

# VISUAL ART JOURNAL





# — Intro

Hello dear reader,

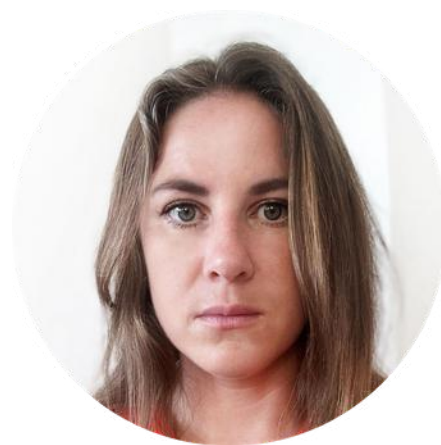
You are holding the 58th issue of our magazine, filled with all forms of visual art. Painting, sculpture, installations, performances, and fashion design — you will find it all in this issue. We are truly delighted that Visual Art Journal continues to grow as a platform where creative people from different fields can express themselves and share their artistic voices.

This summer, we have also been actively developing other areas of our work and expanding the geography of our exhibition spaces. We now organize exhibitions not only in Vienna, but also in Paris and Madrid.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to everyone who trusts us and joins us in exploring these new formats. We hope to continue growing, developing, and creating new ideas and opportunities for you.

Make yourself comfortable — as always, more than 100 pages filled with creativity are waiting ahead.

Enjoy the issue!



**Anna Gvozdeva**

Curator of  
Visual Art Journal

*On the Front Cover:*

**Fangfang Han**

Where Reading Meets The City  
2025

*On the Back Cover:*

**Tatiana Myreeva**

Woman Portrait  
2022



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

## — Interview

# Sebastian Ścigalski

**Your paintings are described as spaces of presence rather than representation. What does “presence” mean to you in the context of painting?**



For me, presence means a state of being fully here and now, without the need to interpret, name, or analyze what we see. I am interested in the moment when a painting ceases to be an object to be read and instead becomes an experience. I would like the viewer to pause for a moment and simply be with the painting, without feeling the need to search for meanings.

**Your compositions often rely on subtle tonal transitions. How do you decide when a transition should remain soft, restrained, or almost imperceptible?**

I do not treat tonal transitions as a compositional element in themselves. I am interested in the moment when the boundary between colors begins to dissolve and loses its clear definition. In these areas, the painting becomes less descriptive and more experiential.

During the painting process, I continuously explore different types of transitions—longer or shorter, more fluid or more concentrated. Through these relationships, I build the tension, rhythm, and spatial quality of the work. I do not follow any predetermined rules. Instead, I look for the moment when color, light, and composition begin to resonate with one another in a way that feels internally coherent. When that



sense of inner harmony emerges, I know that the painting has reached its final form.

**Your works avoid direct narration and symbolism. Why is it important for you to leave a painting open and unresolved?**

I believe that a painting does not need to communicate a specific story in order to be meaningful. When we impose a fixed interpretation, we limit the possibility of a personal encounter with the work. I prefer to create a space in which each viewer can discover something of their own, or simply remain with what cannot be fully named or explained. For me, painting is not a vehicle for delivering messages but a way of opening up a certain kind of experience. Ambiguity plays an important role in this process because it leaves room for contemplation, perception, and individual reflection. I am interested in works that continue to reveal themselves over time rather than offering immediate answers. In that sense, leaving a painting open and unresolved is not an absence of meaning, but an invitation to engage with it more deeply.

**Many of your paintings evoke landscapes, horizons, or atmospheric states without depicting them literally. Do you see this connection yourself?**

Yes, although it is not the starting point of my work. I think it stems from our natural way of perceiving the world. Viewers often recognize horizons, space, or light in my paintings because these elements are deeply rooted in our experience. I am not trying to depict a landscape, but I am interested in creating a similar sense of space, openness, and immersion.

**How do you approach color emotionally and intuitively? Do specific colors carry particular states or memories for you?**

Color is, above all, a carrier of atmosphere for me. I do not assign fixed meanings to specific colors, but I do sense their emotional temperature and energy. My color choices emerge intuitively during the painting process and are often shaped by the relationships between colors rather than by any single color on its own.

This process is based on experimentation. I combine different colors, observe how they interact, and explore the tensions, harmonies, and emotions that emerge between them. I am interested in the moment when a particular combination of colors begins to resonate with me in a way that is difficult to explain rationally. These discoveries often become the starting point for further development of the painting. Ultimately, what interests me most is how color influences our perception of space, time, and presence.



# Ricky Mach

**Your paintings often seem to move between reality, dreams, and inner states of mind. How do you usually recognize the moment or image that becomes the starting point for a work?**

At times there's a tangible reference for the painting itself. When this happens I choose whether to utilize the full reference or if preferred, incorporate portions of the reference. Most times, it's the intangible - mood, instinct, the imagination. Either way, I allow the reference to influence or the imaginative to take shape and then act accordingly to execute a painting.



Ricky Mach | Greyscale | 2022



**You describe each painting as an interpretation of a particular phase of consciousness. What does “consciousness” mean to you within your artistic practice?**

Consciousness refers to the ability for me to ‘allow’ as opposed to inhibiting. Consciousness ‘allows’ me to first see the world for what it is. Consciousness also ‘allows’ me to be aware of what’s going on in my own mind and how I can find a place for it. I guess with that being said, consciousness is the means for me to be aware and acknowledge that I have something to offer.

**Many of your figures have X-shaped eyes, mask-like faces, or stitched mouths. What do these recurring symbols represent for you?**

These X-shapes, mask-like faces and stitch like orifices are motifs to represent the variables and constants that are present within the consciousness from where they come from. Their usage then reflects that consciousness in accordance to the theme of each painting.

**Your works combine playful visual language with darker emotional undertones. How do you balance humor, tension, and psychological depth in your paintings?**

This is a really good question. Honestly, just like in our reality - there are at times no means to balance all of



these things. That is a thing that must be acknowledged. When there is no means for balance, they all must exist how and where they are - with or without resolve. I have made attempts to compartmentalise these varieties from another but a lot of their particulars still find each other. For example, within the painting 'Greyscale', it presents itself as a fair microcosm of the world and the various niches and environments within but there is also an undertone of alienation and tension within the 'cohesion' of the painting, might I say. Notice how some of the entities fit neatly within their environments while others seem to scurry and haste to find a place within a world that does not accept or further does not acknowledge them. Therefore, yes there may be harmony and inclusion within the painting but for whom and where if not everyone and why? Questions that we often ask within society.

**Can you tell us more about your brush, finger, and knife technique? How did this method develop, and what does each tool allow you to express?**

The BFK technique is a method that I began to explore within my initial goings of becoming a painter. When I was developing a means to interpret my themes, I had concluded that it would be suitable to utilise more than one tool to apply the paint to the canvas. The brush came first, then came the finger. The final of the three was the knife. Using all of these tools allow the paint to behave upon the canvas in a particular

fashion - which adds more depth to the expression of the themes within.

**How has growing up and working in The Bahamas influenced your sense of color, rhythm, imagination, or emotional atmosphere?**

Definitely the Bahamian Junkanoo community has played a key role with all of its intentional colour and themes of variety, expression and inclusion. Beyond that, growing up with the television and the influences from it has been a key component. The television has so much pull on daily life that I may still not even be aware of. Overall, I'm still assessing these influences as I mature more not only as an artist but as an adult.

**Some of your paintings suggest characters, creatures, or beings from an unknown world. Do you see them as self-portraits, symbols, dreams, or independent personalities?**

Independent personality, that's an interesting phrase. I've never thought to put it that way but I suppose that that is certain - given that my work can be seen as a mirror for the viewer. And within that viewer there are facets of themselves just as the paintings have facets within. So yes, they can be interpreted as independent personalities, but I will not limit it to just those. They can also be interpreted as dreams, a reflection or a symbol of something that is ubiquitous or personally sentimental.



## — Interview

# Fangfang Han

**You were born in China and now work between China and London. How have these different cultural environments shaped your visual language and the stories you choose to illustrate?**



Fangfang Han | Story Of Treasure | 2025



Growing up in China, I was deeply influenced by traditional paper-cutting, hand-drawn animation, Chinese myth and Peking opera which my parents love, all of which sparked my love for storytelling through images. Studying and working in the UK introduced me to a different visual tradition, British literature and theaters, printmaking artwork, architecture, and my fav museums which broadened my understanding of narrative and composition. Moving between these two cultures has shaped a visual language that combines the warmth and richness of Eastern storytelling with the structure and visual rhythm of Western illustration.

**During your MA at Kingston School of Art, you were influenced by French comics and printmaking. Which qualities of these traditions continue to appear most strongly in your work today?**

French comics taught me how to tell stories through sequences, pacing, and expressive characters and humor, while printmaking greatly influenced my use of colour, texture, and bold graphic shapes. Those two influences remain central to my work today. I still think in terms of narrative first, while using colour and texture to create atmosphere and emotion.

**Your illustrations often contain many characters, architectural elements, and small narrative details. How do you organise such complex compositions while keeping them clear and visually engaging?**

It comes quite naturally to me. Friends often tell me that



my illustrations always have a clear visual focus, even when they're full of details. I spend a lot of time thinking about composition at the sketch stage, carefully arranging the relationships between people, architecture, and negative space so that every element supports the story rather than competing for attention. I want viewers to know where to look first, and then gradually discover everything else.

**How do you decide which recognisable landmarks and everyday details to include when representing a particular city or place?**

I usually begin by asking what has the biggest influence on people's everyday lives and what locals talk about most. Landmarks are important, but I'm equally interested in the cafés, markets, neighbourhoods, or daily rituals that make a place memorable. Those ordinary details often tell a more authentic story about a city than its famous attractions alone.

**Your work invites viewers to discover small scenes and hidden details gradually. How important is this element of visual discovery to your storytelling?**

It's at the heart of my storytelling. Everyday life is full of tiny moments that are funny, touching, emotional or quietly meaningful. I'm less interested in grand, heroic narratives than in the small moments that reveal people's personalities and relationships. Artists like Jean Jacques Sempé have had a lasting influence on me because they celebrated ordinary life with humour and humanity. I hope my illustrations encourage people to slow down, look closer, and discover something new each time they

return to an image.

**Colour plays a central role in creating the warmth and optimism of your illustrations. How do you develop a colour palette for each project, and how much is guided by intuition?**

I'm inspired by Mid-century Modern design and its bold yet timeless colour palettes. I enjoy creating combinations that are vibrant and nostalgic without feeling overwhelming. Much of my colour selection is intuitive, I often imagine the emotional atmosphere first, then experiment with several palettes until one feels right. For client projects, I usually develop a few different options so we can choose the one that best supports the outcome.

**You work across editorial illustration, publishing, branding, and public spaces. How does your approach change depending on the scale, audience, or context of a commission?**

Editorial and publishing were the natural starting point for my career because they focus on communicating a single idea clearly and quickly where you start to get commission more easily. As I've worked on more branding and public space projects, I've realised they require a broader way of thinking and more skills. Beyond creating an individual illustration, I need to consider how the visual language functions across different applications, environments, and audiences. It has encouraged me to develop stronger design thinking alongside my illustration practice, and I see that as a natural and exciting direction for my work.



# — Interview

## Dominika Luszcz

**How did your studies at Columbia College Chicago influence your artistic development and the way you approach figurative painting today?**

Immigrating from Poland to the United States gave me a profound sense of freedom. Coming from a structured post-communist society, I was struck by the openness and informality of American culture. That contrast shaped my identity and encouraged me to question boundaries,



embrace experimentation, and develop a more independent artistic voice. At Columbia College Chicago, I found the freedom to explore figurative painting beyond traditional representation, using the figure to express emotion, resilience, identity, and the experience of living between two cultures.

**You have lived and worked in Kazanów, Poland, since 2016. How has the slower rhythm of rural life affected your creative process, visual language, and choice of subjects?**

Moving to the countryside transformed both my life and my artistic practice. For the first time, I developed a direct relationship with the land—I worked the soil, planted my own garden, and experienced the changing seasons in a deeply physical way. Living in rural Poland also reconnected me with traditions that have endured for generations, including the quiet presence of pre-Christian folk rituals still observed by older members of the community.

These experiences reshaped my visual language. Flowers, plants, and other natural forms began to appear in my paintings, not simply as decorative elements, but as symbols of fragility, resilience, growth, and renewal. My colour palette also shifted, becoming more grounded in earthy tones that reflect the central role of the land in everyday life and in my own creative process. The slower rhythm of rural life taught me to observe more closely, and that sense of stillness continues to shape the emotional atmosphere of my work.

**Your figures are not portraits of particular individuals but universal emotional presences. How do you develop their appearance, posture, and psychological character?**

My background in photography has shaped the way I



Dominika Luszcz | Pause | 2026



approach the figure. Spending years photographing people taught me to observe gesture, posture, and the quiet language of the body. Those experiences continue to inform the way I construct my painted figures. The figures in my paintings are not portraits of specific individuals but emotional presences. Their eyes are intentionally designed to follow the viewer wherever they stand in the room, creating a direct and often intimate encounter. There is a reason I distort their bodies. I elongate their necks, twist their torsos, and sometimes place them in positions that appear physically uncomfortable or even painful. These distortions are intentional—they allow me to convey emotions that cannot be expressed through a naturalistic body alone. By moving beyond physical resemblance, I invite viewers to engage with the psychological and emotional reality of the work rather than the identity of the person depicted. In this way, the figures become universal rather than personal, allowing each viewer to bring their own experiences and emotions to the encounter.

**What draws you to elongated proportions and subtle anatomical distortions, and how do these formal choices help you communicate an internal rather than external reality?**

The elongated proportions in my paintings come from several different influences. The simplified, vertical forms of traditional folk carved wooden sculptures have long inspired me, but the extreme thinness of my figures also has a more personal origin. For many years, I struggled with my own body image and weight. The elongated figures became a way of expressing that experience—not as literal self-portraits, but as emotional reflections of vulnerability, resilience, and the search for identity.

**Stillness is a recurring theme in your work. What does stillness mean to you, and why do you consider it an active psychological state rather than an absence of action?**

I believe that in stillness everything happens. I am drawn to moments when a person appears calm and motionless, yet internally everything is unfolding—memories, emotions, doubts, hopes, and quiet transformations. Those invisible moments interest me far more than action.

For me, stillness is an active psychological state. It is where we process change, heal, endure, and come to understand ourselves. Perhaps this understanding comes from my own life. As a child, immigrating from Poland to the United States required resilience and constant adaptation. Later, returning to rural Poland taught me a different kind of stillness through nature, gardening, and the slow rhythm of life.

**How does a painting usually begin for you - with a particular emotion, a visual image, a colour relationship, or an intuitive response to the canvas?**

A painting can begin in many different ways. Sometimes it starts with a thought or an emotion, other times with a piece of fabric whose texture, pattern, or color sparks an idea. Often, it begins with simply observing people. I am fascinated by quiet, everyday moments and the subtle ways we communicate through posture, gesture, and presence. I often paint women because they allow me to explore themes of identity, vulnerability, resilience, and human connection. Hands are equally important in my work. They carry emotion, memory, and intention, often expressing what a face cannot. A slight gesture or the way a hand rests can reveal an entire psychological state. As I begin painting, these observations become less about the individual and more about creating an emotional presence. I don't set out to tell a specific story; instead, I allow the painting to develop intuitively until the figure embodies the feeling I am searching for.

**What would you like viewers to experience during the first moments of encountering your work, and do their interpretations ever change the way you see your own paintings?**

Painting is my meditation. I hope standing in front of my paintings becomes a meditation for the viewer as well. I hope viewers slow down. My paintings are not meant to reveal themselves all at once. I want the first encounter to be quiet—to create a pause where the viewer is drawn into the emotional presence of the figure rather than a specific story. More than anything, I hope the work evokes a feeling that is difficult to explain—a moment of recognition, a memory, or even goosebumps. I want viewers to reconnect with something they may have forgotten or never found the words to express. If a painting stirs an emotion that feels deeply personal, then it has fulfilled its purpose.

**Julie Baum** is a London-based contemporary artist working in pencil, archival ink and gold leaf. A graduate of Central Saint Martins, her multidisciplinary background spans drawing, jewellery and object design.

Her current work uses birds and the natural world to explore connection, vulnerability, devotion, protection and belonging. Baum's earlier creative practice was featured in Wallpaper\*'s Graduate Directory 2011 under her former name, Julie Impens.

#### *Project Statement*

My work begins with observation, but I am less interested in documenting nature than in what we recognise in it.

A parent guiding its young, two birds finding refuge in one another, an offering being passed between them or a moment of direct eye contact can communicate something remarkably familiar.

In *Aurea Vincula*, I use these encounters to explore the different forms connection can take.

Each drawing is made through thousands of individual pencil and archival ink marks. The process is deliberately slow. Gold leaf is then introduced only where it carries meaning, becoming a visual marker for something precious but intangible.

The work is detailed, but the compositions remain restrained. Negative space matters as much as the marks themselves because it allows a small gesture to carry the emotional weight of the image.



Julie Baum | Sacred Bond



Julie Baum | Ascension

## — Interview

# Liza Stoitsi

**Your practice moves between sculpture, filmmaking, and installation. How do these different media influence one another in your work?**

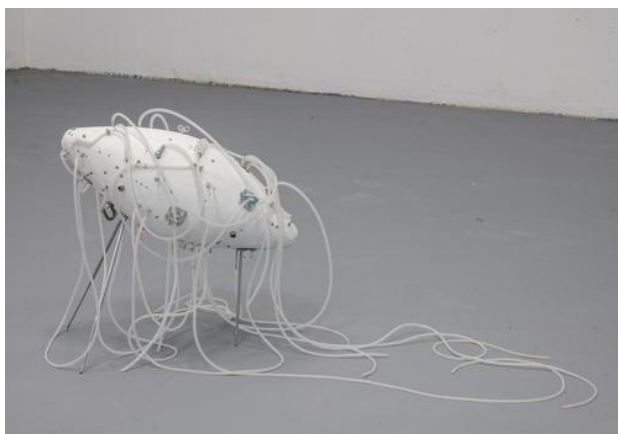


Photo taken by Ioannis Kokkalis



I don't think of sculpture, film, and installation as separate disciplines. For me, they are different ways of exploring the same ideas. Sculpture allows me to build physical systems, film helps me observe movement and time, and installation brings the viewer into the work. Sometimes an idea starts as a sculpture and becomes a film, and sometimes it happens the other way around. The medium depends on what the work needs rather than on a fixed method.

**You describe form as a place where biological, technological, and sculptural logics collide. What draws you to this intersection?**

I have always been interested in the similarities between living systems and constructed ones. Biology and technology may seem different, but both rely on structures, processes, and relationships. Sculpture allows me to bring these different logics together in a physical form. I am less interested in representing nature or technology than in exploring how they can coexist and influence one another.

**Many of your works seem to operate less as static objects and more as systems or organisms. How do you think about movement, behavior, or transformation within your sculptures?**

I don't think of my sculptures as fixed objects. I see them as systems that suggest the possibility of change, even when they are still. Some works physically move, while others imply movement through their structure or the way their materials



interact. What interests me is the idea that a sculpture can behave rather than simply exist, creating the feeling that it is always in a process of becoming.

**Materiality appears to play a central role in your practice. How do you choose the materials you work with, and what kinds of tensions or meanings do they carry for you?**

I choose materials for what they can do rather than what they represent. Each material has its own properties, limitations, and behavior, and these qualities often shape the work itself. I am interested in combining materials that carry different associations, such as ceramic, metal, or electronic components. The tension between fragile and industrial, organic and synthetic, becomes part of the sculpture's language rather than a symbolic contrast.

**Your sculptures often have a fragmented, almost archaeological quality. Are you interested in ideas of decay, remains, or reconstruction?**

I'm more interested in traces and transformation. Fragmentation allows me to suggest that an object has a past or a future beyond what we see. I like the

idea that a sculpture can feel as if it is in the middle of a process rather than representing a finished state.

**Some of your works suggest a dialogue between the organic and the mechanical. Do you see technology as something separate from nature, or as part of a larger living system?**

Technology is something created by humans, who are themselves part of nature. I'm interested in the point where the distinction between the organic and the mechanical becomes less clear. Rather than treating them as opposites, I see them as different ways that systems can exist, adapt, and interact.

**As an artist currently studying at the School of Fine Arts, how is your practice evolving, and what questions are you most interested in exploring next?**

During my studies, my work has gradually shifted from making individual objects to thinking in terms of interactions. At the moment, I want to explore how artworks can behave rather than simply occupy space, and how materials, technology, and viewers can become active parts of the same system.



## Liezl Goosen

I am a photographer and artist based in Cape Town, South Africa, working under the name Liezl Goosen Studio. My work focuses on botanical subjects and skeletonized leaves, using a range of photographic and alternative processes, with a particular emphasis on wet cyanotypes. I enjoy exploring different creative techniques, including intentional camera movement, macro photography, and in camera multiple exposures.

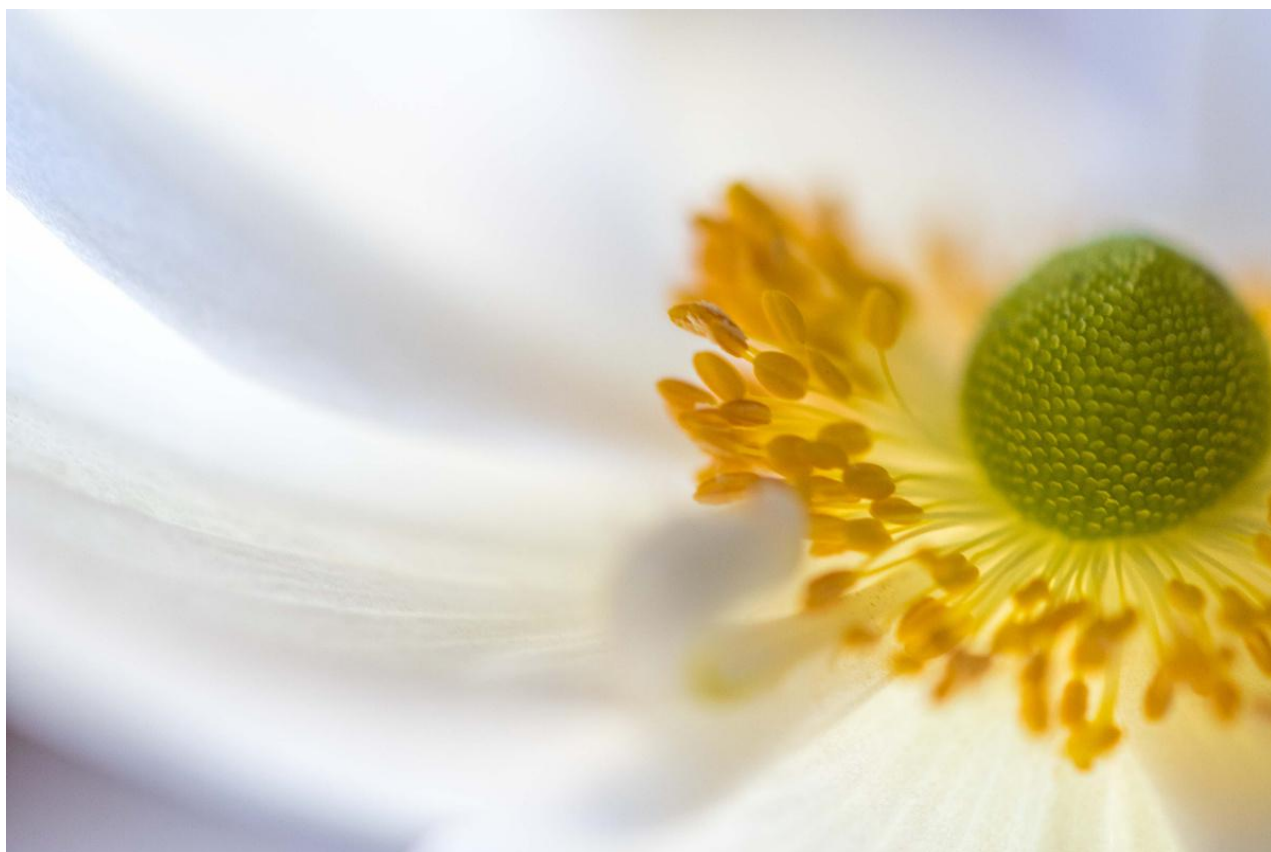
### *Project Statement*

My work explores botanical subjects through photography and alternative photographic processes, with a particular focus on wet cyanotypes. I am interested in how different techniques can transform familiar plants into new visual experiences while remaining connected to their natural forms.

Using processes such as macro photography, intentional camera movement, in camera multiple exposures, and wet cyanotypes, I investigate the relationship between observation and experimentation. Some works highlight fine botanical detail, while others embrace movement, abstraction, or the unpredictable qualities of the photographic process.

Skeletonized leaves are a recurring subject in my work. Their delicate structures reveal patterns that are often overlooked, reflecting both the resilience and fleetingness of the natural world. Whether working with a camera or creating cyanotypes, I am drawn to the balance between control and chance, allowing each process to influence the final image.

Through these works, I aim to encourage a closer appreciation of the forms, textures, and quiet complexity found in nature.



Liezl Goosen | Botanical Study Anemone | 2026



## — Interview

# Eva Čapková

**Your work often explores invisible forces, time, duration, and being. What first drew you to these themes?**



It was the personality of the Czech graphic artist Vladimír Boudník that led me to the themes of the invisible, duration, and being. Boudník was an innovator of graphic techniques — the “gentle barbarian,” as his friend, the writer Bohumil Hrabal, called him. I was fascinated by the energy, the will, and the courage that Boudník devoted to art. His work in the 1960s was abstract — a word that was almost taboo under Communism at the time. He could not achieve great success with his art then. He only began to receive recognition from abroad toward the end of the 1960s, during the Prague Spring. After the invasion by the Warsaw Pact forces, freedom was lost again. An ironic twist of fate was that Boudník was actually supposed to celebrate his second wedding on August 21; his best friend, Bohumil Hrabal, could not attend the wedding because of Soviet tanks on the streets. In the end Boudník did marry his Věra, also an artist, whom I later had the honour to meeting.

**Magnetic fields play an important role in your artistic process. How did you begin using magnets as a painting tool?**

The idea to use magnetic fields first in printmaking and later in painting came from Oldřich Hamera; he was Boudník's only student. I met him in 2011 and he showed me the extraordinary graphic procedures of Active and Structural graphics that he used. However, he did not himself use Magnetic Graphics and wanted to persuade me to try it. At first I did not listen — I was completely satisfied with Structural Graphics, which I liked a lot. A few months later did I begin to experiment with Magnetic Graphics. At first it was more of a game. Initially I knew nothing detailed about the method: Boudník was no longer alive, and the descriptions of the technique were incomplete. So I had to reinvent everything myself. I succeeded. In 2017 I received the General Packaging Prize and an Honorable Mention for one of my miniature prints at the 11th Biennial International Miniature



Print Exhibition at the Center for Contemporary Printmaking in Norwalk.

**In your works, the human body appears both familiar and unfamiliar. What does the figure represent for you in the series *Total Torso*?**

Since last year I have been increasingly engaged with the human body. Even before, the human being was present in my paintings latently, if not visibly — for example in the cycles “Witnesses” or “Heavy Clouds.”

By “Witnesses” I mean, for example, stones like menhirs, various rock formations in the landscape, or sacred trees that share the same space with us but not the same time. For these witnesses our life is only a small episode. They bear witness to the changes in the surrounding landscape and our lives, beside them, our existence appears like that of a mayfly.

“Heavy Clouds” does not refer only to our existence — clouds have accompanied humanity since its beginnings. The ancient gods often wrapped heroes in clouds to help them escape fate. The cloud here is often part of deception and illusion. In the Bible, clouds separate the heavenly and earthly spheres, but sometimes they also represent the immediate presence of God. Clouds can also symbolise the search for something higher up there. They can conceal, yet by doing so they also point to what is being pointed at; by their presence they both reveal to some extent and awaken our curiosity.

In the “Total Torsos” series I am chiefly concerned with ambiguity. My figures do not enter the world as finished identities; rather they are bodily reliefs shaped by light, time, and material transformation. By layering colours, pigments, and surface textures I create bodies that appear both present

and lost: the contours are distinct, while their interiors open into networks, veins, and cavities, as if something mysterious were escaping from them or penetrating into them.

One cannot tell whether one is looking directly at the person or whether the figure turns its back. This opens space for associations: what is happening inside people? Can we see our inner life? Can we understand, control, or investigate it?

**You often combine controlled intention with chance. How do you decide when to guide the material and when to let it act on its own?**

I work with chance, but also with natural laws — that is, with physical forces and, if you like, mathematical forms. I can say that I prepare the playing field for chance. I work with ferromagnets from which I can create different compositions; I decide where and how much binder I use and how many metal filings I scatter over the canvas. At the same time I am fascinated by the moment when the material reveals something I did not know was there: a hidden motif, an unexpected relief, or a break of colour that changes the meaning of the whole figure. These discoveries write an anamnestic layer into the works — layers of personal and collective memory, of traumas and joys. Golden tones and structures appear both sacred and decadent: they recall religious icons as well as oxidation, tree bark, or old reliefs that time has damaged and at the same time accentuated. The result is also a surprise to me, since my works can take several days to dry depending on temperature and the metal filings corrode slowly. Many of my paintings thus only reach their final colouring after a few days.

