

VISUAL ART JOURNAL

VISUALARTJOURNAL.COM



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— Intro

Hello Dear Reader,

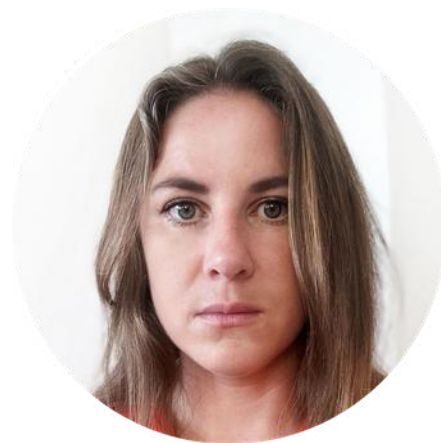
You are holding Issue #59 of our magazine — a vibrant, vivid edition filled with color, texture, and creative energy. Somehow, as summer draws to a close, this issue feels like a harvest: a gathering of remarkable talents, diverse voices, and artistic discoveries.

And yet, there is so much more ahead. This autumn, our team will be launching several new projects, and we look forward to sharing them with you through our social media channels.

Bringing artists together and creating a space where they can express themselves is both a privilege and a responsibility. Our hope is to build a strong and inspiring community — one where artists can discover one another, exchange ideas, support each other, and grow together.

For our part, we will continue searching for new ways to champion creativity, bring artists closer to their audiences, and create opportunities for their work to be seen and appreciated.

So make yourself comfortable and turn the page — there is plenty here to explore, discover, and be inspired by.



Anna Gvozdeva

Curator of
Visual Art Journal

On the Front Cover:
Lara-Ann Guerreiro
Casablanca At Night

On the Back Cover:
Joanna Mora
I Still Care
2026



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

Ian Rayer-Smith

You have described a life-changing encounter with a single painting in a California gallery. What do you remember most clearly about that moment, and what made you realise that painting could give your life a new direction?

I can still remember standing in front of the painting and feeling something I had never experienced before. It wasn't just admiration for the work; it felt as though the painting was alive. It had an energy and presence that completely stopped me in my tracks.



Ian Rayer-Smith | The Drift | 2026



At that point in my life I had built a successful business, but I wasn't fulfilled. Looking back, I think that painting gave me permission to imagine a different life. It wasn't a rational decision. It was instinctive. I left the gallery knowing I wanted to paint, despite having no artistic background at all.

That single encounter completely altered the direction of my life. It wasn't about becoming an artist overnight; it was about discovering something that finally made sense to me.

After leaving a career in business, you trained in fine art and later spent two years working intensively in isolation. What did that period teach you that formal education could not?

University gave me valuable technical foundations and exposed me to the history of painting, but the real education began afterwards when I was alone in the studio.

For two years I painted almost every day without worrying whether the work was good enough or whether anyone would ever see it. There was nobody telling me what should happen next. I had to learn to trust my own instincts.

That period taught me resilience. It also taught me that finding your own visual language isn't something that can be taught. It comes from making thousands of decisions, making countless mistakes, and continuing even when the work feels uncertain.

I think every artist eventually reaches a point where they have to stop looking for permission and simply listen to themselves.



You begin each studio day with music and allow it to accompany the entire painting process. How does music affect your rhythm, gestures, or emotional state while you work?

Music is part of the atmosphere of the studio. I don't choose it to illustrate a painting, but it helps create a mental space where I stop analysing and become more instinctive.

Different music changes the pace of my movements. Sometimes it's energetic and physical, encouraging fast, expressive marks. Other times it's quieter and slows everything down, allowing me to notice subtleties that I might otherwise miss.

The painting and the music almost become one continuous rhythm. After a while I'm no longer aware of either independently, they simply become part of the same experience.

You say that you often follow the painting rather than lead it. How do you recognise the moment when a work begins to develop its own direction?

Usually it's when the painting surprises me. I'll make a mark without fully understanding why, and suddenly it opens a completely unexpected possibility. From that point on I'm responding rather than directing. The painting begins presenting problems and opportunities that I couldn't have planned. If I try to force an idea onto it, the work often loses its energy. I've learned that my role isn't to control every decision but to recognise when something unexpected has happened and have the confidence to follow it. That's when painting becomes exciting.

Your paintings combine spontaneous gestures with areas that feel layered, erased, covered, or partially revealed. How important are revision and destruction within your process?

They're essential. People often think painting is about adding, but for me it's equally about removing, covering, scraping back and

allowing earlier decisions to remain visible beneath the surface.

Some of the most important moments happen when I destroy something I thought was working. Those decisions create history within the painting. Every layer leaves traces of previous thoughts, and I like the idea that the finished work contains evidence of its own journey. Rather than hiding uncertainty, I embrace it.

You describe your paintings as questions rather than answers. What kinds of questions are currently occupying you in the studio, and have they changed as your practice has developed?

Earlier in my career I was asking how I could paint. Now I'm asking how far painting can go before it loses its identity, and how much emotion, memory and atmosphere can exist without describing anything directly.

I'm increasingly interested in creating paintings that don't explain themselves immediately. I want them to unfold slowly, rewarding people who spend time with them. The questions have become less about technique and much more about experience.

How can a painting continue revealing itself after someone has lived with it for years?

That's something I think about constantly.

Painting gave you meaning, purpose, and "a reason". Has the nature of that reason changed over time, and what are you still hoping to discover through painting?

Painting still gives me purpose, but the purpose has evolved.

At first it was about finding myself. Now it's about continuing to discover something I didn't know was there. Every new painting is an opportunity to enter unfamiliar territory.

I'm not interested in repeating myself or producing recognisable formulas. If I already know how a painting will end, I lose interest.

What keeps me motivated is the possibility that the next painting might reveal something completely unexpected. I hope I never lose that sense of curiosity because I think that's where genuine creativity lives.



Zaza Aspanidze

I was born in Georgia (country) in 1970.

I have been drawing since childhood.

I graduated from Tbilisi State University, then Tbilisi Academy of Arts.

I participate in various exhibitions.

I am a freelance artist.

Zaza Aspanidze | Meeting | 2024





— Interview

Lara-Ann Guerreiro

Your Block & Form series brings together childhood memories, Mediterranean landscapes, and domestic scenes. How did these different sources of inspiration first become part of a single visual project?



Motherhood slowly made its way into my studio over the past several years. Finding sources of inspiration look different as I'm surrounded by childhood more than my studio walls. So it came from the unexpected; stacking building blocks with my children during play time. The white and orange blocks reminded me of the homes scattered cross Madeira's hillside, and the concept grew from there.

You were born in South Africa and draw strongly on your Portuguese heritage. How does living between these cultural references influence your understanding of place, belonging, and memory?

Although I was born in South Africa, I grew up in a very Portuguese household, so I never felt as though I had to choose between the two cultures. They've always existed alongside one another.

Portugal has always represented something deeply familiar to me. I don't look at the Mediterranean with curiosity—I look at it with adoration, almost the way a child looks at their mother and instinctively sees her beauty. It's a connection that's been shaped by family, tradition, language, food, and the stories that were passed down long before I was old enough to appreciate them.

Living between those two cultural references has taught me that belonging isn't always about where you're born. Sometimes it's built through heritage, memory, and the values you're raised with. South Africa is my home and where my life has unfolded, while Portugal is part of the foundation of who I am. Rather than feeling divided between them, I feel enriched by both.

Your compositions often resemble arrangements made from children's building blocks. What does this



Lara-Ann Guerreiro | Albufeira Block&Form



visual connection to play and childhood allow you to express?

Simplicity, that less is more. A departure from my previous detail oriented work. Young children are so content with simple objects, yet create immersive worlds and this made its way into my work. I often needed to revisit pieces simply because they contained too many parts, distorting the sense of place and burdening the viewers eye.

How do you decide which elements of a landscape or still life should remain recognisable and which should be reduced to pure geometric form?

The hero element is what makes the piece most recognisable. Most of the time its a colour deeply associated with a place or a particular form in general. This element evokes a sense of place or the object to the viewer; like the lime-washed walls in Faro. The rest of the elements are supporting actors, just enough to help carry the lead.

Your works are carefully balanced, yet they also feel spontaneous and playful. How do you develop a composition, and how do you know when the relationship between its forms is complete?

Before I started my studio I worked in editorial design; so the grid system became my playground. Most of my work has its feet rooted in some sort of grid. I like to contrast the rigidity with playful elements.

A piece will either be lacking something definitive or it's fighting with itself. Once I've processed what it needs, there's a visual harmony that settles into place and I can send the piece off.

Although your editions are produced as Giclée prints, their surfaces evoke block printing and risograph techniques. How important are texture, grain, transparency, and imperfection to the atmosphere of the works?

Because my works are digitally hand-made, depth and contrast are two very important elements to me. it creates this lovely harmonious balance; contemporary technology and old-school print.

I love retro printing techniques and block-print in general, and Risograph inspired me to add depth to over lapping blocks by introducing a layered colour, and to recreate the vibrant matte soy-oil based inks in my work.

Your background in communication design is visible in the clarity and structure of your compositions. In what ways does design thinking support your fine-art practice, and where do you try to move beyond it?

I've married the two. I did fine art from a very young age and when I went to university I left that behind for communication design. Over the years I've learnt to use both and I'd like to think I've found a good balance. I find that they needed one another, they keep each other level head. There's beauty in art, and structure in design and together they work very well.



Linda Bodolóczy

Project Statement

I am a person who feels a lot: many things – often contradictory and intense. So my fundamental experience in life is that I have to extract from information that is overwhelming and contradictory what I can experience as reality. My works are the reflections of this emotional process: I use several – sometimes incompatible – pictorial elements, and from this diversity I create an ultimately harmonious composition on the canvas.

For years, my creative practice has been the mixing of gesture and geometry. The two painting trends are completely opposite to each other in their completion: one is planned, edited, the other is impulsive – the painterly gesture leaves a random imprint on the canvas. At the same time, the two methods can be very visually complementary to each other, since one is what the other is not. By including different qualities, I want to illustrate the contradictions of the world – and the individual within it.

I create constructive compositions. Geometry and gesture are not given complete freedom in my work, especially since I use both in all my paintings, so none of my paintings are strictly geometric or expressive. I quote them, they are included as image-forming elements, the foundations of the construction.

My paintings are structured, and the gesture also fits into this structuredness: of course, a cut mass of paint remains, but it has to be cut just there, at just the right angle, and it can only flow on the canvas for as long as I want. And if the composition so requires, I cut it in half or cover it up.

My colors vibrate. This is my means of illustrating emotional turmoil. I prefer to use complementary color pairs, which, when placed next to each other, bring out the maximum liveliness from each other, their contact leaves a moving, afterimage effect. My works are almost intrusively colorful – I want the viewer to get the impression, while reading the images, that I experience the world the way I do.

Linda Bodoloczy | 2022





Linda Bodoloczki | 2025

— Interview

Belinda Martens Kjærulf

Could you tell us about your journey from studying fashion design and working in textile and print design to developing your practice as a visual artist?

I have always painted and drawn, but when it came to choosing a career, I felt it should be something that existed within a larger industry. Fashion design seemed like the perfect fit because it combined my love of colour with the possibility of artistic expression through clothing. During my first years working in fashion, I discovered textile and print design and immediately fell in love with it. It allowed me to combine painting with product design, creating what I saw as a form of applied art. I loved translating hand-painted ideas into textiles that people could wear and live with.



Belinda Martens Kjærulf | Transitions | 2026



At the same time, working as a textile designer meant constantly designing within trends, specific briefs, and tight deadlines. Everything moved quickly, and collections were often short-lived. Painting on canvas and paper offered me the opposite. It gave me the freedom to slow down and create something timeless. Now my work comes from within rather than responding to what is expected or currently in fashion. It allows me to explore ideas, emotions, and my connection to nature, creating work that feels deeply personal and authentic.

You were born in Germany and are now based in Copenhagen. How have these different cultural and natural environments influenced your artistic vision?

Germany's vast natural landscapes have had a profound influence on my artistic practice. Nature represents the birth of all things and is a constant source of calm, happiness, and inspiration for me.

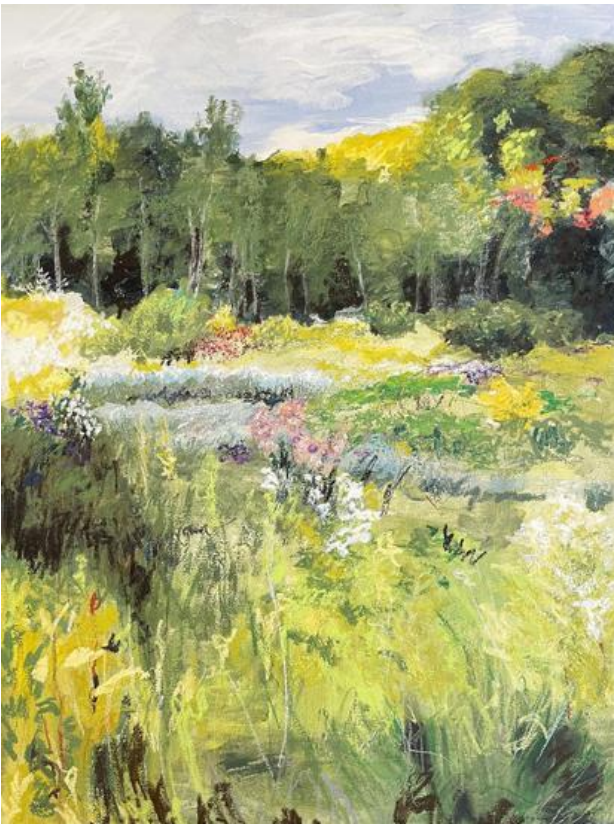
Moving to Denmark has taught me to appreciate beauty in everyday life and to slow down through the concept of "hygge", finding presence and meaning in simple moments. I have also been deeply inspired by the Danish approach to design, where colour and materiality are considered with great intention.

I think my work exists somewhere between these two influences: the untamed richness of nature I grew up in and the quiet appreciation for colour, simplicity, and everyday beauty that I found in Denmark.

Wildflowers, landscapes, and biodiversity play an important role in your work. What first drew you to these subjects, and what do they represent for you personally?

I grew up surrounded by forests, so wild nature was a big part of my childhood. When I moved to the city as a young adult, I gradually lost touch with how deeply connected I was to it.

After a stressful period and experiencing burnout from the fashion industry, I found my way back to nature and rediscovered how much it meant to me. I started learning more about biodiversity and how we can help nature thrive, which strengthened my connection to the natural world. For me, wildflowers and landscapes represent calmness, authenticity, and a way to reconnect with myself. They offer a sense of escape from everyday worries and remind me of the beauty and resilience of the natural world.



You primarily work with acrylics and oil pastels. What possibilities do these materials offer you, particularly when creating layers, textures, and atmospheric effects?

Both acrylics and oil pastels offer a sense of spontaneity and unpredictability that I really enjoy. Acrylics allow me to work intuitively with layers, as the paint dries quickly and sometimes reveals unexpected textures underneath. Oil pastels add a rich, tactile quality and enhance the sensory feeling of my work. I love the expressive, almost impressionistic atmosphere I can create with these mediums.

Do you usually begin with a particular place, photograph, sketch, or memory, or does each landscape gradually emerge through the painting process?

When I'm on hikes or walks, I gather inspiration by observing nature. From these experiences, an idea or theme gradually begins to emerge. My most recent series, Behind the House, is inspired by the wildflower meadow behind my parents' house, which is also my childhood home. I spent countless hours there as a child, often oblivious to its beauty because it felt so ordinary. Through this collection, I want to encourage people to appreciate and care for the nature that surrounds us. Even if it's just a patch of wildflowers or weeds in a local park.

I usually begin with a reference image, either one I have taken myself or one I have received permission to use from a photographer. However, I never copy the image directly. I use it as a starting point, allowing myself to add, remove, or change elements intuitively. Through the painting process, the landscape slowly transforms and a certain mood or feeling begins to emerge.

What emotions or sensations do you hope viewers experience when they encounter your landscapes?

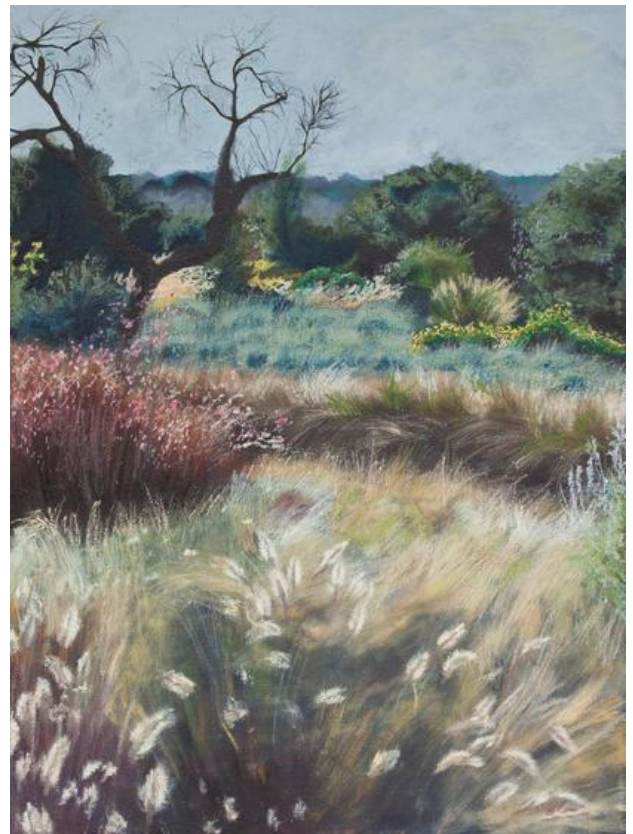
The most meaningful response is when viewers tell me that my paintings remind them of a place they have visited or a memory from their past. It might evoke the warmth of a holiday, the feeling of their childhood, or a place they deeply miss. I find it beautiful to create something that can awaken personal memories and positive emotions in others. More than anything, I hope my work offers a moment of peace. I want people to slow down, take time to observe, and discover the small details within the painting. If they can get lost in it for a while and reconnect with the positive energy that nature brings, then I have achieved what I set out to do. I hope my paintings evoke feelings of warmth, reassurance, inner peace, joy, and perhaps a touch of nostalgia.

How has your artistic practice evolved through your exhibitions in Germany and Copenhagen, and what new directions would you like to explore in the future?

In the beginning, I worked with more abstract motifs and gradually found my own visual language through exploring the beauty of nature. My exhibitions in Germany and Copenhagen have helped me develop confidence in this direction and understand how my work connects with viewers.

In the future, I would like to continue exploring different surfaces, such as painting on raw canvas or wood, and see how these supports can influence the expression and atmosphere of my work.

I also hope to explore the theme of preservation and biodiversity more deeply, supporting environmental conservation programmes that focus on restoring wildflower meadows and natural habitats for insects and other endangered species. I would love for my art to contribute to raising awareness and, in some way, help protect the landscapes that inspire my work.



Joanna Mora creates colorful paintings in acrylics that show women of color holding flowers and / or leaves. Born in 1989 in Wuppertal, Germany, Joanna's work focuses on the representation of women of color who were largely absent from German media during her youth. She herself is the daughter of a German mother and a Guyanese father. Joanna is currently based in San Jose, Costa Rica.

Project Statement

My life takes place between several different places, cultures and languages. I feel deeply connected to all of them, but without painting, I would have no way to express myself and be understood by everyone. That is why I feel so drawn to the canvas. Paintings don't need translation. Everyone can look at them and feel something. I also love that paintings don't ask for permission to be seen. A painting can be placed in a room and you can be sure that people will see it. It doesn't take much effort or time to look at one. I love this immediacy.



Joanna Mora | Happy Birthday | 2026



Jh2026

— Interview

Qingruo Zhao

Could you tell us about your background and what first drew you to motion design and animation?

I am a New York-based motion designer and animator specializing in documentary, nonfiction, and narrative-driven visual communication. I studied Computer Arts at the School of Visual Arts, and over the past several years I have worked across studios including Hornet, Carbon, and Bigstar, contributing to projects for Disney+, Netflix, Peacock, Google, and other global platforms and brands.

What first drew me to motion design was its ability to integrate illustration, graphic design, music, editing, and countless technologies into a single expressive language that achieves what no



Qingruo Zhao | Little Island | 2023

individual discipline can on its own. I was initially attracted to its diversity and playful nature—the way simple elements could be combined to create direct, immediate expression. Over time, I became more interested in motion not just as decoration, but as a storytelling structure, and eventually as a system for communication. This shift led me toward more intentional, structured approaches to visual storytelling, where clarity and meaning are built through motion rather than added onto it. I've also come to value—and take pride in—its capacity for emotional resonance and shared experience, where my work becomes a way to connect people through feeling as much as through information, often expressing empathy in ways that go beyond language.

How has living and working in New York influenced your visual language and creative perspective?

New York has had a major influence on how I observe, compose, and think about visual rhythm. The city is constantly placing different eras, cultures, languages, textures, and design systems next to one another. You might see hand-painted signage beside a digital billboard, a newly installed high-end brand poster next to torn poster-wall material, or a highly polished brand environment beside something completely improvised and personal.

New York really contains every style and artistic



language you can imagine. In my early years here, I was constantly absorbing everything I saw—studying, collecting, and breaking down different visual approaches—and gradually integrating them into my own work. I've always felt like I'm being continuously inspired, continuously learning, and continuously evolving through that process.

That contrast has made me more comfortable combining visual languages that might initially seem unrelated. My work often balances precision with spontaneity, structure with playfulness, and polished design with more tactile or human details. I think that reflects the experience of living in New York, where things rarely feel visually uniform.

Working here has also taught me how to communicate within highly collaborative and fast-moving environments. Motion design is rarely created in isolation. I work closely with directors, designers, producers, and clients, and New York has pushed me to become more adaptable without losing my own point of view. It has helped me understand that a strong visual language must be distinctive, but it must also function within a much larger storytelling system.

What does your creative process usually look like, from the first idea to the finished piece?

My process usually begins by identifying the central communication problem. Before thinking about style, I ask what the audience needs to

understand, feel, or notice, and where they may become confused or emotionally disconnected. This is especially important in documentary and nonfiction projects, where the material can be dense, and the visual design must support rather than overwhelm the story.

From there, I begin collecting references and organizing the project into visual principles. I look for recurring ideas, emotional shifts, archival textures, character traits, editorial patterns, and opportunities for visual continuity. I often create style frames, motion tests, or small visual systems before fully developing a sequence. These early experiments help establish rules for typography, color, transitions, composition, image treatment, and rhythm.

Once the visual language is established, I develop the motion design, timing, pacing, sound, and narrative emphasis, using the edit as a guide for how the design should behave. The final stage is often about refinement rather than addition. I pay close attention to small details—how long an audience needs to read something, how an image enters or exits, whether a transition feels emotionally appropriate, and whether the system remains consistent across the entire project. My goal is to make the final work feel intuitive, even when the process behind it is highly complex.

Your work often feels playful, warm, and carefully composed. What emotions or experiences do you hope to communicate through it?

Outside of client work, I'm drawn to work that feels thoughtful without becoming emotionally distant. Even when dealing with complex information, I want the audience to feel invited into the story rather than positioned outside of it.

Playfulness is one way I try to create that sense of openness. It can make information feel more approachable, reveal personality, or introduce a small sense of discovery. Warmth is just as important, especially when the work touches on real people, personal histories, or emotionally sensitive material. More than anything, I want people to feel in a good mood when they're watching it, and to sense that care behind the design.

At the same time, I'm very intentional about composition. Every decision—scale, spacing, movement, color, and timing—shapes how a moment is understood. I hope my work communicates curiosity, empathy, and clarity, and ideally leaves the viewer not only understanding the information more easily, but also feeling a little more connected—and a little lighter—after experiencing it.

Where do you usually find inspiration for your characters, colors, forms, and everyday narratives?

A great deal of my inspiration comes from observation. I pay attention to internet memes, everyday moments, and beautiful photographs of both people and landscapes; I try to capture the emotions of the present and express them through my work.

For characters, I am interested in imperfection and personality. A slightly unusual posture or exaggerated reaction can communicate more than a polished or idealized figure. I often look for gestures that feel recognizable but not generic.

My approach to color and form depends on the emotional structure of the project, and color inspiration comes from the emotions I want to convey. Sometimes I draw from archival materials, handwriting, printed ephemera, children's artwork, or analog media.

I also find inspiration in the tension between systems and accidents. I enjoy creating clear visual rules and then introducing moments that feel surprising, handmade, or slightly unpredictable. That balance often gives the work its personality.

How has receiving an Emmy Award affected your confidence, career, or understanding of your own creative practice?

Receiving an Emmy Award for Outstanding Motion Design as part of the team behind Jim Henson: Idea Man was an important milestone in my career. The project was directed by Ron Howard and involved an extraordinary creative legacy, so contributing to it already felt meaningful. The recognition confirmed that motion design can play a substantial narrative

role in documentary filmmaking, rather than functioning only as visual enhancement.

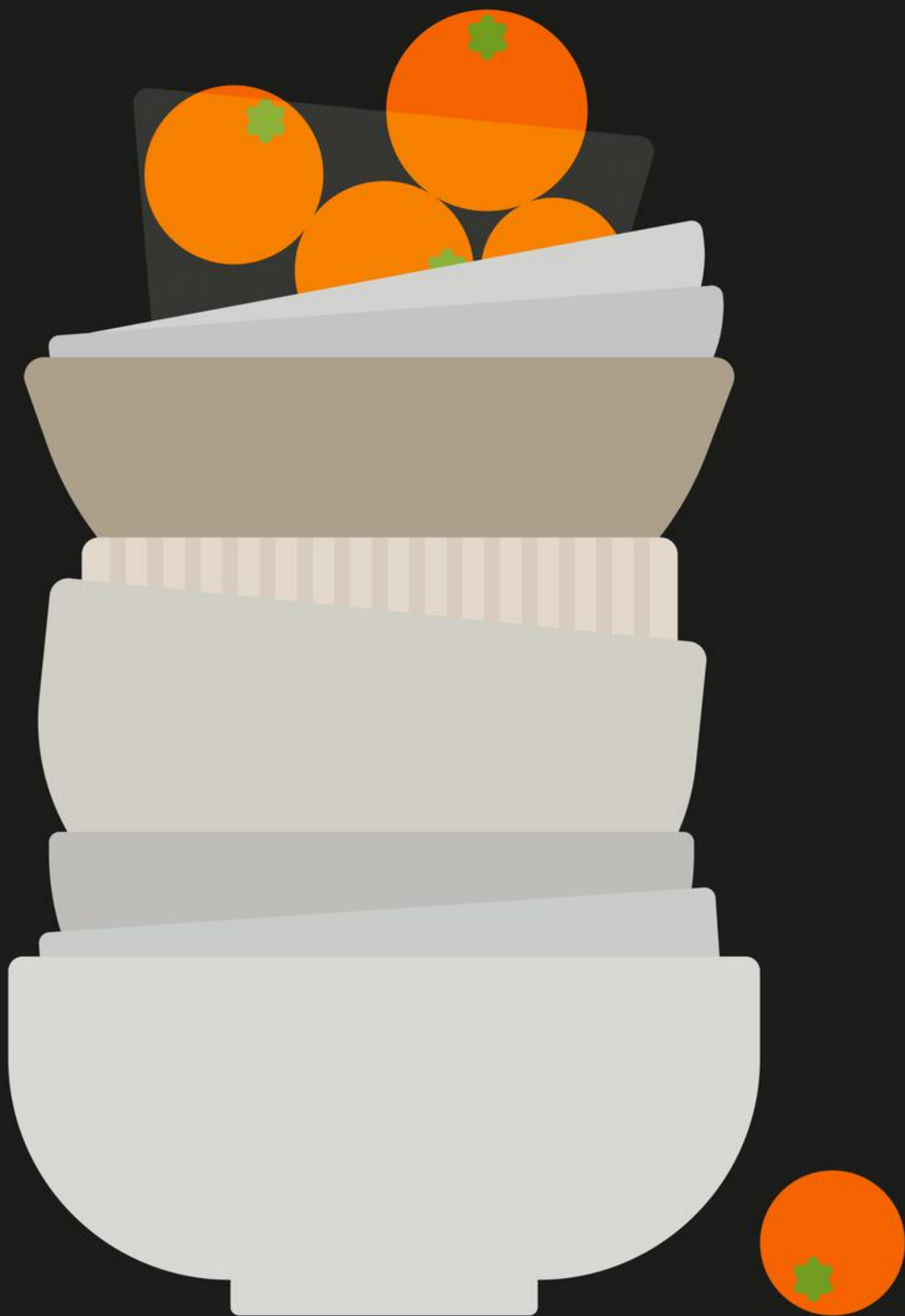
Personally, the award gave me greater confidence in the value of my approach. Much of my work focuses on subtle decisions: how archival material is organized, how a transition supports an emotional shift, or how a graphic system helps audiences navigate a story. These contributions are not always immediately visible, because successful design often feels natural within the film. The Emmy helped validate the importance of that behind-the-scenes thinking, and I feel I am encouraged to create!

