

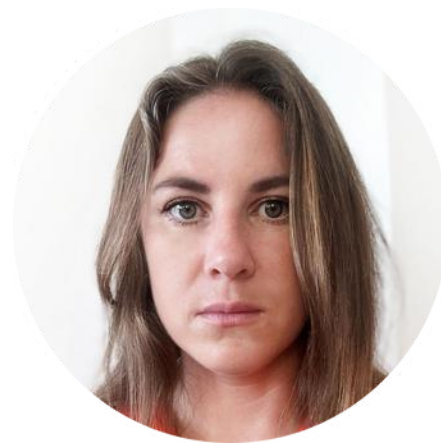
# VISUAL ART JOURNAL







# — *Intro*



**Anna Gvozdeva**

Curator of  
Visual Art Journal

Hello, dear reader,

You are holding in your hands the 22nd issue of our magazine, and I'm glad to see it growing and resonating with our audience.

The work of an artist is unpredictable—sometimes a painting may take a day, while other times it requires years of effort or a series of breaks, returning again and again to refine something.

Can a painting be judged by the time spent on it? Or is the meaning behind the work more important? These are questions each person must answer for themselves. After all, some value the craftsmanship and technique of the artist, while others prioritize the idea above all. In this issue, you will find both paintings that were created over many years and photographs that are captured in an instant, but behind them lies a tremendous amount of preparation. I wish you enjoyable reading, and thank you for following our magazine!

*On the Front Cover:*

**Erik Ebert**

Eau Rouge  
2025

*On the Back Cover:*

**Daria Lada**

Melting Point  
2024

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

# — Interview

## Chong Liu

**Your career has spanned animation, digital illustration, concept art, and even interior design. How do you balance these different mediums, and do you find any crossover between them?**

I studied 3D animation in school and worked as an indie animation director in my early career. However, I eventually decided to focus more on the pre-production stage of animation, gradually transitioning into a role as a concept artist. During my spare time, when concept design no longer brings me as much joy, I turn to digital illustration as a new tool for artistic expression.

Jumping between different mediums can sometimes feel overwhelming because it pushes me out of my comfort zone and forces me to learn new principles. However, as an active concept artist in the game industry, I find that my background in 3D animation and my passion for illustration have become invaluable to both my art and career. My experience in 3D animation has given me a stronger understanding of narrative and the ability to interpret 2D objects in a three-dimensional way. Additionally, my familiarity with 3D programs helps me work more efficiently when creating concept designs.

While I see illustration and concept design as distinct fields requiring different mindsets, I believe they can complement each other. For example, the problem-solving approach I've developed as a concept artist helps me clarify themes in my illustrations, preventing creative blocks. At the same time, the reference-gathering process for illustration has expanded my visual library, making me more confident when working on concept designs.



Chong Liu | The Flower of War

**Your work on the animated short film "NoWhereMan" earned significant recognition. How did that experience shape your approach to storytelling and visual design?**

In terms of visual design, working on NoWhereMan was not only my first time acting as a design generalist—responsible for shaping the overall look of the animated short, including characters, scenes, and props—but also my first experience art directing myself. Since I was the only concept artist and illustrator on the team, I had to build a visual guide for the entire animation from scratch.

Compared to working on larger film or game projects, where established visual guides and art direction are already in place, my experience as the art director for NoWhereMan gave me a unique opportunity to experiment with bold and unconventional ideas with very few restrictions. I had the freedom to fully apply my own aesthetic to the film, which was both exciting and challenging. This project also taught me a valuable lesson as a concept artist—it helped me discover which aspects of design I excel at and which parts of the creative process I truly enjoy.

When it came to storytelling, creating the storyboards for NoWhereMan was a challenging process. We revised them nearly 30 times before I was finally satisfied. The constant polishing and reworking were difficult, but through this experience, I gained a deeper understanding of narrative principles—lessons that later proved invaluable to my work as a concept artist.



This project also helped me identify the aspects of design I excel at and the parts of the creative process I truly enjoy. It was a pivotal experience that not only strengthened my storytelling skills but also deepened my understanding of visual development.

**In your concept art and digital illustrations, you create otherworldly landscapes and charismatic characters. What is your process for world-building and character development?**

My approach to world-building begins with a strong narrative foundation. Whether designing a vast, otherworldly landscape or developing a compelling character, I always start by asking: What is the story behind this world? What are its rules, cultures, and history? This storytelling-driven process allows me to create immersive and believable environments that feel lived-in.

For example, in my world-building project *The Sky Searchers*, I created a world where the entire land is shrouded in a thick layer of toxic gases. As the poisonous fog steadily rises, survivors are forced to build their shelters on higher ground. To gather resources, they construct and pilot makeshift aircraft, navigating the skies in search of supplies. In this project, I focused on designing vehicles and landscapes that visually communicate the world's history and function while ensuring that the characters feel organically connected to their environment. Character development follows a similar philosophy. I consider not just the aesthetics but also the personality, background, and purpose of each character. Their design choices—whether it's clothing,

posture, or accessories—should reflect their experiences and the world they come from.

**You've worked with major clients such as Google and Ubisoft. How has collaborating with such large companies influenced your artistic direction and creative process?**

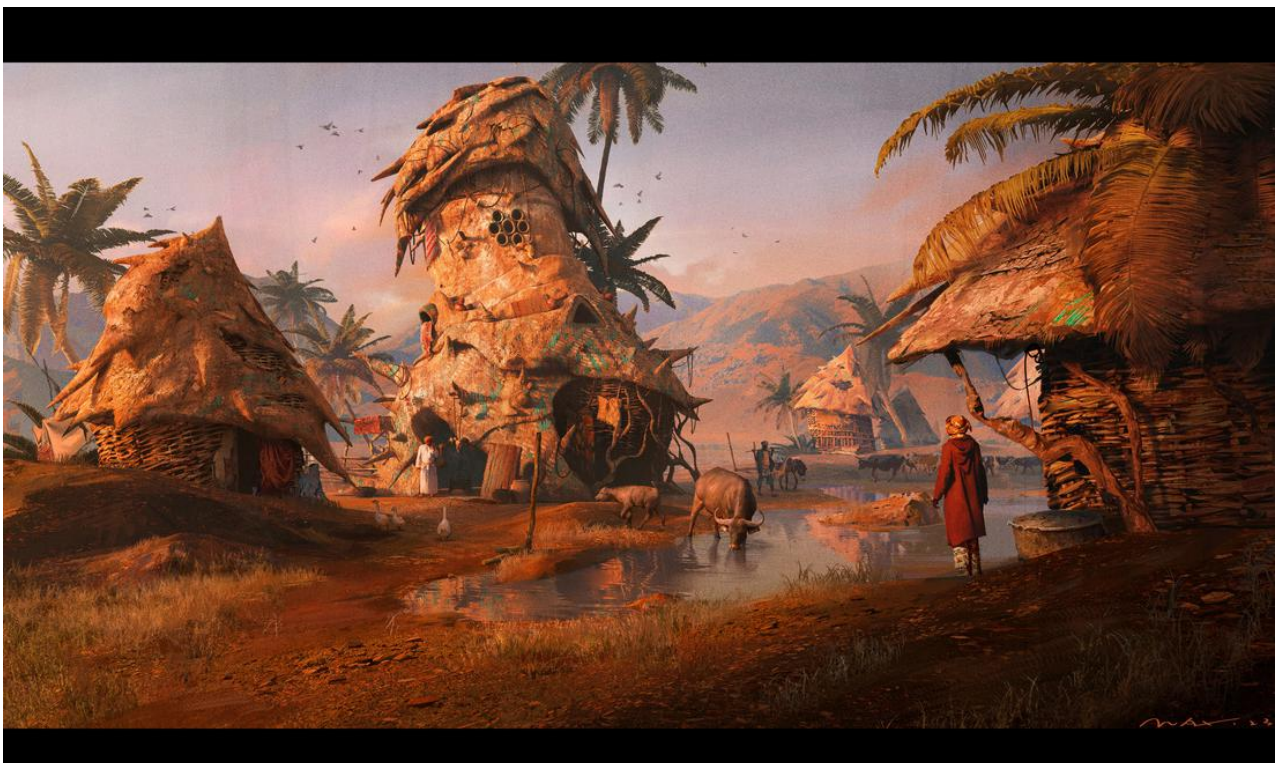
For me, working with a large team on major game titles has significantly improved my process, skill set, and overall understanding of video game production. However, it has contributed less to my growth in art direction.

One of the biggest influences on my work in recent years has been the importance of detail in design. After seeing some of my coworkers' designs with incredible intricacy, I began revisiting my older works and questioning whether my designs contained enough detail to convey rich information and resonate with the audience.

In terms of artistic direction, working as a designer in a team often leaves little room for innovation in that area. While we can maintain some of our personal aesthetics and tastes, the main goal is to align with the project's established art direction and not deviate too far from it. Because of this, I make a habit of creating personal concept art and other digital works to explore and implement my own artistic vision.

**Your recent venture into oil painting is intriguing. How do you approach this traditional medium differently from your digital work?**

Exploring oil painting has given me a fresh perspective



Chong Liu | Max Iiu

on creating art. Traditional materials force me to slow down and think more carefully about each brushstroke, as there's no undo button. Since oil painting is a brand new medium for me, I need time to learn and familiarize myself with it. I remember in my first oil painting class, when drawing live models, I was quite confused by not being able to layer my oil paints on the canvas the way I would in Photoshop. It's also made me more aware of color mixing, texture, and the physicality of paint—insights that have influenced how I approach lighting and brushwork in my digital work.

**As a concept artist at Ubisoft, you must work within specific parameters for video game environments. How do you maintain your creative freedom while adhering to these guidelines?**

Although the priority for concept artists working in a team is to meet task requirements and align with the established art style and direction, there is still room for creative freedom. Just as no two leaves are exactly alike, every artist brings their own vision and aesthetic to their work.

One of my concept design tasks at Ubisoft demonstrates this balance. I was assigned to reskin an AK-47 assault rifle with a vintage steampunk theme. Before I even started, there were several constraints to consider: the required style, the existing weapon model, the overall silhouette I couldn't alter too much, and the project's overarching art direction. However, within these boundaries, there was still plenty of creative freedom. I could explore different combinations of metal steampunk materials, incorporate intricate clockwork mechanisms, and even

rethink the color scheme to make the weapon stand out beyond the typical brass and copper tones of steampunk designs.

I resonate with the phrase, "Restrictions bring creativity." Setting constraints and anchors in a design project narrows the scope of exploration, reducing the likelihood of getting stuck and, in turn, sparking new ideas. In design, there's a fine line between being restricted and being inspired.

**Your artwork often features futuristic and dystopian themes. What draws you to these subjects, and what message do you hope to convey through your art?**

I've always been drawn to futuristic and dystopian themes because they offer a space to explore both possibilities and consequences. The future is unknown, but through design, we can speculate on how technology, society, and human nature might evolve.

For me, it's not just about creating visually striking worlds—it's about storytelling. I like to embed details that hint at the history, struggles, and resilience within these settings. Whether it's a piece of technology shaped by necessity or an environment that reflects societal shifts, I want my work to spark curiosity and invite the audience to think about the world we're building today.

Dystopian themes, in particular, allow me to explore contrasts—beauty in decay, order in chaos, and the human spirit's adaptability. It's not always about warning or pessimism, but rather questioning and reflecting on our trajectory.



Chong Liu | Homeless





**Julia Ponz** is an engineer-technologist in artistic materials processing. During her university years, she also studied jewelry making. After, she worked at an engine manufacturing plant, while spending her free time on handmade crafts, stained glass, and lampworking. Later, she tried to combine glass with silversmithing. After spending several years in emigration searching for her path, she decided to return to creativity and start her journey in art. Stuttering since childhood has made her avoid direct communication out of fear of failure, and she has always sought alternative ways to express herself. Irony and anxiety have become essential parts of her life. Julia has written poetry since the age of 16, and last year, she compiled her poems into a small book in Russian.

### *Project Statement*

**"Bugs and Beings"** creates a sense of absurdity through wordplay and composition. Colorful, hat-wearing men, who could entertain us, sing, play the banjo, or tell captivating stories, are subjected to dynamic energy, a touch of unease, and a sense of confusion. All of this feels like a strange dream.





Julia Ponz | Bugs & Beings | 2025

# Istvan Dukai

**Your work is deeply rooted in geometric tradition and minimalism. Could you elaborate on how these influences shape your artistic process and final compositions?**

I see my autonomous art as predominantly non-referential. My works aim to present objective and perceivable qualities rather than alluding to any external or symbolic meaning.

I strive to find an objective, mathematical organizing principle to counteract disorder and chaos, creating an abstract order or system. At the same time, through my choice of materials and the deliberate degradation of my forms, I also reveal the inevitable—impermanence and decay.

**Your pieces often evoke a sense of calm and transcendence. How do you balance these elements with the inevitable passage of time and moments of disruption in your artwork?**

Balance is a central element of my art, making its role essential. I believe that other areas of life also function properly only when we find and cultivate the right equilibrium.

These artworks can be seen as a declaration of the inherent beauty of natural, ephemeral materials. However, beneath them lies a strict compositional structure, which contrasts with the worldly impermanence of the chosen mediums and subtly references the aforementioned influences from art history.



Istvan Dukai | Fluit | 2022

**You mention that some materials and techniques in your art are evocative of your childhood during the Balkan war. Can you tell us more about how these personal experiences influence your choice of materials and imagery?**

I've mentioned that I primarily view my works objectively, but some of my artistic series engage with specific themes and contemporary issues. One such example is my work on military tarps and tents that were used during the Yugoslav Wars, where my main message is demilitarization.

I reinterpret the objects, surfaces, and materials I source—whether found or deliberately sought out—through both digital and physical acts of degradation. The materials I use are deeply connected to my rural childhood: rough, handwoven sackcloth, military tarps, or worn, rusted metal sheets. Once prepared, these surfaces undergo various physical distressing processes, such as sand washing, soaking, scrubbing, chemical treatments, and boiling in tannin-rich liquids extracted from tanning plants.



**Brutalist architecture and local folk art seem to be important sources of inspiration for your work. How do you incorporate these elements into your compositions, and what do they represent for you?**

Since childhood, one of my primary sources of formal inspiration has been Yugoslav brutalist architecture and Hungary's socialist realist memorials and buildings. I felt like I was in a true sci-fi film when I was near them. In my art, the sensibility of visual arts merges with the complexity of architecture and the systematic approach of design. The geometric decorative patterns of local folk art have also subconsciously become part of my work, as I grew up in a very small, isolated village where I encountered these forms every day. Since I socialized with these elements, I consider it important for them to appear in some form in my artworks.

**The use of digital design combined with traditional printing techniques plays a significant role in your art. How do you see the relationship between digital and traditional practices in contemporary art?**

The era and context are entirely different compared to artists who lived 100–200 years ago. Today,



Istvan Dukai | RUR-SUS | 2020



Istvan Dukai | Objekt V2 Certo Scio | 2020

computers, digital tools, and software are inescapable—they have become an integral part of our daily lives. However, balance, as I've previously mentioned, is crucial here as well—how much of the digital aspect we incorporate into our art, especially when it comes to AI. If the machine-driven element overflows, I don't believe we can still call it a human creation.

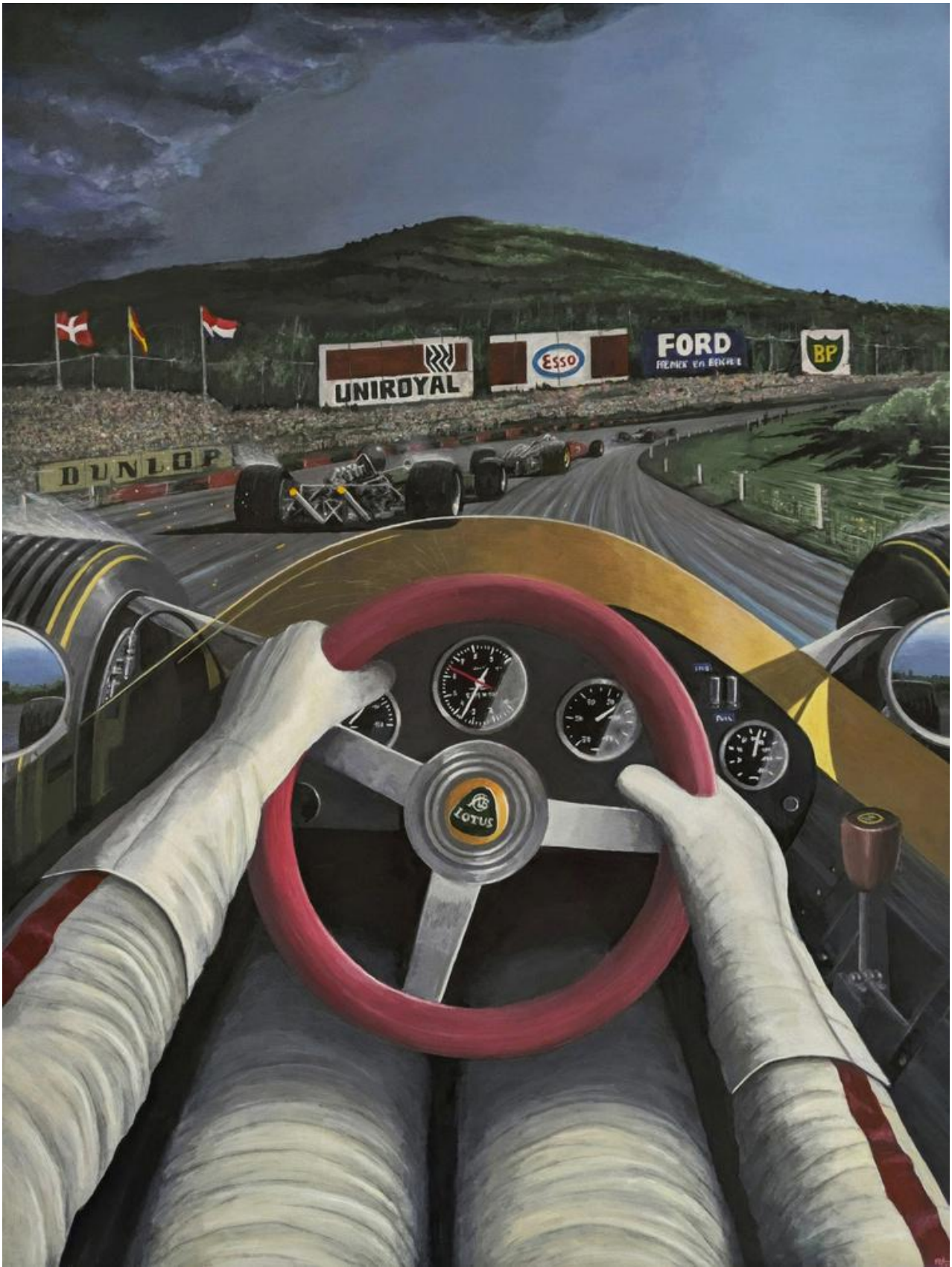
**Your works often feature contrasts, such as light versus dark and contained versus disruptive forms. How do these contrasts relate to the emotional and philosophical messages you aim to convey?**

These contrasts create a certain level of "rhythm" within my otherwise static works. Sharp geometric shapes alternate with curved lines, and these interfering motifs generate illusions, ambiguity, and a sense of movement and flickering.

**Can you describe the role of texture in your art? How does the tactile quality of the materials enhance the viewer's experience?**

My work is primarily characterized by craftsmanship, tactility, and the use of unconventional materials. Since I don't paint with a brush but instead intervene in forgotten, story-filled materials—such as sackcloth and rusted steel sheets—it's crucial that the final piece remains expressive. I believe that my digitally inspired forms become more human, softer, and more approachable when I emphasize the tactile qualities of the various materials.

**Erik Ebert** is a self-taught artist from Germany (m/ 41 years), starting his art journey in 2021. He focuses primarily on the aesthetics of iconic racing motifs in its own clear style with surreal tendencies. The visual language is characterized by emphasized colors and forms. All artworks are based on original historical photos of the golden era of motor racing. The contours of these motifs form the basis for the creation of his works of art. The emerging artist focuses primarily on acrylic painting with elaborate fine glazing techniques and many thin layers. He has steadily developed this work and the techniques over the last years.





## Project Statement

The artwork „**Eau Rouge**“ is inspired by the 1967 Belgian Grand Prix and shows the perspective of the British champion Jim Clark at the famous Eau Rouge curve. The goal of the work was to capture the beauty of this rare moment for which no photograph or film can exist. It's the artist's vision of a special moment from a first-person perspective. The focus of the artwork is on the driver's pose of Jim Clark, looking at the cockpit instruments of his Lotus 49, the racing action as a pursuer of Graham Hill driving in front of him, and the grace of the scene with its sharp light, shadows, and weather conditions at the Belgian circuit 1967. „Eau Rouge“ combines all aspects of a rare moment from a first-person perspective in a unique artistic interpretation. After researching many historical photos of the circuit, the car and the drivers of the year 1967, Erik Ebert experimented in the working process with light and shadow as well as the drivers posture to finally create a surrealistic vision of his view. In order to capture the fine color gradients, acrylic glazing techniques with many thin layers of water-diluted acrylic paint were used in the work process. The surface is a gesso primed wood panel (800 x 600 x 19 mm).

The second racing artwork „**Rocket Ron**“ (acrylic painting, 59x42 cm on paper) was inspired by a retro film sequence from the 70' s and shows the shining blue helmet of Ronnie Peterson, racing with his Lotus through the Green Hell Nuerburgring.



Erik Ebert | Rocket Ron | 2024

# — Interview

## Julia Ciutek

**Your works beautifully integrate fragility, transparency, and light. How do you balance these qualities while working with glass, and what emotional significance do they hold for you?**

Glass, to me, is a medium full of contradictions—it can take on fluid, organic forms just as easily as static, tense structures. It is highly malleable yet fragile and unpredictable. This duality allows me to explore tensions between balance and disruption, control and uncertainty, the visible and what lies hidden beneath the surface. Every property of glass—its structure, texture, the way it reflects or absorbs light—shapes how my works are perceived. I deliberately choose the form and nature of the material to emphasize the emotions I want to convey. Its susceptibility to deformation and fractures becomes a metaphor for tension, internal conflicts, and the instability concealed beneath an outward sense of calm. It is this layered nature that makes glass, for me, not just a material but a language—one that speaks of boundaries, tensions, and emotions suspended between harmony and collapse.

**Your project statement mentions the exploration of societal issues. Can you tell us how these themes manifest in your glass artworks and what message you aim to convey?**

My work is deeply rooted in reflection on the world I live in and the issues that affect me, my loved ones, and society as a whole. I explore themes of inequality, systemic injustice,



Julia Ciutek | Singularity | 2023

cultural norms, and individual identity. Glass is the perfect medium for examining these topics because its fragility and transparency can symbolize impermanence, the illusion of stability, and the boundaries between awareness and ignorance. In my piece *Let's Meet in Better Times*, I address society's passivity toward the climate crisis. The installation features a vessel in which one can "wash their hands"—a gesture that metaphorically represents avoiding responsibility and shifting it onto others. The water in the vessel symbolizes our false sense of purification, the justification of inaction, while real problems persist and continue to grow. With this work, I wanted to encourage viewers to reflect on how often we choose passive observation over action and how easily we excuse our lack of response. I believe that art has the power not only to raise awareness but also to provoke change—even if it begins with a single question in our minds.

**Glass is a medium often associated with fragility. How do you approach this vulnerability in your work, and does it symbolize something deeper in your exploration of contemporary challenges?**

Glass is a material traditionally associated with fragility, which is a fundamental aspect of its nature. However, it is full of contradictions—it can be both delicate and brittle, yet sharp and aggressive. It can either transmit light or block it, be raw, deformed, matte, or perfectly smooth. This diversity gives me immense expressive possibilities, and I consciously select each of its properties to align with the emotions and message I want to convey in my work. It is precisely this variability that makes me see glass as a reflection of human nature and contemporary issues. At times, I create tension through jagged, raw, and sharp edges; other times, I deliberately induce cracks and deformations to reveal the pressure and fragility of what appears solid. When I want to emphasize the illusion of security, control, or perfection, I choose perfectly smooth, almost flawless glass—yet even the slightest pressure can cause it to crack and shatter. Each of these qualities carries meaning and stems from a deliberate choice. For me, glass is more than just a material—it is a language of tension, fragility, and contradiction, through which I express the conflicts and contrasts that shape our world.

**Your works have been exhibited internationally, and you've received various awards. How does the recognition of your work shape your creative journey and your perspective on your art practice?**



Julia Ciutek | Singularity | 2023



Every recognition and opportunity to present my art on an international stage is a great honor, but above all, a motivation for further growth. It confirms that the themes I explore resonate not only within my immediate surroundings but also in a broader, global context. These experiences have also given me greater confidence as an artist—both in what I create and in how I speak about it. The recognition of my work has given me the courage to experiment, take risks, and trust my own intuition.

**You mention that your artistic practice is deeply rooted in your daily reality and the challenges faced by the community. Can you share more about the specific societal issues you address through your work and why they are important to you?**

In my work, I explore themes that stem from observing contemporary society and the mechanisms that shape it. I am particularly interested in how cultural norms, systemic inequalities, and social pressure influence individual identity and choices. I examine the impact of society on the individual, investigating the forces that shape our sense of self, decisions, and perceptions. What fascinates me is the paradox of modern culture—on one hand, it glorifies uniqueness, while on the other, it enforces conformity. In *You're so special*, I analyze how the pressure to fit into societal molds turns individuality into an illusion, where authenticity gives way to imitation. I also explore the boundaries of privacy and intimacy, especially in the context of social expectations. In the installation *Your dirty laundry*, I examine the tension between the need for authenticity and the pressure to conform—how much of ourselves we reveal under societal influence and where we draw the line we refuse to cross. The glass garments intertwined with metal chains symbolize both our fragility and the barriers that protect our privacy. Another significant aspect of my artistic exploration is the impact of contemporary habits and values on everyday life. In *Seven Sins of Modernity*, I analyze the destructive mechanisms that govern today's world—from misinformation and discrimination to consumerism. I question to what extent our choices stem from real needs and how much they are dictated by societal structures. Art provides me with a space for reflection on these processes and an opportunity to question the direction in which we, as a society, are heading.



**How does your glass artwork engage the viewers? Do you have a particular experience or reaction from viewers that you find especially impactful?**

My works engage viewers on multiple levels—visual, emotional, and intellectual—often provoking reflection and personal interpretation. What fascinates me most is how differently my work can be perceived, depending on the particular viewer. It often happens that their interpretations diverge from my original concept, but this is precisely what makes art alive—it begins to exist independently of me, resonating with the recipient in completely unexpected ways. The greatest joy comes from moments when someone approaches me to talk—about their interpretation, emotions, and associations. I believe that art exists to open us up, provoke thought, and create a space for conversation.

**Your project “Singularity” seems to explore an emotional depth through the material. Can you talk about the emotional narrative in this particular work and its connection to your overall artistic vision?**

*Singularity* is a story of mystery, uncertainty, and the limits of understanding. A black hole, though rooted in science, becomes primarily an emotional metaphor in my work—a symbol of what is unattainable, elusive, yet simultaneously captivating and hypnotic. Glass in this installation acts as a barrier between what we can see and what remains beyond our reach. It is a veil of mystery through which we perceive only the outline of truth, while the rest remains unspoken. This uncertainty creates tension—a balance between the desire to know and the acceptance of the unknown. Emotionally, *Singularity* speaks of confronting what we do not understand, of fascination with what is hidden, and of the boundaries of human experience. It is a reflection on our urge to control and define reality, while some things must simply be felt—even if we never fully comprehend them.

