

VISUAL ART JOURNAL

NO. 57

JULY 2026



— Intro

Hello dear reader,

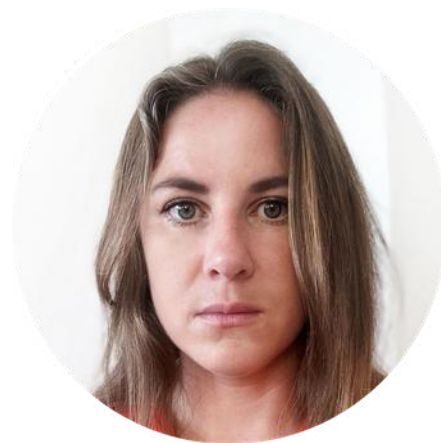
You are holding the 57th issue of our magazine. Like the previous editions, this issue is full of creativity, imagination, and reflection.

Every time, I am amazed by how diverse the field of inspiration is, and how different people's paths can be when it comes to expressing their feelings. Some draw inspiration from nature, some from human experiences, others from history and folklore. Each artist has their own unique identity, woven from what they have seen, heard, and, of course, lived through.

We are expanding the range of artistic fields we want to highlight, and starting with this issue, we will introduce you to masters of their craft from new creative spheres. Our team understands very well how difficult it can be for an artist to find a space for self-expression and for presenting their work, and we want to be a platform for different forms of creativity.

So, as always, make yourself comfortable — more than 100 pages of visual pleasure await you.

Enjoy reading!



Anna Gvozdeva

Curator of
Visual Art Journal

On the Front Cover:
Tatjana Capuder Vidmar
Space = Light + (Shadow)
2024

On the Back Cover:
Charles Chao Wang
Away Way
2022



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

— Interview

Bradley W Giles

Your work often connects historical memory, landscape, and preservation. How did this focus first become central to your artistic practice?

From an early age, I was first exposed to the vast wonders of nature through the many camping trips I would go on with my family and I was drawn to places that carried a sense of history. Whether exploring old homesteads, archaeological & historic sites, Native American cultural landscapes, or wilderness areas, I became fascinated by the stories embedded within the land itself. Over time, I realized that many of these places were disappearing through the ever present specter of development, environmental degradation, neglect, or simply the passage of time.

Bradley W Giles | What Price Paradise | 2024



Bradley W Giles | Where The Feathers Speak (Twilight At The Canyons Edge) | 2025

As an artist, I saw an opportunity to do more than create beautiful landscapes. I could use painting as a form of preservation...reconstructing places, documenting cultural memory, and bringing attention to landscapes and stories that might otherwise be forgotten. Today, much of my work exists at the intersection of art, history, science and conservation. Each painting becomes a visual record that seeks to reconnect viewers with the people, extinct animals, events, and environments that shaped our world long before our own time.

You describe your paintings as a form of advocacy. What do you hope viewers understand or feel when they encounter your historical and environmental scenes?

I hope viewers can experience for a fleeting moment, with all of their senses, the awe inspiring energy to the land, to history of a long ago age... sites that have unfortunately become casualties of humans relentless quest to conquer and reshape the land in their perceived image. This is one of the very reasons why myself, as well as many other artists of the past and present, paint these type of historical landscape scenes of the natural world...to document them for future generations, before those vistas are but only a fleeting memory to those living now on this Earth.

Many of the places I paint have endured thousands of years of human activity and natural change, yet they remain vulnerable. Through my work, I want people to recognize that landscapes are not simply scenery; they are monuments of memory, culture, ecology, identity and spirituality. If my paintings encourage someone to learn more about a Native American culture, support a conservation effort, protect a historic site, or simply look more carefully at the world around them, then my paintings have served their purpose. Art has the power to inspire stewardship, and I believe artists have an important role in helping people see what is worth preserving before it is gone forever.



Many of your works seem to recreate moments that are no longer physically accessible or have been altered by time and development. How do you approach bringing a lost or endangered landscape back to life on canvas?

The process begins with research. I often spend months gathering information from historical photographs, maps, archaeological reports, scientific studies, museum archives, oral histories, and firsthand field observations. I work closely with historians, archaeologists, geologists, biologists, and Native American cultural advisors whenever possible. Once I compile and understand the historical and environmental context, I begin constructing the scene much like a visual historian. Every element...from vegetation and wildlife to weather conditions, architecture, and topography...is carefully considered. Yet the goal is not simply historical accuracy. I also want viewers to feel what it may have been like to stand in that very place in my painting...to step into a landscape from the past. The painting must convey both factual truth and emotional truth. In that sense, each work becomes part research document and part act of imagination.

You have collaborated with historians, archaeologists, scientists, and Native American tribal leaders. How does this research process influence the emotional and visual direction of a painting?

Research provides the foundation, but it also provides the soul of the work. Every conversation with a tribal elder, historian, archeologist or scientist adds another layer of understanding that goes far beyond visual reference material. These collaborations often reveal stories, traditions, ecological relationships, and cultural meanings that would otherwise remain invisible.

As a result, the emotional direction of a painting frequently evolves during the research process. What may begin as a landscape painting can become a story about cultural resilience, environmental change, ancestral memory, or humanity's relationship with the natural world. The deeper the research becomes, the more meaningful the final painting becomes.

Light, clouds, smoke, and atmosphere play a major role in your paintings. How important is mood and weather in shaping the narrative of your work?

Atmosphere is often one of the primary storytellers in my paintings. Light, weather, clouds, mist, fog, and moonlight help establish not only a sense of place but also a sense of emotion and time. A passing storm, a shaft of sunlight, or a veil of mist can transform a landscape into something ethereal and deeply symbolic.

Nature is constantly changing, and those changes often mirror the themes I explore...creation and destruction, permanence and impermanence, memory and renewal. Atmospheric conditions allow me to create visual drama while also expressing ideas that words alone cannot convey. In many ways, the weather becomes another character within the painting, which takes on a life of its own.

How do you decide which historical sites, landscapes, or stories deserve to become the subject of a painting?

I am often drawn to subjects that exist at a crossroads of history, culture, and environmental significance. Many of the places I paint have stories that are underrepresented, misunderstood, endangered, or at risk of being forgotten. I look for locations that can teach us something about who we are, where we came from, and how we relate to the natural world.

Sometimes the subject chooses me. A landscape may possess a powerful sense of presence, a compelling history, or a story that simply refuses to let go in my thoughts. When I find a place that resonates on both an intellectual, emotional and spiritual level, I know it has the potential to become a painting.

When you think about future generations looking at your work, what kind of record or message do you hope your paintings will leave behind?

I hope my paintings serve as both a historical record and a reminder of our responsibility to the world we inherit and leave behind. Long after I am gone, I would like future generations to look at my paintings and understand that these landscape and cultural scenes mattered in the evolution of humanity and that these stories are a documentation of our past, present and future world.

My goal is not merely to document the past but to encourage a deeper appreciation for the interconnectedness of history, culture, science, and nature. If my paintings inspire future generations to preserve what remains, restore what has been damaged, and respect the wisdom of those who came before us, then I believe they will have achieved their greatest purpose.

Ultimately, I hope my legacy is one of stewardship...a body of artwork that helped people see the land not simply as territory, but as a living archive of memory, meaning, and shared human experience.



Bradley W Giles | Land Of The Cahuilla | 2022

Gabriella Hill is a visual artist based in Upstate, New York. She has been drawn to art her whole life and has been studying formally in the Academy of Art University's Masters program. Subject matter usually consists of the natural world, such as landscapes and wildlife. Painterly brushstrokes and a gestural approach is often used in her oil paintings, and this helps to represent the life and energy found in the subjects.

Project Statement

This series of work focuses on the landscape, and the diversity of the landscape is explored through subject matter as well as a varied painting approach. "Bolivar Cows" is an 18"x24" studio painting; "Cape Cod," "Tamaracks," and "Winterscape" are 9"x12" plein art works; and "Cedars" and "Golden Hour" are 9"x12" quick studies. Though the timeframe and subsequent painting experience was different for these works, what ties these pieces together is the approach to the subject matter and the painting methods used. Capturing the overall gesture, essence, and unique moods of the environment was the focus, which allows the presence of the landscape to shine through.

Hill Gabriella | Bolivar Cows | 2025





— Interview

Kálamó

Your practice is rooted in ancient rituals and meditation. What first drew you to candle holders as a central object in your ceramic work?



As urban life became more chaotic and stressful, we felt the urge to create moments of connection to our inner self. We thought that the routine around city centers may lead you to lose the ability to reflect on your own life and actions. The more you get used to faster technologies and automatic mechanisms, the more you go blank to sensitive and meaningful moments throughout the day. Therefore, we wanted to create a moment of pause and rest through candles. The warmth combined with low light creates a unique atmosphere of comfort, where you feel free to be yourself and remember who you really are.

How do you understand the relationship between fire, clay, and time in your pieces?

The ceramic practice needs its own timing; you can't rush it. We learned to respect that through many cracked pieces. The work needs to be done in stages; if you skip or disrespect one of them, the whole piece is affected. We compare our practice to a cosmogonic creation; one can't exist without the other.

In that way, we feel the paradoxical meaning of time every day. We understand time as an abstract concept, measured by living life. The clock is a human invention, and we avoid looking at it as much as possible. We don't believe in a linear technological evolution; some analog gear still operates and matches human needs as a living body on this planet in a better way. We learned through clay to listen to our bodies instead of an outside demand, so we keep this reflection as a central purpose in our work.

The fire sums everything up. Heraclitus is our teacher on that matter; he conceives fire as the arché — from the Greek arkhé, the fundamental principle of all. He believes in the ambiguous trace as a constructive form: fire can destroy and build. That tension, in his eyes, provides the right amount of harmony needed. Without the cathartic role played by the fire, our work wouldn't exist.

You describe your works as having an ephemeral character because of the melted candle wax left on the surface. How important is this transformation after the piece begins to be used?

This is also an important aspect of Kálamó. We like to think that our pieces have a living inner form, like everything on this earth. We see our process much more as accessing



knowledge than forming it. Ceramics have been made for over 15,000 years; why not work together with those who came before us? In that way, we trace a line of permanent transformation. We don't see ourselves as a starting point; it hasn't begun with us, and it won't end with us either. When working with matter, we need to have that consciousness: material things stay here longer than we do. We like to think of human culture as an extensive open encyclopedia asking to be read; to use that knowledge in favor of all is a must. So, after they complete the cycle inside the studio and go to other places, we suggest that the transformation continues through the person who will acquire that piece. By lighting candles, the body surface will undergo an unpredictable modification, turning the person into an active creator too. Wax is a very interesting ephemeral material; you can assemble forms, and they will stay there as long as you want, until you remake the process by recycling it. Our pieces are not entirely ours; they are made to be used and to exist in the world around us.

How does working as a duo influence the creative process? Do you divide roles, or is each piece created through shared intuition?

We haven't actually decided to work together. Our partnership came before the studio and naturally gained the work space. We have a lot in common, and that was a turning point in bringing our perspectives together into a business. Understanding the world better has always been part of our conversations. Heraclitus says that by putting individuality aside, you might be ready to comprehend reality in a more reliable way, being able to slowly walk towards the truth. Thus, creating a space where we could practice our thoughts seemed perfect. Kálamo is way more than a brand. It is a shared space where we can talk, reveal, try, suggest, learn, and express our

thoughts without judgment. We like to think of Kálamo as a wide, large room with infinite making potential, where there is no me or you, just a fierce desire to create.

How do you want people to interact with your pieces — visually, physically, spiritually, or through daily ritual?

We would like to present our pieces not just as decorative, but interactive. So, all the options are welcome. We are seeing people losing what humanity spent thousands of years building: the ability to read tender sensibilities. An openness to the natural state of being. Our work faces that problem directly; somehow, we're trying to fight a certain "involution" established nowadays. We see the ancient world as a gold mine force to help us; the ceramic process is basically the same as it was in the beginning. Heraclitus' thoughts are more current than ever.

In what way does Brazilian culture, landscape, or local craft tradition influence your work?

Ceramics are known to be a heritage craft. For me, it was the same: my mother worked as a ceramic teacher in a non-profit institution. I grew up there; all my equipment is from that time, and it carries a special mark from everyone who touched those tools. All those handprints are now on Kálamo's works, for sure.

What does the name "Kálamo" mean to you, and how does it reflect the identity of your artistic duo?

Kálamo represents, above all, trust. Without trust in each other's thinking and way of being, those pieces would never be able to become real. Literally, Kálamo means reed, stem. The main structure used to handwrite, to make an arrow, and to carry objects like candles. We interpret that as a strong single column, capable of sustaining our beliefs, maintaining our lives in an eternal dynamic movement, like flames.



Jay Graves

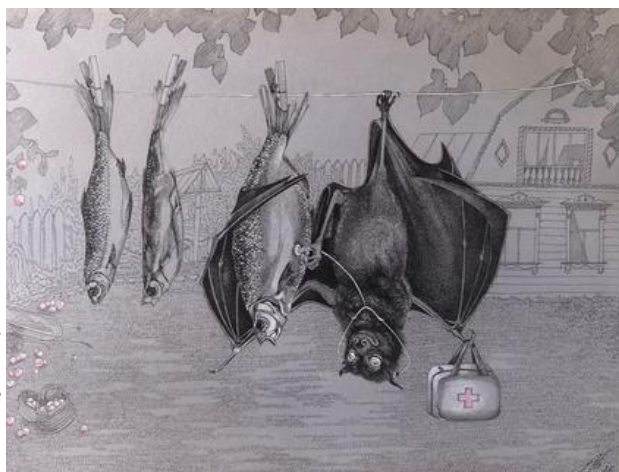
Oklahoma based experimental printmaker using rollers and brayers I make for surface rolled relief printing.





Alena Belyanko

Your art statement speaks about the “shadow” of the human being. What does this shadow mean to you personally, and why did you decide to bring it to the center of your visual language?



Alena Belyanko | Memento Mori

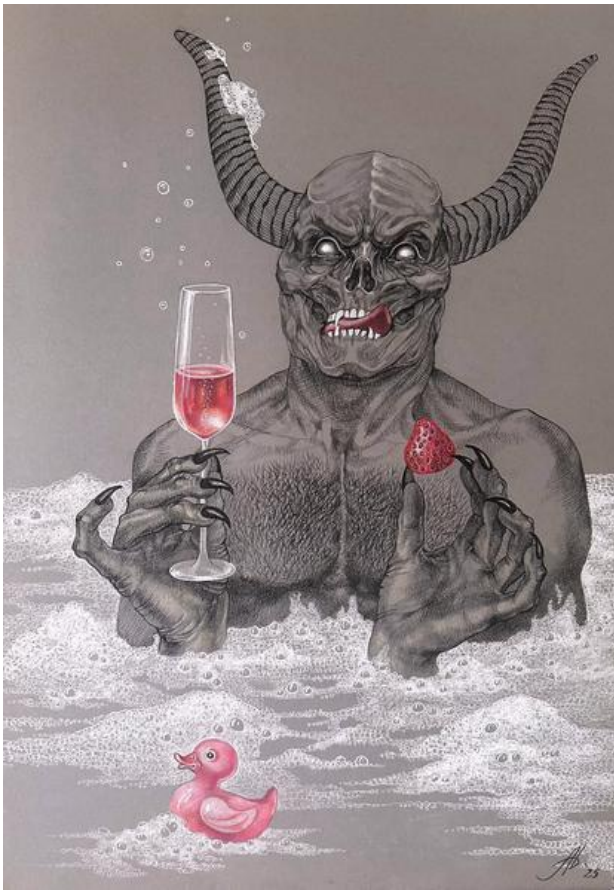


Alena Belyanko | Soft Loops

For me, the “shadow” is a space of genuine freedom — one that global institutions and social systems try to suppress by labeling it as “wrong” or “sinful.” I bring the shadow to the center of my visual language in order to deconstruct this hypocrisy. We live in a world where the pseudo-light of grand ideologies, religions, and political systems often turns into slave morality, violence against the individual, and total control through fear. This series exposes that paradox: today, the harshest destructive processes often take place under the guise of “absolute good,” while true human sincerity, allure, and inner autonomy are pushed by society into the dark, “demonic” side.

Many of your works combine disturbing, demonic figures with delicate or even playful elements. How do you find the balance between fear, irony, and tenderness?

This balance is a mirror of the structure of our world, which is not black and white. Absolute evil is often wrapped in an impeccable, respectable façade, while something that at first appears frightening or is condemned by society may turn out to be vulnerable and deeply human inside.



Irony and paradox are the main tools in this series of works. When a brutal demon conveys tenderness and fascination, and is placed within everyday domestic settings, I deprive the “dark force” of its destructive pathos. Playful and delicate details within disturbing graphics are a way to domesticate fear and show that charisma and warmth are born at the intersection of extremes. It is a union between the cruelty of global social contexts and the fragility of an individual living being within them.

In your drawings, the monstrous often appears not as an enemy, but almost as a companion. Is your “demon” a threat, a protector, or a hidden part of the self?

My demon is a hidden but fundamental part of the personality, which in this concept acts as the main protector of the human being. It is dangerous to the system, but saving for individuality. In a world where hypocrisy flourishes under the slogans of patriotism, legal absurdity exists under the banner of democracy, and religions generate violence, the inner demon remains a symbol of rebellion and honesty. It

does not carry the threat of destruction; it is a companion that allows one to preserve critical thinking, sexuality, and autonomy. It is relaxed and ironic because it is free from various dogmas.

Your works often mix beauty and discomfort. What do you want the viewer to feel when they first encounter your images?

I want the viewer to experience cognitive dissonance when confronted with the double standards of their own reality. The discomfort arises from recognizing the hidden social traumas and absurdities that surround us, but which are usually silenced. This series of works is an invitation to step beyond imposed systems of values and to see that light and darkness in contemporary society have long since changed places.

If your art is a manifesto of accepting one’s nature, what kind of freedom do you hope your characters - and your viewers - can find through this acceptance?

It is freedom from slave morality and false ideals. My characters are free because they do not try to conform to dogmas or anyone else’s expectations. For the viewer, this is a manifesto of gaining mental freedom — the right not to participate in social hypocrisy, the right to acknowledge one’s complexity, one’s expressions, and one’s hidden facets. When a person stops blindly believing in the pseudo-light transmitted from above and accepts their shadowy, charismatic side, they escape the control of fear. They become truly whole, alluring, and invulnerable to mass manipulation.



Shanna Darsan

I am an Irish-Trinidadian fine artist interested in materiality and the unconscious mind. Through processes of creation I seek understanding in feelings I cannot put into words.

Project Statement

Shanna Darsan's interest lies within the unconscious mind and the vast landscape of dreams. Through dreams she seeks to understand the ways in which the mind is submerged within this personalized space. She utilizes colour and pattern taken from the human body to create unconscious linework in acrylic paint. An acrylic base colour is placed and Darsan looks within the uneven paint to seek out form and shape. The patterns spiral off into vast networks which communicate this idea of a never-ending dreamscape.

Shanna Darsan | It Came from Me | 2026





— Interview

Nina Khmeleva

Your biography includes movement across several countries - Russia, Uzbekistan, and the United States. How has this experience of displacement and transition influenced your visual language?

My visual language became much more technically robust when I first moved to Uzbekistan and discovered the patterns and colors of Central Asia. Later, in America, my personal voice began to shine as I started implementing this new technical vocabulary.

When you are placed in an environment that is completely different from what you are used to, both culturally and socially, it makes you realize how unique you actually are.

I usually say: "For my whole life, I thought I was just normal. After moving countries, I realized I am not normal; and 'normal' does not exist."

Many of your characters seem both humorous and unsettling at the same time. How do you balance dark humor with emotional tension in your images?

The technical and conceptual aspects of my work are often separate from each other, even though they serve the same goal.

The humor comes from the technical execution: when I draw, I enjoy making the resulting image funny.

The unsettling aspect, however, comes from the underlying idea behind the image.

For example, in *Normal People*, the subject matter (the political climate in modern Russia) is extremely painful and unsettling, and the small visual joke of a cat stealing a piece of salami was something I came up with while working on the piece.

Your compositions use flat graphic forms, but they also feel rich in narrative. How do you build a story within a single image?

I have a lot of experience creating cartoons: I did it throughout my childhood. A good cartoon needs to be expressive enough to convey its idea without words.

This can be achieved through shape language,





Nina Khmeleva | Werewolf Shepherd | 2026

gesture, composition, and color.

In my work, I utilize all of these tools, with a particular focus on gesture: the main expressive movement of the piece, its emotional line of action.

The figures in your works often appear distorted, theatrical, or mask-like. What role does distortion play in your artistic practice?

Thank you for this observation. I am indeed very interested in masks, and I have created many of them in the past.

To me, a mask can be "a face, but better": something capable of expressing emotion in its purest form.

A mask also creates distance between the viewer and the character, and alienation is one of the prominent themes in my work.

Distortion serves a similar purpose by creating a "safe distance" for reflection. It is also a very enjoyable visual tool.

In my opinion, breaking and bending traditional linear perspective is something worth experimenting with.

Play and irrational logic are important elements in your work. Do you see absurdity as a form of freedom, criticism, or storytelling?

All of the above. For me, it is primarily an instrument of storytelling, as I am also a writer. It allows both the artist and the viewer to examine familiar situations from interesting angles.

In my opinion, all great art is absurd to some degree.

You are currently developing a collection of short stories. How does writing connect with your visual art practice?

Illustration is, by definition, an accompanying image for a text.

In addition to that, I find many literary devices highly useful in illustration, including hyperbole, comparison, and rhyme.

A key aspect of writing is building the right momentum to guide the reader smoothly through the text.

In visual art, composition and form guide the viewer's eye through the image in much the same way. There are many other technical similarities as well.

You hope to write, illustrate, and publish your first book within the next two years. What kind of world do you want this book to open for the reader?

I'm not sure yet. Most likely, it will be science fiction. I am very interested in the genre, and I read many science fiction books as a child.

I draw inspiration from writers such as Henry Kuttner, Robert Asprin, and Roger Zelazny.

Their works are absurd, playful, and technically robust in a way that feels very compatible with my own artistic practice.

Maria Tsirona is a Greek writer and artist whose work spans novels, children's stories, short fiction, poetry, and theatre. Alongside literature, she also paints on an amateur basis. Her work carries a poetic eye and a quiet, childlike innocence — full of vivid colours, golden dust, and a gentle sense of everyday magic.

Project Statement

This work is part of my ongoing project “The Flower Vases of Kallikrateia”, inspired by childhood memories from our summer house in Kallikrateia, Halkidiki. The pieces revisit the light and colours of Greece, and the atmosphere of those early summer days — days filled with innocence, ease, golden dust, friends, and long games on the beach. There were always fresh flowers, cut straight from the garden and placed in the plain vases around the house.

Created as collage works using various types of paper, including hand-painted pieces, these works reflect the quiet beauty of everyday life, the grace found in simple moments, and the childlike sense of wonder with which I choose to see the world.



Η έρευνα της Ευρωπαϊκής Φυσιοθεραπείας

Η Ελλάδα έχει 300 βούτες που αναλογεί σε 35.000, για 736 βούτες, σε 110.000 - 115.000, έχει 577 βούτες, 115.000 - 120.000 ανά λευτές για 59 εκατ., δι- λυτή, ενώ η Ισπανία ε-



— Interview

Zara Adriana Bachratá



You grew up in a small village in Slovakia. How has your environment influenced the way you see the world and create art?



Zara Adriana Bachratá | Sick mother

I have to admit that I used to complain about living in a small village—no shops, restaurants or cafés and I didn't have any friends nearby. But looking back, I realize that growing up in a small village was actually a great advantage.

I grew up in a house surrounded by my family, and my cousins lived very close, so we spent most of our time together. We were always outside in the garden, using our imagination and inventing our own games. My parents always encouraged me to create. I started in the morning and finished before going to bed. I didn't grow up with a phone or spend my childhood in front of television. Because of that I learned the value of real life in a world that has become increasingly virtual. The environment I am in has a huge impact on the way I think and create. When I'm in a busy city surrounded by people and constant noise, I often feel overwhelmed. That's why I'm always excited to come back home, where I can simply sit in the garden, observe the beauty around me and listen to my own thoughts in silence. That's when most of my ideas come to me.

My grandma's garden has always been a special place for me, even now when I no longer play there with my cousins. It is full of blooming flowers, fruit trees and vegetables and all you can hear is sound of the birds or insects. For me nature has become the greatest source of inspiration. Nature is art itself. I especially enjoy drawing and painting flowers and other natural motifs. Recently, I also created a kimono dress using the eco-printing technique, dyeing the fabric with flowers collected from my grandma's garden.

I know that many people in Slovakia see growing up and living here as a limitation. It is a small country and perhaps not as developed in certain areas, so people often believe we don't have the same opportunities as



those living elsewhere. I decided to see it differently. I believe that if we truly believe in ourselves, have goals we want to achieve, and consistently work towards them, there are no real limitations. The only limitation is our mindset, not the country we live in. Growing up in this kind of environment taught me to appreciate even the smallest things and to find beauty everywhere. I think that the simplicity of my childhood, strong connection with my family and the freedom I always had laid the foundation of who I am and how I create.

You started taking art classes just three years ago, yet you already draw and paint almost every day. What keeps you so motivated and disciplined?

I've started taking art classes mostly because I always wanted to study design. My art teacher always told me to draw every day and then during our lesson we went through my work. Firstly I did it just because I believed that only with hard work I will be able to get the results I want. I had a goal that I wanted to achieve. However, later on it became a passion. I started to experiment with different media and different techniques. I simply started to enjoy the journey instead of working towards one goal. What is the life without a passion anyway? I still believe that hard work is important, because only with that I will be able to have freedom to do what I love, but it is not the only thing that matters.

It doesn't mean that I am always in the mood for drawing or painting. Many times I lack motivation to do it, but I always remind myself that I was gifted with a talent-the ability to create art and therefore I should work on myself. Also sometimes when I feel like my

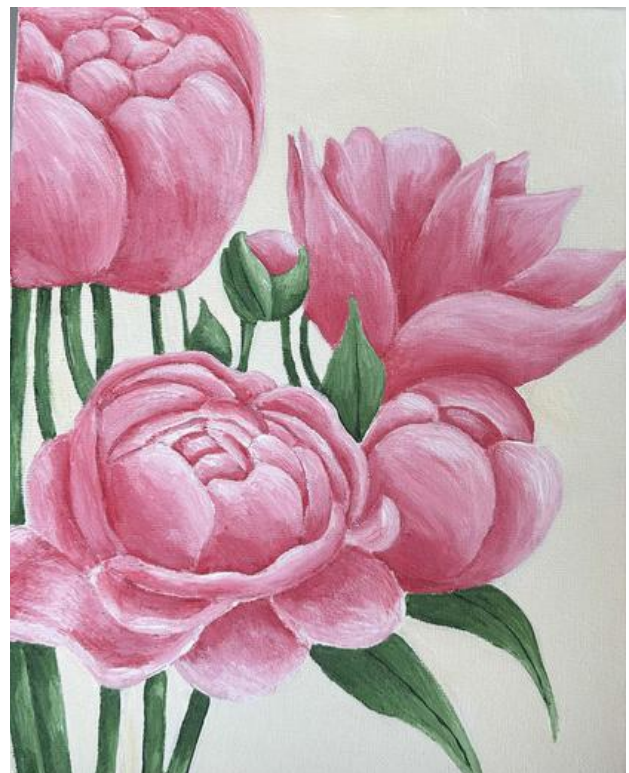
work is not good enough I take my previous sketchbooks and compare them. I remain motivated when I see my improvements and that my hard work actually paid off.

For me drawing also became a habit. When we repeat something everyday it fixes into our subconscious mind and it becomes part of ourselves. That is me with drawing. I dedicate an hour to drawing a day, because I was taught to do so right from the beginning. Now everywhere I go the sketchbook goes with me.

You mention that art helps you to enter the state of flow. What does this feeling mean to you?

For me, a state of flow means being in a moment when there are no external factors disturbing me. It happens when I forget about the time, people and noises around me and I just concentrate on the present moment. This always happens when I do art. The world around me seems to disappear, and nothing else matters except what I am creating. I can spend hours drawing, and I don't notice how quickly time passes. It helps me to focus and immerse myself in what I'm doing.

I think it is important for everyone to have something like this — to disconnect from everyday life and take a break from the outside world. This state also makes me feel good and perform at best of my ability. For example, once I had a terrible headache, but when I started painting and became completely absorbed in it, the pain suddenly disappeared. The same thing happens when I feel overwhelmed or when I can't process my thoughts.



Your work often feels very emotional and intimate. What emotions or thoughts do you usually try to express through your art?

With my drawings, I usually try to capture real life—what I see around me— which is why I prefer still life drawing. I like the idea that ordinary objects can come to life through art. Through my drawings, I tend to express peace rather than chaos. I like precise, clean lines and a soft, muted color palette because they reflect the calm atmosphere I want to create.

When I'm creating a piece as a gift, I always try to make it personal so that it resonates with the person receiving it, but in general I usually don't focus on specific emotion or thought. I enjoy the fact that people interpret art in their own way. Every person is unique, so the same artwork can evoke completely different thoughts and emotions depending on who's looking at it.

