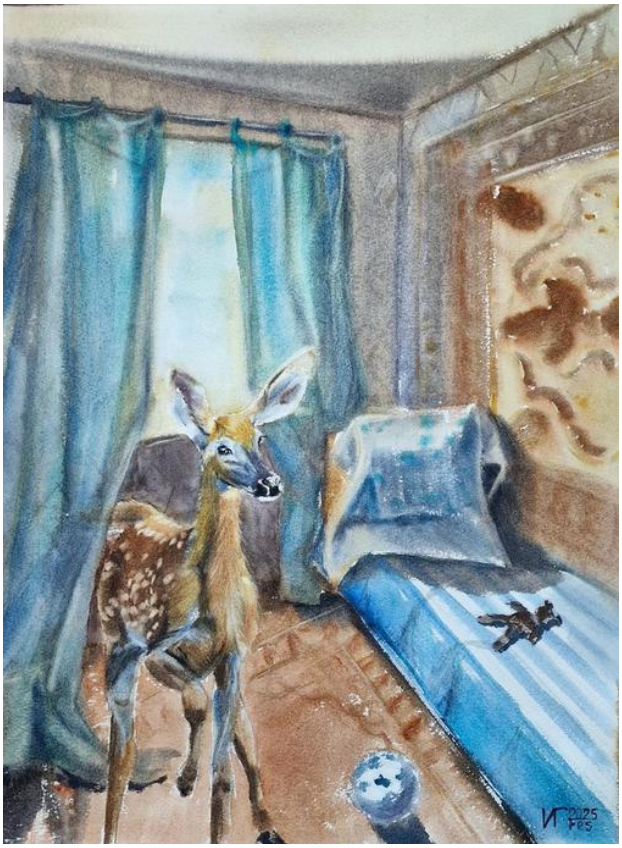
Iryna Grytsenko | Withdrawal | 2025

Each painting is not just an image, but a scene with its own logic, tension, and silence. And a series is like an architectural project for me: individual works are like rooms, and together they form a unified emotional space.
Architectural thinking helps me keep a balance between intuition and structure, between feeling and composition. Even the most fragile emotions need a "framework" to be heard.

In the series "States", animals appear in interiors that are foreign to them. What was the first emotional impulse that led you to this visual decision?

This decision was born from my own inner feeling. Even though I have been living in Morocco for sixteen years, I still often feel not entirely in my place, not fully in my natural environment.
These animals are metaphors for my inner states. They reflect what I experience while living in another culture and another space: anxiety, vulnerability, sadness, isolation, doubt.
But despite all of this, there is always hope present in these works.

Watercolor is often associated with fragility and unpredictability. How does this medium help you speak about vulnerability and inner tension?



Iryna Grytsenko | Vulnerability | 2025

Watercolor itself is a fragile and unpredictable medium, and working in the wet-on-wet technique makes this even stronger. Control becomes almost an illusion.
If you wait a little too long, the paint stops flowing.
If you rush, everything spreads uncontrollably.
This constant tension between patience and risk feels very close to human emotional experience. There is adrenaline, vulnerability, and acceptance that not everything depends on you. This is how the theme of fragility and inner tension naturally appears in my work.

Many of your interiors feel quiet, almost suspended in time. What role does silence play in your artistic language?

Perhaps I do not consciously try to paint silence, but it appears in my works again and again. I think it has become part of my artistic signature.
Silence gives space to hear oneself, to slow down and enter a deeper inner dialogue. In my artistic language, silence is a place where emotions do not shout but exist quietly and deeply.

Living and working in Fez, particularly near the medina, how does this environment shape your sense of space, rhythm, and symbolism?

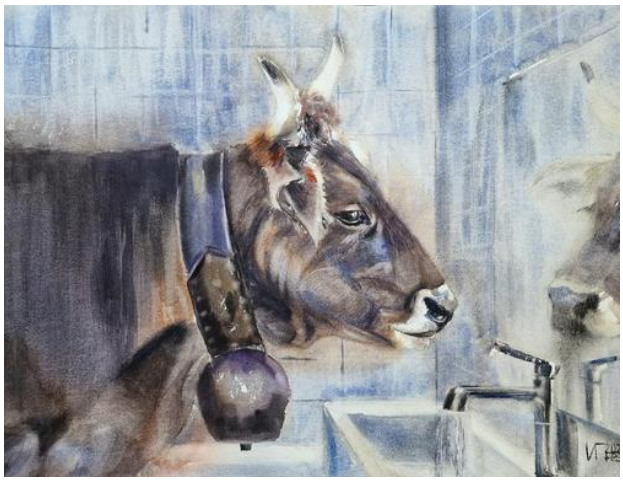
I have created many works inspired by the medina of Fez. For me, it is an almost magical place, especially its non-touristic areas: quiet streets, unrestored facades, and a strong sense of time.
The medina is about twelve centuries old, and you can truly feel the power of history there. This environment has shaped the intimacy of my works, their sense of enclosure, inner concentration, and symbolism.

Animals in your works seem calm, alert, or introspective rather than dramatic. How do you choose which animal corresponds to each emotional state?

This is my favorite question. I choose each animal with great care and sensitivity.
I always look at its character, behavior, and energy.
For example, a fawn symbolizes fragility, vulnerability, and constant alertness.
A cow, for me, carries a deep, almost human sadness. Her large eyes look straight into the heart.
And the horse is especially personal. When I was a child, I had a dream where a horse stood in a hallway between the street and the house, unable to decide where to go. This image stayed with me forever, and in the series States it became a perfect symbol of doubt and inner choice.

What do you hope remains with the viewer after spending time with these works: a specific emotion, a memory, or simply a pause?

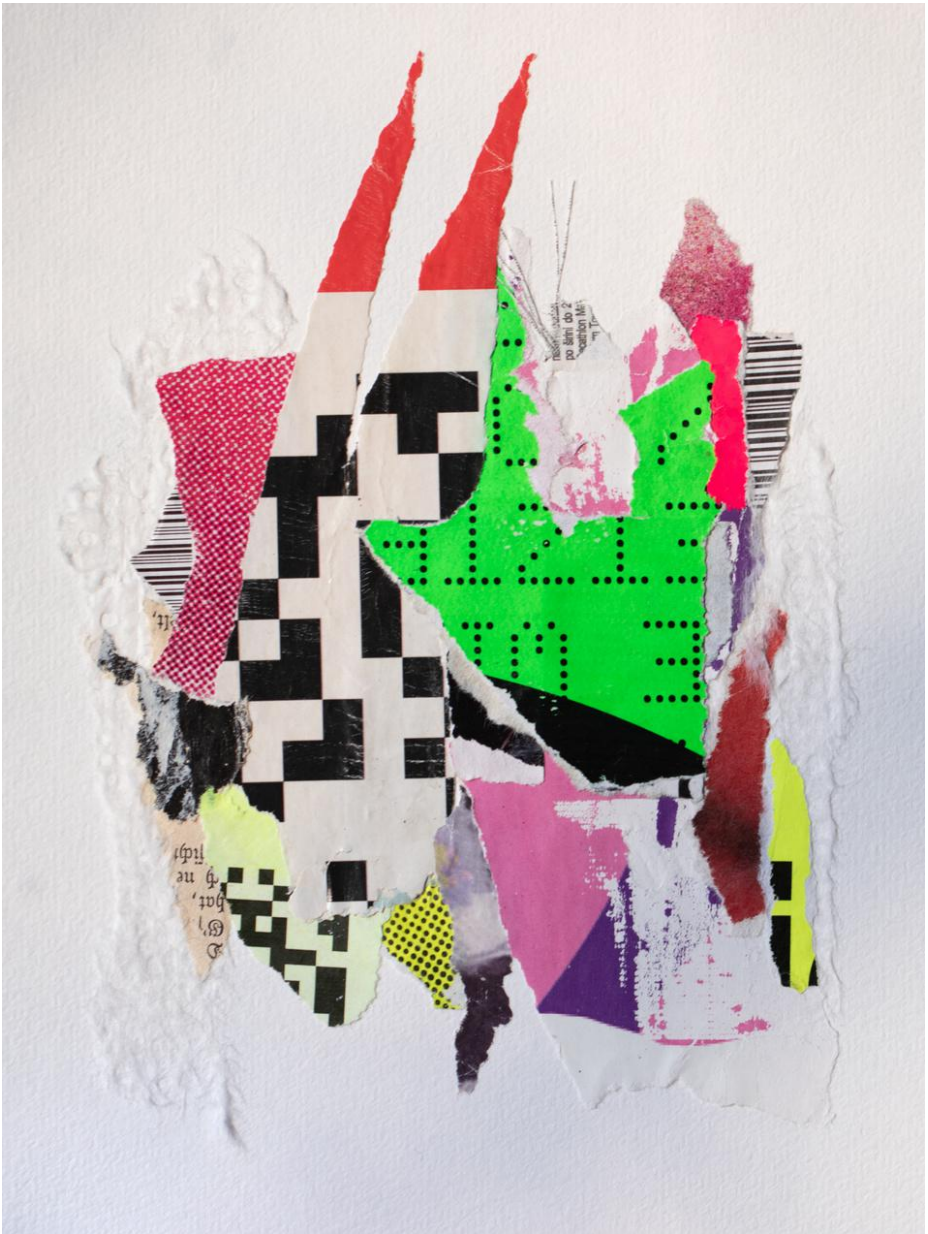
I would like each viewer to find something personal in my works.
Someone may recall their own memories, someone may smile, and someone may feel a slight discomfort or tension.
For example, someone might look at the cow and jokingly say they expected to see someone else in the reflection, but it is still the cow.
Another person might see a large animal confined in a very small space and feel an inner unease.
Any reaction is valuable to me. If a work creates a feeling, it means it is alive.



Iryna Grytsenko | Sadness | 2025

Lola Giancarelli (Buenos Aires, Argentina) is a visual artist, performer, and cultural producer based in Berlin. Trained in visual arts, dance, and theater, she develops an interdisciplinary practice that engages materiality, the body, and gesture as cognitive languages—forms through which thinking is shaped and expressed.
Her current work centers on collage as a symbolic and political reconstruction of memory. She works with found materials, archival documents, and urban fragments, stitching, assembling, and transforming them to weave connections across geographies, temporalities, and narratives. In her latest series, posters collected from Berlin's streets become layered traces of a city constantly dissolving and recomposing itself through artistic intervention.
Giancarelli has participated in collective exhibitions in Berlin, Romania, and Barcelona. She has collaborated in the organization of art fairs such as HAAM (Hamburg) and BAAM (Berlin), and has developed experimental, pedagogical, and community-based projects across Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, Spain, and Germany. Her practice approaches art as an act of resistance, dialogue, and transformation—an ongoing effort to reclaim memory, territory, and collective agency.

Project Statement
What draws me to artistic practice is its capacity to delve into abstract areas of reality and to uncover the forces operating beneath the surface image of the world. My work moves between composition and decomposition, precision and imprecision, appearance and disappearance. I am interested in working within this unstable territory where the material meets the symbolic, and where each gesture constructs a poetic and political possibility.
My current practice focuses on collage as a primary language: a form of visual archaeology in which paper—collected, found, or torn from the urban landscape—becomes embodied memory. I intervene in these materials through stitching, gluing, layering, and the combination of techniques. The thread that joins the fragments functions as a vital line, sustaining the image. In my work, stain and delicacy coexist, as do the discarded and the precise, construction and disassembly. Each piece emerges as a constellation of layers and textures that register time, the intimate, and the collective.
Works 1, 2, and 3 are part of Beauty, a series of three collages created from posters collected on the streets of Berlin. The three pieces were produced simultaneously, establishing a compositional and emotional connection grounded in dialogue between their parts.
Within this framework, the series engages with the notion of the archive as an open structure—not as a device that preserves only what has been, but as a space that enables readings and meanings yet to come. In dialogue with the ideas of Jacques Derrida, I understand collage as a practice of active memory, oriented both toward preservation and toward projection into the future.



Lola Giancarelli | Row | 2026 | Photo by Óscar Barbosa / @studiobluebarbosa

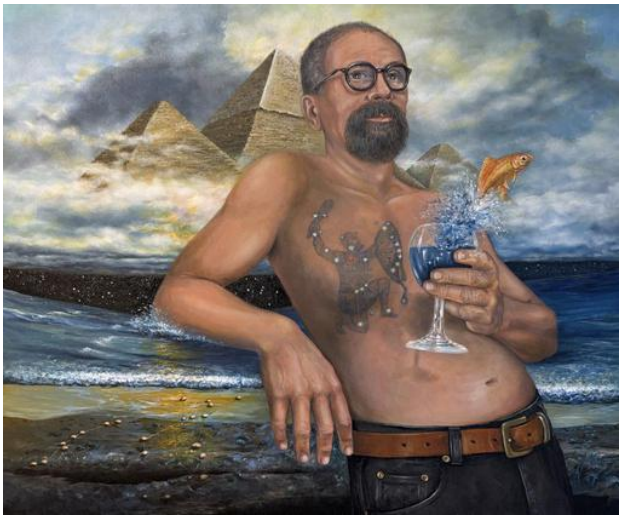
Lola Giancarelli | Central Rose | 2026 | Photo by Óscar Barbosa / @studiobluebarbosa

Lola Giancarelli | Semantics | 2026 | Photo by Óscar Barbosa / @studiobluebarbosa

Alex Jobbagy

Your artistic journey began very early, with your first solo exhibition at the age of 13. How did that early experience shape your understanding of art and your decision to return to fine art later in life?

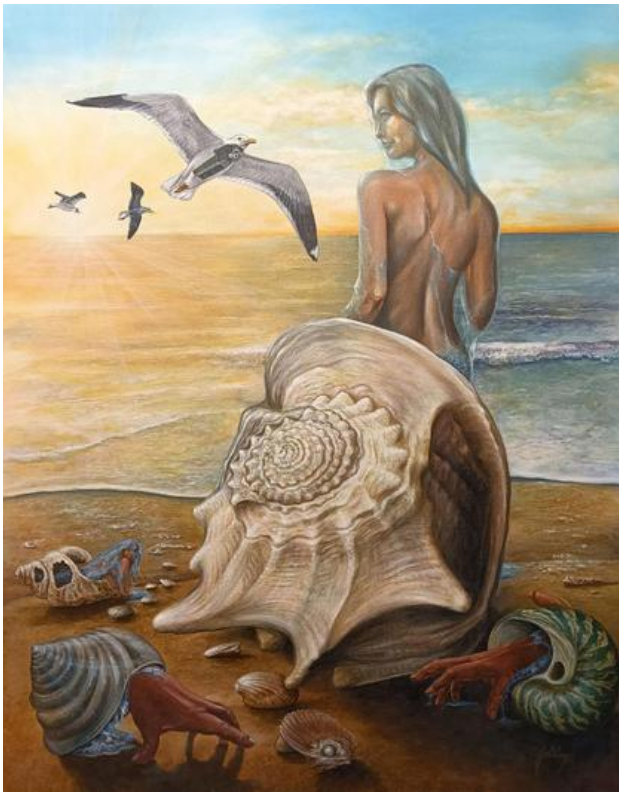
Having my first solo exhibition at such a young age gave me an early sense of art as a serious form of inquiry and communication, not simply self-expression. At the same time, that experience came before I had the tools or life experience to fully understand its significance. Returning to fine art later in life has allowed me to re-engage with that early impulse from a more grounded, intentional place - bringing with it greater clarity, patience, and depth.



Alex Jobbagy | Orion'S Belt | 2025

You spent many years working in commercial graphic design and marketing, even earning an MBA. How has this background influenced your current artistic practice, if at all?

Years spent in graphic design, marketing, and business sharpened my understanding of visual language and systems of communication. Returning to fine art has been a deliberate shift away from utility and persuasion toward openness and ambiguity, but that professional background still informs my sensitivity to form, composition, and context.



Alex Jobbagy | Dawn Of Awakening | 2025

Having been born in Transylvania and later relocating to Australia, how do ideas of displacement, migration, and identity inform your work today?

Relocating from my country of birth has deeply influenced how I understand identity and place. Experiences of migration and displacement inform my work by shaping the way I observe, remember, and relate to my surroundings. These experiences continue to guide my interest in awareness, perception, and the emotional dimensions of belonging.

Surrealism and symbolism play a central role in your visual language. What draws you to these movements as tools for exploring contemporary social and political realities?

I'm drawn to surrealism and symbolism because they allow me to address social and political realities that are difficult - or sometimes impossible - to speak about directly. These visual languages create distance and ambiguity, making space for complex, sensitive, or contested issues to surface without being reduced to illustration or commentary. Through metaphor and displacement, the work can approach these subjects obliquely, inviting reflection rather than prescription.

Many of your works feature the human body merging with natural elements - hands becoming landscapes, figures dissolving into organic forms. What does this fusion represent for you?

My work explores the fragile tension between the individual and the world - the delicate balance between the harmony of nature and the artificial rhythms of modern life. While we are inherently part of nature, this connection is often obscured by the demands and routines of contemporary society, where conformity and busyness dominate. Through the fusion of human figures with organic forms, I aim to disrupt familiar perceptions and create thought-provoking scenarios that invite viewers to pause, reflect, and reconsider their relationship to the natural world.

2025 has been an exceptionally active year for you, with over 20 exhibitions worldwide. How has this period of momentum affected your creative process?

