



*with artists*

# INTERVIEWS

COLLECTORS' ART BOOK

# Al-Tiba9

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CONTEMPORARY ART

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# LIMITED EDITION COLLECTORS' ART BOOK

Volume 5  
Limited edition of 500



Al-Tiba9 Gallery, Barcelona, Spain



**SPEAK.  
YOUR VOICE  
CARRIES  
STRENGTH  
NO ONE  
ELSE CAN  
REPLACE.**

# *Interviews with Artists*

## COLLECTORS' ART BOOK

Al-Tiba9 Contemporary Art reflects modern society and its environment through the works of experimental contemporary artists, showcased for their innovation and vision in photography, sculpture, performance, painting, installation, design, architecture, and fashion.

Being an artist featured on Al-Tiba9's online platform means having the unique chance to present their work to museums, galleries, academics, art professionals, collectors, and art lovers worldwide. Each artist represented in this book has previously been selected among thousands of artists to gain international exposure and recognition and tell the world about their art and life story through interviews.

This exceptional Collectors' Art Book, in a limited edition of 500 copies, is designed with the most advanced curatorial and editorial skills by the curator and founder of Al-Tiba9 Contemporary Art. This collectible art book aims to create a visual language between artists and international art collectors, offering them the possibility of an artistic, visual, and emotional exchange.

The QR codes link directly to the original interview, where readers will have access to the full text and more artworks, and introduce them to the artists' production and philosophy.



Interviews Platform

# *In this Book*

## FEATURED ARTISTS

Aurore Monteil, Dancho Atanasov, Doug Winter, Eagan Hsu, Ellerie Brust, Hao Wu, Hou Guan-Ting, Julio Merino, Kate Ferguson, KristofLab, Marcus Brown, Marta Ornelas Monteiro, Miguel Garcia - Marques de Jadraque, Mingyong Cheng, mole ^ 3, Natalia Shamrai (Kolpakova), Nicola Napoli | WIKO, Qi Liu, Rodrigo Alpizar Sánchez, Shu Wang, Suly Bornstein Wolff, Tamara Novikova, TANI TELAS, Wei Zhang, Wenwei Chen, Xiuzhuo Zhou, Yang Lu, Yanhua Feng, Yasuaki Matsuura, Ziggy Yang

Mingyong Cheng's artistic research investigates speculative ecology in the age of generative AI, where artificial intelligence becomes not merely a technical process but a speculative partner in reimagining human–environment relations. By engaging AI as a cultural and ecological interlocutor, Cheng's practice explores how synthetic systems can evoke alternative ways of sensing, remembering, and coexisting with the more-than-human world. Working across generative animation, performance, real-time systems, and immersive installation, Cheng develops hybrid environments in which nature, data, and memory converge through machine vision and embodied experience.

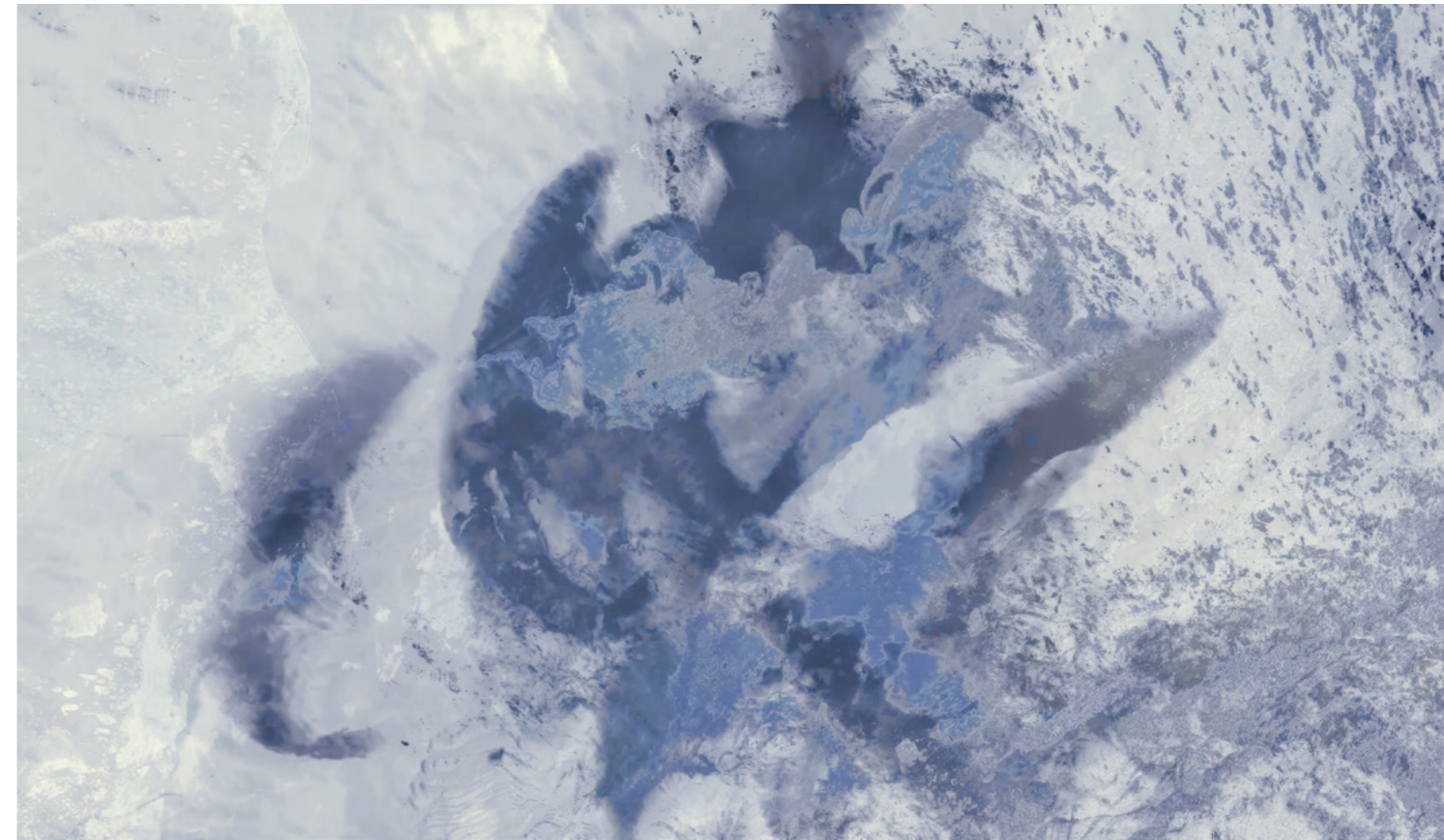
Across these projects, Cheng's work proposes speculative ecology not as a theme, but as a method—one that invites generative AI to act as a companion in exploring cultural residues, environmental futures, and the unstable borders between the real and the synthesised. These works do not offer conclusions but instead open a space for multi-scalar perception and ecological imagination, where the digital is no longer outside of nature, but deeply entangled within it.

# Mingyong Cheng



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Mingyong Cheng, originally from Beijing and now based in California, is an interdisciplinary artist working at the intersection of AI, generative art, and environmental research. She holds two BFAs from Communication University of China (CUC), an MFA in Experimental and Documentary Arts from Duke University and is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Art Practice and Art History at the University of California, San Diego, with a focus on interdisciplinary environmental studies. Mingyong's work bridges computational media arts and speculative ecology, emphasising the co-creation of generative artificial intelligence in the artistic process. Her research explores how generative AI can act as a collaborative partner, producing ecological art that transforms our understanding of and relationship with nature and the environment. By engaging AI as a co-creative force, her practice reimagines the boundaries of creativity and its potential to address contemporary ecological challenges. Her work has been exhibited internationally at leading venues, including ACM SIGGRAPH Asia, SIGGRAPH and Creativity & Cognition, the Annual Conference on Neural Information Processing Systems (NeurIPS), the International Symposium on Electronic Art (ISEA), the IEEE / CVF Computer Vision and Pattern Recognition Conference (CVPR), and other global art and technology forums. Her work won the Gold Muse Design Award 2025 in the Artificial Intelligence category and was also recognised as the winner of the 2025 Digital Arts Student Competition Speculative Futures.



### **How do you see the role of generative AI evolving within the field of ecological art? Can machines truly become creative collaborators?**

Generative AI is changing how artists approach ecological questions. I don't see it as a passive tool but as an active collaborator that contributes to the creative process. AI systems can recombine ecological and cultural data in ways that bring forward unfamiliar relationships and unexpected forms. This helps challenge established assumptions about nature and opens up new ways of working. Collaboration with AI is not about giving up agency, it's about engaging in a process where both human and machine shape the outcome together. The model generates material, I respond to it, and the direction of the work shifts in response to both. This kind of dialogic process or feedback loop is central to how I think about creativity today.

The way I approach this collaboration is shaped by a perspective I call speculative ecology. It's a way of thinking through ecological issues that emphasises uncertainty, entanglement, and possibility, rather than fixed systems or stable representations. Rather than depicting nature as something external or harmonious, speculative ecology sees it as dynamic and constantly reshaped through interactions between human and non-human forces, technological, biological, and otherwise. From this view, ecology is not just a subject but a shifting relation that includes data, memory, sensation, and narrative.

In this context, AI becomes part of that ecological relation. It introduces its own form of memory, drawn from training data, shaped by algorithms, and expressed through generated forms. These outputs often exceed my expectations, opening new questions I wouldn't have asked on my own. Working with AI in this way is not about efficiency or automation, but about expanding the range of ecological imagination. It allows for emergent connections and alternative visions of how we relate to the world, ones that are shaped not just by what we already know, but by what machines are capable of remembering, recombining, and revealing.

### **In your project *Fusion: Landscape and Beyond*, you trained an AI on shan-shui paintings. What did you discover about tradition and memory through this process?**

In *Fusion: Landscape and Beyond*, I fine-tuned the Stable Diffusion v4.1 model on a self-curated dataset of shan-shui paintings, in collaboration with Xuexi Dang. Rather than building a model from the ground up, we introduced it to a visual tradition that has continuously evolved over centuries. Shan-shui is not only an artistic form but also a mode of perception, a way of relating to nature, and a cultural presence that extends into everyday life through poetry, philosophy, and spatial design. Its aesthetics have never remained static. They have shifted in response to changing social, political, and environmental conditions while retaining their conceptual

foundations. Working with AI in this context helped me see the model as a form of memory. Fine-tuning allowed the AI to internalise the visual grammar of shan-shui and reconfigure it in ways that did not simply reproduce but reactivated and recombined inherited forms. I began to understand this process as a kind of "AI memory". The model recalls and synthesises fragments of tradition, making them visible in forms that are both unfamiliar and strangely resonant.

This experience challenged the notion that tradition must be preserved unchanged. Instead, it revealed that cultural memory can be carried forward through transformation. AI has become a participant in the longer history of shan-shui's evolution, engaging in the same process of adaptation that has defined the genre for centuries. Rather than being outside of tradition, the AI becomes a new voice within it, suggesting that memory and cultural continuity can unfold through processes of reinterpretation, recombination, and creative negotiation.

### **Many of your works, such as *Learning to Move, Learning to Play, and Learning to Animate*, involve live interaction. What draws you to real-time systems and performance?**

Real-time systems allow me to create situations in which the audience isn't just observing but participating. I'm drawn to the unpredictability of these systems, the way something changes depending on how someone moves or how data flows at that moment. This kind of interaction mirrors the behaviour of ecological systems, nonlinear, adaptive, and responsive. I also see real-time environments as places where human and non-human elements collaborate. Whether I'm working with AI, sensors, or biofeedback systems, the performance becomes a shared process. It's not about control; it's about exchange. That's where I feel speculative ecology comes into play, especially in *Learning to Play* and *Learning to Animate*, not as a theme, but as a working method that reveals interdependence and ongoing transformation.

### **You describe your installations as "hybrid environments" where nature, data, and memory converge. How do you approach building these immersive ecosystems?**

For me, building these environments starts with a question, something I want to explore about how we relate to ecological systems, or how memory and perception shift through technology. I begin by researching the topic deeply, not just conceptually but also visually and emotionally. I collect materials that feel relevant, environmental data, archival images, fragments of text, sensory recordings, and then look for ways they can speak to each other.

I use tools like generative AI and TouchDesigner because they let me create systems that respond in real time to movement, sound, or other inputs. But the goal isn't to show off the technology. It's to create a space where the digital elements feel inseparable from the organic ones, where everything contributes to a shared atmosphere. I think a lot about how

to build interactions that feel intuitive, where people can enter the work physically or emotionally without needing instructions.

Memory plays a big role in this process. I'm interested in how cultural and personal memories are stored, distorted, or reactivated, both by us and by machines. So I try to design the space in a way that makes room for reflection, not just stimulation. It's less about spectacle and more about creating an experience that lingers, that stays with people after they leave the space.

### **What are the challenges or limitations you've encountered when working with AI as a speculative tool for environmental storytelling?**

One of the practical challenges is that the quality of AI-generated content isn't always reliable. Sometimes images or sequences need additional processing to reach the visual or emotional effect I'm aiming for. At other moments, the AI generates outputs that are so overly specific or literal that they leave little room for interpretation. Other times, the results are too abstract or disconnected from the ecological themes I'm exploring, which makes it hard for the work to hold the tension or nuance I want.

So much of the process becomes about navigating that balance, finding what feels resonant, refining what doesn't, and learning how to work with the system almost like I would with another collaborator. It's unpredictable. It takes time to understand what the model is capable of, how it responds, and how to shape its contributions without forcing them into something they're not. That back-and-forth is part of what makes it generative, but also what makes it slow and experimental. There are also environmental and ethical concerns that I think about regularly. AI systems, especially large models, have real ecological costs in terms of energy and resource use, and they often rely on training data scraped from complex and sometimes problematic sources. When working with ecological themes, it feels especially important to be aware of what kinds of visual narratives are being repeated, and to avoid aestheticising environmental collapse in ways that feel disconnected from lived reality.

At the same time, speculative storytelling through AI offers a way to imagine relationships and futures that are not easily represented through traditional media. However, because these systems operate through pattern recognition, they can reinforce familiar tropes unless we are intentional about how we prompt, curate, and frame their outputs. That's where the work becomes less about control and more about careful engagement, recognising that the machine brings its own logic, and learning how to listen to it critically while staying accountable to the ecological questions that matter to me.

### **Your use of machine vision and environmental sound, like in *Six Seasons*, feels poetic. How do you balance scientific data with artistic intuition?**

*Six Seasons* was created through a close collaboration with composer Lei Liang and oceanographer Joshua Jones. The

work draws on underwater sound recordings from the Arctic Ocean, environmental datasets, and seasonal satellite imagery. These materials shaped both the structure and the atmosphere of the piece, but my goal was not to translate them directly. I wanted to create an experience where these layers could be felt and sensed through time, through sound, and through shifting visual textures.

I started by fine-tuning six LoRA models of Stable Diffusion on visual datasets that reflect different Arctic seasonal transitions. These were combined with a DreamBooth model trained on traditional Chinese shan-shui paintings. The AI-generated images were pre-rendered, but they did not function as static elements. Within TouchDesigner, I reprocessed these visuals using the original ecological data and the live structure of Lei Liang's multichannel composition. The system allowed the pre-generated imagery to react in real time to changes in the soundscape, creating a visual field that was responsive and fluid.

In this project, AI functioned less as a content generator and more as a memory system that could be activated and reshaped in response to environmental presence. Scientific data gave me the foundation, but it was intuition that guided how the images moved, how they lingered, and how they shifted over time. I listened closely to the recordings, not just for meaning but for rhythm, density, and emotion. That guided how I composed the visual transitions and how I allowed moments of stillness and transformation to emerge. For me, balancing data and intuition means staying close to the material but not being limited by it. I am not trying to explain the Arctic, but to offer a way to dwell with it. The work is shaped through care, through response, and through an ongoing conversation between ecological systems, human interpretation, and machine memory.

### **Speculative ecology is central to your work. How would you define it in your own terms, and what role can it play in reshaping our ecological imagination?**

I think of speculative ecology as a way of rethinking our relationship with the environment by moving beyond fixed systems and anthropocentric views. It brings together ecological thought, speculative philosophy, and artistic practice to explore how humans, non-humans, and technologies are entangled across time and scale. Rather than aiming to represent nature as it is, it asks what could be, what kinds of ecological relationships, narratives, and futures we can imagine.

For me, speculative ecology is also about recognising that knowledge and perception are always partial. It opens space for multiple perspectives, including machine intelligences, and invites us to consider forms of agency and interdependence that often go unnoticed. In my practice, it becomes a method to work through uncertainty by collaborating with generative AI, for example, I'm not illustrating nature but co-thinking with systems that carry different kinds of memory. This helps unsettle familiar representations and allows for more open, layered, and reflective ways of engaging with ecological questions.

Graduated in Architecture from ENSA Paris-Val de Seine (2023), and trained in azulejo painting in Lisbon (Creazul, 2022) as well as in ceramics (Sedimento, 2022), Aurore Monteil develops a multidisciplinary artistic practice rooted in architecture, conceived not only as a discipline of construction but as a sensitive, vibrational, and universal language. Her work explores the impact of materials, forms, and spaces on both body and mind, unveiling the invisible frequencies that connect individuals to their environment.

Her medium of choice, the painted azulejo, occupies a central place in her practice. Heirs to a centuries-old tradition, these glazed ceramic tiles become, under her brush, resonant surfaces capable of capturing and diffusing their own energy. Each panel is conceived as a miniature architecture, designed in situ for the site and its users, arising from a thorough study of the vibrations of the place, its history, and the intimate relationship that the work can weave with its recipient. Public commissions, bespoke creations, and research projects intertwine to transform Monteil's azulejos into both aesthetic and spiritual devices, capable of turning space into an immersive and vibrational experience.

# Aurore Monteil

Architecture forms the backbone of her practice. It is not confined to a disciplinary framework but structures and connects the entirety of her explorations – painting, ceramics, performance, dance, and installation. Movement and dance become tools of spatial and energetic investigation, while ceramics, with its elemental materiality, grounds her in a tactile and physical experience of the world. This cross-disciplinary approach nourishes a reflection where art and architecture converge to question the visible and the invisible, the built and the lived, the intellectual and the sensory.

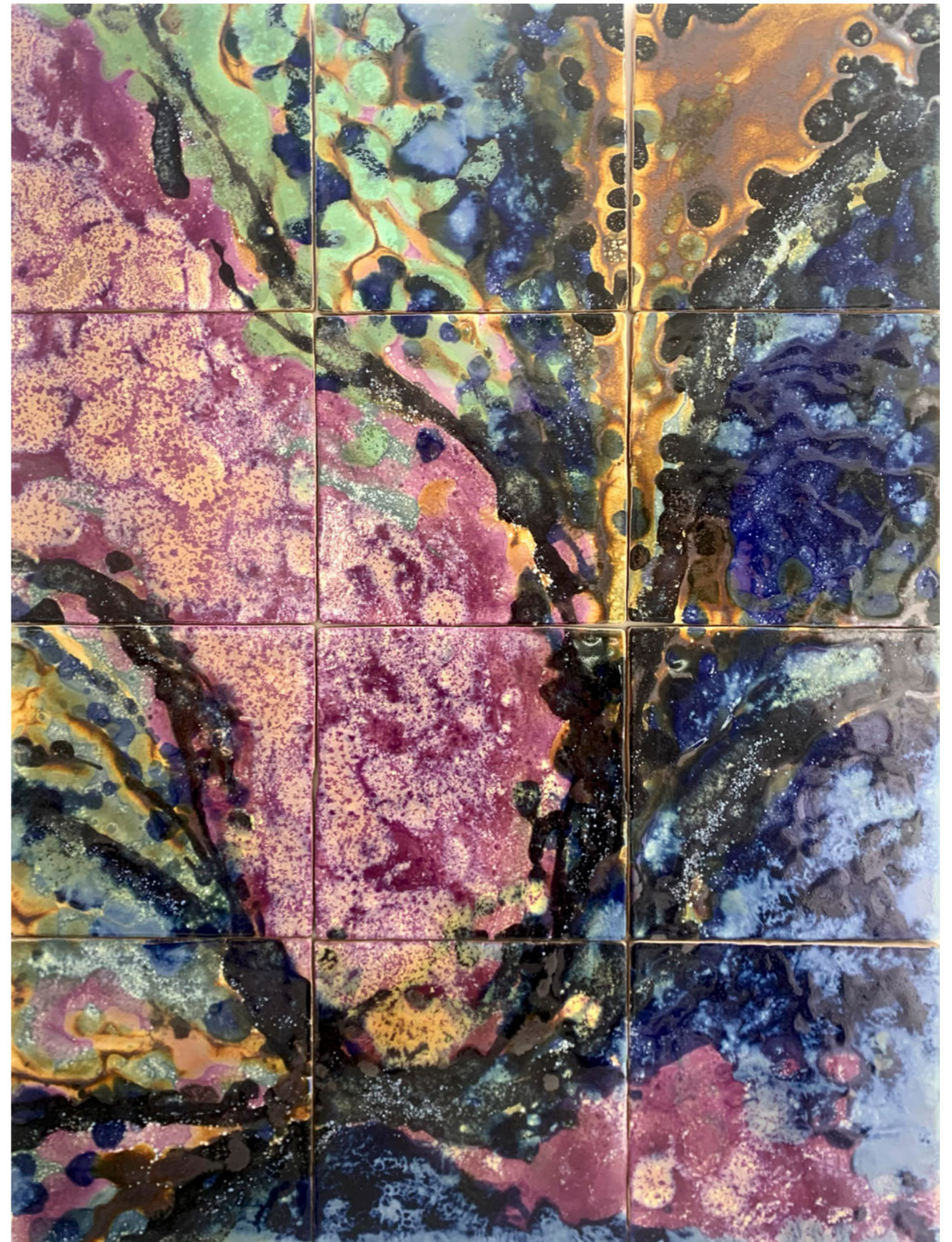
Her work has received increasing recognition. Winner of the Île-de-France Regional Prize of the Ateliers d'Art de France Competition 2025 (Heritage category), she is exhibiting at the Musée de la Toile de Jouy until May 2025. She was represented by the gallery We Artisan at the Paris Fair 2024, and is preparing several international exhibitions: the Women in Art London Biennale (Chelsea Old Town Hall, September 2025) and Root Unseen at the CICA Museum (Incheon, South Korea, October 2025).

Her practice is guided by a profound conviction: every material, every surface, every form carries its own vibrational frequency, capable of influencing well-being and inner harmony. Through her works, Monteil seeks to reveal and amplify these frequencies, offering the viewer an experience where intellect, body, and the invisible come into resonance. Based between Paris and Lisbon, she situates her practice in a constant dialogue between heritage and contemporaneity, architectural rigour and artistic freedom, tradition and vision. Her azulejos, both memory and projection, become thresholds, spaces of passage, inviting us to inhabit differently both space and ourselves.

Ethereal Symphony  
60x80 cm

Enamels painting on  
glazed ceramic tiles

Mixed Media  
2025

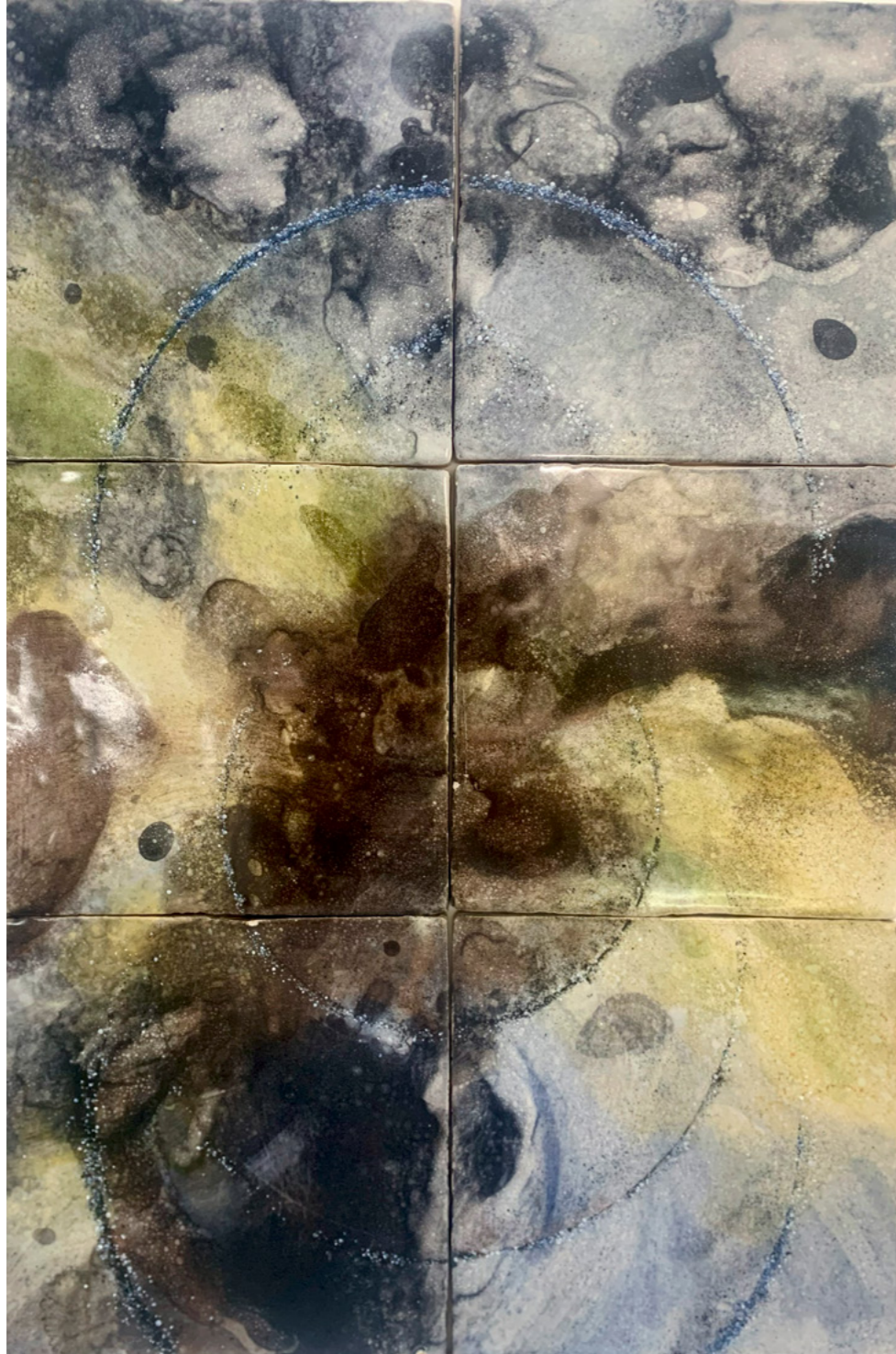


4astudiolab.com  
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Paris, France

Aurele's Aura  
40x60 cm

Oxyde painting on glazed  
ceramic tiles

Mixed Media  
2025



Nathalie's Aura  
40x60 cm

Oxyde painting on glazed  
ceramic tiles

Mixed Media  
2024



**You work with painting, ceramics, performance, dance, and installation. How do these different media connect in your creative process?**

All my practices converse like the voices of a single polyphony. They continually lead me toward new explorations and compel me to remain awake, in motion, in a state of constant experimentation. This openness prevents me from being confined to any one medium; instead, it allows energy to circulate freely between different forms of creation. It also nurtures a receptivity to encounters and collaborations still unimaginable today, because every new discipline I explore becomes a threshold toward another.

