

# VISUAL ART JOURNAL







# — Intro

Hello, dear reader,

I am delighted to welcome you to the pages of the 14th issue of our magazine.

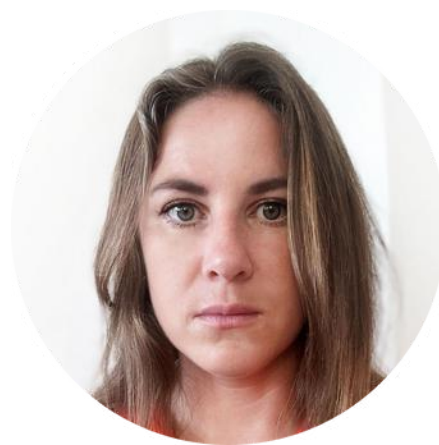
For many of you, winter has arrived—a time when you might feel like crawling under a warm blanket and doing nothing, embracing a winter hibernation. For others, however, it's a season of focused work, free from the distractions of summer's adventures and vacation vibes.

For our team, winter began with reflecting on our work and considering how we should grow and what we need to bring to the magazine. We now want to include works from artists across all creative fields, not just painting. We believe that any form of creativity aimed at creating beauty deserves to be showcased and to find its way to the audience's hearts.

In this issue, you will find paintings, sculptures, herbariums, and much more.

Special attention should be given to the interviews featured in this edition. They are, as always, filled with profound meaning, fascinating life stories, and inspiration to support and motivate creativity.

Happy reading! Ahead of you lies over 100 pages of wonder and beauty.



**Anna Gvozdeva**

Curator of  
Visual Art Journal

*On the Front Cover:*

**Lilia Daniela**

Under the stars

*On the Back Cover:*

**Nitin\_Kakkar**

H3-X5

2023

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

## Gaya Lastovjak

Contemporary figurative artist creating three-dimensional paintings with her own technique using paper-mache, canvas and oil paint. Artist's most recent symbolic, three-dimensional paintings explore themes relating to the dualistic nature of man, that is good and evil, which is part of human nature. She also engages in a dialogue with current events and phenomena. Gravity of the works themes collides with their harmonious form. The paintings covered mainly in white paint appear to be static, colours are replaced by shadows by which the works visually gain additional dimension, the one between a painting and a sculpture. Her art defies all classifications and definitions, it is subtle and at the same time critical. In addition, she is involved in sculpture / paper installations, performance and happening art.



Gaya Lastovjak | Bath | 2020





## — Interview

# Juliette Guilloteau

**Could you tell us about the inspiration behind your paintings "Bathroom Pink" and "Overalls by the Oak"?**

Some of my fondest memories were created with my family, and some of the earliest ones come from moments at my grandparents' house in the west of France. Each room in the house had its own personality, and so did my grandparents. I was very young when they passed away, so the image of them that I keep was formed when I was 8 years old. I'm almost thirty and only now am I trying to go through the grief that I didn't have the resources to process back then. These two paintings are part of that process — honoring their memory in the best way that I can.

**Your artist statement speaks of vivid memories of your grandparents. How do these memories shape your artistic process and choice of colors?**

Writing is an important part of my creative process. I use it to relive moments, have



Juliette Guilloteau | Bathroom Pink + Overalls by the oak | 2024



memories come up to the surface and explore the emotions that they bring with them. I spent a while writing about family gatherings, memories with them, how I remembered them and their environment. A lot of those memories took on a different dimension now, compared to back then.

I remember my grandmother as a very soft-spoken, strong woman, one who would always have chocolate mousse ready for us when we arrived. The strongest image I have of her is watching her in the pink bathroom, getting ready. This entire scene inspired "Bathroom Pink" — it's deeper than a simple pink, it has layers, just as my grandmother did. I wanted to try and communicate that depth, and her energy, with a soft pink and deeper purples, paired with bursts of more vibrant colors.

My grandfather was the center figure at the table, but the man I remember also helped me learn how to read, loved peanuts and always wore the same green jumper. He strolled around the garden with his cane, pipe in the other hand. "Overalls by the Oak" is the version of him that I drew inspiration from. He was a complex character, undoubtedly loving, unforgivably dark as the woods.



**You mention that the subjectivity of grief makes shared understanding challenging. How does this influence the themes you explore in your work?**

When I say that I'm revisiting my grief, this is an experience that no one will completely understand — others might relate, but it is a deeply personal and visceral emotion that, although universal, remains subjective. Everything in my work comes from that subjectivity of experiences. I'm not looking to recreate everyone's feelings, I trust my instinct to guide me in exploring what matters and inspires me.

**As a self-taught artist, what challenges have you faced in developing your artistic voice, and how have you overcome them?**

The main challenge, one that I imagine shall stick for a while, is building up that confidence that my art has a right to belong out in the world, and not putting on a pedestal the artists that went to art school or come from an artistic background. I have reached out to artists that I know, to ask for advice, for their opinions. It has really forced



Juliette Guilloteau | Bathroom Pink | 2024



Juliette Guilloteau | Overalls by the oak | 2024

me to put myself and my art out there and step outside my comfort zone, which is valuable everyday. Books and the Internet are brilliant resources, but actually practicing, trying out new things, new media, new techniques is the one way that has helped me find my own voice and create my own artistic universe. And ultimately, no one really cares that much, so why not go for it?

**Your work is influenced by abstract expressionists. Are there any specific artists or styles that have particularly impacted you?**

Amongst others, Joan Mitchell, Mary Abbott, Grace Hartigan, Allison James, Francesca Mollett, Daisy Parris.

**How do you hope viewers will connect with or interpret "Bathroom Pink" and "Overalls by the Oak"?**

If they connect at all with the stories behind them, or the images themselves, that will be the victory. Each interpretation will be subjective, which is all I strive for — for the viewers to appreciate art in their own way.

# David Sisso

Born in 1968 in San Luis, Argentina, and currently living in Buenos Aires, he holds a degree in Communication Sciences.

He has been a photographer since 1993, the year he joined one of Argentina's most prominent newspapers, *La Nación*. He has twice been awarded the Medal of Honor by the Society of Publications Design. He served as Chief Photo Editor for *Rolling Stone* magazine in Argentina from its launch until 2008. Since then, he has established his own advertising and editorial photography studio, *Sisso-Chouela*, working with numerous international brands and earning recognition at the Cannes Lions Festival.

Since 2018, he has been focusing on artistic projects, exploring the languages of other disciplines such as painting, sculpture, video, and drawing.







## — Interview

# Snezhana Khozhieva

**Your background combines influences from both Islam and Orthodox Christianity. How has this interfaith experience shaped your artistic vision?**

I grew up in an interfaith family—my mother was Orthodox, and my father was a secular Muslim. As a child, I often heard stories from my father about his family, our roots, and the origins of his lineage. Through these stories, he passed down his values, love, and respect for family culture, along with a sense of personal responsibility to know one's roots. I learned to respect family traditions and the hierarchy within the family. I became familiar with the Orthodox branch of the family history later, as an adult. I asked my mother about her childhood and compiled the genealogy of her lineage, which became a fascinating activity for me. Of course, neither religion is perfect, and at times my parents' demands contradicted each other. As I grew up, I sought a comfortable existence between the religions that "chose" me.

On one hand, I cherish the history, genealogy, and culture of my lineage; on the other, I gradually chose freedom from stereotypes. I traveled extensively and absorbed the cultures of various Asian and African countries, which significantly influenced me as an artist. I believe my paintings convey a multicultural code and an earthy connection, inviting viewers to feel grounded and connected to their roots, and, more broadly, to the primal structure—the "beginning of beginnings"—while addressing contemporary issues.



**You describe your work as rooted in "ethnic painting and abstract art" with a focus on "textural conceptualism." Could you explain how you approach texture in your art and why it is significant to your expression?**

Texture in art is not just a visual element—it is a powerful way to convey information and create emotional context. The tactile qualities of a piece can shift the viewer's perception, opening new horizons of interaction with the artwork. One of the unique aspects of texture in art is its ability to engage the audience.

My works are designed for viewers to interact with them not only visually but also physically, by feeling the textures. Each texture carries an emotional load. For example, rough textures can evoke feelings of heaviness or negative energy, while smooth and polished surfaces bring a sense of calm and tranquility. These reactions stem from our instinctive responses to tactile sensations.

Research shows that our brains process information about texture faster than they process color or shape. This suggests that texture can directly influence our perceptions and emotional states.

**The series "From Primitiveness to Primitiveness" explores a return to nature and primitive origins. What inspired this exploration, and how do you feel the modern world contrasts with the primordial elements you depict?**



Modern people increasingly seek control over everything: "Control yourself," "Control what you say," "You are what you eat," "You are what you focus on," "Control your thoughts, emotions, and mind," "Live in the moment." All these calls distance us further from the randomness of nature and our primal essence.

Such messages are often interpreted as demands to live only in the present. By doing so, we seem to cut off a significant part of ourselves—our past and our roots. We become prisoners of excessive control and "touristification," a concept described by Nassim Nicholas Taleb in his book *\*Antifragile: Things That Gain from Disorder\**, which inspired this series.

Taleb writes: "Those living under the illusion of control are fragile... Our age strives to extract variability and randomness from life." He calls touristification the attempt to make reality predictable down to the smallest detail, systematically eliminating randomness and uncertainty for comfort and efficiency. Returning to the vector of randomness in life leads to reconnecting with our primal essence and nature—the only system marked "invulnerable" by time.

**In your work, you often reflect on the genealogical history and the concept of "ancestral strength." How do these themes manifest in your compositions, and what do you hope viewers take away from them?**

These themes are mostly reflected in the color



Snezhana Khozhieva | Supercontrol | 2023

schemes of my paintings. If I could paint solely with earth, I would. In fact, I sometimes use earth and other natural materials in my artwork. I believe that no one exists in isolation. Behind each person stands the women and men of their lineage, who can protect, warn, or guide them. They are a part of you, and you are a part of their strength. For me, this connection is a resource. There's a phrase, "family tree," where the tree symbolizes lineage and roots, young shoots growing into significant branches over time. Have you ever seen hundred-year-old oaks? They exude wisdom and strength. Imagine trees that are thousands of years old—how much they've witnessed!

Viewers often tell me my paintings feel like the cross-section of an ancient tree—something they want to touch to draw strength for their lineage.

**Your piece "Circle of Consciousness" reflects a search for order in a chaotic world. Could you elaborate on this idea and how your personal experiences influenced this creation?**

This painting was created during a challenging period in 2021—the pandemic. The familiar world around us was collapsing. It seems like a cliché to say now, but that time left deep scars. I lost my mother, the closest person to me. Clinging to structure became my way of staying afloat. I wanted to rid myself of the sense of chaos, to create an illusion of control. Over time, I elevated order to a pedestal, excluding randomness from life.



Snezhana Khozhieva | Rondavel | 2020

This painting was a meditative dive into structure—a search for order and foundation.

**The concept of control and its fragility is central in your piece "Supercontrol." How do you balance control and spontaneity in your art practice, and how does this relate to your own philosophy of life?**

The painting "Supercontrol" reflects the concept of control. I wanted to show that over-controlling one's life leads to a dead end. Life dies when there's no "air," no room for spontaneity. The process of creating the piece was meticulous and meditative, reminiscent of the repetitive relaxation women experience when knitting. In life, however, such control can stifle. Women who overcontrol their lives—consciously or unconsciously taking on the role of God—suffer. I know this because I am one of them. Now, I try to allow for randomness and less

"touristification."

**You have traveled extensively, including to Africa, which you describe as a "cradle of humanity." How have your travels influenced your artistic style and subject matter?**

The words of writer Tess Gerritsen resonate deeply with me: "We all come from there. A part of you, an ancient memory in your brain, recognizes this continent as home."

My solo journey through several African countries sparked irreversible changes in my soul. The trust in fate, life, and Providence I felt during that trip was magical.

If I could paint with the winds of the savanna, the sunrise over the Serengeti, or the dusty whirlwinds, I would. If I could weave the songs of the Maasai or the click of cicadas into my paintings, I would. But I am not a god—I do what I can.







Snezhana Khozhieva | Circle of Consciousness | 2021

## — Interview

# Hiurma Delgado

**Your work focuses on social and personal relationships, particularly the limits imposed by society on individuals. What inspired you to explore this theme in your art?**

My art is often a way of expressing myself, of talking about issues that concern or interest me and getting others to talk and reflect on them as well. That's why I tackled this topic, because it was something I observed in people every day and that gave me a disturbing feeling.

**In your statement, you discuss the system that promotes individualism and self-help remedies. How do you see this affecting people's ability to form meaningful connections?**

Well, you have to be strong, you have to be the best, you have to be independent and not need anyone for anything, you have to be positive, you are who you are and others put up with it, you make your decisions as an individual without thinking about how it affects your environment, you usually think about yourself and how you feel before anything else or someone else, it's easier to replace relationships than to strengthen or heal the ones we already have, the most important thing is our goals... and in that concentration on oneself, the values that generate meaningful relationships are lost. It's an imbalance that doesn't make us happy because as human beings we need that network of healthy relationships in our lives. It's okay to be



Hiurma Delgado | Limits in social and personal relationships | 2024

independent and all those things, but with balance, without losing the values that allow us to generate and take care of our 'social ecosystem'.

**Could you share more about your creative process when working with the monotype technique? What challenges and rewards does it offer?**

Monotype is a technique that has hooked me. Ever since I started studying art, I have been working on embracing imperfection, because I actually love it. It's just that we learn to get rid of it as we grow up and 'learn to draw well'. Monotype was a real discovery for me in this sense. It allows me to work in an environment of imperfection where unexpected stains and textures reign all over the paper. I have fun, I have a great time and it shows in the final result, which doesn't put so much pressure on me.

**How do you approach using color in your work? Are there any particular colors you feel drawn to when exploring themes of isolation or connection?**

The use of color is very important to me. I like to



mix things that are unusual and go beyond the established canons. However, I don't always do it because at the end of the day I have to take into account the culture of the people who are going to interact with my work, especially when the message I want to convey is a subject that is perhaps a bit delicate or reflective. For example, in this case I wouldn't have used a red background because I think it wouldn't have helped me communicate the message, but perhaps in another culture it would. I was testing various colors, some more desaturated and warm, until I felt that this was the right color. So when I can I allow myself to do crazy things with color, but on other occasions I treat it very delicately so that it helps me convey what I want.

**Humor and critical attitudes are sometimes present in your work. How do you decide when to incorporate humor, and how does it help convey your message?**

Sometimes I come up with humorous ideas when I'm thinking about how to approach a job, but I don't decide right away. I make sketches and try to think of other paths as well. After a few days I realize whether humor is appropriate or not, because it gives me time to reflect on whether it's a very delicate subject and how it might affect people who feel alluded to it. Of course, there are subjects in which it's not necessary to think about this. But nowadays it seems very difficult to make this decision because society in general is very sensitive. Honestly, it's ideal to be able to make people smile on a controversial subject without them feeling offended and being clear that you're not making fun of anything or anyone, with all due respect to all parties involved. But it's complicated.

**Can you tell us more about the role of magazines and press illustrations in your artistic journey?**

Magazines and books have been essential since my childhood. My mother gave us books whenever she could rather than toys. Magazines were always present at home every month with their new issues and we had a library of magazines. In fact, one of my recent works



Hiurma Delgado | Limits in social and personal relationships | 2024

selected for the 'Iberoamerica Ilustra Catalogue' is based on an article from a magazine that I read when I was little. And my first references when I began to be in more serious contact with art were some renowned press and conceptual illustrators such as Javier Jaén and Isidro Ferrer. On the other hand, at Art School we were in direct contact with professionals in the field of press illustration who passed on their knowledge to us. For me, these mentors have been very important.

**Your artworks were recognized as finalists in the Hiii Illustration contest and published in Branca magazine. What does this recognition mean to you as an artist?**

It means a lot, it is encouraging and strengthens my confidence as a novice artist that I am on the right path to fulfill my goal of transmitting emotions, messages, reflections through my art... In addition, it is a way of making myself known to clients and the media so that we can collaborate together, which is my other goal, to make illustration not only my passion but also my livelihood.

# Delia

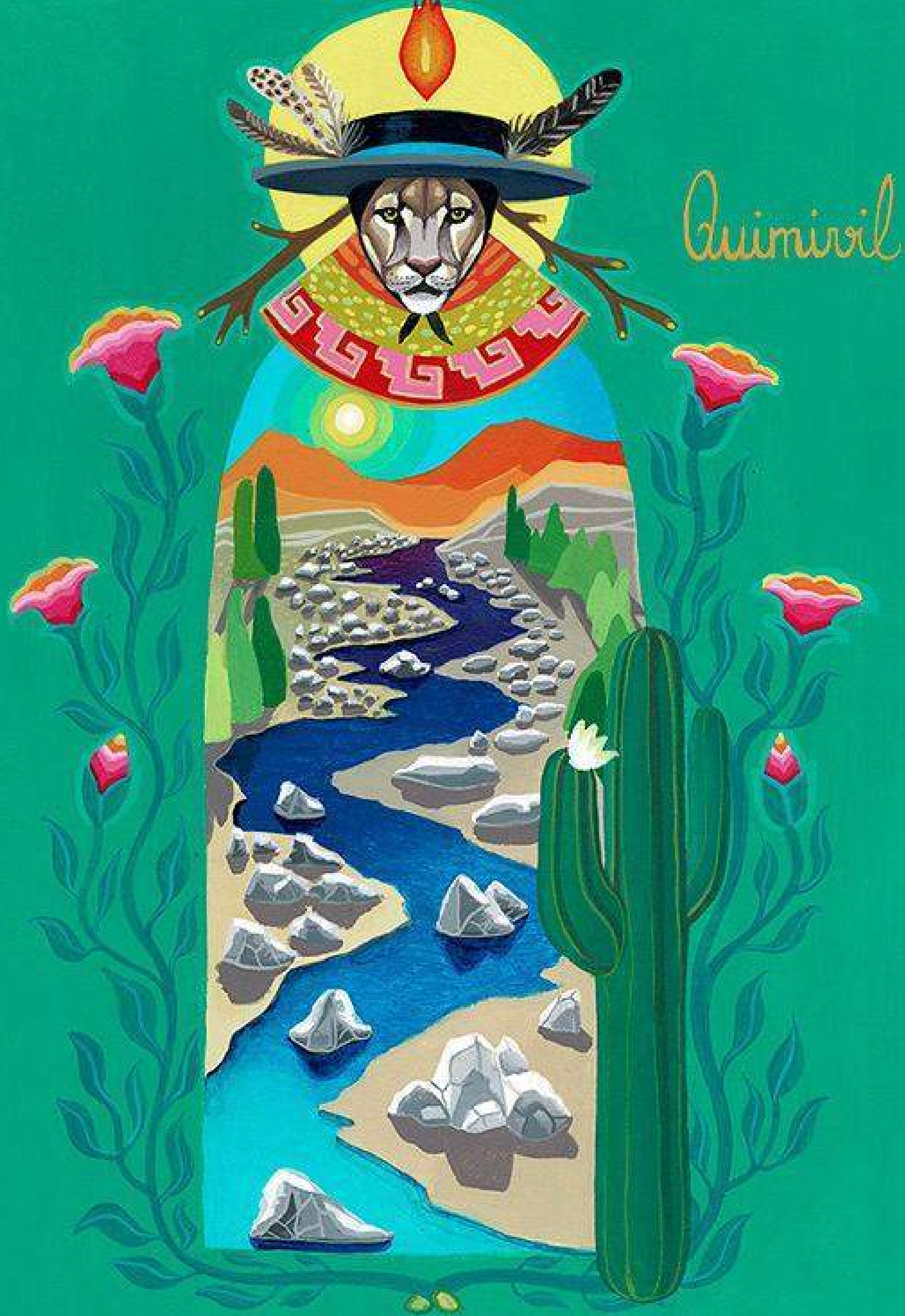
Born in Madrid, Spain, in 1979, originally from the suburbs of Buenos Aires, she currently resides in Córdoba, Argentina. She studied at the Manuel Belgrano School of Fine Arts and graduated as a National Teacher of Drawing and Painting.

Her works have been exhibited in Argentina, Spain, Brazil, Uruguay, Berlin, and France. She is an illustrator of stories for free childhoods with Editorial Chirimbote, a coordinator of personal project workshops, a creator of album covers for various musical projects, and the character designer for *Las asombrosas aventuras de Zamba* on Argentine national television.



Delia Iglesias | Painting Sea of Art By Our Ancestors





# — Interview

## Lilia Daniela

**Your artwork is created with natural materials that are ephemeral and fleeting. What inspired you to work with such impermanent mediums?**

From a young age I was fascinated and interested in both art and nature. Even though I lived my childhood in an apartment building in Portugal, I spent most of my time playing outside. Our building was at the edge of a small town, so behind us was a world of forests and nature. If I wasn't outdoors, I loved to draw or grow plants, particularly beans, on our veranda! While I only started creating art with nature in my 40s, I feel it was inevitable that my love of art and nature would intersect. I find working with nature to be incredibly healing and calming. There's something deeply satisfying about connecting with nature in this way. The delicate way of these materials invites me to be more mindful; I have to work slowly to balance everything together carefully. This allows me to be fully present and to appreciate the moment, and to understand that beauty can be found even in what is temporary.

**How do you feel about the temporary nature of your artwork? Is there a specific emotion or philosophy that drives this choice?**

I embrace the temporary nature of my artwork, seeing it as a reflection of the natural cycles of life and an invitation to connect with impermanence. I feel like our culture often fears impermanence, viewing it as



something to resist or there's a disappointment when something cannot be preserved. I find there is beauty in the fact that nothing lasts forever, that everything has a beginning and an end. By creating art that won't last, I'm reminded to stay present and to cherish each moment. Having worked as a nurse, caring for those at the end of their lives, and as a midwife, assisting in the miraculous process of birth, I've come to realise that everything has its time. There is a freedom in recognizing that life isn't meant to be static or permanent, but fluid and evolving. There are times though I will look at a photo after the work has gone and I wish I could go back and "tweak it"! However, I then remind myself that the artwork was what it needed to be at the time and celebrate it for that.