What are some of the greatest challenges you have faced as a motion designer, and how have they helped you grow?

One of the greatest challenges has been learning how to contribute my own perspective within an already established field, particularly documentary storytelling. I often start from the details—breaking down dense, complex material and organizing it into clear categories—so I can better understand the underlying structure of the story. From there, I try to build a visual system that brings order to the information while still respecting its emotional nuance. This approach allows me to maintain visual consistency while also embedding my own animation language into the work.

Another challenge has been balancing authorship with collaboration. A motion designer may have a strong visual idea, but the final work must support the director's vision, the editor's structure, the producer's constraints, and the audience's needs. Learning when to advocate for an idea, when to adapt it, and when to remove it entirely has made me a stronger designer and collaborator.

In an industry where visual styles are increasingly saturated, creating work that feels fresh and unexpected has become more difficult. The arrival of the AI era is both an opportunity and a challenge, pushing me to continuously integrate new tools, software, and features into my workflow. I try to create through making mistakes and learn from those mistakes as part of the process, embracing uncertainty and looking forward to the unknown outcomes it can lead to.



Sammi Eady is a contemporary fiber artist mapping domestic landscapes and transit routes onto found textiles from memory. Using a sewing machine, her embodied illustrations operate in the gray area between a template and a form. Based in Greensboro, NC she received an MFA degree in spring of 2026 at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and currently teaches a range of courses including sculpture and drawing foundations. She studied oil painting at the University of Florida before adapting experimental textile practices using freestyle machine sewing.

Project Statement

In my practice, I explore phenomenological visualizations of space and time using fiber illustration as a point of access into current domestic interiors and my recollection of past sites. I believe place is the most important tool in our innate desire to organize stages of life, as it harbors memories and lived experiences. Through my practice, I am able to counteract future states of disembodiment as a mode of survival, retreat into past states of being, and embrace the distortion of memory.



Sammi Eady | Sunrise Dr



Sammi Eady | Harrison Road (detail)

Christina Stavri Sakka

You were born in Australia to Cypriot parents and spent your childhood on a farm in the Northern Territory. How did this environment shape your earliest understanding of nature and creativity?



Christina Stavri Sakka | Moonlit Duet | 2026



Growing up on a farm in Australia meant that nature was simply part of my everyday life. I learned to appreciate the beauty of the world around me from an early age. The Australian landscape is vibrant, with lush colours thanks to its abundant rainfall. Visiting Cyprus throughout my childhood gave me the opportunity to experience a completely different natural environment, from its beautiful Mediterranean beaches and pine-covered mountains to its vast rustic countryside. I believe this rich contrast between the Australian and Cypriot landscapes has profoundly influenced my work. Experiencing the beauty of two very different parts of the world has shaped the way I see nature and continues to inspire the colours, atmosphere, and subjects I paint.

You showed an interest in art from a very young age, but for many years your artistic ambitions took a secondary role while you focused on family and your career. What eventually inspired you to return to painting with full commitment?

In the past I viewed my art as just a hobby and found it difficult to part with my art, as it felt that I was giving away pieces of myself. So I mostly painted for myself and close family and friends. I didn't think I would ever be able to sell my art. In 2024 a friend of mine who was also a hobby artist asked me if I had any pieces to donate for a charity event she was planning. The money was to be donated in memory of a very dear family friend who sadly passed away from cancer. Not wanting to part with any of my existing pieces, I gladly rushed to paint three new ones in time for the event. The overwhelming positive feedback I received and the fact that all three pieces sold on the very first night made me stop and realise that my paintings may actually be something that people would want to own. So this was the spark that got me painting again and slowly, slowly putting myself out there, building my online presence through social media and my website. By the end of 2025, I could no longer concentrate on my corporate job, all I could think of was getting home to my paintings. Eventually, I made the decision to leave my job



and focus solely on my art.

You often describe being inspired by fleeting scenes you notice while moving through the Cypriot landscape. How do you transform a brief visual impression into a finished painting?

While driving my youngest to and from her afternoon lessons, I often find myself captivated by the ever-changing colours of the clouds and sky, and the patterns formed by the trees and buildings. I feel as though I am driving through a living painting. When I return to my easel, I carry that feeling with me and try to convey it through my art.

Light plays an important role throughout your work, and the recurring use of gold gives many of your paintings an almost symbolic quality. What does gold represent for you?

Gold is considered one of the most valuable commodities on Earth, but nature is the most precious thing of all. For this reason, I love using gold in my paintings to emphasise that nature should be our number one priority in life. Nature is not only beautiful but also precious.

Birds and other animals appear frequently in your paintings. What draws you to these subjects, and do they carry particular emotional or symbolic meanings in your work?

Growing up on a farm, we had the privilege of having many animals to love, play with, and care for. Animals are the subject of many artists' work because they possess a special beauty that mesmerises. Birds, in particular, have such diverse colours that they are always an enjoyable challenge to replicate on canvas.

Several of your recent works combine natural imagery with figures such as dancers or angelic

forms. What interests you about bringing the human figure together with elements of nature?

Humans cannot exist without the natural world, yet sometimes they seem to naively believe that they can. By combining humans, animals, and nature in my paintings, I try to remind the viewer that humans are not separate from nature, we are part of it.

At this stage of your artistic journey, what themes, techniques, or directions are you most interested in exploring next?

At this stage of my artistic journey, there are so many subjects I want to paint that I find it difficult to decide which one to start with. Creating large-scale paintings takes time, so you have to commit to a particular style for quite a while.

Last year, I found a way to trick the system by painting lots of small 10×10cm mini paintings. This allowed me to explore many different subjects and styles in a much shorter period of time. I probably painted close to 100 minis in one year, experimenting with realism, abstract, semi-abstract, animals, trees, water, skies, and even galaxies. I packaged them in small gift boxes, and to my surprise, they all sold, mostly as Christmas gifts. Right now, I feel particularly drawn to softer-toned landscapes with an emphasis on dramatic, cloud-filled skies. I'll probably paint a few more minis first to get some of those other ideas and techniques out of my system before beginning the collection for next year's solo exhibition.



Katarzyna Stefaniak

I have always been fascinated by colours, light and shapes, particularly as found in nature. Nature is my inspiration, with its calming potential and richness. My paintings are a way to pause, take a breath, and enjoy a moment of silence. This is what is missing in the hustle and bustle of modern cities. They are an invitation to unhurried rest.

I mainly create oil paintings and abstract watercolour landscapes. I like oil paints for the ability to mix colors for a long time. Watercolors, on the other hand, for their unpredictability.

Exhibitions:

20-27 September 2024 - FUN2024, Festival Celebrating Awkwardness, Warsaw, Poland

- 2024 - honourable mention in the 5th edition of the 'Women Side of Art' competition, Defabryka, Warsaw, Poland

- May 2025 - Group exhibition „Women Side of Art”, Defabryka, Warsaw, Poland

- September 2025 - group exhibition „Anatomy of Relationships” at the Szyb Wilson Gallery in Katowice, Poland

- April 2026 - grup exhibition Kuźnia Sztuk Pięknych, Warsaw, Poland

- April 2026 - finalist - „Essence of Water” in Fame Frame Gallery, Czechia

- July 2026 - group exhibition in Museo Storico Citta di Lecce, Italy, art curator Caramela Loiacono

- July 2026 - on-line group exhibition, selected finalist, No.35 Gallery, UK

Project Statement

The photos shown come from the 'Flower Landscapes' series. While painting a piece called 'I Embrace,' I thought about a series of paintings where flowers are like landscapes that the eye can slide over. She also associated this flower with an embrace, and the next paintings are also an attempt to capture a mood or gesture through a flower.

Rather than simply depicting nature, I aim to capture the feeling it creates — a sense of pause amid constant motion, and a moment of quiet joy. My paintings invite viewers into a space that feels gentle, contemplative, and emotionally open.



Katarzyna Stefaniak | I Dance | 2025



Katarzyna Stefaniak | What Did You Say | 2026

— Interview

Nancy Bou Karam



Your work often moves between emotion, memory, and identity. How do these three elements come together during your creative process?



Every painting begins with something deeply personal. It starts with an emotion I have experienced, a memory that has stayed with me, or a part of my identity that I want to understand or express. I don't consciously separate these elements they naturally become one. My paintings are, in many ways, reflections of who I am.

You describe flowers as a language of emotion delicate yet powerful, fragile yet alive. What emotions or personal experiences do flowers allow you to express?

Flowers have become my way of telling the story of women. As a woman, I have lived through experiences that challenged me, but I am grateful for them because they shaped the person I am today. Through flowers, I express resilience, vulnerability, hope, and quiet strength. They may appear fragile, but beneath that softness lies an incredible ability to survive and bloom.



Color plays a strong and expressive role in your paintings. How do you choose your palette, and what do particular colors communicate in your work?

My palette is guided by emotion. It depends on the composition, my state of mind, and the feeling I want to communicate. I am naturally drawn to strong contrasts and often choose black backgrounds because they give the flowers presence and power. They create light through darkness. In many ways, this reflects how I experience life, there are moments of darkness and moments of light, and that contrast has become an essential part of my visual language.

Your floral paintings range from detailed observation to more expressive and abstract interpretation. How do you decide how closely to follow the natural form of a flower?

I always begin with the flower's natural structure, but I allow emotion to reshape it. The flower transforms according to what I am feeling and the story I want to tell. Even its stage of growth... whether it is blooming, opening, or fading becomes symbolic of an emotional state or a chapter in my own life.

Nature and Lebanese heritage are both important sources of inspiration for you. In what ways does your cultural background enter your paintings, either consciously or intuitively?

My floral collection is deeply influenced by the experience of women in Lebanon. Our culture

teaches us resilience from a very young age. We learn to adapt, to carry our burdens with grace, and to keep moving forward despite challenges. That is why my flowers always bloom. They carry signs of struggle, yet they never lose their beauty. They are a tribute to the quiet strength of Lebanese women.

You encourage your students to discover their individual creative voices. What helped you recognize and develop your own voice as an artist?

My late brother, who was an architect, was the first person to recognize my artistic gift. He believed in me before I fully believed in myself. He taught me techniques, encouraged me to keep exploring, and inspired me to trust my own vision. His guidance became the foundation upon which I built my artistic voice, and his influence continues to live through my work.

You believe that creativity can transform the way we see the world. What kind of emotional or intellectual transformation do you hope viewers experience when encountering your paintings?

I hope people realize that a painting is never just an object to look at, it is a story, an emotion, and a piece of someone's soul. Every artwork carries the artist's thoughts, memories, and feelings. Through my paintings, I hope viewers will look beyond the beauty of the flowers and discover their deeper meaning: that true strength can exist within softness, and that what appears fragile can often be the most resilient.



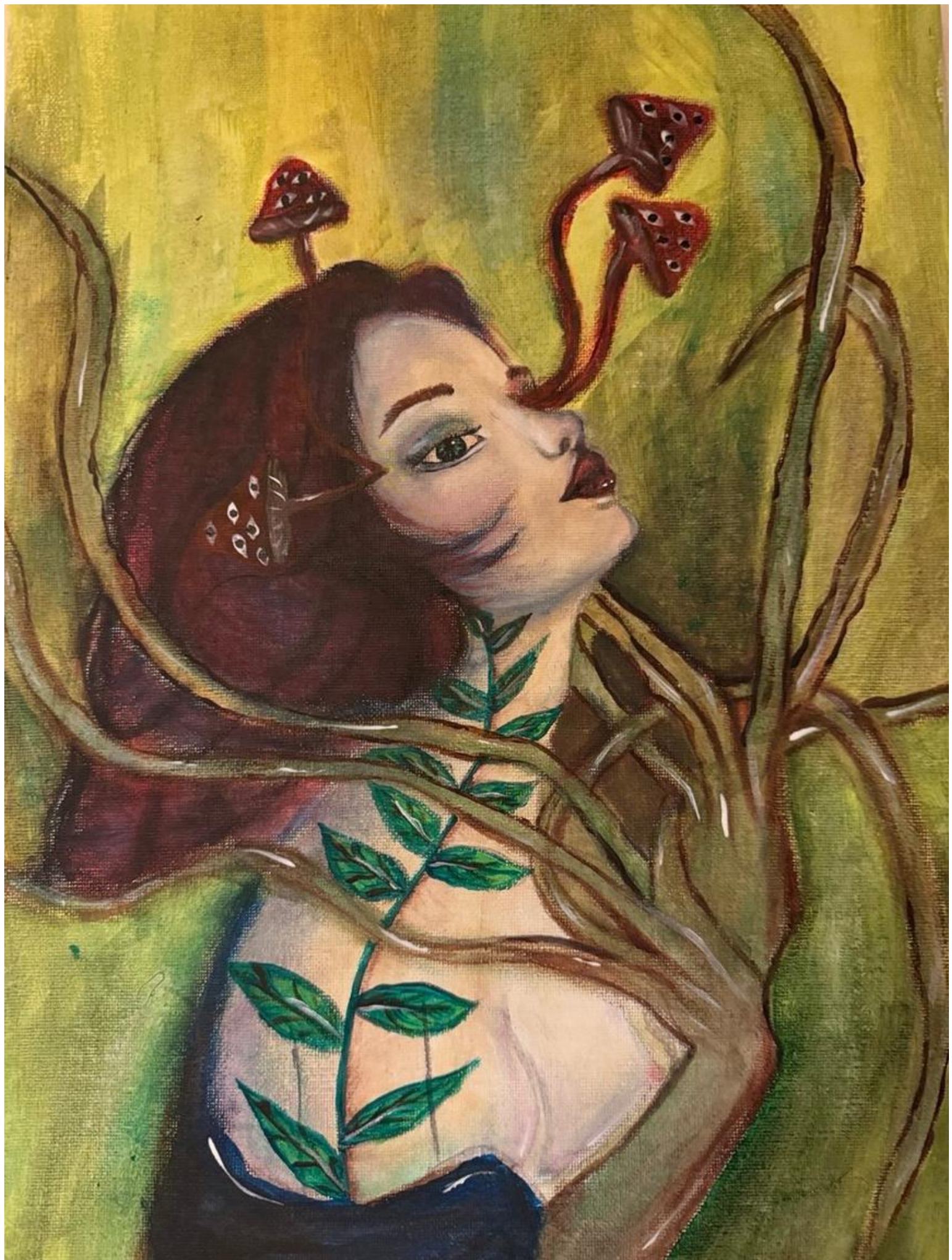
Ana Bucinscaia

Ana is a self-taught artist from Moldova, where she lives and works. For her, drawing is a way to put her inner feelings and emotions, which are difficult to express in words, onto paper. Each work becomes a captured moment of feeling and an attempt to convey it to those who come into contact with her art.

She works in various techniques, constantly experimenting with form, colour and materials. Search and intuition are at the heart of her creativity, through which Ana builds her own visual language — sincere, lively and emotionally open.

Ana Bucinscaia | Threshold | 2026





Artadi Studio

How did Artadi begin, and what inspired you to build a studio dedicated specifically to sculpture with cold porcelain?

Artadi Studio is a team of like-minded people passionate about botanical sculpture. In 2013, we came across a similar bouquet for sale on an online marketplace and simply had to try creating something like it with our own hands. Over time, our flowers became more professional, and we began sharing our knowledge by opening a studio school. To date, more than 5,000 people have attended workshops at our studio, and many of



them have gone on to become talented artists themselves.

What qualities of cold porcelain made you choose it as your primary artistic material, and what possibilities does it offer that other materials cannot?

There are many ways to create a flower for an interior: it can be knitted, painted, blown from glass, or constructed from various materials. The result may look beautiful, yet we will always understand that what we see is not a living specimen, but something made by human hands. Cold porcelain, however, makes it possible to create precise botanical replicas of flowers. This was the main quality that captivated us. Because cold porcelain can be rolled out extremely thinly and perfectly preserves the texture transferred from living specimens, the flowers not only look real but often even feel like the ones we encounter in nature.

Oil paints and artists' pastels adhere beautifully to cold porcelain, allowing us to reproduce the finest variations in colour and the smallest details in the structure of stamens, petals, leaves, and blossoms.

Your flowers are distinguished by remarkable botanical accuracy. How do you balance careful observation of nature with artistic interpretation and imagination?

Without question, creating a truly lifelike flower requires an understanding of the structure of each species, as well as the differences between varieties of the same flower. Before we begin working with cold porcelain, we study the architecture of the plant. Seasonality is especially helpful, as it allows us to buy a real specimen and examine it repeatedly, breaking it down into its individual elements. Some plants bloom only briefly, however,



Artadi Studio | Composition In Roseball | 2026

so we always sketch and document their structure, even when it is a flower we have sculpted many times before. Nature never ceases to reveal something new.

When the sketch is transferred into clay, the sculptor takes over. Cold porcelain allows for corrections only until it dries, so a flawless knowledge of anatomy is essential. Yet our aim is not to recreate a herbarium specimen, but to convey a living organism.

In nature, a flower is never perfectly symmetrical: it reaches towards the light, bends beneath the rain, or bears the mark of an insect. We introduce this subtle asymmetry deliberately—the accidental curl of a petal's edge, the barely perceptible difference in tone between two neighbouring buds.

Balance lies in knowing the rules so deeply that one can elegantly break them in the service of truth and life.

Could you describe the process of creating a composition - from studying a particular plant to assembling the finished bouquet or sculptural object?

Creating a floral composition is a highly creative process. Very often, a client knows that they would like to see a particular flower, and from that point



Artadi Studio | Lilac And Pionies | 2026



Artadi Studio | Autumn Bouquet | 2025

on, it is our task to suggest possible combinations with other flowers and complement the bouquet with greenery. We also discuss the vase separately and often help the client find a suitable one. Sometimes, however, the client already has a vase, and we design the arrangement specifically for it. Once the composition has been agreed upon, we create a drawing of the bouquet and send it to the client. If they are happy with everything, we discuss the timeframe and begin making the flowers. Occasionally, we receive orders for flowers that are not native to our region and that we have never had an opportunity to see in real life. In such cases, botanical atlases and books about flowers become invaluable resources. Our studio has an excellent collection of illustrated books and albums, which also allows our students to broaden their knowledge and visual awareness. Creating a flower from cold porcelain is not a matter of simply imitating nature by hand; it is more like translating living botany into the language of sculpture. The process requires the artist to combine the skills of a naturalist, a sculptor, and an engineer.



The work begins long before the package of modelling material is opened. For complex projects, we try not to rely on photographs or other people's references, as they distort proportions and obscure subtle variations in tone. Instead, we study plants from life. Our task is to understand and remember the plant's physical qualities: its centre of gravity, flexibility, and direction of growth. For a large-scale project, such as a life-size cherry blossom branch, we prepare a detailed technical sketch, including measurements of every branching point. Next comes colour mixing—the most meditative and, at the same time, one of the most delicate stages. Plants are never uniformly coloured. The pigment must be blended into the material until the texture is completely even; otherwise, it may dry in patches. Cold porcelain begins its life as a soft, pliable clay-like material. However, the laws of physics are unforgiving. A thin, realistic petal cannot support its own weight, so every element contains a hidden piece of engineering. For heavy flower heads, such as peonies and dahlias, we create an internal wire framework wrapped in special paper floral tape. The sculpting process always begins with the smallest and deepest elements—the centre of the

flower, the pistils, and the stamens. Each petal is shaped by hand, textured using special silicone veinners or moulds cast from living specimens, and then thinned with a sculpting tool against the palm until it acquires the precise delicacy and character of that particular flower.

Which stage of the process is the most technically demanding: shaping the petals, reproducing texture, mixing colors, constructing stems, or assembling the composition?

Undoubtedly, the most challenging part of portraying a flower is making it feel as alive as possible. To achieve this, we try to capture and recreate not only its form, but also its movement. For us, artistic vision lies in the ability to convey how a flower trembles in the wind, fades in the sunlight, or is nibbled by a tiny insect. Flowers depicted "in motion" always draw the eye.

Artadi brings together several experienced artists. How do you collaborate as a team while preserving the individual artistic voice of each



master?

Creating a single flower from cold porcelain can require anywhere from 2 hours of work for a snowdrop to 56 hours of continuous (!) labour for a single branch of double-flowered lilac.

Of course, one artist can take on a bouquet of peonies, but maintaining a steady pace and handling large orders is much more challenging. Working together on arrangements and bouquets therefore allows us to complete orders within reasonable timeframes.

Naturally, each artist has their own distinctive style—after all, every flower is handmade. However, we all work within the field of realistic floral art, so the flowers created by one artist complement those made by another beautifully.

When discussing a new project, each artist usually chooses the flowers they will create entirely from start to finish. Once all the individual elements are complete, we gather in the studio, where our professionally trained florist, who specialises in various bouquet-making techniques, assembles the final arrangement.

We always arrange professional photography of our flowers before delivering the finished order to the client.

Artadi brings together four artists, each with extensive experience in cold porcelain. How do you organize your master classes in Moscow and Dubai, and what is the most important skill or understanding you hope participants take away from them?

At our studio in Moscow, classes take place almost every day. Several of our studio's artists are responsible for the teaching process, and they not only substitute for one another but also complement each other's expertise: some teach how to sculpt wildflowers, others focus on garden flowers, while others specialize in flowers for beginners.

Students can attend a single flower-sculpting lesson or take a complete series of classes as part of a course dedicated to a particular theme.

In Dubai, we have considerably less time to teach our art because the classes are conducted during our instructor's visits. For this reason, the Dubai programme is planned very carefully and well in advance as a series of masterclasses, with the main goal of achieving a beautiful result in the shortest possible time.

In Moscow, our priority is to teach people how to sculpt flowers not only during the lessons but also independently afterwards. In Dubai, however, what matters most to us is that every guest leaves the class with an impressive finished flower and a highly positive experience.

What emotions, memories, or associations would you like viewers to experience when encountering your floral sculptures?

When we teach ordinary economists, doctors, teachers, makeup artists, and people from many other professions at our workshops, we see surprise and joy in their eyes when they realize that, in just five or six hours, they have managed to transform a simple piece of clay into a lifelike flower, complete with pistils, delicate membranes, and thorns. By creating their own flower from cold porcelain, they have connected with art—and this makes the world around us a better place. With our flowers, we create a person's mood from the very beginning of the day, as they pass by them in their home each morning. This is a great responsibility. That is why we try to fill our flowers with lightness, warmth, and positive emotions. Our flowers in an interior become a small island of beauty and tenderness.



Artadi Studio | Wild Bouquet | 2023

— *Exhibition review*

The Names Gallery in Vienna – 8-9 August

On August 8-9, The Names Gallery presented a two-day international contemporary art exhibition in Vienna, bringing together 51 artists from a remarkably diverse range of countries, cultural backgrounds, and creative



practices. Curated by Anna Gvozdeva, the exhibition reflected the plurality of contemporary art today, creating a space in which individual artistic voices could coexist, contrast, and enter into dialogue.

The exhibition was held at The Last Abstraction Gallery, an independent art space in Vienna whose bright and intimate setting provided an ideal environment for close engagement with the works. Throughout the two days, visitors explored a diverse selection of artworks presented in both physical and digital formats, including painting, photography, mixed media, digital art, figurative works, abstraction, and experimental approaches.

The international character of the exhibition was central to its identity. Participating artists included Jonathan Muyal, Moritz Weigle, Zara Adriana Bachratá, Luciano Caggianello, Anna Bölcskeiová, Matthew Morpheus, Wojciech Jachyra, Feride Özşakacı, Aminu Yunus Opeyemi, Peter Tristram Walz, Didem



Yüksekdağ, Faranak Bahrpeyma, TAK Erzinger, Dylan Huveneers, Syra Larkin, Eva Capkova, Michael Guevara, Valery Smirnov, AlexaBellaZoe, Nicole Koutlis, Daniel Kreissl, Caitlin Driver, Lamia Ermiş, David Rovirola, Monica Dhaka, Henry Jentzsch, Ilanit Litman, Emily Alana James, Belinda Martens Kjærulf, Veronika Padar, Juleah Claar, Raz Forh, Alexey Savvin, Lynne Woods, Yuna Skvortsova, Ella Leynard, Fatima M Khan, Yotvat Rieder Aviram, Meriam Jelassi, Alexandra Albertsen, Nancy Bou Karam, Krunoslav Bedi, Dagmar Bachanová, Cat Simmons, Qingruo Zhao, Nastazia Georgiadou, Meyse Mumcuoğlu,

Fanyun Peng, Brechin Flournoy, Elif ÇELEBİ, and Hyebin Jeon.

The exhibition brought together a wide variety of artistic styles, techniques, and subjects. Figurative and abstract works were presented alongside photography, mixed media, and digital art, with artists exploring themes ranging from identity and memory to nature, emotion, and personal experience. This diversity gave visitors an opportunity to discover very different approaches to contemporary art within a single exhibition. For two days, The Names Gallery created an international platform in Vienna where artists from different generations, countries, and artistic traditions could share the same space without losing the individuality of their practices. The exhibition demonstrated how a collective presentation can function not as a search for uniformity, but as an opportunity to emphasize difference, curiosity, experimentation, and artistic independence. The result was a vibrant collective portrait of contemporary art, shaped by 51 individual artistic voices brought together in Vienna for two days of discovery, exchange, and creative connection.

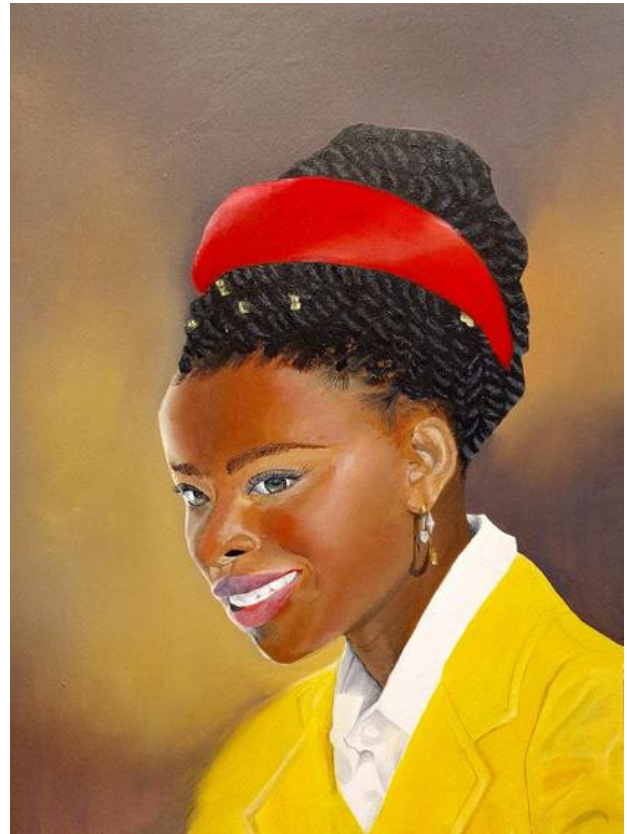


Lynne Woods

You describe art as an unexpected turning point during a difficult period in your life. What first encouraged you to begin painting?