**How has your background between the Czech Republic and Bavaria influenced your artistic language?**

I cannot say for certain whether my life between Bavaria and Bohemia has influenced my artistic language. I lack the necessary distance from my own work — others might judge that better. However, I often find myself in the situation where, in the Czech Republic, I am not Czech enough for many people (“the German”), and in Bavaria I am perceived as Czech. I thus move through a kind of nowhere.

At the same time I see myself as a mediator between these two countries in the cultural field. I have the sense that, although we are neighbours, in the Czech Republic — apart from very major artists like Gerhard Richter — there is little engagement with German art, and in Germany there is little knowledge of contemporary Czech art. Perhaps it is somewhat different in Austria?

**You have worked as an artist, illustrator, curator, cultural organiser, and book author. How do these different roles influence one another?**

Everything I do is an organic whole. At least for me. My writing and my visual work are connected. One flows into the other. When I wrote about Boudník, I began to work with his graphic techniques. The topics I deal with theoretically naturally flow into my artistic practice. Incidentally, the graphic artist Boudník published samizdat literature in the 1950s, the writer Bohumil Hrabal made collages, and the graphic artist Oldřich Hamera ran his samizdat edition in the 1970s. In my opinion, visual art and literature are closely related.

# — Interview

## Julia Lilla

**How did your journey in art begin, and at what point did you feel that creativity was becoming not just a passion, but a way of speaking about yourself and the world?**



Julia Lilla | 4Am Nightmares | 2025



I paint because I cannot help but paint. Since childhood, I have had an intuitive sense of colour. For me, colour has become the most precise way to express inner states—things that are difficult to put into words. Abstraction, colour, texture, and experimentation with materials have become my way of experiencing and making sense of the world. Some people do this through words, others through music. For me, that language is colour.

But my path to art was not a direct one.

I have always felt a need to create something with my hands. I designed and sewed clothes, practised decorative inlay, baked cakes to order, developed a manicure business, earned a degree in mathematics and computer programming, travelled extensively, and lived in Europe and the United States. Each of these experiences taught me something, but none gave me the feeling that I was truly where I belonged. Psychotherapy became a turning point. It helped me understand that, for a long time, I had used creativity as a way to earn love and recognition and to prove my own worth. At some point, I became curious about what my life might look like if I no longer had anything to prove. That was when I truly began to paint. Today, my paintings are no longer a way of telling the world who I am. Quite the opposite: each new work



helps me understand myself more deeply and discover who I am becoming.

**How did your self-directed study of art influence your attitude toward rules, academic canons, and artistic freedom?**

As a child, I attended art school, but the academic disciplines—drawing and sculpture—were the ones I found most difficult. Looking back now, I understand why. I was bored by the endless process of reproducing reality according to established rules. I wanted to explore, experiment, and find my own solutions. Even then, I could feel that rigid boundaries left me with too little room to breathe. Later, when I continued studying art independently, this feeling only grew stronger. The absence of an academic education turned out not to be a disadvantage, but a space for freedom. I was not obliged to do things the “right” way—I was free to search for what felt honest and true to me. I do not break rules simply for the sake of breaking them. When I depart from them, it is only because I feel intuitively that this is what will make the work more precise and alive. And this applies not only to art. Over time, intuition gradually became my main point of reference. It is what tells me when a painting is complete. This is difficult to explain rationally. Perhaps it resembles the feeling of being full: you continue working until an inner hunger has been satisfied. Then, one day, you simply know—it is finished. There is nothing more to add. Sometimes people ask whether I would have become a different artist if I had received a classical academic education. I think I would have. In fact, I am not even sure I would have remained an artist at all. I feel that the habit of constantly asking myself, “Is this

correct? Is this professional? Am I allowed to do this?” might eventually have silenced my ability to play, to be surprised, and to trust my own instincts. That is why today I place far more trust in my inner compass than in ready-made answers.

**You define your artistic direction as “Abstract Infantilism.” What does this concept mean to you — a return to childlike freedom, a method of self-discovery, or an artistic approach?**

For me, it is simultaneously a return to childhood freedom, a means of self-discovery, and an artistic method.

When people hear the word “infantilism,” they almost always perceive it as something negative. It is usually associated with an adult who refuses to take responsibility for their own life. This meaning of the word is familiar to me as well.

That is precisely why I found it interesting to use the term in an entirely different context.

“Abstract Infantilism” is a deliberate provocation. At first glance, my works may indeed appear overly naïve, almost childlike. Yet behind this apparent simplicity lies an experience that is far from childish. The free, spontaneous brushstrokes are grounded in years of personal work, reflection, the search for my own path, and attempts to understand how to preserve a sense of vitality while growing older.

I do not want to become a child again. On the contrary, I believe that being an adult is far more interesting, because an adult has the freedom to choose the life they want to live. At the same time, it has been important for me not to lose the part of myself that is capable of wonder, play, trusting intuition, and looking at the world with curiosity. This is why my paintings emerge at the intersection of two states: adult awareness and childlike openness.





For me, it is a space where experience meets freedom, structure meets spontaneity, and responsibility meets play.

Perhaps this is exactly where genuine creativity begins.

### **What role does play have in your creative process — with color, texture, form, and chance?**

For me, play is not an artistic device. It is a way of exploring the world.

If I were presented with two canvases, one saying, “This is going to be a very important painting,” and the other, “Let’s see what happens,” I would choose the second without hesitation. The first phrase creates expectations and a fear of making mistakes, while the second opens up a space for curiosity. And it is curiosity, I believe, that keeps art alive.

I usually begin a work with a particular idea or mood, but the painting almost always changes during the process. I try to follow my instincts rather than resist these changes.

Spontaneity plays a particularly important role in this. I used to become frustrated when materials behaved differently from what I had intended. I wanted to keep everything under control. But at some point, I began asking myself, “How can I turn this mistake into something interesting?” Since then, unpredictability has ceased to be an enemy and has become an active participant in the creative process. Very often, it is precisely this unpredictability that makes a work feel more alive and unexpected.

Even if no one ever saw my paintings, I would still continue experimenting—not for the viewer, but because the process of discovery itself brings me joy. Perhaps that is why play, for me, is much more than a creative method. It is a way of remaining open to life.

**The series “Mui Ne Drift” is connected with Vietnam, wind, kitesurfing, and a sense of**

### **movement. How do travel experiences change your perception of yourself and your visual language?**

I feel that I travel not so much because I enjoy changing places, but because new places change me. Each journey becomes an opportunity to see myself from an unexpected perspective. When I return home, I realise that I have become slightly different once again. And as I change, my paintings change with me. Travel expands not only my understanding of the world, but also my sense of my own possibilities. After visiting each new country, a thought arises within me: “What else could I try? What else am I capable of?” It is precisely this feeling that creates the desire to keep moving forward—both in life and in art.

Of course, inspiration does not come from travel alone. I am equally inspired by books, films, exhibitions, and conversations with people. Yet there is a special kind of magic in travelling. When I arrive in a new country, it is as though I switch into observation mode. I begin to absorb everything around me: the light, colours, scents, rhythm of the streets, local cuisine, conversations, and people’s habits.

What strikes me most is how different we can appear on the outside and how similar we remain within. Love, kindness, the desire to be close to those we care about, and the ability to find joy in simple things—these exist in every culture. This is what restores my sense that the world is much kinder than it sometimes seems.

Vietnam holds a particularly special place in my life.





Julia Lilla | U&I | 2025

It did not so much change me as finally allow me to hear myself. For the first time in a long while, my nervous system was able to truly relax there. The sun, the ocean, the wind, new friends, a sense of safety, and the unhurried rhythm of life gradually released the inner tension I had been carrying for a long time. When I stopped constantly trying to be strong and control everything that was happening, I discovered that the version of myself I had long wanted to meet had already been living inside me all along. Perhaps this is why the Mui Ne Drift series turned out to be so light. It is not so much about Vietnam as it is about the inner sense of freedom that can sometimes emerge far away from home.

And yet, I believe that a true home is not a place on a map, but a state in which you gradually piece yourself back together. For me, travelling is one of the ways of experiencing this process.

### **Which artists, cultural phenomena, or visual impressions have had the greatest influence on you?**

I have always been influenced less by artistic movements than by people who found their own way of being themselves.

Of course, there are artists without whom I cannot imagine my own story. As a child, I saw Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa at the Louvre, and I still remember my surprise: "Is that all?" Perhaps that was the first time I realised that expectations and reality do not

always align.

Later, I was deeply struck by Jean-Michel Basquiat—by his boldness, freedom, and complete lack of fear of being himself. Claude Monet influenced me in a very different way. Discovering Impressionism was the moment when I thought, "So this is possible too?"

Among contemporary artists, I am particularly interested in David Pher and Vitaly Prostov. I admire the fact that they have developed their own distinctive and recognisable artistic language.

But honestly, life itself influences me far more than any individual artist. Travel, books, music, psychology, running, conversations with people, love, and loss—all of these become part of my artistic experience.

Above all, I am inspired by people who are not afraid to be themselves. That is why I study not only paintings, but also human lives. I am interested less in the question, "How did this person paint?" and more in, "How did they become who they are?"

### **What would you like viewers to feel when they encounter your works for the first time?**

I would like people who encounter my work to remember, even if only for a few minutes, that life is much bigger than an endless list of tasks, anxieties, and expectations. I want them to allow themselves to pause, take a breath, and rediscover their interest in life.

Perhaps that is why my paintings are so bright, emotional, and slightly unusual. I like it when they surprise the viewer at first and then gradually reveal their mood. If, after some time, a person remembers not the subject itself but a feeling, an atmosphere, or a colour, then a genuine dialogue has taken place between us.

If my works could say just one thing to the viewer, it would be:

"Live your life. It's just a game."

For me, this is not an invitation to take life lightly, but a reminder not to live in constant fear of making a mistake or failing to meet someone else's expectations.

I do not aim to evoke only pleasant emotions. I believe that every feeling has the right to exist. If my work helps someone give themselves permission to feel — joy, sadness, wonder, confusion, or hope — then it has already done something important.

I do not paint in order to tell the world who I am. Quite the opposite: each new work helps me understand myself more deeply and see who I am becoming. I would like my paintings to do something similar for the viewer — not to offer ready-made answers, but to gently invite them to pause, feel alive, and ask their own questions.

After all, I do not paint to teach people how to live.

I paint to remind them that life is already happening.

## Daniel "Fish" Ioanitescu

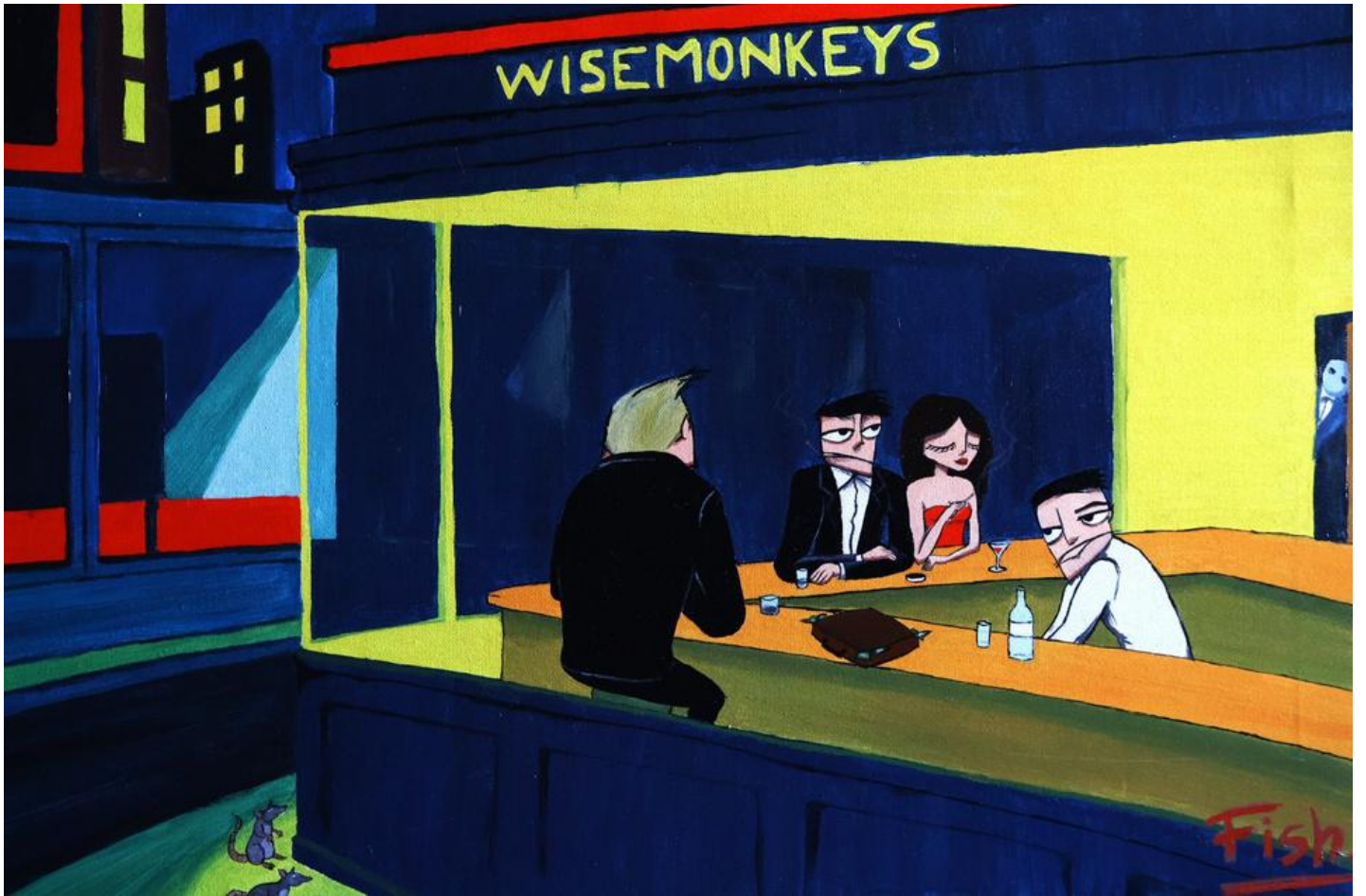
My work focuses on contrast — between control and chaos, silence and intensity, structure and emotion. Every piece is created using acrylic on canvas, built through layers, adjustments, and deliberate imperfections.

### *Project Statement*

FishStudio started as a way to translate internal states into something visual.

Daniel Ioanitescu | Three Wise Monkeys





# — Interview

## MI YAN

**Could you tell us about your journey into visual art and illustration, and what first inspired you to develop a research-led practice?**

My journey into visual art and illustration began with my grandfather, who was an artist. Although he passed away when I was very young, he left behind many newspaper illustrations. As a child, I was fascinated by their stories. Drawing became a way of connecting with someone I had never truly known. That experience inspired me to create narrative illustrations and imagined worlds. I later studied sculpture because I wanted to explore how illustration could move beyond the page into immersive experiences. During my undergraduate years, I became increasingly interested in social issues and started thinking about how visual art

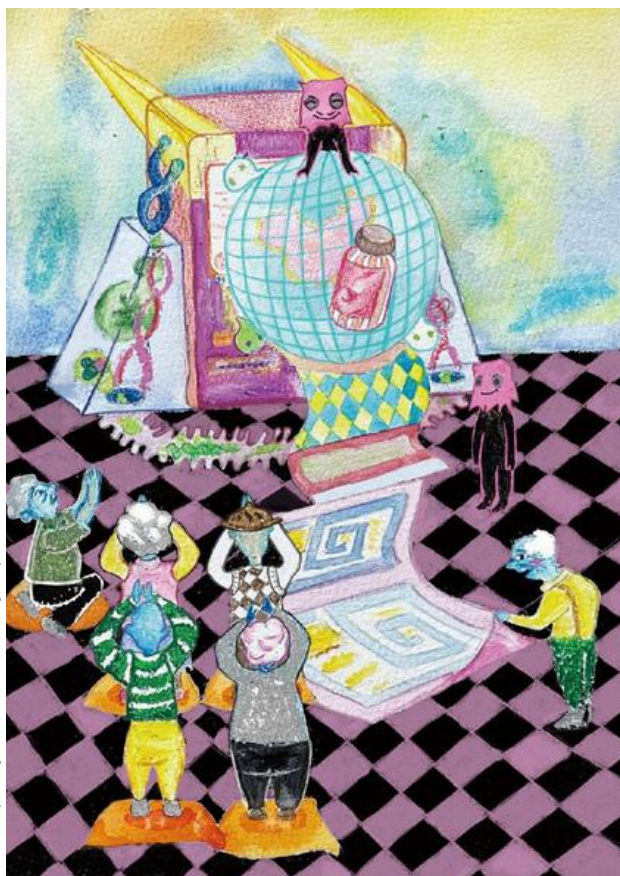


could respond to them.

My research-led practice took shape during my MA in Design: Expanded Practice at Goldsmiths, University of London. There, I learned to begin every project with observation, conversation, and research. I realised that research was not just preparation for making art. It became part of the creative process. Since then, asking questions has become central to my practice. I like to understand why things happen before transforming my observations into characters, spaces, and fictional worlds. Rather than offering answers, I hope my work encourages viewers to explore and form their own interpretations.

**How did studying and working in London influence your artistic perspective, and has returning to Wuhan changed the way you approach your work?**

Studying in London broadened the way I think about visual storytelling. During my MA, I experimented with storyboards, scripts, and cinematic narratives before realising that illustration was the medium I connected with most. It allows me to move between my own perspective and that of the characters I create. I enjoy using



MI YAN | Labyrinth Protocol Prayer | 2024



narrative and humour to explore social questions without giving direct answers.

After graduation, I worked as a model maker in the UK film industry. I watched technical drawings become physical objects and storyboards become real environments. Seeing ideas develop from paper into physical space strengthened my interest in creating immersive worlds. It also showed me how every small detail contributes to the audience's experience.

Returning to Wuhan did not change the way I make work. Instead, it changed what I notice. I returned to the studio where I grew up, and I found myself paying more attention to family, memory, and everyday life. London is the home I built for myself. Wuhan is the home that holds my roots. Today, these two places continue to shape how I see and make work.

### **What does a typical working day look like for you?**

If I'm working on a film project, my day usually starts early in the workshop, where I make models and props. After work, I like to watch films, read, or scroll through social media. Many of my ideas begin with ordinary moments. It could be a line from a film, a joke, or something I see online. I write these ideas down immediately. If an image already forms

in my mind, I sketch it in Procreate before it disappears.

When I'm between projects, I slow down. I take a sketchbook to the park, draw squirrels and plants, or go on long city walks while listening to music. I'm always curious about forgotten objects I find on the street and the stories they might hold. Many of my characters and fictional worlds begin with these small observations.

I also enjoy running and CrossFit. Exercise brings me back to the present after spending long hours imagining new worlds. I usually end my city walks by buying a croissant. I believe creativity doesn't only happen in the studio. It often begins in the ordinary moments that people overlook.

### **Your practice explores how social systems shape emotion, behaviour, and identity. What draws you to these themes?**

I've always felt that nothing exists in isolation. I believe everything is connected. That's why I pay close attention to everyday life. A song lyric, a street advertisement, a forgotten object on the street, or even a casual conversation can stay with me for days. I often find myself wondering why these moments appear and how they might connect to something larger.

Over time, I realised that I became less interested in individual events than in the invisible forces behind them. I'm more interested in how family, culture, media, consumerism, and the environments we grow up in quietly shape our beliefs, emotions, and behaviour. Rather than judging these systems, I want to understand how they work.

Labyrinth Protocol grew from a personal family experience. My maternal grandfather spent a large amount of money on health products, and our home gradually filled with supplements, promotional gifts, and products that promised extraordinary health benefits. Instead of dismissing those choices, I started asking why people place so much trust in these promises. That question led me to research health-product marketing, consumer psychology, and ageing. It also helped me realise that my practice always begins with questions. I like to understand why things happen before transforming those observations into characters, architecture, and visual narratives. I hope viewers can enter these narratives, discover unexpected connections, and arrive at their own interpretations.

### **What role do symbols, repeated objects, and**

## architectural structures play in building the internal logic of your fictional worlds?

For me, symbols are distilled portraits of people or groups. They help me simplify complex social behaviours into characters that viewers can recognise. I usually begin with observation, research, and conversation. Then I gradually transform shared traits into symbolic figures or creatures. I want people to recognise something familiar in them without needing a direct explanation.

Recurring objects represent unresolved questions. They can suggest obsession, emotional barriers, relationships, or psychological states. I repeat these elements because I don't believe unresolved issues simply disappear. They return in different forms, just as they do in everyday life.

Architecture holds everything together. It represents the invisible systems that shape our lives, so it is never just a backdrop. In *Labyrinth Protocol*, labyrinths, staircases, corridors, and enclosed spaces all become part of the story. They guide movement, shape decisions, and create the rules of the world. I want viewers to experience these spaces rather than simply look at them. Many of us believe we are making our own choices, while quietly following paths that have already been designed for us.

## Is there a particular artwork or project that marked an important turning point in the development of your artistic language?

Yes. I believe *Labyrinth Protocol* was the turning point in my practice. Before that, I mainly created individual illustrations that captured a single scene, story, or moment. My work was more direct, and I wasn't thinking about building complete worlds. While developing *Labyrinth Protocol*, I spent much more time on research, reading, and interviews. It was the first time I realised that illustration could be more than a way of telling stories. It could also become a way of exploring and understanding reality.

Instead of depicting the real world directly, I began transforming my observations into symbols, characters, architecture, and fictional worlds. I became more interested in how a world works, what rules shape it, and how those rules reflect everyday life. Since then, this has become the foundation of my practice. I begin with personal experience, expand it through research, and use world-building to create spaces that invite viewers

to explore and form their own interpretations.

## What new ideas, materials, or forms of audience participation are you currently interested in exploring?

Recently, I've become interested in the idea of collective consciousness and the possible relationship between humanity and unknown forms of life. This idea was inspired by *Pluribus*. It made me wonder whether consciousness truly belongs to individuals, or whether it can be shared, connected, and constantly reshaped.

I don't see extraterrestrial life simply as science fiction. I see it as another way of thinking about human civilisation. I often imagine a society without money, nations, religion, or even the identities we take for granted today. How would such a civilisation understand emotion, time, trust, or existence? Questions like these make me question ideas I usually take for granted.

In my practice, I want to expand these imagined environments into physical space. I'm interested in creating experiences where viewers don't just observe a world, but move through it, make choices, and gradually discover how it works. I hope this creates a more active and personal relationship between the viewer and the work.



MI YAN | *Labyrinth Protocol* Family | 2024



**Luciana Fabiilli** is an Italian contemporary figurative artist. She holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts Honours Degree from Toronto, Canada.

Her work was selected for a featured article in the National Magazine called The Artist Magazine. The title: Melding Passion and technique. Her painting Blue Passion was chosen among 13,000 entries.

She was featured in Manhattan's Art Magazine, NY. Her painting was selected on the inside front cover of Encyclopedia of Living Artist, California, into Dallas Women's Magazine, Texas, The Artist Talk Magazine, England, along with features in local magazines, as the Plano Profile, TX, article titled Her home is her canvas.

She was selected to Swiss art expo, Switzerland, Miami, and expo metro Barcelona Spain. Luciana has been featured in The purposeful Mayo journal and Tribune in Canada.

She was invited and selected into the digital showcase at Seattle artfair.

She has won numerous awards, such as Creatio Magna, Masterpiece Lumenartgallery, Turkey. She received distinctive award by gallery 4percent, San Francisco, and honorable mention Teravarna, California. Michael's stores corporate headquarters have featured luciana's work in advertisements in their email blast for custom framing.

#### *Artist statement*

Luciana's paintings are an artistic journey exploring the spiritual realm thru vibrant intuitive paintings. The artistic process focuses, or rather rooted in an unfolding organically without preconceived structure of what she calls "Muses of Inspiration".... figures that embody beauty, love, strength, and feminine energy.

Luciana's mission is to inspire... with a vision to paint a brighter World.



Luciana Fabiilli | Duality | 2026



# — Interview

## Alexey Savvin

**You received your academic art education at the Surikov Moscow State Academic Art Institute. Which principles of the classical school remain important to you today, and which do you consciously move away from?**

I entered the Surikov Institute as a mature student after moving to Moscow at the age of thirty. Perhaps because of that, I never saw academic training as a rigid system of rules, but rather as an opportunity to understand the language of classical painting from within.

The education was rooted in the traditions of the Moscow school: restrained colour, subtle silvery tonal relationships, rigorous compositional discipline, and a deep respect for



Alexey Savvin | Da Vinci | 2025



academic structure. These principles became an important foundation of my practice, although I did not carry all of them into my own artistic language.

Today my paintings follow a very different colour logic. I deliberately moved away from the muted palette that characterised my academic training in favour of vivid, saturated colour. My attitude towards paint handling has also changed. During my studies expressive impasto was encouraged, whereas now I prefer a calmer and more restrained surface.

What has remained with me is the understanding of composition. The classical school gave me the ability to construct an image, and precisely because I know these principles, I feel free to challenge them—cropping compositions, shifting visual balance, or intentionally disrupting traditional harmony. For me, breaking the rules only becomes meaningful once you truly understand them. I have also abandoned the academic distinction between “noble” and “ignoble” subjects. Contemporary art no longer needs such hierarchies. I am much more interested in discovering profound meaning within ordinary things, because everyday reality often carries surprisingly deep cultural and philosophical significance.

What has never changed is my respect for the craft of painting itself. The Surikov Institute gave me a profound understanding of technique and material, and that knowledge continues to underpin everything I do.

**In addition to your artistic education, you hold a PhD in Philology. How has your work with language, texts, and interpretation influenced your visual thinking and the**



#### How do you construct your painted compositions?

I believe that my background in philology has shaped the very subjects I explore as an artist. For several years my life revolved around literature, language, and textual interpretation. That experience taught me to see every cultural object as a layered structure in which every visible meaning conceals another one beneath it. For this reason, literature, biblical narratives, classical mythology, and the history of art frequently become the starting points for my paintings. I am not interested in illustrating stories. Instead, I seek to reinterpret them through a contemporary visual language. My philological education gave me an extensive cultural framework. It allows me to work freely with symbols, to establish unexpected connections between different historical periods, and to build paintings that function almost like texts. Perhaps that is why there are very few accidental elements in my work. Every image is intended to operate on several semantic levels simultaneously. I have always been fascinated by what I would call the “double language” of art: a painting first speaks through emotion, but gradually reveals additional layers of meaning as the viewer spends more time with it. For me, the most interesting moment occurs when visual perception turns into interpretation, and the viewer becomes an active participant in constructing the work’s meaning.

**In your works, fragments of classical paintings are combined with contemporary imagery, animals, and natural forms. How do you select your historical sources, and what happens to their original meaning when they are placed in a new context?**

I do not believe it is possible—or even meaningful—to paint

today exactly as artists did in the nineteenth century. Academic painting reached an extraordinary level of mastery, and simply repeating it would add very little. What interests me instead is entering into a dialogue with that tradition. Historical paintings are not objects for imitation; they are part of our collective cultural memory. When I first visited the great Italian pinacothecas, the experience was almost overwhelming. That encounter eventually gave rise to my series Pinacoteca.

The works are neither quotations nor stylistic reconstructions. They are an attempt to visualise memory itself. When I place historical fragments into contemporary compositions, I invite them to continue their existence within a new visual and cultural context.

#### How does your work on a painting begin?

My paintings rarely begin with a finished sketch. Usually I have only a general direction rather than a clear image of the final work.

Painting is a way of thinking rather than executing a predetermined idea. The composition evolves through the process itself, often leading me somewhere completely unexpected.

Oil painting allows endless revision, and that freedom is essential to my practice. Each canvas becomes an act of exploration rather than the illustration of a fixed concept.

#### Why are you drawn to insects and biological forms?

My interest began while studying seventeenth-century Dutch painting, where insects often carried complex biblical symbolism.

I wanted to reverse that hierarchy by moving these almost invisible details to the centre of the composition.

This became the basis for my series The Tree of Knowledge, where a single insect becomes a way of speaking about memory, religion, culture, and human perception.

#### How important is personal biography in your art?

Personal biography is always present in art, even when an artist does not speak directly about themselves.

My work reflects not autobiography, but the biography of perception—the evolution of my understanding of culture, memory, religion, and art itself.

If an artist no longer changes, their work risks losing its vitality.

#### Which themes are currently of particular interest to you as an artist?

I continue to explore cultural memory, religious narratives, philosophy, and symbolic systems. At the same time, I have become increasingly interested in the material nature of painting itself.

My current series, Eden. Epilogue, investigates not only the story of the Fall but also the memory embedded within the painted surface. Through layered techniques, I seek to create works that resemble archaeological strata or ancient frescoes.

Ultimately, my practice is driven by a simple idea: I am not interested in reproducing the past, but in rereading it through the language of contemporary painting.

**Sonia Schafer** is a Brazilian visual artist, illustrator, and graphic designer whose work explores memory, texture, and the traces of time. Working across watercolor, oil painting, and ceramics, she investigates the relationship between natural forms, ancestral heritage, and human experience. Her recent ceramic series draws inspiration from archaeological fragments and organic surfaces, inviting viewers to reflect on history, identity, and the marks left by time. With more than two decades of experience as an artist, illustrator, designer, and art instructor, Schafer continues to develop multidisciplinary research that combines traditional techniques with a contemporary visual language.

### *Project Statement*

My work explores memory, time, and the traces that history leaves behind. Through textures, organic forms, and forms reminiscent of archaeological discoveries, I seek to create objects that evoke fragments of forgotten narratives and ancestral memories. Rather than representing specific places or events, these ceramic pieces invite viewers to reflect on what remains, what is transformed, and what continues to shape our identity. My artistic process is guided by experimentation with natural materials and surfaces, allowing each piece to preserve the marks of its own making and become a quiet dialogue between past and present.