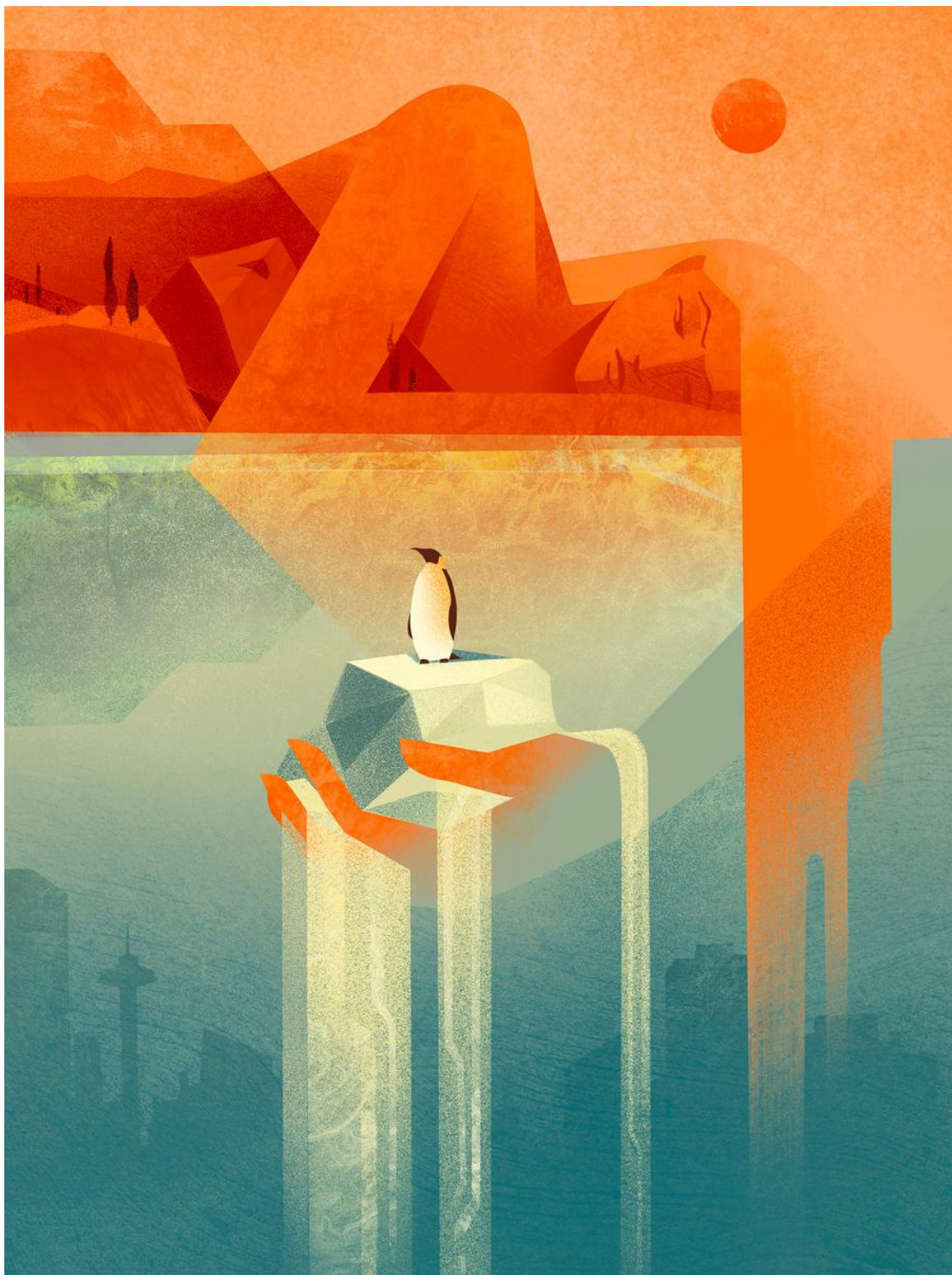


Julia Ciulek | Singularity | 2023

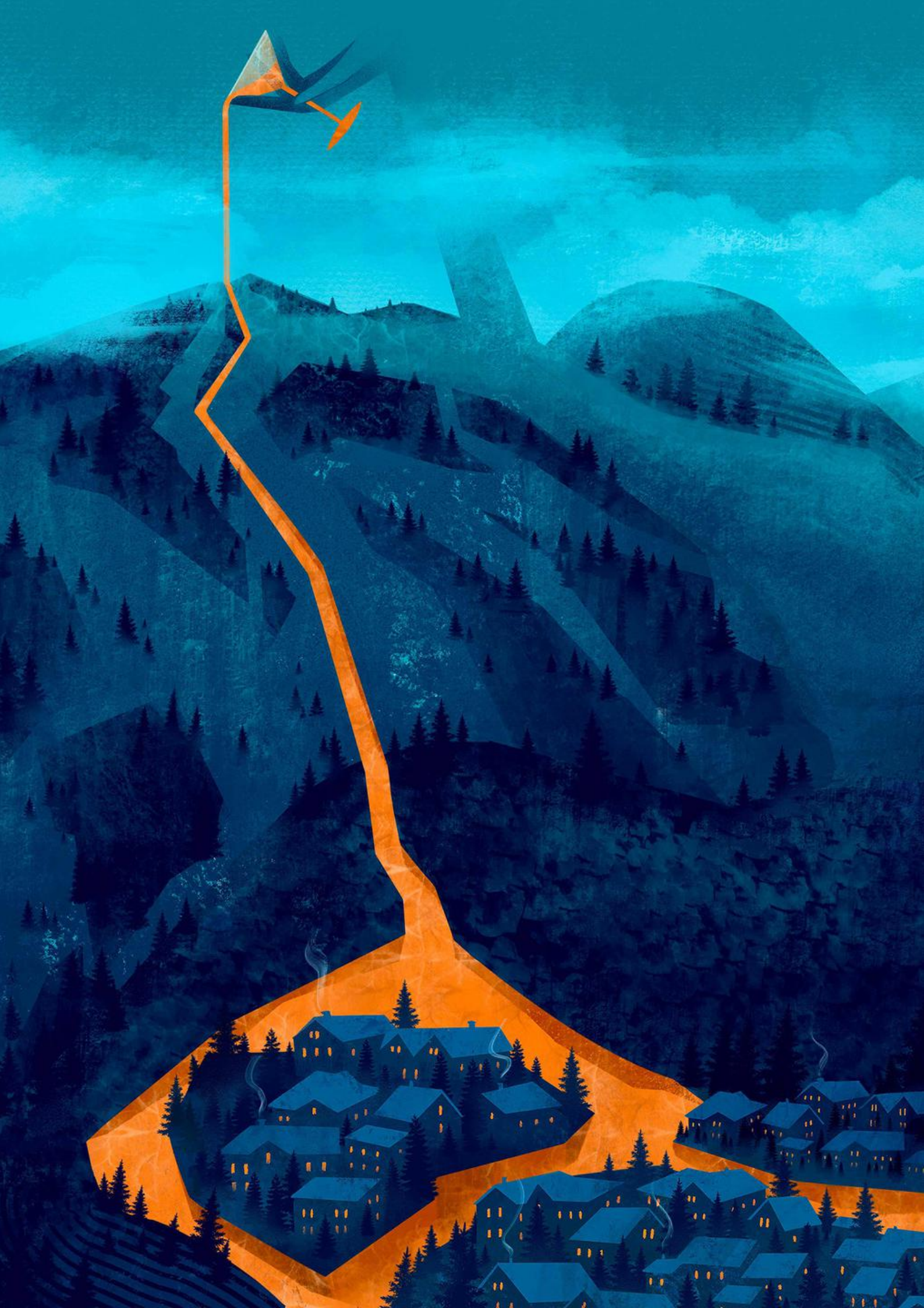
**Daria Lada** is a Ukrainian artist and illustrator currently based in Canada. With roots in traditional art, her creative journey has blossomed into a distinctive style defined by vibrant colors, rich textures, and whimsical compositions that leave a lasting impression. Drawing inspiration from nature, ethnic motifs, Art Deco, vintage aesthetics, travel, and social themes, Daria thrives on exploring diverse styles to craft the most compelling visual expressions for every concept. For over five years, she has partnered with brands, digital agencies, IT companies, and art studios to deliver cohesive and impactful visual solutions. Her portfolio encompasses editorial and brand illustrations, character design, product illustrations, and posters.

### *Global Warming Illustration Project*

This illustration project focuses on visualizing the impact of global warming. Through powerful imagery, it highlights the effects of climate change, such as rising sea levels, melting ice caps, and extreme weather events. The aim is to create an engaging, thought-provoking piece that raises awareness about environmental issues and encourages action toward a sustainable future.









# — Interview

## Karim Lopez

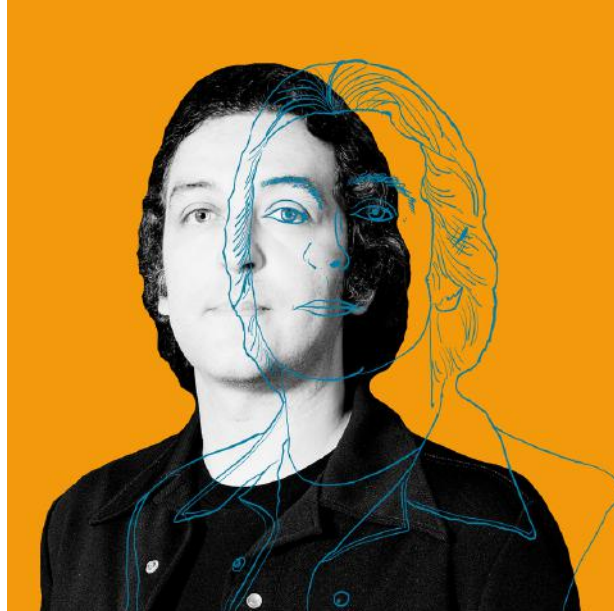
**Karim, your work often focuses on the human figure and the spaces where your characters unfold. How do you choose which emotions or stories to depict through your figures?**

For me, the human figure is a vessel for emotion and storytelling. I often draw from personal experiences, memories, or moments of vulnerability that resonate deeply with me. I think about the spaces my characters inhabit as an extension of their emotions—whether it's a confined, intimate setting that evokes introspection or a vast, open space that suggests longing or freedom. Sometimes a gesture or even the absence of a figure can tell a more powerful story than words. I let the composition guide me, allowing the figures to emerge organically.

**Your use of color is striking, especially the dramatic contrasts. How do you decide on your color palettes for each piece, and what role does color play in conveying the message or emotion of your work?**



Karim Lopez | Arcanas - Nine of Swords



I believe color is one of the most instinctive yet intentional aspects of my work. I use it to heighten emotion, create tension, or establish a particular mood. I often start with a feeling rather than a strict palette. From there, I experiment with contrasts, sometimes pushing colors beyond realism to intensify the story within the piece. The interplay between light and shadow also plays a crucial role, allowing me to create depth and drama. In many ways, color is like a language in my work—it speaks before the figures do, setting the tone and guiding the viewer's experience.

**Your first solo exhibition, "Arcanas: Afro-Caribbean and Feminine Transfiguration of the Tarot," reflects deep cultural and symbolic references. How did this theme emerge, and what does it mean to you personally?**

The theme for Arcanas emerged from my deep connection to Afro-Caribbean culture and spirituality, as well as my fascination with tarot as a symbolic language. I wanted to reinterpret the archetypes through a feminine and diasporic lens, blending ancestral narratives with contemporary identity. For me, it was both an artistic and personal journey—exploring how these symbols have shaped our understanding of power, intuition, and transformation. By reimagining the tarot through an Afro-Caribbean perspective, I aimed to honor the resilience and mysticism of the culture while also challenging traditional depictions of these archetypes. In some ways also recognizing some female figures of my own life: my grandmother, cousins, former partners...

**How do your personal experiences and dreams influence your creative process? Are there any specific memories or dreams that have led to the creation of some of your pieces?**

My personal experiences and dreams are at the core of my creative process. I often find that my subconscious does a lot of the work before I even pick up the pencil. Some pieces come directly from vivid dreams—images or emotions that linger long after I wake up. Other times, memories resurface in unexpected ways, blending with imagined elements to form a visual narrative.

One piece that stands out was inspired by a childhood memory of watching my sisters perform a simple yet almost ritualistic act of braiding their hair. That moment, intimate and meditative, later found its way into a composition where hair became a symbol of strength and connection. Similarly,



I've had dreams where colors and figures appear fully formed, and I feel compelled to bring them to life. My work often becomes a bridge between waking life and the unseen world of emotions, memory, and dream logic.

**Your art features a lot of metaphor and symbolism. How do you see the role of symbolism in your work, and how do you want viewers to interpret these elements?**

Symbolism is essential to my work—it allows me to layer meaning and invite viewers into a deeper, more intuitive experience. I often use recurring symbols, like water to represent transformation, or hands as a conduit for energy, creation, or restraint. These elements emerge organically, shaped by cultural references, personal history, and emotion. I have never believed in dictating a single interpretation. Instead, I want viewers to engage with the imagery through their own lens, bringing their experiences and myths into the conversation. Some might recognize cultural or literary references, while others may connect with the work on a purely visceral level. I love when people find meaning in details I hadn't consciously placed—it reinforces the idea that art is a dialogue, not a monologue.

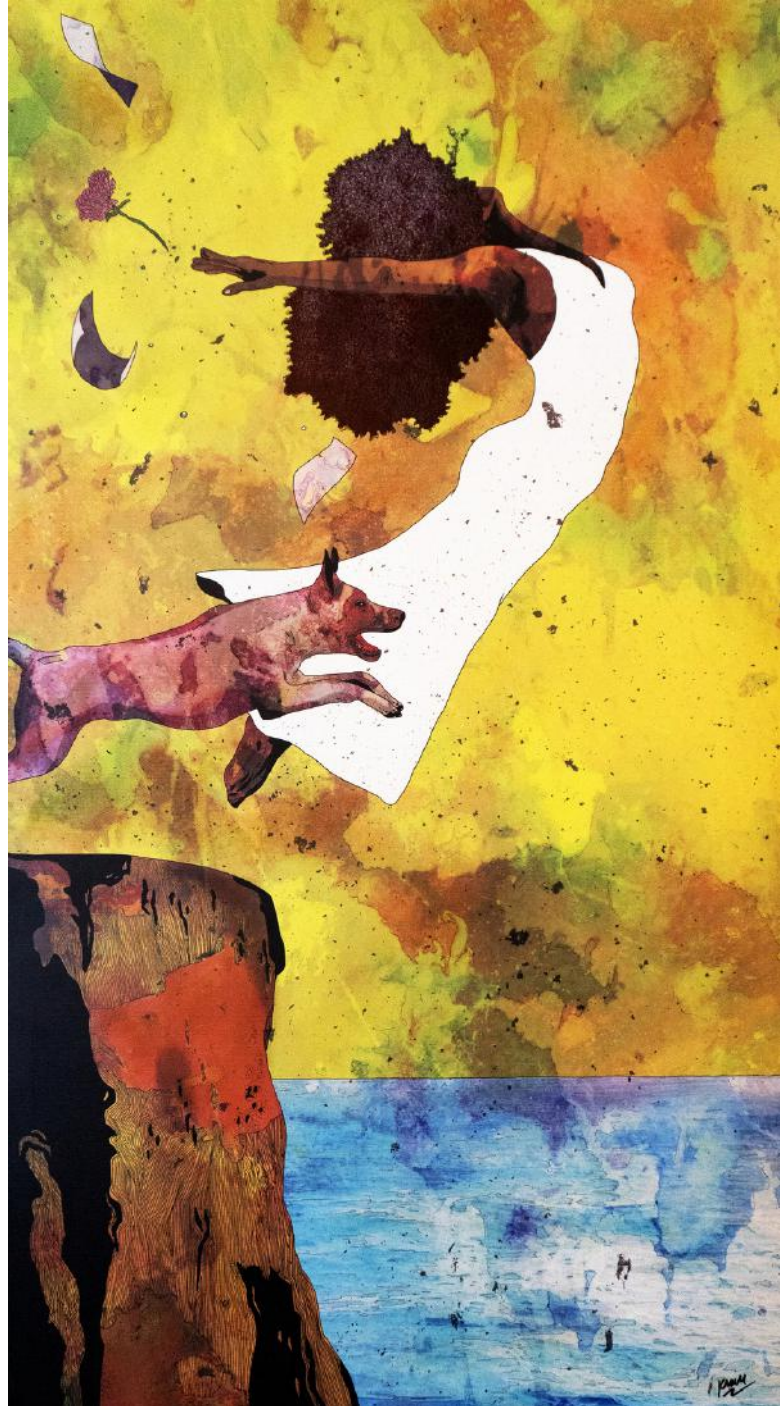
**You have been part of several international exhibitions and art fairs. How has your experience exhibiting your work in different countries influenced the evolution of your style?**

Exhibiting internationally has been a transformative experience for my work. Each place brings a new cultural lens, different ways of engaging with art, and unexpected conversations that challenge how I see my own pieces. Seeing my work in different contexts has made me more aware of the universal themes that resonate across cultures, as well as the nuances that shift depending on the audience. For example, in one exhibition, I noticed how viewers in Latin America connected deeply with the spiritual and ancestral themes in my work, while in Europe, the emphasis was more on the technical and symbolic aspects. These interactions have pushed me to refine my visual language—balancing personal storytelling with a broader, more fluid narrative that invites multiple interpretations. Over time, my style has become more layered, drawing from these cross-cultural exchanges while staying rooted in my own identity.

**What is your approach to blending architecture with your artwork? How does your architectural background shape the way you design the composition or structure of your pieces?**



Karim Lopez | Reinbou



Karim Lopez  
Arcanas - The Fool

Architecture has deeply influenced the way I approach composition, space, and structure in my artwork. I see each piece as a kind of constructed environment—whether it's an actual architectural setting or an abstract, emotional space. My training taught me to think about balance, rhythm, and proportion, which naturally translates into the way I arrange figures, light, and negative space within my compositions. I also love playing with perspective, depth, and spatial tension. Sometimes, the spaces in my work feel grounded in reality, while other times, they become dreamlike or symbolic, almost like psychological landscapes. Architecture has given me a strong foundation for designing these visual narratives, ensuring that every element has a purpose and contributes to the overall feeling of the piece.



**Soo Jin CHUNG** is a South Korean contemporary artist born in Seoul on May 25, 1988. She began her academic journey studying Visual Communication Design at Seoul Women's University, where she first developed a sensitivity to image, perception, and emotional expression. She later moved to France to pursue her artistic path, graduating from the École des Beaux-Arts in Montpellier. Currently, she is based in Paris, where she completed her master's degree and is now a PhD candidate in visual arts at Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University. She is also certified with the highest-level qualification in art therapy (1st-grade art psychotherapy counselor) in South Korea, and this background strongly informs the therapeutic dimension of her work. Her artistic journey is shaped by a transdisciplinary approach, bridging Korean and French influences and integrating psychological insight into visual creation.

#### *Artistic Statement*

CHUNG's work explores visual experimentation through photography, painting, and multimedia installations. She is particularly interested in the themes of memory, identity, emotional scars, and trauma. Using transparency, light, and layered materiality, she creates immersive experiences that blur the line between reality and imagination, encouraging the viewer to reconnect with fading memories. Her practice goes beyond visual representation; it is a process of healing through art, making psychological wounds visible and offering transformation through aesthetic experience. She believes art can act as a visual process of emotional restoration, giving shape to the invisible and the unspeakable.









# — Interview

Interviewer:  
Anna Gvozdeva (curator)

## Lu Xin (Lucine)



### Unlocking Art on Skin: Lucine's Fusion of Tattoo and Contemporary Art

**"Tattooing is the integration of art into the body. It's not just a design; it's a convergence of personal memory, cultural symbols, and contemporary artistic language."**

—Lucine

For centuries, tattooing has been seen as a form of personal expression, but in Lucine's work, it transcends decoration and becomes an artistic medium in its own right. As an artist and tattooist based in Orange County, California, she merges cultural heritage, visual storytelling, and fine art, seamlessly transitioning between skin and canvas. Her works, such as *Shackled*, the mythology-inspired *Kylin*, and her exploration of freedom and constraint, all reflect her distinctive artistic vision.

Lucine's journey into art and tattooing began in a traditional fine arts setting. While studying at an art academy, she was immersed in exhibitions, seminars, and creative exchanges with fellow artists. Originally an illustrator, she discovered tattooing through a senior artist who incorporated illustration into her tattoo work.

"That was an eye-opener for me," Lucine recalls. "I started wondering—why not break free from the conventional categories of tattooing and make it more fluid and expressive?"

This realization led her to blend different artistic styles in her tattoos, breaking away from rigid classifications. "Each tattoo commission is like a creative challenge, where I merge the client's personal story with my artistic approach," she explains. In contrast, fine art serves as a deeply introspective process for her. "Tattooing is about understanding others, while my personal art is about questioning and expressing myself."

One of Lucine's most thought-provoking works, *Shackled*, explores the theme of human constraints within nature and society. Surprisingly, it was inspired by a childhood memory—her beloved music boxes.

"Every year on my birthday, I received a music box. One of my favorites was a crystal music box with a dancer that twirled when the melody played," she shares. "But as I grew older, I realized how many people live within predefined roles, endlessly repeating the same motions—just like that dancer."

Through this work, she reflects on human existence and the illusion of control. "We think we shape the world, but in reality, we are part of a larger system, bound by natural and societal forces." For Lucine, true freedom is not the absence of constraint but the ability to navigate and find meaning within it.

Lucine often draws from Eastern folklore, merging traditional symbols with contemporary artistic approaches. *Kylin* is a prime example—her interpretation of the mythical Chinese Qilin using the bold aesthetics of street graffiti.



The Qilin is a symbol of prosperity and fortune in Chinese mythology. I've always admired how ancient people created these mythical beings with such imaginative narratives," she says. "In my student years, I became fascinated by street art, so I experimented with integrating graffiti-style composition and color schemes into this traditional figure."

By using exaggerated motion and vibrant hues of purple and blue, she gives the ancient creature a modern energy. "I love making history converse with the present—breathing new life into classical motifs through contemporary artistic language."

Lucine balances the structured approach of tattoo design with the free expression of fine art. "Tattooing is a more analytical process—I consider skin texture, muscle structure, and composition," she explains.

"Fine art, on the other hand, is an emotional release, guided by intuition rather than constraints."

Yet, for her, both share a fundamental goal: exploration. "Whether it's on skin or canvas, my work is always about pushing my creative boundaries and finding new ways to tell a story."

Lucine has received multiple awards, including the No Boundaries group exhibition's "Best Audience Choice Award." To her, recognition is not just about validation but about emotional connection.

"Genuine artistic expression resonates with people," she says. "Knowing my work can connect with an audience makes me feel less alone in my creative journey and motivates me to keep experimenting."

When discussing tattooing's place in contemporary art, she sees it as an extension of performance art. "Tattooing is a fusion of painting and performance. I don't think it needs 'art world' validation—it already stands as a deeply personal and expressive form," she states. "For many, tattoos are not just aesthetics; they are emotional anchors, personal statements, and even tools for healing."

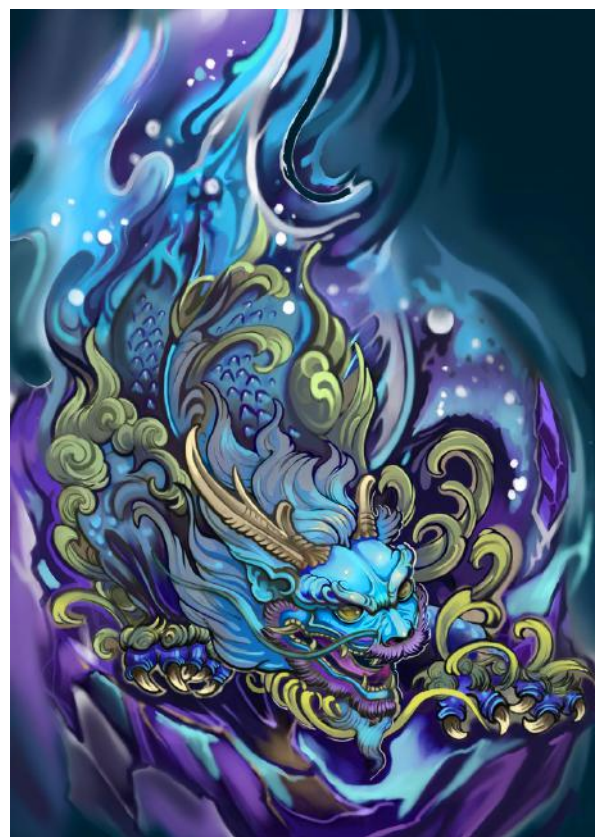
She believes artistic value isn't about institutional recognition but about the meaning it holds for those who experience it.

From childhood memories of a music box to street art-inspired mythical creatures, from reflections on freedom and constraint to tattooing as a deeply personal medium, Lucine constantly challenges artistic boundaries.

For her, tattooing and fine art are not separate disciplines but interconnected forms of storytelling. As she puts it: **"Art has no fixed form—what matters is whether it touches the soul."**



Luxin | Shackled | 2022



Luxin | Kylin | 2022

# — Interview

## Amy Laurann

**What initially drew you to lifestyle and fashion photography, and how did you develop your unique style?**

When I moved to Florida in 2021, I was coming from a background focused on nature, industrial textures, and documentary-style photography in Pennsylvania. As I was settling into a new home and exploring the area, I started connecting with the local creative community. Around that time, someone reached out looking for lifestyle photography for their real estate business. It was one of those moments where everything just clicked—working with people, capturing authentic moments, and telling a visual story in a collaborative way felt like second nature. From there, word of mouth led me to work with other creatives. Each project brought its own energy, and over time I developed a style that's natural, candid, and personal. I focus on creating space for the people I work with to bring their own ideas and personality to the shoot—it's always collaborative. That approach continues to shape my work more than anything else.

**How does natural light influence your**



**photography, and why is it such an integral part of your work?**

Natural light brings a sense of honesty and authenticity to my work. There's a warmth and unpredictability in it that I love—whether it's the golden hour glow, diffused overcast light, or the sharp contrast of a bright afternoon. It adds an emotional layer to the images and keeps me fully present in the moment. Instead of controlling every element, I get to work with the light, which makes each shoot feel unique.

**Florida's urban landscape offers a lot of visual energy. How do you capture the dynamic vibe of the environment in your photos?**

Florida has this incredible architectural contrast—modern cityscapes alongside old-world charm, bright colors against deep shadows, and busy streets balanced by quiet pockets of nature. I try to reflect that by staying flexible and responsive to whatever's happening around me.

I'm always looking for movement and those small, unscripted moments that add life to an image. Sometimes it's as simple as catching a laugh in the middle of a crowded market or shooting in an alleyway where cascading light creates a mood you wouldn't expect.

**Can you describe a particularly memorable photoshoot you've had in Florida?**

One that really stands out took place on the rooftop of a parking garage in downtown Tampa. We worked



with the natural lines of the city skyline and the sharp angles of his G-Wagon to create a clean, modern vibe. The contrast between the mirrored glass buildings and his sleek, tailored look brought everything together visually.

What I loved most about the session was how simple it was—no complicated setups, just natural light and letting the environment and his energy lead the way. There was a moment where he was sitting on the edge of the car door, completely relaxed—he owned the space without even trying. That’s always the feeling I’m chasing. When someone lets their guard down, the image stops being about the pose and becomes about the person.

**Your work features a lot of human subjects in various settings. How do you work with models to bring out natural expressions and emotions?**

I think the key is creating a relaxed, collaborative space. Before I even pick up the camera, I take time to connect with the person—whether they’re a professional model or stepping in front of the lens for the first time. I’m not big on rigid posing. Instead, I encourage them to move naturally, talk, and interact with their surroundings in a way that feels comfortable and authentic.

It’s also important for me to get their input along the way. I like to pause during the shoot and show them a few images on the display. There’s something kind of magical about that moment—when they see themselves the way I see them. It builds their confidence and opens up the space to be even more creative and adaptable together.



Amy Laurann | Lucy | 2024



Amy Laurann | Wanda | 2024

**How do you stay inspired and keep your work fresh and innovative?**

Staying curious is everything. I’m always exploring new locations, working with different people, and learning from other creatives in the community. Every collaboration brings something fresh to the table. I also find inspiration by going back to basics—taking my camera out with no agenda, just seeing what catches my eye. Whether it’s street photography, nature, or even textures like rusted steel (a throwback to my urbex days in Bethlehem), it all feeds into my creative process. And sometimes stepping away from photography altogether—getting out in nature or visiting galleries—sparks new ideas.

**Have you ever faced challenges in your work due to the lighting or environment? How do you overcome them?**

Absolutely! Florida’s weather can be unpredictable—one minute you have perfect light, and the next you’re dealing with harsh sun or a sudden downpour. I’ve learned to embrace it. If the light isn’t ideal, I’ll change locations, adjust angles, or use shadows creatively. Sometimes the unexpected conditions lead to the most interesting shots.

I always come prepared with a flexible mindset. Some of my favorite images have come from situations where we had to pivot because of weather or lighting. It forces me to think differently and get creative on the fly.

# Fontaine Scarelli

**You describe your art as a form of self-discovery. Can you share more about how your work serves as a cathartic process for you?**

Painting is my therapy. And I don't mean that in some vague, metaphorical way. I mean that in the most literal sense. I've had a therapist, and I still check in with one from time to time, but painting is the thing that lets me process life in real time. It's where all the noise in my head, all the chaos, all the unresolved thoughts and emotions, find a place to exist outside of me. There's something about getting lost in the act of painting. From moving the brush, layering colors, creating space and depth. That forces me to confront things I might not even realize I need to face.

A blank canvas is intimidating because it's an unknown, and I think that's what makes it such a perfect space for self-discovery. I never fully know what I'm about to create, and that's the beauty of it. Each painting is me trying to make sense of something, maybe something subconscious, maybe something I haven't quite put into words yet. But by the time the painting is done, I've learned something new about myself, or at least about the way I see the world. It's an ongoing process, never fully knowing but always learning.



**Your work seems to challenge traditional boundaries. What role does rebellion play in your creative process?**

I've never been one for following the rules, especially when it comes to art. The idea of creating something that fits neatly into a category or checks all the boxes of what's considered "good" or "acceptable" has never appealed to me. I think there's something inherently rebellious about making art that doesn't conform, that doesn't aim to please in a traditional sense.

Maybe that stems from how I grew up as an only child, left to my own imagination, never having to fit into the dynamics of a sibling hierarchy. I had the freedom to create my own worlds, to think in a way that wasn't shaped by anyone else's expectations. That mindset carried over into my work. I don't approach a painting with a strict plan, and I don't try to force it into something predictable. The moment I feel like I'm painting in a way that feels too safe, too expected, I push myself to disrupt it.

For me, rebellion isn't about being contrary for the sake of it, it's about escaping conformity. It's about creating something that feels completely my own, that doesn't fit neatly into a box. And in a world that constantly tries to label and categorize, I find a lot of satisfaction in making work that refuses to be easily defined.

**Your art is known for its philosophical depth. How do you incorporate these deeper themes while maintaining a visually engaging and immersive style?**

Philosophy and painting are inseparable for me. The way I approach a canvas is the same way I approach thinking about life. It's full of unknowns, contradictions, and moments of clarity that vanish as quickly as they appear. I think my work naturally reflects that tension.



I'm fascinated by time and how we perceive it, how it moves, how we exist within it. So much of my work plays with that idea, layering movement and stillness, control and chaos, as if trying to pin down something that can't be pinned down. There's always an existential undercurrent running through my paintings, but I never want that weight to make the work feel suffocating. That's where balance comes in. Even in the darkest, most chaotic moments of my paintings, there's always a sense of space, of openness, of light breaking through. I think that mirrors the way I see the world, there's always a chance for something new, for something to shift. There's a philosophy in that: that nothing is ever truly fixed, that reality is fluid, that we're constantly shifting between what we think we know and what we have yet to understand.