On the other hand, when I design fashion my approach is different. It's more about storytelling, self-expression, and communicating a message. This is also because the process involves many stages such as mind mapping or research before I come to the final outcome. I believe that art can often have a more powerful voice and create a greater impact than words alone.

Recently you have been experimenting with pastel and charcoal. What attracts you to these materials?

I really like these materials because they allow me to be more playful and experiment more. Unlike pencil, they feel less meticulous, because they allow me to use the whole surface, not just fine lines. They also help me to mimic different textures so that you can feel whether something is wood, stone or fabric... Especially pastel comes very natural to me. Even though, I only used it a few times, it feels as if I've known it for years. I love playing with the colors, mixing them and discovering unexpected shades. Also for me with pastel it seems like the painting never has to be finished and still looks good. I also enjoy getting messy when I make art. When I use charcoal or pastel they are literary everywhere :)

You said that traveling gives you freedom and inspiration. Is there a place or culture that has especially influenced your artistic vision ?

As I started to travel more I realized that I see art in every single place I visit. Every experience leaves a mark on my work. I feel like my artistic vision is still developing, but it is not shaped by one place, it is a combination of my personal experiences, the people I've met or the art and cultures I've observed. I really



like to get to know new people and the way how they see the world. It extends my perspective and often helps me to come up with different ideas.

Especially in fashion I like when my work is influenced by a certain place or culture. As I mentioned before nature is one of my biggest sources of inspiration. I was especially captivated by the landscapes of Bali or Mauritius. Not only they are filled with beautiful flowers, but those flowers have a deep cultural meaning. In Bali I saw how people prayed with flowers in their hands and placed offerings in their temples. I also found fascinating how each flower carried its own symbol. My recent project-the kimono dress was also influenced by Japanese culture, but in general in this project I examined how different people perceive flowers and therefore multiple journeys influenced my work.

What kind of artist or designer would you like to become in the future?

I would like to be a fashion designer. This has been my dream since I was a little girl. I like so many things and I feel like in fashion everything combines together, whether it is art, business or history...It is also the way I can express myself. It's not just about the clothing, it's about the whole journey behind it-the supply chain, the story or the craftsmanship that goes into creating it... For the last years I've been also researching more about sustainability in fashion. I know that the world behind the fashion is not as beautiful as it appears from the outside. The impact it has on the environment, animals, but even us humans is terrifying. Therefore, I would also like to study this topic further in the future.



— *Exhibition review*

The Names Gallery in Vienna – 27-28 June

On an exceptionally hot June day in romantic, art-filled Vienna, an international exhibition took place, presenting the work of 46 artists. On June 27-28, The Names Gallery hosted a two-day showcase of contemporary art at The Last Abstraction Gallery, bringing together artists from different countries, generations, and backgrounds.

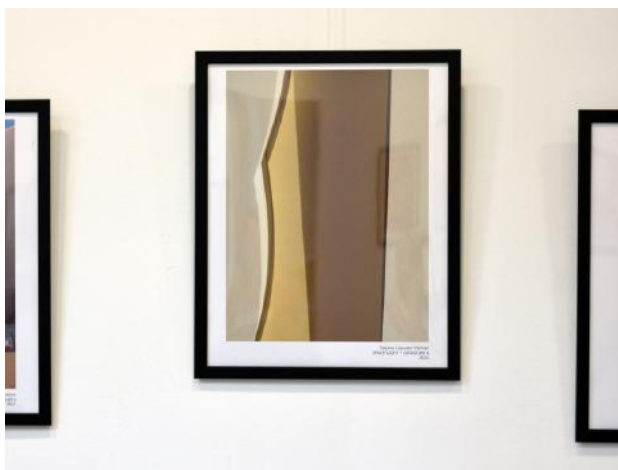
Curated by Anna Gvozdeva, the exhibition offered a rich cross-section of contemporary practice, spanning painting, photography, mixed media, digital art, and experimental formats. Rather than following one stylistic line, the



project was built around plurality: different visual languages, cultural memories, and ways of transforming personal experience into artistic form. This diversity became one of the strongest qualities of the show, allowing visitors to move from quiet, intimate works to expressive, symbolic, or structured compositions. Across the exhibition, the viewer could encounter many approaches to the image. Some works explored memory, identity, and personal history; others turned toward abstraction, geometry, the body, landscape, architecture, or the symbolic language of dreams and myth. Photography appeared as a poetic and reflective medium, while painting, mixed media, digital, and experimental works expanded the visual range of the project.

The participating artists were Natalia Macrii, Tatyana Chernova, Róbert András Czirok, Magnus Østermann, Clauida Ungersbäck, Ana Maria Costea, Amalia Poulli, Gabriel Mateus, Marsi Pedroche, Zechen Huang, Nadim Touma, Yuange Sheng, Zsuzsanna Ursprung, Nikola Gocic, Maria Tabet, Yuliana Chavdarova, Miléna





Cayet, Alexia Banica, Yolanda Ramirez Goldsack, Shannon Santos, Nikola Glavan, Tatjana Capuder Vidmar, Dina Melnik, Oleksandra Roche-Newton, Sophie Noir, Esther Wiederhold, Andrey Marin, Tea Lazić, Nursena Tetik, Necmi Enes KIŞ, Monika Torczynska, Charles Chao Wang, Kärt Merilain, Arbresha Hoxha, Brigitte B Burckhardt, Eugenia Rodina, Tijana Kostić, Silvia Göttlicher, Nihat Firat, Tatyana Bespalaya, Marina Ovseichik, Alena Belyanko, Anastasia Vendina, Vladislav Aksenov, Yulia Malysheva, and Asya Kir.

The exhibition brought together artists whose practices are shaped by different environments and contexts, yet many works shared a sensitivity to transformation, vulnerability, and

perception. The result was a dialogue between individual stories and broader themes: belonging, displacement, nature, urban life, human presence, and the fragile beauty of everyday experience.

Over the course of two days, visitors discovered emerging and independent artistic voices in an accessible, concentrated format. The exhibition encouraged direct looking: the kind of attention sometimes lost in the speed of digital viewing. In the gallery, each work existed as part of a shared physical experience, surrounded by other works and by the reactions of the audience.

The Names Gallery continues to develop its pop-up exhibition format as a way to create international visibility for artists and to build temporary cultural encounters in different cities. The Vienna showcase demonstrated how even a short exhibition can generate presence, exchange, and community.

We extend our sincere thanks to every artist who took part in the exhibition, and to everyone who visited the gallery over the two days. The June showcase in Vienna became a warm and memorable meeting of contemporary artistic practices, reflecting both the individuality of each participant and the shared energy of an international creative community.



Tatjana Capuder Vidmar



Tatjana Capuder Vidmar | Space = Light + (Shadow) | 2024

In my teenage years I was excited about modern painting, sculpture, and architecture. But since my childhood I play piano and I adore classical music. As a student I have enrolled in the Faculty of Architecture, University of Ljubljana, and to fulfil my further interests in architecture after my PhD I went to London to study at the Architectural Association School of Architecture. There I learned completely new approaches out of the box that were liberating and expanded my critical thinking and imagination. This was not an imagination of a dreamer but of a serious tendency to understand what space per se is and to figure out the role of architecture in space.

When did you first become interested in art, and how did your artistic practice begin?

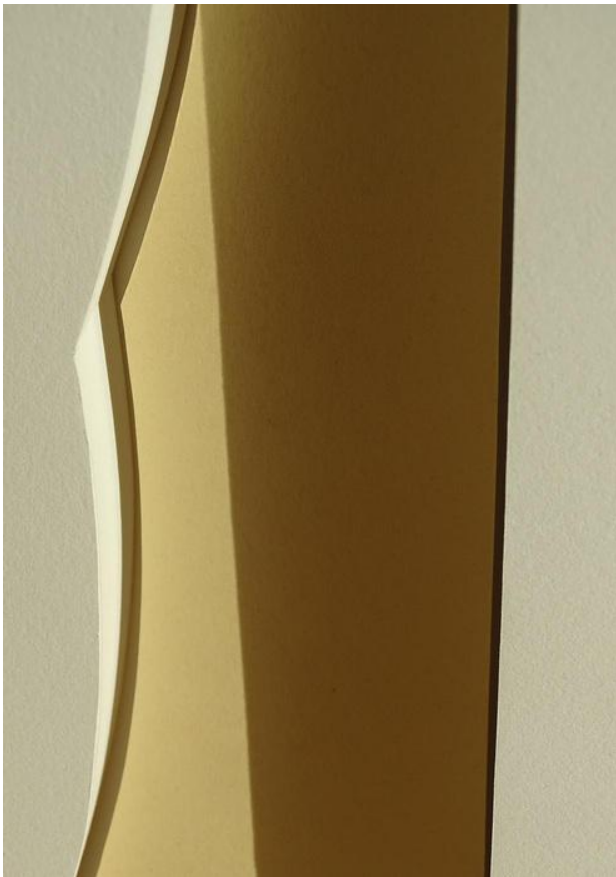
How did your background in architecture shape your artistic approach to space, light, and form?

Architecture makes it evident that everything is connected. As physicist Carlo Rovelli beautifully explains in his book *Reality Is Not What It Seems*, the reality is relational. And architecture is a part of the reality. So, everything is in a relation and therefore connected. Architecture is in a relation to space and light, and architectural form should depend on these relations, and of course on many other relations, too. But my artistic research is focused on relations between space, light, and form.

Was there a particular moment when you realized that architecture and art could connect in your practice?



Tatjana Capuder Vidmar | Space = Light + (Shadow) | 2024



I have never understood architecture separated from art. Architecture is an art. But to be realized it needs at least two approaches: on one hand it needs outstanding professionals to make plans and then to realize them on a site, on the other hand it needs extraordinary studies in many realms from philosophical thinking to innovations in technologies and materials if we want to go further and follow the development and needs of society. Architecture needs a vast knowledge. My artistic research is only a small part of it. The results of it show relationality and connectivity between space, light, and form. This I find very interesting because I consider space and light as basic entities that manifest forms. Therefore, my art tries to deal with serious questions that also question human feelings in a space manifested by light and forms.

The series "SPACE = LIGHT + (SHADOW)" appears to transform simple paper structures into complex spatial experiences. What was the starting point for this series?

Years ago, I have started with the idea that if I want to research space per se I need to research spaces that were not yet touched by humans. It is hard to find any except in smaller scales that are usually not interesting for contemporary science or a developer, that is space between micro natural structures like in a dried autumn leaf or in a surface of a forgotten stone. The question was what is going on here between structural elements in such a micro world, and if there is possible to understand space in a reflection of a natural form. And yes, paper is a

very simple and modest material which is able to simulate the natural forms of the micro world, and with the paper this world was enlarged to be easily observed.

What role does shadow play in your work - is it a visual effect, a structural element, or an independent part of the artwork?

In the sixth century BCE for example Taoism understood life and its processes as a balance between opposites that are part of the same system, the Tao (or Dao). In the Tao, light and darkness need each other in order to be recognized, defined and understood – and thus they are needed for us to be able to understand the world and ourselves. Therefore, shadow is a relational element and depends on light. It creates also an atmosphere in space and reveals our feelings in the space.

Your paper models seem minimal at first glance, yet they reveal rich layers through light and perspective. How important is the viewer's movement or point of view?

The paper models are intentionally minimal with the aim that a viewer would stop and try to reveal all these layers motionless. In such a motionless moment, I hope, it becomes evident, that this moment and the relations in it are just one of the many possible relations in a limited cloud of relations between space, light and form, and the viewer of course.

Alongside your artistic and architectural work, teaching has been an important part of your professional life. How does communication with students influence your way of thinking, creating, and understanding space?

I teach three subjects, Development of Settlements, Basics of Architecture and Urban Design, and Urban Planning at the Department of Landscape Architecture, which is one of the departments of the Biotechnical Faculty, University of Ljubljana for 20 years now. In all these years I have used flipped class methodology and I am lecturing ex-cathedra only where it is needed. Flipped class gives a lot of opportunities for debates, where moderating is very important. It needs to be flexible and it needs to support critical thinking and creativity in students to get them out of the box. But these are also characteristics needed for the moderator of the debate. There are always many moments during the process of moderation and also of course during mentoring students' projects that I get an upgraded insight to a knowledge. Teaching is also self-learning through the teaching which is most exciting. I consider ex-cathedra lecturing of the same subject extremely boring if one does not challenge oneself with new ideas which can go beyond a paradigm. And yes, space is always in the focus of my ideas. I think it is most necessary to go beyond one's profession to be able to go beyond existing norms to find new solutions for a better world.

Nelli Markina

Interdisciplinary artist. Hereditary aquascaper.

"Painting" both underwater and on land, she has a subtle sensitivity to nature and parallel worlds. Experimenting with various materials and themes, she actively develops her own unique technique, which distinguishes her from other artists.

Project Statement:

The series of paintings *Legs of the World* opens with a work in which female legs and male hands holding underwear enter into a tense visual dialogue. The composition explores the sexuality and allure of the image of the Italian woman through minimalist yet emotionally charged details.

This is how the idea for a series of works was born: poses of women's legs from different countries and cultures are presented not as demonstration, but as natural grace, while the details create an image in which seduction is inseparable from inner freedom.



Nelli Markina | Secret | 2021



Nelli Markina | Incendiary Afra | 2024

— Interview

Emily J Zweibel



Your collages feel like small surreal worlds built from fragments of everyday life. How do you usually begin a new work - with an image, an idea, a feeling, or a found material?



Emily J. Zweibel | Dominoes

I usually don't start with a premeditated concept. A specific image or color might spark an idea and then the images I choose begin to dictate the direction of the piece. When that happens, the process feels less like creating, and more like responding. It's an ongoing dialogue. There are times when I feel blocked. That is when I may use a concept like 'ocean' or 'solitude' as a point of departure. But the process remains deeply intuitive, allowing the collage to outgrow its original prompt.

You describe your practice as “visual archaeology and reconstructive surgery”. What do these two ideas mean to you in the context of analog collage?

“Visual archaeology” is the act of unearthing forgotten histories from old print media, like vintage magazines and old textbooks. “Reconstructive surgery” is the physical grafting that happens on the cutting mat. I cut open these distinct realities and stitch them into a new, breathing visual organism that takes on a life of its own.

Many of your works combine humor, unease, beauty, and strangeness at the same time. How important is this emotional ambiguity in your work?

Emotional ambiguity is at the core of my work because it reflects the true complexity of human experience. Our most profound moments often exist at the intersection of conflicting feelings. The tension in juxtapositions creates life. That friction—where you want to laugh but also feel a slight chill—turns a static image into a living psychological space.

Female figures appear often in your collages, sometimes flying, transforming, or inhabiting impossible landscapes. What role does the body play in your visual language?



In my collages, the body functions as a site of transformation, agency, and subconscious freedom rather than a passive object for visual consumption. The female figures—whether sprouting wings, morphing into a mythological creature, or dissolving into clouds — suggest the physical as psychological. The body is a medium for dreaming, processing trauma, and experiencing joy. It is an active participant in its own surreal universe.

Your work often plays with scale - tiny figures, oversized objects, dreamlike proportions. How do you use scale to change the viewer's sense of reality?

Scale is the ultimate tool for disrupting a viewer's everyday logic and breaking the subconscious autopilot we use to navigate the world. Making a commonplace object massive assigns an absurd, almost mythic significance to the ordinary. Conversely, placing tiny human figures in vast spaces evokes a sense of vulnerability, isolation, or childlike wonder. By destabilizing standard proportions, I create a sort of dream logic effect. The viewer is pulled into an alternate, surreal universe where the rules of physics are suspended, and the possibilities are boundless.

Since moving from New York to Mexico City in 2023, has your environment changed your artistic practice or the atmosphere of your work?

Moving from New York to Mexico marked the beginning of a major transformation in both my daily life and my artistic practice. I was a teacher in New York for many years. I always loved collaging but simply didn't have the time or energy to consistently make art. Retiring and completely changing my physical environment gave me a sense of liberation. For the first time, I had the mental space to commit to my artistic practice. Moving here also profoundly impacted my creative choices. Mexico City altered my visual language. It has a kind of poetic density, with a rich surrealist legacy, layers of visible history, lush flora, and urban chaos all coexisting. On a practical level, I find incredible vintage images and local ephemera in Mexico City's many markets and used bookstores. All of these factors have led to more layered, patient work.

When viewers encounter your collages, what do you hope they feel first: curiosity, discomfort, recognition, amusement, or something else entirely?

If I have to choose, I hope they initially feel a bit disoriented, quickly followed by curiosity and then recognition. Curiosity is the hook that makes you step closer to the piece to figure out what you're seeing. The ultimate goal is recognition. I don't mean recognizing a specific face or object, but rather an emotional recognition. I want viewers to look at a peculiar, impossible scene and think, "I don't know what this is, but I know what that feels like." If that recognition carries with it a bit of amusement or a twinge of discomfort, then the collage has successfully done its job. My ultimate goal is to create a strange familiar.



Emily J Zweifel | Errands Vivid

Victoria Kobylskova

Your works are full of movement, rhythm, and visual “pulsation.” How do you create this sense of energy on the canvas?



Victoria Kobylskova | Distortion | 2024



In fact, this “pulsation” comes from within. When I create paintings, I transfer my energy into them, and you can see it on the canvas. Of course, form also plays a very important role. This energy materializes through an active interaction of geometries: I like to bring together round, flowing elements with sharp diagonals or striped backgrounds. But it is not only the contact between forms that matters — the rhythmic structure is equally important: the way color fields alternate, and how one form flows into another. It is as if I capture a moment of inner movement and make it visible. This tension between different geometries, combined with their rhythmic transitions, makes the viewer’s gaze move across the canvas, creating the feeling of a living “pulsation.”

You often use bright, contrasting colors. What role does color play in your artistic language?

For me, color is both an emotional signal and a constructive foundation. On the one hand, I use bright, contrasting shades to convey my mood and inner energy, immediately capturing the viewer’s attention. On the other hand, color functions as a structure: I think not in tones, but in volumes. Through contrasting color fields, I define the foreground and depth, replacing classical chiaroscuro with active planes of color. It is a kind of color architecture that emerges from my inner state.



Many of your compositions transform everyday objects into bold, almost symbolic forms. Why is stylization important to you?

In my work, I consciously move away from the illusionistic copying of reality. I simply find it boring to redraw what already exists — I want to create something new. For me, stylization is a tool for translating the everyday into the language of pure symbols. I enjoy generalizing forms, turning a familiar object, such as a teapot, into a geometric color field and freeing it from everyday visual noise. In this way, I leave space for the viewer to enter into a direct dialogue with color and form, beyond the domestic narrative.

How has your education in decorative and monumental art influenced your approach to composition and form?

This education has given me perhaps the most important thing — an understanding of the plane. I do not try to depict a window into the world, or an illusion; I work with the surface as an independent space. Monumental art teaches you to work with silhouette, mass, and composition as a rhythmic structure in which every element supports the entire work. Decorative art has also given me the courage not to be afraid of ornament and large color fields — I think not in shades, but in broad blocks of color.

You work with tempera paint and texture paste. What attracts you to these materials?

Tangibility is very important to me. Texture paste is my way of giving a painting relief. When I apply it, I can

control whether the surface will be smooth or uneven. This creates a play of shadows in real space, which changes depending on the lighting. Tempera attracts me because of its matte quality, density, and brightness. Unlike oil paint, it does not shine. It can be applied very densely, making the brushstroke raised, or diluted to an almost watercolor-like transparency. This gives me great freedom in creating that very “pulsating” texture.

In your works, geometric forms often interact with recognizable objects. How do you balance abstraction and recognizability?

Essentially, I analyze the form of the object: I consciously remove everything secondary and search for the visual boundary at which the object still remains recognizable, but has already become a geometric color field. This is where the balance lies: I leave just enough for the viewer to recognize a “teapot,” while still perceiving it as part of a rhythmic structure rather than as an everyday object.

Do you want the viewer to read your works emotionally, decoratively, symbolically, or intuitively?

I would like the viewer to perceive my works intuitively and emotionally. Of course, I want the beauty of the decorative pattern to please the eye. But it is much more important to me that the viewer feels the vibration, the energy embedded in the colors and relief. Symbolism can remain in the background. I do not want people to decode my works like a puzzle; I want them to surrender to the flow of color and texture, to allow themselves to emotionally “switch on” to this rhythmic wave. If a painting evokes in the viewer a physical sensation of pulsation or a certain mood, then contact has been made.



— Interview

rratta_tta

You describe yourself as a self-taught artist. How did drawing and color first become a language for you in childhood?



I remember always being really into understanding everything around me, like the universe, nature, people, behaviors, systems, and theorizing about it. I think I felt very insecure about my near surroundings. So everything that came with drawing, came first as a way to stop explaining things with words, like some sort of mental relieve, so that I could just follow the lines with some inner intuition and confidence about the order that I was giving to myself, including creating new paths to escape. Over time it became a regular practice to withdraw into myself. Color was different, it was like decorating my inner space, risking myself all the time to be wrong, but without the external judgement. It was about having fun. Most of my experience with color comes from experimenting, doing some hideous mistakes, by ruining things on purpose.

You write that art helps you solve problems and make decisions. How does this process work for you in practice?

It's like meditation, but reversed. I don't just feel overwhelmed by every thought and do some breathing work... In this case I start with nothing, just paper. I don't think at all, until I begin to see some possibilities out of some lines, some kind of inspiration (mostly coming from nature) and dream about it while I let it be on paper.



Some emotions related to expansion comes to me, to defy the limits, to defy my own patterns. Till I build my own new story. Sometimes I catch myself holding my breath by the end of it, like I'm holding on to the excitement. So when I feel like reality is too much, I draw and paint, and think that I'm untangling ideas and narratives. Changing something at a subconscious level.

Watercolor is central to your work. What attracts you to its fluidity, unpredictability, and transparency?

The possibility of visualizing layers or perspectives. It feels like you can imagine the overlap of different dimensions, or that is the movie that I play on my mind. If reality is constructed by different possibilities, watercolor acts like the medium to see it. Every layer is different from the other one... they don't have the same direction, or the same degree of color. Each one of them has its own current and intensity. Like there is nothing wrong, it's just nature. I give away control, and wait to see the result.

Many of your works seem to exist between figuration and abstraction. How do you find the balance between recognizable forms and emotional states?

I think I try to represent figures to focus on a theme, while I put the emotions in the way that I hold the pen, and the colors I pick up randomly. I try to draw the limits, to then break them. It's like feeling the transition every time I cross the line while I'm painting, color can stay the same if its viewed from the same perspective, or it can change if it's part of a different wave of emotion, it depends of what part and figure I am painting, and how I relate with it... like a chemical reaction between two worlds that are getting in touch. Going from earth to water, from water, to fire, from earth to fire, to air... I don't know if it makes any sense.

Faces and mask-like images appear often in your works. What does the idea of the mask mean to you?

I like to work on the idea of death as a taboo, to perhaps provoke people. Like there was a time when bodies where a source of science, memory, maybe art. And

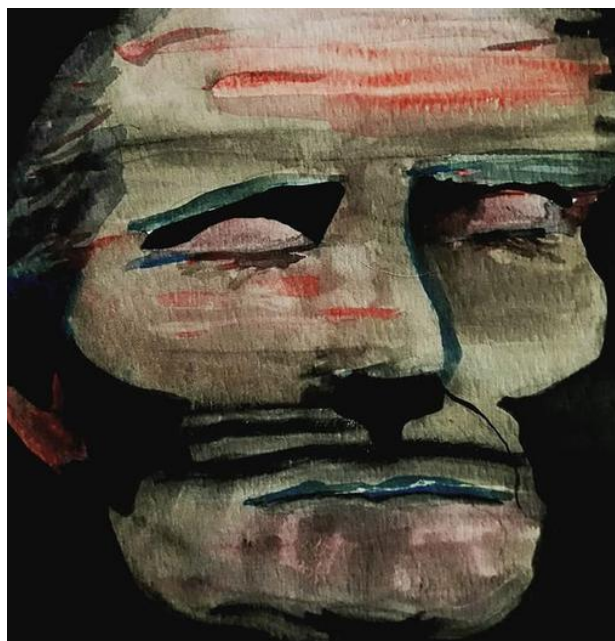
western culture has lost his appreciation for this process, trying always to live as much as we can, pushing unnecessary boundaries on my view. For me masks represent a period of transition, between the thing that is acknowledged and the thing that is remembered.

How important is intuition in your work? Do you plan the image before painting, or do you allow the watercolor to guide you?

I sometimes have ideas coming to me before getting asleep, like concepts, or narratives, or just images. I think of some mixture of colors, or a concept to explore. I also use images from different sources that I find interesting in their significance, or in composition. Then I just try watercolor, and let myself go. I think intuition is all of my creative work, despite the fact that I do some research, but I feed on different things that captivate my attention and linked them.

How has your understanding of art changed from childhood until now, especially as a way of transmutation and spiritual survival?

Before it was just a practice, a coping mechanism. I don't think art had much importance to me in a concrete way, it was about consuming activities and expressions that were private and silly, while I was looking for something to believe, something to rely on. I never believed in a God, although I tried really hard to. I wanted to be normal. And recognizing myself as an artist was far away from my idea of being accepted. Overtime, it was undeniable to myself... and I gave it this purpose, I started to look intentionally for an infinite source of inspiration, and I couldn't find a bigger thing than spirituality and surrendering to something else. It became a portal to understand meanings and to offer new perspectives about connection between people, nature and non-linear time.



Ladina Denoth

A text written about me by a wonderful woman:

Ladina is a beautiful soul — a mother, an artist, and a woman of quiet strength and luminous grace. She moves like a feather in the air. There is a tenderness in her presence, yet also a deep resilience beneath it. She comes from a family of artists — her mother, grandfather, and uncle — each with their own creative voice. I loved listening to her speak about carving her own path, stepping into her confidence, and honouring her unique way of creating.

A LITTLE ABOUT THE MEANING OF MY PAINTINGS:

I feel that my paintings are LANDSCAPES FROM THE SOUL. Colour gives life to feelings and stories. I love exploring depth and texture.

Those who observe my work may experience their own emotions — such as love, strength, or happiness — reflected in the paintings, like a mirror of their own magical lives. This is why I love seeing my artwork on someone else's walls. It means the world to me, and I am deeply grateful.

Ladina was born in 1982 in Samedan, Switzerland, and moved with her mother and brother to Costa Rica in 1994. Since then, Costa Rica has been her home.

Helga Denoth, my mother, was an exceptional artist and human being. Her days were always filled with colour, laughter, and love. Throughout her life, she had an extensive artistic career and participated in exhibitions around the world.

Helga Denoth (1956–2023)

Project Statement

Freedom

I am free now. Now I am 44 years old and have been through some hard moments. Taking care of my mom for years and she was my idol, an exceptional artist. There was a connection between us that is hard to find. I am now, that she has passed away a woman that has grown, a warrior someone said. A single mom making her life as an artist. And making it as one. I am resilient and will keep on going surrounded by wonderful, magical and supportive people that have come in to my life these past couple of years.

This is my statement because my paintings are about all of these feelings. A woman getting in to her own empowerment. A woman feeling a lot. A woman painting her emotions. And going on in her life. And making it, now. My life is filled with even more colors and lots of love. I am free. Living my life as a single mom and artist. All of that, is stated in each and every single painting of mine.





— Interview

Elena Zazulina

Your jewelry journey began in 2014. What was the first impulse that led you to choose jewelry as a form of artistic expression?

For as long as I can remember, I have always been involved in creative work. I loved inventing things and creating with my hands. Later, I began working with graphics and painting, creating large-scale artworks and participating in exhibitions of animal artists in various exhibition spaces and projects.

Over time, my works evolved and gradually became smaller in scale, moving toward ceramics and small-form sculpture, while remaining within the genre of animal art. It was then that I realized size was not the



most important thing, and that I was much more interested in and comfortable working in a smaller format without losing expressiveness.

At a certain point, small-scale sculpture also underwent a transformation, becoming even more compact and shifting into the form of wearable art — jewelry. I approach the creation of jewelry in the same way I approach art objects, continuing to draw inspiration from nature, as well as from traditional ornaments, which often also contain botanical motifs or narratives.

Do you remember the first piece of jewelry you created with your own hands? What did it mean to you at that time?

Speaking of my first jewelry pieces, it is funny to remember now, but they were felt beads and a brooch made from the brushed-out wool of my beloved dog Sirius, a Sheltie, or Shetland Sheepdog. Of course, it had nothing to do with metal, but apparently, even then, the direction of my jewelry development was already beginning to take shape. I realized that it was possible to try different materials and experiment, because it is only through such unusual combinations that something distinctive can be born — something with a personal story, its own perspective, attitude, style, and the author's voice.

Before working with titanium, you experimented with different materials. At what point did you





realize that titanium could become the main material for your project?

When I first started working with metal, I used silver, nickel silver, brass, bronze, and copper. From an artist's perspective, the color palette of these metals felt limited. I created simple, graphic works by combining these metals and seeking expressiveness through patination, textures, and, of course, stones. I often felt that I was missing color. I tried moving toward enamels and studied colored patinas that could be applied to metal, but I did not progress beyond experimentation. Then, when I discovered titanium, I was deeply inspired and intrigued by its possibilities. It is incredibly lightweight and hypoallergenic, but its true magic lies in its ability to take on different colors. It is a metal used in medicine, space technology, and premium jewelry. It took me almost a year to arrive at this project, taking into account all the challenges of working with titanium: purchasing complex equipment, experimenting, adapting, and mastering new technologies, while moving between moments of great inspiration and disappointment caused by critical mistakes at the final stage. It became a kind of challenge for me, and instead of giving up, I decided to continue exploring this difficult metal and search for my own path.