**Could you describe the process of gathering and selecting the natural elements for your pieces?**

Foraging for materials can feel like a meditative and mindful process. I often wander through my garden, parks, the bush or other natural spaces, paying close attention to what's available in each season. I gather elements that catch my eye, whether it's a leaf with a unique texture, a vibrant flower or a piece of wood with an interesting shape. I take care to choose only what feels abundant so as not to disrupt the environment. Sometimes, I gather materials that are already on the ground, like fallen leaves or petals, allowing me to work with things that are already in their natural state of transformation. Being a sentimental person, I also appreciate when people





bring me their foraged foliage or their dried bouquets that would otherwise be discarded...it allows others to become part of the art itself, and I really cherish that. Once I've gathered what I need, I bring everything to my workspace and let the materials guide me. Sometimes I may have a specific image in mind, like a bird I want to create so I am mindful of the materials I choose that will enable me to create out my vision. I have found this foraging ritual not only inspires my art, but it also allows me the pause in the day to notice and deepen my connection with nature and creation.

**Do you have a Favorite type of natural material to work with? What makes it special for you?**

I don't have a single favourite material because, for me, each element offers something unique to the creative process. Fresh flowers bring vibrancy and a sense of immediacy to a piece, while dried flowers add a more delicate, earthy quality, telling a story of time passing. Its less about the specific type of material and more about how I can transform each element into something meaningful. I enjoy experimenting with textures, colours, and shapes to see how they interact and evolve in my work.

**How do you decide when a piece is "complete," especially knowing that it won't be preserved?**

Deciding when a piece is complete is a blend of intuition and visual assessment, especially when working with shapes like a bird or other forms that feel



Littlebirdart - Lilia Daniela | White breasted Robin | 2024

meaningful in the composition. I often rely on photography to help me step back and see the piece with fresh eyes, capturing an image and studying it to check if the shape and balance feel right. I will also often lean on my mum's support! I am fortunate that she lives nearby and being a creative herself, I love getting her perspective on whether a piece looks "done".

Ultimately, it's also an intuitive process. There's a moment when I sense the materials have come together in a harmonious way that feels complete, almost like the work is telling me to stop. This moment of "knowing" when it's done is deeply connected to being happy with the overall shape and composition as it comes alive, even if only briefly.

**What role does photography play in your creative process, given that it's the only way to capture and preserve your work?**

Photography plays an essential role in my creative process, as it's the only way to capture my work after the materials inevitably fade or decay. It's been a steep learning curve to understand the technical side of photography, but producing high-quality images has become crucial. These photos are what I can turn into prints to share my work with others, allowing the artwork to live on in a new form, even after the originals have returned to nature. Capturing each piece well feels like honouring its brief existence.



Littlebirdart - Lilia Daniela | Up the garden path | 2024

Photography also helps me see my work from a different perspective, allowing me to evaluate shapes, compositions, and details more clearly than I might see them in real life.

**How does your work with nature affect your personal view of life, impermanence, and the environment?**

Working with nature in my art has made me more aware of the cycles of nature, the beauty of impermanence, and the value of living seasonally. I live in a part of the world and culture where almost everything is available year-round at supermarkets, so it feels as though we have lost touch with the seasonal

cycles of growth and decay. Through my ephemeral art, I've reconnected with this sense of seasonality in a small but meaningful way. I've gained knowledge about what blooms and flourishes at times of the year, noticing the subtle changes that each season brings. Sometimes, a vision for a piece has to wait because a particular bloom isn't in season, which has taught me to be patient and open to new possibilities. I will explore instead what's flourishing in that season, often leading me to unexpected forms and colours. Creating art from natural materials has made me more mindful of our environment and our responsibility to protect it, as well as the need to slow down appreciate each season.



Lilia Daniela | Under the stars







Born in Gloucester, Massachusetts (United States), **Nina Testaverde** is a mixed-media visual artist and writer. She trained in the art of kintsugi in the workshop of sensi Yoshichihiro Kuge in Tokyo, and apprenticed in the studio of Nicoletta Gualdi Ceramiche, in Rome. Restoring in southern Italy, She currently practices in collaboration with artists and studios in the world, throughout her travels, with the hope to continuously create, learn, and teach.

#### *Artist Statement*

Environment has a major impact on the work that I create. I do not limit myself to one medium or subject, preferring instead, to work organically with what feels right at that time. The thread that binds my work together is the curious exploration of culture, the human form and a connection to nature. Authentic creation, for me, happens when I am wading through the unknown. At times, I surprise myself— I find beauty in this fold.

Nina Testaverde | Subaqua







# — Interview

## Nitin Kakkar

**Your work is deeply inspired by the transformative qualities of music. Can you share how music influences your creative process and the themes you explore in your paintings?**

The work, in a very literal way, uses pigment and mark making as an allegory for the sonic experiences of music. I am often, while painting, reflecting on the impressions musical passages have left on me and am attempting to emulate those visually.

The themes explored are primarily emotional, which music is singularly predisposed to convey. One might say that music is where even our darkest and most perplexing emotions may find their glory and acquire their healing properties. I also try to explore themes of nature which primarily serve to orient, decorate, and exalt the emotional themes.

**You mention drawing inspiration from vintage electric musical instruments and sound equipment. What is it about these elements that resonates with you and drives your artistic expression?**

Nitin Kakkar | A Shit Eating Grin for God and the Devil | 2005



Nitin Kakkar | RT1-S849 | 2023

The advent of electric musical instruments and sound equipment served to both elevate and disrupt the conventions and norms common in the evolving history of music. I strive, as an artist, to mirror that impact, visually onto the lineage of abstract painting. To put it simply, I want the excitement, exaggerated clarity, and wild expression that were ushered in by the emergence of electric musical instruments and sound equipment to drive my work.

**How do you approach layering and manipulating acrylic paint to reflect the complexity of musical expression? Could you describe your technique in more detail?**

This is where my work is analogous with experimental and avant-garde music. Without thinking too much, I apply paint, with my canvas on the floor, usually with an abundance of high-flow medium, using various dripping, scraping, and wiping techniques, and by tilting the canvas in different ways which readily renders the effect of the painting to that of experimental music. I think most abstract painting touches on something musical; I have simply made this the ultimate focus of my work.

**Your work explores the intersection between the natural, contemporary, and post-contemporary worlds. How do you see music bridging these different temporalities?**



The natural, contemporary, and post-contemporary world tend to bridge themselves. Music, in many instances, cradles that bridge. The natural world is omnipresent. We cannot exist without water and air, so anything that engages, stimulates, or speaks directly to the senses invokes a poetic connection to the natural world. Even a monotone rhythmic tapping of one piano key will either remind me of something in nature or make me feel distracted. It will, perhaps, invoke something architectural or mathematical; but that, I have to say, does not directly influence my work.

In terms of the contemporary and post-contemporary world, any veering away from tradition puts us in these temporalities to some effect. Being completely rooted in tradition is the only way to avoid it entirely.

**How has your formal education at Sarah Lawrence College and the Pacific Northwest College of Art shaped your approach to abstract art?**

To be honest, my formal education has done almost nothing to shape my approach to art or my practice in any way. I, in some ways, even wonder, at times, to what effect I am trying to unlearn any curricular advice and direction I may have absorbed there. Not to say it was a useless experience. Studying art in a traditional sense has enriched my life and answered countless questions I had about art. It has given my life a profundity and a deep sense of history and culture. I can't say that I'd trade it for anything.

**Are there specific genres or eras of music that you feel have the most profound impact on your art?**

Absolutely. Since I was young I have spent many years focussed on one style of music or another. I tend to gravitate, primarily, to one style of music at



Nitin Kakkar | KR-0292 | 2010



Nitin Kakkar | A-3R97F | 2020

a time. When my voice as a painter developed, I was devoutly engaged with garage and surf music from the 1950s and 1960s, and the subsequent emergence of British invasion music of the 1960s. This was also a time in which I sought, rather naively I suppose, to unify people and harmonize souls through art. The work, as a result, developed a sense of stylistic fusion. I see my work as a fusion that is rooted in, or derived from, garage and surf music of the 1950s and 1960s.

**Your works appear to be visually dynamic, almost like they're vibrating with sound. Do you aim to evoke specific sounds or musical experiences in your pieces?**

I actually have tried to create a visual experience that references the cornerstones of early rock 'n' roll music. Each piece has a reference to drums, electric bass, and electric guitar sounds. A few of the pieces have pencil line smiley faces which not only reference the "peace and joy" philosophy of many of the bands of that era, but also suggest vocals. What amuses me is that it, to some effect, did not work. My paintings could just as easily be read as a visual representation of compositions for electric synthesizer. This has proven to be a very workable and welcomed ego death. I do plan on incorporating black backgrounds in the future to closer reference and pay homage to rock 'n' roll, but the white backgrounds, I imagine, will always amuse me and find purchase in my work.



## Mosaz

Almost all my drawings are based on the recognition and pride of my Asian identity. Also conflict between real life and illusional world. Including my point of views on life and death, value and self cognition, losing my self and finding it back.

Mosaz | A Joy Funeral 1 | 2021









# — Interview

## Yiru Wang

### **What first inspired you to blend material design with new technologies in your art?**

What first inspired me to blend material design with new technologies in my art was my constant curiosity about the boundaries between art and technology. Historically, when photography was invented, it sparked debates about the future and relevance of painting. Yet, I've always seen these mediums not as opposing forces but as complementary tools in the evolution of artistic expression.

To me, new technologies are not threats to traditional art forms but opportunities to expand the vocabulary of artistic expression. They allow us to convey ideas and emotions in ways that were previously unimaginable. The question lies not in the technology itself, but in how the artist uses it to communicate more effectively and authentically.

This perspective drives my practice. By integrating new tools like 3D printing, digital manipulation, and biomaterials with traditional techniques, I aim to explore how technology can deepen artistic expression rather than diminish it. My work is an ongoing exploration of this synergy, seeking to dissolve perceived boundaries and demonstrate how innovation can enrich, rather than replace, artistic traditions.

### **Can you talk about the role of technology in your creative process? How do you see it influencing your future works?**

Technology plays a transformative role in my creative process. It offers me entirely new experiences and possibilities, enabling me to



push the boundaries of traditional artistic expression. However, working with technology isn't simply about adopting new tools—it's about learning to master and integrate them into my vision.

I see this relationship as a process of mutual learning and adaptation. Just as I train AI to understand and execute my creative intentions, I also allow it to challenge and expand my perspective. In a sense, we are taming each other: I guide the technology to serve my artistic goals, while it pushes me to think in new, unconventional ways.

Looking to the future, I believe technology will continue to play a central role in my work, particularly in exploring the intersection of humanity and machine. AI, 3D printing, and biomaterials, for example, offer endless opportunities to experiment with form, concept, and interactivity. Yet, my ultimate goal remains the same: to use these tools not as ends in themselves but as means to create art that resonates emotionally and intellectually.

### **Your works often push the boundaries between traditional and digital art forms. How do you approach this intersection in your projects?**

My work often exists at the intersection of traditional and digital art, and I approach this



space as a dialogue rather than a divide. For me, these two realms are not opposites but complementary forces that can inform and elevate one another. Traditional art forms provide a foundation rooted in tactile expression, history, and craft, while digital technologies offer tools to expand possibilities, innovate processes, and challenge preconceived boundaries. In my projects, I aim to integrate these two worlds seamlessly, allowing them to interact and shape the final outcome. For example, I often begin with concepts inspired by traditional artistic methods—drawing, photography, or sculptural composition—but I then reimagine these ideas through digital manipulation, 3D printing, or the incorporation of bio-materials. This hybrid process allows me to explore questions of form, texture, and narrative in ways that neither medium could achieve alone. At the heart of my practice is the belief that art is not constrained by its medium but by the artist's imagination. By merging the tangible with the virtual, I aim to create works that are not only visually compelling but also provoke dialogue about the evolution of art itself. This intersection becomes a space of experimentation, where tradition meets innovation to push artistic boundaries and redefine what art can be in the digital age.



**How has your experience participating in events like the Art Shopping art fair and New York Design Week influenced your artistic vision?**

Participating in events like the Art Shopping art fair and New York Design Week has profoundly shaped my artistic vision, providing me with invaluable opportunities for growth, collaboration, and reflection. These events placed me in direct dialogue with a diverse range of artists, designers, and audiences, each bringing unique perspectives that challenged and enriched my understanding of art's role in society.

At the Art Shopping art fair in Paris, I was struck by the way audiences engaged with my Day in Night series. Their interpretations, often shaped by their personal experiences, illuminated aspects of my work I hadn't consciously considered. This dialogue reinforced my belief in art as a shared experience—one that evolves through the connection between creator and viewer.

New York Design Week, on the other hand, exposed me to cutting-edge design and multidisciplinary collaborations, inspiring me to think beyond the boundaries of traditional art. I witnessed how design and technology intersect in practical yet profoundly creative ways, prompting me to explore similar integrations in my own practice.

This experience encouraged me to embrace bold experimentation, blending art, technology, and

sustainability to create works that are both aesthetically striking and conceptually layered. These events also instilled a sense of responsibility in me—to create art that resonates globally while remaining deeply personal. The cultural exchange and feedback I received reminded me of the power of art to connect and communicate across borders, motivating me to continually push my creative boundaries and explore universal themes through innovative approaches.

**Can you tell us about your experience working with 3D printing and biomaterials, and how this reflects your environmental concerns?**

My experience working with 3D printing and biomaterials has been deeply personal and transformative, driven by both my environmental concerns and my own life experiences. One of my most meaningful projects, *On the Nose*, embodies this connection. This work utilizes 3D printing, brainwave modeling, and biomaterials to address smell disorders caused by psychological factors. The project was inspired by my own struggle with a smell disorder—a condition that made me acutely aware of how sensory experiences shape our connection to the world. As I delved deeper into research, I met many individuals facing similar challenges, each with their own unique stories of frustration and resilience. These encounters profoundly shifted my perspective, making me realize the responsibility I carry as an artist and designer. Art is not just about self-expression; it is also a tool to bridge gaps, to address overlooked



issues, and to inspire hope. This project also taught me to listen to nature. I came to understand that while we cannot always solve every physiological problem with technology alone, nature often holds the answers. By integrating biomaterials into my work, I discovered their potential not only for sustainability but also for fostering harmony between the human body and the environment. This approach reflects my deep commitment to ecological balance and the belief that technology should amplify nature's wisdom, not replace it. *On the Nose* was more than an artistic endeavor—it was a journey of healing and reconnection, both with myself and with the people and environment around me. This experience continues to guide my creative practice, inspiring me to seek solutions that are innovative, compassionate, and sustainable.

**Your art often incorporates a tactile experience. How important is the sensory engagement of the viewer in your creations?**

I believe that art should not only be seen but also felt. By incorporating tactile experiences into my creations, I aim to forge a deeper connection between the viewer and the artwork, transforming the act of observing into one of interaction and discovery. Touch and texture have the power to evoke emotions and memories that transcend visual perception, making the experience of art more immersive and personal.

For example, in projects where I integrate biomaterials or intricate 3D-printed structures, the tactile qualities often mirror the themes I explore—whether it's the fragility of existence, the dynamic relationship between nature and



technology, or the passage of time. The materials I use are deliberately chosen to invite physical interaction or to suggest textures that viewers can imagine feeling, even if they are not physically present. This sensory dimension encourages a profound awareness of the artwork, inviting viewers to explore it with multiple senses and to interpret its meaning in their own unique way.

Tactility also aligns with my interest in bridging the organic and the artificial. The physical textures of biomaterials, for instance, create a visceral connection to nature, while the precision of 3D-printed elements speaks to technological innovation. This juxtaposition emphasizes the balance between these worlds and underscores themes of sustainability, interconnectedness, and humanity's evolving role in the ecosystem. Ultimately, the tactile aspect of my work is not just about the physical interaction; it's about inviting the viewer to engage more fully—with the artwork, with themselves, and with the world around them. By stimulating the senses, I hope to create experiences that linger in memory and foster a deeper understanding of the themes I explore.

**What message do you hope to convey about the relationship between humanity and technology through your art?**

Through my art, I aim to convey the importance of achieving a dynamic balance between humanity, technology, and nature. Technology and natural resources have always been deeply interconnected, existing in a reciprocal relationship where one influences and sustains the other. My work highlights this interdependence, emphasizing that while technology can amplify human productivity and innovation, it must remain grounded in ecological responsibility and respect for natural systems.

By integrating advanced techniques such as 3D printing and biomaterials into my creations, I strive to illustrate how technology can coexist



harmoniously with nature, fostering solutions rather than creating conflict. This balance is not only vital for sustainability but also serves as a metaphor for the broader relationship between progress and preservation.

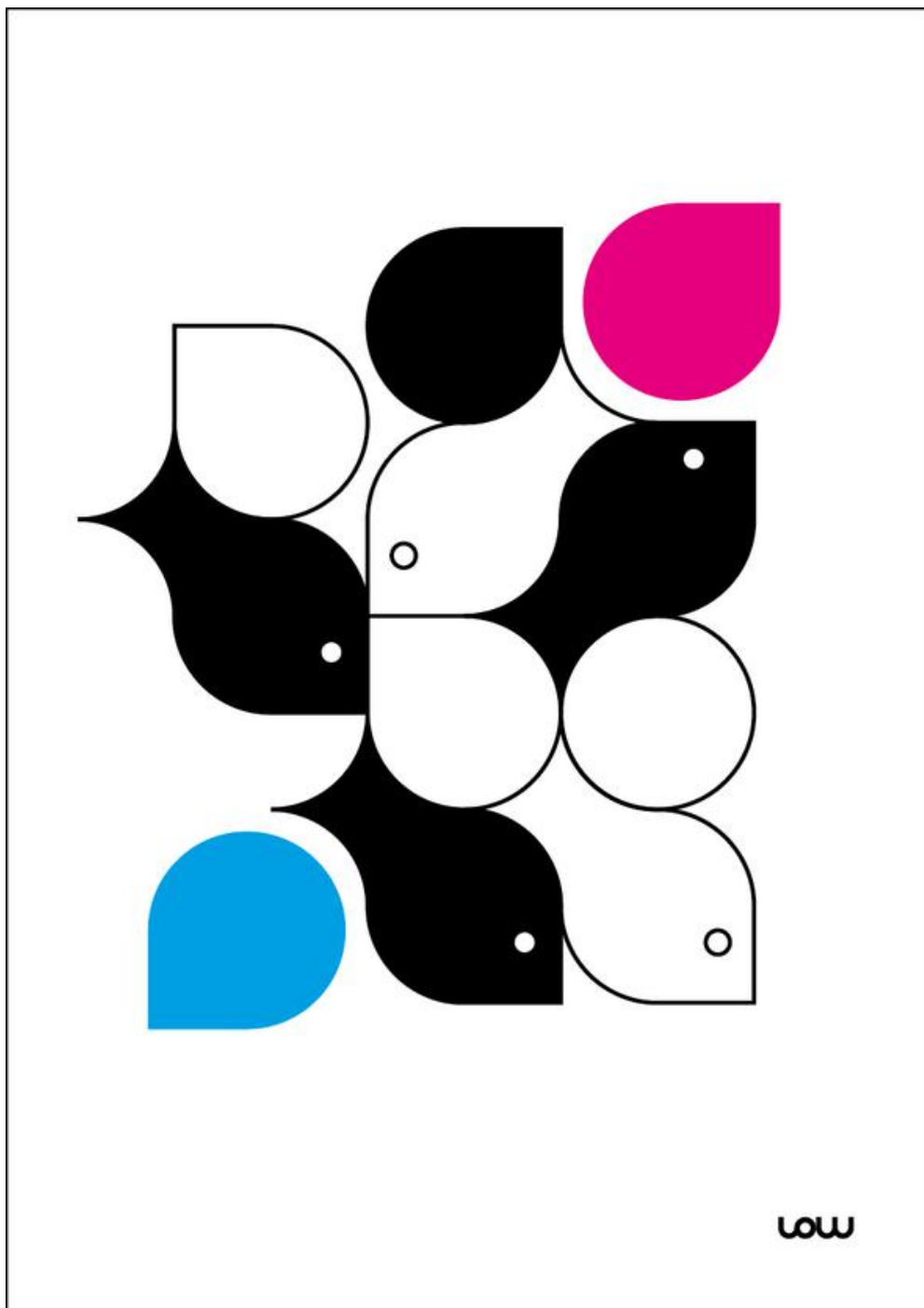
I want my art to inspire reflection on the choices we make as a society, encouraging a future where technological advancements do not overshadow but instead enhance our connection to the natural world. It is a call to reimagine innovation as a tool for regeneration and harmony rather than exploitation, aligning humanity's creative potential with the enduring rhythms of the earth.

## Freddy Low

Artist from Copenhagen, Denmark. Male, age 53.  
Graphic designer and electronic music producer.