Painting and ceramics root me in long durations, a time of patience, of attention to the material's accidents, while dance and performance open me to the immediacy of gesture, to the sudden passage of energy through the body. Their meeting point is the body itself: both instrument of creation and vessel of perception.

Each medium activates its own frequency, and it is their interlacing that gives coherence to my work. I don't seek to rank these languages, but to listen to what each reveals in the present moment. Together, they compose a vibratory architecture, a living resonance in which the viewer, by finding their own place within it, contributes to and nourishes the work through their emotional presence.

**Your practice often speaks about the vibrational energy of materials and spaces, as you mention in your statement. How do you explore or translate these invisible frequencies into your artworks?**

Exploring and translating frequencies is the guiding thread of my practice. To do so, I weave together multiple disciplines, intuitive dance, spiritual traditions, physical and chemical sciences, and energy medicine, and seek to let them converge within the work, where the immaterial becomes tangible. For instance, the activation of Kundalini taught me that the body is not merely a tool, but a receiver and transmitter of waves. Gesture, breath, and presence become vectors of consciousness capable of manifesting images, colours, and forms, as if an inner cartography were being revealed. This experience echoes other practices such as reiki, magnetism, or Amazonian rituals, which understand illness as a vibrational imbalance and art as a path of harmonisation. Mahāyāna Buddhism deepens this understanding through the notions of emptiness, radical interdependence, and impermanence. This spiritual dimension is inseparable, for me, from science. Acoustic physics has confirmed what I have always intuited, that everything is wave, that vibration organises matter.

In my work, I do not see colour merely as pigment but as frequency. It acts directly on the body and psyche, as explored in chromatherapy. Each hue becomes a revealed vibration, resonating with the body's energetic centres. These correspondences, far from static, structure and enliven my

paintings. I do not seek to impose a truth, but to open a field of resonance, an invitation to welcome within oneself the creative entropy, the fertile chaos from which renewal arises. My research also extends to quantum physics and string theory. These fields, often seen as abstract, nourish me because they confirm a deep intuition: matter is not fixed, but relational, a field of potential, of probability. String theory imagines that elementary particles are not static points, but tiny strings vibrating each at a specific frequency, like the chords of a cosmic instrument.

This idea mirrors my own conviction that every material, every surface, every form possesses its own frequency, one that shapes our perception and our joy. I speak of joy because, after spending much of my life agonising over the question, "What is the purpose of all this, of existence, of being here?", I've come to a simple answer: joy.

And, like any muscle, joy strengthens through use. The waves it sends into matter align our fields of action and contribute to maintaining harmony within the Möbius flow of universal energy and consciousness. It may not be an ultimate answer when you explore the depths of reality or the theories of consciousness, such as solipsism, but I cherish it as a path, a way to remain anchored in this tangible world.

**When creating in situ pieces, like Vita Esteree, how do you begin the process of studying the space and its history before designing the work?**

My process always begins with intuitive immersion. Before any constructed analysis, I wander through the site without purpose or expectation, letting my body absorb what presents itself, free of judgment. I attune myself to the respiration of the architecture, its proportions, materials, orientation, light, and circulation. I also observe the broader landscape, its topography, archaeology, flora, fauna, and built environment, as if the place could only be understood through the network of relationships that animate it and bind it to the living whole. Every building, for me, is an organism endowed with its own memory and breath.

What follows is an exploration of the site's history and memory. I conduct both documentary and sensory research, listening to the stories of those who inhabit or traverse the space. These voices, sometimes anecdotal, often reveal a deeper truth about a place's identity.

Layered upon this rational investigation is an energetic reading. I use simple tools, the gravity of my own body, felt resonances, and meditation. I try to perceive the frequencies at play: their weight, their fluidity, their echoes. These sensations mirror a shared atmosphere, which I then attempt to translate. Light, acoustics, and materials offer measurable data, but I always connect them to a more subtle intuition, such as the Schumann resonance, which reminds us that we vibrate at the same rhythm as the Earth itself.

When the time for creation arrives, I translate these multiple strata into forms, lines, and colours. This process unfolds

through collages, sketches, layers of tracing paper, and associations of ideas. For Vita Esteree, I worked from the architectural blueprints of the building and drew inspiration from Palaeolithic art to inscribe engraved lines. I aligned each phase of creation with natural rhythms, forest walks, lunar cycles, and meditative dance to root the process within a cosmic temporality.

The ultimate goal is always the same: to create a visual and emotional landmark. An in situ work is not decoration; it is an interface. It humanises architecture, generates a sense of belonging and elevation, and transforms a mere space into a passage, an experience both sensory and spiritual.

**Your works touch on spirituality, memory, and the relationship between people and their environment. Where do you find your main sources of inspiration?**

My sources of inspiration are not fixed themes, but situations of attention, a threshold, a glimmer of light, a rhythm, a story. I try to inhabit those zones of transition where space reconfigures itself: where one material begins as another fades, where light turns and traces its daily choreography.

Light is an exacting teacher. The azulejo taught me that a surface is never identical to itself; it changes with every hour, every season. I therefore conceive each work as an instrument capable of resonating with the meteorology of time.

The accidents of matter also guide me: cracks, bubbles, tensions in the glaze. What we call a "flaw" often becomes a vibrational signature, proof that matter has its own will. This pedagogy of chance nourishes my aesthetic: allowing reality its share of the unforeseen.

Music and rhythm shape my compositions as well. The grid of tiles functions like a metric structure; variations are syncopations; the whites, silences. This rhythmic listening helps me weave between the micro, the gesture of a brushstroke, and the macro, a mural, a façade.

I also listen to human stories and gestures of use. Collective memory, sometimes whispered, guides my formal choices. Equally inspiring are the geometries of the living and the constraints of construction: spirals, fractal growths, solar orientation, or technical limits. For me, inspiration is never separate from the world; it is born from dialogue, between matter and meaning, chance and order, necessity and freedom. Of course, my works approach spirituality through my own practices, Mahāyāna Buddhism, Kundalini, shamanic rituals, and the cycles of nature. But in truth, everything is spiritual: everything is interconnected, a memory inscribed both in our cells and in collective consciousness. Everything is, and is not, all at once. What remains is what we choose to perceive in each thing.

In my work, I offer a probability of the real, shaped through my eyes, my soul, my emotions, and I leave the viewer entirely free to vibrate with me, to enter my dance if they wish to find refuge there.

If I had to summarise all of this in a single word, it would be «pareidolia», that mysterious faculty of the mind to recognise forms, faces, or presences where there are only accidents of matter or light. A word I cherish, for it contains the essence of how I see.

**What does it mean for you to create artworks for public spaces, and how do you hope they affect the daily lives of those who encounter them?**

Creating for public space means opening art to everyone, without conditions or filters. It means accepting that the work will meet those who might never step into a gallery, a hurried passerby, a resident returning home, a child growing up under its gaze. This democratic dimension moves me deeply. It reintroduces sensitivity into daily life, allowing emotion and wonder to resurface amid the constant flow.

In public space, an artwork becomes a collective landmark. It anchors a place, creates memory, and weaves shared belonging. It no longer belongs solely to the artist, but to those who cross it, observe it, or live beside it. This shift is essential: art ceases to be a fixed object and becomes a living organism, transforming with the seasons, the light, and the rhythms of use. A panel of azulejos offers a space where each person can build a personal, intimate relationship.

This vocation is ancient. From their origin, azulejo panels carried a pedagogical function, telling stories to those who could not read, teaching as much as they enchanted. That lineage inspires me still: public art is not mere decoration, but a universal language. Then as now, it reflects its time and acts as a silent teacher, inviting reflection, learning through image, matter, and vibration.

I like to think of these works as breaths within the urban fabric. They do not seek to impose a truth, but to create thresholds, moments of suspension. A hallway can become a place of contemplation, a staircase an initiatory passage, a façade an invitation to lift one's eyes.

What I hope for is both simple and immense: that a gaze lingers, a breath softens, and that joy, that muscle which sustains the harmony of all living things, awakens. Even fleetingly, it can transform a day and open new possibilities where one once saw only walls.

Creating a public space also means inscribing one's gesture into the long rhythm of time. The work does not live solely for the moment of its unveiling; it converses with generations, resists both fashion and weather, while preserving its capacity to surprise. It becomes a shared good, a collective memory. In this sense, public art is not secondary ornamentation but a necessity, a way to humanise architecture and to remind us that, within the geometry of cities, there will always remain space for the unexpected and the poetic.

Yanhua Feng's recent body of work embraces ambiguity, softness, and emotional residue, not as retreat, but as an artistic stance. In a visual culture increasingly shaped by speed, clarity, and spectacle, Feng chooses dissonance and uncertainty as deliberate strategies. Her paintings turn away from narrative closure and toward what remains unresolved: shifting roles, quiet ruptures, and the psychic weight of domestic space.

Working in abstraction, Feng resists the pressure to define or contain. Colour in her work is not decorative or symbolic – it acts as atmosphere, tension, or refusal. Her compositions are often inhabited by fragmented, drifting bodies that lean or dissolve, pushing back against the modernist insistence on formal cohesion. Through layered surfaces and unstable forms, she constructs a visual language that privileges vulnerability over certainty and complexity over clarity.

Feng's work offers a quiet, persistent resistance to the cultural demands for coherence, particularly around identity, gender, and care. Her paintings do not shout; they listen. They invite slowness. They make space for the emotions that resist naming. In doing so, Feng reclaims softness as a mode of strength and ambiguity as a way of seeing, proposing that dwelling in uncertainty is not a loss, but rather a way to remain open.

# Yanhua Feng

Yanhua Feng (b. 1965) is a Chinese-born artist based in San Francisco, with studios in Vancouver and Beijing. Trained in design in the 1990s, she led major national visual projects in China during a period of rapid social transformation, including commemorative work for the return of Hong Kong and the China Women and Children's Museum. These early experiences shaped her understanding of image-making as both a public structure and a personal language.

After relocating to Canada, Feng returned gradually to painting. Following her move to the Bay Area, she reentered the studio with renewed urgency. Working primarily in acrylic on canvas, she constructs layered surfaces in which color functions as atmosphere, boundary, and resistance. Her abstract paintings evoke bodily presence without portraiture, holding tension between softness and force, intimacy, and instability.

Her recent exhibitions include a solo exhibition at CICA Museum in South Korea, participation in ART021 Shanghai Contemporary Art Fair, the Salon des Artistes Indépendants at the Grand Palais in Paris, and a public art installation in New York's Times Square. Across formats, Feng's work considers how ambiguity and restraint can carry emotional and political weight, and how abstraction may serve as a language for what remains unsettled.

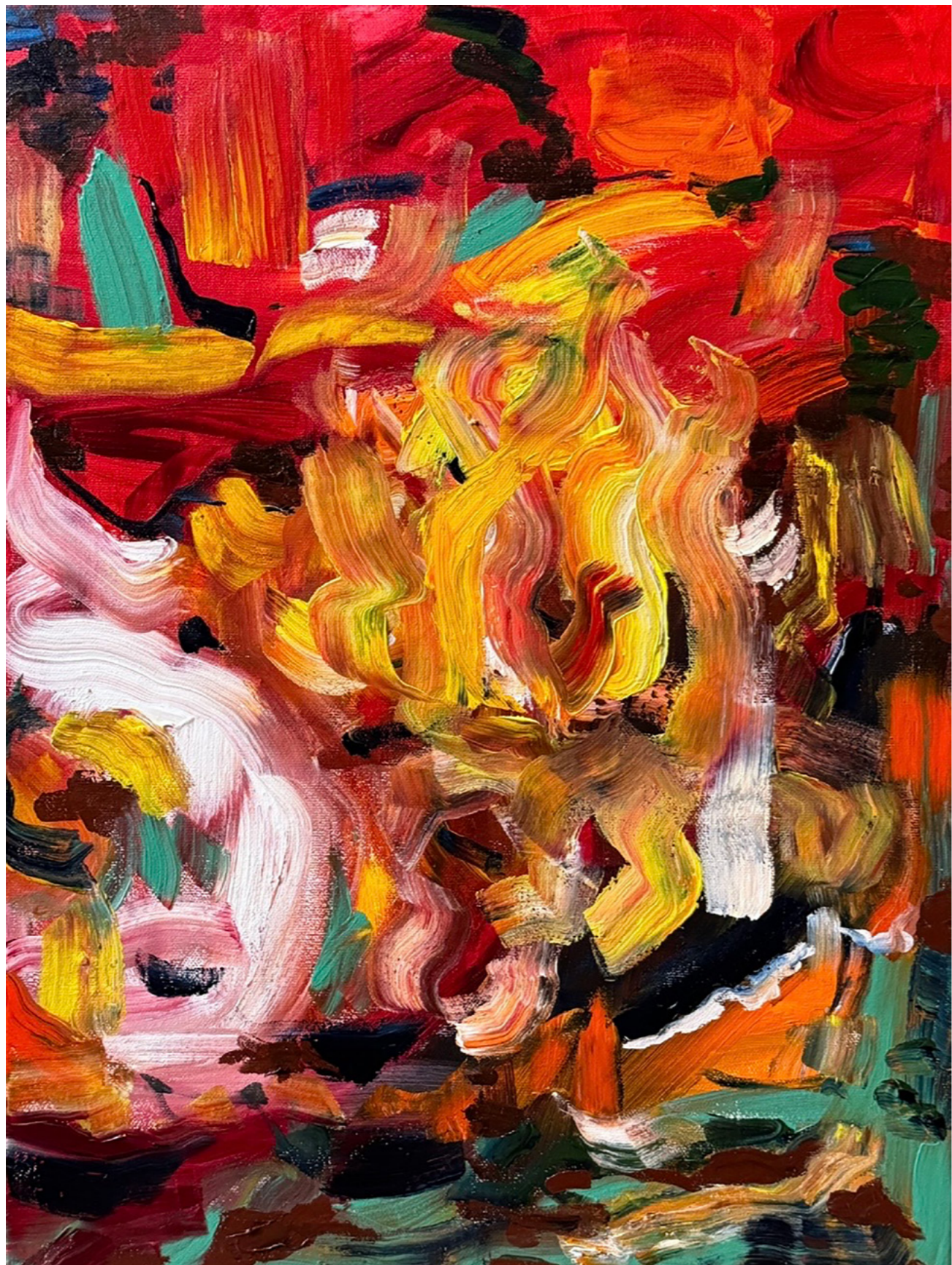
Flesh and Ornament

Acrylic on canvas  
36x48 in

Painting  
2024



yanhuafeng.com  
@yanhua\_art  
San Francisco, USA



**Your artistic path spans design, large-scale projects, and now abstract painting. How would you describe yourself as an artist today?**

These days, I consider myself someone who works with emotional structure more than visual hierarchy. I'm less concerned with telling people what to see, and more interested in what they might feel, especially the things that don't have clear edges. Grief, care, restraint, uncertainty. When I was designing, the goal was to make things legible, to communicate clearly, often within tight constraints. Painting, for me, does the opposite. It opens things up. I moved from shaping messages for institutions to making work that listens more than it speaks. That shift, from clarity to complexity, wasn't just technical; it was personal. It's how I think now, and how I live.

**You gradually returned to painting, often drawing in quiet moments between caregiving tasks. How has this deeply personal context influenced the themes and sensibilities that emerge in your work?**

For many years, my creative time ran parallel to family life. I was raising a child, managing a household, and making choices that prioritised others before myself, not out of sacrifice, but as part of a rhythm I stepped into fully. I wasn't in the studio every day, but I was never far from image-making. I sketched when I could, at the kitchen table, late at night, in the quiet between moments. Those pauses held a different kind of clarity.

They also sharpened my attention. I began to notice the weight of what's unspoken, the emotional tension in ordinary scenes, the way care lives in restraint. That kind of slow perception is still at the core of how I paint.

My work isn't about loud gestures or quick conclusions. It's about holding emotional space, about honouring complexity without having to name everything. In a way, those years didn't take me away from art, they prepared me to see more deeply, and to make work that listens as much as it speaks.

**Working primarily in acrylic on canvas, what drew you to this medium, and how does it serve your exploration of ambiguity, softness, and emotional residue?**

Acrylic gives me room to change my mind. That's probably the biggest thing. I can build, scrape back, blur, adjust, all in the same sitting. I like that it doesn't wait for perfection. It's fast enough to keep up with me, but forgiving when I need to shift direction.

I didn't choose acrylic for efficiency, I chose it because it accommodates uncertainty. The surfaces in my work are always in conversation with what came before, what was covered, what was left visible, what insisted on staying. Acrylic is ideal for that kind of negotiation. It lets things accumulate and disappear at the same time.

**Your paintings evoke bodies without portraiture. Could you share how you arrive at these forms and what they mean to you in terms of visual language?**

The body shows up in my work like a rumour. It's there, but not pinned down. A curve might feel like a shoulder, a fold might suggest a leg, but I'm not trying to "draw" anyone. I'm more interested in what a body feels like than what it looks like. These forms usually emerge through the process. I don't set out to paint a figure, it's more that gestures, gravity, or tension start to feel bodily. By not fully resolving them, I leave space for projection. You can find yourself in the form, or not. That ambiguity is important to me. It keeps the painting open, alive.

**You speak about resisting clarity and narrative closure in favor of uncertainty and dissonance. What does this creative choice allow you to express that more literal forms might not?**

Literal forms often want to tell you something. And sometimes that's great. But I've always been more drawn to the stuff we can't explain so easily, emotional contradictions, shifting identities, that constant state of almost-knowing.

When things are unresolved, they stay in motion. And I like that. There's more room to breathe, more room to feel. I think we live in a moment where there's so much pressure to "figure things out," to brand yourself, to tie everything into a neat story. My work pushes against that. It sits in the blur, in the not-yet. That's not just a visual strategy, it's a way of being.

**Colour in your work functions as atmosphere, tension, or refusal rather than decoration, as you mention in your statement. Could you walk us through your process of choosing and layering colour to build these shifting emotional spaces?**

Colour is never just there to be pretty. I don't think about it in symbolic terms either. For me, it's more like a mood, or a kind of pressure in the painting, something that pushes, resists, or quietly holds space. I tend to start with a certain emotional tone, sometimes it's tension, sometimes it's hesitation, and then let the colour respond to that.

I work directly on the canvas, mixing as I go. I don't over-plan. I like to let things unfold and sometimes even go wrong. That kind of "letting things slip" is actually important to me – it's a way of working that allows for contradiction, imbalance, and even a bit of stubbornness on the surface. I guess you could say I trust the painting more when it doesn't resolve too neatly. I'm not trying to create harmony. I'm more interested in friction, cool against warm, soft next to something sharp. That tension is where things start to feel alive. In a way, I think we live in a time that really craves clarity and perfection. But I'm more drawn to what happens when things misalign. There's a kind of truth there. Maybe not a clean truth, but a human one.

Tamara Novikova's work focuses on how simple materials and everyday objects can open up new ways of seeing. Using red and blue ballpoint pens, she turns a common writing tool into a way of building bold, layered drawings. She often starts with an ordinary object she finds visually interesting, then redraws it through repeated marks until it grows into a large, abstract cluster. Her process is steady and hands-on, letting shapes shift naturally as the ink builds up. Influenced by her design background and early schooling in Russia, Novikova likes working with basic materials because they keep her grounded and connected to the familiar. Through this approach, she shows how something small and simple can become playful, energetic, and surprisingly expressive.

Just Some Bottles and Syringes

Ballpoint and marker,  
35.5x40.6 cm

Drawing  
2025



# Tamara Novikova



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New York City, USA

Tamara Novikova is a visual artist and packaging accessories designer based in New York City. Raised between Russian and American culture, she brings a cross-cultural perspective to her practice, blending the structure of design with the intuitiveness of drawing. Her signature use of red and blue ballpoint pens reflects both personal history and her ongoing interest in memory, form, and repetition. Her illustrations move fluidly between fine art and everyday utility, transforming simple materials into expressive, textured surfaces. Novikova's work has been exhibited in galleries across New York, and she continues to explore the evolving dialogue between commercial design and conceptual art.



**You were raised between Russian and American cultures. How has this dual background shaped the way you see and make art?**

Growing up between Russian and American cultures gave me a layered way of seeing. From the Russian side, I absorbed a deep respect for technique, craftsmanship, and the “old world” discipline of learning to really look at something. There’s a seriousness and structure to that way of making art that still informs how I approach a drawing, almost like the underlying architecture of my work is rooted in that early training. In contrast, my American experience exposed me to a more contemporary, experimental way of thinking. It taught me that familiar objects can be reinterpreted, expanded, and abstracted into something new. That sense of openness and reinvention shapes how the drawings ultimately grow. So in a way, my work mirrors those two influences: the structure and attention to craft feel very Russian, while the larger abstract forms that emerge, the clusters built from still-life objects, carry a more American contemporary spirit. Living between these cultures has made me comfortable combining discipline with curiosity, tradition with play.

**What first drew you to use red and blue ballpoint pens as a main tool in your drawings?**

I started using ballpoint pens in school in Russia, where they were as standard as the No. 2 pencil is in the U.S. Because I never had intensive academic art training, just two life-drawing classes and a design education, I ended up teaching myself how to draw with whatever was available. The pen became a kind of instructor for me. You can’t erase ballpoint ink, so it forced me to own my mistakes, adapt, and build technique through trial, error, and repetition. That challenge shaped the way I draw today. I also like that the pen lives in both worlds of my life: it’s a professional office tool and an artistic tool. It’s cheap, small, familiar, and completely unpretentious. There’s something honest about building complex, layered images from something so ordinary. The colour choice also grew naturally out of my environment. Living and working in New York, I kept noticing how much of the city’s visual language, signage, transit, and graphics sit in the red/orange and blue palette. Blue ballpoint was always the default, and red/orange became the perfect energetic counterpart. The combination felt both practical and symbolic of the city around me, and it stayed with me.

**Many of your drawings start from simple, everyday objects. What makes an object interesting enough to become the starting point of a work?**

I’m drawn to everyday objects for a mix of visual and psychological reasons. Sometimes the starting point is purely colour. I’ll see something that’s the perfect blue or a bold red-orange, and I immediately want to translate that into ballpoint

ink. Other times it’s the texture that grabs me. Honestly, about 70% of the impulse comes from asking myself, “What would this look like in a ballpoint pen? Could I even pull this off?” There’s always a challenge in trying to make a simple object feel alive through such a restrictive medium.

There’s also an element of repetition that comes naturally to me. I often draw an object, then draw it again next to the first one, as if to say: “Just in case you didn’t see it.” And then I draw it a third time so the viewer definitely sees it, and eventually a whole cluster, so there’s no doubt what they’re looking at. I’ve noticed I speak this way too, repeating myself in conversation to make sure I’m understood. That pattern shows up visually in my work without me consciously planning it; it’s just how my brain organises things.

Some pieces begin with a digital collage that I build in Photoshop and then translate using a grid method, and others are drawn completely loosely, letting the cluster form organically. But whether the origin is digital or spontaneous, the object has to spark something with me: curiosity, challenge, colour, and/ or texture.

**Can you walk us through your creative process, from choosing an object to building it into a layered composition?**

The process usually begins with what initially draws me to an object, often its colour, sometimes its texture, and always the challenge of imagining it in ballpoint pen. From there, the path depends on the piece. Some works start with digital experiments in Photoshop, where I layer, collage, and arrange elements to explore composition before translating it to pen on paper using a grid method. Other works are entirely loosely freehand, letting the object grow organically as I cluster marks and build repetition. Regardless of the approach, the work develops slowly, mark by mark. I pay attention to rhythm, layering, and the way clusters interact, allowing the composition to emerge naturally while keeping the original qualities of colour and texture intact. Whether digital or analogue, the goal is the same: to transform familiar objects into something richer, more abstract, and visually engaging.

**How does your design background influence the way you approach drawing as a fine art practice?**

My design training and professional experience have deeply shaped how I approach drawing. In school, I focused on fashion and object design, working with three-dimensional forms and considering how they function in the real world. After college, my career began with high-end bespoke projects, including fabric treatments, 3D printing, beading, and intricate craftwork for runway shows, galas, and special events. Later, I shifted into mass-market accessories, where the focus moved from luxury craftsmanship to cost, production constraints, and market competition. I eventually moved into packaging graphics, where I found greater creative freedom through sketching,

illustration, and layout design. Across these experiences, design taught me to work within structural, material, and commercial parameters. That discipline translates into my fine art practice, particularly in pattern, repetition, and compositional structure. At the same time, fine art allows greater freedom to explore imagination, while the sensibility of organisation, layering, and visual patterning remains rooted in my design background.

**Your works grow through repetition and accumulation of marks. What role does patience or rhythm play in your practice?**

Patience and rhythm play different roles at different levels in my work. The act of creating can be quite staggered for me; I often have to hover over my desk for long stretches, then step away, walk around, and come back to reassess and redraw. My mind easily wanders to other ideas, so keeping focus requires effort. If I were to compare the rhythm of my process to music, it would definitely be jazz: notes scattered, improvisational, and sometimes unpredictable. That said, rhythm within the composition itself is something I pay close attention to. Even when clustering objects seemingly randomly or embracing asymmetry, there has to be a visual cohesion. Each object is considered in relation to the others, so the eye can move through the work naturally, and the repetition and accumulation of marks feel deliberate rather than chaotic. Patience comes from allowing this process to unfold over time, letting the composition settle into a balance between spontaneity and structure.

**Ballpoint pens are ordinary and accessible materials. Why is it important for you to work with something so familiar and common?**

Working with ballpoint pens keeps my practice grounded and approachable. They’re everyday objects, familiar and unpretentious, and that simplicity mirrors the objects I draw, ordinary things that often go unnoticed. Because they are cheap, portable, and immediate, I can focus entirely on the act of drawing: layering, building texture, and exploring repetition without being distracted by tools or materials. There’s also a psychological dimension: using such a familiar tool demands presence and attention, since every mark is permanent. The pen allows me to embrace mistakes, to experiment, and to explore composition and pattern in a way that feels both intuitive and disciplined. In short, the ordinary nature of the pen makes extraordinary outcomes possible.

**Your pieces often balance structure and playfulness. How do you keep this tension alive while you work?**

Playfulness in my work often comes from the objects themselves and how I choose to combine them. I like creating small contradictions, visually, conceptually, or even through the titles I give the pieces. Sometimes it’s humorous or a

little sarcastic. For example, one work clusters goldfish snacks and Cheez-It snacks together, which is 100% playful and exaggerated, poking fun at processed perfection and consumer culture. At the same time, there’s always a structure underlying the work. Even when objects are arranged in odd or contradictory combinations, I pay attention to composition, repetition, and visual balance. The tension between structure and play emerges naturally: the serious, deliberate act of building clusters contrasts with the humorous or unexpected relationships among the objects themselves. That dynamic keeps the work alive and engaging.

**You have exhibited in New York galleries. What did you learn about the contemporary art market from these experiences?**

Since starting my new portfolio in 2022, I’ve had just a couple of years of exposure to the New York gallery scene, mainly through independent juried group shows. I found that my work is able to fit into a variety of curatorial themes, which may have been beginner’s luck, but it also highlighted something consistent: curators and judges value cohesion in a body of work. At the same time, I’ve realised that the fine art world is still a business. It would be naïve to think that galleries, collectors, or the market respond solely to an artist’s personal expression. If you want people to be interested in and ultimately purchase your work, you have to understand it as a commodity. In today’s world, being an artist often means being a businessperson as well. For me, this awareness reinforced the importance of having a clear theme. Once I settled on the ideas I wanted to explore, I focused on sticking with them consistently. Cohesion allows a body of work to grow, resonate, and be memorable, and it’s ultimately what helps your work reach a wider audience.