Sonia Schäfer | Fragment III -Traces | 2026





Sonia Schäfer | Fragment I - Echo | 2026



Sonia Schäfer | Fragment II - Memory | 2026

# TANA BASH (Alla Tanabash)

**You describe yourself as an independent self-taught artist. How did your artistic journey begin, and what inspired you to pursue painting seriously?**

Art is not merely a path, but a way of being. My creative journey began long before I ever picked up a brush or a marker. Art had always been with me: it echoed in the fairy tales my grandmother told me as a child, hid within the patterns of old wallpaper, and shimmered with all the colours of the rainbow in the raindrops outside my window. I never studied painting through textbooks or academic programmes. My university has been life in all its forms—from the morning light dancing on the leaves of trees to unexpected conversations with strangers in cafés. I am a self-taught artist because I believe that true inspiration cannot be found in a class schedule. It can only be captured as it passes by, like a butterfly.



TANA BASH (Alla Tanabash) | Moment In The Edges | 2026



What inspired me to pursue painting seriously?

It was a moment of revelation. One day, I realised that words could no longer express what was stirring inside me. My thoughts had become too complex for sentences, and my emotions too vivid for letters. That was when I began to paint—tentatively at first, and then with increasing confidence. Every brushstroke became my voice, every dot a word, and every patch of colour an entire story.

Painting became my way of speaking about what cannot be described in words. It is a dialogue with the world in which there are no rules of grammar, only the language of emotion. When I paint, I do not simply create a picture—I live through it. Each work is born from silence, from an inner dialogue that eventually breaks through to the surface in the form of lines and colours.

My art is not primarily about technique, although technique is important. It is about sincerity.

I am an independent artist because freedom of choice is my most important tool. I allow myself to make mistakes, experiment, and search for my own unique voice without being constrained by the expectations of others. This is where my strength lies: in being myself, listening to my heart, and trusting my intuition.

This is how my journey began. It continues every day, and I do not know where this path will lead me. But I know one thing for certain: as long as I have paint and canvas, I will continue telling the stories that live within each of us.

**How have your life experiences and personal history influenced the themes, emotional atmosphere, and visual language of your work?**

Life is my greatest teacher, and art is a way of translating its lessons into the language of color and form.

In these works, you see not merely Cubist experiments with geometry, but a reflection of my personal experience and inner world. The Alley, in which a human figure dissolves into the rhythm of the trees, was inspired by memories of long walks through the park, when I sought solitude in nature. This tunnel-like avenue symbolizes the path toward self-discovery: the farther you go, the more deeply you merge with the surrounding space.

The cats that appear in many of my compositions, as in Woman and Cat, are connected to my own biography. I have twelve cats, most of whom were abandoned and taken in. Caring for them has taught me compassion and patience, while their independent nature has inspired me to create images that combine grace with mystery. In this painting, the



woman and the animal are united by a shared blue background, as though they exist within the same emotional space, sharing moments of silence and contemplation. Portraiture holds a special place in my practice. I never depict people in a completely realistic manner. Instead, I fragment the face into triangles and planes, as though attempting to look beyond the mask of everyday life. This approach reflects my journey as a self-taught artist: I learned to see the world through the lens of emotion rather than academic rules. In the portrait of a woman with blue accents on her face, I used cool tones to convey a state of inner harmony or perhaps gentle melancholy. These blue lines are my personal marks—a visual code through which I express the state of the soul. My visual language is therefore a mosaic of personal experiences. Each work is a dialogue between my past and the present moment of creation. Cubism allows me to deconstruct reality and then reassemble it from my own perspective, transforming ordinary scenes into profound metaphors.

**Your work combines abstraction with elements of Cubism. What attracts you to the geometric interpretation of figures and space?**

In geometry, I find not limitation, but boundless freedom. For me, abstraction and Cubism are the two wings of a single flight: one allows me to soar through a world of pure emotions and sensations, while the other provides support through structural lines and planes. I am drawn to the geometrisation of figures and space primarily because it reveals the essence of things. Geometry is a way of seeing the invisible. In everyday life, we are accustomed to perceiving the world through the lens of reality: an apple is round, a tree has a trunk and branches. Yet when these forms are broken down into triangles, squares, and lines, the hidden rhythms of the universe begin to emerge from beneath their familiar surfaces.

Geometrisation helps me perceive the tension and the internal forces that hold a form together or seek to destroy it. It is like an X-ray of an object's soul.

Cubism is a language of inner dialogue. When I divide a human face or figure into planes of different colours, I am not merely playing with form. I am dissecting the personality, revealing multiple facets of a person's character to the viewer simultaneously. The gaze may be direct, while the eyes themselves are composed of numerous angular fragments reflecting doubts, memories, and hopes. This technique allows me to speak directly about the complexity of human nature, bypassing the conventions of portrait likeness. Structure is the harmony of chaos. The abstract backgrounds of my works often resemble a cosmic void or a whirlpool of thoughts. The Cubist figures become islands of stability within this flow. They provide a point of visual support, allowing the eyes to rest after the surrounding visual noise. For me, this contrast between abstract space and clearly defined facets is a metaphor for life itself: the infinite mutability of the world and the human desire to find order within it.

By geometrising space, I therefore create my own alphabet of images. Instead of letters, I use triangles; instead of sentences, areas of colour. When these elements come together, a unique text is born—one that every viewer reads in their own way.

**Many of the works presented are dominated by shades of blue, turquoise, and violet. What symbolic and emotional significance does this palette hold for you?**

Blue is not merely a color, but a state of mind.

In my work, a cool palette of blues, turquoise, and violet serves as a visual equivalent of silence, depth, and inner harmony. It is the color of contemplation, which I find in twilight and in the reflections on water.

For me, turquoise has always been associated with purity and transparency. It recalls those moments when thoughts become crystal clear and emotions flow smoothly, without



sudden shifts. Combined with deep blue, this shade creates a sense of space, as though it expands the boundaries of the canvas and invites the viewer to look beyond the horizon of the painting.

Violet, particularly in its darker shades, symbolizes the mysticism of everyday life. It appears where the visible world ends and something greater begins: intuition, premonition, mystery. This color often surrounds the human figures in my compositions, creating an aura of enigma around their faces. A violet sky above an avenue or the background of a portrait becomes a metaphor for the subject's inner world—a realm that cannot be accessed directly, but can only be sensed through the reflections that appear on its surface. This palette is my way of speaking about a form of melancholy that is not sadness. It is, rather, a contemplative calm, a moment suspended in time. The blue shadows on a woman's face or the geometric planes of the trees in *The Avenue* suggest that life flows slowly, giving us the opportunity to pause and experience its depth. When I work with these shades, I feel like a guide between the world of forms and the world of emotions. Cool colors allow me to convey what cannot be expressed in words: the silence of the night, the coolness of the morning air, and the infinity of the cosmos within each of us.

**The female figures in your paintings appear strong, contemplative, and slightly mysterious at the same time. Who are these heroines, and what emotional states do you seek to convey through them?**

The female figures in my works are not portraits of specific individuals, but archetypes of emotional states and feelings. Each heroine embodies an inner dialogue. Through them, I seek to convey the multifaceted nature of femininity that often remains hidden behind the masks of everyday life: strength concealed beneath outward softness, and the depth



TANA BASH (Alla Tanabash) | Shadow Of The Soul | 2026

of thoughts that cannot be read from a facial expression. Strength without aggression. Their poses contain no deliberate display of power or vulnerability. They simply exist, occupying space with dignity. Their strength is revealed through stillness and through the way they accept themselves as they are. It is a state of inner stability in which a woman becomes an entire world unto herself. Thoughtfulness as a form of contemplation. These women do not look at the viewer; they look within themselves or into the distance. Their gaze is directed towards a place where words lose their meaning. Here, thoughtfulness is not passivity, but an active process of reflecting on life and searching for answers to eternal questions. It suggests that the beauty of a moment lies precisely in experiencing it slowly and fully. Mystery as a reflection of depth. The Cubist fragmentation of faces into geometric planes is my way of showing that a personality cannot be reduced to a single emotion or moment. Sadness may be hidden behind a smile, while a storm of emotions may lie beneath a calm exterior. The mysterious masks composed of triangles and lines tell the viewer: "I am more complex than what you see." This sense of incompleteness draws the viewer's attention and encourages them to search for hidden meanings. Who are these heroines?

In essence, they are all different manifestations of myself. They may also represent any woman capable of being both the keeper of the home and the captain of her own ship. Each work is an attempt to capture the moment when the outer shell dissolves, revealing an infinite universe within.

**In several works, a cat appears beside a woman. What does this image symbolize, and why has it become an**



TANA BASH (Alla Tanabash) | In Indigo Style | 2026



### important part of your artistic universe?

The cat in my work is not merely an animal, but a metaphor for independence and inner freedom.

This image has become an integral part of my artistic universe for several reasons. First, it is deeply autobiographical: as I have already mentioned, I have twelve cats, most of whom were abandoned. Caring for them has taught me compassion, patience, and unconditional love. Most importantly, however, I discovered in these animals a unique combination of grace and self-sufficiency. A cat never asks for attention; it accepts or rejects it on its own terms. For me, this quality has become a symbol of inner strength. Unlike the dog, which embodies loyalty and devotion, the cat symbolizes a subtle perception of the world. It hears what we cannot hear and sees in the dark. When placed beside a female figure, the cat emphasizes the intuitive nature of a woman and her ability to sense what remains invisible. When a cat appears in a composition, it becomes a reflection of the heroine's inner state. If the woman is sitting thoughtfully, the cat may appear calm; if the model's gaze is directed into the distance, the cat looks in the same direction, as though sharing her melancholic detachment. They exist within the same emotional space.

In the mythology of many cultures, the cat is associated with the cycles of life, magic, and the mysteries of the night. I use this archetypal symbolism to emphasize the connection between female figures and something ancient and unchanging. Together, the woman and the cat create a sense of timelessness within the scene.

Thus, the cat in my work is a companion to the feminine principle, embodying the part of us that lives by its own rules and listens to its inner voice more closely than to external expectations. This image allows me to explore the harmony between human beings and the natural world, as well as the importance of preserving one's independence even within the closest relationships.

### How have the recognition you received at the Golden Time Talent competition and the interest of collectors from different countries influenced your confidence, and what professional goals are you currently pursuing?

Recognition is not merely a reward, but a powerful impetus to keep moving forward.

Receiving a diploma at the Golden Time Talent competition and learning about the interest that collectors from different countries—especially Germany—had shown in my work marked an important moment for me. However, the true turning point in my life as an artist was discovering and studying at Sasha Robinson's online school. It enabled me to move from intuitive creativity to a conscious mastery of my craft. The programme gave me not only new tools, but also confidence that I was following the right path. It transformed my painting from a personal diary into a language that could be understood by the international art community.

Until then, I had been a self-taught artist who painted from the heart, without considering the market or current trends. Recognition from a professional jury and the international art community helped me understand that what I create has value not only for me, but also for other people. This recognition transformed my inner confidence into a solid professional foundation. I realised that my path was the right one, even though it did not conform to academic conventions.

I stopped being afraid to experiment. When you know that your style resonates with viewers beyond your own country, you gain the courage to go even further. I am currently developing my cubic dotting technique and exploring new combinations of geometry and abstraction. This style will be reflected in all my future series.

I now understand that my works travel around the world and hang in the homes of people I have never met. This makes me approach every painting as a message that must be filled with meaning.

My current professional goals are:

Creating the "Purple Universe" series: I want to deepen my exploration of the cool shades of blue and violet that have become my signature. In this series, I plan to portray different states of the feminine principle through the prism of the cosmos within us.

Holding an exhibition in Europe: My goal is to organise a solo exhibition at a European gallery. The interest shown by German collectors was the first step, and I am now working to ensure that my paintings find their place within an international context.

Developing my own school of colour: I aim to formulate a theory explaining how geometric forms interact with abstract backgrounds within my particular colour palette. I would like to leave behind not only paintings, but also a methodology that could inspire other self-taught artists.

The "Feline Alchemy" series: Since cats occupy such an important place in my life and artistic practice, I am planning a series in which these animals will be the central figures. These will not be charming portraits, but profound, metaphorical compositions revealing their symbolic significance.

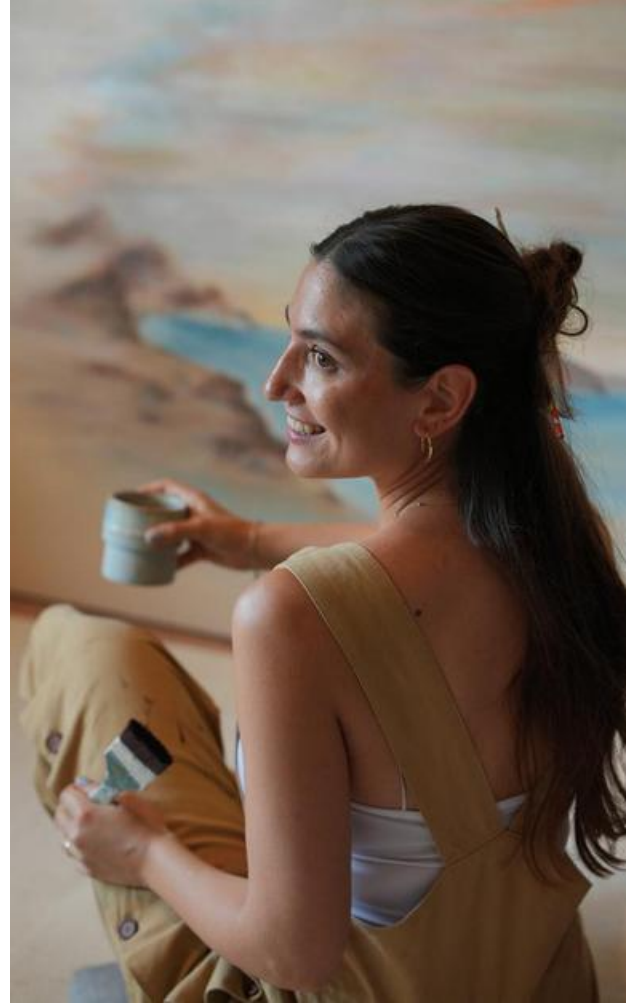
Ultimately, recognition has become a compass guiding my artistic development. It has shown me that my art is needed in this world, and my main goal now is to speak to the world through the language of colour as loudly and sincerely as possible.

## — Interview

# Şeyma Tozkoparan

**Your background combines decorative arts, conservation, restoration, and architecture. How have these disciplines shaped the way you approach painting and composition?**

My artistic journey has been shaped by the combination of different disciplines. During high school, I studied Decorative Arts, where I received training in light and shadow, color theory, technical drawing, and various artistic techniques. My university education in Conservation and Restoration taught me to respect both history and materials, and to recognize the traces that time leaves on surfaces. Later, while working in interior architecture, I realized how important artworks are in creating a meaningful dialogue with a space and in influencing the emotions of the people who experience it. Today, I bring all of



these experiences together in my paintings, creating layered works that emphasize texture and aim to evoke emotions.

**You mention that spatial thinking plays an important role in your artistic practice. How does your architectural experience influence the structure of your abstract works?**

Architecture taught me not only how to design structures, but also that empty space can be just as important as form. Whenever I am commissioned to create a painting for a specific interior, I prefer to visit the space first, experience its atmosphere, observe its colors and character, and then create a work that naturally belongs there. I aim to create paintings that establish harmony with their surroundings. In my compositions, I enjoy leaving breathing spaces that allow the viewer to feel calm rather than overwhelmed. Sometimes I achieve balance with a single brushstroke, and sometimes through the areas I intentionally leave untouched. This gives my paintings a quiet yet powerful presence.

**Many of your paintings seem to balance emotional intensity with a strong sense of material texture.**



Şeyma Tozkoparan | Derin | 2025



**How important is texture in expressing inner states or memories?**

For me, texture is the silent language of a painting. Sometimes emotions are expressed more through the surface than through color itself. That is why I incorporate nature directly into my work. I use soil, sand, and other natural materials to build textured reliefs, bringing traces of nature onto the canvas. Layer by layer, these surfaces carry memories, lived experiences, and the marks of time. I want viewers not only to look at my paintings but also to feel the movement of the surface and the presence of nature as they come closer.

**Your works often move between abstraction and recognizable forms, such as landscapes, bodies, or faces. How do you decide how much of the image should remain visible or hidden?**

I never want my paintings to tell only one story. Ambiguity creates space for the viewer's imagination. Sometimes I leave the feeling of a landscape, sometimes the suggestion of a figure, and sometimes only an emotion. I value the fact that each person can discover something different within the same painting. I complete the artwork, but the viewer completes its meaning. Isn't nature like that as well? A sunset can evoke one emotion on one day, and an entirely different feeling the next, even though it is the same sun setting.

**In several works, gold details appear as a recurring visual element. What does this golden mark represent for you?**

My connection with gold leaf began while I was working in the gilding workshops at Dolmabahçe Palace and Yıldız Palace, where I was involved in the

conservation and restoration of traditional decorative artworks. During that time, I became deeply fascinated by the elegance, delicacy, and craftsmanship of the gold leaf technique. Over time, it became an essential part of my artistic practice. Today, I use gold leaf not simply as a decorative element, but as a personal signature—a mark that carries a part of my identity within each painting. I am also attaching a photograph of myself taken while working at Dolmabahçe Palace in 2009, as it represents the beginning of my connection with this technique.

**You work with oil, acrylic, watercolor, ceramics, and natural candles. How does moving between different materials affect your creative process?**

Each material teaches me a different way of thinking. Oil painting teaches patience and depth, acrylic offers freedom and spontaneity, while watercolor reminds me to embrace the unexpected. Working with ceramics and creating natural candles strengthens my connection to touch, craftsmanship, and materiality. Although the materials change, texture and emotion always remain at the heart of my creative process. I also find great joy in lighting the candles I make and drinking coffee from the ceramic cups I create while painting. These small rituals help me slow down, connect with the moment, and make the creative process even more meaningful.

**You describe your work as a way to express emotional layers and human relationships. Are your paintings more connected to personal experience, observation, or imagination?**

My paintings emerge from a combination of personal experiences, observations of nature, and imagination. Most of the time, I am not painting a specific landscape, but rather the feeling that landscape leaves within me. My goal is not simply to create a surface for people to look at, but to offer a space where they can pause, breathe, and reconnect with their own emotions.



Working at Dolmabahçe Palace, Istanbul, Türkiye | 2009

**Zahra Ebrahimzadeh** is an Iranian illustrator and mixed-media artist whose practice explores memory, nature, and the fragile relationship between humans and the more-than-human world. Working across illustration, watercolor, oil painting, and mixed media, she creates poetic visual narratives that blur the boundaries between reality and imagination. Her work reflects on themes of ecological memory, belonging, and transformation, often portraying landscapes as living archives of personal and collective experience. Zahra's practice is rooted in observation, storytelling, and experimentation with natural forms and layered materials. She is currently developing projects that combine illustration with research and community-based artistic practices.

#### *Project Statement*

My artistic practice explores the relationship between memory, nature, and the human condition through illustration, painting, and mixed-media experimentation. I am interested in the quiet spaces where personal memories, landscapes, and imagination intersect, creating visual narratives that blur the boundaries between reality and fiction.

Rather than treating nature as a passive setting, I approach it as a living archive that preserves traces of human presence, absence, and transformation. Trees, plants, stones, and forgotten landscapes appear throughout my work as silent witnesses carrying stories beyond language. I see them as active participants rather than decorative elements.

My practice combines drawing, watercolor, mixed media, and oil painting to build layered images that invite slow observation. I am drawn to themes of belonging, ecological memory, displacement, and the fragile relationship between humans and the more-than-human world.

Recently, I have become increasingly interested in expanding my practice through participatory and community-based approaches. I believe that artistic practice can become a form of listening, allowing local stories, shared memories, and everyday experiences to shape the creative process. I see illustration not only as a personal language but also as a way of creating dialogue between people, places, and ecosystems.



Zahra Ebrahimzadeh | 2026



## — Interview

# Anastasia Russkova



**Your work often focuses on the emotional imprint of lived experience. How do personal memories or observations usually transform into a visual image for you?**



Anastasia Russkova | Awakening

Primarily through associations. Before almost every work I build chains of associations, searching for the most precise image that carries a specific emotional state — something that distills the experience rather than illustrates it. It can be a colour, an object, an environment — whatever holds the feeling most accurately.

**Many of your paintings depict women in intimate, vulnerable, or psychologically charged moments. What draws you to this kind of female imagery?**

Vulnerability in women is too often read as weakness. I see it as the opposite — as a vast emotional range that encompasses not only pain but deeply positive experiences as well. At the same time, we still navigate a position of constant defence, continuously pushing back against labels imposed from the outside. That tension is what I find most honest to paint.

**In your artist statement, you speak about the pressure placed on modern women — appearance, relationships, success, reproductive expectations, and social status. Which of these pressures feels most urgent for you to explore through painting?**

I can't isolate a single theme, because the problem



is precisely the volume — the sheer accumulation of demands placed on women simultaneously. In my work I deliberately move away from depicting that pressure and instead paint life without it. These moments exist: moments when we belong entirely to ourselves, free from external judgement. My intention is to make that feeling of ease visible — and through visibility, to make it easier to carry into everyday life.

**Your female figures often seem both exposed and powerful at the same time. How important is this tension between vulnerability and strength in your work?**

This duality is foundational to everything I make. I believe it exists in all of us — but circumstances have trained us to read it only as weakness. My work is an attempt to reframe that: to show vulnerability and strength not as opposites, but as the same thing.

**How do you approach the theme of the gaze — both the viewer's gaze and the way your characters seem to look back?**

My figures are looking for the same thing the viewer is — recognition, a sense of being understood. Their gaze moves in different

directions: sometimes outward into the world, sometimes inward. But it is always a search. I think of it as a conversation between the figure and the viewer, conducted through looking rather than speaking.

**How do you balance personal experience with broader social commentary in your paintings?**

Through conversation. I talk with a great many people, and we often discuss the social pressures that affect us — and how they intersect with our inner lives. At a certain point those conversations made something clear to me: these experiences are not mine alone. The problems I carry are shared by an enormous number of women living in entirely different circumstances. That realisation is what moved my work from the personal toward the collective.

**What would you like viewers to feel or question when they first encounter your work?**

I want them to feel ease — and pleasure in simply being alive. If a painting can return someone to that feeling in a difficult moment, that is enough for me. As for what I hope they question: the authority of social labels, and the degree to which those labels shape our choices without our awareness.



# — Interview

## Lora Arbrador

**You discovered egg tempera at the age of nineteen and have remained deeply connected to this medium ever since. What first captivated you about egg tempera, and why does it still feel like the right language for your work?**

One of the first art courses I took at the University of California at Berkeley was “Materials & Techniques.” One day, the instructor handed us a paper with instructions for making egg tempera paint.

I had never heard of egg tempera but obediently bought an assortment of pigments, a sheet of plywood, the materials to make the traditional gesso priming, and, of course, eggs. I could not get the paint to work well, but was captivated as each brushstroke was magically absorbed into the ivory-like gesso ground.

Maybe it's like baking bread from scratch. Sure, you can buy bread at the store, and you can buy paint in tubes, but I love the intimacy of knowing my ingredients. I even have nicknames for some of my pigments, such as “quin mag” and “tit white.” Egg tempera is a difficult medium, not just because you need to add egg yolk to the paint, but because corrections are cumbersome, plus you need to wipe your brush on a rag before every stroke to control the moisture. There is gravitas and a sense of connection to an ancient craft, but mostly it's the result: a satiny velvet, slightly waxy surface with a bit of glowing light beaming up from the white gesso ground. That's what keeps me enthralled with the technique.

Lora Arbrador | Dying Of Love



**Your paintings often balance luminosity and discomfort, tenderness and mortality. How do you approach this emotional tension when developing an image?**

I try to transmute difficult or unfiltered subject matter into something challenging or devotional.

The ideas sometimes come ready-formed—musicians call this a “download” from their creative brain—but then I elaborate as the painting starts talking to me and telling me where it needs to go.

I make a lot of preparatory drawings, but the magic occurs in the act of painting. Michelangelo expressed that the image was already in the block of marble, he just needed to reveal it as he carved. I am in dialogue with the painting. Sometimes it fights me, or I struggle to hear what it's saying. Then I go for trial and error, and the errors are painful. Still, there are moments of exhilaration that carry me through the struggle. The luminosity often comes from the egg tempera technique itself, but if the egg medium is not added in the correct proportion, it can look dull and overly matte. I must add enough egg yolk to bind the pigment to the gesso ground, but not so much that the paint surface looks greasy. A technique I am currently using is to lightly polish each layer with extra-fine cheesecloth, which starts building a sheen that will become more pronounced once the surface has cured (polymerized) and I polish the painting with a silk cloth.

**Your experience as a registered nurse has clearly shaped your artistic vision. How has working closely with the human body changed the way you understand beauty, vulnerability, and intimacy?**



I veer away from conventional standards of beauty, which can look trite, worn, or just boring. Rather, I try to capture a mood or expression based more on what the person is thinking or feeling. This is extremely challenging because, in addition to shunning typical beauty, I try to avoid caricature or the grotesque. At times, I default to pretty or classical features because, after all, I do want to create a beautiful painting, and an alluring figure or face can be a shortcut to that.

One aspect of vulnerability, as it relates to the human body, is the fragility of life. My paintings that depict death or medical themes highlight or penetrate imperfections and interventions, such as surgery, that can be seen as violent or invasive. I try to put a human face on them. For example, by depicting lovers, one of whom happens to have a colostomy. Or a surgeon wielding a power saw to open the patient's chest but for the purpose of repairing the coronary arteries not inflicting harm.

I view intimacy in terms of nursing as the honor bestowed on me to witness private actions or areas of a person's body, such as defecation, which I cannot say is pleasant but still can be transmuted into something visually interesting, even though it may be shocking or offensive.

**In your statement, you mention the body's "inner landscape" - fluids, secretions, menstruation, lactation. Why is it important for you to bring these often-hidden aspects of the body into painting?**

I don't pre-think most of my art. Images come to me, and I can either pass on them or capture them with pencil or paint. They are often based on my personal experience, such as menstruation or lactation. I have to make the choice of either graphically portraying them and risk being "cast out of the village" or suppressing them in favor of something more acceptable, such as a still life or conventional landscape. I love traditional art but feel my path is to honor a strong

artistic impulse, especially if I can transform it into something beautiful or interesting.

**Several of your works seem to transform the body into something symbolic, almost ritualistic. How do you decide when a figure should remain human and when it should become more dreamlike or mythic?**

I think those types of images are created when I am sketching or painting free form without knowing where I'm headed. For example, I'm sketching a woman and all of a sudden she has four breasts instead of two! So it's not a decision; it just rolls off my pencil or brush. The decision comes in deciding whether to share it publicly, which depends not only on the topic but also on whether I think it has artistic merit or interest.

**You have said that you try to move away from conventional standards of beauty while avoiding caricature or the grotesque. How do you find the balance between confrontation and empathy?**

While I do confront if that is what my artistic intuition requires, I try to soften it with a gentle choice of color or lyrical use of line. I think that helps the viewer to not turn away from the image even though the content may be challenging.

**Your work often seems to invite the viewer into narratives that are intimate, unsettling, and not immediately explained. How important is ambiguity in your paintings?**

I try to make my paintings work on many levels. Visually, I strive for color harmony or disharmony (unsettled). Because the ideas are "not immediately explained" is one reason I wrote my book *Art & Love: My Life Illuminated in Egg Tempera*. Although I believe the work should speak for itself, I've found that sharing more of the narrative in written form deepens the viewer's interaction with the painting.

