SUNNY ART PRIZE V

# SUNNY ART PRIZE

LOTTERY FUNDED

Supported using public funding by
ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

# PREFACE

Every edition of the Sunny Art Prize aims to push the boundaries of both traditional and new media, allowing audiences worldwide to engage with issues of paramount importance to global societies through visual culture. With 2020 being the year that will define this decade, the extremely talented pool of international artists embraced the challenge of examining sensitive and complex issues through their work. Relevant matters include COVID-19, what the lockdown meant for different societies, and how the resurgence of forward-looking movements such as Black Lives Matter and Trans Lives Matter has effected positive change. Artists have also commented on what 2020 meant for environmental change as the world braces for ecological catastrophe, as well as on concerns regarding how worldwide conflicts are disrupting fragile social systems and their related impact on identity at the end of the second decade of the 21st century.

This year proved challenging for the arts and cultural enterprise, with the coronavirus triggering an economic contraction in the industry, which nearly caused its collapse, especially considering the initial neglect to support artists and creatives with governmental budgets for the crisis. This first London group exhibition of this year's edition of the Prize therefore intends to highlight the importance of the arts and artists to society, with particular emphasis on their value in terms of their contributions to educational, economic, and social wellbeing.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The team at Sunny Art Centre wishes to thank all of the shortlisted artists who have been exceptional in debating and exchanging conversations about their work and in curating the exhibition itself. In particular, this catalogue and the exhibition itself would not have been possible without the participation of the shortlisted artists *Ana Schmidt, Azita Moradkhani, Antonios Fikos, Beichen Zhang, Colin Roberts, Catherine Hyland, David Hedley Noble, Diana Savostaite, Emanuela I. Harris Sintamarian, Elisa Bertaglia, Frances Gynn, Gabriele Grones, Gyonyoung Yoon, Glib Mukha, Gavin Watson, Hang Gao, Into Niilo, Julie Stephenson, Julian Reisinger, Keane Tan, Kong Ho, Lisyanet Rodriguez, Rich Jellyman, Robert Winstanley, Richard Kenton Webb, Roberto Beragnoli, Ming Lu, Mariia Filatova, Martha Zmpounou, Mgdalena Libero, Marie Lenclos, Najaah Mclaren, Nina Pancheva, Pawel Sadaj, Parastoo Ahoon, Svetlana Ochkovskaya, Serhii Korabelnikov, Sam Rachamin, Shaun Haugen, Silvia Rocchino, Sofia Mangini, Tijana Petrovic, Tommy Ramsay, Vinciane Roduit, Wiktor Kuta, Zena Assi, Zoe Beaudry, and Zofia Blazko.*

Moreover, as with every edition of the Sunny Art Prize, audiences from all over the world have provided invaluable support through their responses to the artworks and through their extraordinary drive to engage in this global conversation. Art has no cultural nor social value if it is not intended to benefit its viewers and invite them to reflect on what they deem important. The wide selection of artworks exhibited for the Sunny Art Prize 2020, which come from artists around the world, will provide audiences with this opportunity, one in which they will be able to bring home new perspectives on who we are.

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www.richardkentonwebb.art
@richardkentonwebb

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www.francesgynn.co.uk
@frangynn35

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**SVETLANA OCHKOVSKAYA**

https://ochkovskayart.wixsite.com/
@svetlanaochk


## SHORTLISTED ARTISTS

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www.minglu.art
@_minglu

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www.jln-reisinger.com
@ jln.reisinger

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@artisnowillegal

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www.tommyramsayart.com
@tommy.ramsay

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www.ninapancheva.com
@ninapancheva.art

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www.vincianeroduit.com
@vincianeroduit.fineart

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www.keaneofficial.com
@keane0t19

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**LISYANET RODRIGUEZ**

www.lisyanetrodriiguez.com
@lisyanetrodriguez

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**SILVIA ROCCHINO**

www.silviarocchino.com
@silviarocchino

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www.robertwinstanley.com
@robertwinstanley_

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www.gao-hang.com

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https://www.samrachamin.com/
@sam_rachamin

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www.shaunhaugen.com
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https://hedleynoble.com
@hedleynoble

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https://www.in2into.com/
@in2into

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https://juliestephenson.net/
@juliestephensonphotography

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www.facebook.com/GlibMukha
@glibmukha

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## DIANA SAVOSTAITE

www.dianasavostaiteart.com
@diana.savostaite

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## MARTHA ZMPOUNOU

www.marthazmpounou.com
@marthazmpounou

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## MAGDALENA LIBERO

www.magdalenalibero.wordpress.com
@magdalenalibero

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http://pawelsadaj.com
@pawelsadaj

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www.colinrobertsart.com

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www.azitamora.com
@azita.mora

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@richardjellyman

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www.catherinehyland.co.uk
@cathyland1

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www.emahsin.com
@emasdas

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## GABRIELE GRONES

www.gabrielegrones.com
@gabrielegrones

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**TIJANA PETROVIC**

www.petrovictijana.com
@tijana.petrovic_

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@gezlevli

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**MARIIA FILATOVA**

http://mariafilatova.art
@mariafilatova.art

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www.elisabertaglia.com
@bertagliaelisa

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**ANA SCHMIDT**

www.schmidtana.com
@schmidtana

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**MARIE LENCLOS**

www.marielenclos.com
@marielenclos_painting

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**WIKTOR KUTA**

www.paradiselifeart.com
@paradiselifeart

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**ZOFIA BLAŻKO**

www.zofiablazko.com
@Zofia Błażko

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**ZOE BEAUDRY**

www.zoebeaudry.com
@zoebeaudry_art

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**ZENA ASSI**

www.zenaassi.com
@zenaassi

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**BEICHEN ZHANG**

www.zhangbeichen.com
@beichenzhangphoto

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**GAVIN WATSON**

https://gavinwatson.net
@best_inbreed

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**KONG HO**

www.kongho.com
@kongho04

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**SOFIA MANGINI**

http://sofiamangini.wixsite.com
@lineadventure

# PRIZE WINNERS

Richard Kenton Webb

Frances Gynn

Svetlana Ochkovskaya

*‘From the heart*
*it has sprung,*
*and to the heart*
*it shall penetrate.’*

*Ludwig van Beethoven*

**Endgame**
Oil on Board
60 x 45 cm
2018

# Richard Kenton Webb

For, *Richard Kenton Webb*, drawing, painting and printmaking are at the heart of his practice. He believes that painting is an intrinsic human language and will never disappear. For centuries, the artist's imagination and the alchemy of materials have fused to create truly remarkable works. Words can fail us, but by engaging with materials, an artist is able to transfer their inner world into a composition. The materials and our imaginations can fuse into a visual poetry, communicating a hidden realm. In this respect, the artist makes visible what is unseen. Thus *Wreck* discusses what is not necessarily seen and yet, has been experienced.