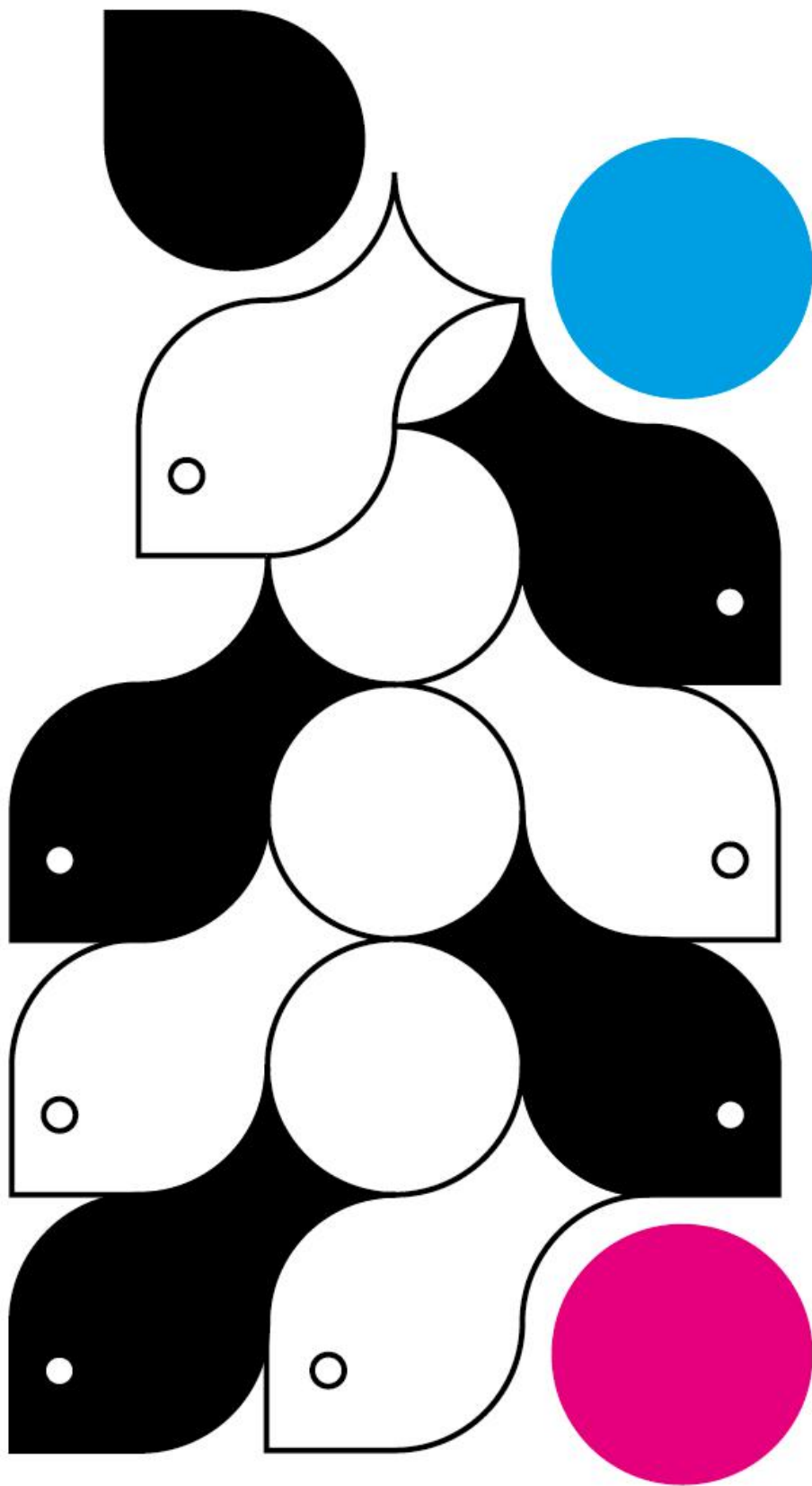
### *Artist Statement*

Everything is in flow.



Freddy Low | Flowin | 2023





low

## — Interview

# Giulia Sarti

**Can you tell us about your journey from being a lawyer to discovering your passion for art? What sparked this transition?**

Being a lawyer does not exclude my passion for art; on the opposite, my work and art are complementary. Being a lawyer and abstract art, both require a certain amount of creativity. Contrary to what people might think being an antitrust lawyer does require reasoning: competition law is a very vibrant and diverse subject. Of course, another form of creativity is that on canvas.

In addition, I have always been passionate about art: it is fascinating that, beyond objective representation, each person can provide his or her own interpretation of the artwork and imagine with broad discretion its real meaning.

When I was a child, I used to paint, but I never took part in proper painting classes. For many years I did not paint except occasionally. It was only when I was older, living in Florence, that my passion for painting was renewed thanks to Renaissance painting classes. Then in 2020, during the lockdown in Brussels, I started to draw in pencil again, and since then I have not abandoned painting. In fact, when I moved to Milan, I began attending a painting course, during which, experimenting with a variety of techniques, I ended up preferring abstract painting.

**How has your background in law, especially in competition law, influenced your**



**approach to art, if at all?**

My background in law has provided me with a method: it is a study method, in particular; however, I apply it not only at work, but also when I paint. For me, painting is not only freedom of expression, but it is also method and study.

When I paint, in fact, I like to have an order, a plan in mind before I start. I like to study the various colour combinations, figure out what materials besides colour I could use, choose the best canvas, paint brushes, tools etc. Of course, it is true that in painting, differently from the legal profession, it is much more likely that the moment you start painting your initial project immediately changes shape, considering that painting is not only study and method, but also improvisation.

However, in the end, I find that writing a brief or a legal opinion is not so different from painting: you always start from an idea, an initial draft that then evolves, on one side, with reasoning and writing and, on the other side, in the case of painting, with freedom of expression on canvas.

Finally, thanks to my specialization in competition law, I have had the opportunity to



live in different cities, each of them a different source of inspiration.

**Why did you choose abstract painting as your primary medium? What does abstraction allow you to express that other forms may not?**

After having experienced, and continuing to practice, various techniques, I found that abstract drawing is the one that most reflects me. Compared to other painting techniques, in fact, it allows me to mix distinct colours and materials on the canvas in unusual ways every time. And when I say, "on the canvas," I mean that when I paint, the final colour I want to create is made on the canvas itself.

The aspect I like most about my abstract art is that even if I want to replicate one of my paintings, with the same colours, materials, canvas, and tools used, I could never make one painting exactly the same as any other one. I love the fact that no one (not even myself!) could reproduce a work identically. Painting, in fact, for me depends not only on the colours and materials you use, but also on the state of mind you have when you paint, which is impossible not to let it show on the canvas.

In any case, I like to communicate the idea of uniqueness through my abstract works, thinking that, precisely, each of them is unique.

**Could you describe your creative process? How do you choose the colors and materials for each piece?**



It depends: if the painting is addressed to a specific person, I usually ask what his two favourite colours are or what are the colours of the environment where the painting will eventually go, and I start matching colours and/or materials based on those two initial colours.

Other times, when I am painting for the sake of painting itself, I explore classic colour combinations to either maintain them as such or make them unusual, I try to bring contrasts into compatibility with each other, but most importantly I mix the colours on the canvas. The number of times colour unexpectedly comes to life from the palette to the canvas when it mixes with all the other colours, it is amazing.

What really lights up my passion is blending the colours on the canvas along with the other materials like sand, paper etc.: everything looks chaotic at first look, but it really is not at all. There is always a study of combining colours and materials. Nothing is by chance. Other times again, when the painting is an abstract representation of something in nature, the juxtaposition of colours depends on what I am going to represent: for example, I once represented a grotto of the Greek island

of Atokos rising from the sea. In that case, the colours reflected, in my own way, those of the sky, the rock wall, the nature, and the sea.

**What does painting mean to you personally? Is it a form of relaxation, expression, or something else?**

Painting for me is both a form of relaxation and a form of freedom of expression. When I paint, I focus only on that, and time runs very quickly. In my opinion, painting is taking time just for myself, away from any distractions. It is a way to reflect and to take a break from the busy reality in which we all live.

In particular, during a Renaissance painting class in Florence I experienced that very feeling of calm and detachment that I mentioned earlier. Imagine a painting class inside a beautiful Renaissance palace in the centre of the city, classical music, art books, canvases, paints, paintbrushes. It felt like living in another time.

However, not every time I paint is like that: painting, as far as I am concerned, is influenced a lot by my mood. There are some periods when I really feel that I cannot do it and when I am not in a good mood, I am not inspired and blocked.



**Your works showcase a variety of textures and colors. How do you decide on the balance between different elements in your compositions?**

The balance of the various elements on the canvas depends on the initial choice of the two primary colours. The whole painting starts from there. The rest is entirely determined by the colour combinations that are gradually combined on the canvas. The study of the work and the colours I mentioned above in my case takes place, in part, before the work is created and, in part and mostly, during its creation.

Starting with an idea is easy, much more difficult is to pursue the realization of that same idea on canvas. As I said, it happens that most of the time what I had initially imagined assumes a different shape.

**How has living in different cities like Florence, Luxembourg, Geneva, Brussels, and Milan impacted your artistic style?**

Living in different cities has allowed me to approach different realities from many points of view, not only from an artistic perspective. Florence, the birthplace of the Renaissance and a city full of inspirations from an artistic side. Florence even if you do not mean to, it surrounds you: its architecture is in itself inspiring.

Luxembourg, Geneva and Brussels: more modern and international cities, hubs of people of different nationalities, each with a story to tell. They are cities that, thanks to being international, are very lively from an artistic angle and not at all boring, as most people would think.

Finally, Milan, in some ways, remarkably similar but also hugely different from Florence: a very vibrant city, from all points of view, international and modern and at the same time full of history, museums, exhibitions. Its diversity allowed me to fully experience what later became my passion, abstract art.







**Adrian Kiszka**, MA – born in 1991.

Graduate of Piotr Potworowski Art High School in Poznań, Poland. He graduated with distinction from the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Poland majoring in Painting. He completed his supplementary diploma in mural painting. It was the first diploma in the history of the University that combined mural painting with intermedia. Winner of the Audience Award for the best artistic diploma and a distinction from the Center for Contemporary Art "Znaki Czasu" in Toruń, Poland. In recent years, Adrian Kiszka's works could be admired at exhibitions in Egypt, Germany, Zurich, CICA Museum–Czong Institute for Contemporary Art in South Korea, and also in Venice during the Biennale d'Arte di Venezia. The artist's work has been presented in Poland by institutions such as CSW "Znaki Czasu" in Toruń, CSE "Światowid" in Elbląg, Rondo Sztuki Gallery in Katowice, Łazienki Królewskie and the Grand Theatre in Warsaw, Galeria Miejska Arsenał in Poznań. In 2024, his painting was included in the exhibition of honored artists of the Art Biennale in Tarnów, Poland.

Artist: Adrian Kiszka

Title: „*He, She, It*”

Medium: Oil on linen canvas

Size: 120 x 100 cm.

Year: 2024

"He, She, It" is a suggestive painting. The artist deliberately leaves space for the recipients' own interpretation, encouraging them to reflect on the social and cultural aspects of the presented topic. Through this composition, Adrian Kiszka opens a dialogue with society, inviting viewers to a deeper analysis and discussion of our contemporary world.





## — Interview

# Klaudia Zelenay

**Your art spans both tattooing and painting. How do these two mediums complement or influence each other in your creative process?**

Tattooing and painting offer me two unique yet complementary creative outlets. In tattooing, I work closely with people, turning their ideas into permanent art on their skin. It's a collaborative process where I often have creative freedom, but it's always tailored to the individual. In painting, however, I can fully immerse myself in my world, connecting deeply with my emotions and vision without external input. This balance between collaboration in tattooing and



personal expression in painting enriches my creativity in both mediums. Tattooing sharpens my precision and adaptability, while painting allows me to explore concepts freely and intuitively.

**What inspired you to transition from tattooing to focusing more on painting since 2020?**

I didn't transition from tattooing to painting; rather, I began dedicating more time to painting alongside tattooing. Both forms of art are essential to me, and I see them as complementary rather than exclusive. In 2020, I found myself exploring painting more seriously, which allowed me to dive deeper into self-expression and experiment with techniques I couldn't fully apply in tattooing. Painting became an additional way to expand my creativity while still maintaining my passion for tattoo art.

**Many of your paintings feature nature and animals. What role does your environment near Lake Balaton play in your artistic inspiration?**

Although I was born and raised in Budapest, I spent a significant part of my childhood near Lake Balaton with my godparents. Those early experiences cultivated my love for nature, which remains a central theme in my art. In 2020, my husband and I moved to the Balaton area, and living here has deepened my connection to the natural world. The lake, changing seasons, and abundant wildlife constantly inspire my work, helping me capture the tranquility, beauty, and fleeting moments of nature on canvas.





**Your work often balances light themes of nature with darker, horror-inspired motifs. How do you approach blending these contrasting elements?**

As a fan of metal music and the horror genre, I find myself drawn to the darker, more mysterious aspects of life. These themes inspire the shadowy, intense elements in my work. At the same time, another side of me is deeply connected to the serenity and beauty of nature and the animal world. Bringing these contrasting aspects together feels natural, as they represent the duality within me.

**Can you tell us more about your watercolor-like techniques with acrylics? How did you develop this unique approach?**

I primarily use the watercolor style in my tattoo work, where it brings a vibrant yet delicate quality to the designs. In painting, I'm always exploring what might look better in watercolor than in my main mediums, acrylic or pastel. I discovered almost by accident that heavily diluted acrylics can mimic the translucency and fluidity of watercolors beautifully. However, despite these experiments, my main focus remains on acrylic and pastel as they allow for greater texture and depth in my art.

**You've participated in exhibitions around the world. Which experience has been the most memorable or influential for you?**

Each exhibition has been unique and rewarding, but the first opportunities in new locations always stand out as the most memorable. For example, showcasing my work at galleries like the Golden Duck Gallery (Budapest, Hungary) and the Teravarna Gallery (Los Angeles, USA) were milestones that boosted my confidence and encouraged me to explore



new artistic directions. These moments of stepping into the unknown and presenting my art to new audiences are both challenging and deeply fulfilling.

**What do you hope viewers take away from your art, both as a tattoo artist and a painter?**

Through my art, I hope to convey the harmony between light and darkness, inspiring viewers to see the beauty in the darker side of life—proving that not everything that appears ominous is inherently negative. As a tattoo artist, my goal has always been to create meaningful, personalized works that resonate deeply with each client. Even after nine years in the profession, I remain committed to ensuring each tattoo is a reflection of the wearer's personality and story. Similarly, my paintings aim to evoke emotion and spark reflection, inviting viewers to explore both their inner worlds and the world around them.

**What are your plans for the future?**

Looking ahead, I aim to continue expanding my artistic horizons by participating in more international exhibitions, exploring new mediums, and further integrating tattooing with painting. I hope to deepen the emotional connections with my tattoo clients, creating even more personal, meaningful works. Regarding painting, I'm excited to experiment with new techniques and themes, possibly collaborating with other artists to bring fresh perspectives to my work. Ultimately, I want my art to continue evolving while staying true to the balance between dark and light that defines my creative vision. Another significant plan is to move to the United States, as the immigration process is currently underway. This move will allow me to grow artistically and connect with a broader community of artists.

## — Interview

# Oksana Sadovnyk

**How did your passion for painting develop during your childhood, and how has it evolved over the years?**

In childhood, like most children, I loved drawing in kindergarten. There were daily creativity lessons. After kindergarten, art lessons became mandatory and one of my favorites in school. I participated in art contests dedicated to various dates and events. Later, there was a brief pause —during my time at university, I didn't have time for drawing. Some bursts of creativity appeared at the start of my professional life when I helped students create wall newspapers. In 2023, I decided to try my hand at textured painting, and I really enjoyed it.

**What inspired you to use propolis as a medium in your art?**

My return to creativity began with beekeeping. I wanted to do something non-standard yet



Oksana Sadovnyk | Antigravity | 2023

unusual. Propolis is an extraordinary, highly beneficial, and unique beekeeping product with abundant healing properties. Not everyone can consume beekeeping products internally, as some people experience allergic reactions. To avoid such reactions, the effect of aromatherapy is used. The body receives therapeutic benefits through the phytoncides of propolis.

**Could you share more about the process of working with propolis? Is it challenging compared to other materials?**

Yes, working with propolis is more challenging. Propolis must be carefully collected. While working with bees, you learn about nature, the significance, and the value of all bee products. I practiced beekeeping for eight years and am a third-generation beekeeper (my grandfather, father, and I). Propolis is very capricious and specific to work with. Its composition is unique; scientists still cannot recreate it artificially. The substance consists of 200 constant elements and 50–100 variable ones, including resinous components, waxes, essential and aromatic oils,



Oksana Sadovnyk | Sunset



flower pollen, vitamins, minerals, amino acids, and bioflavonoids.

**How do your viewers typically react to the aroma and concept of your "healing" paintings?**

Audience reactions to the perception of the paintings are mixed, as some of them are abstract, inviting imagination. Only after inhaling the aroma does a certain bewilderment and surprise appear on people's faces. Unfortunately, people generally have a low understanding of what bee products are, and of the importance of propolis for human health in particular.

**Do you think eco-friendly and health-oriented art will become a larger trend in the art world?**

Like art as a whole, eco-friendly and health-oriented art will likely not become a rapidly spreading trend at first. However, it has the right to exist. A discerning person will notice it and allow themselves to acquire such a piece of art.



Oksana Sadovnyk | I believe I can fly | 2023

**What are your future plans as an artist? Are there any new mediums or themes you are interested in exploring?**

There are many plans for the future. I prefer to complete a piece first and then present it as a finished work. There is much to learn and many new ideas and materials to incorporate into my creativity—new themes and new materials. What some are used to throwing away and polluting nature with, others can repurpose to create eco-artworks.

**Would you consider collaborating with other artists to further the concept of art that benefits well-being?**

To collaborate with other artists and promote the ideas of health-beneficial art, it is essential to connect with such masters. I hope that magazine publications, participation in exhibitions, and international competitions will help me find like-minded individuals for creating eco and aroma paintings.



Oksana Sadovnyk | Moonlight | 2024

## — Interview

# Gerardo Hernandez Blancarte

**How did your journey as an artist begin, and what drew you to watercolor animals in the early stages of your career?**

As a child I was always amazed by people that could draw, one of them being my uncle Abel. I always thought it was a unique ability to be able to capture images with the skill of your hand. I was also inspired by Vincent Van Gogh and artist Raymond Hu. Mr. Hu also painted animals and me being a child that always watched the National Geographic channel I began painting animals in watercolor while paying tribute to Vincent Van Gogh.

**What motivated your transition to acrylics and mixed media, and how has it influenced your creative process?**

The need to want to keep growing and



producing unique works of art motivated to transition into mixed media. This has enabled me to add different tones, dimensions & elements to my work. My creative process has been influenced by having more tools to work with. A good example is in my piece “Through the Blue” where the outline of the waves have a silver touch to them, mimicking the reflections of the seas and adding more depth, meaning and curiosity to my work.

**Your art reflects phases inspired by your Mexican-American heritage, animals, skylines, and surrealism. How do these diverse themes interconnect in your work?**

The themes of my works have sometimes connected and sometimes have just been different phases of my life. I started painting many Mexican American pieces as a tribute to my roots. I painted them in traditional styles during a phase where I was still honing my skills. When I transitioned to skylines I paid homage to some of my favorite cities around the world. Lately my



Gerardo Blancarte | City Escape | 2024



tribute has been to nature, life and human emotions.

**Could you share more about the thought process and emotions that go into creating a piece, especially the balance between beauty and the years of dedication behind it?**

The thought process behind a piece varies, depending if I'm doing one piece or a series with a theme. Lately I've been painting animals but I have combined skylines and surrealistic aspects behind them. One of my latest pieces "City Escape" was an idea that was years in the making. Having painted skylines and animals it occurred to me in a dream, why not combine them one day while touching up on themes such as the environment & pollution. Sometimes the process takes years other times it comes right away, but when it comes you must do your best to capture it.

**Your recent focus on nature is fascinating. How do you choose the subjects, like birds or blue whales, and what do they represent in your narrative?**

The subjects are often chosen based on the message or theme I want to convey. Birds to



Gerardo Blancarte | Through the blue | 2024

me often represent a free spirit, full of inner calmness but also adventure and exploration. In the piece "Words of Wisdom" you see a calm Oriole surrounded by chaos, reminding itself to "Let it Be". Blue whales in my pieces often represent intelligence, matureness, curiosity & journeys. In "Through the Blue" it represents all those but there's also a play off the name itself and the color & how one can navigate through a blue period.

**What challenges or inspirations have shaped your 20-year journey as an artist?**

The same natural curiosity that got me into painting has stayed prominent in continuing to expand as an artist. Recent health concerns have motivated me to stay active and productive making new art and hoping my that my pieces move people as much as they move me.

**What advice would you give to aspiring artists who are exploring diverse mediums and styles like you have?**

Keep exploring and keep experimenting. Growth is part of the journey and you'll never know if the next piece will be your favorite/best or if it will lead to other emotions/feelings and other doors opening along the way. If you want to expand your horizon you can't be afraid to loose sight of the shore.



Gerardo Blancarte | Words of wisdom | 2024

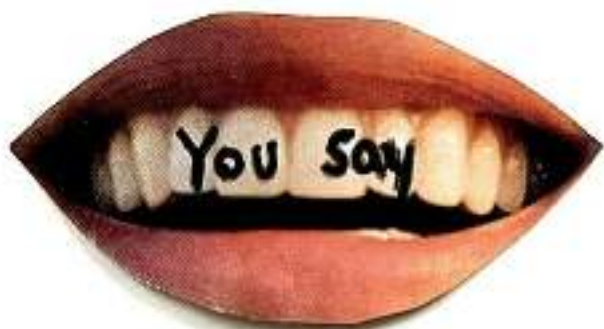
My name is **Grace Bobinski** and I am a collage artist from Edmonton, Alberta. I am studying Clothing, textiles and material culture at the University of Alberta, and creating collage art is one of the things that brings me joy the most. I am passionate about the creative and intimate process behind analog collages, and love the holistic nature of putting together separate pieces to create something whole. The unpredictability of analog collage work keeps things interesting- sometimes my favourite collages are the ones that began with a completely different vision in mind! Needless to say, I love collecting vintage and independently published magazines, and my favourites in my collection are my 1970's Cosmopolitans. I've made my first zine this year, and hope to continue to print some more in the future.

### *Project Statement*

This series of collages was made with the intention of conveying a myriad of emotions- angst, yearning, intemperance, solitude, acceptance. I hope to showcase my visual interpretation of the lyrics from various artists, including the Red Hot Chili Peppers, Hole, Lana Del Rey, and Fiona Apple within my work. Each piece comes from a genuine appreciation and passion for both music and art to be an outlet for our emotions as human beings.







## — Interview

# Katerina Kvacheva

**Your works often convey deep emotions and symbolism. How do you decide which feelings to express through each piece?**

When I stand in front of a blank canvas, I am always overcome with a sense of excitement and anticipation. Each brushstroke is not just a movement, but a way to express what is deep inside me. I choose what meanings to put into my work based on several key aspects.

Firstly, I turn to my own experiences and emotions. Life events, joys and sorrows become the building blocks from which I build my work. I strive to convey not only my feelings, but also to create a space where the viewer can recognize themselves, see a reflection of their experiences. Secondly, I am inspired by the world around me: nature, people, culture. Every new acquaintance, every moment in life can become a source of a symbol or metaphor. I love to explore how different elements can interact with each other, creating new meanings and associations. It is also important to consider context and history. I study the work of other artists, various artistic movements and philosophical ideas. This allows me not only to expand my horizons, but also to find unique ways to interpret known themes. Finally, I always strive for a dialogue with the viewer. Something that may seem obvious to me may have a completely different perception in another person. I leave room for interpretation so that everyone can find their own meanings in my works.