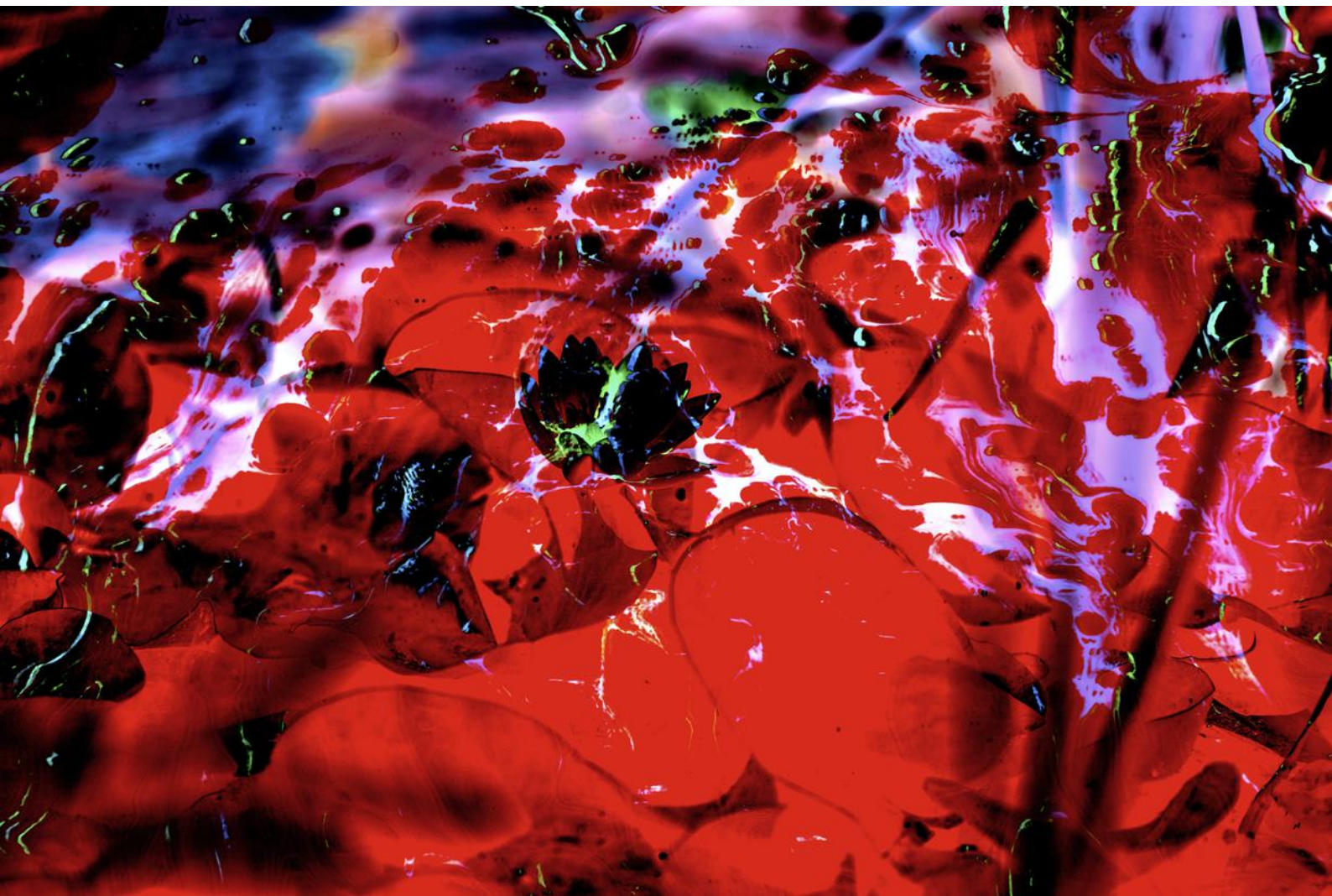


**Ouvea Coly** (b. 1999) is a French multimedia artist and author based in Ireland. At 26, she draws upon a rich academic background in dance and philosophy from the Conservatory of Rouen. Her multidisciplinary practice explores movement, perception, and the intersections between the body and mind.

After relocating to Ireland to continue her studies and artistic research, Ouvea has exhibited her work internationally from Singapore to London.

Ouvea Coly | An Ironic Testament to Humanity





Ouvea Coly | Hesitations

# — Interview

## Genie Fyd

**You were born in a remote northern town. How did the atmosphere of this place - its climate, isolation, light, and surrounding landscape— influence your visual perception?**

There was almost no light and a constant sense of loneliness as I walked to and from school through the snowdrifts. In winter, it would get dark at three in the afternoon, and you would simply sit there in



Genie Fyd | Knees



Genie Fyd | Overflow

the darkness. I think that is where the red comes from—I always longed for something intensely vivid and alive. The isolation also played its part: when there is nothing to look at outside, you begin to look inward.

**Drawing became a language for what could not be expressed in words. Do you remember the moment when you first felt that an image could convey an inner state more precisely than speech?**

There was no single defining moment. As a child, I simply had no one to talk to, and drawing was the only place where I could express something without having to explain it. Words always require translation. Drawing does not. It allowed me to escape for a while.

**You worked in a technical field for several years. What prompted you to ultimately choose painting and begin a full-time artistic practice?**

There was no sudden turning point. At some point, I simply realized that my need to express my feelings and emotions was growing stronger every year.



Without drawing, those emotions came out through emotional instability and depressive states. I was good at technical work, but it took something important away from me—my sense of self. Painting restored the feeling that I actually existed.

**In your works, the human body is presented as a system of disconnected, displaced, yet simultaneously interconnected elements. Why did anatomy become your primary visual language for exploring inner fragmentation?**

Because the body, without unnecessary clothing or accessories, is emotionally honest. When I could not explain what was happening inside me, my body already knew. Ribs, loops, and the spine are not images created merely for aesthetic effect. They are quite literally what borderline personality disorder feels like from within. The boundary between oneself and another person becomes blurred; something inside does not fit and is constantly spilling outward. Anatomy became an effective way to communicate these states visually.

**The series is dominated by shades of red, burgundy, and pink. What does this palette represent for you: corporeality, vulnerability, anxiety, vital energy, or something else?**

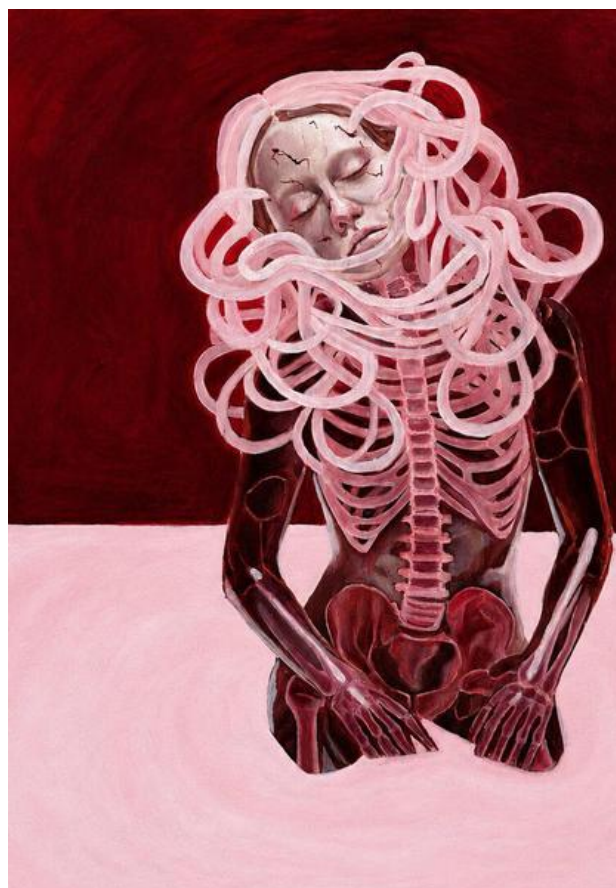
These colours emerged on their own—I did not choose them deliberately. Red, burgundy, and pink are the colours of what lies inside the body: blood, muscles, living tissue. I think that when you paint inner states, organic imagery arises naturally. And this is exactly what those states look like—warm, alive, and slightly frightening when viewed up close.

**How do the titles of your works—Bare, Fragmentation, Loops, Manifestation, and Overflow—emerge? Do they appear before you begin painting, or do they result from reflecting on an image that has already been created?**

Always afterwards. I cannot name something that does not yet exist. I look at the finished work until I understand what exactly has happened within it—and then the word appears.

**Since 2024, you have focused on your artistic practice. How has your understanding of your own art changed during this time, and which themes or artistic concerns would you like to develop further?**

I used to think that the viewer should understand everything immediately, so I tried to create paintings with simpler and more accessible meanings. Now I understand that my task is not to explain, but to create a space in which a person can encounter something of their own. If that happens, then the work has succeeded. In the future, I would like to explore materials more deeply—perhaps introducing acrylic glass or something else that extends beyond the canvas and enters physical space.



## MAY H.D.

MAY H.D. (BRAZIL) is a visual and sound artist, independent curator, master and doctor in Visual Arts at the Federal University of Bahia - UFBA. Her research resonates loudly in artivisms by developing works in the field of web art and live performances using creative coding (JavaScript) and his recent production focuses on the hybridization of digital arts with painting and sound.

### *Project Statement*

The new series of paintings by multimedia artist MAY H.D. (Salvador, Bahia - BRAZIL), who holds a master's and doctorate in Visual Arts, also known as May H.D., presents a combination of pictorial representations using vigorous brushstrokes, showing nature not as a scenery but as a presence that becomes deprogrammed and returns responses in noise. The revolution that emerges from its state of permanent instability proposes to establish other possibilities of existence from contemporary disorder. Investigating the gesture as a testament to transmutation, May H.D.'s paintings reveal themselves as fields of transition — spaces where the image dissolves, the color fades, and the central idea is disappearance.

The light, an essential element of painting, ceases to be merely a means of revelation and becomes the force of this erasure. The artist then makes the surface a territory of ruin, a place where time is inscribed not as chronology, but as sensitive erosion.

Her poetics approaches the contemporary thought of impermanence, where movement becomes part of the pictorial language and invites us to look at time not as a line, but as that brief instant that resists and echoes until it becomes a memory.



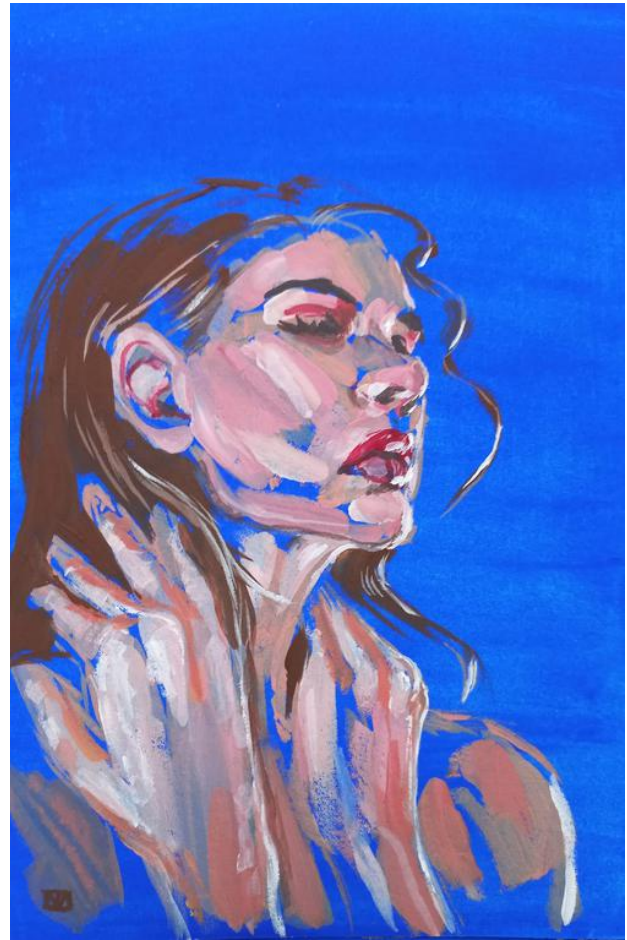


# Tatiana Myreeva

**You were born and raised in Yakutia. How have the nature, culture, and visual atmosphere of this region influenced your artistic perception?**

My childhood was deeply connected to nature. I could spend hours observing animals – their movements, physical expression, and behavior. My parents and relatives maintained a large household, so animals were an integral part of my everyday life.

Another important aspect of my upbringing was the traditional Sakha practice of preparing for the long winter



Tatiana Myreeva | Tenderness | 2022

each autumn. I took part in butchering livestock and wild game, which gave me a unique opportunity to study anatomy firsthand rather than through textbooks. Later, my curiosity expanded through medical anatomy atlases that my parents kept in their home library. Although those books were stored on the highest shelf, I always found a way to reach them. I was endlessly fascinated by the human body – how muscles function, how movement changes form, and how anatomy shapes expression.

I grew up in a very remote village that, during the summer months, was not even connected by road. Information arrived slowly, and books ordered from Moscow often took several months to reach us. Perhaps that is why every new book felt incredibly precious. Among my greatest treasures were instructional books on drawing people, animals, and nature. Those experiences nurtured my lifelong fascination with form, movement, and the inner structure of living beings.

Today, that early experience continues to shape my painting. I am interested not only in the outward appearance of a person, but also in the inner state that reveals itself through the body.

**When did you first turn to portrait painting, and why did the human figure become the central subject of your artistic practice?**

Since 2020, I have been working professionally in portrait painting, although my journey began much earlier. During my final years of school, I spent countless hours drawing portraits. At that time, it was less about developing artistic



Tatiana Myreeva | Rebooting Consciousness | 2026



skill and more about understanding myself. Through the human face and figure, I found a way to process emotions that I could not always express in words. In many ways, it became a form of personal art therapy. Over time, this introspective practice evolved into a coherent artistic vision. Today, the human figure remains the central subject of my work. It is through portraiture that I explore inner transformation, self-acceptance, and spiritual growth, using the human image as a universal language for reflecting the inner life.

**The figures in your paintings are often depicted with their eyes closed or their heads tilted back. What emotional and psychological states do you seek to convey through these poses?**

Closed eyes symbolize the moment when a person stops looking outward and begins looking inward. It is in these moments that self-awareness emerges and we become able to truly listen to our inner voice.

A head tilted back represents relaxation, release, and trust. It captures the quiet moment of a deep breath, when tension begins to dissolve. For me, this gesture also symbolizes reaching toward something greater—God, the Higher Self, or the Absolute. Everyone gives it a different name, but the essence remains the same: the search for a connection with something beyond ordinary human experience.

**Deep blue plays an important role in many of your works. What does this color mean to you personally, and how does it influence the mood of the person depicted?**

Deep blue is one of the defining elements of my visual language. To me, it represents sensitivity, psychological

depth, and the mystery of human consciousness.

Symbolically, I associate this color with Neptune – the planet traditionally connected with intuition, spirituality, imagination, and the inner world.

At the same time, the deep blue background creates an intimate, contemplative space. It removes every unnecessary distraction, allowing the viewer's full attention to rest on the figure and its emotional presence.

**How does your approach to freely created figures differ from your work on commissioned portraits, where you need to convey the individuality of a specific person?**

The fundamental difference lies in the source of the image. When creating a commissioned portrait, I strive not only for physical likeness but also for an understanding of the person's inner world. Their life story, significant experiences, and personal journey all help me perceive their individuality. My goal is to capture not only their appearance but also something of their character and presence.

My personal paintings begin from an entirely different place. The figures are not portraits of specific individuals. They emerge from my own experiences, emotions, and spiritual exploration. As a result, these works carry only my own inner energy and emotional states.

**How have participating in international exhibitions and receiving the Talent Prize Award in Los Angeles influenced your perception of your own work and your subsequent artistic development?**

I regularly participate in exhibitions and art competitions, and each experience has strengthened my confidence in the value of my own artistic voice. When your work resonates with audiences and members of the professional art community across different countries, you begin to realize more clearly that the inner experiences we all share are universal, transcending cultural boundaries. For me, international exhibitions are an opportunity to engage in a dialogue with the world through art. I also believe that spiritual fulfillment and professional success are not mutually exclusive. The opportunity to dedicate myself to art, continue growing as an artist, and connect with those who resonate with my work is an essential part of my creative journey.

**What themes, emotional states, or new artistic techniques would you like to explore in your future work?**

Although portraiture has long been the primary focus of my practice and I have developed several series within this genre, I have always remained open to exploring new artistic directions. Three years ago, I became inspired by the idea of bringing portraiture and animal art together within a single body of work.

As I mentioned earlier, animals have been part of my life since childhood and have profoundly shaped the way I perceive the world. To me, they are not only an integral part of nature but also symbols of specific inner qualities and stages of human spiritual development.

I am interested in exploring the relationship between the human and the animal as two expressions of the same natural essence, revealing their inner dialogue and the subtle ways they influence one another.

My name is **Enrique Martínez Reding**; I am an artist from Monterrey, Mexico. My work consists of drawing and painting, and at one point I also worked with photography. I don't have formal education in art, but is something that I have learned by observation and a lot of practice. I take art seriously. I took part in a group drawing exhibition at the SADE gallery in Los Angeles in the summer of 2024. I was invited to participate by the Los Angeles artist, curator, and editor of the art magazine Artillery, Daniela Soberman. The exhibition was curated by her and by Brian Lee Hughes, creative director and owner of SADE LA. It is my goal to advance my career as an artist.

#### *Project Statement*

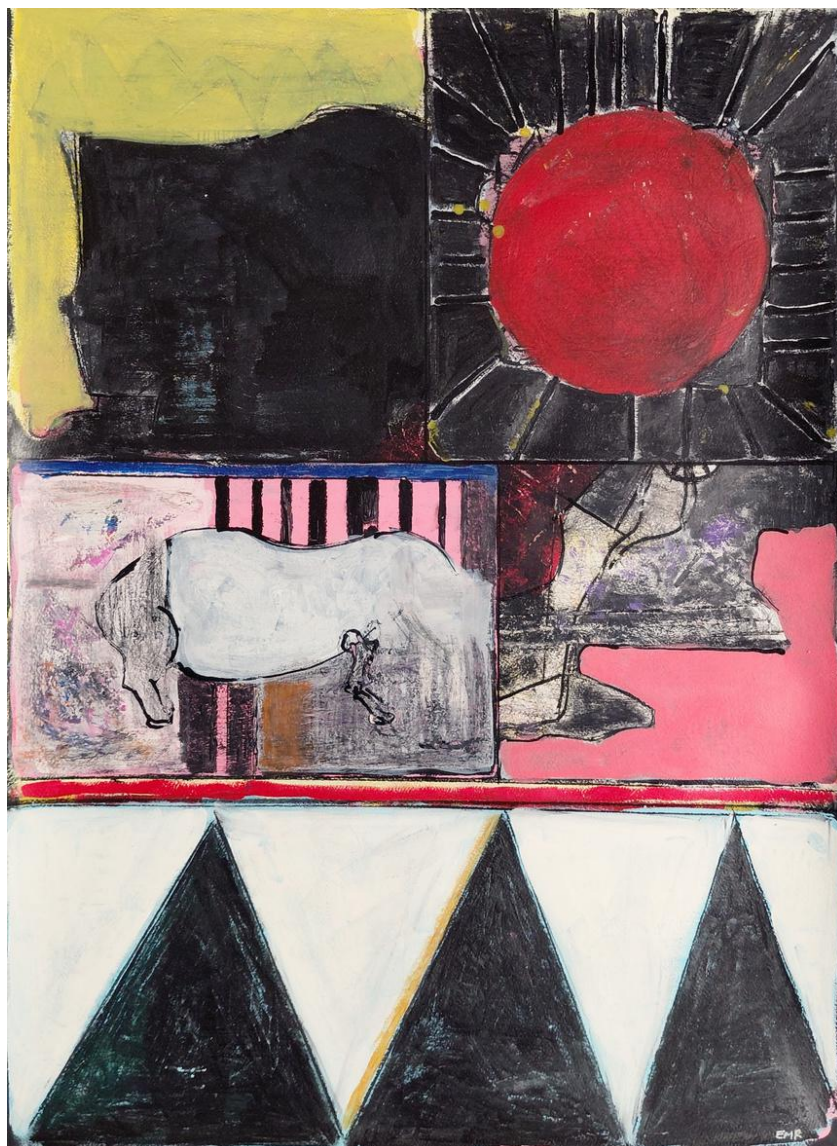
I have completed a series of drawings in which I try to express the anxiety we can experience when we are in enclosed spaces or in close proximity to others. I have placed my characters or figures—people, animals, objects, or beings of an undefined nature—in rooms or delimited spaces, interacting, overlapping, and intertwined, seeking to evoke the feeling of being observed, judged, threatened, invaded, or crushed by extreme closeness to others. The sizes range from 30 x 45 cm to 80 x 120 cm.

Lately, I have been working on a series of works that are a blend of drawing and painting, on cotton paper with charcoal, ink, gouache, and acrylic paint. The style is a mix between figurative and abstract. The figurative part is connected to drawing; in this case, unrecognizable figures of no defined nature, ranging between the animate and the inanimate.

The backgrounds and surfaces are also uneven, dirty, stained, erased, and scraped, in some cases extracted from the paper and from different layers of color. I extract the color by scraping the surface with charcoal blending stumps almost petrified by several layers of ink, charcoal, and paint.

The theme of this series of paintings is, to a large extent, defined by the elements I have mentioned: the figures, surfaces, and mixture of materials. In some cases, they are several small works within a single piece, arranged at random and as the process unfolds, in a certain harmony. They evoke old and disordered places or surfaces, created over time by environmental elements, both human and non-human.

At present, there is nothing in my daily life that resembles this aesthetic; I make my living in a structured activity, in an orderly environment, with a very clean aesthetic of clear and defined lines. Paradoxically, what is excessively ordered and pristine can feel overwhelming, compared with that which is in apparent chaos. And perhaps for this reason I have sought that chaos in my work.



Enrique Martínez Reding | 2026



## — Interview

# Tatyana Shchulepova

**What first drew you to Japanese culture, and why did the figures of the samurai and the guardian of beauty become so important in your artistic practice?**

What struck me about Japan at first was not so much its philosophy—which came to me later—but its extraordinary material culture, in which every object seems to possess a soul.

When I first saw a samurai suit of armour—not in a picture, but in a museum—I was fascinated by the way layers of lacquered metal, silk, and leather came together to form a unified whole. Later, I noticed an elegant geisha's hairpin, carved with the same care and precision as the blade of a katana. I was drawn to this shared obsession with detail: both the warrior and the guardian of beauty serve the same god—Perfection.

I came to understand that the samurai and the geisha do not belong to two separate worlds, but



represent two sides of the same coin. The samurai, with his sword, embodies the readiness to cut away—not only an enemy, but also one's own fears, doubts, and attachments. The geisha, as a guardian of beauty, embodies the ability to preserve what is fleeting, capturing perfection in the fragile ritual of a tea ceremony, the movement of a hand, or a delicate web of flowers.

The samurai represents action and determination, while the geisha represents preservation and contemplation. Together, they create the very harmony described by the Way of Bushido. True strength, as I show in my painting *Among the Flowers*, is born not from destruction, but from the ability to find beauty and tranquillity even at the edge of a sword.

For me, these two figures create a dialogue between the harsh truth of life and its fragile, transient beauty. Through them, I try to connect the present with the wisdom of the past, reminding both myself and the viewer that courage and self-sacrifice are timeless values that must not be forgotten.

Japan gave me the perfect language through which to speak about something that concerns everyone: how to be strong without becoming cruel, and how to remain gentle without becoming weak.

**Your project explores Japan not only as a visual theme, but also as a moral and philosophical space. What does Japan symbolize for you personally?**



Tatyana Shchulepova | *Among The Flowers* | 2025



For me, Japan is not so much a geographical location as it is a moral compass. When I first immersed myself in writings on Bushido, I was struck by one phrase: “Every morning, a samurai must first remember that he will die.” This is not pessimism; it is the greatest form of freedom. We often run from the thought of our own mortality and hide it behind the distractions of everyday life. Japanese culture, however, places death at the centre of life—not as an ending, but as a measure of the quality of every moment we live. This culture does not recognise the word “later.” There is only “now,” but it is experienced with absolute awareness. When I paint my relief image of Mount Fuji, I am not simply depicting a mountain. I am recreating the point upon which a samurai might have gazed and, for a moment, forgotten about death. It is a reminder that the value of life lies not in its duration, but in the depth with which it is experienced. In my project, Japan is a mirror in which both my viewers and I can see our true selves and ask the essential question: “What will remain of me when everything unnecessary has been cut away?”

**In your statement, you speak about Bushido—the Way of the Samurai. Which values of this philosophy feel most relevant to contemporary life?**

For me, Bushido is neither a religion nor merely a code of honour belonging to warriors from a distant past. It is a tool for the survival of the soul when the world becomes too constricting. I do not create my paintings simply to depict Japan. Through its wisdom, I want to help contemporary people discover a source of support within themselves. Bushido places the process of self-improvement at its very centre. A samurai practised the art of the sword every day not in order to kill more enemies,

but to become a better version of himself. In my work *The Beauty of the Moment*, there is no one except a woman, a teapot, and a cup, yet it contains an entire universe of concentration. Every movement and every pause becomes a purpose in itself.

Many people believe that Bushido is concerned only with severity and death. Yet one of its central virtues is *jin*—benevolence and compassion. A samurai was not supposed to be cruel without reason; his strength was justified only when it was used to protect the weak. This is why I depict a sword resting *Among the Flowers* and the ritual of tea drinking in *The Beauty of the Moment*. For me, these images serve as reminders that a true warrior is not someone who destroys, but someone capable of preserving and valuing life in all its fragility.

The concepts of honour and conscience also seem particularly relevant to contemporary life. In Bushido, honour is not determined by what others think of you, but by how you face yourself in the mirror of your own conscience.

In my painting *Heart of the Sword*, I depict not a battle, but a dialogue—the hand and the steel become a single nerve. It is a metaphor for the idea that remaining true to oneself requires daily, silent work. This is the value I want to restore: the ability to take responsibility for one’s words and actions, even when no one is watching.

In my practice, I am interested in translating the language of Bushido into the language of colour and texture. The relief image of Mount Fuji, which makes the warrior forget about death, and the contrast between sharp steel and delicate petals in *Among the Flowers* both suggest that true strength is born through harmony with the world, rather than through resistance to it.

I want viewers looking at my paintings to ask themselves: “What is my own ‘sword’? What am I





prepared to cut away in order to remain true to my conscience?"

**The samurai in your works appears not only as a warrior, but also as a symbol of discipline, inner strength, and self-mastery. How do you understand this image today?**

That is exactly right. For me, the samurai is not so much a warrior with a sword as a symbol of a person who follows their chosen path despite external circumstances. The samurai is not simply a Japanese man in armour. He represents the inner strength that emerges at the moment when a person makes a decision and refuses to turn away from it.

He embodies the daily work of self-improvement—something I understand very well through the process of working on the details of my paintings. The samurai invests his will in the blade; I invest mine in every millimetre of the canvas. Without this daily practice, neither the warrior nor the artist can exist.

A samurai never fully achieved perfection; he merely moved closer to it with each passing day. The same is true of realistic painting. I may spend months working on a single painting, yet when it is finished, I can always see how it might have been made even better. This is not disappointment. It is movement.

Every time I pick up a brush, I follow my own small Way. And if my paintings make viewers stop, even for a moment, and sense this inner discipline, then the figure of the samurai is not confined to the past—it is alive here and now, on the canvas.

**Your paintings are created with very precise realism and detailed acrylic layering. Why is this level of detail important for expressing the spirit of your subjects?**

Detail intensifies the vitality of the moment. For me, it would be unacceptable to depict a samurai's armour schematically or to distort the proportions of his sword, because that would show disrespect for the way of life I am studying.

I apply dozens of extremely thin layers: glazes, translucent shadows, gradients, textures, and highlights. Each layer must dry before I can apply the next one, and every minute detail must be carefully rendered. This requires tremendous patience, which I compare to the endurance of a





samurai.

My painting is a visualisation of the process of self-perfection. I hope that, as viewers examine this multilayered surface, they will subconsciously sense the amount of time invested in creating the painting—and therefore feel the weight and significance of what is depicted.

**In works such as Samurai and Heart of the Sword, the sword becomes a powerful visual and symbolic element. What does the sword represent in your project?**

In my project, the sword is far more than a physical object. It is neither decoration nor a symbol of violence. It is a concentration of meaning around which the philosophy of many of my paintings is constructed. It embodies honour, discipline, harmony, determination, and the fragility of existence.

In my painting Samurai, the warrior is not raising his sword to strike—he is simply holding it in a state of complete readiness. Here, the sword is not a weapon directed against an enemy, but an instrument of inner severance. The reflection on the steel reveals to the viewer that the warrior has

already made his decision. His hand does not tremble. This stillness says more than any movement of the blade.

For me, this is the sword's most important function: to bear witness to the moment when a person stops hesitating and begins to act.

In Heart of the Sword, I depict a dialogue between the human being and the steel. The sword becomes the expression of its owner's "heart"—his soul.

In Japanese culture, the katana was regarded as sacred. It symbolised honour, courage, and martial valour, while also carrying a spiritual connection to one's ancestors—samurai would pray to their swords before battle. The sword was therefore not seen as lifeless metal, but as an object endowed with ancestral memory and the personal history of its owner.

**Many of your works contain a strong contrast between darkness and light, especially in the samurai portraits. How do you use light to create psychological tension?**

For me, Japan represents a dialogue between the visible and the invisible. The sword contains the soul of the warrior, the tea bowl preserves the warmth of the craftsman's hands, and every seam of a kimono breathes with the history of a family lineage. As a realist painter, my task is not merely to copy the external appearance of these objects, but to make this invisible layer visible.

I therefore use textures and strong contrasts of light and shadow so that the viewer can feel that behind the steel lies willpower, behind the flowers lies transience, and behind the ritual lies infinity. The illuminated side speaks of a readiness to act, while the dark side represents hidden depths—the part of the soul that the samurai reveals to no one, perhaps not even to himself. The viewer sees that the warrior does not merely stand in the light; he chooses to remain within it, despite the shadow that follows him.

Psychological tension emerges precisely at the boundary between light and darkness. In the painting Dan / Determination, the light falls in such a way that it emphasises the warrior's intense gaze, while leaving his eyes partially in shadow. This is not because I do not want to reveal them completely. It is because true determination is never entirely open or transparent. It always contains an element of the unknown, even for the warrior himself.

Here, the light represents the external challenge, while the shadow represents the inner dialogue.

## Ahmed Zeidan

30-year-old Egyptian visual artist interested in the inner human journey and the stages of personal and spiritual transformation.

My work explores imagined worlds inspired by reality, where each piece reflects psychological states and human experiences through muted colors and expressive lighting.

Coming from an architectural background, I approach painting as a spatial experience, where composition and atmosphere guide the emotional flow.

Through my work, I aim to reflect my personal experiences and cultural context.

### *Project Statement*

My practice explores the inner human experience and its relationship with space, influenced by my background in architecture.



