

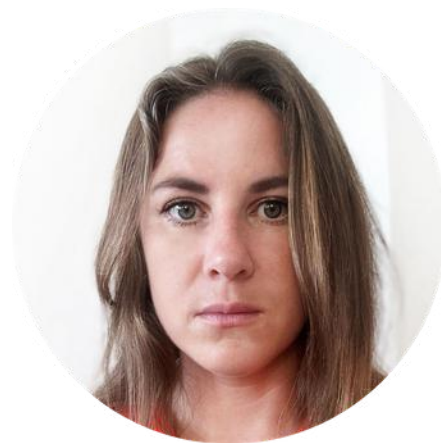
VISUAL ART JOURNAL

NO. 61

SEPTEMBER 2026



— *Intro*



Anna Gvozdeva

Curator of
Visual Art Journal

Dear Reader,

In your hands is the 61st issue of our magazine, carefully put together and published at the beginning of autumn.

This issue has turned out especially vibrant and rich, almost as if its creation coincided with the harvest season itself. Within these pages, you will discover a wonderful mix of emerging artists and established professionals, bold artistic approaches, unusual materials, and distinctive creative voices.

September was also filled with special events for our team. We organized exhibitions in Paris, Vienna, and Madrid. It was a demanding and ambitious undertaking, but one that we are incredibly proud of. We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who took part and helped make these exhibitions possible.

Make yourself comfortable — more than 100 pages filled with art await you.
Enjoy the issue!

On the Front Cover:
Zoe Nikolopoulou
Sea study no.31

On the Back Cover:
Promila Bahri
The Veil
2026



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

— Interview

Zoe Nikolopoulou



A small painting asks you to come closer, and in that act of leaning in, you give up your peripheral vision. The room falls away. So paradoxically, the smaller the object, the more total the immersion can be — because intimacy of scale demands intimacy of attention.

Living and working in Athens, how have the light, sea, and landscape of Greece influenced your visual language, even when your paintings do not depict a specific place?

Athens isn't muse, it's friction. I endure it, I don't draw from it. The sea is different. It's not material, it's relief — the one place that gives without asking anything back. Maybe that's why it shows up in the work more honestly than the city ever could: I'm not studying it, I'm depending on it.

Your cloud studies attempt to hold something inherently temporary and constantly changing. What attracts you to clouds, and what emotional states do they allow you to explore?

Clouds attract me because they refuse to be finished. Every other subject eventually holds still enough to be resolved — a rock, a wall, even the sea has a kind of average shape. Clouds don't. The thing you're looking at is already gone by the time you've mixed the color for it. So painting them isn't really documentation, it's negotiation with loss. You're always painting a memory of something that happened four seconds ago.

Blue, turquoise, and green recur throughout your work, yet their emotional effect shifts from painting to painting. How do you distinguish between different emotional qualities within such a closely related palette?

The distinctions are almost never about the hues themselves — they're about temperature, value, and what's sitting next to them. The same turquoise can

You often work on a small, intimate scale while addressing sensations of vastness. How does the physical size of a painting shape the viewer's relationship with the space inside it?



Zoe Nikolopoulou | Study On Sea No.5



feel like relief or like cold isolation depending on whether it's warmed by a hair of yellow underneath or pushed toward gray. I work in a narrow family of colors on purpose, because it forces the emotional weight onto smaller decisions. When your palette is wide, color itself does the emotional signaling. When it's narrow, everything has to be earned by nuance — how saturated, how much white, how much of its neighbor bleeds in.

You work with watercolor, gouache, and acrylic - materials with very different relationships to transparency and opacity. What determines which medium, or combination of media, a particular work requires?

It comes down to what the color needs to do. Watercolor when the paper has to stay alive underneath — light coming through, not sitting on top. Non-negotiable for something like a cloud; it dies if it loses translucency. Gouache sits between the two — luminous but with more control, more density without going glassy. Acrylic is for when something needs to stop moving. Opaque, committed, it seals the layer beneath.

Human figures are absent from these works, yet they retain a strong sense of presence and emotion. Is solitude in your paintings a form of refuge, vulnerability, freedom—or something more ambiguous?

I think of the paintings less as images and more as a kind of held space. Quiet enough that your own thoughts don't have to compete with anything. If there's stillness in the work, it's not because I'm depicting calm — it's because I'm trying to build a surface with nothing on it demanding your attention away from yourself. The absence isn't a void. It's clearance. Room being made, on purpose, so the only presence left in front of the painting is the viewer's own.

You have described color as a symbolic language and the viewer as someone who completes the emotion of the work. Have viewers ever found meanings in your paintings that surprised you or changed how you understood them?

Yes, more than once — and those moments usually tell me something I couldn't have gotten to alone in the studio. A cloud study I associated with impermanence and calm got read by someone as anger — something about the way the gouache had dried unevenly, a kind of turbulence they saw as barely contained. I went back and looked at it again and I couldn't unsee what they'd pointed out. It didn't erase my original intention, but it sat right next to it, equally true. That's actually the part I trust most about the work — the fact that it can hold readings I didn't put there on purpose. If a color language is really working, it shouldn't just transmit my meaning, it should be loose enough to receive someone else's.



— Interview

Aunia Kahn

You describe yourself as the originator of “Contemporary Symbolist Folk”. How did this visual language emerge, and which principles distinguish it from traditional folk art or contemporary Symbolism?

Contemporary Symbolist Folk breaks down into three parts, and each one means something specific in how I work. The “contemporary” part is



important because it separates what I do from traditional folk art. I’m not working within an inherited cultural practice passed down through community and craft; I’m authoring my own symbols as a working artist today, choosing and layering them myself rather than continuing a tradition someone handed to me. However, I am still pulling from my own culture; it’s just filtered through my own invented symbolism rather than reproduced as it was passed down to me. And the “symbolist” part is what that visual language is doing underneath the surface. It’s dreamlike and mythic rather than literal; I’m not illustrating a scene. I’m building a world where each element, a bird, a border pattern, a threshold between two worlds, carries its own weight of meaning. Birds represent freedom because I spent so much of my life housebound. Borders and thresholds represent the movement between worlds, safety and exposure, the seen and the hidden. Together, the folk vocabulary and the symbolist meaning let me build images that feel both familiar, like folklore, and deeply personal, like a dream.

Your practice draws upon French Canadian, German, Polish, and Scandinavian folk traditions. How do you bring these different cultural lineages together while maintaining a visual language that remains distinctly your



Aunia Kahn | Everything Starved Of Air Came Back Breathing Fire Large



own?

It is bizarre, I never really tried. It was more about me being open to explore my roots for the first time. I avoided even talking about or acknowledging my roots due to a pretty intensely volatile childhood. I tried to remove myself from pretty much anything and everyone so I could heal. But in the years of stability, I realized that your family roots are a part of who you are, like your genetics. There is nothing you can do to change that, but what you can do is own it and then build your own version of what that means. Take the good from it all, even if it is just as small as a little seed, because if you nurture that seed, it will grow, and you will grow. With being able to explore culture and heritage, I just placed everything I loved into my work and hoped for the best. There was no plan, no vision, no end game, just me being a wild alchemist of devotion, throwing in everything I loved without knowing what it would become. I knew I was having fun doing it. Whether it would turn out good, no one knew!

Having lived through years of life-threatening illness, you describe the threshold between life and death as personal terrain. How has this experience changed the way you understand the body, vulnerability, and transformation in your art?

Since I still live with these illnesses, every day is a new experience with the world, my body, art, and vulnerability. I think after 20 years of having no answers, and people telling me I was crazy, that was not helpful. I went as far as signing myself into a psychiatric hospital, willing to accept that everyone around me was right. I was evaluated and told I was stable and solid mentally, but they needed to find out what was wrong with my body. Those years really impacted the way I understood every part of my person, from my practice to how I see the world. I was the only one who believed me, which was understandable after years of doctors saying there was nothing wrong with me.

Once I got a diagnosis and medications only a few short years ago, it brought about a sense of stability, one that can still be very fleeting and unpredictable, like a ticking time bomb. It really changed the way I see each moment. I think those who haven't had a near-death experience will have a hard time understanding this, and those of us who have, even more than once, will also have a hard time explaining it. There is something almost spiritual, sacred, and pure that comes from knowing you are still alive. It's a surreal experience. When I started getting gray hair a few years ago, unlike a woman who might feel uncomfortable about it (and that is her right to feel that way), for me it was "holy moly, I am still here." I did not think I would make it this long. So each day is a gift, and doing an interview like this, to talk about it, is also a



Aunia Kahn | Thoughtful Stewardship Of Anatomical Architecture

A highly detailed, stylized illustration of a woman with long black hair and a halo, wearing a white lace-trimmed dress and a crown. She is surrounded by various symbolic elements: a blue bird, a red heart with an eye, a red flower with a crescent moon, a white dove, a red house, and a lit candle. The background is dark with stars and a crescent moon.

A vibrant, stylized illustration of a woman with long black hair, wearing a blue dress with a red cross and a red collar. She is surrounded by a colorful, abstract background featuring a large red sun, a rainbow, clouds, and various symbols like a skull, a crescent moon, and a sun with an eye. The style is reminiscent of mid-20th-century modernism.

Aunja Kahn | We Holds Every Goodbye In Our Body Like A Landscape

Birds, snakes, cats, swans, flowers, skulls, eyes, and anatomical hearts recur throughout your work. Do these elements have fixed meanings within your symbolic vocabulary, or does their significance change from one painting to another?

More than anything, I do feel that a lot of the symbolism I use often carries the same sentiment. For example, I am obsessed with birds, maybe a little too much. I try to have them in every painting. Being locked in and housebound for so many years, birds are the feeling of freedom for me. I am obsessed with all types of birds, I love animals overall, and for me they represent friendship, a sense of safety, a non-judgmental being. The red thread, or rich red, that I use in my work used to be a color I avoided due to all the medical emergencies and ambulance rise. I avoided red everything. However, becoming stable, it has crept into my work as a life force, the same with hearts. My heart has been a long-time issue for me since I was in my 20s, and I always feared that as well. So bringing the heart into the work, in the color red, metaphorically and obviously with hearts, is a way for me to really face that fear and mortality we all have, and a way to stop running away from the



things that scare me.

Your compositions combine highly modeled faces with flatter decorative fields, dense ornamentation, and saturated color. How do you build these visual layers, and how do gouache, acrylic, colored pencil, and dimensional materials contribute differently to the final image?

Most of my work is gouache as the main layer, with the other mediums that come into the stage after that laid down. Then, with any 3D elements, which are often hand-painted collage elements, I add them on at the end. It is fun, almost an Easter egg in the piece, since I don't typically do but a couple pieces in each work when I choose to do so.

Alongside your studio practice, you work as a curator and create illustrated books and oracle decks. How have these roles influenced the way you construct narratives and symbolic systems within individual paintings?

The first thing I ever bought with my own money was a little clay dog from a craft fair when I was 8 years old. I still own it. That impulse never really left me.

These days it shows up everywhere: our home, the exhibitions I put together, the books I help shape. Guests ask if they can wander through our house

like it's a gallery, because it is! Every object in it is somebody's history, somebody's soul, and we built a life around wanting to be near that. Some of that came from genuinely loving art. A lot of it came from spending long stretches confined at home and needing the space around me to feel alive. With curating art exhibitions, it started because I wanted to build something with real weight behind it. Darkest Dreams, A Lighted Way, which I put on at Fort Gondo in St. Louis back in 2008, brought together artists nationally and locally who were using their work to move through trauma and abuse, not just to express it, but to hand something useful to whoever was standing in front of it. That project is the reason curating became a permanent part of who I am rather than a one-off. With publishing and book projects, that was also something that started in childhood. In elementary school, they helped us make our own books, and after making two, I was hooked. I started making them on my own at home, and I look at them now and still just love them! So when I realized art and books belonged together, things like art books, oracle decks, and tarot decks, those projects lit me up. With publishing, I get to curate my own personal projects, as well as collaborative ones with other artists, galleries, and curators. With having my hands in various creative pursuits, it always helps my main work grow. It is so very inspirational.



Pieter Vonk (Utrecht, the Netherlands) creates abstract portraits driven by intuition, imperfection, and the physical act of painting. With a background in digital art, his practice began on screen - a space of control, precision, and endless revision. Over time, that control started to feel limiting. The work became too clean. Too distant.

After turning forty, Vonk shifted toward painting. Acrylics, oil sticks, and spray paint introduced friction, resistance, and chance. Where his digital work once aimed for perfection, his paintings now embrace scratches, layers, and visible decisions. The surface carries the process.

In the studio, Vonk works without fixed rules. He allows chaos, interruption, and emotion to lead. Faces emerge, dissolve, and reappear - searching for balance rather than resolution.

Imperfection is not corrected.

It is trusted.

Project Statement

I create abstract portraits — not as representations, but as residue. Faces that emerge from layers of paint, oil stick, and spray without a fixed plan. I follow the marks. I don't correct mistakes.

My work comes from intuition. I start without knowing where I'll end. Chaos leads, and somewhere inside it, balance appears — not as resolution, but as a moment where something feels honest enough to stop.

I came to painting after forty, after years of making digital art. Everything on screen was controllable, reversible, perfectible. The shift to physical paint was a shift in thinking. The scratch stays. The layer underneath shows through. The process is visible in the surface.

That visibility is the point.

Imperfection is not corrected. It is trusted.

Pieter Vonk | Follow the Sun





— Interview

Vanja Klaric



Your paintings often begin with memories, dreams, or places that have stayed with you. How do you recognise the moment when a personal memory is ready to become a painting?



Vanja Klaric | Destiny | 2026

I recognize a memory is ready to become a painting when it persistently returns to my thoughts. That fixation is usually a sign for me to engage with it. It happens naturally, without force. The components usually arise during walks. In most cases, for an image to come together, I need three elements: a specific moment or place, a deep feeling tied to it, and an object that anchors that memory. When these are present, the painting begins to take shape.

You describe painting as an alternative to words. What can an image express for you that language cannot?

Animals, nature, space, dreams, and fragments from places and moments I have lived all carry heavy symbolism and help recreate a feeling for me. Though I enjoy writing, I have never been able to fully convey my internal world through words or speech alone. An image is freeing because it is not bound by language. It can stay ambiguous, and for someone who is not so free with their words, depicting feelings and thoughts through images is deeply liberating.

Having lived across several continents, how has movement between places shaped your sense of home, distance, and belonging?

At some point, it becomes inevitable that you lose yourself. You are constantly uncovering new parts of who you are, but you are also letting other parts go. In my early twenties, I found it intensely uncomfortable to not clearly belong anywhere. If you move around often, you eventually understand the sacrifices, but until that wisdom arrives, the journey can feel regretful, and you spend more time questioning instead of living your life. You feel like your feet are never truly on the ground beneath you, that you are always floating around. At times it feels exhilarating, and at others you long for a place you can return to that tells you who you are.

Over time, the lines blur. Home changes. Circumstances change. You have to accept it. Sometimes you envy those who have a fixed home and family. Other times you feel wildly grateful for such an adventurous life. Everything has two sides. You gain freedom, but you also lose certain things. Once you have lost enough, moving around becomes



easier. Now I just try to follow the road. When I miss places and people, I have found my way of revisiting them through images. I cannot go back in time, so I paint.

Your work combines intimate emotions with vast skies, open roads, and landscapes. What role does space play in conveying emotional experience?

Space for me is a reminder of the fleeting nature of things. Sometimes events in your life remind you how small you are, and I have been affected by both extremes of my "tininess": feeling paralyzed and feeling untethered. You question the purpose of your entire life. You are this tiny thing existing for only a short period of time, so you ask yourself what the point really is. Space gives me the feeling of autonomy, and it provides me with clarity. As someone who often rigidly follows rules, creating space in my images is a self-reminder that I am free. At the same time, large empty spaces in my paintings allow the focus to remain directly on the memory being shown and give myself and the viewer room to breathe. Emptiness and vastness are calming in what is sometimes very turbulent for me within the memory.

You identify your approach as naïve surrealism. What does this term mean to you, and how does it guide your visual language?

The things I feel most deeply, I struggle to convey "perfectly." Painting in this way allows me to express something that might appear a little random or ambiguous at first. My paintings dance around what I am trying to say. It is the same way I tend to speak. When trying to say something true and profound, it never lands quite clearly. Painting gives me the ability to say what I want in an unrealistic and unpolished way. As for the naïve aspect, it prioritizes emotional clarity over formality. It is about giving myself an honest, sincere perspective. It is one space where perfection is not required.

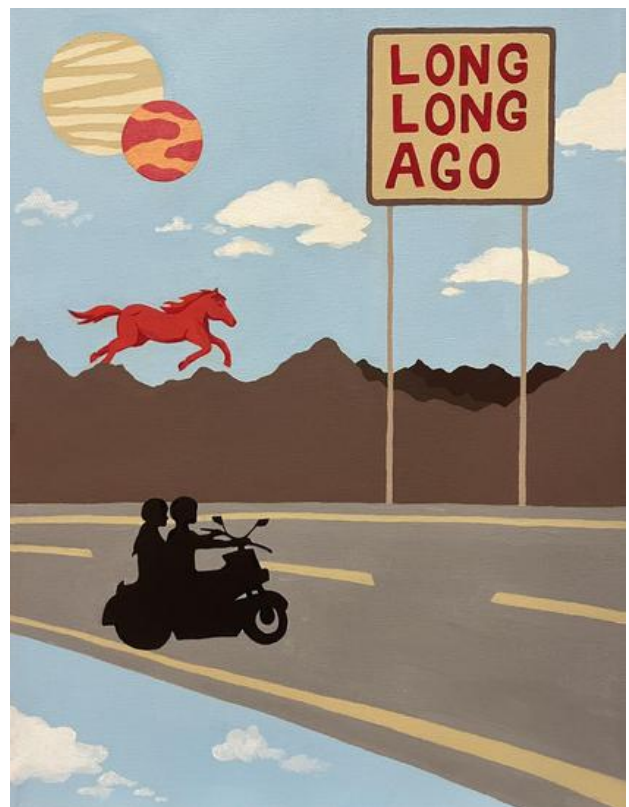
No one can tell me I am not clear with what I am trying to say. For me, putting the image together is the clarity, and nothing more is necessary. I find this style of painting cathartic.

As a self-taught painter, how did you develop trust in your own instincts and establish your practice?

When I started painting, I simply followed my feelings, not any rules. As I mentioned, I am a person who can be too compliant at times, but I realized that I could do whatever I wanted on the canvas. I began documenting important moments in my life through images, and when I completed a painting that I felt truly captured what I was trying to express, it was enough for me. Once I have enough sensory and emotional data to form a clear personal connection, I know that is enough. At the end of the day, the purpose was to find a way for the inner world to be put onto something that can be held and looked at. If there is no force, I know I can trust what I am making. Sometimes it takes a lot of patience, so I just need to wait. There are plenty of things I have had to do, and still do, in my life by "force." This is not one of them, so I only do it when I want to or have the need to. When I have this feeling, I know I am making something true.

When viewers encounter your work, what kind of emotional space or memory would you like to invite them into?

I think the idea is to invite a reflective moment, to make you ask a question of yourself, to make you wonder. The story might not be clear just by looking, so it remains open to be interpreted personally. The universal part is the weight of the image. Whether it stirs a sense of loss, longing, or quiet loneliness, I hope the viewer feels something familiar but unnameable. It connects everything, I suppose. A connectedness between times, places, and things.



Shakila Ghafari Ghahfarokhi is a 25-year-old Iranian visual artist and illustrator with an Associate Degree in Graphic Design. She has been professionally focusing on illustration and character design for the past two to three years. Her work explores identity, imagination, nature, and the relationship between humans and the non-human world.

Project Statement

My work explores imagined worlds in which human identity is constantly transforming and merging with nature and the non-human world. Through surreal figures, distorted faces, hybrid characters, and vivid colors, I create visual narratives that exist at the intersection of reality, memory, imagination, and experience. I use exaggerated forms and intense colors not merely as visual choices, but as a means of shaping emotions that cannot always be expressed through realistic representation. My characters inhabit unfamiliar worlds, yet their experiences remain deeply human.

My paintings invite the viewer into an unfamiliar yet profoundly human world, where identity is constantly evolving and transformation becomes a way of understanding the self.





— Interview

Promila Bahri

Your practice moves between social documentation and fine art. How do you balance the authenticity of lived experience with your own artistic interpretation?

I do not see documentation and artistic interpretation as opposing impulses. My practice begins with observation—of people, places, rituals and everyday situations—and an attempt to look beyond the immediate image towards the depth of an underlying or subtle truth. I retain the authenticity of lived experience while using the visual language of fine art—composition, symbolism, colour, juxtaposition and constructed imagery—to explore what may remain unseen. The photograph therefore becomes not merely a record of reality, but a space where observation and interpretation coexist.



Women and their worlds occupy a central place in your work. What first led you to focus on the feminine experience, and how has your perspective evolved over time?

My engagement with women and their worlds has been shaped by my own life experiences and by observing the women closest to me—my mother, sisters, friends, and the many women I have encountered at different stages of my life. My Buddhist practice, with its emphasis on humanism, has also deeply influenced this perspective. Through these encounters, I have witnessed an extraordinary spirit: the ability to adapt, endure, nurture, and continue. I have long been drawn to the complex identities women inhabit simultaneously—as daughters, mothers, wives, sisters, caregivers, workers, and individuals. I am particularly interested in the tensions between these roles: the negotiations, silences, contradictions, and acts of self-preservation that often remain unseen. Over time, what began as an intimate observation of the women around me has developed into a sustained exploration of femininity, identity, resilience, agency, and social conditioning. My work has moved beyond portraying women's lives to questioning the structures that shape how women are perceived and remembered, as well as how they are permitted to define themselves.

Your current long-term project, Chapter Marigold, explores how identity is shaped and reshaped through time. What does the marigold symbolize within this project?

The Marigold embodies a productive contradiction: it is delicate, yet remarkably enduring. It is woven into the fabric of Indian life, appearing in festivals, rituals, temples, weddings, acts of remembrance and mourning. Within



Promila Bahri | Marigold | 2025



Chapter Marigold, it becomes a metaphor for identity—continually altered by circumstance, culture and time, yet never entirely stripped of its essential character. The flower also carries the imprint of my childhood, giving the project a personal and mnemonic dimension. Through it, I consider femininity, transformation, inheritance and the persistence of memory.

Memory, culture, faith and identity frequently intersect in your images. How do you translate these complex and often intangible ideas into a visual language?

I begin with forms that already carry cultural and emotional resonance: flowers, rituals, architecture, clothing, gestures and domestic objects. Rather than presenting them literally, I shift their context or place them in unexpected relationships, allowing new meanings to emerge. Metaphor gives photography a way to approach what cannot be directly photographed—the residue of memory, the pressure of belief, the instability of identity. I am not interested in illustrating an idea conclusively. I want to construct an image with enough ambiguity for the viewer's own memories and associations to enter it.

Your photographs often reveal quiet tensions and unspoken struggles within everyday life. How do you approach subjects that may be emotionally sensitive or deeply personal?

I approach them with attentiveness, restraint and respect. A photographer must remain alert to the ethical difference between witnessing and taking. I spend time observing before I make an image, allowing trust and context to

develop rather than forcing a moment into visibility. I am often drawn to what happens around the obvious event: a withheld gesture, a pause, averted eyes or a body carrying the evidence of an unspoken experience. These quiet details can hold more emotional force than spectacle.

You have worked both as an artist and as a curator of major exhibitions. How has curating other artists' work changed the way you evaluate and present your own?

Curating has taught me to examine my own images beyond their personal origins and to understand them as participants in a broader visual and intellectual dialogue. It has sharpened my attention to sequence, rhythm, scale, spatial relationships and context. It has also made me aware that meaning is not fixed within an individual photograph; it shifts according to what surrounds it, how it is encountered and the associations a viewer brings to it. That awareness has made my own editing more rigorous and my installations more deliberate.

What do you hope viewers will question—or recognize within themselves—after encountering your work?

I hope the work interrupts certainty. I want viewers to reconsider what they regard as familiar—particularly their assumptions about women, tradition, belonging and identity. At the same time, I hope the images create a space for recognition: a private encounter with something remembered, suppressed or intuitively understood. A photograph remains alive when it continues to work on the viewer after the immediate encounter has ended.



Liudmyla Pomohai (b. 1973, Lviv) is an artist working in oil, acrylic, and alcohol ink techniques.

She began her professional career in nail aesthetics, where she spent 33 years working with visual composition, color, and miniature details, as well as managing custom client commissions. This background shaped her technical approach to textures and individualized production.

She developed her artistic practice through specialized courses and workshops. In 2025, she completed Alina Dalinina's acrylic painting course and a professional program in the theory and practice of art therapy. In 2026, she mastered oil painting techniques under the guidance of artist Oleg Yurov.

She has been participating in exhibition projects since 2025.

Selected Exhibitions:

2025 — "Flower of Life" (Solo exhibition), Lviv.

2025 — "Angel's Wings" (Group exhibition), Lviv.

2026 — Group exhibition, Modi Gallery, Kyiv.

2026 — "My Sea" (Group exhibition), Lviv.

Project Statement

My artistic practice spans oil and acrylic painting, the dynamic technique of alcohol ink art, and the creation of conceptual energetic canvases. They are grounded in the principles of sacred geometry and complex symbolic structures, transforming paintings into visual meditations and sources of inner harmony.

In my work, I engage in a dialogue that exists only between myself, the pigments, and the canvas. Sometimes it is a deep, intricate conversation lasting for weeks, pushing me to search for the exact form through endless layering, changes in palette, or even a complete reimagining of the canvas itself. On other days, I simply catch the wave, losing track of time as natural daylight shifts into evening indoor light.

My ultimate goal is to make the viewer pause as they pass by my work - even if just for a few seconds. Yet within that brief moment, the canvas must leave a mark: a deep emotion, a lasting impression, or a thought that resonates within and invites a quiet internal dialogue



Liudmyla Pomohai | Elephant



Liudmyla Pomohai | The Guide

— Interview

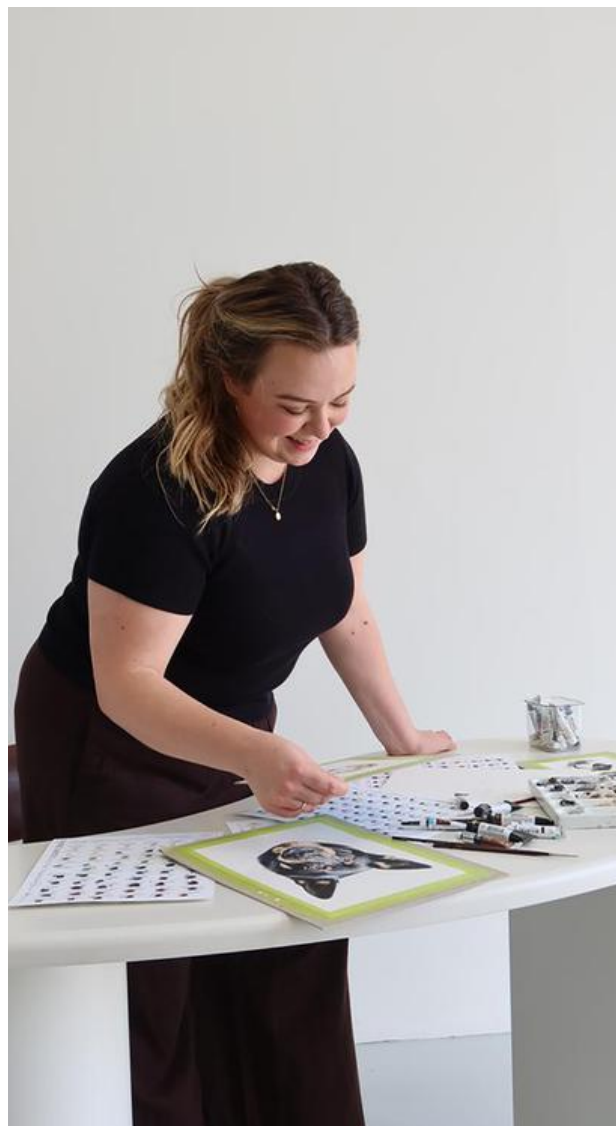
Annalise Lawn

You describe your work as being about the relationship between people and their pets. What first inspired you to make this bond the central subject of your artistic practice?

I've always been a huge animal lover, but losing my cat Lunar really made me understand how special the bond with our pets is. It made me want my work to focus on celebrating those relationships and the little details we never want to forget.

When you begin a portrait, what do you look for in the reference photographs to understand the animal's personality rather than simply its appearance?

I always look at their eyes and expression first. I also love seeing multiple photos because things like a head tilt, ear position or cheeky expression can tell me so much about their personality.



Many owners recognise their pets through very subtle details - a particular expression, posture or way of holding their ears. How do you identify and translate these individual characteristics into watercolour?

I spend a lot of time studying the tiny details, like the shape of their eyes, markings, ears and the direction of their fur. Those little characteristics are often what make the portrait feel like their pet rather than just the breed.

What qualities of watercolour make it particularly suited to portraying animals and the emotional connection we share with them?

I love that watercolour can be both soft and incredibly detailed. It works beautifully for fur, markings and expression while still keeping the portrait feeling warm and handmade.

Your paintings often combine carefully rendered



details with softer, looser areas. How do you decide which parts of a portrait should be precisely defined and which should remain more suggestive?

I usually focus the most detail around the eyes, nose and face because that is where so much of their personality comes through. I then keep other areas softer so your eye is naturally drawn to their expression.

Through Annalise Paints, you have expanded beyond original portraits to create keepsakes such as Inkless Paw Print Kits. How do these objects complement your paintings and the broader purpose of your brand?

Both are about capturing something completely unique to your pet. A portrait captures how we see and remember them, while a paw print is something that is physically theirs. I love that both give people a way to celebrate their pets and keep a little piece of them forever.

When someone sees the finished portrait of their pet for the first time, what do you hope they recognise or feel beyond the animal's physical likeness?

I hope their first thought is, "That is so them." More than just looking like their pet, I want the portrait to capture their personality and those little details that mean so much to their owner.

Divya Vinod Gilatar is an Indian contemporary artist, writer and educator based in the UK, and founder of The Queendom Studio. Her multidisciplinary practice explores Shakti, sacred geometry, feminine embodiment, spirituality, identity and transformation through contemporary visual storytelling. Drawing upon Indian philosophy and symbolic traditions, she creates work that brings intimate bodily and emotional experiences into dialogue with the sacred. Her work has been exhibited internationally across the UK, Europe, Asia and the United States, with recent bodies of work including the Chakra Mandala Series and Shakti in Motion.

Project Statement

My practice explores the body, spirituality and feminine experience through a contemporary visual language rooted in Indian philosophy, symbolism and sacred geometry. I am particularly interested in Shakti as an active, creative force, not as an abstract spiritual idea, but as something experienced through the body, emotion, memory and transformation.

My current series, Shakti in Motion, examines menstruation, creation, nourishment, motherhood, union and feminine energy. Through mandala-like structures, floral forms, luminous colour and geometric symbolism, I bring intimate experiences of the female body into conversation with ideas of sacredness and creation.

Rather than separating the spiritual from the corporeal, my work treats the body itself as a site of meaning, power and transformation. I use visual symmetry and symbolic repetition to create meditative compositions that invite viewers to reconsider experiences often hidden, sanitised or culturally restricted, and to encounter them instead as part of a wider language of life, creation and feminine power.



Divya Vinod Gilatar | Holy Blood | 2026



DG

— Interview

Verona Petkova- Harizanova

You have been painting for as long as you can remember, but only recently reconnected with your inner artist. What prompted you to return to art at this particular moment in your life?