2025 marks the first year I have been able to dedicate myself fully to art. I am exploring a surge of ideas and emotions that I wish to communicate visually, and as a result, I am creating almost daily. Feedback from peers, galleries, and clients has been both encouraging and instructive, helping me refine and focus my practice. I have also been fortunate to see several of my works find new homes, which affirms and motivates my ongoing exploration.

When viewers encounter your work, what kind of emotional or intellectual response do you hope to awaken in them?

I hope the work encourages quiet reflection and emotional resonance, inviting viewers to slow down and become more attentive to their own responses. Ideally, the encounter opens a space for contemplation while fostering a heightened awareness of the world around them and their place within it.

Alex Jobbagy | The Camel Whisperer | 2025

Izik Vu

Izik Vu | Immersed In Religion | 2022

Your work is deeply rooted in personal memory and nostalgia. When you begin a new piece, do you start from a specific memory, emotion, or visual detail?

When planning a collection, I like to think of the overall message I want to convey and build a mental accumulation of specific memories that fit that theme. So, when I am starting a new piece, I already have an idea of the body of work I am going to include the art piece in and what memory I want to paint.
As I experience an event, I sometimes get an inkling that I might want to paint. That is when I begin to look at the event through the lens of an artist as opposed to the lens of a person experiencing new things, knowing I am going to reference that experience later on to paint about.
I also think about what type of emotions I want to convey in my different bodies of work. For example, in my series "Nhà ở đâu? (Where is my home?)," I want to convey an off-centered lostness in a way of childish confusion—like a kid who initially knows that something is a bit different about them, but does not necessarily understand why. Only after re-examining their memories from a more grown-up point of view, they are able to understand what they were experiencing.

Izik Vu | To Gamble Is To Have Community | 2022

Many of your paintings include handwritten notes, reminders, and everyday text. What role do these fragments of language play in your storytelling?

My artwork is intrinsically connected with my memories and all my friends know that my memory is not... great. Similar to the way that I use post-it notes in my artwork, I also carry around a notebook for note-taking in real life. I wanted to convey what these memories are connected to through note taking—things that may not be as obvious by just looking at the initially painted picture.

Izik Vu | Nail Tech For A Living | 2022

You often depict ordinary moments - food, cafes, shared tables, workspaces. What draws you to these quiet, intimate scenes rather than grand narratives?

There is beauty in the mundane. I love looking at these small moments with a more critical eye. Grand gestures are, undoubtedly, great, and are what makes a splash in the mind's eye. However, a life consists of smaller, more quiet moments of connection that can be easy to forget. If I do not write these small moments down, I forget them. Similarly, I want to paint moments so that they are not forgotten.

Watercolor plays a central role in your practice. How do you balance control and unpredictability in the medium, and how does that reflect the nature of memory itself?

Watercolor is fluid and unpredictable, just like memories can be. Memories can easily warp, just as the way watercolor shifts. I love using wet on wet techniques that give the watercolor more freedom to move how it wants and liken it to the way that memories will shift no matter what you want them to do. Which is why some people do not like nostalgia or find it sad—right? Because it warps your perspective. But I find that to be beautiful—moments are experienced differently by everyone because our brains work differently.

Several works suggest fleeting moments or pauses in time. Do you see your paintings as a way of preserving moments that might otherwise be forgotten?

Yes, I do. I use my paintings to preserve my memories and the experiences that have impacted my life. I want people to look at my paintings and be reminded of their own small forgotten moments too.
You could call my paintings a time capsule for the past, present, and future.

How has growing up and living in Los Angeles influenced your visual language, subjects, or sense of identity as an artist?

Los Angeles is such an incredibly diverse and colorful city that I would say is harder to not be influenced by than to be influenced by. I believe Los Angeles is the type of city where you get as much out of it as you put in. Meaning that if you are open to learning about the city, it will reward you with the best experiences in turn. Artistically, I would say that Los Angeles has such a variety of work by different artists on display in the widest range of institutions.
I grew up visiting the Getty Museum, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) and tiny little independently owned galleries, and seeing each of the many different shows helped grow my understanding of the art world as well as my own identity artistically. Los Angeles taught me to try everything, to not be afraid of failure, and to have an open mind. That applies to everything, from tasting a new cuisine in the city to using a new art medium within my work.

What do you hope viewers take with them after spending time with your work - a feeling, a question, or perhaps a memory of their own?

I hope my artwork evokes a sense of nostalgia in my viewers and that they are able to sit with what different memories can mean for them. I want to make them dig deep into their own memories to consider what kind of mundane happenings in their life they would paint if they were the artist. What brings them joy or a sense of nostalgia so strong, they would want to immortalize it if they were the painter? And what sort of past experiences did they have to make them the person they are today?

Izik Vu | Clinging Onto Any Type Of Representation | 2022

Kiara Pike and Sidney Frenette-Ling are emerging Canadian artists, who grew their art practices together at the University of Lethbridge studios. Each of the artists now live across Canada, and find the idea of collaborating over distance an exciting endeavor. The mediums present in their work span: printmaking, sculpture, poetry, digital modeling, illustration, and 3D printing.

Artist Statement
This collaborative project between Pike and Frenette-Ling incorporates surrounding local fauna in the context of rural versus urban environments in the city of Calgary, Alberta. Pike's colourful imagery and Frenette-Ling's contrasting visual expression describes the complex animal relationships present in this land.

KPike | SFL

KPike | SFL

KPike | SFL

Roger That

Your portraits are intentionally imperfect and emotionally raw. What does imperfection allow you to express that polished realism cannot?

Imperfection feels closer to real life. I've made art my whole life, and the more I tried to make things perfect, the less honest they felt. Normal is boring to me. The ongoing lines, weird proportions, and "off" moments let emotion come through without overthinking it. I'm colorblind too, so I've never experienced the world in a super clean or traditional way visually. That's probably part of it. I like when people aren't totally sure what they're looking at... it makes them slow down and actually feel something.

Faith, failure, and redemption are central themes in your work. Was there a personal moment or season that pushed you to begin exploring these ideas visually?

There wasn't one big moment as much as a long season of realizing faith is a lot messier than I was taught growing up. I've had plenty of failure, doubt, and moments where I didn't feel strong or spiritual at all. Art morphed into a way to process that without pretending I had answers. I wasn't trying to make "faith art" initially, I was just being honest, and those themes kept showing up on their own. It changed everything.

Many of your pieces include Scripture or handwritten text. How do you decide when words are necessary, and when the image alone should speak?

I don't want words to do all the work. Most of the time, I want the image to make someone pause and wonder what they're looking at. When I add text or Scripture, I want it to look like a reminder instead of a message. The handwriting keeps it human. It's not meant to feel polished or preachy, just personal, like something scribbled in the margins.

Your faces often feel exaggerated, awkward, or uncomfortable. What role does discomfort play in spiritual reflection for you?

Discomfort is kind of the point. If something feels too comfortable, people move on quickly. They trust it and it feels familiar. When a face feels awkward or a little weird, it makes you sit with it longer. Spiritually, a lot of growth happens in uncomfortable spaces.. questions, tension, not having it all figured out. Those faces reflect that. They're not trying to be pretty; they're trying to be honest.

Biblical imagery appears throughout your work, yet it feels deeply contemporary. How do you translate ancient spiritual narratives into a modern visual language?

I don't think these stories belong in the past. Faith isn't something separate from real life, it's happening right now. Putting Jesus in modern situations isn't about being edgy; it's about closeness. I want people to feel like Jesus sees them where they actually are, not just in stained glass or history books.

How do you hope viewers who may not share your faith background will engage with your work?

I hope they feel free to just experience it. You don't have to believe what I believe to appreciate the story or the emotion. If someone is curious, confused, or just drawn to it visually, that's enough. There's room to admire the story even if you don't share the faith behind it.

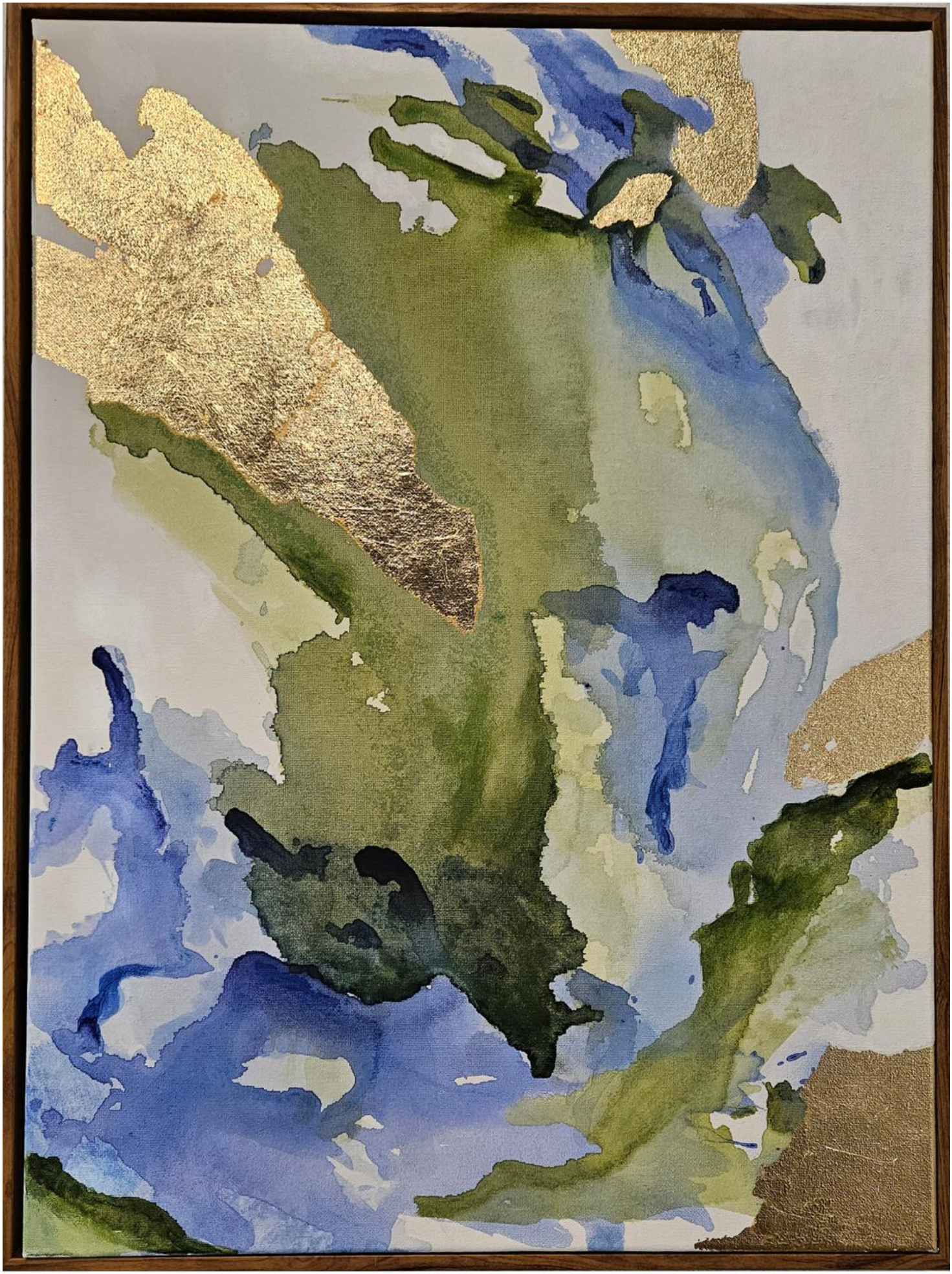
Your work invites viewers to pause and reflect. What do you hope someone carries with them after encountering your art?

I hope they walk away feeling seen. At the core of everything, I want people to be reminded that Jesus sees them and loves them.. right where they are. And if someone doesn't believe that, I still hope they leave with a sense of wonder, or at least a moment where they stopped and felt something. Ultimately, my goal is to glorify God, even if it's done in a quiet, unexpected way.

Rosalyn Villanueva is a Filipina artist whose abstract works embody elegance, emotion and intentional design. Through richly layered textures and thoughtfully curated color palettes, she creates modern paintings that elevate interiors while expressing deep personal meaning. Rooted in story, movement and culture her art invites quiet reflection and bold inspiration designed to complement both space and style.

Project Statement
KulayCollections is a personal and cultural exploration through abstract painting. Rooted in my Filipino identity, this project honors richness of kulay- (color) as emotion and memory. Each work reflects lived moments: family, love, longing and change. Through layered textures and expressive movement, I translate internal experiences into visual stories, creating pieces that invite viewers to find their own meaning and connections within the art.

Rosalyn Villanueva | Light in Memory



Rosalyn Villanueva | Together, Beloved

— *Interview*

Maria Tretyakova-Muratkina

Your project “Textures of the Environment” focuses on the changing states of nature. What initially inspired you to explore this theme, and how has it evolved over time?

The starting point was a desire to convey the scenes I observed through visual art in the style of abstract impressionism — to vividly capture the real world in its movement and constant change, and to transmit my fleeting impressions. Equally important are place and environment: the contexts in which I find an emotional response.
Over time, the formats of the works grew larger,

Maria Tretyakova-Muratkina | Landscape | 2025

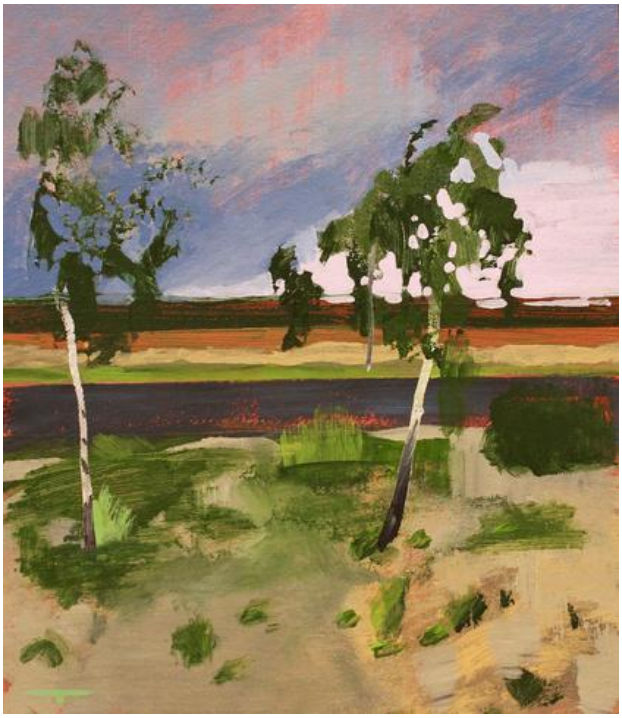
additional decorative elements appeared, and the color palette became richer and more intense.

You describe nature as something limitless and without a clear form. How do you translate this formlessness into structured compositions on canvas?

In my view, nature is not formless; it does not have a clearly defined shape — and that is an important distinction. Therefore, the artist defines and completes the form through the prism of their own perception. Through the stylization of the image, I simplify many details. The central task becomes the search for the abstract forms of the landscape.

In your statement, you mention transforming abstract thought into something tangible. What does this process look like in practice while you are working on a painting?

In the project “Textures of the Environment,” I explore the transformation of abstract thought into a tangible image. In practice, this process unfolds as follows: while working on a painting, the landscape is interpreted through artistic and technical methods and skills. First and foremost, it is an exploration of color and form. The connection to a



Maria Tretyakova-Muratkina | Landscape | 2025

specific place is secondary. Each element of the image - whether a cloud or a tree canopy - must have its own density of brushwork and texture, while still reflecting its natural origin. By imbuing the image with distinctive elements of my personal style and eliminating unnecessary details, the composition is constructed.

Architecture appears alongside natural elements in several of your works. What kind of dialogue are you trying to build between the man-made and the organic?

In these works, I observe environments where architecture comes into contact with the landscape. Over the years, the structures have changed together with their surroundings and gradually merged into a single whole. Little by little, flora has embraced human-made objects and become akin to them, resulting in a symbiosis.
The intertwining of nature and architecture embedded within the urban landscape inspires me to convey the scenes I encounter, imbuing them with philosophical meaning. It is important to me when humans enter the natural environment subtly, introducing their own elements without disruption. I seek a balance between vegetal motifs and architecture.

Color plays a strong emotional and structural role in your paintings. How do you choose your color palettes, and do they relate to specific moods or memories?

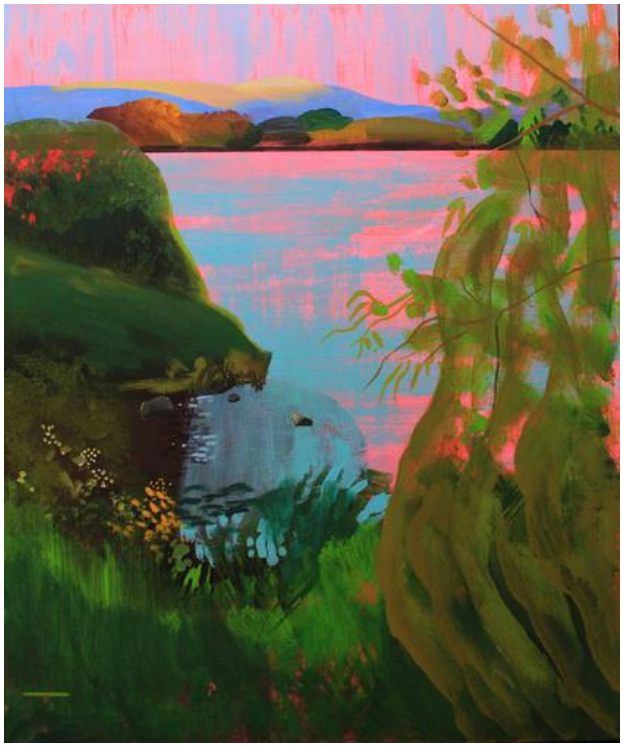
Yes, it is connected. Color helps me intensify the emotional subtext of the image. Through my color palette, I project the mental dimension of the painting. I observe nature from a contemplative perspective, immersing myself in the landscape in order to remember the scene and its color harmony, to grasp the essence of a natural state. All of these aspects are essential for realizing the intended narrative lines.