Now, through anodizing, I can give titanium color and imagine not so much as a graphic artist, but rather as a painter working with paints. This allows me to bring to life ideas that would be impossible to realize in other metals.

You describe titanium as a material that contains "99% physics and 1% magic". What feels most magical to you in working with it?

Of course, titanium anodizing is the most magical process. How can one create color without using paints, pigments, or enamels? It is almost like creating color on metal out of thin air!

What is scientifically called an optical illusion happens when, under the influence of heat or electric current, an oxide film of varying thickness forms on the surface of the metal. This film is completely transparent, but as light passes through it, it refracts, and our eyes perceive it as color.

The thickness of this film determines which color the eye will see — blue, violet, sky blue, pink, gold, or green. For those familiar with physics, it is truly 99% physics and 1% magic. And for those who are not, it is 100% magic!

If we look at your project as a personal story told through titanium, color, and ornament, what is this story primarily about?



In the broadest sense, for me, it is about connection. We live here and now, in the present, while remembering our connection to the past and dreaming of the future. That is why all my titanium works are a story about how something traditional from the past can harmoniously coexist with something high-tech from the future, all within the present moment.

I studied jewelry making and use traditional jewelry techniques and materials, while at the same time exploring new technologies, contemporary materials, and investing in innovative equipment. If you look at a single piece of jewelry inspired by traditional ornamentation, it immediately becomes clear that I am not a supporter of archaism. I view ancient and historical elements exclusively through my own contemporary perspective — in terms of their aesthetics, harmony, and often their functionality. When studying folk ornaments, architectural elements, and jewelry itself, I do not seek to copy them, because I believe this would be meaningless in relation to our time, our way of seeing, our style, and the lifestyle of a modern civilized person. But they inspire me. Many ornaments or elements resonate naturally with contemporary jewelry, and I enjoy this “time machine” that, through imagination, creativity, and new technologies, connects our eras on such a level.

How has your understanding of jewelry art changed from 2014 to the present day?

When I entered the world of jewelry in 2014, it was a craft for me. I was learning techniques, discovering how to work with metal, solder, and set stones. It had nothing to do with art.

Today, jewelry art is, above all, a language for me — a language through which I speak. A language that allows me to express myself and make statements using those very “words”: the techniques I learned at the very beginning.

And if my jewelry resonates with other people, it means we are speaking the same language.

What aspects of your personal experience, character, or worldview are most reflected in your jewelry?

My titanium jewelry reflects many personal aspects of who I am.

First of all, it is reflected in the approach itself. I am an emotional person, and working with titanium from beginning to end is a very emotional process. It is a metal that is quite difficult to work with, one that does not forgive mistakes along the way, yet it offers a bright, highly striking, and impressive result in the end. And if you have gone through all the difficulties, reached the finish line, and everything has worked out,



you are once again overwhelmed with emotion and feel the joy of it, like a winner.

Secondly, when it comes directly to my titanium jewelry, what I see in myself is always contrast. It is a true union of strong character and elegance, of simple lines and complex technologies. My titanium jewelry is like a woman who appears delicate, light, and graceful, while inside she holds a complex inner world and a strong character that requires a special approach to understand.

In my authorial project AZULINE, I combine laconic forms with original illustrations, handcraft with advanced technological equipment, and traditional materials with contemporary ones.

I use titanium as the main material for my jewelry — a modern and highly relevant metal with a complex character and almost cosmic possibilities: lightness, strength, hypoallergenic qualities, and decorative potential. I complement it with jewelry alloys, non-ferrous metals such as nickel silver, brass, bronze, and copper, as well as stones.

I experiment with scale, as titanium is ideal even for large forms. I explore the color of metal and stones, using them almost as a painter uses paint — mixing, combining, and placing colorful accents. This is a truly creative process, because even the additional metals and alloys, as well as their colors, are not chosen randomly. They are selected to support the overall color palette and harmonize with the ornament on titanium, flowing naturally from one element into another.



— Interview

Gina Senko

How did your journey into textile art and felt-making begin?

My felt-making journey began with the intention of creating a pair of slippers for a hospitalized friend and a futile search for attractive oven mitts. From the moment I started making them, I was obsessed with the creative potential of wool. I began to see the objects around me as either



Photo: Antonio Cabrera

wool-working tools or as large sculptures, wondering how they could best be translated in wool without requiring armature. As I developed my felting skills and confidence, my focus shifted from creating functional pieces to more open-ended self-expression and story-telling.

What first drew you to natural fibers and sustainable materials?

'Natural fibres' like wool have a large human handprint on them from millennia of selected breeding for desirable characteristics, such as non-shedding sheep. Now, however, wool has gradually been devalued, overlooked and replaced with synthetic fibres. There is a great deal of wasted sheared wool and I see that as an opportunity to appreciate and renew our relationship with wool.

Your background is in environmental assessment. How does this education influence your artistic practice?

I have a degree in environmental studies/geography and a masters in environmental impact assessment. Firstly, this



Photo: Antonio Cabrera, Location: Pace Farm, Quebec



education gave me the tools to consider materials with their life cycle in mind. Secondly, it made me conscious of how we have engineered our environments, including other species, and also how our environments have shaped us. Creatively we can shape or alter the wool, and the resulting fibre art can, in turn, influence us. There is an unspoken reciprocity.

Why did wool become such an important material for you?

It is the innate qualities of wool that inspire my passion. Not unlike clay, the possibilities to create are limitless.

Your work often refers to the natural world and the animal kingdom. What inspires you most in animals?

From a biological, evolutionary and aesthetic perspective, the natural world and its inhabitants are a constant source of wonder and fascination for me.

What was the idea behind this ram head sculpture?

The ram's head is personal piece. It is an homage to the late Elwood Quinn, an influential person in Montreal's agricultural/educational scene. He provided me with the wool and fun conversation so my goal was to create a strong but unconventional sculpture in his honour.

You studied in France with masters in the field. What was the most valuable lesson from that experience?

I took felting classes at Feutre Formation France with Gladys Paulus. She is a felting genius who shared her experiences in making various animal features. It gave me the tools and confidence to try new ideas.



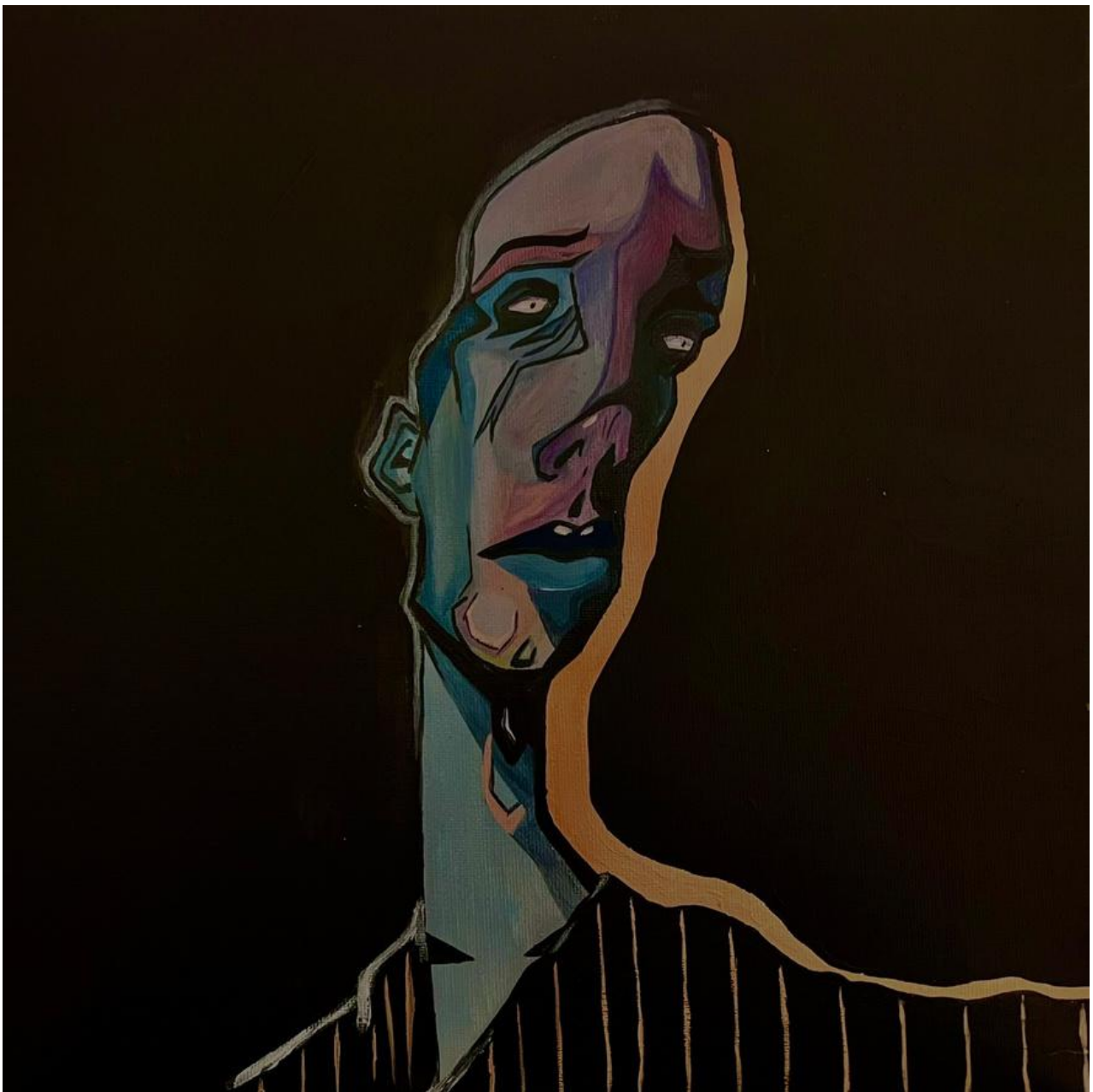
Valeria Vasilache

Here is a short, heartfelt backstory you can use for your profile or about page:

For as long as I can remember, art has been my truest language.

Growing up, words often felt too small to capture the depth of my emotions or the rich weight of the traditions passed down through my family. So, I turned to the canvas. Every stroke became a way to honor my roots, and every color a reflection of a feeling too complex to speak aloud.

What started as a private sanctuary has grown into a journey of connection—a way to weave together heritage, emotion, and creativity, and finally share my heart with the world.





— Interview

TuRist

Your pseudonym, TuRist, reflects your deep connection to travel. How have your journeys shaped your artistic vision and the emotional language of your work?



TuRist | Envy | 2026



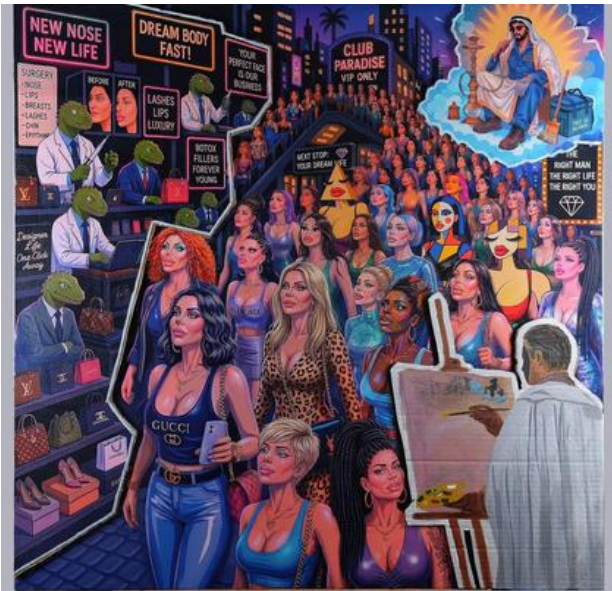
I would not say that travel has strongly influenced my style or artistic language in the way it did, for example, with Gauguin. Rather, travel generates impressions, inspires new themes, and awakens thoughts and emotions. Immersing yourself directly in another culture and economy is much more immersive than seeing something on television or online. For instance, after visiting camel races in Qatar, I wanted to create a work about the migration policies of the Persian Gulf countries, to discuss their advantages and disadvantages. And after attending the completely dull and toothless Venice Biennale, I created a work with monkeys about cowardice in contemporary art.

In your creative process, how do personal emotions and lived experiences transform into visual images?

Images appear in my mind, and the stronger the emotion, the more obsessive the image becomes. In general, my first works emerged as a form of art therapy. I had an almost irresistible desire to share an emotion or a conclusion, and then I realized that I could “pour it out onto the canvas.”

You are not classically trained as an artist. Do you feel that this gives you more freedom in your work?

No, rather the opposite. I feel a lack of education and technique, a lack of systematic knowledge. I try to fill these gaps quickly: I run around museums and exhibitions all over the world like crazy, hire the best and most intelligent guides, communicate a lot with other



artists and art historians, and learn from all of them as I go.

Your practice brings together Russian avant-garde poster traditions, naive art, and AI-generated imagery. What attracts you to these very different visual languages?

As a social thinker, I look for the most effective ways to visualize my ideas. The choice of the avant-garde poster is obvious in this sense. The naivety of the style, especially at the beginning, often came from my inability to draw well. And neural networks have helped greatly to accelerate and expand the production process. There will be other styles as well — I am still searching.

The themes of technological transformation, artificial intelligence, and the digital future appear frequently in your work. Do you see technology as a threat, a tool, or both?

As I just mentioned, from a technical point of view, neural networks, Photoshop, and other technologies have proved very useful for us as artists, and we use them with pleasure. But when speaking about humanity as a whole, the question becomes much more complex. Technologies that improve our lives and make our work easier should not lead to the degradation of human beings themselves. For example, by removing heavy physical labor and the need for daily survival through machines, we have ended up with weaker, more delicate, and more fragile men — and now we are surprised that they cannot, and do not want to, defend their homeland as they once did. By spreading calculators everywhere, we have forgotten how to do mental arithmetic. By dictating voice messages, we have begun to forget how to write. I strongly believe in Engels's idea that labor transformed the ape into man. Now, in the age of AI, we must make a serious effort not to turn back into apes. To do this, we must constantly improve ourselves and develop talents and skills that are inaccessible to machines.

Your statement speaks about an age of profound global transformation. What role do you believe art can play during moments of crisis and uncertainty?

Art should play a very important role. Visualization sometimes reaches the mind and heart better than words. Art should also comfort, motivate, mobilize, or, on the contrary, help people relax. In the age of modernism, art was at the forefront of change — hence the word “avant-garde.” Today, because of censorship, tolerance, and fear of cancellation, we are trailing behind society. This is exactly what I am trying to fight against: to write about what matters most — the survival of human beings in the age of AI, the crisis of democracy, the degradation of public finances and the devaluation of savings, migration, and the loss of identity.

When viewers encounter your work, what kind of response do you hope to awaken in them — reflection, discomfort, recognition, hope, or something else?

First of all, I want to make the viewer pay attention to a problem, think about it, start arguing, discuss it with others or within themselves. At first, the viewer needs to be drawn in — for example, through provocation, strong emotion, or mystery. But afterward, it is essential to arrive at a discussion of an important topic.

Many people say that my art is dark, depressive, and frightening. But I do not see it that way. I frighten people a little and create a sense of unease so that viewers can better understand the depth of the problem and become motivated to solve it positively. For example: “your savings will soon disappear, so you should buy gold,” or “they are turning you into idiots by forcing you to watch short reels, so read long books and learn to understand why you are being overloaded in exactly this way.” Ultimately, my task is to make my own modest contribution to preventing us from turning into a herd of apes.



— Interview

Fiona YEH

Could you tell us a little about your journey as an artist and how you first began painting?

Art has always been a way for me to explore life and understand myself. I began painting out of curiosity—curiosity about emotions, imagination, and the invisible connections that exist between people and the world around them.

Over time, painting became more than a creative practice. It became a way of observing, learning, and reflecting on my experiences. I see myself as a traveler on Earth, and art allows me to transform what I discover along the journey into a visual language that can be shared with others.

Your paintings often feel like they exist between reality and dream. How important is this dreamlike atmosphere in your work?

The dreamlike atmosphere is an important part of my work because I am interested in what exists beyond the visible world. Emotions, memories, intuition, and imagination often reveal truths that cannot be fully explained through logic.

By creating spaces between reality and dream, I hope to invite viewers into a quieter place where



Fiona YEH | Lion-40

they can connect with their own experiences, emotions, and inner landscapes.

The gaze of the lion feels very direct and almost human. What do you want the viewer to feel when meeting this gaze?

The lion in my work is never just a lion. It is a mirror.

When viewers meet its gaze, I hope they feel a moment of recognition—as if they are looking at a part of themselves. Strength and vulnerability can exist together. Courage is not the absence of fear, but the decision to keep moving forward despite it. The lion's eyes carry silence, memory, resilience, and emotion. They do not judge or demand; they simply exist and invite reflection.

For me, Leonoir is about the hidden strength within every individual. Through this gaze, I hope viewers feel seen, understood, and perhaps reminded of the strength they may have forgotten they possess.

Was there a particular experience or period in your life that helped you understand your artistic voice more clearly?

I do not think my artistic voice emerged from a single moment. It developed gradually through living, observing, questioning, and experiencing the world.

As I continued to create, I became less interested in describing appearances and more interested in exploring what lies beneath them—human emotions, inner landscapes, and the invisible connections that shape our lives.



Fiona YEH | Teasing the King-6



This journey eventually led me toward the symbolic language of lions, women, dreamlike spaces, and Leonoir.

Do you usually plan your compositions in advance, or do they develop naturally while you paint?

I usually begin with a feeling, a question, or a symbolic image. While I may have an initial direction, I leave space for intuition and discovery throughout the process.

For me, painting is less about executing a plan and more about having a conversation with the work itself. Some of the most meaningful elements often emerge unexpectedly.

What does healing mean to you as an artist, and how does it appear in your visual language?

For me, healing is not about fixing something that is broken. It is about becoming more aware, more connected, and more compassionate toward ourselves and others.

In my work, healing appears through stillness, reflection, and connection. It can be found in the gaze of a lion, the presence of a woman, or the quiet simplicity of Leonoir. These elements invite viewers to slow down, look deeper, and reconnect with what truly matters.

What do you hope people remember after seeing your artworks?

More than remembering a specific image, I hope people leave with a feeling.

A feeling of connection.

A feeling of curiosity.

A feeling of hope.

If my work can encourage someone to see life from a different perspective, to connect more deeply with themselves or others, or to bring a little more kindness into the world, then it has fulfilled its purpose.

At the end of June the artist's work was also featured on a Times Square billboard in New York, expanding the project beyond the magazine format and bringing it into a public urban space.

— Interview

Anastasia Gangal

You were born in Chisinau and grew up in a family connected to architecture and interior design. How did this environment shape your visual language as an artist?



From early childhood I have been surrounded by a lot of books in my parents house. Books about history of arts, music, philosophy, architecture and design, biography of famous painters, poetry and artistic literature that created interest and taste for art, builded like bricks the foundation for the future paintings and visual artworks. A series of my artworks have geometrical shapes that was influenced by architectural forms.

Your artistic path began with caricature-style characters and watercolor. What led you toward abstract painting?

Yes, indeed I was painting caricature of animals, mainly cats and rabbits in a cartoon style, also doing sculpture from polymer clay, handmade bags and wooden mirrors painted manually with acrylics, this was the early stage of my creation path, named under a brand name GangLiON. After several years of being passionate by film photography, I started experimenting with acrylics paints offering me total freedom of expression that has the abstract art. A



more mature view and desire to create a state of emotion and feelings and a lot of freedom that abstraction gives, combined in this choice.

You describe abstract art as a journey into the hidden corners of the soul. What do you usually discover about yourself while painting?

I find on my canvas exteriorized my suppressed emotions and unexpressed feelings, as I am more introvert and usually closed and reserved emotionally in my daily life. The process of painting it's like meditation that allows me to hear myself better and connects me to my inner self and gives me the feeling of peace and balance by expressing things that I did not know even myself that I had inside. It's like a journey of self-discovery. I find inside a lot of unspoken words and feelings that find their place on my canvas dressed in colors and imprinted energy.

Color plays a powerful role in your works - often bright, contrasting, and emotionally intense. How do you choose your color palette?

I usually choose 4-5 colors that will build my main color theme of the painting and I experiment during the painting process. I like to choose contrast bright palette with strong emotional note. I think they are reflecting my lion personality and the fire inside :)

Your paintings combine energy, movement, and expressive texture. Do you plan the composition in advance, or does it develop intuitively during the process?

I usually do not make plans for a painting, I decide in advance only the colour palette and then I trust the fully intuitive process that I really enjoy, this is where the magic begins and I never know the final result, it is a process that has its own flow and wisdom which I fully trust. I listen to my favorite music when I paint, so the whole process has its own unique atmosphere, when I don't like to be disturbed. In this moment, it's my world where there is only me, music and the creative process. It is very energetic charged and I love it!

You have participated in exhibitions in Tokyo, Rome, and Chisinau, and you have also worked as a curator. How has curating influenced your own artistic practice?

Curatorial work offers a great opportunity to connect with other artists and their works, with spaces, galleries, museums. These important art players enrich my vision as an artist, I am often inspired by other artists at the exhibitions and art events. It is very interesting to get to know them, to talk, to discover what inspires them and motivates for creation. This communication and exchange gives me another angle of the creation process that I may bring into my own practice as well.

What do you hope viewers will feel or experience when they stand in front of your paintings?

I would like them to stop first and take a deep slow breath and listen to their feelings, their inner state. I would like them to develop an attention and a curiosity for their own emotional palette inside. The paintings in fact are an invitation for a silent moment of introversion, autocontemplation and inner tune with the voice of their soul.



Anastasia Gangal | Caught Dragon | 2021

— Interview

Xiaohan Wu

Your work often begins with the form of the horn. What first drew you to this object as a symbol of sound, voice, and communication?



The horn first caught my attention because it can both project sound outward and receive it, almost like it can speak and listen at the same time. I became interested in it as a form that represents communication rather than just an object. Its shape naturally guides sound, but it also creates distance between people. That duality made me think about how communication is never as simple as sending a message. The horn became a starting point for exploring the relationship between speaking, listening, and misunderstanding.

You describe miscommunication as an important part of your practice. How did your experience of moving between languages and cultures shape this body of work?

Moving from China to the United States made me realize how often communication fails, even when everyone has good intentions. English is not my first language, so I sometimes struggle to express exactly what I mean or worry that people misunderstand me because of my accent or word choices. Over time, I realized that miscommunication isn't only about language—it also happens because everyone interprets experiences differently. My work comes from those everyday moments where something gets lost, changed, or misunderstood between people.

The horn can amplify a voice, but in your work it also seems to distort or interrupt it. How do you think about this tension between speaking and being misunderstood?



I think speaking and being misunderstood are closely connected. We often believe that speaking louder or more clearly will solve communication problems, but that's not always true. Even when a message is amplified, people may still hear something different based on their own experiences. In my sculptures, the horn sometimes looks like it should help communication, but instead it blocks, redirects, or complicates it. That reflects how communication works in real life.

Many of your pieces feel both functional and symbolic, almost like instruments or vessels. Do you imagine them as objects that could be used, worn, heard, or performed?

I like creating objects that sit somewhere between function and sculpture. Some pieces look wearable or usable, while others only suggest a function without actually performing it. I'm interested in that ambiguity because it invites people to imagine interacting with the work. Even if the objects aren't meant to be used literally, I hope viewers think about what they would sound like, how they would feel to wear, or what kind of conversation they might create.

In several works, the opening of the horn resembles a mouth or a place where language begins. What role does the body play in your understanding of sound and speech?

The body is where communication begins. We speak with our mouths, breathe through our lungs, and hear with our ears. I often think about the mouth as both a physical opening and a symbolic place where ideas become language. By combining forms that resemble mouths, ears, and horns, I try to connect the physical act of

speaking with the emotional experience of trying to be understood.

How does your background in metalsmithing and contemporary jewelry influence the scale and intimacy of your work?

My background in metalsmithing and jewelry makes me think carefully about materials, craftsmanship, and the relationship between objects and the body. Even when I make larger sculptures, I still approach them with the same attention to detail that I would give a piece of jewelry. I'm interested in creating work that feels personal and invites close looking. The scale may change, but I always want the work to create an intimate experience between the object and the viewer.

As an artist currently living and working in Chicago, how has your environment influenced the way you think about identity, language, and belonging?

Living in Chicago has introduced me to people from many different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. That diversity reminds me that communication is something everyone continues to navigate, regardless of where they come from. At the same time, building a life here as an immigrant artist has made me think more deeply about identity and belonging. My work has become less about my personal experience alone and more about communication as something universal. Even though we all speak differently and come from different places, we're all trying to connect with one another.



— Interview

Anastasiia Dobrovolskaia (Asya Dobrovolski)

You were born in Siberia and began your journey with reportage photography. How did the place where you grew up influence your artistic vision and your interest in space, memory, and the human environment?

Anastasiia Dobrovolskaia (Asya Dobrovolski) | Archevolution | 2018



Tyumen is a meeting point of different cultural layers: the traditions of Indigenous peoples, Russian heritage, and a powerful industrial dimension. From an early age, I began to notice how differently people inhabit the same space, what traces they leave behind, and how these traces accumulate over time. This became the foundation of my interest: to see territory not as something fixed, but as a system of relationships between people, time, and memory.

Siberia shapes a particular way of seeing: vast distances, harsh nature, and a sense of remoteness. You learn to notice fragility in what appears unchanging. Later, when I was extensively involved in documentary photography — from expeditions across Siberia to working for a news agency — this way of seeing only became stronger. Documentary photography taught me to be honest with myself and to approach the people I photographed with deep respect. At the same time, it revealed the limits of the direct image: so much remains invisible — memory, loss, and the way an environment outlives the human presence. Over time, this zone of silence became the central focus of my artistic practice.

Your career began with documenting remote regions and social environments - from the Arctic to Latin America. What has this experience of observing different territories and people brought to your artistic practice today?

Ten years in documentary photography are,



above all, a training of the eye. When you work in extremely different conditions — from Arctic expeditions to the slums of Latin America — you quickly learn to distinguish what is external and decorative from what is essential. Territories and cultures may be entirely different, but the fundamental human narratives — attachment, loss, the attempt to take root, to leave a trace — prove to be universal.

This experience gave me a certain visual sensitivity to environment: I began to acutely perceive how space shapes behavior, and, conversely, how people, even in the most inhuman conditions, continue to inhabit and domesticate their surroundings. Today, in my artistic practice, this perspective has not disappeared — it has simply shifted from documentary testimony toward a more metaphorical form of expression. I continue to explore the relationship between human beings and their environment, but my tools have become broader: instead of a direct photographic frame, I now work with mirrors, embroidery, and layers of materials. Yet the fundamental question remains the same: how we leave a trace, and what happens to that trace afterwards.

At what point did you feel the need to move beyond classical photography and turn to mirrors, embroidery, video, and mixed media?

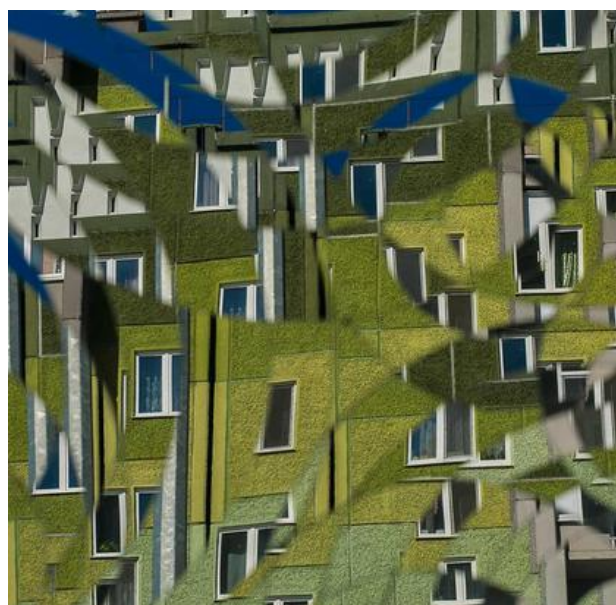
It was not an instantaneous decision, but rather

a gradual one. I had worked in news photography for quite a long time, where an image has to be as precise, unambiguous, and immediately readable as possible. But over time, I came to realize that I was absent from documentary photography. For it to remain honest, it had to be a dry recording of an event, a moment — while I wanted to speak in a different language. By chance, I joined a course in art photography, and at that moment everything changed.

I turned to the mirror because it brings the viewer into the image and does not allow them to remain in the position of an outside observer. Embroidery came as a gesture — slow, tactile, almost meditative. In a sense, it was a return to the very beginning: when I was 12, my work was included in the Russian Museum, and it was a textile piece, hand weaving. So thread and needle are materials with which I have had a long-standing relationship. Video and mixed media appeared later as a logical extension — when a single static layer was no longer enough to convey the complexity of experiencing an environment.

In the project Archevolution, architecture becomes not merely an object of representation, but a reflection of society's internal processes. What was the first impulse behind creating this series?

