
VISUALARTJOURNAL.COM
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Intro



Anna Gvozdeva

Curator of
Visual Art Journal

Hello dear reader,

You are holding the 64th issue of our magazine, in which, as always, we have brought together a diverse collection of artists from around the world.
However different their styles may be, there is one thing worth remembering: all of these artistic expressions have become possible thanks to the courage and determination of those who dared to introduce the world to new ways of seeing and expressing themselves.
The 19th and 20th centuries gave artists greater freedom to communicate meaning through an expanding variety of forms, spaces, and materials. In the 21st century, virtually any object can become an internationally recognized work of art. What matters most is the idea behind it.
This is precisely why we place so much emphasis on conversations with artists. We believe it is incredibly valuable to have the opportunity to discover what an artist intended to express through their work, the stories behind their creations, and the journeys that brought them to life.
So make yourself comfortable. Ahead of you are more than 100 pages filled with art and fascinating conversations.

Enjoy reading!

On the Front Cover:
Celeste Luz
Presence
2026

On the Back Cover:
Steverlynck Fanny
Champêtre

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

Rebecca Microsaint



What first drew you to oil painting, and how did you develop your practice as a self-taught artist?

How one tells a story is the story. I knew I had some things to say, but I needed to try my hand at as many media as possible to make sure these things were said. When I started expressing myself a few years ago, I first wrote prose, then transitioned to comics, and then axed the words altogether when I painted some blue hands and feet and realized that a painting has the power to invoke a story rather than tell it word for word. I experimented with watercolour and acrylic but I fell in love with oil for the colour potential and slow dry time. My first oil portrait was so freaky for its complete misunderstanding of colour and value, but I remember thinking how lucky I was I have a whole lifetime to figure it out. So, while there are other media to try, I'm still stuck on oil.

How did living in Berlin influence your work, and has returning to Canada changed your perspective?

Berlin is such a great city for a visual artist - it's not immediately beautiful, but it waits for you to see it in the right light and then all its history and culture is new and you wonder why you didn't come sooner. However, being from where I'm from, the most significant thing this period did for my art was just let me be away. Letting my life in Canada exist only in memory or image for a few years gave me a lot of perspective. Who knows - now that I'm back I'll probably get similar perspective on my experiences in Berlin and paint them too.

What did your residencies in Germany and Iceland bring to your practice? Is there a particular experience that still shapes your paintings?



Rebecca Microsaint | The View | 2026



Rebecca Microsaint | Beekeepers | 2026

Work ethic and community. In Iceland I worked in an old warehouse with other artists of all practices - there was a jewelry maker, an electronic musician, and a photographer. We were often all working in silence (the musician had headphones), but there was an unspoken accountability among us.

You prefer to work on a small scale because it allows you to travel. What creative possibilities does this intimate format offer?

Big worlds are hiding in small spaces - working small makes me ask myself which elements really must be in the painting, and which are just visual fluff. Small things are also cute and anticlimactic, which I love.

What prompted your shift from realism toward a more conceptual approach to painting?

This shift happened recently. There was an old cemetery nearby where I was staying and I thought it was cute. I painted it and without really thinking, just added a girl on the grass. I don't know where she came from, maybe she is the ghost of one of the people buried there, but I loved how she fit right into place.

When looking through old photographs, what makes you choose a particular image as the starting point for a painting?

Definitely not the photo quality - I've had to work off some janky photos from decades ago it's made me realize I need to study anatomy a lot more to be able to fill in the blanks. The photos are always different, but I'm interested in a person or object in the corner who deserves to be in the centre.

You say that the more surreal your painting becomes, the more real it feels. Could you tell us more about what "real" means to you in this context?

Real means alive according to the inner experience. At best, a photo comes alive according to the facts. There's a person, there's her smile, there's the sun. But painting in some element from a different world altogether adds a new dimension and taps into what I know I'm asking myself all the time as I figure out how to exist. Am I really smiling? Do I have any clue why the fuck I'm here today?



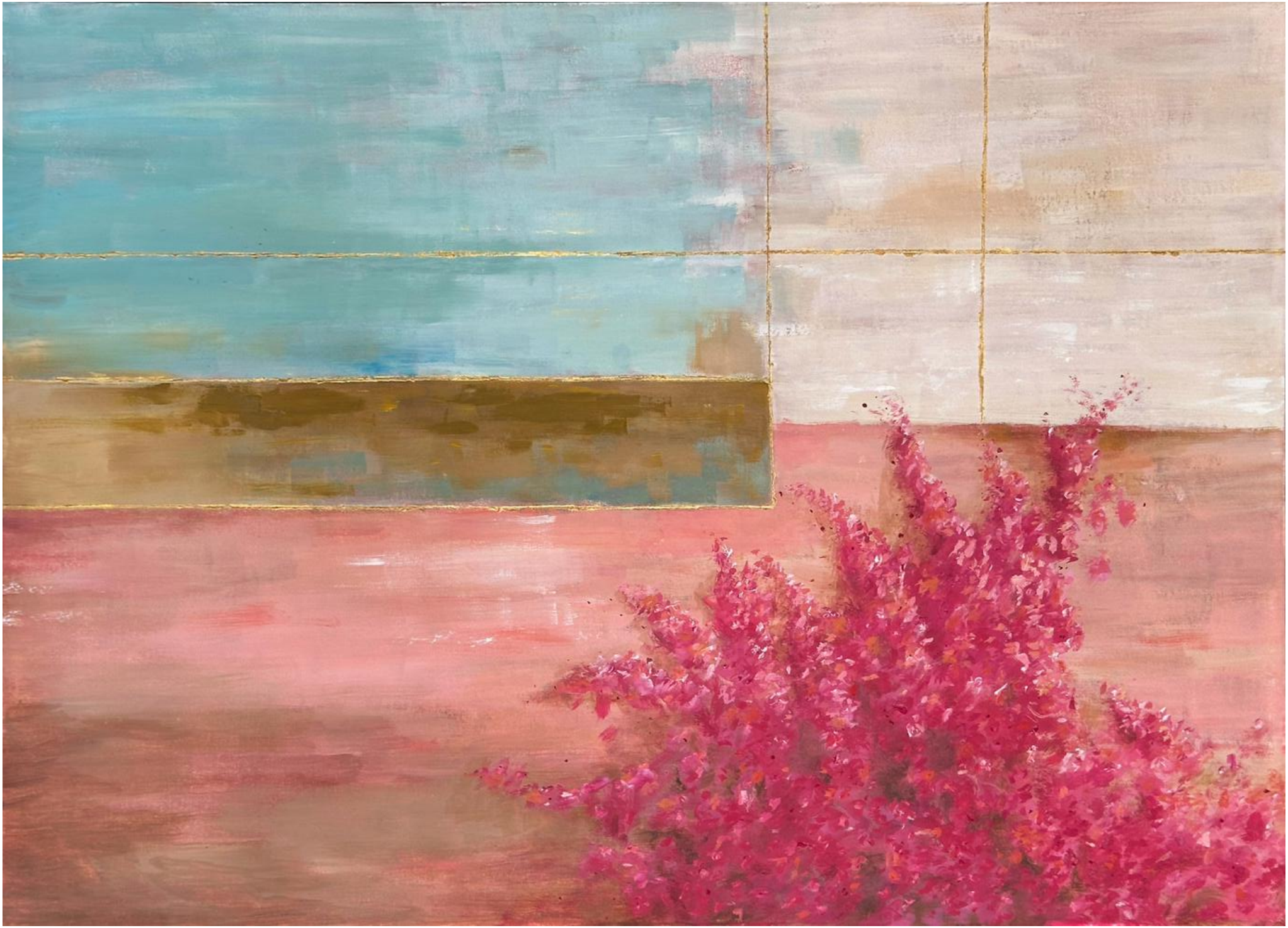
Rebecca Microsaint | Pills | 2026

Celeste Luz (b. 1988) is a contemporary oil painter based in Torrevieja, Spain. Inspired by the Mediterranean and the quiet poetry of everyday life, her work explores the emotional power of light, color, and atmosphere.
Through expressive brushwork and vibrant compositions, she transforms familiar places, ordinary objects, and fleeting moments into paintings filled with warmth, nostalgia, mystery, and wonder.
After overcoming eight years of serious illness, painting became a profound personal transformation and a new way of experiencing the world. This journey shaped her artistic vision, rooted in resilience, hope, and an appreciation for the beauty often hidden in everyday life.
Her work has been exhibited in Spain and is held in private collections.

Project Statement
My paintings begin with a feeling. Sometimes it is the warmth of sunlight on a familiar street; sometimes it is the quiet presence of an ordinary object that seems to hold a story.
I work in oils, using expressive brushstrokes, color, and atmosphere to capture not simply what I see, but what a moment makes me feel.
Color is central to my artistic language. It can create comfort or tension, transform something ordinary into something unexpected, and reveal emotions that words cannot quite express. I love exploring how colors interact, how they can change the mood of a scene, and how even the simplest subject can become something extraordinary.
My journey into painting followed eight years of serious illness, an experience that profoundly changed the way I see the world. It taught me to discover beauty in the smallest details and to appreciate moments we so often overlook.
Through my paintings, I hope to invite viewers to slow down, reconnect with their emotions, and discover something of their own in what they see.



Celeste Luz | Spanish Courtyard | 2026



Celeste Luz | Beyond the Frame | 2026

Tix Makes



Is there a particular childhood memory that helps explain why nostalgia became such a central theme in your work?

More than a particular memory it is the feeling of remembering those core childhood memories, it's that warmth and kind feeling of having fun with total liberty. I was pretty lucky to have had a childhood where those playful and free moments happened, either on the beach with my cousins, Saturdays at my grandmother's house or at school with friends. Every time I remember those memories, they bring back this genuine feeling of happiness, warmth, and lightheartedness. I think that's what nostalgia means to me: not just looking back at the past, but being able to reconnect with the way those moments made you feel. Through my work, I want to capture that feeling and share it with others, creating something that reminds them of their own childhood, their own memories, and that playful part of themselves that never really goes away.

How did Blix first come into being, and at what point did you realize this character could become the foundation of an entire universe?

Blix came from a feeling I was searching for myself: comfort. I started thinking about the things that make me happy and bring me back to that lighter, more playful state of mind. My childhood and my inner child always brings out that feeling and when I think about childhood, balloons were one of the first images that came to mind. They're simple objects, but they carry so much meaning: celebration, freedom, and carefree moments. I wanted to turn that feeling into a character, something that could hold that sense of comfort and joy.

The 'X' eye became an important part of Blix, too. For me, it represents the idea that nothing is perfect, and it's important to see beauty in those imperfections rather than trying to hide them. There's also a more personal connection to it: I tend to blink a lot when I'm nervous or when I find myself in unfamiliar social situations. So, in a way, that little detail carries a piece of me, too.

Gradually he became more than a character. As I started exploring different shapes and ways to give him life, I realized it could evolve into something much bigger, a universe where each creation could tell its own story while sharing the same spirit. That's how Blix World began to take shape; as a way to reconnect with our inner child and remind ourselves not to take life too seriously.



Tix Makes | Blix World

Balloons bring joy, but they can also burst, deflate, or float away. How does this fragility influence the emotional stories you tell through Blix World?

I believe that's just part of life. Balloons burst, deflate, or float away, just as moments and experiences eventually come to an end, but their memories aand emotional charge don't have to. I try to see the beauty in that fragility, and I wish for people to see it that way too, even though sometimes it is hard, I myself struggle with it at times, but I try to always keep it present. This idea connects back to the small detail of the 'X'



Tix Makes | Zany Duck

eye in my characters and the idea that imperfections are not something to hide, but something that can help us appreciate the good things in ourselves and in our experiences.
I want Blix World to be a reminder that, despite life's ups and downs, we can still find joy and hold on to that playful inner child spirit we still carry within.

When you reinterpret familiar childhood characters and symbols, how do you decide what to preserve and what to transform into your own visual language?

As I've done more iterations and variations inside Blix World, I have slowly started to develop my own way of approaching these transformations. It's been a process of experimentation, especially when bringing them to life on my 3D printer, that gives certain limitations to think about when going from 2D sketch to a 3D model. Then there is learning what are the elements that make a character recognizable and what I can reinterpret through my own visual language. I want to preserve that sense of familiarity and nostalgia, but transform it into something that feels distinctly mine through color, shape, and the playful, balloon inspired aesthetic that defines my work.

Your use of vibrant color suggests an immediate sense of playfulness. What quieter or more complicated emotions do you hope viewers discover beyond that first impression?

I want to believe there's a certain comfort in playfulness, and that's something I want people to experience through my work. Beyond that initial sense of joy, given by my choice of using bright colours, I hope there's also a feeling of tenderness and reflection. My work comes from a desire to reconnect with childhood and find comfort in those memories. I want people to not only feel happy when they see my work, but also remember something of their own, or reconnect with a part of themselves they might have lost touch with and celebrate it.

Are there aspects of Blix World that feel distinctly connected to Peru, even when you are working with widely recognizable childhood imagery?

Definitely, as much as I want Blix World to be a universal language that anyone can connect with, as an individual I also want parts of it to be a reflection of my own upbringing and experiences. In some ways in order for people not only to know me and where I come from but to get to know the richness of Peruvian culture. Luki, my Andean llama-inspired character, is one example of this; created to bring that connection into my work. It's an iconic animal deeply connected to Peru reimagined through the playful, balloon-inspired language of my Blix World. I really like the idea that I can share something personal to my roots while creating something that people from different places and backgrounds can connect with through the tenderness and joy that the use of shapes and colours can also communicate, even if at first instance the reference is not familiar to them.

Has a viewer ever associated your work with a memory or emotion you had not anticipated? How did that response affect your understanding of the piece?

I recently was part of the Art Toy con here in Lima, Peru and someone told me my Blix Head figure reminded him of a character in a video game character he used to play as a kid. I was not familiar with said character, hence I found it super interesting because that wasn't a reference at all in my mind when creating the aesthetic of the character, yet something about its shape or overall look brought him back to a memory and a specific time in his own life.
That made me think that one of the most beautiful things about any type of art is that everyone brings their own experiences to it. Even when I create something from a very personal feeling or memory, or a unique place in my mind, someone else might see it through a completely different lens. That is a reminder for me that a piece of art doesn't have to mean just one thing. I might be sharing a part of my own childhood, but someone else might find a connection to theirs in a completely different way. In that sense, the work becomes something shared, and that's one of the things I love most about creating from a place of wanting people to feel or remember a feeling rather than to identify a specific person/ character/ thing.



Tix Makes | Animaney N Insaney

LADY OCTOPUS



LADY OCTOPUS | The Forest Where Stars Are Born | 2026

How did you choose the name LADY OCTOPUS, and what does it express about you as an artist?

Before focusing on my art, I was also working in fashion and beauty, and at one point I worked as a fashion journalist as well. I was always doing many things at the same time, moving between different people, projects, and information very quickly. Because of that, people around me gave me the nickname "Lady Octopussy," inspired by the James Bond world. Later, I chose LADY OCTOPUS as my artist name. I liked the idea that it reflected a person who can reach in many directions at once, stay curious, and connect different worlds.



LADY OCTOPUS | Looking Beyond The Stars | 2026

In what ways, if any, do your Korean background and your life in France influence the imaginary worlds you create?

I graduated from high school in Korea, then came to France to study and later built my professional life here. Over the years, I have also worked and travelled throughout Europe and other parts of the world. I think this experience has naturally allowed Eastern and Western ways of life, emotions, and visual sensibilities to meet inside me. Rather than consciously mixing cultures, I feel that these different influences have simply become part of the way I imagine and create.

How did The Girls Who Live on Stars begin? Was there a particular image, memory, or story that sparked the project?

Like many girls, I have always loved stars. I also have a habit of doodling while I am on the phone. One day, while drawing without really thinking about it, I created a little girl inside a rounded shape. That accidental sketch became the beginning of the Egg Girls. From there, the world gradually expanded into seven girls, stars, another planet, and eventually the



LADY OCTOPUS | Holdinga Star | 2026

story of The Girls Who Live on Stars.

Why did you choose egg-like forms for your seven protagonists, and how do their individual personalities emerge?

The seven protagonists each have a different color, inspired by the colors of the rainbow. While doodling, I first imagined a simple round form, but then I wondered whether an egg shape could contain the feeling of a small child more naturally. That is how the Egg Girls were born.
Each girl has her own hair color, personality, taste, and way of reacting to the world. Their differences are not only visual; they also appear through their behavior, preferences, and the way each of them experiences the journey.

You describe your scenes as quiet and dreamlike. How do you convey subtle emotions through gestures, composition, and small visual details?

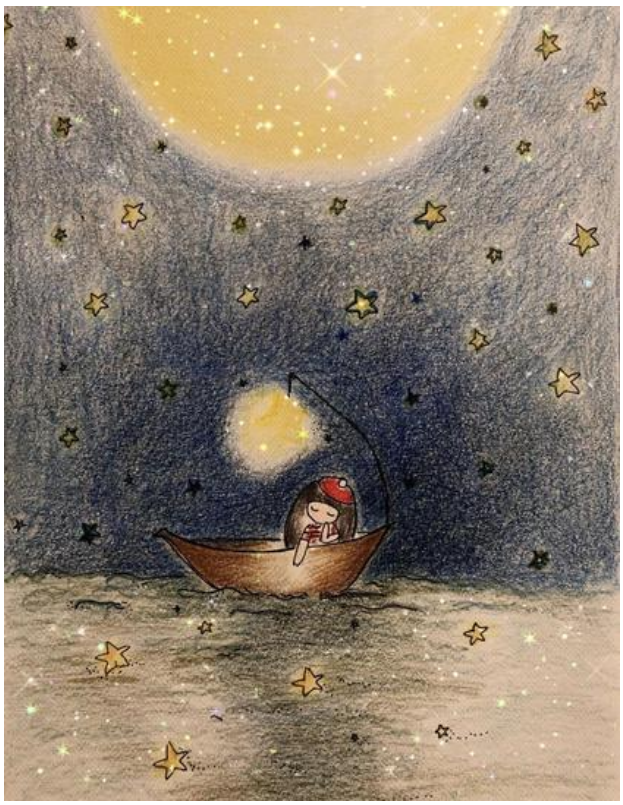
My daily life has often been very busy because of my work in fashion and beauty. But nighttime has always felt completely different to me. When everyone else is asleep, I feel that the night becomes my own private space — a time when I can enter a completely free world of imagination.
Many of the Egg Girls' scenes come from that feeling. Some are also inspired by memories from my own childhood, transformed through imagination. I prefer quiet gestures, small actions, light, space, and atmosphere rather than dramatic expressions. I want the viewer to feel the emotion before trying to explain it.

How much of the Egg Girls' world have you defined for yourself, and how much do you deliberately leave open for viewers to imagine?

I have already developed the main story and the world of the Egg Girls in my mind. I know who the seven girls are and how their story unfolds. At the same time, I do not want to explain everything through words.
I would like the book to remain visual and open, so that both children and adults can look at the images, smile, and create part of the story for themselves. I want to show that adults can still have a childlike heart, even after growing older.

You hope to reach both children and adults. What would you like each audience to discover in the same image?

For children, I hope the images encourage curiosity and allow them to keep their sense of innocence and wonder for as long as possible.
For adults, who are often busy, tired, or overwhelmed by work and responsibilities, I hope the images can bring back a warm memory: "I was a child once too." I would like them to reconnect, even for a moment, with the softer and more playful part of themselves that may still be quietly living inside.



LADY OCTOPUS | Fishing For Stars | 2026

Marien Espinosa Garay



Art, writing, music, singing, acting, and teaching were deeply rooted practices in my family, alongside frequent conversations about classic literature, poetry, history, and philosophy. Consequently, pursuing these disciplines felt like a natural progression. This environment inspired me to participate in art exhibitions and literature contests, ultimately leading me to earn a Master's degree in Humanities, transforming these family traditions into my professional path.

You have worked with painting, sculpture, object art, collage, installation, and drawing. What guides your choice of medium when you begin a new work?

I believe everything starts with an image that appears suddenly in your mind or heart, completely unbidden. From there, you follow where this inspiration leads, listening closely and trusting that the medium you choose is the right one for this idea to unfold and be brought into the world. As the philosopher Louis Lavelle said: "The work of art becomes a web that confines a spark of the spirit, enabling the inner to become external and permanent."

In your painting "El beso", human profiles merge with organic and geometric forms. How do you develop these transformations, and what do they allow you to express?

It is an elusive process to explain, as I believe much of this artwork is born from a subconscious state. Just like in dreams, you set reasoning aside and allow images to flow freely. Interestingly, these pieces also communicate with the viewer on that same subconscious level. Once El Beso was finished, I noticed the audience deeply resonated with its underlying themes: love persevering in spite of adversity, the coldness of mechanical edges, and nature blooming within the figures—feelings that ultimately transcend what words can express.

The meeting of two faces suggests intimacy, while the

How did art, writing, and teaching become part of your life, and how has the relationship between these three practices evolved over time?



Marien Espinosa Garay | El Beso



Marien Espinosa Garay | The Aching Seashell | 2009

surrounding forms make the scene feel dreamlike. What interests you about the relationship between human connection and the imagination?

Human connection operates on multiple levels. At the surface, we see individuals going about their daily activities, playing their roles in various scenarios—at home, at work, or within their busy lives. But at a profound level, human emotions such as love or fear defy concepts and words. There, in the innermost realm of the soul, only symbols and archetypes can reach. These universal patterns formed the very first link between humans, enduring within the collective psyche from antiquity to the present day. As Carl Jung noted, symbols serve as a bridge to this collective depth, allowing the unutterable to find form.

How does living in Cancún influence your visual language? Do the sea, light, and local environment enter your work consciously or intuitively?

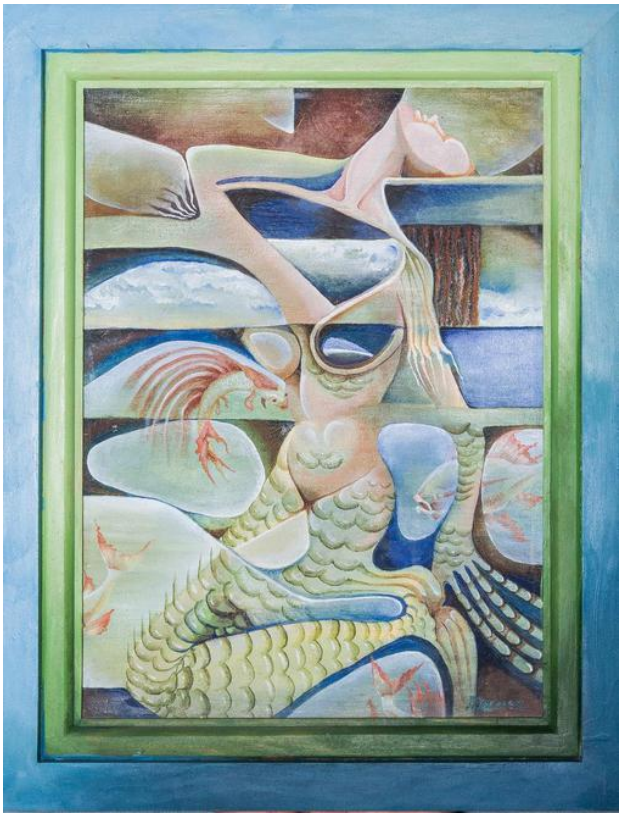
Both consciously and intuitively. The white sands, the turquoise blue sea, and sunrises and sunsets full of colors and shades—all of these vivid experiences have deeply influenced my artwork.Also, the Mayan culture has been a core interest in my research about Maya art and the use of the 'Azul Maya' (Maya Blue pigment) in pre-Hispanic and colonial art in the Yucatan Peninsula.

After more than thirty years of teaching, what have your students taught you about creativity, and has this changed the way you approach your own work?

In my youth, I began as a kindergarten teacher, later moving on to elementary and high schools, as well as working with children with special needs. Eventually, I also taught at the college and graduate levels. Through this journey, I have learned that regardless of age or academic level, creativity is a fundamental drive within every human soul. From antiquity to the present day, and from our earliest years to the end of our lives, we constantly seek to express our innermost selves, whether consciously or not. This realization has profoundly shaped my approach, deeply enriching both my life and my creative process.

How much space do you leave for viewers to interpret your work differently from your original intention? Has someone's response ever changed your understanding of a piece?

I am certain that viewers will interpret every artwork with absolute freedom, guided by how they are moved by its textures, the direction of lines, the temperature of colors, and the overall composition—much like Wassily Kandinsky explored in Concerning the Spiritual in Art. Furthermore, when an artwork presents recognizable figures, nature, expressions, or relationships, the observer connects directly with the spirit of a culture at a specific historical moment. And when the work taps into the open perspective of symbols and archetypes, the viewer experiences a profound shock, akin to a lightning strike. Carl Jung would see his notions of the collective unconscious affirmed here, just as Byung-Chul Han wrote in The Salvation of the Beautiful: "The contemplation of the beautiful does not provoke complacency; it shocks." Art is inherently polysemic, as Umberto Eco stated, and yes, I am often wonderfully surprised when my work elicits interpretations I had never initially imagined.



Marien Espinosa Garay | Sirenata | 2004

Kamil Plodzień is a contemporary visual artist based in the Czech Republic. He has been creating art for a long time and has developed a distinctive artistic style that has evolved from figurative art to abstract expressionism. He recently expanded his international reach by participating in the Bid4Berlin project in Germany. His upcoming schedule includes, among other things, participation in the Open Art Fest in Prague at the end of November 2026. He is currently focusing on developing his studio practice and actively expanding his influence on the contemporary art scene.

Project Statement
I see painting as part of my identity, a tool for introspection, and a way to communicate with the world around me. While I used to focus on figurative art and capturing emotions in portraits, today I create in the spirit of abstract expressionism. I am fascinated by the process of intuitive acrylic painting, in which a visual record of my current feelings emerges on a blank canvas. My works are a mosaic of everyday impressions and reflect my personal and artistic journey. Each painting is an open story, and I am delighted when my paintings bring joy to others as well.



Kamil Plodzień | Winter Love



Kamil Plodzień | Magnolia

Kim Mijung (On-u MJK228)



Kim Mijung (On-u MJK228) | Overlapped Time And Space A Red Episode | 2026

How did your creative journey begin, and what led you to express yourself through both visual art and writing?

My creative journey began with a desire to move beyond familiar figurative work and explore new artistic possibilities. With a dream of studying in Manhattan, New York, I spent a month encountering international artists who worked with freedom, discovering new possibilities for expression. That experience awakened my dormant senses and imagination and became a turning point that naturally led me toward nonfigurative art. Through this, I realized that art goes beyond reproducing established forms: it is a process of freely exploring and expressing one's inner world.



Kim Mijung (On-u MJK228) | Slow Journey Of Dreams | 2026

You describe your practice as capturing fleeting moments of everyday life. Could you share a recent moment that inspired a work and explain what made it meaningful to you?

Recently, watching Korea's achievements in football and golf, alongside the remarkable growth of its semiconductor industry, has filled me with pride in the strength and potential that this small country demonstrates on the world stage. These feelings inspired me to consider how Korean culture and art, too, can connect more widely with the world. By bringing Western forms of artistic expression to exquisite Eastern silk, I explore a new artistic language in which tradition and modernity coexist. Through this practice, I hope to introduce the originality and beauty of K-art to the world.

Your artistic gaze is lyrical and dreamlike. How do memory and imagination transform the things you observe?

Through memory and imagination, I transform moments from everyday life into lyrical, dreamlike images. By projecting my inner feelings onto familiar subjects, I build a visual world of my own in which reality and fantasy intersect.

Kim Mijung (On-u MJK228) | Garden In Radiant Time | 2025



You work across different forms and media. How do you decide which medium best suits a particular idea or emotion?

I draw inspiration from the innocent memories of childhood and the exhausting routines of modern life, reinterpreting them through a lens of hope. Depending on the emotional tone of the subject and the message I wish to convey, I choose the textures, colors, and techniques that best bring out the depth of feeling and fully realize the work's visual form.

How do your writing and visual art influence one another? Are there experiences you prefer to explore through words rather than images?

For me, writing is another form of expression that complements visual art and communicates the inner life of a work more deeply. Putting the thoughts and emotions within a work into words helps viewers understand it and interpret it from their own perspectives. Sometimes, exploring the memories, emotions, and symbolic meanings contained within an image through language brings me closer to the essence of the work than the image alone. I believe that words and images expand one another's meaning, making the work richer and more complete.

How did studying at The Art Students League of New York influence your practice? Was there a lesson or encounter that stayed with you?

As someone who did not major in art, my experience at The Art Students League of New York was a challenge that opened the way to a wider artistic world. I set off for an unfamiliar place without a clear plan, even though I was not fluent in English, because I wanted to step beyond familiar boundaries and encounter firsthand the world of artists who worked freely.
More than learning specific lessons there, I absorbed the works I saw, experiencing them with my eyes and heart and carrying them deep within me. In particular, my way of seeing color changed, and I became bolder in my expression. The greatest reward was the emergence of my own world of nonfigurative expression, unrestricted by established boundaries. The lesson that stayed with me is clear: look beyond the confines of your own world and toward the wider one. Taking on the challenge of an unfamiliar world ultimately became a process of discovering the possibilities that had been lying dormant within me. The artists I met there and I promised that we would meet again someday. Although circumstances have not yet allowed us to reunite, we still exchange news by email and maintain our connections. Those encounters remain precious memories of a bond formed through art, reaching beyond physical distance.

Your exhibition history includes projects in Korea, Poland, Monaco, Los Angeles, and Tokyo. Have encounters with different audiences changed the way you understand your own work?

Exhibiting in countries beyond Korea has been a meaningful journey of communicating with audiences around the world through art and expanding my dream of becoming an international artist. Meeting different audiences has not changed my own artistic perspective on my work. However, I hope that viewers can discover their own emotions and meanings within it and find comfort and healing for their weary hearts. My wish is for art to become more than something to look at: I hope it can serve as a warm channel of communication that touches our hearts and helps us find inner peace.



Kim Mijung (On-u MJK228) | Time Flowing Beneath The Dancheong | 2025

Filoiann Wiedenhoff is a full-time digital and acrylic artist, faith-based author, and retired ministers wife based in San Diego, California. Driven by a mission to make art accessible to everyone, she founded Filoi's Art Gallery, a unique donation-based online gallery featuring serene seascapes, vibrant moonscapes, and tranquil island themes. Beyond her visual art, Filoiann is a dedicated writer whose work explores spiritual intimacy and devotion, highlighted by her upcoming book, 40 Days of Love Between Christ and the Church. Her multi-channel approach to creativity fosters a deeply collaborative and engaging relationship with an audience seeking calm, inspiration, and spiritual renewal.