As a trained artist and former art teacher, how has your pedagogical experience influenced your own artistic practice?

To be guided by the classical school, while at the same time striving to develop one's own distinctive visual language in painting. To remain observant and patient, and not to lose a sense of wonder toward nature.

How do you hope the viewer interacts with your paintings - emotionally, intellectually, or intuitively?

In its entirety. I offer the viewer a "philosophy of contemplation." This means looking at familiar subjects in a new way, from a position of genuine attentiveness to what is unfolding. My aim is to draw the viewer's attention to simple scenes imbued with harmony and mystery—to create a personal source of the supra-sensory. To look inward, somewhere beyond everyday reality.



Maria Tretyakova-Muratkina | Landscape | 2025

Anna Solomiana
My name is Anna, I am a self-taught artist, sculptor, and designer. I've been sculpting for over 10 years, I started with floral sculptures, floral miniatures, and custom jewelry, and gradually transitioned to sculpture illustration, positioning my content through the concept "See Pop Culture through Sculpture". My main sources of inspiration are music, film, fashion, and the striking images of celebrities. Oil painting came into my life relatively recently, and with it, I finally felt the desire to express myself, establish myself as an artist, and share my vision with the world.

Project Statement
In the beginning was the Vision.

Anna Solomiana | In the Name of Love | 2025

Anna Solomiana | Some Like It Hot | 2025

Evaldo Bragança

Your work revisits classical myths not as historical references, but as living structures. When did you first realize that mythology could function as a contemporary language for you?

As long as I can remember, I have been fascinated by mythology. At school, especially in history classes, this fascination turned into genuine curiosity. The more I investigated, the more this interest became a true passion — not only for the myths themselves, but also for Greek philosophers and the figures of the "gods."
There was a specific moment in high school that proved decisive: I was challenged to draw a comic strip based on the myth of Ulysses on the island of the Cyclopes, interestingly enough also in a classroom setting. That experience stayed with me. Looking back now, I realize that this was when mythology stopped being mere content and became a language. Thank you for bringing that memory back.

Evaldo Bragança | Contemporary Bacchae

In The Contemporary Bacchantes , the body appears as a space of ritual, excess, and transformation. What does the body allow you to express that other forms or symbols cannot?

For me, the body is what connects the divine to matter. It is the most noble thing in the world. By representing divine entities through ordinary people, I treat the human as sacred. I see the body as what shelters us, what makes us feel alive and allows us to recognize ourselves in one another. I treat humans as divinities, and the body expresses that — it expresses the ultimate sacrifice. A sacrifice that no other symbolic form can carry in the same way.

The Bacchants in your work seem suspended between trance and consciousness, control and surrender. How do you approach this tension during the creative process?

This tension appears strongly in the imperfections of my work. I don't take everything to completion. I

Evaldo Bragança | Contemporary Bacchae

leave parts unfinished — sometimes out of exhaustion, sometimes entirely by intention.
For me, surrender lies in not worrying excessively about the final result and allowing the work and the material to respond to me. At the same time, I think a lot about the sacred feminine as a form of sublime love, connected to enchantment, fascination, and the ineffable. It's like seduction: two steps forward, one step back.

You combine painting, sculpture, and digital images within the same conceptual universe. How do you decide which medium best suits a specific idea or emotional state?

Everything begins in the mind. Before anything else, I paint with thought. Today, I am able to build, destroy, and reconstruct images internally before executing them — something that took many years of practice.
My studio has always functioned as a laboratory. After thinking, I experiment. I observe how the material responds, how the medium reacts to the idea. If it works, I continue. If not, I redo it in a different way. The process is always a dialogue.

Your works often evoke rituals without depicting a specific ceremony. What is the importance of ambiguity for you as an artistic tool?

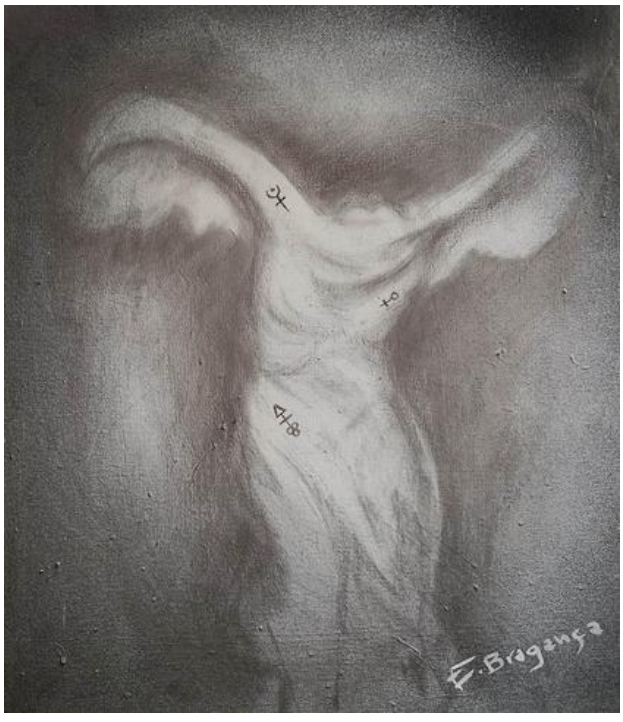
I find this question very interesting. The absence of a specific ritual creates space for the viewer to imagine what that ritual might be.
Ambiguity allows for multiple interpretations. I invite people to imagine what happened there, to mentally complete the scene. It is a provocation to think creatively, without everything being handed over fully resolved.

How does your Brazilian cultural background influence your relationship with myth, the body, and collective experience, if at all?

My cultural and religious background directly permeates my work. I was raised Catholic, I have faith, but I have always kept a certain distance from the church — largely out of rebellion. Even so, I often walk through churches, not for worship or rules, but for the art, the architecture, and the symbolic energy these spaces carry.
This displacement led me to seek the sacred elsewhere: in Umbanda terreiros, at rock concerts, in bodies immersed in collective trance. In Brazil, where syncretism pulses as a living force, I learned to merge narratives, beliefs, and symbols. From this emerges a symbolic field of my own — hybrid, unstable, and provocative — where the sacred and the profane coexist.

What do you hope remains with the viewer after encountering The Contemporary Bacchantes : a question, a sensation, or a form of recognition?

I hope the viewer leaves with a sense of ecstasy and excitement. That they feel more motivated to experience worldly pleasures without guilt.
The Bacchantes reveals that people are sinners — and that perhaps there is nothing inherently wrong with that. We live in Dionysian times. The work awakens the desire to sin, always with the awareness that a greater law exists. It is possible to sin, as long as it is done with measure and consciousness.



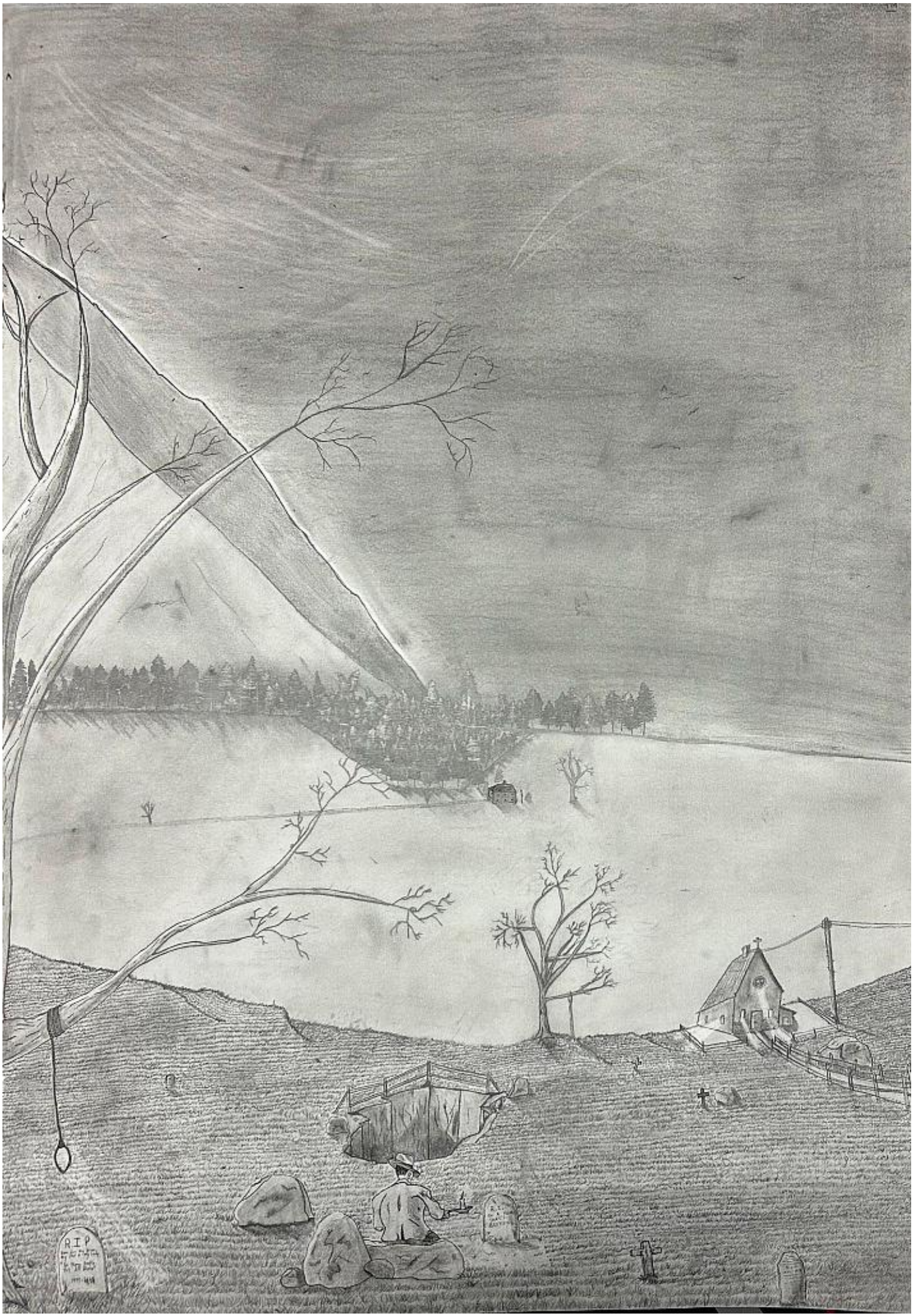
Evaldo Bragança | Contemporary Bacchae

The Chaotic World

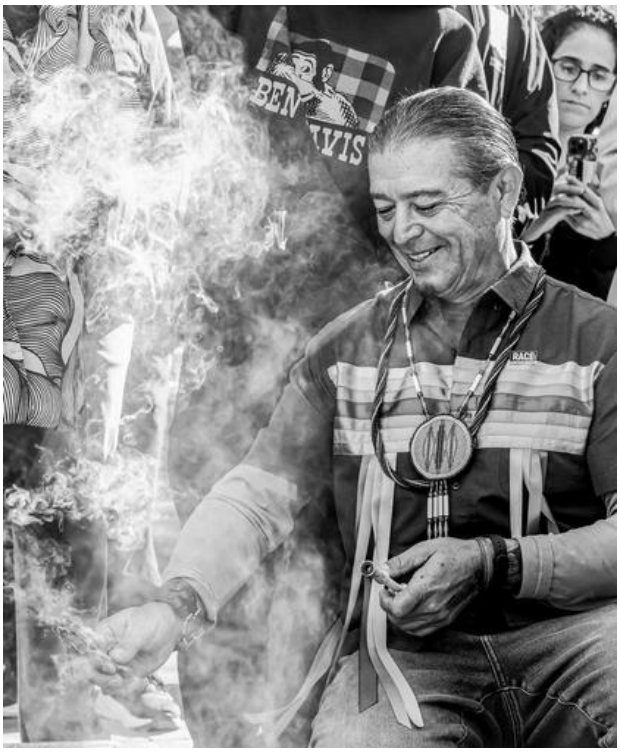
Raised through parts of the UK care system, I learned early how to observe quietly and find meaning in small details. Drawing and photography became constants in my life — steady, reliable spaces where I could focus, process, and hold onto something that felt my own. Much of my work is solitary, both in the way I create photographs and in my drawing practice. That solitude is intentional; it allows me to work closely with my thoughts, and it plays an important role in managing my mental health and maintaining balance.
My creative practice continues in that same spirit. I see art as a lifelong process of learning, experimenting, and evolving — a way to keep refining both my skills and my understanding of the world. Everything I make is part of that ongoing journey of growth, curiosity, and personal development.

Project Statement
I work with drawing and photography to explore quiet, solitary spaces and the mood of the world around us. My work often leans toward the subdued and the atmospheric, focusing on moments that feel still, distant, or emotionally charged in subtle ways. I'm drawn to the quieter edges of environments and experiences, where loneliness, reflection, and mood become visible.
My practice is deeply personal and largely solitary. Creating is not only a creative act but a stabilising one — a way of maintaining balance and managing my mental health. The process of working alone allows me to slow down, observe carefully, and stay connected to my inner world while responding to the outer one. Drawing and photography first became anchors during difficult periods of my life, and they continue to provide structure, focus, and a sense of control.
Through my work, I'm interested in how atmosphere can carry emotion without needing explanation. I explore how stillness, space, and understated imagery can reflect internal states and shared feelings of isolation or contemplation. My practice is rooted in ongoing learning, with each piece contributing to a continuous process of growth, refinement, and deeper understanding.

The Chaotic World | The Weight of Quiet Things


R I P

Kota Inouye



Kota Inouye | Nostalgia In Making | 2025

Your work often centers on memory, emotion, and lived experience. How do you decide which moments are worth preserving through your lens?

Being behind the lens does not mean I get to decide what is worthwhile to preserve, but allows me the opportunity to capture key moments that are intended to retell an emotion, memory, or story that occurred at one point in time. I am often split between the mundane and the makings of history, however, I remind myself that some history is not always grand. I truly believe that even an intimate gathering is in actuality even greater than a large-scale event. What truly then is worth preserving is the emotions and meaning of that moment in time, not necessarily just the moment itself.

You describe your practice as a way of retelling stories and recalling emotions "trapped in time". What role does photography play for you as a tool of remembrance?

Kota Inouye | Coming Full Circle | 2025

When I first got into photography, I tried a variety of styles—environmental, sports, contemporary, and many more. Nothing stuck with me until I began bringing my camera to document time spent with family—in that moment, something clicked.
I realized later that there is an incredibly important practice that most families, even organizations forget about in their day to day operations—the practice of history. As a result of a deep desire for innovation and instant gratification, people are constantly stuck on the future. So, when we are so trapped in what the next big trend is, when do we ever get time to be present or reflect on the past? The capturing of moments that then become memories, gives you the opportunity to retell the story of what happened and share the emotions you felt at one time.
As a historian in my own life, I ask myself if I really lived if I have nothing to show for it? I can tell my stories and I can retell other's stories, but it becomes even more meaningful when there is a visual representation of those moments in time. Documenting means you have reminders for stories you want to tell, but oftentime, they evoke the emotions you felt in that moment. There is importance in being able to accurately capture a moment, because that photo shares more when emotions are visible.

Many of your images depict cultural rituals, movement, and collective presence. How do you navigate the responsibility of documenting traditions while avoiding appropriation or spectacle?

By having an anthropological and historian approach when documenting culture and traditions, you get better insight into what is culturally appropriate. I spend a lot of time getting to know the organizers of the cultural events I attend, I also get involved in those circles to get a better understanding of the culture or movement I intend on representing through my photos.

Kota Inouye | Calling On Heritage | 2025

I am prideful that I have the opportunity and responsibility to use my photography to uplift and honor those in front of my lens. However, it is not without permission and mutual understanding, that I am able to take on this responsibility. There is a lot of trust that needs to happen prior for opportunities like this to come about.

Your work feels both celebratory and deeply grounded. How do you balance joy, resilience, and historical weight within a single image?

I mentioned earlier that oftentimes, people forget to practice history and that they are constantly moving towards the next big trend, and the same is true here. There is a lack of celebration or reminder that history was celebrated at one point in time, big or small. We are currently living in a generation where everyone can take pictures and call it a photo, but those can feel short lived. Yes, we capture the mundane to document for documentation's sake, but we also must remind ourselves of the impact of that moment in time. In order to balance emotions, impact, and time within a single photo, I take into account the angle and position I stand. Sometimes I am capturing a moment in pure luck and sometimes I am in anticipation. Cameras do not always produce what your eyes see and they oftentimes have a mind of their own, regardless, photos encapsulate when all align.

Several of the works presented capture motion - dance, ritual, gesture. What draws you to movement as a visual language?

From the forefront, there is more satisfaction in movement as opposed to stagnation. Simply put, memories captured are never actually still. Though cameras capture a still shot, you often will find slight imperfections of movement whether in the foreground, background, or subject.
Capturing dance, ritual, and gesture, means to record the art and expression of a moment in time—resharing the actions and emotions of the performer(s), as they analyze the impact they made with the crowd. There is art in their movement as you watch, but there is also art in how they are feeling their motion and expressing themselves through performance.