Through documentary photography, I traveled extensively across Russia and visited dozens of



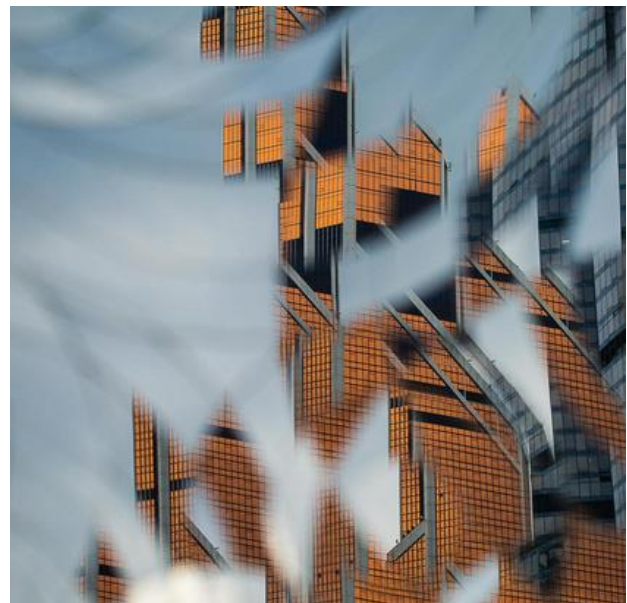
cities. At some point, I began to notice that the architecture had become almost indistinguishable: you could no longer tell whether you were in a residential district of Moscow, in Chelyabinsk, or in Irkutsk. This total erasure of identity became an alarming signal for me.

The standard high-rise apartment block, already rather impersonal by nature, suddenly began to disguise itself as something bright and colorful — yet behind these façades, the emptiness remained. I was struck by this gap between the exterior and the interior: architecture “changes its clothes” without changing its essence, and in this gesture I see something deeply human, almost neurotic.

Society demands increasingly vivid images, and the buildings of the Soviet and post-Soviet periods obediently respond to this demand. But instead of humanism and genuine care for the environment, what emerges is a kitsch-like mixture of styles and a loss of identity. I wanted to explore architecture not as an urban planning phenomenon, but as a symbol of its time — a mirror in which we see ourselves reflected, often without realizing these metamorphoses.

The project speaks about depersonalization, the loss of identity, and the “dressing up” of Soviet and post-Soviet architecture in bright facades. What concerns you most about the contemporary urban visual environment?

What concerns me most is the disappearance of



Anastasiia Dobrovol'skaia (Asya Dobrovol'ski) | Archevolution | 2018

authenticity. We live in an era when the urban environment increasingly resembles a stage set: bright, glossy, but lacking depth. I am troubled by the speed at which this transformation is taking place — we do not have time to realize how the kaleidoscope of time places us into an entirely new visual and semantic reality.

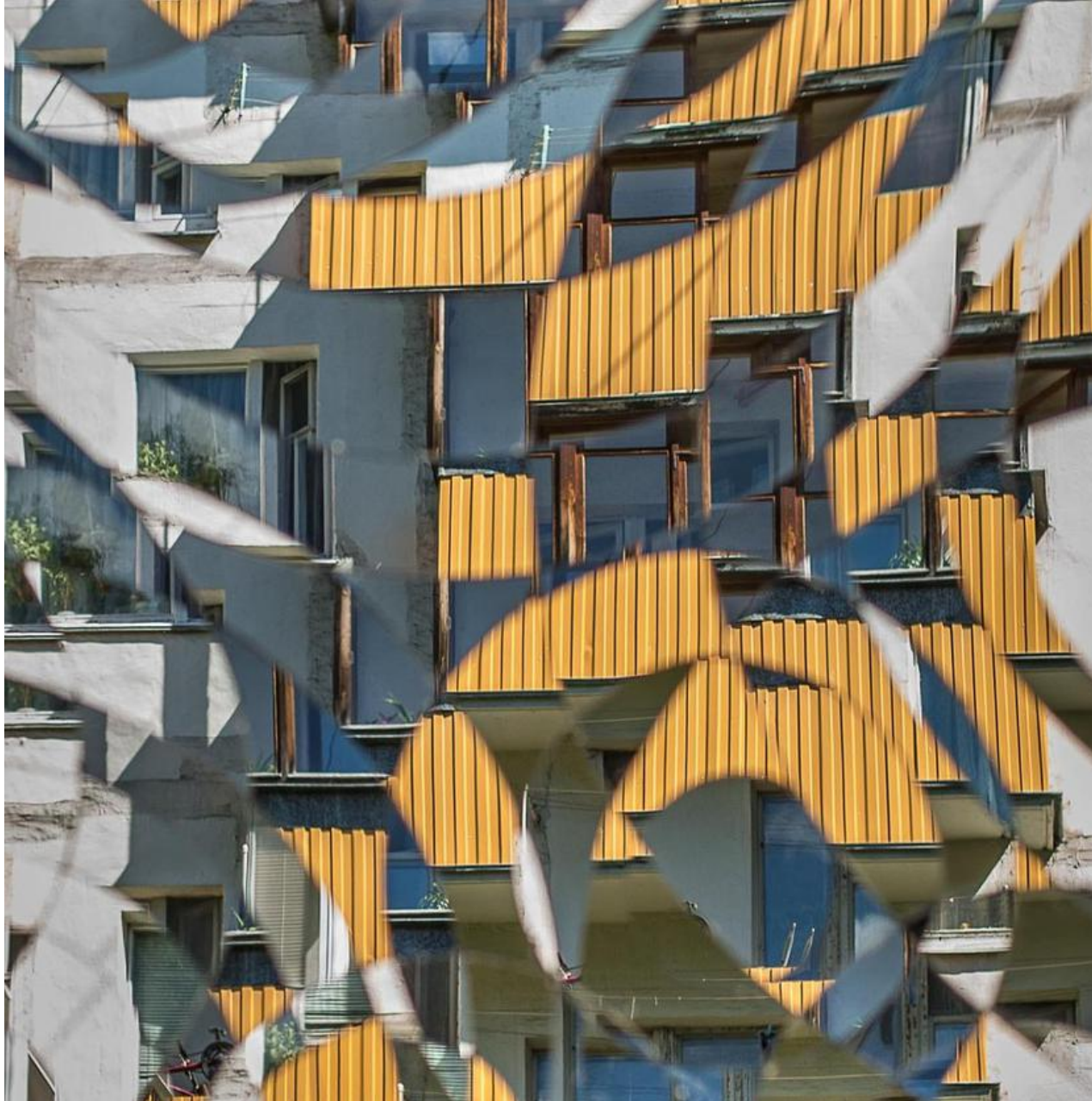
Humanism in urbanism is giving way to a kitschy mixture of styles. The old and the new coexist, but not in dialogue; rather, they form a chaotic, heterogeneous mass. Attention becomes scattered among endless colorful houses, and the city ceases to be a place of rootedness — it becomes alien and impersonal. Behind the bright façade, there is often nothing but emptiness, and this emptiness gradually becomes the shared background of our lives. This, perhaps, is what worries me most of all — when the environment stops being an extension of the human and becomes merely a surface with nothing behind it.

Your photographs often create a kaleidoscopic effect, where the city breaks down into color, rhythm, reflection, and surface. How do you build your compositions - intuitively, or through a carefully planned structure?

I tend to trust my intuition, but it is guided by certain inner settings that have developed over years of working with images. The composition often emerges on site — as a response to color, the rhythm of façades, and the play of reflections. I do not follow a rigid plan, but I

Anastasiia Dobrovol'skaia (Asya Dobrovol'ski) | Archevolution | 2018





always know exactly what I am looking for in the environment.

For the Archevolution project, I created my own custom mirror, which became my constant compositional tool. The mirror is made up of different fragments and seems to “assemble” an urban kaleidoscope within itself, creating a frame while still leaving space for improvisation. For me, this effect of a dissolving, fragmented image is not just a visual technique, but a way to convey the very feeling of the contemporary city — fragmented, multilayered, and inviting each viewer to discover something of their own within it.

If we consider Archevolution as a reflection on the human being within the contemporary city, what would you like the viewer to feel: alienation, recognition, anxiety, beauty, or something else?

I would like the viewer to move through several states. First, recognition: these are familiar residential districts, standardized housing blocks where millions of people live. Then, perhaps, a slight sense of discomfort or anxiety — when, behind the bright façade, one begins to discern the emptiness we spoke about. But the final point to which I hope to lead the viewer is not alienation, but reflection.

It is important that the viewer sees themselves in this architecture. After all, we too often “dress ourselves up,” wear masks, and fear the silence and emptiness within. In this sense, the city is an extension of us, our mirror. And if, at some point, an awareness of this connection emerges, then after the anxiety there may also come beauty — strange, complex, but genuine. Because even in a fragmented, impersonal environment, one can find rhythm, color, and a reflection of one’s own humanity.

— Interview

Claudio Paglia

Your connection with photography began through your father and his black-and-white images from the army. How did his visual legacy shape the way you see the world today?

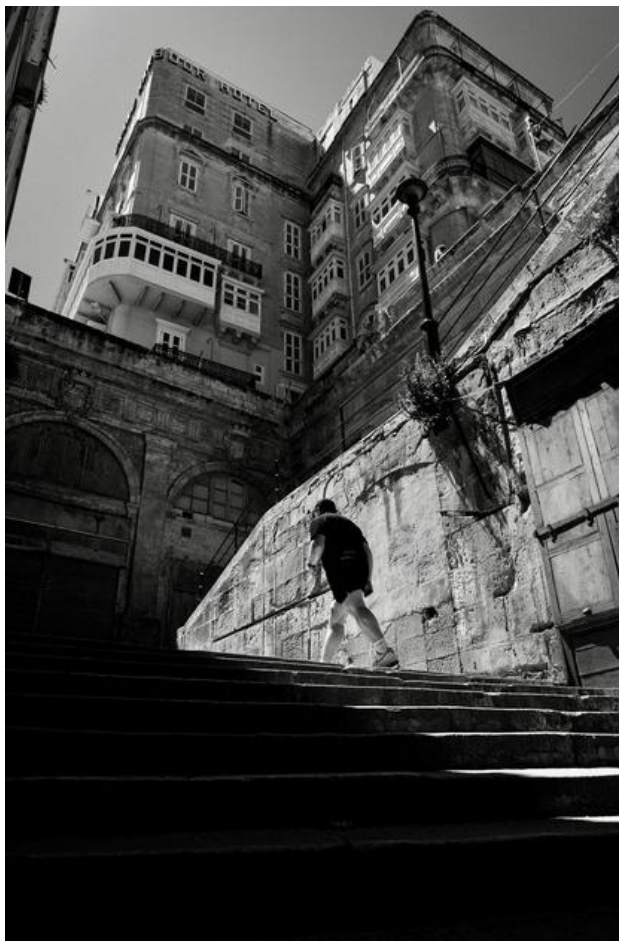


What struck me most about my father's photographs wasn't really the subject matter — it was the restraint. He wasn't trying to make a statement or capture anything heroic, just documenting what was around him, day to day. That quiet deep way of looking at things is something I've carried into my own work without even realising it for a long time. I didn't set out to imitate it, but tried to adapt the way I approach the street — patient, a little detached, paying attention to things that don't ask to be photographed — that comes straight from him.

You mention that photography became more mature after you moved to the Netherlands in 2019. What changed in your approach during that period?

Moving to Rotterdam was a turning point. My vision shifted in two directions at the same time — it became narrower in the sense that I started paying much more attention to details and emotion, small gestures, subtle light, things I would have overlooked before. But it also became wider in terms of understanding the context around me, the social environment, the rhythms of a city and its people.

The street appears to be your main creative environment. What attracts you most to ordinary



urban scenes and everyday moments?

What I love about the street is that people drop their guard without realizing it. When someone thinks no one's watching, you get something real — a moment of sadness, a small private smile, a bit of stillness in the middle of all that movement and noise. Those feelings are genuine because they're not meant for anyone, definitely not for a camera. That's really what I'm after — catching someone just being themselves, nothing performed, nothing held back. You can't ask for it and you can't set it up. You just have to be there, ready, when it happens.

Your photographs often capture people from behind, in movement, or partially hidden. Are you interested more in identity, anonymity, or the emotional trace of a passing moment?

It's really about that same purity I was talking about before. When someone is walking away from you, or caught mid-movement, they have no idea they're being seen, so there's nothing adjusted or held back. You get them exactly as they are in that second — a posture, a way of carrying themselves, completely unguarded. I'm less interested in who that person is specifically. I just want that one honest moment, untouched by the fact that a camera exists.

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

What the absence of color gives you is space — space for contrast, texture, and shape to actually carry the image. Without color pulling focus, you start noticing things you'd otherwise miss: the grain of a wall, the way light falls across a face, the weight of a shadow. It also leaves more open to interpretation, because color tends to tell you exactly what mood a scene has, while black and white leaves that for the viewer to feel out themselves. So really, it's not about what color takes away — it's about what its absence makes room for.

Your work seems to balance observation and emotion. Do you usually wait for a decisive moment, or do you photograph more instinctively?

It's both, but at different stages, and honestly the gear I use depends on which mode I'm in. For decisive moments, I shoot with my Olympus. It naturally slows me down — there's no instant feedback, no rapid fire, so I have to actually plan what I want to capture and wait for it properly. For the more instinctive moments, I switch to my Fujifilm. That's when something spontaneous is happening fast and I can't afford to lose the momentum, so I need something quicker and more responsive in my hands. The cameras end up matching the two different mindsets I work in.

How do you choose which moments are worth keeping after a day of shooting on the street?

What I'm looking for is something that still holds my attention — something that doesn't give everything away immediately. But there's something deeper underneath that too. We're made of emotions, and that's really at the core of what I'm doing when I shoot — connecting my own feelings with the feelings of someone else. So when I go through the photos, I'm not just checking if the composition works. I'm checking if that connection is there, that's usually the one worth keeping.



Yana Yakovenko

I was born in 2005 in Omsk, Russia.

I studied at the Sozvezdie Centre for Creativity, where my first solo exhibition was held in 2014.

I graduated with honours from the Sanin Art School and received a special commendation for my dedication and love of art. At the same time, I completed my studies in string instruments at the Y. I. Yankelevich School of Arts.

I have participated in and received awards at numerous city, regional, and international youth festivals and competitions in Russia and Belarus. I have also been recognised with diplomas in several creative projects dedicated to various social issues.

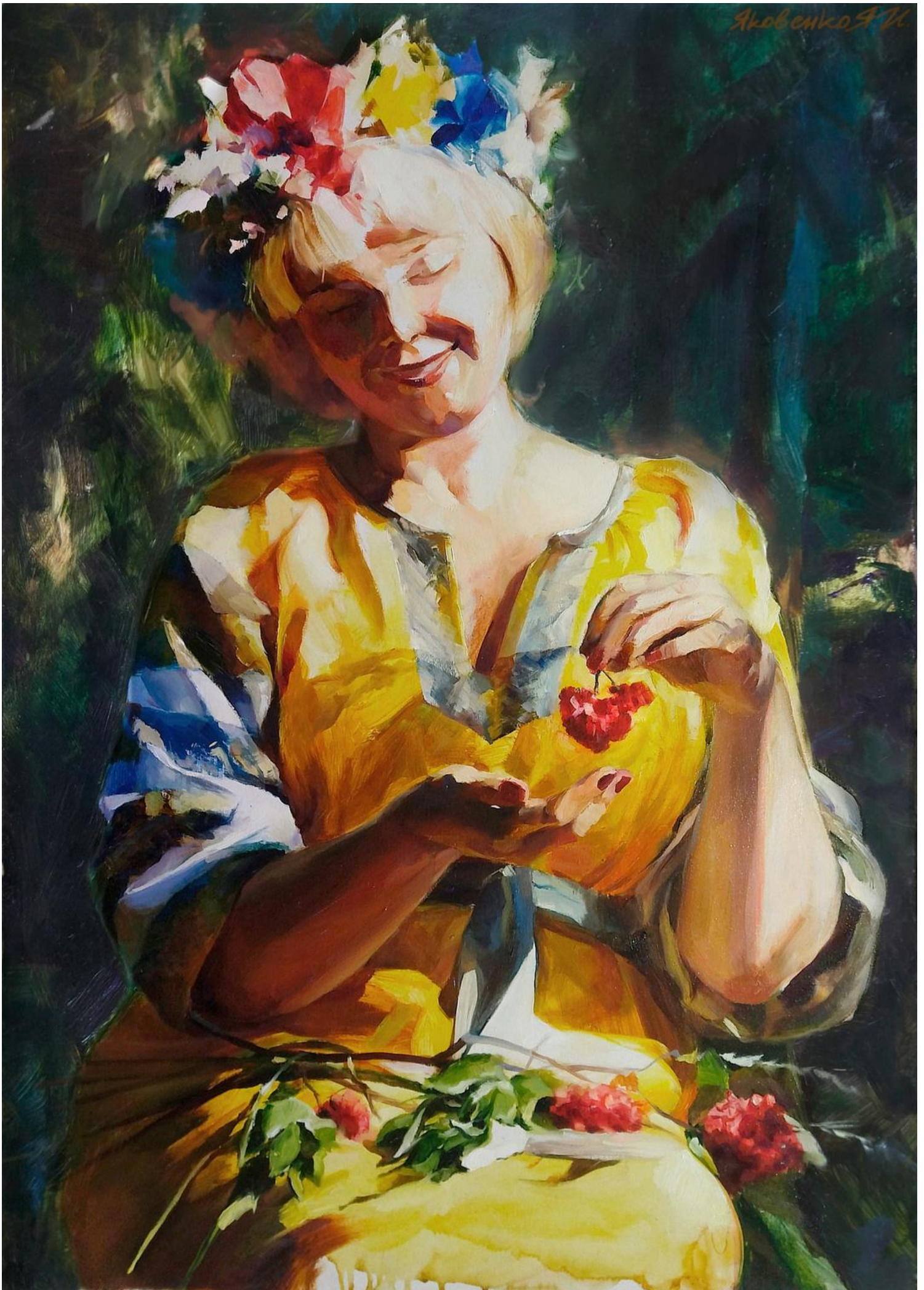
I currently participate in exhibitions for young artists in different cities across Russia. In addition to my traditional art practice, I am interested in creating 2D illustrations and animation.

Artist Statement

I am particularly interested in painting landscapes, still lifes, and portraits in a style closely related to realism and Impressionism.

Yana Yakovenko | Mountain River Baksan | 2024





Yana Yakovenko | Summer in the Forest | 2025

Tori Zirul

How did your background in molecular biology influence the way you look at art and visual storytelling?

I have never felt that science and art are mutually exclusive. To me, they are both ways of observing, understanding, and reaching for meaning in a life that often feels impossible to understand.

Molecular biology shaped the way I look at structure, pattern, and process. In biology, form and function are deeply connected; a structure usually tells you something about how a system works. I think that comes through in my art. I am drawn to details, repeated forms, and the feeling that something unseen is happening beneath the surface. Science also taught me patience. So much of scientific work involves failure, revision, and proving things wrong. That has helped me with perfectionism. The artist in me wants immediacy, while the scientist in me asks: What else is present? What am I missing? What can't I see clearly yet? Both science and art begin with observation. Both are ways of trying to get closer to truth. I love visual art because it allows me to express something fully without having to say it directly.



Tori Zirul | In Bloom



You describe your work as existing between observation and emotion. How do you balance these two sides in your creative process?

I am learning that I cannot force emotion into a piece. When I try too hard to make something express grief, anger, tenderness, or any other feeling, the work often becomes too direct or self-conscious.

Instead, I try to begin with observation: a line, an object, a structure, a shape, a place. I trust that the emotion will enter through the attention I give it. Even when I am trying to observe something objectively, I am still seeing it through my own experience and perception. For me, observation is not cold, and emotion is not separate. The two are always connected. The details become a way of holding feeling without having to explain it too directly.

What first led you to ink and watercolor as your main artistic mediums?

Ink came first. In college, I began visual journaling and became drawn to detailed line work. I liked the clarity of ink and the way one line could change the feeling of an entire drawing.

Watercolor is newer for me. I started using it more seriously within the last year or two. After a surgery changed the steadiness and comfort of my hand, and an associated pain condition made it difficult to sit for extended periods of time, watercolor gave me a more fluid way to keep making work. I never planned for watercolor to become so important to me, but I love the atmosphere it creates. Ink gives me the structure I am drawn to, and watercolor brings in something less predictable – moodier, with a life of its own.



Your works often combine delicate line work with expressive color. Which usually comes first for you — the structure or the atmosphere?

Structure almost always comes first. I am deeply invested in line work, and my initial drafts can become very detailed and time-consuming. The structure gives me a controlled foundation to build from.

But once I move from pencil into fine liner and color, something often shifts. My hand begins to move more intuitively. I may start by following the draft, but then I begin changing the weight of the line, adding texture, reaching for watercolor or marker, and allowing the piece to move away from the original plan.

That tension is important to me. I begin with control, but I believe the piece needs to evolve without force. For example, I originally imagined *Fractured Time* as a kind of technical schematic for a time machine. But as the piece developed, it became something more emotional and unstable. It had other plans.

In *Fractured Time*, the broken clock becomes more than a machine. What does this image symbolize for you?

The clock in *Fractured Time* was not originally meant to be broken. As the piece evolved, it needed to shatter. For me, the broken clock symbolizes the moment when an internal state shifts into overdrive — when time stops feeling measured and begins to feel fractured, urgent, or unstable. It is a machine, but it also becomes a psychological object. My first instinct when looking at it is: pay attention. The clock represents more than time passing. It holds pressure, memory, anxiety, and the feeling that something beneath the surface has reached a breaking point. In that way, the fracture is not only damage, but a signal.

Why are themes of time, decay, and renewal important in your work?

I have always had a sensitivity to time, even as a child. I am interested in the way things continuously change, deteriorate, repair, and transform.

In a chemistry class, one of my professors described entropy — the tendency of things to move toward disorder and chaos — using the image of a car rusting over time. That image stayed with me. But what amazes me is that living systems are always working against that and resisting that disorder. Our bodies are constantly repairing, regulating, rebuilding, and trying to find balance.

That tension feels central to my work: breaking apart and coming back together, decay and repair, loss and renewal. I do not see decay only as an ending, something to grieve, but also as an essential part of becoming.

I am interested in time not only as something measured, but as something felt and lived — in the body, in memory, grief, healing, and change. It is my intention (and dream) to create a book of poetic essays alongside artwork exploring these themes.

Your work touches on memory and grief. How do you approach emotional subjects without making them too direct or literal?

I often approach emotion through objects, atmosphere, and symbolism rather than direct narrative. A clock, a flower, a room, a machine, or a line can hold feeling without needing to explain it.

Generally, I find grief and memory are often difficult to face directly. They arrive in fragments, through details, repetition, ordinary things that suddenly feel charged. I try to let the work reflect that.

Rather than illustrating an emotion literally, I try to create a space where the feeling can appear on its own. I trust that whatever needs to come through will come through in the work — sometimes subtly, sometimes unexpectedly



Sara Medea SAYU

Sara, could you tell us a little about yourself and how your artistic journey began?



Sara Medea SAYU | Via Dreams | 2025



Hello everyone, I'm Sara Medea, in art Sayu. My artistic journey began in school, where I immediately knew what I wanted to do with my life. My journey began much earlier. I've always had a strong passion for art and creation and from a very young age I dabbled in all kinds of creative endeavors in addition to my passion for drawing, which has always been a part of me.

Regarding painting, I began developing my own personal style from the structure of the work to its execution a personal voice that I was able to deepen after finishing school, giving free to my true vision of the world. Looking at it from extremely disadvantaged perspectives but always presenting myself in line with social demands, I realized that too often others are left adrift. This is where my decision to create works that help the viewer feel less alone, to relax, and above all to instill in them an additional sense of security, because often we need someone to open up and talk to. My works therefore help the viewer feel good and relax, which is why one of the colors I use most is blue.

In 2015, I had the opportunity to create my first mural on a large space, and it was a wonderful opportunity to prove myself. I loved working on that wall, and to this day that piece is still there, just as beautiful as I left it. Other opportunities followed, which led me to create other murals, always in the Veneto region.

After finishing school in 2013, I obtained my qualification as a tattoo and piercing operator. Tattooing is a passion that was born in conjunction with feeling good, loving yourself, and wanting to help someone else accept and love themselves.

You were born in Mestre, near Venice. How has this place influenced your way of seeing art and beauty?

I've always cherished the true beauty of Venice. With its multitude of styles, it's truly one of the cities I appreciate most in the world (artistically speaking), and were I lived for a short time. Its influence is undeniable, because Mestre is a gray, industrial city, nothing like Venice, a city of enormous historical importance, where just walking brings inspiration. I love the Baroque and its prosper.

Whenever I can, I always enjoy a tour on Palazzo Ducale, a place you simply must visit if you're in Venice. Its magnificence and majesty draw me to the rooms, almost as if I were part of them.

What was the most important thing you learned during your studies at the Venice State Art School?

Definitely technique in drawing and painting. I attended a school where we did 40 hours of drawing a week. To be precise, I attended the Venice State Art High School, majoring in Academy Studies, a program that offered excellent artistic training even without a fine arts academy. Unfortunately, 2013 was the last year of this major, which was the original purpose of the school.

I was already thinking about what my career path would be, and at school I did what was required, but I always pursued my own. I always preferred to independently explore what inspired me. In fact, it was with my high school thesis that I was able to demonstrate for the first time what I mean. From the presentation to the research, it was greatly appreciated and considered the best presentation with fascinating content. It encompasses some of my main artistic and philosophical influences, including Van Gogh, Japonism with his prints, and Japanese tattooing, one of the first tattoo styles I explored.

How did the artistic name Sayu become part of your creative identity?

My stage name, Sayu, derives primarily from its similarity to my name, Sara. I've also always had a deep love for Chinese and Japanese culture and their philosophy, which I've also learned through sport. I'm a brown belt in judo. I grew up with this philosophy/sport, it shaped my character, and the reference, to this philosophy certainly couldn't be missing from my stage name.

Furthermore, when pronounced SAYU, it can sound like "see you" in Italian, "ti vedo" and it also encompasses a more fitting greeting, "see you again," in Italian "ci vedremo ancora" a very important message, also against abandonment.

Your paintings often combine galaxies, waves, and organic forms. How do these images usually come to you?

These arise from my inner self, the galaxies for depth the context of the galaxy is infinity representing presence and darkness, this serves me to represent the depths of each of our souls something still partly unknown.

The spheres represent awareness, reason, thoughts, water for the perfect element and movement. Here we unite with biomechanics, the motor science of the human body, merging water with the movement of the body, representing this union with natural forms; water is the source of life, the origin of the best ideas purified from the rot that surrounds us. In fact, in one work, "WindSteel," its reading is jokingly like a self-X-ray to ensure everything is in order, to ensure this heavy city hasn't left an indelible, malevolent mark. These forms come to life in my thoughts, in my visions, and in the gestures of creation.

The idea of an inner journey is very important in your work. What emotions or thoughts would you like viewers to feel?

With circular movements and the color blue, I help the viewer experience a relaxed, introspective vision. I create an almost hypnotic sensation, a dreamlike reality that leads to self-rediscovery, even simply to something beautiful we had forgotten.

In my "Gold Chapter" series of artworks, I use gold leaf to

help the viewer retain impressions of the best moments of their lives and remember the most beautiful experiences thanks to the strong visual impact imparted by the works. Indeed, they range from an infinite depth like that of the three-dimensional universe, enhanced by the insertion of clouds and galaxies, to an abstract gold in the foreground. The message received is "remember," and this thought is combined with gold, the memory will fall upon it. Therefore, the beautiful thing is that elements such as the sphere (essential for me) can also be found in these works to enhance the message of awareness.

You are also a tattoo artist and street artist. How do these different practices influence your paintings?

I love creating works in large spaces; I can truly express everything. My first experience was in 2015, followed by other creations in underpasses and private spaces. For me, wall tattoos and contemporary art are one and the same because everything comes from me. The practices are different, but for me, the thought and the execution make no difference because they are part of me.

I study forms, so it's easy for my work to be suitable for both canvas and skin, as well as being suitable for large-scale creation. The images must be captivating, allow for breathing space, and become an integral part of the viewer, just as in tattooing, the work or drawing becomes part of us.

My tattoo style is New School/Biochemical/Bioorganic, but I never touch anyone else's work. I work indoors for months developing new ideas, possibly without a phone, to maintain my originality.

My goal with tattoos is to faithfully reproduce my artwork on skin, while continuing to develop my tattoo designs.