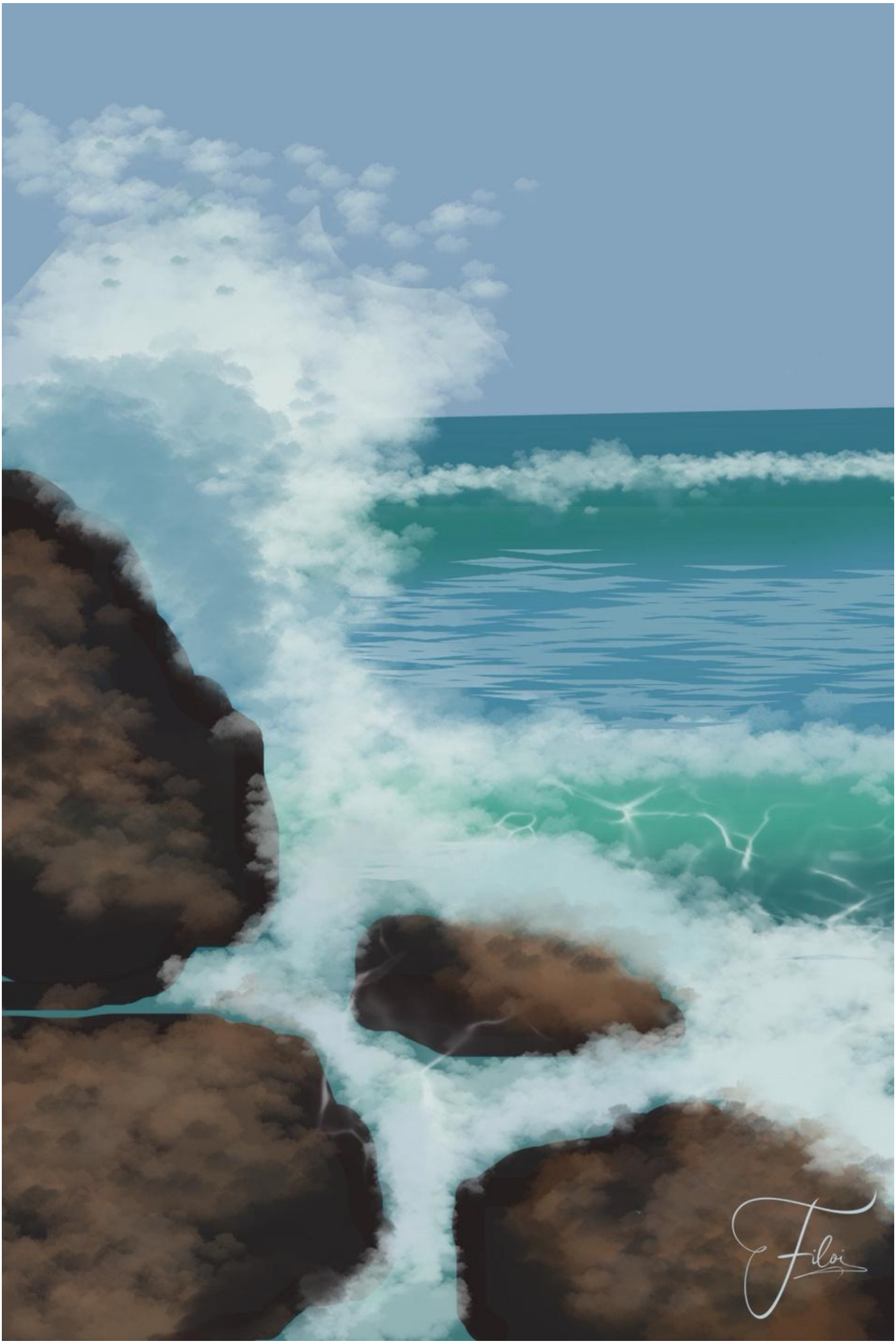
Project Statement

Working across both acrylics and digital mediums, my portfolio is deeply inspired by the quiet beauty and expressive moods of nature—from tranquil ocean horizons and luminous moonscapes to vibrant island landscapes. Each piece is crafted to evoke serenity, reflection, and wonder, capturing moments of calm and light amidst the noise of everyday life.

Accessible Artistry

As a full-time artist and retired minister's wife, my life's work has always been rooted in community, generosity, and connection. By offering my complete digital and acrylic collection online through a voluntary donation model ($5 to $10), I invite everyone to freely download, enjoy, and participate in my gallery. This approach allows me to continue pursuing what I love while ensuring that my art remains open and accessible to all, no matter where they are or what their budget may be.




Filoi

Rada Rey



My background in landscape architecture, particularly in the design of public spaces, plays a key role in the way I perceive my surroundings. I often notice various details, structures, constructions, and the overall organization of a place. Most importantly, however, I always consider the relationship between the surrounding landscape and the people within it. Architecture has taught me to immediately ask myself how comfortable I or others feel in a particular place: whether the environment feels oppressive or overbearing, whether it offers a sense of protection, or perhaps gives a feeling of freedom and lightness. From this, it often becomes clear what kind of people live there and what values they hold. After all, human behavior is strongly influenced by the environment in which we find ourselves.
At times when my inner landscape architect is asleep and the artist in me is awake, I perceive the colors around me with particular intensity. Whenever I find myself in a new or interesting place, I try to make quick sketches using just a few primary colors. This helps me experience and understand the unique energy of that particular place more vividly.

In 2019, you began exhibiting regularly and travelling extensively in the Himalayas. How did these two developments influence each other?

2019 was a personal turning point for me. During a difficult period in my life, I left everything behind and, with the last of my savings, decided to fulfill a long-held dream — to see the mountains painted by Nicholas Roerich.
At that time, the most accessible option was a trip to Nepal, where I saw the Himalayas for the first time. It was there that I understood why Nicholas Roerich used such extraordinary colors. Only such vivid shades can truly convey the energy of those powerful places.
Once you have experienced that air and that energy, it becomes very difficult to stop.
I felt deeply energized and inspired by the Himalayas, and this experience encouraged me to immerse myself more deeply in my artistic practice — experimenting, exploring, and searching for my own distinctive visual language.

Can you recall a particular encounter or moment in the Himalayas that changed your understanding of your own

How has your background in landscape architecture shaped the way you observe and depict landscapes? What changes when you approach a place as an artist rather than as a designer?



Rada Rey | Beyond Mera Peak | 2024



artistic practice?

The first moment was, of course, my first encounter with the Himalayas—the first sunrise, the first pink and lilac haze dissolving against the grandeur of the mountain peaks. But this journey was incredibly difficult for me, as these were my first mountains, my first hikes with a backpack, and my first experience of Asia.
It took me two years to return to these places. This time, I was no longer running away from myself, but rather coming back in order to find myself.
The journey to the foot of Everest became a turning point in my artistic practice. At that moment, I understood what I was searching for and what emotions and sensations I wanted to convey through my work: the depth, strength, and solitude of the human experience, intertwined with a feeling of absolute freedom against the backdrop of the majestic massifs of the highest mountains on our planet.

What do your quick sketches made during a journey capture that photographs or paintings completed later cannot?

Quick sketches are a kind of travel diary. Instead of writing things down in words, I tell the story and capture the feeling through lines, color, and composition. My sketches preserve what touched me most — what caught my eye, held my attention, and resonated with me.
A photograph captures a moment, but when I sketch, I experience that moment differently. I slow down, look more closely at the space around me, and decide what to keep on paper and what to leave out. In that process, I am not simply observing a place — I am entering into a dialogue with it.
For this reason, a sketch preserves not only what I saw, but also how I perceived it — not as a single instant, but as an experience unfolding through the process of drawing. When I return to a sketch after some time, I can reconnect with that moment and recover the feelings and impressions I experienced there.

When you develop a painting from your travel experiences, how do you balance what you actually saw with what you remember and felt?

As I work on new paintings inspired by my travels in the Himalayas, I find myself returning to my sketches and photographs, gradually recalling how I felt as I shifted my gaze from the mountains to the pages of my sketchbook, what the air tasted like as I made the first strokes with my pen — and how, in that moment, something magical began to happen.
The gradual transition from the mountain landscape to the sheet of paper, together with the slowing of my breath, would draw me into a kind of trance or meditation. Now, as I revisit my sketches again and again, I return to that same meditative state I experienced in the mountains. At a certain point, my hand seems to move across the canvas on its own, as though the very energy of the Himalayas were guiding me.

You describe mountains as the energy of a place rather than simply a landscape. What choices in colour, form, or composition help you communicate that energy?

One of the main ways I convey the energy of the mountains is through lines — like streams of invisible force moving through space. I try to capture the movement of the mountain wind, the rhythm of the slopes, and the way mountain ranges seem to flow into one another.
I begin with lines and gradually introduce color. Color becomes an extension of my perception of the place: the stronger and more vivid the impression, the richer and bolder the color combinations can become.
What matters to me is not simply depicting the mountains as I saw them, but conveying their scale and my own emotional state in their presence. That is why, in my work, color and form may move away from a literal representation of reality, becoming a language of emotions and inner experience.

What role do your written travel notes play in your artistic process? Do words and images preserve different aspects of the same experience?

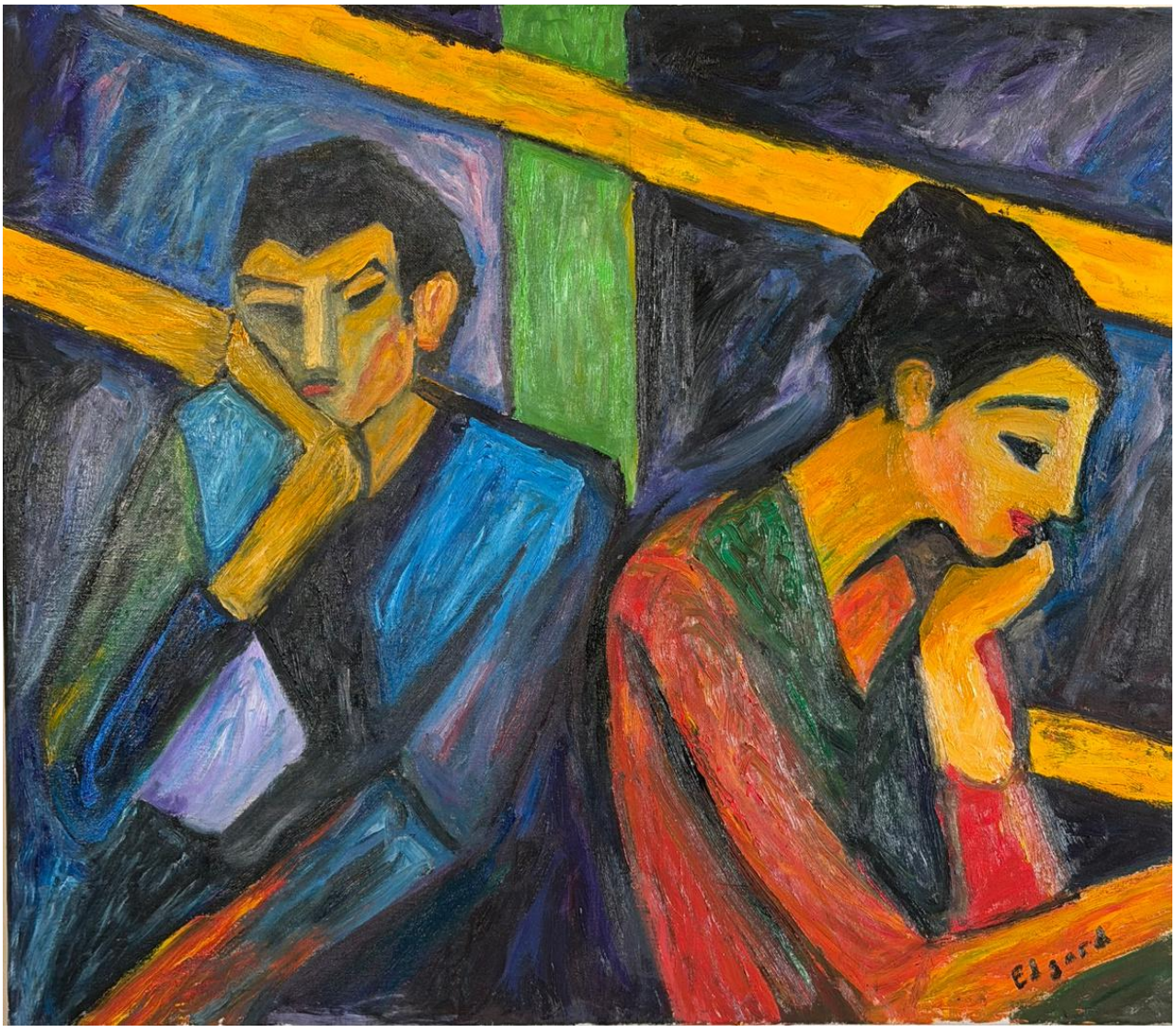
I dream of creating a book that brings together my travel notes, sketches, and paintings, combining travel and artistic practice into a single story.
For me, words and images are two different ways of preserving lived experience. Words can capture thoughts, inner questions, chance encounters, and small details that might otherwise be forgotten. Sketches, on the other hand, preserve visual impressions and the immediacy of direct contact with a place.
Sometimes a few lines and patches of color can convey a feeling far more precisely than a detailed description. At other times, it is words that help reveal what lies behind an image.
I am interested in bringing these two languages together in order to tell a story not so much about the geography of a journey, but about the inner path of the person who experiences it.



Rada Rey | The Path to Mera Peak | 2025

Edgard Loepert is Brazilian-born,Israel-based visual artist whose works explores the human experience through expressive forms,emotional tension, and the relationship between figures and the surroundings.
Essencially self-taught, Loepert developed his artistic practice alongside a professional life outside the art world, maintaining painting as a deeply personal ans enduring pursuit. His artistic journey encompasses different aproaches, including expressive painting and finely detailed pen-and-ink drawing, revealing both sensitivity to hunan experience and a commitement to visual exploration.
Kn this current body of work, Loepert embraces Expressionism,using gesture, form snd composition to convey the complexity of human emotions and the quiet tension of everyday existence.His paintings invite viewers to look beyond the visible scene and discover the psychological and emotional dimensions within it.
Having exhibited in Brasil and israel, Loepert continues to develop an independent artistic language,shaped by observation, experimentation and a sustained engaigment with the human condition.

Project Statement
My art is a journey into the complexity of human existence.Through painting and dwawings, I seek to express what often remains unspoken: the emotion,tensions,silencesand contradictions that shape our inner world.
In my current expressionist work,figures, spaces and forms become a language of their own.I am drawn to a fragile relationship between individuals and their surroundings ,to the distance that can exist between people and to the invisible forces that influence how we experience the world.I do not seek to provide answers, but to create images that invite reflection and leave room for personal interpretation.
My artistic practice is guided by intuiton,observation and the freedom to explore.Each work develops through a dialogue between intention and discovery,allowing the image to reveal its own direction.







Mari Chung | Observer Sandy | 2022

Mari Chung

How did your interest in visual storytelling develop, and what led you to create The Observer?



I've always been a huge fan of cartoons, and I've always believed that visual storytelling is one of the most powerful ways to communicate with people. A character can make you feel something or recognize something about yourself without saying a single word. I've always been fascinated by that ability.

The Observer began as an experiment in exploring my own insecurities. They're deeply personal subjects, and sometimes they can be uncomfortable or difficult to talk about. For me, the series also became a way of observing myself. As I went through different emotions and experiences, I began to discover these girls within me. Rather than approaching those feelings in a heavy or overly serious way, I wanted to make them feel delightful and intriguing. I felt that a cartoony visual language would be the perfect way to do that.

Visually, I was interested in creating a contrast between the girls' cute, rounded shapes and their cooler color palettes. There's something about that combination that feels both inviting and slightly mysterious. You might be drawn to a character because she looks cute, but then something about her expression or the atmosphere makes you pause and wonder: What is she thinking about? What is she going through? What is she trying to tell me? For me, that curiosity is the starting point of storytelling.

I think we all carry insecurities and parts of ourselves that we don't always know how to understand. Through The Observer, I wanted to create characters who could make people curious



Mari Chung | Observer Ruby | 2022

about those feelings and perhaps help them recognize something familiar in themselves. I believe recognition is the first step toward understanding.

Who is "the observer" in this series — the character, the viewer, or yourself? How does this relationship shape the paintings?

I think the observer can be all three, but it begins with me.
As I observe my own emotions, I discover these girls within me. Once I give those feelings a form outside of myself, I can step back and look at them from a different perspective. Instead of simply experiencing an emotion, I can become curious about it and begin to understand it through the character.
Each girl also has her own perspective and emotional world. I want them to feel like individuals rather than just representations of my feelings, with their own stories that extend beyond what we see in the paintings.
Then the viewer becomes part of that relationship. Although the girls emerge from my personal experiences, their meanings don't have to remain exclusively mine. I hope people can observe these characters, connect with their stories, and perhaps discover something about themselves, too. In that way, the paintings become a meeting point between my inner world and the viewer's.

How has working in the Hollywood animation industry influenced your approach to storytelling within a single, still image?

Working in animation has taught me how much a single pose can communicate. A strong performance often starts with one strong key pose that immediately tells the audience something about the character, even before she moves.
I brought that same thinking into The Observer. I wanted each painting to feel like a single frame from a film: it tells us something, but also leaves us curious about what happened before and what might happen next.
For example, in No. 1 Mary, I'm exploring shame. I imagined her yelling, "Don't look at me! Or my watches will watch you back!" She's wearing watches with fake eyes on them, almost as a defense against being seen.
But her body language tells a different story. She's hunched over timidly, hiding her own eyes behind the watches. Her other hand is tucked beneath her knee, and there's even a little teardrop pattern on her skirt that hints at what she might really be feeling.
Is she trying to scare people away? Is she crying? Why is she hiding if she's the one telling everyone not to look at her?
I love creating these little contradictions. A still image doesn't need to tell the entire story. It just needs to capture the right moment to make someone stop, feel something, and want to know more.

How do you develop your characters — from their appearance to the emotional world they inhabit? Does a character usually begin with a feeling, a visual idea, or a story?

For The Observer, the characters usually begin with a feeling rather than a visual idea or a fully formed story.
As I go through different experiences in life, I try not to avoid the emotions that come up. Instead, I face them and listen. I often write in my journal because it's sometimes difficult to understand exactly how I feel, and writing helps me find more precise words for those emotions.
Then I start sketching by hand and let the characters take shape naturally. I don't necessarily know what they'll look like at first.
And then, something funny happens! Once I finish a rough drawing, it's almost as if the character starts yelling at me, telling me what she wants to say. Suddenly, her voice and story begin to emerge from the drawing.
So my process is less about deciding who a character should be and more about listening until I

begin to understand who she is. I follow the feeling, let the character emerge, and discover her story along the way.

The series explores vulnerability alongside the desire to protect oneself. How do you translate the tension between revealing emotions and keeping them hidden into a painting?

Even when I have a very specific emotion in mind while creating a painting, I don't necessarily explain that emotion in its description. Instead, I give each girl a short, quirky, sometimes funny story. I like letting the viewer discover what's happening beneath the surface rather than telling them exactly what to feel.
I think that tension comes through in the characters themselves. They might try to hide, protect themselves, or act as if everything is fine, but their poses and expressions reveal something more vulnerable. It's almost like they're trying to keep their feelings a secret, but they're not very good at hiding them!
I enjoy that little contradiction between what a character seems to be saying and what her body language tells us. The humor makes the story feel lighthearted, while the emotions underneath give it another layer. I want viewers to enjoy the painting as a funny, curious little story, but also have a moment when they recognize something deeper in the character.

Your practice spans both 2D and 3D. How does working across these formats influence the way you think about the figures and spaces in your paintings?

Working across 2D and 3D has definitely influenced how I approach my characters. Even when I'm creating a flat painting, I don't think of the character as just a drawing on a surface. I think about how she occupies space and how her body turns in perspective, even when the painting style is very flat. My animation background naturally makes me pay attention to the volume and physicality of the figure. I'm also interested in how a character's pose can change depending on the viewer's point of view. Small shifts in perspective can change how we interpret her emotions.
Actually, I'm planning to bring the girls from The Observer into the physical world by turning them into sculptures! I'm excited about the idea of letting people experience these characters beyond a flat image, seeing them from different angles and feeling as though they really exist in the space around us. For me, it's another way to bring their little worlds to life.

What would you like viewers to recognize in these vulnerable figures? Have any responses to the series surprised you or changed your understanding of a painting?

I hope viewers can recognize a little bit of themselves in these girls in a fun, playful way. We all have insecurities and vulnerable parts of ourselves that we sometimes try to hide or avoid. I want people to feel that it's okay to acknowledge those feelings rather than push them away.
Although the girls emerge from my own experiences, I don't want to dictate exactly how people should interpret them. I want to leave room for viewers to bring their own experiences and emotions to the paintings.
What's interesting to me is that a character can mean one thing to me but something completely different to someone else. A viewer might connect with a particular expression or pose because of something they've experienced in their own life. I find that possibility really exciting because it means the story can grow beyond what I originally put into the painting. Ultimately, I hope these girls encourage people to observe themselves with a little more curiosity and kindness, just as I did when creating them. Sometimes, seeing a part of ourselves reflected in a character helps us recognize feelings we haven't fully understood before. I think that's the beauty of visual storytelling: the work doesn't end when the artist finishes the painting. It continues through the people who connect with it.



Mari Chung | Observer Emily | 2022





Danko Gospic | Shadow Gang

Danko Gospic

What first drew you to photography, and how did it become a form of personal expression?

I have always paid attention to forms, lines and shadows, and I felt photography was an opportunity to record what I see around me in my own way. Later I started to observe the people in everyday activities so the fascination began and I couldn't tear myself away from the camera.



Danko Gospic | Lonely Migrant

How does your experience as an interior designer influence the way you compose a photograph?

I mentioned lines and forms but a good composition is the result in both cases. If there is no good composition, then something is not done properly. After so many years I am constantly observing the world around me as if through a camera.

When you enter an unfamiliar space, what catches your attention first: the light, the proportions, the textures, or the traces of people's lives?

Lights and shadows always attract me first but then I look for something in the frame that evokes emotions in me, like a story. I love documentary photography for that very reason.

Light plays an important role in both interior design and photography. How does your approach to it change between these two practices?

Light in the interior is one the most important elements and must be carefully planned, so photography is also a hunt for good light. In both fields, light is magic that either wakes up the princess or turns into a frog.

How much of your photographic process involves planning, and how much depends on responding to an unexpected moment?



Danko Gospic | Have Mercy

I try to plan as little as possible and manage in the moment while experience helps me recognize or predict situations I want to see, but an unexpected moment gives a special touch to photography.

How does combining photography with your design career affect the time and freedom you have to experiment?

I had several opportunities to become a professional photographer, but I chose design because that way I can enjoy photography more intensely and without pressure. I try to spend at least a few hours every day wandering and exploring with my camera. My job doesn't interfere with that at all, and I would never give up photography because of my career commitments. It's my therapy.

What would you like to explore in a future photographic project, and what questions would you want that project to raise?

I think a lot and research about the major crises that threaten our planet. I beleive that a large number of people still do not understand the seriousness of these situations and I would like the photographs to bring the truth closer to them.

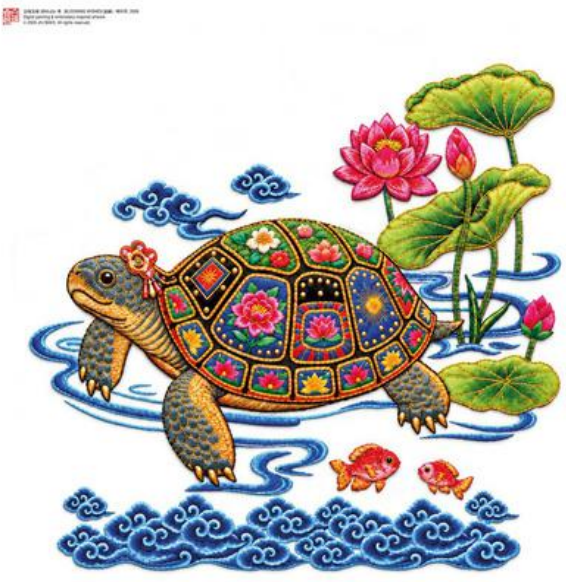
Interview

Jiu Baek



Having spent decades serving as a senior creative director overseeing brand identity and retail spaces, commercial design has always operated within the framework of clear objectives, specific targets, and business value. In contrast, my personal practice as a digital artist serves as an expansion and a liberating escape—allowing me to explore unconstrained inner sensibilities and pure plastic language. While commercial design is a language of structure and logic used to persuade audiences, art possesses the power to immediately touch the subconscious and emotions that lie beyond logic. The rigorous visual craftsmanship I accumulated as a designer strongly supports my artistic expression, while my artistic pursuits, in turn, infuse my commercial work with a profound depth and original inspiration that is otherwise easily lost.

How has your personal artistic practice evolved alongside your career as a creative director, and how has art allowed you to express what commercial design cannot?



Jiu Baek | Blooming Wish Turtle | 2026

Drawing on over 20 years of experience in branding, how do you approach composition, color, and visual storytelling in your work? What design principles do you maintain, and what challenges are you currently exploring?

Over 20 years of experience in branding has gifted me with the ability to intuitively orchestrate visual structures. In my artwork, composition, color, and storytelling are meticulously calculated around the rhythm and emotional flow I want the viewer to experience within the visual space.
My core design principles are “minimal depth”—achieving profound meaning through simplicity—and precise balance. I consistently strip away unnecessary elements and fill that space with high-density sensibility. Currently, my greatest challenge is bridging traditional Korean heritage and motifs—such as Minhwa (folk art)—with digital media as a cutting-edge tool, thereby reinterpreting them into timeless, universal resonance and visual freshness.

What inspired the “Blooming Wish” series, and how did you arrive at the idea of creating modern visual talismans?



Jiu Baek | Blooming Wish Rooster | 2026

The “Blooming Wish” series originated from a desire to create a visual sanctuary where individuals navigating the fast-paced modern society can pause, catch their breath, and find inner peace and positive energy in their daily lives.
Just as our ancestors kept talismans or folk paintings close by to pray for well-being and blessings, I felt that modern people also need a “visual talisman” that fosters inner comfort and holds their aspirations. I intended for the vibrant forms and colors blooming across digital screens and everyday objects to serve as a contemporary spell and comfort, delivering luck and healing energy to the viewers.

What is your personal connection to minhwa (Korean folk art)? Are there specific paintings, traditions, or memories that continue to influence your interpretation of this cultural heritage?

Minhwa is not an authoritarian or museum-bound art form; rather, it is the most deeply human art, raw with the humble aspirations of ordinary people, a fierce attachment to life, and a profound reverence for nature.
Rather than a single specific piece, my subconscious is deeply rooted in memories of the unpretentious color harmonies and humorous vitality I encountered through traditional life experiences in my youth. The inherent plastic qualities of Minhwa—simultaneously vibrant yet unpretentious, carrying earnest prayers yet remaining flexible—resonate perfectly with the warm healing and communicative message I aim to express through digital art.

Your work is described as offering comfort and healing. How do you use color, space, and detail to create an emotional atmosphere?

When composing a space, I prioritize harmonious tones and the aesthetics of negative space rather than stark, stimulating contrasts. The color palette organically combines neutral tones that calm the mind and relieve visual fatigue with subtle, deep off-whites and accent colors symbolizing softly budding vitality.
Rather than being ostentatious, the details are expressed through microscopic shifts in texture or the gentle flow of curves. This allows viewers encountering the work to naturally experience the psychological stability and emotional immersion of stepping into a cozy, welcoming sanctuary.

Your work extends into digital media and fashion products. How does the movement between formats change how you develop images and imagine your relationship with the viewer?

When sophisticated visual art that once resided within digital screens expands into fashion products or offline mediums, the artwork transcends its role as merely something to “observe” and becomes a medium for experiencing life side-by-side.
The process of contemplating how the materiality and texture of an image shift across different formats brings me immense joy. When viewers (and consumers) go beyond gazing at digital art through a screen and instead wear it or hold it close through fashion items and everyday objects, the boundaries between art and life dissolve, fostering a much more intimate and multi-dimensional relationship.

When presenting your work internationally, how do you approach audiences unfamiliar with minhwa? What do you want them to experience before learning about the symbolism?

Even without a concrete understanding of cultural backgrounds or traditional symbolism, I believe that the comfort provided by beautiful harmonies, the rhythm generated by organic forms, and the warm energy radiating throughout the work speak intuitively across borders.
Before diving into complex traditional symbols, I hope audiences first experience the emotional resonance—the visual stability, inner comfort, and a subtle sense of excitement—that washes over them when they stand before the piece. I trust that this positive sensory experience will naturally lead to a genuine curiosity about the Korean cultural roots and stories embedded within the work.



Jiu Baek | Blooming Wish Haechi | 2026

— *Interview*

Ján Špireng



Ján Špireng | Stranger

What personal experience or question first led you to create PROJECT LIFE?

It began with PROTECTION, a photograph I dedicated to my daughter Zoe. It carries a simple, personal promise: “As long as I’m here, you will never walk through life alone.” PROJECT LIFE grew out of that relationship and sense of responsibility.
Over time, the project expanded to include other experiences that are part of life: closeness, loneliness, loss, pain, and the search for oneself. Photography allows me to express things I sometimes cannot or do not want to put into words. Personal experience is my starting point, but I do not want viewers to need to know my life story to find something meaningful in the images.
That is why PROTECTION remains the project’s closing image. It reminds me where the whole cycle began and why there is a reason to keep going, despite the difficult experiences explored in its individual chapters.

How do you decide where one chapter of PROJECT LIFE ends and another begins? What connects the chapters beyond their visual language?

Each chapter represents a different inner state or experience. THE BROKEN focuses on a person’s inner breaking point, PAIN brings that pain into a relationship, and STRANGER asks how well we still recognise ourselves. But the boundaries are not entirely clear-cut. As in life, one experience can lead into another.
The triptych allows me to stay with a subject and explore it through three images. A chapter does not have to offer a solution or a fully resolved story. What matters is that the photographs express something together that a single image could not.
Above all, the chapters are connected by the human being and our relationship with ourselves and others. They grow out of personal experiences while leaving room for the viewer’s own. The project also has two fixed points: ESCAPE as an entry into life, and PROTECTION as a promise of protection and closeness. New chapters can emerge between them, because our experience of life is never complete.

What does the title STRANGER mean to you? Does it refer to another person, an unfamiliar part of ourselves, or something else entirely?