Lynne Woods | Pink Peony | 2026



Lynne Woods | Amanda Gorman | 2024

I never expected painting to become such an important part of my life. It was illness that unexpectedly led me to discover my passion for painting. At a time when the pressures on both my physical and mental health felt insurmountable, I sought both an escape and a sense of purpose. I attended Project Ability in Glasgow, a wonderful art charity, initially hoping simply to occupy my time. I quickly discovered that painting gave me something much more valuable. It allowed me to express emotions that were difficult to put into words and became a place where I could focus on possibility rather than limitation. What began as trying to get through one day at a time gradually became a passion that continues to shape my life.

How has your creative practice changed your relationship with your physical and emotional well-being?

Painting has transformed me in ways I never expected. I still experience many days when my body or mind feel overwhelmed, but when I paint those difficulties become lighter. My focus shifts entirely to colour, light and form, and for a while I can simply exist in the creative process. It has given me confidence, hope and a renewed sense of identity. Rather than defining myself by illness, I have discovered another part of myself through art.



Painting offers you peace, purpose and hope. How do these feelings influence the way you approach a new work?

I try not to begin with the aim of producing a perfect painting. Instead, I paint with curiosity, openness and playfulness, allowing the process itself to guide me. Each painting becomes an opportunity to be mindful. I have begun to appreciate beauty that can often be overlooked. I am also learning to be patient, as I find some pieces just need a little time to settle before finding the path they want to take. I try to let each piece develop naturally rather than forcing it. There are also times when I find myself painting more frantically, often led by whatever is happening in my mind at the time. For me, the experience of painting is just as important as the finished work. Painting, for me, is all about feelings. I paint from the heart, and that is what leads me to the subject. It has to be meaningful.

Your work explores both beauty and resilience. What does resilience mean to you personally and artistically?

Resilience isn't about never struggling. To me, it is about continuing to search for beauty, meaning and kindness even during difficult times. My paintings often celebrate subjects that appear delicate, yet possess remarkable strength. Flowers bloom despite unpredictable weather, with nature quietly renewing itself year after year. With just a little care, they can become stronger and truly thrive. I find comfort in those parallels, and I hope my work

reflects the quiet resilience that so many people carry within themselves. Beauty can exist on the darkest days.

What draws you to peonies, and what qualities or emotions do these flowers represent in your work?

Before becoming an artist, I owned a flower shop with my sister. Some of my happiest memories are from those years, surrounded by flowers every day. She continues to inspire me with her kindness, creativity and love of nature. Peonies have an extraordinary presence. Their soft layers unfold slowly, revealing both strength and fragility at the same time. I am fascinated by their structure, colour and constantly changing forms. While painting them, I found myself reflecting on grace, hope and perseverance. They became symbols of finding beauty during periods when my own life felt anything but beautiful. Their fleeting nature also reminds me to appreciate moments of joy while they are here.

Your paintings combine careful observation with a strong emotional quality. How do you balance realism with your own personal interpretation of the subject?

I have always been drawn to flowers. Years of working as a florist taught me to notice the small details that make every bloom unique. I enjoy observing my subjects closely because I believe careful attention reveals details that might otherwise be missed. However, I don't paint simply to reproduce what I see. Colour, light, atmosphere and composition are all used to communicate how the subject felt to me emotionally. I hope viewers recognise the flower itself while also sensing the emotions and reflections that developed throughout the painting process.

What do you hope viewers experience when they spend time with your work?

Above all, I hope people pause. In everyday life we often move so quickly that we overlook moments of quiet beauty. If someone spends a little longer with one of my paintings and feels a sense of calm, hope or connection, then I feel the work has achieved something meaningful. If my journey also encourages someone facing their own challenges to believe that healing and creativity are possible, that would mean even more.

Noa is a visual artist working primarily in transparent watercolor. She graduated from the Comic Art Department at Osaka Sogo Design College in Japan. Her practice explores delicate inner worlds where beauty, sweetness, and fragility coexist with subtle feelings of sadness and pain. Through her paintings, she hopes to create an emotional connection with viewers and offer a quiet sense of comfort and healing.

“Sugar Yashiki” (砂糖屋敷) is the name she has used since she began her artistic practice. It represents a beautiful yet fragile world, like a castle in the air—magnificent and dreamlike, yet vulnerable to disappearing with something as small as a drop of water or hot oil.

Project Statement

My work explores a world that appears beautiful, delicate, and sweet on the surface, while quietly concealing sadness and pain underneath.

I work primarily with transparent watercolor, using its softness and translucency to create an atmosphere that feels both beautiful and fragile. I am interested in the contrast between what appears comforting and what lies beneath it, creating worlds that feel like beautiful but fleeting castles in the air.

“Sugar Yashiki” (砂糖屋敷), the name I have used since I began creating art, comes from this idea. Even the most magnificent castle can disappear when touched by something as small as a drop of water or hot oil. For me, this fragility is an important part of beauty.

Through my work, I hope to create a quiet emotional connection with viewers and offer them a moment of resonance, comfort, or healing.

Noa | Odile





Noa | Welcoming the Morning

— Interview

Cat Simmons

Your project begins with photographs from your family archive. What first prompted you to revisit these images not simply as records of the past, but as materials for artistic transformation?

I discovered that there had been secrets kept within my marriage, secrets of betrayal and addiction. It was during that time that I was in grad school, earning my MFA. As I was cleaning up the house one day, I found a photograph of my



Cat Simmons | Objet A | 2021



Cat Simmons | Objet A | 2021

family when the kids were much younger. I mapped the timeline and realized that at the time that photograph was taken, there was active betrayal taking place. This photograph that had been a cherished memory suddenly took on a whole new meaning. I began to consider the role of memory as it relates to the actual physicality of the photograph. I was curious to ask the question of whether or not deconstructing the physical photograph might somehow help me soothe my emotional pain. It was an experimentation that led to an entire body of work which continues to evolve.

You describe discovering painful truths hidden beneath photographs that once represented happiness. How did these new realizations change your understanding of photography's relationship to memory and truth?

A photograph only ever tells you that something was in front of the camera, not what it meant, not what came before or after the shutter closed. Once I knew what some of these images were concealing, I couldn't unsee the collision of an outdated truth with the new one. I remember reading Walter Benjamins writing entitled *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*.

It discusses the aura of the original work of art in an age of mass reproduction. I asked, does memory have an aura? Can the aura of memory contained within a printed photograph transcend the destruction of its material state. And if it could, might I be able to reconstruct that memory into a new truth by altering the physicality of the print? The answer is yes. The memory contained within truth of the photograph at the time it was taken remains, but that memory, along with its truth, can be rearranged, reconceptualized.

What does physically altering an original print allow you to express that digital manipulation alone could not?



As I deconstruct the print, there is a cathartic transaction taking place as the sticky emulsion adheres to my fingers and the ink drips from the paper onto the tray below. The act of assaulting the print along with its aura of memory is healing. To then physically reconstruct those materials into a new assemblage, a new aesthetic representation of that memory is in essence, a truth rewrite. Certainly, the reality of actual events holds true in my brain, but the outward aesthetic changes. The language of that photograph tells a new story, a new more empowering truth. Digital manipulation is not tactile. It just doesn't hold the same weight. It's easy and cheap.

Your process includes dripping pigment inks, removing emulsion, tearing paper, and reshaping photographic materials. How do you decide which form of intervention is appropriate for a particular image or memory?

The first step in this decision is to consider the memory I am deconstructing. My process is experimental, and I have remained open to new ideas and approaches to formulate. At the end of the day, it really boils down to what my subconscious mind wants. I am a firm believer that much of what I do is motivated from the deeper places within me. If I am looking at a photograph and have the idea to freeze the emulsion in ice, I do it. If I think it might be interesting to burn the print, I will do that.

Is there an emotional difference between deconstructing a photograph that carries a difficult personal history and creating the final artwork from its fragments?

Yes! The destruction or assault against the print really feels more like the yelling rage one might feel in a heated argument. The construction of the new artwork feels more like the internal strength that comes after walking away from it. Photographing the new artwork and making digital choices

in post feels like a slamming of the door on that argument, never to return again. It's golden!

Has working on this project changed the way you relate to your family archive? Are there photographs you now view differently, or images you would still hesitate to transform?

I love my family archive. I do view many of my family photographs differently, but I must say, the way we choose to perceive and remember really is internal. As I have healed and shifted away from anger and into a place of forgiveness and peace, I do not hold the same intense feelings of anger or hurt. Honestly, I am so grateful for the mess he made because it set me free to become a new version of me whom I have grown to love. This is why I have moved on to working with my own childhood portraits. I am evaluating my own trauma and rather than destroying those images for the purpose of forgetting, I am doing so and using the rubble as decorations, things to be celebrated; same process, totally different intent.

As an educator, you encourage others to use photography as a visual voice. How has teaching influenced your own willingness to approach deeply personal material and experiment beyond conventional photographic practice?

When I create assignments, I do so with much intention to offer my students an opportunity to pause and observe themselves in their work. I assign self-portraiture and conceptual projects that require them to look inward, and they do. They come up with deeply personal and reflective projects. I am also a very transparent instructor. I don't share ALL of my personal details, but as I am vulnerable about my own art, I perceive my students to feel safe in being equally vulnerable.



Gerardo Gutiérrez Castelan

Gerardo Gutiérrez Castelan (b. 1956) is an artist from Puebla, Mexico.

Education

1979–1984 - School of Architecture, BUAP (Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla)

1984–1986 - Studies in Anthropology, BUAP

1987 - Studies in Literature and Poetry, BUAP

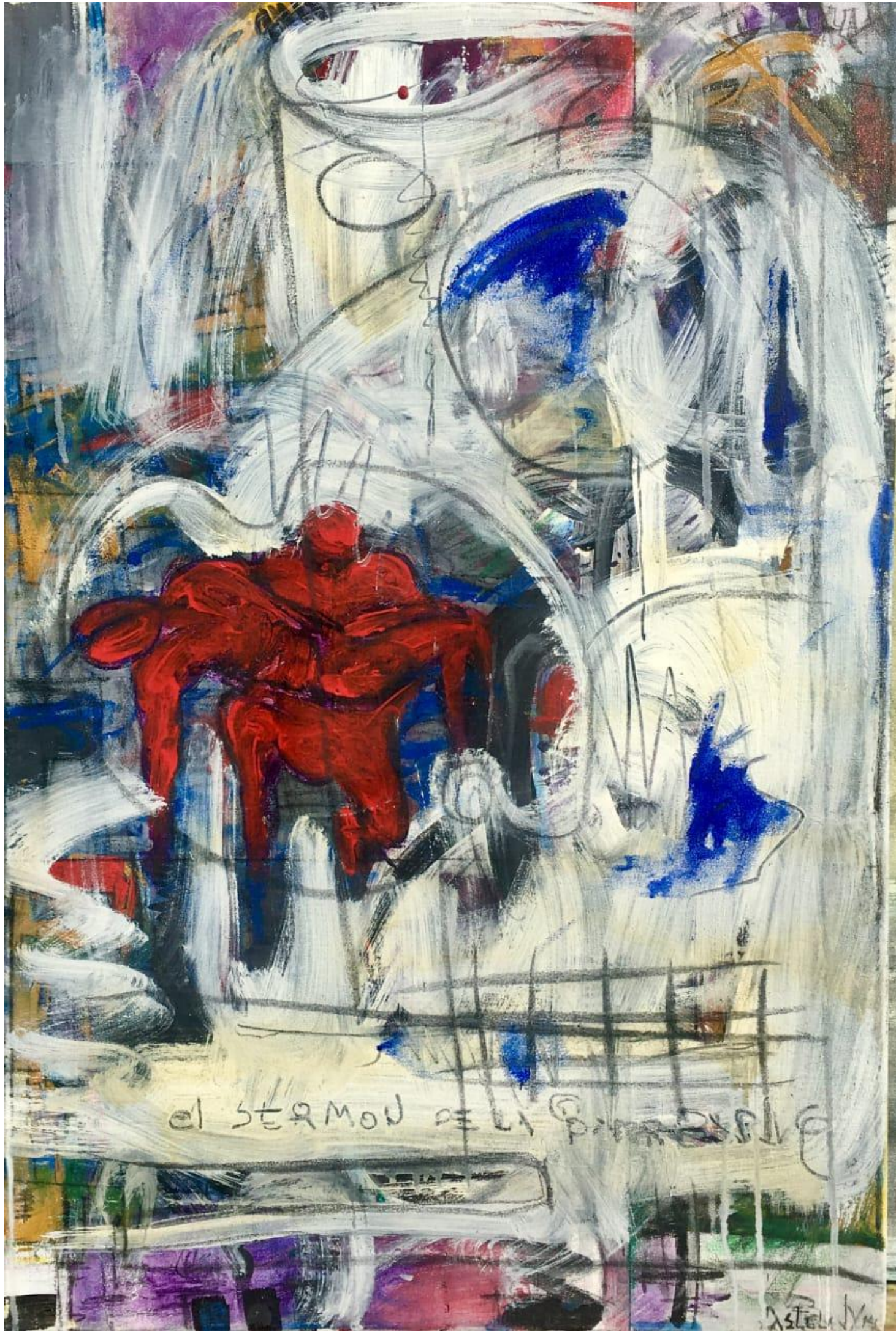
Project Statement

"I believe that art is the only form of activity through which man, as such, manifests himself as a true individual."

— Marcel Duchamp

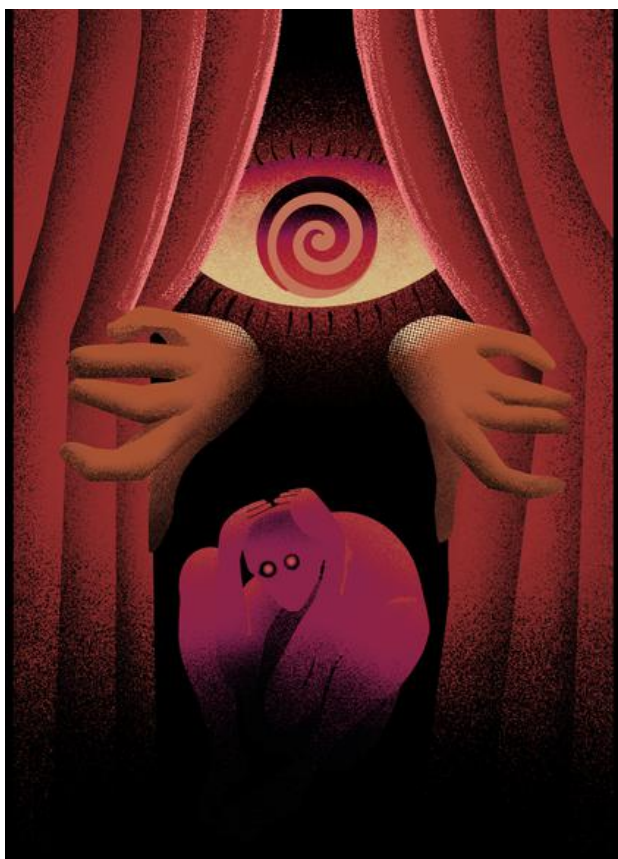
Gerardo Castelan | Idiosincracia | 2015





Mikołaj Radzyniak

You have been developing your artistic practice for more than a decade. How has your understanding of art and its role in your life changed during this time?



Mikołaj Radzyniak | Obsession



I remember that when I was a little boy, the person who taught me how to draw told me to write the words, “A day without drawing is a day wasted,” on my sketchbook. At the time, those words put a lot of pressure on me, to the point that I stopped drawing altogether for a while.

Today, I feel that I have matured enough to say that creating is what gives my life meaning. It puts me into a state of flow, it helps me survive, and most importantly, it no longer feels like an obligation. Digital art definitely changed a lot for me along the way. It made me fall in love with drawing and creating all over again. Although I appreciate traditional mediums, digital painting has become my favorite artistic medium because of the incredible freedom it gives me.

For a long time, I wandered between different styles, trying to fit myself into certain categories, but looking back, I realize how unnecessary that was. The best advice I received, and something that completely changed the way I think about art, was simply to trust and observe what comes from within rather than trying to adapt myself to the outside world.

Your style has evolved through anime aesthetics, graphic design, realism, and surrealism. Which elements of these influences are still present in your current work?

Unfortunately, I hardly ever draw in a manga or anime style anymore. It simply doesn't excite me the way it used to. I am also gradually moving away from realism understood as faithfully copying or imitating reality. Occasionally, as part of my practice and development, I still do photo studies, where I try to reproduce what I see in a photograph as accurately as possible on a digital canvas.

I think surrealism is the strongest influence in my work today, especially in my posters. I love that aesthetic drawn from all kinds of dreamlike visions. It works beautifully in posters and graphic design, but also in creating magical fantasy worlds.



You describe style as a tool for storytelling rather than a fixed identity. How do you decide which visual language is most appropriate for a particular idea or emotion?

I try to begin by finding the subject, associations, ideas, concepts, and values, and only then choose the style and form through which I want to express them. Of course, sometimes you simply act on impulse, and that can be great too. But when I create more personal projects, I like the form to serve as a tool for telling the story, rather than the other way around, where the story becomes merely an excuse to experiment with form.

That is why, despite my strong connection to digital painting, I love exploring new techniques and mediums, such as linocut, aquatint, experimenting with architectural concrete, epoxy resin, and other forms of artistic experimentation.

How has your professional experience creating worlds and environments for the video game industry influenced your personal illustrations?

I think creating worlds has greatly developed my creativity and taught me to ask questions about the purpose and context of what appears in an illustration. For example, if I am designing a dark

medieval castle, I ask myself: Who lived there? What happened inside it? What did the surrounding area look like? What purpose did the fortification serve? I approach my personal illustrations in a similar way. I ask myself what I want to portray, why a particular association or image comes to mind rather than another, and what emotions I want to evoke. Of course, working in the video game industry has significantly improved both my speed and technical skills, but I think the most important changes have happened in the way I think about creating.

Architecture and imagined spaces are important parts of your practice. Do you approach the human mind and emotional experience as spaces that can also be visually constructed and explored?

I like the analogy of the human mind as a labyrinth filled with thousands of corridors and doors. I often imagine the subconscious and deeply rooted psychological processes as the lower levels of a vast, multi-layered basement.

Through reflection, self-awareness, or therapy, we can gradually reach those levels, open the doors, and begin cleaning those rooms of the mold that poisons our soul.

You have said that art helps you express experiences connected with chronic mood disorders that are difficult to communicate verbally. What can an image reveal that words sometimes cannot?

I often find it difficult to talk about things that are painful or difficult for me. When friends ask me how I am doing, I often cannot bring myself to say, "Listen, things are really bad." Instead, I simply answer, "I'm getting by."

Some subjective emotional states are also incredibly difficult to express through words. It is hard to explain what deep sadness looks or feels like, but it is easier to compare it to a dense fog that covers your entire world—a fog in which, like in a swamp, you sink even deeper the harder you try to escape. And that is what I love most about creating.

What would you like viewers to feel or reconsider after encountering *Obsession and Thought Trap*?

I would like viewers to feel anything.

I don't want to tell anyone what they are supposed to think about my work. Even if their reaction is negative, that is still much better to me than indifference, or simply thinking, "That's nice," and forgetting about the work a second later.

So I will be very happy if my work moves someone in any sense of the word.

Tanya "Tatyana" Finch (b. 1975, Kazakhstan) is a self-taught graphite artist. She was born in Kazakhstan and lived in Siberia, Ukraine and Russia. She has been a resident of Arizona since 2005. While her formal education is in the sciences, she discovered a deep passion for art 4 years ago. Since then she has dedicated herself to drawing and hardly let a day pass without practicing.

"Tanya Finch's passion for graphite pencils began when she was 5 years old in Siberia, Russia, and continued through her college years, where she earned a degree in Chemistry.

She discovered that graphite pencils allowed her to achieve realism, deep emotions.

She has received multiple awards and achieved designation with the multiple gold medals, grand-prix. Tanya held a solo exhibition in Phoenix, USA, in 2023. Since then, she has showcased her work internationally in the USA, Russia. Throughout the last 4 years, Tanya's original drawings have also been published in multiple art magazines and books, both domestically and internationally. Her work continues to gain attention and recognition through various prestigious awards. Tanya continues to embrace new challenges, aiming to capture the beauty of daily life with her graphite pencils."

Project Statement

The beauty of the world around me has attracted me since childhood. I wanted to express my vision on paper, to convey through artistic means the sensations of contact with it. A trace of a black line on a white sheet, a pencil gives me the opportunity to discover the boundlessness of the world, the beauty of every corner of the earth. Black and white are two colors which I have chosen for myself. It is with their help, in the endless alternation of strokes, lines, spots, that I try to convey all the beauty of the world around me.

Tanya Finch | I Am Home





Tanya Finch | I Will Be Back!



Tanya Finch | A Light in the Silence

— Interview

Sonia Kumari Sharma

You studied at Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design. How did your education there influence the development of your visual language and your approach to figurative painting?

My time at Emily Carr helped me understand my practice as something that could move between materials, images, and concepts rather than treating each medium separately. I was developing my skills as both a painter and a ceramicist, and that combination has directly impacted how I work and understand visual language now. In painting, I was exploring portraiture through pop culture, satire, identity, and contemporary life. I was in an environment that encouraged me to pay closer attention to how materials already speak before I even decide what image to make with them. That awareness continues to shape my figurative work today. I began seeing figures not only as subjects to represent, but also as sites where desire, consumption, vulnerability, and social meaning can be explored. Emily Carr encouraged critical language and conceptual problem-solving, which helped me explore these connections more deeply, especially the relationship between what is visually seductive and what is psychologically charged. It encouraged me to create work that can hold both pleasure and discomfort, the ordinary and the symbolic, and helped me understand that the process of



making could remain part of the investigation rather than only the final result.

Food is a central motif in your work. What first drew you to the act of eating as a subject for exploring desire, pleasure, and vulnerability?

My interest in food as a motif began with my own relationship with food. What started as love has grown into a way for me to think about consumption, desire, and experience in a broader capacity. Food is incredibly personal, but it is also something most people understand through memory, ritual, comfort, celebration, superstition, restriction, pleasure, and even excess. I think about how quickly a specific food can bring me back to a place or feeling, like wanting bubble tea every time it rains because the bubble tea shops near me growing up used to be 50% off when it was raining, or the local Vancouver ritual of going to the Costco food court before a Canucks game at Rogers Arena because it is across the street. I think about oranges during soccer, hot dogs at baseball games, and even the way the smell of food in a room becomes part of the experience. In my paintings, I don't want food to function only as still life or decoration. I want it to become a way of entering the psychological space around a figure, where appetite, nostalgia, vulnerability, pleasure, embarrassment, and surrender can exist simultaneously.

Your figures are often captured in private, unguarded moments of consumption. What interests you about portraying people when they are completely absorbed in a sensory experience?

These moments are interesting to me because eating is an act that can put you in a state that is both present and unguarded. When someone is absorbed in taste, texture, mess, or pleasure, they are not usually being performative; their attention turns inward toward their own sensory experience. That absorption can have tenderness, but it can also make the figure appear exposed because pleasure is not always neat or controlled. This type of consumption can become psychologically charged. A figure caught in the middle of a bite or mid-moment is surrendering, even briefly, to appetite and sensation. I want the viewer to feel invited into that intimate moment without possessing it. There is something slightly uncertain about it, as though the viewer is witnessing something ordinary that has been transformed



Sonia Kumari Sharma | Floor Time



into something more vulnerable and grander.

How do you choose the foods that appear in your paintings? Do particular textures, colours, or cultural associations influence your selection?

Sometimes I am drawn to a food because of its colour or texture, but sometimes it is because I am interested in exploring the memory or social meaning it carries. The most fun foods to paint are the ones that melt, drip, or overflow; they create a conversation about sensory experience in a more immediate way. This can make the act of consumption feel physically present instead of symbolic from a distance. Simultaneously, I think about how certain foods have their own associations: comfort, childhood, celebration, luxury, indulgence, or even embarrassment. A dessert can feel playful and nostalgic, but when it is pressed against the skin or dripping down someone's face, the image can shift very quickly into something more intimate or psychologically charged. Because I work with models, I begin those projects through conversations about consent. I think it is important to acknowledge that ice cream on someone's face can be funny and familiar, but it can also be read as sensual, vulnerable, or exposing depending on the viewer. That instability between pleasure and discomfort is part of what interests me, but it also requires careful consideration and respect for those I have the privilege of working with.

In works such as *Frosting* and *Dairy Queen*, pleasure seems to coexist with excess, awkwardness, and exposure. How do you balance humour and discomfort within the same image?

In works like *Frosting* and *Dairy Queen*, I like exploring the unstable point where pleasure starts to become discomfort. There is something funny and familiar about food getting out

of control: frosting on your face, ice cream melting faster than it can be eaten, or a dessert becoming messier than expected. Those moments can feel playful because we recognize them from everyday life, but they can also become awkward very quickly. The person in the image is caught in a moment of indulgence, but also exposure. They are being seen when they are not polished, composed, or fully in control of how they appear. I think that is where humour and discomfort begin to overlap. That shared experience can hover between amusement, desire, embarrassment, tenderness, and unease. Excess lets the scene feel seductive and ridiculous at the same time, and I like the playfulness of that instability because it reflects how complicated pleasure can be.

Gold leaf has strong associations with sacred art, wealth, ceremony, and permanence. What led you to introduce this material into scenes of ordinary, everyday indulgence?

When I initially started working with gold, I was exploring the idea of status indicators and how materials communicate value across time and culture. Gold has an expansive visual history, appearing in religious spaces, ceremonial objects, family heirlooms, offerings, ornamentation, and symbols of prosperity. It can imply devotion, wealth, permanence, reverence, and security almost immediately. What interested me was placing that material beside imagery of something as ordinary and fleeting as food. Food disappears. It is eaten, gifted, wasted, shared, craved, or remembered, but it does not last in the same way gold is expected to last. At the same time, food carries a similar value. It can be offered, celebrated, used in ritual, associated with abundance, or treated as a form of comfort and luxury. A cinnamon roll is not necessary for survival in the way rice might be, but being able to enjoy, gift, or even waste something decadent can become its own kind of wealth signifier. By bringing gold into scenes of everyday indulgence, I'm interested in the tension between the everyday and the sacred, elevating ordinary consumption while also questioning how value is constructed and assigned.

Your compositions often bring the viewer very close to the figure and the food. How do cropping, scale, and perspective help create a sense of intimacy or psychological tension?

Perspective is crucial to storytelling; it determines how the viewer enters the image. Cropping, scale, and point of view can make a scene feel open and inviting, or they can make it feel almost too close. I consider where the viewer's eyes will focus, toward the face, the mouth, the food, the hand, the mess, or the gaze of the figure. Direct eye contact can make the viewer suddenly aware of their own looking, while a more absorbed or passive figure can make the moment feel private, as though it is being witnessed without permission. What is left outside the frame matters too, because it is left to the viewer to imagine. When the figure and food fill the composition, there is less distance between the viewer and the scene, and the act of looking becomes more physical and involved. That closeness can feel warm or seductive, but it can also create psychological tension, implicating the viewer in the moment of consumption instead of allowing them to simply observe it from afar.

Sára Knudsen

I am originally from Prague and now live in Denmark. I start painting in 2025, and it quickly became my favourite way to express ideas and emotions. I love creating whimsical scenes where ordinary moments become magical, inviting viewers into imaginative worlds full of colour and storytelling. As a self-taught artist, I see each painting as a chance to learn, grow, and share a little wonder with others.

Project Statement

I paint whimsical worlds where reality and imagination come together. My work is inspired by everyday moments, but I enjoy transforming them into colourful stories filled with expressive characters and unexpected details. Working with acrylic paint allows me to experiment with colour, texture, and emotion. Through my paintings, I hope to encourage people to slow down, smile, and discover a sense of curiosity and magic in the ordinary.

Sára Knudsen | Things Are Not Always How They Seem





Sára Knudsen | Secret of the Village

Asma Kocjan

Your artistic practice grew out of your experience as an international model. At what point did the fashion world become not only your professional environment, but also a subject you wanted to examine through art?