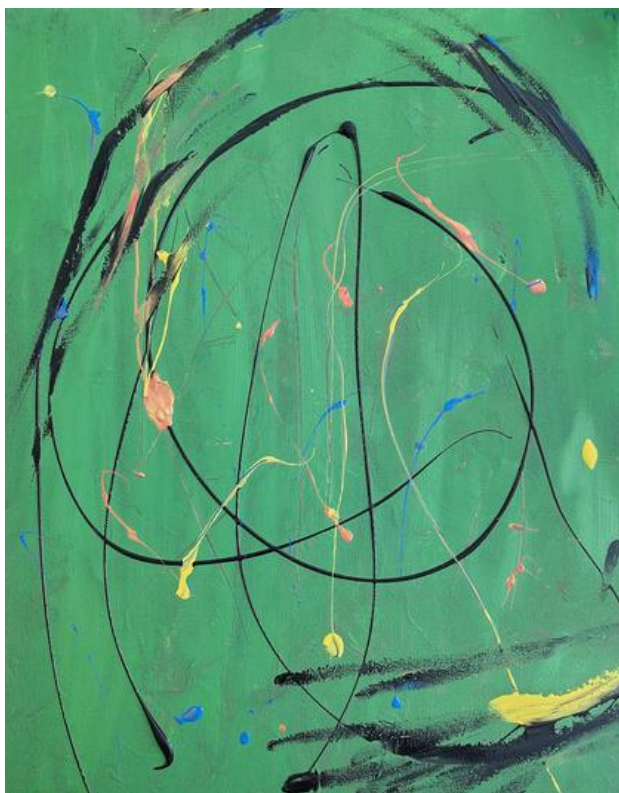


Art has always been a part of my life, one way or another. I'd like to believe this is true for everyone, or at least I wish it were. The inspiration to create usually comes in waves, but recently, I have been heavily influenced by the idea of "muchness" and the role it plays in our lives. We are all carrying this individual kookiness which makes us who we are; which enriches the world (just like all different cultures do), but more often than not, we choose to erase any trace of it, in hopes to be accepted by a standardization machine which, eventually, turns us into nothing but mechanical animals. A juxtaposition between what food our soul craves, and what it is being fed. There is this fragile silver line; a connection between the state of the world, and the part we all play in it - both as individuals, and as a collective being. This concept inevitably brought me closer to my inner artist, or at least to the self I would like to be if I am being entirely myself.

You chose a professional path outside the arts. How has that experience influenced the way you think, observe, and create as a painter?

The corporate world, as we like to call it, has its lessons and opportunities. However, I have realized that the more time I spend within its limitations and expectations, the more I crave consuming and creating real, raw art in its many forms - deprived, as much as possible, from the artificial element, in all senses of the word.

Your practice moves between recognisable images - birds, landscapes, and trees - and highly expressive abstraction. What determines which visual language you choose for a particular



idea?

I am a firm believer in creating when inspired, and trying to portray a language you cannot speak, or learn. Art is not universal, as much as it is. By painting something, and putting a certain meaning behind each painting, I am not trying to lead the narrative to what it means for the observer. I had my idea; my inspiration, but it is up to the viewer to choose what they see. I have been told I could popularize my work more by painting clear messages, or recognizable pieces based on consumer research. Currently, this does not align with my understanding. The language I choose; the message I choose depends solely on my mood, and what has influenced me at that particular moment - a thought, a song, a landscape, there is no correct formula I follow. And I think this is true for the members of the audience, too.

Birds appear repeatedly in your figurative works, including *The Guard*. What do they represent for you, and why do you find yourself returning to them?

I do feel drawn to birds, even though I rarely have the courage to draw them. They are after all the universal symbol for freedom, or lack thereof.

Nature is present throughout your work, sometimes as a peaceful landscape and sometimes as an intense field of colour and movement. What kind of relationship with nature do you hope to communicate?

We may all be a part of nature, but we are not equal to it. Nature nurtures, but just as effortlessly it can remind us how truly tiny we all are. People must learn to respect it and care for it. We seem to be the only species not grasping the idea.

Your abstract paintings often combine sweeping black lines with vivid backgrounds and small accents of colour. How do you balance deliberate decisions with spontaneity during the painting process?

With the abstract paintings I usually start with a concept. Sometimes a colour pops up in my mind, others a feeling I would like to capture, but only after I have laid down the main colour, the actual shape of the painting starts to take form. For example, I have this set of paintings "Appetite for perfection" where one has a vivid yellow background. At the time I knew I wanted to portray the idea of perfection turning into destruction, and I was set on the yellow as a central colour, but all other elements of the painting came to be spontaneously as I immersed myself in the process. The other two pieces of this collection follow a similar pattern to fit the initial theme, so there is a bit more deliberation there.

Having been born and raised in Bulgaria, do its landscapes, culture, or visual traditions consciously or unconsciously enter your work?

Absolutely! The world is full of spectacular places, unbelievable landscapes, and it is so, so rich in cultures, history, and all things extraordinary...but as much as I like to think of myself as a cosmopolitan, there is a special magic I feel when I am at home. Bulgaria is also quite rich when it comes to mountains, the sea, its culture, history, and mythology. There are many aspects we, as Bulgarians, should work on and improve for our homeland to be seen and appreciated for what it really is, but I have always drawn inspiration from it, sometimes consciously, and others - perhaps, without realizing.



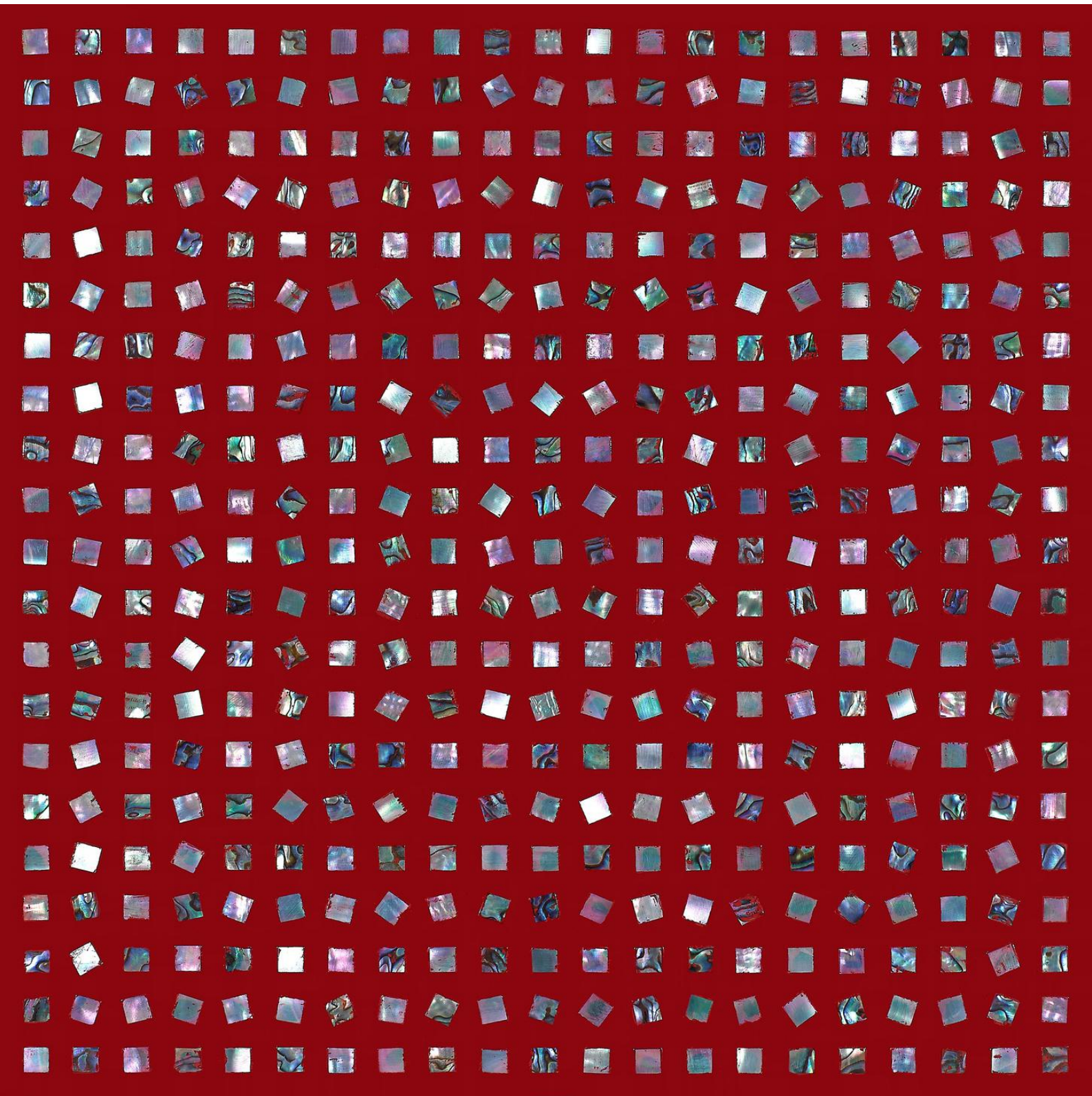
Hyunseob Yoon

Project Statement

The central theme running through my work is "relationships." As social beings, we cannot live without relationships. I believe that relationships between people are fluid, and that a mature person shapes them to be both beautiful and harmonious. But since we are not perfect beings, I believe we must break and shatter ourselves again and again, enduring despair for the sake of a harmonious relationship. For a beautiful relationship, you need to have faith in yourself, as well as trust and patience for others. Marion Buber's thought is the root of my work. "You and I can only meet when we devote our entire being. Because of you, I become me and I become you. All true life is encounter." Based on this, I use colored surfaces made up of various colors and materials to depict stories about relationships.

Hyunseob Yoon | Sea of Samsara | 2026



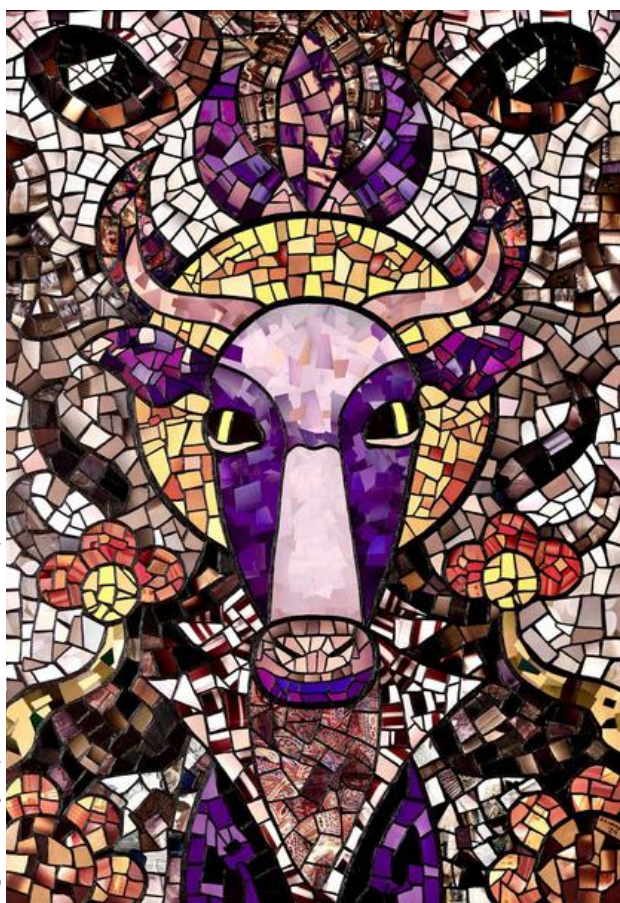


— Interview

Olga Krakovyak

You were born in Kyiv and have lived in Germany since 1999. How have these two cultural environments influenced your identity and the way you approach your artistic practice?

I have spent almost my entire adult life in Germany. I spent my childhood and youth in Ukraine, partly still in Soviet Ukraine. My entire personal development as an adult has taken place here: I studied here, worked here, and built my life here. I feel very much at home in Germany and, today, I cannot really imagine living in Ukraine again. European art has also had a strong influence on me. I am



Olga Krakovyak | Clothes Make The Man | 2024



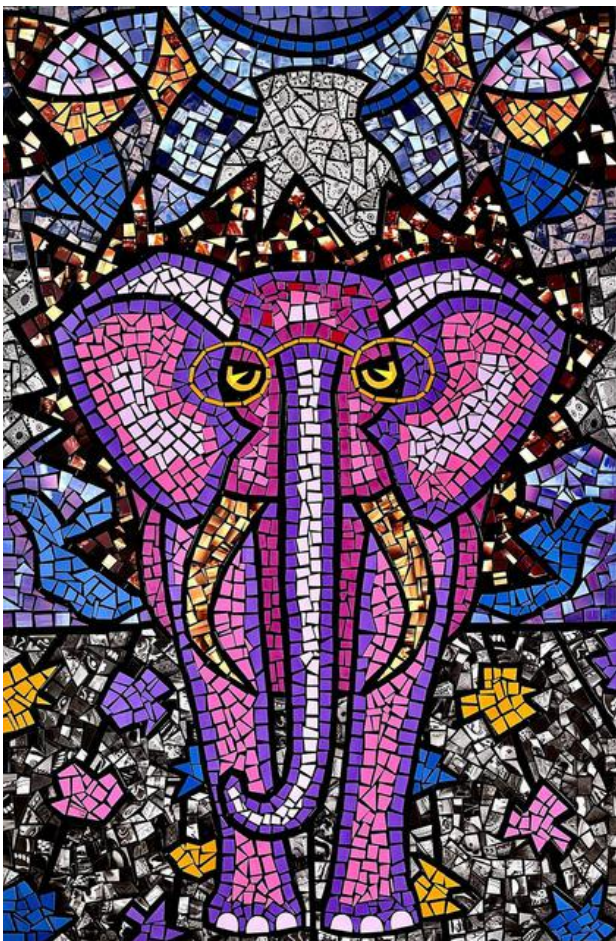
particularly drawn to the Impressionists and their feeling for light and colour, the Expressionists and their strong expression of emotions, and especially Magical Realism. I am fascinated by how something magical and dreamlike can emerge within realistic images. This connection is also important in my own work.

At the same time, my heritage is also present in my art. I have been particularly influenced by the intense colours and strong symbolism of icon painting.

It was only after the beginning of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine that I realised how strong my connection to my original homeland still was. I had not been fully aware of it before. The war triggered something in me that I had to confront very intensely – emotionally as well as artistically. Over a period of about a year and a half, I worked almost exclusively on this subject and created a series of almost 50 graphic works dealing with the war in Ukraine. I called this series "Diary of Feelings."

Your work spans drawing, painting, and collage. What led you to develop the distinctive paper mosaic technique that has become so central to your recent work?

Yes, this development is closely connected to the first question. After working exclusively in black and white for many months and dealing with difficult subjects such as war, loss and painful emotions, I felt a strong need for colour. But I could not simply return to my earlier painting. Something had changed, including the way I saw the world. The Hamas attack on 7 October 2023 and the growing antisemitism in Europe also created a strong feeling of insecurity in me. After all these painful experiences, I felt the



need to symbolically piece my inner world back together. That is how the idea for my paper mosaics emerged. I create a new world from many small fragments. I use materials that have already been used and turn them into something new. For me, this carries the hope that even difficult experiences, painful episodes and a broken world can be put back together and transformed into something new.

You often work with old books, magazines, packaging, and other previously used materials. How important is the history of these fragments to the final meaning of a work?

For me, it is fundamentally important to reuse materials. There is also an upcycling idea behind my work. I find it exciting when things that would normally be thrown away are given a new life. In a large artwork made from several thousand individual paper fragments, of course, not every piece can have its own story. Sometimes it is simply about colour, texture and the composition of the fragments. But sometimes the content of the material is actually important to me. For example, I collect invitation cards from exhibitions I have taken part in, art prizes I have been nominated for, or cards from museums I have visited. When these personal memories become part of my paintings, they give the work an additional meaning for me.

Many of your works feature animals and highly symbolic, almost theatrical compositions. What attracts you to animal figures, and what role do they play in your visual language?

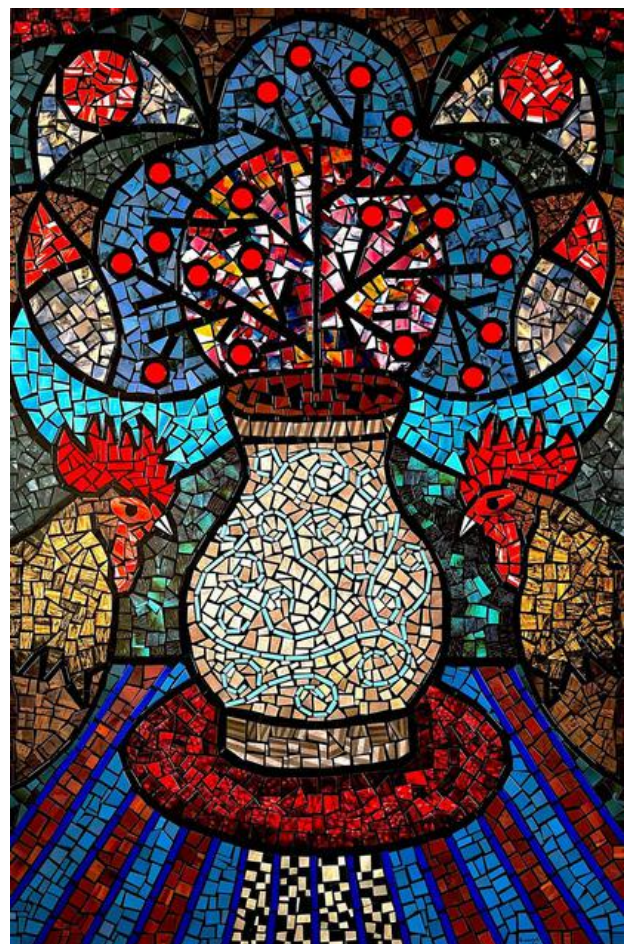
Yes, animals, but also insects, often appear in my work. Animals have a special inner beauty for me that is also visible on the outside, and that fascinates me. I find insects particularly interesting because we do not usually think of them as beautiful. I see a very special visual quality in them, especially their symmetry. At the same time, the animals in my work are not animal portraits. They serve as symbols and take on human qualities and abilities, similar to the way animals are used in fables. This allows me to express certain human situations or feelings without depicting people directly.

Some of your works have titles such as *Elephant in a China Shop*, *Clothes Make the Man*, and *All That Glitters Is Not Gold*. How do proverbs, familiar expressions, and storytelling influence the concepts behind your images?

Although the overall concept behind my work is about piecing a broken world back together, each artwork also has its own story.

Proverbs and familiar expressions are often the titles of my works. I like them because they express an idea very briefly, precisely and with great impact. I have always been fascinated by them, know many of them by heart, and enjoy thinking about their meanings.

But in my work, I often do not mean the expression in the way it is normally understood. "Clothes Make the Man", for example, can be meant ironically or as a question. I want the viewer to read the title, look at the image and ask themselves: Is it really like this? Or is it perhaps completely different? For me, it is important that the viewer can form their own opinion and develop their own story.



Since 2023, you have also been teaching acrylic painting in Dortmund. How has working with students affected your own creative process or the way you think about art?

I teach acrylic painting to adults as a leisure activity. Of course, you have to lower your own expectations a little and not expect everyone to learn to paint professionally. Many people come to my classes to relax, be creative, or learn new techniques.

At the same time, I find it very fascinating to see the progress my students make. And actually, teaching has also brought me back to my own acrylic painting. After a long period of working on my black-and-white graphic works and later on my paper mosaics, acrylic painting had moved somewhat into the background. Through my students, I was gradually drawn back to it – and I really enjoy that.

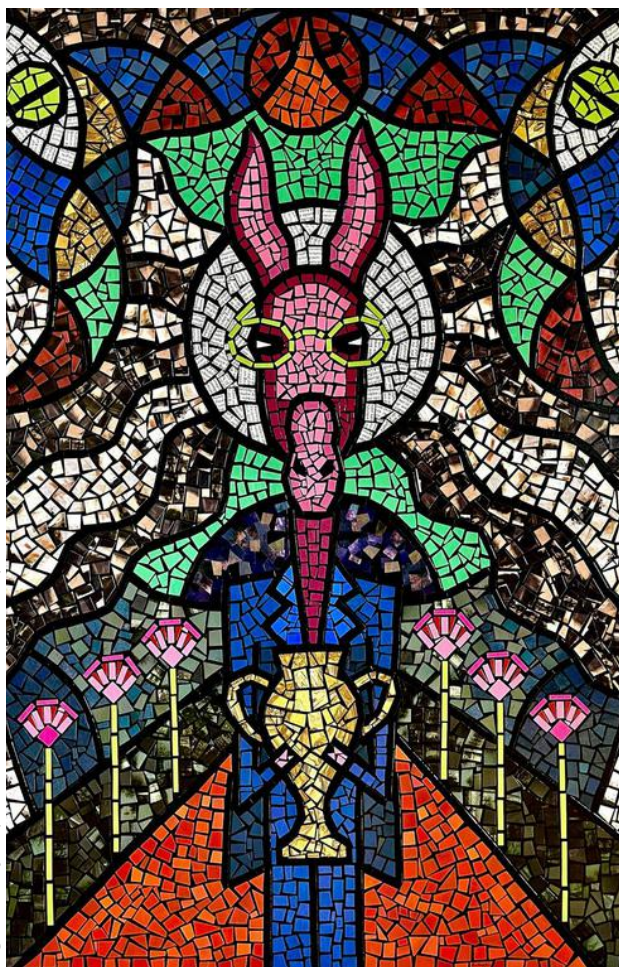
For me, acrylic painting is a wonderful contrast to my paper mosaics. With the mosaics, I have to work very precisely and with great concentration, and I have to plan a lot from the beginning. With acrylic painting, I can be much freer, experiment with colour, and sometimes start without knowing exactly what the finished painting will look like.

Looking back at your development from studying at the Private Art Academy Wetter/Ruhr to exhibiting widely across Germany, what moments have been particularly important in shaping you as an artist, and where would you like your practice to develop next?

During my training, the teachers who recognised and



Olga Krakovayak | All Sunshine And Rainbows | 2026



Olga Krakovayak | All That Glitters Is Not Gold | 2026

supported my feeling for colour were very important to me. I was also encouraged to develop my graphic work further. I was told, for example, that I could illustrate books. That gave me confidence.

In terms of exhibiting, being selected for my first juried exhibition was an important moment. I realised then that my art could interest other people and have an impact on them. Later, my larger artistic projects became increasingly important. I am now working on three main themes: "Ukraine. War. Close to the Heart," "Risen from the Ashes," about synagogues destroyed in Nazi Germany, and my paper mosaics under the title "Broken World." When I realised that these projects worked as complete bodies of work and could lead to several solo exhibitions, that was an important step for me.

Teaching has also shaped my development. Through it, I gradually found myself as a teacher as well.

Looking ahead, it is particularly important to me to develop further as an institutional artist. I want to take part in more curated exhibitions, develop new concepts, work in series and bodies of work, and realise larger solo exhibitions.

At the moment, I am especially interested in creating a solo exhibition with my paper mosaics. I already have a concept and am looking for a suitable space. Alongside the existing paper mosaics, I would like to incorporate elements from the digital world. My works would be digitised and projected onto the walls. At the same time, I want to involve the visitors and viewers directly in the creative process. Part of the artwork would be created together with them, as a kind of collective work. This process would be documented, and the exhibition itself would become a space for a kind of ritual, collective healing.



Rosa Rojas is a Dominican-American multi-disciplinary artist based in Jersey City, New Jersey. Born and raised in the Bronx, her work navigates multi-cultural spaces and the concept of existing "between worlds". Moving fluidly between painting and sculpture, Rosa translates her technical background in analog photography into a distinct monochrome style defined by heavy contrast, architectural light, and atmospheric shadows.

Rosa earned her degree from Lehman College, CUNY, before refining her sculpture technique at New York's Modern Art Foundry and completing an oil painting residency in Paris. Her work has been exhibited internationally and throughout the American Northeast, including at Artfront Galleries and the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. Alongside her studio practice, she actively contributes to regional public art projects and large-scale street murals.

Project Statement

My work explores the quiet, transient environments we occupy and examines how physical spaces continue to hold our presence even in our absence. Growing up as a first-generation Dominican-American in New York City, I spent my life navigating multi-cultural environments. This experience heavily influences my current visual language. Rooted in my foundational training in analog photography, I approach both painting and sculpture through a lens of deep contrast. I paint primarily with a monochromatic palette, and isolate stark atmospheric elements, like how light falls across a bare wall or how shadows pool in an empty corner. By intentionally omitting clear figures from the canvas, I invite viewers to each scene allowing them to feel the weight (or lightness) of a moment. My goal is to capture mundane, everyday moments, inviting the viewer to step into the stillness and contemplate the echoes left behind.

Rosa Rojas | Learnt Forgiveness | 2026





Stefan Seitz

Your sculptures often begin with a single tree trunk and are shaped largely with a chainsaw. What attracts you to this direct and physically intense way of working with wood?

Working directly on a wooden log allows me to express these sensations immediately and directly. I hope that the final result stays true to the initial impulse. It's not necessarily to find the work physically exhausting; rather, it helps me sort out my thoughts and let go a little,



Stefan Seitz | Mr. M



Stefan Seitz | Detlef

allowing the world around to fade away for the moment. You could compare it to mountaineering: following the path to the summit without falling, and then the next mountain is already waiting. This also stems from my background from the Bavarian Alps, where I grew up. Because I work quickly with a chainsaw, every sculpture becomes a snapshot in time.

Human and animal characteristics frequently merge in your figures. What interests you about this space between the human, the animal, and the imaginary?

In these sketches, I playfully explore interactions—between humans and animals, allowing a wide array of combinations to emerge as if in a melting pot. The inspiration comes from the space between shadows there perspective and from the act of putting myself in another's place.

Your sculptures are given personal names such as Franz, Susi, Rolf, Emilio, Toro, or Hugo. At what point does a figure reveal its name to you, and what role does naming play in giving it an identity?

The names usually reveal themselves while I am carving the sculpture—sometimes spontaneously, or perhaps an idea was already lurking in the back of my mind, waiting to emerge. Sometimes it fits, and sometimes it doesn't. Color helps me further accentuate the work.



The title serves as a vehicle to better immerse themselves in the sculpture, to spark perhaps a new train of thought.

You prepare your sculptures through sketches, yet the chainsaw also allows for spontaneity and immediate reactions to the wood. How do you balance an initial idea with discoveries that happen during the carving process?

The artwork stems from an inner impulse, responding to various events, sensations, occurrences, memories, I create numerous drawings.

There are no limits to the imagination here; Expressionism and Impressionism serve as constant companions in the work. Each artwork is unique—some are expansive or quietly introspective, while others are raw and explosive. My inner self filtering, often leading to the spontaneous realization that a particular drawing fits in the piece of wood.

Anatomical precision takes a back seat—resulting in oversized hands, feet, torsos, or heads—as the expressive carving of the figure from the log takes center stage. It is always a balancing act between the free flow of artistic expression and the specific form I intend to carve.

Different types of wood appear throughout your work, including lime, oak, yew, ash, poplar, elm, and Swiss pine. How much does the character of a particular wood influence the final form or personality of a sculpture?

There are many beautiful types of wood. The type of wood I use varies greatly, depending on the size or the intricacy of the sculpture.

What kind of Artwork Depending on the scale of the work, I need various tree trunks.

They are hard and rigid, others are soft and lightweight, or striking with pronounced grain patterns and unique hues. They also produce very different sounds. I like it. And also give off a wide range of scents, from pleasant, sweet aromas. However, there is no one-size-fits-all formula—no code—that can be applied here.

Much of the process is intuitive, driven by instinct and a certain feeling for the material.

Through years of artistic practice and the excellent foundational training provided by the Woodcarvingschool in Oberammergau. Much of the process is intuitive, driven by instinct and a certain feeling for the material.

There is often a humorous or almost playful quality in your sculptures despite their solid, static material. How important are humor and lightness in the way you want viewers to encounter your figures?

That natural quality is reflected in my artwork with a touch of humor. Humor helps me make the sculpture lighter. Humor and seriousness is very important in my life.

Casual and light, with a good dose of humor—if possible. The figures should resemble a loose sketch; once you start and it's hard to make a break. At the same time, you have to stay intensely focused—what's gone is gone, and mistakes are hard to fix.

I often envy fellow artists who paint on canvas; it's easier to make corrections or start over there if things don't go quite right.

The art itself shows me the direction to take, and I let it guide me while I work. If I try to force something, the result usually isn't good.

You studied sculpture with Stephan Balkenhol after completing your training in woodcarving. How did the transition from traditional craftsmanship to an academy environment influence your understanding of figurative sculpture?

Transitioning to creating free-form artistic sculptures was not easy. Having just completed my formal training for Woodcarver, I was still deeply conditioned by it; I therefore initially set aside my carving tools and traditional craftsmanship to allow the habitual style of carving to recede into the background. The Academy of Arts in Karlsruhe helped me forge my own path, as the institution is very open and free from the constraints of traditional training. A playground for many things. The lively exchange of ideas was mutually enriching across a wide range of areas. Engaging positively with the artworks created—as well as with the very concept of art—fostered my personal growth and continues to shape my work to this day.

— *Exhibition review*

The Names Gallery in Paris – 5-6 September

Held on 5–6 September 2026 at Galerie M in Paris, Fragments of the Contemporary #1 brought together a notably diverse group of artists under the organization of The Names Gallery and the curatorial direction of Anna Gvozdeva. Rather than attempting to define contemporary art through a single tendency, the exhibition embraced multiplicity. Painting, photography, digital imagery, abstraction, figurative work and conceptual approaches appeared within one project, creating a multifaceted portrait of artistic



production across different countries, generations and visual languages. A particular strength of the exhibition was its refusal to impose stylistic uniformity. The participating artists approached very different themes and visual territories: the body and identity, psychological states, memory, landscape, cultural heritage, abstraction, technology and the constructed image. This diversity became one of the exhibition's central qualities. Each work remained connected to the individual experience and artistic vocabulary of its author, while together the works reflected the complexity of contemporary visual culture and the increasingly international character of artistic practice. The exhibition also demonstrated how contemporary art can function as a space of exchange between very different perspectives. Artists working across countries and cultural contexts brought their own references, techniques and sensibilities to the project. Some works were intimate



and introspective, others direct and expressive; some relied on narrative and recognizable imagery, while others communicated primarily through colour, material, form or atmosphere. The result was a broad spectrum of approaches rather than a single curatorial statement imposed upon the participants.

The exhibition featured Gabriele Martin, AlexaBellaZoe, Guéant, Willy van den Berg, Alice Chan, Shannon Hack, Dominika Luszcz, Fangfang Han, Charlotte Sapene, Lorrrem (Denis & Julia Zelenykh), Arkadiusz "AREK" Gepchard, Guja Quaranta (ONiRiKA), Henry Jentzsch, Yusuf Esad Kürekci, Michael Guevara, Liu Xuewen, Antonio Jose Quevedo Cabello, Ekaterina Levakova, Zoe Baer,

Jessica Kramer, Zhanna Bieloglazova (Kravchenko), Ahad Alshamari, Kiska Shiyu Huang, Jens Christoph Gehring, Shaina Mohammed, Svetlana Popovic, Victoria Ellison, Esin Kızgın, Divya Vinod Gilatar, Olga Shipilova, Yolanda Ramirez Goldsack, Mata Karina O'Sullivan (M.K.OS), MUEN, Dylan Huveneers, Tobiloba Ajimuda, Yuliia Zhuchkova, Elmira Zueva, Tatjana Danilovic, Anastasiya Ihnatovich, Meyse Mumcuoğlu, Pia Zabret Verbole, Dominique Starck, Sunmi Hong, Abraham Kramer and Maria Abina Kramer.

In its first edition, Fragments of the Contemporary established a format based on encounter rather than hierarchy. Its significance lay in bringing independent artistic voices together without reducing their differences. The exhibition presented contemporary art not as a unified movement, but as an evolving field shaped by personal experience, cultural background and individual methods of seeing. Within the context of Paris, Fragments of the Contemporary #1 became a temporary meeting point for these diverse practices and a reflection of the openness, plurality and international character of the contemporary art scene.



— Interview

Mike Fullarton

Your recent work transforms maps and transport networks into abstract visual compositions. What first drew you to maps as a source of artistic material?