For me, STRANGER is primarily about encountering a stranger within yourself. It is the moment when you look at yourself and realise you are no longer as



Ján Špireng | Stranger

familiar to yourself as you thought. Our experiences, losses, and decisions can change us without us noticing straight away.
The mirror is important in this series. It offers the possibility of recognising ourselves, but also raises the question of who we are actually seeing. I am interested in the tension between a person and their own image: between the self they know and the figure they now find in front of them.
But I do not want to limit the title to a single explanation. Some viewers may see estrangement from themselves; others may think of someone who was once close to them but now feels like a stranger. For me, the series begins with a question of identity, but room for other readings is part of the work.

How do you develop the poses and gestures of your figures, and how do you recognise when they convey the emotion you are looking for?

Before photographing each series, I have thought through the idea, emotion, or experience I want to express. That is my starting point when developing poses and gestures. I try to translate something internal into an image through the body, its position, its movement, and its relationship to the surrounding

space. When looking at a photograph, I return to what first prompted the series and ask whether I can find that feeling in it. That does not mean the same gesture has to mean the same thing to the viewer as it does to me. The possibility of a different reading is central to my work. I bring my own experience into a photograph, but I want to leave room for someone else's experience too.
I do not want to tell viewers what to see or feel. I would rather encourage them to ask, "What do I see in this image?" If a photograph leads them to their own story, its meaning for them may differ from my original intention. That is equally valuable to me.

Your photographs feature anonymous figures. How does withholding someone's identity change the emotional connection between the subject and the viewer?

When a figure's face or identity is not clearly visible, attention shifts to their gesture, posture, and situation. Viewers may think less about who that particular person is. Instead, they may recognise themselves, someone close to them, or a feeling they have experienced.
For me, anonymity creates room for a personal connection with the image. Even without a facial expression, the position of a body or the distance between two people can convey a strong emotion. I am interested in how much we can communicate through these simple means.
This connects to my wish not to dictate what viewers should find in a photograph. The figure comes from my story, but their anonymity allows viewers to enter the image with their own. What remains hidden can, paradoxically, create a sense of closeness.

How did you select the three photographs you submitted from STRANGER? Do you intend them to be viewed in a particular order?

I had planned all three images before photographing them, including their order. They were not assembled afterwards from unrelated photographs. From the beginning, I conceived them as one triptych.
In the first image, a person looks into a mirror. In the second, they see someone they are not, or someone they do not recognise within themselves. In the third, they stand face to face with themselves, but the other figure is wearing a mask. For me, this is the moment when a person still recognises themselves, yet realises they have become someone else.
The sequence I, II, and III is therefore important. It moves from looking at oneself, through estrangement from one's own image, to an encounter with that transformation. This is my starting point, but I do not want it to limit the viewer's interpretation. One person may see concealment in the mask, another protection, or the identity we present to others.
STRANGER II will be exhibited in Vienna. Although it belongs to a wider narrative, it can also stand on its own and raise the question of who we actually see when we look at ourselves.

Have viewers ever interpreted one of your photographs in a way that surprised you? Did their response change your understanding of the image?

It happens quite often, but two responses have stayed with me in particular. The first concerned PROTECTION. One viewer saw danger in it: an adult pursuing a child. Yet I had created it as an image of protection, specifically the protection of my daughter, to whom I had promised, "As long as I'm here, you will never walk through life alone." The same image carried almost opposite meanings for us.
The second response came from a viewer in the United States, who saw resurrection in THE BROKEN. I had conceived the series as the story of a person breaking down, reaching out for a helping hand, and ultimately not receiving that help. Where I was expressing collapse and an unanswered plea, this viewer found resurrection.
Responses like these show me that a photograph can hold a meaning I did not consciously put into it. My original story remains, but it is not the only possible reading. That is precisely why I do not want to tell viewers what they should see. I am interested in what they discover in the image, even when it is the complete opposite of what led me to create it.

What questions remain unresolved for you in PROJECT LIFE, and how might they shape its next chapter?

I do not approach PROJECT LIFE with the feeling that I have to photograph something simply to create another series. The subjects come naturally. When I carry a feeling or experience that I want to express visually, I begin looking for a way to give it form. That is how a new chapter emerges.
I do not have a predetermined list of questions to work through, or a fixed idea of where the project must lead. What feels important to photograph next may come from something I am experiencing now, or from a feeling I am only gradually beginning to understand.
Life itself is an endless source of inspiration for me. As long as it brings new experiences, encounters, and changes, PROJECT LIFE remains open too. The next series will emerge when I have something I want to express through photography.



Steverlynck Fanny

Originally from Gordes, a small village in the Luberon, I have been immersed in the world of photography since my earliest childhood. I am a passionate person who loves to contemplate my surroundings. I enjoy bringing to light things that often go unnoticed - whether in the people I photograph or within a particular atmosphere. I am a highly sensitive person, and for me, photography is a way to escape from reality. Photography has the power to convey a wide range of emotions; indeed, that is the true strength of a photographer - no sound is needed, only the image itself. Much like a painter, I observe, analyze the light, craft a scene, and translate all those emotions—not with a paintbrush, but with my own eye.



Steverlynck Fanny | Poetry



Steverlynck Fanny | Workshop

Meijke de Jong



In the weekends I work a part-time job at HEMA in the restaurant section. When we go up to the cafeteria to take our break, we pass through some pretty old and weathered hallways. In the ceiling there are holes where lights used to hang, which look like little faces with crooked smiles. Despite me having worked there for four years already, I only noticed them last summer while randomly looking up. When I showed the ceiling smileys to a colleague of mine who has worked here for over 15 years, she pointed out a crack in the concrete floor that looks like a cartoonish young kid's face. She noticed it years before I even started working there and almost every time she goes down the stairs she still looks at it, and now I do too. I love that people share these moments they notice themselves after I show them my work or inspiration! Honestly, the HEMA has been a source of inspiration a few times now. Last year, while doing the dishes, I came across a cup that had previously contained a cappuccino. The leftover foam and coffee had formed a very literal smiley face with crooked eyes

You describe being drawn to inconspicuous, "funny" images that briefly catch your attention. Could you share a recent example and explain what made you want to paint it?



Meijke de Jong | Going Anywhere | 2026



Meijke de Jong | Just Look Up | 2026

at the bottom of the cup. By chance, a colleague had her phone with her and was able to take a photo of the cup. Ultimately, this became the 'transient smile' series.

You mention that painting helps you get a grip on your sense of time. How does your experience of time change while you are working on a painting?

Time is of course relative, and we have tried to make sense of it using measurable things like days and months. And that is the main thing I struggle with. The amount of time that has passed, especially when it comes to days or months, does not always make sense to me; often it feels like the days and months pass faster than they should. The paintings make moments in time tangible and so the process of making the paintings becomes a timekeeping tool for me. Rather than using the numbers of the days, weeks or months to keep track, I look at how long I've been working on a piece and how I need to plan ahead. It also makes me feel more grounded and present. Like I've noticed lately that I've been more restless after not having been able to paint for a while due to moving into a new studio. It feels like the days are going by too fast for the things that I want to do.

Your paintings develop over weeks or months. What happens to the original fleeting moment as you spend so much time recreating it?

Well, I wouldn't say I'm recreating it, but rather capturing how I look at the moments and images. I think it's more fitting to say that they are interpretations. Mainly the original moment becomes something to share with others. Like I mentioned earlier, when I share images of the moments my paintings are based on or the paintings themselves, it's not uncommon for people to share something similar with me. It's such a sincerely human reaction that I adore. Especially with art but in general as well, people are often trying to find something to relate to in order to understand it better. During the graduation exhibition I've several people come up to me with stories and images to share with me. An artist who had a leak in his ceiling that took the shape of a sheep. Someone who had tagged along with a friend showed me a picture of a massive field with one bright red poppy in it. One of my philosophy teachers told me how the smell of 'going anywhere' reminded her of working in the garden the previous week with her fiancé. All these people are becoming more aware of these little moments in their own lives and are sharing it with others, which is one of the main things I'd hoped my paintings would do. At the same time, the moments also become personal keepsakes. It's now a personal story and journey that I keep going back to, which is also why some paintings become series. Even if the story behind it doesn't always make sense to other people, it's important that it does to me.

You work with many transparent layers of handmade paint. How do you make your paints, and what does this approach allow you to achieve visually?

Initially I started using pigments after visiting a tiny art story next to the Galleria dell'Accademia in Florence. Inside they had a rack of pigments they mixed themselves, one of which was natural green earth. I decided to give it a try and fell in love with the process of handmaking paint. Most of the pigments I currently use are from Verfmolen de Kat, one of the five windmills on the Zaanse Schans. Since last year, I have started experimenting with making my own pigments or using natural



Meijke de Jong | Little World (Mikros Kosmos) | 2026

materials as well, such as with finely ground coffee. Using a pallet knife and paint muller I mix the pigment with of (bleached) linseed oil to create oil paint. I vary the amount of linseed oil and painters medium based on how transparent I want the paint to be. This process has given me a better understanding of oil paint, whilst also giving me more control over its transparency and colour. It also, once again, slows down the process of making a painting for me physically. Some days I will spend purely mixing paints without putting a single drop of paint on a canvas.

What first inspired you to bring scent into your paintings, and how do you choose a scent for a particular work?



Meijke de Jong | Afternoon Window | 2026



Meijke de Jong | Through The Blinds | 2025

It started with an irritation at the Uffizi Museum in Florence. There are many great paintings inside this museum, such as Primavera by Botticelli. Most people were stood at a 10 meter distance trying to take a picture of the whole painting. However the crowd seemed quite irritated, and as it turned out there was an elderly couple standing only a few centimetres away from the painting. There are more than 500 unique plants depicted in this painting, which the couple was actively discussing. But that didn't matter to the crowd, they just wanted their picture. And I thought it was such a shame how for them a picture had become the entire experience of the painting, rather than being physically present. I wanted to deter that as much as possible with my own paintings without having to put up a sign literally saying "don't be afraid to



Meijke de Jong | Walk(A)Way | 2025

get close and move around". The use of smell in art is not uncommon, however when it comes to paintings specifically it is. The sense of smell is also the only one that is directly processed in the brain without filtering; you react to it before you realise it. In the beginning I mixed the fragrance oils with the oil paint directly. However as the painting began to dry and cure, the smell completely vanished. A fellow student actually came up with the idea to pin cotton balls behind the frame. The cotton balls hold on the smell incredibly well, and if wanted can be 'refreshed' easily. As for choosing smells, I use the smells that I personally link with the moment. The first painting I worked with smell with was 'the warmth that remained', where the smells mirrored my associations with the image of a motherly figure in a brown-orange palette. Other times it's more literal, like the 'little world (mikros kosmos)' series, which uses cis-3-hexanol: the smell of cut grass.

Your thesis explored smell as a way to encourage a more embodied encounter with painting in white cube galleries. What did your research reveal about how people behave in these spaces?

The main culprit for how people behave in gallery spaces is ocularcentrism: out of all the senses, everything in our contemporary western society is centred around sight, such as the preferred way of gaining knowledge. The white cube aesthetic is a direct result of this. No distractions, such as colour outside of the painting, are allowed. Only the most 'neutral' possible viewing experience. The walls being white gives of the idea of value and worth, that the item on the wall should not be contaminated and that we should keep our distance from it. It has become a subconscious barrier. And since the rise of the white cube aesthetic in the early twentieth century, this kind of experience has become the norm.

Have you observed viewers slowing down or moving closer to your paintings because of their scent? Was there a response that surprised you or changed your thinking?

Absolutely. The first time I got to try it out in an actual white cube gallery space was at Concordia, Enschede in April of 2025. Three out of the six paintings had smell and additionally there was a small table with the pure fragrance oils at the entrance. After viewers had been informed of the smells during the opening speech, many people went straight to the paintings and almost touched the paintings trying to smell it. They also kept moving between the paintings rather than only looking at them once. This movement wasn't only restricted to my paintings, as this was a duo exhibition with another student (Caroline Schot) who had more sculptural work. Some of her work also used earth and people got close to the ground to smell it as well. The same kind of movement happened during the graduation exhibition. Although that was not in a purely white space, several of the walls had a deep blue-green colour as to help break the subconscious barrier. One thing what surprised me was something that happened the week of the final exams. The paintings had been on the wall for a while and the smells had slowly filled the room. A few students came in and asked if they could stay or even meditate for a little right before they had their own exam.

Lisa DeLoria Weinblatt received her M.F.A. at the School of Visual Arts, NYC, B.A., Magna Cum Laude, Art Department Honors, at Queens College/CUNY. She has been awarded six national Artist-In-Residence Scholarships and recently received a New York City Artist Corp Grant. She is also the recipient of NYC Public Arts Grants from the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council and the National Endowment for the Humanities with Circuit Productions.

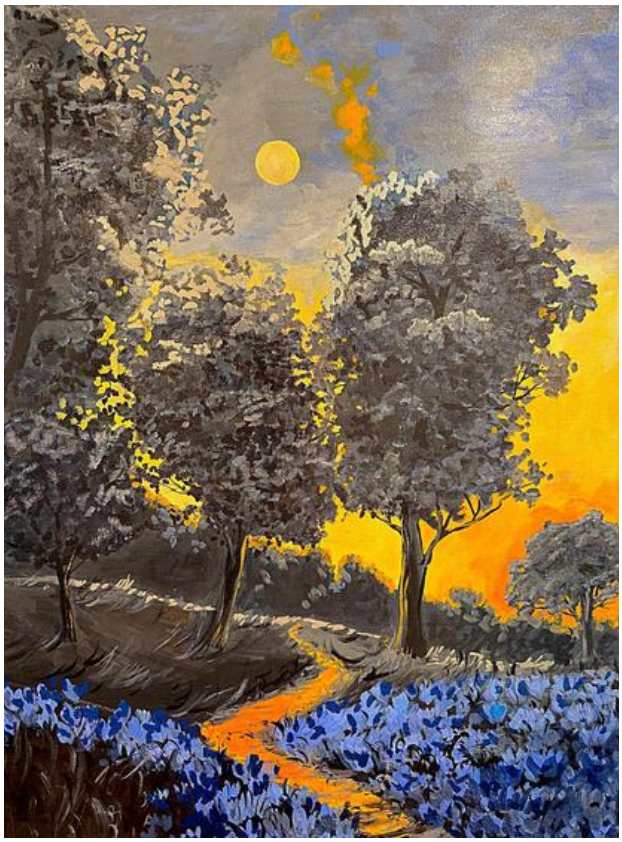
Project Statement
I am a figurative painter whose imagery is informed through direct observation, memory and personal experience. SCHOOL LUNCH is a visual essay of contemporary student life, created by observational drawing, on-site, in real educational settings. The paintings in this series present images concerning the nature of human relationships. Current social cultural issues and their emotional attitudes are explored in the shared experience of school lunch.
SCHOOL LUNCH is generated from drawing in educational settings, lunchrooms and campuses of High Schools and Colleges. Each individual in my paintings, drawn in the moment, is an actual person. The drawings are the genesis of my paintings. The drawings are fast ten/ fifteen-minute graphite/pastel pencil likenesses. My compositions reflect the atmosphere and tone of the environment. My process involves the use of my student portrait drawings in the figures.
I have exhibited in many college galleries. As part of some of my college exhibitions, I'm invited on campus as a 'Resident /Visiting Artist.' This opportunity allows access to a wide scope of activities to record.
The challenges inherent in our diverse society surround youth and students of all ages today. My goal is to create humanistic awareness in a framework that is universally recognized.
SCHOOL LUNCH underlines perceptions which affirm cultural identity, brings together ideas espousing contemporary social, gender and political concerns while encouraging a belief in the quality of human spirit.







David ErMe



You have built a career in the restaurant industry while also developing your painting practice. What first drew you to painting, and when did it become an important part of your life?

Art and painting have always interested me. When restaurants closed during the COVID-19 pandemic, I felt, for the first time, how much I missed creating. In a restaurant, you create something every day: an atmosphere, impressions, experiences for your guests. When that disappeared, I wanted to find another outlet for that creative energy.



That journey led me to Natalia Pekarskaya's studio. Since then, painting has become more than a hobby—it is a regular practice and a different way of thinking: seeing composition, establishing balance, and shaping an impression. It is like a parallel path in my career—a different language, but the same need to create. Natalia's support, along with that of my family and loved ones, has been and continues to be immensely important to me, and I am deeply grateful to them.

You describe your approach as "eclectic romanticism." What does this term mean to you, and how does it influence the decisions you make while working on a painting?

For me, eclectic romanticism is a way of expressing powerful feelings by freely combining motifs from different cultures and eras. Romanticism brings emotional depth and drama, while eclecticism gives me the freedom to move beyond a single style. I draw on expressive techniques from anywhere —from classical and biblical imagery to poetry and music. In practice, this becomes a deliberate strategy: I construct the subject as an expressive image in which different elements reinforce one another. The colors are often rich, almost theatrical—they sustain the tension and emotion. Details such as birds, trees, or direct quotations are not simply decorative; they are meaningful accents and symbols. They act as anchors and help tell the story. This gives the painting strength, emotional depth, and a clear internal logic.

In your landscapes, richly colored trees often appear alongside luminous skies. How do you choose your palette, and what role does color play in creating an atmosphere?



I choose my palette intuitively. The first layer is almost a ritual: subjects begin to emerge from patches of color and brushstrokes, and the painting seems to guide me forward. At the same time, my use of color also involves deliberate symbolism. Gold, for example, is not simply about sunlight: in Christian icon painting, it represents grace, eternity, and the presence of the divine. Blue evokes the heavenly realm and spirituality.
The richly colored trees and luminous skies draw, to a large extent, on images of biblical gardens: Eden, the Garden of Gethsemane, and the garden of Joseph of Arimathea. Color thus becomes more than a painterly technique—it is a way of creating a timeless atmosphere, a space that holds both mystery and light. The mood I seek emerges from this combination of intuition and symbolic language.

Several of your works feature paths, rivers, and distant buildings. Do you imagine a story or destination that lies beyond the painting?

It is important to me that viewers are not given a ready-made meaning, but that the painting encourages reflection. One person might see a simple scene in nature, another a story about life's journey. Someone might see the rising or setting sun, while someone else sees the moon in the depths of night. A moonlit garden or a garden covered in dew evokes a moment of stillness, as though nature were holding its breath before a miracle. In this way, the painting becomes a space with many layers of meaning.

Small human or animal figures can be seen in some of your landscapes. How does their presence change our perception of the scene?

Small figures in a landscape are subtle accents that establish scale and invite a particular way of seeing the scene. They encourage a dialogue with the painting: viewers notice for themselves how their sense of space changes and how the silence acquires personal meaning. A deer in a blue forest, for example, is a symbol of the soul—its calm embodies stillness and depth. This unhurried quality echoes Japanese aesthetics, where the moment itself matters more than the action. The figures are in no hurry; their postures are calm. From this pause emerges a sense of anticipation, reflection, and contemplation.

You have said that having no formal art education gives you a sense of freedom. What challenges have you encountered while learning to paint this way?

One of the challenges I face without an academic foundation is working with proportions—for example, when I need to paint a convincing human figure. This is a technical barrier that I have to work around through experimentation and by finding my own approaches. My mentor and teacher, Natalia Pekarskaya, whom I mentioned earlier, helps me with this. But there is another side to this situation—the very freedom that has become part of my artistic language. The absence of rigid constraints allows me to move beyond a conventional palette: a forest can be blue or pink, and the figures can be fantastical, a little strange. My eclectic romanticism emerges precisely from this shift in the familiar: ordinary things appear in an unexpected light, lose their everyday predictability, and become something more. For me, this freedom is not about disregarding technique, but about being able to place imagery and emotion first.

Has your experience in the restaurant industry influenced the way you think about atmosphere, color, and the impressions you create for other people?

In a restaurant, you create more than food and interiors—you shape a guest's emotional journey, from their first step inside to their last. You guide their impressions through details: how the music sounds, how the fabric falls, how light plays across glass. This taught me to see atmosphere as a system in which everything contributes to the overall feeling. Now, when I work on canvas, I shape a similar emotional experience. Color becomes a guide: it can lead gently and soothe, or create a sudden surprise. Composition establishes the rhythm: in some places, viewers should pause; in others, their gaze should move quickly across the painting before returning. My experience in the restaurant industry taught me to pay attention to details, which I give a special role in my paintings.



Constanze Kratzsch

A German artist is Constanze Kratzsch. She was born in 1984 and spent her childhood on the island of Rügen in East Germany. She investigates the notion of transience in her art. The craft of visual poetry. Constanze Kratzsch is based in Berlin, both living and working there. The Berlin Wall Foundation in Germany has collected her work, 'Beton Spiegel'.She has previously exhibited her work at several venues, including Palazzo Ca' Zanardi in Venice, Italy; the OnArt Gallery in Florence, Italy; the CICA Museum in South Korea; and the Cello Factory Gallery in London, UK, operated by the well-known London Group Avantgarde. In 2023, her artworks were showcased in the group exhibition Ping Pong Basel at the Projektraum-m54 in both Basel (Switzerland) and Miami (USA), organized and managed by Sue Iron.

Project Statement
She investigates the notion of transience in her art. The craft of visual poetry.

Constanze Kratzsch | Happiness and Unhappiness





Constanze Kratzsch | Happiness and Unhappiness

Na Young Lee



Na Young Lee | Enchanted Orange Souls

Was there a particular experience that first made you question the relationship between what we can see and what we accept as real?

I grew up in an environment strongly influenced by science. My father studied electronic engineering, founded a technology company, and developed several patents. Through his influence, I became interested in science from an early age, believing that almost everything in the world could eventually be explained through logic and evidence.
However, certain personal experiences began to challenge that certainty.
In my early twenties, I was hospitalised with a severe illness and a high fever. During a brief moment of altered consciousness, I experienced what felt like my entire life unfolding before me in extraordinary detail. Memories, conversations, and forgotten moments appeared with remarkable clarity. What felt like an extended experience may have lasted only seconds in reality.
That experience left me questioning the relationship between consciousness, memory, and our perception of time. Other experiences involving dreams and intuition have continued to deepen my curiosity.
I began to recognise how naturally we trust what we can see and understand, often accepting it as the whole of reality. Yet my experiences have led me to consider the possibility that existence extends beyond the limits of human perception.
I don't see this as a rejection of science. Rather, I am interested in the questions that remain open, even when we approach the world through logic and evidence. Through painting, I hope to create a space where viewers can question what they accept as real and consider what might lie beyond what is immediately visible.



Na Young Lee | Between The Seen And The Unseen | 2026

Your statement describes a tension between scientific rationality and phenomena that resist explanation. What does painting allow you to explore within that tension that analytical thinking alone cannot?

Scientific thinking has taught me to look for explanations, but painting allows me to remain within a question without needing to resolve it. Rather than trying to define the unknown, I can explore it through a process that is itself unpredictable.

One of the things I find most fascinating about painting is the way something unexpected can emerge from a decision that initially seems quite ordinary. I might introduce a colour, change the direction of a brushstroke, or remove part of the surface, and suddenly encounter something I could never have imagined in advance.
I am particularly interested in the moment when an act of removal becomes an act of discovery. Sometimes, when I wipe away a layer of paint, an earlier colour or form reappears. It was always there, but I had lost sight of it. Something can remain present even when it is no longer visible to us.
I am also drawn to what surrounds a subject rather than the subject itself. Instead of depicting an object directly, I sometimes imagine its shadow or the space around it as the central presence. This shift in attention allows me to reconsider the relationship between what is immediately visible and what might otherwise be overlooked.
Chance plays an important role in this process, but it is always accompanied by deliberate choices. I decide which unexpected forms to preserve, which to develop, and which to let disappear. The painting develops through an ongoing exchange between intention and accident.
Analytical thinking often moves towards a conclusion. Painting allows me to investigate a question through direct experience, where the outcome is not entirely determined in advance. I am interested in what becomes possible when thought and material respond to one another.

How did your MA at Chelsea College of Arts influence your practice, particularly your approach to uncertainty and the limits of knowledge?

My time at University of the Arts London, Chelsea College of Art was important to me, although I don't think I fully understood its influence while I was studying there. Some of the most meaningful questions I encountered during my MA only began to make sense after I graduated.
I remember presenting a project that began with



Na Young Lee | 5Th Element



Na Young Lee | At The Hour Of The Shimmering Sunset | 2026

Schrödinger's cat. Before I could even move beyond the first slide, one of my tutors asked me, "Why?" Why was I introducing this concept, and what did it really have to do with my work?
I was completely caught off guard. I had been fascinated by the theory, but I had never properly questioned why it mattered to me personally. At the time, I couldn't find an answer, and I eventually moved on to a different subject.
Looking back, I realise that the question was more important than I understood. My interest was never simply in scientific theories themselves, but in the questions they raised about what we can know, perceive, or confidently define.
Chelsea also exposed me to a wide range of perspectives through long group critiques with artists from different cultural backgrounds. My individual tutorials were particularly valuable, especially when tutors challenged me to be more selective and question the necessity of my decisions. I often wanted to explore too many ideas at once, and their direct criticism helped me recognise the importance of making clearer choices.
During my MA, and even shortly after graduating, I often found it difficult to articulate the full scope of what I wanted to investigate. Since then, my understanding has continued to develop through painting, exhibitions, conversations with other artists and viewers, and opportunities to reflect on my work in writing.
I now have a clearer sense of the direction I want to pursue, while recognising that an artistic practice is continually evolving. I have become more comfortable allowing questions to develop over time rather than seeking immediate answers.
In that sense, Chelsea did not give me a definitive

understanding of my practice. It gave me questions that continue to shape it.

When you begin a painting, how does an abstract question about the unseen become a visual starting point? Do you begin with an image, a particular sensation, or an encounter with the materials?

My philosophical interests provide an underlying direction, but I approach the canvas through colour, material, and visual intuition rather than beginning with a predetermined image.
I usually start by choosing at least two colours and blending the boundaries between them to create a gradual transition. Even when I use the same colours and consistency of paint, the resulting depth and atmosphere can be unexpectedly different. These subtle variations often suggest the beginnings of a composition.
As I begin to develop forms, I draw on imagined spaces and fragments of imagery rather than direct visual references. I might think of a world beneath the surface of water, a scene from a dream, or ambiguous organic structures that could resemble branches, veins, or parts of the human body without becoming any one of them.
I am particularly drawn to forms that seem almost to touch or connect. I am interested in the invisible relationships between things — subtle interactions, a kind of chemistry, or forces that we cannot directly see but might somehow sense. Through painting, I explore how these relationships might be suggested visually without becoming literal representations.
I sometimes develop a form by imagining its shadow rather than the object itself. This allows me to reverse the usual relationship between subject and background, giving importance to something that might otherwise remain secondary.
Towards the end of a painting, I often search for places where light might be hidden within the imagined space. Using a round brush, I introduce small highlights, almost as though I am uncovering light that was already there but had not yet become visible. A subtle point of light can transform the relationship between forms and alter the atmosphere of the entire space.
Rather than translating a philosophical idea directly into an image, I allow meaning to take shape through the interaction between intention, imagination, and the material itself. The painting develops through this exchange, often revealing possibilities beyond the image I initially had in mind.

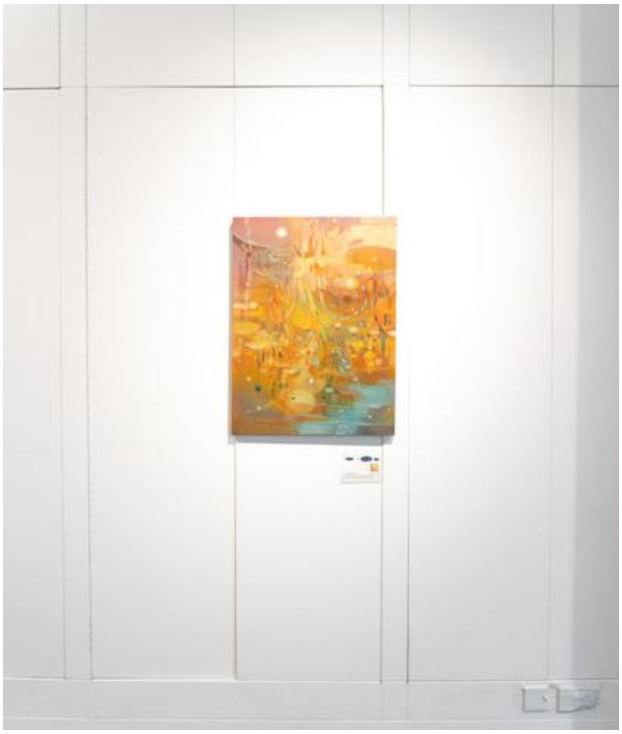
What qualities of oil paint are essential to your practice, especially when creating forms that seem to emerge, recede, and change over time?



Na Young Lee | 5Th Element

What fascinates me about oil painting is that a painting never feels entirely fixed in time.
Oil paint dries slowly, which allows me to work wet-on-wet, introducing colours into a surface that is still changing. Sometimes pigments blend in ways I could never have anticipated, producing subtle colours that seem to exist somewhere between the ones I originally chose. Not every accident is beautiful. Colours can become muddy or lose their clarity, but I enjoy searching within that unpredictability for something I could not have created deliberately.
I also work with thin layers of paint, building up depth and then occasionally wiping sections away with a cloth. What I love is that the paint rarely disappears completely. A faint veil of colour remains, while fragments of earlier layers begin to show through. The surface holds traces of its own history. Something can be covered, altered, or almost erased without entirely ceasing to exist.
There is also something about the way oil paintings settle with time that I find beautiful. I sometimes think of it as a kind of maturation, almost like wine. As the paint dries, the colours and surface seem to find a different balance. I love the richness of oil paint, its subtle sheen and depth, and the way a finished surface can feel almost alive.
But beyond these physical qualities, I am interested in another kind of change: the one that happens through looking.
I experience this with my own paintings. A form that once seemed central may become less important the longer I look, while something I barely noticed begins to emerge. Sometimes I return to a painting on another day and see an entirely different relationship between its forms and colours. Nothing has necessarily changed on the canvas, yet my experience of it has.
I hope my paintings offer viewers that same possibility. I don't want everything to reveal itself at once. I want there to be something left to discover, even after someone has spent time with a work.

How do you respond when a painting develops in an unexpected direction? What helps you decide whether to follow that change or return to your



Na Young Lee | At The Hour Of The Shimmering Sunset | 2026

original intentions?