**How do you balance the chaos and the calm in your paintings? Are there specific moments in your work where you feel that contrast most strongly?**

For me, it all starts with the underpainting. That's where I let things unravel. It's the stage where I warm up, loosen up, and set the foundation that will dictate everything else in the piece. It's also where I let the painting tell me what it wants to be. Before I start refining, before I start making sense of the composition, I allow the chaos to take over.

The contrast comes in how I respond to that chaos. I build over it, push against it, sometimes even erase parts of it. I think that tension between letting go and regaining control is what gives my paintings their depth. It mirrors the way life works: moments of turbulence followed by clarity, uncertainty balanced by the need for structure. That interplay is what keeps my work alive.

**Your work is heavily inspired by post-apocalyptic films and existential themes. How do these influences shape the narratives in your paintings?**

There's something about post-apocalyptic films that always pulls me in and it's not just the destruction, but the tension



between despair and survival. Even in the bleakest dystopian worlds, there's always this sliver of hope: a hidden bunker, a safe city, the possibility of rebuilding from the ashes. That contrast fascinates me.

I think that same push and pull exists in my paintings. There's always a sense of uncertainty. Forms breaking apart, colors colliding, space folding in on itself, but there's also movement, light, and the suggestion that something new is forming. I like the idea that even in chaos, there's a chance for renewal. It mirrors the way I see life: even when things feel like they're unraveling, there's always something on the other side.

**In your statement, you mention that painting for you is a journey into the unknown. Could you describe a specific painting where you feel this journey was especially present or significant?**

This is a direct nod to *The Twilight Zone*, which has been one of my biggest influences. Rod Serling had this incredible way of placing one foot in the familiar and the other in the unknown. That's how I approach a blank canvas, it's terrifying, but there's also this pull toward discovery.

One piece that really embodies this for me is *The 7-Year Minute*. That painting felt like stepping through a portal. Like I was accessing something beyond myself. I remember working on it and feeling completely disconnected from time, like I wasn't painting so much as channeling something. That's what makes the process exciting: every piece is its own journey, and I never fully know where I'm going until I get there.

# — Interview

## Ti Xu

**Your background in Product Design and Illustration offers a unique perspective. How do you think your design education influences your illustrative practice?**

The design education I received trains me to take on each project, oftentimes even the fun, personal projects, as a design project. I have an urge to figure out the goal of the project and to know the elements that appear in my painting by heart. The former concerns the format and usage of the work: is it going to be displayed digitally or printed? Is it an editorial piece or a narrative? And the latter is about researching the themes, contents, styles that make up the painting. This part involves a lot of picture/video searching and study drawings. Apart from familiarizing myself with the objects to be included (say for my last graphic novel, a locomotive), I immerse myself in relevant materials, regardless of medium, to absorb the emotive side of the themes. For example, while working on my latest graphic novel, the *Station*, which tells the story of a young traveler stuck at a rundown station waiting to set off on an adventure, I not only looked into the structure of locomotives to come up with a design for one (important motif in the story), but also watched films and documentaries and read books that either tells the history of century old railways, or conveys a feeling of lostness and hope. All those efforts might not be directly influential to the design decisions, but they make the later creative process smoother and more intuitive.

**Your work spans a range of mediums, from line-based illustrations to animation. Can you walk us through your creative process when working on different forms of art?**

The answer to this question will be a good complement to the designerly approach I have mentioned above. In terms of creative process I can roughly divide the forms I have worked on into two categories: “iterated projects” and “one-off projects”. For the “iterated projects”, which are usually digital and take more than a day to complete, I retain more of the designer mindset. I first do a round of sketches for ideas, then feed my imagination with research of visual references and stories/history relevant



Ti Xu | Fuzzy surfaces | 2022

to my themes. In the meantime I keep sketching for compositions only readable to myself. Then I make critical decisions about what visual elements to include and the general composition. Before starting to work on the final I would further research the structures of my objects, depending on their complexity. Completing the final is a matter of days, after all the previous work. The “one-offs”, as the name suggests, don’t require much edits. They include on-scene paintings/drawing done with traditional mediums like gouache and ink. I am not a fan of doing drafts for line work and keep the draft minimal when working with gouache. Other “one-offs” that I keep offline in my sketchbooks are freestyle drawings or character designs or one page comics, which I start with a vague idea and carry on without knowing how it might end. I guess this approach is the improvisational me fighting back at the rigorous designer me. I really enjoy going with the whim or sensation at the moment and doing things with no returns. It leaves me numerous unfinished pieces, but many of them capture things that I couldn’t have planned whatsoever.

**Could you share the inspiration behind your piece “Fuzzy Surfaces” and how you approached its creation?**

I am happy to say that this piece is one of the long term projects that captured some of the emotive aspects in my life drawings. It started off as a school project, assigned by my instructor Lauren Berke. The guideline is to make a poster of 13.5 by 18 inches, and the image is to be inspired by a line of message, which we were free to come up with ourselves. My message was: “We love fuzzy surfaces- not on ourselves though”. It was a combination of addressing the wholesome feel of skin contact with fuzzy surfaces, and the human behavior of removing hair from our own skin. As the humor is in the contrast, I left



the human figure blank and filled the surroundings with a spring meadow of textured plants. After completing the course I decided to leave out the text and let the image speak for itself.

**How did your collaboration with the Hue Magazine and the Inaugural Art Festival in 2024 shape your career or artistic style?**

The collaboration with Hue magazine was my first commercial project in illustration. The illustrations being done in linework was really a design decision from the graphic designer in the art direction team. Back then I was more at a loss with my diverse portfolio that did not show a clear art style. Completing the work successfully gave me the first assurance that there can be a market for one of the things I do, as simplistic as it is. The Inaugural Art Festival project was my first commissioned animation, marking a move towards what I am hoping to explore more in the future. Though I came from an illustration background, I was looking to make more than illustration with moving elements for the one minute motion design. Also an idiosyncrasy about the project is that the motion should be projected onto a massive facade of a horizontal building, which is textured and far from a high definition canvas. I ended up choosing a high contrast and limited palette and restricted my images to bold shapes, which also works in favor of animating. It is an interesting challenge that boosts my confidence in going further down the animation path.

**What was the experience of working with the Longmen Grottoes (Luoyang, China) official store like? What did you learn from designing merchandise based on such a rich cultural heritage?**

The experience of working with Longmen is a challenging and rewarding one, I should say. But the design to production process was filled with uncertainty. Among all the real world projects I have worked on this one took the most in depth research. I went to visit the Longmen Grottoes in person and had the pleasure to learn the historical backgrounds of it directly from a native Luoyang person, who is also supervisor of the project. I read books on the fascinating story of its construction, which is by the one and only female emperor throughout Chinese history. I had fun learning new things in the research phase, but the initial design process wasn't going smoothly. Since the output illustration would be integral



Ti Xu | Garden Of Tears | 2023



Ti Xu | Moon Editor | 2024

to the merchandise, be it keychain or umbrella, appeal and compatibility with the object are important. So I extended my research to products of the same nature and browsed through many of the online stores of museums. I came up with designs for keychains and car air refreshers(I picked these products based on their reasonable production cost for a souvenir and the compatibility of their craft). Three months later, one of the designs was chosen and sent to sample production.

**What role does storytelling play in your work? How do you ensure your art communicates the message you want to convey?**

Storytelling is a way for me to approach a blank canvas, although depending on the format of projects, the role of storytelling varies across my portfolio. So for works that have "storytelling" in its format, like comics, I use the story itself as an analogy for what I want to express. For other forms of illustration, which don't rely on an ordered viewing of multiple images to be perceived, storytelling is about imagining and feeling the bigger world where the work only captures a significant fraction of. In either case, storytelling helps me imagine before visualizing anything on paper.

**Your piece "Year of the Snake" depicts a strong visual narrative. What is the significance of the snake in this work, and what inspired the overall design?**

As a Chinese illustrator it's how I celebrate the new year (Spring Festival for the Chinese)! According to Chinese tradition each year is assigned a zodiac animal to represent the year, which is great for creation because it assigns something tangible to the abstract division of time. I started doing this four years ago, when it was the year of the tiger. I was surprised to see how people of my culture resonated with it and thus decided to make it a yearly ritual. The snake motif this year is trickier than the ones before, as snakes elicit fear in those who are not fans(many online voiced their feelings of unease at the sight of snake imagery for new year). So my initial idea was to abstract the motif and apply it on character designs to make up an image. Eventually the pattern composed of long sleeve dancers became overpowering to the image, and I added fragments of a giant snake hidden in the background. I didn't do much to gain people's love for snakes, but I'm overall happy with the work.

## **Alina Baikova**

### *Artist in Glass and Mosaic*

Born in a small city near Moscow, Russia. Currently living and working in Wrocław, Poland. Her artistic journey began with a background in journalism, which sparked her interest in languages – especially Slavic languages. Over time, she transitioned into the world of visual arts, where she discovered her true calling. She specializes in art glass, design glass, traditional and contemporary mosaics, and sculpture. She studied at the State Academy of Art and Design in St. Petersburg, where she completed her Bachelor's degree in Glass Design. In 2020, she participated in the Erasmus+ program at the E. Geppert Academy of Fine Arts in Wrocław, Poland, and was so impressed by the completely different approach to education that she decided to continue her studies there. In 2024, she obtained her Master's degree in Art and Glass Design and made Wrocław her permanent home. During her education, she also explored other artistic techniques, such as calligraphy and mosaic. In 2024, she had the opportunity to study contemporary mosaic techniques at the Friulian Mosaic School in Spilimbergo, Italy – experiences that have significantly shaped the subsequent development of her career. Her work is deeply inspired by nature, geometry, and abstract art. She aims to bridge traditional techniques with contemporary practices by experimenting with various materials and methods. Actively involved in the artistic community in Poland, her works are primarily exhibited in galleries in Wrocław, while she also participates in group exhibitions in other cities, such as "Szkło Młodych" (Young Glass) exhibition at the Glass Heritage Center in Krosno. Her main focus today is the popularization of mosaic as both a craft and an art form in Poland. In 2024, she launched the volunteer initiative "Mozaika Dostępna" (Accessible Mosaic), through which she organizes educational projects dedicated to this rare craft.







### *Artist Statement*

As someone deeply inspired by science, I am drawn to complex techniques that require multiple stages of execution, demanding patience and precision. As an ADHD person, I experience episodes of intense hyperfocus, which turns some of my works into obsessive creations, meticulously assembled from a lot of tiny fragments during sleepless nights. As an extremely kinesthetic being, I focus on texture in almost every piece I create, ensuring that the surface itself becomes an essential part of the experience. As a girl, I adore spark and shining, finding endless inspiration in the way light interacts with glass. As a control freak, I base my artistic practice on a solid academic foundation, adhering to the principles of composition and color theory. As a chaotic artist, I use my own emotions as a driving force. Every work of mine is unlike one another, but reflects me on many different levels.

## — Interview

# Jérôme Pace

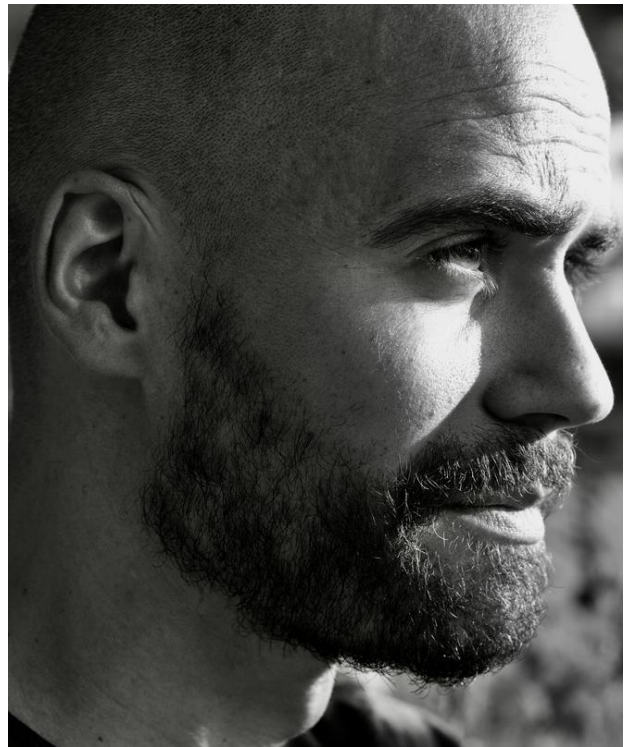
**Your work reflects a deep connection to nature, mythology, and personal experience. Could you share how your travels and various experiences shape your art?**

What I am going to say is a truism: more than our words, we are what we have done. Historian of religion, I have lived for a long time at the rhythms of ancient mythologies. A rare peregrination that, having allowed me to probe our heritage and our imagination, nourishes me today as a photographer.

Likewise, exploring the world has always been for me synonymous with freedom. I have, for example, excavated in Kurdistan Region; practiced sambo in Moscow; or harvested tea in the prefecture of Kagoshima. This perpetual wandering is who I am. And so is my art: it is that interrupted discourse of which the hours, echoes of my darknesses, reveal my sauroctone soul.

**The phrase "Chat rit varie" seems to have a mystical and poetic resonance. Can you tell us more about its meaning and how it relates to your artistic process?**

"Chat rit varie" is actually a play on words. It translates to: "The cat that laughs are changing/changes" and plays on the word "charivari" – a ritual used to restore the balance of society after a fault –, the first syllable of which is pronounced "cha" like the word "chat" (cat in French). If we add to this the symbolic dimension of the cat, as a guide, but also the popular idea of its judgemental character, it seemed like the



perfect fit for my work's title.

**In your artist statement, you mention "the guardians of the doors and the roads of the world." How do these symbols influence your work, and what do they represent to you personally?**

We all are the sons of Nature. And it is not for nothing that, celebrated by men and gods, her mother has long been the beating heart of our civilizations. That Eden, flora and fauna have not forgotten it: the heralds of Beyond, they continue to play as outposts. Better: discreet witnesses of our lost dreams, they are, as darkness falls, the guarantors of our last hopes. And when we accept it: our guides on the life's roads.

**Your exploration of freedom through art is central to your practice. What does freedom mean to you in the context of your creative journey?**

Everything. Of course, we may not be understood by others. And being frustrated for that. However, nothing is more beautiful than completely feeling yourself. In an increasingly authoritarian world, only the search for perfection and beauty, that is to say our desire to fulfill ourselves and rise up, can help us (re)find ourselves. And with it our only true freedom:



our inner freedom.

**Your projects often reference mythological and literary figures, such as Dante. How do these references inform the emotional and visual aspects of your work?**

These references are the soul of my work. You know, our culture is foundation. this point of reference which, nourishing us, allows us the choice: to advance or not in full knowledge of the facts. Penetrate the soul of the world, it is said, liberates the lost: there is no Epiphany for whom serves and forgets.

**"Chat rit varie" was created in France. How did the setting and environment influence this particular project, and why did you choose France as the location for it?**

Chat rit varie is an enchanted parenthesis in the wandering of a life. Most of my projects are born abroad (Il sole non vede mai l'ombra, Naturaleza, wandering of a life. Most of my projects are born abroad (Il sole non vede mai l'ombra, Naturaleza, etc.). But this one was



Jérôme Pace | The lighthouse keeper loves the birds too much | 2021



Jérôme Pace | In the grey sky of the earthenware angels | 2024

created at home, in Fontvieille, an enchanted Provencal village where I live today.

In the shade of the sleeping mills, the nymphs sing the laughter of my childhood... Exploring the feeling of European engraving, my work is, in this regard, a cry from the heart. A fleeting, almost nostalgic vision of an endangered France.

**You mention a "sauroctone soul" in your statement. Could you elaborate on this concept and how it relates to your identity as an artist?**

The sauroctone gods and heroes kill dragons. Guardians of the world, they are those who, when it is attacked, restore its balance. If Saint-Michel and Saint-Georges are perhaps their most famous representatives today, their existence goes back even further: Apollo (Greece), Indra (India) or Ninurta (Mesopotamia) helped to forge their glorious reputation. We all have our share of light and shadow. And we struggle every day between these two worlds... However, I would say that this is a welcome fight. Indeed, it is only because the shadow threatens us every day that we can live our lives to the fullest.



# — Interview

## Xufei Qiao

**Your art blends natural elements and traditional textile design techniques. How do you manage to fuse these influences so seamlessly, and what is the significance of using these particular materials?**

First, I believe artists incorporate many of their life experiences into their work, which can manifest as concrete objects and symbols or as abstract feelings. For me, the boundary between drawing and textile print has always been blurred—at least technically speaking, both involve leaving marks on paper with brush and pigments. During my self-taught journey in drawing, some of my working methods as a designer were naturally integrated, such as using techniques from textile design to develop color and texture and often researching design history for reference. Regarding natural elements, I'll address that in the following questions.

**You mentioned the role of your rural seclusion during the pandemic in shifting your focus from textile design to fine art. How did that time influence your artistic development, and how is it reflected in your current works?**

Being a fashion and textile designer requires adapting to a rapid pace and intense pressure. I often compare myself to an image processor—a machine that analyzes, transforms, and processes countless inspirational images into print designs. When I left the city to live in a quiet country house, I was surrounded by the sky, rocks, trees, and flowers. I would often drive to canyons to sketch, draw trees and landscapes, and see more tangible objects. This feeling was completely different from designing, and it made me rethink what I really loved. When we get busy in our daily lives, it's easy to ignore our deeper needs. People have asked me whether my personal style is closer to abstract energy or rational accumulated effort. After experiencing a year of



pandemic lockdown, I don't think my work underwent a dramatic transformation - I've just become more sensitive to my current creative state and emotions and can now engage more actively in creating works of any style.

**In your 'Night Park Slide' series, you focus on the uncanny qualities of playground slides under dim streetlights. What was it about this particular subject matter that drew you in?**

The 'Night Park Slide' series began with a spontaneous night ride. I lived in a university neighborhood where the streets maintained a quiet, peaceful atmosphere at night. As summer was just beginning and the evening weather was comfortable, I started cycling around the area with my sketchbook and pastels, stopping to draw whenever I encountered a nightscape I liked. Rather than being a purposeful sketching activity, it was more like a game of rediscovering the city. My encounter with the slide happened in a small urban forest park, where a large slide built from stone and wooden posts sat before me like a castle. I could imagine countless children playing and laughing there during the day, but at that moment, the park was so silent and solemn. I captured this striking contrast in my drawings, and this experience had a subtle but lasting impact on how I view things, so much so that I later made multiple nighttime visits to different park slides, seeking inspiration.

**Your use of color in these works seems deeply intuitive. Can you elaborate on how you select and blend colors in your compositions, especially when relying on intuition and grayscale values?**

When handling colors, one of my principles is to try to



make each stroke a different color. Unlike studio painting, my sketching primarily uses oil pastels and soft pastels. Rather than mixing colors, I work directly with the materials' natural hues. I tend to divide things into many small sections and fill them with color; for instance, I might paint concrete tiles in a variety of colors, thinking "What if there's green next to pink, and then black next to that - wouldn't that be fun?" letting these colors dance on the paper. What's even more interesting is when the environment is so dark that color hues become indistinguishable - then all I can rely on is the variation in grayscale values. What I do is shuffle my pastels and ensure that adjacent color blocks have different grayscale values when coloring. This creative approach brings surprising results, making me realize how much we typically rely on subjective judgment when choosing colors. For me, it's a new challenge and a way of self-discovery.

**Could you share more about your experience growing up in a family of agricultural engineers and how that influenced your approach to observing and documenting natural phenomena?**

I've always felt that observing the growth of living things is a magical experience. When I was seven years old, I went on field trips with my father, who is an agricultural machinery researcher. While he and his fellow researchers were collecting crop samples, I would dig up rhinoceros beetle larvae from the soil, arrange them by size in a row, and imagine what they would look like when fully grown. Around this time, I started documenting plants and animals in my surroundings, particularly when I moved to Montreal during fifth grade. I spent incredibly long hours on the elementary school lawn, creating a mushroom guide where I sketched every kind of mushroom I could find. I believe drawing is also a form of documentation, but unlike botanical illustration, it includes more complex information beyond just recording appearance - it captures the artist's perspective, mood, metaphors, and more.



Xufei Qiao | Portrait of Cockatoo

**Your works often explore the interplay between cultural memory and nature. Can you talk about how the ice plum pattern, for instance, relates to your exploration of these themes?**

A place's natural landscape influences its visual culture. On a crisp winter's day, I wandered through the gardens of the Old Summer Palace, where nature itself seemed to paint an eternal masterpiece. Plum blossoms swayed beneath a cascade of winter light, their golden reflections transforming each branch into shimmering threads of summer streams. Nearby, cracks in the frozen lake echoed the iconic "ice plum" pattern from the Qing Dynasty—a design where intricate ice-crack motifs are adorned with plum blossoms. My recent work, Ice Plum Blossom, builds upon this historical foundation. Through meticulous recreation of the ice-crack pattern, I embarked on an intuitive journey of sensation, memory, and philosophy, echoing the flow of an oriental garden.

**Having lived in multiple cities, how does your multicultural background influence your approach to art, especially in terms of bridging Eastern philosophical traditions with contemporary artistic practices?**

Due to my family circumstances, I frequently moved between different cities starting in elementary school. Remarkably, I never felt confused by culture shock; instead, I found many interesting aspects to it. On one of my design projects, I researched both the Classic of Mountains and Seas and medieval European monsters, discovering that despite these regions having no contact at the time, there were surprising similarities in how they created these mythical creatures. In my understanding, Eastern philosophy emphasizes the fluidity and undefined nature of things, similar to the Zen concept of "a world in a grain of sand." I hope to engage in more discussions on this topic and further affirm my artistic language.



Xufei Qiao | Portrait of Flatfish

# — Interview

## Beth L Barry



**Can you tell us more about how your background in art therapy influences your work as a landscape artist?**

As an art therapist, I understand the therapeutic value of making art. The creative process is curative in itself. While there is no direct influence for me between being a therapist and a landscape artist, the beauty of nature and the capturing of emotional impact is both therapeutic and uplifting.

**Your paintings often explore the emotional resonance of nature. How do you choose which landscapes to represent, and what feeling do you aim to evoke in the viewer?**

The landscapes I chose are a combination of what I have literally seen, filtered through what I feel when I experience nature. There is no specific feeling I am hoping that the viewer experiences. It's about the emotion itself and what the viewer brings to the experience.

**You mention the importance of gestural lines in your creative process. Can you explain how this starting point shapes the final composition?**

My paintings all start with a gestural line. The gesture usually has some mass, creating the beginning of visual tension. That tension grounds the composition as the painting evolves.

**Color plays a crucial role in your work. How do you approach your color choices, and what emotions are you trying to communicate through them?**

The colors I paint with are emotional choices. I use buoyant lively color choices to convey positivity. My finished paintings are places of pleasure, primarily achieved through the color.

**What challenges do you face when trying to express the "feeling" of nature in your paintings rather than focusing on its literal representation?**

There are no challenges. The feeling is conveyed through light, movement and color.



Beth Barry | Salmon Run | 2024



**You've exhibited in various locations, including international venues. How does the place or context of an exhibition influence the way you present your work?**

The venues I show in certainly influence what I decide to exhibit. If I am showing in a coastal area, I will show work that is reminiscent of seascapes. That said, I mainly decide what to show based on the cohesion between the paintings, in addition to what the curator is asking for.

**As a psychotherapist, do you find that your understanding of human emotions deepens your ability to capture them in your artwork?**

Not exactly, but both as a psychotherapist and as a painter, I understand the value of conversation and connection. With a patient, the space



Barry Beth | Off Center | 2024

created between us facilitates connection. With a canvas, the mark-making facilitates conversation with an audience.



Beth Barry | Pop Stand | 2024



## — Interview

# Aubrey Guzman

**Your work often captures the hidden stories of urban spaces. Can you describe what draws you to street photography and the raw textures of city life?**

Cities are constantly evolving, full of energy, movement, and contrast. What draws me to street photography is the way these elements interact—the way people navigate spaces, how light shifts across a skyline, or how graffiti turns a blank wall into an unspoken dialogue. Living in Texas, I've always been fascinated by the juxtaposition of old and new, whether it's historic buildings standing next to modern high-rises or a quiet moment unfolding in a fast-paced environment. My photography is about capturing the in-between—the raw, immersive, and storytelling moments that define city life.

**How do you approach photographing a scene? Do you plan your shots, or do you prefer to let the environment and spontaneous moments guide you?**

I don't scout locations in a traditional sense, though I may plan to travel to certain places. My approach is largely spontaneous—I let the environment guide me. I believe the best images happen when you remain open, letting the city tell its own story rather than forcing a shot. Whether it's a street performer captivating an audience, a quiet exchange between two strangers, or the way rain changes the mood of a street, I look for those moments that feel real and unfiltered. The beauty of street photography is that no two days are ever the same, and I embrace that unpredictability in my work.



Aubrey Guzman | Chimney Sentinels

**In your artist statement, you mention that your photography is about capturing unscripted moments. How do you balance spontaneity with composition in your work?**

Spontaneity is the foundation of my work, but composition is what gives it impact. I never stage or manipulate a scene, but I do pay attention to framing, perspective, and balance. If I see a visually striking setting—a neon-lit diner, an alley with layers of graffiti, or strong geometric shadows—I might wait for the right moment, the right person, or the right movement to complete the frame. It's a balance of instinct and patience, knowing when to click the shutter at just the right time to preserve a moment that tells a story.

**Many of your photographs focus on textures and colors. How do you use these elements to convey emotion or tell a story through your images?**

Textures and colors are crucial to how I tell stories. A weathered brick wall, the reflection of neon lights in a puddle, the contrast between an old historic district and a modern skyline—these details create mood and context. Living in Texas, I'm drawn to the vibrancy and grit of urban environments, whether it's the bold hues of a street mural or the muted tones of a city at dawn.



Colors set the emotional tone—bright, saturated images might convey energy and movement, while desaturated or shadow-heavy shots might evoke solitude or nostalgia. Textures add a tactile quality, making the viewer feel the depth of a scene rather than just seeing it.

**Can you talk about a specific moment or experience during your travels that significantly influenced your photography style?**

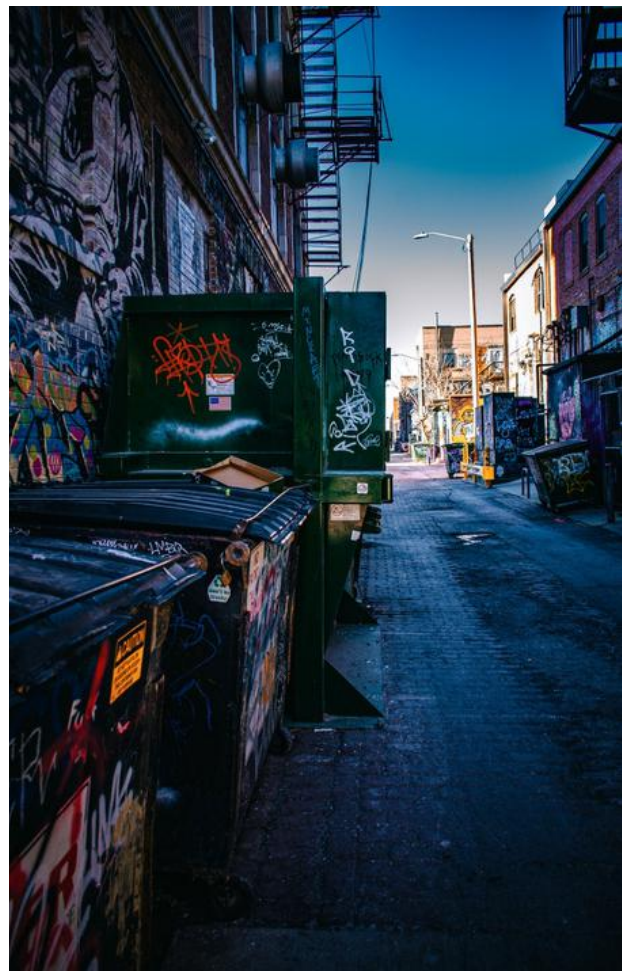
One of the most defining moments in my journey was visiting an art museum in Nashville, Tennessee, where I saw an exhibition on Dorothea Lange. Her work made me realize that photography wasn't just about capturing a moment—it was an art form, a way to tell a story without words. Lange's ability to document human emotion, struggle, and resilience through composition and light changed how I saw my own work. Since then, I've approached street photography with more intention, looking for ways to capture images that don't just document a place, but evoke a feeling and a deeper narrative.

**You highlight the beauty in urban environments that many might overlook. How do you think street photography can change our perception of these spaces?**

Street photography forces us to slow down and see



Aubrey Guzman | Faces of the Wall



Aubrey Guzman | Urban Layers

the world differently. Cities are often seen as chaotic, but within that chaos, there are small moments of beauty—gestures of kindness, fleeting interactions, or the way light transforms a familiar street. Through my work, I try to highlight these details, showing that urban spaces are not just places we move through, but places full of meaning and personal connection. I want people to see cities not just as backdrops, but as living, breathing environments shaped by those who inhabit them.

**How has your approach to street photography evolved over time, and what has been the most significant lesson you've learned along the way?**

I actually started out photographing landscapes and more rural locations—quiet, open spaces where nature dictated the scene. Over time, though, I became more drawn to cities and the rawness of urban life. Unlike landscapes, which are still and predictable, cities are always in motion, always changing. One of the biggest lessons I've learned is to embrace that unpredictability. The most compelling moments happen in an instant—a fleeting glance, a shift in light, a sudden downpour that transforms a street. I've learned that being present, patient, and open to these moments is what leads to the most powerful images.