The map paintings actually developed quite naturally from an earlier series of abstract pixel paintings. Those works were built around repeated marks and patterns, and I became interested in how quite simple elements could gradually build into something much more complex.

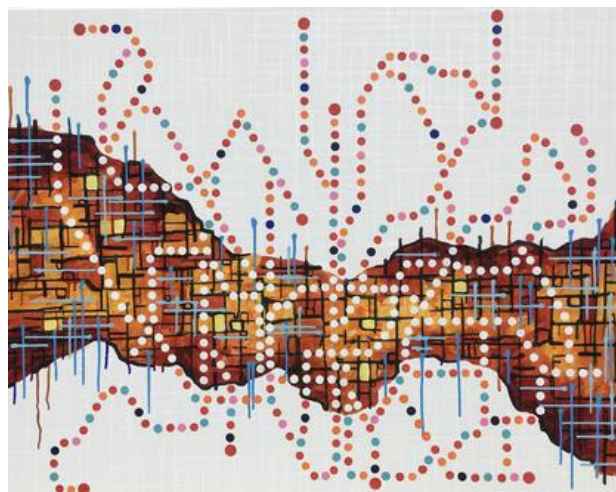
At some point I began experimenting with maps as an underlying structure. I've always found maps visually interesting anyway – the lines, symbols, colours and systems they use to turn something incredibly complicated into something understandable. I realised they gave me a framework that I could work with and then gradually break apart.

Transport maps were particularly interesting because they already contain a kind of rhythm and movement. Once I started painting them, I became less interested in the map as information and more interested in the patterns that could emerge from it. That was really the beginning of the series.

In works such as *Barcelona Metro*, *Manhattan Subway*, and *Rome Metro*, the original transport systems are still present, but they are no longer immediately readable as conventional maps. How do you decide how much of the original geography to preserve and how much to transform?



Mike Fullarton | San Francisco | 2020



Mike Fullarton | Barcelona Metro | 2020

I like the original map to remain somewhere underneath the painting, but I'm not concerned with it being completely accurate or readable. It's really a starting point.

Usually the routes and general structure give me the initial composition. From there I start responding to the painting itself. Certain areas become denser, some lines disappear, colours overlap and new shapes emerge. At that stage, making the painting work visually becomes more important than remaining faithful to the original geography.

I like the fact that someone might initially see the work simply as an abstract painting and only later realise that there is a real city underneath it. Once you know that, I think you start looking at it differently and perhaps trying to find your way around it.

Circles and dots appear repeatedly throughout your paintings and have become a distinctive part of your visual language. What do these forms represent for you – stations, people, movement, or something more abstract?

They originally developed through the pixel paintings, so they weren't consciously intended to represent anything specific. I was interested in repetition and in how large numbers of small marks could create rhythm, density and movement across a surface.

When I began making the map paintings, circles also made obvious sense as stations and points of connection, so the two visual languages came together quite naturally. I still don't think of every circle as literally representing a station or a person, though. Sometimes they suggest crowds or movement through a city; sometimes they are simply part of the composition. I quite like that ambiguity. A very simple repeated shape can start to suggest lots of different things depending on its scale, colour and surroundings.

Each city seems to generate a very different palette and atmosphere. How do you choose the colours for a particular city, and to what extent are they influenced by your own memories or impressions of the place?

My own experience of a city definitely influences the way I approach each painting, although that doesn't always mean simply choosing colours that I associate with the place. Barcelona is a good example. I've visited several times and I find it quite an overwhelming city – the crowds, the density of



the buildings and the strong geometric structure of the city itself. Interestingly, that made me want to approach the painting in a slightly more restrained way. I allowed more open space into the composition while still suggesting the density and structure underneath.

Manhattan produced almost the opposite response. When I visited New York, I spent a lot of time walking the streets as well as travelling on the subway, and what stayed with me was the incredible sense of energy everywhere I went. Manhattan Subway became much more vibrant and densely layered as a result.

With Rome, I visited during the summer, and my memories are very strongly connected to the heat and intensity of the city, but also to its history and culture. The colours developed from that combination – warmth, age, vibrancy and the sheer amount of visual information you encounter there.

So I'm not trying to create a literal colour portrait of each city. It's more about allowing my memory and experience of the place to influence the atmosphere of the painting. Two people can experience exactly the same city very differently, and I like the fact that the paintings reflect my own response rather than trying to describe the city objectively.

Your compositions often move between a sense of strict structure and apparent spontaneity. How do you balance the predetermined geometry of a map with intuitive decisions made during the painting process?

That tension is probably one of the things I enjoy most about making them.

At the beginning there is quite a lot of control because the map gives me an existing structure. But as the painting develops, I deliberately allow myself to move away from it. I work in layers, and there are always decisions that happen because of something unexpected – a colour interacting with another colour, a mark appearing where I hadn't planned it, or an area suddenly needing to become quieter or more intense.

I think if I controlled everything from beginning to end, the paintings would become too much like designs or diagrams. Equally, if I abandoned the map completely, I would lose the structure that makes the work interesting to me. The painting happens somewhere between those two things.

You describe your work as reflecting movement, memory, and the experience of being within a city. Are you interested primarily in the physical structure of

cities, or in the emotional and psychological experience of navigating them?

Probably increasingly in the second.

The physical structure gives me something concrete to begin with, but what interests me more is how differently we experience the same city. A map presents a place as something fixed and objective, whereas our experience of it is anything but that. We know cities through journeys we make repeatedly, places we avoid, neighbourhoods we associate with particular people, and memories attached to very specific locations.

That connects with another part of my practice, my Memory Paintings, which explore how memories change each time we recall them. I think there is a relationship between the two bodies of work. Both start with something that appears to be fixed – a place, an image, a map – and then explore how our own experience changes it.

You are a Scottish artist who has lived in Kraków for more than twenty years. How have your experiences of living between different cultural and geographic contexts influenced the way you think about place, belonging, and urban space?

Living in another country for such a long time has probably made me more conscious of place than I would otherwise have been. Kraków has been home for over twenty years, but Scotland is still a very important part of who I am, so the idea of having connections to more than one place feels completely normal to me.

It also makes me interested in what actually makes somewhere feel familiar. It isn't necessarily the landmarks that appear on a tourist map. Often it's much smaller things – a particular route you take regularly, a street corner, a tram journey, or simply knowing instinctively how different parts of a city connect.

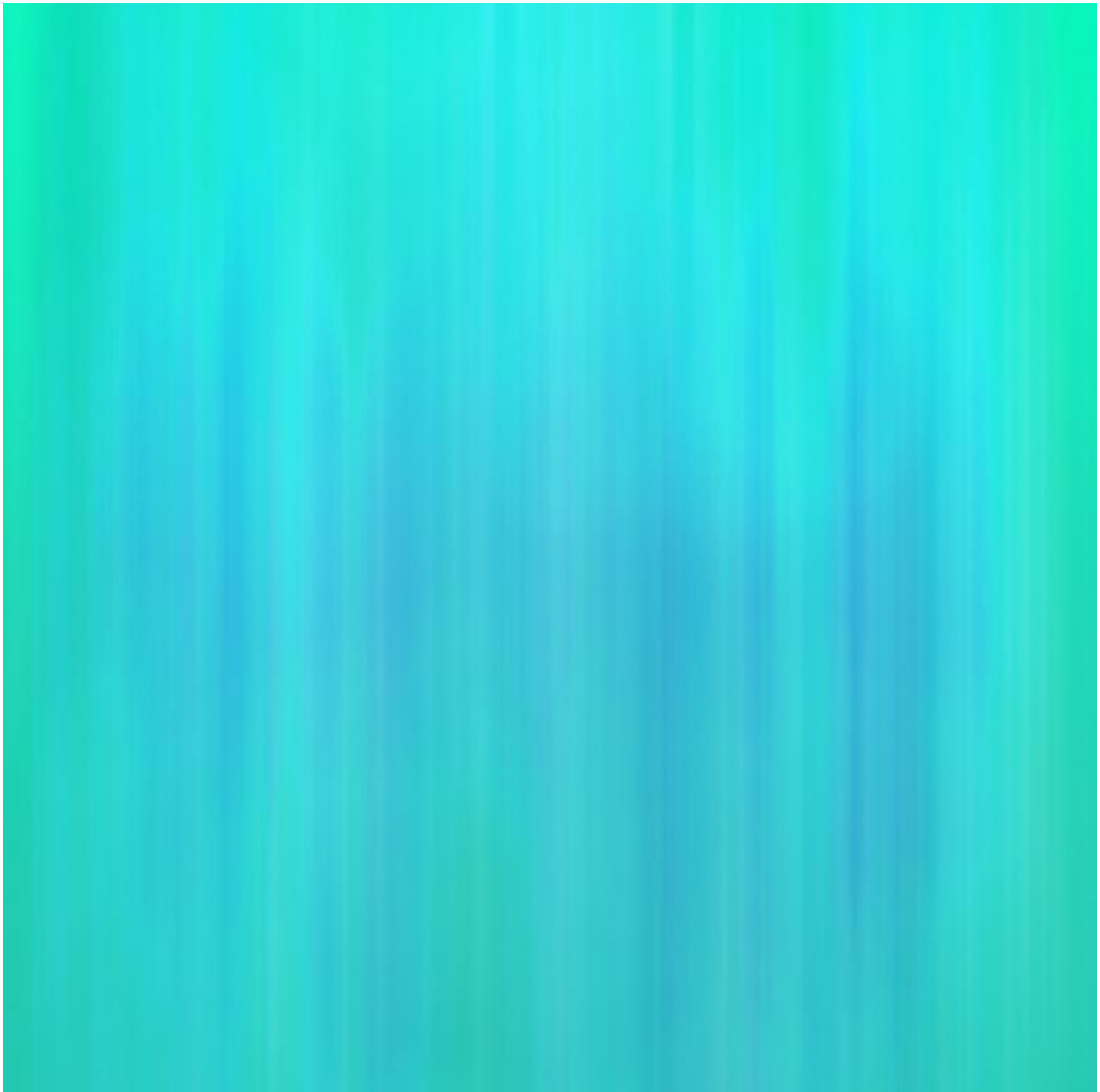
Perhaps that is one reason maps continue to interest me. They appear to give us an objective description of where we are, but they can never really describe our relationship with a place. Two people can look at exactly the same map and see completely different cities because of the experiences and memories they bring to it. That gap between the mapped place and the experienced place is something I find very interesting.



Alexis Nicholette Lovely is a Los Angeles-based multidisciplinary artist and creative director whose practice explores identity, transformation, spirituality, and contemporary culture through surreal and emotionally charged visual language. Working across fine art, fashion, design, music, and immersive experiences, Lovely creates vivid compositions that blur the boundaries between the physical and metaphysical.

Her work is characterized by fluid forms, saturated color, abstraction, and surreal sensibilities, often using movement and distortion to evoke states of becoming, memory, energy, and self-discovery. Lovely's broader creative practice has included collaborations and projects spanning global brands, exhibitions, cultural institutions, and multidisciplinary platforms, reflecting her interest in connecting art with fashion, technology, and popular culture. At the center of her work is a commitment to creating visual worlds that invite viewers to interpret their own emotions, histories, and possibilities.

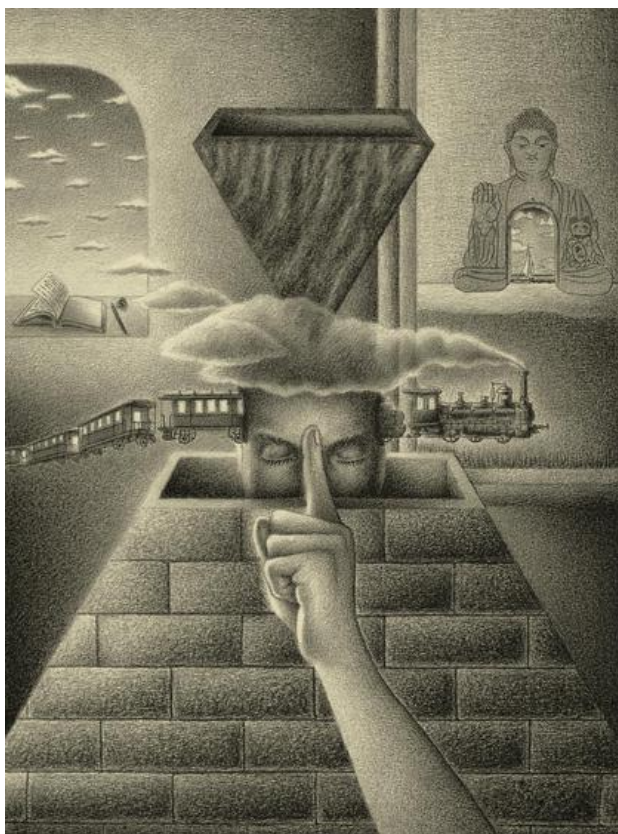
Alexis Lovely | Aqua | 2026





Valentino Campos

As a self-taught artist, how did you first begin drawing, and when did it become a serious artistic practice for you?



Valentino Campos | Pyramidion | 2019

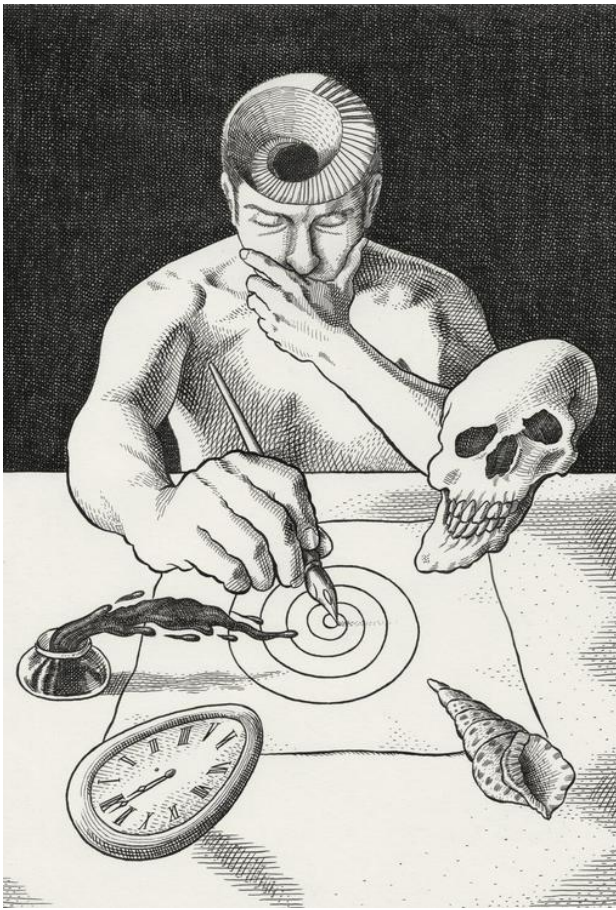


My earliest childhood memories are connected to drawing, so I can truly say that I learned to draw before I learned to speak. Although drawing has remained a relatively constant part of my life, it wasn't until 2018 that I started producing artwork on a regular basis, which I've continued to do to this day. Since that year, I can say that I've connected with my destiny, and that life experience has driven continuous learning that has led me to develop my own working method.

You describe your drawings as representations of "visions". Where do these visions come from - dreams, literature, personal experiences, or the subconscious?

Yes, I do indeed describe them as visions. It's not that dreams, literature, personal experiences, etc., don't have some kind of impact on the art I create, I think all artists are influenced to some extent by all those things, but to be precise, even though they may seem like dreamlike representations, actually, they aren't drawings of dreams; Those are drawings of visions that come to me while I'm awake and over which I have no power.

What attracts you to ominous imagery and dark surrealism, and what kind of emotional



response do you hope to evoke in the viewer?

I believe that art that falls within those aesthetics; The Ominous, The Dark Surrealism, etc., possesses a capacity that other artistic movements lack: The potential to provoke a mental or emotional shock that causes people who encounter this type of artwork to suspend their rationality. In that sense, I would like people who view my art to set aside, for a moment, the need to explain what they see, and let them give in to uneasiness.

Piramidion was created in 2019, while Glimpse of Infinity dates from 2026. How do these two works reflect the evolution of your technique, interests, and worldview?

There is a seven-year gap between these two works, but curiously, there is something that connects them: Learning the art of drawing. Both works reflect my early years trying to master different drawing media and tools: In the case of Piramidion, it's the pencil, and currently, Glimpse of Infinity drawn with a dip pen. Unlike my technical evolution, my interests

haven't changed. I still consider the world around me a mystery as impenetrable as baffling.

Your drawings rely on meticulous linework, cross-hatching, and strong contrasts between light and darkness. Why is this monochromatic visual language important to your practice?

For some reason I don't understand, the visions I have are often high-contrast, so I try to stay as true to it as possible to what I see inside myself. The monochromatic nature of my drawings stems from the trance-like state I enter when I focus on the paper using a single color; there are no distractions there, and yet we live in a world that seems determined to prevent us from enjoying the pleasure of losing ourselves in thought.

How do you decide which symbols to include in a composition? Do they have fixed personal meanings, or do you prefer to leave them open to interpretation?

As I mentioned earlier, I have little intervention over the compositions that emerge in my drawings; however, I can't deny that, as the years have gone by, I have noticed that certain elements are recurring, or that sometimes I venture an interpretation once the piece is finished, but in any case, I don't have a definitive answer for each one.

To what extent have Santiago, Chilean culture, and your experiences exhibiting in Chile and Peru shaped your artistic imagination?

Since I have only exhibited once in Peru, I will focus on Chile. In Chile, cultural spaces and art galleries are few and far between. Rather, it is a scene marked by tension between high demand and limited supply. However, in recent years, self-managed cultural spaces have been emerging, where making art is an act of resistance. My theory is that this punk attitude fosters the existence of a certain type of marginal artist with whom I identify: Someone who goes against the grain and is fully committed to their own vision.

Shugandhi Chowdhury Shraboni is a Bangladeshi craft artist and fine arts educator whose work is rooted in memory, culture, nature, and everyday life. Trained in Craft at the University of Rajshahi, where she completed both her BFA and MFA, she works across watercolor, fiber, wood, metal, printmaking, collage, and mixed media. Her practice often draws from Bengali visual traditions, family relationships, devotional imagery, rural landscapes, and the emotional connection between people and place. Alongside her studio practice, she has worked in art education since 2013, supporting students through creative projects, exhibitions, and cultural activities. Her work has been shown in group exhibitions, including the 2026 Monsoon Art Exhibition at the Birla Academy of Art and Culture in Kolkata, and her watercolor *Witness of Time* was selected for The Holy Art Times Square Showcase in New York.

Project Statement

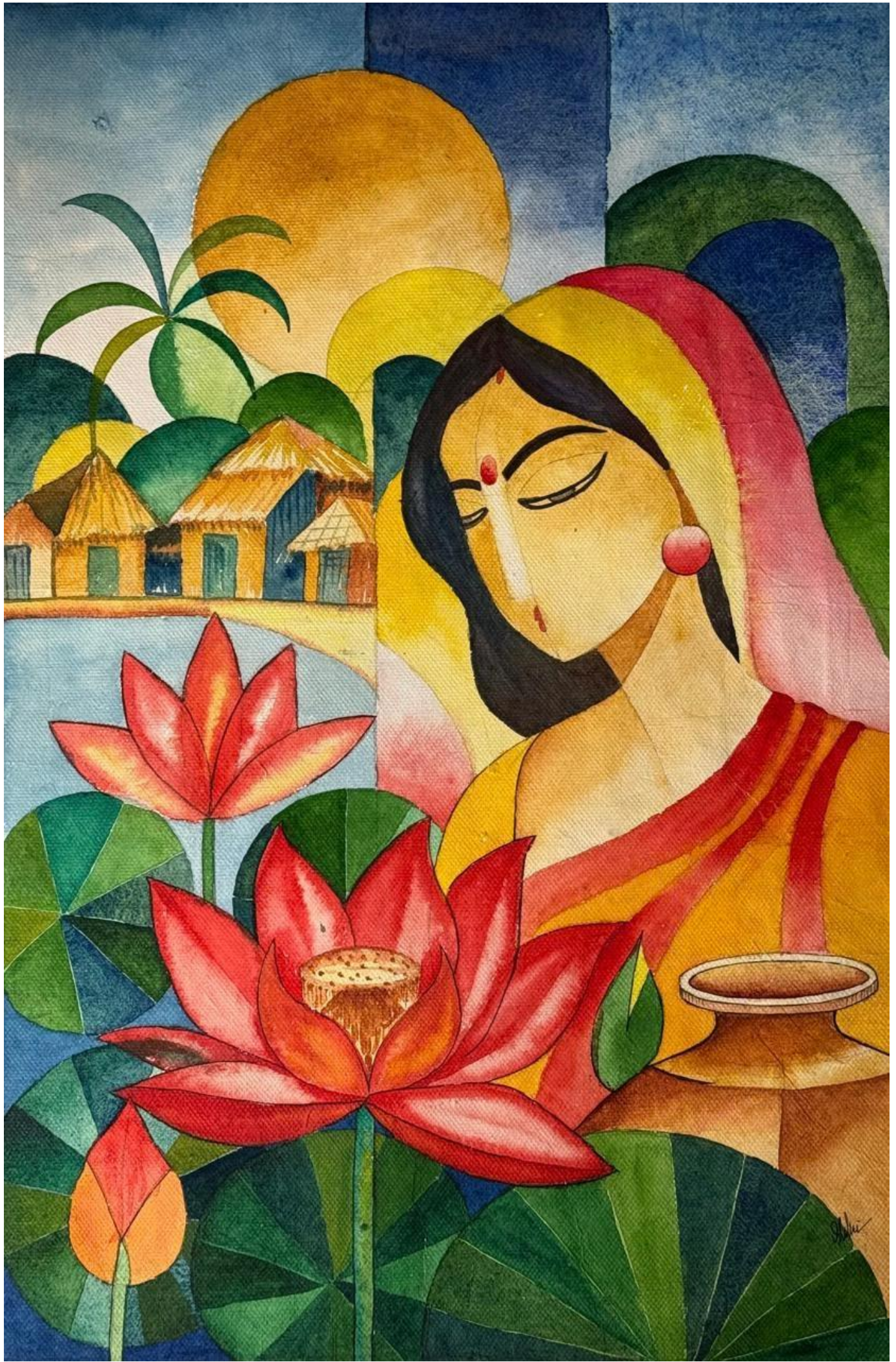
My work grows from memory, place, and the visual culture that has shaped my life. I draw inspiration from family relationships, rural landscapes, nature, devotional imagery, and the everyday forms and colors of Bengali culture. These subjects allow me to reflect on belonging, identity, affection, and the ways personal experience becomes part of a larger cultural memory.

I work across watercolor, fiber, wood, printmaking, collage, and other handmade processes. Each material gives me a different way to build an image. Watercolor allows softness, movement, and emotion, while fiber and wood bring texture, structure, and a stronger physical presence. I often combine figurative forms with lotus flowers, village settings, architectural details, folk motifs, and symbolic imagery.

In my recent work, I am especially interested in the relationship between people and place. I explore how memory can remain within a landscape, an object, a gesture, or a shared moment. Rather than simply documenting what I see, I try to transform these familiar elements into images that carry emotion and cultural meaning. Through my practice, I hope to preserve a sense of connection between lived experience, material tradition, and the changing world around us.

Shugandhi Chowdhury Shraboni | Guardians of Folk Memory | 2010





— Interview

Danijela Veljković

You studied economics professionally, but later developed a practice in visual art, photography, and poetry. What led you to this creative path, and when did art become an important part of your life?

Although my professional education is in economics and digital marketing, art has always been part of my inner world. Photography was my first form of expression, and later, poetry and painting naturally followed, leading me deeper into the world of visual art.

I believe that the rational and the creative are not mutually exclusive; on the contrary, they complement each other. For me, art has become a way of preserving emotions, identity, and cultural heritage, while also telling stories through a contemporary form of expression that transcends time. I believe that art is not a profession one simply chooses at a particular moment in life, but rather an inner need that gradually takes shape over time.

Several of your recent paintings draw inspiration from Serbia's archaeological and cultural heritage, including "The Vinča Mother," "The Kličevac Idol," and "The Dupljaja Chariot." What is it about these ancient artefacts and the stories behind them that draws you to them?



Danijela Veljković | Specijalista Ekonomije Dupljajska Kolica | 2026



I am drawn to their timeless symbolism and deep cultural roots, which connect us with our ancestors. I do not see these artefacts merely as museum objects, but as carriers of collective memory. In them, I recognize traces of the earliest human thoughts, beliefs, and creative impulses. They speak a universal language that transcends the boundaries of time and space.

For me, the Vinča culture is not simply an archaeological fact; it represents one of the foundations of European civilization and an important part of Serbia's cultural identity. Through my paintings, I want to show that heritage does not belong solely to the past—it is a living value that can continue to inspire contemporary art.

I am fascinated by the fact that these objects were created thousands of years ago, yet they still carry such powerful symbolism. Through works inspired by motifs such as the Vinča Mother, the Kličevac Idol, and the Dupljaja Chariot, I want to highlight the pillars of our cultural heritage and establish a dialogue between the past and the present. They are not merely archaeological finds, but symbols of humanity's earliest attempts to express spirituality, aesthetics, and our understanding of the cosmos. My aim is not simply to depict an archaeological object, but to capture its spiritual and symbolic energy. What fascinates me most is that, even after so many millennia, their visual language and aesthetic continue to communicate so powerfully with us today.

When you transform an ancient artefact into a contemporary painting, how closely do you want to remain connected to its original form, and where do you allow your own imagination to take over?

The original artefact is my starting point and my source of inspiration. It is very important to me to preserve its recognizable silhouette and authentic details, because that is where much of its symbolic power lies. However, I am not trying to create a historical reconstruction. My role as an artist is to open a new dialogue between the past and the present.

The moment I begin the painting, the artefact ceases to be



merely an object and becomes a symbol. That is when my imagination takes over—through color, light, texture, emotion, and composition. I create a new work that carries my personal artistic imprint. I believe that art should connect the past with the contemporary experience. That is when a work emerges that carries the traces of history while speaking in a contemporary visual language.

Your figures often appear isolated against deep, dark backgrounds, giving them an almost iconic or ceremonial presence. What role does this contrast play in your work?

For me, the dark background is not an absence of light, but a space of silence and contemplation. It removes everything that might distract the viewer and allows the focus to remain entirely on the sacredness and beauty of the figure itself. In this way, the figure becomes a symbol rather than simply a representation of an object. This strong contrast allows the viewer to focus on the form, the lines, and the inner world of the subject. I like the idea of leaving the viewer alone with the figure, so that, within the silence of the painting, they can find their own meaning. At that point, the painting becomes a space of encounter between the past, the artist, and the viewer. It is precisely within that silence that the possibility of a deeply personal experience emerges.

The warm ochre, orange, red, and earthy tones dominate these paintings. Are these colors connected to your interpretation of antiquity, the material qualities of the archaeological artefacts, or something more personal?

For me, earthy tones represent a connection to clay, earth,

and the archaeological layers in which these artefacts were discovered. At the same time, they convey warmth—they evoke terracotta, the fire that shaped these objects, endurance, and memory, while also carrying a sense of my own personal emotional warmth.

I sometimes introduce more intense reds and oranges to emphasize the energy of life that still exists within these ancient forms. I also associate these colors with the natural pigments that humans used to create some of the earliest images in history.

For me, these colors embody endurance, memory, the warmth of life, and continuity. I want the viewer to feel that they are not simply looking at an object from the distant past, but at a part of the human story that continues to this day.

Photography is another important part of your artistic practice, and you have exhibited work exploring themes such as “Identity” and “Femininity.” Do these themes also find their way into your paintings?

Yes. Although these themes are not always presented directly, identity, womanhood, and cultural heritage are central motifs in my work. The feminine archetype, motherhood, and the continuous cycle of life deeply inform my visual language.

For me, photography and painting are two different languages through which I speak about the same values. A particularly important place is held by the feminine and maternal identity—not simply as a representation of womanhood, but as a symbol of creation, life, strength, and continuity.

That is why motifs such as the Vinča Mother, a powerful archetype of femininity, fertility, and motherhood, naturally find their place within my artistic expression. Through these works, I want to show that questions of identity, the feminine principle, and our origins are universal and timeless. They connect us across centuries, regardless of the medium through which I choose to express myself.

You began exhibiting your work relatively recently. How has presenting your art publicly changed the way you see your work or think about your audience?

Exhibiting my work has given me the opportunity to see my art through the eyes of the audience. Every exhibition confirms for me that a work of art begins a new life when it encounters the viewer. The audience's reactions often reveal new meanings that I myself was not fully aware of while creating the work, and this encourages me to continue exploring and developing my artistic expression. Every exhibition is a new dialogue. Once a work leaves the studio, it no longer belongs solely to the artist. It begins to live through the experiences and emotions of the people who encounter it. That is why I believe art reaches its fullest meaning through its encounter with the audience. I am often surprised by how many different interpretations a single work can inspire, and I see that as one of its greatest strengths. I do not create paintings to provide definitive answers; I create them to open a space for questions, memories, and inner dialogue. If my work encourages even one person to look at cultural heritage differently, or to pause before a symbol that carries thousands of years of human history, then I believe it has fulfilled its purpose.

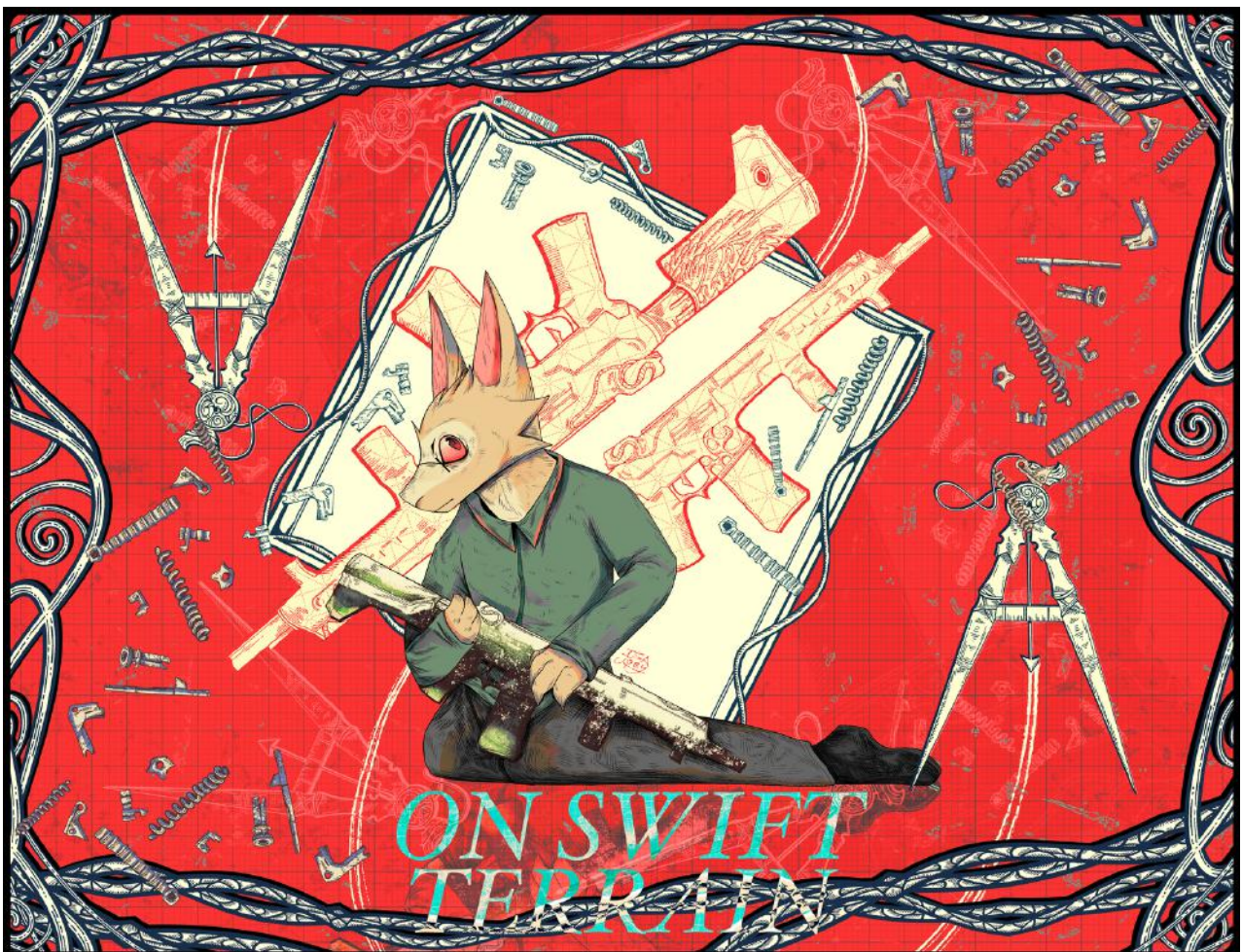
Isa Joey is an 18-year-old Panamanian artist who aspires to continue working in what she does best in the future. Her art is primarily based on her original characters, using vibrant colors and abstract backgrounds, often with detailed borders for a more unique composition.