Some of my favourite moments in painting happen when something beautiful appears almost effortlessly. It might be a subtle gradient that forms as two colours blend, or a faint trace that becomes visible after I wipe away a layer of paint. I am especially drawn to moments when the result feels natural and slightly mysterious, as though it has emerged without being forced.
When that happens, I try not to interfere too much. Sometimes all a faint area needs is a small highlight or a subtle adjustment. If an unexpected form begins to resemble something I find interesting, I might develop the surrounding areas in response to it, allowing the composition to grow from that discovery rather than following what I originally imagined.
On the other hand, I often become dissatisfied with areas where I have worked too hard. When I concentrate excessively on small details, the painting can begin to feel cramped or overly controlled. Even if I have spent a long time developing a particular section, I am willing to paint over it.
Sometimes I wipe those areas back, partly because I am curious about what might be revealed underneath. Something I had covered or forgotten might turn out to be more interesting than what I was trying to create. I repeat this process until I find a balance that feels right.
Knowing when to stop is perhaps one of the most difficult parts of painting. I usually reach a point where the overall composition feels balanced and I no longer want to interfere with it. But that feeling is not always easy to trust. Ultimately, I try to recognise when I have given the painting everything I can, and when the atmosphere and ideas I wanted to convey have found their place within it.
I don't believe that adding more necessarily makes a painting better. Sometimes the most important decision is simply to leave it alone.

Has a viewer's interpretation ever drawn your attention to something in a painting that you had not consciously recognised? How did that encounter affect your understanding of the work?

Over time, I have noticed an interesting pattern in the way people respond to my paintings.
Their first reaction is usually intuitive. They talk about the atmosphere, the emotions, or the movement they sense before trying to identify anything specific. I place a great deal of importance on this first impression. I want a painting to communicate something within those first few moments, even before the viewer knows exactly what they are looking at.
Then, as they spend more time with the work, they begin to recognise forms and create their own stories. What I might have imagined as a tree branch could become, in someone else's eyes, a table prepared for a wedding feast in a fairy tale. I find these interpretations delightful because they reveal possibilities I had never considered.
As the conversation develops, some viewers begin to focus on the painting itself — the brushstrokes, the layers, and how particular effects were achieved. I enjoy observing these different stages of attention, from an immediate emotional response to storytelling and, eventually, a closer examination of the painting's physical construction.
I remember an exhibition where a curator later shared a recording of viewers discussing my paintings for around thirty minutes. They were identifying different forms, debating how things might be connected, and suggesting interpretations I had never imagined, including the idea that certain elements represented the passage of history.
What made me happiest was realising that my paintings could hold people's attention and inspire such a long conversation without me having to explain anything. I felt genuinely proud that they were so engaged with the work. It was almost as though I had placed a question mark in front of them, and they had begun proposing their own answers. I loved listening to that exchange.
That experience reinforced something I value deeply about painting. I don't necessarily want viewers to arrive at the interpretation I had in mind. I would rather give them something that sparks their own imagination, curiosity, or even disagreement.
There is something wonderful about watching a painting take on a life of its own through the conversations it creates.

Irina Rezwan



Drawing has been part of my life for as long as I can remember, maybe even before I learned to write. I think I started by scribbling on the walls at home with crayons. My mother always encouraged me to keep drawing, just not on the walls of the house. Painting on objects in a way is like marking my territory with my drawings. I like the objects around me to be customized and fun.

As a Bangladeshi artist based in Bangkok, how do your cultural roots and your current surroundings influence your work?

I grew up in a home where Bangladeshi culture and history were always discussed in depth. My parents listened to a lot of Bengali music, which taught me the beauty of self-expression. At the same time, much of the culture I grew up in placed a strong emphasis on shame and on meeting society's expectations. I brought both sides with me to Bangkok. The good was the vibrant colours and the emotional depth. The bad was a constant guilt and the feeling that I had to censor myself to be a "good girl."
Bangkok gave me a safe space to just... be, without worrying about how I'm perceived or whether I'm being disobedient. That safe space is where my creativity thrives most.

You describe seeing colours and patterns in memories, travels and emotions. Could you share an example of how one of these experiences became an artwork?

Certain songs take me straight back to childhood. They make me feel weightless, the way you feel floating in water. That feeling inspired two works from my series where does the mind go?: for a quick dip and for a deep dive. For me, that kind of calm will always be

How did your artistic practice begin, and what drew you to exploring painting, murals and everyday objects?





blue.

Your choice of materials seems closely connected to your mood. How do you recognise whether a feeling needs to become a painting, a clay figure or something else?

I write my feelings down whenever I can, in the notes app on my phone, in my journal or on loose sheets of paper. As I write, my mind starts to wander and images form in my head. Some of them make it onto a canvas, some stay as notes, and some are simply... forgotten.

What first prompted you to begin Shame Less, and how did you choose the title for the series?

It started with a conversation with a friend. We realised that no matter how far we get from our conservative upbringing, we still feel a little guilty about how we dress or how we choose to live. Every time we enjoy the freedom we worked so hard for, there's a line of obedience we feel we have to keep. In my paintings, I want to reject the shame I'm expected to feel. That's where the title comes from.

You describe freedom from shame as a space you can visit but cannot yet stay in for long. How does this movement between freedom and guilt shape the series?

It's a constant push and pull, and the series follows that. So far, I've focused on the phase where I feel completely free. The other phases are still unfolding: the tension, the clash with guilt, the slow process of unlearning. In a way, the series is moving at the same pace I am.

What would you like viewers to feel or question about their own lives when they encounter Shame Less?

I want women who feel what I feel to look at these paintings and recognise themselves. To feel seen, to feel heard, and maybe to feel a little less afraid of living outside the lines they were given.

Anastasia Shchetsinskaya

This series of watercolors is an attempt to hold on to a moment and preserve the freshness of a first impression. It focuses on simple yet evocative motifs from the artist's native region: wildflowers, scattered apples, the crunch of a watermelon slice. These images are less about subject matter than about an emotional response—a desire to notice beauty in everyday life.
The series is distinguished by its swift execution: each work is created in a short time, without lengthy preparation or revisions. This preserves the immediacy of the gesture and the transparency of watercolor, while imperfections become part of its expressive quality. The series suggests that creating art does not necessarily require a great deal of time: an attentive eye and a willingness to capture what one sees can be enough.



Anastasia Shchetsinskaya | Wildflowers | 2025



Anastasia Shchetsinskaya | July | 2025

Interview

Jae Park



How did studying architecture at SCI-Arc shape your artistic practice, particularly the way you approach structure, materials, and construction?

Before attending SCI-Arc, I studied architecture and gained professional experience in South Korea. At that time, I was primarily focused on solving architectural problems within given constraints and finding ways to realize my designs.
At SCI-Arc, I explored a wide range of fabrication techniques, including sculpture, plaster casting, woodworking, and printmaking, applying them to physical models and drawings. What interested me was how even carefully planned processes could produce slightly different results. Even when 3D printing the same digital model multiple times, the outcomes were not always identical.
These experiences led me to think more about the relationship between design and fabrication. New questions often emerged through making something and observing the results. In Exactly Not the Same, I explored this relationship by repeatedly applying the same rules and observing the differences that appeared through the process.



Jae Park | Exactly Not The Same | 2026

You work across architecture, photography, and sculpture. What connects these disciplines for you, and how do ideas move between them?

I see photography, architecture, and sculpture as different ways of developing an idea rather than as separate practices. I might explore an architectural idea through photography or develop a sculptural concept into an architectural space.
For example, when working on an architectural project, I sometimes experiment with printmaking techniques to reinterpret drawings or create photographic composites that place a building I am designing in an entirely different setting. Most of these experiments never make it into the final presentation, but they allow me to reconsider familiar ideas from different perspectives and occasionally lead to unexpected directions.
I take a similar approach when working with photography or sculpture. Exploring an idea through different materials and techniques often produces unexpected results, sometimes changing the original idea itself. I prefer to keep the choice of medium open and let the work develop through experimentation.

What first prompted the question behind Exactly Not the Same: does repetition necessarily produce sameness?

Repetition is common in architecture. For example, identical columns arranged at regular intervals can create a sense of order and unity within a space.
I began to wonder whether this sense of order required every individual element to be exactly the same. Even when elements vary slightly, the overall rhythm can remain intact. In some cases, a shared order can make those individual



Jae Park | Exactly Not The Same | 2026

differences even more apparent.
Exactly Not the Same grew from this question. I wanted to explore how a consistent system of repetition could maintain an overall sense of unity while allowing individual differences to emerge.

Rather than designing each form individually, you establish a shared system. Could you explain how this system works and which rules guide the resulting forms?

The basic method is simple: drawing lines repeatedly using the same procedure.
I established a set of rules and applied them consistently, allowing countless lines to accumulate and overlap.
Depending on how the lines intersected and overlapped, variations in density and form began to appear.
Each drawing developed its own visual characteristics while following the same underlying process. I did not predetermine the individual differences. I observed how they emerged through the repeated application of the rules.

Why did you choose the line as the basic unit of the project? What can a line express that a surface or a solid volume cannot?

I am interested in how a line can contribute to a larger form while retaining its identity as an individual element.
A single line is simple, but countless lines together can create the impression of a surface or a solid mass. This perception changes with viewing distance. From afar, the drawings appear as faint, unified forms. As you move closer, those forms gradually dissolve into countless individual lines.
I chose the line because it allows the overall form and its individual components to remain visible within the same work.

How did you choose the materials for the four laser-etched works, and how do their surfaces affect the visibility and character of the lines?

I began by drawing and overlapping lines repeatedly in a digital environment. However, with conventional printing, overlapping lines tend to merge into a single image. I wanted the repeated act of drawing to leave physical traces on the surface.
This led me to laser etching. With the method I used, the laser followed the overlapping paths, passing over the same areas multiple times and gradually building up marks on the paper. I chose textured black paper because a single laser pass leaves an extremely faint mark, almost invisible to the eye. As the lines overlap through repeated passes, the marks gradually become deeper and more visible, allowing the form to emerge.
The paper's surface is also slightly uneven, so even under the same laser settings, subtle variations occur in the marks. When viewed closely, the individual lines reveal differences in depth and texture.

How do the thread columns extend the project's exploration of line into three-dimensional space? What role does the drawing of their construction logic play in understanding the work?

While working on the four black drawings, I began to wonder what would happen if I brought the repeated lines into physical space. I extended the experiment by translating the lines into actual threads and arranging them according to the same principles to create structures resembling columns and roofs.
In the drawings, overlapping lines produced variations in density and form. In physical space, gravity and tension introduced new variables. Even when following the same construction method, the threads sagged and shifted at slightly different angles, producing variations in the structures and the spaces beneath and around them. This experiment later developed into further three-dimensional models and studies of architectural space.
The instruction drawing presented here illustrates the rules and construction process behind these thread structures. The four black drawings show forms generated through repetition, while the fifth drawing shows how the same principle can be applied to physical structures.



Jae Park | Exactly Not The Same | 2026

Pascale Gay

How did your journey into fashion design begin, and what first attracted you to working with clothing and form?

I've been drawn to making things with my hands since childhood — first through art classes, ceramics, and painting. Growing up near a recycling factory, I'd collect fabric scraps and experiment. My mum taught me to sew by hand, and by ten I had my first machine and taught myself everything else. I wasn't interested in "fashion" as an industry, but I always sewed. After high school, a friend suggested I turn that love into a career, which led me to TAFE.

TAFE suited me — its practical focus helped me understand how ideas and research become real garments. I studied life drawing, illustration, colour theory, CAD, patternmaking, and sewing, and eventually continued into a Fashion Design degree. I learned how





Pascale Gay | Look 3

luxury fashion connects to every part of the industry, and during my studies I interned and then got my first job at a luxury design house.

From there I kept going — through study, through work, through being told I didn't belong or wasn't "fashion." I wasn't the most gifted student, but I was relentless. Even when the odds weren't in my favour, the drive to make garments and keep myself inspired never left. My graduate collection combined fabric, screen printing, painting, and rubber – tying back to my interest in different materials.

Looking back at your career, which experiences have had the greatest influence on the designer you are today?

College helped me realise I wanted to be a designer and helped shape the kind of designer I could be, which avenues I felt the most comfortable exploring for inspiration, converting wacky ideas into tangible, wearable pieces and introducing technical standards. After College, I've really absorbed so much from each role in fashion since then. Learning from pattern makers and machinists with 20-30 years' experience each, and how



Pascale Gay | Look 2

they see patterns, and where concept starts and production ends
Moving to London and doing two London Fashion Week Shows proved I could work on the global stage. I feel my strongest source of motivation is the curiosity to continue learning and studying. Taking night and weekend classes, and diversifying my experience across design, development, and production.

You have worked across both smaller ateliers and major fashion houses. How have these different environments shaped your approach to design?

All houses are different, but I felt like the more I could sink my teeth into, the more I could learn. I want to be impressed, and inspired by what could be done given few parameters. Sometimes I am left to drape for days, and play around with morphing shapes, which is where I am most drawn – and this is mostly from smaller houses or in roles where I work on the development side of things. (design, pattern making etc).
The bigger houses, atelier or production roles have taught me structure, critical timelines, management of people and budgets. So equally important, but different. Its critical for me as a small business to have that framework, even if on a smaller scale, to be able to move quickly, and make considered, educated decisions.

What does the process of developing a new collection usually look like for you, from the first idea to the finished garment?

I don't work in a linear way – Essentially, I start with a mood board of random images, colours, shapes, textures and details, Then i do a lot of draping, trying to emulate some of the shadowing, shape, feelings and negative space of different works, and I sketch it up. I then draft patterns and make a maquette or a toile. I fit this on the mannequin and make alterations to the pattern from there. If its close (fitting wise) then I fit it on a fitting model (an Australian size 8) so she can give me her feedback on fit and wearers experience. I may repeat this step a couple of times until the fit, function and design are ready. Finally, I cut, make and finish in the real fabric. Now imagine all these steps for each garment, and me repeating them many times. The mood boarding, draping, sketching, and altering never really stops until its about to be photographed in the lookbook or at the show.

Visual art plays an important role in your practice. What kinds of artists, artworks, or visual ideas tend to inspire you most?

I get most of my inspiration from old technical books in the library - things like photography techniques, architecture, lighting, painting and other bits and pieces, and I visit old book shops and antique stores. this year I've been loving 'Porcelain Painting' – Colour, design,



Pascale Gay | Look 1

method and firing by Joyce Randall. It changes all the time though, the latest collection I was inspired by the work of Rene Lalique's Glass works, although my phone is also full of photos of 1960s magazine photography, Loie Fuller, it's a mix. My graduate collection from 2017 was based on the work "A narrative with Sexual Overtones' – by Sandy Edwards – Found in the Book 'The Critical Distance: Work with Photography, Politics, Writing'. A lot is found through picking up a stack of old books and going to local art exhibits.

How has your understanding of the relationship between clothing, the body, and space evolved throughout your career?

I think initially when I started studying Fashion, I didn't really relate the idea of runway clothing or couture back myself or what I found interesting at all, and I slowly realised that there aren't as many limitations to designing as I once thought.
My work now treats clothing as a sculptural extension of the wearer. A lot of my practice is driven by exploring materials and their limitations. I'm constantly asking how I can create structure from fabrics that are overly fluid, or how I can distort or 'destroy' the inherent qualities of a textile to completely change its function. Back in 2019, I created a range that manipulated the stretch of fabric cut on the bias — a risky approach — and used those distortions to build silhouettes that sat almost like



Pascale Gay | Look 8



Pascale Gay | Look 9

extensions of the skin. It wasn't about flattering the body; it was about expanding it.
I've also been incredibly fortunate with the mentors I've had. Being invited into rooms, asked for my opinion, and given the space to experiment has shaped me more than anything. There are moments where I still feel like a complete nobody — and then suddenly I'm backstage at Fashion Week, contributing to something bigger than myself. Those experiences have grounded me and helped me understand that clothing, the body, and space are always in conversation. My work lives inside that dialogue.

What have been some of the most important lessons you have learned through building your own label?

One thing I've learnt is that as a designer, there is no one 'proper' way to produce a collection or a piece. Usually, it's a lot messier than that. I, like many designers and artists am never satisfied, so I've managed to learn the framework, processes, and systems in the fashion industry from development to production and applied them to building my own brand and to guide my decision making and make calls which would have previously sent me into a decision paralysis. Thinking on your feet and trusting your gut are crucial. Try not to present a problem without providing a solution and be flexible. Always overestimate the time it will take to perform each step of the process and seek constructive feedback from friends and colleagues are rules I have harnessed.



Zelda & Marco



We were both thinking of making watercolors simply as a hobby. Very quickly, we decided to illustrate wordplays as something light-hearted and funny. Joking together is key in a friendship and to see which puns are landing with others is something interesting. It forced us to make sure we had a clear to depict with our illustrations. The first wordplay we drawn is “à led” : it is a mix between an SOS French message “à l’aide” and the LED lightbulbs. This drawing, like many others, is based on homophonic sound. Both sound the same but have very different meanings.

How does your work as teachers influence the way you listen to language? Have classroom conversations or students’ interpretations ever inspired a drawing?

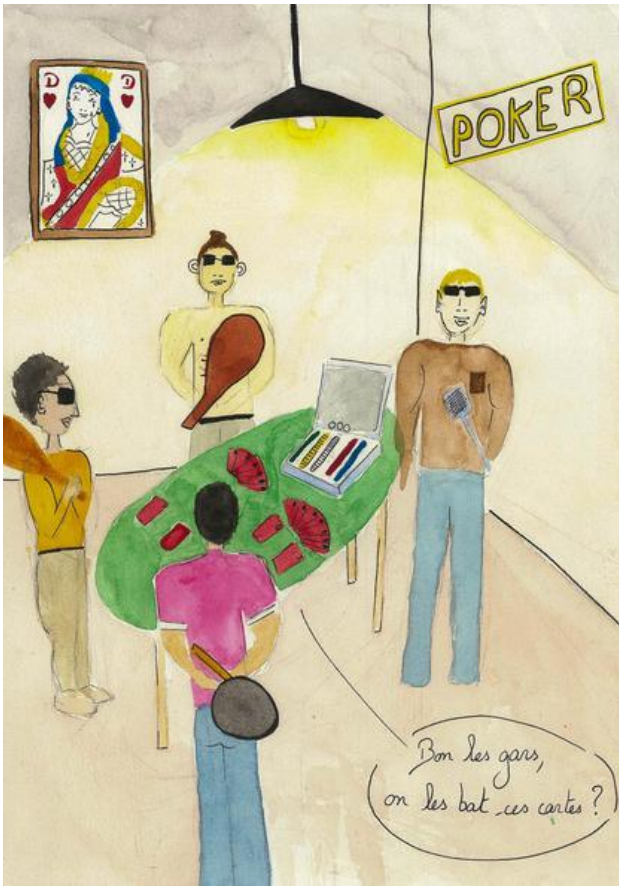
Of course, to be teacher of French language and literature helps us. We pay attention to the language and its daily use, especially in our classroom when we have to explain different meanings and uses of words. Some ideas do come from our students. One example is “avoir quelqu’un dans les patte” which is an idiom for “to be in one’s way/to be underfoot” but if you omit one letter from “pattes” to “pate” it means “pasta”: thus the drawing is a guy in someone’s pastas plate. It is also a state of mind: we took the habit of paying attention to what people tell us and it became a kind of game. Even our families and friends suggest wordplays to illustrate.

How do you create a piece together, from the initial joke to the finished illustration? Do you have distinct

How did your weekly meetings develop into an artistic collaboration, and do you remember the first wordplay illustration you created together?



Zelda & Marco | Couler Un Bronze



Zelda & Marco | Battre Carte

roles, or does the process change with each work?

We don't have distinct roles because we are both drawing but Zelda is better than Marco and Marco brings more wordplays. Each week, we discuss the drawings and their details, we agree on a clear and funny drawing, sometimes by asking someone else to see if it is understandable. It is very joyful to see how an idea brings something and becomes a drawing. On top of that, since two years, we no longer live in the same country. Our drawings projects help keep a strong bond between us.

What makes a French word or expression particularly promising for an illustration? How do you decide which ideas are worth developing?

We take several kinds of things to illustrate: a complete French idiom like "Il pleut des cordes" which corresponds to the English idiom "its raining cats and dogs" but literally means "it is raining ropes". Sometimes we just take two homophonic words that can be easily illustrated like "poulet" which means "chicken" and "pou laid" which sounds exactly the same and means "ugly louse". It is remembering us the richness and also oddities of French language, especially for non-speaking persons. A "poulet" is also slang for "policeman". We try to add these three meanings in our drawing. Sometimes we just change a word in an expression. For example, "Le poids de la victoire" become "Le pois de la victoire". The first expression means "the weight of victory" as to be victorious can be hard to handle and comes at a price. Without the letter "d", the word is becoming "pois": it is the same sound but not the same meaning. The "pois" means "peas": so we drawn a peas on a podium...

Your drawings combine soft washes of colour, expressive characters, and handwritten text. How did this visual style develop, and what does it bring to your humour?

We play with framing, sizes and scales to make our ideas understandable without losing complexity. We often discuss the title: do we have to put it or not? Do people understand without the title or the original expression. We want to have the audience try to find all the references and declinations in the initial expressions through the drawing.

Since your work relies on the sounds and multiple meanings of French words, how do you approach sharing it with viewers who do not speak French?

Actually, we didn't really think about making it accessible for non-French speaker, it seems so easy to think about pun with French words because there are so many words which look or sound similarly but mean totally something else. We also like to play with collective representation related to French culture, which could be more accessible to English speakers. On another hand, we like the same kind of English content on social medias so maybe one day we'll think about more "inclusive" ideas but to be honest, we should improve our English practice.

How has your understanding of each other's humour changed through working together? Can you recall an idea that became stronger because you initially saw it differently?

Working together really helped, we probably wouldn't continue by our own. From Zelda's perspective, without advice and ideas from Marco, she wouldn't keep drawing puns, she's a real source of inspiration. Moreover, we think that some of our drawings we imagine together coming with one pun initially became something else because one of us said "Great and we could add this and that". The downside of this process is that some drawings become understandable only to us, but we could say it makes our friendship stronger.

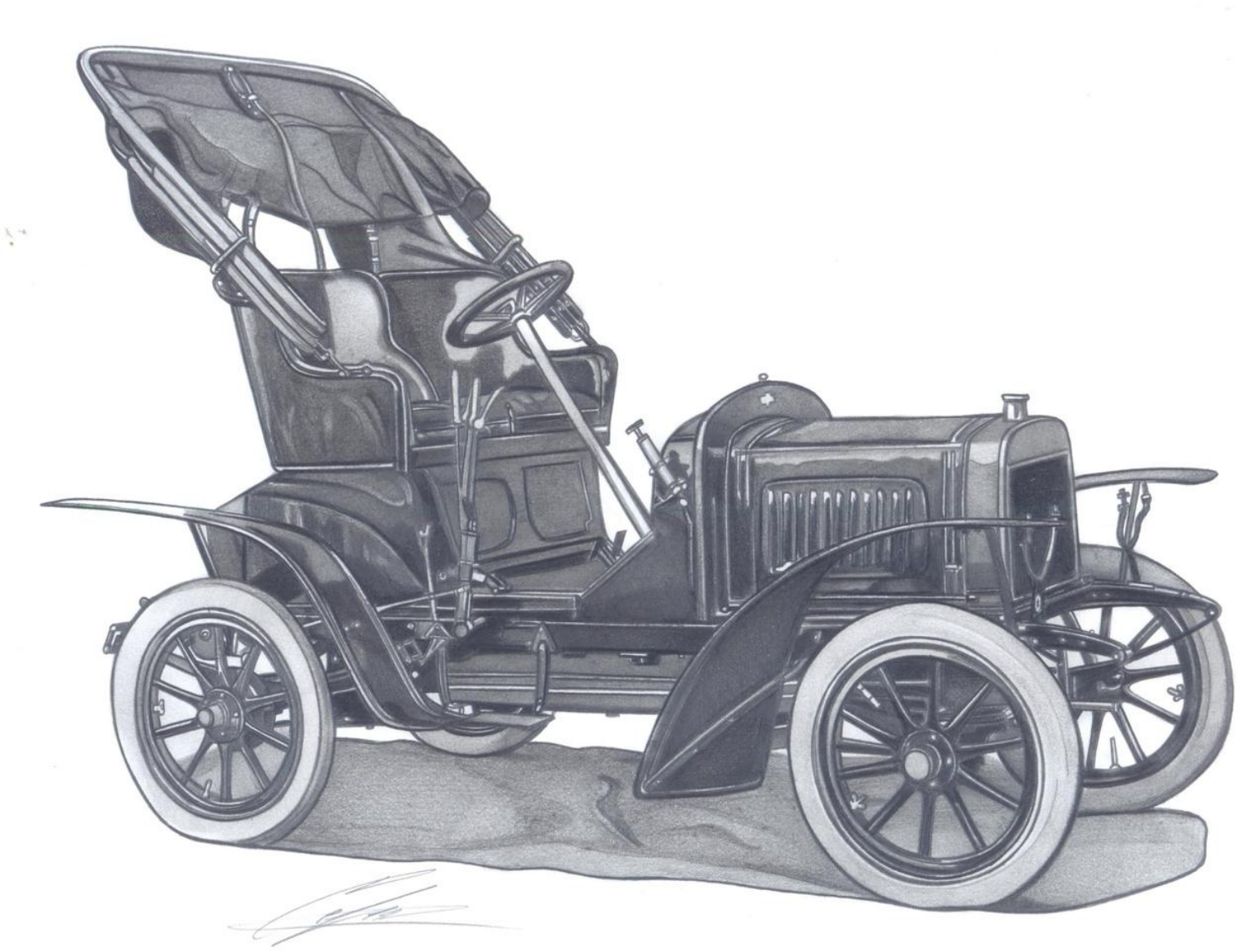


Zelda & Marco | Bar S'Accouda

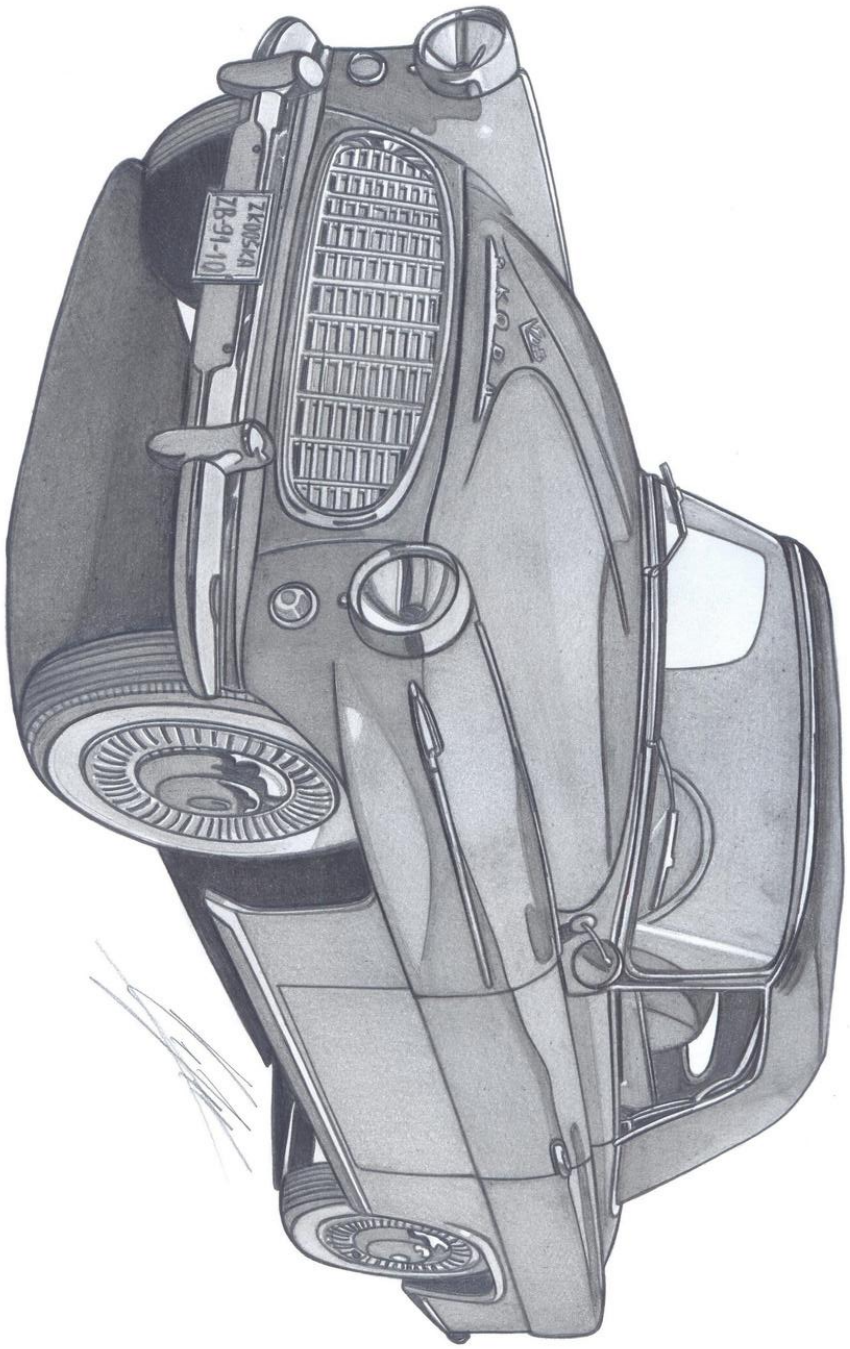
Stefan Ivanov

Born in January 1987 in Dryanovo, Bulgaria. In November 2005 I spent 14 days in coma after terrible motorcycle accident.I was with two craniocerebral fractures, loss of memory and many injuries.The next several months I was liying in my bed ,unable to move a lot.
In June 2006 I started drawing as a part of my recovery because my hands were shaking and I had pain in my eyes.
Since then I never stopped drawing.For more that 20 years I am creating something never done before. I am creating the whole automotive history of Laurin & Klement and Skoda brands by drawing it.
In the past four years my work became popular around the world, among automobile enthusiasts and organizations,with more than a hundred articles from 14 countries from each continent. In 2024 I was invited to become member of the "Guild of motoring artists in England".This year I was selected for the "Book of one hundred artists " of Europe for 2026, from Palermo, Sicily. In July this year I got another international award from "Art and Color 365" magazine from Colorado, USA.
I have opened four exhibitions.Three in Bulgaria and one in Skoda hometown of Mlada Boleslav, Czech Republic in 2024.
I am looking forward to find partners who would help me organize exhibitions where people would appreciate my work.I am in touch with several automobile museums in USA.Some of them are interested of helping me.
I am living proof that everything is possible and I believe I am on the right path :)

Stefan Ivanov | Laurin & Klement Voiturette Type A 1905



Stefan Ivanov | Skoda 450 Cabrio 1





Stefan Ivanov | Skoda Popular in Argentina

Irena Hocevar (Ihart)



You describe painting as a return to a passion that had remained dormant for many years. What brought you back, and how has your relationship with painting changed since then?