Thus, the process of choosing deep and symbolic meanings is always a synthesis of personal experience, observations, cultural context and interaction with the audience. Each painting is an invitation to reflection, to search for answers to questions that concern us all.



**You use collages with elements like newspapers and musical notes from different countries. What role do these materials play in your artistic process?**

Collages occupy a special place in my work, being not only a technique, but also a philosophy of working with material. They allow me to create multi-layered, multi-faceted works that reflect the complexity of our world and human experience.

When I use different elements, such as pages from old newspapers, musical notes or natural materials, I strive to connect different stories and contexts. Each detail I add carries its own story, and together they form a new whole. It is like a conversation between eras, styles and emotions. For example, a newspaper can symbolize the daily routine and news, while musical notes can convey feelings and evoke melodies in our fantasies that are difficult to express in words. Collages also allow me to experiment with shapes and compositions. I can easily manipulate elements, create unexpected combinations and find new visual solutions. This gives me freedom of expression and the opportunity to explore the topics that excite me from different angles. Ultimately, collages in my work are not just a technique, but a way to create multi-layered



Narratives that can be interpreted in different ways. They allow the viewer to immerse themselves in a world where each element has meaning and can evoke emotions, memories or reflections. I believe that it is in this interaction between different materials and ideas that the real magic of art is born.

**Your paintings combine expressive techniques with irony. How does this blend help you communicate the themes of your work?**

The combination of expressive technique and ironic accents in my work has become a real discovery. This interaction allows me to not only express my feelings and ideas, but also to add layers, making the viewer think about what lies behind the external appearance of the work. Expressive technique, with its bright colors, dynamic brushstrokes and powerful shapes, allows me to convey the emotions and energy of the moment. I strive to make the viewer feel the passion and intensity with which I work. It is like a noisy stream that captures and captivates, creating an atmosphere of spontaneity and sincerity.

However, adding ironic accents to this expression becomes a kind of counterpoint. Irony allows me to look at serious topics from a different angle, showing their absurdity or paradox. It can be something that at first glance seems light or even playful, but upon deeper



Katerina Kvacheva | Spinning Around | 2021

consideration reveals more serious questions. For example, I can use comic images or distorted forms to emphasize the absurdity of certain social phenomena or human relationships. This combination creates space for dialogue. The viewer can laugh, be surprised, and then think about what exactly I wanted to convey. Irony helps create distance, allowing me to discuss difficult or painful topics without causing a defensive reaction in the viewer. In this sense, the work becomes not just an expression of my thoughts, but also an invitation to reflect. Thus, the expressive technique and ironic accents in my work work as two complementary elements, creating multi-layered and profound works. It is like a conversation in which emotions and humor intertwine, forcing the viewer to immerse themselves in a world where every detail matters, and every smile can hide deeper meanings.

**You have a background in both painting and sculpture. How do these disciplines influence each other in your creative process?**

One of my creative techniques is sculpture. My



Katerina Kvacheva | Bohemian Rhapsody | 2024





Katerina Kvacheva | Brightness | 2022

experience in sculpture gives me both inspiration for further work with painting and the study of volumetric forms, expands the vision of the object in space, the arrangement of shadows. This is a separate world where you can create a mood, dynamics and experiment with forms in space. Sculpture is an endless source of inspiration for me.

**As someone who works in the fashion industry, how does your experience as an art director, stylist, and makeup artist affect your approach to painting?**

In everyday life, I work as an art director of fashion shoots, a stylist and a make-up artist. I create unique concepts, mood boards and stylistic images. This is an incredible, exciting, constantly changing and energetic work experience. I try to follow fashion trends, as well as be a trendsetter in my work and with my team. I study the history of fashion, styles that are often intertwined with art, eras, time. We often travel with our team to different countries of the world and create unique shoots, conveying all the beauty of the environment. I believe that the unique taste and sense of

beauty in our lives are formed by observation and environment. It is like an endless kaleidoscope and a puzzle. The vision of beauty forms incredible concepts, ideas and pictures in your brain, expands the boundaries of fantasy, which certainly helps in painting.

**Your work seems to be a dialogue with the viewer about society and human nature. What responses or reactions do you hope to evoke?**

In my silent dialogue with the viewer, I want to convey encrypted messages, where every detail matters and try to immerse the viewer in a space for his personal reflections. I try to convey in my works themes close to every person, such as: time, the beauty of the moment, love and sadness, the transience of beautiful youth, loneliness.

It is important for me that my works evoke resonance in the soul, from the feeling of lived experience in viewers, immerse them in memories of something forgotten, beautiful and complex at the same time, leaving a long aftertaste.



Katerina Kvacheva | Eva in the garden | 2023







## — Interview

# Ren Jerome

**Your artistic journey started at a young age, inspired by comic books. How did that influence your current style and subject matter?**

My start in comic book drawings has affected my art style now in the way that a lot of my art has bold lines and colors, similar to what you'd see in the comics. I have taken a lot of the skills I learned from drawing comic book panels and molded them into something more complex and unique to me. Most of the fundamentals from that time in my life have followed me into what I make now, I have just tweaked them to fit the artistic goals I have now. Knowing how to freehand copy comic book panels has helped me a lot in transferring the images I see in my mind before I make something new onto paper in an accurate way.

**You mentioned that you aim to create art that requires a deeper look to understand its layers. What is your process for building such intricate details in your work?**

I love to look at other's art and see the layers and time it took to create such pieces, so I try to emulate that feeling in my work as well. My process is a very long and seemingly tedious one. I start with a concept mentally that I want to create, which can involve concept sketches and looking online for inspiration pictures. I then decide how detailed I want the piece, which helps



to choose what size paper to use for that specific piece. It gets difficult to do extremely intricate designs on smaller paper, so for those detailed pieces I'll try to stick to larger paper so I can really get in there with my pens. Usually my art has more than one subject, so I'll begin by sketching the one I want to draw first in its entirety. I'll draw each subject the same way, and then move to the next one. The first layer of sketches will often determine how detailed the finished piece is, so I really try to detail the sketch as much as I can without ink or paint. Each detail feels like laying each individual brick in a house. They're small, almost insignificant, but each one plays a major role in the integrity of the finished piece. It's the small things that give the finished piece that "wow" factor.

**Snowboarding and art seem like two very different worlds. How do these two passions intersect or influence each other?**

Snowboarding and art are very different, but also very similar in certain ways to me. Whenever I'm drawing or making anything really, my mind goes quiet and I feel free. I can be as creative as I want to and make literally whatever my mind can think up. Snowboarding is much the same. As I'm



going down the mountain on my board, I feel absolutely free and my mind is calm. I can also be really creative in the little trails I'll make for myself in the woods, or what trick to do off of jumps and things of that nature. In that sport, you can pretty much do whatever you want creatively. It can really be your mountain, once you know what you're doing. Normally the inside of my brain is very loud and chaotic, so doing these things feels extremely therapeutic. Doing these things over the years that I have, has helped me feel much better mentally and they both center me to who I truly am as a whole.

**Your work blends surreal imagery with bold colors. What role does color play in your creative process, and how do you choose your palettes?**

I used to hardly ever use color in my work. I was a black and white pen and ink artist for the longest time, and color was a little intimidating during that time. I started using color more intentionally about six years ago, and I'm so glad I did. Color is such a fun element to use nowadays. It adds more depth to my work and I find that people are more drawn to my work with color in it. Color is often an element I add pretty far into the creative process because I try to make the structure of the drawing fleshed out before I add other elements into it. There is no rhyme or reason why I pick the colors in my palette for each individual piece, honestly. I pick between a warm color palette or a cold color palette for the dominant parts of the drawing. Sometimes I'll add in a blue into a warm color palette or a red into a cold one. Adding in the occasional outlier color in a piece can add



contrast and draw the eye to a specific part of the drawing. It varies based on the feeling I'm trying to give the piece. Color is super important to how a piece feels to look at, so I keep that in mind when I decide what I'd like to use. The colors I pick are where I feel my artistic little heart wants to go.

**Who are your biggest artistic inspirations, and how have they shaped your perspective as an artist?**

My artistic inspirations come in a couple different shapes. I get really inspired from the art that was made during and around the Renaissance period in Europe. People like Caravaggio, Goya, and Gentileschi have inspired me over the years to play with darker subjects and use contrast and dark colors to my advantage. Rococo themed art is also dope but I prefer the darker side of things. Sometimes I'll use lighter colors, but I'll always contrast with significantly darker ones. These artists have shown me that I can fully express myself exactly how I want to in my art and not be concerned how others will react. They painted what their hearts told them to, and it helped them work through their own issues. I strongly feel this way about making art. Other inspirations

of mine come in the form of eccentric and expressive musicians. I take a lot of inspiration and genuinely admire a musician from Australia named Tash Sultana. She is incredibly creative and is exactly herself. She is very expressive in her music in a beautiful way. She is able to weave different parts of her song into other parts to make it all sound like something entirely unique. She's a one lady show with some rhythm musicians while she plays live behind her. Tash will play her instruments and then loop the tracks and weave them together. She'll play a whole slew of instruments in her songs, making them have lots of depth. I love how she makes her songs and seeing her play live was almost a religious experience. I loved every part of it. I feel that using multi-media is much the same. I use lots of different mediums in the same piece sometimes, and I feel it creates depth in my work. Other musicians like this of course involve people like David Bowie, Kurt Cobain, Jimi Hendrix and everybody in Pink Floyd. These artists are exactly who they are unapologetically. They make music for the "freaks" of the world.



For the artists. They speak my language and hearing what they've got to say inspires me to make the art I do. I believe that it's a constant cycle of consuming others' art as an artist, then using that and thinking about how it makes me feel and creating something entirely unique. I absolutely love getting to be a part of it consistently, and how all of this makes me feel. Art is such a fulfilling genre of things to be a part of in this world. Music is a large part of my art, as well as all the old classic painters.

**You have a unique focus on merging known ideas with surreal elements. Could you share an example of a piece where you felt you achieved this perfectly?**

One of my favorite pieces I've done as of late is a great example of this. It's a 22in by 30in acrylic painting of a skull with a jellyfish coming out of the back of its head, flowing down the paper in lots of different colors. I also incorporated the bottom part of a mushroom onto the back of the head as a transition between the two subjects. This piece does not have a name quite yet, as I'm trying to decide between "Neptune's Veil" and "Jellybones Mirage." This piece is very intricate and combines elements that aren't normally seen together, in a beautiful manner. This piece is one of my favorites because of the colors firstly. Purples, blues and pinks hold a special place for me because of how awesome they can look next to each other and the blends you can get if you incorporate contrast. I also love this piece because of the story behind it. I had the idea for it during a psychedelic trip and I sketched it out that night. It was my side project for 6 months and I loved coming back to it day after day because seeing progress as an artist really fills some sort of void in me. I didn't know where I was gonna go with it, but I just kept doing my thing. It very slowly started taking shape over time, and there were points I was unsure of. But I kept going anyway. I was originally going to sell it to a friend I met in the Army, but she ended up ghosting me as soon as I finished it. The point of art for the artist is to make it and express ourselves, not to sell it for a cheap "friend" discount. Her not buying it made me sad for a while, but as I kept thinking about it I became glad she didn't follow through. Now I



can sell the original to someone who will truly appreciate it and love having my original work in their home. It's all about perspective :)

**What advice would you give to young artists who are just starting their artistic journey?**

To any young aspiring artist out there I would say, just keep going. Keep drawing. Keep painting. Just keep making stuff. Even if you think it's bad or terrible. It doesn't have to be for

anyone but you. Make stuff for yourself because it's fun. Because it's fulfilling. Express yourself in a way truly unique to you. Make your own style. Be you, you will find people who understand. Make things especially when you feel sad or emotional. Making things has helped me through a lot of my trauma. It's always been a constant and it's been there for me when literally no one else was. It's important to have an outlet for how you feel, and art could be that thing. But you don't know if you don't try. Find yourself in it.



## — Interview

# Tinni Snåre

**Can you share the inspiration behind your recent solo exhibition at Galleria Dromig in Helsinki?**

My art is my secret hideaway where I can express my feelings and feel free from pressure and expectations from the rest of the world. I create a world of my own where I try to reach some sort of inner serenity despite all the terrible things happening in the world right now. During my solo exhibition, *Serenity Unveiled*, I sought to convey the emotions of an inner fight toward achieving peace. When Russia escalated its military invasion of Ukraine in 2022, it affected my emotions, as well as those of many other Finns, in a profoundly new way. My grandparents lived in Finland through the war against Russia, and undoubtedly, many of us Finns carried unresolved fears and emotions that surfaced in various ways as Russia's invasion of Ukraine unfolded in the manner it did.

We wanted—and still want—to help those who are suffering, as we can grasp the reality that it could just as easily have been us. Yet, we feel an overwhelming sense of helplessness. We carry a deep historical understanding of suffering, but we also have many emotions that need processing. Part of my own processing took place while I was painting for the exhibition *Serenity Unveiled*. Some of the works, such as the work *Peace please* also has a very clear message.



**How do you find balance between painting, sculpture, and design in your creative process?**

I have periods when I only focus on painting and other periods where sculpturing and design is in focus. This is a natural way for me to work. I feel that working with different media nourishes my creativity, and I often draw ideas from my own sculptures or paintings to incorporate into another medium.

**Your art has been described as a "secret oasis" where you can "hide and breathe." Can you elaborate on how this philosophy influences your work?**

As a person I am very sensitive and I constantly need to engage with and confront my emotions. Given that I also work as a lawyer, while also having a family and managing a household, my life is incredibly busy. That's why it's so essential for me to find moments of peace and dedicate time solely to myself and my emotions. The art that comes from these moments is a result of emotional processing and a release of creativity. I believe this is why it resonates so strongly and is



appreciated—it stems from a place of unforced creativity and authentic emotion. Art has always been my hiding place - ever since I was a small child. As a child I struggled with severe selective mutism for many years, and art became my primary means of expression and I created a hidden world for myself. This is also the reason why it was so hard for me to exhibit my paintings for the first time in the solo exhibition in the Sibelius museum in Turku in 2022. I felt naked and exposed. I still do when somebody comments or asks me questions about my art. Still, I am happy to take part in this interview - although I am stepping far outside my comfort zone.

**What role does public art play in your career, especially with projects like the large outdoor sculptures in Pargas city center?**

The sculpture project is one of the hilarious projects I've done in my whole life. Embarking on challenging projects with like-minded people is an experience that's beyond words. And I love public art because it makes art accessible for everyone. The best thing is that it can inspire people and people's feelings in



Tinni Snåre | Awake

unpredictable ways. It can also strengthen the sense of belonging.

**What was your experience collaborating with the city of Pargas on a public art project?**

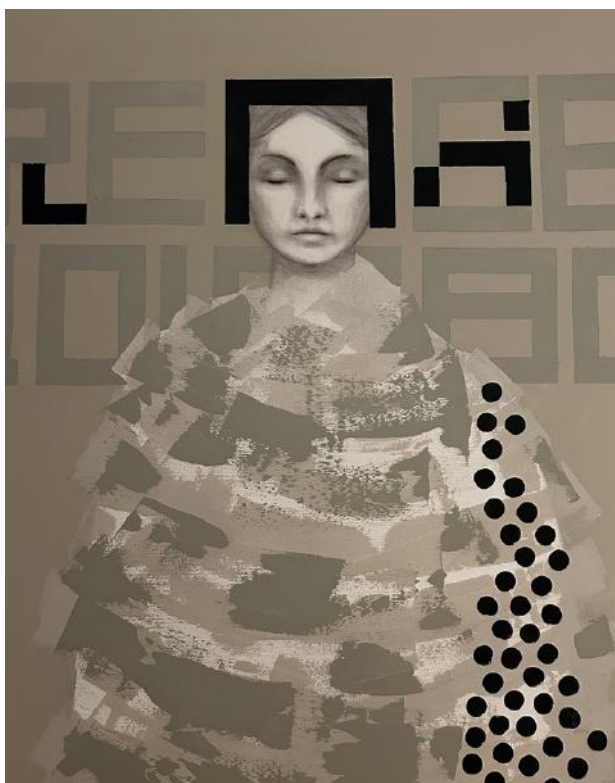
It was very fruitful and inspiring. Pargas is a small village in the heart of the Finnish archipelago. Pargas stands out when it comes to a sense of community and social responsibility.

**How has your work evolved after participating in events like Konstrundan?**

Konstrundan is an event for professional artists opening up their art studios in Finland. It is a very important event for artists and gives you nice publicity.

**How does the Finnish cultural and natural landscape influence your art?**

The Finnish cultural and natural landscape has a profound influence on my art. Growing up in the Finnish archipelago, I've always been surrounded by the sea, vast forests and the ever-changing seasons. I find that the tranquility and stillness of the Finnish landscape provide a space for introspection, allowing me to process my emotions and translate them into visual forms.



Tinni Snåre | Peace please

## — Interview

# Deniss Inkins

**You have created a unique artistic direction known as "Poundism." Can you tell us more about what inspired this concept and how you see it evolving in the future?**

The creation of "Poundism" has become a natural expression of my desire to understand the changing role of money in the modern world. I have always believed that money is not just a medium of exchange, but a powerful symbol of our time that influences human relationships and social structures. The inspiration came from a radical exploration of the symbolism of the British pound sterling and its historical and cultural significance. "Poundism" is meant not only to capture this symbolism but also to provoke reflection on how money shapes our perception of the world.

I envision the future of "Poundism" as a space for experimentation and dialogue. With the evolution of technology and digital currencies (such as cryptocurrencies), I plan to integrate new media and methods to make the concept more accessible and relevant to my time. I believe that directions such as NFTs and virtual reality can open new horizons for our understanding of monetary value.

**In your series "Bitcoin" and "City Mask," you explore themes around currency, technology, and societal change. How do these works reflect your views on modern society and the role of money?**



Deniss Inkins | Bloody Oil

The "Bitcoin" series is a visual exploration of the transformation of the financial system. I use street art techniques to showcase the dynamics and ambiguity of our time—the shift from traditional currencies to digital ones, which fundamentally changes our perception of value. The emergence of cryptocurrency and its growth symbolize, for me, humanity's quest for innovation, freedom, and self-expression.

Ultimately, the "Bitcoin" series is more than just art. It is an expression of my understanding of the world of money, a reflection of the changes in our society's distorted financial reality, and a personal perspective on a future where wages, savings, and investments may look completely different. It is a challenge I pose to myself and those around me to reflect on the changes in our financial lives and to seek the opportunities presented by this new era of digital money.

On the other hand, "City Mask" is based on the experience of the pandemic, during which money became not only a source of fear and anxiety but also a symbol of survival and



adaptation. By using elements related to childhood and play, I aimed to convey the deep connection between family values and the need for material well-being. These works highlight how crucial aspects of our lives, such as health and family, are often overshadowed by the pursuit of money.

**Your "Bloody Oil" series touches on themes of wealth, prosperity, and the darker aspects of oil as a global resource. What emotions or messages do you hope viewers take away from these works?**

The "Bloody Oil" series reflects the contradictory nature of oil as wealth. I want viewers to realize that behind this turbulent flow of finance lies not only prosperity but also numerous tragedies and conflicts. Oil is portrayed as a resource that creates economies, but also as a source of suffering. I aim to evoke a range of emotions—from admiration to anxiety—pushing viewers to reflect on their own perspectives on wealth and how it shapes our lives. The use of symbols such as blood illustrates that behind every successful business is a story of people who have lost everything. My works encourage the audience to contemplate the inseparable connection between economic well-being and human value. This dialogue about the cost at which we obtain this prosperity remains relevant regardless of the time period.

**You often incorporate symbolic elements, like the skull and cross in the "Bloody Oil" series. What is the significance of these symbols in your art, and how do they connect to your philosophical view of life and death?**

The symbolism of the skull and cross in my works carries profound philosophical significance. The skull symbolizes the transience of life and serves as a warning about the fleeting nature of material wealth. In the context of my pieces dedicated to oil, it



Deniss Inkins | Bitcoin | 2021

also becomes a metaphor for the value attained through blood and sacrifice. This serves as a clear reference to the "vanitas" tradition, but in a contemporary context, it reminds us of the need to maintain a balance between the pursuit of material prosperity and the preservation of human values. On the other hand, the skull also represents joy for me, largely influenced by Mexican culture, where it embodies the celebration of the Day of the Dead—a time when it is customary to rejoice and honor those who have passed. Here, the skull becomes a symbol of good fortune and acts as a folk talisman that protects the space it occupies. The cross embodies both spiritual aspects and the limitations imposed by society. It is a powerful symbol of struggle, hope, and overcoming the moral conflicts we face as individuals. When combined with the skull, the cross enhances the protective meaning that I incorporate into my paintings, adding depth and layers to their significance. Together, the skull and cross create a powerful visual narrative that explores both the dark and light facets of our existence in the modern world, where financial resources and material values largely define our lives.

**Many of your works are created in a raw,**

**free technique, breaking classical art education norms. How did you develop your style, and what influences led you to this unconventional approach?**

My style has developed organically through experimenting with various techniques and materials. I turned away from traditional methods to explore my individuality and independence as an artist. The influence of masters such as Jackson Pollock and Andy Warhol helped me understand how to work without rigid boundaries, finding freedom in abstraction and street art.

I have come to the conclusion that art should be engaged and accessible, so I strive to make it expressive and honest, even if it appears raw and unrefined. This free technique allows me to convey genuine emotions and experiences rather than merely adhering to strict canons. This approach creates a unique signature that distinguishes me from other artists.

I enjoy incorporating elements of cubism, abstraction, pop art, and street art into my works. They contain a certain chaos, which is part of the abstract approach: drops may flow upward, shapes can be asymmetrical. I don't adhere to a strict style; it is this expressiveness and dynamism that make each piece unique. In the process of creation, I work very expressively, sometimes turning the canvas, which adds an additional level of energy to my paintings.

**How does your experience as an entrepreneur influence your artistic vision, especially in terms of themes around wealth and business?**

My experience in business has played a key role in shaping my perception of art and its economy. I understand how markets and

financial systems function, which allows me to delve deeper into themes of wealth and value in my work. I see art as something more than just an aesthetic phenomenon; it is also an economic tool and a means of recognizing social changes.