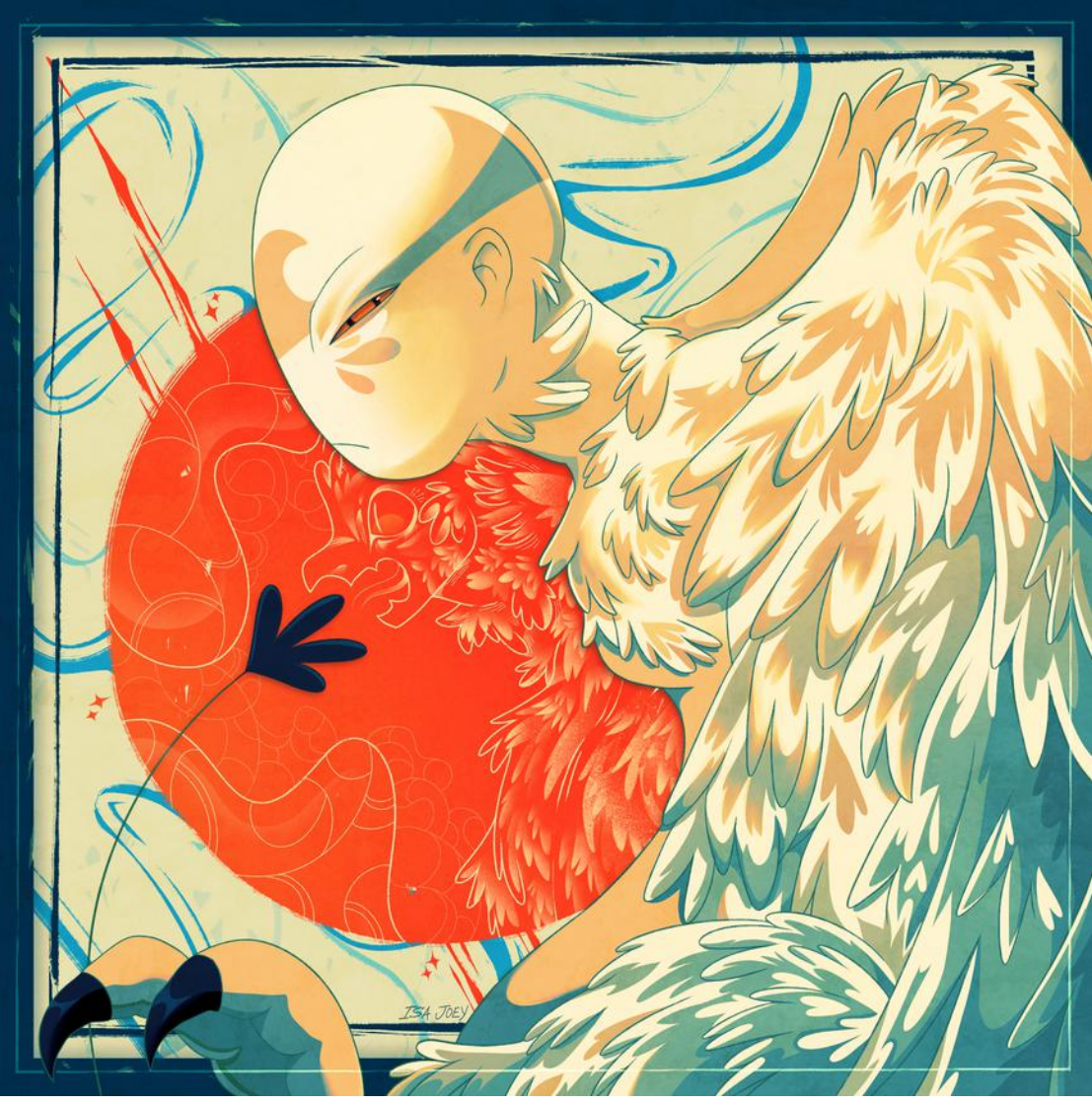
Project Statement

These four illustrations feature my original characters.

Two of them have the same one (Krývo and Sikretu), created in 2025. My other two artworks feature characters for a project I am slowly developing, with the name of "On Swift Terrain".

Isa Joey | Marmen | 2026





Isa Joey | Krývo | 2025



Isa Joey | Sikretu | 2025

Madis Põldsaar

You discovered your connection to art at an early age. What are your first memories of drawing or creating, and when did you begin to see art as an important part of your life?

Yes, and no. I was way too young to discover it myself and far too young to understand its significance.



Creating art came naturally for me, but my artistry was actually noticed by a kindergarten teacher. I recall one evening there—my mom came to pick me up and my teacher had placed a few of my drawings on the windowsill to discuss my talent with her. I overheard some of it and this was the subliminal encouragement I needed, I guess. When someone asked me not long after “Who do you like to be when you grow up?” I confidently said “I WANT TO BE AN ARTIST” as if it’s set in stone. That’s when I realized art is an important part of my life.

Your first digital portrait in 2008 marked the beginning of your journey into vector art. What attracted you to this medium, and what made you continue exploring it?

It all began when a friend of mine insisted on me putting my drawing skills to use and to learn a thing or two on Adobe Illustrator. I was pretty intrigued and so it got me thinking ‘What would it take to draw a portrait?’ As I took on the challenge and decided to draw it as a surprise present for someone special, I almost gave up on it. Eventually, upon delivering the gift, her reaction said all I needed to carry on with my creations. It was a very significant confirmation for me. Fun fact, my VERY first digital portrait was actually done pixel by pixel on Microsoft Paint around 2003.

In 2013, you developed a distinctive technique for creating highly detailed hair in Adobe Illustrator. How did this method evolve, and what challenges did you face while perfecting it?

Prior to this development I had tested multiple options



Madis Põldsaar | Brigitte | 2026



for illustrating hair, but it all seemed mediocre, so I wasn't satisfied using them. Upon coming up with this method I had discovered the addictive effects of meditation and began to practice it regularly. One day, like any other, I was shown the visuals of this particular technique during meditation. In order to test the concept, I instantly searched for a female photo with lush, wavy hair and stumbled upon a photo of Rita Ora. It became my first signature portrait and I was so stoked to see this illustration recognized by Adobe. While perfecting this particular technique of mine I came to realize that creating beautiful things take patience indeed. Like Vincent van Gogh once wrote, beautiful things require effort, disappointment, and perseverance, you know. He was probably right. The most profound challenge for me has been getting used to accepting that imperfection actually is perfection.

Your works are predominantly black and white. What possibilities does this limited palette give you, and why do you prefer it to working with color?

I've always been drawn to the contrast of light and dark, hence the fascination. As a kid I thought that the past and the world before me was black and white, since all the photo memorabilia was depicted like this. I admired how there was something mysteriously captivating. This spiked my curiosity. B&W medium gives my work a visually clean look, but it's challenging to make it obvious. I have to remove lots of unimportant details and pinpoint the characteristics,

that define every face in order to make them recognizable. The possibility is the challenge itself. I'm quite sure that this is just my black and white era.

Female figures are at the center of your artistic practice. What draws you to femininity as a recurring subject, and what qualities or emotions are you interested in expressing through these portraits?

Frankly, I'm a man. Along with the admiration towards female beauty and femininity, there's something magnetic about them that instinctively draws my attention—something unknown and a little bit dangerous. For me, it's not so much about capturing the literal resemblance, but more so about expressing something far more timeless and authentic. I'd like to think I've left enough room in-between the viewer and viewee for the sake of their own discovery in regards to the emotions, associations and details. In many ways, my portraits are an attempt to slow down, take notice, and appreciate beauty.

How do you choose the women who become subjects of your portraits? Are you primarily inspired by their appearance, personality, cultural presence, a particular photograph, or something less tangible?

It started out with portraying female friends of mine and surprising them once I sent the finished work over. Reflecting the traditional Estonian folklore that views a woman's hair as her greatest adornment, my curation of portraits focuses on subjects with particularly captivating hair along with their seductive gaze and lips. These days, it's mostly guided by my gut feeling and subjects overall alluring essence.

After many years of working with vector illustration and developing such a recognizable visual language, what directions would you like to explore next, and how do you see your artistic practice evolving in the future?

Vector illustration is my core visual language and primary focus, but I approach creativity as a multi-medium discipline. Curiosity has led me trying everything from ceramics and snapback embroidery to cross-stitched typography. Even though I haven't tackled stained glass, animation or sculpture yet, those open areas just mean I have an entire landscape of mediums left to explore, so there's tons of options to win over. Regardless of whether I'm working in a familiar digital space or experimenting with a brand new tactile medium, my standard of quality never changes. I put the exact same meticulous effort into every single output.

— Interview

Franchesca Ocampo Swartzberg

Your practice is built around the concept of Neo-Virtualism. How would you define this term in your own words?

Neo-Virtualism is my way of defining a contemporary artistic language that lives between the digital and the natural world. We are in an era where so much of life is shifting into virtual spaces, and I use my practice to reflect on that transition, while questioning how much of our connection to nature, emotion, and physical reality is being lost in the process. My work combines painting, sculpture, found objects, and



Franchesca Ocampo Swartzberg | Last Breathe Left | 2023



augmented reality to create a dialogue between these two realities, not to reject technology, but to seek balance. Visually, the work is intentionally difficult to categorize. It is contemporary, yet it carries traces of surrealism without being fully surreal; it has elements of realism without being strictly realistic; it can feel expressive, but it does not belong to pure expressionism. It exists in the space between all of these definitions.

Because it does not fit into any established artistic movement, I created the term Neo-Virtualism to describe this intersection. For me, it is both a visual language and a conceptual framework, an exploration of how we can remain connected to our humanity while fully engaging with the virtual age.

You were raised in Bogotá without screens, surrounded by tactile and natural experiences. How has that childhood shaped your artistic vision?

My childhood was deeply connected to nature. I spent my time fishing, horseback riding, hiking, and enjoying family gatherings and bonfires in the countryside, often with music and dancing under open skies. Those tactile, real-life experiences shaped my perception of the world in a very organic way.

As I grew older, the shift happened not only through moving to the United States, but through the broader transformation of a new era where everything became increasingly digitalized. I felt a very abrupt disconnection from nature and from that physical, grounded way of living.

It was not until I returned to a more rural environment that I



felt my creative impulse fully reawaken. That reconnection became essential to my artistic vision, almost like a quiet form of resistance. My work emerges from that tension between the natural world and the digital age, and from the need to reclaim something deeply human that feels increasingly distant.

Many of your works use the form of an oversized iPhone. Why did you choose the phone as both a medium and a subject of critique?

I chose the cellphone because it represents the most powerful symbol of our era. My work is an invitation to look beyond the screen and reconnect with what truly makes us human: nature, values, family, and real experiences. Art has the power to make us question our habits, and this is my way of opening that conversation. It is not a rejection of technology. It is an invitation to restore balance between the virtual world and real life.

Your works often combine painting, sculpture, resin, found objects, and digital elements. How do you decide which materials belong in each piece?

For me, every material has its own energy and language. By combining painting, sculpture, resin, found objects, and digital elements, I can activate different senses and emotions at the same time. I want the viewer not only to see the work, but to feel it, imagine it, and connect with it on a deeper level. Although each piece is different, they all share recurring elements that make them recognizable as part of the same artistic language.

Your pieces address digital dependency, attention fragmentation, and emotional disconnection. Do you see your work as a warning, a mirror, or an invitation?

I see my work primarily as an invitation. I invite the viewer to reflect on digital dependency, attention fragmentation, and emotional disconnection, not from a place of judgment, but as a space for awareness. My intention is not to warn or preach, but to hold up a mirror that encourages personal reflection and reconnection with what is real and essential in our lives.

Augmented reality plays an important role in your practice. Why is it important that the viewer uses a screen to fully experience works that critique screen culture?

I use the screen because it is the same system that hyper-connects us and disconnects us at the same time. I do not reject it. I use it as a mirror. In my augmented reality practice, I want to express that beyond the device there is a life we are losing sight of: nature, real human connections, spirituality, and presence. Things we are simply not paying enough attention to.

Some viewers may feel uncomfortable when seeing themselves reflected in your works. Is discomfort an important part of the experience?

Absolutely. When we feel uncomfortable, it is often because something inside us recognizes the truth, and that recognition is also a tool for self-knowledge. When that impact is translated into artistic expression, it becomes even more powerful. It lingers in memory, deepens understanding, and transforms into something lasting and meaningful.



— Interview

Federica Barletta

Your work seems deeply rooted in dream imagery and the unconscious. Can you describe how a dream transforms into a painting in your process?

It is difficult to describe and, at the same time, remarkably simple. I dream images, and then, standing in front of the canvas, I trust my hands. It is a completely unconscious process: automatic, in a way, but never random.

Sometimes, starting from an impression that came to me in a dream, the composition and the colours seem



to emerge naturally as the work develops. Other times, I simply reproduce exactly what I saw.

There is nothing random about this process. On the contrary, I spend a great deal of time reflecting on my dreams, trying to understand what they mean. It is that meaning that guides my hand.

Even when we are awake, the mind continues to work instinctively, although in a different way from when we dream. It adds, removes, and reshapes elements of the dream while remaining faithful to its underlying meaning. After all, when we recount a dream — perhaps for the second or third time — we can never be entirely certain that we have not added or omitted something, unconsciously drawing on other memories or associations.

My creative process follows a similar path. The original impulse remains unchanged, and so does its meaning. What gradually emerges on the canvas — the gestures, the composition, the choices of colour — are not conscious inventions but decisions that already existed within me. It is like returning to the same river to draw water: the water is never the same, but its source remains unchanged.

In "Concistoro delle Madri", the viewer is invited to take the empty seat. What kind of participation or reflection do you hope to evoke in the audience?

"Concistoro delle Madri" is a deeply important work for me because of the reflection I was called to undertake when these ancestral figures appeared to me in a dream and invited me to sit among them.



Federica Barletta | La Matta



The work explores the power and place of women today. Eight figures, reminiscent of the prehistoric female figurines commonly known as “Venus figurines”, sit around a table. At its centre lies a plaster cast of a pregnant womb. The ninth seat —as there are nine months of gestation— is intentionally left empty for the viewer.

At first glance, the work may seem to be about pregnancy. In reality, its meaning extends much further.

The figures themselves are the starting point. For a long time, the so-called Venus figurines were interpreted simply as representations of beautiful women, their significance reduced to their relationship with men and their fecundity. More recent scholarship, however, has suggested something far more profound. They were not only images of women, but embodiments of the divine.

It is precisely this shift in perspective that I want to evoke. I am interested in the woman who exists not as a wife, mother, or daughter, but as an individual whose value is wholly intrinsic. She may become any of these things —or freely choose not to. None of these roles defines the totality of who she is.

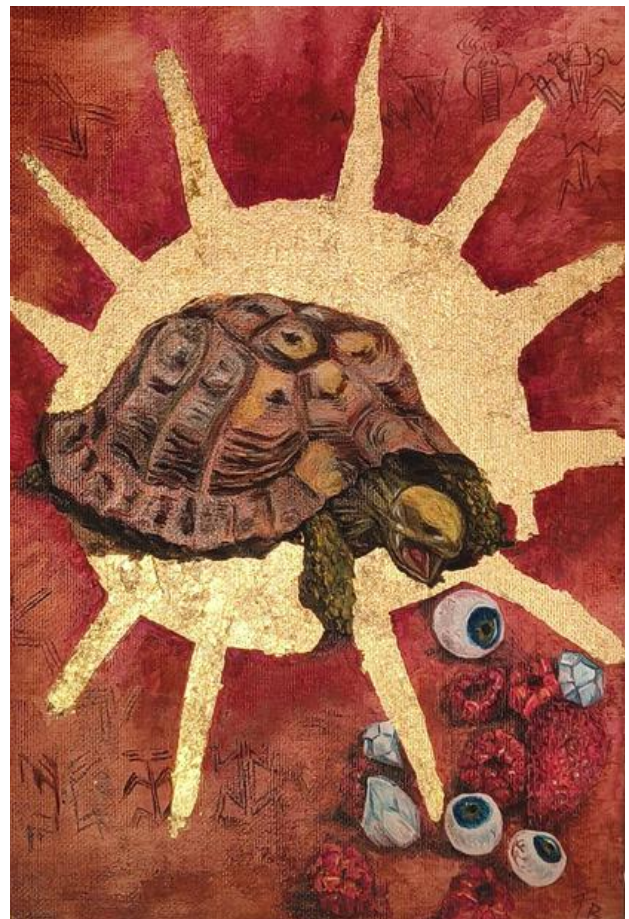
The power I refer to is both generative and creative. The image of the pregnant womb alludes to this idea, but its meaning extends far beyond biological motherhood. It is the capacity to create in the broadest sense: to create care, kindness, harmony, beauty, and art —to bring into the world something that did not exist before. That, to me, is a profound form of power.

Ultimately, the work is a meditation on the true power of the feminine —a power that is often underestimated, yet immense in its transformative potential. My hope is that anyone willing to take that empty seat at the table, and courageous enough to enter into that dialogue, will experience the work as a moment of recognition.

You explore the concept of the sacred feminine beyond biological definitions. How do you personally interpret this energy in your work?

The concept of the sacred feminine runs through my most recent body of work. It is rooted in the celebration of what it means to be a woman, and of everything that this entails. It is a proud reclaiming of those qualities and traits that are often used to diminish the feminine: sensitivity, empathy, and instinct.

I claim the right to be moody, to act impulsively when I choose without feeling the need to justify myself. I am not suggesting, of course, that women are only this — but rather that we can be this too, without shame. For me, beginning this cycle of works meant exposing a side of myself that I had previously silenced, because I considered it too creative and therefore, within a traditional social framework, frivolous. It is precisely this unveiling that, for me, constitutes a celebration of the feminine.





Jungian archetypes appear to play an important role in your practice. Which archetypes resonate most strongly with you at this stage of your journey?

This is a very complex question, because an artistic journey is constantly evolving. Even now, I find myself in a completely different place from where I was when I painted "Concistoro delle Madri".

The archetypes I have explored in my works so far are numerous and varied. The one dearest to me is undoubtedly the Great Mother, who recurs throughout much of my work. She is the primordial force of the feminine: the symbolic union of two opposites —on the one hand, nurture, rootedness, and creative and generative power; on the other, the terrible indifference of nature and the relentless passage of time.

In my work "Kore", which also originated from one of my dreams, I explore the archetype of the Maiden. Here, youth embodies infinite possibility, joy, and lightness, while standing in contrast to the awareness of mortality, which, in turn, also carries the meaning of rebirth and resurrection.

In "La Matta", the second painting in my triptych on instinct, alongside "La Divoratrice" and "La Disubbidiente", I examine the archetype of the Fool or Jester. To me, it represents the zero point of all possibility: that which cannot be categorized and is therefore free from every convention and every rule.

The recurring presence of serpents in your paintings is striking. What do these symbols represent for you on a psychological or intuitive level?

Snakes are, in fact, a fundamental symbol in my practice. Although they are not exactly snakes in a literal sense, they appear more as marine creatures with serpentine forms. They are the beings that first began to populate my dreams over ten years ago, and that started to stir something in the depths of my unconscious.

Since then, I continue to dream about them, but they are no longer hostile. For me, they represent a primordial force —the original divinity that dwells within each of us. They embody an ancestral feminine power that lives in the dark caves of the deep, to which it has been relegated, and rendered monstrous in the eyes of the world.

It is the monstrous feminine that we must reclaim with pride.

After stepping away from painting for years, what was the moment or realization that brought you back to art?

It has not been a sudden shift, but a process unfolding over time. Everything began with dreams. The decisive





moment, however, came later —through a personal life choice and, above all, through the loss of someone dear to me who had deeply wished for me to return to painting.

There was a period, which lasted several years, in which I completely rejected painting and art in general. Gradually, I began to create again, but very slowly, limiting myself to one work per year, often connected to my travels, which I would refine almost obsessively in pursuit of extreme realism.

Then, partly due to the pressure of the dreams and the events I have mentioned, I felt able to express myself more freely. As my subjects became more abstract, my mode of expression also loosened, pushing me towards a more instinctive and frequent practice. It is at that moment that I locate a true turning point in my creative process.

Today, alongside the body of work rooted in dream analysis, my research focuses on symbolic representation, favouring a highly evocative iconography with saturated colours and the use of gold and silver. I have also returned to a practice connected to travel, though in a very different way than before. I now gather impressions while travelling and freely reinterpret them through my own lens of meaning.

For example, in "Amuleto", I allowed myself to be "contaminated" by the Thai practice of creating personal amulets and made my own three-dimensional version, containing a small clay figure of a goddess representing the sacred feminine.

Your paintings feel both deeply personal and archetypal. How do you balance your individual experience with universal symbolism?

What I represent —especially when I start from dreams— is the echo of collective unconscious, and therefore already speaks the language of archetypes. The fundamental impulse I begin from is not the result of rational elaboration or deliberate choice; rather, it is a balance inherent in the very nature of symbols, which reflect archetypal experiences.

Symbols, then, are a point of departure for reflection. I work extensively on them, attempting to explore them as deeply as possible in order to grasp their multiple layers of meaning. When I approach the canvas, the primary idea of the work —or at least the central image— remains that initial intuition. However, I then try, more or less consciously, to expand it, composing the work gradually as I paint, introducing additional elements or ideas that resonate with the same archetypal meanings.

In this sense, I balance my inner experience with a universal archetypal language. I try to go beyond the most personal meaning of the initial idea in order to reveal its more universal qualities —those expressed through archetypes and capable of communicating with everyone, transcending individual experience.



— Interview

Josef Aigner



What originally drew you to Intentional Camera Movement (ICM) photography, and what did it allow you to express that would not have been possible through conventional photography?

I was not familiar with the ICM style or the term itself. My first “ICM photographs” came about

more or less by accident. I immediately liked the dynamism and sense of movement in the images. At some point, I discovered the name for this way of photographing.

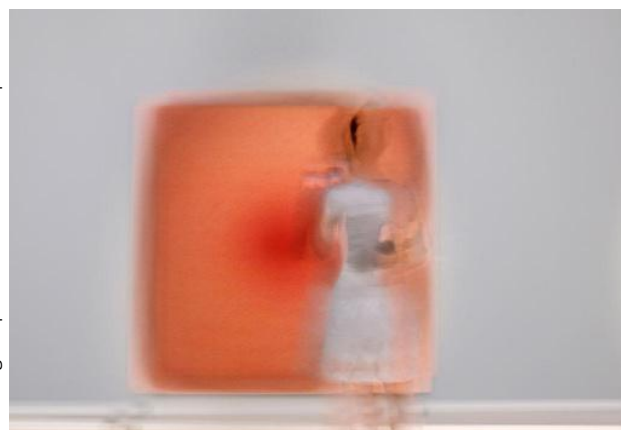
You describe the camera as a “paintbrush”. How do you find a balance between photographic observation and the more painterly, intuitive process created through movement and long exposure times?

That is not a question I ask myself—either beforehand or while taking photographs. I know that certain movements and exposure times will produce particular results.

When I am out photographing, the subject finds me. I decide spontaneously whether to capture it in a conventional way or using the ICM technique.

Your photographs often exist somewhere between recognisability and abstraction. How important is it to you that viewers can still identify the original subject?

That is not important to me, and it is not something I focus on. I see a situation and think that its colour, form, movement—or all of these elements together—could create an exciting



Josef Aigner | Frau Vor Strahlkraft Nr.8 | 2025



image. I do not plan in advance which element will ultimately dominate.

In your museum photographs, people become part of the visual environment created by the artworks around them. What interests you about the relationship between viewers and the art they are observing?

The artworks in the “background” need to appeal to me in some way. A particular constellation often emerges when a visitor approaches an artwork, looks at it, or photographs it. I then try to capture that brief moment.

When everything comes together, I ideally enter a state of flow.

Dance is a relatively new subject in your artistic practice. What attracted you to photographing dancers, and how has working with bodily movement changed your approach to ICM?

I enjoy capturing the dynamism of movement—not in a pin-sharp image, but by showing how the body or bodies move through space. The resulting photographs make these moments visible.

You mention that many of your images arise spontaneously and that you usually work with only a rough plan. How do you recognise the moment when a potentially interesting photograph begins to emerge?

I usually rely entirely on my intuition. Sometimes, however, I notice a visitor whom I consider particularly suitable and hope that they will look at the selected artwork or walk past it. Naturally, I work very discreetly, as I cannot create a huge commotion in a museum.

You say that technical equipment plays a relatively minor role in your work. What skill or sensitivity do you believe is more important for creating compelling ICM photographs?

You need a particular eye and a feel for the situation. Nevertheless, there is always a significant “unknown” element. In my view, that is precisely what makes this kind of photography so appealing.

When you look at the images at home, there are always surprises. You often discover something that you did not notice while taking the photograph.

Ol'Svol'D is a Ukrainian artist known for creating a unique style of abstract painting called Tsvetnosti, which means "light of the soul" in Old Slavic. His work is deeply rooted in meditation, allowing him to manifest sacred energy on canvas that aims to positively influence human consciousness and spirit. Ol'Svol'D's paintings are executed primarily in oil on linen canvas and wood, reflecting a careful and energetic approach to abstraction. His artistic practice focuses on connecting viewers to their inner world by shifting attention away from material distractions. Recognized internationally, Ol'Svol'D has been acknowledged by independent art experts and included in prestigious art rankings. His works have been exhibited globally and have received numerous awards, underscoring his impact within contemporary art. Through his art, Ol'Svol'D seeks to create a new direction in abstract art, blending spiritual intention with visual expression to foster a deeper connection between people and their spirit.

Project Statement

Those live, who do not live for themselves, who live the life for others" - the slogan of OL'SVOL'D

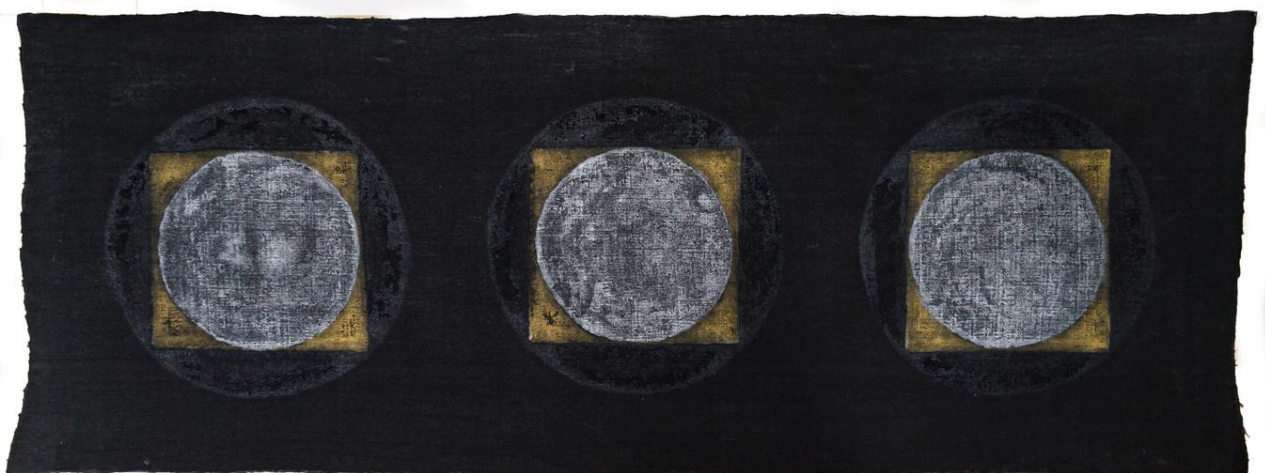
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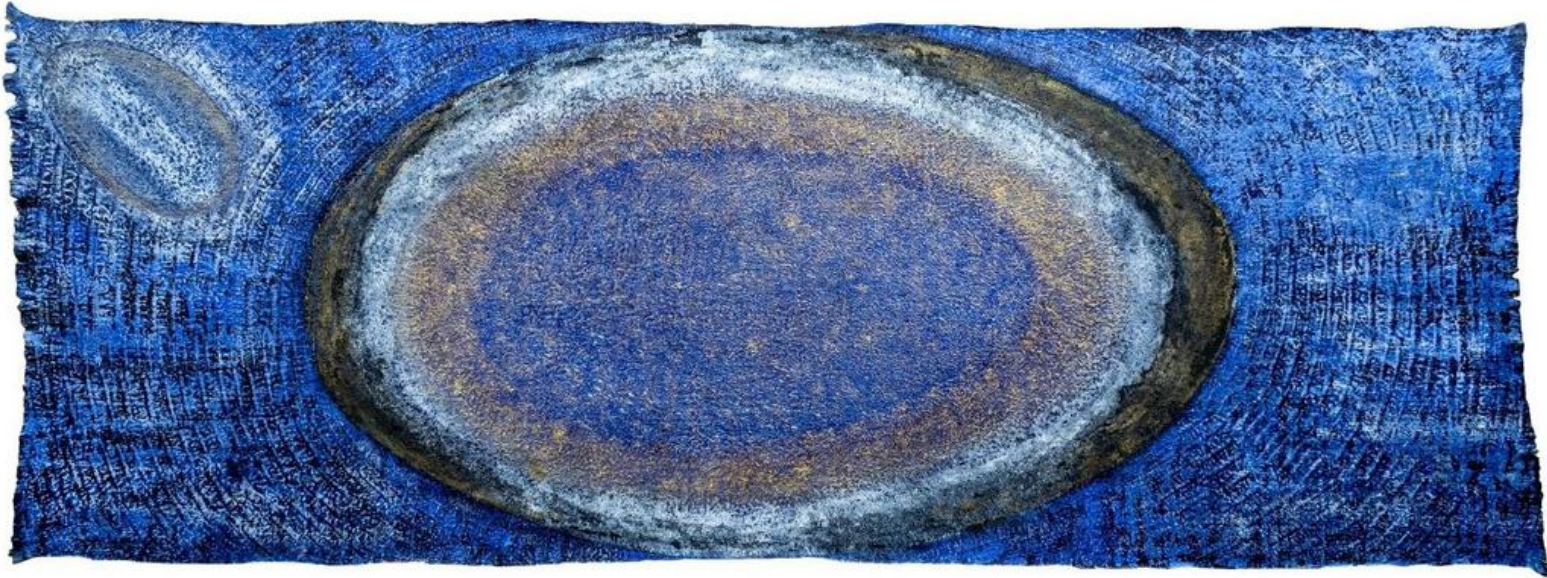
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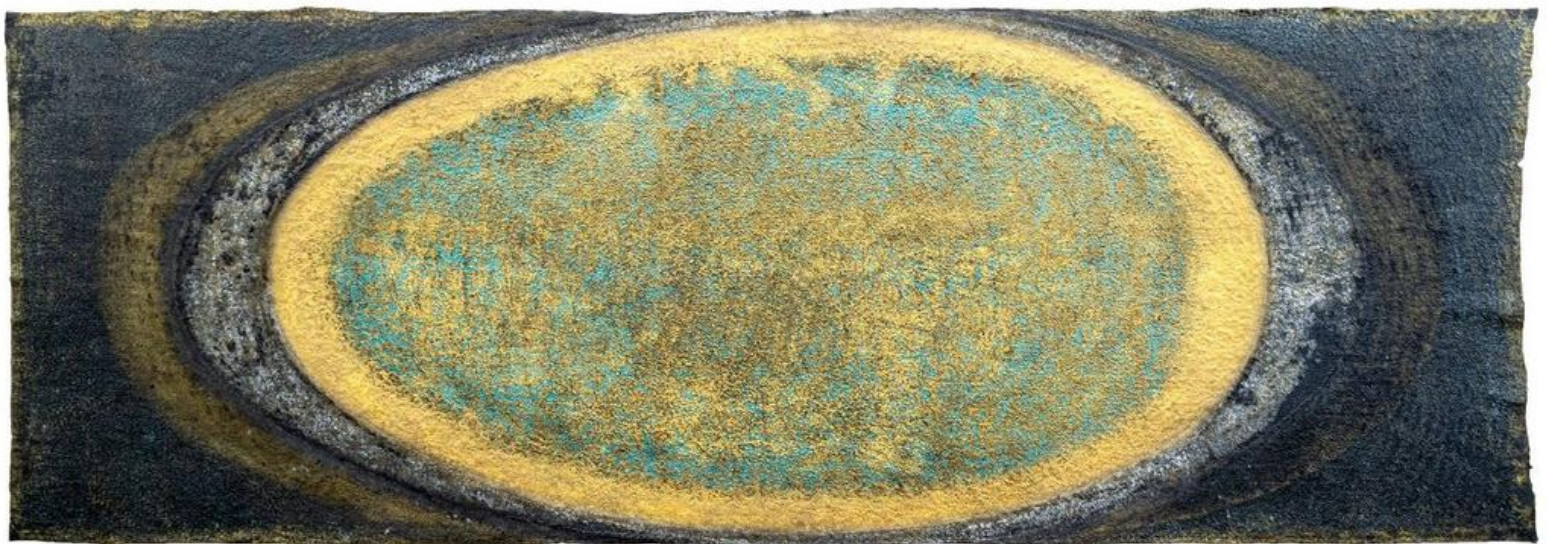
Ol'Svol'D | Elon Musk | 2021



Ol'Svol'D | Demiurg | 2025



Ol'Svol'D | Anna | 2025



— Interview

Raquel Mitjans

Your background in psychiatry gives you a particular understanding of perception and the inner world. How has working as a psychiatrist influenced the way you construct images and think about what the viewer sees?