You have a strong background in business and global management. How has that education influenced your artistic career and the way you navigate the creative industry?

At first, education was the leading reason I was struggling and oftentimes business in particular , construed my views on myself as a photographer—and as an artist. However, education was also my reason to pick up the camera more. Having worked 2 or more jobs at a time with a triple full-time student course load, I found myself in a terrible mental state. Oftentimes, that meant I would lay in the door, motionless in bed.
Now, cameras are one of the main tools I use at work—strange, but not so strange for someone working in marketing and public relations. Using cameras while working in these fields has pushed me in good and bad ways. Whether it is the struggle of a fast-paced environment or the overwhelming feeling that some photos are not my best work, in spite of that, I still see my progression as a photographer through our archives.
Reflecting on my experience, I can genuinely say that I did not understand the impact picking up a camera had on me until recently. Truthfully, I am still navigating what it means for me to be an artist. For so long, I have never thought or treated myself as an artist, but as a documentor or historian. Even in my struggles to overcome the idea of being an artist, I am still making an effort to share the moments I captured that make me cry, smile, laugh, and/or feel prideful.

In an era of fast image consumption, how do you hope viewers will slow down and engage with your photographs?

I hope that viewers will slow down by reflecting on the memory that was captured, the movement of the subject(s), and the emotional impact they received. Some reflections could be on the small histories being made in their lives, and the experiences they take away through acts of remembering, analyzing, and developing. Overall, I hope my work inspires them to document their own lives, so that they can capture stories they want to share.

Kota Inouye | Smiling As A Dance Form | 2024

Ksu Anosova
Since 2020, I have been studying illustration, going through art marathons and building my own visual language. Mystical worlds are born in my works, woven from silence, magic and living black lines leading the viewer through hidden meanings.

Artist Statement
I work with graphics and black line, creating mystical spaces and exploring the atmosphere of silence and inner state.

Ksu Anosova | 2026

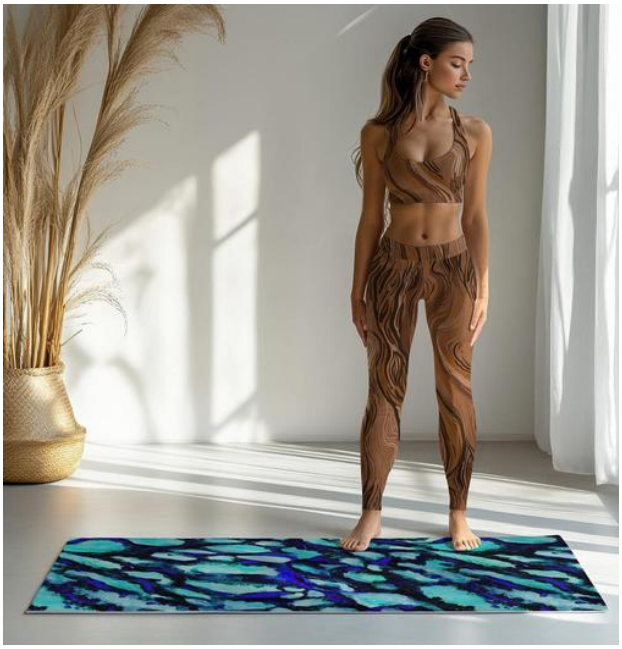
Ksu Anosova | 2026

Simona Di Pietro

After primary school, driven by a strong interest in drawing, I enrolled in a technical high school specializing in textile design: Setificio in Como. During those five years, I was immersed in both artistic and technical disciplines. The education was strongly process-oriented and highly practical. Within the school, there was a dedicated area for looms, both traditional and digital, which allowed me to see how a design translates into fabric, while visits to local textile companies showed me how the work learned in class is applied in real production.
This experience introduced me to a world I hadn't imagined before: textile design is not only a form of visual expression, but a highly specialized language shaped by material knowledge, history, and precision.

You were trained in Como, a historic center of textile excellence. How did this environment shape your understanding of pattern, material, and craftsmanship?

Being trained in Como deeply shaped my understanding of pattern and material. Growing up in a city where textile culture is part of everyday life, I entered this world very early, almost intuitively.



Simona Di Pietro | Aqua+Barkmockup

You often begin your work from a natural reference such as a landscape or organic texture. What kind of emotional or intuitive connection do you look for before starting a new project?

A pattern in nature can stop me in my tracks: dots on a leaf, the blending of tones in rocks, the textures in bark, or water in motion. It makes me pause, deeply observing, letting my eyes follow the shapes, the flow, and the movement outward from a single point.
It feels as if nature itself is inviting me to slow down, to watch carefully and with intention. That invitation comes with a subtle, almost pleasant feeling in my body: a kind of internal nudge that tells me this is something worth exploring, something that wants to become art. This sensation, combined with my personal experience and emotional response, drives the transformation of that moment into a design that is uniquely mine.

Hand painting plays a central role in your process. What

Simona Di Pietro | Aqua, Daydream

does the physical gesture of painting allow you to express that digital tools alone cannot?

Acrylic paint allows texture to emerge through pressure, layering, and rhythm. These variations happen in real time and are perceived physically, giving the work a sensitivity and presence that feels essential to my process. The marks are tangible, and their immediacy evokes a direct emotional response that digital tools cannot fully replicate.
There is also a sense of freedom that comes from working on large sheets of paper. My arm can move freely, following the rhythm of the pattern as it develops, without the constraints of a screen. That bodily movement becomes part of the design itself.

The transformation from a hand-painted artwork into a seamless repeat seems crucial in your practice. How do you approach this transition without losing the original emotional quality of the work?

The transformation from a hand-painted artwork into a seamless repeat is indeed a crucial part of my process. I always start spontaneously, giving the initial drawing the space it needs to breathe, letting the gesture and movement emerge freely.
Creating the seamless repeat is a more technical step. Over years in this industry, I've developed the skills to translate a hand-painted piece into a repeat without losing its original essence. My focus is always on preserving the flow, rhythm, and character of the initial mark, even as I work digitally to make it repeatable.
It's not a simple scan-and-go process, careful work is required to maintain the integrity of the gesture. The goal is to keep the pattern alive so that the emotion, movement, and intention of the original hand-painted artwork remain present in the final seamless design.

Living in Australia and working with swimwear and surf-inspired brands clearly influenced your palette and forms. How did the ocean and coastal landscapes reshape your sense of rhythm and movement in design?

Living on the Australian coast profoundly reshaped how I observe and translate nature into my designs. The ocean, with its ever-changing movement, turquoise waters, and waves, taught me to see rhythm and flow in patterns. The red rock formations of the desert and the intricate textures of tropical rainforests revealed natural structures and patterns I had never noticed before, which became a core part of my visual archive.
The diversity of native plants, unusual flowers, and wildlife opened my attention to new forms and details, expanding the way I perceive shapes, colors, and movement. Even encounters with underwater life, from coral formations to marine creatures, offered inspiration in pattern and hue. These experiences have shaped my palette and forms, blending earthy, grounded tones with vibrant, tropical colors. They allow me to combine spontaneity with structure, creating patterns deeply connected to the natural world.

Your work often exists beyond the canvas, applied to garments, yoga mats, and functional objects. How does functionality influence your creative decisions?

For me, functionality doesn't dictate my creative decisions; it's the other way around. Each design is a message, a way to bring the power and beauty of nature into everyday life. In our fast-paced world, it's easy to feel disconnected from the natural environment, so I see my work as a bridge: translating the rhythms, colors, and textures I've observed in landscapes, rocks, oceans, and plants into patterns that can live on garments, objects, or surfaces.
The goal is to create a connection, a gentle reminder of the beauty around us, an invitation to pause and feel a sense of wonder. By bringing nature into objects, I hope to offer more than decoration: a moment of reflection, inspiration, and grounding.

You describe your current practice as more mature and conscious. What does "conscious design" mean to you today, both ethically and creatively?

Conscious design today means creating with purpose and awareness. My work aims to bring the beauty of nature into everyday life, offering moments of reflection and connection, while carrying my personal interpretation and identity.
Creatively, it pushes me to follow my own vision rather than trends.
Ethically, it guides the collaborations I choose: I aim to collaborate with brands and people who share a sustainable, thoughtful approach to materials and production. It's about making choices that honor the planet and nurture authenticity, while keeping my work unique, meaningful, and connected to the natural world that inspired me.

Rainier Naomi is an illustrator and visual artist working primarily in digital and mixed media with themes that explore fantasy and visual storytelling. Her work has been featured in Wandering Autumn Magazine and exhibited in galleries such as Gallery 35, Joshua Farm Gallery and the Hyatt Place Hotel. She was awarded the Emerging Visual Arts - Multimedia for the Mississauga Arts Awards in 2025. Based in Canada, Rainier continues to develop personal and client-based projects that bring joy and whimsy to the world.

Project Statement
A magical paintbrush from the film "Barbie as Rapunzel" was one of the first sparks that ignited my love for creating art. The idea that a brush could open a doorway to other places and realms captivated me completely. As a little kid, I was enchanted by anything fantasy: witches, magic, alicorns, mermaids... the list never seemed to end. Inspired by that movie, I once picked up a brush and painted the inside of my closet door in secret. It was only a bunch of lines and scribbles, yet to the dreamer I was then, it became my own portal to a world I longed to explore.
I may never live in a pink castle on a hill, accompanied by a mermaid friend and an alicorn familiar, but I'm content knowing that as an artist, I can create any magical world I imagine. My brush may not open magical doorways but it has and still continues to open amazing possibilities for me. And creating is something I keep doing to keep my inner child happy.

Rainier Naomi | A Little Dreamer's Portal

Ifeoluwapo Rachael Okunade

I think of it as a quiet middle ground, a quiet place where what is seen and what is felt overlap. It's not about escaping reality, but softening it enough to allow the inner truth to surface. I'm drawn to this in-between because it mirrors lived experience: memory, emotion, faith, and identity rarely exist as fixed or literal things. I'm also drawn to it because it feels truthful. It's where I feel most present and most honest when creating.

Your work often exists between reality and imagination. How do you personally define this space, and what draws you to it as an artist?

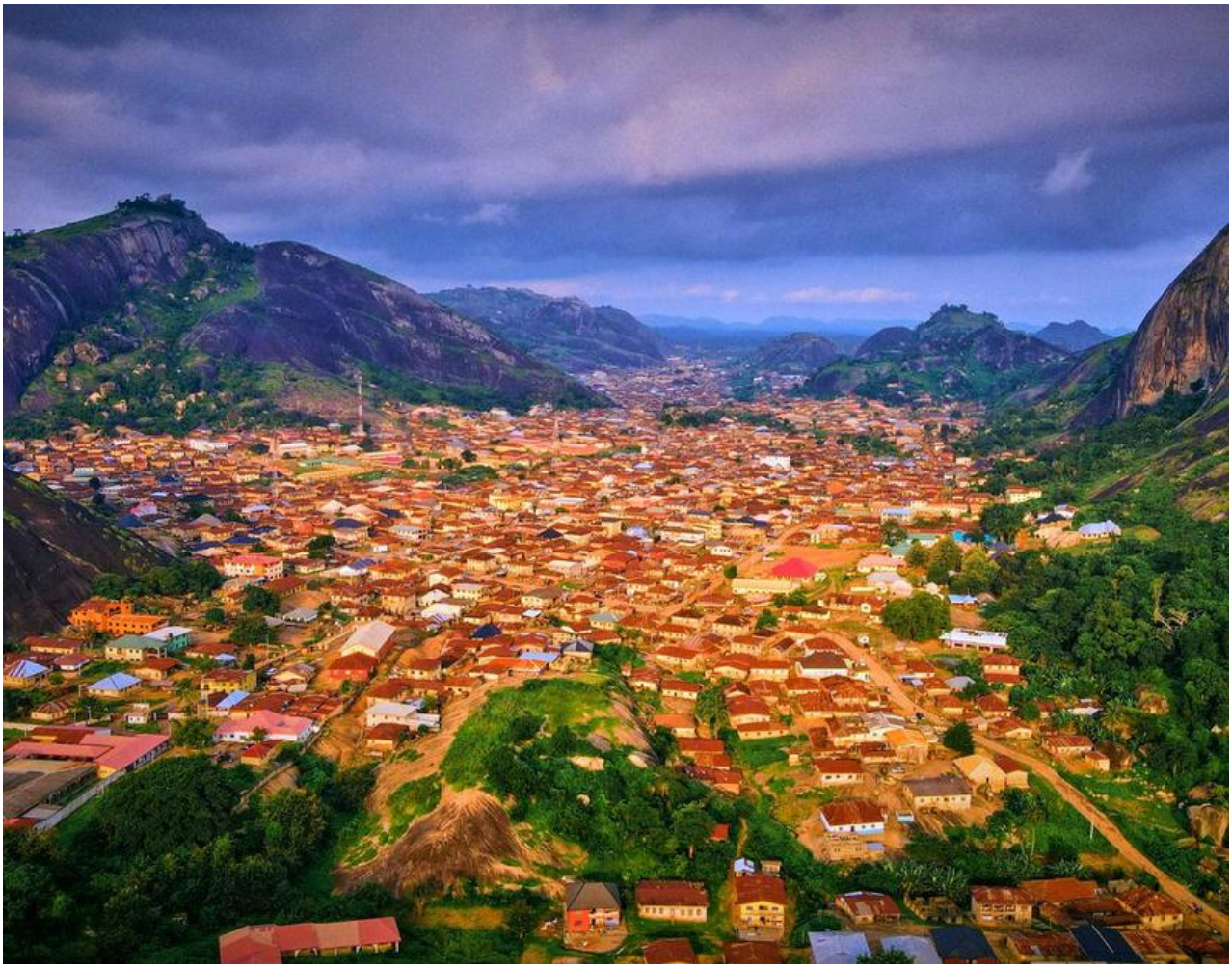
Ifeoluwapo Rachael Okunade | Dual Identity

Light plays a central role in your visual language. What does light represent for you beyond its technical function in photography?

Light feels emotional to me. It represents presence, guidance, and moments of clarity. Sometimes it's soft and comforting, other times it's revealing in a way that feels vulnerable. I'm less interested in light as a tool and more in how it makes someone feel, how it holds the subject, and how it creates a sense of calm or openness.

Nature appears not just as a backdrop, but as an emotional presence in your work. How do you see the relationship between inner emotional states and natural environments?

Nature is an expression of what's happening inside us. Stillness, tension, growth, and release are all visible in natural spaces. When I work outdoors or with natural



Ifeoluwapo Rachael Okunade | Harmony In Nature

elements, I respond to their mood as much as to their form. They help carry emotion without forcing it, and they create space for reflection and grounding.

Your images invite stillness and slow observation. In a fast-paced digital world, why is slowness important to your artistic practice?

Slowness helps me pay attention. It allows me to create with intention rather than pressure. In a world that moves quickly and demands constant output, slowing down feels necessary, almost protective. I want my work to offer a pause, a moment where the viewer doesn't have to rush to understand, but can simply sit with what they're seeing.

Several of your series suggest themes of healing and mindfulness. Has photography played a personal role in your own emotional or spiritual well-being?

Yes. Photography has often been a quiet space for me to process life. It's helped me slow down, reflect, and reconnect with myself during different seasons. Sometimes it feels less like making images and more like listening to my emotions, my thoughts, and what I need in that moment.

You intentionally leave your images open to interpretation. How do you feel when viewers bring meanings that differ from your original intention?