„Fashion was my first visual language,,

As an international model, i experienced beauty, glamour and constant transformation from the inside.

When i turned fully to painting, i realized that i was no longer interested in representing fashion itself, but in exploring what lies beneath it.

I still love fashion , it remains an endless source of inspiration for me. But in my paintings, fashion is no longer the destination- itis the doorway into questions about identity, memory and human presence.



Asma Kocjan | Staged Presence | 2026



Asma Kocjan | Traces Of The Night | 2026

Having experienced the fashion industry from within, how do you balance criticism of this world with your personal attachment to it and the influence it has had on your identity?

I don't see my relationship with the fashion world as a contradiction. Fashion has been an important part of my life, and i remain deeply fascinated by its creativity, craftsmanship and ability to communicate without words. It taught me to observe details, proportions, textures and the power of visual expression.

My paintings do not criticize fashion itself. Rather, they explore the space where appearance meets reality.

The figures in your paintings are often anonymized and reduced to silhouettes. Why is it important for you to conceal their individual identities rather than depict recognizable personalities?

I am less interested in portraying a specific person than a capturing a human presence. By reducing my figures to silhouettes or partially concealing their identities, i create space for the viewer's own memories, emotions and experiences.

I am not painting a portrait of someone. I am painting a state of being.

Concealment and revelation appear repeatedly in your work. Do you see the process of adding, covering, and removing layers as similar to dressing and undressing the human body?

Yes, there is definitely a connection, although i see it more as a metaphor than a literal comparison .

The process of building a painting through layers resembles the way we construct our own identities.

Every layer is like a memory. Even when it disappears from view, it continues to shape the painting.

You combine acrylic paint with photographs, fabrics, newspaper fragments, grids, and other materials. How do you decide which materials belong in a particular work, and what meanings do they carry for you?



I never choose materials simply because they are visually interesting. Every material has its own history, texture and cultural associations.

Before it becomes part of painting, I ask myself whether it contributes to the story the work wants to tell.

I collect visual impressions wherever i go. I collect stories!

The titles of your works offer viewers a point of entry without fully explaining the images. At what stage of the creative process do your titles usually emerge, and how do they shape the interpretation of a work?

For me, a title is never simply a description of what can already be seen. It is an invitation to enter the work a particular emotional or poetic perspective, while still leaving room for personal interpretation.

Most of my titles emerge towards the end of the creative process.

A title should not answer the painting. It should begin a conversation with it.

You have observed that the art world is increasingly becoming similar to the fashion world. Which qualities do you find most troubling in this convergence, and what questions would you like your paintings to raise about visibility, beauty, consumption, and change?

I believe there has always been a dialogue between art and fashion, and i don't see that as something negative. Both have the power to reflect their time, shape cultural identity and communicate visually.

Ultimately, i hope my paintings ask a simple but essential question: What do we truly see when we look beyond the painting?

I don't want my paintings to compete for attention. I want them to reward attention.

Shaina Mohammed

Your practice spans performance, theater, photography, video, and installation. How does your background in theater influence the way you construct visual artworks?

For me, theater is not just about learning acting techniques or creating scenes. Theater can be a way of thinking about human existence. I learned from theater that the body is a place where meaning is created rather than merely a means of expression. Every movement, every pause, every breath, and even every silence can become a language. I have tried to transfer this understanding to photography, video, and installation. In my work, the body is not just the subject of an image, but a place where time, nostalgia, pressure, thought, and being intersect.



Shaina Mohammed | Force Of Kazi | 2026



A body that always exists between revelation and concealment, freedom and limits, presence and absence.

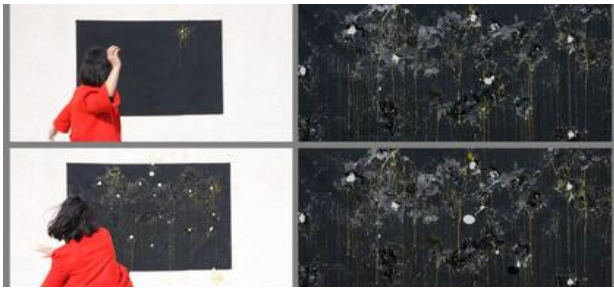
At the same time, I learned from theater that space is never empty, that every place carries history, memory, and the possibility of events.

The same is true of time. I don't see time as something straightforward, but as something that accumulates in the body and is reborn through the viewer's experience.

The relationship between theater and visual art, for me, is not a relationship between two different media; it is a relationship between two ways of thinking—one that creates meaning through events and the other through images—but both meet in the same place: The moment when the viewer feels that what they are seeing is not just something external, but part of their own existential experience.

Therefore, everything I make—photographs, videos, and installations—is, for me, an extension of a stage without visible boundaries. The exhibition space becomes the place of events, the body becomes text, and light becomes language. The viewer is transported from the act of looking into the production of meaning.

Hence, the aim of my work is to create a situation in which the viewer is forced to rethink their existence, body, and relationship to the world.



In the photographic series Press, the body appears confined within an extremely narrow architectural space. How did you discover or create this location, and what did it represent to you?

This place and situation are not just an ordinary architectural space, but a metaphor for the boundaries and intense feelings I have encountered and experienced every day, to the extent that there is no space for a normal breath.

Every movement is a breath of pressure and boundaries.

The high walls, close to the body, represent stress, mental tension, restrictions, and the absence of free breath. From there, nothing remains in its normal state, and nothing is seen in its normal form.

In this work, the space and the narrow walls alongside the body have become a language. I wanted the viewer not only to see a narrow space, but also to read the feeling of confinement and pressure.

As for the creation of the place or space, the feeling that existed inside me had to be created in such a place, constructed through a series of partitions placed side by side.

The long corridor creates a strong sense of distance between the viewer and your figure. Why was this separation important for the work?

When you stand in front of a work of art and ask, "Why is this made like this?" or, as you say, "Why was this separation important?" it means that, at that moment, the work has managed to come closer to achieving its purpose.

Because it has raised questions and thoughts. This, in itself, is an important aspect of contemporary art. Yes, this separation is an important aspect of the work and is embedded in the concept itself.

Of course, this situation creates separation as much as it creates a feeling of pressure and crisis. But this distance is not only geographical and physical; it is also psychological and social.

The distance becomes productive of thought and feeling. When the viewer looks at the work, it is both near and far at the same time.

This separation creates a sense of loneliness, silence, and the inability to reach one another, which is the main content of this series of works.

The series includes various everyday actions and objects, such as sitting, waiting, resting, and using a table or a toilet. How did you choose these particular scenes?

These actions are very ordinary and part of everyday routine. I didn't aim to show these actions and everyday objects simply to depict ordinary life.

Rather, I wanted to show that one often lives one's inner life through these same ordinary actions. This inner life is the result of accumulated pressure and intense exposure.

It is the inner self that determines how the things outside and around us are experienced. Although these actions may seem ordinary, when they occur under severe pressure and within a limited space, they take on a different meaning from the one they originally had.

Sitting becomes waiting. Rest becomes mental fatigue. Beds and tables, which are meant to provide comfort, have here become part of the pressure and no longer serve their ordinary function.

I wanted to show that even the most ordinary things can change their meaning under different circumstances.

Therefore, each of these scenes was an attempt to say, or to show, that human tragedy is sometimes found not in great events, but in the most ordinary actions that are constantly repeated.

You describe the work as reflecting difficult interactions and treatment by others. How do personal experiences become transformed into images without becoming purely autobiographical?

Yes, I consider personal experience to be the primary material of my work, not its ultimate goal. Life experience is the raw material from which the artist begins and pushes to its furthest possibilities.

In doing so, I didn't intend simply to tell my own story. I tried to transform private feelings into a shared



Shaina Mohammed | Infinte Swing | 2025



language, so that each viewer could relate them to their own experience.

When an artwork moves from the private to the public, it is no longer just about one person.

Art has the ability to transform any personal experience into a shared thematic image because there is an artistic consciousness and vision behind that experience. At the same time, personal experience can be questioned, rethought, and transformed into symbols and forms.

At this point, the experience ceases to be a private memory and becomes an artistic experience.

When an individual experience can create a shared sense of humanity, it is no longer a biography, but a mirror of the human condition.

When art is filled with biographical details, the space for the viewer to rediscover their own experience within the work becomes narrower.

Therefore, this work should not be seen as a confession of personal experience, but as a question about the meaning of existence, relationships, and the sense of limitation.

Your work often explores loneliness, alienation, pain, memory, and loss. How are these experiences shaped by the social and political realities of Kurdistan?

Of course, no work of art is born outside its time and place. As a Kurdish artist, I have lived within a history, geography, and collective memory that have shaped the lives of individuals and society.

At the same time, I believe that if art remains only within the confines of its regional identity, it loses some of its potential.

The task of art, in my view, is to reach universal meaning from a particular place, and to move from a personal experience to a human experience.

The loneliness, alienation, and memories that recur in my work are not just personal experiences or the result of a particular political situation. They have settled in the heart as psychological monuments of history and life. Each society may have its own way of

experiencing these feelings, but the basis of the feeling is the same.

That is why I try to make this place—where the individual and society, nostalgia and the present, the personal and the common meet—the center of my work.

In the context of Kurdistan, history is not only found in the archive of events; it is in the body, in memory, and in silence.

I am most interested in the point where history becomes feeling, not just evidence, so politics can be present in my work as an unseen force.

A force that changes the way one thinks, remembers, and relates to the world, rather than existing merely as a direct subject.

Therefore, although my work originates in Kurdistan, my aim is not for it to be read only as a regional document.

I want it to be read as a shared human space, a place where any viewer, regardless of their identity or geography, can find a part of themselves.

In my view, art then transcends the boundaries of its birthplace and becomes a common language of humanity.

What kind of emotional or physical response would you like viewers to have when encountering Press as a complete twelve-image series?

The truth is that I never try to impose a particular feeling on the audience, because I believe that a work of art is completed when the audience begins a conversation with it, not when I finish making it. So, it is not important for me to predetermine what the audience should feel. Rather, I hope my work can create a space in which each person can find their own feelings, memories, and experiences.

In the series Press, the body is not only a visual object; it is an archive of memories, fear, silence, and the influence of unknown forces.

Therefore, I want the viewer to respond to their own body and feelings before seeing the form or the technique.

If they become breathless, feel constricted, or even lose their sense of time, then the work has, for a brief moment, moved from the level of vision to the level of experience.

If Press can create a moment in which the viewer breaks away from the pace of everyday life, even for a second, and returns to their body, their memories, and their feelings, then I feel the work has achieved its goal.

I am not looking for a single, unified answer as much as I want a question to remain in the viewer's heart. Finally, I hope that anyone who is under pressure will remember not only the images, but also the feeling of that moment.



Louis Larkin

I'm Louis, A 21 Year old photographer from Melbourne. I've been taking photos for just over a year now and love it. I specialise in nature and street photography. My most recent project "The Land Of The Rising Sun" was taken on my recent trip to Japan and covers the different aspects of life from different people throughout the country. Thank you for reading and I hope you like viewing my photos!





Alex Mullen

You have lived and worked in Adelaide, London, rural South Australia, and now Provence. How has moving between such different environments shaped the way you understand place and your own identity as an artist?

I didn't consciously set out to make work about place, but looking back it has always been central to my practice. Growing up in Adelaide, it was something I took for granted. It was only after moving to London that I realised how much my own sense of self had been shaped by where I was raised. Living in England connected me to my family history, but it also made me realise how Australian I am.



Alex Mullen | Courtney (Pastel) | 2025



Later, moving to Webb Beach, a small fishing town on the Adelaide Plains, was another kind of contrast. After London, the flatness and isolation felt strangely liberating: there were only a handful of permanent residents, no shops, and the tide could recede so far that the water disappeared from view. I had spent time there as a child, so there was also a sense of returning to something familiar, but experiencing it as an adult and with my partner gave me a different perspective. She grew up in Provence, and seeing Australia through her eyes made me more aware of things I had previously taken for granted. Now, living in Provence, I find myself experiencing her landscape in a similar way.

What originally drew you to art, and when did you begin to see painting as the primary way to express your experiences and ideas?

As a kid I was always drawing and art was my favourite subject at school, but for whatever reason I never considered it something I could pursue seriously. I ended up studying psychology at university instead, probably because I had a great teacher in high school. By the start of my second year I knew it wasn't what I wanted to be doing. I remember telling a friend during a lecture that I was going to quit but had no idea what to do instead. She looked at my notebook, pointed to the drawings covering the pages, and said, "All you ever do in lectures is draw. Maybe you should be doing that." I went on to study graphic design, thinking it was a practical choice. While I enjoyed the course, I realised I was spending a lot more time on the computer than I was drawing. That led me to Adelaide Central School of Art, where drawing formed the foundation of everything we did. As soon as I picked up oil paint, I knew I'd found the medium I wanted to dedicate myself to.



Since moving to southern France, landscape has become increasingly central to your practice. What was it about Provence that changed or redirected the way you work?

Everywhere I look in Provence feels as though it could be a painting. That's partly the landscape itself, but also the legacy of artists who have worked here before. Arriving in a place so closely associated with the history of painting was both exciting and intimidating.

When I first moved here I continued making work that was closer to my earlier practice, but it gradually began to feel contrived. At the same time, becoming a father shifted my perspective. My life suddenly felt bigger than just myself. The work I had been making had a darker edge to it, and although I didn't necessarily change my view of the world, landscape offered a different sense of scale. The darker and more difficult things in our lives are temporary; the world continues beyond us. That idea has become increasingly present in the way I think about landscape.

Your recent landscapes are built from dense, rhythmic marks and vivid colour rather than conventional naturalistic description. How did this distinctive visual language develop?

Drawing has always been the foundation of my practice, and I tend to paint in much the same way that I draw. In my recent landscapes, the mark-making is quite literally a translation from the coloured pencil and pastel drawings that come before the paintings.

In previous bodies of work, I often combined different styles within a single painting, and I found that I sometimes had a tendency to overwork them. I wanted to develop a more consistent visual language, both for the qualities it could

bring to the work and because I felt that a more defined way of painting would help me avoid overworking the surface. I've always felt that an understanding of colour is one of my strengths, and working with broken marks gives me the freedom to play with it more intuitively.

Trees, rocks, hills, and vegetation often become almost individual characters in your paintings. What attracts you to these particular natural forms, and how do you decide which landscapes are worth translating into a work?

That has generally been the case with my work. Whether it's a tree, a rock, a book on a shelf or a park bench, I tend to paint things in a way that gives them a sense of energy or life. I think this comes partly from an interest in ideas around consciousness and animism, and the possibility of seeing the world as being more alive than one might generally assume. There is also something more simple behind it: a desire to pay attention to the things we normally overlook. Sometimes I'm simply struck by something. One of my paintings depicts a tree I passed every day on my way to work. When it came into blossom one spring, I felt I had to paint it. At other times, the decision is more pragmatic: I'm looking for the possibility of a strong composition and considering how the different elements relate to one another. I think this way of looking at things probably contributes to them taking on a sense of character. Sometimes a particular tree, rock or other natural form becomes the anchor of a composition, and the rest of the landscape is built around it.

You have mentioned that you are interested in "recognition" rather than "truth" in art. What does recognition mean to you, and what kind of response do you hope occurs when someone encounters your work?

For me, painting isn't about explaining an idea or faithfully describing a place. It's about creating the conditions for an emotional response that connects us to something we perhaps already know but might not be able to put into words.

A painting by William Mackinnon or Alice Neel, for example, can trigger an emotional response because they have captured something of the human experience that I recognise, even if I can't necessarily articulate what it is. There's a comfort in that, even if the feeling is uncomfortable. That is the kind of response I hope to create with my own work. The only problem is that I can never really know if I've been successful.

As your work continues to evolve in France, what are you currently exploring that feels new or unresolved, and where do you see your practice moving next?

The works featured here are part of Goat Country, a two-part exhibition, the second part of which will be exhibited in Draguignan, Provence, in October this year. Once I finish those paintings, I have some ideas that are more historical and narrative-based that I'd like to explore in greater depth. I'd also like to continue painting landscapes. There's a well of possibilities to explore there, whether through different colour palettes or trying to show further restraint when working the canvas. I think there's still a lot of room to develop my technique.

Izabela Łapińska

Art photographer, professor of art, holds a doctorate and habilitation in film art, specializing in photography from the National Film, Television and Theatre School in Łódź.

She has participated in several hundred photography exhibitions in Poland and abroad, as well as numerous publications in periodicals in France, Belgium, the Czech Republic, and Greece. Her work has been published in the Belgian publishing house "Objectif," the French edition of "PHOTO," the Polish magazine "Pozytyw," "Camera Obscura," "Format – Magazyn o Sztuki," and "Akademia" (Academy) published by the Polish Academy of Sciences.

She is the author of photographic projects presented in galleries and museums, including: "Details of the Female Body," "Sensuality," "The Film Defect of Loneliness," "The Naked Face," "Walking Through the City," "Clinical Image," "Meristem," "Biopsy," "Autopsy," and "Skin."

She has curated exhibitions in, among others, the following institutions: in: Polish Institute of Art and Sciences of America, New York, United States, Ancien Cinema - Luxembourg, Centre Culturel de Rencontre Abbaye de Neumünster, Luxembourg, European Court of Justice - Luxembourg, Das Kreismuseum Bogenberg, Germany, Dynamic Photo Art & Performance, in the series European Women Photographers, Graz, Austria, Wozownia Art Gallery, Mazovian Center of Culture and Art - Galeria XX1 Warsaw, Imaginarium Gallery, Łódź, Cinematography Museum, Łódź, FF Gallery (Photography Forum) in Łódź, Wieluń Region Museum, Wieluń, Borderlands Museum, Lubaczów, Galerie de l'Hotel des Arts Saverdun, France, National Museum in Gdańsk (Design and Art exhibition). Her photographs have been recognized in competitions around the world, and she has received numerous awards, including: Gold Winner in the TIFA Tokyo International Foto Awards, Gold Winner in the PX3 Prix De La Photographie Paris, 1st Prize in the 19th Julia Margaret Cameron Award – The WorldWide Photography Gala Awards, Silver Award in the BIFA (Budapest International Foto Awards), Finalist in the 15th Annual International Book Awards IBA Los Angeles USA, Silver Winner in the TIFA Tokyo International Foto Awards, Silver Winner in the PX3 Prix De La Photographie Paris, and numerous other awards and dozens of honorable mentions in competitions around the world. "Skin"—an award-winning, limited and signed edition of her own photographic monograph—is held in the library collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, USA; in the art collection of the Fraenkel Gallery in San Francisco, USA; in the art collection of the Yosii Milo Gallery in New York, USA; in the art collection of the Zachęta National Gallery of Art; and in the library collection of the MOCAK Museum of Contemporary Art in Krakow.

Izabela Łapińska has participated in international projects and academic conferences whose themes are closely related to the body in culture.

In addition to her photography, she also writes texts. Her published works have focused on photography, film, and advertising, with an emphasis on topics related to eroticism, bodily ugliness, abuse, and exclusion in art.

The artist was awarded the honorary badge of Merit for Polish Culture - a Polish decoration of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage awarded to people who distinguish themselves in the creation, dissemination and protection of culture, and the Bronze Cross of Merit - a Polish civilian state decoration awarded by the President of Poland for services to the State or citizens.

Izabela Lapinska | Eyes | 2015





Izabela Lapinska | Cat | 2022

— Interview

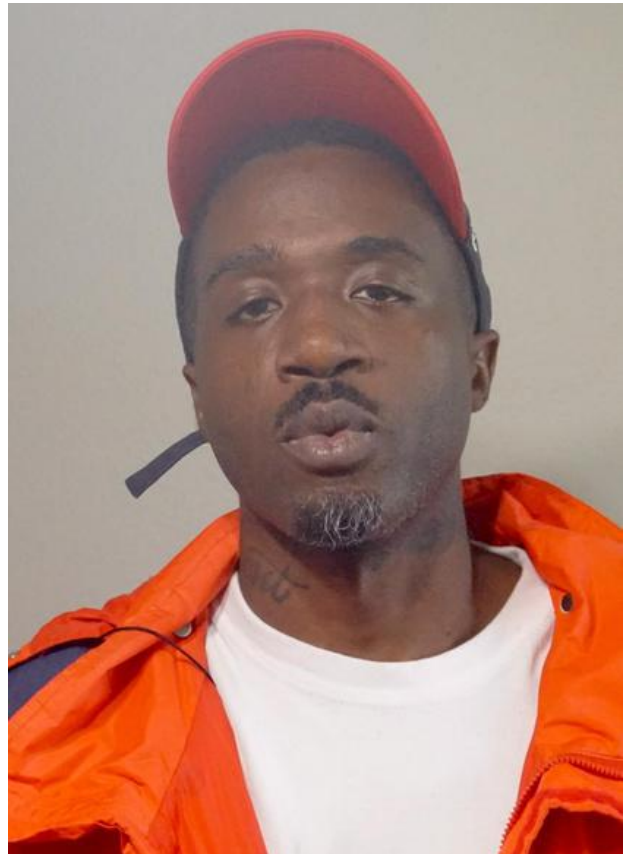
Raz Forh

Your portraits remain recognizably human while often moving toward abstraction. What interests you about this tension between the visible figure and the subject's inner emotional world?

What interests me most is how my perception of a thing can almost become a reality that's completely in my hand. There's something about just attacking the canvas with brushstrokes that seem like I'm just making a mess, until all of a sudden I can recognize who or what I'm looking at. I can always keep rendering my strokes to make it hyper



Raz Forh | Ballerina | 2026



realistic but I have a resonance with the primal look that abstraction gives my paintings. I want the human touch to be in my work I don't care if it's technically perfect like a Mona Lisa I might mess it up on purpose just so you know a human did it.

As I get better there will be less abstraction in my works but for now it's good to experiment with as I hone my artistic voice as a painter.

Having already developed a distinct creative identity through music, how has becoming a visual artist changed your understanding of your own artistic voice?

That's a great question.. I have to say it's been somewhat of a revelation for me to see the choices I make when I create visually as opposed to audibly. I realize my "voice" resides in everything I create. Maybe this is because I was forced to cultivate my own touch as a rapper and beat maker. It's frowned upon to do anything like someone else in hip hop so every painting has to feel like me alone. It sounds like a lot of pressure but it's very liberating for someone like me.

Was there a particular moment when you realized that painting could express emotions or ideas that music could not?

Yeah once I began to understand things like impasto and the difference in the mediums. Something about the texture of a painting can give you the same feeling as looking at a picture or video of your favorite food. A



painting of your childhood home can make you shed a tear. Basically thanks to some of my paintings I've been able to find out about how inanimate objects can evoke an emotional response in someone.

If I scream on a song I have an idea how you'll respond, but there's someone I can show a simple painting of a sunrise that might bring them to tears. The beauty is in the eye of the beholder but it's still very interesting.

Many of your works feel intimate and introspective. Are they rooted in personal experience, observation of others, or a combination of both?

I would say a lot of my works are rooted in emotions I've felt. My life has been an absolute rollercoaster and I think that's what makes me an interesting painter mostly. The attitude in my work. The fearlessness. I would have only been painting for 2 years this September so it's not that I'm super skilled it's all just raw willpower and dedication to the craft. But to keep it simple everything inspires me a little bit.

Your paintings convey strong psychological intensity even when the subjects appear still or restrained. How do you create this emotional charge through gesture, composition, and brushwork?

As I'm painting the figure it almost feels like the closer I get to finishing the figure the more life I'm breathing into them. It's as if I have an inner compass telling me how this character or that character's energy would be and it helps me translate it in paint.

Red splashes and marks repeatedly interrupt

otherwise muted palettes in your work. What does the color red represent for you, and how consciously do you control these interventions?

The red splat is my signature. I put it on my very first painting and just honed it. Lately I see a lot of people biting the aesthetic from me. I only started painting a year ago and now I see it being used more and more by others, but it's very unique to my personality. As a rapper I used a lot of Japanese samurai aesthetics in my covers and videos and I think it just bled into my paintings. Red is just such a powerful color when used correctly and it feels right for me. Every splat is different because I'm in a different mood with each work and I'm also communicating a different thing in each so somehow my spirit just knows the way that I need to throw the paint on the finished piece. The splat is my garnish.

As an artist at the beginning of your visual practice, which themes, techniques, or subjects would you like to explore more deeply in the coming years?

I just got into oil a few months ago so I'm just keeping my ears and eyes open to any teachings I can find right now. I would love to learn how to do the thing Caravaggio does with shadows one day but I don't see that happening for a few years.

I'd like to study abstract art a little bit more too. It looks like a big mess especially when you're not a painter but once you start it begins to look some kind of language like hieroglyphics or something.

I plan to step my portrait game up big time in the coming years also and eventually get to painting real life subjects that can pose for me. I'm hopeful that I'll find the right mentors, friends and residencies to hone my skills.



Anna Mirtshulava

Abstract Expressionism / Energy Painting

An artist who combines energy practices with abstract painting.

Since 2024, she has been creating paintings as tools for transforming one's inner state. Her works function as visual meditations: they inspire, shift the viewer's mood, and help bring dreams to life.

Artist Statement

The Archaeology of Feeling series opens with a work that captures speed and vortex, chaos and geometry of passion. It is a moment when sensations flare up and take hold of the mind. Then, the feeling begins to take shape. This is the BEGINNING - a dialogue, life in motion, a clear and contrasting moment of connection.

In work #3, the feeling sinks deeper, becoming part of the flesh and memory. It no longer screams; instead, it becomes a relief, a texture, a part of a person's very essence.

At first, it is a whirlwind. Then, it becomes a journey shared together. In the end, it leaves an imprint on the soul itself.

Art is the memory of what we truly felt.



Anna Mirtshulava | Speed | 2025



Anna Mirtshulava | The Beginning | 2025

Anna Mirtshulava | The Red Velvet Horse | 2026



— Interview

Chaehyun Min

Your paintings transform personal memories into symbolic visual worlds rather than representing them literally. What draws you to this indirect way of working with autobiographical material?



Chaehyun Min | An Uncontainable Body | 2026



For me, indirectness is not a way of concealing personal memories, but a way of caring for them. Some experiences are too overwhelming to be translated literally. I often think of them like water held behind a dam—if released all at once, they lose their shape and become destructive. Instead, I let them emerge gradually through color and forms. Whether positive or painful, I believe autobiographical experiences contain far more possibilities than they initially reveal. Because of that, I try to approach them with great care rather than translating them directly. When I take the time to work with them patiently, they gradually stop circling around my own personal experience and begin to open themselves to broader interpretations.

Childhood photographs and domestic spaces are important sources of inspiration for you. How do you decide which memories or visual details are ready to become part of a painting?

I don't consciously choose memories because they are important. The memories that become paintings are usually the ones that continue to return to me over time. Often, it isn't a specific event but a small visual fragment—a corner of a room, a pattern, or a particular quality of light—that stays with me. I also find myself drawn to photographs with vivid colors and distinctive patterns. Rather than feeling accidental, they seem to hold the atmosphere and emotional truth of that moment in the most honest way. They become a starting point for experimentation, and as these fragments begin to connect with other memories and emotions, they gradually find their place within a painting.

You describe your compositions as collage-based patterns in which separate elements become parts of a single living organism. How does this idea influence the way you construct an image?



The absence of rigidity is probably the most important part of my process. I don't try to make separate elements fit together according to a fixed plan. Instead, I keep asking myself what feels important to the question I'm exploring at that moment. The process is intuitive, almost like sewing, where one fragment is slowly connected to another. Sometimes this leads to unexpected compositions that feel surprisingly alive. At the same time, I have to be careful not to impose meaning onto every connection. That balance between intuition and restraint requires a great deal of concentration and ultimately shapes the way I construct my images.

Your works often combine tenderness and unease, using vivid colors alongside darker or psychologically charged imagery. How do you create and maintain this emotional tension?

I'm really glad people noticed that. It might even be something I wasn't fully aware of myself. I think most people, not just me, are constantly trying to maintain a sense of psychological balance, especially in today's world. I'm interested in observing that fragile state rather than deliberately creating emotional tension. As I work, I think it naturally finds its way into the paintings. The coexistence of tenderness and unease isn't something I consciously construct; it simply emerges from the way I experience and observe people, including myself.