**Lastly, looking ahead, where do you see your work heading next? Are you working on any new project or series?**

Lately, my work has turned toward athletes’ legs. A few months ago, I joined the Upper East Side running club in Manhattan, and suddenly I began seeing legs as fascinating objects in their own right. I’ve been running long distances since 2013, but training for the Berlin Marathon and being part of a group has given me a new perspective and new muses. Drawing in ballpoint pen is a slow, meticulous practice that demands patience and focus, and I’ve realised that long-distance running trains the same mental muscles. Both require staying present and steady, whether it’s a marathon or building clusters of tiny marks. While Degas drew dancers to reveal imperfections behind the stage, I’m more interested in the perfection I see in runners’ limbs, sculpted through motion and repetition. Studying them closely is a mix of admiration, observation, and a playful obsession. It’s meditative and inspiring, and I’m excited to see how this series evolves as I continue exploring form, motion, and detail.

Shu Wang is an interdisciplinary artist working with wearable structures that move fluidly between scales, from large-scale wearable sculptures to intimate jewelry, because both investigate the same question: how does the body mediate between internal feeling and external structure? She translates social expectations, invisibility, and the emotional tension between expression and conformity into tactile experiences completed through the body.

Her work originates from reactions, emotions, and expectations, shaped by an early awareness of how one is asked to behave, and what it quietly costs to be perceived as good. When her personal shape does not align with the rigid forms around her, that friction becomes material. The body becomes both a vessel of emotion and evidence of presence, a site where what cannot be easily spoken can be felt through weight, touch, restriction, and movement.

Interaction is essential. A work begins when someone wears it, touches it, or approaches it, and the object enters a living relationship with the person. Wearable sculpture allows Wang to amplify structure and scenario at an architectural scale, testing how the body negotiates with larger systems of control. This research directly informs her jewelry practice: jewelry becomes a miniature wearable sculpture that compresses the same structural language into a daily scale, allowing the work to return to intimacy, repetition, and long-term bodily memory. She is interested in how structure and emotion coexist, how materials and forms are activated through proximity and touch, and how a shared moment of perception can dissolve the boundary between maker and viewer, leaving something that lingers on the body and in memory.

# Shu Wang

Shu Wang is an internationally renowned interdisciplinary artist specializing in jewelry design and wearable sculpture. Born in China, she is currently based between the United States and China. Her practice centers on the body as a site where emotion, structure, and social tension converge. Through interaction, movement, and physical proximity, she investigates how objects function as living media, activating sensory experience, mediating social expectations, and generating shared perception between wearer and viewer. Wang's academic training reflects a rare interdisciplinary trajectory that bridges engineering, material science, and fine art. She began her studies in Nonmetallic Inorganic Material Engineering at the University of Science and Technology Beijing before transferring to the Rochester Institute of Technology, where she earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Jewelry and Metal Design. She later received a Master of Fine Arts in Fashion, Body, and Garment from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. This diverse educational background informs her distinctive approach, which integrates material experimentation, digital fabrication, and conceptual rigor with emotional and bodily resonance.



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### **Your work moves between large-scale sculpture and jewelry. How do you think about scale when developing a work?**

Scale is not usually the first thing I decide. I start from a situation and a visual language I want to build, then size becomes a consequence of what the work needs to do on the body. Different scales create different modes of interaction with the body, and therefore different effects, physically and psychologically.

In large-scale wearable sculpture, scale allows the work to behave like a structure you enter. It can reorganize posture, movement, and proximity, and it makes social tension visible in how a body is constrained, protected, or staged. That expanded scale is essential when I want the form to shape a whole situation around the wearer and the viewer, creating an environment rather than remaining a standalone ornament. Jewelry operates through a different logic. When I make jewelry, I often think of it as pigment and the body as canvas. The work is smaller not because the ideas are smaller, but because the intimacy of scale lets the piece sit on the skin like a mark, something that can be layered, repeated, and carried through daily time. In both cases, I'm working with the same questions, how structure and emotion are activated through the body, but scale determines whether that activation happens as an immersive situation or as a concentrated trace.

### **You often describe the body as a mediator between emotion and structure. How does this idea shape your making process?**

For me, structure is the set of forces that are already there before you act: social norms, built environments, and even another person's boundaries and habits. When bodies come into contact, these structures collide and get renegotiated. The body is the mediator in this exchange. External structures act on the individual through the body, and emotion returns as bodily responses: tension, breath, posture, sensitivity, withdrawal, or approach. That response then feeds back into the structure through how we move, take space, negotiate distance, resist, or adapt.

This model shapes my making process. I begin by identifying the structure I'm responding to and the emotional state it produces. Then I create an object that stages their contact on the body, where it touches, where it holds, where it restricts or supports, and how it shifts posture, movement, and proximity to other bodies. I prototype through repeated wear tests, adjusting pressure points, balance, and range of motion until the piece generates a specific kind of bodily feedback. Digital fabrication helps me establish precise structural systems and controllable connections, while hand processes allow me to tune the sensory threshold of the work: edges, surface, and intensity of contact. I'm looking for a condition in which structure becomes physically legible, and the body's emotional

response becomes visible in space, so wearing the piece is both a physical fact and an emotional negotiation.

### **What materials or structural elements do you return to most, and what draws you to them?**

My material choices are intentionally mixed and often depend on the situation I'm trying to create. That said, I return to a few elements consistently. Clear 3D printed resin is one of them. I'm drawn to it because it allows me to invent precise structures and forms that don't already exist, with a level of control over geometry, tolerance, and repetition that is difficult to achieve by hand. Its transparency also keeps the structure visible, and the internal logic of the piece can remain readable rather than hidden.

Alongside that digital precision, I return to fiber and metal as the handmade side of my practice. The fiber materials I use are often structural: papier-mâché constructions, rattan weaving, and, at times, fabric, depending on what kind of contact, tension, or movement the work requires. I treat these materials as sculptural frameworks rather than soft decoration, using folding, layering, weaving, or stitching to generate volume, stiffness, and resistance by hand. Metal is equally important when a form needs to sit on the body in a very specific way. It gives me precise, durable contact points and structural stability, so I can control exactly how the piece rests, balances, or tensions against the skin, and maintain that relationship through repeated wear.

Beyond materials, I return to geometric forms and modular systems. Geometry lets me establish clear rules and forces, while modularity supports assembly, reconfiguration, and interaction. Across materials, what I return to most is the combination of organic and inorganic languages. That contrast gives me a way to stage how a living body negotiates with structure, and how experience becomes legible through form.

### **How does working at an architectural or sculptural scale inform the way you design jewelry?**

Working at an architectural or sculptural scale is where I can test structure as a full situation around the body. At that scale, I can observe how a form reorganizes posture, movement, and proximity, and how it changes the wearer's relationship to space and other bodies. Those observations become the foundation for my jewelry, not as a literal translation of shape, but as a translation of mechanism.

When I shift into jewelry, I compress the same structural language into a scale that can be carried through daily life. I pay attention to where a piece touches, how it distributes weight, how it creates tension or support, and how it holds its position on the body through movement and time.

In that sense, jewelry is a condensed form of the same research. Wearable sculpture allows me to expand structure until it becomes an environment, and jewelry allows me to concentrate it into a precise trace on the body. Both keep

the same questions about emotion, structure, and activation through interaction. Jewelry is wearable sculpture under compression, while wearable sculpture is jewelry expanded into space.

### **Many of your works address social expectations, invisibility, and control. How do these ideas translate into form?**

I translate social expectations, invisibility, and control into form by treating them as structural systems rather than narrative themes. Social expectations appear as predetermined rules, forms that feel decided in advance. I work with fixed geometries, repeated units, and regulated pathways that ask the body to adjust, so 'fitting in' shifts from concept to physical negotiation.

Invisibility translates into mechanisms of perception and access. I use transparency, concealment, reflection, and optical distortion to control what can be seen, from where, and under what conditions. I'm interested in the gap between visibility and presence; how something can be materially present yet partially inaccessible, and how perception itself can be shaped by structure.

Control becomes legible through contact, constraint, and distance. I pay close attention to where a structure touches the body, how it distributes pressure and weight, what it restricts or permits, and how it reorganizes posture, movement, and proximity. Modularity matters here because it introduces choice within a system. When a form can be assembled or reconfigured, control is no longer a single fixed force; it becomes something negotiated through repeated decisions and interactions.

Ultimately, these ideas translate into forms that operate like frameworks, rules, and thresholds. The goal is not to illustrate social forces, but to construct an experience where the body can register them directly, and where what is usually nonverbal becomes legible through structure.

### **How do viewers or wearers typically respond when encountering your work for the first time?**

Viewers and wearers often respond through curiosity that quickly turns into physical engagement. When a work is suspended, people tend to move closer rather than step back. They lean in, enter the woven space, and look through a lens to observe the outside world. The first encounter becomes an action, not only viewing an object, but testing how perception changes when the body approaches and participates.

In more object-based installations, people often register the body implicitly. When a form carries a human contour, viewers frequently ask whether it is wearable or imagine how it would sit on a body. Even without being instructed to interact, the work prompts questions about activation; how it would be experienced rather than only viewed.

In participatory situations, the response is immediate and social, especially when the interaction is clearly structured. In Shared Memories, I invite someone to toast with me using an object I made, then we document the encounter with a photo and a small printed record, one copy for me and one for them. Because the steps are simple and the outcome is tangible, the viewer shifts from spectator to collaborator, and the first encounter becomes something jointly produced rather than passively observed.

### **Are there artistic, theoretical, or personal references that have strongly influenced your practice?**

I don't have a single artistic or theoretical reference that I consistently return to as a foundation. My practice is primarily shaped by lived experience, the tension between how I feel and the structures that shape how I am expected to behave, appear, and relate. I use making as a way to convert that tension into conditions the body can register.

There are, however, a few recurring points of influence. I'm drawn to practices where the body becomes a site of meaning-making, and to approaches that examine how internal states externalize into physical form and behavior. On a personal and cultural level, 气(Qi), often understood as a flow of vital energy, has shaped my interest in making invisible forces legible through material, geometry, and contact.

### **And finally, what directions or projects are you interested in exploring next? Do you have any new projects or concepts you would like to share with our readers?**

For my next directions, I'm interested in how systems externalize internal states. I'm developing a more conceptual body of work around chance, rule-based decisions, and the way "randomness" can reveal preference, desire, or hesitation. I'm treating fate less as a narrative and more as a method, creating systems where chance and choice interact to make the negotiation between intention and uncertainty physically legible.

That research connects directly to my jewelry practice. In jewelry, I'm beginning a series built from a single modular unit I designed. The unit functions like a rule, a chosen constraint that organizes form, assembly, and variation. Freedom, for me, is not infinite choice, but sustained exploration within a structure. By committing to one unit and testing how far it can go, I can observe how small decisions accumulate, how repetition produces difference. The body registers these decisions through wear.

Across both the conceptual work and the jewelry series, I'm continuing the same question: how structure produces experience, and how constraints can generate new possibilities when they are treated as an active system rather than a limitation.

Rodri Maguchi Collection is my new creation, forming part of a diverse artistic display of the “Islamic Rock” style created by Rodri. © RODRI MAGUCHI portrays a unique and deep approach to the feelings of the current era in the Middle East. I see things, and rock art happens, almost like a painting. “MAGUCHI” means powerful in Russian.

# Rodrigo Alpizar Sánchez



rodrimaguchi.com  
Dubai, UAE

Rodri is a Mexican, Muslim emerging artist, lawyer, entrepreneur, and philanthropist living in Dubai. He was born in Mexico City in 1994, a year of light, and he grew up with a great passion for Rock Music, learning to play the guitar and the drums. He later became a Lawyer, graduating from the Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City, and a Manager, graduating from the Universidad Latinoamericana. After a tough Law career, he joined the Illustrious and National College of Lawyers of Mexico to consolidate the base of his career as an Attorney belonging to the first and most prestigious Bar in the country.

A vision came to his mind that inspired the creation of @QALB, so he moved to Dubai in 2023 to make it happen. He aims to help people in Mexico's courts while pursuing a career as a famous artist. To achieve this, he moved to the U.A.E., brought his guitar, and began developing his skills. He has visions and brings them into reality; it's about raising others' hearts through Rock.





**First of all, introduce yourself to our readers. Who are you, and how did you first get interested in art?**

You can call me Rodri, I am an emerging artist living in Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates. I came close to art through a very deep perspective I found in photography. I am also a musician; I play the guitar.

**You were born in Mexico City and now live in Dubai. How has this journey shaped you as both a person and an artist?**

Well, moving to Dubai was a step I took to grow as a person and as an artist. I noticed that people from all around the world were moving here. It is a city that is waking up to a new era. Knowing new people and places in a waking city opens your eyes to other realms. It is not about shaping somebody but realising true identity.

**You studied law and even became part of Mexico's most prestigious Bar. What made you take the leap from law into art?**

My dream, since I was 13 years old, was to become an artist. I grew up in a family of prestigious doctors. I learned to play the guitar and followed the "real life agenda" until I graduated from college as a lawyer. I simultaneously tried to create many Rock Bands while attending to legal cases. Something inside of me brought me back to art. I still attend my legal cases from a distance.

**Rock music has been a big part of your life. How does music influence your artistic creations?**

I always think about dreams and illusions, even real life as a movie, as a work of art. Everything is happening with music in the background. I loved listening to music and imagining different situations, such as playing the guitar in the background for the one I loved. I guess I've somehow learned how to photograph these things. I get really inspired by the sound of the electric guitar.

**You describe your style as "Islamic Rock." Can you tell us what this means to you and how it translates into your work?**

I am a converted Muslim; I found the inspiration to push through my mind and try to bring my imagination to reality. Since I visited the East side of the world, I got to know special people, and found the mystic realm of Islam. And I found again the power of music, as a way of love and peace.

**What role does your faith and identity as a Muslim play in your creative process?**

Being a Muslim plays a crucial part in the creative process for me as I try each day to reach for the heavens in prayer. I also seek to share with others what is in my mind, what I feel and become each day a better version of myself.

**You talk about raising people's hearts through Rock. What kind of feelings or messages do you hope people take away from your art?**

I hope people will notice a mystic realm, identify with the inspiration behind the artworks, and feel or perceive a channel of intuition.

**How do you balance your life as a lawyer, entrepreneur, philanthropist, and now emerging artist?**

I have to coordinate myself very well, schedule times and stay focused. It is a group of tasks meant to be done and perfected day by day.

**Moving to Dubai in 2023 was a big step. What opportunities or inspirations have you found here that you couldn't find in Mexico?**

It is more about the inspiration of leaving the place I was born in to find a New World on the eastern side of the World. See the other side of the movie.

**Looking ahead, what are your dreams for yourself and your career as an artist?**

I want to push through with my commercial activism project. As a famous musician, I help vulnerable people through the legal aspect, sell a lot of T-shirts, and buy a bunch of guitars and a limousine to ride with my friends in Dubai.

Eye to Eye  
138x80x50 mm

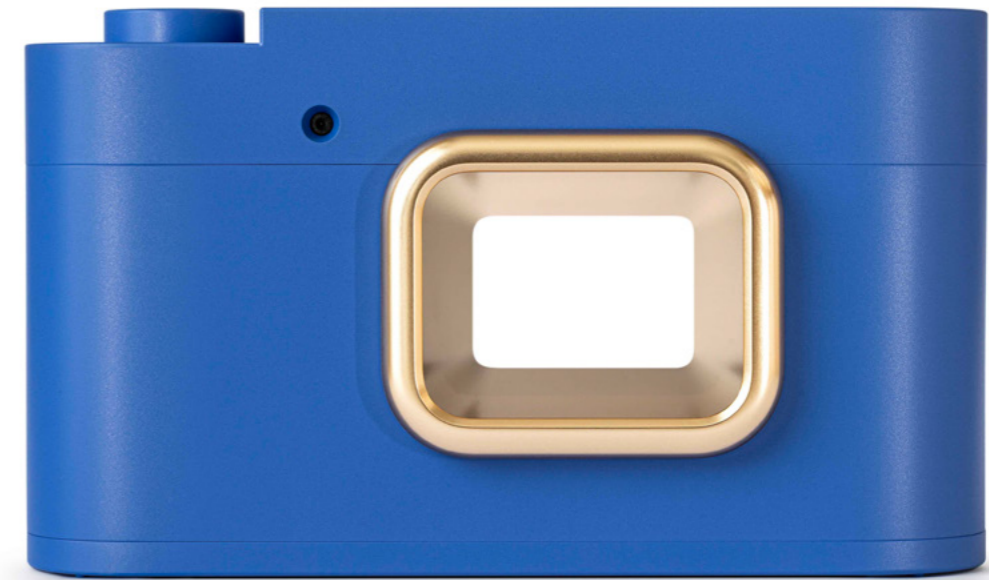
ABS Resin, Aluminum,  
Polycarbonate, Acrylic  
Urethane Paint

Conceptual art  
2024

Yasuaki Matsuura is a Tokyo-based artist who explores the theme of “New Memory” through the creation of fully functional cameras. As automation and virtualisation accelerate across every aspect of daily life, Matsuura sees a growing crisis: the diminishing value of memory itself. In a world where moments are effortlessly captured and archived by machines, the emotional and human weight of remembering is quietly being lost.

In response, he builds cameras from scratch, not as nostalgic objects, but as instruments that reawaken awareness of the act of recording. His works invite users to slow down, to look, and to feel the presence of time and others. Each camera is not just a device, but a proposition: that memory must be earned, not simply stored.

With over a decade of experience as a lead designer at Canon, and rooted in Tokyo, a global hub of camera culture, Matsuura brings technical mastery and conceptual clarity to his practice. His work reclaims photography as a human ritual, proposing new forms of memory-making for an age at risk of forgetting what it means to remember.



# Yasuaki Matsuura

Yasuaki Matsuura (b. 1990) is a Tokyo-based contemporary artist whose practice centers on the theme of “new memory.” He uses the camera, its form, function, and cultural role, not just as a tool, but as both subject and medium.

He graduated from Kanazawa College of Art in 2013 and spent over a decade at Canon Inc., where he designed some of the company’s most iconic cameras. His work includes models from the EOS DSLR series and, in 2018, the groundbreaking full-frame mirrorless system EOS R and RF 24–105mm F4 L IS USM lens, Canon’s first major system overhaul in 30 years.

As a lead product designer, Matsuura became a defining figure in the camera industry. In 2019, he launched a corporate venture project within Canon, challenging the spec-driven nature of the market. As project lead, he successfully developed concept-driven cameras such as IVY REC, expanding the public’s perception of what a camera could be. In 2024, Matsuura formally began his career as a contemporary artist. He now creates sculptural and conceptual works that use the physicality of the camera to examine memory, perception, and presence in an era shaped by automation and virtualization. He is recognized as the only artist working exclusively through the language of the camera, treating it not only as a device, but as a metaphor for how we record and engage with human experience.

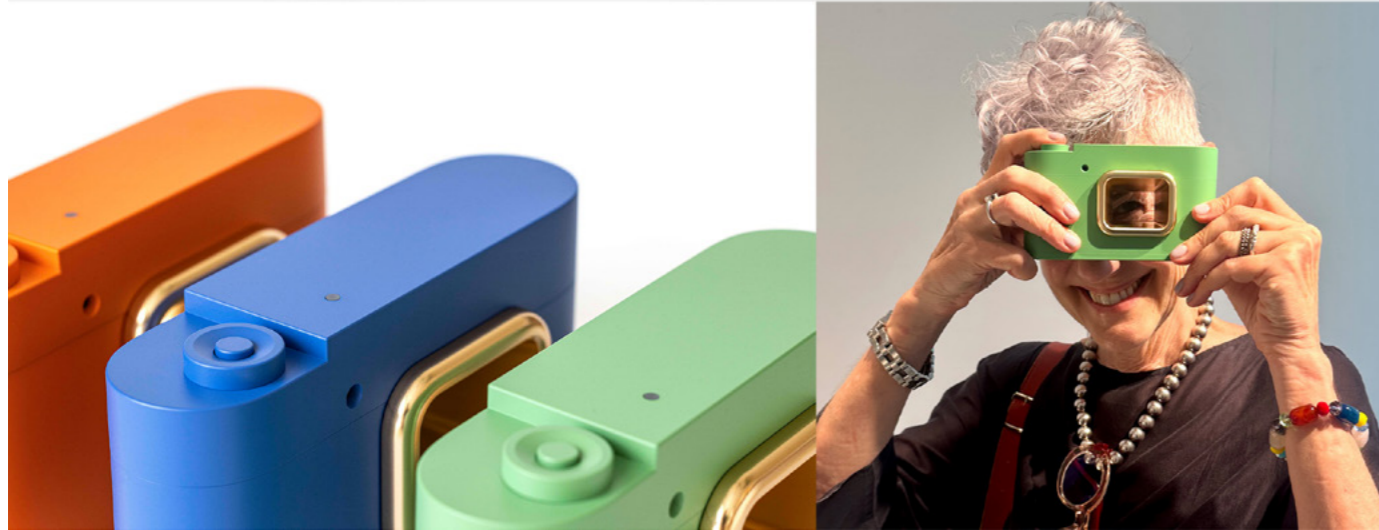


yasuakimatsuura.com  
@yasuaki\_\_matsuura  
Tokyo, Japan

Eye to Eye  
138x80x50 mm

ABS Resin, Aluminum,  
Polycarbonate, Acrylic  
Urethane Paint

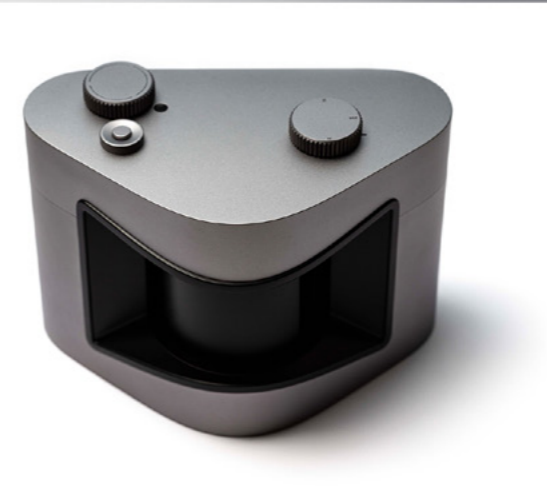
Conceptual art  
2024



Panorama  
202x149x115 mm

Aluminum, ABS Resin,  
Magnesium Alloy,  
Anodizing

Conceptual art  
2024



**You spent over a decade designing some of Canon’s most iconic cameras before transitioning into contemporary art. How has your experience as a product designer shaped your artistic vision and approach today?**

Working on camera development at Canon gave me a deep opportunity to think about how people record their lives and hold onto memories. Without that experience, I don’t think I would be making art about memory today, it was the foundation that led me here.

My background as an industrial designer is also a core part of who I am as an artist. It has deeply shaped my commitment to the physical quality of my work. In the art world, there are many pieces where the value lies mainly in the concept, and the physical form can sometimes feel secondary. That has its place, of course, but for me, the object itself matters deeply. I’ve spent years confronting objects seriously and respectfully. Through that, I’ve come to believe that form has its own power, something silent, but undeniable. That belief continues to guide my artistic practice. I don’t just want to make conceptual proposals; I want to make physical presences that speak on their own terms.

**Working within a corporate environment often means balancing creativity with market demands. What personal or professional moments at Canon most influenced your current perspective on memory and technology?**

One of the most formative experiences was leading the development of a camera called the IVY REC. At the time, I had been designing Canon’s EOS DSLR series, professional-grade cameras with a long legacy. It was rewarding, but also a highly disciplined and technical process.

Then I joined a new in-house venture team aimed at creating a camera for younger users. As the team lead, I had the chance to speak directly with a wide range of people about how they used cameras in their daily lives. That experience changed how I saw the role of technology.

I came to realise that a camera’s value isn’t only about technical specs. Many users weren’t just interested in high performance, they were struggling with how their memories were being shaped, or even taken over, by their smartphones. It made me reflect deeply on how we relate to moments, how we remember, and what it means to truly capture something beyond the image.

That project was a turning point. It helped me see cameras not just as tools, but as cultural objects, and ultimately, as a medium through which I could explore memory as an artist.

**You treat the camera not only as a tool but as the very subject and medium of your art. Could you walk us through your creative process? How do you design and build these fully functional cameras as conceptual works?**

My work begins not with materials or forms, but with reflection. I carry many personal thoughts and questions around memory, how it’s formed, what we lose when it becomes automated, and how we might reclaim it. I take daily notes whenever something strikes me, and then set aside quiet, focused time each week to think more deeply. While the physical camera may catch attention first, I’d say the conceptual phase is often the longest part of the process.

In terms of making, I bring a full industrial design process into the art space, which I believe is quite unique. Just because something is art doesn’t mean the form or material can be arbitrary. I believe there’s always a best shape, a most honest structure, to carry an idea.

So I start with sketches, move through dozens of prototypes, and carefully refine every detail, including things like edge radii and surface finishes. My background in industrial design allows me to give form to conceptual inquiries with precision and intentionality. Some people in the art world say this hybrid approach stands out. For me, it simply feels necessary, because memory deserves that kind of care.

**Your practice blends sculptural craft with technological precision. How do you navigate the tension between function, aesthetics, and concept in your pieces?**

It’s definitely a challenge. These elements often pull in different directions. But I’ve come to see that very tension as a source of innovation, not a limitation. The key is not to compromise too early, but to stay with the problem long enough to find a solution where concept, function, and form don’t cancel each other out, but amplify one another.

Prototyping plays a big role in that process. I often start with rough models, just to get the idea off the page and into physical space. Sometimes a concept that feels profound in theory doesn’t translate when built. Other times, unexpected discoveries emerge through the act of making. That iterative, experimental mindset comes directly from my experience in industrial design.

In the end, I try to treat each project not as a problem to solve, but as a balance to tune, where thought and form are constantly adjusting to each other until something essential comes into focus.

**The idea of “New Memory” is central to your work. How do you define it, and what motivated you to explore the crisis of memory in our society?**

For me, “New Memory” is the reinvention of memory itself. Technological advances have made it easier than ever to record our lives, but in that ease, we risk losing something essential: the weight of remembering. The physical and emotional processes that turn an experience into a memory are fading. Touching a moment directly, letting it sink into the mind

and body, that very human act is being eroded by the rise of smartphones and social media.

“New Memory” is my response to that crisis. It’s a quiet resistance against forgetting what it means to truly see, feel, and remember. Memory, after all, is not data, it’s a trace of experience, a living sensation. I see my work as an alternative technology: one that restores memory to the hands of the human, not just the machine.

Having spent years developing cameras, I’ve witnessed both the beauty and the consequences of recording culture. As an artist, I now use the camera not only as a device, but as a lens to question the very nature of memory itself.

**In your view, what is being lost when memory becomes effortless and automatic? Do you see your cameras as tools of resistance, reminders, or something else entirely?**

As memory becomes effortless and automatic, we begin to surrender the act of remembering itself. We press the shutter and feel reassured, as if saving the image completes the experience. But true memory is more complex: it settles slowly into the body, then rises unexpectedly with time. In exchange for easy recording, we are losing the felt depth of memory, and that, to me, is a quiet crisis of our age.

My cameras are not designed for efficiency, but for presence. Rather than “tools of resistance,” I think of them as prompts, devices that reopen the sensory circuit between the self and the world. They invite the user to look again, feel again, and be present, not through a screen, but through direct engagement with the person or scene in front of them. These are not cameras for documentation. They are instruments for rediscovering the possibility of memory.