Two years ago, the artist thought he would lose everything. In particular, he was told by someone who had power over his life that his philosophy as an artist and educator was completely invalid. He made *Wreck* during a time of intense oppression. The activity of making paintings enabled him to express what was happening and make sense of his situation. Whilst his work sustained him through a period of deep distress, it now has a life and purpose of its own.

When discussing his work, *Richard* remarked: 'Why does the world seem out of control? I hope to expose the abuse of power and the underlying causes of some of the problems that we face globally. I hold up a mirror to open a conversation about what drives our behaviour and the values that lie behind our day-to-day decisions and actions.'

*The Cold Light of Day I*
Oil on board
60 x 45 cm
2018

***Wreck***
Oil on board
62 x 85 cm
2017

*Wreck* is a conversation about how people can use their power to damage others. Ultimately, this painting is about integrity, dignity and hope. Is the boat sinking, or has it just run aground? How does the viewer read this picture - as a victim or as a victor? For *Richard*, *Wreck* is about hope because the boat has only run aground. He is telling himself that this psychological and emotional abuse must not destroy him. At high tide, the boat will float away safely. This painting is also part of a large body of work inspired John Milton's epic poem, Paradise Lost.

# Frances Gynn

*Frances'* work for some time has been informed by nature and man's engagement with it, and particularly more recently, with the related environmental issues. She began with an interest in something she called 'strange attractors', but not in the chaos theory sense of it but in oddities in nature that simply caught her eye. These were mostly man-made objects found in the environment, either discarded or intentionally there. She was interested in the visual effect of these objects within a natural environment. Thus, the human element made it more interesting, less saccharin.

As plastics started to have a more evident role in the landscape, *Frances'* artistic practice reflected a growing concern for the human effect on the environment. In a collaborative site-specific exhibition marking the centenary of the destruction by coastal erosion of Hallsands, a fishing village in South Devon, she used hand drawn lines ("ghost nets" of lost fishing gear) in her works to describe the land and the movement of the sea. The images are initially benign and ethereal, floating gracefully in the sea as in *Netwave* (linocut on paper). However, a more malign consequence becomes apparent; a perpetual moving killing zone, ghost nets are ubiquitous in our oceans and a major cause of plastic pollution. *Frances'* practice continues to use hand drawn lines to describe the physical environment and the effect of human interaction with it. The advent of COVID-19 altered the ways of the world, possibly irrevocably, possibly only briefly. The drawing Reconnection Mr. Jones was made as an investigative attempt at understanding how the COVID-19 lockdown may affect people. Prior to the lockdown, Mr. Jones was on a treadmill - he didn't stop working, not even to pause and reflect. There was not the time. If lockdown has meant that people have reconnected with nature, benefiting them both mentally and physically, it may hopefully mean that it can have a positive effect on prompting people to preserve the natural world. Reconnection Mr. Jones illustrate a network of branches like sinews and arteries pumping the energy back into a tired body. The reflective pose of the figure emphasizes a mood where the figure is at last having time to contemplate life's real values.

*Netwave*
Linocut print on paper
83.5 x 113.5 cm
2020

# Svetlana Ochkovskaya

*Svetlana* makes immersive, disorientating, otherworldly installations and costumes that are mythic representations of her world view. She is curious about things that are deemed weird or different. The artist also explores the idea of the fantastic, strange and of the 'other', thus producing her wondrous world of curiosities. Such world is inhabited by creatures that are neither human nor alien, real or imaginary, while its glowing environments and tactile costumes bend the fragile boundaries of our perceived reality.

Through performance in full-body sculptural costumes *Svetlana* wishes to explore the idea of the conflation of public and private identity; to thus extend the boundaries of the figure and to invert a sense of identity. In *Adapting To The New Reality Of Life Under Lockdown* the artist investigates how social interconnectedness offers human beings a sense of identity and a way to deal with our everyday emotions. Tis is because in many contexts around the world, the lockdown has been considered a time of great anxiety and uncertainty with a feeling the world has permanently changed. Furthermore, during such time, many people were stuck inside their homes and were not able to visit other places. Everyday routines thus turned boring and it seemed pointless to even do ordinary tasks at home. Therefore, Svetlana wished to create a new fantastical world which offers an escape route from our daily routine, our mundane way of seeing and to challenge our sense of everyday. Overall, in her work, *Svatelana* wants to make familiar things unfamiliar, to remove everyday life experiences from familiar associations, to turn them over and to displace them.

*Adapting To The New Reality Of Life Under Lockdown*
Video
2020

*Adapting To The New Reality Of Life Under Lockdown*
Video
2020

# SHORTLISTED ARTISTS

Ming Lu
Julian Reisinger
Roberto Beragnoli
Tommy Ramsay
Nina Pancheva
Vinciane Roduit
Keane Tan
Lisyanet Rodriguez
Silvia Rocchino
Robert Winstanley
Hang Gao
Sam Rachamin
Shaun Haugen
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Diana Savostaite
Martha Zmpounou
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Colin Roberts
Azita Moradkhani
Rich Jellyman
Catherine Hyland
Emanuela Sintamarian
Gabriele Grones
Tijana Petrovic
Serhii Korabelnikov
Mariia Filatova
Elisa Bertaglia
Ana Schmidt
Marie Lenclos
Wiktor Kuta
Zofia Blazko
Zoe Beaudry
Zena Assi
Beichen Zhang
Gavin Watson
Kong Ho
Sofia Mangini

# Ming Lu

*Ming Lu* works with photography, installation, performance art as well as more traditional media such as porcelain and embroidery. Her recent works, including the shortlisted *Blue is My Business*, play on the tension between contemporary art and traditional Chinese craftsmanship. Humorously employing symbols and figures from myths, legends, prehistorical culture, and from her own biography alike, *Ming Lu's* works reflect her cultural identity, which combines enduring attachments to China, her birthplace, and to Europe, where she studied art.

*Blues is My Business* explores the potentials of blue and white porcelain, the traditional medium that is still cast, glazed and fired by hand in some regions of China. The centuries-old craftsmanship requires many years' of experience and clearly-divided cooperation between the casting specialist, the painter, the glazer and the firing experts. The figure of the Beijing Duck was created with archaic techniques, thus tapping into the complexity of the visual element in images: from museum-worthy archaic objects to something reminiscent of daily life on the streets of Chinatown. Therefore, *Blues is My Business* plays on the tension between contemporary art and traditional Chinese craftsmanship, with a touch of humour.

Another focal theme in *Lu's* works is femininity. While the artist's embroideries feature a cast of female characters re-created from historical myths, the artists uses many ordinary objects in her sculptural works, such as cosmetics (notably lipstick and facial masks), lingerie, hair extensions, and transforms them into anthropomorphic playful representations of the female body and the female experience. This metaphorical and deadpan use of everyday objects to speak of important issues is a typical approach of the artist, her works often veer between abstraction and literalness ; between the familiar and the uncanny ; between absurdity and gravity.