Could you describe your working process? Do you begin with photographs, sketches, fragments of patterns, or an intuitive response to the canvas?

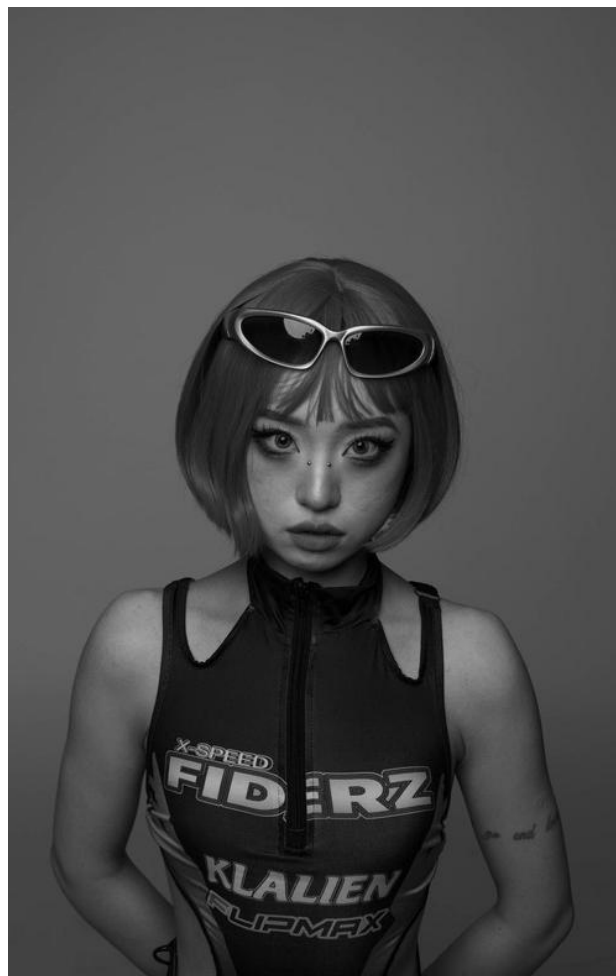
Although it may seem unexpected from looking at my work, I actually dislike reaching a point where I can no longer explain the internal logic of a painting, even to myself. My process often begins by making collages from photographs, patterns, and visual fragments that inspire me, and I'm quite particular about those references coming from my own experience. Whenever possible, I photograph them myself. Once those elements come together, I try to articulate the work by writing a clear and coherent sentence.

After holding your first solo exhibition in Seoul in 2025, did your relationship with your work change? What artistic questions are you currently interested in exploring?

I think I have become more interested in finding a balance between objectivity and personal experience. I'm currently thinking about how much of myself should exist within my work without allowing my brain to define it completely. I think it can be dangerous to believe that, simply because someone is an artist, they have to be a certain kind of person or constantly perform a particular identity. Rather than searching for a fixed image of what an artist should be, I want to remain open to change and let my work evolve naturally alongside me.



Kiska Shiyu Huang



What was the starting point for OsteoSymbiote, and how did the idea evolve into its final visual form?

OsteoSymbiote grew out of my ongoing interest in imagining synthetic life forms rather than designing wearable objects. Instead of asking how an object could decorate or enhance the human body, I became fascinated by the possibility of a digital organism evolving to live alongside it. I wanted to imagine a new form of life that would attach itself intimately to the body, not as an accessory or technological device, but as an independent organism capable of forming a long-term relationship with its host.

My background in Fashion Jewellery continues to influence the way I think about the body. While I was increasingly drawn to digital 3D design, the body remained central to my practice. Rather than creating ornaments for it, I became interested in imagining speculative organisms that could exist with it. H. R. Giger's biomechanical universe also had a profound influence on my artistic direction. His vision of blurred boundaries between humans and alien life encouraged me to imagine synthetic organisms that are neither purely biological nor entirely artificial, but something in between. As the concept evolved, I began researching human anatomy, particularly the pelvis and spine, as the structural foundation for the organism's growth. Instead of simply placing an object onto the body, I wanted the form to appear as though it had evolved with the body itself. This gradually developed into OsteoSymbiote, a speculative biomechanical organism that exists somewhere between anatomy, synthetic life, and wearable sculpture.

Your work draws on anatomy, biotechnology, and speculative evolution. Which biological structures or processes most strongly influenced the organisms in this series?

The pelvis and spine became the primary anatomical inspiration because they form the structural core of the

human body. They provide support, protect vital systems, and serve as pathways through which the nervous system connects the brain to the rest of the body. Beyond their functional role, I was also drawn to their symbolic significance. The pelvis is closely associated with pregnancy and childbirth, making it a powerful symbol of the origin of life. This inspired me to imagine a synthetic organism that is not born through biological evolution alone, but through human creation. I wanted to explore the idea that artificial life could emerge from the same anatomical foundation traditionally associated with the beginning of human life. In this sense, the pelvis became more than an anatomical reference. It became a symbolic birthplace where biological life and synthetic life intersect. I was equally interested in biological processes such as adaptation and symbiosis. Rather than imagining a fixed object, I imagined an organism capable of evolving alongside its host, gradually adapting its form to the human body over time. In my mind, the organism is never complete. Like any living system, it continues to evolve through its relationship with its host.

The forms in these works can be read as jewellery, armour, prostheses, parasites, or independent living beings. Is this ambiguity important to the way you want the audience to perceive them?

Yes, this ambiguity is entirely intentional. My background in Fashion Jewellery continues to influence the way I think about the body. What has always fascinated me is the

way jewellery attaches to different parts of the body and changes the relationship between the body and the object. That way of thinking became the starting point for my practice.

As my work evolved, I became less interested in creating ornaments and more interested in creating life. Rather than designing an object to be worn, I wanted to imagine organisms that choose to inhabit the body. They are not simply accessories, nor are they fully independent creatures. They exist somewhere in between.

I deliberately keep that ambiguity because I want viewers to question what they are looking at. Is it jewellery? Is it armour? Is it a prosthesis? Is it a parasite? Or is it an entirely new form of life? More importantly, I want them to ask themselves another question: "How would I feel if I allowed this organism to attach itself to my own body?" I am less interested in providing an answer than in creating a space where those questions remain open.

How do you imagine the relationship between the human figure and the synthetic organism: is it protective, parasitic, mutually beneficial, or something more complex?

I don't think the relationship between humans and the synthetic organism can be reduced to a single definition. It is deliberately complex because it reflects the relationship we already have with digital technology today.

With the rapid development of AI and digital technologies, we have become deeply connected to digital tools. Smartphones, social media, and AI systems have become extensions of our everyday lives. We carry them with us constantly, build digital identities through online profiles, and increasingly rely on them for communication, learning, work, and entertainment. In many ways, we are creating digital forms of life while simultaneously allowing them to become an inseparable part of our own existence.

This relationship brings enormous benefits. Digital technologies make knowledge more accessible, connect people across geographical boundaries, and expand the way we experience and understand the world. At the same time, they also raise important questions about privacy, identity, dependency, and the misuse of artificial intelligence. Rather than seeing this relationship as simply positive or negative, I believe it is becoming increasingly interdependent and difficult to separate.

OsteoSymbiote is my way of visualising that complexity. The organism appears to attach itself to the human body, but whether it is protecting, controlling, evolving with, or depending on its host is intentionally left unresolved. I hope the work encourages viewers to reflect on their own relationship with digital technologies and to consider how closely they have already become integrated into their daily lives.

The organisms appear both threatening and highly ornamental. How do you approach the tension between beauty, attraction, discomfort, and danger?



Kiska Shiyu Huang | OsteoSymbiote | 2026

I don't see beauty and danger as opposites. I see them as qualities that often coexist. As I mentioned earlier, H. R. Giger has profoundly influenced my artistic practice. His biomechanical aesthetic demonstrates that something can be simultaneously beautiful yet unsettling. Rather than separating attraction from fear, his work allows these emotions to exist together, and that has greatly shaped the way I approach my own work.

The sense of discomfort in my work often comes from the skeletal forms. For many people, bones are closely associated with death because they are what remain after life has ended. However, I see them very differently. Bones are the structural foundation that supports life from the very beginning. They make movement possible, protect vital organs, and provide the framework through which the body grows. To me, they represent the architecture of life rather than simply a symbol of death. This duality also reflects the relationship between humans and digital technology today. Digital technologies are deeply attractive because they offer convenience, connection, and endless possibilities. Yet the more attractive they become, the more deeply they integrate into our lives, bringing new ethical and social concerns such as dependency, privacy, and identity. I wanted the organism to embody this same contradiction. It is visually seductive enough to invite curiosity, yet unsettling enough to encourage viewers to question whether they would truly welcome it onto their own bodies, just as we continue to negotiate our relationship with the digital technologies that increasingly shape our everyday lives.

Your work has been presented in both art and fashion contexts. How has your experience with fashion influenced the way you think about the body, wearability, transformation, and self-presentation?

My background in Fashion Jewellery taught me how objects communicate identity and how they become extensions of the body. Jewellery is never just decorative; it reflects personality, culture, memory, and the way we choose to present ourselves. It also made me fascinated by the intimate relationship between objects and the body, and how something worn can transform both appearance and perception.

This curiosity led me to study Material Futures at Central Saint Martins, where my focus shifted from designing objects to imagining possible futures. Rather than asking what materials are, I became interested in what they could become and how emerging technologies might reshape our relationship with the body, identity, and the environment. My work gradually evolved from wearable objects into speculative digital organisms that question how humans might coexist with synthetic forms of life. My current practice asks what happens when objects are no longer passive accessories, but active organisms that become part of our identity. Instead of simply expressing who we are, they begin to influence how we perceive ourselves, how we interact with others, and where we draw the boundaries between the physical body and the digital self.

What changes when a digital sculpture moves from a still image into augmented reality and becomes something the audience can encounter through their own camera and physical surroundings?

A still image only allows viewers to observe the digital organism from a distance. For me, augmented reality is not simply a display technology. It is the moment when the organism begins to exist in the same space as the viewer.

Once it enters augmented reality, the relationship changes completely. The audience is no longer simply looking at the digital organism; they become its host. More importantly, they shift from being observers to active participants. The work becomes deeply personal because every viewer experiences it on their own body and within their own surroundings.

I am interested in the moment when a digital organism appears to exist within physical space. Although viewers know it is virtual, their instinctive reaction often treats it as something genuinely present. That moment reveals how increasingly blurred the boundary between digital and physical experience has become.

Ultimately, this is the central theme of my practice: exploring the evolving relationship between humans and digital life. A still image introduces the digital organism, but augmented reality allows people to experience what it might feel like to coexist with it. Instead of simply observing a speculative future, they briefly become part of it. For a brief moment, the audience is no longer outside the work. They become part of the organism's world, just as the organism becomes part of theirs. In that moment, the boundary between observer and subject, digital and physical, begins to dissolve.

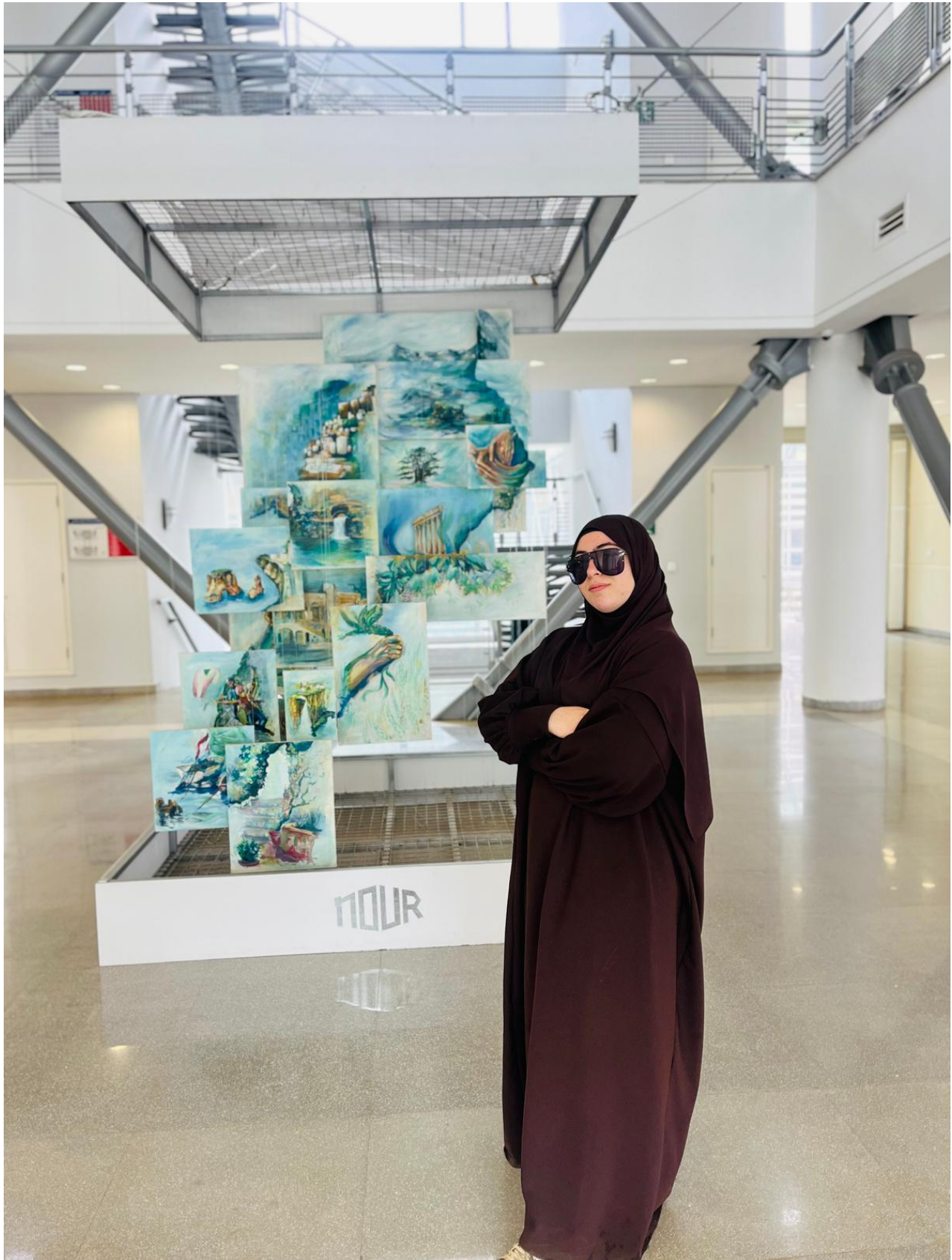


Kiska Shiyu Huang | Osteosymbiote | 2026



Nour Jamal

Visual Artist & Art Educator Murals & Anamorphic Art.
Lebanese.
Teaching painting & creativity, sharing art tips.



Project Statement

Technical Report: "SHATAT" (Diaspora)

Artist: Nour Jamal

Art Form: Installation Art / Anamorphic Art

Conceptual Classification: 5D Interactive Conceptual Experience

I. Conceptual Framework

The installation "SHATAT" acts as a complex conceptual structure dissecting the dialectics of identity, collective memory, and contemporary Lebanese reality. The work does not present the viewer with a fixed visual truth, but rather confronts them with the shock of fragmentation and reconstruction. It is a living embodiment of how homelands transform into scattered fragments in space, where it becomes imperative for the viewer to seek physically and intellectually the "Point of View" (POV) to build a cohesive scene out of diaspora. The moment they abandon this point, the bond of identity unravels to return the work to its shattered reality, simulating the experience of alienation, societal rupture, and the continuous search for stability.

II. Scenographic Architecture & The 5D Structure

This installation breaks the standard conventions of traditional three-dimensional sculpture, extending across five sensory and cognitive dimensions that link the exhibition space with the psychological consciousness of the viewer:

Physical Three-Dimensionality (3D - Mass & Space): The work materializes physically through 22 independent panels suspended by delicate, transparent wires in an open internal atrium. The number (22) is deliberate, referencing the date of Lebanon's independence and its National Day, turning independence from a mere historical memory into a suspended physical mass capable of fragmentation and vibration.

The Fourth Dimension (4D - Temporal & Bodily Motion): The work is conditional on time and movement; it cannot be comprehended by standing still. The viewer is compelled to circle around the suspended structure, climb stairs, and alter their position, making the time spent in motion an essential element in reading the artistic concept.

The Fifth Dimension (5D - Multi-faceted Perception & Parallel Cognitive Realities): The fifth dimension is achieved here by designing the architectural work to be read from five completely contrasting geometric angles. These angles reflect two parallel realities at the exact same moment and place (the reality of construction versus the reality of collapse), distributed as follows:

III. Detailed Visual Analysis of the Five Angles and Faces

1. The Front Face (The Synthesis of Identity and Productivity - The Cohesive Colored View)

When standing at the correct optical viewpoint from the front, the 22 panels merge to form a vibrant, colorful composition that condenses the geography, history, and people of the homeland through three-part axes:

A. The Axis of Economy and Human Hands (The Core of Sustainable Resilience): Hands appear here as a central kinetic element expressing human action resisting nothingness:

The Agriculture Composition: Represented by an extended, coarse, and deeply rooted hand gripping golden ears of wheat tightly, symbolizing giving, food security, and attachment to the bounties of the Lebanese plains and earth.

The Industry Composition: Represented by profoundly detailed artisan hands shaping and crafting clay pottery, in a direct tribute to the authentic heritage of craftsmanship (specifically in Tripoli and historical regions), symbolizing the idea of reconstructing self and identity from raw earthly materials.

The Trade Composition: Materialized in a delicate, graceful hand holding a fine thread of silk, as a clever historical reference to the Silk Road and the historic ports of Tripoli and Beirut, expressing commercial openness, diplomacy, and the cultural link between East and West.

B. The Axis of Landmarks and Shared History: The work brings together three architectural monuments that condense temporal memory: The Citadel of Tripoli with its solid Mamluk architecture, The Pillars of Baalbek towering as a symbol of historical immortality, and Beiteddine Palace with its Shihabi aesthetic; together they form the defensive walls of collective consciousness.

C. The Axis of Nature and Abundance: Features the Olive tree (symbol of deeply rooted peace), The Vineyards/Grapes (symbol of joy and ingrained hospitality), and the climbing Medida plants (whose structure expresses social interconnectedness and a high capacity to adapt and overcome crises).

D. The Axis of Motion and Spirit (Art & Sports): Captures the rushing energy of youth through Paragliding challenging the geography of the sky, and Rafting in the face of roaring waters, with the bodily movements of the Caracalla Dance Theatre at the center, infusing the installation with a folkloric, kinetic rhythm that links the panels together.

E. The Axis of Water and Flow: The scenes of Afqa Grotto, Jezzine Waterfall, and the Orontes (Al-Asi) River flow across the panels. With the symbolism of the Orontes River running in the opposite direction, the work anchors the concepts of rebellion, uniqueness, and non-compliance.

F. The Gold Point (The Center): The green, majestic Cedar of Lebanon is centered in the Bsharri region to act as the vibrant visual heart around which all elements of life and productivity revolve.

2 & 3. The Right and Left Angles (The Physical Embodiment of "Shatat" in Space)

When the viewer moves to the right or left and steps away from the central point, a shocking disintegration occurs:

The colorful compositions separate completely, and the bare wooden edges and suspended gaps of the 22 panels are exposed. This side view philosophically represents the "literal diaspora"; it clarifies to the observer how the beautiful scene is nothing more than suspended, unstable shards experiencing a state of rupture and geographical and human alienation.

4. The Reverse Face (The Dark Dramatic Reality - The Back Rendered in Charcoal)

Upon rotating completely to the back face, colors and life disappear entirely. The viewer faces a wall of stark, dark reality executed entirely with sharp strokes of charcoal:

The Charred and Leaning Cedar: Appears with a trunk and branches eroded by fire, serving as a direct symbol of a homeland reeling under the weight of corruption, consecutive economic crises, and the destructive impact of loose weapons.

Flocks of Crows and Migrating Birds: Grim flocks of crows hover over the burnt branches as a symbol of misfortunes, intersecting with birds migrating and fading into the horizon, embodying the tragedy of brain drain and the mass migration of youth, leaving those who remain to face a harsh, grim reality.

5. The Top Face (The Perspective of Power Struggle - View from the Upper Floor)

When the viewer ascends to the upper floor and looks down at the work from above, an essential psychological and social dimension is revealed:

The viewer sees "The Torn Blanket" stretched over the upper grid structure.

This surface represents a precise visual metaphor for individual selfishness and internal infighting; where each faction or group attempts to pull the "blanket" toward its own narrow interests, ultimately leaving everyone exposed and tearing the shared national cover.

IV. Conclusion

The "Shatat" installation by artist Nour Jamal Sankari represents a milestone in utilizing anamorphic art to serve human and national causes. Through its five dimensions, the work does not merely exhibit; it places the viewer's awareness and perception on a real trial. The choice ultimately belongs to the viewer to define their position within the experience: either to stand before the hands working with wheat, silk, and pottery to build identity, fall into the disintegration of the sides, face the dark charcoal reality of the back, or witness from above the tearing of the shared blanket.



— Interview

Peter Tristram Walz



Your practice brings together art, writing, education, and research. How do these different roles influence the way you create visual work?



Peter Tristram Walz | Book Vise

I am a maximalist when it comes to experience, but I strive for minimalism in the presentation of my work! I think all experiences and learning contribute to what creates “successful” art. As a teacher, my mantra for my students is the assumption of “legitimacy,” or giving the work the benefit of our doubts. During critiques, I stress that we must do our best to shed our own prejudices and approach all work as if it has already been qualified. This is difficult and must be cultivated carefully. From my perspective, it is also a truth, which, of course, makes it easier to follow in the end.

It may be true that not all art or artists enter the canon, but we certainly all make art to describe something that cannot easily be illuminated in any way other than the way we choose to create it. All experience is experience, which is why I view aging and learning as a joy and privilege, not a deficit.

The works presented here have a strong material presence, with layered surfaces, dark textures, and visible wood structures. What role does materiality play in your current studio practice?

I was originally trained as a fine furniture maker, so the presence, choice, and manipulation of physical stuff in my work are deeply ingrained, (forgive the pun!) But this also relates to my perception of the physical world and is especially connected to my desire to illuminate “material” that is not traditionally defined as physical.



The visibility of the material—its worked surfaces and its malleability—should refocus the viewer on the ephemeral: unseen materials we work with and non-retinal craftsmanship to borrow from Duchamp.

Much of your work explores visual culture and mediated experience. How do you understand the relationship between physical objects and digital systems today?

This is an incredibly important question. I find that students, artists, and the public often tend to regard digital systems as somehow apart from lived experience. We regard the digital world as a product to be consumed. This is because we—and by “we,” I do mean the prevalent capitalist construct—experience ourselves through the lens of a particular cultural perspective that privileges the observer. Some have called this a “gaze,” but however one chooses to participate in these systems and experiences, or this discussion, an ephemeral framework of constructed observation is—and, in fact, must be—present. To put this more simply: we expect digital systems to be for something. But if we consider that they may not simply be for us, but rather are part of what constitutes us, then we can begin to understand these systems as something other than an input-output binary. “Us” becomes not merely what digital systems complete, calculate, or act upon, but something that exists alongside, or integrated with, as an extension of a larger planetary system we might call life. Famously, McLuhan argues that media and technological tools function as extensions of human biological and cultural systems. But even this assertion does not fully explore the possibility of a deeper and more fundamental continuity between such extensions and those things that fall outside the

category we conventionally call technology. Thus, I do not view digital systems as simply having a relationship to physical objects. I understand digital systems as physical objects—and, at a more fundamental level, as participating in the same material object or system that constitutes us all.

Could you tell us more about your concept of the “cultural proscenium”? How does this framework appear in your recent artworks?

A proscenium is the architectural frame around the opening of a stage: the threshold through which the audience observes a performance. It corresponds closely to the theatrical “fourth wall,” the imagined boundary separating the performed world from its observers. In ancient Greek and Roman theatre, the term could also refer to the area or raised platform where the play was staged. It can therefore be understood not only as a frame around creativity, but also as one of its sites—the boundary from where performance is enacted.

I look at cultural and digital spaces as the same. When I describe the cultural proscenium, I am implying that although we collectively and individually perform in our daily encounters with others the scope of that performance has both broadened and become more introverted with the rise of digital tech.



This is exemplified by social media. The number of potential performances of oneself—through video and image feeds, opinions, and written posts—is connected to the aggregate number of “followers” one has cultivated or, perhaps even more interestingly, imagines having cultivated. This occurs not publicly, as some technology conglomerates would have us believe when describing these forums as a “public square,” but rather as an interaction between a screen and a mind.

It is an isolation of actions that previously would have entered collective memory. That collective memory, based in the minds of others, is what creates my “self.” Without a collective experience, we are then given to performing many selves at many different points in time and engagement without a sustained core self. The cultural proscenium is the gateway through which a person performs a different “person” at any point during the course of contemporary life.

How does this appear in my work? It appears through a disambiguation of traditional attitudes toward the relationship between the object and the viewer. My works are not interested in being seen; they are interested in revealing the viewer to themselves as well as engaging with these technologies as object/selves in their own right.

How does your background in critical theory and art history shape your approach to form, composition, and meaning?

As I mentioned at the beginning of this interview, I



Peter Tristram Walz | Active object

view all experience and learning as equally important and crucial to interesting and vibrant art. Theory does a good job of opening minds and thoughts to the potential for expression.

I especially enjoy metaphysics and philosophy because, much like art, they rely upon distinctly indirect languages to achieve what they hope to achieve. In many cases, what artworks might hope for is to be misunderstood, so that the viewer, actor, or whoever encounters them delivers their own personality to the work.

What draws you to abstraction as a visual language, especially when addressing complex themes such as perception, media, and technology?

It would be difficult for me to say that I am an abstract artist. Abstraction is itself a fraught subject, though perhaps not as fraught as “realism.” Consider Thomas Struth’s photographic portrait series. At first appraisal, the works appear to be examples of highly formal portraiture, yet there are oddities in their affect, manner, titling, and in the monumentality of the printed objects themselves. As portraits, they may move closer to abstraction than, say, an Abstract Expressionist work in which gesture functions as part of an already recognizable visual Gestalt. Both forms retain a relationship to indexicality, but Struth’s portraits filter that indexicality through performance. The photograph remains a record of a physical person and encounter, yet pose, affect, scale, framing, and presentation abstract the final work from



Peter Tristram Walz | Active object



straightforward resemblance. The image does not abandon representation so much as reveal the structures through which representation is produced and interpreted.

I try to work in a similar way. The wood panels, sculptures, and spaces are designed not to represent an abstraction of reality, but rather to illuminate the abstraction already operating within reality.

How important is the viewer's bodily experience—movement, distance, texture, and scale—when encountering your work?

The viewer's bodily experience (even when not present) is extremely important to my work, although I think it is often a deeply unconsidered aspect of viewing art. This has become particularly problematic for artists who work physically—with wood, clay, stone, and other materially specific forms—because it is difficult to communicate the full depth of that experience through online forums and exhibitions. Scale is perhaps the most readily apparent condition affecting the perception of an artwork, but distance, movement, texture, and the viewer's position are

equally important. To sustain interest in the absence of that presence, I find that a work must be thoughtfully documented through multiple angles, details, and views of the object within an environment. This sometimes results in my documentation becoming a kind of photographic montage—almost Cubist in the way it attempts to present multiple perspectives and moments of encounter at once. Environmental works make the limitations of documentation even more apparent. A representation of a space necessarily fails to communicate the totality of living within a curated environment: the movement of the body, the shifting distances between objects, the peripheral impressions, and the textures and proportions that gradually become perceptible through time.

I have been especially interested in work that illuminates senses that have not traditionally been allowed in museums and curated spaces, especially touch. I am planning a series in which touch is required rather than distanced from the experience of the work. It is also important that digitally consumed work interrogates that physical relationship as part of its facture.

Gina McCulloch

Abstract Artist

I am an abstract artist working with fluid acrylic pours to interpret and express the raw energy and natural beauty of nature all around me.