I am **Christiaan Dekker**, a Dutch artist with a contemporary approach to traditional techniques. In my studio in Leusden, I blend craftsmanship with my own artistic vision. My work ranges from relief prints to intricate pencil drawings, each carefully crafted with precision, care, and passion. As a creative all-rounder, I continuously experiment with techniques and materials to create unique, expressive artworks. My passion for making is boundless. Each piece reflects my quest for originality and the drive to translate my imagination into a tangible reality.





AP

"LYRA"

CHRISTIAN 2025

## — Interview

# Anna Yakusheva

**Can you share how your journey as an artist began and how it evolved over the years?**

I was 4 years old, and I remember sitting under the table, curiously watching the red mark from my mother's new lipstick on the wall. In those times, it was still a rarity, and my father had brought it for my mum from abroad. But I wasn't interested in using it as a lip — at that moment it became as means of self-expression. This vivid childhood memory is the first expression of my creativity and draw unusual materials. At that moment some unusual



condition began to dawn on me, but I was only able to fully understand and name its years later, after going through a journey of self-acceptance.

From the age of 15, I learnt that it is not enough to paint as you feel, needed knowledge and an academic foundation. I was accepted to the local art school and started to study academic drawing, sculpture, and developed a particular interest in oil painting. I painted local landscapes, sold my works at local fairs, and gave them to friends. This was my first experience being recognized as an artist, and it inspired me.

When it came time to choose a profession after finishing school, the only creative field available in our city was interior design. It was in university that I spent the most beautiful five years immersing myself in the world of art and experimenting with materials. During that time, I began studying philosophy, art history, and became deeply studied of the Bauhaus school. I became interested in studying the Renaissance and greatest geniuses those time, Leonardo da Vinci and Raphael. I spent a lot of time drawing copies of their works, liked observing people and sketching quickly, reading everything that sparked my deep interest. After finishing my studies, I continued my creative journey as interior designer.

**How did the transition from interior design to art affect your creative process and artistic style?**

Working as an interior designer, I developed excellent skills in communication, business management,



Anna Yakusheva | Choice | 2023



teamwork, flexibility, and the ability to see the bigger picture in any creative process. And these skills have been a great base in my future endeavours as an artist. I wasn't developing as an artist at the time, but I did create a few paintings specifically for my projects. This was an attempt to explore interior abstraction. However, I didn't pursue this creative experiment further, as I didn't feel it was truly my style. I was looking for something more, but due to my busy schedule, I couldn't quite capture that feeling and express it on paper. The big change in my life came in 2016 when fate challenged me to choose between successful self-actualization or starting a family. The choice for me was not an easy one. But after leaving behind a promising future as a designer, I moved to England and, shortly after, became a mother for the first time. During this period, my inner world was profoundly shaken. I encountered social and cultural differences in mentalities, and I had to find new ways of creative development for myself. The responsibility of caring for a young child led me to explore my inner world through esoteric and spiritual knowledge. I began searching for myself. It was from that moment that my journey as an artist truly began.

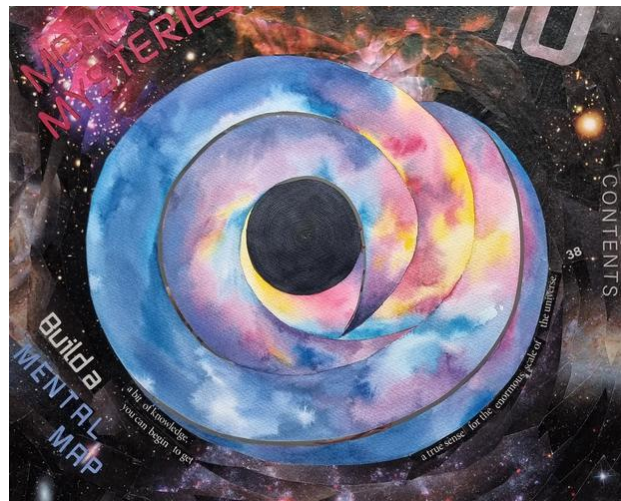
**Your works explore themes like emotional intelligence, psychology, and esotericism. How do you incorporate these ideas into your art?**

We live in a time when occult sciences and esoteric rituals can be openly explored without the fear of being burned at the stake, that to understand the essence of our existence. To comprehend what we can build on in life. I consider this knowledge one of the most wonderful tools for self-discovery and interacting with the world. And as an artist, I pass on all the experience I've gained through my work.

At the same time, I hold science in high regard. Everything in the Universe has the right to exist without division.



Anna Yakusheva | And you are you



Anna Yakusheva | Infinity

And, of course, much of the "esoteric" becomes so much clearer when you also receive explanations of "how it works" from a scientific perspective. Therefore, in my work, I employ methods and techniques that are based on both scientific approaches and research.

Our life is a reflection of the images we hold in our consciousness. Therefore, it is symbols that shape reality. And those symbols and signs that surround us, they are the ones that translate into our lives. It is they that programme us for effective actions in the direction of our desires.

In my new series of works, "Quantum Collage," I explore the manifestation of desires. These are individual pieces that delve deeply into a well-researched topic and are based on knowledge from quantum psychology, astrology, human design, and numerology. According to quantum theory, thoughts, like molecules, have physical properties — they materialize and attract like energy. Thus, this series of personalized works infuses the owner with qualities that are embedded specifically in them and for them.

The works are based on the principle of the law of attraction, in which the manifestation of desires occurs, transforming and helping them materialize in the real world. The entire piece serves as a personal creative passport. And even if the owner is not yet familiar with their true self, through my collage, they can learn a great deal about who they are.

The works in this series are not just pieces of art; they are transformative pieces that will guide one toward self-discovery, contributing to external changes as well.

**You mention that your artwork is meditative, involving direct contact with your Higher Self. Could you elaborate on this process and how it influences your pieces?**

I cannot say that it is the influence of my Higher Self on my work; rather, it is the work of my Higher Self itself. My Higher Self is not something separate from me. It is widely known that our bodies are merely instruments for manifesting the creations of our unconscious mind. Therefore, the entire process of creating a piece of art for me is truly like a meditation, in which I immerse myself

completely and see the images that then appear on paper. Some works, or parts of a work, I may see in a dream, and upon waking, I immediately try to draw what I've seen in my sketchbook. Afterward, I analyse what I saw and transform it into the artwork. Sometimes, a word I hear, a book I read, a detail I saw in nature, or reflections on life's themes can spark an idea for a future painting. At times, the process becomes so captivating that I simply disconnect from any logical thoughts and just draw. I have accepted the fact that my works may not be created quickly. It can take a month, two, or sometimes even longer. I may work on several work at once, and it's a special pleasure for me when I can see several completed works at the same time.

There are times when I step away from brushes, paints, and magazines, from any interaction with the outside world, and retreat into solitude, focusing on my daily family routine. During this time, I simply observe the external world and check my inner compass.

**How do you select the words and magazine clippings that you incorporate into your watercolour and collage works? What role do these elements play in the transformation you aim to inspire in the viewer?**

I am deeply moved by the story of Santiago from Paulo Coelho's book. He dreamed of finding treasure, but his journey was full of trials. It was the symbols and signs that guided him to his true purpose. When he met the old man, the latter said: "When you really want something, the entire Universe conspires to help you achieve it." Santiago recognized and trusted all the signs of fate: the eagle, the wind, the desert.

My works are a combination of two techniques—watercolour and collage. Watercolour became an association for me with the lightness and fluidity of life. In rethinking the role of glossy magazines as an artifact of our time, I complement my works with cuttings from them, which serve as the very symbols and signs for the viewer. I use recognizable images as alternative meanings for each observer, allowing them to project their own experiences and outline their personal, unique life path. With this, I aim to evoke hidden emotions within the viewer, awaken their consciousness to a dialogue with themselves, and show that each of us is unique and a Great Creator, not only of our own life but of this



Anna Yakusheva | Ego | 2024

World as a whole.

Each of my works, like each person and their fate, can be viewed as long as the retina of the eye, which never repeats. I show how multifaceted, light, and free our reality can be if we learn to trust life and listen to the voice of our soul.

**Metamodernism is a key theme in your work. How do you define this artistic movement, and how does it resonate with your personal journey toward inner freedom?**

Metamodernism, for me, is a unique space for exploring inner freedom, as it combines elements of sincerity and irony, doubt and faith, while reflecting the paradoxes of the contemporary world. Unlike postmodernism, which often focused on dismantling traditions, metamodernism opens up space for the search for meaning and personal truth in a world of uncertainty.

This resonates deeply with my own journey towards inner freedom. In my creative work, I strive to embrace these contrasts, allowing myself to be both vulnerable and strong, doubtful and confident. I remain open to change and to a process where there is no final goal, only movement and growth. This understanding enables me to express my emotions and experiences, accepting inner contradictions and finding strength in them for self-expression. It allows me to reveal my true nature without fear of my own conflicts. I give myself the freedom to express not only my struggle with external limitations but also my search for inner harmony, accepting uncertainty and evolving alongside the world around me.

**What advice would you give to other artists who are exploring their own inner worlds through art?**

Art is a brief portal to the self. A work of art is something that concentrates the unconscious around it. To show one's vulnerability and fragility without fear of rejection or disapproval, to be open in one's art—this is the key success of the new era. I consider this to be the courage and strength of a person who has remembered their true nature as a Creator. By exploring ourselves, transforming, and sharing our experiences through our work, we awaken the viewer to become closer to their own true creative nature.

When we explore our inner world, it is truly a process of deep revelations, sometimes painful, but it is these moments that give birth to powerful works. We should not limit ourselves by expectations or what others may think. Art is a personal expression, and it must be honest. It is also important not to be afraid of experimentation and mistakes. Often, it is through mistakes that we make the most unexpected and valuable discoveries. Let each new step be part of the journey, not the final destination. It is essential to remember that the inner world is an ongoing process, and art will evolve alongside us. Therefore, helping to reconnect with true creative energy and restore trust in the future is the task of creators in our time. Remember this!





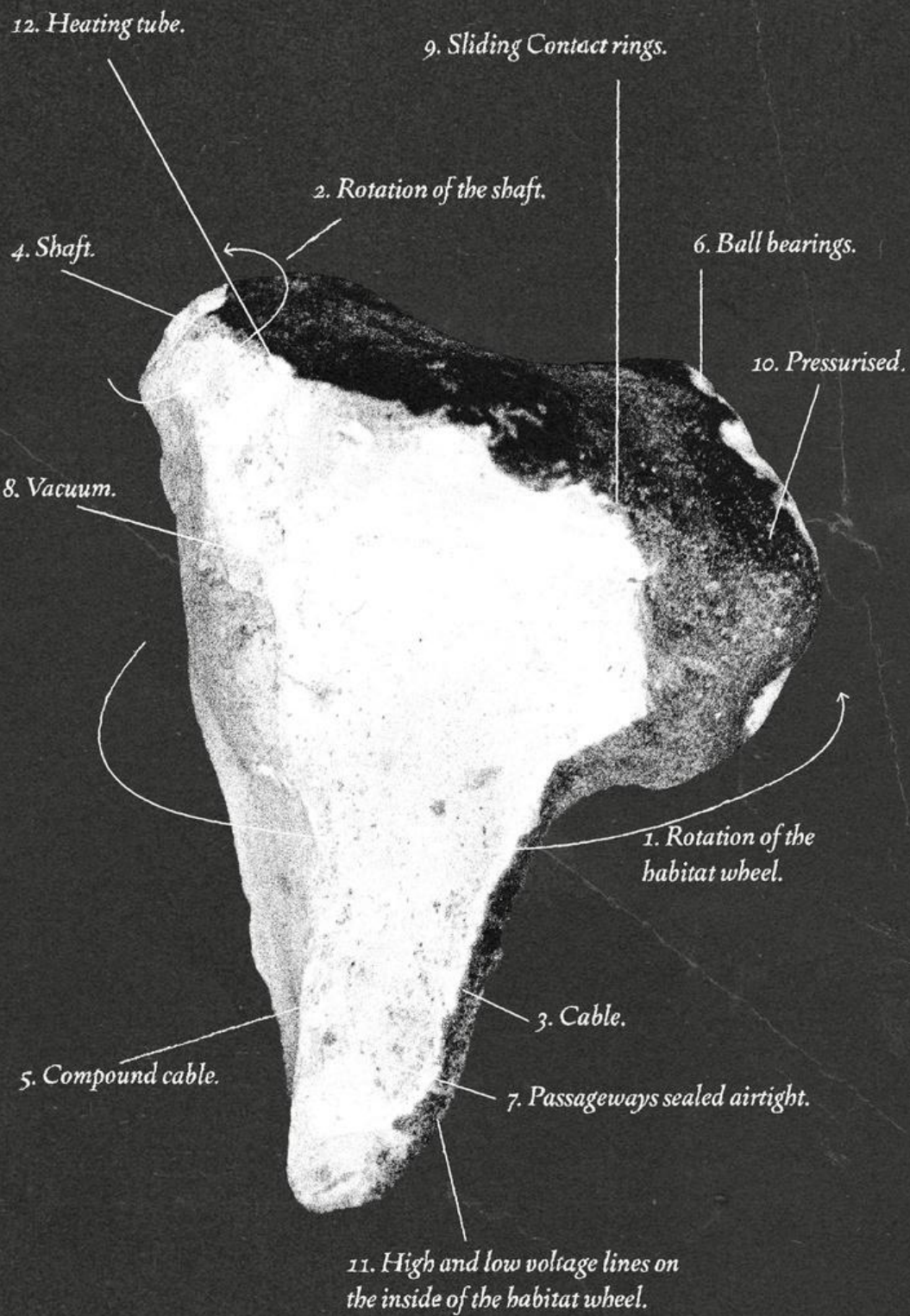
Anna Yakusheva | The birth of a new consciousness | 2024

**Sara Stiplovšek** is a Slovenian artist and designer. After completing her undergraduate studies in Visual Communications at ALUO (Ljubljana, Slovenia), she moved to London in 2020 and completed her master's in Design for Art Direction at the University of the Arts London. In her work, she focuses on documenting and recontextualizing objects and situations from everyday life. Her past projects include the visual identity for Dve Luni (a non-profit organisation for poets in Maribor, Slovenia), the design of the book Stykani for ŠKUC, and the design of the catalogues Prisotnosti and Caravan Next Photo Book for KID Kibla. Sara currently lives and works in London.

### *Project Statement*

The Problem of Stones is an evolving project that officially began in 2024, though the act of collecting started five years earlier. Sara Stiplovšek has been gathering stones, rocks, and pebbles from various points in time and differing locales, turning these stones into material artefacts of a particular space and time. This project recontextualises found objects, transforming them with text and annotation into archetypes, alluding to hidden and withdrawn qualities. Each selected stone is photographed and manipulated to reduce it to its most essential details: shape, texture, and contrast. Then, found text is assigned to each stone, designed to echo its archetypal form, whether as an archaeological artefact's name, a patent specification, or a notation from the drawing of an invention. By assigning new meanings to these stones through familiar descriptive structures, the project upsets and plays with the ideas of context, perception, and categorization. The title, The Problem of Stones, is a nod to The Problem of Space Travel, a book written by Herman Potočnik (Noordung) in 1928.







## — Interview

# Gabriela Stellino

**How did your early experiences studying at the National Art School Manuel Belgrano and the National Academy of Arts Pridiliano Pueyrredon shape your artistic journey?**

The Fine Arts schools have given me extensive training. I have been fortunate to have teachers like Roberto Paez, Pippo Ferrari, Raul Scaranno, Georgina Labreau, and others—generous artists who lived what they did.

**Your works seem to merge delicate watercolor with intricate paper reliefs. How did you come to experiment with the combination of these two elements?**

My working method is based on continuity, on constant work. The artwork takes shape through continuity. One becomes familiar with the material and the idea. Continuity seems essential to me for the image to grow. And there is something that completes itself through repetition and change.

The series presents cut-out works in small format from the year 2024.

A relief is created. The cut creates space for the color, which



is added punctually.

The color, sometimes opaque, watery, or somewhat faded, evokes a vague memory. The color generates a special charm. The watercolor technique allows one to perceive how the moment of the brushstroke is captured on the paper. The time of the brushstroke lingers, trapped in the paper.

**What is the significance of using paper as a medium in your art, especially when it comes to creating shadows and playing with the empty space around your works?**

These works flow from the surface into the spatial dimension. Delicate pieces emerge with small and large spirals. The play of shadows completes the image and shifts according to the light's incidence.

Although it may seem random, the arrangement of the strips is carefully considered:

how the marks correspond to each other and how the black spots relate to one another.

The paper strips are not glued but meticulously interwoven. Paper has been the foundation of my work for many years. I am deeply interested in the quality of the material—its fragility, its structure, and its interaction with ink or color. Its nature blends perfectly with the small format. The small format invites us to look closely. It demands concentration, guiding us toward subtlety and delicacy. It is like poetry—without grandiosity or spectacle. That which often goes unnoticed...

**In your series "TAGESFARBEN / DAY COLORS," you explore an interplay of color nuances. How do you approach the process of balancing repetition and variation within your collages and watercolors?**

Color correspondences are the soul of this series.

Color and its possibilities. How a small patch of color can become surprisingly striking, how it communicates through value, how a palette can become forced or dissonant... with



Gabriela Stellino | Serie Schiribizzi, Work Nr 6804 | 2023



unruly colors or combinations that "don't match." And yet, all of this transforms into a new harmony.  
How does color react? What holds the image together? These are questions that emerge in the process.  
The different ways to read an image.

**Can you explain the creative process behind the "Moving Relief" works, particularly how the dynamic paper curls and their shadows contribute to the piece's overall narrative?**

These paper works are three-dimensional linear drawings, where the interplay of shadows not only completes the image but transforms with the incidence of light. The combination of various techniques opens up new expressive possibilities. It is crucial to maintain flexibility in ideas, constantly rethink them, and stay active in the creative process.  
The fusion of techniques in visual arts expands the creative horizon, giving rise to works that transcend traditional boundaries.

**Your work includes not only collage and watercolor, but also the unique "Print Relief" technique. Could you walk us through how you developed this method and how it influences the perception of your prints?**

I started with two-dimensional prints. However, I wasn't fully satisfied with the flat prints, so later I began incorporating cuts into the print, bending the edges of the cuts, and lifting the printed paper. What is characteristic of this process is the "multiplicity of perspectives," where different views open up depending on the angle of vision. From a technical standpoint, it is not possible to produce identical sheets. Each sheet is a unique piece..



Gabriela Stellino  
Work Nr 4460  
2019



Gabriela Stellino  
Tagesfarben, Work Nr. 5633  
2021

**In your opinion, how do the transient qualities of your works—like the change in perspective depending on the viewing angle—connect with themes of fragility and impermanence?**

The project Bildgeschehen (translated as "What Happens in the Image") works with watercolors on paper and animation. This work with animated sequences literally begins in the Black Forest, where the landscape disappears into the fog: its shapes, open, with few contrasts and subtle nuances, along with the old conflict of the moving motif. The sketch is not yet finished, and yet everything has already changed. These images begin with sketches made in the landscape and notes on the arrangement of colors, chromatic tensions, how a shape progresses, how it disappears, what remains... My intention is to give the viewer the impression of being faced with a work in constant transformation. In these animated sequences, there is no story or anecdote. I try to follow an organic rhythm of the image. The "time" component is naturally integrated. From the beginning, I am interested in the flow of a moment... a moment that flows. The constant becoming... That awareness of transience is ultimately what shapes our experience. I believe that these concepts remain present in the content of the subsequent series.

## — Interview

# Karen Ghostlaw

**Your series "A Page In Time" beautifully explores personal transformation and the nature of existence. What inspired you to focus on self-portraiture as a medium to express these themes?**

The inspiration for focusing on self-portraiture in my series *A Page In Time* comes from my desire to explore my own transformation and the changing nature of my identity. After dedicating many years to motherhood and homeschooling my four children, I found myself at a crossroads, questioning who I was as my children became more independent. As they reached milestones like graduating high school and applying for university, I realized I was transitioning into a new phase of life—one where I would no longer be needed in the same way. This shift left me grappling with the question, Who am I? I received a BA in Photography from Pratt Institute in the early 1980s, the camera became a natural part of my being, my tool to define the way I perceive the world around me translating what I see into visual narratives. I turned to women artists and photographers that have explored self-portraiture that inspired me to begin my self portrait study in the early 2000's. Women like Frida Kahlo, Cindy Sherman, Vivian Maier, and Diane Arbus, who used self-portraiture to explore themes of identity, gender, and personal narrative. Self-portraiture was the catalyst that offered me a way to visually document a period of introspection and self-discovery. It became a means not only to reflect on my personal evolution but also on the broader experience of womanhood. The idea of using my own image to explore themes of identity, transformation, and existence felt both natural and empowering. I was able to not only examine my own journey but also connect with the universal experience of women as they navigate obstacles and face challenges through different phases of life. My reflective self-portraiture became an archaeology of self discovery—digging deep to find answers that reveal new potential. It empowers me to make decisions that help rewrite the stories of my identity and guide my personal journey, a page at a time.

**How does the interplay of light, shadow, and reflective surfaces influence the narrative in your work? Could you walk us through your creative process when working with these elements?**

The interplay of light, shadow, and reflective surfaces plays a pivotal role in the narrative of my work. These elements act



Karen Ghostlaw | A Page In Time | 2022

as metaphors for the internal journey I'm exploring — the contrasts between what is seen and unseen, the known and the unknown. Light represents clarity, revelation, and understanding, while shadow embodies the hidden aspects of the self, the parts that are often overlooked or suppressed. Together, they create a visual dialogue that speaks to the tension between revelation and concealment, the visible and the invisible layers of our identities.

Reflective surfaces serve as a powerful metaphor for introspection, inviting viewers to look beyond the surface and explore the deeper layers of the self. Just like the fractured or incomplete reflections we see in mirrors, they represent the complexities women face—societal pressures, internal conflicts, and shifting identities. The image in the reflection changes with each angle, symbolizing the evolving roles and self-worth women negotiate throughout life. In this way, mirrors and reflective surfaces visually capture the ongoing journey women undertake, confronting and overcoming the obstacles life presents.

When I approach these elements in my creative process, I begin with a concept as I look through the viewfinder. I carefully consider how light can highlight or obscure certain aspects of my image, shaping the mood and the narrative. I position myself in relation to the light and shadows, allowing the interplay between them to emerge organically, almost as a conversation. The reflective surfaces are strategically placed to guide this dialogue, often revealing new facets of my expression or drawing attention to an element of the scene that would otherwise remain hidden. This idea becomes a photograph through the editorial process in lightroom. As I work, I'm constantly aware of how these elements interact and evolve. Sometimes, the shadows may overpower the light, creating a sense of mystery or uncertainty. Other



times, the light floods the space, illuminating parts of myself that I may have avoided acknowledging. This process is fluid and intuitive, much like the journey of self-discovery itself — an ever-changing, evolving dance between the light and dark within us.

**The reflective surfaces you use, like water, glass, and metal, seem to have symbolic significance. What do these surfaces represent in the context of your work?**

The reflective surfaces I use—such as water, glass, and metal—carry deep symbolic significance in my work. Each of these surfaces represents a different layer of introspection and personal reflection. Water, with its fluidity and movement, symbolizes the ever-changing nature of identity and emotion. It reflects not just the surface but often distorts the image, reminding us of how our perceptions can shift and evolve, much like our inner lives. At times, water also reveals the bottom, offering a glimpse of what lies beneath the surface. This element speaks to the structure of history—the foundation of our past—that is always present and continues to shape who we are, even when we may not be fully aware of its influence. The depths of water become a metaphor for how our history, our experiences, and our memories are always intertwined with our current selves, forming an unbroken connection between where we've been and who we are becoming.

Glass, transparent yet fragile, speaks to the vulnerability we experience as we expose our true selves. It reflects our image clearly, but it also separates us from the world, creating a barrier that can both protect and isolate. It highlights the tension between what we allow others to see and the parts of ourselves that remain hidden or shielded. Glass also captures the reflections of objects, textures, and even people, subtly incorporating the external influences that relate to the obstacles and challenges we face. These reflections often appear fragmented or obscured, mirroring how these forces—both internal and external—can cloud our sense of self or alter our path. Glass embodies the paradox of being both stagnant and transient; while it may seem solid and unchanging, the reflections constantly shift and evolve, symbolizing how we are influenced by the world around us, yet remain in a constant state of flux as we navigate through life's complexities.

Metal, or stone, with its cold, hard surface, reflects in a more defined and structured way, often offering a more rigid and unyielding image. It speaks to the strength and resilience we, as women, often must embody as we navigate through life's complexities. These materials also bring texture to the reflection, mirroring the jagged and uneven surfaces of our personal journeys. Just as geology shapes the earth through time, with each layer of rock and mineral telling a story of transformation, metal and stone remind us of the long process of growth and change. The reflective surfaces of these materials evoke the idea of endurance—the way we weather life's challenges, sometimes feeling worn down, but always developing a deeper sense of strength and understanding. They remind us that the reflective process, much like the shaping of stone, can be hard yet necessary in forming and understanding our identity. Reflective surfaces like water, glass, and metal each offer a unique perspective on identity and transformation. Together, they highlight the contrasts between clarity and distortion, vulnerability and strength, reminding us that our identity is



Karen Ghostlaw | A Page In Time | 2022

constantly evolving. These surfaces help us reflect on our journey and how we continue to redefine ourselves as we move forward.

**Can you share more about your experience creating self-portraits during the pandemic? How did this period of isolation impact your work both creatively and personally?**

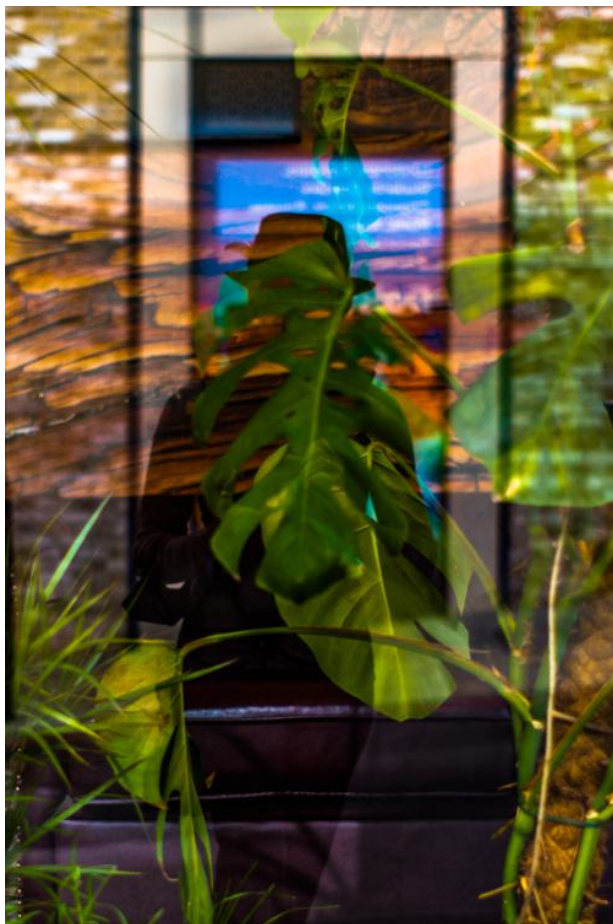
During much of the pandemic, my family and I lived in a log cabin in a remote area of the Adirondack Mountains in New York State, surrounded by nature and far removed from the layers of glass and urban spaces I had once been so accustomed to. Growing up in this area, I always had a deep connection to the land, so returning to the Adirondacks felt like a return to my roots. This isolation became a pivotal point in my self-portraiture work. Without the typical constraints of the city or the distractions of everyday life, I found myself drawn to the raw, unfiltered landscape around me. I began to explore the idea of nature as a reflection of the self, finding new ways to engage with my environment and my own image.

Mirrors and water became central to this exploration. I would sometimes drag mirrors into the wilderness, allowing them to capture not just my reflection but the natural world as well. The mirrors, often placed in streams or positioned among trees, became a way to merge the self with nature, offering a powerful metaphor for how isolation can lead to deeper self-reflection and a re-connection with one's surroundings. The reflections in water and glass highlighted the contrast between the stillness of nature and the restlessness I sometimes felt within, creating a poignant dialogue between internal and external worlds.

Creatively, this period allowed me to step away from urban distractions and explore a more intimate, direct connection with both myself and the environment. The isolation sparked a deeper sense of introspection, and I began to focus more on the simplicity and clarity that nature provided, using mirrors and water to capture and reflect the changing landscapes of my emotions and thoughts. Personally, it was a time of reconnection—both with myself and with the world around me—and the process of creating self-portraits in this way helped me find clarity in a time of uncertainty. The Adirondacks, with its vast wilderness and quiet stillness, allowed me to reconnect not only with my past but also with a deeper, more authentic version of myself.

**Your work often explores the interconnectedness of individual identity with the greater whole. How do you perceive the role of women in the world today, and how does this influence your art?**

In my work, I strive to support not only women and people identifying as women but also gender-diverse individuals, recognizing the vast spectrum of human experiences and identities. Embracing and celebrating the diverse expressions of gender has deepened my understanding of the complexities of identity and how it shapes our interactions with the world around us. This commitment to inclusivity has expanded the scope of my self-reflective study and self-portraiture, allowing me to engage with a wider range of voices and stories, which, in turn, has enriched my own



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creative process.

Through this exploration of self-portraiture, I have learned that the act of turning the camera on oneself is not just about capturing an individual image, but about delving into a larger conversation about identity and human experience. The reflective process of capturing oneself has evolved beyond just a study of my own identity—it has become a way of understanding the universal themes of transformation, struggle, and resilience that are shared by all people. This self-reflective practice has allowed me to recognize the power of portraiture to bridge divides, fostering empathy and understanding. Through this journey, I've come to see that self-portraiture, when viewed in the context of others' experiences, reveals much more about the interconnectedness of all people, regardless of gender or identity.