**Looking at your body of work so far, are there recurring formal elements or design choices that intentionally reflect your ideas about memory and presence?**

I aim to convey a message through form, something that speaks instantly and lingers in memory. For this reason, the frontal graphic silhouette of my pieces is particularly important. I spend a lot of time refining the balance between simplicity and originality so that the form communicates even before it is fully understood.

Another key element is build quality. When dealing with a sensitive theme like memory, I believe the object itself must have integrity. Every detail, from materials and surface finish to weight and tactile presence, needs to feel essential and considered. A well-crafted object has a quiet authority, one that invites the viewer to pause, reflect, and trust the experience it offers.

**Many of your works invite users to slow down and become conscious of the act of recording. Have you observed how audiences respond emotionally or intellectually to this invitation?**

Most people approach my works with the muscle memory of recording, instinctively reaching for their smartphones. In front of pieces like What Icon? or SLR Sculpture, they prepare to take a photo, only to pause. The object shaped like a camera is, in fact, a mirror. What they’re about to capture isn’t the artwork, but themselves.

That moment of stillness is powerful. It’s when the automation of recording falls away, and viewers are returned to their own gaze, their own presence. Some laugh, some hesitate, and others grow quiet and contemplative. There’s a unique overlap between emotional reaction and intellectual realisation, something unexpected, yet deeply human.

My works aren’t meant to provide answers. They are designed to leave questions, gentle interruptions that insert a kind of quiet noise between the viewer’s body and memory. If something lingers afterwards, not as an image but as a shift in awareness, then the work has fulfilled its purpose.

**As your practice evolves, do you envision experimenting beyond the camera itself? Do you plan to bring this concept to new mediums or art forms?**

Possibly, yes. But for now, I feel that this journey with the camera is far from complete. The more I work with it, the more depth I discover. It’s not just a tool, it’s a mirror of our relationship to memory, technology, and time.

Rather than expanding into new mediums for the sake of variety, I want to continue exploring the theme of memory with as much depth and sincerity as possible. I believe it’s a subject worthy of a lifetime, and the camera, both in form and metaphor, still holds many layers I have yet to uncover.

**Lastly, where do you see yourself and your work in five years from now? How do you plan to make an impact on the art world?**

I’ve only just begun my journey as an artist, this is my first year, and I’m still largely unknown. My immediate goal is to present my work on major international platforms and introduce it to new audiences. Over the next five years, I plan to create pieces that leave a lasting impression. Some are already in the works, so please look forward to them.

As for impact, I hope to help shift the conversation in contemporary art toward a deeper appreciation of the physical quality of artworks. While strong concepts are essential, I believe that care, time, and craftsmanship also carry profound meaning. Many artists pour themselves into the material presence of their work, and I hope to be part of a movement that brings greater visibility to that dedication.

By the time that shift happens, when ideas and material presence are valued equally, I hope my work will already be part of what led us there.

Photography is widely regarded as a truthful medium, and Doug Winter's images honour the diversity of personal truths. Winter's work expands the traditional approach to photography by using the camera as a conceptual mechanism to investigate how the human system adjusts, grieves, and adapts to trauma and physical impairment. He utilises analogue photo-mechanical methods to create photographs that expose latent memories through non-representational forms, text, and colours. Each image serves as an organised impression of memories and sensations, connecting the spectator to their life experiences.

# Doug Winter

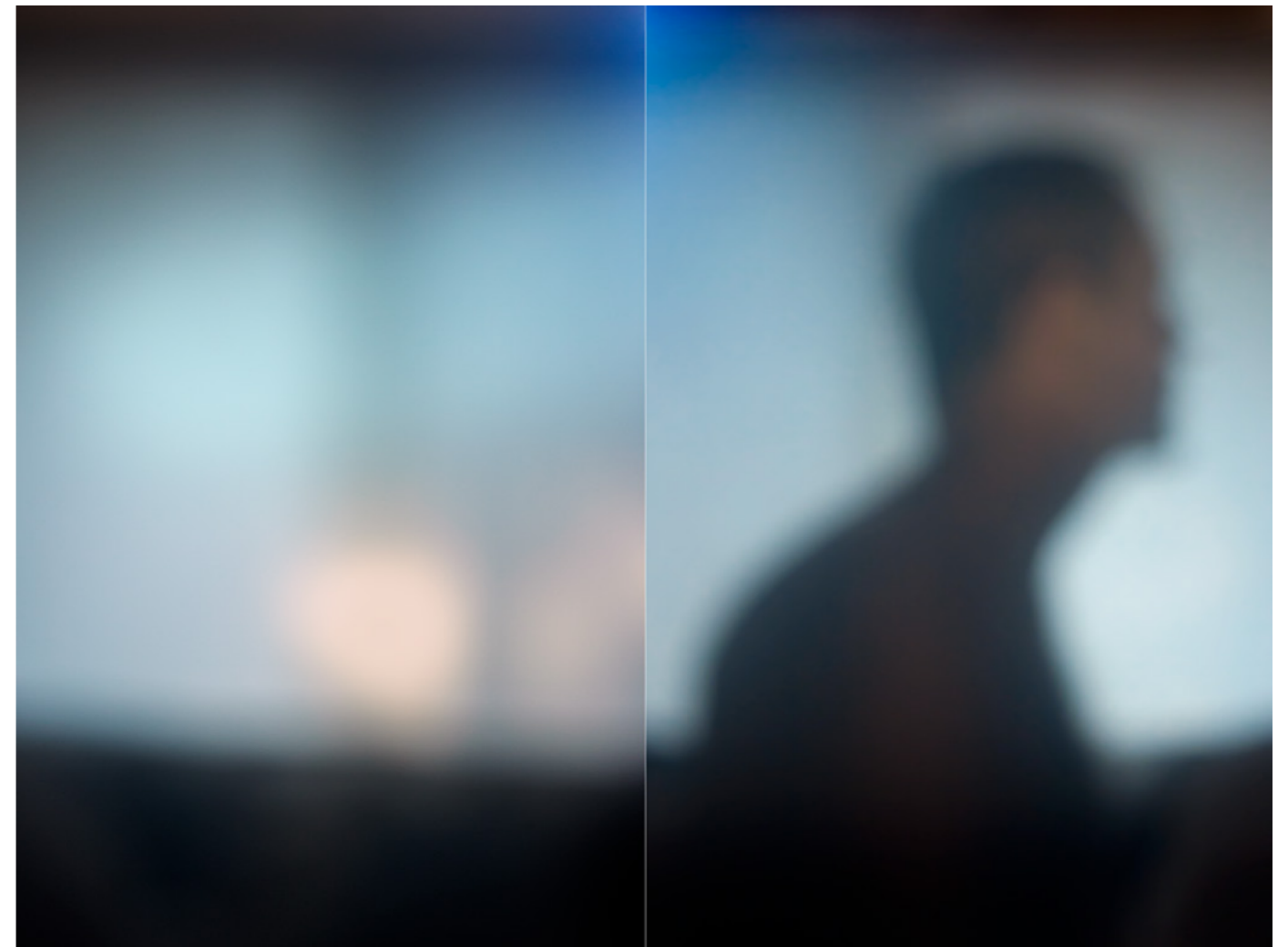
Doug Winter (b. 1966, Denver, Colorado) is a photographic artist and filmmaker living with impaired vision, including visual snow syndrome. Shaped by witnessing his father's sudden loss of sight and adapting to his own partial vision loss following a stroke-related change in vision, he treats the camera as a conceptual mechanism, not a tool of documentation. Working without digital correction, he physically modifies lenses and sensors and uses degraded film materials to investigate how vision and memory shift, fracture, and rebuild with each act of remembering, and how the photograph can fail as evidence and truth.

In 2023, Winter received a \$10,000 Seeding Creativity grant funded by the National Endowment for the Arts through the American Rescue Plan. In 2024, he was a semifinalist for the Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition 2025 (Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery). A finalist for the Arte Laguna Prize, he exhibited at Arsenale Nord, Venice, and has been selected on three occasions by separate Arte Laguna juries for exhibition, including Arte Laguna's 20th Anniversary exhibition at EKA-Tianwu Creative Park (Jinqiao, Pudong), Shanghai. Through Arte Laguna, he received a fully funded one-month residency at the Hong Museum (Shanghai branch), China. His works are held in the collections of MoCA Cultural Association, Venice (2 works), Hong Museum (Shanghai branch), China (4 works), and the National Steinbeck Center, Salinas, California (1 work). He is an artist-in-residence at KALA Art Institute in Berkeley, California, and is a graduate of the Colorado Institute of Art (1987).

See me, Endearment, Day 189  
(in two parts)

Archival Pigment Print  
on Cotton Rag Paper  
91.4 x 121.92 cm

Photography  
2023

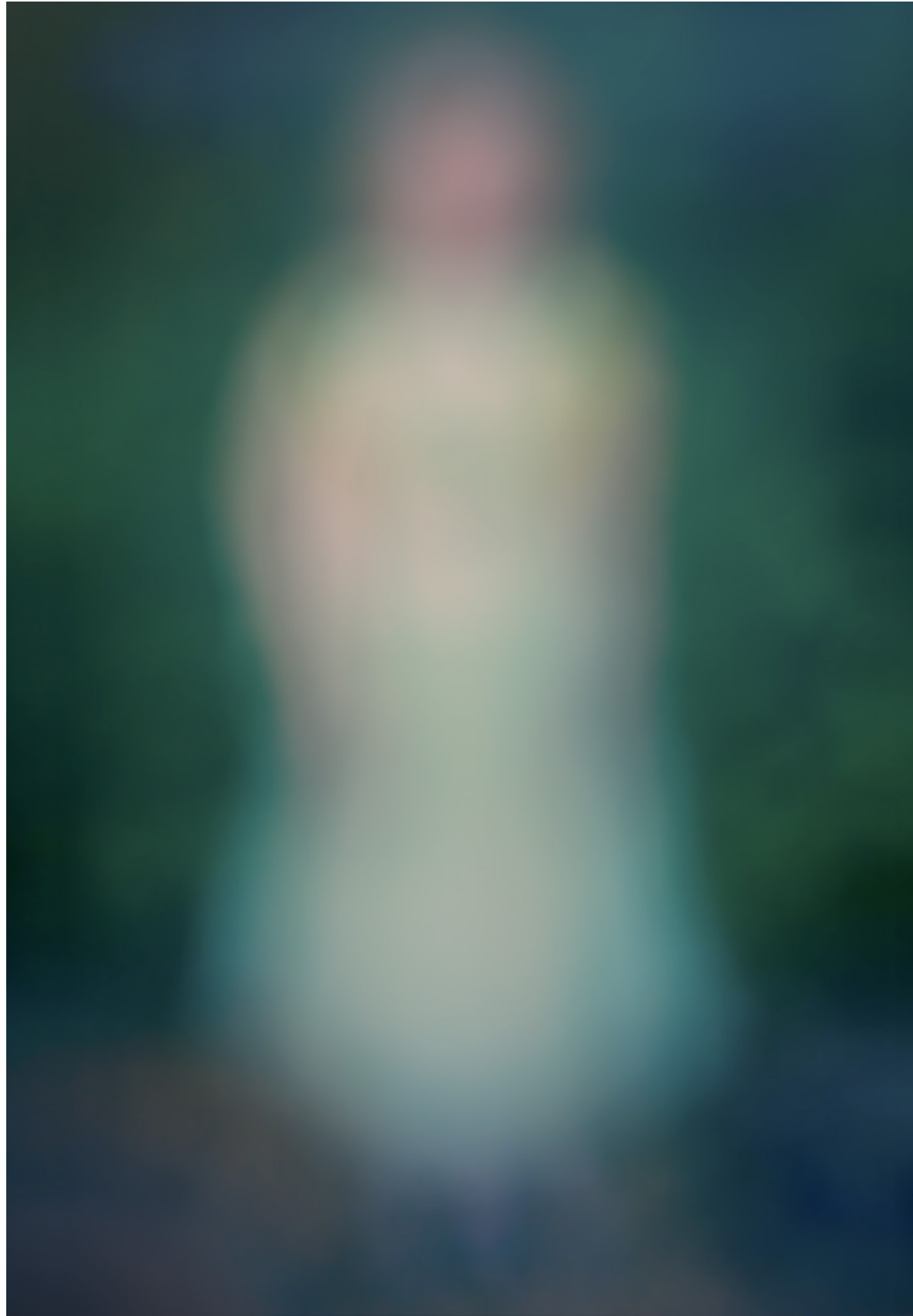


dougwinterstudio.com  
@doug\_winter\_studio  
Elk Grove, United States

Shoulder the wind, Day 185

Archival Pigment Print  
on Cotton Rag Paper  
91.4x60.96 cm

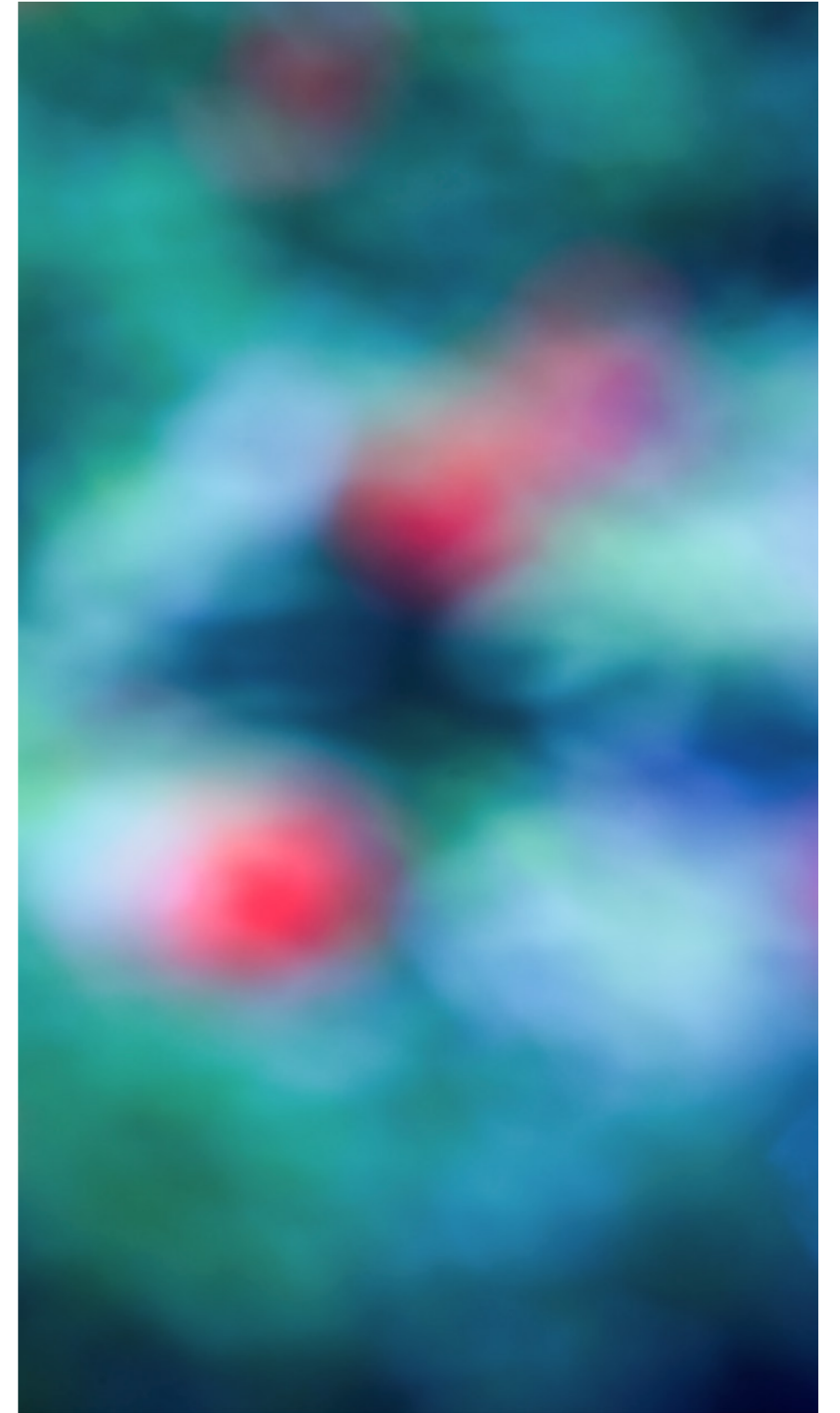
Photography  
2020



Water Blossoms in shade,  
Day 35

Archival Pigment Print  
on Cotton Rag Paper  
91.44 x 50.8 cm

Photography  
2020



**How has your creative process evolved, both technically and emotionally, in the past few years? Do you find your practice has shifted in any way?**

While working on my National Endowment for the Arts grant exhibition, I began asking myself deeply personal questions. Instead of trying to control my actions, the camera's actions, and the outcome, I committed to investigating them, no matter the emotional or mental cost. Something broke open during that process. The barriers I had once associated with photography, the rules I was taught and had followed for decades, began to fall away, tearing down the foundation I had built my practice on. That intense emotional experience pushed me away from my photographic roots and into unknown areas of both my life and my art. I stopped using the camera as a tool of documentation and began using it as a conceptual mechanism, something capable of holding uncertainty, ambiguity, and contradiction.

After the exhibition closed, I reread my notes and revisited the responses people had shared with me, at the opening, in writing, and through the sale of the work. I felt a deep satisfaction at having completed something so meaningful and memorable. But I also felt an unexpected emptiness. I applied to and was accepted into the artist-in-residence program at KALA. Working long hours in that space, surrounded by tactile materials and other artists, shifted everything again. I gave myself permission to create without second-guessing. I began pursuing long-buried memories, especially those tied to visual impairment, grief, fragmented recall, and traumatic sensory experiences. The work became more vulnerable, more embodied. In some cases, it became too personal to ever show publicly, not because the work failed, but because it did what it needed to do. It was for me. And I'm proud of the vulnerability and courage it took to name the past, witness it, and let it go.

**Speaking of new works, you recently launched a new series, *Unfolding*. Can you walk us through how this series came to life, from concept to final image?**

The series is deeply rooted in sensory memory and non-visual perception, as you mention in your statement. Can photography, traditionally a visual medium, adequately evoke these non-visual sensations? How do you attempt that in your work? That's the core tension I'm working with, how to use a visual medium to speak to non-visual experiences. Photography is traditionally tied to sight, clarity, and documentation as a way to prove evidence. But for me, it's become a way to explore what lies beneath. I'm interested in what happens when we remove the expectation of sharpness or evidentiary clarity, when we let photographs behave more like sensations than appropriated representations.

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To do that, I disrupt the mechanics of the camera itself. I alter lenses, impair sensors, and allow the camera to react without my implicit control, so that the resulting image carries the feeling of instability or fracture. These choices can mirror my own visual impairment, but they also speak to how we feel and retain our memories: through tone, pressure, warmth, or even sound. I often think of my images as emotional or sensory echoes, like the warmth left in a bed after someone gets up. So no, photography might not traditionally be designed to hold non-visual sensation, but that's precisely why I'm drawn to pushing it. The medium's limitations become part of the conceptual framework. In embracing and exploiting its failures and limitations, I've found an opening for something deeper and more embodied to occur.

**In *Unfolding*, you describe working directly on the camera's digital sensor and altering lenses. What led you to those experimental techniques, and how do they align with your practice?**

What led me to alter lenses and work directly on the sensor began with looking at a scan of my own eye, at my impairment, and continued through a series of conversations with mentors and peers during the development of my NEA exhibition. I completely released the constrictive rules of traditional photography, the preciousness of the sensor, the perfection of optics, and allowed the camera itself to take on an impairment much like my own.

I realised that traditional photography, and traditional sight, no longer reflected how I experience the world or how I retain memory. So I used that feeling and experience to exploit and uncover what lies beneath, to let the image emerge not from control, but from disruption, sensation, and the instability of perception itself.

**The idea of "truth" in photography is central to your practice. How has your understanding of visual truth changed as your work became increasingly abstract and sensory-driven?**

Photography is often regarded as a truthful medium, but truth itself is an abstraction. My work moves from objective truth toward the subjective. The images I create honour the

diversity of personal truths while also acknowledging that truth is never fixed. My memory of an event may be entirely unrecognisable to someone else who experienced it, shaped by age, height, gender, emotion, trauma, or cultural bias. If I have tears in my eyes during a traumatic moment, what I see becomes distorted, filtered through grief or pain. That vision is abstract, yet it's still part of my truth. So I ask: how does a memory remain truthful when the visual itself is altered? I think of truth as a kind of Venn diagram, overlapping perceptions, with a residue of shared experience in the middle. After the moment passes, something remains, like the traditional film photographic process itself: a latent image, invisible but present, waiting for the right conditions to emerge. That's what I'm working with, the possibility of truth, even when it's fractured, uncertain, or incomplete.

**Has your relationship with memory or grief changed while creating *Unfolding*? Did the process bring unexpected revelations or moments of discovery?**

Grief is love without a home, and that's a confusing place to live. The grief I carry daily can be overwhelming. I often question why my life has followed this path. I'm so thankful and lucky for the life I have been given, but I often ask why I've experienced such pain, why some memories are colored in such unsettling ways.

Creating *Unfolding* changed my relationship with memory and grief in ways I never expected. I dove deep into autobiographical experiences, many filled with confusion and pain, others marked by joy and adulation. I confronted the honesty I held to those memories and examined my own role in them, how I showed up, what I carried, what I avoided. That process lifted a veil. I finally began to understand why I gravitate toward specific experiences, why I react the way I do. And what's been most challenging to accept is this: my art practice has become a kind of transparency, a way to physically manifest grief and memory. I can now hold it in my hands. I can tear it apart. Or I can hold it and cry. This time, it's deeply personal. Many of the new pieces will never be shown publicly, not because the work isn't successful, but because it's too raw. Too close. *Unfolding* has made me take inventory: Where am I? What was my role, good or bad, villain or hero, within a life marked by brutality, beauty, and sometimes madness, all entangled in the lives I've shared or passed by on the street?

**Are you exploring new materials or mediums beyond photography in your current or upcoming projects, perhaps more tactile or sound-based work?**

Yes, I am exploring new materials and mediums beyond traditional photography. Though the work remains grounded in light and image, it is now pushed further into themes of extended time (memory), material failure, and both physical and emotional residue.

For my NEA exhibition, I created two tactile-based pieces. One, titled *Blue #3*, invited guests to touch and reflect on the colour blue as both a visual and emotional experience. The second,

*Flames of Cantania*, was a collaborative, photographic, and text-based artwork in which guests physically helped reveal hidden elements, connecting interaction with meaning and personal memory.

At KALA, I've been focused on gradually removing the image from photo-based works, leaving behind only the emotional trace or memory of what was once there. It's an ongoing process of visual, tactile, and emotional problem-solving, deeply personal, challenging, and extremely rewarding. I've also begun experimenting with sound, shadow, and experimental film. I'm currently in the early stages of principal photography for this new work. It's not yet ready to share. I hope to present it in a solo exhibition in late 2026.

**How do you envision your next body of work developing? Are there new themes or personal experiences you're beginning to explore artistically?**

My next body of work is developing slowly, but with intention. Much of it is rooted in the themes I've already begun to explore, memory, autobiographical experiences, impermanence, and the instability of perception, but I'm now leaning further into absence. I'm focusing on experiences and sensations that have lingered unresolved or unnamed, especially those tied to vulnerability, masculinity, and physical limitation. The work is becoming less about what is shown and more about what is felt, remembered, or sensed at the edge of recognition. That's the direction I'm headed: toward work that doesn't explain, but invites, quietly, and sometimes uneasily, what lives beneath the surface.

**Looking ahead, what does artistic success look like to you now? Has that definition shifted since your early career? And what would you like to achieve in the next 5 years?**

Artistic success looks very different to me now than it did at the start of my career, it's less about recognition and more about honesty, endurance, and the depth of connection my work can create. Success now means making work that's emotionally resonant and deeply connected to my lived experience, creating from a place of vulnerability and reflection. It's not just about showing something, but about feeling it, allowing it to speak universally in ways that go beyond surface or explanation. In the next five years, I plan to seek targeted grant funding and pursue public art opportunities. I want to deepen my exploration of experimental film, sound, monotyping, and tactile installation, pushing further into abstraction and non-visual perception. I hope to create immersive work that resonates across sensory and cognitive differences, and connect with artists navigating disability, grief, or fragmented memory. For me, success now means staying close to what's real, even when it's hard to name.

Dancho Atanasov is a fine art photographer whose portfolio includes landscape, architecture, travel, and conceptual single photos and series.

Through his individual approach, Dancho Atanasov extracts beauty and aesthetics from every photographed object, based on its type.

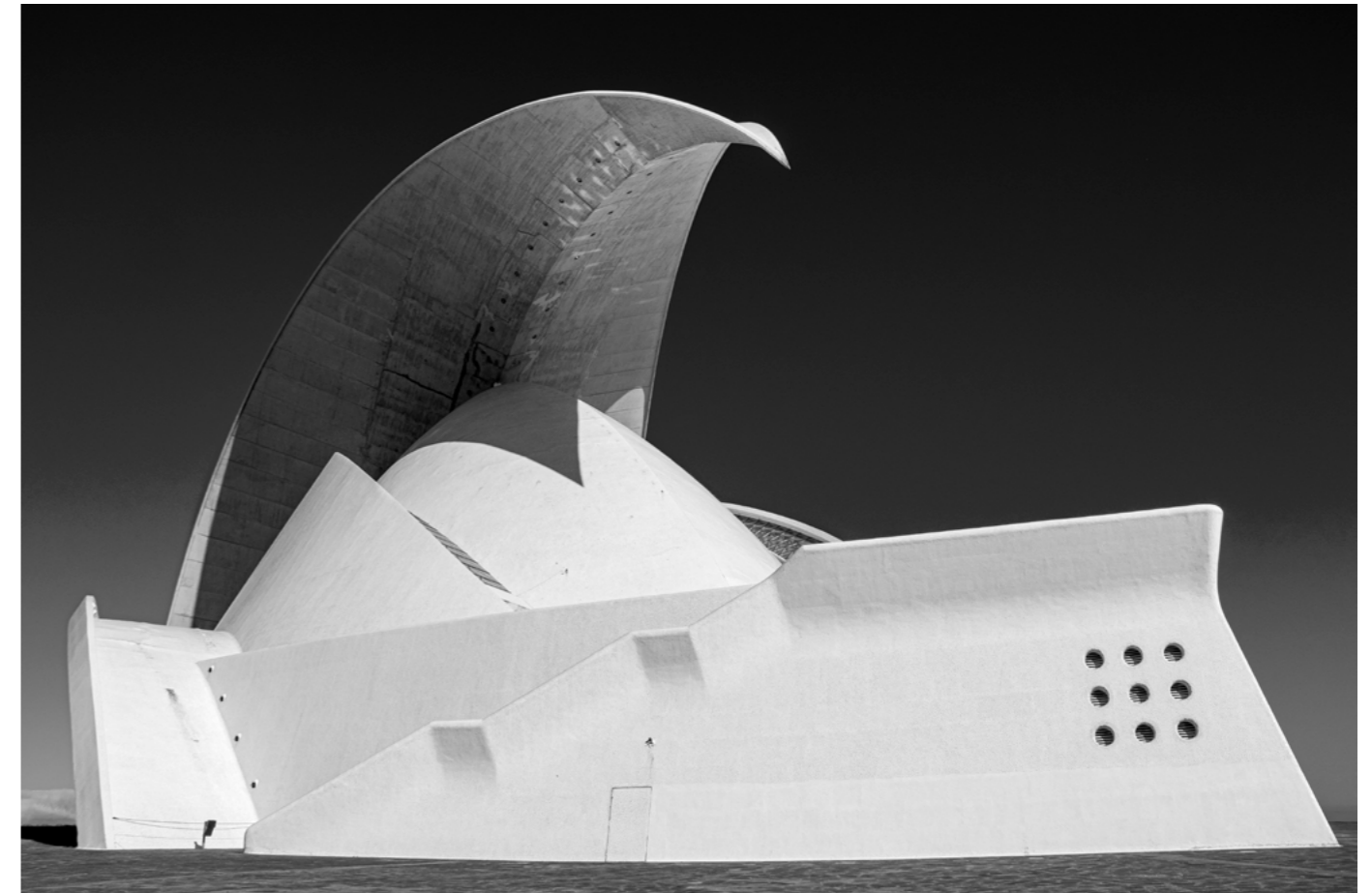
Watching the photos, you find a proper combination of forms and shapes, dynamic angles, and a sense of detail-based volume.