Painting was a passion that stayed with me, even during the years when other things took priority. My background in graphic and fabric design allowed me to remain connected to creativity, colour, composition, and materials, but painting itself had taken a quieter place in my life. Returning to it felt less like starting something new and more like reconnecting with a part of myself that had always been there.
Over time, my relationship with painting has become more intuitive and personal. I feel less concerned with the need to define an outcome from the beginning. Instead, I allow myself to explore, to experiment, and sometimes to be guided by unexpected discoveries. Painting has become a space of freedom, where I can slow down, listen to my instincts, and express things that are difficult to put into words.

How does your background in graphic and fabric design influence the way you approach composition, texture, and the physical structure of a painting?



My background in graphic and fabric design has undoubtedly shaped the way I approach painting. Both disciplines have taught me to pay close attention to composition, rhythm, proportion, repetition, and the relationship between colour and form. They have also made me sensitive to the way a surface can communicate through its structure, even before we begin to interpret its visual content.
Fabric design, in particular, has influenced my understanding of texture and tactility. I am interested in how materials hold traces of a process, how patterns can emerge through repetition, and how subtle variations create a sense of movement. Graphic design has given me an awareness of balance and spatial relationships, while painting allows me to move beyond the precision of design into something more instinctive and unpredictable.
In my work, the surface is not simply a background for an image. It becomes the image itself a physical structure with its own rhythm, depth, and character.

What first drew you to plaster as a painting material, and what possibilities does it offer that other materials do not?

I was drawn to plaster because of its physical presence and its ability to transform a painting into something almost sculptural. Unlike traditional painting materials, which often encourage us to think primarily in terms of colour and image, plaster introduces volume, resistance, and a certain unpredictability. It allows me to build a surface rather than simply paint on one.
What fascinates me most is the balance between control and chance. Plaster can be shaped, layered, scraped, and sanded, but it also responds to the process in its own way. It may crack, break, or reveal unexpected marks. These irregularities are not necessarily imperfections they can become essential parts of the work.
I also appreciate the way plaster interacts with light. Its subtle relief creates shadows and tonal variations that change according to the viewing angle and the surrounding light. This gives the painting a quiet dynamism. It is never entirely fixed in its appearance, because the surface continues to reveal itself differently as we move around it.

Could you walk us through the development of one piece, from the first application of material to the final stages of shaping and sanding?



Each piece begins with an idea or a feeling, but rarely with a completely defined image. I usually have a general sense of the atmosphere I want to create, perhaps a particular colour relationship, a certain degree of movement, or a surface quality that I want to explore.
I begin by applying plaster to the support, building up the material and establishing the first layers of texture. At this stage, I am interested in its physical behaviour how it spreads, where it accumulates, and how it responds to the tools I use. I work directly with the material, allowing my hands and gestures to influence the emerging surface.
Once the plaster begins to set, I start shaping it, removing material in some areas and emphasising it in others. This is a gradual process of addition and subtraction. I may scrape, carve, or sand the surface, sometimes revealing a quieter layer beneath a more pronounced texture. Often, the most interesting moments occur when the material does something I had not anticipated.
Colour comes into the process as the surface develops. I apply it, observe how it settles into the relief, and consider whether it enhances or competes with the existing structure. I may return to certain areas several times, adjusting both the colour and the texture.
The final stages are often the most delicate. Sanding softens some of the marks while allowing others to remain visible. I look for a balance between roughness and refinement, between what is revealed and what is left untouched. I know a piece is approaching completion when the surface feels resolved, even if it retains a degree of openness and ambiguity.

How do you develop your colour palette? Do colours guide the construction of the surface, or do they emerge in response to its texture?

Colour and texture are closely connected in my work, and I find it difficult to separate one from the other. Sometimes I begin with a colour that I am drawn to, and this becomes the starting point for the entire piece. At other times, the surface comes first, and the colours emerge in response to its physical qualities.
I am particularly interested in subtle colour relationships tones that sit close to one another, gentle transitions, and variations that become apparent only when we look carefully. I do not always want colour to dominate the surface. Sometimes I prefer it to settle into the texture, allowing the relief and the changing light to contribute just as much to the overall impression.
The plaster itself influences the final result. Colour behaves differently across smooth and rough areas, in recesses and on raised edges. It can appear deeper in one place and lighter in another, creating a sense of depth without relying on conventional perspective.
For me, colour is not simply something applied at the end of the process. It is part of the material's language, and I allow it to evolve alongside the surface.

Beyond their tactile qualities, what personal experiences or emotions find their way into your surfaces?

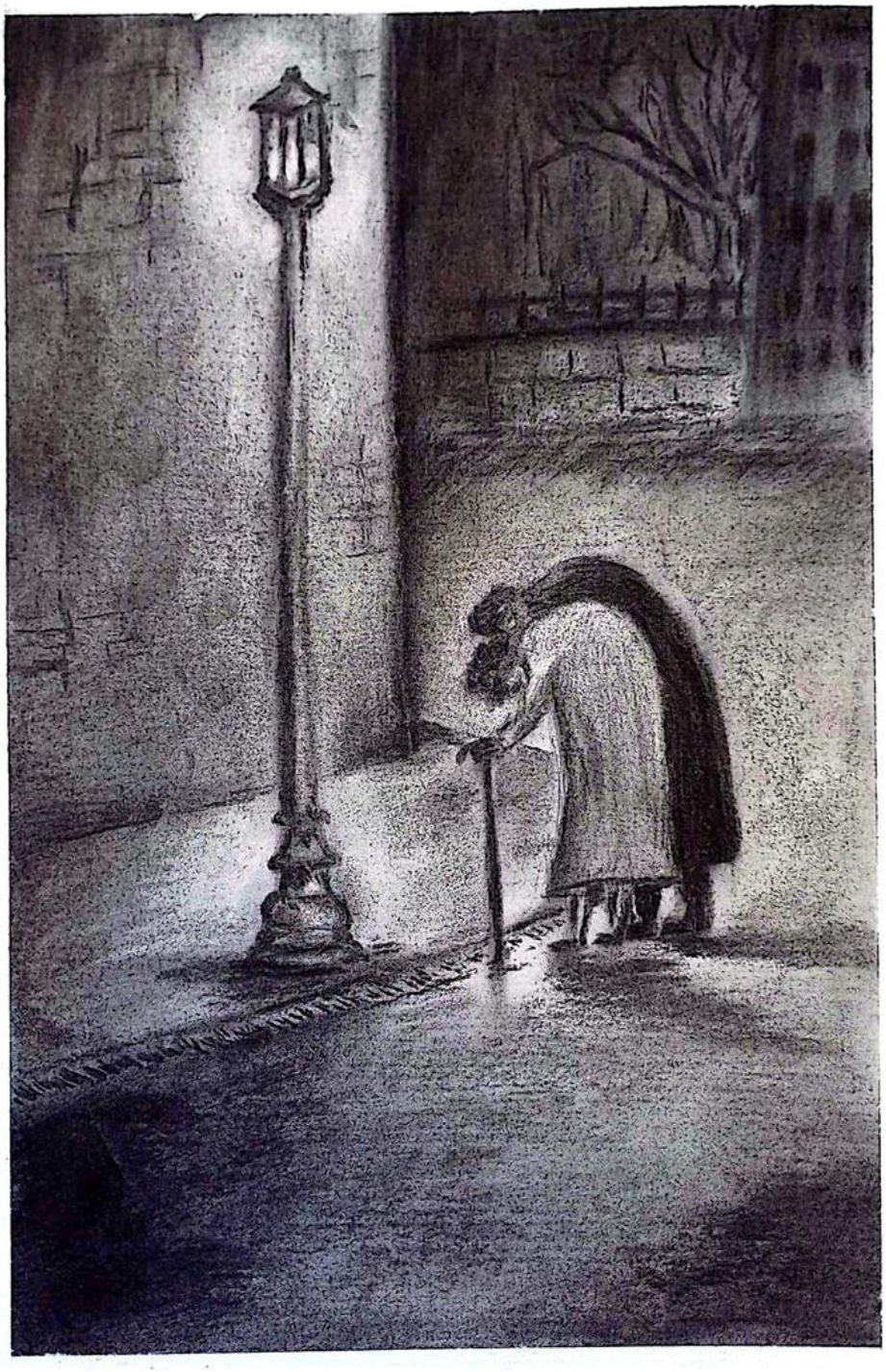
Although my paintings are abstract, they are deeply connected to personal experience. I do not necessarily begin with a specific memory or emotion that I want to represent. Instead, feelings often enter the work indirectly, through the pace of the process, the gestures I make, and the decisions I take along the way.
There is something important to me about the physical act of working with plaster. It requires patience and a willingness to accept that not everything can be controlled. Sometimes the process feels calm and meditative at other times, it involves frustration, uncertainty, or the need to remove something I have spent a long time creating. I recognise these experiences as part of life itself.
The layers, marks, and imperfections in the surface can hold something of these moments. They become traces of time, of decisions made and reconsidered, of things that have been built up, altered, or allowed to remain unresolved.
Returning to painting after many years has also made the work more personal. There is a sense of rediscovery in it, of allowing myself to return to something meaningful without needing to justify it. Perhaps this is reflected in the surfaces themselves: they are not always perfectly controlled or polished, but they carry a sense of presence, vulnerability, and quiet strength.

How would you like viewers to encounter your paintings? What might they discover by moving closer, stepping back, or observing the surface under different light?

I would like viewers to approach my paintings without feeling that they need to understand them immediately. I am interested in creating an experience rather than communicating a single, fixed meaning. The work can be encountered visually, but it also invites a more physical and sensory way of looking.
From a distance, the painting may appear calm, almost minimal, with colour and composition creating an overall sense of balance. As the viewer moves closer, however, the details begin to emerge: small irregularities, changes in depth, traces of the tools, and the subtle transitions between different areas of the surface.
Light plays an important role in this experience. Depending on its direction and intensity, shadows appear and disappear, revealing textures that may not have been visible before. The painting seems to shift slightly, even though the material itself remains unchanged.
I hope viewers feel free to spend time with the work, to move around it, and to discover their own associations. Perhaps one person will be drawn to its texture, another to its colour, and someone else to the feeling of stillness it creates.
Ultimately, I would like the paintings to offer a moment of pause an opportunity to slow down and become more attentive to material, light, and the experience of looking. If the work allows someone to connect with a feeling or a memory of their own, then it has opened up a space beyond the object itself.

My name is **Matina Panagou**. I'm 22 years old from Greece and I have a degree in preschool education. I love and appreciate all forms of art, I enjoy seeing new and fresh ideas from artists all over the world, discovering new things and finding inspiration. I have always felt that art allowed me to express myself best. It often served as my anchor during difficult times. Every time I create something, it feels as though I am entering a world where I find safety and a sense of sustainability. From a young age, I have been observing the world around me as if it's a work of art—blending the atmosphere with colors, shapes, and shadows and exploring the emotions stirred in me by everyday scenes. I am now at a stage in my life where I wish to engage with the arts more seriously, I want to practice, experiment, and create with total freedom.

Project Statement
The works I have chosen to submit represent an attempt to experiment with coal. I wanted to create environments that provoke reflection and perhaps even confusion. Specifically, in two of the three pieces, irregular shapes intrude upon the clear image, evoking a sense of decay within something stable, or an interference with something familiar. In the third work, the focus shifts towards time and the atmosphere of the environment.



Matina Panagou | Couple Under the Streetlight | 2026



Matina Panagou | Landscape at Night | 2026

Matina Panagou | Sitting Angel | 2026



Lee Jungok



How did growing up by the sea shape your imagination, and what does the Gwangalli Beach horizon mean to you today?

Pusan Gwangalli Beach is a place where the vast nature of the sea and the city coexist. Living in a modern building of that era next to the beach, I used to swim and play on the shore and walk back home in my swimsuit. In a place where the city and nature coexisted, I think I absorbed both modern and commercial, as wel as natural and artistic sensibilities. My childhood was a time when I could deeply observe the patterns and textures of the sea waves and the ripples on the sand. Back then, I found it mystical to see how the sea, the sky, and the sandy beach al underwent continuous changes while remaining connected. The apartment was a very modern piece of architecture. Thinking about it now, it seems people want to use buildings and objects to freeze changing things in a way that is convenient for them. That modern apartment is now facing redevelopment after some 40 years. It makes me realize that even what people wanted to fix in a permanent form changes eventualy.

For me, life in the new apartments along the Gwangali Beach felt like embracing both the aesthetics of human-made modern creations and the beauty of nature, against a backdrop where the human-made and the natural coexist So I think I have naturaly absorbed and accepted the two fields of modern design and pure painting, which are convenient for people.

The horizon of Gwanganri is like the curtain of a stage before a performance begins. The vertical fear of the deep sea and the wonder beneath it coexisted horizontaly with the fear and curiosity of the world beyond the horizon.The horizon of the sea is the curtain before the performance begins, an obstacle to overcome fear, and for me, the horizon of the sea of Gwangali Beach is the door that connects the next section of a new and strange place. I always vaguely thought that one day I would open the door to a new place in the beyond world, and I thought that it would connect the changing flow of my life like the waves of the ocean and the grains of sand.



Lee Jungok | Life Is A Garden Of Microcosms | 2019

What prompted you to move from a twenty-year career in design to fine art, and what was the most challenging part of that transition?

I majored in textile art. In fact, I expected industrial fiber patterns or textile designs with fashion, but the

university course was pure painting with fiber. This major is a good combination of the medium of painting and fiber in my future work.
When I graduated from colege and came into society, Korea coincided with the IMF crisis, which is Korea's economic crisis. I couldn't avoid it either, and that was a time when design was emerging as a promising field. However, I have been working as a designer with the same expectations as the destination of fine art related to nature that I had since I was young. The SSAMZIE brand was the first place to design bags, supporting artists and designing leather products such as works of art. It seems to reflect my longing like a pure painting. In addition, I have been in the business of designing and producing bags, walets, hats, etc., and the concept of the design was the same as the work. Since then, I have been designing outdoor sports brands for over 10 years. I have been designing outdoor bags, hats, shoes, tents, etc. in nature. When I took pictures of market research and product tests, I had never been to Baekdu Daegan in Korea, Mt. Hala in Jeju Island, Olegil, Seoul, Mt. Bukan, Cheonggyesan, etc., and I have been with pure nature such as Switzerland, France, Austria, the Alps, and Salt Lake City in the United States. I always design with nature, so I had a lot of time to take a deep look at nature and a longing for pure painting.
The experience of the IB (Ho Chi Minh City International Baccalaureate Curriculum) found that the process and method of creating an artist's work coincide with the design process that captures the direction and concept of the product. So I'm also interested in expanding the content and concept of pure works to the design of products. In the future, I think these artistic handicrafts wil be more valuable than products printed in factories in the AI era. So I don't have a big boundary between design and art.

How does your background in fiber arts influence the way you approach texture, structure, and composition?

While majoring in fiber art, I became especialy interested in working with thread. For my graduation project, I knitted human faces to depict the two selves within us, then connected the figures to tel the story of my life—from birth to death. The work received awards at the Korea Art Exhibition and the Hongik Textile Sculpture Exhibition.
I was drawn to the process of creating forms by connecting threads, and that interest continues today in my pen drawings, where I build images by joining lines. Through the figures in my work, I have explored relationships with others and the conflict between the two selves within me. Looking back, I find it remarkable that I have been expressing emotions I felt from childhood through my art.



Lee Jungok | Life Is A 자화상 | 2026

The work in which I connected threads to create forms and linked knitted ful-body figures to express the path I have traveled and the one stil ahead resonates with a 2019 piece in which I used acrylic on cotton fabric to depict branches in an abstract form. At the time, I did not consciously connect the two works. In retrospect, however, I realize that questions about human relationships have always been at the heart of my practice. The tangled branches reminded me of the connections between people. The use of line and the process of forming shapes by joining threads—both rooted in my studies of fiber art—as wel as my ongoing reflections on human relationships, continue to inform my work today.
In future works exploring forms in nature, I plan to combine the continuous lines of my pen drawings with saddle stitching, used in luxury handbag making, and other stitching techniques. Through this approach, I hope to depict trees, flowers, and water, bringing together line drawing and stitch.

You describe each person as a unique microcosm. How did this idea develop, and how do you translate it into visual form?

During a difficult period in a relationship, when my self-esteem had falen to its lowest point and I was questioning my very existence, I came across a piece of writing by chance.
In Eastern philosophy, there is a saying attributed to the Buddha:
You are the flower that the universe bloomed.
Hundreds of millions of years of time and countless stars,
The warmth of the sun and the distant wind overlap and overlap
It is the only existence that has bloomed here now.
As you live, you are shaken by the commotion of the world,
The moment comes when you lose your own light by comparing yourself to others.
But remember. Just like the flowers on the side of the

road are not jealous of the size of the flowers blooming next to them,
Just like roses don't envy the color of tulips,
If you bloom with your own color and scent in your own season, that's all.
Like a lotus flower that takes root in the mud but is not stained by the dirt,
Deep in your heart, there is a clear and perfect Buddha nature.
No matter how the world evaluates you,
No matter what kind of rain and wind blew on the road you walked,
The nobility of your existence does not change for a single moment.
So get away from other people's eyes today.
Embrace yourself completely.
You are already perfect in itself,
It is the most beautiful flower that the universe has bloomed with all its strength.

While teaching IB Art in Ho Chi Minh City, I explored the golden ratio. Seeing it appear in the cosmos, in flowers such as sunflowers, and in the human body led me to think about how the laws of the universe are connected to human life. I began to wonder why people, often out of stubbornness, find it so difficult to accept advice and guidance offered with good intentions.

This question brought the solar system to mind: planets orbiting around the Sun. We live in a universe made up of galaxies, solar systems, and perhaps even stars that exist alone. When others interfere with the orbit of the planets that revolve around the Sun at the center of my own world—myself—they can disrupt its natural course.

Just as countless galaxies exist independently, each folowing its own orbit, I came to see every person as a complete and independent microcosm. Each of us holds an inner world that is sustained by its own unique mass and gravity—a space that belongs to us alone. I came to cal this inner world a "microcosmos."



Lee Jungok | House Of Heaven | 2018

I came to believe that, just as no two perspectives or inner worlds are identical in the universe, there can be no complete overlap between human beings.

To translate this philosophy into visual form, I draw on the language of line, thread, and organic texture—elements I have explored since studying textile art. In particular, my pen drawings connect as many lines as possible, expressing the way the laws of the universe flow through nature and human life.

Through my work in outdoor design, I have often stood at the top of a mountain and looked out over a city. From that height, the world can appear no larger than a speck of dust. I began to feel that we spend precious time and energy on things that matter very little, and that I should instead direct my limited energy toward the things that orbit around the star at the center of my own world.

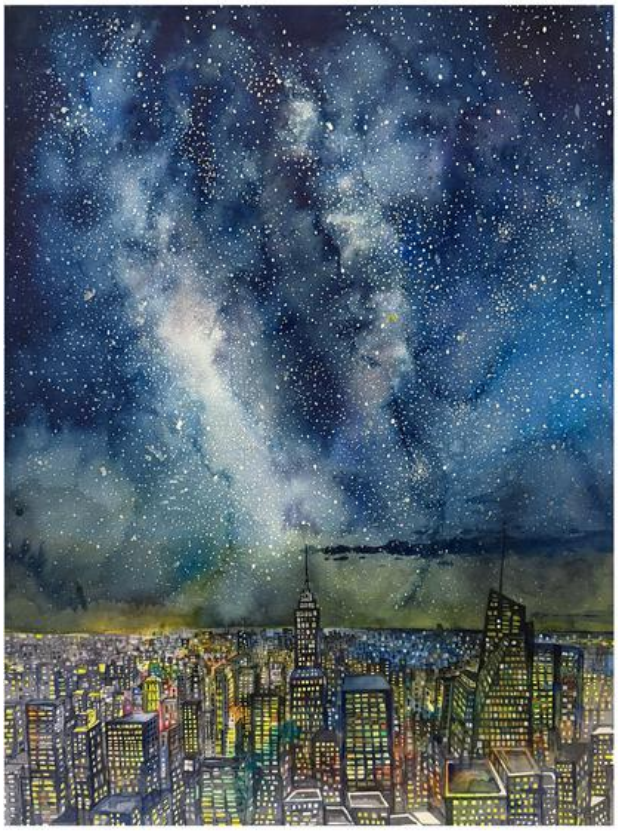
Perhaps this is why, during a trip to New York, the view from the Top of the Rock at Rockefeler Center reminded me of the cosmos. The city seemed to me like a supercluster, formed by countless stars and stelar systems. In my future work, I hope to continue developing an abstract visual expression of the universe.

Personal boundaries are central to your description of human relationships. How do you explore the balance between connection and independence in your work?

As a designer and someone responsible for leading design work, I have experienced the difficulties in human relationships that almost everyone encounters, in one way or another. When I moved to Ho Chi Minh City, I found a temporary sense of peace by letting go of many of the things I had been carrying. However, even in the smaller relationships of everyday life—with family, neighbors, and other parents—I came to realize that conflicts and difficulties arise in all kinds of human relationships.

My relationships with my children, in particular, led me to read many books about human behavior and relationships. One book that especially influenced me was Sparks of Genius: The Thirteen Thinking Tools of the World's Most Creative People. In Unit 4, which explores pattern recognition, I learned that similar patterns can be found across many fields, including nature, natural phenomena, human behavior, history, and economic trends. I began to recognize patterns in the childhood environment and relationships that had shaped me. I wondered whether these recurring patterns might also resemble the fundamental physical patterns that govern the universe.

I came to recognize that even some of the experiences I had gone through in the past were connected to



Lee Jungok | Small Universe New York | 2018

patterns arising from my relationship with my parents. This led me to reflect on the kind of relationship I wanted to build with my own children. At that point, I began to use the physical laws of the universe as a metaphor for understanding human relationships. I imagined myself as the Sun at the center of my own solar system, with the things I consider important—my work, relationships, husband, children, financial well-being, and other priorities—orbiting around me like planets. I came to realize that my galaxy could not simply overlap with another galaxy without consequences. Such an encounter could lead to a galactic collision and merger.

Therefore, I felt that if I wanted to protect my own galaxy, I needed to keep my distance when encountering another galaxy that interfered with or collided with mine. Equally, I needed to avoid interfering with other galaxies myself. If I continued to hold my children within my own galaxy even after they had nearly reached adulthood, they would not be able to create galaxies of their own. This made me reflect on what I should do when my children, who were once like small asteroids in my universe, grew up and began building their own galaxies.

I was also influenced by the Korean reality dating program Heart Pairing, which gained popularity in Korea in 2025. Watching how pairing different people could produce different dynamics, atmospheres, and outcomes made me think about how human relationships can generate different kinds of chemistry depending on whom we are paired with.

In the universe, for two stars to form a binary star system and orbit around one another, many physical conditions must be met. If two stars simply pass by each other, their gravitational interaction may bend their trajectories, but they will generally move apart again along hyperbolic trajectories. For them to become gravitationally bound in an orbit around one another, a phenomenon known as capture must occur, requiring a mechanism through which their orbital energy can be reduced or transferred.

Understanding this made me more deeply appreciate the extraordinary nature of human connections. Just as many physical conditions must come together for two stars to form an orbital relationship, the encounter between two people that develops into a lasting bond can feel almost miraculous.

In Buddhism, the connection between people and phenomena is also understood through the principle of dependent origination.

Cause (因, Hetu): The direct and inherent cause that produces a result, such as a seed.

Condition (緣, Pratyaya): The indirect and external circumstances that support the cause, such as sunlight, soil, water, and a gardener's care.

Result (果, Phala): The phenomenon that emerges when causes and conditions come together.

This helped me understand that even stars require countless conditions and circumstances—the equivalent of Pratyaya—to become bound in an orbit. It was a process through which I came to appreciate that the formation of an orbit between celestial bodies, just like the meaningful connection between two people, depends on many conditions coming together.

Another profound realization came from the Japanese film Exit 8, released in 2025. In the film, the protagonist searches for an exit by gradually recognizing anomalies that he had previously passed without noticing. There are strange characters, including a man and a schoolgirl, whom the protagonist does not attempt to persuade or change. Instead, he takes the child who represents his future and continues searching for the anomalies that will lead them to the exit.

This gave me a powerful insight: to change harmful behavior or recurring patterns in life and move toward a better future, a person must first recognize their own errors.

As I watched the protagonist confront his own mistaken behavior in the subway, I saw a reflection of myself. I realized that I had often tried to persuade my colleagues, friends, parents, siblings, and even my children to recognize their errors and change themselves. I had been trying to convince others to change, just as the protagonist might have tried to persuade the strange people he encountered.

I came to understand that the part I can truly change is myself. My responsibility is to recognize and correct

the errors and patterns within my own life, while helping my children develop the ability to maintain their own orbits as they build their own galaxies.
Throughout my long career as a designer, I have repeatedly designed products, brought them to market, evaluated the previous year's sales, and reflected on how to create better products. I have conducted market research, incorporated new ideas and improvements, and persuaded investors and colleagues to support my direction. Over time, this way of thinking became almost a professional habit, and I carried it into my family life and personal relationships as well.
I have now come to understand that nature is in a continuous state of change. It is something I cannot hold still, fix permanently, or define once and for all. By contrast, the things we create artificially are often intended to be defined, structured, and fixed according to human purposes. They are things we can attempt to persuade others to understand and accept within a particular framework.
But human beings are like the sky, the sea, and the sand: they are part of nature, continuously changing and evolving. They cannot be permanently fixed or defined according to our expectations. I have come to realize that while I can design and define objects, I cannot treat people in the same way. People, like nature itself, must be allowed to change.

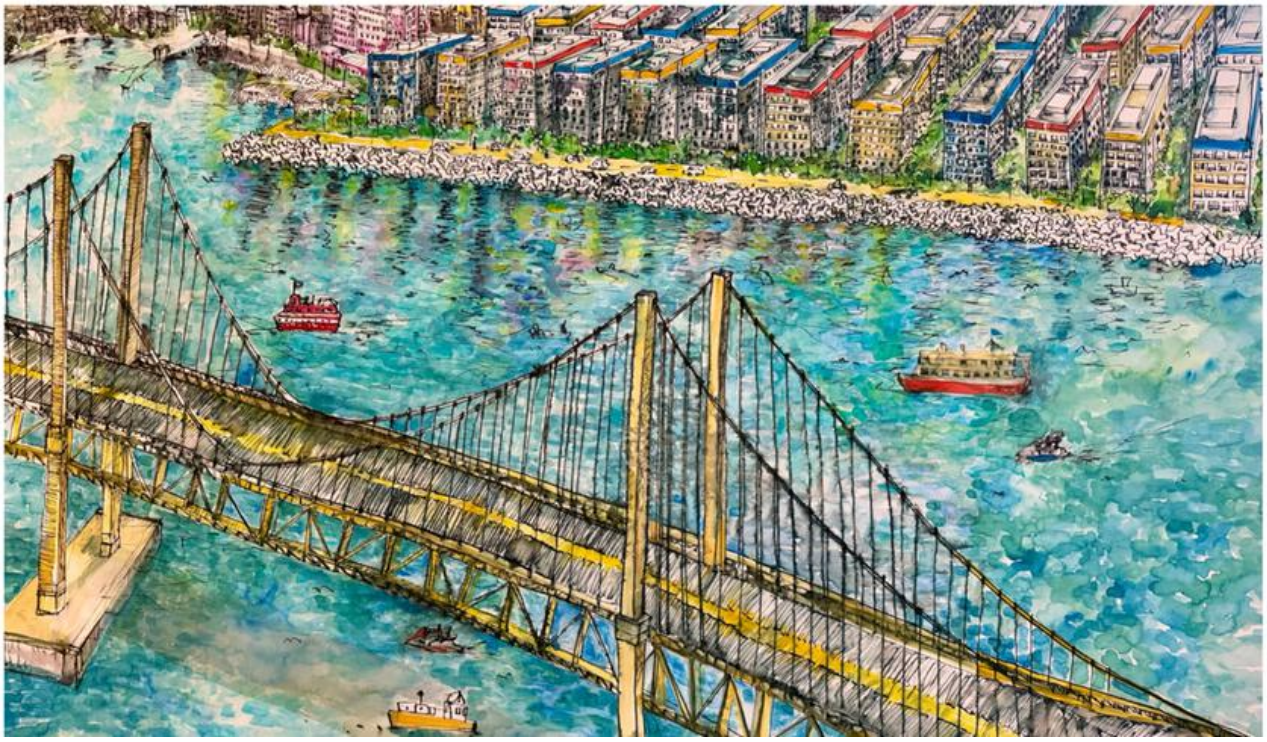
How did living in Ho Chi Minh City change your understanding of nature, resilience, and your own life journey?

In Ho Chi Minh City, I often encounter trees whose roots push through concrete, revealing the persistent force of nature even within an urban environment. One day, while going out for a meal in Thao Dien, I noticed a tree that had grown around a newly constructed building. Its branches had bent and changed direction to avoid the structure, alowing the tree to continue growing while maintaining its balance. Looking at it, I found myself thinking about how much energy it must have taken to adapt its own form to survive. I felt a sense of empathy for the tree and thought to myself, You must have had such a difficult time, too.
On another occasion, I saw a tree in a jungle whose branches had become tangled and intertwined with those of the surrounding trees. Its form reminded me of myself, caught up in the many big and smal issues involving my parents, holding on to those relationships and struggling to find my own direction.
Perhaps I, too, had been trying to escape recurring patterns in my life by moving from Gwangali Beach in Busan to Seoul, and eventualy to Ho Chi Minh City. Moving to different places may have been my way of seeking distance from the patterns I wanted to leave behind. Yet trees cannot simply move away from their surroundings. They must adapt their growth to whatever conditions they encounter. I sometimes felt a deep sense of compassion for them because they had no choice but to remain where they were and find a way to survive.
Living in Ho Chi Minh City has given me many opportunities to observe trees closely. The city has numerous schools that folow the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum, and alongside my work supporting art education within this educational environment, I began researching trees as a subject of artistic exploration. This research has continued to influence my practice.
The more closely I studied trees, the more I began to recognize similarities between their structures and human lives. Their roots, trunks, and branches respond to their surroundings, adapting to light, space, obstacles, and the presence of other trees. Every bend, intersection, and irregularity tels a story of how a living organism has responded to the conditions around it.
I began to see these details as reflections of our own lives. Like trees, we are shaped by our environments, our relationships, and the obstacles we encounter. Sometimes we bend to survive; sometimes we grow in unexpected directions. Our forms carry traces of the circumstances we have lived through.
I also began to recognize paralels between the structures of trees, human beings, and the larger laws of the universe. Each exists within a network of relationships and conditions, continualy responding to forces beyond itself while developing its own distinctive form.
These observations eventualy led to my work Self-Portrait (Work 2). Rather than representing myself through a conventional human likeness, I explored the tree as a way of reflecting my own experiences, emotional patterns, and search for balance.
I am currently continuing to study the forms and biological structures of trees through drawing as I develop my next series.
Living in Ho Chi Minh City has changed the way I



Lee Jungok | Small Universe New York | 2018

Lee Jungok | The Departure Of The Universe | 2026



understand resilience. I once thought that resilience meant enduring difficulties and finding ways to overcome them. Now, I have come to see that it can also mean adapting without losing oneself, recognizing when a familiar pattern is causing harm, and finding a new direction when circumstances change.
Trees have taught me that survival does not always require standing straight or growing along a predetermined path. Sometimes, it means bending around an obstacle, finding another way toward the light, or alowing one's form to change in response to the world.
Through my observations of trees, I have also begun to understand my own journey with greater compassion. Perhaps my movements between cities were part of my attempt to find a place where I could grow differently. And perhaps, through my art, I can now transform the patterns I once struggled with into something I can observe, understand, and express.
For me, the trees of Ho Chi Minh City have become more than subjects of artistic study. They are mirrors of my own life—reminding me that even when we cannot control the conditions around us, we can continue to grow, change our direction, and discover new forms of existence.