Through studying the interaction between art and business, I have come to realize that a successful artist must be not only a creator but also a strategist. This knowledge helps me to work with themes that are relevant in the market and to draw attention to my pieces. I hope that my approach will enable other artists to engage more purposefully in discussions about wealth and values in our contemporary society.

**As an artist and photographer, you draw inspiration from street life and photorealism. How do you balance these styles with the abstract nature of your paintings?**

My work combines elements of street art and photorealism through a continuous exploration of the surrounding world and its nuances. Street life is full of dynamism and diversity, generating a multitude of emotions that I strive to convey in my paintings.

Abstraction allows me to express these feelings in a more free and individual form, while photography serves as a source of real narratives and scenes that inspire me.

I am not afraid to mix these styles to create something unique, where each piece becomes not just an image but an emotion, a moment, or a concept that encourages the viewer to reflect and feel. This interaction between reality and abstraction, in my opinion, embodies the true essence of contemporary art.



D.I.  
Dart

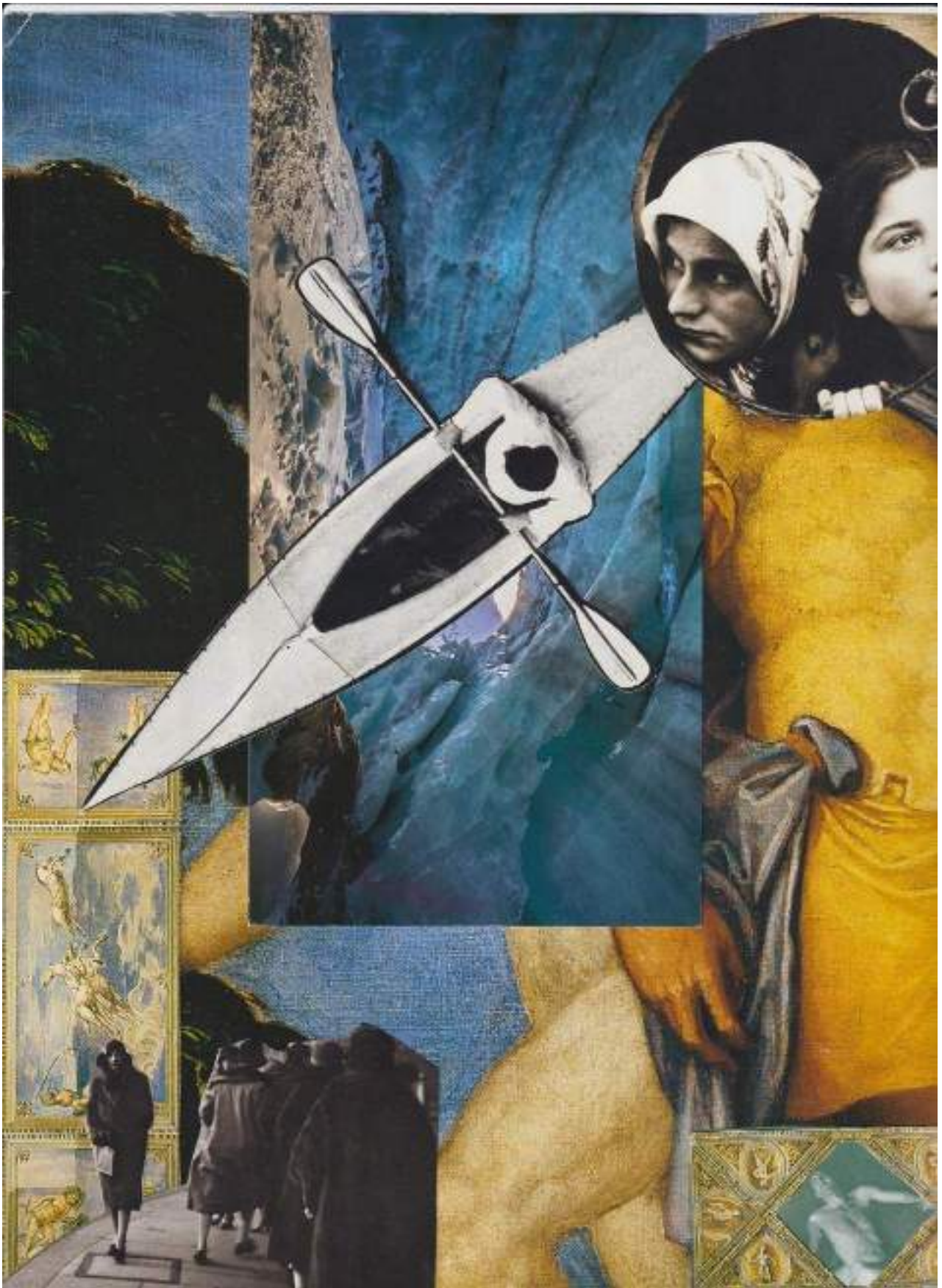


**Ali Atakay** was born in 1995, lives and works in Paris as a translator and researcher. Inspired by surrealism and pop culture, his work explores the boundary between text and image. Through his works, he recontextualizes the everyday life, transforming fragments of life and words into visual and poetic compositions. By experimenting with other materials and techniques such as sculpture, he constantly seeks new media to expand his artistic expression.

### *Artist Statement*

Atakay employs a polysemic approach, where each collage becomes an interactive layering of text and image. Words are not mere annotations or explanations; they are woven into the work as visual elements, playing with shapes and sometimes colors to create a vivid dialogue with image fragments. Phrases twist and merge with visual textures, giving rise to works where the line between reading and contemplation is subverted. His artistic process is fueled by a relationship with the perceived world, agency, and multiple identities. By blending newspaper clippings, literary quotes, and fragments of correspondence, we witness a mosaic of meanings where words and images echo, contradict, and complete each other, inviting viewers to a plural reading where text may transform into texture, shadow, or focal point. Each piece becomes a unique epistemological experience, where personal experience intersects with the everyday through a layered visual language.





Atakay Ali | Untitled | 2023

## — Interview

# Gabrijela Parigros

**Your recent works are inspired by *Alice in Wonderland*. What drew you to this story, and how does it resonate with modern themes?**

My absolute favourite book during early childhood was *Alice in Wonderland*. At the time, I didn't grasp the essence of the novel, but I was utterly mesmerised by the wild and surreal illustrations created by Serbian artist Miodrag Bata Knežević. It would later become clear that these illustrations profoundly shaped the aesthetic of my entire creative practice—though I wasn't aware of it at the time. Once I recognised this, it felt only natural to create an homage to “my” Alice.

Alice resonates beautifully with modern times. She wrestles with the same questions that trouble contemporary individuals: questions of identity, transformation through circumstance, (non)adaptation, and the ever-present need for validation. In my body of work, Alice becomes a secondary character, reflecting my own personal transformation, both as an individual and as an artist.

Classic Alice also explores the interplay between reality and illusion. In its original form, the story features fantastical, dreamlike scenes. Translated into our contemporary context, however, we find ourselves living amidst simulation—surrounded by advancing technologies, and most notably, artificial intelligence. Within this subtext lies the duality between reality and our perception of it. Can we, in today's world, make truly objective judgments on any fundamental issue?

Alice also grapples with existential questions, which remain, as ever, the ultimate questions across all historical periods, including our own.



Gabrijela Parigros | Where are you going

**Can you elaborate on your concept of “The Land of Dopamine” and how it connects to the challenges of contemporary society?**

Without venturing too deeply into science, I'll simply note that dopamine is a hormone produced by the human brain, acting as the source of pleasure, motivation, and euphoria. On the opposite end of this spectrum lies depression. From an early age, self-validation has always been one of the key sources of dopamine—starting with the acceptance we seek from our parents and later expanding to the approval of those around us. This process helps build our confidence and, ultimately, our sense of satisfaction.

Social media has introduced an entirely new array of dopamine triggers, creating, in a sense, a form of dependency. I, too, have fallen victim to this dependency. The connection between dopamine and my paintings lies in the fact that I experience two sources of satisfaction: first, during the process of creation, and second, when the work is shared online and the reactions begin to roll in. If a piece doesn't make it onto social media, or if the response is lacklustre, the act of creation alone no longer feels sufficient to me. I don't believe this is a problem unique to me.



Many contemporary artists feel similarly compelled to maintain an active presence on social media, as staying visible has become critically important in today's world.

### **How do you integrate modern tools like AI into your classical oil-on-canvas technique?**

The advent of AI has opened new doors for creativity and artistic expression. Every artistic discipline is engaging with new technologies and their possibilities in different ways. While many view this as a threat, I see AI as a brilliant tool. Rather than using AI-generated images as a final product, I treat them as a starting point. I craft deeply personal and intimate prompts, creating sketches that I later translate into the traditional medium of painting on canvas.

This reversible approach allows me to use new technologies in the service of time-honoured skills, preserving my profound love for classical painting. It inspires me to work with greater enthusiasm and has made me more productive than ever before.

### **What role does social media play in your artistic process and your perception of validation as an artist?**

As I've already mentioned, visibility is a challenge faced by all contemporary artists. In today's environment of stylistic pluralism, diverse individual approaches, and an abundance of outstanding creators, it's a considerable challenge to stand out, be noticed, and receive recognition that feels appropriate and satisfying. Artists are competing for a place in the spotlight, opportunities to showcase their work, and ultimately, access to collectors and professional auctions.

It's no longer enough to simply produce high-quality art. Contemporary artists are now expected to master marketing skills, self-promotion, and an entirely new approach to entering the marketplace. Social media has become an excellent tool for achieving these goals.

However, the flipside of this coin, as I've mentioned before, is the dependency it fosters, which can become a serious source of mental health issues if our efforts don't receive adequate validation online.

### **What challenges have you encountered while addressing the themes of technology and human emotion in your work?**

Alice in the Land of Dopamine, though rendered



Gabrijela Parigros | There

in vivid colours, carries an undertone of darkness, alienation, and subtle unease. My characters never have purely human facial expressions, the settings—while containing elements of both the urban and the natural—are not real, and the creatures depicted, though they may faintly resemble familiar beings, are something entirely different. Everything exists in an imaginary world teeming with hidden discomfort.

On a subconscious level, I've likely portrayed my personal perception of the modern world and the technologies that surround us—a world in which we dwell, survive, and at best, navigate, but rarely truly live in the fullest sense of the word. Amidst floral surroundings and explosions of colour and form, my Alice feels a profound sense of anxiety, and each canvas represents an attempt to liberate her from this confined space. The palette I've chosen for this series is my way of seeking a return to "happier times" (despite the themes), to a time when the world around us wasn't grey, generic, and unrecognisable. If we observe the world today—its contemporary design and the overwhelming trend towards minimalist aesthetics—we see a loss of specificity. Architectural styles no longer reflect their regions, fashion feels homogenised, and even cars are distinguished only by their logos rather than their unique features. Modern architecture in Europe is now indistinguishable from that of America or Asia. This uniformity hasn't brought happiness to modern humanity. I felt an overwhelming need to create an emotional balance between the unsettling characters in my paintings and the radiance of the colours chosen to envelop and impact the viewer.

### **How does your educational background in painting and art education influence your creative approach?**

During my education, I initially studied art history but soon transitioned to painting, earning my Master's degree in 2005 under the mentorship of Professor Milan Blanuša at the Academy of Arts in Novi Sad, Serbia. However, my journey as a painter began much earlier, in 1992, when I first embarked on serious preparations to study at an art academy.

Throughout my education and beyond, the primary components of my work—beyond the expected technical and technological foundations—have always been honesty and purposefulness. While "honesty" might sound like a worn-out cliché, it was instilled in me by my mentors. This left me approaching every piece of work with a certain degree of nervousness and responsibility.

As a result, I find myself utterly unable to create anything I don't genuinely feel. For this reason, I'm not one of those artists who can work on commissioned pieces; such works feel entirely detached from me, lacking even a trace of sincerity, no matter the manual artistic skill I may bring to them.

Purposefulness, for me, means being able to justify my artistic practice at any moment—understanding its origins and the message it conveys to the audience. Combined with honesty, this has allowed me to fully embrace the third essential component of my work: emotion. Together, these elements enable me to create deeply personal and entirely authentic pieces.

### **What is your vision for the future of your artistic practice in a world increasingly shaped by technology?**

Despite widespread predictions that technology will replace "the human" and creativity as a whole, I firmly believe this will never happen. History has shown us time and again that new technologies are, in fact, excellent tools for shaping human imagination. They pave the way for new media, and with that, new methods of creation.

While technology advances at a pace far exceeding the evolution of human psychology and emotions, I believe we still have the capacity to steer this progress. I am confident that this will lead to even greater and more meaningful artistic production, resulting in a wealth of fascinating works across all creative fields. Personally, I enjoy embracing every form of new technology available to me, making full use of the potential it offers. This, of course, does not mean abandoning traditional artistic practices but rather enhancing them and remaining committed to continuous learning.







**Stella Newmoyer** is a young emerging artist who studies art education at Kutztown University. She is hoping to concentrate in print making or painting, but also dabbles in water color. She hopes to bring a more empathetic lens of viewing the world to her audience, for finding the special in the ordinary.

Stella Newmoyer | La Vie Quotidienne En Plein Air | 2024







## — Interview

# Mariza Liaw

**Could you share the journey that led you to become a multimedia artist, especially one focused on photography?**

My interest in photography began in 2018, when I began creating a series of photographs. This series focused on the idea of stripping away the familiar identities of everyday objects to a new view. This later became my art style. During my time in highschool, I met a wonderful and inspiring teacher, Ms. Fabroa. She became the mentor I looked up to the most as she encouraged me to submit my work to galleries, take darkroom workshops outside of school and introduced me to film photography. She even allowed me to further better my artistic skills in the Arts and Culture Club where as a collective group of students would create artworks displayed in our school's foyer. Being her student meant that I was able to learn, network, and build a plan to, hopefully, fingers crossed, set sail for my dream career as a small business owner. It is a work in progress, but I plan to sell



photographic prints to meet art collectors, admirers, and a community of artists who share a similar passion as I have.

**You describe yourself as a "moy" artist. Can you elaborate on what this means to you and how it influences your work?**

Moy, sometimes defined as 'gentle', is a term I use to describe my artworks. It is contemporary, yet abstract art, with a colour palette of either monochromatic or complementary colours.

To create 'Moy' artworks, I focus on capturing ordinary objects while removing their 'ordinariness.' That's what defines 'Moy'.

The goal is to encourage viewers to sit, reflect on how the expression makes them feel, and share their perspectives on what they see.



**How does your cultural background as a Taibu-Hakka Chinese artist shape your art?**

As a Canadian Taibu-Hakka Chinese artist, I feel as though my culture and identity are slowly being forgotten. Growing up, when I would share my background with others many people would begin to question what Hakka was. I have received a variety of responses, such as, "What is Hakka?" or "What is that?" or people talking amongst themselves with many puzzling expressions.

Hakka is a culture. It's a language, and it's a heritage. It may not be found in Google Translate, it cannot be read nor can it be written, but it can be spoken. It's special to me and finding other Hakka speakers gets me excited every time.



My grandpa would occasionally tell me stories about where my ancestors came from—the Taibu village. Apparently, depending on which village your ancestors are from, the language is spoken differently. It's quite fascinating once you start looking into your roots. Therefore, I'd like to say that I am a proud Canadian Hakka Chinese art student, who would like to remind artists of slowly dying languages to keep their heritage intact. Even if many people have forgotten such a language, my artwork and name will always express my existence and the roots of my culture.

**Your work often has a monochromatic and soothing quality. What is the message or feeling you hope to convey to viewers through this style?**

The message I hope to convey is a sense of wonder through abstraction. Since the photographs reflect my expression during the shoot, it is often overlooked.

**What role do your parents and grandparents play in your artistic journey, and how have they influenced your vision?**



Growing up my family were always supportive of most things I do in life. They would consistently remind me of how much they were proud of me no matter if it was the smallest achievement ever to be known or a big opportunity like getting published in this magazine. They never stopped supporting me as I kept changing my interests in wanting to be a teacher, ballerina, photojournalist, news reporter, baker, photographer, graphic designer, and now hopefully a small business owner.

My grandma on my mom's side fully influenced me with an eye for art as she was the one who taught me how to draw during my childhood. She recently passed away late July of this year and was known as the artist of the family, an amazing cook, an art collector, and an admirer of a few Chinese artists. She believed in me and supported me along my journey, but was never able to make it to any of my recent milestones due to her diagnosis of dementia.

My grandpa never made it to learning of my interest in photography, but for me to find out he had an eye for photography now, is amazing.

**Do you have a particular process when approaching a new project, especially when working with multiple mediums?**

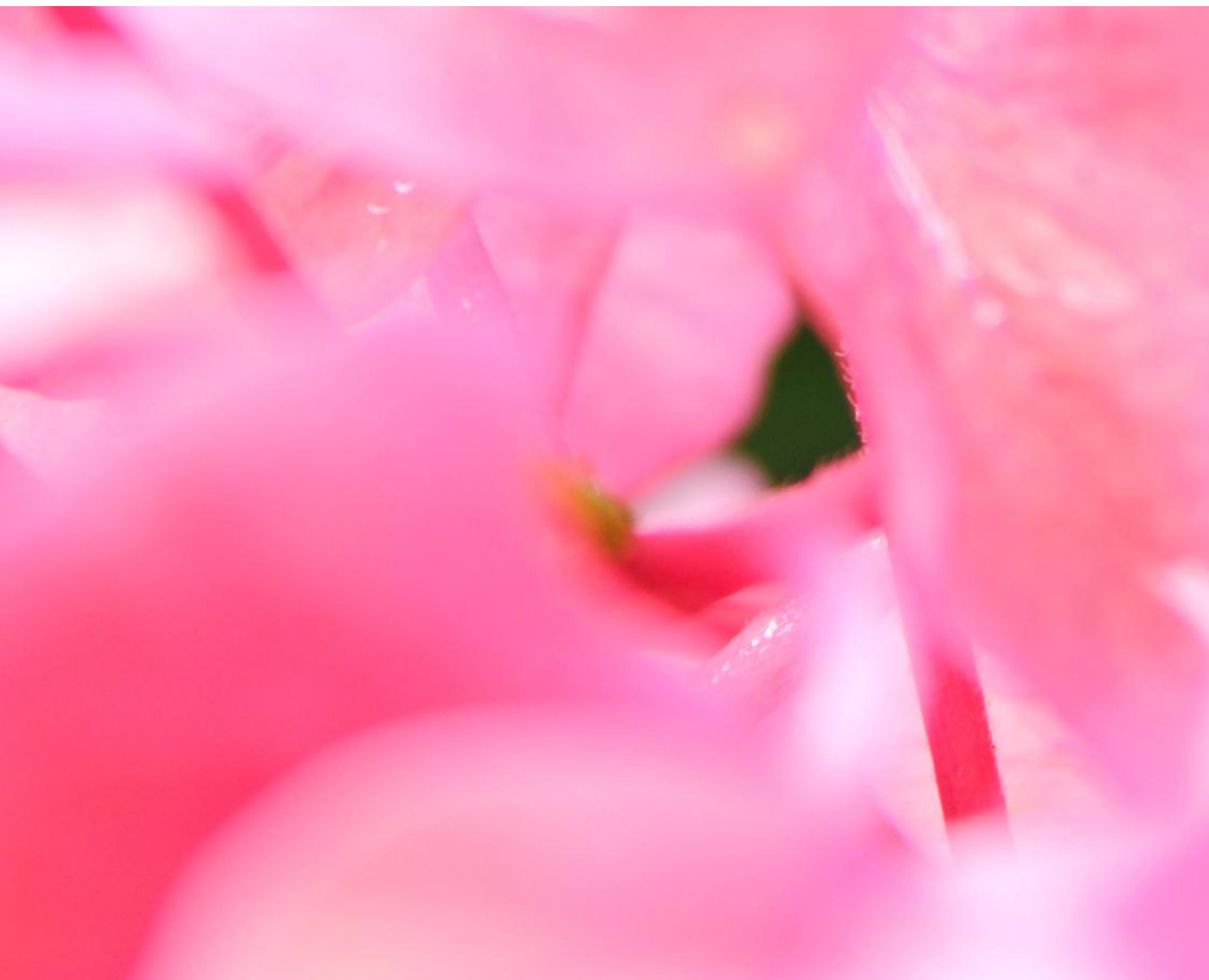
When I begin a new project it tends to start off from quite a funny story. My ideas tend to be inspired from random moments. For example, for my



pomegranate photograph it all began when I was craving for a pomegranate late at night. While I was taking the fruit apart, the vibrant, pinkish, reddish colour caught my eye as the juice gushed onto the cutting board. With the composition created from the miniature fruit juice puddles, it led me to succeed in creating many variations of reflection photographs of the fruit. In the end, my hunger for the fruit led to the creation of such a photograph.

Another approach on how I came to photograph the abstract image with a turquoise background and magenta blur all began when my grandma asked me to take pictures of her flowers from her garden. As many people are the type of person that likes to be recognized for their work, I present to you an abstract photograph, collaborated by my grandma, who planted the plants, and me, her granddaughter, who photographed it in my own art style. I could go on with how I have proceeded with many of my past projects, but it generally occurs out of the blue.





## — Interview

# Anna Stolbova

**Can you share your journey as an artist, particularly how your experience with Dymkovo toys influenced your creative vision?**

I have always drawn, ever since childhood—in school during lessons and in college during lectures. Although my primary profession (lawyer) has no connection to the path of an artist, it didn't stop me from periodically continuing to draw for myself.

Alongside my legal work, I spent a period of about 15 years professionally creating Dymkovo toys. Over time, I feel I outgrew Dymkovo toys. After all, it's more of a craft than serious



creativity. I began to crave new colors, different textures and materials, and freedom in the creative process, as Dymkovo toys are quite strictly regulated by the ancient traditions of folk art, leaving little room for creativity.

**What inspired you to pursue hyperrealism and join Aron Honore's Academy of Hyperrealism?**

I stumbled upon Aron Honore's Academy of Hyperrealism, quite by chance, you might say. I was simply bored and searching for something to inspire me—something to spark excitement and interest, something completely new to learn. I sincerely believe that life is a continuous process, and anything that stops moving either dies or regresses. For this reason, I prefer to keep moving, learning, discovering, and creating while I have the chance. Hyperrealism intrigued me because of its complexity, the technique involved, and the stunning results.