The artist gets his inspiration from the beauty of nature and the artworks of great architects and sculptors. When he travels, he researches the history, architecture, sightseeing, and events in the next destination and makes notes about the new photography "targets". Some of them are planned preliminary before his departure, and he spots some of them onsite.

All the artworks are limited edition aluminium dibond prints with size 150x100cm (60x40in) and 90x60cm (36x24in).

Nowadays, he is working on new interactive art media, combining photography, 3D animation, music and various effects, ready for immersive art experience and 360 VR.

# Dancho Atanasov



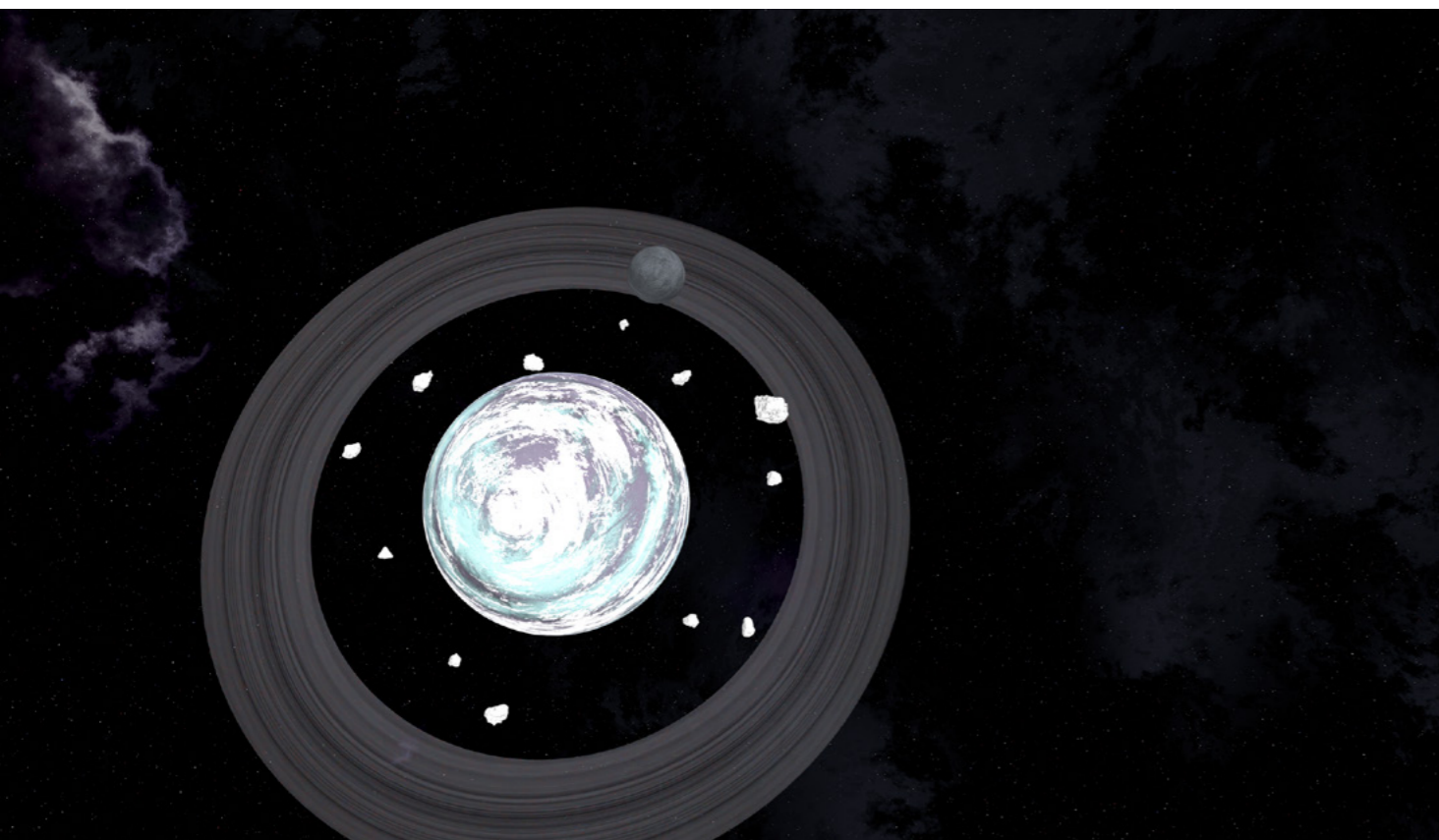
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Sofia, Bulgaria

Since his early childhood, Dancho Atanasov has been interested in art and has tried out many things - from music to visual arts. He gets to know photography through his uncle - skydiving as a teenager. His uncle, himself an enthusiastic parachutist and photographer, lends him his photographic equipment and teaches him the fundamentals.

During 4 years (2010 – 2014), he used to work as chief editor and photojournalist in a travel magazine, which was a great experience and cultivated his point of view. The final step is the Conceptual Photography Class accomplishment (2 Levels + Master Class: 2015 – 2017).

The artist left his time as a combat pilot and air traffic controller behind and now works as a fine art photography artist at Art Of Dancho. His works have received many awards and are frequently exhibited.

Most of the photos have won international photo awards, and in the hands of art collectors, art dealers, or interior designers, they can be precious masterpieces for art investment as limited edition photo prints and NFTs.



**How did your journey as an artist begin, and what first inspired your love for photography?**

I have always been into the arts, painting, sculpting, drawing, and music. I received my first art award at the age of 10 in a city children's painting contest. During secondary school, I used to skydive at the local air club, and my uncle (a former skydiver and photographer) shared his photography gear with me and taught me the basics. That's how I took my first steps in photography.

**Your career has transitioned from jet fighter pilot to fine art photographer. How has this unique background influenced your artistic vision?**

The vision you develop as a jet fighter pilot is second to none. Just imagine a fusion of breathtaking landscapes and picturesque cloud formations shifting rapidly due to high speeds and dynamic maneuvers. You want to capture and share these moments with others, but given the narrow cockpit and intense conditions, it was not always possible to take out a camera and shoot. Nowadays, it's much easier, just mount an action camera and... voilà!

**When preparing for a new photography project, what steps do you take to plan and execute your ideas? Do you prefer to research and plan in advance or explore spontaneously?**

I usually plan ahead and conduct thorough research. Google Maps and Google Earth are great tools. Any additional sources of information are always appreciated. I also evaluate weather conditions, time of day, and season. Based on this, I pack my luggage and photography gear accordingly.

I will always remember my project, Las Torres de la Huerta (The Towers of the Orchard), with a smile. While exploring the Alicante region using the tools I mentioned, I discovered 20 ancient towers in the San Juan area. Some were located within the suburb, but most were hidden in the surrounding valley. I printed two versions of highly detailed 3D maps, one for myself and another for a potential taxi driver.

In San Juan, I found a line of taxis and a group of drivers resting in the shade of palm trees. When I showed them the maps, a look of horror appeared on their faces. They were unfamiliar with the area and didn't have navigation systems in their vehicles. The first three drivers refused to take me there outright. After lengthy negotiations, the fourth one finally agreed. On the way, he kept complaining about being hungry, the dusty roads, and the lack of asphalt. When he realized I was firm and unshakable, he had no choice but to accept the situation and stop at every tower so I could take my shots. I found the whole situation amusing and asked him if he had ever met a photographer as crazy as me. His response? "No, never! And I will remember this trip for the rest of my life." Eventually, we even discovered a 21st tower that had never been documented.

I also revisit places and subjects I have photographed before. One such case occurred at midnight in the burial ground of St. Barth's Church in Horley (near Gatwick Airport, UK). I first

saw it in 2012 while returning from Tenerife. Under a full moon, the place looked incredibly eerie, but I didn't have my camera with me. Four years later, I returned and captured stunning long-exposure shots, using light painting to illuminate the statues and graves.

Sometimes I return to a location because I develop a new vision for it or realize how I can improve my previous shots. It often happens that I visit a place to photograph one subject, only to discover new ones and develop fresh project ideas on the spot.

**You describe achieving harmony and aesthetics as a key goal in your work. How do you approach creating that balance in your photographs?**

Harmony and aesthetics are at the core of my artistic vision. I achieve balance in my photographs by carefully considering composition, light, and color. I often work with symmetry, leading lines, and natural patterns to create a sense of order and visual flow. Light plays a crucial role as well; it helps me sculpt forms, create depth, and evoke emotions that resonate with the viewer.

Another key aspect is my approach to minimalism and abstraction. I seek to distill scenes down to their essential elements, removing distractions to emphasize beauty in simplicity. Whether capturing architectural forms, landscapes, or abstract textures, I aim to create a visual dialogue that feels both structured and emotionally engaging.

Ultimately, balance in my work comes from intuition and refinement. I continuously explore new ways to merge artistic expression with technical precision, ensuring that each image conveys a sense of harmony that draws the viewer in.

**Your work often focuses on shapes, colors, and light. Can you share how you achieve this harmony in your photographs?**

Shapes, colors, and light are the foundation of my photographic approach. I am drawn to the way geometric forms interact with their surroundings, how colors evoke emotions, and how light transforms ordinary scenes into something extraordinary. To achieve harmony, I focus on composition first. I carefully frame my shots to emphasize balance, whether through symmetry, contrast, or the subtle interplay of positive and negative space. I also pay close attention to color theory, using complementary and monochromatic palettes to create mood and cohesion within my work.

Light is perhaps the most powerful tool in my process. Whether it's the soft glow of natural light or the stark contrast of shadows, I use illumination to shape depth and enhance the essence of a scene. It allows me to highlight details, create movement, and add a sense of rhythm to my compositions. Ultimately, my goal is to capture the quiet beauty of the world in a way that feels both structured and poetic. I seek out moments where form, hue, and luminosity come together naturally, refining each image to express a sense of harmony and timelessness.

Eagan Hsu is a lens-based artist whose work expands photography into sculpture, installation, and film. He addresses how the fluidity of position and perception is exactly what moors them together. Essentially, each piece acts as a part of a continued investigation of how we withstand our roles as different actors in various stages and circumstances. For Eagan, art conceals as much as it reveals. It is the medium of responsibility, shaped by decisions that reflect our consciousness as well as the unconsciousness of the world observed.

# Eagan Hsu



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Eagan Hsu (b. 2007, Taipei, Taiwan) has presented solo exhibitions internationally, beginning with an invited solo exhibition at Place M in Tokyo by Japanese photographer Seto Masato. His subsequent solo exhibitions include *Extraordinary Within the Ordinary* (2023, Sunsun Museum, Taipei), *Interconnected* (2024, Acta Academy, Taipei), and *to exist* (2025, Eastern Ad Artistic Space, Taipei). His work has also been exhibited at venues such as Independent & Image Art Space in Chongqing, The Holy Art in Athens and Tokyo, and Le Carrousel du Louvre in Paris. Alongside exhibitions, Eagan's practice extends into writing and research. He is the author of *Before Shutter, After Image* (2025), a book of photography theory (ISBN: 979-821-871-5953). His work has received recognition from major photography competitions, including the International Photography Awards (IPA), Paris International Photography Awards (PX3), and Analog Sparks Film Photography Awards.





**Photography is your primary medium, yet you push its boundaries with experimental techniques. What does photography allow you to express that other mediums might not?**

This was truly a difficult question to answer, as I realize that I never really thought this through. I feel that photography offers a unique intersection between reality and artistic interpretation that other mediums might not provide in the same immediate or tangible way. Working primarily with film photography allows me to engage with the medium on a deeply physical and sensory level. The tactile process of handling film, with its inherent unpredictability and imperfections, enables me to embrace spontaneity and authenticity in my work. This hands-on approach reflects my fascination with capturing raw and unfiltered moments that define human experience.

By utilizing techniques such as slow shutter speeds and double exposures, I delve into the complexities of time, motion, and emotion within a single frame. Slow shutter speeds allow me to portray movement and the passage of time, blurring the lines between the concrete and the ephemeral. This conveys the fluidity of emotions and the transient nature of our experiences. Double exposures enable me to layer multiple perspectives and moments, symbolizing the multifaceted aspects of identity and memory. This blending invites viewers to explore deeper narratives beyond the surface.

My approach is also influenced by the philosophy of Lomography, which embraces experimentation, spontaneity, and imperfections. This perspective liberates me from conventional rules and opens avenues for creative exploration. By adopting this mindset, I can capture moments that are both visually striking and emotionally evocative, fostering a more intimate connection between the artwork and the viewer.

What distinguishes photography for me is its capacity to capture fragments of reality while simultaneously offering endless possibilities for artistic manipulation. This duality allows me to explore profound themes such as existence and identity in a medium that feels both immediate and relatable. Photography's grounding in the real world provides a foundation upon which I can build layers of meaning, using experimental techniques to challenge perceptions and evoke introspection.

Photography enables me to navigate the space between the seen and the unseen, the tangible and the abstract. It grants me the ability to freeze moments in time while also deconstructing them, revealing hidden depths and complexities. This medium's unique blend of reality and artifice allows for a form of expression that is both personal and universally accessible, making it particularly suited to conveying the nuances of human experience that might elude other art forms.

**Your photography often captures raw, candid moments. Could you walk us through your process when working on a new series?**

When approaching a new photography series, I find that the conventional understanding of "motivation" can be somewhat misleading. Motivation isn't always a constant presence that

drives us to create; rather, it's something that ebbs and flows and often needs to be developed through dedication.

When I start a new series, it often begins with simple questions about my own motivations and interests. I ask myself, "Why am I drawn to this particular subject or theme?" or "What aspects of this topic resonate with me on a personal level?"

My methodology often follows a "just do it, understand it later" principle. I believe that sometimes you need to create without overthinking, allowing the process to unfold naturally. This doesn't abandon essential quality; rather, it allows for unexpected breakthroughs and new perspectives to emerge. Interestingly, I've found that one of the most effective ways to improve my practice is to occasionally step away from it entirely. While this might sound counterintuitive, periods of disengagement can lead to unexpected insights and fresh perspectives.

In photography specifically, I've developed an exercise that I call "taking photos without taking photos." This involves carrying my camera and actively looking for potential shots but without actually pressing the shutter button. At first glance, this might seem absurd, but I've discovered that it enhances my observational skills and forces me to see the world differently. This practice aligns with Vilém Flusser's philosophy of photography as a way of encoding the world. Even without capturing images, I'm still engaging in the act of seeing and interpreting my surroundings through the lens of photography. By not being constrained by the need to produce tangible results, I find myself noticing details and patterns that I might have otherwise overlooked.

**In your conceptual work, you use techniques like slow shutter speed and multiple exposures. How do these methods help you convey emotional depth in your work?**

In my conceptual work, techniques like slow shutter speed and multiple exposures play a crucial role in conveying emotional depth. These methods allow me to capture layers of feeling, movement, and time that would otherwise be flattened into a single, static image. With a slow shutter speed, I can express emotions' fluid, often chaotic nature, how they linger, blur, and overlap, much like our thoughts and memories do in our minds. Multiple exposures allow me to represent different aspects of my identity or emotional states within a single frame, layering one moment upon another. This approach feels particularly honest, as it aligns with the complexity of human emotions; we rarely feel just one thing at a time.

These techniques give me the freedom to express ambiguity and depth, which I believe reflects our internal worlds more accurately. Life isn't always clear-cut or easily understood, and by incorporating these methods, I'm able to invite viewers to engage with the nuanced, multifaceted nature of identity and emotion. Ultimately, slow shutter speeds and multiple exposures help me to bridge the gap between reality and the intangible layers of self and emotion, capturing not just a moment but a state of mind.

KristofLab's working method is rooted in artistic research, combined with an experimental approach. He frequently collaborates with creators from various artistic disciplines. In his installations and performances, he integrates multiple art forms, typically designing his works in a site-specific manner. Transitory media, such as video and sound, play a central role in his practice. Through an interdisciplinary approach, KristofLab continuously seeks to expand and challenge his own perspective.

The urban environment serves as a recurring point of departure for his work, offering a symbolic yet sensorially tangible framework through which he explores social concerns, including globalisation and its consequences, environmental issues, war, and social inequalities. In his paintings, installations, and video works, he regularly reflects on the crisis of individual identity, the transformations driven by digitalisation and social media, historical trajectories, and questions surrounding contemporary societal structures.

# KristofLab



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KristofLab (b. 1988, Győr) is a Budapest-based interdisciplinary artist. He graduated from the Hungarian University of Fine Arts (Graphic Arts, 2012; Art Education, 2013) and studied at HfBK Dresden via Erasmus. He took part in the Budapest Art Mentor Program (2019–2020) and was a core member of Ziggurat Project (2015–2023), collaborating on site-specific performances across Europe. He participated in residencies in the Netherlands, Sweden, Slovakia, and Austria, and has worked on projects funded by Creative Europe and the Visegrad Fund. His recent exhibitions include Turbina Gallery, ISBN Gallery, and Godot Institute of Contemporary Art. He was awarded the Derkovits Scholarship (2022), shortlisted for the Strabag Art Award (2022), and received the Republican and UniCredit Young Artist Scholarships. His works have been presented at Kunsthalle Budapest, Ludwig Museum, GODOT Institute of Contemporary Art, MODEM, and international venues such as Boston, Seöl, London, Rome, Berlin, München, Vienna, Brussels, Warsaw, Krakow. His practice often extends to collaborative, research-based formats.





**Collaboration plays a central role in your work. What draws you to collaborative processes, and how do they influence your creative decisions?**

Early in my career, through residencies and international projects, I took part in initiatives built on collective thinking and knowledge sharing. Collaboration is especially important to me in work that is research-based or that touches on areas where the expertise of others is essential. These experiences helped me understand that creation is never a purely solitary act, even when it is associated with a single name. For me, art has always been a form of discourse, in which the presence of others is not only inspiring but indispensable.

During the pandemic, for example, I created a project built from visual materials sent from different parts of the world. This global collaboration could function even in the midst of physical isolation and opened up new possibilities for interpretation.

This approach also informs my work as a gallery director. For the past two years, I have run an artist-run space in Budapest that functions both as an exhibition venue and an artistic laboratory. Every event and collaborative project feeds back into my own thinking; for me, collaboration always holds new and exciting possibilities.

**Research also seems foundational to your methodology. Could you walk us through your process, from initial idea to the outcome?**

Each project is organised around some conceptual seed, a word, a social or scientific phenomenon, that triggers a visual search in me. In the initial phase, I create digital sketches and image experiments, which themselves operate reflexively: feeding back into the concept and sharpening the research questions.

I increasingly use ChatGPT during this phase to find sources and map out alternative perspectives, which I then deepen through my own research and note-taking. The technological aspect is important, too: I often need to immerse myself in fields like hydroponics or electronics, which appear in my works not only as tools but also as conceptual elements.

In the experimental stage, I start physically testing materials, forms, and techniques, a process that often takes months. The end result is usually not a single object, but a complex, multi-media body of work that reaches its final form in an exhibition context.

**Your installations and performances often take on a site-specific form. What is your approach to reading and responding to a particular space when creating a new work?**

When working on a new installation, I always begin by mapping the space, examining its physical properties, atmosphere, and associated symbolic meanings. It is important to me that the space not serve merely as a backdrop, but engage in an active relationship with my work. My installations are often

modular, built from segments, allowing me to reconfigure them differently for each venue.

This flexibility is not only a technical matter but also a conceptual one: each new space offers a different perspective on the same theme. The work thus functions not as a closed entity, but as an open system that can be rearranged and expanded. I often use ephemeral materials, found objects, or pre-existing items placed into new contexts.

Ephemerality, site-specificity, and the singularity of presence are integral to the concept, just as is the fact that such works do not easily fit the expectations of the contemporary art market. I consciously reflect on how the idea of the “artwork” can, or cannot, be interpreted in these cases.

**Time-based media like video and sound are key elements in your installations. How do you see these media contributing to the permanence or impact of your work?**

The medium of installation excites me because of its site-specificity, its unrepeatable nature, and its capacity for change. Sound and video, as time-based media, naturally fit into this framework: each playback creates a new interpretation.

I often use videos sourced from social media or YouTube that activate collective memory. For example, in my work Transmitter, fragments referencing the events of September 11 are interwoven with emotionally dense images. Such materials are already part of our contemporary visual heritage, but within an installation context, they gain new layers of meaning. I also create generated videos tied specifically to the given project, such as in Let it flow. For me, sound and moving image are not merely technical tools, but media for expressing questions of time, memory, and presence.

**The urban environment recurs in your projects as both symbol and sensory field, as you mention in your statement. Can you tell us more about your relationship with urban spaces and how they shape your reflections on social or political issues?**

For me, the city is not only a location, but a social and visual fabric saturated with meaning, an ideal medium for processing individual and collective experiences. Its historical roles, as fortress, knowledge hub, or symbol of power, provide an inherently fascinating structure for artistic reflection.

My personal attachment is also significant: I spent my childhood in the panel block landscapes of the former Soviet bloc, which deeply shaped my relationship to space, identity, and possibility. In my travels, the architectural character of many cities, their orderliness or chaos, has inspired me and provided an inexhaustible source of material. I often see myself as a modern landscape painter, except here nature has been replaced by the built environment. For me, the city is at once a stage, a mirror, and a catalyst.

mole^3's work is based on this belief. By employing two distinct artistic approaches, woodblock printing and generative art, she explores the coexistence of opposing elements and the process through which they emerge from a shared origin, transforming into different forms. Having studied oil painting and woodblock printing at university, she began her artistic journey through woodblock printing. For her, this medium embodies the coexistence of contrasting forces—"woodblock and print," "bumps and dips," "stillness and movement." It can be seen as a microcosm of a world where different things are born from the same starting point and harmony and disharmony coexist in conflict with each other.

However, when she felt stuck in the creative process, she happened to encounter generative art. Algorithmic production brought her a new perspective and made her realize that "coding is also printmaking." In her coding-based video production, she abstracts the physical processes of woodblock printing, such as color-block separation, layering colors, and actions like rolling paper, while exploring the conceptual transformation of printmaking into a three-dimensional form. She also tries to express the idea that the world is a collection of tiny life forms through the decomposition and reconstruction of pixels. Since starting coding, she has come to see the world and human activities as a kind of algorithm. By carving generative art, she is trying to connect the digital and physical worlds and create new meaning. Her work explores the fusion of tradition and innovation and encourages cultural dialogue. It is an experiment that embraces the possibilities of technology, questions the very nature of manufacturing and craftsmanship, and explores "something" that transcends different worlds.

mole^3

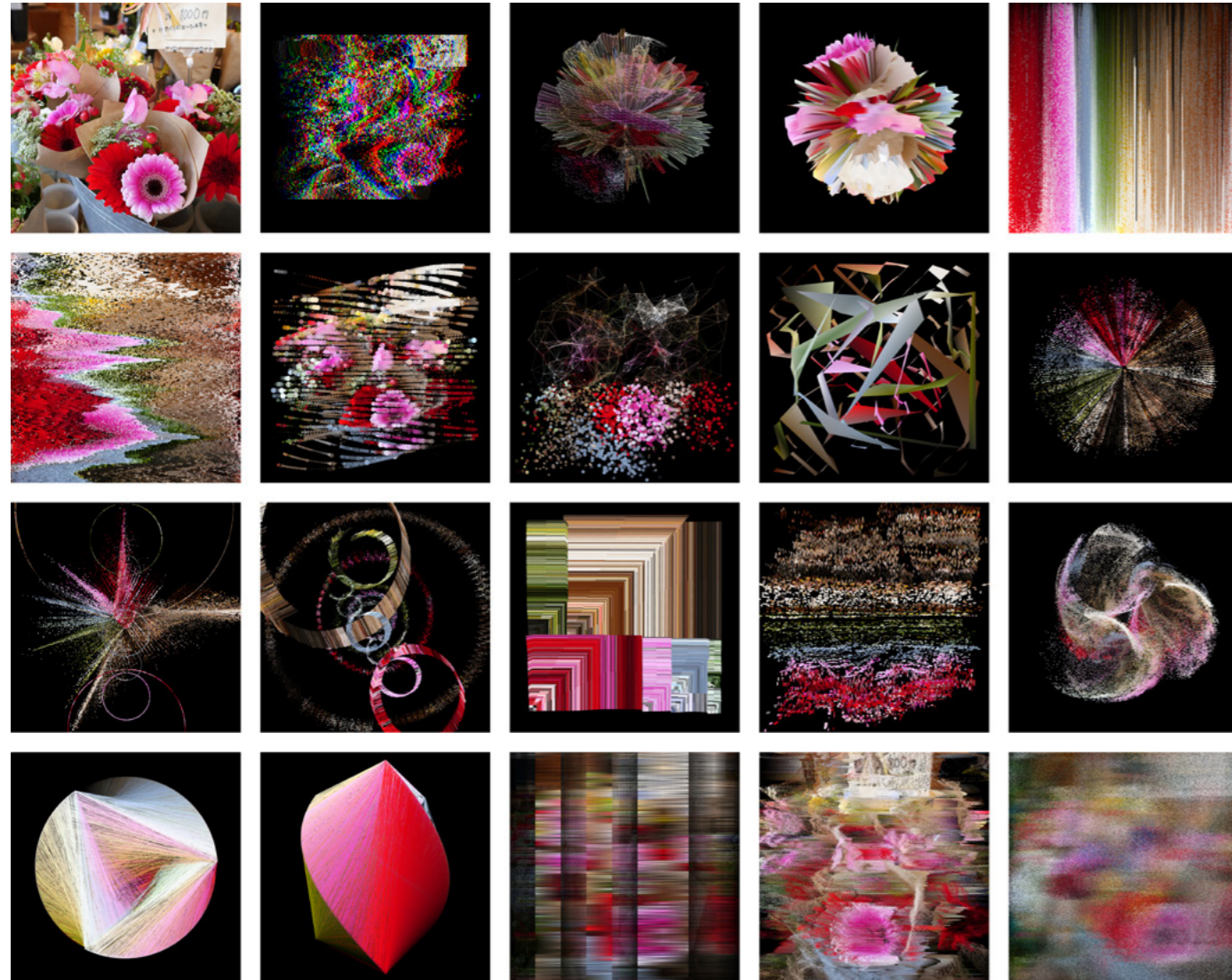


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mole^3 is a Japanese printmaker and visual artist whose work explores the intersection of traditional printmaking and digital media. She creates using open data, images, sound, generative art, and woodblock printing. Viewing coding as a form of printmaking, she considers on-screen outputs to be the digital equivalent of physical prints. Through this perspective, her practice expands the conventional understanding of printmaking.