***Blues is My Business***
Blue and white porcelain
30 x 16 x 9 cm
2019

# Julian Reisinger

*Julian Reisinger* is a Mixed Media Artist based on the Gold Coast, Australia. Originally from Munich, Germany, he moved to Australia in 2019. His work explores the world of installations, audio-visuals and light as a medium. His art career started when he got his first 35mm film camera ten years ago. From this stemmed a newly discovered passion followed by many photos and many more negatives.

*Julian's* intention in his art is to provoke the audience and invite the viewer to share in the mood of the work, to take their own unique journey through their own mind. By delving into the realm of dreams and fantasy, the viewer engages/connects with their feelings, our world, and non-/human relationships. His works are made by using unique processes, using the latest technologies, such as VR, interactive media & coding, photography, videography, audio, physical materials and light.

*ISOLATION-20* is a reflection on and criticism of the year 2020, who we are, our beliefs, our government systems, leadership, Western society, capitalism and the degradation of human rights. For *Julian*, 2020 is a time when all things we know are being questioned. Social media has given power to unheard voices, and in turn allowed people worldwide to demand revolutionary change in areas of oppression, government systems, and public health. This sweeping demand for change has highlighted certain movements and currents of thought and also drawn attention to others, such as conspiracies of mass control, planned virus outbreaks and political agendas.

We are bombarded with new information and ideas every day. On this respect, the artist questions how we can know what to listen to when misinformation is spread just as easily as the truth. Thus, *ISOLATION-20* subtly explores the constant tension between informational consumerism and capitalism in a system that encourages us to consume more information, while simultaneously rewarding those who deliver it, regardless of their authority. The video work is a combination of a desktop assemblage and digital 3D render work creating an interplay between a virtual reality and the physical world.

*ISOLATION-20*
Digital 3D Video-work
2020

# Roberto Beragnoli

*Roberto Beragnoli* is an italian artist born in Florence. From a very young age, he worked on illustration and painting through a personal research towards satire and figurative art. After completing his studies in Information Technology and graduating in Aesthetic Philosophy, in 2015 he founded a technology and digital art studio. His creativity has therefore gradually approached and intertwined with the profession of designer: modeling, 3D printing, electronics, programming, artificial intelligence have become the main tools with which he gives life to his ideas, while maintaining a strong contact with the visual art made through the manipulation of materials and spaces. In fact, he often connects physical media, whether sculpted or painted, with the digital world and, in particular, with augmented and mixed reality.

His most research focuses on the concept of space and time, on their creation and transformation: thanks to art and technology, a limited physical point can become a path, a two-dimensional surface can become a space, a place can unfold its temporal dimension. A perfect example of such work is the shortlisted Profilo Continuo [*continuous profile*]. This is a sculpture depicting the « *continuous profile* » of Donald Trump, conceived to be exactly at eye level for the observer and to show the same silhouette from every side and point of view. It is an ironic quote of the Profilo Continuo di Mussolini [continuous profile of Mussolini], made by the futurist sculptor Renato Bertelli. Bertelli proposed a kind of art which bonded with propaganda with the aim of reviving " without rhetoric the metaphor of a watchful and sleepless chief who sees and watches everything ".

With Trump's profile, the theme, on top of being a satirical cue, is enriched with another level of reading. Through augmented reality, it will be possible to view Trump's own tweets, virtually projected on the statue's base, changing as the observer moves around the piece. *The Profilo Continuo* becomes again a theme able to double up, just like the Janus Bifrons recalled by Bertelli himself with his original piece. Furthermore, in order to read all the tweets posted by the US President, a viewer would be required to circle the piece walking a total of 3,169 km, which is the length of the US-Mexico border or, in *Roberto's* words: " an endless border that focuses on a single point in the centre. A circle that becomes a mystical and ascetic path, and that wants to reflect the connection between art, politics, propaganda and religion. "

*Profilo Continuo (Continuous Profile)*
Sculpture in polyester, resin and black paint
40 x 45 x 40 cm
2018

# Tommy Ramsay

*Tommy Ramsay* chose to work in multiples of small canvases which make up a whole project, as with *Chapter 3*. The background of this choices relies on the following: Western art has historically rejected perceived feminine traits such as colour, craft, decoration, pleasure, sensuality, chaos, decadence, eroticism and artifice in favour of function and efficiency. Traditional male painting concentrates on an overall, where the image is conceived of and viewed as a monolithic whole. The "multiple" forces the eye to move in and around, to collect up disparate elements in order to make a whole. It both creates and disrupts narrative; through its very nature it stops painting becoming static and introduces an instability in the work. This allows the work to remain open, fluid and permeable. This is intrinsic to how the work operates. For *Tommy*, it feels to be time to embrace the tentative and the unstable, body as well as mind, the additive rather than the subtractive, to embrace the sublime through sensuousness rather than through reduction, geometry or negation.

In *Chapter 3*, collage elements extend off the surface of the canvas and onto the wall. In doing so this begins a conversation with the space that the work inhabits. The work slips out of the picture frame and leaks onto the wall, the boundaries and histories of the art object and the exhibition space become blurred. The works asks the viewer to consider what painting is, what visual language is, how we assimilate signs, how we build our identities. Considering this novel approach to visual experience, *Tommy* highlighted that 'visual experience is an exchange between subjectivity and historical transformation. Different types of objects actively bring their own histories and relationships to us. We do not experience this passively, rather these stories and experiences are built in to how we decode and read what we are looking at. We are bonded to this collective past and to those around us.'