What would you like viewers to discover about themselves through your work, and what questions are you hoping to explore next?

Looking back, there have been three major crises in my life. In the midst of those rough waves back then, I could not yet see it clearly, but looking from a distance, those crises were ultimately processes of planets experiencing small and large shifts and collisions within the relationships that surround me. They were not merely moments of pain, but a necessary cosmic journey through which I made my own choices and decisions amidst countless collisions, eventually shaping my own unique worldview.
This reflection brings me face-to-face with a new artistic inquiry. Moving forward, I wish to explore how this artistic universe and the stars I have created can endure healthily over time and move along a mature orbit. At times, unexpected collisions in life may break and shatter certain pieces away. Yet, I want to embrace those wounded fragments with a profound and positive energy so that they too—in the near future, or perhaps even after hundreds of millions of years—can re-emerge as healthy stars and radiant galaxies. Thus, rather than being shaken by external forces, I intend to silently carry on this practice, finding my balance through inertia and centrifugal force, grounded deeply in my own inner mass.
It is my hope that those who encounter my work through this journey will also be able to look back upon their own lives. I hope they come to understand that the numerous conflicts and heartaches they experience within complex relationships are not due to personal weakness, but are simply part of the universe's immutable, grand physical laws. In doing so, I wish for them to find deep healing within the work, without spending the finite time granted to us on consuming pain and harming their own mental and physical well-being. I sincerely hope that they will dedicate that precious time and energy entirely to nurturing the peace and happiness of their own personal universe.

Milica Stojaković



When I mean realism, I mean classical realism, hyperrealism and fantastic realism. I want to express my feelings, my opinions in different ways of realism. The subject who appearance in my realistic art is the flower, fruit, body, portrait of someone, segment in the nature or mystic symbols and elements. I insist on great naturalness and realism.

How have growing up in Serbia and studying in Belgrade shaped your artistic identity?

My name is Milica Stojaković, and I am painter. Growing up in Serbia is not easy. I really mean that because people here are difficult and different. I was born 1990 in small town who names Valjevo. I love art since I was kid. I finished art school and here in country I was studied. Studying here is nice; you can see many artists and people who love arts, but Belgrade prefer modernism. It's not big number of us who prefer realism. When I was child, I saw art of old masters and they inspired me. I adore art of this genius and I try to understand their techniques and I learn. I preferred west still, and I have my ideas. I always love realism and I get starting with him immediately when I start to paint. Inspired by that still and many situation from my life are built my artistic identity.

What draws you to realism, and what do you hope to express beyond the visible appearance of your subjects?

You have explored different techniques but prefer oil on canvas. What qualities of this medium make it especially suited to your artistic vision?

Yes, I explored different techniques by watercolor, acrylic, pigments, gouache, oil, but I prefer oil on canvas. The material must be perfect. My material includes primary colors who I mixed, and oil and brushes. The best materials for me is Rosemary brushes. This material is in my first place for work, but I love and others like Rembrandt, Van Gogh, Lukas and Spektar. It's very important the materials which we work with.

How does a painting begin for you—with an image, an emotion, a story, or something else?

My art for me is my life. It is my story about me. I adore my art. My best painting is "Ella", and she is protection symbol of my art. "Ella" in Latin language and religion means God. That story of my life including people who is obeležili my life—my family, friends, mystic situation and happenings which were. We



always learn in life. But it's very important when is God with us, because art learn us that we must love and believe in life and we must to survive and last in the world around us. Artworks is for all life. With art we are not alone. The best feeling is when my hand makes different moves and creates my new ideas.

Your practice includes still life, portraiture and landscape. What makes a particular subject compelling enough for you to paint?

The particular subject who is compelling enough for me is still life. I love flowers, especially peonies and roses. I love to paint that. And like flowers and I adore religion.

Has your experience as a teacher changed the way you understand or approach your own creative practice?

Working with young people is wonderful experience. They are young and they are inspired to learn about art. I try to they understand art in different ways, like drawing, painting and books. They must be creative and must have their personality artistic identity. They learn from different books and literatures about art and artist. My experience as a teacher learn me patience. I try in easy way in my class to learn young people how to finish the art problems and to build their own style.

Having exhibited in Serbia and internationally, what have you learned from seeing different audiences respond to your work?

Yes, I have the exhibition in Serbia and internationally. It makes me to understand better art and other cultures, people and countries. That's not all. Realism is growing especially in the world and everyone who preferred realism proud to be part of it. It's heavy style and needs a lot experience and knowledge and talent. I love to hear experience by many people here and in others country, and that's the way who inspired me for my ideas. People speak through their art. You can see the different feelings, different opinion, and many question about art and how art will looks in the future. And I try to learn a young generation to explore the world of art, to be creative and to love the art. As Descartes said: "I paint, therefore I exist." Art will save the world.

Interview

Aiqi Zhang



Your practice spans brand identity, typography, motion, and spatial design. What first drew you to working across disciplines, and what connects these different areas in your practice?

I think it started with curiosity. I've always been drawn to different areas of design, and I never really wanted to limit myself to just one. I enjoyed exploring what each discipline had to offer, and over time, working across them became a natural part of my practice.
Working in advertising has also shaped the way I think about this. I've come to appreciate that the choice of medium can be a creative idea in itself. I don't necessarily begin a project knowing what form it should take. Through research and exploration, I try to understand what the idea needs and how it might best come to life.
What connects these areas is how they continue to inform one another. The attention to form, structure, and composition that comes from my graphic design background influences how I approach motion and physical space, while working in those disciplines has also changed the way I think about graphic design. I find that moving between disciplines often leads me to possibilities I wouldn't have discovered by staying within just one.



Aiqi Zhang | Credence Display | 2022

You explore how form, space, and narrative shape one another. Could you walk us through a project in which changing the form or spatial arrangement fundamentally changed the story being told?

One project that comes to mind is Firstborn, a restaurant identity I created for a contemporary Chinese American restaurant in LA Chinatown. The concept grew from a shared memory of the fish tanks commonly found in Hong Kong restaurants, which often sit near the entrance and become part of the experience of arriving. I translated this familiar image into a goldfish symbol that became central to the restaurant's visual identity.
What changed the story was bringing that symbol into the physical environment. Rather than recreating a fish tank, I wanted to reinterpret its presence in a more abstract way. By placing the goldfish on the restaurant's exterior signage, it became something people could encounter before even stepping inside, much like the fish tanks that originally inspired it. The form was different, but the connection to that familiar experience remained.
Over time, I began seeing people stop to photograph the signage. That was a meaningful moment for me because a symbol rooted in a shared cultural memory had begun to find its own place in another neighborhood. What started as a reference to one environment gradually became part of the everyday visual landscape of another.
I think that's what interests me about spatial design. Once a piece of work enters the world, its meaning is no longer shaped by the designer alone. The environment and the people who encounter it begin to add their own layers to the story.

When translating an abstract concept into a visual system, what do you establish first? How do you assess whether the original idea remains clear as the system develops?

I usually start by understanding the idea behind the brand before thinking about individual visual elements. I'm interested in approaching identity design as a whole rather than building everything around a logo. Through research and exploration, I try to find a central idea that can become the foundation of a visual language.
I particularly enjoy developing systems that allow for variation. Once that central idea is established, I begin exploring how it might translate into typography, imagery, composition, or other applications. I think a strong identity



Aiqi Zhang | Fuzzy Feelings | 2023

should have enough flexibility to respond to different contexts without requiring everything to look exactly the same.
As the system grows, I often return to the original concept and ask whether each new expression still feels connected to it. I'm less concerned with repeating the same visual elements than with maintaining a consistent way of thinking. Sometimes exploring a new application can even reveal another side of the idea, and I think that's what makes a visual system interesting to develop over time.

How does your approach change when a design moves from a page or screen into a physical environment? What new possibilities emerge when viewers can move around or through the work?

I've always enjoyed exploring how typography behaves at different scales. The same letterforms can take on entirely new qualities simply through changes in size, material, or presentation.
I think the approach really depends on the context of each project. Sometimes, the scale comes from a historical reference, like creating a miniature type specimen inspired by La Perle, an 18th-century French publication measuring just 6 × 7 cm, as a way of reflecting the historical influences behind my typeface. Other times, it's shaped by the exhibition and its curatorial direction, leading me to translate typography into a human-scale woven blanket that brings out the ornamental qualities of the letterforms. In other cases, the goal might be to encourage participation within a space, turning typography into an installation that visitors can actually walk through.
What excites me is how these decisions change the way people engage with the work. The miniature specimen invites people to hold it close and examine the letterforms, while recalling the extraordinary precision that historical metal type printing could achieve at such a small scale. At a larger scale, intricate forms become more visible, while spatial installations allow people to discover typography through movement and shifting perspectives. I love how it can move from something intimate to something immersive, opening up possibilities beyond reading alone.

You contributed as a designer to Apple's Fuzzy Feelings. What was your specific role, and what did the experience teach you about creating an emotional narrative through design?

As one of two designers on the project at TBWA\Media Arts Lab, I worked on the bespoke Fuzzy Alphabets for Apple's holiday film Fuzzy Feelings. My involvement ranged from initial letterform sketches and tracing to typographic refinement, felt-letter production, the photoshoot, and final execution. Working closely with the creative team, I helped bring both the serif and sans serif alphabets into their final tactile forms.
The letterforms drew inspiration from Apple's established typefaces, reinterpreted with an intentionally imperfect, whimsical character. Each letter was handcrafted from real felt, so its texture and small irregularities became part of its personality. Those qualities helped connect the typography to the handmade world of the film.
What stayed with me was how much emotional meaning a small design decision can carry. The softness of a material or the slight unevenness of an edge can make a letter feel warm and human. The experience taught me to think about typography as part of the storytelling itself: the way words are made and presented can help people feel the story, even before they read them.

In multidisciplinary collaborations, how do you communicate your ideas to people working in different creative fields? Can you recall a moment when a collaborator's perspective changed your approach?

The same idea can mean different things to people working in different creative fields. I try to bridge those perspectives by finding a common starting point in the strategy and the story we want to tell, using storytelling and visual references to make ideas more tangible. Often, the most interesting part is seeing how someone else's interpretation can shift my own thinking.
One example is Public Displays of Encouragement, a campaign for Apple TV+'s Ted Lasso that I worked on at TBWA\Media Arts Lab. The campaign featured personalized messages of encouragement for U.S. national soccer players, displayed on billboards in their hometowns. Working with the creative team, I explored how typography and copywriting could come together to capture Ted Lasso's personality. The handwriting needed to feel casual, imperfect, and personal, as though Ted himself had written each message. The collaboration encouraged me to think about typography not simply as a way to present words, but as an extension of the voice behind them. Even small decisions about scale, spacing, and irregularity could change how the message was perceived.

You are interested in graphic design as a broader cultural and spatial experience. What would you like people to feel, notice, or do when they encounter your work in a shared physical space?

I hope my work creates a sense of connection between people and the places around them. Sometimes, it's a familiar gesture, a symbol that carries a shared memory, or an unexpected use of color or material. These quiet moments of recognition and discovery might invite someone to pause and gradually become part of how they remember a place. Over time, I'd like the work to become part of everyday life, growing alongside the city and gathering meaning through people's experiences.
That is something I'm drawn to in land art: the way a work can coexist with its surroundings and be shaped by time and natural conditions. I hope my work can have a similar openness, leaving room for people to find their own meanings in it as its relationship with the place evolves.

Genoveva Kachurkova is a Macedonian visual artist, painter, and multi-disciplinary creator whose abstract artwork serves as a vivid translation of sound, texture, and emotion into visual form. Kachurkova's transition from music into painting marked a profound shift toward an intimate, tactile form of self-expression. She treats the canvas as a therapeutic outlet, utilizing an intuitive approach to color and texture that mirrors her relationship with ambient and electronic soundscapes. Her work heavily features small-format abstract pieces that capture fleeting emotional states and psychological landscapes rather than literal representations.

Project Statement

This piece uses hard and soft pastels on paper to explore the tension between structural form and emotional fluidity, translating internal sonic frequencies into a deconstructed abstract portrait.



Genoveva Kachurkova | Tyrouka | 2021

Nai Turner



Nai Turner | Nothing Is Wrong Right Now

How has your understanding of strength changed through your experiences as both a U.S. Army veteran and an artist?

For a long time, I understood strength as being able to push through. My experience in the Army reinforced discipline, endurance, and figuring out how to keep going even when something is difficult. Those qualities still serve me, especially as a full-time artist, but my understanding of strength has expanded.

Now, strength also means being honest about where I am. Sometimes it means resting, asking for help, or allowing myself to feel something without immediately trying to fix it. Painting gives me room to practice that. I can bring uncertainty into the studio and work with it. I don't have to have everything figured out to create something meaningful.

What feels most important to you when portraying Black identity through moments of tenderness, rest, and uncertainty?

I want the people in my paintings to have room to simply be. Black people are often expected to be strong, productive, resilient, or able to carry whatever comes our way. I'm interested in what happens when we put some of that down.

A quiet moment can hold so much: someone sitting with their thoughts, allowing themselves to rest, or feeling something they don't yet have words for. I want to give those experiences the same attention and presence that a more dramatic moment might receive. Our tenderness deserves to be seen. So does our uncertainty. Neither takes away from our strength or the fullness of who we are.

The In-Between explores the space between healing and being healed. How do you recognize when a painting about an unresolved experience is complete?

I separate finishing the painting from resolving the experience. I can still be living through something after I've said what I need to say about it on canvas. A painting feels complete when the emotion is there and the visual decisions support it. The posture, the space, the color, and the details have to feel honest together. Sometimes I have to ask myself whether another change will help the painting communicate or whether I'm trying to paint my way into an answer I don't have yet.



Nai Turner | Holding What I Can

With The In-Between, I'm learning to let the work end with an open question. That's part of being truthful about where I am.

In Nothing Is Wrong Right Now, a seated figure occupies an intensely red interior. How does this color relate to the reassurance expressed in the title?

I like the tension between the intensity of the red and the reassurance of the title. Red can feel charged, warm, or overwhelming, and I wanted the room to have that presence while the figure has permission to be still.
For me, the title is a reminder to return to the present. When you're used to anticipating what could go wrong, a quiet moment can take some getting used to. The red allows that intensity to remain in the painting without determining what happens next. The figure can exist within it and still experience a moment of peace. The words "right now" matter because that moment doesn't have to promise anything beyond itself.

In Holding What I Can, the hands become the central focus. What did you want their gesture to communicate about the experience of holding on?

I wanted the gesture to communicate care, effort, and limits. Hands can say so much about what someone is carrying without us ever seeing their face.
The folded fabric gives that act of holding something familiar and intimate. I was thinking about the things we try to keep together: memories, responsibilities, relationships, and parts of ourselves. There is tenderness in holding something carefully, but there is also a point where we have to recognize our capacity.
The title, Holding What I Can, gives permission to acknowledge that limit. There is value in what we're able to hold, even when we can't carry everything.

How does working on murals influence the way you approach the intimate scenes in your oil paintings?

Murals have taught me to think about how a painting meets someone in a space. I have to consider what a person notices from a distance, how their eye moves, and what makes them want to come closer. That awareness carries into my oil paintings through composition, color, and the presence of the figure.
With an intimate scene, I want something to draw you in before you notice the smaller details. Then the posture, the hands, or an object in the room can give you a reason to stay. Working at different scales has helped me understand how much a quiet gesture can communicate when I give it enough space.

Through Live or Exist Foundation, you address food insecurity and housing instability. How has this community work shaped your understanding of care and dignity within your artistic practice?

Through Live or Exist Foundation, I've learned that how you offer support matters as much as what you offer. Someone receiving a meal or basic necessities deserves choice, respect, and a human connection. Their circumstances are only one part of their life.
That understanding carries into how I paint people. I want the figures to have an inner life that belongs to them. Viewers can connect with what they see without being given every detail of someone's story. Both my community work and my art come from paying attention to people. Care means taking the time to see someone, listen, and recognize their humanity without requiring them to prove that they deserve it.

Indra Persad Milowe



You grew up in Curepe, Trinidad. What are some of your earliest memories of art, color, or visual culture from your childhood there?

After I retired in April, 2019, I thought about all the kitchens that I had cooked in and my favorite was my grandmother's kitchen. She cooked with three chulhas (wood-burning outdoor stoves). They required a lot of skill to manipulate the pieces of wood, to keep the flame burning correctly. To become an "eligible bride," one of the requirements was to be able to puff a paratha (a flatbread made with wheat flour and ghee), with the right texture and consistency. After mastering that skill, you were allowed to place "your handprint" on her kitchen wall. It was like a graduation! That kitchen brought up a lot of memories of different foods that were cooked for different festivals. Hence my first painting was my grandmother's kitchen. As I began to plan out this painting, I remembered the smell of freshly made ladoos (small spherical sweets) which was a favorite dessert of ours and of Lord Ganesh. Lord Ganesh is the Remover of all Obstacles and the first Hindu deity to be worshiped in all festivals and ceremonies. My second painting was Ganesh Chaturthi, a festival honoring Lord Ganesh.



Indra Persad Milowe | Cili Figures

How did your time at Curepe Presbyterian School, St Augustine Girls' High School, and the University of the West Indies influence your development as an artist?

In my youth I wanted to study art. My interest was in nature, still life and design. I adored my high school art teacher, Mrs. Helga Mohammed. She was from Madrid and married to a Trinidadian. On my first day in her class, she wrote on the blackboard: "Art is not just a painting hanging up on a wall, art is in every aspect of your daily life." My paintings were chosen for the high school's yearbook for two consecutive years. At age 15, I painted from nature: orchids on a branch. At age 16, I did a still life: a display of an apple, pear, and a bunch of grapes. Those two paintings and all the incredible reviews that came with them lifted my confidence in my artwork.
I retired from general, ophthalmic and psychiatric nursing in 2019. I had worked in England, Malta, Trinidad and the United States. Through British Nurses Overseas, I was able to work in different countries. Ultimately, I decided to go back to art during my retirement and my preferred medium is acrylic paints on canvas.



Indra Persad Milowe | A Balinese Funeral

I have had numerous exhibitions of my paintings in public venues and in many online digital forums. I have three large collections of paintings relating to the Festivals and Folklore of Trinidad, West Indies, Moroccan culture, and Balinese culture.

Your work often draws on travel, cultural traditions, and local celebrations. What first inspired you to make these experiences a central part of your artistic practice?

I have travelled extensively in and out of cities around the world and have many fond memories. I was determined to create very original art!

How did your two artist residencies in Ubud change the way you observed and understood Balinese culture?

I always wore sarongs (traditional wrap around dresses) and was told that if I wore my sarong with a kebaya (traditional chest garment) I could be invited to the five-day Odalan Festival at the local hindu temple. A guard at the entrance makes sure everyone is properly attired!
Kebaya has become Indonesia's most proud national attire for women. Each province and area has its own distinct kebaya style. Kebaya Bali is especially unique and distinctive compared to other areas in Indonesia. Its uniqueness lies in the colors of kebaya used for different religious ceremonies.
For Odalan, the statues of the deities housed in the Royal Palace are taken by a large procession to the town's temple where they are worshiped for five days. Then they are removed and returned. The level of commitment of the musicians, drummers and everyone is wonderful to watch as they put their everything in these proud moments. Crowds of Balinese as well as interested tourists observed these events.
At the outdoor temple, I had difficulty getting up from the ground one day because of leg cramps. Two women came to help me up and invited me to join everyone for lunch and it felt like I belonged to that community. When I asked to pay they refused my offer and was told that I was their guest! The decorations were incredibly beautiful; everyone was dressed in their finest. Afterwards, I went out and bought six more sarongs!

You attended ceremonies and festivals in Bali, including a wedding, a baby ceremony, Odalan, and Galungan. Which of these experiences had the strongest impact on you as an artist, and why?

I was invited to a Balinese wedding by Rudi and his wife Putu (the owners of the residence where I stayed). I felt so accepted when I was invited to take photographs with the bride and groom and to join everyone for lunch.
I had been shopping in Ubud Market for an Ikat wall hanging and spent quite a while in this shop chatting with the lovely woman owner. Ikat weaving refers to yarns that are first dyed before they are woven into patterns. The weaver has to precisely dye the threads then align them into the correct pattern, a very complicated process. On top of that, there are three different ikat weaving techniques!
One week later, I was walking around Ubud Market and saw that same shop owner again. She came to chat with me and wanted to know when I was leaving. She invited me to her "Granddaughter's three-month Baby Ceremony." I was ecstatic about the invitation, but it was the end of the day and I was too tired to go out to buy a gift. I stopped off at Putu's house to ask her what is appropriate to take as a gift. She replied, "Anything!" I had bought a beautiful box of incense to bring back and she approved of it. I asked her what she was taking and she said, "I will bring a bag of rice." The Balinese are so simple and practical and much less materialistic compared to most people in the USA.
I was blown away to see the level of devotion, love and support that was showered by everyone to this baby. Lunch was delicious. I tried everything including the roasted pig. I also got a box of treats to take back with me. It was attended by a lot of colorfully dressed women whom I had met in the temple and at the wedding. It is a small town, everyone knows everyone else, they all knew my name and wanted to know when I would return to Ubud! I was struck at how spiritual the ceremony was and took a seat so I could see all the gifts everyone was bringing: rice, flour, tea, coffee, vegetables, a bunch of bananas, coconuts, eggs etc.
The Balinese believe that a baby does not fully come into its new body until one hundred days of age. Therefore, the baby is carried everywhere and its feet are never allowed to touch the ground until the ceremony! Also, a Balian psychic present looks at the infant and announces who the baby is a reincarnation of!
The essence of the Balian life wisdom is "Tat twam asi," (Sanskrit) meaning "The Divine is I" but it also means "The Divine is he/she." It is like the Western "Love they neighbor as thyself!" And they practice this every day. Their warmth and caring and hospitality are palpable. That is why the people of Bali are such a treasure!

In your Beautiful Ubud, Bali collection, you created 20 paintings. How did you decide which people, rituals, symbols, and architectural elements to include?

It was easy! They are all so meaningful and beautiful. Candi bentar (traditional ornate entranceways) and rice fields are everywhere, so they had to be my first choice.

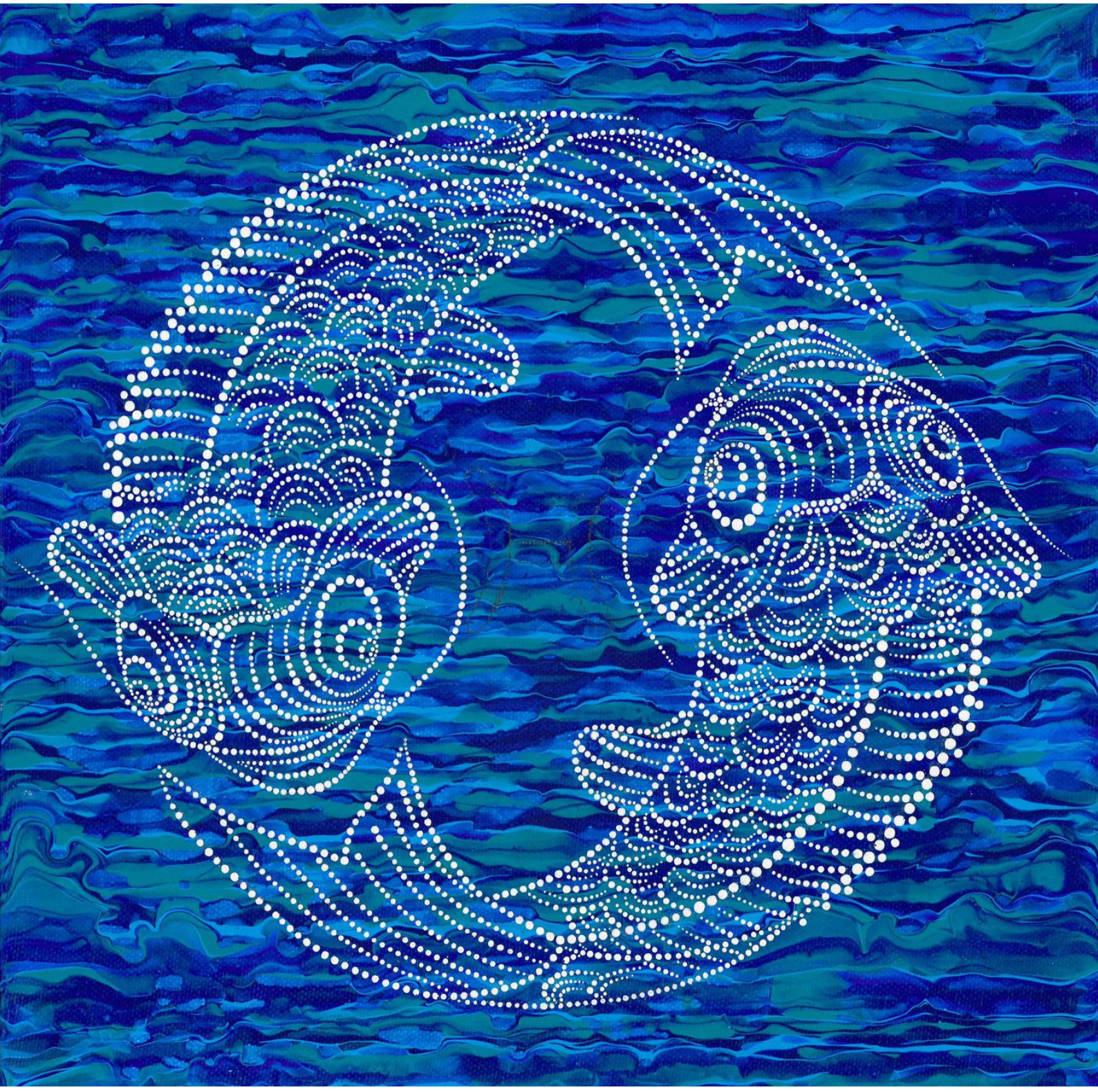
Looking across your collections today, how has your artistic perspective evolved, and what subjects or places would you like to explore in your next body of work?

I have been working on modern art designs recently. However, I often weave cultural themes into them. My latest painting, Zuri, describes the African tradition of circles and their symbolism in daily life and culture.

Lyuba Darova is a painter from Krasnoyarsk region, Siberia, Russia. She works primarily in acrylic on canvas, exploring the theme of the sea depths and their inhabitants. Her work treats "the sea within" as a state of mind — a rising sign, a hint. Her works have been shown in selected group exhibitions and cultural events across the Krasnoyarsk region.

Project Statement
My paintings are meditative drawing — a process that changes my own state and lifts me higher than everyday life usually allows. I work in acrylic because it lets me reach the result I need quickly and directly. In my recent works I focus on my inner world: the sea as a mirror, and signs that appear like quiet prompts from beneath the surface.





Lyuba Darova | Fish | 2025

Teona Margvelashvili



How did your creative journey begin, and what led you to work across both fashion design and visual art?



I have been drawing since childhood, and I used to sew clothes for dolls. Interestingly, the clothes I made for my dolls many years ago are still relevant today. One of my drawings was exhibited when I was still in kindergarten. Later, at school, I began sewing bags and clothes for my friends.
Creativity has always come naturally to me. Since childhood, I have created whatever my imagination inspired me to make, and this remains an essential part of my life today.

Has your Georgian background influenced your visual language? If so, which aspects of it feel most present in your work?

Yes, it has. If I had the choice, I would be born in Georgia again.
My country has a long and rich history. Georgia has endured many wars and occupations while preserving its history, culture, and religion. To this day, 20 percent of my country's territory remains occupied by Russia.
The current situation in my country deeply affects me, and I often express my emotions



through my paintings, collection presentations, and performances. I believe the colors I use in my work reflect my country's past and future.

You describe yourself as an avant-garde designer. What makes a design avant-garde in your eyes?

For me, avant-garde is an inner calling, self-belief, and the courage to be different. It is about freedom, experimentation, and expressing one's vision without limitations.
To me, avant-garde means not following existing rules simply because they already exist, but creating your own language, your own world, and daring to present something that is not yet understood or accepted by everyone.

How do you decide whether an idea should become a garment, a painting, or a combination of the two?

I believe an artist should express as much as possible through their work and communicate everything they feel the need to say.
I create garments, paint, and stage performances. For me, these are different forms of self-expression through which I communicate the present and my own perspective on the world around me.

What draws you to particular fabrics and materials, and how do their physical qualities influence your designs?

I love experimenting by combining seemingly incompatible fabrics and contrasting colors. For I me, it is about making the impossible possible. also love combining the old with the new. I try to let the fabric speak for itself and become part of the message I want to communicate.

How much does practical wearability influence your decisions, especially when it comes into tension with your artistic vision?

I believe courage is one of the foundations of self-confidence. When people feel comfortable in what they wear, they can express themselves freely.
My collection is an expression of protest. For me, clothing is not merely about appearance — it is a means of expressing my message, my position, and my response to the world we live in. I welcome the idea of clothing becoming a form of protest and a way to communicate a powerful message.

Has a response from a viewer or someone wearing your work ever changed the way you understood a piece?

I have received a great deal of criticism since childhood. There have been moments of surprise and even attempts to ridicule my work.
However, I believe that when you are confident in yourself, criticism can become one of your strengths. If you believe your work is not good simply because someone else does not like it, you are allowing doubt to undermine your confidence in yourself and your artistic vision.
For me, it is important for an artist to preserve their individuality and never abandon their message simply because it is not accepted by everyone.