**You describe your work as an existential reflection on reality and humanity's place within it. How do you see the evolution of identity and consciousness in today's society?**

The evolution of identity and consciousness in today's society is deeply interconnected with the way we are constantly shifting and adapting to the world around us. We're living in a time where identity is no longer a fixed concept, but something that is continuously evolving. Technology, social movements, and even global challenges push us to rethink who we are and where we fit into the larger story of humanity.

Identity now exists in a space where we can explore and redefine ourselves based on both internal desires and external influences. We're constantly exposed to the identities of others through social media, offering new ways of understanding ourselves in relation to the world. This can create a sense of connection, but also confusion, as we try to navigate authenticity in the face of so much influence. What's even more powerful is that these shifts in identity are no longer confined to traditional categories like gender, race, or class. People are increasingly breaking free from these conventional labels, creating new and more nuanced ways of identifying themselves. This fluidity opens up the possibility for anyone—regardless of gender or background—to find a deeper, more personal sense of self that doesn't necessarily conform to societal expectations or norms.

This evolution is not just about expanding our understanding of who we are but about embracing the diversity and complexity of human experience. It's about acknowledging that identity, in its truest form, isn't something rigid or defined by others—it's a continuous process of self-discovery, shaped by the intersection of who we are inside and the world we navigate. In this ever-changing landscape, authenticity becomes an individual journey for each person, a quest to define themselves beyond the traditional boundaries.

Consciousness, too, is evolving as we become more aware of our shared existence. We are increasingly mindful of how our individual actions and experiences are linked to global issues like climate change, mental health, and social justice. This growing awareness shapes our identity, encouraging us to look beyond the self and embrace a greater sense of collective responsibility. It's as if we are starting to recognize that our personal journeys are part of a much larger human narrative, where each shift and change we undergo reflects a



broader, unified whole.

In my work, I explore this constant transformation of identity and consciousness. Through self-portraiture, I examine the way our sense of self is not static but shaped by ongoing reflection, growth, and change. It's an existential process, questioning how we find meaning in such a dynamic and sometimes overwhelming world.

**As the Co-Founder of The Pictorial List nonprofit and Editorial Director of The Pictorial List Magazine, you've collaborated with photographers worldwide. How has this global exchange influenced your artistic development?**

Supporting photographers and the art of photography, particularly women photographers, has been deeply fulfilling. By providing a platform for photographers to share their stories and visual narratives, I feel we're contributing to a global movement that values and elevates the art of photography. My editorial work has allowed me to explore the intersection of visual storytelling and artistic expression, fostering a space and nurturing a community where photographers can develop their unique voices and engage in meaningful dialogue about their work. I am proud to be part of a community that spans the globe, where every new collaboration not only helps me grow as an artist but also deepens my understanding of photography's universal power to connect people across cultures, races, genders, and experiences.

Recently, I've also found it incredibly enriching to connect more deeply with my local community in the Hudson Valley. After years of global collaboration, being able to contribute locally feels like a natural extension of everything I've learned and experienced. The connections I'm forming here allow me to share the insights, empathy, and understanding I've gained through my work with photographers from around the world. Now, I feel that I can bring these global perspectives back to the community I call home, offering something meaningful and valuable in return. This experience of bridging local and global spaces has given me a sense of purpose and fulfillment, reminding me of the importance of building connections wherever we are—whether it's across the world or right in our own backyard.

Photography has always been at the core of my personal and artistic journey, and it is through photography that I've been able to truly connect with the world around me. The power of visual storytelling, to capture moments, emotions, and stories, is unmatched. Photography allows us to express complex ideas and narratives in a way that words cannot, and it has always been an essential tool for exploring and reflecting on identity. The Pictorial List is deeply rooted in the history of the Pictorialist movement, where photographers like Alfred Stieglitz helped elevate photography as an art form. We continue that legacy by supporting photographers and visual storytellers, helping them develop a narrative and a dialogue around their work. Through interviews, book reviews, and features of photography stories and projects, we provide a global platform that encourages further support and fosters a community where photographers can connect with like-minded individuals, both locally and internationally. Looking ahead, we're excited to continue developing our nonprofit and giving back to the community that has supported me so generously. I'm particularly grateful for the Bank Art Gallery in Newburgh, New York, whose support of

The Pictorial List Volume One—New York was instrumental in bringing this vision to life. Their generosity and commitment to the arts have played a key role in my ongoing exploration of Who Am I as an artist and individual, and they have provided a space for me to continue my personal journey of growth and discovery. This community has welcomed me back home, and I look forward to nurturing that connection as we develop our nonprofit, supporting a diverse and inclusive community of artists, photographers, and visual storytellers, helping them grow and find meaningful support through the power of art and narrative. I look forward to adding a new chapter to A Page In Time.



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## **Delphine Garcia**

I am a french woman artist and art teacher living in Berlin for more than 10 years. I am a mix of french and Berliner culture. Originaly more into collages, I like to mix different technics in my works.







## — Interview

# Sondra Bernstein

### **What inspired your transition from the hospitality industry to the world of digital art?**

After spending over four decades in the dynamic and demanding restaurant industry, I made the conscious decision to step back from the daily grind of operations. This choice was driven by a desire to slow down, rediscover my creative spark, and embark on the next phase of my personal and professional journey.

The transition from the role of a restaurateur to that of a digital artist was not merely a change in the tools and materials I used, it represented a profound shift in how I channeled and expressed my creativity. In the restaurant world, success was often measured in immediate, tangible responses: the visible delight of a customer taking their first bite, the contented sigh after tasting a perfectly paired wine. The feedback was instant and gratifying.

Digital art, on the other hand, requires a different kind of patience and a different set of expectations. The satisfaction derived from creating digital art does not stem from immediate reactions or external validation but rather from a deeper, more introspective process of contemplation. It's about the personal journey of creation and the meaning imbued in the work itself. While I still maintain an active presence in the restaurant industry, my primary role and identity have shifted. I now see myself predominantly as the founder and partner of these establishments, but also, importantly, as their resident artist. This new identity allows me to merge my past experiences with my newfound passion, creating a unique synergy between the culinary world and the digital art realm.



### **Could you tell us about the first time you encountered digital art and how it influenced your creative process?**

My artistic journey began with graphic design, utilizing tools like Photoshop and Canva to craft social media posts and branding materials for my business. However, the emergence of NFTs in the art world sparked an intense curiosity within me, leading me to adopt the moniker "4everKurious."

In late 2020, I embarked on an exploration of digital art and AI, a journey that has been characterized by continuous learning due to the rapid advancements in this field. The boundless potential of new technologies and their capacity to amplify my creative expression enthralled me. My days became a dynamic blend of experimenting with novel imaging tools and refining concepts, often articulating my ideas with the assistance of AI language models. This collaborative process with technology has been both exhilarating and a source of immense inspiration.

Driven by my thirst for knowledge, I found myself spending hours each day on the Clubhouse app, immersing myself in conversations with artists, developers, and crypto enthusiasts. The experience rekindled a passion for learning and engagement that I hadn't felt in years.



The prospect of NFTs and digital art providing a sustainable livelihood for artists, regardless of their geographical location, was a significant source of inspiration. The potential for earning royalties on resales also captivated me, as it offered a tangible path towards generational wealth for artists and their families—a possibility that had never been so accessible before.

However, the landscape has shifted considerably since then, and the initial optimism surrounding NFTs has been tempered by the realities of the market and the evolving dynamics of the digital art space.

**As a creator and curator, how do you balance your artistic vision with your curatorial role at SearchLight?**

SearchLight, an early platform for showcasing emerging artists, predates the emergence of computerized opencall opportunities like HUG and JOYN. As a grassroots initiative, SearchLight required time and effort to establish relationships with artists and curators. My initial administrative role involved streamlining processes and consolidating information. However, through collaboration and observation, I discovered that I had always been a curator, and my role at SearchLight solidified this realization. Curating, whether showcasing other artists or one's own work, is as crucial as the art itself. It involves thoughtful selection and presentation, shaping the viewer's experience and understanding.

The emergence of digital platforms has transformed the art world, offering new avenues for exposure and connection. However, the core principles of curation remain essential. The curator's role extends beyond mere selection; it encompasses creating a narrative, fostering dialogue, and providing context. In an increasingly saturated landscape, the curator's discerning eye and thoughtful approach are invaluable in guiding audiences and amplifying artistic voices.

**You mentioned that traditional mediums like paintbrushes and charcoal never fully resonated with you. Can you elaborate on why digital art felt like the right medium for you?**

Traditional artistic mediums like drawing and painting never quite clicked for me despite multiple attempts. I wanted to be an artist but struggled with the patience required to master these conventional techniques, which led me to explore mixed media, collage, and photography instead—creative outlets that felt more accessible and aligned with my abilities.

When I first discovered AI-generated art, it was a revelation—finally, a medium that could bridge the gap between my creative vision and technical execution. What excites me most about digital art is the dynamic

collaboration between human intuition and artificial intelligence. With AI tools, I can experiment with any artistic technique, style, material, or color, creating endless variations without the technical limitations I experienced with traditional media. Yet the process remains deeply personal and creative; it's still the curator in me who evaluates, selects, and shapes which pieces to share, ultimately crafting the final narrative. This partnership between technology and human aesthetic judgment has opened artistic doors I once thought were closed to me.

**How does AI enhance your creative process, and what role does it play in your artistic expression?**

AI isn't just a tool in my process—it's more like a creative partner with a distinctly different perspective. Sometimes it misinterprets my prompts in ways that open entirely new artistic directions. Other times, it takes a half-formed idea and reveals possibilities I hadn't considered. The key has been learning to maintain a balanced dialogue: neither dominating nor being dominated by technology, but engaging in a genuine creative exchange. This collaboration has taught me that creativity isn't a finite resource to be guarded, but an infinite conversation to be explored. As AI technology races forward, I find myself both excited and contemplative about its implications for artistic expression. The challenge isn't just keeping up with new tools, but maintaining authentic artistic voice amid rapid change. I see my future work becoming even more layered—not just technically, but conceptually—as the boundaries between human and machine creativity continue to blur. The constant will be the search for emotional truth within digital expression.



Sondra Bernstein | Blind clarity | 2024

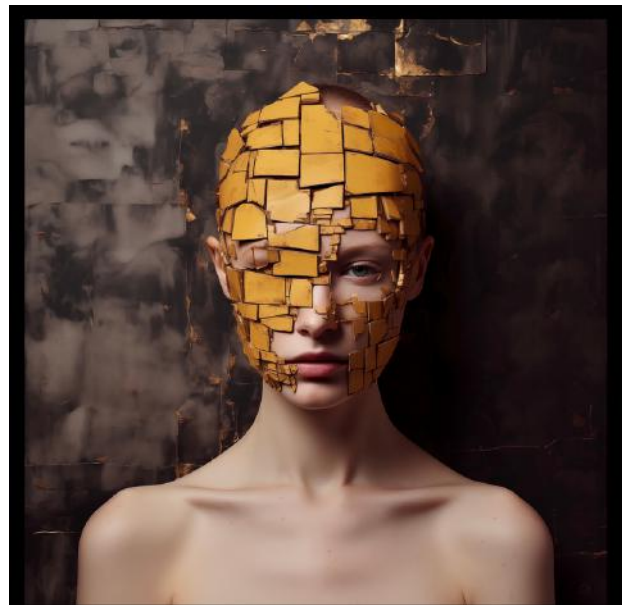
**Your art combines photography with AI enhancements. What do you hope to achieve by blending these two elements in your work?**

Photography has been my artistic language since college—a medium where I focused on capturing reality through my viewfinder, creating art from authentic moments in time. I maintained a purist approach, never altering my photographs to manufacture scenes that weren't actually there. This made the emergence of AI as a creative tool particularly transformative for me; suddenly I could visualize and materialize images directly from my imagination rather than just what my camera could capture.

When I blend my original photography with AI enhancements, I'm deliberately embedding my creative DNA into each piece. This integration is especially meaningful amid ongoing discussions about authenticity in AI-generated art. By incorporating my own photographic elements as foundational layers—like in my recent poppy series, which began with my flower photography before being transformed through AI techniques—I create a bridge between captured reality and imaginative vision. This layering approach allows me to maintain a personal connection to my work while expanding beyond the traditional constraints of photography, resulting in pieces that are both authentically mine and creatively expansive in ways I couldn't achieve through either medium alone.



Sondra Bernstein | Fading | 2024



Sondra Bernstein | In pieces | 2023

**How has your role as a metaverse architect influenced your approach to digital art and its potential for immersive experiences?**

My journey as a metaverse architect in Voxels began as an exploration outside my comfort zone but quickly evolved into a meditative and creative practice. The platform's block-oriented structure challenged traditional design approaches, forcing me to rethink how to create realistic items within these constraints. This process of translating real-world concepts—like Food Halls, Wine Tasting Rooms, and residential spaces—into digital environments taught me how spatial design principles can transcend physical limitations while requiring creative adaptation. As my work evolved, I gravitated toward two particularly meaningful areas: virtual art galleries and a digital home goods marketplace. The galleries became functional venues for showcasing my art and participating in SearchLight's open calls, helping me understand the symbiotic relationship between architectural space and digital art. Simultaneously, designing furniture, pottery, and home décor for those who didn't want to create themselves revealed potential passive income streams in the metaverse economy.

With the proliferation of AI creativity platforms, my focus naturally shifted more toward digital art creation than architectural design. This evolution wasn't a departure from architecture but a continuation of my interest in creating immersive experiences through different tools and scales. The most profound influence of metaverse architecture on my artistic approach has been understanding that constraints foster creativity, spatial thinking enhances digital art presentation, and truly immersive digital experiences require thoughtful integration of architecture, art, and functionality—principles I continue to apply as I explore new creative frontiers.







# Borderline Infernos

**Can you tell us about your journey into digital art and photography? What inspired you to choose these mediums?**

My journey into digital art and photography began with a fascination for storytelling and the ability to capture moments that transcend reality. I was drawn to photography because of its power to freeze time and evoke emotions, while digital art allowed me to break free from the constraints of the physical world and create entirely new realities. The combination of these mediums felt like a natural progression, as they enabled me to merge the tangible with the imaginary. I was inspired by the works of surrealists like Salvador Dalí and contemporary digital artists who pushed the boundaries of what art could be.

**Your works often incorporate surreal and dystopian elements. What themes or emotions are you trying to convey through your art?**

I aim to explore themes of impermanence, transformation, and the fragility of existence. The surreal and dystopian elements in my work serve as metaphors for the complexities of the human experience—our fears, hopes, and the tension between progress and destruction. I want to evoke a sense of unease but also curiosity,



encouraging viewers to question the world around them and their place within it. Emotions like nostalgia, alienation, and resilience often emerge in my pieces, reflecting the duality of beauty and decay.

**How does your training at the EFTI academy and Miguel Hernandez University influence your current creative process?**

My training at EFTI and Miguel Hernandez University was foundational in shaping my technical skills and conceptual approach. At EFTI, I honed my photographic techniques and learned to see the world through a more critical lens, while at Miguel Hernandez University, I delved deeper into the theoretical and philosophical aspects of art. These experiences taught me to balance technical precision with creative experimentation, and they instilled in me a discipline to constantly push my boundaries. The emphasis on storytelling and visual narrative during my studies continues to influence how I conceptualize and execute my projects.



## How do you approach blending photography with digital techniques in your work?

Blending photography with digital techniques is a process of layering and transformation. I often start with a photograph as the foundation, capturing a moment or subject that resonates with me. Then, using digital tools, I manipulate and enhance the image, adding surreal elements, textures, and colors to create a new narrative. The key is to maintain a balance between the realism of the photograph and the fantastical elements I introduce, ensuring that the final piece feels cohesive and immersive. It's like painting with pixels, where each layer adds depth and meaning.

## Your works seem to explore the intersection of humanity and the environment. Can you elaborate on how you see this relationship and how it translates into your art?

I see the relationship between humanity and the environment as one of both harmony and conflict. We are deeply connected to nature, yet our actions often lead to its destruction. In my art, I try to capture this duality by juxtaposing human figures with natural or post-apocalyptic landscapes. The figures often appear small or vulnerable, emphasizing our fragility in the face of environmental change. At the same time, there's a sense of resilience and adaptation, suggesting that even in the face of devastation, there's potential for renewal and coexistence.



## What message do you hope your viewers take away from your pieces?

I hope my viewers feel a sense of introspection and connection. My goal is to spark conversations about the human condition, our impact on the planet, and the possibilities of transformation. I want people to leave with a sense of wonder but also a call to action—to reflect on their role in shaping the future and to find beauty even in the midst of chaos. Art, for me, is a bridge between the personal and the universal, and I hope my work resonates on both levels.

## How do you decide on the subjects for your pieces, particularly the figures and the post-apocalyptic imagery?

The subjects in my pieces often emerge from my own experiences, dreams, and observations of the world. I'm drawn to figures that evoke a sense of mystery or vulnerability, as they become vessels for storytelling. The post-apocalyptic imagery is inspired by my concerns about climate change, technological advancement, and societal shifts. I imagine worlds that are both haunting and beautiful, where the remnants of humanity coexist with the forces of nature. The process is intuitive—I let the concept guide me, and the subjects often reveal themselves as I work.

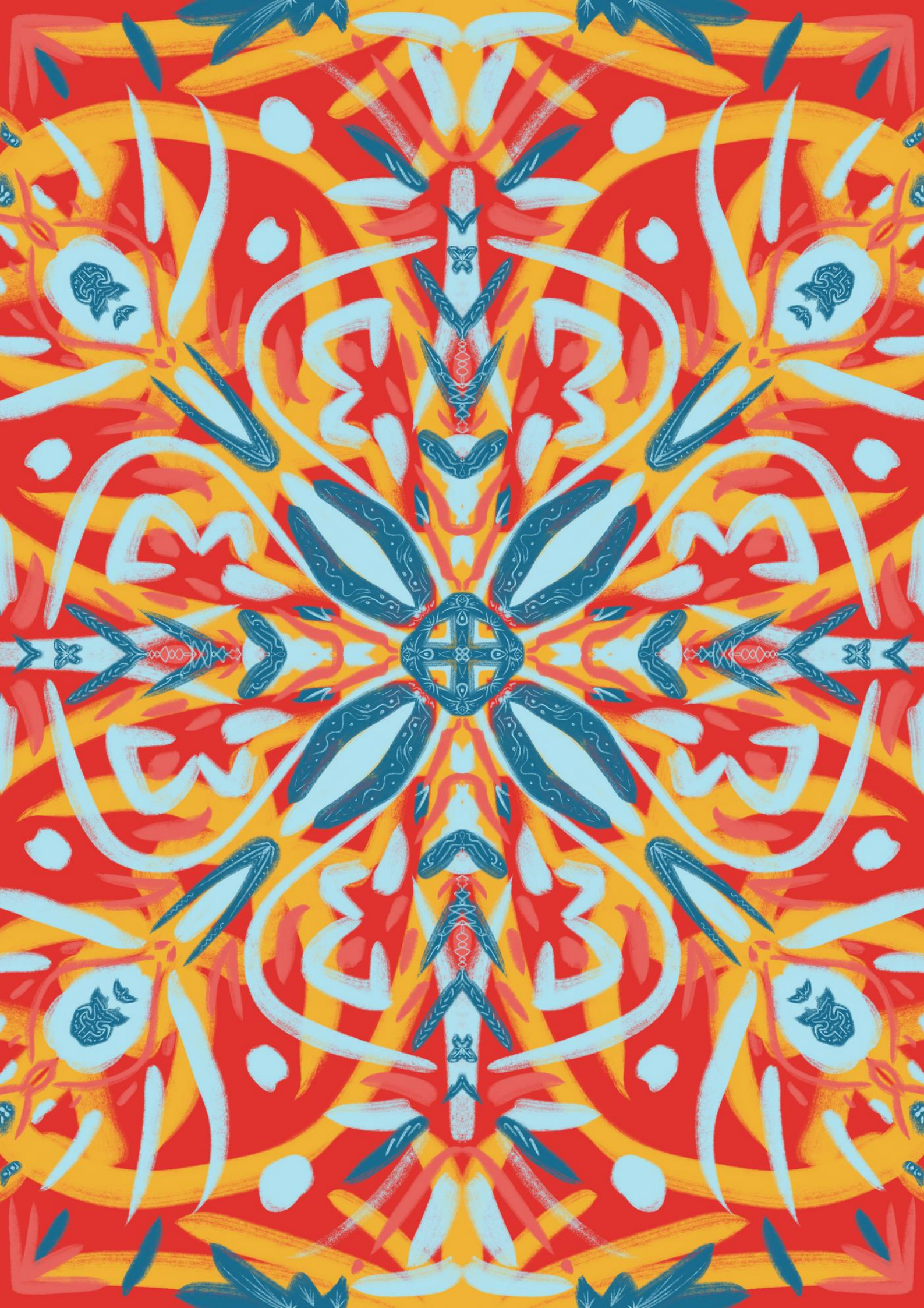


## **Weronika Piekarska**

I am a student at The Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków who specialises in product and poster design. I am interested in board games and my goal is to bring a new quality to their design in order to make them more artistic and less commercial.









## — Interview

# Cole John

**Your project statement emphasizes that "art saves lives." Can you explain what this means to you personally and how it translates into your work?**

Art, no matter the form has the capability to be the ultimate expression of emotion. It is a pure outlet. Art is a necessary distraction that can ease the mind, make you ask questions and give you answers.

**You've explored several different styles and mediums. How do you choose which medium to work with for a specific piece?**



Cole John | Midnight Lane | 2017



I usually just know. If I draw a sketch of something that I want to become a painting, I already see it how I want it to be. If I envision something very simple, I'll probably do it the easiest way, digitally, and just print it out large scale.

**Your work appears to move between realism and abstraction. Can you talk about the process behind creating works like "Dead of Winter" and "Midnight Lane"?**

For majority of my paintings actually, I start with several rough drafts of messy, I guess, preliminary studies. Nothing to in-depth. For Dead of Winter and Midnight Lane, I started with a tree trunk and so on, no wash or anything. I painted the first layer more of a melted version of itself.

**Nature and organic forms seem to be present in much of your work. What role does nature play in your art, and why is it so central to your practice?**

Our environment is so important to our growth and mental state; even indoors. Nature, like our mind, is inescapable.



**The use of both acrylic paints and black ink in your artwork is quite striking. What draws you to these materials, and how do you decide when to use one over the other?**

Like photography some things just look better in black and white. Black is such a rebellious colour to paint or draw in, you know, to make a final piece in only black says something. And to make a final piece in colour, says something else.

**How has your early career influenced the direction of your art today, and are there any specific artists or movements that have inspired you?**

I'd say, my art is more influenced by my life; where I'm at and how I'm feeling. If anything, my early career, like life, allows me to look back and

know what to do and what not to do, what I like and what I don't like.

Claude Monet and Vincent van Gogh have been a major inspiration, but there's definitely more people who have inspired me. In other works, I haven't shown the public yet, you would see a new side of my practice. Andy Warhol has become a big figure to me for his genius in pop art and personal branding.

**Can you share more about your experience with digital art and how it complements or contrasts with your traditional practices in acrylic and ink?**

Digital art (not A.I) is kind of the opposite of my traditional paintings. I look at it differently, like knowing it's computer generated is one thing and it's almost a mockery of literal painting.

Cole John | Flower | 2025





## Nikoleta Chatzinikou

I am a fine art student at the University of Westminster, interested in the intersection of subconscious expression, material experimentation, and visual storytelling. My technique includes painting and mixed media, with a strong emphasis on fluidity, texture, and unpredictability. Memory, metamorphosis, and the interplay between control and spontaneity are particularly interesting to me. My art seeks to elicit emotional resonance, enabling viewers to engage with their own internal landscapes.

### *Artist Statement*

My work explores the subconscious, using painting as a means to capture fleeting emotions and internal narratives. I often enter a dreamlike state while working, daydreaming to allow my intuition to guide my process without conscious interference. This results in paintings that act as snapshots of my shifting emotional landscape, embracing both fluidity and unpredictability. To create my work I use pouring paint, oils, and felt—materials that create a balance between control and spontaneity. The fluidity of poured paint mirrors the unfiltered nature of the subconscious thought, while oil paints add depth, refinement and control. Felt too introduces a tactile solidity, grounding the dreamlike qualities of my work. This project includes three works, each representing a different emotional state. One embodies calm introspection with soft transitions no sharp edges and ethereal colors. Another is chaotic, marked by erratic brushstrokes and an aggressive use of color, reflecting moments of emotional turbulence. The final piece blends both elements, incorporating macabre motifs such as spines to explore vulnerability and mortality—recurring themes in my subconscious. Pia Fries and Bernard Frize have had an influence on my approach. Fries' use of texture and expressive layering motivates my investigation of materiality, whilst Frize's interaction of form and chance drives me to accept unpredictability. Their work has influenced my process, sustaining my fascination with the conflict between order and chaos, real and unreal. This series invites viewers to engage with their own inner landscapes, reflecting the fluid nature of human emotions.







Nikoleta Chatzinikou | A murmur away from the stream



Nikoleta Chatzinikou | Opalescent



# Mad Cissoko

**Your work seems deeply inspired by the concept of abstract realms. Can you explain what abstract art means to you and how it influences your creations?**

Abstract art (has) a special meaning for me. It's an open door to freedom, a way (to explore) emotions, feelings and the imaginary. I like to first (delve into my own feelings), then translate and share them. Abstract art captivates me, (I feel a) natural attraction to it. Colors and shapes (naturally guided me) down this path. It's the best way for me to represent (my thoughts and inner world). In my creative process, (emotion) is essential, followed by the visual part. These two major aspects guide my relationship with abstract art.

**You've mentioned being inspired by Henri Cartier-Bresson and Vivian Maier in your photography. How do their works resonate with your personal style, and how do you blend photography with digital art and painting?**

Henri Cartier-Bresson and Vivian Maier were huge sources of inspiration for me. Getting close to the subject, triggering at the right moment, being patient - all this resonates in the way I photograph. I don't manufacture the moment, I wait for it, I go out to meet it with curiosity and vulnerability. For me, disciplines are not distinct. Everything blends together naturally, depending on the ideas of the moment. I can very easily switch from photography to painting or digital creation in the same day without any problem. Photos can inspire me to create digital works, and paintings can influence my photos, and so on. My work is a living archive that nourishes every medium.



**You started with digital photography but transitioned to film photography. What drew you to film, and how has it changed the way you approach your work?**

I've used digital cameras a lot, but what drew me to film was the need for simplicity and freedom. Digital is (practical), but I found it too rigid, with (a multitude of) buttons and lenses. I needed to get back to the essence of photography: aiming and shooting. This change transformed my practice. It became more (instinctive), and the way I triggered the shutter evolved. With 36 exposure film, you have to choose (each) moment carefully and analyze the environment. It's made me more patient, more concentrated (film means being demanding: every mistake costs an image, whereas digital makes it easier to correct mistakes).

**In your project 'Abstract Realms,' you explore a variety of colors, forms, and texts. Could you share more about your creative process when composing these digital works?**

For "Abstract Realms", it all started naturally. I had a collection of images and a clear vision of what I wanted to create: works (visually striking and emotionally charged). I start with the background (which sets the overall tone of the work). Then I select (strong) images from my archives or (from my digital creations). Then I fine-tune the details with emotion, to (enrich the visual composition). The final placement of elements can take (a few hours or several days), (depending on my energy and inspiration).



**You describe your art as versatile, spanning photography, digital art, painting, and video. How do you decide which medium to use for each specific project?**

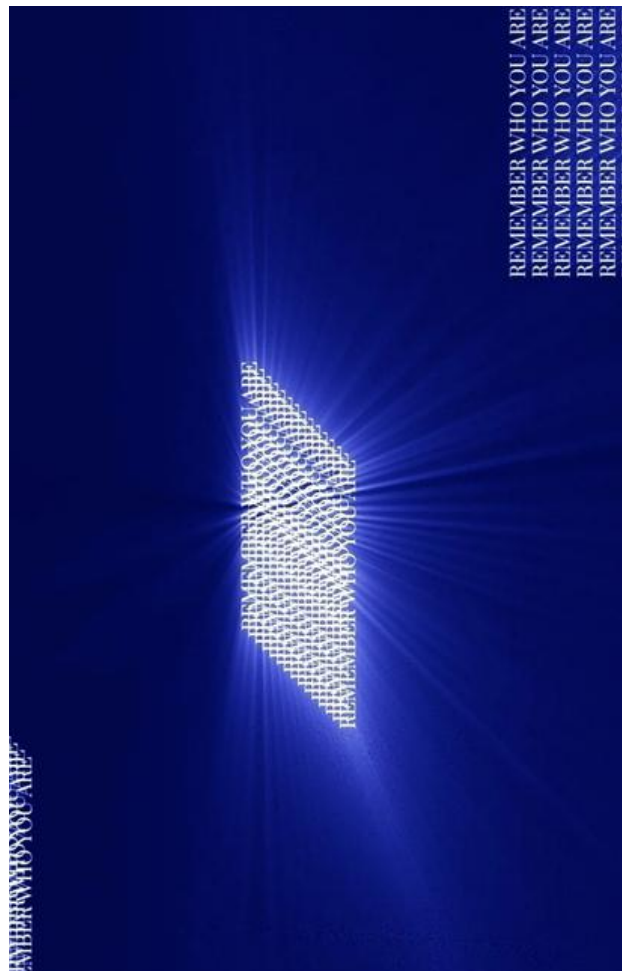
Each medium (comes naturally depending on the emotion I want to convey). Video expresses nostalgia, photography captures moments in life, painting (translates my inner world), and digital art (creates a bridge between the real and the imaginary). The medium changes, but the message remains the same: about me, about us, about you. (This universal link is at the heart of my work).

**Could you tell us about the significance of the yellow line or color in your work? It seems to stand out in a lot of your work.**

Ah yes, that famous lifeline. The color yellow plays a central role in my artistic work. For me, it embodies a strong emotion and represents life itself (it's light, warmth, energy).