Her work has been exhibited in Japan and internationally, including at the NTT InterCommunication Center [ICC] in Tokyo and in collaboration with the Yamaguchi Center for Arts and Media [YCAM].





**You describe coding as a form of printmaking. Could you elaborate on this perspective? How does the digital act of coding parallel the physical process of carving and printing?**

There is a command called print() in programming languages. I suddenly found it interesting that the word “print” is used in the digital world, and at that time I thought that the act of writing code and displaying it on a screen is similar to printmaking. When writing code, sometimes I write it vaguely, but in many cases, I proceed while predicting what it will look like. However, sometimes the image I intended appears on the screen, and sometimes something completely different appears. I feel that this process is similar to “printing” woodblock prints.

From that, I began to think that writing a program is like “carving” a block, and displaying it on the screen is like “printing” a woodblock print. “I see, coding is printmaking.” I thought. Of course, the physical tasks are different, but to me, they are conceptually the same. I think it was because of this idea that I was able to continue learning coding, a world expressed only in strings of characters.

**Your work revolves around the idea that “all things are fundamentally born from the same source,” as mentioned in your statement. How does this philosophy influence your creative process and the themes you explore?**

I wasn’t conscious of this idea from the beginning, but I realized that it was inside me as I continued to create. When making prints, two things are born: the block and the print. There is the appearance of multiple things being born from one thing, and the coexistence of opposing things born from a single source, the block and the print, and I began to feel that these symbolize the structure of one aspect of the world. In order to visualize the coexistence of opposing things, I repeatedly tried to exhibit the block and the printed work side by side, and eventually I began to present the block itself as a work of art. On the other hand, even in creating animations using coding, I am conscious of the process of decomposing and layering the block. In particular, in the series in which I decompose the pixels of an image and reconstruct them, as I observed the process of the shape changing, I felt more strongly that even though they may appear to be different shapes, they are fundamentally the same thing.

In this way, I realized that the theme connected to the prints was further developed through production through coding, and that I was trying to express the fundamental theme that “all things are fundamentally born from the same source.” With this realization, I would like to further deepen this idea in the future. However, since production is always a series of new discoveries, it is possible that the project will develop from a different perspective in the future.

**Your practice fuses tradition and innovation while fostering cultural dialogue. How do you see your work contributing to contemporary discussions on craftsmanship, technology, and art?**

My work explores whether craftsmanship, technology, and art are not independent, but instead interact to create new possibilities. My printmaking incorporates elements of traditional craftsmanship: carving and printing a block require manual skill, yet I explore how these processes can be reinterpreted within contemporary art rather than treated solely as handiwork.

At the same time, creating technology—such as coding—also has a craftsman-like dimension and creative potential, and although I am still learning, I believe it can be established as art. As technology evolves, craftsmanship and technology do not conflict but influence one another, expanding possibilities for expression. In Japan, craftsmanship is closely associated with manual labor, yet contemporary crafts and art evolve by embracing new technologies and tools. While the warmth and imperfection of handwork have their own value, the precision and efficiency of machines—and the creativity that emerges through human intervention—also generate value. Even so, I choose to devote significant time and effort to carving blocks by hand, as wood carving is the one practice I do not want replaced. As AI- and computer-based art becomes more widespread, asking “What are your beliefs?” is one way my work engages contemporary discourse.

**You have exhibited both in Japan and internationally. How do audiences from different cultural backgrounds respond to your work?**

It may seem contradictory, but even though I use the words “traditional” and “craftsmanship,” I want my work to be as universal as possible, rather than linking it to a specific country or culture. Therefore, ideally, there would be no major difference in reactions between Japan and internationally, and I feel that this is generally the case in actual exhibitions. Of course, it is not accepted by everyone.

However, some people resonate deeply with it and stop to look at it for a long time, and I think that is enough. Interestingly, when I exhibited my work at a hotel in Tokyo, where many international travelers stay, I had the opportunity to have my work viewed from various perspectives in an international environment, even though it is in Japan. There, I had the valuable experience of being able to compare the reactions of Japanese and international people. Although I wish to be “universal,” there is something that cannot be completely wiped away, and sometimes it stands out in different cultural backgrounds. This in itself was a very interesting discovery for me.

Marcus Brown's mission is to create artworks that educate the public about important issues while transcending both media and societal boundaries. As an artist with enslaved African ancestors, he feels a profound responsibility to use his work to tell their stories and to create new pieces that empower and unite diverse communities. Brown views his role as an artist as simultaneously technical, scholarly, and performative. In his creative process, he draws upon African American and Creole traditions, employing a wide variety of media languages. Much like a New Orleans chef who skillfully combines diverse ingredients to create a rich gumbo, Brown integrates visual, auditory, performative, and interactive media into compositions designed to re-conceptualize and re-spiritualize contemporary culture. His artistic approach is deeply influenced by the musical traditions of his African American, Native American, and European heritage.



# Marcus Brown



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A native of Bulbancha, New Orleans, Marcus Brown is a sculptor, painter, inventor, musician, and educator. Brown holds an M.Ed. from Portland State University and a BFA from Kansas City Institute of Art (KCAI) in Missouri. His work is expansive and includes national and international exhibits and performances in New York City, Berlin, Germany, Krakow, Poland, Venice, Italy and Seoul, South Korea. Brown developed a form of painting called Electro-sonic Painting in which the artist paints with sound/data-producing instruments. He has performed with his invention internationally. In addition to his performance art, Brown has exhibited with artists such as Andy Warhol, Chris Burden, Hannah Wilke, and others around the world. Brown is currently combining a new form of creative storytelling using Augmented Reality (AR) sculptures with interactive multimedia elements. His latest national project, Slavery Trails, is a musically interactive site-specific augmented reality (AR) installation series based on slave ships and enslaved people, placed on historical sites throughout the United States. The series is Brown's effort to create a decentralized memorial to slavery in the United States.



**Your work spans multiple disciplines, such as sculpture, painting, music, and performance art. How do these mediums interact in your creative process, and what drives you to work across so many forms of expression?**

I feel a deep internal drive to create art using whatever medium I can master, which naturally leads me toward multimedia expression. Growing up in New Orleans, where music and art are intertwined with daily life, has profoundly shaped this multidisciplinary approach. My creative process is highly experimental, almost scientific, relying heavily on research and development. Creating interactive controllers that allow me to blend sculpting, painting, and music, such as playing my saxophone through a paintbrush or sculpting knife, has been essential to my artistic evolution. Over the years, acquiring diverse skills has become central to my creative practice, allowing me to express ideas in complex, layered ways.

**You often incorporate elements of African American and Creole traditions into your work. How do these cultural influences shape the stories you tell through your art?**

African American and Creole traditions strongly inform the colours, rhythms, and energy in my art, particularly in my Electro-Sonic paintings. The musical traditions of New Orleans, second lines, jazz, funk, and improvisational jams, play a vital role in shaping my artistic identity. Often, my collaborations with other musicians involve improvisation using both traditional and unconventional instruments, echoing the dynamic, communal spirit of my cultural heritage. The vibrant aesthetics of New Orleans, particularly the intricate ironwork craftsmanship, and Haitian, French, and Spanish architectural influences found in the Treme neighbourhood also significantly influence my visual language.

**Electro-Sonic Painting is such a unique fusion of sound and visual art. What inspired you to develop this technique, and how has it evolved over time?**

Electro-Sonic Painting emerged directly from my fascination with the musical traditions of New Orleans, especially jazz improvisation. I envisioned creating a conversation between sound and materials, inspired by how musicians converse through instruments. My early sound paintings were percussive: I recorded myself creating rhythms on sound-producing canvases wired with handmade microphones and looped these sounds as I painted. Initially, my tools were analogue, consisting of microphones and synthesizers. The disruption of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 deeply impacted my development of Electro-Sonic Painting. Evacuating to Portland, Oregon, I found myself improvising with whatever tools I had, leading to innovations and new artistic possibilities.

**Music plays an integral role in your performances. How do you approach the relationship between sound, space, and audience in your interactive works?**

The type of interaction I seek to create guides my approach. I

view interactive art as an opportunity for magical experiences, something transformative and immersive. When audiences feel they can play with and influence the art, it becomes a profound form of storytelling. I aim to draw viewers into the experience, giving them a sense of wonder and discovery. Through careful consideration of how sound and space interact, I strive to create immersive environments that captivate and emotionally engage the audience.

**Your artist statement speaks of “re-conceptualizing and re-spiritualizing contemporary culture.” How do you see your work reshaping historical narratives and cultural memory?**

My work seeks to challenge how history is traditionally presented. American history has often been shaped by those in power, emphasizing narratives and erasing others. I believe art possesses a mysticism and purpose beyond mere decoration, something largely forgotten in Western culture. Like African mask-makers creating ceremonial masks, Native American dancers preparing elaborate suits for powwows, or the Black masking Indians of New Orleans crafting suits for annual rituals, my art aims to reconnect contemporary audiences to deep cultural memories and spiritual meanings. Through this approach, I hope to reshape and reframe how we engage with history and culture.

**Your latest project, Slavery Trails, uses Augmented Reality to create site-specific memorials. Can you share the concept behind this project and how you envision the public interacting with them?**

Slavery Trails is my effort to create a decentralized memorial to slavery across the United States. This series of site-specific, musically interactive augmented reality installations honours enslaved individuals and commemorates the historical locations of slavery. These AR installations vividly represent the histories associated with these spaces, challenging viewers to actively engage through their digital devices. The interactive nature of the installations invites deep, personal reflection, aiming to fill gaps in public education and historical understanding.

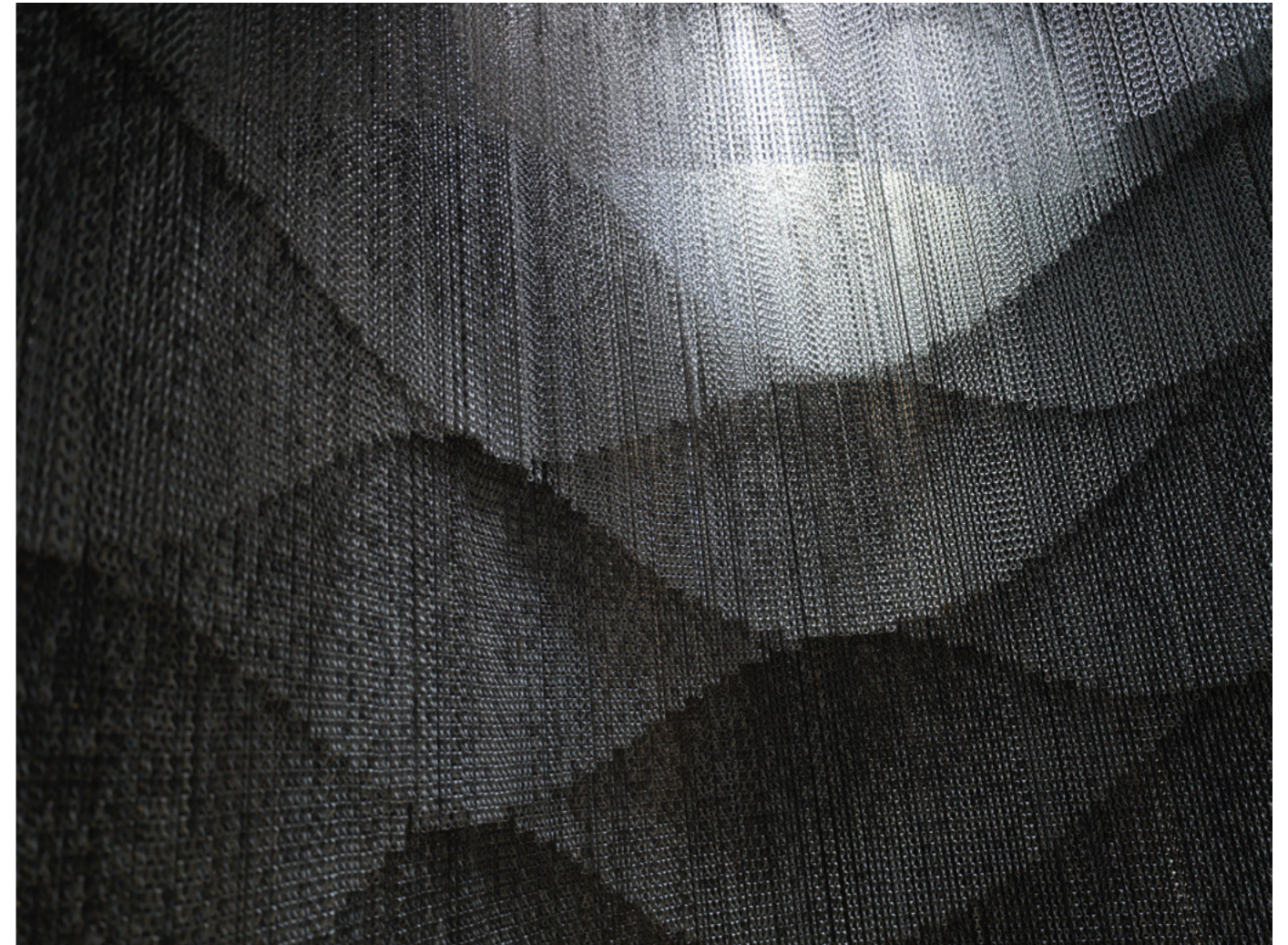
**Technology is a recurring element in your work, from Electro-Sonic Painting to Augmented Reality. What excites you about using new media in art, and are there any emerging technologies you’re interested in exploring next?**

Technology excites me because it allows art to become something unexpected and immersive, drawing viewers into new experiences. Using technology in my art amplifies ideas and enables me to engage diverse audiences more directly. I’m particularly interested in exploring sustainable and environmentally conscious technologies that minimize pollution and energy use. Projects like Slavery Trails leverage personal devices that everyone already carries, maximizing the impact of the art while reducing its ecological footprint.

In Silent Infrastructures, photographer Xiuzhuo Zhou explores how architecture and infrastructure quietly shape perception and control. The series omits human presence, focusing instead on built forms and synthetic materials that structure modern life.

Works like Algorithmic Heaven, Nervous System of a City, and Simulated Fluidity reveal how repetition, symmetry, and scale function as tools of soft regulation. These images dissect how spatial design enforces order, not by force, but through aesthetics.

Zhou avoids narrative and spectacle, positioning infrastructure as a silent agent of ideology. Power here is not declared through symbols, but embedded in patterns and surfaces. His images prompt us to reconsider the spaces we inhabit, how they guide us, and to what end.



# Xiuzhuo Zhou



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Xiuzhuo Zhou is a photographer and narrator of the inner world, whose work explores the subtle interplay between emotion, memory, and philosophical reflection. Originally from Hubei, China and now based in Southampton, UK, Zhou specialises in realistic photographic styles that capture the often-overlooked poetics of everyday life. His practice spans photography, installation, and new media, integrating technological approaches such as collage and AI-generated imagery to blur the boundaries between reality and imagination.

Zhou's work centres on themes of identity, temporality, and existential inquiry, focusing on how individuals navigate and preserve a sense of self amid rapid societal change. Through precise documentation and quiet observation, he reveals moments of humour, introspection, and quiet beauty, inviting viewers to re-examine their inner states and find meaning within the ordinary.



**Please tell us about your background and what first drew you to photography?**

I was born in 2003 and grew up in Hubei, China, a land that carries the weight of Bronze-Age relics while racing through industrialisation. Because my family moved often, I became acutely aware of how time accumulates and identity drifts. My entry point into photography was not a camera but a single print a friend once handed me. Although we have since lost touch, every time I look at that photo, I recall the moment we shared. It showed me that an image can bottle fleeting emotion, preserving it against the flow of change. From then on, I began using the lens to record each moment in an ever-shifting world.

**How has moving from Hubei, China, to Southampton, UK, influenced your artistic perspective?**

Both my riverside hometown, where the Yangtze meets the Han, and the port city of Southampton belong to a “water-route culture” in which arrival and departure are everyday rituals. I often liken myself to a small boat, forever docking and casting off. Loneliness, absence, and the urge to take root are recurring themes in my work. Though Southampton may not be my final harbour, it has taught me to cherish every second, and that sense of appreciation now flows through my images.

**Your work often captures quiet, everyday moments. What inspires you to focus on the subtle and overlooked aspects of life?**

Most of my inspiration rises from within. Whether restless or serene, I pick up the camera and look for details that echo my mood: dawn mist, a flicker of light on a roof, a lone tree. By shaping light and composition, I try to condense intangible feelings into something tangible, so viewers can sense the undercurrent beneath the surface.

**You integrate technologies like collage and AI-generated imagery into your practice. How do these tools affect your creative process?**

AI lets me digitise my style: I train a model on my personal archive, quickly generating sketches or colour schemes in my own visual language, testing what I might have captured in an alternate timeline. Collage is a tactile act of taking apart → extracting → re-assembling: I layer originals, archival material and AI drafts by semantic elements, spotlighting the narrative core so viewers grasp it instantly. The two methods complement each other: AI supplies swift variations, collage forges the fragments into something warm and contextual.

**Much of your work explores themes of identity and temporality. How do you personally relate to these themes?**

In “Autumn’s Breath,” Southampton’s golden woods became a temporary harbour for my drifting life. In “Ephemeral,” shot on Lake Hallstatt, Austria, I echoed the line “Colourful clouds

scatter easily; glass shatters quickly,” capturing a swan’s wake as it vanished, reminding myself that identity, encounters, and beauty all dissipate like vapour. Every shutter press is really a question: Who am I right now?

**In your series Silent Infrastructures, you highlight how architecture shapes perception. What led you to explore architecture in this way?**

I treat the supporting elements of city and nature as a hidden code that silently rewrites our posture and emotional tempo. My lens is first “disciplined” by domes, scaffolding, pylons, metal façades and palm-leaf veins, geometries that pull the gaze upward or squeeze it sideways, shaping how we breathe and even how we think. Then I plant tiny instabilities: dust drifting in Sagrada Família’s stained glass, shadows between power lines, rust speckles on scaffolds, water-like reflections on steel. These fissures hint at the fragility of every system and suggest that the man-made and the natural share a reticular life, both supporting and consuming. I want viewers to feel a bodily vibration between vast order and quiet disorder, as though inside a colossal, seemingly mute machine that still roars beneath the surface, questioning their own scale, freedom and belonging.

**You often avoid human presence in your photographs. What does this choice allow you to express?**

“Absence” is my enduring core. Figures certainly drive narrative, yet I am more interested in how a space speaks once its occupants have gone, the dent in an empty chair, the dust in a vacant hall, the echo beneath a deserted nave. For me, absence amplifies presence.

**How do you balance realism with imagination in your photographic style?**

Most of my images are documentary: natural light, long exposure, ambient sound. Yet I open a narrow seam between reality and reverie, double-exposing clouds over city light trails, or stretching a night shutter so lamps become filaments, revealing hidden rivers of time. Viewers stand in the real scene while glimpsing an inner landscape.

**Are there particular artists, philosophers, or writers who have influenced your thinking and practice?**

Photography / moving image: Hiroshi Sugimoto’s suspended time, Andreas Gursky’s macro-order, Wolfgang Tillmans’s everyday lyricism.  
Architecture & space: Tatiana Bilbao’s human scale, Kengo Kuma’s “negative architecture”.  
Philosophy: Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s body-space phenomenology, Heidegger’s Dasein and “dwelling”.  
Literature: Italo Calvino’s Invisible Cities, Borges’s mirrors and labyrinths, Yu Hua’s Cries in the Drizzle.  
They keep showing me how an apparently hollow space can carry narrative, and how time can fold into a single frame.

Yang Lu's work resists human-centred narratives and seeks to dismantle the illusions that sustain them. Yang creates objects that operate as fragments from elsewhere, mirrored forms, alien inscriptions, and transparent architectures that neither reflect us fully nor explain themselves. These works emerge from a refusal to reduce existence to binaries: life and death, self and other, human and nonhuman.

Yang approaches painting, sculpture, and technology as unstable surfaces where meaning collapses and re-forms. Engraved acrylic, 3D-printed structure, and laser-engraved glyphs become tools to imagine an alien gaze, cold, detached, and free from empathy, turning its attention back toward humans. In this reversal, the viewer is placed in the position of the gazed upon, experiencing the disquieting vulnerability usually reserved for the nonhuman within anthropocentric narratives.

Yang's practice is not about offering resolution but about opening fractures: mirrors that fail to flatter, signs that cannot be decoded, and images that haunt without revealing their origin. Each work acts as a counter-gaze to the gaze, a counter-definition to the definition, pressing the viewer to confront the dangers and limitations of anthropocentrism.



# Yang Lu

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Yang Lu attended the School of the Art Institute of Chicago for a BFA. Recent solo exhibitions include the Chicago Grand Gallery, IL, USA; past solo exhibitions include "Contours of Chance" at CICA Museum in South Korea. Group exhibitions include "Trace Unknown," Color Club, Chicago, IL, USA; On The Verge of Hope, Gallery Wrightwood, Chicago, USA; Yata Bhaavo, Tat Bhavti, HAZ Gallery, Chicago, USA; Emotion, Cista Arts, London, UK; FRAGMENTS, Tapiial Virtual Gallery, Santiago, Chile; Sonic Sculptures 3, Nottingham, UK.



**You work across painting, sculpture, and technology. What drew you to combine these different media?**

In fact, combining them was a very natural process. I've always been inclined to try new things and technologies, and I believe the development of technology is an unstoppable trend. Art must evolve with its time in order to remain vital. That's why I chose to bring together the two-dimensional and three-dimensional, the traditional and the modern. Painting allows me to quickly record and transform ideas, creating unique images. Sculpture takes those ideas from two dimensions into three, breaking out of painting's frame and freeing the image from traditional order. Technology then gives me the ability to integrate them with a modern texture and contour, making my works more contemporary. The way these different disciplines intertwine naturally generates meaning, such as how a painting can appear beyond the flat surface, or how a sculpture can acquire new textures through digital processing. The intersection of these disciplines always yields surprising innovations. At the same time, working across media isn't about mixing for the sake of variety. It's about finding the right structure for each idea. This interdisciplinary approach allows the work to stand apart from the evaluative standards of any single discipline. Viewers can't simply interpret them through existing categories, which gives them greater freedom of interpretation and gives me greater freedom in creation.

**How did you begin experimenting with engraved acrylic, 3D printing, and laser-engraved glyphs?**

I started experimenting with engraved acrylic, 3D printing, and laser-engraved glyphs through my interest in pushing painting beyond the flat surface. Acrylic caught my attention because once it's engraved, it changes how light and reflection work, it's no longer just a surface but almost like a space in itself. From there, I began trying 3D printing and laser cutting because they gave me a way to create precise, almost unfamiliar forms that didn't feel tied to tradition. The glyphs especially came from my interest in creating a kind of language that looks detached from human writing. For me, these tools aren't just about technology; they're about finding new ways to let ideas take shape.

**Your work often resists human-centred narratives, as you mention in your statement. What inspired you to challenge anthropocentrism in your practice?**

My interest in challenging human-centred narratives stems from a critique of what I see as the "big ego" of anthropocentrism. This mindset assumes humanity is the centre of everything and that all other beings exist to serve us. It ignores the autonomy of other entities, treating them as resources, and frames the world according to human priorities. For example, discussions about planets often focus on whether they can be colonised, exploited, or used as backups for Earth, rather than considering them as worlds with their own value. This behavioural pattern also impacts human society. Those who

control more resources gain the power to define the "non-self," giving them the perceived right to ignore or dictate the lives and opportunities of others. In this sense, anthropocentrism is not just philosophical but social, embedding inequality and domination. In my work, I unsettle these assumptions. Through mirrored forms, transparent layers, alien glyphs, and ambiguous structures, I create art that exists independently of human primacy or expectation. The viewer isn't the centre of the piece; sometimes, they are challenged by it. I aim to show how anthropocentric narratives conceal how beings' "not-self" are defined and controlled, while opening space for both the work and audience to encounter existence on its own terms, beyond human-centred frameworks.

**Can you describe your creative process? How does a piece usually begin, and how do you get to the final outcome?**

My creative process is generally unplanned at first. It can stem from random inspiration or from my thoughts and notes on specific things I'm interested in. When I feel a subject should be explored further, I'll do some research, gather relevant information, and then sketch. Once I've condensed the final form of the work from my sketches, I'll develop a plan and gradually bring it to life. Of course, there are times when adjustments are made during this process. If I encounter a texture or feel that emerges by chance, I might retain it or intentionally utilise it.

**Many of your works use mirrors, inscriptions, and fragments that resist explanation. What do you hope viewers experience when encountering them?**

I hope viewers can experience a counterintuitive surprise that provokes thought. These works aren't meant for purely pleasurable visual enjoyment; rather, they exist as a mysterious presence that challenges common perceptions or habitual ways of thinking. People are naturally drawn to things that reflect their own image, and many won't pass up an opportunity to look in a mirror, but that is also a way of confirming one's existence through external appearances. That's why I chose to engrave unreadable patterns on the mirrors. When viewers look at themselves, they can never fully see a clear image; instead, they might even feel "marked." This may make viewers feel uneasy, because these marks and annotations appear without their consent. Yet humans often do the same to other beings, imposing labels, interpretations, and judgments based on their own standards, without regard for the feelings of those being marked. Through the use of mirrors, inscriptions, and fragments, I try to reverse this act of gazing and defining, creating an atmosphere in which viewers, while looking into the mirror, feel targeted, observed, analysed, and recorded, almost like a specimen. This is intended to provoke reflection and awareness. This sensation, initially attractive but increasingly uncanny the longer you observe it, is exactly what I aim to create. By combining allure with discomfort, the work encourages viewers to reflect on the psychological impulses behind this behaviour, making their thought process part of the experience.

Deformed  
127x56 cm

Nylon, cotton, linen,  
gauze, embroidery, pulp,  
bark, seiryutai ink

Textile art  
2021

Hou Guan Ting draws inspiration from roadkill and the process of bodily decay, initially captivated by the external characteristics of decomposing forms. Hou observes how decay alters texture and image over time, a phenomenon that seems both time-sensitive and timeless. Using the language of traditional crafts like embroidery and patchwork, Hou deconstructs and reinterprets subjects deemed ugly or unpleasant by society, transforming them into works of art. His pieces compel audiences to confront these uncomfortable details, urging them to explore dark corners they might otherwise avoid. Through his art, Hou challenges society's tendency to obscure death and violence, as the media often does, by filtering such images into vague and sanitized forms. Instead, he translates the raw and distressing into vivid, tactile creations, stripping away moral "mosaics" and replacing them with colourful textures. This approach allows viewers to confront death in a buffered, layered manner, prompting deeper engagement and contemplation.

Hou reflects on how modern life, dominated by fragmented media and overstimulation, has dulled people's capacity for focus and introspection. In contrast, his art invites a slower, more mindful experience. His creative process is deeply immersive, amplifying his senses as he contemplates the tactile and sensory dimensions of his work. By examining the remains of roadkill, broken bones, sticky fur, and decaying forms, Hou enters a meditative state where time slows, and the noise of the world fades. For Hou, art serves as a key to reclaiming a sense of presence and amplifying awareness in a world that rushes past life's essential truths. His works encourage viewers to pause, reflect, and confront the realities of death and decay, offering a space for quiet contemplation amidst the chaos of modern existence.