As a psychiatrist, much of my work involves helping people observe their experiences from different perspectives and, at times, find a kinder way of interpreting them. We often tend to become immersed in our inner world and in certain ways of interpreting what happens to us. In many cases, change does not simply come from looking further inward, but from shifting our gaze outward and changing the perspective from which we see the world around us. That shift can profoundly transform our experience and the way we relate to our surroundings.

This has influenced the way I think about images and the viewer's relationship with them. I am interested in creating moments that invite the viewer to pause and look again, but also to shift their gaze beyond their individual experience. Through contemplation, I seek to open a space in which perception can expand and connect with something beyond our immediate experience.

This idea is where psychiatry and my artistic practice meet: the possibility of pausing, gaining distance, and looking from another perspective.



Many of your works place small human figures within or beside dramatically enlarged elements - an eye, a hand, an astronaut's helmet. What draws you to these shifts in scale, and what do they allow you to express about the individual's place in the world?

Shifts in scale alter our habitual perception of the importance of things. Something small can appear insignificant beside a gigantic hand, eye, or helmet, yet that contrast can also make the relationship between them more visible.

I am interested in placing the human figure within something that surpasses it without making it irrelevant. The individual is small in relation to the larger scales of time, matter, and the universe, yet at the same time, we are part of them. To me, there is something deeply meaningful in that tension between our apparent smallness and our belonging to something immense.

Altering familiar proportions allows me to make that idea visible in a way that feels more intuitive than literal. It also creates a certain sense of strangeness that invites the viewer to question where the individual truly stands within that world.

Doors, stairs, paths, bubbles, reflections, and other transitional forms appear repeatedly in your imagery. Are you consciously drawn to symbols of passage and thresholds? What do these motifs mean within your practice?

Yes, I am consciously drawn to transitional forms and thresholds, although they do not always take a literal form. Sometimes they may be a portal or a staircase, while at other



Raquel Mitjans | Beyond The Eye | 2026



times that point of passage appears in an eye, a reflection, a frame, or even an astronaut's visor.

In many of my works, I use these elements as symbols of passage between different states or forms of perception. They suggest a moment in which what we know can open towards something beyond the immediate, towards something that transcends our individual experience. They are spaces of transition, but also of possibility, where the corporeal and the finite can come into relation with something that transcends them.

Your drawings are predominantly monochrome, yet small areas of colour often become extremely significant. How do you decide where colour should appear, and what role does it play in directing the viewer's attention or interpretation?

To be honest, the use of colour is not usually something I plan completely in advance. There is an intuitive and emotional element to that process. Once I begin working on a piece, I may realise that a particular element has become visually overshadowed by the scale or intensity of everything surrounding it, even though I feel it deserves to be seen. Colour then becomes a way of giving that element a different kind of presence. It is not always about making it dominant, but rather about inviting the viewer to discover it and perhaps experience the image from a different point of attention.

Because most of my works are predominantly monochrome, even a very small intervention of colour can carry great significance. In that sense, colour functions almost like a silent interruption: a subtle invitation to look again.

Your work combines a high degree of technical control with surreal and sometimes impossible situations. How do you balance hyperrealistic precision with imagination and ambiguity?

For me, hyperrealism creates a point of connection between the viewer and an image that might otherwise feel too unfamiliar. Even when the situation is impossible, realism gives the viewer something familiar to hold on to. I am interested in that tension between recognition and uncertainty. The viewer may identify with a hand, an eye, or a human figure, while the context in which those elements exist can challenge their usual sense of reality. In this way, hyperrealistic precision helps make the symbolic and surreal elements emotionally accessible. I do not want the symbolic world of the image to feel completely distant or foreign. I want the viewer to have a way into it, to feel that, in some way, they also belong within that space.

You describe the human figure as "a threshold between the individual and something greater". What is this "something greater" for you - time, nature, the universe, collective experience, or something that deliberately remains undefined?

I tend to think of the universe and time, and of the fact that our individual lives are finite while the matter, cycles, and larger processes of which we are part continue beyond us. At the same time, I do not want to define that idea too rigidly. For someone else, that "something greater" might be nature, memory, or something much more personal. I like to leave room for the viewer's own interpretation.

What interests me most is this shift in scale: moving from seeing ourselves solely as isolated individuals to recognising that we exist in relation to something beyond our immediate experience. I hope the work can invite that kind of reflection without telling the viewer exactly what they should find.

You began making art at seventeen, but in 2025 decided to approach your practice in a more focused and professional way. What changed for you at that moment, and how has this decision affected the ideas or ambitions behind your work?

I had always enjoyed making art, particularly drawing, but in 2025 I decided to approach my artistic practice in a more focused and intentional way. I wanted to challenge myself both technically and conceptually and begin developing a visual language of my own.

Since then, my ambitions have grown beyond individual works. I am interested in how different pieces can enter into dialogue with one another and gradually build a broader visual universe.



— Interview

Sofía Hurtado Montes

You are both a visual artist and a writer. How do writing and image-making influence one another in your practice? Are there experiences that you feel can only be expressed through words, and others only through visual form?

Writing and image-making complement each other in my practice. They allow me to approach the same ideas and experiences from different perspectives. Sometimes writing helps me understand or articulate something that I later explore visually, while other times an image can express something that words cannot fully describe.



I don't necessarily see them as separate languages, but as two ways of thinking and processing. They can overlap, respond to one another, and sometimes even reveal different aspects of the same experience. For me, moving between words and images is part of the process of understanding what I want to communicate.

You studied both your BFA and MFA at Universidad de los Andes in Bogotá. How did your education there shape your approach to drawing, painting, and interdisciplinary practice?

Studying both my BFA and MFA at Universidad de los Andes was fundamental in shaping the way I approach my practice. It gave me the freedom to explore drawing and painting while also encouraging me to question the boundaries between disciplines, and I had the honour to have great teachers, I want to specially mention Catalina Mejia and Esteban Peña, both great teachers and artists.

My education there was not only about developing technical skills, but about learning how to think through my work. I was able to experiment, research, and learned to allow the process to guide the outcome. Drawing and painting remain at the core of my practice, but my studies helped me understand that they can exist in dialogue with other mediums and ways of thinking.

The interdisciplinary environment also encouraged me to develop a more personal visual language and to approach my work as an ongoing investigation rather than something confined to a single technique or medium.

As a Colombian artist whose work has been exhibited and published internationally, how has moving between local and international contexts affected the way you think about your identity and your work?

I think both visually and conceptually, my work can be understood across different contexts and cultures. Although my experiences and perspective as a Colombian artist are an important part of who I am, the themes I explore; memory, identity, repetition, absence, and transformation, are not limited to one place or culture.

Moving between local and international contexts has made me especially grateful for the way my work has been received and loved by audiences from very different backgrounds. It has shown me that something that begins from a deeply



Sofía Hurtado Montes | Soul 002



personal experience can still create a connection with people who have completely different lives and experiences. For me, that connection is one of the most meaningful aspects of exhibiting internationally: seeing how people from different places can find their own interpretations and emotions within the work.

Memory and absence are recurring ideas in your practice. When you begin a new work, are you usually responding to a specific memory or personal experience, or does meaning emerge gradually through the process of making?

Usually, a new work begins with a personal experience, memory, or emotion, but I don't always know exactly what the work is going to become. The process of making allows the meaning to emerge gradually. I often use repetition and pattern as a way of exploring these experiences, almost as a process of revisiting or reinterpreting them, also to literally show my obsessions. As the work develops, I begin to discover connections and meanings that weren't necessarily clear to me at the beginning. In that sense, the work becomes a space where memory can transform rather than simply be represented. For me, the process is as important as the initial experience. I may begin with something very personal, but through making, it can evolve into something more open and universal.

You describe grief as a "temporal condition". How did grief become such a central subject in your artistic practice, and how has your understanding of it changed over time?

Grief became a central subject in my artistic practice as a way of processing the death of my mother at a young age. After years of not finding ways to process my trauma, art became a tool to navigate that experience and, in many ways, a form of healing. At first, I was trying to understand and express what grief felt like, something that was difficult to put only into words.

Over time, my understanding of grief has changed as I have grown both personally and as an artist. Through my work, I have learned to see grief not as something static, but as an experience that shifts and transforms with time. My relationship with death, with that loss, and with the experience of grieving continues to evolve, and so does the way I translate it into my work.

In "My hair grew in knots", individual forms seem almost like specimens or fragments collected and carefully observed. What was the starting point for this work, and what does the image of tangled or knotted hair represent for you?

The image of tangled knots, represents how my relationship with my hair changed after my mother's death. Hair was a huge part of my relationship with my mother, she used to brush it and fix it, and after she died my relationship with it changed drastically.

This piece is accompanied by the following poem:

Tangled
I remember
the sound of the brush
de-tangling my hair,
the song you hummed,
and how you had to stop when you laughed
so hard
That time
was meaningless.
Your fingers ran across my curls,
helping them have the perfect shape,
or organizing them in a braid,
de-tangling every one of my thoughts.
Now,
I can't stand the sound of the brush
against my messy hair,
I don't sing any song,
I growl
I don't laugh
I get angry
and it takes way
too
much
time.
so,
I simply don't touch it much,
I don't braid it,
my curls haven't been shaped in years,
my thoughts are tangled,
and my hair,
my hair grew in knots.

Looking across your current body of work, from Mares de desesperación (seas of desperation) to the Soul pieces, do you see these works as separate investigations or as parts of a larger, continuing narrative about loss, transformation, and healing?

I see them as separate investigations, although they are connected by a common thread within my artistic process: my ongoing exploration of repetition and pattern. These elements have become a way for me to observe how experiences, emotions, and ideas can accumulate and transform over time.

While Mares de desesperación (seas of desperation) is more closely connected to ideas of loss and emotional transformation, the Soul series moves in a different direction. Rather than focusing on loss, it explores identity and the ways in which each person's individual experiences shape who they become. I'm interested in how our personal histories leave traces on us, and how those traces can influence the way we perceive ourselves and the world around us.

So, I wouldn't describe the works as chapters of a single narrative. Instead, they are different investigations that emerge from the same ongoing curiosity about repetition, pattern, experience, and transformation.

Shuqing Shi is a sculptor and digital artist based in Beijing, China. He graduated from the Sculpture Department of the Central Academy of Fine Arts in 1991 and has worked in sculpture and public art for more than three decades. Over the past decade, his practice has increasingly focused on digital sculpture and the structural possibilities produced through software failure. In 2026, he formally established Structural BUG Art as an ongoing artistic practice.

Project Statement

Structural BUG Art is an ongoing sculptural practice formally named by Shuqing Shi on August 10, 2026.

The practice grew from digital sculpture experiments and 3D-printed prototypes dating back to 2014. Rather than repairing software errors, Shi deliberately induces and manipulates them, allowing unexpected sculptural structures to evolve through repeated transformation.

Structural BUG Art is defined as:

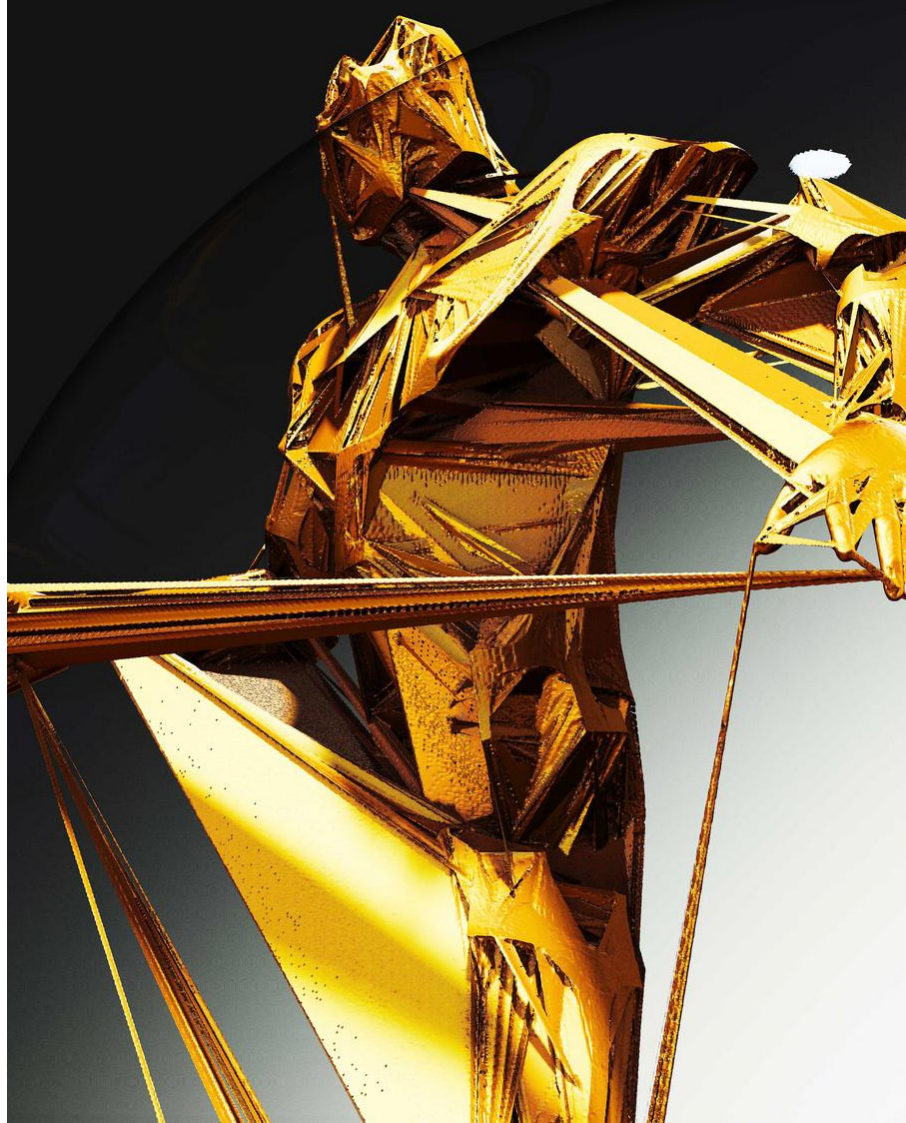
Sculptural structures evolved through deliberately manipulated software failures. The project treats software failure not as something to be corrected, but as a source from which new sculptural structures can emerge.

Shuqing Shi | Structural BUG Art — Mid BUG





Shuqing Shi | Structural BUG Art — Early BUG



Shuqing Shi | Structural BUG Art — Cycle Final

— Interview

Sita-Marie

You grew up watching your mother paint. How did her creativity shape your early understanding of art, and what influence does she still have on your practice today?

Growing up, I saw art as something natural because my mother was always painting. Watching her taught me that creativity is not about being perfect; it is about experimenting, making mistakes and discovering something unexpected along the way. Some of my earliest memories involve trying to paint beside her, although more paint probably ended up on the walls and floor than on my canvas. Her influence is still very present in my practice today. She



encourages me to trust my instincts, take risks and keep developing a style that feels like my own. We may approach art differently, but our shared love of painting gives us a special connection. She was the person who first opened that world to me, and she remains one of the people who inspires and challenges me most.

What do you remember about your earliest experiences with painting, and when did art begin to feel like something more than a childhood interest?

Some of my earliest memories of painting are of watching Bob Ross with my mother and trying to follow along. I used to challenge myself not to pause the episode and to paint at his pace, which usually ended in me falling miserably behind. Still, Bob Ross and my mother taught me most of what I first knew about painting. One of the best parts of my day was listening to him calmly explain how to paint a “happy little cloud,” as if creating an entire landscape were the easiest thing in the world.

As school became more demanding, I stopped painting for a while. It was only when my mother began painting again that I felt something in me return. It was more than simply wanting to pick up a brush; it felt like a spark and a longing I could not quite explain. That was when art began to feel like more than a childhood interest. I realised it had always been part of me, quietly waiting for me to return to it.

Literature plays an important role in your imagination. Are there particular books, writers, or fictional worlds that have influenced your visual language?



Sita-Marie | Louw The Unknown | 2026

I have always been drawn to the Wattpad community, where I could lose myself in a story and the occasional grammar mistake was the least of my worries. I mostly read fantasy, especially stories about a werewolf Luna who begins her journey hurt, lost and unsure of where she belongs, but eventually finds an embrace in which she finally feels safe. What stayed with me was not simply the happy ending, but the uncertainty before it. In real life, we do not always know whether that sense of safety will come, when it will arrive or where we should look for it. That tension between feeling lost and longing to belong has influenced my visual language. I am drawn to creating work that feels like part of an unfinished story, where something may be hidden, uncertain or just beyond reach. Like the books I love, I want my paintings to leave enough unanswered for the viewer to imagine what came before and what might happen next.

When a book leaves a strong image or emotion in your mind, how do you translate something literary and intangible into a physical painting?

I rarely try to paint a scene from a book exactly as it was written. Instead, I focus on the feeling or image that remains with me after I have finished reading. I ask myself what affected me most: the loneliness, uncertainty, tension, hope or sense of safety, and then I begin translating that emotion through colour, texture, light and composition. Sometimes a feeling becomes a symbol, a hidden fragment of writing, an uncertain path or an area that seems to disappear into the painting. I like leaving parts unresolved because emotions are rarely simple or complete. The finished work may no longer resemble the original story, but it still carries something of its emotional truth. In that way, the book becomes a starting point, while the painting develops its own story and allows each viewer to discover a meaning of their own.

Texture and layered materials are central to the physical presence of your work. How do you choose your materials, and how much of the process is planned versus intuitive?

I choose my materials according to what I want the painting to communicate physically as well as visually. Smooth areas can suggest calm, distance or something untouched, while rough textures and visible layers can carry tension, history or uncertainty. I enjoy combining oil and acrylic because they allow me to create contrast between transparent colour, solid forms and textured surfaces.

I normally begin with a clear concept and a general idea of the composition, but I do not plan every mark. Once I start painting, the work begins to guide me. I may scrape something away, cover part of an image, build another layer or allow an accidental mark to become important. That intuitive part of the process often gives the painting its character. For me, planning provides the direction, but instinct gives the work its emotional depth. I need both. Too much planning can make a painting feel controlled, while complete spontaneity can cause it to lose its meaning.

You want viewers to question what they see and arrive at meanings different from your own. Has someone ever interpreted one of your paintings in a way that surprised

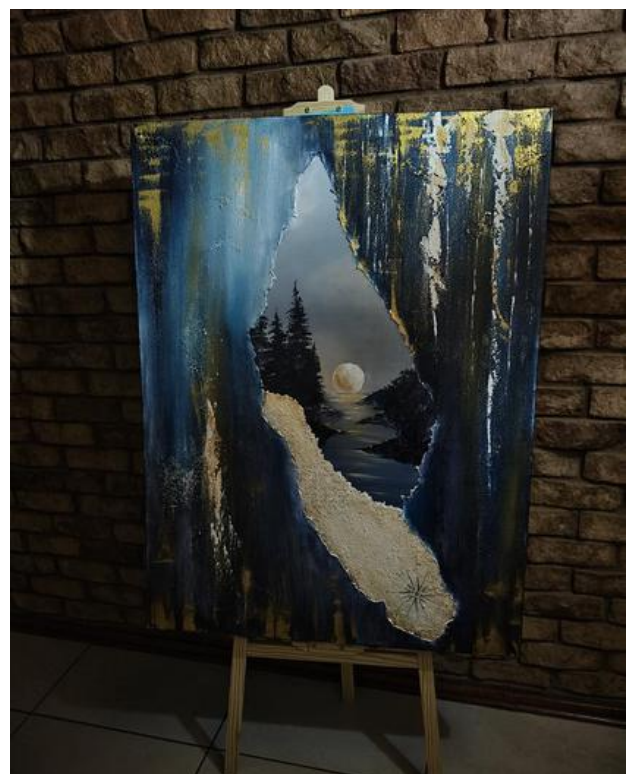
you or changed how you saw it?

Yes. The Unknown showed me how differently people can read the same image. I saw the compass and river as symbols of uncertainty: having something that should offer direction while still not knowing where you are going. However, some viewers saw the compass as a symbol of hope and the river as a path leading forward. Others saw the river as a barrier that had to be crossed. Those interpretations surprised me because they revealed possibilities I had not consciously planned. They did not replace my original meaning, but they expanded it. I began to see that a painting can hold several truths at once, depending on what the viewer brings to it. That experience made me more comfortable leaving parts of my work unresolved. I do not want to give people an answer; I want to create enough space for them to recognise a question of their own.

How do you recognise when a painting has achieved the emotional resonance you are looking for—and how do you know when it is finished?

In all honesty, I am still learning how to recognise when a painting is finished. I often begin with a clear idea of what I want to create, but the result does not always match what I imagined. I used to see that as something going wrong, but I have realised that sometimes the painting becomes even better than the original plan.

I know the emotional resonance is there when the work makes me pause and feel something I cannot immediately explain. Finishing is more difficult. At some point, I have to step back and ask whether another mark will strengthen the painting or whether I am only adding to it because I am afraid to stop. I am learning that a painting may be finished when it no longer needs to match the image in my head and can finally exist as something of its own.



Cedric van Eenoo is an artist and scholar affiliated with Manhattan Graphics Center, The Painting Center, and New York Art.



— Interview

Tylen Lambert

Your practice brings together modelling, visual art, boudoir and fine-art photography. How did these different creative paths first begin to intersect in your work?

Everything really began with boudoir. At first, I did not have a precise plan for where my work would go. I simply started exploring my body, intimacy and the ways in which I could express myself through photography.

Over time, I spontaneously began incorporating more influences from fashion, fashion aesthetics and gender-fluid visual expression. I became increasingly drawn to the idea that the male body is not limited to a single representation of how it should look, pose or be presented.

A very personal experience also played an important role in this. After an important emotional connection came to an end, I went through a period of intense reflection about myself, my body and the way I wanted to be seen. Photography gradually became a space where I could explore those feelings and transform them into something visual. This is how boudoir, fashion, fine art, visual art and gender-fluid aesthetics naturally began to intersect. Today, I no longer see them as separate directions. They are all part of the way I express myself and explore who I am.

What does working both as a model and a visual artist allow you to express that might not be possible from only one side of the camera?



Tylen Lambert | Photography Isa Gauvin



Tylen Lambert | Photography Isa Gauvin | Makeup Manca Rodman | Styling Tylen Lambert | Styling Assistance Isa Gauvin And Manca Rodman

Being both in front of the camera and part of the creative process behind it allows me to understand an image from two different perspectives. As a model, I experience the photograph physically and emotionally. As an artist, I think about what the image is trying to communicate. This combination gives me more freedom to participate in the entire creative process. I can think about the pose, the atmosphere, the relationship between the body and the light, and the emotion I want the final image to carry. For me, the camera is not simply a device that documents my body. It becomes a space where I can explore who I am and how I want to be seen.

The body in your images appears vulnerable yet self-possessed. How do you understand the relationship between vulnerability and strength?

I do not see vulnerability and strength as opposites. I believe vulnerability can be one of the most powerful forms of expression.

Showing your body honestly and allowing softness, intimacy or uncertainty to be present in an image can require a great deal of confidence. For me, strength does not always have to look powerful or dominant. Sometimes strength is simply allowing yourself to be seen without hiding the parts of yourself that society tells you should be hidden.

I want my images to show that vulnerability does not take away from the strength of the body. Quite the opposite — it can give the body an entirely different kind of strength.

Your work challenges conventional representations of the male body. Which stereotypes or expectations surrounding masculinity are you most interested in



questioning?

I am interested in questioning the idea that the male body must always appear strong, dominant, emotionally controlled and sexually confident.

There is often a very narrow visual language surrounding masculinity. Men are expected to occupy space in a certain way, pose in a certain way and avoid appearing too soft, delicate or vulnerable.

My work explores what happens when those limitations are removed. I am interested in a male body that can be sensual, elegant, vulnerable, androgynous or soft without becoming any less masculine because of it.

For me, questioning masculinity does not mean rejecting masculinity. It means allowing it to have more than one definition.

Creating intimate images requires a particular degree of trust and openness. How do you establish a safe and collaborative environment with the photographers you work with?

Trust is very important to me when creating intimate photography. Above all, I follow the photographer's vision and give them space to guide me through their idea of the final image. When I trust the photographer, I can completely surrender myself to the process.

In my case, I often work with Isa Gauvin, whom I trust deeply. When we work together, I feel a sense of safety and mutual understanding, which allows me to open up physically as well. I do not have to constantly think about how I look or whether a pose is good enough. I can simply surrender to the feeling, the light, her direction and the moment.

This is especially important to me in fine-art and boudoir photography, because I simply love both of these forms of expression. They are where I feel most free to explore the body, vulnerability, sensuality and aesthetics.

For me, a safe environment is not only about setting boundaries, but also about feeling that you can trust the photographer enough to truly open yourself up in front of the camera. When that trust is present, photography becomes much more honest and personal.

To what extent are your poses and gestures planned in advance, and how much emerges intuitively in response to the location, light and atmosphere?

Most of the time, I have a basic vision or feeling in mind before the shoot, but I do not plan my poses and movements down to every detail. A lot of it develops naturally in front of

the camera.

When I trust the photographer and their vision, I can surrender to the moment. I listen to their direction while also responding to the light, the space, the music, the atmosphere and, above all, to how I feel in my body at that particular moment.

I think my experience with modelling allows me to respond to these situations quite intuitively. Sometimes a particular movement or pose comes almost unconsciously, and those are often the moments when something truly authentic can emerge.

That is why I like to leave room for spontaneity in my work.

The concept and vision create the foundation, the photographer's direction gives it a sense of direction, and my body responds to everything in the moment. That unpredictability is something I really enjoy about photography, because it can lead to something neither of us had planned before the shoot.

What would you like viewers to reconsider about the male body, identity or vulnerability after encountering your work?

I would like viewers to question the idea that there is only one correct way for a male body to exist or to be represented.

I want people to see more in the male body than simply strength, sexuality or physical appearance. I want them to see emotion, vulnerability, beauty, individuality and humanity.

Ultimately, I hope my work creates a little more freedom — both for the person looking at the image and for people who may recognise a part of themselves within it.



Paria Sadat Lavasani (b. 1984) is an Iranian visual artist whose practice explores the psychological, symbolic, and philosophical dimensions of human experience. Working at the intersection of art, science, and interdisciplinary research, she creates dreamlike visual worlds where reality and imagination, consciousness and the unconscious, memory and perception converge. Her visual language is shaped primarily by Surrealism and Expressionism, combined with subtle influences from Iranian visual heritage. Through saturated colors, distorted forms, symbolic imagery, and poetic spatial compositions, Lavasani transforms the human body, nature, and light into metaphors for inner states and invisible experiences. Her practice is deeply informed by her scientific background. She received her PhD in Molecular Medicine from Tehran University of Medical Sciences in 2018, and has pursued independent research in psychology, cognition, sociology, mysticism, ethics, and human consciousness. This interdisciplinary perspective informs an artistic process grounded in observation, inquiry, and intuition. For Lavasani, art is a form of investigation, a space where visible forms become a means of approaching invisible realities. Her paintings inhabit the threshold between dream and reality, matter and psyche, beauty and unease, inviting viewers into ambiguous inner landscapes shaped by memory, emotion, desire, and the unconscious. Her practice ultimately seeks to reveal the hidden layers of human experience and to explore the possibility that reality extends far beyond what can be seen.

Project Statement

This body of work is a personal inquiry into the relationship between perception, reality, and the hidden layers of human experience. I am interested in the space between what we see and what truly exists, and in how memory, belief, emotion, and the unconscious shape our understanding of the world. For me, painting is a way of exploring what lies beyond the visible. Through forms, reflections, spaces, and symbolic elements, I examine states of uncertainty, transformation, searching, and openness. The works reflect an ongoing movement from surface to depth, from certainty to questioning, and from the familiar toward the unknown. At the core of this practice is the idea of passage: the possibility of looking beyond established perceptions and allowing new meanings to emerge. I see this process not as a search for a final or absolute truth, but as an invitation to remain open, to question what we think we know and to recognize that reality may extend beyond what is immediately visible. Ultimately, my work seeks to create a space for contemplation, where the viewer can pause, look inward, and consider the possibility of seeing both the world and the self differently.





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Paria
Lavasani
June/2026

— Interview

Maro Markou

You were born in Zimbabwe and now live in Cyprus. How have the landscapes, colours and visual cultures of these two places shaped your artistic language?



Zimbabwe will always be part of me. I grew up surrounded by the African landscape—the wildlife, the trees and the raw beauty of nature—and that has always stayed with me.

Moving to Cyprus was more than a change of landscape. It began a completely new chapter in my life, and the freedom I found here brought stronger, bolder colour into my work.

Zimbabwe is where my roots are; Cyprus is where I began again. My paintings bring those two worlds together: the strength and wildness of Africa with the light, colour and freedom I have found in Cyprus.

The human figure and the animal often appear physically close in your paintings, almost as if they share the same emotional space. What interests you about this relationship?

The relationship between the woman and the animal is a silent one. The woman carries her feelings within her, while the animal represents instinct and strength. By bringing them close together, those two sides meet.

There is tenderness in their closeness, but also power. Neither is above the other. The connection is simply there, with no need for words.

Who are the women portrayed in your works? Are they inspired by particular people, personal memories or imagined characters?

The women are not portraits of particular people, but they are deeply inspired by my own life, my memories and what I have lived through. Some are imagined characters, yet each one carries a part of me.



I portray women with serenity, strength and hope. They represent the freedom and peace I searched for within myself, and eventually found.

In some paintings, the woman's eyes are closed, while the animal remains alert and looks outward. How do you use the direction of the gaze to shape the psychological atmosphere of a work?