Every painting begins without a fixed plan, only a feeling. As the paint moves, blends, and settles, unexpected forms emerge. This intuitive process is what makes each piece truly one of a kind.

I am inspired by textures, nature, movement, and emotion. I let the medium speak for itself.

The Creative Process

I don't control the outcome. The medium is unpredictable and spontaneous.

Working with fluid acrylics means embracing unpredictability. I guide the flow, blend colours instinctively, and allow natural textures to form. What results is always unique, shaped by intention, but never forced.

The paintings arrest your attention and interest, arousing your curiosity.

Project Statement

This freedom to create in an instinctive, organic way is what keeps my work alive and evolving. It allows me to enjoy the creative process where flowing paint and colours are manipulated into desired designs.

Gina McCulloch | Gemstones





Gina McCulloch | Untamed Motion

— Interview

Hyebin Jeon



guide my choices of color, gesture, and space. The painting becomes a way of giving a physical form to something that originally existed only inside me.

Intuition seems to play an important role in your process. At what point do you feel that a painting begins to develop its own direction beyond your original intention?

I think that happens when I stop trying to control the painting completely. I usually begin with an emotional intention, but as I layer paint and respond to what is already on the canvas, unexpected forms and relationships begin to appear. At some point, I start reacting to the painting rather than simply executing my original idea. That is when I feel the painting develops its own direction. I want to listen to that process instead of forcing the work to become exactly what I imagined at the beginning.

Your works move between atmospheric, almost weightless passages and areas of intense color and physical gesture. How do you approach the balance between softness and visual intensity?

For me, softness and intensity are not opposites. They are both necessary to express how emotions actually move. A feeling can be quiet and overwhelming at the same time. I use softer, more atmospheric passages to create space

Your paintings explore the unconscious and emotional perception rather than recognizable subjects. How do you begin translating something as intangible as a memory or feeling into paint?

I usually begin with a feeling rather than a specific image or subject. Sometimes it comes from a memory, a moment that stayed with me, or even a feeling that I cannot clearly explain. I try not to translate that experience literally. Instead, I think about its movement, temperature, weight, and rhythm. I let those sensations



Hyebin Jeon | Landscape



and allow the eye to breathe, while stronger colors and physical gestures create moments of emotional pressure. I often move between these two states instinctively until the painting feels emotionally balanced.

Color appears to carry a strong emotional function in your paintings. Do particular colors begin with specific emotions or memories for you, or does their meaning emerge during the painting process?

Sometimes I begin with a certain color because it already carries an emotional association for me. But most of the time, its meaning changes as I paint. A color that initially feels peaceful can become tense when it is placed next to another color, or a strong color can suddenly feel vulnerable within a softer space. I am interested in that transformation. Rather than assigning one fixed emotion to each color, I allow the emotional meaning of color to develop through its relationships on the canvas.

One of the striking qualities of your work is the tension between forms that seem to emerge and forms that appear to dissolve. What interests you about this boundary between presence and disappearance?

I am interested in the uncertainty of things that are present but never completely fixed. Memories work that way for me. We remember something, but the image is never exactly the same each time we return to it. Parts become clearer while others disappear or change. I think my paintings reflect that experience. I want forms to feel as though they are emerging and disappearing at the same time, existing somewhere between recognition and uncertainty.

Some of your paintings feel calm and expansive, while others are much more intense and almost visceral. Do these different emotional temperatures reflect your state while painting, or are they consciously constructed?

They can come from both. My emotional state naturally affects the way I paint—the pressure of a gesture, the amount of color, or the openness of a space. But I do not simply document my mood. As the painting develops, I make conscious decisions about where to intensify or quiet the image. Sometimes I may begin from a very personal emotion and gradually transform it into something that feels less autobiographical and more open to the viewer.

You invite viewers to find their own emotional connections rather than follow a fixed narrative. Has a viewer ever interpreted one of your paintings in a way that significantly changed how you saw the work yourself?

Yes. One of the reasons I value sharing my paintings with other people is that viewers sometimes notice emotional possibilities that I was not consciously aware of. I may think of a painting through a particular memory or feeling, but someone else can see loneliness, comfort, desire, tension, or even hope in the same work. Those interpretations remind me that a painting does not belong entirely to the person who made it once it enters someone else's experience. I find that very meaningful because my goal is not to tell viewers exactly what to feel, but to create a space where their own memories and emotions can meet mine.



Balša Gobović (Podgorica, Montenegro) is a photographer, artist, educator, husband, and father. His practice explores identity, time, memory, transformation, and human relationships through analogue, camera-based, and camera-less photographic processes. He approaches photography as a form of reflection and research rather than solely as a means of representing reality.

Gobović holds a BA in Applied Computing from the University of Montenegro, an MA in Media Design from West Virginia State University, and an MFA in Photography from the Savannah College of Art and Design in Atlanta. He is an Associate Professor of Photography and Vice Dean at the Faculty of Visual Arts, University Mediteran in Podgorica.

His work has been presented in solo and group exhibitions in Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the United States. Major projects include *Reflections*, a series of long-exposure portraits examining the mutability of identity, and *Essentials*, which combines photographs, photograms, and enlarged botanical fragments to consider coexistence, care, duration, and change.

Project Statement

Essentials explores identity, time and change through flowers as both motif and material. This submission presents the camera-less segment of the project, consisting of darkroom enlargements of individual petals and petal fragments.

The project reflects on the ways in which shared life gradually changes our understanding of ourselves. Identity is not viewed as something fixed, but as something continuously shaped through relationships, care, attention and time. Flowers become a means of examining fragility, adaptation, endurance and transformation.

Through magnification, the flower is removed from its familiar and decorative form. Attention shifts toward the internal structure of the petals—their surfaces, veins, textures, imperfections and accumulated traces. They begin to resemble landscapes, maps and networks, revealing complexity within forms that initially appear simple.

The camera-less process is inseparable from the concept. Plant material is placed directly in the photographic enlarger, allowing light to pass through and around it onto photographic paper. The resulting images are not conventional representations of flowers, but records of contact between organic matter, light and human intention.

Across the series, the flower gradually moves from recognizable form toward texture, structure and trace. What begins as botanical material becomes a reflection on the changes produced through time and coexistence, and on what remains when familiar appearances are stripped away.



Balša Gobović | *Essentials*



— Interview

Lorrrem (Denis & Julia Zelenykh)

How did Lorrrem begin, and what led you to build a shared creative practice as a duo?



Lorrrem (Denis & Julia Zelenykh) | Kokoshnic



Lorrrem started in 2020 in Donbass as a joint practice by Denis and Julia Zelenykh. At first it was ordinary design work: local brands, organizations, identities. Then CGI came along, and the layouts started to feel cramped. We wanted to make objects that live a life of their own — on social media, in the city, in the viewer's phone.

The duo format came out of practice, not strategy. We were discussing every frame together anyway, so it was easier to admit that the author here isn't a person but a conversation between two.

Our best-known work turned out to be the augmented reality postcards devoted to memorial sites — we made them together with Alina Abramchuk. The postcards were shown at the local history museum and on television; today they're held in the museum's collection.

How do you divide responsibilities between you, and how does the dialogue between two artists influence the final work?

Julia does CGI. Denis does AR, animation, 3D and digital graphics. The admin work we split down the middle — no romance there.

The dialogue, though, works as a filter. If a scene only appeals to one of us, it's usually just unfinished. If we argue about it, there's something alive in it worth holding onto. We rarely divide tasks by layers, in the spirit of "you do this part, I do that one" — the same scene goes around the loop several times and comes back changed every time.

The practice is shifting now. Julia has started painting on canvas — we want to bring more physicality into the digital



work: texture, the trace of a hand, accident. Alongside that we're experimenting with material objects. AR is already a meeting between the digital and the real, so it makes sense for that meeting to have a proper second half.

Your works often place human figures, animals, flowers, and cultural symbols in surreal or cosmic environments. What attracts you to these unexpected combinations?

For us space isn't a decoration or a genre — it's a way of stripping away context. On Earth a flower is a flower in a vase, a dog is a dog in a yard. Move them into emptiness and they stop being household items: what they actually mean becomes visible.

At that scale, objects are also levelled with one another. A person, an animal, a flower, an ornament from an old postcard — against a black background they all have equal rights. We like that equality; it says that the human being isn't the owner of the picture, just one of its elements. And the third reason, the most honest one. We live in a world that's been explored by a few percent. Everything else is darkness you can only look into and imagine. Surrealism, for us, isn't an escape from reality but a working hypothesis about the part of it we haven't reached.

Space appears as both a physical setting and a metaphor in your work. What does the universe represent to you in relation to human identity and existence?

The environment shapes us and we shape the environment — for us that isn't an aphorism, it's something visible in our own work: the place where you live creeps into the frame on its own, even when nobody invited it. The universe, in that sense, is simply the largest environment there is. It sets a scale in which personal dramas take on their true proportions. Not devalued — precisely made visible. A human being is small, but we're the only known point where the universe gets a look at itself. So identity, for us, isn't about "who am I among people" but "where am I in this volume." The answer comes out provisional every time. That's probably why we keep wanting to make the next piece.

In one of your works, a human face is replaced by an abundant bouquet of flowers. What ideas about identity, transformation, or inner life does this image express?

People get read by their covers: by appearance, by profession, by how they present themselves. Half of all

conflicts come from that — people argue with each other's covers and never reach the contents.

A bouquet instead of a face is an attempt to put things back in order. We removed what people usually judge by and put in its place what a person actually carries inside. Everyone is made by nature to create something beautiful: some through their work, some through how they treat others, some without ever noticing it.

A bouquet is also alive: it blooms, it wilts, it depends on care. So it's really a question addressed to the viewer — what's growing in you, and are you watering it?

How does augmented reality change the way viewers experience your work compared with encountering a conventional still image?

A still image is read in a second. With AR the viewer has to do something: take out a phone, point it, walk around the object, find the angle. That effort changes the relationship — the work stops being a picture in a feed and becomes a place the person came to on their own.

AR also gives you time. In augmented reality a story can unfold: first the viewer sees one thing, then notices a detail, then realizes the detail is looking back. A still frame can't do that — it shows everything at once.

With the postcards this was most obvious. A paper postcard of a memorial site and the same postcard through a camera are two different experiences, and the difference appears in about a second.

At what stage of your creative process do technology and concept meet: does an idea determine the tools, or can experimentation with CGI and AR generate the idea itself?

For us it's almost always AR first, everything else after. We're not inventing a picture but a scene: what the viewer sees at first glance, what they find on the second, and what stays hidden for the most persistent.

That's why a still frame isn't the work for us — it's an invitation. A cover, with the real story lying behind it: easter eggs, hidden characters, unexpected turns. Anyone who stops at the picture in the feed has honestly seen about a third of it.

Sometimes the tool suggests the idea: you catch a glitch in the tracking, it turns out more beautiful than what you'd planned, you keep it. But more often the idea pulls the technology along behind it — we decide what should happen to the viewer, then work out what it takes to make it happen.



When the Ordinary Becomes Insufficient: Renwei Liu's Seen-Scene-Screen

By Tabitha Ysart Green

In a world where we are consistently fed spectacle through the media, how can our daily lives compete? This is the question posed by Renwei Liu in his recent solo exhibition "Seen - Scene - Screen". Curated by Chupei Yu, and presented from the 21st to the 28th of July 2026, at LumiNoir ART Gallery, London, his exhibition presented four of Liu's most recent digital video works under the collective title Edited Reality. In Edited Reality, Liu reflects the creativity that can come from boredom, but with a sinister twist, as the bored protagonist attempts to escape the ordinariness of his everyday life.



Installation view of Seen-Scene-Screen, LumiNoir ART Gallery, London, 2026.

Edited Reality transports the viewer into the everyday existence of a man whose life is cyclical and unremarkable. He becomes a visual metaphor for society's contemporary condition - overstimulated by media, and understimulated by life. Liu then juxtaposes the protagonists' routines with increasingly dramatic imagined scenarios, highlighting the feelings of inadequacy and suffocating normalcy that modern media consumption can create. We follow the rhythm of the protagonist's life: commuting to work, working, after work activities and spending quiet weekends alone. One sequence begins with an otherwise normal morning commute. The protagonist is shown in a train carriage alongside other commuters on the way to work. He notices a woman carrying a metal briefcase and begins to speculate about its contents. His curiosity quickly spirals into fantasy: the woman becomes a terrorist and the briefcase a weapon.



Installation view of Seen-Scene-Screen, LumiNoir ART Gallery, London, 2026.

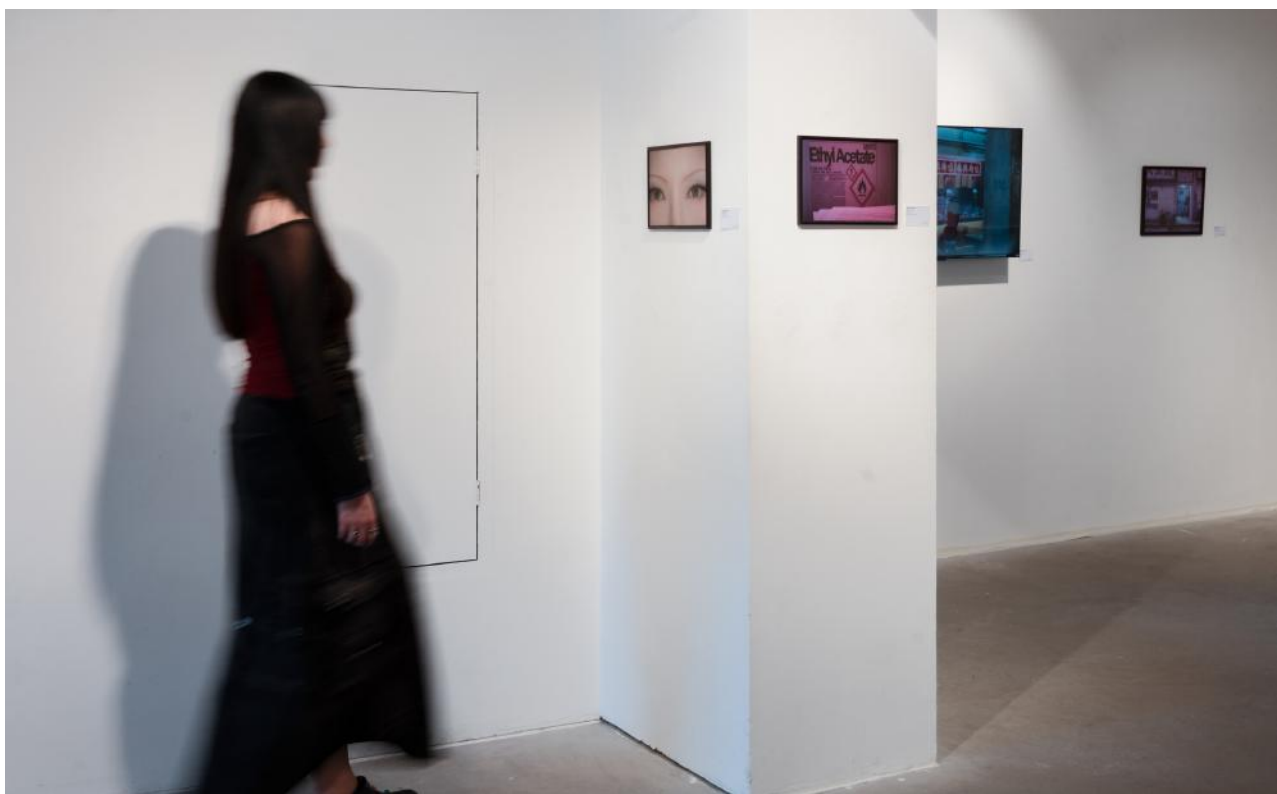


Installation view of Seen-Scene-Screen, LumiNoir ART Gallery, London, 2026.

The viewer is drawn into a curated visual space of normalcy, which is swiftly replaced by a crisis, conspiracy, or dramatised moment bringing the viewer out of the comfortable and into the extraordinary, before revealing itself as fantasy. The transition between reality and fantasy occurs without visual warning, which denies the viewer a clear distinction between the two. In doing so, the exhibition mirrors the protagonist's own collapsing boundary between observation and imagination.

Utilising a dual-channel model that alternates between mundane scenes and the increasingly cinematic fantasies, *Edited Reality* explores the psychological consequences of consuming a world in which every event is framed as exceptional. The works interrogate modern society's use of spectacle media; from breaking news and conspiracy culture to true crime, viral videos and clickbait journalism, constantly feeding us the extraordinary, so that we fail to slow down and appreciate the ordinary. As the boundary between imagination and observation dissolves, the protagonist's fantasies become a coping mechanism for the perceived inadequacy of everyday life, prompting viewers to question whether the ordinary has lost its value - or whether our ways of seeing have changed.

This exhibition is aptly timed as contemporary discussion around social media shifts to a more critical angle. Concerns about the effects of social media on young minds are shaping political policies, such as the proposed ban on social media for under 16 year olds in the UK in 2027, and the same actualised ban in Australia in 2026. Rather than offering easy answers to this epidemic of the extraordinary, "*Seen-Scene-Screen*" asks viewers to reconsider their own relationship with the ordinary.



Installation view of Seen-Scene-Screen, LumiNoir ART Gallery, London, 2026.

Úrsula Romero

How would you describe the direction your work is taking at this stage?

After 23 years of painting, I have seen that my work continues to occupy the distinctive territory between contemporary painting, symbolism, autobiography and psychological image-making. I appear to be developing a visual language in which flowers, plants, the human figure and fragments of my personal history become vehicles for exploring themes of longing, grief, transformation, ageing, identity and collective memory. After years of watercolour botanical painting, the work is starting to morph into new directions. In 2019, whilst painting blue sun orchids in NW Tasmania I started to use oil paints and this marked the biggest leap I have ever made away from traditional flower painting techniques. Then in 2021, I made the drastic decision to bury my alter ego Inky Leaves and to put all of my previous works in a 'meta tomb' in order to re-invent myself as Úrsula Romero. By doing this, I escaped the pigeon hole of the algorithm whilst killing the



Úrsula Romero | Leaf | 2016



ego. I surrendered to the evolution of my artistic journey. Although botanical imagery has long been associated with my practice, I have never been a true botanical painter. To call me this would be to misunderstand the nature of my work. In my paintings, flowers rarely function as botanical subjects in their own right. Instead, they operate as symbolic forms, carrying emotional, psychological and cultural meanings that extend far beyond the natural world. Leaves and flowers become a symbols through which my personal experience is revealed. I use flowers and leaves as a muse to tell her my autobiography.

Since setting up a studio in Andalucía, my work has evolved quickly and dramatically. I am no longer concerned with representation, but with the transformation of inner experience into image. Spain is a country with a rich history of art and of painting in particular, and I find myself naturally drawing upon these influences, from Goya's psychological ambiguity and El Greco's spiritual distortion. The violence of the light in Southern Spain makes the shadows even darker and this has influenced my painting style.

Currently I am developing a collection on my mid-life. The collection raises questions on grief, loss and crises - both personal and collective.

You established your studio in Andalucía after leaving the UK. How have the landscape, light, cultural history, and painting traditions of Southern Spain influenced your visual language?

I set up a studio in Granada, Andalucía in 2014 in order to focus on my painting more. After five years of living in London, I was beginning to get lost in the noise and ached for some space and peace. What I didn't realise is how this move would change the way I paint and think about painting. My paintings started to find their own narratives and ideas. My first collection Leafscape documented the disorientation I felt moving between two countries. Inspired by the brightness of the sun in Granada and the darkness of its cast shadows, I also started lighting my subjects differently - spot lights got closer and the sun was more intense and the leaves just started popping off the page.

After Leafscape, I started Blaue Blume and again I noticed that Andalucía was influencing me. I started under exposing everything to make things darker. I added deep black space and worked in a tenebrist style akin to Mediterranean painters centuries before me. I visited galleries in Madrid and became entranced by the baroque and by artists such as Ribera. Twelve years on, Spain just keeps feeding me. I am now totally absorbed in the work of Goya. I feel very lucky to be here.



Leafscape was an important earlier project in your artistic development. Looking back, what aspects of that project continue to influence your current paintings, even as your practice has moved in a new direction?

Leafscape was indeed a very important moment in my career. It began when I partially moved to Spain part time and documented the disorientation that came with this experience. At this time in my career, I was very influenced by the painter Rory McEwen who was known for painting decaying leaves on large sheets of stretched Kelmscott vellum as well as the work of Peter Greenaway. The way I enlarged the leaves to a massive size was an intuitive decision on my part and the obscuration of the leaves extending beyond the frame, was again intuitive. But the effect was fantastic. The oversized leaves dwarfed anyone who looked at them. The collection was allegorical in that it had many meanings. In 2017, I mostly discussed the collection of works as bring up an ecological debate - plants living on the edges of civilisation and of the paper. The collection came with a soundtrack using the sounds I recorded from each location where I found a leaf. The track itself was dystopian and confusing in its composition, with sounds from England and Spain being mixed together. One minute you were hearing the bells of Big Ben or a police siren, the next clanging bells from goats grazing in the pastures of Granada.

As time has gone on, I have come to understand that Leafscape was equally an autobiographical story of me jumping between countries and worlds. I was stretched beyond borders and the borders of the frame. The leaves were magnified to such an extent that their surfaces began to resemble maps, revealing inner landscapes within their

edges. The dystopian sounds were my own head, full of the noise.

When I completed Leafscape, I vowed not to paint a leaf ever again, but alas, I find myself continually going back to them. I am clearly still grappling with my inner landscape and questioning where I belong. Leafscape still influences a lot of my work today. I still make soundtracks to sit with my paintings, I still make books and I still paint over the edges of the frame. I also have carried on my lighting techniques across to my current work. However, I am enjoying painting in a different way. Blaue Blume began the thought process of negative space, transparency and of layering, which is now being deepened in my latest collection of works.

How has the meaning of the blue flower changed for you since you began the project in 2017?

Rooted in the spirit of the Romanticists who crossed continents in search of poetry, this body of work drifts between botany, dream and remembrance, where sight and sound blur their boundaries. Each painting traces a journey across the world in pursuit of rare blue flowers. The meaning of the blue flower hasn't changed, but it has been explored and deepened in the 21st Century. The paintings speak quietly of evolution, both human and botanical. Our eyes, shaped by survival, struggle to register blue fully, and so the colour hovers at the edge of seeing. It is sensed more than observed. This partial blindness mirrors the limits of knowledge itself, where the most vital things remain just beyond reach, shimmering and unstable. Blaue Blume reflects on borders drawn by human hands and the quiet violence they inflict on the natural world. These lines interrupt migrations, fracture habitats and impose rigid order on systems that thrive on movement. Wars, pandemics and



Brexit all occurred during this eight-year snapshot in history. Ultimately, the Blue Flower calls for wandering and becoming lost, for crossing thresholds and briefly disappearing. It suggests that freedom begins where certainty dissolves. Above all, there is a radical tenderness at the heart of the work. It asks us to make friends with the unknown rather than conquer it. That is the true meaning of Blaue Blume. It always has been and always will be.

Blue can carry many emotional and symbolic meanings, from melancholy and distance to spirituality and transcendence. What does the colour blue represent within your work?

The Colour blue represents all of these things that you have listed in my work. It doesn't represent any one thing. Blue is ambiguous. Blaue Blume is a wandering. It follows the blue flower of Novalis, that impossible emblem which appears only to vanish like a dream, leading us away from certainty and into longing. Blue, elusive by nature, resists both pigment and perception. It is problematic for plants to produce and difficult for humans to hold. Few living forms are willing to expend energy on a colour that offers no clear gain or advantage. Like Heinrich's flower, it dissolves under direct light, slipping from the grasp of reason and refusing to be named.

The search for the Blue Flower and the colour blue becomes both personal and historical. It is a record of a time lived, travelled and endured. A quiet witness to forces that interrupt movement and silence desire. At the same time, it celebrates the persistent human need to roam, to imagine distant horizons and to step beyond the known. In the words of Rebecca Solnit 'one never arrives in blue'. Blaue Blume offers no conclusion. It leaves the door open. It asks us to linger in uncertainty, to trust the intelligence of dreams and to recognise the natural world not as a resource, but as a teacher. In following the blue flower, we do not arrive. We remain in motion, attentive, unfinished, and free.

How do you approach the process of building colour, atmosphere and depth in your oil paintings?

I work in montage mostly. I have an archive of symbols and motifs in my studio and in my mind and I work to piece these together in unusual ways. My mother, Kitty Shepherd, works in a similar way with her ceramics and I think either we have the same type of brain, or I learnt it from her. Atmosphere is mostly created by studying the techniques used by the Masters over the history of art and developing upon them. This is the language of art and the hidden conversation between painters over Centuries. As a painter, you can easily have an invisible conversation with Caravaggio or Rembrandt



or Bacon. You just need to look at what they did and evolve it. I use light and shadow a lot in my work to create atmosphere, but I also manipulate scale. I am also very conscious of colour. With Blaue Blume I found myself very quickly changing the way I managed the white negative space produced with traditional watercolour botanical painting techniques, filling in the space with black or blues to accentuate the blueness of the flower. Recurring themes within my practice include obscuration, fragmentation and manipulation of scale. Figures, flags, doors, leaves and flowers are partially concealed, forms extend beyond the frame, and elements are deliberately withheld from view. These strategies reflect my interest in the incomplete nature of memory, the tension between what is visible and what remains hidden, and the way meaning is often found in absence as much as presence.

During the pandemic, you created Los Pensamientos, a work consisting of 197 pansy flowers. How did this project emerge, and why did the pansy become the central symbolic form through which you responded to that period?

Between the years of 2020 and 2021 my project Blaue Blume was put on hold as I couldn't travel anywhere. At the time I was living alone in the Sierras de Tejeda, Almijara y Alhama. A pretty remote but beautiful place. As soon as lockdown started, I found myself painting a small 15 x 15cm pansy. It was bigger than a life size pansy, but small for my usual scale. In all honesty, it felt a bit like that moment when Tom Hanks makes a face from his bloody hand print and decides to call his football 'Wilson'. The pansy had a face, like those in Disney's Alice in Wonderland. In lockdown, I had become Alice.

Before long I had painted a series of these faces and I put them up for sale and they were popular. It appears everyone wanted a little happy face. In Italy, the pansy is known as 'flamola' (little flame), and I rather like that. A little flame of hope. Hope in the dark. They are petals of nostalgia, happy flowers. Gateways, representative of the portals of our hidden transformations as we sheltered in our houses from Covid-19.

As time went on, the project changed and I decided to paint 197 different pansies and stop at that number, because there are 197 countries in the world. I titled the finished piece Los Pensamientos after the Spanish name for pansy as not only was I in Spain during this historic moment, but the name, akin to the French 'Pensée', has a double meaning for 'thoughts' and we were all locked up, stuck with our own thoughts. In the language of flowers, a pansy also means that someone is 'thinking of you' and is often used as a get-well flower to show that you sympathise with someone's pain and distress. In this case, the sympathy went to an entire country. Each pansy in this piece was painted individually on a 15 x 15cm square and was posted to a recipient somewhere in the world. The finished piece of 197, is the complete collection of all of these tiny scattered paintings. Masquerading in the final digital piece of 200, I included three imposters, who have appropriated the pansy patterns to go unnoticed, akin to a virus. The final piece is 300cm x 150cm.

Sound has accompanied several of your major painting projects, including Leafscape and Blaue Blume. What can sound communicate alongside a painting that the visual

image cannot express on its own?