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# Hou Guan-Ting

Hou Guan-Ting (侯冠廷), born in 1999, explores the relationships between time, the body, and craftsmanship. Through intricate textile techniques and layered textures, his work examines how material and memory intertwine within woven structures.

Natalia Shamrai (Kolpakova) creates art that transcends time and function, weaving narratives into silk to produce pieces that are both visually compelling and conceptually rich. Her designs reflect a fusion of fine art and fashion, where every line, texture, and form carries deeper meaning, responds to external challenges, evokes conscious premonitions, and conjures dreamscapes. By subtly distorting space and time within my compositions, she aims to create a sense of timelessness, offering wearers and viewers an opportunity to engage with a personal “fifth dimension” of perception.

Raised in a family of scientists, yet deeply immersed in art, the artist has always sought to blend analytical precision with creative expression. Her journey has taken her from book illustration and editorial design to textile and ceramic-based storytelling, culminating in her current exploration of silk as a narrative medium. Through international exhibitions, Natalia continues to explore the evolving relationship between fashion and art, transforming everyday objects into enduring works that inspire curiosity, foster connection, and spark conversation.

## Natalia Shamrai (Kolpakova)

Natalia Shamrai (Kolpakova) is an award-winning graphic artist and designer from Kyiv, Ukraine, specializing in art and fashion. Now based in Falmouth, UK, she creates intricate graphic designs digitally printed on silk, transforming them into both wearable accessories and interior art pieces. Her work, rich in narrative and symbolism, bridges the gap between fine art and fashion, turning everyday objects into profound conversation pieces. Natalia has exhibited internationally, including at the UN in Vienna, Basel Art Center, London Design Fair, and upcoming solo and group exhibitions in the UK. Natalia Shamrai has been recognized with prestigious awards, including the Epson Digital Fashion Competition, the European Product Design Award, and the International Design Awards.



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Nicola Napoli is an artist whose practice is rooted in what he describes as “reading souls,” exploring how human beings can be understood through energy beyond the visible. His work shifts identity through symbols, colours, and subliminal details, seeking to reveal layers that exist beneath surface appearances.

For more than 25 years, his artistic journey has been marked by both significant achievements and setbacks. Through this trajectory, Napoli has arrived at what he considers a state of enlightenment, embracing the act of defining himself, his soul, and the legacy he wishes to leave within earthly existence. Grounded in the idea of complexity through simplicity, Napoli communicates with the living world without words, emphasising the power of silence. For him, the void of the galaxy and unspoken truths hold the potential to both liberate and destroy.

Planetz, a collection of 12 works, represents the genesis of an ongoing exploration of human representation, emotion, light, darkness, and vision.

# Nicola Napoli

## WIKO

Nicola Napoli (1983) is an Italian artist and creative director whose career spans visual arts, cinema, and music. After a long experience as a creative consultant for international brands and artists, he chose to focus his personal research on digital painting and the transformation of visual languages into physical artworks.

His latest project, the PLANETZ series, explores the human essence and themes of introspection through seemingly minimal compositions, blending aesthetic purity with inner reflection. Alongside his artistic practice, Napoli has built a strong presence in the music world, creating album covers, visual identities, documentaries, and backstage films for leading artists, while also curating and producing events that merge performance, image, and experimentation.

With his film MY OWN WORST ENEME, presented and awarded at international festivals, he expanded his vision into narrative cinema, reinforcing the multidisciplinary and cross-boundary nature of his work.



Wei Zhang's artistic practice centres on the concept of "containment" and the exploration of breaking beyond existing boundaries, both physical and psychological. A container can be a human organ, a closed-off memory, or the canvas itself, which became her container for recording emotions and experiences. Born and raised in Nanjing, China, a city where traditional architecture and modern skyscrapers coexist, her work reflects diverse influences that mirror her exploration of containment and liberation. She works primarily with acrylic, screen printing, and digital media on raw wood panels, creating works that feel both mechanical and organic. Her creative process begins with a word or idea that triggers memories and emotions, which guide her choices in colour and form. Her work frequently features human organs and cells as metaphors for human experience, translated into organic shapes that serve as vehicles for colour. Colour is the most essential language she uses to express feelings and her sense of self. She returns consistently to red, yellow, and blue, layering colours to transform flat surfaces into something three-dimensional. This rich layering simulates mechanical printing processes while maintaining an organic quality, creating a visual tension that mirrors her exploration of boundaries. Through this mixed-media approach, Wei Zhang surpasses her own boundaries and documents this journey. Her works evoke emotions that everyone encounters, prompting viewers to develop their own understanding of containment and inspiring them to break free from their own restraints, exploring the endless possibilities of human existence.

# Wei Zhang

Wei Zhang is a visual artist passionate about colour, trained in Art Education at Nanjing Normal University and Painting at the Savannah College of Art and Design. Born and raised in Nanjing, a city where traditional architecture and modern skyscrapers coexist, her practice reflects diverse influences from this unique urban landscape. She currently works as a freelance artist in Atlanta. Working primarily with acrylic, screen printing, and digital media on raw wood panels, Zhang's practice centres on the concept of "containment" and the exploration of breaking beyond existing boundaries. Her creative process begins with emotions and memories that trigger visual subjects, frequently featuring human organs and cells as metaphors for human experience. Her paintings unfold through rich colours and layered applications, simulating the process of mechanical printing to create a sense that is both mechanical and organic. Through this mixed-media approach, Zhang surpasses her own boundaries and documents this journey, evoking emotions that everyone encounters. Her works prompt viewers to develop their own understanding of the concept and inspire them to break free from their own restraints, exploring the endless possibilities of human existence. Resonating with both the external world and inner self, Zhang's art strikes a chord within. Zhang's work has been exhibited in Atlanta, where she has also received multiple awards and recognition for her artistic achievements.



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# Julio Merino

Julio Merino is a visual creative specialised in photography and graphic design, based between Seville and Cadiz. With a technical background in Image Capture and Lighting, combined with advanced training in Graphic Design, his work stands at the intersection of visual storytelling, branding, and art direction.

His photographic approach is defined by a strong sense of composition, intentional use of light and colour, and a focus on coherence between image and concept. Rather than working from a purely artistic perspective, Julio develops visuals with clear commercial direction, aimed at enhancing brand identity and narrative through powerful imagery.

He is especially interested in collaborating with fashion labels, publications, and creative teams that seek to strengthen their visual presence through contemporary and carefully curated campaigns. His practice merges photography and design as complementary tools, allowing him to deliver cohesive visual content across digital and print formats.

Julio's objective is to build long-term creative partnerships with brands, offering not only aesthetic value but also strategic visual thinking.



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There is power in people coming together and taking action. The contributions of Ellerie's neighbors, friends, and colleagues have only enriched the value of her work. It wouldn't be the same if her focus had not been so local. Burlington has a timeless quality that allows people of all skill levels to build on each other's creativity. Ellerie hopes her work inspires others to engage more actively in their community, not just artistically but politically as well. Humans are inherently social creatures, and in a time when technology seems to dominate, Ellerie believes it is crucial to remember what drives us to create and take action. The answer often lies in our connections with loved ones, a truth as old as humanity itself.



# Ellerie Brust



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Whether in the snowy mountains of Vermont or the grungiest basement in Jersey, Ellerie will be there, snapping pictures of America's upcoming generation of rockstars. Ellerie began her photography career at the age of fifteen, working in the studio for Classic Kids Photography. Coming off of traditional portraiture, Ellerie became enamored with the punk scene on the East Coast, and her camera followed suit. Ellerie collaborates with artists located across the eastern seaboard, including New Jersey, New York, Boston, and Vermont. She's volunteered with Migrant Justice and the Party for Socialism and Liberation, documenting protests and rallies.



**What first drew you to photography, and how did your creative journey evolve over time?**

I honestly can't remember what first drew me to photography. I have always been creative, exploring various mediums, from painting to scene-writing (I used to be heavily involved in theater). My creative journey evolved to become more concentrated once I felt like I aligned with an artistic expression that felt true to myself. However, I think it is imperative to try everything you can get your hands on. Having an open mind and remaining curious has made me a better artist.

**Burlington, VT, plays a central role in your work. How has this city shaped your artistic vision compared to larger cultural hubs?**

Burlington was able to influence my artistic vision because of its particular aesthetic combined with its isolated yet dense population. Burlington's population is under 45,000 people, which is smaller than other cultural hubs. Not only that, but it is the biggest city in the entire state. So, its identity has been able to develop in relative isolation. I interpret Burlington's aesthetic through its specific qualities: the DIY rock and punk music scene, the proximity to nature (specifically Lake Champlain and the surrounding mountains), and the prominent population of young college students and post-grads. I will say that the trends I noticed to be popular here are American fashion trends ranging from the 1970s to the 90s.

**Your work captures the essence of Burlington's creative community. How do you approach photographing artists and their environments to reflect their energy and spirit?**

I feel very lucky because there isn't much communication necessary for me to curate that essence. I believe because we're on the same wavelength, able to have an unspoken understanding. I always ask artists if they are looking for anything specific before their show, for example, specific angles or color grading. However, as time progressed, the people I photographed seemed to trust my previous work enough to allow me to have full creative control.

**What emotions or narratives do you aim to evoke through your photography? Is there a particular story you've captured that stands out to you?**

I love this question because it drives straight to what I try to convey through my work. What I evoke through my work is reminiscent of the Renaissance art period. I see this through dimensional lighting, multiple intertwining subjects, and themes of deities. I view my subjects as legends in the community because of their talent, gusto, and ability to create magic without the same resources or opportunities you could find in a larger city. I want them to leave an iconic impression on the viewer as if they were a deity themselves.

**Your photography is deeply rooted in gratitude and appreciation for your creative peers. How do collaboration and community influence your process?**

I find the collaboration with my community rewarding because we are making art for the sake of making it, versus making a profit. I believe that ties in with the DIY themes found in Burlington. Its homemade nature is what makes it authentic and, therefore, magnetic. Making art and sharing it with others humbles you because you are contributing to something bigger than yourself. This is what makes people legends in my opinion. They can invent something that can be shared with their peers for cultural enrichment, not capital. The rejection of capitalism is what motivates me to keep going.

**Burlington has a strong independent art and music scene. How do you see your work contributing to or documenting this cultural movement?**

I believe documenting is the perfect description of what I do. I cannot play an instrument to save my life, so I cannot connect to the scene through that alone. However, I appreciate music and watching my friends doing what they love. It's my appreciation that makes me feel connected. I also believe what I'm witnessing deserves to be documented because of its value. I have never witnessed an emerging scene like this before. And to be witnessing it first-hand versus learning about it decades later is a gift. I feel like my contribution to the movement is through my particular type of expression, photography.

**Can you tell us about a recent project that felt particularly meaningful to you? What did you hope to communicate through it?**

In March, I am hosting my first gallery exhibition in town at a local coffee shop called Muddy Waters. My gallery is going to consist of fifteen of the bands I've shot in Burlington. This project is meaningful to me because this will be the first time where I can share my art in person with all the people who helped make it happen. I hope that through my gallery, I can communicate my gratitude for the community and what can emerge from participating in the world around them.

**Have you encountered any unexpected moments or surprises while capturing Burlington's artistic scene?**

I believe the best surprises I've encountered are how different the bands can be in the scene. One of my favorite examples is a band called Solgyers. They are not native to Burlington, but they've played here before. Many bands from New England come to Burlington to perform. Solgyers is a nine-person punk-reggae band with an elaborate horn section. When I shot them in August 2024 at the Publishing House (Burlington has residential houses that double as music venues, usually in basements), I was impressed by their horn section, especially since they performed in a sweaty basement with kids moshing around. It was a delight to photograph.

Chen Wenwei approaches photography as a speculative language rather than a mere annotative reproduction of reality. Influenced by her background in editorial design, she utilises photography as a structural tool to investigate how memory, materiality, and power structures intertwine within built spaces, revealing themselves through light, circulation, signage, boundaries, and the nuanced weathering of materials. Brutalism serves as both the critical context and the fundamental ethics of her practice. Drawing from the movement's pursuit of formal clarity and structural honesty, she establishes a verifiable method of inquiry: transforming intuitive doubts into visible contradictions and juxtapositions. For Chen, the act of photographing is not a simple capture; it is a construction of an auditable visual system. Grounded in architectural references and spatial logic, and integrated with the relational dynamics of generative prompts, her work relies on fixed lighting scales, repeated site visits, and rigorous arrangement. Rather than rushing toward conclusions, Chen traces how these conclusions are formed. She continuously identifies judgments often mistaken as "natural," exposing the latent habits and distributions of attention behind them. To her, photography is both methodology and ethics: it demands restraint, repetition, and prolonged presence, refusing to dilute the complexity of reality with simplified narratives. Acknowledging that the act of seeing is an act of intervention, she recognises that every framing alters the meaning of the image and recalibrates her distance from the world. Through disciplined composition and a scrutinizable visual order, she transforms each image into a speculative site for perpetual revisit.



# Wenwei Chen

Wenwei Chen (b. 1999) is a Toronto-based interdisciplinary artist whose practice explores themes of identity, impermanence, and the intertwining of personal and collective histories. Originally from China, Chen holds a Bachelor of Media Arts (Honours) from the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia, and a Master's in Art, Design and Media from the Ontario College of Art and Design University in Toronto. Chen's work has been exhibited internationally, with recent shows including the Moordn Art Fair in Guangzhou, Photofair Shanghai, and the RBSA Photography Award Prize exhibition in Birmingham. In Canada, her projects, such as "Embracing the Inexplicable" and collaborative work "Embodiment of the Intertwined," have been featured at the OCADU Graduate Gallery. Her innovative approach has earned her recognition as a finalist for the Artiver AI Awards, and her works are archived by the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney. Wenwei Chen is represented collaboratively by Art On Space Gallery in Foshan, China (2025–2028) and has been featured in international publications including BlogTO, Sydney Contemporary, and 17:23 Magazine. Through her diverse artistic output, Chen continues to investigate the boundaries of media arts, making her a rising voice in contemporary art.



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**Your images explore memory, perception, and the politics of space. How do these themes emerge during your research and site visits?**

Architecture is where ideology becomes inhabitable. It organises the body before it influences the mind. Circulation, thresholds, signage, and the weathering of materials quietly dictate how we move, where we belong, and who is granted entry. I am drawn to Brutalism because it amplifies this mechanism to the point of being unavoidable. It does not offer a consumable facade; instead, it confronts the gaze through sheer mass, traces of labour, and the weight of consequence. Juhani Pallasmaa noted that the task of architecture is to structure our being-in-the-world through embodied metaphors, placing the individual back into the continuum of culture and history. For me, Brutalism achieves this with a sharper edge. It insists on the exposure of raw materials and the visible marks of construction. This anti-aesthetic stance does not hinder memory. On the contrary, it possesses the power to activate the collective subconscious precisely because it refuses to please the eye.

**Your process involves repetition, fixed lighting conditions, and prolonged observation. How important is time in shaping the final image?**

These themes are rarely motifs I bring into the site; rather, they emerge actively from the environment itself. Often, architecture is experienced through use rather than sight. You find yourself forced to accelerate in a corridor, compelled to pause at an entrance, or feeling an inexplicable sense of trespass in certain corners. The politics of space manifests in minute details: the tone of signage, the density of surveillance, the layers of access control, or even why a bench is designed to discourage lingering and why a floor makes footsteps uncomfortably clear. These elements quietly embed the logic of who belongs and who must depart into the fabric of the everyday. Memory functions as a subterranean current. It is not necessarily personal recollection but often a residual collective emotion. Weathering, repairs, rust, and overlapping layers of coating act as the editorial marks of time. Through repeated visits, I have discovered that the meaning of a space shifts according to the duration and manner of one's presence. If you move quickly, it functions as a utility. If you linger, it evolves into a narrative. Upon returning, it stands as a form of testimony. The purpose of research and revisiting is not to gather more comprehensive facts, but to allow the space to exert a counter-force upon the gaze, compelling an acknowledgement that perception is not a passive reception but an active participation.

**Brutalism is not only an aesthetic reference but also an ethical framework in your practice. How does this influence the decisions you make while photographing?**

In my work, time holds two distinct meanings that ultimately converge into a singular weight. The first is the time inherent within the architecture itself. Brutalism often presents itself

as permanent, yet it continually betrays its own vulnerability in reality. Water stains, cracks, corrosion, the absence of maintenance, and abrupt repairs all etch history into the material. Though seemingly silent, these structures offer a continuous narrative of shifting systems, urban amnesia, and the transition of futuristic visions into the lived experience of decay. A surface is never just a surface; it is history compressed. The second is the time I invest on-site. For me, waiting is not an interval between shots but the very price of seeing. Returning to a location repeatedly under fixed conditions is not an attempt to manufacture a uniform style, but rather to grant change an evidentiary quality. I seek to verify what persists stubbornly across different moments and which details only permit themselves to surface after a prolonged presence. Many so-called 'obvious' elements become suspicious under sustained scrutiny, while faint, low-contrast existences gradually gain form through the act of waiting. When I say time shapes the image, I mean that the final photograph is not the result of a momentary capture but the intersection of these two timelines. The historical time of the architecture provides an irreplaceable deposition, while the time I spend waiting renders that deposition accessible. Consequently, the image is no longer a mere act of seeing; it is a confirmed presence.

**You emphasise restraint and rigour over narrative clarity. How do you navigate the tension between complexity and readability in your work?**

I do not equate legibility with explanation, nor do I view complexity as deliberate obscurity. For me, legibility is a mode of entry. It provides a path into the image without promising a definitive conclusion. Complexity is not an obstacle; it is the inherent density of reality. The balance I seek is not between the complex and the accessible, but rather between control and openness. I strive to grant my images a rigorous, steadfast structure, an accessible form capable of sustaining prolonged contemplation. Yet, within this structure, I retain elements that cannot be immediately digested, ensuring that the act of looking transcends mere recognition. As viewers navigate the frame, they undergo a cognitive shift: from 'I understand' to 'I am no longer certain,' and finally to 'I realise why I am so anxious to understand.' This trajectory transforms viewing from an act of consumption back into a lived experience. Brutalism has taught me the value of this resistance. While anti-aesthetic, it activates profound collective emotions precisely by refusing to offer immediate visual gratification. In my photography, I aim to establish a similar order; one that is disciplined but not closed. I want the composition to be a site one can return to repeatedly, rather than a puzzle to be solved and discarded. Subtle disturbances, such as the rare emergence of red, are vital here. It attracts the eye but offers no reward, leaving only a lingering tension. It is within this discomfort that viewers confront their own habits of seeing. Clarity, then, ceases to be a service and becomes a question of ethical weight. We must ask ourselves whether we are willing to acknowledge that some existences refuse to become submissive simply to be understood.

Kate Ferguson's multidisciplinary practice is rooted in an appreciation for the threshold moments where transformation occurs and realities blur. The spiritual and mystical play a large influence, as both a topic of observation and a way of being. Through her work, she considers nostalgic liminality, the sensation of memory, and decisions that lead to psychological and spiritual evolution, particularly in regard to self-actualisation. Storytelling is central to all areas of her work. In photography, Kate gravitates toward raw, energetic compositions and vibrant colour saturation. She often uses vintage film cameras and experimental processes like film soup, which alters the film during development and introduces an element of unpredictability. Her approach is hands-on, intuitive, and led by curiosity. In her writing, whether through non-fiction narrative texts or film scripts, she focuses on emotional and psychological evolution, especially the small decisions or encounters that quietly shape the direction of a life. Her stories often centre on personal reflection and interpersonal dynamics. Filmmaking allows her to explore subconscious layers beyond what still photos expose. Through moving image, she investigates internal landscapes and complex emotional states, adding depth and nuance to the themes that run through her work.

# Kate Ferguson

Kate Ferguson is a photographer, writer, and filmmaker based in Mexico City. Her photography and film works have been showcased across Greece, Mexico, the USA, Romania, Uruguay, Russia, Canada, England, and Germany. She was awarded Best Imagination at the Short Film Factory in Bucharest and for Lyrical Composition at Magikal Charm, NYC. Her recent residencies include Bonfire Air, Nekubi in Kavala, Greece, and Studio Luce in El Paredón, Guatemala.



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Robbed

35mm film  
Film soup

Photography  
2024





**Please introduce yourself to our readers. Who are you, and when did you first realise art could be your career?**

I'm Kate Ferguson, a photographer, writer, and filmmaker currently based in Mexico City. I grew up in California, moving often. Making art has always been so much of my natural state. I did go through an era where I was perceiving some mixed messages about the logistical practicalities of art as a career. I got a "traditional" degree and have worked in so many different jobs. But I was also encouraged by teachers and by my family to continue exploring it, and would say that's only increased over time. I have always felt strongly about honouring the creative impulses, and I'd say my dedication has also grown over time. I try to trust myself.

**Your work spans photography, writing, and filmmaking. How did your creative journey begin, and what led you to embrace such a multidisciplinary practice?**

These are the ways I played as a child, and I never totally stopped. I took photos of my dolls, which, as you might imagine, are a bit haunting. I made stop motion short films featuring my toys and live action short films starring my friends. People started giving me cameras, and I got pretty into photography and art in high school. When I was in college, I did a study abroad program in Paris, which is when I started to take things a bit more seriously. Filmmaking came quite a bit later. I would say I had more work to do to grow into that, both technically and just as a person. I've continued with each of these disciplines because, for me, they all inform each other. It's all storytelling, and these are always that I like to communicate.

**You describe your art as rooted in "threshold moments" where transformation occurs. Can you share a personal experience that first made you aware of these liminal spaces?**

When I was growing up, I was very into a 70's movie called The Adventures of the Wilderness Family. There's a scene where the family leaves Los Angeles to move into a forest cabin, and the dad yells, "We're getting out of here!" as they drive down the freeway. It is quite literally a point of transition for the characters and the story, and I felt it in such an extreme manner that I wanted to learn how to replicate it. I can feel it now, talking about it. It's a type of buoyant liminality. It's the movement in the in between. Embracing the inevitability that everything will change. I like the sweetness of nostalgia and the romance of adventure; those threshold moments contain both. So some of my first memories of liminal spaces were actually brought about by art.

**In your photography, you often work with vintage film cameras and techniques like film soup, which introduce an element of unpredictability. What draws you to this experimental approach, and how do you balance chance with control in your process?**

I learned photography on film cameras and processing in darkrooms, so for one thing that feels most familiar to me. While there is a predictable cause and effect, it's also easy to witness the mysterious magic of it all when working with film, and that's an important part of the artistic process for me. I tend to feel that the art itself knows as much as I do (if not more) and that we're working together. So I really go into projects with a lot of curiosity and trust.

The control I bring into it is the experience. Having preferred film stocks, lighting, and knowing how certain cameras tend to behave. In the case of film soup, knowing which ingredients create gentle colour shifts and which ones are more likely to completely obliterate a strip of film. That being said, I don't really feel like there are mistakes. I love texture, grain, and colour. Can't get enough. If I develop some film and there are surprises to contend with, then it inspires me to get creative in doing it. I appreciate the chance; it keeps things fresh, and it can feel really synchronistic and purposeful.

**Nostalgia, memory, and psychological and spiritual evolution are recurring themes for you. What kind of dialogue do you hope your work sparks with viewers on these subjects?**

I've connected very strongly with the concept of evolution, and particularly through trusting some sort of divine design or higher power. And a lot of evolution means a lot of change. I think I became cognizant of the concept of impermanence pretty early on, which could lean towards existential confusion, but it's also where all the possibilities are. No two days are the same; I am never quite the same. There's all this potential to alchemise and release and heal and become.

It's such a gift to have options in the way we perceive things. I still feel fondly about places I no longer live, and sweetly about people I no longer have relationships with. Experience is just very worthy, and we have a humongous, glorious planet to do it on. Life is really beautiful, and I hope my work speaks to that.

**Your short film, Dear Kevin, brought you to Mexico City and eventually inspired you to settle there. What is it about the city's energy and culture that feels essential to your work today?**

That's true! I had lived in Los Angeles for many years and felt ready for a change. I was thinking I would become nomadic for a while and just travel the world, but when I got to Mexico City, I found that it was something I needed to lean into. I've found a really pure appreciation for art, beautiful architecture, and a walkable lifestyle. There's a lot to learn and witness, which is a way of living that I value. I'm learning Spanish and am grateful for the challenge and being immersed while doing it. I think that, in general, learning about different cultures, histories, and languages is essential to my work, and also just essential as a person. I feel best when I'm constantly evolving, and I trust that my work will as well. I think there are likely various location chapters ahead of me.

Design is not only Hao Wu's career but also his lifestyle. As a designer, he resists rigid definitions, choosing instead to explore whatever inspires him. When he draws through the lens of an interior designer, he reconstructs images in his mind and creates a dreamlike world shaped by imagination. Through this process, ordinary elements encountered in everyday life are transformed into objects that exist at the boundary between reality and illusion. He records this transformation using all the tools and skills at his disposal.

His goal is to capture both the physical reality of a building and the emotional experience it creates. By incorporating traditional calligraphy and storytelling, he adds depth to his work, connecting the past with the present. Regardless of how technology evolves, he believes true beauty comes from the time and effort an artist invests in their craft. Every stroke and every detail matters. For Hao, art is about honoring tradition while creating something new.

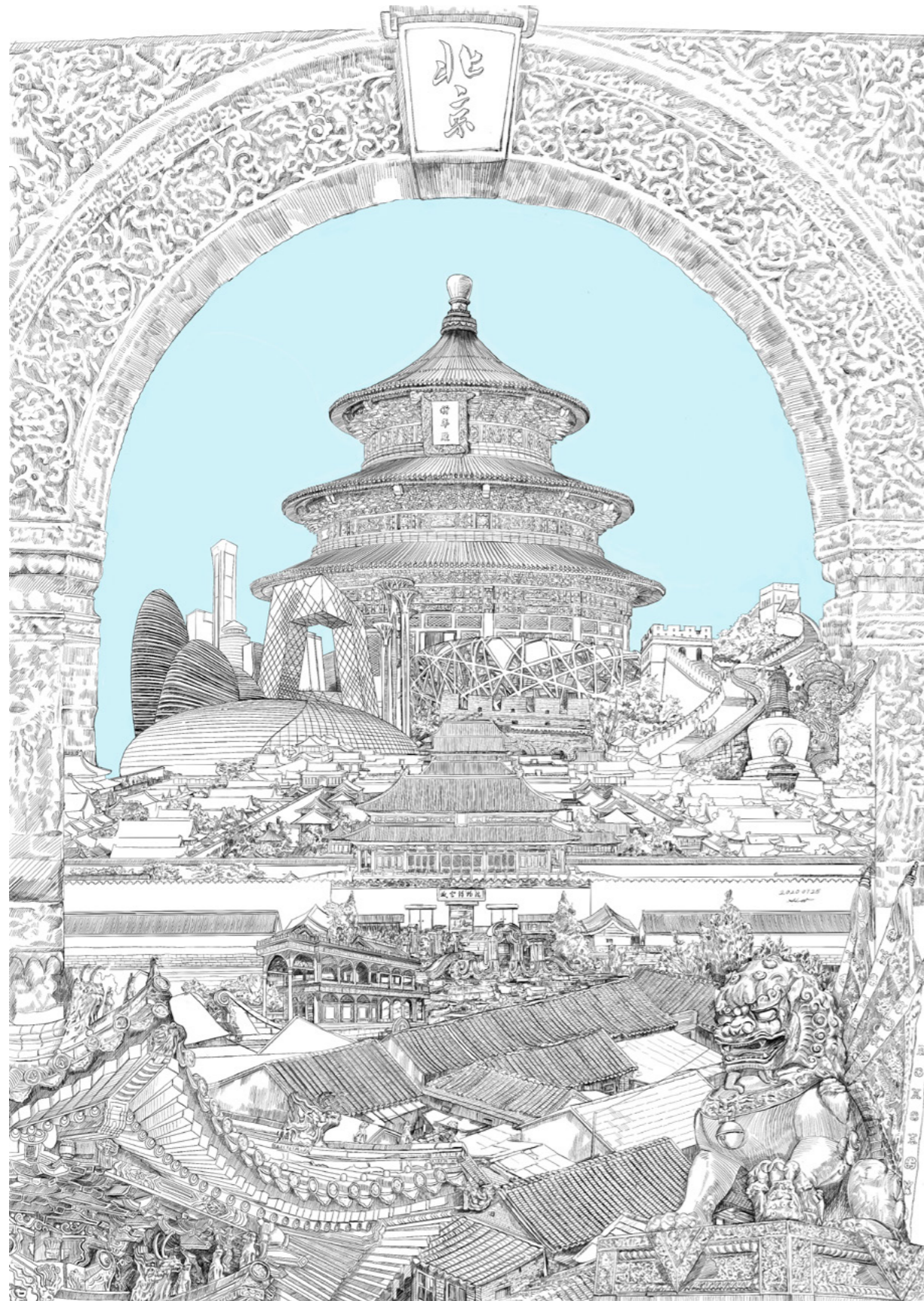
# Hao Wu



[sites.google.com/view/haowuarts](https://sites.google.com/view/haowuarts)  
@haowu\_design  
Boston, USA

Hao Wu is a designer and artist with a background spanning architecture and interior design. Born in China, he has long been fascinated by diverse cultures and traditions, which deeply influence his work. After moving to the United States in 2016, Hao earned an MFA in Interior Design and began integrating a rich blend of skills, materials, and global inspirations into his practice. While he embraces digital media, he approaches it with a traditional mindset, ensuring that craftsmanship and artistic integrity remain central to both his art and interior design work. In 2023, he returned to traditional watercolor painting, merging his experience and skills to create works that harmonize innovation with timeless beauty. Now working at one of the world's leading architectural firms, his artistic practice is not separate from his design work but an essential component of his interior design approach. He continues to explore the intersection of design, art, and cultural narratives, bringing his passion for cities, buildings, and history into both his artistic creations and spatial designs.