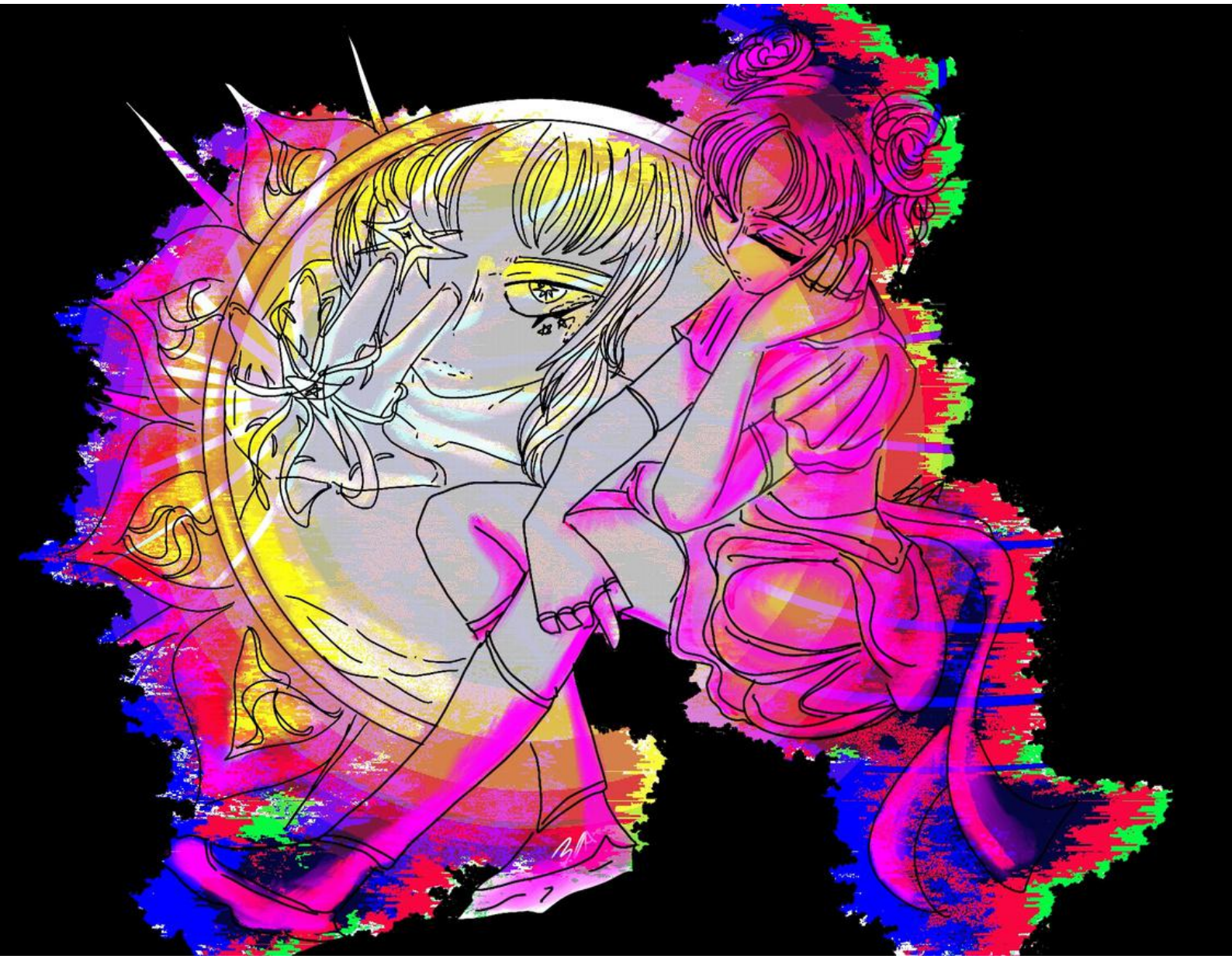
I really welcome it. I don't see my meaning as more important than the viewer's experience. Everyone brings their own story, and I like that the work can hold multiple interpretations. If someone sees something that resonates with them personally, even if it's different from what I imagined, that feels like the work is doing its job.

How has exhibiting your work across different cultural contexts - the UK, Nigeria, and the US - influenced the way you think about identity and audience?

It's made me realise how layered identity is. While cultural backgrounds differ, emotional experiences are often shared. Showing work in different places has helped me trust subtlety and universality, that quiet emotions, light, and presence can communicate across cultures without needing explanation.

My name is **Berenice Diaz-Acosta** and I'm from Siler City, North Carolina. I believe art is like a television, although is composed with different tools and materials, it comes together as a screen that projects a moving story. During my childhood, I would spend endless hours sitting in front of the television. Placing my head against the old bulky system just to feel the electricity travel through every fiber of my hair. Listening to nothing but the noise of the static of lost signal full up my ears. Although my elders could only afford what was being featured on air, the very few animated shows transmitted through the screen had expanded my world. I became fascinated with how these shows can be perceived through different media, with alternative styles of movement, and, most importantly, storytelling. Storytelling has been a central part of my work, no matter what form they're perceived in, either through the background environment, or describing elements of one's design. I often see myself as a reflection projecting behind the television screen. With all elements such as the vibrating static, line, and bright saturated colors merging into a single picture to flash the beauty of life beyond my eyes. To capture every emotion, thought, or experience faced within my creations before the television shuts off. Although the screen projects nothing but black, one can feel last specks of static tingling in the air.

Berenice Diaz-Acosta | Two Paths, Only One Self | 2026



Berenice Diaz-Acosta | Eternal Amor | 2026

— *Interview*

Anastasiia Lodde

Your background is in genetics, and you spent many years in science before transitioning to art. How has scientific thinking influenced the way you construct narratives and symbols in your paintings?

Science taught me to observe, think systematically and understand that even the smallest element can carry meaning within a larger structure. I approach symbols like variables in an experiment: they repeat, mutate and shift context over time. I create visual ecosystems where symbols interact, recur and evolve and this mindset lets me work intuitively while staying attentive to the internal logic, rhythm

and cause-and-effect relationships within an image. I spent many years working in genetics, creating transgenic organisms like wheat and sunflowers, altering biological elements so that new forms could emerge. Looking back, I realise I still do something very similar in my art. I'm capable of processing large amounts of information — personal memories, historical layers, everyday observations — and when all of this passes through my emotional sensibility, it becomes an image. This is where the story begins.
Perhaps this is why I create anthropomorphic fish and hybrid objects and why my themes keep flowing into one another. I combine fragments, allow meanings to shift and let one form transform into another. For me, art is a space of controlled transformation, where analysis dissolves into emotion and something new is born.

Migration and displacement are central themes in your work. At what point did you realize that these experiences would become the core of your artistic language?

After moving to Denmark, I began painting more consciously and intensely. At the same time, I felt a growing need to look back. I gradually realised that I knew almost nothing about certain parts of my family history and this absence itself began to trouble me.
This curiosity led me to work with archives and to contact Estonian archival institutions in order to

Anastasiia Lodde | More And Less

learn more about my family. Through this research, I discovered a recurring pattern of migration shaped by repression and forced displacement. When I later experienced migration myself, it was a voluntary choice and this difference became very important to me. As I went through the stages of migration — disorientation, fragmentation, gradual transformation — I felt these processes in my own body, but I was also able to see them from another angle: as an opportunity for growth and personal enrichment.

Painting became both a form of therapy and a space for reflection. Over time, my practice expanded beyond my own history. I began listening carefully to the experiences of friends and people around me, carrying their stories with care. What began on canvas has since evolved into installations and performance, allowing these multilayered personal and collective experiences of migration to coexist in a shared space.

Fish, bicycles, suitcases, and Soviet-era objects recur throughout your paintings. How do these symbols function for you - are they personal memories, collective signs, or evolving metaphors?

They all began as deeply personal images rooted in memory, but over time they stopped functioning as fixed symbols and became something more fluid. The fish, for example, first emerged as a symbol of inner values. It comes from my childhood: I grew up near a river and spent many hours fishing with my grandfather. Gradually, though, the fish began to change. It didn't simply become a figure of a migrant; it started to transform into a human-like presence. Today, the fish in my work carries fears, desires, contradictions and impulses. It is neither good nor bad. It exists with all the complexity of being human and sometimes with traces of inhumanity. This ambiguity matters to me. I'm interested in moments when the boundary between human and non-human becomes unstable.

Other recurring objects — bicycles, suitcases, houses — function in a similar way. They are rooted in personal memory, but they also belong to a shared cultural and historical experience. Over time, they become vehicles of movement and adaptation. I allow these elements to evolve without fixed meanings; they grow alongside me, absorbing new layers of experience. In this sense, my symbols are living forms, always in the process of becoming.

You describe your practice as working through a post-migrant lens. How has living and working in Copenhagen reshaped your sense of identity and artistic voice?

Copenhagen gave me security, distance and enough time to reflect on my life and ask myself who I am and why I'm here. In many ways, it allowed me to live a second life. With familiar structures gone, my sense of identity narrowed to survival and day-to-day decisions. Long-term planning seemed impossible and much of my energy went into managing uncertainty.

Around 2021–2022, during a very intense emotional period, I became acutely aware of how fragile identity can be when it's stripped of language, status and familiar social roles. I drew, read and reflected a great deal and at one point I even considered abandoning my identity entirely and trying to rebuild myself. This thought eventually faded into the background. Learning to stay present with myself, rather than erase myself, became a decisive turning point.

A significant part of this transformation is taking place in my shared studio, where I work with three Danish artists. Although my Danish is still limited, we communicate in English. Working closely with them has helped me understand how closed and conservative Danish society can be in many ways and at the same time how curious and deeply empathetic it is, especially towards other cultures. I learn a lot simply by listening to what concerns

them, how they work and which topics matter to them. This daily coexistence has strengthened my practice and helped me become bolder in expressing my own opinions.
I feel this especially within Copenhagen's international community, where many people carry their own experiences of migration. My work often resonates most strongly with those who have lived through similar processes and these encounters — at my exhibitions, studios and festivals — have become an important confirmation for me.
Copenhagen hasn't made my journey easy, but with its rhythm, its people and its communities, it has given me the space to ask fundamental questions about belonging, responsibility and coexistence. This life experience has profoundly reshaped my artistic voice, making it louder and more attentive.

Many of your works balance humor, absurdity, and quiet tragedy. How important is irony or surreal exaggeration in helping you speak about trauma and loss?

Irony and absurdity matter to me, but not as tools of ridicule or distance. I don't try to mock anyone, or to speak from above or below. I see myself as an observer — someone who passes experience through herself, like through a lens — and communicates what she feels.
My first work with fish appeared in 2023, when I was still processing my initial sensations after relocation. It depicted a fish riding a bicycle through an underground city, a metaphor born from a very physical experience. I imagined a freshwater fish suddenly finding itself in a cold, salty sea: the density of the water changes, movement becomes heavier and slower and everything requires more effort. At the same time, this slowness allows the fish to look around, to notice the world and to begin questioning who it is within it.
This is where absurdity enters my work, as a way to describe something that is difficult to articulate directly. Later images, such as a fish sitting at sunset and eating fish soup, grow from the same place. Nothing dramatic happens, yet the tension is already present. I try to show that trauma and loss often exist in everyday routines, contradictions and repetitions. For me, humour is a form of care. I am a pacifist and irony is neither a weapon nor a shield; it is a way to remain human. In this sense, the absurd feels closer to me than realism, because it reflects the uneven and non-linear work of memory.

Anastasiia Lodde | Underwater | 2024

Your art often critiques systems that manipulate and divide, while emphasizing humaneness and resilience. Do you see your practice as a form of quiet resistance?

Yes, but not in a confrontational way. I see my practice as a form of resistance rooted in attention and care — in a refusal to simplify human experience.
Once, a woman came to my exhibition and shared her story. She had emigrated more than 25 years ago and told me that, in order to feel at home, she felt she had "to cut off her roots". This phrase deeply affected me and raised a question I couldn't let go of: why should belonging require erasing yourself?
This encounter led to the work More&Lees. In it, a fish stands in the middle of the sea, surrounded by a forest and a sunset. In one hand, it holds a phone; in the other, a cable, hesitating whether to cut it or not. This moment of stillness is essential to me. The fish does not act — not because there is a right answer, but because the choice itself deserves to be seen.
My work is about creating space for doubt, memory and individual decisions. I believe immigration is not about forgetting who you are,but about holding complexity: carrying your roots while continuing to build something new.

Many of your figures appear isolated yet

interconnected within shared spaces. How do relationships - family, community, society - influence your compositions?

Of course, all of this influences my work. Even though I have a strong and supportive community here, including an international one, I feel a growing distance from my family, who remain elsewhere. This distance is difficult to articulate fully; it exists more as a feeling.
Elements of home are therefore always present in my work. They appear as matchboxes, telephones, dishes, or gingerbread on the table. These are not nostalgic reconstructions, but small possibilities to return briefly to a time and a place that no longer exist in reality.
Community, on the other hand, shapes how my figures coexist. They often share space without fully merging, remaining close yet separate. This reflects how relationships can feel in an international environment — built on care, but also on distance and difference.

Émilie Michaud (Em Collage)
PhD candidate and copywriter, I'm surrounded by words on a daily basis. I wanted to ignite my creative fire and rekindle my passion for art with a medium that implies paper. Collage is a wonderful way to destress, to use old magazines and to make my brain work a completely different way! I made whimsical analog collages that combine humans, nature and words, to dream and inspire dreaming.

Project Statement
It exists beats It's perfect.

Michaud Émilie | It Takes You Out of the Ordinary | 2026

Michaud Émilie | Okay, I'll Manage on My Own | 2025

Régine Devarrewaere

You describe your artistic approach as Empreintéisme. How and when did this concept first emerge in your practice?

Empreintéism emerged gradually, almost naturally, from my relationship with material, time, and memory. As a painter, I have worked extensively with textiles, felting, and soft sculpture. This slow, hands-on process has profoundly shaped my relationship to gesture.
Over time, I came to understand that what mattered to me was not representation, but the trace left behind: the trace of the gesture, the trace of time, the trace of memory. Collage and layering then imposed themselves as an obvious choice. I named this approach Empreintéism to express this desire to reveal what persists, what surfaces, what remains beyond the image.

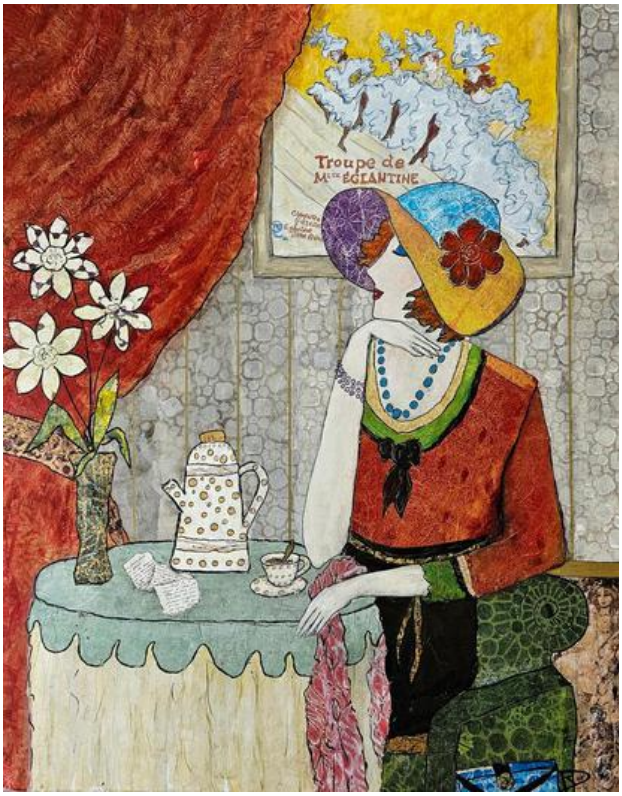
Régine Devarrewaere | Vin De Paille | 2024

Collage and layering play a central role in your work. What does the act of building an image through successive strata represent for you conceptually?

To construct a work through successive layers is to accept that nothing is ever completely erased. Each layer retains a memory, even when it is covered. This superimposition becomes a metaphor for time, for life, and for our own history.
Collage allows me to work with fragments, traces, and papers that already carry meaning. The work takes shape slowly, in a constant dialogue between what appears and what disappears. I am drawn to the idea that a painting can contain multiple temporalities within a single space.

Memory and time are recurring themes in your paintings. How do personal memories influence the atmospheres you create on the canvas?

My painting is deeply nourished by intimate and familial memory. Poetry also holds an essential place in my universe. The presence of the poet Christian Tarroux by my side accompanies this journey. His way of inhabiting language resonates profoundly with my way of inhabiting matter. Our worlds engage in dialogue without ever merging, sharing a mutual respect for silence, rhythm, and long durations of time.
My work is also shaped by my name, Devarrewaere, of Flemish origin and connected to the work of color and



Régine Devarrewaere | Mlle Eglantine | 2025

textile, which strongly echoes my relationship with materiality. Without realizing it, my roots led me toward color, trace, and fabric. This is a memory that does not pass through words, nor even through narrated recollections. It is not a factual memory, but a sensitive one, permeating atmosphere, light, silences, and everyday objects. My works thus become open spaces, where each viewer can project their own memory and their own emotions.

You work with hand-painted tissue paper, a fragile and ephemeral material. What attracts you to this medium, and how does fragility shape the final image?

Tissue paper draws me in through its extreme fragility, transparency, and its ability to retain the trace of a gesture. Hand-painted, crumpled, and layered, it preserves the memory of each stage. Its delicacy calls for slowness, attentiveness, and listening. This material makes it possible to express vulnerability, the passage of time, and ephemerality. It creates visual depth. Tissue paper is not merely a medium or a palette of colors; it becomes a sensitive skin, permeated by memory and emotion.

Light seems to circulate between layers in your works. How do you think about light as a structural or emotional element in your compositions?

For me, light is a fundamental element. It is never decorative. It moves through the layers, revealing hidden strata, like a luminous memory. It creates a sense of breathing, a space of silence.
Emotionally, light brings a form of calm and suspension. It allows the work to avoid becoming heavy, to remain open and permeable. It is what gives this feeling of calm and of time being suspended.

You mention that Empreintéisme does not seek representation, but rather an imprint. What kind of experience do you hope the viewer will have when encountering your work?

I wish to offer an experience of slowness and presence. In a world dominated by the endless scrolling of images, I claim a long duration. “I do not scroll my painting.” I would like the gaze to pause, to feel the layers, the traces, the silences. For the work not to reveal itself immediately, but to be discovered gradually, like a memory one slowly comes to know.

Your works often feel suspended in time. Do you see painting as a way of slowing down the world, or preserving fleeting moments?

No doubt, both. Painting is for me a way to slow down the world, to step outside the state of constant urgency. It is also a way of preserving the ephemeral, of holding on to what disappears too quickly.
I also inscribe within it the imprint of the feminine: the hand of a mother, a sister, a companion, which, in the discretion of everyday life, offers simple gestures carrying care, tenderness, and presence. Gestures that are almost invisible, so natural do they seem, yet which form the silent fabric of ordinary happiness.
Painting thus becomes a space of gentle resistance, a place where time regains its natural rhythm, where these essential gestures can finally be seen, acknowledged, and preserved.

Régine Devarrewaere | DéBut De JourniéE | 2025

My name is **Alina Melnyk**. I am an artist from Ukraine. In 2011, I graduated from the Faculty of Arts at my local university. I have participated in exhibitions in Kryvyi Rih (Ukraine). Since graduating, I have been creating works that are now in private collections in Ukraine, Poland, and the United States. I create my works using oil painting techniques.