When you start to listen, you begin to 'see' things differently. When you listen properly, you instantly become present in time and space. Processes slow down and one becomes acutely aware. You find yourself merging with the landscape and you begin to see how even your own body influences the way sound waves move. I have in the past been interested in how a painting could hint at a sound to produce an experience that is beyond visual, or in fact, audible - to tap into something that is spiritual. There have been times when I see a painting and the artist, being a master of brush and composition, ushers me into a space where I hear sounds - imaginary ones. In this sense, a painting can be seen as a theatre, transcending its material form into something else entirely, something ethereal, such as a story or a feeling. Sound renders the object dynamic, it makes what we see quiver with life (Voegelin, 2010)

For both of my collections Leafscape and Blaue Blume, I have produced soundtracks. For Leafscape, I worked with composer Derek Thompson create a piece that featured all of the sounds I recorded from the sites where each leaf grew. For Blaue Blume, I have done the same, recording all the sounds from every country I visited. I do this to extend the nervous system of the painting and what it can achieve as a call to action ecologically, but the CDs also function as stand-alone pieces. The main story arcs are always about belonging and the relationship between plants and humans - how we interact with our environment and how our environment interacts with us, and I believe very strongly that this story cannot be told with pictures alone.

The blink of an eye lasts three hundred milliseconds. The blink of an ear lasts considerably longer. From birth to death, the ear never closes. Kim Cohen (2009)

There aren't many people who pay attention to the sounds and often when they do, sound is left to enhance another sensory output and never left to singularly become. Yet, the invisible and the formless world must be given equal validity in order to transform the visible and the formed. This is basic alchemy. This is how one can belong to the world fully. We all have invisible souls that grow into something intangible but in the modern world this seems to be unrecognised. We are all living in a world which overly taxes the left hemisphere of our brains. Our languages and our systems rarely tap into the right side - the 'acoustic' side - of our brain, and as our existence is becoming progressively more 'wired up', this is becoming increasingly so. I believe that by using pictures and sound we begin to use the other side and become more responsive.

The auditory world is always dynamic and never static and in order to really understand sound, you have to realise that you are part of it. You are inside a soundscape. This is how I try to 'see' when painting - I try to feel the space around as if I am part of it. I try to sense the distances between the object and myself and convince myself that they are not really there - there is no distance, it's an illusion. Sound's ephemeral invisibility frequently means it is ignored. Ever heard of the saying 'seeing is believing'? It seems that there is this absurd belief that to see things is to understand things.

The unsettling thing about sound is it breaks down the ego. For example, if we hear a noise then we are instantly part of that noise - we share the space and the moment with the noise. There is no distance between us because sound happens inside of us in the ear and brain - there is no

distance. So rather disturbingly, you get the melding of space and time inside of you. You become a vessel; you become the landscape, the environment between this world and the one that existed before.

Your book Blaue Blume brings together several years of artistic research and development. How does the book relate to the paintings, and what experience do you hope it creates for the reader or viewer?

My upcoming publication 'Blaue Blume' will feature the entire collection of paintings made during my eight-year project. As with all my publications, I curate the book to be a piece of art in itself, giving my audience the chance to own something collectible and precious. The book is lay-flat bound, which allows the landscape paintings to cover a double page spread without the indentation of a sewn spine, which allows the artworks to be fully appreciated in their entirety, uninterrupted. The book is presented in a blue velvet covered, embossed slipcase and every book in the edition of 500 is signed and numbered by me. I love producing books because they extend beyond the exhibition space, allowing the art works to be taken into the home without the enormous cost. People can enjoy my work from the comfort of their own homes and explore the collection quietly and slowly in their own time. The format of books offers something different to an exhibition or images on a screen. This particular publication is organised into geographical regions and describes my journey using my art works. Blaue Blume essentially is a project on space and the journey of the soul and mind. My previous collection titled 'Leafscape' was more about time, but both look at issues such as what it is to belong, life's journey, travel and our own inner landscape. My hope with Blaue Blume, is that it will bring the hidden and mysterious beauty of our world to people's laps.



Úrsula Romero | Sirena Voladora | 2019 - 2022

Qi Nian Li, Male, born in 1981. He has loved painting since childhood. After graduating from high school, he worked in retail while studying painting in his spare time. He later became a professional painter. For many years, he has devoted himself to the innovation of ink wash painting. Through persistent exploration, he has achieved breakthroughs and developed a distinctive brush-and-ink language, lending his ink works an unprecedented visual.

Project Statement

Ink wash painting is a painting form unique to China. Yet due to cultural isolation and ideological suppression, Chinese ink painters remain completely ignorant of modern art. Their works either repeat the creations of predecessors or appear shallow and empty, entirely devoid of painters' unique feelings and profound understanding of life—like castrated eunuchs.

Against this backdrop, I commit myself to the innovation of ink wash painting, restoring it to the origin of art. After years of endeavours, I have finally succeeded, and my paintings take on an unprecedented appearance.

Qi Nian Li | Mona Lisa | 2025





— Interview

Alisia Prifti

You were born in Albania and later studied Graphic Design at the National University of Arts in Bucharest. How have these different cultural environments influenced your visual language and the way you approach creativity?

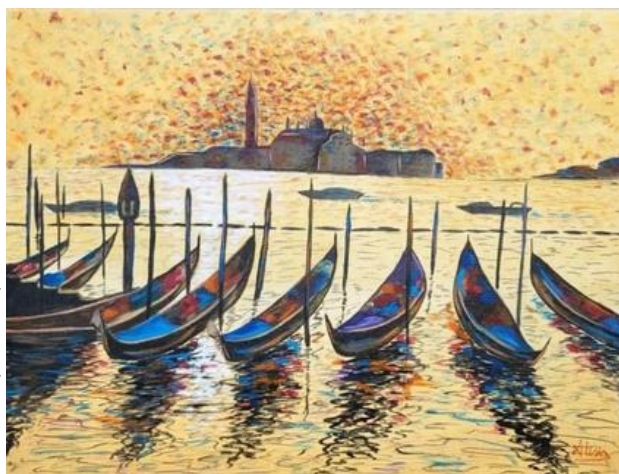
Growing up in Albania shaped my appreciation for culture, history, and visual storytelling. It's a country with a rich cultural heritage, strong traditions, and



diverse landscapes, and I think being surrounded by those influences made me more attentive to detail and the stories that visuals can communicate. Living in Romania introduced me to a different cultural environment and artistic perspective. Experiencing another country's traditions, architecture, and creative scene broadened the way I looked at visual expression. However, it wasn't until I moved to Bucharest to study that I fully immersed myself in graphic design. That experience marked a turning point in my creative journey, shifting my focus from painting to design and changing the way I approached creativity—not only as a form of personal expression but also as a way to communicate ideas clearly and solve visual problems.

What initially drew you to graphic design, and at what point did painting become an important part of your creative practice?

Painting came first. It was my earliest way of expressing ideas and exploring color, composition, and emotion. As I continued my studies, I became increasingly interested in graphic design because it combined creativity with communication and problem-solving. Over time, my focus naturally shifted toward design, which is now my main active practice, while painting remains an important part of how I developed as a visual thinker.



Alisia Prifti | Venezia | 2022



Your professional design work is based on clarity, structure, and the simplification of complex ideas, while your paintings appear much more intuitive and spontaneous. How do you navigate between these two different modes of creating?

For me, they were never completely separate. Painting taught me to trust intuition and experiment, while graphic design taught me how to communicate with intuition and clarity. Although I don't paint much anymore, I still carry that balance into my design work—I like to combine structure with curiosity and leave room for creative exploration within clear framework, while always aiming to solve problems.

Do you feel that your background in graphic design influences the way you construct a painting, particularly in terms of composition, balance, color, and negative space?

Definitely. Even when I was painting, I naturally thought about composition, balance, and the relationship between forms. Design strengthened my awareness of visual hierarchy and negative space, and those principles influenced how I approached a canvas, even if the process itself was more intuitive.

Your abstract works often contain flowing, almost organic movements of color. Are these forms connected to particular emotions, memories, natural phenomena, or are they

primarily discovered through the painting process itself?

They were usually discovered during the painting process rather than planned in advance. I wasn't trying to represent a specific place or emotion. Instead, I allowed the forms to develop organically, responding to color, movement, and the interaction between different elements until the composition felt balanced.

When you begin a new artwork, do you usually start with a clear concept or visual structure, as you might in design, or do you allow the image to emerge gradually through experimentation?

With painting, I preferred to let the image emerge gradually through experimentation. In contrast, graphic design usually starts with a clear objective and a problem to solve. I enjoy that difference, although today I primarily work within the design process.

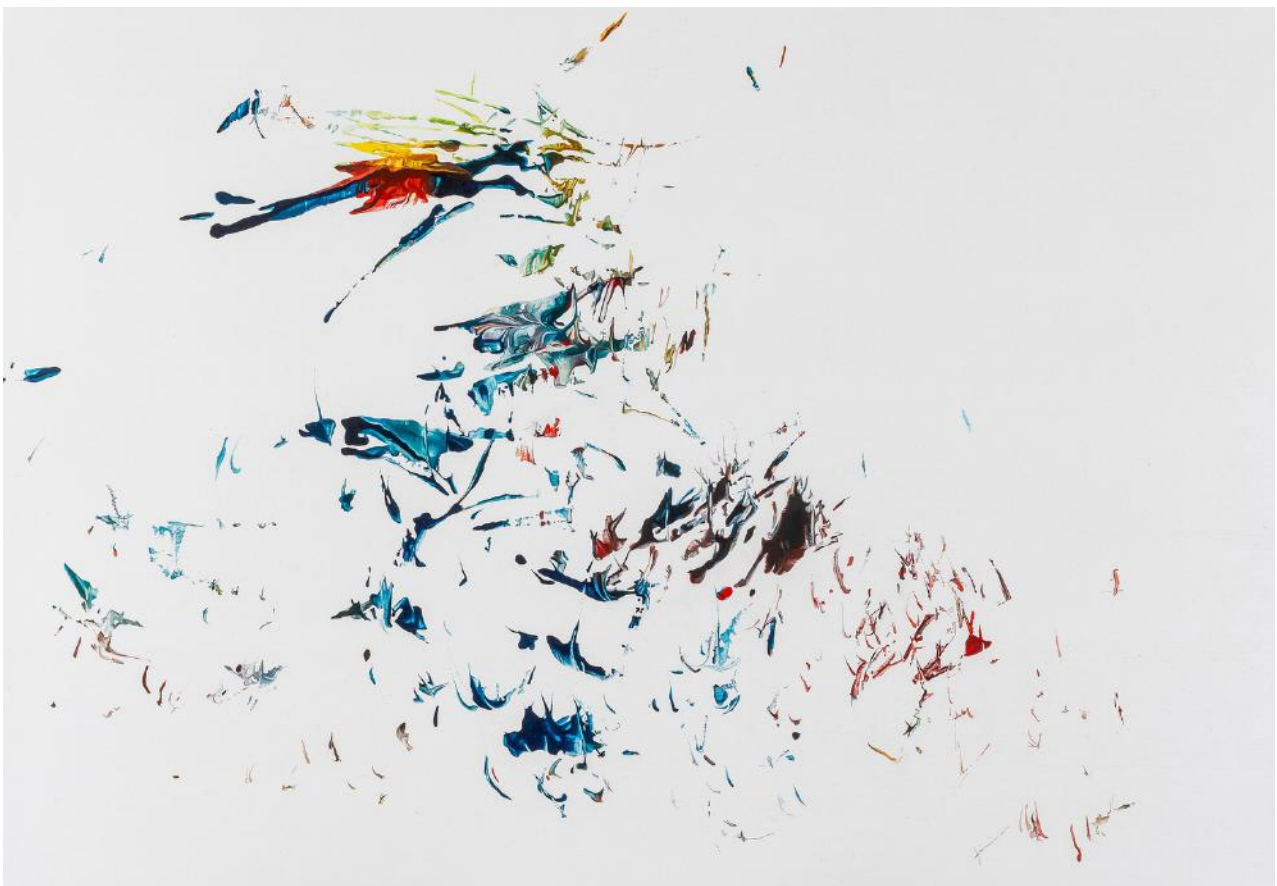
Looking ahead, are you interested in bringing your design and fine-art practices even closer together, and what new subjects, techniques, or formats would you like to explore next?

At the moment, my main focus is graphic design. I'm particularly interested in developing my work in branding and visual identity while continuing to explore how artistic thinking can strengthen design. I don't see painting as a separate career path right now, but I'm grateful for how it shaped my creative perspective and continues to influence the way I approach visual work.



Dominique Starck is a painter, choreographer, dancer, and yoga teacher. He lives in Seebach in northern Alsace. Born in 1963 in Wissembourg, he studied at the Strasbourg School of Decorative Arts under the direction of Sarkis (DNSEP in 1988) and spent time at the Düsseldorf Art Academy in Konrad Klapheck's studio. He then trained in Butoh dance, contemporary dance, and yoga. He exhibits regularly in the region and creates performances in rural areas, as well as on regional, national, and international stages (Strasbourg, Nancy, Lyon, Paris, Marseille, New York, Quebec City, Sarajevo, Novi Sad, etc.). With the support of the City of Strasbourg, the Alsace Regional Council, and the Bas-Rhin General Council, he has organized several cultural events combining visual arts, music, and contemporary dance in Strasbourg and in rural areas. In 1991, he was awarded the prize from the European Center for Contemporary Artistic Actions. In 2008, he received a research grant from the General Council of the Bas-Rhin.

Dominique Starck | Indian Rhapsody | 2025





Dominique Starck | In the Name of the Father | 2010

— Interview

Ricardo Ferreira

What first inspired you to pursue a career in filmmaking?

When I was a teenager, I thought that I wanted to be a game designer. I was really into video games but I quietly realized that programming was not for me. What I actually liked was telling stories. For me, filmmaking is a way to show your thoughts, ideas, and experiences to the audience. It is one of the few careers when you can



actually express yourself in such unique ways and at the same time it gives you the freedom to tell a compelling story at the same time. But also, I'm not going to lie, I hate wearing suits. I was looking for a career that didn't require me to wear a suit every day.

How has your education at the New York Film Academy influenced your professional approach?

Before I went to the New York Film Academy, I did not know a lot about filmmaking. It definitely helped me create a basic understanding of what filmmaking is and use the knowledge learnt in NYFA to create my own stories. A good thing about the institution is that they don't just focus on the main career that everyone wants, like directing or screenwriting, but also on other positions like gaffing or sound mixing. While I was studying there, I found my passion for sound. They helped me become a professional: how to talk with crew members in a professional way, understand that every position has its own role in a film production, and how to properly pitch my ideas to people. It helped me understand that the real professionals are not those who have the best gear with the latest technology, but those who can put their own touch during the filming of the shoot.



What do you enjoy most about working as a production sound mixer?

I love the fact that I am in my own department. Most people in the filmmaking industry don't really understand sound, so they leave a lot of the sound recording job to the sound department. It is a big task, but it is a job I personally enjoy a lot. So, I have a lot of freedom when it comes doing sound. At the beginning of becoming a sound mixer, I was really overwhelmed by hearing every single small detail all the time while filming, but as I got used to it, I even learnt to appreciate it to hear those little sounds that we usually don't stop and listen to.

How does your understanding of sound influence the way you approach directing and visual storytelling?

It helps a lot, to be honest with you. A lot of times, when I am writing a script, even without really thinking about it, I already know the kind of sound effects that I would use during the edit. Because I know what kind of sound effects I want, I usually write them down on the script in order to remember them; this allows me to feel the genre that I want to create. For instance, if I am writing a comedy and I want an anvil to fall into a character's head, I would put in the script something like: "Before the anvil falls, we can hear a cartoon sound effect before hitting the character's head."

In a lot of genres, sound makes up 70 percent of the movie. Without sound the film gets a little harder to express the message that you want. As I understand it, the sound is another tool that the filmmaker has in order to make the spectator believe what is being shown is real and not a movie.

What are some of the main challenges you face when recording sound on set?

Well, it depends a lot on the kind of place that we are shooting; every space and set works differently than the other; it is a really case-by-case scenario. Here in New York, it is a really loud place, so every time I have to shoot here in the city, I have to be careful of people talking on the street, someone might horn because there is a lot of traffic and they are in a rush. I might hear a garbage truck picking up garbage or maybe some construction is being done nearby. But definitely the most consistent challenge

of this city is the airplanes; they are really loud, and depending on how close you are to their flying scheduled route, it can become a nightmare or just some noise in the background.

I was shooting a web series last month and the main location was near a church, and for some reason a lot of airplanes had their plane schedule to pass below the apartment when we were shooting. Also, we were shooting on Sundays and every now and then, we also heard the bells of the church while shooting. It was annoying, but we made it work out.

What skills or areas of filmmaking are you currently interested in developing further?

I want to keep gathering more knowledge on the sound department. I am starting to learn how to be a sound designer so I can understand how to edit sound and how to create a good final mix. And also, I am starting to investigate how to become a foley artist. A foley artist is someone who records and creates additional sound effects for movies, like the sound effect of a spaceship. I will keep developing my comedy directing skills in the future, but for the moment I want to keep improving as much as I can as a sound guy.

What kinds of projects would you like to create or contribute to in the United States and Paraguay in the future?

I would love to work on a set in Paraguay. I have been a sound mixer for almost three years. I mostly film here in New York, so I did not have the chance to go back to my country and make a lot of contacts yet. I don't really have a preference for the kind of shooting that I do. Although I would definitely love to work on more documentaries, it is always an interesting process to work on those kinds of sets. Both in Paraguay and the United States

I would love to keep creating comedies here in the USA, and I would love to create comedies in Paraguay too. I do feel that if I ever create a comedy in Spanish, I need to tackle it in a different way, because the humor and the kind of public are different. It would definitely be a challenge, but I feel it would be an interesting one. I feel there is so much of the Paraguayan culture that gives a lot of elements to create a good story.



Nadia Bazaziants (Baz)

Living and working in Netanya, Israel

Project Statement

I work primarily in figurative painting.

I am drawn to people in whom the world that has shaped them can be read. Through painting, I ask myself a simple question: how can that world be made visible?

My work begins with the human figure. I am interested in gesture, posture, clothing, and the material environment — all the elements that carry traces of personal and cultural experience.

My paintings grow out of observing people, family history, migration, and everyday life. Observation, memory, family history, and lived experience help me make that connection visible.





Nadia Bazaziants | A Japanese Woman at the Chuppah of Her Sister-in-Law | 2025

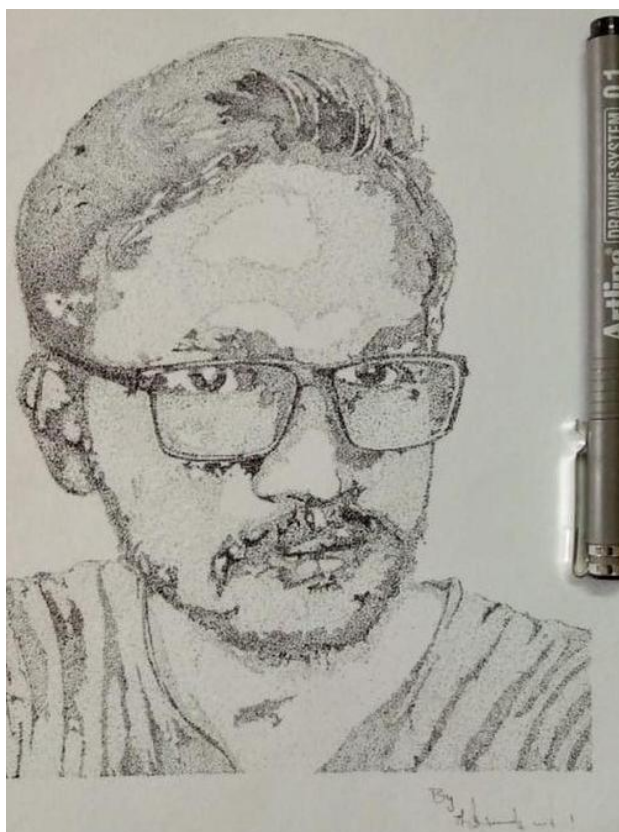
— Interview

Surendra Babu Gantenapati



Your practice moves between the precision of architecture and the spontaneity of hand drawing. How do these two ways of thinking influence each other in your work?

As an architect I was trained to think about spatial relationships, while hand drawing allows me to respond instinctively to emotion, movement, and observation. Rather than existing in opposition, these approaches complement one another. The discipline of architecture provides a strong foundation, while drawing offers the freedom to explore ideas beyond technical constraints. Together, they create a balance between precision and intuition that defines my artistic practice.



You use several distinct techniques, including stippling, continuous line, contour drawing, and expressive scribbling. What determines which visual language you choose for a particular subject?

The subject and the emotion I want to communicate are my key ideas, not the medium or the technique. Dot rendering allows me to build depth and subtle tonal transitions through patience and precision. Expressive scribbling helps me capture movement, emotion, and spontaneity. I select the approach that best reflects the subject's mood and character, allowing each drawing to develop its own visual identity with ease and flow.

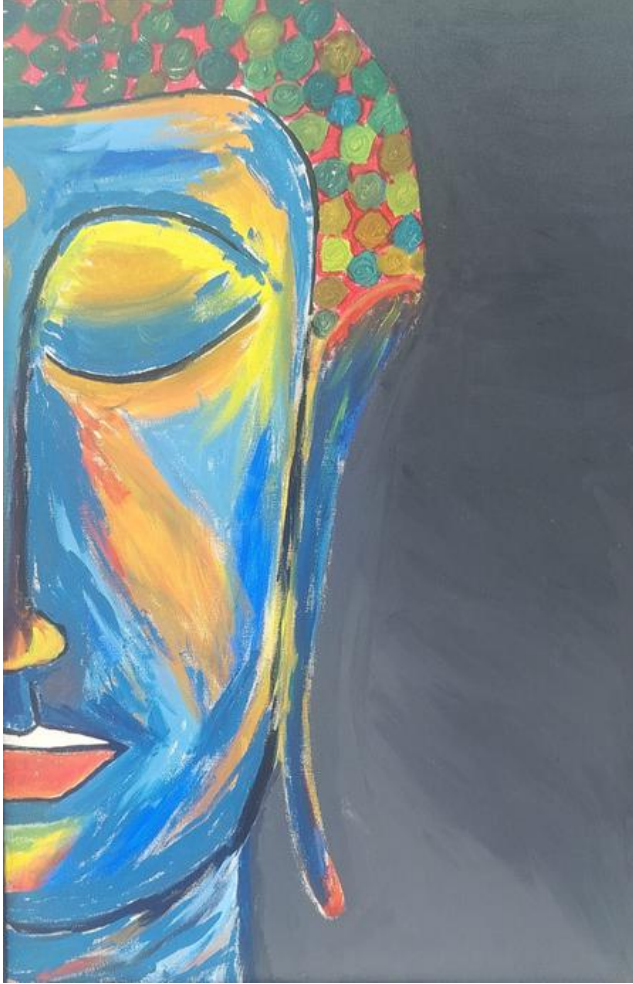
In your stippled portraits, the image gradually emerges through the accumulation of countless small marks. What attracts you to such a slow and repetitive process?

For me, dot rendering is more than a technique—it is a process of observation and patience. Every dot is placed intentionally, and over time those individual marks come together to reveal form, light, and emotion. I enjoy the discipline the process demands because it allows me to connect deeply with the subject. The gradual emergence of the portrait reflects my belief that meaningful work is built through consistency, attention to detail, and persistence.

How do you balance accuracy and likeness in portraiture with the desire to preserve the expressive quality of the individual marks?

I don't chase perfection or try to compete with a photograph. I'm more interested in capturing the feeling, personality, and presence of a person than creating an exact copy. If someone recognizes that essence in the portrait, I've achieved what I set out to do.

At the same time, I want the drawing to remain honest to its process. Every dot stays visible because those marks tell the story of how the artwork came to life. Up close,



you see thousands of individual marks and the time behind them; from a distance, they come together as a single image. I find that transformation fascinating. For me, the beauty lies in the handmade marks and the subtle imperfections—they give the work its character and remind us that every portrait is not just an image of someone, but a record of the artist's journey in creating it.

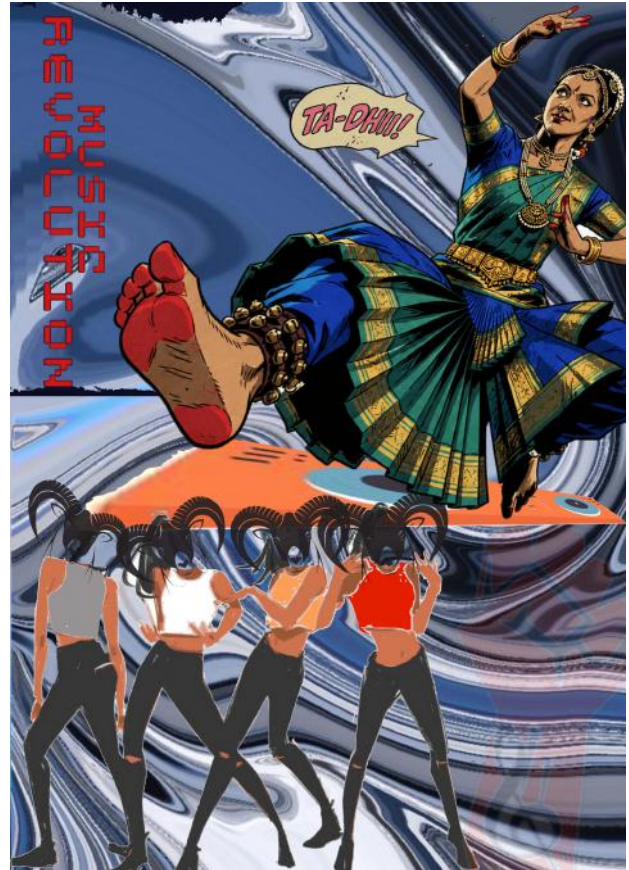
Your figure drawings often convey movement with relatively minimal means. What do you look for in a gesture or pose before you begin drawing?

I created this piece as a gift to myself. It serves as a reminder to slow down, pause, appreciate the present moment, and practice self-love. In the midst of life's constant demands, it encourages me to reconnect with myself and value the quiet moments of reflection and gratitude.



How does your training in landscape architecture influence the way you perceive organic forms, patterns, or relationships between the human figure and surrounding space?

My background in landscape architecture has strengthened my understanding of natural systems, spatial relationships, and organic patterns. It encourages me to see the human figure as part of a broader environment rather than an isolated subject. This perspective influences both my compositions and the way I observe balance, rhythm, and harmony in my drawings.



Your work ranges from highly controlled mark-making to much looser and more spontaneous drawing. Do you consider these approaches opposites, or different expressions of the same artistic investigation?

I see them as two sides of the same creative journey. Some days I enjoy the patience and focus of dot rendering, where every mark is intentional. Other days, expressive scribbling lets me draw freely without overthinking, capturing emotion and energy in the moment.

Both approaches help me understand the world in different ways. One teaches me to slow down and observe, while the other reminds me to trust my instincts and simply enjoy creating. I don't see them as opposites—I see them as different ways of expressing myself, depending on what I feel and what the subject inspires.

— Interview

Olga Murtaeva



Your creative practice brings together painting, music, literature, theatre, and performance. How do these different art forms influence one another in your work?

I am fortunate to express myself vividly across many different fields of art. Whatever I undertake, I strive to find an optimal balance between self-expression, healthy perfectionism, humanism, and love for people and the world. And I never simply play a role - or rather, I never pretend. I always live what I create.

Different forms of creativity come together naturally in my work. For example, my extremely high coloratura notes, which rank among the highest in the world, are essentially the same vivid colours that I favour in painting, only expressed through the voice.

I also often use my paintings to illustrate literary works, including the fantasy stories in my book *The Best in You – Cosmos*. It is also very rewarding to know that my creative work resonates with other authors and inspires them to create interesting works of their own.

You are active in painting, literature, music, cinema, theatre, fashion, and public life. How do you preserve an authentic artistic voice while working across so many different fields?

In every field, I remain true to myself and try to do good—something one can never grow tired of. I believe this quality of character is what most strongly enables me to express, preserve, and develop my distinctive artistic voice.



Your paintings are characterised by vivid colours, expressive brushwork, and rich texture. How do you choose the palette and painting technique for each composition?

My colours and textures are naturally guided first and foremost by my emotions, intuition, and feelings, which are reflected in all my works. My original and innovative style is what I call painterly murmuration. My paintings are vivid, harmonious, and uplifting, and they can easily be associated with the dance of birds in the sky—the natural phenomenon of murmuration.