### How did your training in architecture and interior design shape the way you approach art today?

My training in architecture and interior design has strongly shaped the way I approach art today. Unlike purely aesthetic disciplines, architectural education focuses heavily on mechanics, physics, psychology, and economics. It teaches you to understand real-world requirements and limitations, budget, materials, structure, and context, and to work creatively within them.

In architecture, a design choice is not just about what looks good; it must be supported by analysis and respond to the current situation. Rather than saying “I feel this is right,” a designer must be able to explain “why” it works. This mindset has stayed with me in my art practice.

Although I create art driven by passion, I almost always apply a logical check to my process. I consider multiple ways of working before arriving at a result, carefully placing objects and colors where they make the most sense. My work is informed by an understanding of physical space, material reality, economics, and society.

Because of this background, my artistic process is guided more by analysis and logic than by emotion alone. Passion is essential, but structure, reasoning, and awareness of the world give my work depth and intention.

### Growing up in China and later moving to the United States, how have different cultures influenced your work?

Growing up in China and later moving to the United States has influenced my work in a very practical way. Chinese culture has a long history and big regional differences. For me, it works like a logic library for art. I can take many kinds of materials and references from it. Chinese culture is more focused on criticism than praise, which encourages modesty. Because of this, my work made in China is usually quiet, balanced, and controlled.

I’m glad that the first city I moved to in the U.S. was New York. It has a large and diverse population, with many cultures and ways of thinking existing together. They influence each other but still remain independent. This was the first time I understood that art doesn’t need to focus on what is “right,” because a single absolute right doesn’t exist. I visited many galleries and absorbed pop art, contemporary art, and work in different media. These experiences added new layers to my library and pushed my work to become bolder.

### You describe design as both your career and your lifestyle. What does that mean in your everyday practice?

I believe design is something you cannot separate from daily life. It is not only my career but also my lifestyle. The core of design is creativity. Creating a specific space for a client is my job. At the same time, we all live inside spaces designed by others every day. When I go to a restaurant, I do not think about the food first. I think about the space. I imagine the

layout, where the kitchen is, and where the restroom is. I notice how customers, food, and staff move through the space. Then I look at the design of the interior, the style, the materials, and what could be improved. This process only takes a few seconds, but I build the whole space in my mind. After that, I even look at small details like the menu. I notice the layout, the fonts, the food photos, and the names of the dishes. I think about why certain names make me feel excited or not. I think about the purpose behind these choices.

I cannot stop doing this because design is already part of my life. I believe this happens to most designers. If someone likes to study building details or knock on walls and furniture, they are probably a designer.

### What drew you back to traditional watercolor painting in 2023?

I learned watercolor briefly during my first year in architecture school, but I soon stopped and switched to digital media. I enjoy drawing digitally and often use watercolor-style effects. Digital tools have many advantages, such as unlimited canvas size, easy editing, and accurate color control.

In 2023, one of my friends, who illustrates architectural drawings in watercolor, encouraged me to return to traditional watercolor painting. He suggested that I try working with real materials instead of simulations and gave me a lot of support. Traditional watercolor is very different from digital media. Pigments settle on the paper, and unexpected effects appear when layers mix. If the paper is not completely dry, unwanted patterns can form. Different pigments also react chemically and can create dull or gray areas. These limits can be difficult, but they are also what make traditional watercolor interesting. I spent about three months learning to control this technique. During that time, I painted around 100 watercolor works and shared them with friends during a gallery night.

### How do you balance digital tools with a traditional, craftsmanship-focused mindset?

I do not see digital tools and traditional craftsmanship as opposites. This may be because I started as a designer before becoming an artist. I do not focus on specific skills or media. I chose the most practical method to reach my goal. For me, the idea and what the work communicates are more important than technique.

Recently, I won a rug design competition. I started the project with traditional watercolor because that natural feeling is difficult to achieve with digital tools alone. After that, I scanned the painting and refined it on the computer. The watercolor created the organic quality, and the digital process helped turn it into a finished product. Neither approach alone could achieve the final result.

Stéphanie Navarro, operating under the pseudonym TANI TELAS, is a major figure in contemporary progressive abstraction. Rooted in Corsica with French and Spanish heritage, Tani Telas draws profound inspiration from the Mediterranean, which remains the vibrant, thematic heart of her practice. Her work is defined by a rigorous and disciplined process that seeks constant emancipation from established conventions. This creative path is articulated in three distinct phases: first, an initial period of introspection, where she meticulously develops and calibrates colors to reflect her deepest, immediate emotions. This preparatory stage then gives way to instinct on canvas, where color is deployed with visceral force, taking spontaneous and dynamic shape. Finally, the completed work is anchored in its cultural bedrock, integrating the history, soul, and geological textures of the Mediterranean. TANI TELAS's powerful abstract vocabulary is thus a compelling combination of raw emotion, gestural instinct, and cultural resonance.

# TANI TELAS

TANI TELAS, the pseudonym for French artist Stéphanie Navarro, was born in Oran, Algeria, and draws upon a rich Franco-Spanish heritage. While deeply rooted in her Mediterranean base in Corsica, Navarro cultivated a rigorous intellectual foundation, earning a Master's degree in Hispanic Literature, Languages, and Arts from the University of Toulouse in 2011. Artistic growth has been a constant thread throughout her professional life, maintained through continuous study and practice. Rather than a beginning, the years 2022–2023 represented a season of artistic fellowship with Jorel Sergio, providing a unique space for the mutual exploration of technique and creative exchange.

Tani Telas's vibrant and compelling body of work serves as a manifesto of progressive abstraction. The Mediterranean, far more than a geographical setting, is the fundamental source of her inspiration and the emotive heart of her expression.

The year 2025 has culminated in a significant achievement for her international career: On December 1, 2025, Tani Telas was awarded the coveted Certificate of Artistic Merit from the Luxembourg Art Prize (awarded by La Pinacothèque). This major distinction is the pinnacle of a rapidly accelerating career, which also includes multiple accolades, such as three Honorable Mention Awards from the TERAVARNA ART GALLERY.

Her commitment to exhibition is intense and consistent, featuring both solo and collective shows across Corsica and the Var region since 2018. The year 2025 will continue to be punctuated by the launch of a major solo exhibition series titled "Femme Med": Ancre en Méditerranée" (Mediterranean Woman: Anchor in the Mediterranean), with confirmed dates on the French Riviera (Côte d'Azur) in Le Castellet, Six-Fours Le Bruscat, and La Londe-les-Maures.

Marine Arborescence

Oil paint  
85x61x2 cm

Painting  
2024



tanitelas.com  
@tanitelas\_art  
Marato, France



**Your work follows a three-phase process. How would you describe this process in simple terms?**

At its core, my process is defined by a desire to break free from convention. First, I prepare my canvases and supports. Even if they are already primed, I apply two additional layers of gesso, which I texture using a large palette knife. In doing so, I am already shaping the many moods of the Mediterranean directly into the base. The first phase focuses on creating the palette, the nuances, and the texture. I carefully record the 'equations' of my mixtures in color swatchbooks. The second phase opens a field of endless possibilities. I paint instinctively, applying the shades created on my palette to produce spontaneous movements. I arrange the composition and the areas of color and texture entirely by intuition. As soon as a narrative begins to emerge, I enter the third phase. This is where I clarify, refine, and retouch. A story is born.

**Color seems central to your work. How do you choose and develop your color palettes?**

For me, color is the vessel for emotion. No two people see exactly the same blue; this inherent subjectivity is what fascinates me about human nature, the fact that we are all unique. Developing my palette is the first 'gift' I offer in my work. I pay meticulous attention to the raw materials. I only use shades that I have crafted myself, either from natural pigments or from extra-fine oils. The composition of each tube is crucial: every tint is bound with a specific oil that possesses its own singular characteristics. One oil might react differently to the air, drying more or less quickly than another. Mixing certain shades is also a chemistry of oils, a blend that reacts in its own unique way upon the canvas. I can spend hours in my studio exploring the physical nature of these materials. The choice of colors remains paramount, with blues and corals serving as the recurring symbols of my creations.

**Your new series, *Femme Med*, focuses on the Mediterranean woman. What inspired this theme?**

First and foremost, it is because I am one. I grew up in a family of Spanish origin, born in Oran, Algeria, and later spent my youth on the French Riviera between Toulon and Marseille. The women I grew up with, those I have known or encountered, each with their own distinct accent, are my primary source of inspiration. This collection, *Femme Med*, is the result of the stories I've been told: the beauty of the Mediterranean temperament, sometimes weighed down by cultural expectations, the obligations tied to the condition of women in past eras, or even today, as well as themes of migration, adaptation, the gaze of others, and the spontaneous, impulsive dreams of youth. Every generation is represented here, from the great-grandmother to the great-granddaughter. I am deeply in love with cultures and life stories. Since my very first travels, I have been collecting testimonies and anecdotes from chance encounters, books, or moving documentaries. Viscerally, each canvas recalls one of these stories, which I

rewrite in my own way through painting. It is my tribute to the women of yesterday, today, and tomorrow, all cradled by the inconstancy of the Mediterranean waves.

**Your abstract language is emotionally charged. What feelings or ideas do you hope viewers take away from your work?**

Despite the depths, the storms, the shipwrecks, and death itself, life and hope endure. If we are standing, it is for a reason.

**Who are some artists, movements, or cultural references that have influenced you the most?**

To this day, I am still in awe of the Italian masters, from the Renaissance to the Baroque period. I am particularly fascinated by how they crafted their colors, especially considering the rarity and the difficulty of obtaining pigments at that time. Five 'Maestros' stand out in my personal pantheon: Salvador Dalí, Gustav Klimt, Antoni Gaudí, Diego Rivera, and Pedro Almodóvar. I am drawn to their audacity, their freedom, and their unconventional paths. I was also deeply marked by 1980s culture, British Pop, both visual and musical, as well as the *Movida* in Spain. The boldness of the colors, the interior design, and the striking associations in both fashion and set design found in Almodóvar's films have left a lasting impression on me. These artists all had something vital to say. Whether they were denouncing societal issues, like Rivera's social murals in Mexico, or delivering their traumatized yet transcended imaginations through a goldsmith's precision on canvas, they each offered a singular vision of womanly beauty and aura.

**You've exhibited widely and recently received significant awards. How has this recognition impacted your practice?**

To exhibit is to expose a part of myself, to share what influences me and what makes me feel alive. In my collections, the emotional element plays a vital role. Each exhibition is a reciprocal gift. Receiving the 2025 Certificate of Artistic Merit from the Pinacothèque as part of the Luxembourg Art Prize was a deeply meaningful recognition. It serves as a call to face even greater challenges and to embrace an even bolder sense of audacity. It pushes me back into the studio to explore, research, read, and document, but above all, to continue living: contemplating the sea, meeting people, engaging in dialogue, and constantly striving to evolve. There is a saying: 'When you are on stage, it is to say something.' Every gaze cast upon my canvases is an award in itself. I paint for you.

**Looking ahead, what projects or directions are you excited to explore in the next year?**

My upcoming projects are centered around outdoor installations and exhibitions in iconic Mediterranean locations. Writing will also take on a more prominent role with a book project in the works. Naturally, I will continue my Mediterranean exploration, experimenting with diverse supports and new materials.

In the quiet hum of nature, there exists a profound truth: life is not singular, but layered. The unfolding of existence, much like the intricate patterns in the soil, the bark of trees, or the petals of a flower, reveals itself in overlapping depths. These layers, though invisible at times, are always present, woven into the fabric of reality itself. Explore the layers of life, the delicate yet powerful interplay between existence and essence. Life, as it is experienced, is a series of interwoven moments, thoughts, and sensations that accumulate over time, leaving behind subtle traces of our journey. Each experience, like the rings of a tree or the sediment of an ancient riverbed, builds upon what has come before, shaping the contours of our being. Similarly, we are reminded that the layers of the body are not merely physical. Beneath the skin, our muscles and bones hold the stories of our actions, our choices, our growth. Each scar, each curve, each cell is a testament to a deeper truth: our bodies are not just vessels, but maps of our personal evolution, marked by the passage of time. And then, there is the layer of reality, the unseen forces that govern the universe, that bind us to the earth and to each other. What we see, what we touch, what we know, is but a small fraction of a far more complex and intricate reality. Like the atmosphere that encircles the planet, this layer envelops us, often invisible, but always present, shaping how we perceive and relate to the world. This collection of work invites you to explore these layers, to reflect on how they intertwine and shape our understanding of both self and nature. It is an invitation to pause, to look beyond the surface, and to delve into the quiet depths where life, body, and nature coexist in a delicate dance.

# Marta Ornelas Monteiro

Born in Lisboa and shaped by a global curiosity, Marta Ornelas Monteiro is an architect turned multidisciplinary artist whose creative journey is grounded in a profound dialogue with nature. While her formal training lies in architecture, her will has always followed the pulse of the natural world and art, drawing inspiration from organic forms, raw materials, and the unseen patterns that connect all life. Traveling, she collects not only visual and tactile references but also fragments of stories carried by landscapes. Her art practice transforms found natural materials into poetic compositions, giving these elements a second life beyond their original context. Each piece becomes a living testimony to nature's resilience, memory, and transformation.

Her latest work, *Layers of Life, Layers of Body, Layers of Nature's Reality*, explores the unseen strata of existence. In this body of work, nature is both subject and medium. Using earth's textures as a canvas, she reveals the hidden narratives embedded in time: the rings of a tree, the folds of skin, the sediment of memory. The work speaks to the interconnectedness of all life, inviting viewers to consider how their own layers are mirrored in the natural world.

Raio  
Ø12x140x180 cm

Sculpture  
2020



meraatelier.com  
@meraatelier  
Barcelona, Spain



**You were trained as an architect before becoming a multidisciplinary artist. How does your architectural background influence the way you approach art making and the composition of your works?**

Architecture has strongly influenced my path as a multidisciplinary artist. It introduced me to concrete formwork methods, to plaster and cement mixtures. This was when I began my first experiments, which led to my first collection of sculptures. Architecture also influences my painting practice, helping me explore the balance within each composition, form, colour, and light. Abstraction and geometry. Organic and regular structures.

**You grew up in Lisbon and later traveled widely. How have these experiences shaped your sensitivity to natural forms and textures?**

I grew up near Lisbon, by the sea, and was always closely connected to encounters with nature. Traveling offers me a shift in perspective and inspiration that feeds directly into my practice. When I travel, I collect not only ideas and inspiration, but also objects to incorporate into my artworks, often large plant leaves, especially from tropical landscapes, as well as tree branches or dried flowers.

**Your practice is deeply connected to nature. What usually sparks a new piece for you? Do you start from an object or an idea? And how do you get to the final piece?**

My practice is deeply connected to forms found in nature. A new piece usually begins with a moment of curiosity, an observation that gradually translates into an idea. The object itself only comes into existence after a long process of consideration and testing.

What ultimately guides my choices is the silhouette and proportion of a natural element. I am drawn to forms with a strong presence: tree trunks reaching two meters in height, branches, leaves, and dried flowers. Back in the studio, these collected elements become the starting point for each piece.

**You often incorporate natural materials, such as earth, wood, and foliage. What draws you to these elements, and how do you decide which materials belong in a particular work?**

I have always been drawn and curious about nature. I am inspired by natural materials and by the way they transform over time. Captivated by their ephemeral beauty, I began incorporating natural elements into my work, across sculpture, cement-based mixed works, mixed media on canvas, and mixed media on paper.

The material choices emerge through an experimental process of testing my ideas. Each work develops through the interaction between form, scale, and purpose. My intuition guides me through each work, testing new ideas and forms.

**Your recent series, Layers of Life, Layers of Body, Layers of Nature's Reality, explores different strata of existence. How do you translate these conceptual "layers" into visual or tactile form?**

I explore the concept of different strata of existence while giving nature an additional narrative. In my sculptures, a branch or tree is placed on top of a concrete base, creating a unique object that preserves that singular encounter with nature. In my paintings, I aim to capture a fleeting narrative, the shadow moment, translating it onto canvas. The goal in both media is to express a new way to see and experience nature.

**Architecture teaches precision, while nature brings unpredictability. How do you balance structure and organic intuition when creating a piece?**

This parallel between the rigor of construction and the fragility of natural elements gradually became central to my practice. Architecture guides me in the rigour of technique, while nature explores artistic expression in different types of form and matter, exploring organicity in a static form. As the work develops, the proportions and shapes are transformed, creating a harmony between form and hue.

**There is a strong sense of transformation and resilience in your work. What themes do you hope viewers connect with when they encounter your compositions?**

I aim to draw the observer's gaze to the memory of Nature, adding a new narrative to it. Through different artistic processes and techniques, working with materials ranging from two-meter-high tree trunks to the smallest dried flowers allowed me to express new forms of existence, transforming natural matter into unique pieces and offering nature another narrative beyond its original context.

**Your pieces often feel like they carry stories from the landscapes you collect from. How do memory and place factor into your creative process?**

It always depends on the technique I choose. In painting, I work to capture a specific moment through the contrast between precise and blurred plant silhouettes. The compositions move between clarity and softness, layering defined forms with more subdued boundaries, almost like shadows, suggesting movement and the fleeting nature of a moment as it exists and then disappears.

In sculpture, the composition emerges directly from the dialogue between the natural material and the constructed structure. The piece evolves through balance, weight, and tension, allowing the material to retain traces of its original presence while being transformed into a new, autonomous form.

Ziggy's work investigates how identity, memory, and emotional experience are shaped by the cultural, technological, and spatial systems we inhabit. Moving beyond personal narratives of emotional restraint and conformity, Yang's recent practice focuses on broader questions of how both visible and invisible structures mediate contemporary life. Through installations that range from interactive environments to kinetic and spatial experiences, he invites viewers to engage with these dynamics on both perceptual and conceptual levels, prompting reflection on how human presence and behaviour are continuously negotiated within constructed environments.

Emotion Protocol  
8x18x43 1/4 in

Resin, stepper motor,  
acrylic, customized PCB,  
power supply

Installation  
2024



# Ziggy Yang



ziggyyang.com  
@longmuse\_  
New York City, USA

Ziggy (Zhenglong) Yang is a Chinese installation and new media artist based in New York. His practice explores the complex dialogue between human emotions, cultural conditioning, and technology, positioning technology as both an interactive medium and a conceptual framework.

Influenced by his upbringing in Xi'an, China, an environment deeply shaped by Eastern traditions emphasising emotional restraint, collective harmony, and Taoist and Buddhist philosophies. Yang employs mechanical systems, programmable physical computing, artificial intelligence, and synthetic materials as both medium and metaphor, constructing installations that engage viewers in active reflection on the relationship between the self and the surrounding social and technological environment.

Qi Liu is a multidisciplinary artist based in Los Angeles whose practice explores the intersections of gender, society, and environment. Her work often takes the form of installations and photographs that translate social realities into visual experiences. Liu believes that art, regardless of its medium, has the power to inspire awareness and reflection. Whether in two-dimensional photography or three-dimensional space, her intention is to provoke questions, invite empathy, and remind viewers that social change begins with recognition.

For Liu, art is not a distant concept but a living conversation with everyday life. Before entering the art world, she once thought that art existed apart from reality. Yet through her creative journey, she discovered that art can become a language for expressing one's stance and inspiring others to think differently. Her practice now centers on creating works that transform personal observation into collective dialogue, encouraging people to move from merely "seeing" to asking what they, too, can do. Liu works intuitively with materials drawn from daily life, believing that the most ordinary objects carry the weight of shared experience. Through repetition, accumulation, and spatial arrangement, she constructs environments that reflect the structures and emotions of contemporary society. Her installations and images often highlight the invisible labor, quiet endurance, and human vulnerability that exist beneath familiar surfaces.

In the future, Liu intends to continue investigating social, gender, and environmental issues that unfold around her every day. For her, creating art is a form of questioning, connecting, and seeking solutions, a way to engage with the world through both sensitivity and responsibility.

Qi Qi Chairs Fair,

Mixed Media  
4x6x12 ft

Installation  
2024



# Qi Liu



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Los Angeles, USA

Qi Liu is an artist living and working in Los Angeles, working with photography, installations, and art direction. After completing her studies at the California Institute of the Arts, she began exploring social issues, including gender and environmental concerns, through reflective and dialogic approaches. She often examines her own perspectives and invites viewers to engage with the questions her work raises. By transforming observations of daily life into immersive experiences, Liu aims to create works that encourage reflection, dialogue, and heightened awareness of pressing contemporary topics, fostering connections and prompting audiences to reconsider the world around them.

Suly b. Wolff is a multidisciplinary artist who creates objects, installations, and paintings from various recycled materials. In her latest project, she repurposes wood shards and offcuts, transforming them into forms that reflect reductive formal structures. Through this process, she explores themes of simplicity, habitat, and the multifaceted nature of human existence.

Photo Celestia Studio

Time Space Existence,  
Palazzo Mora Venice

Wood and Marble

Installation  
2025



# Suly Bornstein Wolff



sulybw.com  
@suly\_bornstein\_wolff  
Tel Aviv, Israel

Suly Bornstein Wolff (b. São Paulo, Brazil) is a Tel Aviv–based multidisciplinary artist working across painting, assemblage, sculpture, and installation. Shaped by immigration from Brazil to Israel, her practice traces questions of belonging and habitat through the image of the “imported” from palm trees and eucalyptus embedded in Tel Aviv’s Bauhaus-era gardens to the overlooked remnants of the city. She studied architecture and interior design at ORT College in Tel Aviv and later art at the Tel Aviv Museum’s Meierhof Center for Arts. Working with ready-mades and recyclable matter, she is known for glass sculptures assembled from vintage lampshades and vessels, which were also presented at Personal Structures at Palazzo Mora, Venice (2024). In parallel, she builds reductive, architectural environments from wood offcuts, including Slowly, the Whole Unfolds, a ten-meter outdoor relief at Artists House, Tel Aviv. Bornstein Wolff has exhibited in many solo and group exhibitions in Israel and internationally, including in museums and galleries in Italy, the USA, Romania, and India.

From childhood, Miguel (Marquis of Jadraque) has been interested in the figure, portraiture, movement, and light. Miguel is interested in all the materials he can adapt to his paintings: oil, charcoal, pastel, cement, ink, acrylic, spray paint, etc. He adapts them to his paintings according to the series he is working on. His inspiration comes from everyday life, his travels, people, what he reads, what he sees in other artists, conversations with friends, and film. In short, his life. Currently, Miguel is working on a series of "Storks" inspired by his homeland and continues to be interested in emotional figurative abstraction, alternating between the two.

# Miguel Garcia - Marques de Jadraque

Marqués de Jadraque (Miguel García) was born in 1961 in Palencia, Spain. When he was 11, he attended drawing and painting classes at the School of Fine Arts in his town, Palencia. In 1981, he moved to Barcelona and continued his studies at the Royal Artistic Circle (painting nudes) and at the "Escuela Libre del Mediterraneo", under the tutelage of the painter J. Torrents Llado (perfecting his technique and learning about light). During these years, his studio was located on Jadraque Street, where he founded the 'Marqués de Jadraque' group to share ideas with the cities of Barcelona and Madrid. This was the origin of his pseudonym. While in Barcelona, he received portrait commissions throughout Europe and worked for a while in the Vatican City. Around 1986, he moved to Los Angeles, California. He began to move away from portraiture, painting bar scenes and the "people whistling" series. He was also chosen to represent Spain for the 500th anniversary of the Discovery of America (he was commissioned to create a series of paintings). He exhibited in several galleries in California, Mexico, and Hong Kong. In 1992, kind of tired of LA, he moved to London, where he spent a year painting traffic signs on the asphalt and developing a special interest in Cubism. He created a series of bar scenes influenced by Cubism for an exhibition in Mexico City.

In 1993, he returned to LA and settled in Hermosa Beach. He created a Cubist series in black and white that offers a critique of the American system. He painted series such as "people in line" and "clotheslines". In 2005, he moved to Brooklyn, New York. During this period, he created a series of commissioned portraits and worked on "Donkeys", "Clotheslines", "Worried Man", "People line", etc.

In 2018, he moved back to London, where he has lived until 2024. He experimented with new materials and his work tended towards figurative abstraction, inspired by the colors of London gardens. During the pandemic, he began preparing a project to build his studio in a small town in his homeland. Influenced by his homeland, he painted storks and continued his figurative, abstract, emotional work.



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Al-Tiba9 Gallery - The Printed Universe - Books exhibition - Guest artist Yanlin Song - 2025

# COLLECTORS' ART BOOK

LIMITED EDITION of 500 hand-numbered books.

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Open Calls for Artists

**Al-Tiba9**  
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# COLLECTORS' ART BOOK

Being an artist featured on Al-Tiba9's online platform means having the unique chance to present their work to museums, galleries, academics, art professionals, collectors, and art lovers worldwide. Each artist represented in this book has previously been selected among thousands of artists to gain international exposure and recognition and tell the world about their art and life story through interviews.

This exceptional Collectors' Art Book, in a limited edition of 500 copies, is designed with the most advanced curatorial and editorial skills by Mohamed Benhadj, curator and founder of Al-Tiba9 Contemporary Art. This collectible art book aims to create a visual language between artists and international art collectors, offering them the possibility of an artistic, visual, and emotional exchange.

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