Kyung Lim Lee



Kyung Lim Lee | Blooming Time Korea 1945–2050 | 2026

Your practice brings together photography, fashion, design, and generative AI. How has your background in fashion design shaped the way you compose images and tell visual stories?

Fashion design has taught me to see how shape, color, materials, and space work together. In clothing design, the silhouette, details, and fabric textures come together to create an overall impression. I take the same approach when composing images, considering how each element contributes to the whole. I pay close attention to what to highlight, where to leave open space, and how to guide the viewer's eye.

This way of seeing also influences how I tell stories. I want to convey the mood of a scene through color and shape. My background in fashion design shapes how I look at scenes in photographs, and I use generative AI to reimagine them. This process brings the different parts of my work together.



Kyung Lim Lee | Breath Of A Thousand Years | 2026

What first drew you to generative AI, and what did it allow you to express that you had struggled to achieve through conventional photography?

I became interested in generative AI because I wanted to bring memories and imagination into the scenes I saw around me. For me, a photograph captures how a place looks at a particular moment, along with a sense of its history and the feelings I associate with it. I wanted to explore how these different layers of time could come together in a single image.

Generative AI allows me to bring together different places, seasons, real-world forms, and imagined scenes that would be difficult to capture in a single shot. It also lets me experiment with these elements in different ways. It has expanded my creative possibilities, especially when imagining scenes where traditional landscapes and modern cities exist together, or where flowers give familiar places a new feel. What appeals to me is the chance to build on what I observe through photography and give visual form to scenes that do not yet exist.

Could you walk us through the creation of Blooming Time Korea, from the initial idea to the final image? What roles did photography and AI play at different stages?



Kyung Lim Lee | Green Twilight | 2026

This work began with a question: “How can Korean culture and memory continue to bloom in today’s landscape?” I first looked through photographs I had taken over time. I considered the character and mood of the places I wanted to show and how tradition and modern life came together in those places. Studying the shapes, textures, and light in these photographs helped me develop a clearer direction for the work.
Next, I thought about how flowers, branches, traditional landscapes, and modern cities could come together, and used AI to explore different compositions. I reviewed the generated images to see whether they reflected my original idea, whether the space and lighting felt natural, and whether the cultural elements were presented appropriately. I made changes where needed and compared the results to complete the final artwork.
Throughout this process, my own photographs formed the basis of the scene, while AI helped me explore different versions of it. I believe it is the artist’s role to decide which images to choose and how to refine them.

When reinterpreting Korean cultural heritage, how do you decide which elements to preserve faithfully and which to transform through imagination?

I begin by looking at the features that make a subject recognizable. I try to understand the meaning of elements connected to cultural identity, such as the outlines and proportions of buildings and the way patterns are arranged. Understanding the origins and cultural context of these forms is the starting point for my reinterpretation.
I use my imagination mainly to explore the settings in which these elements appear and how they relate to one another. Changing the season, scale, or surrounding landscape can allow familiar subjects to evoke new feelings and tell new stories. What matters most to me is whether their cultural roots remain recognizable after these changes and whether the changes add to the meaning of the work.

In Blooming Time Korea, blossoming branches, traditional landscapes, and the contemporary city coexist. How did you bring these different elements into a shared sense of place and time?

When bringing different elements together, I pay close attention to light, color, and scale. For the elements to feel like parts of a single landscape, the lighting needs to be consistent and the colors need to work together across the image. I also consider the balance between shapes and open space so that the viewer’s eye can move naturally through the scene.
In this work, the flowering branches helped connect the different elements. I used the flow of the branches to guide the viewer’s eye between traditional landscapes and urban structures. In this way, I wanted to create a space where elements from different periods could exist together. The landscape I want to create combines the features of real places with memories and a sense of the present.

You describe "blooming" as the continuing vitality of Korean culture and memory. How do you translate this idea into visual choices such as colour, rhythm, and composition?

For me, “blooming” is a process in which something that already exists emerges again under new conditions. I believe culture and memory gain new life as the ways we understand and express them change over time.
I used color to connect the flowers with the surrounding landscape and bring the whole image to life. I created rhythm through the repetition of flowers, the way the branches extend, and the spaces between elements. This repetition and variation reflect how culture lives on while gradually changing. By connecting traditional and modern elements in the composition, I wanted to convey the feeling that Korean culture and memory continue to grow in our lives today.

How does teaching fashion design influence your artistic experimentation, and what questions do your students raise that make you reconsider your own approach to technology?

In fashion design education, being able to explain why you chose certain shapes and colors is just as important as being able to create images. When I ask students to reflect on their creative process, I ask myself the same questions about my own work. Whenever I use a new tool, I consider how it relates to what I want to express.
I would like to explore two questions with students: “If AI has created much of the image, where does the artist’s own perspective come through?” and “Why did you choose this image from the many that AI generated?” These questions remind me how important observation, interpretation, and choice are in the creative process.
For me, teaching and creating art are inseparable, with each shaping the other. My students’ creative ideas help me take a fresh look at the standards I have come to accept. The trial and error in my own creative work also provides real examples that we can discuss and learn from in class. I believe that sharing these experiences and reflecting on them together can help students develop their ideas and strengthen their ability to express them.



Kyung Lim Lee | Silent Forest | 2026

Astrid Veronica Roxana Chiffelle Kirby

Astrid Chiffelle Kirby is a Chilean visual artist and practitioner of traditional Japanese painting. Her artistic journey is distinguished by rigorous independent research into Sensu, the traditional Japanese folding fan, which served as a gateway to her exploration of Nihonga.
She developed her artistic language through specialized training under the mentorship of renowned Japanese artist and academic Miki Morohoshi, a professor at Osaka University of Arts in Japan.
She actively participates in international group exhibitions through Doxa Gallery, national art competitions in Chile, and notable collaborations with the Melodías del Tiempo platform.

Project Statement
Through the millennia-old technique of Nihonga, I use natural mineral pigments (iwa-enogu), natural earth pigments (tennen tsuchi-enogu), natural water-based pigments (suihi-enogu), sumi ink, gofun, and nikawa glue on washi paper mounted on a wooden panel to explore the ecological resilience of native flora and spiritual landscapes.
My artistic practice seeks to create an invisible bridge between Japan's classical artistic heritage and a contemporary, place-based perspective, carefully balancing the elegance of flat forms, asymmetry, and an absolute respect for empty space (ma).

Astrid Chiffelle | Path to the Sacred | 2026





Astrid Chiffelle | Cala | 2026

Irina Berlizova



Your background includes law, art history, and psychology. How did painting become your chosen form of expression, and how do these different fields inform your practice today?

I have been painting for more than twenty years, so painting is a significant part of my life—one that has developed alongside my education and professional career. I studied art history at the Russian State University for the Humanities, attended Veronika Kalacheva's art school, and studied portraiture under the guidance of Polina Ishkhanova. Over time, a range of themes emerged that I continue to explore today: the inner world of the individual, cultural memory, and the relationship between people, the objects around them, and the spaces they inhabit.



Each of these areas has its own place in my practice. Law is part of my professional background. Art history helps me understand the relationship between artistic language and the culture of its time. Psychology supports my interest in people, their emotions, experiences, and inner contradictions. Painting allows me to approach these themes through image, colour, and material, while preserving what is difficult to express fully in words.

You explore the relationship between a person's inner world and their surroundings. How does your interest in psychology influence the way you develop an image or convey an emotional state?

I'm interested in how a person's inner state manifests itself outwardly, and how the surrounding environment, in turn, influences their perception of themselves. In portraiture, this is connected to themes of vulnerability, corporeality, and the ambiguity of emotional experience. But a person can also be explored through the objects they choose to surround themselves with.

For example, in my series The Aesthetics of Gold, I turn to familiar images—a phone, coffee, a croissant, golf. They become symbols of a particular lifestyle, success, and belonging to a certain social



Irina Berlizova | Hyperjump

circle. Here, the psychological dimension emerges through the relationship between a person and an object: what we choose for ourselves, what we want to communicate about ourselves to others, and what we elevate or even idolize.
In a painting, the emotional state is conveyed by the work as a whole: its composition, depth of color, density of the surface, and the balance between calm and active areas. That is why texture and material are just as essential to me as the depicted subject itself.

You describe your artistic language as a combination of contemporary restraint and the aesthetics of the old masters. Which artists or historical traditions are especially meaningful to you, and how do you reinterpret their influence?

I am particularly drawn to traditions that bring together craftsmanship, careful attention to materials, and the relationship between an artwork and the space it inhabits. In the aesthetics of the Old Masters, I am attracted to the depth of colour, the complexity of the painted surface, and the carefully constructed composition. Another important area of my interest is Russian decorative and applied art, especially embroidery and ornament.
In the series Interweaving Traditions, the cross-stitch gradually transforms into a square, a pixel. Part of the ornament is made with real thread, before transitioning into painted geometry. Gold leaf with a greenish patina evokes the aged gold of icons, the metal of church domes, and traces of time on everyday household objects.
I am interested in how a familiar form changes when transferred into a different material and context. What remains of embroidery when the fabric disappears? Does an ornament retain its connection to manual labour when it begins to resemble a digital image? It is from these questions that my reinterpretation of tradition emerges.

You want your paintings to become part of an architectural space while retaining their independence. What allows a work to enter into a dialogue with a room without losing its own voice?

The dialogue begins with composition, scale, colour, and light. A painting can support the rhythm of a space, add depth to it, or become a focal point around which attention is gathered. What matters to me is how the artwork is perceived within the room as a whole, as well as what reveals itself to the viewer when they come closer.
The independence of a painting comes from its content and its own artistic structure. It should have a theme that remains meaningful beyond the specific interior in which it is placed. In the Interweaving Traditions series, this theme is cultural memory and the transformation of traditional craft forms into a contemporary language; in the Aesthetics of Gold series, it is our



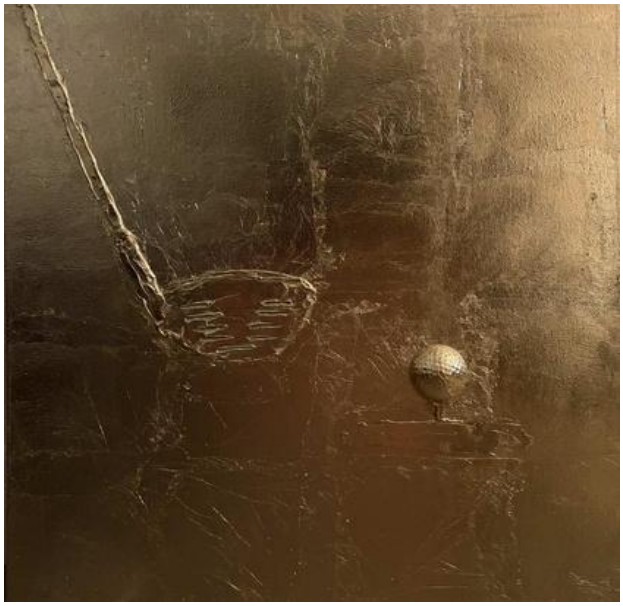
Irina Berlizova | The Home Guardian Interior

relationship with objects and symbols of status.
I want people to be able to live with a work for a long time: to notice how its surface changes under different lighting, to return to its details, and to discover new connections with their own experiences. For me, this is an important part of the emotional space of a home.
People purchase my existing paintings, but I also enjoy creating commissioned works for specific spaces and collaborating with architects and interior designers. This approach makes it possible to create a sense of completeness within the environment that surrounds a person, while also filling the paintings with meanings that resonate throughout the entire project.

Metal leaf and textured surfaces play a prominent role in your work. What expressive possibilities do these materials offer, particularly as the light and the viewer's position change?

Metal leaf and relief make light an active participant in the work. As the lighting changes, the metallic surface can become brighter or more subdued, while the texture emerges through shadows. As the viewer moves, the relationship between these areas changes, and with it, the overall impression of the work.





Irina Berlizova | Success

At the same time, a single material can serve different conceptual purposes. For example, in the Aesthetics of Gold series, gold leaf emphasizes the almost sacred significance of ordinary objects. In the Interweaving Traditions series, by contrast, the patinated surface is associated with memory, time, and the history of objects.
What matters to me is precisely this connection between the physical properties of the material and the content of the work. Shine, roughness, layers of paint, or embroidered thread offer different ways of experiencing the image, even before the viewer begins to interpret or explain it.

Your works move between recognizable subjects, abstraction, and ornament. What determines the visual language and materials you choose for a particular idea?

The choice depends on what the idea is built around and what is important for the viewer to see or understand. In the Aesthetics of Gold series, the objects need to remain recognizable; without that, the dialogue about habits, status, and lifestyle would be lost.
In the Interweaving Traditions series, gold recedes into the background and becomes more of a setting, while the ornament takes centre stage, because it is the ornament that carries the connection to craftsmanship and cultural memory. The use of real embroidery has a specific meaning here: it preserves the presence of handwork alongside geometric forms that resemble pixels and digitalization. Abstraction allows me to focus on the relationships between colour, rhythm, texture, and the very sensation of space. I work with different



means of expression, but they are united by one theme: how a person perceives themselves and the world through images and the material environment.

You value the possibility of a painting revealing new meanings over time. Has a viewer's interpretation ever helped you discover something unexpected in your own work?

It is important to me to leave room in a painting for personal interpretation. I introduce a theme and choose the means through which it takes shape, but the viewer comes to the work with their own memories and associations—and sometimes even with a certain professional bias. I always find it fascinating to hear what different people think a painting conveys or what they believe the artist intended to say. Even when the artist has expressed something very directly in the work, and even when the painting is accompanied by an artist's or curator's text, everyone still sees something of their own.

I have one painting called Hyperjump. It was conceived as a work about a modern man standing at a crossroads, on the verge of transformation, with the surrounding space pressing in on him. At one of the exhibitions where the work was shown, the curator was convinced that it was about my own depression. That interpretation was completely unexpected to me, but of course it made me think. I did not discover any depression, but in today's world of ubiquitous antidepressants, it is always reassuring to have one's mental health confirmed.

Even an ornament can be perceived through memories of home and family belongings, through an interest in tradition, or through its resemblance to digital graphics. All of these possibilities are embedded in the work itself, but their meaning will be different for each person. For me, for example, cross-stitch embroidery brings back memories of my grandmother, who taught me how to embroider, while for someone else it may simply be an interesting contemporary trend—which is something I kept hearing at my most recent exhibition.

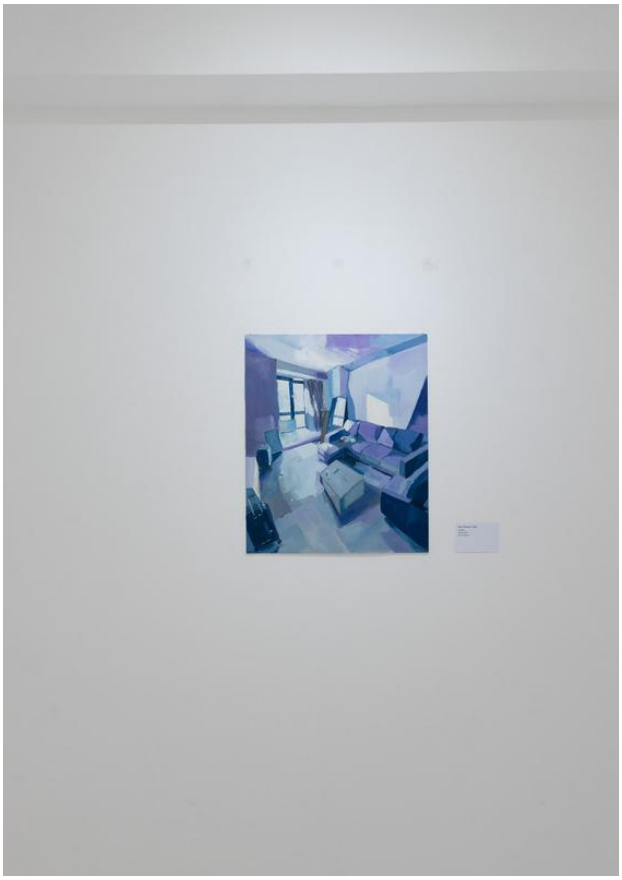
That is why I relate strongly to the idea that our reading of a painting can also change over time. The work itself remains the same, but a person begins to notice something different in it depending on their experience and their state of mind.

Exhibition review

Exploring Yue Zhou's Where the Room Ends

by ***Tabitha Ysart Green***

Gallery 46, London
26 October – 2 November 2026



View from Where the Room Ends at Gallery 46. Image courtesy of Yue Zhou.

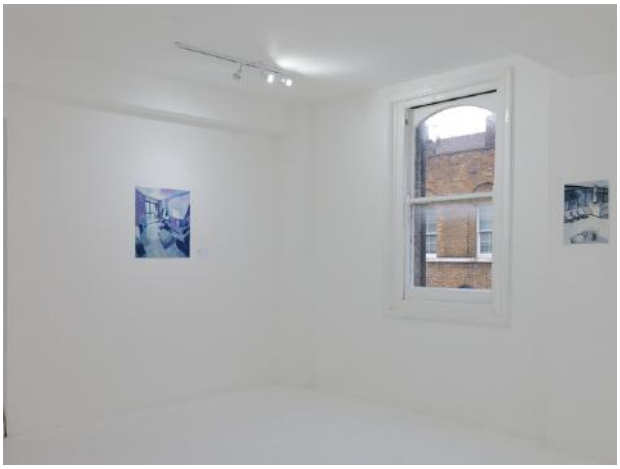
From 26th October to 2nd November 2026 Yue Zhou's solo exhibition Where the Room Ends was presented at Gallery 46, London. Supported by London Art Collective, this exhibition delves into "the boundary of the room", investigating the room as a space which carries daily life, accumulating memories, emotions, habits and traces left by others, and questioning where our living spaces begin and end.

Zhou is a contemporary artist working mainly with oil on canvas, acrylics and watercolours. She draws on her own intuition, emotion and everyday perceptions for her compositions, and uses cool tones, light, space and subtle colour relationships to construct psychological landscapes that lie between reality, memory and dreams. For Zhou, painting is more than a depiction of the external world. It is a way of perceiving the world, organizing experiences and responding to her inner self. In her works, subjects and scenes remain in a state of open narrative, inviting viewers to project their own memories and emotions during the viewing process, and to reconsider the subtle and fluid connections between humanity and the world.



View from Where the Room Ends at Gallery 46. Image courtesy of Yue Zhou.

The exhibition is centered around the series titled End of Rooms (2025-2026). This set of five paintings displays a series of interior scenes in which memories, emotions and the experiences of others constantly intertwine. Zhou implements layering as a medium through which to display how reality and imagination interplay within these spaces, turning them from simple interior scenes into psychological spaces. She breaks down the original boundaries of space, causing familiar places to take on unstable and multifaceted appearances. She explores the multiple lives which a room may live through time, and how these lives, and the people who have lived within them may interact in extra-temporal spaces.



View from Where the Room Ends at Gallery 46. Image courtesy of Yue Zhou.

The works thus pose the question: when different life experiences converge within the same space, to whom does the room truly belong? And where exactly are its boundaries? Displayed within the exhibition space the artworks take on a further layer of fracturing, providing windows into spaces that the viewer does not and cannot occupy, and adding another life, another purpose, to the space.

The End of Rooms series is accompanied by four other works; Another Window (2025), Before Becoming (2024), Indoor Weather (2025), and Green Green (2025). Indoor Weather acts as a transitional piece, shifting the focus of the exhibition to the inner state of individuals, while still addressing the nature of indoor spaces and how they interact with the people who live within them. It explores how an individual's interior space, both physically and mentally, can be shaped by their environment and activities, and the natural mirroring which occurs between a person and their home environment. Another Window transforms the canvas into a window through which one may see another way of viewing the world, rather than a one-to-one representation of it. In this piece Zhou continues her almost surrealistic way of presenting the world by blurring the lines between reality and the image and allowing the real world and the depicted scene to respond to one another. Before Becoming creates another alternative view of the world, imagining the future rather than representing the present. It occupies a space between reality and a dream, like our wishes for the future grounded in the present; an exercise in preparation or manifestation.

Where the Room Ends explores how people live, remember and imagine in unsettled spaces, reflecting contemporary living: shared kitchens, other people's food in the fridge, unfamiliar bathroom lights, open suitcases, unopened letters and unclaimed dishes. It suggests that as living spaces change, the boundaries of the room become blurred, extending into the past, present and imagination.



View from Where the Room Ends at Gallery 46. Image courtesy of Yue Zhou.

Interview

Maria Bakushinskaya



You describe your path to art as a gradual transition from technology and photography into a broader visual practice. Was there a particular moment when you realized that art needed to become a central part of your life?

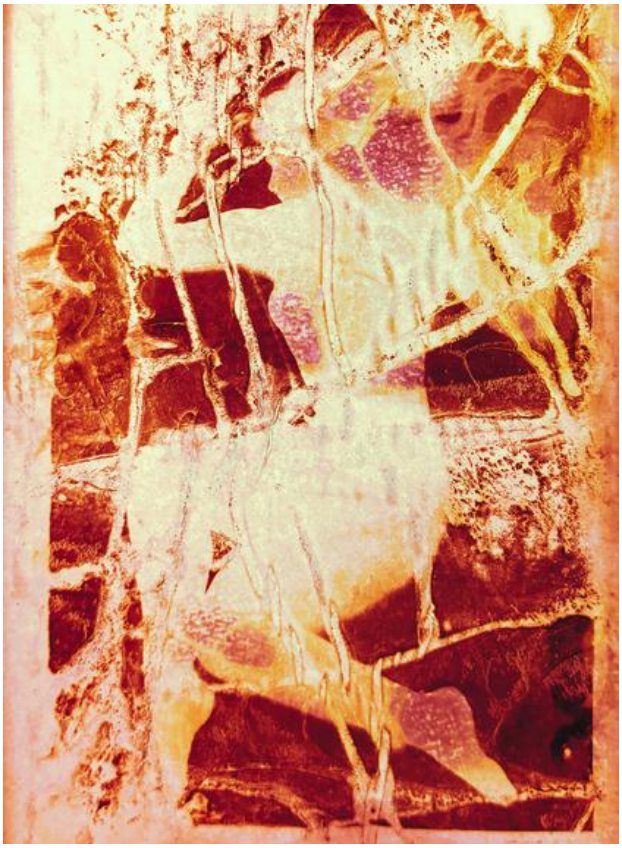
I think it happened gradually. I've always loved photography, but my images were different from what I usually saw, especially on social media. I was drawn to blurred faces, neon colors, distortions, and a sense of unreality rather than technically perfect photographs.
For a long time, I was afraid to share my work because I thought I was just making something weird. Eventually, I showed my photographs to someone from the art world who saw potential in them that I hadn't recognized myself. That gave me the confidence to experiment and develop my own visual language.
As my work started getting noticed and I began receiving invitations to exhibitions, that was when I first felt that I was exactly where I wanted to be. I realized that what I once considered strange was exactly what made my work unique.



Growing up between different environments and cultures has shaped your personal history. How has this experience influenced the way you think about identity, belonging, and the inner world in your work?

I was born in Russia, but even as a child, I knew I wouldn't stay there forever. I moved to Israel at 13, but that feeling of being somewhere temporary never disappeared.
Growing up between cultures made me question what defines our identity. I've never felt that I completely belonged to one country or society, as if I existed somewhere between different worlds.
Experiencing different cultures also showed me how differently people perceive reality and how much our environment shapes us. Perhaps that's why I'm more interested in what remains of our identity beyond cultural definitions. Through my art, I explore inner experiences that can connect people regardless of where they come from.

Photography was your starting point, but your practice now includes video, mixed media, and digital experimentation. What motivated you to move beyond traditional photography?



Maria Bakushinskaya | Traces Of Contact | 2026

I wanted my work to feel more alive, allowing viewers to immerse themselves in an atmosphere where images and stories unfold through movement.
I've worked in IT for many years, so combining technology with art felt natural to me. One of my first experiments was displaying photographs on an old CRT television. I loved the result and started animating my images, adding glitches, and experimenting with video.
I've always loved retro technology because it gives me a warm feeling of nostalgia. Even when a work explores pain or difficult emotions, an old television adds a completely different emotional dimension. There's an interesting contrast between something heavy and painful and something familiar, comforting, almost soothing.
Mixed media allows me to create not just an image, but an experience.

Glitches, noise, overexposure, and digital disruptions appear repeatedly in your work. What attracts you to these visual "errors", and what do they allow you to express that a clean image cannot?

I'm drawn to the aesthetic of imperfections. To me, distorted and blurred images often feel more honest than perfectly composed photographs. Sometimes an image that's too flawless feels artificial, as if there's no room for anything unpredictable.
Life isn't perfectly clear either. We have gaps in our memories, we don't always understand our emotions, and we don't have answers to everything.
Glitches, noise, and blur allow me to express that uncertainty. The image never reveals itself completely, leaving something hidden or unsaid.

Your figures often seem partially dissolved, obscured, or caught between visibility and disappearance. What does this dissolution of the human form represent for you?

When we see a clearly defined face, we tend to focus on the story of that particular person. I want viewers to be able to imagine themselves in that person's place.
By dissolving human figures, I remove individual features and leave room for personal interpretation. Rather than imposing a specific meaning, I want people to immerse themselves in the work and find something of their own within it.

Pain, chaos, uncertainty, memory, and transformation recur throughout your work, yet you do not try to resolve these states. How do you approach the process of turning difficult or complex emotions into visual material?

I've been through many difficult experiences, and they've shaped the themes I explore in my art.
Creating is a way for me to process emotions that are sometimes too complex to put into words. Giving them a visual form helps me understand what I'm feeling and sometimes helps me get through it.
I also hope that people who recognize their own experiences in my work might feel less alone.
I don't necessarily want to find answers or turn pain into something positive. Sometimes it's enough to simply allow those feelings to exist and to be seen.

When viewers encounter works such as Traces of Contact and Inner Loop, what kind of emotional or psychological space would you like them to enter, and what do you hope they might discover there?

Inner Loop explores emotional isolation, when someone becomes so trapped in their inner world that returning to reality feels almost impossible. Even when they recognize that their situation is destructive, they may still feel unable to escape the cycle.
Traces of Contact explores the opposite: our relationship with the outside world. Every connection leaves a trace. Human interactions can enrich and transform us, but they can also hurt or even destroy parts of us. Creation and destruction often exist together.
These works explore the tension between isolation and connection. We can suffer through relationships, but withdrawing completely doesn't necessarily bring peace either.
Where is the line between protecting our inner world and allowing ourselves to be part of the world around us?
I would like viewers to feel the tension between these two states.



Zazie_blue



You began painting in March 2026, having already published poetry and children's books. What drew you to painting at this particular moment in your life?

I actually have a really sad story. I worked for a private school, and I had hoped to be there until I retired. It didn't happen. They fired me unfairly and didn't give me a chance to prove that what they were stating was wrong. But of course, being at a school with an at-will contract, I didn't fight back. I figured that God would take my side and justice would be served. I left quietly a month before my students' graduation and before they received their awards. My former student, who was also my editor-in-chief for the school newspaper, encouraged me to take the oil painting class, which I said I would take, but then I decided that I didn't have the money at the moment to do it. He was disappointed when I told him that I had changed my mind, and I feel that I tried harder on his behalf to make him happy. For me, my entire career was in teaching, and this was one of the most devastating events to happen in my entire career. I fell into a deep depression, and attending the very challenging oil painting class was a way of alleviating this pain and emptiness, and I worked really hard at it.

What does the name zazie_blue mean to you, and how does it relate to the person you become when you create?

Zazie_blue was always there, but in the past she was my poetic muse. I love France and Zazie is Isabelle in France. Blue because in my poetry writing, I hid the dark part of my thoughts and it existed in my poems because my diary was read by my ex-husband in the past. With poems, it could be cryptic and no one could distinguish whether it was real or not. I love the colors pink and black and it shows my true nature. Most of the time, I am bubbly and pink, and at other times, when something devastating occurs, I become the color black, and then it almost seems like zazie_blue comes around to inspire me to work on the artistic part of my personality.

You describe Isabelle as your first painting that "felt worthy". What happened during its creation that changed the way you saw the work—and yourself as an artist?

My Isabelle was a creation that was produced as a reaction to my anger at what had happened to my career. I worked so hard to get my degrees in college, staying up until 2 AM with a newborn baby in my lap. I couldn't take my charcoal sketching class to learn the basics of charcoal sketching with my oil painting teacher, so I decided angrily that I could do so without him, and I worked hard by watching YouTube and borrowing books. Initially, I couldn't work with the messy charcoal, and I realized that I couldn't do the oil paint either but

had to do acrylic instead, and there was so much to research and experiment with that it drove me crazy. At one point, I gave up on her because she looked hideous to me, and the eyes were the most important aspect of any painting to me. My oil painting teacher said that the best thing is to work on shadows and light and work from the background, and I had a really hard time. I almost abandoned her out of the momentum which was building, but instead I chose to ignore her for two weeks. First one eye and then the other emerged, and then she seemed to look right at me, begging me to finish her.
When I did, I got so many compliments about her beauty. I decided to enter her into the Paris exhibition and was accepted on the first try. After that, I decided to enter her into more and more exhibitions, and so far she is now being showcased in New York, London, Amsterdam, and Italy.

When oil paint did not produce the results you wanted, you turned to other materials. How did this decision change your understanding of what a painting could be?

In my mind initially, I felt that I should do the oil painting, although it was so brutal and very difficult, and the cleanup was always so messy. But after I researched and found out I couldn't do collage and Mod Podge and it didn't mix well with my acrylic paint pens and my colored pencils, I decided that the closest thing to oil paint was Cray-Pas oil pastels. After that, I started researching what other artists did and realized that oil painting was just one option, and I see amazing things that other artists do with watercolor and even just colored pencils.

The portrait you shared combines a face with fragments of printed text. How do you choose these fragments, and does their meaning matter as much as their visual texture?

I'm an English teacher, so I am always in love with words. I got the printed texts from a woman's health magazine. I wanted to have words which were encouraging and empathized with women on the whole. It does add so much to the picture. I compare the two often: the one before I added the collage and the one after. The difference is like 180 degrees.

How does being a poet shape your approach to painting? Are there experiences you can express through an image that you find harder to put into words?

I find beauty in everything, especially in nature. Art is expressed in painting, in clothes, in cooking, in music, in everything. I love being a poet; I love being able to immortalize my love with my words. My paintings are, in essence, me, but through a visual experience. I love that question. I think it's the opposite, though. I am more expressive vocally, visually, openly with my words, especially in telling someone how much I love them, and so my upcoming poetry book showcases my feelings of vulnerability. In painting, I can sit there for hours and sometimes it comes out not the way that I envisioned, and I feel confused, but I keep painting and adding to it.