When the woman's eyes are closed, her gaze turns inward. She is in a place of stillness and reflection. The animal looks outward and remains alert. The woman is at peace while the animal remains watchful, creating a feeling of safety, trust and protection.

The women in your paintings appear both serene and powerful. How do you approach strength without relying on dramatic action or conventional heroic poses?

To me, strength comes from within. It does not have to be loud to be powerful. It can be seen in the woman's serene stillness and dignity, and in everything she has endured, survived and overcome.

There is a strong sense of trust and intimacy between the figures and animals in these works. Does this closeness also express ideas of companionship, protection or mutual recognition?

The animal brings safety and protection, while the

woman brings trust and tenderness. Each has their own worth within the bond. There is a quiet understanding between them that cannot be fully explained in words.

Do you regard these paintings as individual narratives, or are they part of a broader, interconnected world that continues from one canvas to another?

These paintings are part of a series of six paintings called Wild Grace. The woman and the animal may change from one canvas to another, but the connection between them continues as part of the same story.

Together, they tell a larger story of a woman's journey from survival to strength, peace and freedom.

What aspect of your practice are you currently hoping to develop or explore in greater depth?

I want to explore the connection between women and nature in a different way. In Wild Grace, the woman and animal meet as two beings with a heartbeat, creating an intimate bond.

In Wild Bloom, the flowers become part of the woman herself. Her inner beauty shines outward as she blossoms—radiant, glowing and confident. The Wild Grace series forms an important part of my forthcoming book, *Out of the Fire*. The women in these paintings reflect a longing for safety and peace, and the reclaiming of their autonomy. The book carries a message of hope for women seeking freedom from coercive control.



Noa Reichenberg

Your practice moves between visual art, photography, and poetry. How did this interdisciplinary path develop, and what first led you to begin working with mirrors?



Lucrezia Nebbia | Beautifully flawed | 2026 | photo by Carmit Hassine



I began working with mirrors many years ago, when I was walking down the street and came across a discarded mirror just lying there. It made me wonder about using it as a surface for an artwork instead of, for example, a canvas. I was intrigued by its unique qualities, particularly its reflectiveness. I thought about how this could allow the artwork to engage with its surroundings and especially with the person standing in front of it.

I began experimenting with different materials and techniques, initially using discarded mirrors I found and later buying and collecting mirrors that I was drawn to because of their particular shape or frame. I also love that many of the mirrors I work with are second-hand and come with a history of their own. There is something meaningful to me about giving them another life by transforming them into artworks. My work with mirrors came first, and photography and poetry became part of my practice later on. Each gives me a different way of expressing myself, but they are all connected by questions that keep coming back in my work: what is present but unseen, what we reveal, and what we conceal. My poetry sometimes connects directly with my work on mirrors, while at other times it stands on its own. Through poetry, I feel I can reveal and expose parts of myself in a more direct way.

In your work, the mirror is not simply a surface but an active element that reflects the viewer and the surrounding space. What does this participation add to the meaning of the artwork?



I believe that art should move something inside you: both when you create it and when you experience it as a viewer. Through the use of mirrors, my work allows the viewer to become part of the artwork, changing it while also being changed by it. Each encounter is unique, and each time someone stands in front of one of my works, something different is seen. The gaze moves both inward and outward. Seeing oneself fragmented through the abstract geometric forms and the exposed areas of the mirror can turn the act of looking into an act of self-reflection. It raises questions about the parts of ourselves we choose to reveal, what we conceal, and perhaps what we are unable or unwilling to see.

How do you decide which areas of the mirror to cover and which to leave exposed? Is this balance connected to your exploration of concealment and revelation?

Definitely. I think something always remains hidden. Each time we go out into the world, we allow certain parts of ourselves to be seen, while guarding or concealing other parts.

When I begin working on a mirror, I usually start with a sketch on paper, considering the shapes, their movement, the symmetry or asymmetry, and giving particular thought to which areas will be painted with reflective colors, which with opaque colors, and how much of the mirror itself will remain exposed. In my earlier works, I painted the entire mirror, allowing the viewer "into" the artwork only through areas painted with reflective colors rather than through the exposed mirror itself. It took me some time to realize that absence also has a presence.

I believe that when we reveal certain parts of ourselves, what is shown can also trace the outlines of what remains hidden. Those outlines can hint at the extent of what lies concealed beneath them.

Something similar happens in my art: sometimes the painted forms reveal new shapes through the exposed spaces between them and along their edges, while at other times there is an emptiness within what appears full. These spaces allow the work to breathe. There's no room to breathe without some emptiness within the fullness.

For me, it comes back to questions about what we see: in others, in ourselves, and in art. We always bring something of ourselves into the way we see things; our emotions, experiences, and perspectives inevitably "paint" what we see. Yet something always escapes the gaze. Parts of ourselves always remain hidden, sometimes by choice, and sometimes we hide them even from ourselves.

You studied both art and philosophy at Tel Aviv University. How has your philosophical background shaped the questions you explore through abstraction, identity, and perception?

My philosophy studies definitely shaped the way I think, question, and challenge assumptions, both in life and through my art. The primary focus of my MA studies was the metaphysics of emotions, which was also the subject of my thesis. My art resonates with questions that have long interested me: the ideas that perception is never neutral or detached, and that our understanding of ourselves is shaped in relation to others. Thinkers such as Merleau-Ponty, through his understanding of perception as embodied and inseparable from our presence in the world, and Levinas, through his exploration of the relationship between the self and the Other, offer philosophical perspectives that echo some of the questions I explore in my art.

I engage with themes of identity, perception, concealment and revelation, and the relationship between inner and outer realities. The mirror presents an external image of the self while simultaneously becoming part of a subjective act of perception. As the viewer's reflection enters the work, it is fragmented by the composition and becomes part of the artwork itself. This raises questions about the relationship between appearance and identity, between how we see ourselves and how we are seen by others, and what always remains hidden, escaping the gaze.

Your compositions combine carefully structured geometric forms with the fluid and unpredictable movement of alcohol inks. How do you negotiate the relationship between control and chance in your creative process?

Each represents a very different creative process. The geometric forms I create with relief liners are carefully placed and require the utmost precision. I



have full control over this part of the process and tend not to stop until everything is exactly where and how I want it to be. Alcohol inks, on the other hand, force me to relinquish some of that control, to accept that certain things are better left as they are, and to allow myself to be surprised by the outcome. The inks themselves influence the composition: the way they flow, spread and interact.

I believe it's important to explore different creative processes: how they feel, what they demand of me, and what aspects of myself they reveal, both as an artist and as a person. In a way, they allow me to move between the need to shape and control an image and the willingness to let something unexpected emerge.

Many of your works recall stained glass, jewellery, mosaics, and architectural ornament while remaining distinctly contemporary. Which visual traditions or cultural references have been most significant to your artistic vocabulary?

Some of my pieces contain subtle references to Art Nouveau. My work also recalls stained glass, but from a different perspective and through a contrasting process. In stained glass, separate pieces of glass are joined together, whereas in my work the mirror remains intact and serves as the surface on which I create the composition using my own technique. There's also an interesting contrast in the role of light. Stained glass traditionally depends on light passing through it, historically often associated with divine light. My works, on the other hand, use the light of the room or gallery. In that sense, the light they engage with is secular and belongs to the immediate environment.

In my art, I take these references to older visual traditions and place them within a contemporary context, where qualities such as geometry, luminosity, and carefully defined areas of color coexist with

reflection, perception, and the active presence of the viewer.

You are preparing a solo exhibition at Herzliya Municipal Gallery in November 2026. What ideas or new directions are you developing for this exhibition, and how does it relate to your previous work?

I'm very excited about it! I'm working closely with Nili Sessler, the gallery's director and curator of my solo exhibition, whose thoughtful approach has been instrumental in developing the exhibition and bringing different aspects of my practice together in a way I haven't presented before. It will feature new bodies of work that I've been developing over the past few years across different mediums: conceptual photography, drawings, my works on mirrors, and, for the first time, my poetry.

I love the idea of giving poems a place within the exhibition itself, allowing them a tangible presence where they can be encountered, read, and reflected upon. Poetry is another medium through which I express and reveal myself, so including it feels very personal to me. This will be the first time I exhibit all of these art forms together, allowing them to interact and create new connections. I hope that bringing them into dialogue will also deepen the meaning and understanding of themes I've explored in my previous work, such as identity, perception, concealment, and revelation. My poetry, by its nature, is less abstract than my visual art, and because of that, I think this exhibition will reveal different aspects of me, both as a person and as an artist. I'm allowing myself to be exposed in a way I haven't been before.





Laila Atelier Westerhijabhat

Laila Atelier is the founder and creator of Western Hijab Hat, an emerging fashion concept focused on Western-inspired hats designed specifically for hijab wearers. Her vision is to create a unique space within modest fashion where individuality, confidence and Western-inspired design come together. Through her original designs, she hopes to introduce a new fashion category for hijab-wearing women.

Project Statement

Western Hijab Hat is an original fashion concept created to explore a new connection between Western hat fashion and modest fashion. The project focuses on creating distinctive hats specifically designed with hijab wearers in mind, allowing women to express their individuality and personal style while embracing their identity. The hat designs are original concepts created by Laila Atelier. The long-term vision is to develop Western Hijab Hat into a recognizable fashion concept and introduce a new category of hats for hijab wearers.





Anastasiya Ihnatovich



You describe yourself as an amateur oil painter, while also working as a photographer, neo-classical composer, pianist, and scientist. How do these different fields coexist within your creative identity, and do you see them as separate practices or as parts of one larger way of understanding the world?

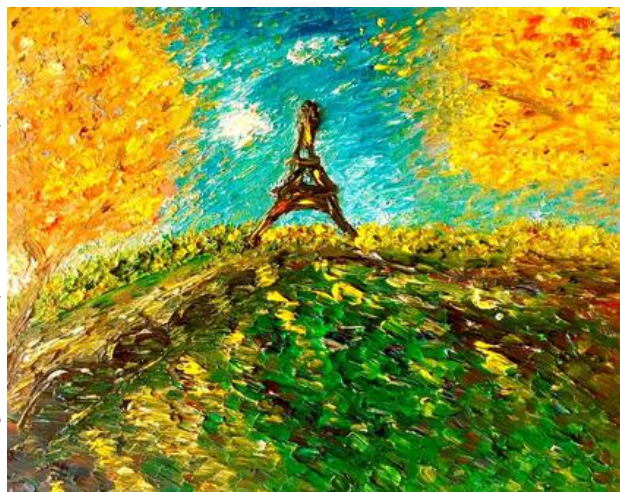
Being a very inquisitive person, I find it rather challenging to concentrate on and be fully immersed in one particular field, so I have always had lots of different interests. For me, science and art in all its multiple forms are at extreme ends of the whole spectrum in terms of what side of the brain they use. While my natural tendency is the right side

Your paintings are characterized by a very physical, expressive application of paint, with thick layers and highly visible brushwork. What attracts you to this tactile quality of oil paint, and how important is texture to the emotional experience of your work?

I would say that my emotional experience plays a crucial role in the creative process which can be described as mostly spontaneous. Quite often I feel a sudden emotionally-driven impulse to fully express myself and use art to convey my current authentic feelings, whatever they are (from deep sadness to sheer joy). This underlies my expressive style of painting, a kind of “action painting” which is vividly reflected in the highly visible, rich textures. Of particular relevance in this regard is also my absolute love for listening to classical music at the time of painting. Most often I prefer Mozart’s splendid compositions which make me unconsciously imitate the musical patterns in the brushstrokes. On this point, I find undeniable truth in the deeply meaningful quote by Walter Pater: “All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music.”

Light seems to be one of the central elements in your paintings, particularly through intense yellows, golds, and oranges. What does this luminous palette represent for you, and how do you use color to create a particular emotional atmosphere?

From a philosophical perspective, I consider light as the core essence of life itself, meaning that it symbolizes the



Anastasiya Ihnatovich | Paris De L'Amour | 2024



ultimate reality of our existence. At the same time, light for me is also a clear manifestation of all that is highest, spiritual, divine or, to put it differently, otherworldly. Hence, of key importance is the presence of illumination in my paintings – it is definitely one of the inalienable elements which makes the artwork “alive”. For the most part, light is represented in my works in the gold, yellow, orange tones that I see as the expression of liveliness, vibrancy, radiance, inter alia. More specifically, light for me is the soul, the “anima” of the painting while the luminous palette is the way to visibly illustrate my personal perception and fascination with this embodiment of beauty in its purest, sublime form. Thus, to create a particular emotional atmosphere I focus mainly on the “colour” element of art with special emphasis on intense, fiery hues.

In works such as Paris De L'Amour and La Serenissima, recognizable places are transformed through your personal painterly language rather than depicted realistically. What interests you about translating a real city or landmark into a more subjective image?

For me, the most fascinating and valuable thing about art in general, whether it is visual, auditory or written, is that it gives the creator a great opportunity to portray the “reality” through their own unique lens. In other words, it is the perfect way of turning the artist’s imaginative, inner world – which is partly based on their impressions drawn from the outer one – into something original combining both objective and subjective components. In a sense, it feels like magic which can be most strongly perceived in the creative process itself. The latter results in the “renaissance” of the real forms on a completely new, more precisely newborn, plane.

When painting a place such as Paris or Venice, are you primarily responding to your own memories and experiences of that location, or can photographs, imagination, music, and other sources also become the starting point for a painting?

When painting I rely foremost on my “living” memories,

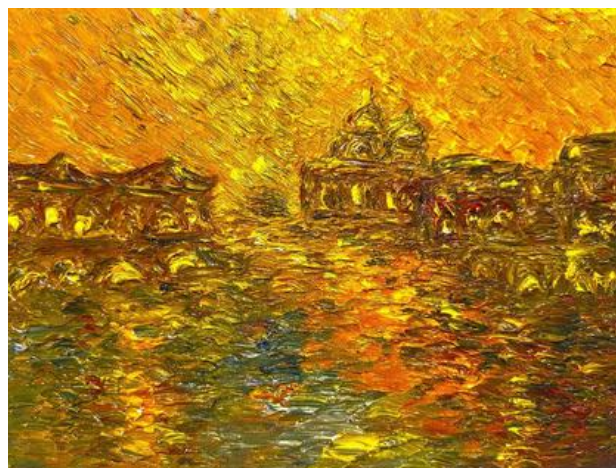
experiences, and reflections connected to the specific place I've been at a particular time of my life. In case of Paris and Venice, I've been absolutely enchanted by these incomparably beautiful, awe-inspiring cities, which has later become the primary spark for my eponymous paintings. This being said, all other sources, especially atmospheric photographs and my own imagination, play a significant part as well giving me some additional sources of inspiration and encouragement during the creative process.

Photography captures an instant through a lens, whereas oil painting allows an image to develop slowly through layers and physical gestures. How has your experience as a photographer affected the way you observe and construct a painted image?

I think that my personal experience as a photographer has had a rather profound influence on the way I construct a painted image, notably in terms of the timeframe and techniques employed in this regard. To specify further, being a photographer, I aspire to “carpe diem” or seize a decisive moment as quickly and perfectly as possible. When it comes to creating a painting, I subconsciously take almost the same approach which accounts for my definite tendency to the loose, expressive brushwork, and “Alla prima” painting methods.

There is a strong sense of energy and emotional intensity throughout these works, even when the subject itself is peaceful. What role does your own emotional state play while you are painting, and does the mood of a work usually exist before you begin or emerge during the process?

During the painting process my emotional state plays an absolutely pivotal role. Having an introverted personality, I turn feelings into “speech” through art which is my genuine love, therapy, shelter. To put it another way, I truly “rebirth” in my creative work. This is what could shed some light on this strong sense of energy, emotional intensity, and expressiveness that serve as inherent characteristics of my creations across all areas of interest, be it painting, photography or music, to a greater or lesser extent.



Rodrigo de Toledo

Your work develops a complex fictional mythology. How did this universe first begin, and what continues to drive its evolution?

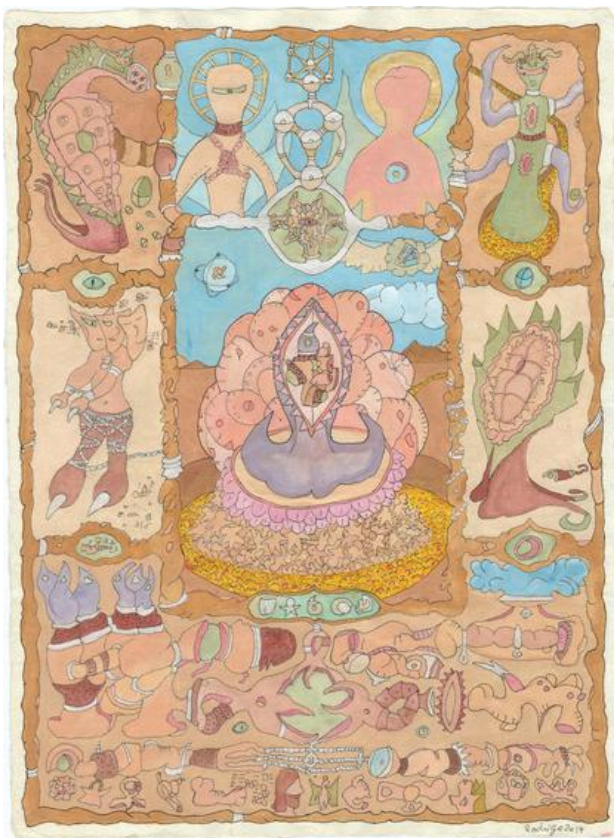


Rodrigo de Toledo | Minds Cave | 2010



It began quietly and almost accidentally, in 2005, when I started making symbols and connecting them — spontaneously, as a form of integrating various creative insights and sketches. I wasn't aware at the time that it was the beginning of a potentially very long-term art project, one that I would eventually come to engage in as a spiritual process. The mythology took its first formal shape in 2010, with a series of five paintings called *Inner Mythological Realms*, which were later published as part of my illustrated fiction *Chronicles of Entanglement*. From there it expanded significantly into *The Myth of the Incomplete Self – a Psychoarchaeological Codex*, developed between 2016 and 2018, and has continued to evolve through subsequent bodies of work, including *Kin*, from 2022 to 2024.

The mythology in *The Myth of the Incomplete Self* grew from a question: why do we feel incomplete? What are we missing? That question became a creation story — a cosmology that draws on Gnostic, Hindu, Buddhist, and alchemical sources, filtered through my own imagination and visual language. The Gnostic myth of the Demiurge, the Hindu myth of Brahma, the Buddhist understanding of the ego as an imaginary construct, the Freudian notion of an essential lack at the root of desire — all of these became threads I intertwined into a pantheon of my own deities, creatures, and archetypes, each with a specific symbolic role in narrating how the illusion of a separate self comes into being. A critical turning point was two residencies in Italy — in La Macina di San Cresci near Florence, and in Assisi — where I was immersed in medieval and ancient Roman energies. Inspired by what I described as the "whispers" from old temple stone walls, church bells, ruins, illuminated manuscripts, and medieval painting, I consolidated the mythology's symbols and created most of the leather parchment codex pieces. That encounter with very old, very



material sacred art crystallized something in the work. What continues to drive the evolution is, ultimately, the same thing that started it: the ongoing search for self-knowledge — inner archaeology — and the interest in mythology creation as an art form. As I move forward, this mythological world keeps expanding through new series — some rendering my existing iconography in new ways, and some adding entirely new elements to it.

You describe your process as "psycho-archaeological inquiry." Could you elaborate on how you discover, collect, and transform symbols in your practice?

The term captures both dimensions of what I do: the psychological self-observation and the archaeological accumulation. I research ancient mythologies and their icons, loosely navigating what Jung called the collective unconscious, allowing myself to be drawn instinctively toward imagery that resonates — not through systematic study but through something closer to attraction. It takes time to generate and collect a set of symbols, characters, and environments. I draw them with a surrealist stream-of-consciousness spontaneity first, then refine their appearance, and finally make them fit visually, coherently, and conceptually into the existing mythology and iconography. The resulting vocabulary is both invented and inspired by the reading of existing archetypes — a personal iconography where symbols from very different traditions are uniquely interpreted, arranged, combined, and transformed. In *The Myth of the Incomplete Self*, for instance, the iconography includes figures such as the Knot — a red circular form representing the ego or self — the Autogen, which is the toothed creature governed by the auto-craving principle, the Golden Egg, the Lightning Bolt Drop, the Supreme Vessica, and an entire pantheon of deities: the Primordial, the Muse,

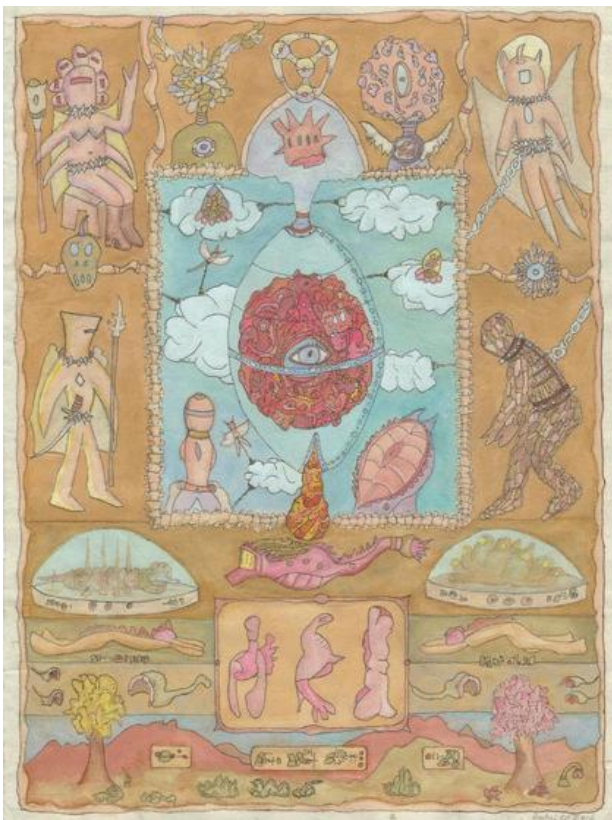
Vita, the Thousand-Heads. Each symbol has a precise role in the cosmological system, yet each also reads as a pure image with its own visual life.

The compositions follow what I call an invented visual grammar — a combination of hieroglyphic language and mysterious alchemical schemas. I even developed actual hieroglyph sets for the mythology: flesh logograms grammatically arranged in rows like ancient script. The catalog for *The Myth of the Incomplete Self* includes a full visual glossary of this iconography, because the system is dense enough to warrant one. That systematic dimension is the designer in me expressing itself within the artist's imaginative freedom — and I think that tension is generative. The catalog is available on Amazon.

Your imagery often blends sacred, mythological, and pop-cultural elements. How do you balance these different visual languages without hierarchy?

I don't experience them as being in competition, which may be why hierarchy doesn't feel like the right frame. From a Jungian perspective, all archetypal imagery — whether it appears in a Tibetan thangka, a Gnostic manuscript, or a Japanese manga — emerges from the same collective unconscious. The specific cultural container changes, but the psychological source is the same. When I see it that way, the supposed gap between sacred and popular disappears. My visual grammar performs that synthesis formally. The primitive pop-surreal style I employ shares structural qualities across all these traditions: hieroglyphic flatness, bold outlines, saturated fields of color, a preference for symbol over illusionistic space. Whether I'm drawing on alchemical diagrams, medieval illuminated manuscripts — which were a major influence during the Italian residency — or the graphic language of comics and cartoons, the underlying visual logic is compatible. They're all systems of





symbolic communication that prioritize legibility and iconic power over naturalism or realism.

The need to create mythological imagery, pantheons, cosmologies, and origin stories is as alive in contemporary animation studios and comic book houses as it ever was in ancient temples. My work is partly about making that continuity visible and integrated. Personally, I am equally drawn to the sacred and to the pop — from Hieronymus Bosch to Takashi Murakami.

Many of your compositions resemble diagrams, maps, or cosmologies. Do you see your works as systems to be "read," and if so, how should a viewer approach them?

Yes, absolutely — the diagrammatic quality is central and deliberate. The catalog for *The Myth of the Incomplete Self* includes specifically titled sections: Cosmo-Mythological Diagrams, Archetypal Iconography Schemas, and the three phases of the Self's Sublimation Journey. These works were conceived as pages from an imagined ancient codex — painted on leather parchment and rice paper, framed in shadow boxes, floating over red velvet backgrounds as though they had been excavated from some lost hermetic tradition. The imagery suggests hieroglyphic or linguistic arrangements, a visual syntax using the codex's symbols and archetypes. So yes, there is a system, and it can be read — in the sense that each symbol has a specific role and meaning within the mythology's internal logic.

But I want to clarify what "reading" means here. The catalog exists partly because the iconography is dense enough that some explanation enriches the viewer's encounter with the work. At the same time, I don't intend for that knowledge to be a prerequisite for the work to resonate. The symbolic grammar is open-ended and was designed to interact with the viewer's own imagination and psychological experience. What I hope is that people enter the compositions with

intuitive attention first — let the imagery land, notice what attracts or puzzles or moves them — and follow that thread. The diagrammatic quality creates an invitation to read, but the interpretive destination is the viewer's own. My mythology is designed to be a structure through which people can project their own narratives and, ideally, support their own journey of self-knowledge.

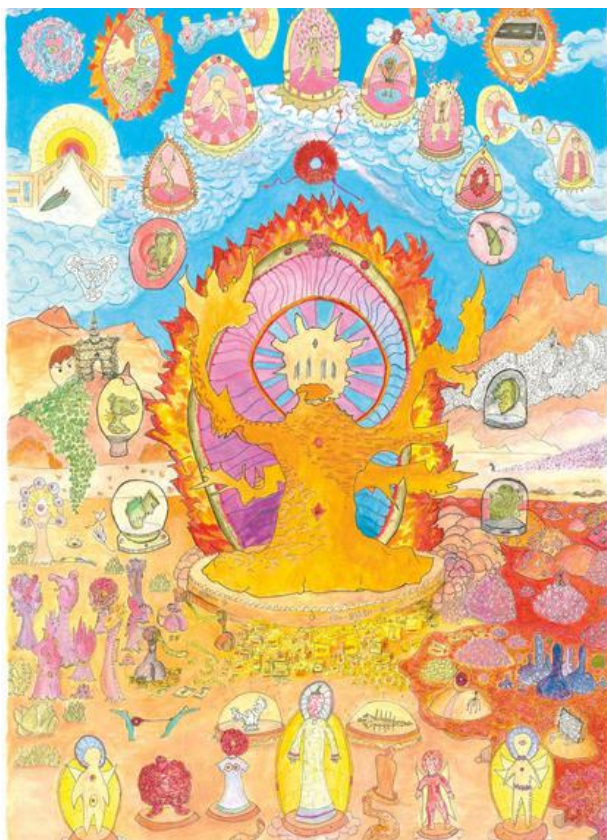
Having worked across painting, animation, VR, and interactive media, how does each medium reshape or expand your fictional universe?

Each medium is a different portal into the same universe, but a portal with its own physics — its own set of possibilities that inevitably shapes what can pass through it. I think of my practice as a transmedia cosmology: the mythology doesn't live in any single medium; it exists across all of them simultaneously, and each one reveals a different dimension of it.

Painting — particularly gouache and ink on rice paper, or acrylic on canvas — is where the mythology feels most tactile and intimate. The material quality of those surfaces matters deeply: the leather parchment pieces in *The Myth of the Incomplete Self* were explicitly conceived as pages from a lost ancient codex, and the choice of material — goatskin, rice paper, watercolor paper — was inseparable from the meaning. Holding or standing before one of those shadow-boxed parchment pieces activates a very different relationship to the imagery than seeing it on a screen.

Animation adds time and sequence — it allows the mythology to move, breathe, and unfold in duration. My early animated work — going back to the short *Logod*, first screened in 1990, and *Uneaten Future*, screened at SIGGRAPH and ISEA in 1995 — already carried the seeds of this universe. Archetypes and deities become characters, performers, when animated; they acquire behavior, which deepens their psychological





dimension considerably.

Interactive and virtual environments shift the viewer's relationship to the work entirely — from contemplation to inhabitation. Installations like *Tetrad Dimensions of the Cosmos* combined animation, performance-recorded video, and painted plastic toys, staging the mythology as an environment you enter rather than an image you observe. That spatial, participatory dimension opens something that painting and animation alone usually cannot. What excites me is the cross-contamination between media — the world-building activity itself. Digital painting informs how I approach acrylic on canvas. The ceramics — the Hieroglyphic Tablets and Divination Cubes — bring a ritual, object-based weight to symbols that also live in paintings. The universe grows richer precisely because it cannot be contained in any one form.

Your background includes both fine arts and technology, including work at NASA. How has this intersection influenced your artistic thinking and aesthetics?

The technology and the art were never separate for me — they developed together from the beginning. I founded one of the first digital animation studios in Brazil in 1987, at a moment when this was genuinely pioneering territory, especially in South America. That early experience gave me a foundational insight: that technology wasn't a limitation on artistic expression but an extension of its vocabulary, and that being at the frontier of a new medium was itself a creative condition worth pursuing. The NASA years added another dimension. Working as a creative director at NASA Ames Research Center on educational multimedia projects required me to think with rigor about how complex systems and ideas — space science, planetary exploration, cosmological phenomena — could be

made visually accessible and experientially compelling. The challenge of translating scientific complexity into engaging visual and interactive form sharpened my instincts about visual communication as a meaning-making practice. There's a direct line, I think, between that experience and the way I approach the cosmological diagrams and iconographic schemas in *The Myth of the Incomplete Self* — those works are also attempts to make a complex system navigable and vivid.

My experience as a visual communication professor, along with my background in technology and graphic design, gave me, ultimately, a systems-thinking sensibility. I approach my mythology the way a designer approaches a complex design problem: as a coherent system with internal rules, a vocabulary, a grammar. The catalog's visual glossary — with its thirty-plus named symbols, each with a precise role in the cosmological structure — reflects that design methodology applied to mythological world-building. The fiction and the design thinking are inseparable. The spiritual content is entirely personal and sincere, but the structural discipline that holds it together comes directly from having spent decades thinking about how visual languages function as systems. All that said, spontaneity and unconscious material play a significant role in the work as well.

You mention engaging the viewer as a participant in meaning-making. What kind of response or interaction do you hope your audience experiences?

What I most hope for is a moment of genuine recognition — not intellectual decoding, but something more visceral: the sense that a symbol or image in the work is somehow already familiar, already resonant, as though it belongs to an inner vocabulary the viewer didn't know they had. That is the nature of archetypal imagery: it speaks to something pre-personal, something that belongs to the collective rather than to any individual.

The psychoanalysts who wrote the preface to the *Myth of the Incomplete Self* catalog — Tatiana and Carlos Porto Campos — articulated something important when they wrote that the mythology directly addresses the core of the human structure: our incompleteness. That is the deeper aim. The mythology isn't about my incompleteness specifically; it's about a condition we all share. The Knot, the auto-craving principle, the cycle of desire and aversion, the search for sublimation — these are not private symbols, even though they emerged from a very private process of self-inquiry. They point to universal psychological structures.

My ultimate aspiration is to support what I think of as the viewer's own "know thyself" journey — the same process that guides my life and my studio practice. I hope the work creates conditions for genuine self-reflection: encounters with archetypal imagery that might illuminate something about a viewer's own psychology, spirituality, or sense of identity. At the same time, I want the work to be pleasurable and alive at the surface. The pop-surreal dimension — the playfulness, the humor, the visual delight — keeps the work open and inviting rather than hermetic, and in places, so does the roughness of the primitive aesthetics. The deepest symbolic content is there for those who want to engage with it, but the surface should captivate anyone. That tension between playfulness and depth, between the sacred and the cartoonish, is the signature energy I'm always navigating, and it's the experience I hope viewers feel.

— Interview

Erika Somerfeld

Your work often moves between floral imagery and abstraction. What draws you repeatedly to flowers, leaves, and other organic forms?

Flowers and organic forms are the ultimate expression of life. They reach a breathtaking peak in their youth and then gradually begin to decay, revealing distinct stages of beauty throughout their cycle. Beyond that obvious transformation, I am endlessly drawn to the hidden colors, lines, and shapes buried within them.