**The theme of 'Eternity' is central to your work. How do you translate this abstract concept into your art?**

I wouldn't say that eternity is a central theme in my work, but it does play a significant role. I find abstract ideas fascinating and take great pleasure in philosophy and theosophy. Like anyone inclined toward philosophical thinking, I





often entertain myself with thoughts and theories about how everything is structured, what lies beyond, and the essence of human life. As such, my works frequently touch on people's subconsciousness—their fears, hopes, and expectations. I enjoy evoking subconscious emotions in people through my art.

**Your work evokes the idea of forgotten gods awakening. What emotions or thoughts do you hope to elicit in viewers through this imagery?**

I mostly express my own emotions and reflections. I am fascinated by the world in its subtle manifestations, intrigued by what people believe in and the reality behind those beliefs. These themes often appear on my canvases.

**What techniques or materials do you use to create the striking texture and depth in your paintings?**

I work with acrylics. It's a rather challenging medium with its own peculiarities, but that makes it all the more interesting to work with. The hyperrealism technique allows for the creation and amplification of a sense of reality,



volume, and depth in a painting through meticulous attention to textures, the tiniest details, and enhancing the effects of light and shadow.

**How do you balance the intricate details of hyperrealism with the conceptual depth of your themes?**

Hyperrealism is a technique. It is not directly connected to the depth of a painting's theme. In hyperrealism, you can depict a simple shovel or "the theory of creation," and both works will be hyperrealistic and uniquely remarkable in their own way.

**What role does mythology or spirituality play in your creative process?**

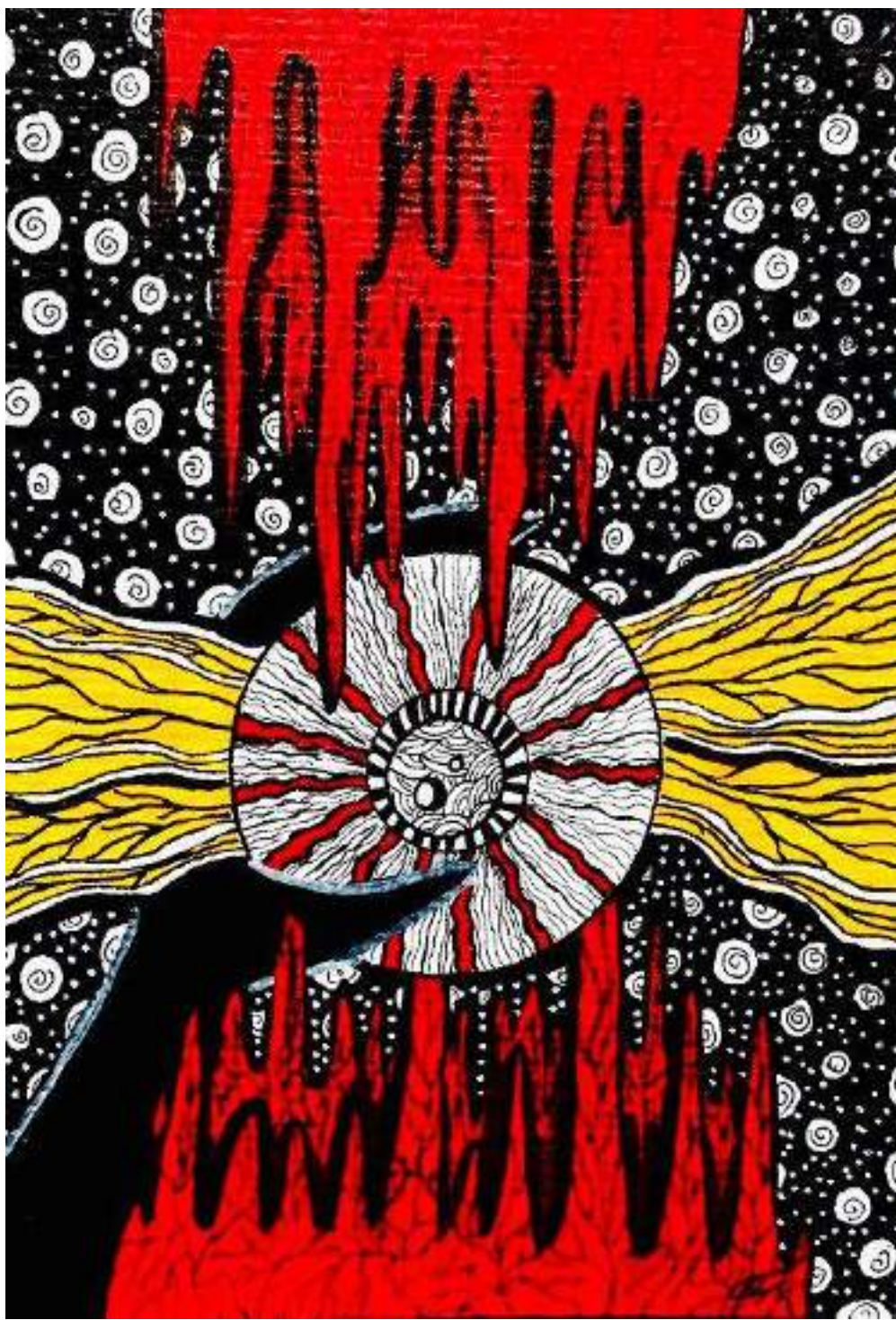
The theme of mythology and spirituality has always greatly interested me. I enjoy studying it periodically, so it often emerges in my work. I'm not interested in creating "empty" paintings without a second layer of meaning or a backdrop for contemplation.





## Darina Haraman

I have been engaged in creativity since childhood, seeing the world through the prism of my own vision and expressing it through art. I am originally from Mariupol, Ukraine, and now live in Cologne, Germany. I work in graphic techniques and photography. I find it impossible to choose between these two directions, so I try to dedicate time to both. In my paintings, each person finds their own meaning—what they see is a reflection of themselves. This is why I prefer not to give titles to my works. I create what I see in my mind and share it with others, but what they see in it is a question for each individual.



Darina Kharaman | Untitled | 2024







# — Interview

## Hector Jaime

**Can you share more about your journey as an artist? How did studying at the Pontifical Catholic University of Valparaíso and your exchange experience in Germany influence your artistic style and vision?**

As an artist, my journey has involved gathering knowledge over the years as I've developed my skills and artistic perspective. In this sense, my studies at the Pontifical Catholic University of Valparaíso were crucial. I learnt about the specific techniques in paintings and drawings, the concepts of the old masters and the modern and contemporary art through the history, that gave me a set of influence artists that resonate with my artistic view such as Francis Bacon, Vincent Van Gogh, Leonardo da Vinci, William Turner, Paul Cézanne. And the exchange experience in Germany evoked in me a complete change in my art as I could see in real life the artworks of the famous artists named.



Hector Jaime | Selfportrait | 2021

**Your statement mentions that you aim to impact viewers through your work. What emotions or reactions do you hope to evoke in those who view your portraits?**

My primary artistic goal is to elicit a visceral reaction of astonishment, allowing for a spectrum of emotional responses based on individual interpretation. This reaction, while ineffable, can be discerned through the expressive qualities of the artwork.

**How does your experience working as a mosaic artist at "Mosaika" influence your approach to oil painting and color application?**

My experience as a mosaic artist at "Mosaika" has significantly contributed to my comprehension of color and the precision demanded in artwork, specifically to contrast elements and balancing precision with artistic expression. Moreover, this exploration aims to discover innovative approaches to the construction of artwork, focusing on the importance of detail, encompassing both specific elements and an overall perspective.

**Color and contrast seem essential in your work. How do you decide on the color palette for each piece, and what role does color play in expressing identity in your portraits?**

The use of color in my works is fundamental, serving as a means to convey distinct light characteristics and to establish the compositional framework. The categorization of this specific type of light stems from observations made in my daily routine. This light, primarily originating from urban environments, is



Hector Jaime | Portrait | 2019-2020



further explored in my inquiries within diverse fields, such as portraiture and landscapes.

**Portraits are a primary subject in your work. What draws you to portraiture, and how do you approach capturing identity and expression in your subjects?**

Two fundamental aspects characterize my personal approach to portrait.

First of all, the symbolic nature of each portrait embodies the essence of my country and its influential figures, conveying their historical significance through the utilization of colors and brushstrokes.

Secondly, the paramount aspect is expression. To achieve a heightened impact on the viewer, I utilize expressive brushstrokes, contrast, and saturation within each part of the painting, while deliberately abstaining from using white tones in the faces.

**Your work is described as creating "shocking images." Can you explain what this means to you and how you achieve this effect through your technique?**

The pursuit of "shocking images" within my artwork hinges on the interplay between meticulous detail and bold expression. This dynamic tension between



Hector Jaime  
Portrait  
2019-2020



Hector Jaime | Portrait | 2019-2020

opposing forces is a fundamental element in each of my paintings.

The tension is accentuated through detailed rendering in focal areas of the painting, juxtaposed with the remainder of the composition, where swift brushstrokes and vibrant colors create a sense of dynamism.

**As an artist currently working and exhibiting in Montreal, how has the artistic community here influenced your work and career?**

The most significant aspect of being an artist in Montreal and participating in exhibitions is the opportunity to receive feedback from viewers, witness their reactions, and validate the ideas explored in my artwork.

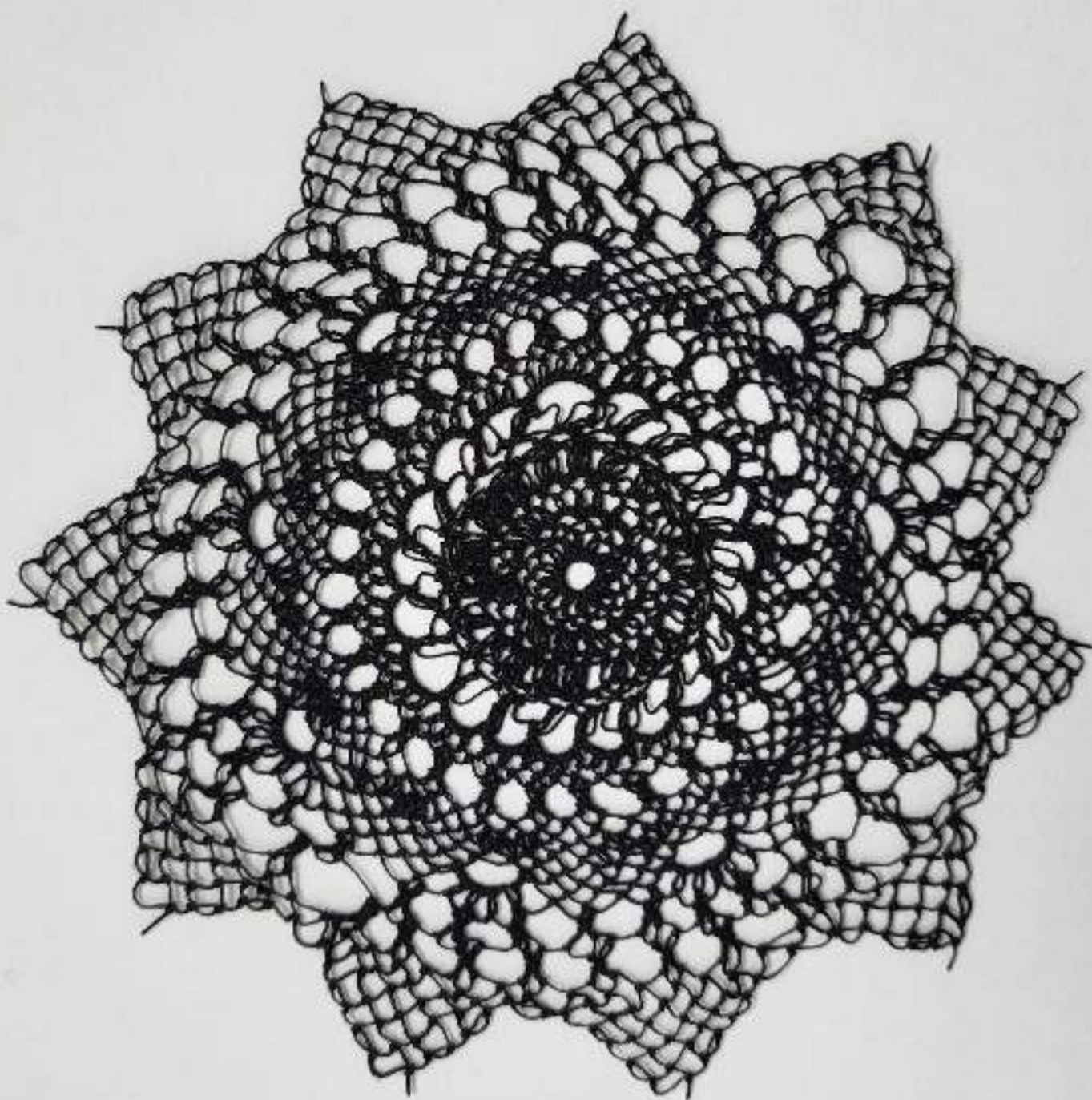
The ultimate aim of my artistic work is to evoke a response from viewers. Embracing both positive and negative feedback as a means of validating the impact of my artworks, ensuring that they cannot be disregarded.

**Stephanie Biczok** is a 21 year-old needle lace artist based in Ontario that primarily practices pure forms of lace. "Pure" meaning that all she uses is a single needle, thread and a pair of scissors. She is a life-long lover of textile arts, and also has experience in sewing, embroidery and knotted bracelets. Today, she mainly practices Armenian needle lace, and Tatting. With patience and determination, her goal is to reinvigorate the art of lace amongst the younger generation.

### *Artist Statement*

Created with only a single needle and sewing thread, Little Bones is a product of my drive to craft something intricate, delicate, and precise from the simplest materials. My creative process is straightforward—I let my imagination flow through my hands, wherever it may lead. The day I made Little Bones, I was not expecting incorporate as many intricate designs as I did. This piece includes ten complex needle lace designs, a result I impressed myself with, and one that I consider a success.





Stephanie Biczok | Little Bones | 2023

## Manuel Martin

### Early Life and Education

Manuel Martin was born on July 11, 1987, in Bad Neustadt, Bavaria, as the son of a painter. He showed a great interest in art from an early age. His first colors were created by himself by crushing blackberries. He trained as a painter, where he gained his first impressions of various styles and techniques, which he incorporates into his art.

### Style Development

Martin's style is known for his abstract works, characterized by rich colors and dynamic structures that come together to form powerful compositions of light and shadow. He works intensively with light and shadow, bringing them to the forefront. Through his use of oil paint, his works appear very vivid and colorful. Over time, he developed his own unique expression, defined by bold colors, light, and shadow.







# — Interview

## Izosceles

**Your work has a vibrant, playful quality reminiscent of pop cartoons. What inspired you to focus on this style, and how do you see it fitting into the broader art world?**

I, even as an adult, am still very much an avid consumer of pop cartoons such as The Simpsons, Bob's Burgers, The Powerpuff Girls (1998 series)—the list goes on! I just love the bright vivid colors coupled with the boundless storytelling that you can only achieve through a medium like cartoons or visual art.

As far as how I see it fitting into the broader art world: it has. It may cause audiences to do a double-take, especially if the majority of the art shown is classical painting and sculptures, but I believe it has its place amongst art that may not look closely like it.

**You mentioned that cartoons and fun visuals should be seen as seriously as fine art. How do you think audiences can start appreciating these styles in that way?**

I think audiences can start appreciating these styles by connecting it back to their lives. A good majority of us have grown up with cartoons, and cartoons, though simplified and exaggerated, still maintain and rely on fundamental artistic principles for them to even exist. So cartoons are art, just simplified and more palatable art.

**How has your approach to creating art evolved from your early days of drawing as a child to now as a professional artist?**

This may surprise a lot of people, but my approach has changed greatly. When I was a child, I would draw what would immediately

come to mind, even going so far as to draw over drawings I'd already drawn on paper. Your imagination is limitless and knows no bounds because the form of expression is so new and no one has yet told you what you cannot do. These days I try to create with intention and meaning even though on the surface a lot of the work could appear as though it's the opposite. I mentioned fundamental artistic principles, and now that those are tools that I've picked up along the way, I like to try to implement them into my work.

**Pop culture often plays a huge role in your work. Are there specific shows, movies, or other pop culture references that have influenced your style the most?**

Studio Ghibli. I love those cinematic masterpieces. There's always a lesson or important jewel embedded in the beauty of those films. It's almost like "hiding medicine in the candy."

**Your characters and scenes have a unique energy to them. How do you bring that liveliness to your work, and what techniques do you use to make them feel engaging?**

I feel like color specifically takes the credit for the liveliness in my work. Color as well as form, because a lot of the figures or people in my art move and behave in a way that is consistent with people who have either no bones or solid structure beneath them—they're able to get away with so much more.

**Do you think the digital medium plays a role in how audiences connect with your work?**

I think so, yes.

I feel like the fascination with digital art is still very much a thing. I think people think that it's very cool how someone can create something of substance by guiding a small cursor to something of great detail—even in the age of artificial intelligence. I feel like when I tell people I drew it on my computer, their eyes almost light up, meanwhile I don't feel as awestruck. Maybe it's because I've done it for so long and am desensitized to what I can accomplish.



**How do you feel about blending traditional and digital techniques?**

I feel like I haven't done it in a while; however, I am not against it.

I'm sure there will be days where an idea will hit me and I may not have my iPad or MacBook on hand and all I have is paper and a pencil. Once I get the idea drawn on paper, I can always scan it and add sauce to it to get it to how I see it in my head. That's blending at the very basic level. I can see myself adding paint or clay, glitter, or holographic elements to a canvas. Sure, why not?

**Can you share a bit about your creative process? How do you typically start a new piece, and what are the main steps you follow?**

At the risk of sounding like a broken record: I utilize fundamental artistic principles, and even more specifically, how I start something: I try to lay down basic shapes like circles, triangles, and rectangles to lay down a basic framework, and once that gets established, I get messy and sketch around those basic shapes to further establish what I'm trying to get out.



Izoseles | Y'ain't Goddu

## Helena Granger

I use dogs as both a metaphor and means of expressing my identity as an urban-born Native. Dogs largely represent domestication, so I feel an allegorical parallel with them, having been culturally “assimilated” since I had largely raised outside of the culture. The effects of colonialism were well felt by my family and I, both as a result of and resulting in our cultural disconnect. Despite these kinds of circumstances being a common experience for many Native people, it was incredibly isolating. My goals as an artist is to create the visual Indigenous representation I needed when I was younger, and to celebrate our collective resilience.







# — Interview

## ilmo

**Could you share the inspiration behind your use of small animal or child characters in your work?**

The use of small animals came from a short course of drawing which I attended a few years back. There was a section within the class where they had us draw wild animals including quokka, puffin etc. The practice of drawing these creatures led me to draw various animals, first in its original form and gradually in articulated shapes of small animal characters that I include in most of my projects.

Drawing child characters started from childhood memories, where I used to ponder in nature and play with the surroundings.

**How do your studies in fashion and animation influence your approach to illustration and painting?**

Studying fashion gave me an insight to approach visual creations with a design related perspective, as in focusing how it could connect with the public more. As for the animation studies, it has taught me how to create stories and characters based on emotion and intuition while exploring my inner self as an artist.



ilmo | Spring | 2022



ilmo | Daytime Question | 2022

**Many of your works seem to focus on nature and life. What draws you to these themes, and what messages do you hope to convey through them?**

It happened naturally while walking in nature, especially back in the years when I was trying to figure things out in life. I would take short and long walks in parks nearby, which kind of became a habit and also a solution to my creative blocks, when they occur. While walking I would observe nature and absorb its positive energy, reflect or mix it with the daily happenings in life to make art. Through this activity, I would often include messages of love for nature and gratitude towards small things in daily life in my art.

**Your art feels very narrative-driven. Do you have specific stories in mind when you create, or do you let the narrative emerge organically?**

I think I go back and forth on planning and improvising on stories behind my creations, since I would have a profile or description set in mind for the characters and scenery I draw, but some might end up somewhere different as I go.



**Do you have a favorite medium, or is it the theme and concept that determine your choice of medium for each piece?**

I am open to all kinds of mediums from traditional to digital ones. Therefore it would be the theme and concept that determines the choice.

**What role does your cultural background play in your artwork, and how has it shaped your artistic voice?**

Although I am currently based in Asia, specifically in Korea, and some elements of it could be portrayed in my projects, experiences of living in both the US and Korea along with their cultures while growing up plus also having spent several years in Singapore, which is a multicultural and multilingual city via country, as an adult has made me focus on what is more global and appealing to the world. This has been somewhat reflected in my art since I would explore what I could produce to interact with diverse people from everywhere.

**If you could give advice to young artists interested in both animation and painting, what would you tell them?**



ilmo | Space of One's Own | 2022

Being interested in both fields makes me assume that the young artist is open to crossing boundaries of different forms of art. So I would say, explore and experiment because what is out in the world is not everything. And above all, I hope they can follow their heart and passion!