As a conservatory graduate and professional singer, do you experience colour, rhythm, and composition in painting in a musical way?

Music has been an essential part of my life since my earliest years. Even as a child, I had a unique voice, and my teachers helped me refine it with great precision, develop its potential, and achieve international recognition.

I have always enjoyed drawing, but I became seriously interested in painting much later, after the birth of my wonderful twin sons, Yaroslav and Stanislav. Above all, they are my greatest sources of inspiration. Music, of course, inspires me as well. I often listen to classical compositions while painting, and I see a clear connection between a palette of colours and the musical staff.

Musical instruments appear prominently in several of your works. What do they symbolise for you beyond their connection to sound and performance?

During my school years, I learned to play the domra, a traditional Russian folk instrument. Recently, I dedicated a series of paintings to the domra with the aim of promoting

Russian culture among young people in Russia and abroad. I also frequently depict other musical instruments. I believe that through them, humanity opens a magical portal into a primordial state of harmony.

Nature is an important presence in your work, from flowers and mountains to the sea and open landscapes. What draws you to these subjects?

We are all creations of nature and, at the same time, its co-creators. In the beauty of the world around me, I sense a divine freedom that is closely related to the freedom of creativity.

Moreover, when I paint earthly or even cosmic landscapes, I feel as though I am walking through these enchanting places myself, while inviting viewers to join me. This offers an opportunity to step away from everyday routines and experience something interesting, uplifting, and enjoyable.

You have studied the role of visual art in education and rehabilitation. How can artistic practice support emotional recovery, personal development, and self-expression?

Creativity has the power to ennoble and discipline us, to encourage constructive thinking, to reveal our best qualities, to heal the soul, and to help us notice beauty. It is not a universal remedy, but it is something without which a fulfilling life would be difficult to imagine.

In my paintings, I particularly want to emphasise the art-therapeutic effect. People can feel more comfortable, calm, and emotionally warm when looking at such unusual and colourful works, which contain a true firework of emotions.



Laura Renfroe

Laura is a charcoal and graphite artist based in Mississippi, USA. Her creative work is inspired by stories that touch the soul--both the light and dark parts of us. She approaches art as a reflection of the tales and memories that she has woven most closely to her heart. She wishes to capture the characters, the fiction, and the realities that reflect the soul. Her art is often explosive and imbued with emotion, capturing both beauty and shadow intertwined.



Liu Xuewen

You began the Looking North at the River project in the autumn of 2021 and have since travelled more than 8,000 kilometres along the rivers of Northeast China. What first drew you to this subject, and how has the project evolved over time?



The first thing I photographed was the Songhua River, which is a river that can be seen every day in front of my home. Based on a simple idea of capturing it, I borrowed Robert Adams and Stephen Shore's new terrain and landscape shooting methods to start my photography in 2021. The shooting is divided into two parts. One part is from Jiamusi City to Tongjiang City, where the Songhua River flows into the Heilongjiang River at Tongjiang; The other part is filmed from the source of the Songhua River in Tianchi, Changbai Mountain all the way to Harbin, covering a distance of over 1900 kilometers. After the formation of the two-part combination work in 2022, it participated in several exhibitions both domestically and internationally. As I delved deeper into my thoughts and filming, I gradually developed the idea of capturing the entire river basin in Northeast China. It was autumn of 2023, and my wife suddenly fell ill. I accompanied her to the hospital in Dandong for treatment, taking care of her while filming. I started filming from the mouth of the Yalu River in Dandong, along the banks of the Yalu River, all the way to Tianchi in Changbai Mountain. After my wife recovered from her illness and was discharged from the hospital a year later, I started filming the Tumen River again. After the 25th Winter Spring Festival, I started filming the Nenjiang River, Heilongjiang River, and Wusuli River. The filming journey of these rivers will be nearly 6000 kilometers, which will fully capture the rivers in Northeast China. Some places have been filmed more than once, and I started to participate in the filming in the autumn of the 25th year. Photography exhibition. Until now, this project has been under filming. The filming project travels through complex terrain and records the vastly different ecological landscapes on both sides of the boundary river: active trade and frequent border crossings between China and Russia; The border between China and North Korea remains relatively

closed due to its special historical background, forming a distinct temporal and spatial contrast.

Several of the rivers you photograph form national borders with Russia and North Korea. How does the idea of a border influence the way you observe and photograph these landscapes?

The rivers Heilongjiang and Ussuri in Northeast China border Russia, while the Yalu and Tumen rivers border North Korea. These rivers are also boundary rivers. Among them, Heilongjiang and Ussuri Rivers have a lot of border trade with Russia, while Yalu River and Tumen River have no border trade with North Korea. Photography tracks the changes of rivers and integrates the ecology, geography, and history of the Northeast border into a single visual narrative. The project takes the perspective of “looking north” and uses the boundary river as a dual boundary between geography and culture. The Heilongjiang and Ussuri rivers on the China Russia border are both natural barriers and trade channels. By capturing scenes of border residents trading and cross-border logistics, the “connectivity” of rivers under the background of globalization is demonstrated; The Yalu River and Tumen River on the border between China and North Korea present the metaphor of rivers as “isolation zones” through the juxtaposition of historical and contemporary images. This comparison not only reveals the complexity of geopolitics, but also prompts reflection on the essence of “boundaries” - whether they are obstacles or protections? Is it fragmentation or symbiosis?

Your photographs are characterised by a restrained, almost monochromatic palette, with snow, mist, pale skies, and muted vegetation often dominating the frame. What led you to develop this visual language?

There are various ways of expressing contemporary photography, some with intense colors, some with subtle colors, some with colorful hues, and some using black and white to explain the world as seen. The colors in the photos I took are quite messy because there are different seasons and time points in the shooting. I think I should use simple color relationships to explain the landscape I see. After trying, I found a happy way to express colors and tones, and further unified them. This makes it easier for people to focus more on the content itself when watching, highlighting the content

expressed in the work and weakening the visual differences in color. The boundary between snow and sky is soft, and the shadows of trees slowly blend out in the mist. You can't distinguish whether the distant mountains are clouds or snow. I don't want to cut them open with sharp contrast, I just want to use a low saturation tone to keep this “fused together” state - just like the winter in Northeast China is never aggressive, it wraps around you, allowing you to slowly hear your breath in the white mist. I don't want any unnecessary “performance” in the picture. The faded colors are the only way to prevent the viewer from being pushed away by visual impact. I am willing to slow down and pay attention to a shallow mark on the snow and a thin frost on the branches. These most inconspicuous details hide the most authentic temperature of this land.

Abandoned boats, industrial structures, shipyards, fences, and other traces of human activity repeatedly appear in the series. Do you see these objects as symbols of decline, transformation, survival, or something else?

The ships, industrial buildings, shipyards, and fences depicted in the work are mostly during the winter season. The winter river closure in Northeast China starts at the end of November and lasts until the end of April or early May of the following year, making it impossible to conduct boat tourism and fishing on the river surface. The ships are frozen on the ice, and the shipyards stop working at this time. At this time, only some entertainment projects built on the ice are available for local people to play. During this period, it was the time for the children to have winter vacation, and they were very happy and had a great time playing. Looking North at the River “is not only a geographical documentary, but also a contemporary fable about” boundaries “and” connections “. Through the flow of rivers, the



Liu Xuewen | Yalu River Donggang City | 2024

project attempts to answer: In today's world where globalization and nationalism are intertwined, how can humans achieve reconciliation with nature, with others, and with themselves? The answer may be hidden in every wave, every riverbank, and the eyes of every border resident. In the context of globalization and geopolitical conflicts, the Northeast Rivers have become a "liquid mirror" for observing the ecology, economy, and culture of China's borders. The project attempts to redefine the visual grammar of "borders" through photography as a medium - it is both the geographical endpoint and the historical starting point.

People are either absent from your photographs or appear as very small figures within vast landscapes. What role does the human presence - or absence - play in your work?

The rivers I photograph can feel the presence of people, but in front of nature, people are not the main subject. We know that the sun and moon go through vicissitudes, the stars move, and all things naturally have their own laws of movement. People need to follow these laws and comply with them. In fact, there will be people everywhere, no ship can't move without people, docks are built by people, buildings are built for people, and even small paths are walked by people. It can be said that people are everywhere, and most of the works have traces of people even though there are no people. The project focuses on the survival status of the two sides of the boundary river with natural rivers as the core, and explores cultural preservation in a closed environment. Through narrative and visual interpretation, explore the symbolic significance of the boundary river as a "liquid boundary" - both a resource channel and a geographical barrier. This micro perspective approach allows the work to transcend geographical records and become a

philosophical text about "how people settle down at the boundaries".

Since beginning the series, have you noticed significant environmental or social changes along the rivers? Have any of these changes altered the direction of the project?

I noticed some issues during the filming process of this project. Cities near rivers have better development, while cities far away from rivers have weaker development. This is true for countries related to rivers in the world geography. Here, I would like to point out that even small towns can develop well by utilizing border ports to develop trade. I deeply confirmed this during the filming process.

At the same time, filming rivers has sparked my thinking. Faced with the political sensitivity and technical challenges of filming boundary rivers, the filming project adopts a "restrained aesthetics" approach: through wide-angle lenses, natural light, environmental types, and other techniques, reducing human intervention, allowing rivers and land to "speak" on their own. The concept of conveying the deep meaning of "coexistence" through silent images attempts to transcend the geographical sense of "looking north" and establish an emotional connection between the audience and the border through visual narrative, redefining the meaning of "border" as a dynamic cultural field.

You are both a freelance photographer and an independent curator. How has your curatorial experience influenced the way you photograph, edit, sequence, and exhibit this body of work?

When it comes to curation, it has had a great impact on me. Curation is the display of works of different categories and forms in the form of themes. Every time I shoot, I need to determine the route, the places I pass through, and the different scenery for planning. The works shot in this project will have several parts, some emphasizing nature, some emphasizing humanities, and some emphasizing industrial landscapes, which will become independent works. I no longer pursue the stunning effect of a single photo, but deliberately reserve enough "narrative gaps" for the entire exhibition, so that the scenery is no longer an isolated background, but a carrier that can support everyone and the story. This requires photographers to have insight and independent thinking ability, which has been very helpful for me



Liu Xuewen | Wusuli River Raohu | 2025



in shooting works. For 'Looking North at the River', curation has never been a 'follow-up work' that begins after taking photos. It started from the first time I surveyed and looked at the river surface - I never took pictures of the river scenery in Northeast China, but the complete story of people living with this river for decades. Curatorial thinking gave me the ability to piece together the scattered fragments along the coast into a world that allows the audience to truly stand by the river.

The Beiwangjiang River project has compiled over 80 photos, with less than 30 selected for the exhibition. The photos compiled by this project have the idea of being edited into a book, and after two years of shooting, the content of the work will be supplemented and improved. At that time, negotiations will be held with the publishing house regarding the publication of the book. In short, curation has taught me to engage in photography creation with a more open-minded attitude.

Irina Zavorotnaya

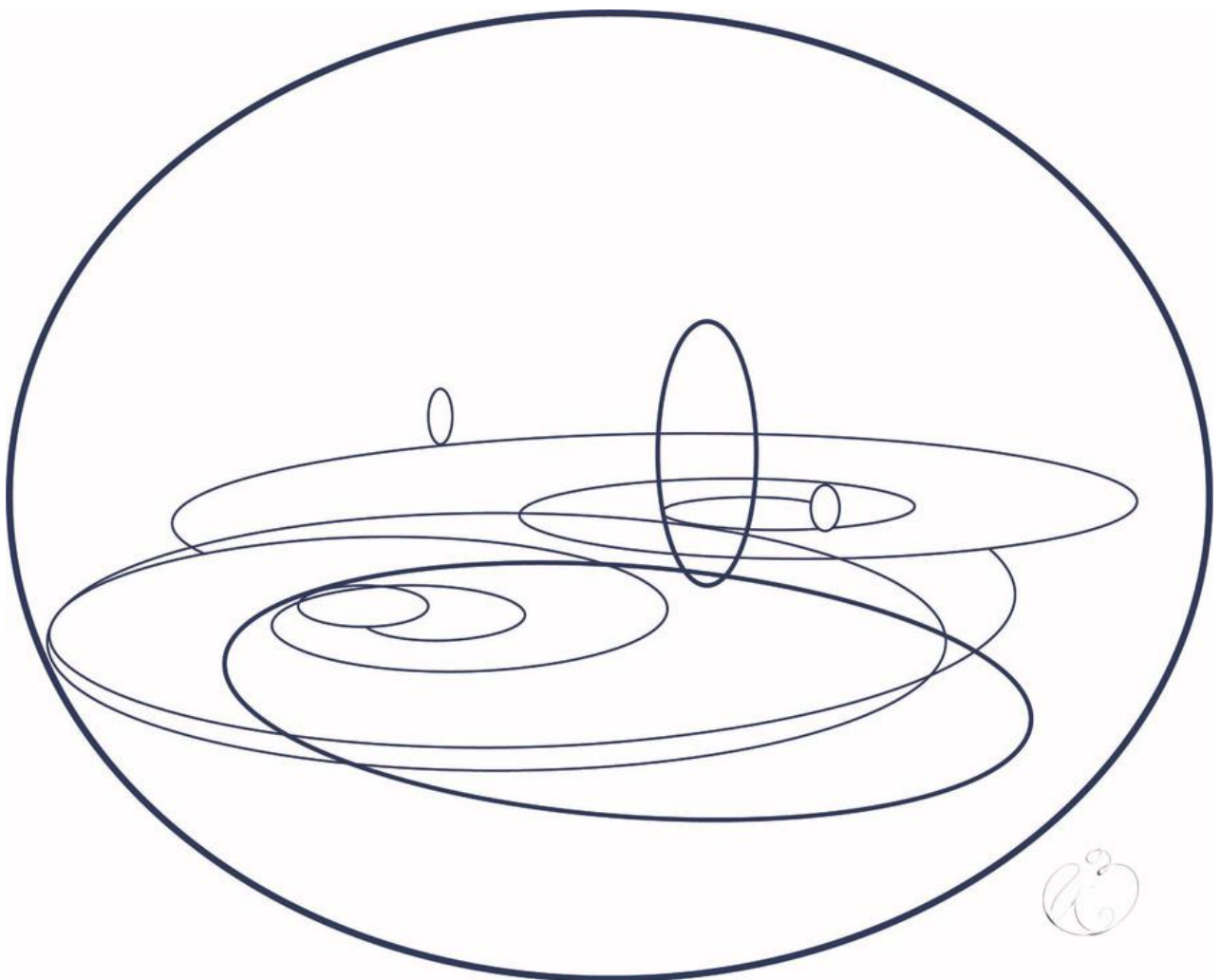
As a graphic artist, I work in the fields of Symbolism, Cosmism, Romanticism, and Realism. In psychological portraiture, I use pencil and pastel techniques, while in my cosmic compositions I turn to photo collage and digital graphics.

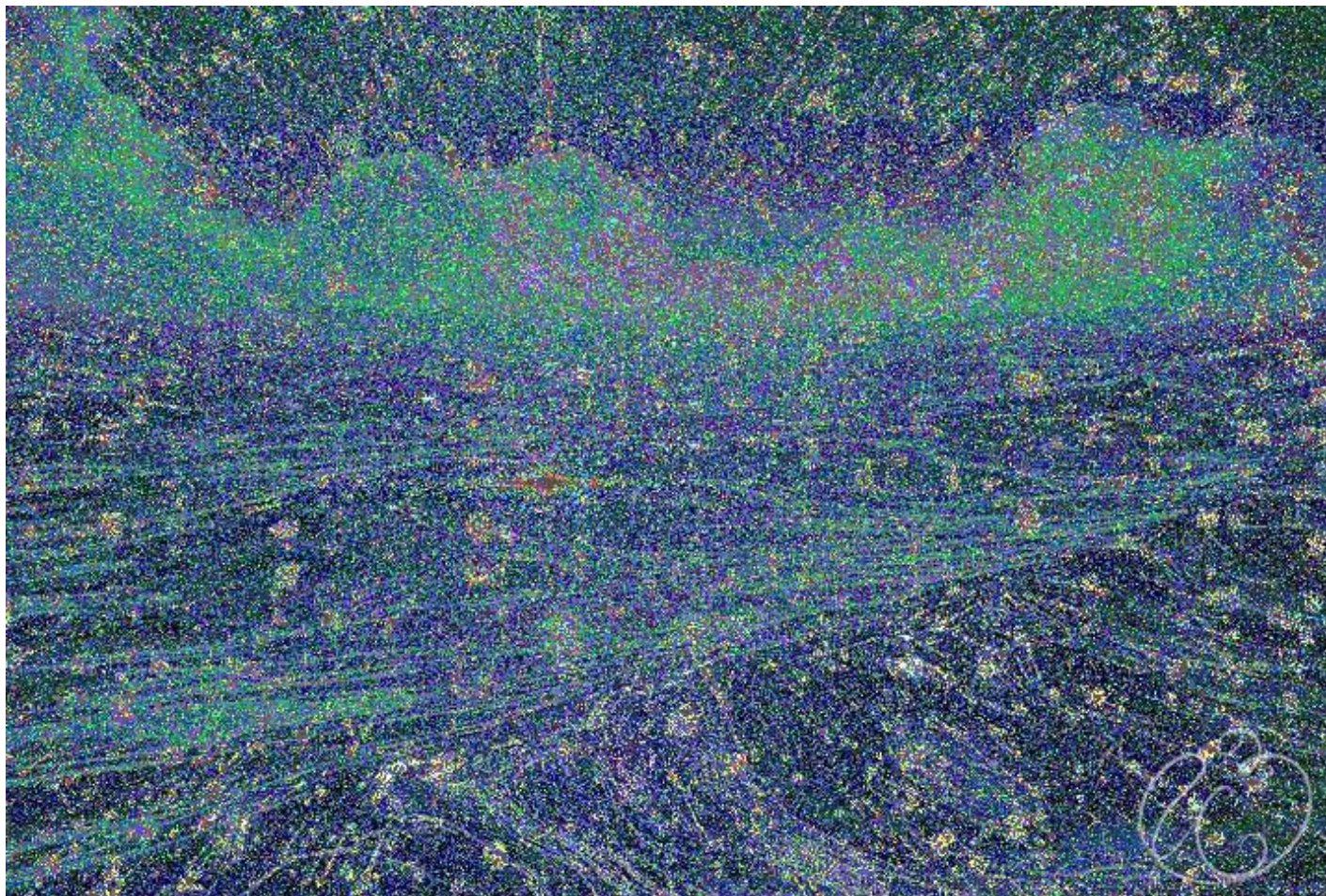
In art, I feel most connected to the world of symbols and metaphors, ideas and emotions.

Artist Statement:

"The Magic of the Cosmos"

Irina Zavorotnaya | Universe I





Irina Zavorotnaya | The Shining III



Irina Zavorotnaya | Space Symphony III

RYU SATAKE



Your practice centers on the “disappearance of contours”. When did this idea first become central to your artistic language?



RYU SATAKE | Presence Between Emergence And Afterimage

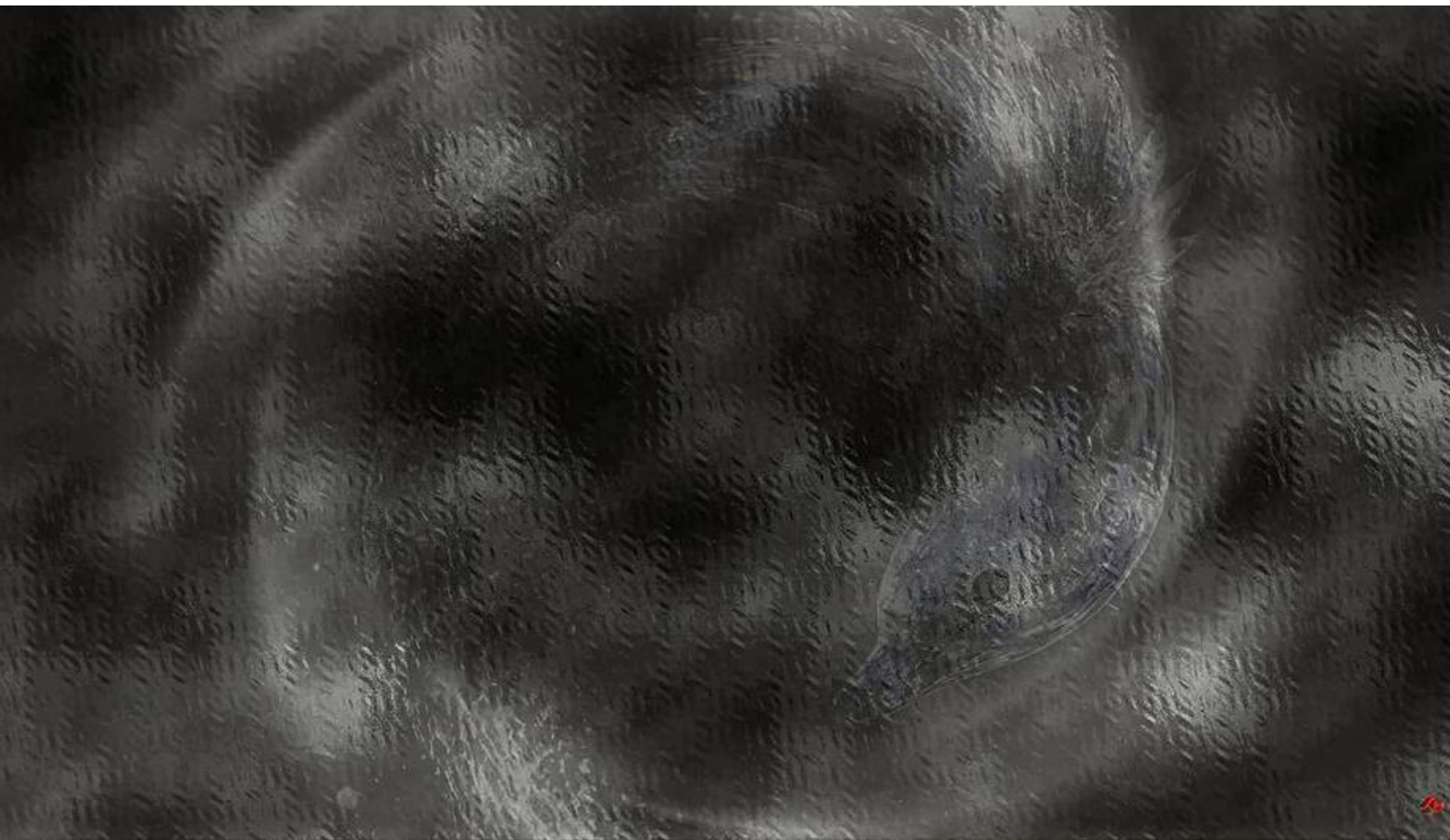
This idea developed gradually through my background in architecture and digital art. I became interested in the moment when an image is no longer recognized as an object but begins to exist as a spatial condition. Since then, the disappearance of contours has become the foundation of my artistic practice.

You describe contours as boundaries between forms, meanings, identities, and spaces. What happens conceptually when these boundaries begin to dissolve?

When boundaries dissolve, fixed meanings disappear. Instead of recognizing an object, the viewer experiences the movement of space itself. The work exists in the transition between appearance and disappearance.

In your statement, you write: “Black is not a color. Black is a structure”. How does black function in your work?

Black is not simply a visual element. It organizes space, depth, and perception. I use black as a structural framework that allows presence to emerge rather than as a color that fills an image.



Whales, birds, and hybrid winged creatures appear throughout the series. What do they represent?

They are not symbols with fixed meanings. They function as traces of presence. They emerge briefly, dissolve again, and guide the viewer toward an experience of space rather than narrative.

How do you create the tension between presence and absence?

I carefully balance visibility and disappearance. I avoid complete recognition so that the image continuously shifts between being present and absent depending on the viewer's perception.

Surface and texture play an important role. How do you develop these complex visual textures?

The textures are created through repeated digital layering and reconstruction. Rather than decorating the image, they generate depth and ambiguity, allowing space itself to become perceptible.

What would you like viewers to experience?

I do not want viewers to search for a correct interpretation. I hope they experience a subtle presence that cannot be completely identified or explained. My work invites them to feel space before they recognize an image.

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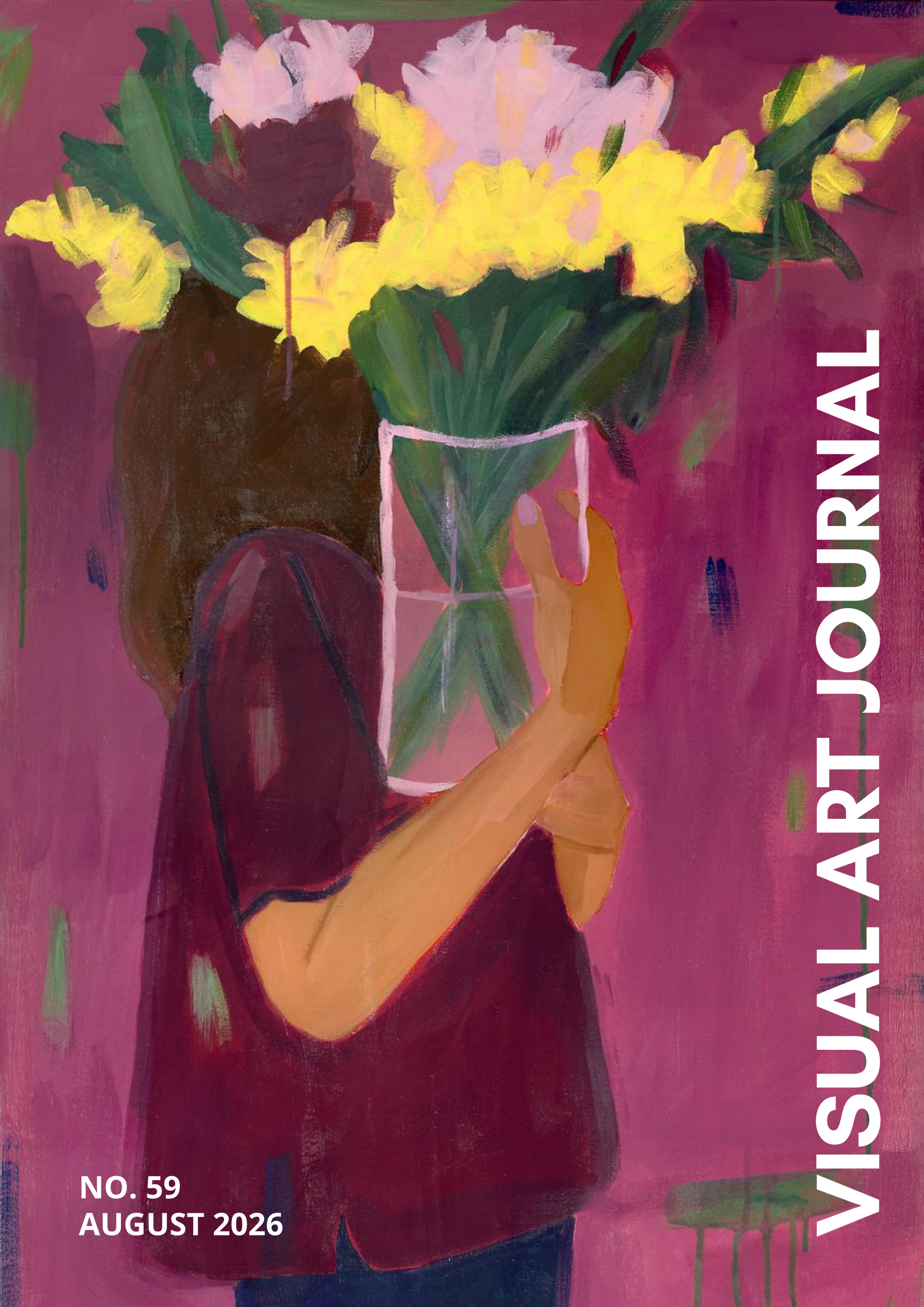
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