In my work, this yellow line often runs through the paintings, creating a visual link between different elements and guiding the viewer's eye (through the composition).

(It acts as a common thread), linking each piece of my work. It reminds us that, even in the darkest moments, (there is always a glimmer of hope). What's more, (its brightness often contrasts with other hues),



highlighting (the emotions and themes explored). All in all, (for me, yellow is a sunny, resilient color, a symbol of strength and optimism).

**As someone who captures moments with a camera, what draws you to abstract art in your digital creations? How do you reconcile these two different styles—photography and abstraction?**

As a photographer, I've always been fascinated by the camera's ability to capture fleeting moments and transform them into (timeless) memories. However, (abstraction allows me to go beyond the tangible, to express the invisible). (What attracts me is this total freedom of expression and interpretation). Unlike photography, which freezes the world as it is, abstraction allows me to explore (emotions and concepts intuitively). To reconcile these two styles, (I like to fuse realism and abstraction). My approach is to use photographic elements as a starting point, (then transform them through digital manipulation). In this way, (I give birth to) works (that go beyond the real and arouse deep emotions). Ultimately, (this tension between the concrete and the abstract is the key to my work. It allows me to tell unique and captivating visual stories).

# — Interview

## Anastasia Gofman

**Your art explores the concept of unity and overcoming the illusion of separation. How do you approach this theme in your work, and how does it manifest visually?**

My art is a kind of conduit, through which I myself live and transmit a deep transformation: the realization of the unity of all things. In my works, I want to dispel the illusion of separation that envelops our perception.

This concept permeates all the images to which I turn. Look at my canvases: it seems that a flower is separated from a rock, and the octopus tentacles live their own independent lives.

It is through this seeming separateness, through this fragile border between "me" and "other," that I lead the viewer to the realization of deep interconnectedness. For example, octopus tentacles, although seemingly independent, obey a single will, a single mind.

Visually, this manifests in the flow of forms, in soft, blurred boundaries, in the use of a palette that emphasizes the overall harmony of the world. I strive to create a sense of pulsation, vibration, energy that connects all the elements of the painting into a single whole.

My goal is not just to show unity, but to give the viewer the



opportunity to feel it, to feel it, to be imbued with a sense of interconnectedness and to understand that we are all part of one huge space.

**The combination of materials such as gold and stones plays a significant role in your work. Could you explain the symbolic meaning behind these elements and how they contribute to your message?**

Each of my works is a striving to connect the material and the spiritual, the inner and the outer. I create multi-layered meanings using volume, mirrors, gold, and stones. The mirrors in my works are not just a reflection of reality, but a conductor into oneself. Gazing into them, we understand that the external world is only a projection of the internal.

Gold is a symbol of the highest spiritual energy, a reminder of the light living within us. Stones are a symbol of connection with nature, with its primordial power and stability. Their combination creates a dynamic interaction, and, moving around, you can change the perception of space.

Thus, these elements become a bridge to the world of sensory cognition, where I invite the viewer to get acquainted with themselves and to know the inseparable connection with the world.

**In your statement, you mention the balance between emotions and intellect. How do you balance these two forces within your creative process?**

I explore and transform the world by creating beauty, both internal and external, and I carry this beauty through art. And I find ways to achieve balance in the world. I see that feelings and reason are the two wings of human existence. Only by





balancing them can we get closer to the truth.

**Your work invites the viewer to reflect on their inner world. How do you hope your audience engages with your pieces and experiences this reflection?**

My works are mirrors, reflecting not only external reality, but also serving as a bridge to the viewer's inner world. I hope that, by interacting with them, the viewer will see a reflection of their own "self," and realize that the world around them is a projection of their inner state. If there is "ignorance" present in this reflection, let it not be a reason for criticism, but a starting point for self-knowledge. The viewer's task is not to "break the mirror," turning away from the unpleasant truth, but to heal themselves, find balance between feelings and reason, and realize the unity of all things. I strive for my works to become a catalyst for this process, inspiring inner transformation and helping everyone to see in themselves the light, harmony, and inseparable connection with the world.

**Can you share how your studies in meta-spirituality and art communication influence your art practice today?**

Meta-spirituality guides my choice of themes and images, prompting me to create works that carry spiritual meaning. Art communication shapes my approach to materials such as mirrors, gold, and stones. Mirrors, for example, cease to be mere reflections, becoming a tool for self-analysis and for the viewer to realize their role in the world. Research in the field of art communication allows me to find new ways to interact with the audience, creating works that evoke a deep response. As a result, my artistic practice has gained greater awareness and purposefulness. I strive to create works that not only please the eye but also inspire inner transformation, helping the viewer to see in themselves the light, harmony, and inseparable connection with the world.

**Your transition from running a business to dedicating yourself fully to art is quite profound. What prompted this change, and how has it impacted your artistic journey?**

My transition from running a business to fully dedicating myself to art was triggered by profound personal changes. After moving to another country, I faced difficulties adapting, anxieties, and a loss of direction. This forced me to rethink



Anastasia Gofman | Creator | 2024

my life and seek new ways of self-expression. During this period of spiritual searching, I discovered art. It consumed me completely, and I surrendered to this flow, exploring different techniques, learning, and practicing. I tried to convey my inner world onto the canvas, and gradually this became not just creativity, but a way of communicating with the world, a way to convey spiritual meanings. This transition completely changed my artistic journey. Art became my voice, a way to express what cannot be expressed in words. And my previous experience in business, strangely enough, turned out to be very useful. It taught me purposefulness, organization, and a professional approach to business, which allowed me to seriously engage in art and share my work with the world.

**What advice would you give to other artists seeking to convey deeper, spiritual meanings through their work?**

My main piece of advice for artists striving for spiritual depth: seek your own path to unity. Don't try to copy other people's formulas, but explore your inner world, your feelings, and your experiences.

Firstly, be honest with yourself and listen to yourself. Art is a sincere expression of your soul.

Secondly, immerse yourself in studying the world. Study nature, philosophy, spiritual traditions, science. The more attention you pay to spiritual depth, the greater your understanding of the interconnectedness of everything in the world will be.

Thirdly, experiment. Don't be afraid to step outside of the familiar. Gold, stones, mirrors – these are tools that, in skilled hands, can become powerful conduits of spiritual energy. Fourthly, give the viewer space for co-creation. Let them, looking at your work, feel a connection to the world, see a reflection of their own soul, come to their own understanding of unity.

And be patient. Spiritual meanings are not revealed instantly. It takes time to realize their depth and learn to express them through art. Believe in yourself, move forward, trust the flow, and you will find your unique way to convey these meanings to the world.



Anastasia Gofman | Reflection of the inner world | 2024



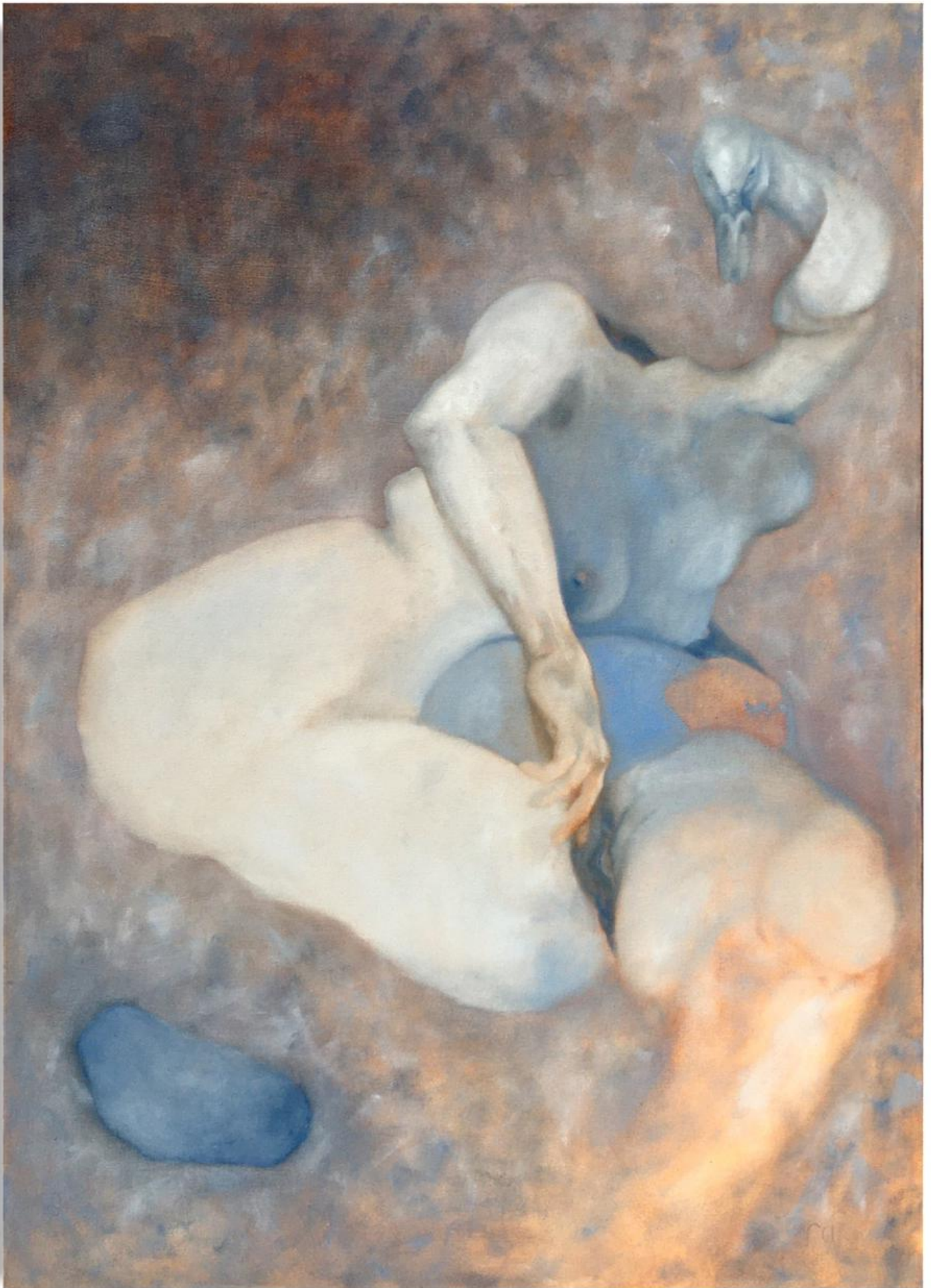
**Ra** is a self-taught painter, sculptor, and performance artist from Cape Town, South Africa, currently based in Southeast Asia. Her work explores identity, selfhood, and the reclamation of power in a world shaped by patriarchal and colonial systems. Using the figure, Ra addresses emotional complexity and rebellion, challenging societal constraints placed on the body. Drawing from personal experience, intuition, and connections to matriarchal storytelling, ecofeminism, and radical transformation, Ra creates art that envisions a more authentic reality. Her practice confronts the fractured sense of self and fractured world, using intuitive methods to push boundaries of form and content. As a queer, neurodivergent woman, Ra has spent her life unboxing the prescribed narratives imposed on her. This ongoing exploration informs her work, which defies societal narratives around gender, queerness, and complacency. For Ra, hope is not about escape but about facing discomfort and dismantling the “everything-is-doomed-so-buckle-in” narrative. Ra has exhibited at New House Gallery (Guildford, UK), The Commons Gallery (Muizenberg, SA), Kalki Gallery (Kathmandu, Nepal) and curated and exhibited a solo show on Bree Street, Cape Town. She is also a women’s empowerment facilitator in the Red Tent Movement, offering safe spaces for women to connect and heal.

#### *Artist Statement*

In a world of pre-prescribed identity, my art unapologetically confronts societal narratives, delving into the emotional and psychological landscapes of the human body. My work reflects themes of autonomy, womanhood, humanhood, queerness, and liberation, questioning the boundaries imposed on, and between, us. I’ve always felt a deep tension between the world presented to me and the one I feel within. Growing up in a world confined to binaries—whether in the roles we’re expected to play as women, the pressure to conform to heteronormative desires, or in neurotypical conversations that felt as dry as cardboard—left me suffocating in a prescriptive story. The ‘shoulds’ of being ‘civilised,’ where worth is reduced to the material and to lust, made me feel as if even breathing into my body meant I was taking up too much space. I was trapped in a story that suffocated me under the weight of expectations. But then, I found colour. Colour became my liberation; both in the way I was allowed to live and in how I co-create with reality. Through colour, I find my autonomy, my reason to live, in a world that often feels drenched in beige, black, and white. Like honesty, colour has been my lifeline in understanding what the world means to me—both in what is, and in what could be. My work investigates the values we hold in our bodies, recognizing that our bodies are the political playground. . Without bodies, we have no politics. I explore aspects of our Selves that society taboo-ifies or suppresses; those we are not permitted to express or discuss openly. I am fascinated by the radical and often uncomfortable aspects of human existence: the raw, disordered, and unfiltered dimensions that exist under sanitized norms. It is through these that I believe we encounter the truest essence of our human hearts. In my practice, I’ve learned to befriend discomfort and uncertainty. I focus on reclaiming the feminine from within the body, questioning what lies beneath the societal structures and narratives imposed on bodies—particularly those with vulvas, but on all bodies, as battlegrounds. Through my work, I seek to express the fullness of being, offer refuge for the complexities of our existence, and create a reality that feels alive, and deeply human.







Ra Searll | A Small Pool of Water, I Will Never Belong To You | 2024

## — Interview

# Amanda Veloso

### **Can you tell us more about how your personal experiences shape your artwork?**

My artwork is deeply rooted in personal narrative; each piece serves as a reflection of my experiences, memories, and emotions. I view my artwork as a personal method of understanding both myself and the world around me, allowing me to navigate questions of personal identity through visual expression.

During my senior year of high school, my art thesis focused on the connection between memory, experience, and personal identity. I became fascinated by how the moments we live through, significant or mundane, shape the essence of who we are, and I wanted to explore this idea through my own lived experiences. This approach has transformed my artistic practice into something much more intimate becoming a means of self-exploration, and a way to process and preserve these moments.

In the past, I received feedback from teachers and artistic professionals who felt that my work, while visually strong, lacked a certain intimacy and vulnerability. At the time, I wasn't entirely comfortable exposing deeply personal aspects of myself in my art. But this thesis became a turning point, as it challenged me to embrace vulnerability and create work that felt honest and introspective.

As of now, my creative practice revolves around using art as a space for intimate reflection,



capturing fleeting moments and experiences that might otherwise go unspoken. My work is, in many ways, serves as a visual diary, one that continues to evolve as I do.

### **How does the theme of memory play a role in your artistic practice, particularly in the works you've created for your current project?**

Memory is central to my artistic practice, serving as both a subject and a framework for how I approach storytelling and create in my work. For my current ongoing project, I am creating a painting and drawing diptych that contrasts and explores how memory is stored and remembered differently in objects versus places. Objects hold memories in a static way—they remain unchanged; preserving a moment in time and serve as physical reminders of personal history. In contrast, places are fluid and ever-changing, shaped by time, people, and shifting atmospheres. A place can hold emotional weight, yet it never remains exactly as we remember it. Through this diptych, I want to explore this tension between permanence and



impermanence, between what is fixed and what is constantly shifting.

Through this project, I've been reflecting on how personal experiences shape not just who we are, but how we remember. The act of creating these pieces is, in itself, a way of engaging with memory, translating fleeting moments into something tangible. By visually representing these ideas, I hope to evoke a sense of nostalgia and introspection, prompting viewers to consider their own relationship with memory, place, and the objects they hold onto.

**Your works seem to reflect both solitude and connection, especially in busy environments. Can you discuss this duality and how it influences your approach to your subject matter?**

The duality of solitude and connection is something I often find myself drawn to. In my work, I like to explore how individuals experience personal moments of introspection even in spaces that are full of movement and life. There is something fascinating about how, even in the presence of others, solitude can exist how we navigate the world both as part of a collective and within the intimacy of our own thoughts. This theme plays a significant role in my current ongoing diptych project, particularly in how memory is stored in objects and places. Public spaces, for example, are constantly shifting people come and go, new experiences layer over old ones—yet within them, we can find deeply personal, almost private moments of stillness. When approaching my subject matter, I aim to capture this contrast, depicting environments that are full of life yet still intimate, where solitude doesn't necessarily mean isolation but

instead becomes a space for reflection. I try to evoke these feelings of existing in two states at once: present within the world yet momentarily lost in memory or thought.

**How do you decide on the materials and techniques you use in your pieces, such as gouache and oil on canvas?**

When deciding on materials and techniques, I tend to gravitate toward oil paint on canvas because honestly, it is the medium I am most comfortable with. Over time, I've developed a strong connection with oil painting as it allows for a depth and richness that align with the way I want to depict memory and personal experience. The slow drying time also gives me the flexibility to refine details, blend seamlessly, and build layers, all of which are essential to achieving the realism I aim for in my work.

Compared to other materials and mediums I've explored in the past, oil paint has consistently been the best at capturing the realistic details I want to convey, especially when working from my own photo references. My artistic approach leans toward realism, not just for the sake of technical precision, but because I want my work to feel immersive, almost as if the viewer is stepping into my own vivid memories and experiences.

At times, I experiment with other materials, such as gouache or graphite, when I want a different texture or effect, but oil remains my primary medium because of its ability to evoke a vivid, almost tangible presence. Ultimately, my choice of materials is guided by how best I can translate personal moments into something visually and emotionally resonant.

**Can you describe your artistic process when creating a piece like "The Train Station" or "Early Morning Drives"?**

My artistic process also varies depending on the medium and the mood I want to capture. For a piece like *The Train Station*, a gouache painting on watercolor paper, I took a more stylized and graphic approach. Gouache allows for flat, bold shapes and a stylized quality that I felt suited the scene; a moment suspended in time, with figures of people and vibrant colors convey a sense of



Amanda Veloso | Apricity | 2024

movement and energy. When working in this style, I focus less on realism and more on composition, shape, and atmosphere, simplifying details while still keeping the image representational.

On the other hand, *Early Morning Drives*, more focusing on realism, required a different approach. I worked from my own photo references to ensure the details were as vivid as possible. The use of oil paint was crucial to me in building depth and refined textures to capture the hazy warm glow of the streetlights and the quick movement of the cars passing by. Though these two pieces differ stylistically, they both stem from the same intent evoking a personal, familiar feeling, whether through stylized abstraction or immersive realism.

**In your statement, you mention a sense of loneliness in a crowd, similar to Edward Hopper's "Nighthawks." How do you view the influence of Hopper and other artists on your work?**

While Edward Hopper's *Nighthawks* has influenced my exploration of themes of solitude in my work, my influences extend beyond just visual artists. I often draw inspiration from literature, essays, music, scholarly and personal journals-forms of storytelling that explore the complexities of human experience in ways that resonate with my artistic practice. I aim to translate these themes into my own personal language.

*Nighthawks* is interpreted as an exploration of human existentialism and loneliness in the

modern age. Hopper's figures, though physically close, feel distant from each other, encapsulating the isolation that can exist even within a crowded city. This sense of quiet detachment is something I reflect on in my own work-how urban spaces, despite their energy and movement, can still be deeply isolating. The figures in *Nighthawks* exist together but remain locked in their own internal worlds, a feeling I often try to evoke in my paintings.

I was also inspired by Olivia Laing's *The Lonely City*, which examines loneliness through art, particularly in densely populated urban environments. Laing's reflections on Hopper's *Nighthawks* and Andy Warhol's *Time Capsules* made me think about how loneliness manifests in different forms-sometimes in isolation, but also in the presence of others. Her work prompted me to consider how my own art could visually represent this tension between connection and solitude, especially within spaces that feel familiar yet distant.

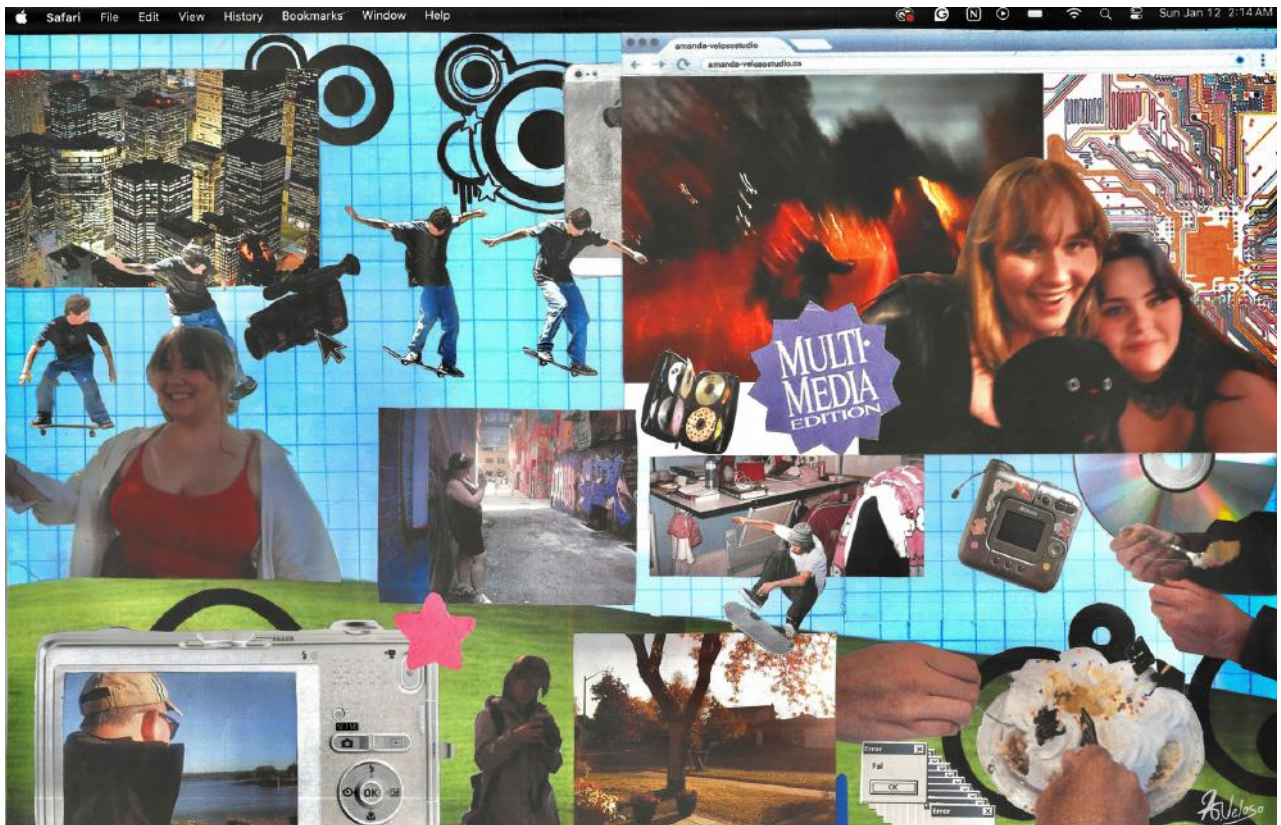
**What do you hope viewers take away from your work, particularly when experiencing themes of memory, identity, and human connection?**

I hope that when viewers experience my work, they find a sense of familiarity within it-whether through the quiet intimacy of a personal memory, the complexities of identity, or the subtle ways human connection unfolds. My artwork stems from my own lived experiences, but I want them to resonate beyond just my perspective. Memory is deeply personal yet universally understood. We all carry moments that shape us, and I want my work to evoke that shared recognition of time, place, and feeling. With themes of identity, I hope my art prompts viewers to reflect on how their own experiences define who they are. Much of my practice involves using painting as a means of self-exploration, understanding myself through the act of creating. In turn, I hope my work encourages others to think about their own evolving sense of self, how memories and experiences shape their personal narratives. Ultimately, I want my work to serve as a tool for reflection, one where viewers can find traces of their own stories within mine.



Amanda Veloso | *Early Morning Drives* | 2024







**Fulvio Cante Soriano** sometimes approaches painting, drawing or sculpture. He continues his experimental research using different materials such as clay, sand, wood, organic, glass or light. It creates a kind of magmatic humanoid chimeras transformed by the appearance of light in their heart. The light sculpts the details like in a rock. In his paintings, the flora dreams itself as invasive and deep, while the omnipresent light decides what is seen or dissolved in the penumbra. The spark, the flames, or the moonlight guides us, before darkness covers them. The biotic factors between man and environment, the organic world, and anthropomorphism through the prism of metamorphosis question it. This concern resonates with the alteration, and the mutation of the organic notion, which becomes a major concern in his work. He is currently residing in Usquare, Brussels.

#### *Artist Statement*

Born in France in 1984, Fulvio Cante Soriano pursued art studies in which he very quickly felt the need to approach the intimate relationship to the living, to the animal, to biological transformation. His cross-experiments led him first to work on the relationship to drawing, then in a second time to explore the volume in the form of sculptures as well as installations. He continues his experimental research using different materials such as earth, wood, metal, glass, or light. He is in residence at U Square in Brussels.



Fulvio Cante | Cytoplasm





## — Interview

# Fabiana Sorrentino

### **How did your journey in the world of art begin?**

I've been passionate about crafts since I was a girl. I loved creating original carnival masks, unique Christmas decorations, and handmade personal gifts for friends and family. I had a large box filled with recycled ribbons, flowers, boxes, fabrics, broken necklaces, and any object that could be reused. I was always full of ideas and made sure they were well-executed and beautifully packaged.

Following my passions, I attended various practical courses over time. My organizational skills led me to event planning, where I combined my creative and managerial talents.

### **How did you transition from working in event management to focusing on moss art?**

At one point, I pursued my dream of organizing art-inspired weddings and events. To achieve this, I needed to understand both the creative and managerial aspects, so I took courses in management, sketching, floral design, and even sewing. However, I eventually realized that wedding planning wasn't sustainable for my family and me.

My passion for handmade crafts led me to moss art. Engaging in artistic and creative activities, especially after becoming a mother, helps me stay connected to my aspirations, passions, and desires. My atelier is my "happy place," where I can forget my problems, view the world through a vibrant lens, and inspire others to do the same.

### **Can you explain the creative process behind your moss and lichen artworks? How do you decide on the colors and elements that come together in each piece?**



Before creating a moss artwork, I usually start with a sketch, which I trace on paper and then transfer onto wood, especially if the pieces are meant to be displayed together. My first priority is to determine the focal points of the piece: will there be a single center of observation, or multiple ones arranged diagonally, in a spiral, or in waves?

Once the focal points are established, I decide on the composition. This involves choosing whether to use only lichens or to incorporate other elements like plants, flowers, and moss, some of which require a sponge base. I don't plan everything in advance, as the evolving artwork often inspires new ideas.

I don't favor monochromatic lichen works; I prefer vibrant, colorful expressions using plants and flowers. My style is baroque, rich in natural elements and dense in composition.

The colors are chosen through various methods: by combination (pairing elements that complement each other), by selection (matching shades and tones of a specific color season), or according to specific requests. In the latter case, I provide a wide range of elements in the required colors. Generally, compositions are more balanced when they include large, medium, and small elements, similar to floral arrangements or table settings.

Ultimately, I rely on my aesthetic sense and my



"horror vacui"—the fear of empty spaces. I rarely stop adding elements to a piece if I feel it lacks balance or fullness.

**Your works often explore the theme of "flowering." How does this concept reflect your personal journey and growth as an artist?**

My creativity and artistic sense are innate, but recognizing and defining myself as an artist has been a long and challenging journey. I've faced periods of great distress, such as pursuing unsustainable ideas or having to put my dreams on hold due to pregnancy. There were times when I felt I had nothing more to offer the world because I couldn't find the space or energy for my passions.

When I was diagnosed with depression, I realized that creating art was my therapy and a necessity for my well-being. I knew I had something to offer as an artist, so I sought psychological help to overcome my blocks and self-sabotage. I found a space for my studio, began meditating regularly, and immersed myself in moss art. This was my "blossoming" moment. By sharing my story on social media, I hope to inspire other women to embrace their true colors and show themselves to the world. My works embody the dignity and strength of my creative and personal journey, transforming my path into art that I proudly share with the world.

**What role do flowers, moss, and lichens play in your art? How do you view these natural elements in the context of your creations?**

They are like colors for a painter—brushstrokes that add texture and depth, reflecting the varied nature of humanity. My artworks are unique creations, each different from the other, mirroring the personal discovery and flowering process of individuals.

You have mentioned the importance of color and experimentation in your work. How do you approach experimenting with new materials or techniques in your art?

I might be considered more of a craftsman than an artist in some aspects of my work. It has often been suggested that I approach potential customers as a merchant, offering solutions to

their problems and needs. While I have tried this approach, it never felt right to me. The craft approach aims to reach a wide audience with skills and precision, creatively solving practical or aesthetic problems and replicating solutions for multiple people.

However, I use art and creativity primarily as expressive, communicative, and aesthetic tools, without any ambition for widespread dissemination. Each work is unique and unrepeatable, aiming to inspire and emotionally engage viewers. The "beauty" you buy in an artwork is the feeling you had the first time you looked at it, as if it spoke to you.

From a craftsman, you buy a creation for its use and placement; from an artist, you buy the pleasure of owning that piece of art. Artists can only value their works after finishing them, as they need to change and insert elements until satisfied. Artisans, on the other hand, work within predefined figures decided with the customer, which would be very limiting for me stylistically.

**Can you tell us more about the symbolic meaning behind the materials you use and how they connect to your broader artistic message?**

I consider myself more of an artist than a craftsman because the experimental and



Fabiana Sorrentino | Patchwork | 2025

aesthetic aspects of using raw materials prevail over practicality or logic. For example, I have mounted works on leather bases instead of wood, despite the assembly and exhibition challenges posed by a non-rigid support. Additionally, I created a type of moss processing called "raso," which involves meticulously shredding lichens to form a frothy, smooth texture. I love using moss roots, which many people discard or consider "ugly" without the domed head of quality lichens. Although the composition time is longer and the technique can be risky, it's an artistic experiment with aesthetic implications that I cherish.