Sara Medea SAYU | Nami | 2019

Dmitry Saltykov

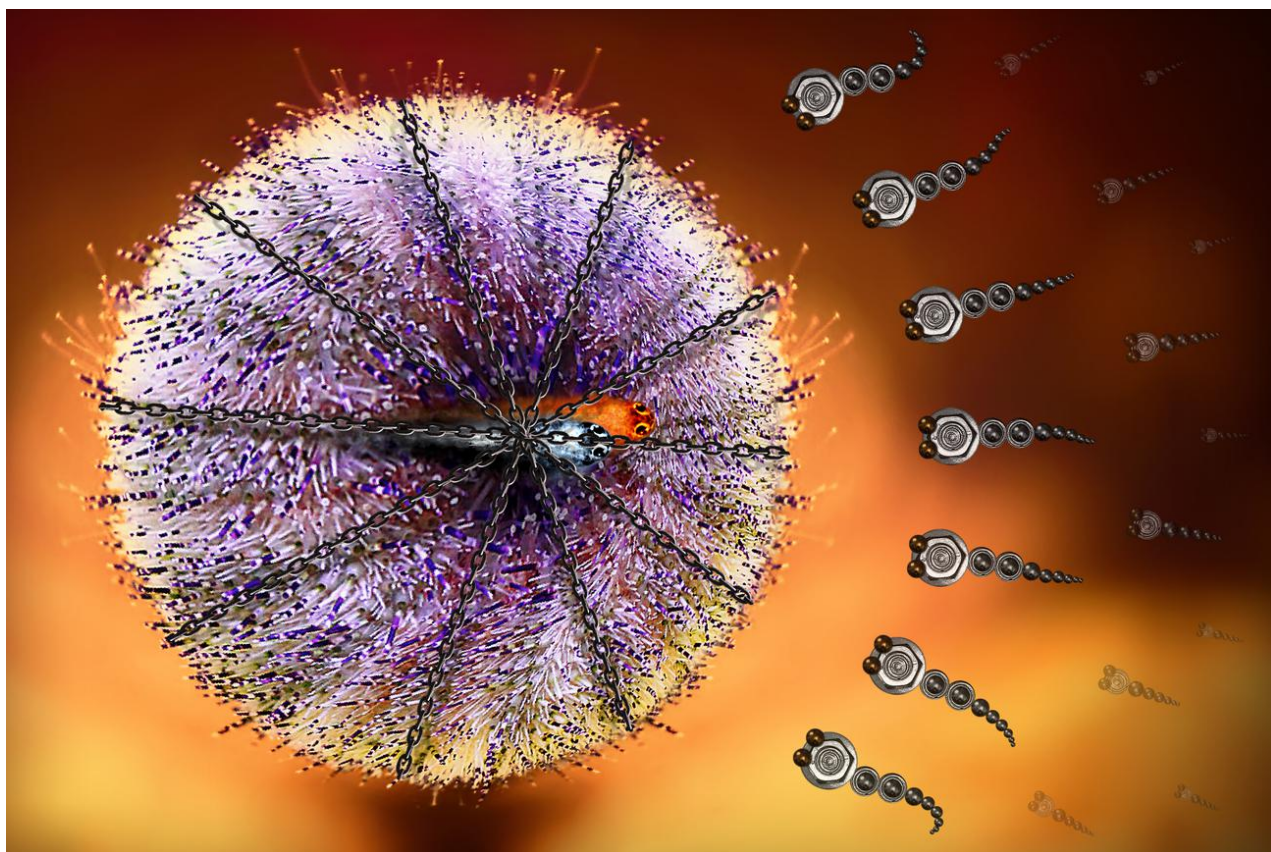
My name is Dmitry. I am an observer of everything that surrounds us in this remarkable, diverse, and constantly changing world - partly a fantasist and dreamer, and, by vocation, something of a photographer and artist.

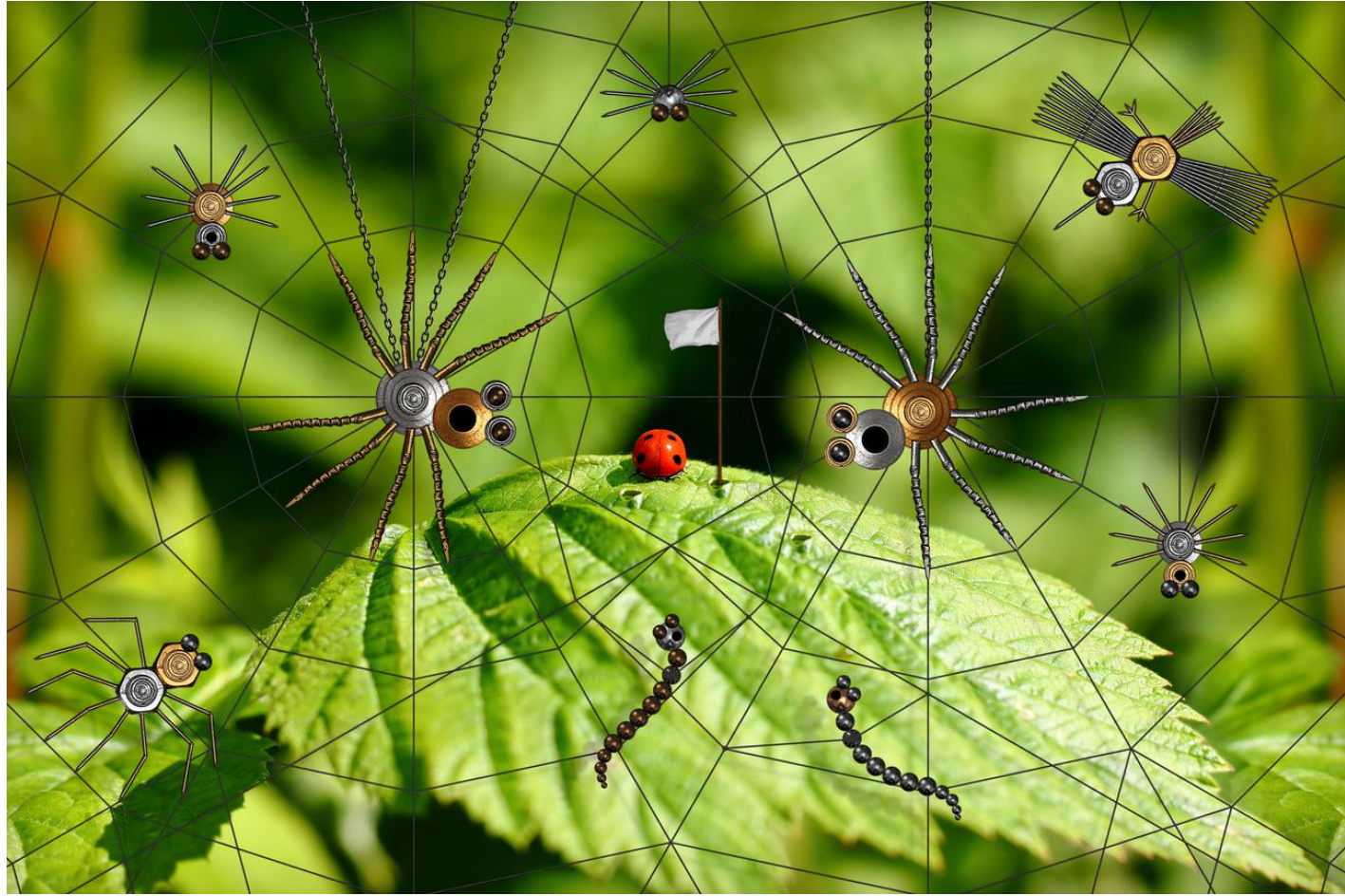
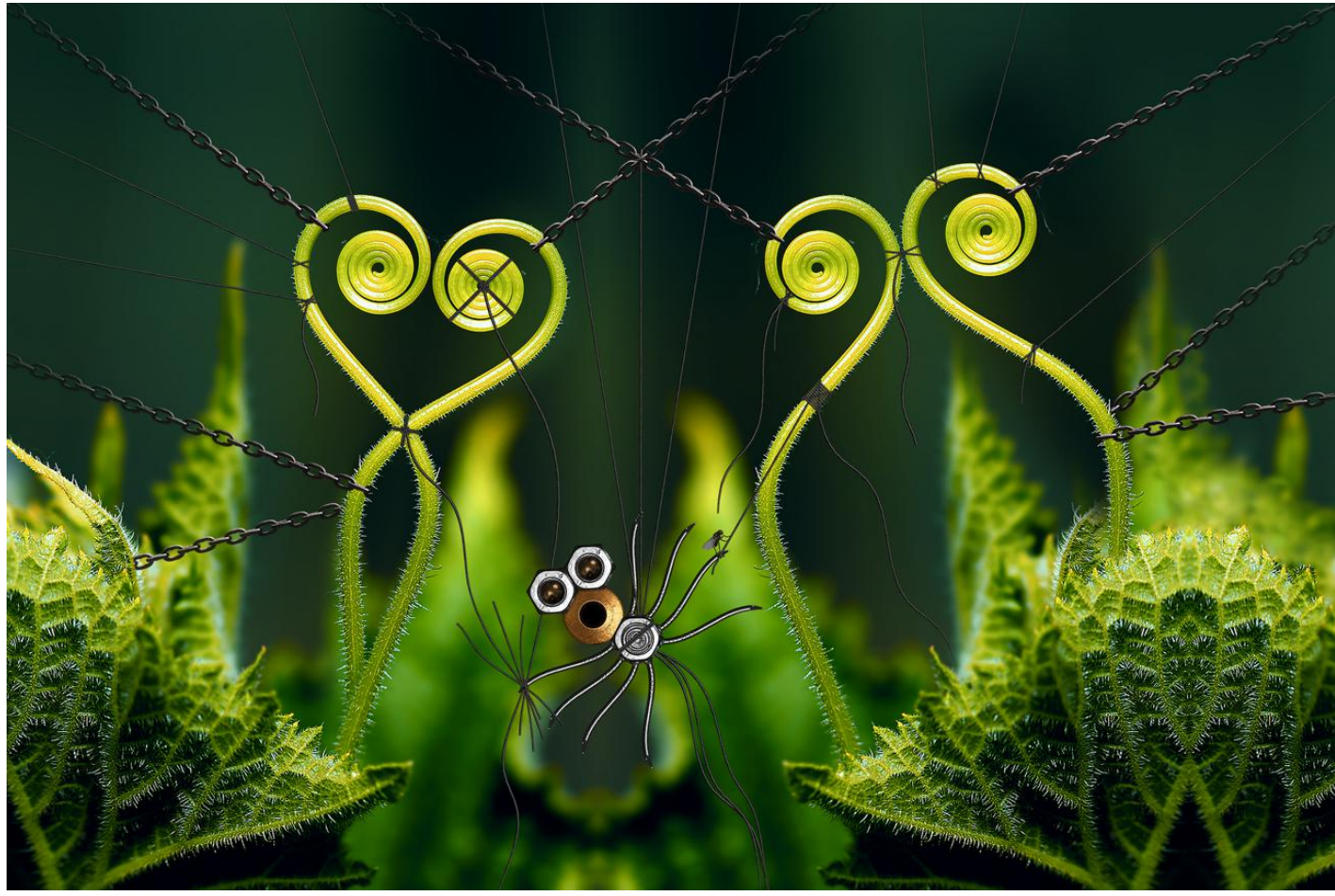
Initially, the main direction and subject of my work was photography of the living micro-world - the world that most people either know nothing about or simply fail to notice. Yet we are an inseparable part of this world, without which life on Earth would not exist and on which we depend far more than we can imagine. At the same time, most of its inhabitants depend on us just as much as we depend on them, and this world changes alongside us.

Today, my artistic practice has transformed into an equal symbiosis of classical photography and digital painting in the style of contemporary art. Most of my recent works are based on ordinary photographs or collages assembled from fragments of several images, which are then extensively digitally processed and enhanced with various elements of conceptual digital graphics.

I hope that my works bring others, as they do me, a small sense of warmth, encourage reflection on something new and unconventional, offer a chance to step away from everyday life, or simply bring a smile. For me, any of these responses is more than a positive result of my creative practice.

Dmitry Saltykov | Asylum... | 2025





— Interview

Sailee Charlu

Your work explores heritage, memory, and cultural multiplicity. How did your experience as a second-generation Indian American shape the emotional foundation of your art?

Growing up between two worlds means you are never fully claimed by either. That in-between space, where you are too American for one room and too Indian for another, becomes the emotional architecture of everything I make. My art lives on that threshold. The figure in *Painless Thorns* holds herself inward, eyes closed, as if listening for something just beneath the surface of her own skin. That posture is a memory. It's what it feels like to carry a heritage you weren't given a complete map to. Yet, you reach for it anyway, with your whole body.



Sailee Charlu | Painless Thorns



You describe yourself as Indian by heritage, American by assimilation, and Latin by immersion. How do these three cultural spheres coexist within your visual language?

For most of my adolescence, they didn't coexist at all. These spheres competed, each one pulling at a different part of me and leaving me feeling like I was perpetually failing at all three. I would speak Spanish with my school community and feel genuinely at home, then walk into a family gathering and feel like a stranger enveloped my culture I hadn't fully been given access to, then return to school and slip back into the American version of myself that asked the fewest questions about my true identity. This constant code-switched between alternate lives was emotional and exhausting in a way I didn't have words for. When I started making art seriously, I used this tension as material instead. The cacti in *Painless Thorns* serve as the visual representation of what happens when you spend years unable to explain yourself across three worlds simultaneously, and you build walls instead. The figure isn't hiding out of shame, but a deeply practiced self preservation when you've been asked one too many times to justify why you are the way you are.

Language plays an important role in your artist statement. How do spoken words, silence, and broken language influence the way you create images?

Growing up with broken Tamil shaped how I see communication in a way that's hard to overstate. I could feel the weight of what my grandparents were saying without being able to fully enter the conversation. I understood enough to know when something was tender or tense, but



not enough to respond. So I spent a lot of my childhood watching and reading beneath the surface of words, a habit of observation translating into how I pain. I became far more interested in what the body communicates than what we explicitly communicate. In my piece, the face is turned away,, and all the emotional information comes from the posture: the tension in the shoulder, the hand pressed into skin. This was a deliberate choice rooted in a lived experience of language being incomplete, of meaning having to find other routes to travel. Silence, in my family and in my art, has never meant the absence of communicate. It has always meant the communication is happening somewhere harder to reach.

In Painless Thorns, the body appears both delicate and wounded, with cactus-like forms emerging from the skin. What does this image reveal about vulnerability and protection?

The most important decision I made in this painting was that the cacti grow from within her. Instead of attacking her from outside, they are something she produced from her own skin

over time. That distinction is the emotional core of the entire piece because that is exactly what my own guardedness felt like: a slow, almost unconscious cultivation of armor that happened so gradually I didn't notice until it was already part of me. When I was younger, most confused about the multiplicity of my cultural identity, I became cold and closed off, convinced that shutting down was safer than risking being seen and still not belonging. This painting doesn't judge that. Her hand rests gently on her shoulder at the same time as the thorns emerge, tender toward her securities even as she begins to reckon with the cost of it.

Flowers and thorns appear together in your work. What does this contrast mean to you emotionally or symbolically?

The falling lotuses are what I genuinely wanted to offer people for most of my life, warmth, openness, and the unguarded version of myself that I kept carefully out of reach. They are soft and pink and already loosening from their stems, able to understand the complexity of my identity instead of adhering to every inherited standard. The cacti are what I showed my loved ones during those years: hard-edged, self-sufficient, something beautiful in its own rights but impossible to hold without getting hurt. What I most wanted this painting to communicate is that I had learned through enough small experiences of rejection and misunderstanding that the warm version of me needed protection.

Your work speaks about feeling like an outsider and learning to reconnect with communities. Has making art changed the way you understand belonging?

This process required me to paint my own figure, which meant spending weeks making deliberate decisions about how to render my own skin, posture, the way my hand rests against my shoulder. I had become so used to presenting different versions of myself in different contexts that I had stopped asking which one was actually mine. Working on this piece forced me to confront the exhaustion I have been carrying from treating my multiple identities as competitors. When I began sharing the work, people who shared none of my cultural background still responded with recognition, still saw something in the figure that connected to their own experience of withholding themselves. Art allowed me to realize that belonging doesn't require someone to share your exact story. It requires telling your story honestly enough that the feeling underneath it becomes visible to someone else.

What do you hope viewers from different cultural backgrounds will feel or recognize when they encounter your work?

I hope viewers recognize the experience of walking into a room and making an instant calculation about how much of yourself is safe to bring in with you, is not an experience isolated to them. This idea of self-editing leaves you feeling like a stranger to yourself. For me, that experience was shaped by culture, language, and growing up between communities that didn't fully overlap. What I hope they feel is that their armor they wear comes from real experiences and real pain. We shouldn't be ashamed of it, but take the first step towards being more open.

Marsi Pedroche

**The horse appears as a central symbol in your work.
What first drew you to this animal as an artistic subject?**

What first drew me to draw horses as an artistic subject was their character and personality. Horses are like any living being to me; they each have their own spark. But horses specifically not only have their own heart or mind, they also manage to reflect the inner state of their rider or person. In this case, it would be the spectator to any of my artworks. Also, another thing that drew me to choose horses as an artistic subject was the experience I had with them thanks to horse riding.

In your practice, horses seem to represent freedom, resilience, and emotional strength. How do you personally connect with these qualities?

Over time, I've come to understand freedom and resilience as the ability to adapt without losing one's essence, but rather being able to move through life with trust and determination. I see this reflected in horses, who have also shown that freedom and resilience can coexist with vulnerability rather than oppose it. For emotional strength, I would think it is to remain open and sensitive without allowing fear to dictate



one's actions; to move through uncertainty while continuing to grow, as well as having the courage to acknowledge one's emotions rather than suppress them, and having the freedom to choose to do so. Like horses, who have shown me that these qualities are not contradictory, they are highly sensitive animals and yet they continue to trust, connect, and move forward despite uncertainty.

Your recent exhibition KAIROS explored the idea of being present in the "here and now". How does the figure of the horse help you express this sense of presence?

Horses are a great example of living on the here and now, not only through their nature but instinctively. In a world where we are constantly pulled towards the past or the future, horses serve as a reminder to return to the present. The reason I choose "KAIROS" is because of its meaning here and now, the Ancient Greek concept referring to a meaningful present moment. While preparing the exhibition, I often focused on what was still ahead rather than appreciating what was unfolding around me.

In many ways, "KAIROS" became a personal reminder that the future is shaped through the present, and the only moment we truly experience is the one we are living right now. Through the instinctive presence of horses. I wanted to invite viewers to pause, reconnect with that awareness and simply allow themselves to be present. Looking back, seeing people gather, connect and genuinely enjoy the exhibition made that message feel all the more meaningful.

**You were born in Spain and are now based in Mexico.
How have these two cultural environments influenced**



Marsi Pedroche | Corfú | 2025



your artistic vision?

Growing up between Spain and Mexico has deeply influenced both the way I perceive the world and my artistic vision. Through my own experience, I have come to associate Spain with a passion for life, strength of character, and determination, while Mexico has taught me the value of nobility of spirit: generosity, dignity, and the quiet strength that comes from leading with humanity. Although these cultures are distinct, I have always seen them as profoundly complementary, each enriching the other in its own way, and in turn enriching me.

I explored this balance in *Alma Ibérica*, where the horse embodies both power and nobility. While some viewers may simply see a white horse against a red background, for me, the color red is a great representation of passion and strength, just as the white and grayish colors of the horse are more down-to-earth, making them more relatable to nobility. The horse has always possessed a remarkable ability to reflect aspects of our own humanity. Through it, I explore how qualities that may seem opposing at first glance can coexist harmoniously. I feel deeply grateful to have been shaped by both cultures, as I would not be the person or artist I am today without either of them.

Your work combines watercolor, ink, acrylic, mixed media, and sculpture. How do you decide which medium best suits a particular idea or emotion?

The choice of medium is often an intuitive process for me. Sometimes an idea arrives already carrying a certain material quality, while other times I discover it through experimentation. I try to find the balance between intuition and intention, considering what each piece needs in order to communicate most authentically. Whether it is the fluidity of

watercolor, the immediacy of acrylic, the depth of oil, or the presence of texture, each medium offers a different way of giving form to an idea.

Your works often explore the connection between humans and nature. What do you think animals can teach us about ourselves?

I believe animals can teach us a lot of things about ourselves by becoming reflections of our own inner state. Through my experience with horses, I have learned that they often respond not to how we wish to present ourselves, but to what we genuinely carry within us. A person may appear calm or confident on the outside, yet horses have a remarkable sensitivity to authenticity. In that sense, they invite us to become more aware of our emotions, intentions and the way we relate to the world around us. They also remind us of the beauty of genuineness. Animals move through the world without pretense, inviting us to reconnect with who we are beneath expectation, fear and the need for approval. As a result, they encourage us to approach life with greater honesty, passion and the freedom to embrace our true selves more fully.

How important is observation in your process? Do you work from real horses, memory, imagination, or a combination of these?

Observation is fundamental to my process. My artistic relationship with horses began through horse riding, so much of my understanding of them comes from direct experience and careful observation. While memory and imagination also play an important role shaping a piece, most of the horses I paint and draw are rooted in real life references. For me, observation is not only anatomical accuracy, but also about understanding their presence, movement and individuality.



Uma Gamzatova

Your works are deeply connected to Dagestan and ancient Tabasaran mythology. What does this cultural heritage mean to you personally?



Uma Gamzatova | Tabasaran Bull Series | 2025



Uma Gamzatova | Tabasaran Bull Series | 2025

For me, it is first and foremost a way of showing respect for the culture of my native region. Dagestan is a region with an incredibly rich and diverse cultural heritage, where each ethnic group has its own history, traditions, and language. I am very interested in studying ancient mythology, legends, and traditions, because through them it is possible to better understand the worldview of our ancestors, their ideas about nature, good and evil, and the structure of the world.

Why did you choose the bull as one of the central images in this series?

According to the mythological story “Уьру yits” (“The Red Bull”), in Tabasaran mythology the Earth rests on the back of the Red Bull — a deity of the underworld. When people on Earth begin to behave violently or lawlessly, the Red Bull becomes angry with them, moves its ear or a



single hair, and an earthquake occurs on Earth. This story preserves the archaic beliefs of the Tabasaran people about the origin of the Earth and its place in the universe.

How do you usually work with ancient symbols: do you study them historically first, or do you approach them more intuitively?

Before using any symbol or ornament, I try to understand its origin, meaning, and place within the culture. It is important to me that each element is not merely decorative, but carries a certain meaning. In the traditional culture of Dagestan, including Tabasaran culture, almost every ornament has its own symbolism.

Your palette is built on strong contrasts, especially red and blue. What emotional or symbolic meaning do these colors have for you?

The choice of red and blue was deliberate. Through color, I wanted to convey a sense of strength, power, and inner tension. This is a great energy, and great energy requires a powerful color and a lot of space, which is why I do not use small canvases. Strong contrast also creates a strong impression and evokes an emotional response.

In art, the color red traditionally symbolizes energy, strength, passion, courage, and struggle. Blue creates depth. From the perspective of color psychology, it helps with concentration. Against a blue background, red becomes even more expressive, creating a powerful visual contrast. For me, this is not simply a combination of two beautiful colors. It is a dialogue between two states: strength and calmness, energy and depth.

How do you balance respect for tradition with a contemporary artistic interpretation?

It is simple. I do not seek to change traditions — my goal is to show that they can sound contemporary while remaining true to their roots.

Your images feel both ancient and modern. How important is this connection between past and present in your practice?

For me, the connection between the past and the present is extremely important. Through a contemporary artistic language, new forms, and color solutions, I try to give ancient legends a new voice. For me, this is a kind of dialogue between the past and the present.

What do you want viewers to feel when they encounter your work?

I would like viewers first of all to feel energy — the inner strength that exists both in the works themselves and in every person. If my works awaken emotions, interest in my native region, and a sense of inner strength, then they have fulfilled their purpose



Uma Gamzatova | Tabasaran Bull Series | 2025

Gioa Fashion Designer

GIOA bags immediately attract attention with their bold colors and distinctive shapes. What role does color play in your creative vision?



Gioa Fashion Designer | Smerlata Bags



Color plays a central role in Gioa's creative vision. It has the power to evoke emotions, express personality and transform an accessory into a statement piece. Our vibrant palettes are inspired by nature and my homeland, Sicily. They are carefully selected to bring joy, energy and confidence to everyday life. Rather than following short-lived trends, I create timeless color combinations that reflect our Brand's identity and celebrate individuality.

Each bag feels very expressive, almost like a small art object. How do you balance functionality with a strong visual identity?

Functionality and visual identity are equally important to me. Every GIOA® bag is created to be visually distinctive while meeting the everyday needs of modern women. I carefully consider proportions, materials and details so that each design is both expressive and practical.

Handmade production is an important part of your brand. Why is it essential for you to preserve craftsmanship in your work?

Handcrafted production preserves the value of



traditional Italian craftsmanship while promoting a more responsible way of creating. Making products by hand is a slower process but it allows us to pay close attention to every detail and ensure the highest quality. It is also an important choice from an environmental perspective. By producing in small quantities and focusing on craftsmanship rather than mass production we help reduce waste and encourage a more sustainable approach to fashion. It is a core value of the Brand.

Many of your designs are inspired by nature - flowers, insects, wings, and organic forms. What draws you to these motifs?

Nature has always been my greatest source of inspiration. Many of my designs begin with a real encounter (a butterfly, a dragonfly, a scarab) or another small detail that unexpectedly captures my attention. It is almost as if nature is inviting me to explore new ideas and express my creativity. The aim is to discover how deep the connection between art and nature is.

How long does it usually take to create one handmade bag, from the first idea to the final piece?

The time required to create a handmade bag can vary. Some designs come to life within a few months, while others take much longer. Often, an idea begins long before the actual production starts. Once the right moment comes, I move into production, always taking the time needed to ensure every piece meets the highest standards of quality and craftsmanship. A creative journey is a process of inspiration, patience, and dedication.

What part of the handmade process is the most important or emotionally meaningful for you?

The most meaningful part of the process for me is the very beginning: the research and design phase. This is the moment when an idea starts to take shape, moving from my imagination into a project. I love seeing a concept gradually become clearer, with every sketch and detail bringing it closer to reality. Then watching a project come to life through skilled craftsmanship is one of the most rewarding parts of my work.

What message would you like women to feel when they wear a GIOA bag?

Our accessories are designed to celebrate individuality and encourage women to express their personality standing out. A GIOA® bag is more than just an accessory; it is a symbol of self-confidence, able to inspire women to embrace their uniqueness and feel that even the smallest detail can make the difference.



— Interview

Brooklyn Bartley

You describe art as the way you communicate, breathe, and survive. When did you first realize that making art could become your main language?



I realized when I was a child. I've grown up in very hostile environments, and I often wasn't able to advocate for myself. Art is a quiet revolution for me. Even as an adult, I've survived certain traumas that have taken away my voice. Being able to paint or draw certain emotions or concepts helps me to heal. If I didn't know to speak through lines and color, A part of myself would have faded away.

Your portraits often feel emotionally intense and deeply personal. What usually comes first for you: an image, a feeling, a memory, or a color?

Most of the time, I actually have trouble imagining things. But before I draw a portrait, I usually think of a feeling. Whether someone else caused the feeling in me, or if it was the product of my own thinking. I very much aspire to let the viewer feel what I have felt. I think art and emotion go hand in hand.

Color plays a powerful role in your work. How do you choose your palette when you want to express something difficult or complex?

My color choices are chosen painting by painting. I like to paint over something again and again until I get the colors to match the mood I am aiming for. I'm not an expert in color theory, I just know that color to a painting is like music to a movie. Whether I choose mostly primary and secondary colors, fully monochromatic, or every part of the wheel, every choice was carefully considered for that specific piece.

Many of your figures seem to carry both vulnerability and strength. What do these faces represent for you?

I myself feel vulnerable and strong, like an egg covered



in thinly coated iron. I wear my heart on my sleeve because I'd like to be seen as who I am. The same is for my work, I want my art to be my mirror. The majority of my paintings are of self portraits, even if it doesn't appear to be me, I am most likely painting myself. Not in a way that is entirely self obsessed, but because I need to communicate myself to the world.

You work with mixed media. What materials or techniques help you express things that words cannot fully describe?

I use primarily gouache, but I also like oil pastel, and graphite. I attempt to take advantage of color, angles, and shapes to create atmospheres that are similar to the general concept in my head. Abstraction in art for abstracted thinking.

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

I hope they feel genuine emotion and sit with their feelings. But if they feel nothing at all, I like to imagine that they will appreciate my design choices.

How do you decide how much of your personal experience to reveal through your art?

I realize that I would like a certain level of mystique to be upheld in my work, so I don't share everything at all times. But I try at the very least to allude to an emotion or an environment that I've been in. Sometimes I am bold and share everything, but other times I still struggle with the fear of rejection and paint more subtler themes.

— Interview

Nadezhda Dozmorova

You describe yourself as both a puppet maker and a collage artist. How do these two creative practices influence each other in your work?



Nadezhda Dozmorova | Space Story | 2026



These two practices are closely intertwined. When working on a collage, I create characters — their images, personalities, and moods. These discoveries inspire me to transfer them into three-dimensional space: this is how a doll is born. In turn, the process of creating a doll suggests new ideas for collages — color combinations, unusual textures, and compositional solutions.

Your early education in fashion design gave you experience with materials, construction, and tools. How does this background appear in your collages today?

The training gave me knowledge of the principles and rules for combining the textures of different materials, creating harmonious arrangements of geometric shapes and various ornaments, and, most importantly, correctly combining colors and their shades with one another.

You say that collage gives you a feeling of freedom, like a bird in flight. What does this freedom mean to you personally?