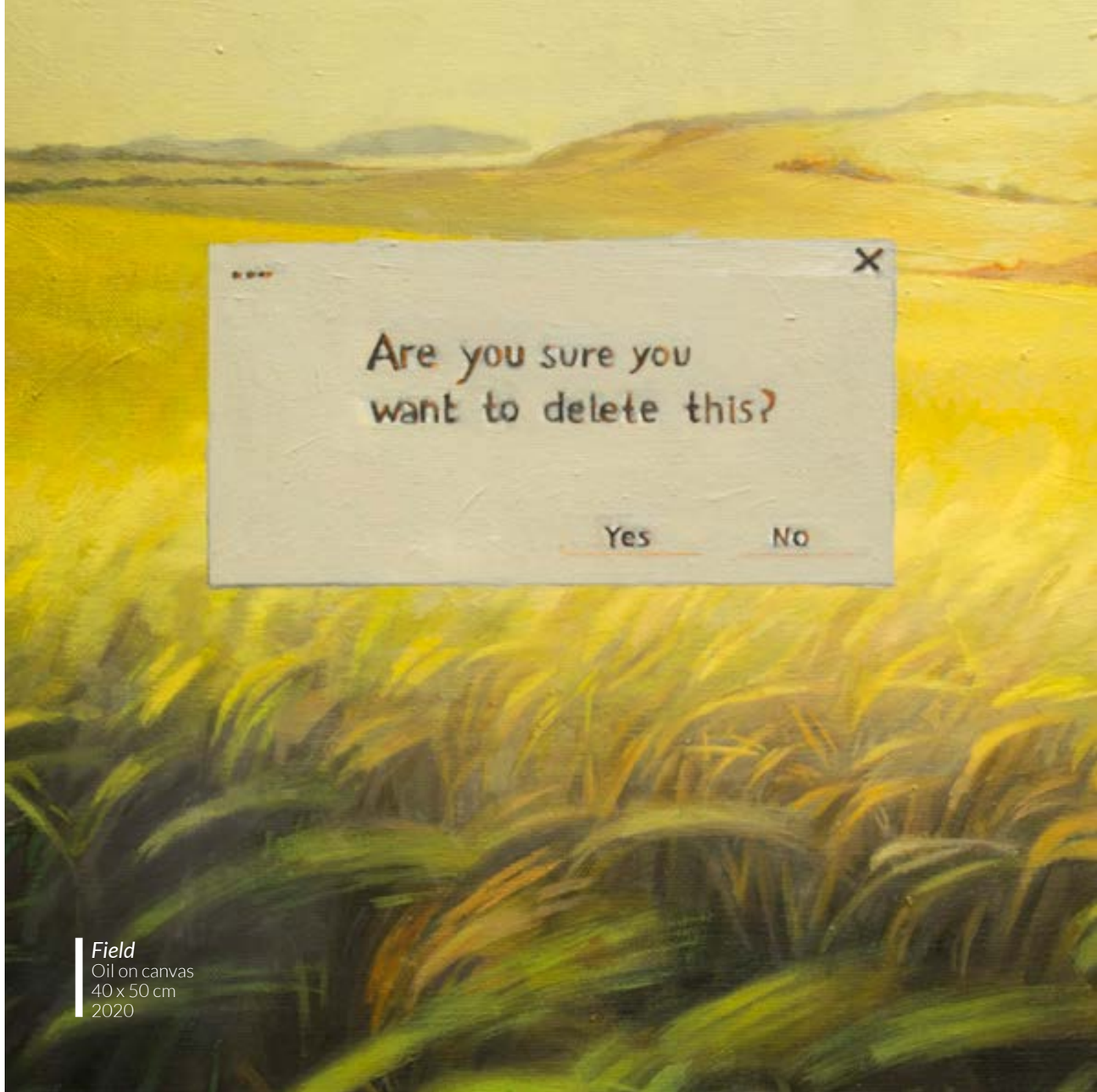
*Chapter 3*
Oil on canvas, oil and screen print
on board, collage on MDF, etc.
180 x 160 cm
2020

# Nina Pancheva

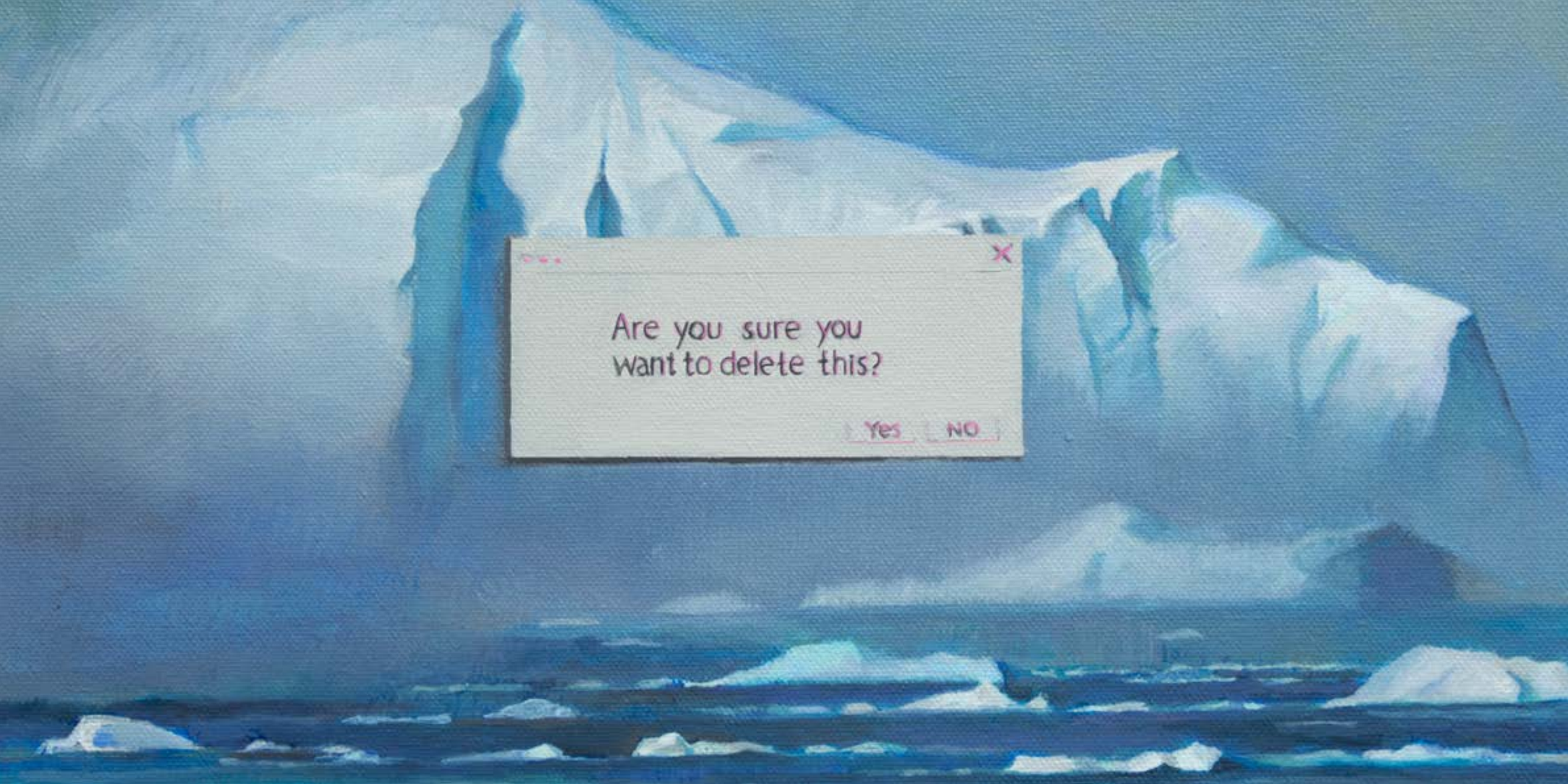
My works are not an attempt for self-expression. Also, they are not an attempt to escape reality. My artisitc approach is the result of the idea that fine art is a unique method for exploring and 'seeing' the world. Working on my paintings and installations has enabled me to seek answers of questions which I find important. In this sense I could describe my works as concept based, as looking for the appropriate means of expressions follows the questions of interest. In my art practice I often work on subjects concerning political and ecological problems - I am convinced that visual art could exceed its formal endeavors and could provide new and different insights than a purely scientific approach.