Ahmed Zeidan | Fading Presence | 2026



Ahmed Zeidan | Swallowed Distance | 2025

# — Interview

## Caitlin Driver

**Your education combines jewelry and metalsmithing with digital fabrication and design. How has the transition between these disciplines shaped your artistic language?**

My artistic language broadened as I introduced rapid manufacturing to my skill set. Working with metal satisfied a pursuit of perfection that other media couldn't fulfill. For example, when polishing metal, it is easy to discern a mirror finish. When I learned how to use technology, the ability to perfect in mass and detail became possible. There was less pressure on my body, and the time it took for fabrication decreased. I was empowered to create sustainably.

**Your works often transform paper fragments and discarded printed materials into carefully constructed sculptural forms. What draws you to these materials, and what meanings do they carry for you?**



Caitlin Driver | Disintegration | 2022



Caitlin Driver | Light Waves | 2025

I cut and shred material to demonstrate how erasure can be used constructively and is transformative. I think there is a feminine quality to destruction. For example, to witness a wave wash the sand flat, I see force happen in nature, and accept that what was there no longer matters. I see my shredded and cut artworks in this light; they are constructed of an aggregate that has undergone a process of neutralization, completely transformed, re-shaped, and re-formed into something new.

**Counsel Table Pieces for the Bench, Bar, and Gallery emerged from the loss of original art jewelry that was never returned after a store closed in 2018. When did you realize that this experience could become the basis of a new body of work?**

In my solitude during the pandemic, I processed a lot of emotion. Experiencing the collective feeling of fear and grief allowed me to realize that I had other unresolved experiences I needed to grieve. I decided to confront my feelings of confusion, anger, disappointment, sadness, and frustration. By destroying materials and reshaping them into new forms, I experienced a feeling of liberation, which ultimately brought me peace and joy.

**Each of the eight pieces contains shredded legal documents from the small claims court process. What did it mean to transform records of a legal dispute into physical artistic material?**

I found cathartic liberation, infinite possibilities, and new beginnings when I transformed the legal documents into artworks.



**Although you have extensive experience with digital fabrication technologies, the works shown here feel highly tactile and material. How do digital tools and hand processes interact in your studio practice?**

Surprisingly, I utilized a lot of technology when making Counsel Table Pieces. Thankfully, despite not having the original art jewelry, there were digital images. I imported images into Adobe Illustrator and created contour shapes. I used the vector file to laser-cut the paper I had made from cut-up legal documents, then embedded the laser-cut paper into the bioplastic.

**Your professional practice includes research into biomaterials and sustainable fabrication. How do environmental concerns influence your choice of materials and the conceptual direction of your art?**

I feel a strong connection to the environment, and that became amplified when I started researching bioplastics in 2019. Feeling deeply connected to the earth motivates me to make more informed and educated decisions about materials and processes.

**You have taught art, design, fabrication, and mindful product development in different educational and cultural contexts. How has teaching affected the way you**

**think about experimentation, responsibility, and accessibility in art?**

Experimentation: Students adding their personality when projects were flexible led to innovations. This experience reminds me to be open to ideas and allows me to see the beauty of collaboration.

Responsibility: Realistically, there are endless things individuals can take responsibility for. I feel empowered when I get to choose what I want to think about, feel, judge, and perceive as important. When I get to choose my focus, I have energy and motivation to achieve, and it expands into abundance.

Accessibility: One word comes to mind: communication. Everyone communicates differently; therefore, having multiple ways to convey something is important. Every person chooses their own style—one of the easiest ways to recognize this is by witnessing how people use tools. In classes, I instruct how to do something in software, and often there would be several ways to achieve the same aim. Depending on the student's preference, they would choose how to perform each task. For example, how to access a tool in Rhino: you can type in the command line, select the tool on a toolbar, or search in a menu. Each student chooses their own strategy to achieve the same end. How a student chooses, what a student prefers, says a lot about them, their style, and how they think.

## Vobuzba

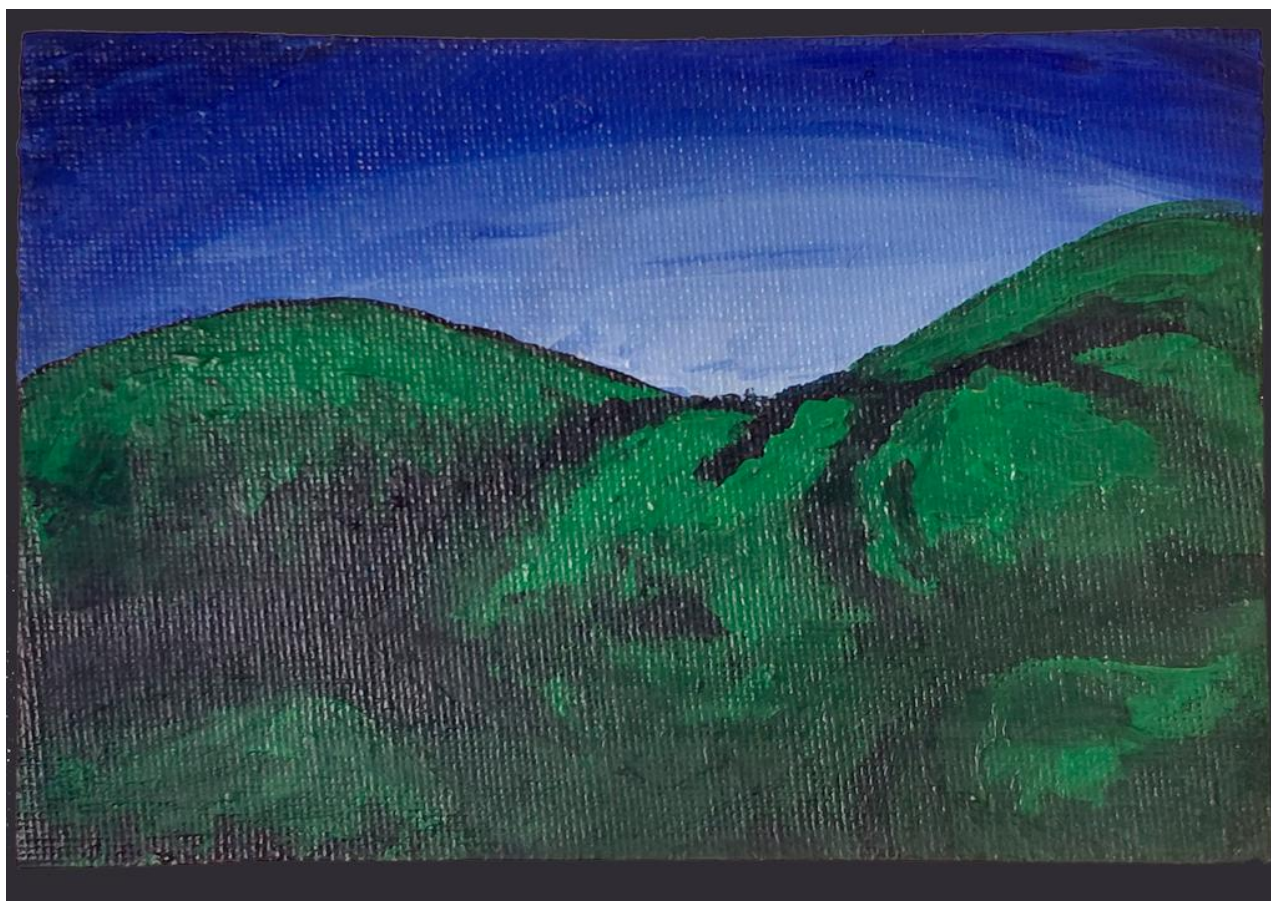
My name is Victoria Lenska. I am an emigrant from Russia who currently lives in Serbia. My work lies at the intersection of painting, illustration, and graphic design. After receiving my education in photography, I later expanded my practice by studying graphic design and illustration. This interdisciplinary experience has shaped my artistic language.

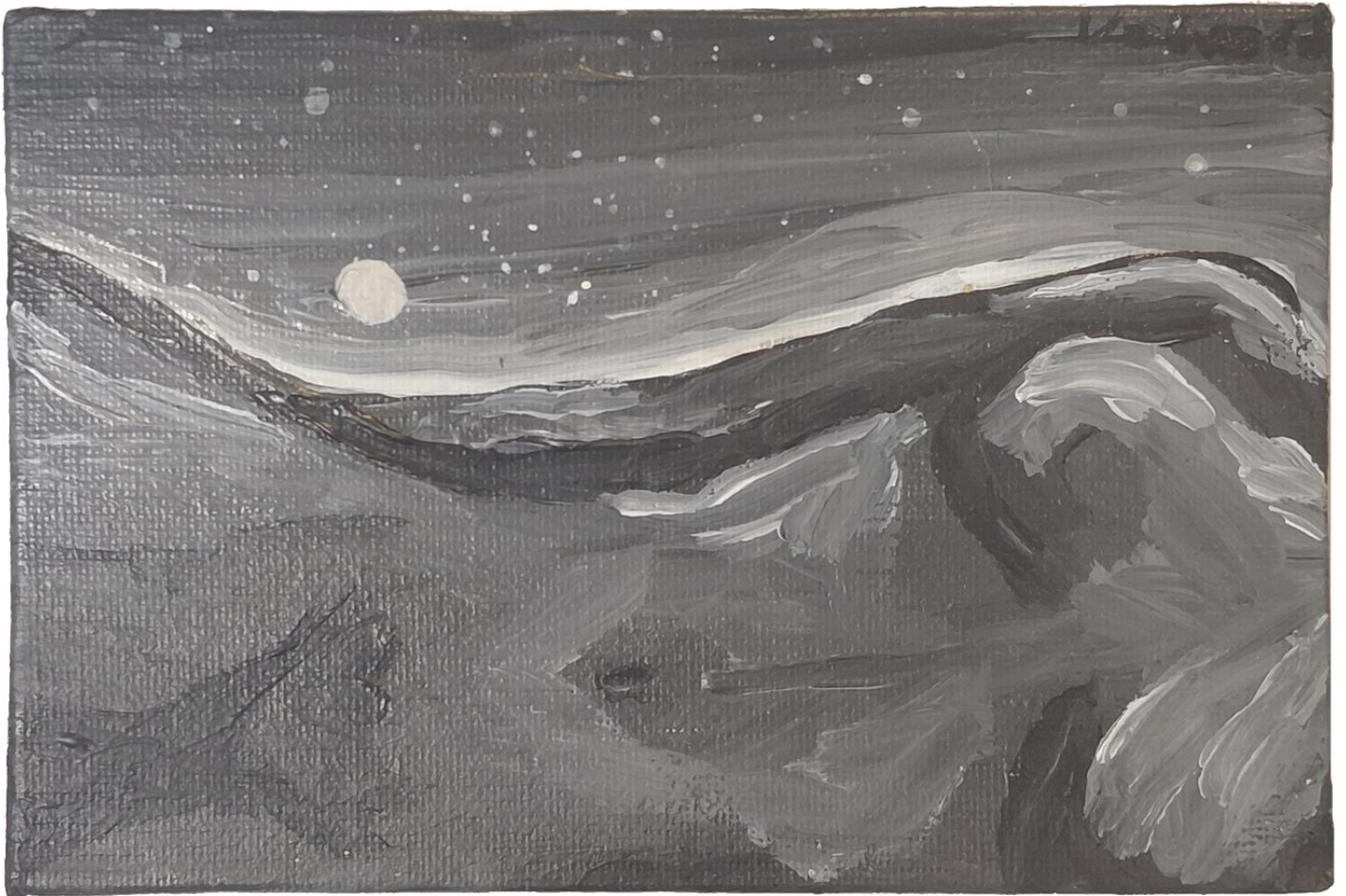
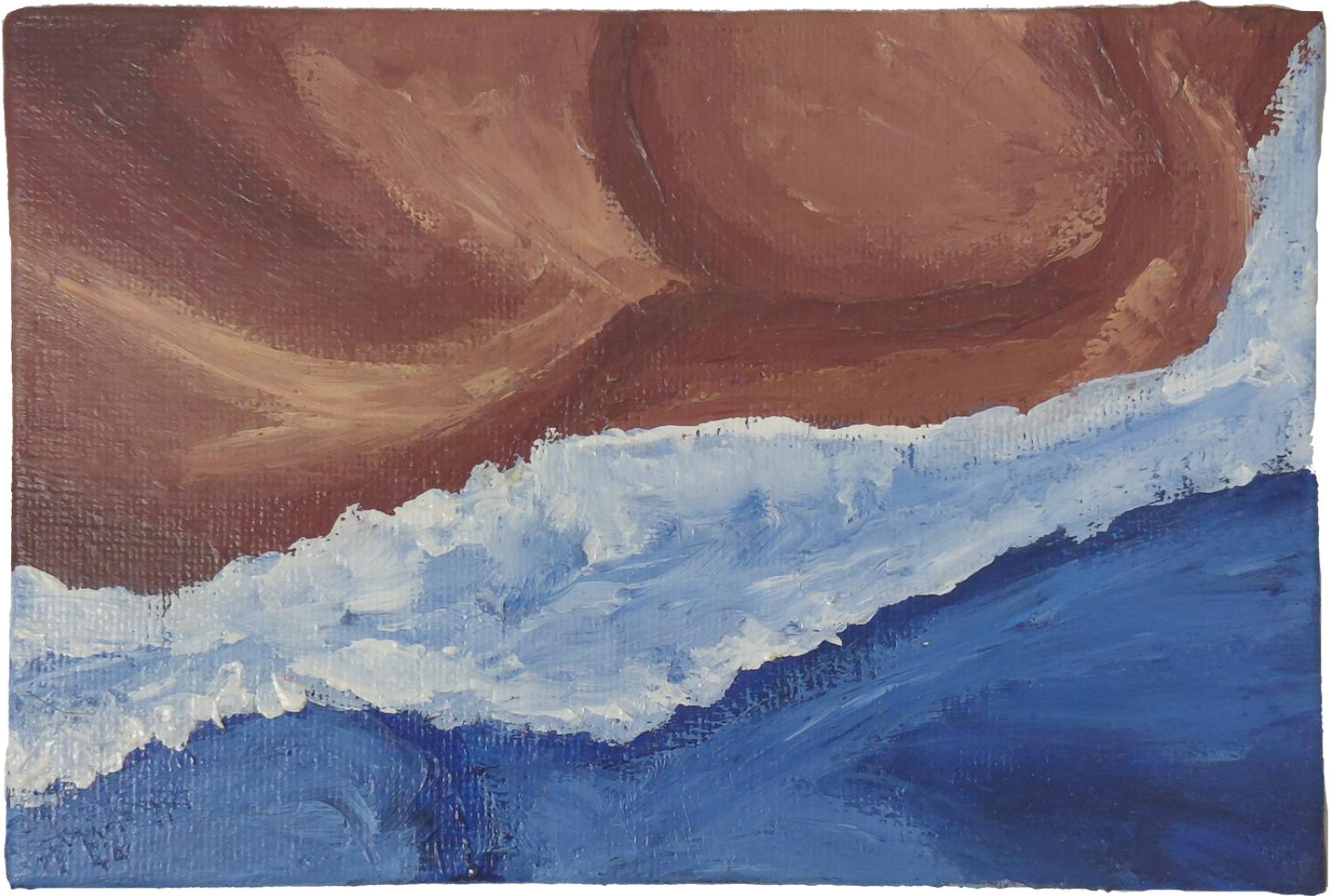
In 2026, I presented my first solo exhibition, "Sides of Tenderness," in Novi Sad—a series of paintings dedicated to the beauty and diversity of the female body.

I am currently developing new projects and striving to participate in international exhibitions, art publications, and residencies.

### *Project Statement*

My paintings explore the beauty of the human form. I believe that beauty exists in many different forms—it can be quiet, unique, and not always immediately visible. My project, *Sides of Tenderness*, is dedicated to the beauty of the female body. Through this series, I invite viewers to look beyond conventional standards and labels, allowing the body to be seen simply as a natural part of the world's beauty. When we admire a mountain landscape or watch waves reaching the shore, we do not judge or compare them—we simply recognize their beauty. I hope my paintings encourage us to look at the human body with the same openness, acceptance, and sense of wonder. The female body is not presented as an object to be evaluated, but as a landscape worthy of the same attention and admiration we naturally give to the world around us.





## — Interview

# James Mokhasi

**Your work explores the human condition through theology, mythology, philosophy, and psychology. What first drew you to these fields as sources for visual art?**

I have always been fascinated by the questions that refuse to disappear. Questions about consciousness, suffering, identity, morality, death, and transcendence



seem to emerge across every culture, religion, and philosophical tradition. Rather than treating theology, mythology, philosophy, and psychology as separate disciplines, I see them as different languages attempting to describe the same human experience. My work doesn't seek to illustrate these ideas directly. Instead, it explores the spaces where they intersect, where certainty dissolves and mystery begins.

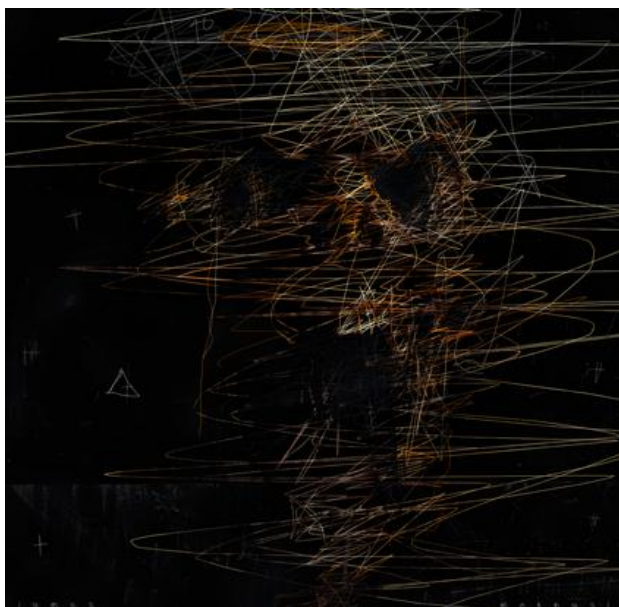
The artwork becomes a place where these traditions can coexist and where the viewer is invited to contemplate the complexities of being human rather than arrive at fixed conclusions.

**Many of your compositions feel like energetic fields of lines, movement, and inner tension. How do you begin a work: with an idea, an emotion, a symbol, or a physical gesture?**

The work can begin in different ways, but it is often sparked by an idea or a passage from a text that continues to resonate with me. It might be something from a text such as Dante's *Inferno* for example; it could be a question, an image, or an insight that refuses to let go. These texts don't provide subjects to illustrate; they act as points of departure for exploring broader questions.

What interests me is not retelling these stories but engaging with the ideas they contain. They become a way of reflecting on consciousness, identity, suffering, morality, and our search for meaning. The finished work is therefore less an interpretation of a particular text than an exploration of the questions it raises.

**Your images often seem to exist between abstraction and hidden figuration. Do you want viewers to search**



**for recognizable forms, or to experience the work more intuitively?**

Ideally both. The work rewards careful observation, but it doesn't demand a single reading. Some viewers immediately notice figures, while others respond first to rhythm, movement, or emotional atmosphere. Neither response is more correct than the other.

I'm interested in creating images that remain open. As we look longer, our perception changes, revealing new relationships and hidden forms. In many ways the experience mirrors consciousness itself we constantly shift between recognition, uncertainty, memory, and imagination.

**Darkness plays an important role in these works, while the lines appear almost like light, traces, or signals. What does this contrast mean to you?**

Darkness represents more than absence. It is the unknown, the unconscious, the place where memory, fear, potential, and transformation reside. Rather than something to escape, I see darkness as the necessary condition from which understanding emerges. The lines function almost like acts of excavation. They are traces of thought, memory, and perception cutting through that darkness. They suggest moments of awareness rather than complete revelation, reminding us that understanding is always partial and always evolving.

**You mention the relationship between the conscious and the unconscious. How does the unconscious enter your creative process?**

The unconscious enters my work less as something mystical and more as something discovered. While I make conscious decisions throughout the process, I also remain attentive to ideas, symbols, and associations that emerge unexpectedly. Often these connections only become fully apparent once the work is complete.

I think the unconscious reveals itself through intuition,

memory, and visual association rather than through deliberate planning alone. By remaining open to these moments, the work is able to move beyond what I consciously intended, often reflecting aspects of the human experience that are difficult to articulate in words. For me, making art is a dialogue between conscious intention and unconscious discovery. Neither operates in isolation, each continually informs the other.

**What role does the viewer play in completing the meaning of your work? Do you expect each person to construct their own interpretation?**

Absolutely. The artwork is only one half of the conversation. Every viewer brings their own memories, beliefs, fears, cultural background, and psychological landscape into the encounter. Those experiences inevitably shape what they see.

I'm not interested in prescribing meaning. If two people walk away with completely different interpretations, I don't see that as a failure but as evidence that the work remains alive. Meaning is something that emerges between the artwork and the person experiencing it.

**What role does the viewer play in completing the meaning of your work? Do you expect each person to construct their own interpretation?**

For me, art is less about providing answers than preserving the integrity of the question. The most profound questions are not problems to be solved but realities to be continually revisited. Every stage of life changes how we understand identity, suffering, belief, and purpose. Good art creates a space where those questions can remain active without demanding immediate resolution.

If my work achieves anything, I hope it encourages viewers to slow down, reflect, and inhabit uncertainty long enough for new ways of seeing themselves and the world to emerge.



## Lenacarvery

From 2016 to 2020, I studied art at the St. Alexy Humanitarian College, majoring in painting. This training allowed me to master painting, composition, and graphics, and to become familiar with the fundamentals of art.

From 2020 to 2024, I earned a second degree in event management at Synergy University. I was fascinated by the inner workings of large-scale events and open calls.

### *Project Statement*

In my project "Luxury of Instinct," I explore human desires and the internal conflict between who we want to appear and who we truly are.

To this end, I create a world in which wild animals, luxury objects, and humans or body parts coexist. Each image becomes a symbol of a specific feeling or human state.

The leopard in my works is more than just an animal. It symbolizes inner strength, freedom, and instincts that cannot be completely concealed behind outward elegance.

Cocktails, pearls, high-heeled shoes, exotic birds, lips, and luxurious interiors are symbols of a world in which people strive for beauty, pleasure, and recognition. But behind this idealized image, true feelings always linger: desire, fear, vulnerability, passion, and the urge to be oneself.

In my works, I ask the question: can outer beauty conceal our true nature, or do true feelings always find a way to emerge? Using vibrant colors, decorative compositions, and surreal imagery, I create a space in which the viewer can recognize their own emotions and reflect on what lies behind the ideal image.





## — Interview

# Michael Guevara



**You've said painting is what brings you the most joy - when did you first realize that, and what did that moment look like?**

Ever since I was a little kid I have always been somewhat of an artist, but for a long time I had pushed that passion to the side until just about a year ago when I rediscovered

my love for art and for painting in particular. I was on vacation with a friend of mine and on a whim we had decided to paint and that time when I didn't have any constraints from school or from my family on what I should create I really fell in love. When I was in high school in art class I think the constraints of being told what to make and being graded for it really stifled my creativity and my drive to want to create new art because it turned being creative into an expectation instead of it being my own personal drive.

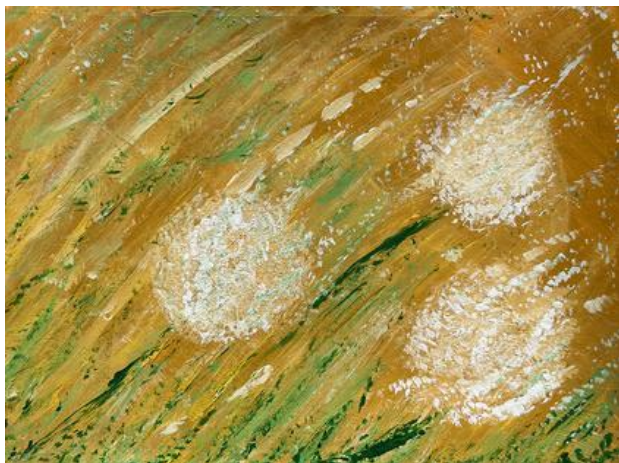
**You often start with no finished idea in mind. Walk us through what a typical session in the studio looks like from blank canvas to "paint bomb" aftermath.**

Before I put any paint on canvas I make sure my workspace is covered in garbage bags as not to get paint anywhere. My studio is more of a home studio and my parents don't like having paint everywhere, but once I get my space paint proofed I begin by splattering paint directly on the canvas either to make organic abstract shapes with the paint or to thoroughly coat the canvas in one color before I start. After that I make some lines with the color and at this point the painting starts to reveal itself to me in the lines that the random strokes create. I tend to be impatient when I paint so I end up touching my painting more than I probably should to see if the paint is dry before I can continue layering. During this whole process I allow myself to be fluid and not care about dripping or spilling paint anywhere I find that, that mindset lets me be less restrictive in my painting.

**Your surfaces are heavily layered and textured. What's your process for building up those layers - do**



Michael Guevara | Alone | 2026



**you know when a piece is "done", or is that also intuitive?**

My layering process can go one of two ways. Either I wait patiently for each layer to dry before I start adding more layers or what happens more often that I get so excited and want to see results now that I just layer on top of the wet paint. The reasons why I pick the colors I do when I'm painting is so that when I layer the colors on top of each other while they are wet that they won't turn brown. As for when

I find a piece done it's mostly intuitive but, I love receiving criticism and a lot of the time when I think I'm done I go to my family for criticism I end up going back to the piece and adding more that I would've never considered without that critique. There are also some pieces where I call it after just a few strokes because some pieces deserve the less is more treatment, and there have been countless pieces where I wish I had taken the less is more approach so now I don't deny myself of that.

**You mention using brushes of different stiffness and paint of different thickness. How do those physical tool choices shape the emotional tone of a piece?**

I believe the different thicknesses of paint layer on top of each other differently and drip differently the thinner paints will almost drip like water and it'll look like melted ice cream, while thicker paint will stay in one spot and drip very slightly its thickness also allows the wet paint to drip around it instead of mixing with the wet paint. The thicker paints also keep their original color better when layering on top of wetter paints without mixing so it lets me paint faster than if I were just to use one thickness of paint. As for the brush stiffness I find that a stiff brush actually adds an interesting texture that a normal brush just can't give me, I think that when I use stiff brushes in a piece it instantly makes it more sharp and wild because you can get these weird shapes and textures and I enjoy really leaning into that over making it all smoothed out and flat.

**Miami and South Florida's energy is a big influence for you. Can you point to something specific - a color, a**

**rhythm, a moment - that makes it into your work?**

I think the biggest part of South Florida that makes it into my work is all the nature. Down here it's tropical sunny weather almost year round so all the vibrant colors of the plants, flowers and even the sky make it into my work. A lot of the time I like to go with color palettes that I see in nature. The other biggest influence is all the modern art all around Miami. I am definitely a sponge and all the murals and art on basically every high rise in the city inspires me greatly. Being in Miami it's hard not to feel inspired by everything around you.

**Music and creative expression are lifelong influences. Do you ever paint to specific music, and does that change the outcome?**

The music choice is almost as influential as the mood I'm in while I actually paint. My go-to as of recently has been very chill ambient music with little to no words in it like Aphex Twin or Minecraft Music. I find that this kind of music has been making my work very abstract as of recent I think because without the words I end up with no outside influence to push me in any particular direction. But before I would listen to Acid Jazz and Psychedelic Rock and with those genres I feel my art gets more grounded and focused I usually ended up painting landscapes with my trademark weirdness.

**Your work is meant to be a focal point in residential, commercial, and hospitality spaces. How do you think about a painting living in someone else's environment versus a gallery wall?**

When I paint for residential, commercial, and or hospitality spaces I end up needing to compromise on my creative vision for the client because what they want isn't always what I envision for a piece and at the end of the day it's whatever they want since it's their money. When I am creating for a gallery though I have no client pushing me in any direction so I can really let loose and create what I want to create. My dream would be to paint what I want to paint and have people want to buy them because it's one of my art pieces.



**Rowena Keaveny**

Rowena is a visual artist & art therapist based in Ireland. Her work uses digital media, and socially engaged practice to explore the diverse issues surrounding social inclusion, disability, neurodivergence and access to cultural participation by marginalised groups. Rowena has been working in an arts in health context for 20 years and is an artist with Anam Beo.

As an art therapist Rowena has a special research interest in and focus on the use of digital practices and online therapy. She also works with digital narrative to facilitate an understanding of individual experience and its impact, and as a tool to aid self-discovery and recovery. She has published articles including, 'Navigating Grief: Using digital narrative as a therapeutic intervention in Art Therapy' published in the Irish Association of Creative Arts Therapists Journal. (Vol 5/No 1: 2018 p 17-28) And 'Covid-19: Creative Arts Therapies Crossing the Digital Divide in Ireland' which explores the findings of her research into the adoption of digital practice during Covid 19: She became co-editor of Polyphony (Journal of the Irish Association of Creative Arts Therapies) in November 2021.

She has been a recipient of bursaries from The Community Foundation of Ireland, The Ireland Funds, The Arts and Disability Ireland Awards (The Arts Council + The Arts Council of Northern Ireland), Tyrone Guthrie Award (Offaly County Council), Artist in the Community Award (Create + The Arts Council) & The Arts Council. Her work is in public and private collections including Laois County Council, Offaly County Council, The Dublin-Mid Leinster H.S.E + O.P.W: The Irish State Collection)

**Project Statement**

My practice investigates trauma as both an embodied and systemic condition, examining how experiences of fragmentation are shaped by familial inheritance, institutional power and broader social structures. The body is not treated as a discrete, autonomous form but as a site where memory, relationship and history converge, carrying the traces of experiences that exceed the individual. Through fragmented imagery and layered visual language, the work considers how trauma is transmitted across generations, becoming embedded within both bodies and the systems that organise and regulate them.