My work constantly keeps me within the framework of the current project. As a creative person, I sometimes begin to feel tired of this. Collage, however, is true freedom — a space without boundaries or strict rules. In the process of working with collages, I step away from everyday life and find myself alone with a sea of possibilities. Stacks of magazines, scraps of paper, color swatches — all of this becomes a palette of spontaneous emotions and impressions.



I remain face to face with this chaos of materials, switch off logic, and simply begin to create. When I work, I do not follow any plan; I listen to my intuition. My hand chooses a cutout on its own, my eye catches an unexpected combination of colors, and my mind dissolves into the process. This state is like flight: you do not think about the trajectory — you simply fly, trusting the wind of inspiration.

Many of your characters seem to exist between the human, animal, and imaginary worlds. How do these characters come to life?

My collages are not born from a plan — they grow from within, like unexpected memories or fragments of dreams. Everything begins with intuition: I do not think through the composition in advance, I do not make sketches, and I do not choose colors according to color schemes. I simply listen to an inner voice that says: “This shade, this texture, or this fragment of an image — this is exactly what is needed.” I take out old cutouts, leaf through magazines, move the fragments around — and suddenly something catches my eye. It may be the curve of a line, a combination of tones, or a barely noticeable pattern. I set these “finds” aside, and gradually, from scattered elements, a unified image begins to emerge.

Each collage is a captured moment of intuitive search. I do not always understand right away what the final work will become or what it will tell the viewer. But, as a rule, the resulting image truthfully reflects what is living inside me at that moment — what I feel.

Your works often feel playful, surreal, and slightly mysterious at the same time. Is this contrast important for you?

Yes, it is absolutely important. It is precisely in the collision of the incompatible — lightness and depth, playfulness and mystery — that the very effect I strive to convey is born. For me, contrast is not just an artistic device, but a way to express the multilayered nature of the world and my own feelings. It allows me to create a tension that makes the viewer pause in front of the work, look more closely, and wonder: “What is happening here?”

You work mainly with analog collage. What attracts you to paper, scissors, and physical materials rather than digital techniques?

First of all, I am drawn to the rustle and smell of paper, the tactile sensations. And also to the process of selecting materials itself: searching, comparing textures, and finding unexpected combinations. I love creating things with my hands.

What would you like viewers to feel when they meet your characters and enter the worlds you create?

I strive to create worlds and characters that evoke an immediate response in the viewer’s heart. First and foremost, it should be a feeling of tenderness — a gentle smile, a warmth in the soul inspired by something sweet and touching. And then, a sense of kindness: not instructive, but natural, like breathing. So that, upon leaving my mysterious world, the viewer carries with them a small piece of this light and looks at reality with a slightly softer gaze.



— Interview

Krista McAllister

How did your studies in Art History and Fine Arts influence the way you approach your work today?



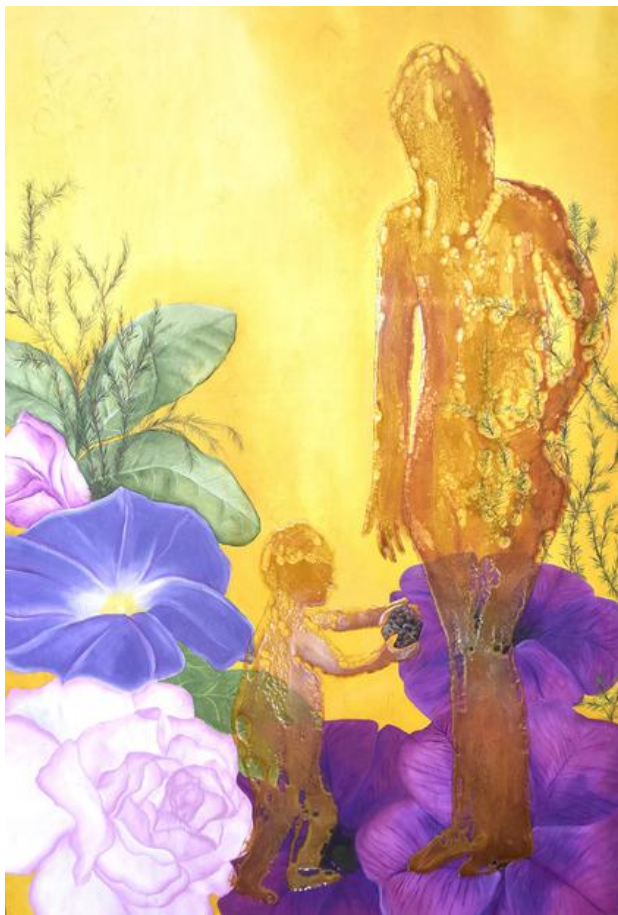
Krista McAllister | Motherhood | 2026



Although I have always loved art, I did not fully understand its historical context until college. I became fascinated by how the single field of Art History encompasses a vast array of societal, political, philosophical, and anthropological research. Beyond studying artistic techniques, I learned to view the world through the eyes of the artists, feeling transported back in time. This realization inspired me to create art not merely for beauty or entertainment, but as a visual pathway to my own lived experience. Today, I paint a visual diary with the hopes of defining our current culture and enlightening viewers to contemporary societal challenges.

Your practice combines oil painting, wood carving, and epoxy resin. What attracts you to working with mixed media? What inspired you to create the Motherhood series?

My desire to create mixed media art stems from the sensory joy of touch. As an artist, I love getting my hands messy with paint, epoxy, and wood shavings. I create not only to establish a theoretical and conceptual voice, but to experience the pure joy and peace the process brings. After exploring acrylics, charcoal, clay, and woodcarving, I transitioned to oil painting and epoxy—mediums that demand both physical intensity and thoughtful control. By combining wood, epoxy, and oil paint, I build a physical framework for my personal narrative. In my Motherhood series, for instance, the wood represents natural life at its core, while the painted flowers symbolize the expansive emotion and beauty of a mother's experience. The figures themselves are cast in the final layer of epoxy resin—the most highly manufactured element. Ultimately, the medium defines the story as deeply as the image itself.



In this series, flowers carry many emotional meanings. How do you choose which flowers or plants to include in each work?

To link a flower to each emotional milestone, I referenced *The Complete Language of Flowers* by S. Theresa Dietz. Her comprehensive guide allowed me to directly correlate specific symbols with unique moments throughout motherhood. In *Motherhood 1*, the white lily represents purity and devotion, while the forsythia portrays anticipation and the salix denotes recovery from illness and receiving a blessing. In *Motherhood 2*, goat's rue evokes physical nourishment—as nursing mothers sometimes use it as an herbal supplement—while purple rue represents the 'first emotions of love.' Additionally, the rose traditionally embodies love, whereas freesia and musk mallow capture innocence and immaturity. In *Motherhood 3*, morning glory portrays resilience alongside 'extinguished hopes,' neighboring the petunia, which indicates resentment. Finally, in *Motherhood 4*, Dietz categorizes cedar as a symbol of strength, birch as adaptability, grace, and renewal, wood sorrel as maternal tenderness, and bluebonnet as forgiveness, self-sacrifice, and survival. These paintings have an array of symbols to uncover, each object and placement with its own meaning. They are obvious and obscure at the same time, puzzling the viewer to foster deeper engagement.

The epoxy-resin figures have a very strong presence in the paintings. What do they represent for you?

The figures represent the evolving bond between mother and child throughout each phase of their relationship. *Motherhood 1* introduces a pregnant woman, which transitions into a mother with her newborn in *Motherhood 2*. In *Motherhood 3*, the focus shifts to a mother and her toddler, before concluding with a mother and a young child in *Motherhood 4*. Each stage captures a familiar, intimate interaction between them. Consequently, these figures serve as a continuous visual anchor across all four paintings, guiding the viewer seamlessly through the journey.

Your statement speaks about societal pressure, family judgment, and self-doubt. How do these themes shape the visual language of the series?

Societal pressure, family judgment, and self-doubt served as the foundational inspirations for the *Motherhood* series. By utilizing the symbolic nature of flowers, I leave a trail of clues for the viewer as an insight into my own personal experience. While the healthy, vibrant blossoms represent the beauty of motherhood, they simultaneously mask deeper emotional struggles. Within these intense fields of emotion reside the epoxy figures—incomplete, vulnerable shapes being actively consumed and altered by the world around them. Ultimately, the series portrays an exquisite beauty entangled with underlying conflict, a universal struggle that resonates deeply whether the viewer is a parent or not.

Your work challenges viewers to question their own place within the story of motherhood. What kind of response do you hope to evoke?

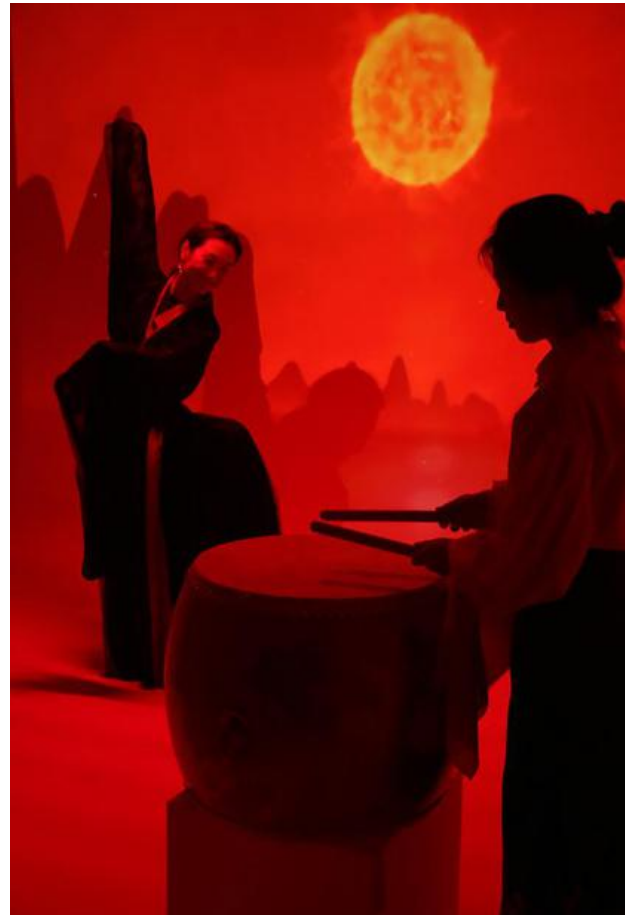
Ultimately, I hope to evoke a deep curiosity regarding one's own role within the collective journey of motherhood. Whether you are a parent, grandparent, friend, pediatrician, or teacher, everyone plays a part in a narrative that extends far beyond my personal story. To the mothers and parents navigating this path: you are my priority. If my work can seamlessly validate your insecurities while leaving you with a sense of hope and positive affirmation, then I have succeeded. To society as a whole, the onlookers inadvertently challenging a family dynamic, proceed with caution: subtle comments, quiet sighs, and judging eyes can quickly create an inhospitable environment for a mother and child. Without community support, mounting societal pressures and relentless self-doubt leave women struggling to fulfill a fragmented version of the maternal role they are so wholeheartedly trying to embrace.

— Interview

Fanyun Peng, Yue Hu, Xinyao Wang, Chad Xu

Rain Rite draws on the ancient Chinese tradition of Nuoxi. What first inspired you to reinterpret this ritual through contemporary performance and digital media?

Fanyun: It started with a conversation between us, about how quickly technology is evolving, and how AI already unsettles people in ways that feel almost primal. That led us to wonder: has this feeling always existed? We started thinking about how, in ancient times, witches and shamans occupied a similar space in the collective imagination that forces beyond ordinary understanding, both feared and needed. From there, we found ourselves drawn to rain rituals: the idea that communities once gathered, performed,



Fanyun Peng, Yue Hu, Xinyao Wang, Chad Xu | Rain Rite Performance

and genuinely believed that human action could move the heavens. We asked ourselves: what would it mean to recreate that kind of moment today, using the most advanced tools we have? Could the technology be turned into an instrument of connection rather than anxiety?

Nuoxi felt like a natural anchor, but our interest was never in reconstructing a historical practice. What fascinated us was the human emotion behind it. On the surface, Rain Rite tells the story of a community facing devastating drought, without scientific knowledge or technological solutions, people turn to dance, music, and ritual as a way of reaching toward the divine. But beneath that, it's really about something timeless: even when confronted with forces far greater than ourselves, we continue to seek connection, meaning, and hope. Through contemporary performance and digital media, we wanted to reinterpret that impulse in a form that speaks to audiences today.

How did you approach the cultural and spiritual meanings of Nuoxi while transforming it into a work for a contemporary international audience?

Yue: Rather than reproducing specific historical forms, we focused on preserving the spirit of the ritual. We were interested in themes that feel universal:

uncertainty, resilience, the relationship between humans and nature, and the search for meaning in difficult times.

Nuoxi has a rich cultural history, but the emotional questions at its core transcend geography and time. How do people respond when faced with forces they cannot control? How do communities maintain hope during periods of crisis?

By translating these ideas into movement, drumming, light, and digital imagery, we hoped to create an experience that could resonate with audiences regardless of their cultural background.

The performance creates a striking liminal space between ritual, theatre, installation, and digital art. How do you define Rain Rite within your broader artistic practice?

Yue: My work lives between disciplines, as an artist, engineer, and drummer, I'm drawn to experiences where sound, technology, visual systems, and human presence continuously shape one another. Rain Rite reflects that. It combines live performance, generative visuals, ritual-inspired storytelling, and interactive media into a space that is simultaneously physical and symbolic. Technology here isn't spectacle, it's a medium for exploring memory, emotion, and collective transformation.

Yao: I don't think of Rain Rite as belonging to any one form, and that in-between is exactly where my work lives. It's a ritual first. Theatre gives it an arc, installation gives it an environment, digital art gives it the ability to respond in real time. But what holds them together isn't a medium, it's the ceremony itself. Rain Rite is built as a single feedback loop: a mic over the drum drives audio-reactive visuals, motion capture turns the dancer's body into a second projected presence, and the projection wraps back around the performer. Dancer, instrument, and image share one nervous system. What I'm ultimately after is a liminal space where people forget there's technology at all, where they feel part of something being summoned, together.

Fanyun: With a background in both computer science and art, blending multiple mediums feels natural to me. I've always believed that every medium, every material, every tool is simply a means of conveying an idea, the work is in finding the right form to carry it. For Rain Rite, that form is inherently plural. The dance shapes the rhythm, the rhythm drives the visuals, and the visuals in turn elevate the dance. Nothing exists in isolation; each element breathes with the others. That interconnection isn't just an aesthetic choice, it's the argument the piece is making. When ancient ritual and real-time technology speak the same language, the boundary between them dissolves, and something truer emerges.

Red light, shadow, projected landscapes, and circular solar or halo-like imagery play a central role in the work. What symbolic meanings do these visual elements carry for you?

Chad: The visual language of Rain Rite grew directly from the narrative arc of the piece. It opens in a scorched world of red and gold, colors of heat, drought, and a civilization at the edge. Pulsating solar imagery amplifies that oppression, reflecting nature's overwhelming indifference to human vulnerability. As the ritual unfolds, the environment transforms. Clouds gather, mist thickens, thunder emerges, rain falls in rhythm with the drums embodying the central tension between human will and forces beyond our control.

By the final act, the storm clears. Golden wheat fields and rising Kongming lanterns bring renewal and hope. The circular forms woven throughout — sun, halo, portal — carry a quieter meaning: that drought and rain, loss and renewal, destruction and rebirth are not opposites but parts of the same unbroken cycle. The circle is the piece's argument: what feels like an ending is always, also, a return.

The human body appears both physically present and transformed by projection. How does this relationship between the body and the digital image reflect your interest in the boundaries between the real and the virtual?

Yao: What I care about is the seam between the two, not either side on its own. In Rain Rite, the body that's really there is the drummer, present, physical, striking with real force. The dancer is virtual: conjured out of the sound the drummer is making, reacting to it in real time, living only as long as the drummer keeps playing. It isn't a person standing next to a copy of themselves; it's a real body calling a virtual one into being. The line between real and virtual goes quiet because one is so clearly listening to the other.

In ritual terms, that's exactly the point. The drummer plays, and something appears, a spirit, an ancestor, a dancer made of light. The real and the virtual stop being two categories and become one gesture. Technology amplifies real presence, it never replaces it.

Fanyun: The dance itself is rooted in Nuo. I choreographed the movement drawing from that tradition, and Yao reinterpreted it through the character she designed. From there, we layered the live performance on top, building outward from that ritual core. I'm drawn to that process of layering, each element adds depth until the whole becomes something you can feel rather than just watch. The digital environment is what makes full immersion

possible: a space where the physical and the virtual reinforce each other, and where the audience isn't observing a ritual so much as being drawn into one.

Rain Rite was created in collaboration with Fanyun Peng, Yue Hu, Xinyao Wang, and Chad Xu. How did each collaborator's artistic or technical background shape the final work?

Yue: Rain Rite was shaped through a genuinely interdisciplinary collaboration, and the final work would not exist without the different perspectives each collaborator brought to the project. Fanyun Peng led the interaction design and the audio-reactive system, exploring how live drumming could become a real-time visual language. Her work allowed the performance to respond dynamically to sound, making each presentation unique. Yue focused on storytelling, visual worldbuilding, and animation design. Her role was to translate the emotional journey of the ritual into a symbolic visual landscape—from drought and desolation to rain, renewal, and hope. Xinyao Wang contributed both stage design and choreography. She developed the spatial relationship

between projections, lighting, and performers, while also drawing inspiration from traditional Nuo dance to create a movement language that connected the physical body to the ritual narrative.

Chad Xu composed the original score and helped shape the overall artistic direction of the project. His music provided the emotional structure of the work, guiding the audience through invocation, conflict, transformation, and rebirth.

Although each of us worked in different disciplines, the project evolved through constant dialogue between sound, movement, storytelling, and technology. Rather than functioning as separate layers, these elements became part of a single living system.

Your work often brings spiritual or cultural ideas into dialogue with technologies such as AR, VR, AI, and interactive media. Do you see technology as a tool, a collaborator, or an active presence within your work?

Yao: For me, technology is most alive when it's listening, when a real physical action reaches across and summons something digital into the same room. In Rain Rite, the drummer plays and the virtual dancer appears, reacting in real time, existing only as long as the rhythm continues. That's not technology as tool or spectacle; it's technology as presence, as the seam where the physical and virtual become one gesture. In ritual terms, that's always been the point: you perform, and something answers.

Yue: I see technology primarily as a medium rather than a subject. Human beings have always sought ways to communicate with forces beyond their understanding: in ancient times through ritual, music, and dance; today through digital media and interactive systems. The tools have changed, but the impulse hasn't. In Rain Rite, technology isn't there for spectacle — it creates a contemporary ritual space where projection and sound reactivity become vehicles for exploring hope, uncertainty, and our relationship with nature. What interests me is whether these tools can help us recover something modern life often overlooks: wonder, collective experience, and spiritual connection.

Fanyun: I've never seen technology as something to fear or resist, it's simply a product of the society we live in, and using it is a way of reflecting the world that has shaped us. That exchange feels mutual to me: we shape technology, and it shapes us back. I don't set boundaries around my art forms. Whatever is around me, I'll use it to express what I'm thinking and feeling right now. Living in this moment, that naturally includes digital tools alongside everything else. I try not to overcomplicate it, just live, embrace, and express.



Fanyun Peng, Yue Hu, Xinyao Wang, Chad Xu | Rain Rite Cover



Alexandra Corina Irimia

You began your painting career in 2017. What first inspired you to start painting seriously?



Since I was little, I have had a passion for drawing and painting. At the age of five, I was already drawing cartoon characters such as Sailor Moon and Dexter. Many years later, in 2017, I decided to pursue painting more seriously because I truly loved the feeling of holding a brush in my hand and mixing colours. It was an important moment for me. Around that time, I also took painting lessons at an art studio near my home, and my teacher told me that I had real potential to become a great artist. That day changed my life and encouraged me to never give up painting.

Your works often explore flowers, landscapes, still lifes, and abstract compositions. What connects these themes for you?

I started with flowers and later moved toward more complex compositions, including abstract works and landscapes, sometimes using references and sometimes working purely intuitively. I think these themes reflect my inner thoughts and feelings. They allow me to express what I experience internally through shapes, colour, and composition.

Colour plays a very important role in your paintings. How do you choose your colour palette for each artwork?

Colour is very important in my work. I often use colours such as blue, green, and red because they help me express emotions and states of



mind. For me, painting and the colours used in an artwork can reflect what is happening inside a person's mind.

Some of your works feel very intuitive and expressive. Do you usually plan the composition in advance, or do you let it develop naturally?

Many of my works develop naturally and intuitively. Sometimes I use a reference, and sometimes I simply begin painting and allow the composition to appear through the process. I enjoy this intuitive approach because it helps me connect more deeply with my emotions and inner world.

Do you see painting as a form of emotional expression, self-reflection, or healing?

Yes, I see painting as a form of emotional expression and self-reflection. I am currently studying expressive art therapy, and I believe that art can be used as a medium to discover unconscious feelings that people may struggle

with. For me, painting is closely connected to emotions, inner thoughts, and the state of mind.

How do you balance figurative elements and abstraction in your paintings?

I balance figurative elements and abstraction by allowing each artwork to develop in its own way. I may begin with something recognizable, such as flowers or a landscape, but through colour, gesture, and intuition, the work can become more expressive and abstract. This combination helps me communicate both the visible subject and the emotions behind it.

What emotions or thoughts would you like viewers to experience when they look at your artworks?

I would like viewers to connect with the emotions and inner states reflected in my paintings. My art is expressive, intuitive, and abstract, and I hope it encourages people to look inward, feel something personal, and perhaps recognize their own emotions through colour and form.

Vangelis Gavriil



Your practice brings together painting, printmaking, philosophy, and theatre. How do these different fields influence the way you think about imagemaking?



Vangelis Gavriil | Glitchy Screen | 2026

I have always viewed the visual arts as an expanded field rather than a collection of separate disciplines. Painting and printmaking were the focus of my studies at GSA, but I have often felt the need to experiment across different media as well, including photography, collage, and digital processes. My background in philosophy and theatre has deeply informed the way I approach image-making. Philosophy provides a critical and conceptual framework through which I can reflect on questions of meaning, while theatre has heightened my sensitivity to narrative structures. I also value the fact that both are humanities disciplines, placing the human being at the centre of knowledge and experience. Working across disciplines allows me to think of the image not as a self-contained object, but as a site where different forms of knowledge, experience, and interpretation converge.

How did moving from Greece to Scotland for your studies affect the way you see your own culture and artistic identity?

Moving from Greece to Scotland gave me the distance needed to see my own culture more clearly and to understand how deeply history shapes artistic identity. Studying in the UK, within an international environment, encouraged me to focus on cultural connections rather than differences, and reinforced my belief that art can serve as a bridge between people.

This perspective became central to my final project, in which I reinterpreted “View near King’s Bromley, on Trent, Staffordshire” by Thomas Gainsborough through a version embroidered by my grandmother. The image was a popular embroidery subject in many Greek homes during the 1970s, making it an unexpected point of connection between British



and Greek cultural histories. Through this project, I explored how ideas of landscape can shift across time and place, from 18th century Britain to contemporary Greece, where natural landscapes are increasingly threatened by devastating wildfires.

In this series, you begin with your grandmother's embroidery based on Thomas Gainsborough's "View near King's Bromley, on Trent, Staffordshire". What first drew you to the reverse side of the embroidery rather than its "finished" front?

When I first removed the embroidery from its heavy Baroque frame, I became fascinated by the stitching on its hidden reverse side. The lines formed by the threads carried my grandmother's gesture in a direct and sincere way, much like ink does.

This discovery led me to trace the thread lines with a Posca pen, breaking the embroidery down into eighteen colour layers. Through this process, I also became aware of the visual affinities between the dense network of stitches and a glitchy screen. The work became a dialogue between our digital age and a time when embroidery was a common leisure activity, as well as a personal conversation between my grandmother and me.

I have always noticed an element of disruption in glitchy, pixelated images. At the same time, they can be understood as moments of transition, in which something dissolves while something new begins to emerge.

You separated the embroidery into eighteen colour layers. How important is this process of deconstruction in your work?

As I experimented with the reverse side of the embroidery, I became interested in exploring its complementary colours. To create the different print series, I first separated the embroidery into eighteen colour layers, which allowed me to study the original palette closely and develop new combinations based on both the traditional RYB and digital RGB colour systems. Conceptually, this process of deconstruction was just as important. The embroidery, made by my grandmother, functions as a family heirloom and a carrier of memory. By breaking it into separate layers, I wanted to reveal the latent possibilities within the image and explore how many different forms of memory could emerge from the same source. In the black-and-white series, the landscape depicted gradually disappears. Through this fading image, I wanted to evoke a sense of nostalgia for a

disappearing era and perhaps also for a natural landscape that is slowly vanishing over time.

Why is it important for you to work with the themes of memory and family history?

For me, working with memory and family history is closely connected to a process of self-understanding. Over time, I realized that it is difficult to understand who we are without looking back at where we come from—our family stories, cultural background, and the histories that have shaped us, often in invisible ways.

Contemporary art has also taught me that history is not only found in archives or historical records, but in personal narratives, inherited memories, and lived experiences. I see art as a unique way of engaging with history on a human level—through emotion, memory, and storytelling. This perspective has deeply influenced my practice. My work is woven into biographical experience and explores the connections between personal and collective memory, as well as the ways the past continues to shape our sense of identity and belonging in the present.

What do you like most about the silkscreen printing technique?

What I love most about silkscreen printing is the balance between repetition and uniqueness. Although the same image can be printed multiple times, each print carries subtle variations that reveal the handmade nature of the process. In an era of digital overproduction, I find this physical and human quality especially meaningful.

Silkscreen also offers a unique relationship with materials. I enjoy experimenting with inks and unexpected elements that can alter the image and create different textures. In my recent black-and-white series, for example, I incorporated ash and charcoal dust into the printing process, allowing the material itself to become part of the work.

I am also fascinated by the way silkscreen can transform an image through gradual changes, making it a powerful medium for exploring memory, loss, and the passage of time. Its ability to combine precision with chance is what keeps the process exciting and creatively rewarding for me.

Your background includes philosophy. Are there particular philosophical ideas or questions that shape your approach to visual art?

My background in philosophy shaped my interest in art not only as a practice but also as a field of inquiry. I became interested in ontological questions about what constitutes an artwork and how meaning emerges between artist, image, and viewer.

These questions continue to inform my approach to art. I am also drawn to reflections on the past: why we study it, how it shapes identity, and what role it can play in contemporary art. This connects closely to my interest in contemporary portraiture and self-portraiture. I often think of a self-portrait not as a direct representation of a person, but as a constellation of images, objects, materials, and memories. A building, a piece of embroidery, a reflection of light, or a trace of history can function as elements of a portrait. Through my work, I explore these connections as a way of understanding both history and myself.

— Interview

Charles Chao Wang

In your photographs, the human figure often appears silent, turned away, or partially hidden. What does this sense of anonymity allow you to express?

This sense of anonymity is a way for me to transform personal experience into something more universal. When I conceal a face, turn a figure away from the camera, or allow parts of the body to disappear, I am attempting to suspend their specific social identity. A recognisable face often prompts the question, “Who is this person?” whereas I am more interested in the emotional and existential conditions that the figure embodies.

At certain moments in life, we all experience a kind of namelessness—states of loneliness, uncertainty, powerlessness, or the feeling of confronting circumstances beyond our control. Anonymity allows the figure to move beyond individual identity and become an open condition of being, onto which viewers may project their own memories and experiences.

This approach is also informed by Zen thought. Zen seeks to loosen our attachment to the self and re-establish our relationship with the world around us. For me, anonymity does not erase individuality; rather, it allows the individual to transcend labels and return to a more fundamental human experience.

Your images often feel staged, yet they still preserve a quiet documentary quality. How do you approach the boundary between reality and constructed image?

For me, reality and construction are not opposites. Photography is already an act of selection, arrangement,



Charles Chao Wang | Away Way | 2022

and reconstruction. I carefully compose spaces, colours, and objects, not to fabricate an alternative world, but to approach experiences that cannot be directly documented.

Many profound emotions—loneliness, oppression, calmness, hope—have no visible form. Constructed images become a way of giving shape to these intangible states.

At the same time, I always want to preserve the texture of reality. Existing spaces, natural light, and the physical presence of the body allow these constructed scenes to retain a sense of lived experience.

I am particularly interested in this threshold between reality and fiction because memory itself functions in a similar way. What we remember is rarely objective fact; it is reality continuously reshaped by emotion, time, and imagination.

Some of your works create a strong contrast between the body and its surroundings - nature, domestic interiors, empty rooms. What kind of relationship do you want to build between figure and space?

The relationship between the figure and space is one of the central concerns of my practice.

I often place people within vast landscapes or empty architectural environments because I am continually thinking about the relationship between the individual and forces that exceed them.

In my work, figures frequently appear small, but this smallness does not signify weakness. Instead, it suggests a condition of acceptance, humility, and connection. Through Zen and Taoist thought, I have gradually come to understand that human beings do not stand apart from



the world but exist as part of a larger continuum. At the same time, space becomes a psychological landscape. A room, a body of water, or a piece of land can become a projection of an inner condition. External environments begin to carry memory, emotion, and spiritual transformation. I hope to create a relationship between the figure and space that moves from separation, to awareness, and finally towards a sense of interconnectedness.