The process of developing the series of paintings Computer Views (three paintings: *Ice*, *Mars and Field*, oil on canvas) started as twofold. On the one hand, it aimed to ad- dress formal questions about the space in the two-dimensional surface of the canvas. By adding the computer dialogue boxes in the paintings, the surface separates into two levels of perception, one been the landscapes, i. e. a realistic approach, and the other - an abstract field of the computer dialogue boxes. Gerhard Richter had a major influence on my work with his usage of photographs and abstract elements in painting. The abstract details in my paintings aim to focus viewers' attention to the fact, that they are looking at a constructed picture.

The other direction started with my intention to contribute to the awareness of some of the current ecological problems, which we all face – the melting of the polar ice caps and the overall global climate change. In this sense the computer dialogue boxes appear in the paintings as signs of a reality, which seems saturated with images, especially in screens. Sometimes it seems as the screens show us a more 'truthful' reality than our own senses. We perceive the worlds' events through screens, we feel as we belong the the world through the power of these images. On the other hand, the world through our screens seems unreal-some kind of computer generated reality. Thus issues as fundamental as the global warming seem somehow unreal too. My paintings combine elements of these two modes of perception, seeking to open up possibities for awareness of these ecological issues, for the ways we perceive reality and the functions of visual art within this context.




*Field*
Oil on canvas
40 x 50 cm
2020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***Winter Night***
Mixed media
60 x 80 cm
2020

# Vinciane Roduit

*Vinciane Roduit* is a classically trained artist from the Russian school of painting in Florence, Italy. Her work is a reflection on her inner life and on life in general with a particular emphasis on childhood. Her compositions are created from the imagination. The artist inspires herself from the plein-air studies that she paint outdoor and also from other paintings and drawings that she creates from life. She paint either outdoor using alla prima techniques but when it comes to composition, she likes to work directly inside the studio on larger formats. It is mainly the beauty of Switzerland that instilled in the artist a love for the natural world.

Her formal approach is through free and fast brushstrokes while her style references impressionistic realism. Furthermore, her styles is also defined by strong and organised shapes that she develops with a more sculptural approach. This is because *Vinciane* tries to bring classical knowledge in my practice and apply it with a more modern approach in her paintings and drawings. The overall goal is to bring positive emotions through the melancholic atmosphere that the artist is able to create in her work.

*Winter Night* is inspired by artist Andrew Wyeth, a master of details and composition. *Vinciane's* work represents a self portrait as an artist. It is also a tribute to her country, to her roots and to her ancestors. Her personal possession in the artwork are depicted as a still-life on the alongside a peeking portrait of a relative on the top left corner of the composition. At the same time, the door is open to a winter nocturnal landscape that represents the artist's Swiss origins. The fact that she does not figure physically in the picture is an original way for Vinciane to share personal elements with the viewer. The use of charcoal mixed with white pastel on a primed background brings forwards strong textures and emphasises a warm and welcoming atmosphere to the interior scene. To achieve this, the artist played with strong lights and shadows to create a high contrast between the warm and light interior of the house and the dark, silent and cold outdoor view.

# Keane Tan

*Keane Tan* is a Singapore an contemporary artist whose works delve primarily into painting, drawing, digital media and installation. Through the use of multiple social media platforms, *Keane* has been actively engaging in discussions regarding the potential of blockchain art, and its potential in data documentation in the digital world of arts. Furthermore, the work created by *Keane* and his creative team continue to question the notion and practices of art in the age of technology, data and human purpose.

His new body of work reflects the recent events of 2020, with *COVID-19* as the underlying topic of interest. The shortlisted artworks suggest the many lifestyle habit, countries and their citizens have adopted based on the disruptive nature of a global pandemic. The works were created using an isometric drawing format, to be printed and stretched onto a canvas. The topic of interior lifestyle is very reminiscent to the topic of the Les Nabis, such as that of the Neo Impressionists, like Pierre Bonnard. It can be said that Keane's body of work can be summed up as introspective, with images that show lives in a boxed interior.

Furthermore, the layout of the New Normal, explores the potential of how countries will operate in future, with technology growing in rampant demand. As the Slovanian philosopher Slavoj Zizek put it, ' the pandemic has separated humankind in a physical way, but it has also brought about a new high in the levels of solidarity'. While globalisation has previously allowed for all of us to have the option to transact, communicate in a digital way, the pandemic in a way forced this mode of interaction on us. The artist thus explore the constant need for humans to interact, as social, loving beings and their increased reliance on technology, as more businesses are hopping onto the internet to stay relevant to customers. In fact, technology- based companies did benefit from the increased demand on services backed by technology, and were seen as heroes. However, this bears the issue of the next topic of interest for the artist, that of privacy, cyber-security and surveillance activities.

*Covid-19*
Graphic print on canvas
120 x 120 cm
2020

*Social Distancing*
Graphic print on canvas
120 x 120 cm
2020

# Lisyanet Rodriguez

One of the unremitting delights of art is its ability to be simultaneously beautiful and troubling. In this respect, *Lisyanet Rodriguez* likes to place her work within this contrast as she finds this ambiguous sensation of pull and push inspiring. In particular, her practice encompasses a meticulous editing process to create objects that seem tender, homely, but possibly menacing. Sometimes she cannot avoid turning them into something monstrous, abnormal, but at the same time beautiful. in describing her work Lisyanet remarked that 'it's like walking in a hallucinating world ruled by its own logic, dimensions, and time flow, quiet and boisterous at the same time.'

In her work, old petrified clothes come back to life as « new objects » of gothic beauty. The artist creates creatures with an abundance of deformities, mutations, hybrid bodies. Inside, her creatures are probably withering. Nonetheless, they always are always luxurious on the outside. The visual result is a merging of materials with lines between the human-animal and subject-object. Therefore, the result can also be considered a collection of artificial organisms that wear their stories as ever-changing metaphors.

At the same time, the observation of life and nature is a powerful inspiration for the artist, as she feels we live in times of serious environmental degradation where toxic contamination, transgenic crops, and genetic modifications are realities in an increasingly more threatening human world. In this regard, Lisyanet wishes to emphasise the desires of broader conscience and responsibility regarding our own vulnerability. But, In art like in any conflict, there is an unvarying background of joy and pain behind every story, where nothing is ever as beautiful, never as bad.