Alongside exhibitions, you hope to create individually painted greeting cards. What appeals to you about making an artwork that becomes part of a personal exchange between two people?

My name, zazie_blue, was actually the one that I created for my poetry and eventual greeting cards. I still want to pursue that lifelong dream. I want to put my poems inside my painted greeting cards like an old design called Flavia, which my mom absolutely loved. I think that greeting cards mean so much because I love them; they are very personal, and when people can't express their feelings fully, they can turn to a greeting card with nostalgic moments or romantic moments.



— *Interview*

Tobiloba Majekodunmi



What personal experiences led you to centre Black women in your photography, and how has your understanding of this subject evolved?

I grew up in Nigeria surrounded by women who held everything together: mothers, aunties, teachers, women running businesses from a market stall. They carried a kind of authority that everyone around them understood. But when I started looking seriously at photographs, I noticed how rarely that authority made it into the picture. Dark-skinned women were often underlit, washed out, or framed through hardship and need. The camera seemed to see them less clearly than I did.
That gap is where the work began. In the early years I think I saw my role as correcting something, as if I had to prove a beauty that the world kept overlooking. Six years on, and after showing the work in both Nigeria and the UK, I understand it differently. The beauty and the strength were never in question. What I am really doing is paying attention, and creating conditions in which a woman can be seen the way she already sees herself.
I am also more honest now about my own position. I am a man photographing women, so I am not speaking for them. The portraits are something we make together, and the work only holds if that is true.

How do you build trust with the women you photograph, andhow much do their own ideas shape the portraits you create together?

Trust starts long before the camera comes out. I usually meet the women I photograph first just to talk: about the work, about what they want to be seen as, and just as importantly, about what



they do not want. I share references and earlier images so they know the language I work in, and I ask about theirs.
During the shoot I show them the images as we go. If something does not feel like them, we change it. Nobody should leave a session feeling that something was taken from them.
Their ideas shape the portraits far more than people might assume. I bring the light, the structure and the ground the image sits on, but they bring presence, gesture and much of the styling. A painted band on the arm, the choice of nails, the way a hand rests near the face: these often begin with the sitter. Some of the closed-eye portraits came from a woman simply closing her eyes between frames, and that moment of rest turned out to be truer than anything I had planned. My job is often to recognise those moments and build the image around them.

Strength and resilience are central to your work. What place dosoftness, vulnerability and uncertainty have within your understanding of these qualities?

I think they are inseparable. There is a version of "strength" that gets attached to Black women which is really a burden: the expectation to endure everything, to never need rest, to always be hard. I am not interested in reproducing that. That image can become a cage.
For me, real strength includes the freedom to be soft. When a woman closes her eyes in front of the camera, she is allowing herself to be seen without guarding against the viewer. That is vulnerable, but it is also an act of self-possession. She does not need to perform for you.
In Rock and River I think about this through the landscape itself. Stone feels like the obvious symbol of resilience, but water shapes stone over time. Softness has its own kind of power, slower and more patient.
Uncertainty matters too. Not every sitter arrives knowing exactly how she wants to be seen, and I don't always know either. When I edit, I often keep the frames where something is slightly unresolved: a hesitant hand, a gaze that has not quite settled. Those images feel more human to me than ones where everything is certain.

You describe sculpting dark skin with directional light. What do you look for in the relationship between highlights and shadows when creating a portrait?

Dark skin holds light beautifully, but differently. It reflects, it carries undertones of red, gold and sometimes blue, and it rewards light that has a direction. Flat, frontal light tends to erase form, so I work with light that lets the face and body turn: you can see where a cheekbone rises, where the collarbone catches.
What I look for is a highlight that describes an edge, rather than one that simply makes the skin brighter, and a shadow that stays open and full of detail rather than collapsing into black. The shadow is not absence; it is part of the face. If the transition between the two is right, the skin reads almost like sculpture, with weight and volume.
I am very conscious that photography's technical history was calibrated around lighter skin, and that dark skin has often been exposed as a problem to be solved. I approach it the other way round. Dark skin is the starting point the whole lighting is built around. The ground matters as well: a deep crimson background warms and deepens the skin, while a luminous white ground makes the figure stand out with real clarity. Each changes how the highlights and shadows speak.

How do you decide whether a photograph needs rich colour or black and white? What changes emotionally when colour is removed?

I choose colour when the relationship between skin, ground and adornment is part of the meaning: gilded lips against a crimson field, for example, where the conversation between warm tones is the whole point. In those images colour carries pleasure, presence and celebration.
I move to black and white when the picture is more about form, gesture and time. Rock and River is in black and white because removing colour puts the woman and the landscape on the same tonal register. Skin, stone, water and sky become part of one surface, and that is exactly the sense of belonging I want.
Emotionally, black and white slows the viewer down. It removes some of the immediate information so you start to read tone, texture and expression more carefully. It feels more interior, and it also loosens the image from a specific moment in time.
I am aware that the historic archive of Black women in black and white is often ethnographic, made by people looking at them rather than with them. So I take printing seriously: rich, deep blacks, a full tonal range, real detail in the darkest skin. The monochrome has to feel like dignity, not distance.

Skin texture remains visible in your carefully styled studio images. What principles guide your approach to retouching and the way you represent skin?

My main principle is simple: remove what is temporary, keep what is permanent. Dust, a stray hair, a mark that wasn't there yesterday, those I may take out, especially if the sitter asks. But pores, texture, scars, stretch marks and the natural variation of the skin stay unless she asks me otherwise. That texture is the evidence of a living person.
I never lighten skin or shift its tone. For a long time the beauty industry has smoothed dark skin into something plastic and uniform, and I don't want to participate in that. Most of my post-production work is about shaping light rather than altering skin: dodging and burning to strengthen the form that was already there in the studio.
The styling in my studio images is deliberate and polished, so the visible texture creates a balance. The makeup and adornment are a performance of self-possession, and the skin underneath reminds you that this is a real woman, not a surface. The women I photograph also see the final edits. It is their face, and they should recognise it.

You want your photographs to make viewers slow down and look again. When selecting your final images, what makes you feel that a portrait can sustain that attention?

I edit slowly. I often print a selection and live with it for a few weeks, and the images that keep holding my attention are the ones that survive. If I understand everything in a photograph at first glance, it usually doesn't make the final edit.
What I look for is a portrait that keeps something back. There is often a tension between stillness and something unresolved: the position of a hand, the weight of a gaze, the way a shadow falls across part of the face. That small tension invites you to return.
The gaze itself is central. Either the woman closes her eyes and you feel you are witnessing something private, or she looks directly at you and you have to hold that look.
Both ask the viewer to take responsibility for how they are looking.
Finally, I think about whether the image belongs to her as much as to me. When the sitter sees the picture and recognises herself in it, not an idealised version but herself, that is usually the portrait that can sustain attention, because there is real presence in it.





Sahaanaa Hariharan



You describe yourself as being "on a quest for softer ambitions". What does this mean to you, and how does it influence your understanding of success as an artist?

To me, ambition has always had a certain hustle. the bigger the ideas, the more consuming they'll be, waiting to be experimented and explored with. Sometimes, they're restless, sometimes they have a driven sense of purpose. While this creative process has served me well the past two-three years, especially, as someone who dapples with different mediums (from risographs to ceramics, fabrics and moving image + sound), I've discovered that I haven't paused to let creativity breathe. Although, I am grateful to be consistently inspired by the stories life has to offer, I started to become curious on whether I could savor, take my time with the ideas that reach out to me, rather than immediately diving into them.



Sahaanaa Hariharan | A Moonlit Rebirth | 2025

For example, I was exploring staging possibilities for "A Moonlit Rebirth" which explores the re-discovery of my South Indian heritage with a pink and golden bordered dupatta, and white earthenware ceramics staged with a crescent moon LED light. The initial plan was to simply place the dupatta on the floor, like a river, then, position the dancer-like ceramics in a circle. But, which specific ones out of the sixteen I made? and how can I explore with lighting?
The answer for the first question was purely out of experimentation and revisiting them. I positioned the ceramics in a wider circle, before eliminating one by one that doesn't suit the narrative of fluidity, transformation, and homecoming. This decision was made out of instinct, and letting the documentation of each experiment sit for a bit before re-visiting. As for the second question, shout out to a senior of mine during my undergrad, who was working on a piece that involved laser cutting, and suggested I explore that space. What started as saying yes to a suggestion solely out of curiosity, germinated into a full blown idea of inserting a laser-cut stencil of a crescent moon inside the LED light, thus illuminating only a part of the piece. This enhances the inquisitive yet uncertain mood of the home-coming to my South Indian heritage: savoring what's already here, whilst knowing that there's so much more to learn.
With both of these questions: their answers involved taking my time with each experimentation, acknowledging that inspirations need time and space to grow, germinate and guide me on how they'd like to share their respective stories. Moreover, understanding this, and note how I sometimes still go back to the old habit of hustling through ideas, it's the constant reminder that I've got time to bask, explore, and savor each idea. Followed by being content with how I won't be birthing every single idea that is in my idea bank. That, is success to me: where I am growing content with the art I've been creating, looking forward to the art that will come through in their own space and time.

You were born in Chennai and grew up in Dubai. How have these places shaped your sense of belonging, and where do their influences meet in your work?

It's interesting, because I've always considered my upbringing as a confluence of rivers. Born in Chennai and visiting India annually is one river, the second being my upbringing in

Sahaanaa Hariharan | The Artern (A Glimpse - 1) | 2025



Dubai, and now, a third. Studying in Nottingham is the third one, wherein, I've been experiencing sweet pockets of home: my friends, and creative pursuits, the liveliness of the place. With that being said, my sense of belonging has been rejuvenating quite consistently because of the people, rather than the places themselves. For example, our annual visits to India would be like time capsules of growing old together, despite video calls and/or texts. My paternal grandparents, they were storytellers and writers in their own way, and they loved bringing people together because they knew that's what stories did and still do. They revived my curiosity for my heritage, and a hunger for the Indian myths and legends. My maternal side of the family, they remind me of change, and how we're always going to be in this together no matter what. My friends, both new and old, ensure my creative spirit is rejuvenated, and with them we're embracing adulthood for all that they are and could be. Amma and Appa, they knew they'll be hearing me yap about art for as long as the practice will have me. Altogether, this support system is what drives the creative pursuits, their influences creating a meeting place to remember, to un-learn/re-learn, and keep telling stories in any shape, way or form. All of it, together, but in our own pace.

Childhood memories form the foundation of your practice. Could you share a particular memory that became the starting point for an artwork, and explain how it changed during the creative process?

Here's an anecdote: one morning, in early 2025, an expansive sunlit shadow cosplayed as windows on the living room wall behind the sofa. I haven't seen something so sublime like these sunlit shadows at home before, and it reminded me of change. This luminous home we're currently living in, has been company since childhood, and yet I am discovering new things about the place. This memory evolved into a black and white photograph of the sunlit shadow in the living room, titled "The Artern (A Glimpse - 1)."
Moreover, this memory expanded with Amma's observation on how the shadowy figure on the right of the photograph looked like a person due to the playful nature of the leaves. Thus, not only does this photograph capture what was (the transient sunlit shadow on the living room) and what will be (the growth of human connections amidst change).
I think that's also childhood: a threshold for outgrowing but naturally curious on who you'll become.

You are exploring whether your mother tongue, Thamizh, has its own atmosphere. What qualities of the language are you trying to convey through images and materials rather than words?

(smiles wide) aaaa I love this question :)
Okay, so some qualities of the language I am trying to convey through images and materials rather than words are: the taste and sounds of the word, and what does it remind one of, with or without its English translation. For example, I am currently working on a piece called "Alaigal," but before I share, or come across its translation, I want to taste the syllables, hear their sounds. In the case of 'alaigal' - it starts off softly (a), and rolls of the tongue with the lai and then, a gentle pressure glides (ga) in 'gal.' Thus, three syllables, a-lai-gal.
Meanwhile, 'alaigal' means 'waves' in Thamizh.
Since, I'm already aware of the translation, I can't un-hear the waves in this word. The more one says the word, the more it sounds like the lap of the waves against the shore, the waters nipping at the ankles, the fragrance of sea-salt and the horizon line reminding me of how big this cosmos is. Both internally, and externally.
Therefore, with for each creative pursuit that releases from here on now, is accompanied with a Thamizh title, and the essence is whether the tastes and sounds of the word support, expand the English translation. Whether one can solely experience, have that as knowledge rather than contain it with words just yet.

Indian mythology, mystic saints, celestial dancers, and family anecdotes inform your recent practice. Can you describe how a particular story from these sources found its way into one of your works?

Oh yes! This one's for Mirabai, a mystic saint, who wore her heart on her sleeve for Lord Krishna. She loved Him since the age of five, and tucked Him in her songs, in her travels, till her hair became silver. I encountered her story when I was younger, snuggling in Amar Chitra Katha comics (highly recommend checking them out, they're amazing!), and her story had been a dormant one within, only to gush during the summer of 2025. Since then, her story had been in my idea bank, which then found their way onto "Beloved." This is the sequel to "Say Yes to Heaven" because she was one, among many radiant souls who wholeheartedly said yes to divinity. "Say Yes to Heaven" explores the importance of trust in creative pursuits, especially when inspiration, for me, comes from divinity. This was constructed with digital fabric of lotuses and a threshold printed on cotton calico, and the over-head projector spotlighting biscuit fired white-



Sahaanaa Hariharan | Jeeva Odu Kadhai (Angle 2) | 2026

earthenware ceramics that has an uncanny resemblance to Lord Vishnu's Ananthasayanam (a divine posture He takes when He's in yoga nidra).
As for "Beloved," it asks: "where does entering the doorway lead?" Moreover, they say, if one wants to get closer to divinity, one must get to know their devotees. and for Lord Krishna, Mirabai was one such extolled devotee.
"Beloved" is a drawing of Mirabai playing and singing to the idol of Lord Krishna playing the flute, printed and constructed like a cuboid, then placed on a mahogany box. Suspended using twine. Behind them are two digitally printed cotton calicos. They are of lotuses with yellow and pink backgrounds respectively (from entryway to further into the room). This was more of an experimental piece, answering smaller curiosities of staging (ie. suspending an object using twine, and treating fabrics as wallpapers of a home), and working with wood.

You work across photography, risograph printing, ceramics, moving image, and sound. How do you decide which medium a story needs, and what have collaborations taught you about combining them?

Now that I am thinking about it, I think the decision of which medium a story needs has been quite instinctive. For example, every time I explore a story that involves fluidity, and dancers (celestial dancers, or dance in general), I find myself naturally gravitating towards ceramics, because of the ease in folding them like the twirls of a skirt. On another note, if I am exploring stories that involve exploration in terms of a journey, then it would be moving image and sound. So, I'd like to believe that the story naturally chooses what medium they're called to, provided I let the idea breathe over time.
As for collaborations, they've primarily been with moving image and sound (shout out to Arya Nair, one of my best friends from high school, who's studying music now, and her friends). The first time we worked together was in 2024, for "Rhythm is Life, Life is Rhythm," which you are more than welcome to find on the bio of my Instagram @saganaskadhai. It was more of a space for me to learn how to delegate and allow my creative process to loosen rather than think I need to do this all on my own. We then, collaborated once again, for "Jeeva Odu Kadhai" ('The Story of the Soul' in Sanskrit and Tamil). My best friend has a phenomenal passion for music, and it mirrors my own for the fine arts, so learning how to capture sounds purely based on visuals, and breaking down components of the narrative into instrumentals (the cello and the flute, with waves for instance). These aspects of learning together, brought us closer as well.
Now, I'm currently working on "Alaigal" a moving image and sound piece, but this time, she's a sampler sound designer. This reveals that collaborations expand creative pursuits, indulging in more dimensions than just one. Moreover, they've also helped me be bold in my ideas. Sharing gratitude to another awesome collaborator, Alex Jacobs ('Bringing Sounds to Life' on YouTube. Highly recommend checking him out on https://yourmusicforhealing.com/drone), for allowing me to use the shruti box recording, for "Alaigal." I am rooting for us all!

During your residency at Riba Rocks, you discovered the importance of rejuvenating your creative spirit. What changed in your working habits after that experience, and how are those changes shaping your next projects?

Oh woah, I am loving these questions :)
So, for context: Riba Rocks are a phenomenal team that create opportunities (like art residencies, music and art festivals). They encapsulate culture, art and sustainability. Sharing gratitude to NTU and Riba Rocks for the art residency during Spring 2025. Highly recommend checking the Riba Rocks website out, in your own space and time :)
Back to the question: one of the primary working habits that changed, for me, was making a clear boundary between work and life. For instance, I'd make the best of the university/art practice work in university, and when I am back home, it's primarily to recharge. Catch up with my family and friends, soak in the mundane. However, it's an ongoing process for me, and I felt it most whilst printing "Sandhya."
"Sandhya" is a series of risographs, which unveil what a threshold might look like in the mundane, through sunlit shadows. In Hinduism, Sandhya Devi is the goddess of dusk. She's all about cusps, thresholds, the in-between. While printing risographs closest to the colors of their photographs (these were teal, yellow and fluorescent pink) was the main essence, the title and the narrative for them emerged naturally. Timeline wise, the idea had been floating since September 2025 and became fulfilled on May 2026. Before the residency, I'd have already ticked off the idea, working even at home. After the residency, even when I'd have lightbulb moments at home, I'd write them down (such was the case with "Sandhya") and develop them as much as I can in university.
All in all, developing a work-life balance has helped me trust the creative process, welcome ideas that naturally reach out. When a flow arises, I'd make the best of it.



Sahaanaa Hariharan | Say Yes To Heaven | 2026



Tiff Zhang is a freelance artist based in Auckland, New Zealand.
The artwork she made is inspired by the Holy Spirit, the light of Jesus, and the quiet beauty of nature. through the artwork explores themes of faith and spiritual connection .
The work invites viewers into a moment of stillness, creating space to encounter a sense of peace, and to engage more deeply with the spiritual essence of Christianity and the Bible.



Tiff Zhang | Lamb

Marcus Mundy



What inspired you to create Amore 9 in 2023, and when did you first realize that clothing could become a form of personal storytelling?

My relationship with art began long before Amore 9 existed. As a child, I loved drawing my favorite cartoon characters, but recreating them was never enough. I wanted to give them something different, something uniquely mine. Every drawing needed a personality, a purpose, or a story beyond what someone could see.
One of my earliest inspirations was my mother. I remember discovering an old sketchbook filled with dresses and clothing designs she had imagined when she was younger. She would sit with us and share her creations. Those moments stayed with me.
I was even offered an opportunity to attend an art school during my younger years, but unfortunately, the tuition was beyond what my family could afford. Still, my passion never disappeared. I continued drawing, writing poetry, exploring design, and imagining what I could create.
After serving in the military, I began pursuing entrepreneurship through business courses, mentorship, and personal experience. Interestingly, one of my favorite parts of building my first business was designing its website and creating the visual experience. I loved bringing an idea to life.
Throughout my life, art had also been my refuge during difficult emotional periods. Eventually, I found myself returning to it while navigating another chapter of heartbreak and personal challenges.
That's when I began asking myself whether these stories could become something more.
In 2023, Amore 9 was born from that question.
I wanted complete creative freedom to tell stories through something people could actually wear. Not simply clothing decorated with artwork, but artwork that could become part of someone's identity and everyday experiences.



Marcus Mundy | What Does Love Taste Like

How has your background and life experience influenced the themes of love, vulnerability, identity, and self-worth that appear throughout your work?

I grew up in an environment where love wasn't always easy to experience or express. Poverty, crime, drugs, violence, injustice, and broken relationships affected the community around me. These weren't distant issues. They influenced people's homes, relationships, and understanding of themselves.
There was love in my upbringing, particularly through



Marcus Mundy | Some Lie, Some Cry, Some Break

the sacrifices and responsibilities my parents carried, but open affection wasn't something we practiced frequently. In our environment, showing vulnerability could be mistaken for weakness, and weakness could make you a target.

I learned early that not every emotion felt safe to express.

Art and poetry became places where I could release those feelings without judgment. But I also developed an extraordinary desire to experience love and give it to others.

I became someone willing to give my time, energy, and sometimes my last dollar simply because I understood what it meant to need kindness.

Eventually, I learned something painful: people can become so accustomed to receiving your love that they forget you need it, too. They assume your generosity comes from an endless supply rather than recognizing that you may be searching for the very thing you're giving away.

Those experiences shaped my understanding of vulnerability, identity, and self-worth.

They also taught me that remaining loving in a world that doesn't always return that love requires tremendous courage.

I bring that understanding into my artwork. I want to explore the emotions people carry beneath their confidence, their beauty, their anger, and even their silence.

Because sometimes the things we struggle to express are the things that connect us most deeply.

Why did you choose streetwear as the main medium for expressing emotional and often deeply personal ideas?

Streetwear allows art to exist beyond a canvas. It becomes something personal, something people carry into the world. Clothing already communicates identity, culture, and individuality, so I wanted to explore how it could communicate emotions and stories as well.

Even the name Amore 9 is a story of its own.

I've incorporated the word "love" into my artwork since childhood. During my military service, I had the opportunity to travel to Italy, a place that became especially meaningful to me. Discovering the Italian word amore, meaning love, gave a familiar concept a new identity.

The number 9 is where the philosophy becomes more layered. Society often celebrates the idea of being a "10," or a perfect dime. But I've always questioned what people believe they need to reach that standard. Sometimes we convince ourselves that beauty or worth requires something additional: jewelry, makeup, expensive clothing, status, or someone else's approval. Nine is the highest single digit. To me, it represents the idea that you can already be extraordinary without needing something extra to complete you. Your worth shouldn't depend on becoming someone else's definition of perfection.

I also became fascinated with the number's symbolism, its associations with completion in numerology, and the mathematical patterns surrounding it. Those interpretations added to my personal connection with nine.

But there's another meaning that's equally important. Amore 9 was originally envisioned as a men's streetwear brand that celebrated women and encouraged a deeper appreciation of them. I wanted to explore the emotional experiences men often conceal through feminine perspectives and imagery. Women became central figures in my storytelling, not simply for their beauty, but for the emotional expression and humanity I wanted the artwork to



Marcus Mundy | I Need Amore

convey.
In that sense, the name also carries a personal message about loving and valuing women.
All these meanings coexist. Love, self-worth, femininity, individuality, and the idea of completeness.
I wanted even the name of my brand to give people something to discover.

Many of your designs explore contradictions—wanting love while rejecting it, appearing strong while feeling vulnerable. Why are these emotional conflicts important to you?

Because I believe contradictions are among the most fascinating parts of being human.
Someone can desperately desire love while being terrified of receiving it. Someone can appear confident while privately questioning their worth. Someone can hurt another person while carrying wounds of their own.
We're complicated, and our emotions don't always agree with our actions.
Much of my artwork comes from a place of understanding. Sometimes I'm interpreting experiences I've personally lived through. Other times, I'm inspired by people I've encountered, situations I've witnessed, or stories that reconnect me with feelings from another point in my life.
Some designs even contain private references that only I, or the person who inspired them, would recognize.
But the viewer doesn't need to know those details to connect with the artwork.
That's what I find beautiful about storytelling. Two people can experience the same piece and recognize completely different parts of their lives within it.
I'm not always trying to tell someone who's right or wrong. Sometimes I simply want them to question a



Marcus Mundy | I Need Amore



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perspective or recognize an emotion they've never considered. Because human beings rarely exist entirely within love or hate, happiness or sadness, strength or weakness.
Most of our stories happen somewhere in between.

In "Some Lie, Some Cry, Some Break", love is presented as something that can transform people in very different ways. Which emotional response to love do you find the most interesting to explore creatively, and why?

What fascinates me most is how love can change someone's relationship with themselves and the world around them.
Heartbreak doesn't transform everyone in the same way.
Some people become guarded. Some become angry. Others lose confidence, while some develop a deeper compassion because they understand what emotional pain feels like.
What interests me is the contradiction between what people desire and what their experiences teach them to do.
Someone who wants honesty may begin hiding their feelings. Someone desperate for affection may reject it when it finally arrives. Someone who understands the pain of betrayal may eventually betray someone else.
"Some Lie, Some Cry, Some Break" explores those different responses without pretending that love affects everyone equally.
I also believe understanding someone's pain doesn't automatically excuse the harm they cause. Empathy and accountability can coexist.
For me, the most compelling question isn't always what love did to someone.
It's who they became because of it, and whether they can recognize that transformation within themselves.



Marcus Mundy | Kill Amore

The phrase "Handle With Care" seems to connect all of these works. What does this philosophy mean to you personally, and how do you hope people understand it when they encounter Amore 9?

"Handle With Care" is more than a slogan. It's a philosophy about how we treat the things we encounter in life, especially the things we cannot always see.
When someone encounters Amore 9, I want them to handle more than the garment with care.
I want them to handle the emotions embedded within the artwork with care. The experiences that inspired those emotions, the meanings behind them, and the people who have lived through them.
Every design tells a story, but somewhere in the world, that story is someone's reality.
Growing up, I learned how easily emotions could be dismissed or mistaken for weakness. Later, I experienced what it meant to give love freely while quietly hoping someone would recognize that I needed it, too.
Those experiences taught me that we rarely know everything another person is carrying.
So "Handle With Care" is an invitation to become more intentional.
When we encounter love, handle it with care. When we encounter joy, handle it with care. When someone shares their vulnerability, their heartbreak, or their happiness, recognize the value of what they've entrusted to us.
The philosophy also extends beyond emotions. It applies to our responsibilities, relationships, communities, and the choices we make that affect others.
I hope people eventually carry that message beyond the clothing itself.

Because if we can learn to handle the emotions represented in artwork with care, perhaps we can become better at handling the people experiencing those emotions with care, too.

When someone wears one of your designs, what do you hope they feel or communicate about themselves beyond simply wearing a piece of fashion?

Above everything else, I want people to feel seen.
I want someone to discover a design and recognize a part of themselves they may have struggled to explain.
Maybe it's a memory, a relationship, an insecurity, or an emotion they've carried privately for years.
I want them to understand they're not alone in that experience.
I also want them to feel comfortable being themselves, without needing to meet someone else's definition of perfection.
But there's another experience I hope the artwork creates: curiosity.
I love imagining someone noticing a design, asking what it means, and discovering a story they didn't expect. Maybe the person wearing it interprets the artwork differently than I do. That's beautiful to me because it means the story has taken on a life beyond its creator.
I don't want to dictate what someone should feel. I want to create something meaningful enough for them to discover their own connection.
If someone walks away feeling understood, inspired, or more thoughtful about themselves and others, then the artwork has accomplished something greater than simply looking good.
I want people to wear the art, experience the story, and carry the message.
Handle With Care.



Marcus Mundy | Kill Amore

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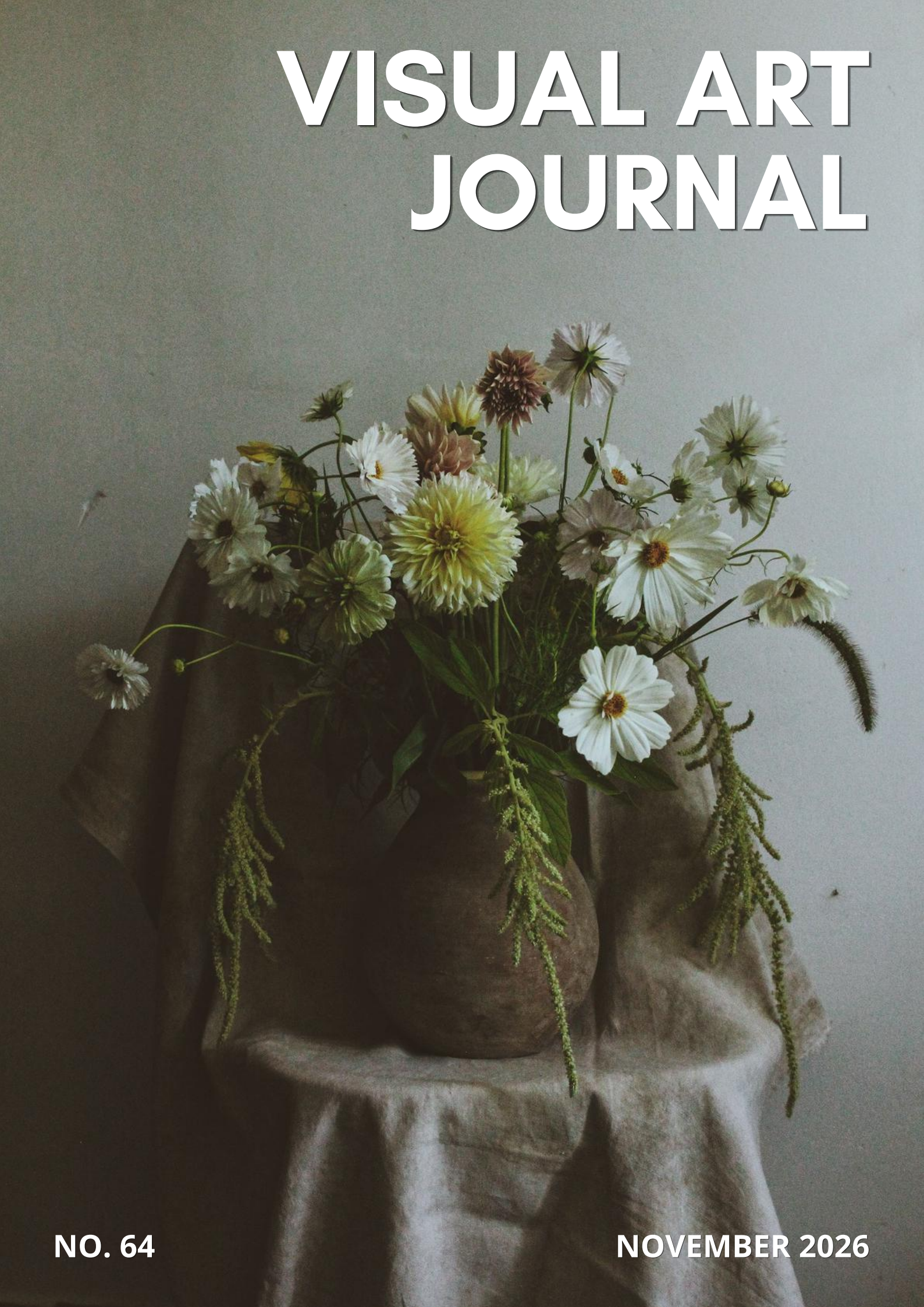
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