There is a quiet emotional distance in your photographs, as if the viewer is observing a private moment from the outside. How important is this distance to you?

This sense of distance is essential because it creates space for contemplation. I have experienced prolonged periods of loneliness, depression, and powerlessness, and I have also witnessed people around me undergoing moments of emotional and spiritual crisis. If these experiences were presented in an overly expressive or sentimental manner, they would risk becoming acts of emotional release rather than invitations to reflect. I therefore prefer a restrained and contemplative language. Distance allows intimate and painful experiences to become something that can be quietly observed and held in thought. This distance is not a form of indifference. It is a respectful form of detachment that protects the dignity of the subject while leaving room for viewers to form their own emotional and psychological connections with the work.

Many of your photographs seem to exist in a suspended moment - neither before nor after an event. Are you interested in ambiguity as a way of keeping the image open?

Yes, I am deeply drawn to forms of ambiguity that inhabit a liminal state. I am interested in images that remain suspended in a moment that is neither fully unfolding nor entirely

resolved. Often, the most charged moments are not the events themselves, but the quiet intervals that exist between them.

Rather than offering a definitive narrative, I prefer the image to remain open and indeterminate, allowing viewers to imagine what has happened and what is yet to come.

Life itself is permeated by uncertainty, and many meaningful experiences emerge within states of transition and suspension. I try to embed something untouchable and unseen beneath the surface of the image—something that resists representation yet can still be intuitively felt.

Living and working between London and Shanghai, how has your sense of place, belonging, or displacement influenced the way you construct images?

Living between Shanghai and London has profoundly shaped my visual language.

Shanghai—and the ancient town where I grew up—remains an emotional anchor and the place where I first became aware of the relationship between society and the individual. London, by contrast, offered me an environment that embraced openness, plurality, and freedom of expression.

The tension between these two experiences has left me with a persistent sense of displacement. I no longer feel that I entirely belong to any single place, and this condition of in-betweenness has given me the perspective of an outsider.

Perhaps because of this, I have become increasingly interested in universal human conditions rather than fixed cultural identities. I think about how people, regardless of where they come from, confront power, loneliness, and uncertainty, and how they search for a sense of inner belonging.

Looking at your recent works, do you feel your artistic language is moving toward greater silence, abstraction, narrative, or something else entirely?

If I had to describe the current direction of my practice with a single phrase, I would call it “spiritual abstraction.” My earlier works were more directly concerned with social issues and external conflicts. Over time, through making work and reflecting on my own experiences, my attention has gradually shifted from confrontation towards healing.

I am increasingly interested in creating images that retain narrative tension while remaining open and indeterminate. They may appear quiet, abstract, or solitary, yet they continue to carry traces of memory, social transformation, and individual destiny.

For me, photography is gradually becoming a space for contemplation and healing. I hope that viewers might remain with the image for a moment and, within that pause, encounter a sense of stillness, resonance, or even strength within themselves.

— Interview

Nursena Tetik

You studied painting and are currently pursuing a Master's degree in the field. What led you to use photography for the series *Where Time Rests*, and how does your background in painting influence the way you compose a photograph?

My education in painting has shaped not only the way I create images but also the way I perceive space, light, and visual relationships. While painting involves a prolonged process of construction and contemplation, photography



allows me to engage with fleeting moments that emerge spontaneously within everyday life. In *Where Time Rests*, photography became a means of capturing encounters that exist only briefly before disappearing.

Although I work with a camera, I continue to think as a painter. Composition, balance, negative space, tonal relationships, and the orchestration of light remain central to my practice. Each photograph is approached as a carefully structured visual field in which architecture, shadow, and human presence interact within a composed spatial arrangement.

The title *Where Time Rests* suggests a pause or suspension of time. What does this idea mean to you, and how did it shape the development of the series?

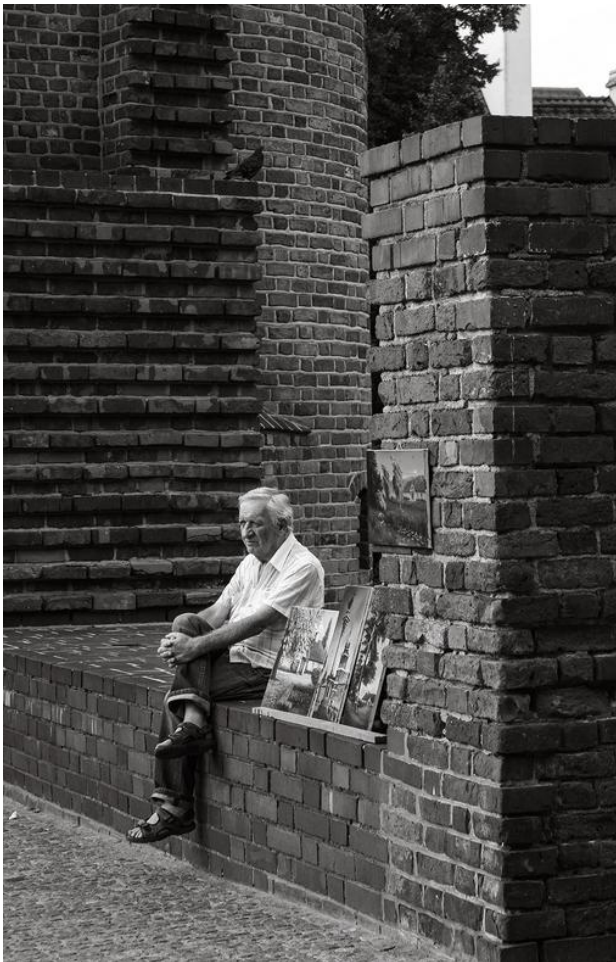
For me, *Where Time Rests* emerges from an interest in liminal states—moments that exist between movement and stillness, departure and arrival, presence and absence. During my travels, I often encounter situations that seem suspended between defined narratives, where ordinary reality briefly slows down and reveals a more contemplative dimension.

The series developed through an attention to these threshold experiences. Rather than documenting events, I became interested in the subtle temporal gaps embedded within everyday life. These fleeting moments create spaces where time appears to pause, allowing both the subject and the viewer to become more aware of their surroundings and their own presence within them.

Architecture plays a dominant role in these photographs, while the human figures appear relatively small within the surrounding spaces. What relationship between people and the built environment were you hoping to explore?



Nursena Tetik | *Where Time Rests* | 2024



In this body of work, architecture functions as more than a backdrop; it becomes an active presence that shapes perception, movement, and experience. I am interested in the ways built environments define the scale of human existence and influence how individuals occupy space. The relatively small figures within the compositions emphasize both vulnerability and transience. They appear as temporary presences moving through structures that seem more permanent and enduring. This relationship reflects my interest in the tension between individual experience and the larger spatial systems that surround and condition it.

Your use of black and white emphasizes light, shadow, texture, and geometry. Why did you choose to remove color from these images, and what emotional atmosphere does monochrome allow you to create?

The absence of color is not a reduction but an opening. By removing color, I aim to shift attention toward the structural elements of the image—light, shadow, texture, rhythm, and spatial relationships. Monochrome allows these visual components to emerge with greater clarity and intensity. At the same time, black and white photography introduces a degree of ambiguity that I find essential. Without the specificity of color, the image becomes more open-ended and interpretive. Viewers are invited to project their own memories, emotions, and even imagined colors onto the scene. In this sense, monochrome creates a participatory space in which meaning is not fixed but continuously reconstructed through individual perception. The use of black and white also reinforces the atmosphere of

stillness and timelessness that lies at the core of *Where Time Rests*, allowing the photographs to exist outside a clearly defined temporal context.

Several works capture people in moments of waiting, solitude, or quiet observation. What attracts you to these seemingly ordinary and uneventful moments?

Much of my practice is rooted in observing the unnoticed dimensions of everyday life. I am drawn to moments that appear uneventful because they often reveal forms of presence that remain invisible within the accelerated pace of contemporary experience.

Waiting, resting, observing, or simply occupying a space can become deeply expressive states. These situations exist outside spectacle and narrative climax; they belong instead to the quiet rhythms of daily life. I am interested in how such moments generate subtle emotional and psychological landscapes, transforming the ordinary into something reflective and poetic.

How do you approach street photography? Do you wait patiently for a particular alignment of light, architecture, and human presence, or are your images created more intuitively?

The photographs in *Where Time Rests* are primarily made during my travels and periods of movement between places. Rather than searching for predetermined subjects, I respond to situations that unexpectedly emerge along the way. In this sense, photography becomes a practice of attentiveness rather than pursuit.

I am particularly interested in liminal moments—brief encounters experienced while passing through urban spaces, crossing thresholds, or pausing within transitional environments. These situations often exist between destinations and resist clear narratives, yet they contain a remarkable sense of presence.

My images are therefore shaped by a combination of intuition and observation. I do not necessarily wait for a specific event to occur; instead, I remain attentive to ephemeral relationships between architecture, light, and human activity that arise within the fabric of everyday life. Photography becomes a way of preserving these transient moments before they disappear.

How do your interests in visual communication, corporate identity, and branding coexist with your more personal artistic practice? Do these disciplines influence one another?

Although these fields may appear distinct, they share a common concern with the construction of visual language. My experience in visual communication and branding has heightened my awareness of composition, perception, symbolism, and the ways images generate meaning. At the same time, my artistic practice allows me to approach these concerns from a more open-ended and exploratory perspective. While design often seeks clarity and effective communication, art embraces ambiguity, multiplicity, and interpretation. I see these disciplines as mutually enriching: design provides structure and precision, while artistic research expands the conceptual possibilities of visual expression.

Ella Leynard

You are a poet, artist, and teacher. How do these three roles influence one another in your creative life?

Being a poet, a teacher, and an artist means creation. In order to bring out the human being in the baby, the toddler and the child, you must strictly connect his life to education. The education received at home continues with the one received from the teacher, at school. This is one of the great masterpieces of humanity, - The Man. Using the word as a tool, the poet creates poems. The artist uses colour to create the painting.

Your background is deeply connected with literature.



How did your experience as a writer shape the way you approach painting?

For me poetry means colour and music created with the help of the word which leads the way to the meaning. Each poem can be considered a painting, while reading it, inside the words you feel the rhythm and almost always, the poem has colour in it. For me the word means colour. I think each word and name has its own colour. The word is a force carrying within the greatest form of energy. If you read a poem you can turn it into a painting. Poetry means imagery. The painting is an image.

You recently graduated from the School of Arts in Bucharest. What was the most important discovery you made during your studies?

There is a constant search to understand, to find out, to learn, to apply it yourself. I have always felt that any kind of learning from someone else has its limitations and it is not something to settle for. I have felt it as terribly displeasing. Maybe nobody is to blame, at a point in your evolution no teacher can help much because only you



know what you need for your art. With this thought acutely bothering me, I found a book recently published, "BRÂNCUȘI, Art is the absolute truth" edited by Doina Lemny, Polirom Publishing, 2026. I started reading it with thirst, I was sure Constantin Brâncuși would help me. And he did: "With art we will always find ourselves at the beginning; you can only learn it through yourself, and you really learn it, while if you learn it from others, you will do things learnt which will not represent you, a sterile form cannot bear children."

Your still lifes often focus on flowers, vases, and everyday objects. What attracts you to these subjects?

Still lifes means for me a frozen instance of time, capturing the impossible, because while you catch it turning it into a painting, it has already passed. It is the victory over the impossible, time did pass, but it remains in the painting. I would love to paint all the flowers in the world. They are a great example of elegance and love. They offer themselves to us, they are perfection itself. They are generous and good. Flowers are nature's supreme form of art. And the human eye sees them as such.

The painting Tulips has a calm and delicate atmosphere, while Vitality is much more intense and expressive. How do you choose the emotional tone of each work?

The feeling comes from inside. Art is re-creating what is inside the mind of the artist with the help of the representations of the world. Towards the end of winter, this thought came to my mind, more of a need. I longed to paint tulips, so, as soon as spring came, I went to the flower market to look for tulips. I carefully chose some and they have become my paintings. Then I started wondering why this thought had been so strong. The feeling connected to it was revival, hope, serenity. When the paintings were ready, I searched for the meaning of the flower. Tulips mean rebirth and deep love, and since the Victorian era, they have also been a symbol of charity. Their upright posture reflects open-heartedness. I have understood the tulips are a representation of the love in my heart by means of colour. And my gratitude for

everything I receive in my heart. Poetry is always with me. Art means offering, giving the feeling from inside you, while always looking for the ideal form. I came to understand that the feeling inside my mind and heart was so strong that it had to go on the canvas.

Do you see a connection between the rhythm of poetry and the rhythm of brushstrokes in painting?

The rhythm common to poetry and painting is absolute freedom. You start writing, but the poem finds its own ending. You start a painting and the painting finds its own ending. Literature and art grow their own spiritual force.

As a teacher of English, you work with language every day. Does teaching influence your sensitivity to images, symbols, and meaning?

Teaching is mainly generosity. It means having the constant concern to get the information across to the students and determine them to make the move towards you, hear you and understand what you want to say. Teacher-student is a meeting halfway. At the root of this concern is love. The thought for the other, the means you found to reach his mind. The constant care for the welfare of the students' minds and souls, means being a teacher. And constant joy and never feeling tired. The results come when you least expect them. But they do. Teaching is a process with the help of the language. Poems are written with words. If you want to describe the painting you see, you must use words. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The Gospel According to St. John



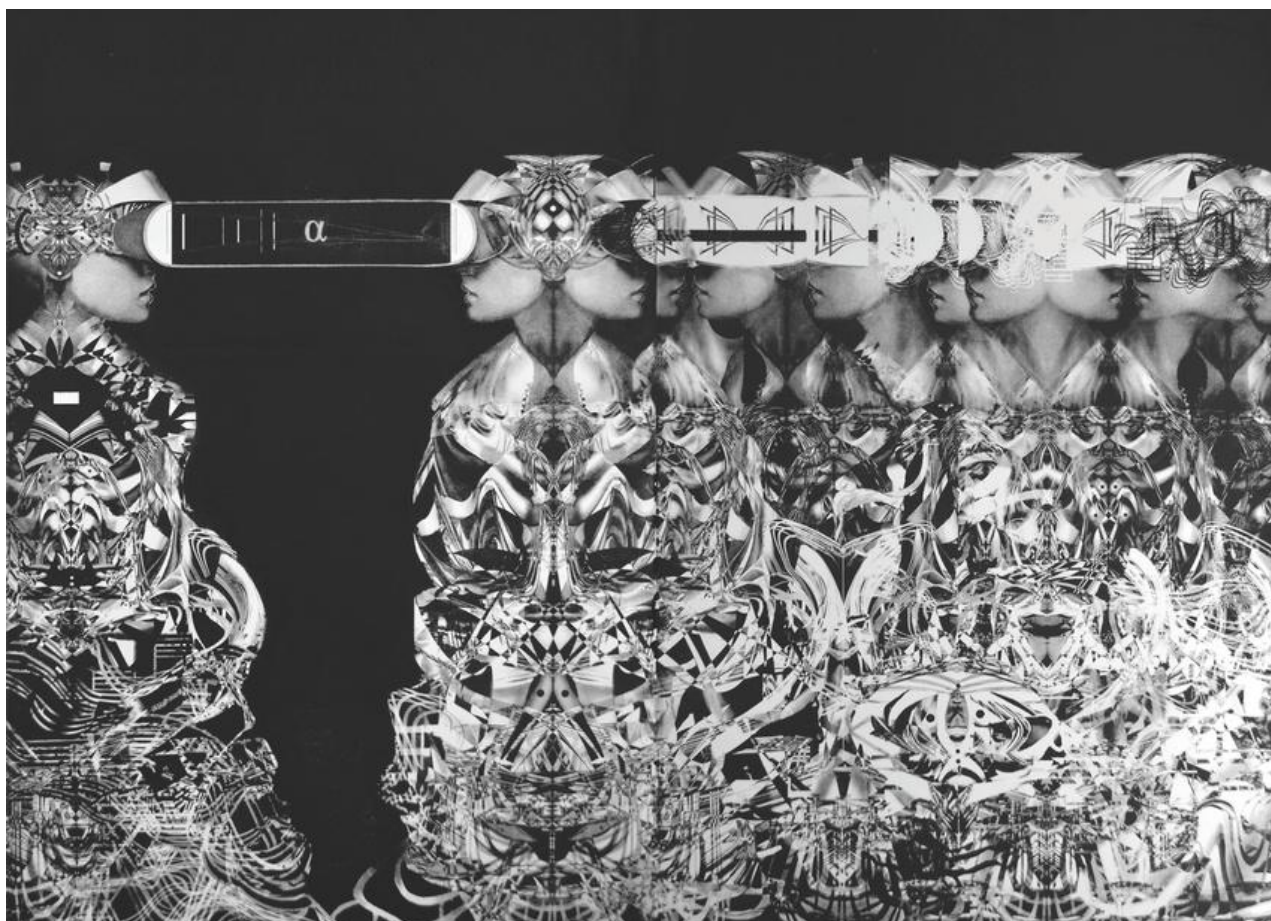
Darina Peeva

Born 1972 in Burgas, Bulgaria.

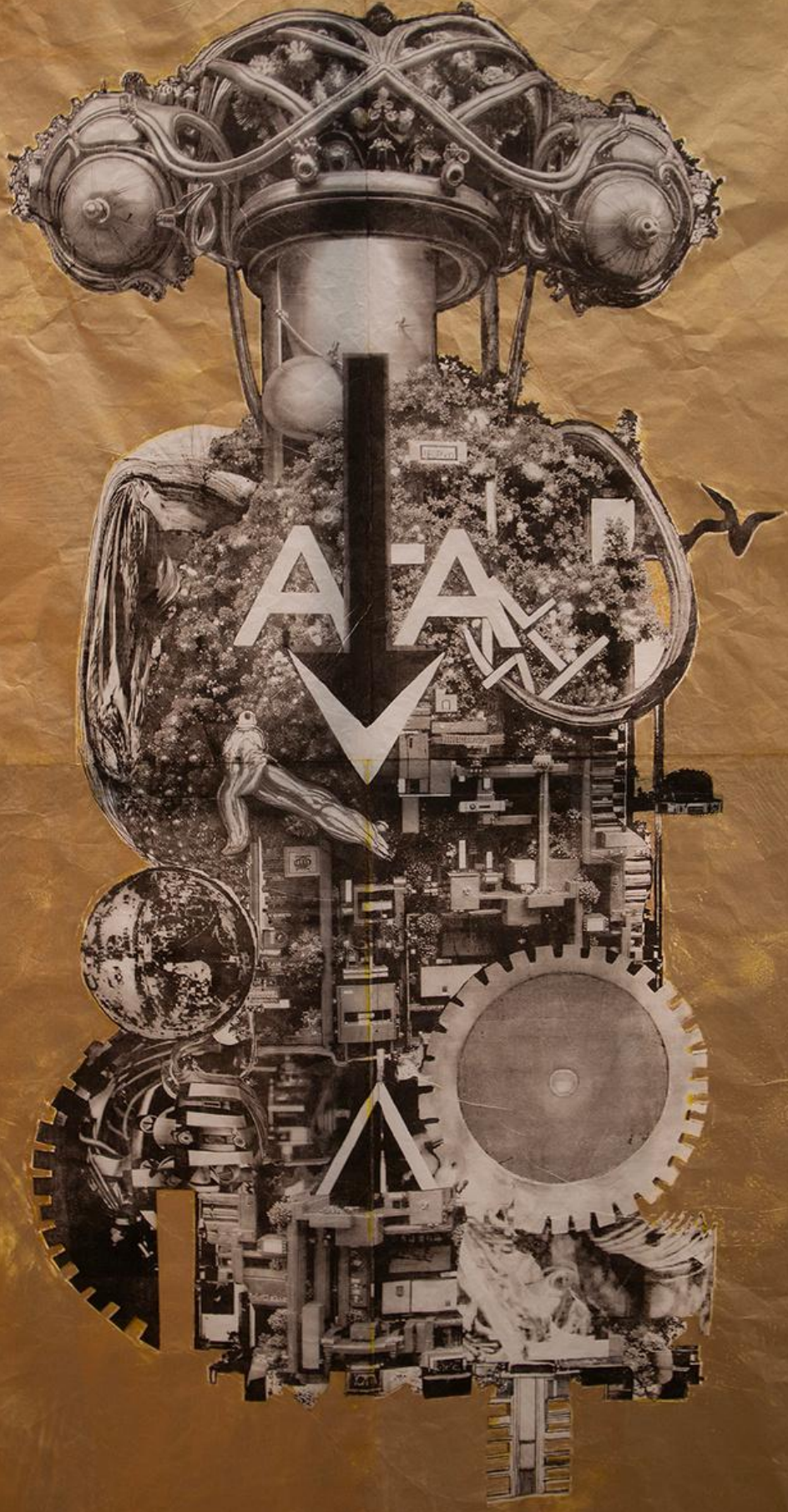
Project Statement

As an artist, I am much interested in the process of changing the image through the various stages of printing and reproduction. I value the experiment in all its forms, as I use the classical techniques of deep print, photography, text and collage. I use photographs of elements and objects of the surrounding environment, easily distinguished images and texts, which I alter by means of computer programs. Thus an image or a sentence may change either its context or its meaning. Manual printing, due to its specifics, changes the images once again and adds traces of damaged surfaces, lines and unequally spread layers of ink to the compositions. The compositions, created in this way are situated between "reality" and "illusion", memories and dreams, letting the viewer include their own interpretations and personal attitudes to the pictures that have been watched. I am also deeply interested in my new searches in the transformation of the drawing sheet from its two-dimensional limitation in the frame of the picture to a three-dimensional object, freely situated in space.

The topics which have great impact on me are influenced by the global political and social processes, as well as by the changes occurring in the lives of ordinary people, due to the new social medium.



Darina Peeva | Alfa | 2022



Natalia Nowacka

Your artistic name, Extinct Sacrif, has a strong and mysterious atmosphere. What does this name mean to you, and how does it connect to your work?



Natalia Nowacka | Duality II, The Circle | 2024



Natalia Nowacka | Chosen Obeyed Forgotten | 2023

It is a combination of the word Extinct and Sacrif, a shortened form that combines Sacrifice and Sacrum. Everybody has to sacrifice something to live their own way, especially when choosing a creative way of life. Besides that, I love drawing the skeletons of extinct animals. For me, it is a tribute to species that were driven to extinction by humans. I deeply identify with the suffering of nature, which is why I call myself "Extinct."

You began drawing seriously after leaving veterinary studies. How did that transition shape your relationship with anatomy, biology, and the body in art?

That was a breaking point in my life. I went through a severe depression, and I tried to heal myself by coming back to my teenage hobby. I started to connect my two greatest passions: zoology and drawing. Later, it became my job.

Veterinary studies made me hate anatomy, while art taught me to love it once again.

Bones, skulls, animals, and organic forms appear frequently in your works. What attracts you to these motifs?

Everything. Their form, structure, death, and the fact that they were once part of a living organism. I have been fascinated by bones for as long as I can



remember. I have been collecting skulls, antlers, and feathers since childhood.

Your works often explore fear, anxiety, dreams, and the darker side of the subconscious. Why is it important for you to give visual form to these hidden emotions?

I have had many experiences throughout my life that I would describe as spiritual. I have always been a highly sensitive person and have always reacted very deeply to what was happening around me. I very often have detailed dreams and nightmares that I can remember after waking up. I am fascinated by the dark side of nature. It is not evil, but mysterious and full of beauty. I am also deeply inspired by the Symbolist movement in art.

Many of your pieces feel connected to mythology, folklore, and ritual. How do ancient stories and legends influence your visual language?

Art is a creative ritual in itself. As humans, we have an ancient tendency toward rituals in our lives. It is in our blood, and we often perform them unconsciously. Nature is the source of the legends and beliefs of our ancestors. They feared and respected it, accepting the rhythm of life it imposed and giving spiritual meaning to many phenomena that seem ordinary today. Especially when we enter a wild forest at sunset, we see countless shadows and shapes that resemble

creatures from another world. We still carry this unique mixture of fear and fascination with the unknown, and I love using it in my art.

How has your experience as a tattoo artist influenced your drawing style, especially your use of contrast, line, and symbolism?

Well, it taught me to keep compositions very clean and clear for the customer. I had to work much faster and more efficiently.

In 2018, when I started my tattoo apprenticeship, I didn't have an iPad or a good graphics tablet yet, so I had to do everything on paper. It was a really hard lesson for me, especially because I had to forget many things that the art academy had taught me and of course I had to combine education and work at the same time.

You have also created artwork for the music industry. How does music influence the mood, structure, or narrative of your visual works?

Artwork for music merchandise and album covers has to be clean and catch attention through composition and motifs as quickly and effectively as possible. It also had a deep influence on my patience. Music clients are, to be honest, often difficult. I had to learn how to cooperate with people and their strong emotions. I had to combine their ideas with my style and my own ideas. It wasn't personal work—it was a complete collaboration with other artists. That's why it's so complicated.



— Interview

Meriem Arabi

You are trained as a theoretical physicist, while your visual language is highly intuitive, colorful, and surreal. How do these two worlds, science and art, influence each other in your practice?

Theoretical physics is an extremely mathematical field. In his book *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, the



Meriem Arabi | Genesis | 2020



Meriem Arabi | Psycho Tropical Self | 2024

Austrian philosopher Karl Popper outlines his definition of a scientific theory. Following his reasoning, mathematics leans more towards a purely creative process than a rigid reflection of reality. Because of this, I like to believe that intuition plays a major role in theoretical physics, which makes it coherent with my artistic side.

Your work often feels like a translation of invisible forces into color and form. Do concepts from physics, such as energy, particles, space, or vibration, consciously appear in your paintings?

A lot of people actually point that out to me, even if I don't always see it myself. If certain physics concepts do appear in my art, they aren't intentional, but it makes complete sense given my background. I've found that it's much easier for me to create when I don't overthink the process. For me, painting is more of a spontaneous outlet.

You describe your artistic process as freestyle, often not knowing where the next stroke will take you. How important is spontaneity in your work?

If art is an expression of your deepest feelings, prioritizing spontaneity is only natural. I process my thoughts and emotions through painting. In my experience, the more spontaneous a painting is, the more it speaks to me. I do sometimes wish I could paint something more structured and intentional and be satisfied with it, but since I've never taken formal classes, I've learned entirely through trial and error. Right now, I'm studying art concepts on my own because I think my style will benefit from them. It's a bit of a challenge for now, but I'm definitely getting



better.

Your self-portrait does not show a traditional face, but rather a psychological landscape. What does portraiture mean to you beyond physical resemblance?

People aren't solely defined by their physical features. There's always more to a person than meets the eye, and even if the world is objectively the same, everyone perceives it differently. So, the most important thing to capture in a self-portrait isn't just a literal likeness, but your own perception of what surrounds you. In my self-portrait, I feel like the focus is as much on the environment around me as it is on my own figure.

Your color palette is very vivid and bold, often combining intense pinks, greens, yellows, blues, and oranges. How do you choose colors, and what emotional role do they play?

I am a very sensitive person, and I like to see that as a good thing because it means I feel everything so deeply, whether it's ecstasy, grief, or the entire spectrum of emotion in between. The vibrant colors in my paintings are a direct expression of that intensity. They are bold and alive, just like everything I feel inside

You mention that you draw inspiration from everything around you. Are there particular

places, memories, books, films, scientific ideas, or cultural influences that return often in your art?

Growing up, fantasy books and movies held an immense place in my life. I remember thinking that reality was so boring compared to the worlds I was reading about or watching on screen. I've always loved Tolkien's works, among others. I also vividly remember discovering Salvador Dalí in the Gothic streets of Barcelona when I was ten years old, which definitely left a lasting mark on me. Ultimately, I don't think I draw inspiration from specific, isolated things; it's more that everything I've ever loved and admired blends into something subtle that is lodged in my subconscious, which eventually finds its way out onto the canvas.

As both a physicist and an artist, how do you imagine your practice developing in the future? Are there themes or experiments you would like to explore next?

Right now, the most important thing for me is to continue my studies. I'm hoping to find a PhD position and contribute to research in astroparticle physics someday. While doing that, I'll also be looking for an environment that allows me to flourish both artistically and personally. Once I have even more time to dedicate to my passions, I'd like to develop some cohesive painting series around specific themes and eventually exhibit my work in a way that creates a complete visual universe.



— Interview

Andrey Marin

Your encounter with the parallel program of Manifesta 10 in 2014 became a turning point in your life. What did you see or experience there that made contemporary art feel like your true path?

Before Manifesta in 2014, my life felt like it was shrinking around predictability - knowing exactly what to do and what would happen next. It was a trade-off: I gave up my inner freedom for security and a shot at success. Everything was clear, stable, and 'good,' but I paid for it with my uniqueness, my right to be imperfect, and my honesty. The scariest part is that this choice usually happens so early in life that we don't even realize it.

But at Manifesta, I saw a completely different reality. I saw artists - people who stepped out into



Andrey Marin | An Eternal Spring Inside A Solitary Cell

this world 'without spacesuits,' totally naked and vulnerable in their work. And the most shocking thing was that nobody killed them for it. Seeing their courage completely shattered my old worldview. I realized that you could actually live and create in a totally different way.