***The White Rain***
Mixed Media Sculpture
48 x 50 x 50 cm
2018

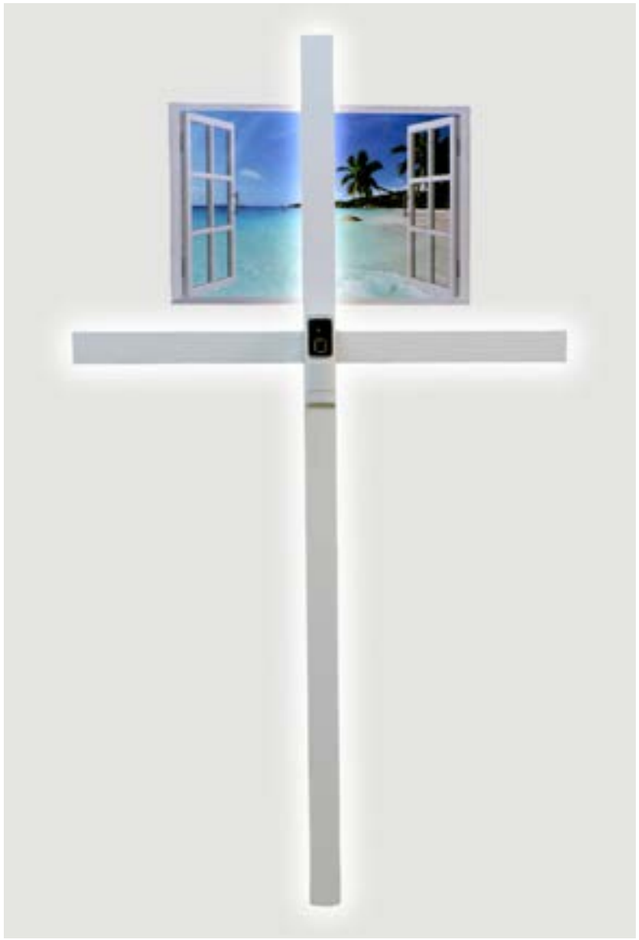
# Silvia Rocchino

When she started to express herself through photography, *Silvia Rocchino* asked herself: 'What would I like to talk about?'. The underlying thought of her creative process encompasses the fact that 'there are so many realities which deserves to be seen, so many topics still a tabu, millions of stories waiting to have a voice, but which ones to choose in the limited time we are given in our lives?'.

Thanks to her studies, artists and people who inspired and continue to inspire her, *Silvia* started to guide her curiosity and her desire to communicate to understand themes and stories related with human nature such as about identity, body, and connection. In her creative work she integrates fashion to reinforce a concept and make the artwork more powerful, since, for the artist, fashion can be considered a manifestation of human identity and communication. One needs only to think about fashion icon Iris van Herpen, whose intent was to blend the past and the future into a distinct version of the present by fusing technology and traditional couture craftsmanship; or about the performer Marina Abramivié, who engaged the best fashion designers to create her bespoke outfits that galvanise a sense of human connection with the public.

*Art of Connection*, the photographic series which include the shortlisted work, was born last year during a workshop of ecstatic dance: at the end of a dancing class, *Silvia* felt incredibly grateful for the experience and the feeling of joy that this experience gave her. In particular, it was a sense of connection between humans, explored through dance, that inspired the artist to create this project. To create this project, *Silvia* collaborated with Marziah Zad, a designer of advanced architecture working at the IAAC (Institute of Advanced Architecture of Barcelona). Together they developed the idea of realising wearables of lightweight structures and minimal surfaces for a sustainable design which works as a connecting tool among the people who wear them. The models, all different in terms of gender, skin colour and appearance, were dancing freely in the desert of Monegros, Spain, first alone (in the first photographs of the series), to then start to connect to each other different cells of a single organism.

*« The Art of Connection »*
Photography
120 x 82 cm
2019



# Robert Winstanley

*Robert Winstanley* is a contemporary British artist. He bases his work on the theory of the abject, and he is particularly interested in how it is used within culture today, often finding ways in which abjection is concealed under the guise of consumer artifice. The work created by the artist is liminal, removing everyday consumer products from their original context and exposing their absurd marketing by presenting them in a hyperreal way. Furthermore, *Robert* takes inspiration from the products idyllic labelling and shapes such products around the sublime image they conjure in the consumer's mind which exposes their harsh, real, components as a form of artifice.

The very products that we consume to conceal our abject nature are often products of a sanitary kind. Room deodorisers labelled as an *"Ocean Breeze"* place an image of a sublime scene onto a prospective buyer that fears their home is anything but. If we strip products of their desirable label, a product itself is of abject chemicals and artificial scents, mass-produced to help conceal a customer's abject self. The way we attach these products onto ourselves makes the artist view the human body as a product of artifice within itself. We live within a culture that promotes these products as a clean simple fix to a non-existent problem and, as a result, we see a sanitisation of culture that uses products, software, surgery, and self-care as a form of masking all that is said to be abject – a new abject.

***The Purifying Scent of an Ocean Breeze Adventure***
Mixed Media
120 cm
2020

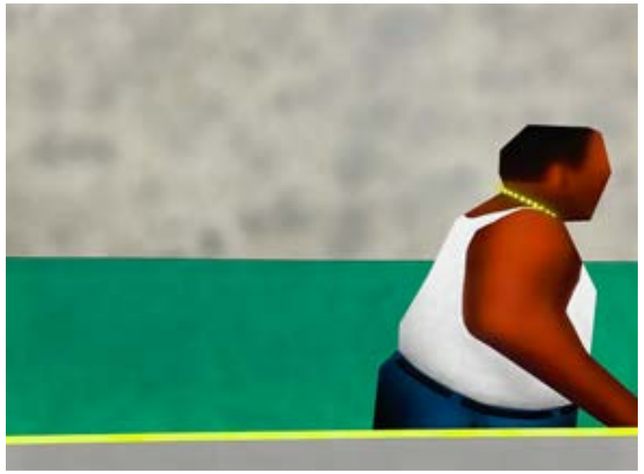
# Hang Gao

*Gao Hang*, a Chinese painter and visual artist now living and working in Houston, TX. He is a represented artist by both Anya Tish Gallery (Houston) and The Second bedroom gallery (San Francisco). His works have been shown in major galleries and museums around China, America and Korea. *Gao* received Master of Fine Art degree in Painting/Drawing from University of Houston, and Bachelor of Art degree in Oil Painting from the Capital Normal University, also 2020 Artadia Houston fellowship.

I am sure my art process has something to do with my habits and obsessions. I mostly listen to standup comedy while making my work. I enjoy standup comedy that challenges general beliefs, and political correctness, yet at its core is negotiating between the observations, language, and laughter of a given performance. Then you realize that it's no paradox, but a good conversation between the performer and the audience. At some point, my paintings are like standup comedy, they can only do so much about solving real problems. But brutal honesty, absurdity, and humor are very powerful qualities in any type of conversation.

My recent paintings are concerned with image "definition" in digital graphics, especially those from the last 20 years. I understand digital graphics as 21st century "found objects". I am interested in objects that are bathing in modern technology's greatness, while exposing a certain rawness, oddity, or awkwardness. When I first encountered 3D modeling and graphic rendering in computer games in the late 20th century, I was totally shocked. From the last 20 years, I was inspired by the fact that how graphical spectaculars could end up being rawness and ridicule in the digital image evolution. However, it is that rawness and ridicule that triggers the same creative impulse with what the painting process can offer. The effect is an actual physical feedback during process: could be surprise, a shifting attitude, a more extreme emotion – my secretions as a human being. I want my practice to simulate a modern production method, but with a high fault tolerance.