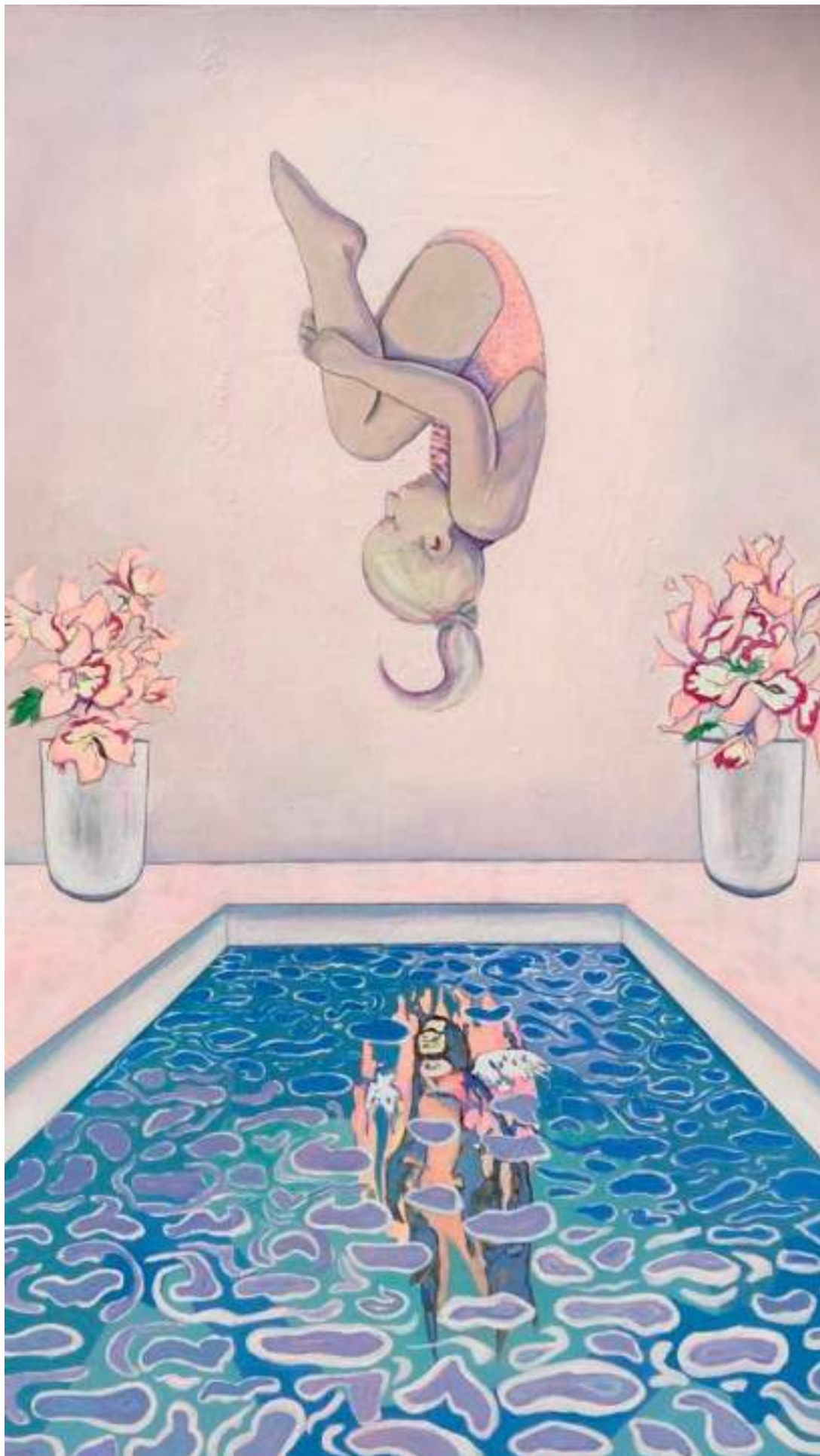
ilmo | Star | 2022

**Carlene Lillford** was educated in Fine art at 'London University' and was awarded an honours in her Bachelor of Arts degree. Lillford then continued on to become an art teacher, having taught globally at "The American University" in London and 'Alicante University' in Costa Blanca Spain. Lillford specialised in fine art, having excelled in realism, draughtsmanship, oil painting, mixed media and acrylics. Her portraiture works have been included in private collections in the UK, Spain, Ireland the US and Greece. After returning to Australia and moving to a farm with unique biodiversity, she was inspired to work with sculptural elements of nature, incorporating mixed mediums such as; sand, seaweed and driftwood into her works. Lillford also conducted art therapy lessons on her property in Bellingen, NSW, connecting people directly with nature. After finding inspiration from making a tree change, she developed the series "A closer look" which explores the natural beauty found in solitude and flowers. She began experimenting with colour and her new found freedom, creating her collection "Frida Kahlo", using vivid colour, short hand of line, geometric shapes and block colour. Her work explores many natural elements, however after assisting a fashion show in Vancouver fashion week 2023, her focus changed to an interest in AI and new technology and is exploring that through her collection "The birth of AI".

### *Project Statement*

The series "The Birth of AI" questions the possibilities of where technological advances could lead us in the future. She draws inspiration from a collaboration between Maia Lillford and Bektur Ryskeldiev who took Wearing Maia's previous fashion collections and fed them into a StyleGAN2 model which generated the distorted faintly human figures. Carlene then took this one step further and turned the AI generated artworks back into traditional artwork using acrylic on canvas. Her work challenges the use of AI in society and future implications it may have.





Carlene Lillford | Birth Of AI | 2024

## — Interview

# Prudence Audié

**Your background in philosophy and plastic arts is unique. How does this interdisciplinary foundation shape your artistic process?**

The guiding problem of my artistic and philosophical work is the same. It's about knowing whether our relationship with nature today can still be meaningful, whether nature without divine or metaphysical transcendence can make sense to us. Is a solitary encounter with nature still possible? Or is the only thing to be found in solitude nothingness?

Combining my artistic and philosophical studies has enabled me to reflect constantly on the relationship between concepts and images. Painting has given me just the right distance from the sensitive experience of nature that is at the root of my questioning: it can express this experience through direct, immediate perception, but it also seeks to understand it by exploring various links between concepts and points of view through the characters it depicts.

**Your work often explores the relationship between humanity and nature. How do you personally define this relationship, and how has it evolved through your art?**

I search the world over for places where nature reveals itself in all its materiality. For me, a journey is a moment of recollection. The starting point for each painting is the sensitive



experience of a place, the experience of what I call 'the elemental': a space where some of the multiple forms of expression of the 'elements' fire, air, water and earth are expressed, and where our kinship with the elemental can be felt directly. The elemental then appears as the foundation of the living, circulating through the organic and the inorganic. For me, nature is neither an object of study available to us, nor a transcendent ideal, nor the reflection of a the human soul. I would like to think about nature from the elemental point of view, by placing human beings back among the living creatures.

The relationship with nature in its elemental dimension is approached from the feminine point of view, both in my paintings and in my poetic work. I try to understand the place of the human being within the living world, but also the place of women. In my stories and paintings, I imagine female characters who withdraw from the social world. I want to show that women can exist outside the realm of desire. These women also often have childlike features. I don't want to show the



disproportion of nature in the face of humans, but the difficulty of choosing an isolated lifestyle for a woman, by expressing a certain feeling of vulnerability.

**In your project statement, you question the role of myth and the sacred in our perception of nature. Can you elaborate on how these concepts influence your paintings?**

On the one hand, mythological divinities are projections of the human point of view on nature. This gives the elements a human face, as in the painting representing Mount Etna, 'The Divine or the Elemental'. On the other hand, my artistic work seeks to represent the elemental as a form of living being that obeys a different temporality and measure, but that circulates through us, that attracts the figure and imposes itself on him. For me, this reflection on this alterity that constitutes us is a way of thinking about the divine without introducing transcendence.

**Your pieces seem to evoke a dialogue between the elemental and the human. What do you hope viewers will feel or reflect upon when experiencing your work?**

I'd like to share this sensitive experience of the 'elemental' by encouraging viewers to see nature in a different way, in all its materiality:



Prudence Audie | The Divine or the Elemental | 2022



Prudence Audie | Experience of the Elemental (Punta Chiappa) | 2024

I'd like them to become attentive to detail, to marvel at all the ways in which the 'elements' express themselves, and to discover in them another form of life.

**Your PhD research on the Pre-Socratic philosophy of Empedocles focuses on nature. How has this research directly impacted the themes and style of your paintings?**

My research work allows me to question the notions that shape my relationship with nature: the living, the human, the elemental. I became interested in the thought of Empedocles because there is a double dimension to the materiality of nature: the 'elements' have a material face and a divine face. The mythological deities express the multiple forms of the elements. This tension in Empedocles' poem corresponds to the problem that concerns me in my artistic and poetic work.

**Your poetry and painting are deeply connected. Could you share more about how your poetic writings inspire or complement your visual art?**

Each painting is a representation of this experience of the 'elemental' in nature: it captures and analyses this experience. The painting is the choice of a place whose sensitive characteristics - the light, the colours, the type of vegetation, the rocks, the spatial configuration, etc. - reveal the presence of the elemental in nature, as well as the connections between beings, the continuity between the organic and the mineral. The poetic writing seeks to define these notions, to identify the concepts that enable us to analyse and understand this experience of the 'elemental'. Each canvas is therefore also an articulation of concepts.

Description plays an important role in my poetic work: I write with the place I might be painting in front of my eyes. By this I don't mean that I'm trying to give an 'aestheticised' vision of nature. Rather, through writing as through painting, I want to encourage people to perceive nature differently, in other words, to be attentive to the details and sensitive appearances through which the 'elemental' manifests itself.

Writing poetry has also enabled me to attach particular importance to the point of view on the canvas. I like to multiply the perspectives in my texts. Each canvas depicts one or more characters who may have different attitudes to



Prudence Audie | Thampos (Sacred Stupor) | 2022

nature. In the painting 'Experience of the Elemental Skogafoss', for example, there is a character in the ice cave trying to classify what she sees in a notebook, a character climbing a glacier with equipment and the character in the foreground splashed by the waterfall. These three different attitudes to nature should make it possible to clarify the concept of the 'elemental': it should not be sought after but should surprise us, imposing itself on us in an immediate sensitive experience.

**In an era where nature is seen as a ressource, your work invites us to see it differently. What role do you believe art plays in reshaping societal perceptions of nature**

Painting is a long and solitary process. For me, it's a way of celebrating nature: choosing this retreat from the world to paint a place that deserves our time. The paintings often show people concentrating on their work, whether they are sculpting, cooking, angling or drawing, and yet they enter into correspondence by sharing the space of the painting. In this way, I want to show that painting creates invisible links not only between living beings, by showing the dialogue between the organic, the mineral and the elemental, but also between people through the sharing of this experience.

Prudence Audie | Experience of the Elemental (Skogafoss) | 2023







**Valeria Di Santo**, born in 1999 and resident in Nova Siri, graduated in Graphics at the Academy of Fine Arts in Lecce with top marks; she continues her specialization in Graphics for Communication, a passion that is accompanied by photography, which she has always been attracted to since she was a child. She follows workshops and masters in Italy and abroad, exploring different perspectives and styles in the vast world of photography; she loves portraits and landscapes. She participates in exhibitions in Lecce and its province, Brindisi, Venice, Nova Siri, Montegiordano, Trieste, Granada. She does an internship at an important museum (MUST) in Lecce as an exhibit designer together with a cultural association Studio Concreto. She contributes as a photographer to the publication of the PNA '22 book. She becomes part of various editorial publications with important publishing houses. She continues to always look for new opportunities, aware of a climb that will lead her to her personal success.

*Project Statement*

**"Spes Ultima Dea"** This black-and-white photograph captures a serene woman lying beside roses, her closed eyes immersed in a deep dream. The image radiates peace and invites multiple interpretations. The roses symbolize love and beauty, enriching the atmosphere of positivity. The woman's dreaming expression draws the viewer into an introspective journey, suggesting not just physical rest but an immersion in imagination and hope. The monochromatic palette enhances the emotional depth, focusing on the evocative interplay between the figure and her surroundings. A universal message emerges: hope, like a seed, can flourish even in adversity, nurturing resilience and envisioning a brighter future. This work celebrates inner strength and the transformative power of dreams, inspiring viewers to reflect on their own aspirations and the enduring potential of hope.







# — Interview

## Mimi Coté

**Growing up in a musical family, how your early exposure to music influenced your journey in visual arts?**

Our Québec City house built by our grand-father in 1921 was home to an eclectic cacophony. On the first floor all day long mother listened to opera and piano while rock 'n' roll music played by my three brothers made its way up from the basement. We the three girls, played the piano and sang along our favourite folk singers on the top floor. Was it not just natural when so many artists, musicians and painters, preceded us in the genealogical tree?

At the dinner table where we were reunited percussions were at their best with the beat pulsed with the forks and knives, on the resonating plates and glasses. Yes, there was a stylistic free for all that allowed for every form of art. At that time mother was studying art history and we were the “flower power” generation. So, I soon started to paint.

**You discovered a passion for art at a young age in Charlevoix. How did the landscape and community of Charlevoix shape your artistic vision?**

Charlevoix had always been a magnet for artists, Canadian and Québécois painters flocked to the rugged county with its mountains and capes plunging into the Saint Lawrence River, its indomitable nature softened by its villages and people. That's where the family for generations spent the summers. There my parents enrolled me at age 7 in drawing classes given by Geneviève Desgagnés, a local artist who taught in the attic of her gorgeous old home. What marked



me the most was that day when she asked us to draw our fellow students pretending to play cards around a small table. What fascinated me most was to realize that each one of the kids had a specific expression that made them look the way they did. The discovery of the art of the portrait filled me with a joyous passion. A few summers later I met with Genevieve's cousin. He organized concerts of singers/songwriters who were then popular in Québec. A whole world opened for me as I was exposed to the best of the Québécois leading talents. He also made me participate in the preparation of the show posters. I learned from him that listening to music while creating was boosting the surprise and joy that accompany creation. Frequenting those two cousins certainly triggered the start of my artistic journey. Louis' favourite singer was Donovan, and the following Christmas I asked my parents for that same Donovan's album. I played my first record over and over again, trying to turn into illustrations the emotions that this enchanting music was bringing back. Emotions became too strong to live by painting only and poetry helped me focus on my emotions. Writing poems came very early and each new summer in Charlevoix brought its load of inspiration. The beach became my atelier. I painted in watercolour the many familiar faces that had become so dear to me. “And the seasons they go round and round” (Joni Mitchell).



**Could you tell us more about the transition from painting landscapes and portraits of friends to creating works from your imagination at age 14? What inspired this shift?**

I guess I was predisposed, growing up in an environment favourable to the arts, attracted by the poetic side of life. A small discovery intrigued me when I retrieved from the bottom of a closet a half-filled watercolour set that had belonged to my very conservative aunt. Alongside laid reproductions of Marie Laurencin's watercolours, a female artist inspired by Picasso and the poet Jean Cocteau.

Without hesitation, I added wings to my characters, animals entered my canvases and were given starring roles, windows opened to many observers. Everyday scenes took a symbolic signification. I had entered the realm of imagination with its mysteries and powers.

**How did your studies at the Ontario University of Art contribute to your development as an artist, and what did the Forsyth scholarship mean to you?**



I was thrilled to be at the college. Bill Poole in printmaking, Louis de Niverville in collage, Franklin Arbuckle in mural painting and my dear Mary Corelli in costume and fashion design all coached me fantastically. I was enthused with the many alleys of creation that were opening before me. I had my first group exhibition at the francophone cultural center. Then I joined drawing workshops outside of the school. My friends and I loved a Montréal band called Harmonium, Toronto was filled with the sculptures of the great British artist Henry Moore who donated many of his works to the city. And after hours, I frequented the speakeasy just across the street from me. I met there many emerging artists, actors and musicians like Peter and Dan Aykroyd, Mary Margaret O'Hara whom at that time was my hero.

All that came to an end with my graduation. The evening of the ceremony I was a little surprised to hear my name called twice, a first time to receive my diploma in Fine Arts and General Studies and then I returned to the stage to accept the Forsyth Scholarship. I could not be proud because I didn't really know what it meant... I would soon find out.

The summer following graduation I had the privilege to spend an afternoon with Québec's great painter Jean-Paul Lemieux. I arrived at his home with a selection of my drawings and paintings. I couldn't believe it when he paid a large sum of money for one of my portraits. We spent the afternoon in his wonderful garden. With all sorts of flowers I had never seen and

popping here and there to my great joy many sculptures.

**The Elizabeth Greenshield Foundation allowed you to study under Franklin Arbuckle in Florence. How did this experience in Italy influence your artistic style and perspective?**

Yes, thanks to the grant I could travel and live in Florence under the umbrella of the OCDA offcampus program. The artist Franklin Arbuckle asked me to become his assistant. That fabulous experience totally changed my life. The first time I sat in front of La Primavera di Botticelli, brought the word creation to another level. And that's when the word beauty was born for me. One could almost feel the presence and the influence of the Medici everywhere. The shop windows, the architecture, the gardens, the clothes, even the shoes were all influenced by the Florentines' understanding of beauty. By osmosis if I may say, a maturity appeared in my work under Franklin Arbuckle. "Archie" managed to get me out of my comfort zone, forced me out, encouraged me not to be afraid of change. From pastel and softness my work became more dramatic. Contrasts, strong contrasts imposed themselves. I practiced a new technique of watercolour mixed with oil, that allowed surprises in my work. Freedom appeared in my learning process as did deeper exploration of the medium.

While in Italy I continued to nourish my passion for words and melodies. I discovered Lucio Dalla, Pino Daniele, Claudio Baglione. I returned many times to Florence afterwards to be with my dear friend Rita who every morning took me in and around the city to paint a new garden. They were the works of her father-in-law, Pietro Porcinai, the greatest garden designer of the 20th century. And I went from surprise to surprise... That journey was followed by an exhibition in Québec city the Porcinai gardens where Rita appears.

**Your work often features decorated frames as part of the expression. What is the**

**significance of these frames, and how do they complement your artwork?**

You may laugh at the simplicity of the answer. I like when the canvas becomes object, and it becomes object thanks to the painted frame! The motifs: flowers, fish, birds add a sense of poetry to the subject of the painting itself.

**You've been part of numerous exhibitions and even collaborated on a mural at the Baie-SaintPaul symposium. How has participating in these projects impacted your artistic journey?**

Apart from my Florence experience my presence at the symposium of Baie-Saint-Paul in 1984 was the second chance in my life to be exposed to a day-to-day life with the same group of artists. We were painting together, eating together, sharing artistic experiences between us but also with the visitors of the symposium. In my case members of the public were also participating as models. I included them in the mural.

**Could you share some insights into your current mural project, which includes nine portraits in hand-painted frames? What message or emotion are you hoping to convey through this piece?**

What I am trying to convey in that mural is that we are all unique, individual human beings placed in a group situation, or framed if you prefer, whether in houses, buildings, schools, churches, institutions. Alone but part of the group, reunited by the frames.

\*You will find some of my songs on YouTube. Look for Mimi Coté "Black Bay" "Au fond de leurs yeux" "Sous le couvercle de la nuit" and more. I produced that album with the fabulous Montreal pianist Guillaume Martineau. The studio experience was magical, one of my musical highlights.







## **Gabriella Varadi**

I am retired. My favorite hobby is painting, I have been painting pictures for 30 years.







## — Interview

# Arthur Sangster

**How has your upbringing in Saint Louis, MO, influenced your approach to art and the themes you explore in your work?**

I want to say that my upbringing in St. Louis influenced my work or how I approached it. By growing up in an environment that was hetero centric and toxic masculine, Queer identity wasn't really a topic, except for when it was discussed in a demeaning way through some people my age, within my neighborhood as a kid and the older people on the persona non grata side of my family, especially, regarding religious justification for their anti-LGBTQ mentality. One side of the family is different from the other; I am closer to my mom's side and they've been supportive of me. when I came out about my sexual orientation during my late teens and early 20's.

So, I used this experience I've had with my upbringing to create themes in my paintings like: how religion played a part of me suppressing my true self, and expressing many aspects of being a gay person navigating dating while being fresh and young out of the closet. Having a boyfriend who I was off and on with, then he had ghosted me, only to hear about him passed away at a really young age.

**Your paintings often incorporate text and figurative elements. How do you decide which quotes or phrases to include in your works, and what role does text play in your storytelling?**

My decision to use quotes in my works are based on if they are relatable to the story about a



Arthur Sangster | Ghosted

specific situation within a painting and the role text plays in my storytelling is the fact that the figure said the quote has been in a similar situation that is related to the painting. Quotes in my work serve the role of getting the viewer to spend a little more time with my painting as if it is a short story about a person or a particular experience. At least that the idea I am going for when I place quotes or phrases into my work.

**What is your creative process like? Do you start with a concept, a specific quote, or an emotion when creating a new piece?**

My creative process is reliving past experience or present experiences or what I've seen from being active on apps like: glowlr and twitter (now x), taking those elements from the process along with research for the topic, and using those things as a part of my concept for a work.

I think about a specific quote or lyric from a song, even. Then I would take my sketchbook and play around with compositions with the text and figures in the sketch, then I pick a color combination that relates to the subject matter for my paintings. And colored the sketch with color pencils to get an idea of how it will look. I used to make a sketch with oil paint on canvas paper, but I haven't done that lately. I just do the sketch in my book and then go straight to painting.

**You've participated in group shows in Chicago and beyond. How has being part of these**



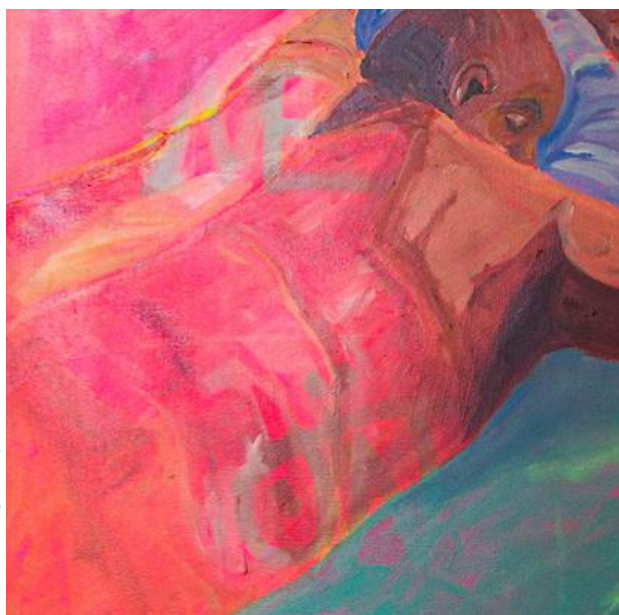
## **creative communities impacted your artistic growth?**

It made me realize that I am on the right path and I just have to do work exploring how to create more of a story in my work. At least that's what I've been told by a residency I have applied for, but I didn't make the final rounds for the selection process. But they give me a critique regarding this.