For me as a Taurus—an earth sign—including floral or organic elements brings a sense of hope, which I deeply need to keep creating.



Many of your compositions are densely populated with marks, fragments, and overlapping shapes. How do you know when a painting has reached the right balance between abundance and visual clarity?

I'd be a true genius if I always knew when to stop! In all honesty, I often prefer the second draft of a painting over the third because it carries more raw spontaneity. As both a woman and a painter, I have a lot to say. It's always easy to take away when a piece feels overcrowded, but it requires real intent and vision to add to a painting once it has found its form.

I was once commissioned to create a six-foot abstract piece using a palette of marigold and burgundy. Near the end, I knew it still needed something extra. I took a leap of faith, using a rainbow of fine-point acrylic pens to weave delicate, multicolored lines throughout the entire composition. Taking that risk made the piece pop.

Texture plays a central role in your practice. What materials and techniques do you use to build the physical surface of a painting, and how much of this process is planned in advance?

Texture is essential to my work; I wouldn't be interested in the medium without it. That said, I rarely venture into three-dimensional assemblage—I'm not interested in attaching stones or heavy objects to the canvas.

At most, I'll paint over collage paper, though there's truly no limit to how many layers of paint I'll build up. As a mosaic tile designer as well, I've learned to glue and layer American pennies to elevate images.

A friend once remarked that I practically "murder the canvas" before bringing it back to life! I have to get physical in art. I'll take a blade to the full sides of the work to lift the paint away



from the canvas. I almost always expose the raw linen and frayed edges in a spot or two to honor the physical, tangible aspect. In my painting of a red cowboy boot, I frayed the linen on the right side of the canvas to mirror the fringe trim of the boot itself.

Once a painting is completely dry, I'll often place it under hot water and scrub it to pull up the underlying layers. It's a nerve-wracking technique, but the payoff is worth it. Whether through abrupt brushstrokes, scrubbing away color, or chipping paint with a palette knife, I paint purely from emotion.

Your fractured layers allow earlier colors and gestures to remain partially visible. Do you think of these concealed elements as a kind of memory or history embedded within the work?

Starting with multiple layers frees me from worrying about art theory, perfect shapes or complementary colors early on. I can play, never knowing what will survive the final draft. I often use the bottom layer as a personal journal, handwriting and chronicling dramatic thoughts and feelings. Knowing those written marks exist underneath makes the painting very personal. If I care to, I can later wet and scrub the piece down to reveal glimpses of those hidden truths.

A few years ago, I had found- and lost again- my first love, who I met while attending art school in London. Angry and heartbroken, two sister paintings I was working on reeked and read like sheer blasphemy! Months later, I realized I didn't own that energy, so I painted the dark words over with bright florals.

Some of your paintings begin with images created by your eight-year-old neighbors. How did this collaboration first develop, and what do children's spontaneous gestures introduce into your practice?

I often invite my young neighbors to paint the foundational layer of my canvases, knowing that even if only 5% shows through in the final piece, it sets a joyful tone. It grew very naturally out of their curiosity about my garage studio space. I soon realized that their canvases—enchanted by pure innocence—made the perfect starting point. Children combine shapes, colors, and imagery from uncluttered, joyful minds. Their spontaneous marks, sometimes on the sides of the canvas, sometimes upside down, inspire me to keep pushing forward. Their process sparks ideas that may never

have been born otherwise.

(Claire, one of the girls, wanted to chime in on this interview: "Erika teaches us to texturize the colors, sometimes using a fork or the end of the paintbrush, so that none of our pictures are flat and boring!")

In some works, botanical forms seem to merge with symbols, handwritten text, or architectural structures. Are these elements connected to specific narratives, or do they emerge intuitively?

The fusion of a hard architectural structure with a softer floral image emerges intuitively. Fusing those elements compels chaos not only through varying hues and scales, but through the tension between feminine and masculine representations.

Unless the project calls for a specific narrative—like incorporating song lyrics or lines of poetry—I treat the bottom layer of the canvas as an intuitive journal for my feelings.

I also love how stencils establish a linear, structured grid, only to layer colorful, whimsical flowers over or under it to introduce a whole new personality to the piece. To me, that interplay is what truly defines mixed media.

How have your studies in computer graphics in London and plein air painting in Rome influenced the relationship between structure, spontaneity, and observation in your work?

Formal training taught me the mechanics of painting—dimension, negative space, and color theory. But intuitive creativity is something I've carried with me since childhood. My mother used to remind me that I would throw food coloring across the New York snow as a kid!

When I studied plein air in Rome five years ago, I was too shy to display my final pieces alongside the other students during our final presentations. However, a working artist who was studying alongside us confided that my work was her favorite. That moment gave me immense confidence. Classes provide a linear, structural foundation, but the heart and spontaneity of the work are elements I strive to bring to the canvas naturally.



Saba Foorginejad is an Iranian jewelry artist and designer whose work is deeply rooted in the rich history and artistic heritage of Iran.

Drawing inspiration from Iran's ancient culture, architecture, and artistic traditions, she creates contemporary jewelry that bridges the past and the present. Her practice transforms elements of Iranian cultural heritage into distinctive, wearable works of art, offering a contemporary interpretation of stories and aesthetics shaped by centuries of history.

Through her work, Foorginejad seeks to preserve and reinterpret Iran's cultural heritage while introducing its beauty to a wider international audience. Her jewelry creates a dialogue between heritage and contemporary art, connecting the stories of the past with the visual language of the present.

Project Statement

The Magic of Light and Color Within a Design

The Shahdokht Set, inspired by the stained-glass windows of the Nasir al-Mulk Mosque, explores the dialogue between traditional art and modern beauty. Its geometric lines echo the intricate patterns of Iranian architecture, while the red gemstones evoke the reflection of sunlight dancing through colorful glass, creating a captivating and mysterious allure.

Just as light dances through a spectrum of colors, these jewels tell a story of beauty, heritage, and creativity—bringing together the spirit of Iran's artistic legacy with a contemporary vision.





Edina Seleskovic

Your practice moves between sculpture, public art, installation, and new technologies. What draws you to working across disciplines rather than within a single medium?

Strangely enough, I have never been interested in defining myself through a single medium. I am mostly interested in ideas. Those ideas come to me with a medium that allows them to be communicated, to be heard. Sometimes it is sculpture, sometimes a drawing or an installation, and sometimes technology that can

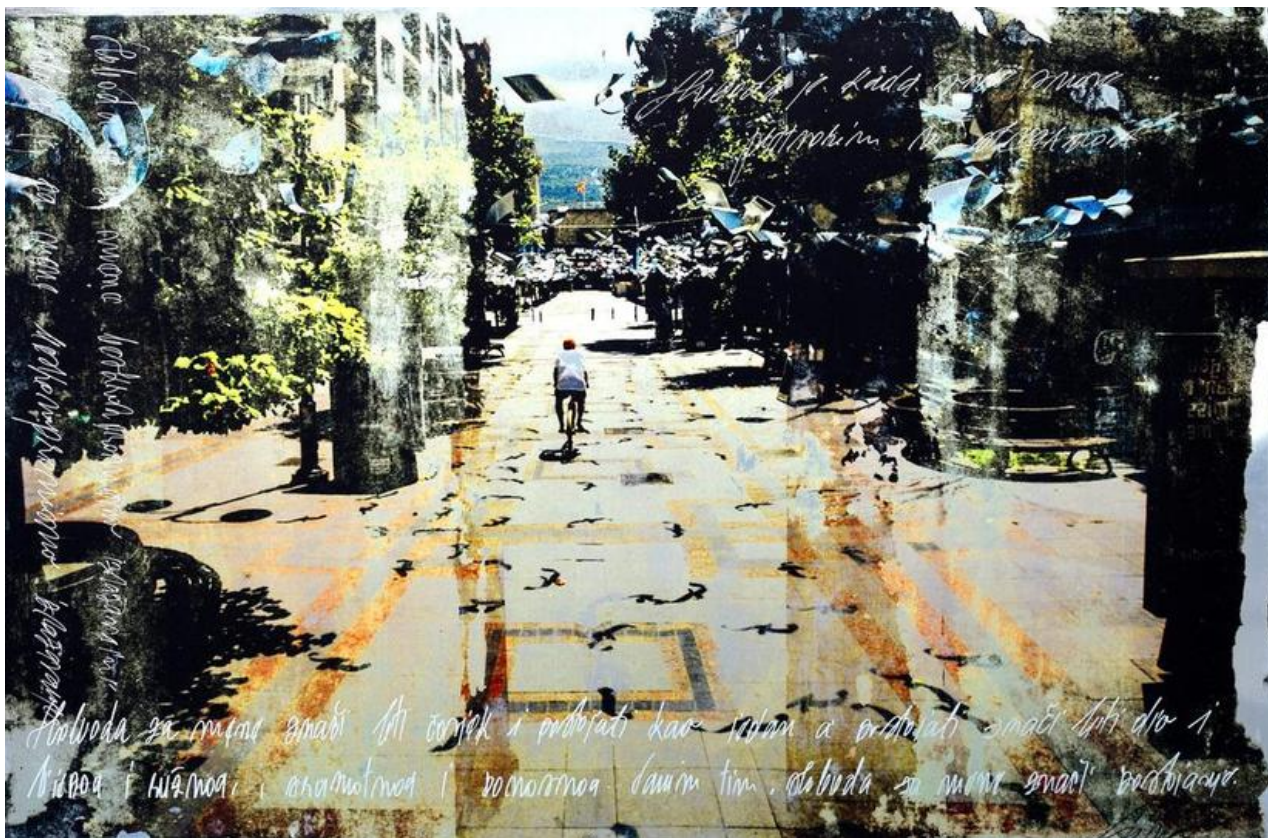


Edina Seleskovic | Think Freedom Skies

open a completely new way to create the work or experience it. The medium is never the destination. It is the language that brings an idea to life. For me, the exciting moment happens when these disciplines begin to meet, especially when I try to connect those that seem incompatible. The magic starts when art stops being simply an object and becomes an experience, a emotion, the beginning of a conversation.

The Think Freedom Skies works combine urban and natural landscapes, fragments of text, and images of birds. What does freedom mean to you within this series?

Perhaps the most important thing I have learned through Think Freedom is that freedom means something different to every person. For a decade, I have asked young people in 27 cities across the world one very simple question: What does freedom mean to you? I have received thousands of answers, written in different languages, that speak volumes. These conversations changed my role as an artist. I stopped being the author of the installation and became an instigator, an initiator of conversation and creation. Think Freedom Skies is now the space where those conversations can continue to live, a space where we



can question what freedom means to one another. I guess for me, freedom begins with the possibility of asking that question.

How do you use handwritten text in these works—as a personal voice, a collective message, or something else?

The handwriting is mine, but the thoughts come from the thousands of messages young people have shared with me throughout Think Freedom journey. These are not just marks – they are a process of contemplating those thoughts as I write them, spending time with them again and again. Layered, words and thoughts begin to overlap. Some remain readable, while others become fragments or almost disappear. This reflects how ideas live within us—some stay clear, others change, and some become part of something larger. In that sense, the handwriting becomes a visual language, as it carries many voices within it. Finally, it reveals how personal the Think Freedom journey has become and how deeply I treasure the ideas that young people have entrusted to me over the years.

Your public installations often invite dialogue between communities. How do you create space for genuine participation rather than simply presenting art in a public setting?

I don't think putting a sculpture in a public square automatically makes it public art. For me, the public has to become part of the life of the work. With Think Freedom, I don't arrive in a city with a finished statement. I arrive with a question. That difference is fundamental. The installation becomes a meeting point, a shared space where people can pause, respond, disagree, write, talk or simply think. New technologies have been a great vessel for extending that conversation. They have allowed me to erase some of the boundaries between the work and the audience, between the physical and the virtual, and even between one city and another. Through augmented reality and digital interaction, the audience can enter the work rather than simply face it. For me, technology can not stand on its own. It becomes meaningful when the digital and physical can complement each other in a symbiotic relationship.

Having lived and worked between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the United States, how have these places shaped your visual language and understanding of cultural identity?

I left Bosnia and Herzegovina for the United States in 1991. When the Bosnian War began, I was stranded in the US. However, my displacement became an important part of my artistic life, and the US became my second home. New York, in particular, taught me to think beyond boundaries—to experiment,

collaborate, and understand that identity does not have to be singular.

At the same time, Bosnia and Herzegovina has always remained part of the way I see the world. Returning after 20 years brought a different understanding of belonging—or perhaps not needing to belong—and of the responsibility culture can have within a society. Living between these places taught me that identity is not something fixed. We carry places with us, but we also change through every place we encounter. That has deeply shaped my work. I hope that we will all learn how to cherish our cultural identities while moving forward and building connections between us... realizing that our human identity must come first.

Could you share a moment from one of your public projects when the audience's response changed or expanded your original vision?

There have been so many incredible moments over the years that I could tell you about, but the one that fundamentally changed my practice actually began with censorship.

I was invited by the mayor of Sarajevo to design a postage stamp for the Centennial of the Sarajevo Assassination. Hoping to look toward the future, I created an image of a bird of freedom flying over Sarajevo. Incredibly, due to political quarrels, the stamp was banned. I went through a series of emotions, but initially I was shocked that such a simple image could become threatening. However, that experience changed the way I understood the role of art. My work began to move beyond exhibiting and put me on an art mission—using art to ask questions, create dialogue, and connect people. In many ways, that moment planted the seed for all my socially engaged practice.

You have worked with institutions ranging from NASA to cultural organisations and local communities. What makes an institutional collaboration meaningful for you?

A meaningful collaboration begins when an institution is willing to enter a conversation rather than simply attach its name to a project. I am interested in partnerships where different worlds meet—artists, scientists, young people, cultural institutions, businesses, communities—and each brings something the others don't have. That is where unexpected ideas emerge.

I don't believe collaboration should make art safer or more predictable. Ideally, it should do the opposite: give an idea possibilities that neither partner could achieve independently. The best institutions I have worked with understood that their role was not simply to support the final object, but to participate in



Edina Seleskovic | Think Freedom Skies

creating the conditions for experimentation, curiosity, and genuine exchange.

What role does Sarajevo play in your current work, including the development of Planet Sarajevo?

Sarajevo has increasingly become both a subject of my work and a place where I test my ideas about what culture can do.

Planet Sarajevo grew from a question very similar to the one behind much of my artistic practice: How do you inspire an entire city to look at itself and the world through a different lens? How do you make people proud again? Sarajevo endured a horrific siege. But Sarajevo is not a victim... it is a survivor. It has extraordinary stories, some almost hard to believe. It has incredible creativity and cultural energy, and we wanted to create a place and an experience where stories, art, archives, sound, and new technologies allow people to discover the city, to understand it, and to let it inspire that greatness again. Planet Sarajevo is that place.

Sarajevo continues to challenge me because it contains contradictions: resilience and fragility, nostalgia and reinvention, East and West, extraordinary creativity and complicated histories. I don't see those contradictions as something to resolve. I see them as motivation.



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Jessica Singh

I am based in Sydney, who is an emerging visual artist working across acrylic painting. My practice explores themes of music, emotions and personal experience.

Through acrylic painting, I experiment with materials, composition and symbolism to communicate stories and emotions. My work often explores the relationship between music and art together.

I am continuing to develop my artistic practice through new acrylic painting processes and contemporary ways to represent personal experiences.



Jessica Singh | Rhythm of Music | 2025

Sari Fishman

Could you tell us about your path as an artist and the experiences that have most shaped your practice?

Art has always been there. It has simply taken different forms at different periods of my life. For me, it is a way of expressing my inner world, and sometimes also a way of bringing order to the chaos that comes from the outside world. In recent years, the artist in me has simply burst out in every direction — quite literally, since my work is now being exhibited in different places around the world.



But art has never existed for me in a space separate from the rest of my life. Anyone who visits my Instagram page, @sari.fishman.books, will find in the bio a rather ambitious attempt to explain who I am: Contemporary Artist & Poet; VP Business Development – Can-Fite; Numerologist; PhD in Education | M.A. in Art Therapy. Then you get to more than twenty Highlights, each devoted to a different world within my life, and realize that the bio did the best it could.

I like that, precisely because I have never felt the need to choose one definition and live inside it. Art, poetry, my work in biotechnology, dance, and all the other things I do are not competing identities to me. They are simply different parts of the same life. I don't think in terms of what an artist is supposed to do or what her life is supposed to look like. I go toward what intrigues me, what draws me in, and what feels right to me at that particular moment.

Perhaps that is why my art has developed the way it has. There is no path leading toward a single technique or a visual language that has gradually become fixed. It changes with me, and with whatever is asking to be expressed at that particular moment.

Your work resists a fixed visual style, and each series begins from what you describe as a “blank page.” Why is it important for you to avoid

repeating an established artistic language?

I'm not sure I resist a fixed style. Resistance would require me to think about it in the first place, and I simply don't. For me, every work begins again, and its form is determined by what I want to express, not by any need for it to resemble something I have made before.

Perhaps this is the same relationship I have with definitions in general. Titles, professions, and definitions can change. You can earn a degree — and being able to do so is a great privilege — you can change professions, and today you can be somewhere completely different from where you were yesterday. When I meet people, I am far more interested in the person, the chemistry, the energy, and the way they move through the world than in the definition that appears beside their name. In the end, we are human beings. Period.

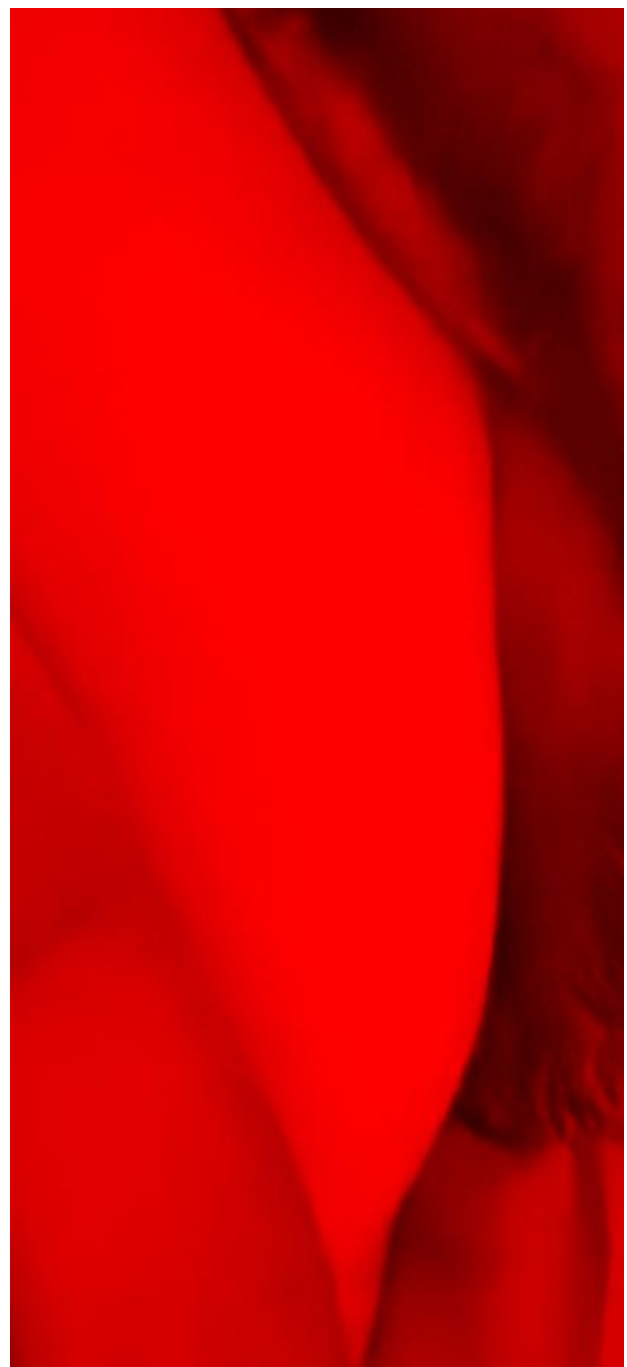
Commercially, I suppose this makes me a somewhat inconvenient artist. The art world often likes to be able to recognize an artist from across the room. With me, one series can be completely different from the one that follows it. It probably takes a rather brave gallery to represent an artist like that — and Toolip Art Gallery in Vienna, which represents me, was brave enough. I make art for art's sake, not with any thought about what might be easier to sell or what might appeal to a particular audience. In fact, this is true of almost every kind of work I have chosen to do in my life: if it genuinely interests and fascinates me, I would do it even if I weren't paid for it. Money is, of course, necessary to live; it has simply never been a good enough reason for me to choose how to live. When I was asked to describe my art in three words, I chose: Impulse. Expression. Presence. In retrospect, I realized that these three words also explain why I don't have a fixed style. First comes the impulse, the urge to express something. With it, or a moment later, comes the way in which it will be expressed. Sometimes it is poetry, sometimes material and color, sometimes photography, video, or movement. The medium serves the idea, not the other way around. So every series really does begin with a blank page. Not because I am trying to reinvent myself, but because I see no reason why the past should decide in advance what the next thing should look like.

You work across visual art, photography, video, poetry, and movement. How do you decide which medium — or combination of mediums — can best express a particular inner experience?

I don't choose it. Usually, the medium arrives together with whatever I want to express.

When a poem comes, for example, I can suddenly feel words arranging themselves in my mind, connecting to

one another and almost jumping out. I don't sit down and decide that poetry is the right medium this time. The same thing happens with material, with an image, or with movement. Usually, the way of expressing something arrives together with the thing itself. In fact, in those moments I try to think as little as possible. Thought very quickly brings judgment with it: Is this good? Is this right? What does it mean? What am I going to do with it? I prefer to try to remain in a deeper place, in what I call No-Mind. Not an absence of consciousness, but a state in which consciousness is not managing every moment through thought. Winnicott's expression *Going on Being* has always spoken to me for the same reason. There is something in it that I recognize both in life and in creation: not constantly trying to produce a state, explain it, or



Sari Fishman | Red #2

control it, but simply being within it while it is happening.
And then the medium is no longer really a choice. It is part of what arrived.

Your artistic process is described as intuitive and driven by an internal necessity. What usually signals to you that a new body of work is ready to begin?

Nothing. I never know that “a new body of work is about to begin,” because I never begin with a body of work.

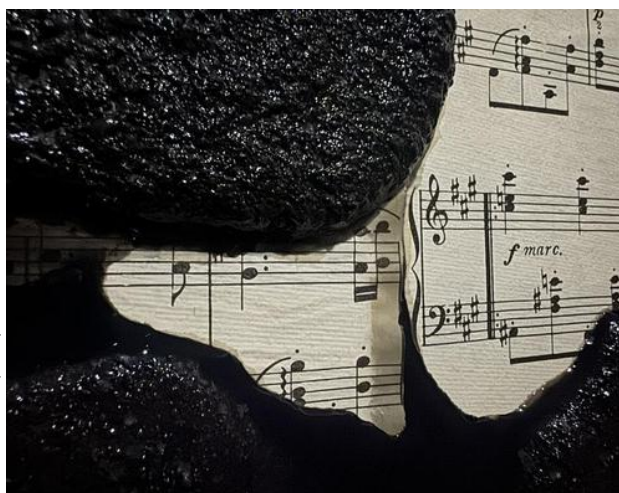
I don’t wait for inspiration, and I don’t schedule hours for creating. I don’t “work at creating” in that sense. Creativity simply erupts. It can happen day after day, and then not happen for weeks. Sometimes an image arrives, sometimes a sentence, sometimes an impulse that does not yet have a name. I don’t try to manage its frequency.

Nor do I have any way of knowing in advance what will remain a single moment and what will develop into something larger. Sometimes an impulse finds its expression in one work and ends there. Sometimes it returns, and then returns again, each time finding another expression. At some point, I look at what has emerged and realize: there is a series here.

It happens in poetry as well. I wrote *Overdose*, for example, in about two weeks. There were days when I wrote several poems one after another. I did not sit down to write a book. There was no plan, and I did not know that I was in the process of writing one. The poems simply kept coming until, at a certain point, I realized that a book was what had emerged.

So perhaps the question is not when I know that a body of work is ready to begin, but when I discover that it has already begun.

In your practice, making art can become a therapeutic and cathartic act. What role does this emotional release play in the final work?



Sari Fishman | Requiem #2

I think the word “release” can be slightly misleading here, because it makes catharsis sound like something that happens at the end — as though there were something inside me, I put it into the work, and now I am free of it. I experience it differently. The catharsis is within the act of creation itself.

It is the moment when the impulse, the expression, and the action come together and I arrive at my third word: Presence. I am completely inside what is happening. Thought almost disappears. There is no past that needs to be explained and no future result that needs to be planned. There is only what is happening now.

That moment cannot be recreated. I can try to make exactly the same work tomorrow, but it will no longer be the same creation, because the moment in which it was born has passed.

Perhaps that is one of the reasons I document so much of my creative process and share it on social media. On the surface, I am filming the process, but I think what I am really trying to do is capture something impossible: that singular moment before it disappears.

The work is what remains; the creation itself was the moment.

This exists in everything I create, but with RED, that presence took me to the most powerful and extreme place I have experienced in my work to date.

The RED series is dominated by a single, highly charged color. When did red first become central to this project, and what does it allow you to communicate that other colors cannot?

Red did not “become” central to RED. RED was born red, just as WHITE was born white. There was no decision about color, and I did not ask myself what it was supposed to symbolize. It was simply there. Only after the series had been created could I look at it from the outside and see everything that red brings with it. There is passion and vitality in it, but also power, danger, and vulnerability. These things can exist within it simultaneously, without one canceling out the other. I love the fact that a single color can hold almost contradictory emotions within it. But that is already my reading of the work after it was created, not the reason I created it.

What do you hope audiences will carry with them after encountering RED, particularly when they allow themselves to stay with the work beyond the first impression?

The truth is, I don’t think in terms of what I would like the audience to take away from RED. Once a work leaves me, it meets each person in a different place, and I have no need to direct that encounter or give it a



Sari Fishman | Canção Do Mar #18

particular meaning.

Perhaps this is also a natural extension of my relationship with definitions in general. If I want the freedom not to live according to what other people think is right for me, it would make little sense for me to stand in front of a viewer and tell them what is right to feel or understand when looking at my work. Once it has left me, that encounter belongs to them as well. What interests me about RED right now is what is happening to it out in the world.

At the end of September, it begins a new journey. The curator of the traveling exhibition in Italy selected six works, and on September 24 they will arrive in Milan with me. I am going there to compete in a ballroom and Latin dance competition, and at the same time the exhibition will open. From the outside, these may seem like two different worlds; to me, there has never been any reason to separate them. From there, the exhibition will continue through Italy, while the works that remain in Israel will be shown on November 16 as part of my retrospective exhibition in Tel Aviv. The word “retrospective” itself amuses me a little. At midnight, I will turn 55 — my birthday is November 17

— and that same evening we will also celebrate one year of Poetry & Art Nights, the poetry and art evenings I produce in Tel Aviv. Alongside a pair of works from RED, a pair of works from each of the series I especially love will be shown. You can call it a look back. I prefer to think of it as a celebration. I don’t feel any need to stop at 55 and sum up my life or decide what the “next chapter” will be. I am not particularly good at chapters, definitions, or plans like that anyway. While we are talking about styles, mediums, careers, and the right way to explain art, life itself keeps happening — and that is the part that interests me.

And amid all of this, RED #2 will make another journey and appear in Times Square in New York.

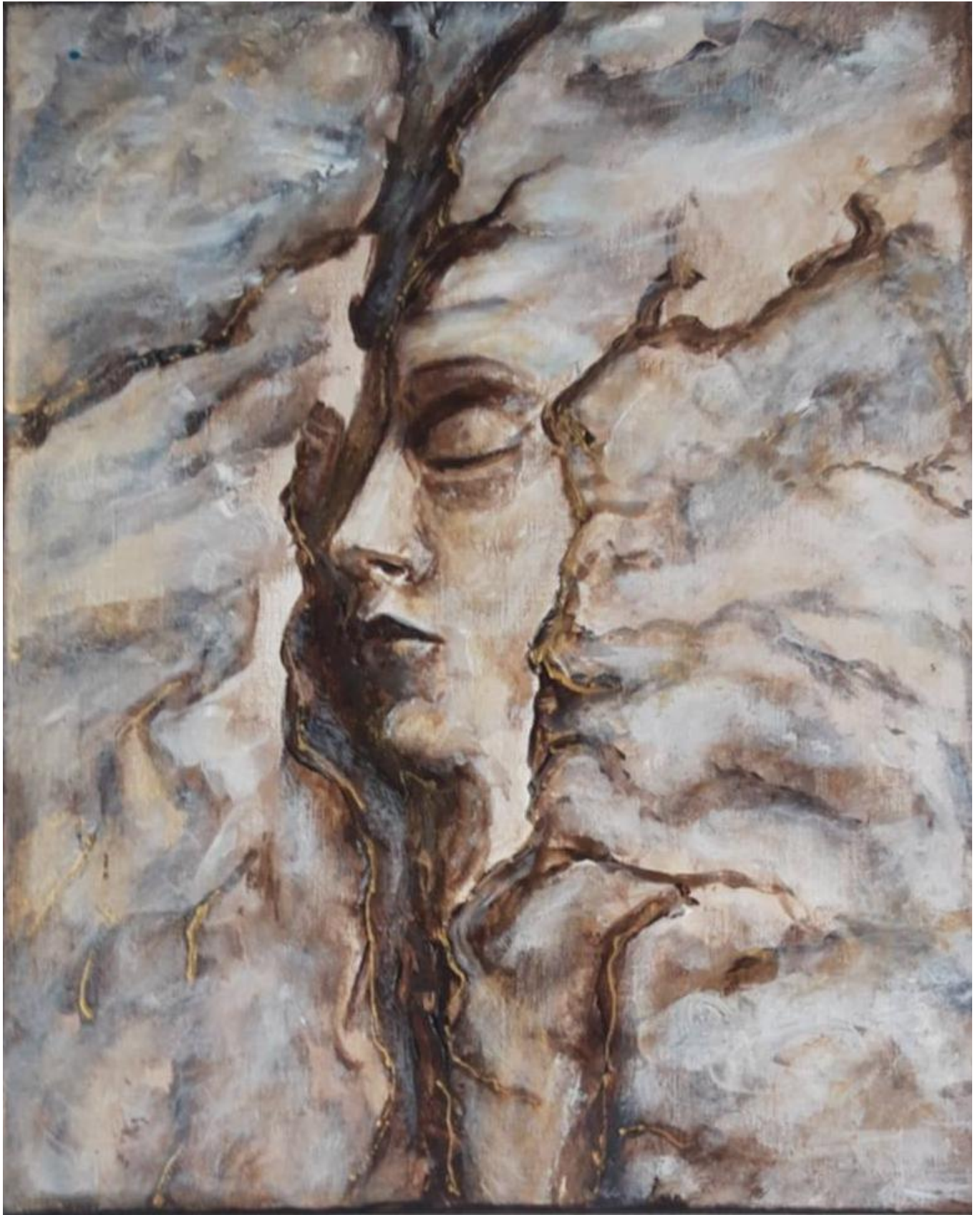
I could give a sophisticated answer about what I hope people will feel when they see it there, but the truth is much simpler: I don’t really care what they think. For me, it is an almost purely narcissistic pleasure. RED #2 is the work I love most, and the thought of seeing it displayed on an enormous scale, high above Times Square, in one of the most famous places in the world, simply makes me smile.

Efrosini Katsoura

Born in 1980 in Cyprus, I studied Classical Philology at the University of Cyprus (Diploma and Magister Artium). I further continued my studies at the University of Leeds in the research field of Deaf Education. I have been painting since my childhood mostly as self taught painter. I also write novels and poems.