*Proud to be an Asian*
Acrylic on canvas for painting
40 x 30 cm
2020



*A Bigger Uncle*
Acrylic on canvas for painting
76 x 101 cm
2020

*A cop who is very Chinese*
Acrylic on canvas
90 x 120 cm
2020

# Sam Rachamin

A product of blood sweat honey and milk, *Sam Rachamin* was born in Israel. As a child growing up in a mixed cultural environment where different cultural groups resented each other had tremendous impact on the artist. While Sam's father is an Israeli with Iraqi roots, his mother was an American white women with western European roots. Overall, this meant that it was hard for the artist to find his own identity as an adolescent and even today as an adult, having problems to bridge the cultural gaps within the family nucleus and within the context of the country itself.

In *Emperor of the Cats*, the name of the sitter is Abdel Aziz Naguyup, a refugee from Cameron, who worked for the artist and his wife as a baby sitter. While working on this portrait, Sam found out that both had a lot in common, being both immigrants in a foreign country with foreign languages, and having both lost one of their parents at a young age. The cat on the composition is the artist's own cat who intruded the life painting session and sat on the sitter's lap. *Sam* decided to retain the cat as a homage to a painting by the great Modernist artist Balthus, (Balthasar Klossowski de Rola) titles *The King of the Cats*.

*The emperor of the cats*
Oil on wood
90 x 80 cm
2018

# Shaun Haugen

*Shaun Haugen* was born in Austin, TX. He is an interdisciplinary artist working across medias of painting, drawing, sculpture, digital video, and sound art. Furthermore, his work is an experiment with the portrayal of exotic forms in nature. He depicts sensual images and colours that relate to nature in its prehistoric state. Furthermore, his paintings are an imaginary environment where viewers can immerse themselves into an alternate condition that existed at the beginnings of humankind.

Imagine yourself living in the jungle as a primitive human. Your adrenaline is causing your heart to beat heavily in your chest, maybe you just took a ritual drug, or perhaps you are on the hunt, but either way you are vulnerable to nature. Bright colours blur past your eyes from the wings of a butterfly or a poisonous frog, and your consciousness is heightened.

*Shaun* uses ideas like this to create abstract portals or windows into the minds of human beings. While the titles have a contemporary feel, he hopes the words create a poetic abstraction that can allow the viewer access from the present into the world of the past.

His art practice is a very intuitive process. He organically relies on spontaneity to build up the surface of the paintings. He then attempts to make a fluid composition by relying on a variety of brushwork and mark making while utilizing a variety of mediums to create the structure of the paintings. Flatness and texture work congruently. Colour is important to him as well. He uses colour to elicit connotations of a psychic experience and as a reflection in the wild of poisonous warning symbols.

***Blue Reindeer***
Oil and galkyd gel on GACed raw canvas
101.6 x 76.2 x 3.8 cm
2019

# Najaah McLaren

*Najaah McLaren* is a South African artist currently living in Australia. Her technique and skills have been developed over the years through continued practice. The artist's style is formalist in character: she aim in to challenge myself to work as accurately as possible, paying particular attention to form, colour, light and texture. She spends countless hours planning, sketching and creating each piece over a number of weeks.

*Najaah* considers herself a wildlife and portrait artist. Having grown up in South Africa, she has been surrounded by exquisite landscapes and diverse fauna. She thus had the opportunity of going to national parks like the Kruger National Park, experiencing the majesty of leopards and lions up-close in their natural environment. Witnessing these felines at such proximity has gifted her with appreciation for their sheer size, agility and beauty. As an artist, the artist has been particularly struck by features such as the rich colours and fur texture of these felines, thus beginning a series of paintings about wildlife.

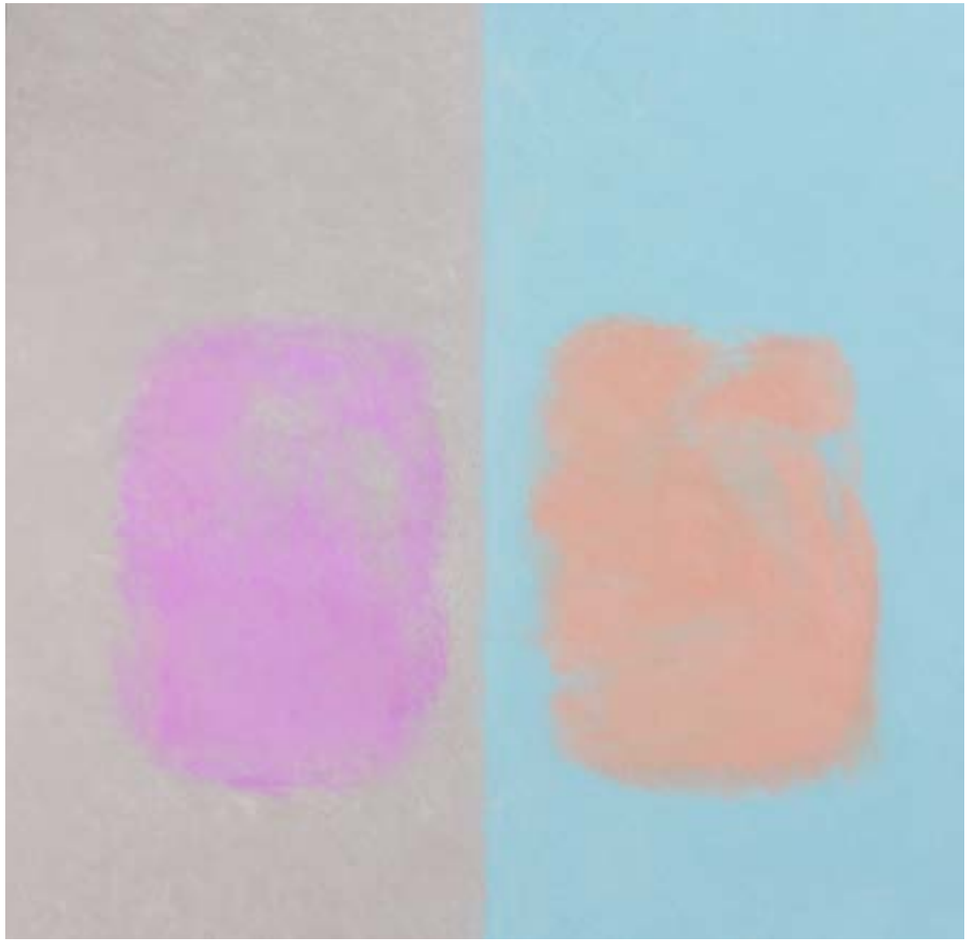
With the shortlisted piece *Majestic*, the artist wishes to bring awareness to the current endangerment of the leopard in Asia and Africa. in fact, the leopard population In Africa has sadly faced a dramatic reduction in its numbers due to loss of habitat, commercialised trade for leopard meat and trophy hunting. Furthermore, in parts of rural Africa, leopards are also killed for the threat they pose to farm livestock. Altogether, this has led to a decline of more than 30 percent of their population in Africa alone.

***Majestic***
Acrylic on Canvas
60 x 45 cm
2020

# David Hedley

*David Hedley Noble* is an international designer and painter, carrying over his love of colour, space, and balance as a designer into the fine art world through painting. His work draws from his experiences of living first in London and then New York, and then returning to Europe with studios now in Northern Italy and the UK.