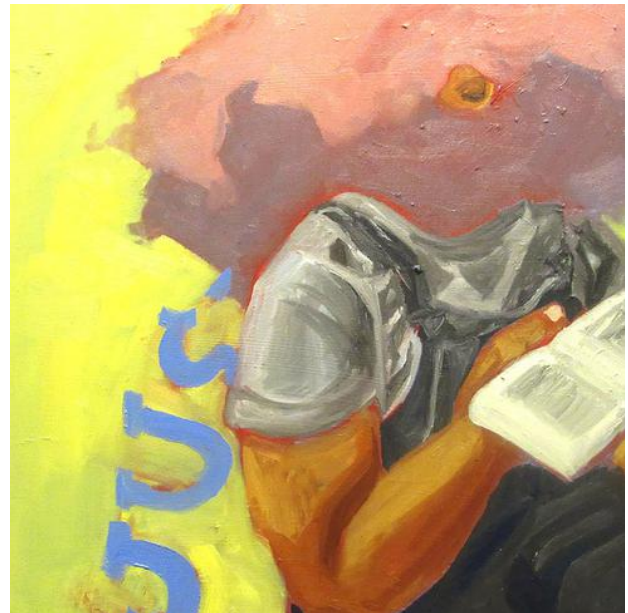
## **Could you explain how your experiences on dating apps have shaped the visual language of your paintings?**

My experiences on the dating apps influenced the visual language in my work by being a documentation of things sent to me by people on the app, like I have made a painting of a guy messaging me a bunch of times to have a video chat and to open my private pics. In some of the paintings I've done, I have taken elements like: color design and logos from the apps I used. Incorporated them into a painting with a image box or text of imaging what will be my reaction to them in my head, for example: In one painting I've painted an image of myself as Saturn devouring a person who send me a picture of them giving another BIPOC gay man fellatio, within the painting.

## **As a recipient of the David and Reva Logan Foundation Grant, how has this recognition influenced your practice or opened new**



Arthur Sangster | SADA



Arthur Sangster | Cloud Leisure Afternoon Leisure

## **opportunities?**

It helped get me into shows and made me take my artistic career more seriously, despite I have a BFA and a dean at every critique lecture that remind us that we owed it to ourselves to create our work that influence taking my practice serious, but being a recipient of this grant really nailed down what i have been advised by my professors to be or do as an artist.

## **What is your vision for the evolution of your art practice in the coming years? Are there new themes or mediums you'd like to explore?**

My vision for the evolution in my practice is to hopefully have a sustainable successful career and continue to have the ability to produce my work and grow as an artist, work on bigger paintings and hopefully get my work into a well-known and admired gallery in major art capitals of the world. Right now, I am going to do figure paintings of Gay BIPOC men who i am friends with as a part of a series that is influenced by concepts from Romanticism.

I want to work with ink, oil pastels, pencil, charcoal and powder graphite and maybe be able to have the skill to work with spray paint, I am pretty open ended with the mediums I would like to explore. I know I would like to do more work with gouache and do more mixed media works.

I would like to write more, especially poetry and maybe do a comic zine.



## Terrell John

I was born in Miami, Florida, but my artistic roots are deeply influenced by my upbringing in the vibrant cultural tapestry of Trinidad and Tobago. Having spent all of my life on the twin islands, my work often reflects the rhythms, colors, and stories of Caribbean life. While also blending with themes of identity, faith, and the mental woes i struggled with internally while migrating to the US.

### *Artist Statement*

My pieces are often made with bright vibrant colors, with slight hidden details - some more apparent than others- that reflect the struggles I were dealing with at the time.









# — Interview

## Mia Fairouz

**Could you tell us about your artistic journey? What made you decide to become an artist?**

As I child, I dreamed of being an actress but I knew that wasn't allowed in my family. So, I found an 'acceptable' alternative and didn't even complete that path because I was burned out. I had to lie about studying Illustration at first because I didn't want to deal with the unnecessary backhanded comments and pressure from them. It, sometimes, feels better when they didn't know that I was studying Illustration. I remember at the age of 15, where I would be constantly asked of which career path should I follow. Deep down, I knew that I could not afford to say I don't know. I made choices that didn't consider, whether or not it was the right fit for me nor what I actually wanted to do.

I had trial evening classes at acting school and I did enjoy until I started to realise that acting was not for me. I hated memorising lines. I enjoyed the exercises and the people were kind but I couldn't see myself doing acting in the long run. That was around the same time I went to expressionism workshops with Safy Farid. I feel more at ease when I make art and exploring and making pieces based on my emotions and perception of the World. Ever since I started making art, my life became clearer and much more satisfying. I am doing activities that I always wanted to do such as reading more and not being dependent on social media.

**How has your background from Bangladesh and your experience studying in Germany influenced your work?**

My bangladeshi background has inspired me to be my authentic myself. I learned more about my culture. Moving to Germany really allowed me to develop as a person because all of the my hidden desires came out. Studying in Germany means that I have more freedom to be explore topics such as sexuality without being



judged. In my city, you can see lots of graffiti in the streets and they are quite nice. I also get to travel to museums sometimes for class trips and I saw many interesting exhibitions. There are so many opportunities within and nearby Germany where I get to develop as an artist.

**Your work spans various mediums, including printmaking, photography, drawing, and painting. Do you have a preferred medium, and if so, why?**

Each medium is special so it is difficult to have a favourite. Sometimes it depends on my mood. However my favourites would be drawing, printmaking and photography as I don't paint often. With printmaking such as lino cutting, I can be experimental and stuff that I thought were mistakes, actually made my pieces better. Photography has allowed me to relax and be more flexible. I get to work more with others compared to my other mediums, where I tend to work more independently.

It has pushed me to talk to strangers. I enjoy documentary photography at the moment because in the future, we get to see documents of the past and it's really interesting to see how life from years ago is similar and or different from the present. Painting is something that I enjoy but I feel like I need the entire day free. I paint rarely just because I have 3 go-to mediums and currently, I am doing multiple



University-related projects. I am also working a student job to help my own independence and make my own dreams come true.

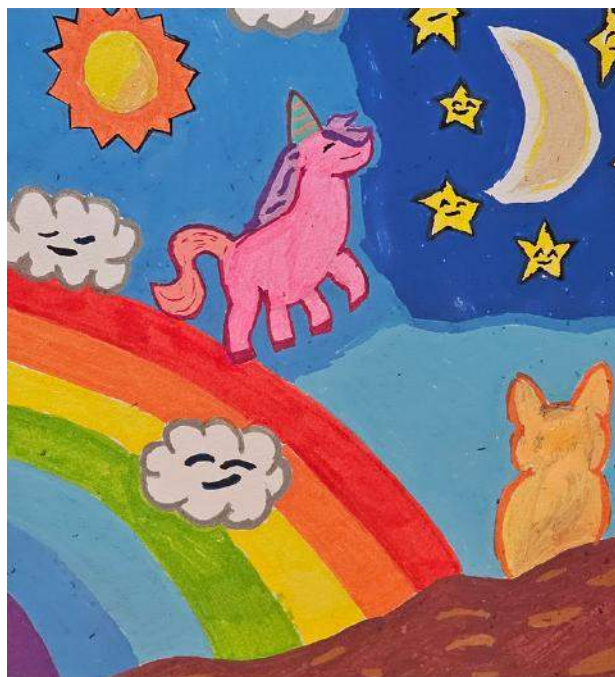
**You mentioned that expressionism workshops played a key role in discovering your passion for art. How have these workshops influenced your style and approach?**

They allow me to be more open and experimental. I am still learning but even after five or ten years, there will still be more to discover. There are so many techniques within each medium. For instance, I, recently, took a screenprinting workshop with Kelly Stewart where I printed the layers by hand instead of using a computer. It was so eye opening to see how different materials create textured effects. I was introduced to new materials such as a lithographic pencil which created a beautiful effect. It made me enjoy screenprinting much more than I did when I did it last semester at my university. I am excited to explore creating screenprints layers by hand and play around with materials and different effects. With workshops, I have guidance and advice which helps me for my future pieces as well.

**Many artists face self-doubt at some point in their careers. How did you overcome your initial self-limiting beliefs about your artistic abilities?**

I started making art around a year ago and starting my artistic journey as an adult felt easier than when I did art during school. School gives grades and numbers to your art work. Having strict parents who care about the number of As I got than my efforts, meant that I focused on grades and numbers during high school. It got a point that I stopped taking Drama after grade 9. It took years for me to unlearn the values that led me to burnout out.

Art is subjective and its ok for your work to not be 100% perfect and or realistic. There are many different styles and you can make your own style. What I really love about printmaking is that each piece is never the

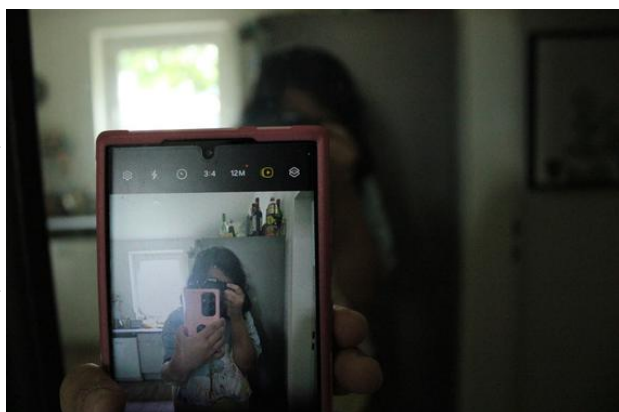


Mia Fairouz | Unicorn flying | 2024

same. Some pieces are lighter than others. Some have different marks which makes a really cool effect. It's great and sometimes frustrating when i'm doing reduction prints due to misalignment. A lot of printmaking involves exploring and trying new techniques and it doesn't need to according to plan. Once I spent time with other artists and made my own pieces. I enjoyed the process more than being considered good with my technical skills.

**You're currently taking photography electives—how has photography affected your approach to other forms of art?**

Currently, I am working on a photobook for my university course that deals with my artistic journey and a series of comics potraying situations that I dealt with as a Bangladeshi immigrant. I just did three new linoprints when I visited Edinburgh to also take photos for my photobook. My concepts come from my desire to be myself without these nonsense expectations (especially as a woman) put on by my family and cultural society. Its also allows people be seen. Some of pieces may push boundaries but it helps me deal with the stuff that I experienced. Photography has inspired me to blend reality and fantasy to make really thought provoking pieces. Recently, I was looking at other self potrait photographers and I found some such as Liu Susiraja and Ahn Jun. I love how refreshing both their photos are and they inspires me. I just want my pieces to be honest and provoke emotions exactly the way films,books and other pieces of art made me feel especially as a child. I also make pieces to let the scribbles in my head unscribble itself.



Mia Fairouz | Mirror selfie | 2024

**Millie Butler** (b. 2000) is a British-Irish emerging artist based in London. Working across painting, drawing, writing, poetry, and sculpture, her work delves into themes of loss, grief, and identity. She has curated exhibitions for the Feminist Library in Peckham, assisted digitising their archives, and written reviews and articles for their website. Her written and visual poetry has appeared in Heroica magazine and zines for the Assemblage Collective. Millie has also worked as an exhibition assistant at Site Gallery, Sheffield. She holds a History BA and is currently pursuing a Graduate Art Diploma at Goldsmiths, aiming to complete an MFA.





## *Artist Statement*

I am a transdisciplinary artist working across painting, sculpture, and film, using materials like, surgically sewn silicone, and sound to explore themes of grief, illness, where it is often hidden behind hospital walls and challenging the ideal human body. I explore these themes through the specific lens of breast cancer and terminal illness- subjects I have often found difficult to broach. However, after speaking with people who have had similar experiences with illness, grief etc, I have seen and felt how important it is to talk about it and realising you're not alone. These conversations have become a catalyst for me, and it has become really important to make these themes the nucleus of my work in order to challenge the cultural repression of grief in the western world (particularly after Covid), and share lived experiences for people to know they're not alone. My work aims for viewers to physically engage with my art to re-socialise the experience of bereavement, showing that grief is not just doom and gloom but can also include humour and absurdity. In my practice, I work with tactile materials that evoke fragility and resilience. Sawdust is both ephemeral and grounding, while silicone sewn in surgical patterns mimics skin. I also use everyday objects like balloons as symbols of organs, introducing a playful element that reflects the absurdity of the body, even in grief. By placing these materials in unexpected contexts, I invite viewers to rethink their relationship with the body and grief. My work aims to break the stereotype of grief as purely sombre. I believe it holds a range of emotions, including irony and humour, and I hope to open space for reflection and dialogue around these ideas.

# — Interview

## Sasha Polgar

**Your background in art seems rich, growing up in a family of artists. How did your early experiences influence your creative style?**

You're absolutely right—growing up in a family of artists is a unique experience. On one hand, it's an incredible privilege to be immersed in the world of art from childhood, absorbing various styles and approaches. I vividly remember watching my grandfather as he lovingly crafted his enchanting illustrations, so rich in detail and deeply rooted in Russian folklore. His work breathed history and tradition. My parents, especially my father, were more drawn to modern Western art, which was freer, more experimental, and filled with bold colors. This duality—a connection to my roots combined with a desire to keep up with the times—has shaped my style. I feel like I'm always searching, moving between figurative and abstract, realism and expressionism. And this journey of exploration will probably never end.

**Your works are created using mixed media and collage techniques. What draws you to this combination of mediums, and how does it serve your artistic vision?**



I've always been fascinated by texture and layers. Mixed media allows me to create surfaces with depth and history. Layering fabric over fabric, paper over paper, feels like building a kind of palimpsest, where the past peeks through the present. I'm also deeply in love with photography. The works of Patrick Demarchelier, Ralph Eugene Meatyard, Lucien Hervé, and David Bailey are masterpieces to me! Glossy images, too, serve as inspiration. Sometimes, I'll take a photograph and enhance it with paint, adding a sense of dimension and a play of light and shadow. This creates a dialogue between reality and imagination.

**Your series includes thought-provoking titles like "All is Vanity" and "Forgive me if...". How do you decide on the themes and messages behind your pieces?**

Ideas come from everywhere! Literature, of course—I adore poetry. Sometimes a single line captures my attention, and I immediately see how it fits onto a canvas, becoming part of the composition. Advertising inspires me too! Those concise, vivid slogans and wordplay—if I hadn't become an artist, I might have gone into advertising. But not all my work carries a deep meaning. Sometimes text is just a beautiful element, an ornament, a play of form. Titles like "All is Vanity" or "Forgive me if..." have rhythm, graphic appeal, and are artworks in their own right.



**The piece "Puppies" introduces a lighter, playful subject compared to some of your other works. Can you talk about the balance between light and heavy themes in your art?**

"Puppies" is a somewhat ironic piece. It's lighthearted, playful, and a bit childlike. But even in this work, there's a sense of nostalgia and a longing for lost childhood. I believe there's always room for both light and shadow in life—and in my art. For instance, the old fabrics I found in the attic of an old house carry their own stories. Someone once embroidered those patterns with love, pouring their soul into them. Now they lay forgotten, covered in dust. I wanted to give them a second life, weaving them into my work. They became splashes of color, textures, a connection between times.

**Several of your works contain written text, such as "Nothing" and "Forgive me if...". How important is the relationship between text and imagery in your art?**

For me, text is another means of expression. Sometimes it's a cry from the soul, a confession, or a dialogue with myself. In "Nothing", there's a sense of emptiness and loneliness. "Forgive me if..." is about regret and the mistakes we all make. But these words also carry hope—hope for forgiveness and the chance to make things right. Text helps convey emotions that are sometimes hard to express through paint alone.

**What role do emotions like regret or vanity play in your series, and how do you aim to connect with viewers through these feelings?**



Sasha Polgar | Puppies | 2023

Regret and vanity are intrinsic parts of the human condition. We all experience them. I want my paintings to make viewers reflect on these things, to pause for a moment and look within themselves. "All is Vanity" serves as a reminder of the transience of everything in this world. It's important to cherish every moment and not waste time on trivialities. I try to express these feelings through color, composition, and brushwork. For instance, works with darker tones evoke anxiety and uncertainty, while bright colors symbolize life, energy, and hope.

**What can we expect from you next in terms of future projects or artistic exploration?**

Right now, I'm deeply inspired by the work of Joanna Mitchell. Her boldness, independence, and ability to stand against societal norms are qualities I aspire to. I want to create large canvases, experiment with color and form, and embrace self-expression fearlessly. My dream is for my works to speak for themselves—without extra words or annotations. I want them to evoke emotions, to make people feel and empathize.



Sasha Polgar | All is vanity | 2024

**Giuseppe Arnone** is a 24 year old Belgian-Italian visual artist whose work explores the diversity of gender identities through a bold and innovative approach to sculptural forms. Born into a Catholic Sicilian family, Giuseppe grew up at the crossroads of two cultures and a family tradition marked by a strong identity, but also by a sensitivity that led him to question these norms from a young age. At 18, Giuseppe came out and confronted a society where expectations around identity and sexuality are often rigid and normative. To emancipate himself and express this quest for freedom, he turned to art. His artistic practice became a way to question the boundaries of gender and create a space for personal transformation. In 2020, he decided to dedicate himself fully to art by enrolling in the École Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Mons, Belgium, a place that played a key role in his artistic and personal metamorphosis. Today, his work is characterized by textile-based installations and sculptures, primarily created with a sewing machine. Giuseppe uses this technique to deconstruct norms related to gender identities. His works depict figures where masculine and feminine characteristics coexist, merge, and blend, thus showcasing the fluidity and non-binarity of sexual identities. Rather than hiding or denying these identities, he celebrates them by juxtaposing them in a space where they can freely interact. Through his sculptures, he offers an evolving vision of humanity, where identity no longer rests on fixed categories, but on total fluidity, allowing each individual to live their sexuality on their own terms, free from judgment. Giuseppe's creative process is deeply rooted in his personal history: the sewing machine he uses for his sculptures belonged to his mother, a Sicilian seamstress. This material and emotional connection to his mother, as well as to his Sicilian roots, gives an intimate and poignant dimension to his work. This symbolic gesture links his family past to his present as an artist and reflects the evolution of his own journey. The artist has exhibited his work in numerous prestigious venues, such as the Maison des Arts de Schaerbeek, the Botanique in Brussels, and the Mons 2025 Foundation. He was also selected for the Prix du Hainaut 2024. In 2023, Giuseppe participated in the Brussels Pride, where he marched with large flags, symbols of his artistic universe, to celebrate diversity and inclusivity. These events marked an important step in his commitment to the recognition of diverse gender identities and sexual freedom. Today, his work continues to question and challenge conventions. With the support of his parents, who actively accompany him in his artistic journey, Giuseppe continues his creative exploration with passion, imagining a future where identity and sexuality are no longer restrictive concepts, but spaces of total freedom. In this future, every individual would be free to define themselves, unbound by labels, but celebrating the richness and complexity of the human experience.





Giuseppe Arnone | L'origine | 2024



Giuseppe Arnone | Au delà des genres | 2024

## — Interview

# Mariia Popova

**What inspired you to pursue a career in restoration, and what do you find most fulfilling about it?**

Since childhood, I have wanted to pursue creativity. When it was time to choose my path for further education, a terrible event occurred – Notre-Dame de Paris caught fire. At that moment, I felt a deep sense of loss and helplessness. Generations had gazed upon this masterpiece of world architecture, which vanished in just one day. Without cultural history, humanity loses its spirituality. This prompted me to delve deeper into the question: "How can I contribute to the preservation of the most valuable monuments of architecture and art?" That's how I came to restoration, and I have never regretted it. The most rewarding part is knowing that your actions carry a higher purpose – you are preserving the culture of your ancestors to pass it on to future generations.

**How does your restoration work influence your personal art, such as painting and charcoal drawings?**

Restoration requires the ability to master precise copying skills. One needs to understand the art and culture of different eras, as well as be familiar with the techniques and styles of past artists. People's attitudes towards copies can vary: some see them as reworking someone else's ideas or mere imitation of great masters, while others view them as an opportunity to make art more accessible and yet more unique compared to machine printing. In galleries, people spend less than half a minute looking at paintings. In contrast, I spend hours observing them, noting interesting details and nuances. This experience allows me to incorporate



elements from the works of great artists into my own paintings, but with my personal interpretation. Different moments call for different techniques. For example, when painting en plein air and striving to capture the "here and now," I work in the alla prima technique. For other works, I may use a layered technique, which helps achieve depth and detail.

**You have participated in many international exhibitions and won awards. Which exhibition or award do you feel has been the most significant in your career?**

Each exhibition holds unique significance for me. It is an opportunity to showcase my work to a broader audience and exchange cultural experiences with other artists. At the "Poetry of Autumn" festival, there were talented painters, musicians, and poets in attendance. That's why it is especially meaningful to me that my work was highly appreciated by the creative community and earned second place in the still-life category. Exhibitions in Paris and Mexico City allowed me to connect with an international audience through the language of art, to gain a deeper understanding of the work of artists from other countries, and to experience their culture through the lens of beauty.

**You use a variety of materials and techniques in your work. Which do you enjoy the most, and why?**



Every artist encounters the challenge of self-discovery and self-expression in its various forms throughout their creative journey. Exploring new materials and techniques has become not only a professional necessity for me but also an opportunity to view simple things from different perspectives.

In my current creative period, I am most drawn to oil painting. It gives me the freedom to work without time constraints—I can complete a painting in a few hours or over several months. The undeniable advantage of this medium is its durability, which is particularly important to me as a restorer.

On the other hand, working with graphics allows me to focus on the line, setting aside concerns about color to delve into tones and shades.

**Your article on the Roman Pantheon demonstrates your academic interests. How does your research contribute to your work as a restorer or artist?**

Knowledge of history and its development is crucial for a restoration artist. It is essential to accurately determine periods to understand the workflow and the techniques required for each restoration project. A significant part of a restorer's work involves analysis and data collection. Without these steps, restoration efforts can be detrimental to the artwork.

I also wrote an article on preserving wooden monuments in various environmental conditions, exploring the factors that lead to their deterioration and ways to address them. I hope that my research will assist restorers in their work and help the general public recognize the importance of preserving cultural monuments.

**Do you have a favorite project or piece that stands out in your career so far? Why is it**



Maria Popova | Dessert



Maria Popova | Nautilus cup

**special to you?**

My favorite work is a copy of "Ship at Sunset near Cape Marten." I greatly admire Aivazovsky's artistry, particularly his ability to depict water. He masterfully conveys both the depth and transparency of a wave simultaneously. In my work, I aimed to analyze and replicate this extraordinary quality.

This piece is also the largest in my collection (60 x 90 cm), and it took me about six months to complete.

In my professional career, a particularly special place has been the Hermitage. It is one of the most visited museums in the world and a cultural heritage site. Being a part of such a significant institution is an honor for me.

**What advice would you give to young artists who want to enter the field of restoration or fine art?**

Do not lose heart when faced with obstacles on your creative journey. Challenges are a path to professional and spiritual growth. Most artists were underappreciated during their lifetimes, but time has put everything in its proper place.

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