(One of the submitted pieces, 'Sleep Ghosts' was purchased by the Office of Public Works for The Irish State Collection in December 2025)



Rowena Keaveny | Sleep Ghosts | 2025



## — Interview

# Tamara-Leigh Jacobs

**You describe your art as a diary that reflects different stages of your life. When did painting first become a way for you to record personal experiences and emotions?**

Painting became my diary when life asked me to carry more than I thought I could. I was born on 1 July 1976 in Vryheid, a small town in KwaZulu Natal, and creativity was always part of my world because my mother was a self taught artist. I can still see her with



her red nails, always busy creating something beautiful. After she passed away, my spiritual alarm clock went off. I went through a divorce and found myself raising two small children on my own. In those years, I painted to survive physically, but eventually painting became something much deeper. I painted to survive spiritually. Every canvas began to hold my grief, my healing, my hope, and my journey back to myself.

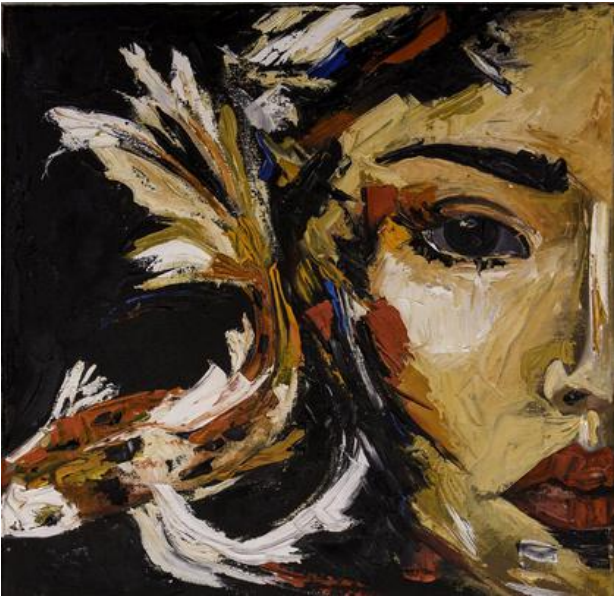
**How has growing up and living in South Africa influenced your visual language, choice of colours, and the stories you explore?**

South Africa lives in every brushstroke I make. Growing up in KwaZulu Natal exposed me to vibrant landscapes, diverse cultures, and people whose strength and resilience are woven into everyday life. As the principal of a pre primary school, I work closely with Zulu children, and their innocence, energy, and colourful smiles inspire me deeply. They remind me to see the world with wonder again. My palette is often bold and expressive because South Africa itself is bold and expressive, full of contrast, beauty, struggle, and joy.

**You say that you paint what moves you spiritually. How do you recognise the moment when an emotion, image, or experience should become a painting?**



Tamara-Leigh Jacobs | Fire Dragon



I recognise that moment when something will not leave me alone. It may be a feeling, a dream, a symbol, or an encounter with another human being. It begins as a quiet stirring inside me and grows louder until I know I must paint it. My spiritual journey has taken me from being very Christian to slowly building my own identity as a spiritual person. The universe has stretched me in ways I never expected, and painting has become the language through which I understand those experiences. I cannot imagine life without paint because it is where my spirit speaks most clearly.

**The women in your portraits appear confident, expressive, and introspective. What aspects of femininity and personal identity are you interested in exploring through these figures?**

I paint women as mirrors of strength, vulnerability, resilience, and transformation. I am interested in the layers women carry, the parts of ourselves we show to the world and the parts we protect quietly. My figures are not only portraits of women. They are reflections of the feminine spirit, of survival, and of becoming. Through them, I explore my own identity as a woman who has been broken, rebuilt, and forged through fire.

**Eyes and facial expressions play a particularly important role in your work. What do you hope the viewer will discover through the gaze of your subjects?**

I paint faces not simply to create portraits, but to find beauty in people when people were not beautiful to me once upon a time. The eyes are where I search for truth. I want viewers to feel seen, to recognise their own humanity in the gaze of my subjects, and to remember that every person carries a story beneath the surface. Sometimes I add details such as the word

“Namaste” in reflections, to remind people that we are spirits having a human experience, not the other way around.

**Your works combine controlled figurative details with spontaneous and expressive brushwork. How do you balance careful planning with intuition during the painting process?**

I begin with an idea or an emotion, but I do not force the painting to follow a rigid plan. I allow intuition to guide me, trusting that the canvas knows where it wants to go. My controlled details give structure, while my spontaneous brushwork gives the painting life and breath. I work in both acrylic and oil, and each medium allows me to express different parts of my emotional landscape. The balance comes from listening, listening to the painting, to my spirit, and to the story that wants to be told.

**Looking back at the stages of your life already recorded through painting, what new chapter are you currently beginning to explore in your work?**

I am currently exploring a chapter of spiritual awakening, transformation, and inner freedom. I incorporate esoteric symbols and zodiac imagery into my work, including the Fire Dragon, because it represents who I am and how I have been forged. Fire has not destroyed me. It has refined me. This new chapter is about embracing my full spiritual identity, celebrating the beauty of human connection, and creating art that reminds people of their own light, even after darkness.



# Stavros X. Petrou

**Your practice moves between visual art, performance, literature, and traditional craft. How do these different forms come together in your work?**



Visual art, performance, literature, and every other form of artistic expression represent, in my case, different manifestations of the same quest. I rarely know from the outset what form a work will eventually take. I usually begin with a sensation, a question, or an image that persists and demands attention. At other times, I begin with a material that I feel compelled to explore. And when I speak of materials, I do not necessarily refer to conventional “art materials”, but rather to any medium that can carry meaning – even something as unexpected as tissue paper.

As the process unfolds, it is the material itself that begins to reveal the path forward. It is at that moment that I understand whether an idea is asking to become a performance, an installation, a poem, or perhaps all of them simultaneously.

I am fascinated by the moment when the boundaries between artistic disciplines dissolve. A poem can acquire a physical presence through an installation, while a performance can transform into a living image. I do not choose the medium; rather, each idea seeks the form and the body through which it can exist.

**You describe art as a way of transforming chaos and trauma into creation. How does this idea shape your artistic process?**

Art appears to defy the very notion of futility. Through art, we transform chaos and trauma into creation. Art has taught me the beauty of truth. A broken object, an unfinished poem, a hesitant stroke of colour on a canvas can move us precisely because they are authentic.

I believe that my artistic process begins exactly where experience becomes difficult to articulate through everyday language. Trauma, for me, is not a subject to be illustrated, but an existential condition that seeks a new form of expression.

There are moments when I enter the studio believing that I know what I want to create, only to leave having produced something I could never have consciously conceived. This unpredictable encounter with matter



is among the most essential moments of the creative process.

I do not know whether art has the power to heal pain. What it can do, however, is transform experience into meaning.

**Basket weaving appears as both a material and a conceptual language in your practice. What first drew you to this traditional technique?**

Basket weaving, for me, is an art form hidden within the fabric of everyday life. I am fascinated by it because it teaches us that creation emerges through the collaboration between the artist and the material, through patience, care, and the passage of time. Each individual fibre acquires meaning through its connection with the others, just as people, memories, and cultures are shaped through relationships and interaction.

I first encountered this art form during my childhood through my grandmother, who was herself a craftswoman. The tradition of basket weaving, as it developed within the community where I grew up and was preserved from one generation to the next, is a traditional craft based on the interlacing of flexible plant materials collected from wetlands in order to create functional objects. It forms part of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Cyprus, the island of my origin, and was inscribed on the National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage of UNESCO in 2017. Its development is deeply connected to the natural environment of the region: the salt lake beside my childhood home has been, for centuries, the place

where the materials used in this craft are gathered. For me, basket weaving is not merely a traditional technique. It is a conceptual language, an embodied form of cultural knowledge, and a way of speaking about everything that constitutes identity and the very essence of being.

**How do you approach the transformation of inherited craft techniques into contemporary installation or performance?**

I do not approach traditional techniques as precious remnants of a past that must be preserved untouched. I perceive them as living forms of knowledge that continue to evolve as long as there are people willing to reinterpret them through the lens of their own experiences.

We do not simply inherit tradition; we enter into a dialogue with it. My creative process does not begin with the desire to reproduce a technique, but rather to understand what it can still communicate to us today. When these practices are transferred into the realm of contemporary installation or performance, they reveal new possibilities of interpretation and new meanings that engage with contemporary social and existential questions.

One of my most significant visual artworks is Kaina Daimonia, a work inspired by basket weaving and, above all, by my lived relationship with my grandmother. The work seeks to redefine folk art through the language of contemporary visual practice,





and it is therefore a great honour that it is preserved as part of the permanent collection of the Cyprus Folk Art Museum.

The title *Kaina Daimonia* refers to the Socratic expression “*kaina daimonia*”, meaning new ways of thinking or new ideas. Within the context of the work, the title can be understood as an invitation to perceive tradition not as something static or confined to a museum space, but as a living creative force capable of acquiring new meanings in the present.

I am not interested in tradition as nostalgia. I am interested in it as truth. Perhaps, ultimately, the art that preceded us is not behind us, but ahead of us, because each generation is called upon to decide anew what deserves to continue.

**Your work often involves the body, tension, restraint, and physical presence. What role does the performing body play in your artistic language?**

In my works, and particularly in my performances, the

body is not an instrument that serves an idea; it is the very idea taking on physical form. I perceive the body, in a sense, as our ontological imprint within the world of material reality. Movement, stillness, and breath carry a meaning that precedes language. The body is the first place where memory, desire, violence, loss, and transformation are inscribed.

In a similar way, I approach the notion of intensity – a quality that deeply fascinates me – not as an element of provocation or spectacle, but as a condition of revelation. When the artist encounters their own limits, social conventions begin to collapse, and a deeper, almost primordial truth emerges. It is there that performance is born, not as a representation, but as an actual event. This is why every performance remains impossible to reproduce in exactly the same way: it is a singular occurrence.

A fundamental prerequisite for creating art within this framework is the physical presence of both the creator and the recipient. In an era where images are endlessly reproduced and experience is increasingly mediated through screens, live presence acquires an almost ritual dimension.

My artistic language is shaped through this encounter between the body, time, and space. In my performances, I do not seek to embody a role, but rather to create an experience that allows the viewer to become an active participant within it. It is at the moment when the body ceases to be merely a biological existence and becomes a vessel of memory, ritual, and poetic truth that I feel art truly begins.

**How does your Cypriot cultural background inform your use of material, memory, and traditional forms?**

Cyprus is the way through which I learned to perceive time, memory, and matter. I grew up witnessing traces of different historical periods coexisting within the same landscape. Perhaps this is why I came to understand time as a series of layers of experience that exist simultaneously, and materials as carriers of stories. The ancient philosopher Zeno of Citium, who was born in Cyprus, suggested that the world possesses consciousness and reason, and that it is, in a sense, a living entity.

The place where one grows up and lives inevitably shapes both one’s human and artistic identity. Although I was born many years after the Turkish invasion of 1974, the trauma of a “divided homeland” and displacement continues to remain alive through the experiences and memories of people to this day. Elements of this collective memory are unconsciously reflected in the way my artistic practice is formed.

I do not seek, consciously or programmatically, to represent Cypriot identity or to illustrate its history. What interests me is to reveal experiences that, while



emerging from a specific geography, speak to broader dimensions of the human condition.

**What questions or emotions would you like viewers to carry with them after encountering your work?**

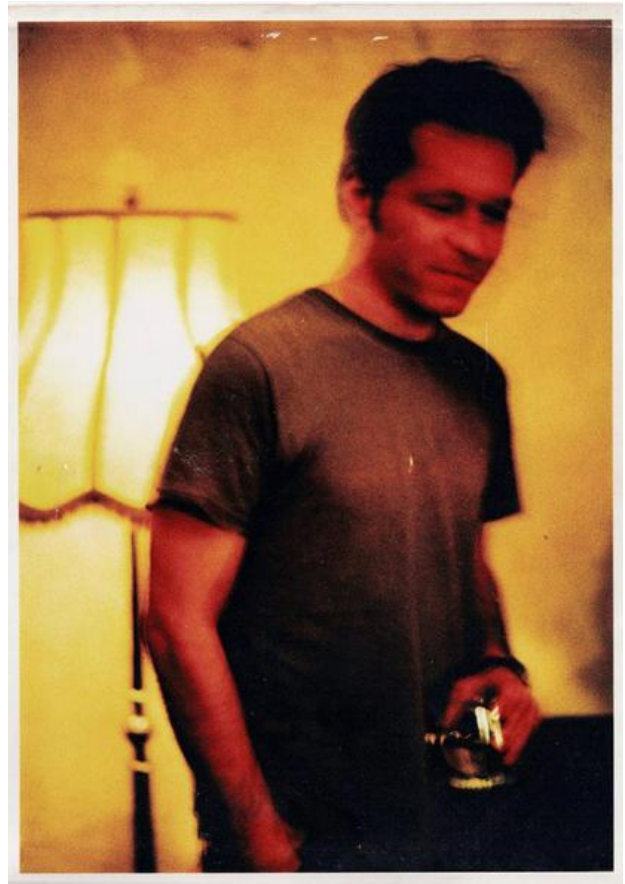
I am interested in creating conditions for encounters; inviting the viewer to slow down, to observe, and to feel that what is unfolding before them concerns them personally. I do not seek to transmit a message; rather, I aim to open a space where new questions can emerge. From their very conception, my works are created to be approached first through emotion and only afterwards through thought. I choose emotional resonance over didacticism. I would never want to dictate to the viewer what they should feel.

I believe that art becomes truly alive only when it leaves room for personal experience and interpretation. If a work leads everyone towards the same answer, then it has perhaps already limited its own possibilities. If someone leaves an exhibition having changed, even imperceptibly, the way they look at an everyday object, a gesture, or even at themselves, then I feel that this constitutes a form of success for the work.

The greatest gift for an artist is to realise that a work no longer belongs to them. From the moment it encounters the viewer, it begins a life of its own — one that the creator can no longer control. This, I believe, is where the true freedom of art resides: in its capacity to exist as a universal human language, one that speaks directly to the deepest and darkest root of our primal cry.

# — Interview

## David Rovirola



**You prefer working with your hands rather than brushes. How does this direct physical contact with paint influence the emotional intensity and final form of your work?**



David Rovirola | Museum's Robbery | 2024

I've spent my life searching for stiff-bristled brushes that would suit my frenetic painting pace, and it turns out my favorite brushes are my own hands. My father was a bricklayer, and I spent years helping him on construction sites, so painting with my hands makes me feel more true to myself. Besides, the canvas is a substitute for the wall of our ancestors' primitive cave.

**You grew up near railway tracks, surrounded by concrete and brick. How does that urban environment continue to shape the textures, colours and atmosphere of your paintings?**

For me, train tracks have always represented escaping towards something new, the journey, seeing where those two lines lead and whether they lead anywhere. Meanwhile, brick and concrete represent settling down and becoming tied to a specific place, and we could say that this is the dichotomy for almost everyone.

**Goya and El Greco were important visual references during your childhood. What aspects of their work still resonate with you today?**



What interests me about Goya is how he always tries to understand his time through his paintings, and about El Greco, one could say that his painting exudes a mystical yearning, difficult to understand, but one that almost all Spaniards possess, even without being aware of it. Goya is my anchor, and El Greco is my sail.

**The figures in your paintings often appear fragmented, distorted or partially concealed. What do these altered bodies allow you to express about human experience?**

My paintings are not based on reality but on my visions, which are nothing more than my fragmentary and personal perception of what I see.

**Your works combine darkness and violence with flashes of vivid colour and occasional humour. How do you balance these contrasting emotional registers?**

My experience in the performing arts taught me

that the viewer's attention is captured through contrast, and it is something I also apply in my paintings.

**You have also worked in documentary filmmaking, set design and multidisciplinary performance. How have these experiences changed the way you construct space, movement and narrative in painting?**

Creating a stage set is very similar to composing a painting. The difference is that instead of using paints, you work with objects, dancers, music, lights... The materials are different, but the process is the same.

**When you move between painting and performance today, do you see them as separate disciplines, or as different manifestations of the same artistic investigation?**

I use the same process in both disciplines and I would even say that they feed off each other and grow together.



**Weronika Raczynska** (born in 1978 in Warsaw, Poland) – painter, drawer, visual artist. In 2002 graduated with a Master of Fine Arts degree in Painting (with distinction) from the European Academy of Arts (EAS) in Warsaw, Poland. In 2010 completed post-graduate studies in Painting & Drawing at The Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts (ASP) in Cracow, Poland. She has had 19 solo exhibitions and more than 140 group exhibitions in New York, Los Angeles, London, Paris, Berlin, Dresden, Basel, Rome, Milan, Venice, Florence, Naples, Bologna, Madrid and Barcelona among others. Raczynska was awarded The Faces of Peace Art Prize in 2022; Artistic Excellence certificate in 2022; Pegasus International Prize for the Arts in Venice in 2023; The Michelangelo International Prize in Rome in 2023; Artistic Career Award in Sanremo in 2023; The Botticelli International Prize in Florence in 2024; The Leonardo da Vinci International Prize in Milan in 2024; The Velazquez & Goya International Prize in Barcelona in 2024; The New Great Masters International Prize in New York in 2025; The Artists in the History of Art International Prize in Florence in 2026; and The Caravaggio International Prize in Madrid in 2026. Lives and works in Warsaw, Poland.

#### *Project Statement*

"One of the most distinctive technical choices [of Weronika Raczynska] is the use of oil (and mixed painterly approaches) on paper rather than canvas. (...) One of the strongest aspects of Weronika Raczynska's [body of work] is its emotional intensity and conceptual depth. (...) This creates a strong sense of authenticity and authorship. Another strength is the consistency of visual identity. Despite variations in subject matter or medium, the artist maintains a very recognisable visual grammar: expressive linework, saturated colour, and emotionally charged composition. (...) This has been one of the most distinctive and emotionally articulate [body of work] that I've seen. The combination of expressive figuration (...) and a deeply personal (...) perspective creates a body of work that feels both coherent and highly individual. Conceptually, the work carries emotional weight and psychological depth that goes beyond surface representation."

Véra Kempf

art curator

[Paris, France 2026]

Weronika Raczynska | Appearance (Collage) | 2024





# — Interview

## Daniel Kreissl

**Your work begins with nature and landscape, but often moves toward something surreal and unsettling. What first led you to explore this hidden side of the natural world?**

I grew up in a painter's environment; my parents took me to exhibitions, studios and galleries from an early age. I soon developed a love for visual art, and I was particularly drawn to surrealist works — its associative freedom and dreamlike imagination strongly shaped my sense of visual metaphor. Later, while working in landscape photography, I was surprised to discover that structures and motifs that once seemed utterly surreal in paintings actually occur commonly in nature and the landscape. This discovery marked a shift for me: I began to perceive the landscape as a source of hidden shapes, symmetries and archetypal images that can be emphasised and transformed through composition, light and photographic techniques.

This experience links my earlier upbringing in an artistic environment with my current photographic approach — combining inspiration from painting with an interest in "found" structures in nature.

**Symmetry plays a central role in your compositions. What does symmetry allow you to reveal that a traditional landscape photograph might conceal?**

Although it may not seem so at first glance, symmetry is a fundamental principle of nature. Almost all animals display



bilateral — axial — symmetry; exceptions include, for example, starfish, which have radial (point) symmetry, as do many flowers. Symmetrical arrangements are also found in the so-called inanimate world: in snowflakes or in the structure of minerals.

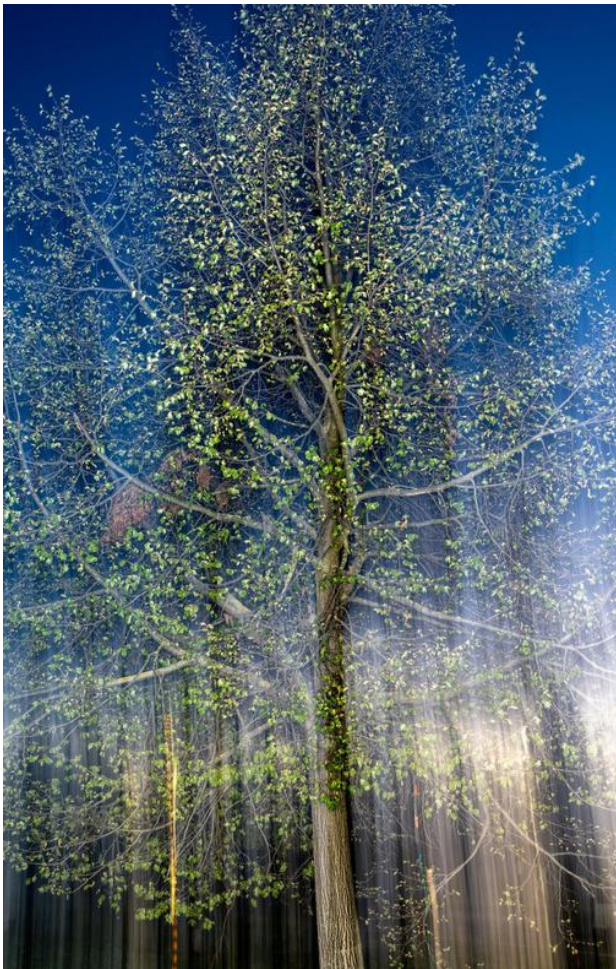
In other words: symmetry is embedded at the centre of the world we know. It is therefore not surprising that when a person sees something axially symmetrical — a shape that in some degree resembles their own bodily configuration, suggesting eyes or a mouth — the notion of a being, "someone else," readily arises. This phenomenon has deep psychological and evolutionary roots: human perception is sensitive to forms that resemble a face or a figure, because recognising other individuals was crucial for survival. In an artistic context, symmetry can act as a trigger for associations — it opens the space for anthropomorphic interpretations, archetypal images and imaginary figures. These "spiritual" figurations arise on the border between perception and imagination: symmetry offers us fragments that the brain completes, and thus certain entities are born in our minds — hybrids between a natural object and a living being.

In my photographs I work precisely with this power of symmetry: I use it so that new, unpredictable shifts of meaning can appear in the viewer's perception — from the familiar to the unsettling, from idyll to enigma.

**Many of your images transform trees, branches, and roots into almost face-like or creature-like forms. Do you search for these figures intentionally, or do they appear during the editing process?**

Some people search for "geocaches" in the landscape, others collect Pokémon; I search for what is hidden outdoors. Unlike those games, I play my game with reality itself: I seek moments when the environment reveals unexpected shapes, structures and hints that often escape the ordinary eye. I prefer to photograph shortly after sunset. It is a fleeting moment between day and night, when the sky is still visible





while darkness creeps across the land — a situation that often reminds me of the atmosphere in Magritte's paintings. I find this interplay of light and shadow to be the most magical aspect of the day. As you walk through the darkened landscape, your imagination expands and mysterious creatures seem to emerge from the dark corners. I believe this is an archetypal experience: nature is not only beautiful and harmonious, but also mysterious and potentially dangerous. In my photographs, I aim to capture this duality — to show how idyllic scenes can suddenly transform into something unexpected, how surface illusions dissolve and reveal layers of hidden meaning. Through composition, extended exposure and targeted lighting, I open a space for associations: what was once taken as familiar can become the trigger for a new, often unsettling perception.

**You mention surrealist influences introduced to you by your father. How has his artistic presence shaped the way you see and construct images?**

My father was my first gateway into the world of image-making. It was not only about admiring finished paintings, but also about an approach to the image as a field of possibilities — a place where ordinary things can be transformed into the marvellous, and where chance becomes a creative element. This influence is reflected directly in my photography. When I compose a shot, I do not seek merely documentary fidelity but rather situations that allow the "unexpected" to arise. My Surrealist roots therefore lead me to construct images as spaces for associations: I leave ample room for chance, for

the "mistake" that often reveals the wondrous.

**In your recent works, you explore demons, mysticism, and the invisible. What does the "demonic" mean to you in the context of nature?**

In my work, the demonic manifests itself primarily as an aesthetic and psychological element. I do not aim to perform magic or summon demons. Rather, I am interested in the subtle tensions and ambivalences that the perception of nature can provoke: moments when familiar shapes and structures suddenly transform into something indeterminate, subconscious or archetypal.

**Do you see your images as discoveries of something already hidden in nature, or as new realities created through your artistic intervention?**

I photograph symmetry almost blindfolded — I primarily seek out intuitively interesting structures in the landscape and complete them by deliberately illuminating selected parts with external light sources. I consciously introduce an element of chance into the process. I remember how I first began creating symmetries digitally around 2019. I used photographs I had not originally intended for that purpose, and suddenly shapes resembling demonic or anthropomorphic figures began to appear in them. The moment was powerful — I must admit it frightened me for a while, yet at the same time, it fascinated me so much that I could not stop. I worked long into the night, captivated by what was emerging beneath my hands. It is precisely the clash between planned intervention and unexpected discovery that I consider essential.

**Your work suggests that the ordinary world contains mysterious or even unsettling presences. What do you hope viewers begin to notice after encountering your images?**

My work does not aim to suggest anything in particular — mysterious and disquieting presences exist in the world, as everyone knows. Everyone has encountered something mysterious at some point, and everyone is afraid of something. I do not know if I want viewers to perceive something specific; I merely show images and offer my interpretation of reality.

That something uncanny sometimes emerges from my work surprises me in itself — it was not my original intention. On the contrary: my original aim was primarily to create something beautiful. Perhaps, then, I would like viewers to take away this exact impression from the exhibition: a sense of the "beautifully uncanny."



## — Interview

# Vladislav Aksyonov

**Your mother played an important role in developing your creative skills. How do you remember that first support, and how did it shape your path as an artist?**

From my biography, it is clear that my mother was the person who first guided me towards a creative path. She enrolled me in a children's school of applied arts, where I was introduced to various forms of creative expression. Applied art involves working with a wide range of materials, and this may be why my current artistic practice incorporates such diverse materials—from fabric and clothing to artificial stone and children's dolls.

**Before becoming a contemporary artist, you founded a fashion house and worked with clothing collections. How does your experience in fashion continue to influence your artistic practice today?**

For a long time, running a fashion house was my primary occupation. However, after spending many years in the industry, I gradually became disillusioned with it. Through my



Vladislav Aksyonov | I Am No Longer A Toy | 2024

work, I came to realize that I had grown tired of the artificiality of the glossy fashion world. I felt constrained by the boundaries of the fashion industry and decided to move into contemporary art, where I could bring my boldest and most provocative ideas to life through art objects.

I have developed an entire project entitled Art in Fashion — The End of Fashion. Using my couture collection transformed into works of art, I create a metaphorical farewell and funeral ritual for my creative practice in fashion, allowing me to be reborn as an artist.

**You have also opened a residence for young artists. Why was it important for you to create a space for other creative people?**

I founded the residency in 2007, at a time when I had not yet imagined becoming an artist in the traditional sense. To be honest, supporting young artists and helping them realize their creative potential was quite fashionable within St. Petersburg's bohemian circles at the time. That was exactly what I decided to do.

Today, I am deeply grateful for that experience. The artist Nadezhda Kosinskaya, a former resident of my program, became well known many years later, and I still own some of her early works, which is a great source of joy for me.

**Your biography mentions psychology and personal transformation as important parts of your artistic development. How did this inner work help you find a new artistic language?**

Above all, every person is driven by the desire to understand themselves. We all undergo a process of transformation in which we learn to recognise, understand, and accept the parts of ourselves that are judged or considered shameful by society at large. This is an important stage of life, when we begin to open up to ourselves.

All artistic expression is filtered through the artist's personality. The works of mine that most clearly reflect this approach are My Muse and Fear of Public Speaking. My Muse emerged from my feelings of envy towards other successful artists. In this work, I attempt to accept that envy and



Vladislav Aksyonov | I Am No Longer A Toy | 2024



transform it into a source of inspiration. Fear of Public Speaking, meanwhile, becomes both a form of public expression and an acknowledgement of my phobia of speaking in front of an audience.

This approach has allowed me to use psychology in my art both as a form of personal therapy and as a relevant subject of research within the field of contemporary art.

**In the series “I Am No Longer a Toy”, the viewer encounters doll-like faces emerging from monochrome textured surfaces. What does the image of the doll mean to you?**

For me, the image of the doll is inseparable from the central idea of the series *I Am No Longer a Toy*. My initial reflection on the project was that a doll resembles a human being in the hands of God. We, too, created it—originally from clay—just as, according to Scripture, God created humankind. Throughout this series, I ask the question: “Do dolls have souls, since we are so alike?” For me, therefore, the doll represents an attempt to draw closer to the Creator. Each doll in the series had been abandoned by someone. I found them at flea markets or rubbish dumps, and later gave each of them a name, a colour, and a new life. The doll appears before the viewer as an independent being, as though returning from the past to declare that it exists and is no longer a toy.

By its very nature, a toy is deprived of free will and a voice; it is created for someone else’s entertainment. It can be broken, decapitated, or thrown away. The phrase “I am no longer a toy,” however, marks a point of manifesto and protest against this condition. It is the moment when the inanimate comes to life, when an object acquires the will, the voice, and the aggression to say: “I am alive. I am no longer under your control.” In human relationships, this reflects a difficult process of separation—from abuse, from social pressure, and from the role of a puppet.

Yet this protest also has another side: the pain and sorrow of loss. Being a toy is painful on the one hand, but on the other, it offers a kind of sadomasochistic pleasure, a state in which one does not have to take responsibility. Breaking free from this fusion, separating from the “tyrant,” or simply growing up and losing the paradise of childhood is an enormous source

of stress. My baby dolls appear anxious and sinister precisely because they are frozen on the threshold between gaining freedom and confronting loss—the loss of their former form in exchange for the right to live their own lives.