Stella-Maris Onwuama

Your work moves between hyperrealistic portraiture and bead-based art. What initially drew you to these two very different yet complementary mediums?

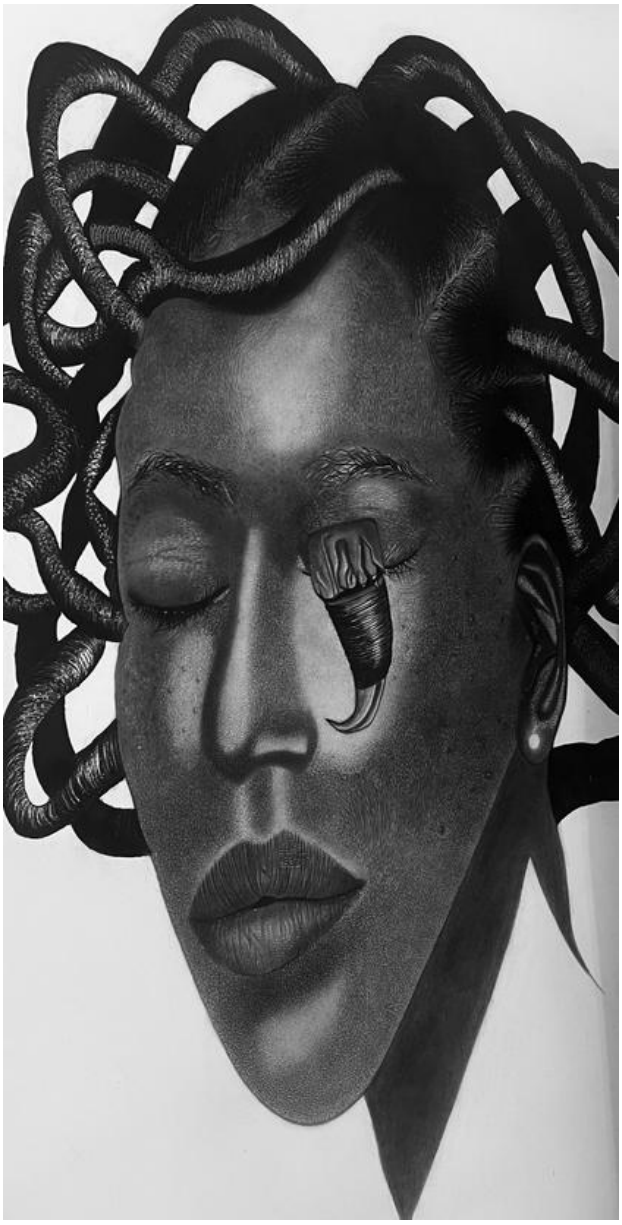
I was drawn to both mediums because they demand presence and patience. Hyperrealistic portraiture taught me how to truly see, to slow down and honor a face beyond surface likeness. Beadwork came later, but it felt intuitive. Each bead is tiny, intentional, and cumulative, much like a single mark or cell. Care is what binds them together.

What connects them is care. Whether I am drawing a face or placing thousands of beads, I am engaging in a quiet, repetitive act that resists haste. One medium focuses on accurately capturing the human image, while the other uses accumulation to create meaning. Together, they allow me to explore visibility on how people, stories, and labor are seen or overlooked.

You often speak about slowness, repetition, and precision as acts of care and witnessing. How does the physical process of making influence the emotional meaning of your work?

The physical process is inseparable from the emotional meaning. Slowness allows me to stay with difficult emotions without rushing past them. Repetition becomes a form of meditation, a way of holding space for memory, grief, or resilience. Precision, for me, is an ethical choice. It is a way of saying that this person, this story, this moment deserves attention. Coming from a life where instability and loss forced me to grow up early, making art slowly is a refusal of disposability. The labor embedded in the work mirrors the emotional labor behind it.

Your portraits emphasize dignity and quiet emotional presence. What do you look for in a face or a gesture before deciding it deserves to become a portrait?



I am drawn to moments of stillness when someone is not performing, not posing, but simply present. A subtle tension in the eyes, the weight of a gaze, or a calm that carries history.
I am not interested in drama or perfection. I search for humanity. It's a face that frequently makes me think of people who are rarely in control and who secretly possess strength. A gesture is worth retaining if it is emotionally honest and encourages reflection rather than spectacle.

Beadwork plays a central conceptual role in your practice. How did you first begin working with beads, and what symbolic meaning do they hold for you today?

I began working with beads during a period when my life required extreme patience and endurance. Beads felt honest, they are small, repetitive, and time-consuming, much like survival itself.

Today, beads stand for accumulation and the way that little deeds of kindness, perseverance, and hard work become something enduring. Additionally, they make attention to previously underappreciated crafts, ornamentation, and femininity-related customs. I'm recovering the gravity of beadwork and respecting the labor that goes into it by bringing it into conceptual and fine art environments.

You transform materials often dismissed as "decorative" into central artistic elements. What challenges or reactions have you encountered from audiences or institutions because of this?

There's often an initial hesitation and some viewers are unsure how to read the work because beads don't fit neatly into traditional hierarchies of fine art. But that discomfort is part of the work.
Once audiences understand the time, precision, and intention behind the material, their perception shifts. I have found that institutions and viewers are increasingly open to rethinking what counts as serious material. I have learned to trust the work to speak for itself and to remain steadfast in my artistic convictions thanks to this challenge.

Your life experiences - loss, financial instability, and early responsibility - deeply inform your work. How do you balance personal vulnerability with artistic intention?

I don't see vulnerability as exposure for its own sake. I am intentional about what I share and how it is translated visually. The work isn't a diary, it's a transformation.
I use structure, discipline, and craft to hold difficult experiences with care. That balance allows the work to remain accessible without becoming overwhelming. My goal is not to ask for sympathy, but to create connections and spaces where viewers can recognize their own resilience reflected back at them.

You work across the United States and Europe. How have different cultural contexts shaped the way your work is perceived or created?

Working across different cultural contexts has taught me how meaning shifts without losing its core. In Europe, there is often a strong focus on materiality and tradition, which deepens conversations around craft and labor. In the U.S., audiences tend to engage more directly with the emotional and narrative aspects of the work.
These differences have made me more intentional and flexible as an artist. They've shown me that while the language of art changes, themes like dignity, care, and visibility are universally understood.

Emquin / Maylin Quinn
Emquin is a Norwegian-British artist currently based in Hong Kong. Her interest in art began when she was 11, when her art teacher at the time would let her stay in the art room after school and use the materials freely. With time, her love for art grew and she began to develop her own style, largely inspired by Keith Haring. Eyes and faces are common motifs in her artwork, and can be found liberally in each piece.

Project Statement
I doodle without a care in the world. I switch off my brain and switch on my pen and let it wander across the page in pure improvisation. These doodles are uniquely mine, yet the same motifs surface again and again—tangled lines of unease, sudden bursts of play, quiet figures curling inward —exposing the persistence of my subconscious. In embracing this unguarded process, I doodle what it means to be human inside a scrutinising, critical, and noisy world.

Maylin Quinn | Cohabitation | 2025

— *Interview*

Tito Joao

We don’t often feature actors in our publication, so it’s especially exciting to speak with you. What does it mean to you to be interviewed as an actor within an art-focused platform like ours?

Hello, thank you so much for having me. I’m truly happy to be here. For me, this means the opportunity to show a little part of who I am to the world through a different medium. As artists, we are always seeking ways to share our art and to reach people, to connect with them in one form or another through what we create.
I also feel that this is a safe and welcoming environment, because I’m surrounded by a platform that shares something deeply important with me: a love for art. Being in a space like this reminds me that, beyond disciplines or formats, we are all connected by the same desire to express, to feel, and to touch others through creativity.

You’ve said that imagination was your first companion in childhood. How has that early solitude shaped the way you build characters today?

Imagination was often my best friend. I could create entire worlds and live inside them, and that ability became the core of who I am as an actor. At some point, I realized I wasn’t just telling a story; I was part of it, and I needed to truly live it for the character to come alive.
I understood that someone who steps into imaginary circumstances can experience life as a completely different person. For me, acting isn’t about pretending; it’s about believing, about letting those inner worlds shape the way I move, think, and feel. That early bond with imagination taught me how to inhabit other lives with honesty, as if they were real because, in that moment, they are.

Cinema played a crucial role in your upbringing. Which film or performance first made you think, “I want to do this for the rest of my life”?

Ah, what a beautiful question! It takes me far back. There are two films that truly lit a flame inside me. The first is Scent of a Woman by

Tito Joao | Outside | 2025

Martin Brest, with Al Pacino's performance. His acting touched me so deeply that every time I watched it, I found myself crying in the same moments, again and again. It was the first time I understood how powerful a performance could be, how an actor could reach someone they had never met and move something intimate inside them.
The second is Big Fish by Tim Burton. That film awakened a curiosity in me about the world, the desire to leave, to explore other places, and through that journey, to know myself better. There's a saying that you must first get lost in order to find yourself, and that's exactly what I learned from that story.
Those two films planted something in me: the belief that cinema can shape a life, not just reflect it. And in a way, they were the first whispers telling me, "This is where you belong."

You describe medicine as a role you were playing rather than living. How did that experience influence your understanding of acting and authenticity?

Medicine teaches you to be observant and curious, especially about people. It makes you understand that there is a reason behind everything, no matter how strange or irrational it may seem, and that you don't need to judge it to try to understand it. I think that perspective helped me become more compassionate toward the world, whether it is real or imagined.

Studying and living in Bristol exposed you to many cultures and stories. How did that period transform you as both a human being and an artist?

Uff, Bristol is such a beautiful city, filled with art everywhere you couldn't help but fall in love with the place. As a human being, it challenged me to step outside my comfort zone and face something completely different from my world. I arrived there with very little English and still in high school. It sounds like a crazy idea, but in that moment, I just thought, "Why not?" Only the crazy ones can conquer the world, right? Haha.
In Bristol, art was treated as something as essential as oxygen. I learned that we all carry art within us; what we discover later are simply the tools and languages to share it. That period taught me courage, curiosity, and the freedom to reinvent myself, and those lessons continue to shape the way I live and create today.

New York is often described as a city that either breaks or rebuilds you. How did your time at the New York Film Academy reshape your relationship with vulnerability and fear?

I've always loved New York. They say living here is for the brave, especially if you're international like me. What scared me the most, and at the same time shaped me into a better person, was learning to open my vulnerability not only in my acting, but in who I am as a human being.
I will always be grateful to my professors, to my classmates from the first semester, and to the film students I worked with on their short films. They had faith in me; they saw something in me that I couldn't yet see in myself, and they helped bring it out, making me a better person and a better professional. That is the greatest memory I carry from the New York Film Academy.
In the end, it's all about continuing to work, to grow, and to keep becoming better than I was yesterday.

You've spoken about acting as an act of empathy rather than performance. How do you emotionally protect yourself while still going deep into difficult roles?

Knowing myself has been my greatest protection, learning what makes me who I am, and holding onto that whenever I need to return to myself, emotionally safe.

Barbara Luckyman
1996–2006 Atelier Art School, Warsaw
1999 – diploma in ceramics, Art College, specialising in ceramics
2001 – diploma in photography, Advertising College, specialising in photography
2000 – solo exhibition Alim.Lam.Mim., Warsaw
2000 – solo exhibition at the Walter Centre, Warsaw
2001 – solo exhibition "Painting", Warsaw
2001 – group exhibition "Art in Defence of Animals", Wrocław
2003 – group exhibition "Still Life", Warsaw
2003 – solo exhibition "All Souls' Day – Memory I", University of Warsaw, Warsaw
2003 – solo exhibition "All Souls' Day – Memory I", Wawer Cultural Centre, Warsaw
2006 – solo exhibition at art&pub "Skład Butelek"
2011 - group exhibition, Milanowek
2011 - group exhibition 'Wihajster', Warsaw
2025 - Ceramics Festival, Piecki
2025 - Open Gardens of Dabrowa, Dabrowa-Łomianki
2026 – XIII International Art Review ALTERNATYWY 33, Ostrow Wlkp

Artist Statement
My artistic practice focuses on ceramic sculpture and the creation of an original Bestiary inhabited by fantastical, zoomorphic beings that exist on the boundary between wakefulness and dream. I create imagined forms drawing from mythology, fairy tales, animal symbolism, and contemporary cultural narratives, including elements of popular culture.
I am interested in the magical world as a universal space, free from explicit political or social references, yet capable of carrying meanings related to identity, transformation, and the emotional experience of the viewer. These fantastical creatures function as narrative vessels and symbolic figures, inviting the audience to engage in personal interpretation and to enter a realm of imagination.
Color and texture play a central role in my work. I use an intense, warm color palette and rich ornamentation, treating the surface of the sculpture as a narrative field. I often incorporate internal lighting, which enhances the sense of mystery and emphasizes the liminal nature of the objects.
My creative process is driven by intuition and experimentation, deliberately blurring the boundaries between functional ceramics and sculpture. Even works with a utilitarian aspect remain part of the imagined world. My practice operates between sculpture, narrative object, and fictional artifact, forming a coherent and continuously evolving universe.

Barbara Luckyman | Werewolf

Barbara Luckyman | Massive Moss Man

Gaëlle Compozia

You describe your practice as illustration rather than pure fine art, because it is rooted in myths, literature, and stories. What does illustration allow you to express that other artistic categories might not?

Illustration allows me to summarize a subject, to tell a story through only one picture—an overview I could not achieve by other means. There is a connection between my artworks and the texts (or studies) I rely on. And I love that. I seek that: turning words into pictures, a single summarizing image. It's very satisfying for my brain. I don't know why, but I need to do it. For now, illustration is the only way I have found to make this possible, to explore and express my sensibility.
As for the choice of medium, I'm not satisfied with painting. I like to draw with Indian ink pens, marker pens, and colored pencils, because I like to draw with hard tools. Brushes and canvas are too soft for me. I like to feel contact and resistance—something my hand holding a pen on a sheet of paper against a table provides. I need a strong support I can lean on. Maybe I should try carving marble someday...

Research and reading play a central role in your creative process, and each artwork is accompanied by a notebook. Could you walk us through how a project evolves from reading and research to the final image?

To describe my creative process and make it understandable, I like to use the metaphor of a puzzle game. I design my artworks as a puzzle whose pieces are put back together. When you start a puzzle, you begin with the frame. In the box, you search for the edge pieces first. Then you select other pieces according to colors and shapes. I do exactly the same with my artworks when I formulate and draw them. Research and reading are the first step: they correspond to sorting the puzzle pieces. Drawing is the next step: it corresponds to putting the pieces back together, filling in the gaps. A puzzle gamer takes a long time sorting the pieces. As an artist, I take a long time researching and reading before drawing. During this process, alongside the illustration, I keep a notebook to write down my ideas, make lists, develop a plan, draw sketches, etc. My notebook is like the puzzle box that contains both the pieces and the model.
When it's done, as an artist I feel what a puzzle gamer feels: satisfaction, release, accomplishment... and then maybe a kind of depression, because when an illustration or a puzzle

Your works are extremely dense and rich in detail, often described as belonging to a horror vacui aesthetic. What draws you to this visual fullness, and how does it reflect the way you perceive the world?

It's hard to say. There is still a mystery, even for me. This horror vacui—this fear of the void that I express—is viscerally anchored in me. It is both physical and philosophical. I am looking for harmony, order, and meaning. Filling a whole page, making a dense composition, filling in the gaps, helps me to feel more comfortable with myself—deep inside—and to feel more comfortable with the outside world when I leave my studio. If there are so many details gathered in my artworks, it is because there are so many thoughts and so many emotions running through my mind. Drawing the way I do helps me to channel my mind. It gives me both a sense of control and release.

Gaëlle Compozia | Ornithologia I, Behind The Foliage... | 2023

Gaëlle Compozia | In The Name Of Glory | 2023

is done, you can't fill in the gaps anymore. You are no longer driven to pursue or achieve something. There is a period of depression before starting a new project.

Your compositions often function like visual maps or puzzles, inviting the viewer to explore them slowly. How important is the idea of "reading" an image in your work?

I can use another metaphor to explain my approach: comics. My artworks are like a comic book made of only one panel that summarizes a myth, a novel, or a study. I design them with a specific reading direction: circular, from bottom to top and vice versa. Some of my works are structured with friezes, whose role is to guide the spectator and to guide me during the artistic process. For instance, you can read my illustration of the 12 Labors of Hercules like a clock (the 12 hours of days and nights), following the 12 friezes that outline the 12 labors accomplished. I myself followed this clockwise structure while carrying out the drawing. Reading directions are at the core of my artistic approach. My works are dense and profuse, but very organized. I am driven to set order and achieve an overview.

More recently, your work has turned toward ornithology and the illustration of birds. What sparked this shift, and what do birds symbolize or represent for you within your broader artistic universe?

In the summer of 2022, on a French island, at the beach with my husband, we were watching the sunset. And we were not alone. On the shore, there were grey herons standing and facing the sunset too. I'm sure they were absolutely not fishing. They were not looking down at prey. They were watching the red sun at the horizon, like us. I want to say with us. It was magical—a pure moment of peace and beauty. That's what birds symbolize for me. When I contemplate them, I feel peaceful. That moment helped me remember that I loved drawing birds as a child. Later, at home, I found old childhood drawings of birds. So I decided to reconnect with this subject and explore it artistically as an adult.