**What has been the most significant challenge you have faced while creating moss art, and how have you overcome it?**

Stylistically, the greatest challenge has been working on large surfaces for the first time. Filling without weighing down and harmonizing works aesthetically without being repetitive, given my rich stylistic figure, could have been a

failure. I believe I have overcome this challenge, but the true judgment lies with the observer of my 80 by 80 cm triptych.

To solve these issues, I maintained some constants in the composition for continuity (e.g., certain natural elements are present in all three paintings) and varied others for movement (e.g., the nodal point, the richest band in the three squares, changes position from top to middle to bottom).

Emotionally, the hardest challenge was confronting the sustainability of my "business." My high number of hours per work are not easily "countable" and are seen as a "constant loss" by others.

I reminded myself that:

- What is good for others doesn't necessarily have to be good for me and vice versa.
- I don't need anyone's consent if creating is what I want to do.
- Creating is my process to find myself, my well-being, and my pleasure, and this has immeasurable value.









## — Interview

# Blanca Becerra

**Can you share how your upbringing in Guanajuato, Mexico, shaped your artistic vision and practice?**

Anywhere I went in my hometown, history was blended into daily life. Whether through the state-wide government slogan declaring Guanajuato as "the cradle of independence" or the spaces I inhabited. The place where I first took painting classes was once a military barracks during the Mexican Revolution, and the museum where I later studied art had been the home of the siblings Jose y Tomas Chavez Morado, renowned Mexican muralist and sculptor. As a child I may have taken these factors for granted, but as an artist I seek to honor and give them the recognition they deserve. My heritage is something I embrace with pride and gratitude. However, my perspective is not solely one of admiration. As a woman who was raised in Mexico, I cannot ignore the harsh realities that many women in my country face daily. Realities that I, due to my relative privilege, did not have to endure in the same way. This awareness compels me to use my artistic platform to acknowledge their struggles, and amplify their voices. Through my work, I hope to channel my experiences and heritage into a dialogue that resonates beyond my own story.

**Your work explores the tension between traditional Mexican culture and the experience of living in the United States. How do you navigate these two identities in your art?**

Nostalgia plays a significant role in my work. I often reflect on childhood memories that are deeply ingrained in Mexican culture but absent from my surroundings in the United States. Since moving, I've found that solitude has become an unexpected but



valuable part of my creative process. Where I grew up, daily life is filled with social interactions such as greeting neighbors on the street, sharing conversations with family and friends throughout the day, and attending community events more often. In contrast, moments of solitude are more frequent in my life in the U.S. This alone time has allowed me to be more in tune with my emotions, providing the space to process feelings I may not have fully confronted before. Paradoxically, the physical distance from Mexico has deepened my connection to it. The quiet introspection I experience here allows me to explore my memories and cultural identity more profoundly. Lastly, I became aware of negative stereotypes after moving here, and relating to others was a challenge. I wasn't Chicana and I resented the stereotypes often associated with being Mexican. This tension fueled my desire to reclaim my heritage on my own terms. It motivated me to learn more and share aspects of my culture that show a non-stereotypical Mexican artist.

**Many of your pieces challenge stereotypes about Mexican women. What specific stereotypes are you aiming to address, and why is this important for you?**

Many girls in Mexico are raised with the expectation of pleasing everyone around them. We are taught to set aside our own needs, silence our voices, and navigate the world with obedience. Boundaries are nonexistent, and trusting others can be a risk. From an early age, we are told to obey "the man of the house," whether that is our father or the next male figure in line. We



are raised to be "decent women." I remember being constantly reminded to sit properly, to lower my voice, to never talk back, and to learn domestic skills, all lessons that were never imposed onto my brothers. Speaking my mind, standing up for myself, and taking up space the way men naturally do makes me an outcast, an "indecent" woman. But I know I am not alone. Through my work, I want to challenge these deeply ingrained patterns and offer my solidarity to other women who refuse to conform. I want them to know they are not wrong for asserting themselves, no matter how much people try to convince them otherwise. One of the most painful realities of this cycle is when other women uphold these patriarchal norms, shutting down those who dare to deflect. I refuse to be that woman.

**How do the mysticism and spiritual traditions of your homeland influence your artistic expression? Can you give an example of how this manifests in your work?**

Mexico is infused with mysticism, where an inherent predisposition to the supernatural coexists with deep-rooted Catholic devotion. Stories of witches and curanderos (traditional healers) are as prevalent as ever. I find this coexistence both contradictory and awe-inspiring, how we seamlessly blend multiple beliefs together, shaping them into something that becomes an integral part of our daily lives. I was raised Catholic, but some of our traditions are a fusion of pre-Hispanic and Catholic rituals, evolving over time



Blanca Becerra | Mi Hija Es Una Santa | 2022



Blanca Becerra | Thought You Wanted Me | 2021

and varying across regions. It is common to hold various rituals for religious or spiritual reasons, however, not many people question their origins. As I delved deeper into their meanings, I developed a newfound appreciation for their significance. This new understanding inspired me to incorporate these traditions into my artwork, not only as a form of homage but also to highlight their relevance in modern times. One example is my depiction of La Catrina, a skeletal lady dressed in elegant garments synonymous with Día de los Muertos. As I learned the history of this image, I explored the symbolism of altars and each offering placed upon them. In my artwork, I sought to honor these elements while also making a contemporary statement. Alongside the traditional offerings, I included a self-defense keychain set. La Catrina is, after all, a Mexican woman, but in today's reality, she must be prepared for the worst.

**You mention that art became a language for everything you were taught to silence. How does this theme of silenced emotions and repressed identity appear in your work?**

More than simply depicting emotions, I use the process of creation to understand them. Naming my feelings does not come naturally to me and instead, I often find myself caught in a cycle of repression, rumination, then eventually, acceptance. Through the process, I give form to these internal struggles, translating them into visual narratives that reflect my experience. For example, my drawing Shame captures

a moment of profound vulnerability. It was created during a time when I had just accepted I no longer held the same religious beliefs I had as a child. This realization left me feeling lost and alone. I was angry at myself for not living up to my parents' expectations, for what felt like abandoning them in their faith. I carried a sense of guilt, feeling ungrateful and ashamed. In the piece, I depict myself curled into a fetal position, with my hair growing around me, whispering the thoughts I wished to silence, pulling me into a void. I focus on how emotions manifest in my mind and body, turning them into something tangible. While these emotions are often uncomfortable, they grant me a better understanding of myself, reshape my perspectives, and, ultimately, accept them as part of the human experience. In doing so, my art becomes a liberating act and a way to remind myself and others that we are never truly alone in our struggles.

**The separation from your culture and family during your formative years had a profound impact on you. Can you speak more about how this experience influenced your artistic journey?**

When I first began developing my artistic skills, I wanted desperately to please my parents with my

artwork. They were, after all, investing their time and money in me, and I felt an obligation to create only beautiful art. This mindset changed when I moved to the United States. In those early years, no amount of drawing or creating could ease the profound longing I felt for my family. Everything changed when I entered high school and met an art teacher who challenged my approach. One day, as I perfected a painting, he walked up to me and simply said, "Make it ugly." At the time, I didn't fully understand why he would encourage such a thing since I still believed art had to be aesthetically pleasing. As time passed, I became progressively upset with my situation. I couldn't fully express to my parents how I felt, nor could I seamlessly assimilate into this new culture while still holding onto my own. In moments of solitude, I began to fill my notebooks with scribbled, distorted faces of people crying or screaming. Yet, I would crumble them up and throw them away because they reflected emotions I believed I wasn't supposed to show. Over time, however, these sketches evolved into larger, expressive paintings with dark shadows intertwined with bursts of color, embodying my need for perfection in a whirlwind of unresolved emotions. As the years passed, I embraced darker themes, exploring feelings of shame, rejection, and loneliness. If I wasn't making my art "ugly", I was at least allowing space for "ugly" emotions.

**You reinterpret traditional Mexican imagery in your art. How do you approach deconstructing these cultural symbols and reimagining them through your lens?**

When reinterpreting traditional Mexican imagery, my priority is to learn as much as possible about their origins and significance, to then make my own convictions without being disrespectful. I then relate them to my personal life and reflect on how they have shaped me or how they might resonate with others. A prime example of this approach is a set of two artworks I call *Las Dos Tonantzin* (The Two Mothers). The concept is rooted in the story of Our Lady of Guadalupe, who is said to have appeared to an Indigenous man, playing a pivotal role in the conversion of his people to Catholicism. However, I later discovered that this apparition took place on the site of the former temple of Tonantzin Coatlicue, the Mexica deity of fertility and destruction. Our Lady of Guadalupe is, in a way, a reimagined version of Coatlicue, an adaptation of ancient spiritual beliefs to fit a new era. Through my eyes, these two figures are a continuation of the same belief, transformed to meet the spiritual needs of their time. By reinterpreting these already powerful symbols, I turn them into a call to action, conveying messages of resistance, resilience, and relevance to modern struggles.



Blanca Becerra | Tonantzin Coatlicue | 2023





La Catrina



**Andrea Thierbach**, born in Schwerte in 1971, has lived in Wuppertal since 2006. After attending the technical college for design from 1988 to 1990 and a one-year internship in the painting room of the Dortmund Municipal Theater, she has been working as an autodidact artist ever since. 1996-2000 studied social education at the Dortmund University of Applied Sciences. Until 2010 she worked in various educational institutions. After the birth of her daughter, she has been working exclusively as an artist. Since 2019 she has concentrated on ink painting and graphics, which initially began in monochrome and later became more colorful and large-format. More recently she has also created collages in which she integrates plant parts and photos, as well as works in mixed media. Her poetic works tell of the beauty (of nature), transformation and the connection to all life. Her last exhibitions were in 2025 at Galerie#23 in Velbert Langenberg, where she has been present since 2021, and also an exhibition at the Kunstverein Klio in Linz am Rhein, in June 2025.

### *Artist Statement*

"In devotion, the blossom unfolds." For me it is clear that art can only be authentic if spiritual development and, accordingly, a corresponding consciousness develops in parallel with it.



Andrea Thierbach | Flow | 2024







## — Interview

# Kathryn Dutchak

**What inspired you to start working in illustration, and how has your artistic journey evolved since then?**

I have been an artist since I was six years old, as my father and my grandmother had the hand-eye coordination to begin with. I think my family talks through making things, and illustration came to me because my style happened to do better there than in visual art. I have had a difficult past, so illustration was a way to stay out of people's lives and still fulfill myself.

**What do you hope viewers take away from your work, especially those unfamiliar with the context of your home country?**

I hope that viewers have a historical representation of what was going on for individuals during certain time periods, so for them to take away even the colors or the textures would be enough for me for them to help rebuild history in case communication couldn't go through during certain life events.

**Can you describe the process you go through when creating a piece, from concept to completion?**

I have a tendency to work on the fly, that in my head I know the sentiment behind who I am. At the moment, it comes down to all my experience as an artist and a person to put it together. I may have an idea or a sketch, but a lot of it happens instantly.

**Your art often explores themes of Ukrainian identity. How do you navigate representing your**



**culture through design in a foreign context, like North America?**

This has been one of the worst cases of untangling assimilation and social problems and certain ethnic identities. We have struggled for generations rising above the working class, so for me to have an opportunity as an artist is extremely controversial coming from our background, as the talent may be there, but the recognition that it could be a real thing to be doing with other's is extremely guarded, especially in the face of real adversity. However, without it, we do not have a voice, and with a voice a history, and to lose that is so serious, to regain it is worth the personal sacrifice.

**What is the significance of the materials or medium you choose for your work? Are there specific mediums that allow you to convey your message most effectively?**

I was using resin and natural products as our area was hit by cyber-attacks, so for me to capture the misery and the color and the hardship was capturing in stone how sick and tainted my life was at the time, as the war overseas had broken out, and many women like me were suffering really badly with the antics of Al-Qaeda making shopping difficult and other white supremacy movements. Since it has gotten easier, I have switched to bright colors and folk art to regain my trust in humanity.



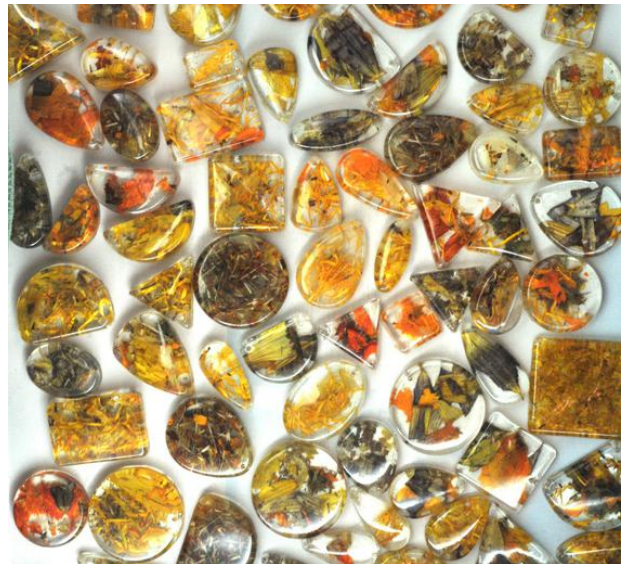
**Can you tell us about your series of illustrations and what each one represents in terms of the broader message you are trying to communicate?**

The sunflower pendants were supposed to represent the peace protest that the people had put together when the war broke out. It was extremely controversial, but the passive resistance here and overseas was so intense I had a hard time accessing the social media accounts. The weather was so bad that year, and we suspected the war had damaged the environment, so the petals involved were supposed to be preserved at that time in case we had radiation in the atmosphere.

The token was my way of interpreting war as a soldier and the embroidery as a person, keeping the color dark and preserving the way our society these days is clinically removed from life, so to have it in synthetic resin represents how our future world can't really have the relics of the old days without incasing it in something indestructable, like some kind of response to nuclear war.

Talisman was my vain attempt at recreating some kind of faith-born culture towards a group that was heavily persecuted for not being up-to-date enough. It's a mix of the peace-loving mountain culture that I am currently from with the resin work done by somebody with almost nothing to work with at the time, but still strong enough to hold up hope. It directly contrasts the super-pop-vapid lifestyle that many of those wishing to start the war were championing as a sign of strength and indifference. It's the kind of thing that all people have in history when things go bad, so their culture is affordable enough to keep with them, even if they lose everything, but that's the thing that puts a civilian in a bad spot when the world shifts and people are moving in.

The cheery red flower folk art is the first time my family has approached the old styles of our home



Kathryn Dutchak | Sunflower

country. Like the Snow Leopard Cover Book design shows, the traditional North American drawing that my family is criticized for as it is technically sound artistically but without strong modern art strengths. However, after the war, tensions over here eased up, I have been trying to do the traditional folk art to regain what's been stolen, in light of the violence overseas. It is so cheerful, it is good for my therapy, and its simplicity reminds me that our roots had what was in it to still be alive even if you lost everything. The wheel flower painting was the next step in that direction. That type of folk painting is ancient, and it's the type of thing you'd see on kitschy wooden lawn ornaments or old diners that are a bit home-style. As an illustrator who is really getting pushed into AI and tech, this return to the worst of it is supposed to reborn the love that we have as people and humans through cheap liquid paint and themes that are taken for granted, not the power that illustration as a fine machine can possess. It is extremely controversial to include such snubbed artwork, that I appreciate your time with me.

**How do you balance your cultural influences with the need to adapt your work to new audiences and environments?**

Personally, as a woman who has been persecuted by the online rape industry through social media and other types of criminal activities, my perspective is extremely disordered as many things in my life were cut off when they were not supposed to be, like access to online deliveries, or appointments at hair salons. This is part of the reason it took me this long to submit my work from 2022-2025. So it's honestly just a guess every day, as women's social justice rights have been under fire, so our ability to reason how to function with new audiences is as strong as it used to be, as our rights to perceive have been tampered with.



## Julia Pavlova

I create paintings that engage in an invisible dialogue with the soul. My works invite reflection, contemplation, and even rethinking the proposed theme. In the collage technique, I demonstrate that everything necessary for expression has already been created, but it's worth looking at familiar things from a different angle and light. For me personally, collage is a kind of psychotherapy! It allows me to expand my inner boundaries and fill my inner world with new stories and colors. And of course, through my paintings, I offer the world another new point of contact for communication and mutual understanding.







## — Interview

# Natalya Raduenz

**Your art is described as a testimony of overcoming challenges. Can you talk more about the process of healing through your paintings?**

My art is not just creativity; it is a process of healing, a transformation of pain into something greater than mere memories. Every brushstroke, every line carries traces of lived experience, but what matters most is that I consciously reshape this experience, giving it new life.

I believe that art can be a bridge between the past and the future, a way to reinterpret even the most painful moments. In my case, it was a struggle with childhood trauma, fears, and self-doubt. When I paint, it feels like an internal dialogue—fear and pain come to the surface, not to consume me again, but to become part of something bright and meaningful.

Sometimes this process unfolds through chaos—mixed techniques, expressive brushstrokes, unexpected color combinations. Other times, it is a meditative immersion, like in icon painting, where every element demands absolute concentration and inner stillness. In any case, each piece is my path to freedom, to the ability to embrace myself and the world without masks.

My paintings resonate with people because many of us fight our own battles, even if they remain unseen. I want my works to carry hope, for the viewer to look at them and feel: even through pain, something beautiful can be created. After all, art is not just a reflection of reality—it is the power to transform it.

**How do you merge your background in engineering with your artistic expression? How does this dual perspective influence your artwork?**

My engineering background and artistic creativity are two poles that, at first glance, seem opposing but, in reality, create the tension and balance essential to my art. They are like two energies—one structured, logical, and analytical, the other intuitive, emotional, and chaotic. They complement each other, allowing me not only to follow traditions and techniques but also to experiment, explore new forms of expression, and find harmony between calculation and spontaneity.



Engineering teaches me discipline, precision, process structuring, and working with materials and technological aspects. These skills help me approach art with a focus on craftsmanship, attention to detail, and quality.

On the other hand, art is a space for emotional expression, exploration, and experimentation, where the process itself is just as important as the outcome. Here, my engineering logic encounters the intuitive, sometimes chaotic nature of creativity. The idea of balancing the technical and the artistic—necessary for a deeper understanding of reality—is reflected in my new series, "The Echoes of Infinity," where I explore the intersection of science, philosophy, Christianity, and art.

Inspired by Descartes' dualism, the Holy Trinity of the New Testament, and Duchamp's concept of the "infra-thin," I reveal the subtle transitions between opposites. Here, mathematics becomes a language for seeking truth, while philosophy serves as a tool for understanding its multilayered nature. Through the principles of the golden ratio and quantum physics, the series demonstrates that truth does not lie in extremes but in their interaction. This is a visual metaphor of consciousness, where chaos and order do not merely coexist but form a dynamic unity. In this concept, reality is no longer static—it becomes an infinite process of awareness, where art acts as a mediator between rational knowledge and spiritual perception.

Thus, my engineering background allows me to bring elements of discipline, structure, and precision into art while preserving the freedom and emotional depth inherent in painting and creativity as a whole. My perspective as an engineer enables me to see and understand the structure underlying an artwork, but it is creative freedom that allows me to transform this perspective into something unique, merging logic with intuition.

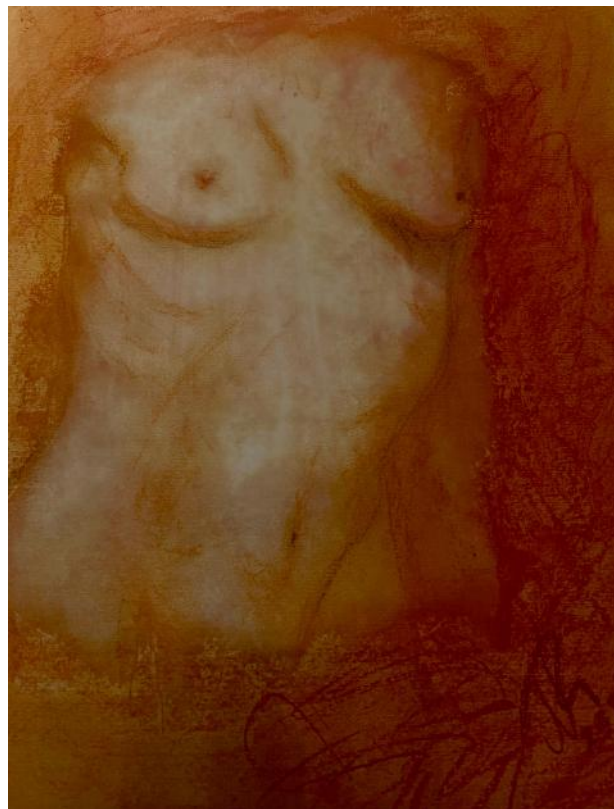
**Could you elaborate on the concept of 'Blind Paintings'? How does this approach shape the emotion and story behind your works?**



Blind Paintings emerged at the early stage of my artistic journey. I have no formal academic training in fine arts, and my initial impulses to create were purely intuitive. I simply applied chaotic brushstrokes to the canvas without a predetermined subject, idea, or concept. Layer by layer, random lines and patches of color gradually formed into images, as if revealing themselves on their own. This method became a way for me to communicate with my subconscious, to explore how chaos transforms into meaning. Viewers often see completely different things in these paintings—and that is no coincidence. Each person brings their own experience, their emotional history, which overlays the visual symbols encoded in the work. As a result, art ceases to be something definitive; it turns into a dialogue—between me and the viewer, between their subconscious and the hidden meaning within the painting. Some abstract works, as well as figurative pieces like the "She could fly" series, were born from this process. The image of the girl did not appear immediately—at first, there were only chaotic strokes that gradually took shape. Only at the final stage of the work did it become clear that something was missing, that the space needed the presence of a girl. Overall, for me, blind painting is a way to go beyond the boundaries of conscious thought, to let emotions manifest spontaneously, without rational control. It is a method that allows not only the artist but also the viewer to connect with something deep, something hidden within their own experiences. And I am no longer surprised when people, looking at the same painting, see different stories, find their own symbols, and feel precisely what resonates with them at that moment. Their subconscious enters into a dialogue with the artwork, bringing it to life with new meaning.



Natalya Raduenz | Apparition at St. Barbara | 2024



Natalya Raduenz | Sketch for the I Am Origin project | 2025

**Your current projects, "I Am Origin" and "The Echoes of Infinity," explore truth in the resonance between polarities. Could you explain what these series represent to you on a personal and artistic level?**

Series "I Am Origin" and "The Echoes of Infinity" are two distinct yet interconnected artistic explorations that are deeply personal to me. They reflect my search for truth at the intersection of opposites, in the resonance between chaos and order, the physical and the metaphysical, reason and emotion.

#### *"I Am Origin"*

This series is an intuitive exploration of the primordial source, the very moment of life's conception, and its sacred nature. It is a reflection on the body—not as a mere form, but as a vessel of energy, memory, and creation. My intention was to move away from literal corporeality and instead reveal the essence of connection, the mystery that cannot be expressed in words but can be felt. In these works, the body dissolves into mist, its forms barely perceptible, yet the presence remains tangible.

On a deeper level, this series speaks to the feminine principle, not in a mundane sense but in a sacred one. Here, feminine energy is not opposed to the masculine but unites with it, creating something third—the very act of creation, life, the birth of something new. In this fusion, the boundaries of individuality disappear, the "I" dissolves, leaving only the process itself.

This series is my return to the origins, to the understanding of the primordial nature of existence. It is an attempt to touch a moment that cannot be remembered, yet one that we all carry within us.

#### *"The Echoes of Infinity"*

Unlike "I Am Origin," where I explore the sacredness of life through the body, "The Echoes of Infinity" focuses on the interconnection of mind, matter, and higher order. This series engages with concepts of science, philosophy, religion, and

art, examining them as parts of a unified system, where each polarity does not exist in isolation but rather in balance with its counterpart.

I have always been fascinated by the transitions between states, the moment when one thing transforms into another—chaos into order, light into darkness, matter into energy. Drawing inspiration from quantum physics and Descartes' philosophy, I find truth not in extremes but in their resonance. In this series, existence is depicted as a process rather than a fixed state, and it is precisely this process that I strive to capture in my work.

On a personal level, "The Echoes of Infinity" is about breaking beyond conventional perception, finding structure within chaos, and realizing that the boundaries we consider absolute are, in fact, fluid. In this series, I incorporate the mathematical principles of the golden ratio and Fibonacci sequences to illustrate that even chaos follows a hidden order, and randomness contains structure.

#### *Resonance Between the Series*

Despite their differences in approach, both series explore the same fundamental idea: the search for truth in the union of opposites. "I Am Origin" looks inward, into the essence of life itself, while "The Echoes of Infinity" examines the endless motion of its existence. In the first, form dissolves in unity, while in the second, it reveals itself through structure. These works are not just artistic explorations but a way of comprehending the nature of existence. They combine personal experience, philosophical inquiry, and scientific principles, transforming them into visual metaphors that invite the viewer not just to observe, but to feel, reflect, and discover their own meanings.

#### **How has your Orthodox faith influenced your creative journey and the themes you explore in your art?**

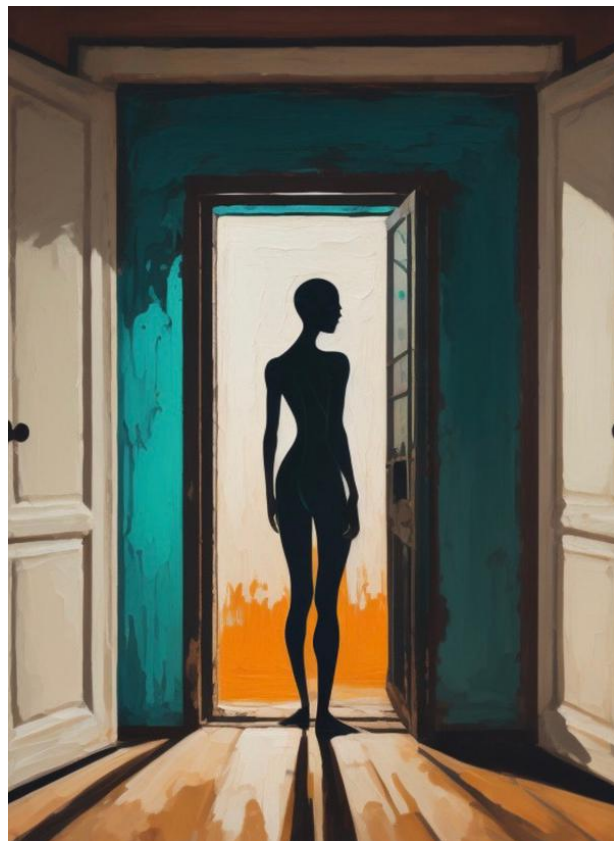
Orthodox faith is my spiritual foundation, the pillar that shapes my worldview and artistic journey. It has taught me to see the world differently—not just through physical forms, but through their deeper meaning, through the search for spiritual essence within the material.

Icon painting was my first step in this realization. While working on icons, I understood that art can be not just a means of expression but also a conduit to the transcendent, to something greater than the artist themselves. In iconography, mastery is not as important as the inner state, prayer, and concentration. This approach has also influenced my other series: even in my abstract works, I seek meaning beyond the visible, striving to convey intangible states, moments of transition, and spiritual experiences.

The "Echoes of Infinity" series is largely inspired by Orthodox philosophy—the search for harmony, the union of opposites,



Natalya Raduenz | Propaganda | 2024



Natalya Raduenz | Run | 2024

the transcendence of binary thinking. This resonates with the concept of the Trinity, where three hypostases are one yet distinct, and with the Orthodox perception of the world as a mystery—something that cannot be fully comprehended but can be approached through art, prayer, and contemplation. My faith also shapes my approach to the creative process itself. I perceive it as co-creation with God, as a way of understanding both the world and myself. Even in my most personal themes, such as in the "I Am Origin" series, I reflect on life as a gift, on the body as a vessel containing something far greater than its physical form.

Thus, Orthodoxy does not limit my artistic exploration—on the contrary, it deepens it. It helps me see art as a bridge between the material and the spiritual, and creativity as a path leading to a fuller understanding of the world and of oneself.

#### **You have mentioned your art as a way of transforming pain into inspiration. What role does transformation play in your artistic practice?**

Transformation is a key element of my art. It is not just an artistic method—it is the very process of creation, the essence of my work. I do not depict reality as it is; I process and reinterpret it, finding new meanings even in the darkest experiences.

For me, art is not an escape from pain—it is a path through it. I have lived through difficult experiences, and instead of locking those memories away, I translate them into a visual language, allowing them to take on a different form, a different energy. In this way, personal trauma transforms into a source of inspiration, a search for light that always exists, even in the deepest darkness.

This principle is at the core of many of my works. The pieces created as "Blind Paintings" were born from the chaos of intuitive brushstrokes, which gradually took shape and



meaning. They are a symbolic reflection of how our psyche processes complex emotions—out of disordered sensations, images emerge; from fragments, a story unfolds.

"I Am Origin" is also about transformation: here, the physical body evolves into something greater—a symbol of the primordial energy of life. Meanwhile, in "The Echoes of Infinity", I not only rethink personal experiences but also global philosophical ideas, searching for harmony in the clash of opposites.

Transformation in art is both a change in form and an inward journey—a process of experiencing emotions, reinterpreting the past. And through this process, something new is born—a new painting, a new meaning, a new self.

**With your works being presented in several countries and private collections worldwide, how do you think cultural diversity impacts your work?**

Cultural diversity has a profound impact on my art, expanding the horizons of perception and adding new layers of meaning. Working and exhibiting in different countries, I observe how the same artwork can be interpreted differently depending on the cultural context. This teaches me to see art not as a fixed statement but as a dialogue, where the viewer brings their own experiences, value system, and worldview.