**Your works combine a sense of childhood, vulnerability, and unease. Are you interested in the border between innocence and trauma?**

I am less interested in the boundary between innocence and trauma than in trauma itself. Everyone experiences it, though to varying degrees of severity. My work condemns trauma, demands that the viewer pay attention to it, and at times attempts to provoke a traumatic response through confrontation.

When it comes to innocence, I understand it solely as purity and absolute untouchedness—as embodied by a child or a baby doll, physically incapable of causing harm. Trauma is its opposite: it is always a violent, invasive, and contaminating intervention, such as psychological or sexual abuse.

When viewers encounter my work, they are left with a distinct feeling that something terrible has happened—that some dark secret is concealed within it. For me, there is no boundary between innocence and trauma. There is only the moment of a harsh, traumatic event that destroys what is natural.

**What do you want the viewer to feel when standing in front of these works: discomfort, recognition, compassion, fear, or something else?**

Emotions! Everything beyond that is subjective and unique to each viewer. No matter how much you try to guide the viewer’s emotional response, they will still see something of their own in the work. On more than one occasion, my artworks have evoked completely opposite feelings in different viewers.

This particular series, *I Am No Longer a Toy*, inspired fear and anxiety in some, while others responded with admiration and curiosity—but it never left anyone indifferent. That is what makes it so wonderful: so many different perspectives are directed toward my work, each accompanied by a genuine emotional response.



**Tehmina Tasadduq** is a contemporary painter working primarily in oil and gold leaf on canvas panels. Her practice, gathered under the name Veil & Canvas, explores identity, silence, resilience, and the quiet transformations of interior life. Trained in the classical traditions of Eastern and Western oil painting, she brings both lineages into a layered language that honours patience as a method. Her work has been selected for international exhibitions in London, France, Manchester, and Turkey, and she has been recognised by Espacio Gallery London, New Road 2 Art Paris, OT Creative Space Manchester, Vial Mail Art Turkey and Happening in MCR Manchester for her contribution to contemporary work on identity and the feminine experience. Alongside her studio practice, she hosts workshops in oil painting and mixed media, sharing the slow craft that anchors her work. She approaches each painting as a small act of listening, to material, to memory, and to the women whose unspoken histories her surfaces are made to hold.

#### *Project Statement*

My practice explores the quiet spaces between identity, memory, and transformation. Working primarily in oil on canvas, I create figurative paintings that examine the emotional layers of the human experience and the stories that often remain unspoken. Rather than depicting specific narratives, I use symbolism, gesture, and atmosphere to invite viewers into moments of reflection, encouraging them to find their own meanings within each work.

Living between cultures has shaped my understanding of belonging and the fluid nature of identity. These experiences inform my paintings, where the figure becomes a universal presence rather than an individual portrait. Through muted palettes, layered textures, and carefully balanced compositions, I seek to express vulnerability, resilience, and the quiet strength found in moments of introspection.

My work is driven by a belief that painting can create spaces for empathy and dialogue. I am interested in how visual language can communicate emotions that words often cannot, allowing personal experiences to resonate across different cultures and perspectives. Each painting becomes an invitation to pause, reflect, and engage with the complexities of memory, silence, and human connection.

As my practice continues to evolve, I am developing a cohesive body of work that expands these themes through larger-scale paintings and immersive exhibition projects, while remaining committed to creating work that is both conceptually engaging and emotionally accessible.



Tehmina Tasadduq | The Unsaid



Tehmina Tasadduq | Worn Identities

## — Interview

# María Camila Restrepo Pedrosa

**Your work is described as poetic, socially driven, and emotionally expressive. How do you personally define the emotional role of fashion in contemporary culture?**



Fashion is constantly evolving; every day it takes on a new meaning, representing something new... from my perspective, there are two ways of seeing it.

On one end, fashion is a tool for social pressure to find its new home in people's minds. The speed at which trends come and go, globalization, and the lack of meaning in much of the content on social media can impact people, especially young minds exploring and searching for their voice, DNA, and style.

On the other hand, fashion can be an amazing vehicle to express who we are and how we feel. Fashion as an industry is so much more than making clothes. I once worked with a community of kids in Medellín, many of them indigenous and all of them victims of violence in the country. They were separated from their families at a very young age and forced to be active members of illegal armed groups. Most of them didn't know how to express everything they were feeling, and we were teaching them how the creative process could help them release their feelings through art and design. In this case, we were leading this class on how to shape your creative process to make loom-woven accessories, which is very characteristic among many indigenous communities in the area.

It was like before words could only tell part of their story, and drawing was a way of telling a different part of the same story, but there wasn't a resource they could use to tell the whole story all at once. Almost as if there wasn't a language they could use for that.

In this creative workshop, we were able to see them not only reconnect with their roots but also find a way to express all of their feelings, layer by layer and bead by bead.

Fashion has that power; even in much simpler daily situations, fashion can be a vehicle to express and transform any emotion inside you. It can mean resilience, happiness, resistance, pain...fashion can mean a lot of things. After all, fashion is a form of art, and art is subjective; art is made to express and provoke.

**You were born in Bogotá and raised between Pereira, Barranquilla, and Medellín. How have these different Colombian cities shaped your understanding of identity,**



### memory, and visual language?

Colombia is very diverse in so many aspects, and culture is definitely one of them. We have 6 different regions in the country, each of them with different accents, stories, and roots. This might not be evident at first sight or if you have only been in one region, but for me, being born in the capital and moving around two other regions gave me the capacity to connect the dots and see how we are all different, while coming from the same place.

I spent around 15 years in Barranquilla absorbing everything our Caribbean culture had to give us, observing the Arab roots in the city and dancing to rhythms produced by the mixture between indigenous, Afro, and Spanish during colonization. On the other hand, Medellín is a city in which, whether we like it or not, the violence and presence of narcos made a huge impact on the city and its culture. Every form of art is like a diary entry of what the city has experienced and the resilience of the people living in it, and fashion is just another part of that puzzle.

The first one is very colorful and playful, full of joy, curvy shapes, flowing silhouettes, and volume, while the other one has a stronger structure, a very urban aesthetic, and clear gender roles assigned through clothing, where the feminine is very sensual, and curves are emphasized through tight silhouettes and short lengths, and the masculine is highlighted through colors, textures, and shapes.

Pereira and Bogotá are a whole different story despite being relatively close geographically.

A way to describe Bogotá is cold, grey, in a rush, from far might look a little intimidating and rude, but once you approach it and reach its heart, kind, friendly, and warm are the right words. This is accurate not only in how people inhabit this city and interact with outsiders, but also in what they wear and how they spend their spare time. Once again, this isn't a random pattern it is absolutely related to the geographic location, being surrounded by mountains and rain, and the capital of the country where most of the political activity occurs, where the country's independence arose but is also a target of many attacks during the violence period. From Pereira, I have always loved how much you can see the pride they take in being cafeteros. This city is located in an area known primarily for growing coffee and working in the

fields. Of course, this happens nearby outside the city; that doesn't seem to be important when talking about who they are and who they are proud to be. They are proud of their roots.

This is just a very general example of how identity, memory, and aesthetics are not unrelated, but instead are dots that connect, can give you hints of a place or group of people's history, their joy or burdens, an idea of the way they think, and even their roots.

The formula to understand how identity and visual language interact has become simple to me over time: what you see is like a sneak peek; it's a little taste before the whole meal, and it's also a big clue for you to be curious and explore. Once you know and understand the culture behind an outfit, a form of art, or any kind of expression, the dots connect. Suddenly, everything makes sense: why is it colourful, why does it look heavy, why is it rigid, why do they look pretty and uncomfortable at the same time...everything is related to culture, because culture makes us who we are.

And memory is always there, no matter if the conversation is about identity or about visual language. Memory is always part of the conversation, and we honour it, most of the time unconsciously, with every decision we make and how we present ourselves to the world. That's our way of telling them who we are, the things we have lived that shaped us, and who we want to be.

**Your statement says that each project begins with a question, a diary, or a collective story. Could you describe how an idea transforms from an intimate thought into a garment or collection?**

It is a very intimate and personal process; sometimes it takes a long time to start, and sometimes it just flows naturally. I try to create out of myself a feeling, a personal experience, and a thought or posture over something I have.

Writing is a big tool for me in this process of transforming something so abstract as a feeling or thought into a collection.

I usually start by writing a poem or a short piece very emotional and full of sensations, intentionally using metaphors that later on will allow me to find inspiration in daily life objects, cultural symbols, or historical moments



from which I extract aesthetic values, shapes, textures, and a color palette.

Imagination is a huge ally as well, a big part of the process after writing is just sitting down in my studio, under the sun or touching the grass, closing my eyes and imagining what this would look like. How would it smell? If it were a sound, how could I describe that sound? How is this color feeling? Those are the type of questions that help me shape and give direction to everything in my mind directly to paper and then to fabric.

**Your silhouettes combine softness, volume, transparency, and sculptural construction. How do you approach the relationship between the body and the garment?**

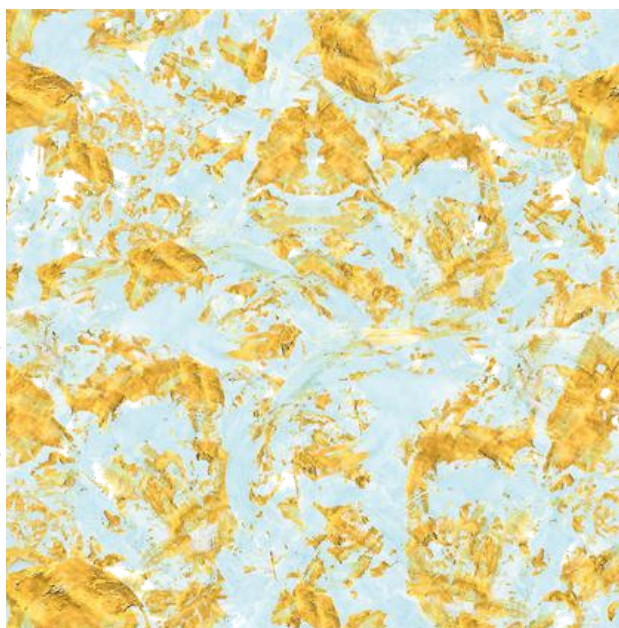
For me, as a fashion designer, the most important aspect is always making wearable garments, in the sense that the final consumer will feel comfortable and will be able to move without restrictions using them. Yes, many clothes are very extravagant, but are people wearing them truly comfortable? My aim is always to check both boxes.

The human body should be able to move, breathe, expand, and dance; it should be able to express itself using clothing as an extension of the body itself.

Thinking about clothing as an extension of the human body and a tool of expression has allowed me to explore with volume and geometrical structures, almost sculptural as you mention. What I like about volume, fluidity, and tightness is that it adds movement to the garment, and whoever is using it is commanding how it moves.

I have also realized that I like making opposite concepts interact in my designs, when it comes to structure and silhouettes, sometimes the final structure or shape of a piece is not determined by a sketch or the patterns. Sometimes I like allowing the opposite concepts to play with each other by draping directly on the mannequin. That often gives breathtaking results.

**The project "Punto de Partida" explores the historical, cultural, and symbolic value of artisanal techniques in Colombia. What did this research teach you about the**



María Camila Restrepo Pedrosa | Módulo Marmoleado Celeste Y Dorado



María Camila Restrepo Pedrosa | Restrepo Mitochondrial Eve

**responsibility of a designer?**

As designers, it is very easy to forget where you get your inspiration from. Nowadays, everything is so fast, I can't even really count how many pictures, videos, buildings, or even people walking on the street we see per minute. And every single thing we see is inspiration, whether we are looking for it or not.

But that doesn't take away our responsibility as designers to give credit for the inspiration we take from indigenous and artisanal communities.

Beyond that, we have the responsibility of keeping our roots and culture alive through our designs and art. It's not about becoming indigenous or adapting techniques that don't go with your narrative; it's about telling stories that light up the spark of curiosity towards an unknown community and giving them a voice. It's about telling our customers where our inspiration comes from, what's the story behind this specific and very special seam.

Fashion is full of symbols and history, and those two concepts are always tied to culture.

**You describe fashion as a medium "to heal, to question, and to transform". What kinds of healing or transformation do you hope your garments can offer?**

I like to think that behind all of my garments, there's an invitation for everyone to get more in touch with their inner child, to dare to get out of their comfort zone and explore more about themselves and who they are through clothing. With social media and how big of an impact it makes in our lives, I feel like a challenge no one can escape is what others will think about you, about me, about us.

My clothes are always full of color, patterns, textures, volume, and layers. And I take that as my reminder, and your



invitation to care less about what others might think about you, go outside, explore, and have fun like when you were a kid. Try on your clothes and create unique outfits that connect you with who you are.

**Your collections have been presented at Colombiamoda, while your research has also entered academic and social innovation contexts. How do you see the dialogue between runway, research, and community work?**

From my perspective, they are all connected, especially how I run my creative process; everything starts with research. You might have an idea or feeling you want to express and almost like a plan on how to do it, but without proper research, all of that is meaningless. Research is the bridge between a simple idea and a collection of symbols and visual resources to connect your ideas with a story, a clear identity, a culture, or a community. When culture is such an important part of your creative process, working with a community is almost inevitable. As a designer, I'm trying to make my work a platform to honor their story, to give them a voice. There's a fine line between getting inspiration from a

community and the inappropriate use of culture. I prefer being perceived as a respectful cultural advocate rather than being known for taking credit for creating something another community has had in their culture for thousands of years. Of course, there are always cases in which research is way deeper than just visual resources, and it turns into a more academic and longer exploration. There's more analysis, very often, sociology, science, history, anthropology, and even politics get involved too. And I think that's part of the beauty of fashion: on a surface level, you might think everything is about garments, shoes, runways and magazines, but fashion as a discipline is here to show us how everything is connected and impacting our lives. Runways and fashion shows are the most common places where we see the final product of months and months of exploration, research, designing, production, styling, and more, not only from a designer or brand's perspective in their shows, but also with how people attending these events choose to present themselves. Every look we see in a fashion event is very much intentional; those are the perfect scenarios for people to speak their minds, their truths, to make sure the world hears what they want to say.

## Sofia Flint

My name is Sofya Flint. I am a mixed-media artist and poet.

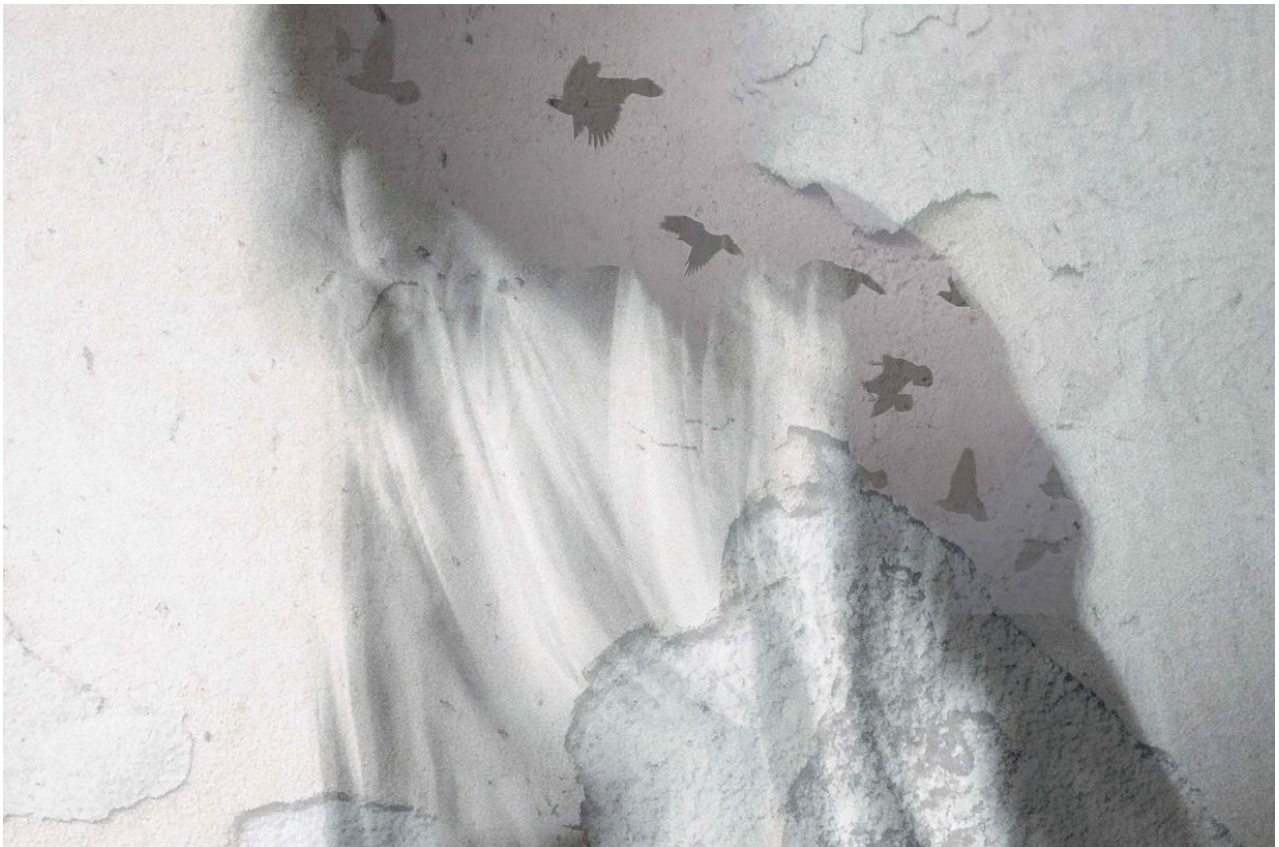
In my practice, I explore the unconscious. A work may begin with automatic writing, or with a particular dream that continues to haunt me even a month later. In truth, however, it begins with silence - when I am finally alone.

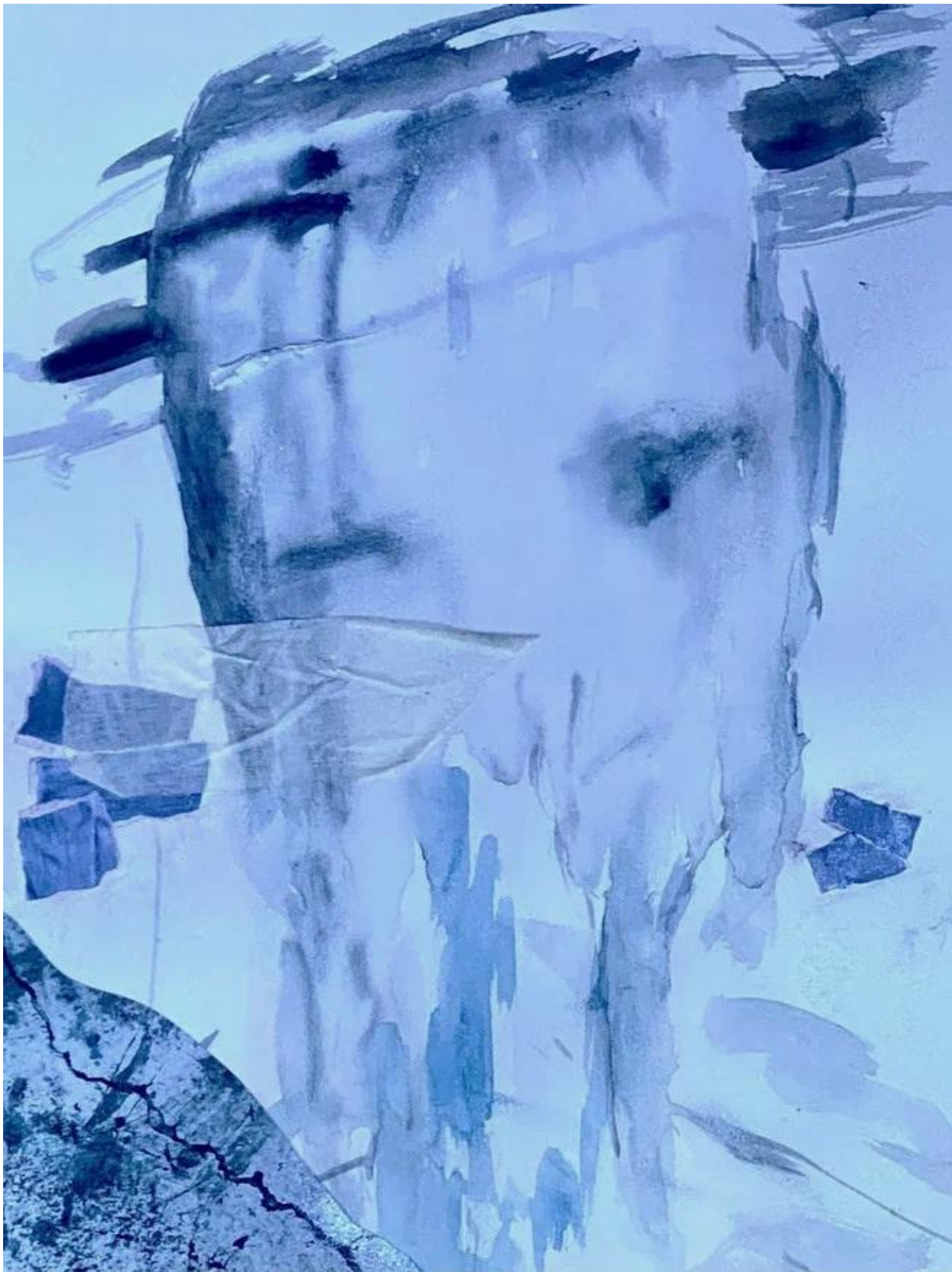
Being yourself does not necessarily mean calling things by their proper names.

Through my heightened sensitivity, I explore the moment when the everyday - the things that simply and constantly surround us - begins to reflect an inner psychological or spiritual state. I may observe how the sight of a red napkin through a faceted glass is refracted into unusual shapes and wonder what this image might illustrate when applied to oneself. What does it resemble? I strive to show that the world is always a reflection of what we feel and what we live by.

I work primarily with a muted, cool-toned palette, using gouache and soft pastels. At the same time, whenever necessary, I allow vivid, sharp, or even tense colours to emerge as accents - this is how they ultimately feel when viewing the finished work.

Sofia Flint | Call Me Quietly by My Name | 2025





Sofia Flint | Angel in the Belly | 2026

## — Interview

# Aminu Yunus Opeyemi

**Your work exists at the intersection of identity, power, and migration. How did these themes become central to your artistic practice?**



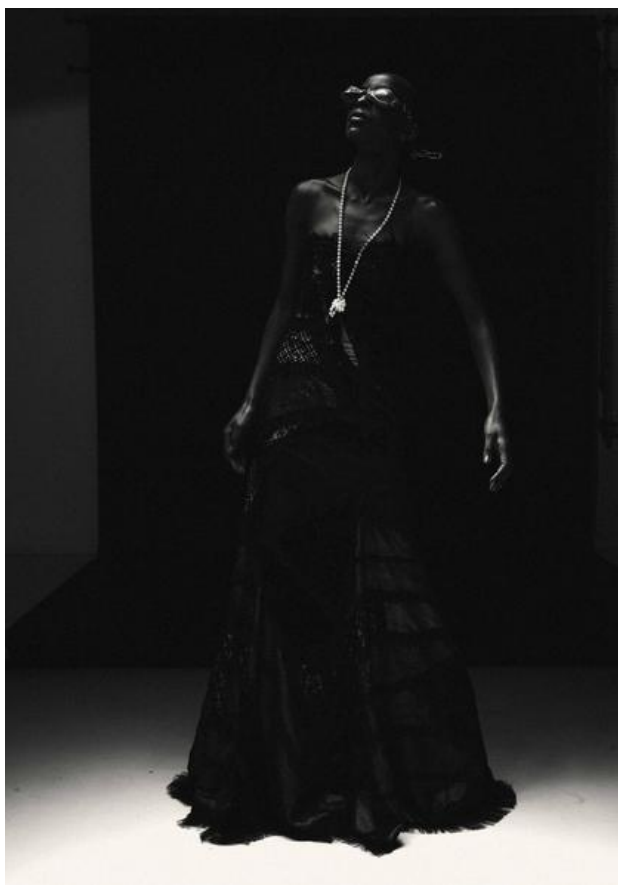
Resilience has always been at the heart of who I am. Growing up, I was constantly dreaming beyond my immediate surroundings while witnessing the quiet determination of the people around me. I began to realise that identity is not something fixed, it is shaped by our histories, our struggles, our communities, and the choices we make in pursuit of a better future.

These experiences naturally became the foundation of my artistic practice. My work celebrates identity by honouring the courage, resilience, and strength of those whose stories are often overlooked. I am particularly inspired by women in the market, women who wake before dawn, prepare their families for the day, take their children to school, and then spend long hours working to provide for them. Their resilience is extraordinary, yet it is so often treated as ordinary. I see these women as symbols of endurance, sacrifice, and hope.

Migration is another thread that runs deeply through my work. I am drawn to the stories of those who leave behind everything familiar in search of opportunity, not only for themselves but for generations to come. Behind every journey are sacrifices, unseen tears, and acts of incredible courage. These narratives remind us that migration is not simply about movement across borders; it is about carrying identity, memory, and culture while continuously redefining what home means.

Ultimately, my practice exists to honour these lived experiences. Through my work, I seek to create space for stories of resilience, belonging, and transformation stories that recognise the dignity and humanity of people who have pushed boundaries, challenged expectations, and shaped the communities we live in today.

**You often work in black and white. What does the absence of color allow you to express that color perhaps could not?**



For me, black and white is about stripping an image down to its essence. The absence of colour removes distractions and allows the viewer to focus on what truly matters the subject, their presence, their emotions, and the story they carry. Working in monochrome draws attention to light, shadow, texture, and expression. It creates a space where identity can be explored more deeply, beyond the visual cues that colour often provides. I am interested in revealing the strength, dignity, and resilience that exist beneath the surface, and black and white helps me do that with a certain honesty and clarity.

It also gives my work a timeless quality. The stories I tell of resilience, migration, community, and belonging are not confined to a particular moment. By removing colour, I hope to create images that feel both personal and universal, allowing viewers to connect with the humanity of the subject rather than the specifics of time and place.

**In your photographs, the figures seem to emerge from darkness with a strong sense of presence. What role do light and shadow play in your visual language?**

Light and shadow are fundamental to my visual language. I use them not simply as technical elements, but as a way of expressing the complexity of the human experience. Darkness, for me, is not a place of absence; it represents the unseen stories, struggles, and histories that people carry with them. Light becomes a quiet revelation, allowing those stories to emerge with dignity and strength. The people I photograph often embody resilience shaped by hardship, sacrifice, and perseverance. By allowing them to emerge from darkness, I want to create a moment where their presence becomes undeniable. The contrast invites the viewer to pause, to look beyond appearances, and to

encounter the individual on a deeper level.

I also believe light has the power to honour. It draws attention to expression, gesture, and character rather than spectacle. In my work, light is an act of recognition that gives visibility to people and narratives that have too often remained in the shadows. Through this interplay of light and darkness, I hope to create portraits that are intimate, timeless, and deeply human.

**Your images feel both intimate and monumental. How do you balance personal storytelling with universal themes?**

I begin with individual stories because they are honest and deeply human. The more personal a story is, the more universal it often becomes. Themes such as identity, resilience, migration, and belonging are experiences that connect people across cultures and generations. My role is to honour each person's story with authenticity, while creating space for viewers to see parts of themselves reflected within it.

**Adornment appears to be an important element in your work. What does it symbolize for you - protection, memory, power, transformation?**

Adornment represents identity, resilience, and transformation. It carries memory, cultural heritage, and personal history, while also symbolising strength and pride. In my work, adornment is never just decorative it becomes a visual language that honours the people I photograph and the stories they embody.

**There is a strong performative quality in your photographs. How do performance, fashion, and fine art photography intersect in your practice?**

Performance, fashion, and fine art naturally come together in my practice because they each offer a different way of telling a story. Fashion and adornment help build a visual language, while performance allows my subjects to embody emotion, memory, and identity rather than simply pose for the camera.

Although my images are carefully constructed, they are always rooted in real experiences. I use these elements to create portraits that feel both intimate and monumental, inviting viewers to engage not only with the beauty of the image but also with the deeper narratives of resilience, migration, and belonging that shape my work.

**What do you hope viewers feel or question when they encounter your work for the first time?**

I hope viewers pause before they look away. My work invites them to move beyond the surface and engage with the humanity of the people in the photographs. I want them to feel a sense of connection, empathy, and curiosity to question the assumptions they may hold about identity, migration, resilience, and belonging. Above all, I hope the work encourages reflection. If a viewer leaves seeing the strength, dignity, and beauty in stories that are often overlooked, then the photographs have done what they were meant to do. They are not just portraits; they are conversations about who we are, where we come from, and the experiences that connect us all.

## Ekaterina Chirkova

The primary medium is painting.

The main focus is on change, movement, and the fluidity of matter, the psyche, and objects - capturing a state at a particular moment. Sources of inspiration include existential themes, symbolism, Jungian ideas, and mythology. At the same time, encounters with people, places, and works of art can also initiate the creative process.

The artist feels a strong affinity with the naïve allegory and meaningful details characteristic of medieval culture. At the same time, contemporary experimentation with eclecticism, the breaking of rules, and the mixing of everything - subjects, narratives, and materials - is equally important.

The works are organized into small series. Each canvas is planned only minimally, with many decisions emerging during the process. The series are connected not only by their themes, but also by their manner and color palette. They are created in a single creative flow and come to an end when the artist feels that everything has been said on the subject.