You balance your artistic practice with a part-time salaried job, which you describe as a way to preserve artistic freedom. How does this balance influence your relationship with time, pressure, and creativity?

I'd lie if I said it's easy. Keeping a balance between a salaried job and artwork is a daily battle, even if it's a part-time job. Sometimes I am too tired to draw when I come home from my job as a social worker. Sometimes it steals all my energy. Yet art is my decompression chamber, my safety valve, my refuge from the disruptions of the world. Art is where I feel free. It is where I can set my own rules, my own limits, my own goals, my own pace—not the rules, goals, and pace required by a boss or a customer. It is where I take back control of my life. When I find a privileged moment for art, time and pressure disappear for a while. I feel safe, like in a cocoon. Drawing liberates my overflowing emotions and resets my mind. My part-time job fills my fridge and my bank account, while art fills my heart and my soul. Soon, my heart and soul will also be filled with the love of a child...

As you are entering a new chapter of life by becoming a mother, do you feel this transition is already influencing your artistic vision or inner imagery?

I think so. Before this child I am carrying successfully, I had to endure several miscarriages. These sad events led me into deep reflections on motherhood, femininity, and life and death—reflections that found their way into my artwork. Recently, I made an illustration about Egyptian deities related to motherhood and another one about Osiris, the Egyptian god of death. Behind my blue birds artwork, designed in degraded shades of blue, there is a hidden but strong aspiration for calmness. My illustration of The Little Prince was also influenced by what I was going through. I felt so sad, so lonely. The Little Prince, written by Saint-Exupéry, is a tale about sadness and loneliness, and it resonated deeply within me. This book shook me to my core. That's why I had to draw The Little Prince—to express and expel my sorrow. Right now, I'm working on a portrait of the Japanese goddess Izanami, and it is no coincidence. I could say a lot about this myth and this new artwork, but it would be too long, so I will simply say that art helps me overcome hard times and rise again after a fall on the road of life.

Gaëlle Compozia | He Who For Years Wandered | 2020

Alexandra Shershukova

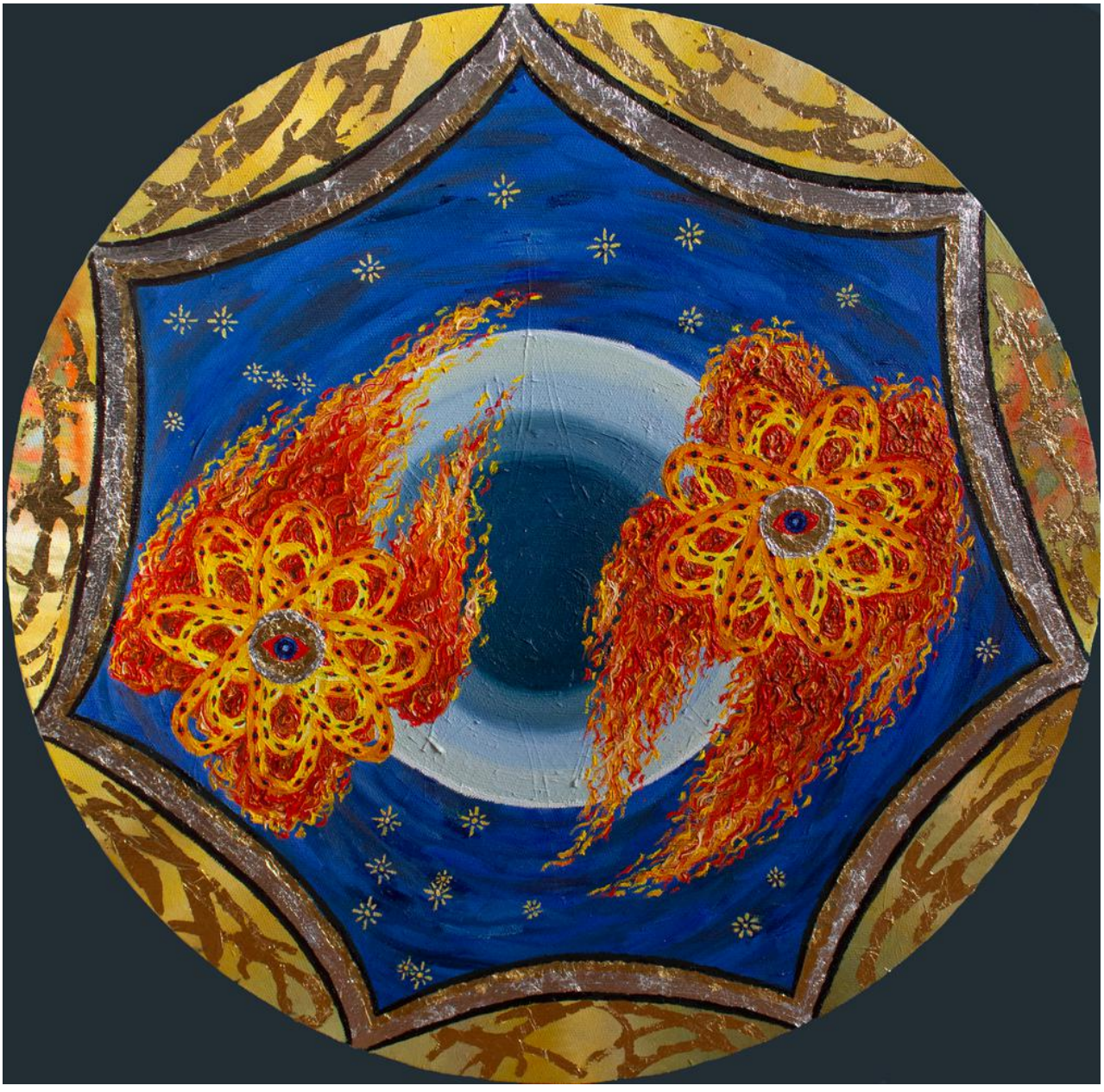
As an artist, I am largely self-taught; informally, I was mentored in painting by Viktor Khusainovich Sharafutdinov. I work in painting and illustration. My artistic direction is Impressionism. I primarily use oil paint and mixed media.

My areas of interest include mythology and religion as elements of cultural influence on society. I am also inspired by urban legends and local folklore.

Project Statement

My paintings reflect my perception of life, myself, and the people around me. All of this is filtered through a lens of mystification and magical thinking. For me, my creative practice is a form of communication with society: I speak about myself, and society responds with feedback.

Alexandra Shershukova | Serenity | 2025



Alexandra Shershukova | Epiphany | 2024

Linh Hoang Tran

Your life journey includes a very early migration from Vietnam to the United States. How has this experience of displacement and adaptation shaped your artistic identity and emotional world-building?

Through my very early migration from Vietnam to the United States, I had to grieve the childhood that I once had during my six years of life in Vietnam and the family members who I will not have the chance to see everyday. It was a sacrifice that my parents have made for me to have a better life and a better future. My first days of elementary school were a struggle. I became known as "The New Student". The only female Asian student that was wearing a white and blue navy dress for a school uniform which is not typical for students there. The mandatory uniform policy at my school at the time was plain navy blue or white collared shirts, paired with navy blue, tan, or khaki bottoms which can be pants, shorts, skirts, skorts, and jumpers. There weren't any rules for shoe types. There are no hats allowed indoors. I felt very out of place when I wore my white collared and navy blue dress to school on the first day. The only language I was able to speak was Vietnamese and I was placed by the school into ESL (English Second Language) from Kindergarten to 6th Grade. It was a time when making friends was the hardest for me. I became a victim of bullying. To me, life then was rough. I felt really lonely and depressed. I always felt that I was falling behind everyone in class. I didn't have anyone to talk to except for my parents and I always felt homesick. I was dealing with a lot of trauma that affected me emotionally and physically. I was able to make friends in third grade and fourth grade. I attended Chinese School after school for homework help. I get to play basketball, take drawing class, perform, and learn Chinese with friends. Some of the people that I were friends with either moved to a different school or we grew apart after sixth grade graduation. I had a lot of memorable memories. There were good things that happened to me during my time in elementary. I got better at speaking, writing, and reading English. I am grateful for the morning assemblies, Scholastic Book Fairs, Scholastic Book Order Forms, Highlight Books, Holiday celebrations, field trips, food, getting Honor Roll, friends I've made, getting introduced to the violin family, school staff, and the afternoon lunches. On Christmas, I got to play the role of Cindy Lou Who From The Grinch Who Stole Christmas, I learned a dance where I skipped backwards, and performed to Miley Cyrus's The Climb Song. I've made new friends at a tutoring center that I attended at the time for help with homework. I received Student of The Month in sixth grade. I used to be an extrovert before migrating to the US. After migrating to the US, I became an introvert because of the struggles that I went through. The shows of Disney, Nickelodeon, Cartoon Network, Qubo, Vietnamese Television, and Asian Dramas became a safe place for me. It is a place where I do not get judged. V-Pop, Pop, and K-Pop became another place that I found comfort in. These experiences shaped my current artistic identity. I learned to adapt, be resilient, and use my voice through art to tell my story as a Vietnamese-American immigrant. When world-building, I rely on my emotions and

Linh Hoang Tran | The Pierced Heart Of A Pageant Girl And An Fallen Angel | 2025

Linh Hoang Tran | The Fireflies Of Nostalgia | 2025

the message I want to bring to my art. I always try to include a piece of Vietnamese elements that honor heritage, embrace personal identity, and connect deeply with those who see my art.

Many of your works feel deeply nostalgic and childlike, yet also complex and symbolic. What role does childhood memory play in your creative process?

Childhood memory plays a huge role in my creative process. It is a way for me to honor my past, embrace entertainment that I grew up with, to heal my inner child, and a tribute to my homeland. My childhood in Vietnam was a beautiful time in my life and I want to preserve it in my works. I am a Vietnamese, who will always be proud to be Vietnamese, no matter where I am in the world.

You often reference fantasy worlds where nature exists without human interference. Is this an imagined refuge, a form of critique, or a future vision?

I view fantasy worlds as an imagined refuge, a future vision, and a way to escape reality. Life can be tough. Fantasy worlds can be a healing and therapeutic place to visit. I visit these fantasy worlds through reading a book, watching films, and through world-building in my art. When I was little, I spent the first half of my childhood in Củ Chi District, a rural district that is an hour drive to the city. My maternal grandma's house was behind the Saigon River and to get over to the other side. My mom or a family member would drive a motorbike with me sitting behind. The motorbike would be driven on a motor boat which acts like a ferry. It was a form of transportation for the citizens who live. The motor boat would take us along with other citizens to the other side. My mom would usually go to either buy fresh produce from wet markets, buy my favorite snacks and drinks, buy hot food for the day, take me to preschool, or the night market for some late night snacks. In the afternoon, I would take naps on a hammock that were hung from huge wooden poles, a mattress on the tile floor, or fanned by my mom to sleep on a wood veneer bed. I really enjoyed the gust of wind breezing by me and the silence filling the air. The country lifestyle has helped me to slow down everything around me and take things slowly. To me, the fantasy worlds give me a sense of belonging that is similar to what my life in the countryside used to be.

Animation Studios such as Studio Ghibli, Disney, and Tim Burton strongly influenced your generation. How do these visual languages translate into your own artistic universe?

Studio Ghibli is known for nostalgia, whimsical storytelling, raw emotions felt from the animated characters, and nature. Disney is known for fairytales, Disney Princesses, and theme songs.
Tim Burton is known for dark, gothic, and whimsical storytelling. Studio Ghibli, Disney, and Tim Burton are a few inspirations that I have in my work. Studio Ghibli and Disney are visually translated into my characters and world-building that I have created in my illustrations. Tim Burton is visually translated into my traditional artwork, digital artwork, clothes that I created during my undergrad, and my fashion sketches found in my sketchbook.

Your practice spans traditional textile techniques, digital art, and fashion design. How do you decide which medium best serves a particular idea or emotion?

I would start with an idea of what I want to do, the story that I want to tell, and how I can do that through the medium that I will be using to create the art. I would choose traditional textile techniques if I want to tell a story of the past, present, and future. I would rely on the colors and textures to help create the emotions that I want to convey. I choose digital art for a particular idea that I struggle to do traditionally and perfectly. I see digital art as a form of convenience. Digital art allows me to use all of the colors that I want without being limited to one color. I can use the undo button whenever I make a mistake. I choose Fashion Design when I want to storytell through textiles, textures, colors, symbols, and history. I see Fashion Design as a way for me to create accessibility, diversity, inclusivity, cultural identity, environmental impact, and innovate. I want people to see my work and feel that they can relate to the message that I want to convey through my pieces. I envision creating a collection that challenges mainstream aesthetics and reflects the Vietnamese-American immigrant experience.

You describe your work as whimsical and fantastical, yet themes of loneliness and identity often emerge. How do you balance playfulness with emotional depth?

I do not feel that there is a way to balance playfulness with emotional depth. I feel that sometimes there is too little playfulness and more emotional depth. Sometimes it would be more of the other way around. I rely on my gut feeling and I would think about what I can do to make my art feel just right in my eyes.

Looking forward, how would you like your imagined worlds to evolve, and what do you hope viewers feel when entering them?

I would like my imagined worlds to evolve into something big, beautiful, nostalgic, and a place to revisit during hard times. I hope that when entering my imagined worlds. The viewers will feel at peace. They would see these worlds that I have created as a safe place where they can be themselves without judgement. They can feel a sense of hope and belonging.

Milena Santirocco, an emerging self-taught contemporary painter.
Milena was born in Lanciano (Chieti), Italy, in 1970. From an early age, she grew up in a family environment rich in art; her father painted and often took her to exhibitions.
Only as an adult did she approach painting, creating works for public spaces, painting stylized subjects on walls.
She began painting on canvas using acrylics, then explored figurative and landscape art and decided to present her work to the public.
Since 2024, she has exhibited her works in Lanciano. In 2025, she exhibited in Rome, Latina, Turin, Teramo, Florence, Montesilvano (PE), Calolziocorte (Lecco), Bacoli (Naples), and Lanciano. In 2026, she exhibited in Paris, Milan, and Rome.

Artist Statement

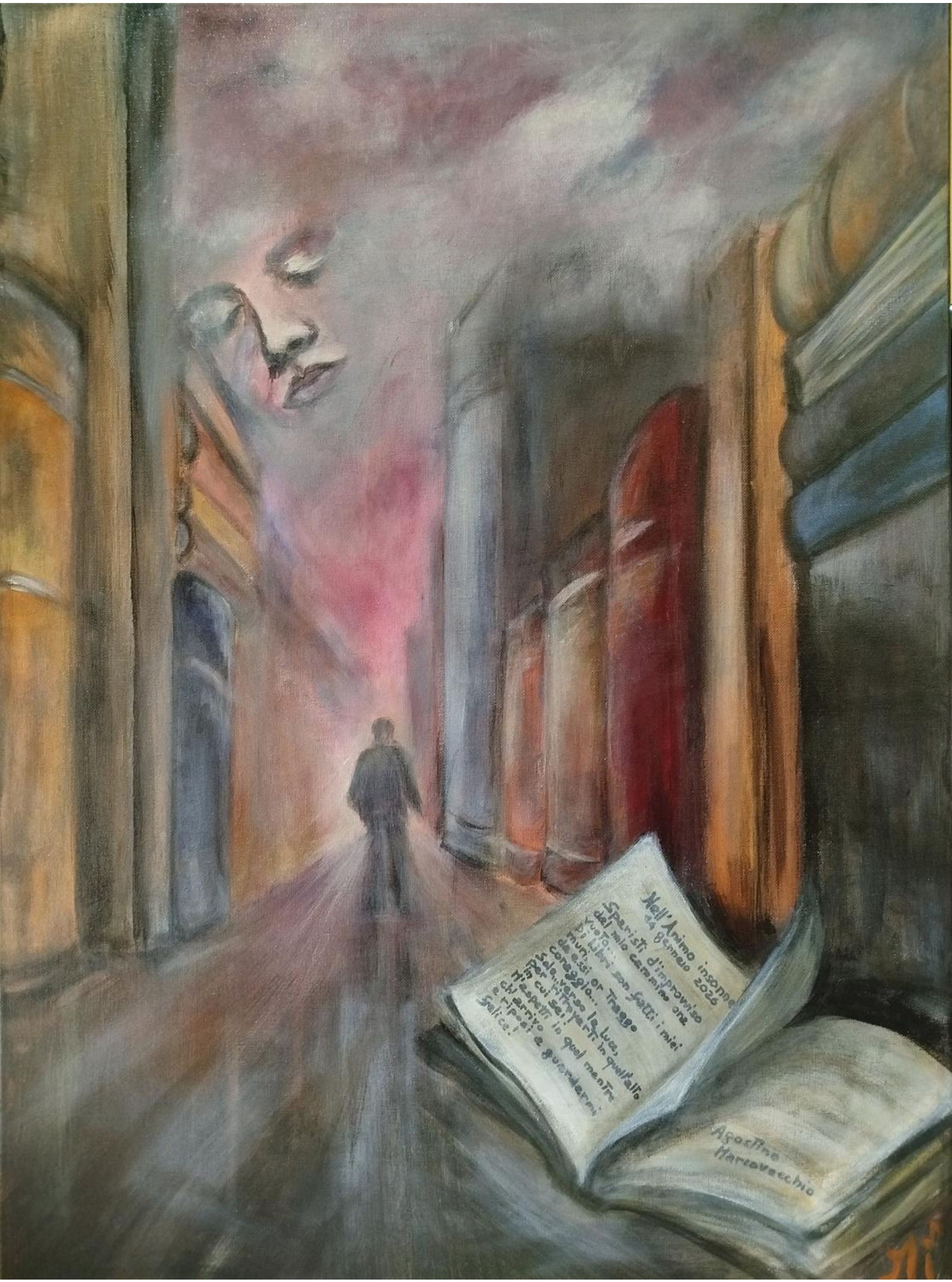
YOU WERE POETRY
by Milena Santirocco
painted with mixed media on 58x78 canvas.