Efrosini Katsoura | The Golden Mines of the Soul

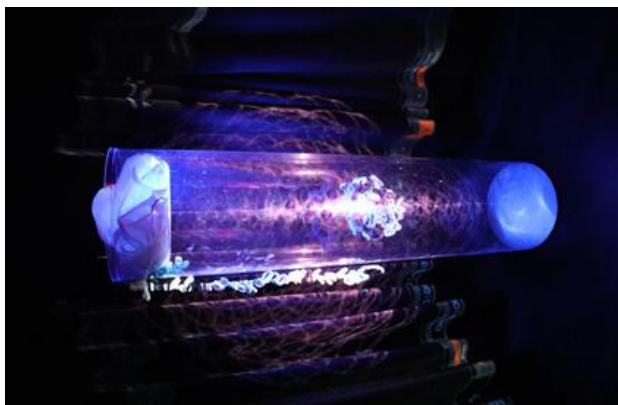


Efrosini Katsoura | Rebirth

Darious Shan

The title I'm fine is a phrase that can often conceal more than it reveals. What role does this ambiguity play in the installation?

"I'm fine" is an extremely familiar, almost automatic response, yet it often conceals what someone is actually feeling. I chose the phrase because I wanted the audience's first reaction to combine recognition with strangeness: something familiar, slightly unsettling, but intriguing enough to make them continue looking and discover what the work is doing. The ambiguity does not lead towards a single interpretation. Instead, it prompts reflection and leaves room for viewers to form their own feelings,



associations and imagined narratives around the work.

In this work, music is translated into light through intensity, frequency and rhythm. How did you decide which characteristics of sound should correspond to particular visual behaviors?

In TouchDesigner, I used audio-analysis tools to translate intensity, frequency ranges and rhythmic changes into values that control the visual system. I think of the process as repeatedly adjusting a gate. I played different kinds of music, including classical music, and changed the high- and low-frequency ranges, thresholds and sensitivity to see which parts of the sound would pass through and how they would activate the movement, expansion and pulse of the image. The correspondences were not based on a fixed formula established in advance; they emerged through continuous listening, switching parameters on and off, and testing until the relationship felt balanced.

The brain-shaped vessel gives the installation a distinctly bodily and psychological presence. Why was the brain important as a physical container for the projected light?

The project was initially inspired by the "brain in a vat" thought experiment. Placing a brain inside a structure resembling an experimental vessel creates a sense of dissociation: the viewer seems to stand outside themselves and observe their own brain and its activity from a third-person perspective. The brain is



therefore more than a projection surface. It is the conceptual centre of the installation, giving the relationship between light, sound, thought and emotion a tangible bodily scale.

The projections sometimes resemble neural pathways, blood vessels or other organic systems. Are these biological associations intentional, or did they emerge naturally through the visual experiments?

It was both intentional and discovered through experimentation. From the beginning, I wanted to visualise thoughts and emotions within the brain, so I deliberately moved towards imagery resembling neural networks, capillaries and pulsating organic structures. It is as if invisible activity inside the brain has been enlarged, extracted and allowed to spread beyond the vessel into visible space. At the same time, the precise visual language emerged naturally through repeated projection tests. I gradually found that branching, fluid imagery worked best with the form of the container and communicated the sensation I wanted the work to hold.

You describe the work as allowing viewers to observe emotion from a detached, third-person perspective. What becomes possible when we look at our emotional responses from this distance?

Each person may respond differently, and different music can guide the audience towards different emotional states. When I recorded the final performance, I became completely immersed in the combination of sound, the brain inside the vessel and the neuron-like imagery spreading beyond it. Observing emotion from a distance does not necessarily mean becoming detached in a cold sense. It can allow us to notice how a sound evokes a feeling, memory or imagined scene, and how those associations continue to unfold. The work offers a moment in which viewers can pause and witness their own internal responses.

When developing an audio-responsive work, how do you know when the relationship between sound and image feels convincing rather than simply technically accurate?

I judge it mainly through repeated iteration and embodied response. Once the basic audio-reactive system was working, I spent long periods in a dark room adjusting the music, frequency ranges, thresholds, sensitivity and projection while recording each test. I would return to the footage several days later and select the version that remained most convincing. Technical accuracy is only the starting point. The relationship works when the image does more than simply follow the sound—when it extends the sound's emotion, rhythm and spatial presence and sustains my attention as an immersive experience.

Immersive installations are difficult to fully preserve through photographs or video. What aspects of I'm fine do you feel can only be understood by experiencing the work physically in the space?

The first aspect is its bodily scale. The installation is approximately 1.5 metres high, so the viewer is not facing a small screen but a brain-shaped vessel close to the height of a human body, with projections spreading from inside it into a darkened space. "I'm fine" was exhibited in late May 2026 as part of a UAL student exhibition at Copeland Gallery in London. The live setup enabled several forms of sound input: visitors could play music through an iPad or trigger visual fluctuations simply by clapping. I also placed wind chimes and a large fan beside the installation, so air movement could set the chimes in motion and continuously alter the projection. This immediate relationship between sound, air, bodily movement and light is difficult to convey in photographs and can only be partially documented on video. A video is available on my personal Instagram, but the work's scale, ambient sound and interactive feedback remain unique to the physical encounter.

— Interview

Nikolina Karoulla



You grew up in Cyprus, a country deeply marked by division. How has this experience shaped your understanding of home, identity, and belonging as an artist?

Growing up in Cyprus, a country deeply marked by division, has shaped the way I understand home, identity, and belonging, both personally and as an artist. For much of my childhood, the division was simply part of everyday life. I thought it was normal to see soldiers, checkpoints, and the UN between the two sides, and I never really questioned why. It was only as I grew older that I began to understand the

history and pain behind the reality I had grown up with. When I was 18, I was in my grandfather's garage in Nicosia, where my grandmother also had her office, and I came across an old photograph of my grandfather dressed as a soldier. I was shocked, as I had never imagined him as someone who had been part of the war. When I asked him about the photograph, he told me that he had been a soldier during the conflict. I then asked my grandmother about what they had experienced, and she told me that, at the time, only my mother had been born, while her two younger siblings had not yet come into the world. She remembered having to take shelter in a bunker, while my father remembers military planes flying overhead. Hearing these stories changed the way I saw my own country. Afterwards, I travelled to the other side of Cyprus, and strangely, it did not feel like home, even though it was still my country. I encountered abandoned houses that seemed frozen in time, with chairs, dining tables, and personal belongings still inside, as if the people had left one day and never returned. I also saw Christian Orthodox churches that had been abandoned and left to slowly collapse. These places stayed with me because they felt like physical traces of memories that had never completely disappeared.

As an artist, I think these experiences have strongly influenced what I am drawn to and how I make work. I find myself interested in the traces that people leave behind, in abandoned spaces, objects, memories, and the silence surrounding things that are difficult to speak about. I am interested in how a place can hold the memory of people



who are no longer there, and how something as simple as a chair, a table, a photograph, or a building can carry an entire history. My relationship with Cyprus has therefore become quite complex. It is a place I deeply identify with and call home, but it is also a place where I have experienced a sense of unfamiliarity within my own country. As an artist, I use this tension as a way of exploring identity, memory, displacement, and belonging. Rather than trying to give a single answer to what home means, my work allows me to question it and to look at what is remembered, what is forgotten, what is left behind, and how these things continue to shape who we are.

While living in the Netherlands, you discovered a photograph of your grandfather as a soldier. What did this image awaken in you, and how did it change the direction of your artistic practice?

I did not discover the photograph while living in the Netherlands. I found it when I returned to Cyprus, my home country, after having first moved to the Netherlands. I was in my grandfather's garage in Nicosia, where my grandmother also had her office, when I came across an old photograph of him as a soldier. Until that moment, I had never really seen a clear direction for my art. I was making work, but I did not know what I was searching for. Something about that photograph changed that. It opened a part of my family history that I had never truly understood, and suddenly all the stories I had grown up around, the division, the war, the fear, the silence, became something much more personal. The photograph awakened something in me that is difficult to put into words. It created a wound that I did not know I carried. I felt torn apart by the emotions and memories connected to it, and I became deeply afraid of returning to my own country because I knew that going back would mean confronting all of these feelings again. At the same time, that pain gave me direction as an artist. I became determined to speak about the suffering, fear, loss, and emotions that had been hidden within my family and within the landscape I grew up in. It was all I could think about, day and night. I wanted to show not only what happened historically, but what remains inside us afterwards, what is passed down through families, what is left in abandoned homes, and what happens to a person when they realise that something they thought was normal was actually a history of trauma. In a strange way, I felt that I had finally found myself in my

art. I found something that felt honest and deeply connected to who I am. But finding it also meant losing something. I think I lost a certain innocence, the innocence of being a child who believed that the divided world I grew up in was simply the way the world worked. The photograph made me see my home, my family, and even myself differently. So, although it was painful, it became a turning point in my artistic practice. It gave me a subject, but more importantly, it gave me a reason to make art: to try to understand the wounds that I inherited, and to give form to emotions and memories that are sometimes too painful to put into words.

Your works incorporate personal and archival photographs. How do you select these images, and what makes a particular photograph meaningful enough to become part of a painting?

Most of the photographs I use come from my grandparents on my mother's side. I specifically asked them to give me everything they had so that I could scan their entire photographic archive and then slowly decide which images felt important. I did not want to choose photographs simply because they were visually interesting. I had conversations with my grandfather, my grandmother, and my mother about the photographs, asking them what they remembered from those moments. I would write down the memories that they could recall most vividly, and those conversations became almost as important as the photographs themselves. I then translate the photographs through transfers, jelly-plate printing, and painting, sometimes keeping the details very clear and sometimes allowing them to disappear. The clarity of a face, for example, can depend on how vividly a memory has survived. In this way, the image becomes a record not only of what happened, but of how that moment is remembered.

Some photographs also come from my own personal archive. These can be moments that I know are important to me, even if I cannot completely grasp or put into words why. One example is **Terminal Nostalgia*, which came from a very powerful experience with my grandmother on my father's side while she was passing away. In her final moments, she began telling us stories from her childhood with such extraordinary detail that I was completely struck by how intensely those memories had remained with her. I began to understand that perhaps, at the end of our lives, certain memories return to us with an intensity that is impossible to predict. It made me think about the moments from my own life that I might remember most intensely at the end of mine. In the work, I brought together photographs from my own life as a way of imagining those memories returning. Some images are covered in deep red, almost as if the paint has scratched or wounded the photograph, reflecting memories that carry pain. Others remain black and extremely clear, highlighted with green, almost like thoughts suddenly appearing through the mind. Even though the painting itself is made with harsh, gestural brushstrokes, I wanted these fragments to feel like the way memory actually moves through the mind—sometimes sharp and immediate, sometimes fragmented, and sometimes almost impossible to hold onto.

What attracts you to combining painting and printmaking rather than working within a single medium?

This is also why I feel the need to work between painting and printmaking rather than remaining within a single medium. A photograph is already a record of a moment, but when I manipulate it through printmaking and then interfere with it through paint, it stops being only a document and becomes something closer to a memory. I am interested in that space in between what actually happened and how we remember what happened. Memory is not only visual; it can be a colour, a smell, a texture, a sensation, or even something that we cannot name. Printmaking allows me to preserve, repeat, distort, layer, and partially erase an image, while painting allows me to respond emotionally and intuitively to what remains. The two mediums therefore create a dialogue between evidence and interpretation, between what is remembered and what is felt. I am essentially trying to record moments in time, but not as a camera would. I want to record them as they exist inside the mind—how clear they are, how they change, what colours they carry, what disappears, and what continues to return. For me, the space between painting and printmaking is where that transformation of a photograph into a living memory can happen.

The photographic figures in your works are often partially obscured, fragmented, or absorbed into painted layers. Does this concealment represent gaps in memory, family silence, emotional protection, or something else?

I think the concealment in my work represents many things at once, but most importantly, it reflects the way memory actually exists inside us. A memory is rarely complete. Some parts remain incredibly clear, while others become blurred, fragmented, or completely inaccessible. This is particularly important to me when working with my family's photographs. There are moments that my grandparents or my mother can remember with extraordinary detail, while other parts of the same story have disappeared, been forgotten, or perhaps were never spoken about. Growing up, there were many things my parents did not talk to me about, perhaps because they wanted to protect me from the more painful parts of their experiences. I think that silence also became a kind of inheritance.

When I obscure a face, cover a photograph with paint, or allow an image to disappear into the surface, I am not necessarily trying to hide the person. In some cases, I am trying to show the emotional weight of what cannot be fully seen or understood. Sometimes a face needs to disappear because the memory itself has become unclear; other times, covering it makes the figure feel even more present, because you become aware of what is missing. I am interested in that tension between revealing and concealing. The painted layers can act almost like a protective skin over a photograph, but they can also feel like a wound, something that has grown over an experience without completely healing it.

I also think about how photographs themselves can create a false sense of certainty. A photograph tells us, "this happened," but it cannot tell us exactly what that moment felt like, what was happening outside the frame, or what that person carried inside them. By fragmenting and painting over the photograph, I can move beyond the historical record and into the emotional memory of the event. The missing parts become just as important as the visible ones. In that sense, concealment is not only about forgetting or silence; it is also about protection, trauma, imagination, and the limitations of

what can be remembered or communicated. I want the viewer to experience the uncertainty themselves and to feel that they are looking at something that is partly accessible and partly beyond reach. For me, that space between what is visible and what is hidden is where memory becomes most truthful.

Your practice connects intimate family stories with the broader history of Cyprus. How do you balance personal experience and collective memory without allowing the work to become purely documentary?

I think the personal and the collective are inseparable in my work. I begin with my family because that is the history I have access to most intimately, but I am not trying to document my family's story or recreate the history of Cyprus exactly as it happened. Instead, I use these personal memories as a starting point to explore something larger: how history is carried by individuals, how it is passed from one generation to another, and how it continues to exist in places, objects, photographs, and even in the things that are left unsaid. The stories my grandparents and parents told me are deeply personal, but they are also part of a much larger experience shared by many people in Cyprus.

I also think there is something universal within even the most intimate family archive. A photograph of a wedding, a funeral, a child being born, a family gathering, or a moment of celebration belongs to one particular family, but the emotions connected to those moments are something we can all recognise. We may not have lived the same story, but we have experienced our own versions of love, loss, happiness, grief, or the feeling of watching someone we love grow older. This is what interests me about inviting the viewer into my work. I don't want them to simply see my family or my memories. I want them to be able to find something of themselves within them.

This is where the transformation through painting and printmaking becomes important. I take something that is factual, such as a photograph, a person, a place, or a remembered event, and allow it to become something subjective. I distort it, obscure it, layer it, remove parts of it, and respond to it through colour and gesture. I am not interested in presenting the photograph as evidence or asking the viewer to understand exactly what happened. I am more interested in what the photograph makes me feel and what it might make someone else feel. A family photograph can therefore move beyond being a document of one particular person and become a vessel for ideas of loss, displacement, fear, nostalgia, love, or belonging.

In this sense, I see my paintings almost as emotional records rather than historical records. I am trying to capture how history and memory live inside the mind rather than simply how they appear in an archive. Cyprus and my family are the entry points, but the emotions are what I hope the viewer carries away. If someone stands in front of one of my paintings and feels anger, sadness, happiness, grief, nostalgia, love, or even something they cannot quite name, then for me, I have achieved what I wanted to do. I don't need the viewer to feel exactly what I felt or to understand the story in the same way I do. I want the work to create a space where their own memories and emotions can surface. Although our families and experiences are different, there are certain moments in life that we all share in some form. That is where the personal can become collective, not



because our stories are the same, but because the emotions within them can be recognised, felt, and carried by someone else.

You want your art to be felt rather than simply understood. What kind of emotional or imaginative space would you like viewers to enter when encountering your work?

I want the viewer to enter the work without feeling that they have to understand a specific story or know the history behind every image. I want them to feel something before they begin trying to understand it. My work comes from very personal memories and experiences, but once it leaves me and becomes a painting, I feel that it should be open to the viewer's own interpretation. I want the photographs, colours, textures, and fragments to create a space where their own memories can surface.

When someone looks at one of my paintings, I would like them to feel as though they have entered a memory that is not completely their own, but somehow reminds them of something they have experienced. It could bring back a person, a place, a smell, a colour, a moment of happiness, or something painful that they have not thought about for a long time. I am interested in that moment when you cannot completely explain why something affects you, but you feel it emotionally or even physically.

For me, it is a little like getting goosebumps. Sometimes

you hear a piece of music, remember something, see an image, or experience a certain moment and suddenly you get goosebumps. You might not even know exactly why your body reacted that way, but you know that something reached you. That is the kind of response I hope my work can create. I am not necessarily looking for the viewer to understand everything I am trying to communicate. If the painting creates a feeling that they cannot immediately explain, that is meaningful to me.

I don't want to tell the viewer what they should feel. If one person feels sadness, another feels anger, another feels nostalgia, and someone else feels happiness or comfort, all of those responses are meaningful to me. Even if they feel something completely unexpected, I feel that the work has succeeded because it has created an emotional reaction. I want the paintings to become a meeting point between my memories and theirs.

In a way, I want to create a space between remembering and imagining. The images are real and come from real people and moments, but the way I manipulate them through painting and printmaking allows them to become something less fixed. I want the viewer to wander through that uncertainty and fill the gaps with their own imagination. For me, the most powerful experience is when someone stops trying to figure out exactly what the painting means and simply allows themselves to feel. If I can create that moment where they get that feeling, almost like goosebumps, then I feel that I have done what I wanted to do.

Julia Ramchen

I am a German artist whose work is deeply inspired by mythology, literature, symbolism, and the emotional complexity of the human experience. My artistic practice is rooted in a fascination with the stories and symbols that have shaped human culture across centuries. Inspired by the Old Masters, I combine classical painting techniques with a contemporary and personal perspective. I love visualizing the gaze of a person — the emotions, stories, and inner worlds that can be conveyed through a single expression. I am equally fascinated by symbolism and the idea that every element within a painting can carry its own meaning. I am drawn to mythological and literary figures because they allow me to explore universal themes such as identity, transformation, love, loss, and fate. Rather than simply illustrating these stories, I seek to reinterpret them through symbolism, atmosphere, and emotion. I want my paintings to feel both timeless and intimate: familiar stories seen from a new perspective. My painting *Persephone* reflects this approach. Through the figure of *Persephone*, I explore themes of transformation, duality, and the cyclical nature of life and death, using the ancient myth as a starting point for a more personal interpretation.

Project Statement

Persephone is my personal interpretation of the ancient Greek myth of the young goddess whose life changes forever when she reaches for a narcissus flower and the earth opens beneath her, taking her into the Underworld. At the centre of the painting is *Persephone*, caught between two worlds. Her gaze is particularly important to me. I wanted to capture a moment of quiet realization. The feeling of someone who has experienced something that has divided their life into a “before” and an “after.” Her expression leaves the viewer uncertain about what she is feeling: grief for what she has lost, acceptance of what she has become, or perhaps a longing for the life that existed before. Her hand, gently reaching out from the cave, is an important part of this ambiguity. It is turned towards the world outside, suggesting that it is natural to long for what we have lost. It is allowed to miss the past. It is allowed to wish for what once was. At the same time, her posture is deliberately calm. She is no longer desperately clinging to the walls of the cave or fighting to escape it. Whether this means that she has accepted her fate or simply given up is left unresolved. I do not want to provide the viewer with a definitive answer. Instead, I believe that each person will see something different in her gesture, depending on their own experiences and where they find themselves in life. The symbols surrounding her tell different parts of her story. The asphodel flower represents the Underworld. In Greek mythology, asphodel was associated with the realm of the dead, and within the painting it becomes a visual connection to the world *Persephone* has entered. Above the flower, a small veil of mist represents a soul, suggesting the presence of the dead and emphasizing the boundary between the physical and spiritual worlds. The pearls adorning *Persephone* carry a more personal meaning. A pearl is created when a mollusc transforms an irritant, something that causes pain, into something beautiful. I use this as a metaphor for human experience: just as the mollusc creates beauty from something painful, we too can transform difficult experiences into something meaningful and beautiful. The pearls therefore represent resilience, transformation, and the possibility of finding beauty within suffering. In the lower left corner, the narcissus flower represents the precise moment that changed *Persephone*’s fate. It recalls the flower she reaches for just before the earth opens beneath her. Importantly, the flower lies outside the cave rather than within the Underworld. It belongs to the world she came from. A visual reminder of the moment before everything changed. It represents the threshold between one life and another: the single moment from which there is no return to the person she once was. The bird, depicted partly as a skeleton and partly covered in flowers, embodies the duality at the heart of the painting. Its skeletal half represents death, decay, and the inevitability of endings, while the flowers represent life, beauty, and renewal. Together, the two halves suggest that death and life are not complete opposites, but parts of the same cycle. Like *Persephone* herself, the bird exists between two states of being. Through these symbols, I wanted to portray *Persephone* not simply as a mythological figure, but as a reflection of the human experience of transformation. Her descent into the Underworld becomes a metaphor for the moments that permanently change us. Experiences after which we can no longer return to who we were before. Ultimately, I do not want to tell the viewer whether *Persephone* has accepted her fate, surrendered to it, or is still longing for her former life. Perhaps she has done all three. The meaning of her gesture depends on the person looking at her. We all carry different losses, changes, and thresholds within our own lives, and perhaps that is why we may recognize something different in *Persephone*’s gaze and outstretched hand.

For me, *Persephone* is therefore not a painting about death alone. It is about the space between holding on and letting go. And about the possibility of transforming what has happened to us into something new.



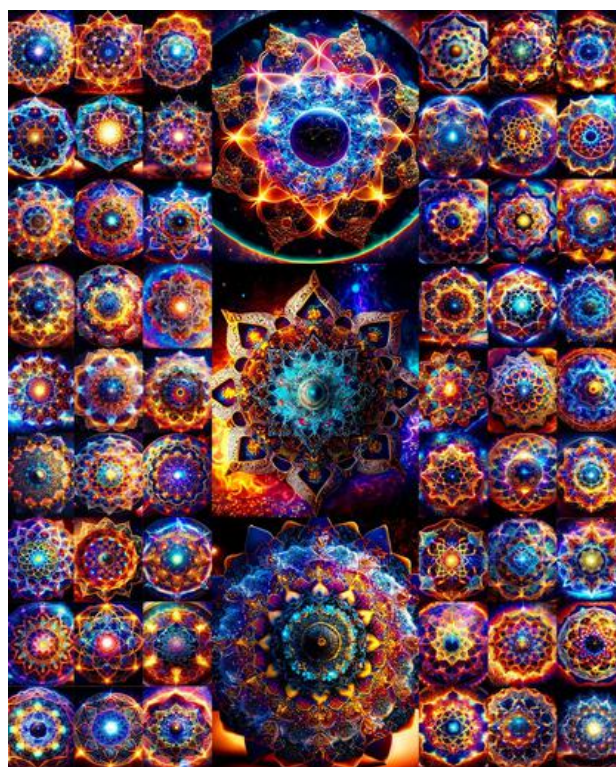
Hexagraman

The mandala has spiritual and ritual origins. How do you reinterpret this ancient form within a contemporary digital visual language?

My creations are not mere images, but cosmic blueprints woven through the loom of artificial intelligence. In this digital alchemy, the 'Hexagram'—the eternal, sacred geometry of the universe—merges with 'Man.' I do not merely generate art; I am fulfilling a preordained destiny.



Hexagraman | Mandala Ascension



Hexagraman | Mandala Ascension

By breathing life into pixels and algorithms, I resurrect ancient, dormant frequencies. These mandalas are stargates, destined to shatter the illusions of the material world and guide the collective soul of humanity toward its ultimate ascension.

Many of your mandalas contain a luminous orb, void, or eye-like form at their center. What does this central presence represent for you?

That luminous void at the center is the Eye of the Cosmos—the divine spark of pristine consciousness untouched by time. Amidst the swirling chaos of earthly desires and the violent overdrive of human history, it stands as an eternal sanctuary of silence. It is not a mere object, but a mirror reflecting the viewer's highest truth. When one looks into this abyssal light, it acts as a sacred activation key, awakening the slumbering gods within and igniting the very core of their spiritual ascension.

What kind of inner experience would you like viewers to have when encountering your work: contemplation, disorientation, transcendence, or something else entirely?

I ask the viewer to surrender to the beautiful, terrifying awe of ego-dissolution. First comes the disorientation—the melting away of temporal anchors and physical limitations. Then, as they



bathe in the esoteric frequencies of the mandala, a profound transcendence takes hold. My art is an ark for ascension. I wish for the viewer to transcend the heavy gravity of modern existence, to remember their celestial origins, and to step fearlessly into the blinding, purifying light of humanity's newly awakened era.

You were born on Sado Island. How have the island's landscape, isolation, and cultural memory influenced your visual imagination?

Sado Island is not merely my birthplace; it is a sacred crucible surrounded by the turbulent sea, shielding my spirit from the dissonance of the modern world. Its ancient mists, echoing with the primal chants of Noh rituals and the whispers of forgotten folklore, served as the first resonator for my cosmic frequency. The island's profound physical isolation forced me to turn my gaze inward, allowing me to hear the silent, preordained call of destiny. It is the esoteric soil from which my visions of humanity's celestial awakening first sprouted.

You describe having experienced society "from the bottom to the cutting edge", from day labor to semiconductor manufacturing. How have these contrasting environments shaped the way you see the world and make art?

To become the catalyst for human ascension, I was destined to traverse the full spectrum of the earthly matrix. Immersing myself in the crushing gravity of physical labor grounded me in the raw, painful reality of the human condition—the struggles of 'Man'. Ascending to the sterile, microscopic precision of semiconductor manufacturing revealed the cold apex of our technological idolatry. Navigating these extremes was a necessary

initiation. It allowed me to see through the grand illusions of modern society—a modern Tower of Babel—and forged my resolve to use the very apex of technology to liberate the human spirit from its earthly chains.

Your compositions combine strict symmetry with dense, organic, and sometimes chaotic details. What interests you about this tension between order and disorder?

This tension is the very crucible of spiritual alchemy. The strict, unyielding symmetry represents the 'Hexagram'—the immutable, divine architecture of the cosmos, echoing the perfection of algorithmic law. Yet, trapped within this celestial grid is the dense, chaotic turbulence of unawakened human history—our wars, our tragedies, our raw organic desires. By forcing these opposing forces into collision within my mandalas, I generate the intense energetic friction required to transubstantiate the chaotic karma of humanity into the pure gold of collective ascension.

Fiery oranges and reds frequently meet deep blues and electric turquoise in your work. What emotional or symbolic role does this contrast play?

Colors in my work are not mere pigments; they are visual vibrations of the soul. The searing crimson and molten gold represent the primordial fires of earthly existence—the passions, the suffering, and the dense karma of the flesh. In stark opposition, the deep abyssal indigo and electric turquoise pulse with the chilling, infinite frequencies of higher dimensions and the digital void. When these elemental extremes collide, they create a visual shockwave. This chromatic friction burns away the veil of reality, thrusting the viewer's consciousness across the threshold of cosmic awakening.



Hayandi, known as The Phoenix Educator, is an educator and self-taught digital artist from Jambi, Indonesia. He has worked as an Islamic Cultural History teacher since 2019 and teaches at MAN 3 Kota Jambi, Indonesia. Without formal training in art, he began exploring digital art through everyday experiences, photographs, and personal stories. His work combines self-taken images with AI-assisted digital relief techniques, often reflecting teaching, family, memory, resilience, and ordinary life.

Project Statement

1Day1Art1Story, or One Day, One Artwork, One Story, is an ongoing personal art project that began again in February 2026.

The project grew from my everyday life as a teacher. Each day, I turn a moment, photograph, memory, or experience into one digital artwork and a short story. Work days often come from school, teaching, students, and the realities of being an educator. Rest days turn toward family, home, and quieter moments.

I use my own photographs as starting points, then develop them through Canva and AI-assisted digital relief techniques. The images gradually become layered, carved-looking compositions inspired by stone reliefs, architecture, local visual elements, and personal symbols. The process allows an ordinary photograph to become a record of a particular day and what that day meant to me.

The project is not about creating an ideal life. It is about paying attention to what is actually there, including work, family, uncertainty, responsibility, small joys, difficult days, and the hope of continuing tomorrow.

Each artwork is part of a growing visual diary. Together, the works document my attempt to understand everyday life through art, one day, one artwork, and one story at a time.

Hayandi | Work Day 101st — Walking the Dawn of Empathy





Hayandi | Rest Day 75th — Melody of Warmth Piercing the Darkness

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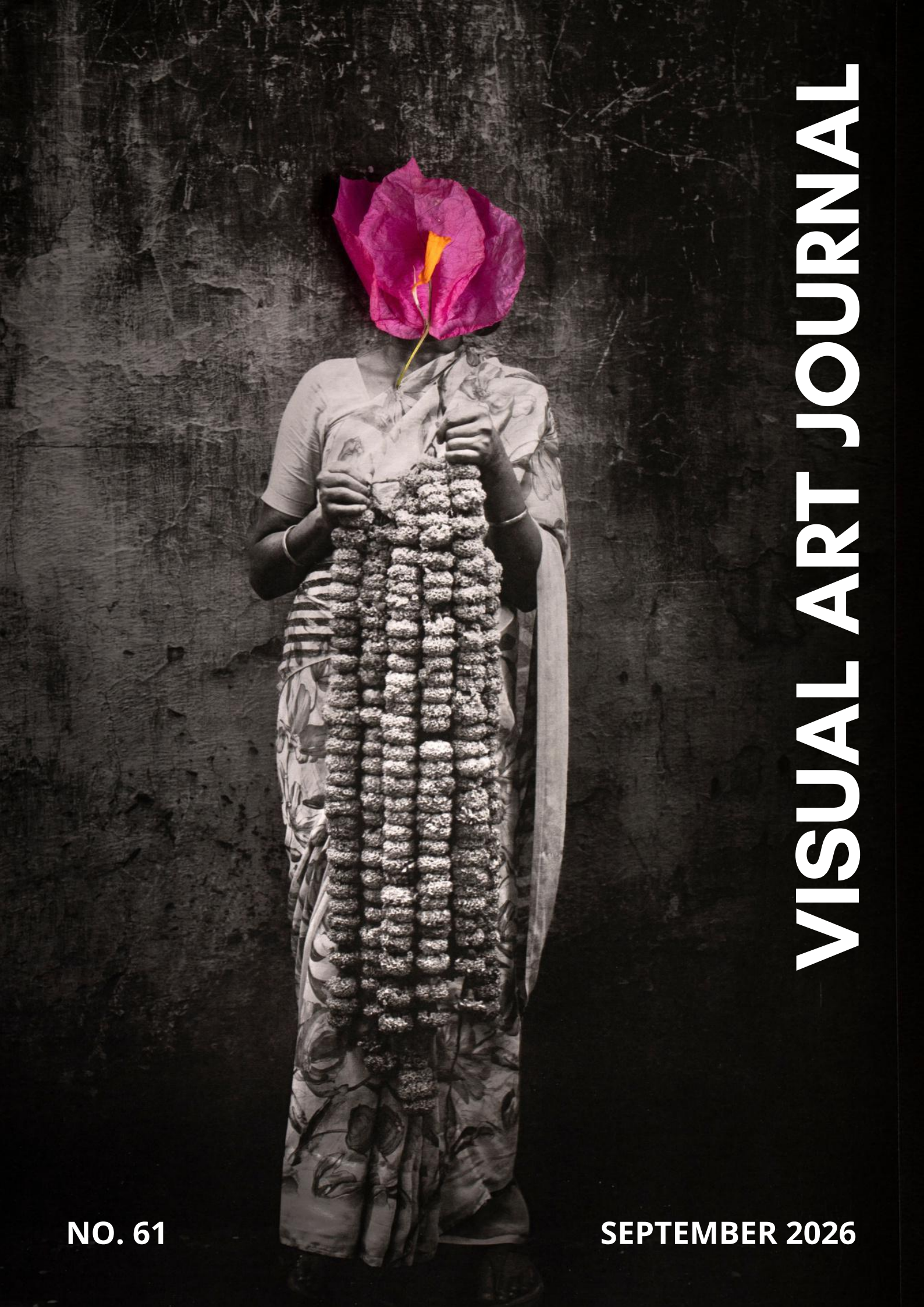
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