K.Chirkova | Guests of the Last Supper | 2025



K.Chirkova | The Ferris Wheel.People Over the City | 2025

# — Interview

## Miléna Cayet

**Your practice is built around the dialogue between line and dot. How did these two elements become central to your artistic language?**

Line and dot entered my work quite naturally because they are closely connected to the actions I use: drawing, stitching, perforating, pressing, and repeating a gesture by hand. A dot may begin as a small mark, but it can also become a hole, a point of pressure, or a place where light enters the surface. A line can be drawn, sewn, stretched through space, or formed by a sequence of separate marks. Their meaning changes according to the material and the way the work is



Miléna Cayet | Axis Of Becoming | 2026

viewed.

Over time, I realised that these very simple elements allowed me to work with things that are less easy to name: distance, tension, rhythm, interruption, and continuity. They help me make relationships visible without turning them into illustrations.

For me, line and dot are less like motifs than points of departure. They give the eye something to follow, while leaving enough space for another kind of perception to develop.

**Repetition plays an important role in your work. Do you see repetition as a meditative process, a structural method, or a way of discovering unexpected forms?**

Repetition gives me a way to stay with a material long enough for it to change.

When the same gesture is made many times, it never remains entirely the same. The pressure of the hand changes. The surface becomes more resistant or more fragile. A thread pulls differently from one point to the next. Small variations begin to accumulate, even within a structure that initially appears regular.

There can be a meditative aspect to this process, but that is not usually my starting point. What matters more is the concentration repetition requires. It slows down both making and seeing.

I often discover the work through these accumulated differences. A form may appear that I had not planned, or a pattern may begin to produce a sense of depth, movement, or tension. Repetition is therefore both a discipline and a way of remaining open to what I cannot foresee.

**In your works, figures often seem to emerge gradually from patterns and layered gestures. How do you decide**



Miléna Cayet | Axis Of Becoming | 2026



#### when a form is complete or visible enough?

Stopping is one of the most difficult parts of my process. I do not wait for the image to become completely clear. In fact, when a form becomes too resolved, it can lose the uncertainty that first made it alive. I look for the moment when the work can hold the viewer's attention without explaining itself too quickly. Sometimes I step away from a piece for several days and return to it under different light. Distance helps me see whether the relationships within it are still active or whether I have begun to overwork them. A work feels complete when it no longer depends on my next gesture. It has enough presence to stand on its own, while still allowing something to shift as the viewer moves, looks again, or spends more time with it.

#### Your compositions combine geometric order with a strong sense of intuition. How do you balance control and spontaneity during the creative process?

I often need a structure before I can begin. It might be an axis, a division of the surface, a repeated interval, or a simple geometric framework. That initial order gives me a direction and a certain resistance to work against. Once the process starts, however, the structure is never completely stable. Paint spreads unevenly. Thread bends or tightens. A perforated surface reacts differently from what I expected. Even a small change in light can alter the way I understand the composition. Intuition enters through these moments. It is not separate from control; it grows out of close attention to what is happening. I make decisions throughout the process, but I also leave room for the material to interrupt the plan. The final work

usually carries traces of both: the structure I established and the changes that occurred while making it.

#### Light appears not only as a visual element, but almost as a material presence in your work. What does light represent for you?

I first became interested in light through the way it changed the physical character of a surface. A perforation may seem almost insignificant until light passes through it. Thread can cast a second drawing as shadow. A pale area can disappear from one angle and become very present from another. These shifts make the work feel less fixed. Light, for me, is closely connected to revelation, but not in a symbolic or religious sense. It reveals by changing relationships. It can bring forward what was hidden, but it can also blur an edge or make something recede. This is why I experience light almost as a material. It has no permanent form, yet it changes every other material it encounters. It also brings time into the work, because the same piece is never perceived in exactly the same way twice.

#### Do you begin with a clear image in mind, or does the artwork reveal itself through the accumulation of gestures?

I rarely begin with a finished image. Usually there is a question, a physical action, or a relationship I want to explore. I may start by wondering what happens when light passes through a painted surface, how tension changes a piece of fabric, or how a repeated mark begins to create depth. From there, the work develops one decision at a time. The accumulation of gestures matters because each action alters what is possible next. Once the surface has been pierced, stitched, covered, or stretched, I have to respond to the new condition rather than return to the original plan. There is still intention in the process. I am not waiting passively for an image to appear. But I try not to force the work to become what I imagined at the beginning. Very often, the most important part arrives when the piece starts moving in a direction I had not anticipated.

#### There is a quiet, contemplative atmosphere in your work. What kind of emotional or perceptual experience would you like viewers to have when encountering it?

I would like viewers to feel that they do not need to understand the work immediately. We are accustomed to recognising images very quickly. We name what we see, decide what it means, and move on. My work asks for a different pace. It may require the viewer to come closer, step back, change position, or simply remain for a little longer. The quietness in the work is not intended to produce one particular emotion. It is there to make subtle changes easier to notice: a shift in shadow, a difference in density, a line that appears continuous from far away but breaks apart at close range. Ideally, the viewer becomes aware of looking as an experience in itself. The work is present, but so are the viewer's body, attention, distance, and time. That encounter is more important to me than delivering a single message.

**Ronald Mario Gonzalez** is a sculptor and installation artist known for transforming timeworn objects and abject materials into haunting serial forms. Since the mid-1970s, Gonzalez has developed a distinctive visual language through reimagining discarded fragments as vessels of memory, identity, and mortality. His practice privileges process and improvisation through material invention and object investigations given human presence and psychological weight to evocative heads, figures, and assemblages. Gonzalez constructs an unsettling, yet deeply resonant sculptural universe memorializing and animating the passage of time and existential complexities of the human condition.

### *Project Statement*

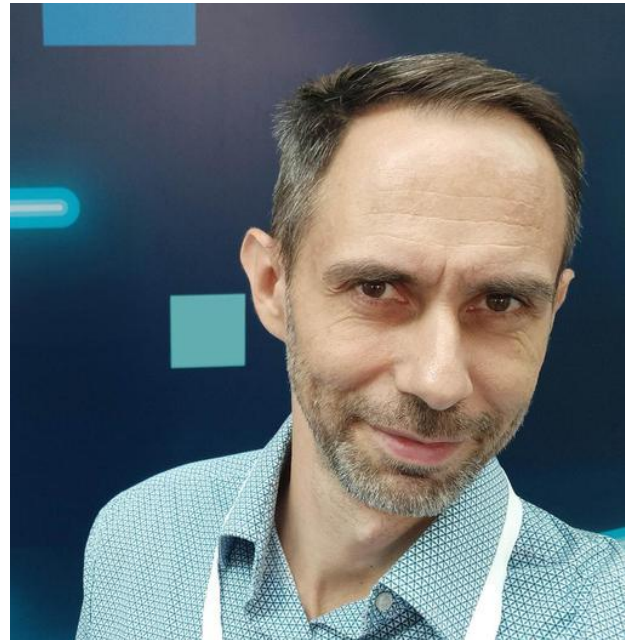
The magic of objects lives in me through memory and imagination. The aesthetics of finding brings the tangible and poetic together in recognition of the tragic vulnerable thing, the crude material given shape that speaks of life and the art of relation to objects. My work is an expression of a found reality where disparate parts exist in a domain populated by the use to be things from yesterday's decay transformed by time and mortality. Things and humans live in a parallel space between birth and destruction. The found object being replete in its forms is a survivor and remnant cast out among us serves as a metaphor of an inevitable end. I am drawn to a sculptural vocabulary that communicates through the energies of growth and dissolution animated by intuition and chance. It is a quest for innumerable creations that emerge between the boundaries of life and death, using what I find to form a world devoted to things that describe their beauty and fate.

Ronald Gonzalez | Wheelchair | 2025





# Valery Smirnov



where I have the opportunity to share my own reading of reality.

**You describe photography as material for “reassembling reality”. What does this process mean to you on a practical and philosophical level?**

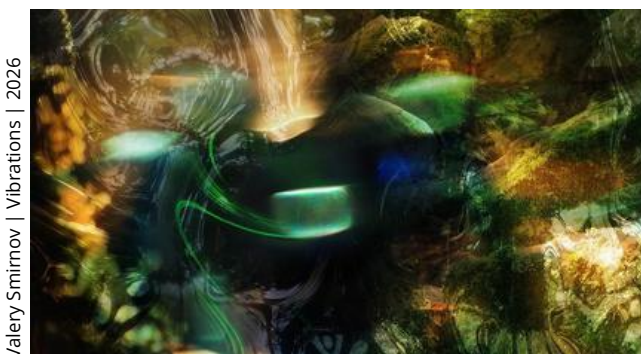
On a philosophical level, for me, it is the creation of an alternative reality. The world around us consists of countless elements, and therefore the number of possible combinations tends toward infinity. By reassembling reality, I find in each of my works only one of these possible versions. Imagine a child's kaleidoscope, where with every turn the composition of the crystals changes. On a practical level, I could say that I am turning a kaleidoscope in which, instead of crystals, there are my photographs. They can form different compositions, and I stop when I feel that the elements have come together into something stable and complete.

**Your works combine fragments taken in different countries, seasons, and contexts. How do you decide which visual elements belong together in one composition?**

It happens in different ways. Sometimes I take a photograph as a starting point, look closely at it, read its mood, and study the details that may have faded into the background at the moment of shooting. I try to sense what else could exist there. What could add mystery to the composition,

**Your background is rooted in cinematography, documentary, and reportage. How has this experience shaped the way you construct images as an artist?**

In the work of a cinematographer, attention to detail is essential, because sometimes details become the key through which it is possible to show one's vision of the world and solve the task at hand. They allow me to place emphasis precisely



Valery Smirnov | Vibrations | 2026



something that would invite reflection and activate associative thinking? At other times, when I am not working on a composition at all — for example, on my way home — a very clear image suddenly appears in my mind, showing me what should be brought together.

**Many of your images exist between photography, digital collage, and cinematic vision. Do you see your works as photographs, digital paintings, visual narratives, or something in between?**

In their form, my works synthesize these concepts, presenting a diversity of artistic expression.

**Light, reflections, distortions, and movement play a central role in your visual language. What attracts you to these unstable, almost elusive states of the image?**

I am attracted by the possibility of capturing these states and giving other people the chance to see them. I want to show that the world around us contains many truly fantastic moments created by light, by the combination of textures, and by the point of perception from which you are looking at that very moment. It is like being in the right place at the right time. The light changes — the reflections disappear.

You take one step closer — and the reflection is already completely different. One variable changes, and the magical image is gone.

**Your compositions often seem to activate associative thinking rather than offer a direct narrative. What kind of response or inner movement do you hope to evoke in the viewer?**

I would like the viewer to be able to reflect and engage their own unconventional perception. To take on the role of an explorer of their own feelings, thoughts, and associations born from my works. To slow down, to feel inspired, and to sense that consciousness is being given the opportunity to think without limitations.

**Your works contain a strong sense of energy — almost as if reality is vibrating, dissolving, or reforming. Is this connected to your perception of the contemporary world?**

I think there are several factors. One of them is that I am a person whose element is fire, and I believe this energy inevitably finds an outlet in my creative work. Of course, it is also connected to my perception of the contemporary world — a world that is changing rapidly, bringing new laws, new standards, and new paths of development.



## Catalin Lutu

Fake Artist is easier to remember than Cătălin Luțu.

My art advice is complimentary.

My original abstract oil paintings present two separate systems, the stock market and the art world, collapsing into a single visual field.

Reflecting the growing misconception that collecting art and investing are the same thing.

The paintings are real. The titles are fake. Love filling out forms

### *Project Statement*

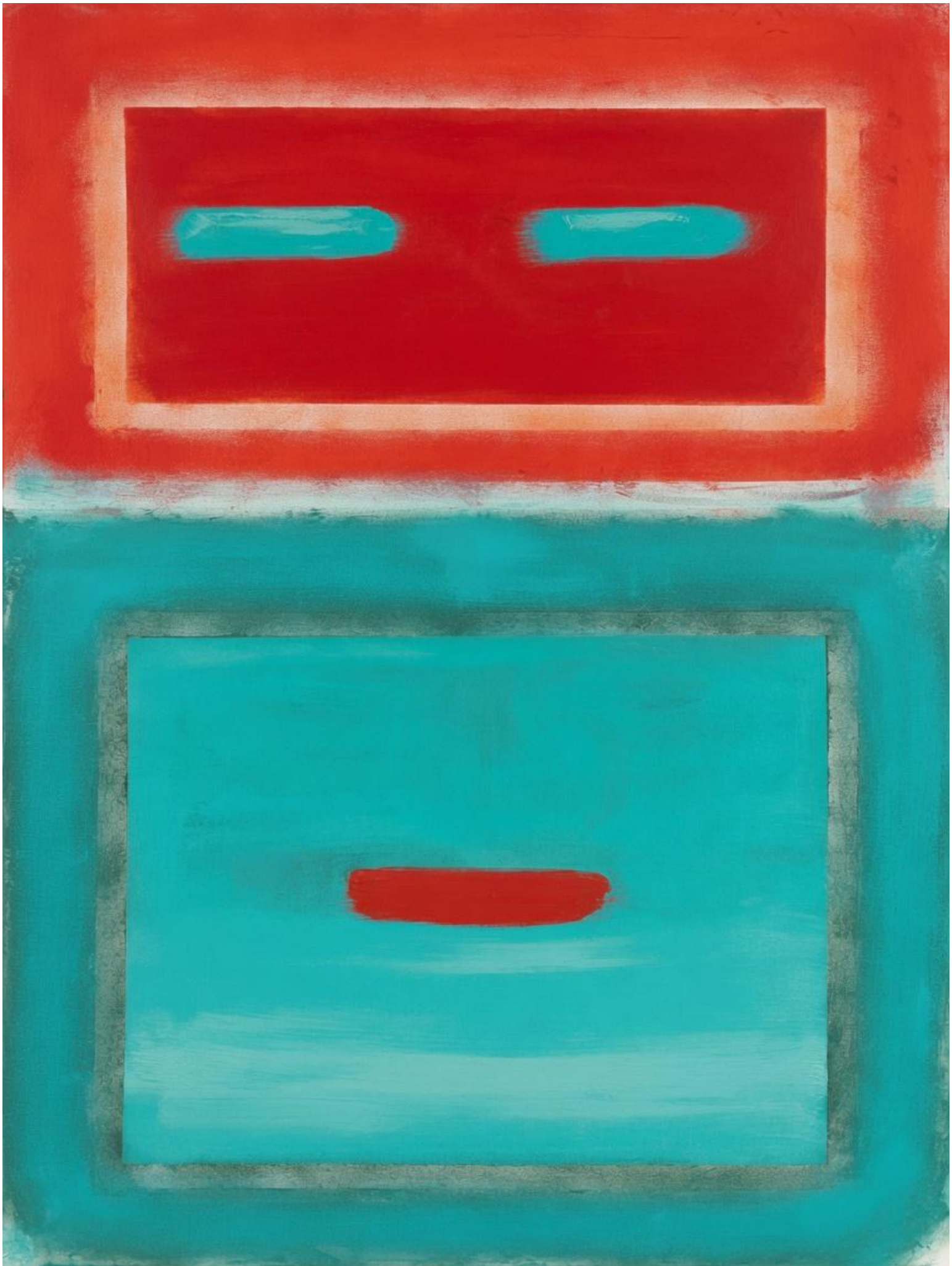
My inspiration for this project emerged from what I believe is a growing institutional push to package and market art as an investment. For new and aspiring collectors, this increasingly blurs the boundary between collecting and investing.

The distortion begins when art is marketed primarily for financial return. The titles participate in that absurdity by making fictional forecasts and exaggerated promises that appeal to greed. Titles such as "Mr. \_\_, Are You a Sophisticated Art Collector?" and, "some tiles are[redacted] for the moment \*\*\*\*\* " critique the financialization of art by mocking its sales pitch.

Visually, the paintings use geometry and color to present two separate systems, the stock market and the art world. Blurred lines separate the fields, but when forms or colors from one system appear in the other, the distinction collapses into a single visual field, reflecting the growing perception that collecting art and investing have become inseparable.

By rotating and reconfiguring the same artwork, I show how presentation can alter perception without changing the object. When art is packaged as an investment, it helps create the illusion that collecting art and investing are the same thing.

Do you collect because the artwork moves you, or because institutions have shaped your perception of art as an investment?



**Yasmina Ahamiane** is a Moroccan multidisciplinary artist, born and raised in the Netherlands. Her work moves seamlessly across literature, visual art, theater, and film.

As an artist, Yasmina brings a sharp, deeply observational gaze to the world around her. Across both her visual work and her writing, she explores themes of identity, belonging, and reclaiming space. She translates complex social and human dynamics into subtle, resonant visual narratives and accessible worlds where every perspective holds value.

Yasmina made her successful debut as a children's author with *Het is Ramadan!* and expanded her literary body of work with *Het mooiste Offerfeest*. Her societal engagement has earned widespread recognition: she won the award for Social Relevance at the Antwerp film festival *Point of U* and was a finalist for the *El Hizra Literature Prize*.

Her dedication to the next generation extends into her community work as the founder of "Lettertypes," a creative incubator where she encourages children to discover and develop their own voices through various artistic mediums. Whether through image, text, or stage, Yasmina creates work that invites connection, encourages reflection, and celebrates the rich nuances of lived experience.

#### *Artist statement*

My work explores the space between observation and emotion, searching for beauty, friction, and identity within a complex world. Grounded in my perspective as a visibly Muslim woman, my visual practice serves as a direct extension of my inner life - a way to translate lived experience into resonant form.

Moving fluidly between lens-based and hand-drawn mediums, I capture moments of transformation, quiet introspection, and raw human presence. Where working with the lens allows me to anchor real-world observations, my works on paper venture into a surreal realm. Here, veiled women fluidly reclaim their space, alongside darker, more vulnerable pieces.

Ultimately, these artworks are extensions of an ongoing search for belonging, nuance, and space in environments that often attempt to categorize us.



Yasmina Ahamiane | My Perfect Mondrian | 2026



Yasmina Ahamiane | Name Means Flower | 2020



Yasmina Ahamiane | In Motion | 2026

# — Interview

## Alexandra Albertsen

**You describe yourself as a Danish/Romanian artist. How have these two cultural backgrounds influenced your imagination, visual language, and understanding of storytelling?**

The themes used in my artworks are rooted into the Romanian literature, such as love, life and death, darkness and light, the sun and the moon, nature. The fantastic elements are my own imagination, and the storytelling is inspired by different fantasy novels that I have read throughout the years.



Alexandra Albertsen | Forever Autumn | 2025



**How did the fantasy world of A Sleepy Spirit Art first emerge, and what does this name represent for you personally?**

The name “A Sleepy Spirit” was firstly used to define a DeviantArt account, in my teenage years, where I used to upload my drawings.

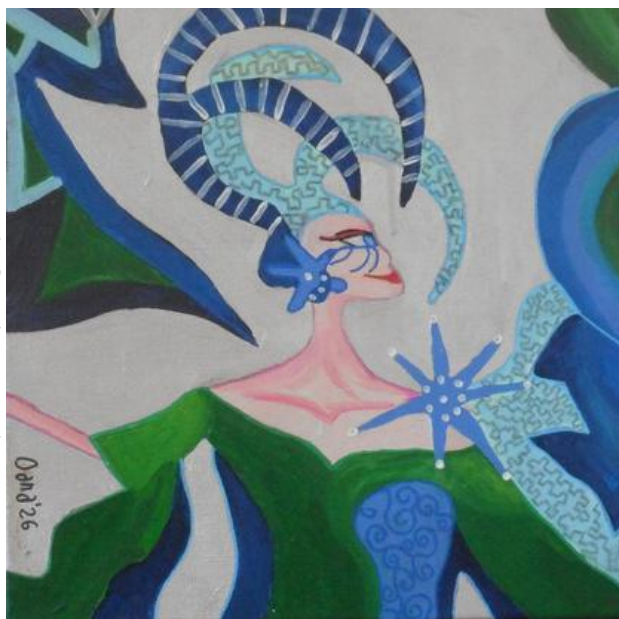
I kept the name, “A Sleepy Spirit” as a reminder from where it all started and added “Art” at the end. Then, Ligia came into the picture, since I wanted to bring a structure to the fantasy world, so I needed a representative figure that can guide the viewers through my ideas.

Another important milestone was opening my blog, [www.asleepyspiritart.com](http://www.asleepyspiritart.com) where I began posting my drawings and paintings, along with their stories. As years go by, the world of A Sleepy Spirit Art is continuously developing.

**Who is Ligia, your alter ego, and what role does she play in guiding you through the worlds and stories depicted in your paintings?**

Ligia is a small creature living on a blue flower, standing at the edge between light and darkness. She smokes an eternal cigarette and predicts my next dreams, into the smoke.

Ligia is inspired by the Caterpillar from Alice in Wonderland and her name is my grandmother's name. I created Ligia to be the gatekeeper of the fantasy world. Ligia owns this fantasy world and therefore she is also the symbol of A Sleepy Spirit Art. In my blog, I write conversations with my alter-ego, where I depict my ideas as a dialogue between Ligia and myself. This dialogue is another way to present my artwork. Recently, I have recorded stories of my artwork and uploaded them on my YouTube channel. My viewers can find there, multiple dialogues between me and my alter-ego.



**Dreams are an important source of inspiration in your practice. Do you record your dreams, and how do you transform their atmosphere or imagery into a finished artwork?**

I have a notebook where I write the ideas or the symbols from a particular dream that had a strong impact. Afterwards I go back to this idea and image it as a painting or a sketch, trying to figure out what elements to use to bring the message alive. Sometimes I go around with the idea for months in my head, before I put it on paper. Once I sketch it, I add the story to it. Afterwards, the idea is ready to be developed on canvas.

**Your paintings feature recurring motifs such as celestial bodies, castles, hearts, ornamental plants, and fantastical figures. What personal or symbolic meanings do these elements carry?**

For me, personally, they all define the state of existence in this world. The celestial bodies define the eternal contrast between darkness and light, the sun and the moon which are constant in my paintings, because not only that they define the eternal opposites, but their relationship can also define an impossible love story. Whereas the hearts will always be a tribute to love, humanity's primordial feeling. The fantastic figures, castles and plants are the mix between the power of mother nature and the power of the human mind, that can mix these elements into creating fantasy worlds. They all have a story and bring a specific message to the viewer, a dream into another dream, a twisted idea or simply a re-interpretation of the four seasons.

**You often begin with simple sketches and a clear central message. How does the image change as you move from the initial sketch to the completed painting?**

The central message remains the same, however depending on the size of the canvas, I add more symbolic meanings to painting, for example my painting "Human Vase" started as a sketch, depicting a vase with three flowers, each into a different stage of evolution. When I started painting it, I added the sun and the moon to opposite corners on the canvas, to emphasize the time passing and the evolution of the human, from childhood to old age. I attach the two pictures as an example.

**You aim to bring happiness to the viewer while also opening the heart to new ways of experiencing life. What emotions or thoughts would you most like people to carry with them after seeing your work?**

Happiness and joy – I wish people to be surprised and amazed by the twisted and unusual ideas from my paintings, and to eventually relate to them. I also wish my paintings can bring a smile on their face.



## Shaun Mason

My work is inspired by the natural world and the sense of freedom, beauty and wonder it brings. Whether I'm painting wildlife or landscapes, I try to create more than a realistic image—I want each painting to tell a story and evoke an emotion. I use vibrant colour, texture and contrast to draw the viewer into the scene and encourage them to slow down and appreciate the details. Painting is my way of expressing how I see the world, and every canvas is an opportunity to create something meaningful and unique.

### *Project Statement*

My Painting is called,  
Guardian of the Sky.

I painted this piece to express the idea that true freedom comes from perseverance. No matter how overwhelming life may seem, we all have the ability to rise above our circumstances, just as the eagle rises toward the light with strength and independence. My hope is that viewers feel inspired to find their own strength, embrace new beginnings, and never lose sight of hope.



# Veronika Padar

**Could you tell us about your journey into art and what first inspired you to become an artist?**

My connection with art began in childhood. I loved drawing and painting from an early age, and my artworks were exhibited in school art exhibitions. Creativity has always been a natural part of who I am.

As life unfolded, my focus shifted to family, higher education, and entrepreneurship. Although art remained close to my heart, it took a quieter place in my life for many years. About six years ago, I felt a strong desire to paint again. It was not something I planned—it was simply a feeling that it was the right time to return to art. Since then, I have been painting intuitively, allowing each artwork to develop naturally without following a predetermined sketch.

Today, painting is much more than a creative practice for me. It is a way of expressing emotions, exploring the invisible connection between people and nature, and sharing the inner world that words alone cannot always describe.

**Nature, mysticism, and feminine energy are central to your practice. How did these themes become part of your artistic language?**

Nature has always been an essential part of my life. I feel



Veronika Padar | Between Two Worlds | 2024

most at peace by the sea, in forests, or simply observing the changing seasons. These places are not only landscapes to me—they are sources of energy, silence, and inspiration. Mysticism entered my artistic language through personal experiences that shaped the way I perceive the world. Since I was young, I have felt that there is more to life than what we can physically see. One particularly meaningful experience was encountering ball lightning when I was fourteen years old. Instead of fear, I felt a profound sense of calm and wonder. That moment deepened my connection with nature and its unseen forces, and ever since, thunderstorms have carried a special meaning for me. Feminine energy naturally became part of my work because many of my paintings explore intuition, resilience, transformation, and inner strength. The female figure is not only a person in my paintings—it represents the quiet power, wisdom, and emotional depth that I believe exists within every human being.

**Your work explores the invisible connection between the human soul and the natural world. How do you translate something so intangible into visual form?**

For me, the invisible is often more powerful than what we can physically see. I believe that nature carries its own rhythm and energy, and as human beings, we are deeply connected to it—even if we do not always notice it.

When I begin a painting, I rarely have a fixed image in my mind. I allow intuition to guide me. The colours, textures, and forms gradually reveal themselves during the creative process. I never try to force the painting to become something specific. Instead, I listen to what it wants to become.

Many of my works begin with a feeling rather than an idea. As I paint, that feeling slowly transforms into symbols,



movement, light, and texture. This is how I give visual form to emotions, intuition, and the invisible relationship between the human soul and nature.

I hope my paintings encourage people to slow down for a moment, to reconnect with themselves, and to remember that we are all part of something much greater than ourselves.

**How does your Estonian background and the natural environment of Estonia influence your imagination and creative process?**

Estonia has shaped me in many ways, both as a person and as an artist. I grew up surrounded by forests, the sea, and the quiet beauty of nature. Here, silence is never empty—it is full of life, movement, and stories waiting to be discovered.

I spend a great deal of time in nature, and it is there that I find balance, inspiration, and clarity. Walking along the coastline, listening to the wind in the pine trees, or simply observing the changing light often becomes the beginning of a new painting.

I believe the Estonian landscape teaches us to slow down and to notice the small details that are easily overlooked. This way of seeing has deeply influenced my creative process. Rather than copying nature, I try to capture the feeling it awakens within me.

Although my paintings are inspired by Estonia, I hope they speak a universal language. The emotions, connection with nature, and search for inner harmony belong to all of us, regardless of where we come from.

**You work with acrylic paint, pouring techniques, yarn, texture, and other materials. What attracts you to mixed media, and how do you decide which materials to use in a particular work?**

I enjoy the freedom that mixed media gives me. Every material has its own character and allows me to express emotions in a different way. For me, texture is just as important as colour because it adds another dimension to the artwork and invites the viewer to experience it beyond the visual image.

I never decide on the materials before I begin a painting. My creative process is intuitive, and each artwork gradually reveals what it needs. Sometimes the painting calls for flowing acrylics and soft transitions, while other times I feel the need to build texture with modelling paste or introduce yarn to create movement, connection, or symbolic elements. I don't use different materials simply to make a painting more decorative. Every texture, line, and layer has a purpose. They become part of the story the artwork is telling and help me express feelings that cannot always be communicated through paint alone.

**Female figures appear as powerful symbolic presences in your paintings. Do you see them as individual characters, archetypes, self-portraits, or embodiments of a particular energy?**

The women in my paintings are not portraits of specific people. They are symbolic figures that represent different aspects of the human spirit, emotions, and inner transformation.

Sometimes they reflect something deeply personal—my own experiences, thoughts, or emotions. At other times, they become universal symbols of intuition, resilience, wisdom, and the quiet strength that people discover within themselves during life's challenges.

I believe that every viewer brings their own story to a painting. Rather than defining exactly who these women are, I prefer to leave space for interpretation. Someone may recognize themselves in them, while another person may see someone completely different.

For me, feminine energy is not limited to women. It represents intuition, compassion, creativity, and the ability to transform and grow. These are qualities that belong to all human beings, and through my paintings I hope to remind people of the strength that already exists within them.

**What emotions or reflections would you like viewers to carry with them after encountering your paintings?**

I hope my paintings encourage people to slow down and reconnect with themselves, even if only for a brief moment. In today's fast-paced world, we rarely give ourselves time to be still, to listen to our inner voice, or simply to observe the beauty that surrounds us. Through my work, I hope to create a quiet space where viewers can pause, breathe, and experience something beyond everyday life.

I do not expect everyone to interpret my paintings in the same way. In fact, I hope they won't. Every person brings their own memories, emotions, and experiences, and that makes each encounter with a painting unique.

If someone walks away feeling a little more peaceful, inspired, or connected to nature—and perhaps also to themselves—then I feel that my artwork has fulfilled its purpose.

For me, art is not only something to look at. It is something to feel.

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