Inspired by a true story, my work "You Were Poetry" tells of an eternal love, beyond life!

I sincerely thank the artist Agostino Marcovecchio for his poetic contribution.
His poem "Nell' animo insonne" magically integrates into the dreamlike context of the painting, creating a perfect union between visual art and poetry!

Nell'Animo insonne...

Sparisti d'improvviso
dal mio cammino ora
vuoto...
Di Libri son fatti i miei
muri,
da essi or traggo
coraggio...
Solo... verso la Luce,
per ritrovarti in quell'alto
in cui sei!
M'aspetti in quel mentre
ch'arrivo
e riposi a guardarmi
felice!
(Agostino Marcovecchio)


Nell'Animo insonne
Agostino Marrovecchio

Darina Komorowski

Your practice combines visual art and psychology. How does your psychological background influence the way you construct meaning and emotion in your paintings?

Darina Komorowski | The Presence Of Life | 2025

Knowledge of how the human psyche works inevitably changes the way you perceive the world, just as any lived experience does. I'm grateful that, through my training in psychology, I encountered a great deal of unguarded human feeling: vulnerability, tenderness and the quiet beauty of what unfolds inside each of us. I look for the same in painting. I want art to help a person turn inward, because the way we see reality says, first of all, something about us. I wish we would face ourselves more often, finding the courage and the respect to hold our thoughts with warmth.

It matters to me that my paintings don't pull someone away from life or demand attention by force. But when a viewer has the time and an inner willingness to meet the work, I want it to be able to unpack something, to stir emotion, invite close looking and draw a person in. My canvases are dense with detail and an internal compositional momentum. As you spend time with them, you can move deeper, loosening the knots of your own awareness, thinking, feeling and asking yourself: What are these emotions? What memories or experiences do they touch? How much of this is about me? What is happening inside me right now? What can I take from this encounter and what else have I learned about myself?

You often describe your visual language as "intensified" and "turned up." What does

Darina Komorowski | Thoughts | 2026

exaggeration allow you to express that subtlety cannot?

Many of my paintings are bright and high-contrast because they mirror how a person experiences their own life. For us, the value of each emotion we live through is always high. What happens inside almost inevitably feels stronger, larger, more intense than it appears objectively. That intensity is part of the power and the beauty of being human.
In painting, heightened colour and contrast paradoxically allow you to look at your feelings from the outside, as if carrying them out into the open and seeing them differently. In that shift, you begin to notice that not every emotion or state has to be interpreted exactly the way we've learned to interpret it internally.
For me, it's important to validate emotion, to allow yourself to experience feelings vividly, fully and honestly. At the same time, I want to stay aware of the line beyond which emotion starts to work against life: tightening, limiting, taking away movement and joy. What matters to me is that an experience doesn't consume a person's life, but brings them back to it.

Flowers dominate most of your work. When did they become your central motif and what do they allow you to say about human relationships?

Flowers, to me, reflect with great precision what is most alive and most essential in a person. A flower embodies life and naturalness, something basic that exists in each of us. And yet it is vulnerable: it has no will in the human sense, no complex psychological mechanisms, no defences. There is only an impulse toward life, toward light, warmth, growth and happiness.
It is within this contrast that my conversation about human relationships begins. What is most important and most tender in us is, in its essence, deeply "floral": the desire for love, acceptance and closeness, the impulse to grow, the ability to live through bloom and to respect our own fading. At the same time, in humans these simple impulses are often distorted and amplified. The desire for more, psychological defences, greed, anger, envy. I don't label these as bad. In many ways they serve a protective function: they hide a person's vulnerability from themselves, because touching it can be unbearably painful.
I feel that through the image of flowers it becomes possible to speak about relationships gently, humanely and in a life-affirming way. To remind a person that they are alive and that they are part of a larger cycle of life.

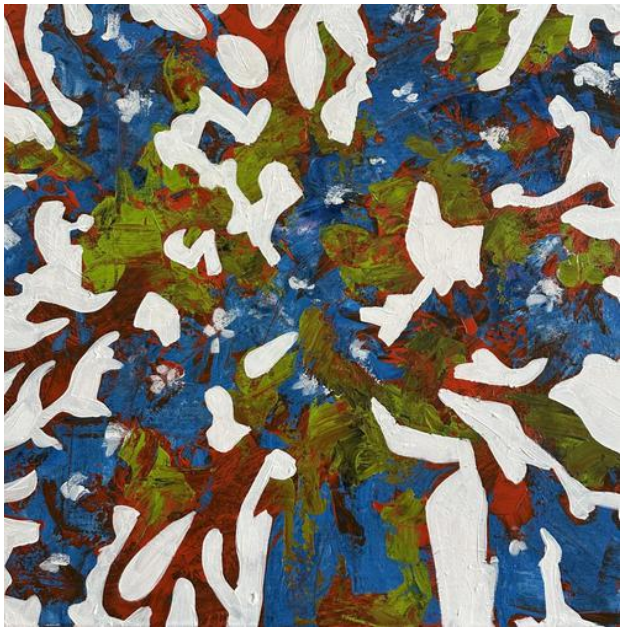
In your series Metamorphosis (2025), transformation plays a key role. What kind of change are these flowers undergoing, emotional, temporal or existential?

Darina Komorowski | White And Flowers | 2025

I don't think transformation is ever only one thing. It is emotional, temporal and existential at the same time, because experience cannot be rewound and today we are no longer who we were yesterday. In Metamorphosis, I wanted to hold onto the sensation of flowing time, when a moment seems to ask: stop, look, you are beautiful, even as your form is still changing.
In this series the flowers undergo metamorphosis before your eyes, as if impressed by emotion, lit from within. There is an elusive beauty to the process that doesn't require an ideal peak of bloom and there is tenderness toward what gradually fades, shifting its tone and rhythm. I see it as an honest portrait of life, where value doesn't arrive afterwards, but is born within the current itself.
Existentially, the series moves through acceptance of a changing form and making peace with it. When you allow yourself to see change as natural, the way you look at yourself and the world also shifts. For me, Metamorphosis is about that adjustment of perception and about the ability to remain present, feeling and quietly at ease within the process, noticing life as it unfolds right now.

You speak about the contrast between outward beauty and inner tension. How do you translate something unspoken or invisible into colour and form?

For me, translating what is unspoken into colour and form begins with attention to my own sensations and with the experience of meeting human emotions as they appear without defences. Listening for that, I'm not trying to depict a specific feeling. I'd rather leave the viewer room to live through their own response, because it will always be personal.
In my work, colour often carries tension, remaining bright and direct, like inner experience at its most intense. The composition, by contrast, can be calm and contained, holding balance, offering a structure against which colour becomes sharper and more audible. That's how a sense of external clarity can emerge while something living continues to pulse underneath.
I often think of tension as a signal you can notice without suppressing it or rushing past it. Working



Darina Komorowski | Midday Flowers | 2026

with form and rhythm, I try to create a space where a viewer, lingering with their gaze, meets their own states and leaves the encounter a little more sensitive and present.

Your paintings often feel suspended in time, as if caught at the peak of bloom. Why is this moment before fading so important to you?

Not all of my paintings are fixed at a peak. My most recent series is largely devoted to transition and metamorphosis, the changes a person moves through. These works are about movement and about respect for the process of transformation, in which life shifts its rhythm, its tonality, its form, without losing its value.
In earlier works, I was drawn to a sense of time pausing, when the gaze slows down and you can feel what usually slips past. That kind of moment brings a quiet in which you can hear yourself again, returning you to the simple experience of the present, where everything decisive actually happens.
Sometimes the path begins with beauty. Beauty can attract you, pull you out of noise, give you a reason to stop, simply to look, to breathe, to be. And if the viewer moves beyond that first "how beautiful", another layer gradually opens, where beauty becomes an entry point into deeper feeling. We can make plans and revisit the past in our minds, but life reveals itself in the point where we are right now. If I feel joy, that speaks of life. If sadness or anger rises, that is life too. I

Darina Komorowski | History | 2026

am present in this moment and there is value in that, something warm and sustaining.

When viewers stand in front of your paintings, what kind of questions or inner reactions do you hope will stay with them after they leave?

When someone stands in front of my work, I hope they notice their inner processes as they arise in the moment: thoughts, memories and shifts of feeling, and recognise that this is not so much about painting as it is about themselves. The work becomes a reason to stop, to hold your gaze, to hear yourself, staying in contact with what moves inside you. For me, the person matters more than art, because nothing matters more than life. At the same time, it is precisely through art, through its presence around us, that we can feel something more deeply and more precisely. My paintings don't offer descriptions or ready-made answers. There are no clear explanations of what or why. There are images, emotion and colour that ask questions of the viewer, gently leading them beyond first impression, from beauty to attention, from attention to honesty.
These are not questions about the painting, but about yourself: What is your happiest memory? Why do you feel lonely? What happened to you that changed you? Can you enjoy the moment? How capable are you of being here and now, without constantly running somewhere else? Ideally, I want people to make time to understand themselves more clearly, not as analysis for its own sake, but as a living contact with who you are and what surrounds you. Becoming more content, more feeling, more present, a person gradually returns to a sense of authorship, as if remembering again that they can be the creator of their own life.

My name is **Isabel Amado** (known as Bel) i was born in a small city in Brazil called Poços de Caldas, Minas Gerais, in 2003. I am a contemporary visual artist with a surrealist and illustrative touch to painting. The work I do reveals a sensitivity to my culture and the nature around me. Using paint and a brush, I work across different surfaces to create a look that blends lived elements with represented dreams. The paintings feature vibrant colors and expressive characters to represent my personal experience growing up in different parts of Brazil, a country where nature is essential to the population, culture, food, folklore, and the country's life.
Since childhood, I have been interested in painting and drawing. I made portraits as gifts and painted the walls of friends' and family's homes. I enrolled at NABA (Nuova Accademia di Belle Arti) in Milan, where I completed my bachelor's degree in Painting and Visual Arts. As an artist, I plan to return home, bringing my artistic background to represent my country in the best possible way, showing the world the beauty of my culture through my work.

Artist Statement
The Cardboard Series refers to a Series of the Female Body taking as a reference the subconscious imaginations and using my own body as a reference for the production.
What began as an experiment, blending acrylic and oil upon humble cardboard, became an ode to the beauty of the feminine figure and the silent language of its expression.
Everything resulted in the creation of a constant series that is still in development, using a simple surface that gives visibility to the vibrant colors of the paint.

Isabel Amado | Cardboard | 2023

Isabel Amado | Cardboard | 2023

Interview

Jennifer McGee & Zoey Qu

Your work is deeply rooted in personal experience. How did your relationship with Isahiah reshape your understanding of inclusion and advocacy?

We adopted Isahiah just before the pandemic. In searching for answers for him we learned that resources were inconsistent and vague. He is an older, non speaking teen with profound autism, the group that falls between the cracks. Everything I thought I knew about Inclusion and accessibility were redefined. He is unable to engage in his daily living without help and supports. This changed my understanding of how little society accepts and supports those with high needs.

Inclusion is Free" carries a powerful message. What moment or realization became the starting point for this project?

Zoey Qu and I had already created a few pieces of art centered around inclusion and self worth for disabled persons before creating Inclusion is Free. I was preparing for a trip to NYC when I felt compelled to center a piece around Freedom as it relates to inclusion and self worth. NYC embodies many different people and cultures so it felt right to create a piece that is representative of the disabled community as a whole, both physical and mental, and visible and invisible disabilities.

The Statue of Liberty is a central symbol in this work. What does freedom mean to you today, especially in the context of disability and visibility?

The Statue of Liberty here represents Freedom, the quintessential trait of American Identity, but true freedom is a broken and jagged reality for many individuals with disabilities because of a lack of accessible resources in the community, and a lack of social understanding and connection. Often the individual is fighting an internal battle to seek support and inclusion. There can be a sense of brokenness, or emptiness that can bring about feelings of being unworthy or less than "normal." In turn, these self proclaimed untruths can lead to self exclusion and isolation. This piece aims to speak to both the external and internal obstacles of inclusion. Only by embracing our whole self can we be free to live our best life, and by authentically accepting others are we fully living the ideals of Freedom.

You describe inclusion as a choice rather than a privilege. Why do you think society still struggles to fully embrace this idea?

I think that too many people wait for the perfect conditions or situations before they can enjoy the moment. But actually we can both seek to improve the injustices of the world while simultaneously being content with ourselves today. We continue to navigate the community with Isahiah even though it is time consuming and difficult. Some days we have to leave early or just sit in the car, but we keep trying little by little because Isahiah needs to live and be able to go into the community. He is human, not a monster. This choice is part of my advocacy, creating a space for him in society. I want society to see him, and hopefully by choosing to show up and create opportunities for him to travel we are building compassion and acceptance for him. I think that society continues to be complacent to creating space and opportunities because that is the easiest thing to do. It is hard for many to see past their own to do list.

How does your role as a parent of a special needs child influence the way you approach storytelling, both visually and narratively?

I think because I adopted Isahiah and had to learn so much in a short time i have a unique perspective that can really help the general population understand the simple ways we as a society can do better in acceptance and accessibility for the disabled community. It is like having a dual perspective from being well meaning but unknowing to knowing but feeling overwhelmed and sometimes powerless. I really enjoy creating children's stories because I am forced to simplify the message into small nuggets. These nuggets are great conversation starters, hopefully leading to more questions and opportunities for family and class discussions.

This project is a collaboration. How did your partnership with illustrator Zoey Qu shape the final visual language of Inclusion is Free?

Zoey and I worked for months on this piece to ensure the complex visual composition was right, and the various symbols of supports were properly placed. From the texture of the sunflowers (symbol of invisible disabilities) to the gradient of the mental health ribbon adorned on Lady Liberty's robe, every stroke is in careful balance with our purpose for this piece. Zoey and I are a great team because she is able to bring my visions to life while contributing her unique style to each piece we create.

What reactions or conversations do you hope this piece sparks among viewers who may not have direct experience with disability or inclusion?

Jennifer McGee & Zoey Qu | Inclusion Is Free | 2024

I want people to see persons with disabilities as equal and deserving of all the good and bad life has to offer. Disabled persons need different types of support to be able to access their unique selves and their own independence..This can look different for everyone with a disability but the attitude In providing these supports should not even be a question. By providing access,and community supports we are not heroes, we are just humans doing what humans are supposed to do. By embracing our wholeness despite our disability we are choosing to belong instead of waiting for permission.

Louise Lalonde
I am a self-taught artist who attended a lot of worshops throughout my life. So, I have experienced a lot of medias: watercolour, acrylic paint, pastels, coloured pencil because I like to draw. My principal inspirations come from the city, people, nature, specially trees, winter sceneries.

Project Statement
For a couple of years, I explore mixed media with collage and other medium. I find a lot of possibilities to explore my creativity.

Louise Lalonde | Where Is the Sun?

Louise Lalonde | Three Little Houses

Isidographe3124

Born in 1989 in Limoges, France, I grew up in Cussac, in the heart of the Limousin countryside, an environment where nature and local life played a central role. Coming from a family of craftsmen dedicated to their trade and attentive to their clients, I experienced a childhood marked by a strong work ethic and close community ties. Vacations were rare, and it was through the pages of magazines like "GEO" that I would escape and discover other horizons. My first steps in photography were taken with a disposable camera, like many young people of my generation, during school or educational outings. Among my most memorable experiences is a photo of a fox's den; although it didn't receive the enthusiastic response I had hoped for from my parents, it marked the beginning of my exploration of imagery.
The real trigger came in 2005 thanks to the film "March of the Penguins," lent to me by one of my parents' clients. The visual splendor of this documentary deeply moved me and allowed me to travel differently, fueling my desire to capture the beauty of the world. That same client, sensitive to my wonder and my desire to seize the moment, passed on his passion for photography and gave me my very first "digital camera." During my years of volunteering with the fire department and during my paramedical studies, I had the opportunity to accompany people with mental disabilities on a tourist trip. This experience strengthened my awareness of the importance of opening up to different environments, both for them and for me. I felt a certain frustration at not being able to capture these precious moments, due to the lack of a camera at hand.Supported by my loved ones, I was able to acquire a digital SLR, an essential companion that allowed me to take my father on a journey through my images before he embarked on his final journey. Since then, photography has led me to cover various events such as weddings, scientific conferences, and to share some of my photos in my former work as a nurse, thus helping my patients broaden their view of the world. Photography holds a central place in my life. For me, it represents a legacy, a gift passed on by the people who crossed my path and touched me deeply enough to turn it into a true passion.

Artist Statement
I have a desire to share, or to help others share, my curiosity about the world. Indeed, through my previous profession and my involvement with people who do not necessarily have the opportunity to open up to the world, I share my travel photographs so that they too can travel. That is why the images in this selection are different, both technically and in terms of material, as well as in the story they tell, where each scene I sought to highlight is connected to a feeling and an inspiration drawn from the world of art, whether it be cinematic, musical, or of course photographic.

Elodie Jullien | Nobilomo | 2024

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