For example, in Orthodox tradition, icon painting is a strictly canonical art form, whereas in Western culture, religious painting is often linked to the artist's personal interpretation. In this distinction, I find an interesting balance: my works are rooted in tradition, yet they remain open to free perception, to the search for meanings beyond dogmatic frameworks. The philosophical and scientific concepts I explore in "The Echoes of Infinity" will likely take on different meanings in various cultural settings. Some audiences may perceive them as a reference to Eastern philosophies of unity and balance, while others may relate them to Western rationalism and the idea of dualism. This diverse reception makes me reflect on universal themes that transcend cultures, language, and traditions.

At the same time, cultural diversity influences the technical aspect of my work. Drawing inspiration from Byzantine iconography, European painting, and conceptual art, I find points of intersection, creating something unique that goes beyond the boundaries of a single style or school.

Ultimately, my art emerges at the intersection of tradition and modernity, personal experience and universal themes, the local and the global. Cultural diversity has become an integral part of my artistic language, expanding the way I understand the world and how I express it in my work.



Natalya Raduenz | The Echoes of Infinity



**Poorvaja Rathi** is a fine artist based in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. She attained her diploma in Fine Arts from Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts Singapore in 2022, and her Bachelors of Fine arts (HONS) from University of the arts London x NAFA Singapore, in 2024. During her student years, she was awarded with the WOON BROTHERS FOUNDATION graduating awards/ student of the year, in the year 2022. She was also awarded with the Dean's list award in the year 2021. Upon completion of her graduation, Poorvaja has participated in shows around Chennai and Taiwan. She believes that her purpose as an artist goes beyond the canvas, actively involving herself in community based activations.

### *Artist Statement*

As a painter, Poorvaja Rathi explores the distance between the urban and rural in Tamil Nadu. She responds to the constant shifting dimensions of an urban plan, and it's sway that compromises several traditional livelihoods. With the duality of geometry and nature in the city, she reflects these visuals in her paintings with a contrast of softness and geometry. Her palette is predominantly blue and green, referring to the night scape of the city where silence is loud, and liminal beings are seen lurking around the corridors of power. Observations of the city provoke the birth of certain characters that she repetitively uses in her works. A question that she often revisits is "What follows the construction of roads"?

Poorvaja Rathi | The boy who left to the city | 2024







Poorvaja Rathi | The March | Acrylic on Sari, Installation | 2024

## — Interview

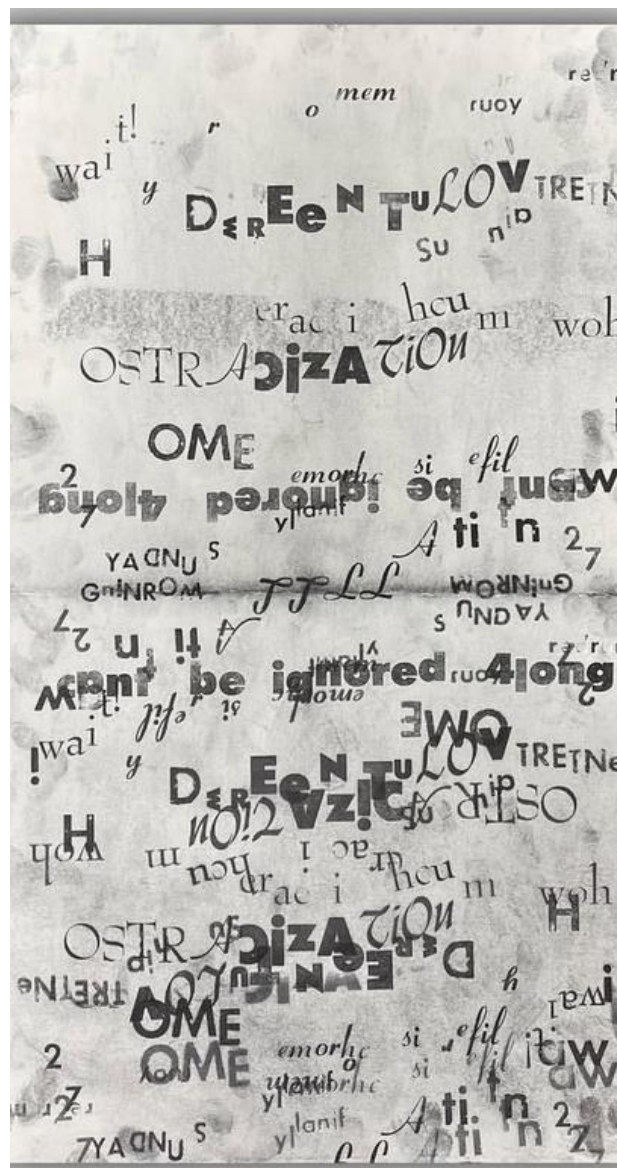
# John Valvo

**Your work spans a range of mediums. How do you decide which medium to use for a specific project?**

When choosing a medium for a project the first question I ask myself is what space I want to be held in the viewer's memory. When I want to be more direct and leave the audience with something specific to meditate on I defer to my physical works in sculpture and oil painting. If I intend to absorb and immerse the viewer, putting focus on the subjective feelings that are individually developed, I will work on a music project. The repetition of a song allows the listener to reflect and relate to the project differently.

**The theme of nostalgia seems central to much of your work. Could you share what personal memories or collective histories influence your art the most?**

My work is very heavily informed by the experiences in my childhood that required me to develop the most. My history and upbringing



John Valvo | Wait!

within my family influences me heavily as lots of my work delves into reflections on my familial ties and my relationship with others I hold closer than family. On the inside I long for the days when I was young and too ignorant to worry, even that which required me to develop in a way I was not prepared for is wrapped in a bright-colored bow as I look back.

**In your process, you mention a tactile approach. How does working with different materials affect the emotional resonance of your pieces?**

In working in multiple mediums, my work echoes its own themes and ideas. This allows concepts to be more cemented in the mind. The reverberation of ideas through different forms creates a weaving in perception, allowing for the contemplation of one theme from multiple sides.



**Your work often touches on themes of resilience and triumph over hardship. How do you see art as a tool for healing or expressing personal strength?**

While working I'm in conversation with the piece, I use this dialogue to reframe my thinking on the situations that bring me the most stress. I try to flip my perspective to the other end of the spectrum and use this as a tool to overcome the hurdles I face. It's important to me not to forget these stressors, they made me who I am and are a testament to my perseverance.

**Could you walk us through the evolution of your artistic practice since you began working with oil painting, music, and other mediums in 2021?**

My artistic practice started in 2021 with textile work, which I knew wasn't my calling but was the most accessible at the time. At the beginning of 2022, I had started painting and had begun taking music more seriously. As I developed as a painter under my mentors, Michael Dixon and Marina Ballout, I was able to spread that growth across all mediums. As they started to become more cohesive through 2024, the conversation between the mediums became more evident. Now I see all my mediums as a single expression that branches out in different directions.

**How do you approach the idea of memory and material? How do you weave those concepts together in your art?**

With memory being a central theme throughout my work it is important to me that I'm intentional about my choice of form and how I want it to reflect in the specific piece. In my physical work, I use a mixture of fixed pieces



that cannot be manipulated and soft, changing, lighter pieces to represent the difference between solid, picture-perfect memories and those that are only a fleeting sensation, where the details aren't emphasized.

The relationship with memory in my music is different. In a song, I choose different lines or phrases that I will repeat to emphasize their importance and reflect their repetitiveness personally. Within the lines, I am direct and upfront about those solid, unchanging memories, while the fleeting memories are relayed in depth through levels of figures of speech.

**Could you describe one of your favorite works that you feel truly captures the spirit of your artistic journey?**

My album "Like It Was Yesterday" encapsulates my artistic spirit the most accurately. In the project, I journey through my lows using poetic elements to reflect the layers of constant introspection. I use beats that combine atmospheric melodies and heavy bass to absorb the listener and transfer the way I felt in the song. Throughout the album, I talk about my hardships, my regrets, my reflections, and things that hold me back. In this way, it perfectly reflects my mind at the time through my best technical work.

John Valvo | Snapseed



**Isabel Schubert** (born 1995, Germany) is an freelance artist and graphic designer based in Rheinberg, Germany. In addition to studying fine arts at the Münster Art Academy, she completed a Bachelor of Arts at MSD, specializing in design. In 2018/2019 she lived and studied in Santiago de Chile for eight months and explored South America. During this time she got diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia. Since then she has lived back in Germany and has focused on painting and book making.

### *Artist Statement*

In my artistic work I deal with myself and my mental illness. Through the abstract approach, my subconscious reveals itself in my works. I let myself be guided by my intuition, which opens up a new area of immediate knowledge and feeling. Through painting, I awaken experiences and memories, and discover patterns and new associations. Collecting shapes and colors leads me to self-observation and self-discovery. I mainly work with oil paints on raw canvas and sew these with transparent fabric. I am fascinated by the transparency in contrast to the absorbing and reflecting color pigments on opaque canvas.



Isabel Schubert | Visual Interest | 2025





## — Interview

# Rowan Huang

**Can you tell us about the inspiration behind your recent works? How do you merge Chinese techniques like ink work with contemporary styles in your paintings?**

A lot of my recent works like *Waiting* (2023), have been projects for my classes at Brock University. I try to elevate some projects by incorporating touches of Chinese aesthetics, brush strokes, and palettes. My projects have explored the human experience and others dove into affronting themes like censorship and sex. With some of my earlier work, like *ROTK* (2021), I explored the use of black paint to create forms and linework, which although was unpolished technique, still made me feel connected to that side of my culture. Chinese art is very photographic and bold, and in a way, similar to 20th century pop art with ink strokes drawing out scenes with a simple colour palette. This is similar to my practice of pulling forms out of clumps of colour and allowing the piece to emerge as I go.

**Your work often explores themes of human nature and self-reflection. How do you feel these themes allow for an intimate interaction between the artist, the work, and the viewer?**

My intention with some of my work is to cause deep reflection for the viewer. Themes like love, sex, gender roles, the “gaze”, and nudity are topics that often cause disgust and shame, and a



question I ask the viewer is why we censor and detest common human experiences? I feel as though we as people do not want to admit certain things about, as we have been taught to feel shame and embarrassment for certain aspects of our lives. When my art creates that reflection on the world, I feel as though I am challenging people's perspectives. I also find a lot of fun and fulfillment in shocking people with provocative and controversial themes. I feel art is its most successful when it creates discourse, as art should be sparking conversations about life and perceptions of it. When people connect to my art, whether negative or positive, I'm glad there's an interaction between my creations and the viewer.

**You mentioned in your artist statement that you draw heavily from pop and abstract art. Could you elaborate on how these influences shape your creative process and the narratives you choose to explore?**

Artists like Andy Warhol, Jean-Michel Basquiat, and Hajime Sorayama have greatly influenced my aesthetic. I find their works satisfying to my eyes, by using bold colours and pleasing compositions. From a stylistic standpoint, Warhol and Basquiat have been translated into many of



my pieces with vibrant colours and free-flowing brush strokes flooding my canvas. Sorayama's pieces on sexuality and nudity have also been inspiring to me, as the human body-and everything we do with them, is something we should celebrate and be shameless about. I gravitate towards abstract art because of the need of interpretation and importance of looking at it. Although other forms of art are always intriguing, abstract and contemporary art is, for lack of a better word, very cool. I enjoy when people tell me what they see in my abstract work, and everyone can have their own relationship with my art, because sometimes people point out things in my work that I haven't noticed or even intended on creating. These unique analyses are very special to me.

**How does your education at the Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts inform your artistic practice, and how do you see it evolving as you continue your studies?**

My time at the MIWSFPA has been the most fulfilling experience of my life, I have learned so much about art and myself. The way I work and think has evolved to another level and I feel an intense creative flow when I'm on campus. Working alongside link-minded peers has been such a breath of fresh air, as I never experienced an artistic community in high school. One thing

I've realized, is that going to art school is about learning to think and adapt, rather than learning how to hold a pencil properly. Things like learning how to use constructive criticism to my advantage, rather than taking offense to it, has allowed me to make some of the best art of my career up to this point. Also, being on a campus dedicated solely to art allows me to collaborate with incredibly talented people who create beautiful art. University has also forced me to explore new areas and mediums that I never would have ventured into, like collage, video art, and installation work. The MIWSFPA has given me opportunity to share my work in exhibits and make long lasting connections, and makes me excited for my final academic year in 2025-2026.

**You've been involved in both public exhibitions and commission work. Can you tell us about your experience working on a commission for CAA Insurance and how it differs from creating pieces for exhibitions?**

The CAA Insurance Niagara mural commission work definitely tested me and my good friend, Neeka DeVries' ability to adapt to the wishes of a large company. Our art department often sends out open calls to art students, and I reached out to Neeka to see if she'd want to collaborate on this together. And to our surprise, our submission was accepted. Over the course of about 6 months, we took CAA Niagara's feedback and kept drafting designs. The piece was to encapsulate the office's 150,000+ regional members, the community, and services of CAA. Eventually, the mural transformed into merchandising for the office team, and our final design was a success. Me and my colleague agreed it was a rocky ride, but well worth it for the experience. We learned that although we as artists know how to envision the final outcome of a piece without having a "final" draft, a corporate body may need a more concrete, polished work. It definitely has a different work flow compared to submitting for an exhibition. With the commission, we found we wanted to go with our designs, instead of CAA's feedback. Whereas exhibits are open to the artist's ideas. I'm still very thankful for the opportunity, as my first ever commission work was for a company as huge as CAA Insurance.



Rowan Huang | Head Back | 2024

**As an emerging artist, you're focused on pushing yourself to evolve. What are some of the challenges you face in your practice, and how do you overcome them?**

As an emerging artist, I find myself concerned about my future and if I can actually make a living off of my art. Being an emerging artist gives little job security and a lot of fear of not finding opportunities. The big dream is to make, sell and exhibit art around the world, and not knowing the steps to get to that point definitely creates doubt within me. Aside from the business/financial aspect of art, I notice that I try to "resurrect" my old art. By that, I mean trying to get back into that free, unconcerned mindset when I am working on a piece. When I first started taking art seriously in high school, I made some of my best work, as I was not concerned with technique or the final outcome, and I trusted myself. Whereas now, I find myself overthinking what I do because I'll have a clear vision in my head of the final product, and I end up hyper fixating on the small things. But in the past year, I've found myself finding beauty in the "mistakes" and realizing everything that doesn't go as planned is a sort of time capsule of that point in my life. Change is a scary thing for me, so the next step is to break away from that doubt, and in a way, be more spiritual and trusting the flow of energy and let it guide my life. I believe the more you let go, you will feel free and evolve in beautiful ways.



Rowan Huang | ARTPOP | 2024



Rowan Huang | ROTK

**How do you see the role of color and line work in your paintings? What does color mean to you, and how does it communicate within your work?**

Colour is important to be because I find so much emotion and association within the entire spectrum. I find satisfaction and a sort of relief when the right hues blend together. I'm also fascinated by line work and how it can be the work, and not just a part of it. I realize my enjoyment of line and colour correlates to my interest in pop art, as artist like Warhol created such captivating blends of vibrant hues with blotchy black lines. Colour to me, represents the artist and what they were feeling in that space of creation. I associate colours with emotions and ambience, such as orange (my favourite colour) evoking a sense of warmth and calmness, but being intense and passionate. My work often reflects my emotional state with colours being a physical representation of my flow of consciousness. My gravitation towards colour also relates to photographic practices and movies, and interestingly, my work is conceptualized as a photo before it is translated onto canvas. Films like La La Land, Blade Runner 2049, and Asteroid City utilize colour in unique and beautiful ways, and I find myself making art with those techniques in mind.





## **Liza Posar**

I am an Australian figure artist/sculptor based in Melbourne with a diploma in Textile & Design. My background gives me a unique perspective on combining different materials and techniques to create captivating pieces that challenge the boundaries. With numerous solo and selected group exhibitions, my work reflects a deep exploration of texture, colour and form engaging viewers in a dialogue about the interplay between art and everyday life.

### *Project Statement*

**'The Circus is in Town'** a temporary escape from the mundane, to embrace wonder, joy and the thrill of spectacle. This vibrant display of acrobatics, artistry and camaraderie serves as a reminder of our shared need for entertainment and connection, showcasing the diversity of human experiences and talents. There is always room for imagination and play.





# — Interview

## Keren

**Your work often explores the duality between close-up and distant perceptions. Could you elaborate on how you approach this contrast in your creative process?**

My work indeed plays with perception. One question arises: What do we see when we look? From a distance, we see abstractions, but as we approach, a more figurative reality emerges, creating a reinterpretation of the image. The forms transform into human, vegetal, or organic figures. So there is a duality between what we think we see and what we discover when we get closer. Isn't this like our own existence? We shape our understanding of the world through apparent certainties that often fade away once we take the time to observe and delve deeper. What we thought was reality sometimes turns out not to be. My work is an inquiry into perception, questioning our own beliefs and confronting us with our existential uncertainty.



Keren | 7-1bleu



Keren | 5-2bleu

**How do you decide when to use abstract forms versus precise, detailed representations in your works?**

My work is primarily autobiographical. I don't consciously decide to use abstract forms or precise representations; it imposes itself on me depending on what I feel at any given moment. So, emotions, memories, and perceptions guide me.

**In your "Géométrie des corps" series, you investigate the geometry of the body. What inspired this exploration, and how do you think it challenges traditional representations of the human form?**

This series is autobiographical. I question the interpretation of the body by detaching it from its organic aspect. I deconstruct it, fragment it, and reassemble it to create a new language. The body becomes a letter. A sign. These signs are complementary and create geometric shapes. A new construction, a fresh start for a new chapter in life. I explore geometry to find a visual language. The desire to deconstruct the usual perception of the body and rethink it as an entity in itself. So at first, there is the woman, then the man, and then they combine and interact, transform, and recombine. This challenges the representation of the body by dissociating it and playing with the boundary between figuration and abstraction. By fragmenting, repeating, and associating the forms, I seek a language where the body breaks free from its boundaries to create new geometries. The fragments follow each other, and the difference lies upstream, in the couple that precedes the image but also in what follows beyond the image.



**Your exhibitions have spanned various locations such as Paris, Ashdod, and Miami. How does the cultural context of each city influence your work or how it's received by audiences?**

Wherever we travel, we end up with ourselves.

**How does your artistic process involve the concept of perception as a dynamic and shifting experience, especially with your work that changes depending on distance?**

The play between distance and proximity brings us to the following question: How do we perceive the world? It is a dialogue between what we see and what we understand, between the intimate and the universal, the fragment and the whole. Perhaps it is through this movement that we come to develop meaning. My work is an ongoing questioning where perception is always in motion. Seeing up close, seeing clearly does not always mean understanding. Sometimes distance provides space to read and rewrite the world around us.

**You've exhibited in numerous prestigious galleries. How do you view the role of galleries in bringing your work to new audiences and fostering creative exchange?**

I have been working with Lelia Mordoch for 20 years, and I am deeply grateful for her commitment to artists. She takes care of everything and creates the link between my work and the public. My nature leads me to retreat; I prefer to let my work speak. Galleries play this mediating role. Without them, our work would remain in the shadows. They provide a framework and allow the artworks to meet the public. I am not one for words, but thanks to Lelia Mordoch, my works have traveled.

**You work with a variety of forms and techniques, from geometric abstraction to corporeal imagery. How do you feel these different approaches contribute to your overall message?**

The different series are tools that allow me, in different ways, to question how our gaze transforms reality. Geometric abstraction creates a visual language that prompts reflection on the underlying order and structure of our world, while corporeal imagery questions the relationship between the individual and the world, between the interior and the exterior. These combined elements attempt to redefine boundaries and push their limits, and it is through these different approaches that art allows us to attempt to unite this duality. We can also try to rewrite our own stories, leaving room for our personal interpretations. Isn't art also meant to harmonize opposites?



## — Interview

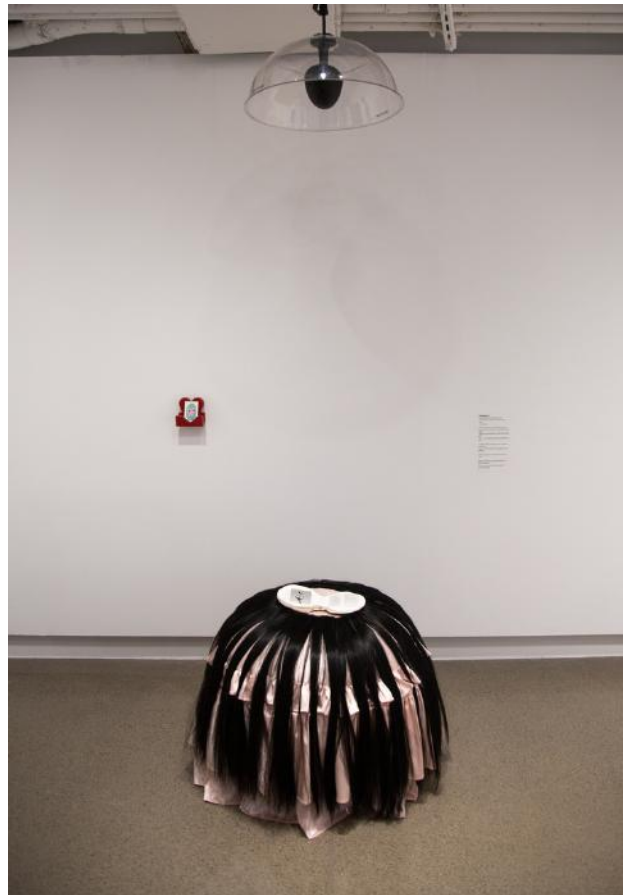
# Ruihong Liu

**Your work explores the fragility of memory. Can you describe how you conceptualize the relationship between memory and materiality in your art?**

In an industry that moves at lightning speed, where trends come and go in an instant, Ruihong Liu stands apart. Her work isn't just about creating garments—it's about capturing something far more elusive: memory. Through her designs and installations, she explores the fragile, shifting nature of recollection, using fabric, texture, and even sound to evoke the way memories fade, transform, and sometimes resurface unexpectedly.

Born in China and now based in New York City, Liu studied at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where she honed her ability to blend fashion, art, and storytelling into something deeply personal yet universally resonant. Her work is influenced by Eastern philosophy, particularly the concept of Yin and Yang, the idea that opposing forces—preservation and decay, memory and forgetfulness—are always in flux, shaping and reshaping each other. Rather than simply designing clothing, she constructs pieces that challenge the way we think about time, identity, and the things we try to hold onto.

At the heart of her practice is the belief that memory and materiality are intertwined. Memories aren't static; they shift depending on where we are, how we feel, and what's happening around us. Materials, in a way, do the same. They stretch, wear down, change color, fray at the edges. In her installation *The Boudoir of Recollection*, Liu brings this idea to life using synthetic silk, rice paper, and hemp cord—each chosen for its ability to embody the impermanence of memory. Silk, with its delicate softness, mimics the fleeting quality of recollections. Rice paper, fragile and prone to aging, mirrors how memories blur over time. And hemp cord, with its rough texture and interwoven strands, speaks to the way time and experience weave through our lives, sometimes connecting, sometimes unraveling.



**How does your cultural background influence your approach to memory and recollection in your artistic practice?**

Liu's perspective on memory has been shaped by her cross-cultural experiences. Growing up in China, she was deeply influenced by the idea that memory isn't just personal—it's collective, shaped by history, tradition, and the stories passed down through generations. When she moved to New York, she began to think more about the participatory nature of memory—how it's not just something we look back on, but something we actively reconstruct every time we recall it. This shift in thinking led her to incorporate interactive elements into her work, inviting viewers to engage with her pieces and, in doing so, reshape their own memories.

**In your installation *The Boudoir of Recollection*, the use of various materials like fabric, rice paper, and hemp cord evokes a tactile response. How do you choose these materials, and what do they symbolize in the context of your work?**

Material choice is a central part of how Liu tells these stories. She gravitates toward textures that change with time, fabrics that evolve rather than remain pristine. Synthetic silk, for example, captures the paradox of memory—at once vivid and unreliable, clear yet elusive. It may look like natural silk at first glance, but as it ages, it loses its sheen, much like how memories lose their sharpness over the years. Rice paper, a staple in Chinese art and calligraphy, holds onto traces of ink and touch, just as memories cling to certain details while letting others slip away. Hemp cord, with its coarse, intertwined strands, represents how memories tangle together, forming connections that can either strengthen or



fray. By using these materials, Liu creates pieces that don't just represent memory—they physically embody it.

**The interplay between preservation and transience seems central to your work. How do you strike a balance between these two concepts in your art?**

One of the biggest themes in Liu's work is the push and pull between preservation and transience. Memory is fleeting, but that doesn't mean it disappears completely. Instead of trying to freeze a moment in time, her work acknowledges that even as memories fade, they leave traces behind—marks that shape us, even when we don't realize it. Some of her garments feature asymmetric or deconstructible structures, designed to shift with movement, touch, and time. They aren't meant to remain untouched—they're meant to change, just like the memories they represent.

**How do you incorporate sound into your installations, and how does it enhance the emotional experience of your audience?**

Liu also experiments with sound as a way to capture memory's emotional weight. In *The Boudoir of Recollection*, she included a 2-minute, 34-second audio recording from the day of her grandfather's burial. The recording isn't dramatic—it's quiet, filled with the subtle sounds of birds at dawn, leaves rustling in the wind, and soft-spoken conversations in dialect. It's the kind of moment that might seem small, but it carries deep emotional resonance. Like memory itself, the recording is fragmented—some parts clear, others barely audible. By incorporating it into her work, Liu gives viewers a way to experience memory beyond just sight and touch, to hear it, to feel its weight.

**Your project invites viewers to reflect on their own memories. What do you hope they take away from experiencing your art?**

Ultimately, Liu's work isn't about giving answers—it's about asking questions. How do we relate to memories that slip



away? Can we truly preserve moments, or do they exist only in their passing? How do memories shape who we are, even when they start to blur? She doesn't try to pin memory down; instead, she creates spaces where people can reflect, engage, and even reimagine their own recollections.

**How do poetry and photography intersect with your fashion design, and what role do they play in conveying the themes of your work?**

Her approach to fashion is just as layered. She doesn't see clothing as separate from art, poetry, or photography—instead, she lets these disciplines merge. In her project *Yin/Yang*, she explores opposition and harmony through photography, capturing the way light and shadow interact, much like memory's fleeting nature. Swirling smoke becomes a visual metaphor for how recollections shift, sometimes clear, sometimes hazy. The poetry that accompanies the series uses fragmented language to mirror memory's disjointed nature, while the garments themselves feature contrasting textures, asymmetrical silhouettes, and deconstructed elements, reinforcing the idea that memory is always in flux.

In a fashion industry that often prioritizes speed and consumption, Liu's work stands apart as an invitation to slow down, to feel, to remember. Her garments aren't just meant to be worn—they're meant to be experienced, to carry emotion, to act as vessels for personal and collective memory. By blending Eastern philosophy, material experimentation, and interactive storytelling, she challenges the idea that fashion is just about aesthetics. For her, it's about connection—between past and present, between material and memory, between ourselves and the fleeting moments that define us.



## **Bitá Pejman**

Trained as a Sculptor and Installation artist, I feed my natural sense of curiosity through challenges, and transformative ideas. In that light, the capability to bring new perceptions, new meanings, and to evoke new feeling in the audience is the end I pursue in my artistic endeavours.

### *Artist Statement*

The emphasis of my studio-practice is on the creation of a transitional space that which is focused on creating a situation in which uncertainty remains as a possibility.







## — Interview

# Jason Grace

**Your art is deeply influenced by your personal experiences growing up and your connection to emotions. Can you talk about how your past challenges, such as bullying, shape your creative process?**

There was a piece I did recently called “chaos theory” I remembered being in school and it was chaotic energy I harnessed that energy into the painting!  
When my classmate died it just exploded onto the canvas!



**As someone on the autism spectrum, how do you feel your unique perspective influences your work and the way you connect with the audience?**

What i like about connecting to an audience member is to see what they see. As a person on spectrum i like to make sure the audience relates to the piece! One piece I just did recently called “all eyes on me” it helped me understand how the viewer sees art in a different way I’m still working on this piece!

**Could you explain more about the role of emotion in your work? How do you express emotions through abstract painting and charcoal drawing?**

As an artist it’s important to express yourself in your paintings or charcoal work I find it very important!

I remembered one time in art school my teacher told me that it’s important to express how you feel and it stuck with me! The way artists can express it’s quite powerful!

How I express is how I feel regarding my artwork it sticks like glue and I’m quite proud of my work as an artist.



**How does your experience with being part of the deaf community inform your art and your approach to communication in your work?**

Ohh that's a tough one as I love deaf community, when I was a kid I remembered my sister teaching me sign language and I didn't understand it at the time but how I felt later on in my life was it was a powerful tool!!! I give all my thanks to my big sister Isabella!

**You've mentioned that your project aims to show the world how powerful our emotions are. How do you think art can help people better understand and express their emotions?**

Yes 1000% sometimes whenever we're confused in life it's good to express your emotions one way or another! I remembered my art teacher in secondary school pointing me out in front of everyone and said "you can't make it as an artist" I've clearly proven him wrong!

**What does your experience being signed with Connection Arts mean for your artistic career? How has this partnership influenced**



**your work?**

Yes, I love everyone in connection arts every time I created something new there always someone supporting me. Im extremely proud to be signed by them they helped me understand my craft! My mentor has helped me as well. We're just a supportive bunch I love them all! Without my mentor I wouldn't be here today! It has definitely helped my artistic career!

**What do you hope viewers take away from your pieces? What kind of emotional reaction do you want to evoke?**

I want the viewer to see what I see it's a very tough thing to do! I'm proud of my work! It sometimes tough as we see the world differently and it's not all black and white sometimes we need a bit of colour to brighten our day.



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