That is exactly why dictatorial regimes fight contemporary art so fiercely, and why the state causes such heavy damage by banning it. They are deathly afraid of this raw honesty and vulnerability. The authorities know perfectly well: once a person takes off their spacesuit and gasps for fresh air, they will never willingly climb back into that suffocating, yet 'safe' world.

Before becoming an artist, you studied and worked as an engineer. Does this technical background still influence the way you construct images, organize space, or approach artistic problems?

I was a terrible engineer - zero enthusiasm, dead eyes. I tried to find something in it, even enrolled in three different tech universities, but I dropped out every year and just applied again the next. So I doubt my engineering background had any influence on my art.

If anything, it was the other way around - art gave me confidence. It brought me to life, I believed in myself, and I quit engineering. And during Covid,



Andrey Marin | Delusion



when all the galleries were closing, I learned a programming language and got a job as a programmer.

You grew up on the Barents Sea coast of the Kola Peninsula. How have the landscape, climate, isolation, and atmosphere of that region shaped your visual imagination?

I was surrounded by dwarf plants, military men, and food shortages, because getting supplies out there was very difficult. All around were abandoned apartments that families just left behind as they moved to the mainland. The Soviet Union was falling apart, and it clearly felt like something was coming to an end.

Almost every week, the radio would report that a soldier had deserted his unit. On those days, my mom wouldn't let me go outside, because they were often armed. Grown-ups there were losing their minds, especially the ones who didn't have families. They deserted, drank themselves to death, froze in the tundra... The rest of the time, my friends and I loved exploring the abandoned apartments, finding left-behind children's toys. Once, we found an old school bag with notebooks inside a manhole - I remember it made me so excited.

It's hard to say how much a childhood like that influenced my art. Maybe it's because of the sharp lack of color, light, and the feeling of isolation that I started painting such bright pictures.

You describe your process as spontaneous and intuitive. What usually initiates a painting - a feeling, a color, a gesture, a memory, or something you cannot immediately name?

It depends. But it's always a pure impulse: an image

starts brewing inside me, and I can't wait to see it myself - it's like I'm the very first viewer. Absolutely any event or signal from the outside world can spark this process, transforming into something completely new.

Since you rarely plan a work in advance, how do you recognize the moment when a painting is complete?

To quote Jackson Pollock when he was asked the exact same thing, he answered: 'How do you know when you've reached an orgasm?' It's pure physiology and an internal feeling - you just know and feel that moment.

There is a tension in your work between humor, childlike directness, absurdity, and a sense of unease. Is this contrast intentional, and what does it allow you to express?

This contrast isn't intentional. Childhood innocence, humor, absurdity, anxiety - this is just how I see life, and I simply want to convey that.

Titles such as *An Eternal Spring Inside a Solitary Cell*, *How to Become a Bird (Instruction Manual)*, and *Cockroaches* suggest hidden narratives. Do titles come before or after the paintings, and how much should they guide the viewer?

The title usually comes last, like the headline of a story or a whole book. But I don't want to force my meaning onto the viewer; I'm not looking for people who will just blindly agree with me.

It's a dialogue between equals. Call it what you want, think what you want - your perspective carries just as much weight. My title isn't law; it's just my personal take on a moment in time.



Gianpaolo Alexander



Gianpaolo Alexander | Company

Your works often feel like scenes from a strange theatre or a dream. How do your images usually begin — with a story, an emotion, a memory, or a visual idea?



Gianpaolo Alexander | City At Dawn

Usually, they are visions that I'm not really sure where they came from. At times, they are a result of a strong feeling, as though they get translated into the visual but have been brewing inside for a while.

In your artist statement, you mention painting what you feel or encounter. How do everyday impressions transform into the surreal worlds we see in your paintings?

They transform through time. What may begin as a view of a park, as I continue to work, seems to absorb whatever I am going through, good or bad. It's not really intentional, but part of just continuing to dream through that vision. It's also important to contain this, if that's the right word, because it's easy for it to slip into something else entirely.

Many of your paintings contain figures that seem mysterious, masked, or ghost-like. What role do these characters play in your work?

The images of people are also seen often through a lens. The lens being life, memory, and dream. So, for me, it's almost more important to allow this to



happen than to capture the way the thing actually looks.

Your urban landscapes feel both familiar and imaginary. Are these cities based on real places, inner visions, or a combination of both?

The places go through a similar process. We have all seen millions of places, and this influences the way we see the world that surrounds us. I am not attempting to be free of perception.

There is often a strong sense of tension in your compositions — conflict, anticipation, or something about to happen. How important is narrative drama in your painting process?

Narration is everything for me. I can't help being interested in that. Everything is in constant movement and changing, so for me, it feels like the most genuine way to develop an image.

You write about searching for things that cause wonder. What does "wonder" mean to you as an

artist, and how do you know when a painting has captured it?

Wonder for me is the unknown and its effect on perception. Wonder can also be negative. Often, I am battling with myself in order to make this turn into something positive or good. Even the most haunted or sorrowful feelings offer a glimpse into the unknown, so I just try to keep that very much present.

Looking at your recent works, what direction do you feel your painting is moving toward now — more narrative, more atmospheric, more personal, or something else entirely?

I would say that the paintings are going towards the breakdown of forms and things, so in a way, the atmospheric. In painting, you are wondering about every element of reality and finding a way to make that all work together. It's all really just a feeling for things. As I change, the paintings change as well. I am always trying to be as honest as I can, I suppose.

— Interview

Kiara Smith

Your work explores vulnerability, heartbreak, and emotional introspection. What usually comes first for you - a personal emotion, a visual image, or a story?

It usually starts with an intense emotion, sometimes even an emotion that someone else is experiencing that I am able to relate to or empathise with. The emotion demands to be expressed and then I start thinking about different stories, images and scenes where this emotion makes sense which leads me to the artwork that I make.

There is a strong cinematic quality in the composition. Are you inspired by film, photography, or specific visual scenes when creating your work?

Sometimes when I create artwork I do kind of picture it as a scene in a movie and I am inspired by film when it comes to deciding on lighting and the tone of the painting.

You mention that music is one of your sources of inspiration. How do songs influence the mood, imagery, or narrative of your artworks?

Music is such a beautiful art form and it tends to invoke many different kinds of emotions in a way that makes you feel heard and understood. Often I will be listening to a song that ends up naming the emotion that I am feeling and that leads to me analysing different ways in which this song applies to my life. Sometimes it's just a



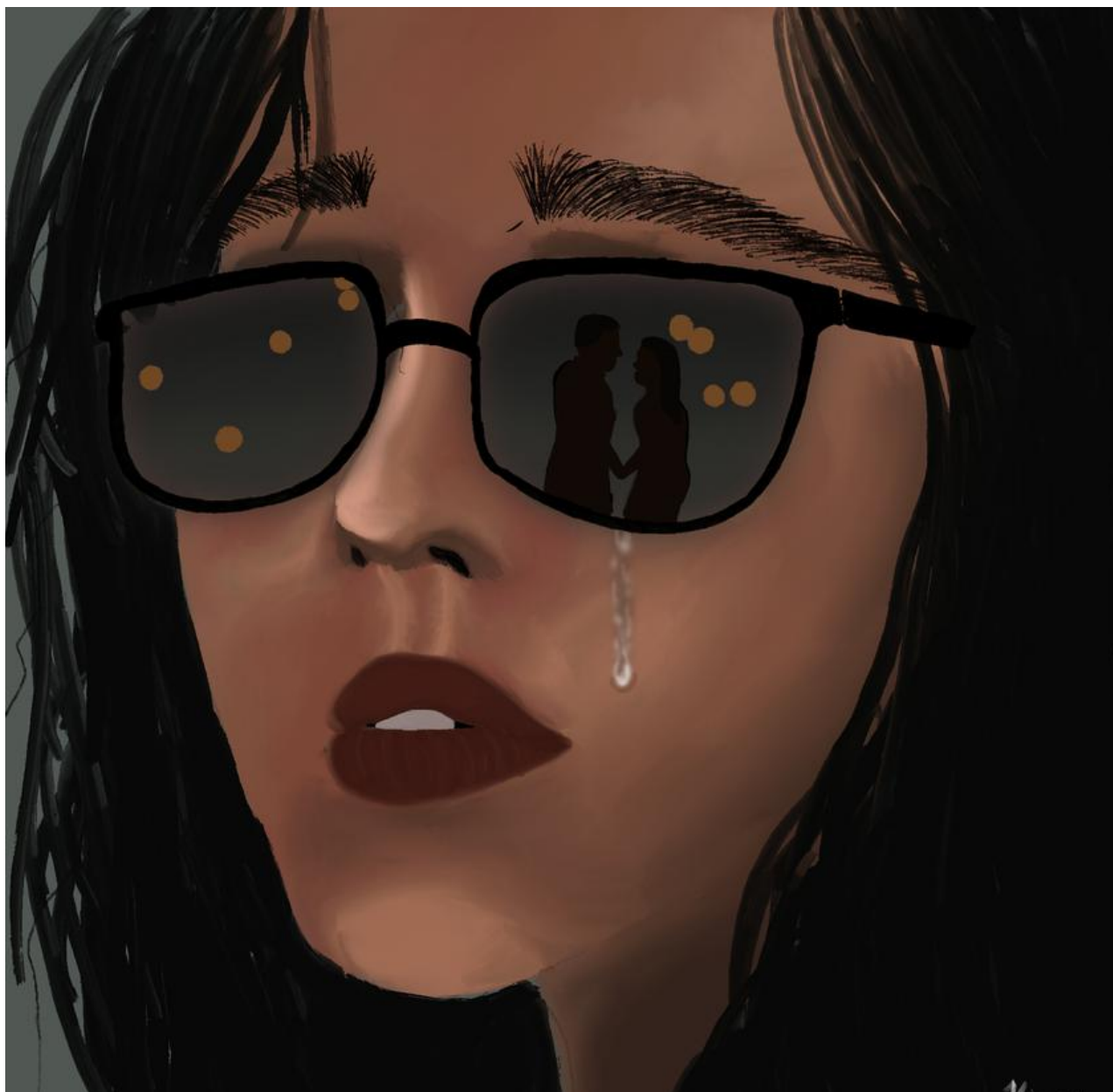
line in the song that ends up showing an image in my head that I feel the urge to recreate. Also, songs sometimes bring up old feelings that you've forgotten about and that helps me to come up with ideas for artworks.

How do you balance realism and symbolism in your creative process?

I love symbolism and metaphors and hiding the different layers of meanings within a painting. However, I never want the symbolism to become a barrier between the artwork and the viewer. Therefore, I do put quite a bit of realism in my paintings to allow people to understand the message I'm trying to convey as the whole point for me is for others to be able to relate to the scenes that I paint.

Do you see your work as a form of healing, self-expression, or communication with others who may have felt the same way?

All of the above. I find healing in expressing my emotions with art and being able to say something without speaking. I find that when I create art that I end up processing these emotions and it allows me to heal while



expressing myself creatively. I'm also interested in relating with people and bonding over these shared emotions. It does feel a bit scary to reveal so much about how I'm feeling through my art but knowing that there are others who relate to it makes it all worth it.

How does being based in Cape Town shape your artistic identity, if at all?

Being based in Cape Town hasn't had a strong influence on what I choose to paint. My work is primarily driven by an interest in human emotion and connection, and I find myself drawn to themes that people can relate to regardless of their background or location. I'm fascinated by the shared experiences that make us human—

love, loss, vulnerability, resilience—and those themes tend to take precedence over a sense of place and culture in my work.

As an emerging artist, what themes or emotions do you hope to explore more deeply in your future work?

At the moment I am working on a series exploring sadness, grief and heartbreak, however, in the future I would really love to explore the happier parts of the human experience such as joy and excitement. I think those emotions are equally as important and often underrepresented. I would also love to explore current world events and the emotions that they evoke for people around the world.

Alena Tuition

When did you first become interested in art?

A sense of beauty lived in me long before I had a name for it as art. I noticed what usually goes unseen: a crack of light on an old wall, an unexpected fold of fabric, a texture that could be read like a sentence. At some point I stopped simply looking and started asking — why does this move me.

That question led me to artists. Kuindzhi's light,



which seems to breathe from inside the canvas. Bosch's strangeness, where the ordinary world turns itself inside out. Magritte's mystery, which never answers directly. Modigliani's elongated necks and faces — as if the body stretches beyond ordinary anatomy to hold something too large for an ordinary form. I was never interested in technique. I was interested in what they lived through while painting — what they were thinking in the moment the brush touched the canvas. I understood something then: art isn't what the eye sees. It's what the artist managed to live through and left inside the image, like a letter with no addressee. The viewer finds it by accident — and suddenly recognizes something about themselves. Today's world moves so fast that we've forgotten how to stop in front of beauty. Frost forming a pattern on glass that melts before we finish looking at it. A hand's shadow on a wall in the instant a light switches on too abruptly to notice gently. A drop clinging to the edge of a glass longer than seems physically possible. We rush past these things because they seem too small to matter. But it's in that smallness that the life we keep missing actually lives — while we chase what feels "significant."

What led you to work with AI-generated imagery and video?

For a long time, I didn't consider myself a creative person. My professions had nothing to do with art. But feeling things deeply — that was always in me, it simply had no outlet.



Alena Tuition | Daughter Of The Underwater | 2026



At some point I realized I wanted to release what had been building inside me, and to show people that art can take many forms. Every new technology leaves its own mark on the history of art — and almost always meets resistance from those used to the previous language. The same happened when photography entered our lives: many painters at the time insisted it wasn't art, just mechanical copying of reality. Time proved otherwise. I don't know how to paint with a brush. But AI gave me a way to say what I think and feel — and perhaps not only me. It became my instrument of self-expression. Not a replacement for the brush, but a new language for the same ancient need: to speak.

What inspired you to create this series?

I've long been struck by how culture decides in advance what we should love and what we should fear. A swan — a symbol of purity and grace — is meant to be adored. A snake — a symbol of danger — is meant to be feared. An axolotl, a frog, a ferret — creatures usually overlooked entirely, too small

and strange to symbolize anything at all. I wanted to strip away these ready-made labels and show the same thing underneath all of them: closeness, trust, stillness — regardless of what label culture had already attached to the creature.

In every frame, the woman doesn't confront the animal, nor does she simply admire it from a distance. She shares its state — whether it's a creature we're taught to exalt, one we're taught to ignore, or one we're taught to fear. The bond remains a bond, whether it's dangerous, beautiful, or unnoticed.

The textures grew from the same idea — the blurred line between human and nature. Glass flowers that look as if grown from ice. Mother-of-pearl that behaves at times like fabric, at times like scales, at times like feathers. Fur that in one frame reads as winter, in another as unease. I wanted the viewer not to immediately know where the costume ends and the creature begins, where the creature ends and the woman begins. That is my language of couture — not an ornament on the body, but its continuation.

The inspiration came from a simple question: what if closeness has nothing to do with how beautiful, dangerous, or visible a creature is?

Do you begin with a clear image in mind, or does the work change during the process?

It depends. Sometimes I already know the theme I want to raise — it lives inside me for a while before becoming a frame. Other times, everything starts from a single detail — a symbol, a fabric, a material, an event — about which I know almost nothing. And that not-knowing becomes the entry point. That's when I go into deep research. I look for hidden meanings, cultural codes, the history of origin — why a symbol came to exist, what it meant across different eras, what trace it left behind. I gather references the way one gathers shards of a single mirror, until an entire picture forms inside me: what the material will be, how the light will fall, what posture the body will take, what movement of fabric will speak louder than words.

Behind every element of the composition lies an emotion — not random, but earned through that immersion. Light carries unease or tenderness. Texture carries memory or threat. Posture carries submission or power.

I choose color with particular care — for me it isn't decoration, but another layer of meaning. I'm not interested in familiar combinations. I'm interested

in finding strange, almost ill-fitting tones and watching how they clash or, instead, fuse with the texture. Color reaches the viewer's subconscious before they have time to think. Only when all these emotions find one another does the final composition emerge — no longer a set of details, but a complete statement in which nothing can be removed without losing its meaning.

How do you choose the animals that appear in your images?

I don't choose by beauty or by how recognizable an image is. I look instead for a creature capable of holding a specific mood of the frame — the character of its gaze, the texture of its skin or fur, the way it can physically settle against the woman's body.

Sometimes the animal arrives first — I see it and understand what kind of woman should stand beside it. Sometimes it's the reverse — there's already a finished image of a woman, and I search for who could meet her in a way that feels inevitable rather than staged. What matters is that the bond reads as a given, not as an idea added afterward.

Why are fashion and couture aesthetics important in your images?

Because fashion is an art form too often underestimated. Every couturier, in creating a look, still returns to the same sources — painting, architecture, an era — to find a way to say what cannot be said in words. Silhouette, fabric, cut: these are a language no less precise than a brushstroke or the composition of a frame. Every collection is a way of speaking to its viewer. Not selling an object, but conveying a state. That's why couture lives inside my images not as decoration, but as a full creative partner in meaning — carrying the same emotional weight as the light, the posture, or the creature beside the woman. What I find especially valuable about fashion structures is that they can be transferred directly onto the human body. The architecture of a collection, born first in a designer's imagination, eventually settles onto living skin, breathes with movement, becomes a second nature. I work with fashion not because it's beautiful. I work with it because it's one of the few languages of art you can wear — and carry on your body as a statement.

How do you want viewers to feel when they look



Alena Tuition | Winters Ally | 2026

at these portraits?

I want the viewer to doubt, even briefly, their own reflex — what counts as beautiful, what counts as frightening. In these portraits, the snake doesn't threaten, the axolotl doesn't repel, and the swan is more than a symbol of purity. Every creature becomes as equal a presence as the woman beside it.

What matters to me is catching the moment when something repellent turns, almost without warning, into something mesmerizing — when the viewer notices they're looking not with unease but with curiosity, and can't quite pinpoint when that shift happened. That's the very displacement I work toward: beauty as not a matter of correct form or familiar symbol, but the capacity to stay close to what we're trained to keep at a distance.

If, after seeing these images, someone's inner sense of "this is frightening" tips — even for a moment — toward "this is beautiful," I've done what I set out to do.

And perhaps that's the deepest thing I want this series to say: we're capable of feeling more than we allow ourselves to. To notice, to pause, to feel — that is the small thing every person is capable of giving back to the world. Not a grand gesture. Just attention to what's already beside us.



— Interview

Pavlina Bargili

Your work often feels like an excavation of the inner self, as if memory is hidden beneath the surface of the body. How do your images usually begin - with a face, a material, an emotion, or a personal memory?



Most of my works begin with an emotion. Sometimes it is a feeling I cannot easily explain, and the image becomes a way of understanding it. At other times it begins with a memory, a fragment of a place, a silence, or a question that stays with me. The face often appears later, almost as a landscape where memory can exist. Materials such as marble, gold, stone, wood, or fabric are never decorative elements for me. They become metaphors for experience, endurance, vulnerability, and time. I am interested in what lies beneath the visible surface and how a person carries their history within them.

You describe memory, identity, and personal history as central themes in your practice. How has your early experience of displacement from Famagusta shaped the emotional language of your art?

Being displaced from Famagusta after the events of 1974 shaped not only my life but also the emotional foundation of my work. I grew up with the experience of loss, absence, and longing for a place that remained physically close yet unreachable. That feeling became part of my artistic language. Much of my work explores what remains after something is taken away: memories, fragments, traces, and invisible connections. I believe displacement teaches you that identity is not only connected to geography but also to memory. In many ways, my work is an ongoing conversation with absence and with the things that continue to exist even when they cannot be seen.

Many of your portraits combine beauty with fracture - marble cracks, gold seams, damaged surfaces, and fragile bodies. What does the idea of “breaking” mean in your work?



I do not see breaking as the opposite of strength. For me, breaking is often a stage of transformation. Human beings are shaped by loss, disappointment, grief, and change. The cracks in my work are not simply signs of damage; they are evidence of survival. They reveal where life has touched us. I am fascinated by the tension between fragility and resilience. A fractured surface tells a story. It reminds us that imperfection is often where our humanity becomes visible.

Gold appears frequently in your images, often alongside ruin, stone, or darkness. What does gold symbolize for you - healing, survival, sacredness, memory, or something else?

Gold represents many things simultaneously. It can suggest healing, resilience, memory, dignity, and transformation. I often place gold beside damaged or weathered surfaces because I am interested in the dialogue between loss and value. What survives difficult experiences often becomes precious. Gold also connects to my background in jewellery design, where I learned to appreciate both the beauty and symbolic power of materials. In my work, gold is not about luxury. It is about endurance and the light that remains after hardship.

Before becoming fully focused on digital art, you studied jewellery design and worked in the jewellery industry. How did that background influence your sense of detail, material, and composition?

Jewellery design taught me to think carefully about structure, balance, texture, and the relationship between materials.

Working with precious metals and stones trained my eye to notice subtle details and understand how different elements interact. Even though my medium has changed, that sensitivity remains present in my work. I often approach an image as if I am constructing an object, considering weight, texture, and material presence. My experience in jewellery design also deepened my appreciation for craftsmanship and for the emotional significance that materials can carry.

There is a strong cinematic and almost mythological quality in your images. Do you see your figures as portraits of real people, symbolic characters, or fragments of yourself?

They are often all three at once. Some figures begin as personal reflections, while others emerge as symbolic characters carrying broader human experiences. I am less interested in portraying a specific individual and more interested in exploring emotional and psychological states. Many of my figures contain fragments of my own memories, fears, hopes, and questions, but they are also meant to be open enough for viewers to find their own stories within them. I think of them as vessels for shared human experiences.

What do you hope viewers feel when they encounter your work - recognition, discomfort, healing, curiosity, or a deeper awareness of the stories hidden beneath the surface?

I hope viewers pause for a moment and feel something genuine. Whether that feeling is recognition, curiosity, reflection, or even discomfort, it means the work has created a connection. We often move through life carrying invisible stories, wounds, memories, and dreams. My hope is that the work encourages people to look beyond appearances and consider the complexity that exists within every human being. If someone leaves with a deeper awareness of themselves or of others, then the work has fulfilled its purpose.



Eva Hartman

Visual artist. Ink and digital drawings.
Water soluble pens, watercolor, acrylic pens.

Project Statement

A mini series of three brush paint drawngs.





Zhengyang Yang

BioMatrix is described as a blockchain ecosystem where crypto becomes real-world value. What was the original idea or problem that inspired this project?

The original idea behind BioMatrix was to bridge the gap between blockchain technology and everyday users. While blockchain offers powerful opportunities for ownership, identity, and financial participation,



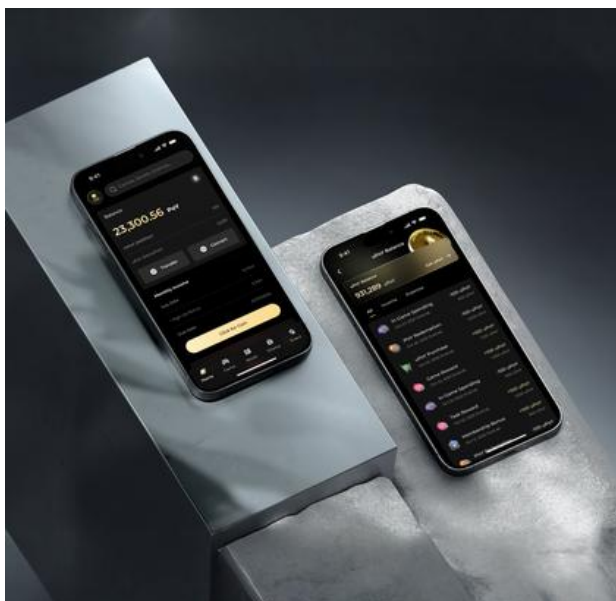
many existing products remain difficult to understand and disconnected from real-world value.

The goal was to create an ecosystem where digital assets are not viewed as speculative instruments, but as tools that can support meaningful participation, rewards, and economic opportunities. BioMatrix was designed to transform complex blockchain mechanisms into intuitive experiences that feel familiar, useful, and accessible to mainstream users.

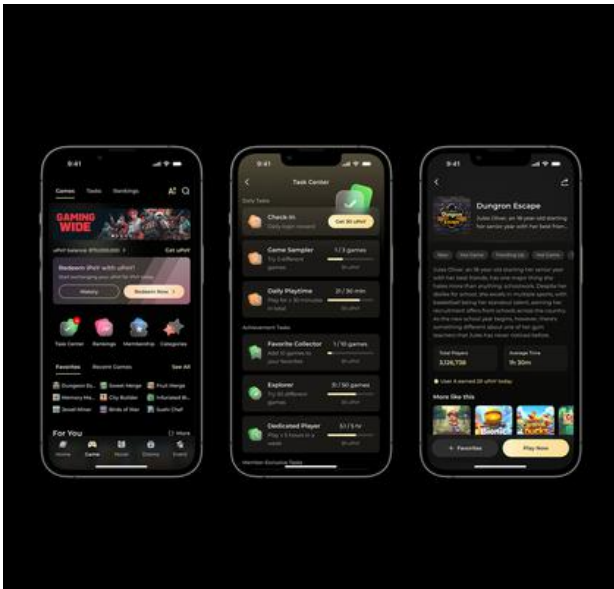
Your work sits between product design, visual storytelling, and emerging technology. How do you balance functionality with a strong artistic identity in BioMatrix?

I believe that design should first solve problems, but it should also create emotional engagement. In BioMatrix, functionality and artistic expression are not competing priorities; they reinforce each other. Every visual element serves a purpose. The storytelling helps users understand complex concepts, while the product architecture ensures clarity and usability. My approach is to build a strong functional foundation first, then use visual language, motion, and branding to create a memorable experience that users can emotionally connect with.

The interface uses a dark visual language with gold accents, game-like icons, and cinematic presentation. What atmosphere or emotional response did you want to create for users?



Zhengyang Yang | BioMatrix | 2025



I wanted users to feel that they were entering a sophisticated digital ecosystem that was both innovative and trustworthy. The dark visual environment creates focus and depth, while the gold accents communicate value, achievement, and progress.

The game-inspired elements were intentionally designed to make participation feel rewarding and engaging. Rather than presenting blockchain as a purely technical system, I wanted the experience to feel aspirational, immersive, and approachable.

The project transforms abstract blockchain concepts into familiar user experiences. What design strategies helped you make crypto feel more accessible and engaging?

One of the key strategies was to translate technical concepts into recognizable interaction patterns. Instead of exposing users to complex blockchain terminology, I focused on clear actions, familiar navigation structures, and visual feedback systems. I also used progressive disclosure, introducing information gradually rather than overwhelming users upfront. By combining educational elements with intuitive design patterns, I was able to reduce cognitive load and help users build confidence as they explored the ecosystem.

The visual presentation of BioMatrix feels both futuristic and luxurious. How did you develop the brand identity and decide on its color palette, typography, and interface style?

The brand identity was built around the idea that advanced technology should feel human-centered and aspirational. I selected a dark foundation to emphasize focus and contrast, while gold highlights reinforce the

perception of value and achievement.

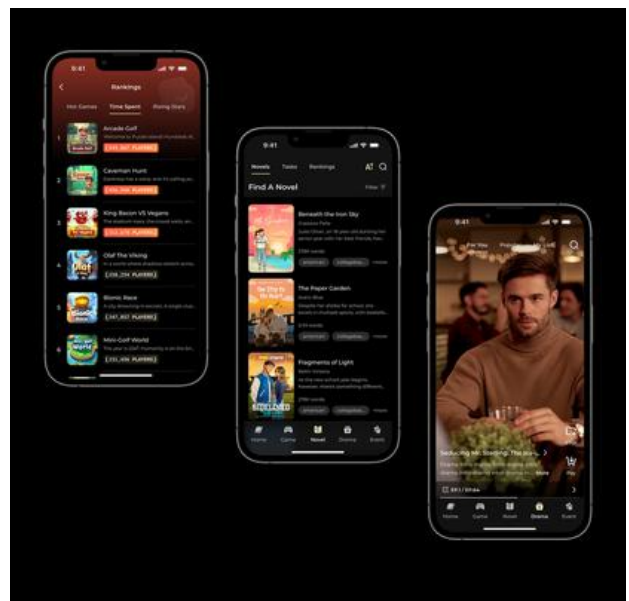
The typography prioritizes clarity and modernity, supporting both readability and brand personality. Across the interface, I aimed to balance futuristic aesthetics with practical usability, ensuring that visual sophistication never compromised user understanding.

As a designer with experience in startups and major global companies, how has your professional background shaped the way you approach experimental projects like BioMatrix?

Working across both startups and large-scale technology organizations has given me a unique perspective. Startups taught me how to move quickly, embrace uncertainty, and innovate with limited resources. Larger organizations taught me how to design for scale, consistency, and diverse user needs. These experiences help me approach experimental projects with both creativity and discipline. I enjoy exploring new technologies, but I always evaluate ideas through the lens of user value, business impact, and long-term sustainability.

What do you hope users will feel or understand after entering the BioMatrix ecosystem for the first time?

I hope users feel empowered rather than intimidated. Emerging technologies often create barriers because they appear too complex or inaccessible. If users leave their first experience understanding that blockchain can be useful, approachable, and relevant to their everyday lives, then the design has succeeded. Ultimately, I want people to see technology not as something exclusive, but as something that can create meaningful opportunities for a broader community.



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