*Between You and I* is part of a series of paintings. This series explores the often-subtle relationships between the hue, saturation and value of colours, positive and negative spaces, and variable, shifting forms. These elements create a poignant balance within the confines of the canvas (and even beyond) and are all carefully reduced to such an extent that if anything were to be moved or removed, the delicate balance between elements would collapse. Each painting in the series invites a contemplative study allowing the viewer to be part of the relationship itself in a contemporary take of the formalist ideas that inspired the work of Modern artists such as Kandinsky and Malevich.



*Between You and I, No. 3*
Oil on canvas
100 x 70 cm
2020

*Between You and I, No. 1*
Oil on canvas
100 x 70 cm
2020

*The Authority of the King*
Acrylic on Canvas
168 x 122 cm
2019

# Parastoo Ahoon

Communication is *Parastoo Ahoon's* primary concern, addressing viewers with her unique aesthetic. She works with various mediums to create conceptual works of art. Stemming from her Iranian socio-cultural background, these conceptual artworks are based on personal, social and political issues she is interested in, with the purpose of engaging the audience's feelings and thoughts. The concept of her work mostly derives from aspects of life she deems as important phenomena, such as life's vicissitudes, difficulties, thoughts and emotions that now become part of her work.

Since every culture has its own unique traditions, Pastroo believes immigrants are bridges between these different cultures, thus they are constantly transforming traditions and adapting them to a contemporary culture. In this respect, for Pastroo there is always a discrepancy, and sometimes a contradiction, between the culture in which she grew up in Iran, and what she learnt about it through history. In her new Lasting Memories series of work, which are painting installations, she tried to showcase these discrepancies through juxtapositions of iconographic elements that represent power, beauty, but also destruction and oblivion through the inclusion of broken wefts in the fabric of her work. The shortlisted piece form the series, *The Authority of the King*, is inspired from one of the oldest Persian rugs, which is today known as the Houshang Shahi Carpet. The story of Houshang Shah is one of the first stories of Shahnameh. According to such story, Houshang Shah was the founder of the first royal dynasty in Iran. Furthermore, by drawing from these images, the subsequent Qajar kings wanted to tie their political and cultural prestige to the ancient world of Iran and strengthen the legitimacy of their government in order to establish it as of the most powerful governments in the history of Iran.

# Gyonyoung Yoon

*Gyonyoung Yoon* is a visual artist working with digital media. She believes that everything, from experiences, relationships and emotions to human beings themselves, can nowadays be uploaded and downloaded in digital format. By converting and uploading herself digitally, she aims to meet people regardless of physical limitations, such as distance and time, with the possibility of preserve her memories forever.

As she started to live away from home, *Gyonyoung* faced a problem that she had never had encountered before in her life - finding a home where she could feel she belong, which, in her own words, 'was harder that I ever imagined'. It requires a significant and constant effort but she could not afford it because of her circumstances as an international student. Instead of struggling to make a home in physical reality, she decided to make it in a digital reality by applying digitally-recreated layers over her physical world, hoping to fill in the blanks.

*Filling in Physical Reality, Living in Digital Reality*
Video
3840 x 2160 pixels
2020

# Into Niilo

*Into Niilo* is an artist and jewelry designer based in Moscow, Russia. In 2018, he created the |*Precious parts*| [capsule collection], where he started his anatomical research and made several items by studying what is considered to be imperfect.

|*Precious parts*| is about self-love and self-acceptance. It is a small research about being human, and an effort to accept and embrace it with all our vulnerability, fragility and imperfections. It is an attempt of philanthropy, starting with physical acceptance. The project is thus the artist's personal attempt to love and to understand the human body. For this project he started using electroforming in brass with further plating in precious metals. The underlying idea was to take something that is considered materially imperfect and turn it into a treasure.

|*Precious parts*| is a sensual journey that starts from the little: loving the shape of one's nail plates and nipples, toes, belly buttons, every single little curve and wrinkle of the body, charm of bends, sticking bones, goose bumps, body hairs and birth marks. But the artist further continued his |*Precious parts*| project, studying different textures of skin, including scars and bulging tattoos (keloid tattoos). Electroforming helps to save the skin texture better than casting, so the objects not only have the skin texture perfectly reproduced, but also retains the shapes of rough, convex tattoos.

During the project, Into also paid a lot attention at how a body changes in different states and positions, to how the skin works, stretches and shrinks and how keloid tattoos behave on different body shapes. The artist thus created the shortlisted shoulder and neck piece cuirass [tattooed pregnant belly] with the remains of bulging tattoos. Furthermore, he created the armour using modern techniques with impressed tattoos that remind about battle scars and ornaments of original medieval armoury.

*Pearl [tattooed neck] necklace*
Electroforming in copper, electroplating
Gold plated copper, cultured pearls etc.
70 x 21 x 22 cm
2020

*[tattooed pregnant belly] cuirass*
Electroforming in copper + nickelizing etc.
60 x 37 x 27 cm
2020

# Julie Stephenson

*'I am a journeywoman. I am an adventurous spirit diving into life boldly, curiously, creatively. I am an artist. There is no differentiation between how I live my life and the art that is an expression of it.'*

*Julie Stephenson* has a deep affinity with the earth and is curious about the unseen. Photography is her primary medium and the source material from which her artworks are created. She questions her own impact on the world and observes how our planet is responding to warming temperatures and climate change. She have been invited to participate in Artist Residencies in the Arctic, after developing a deep connection with, and interest in the polar regions of our planet.

As a photographer, she hears through her eyes. She is an observer. She listens to her inner response to what she sees through her lens. Her photographs are an expression of the deep connection she has with the landscape and her curious spirit. In the shortlisted moving image piece *MELT*, Julie is posing a question as to whether glaciers, icebergs, the Polar Ice-caps will become just a memory as our planet warms up year by year. She thus also questions what rate of change is occurring in the timeframe of one's memory.

*Melt*
Moving Image.Mp4 file
2020

*Youth*
Painting
60 x 80 cm
2020

# Gilb Mukha

The debate on the relevance of classical art in the contemporary art wold is continuing even in the 21st century. While some consider that art should be a mirror of reality, others are more concerned about art as a means of escaping from reality. Still, we can undoubtedly acknowledge that painting can be a instrument to understand current problems in society.

On this respect, *Glib Mukha* often asks himself: 'Why do I paint portraits?'. What he is gradually coming to understand is that portraits are not just a mere representation of how someone looks like, but they are means to visually narrate someone's story. In the Youth portrait, the artist painted a portrait of Krow Kian, 23-year-old transgender model. Kian made history after becoming the first male model to close a women's fall-winter fashion show. One should note here that Krow is a transgender man - the first ever on a womenswear catwalk. The inspiration for the portrait came after the artist watched the film Krow's TRANSformation by Gina Hole Lazarowich, a documentary exploring the journey of Krow Kian in modeling and a wider cultural shift.

Talking about the portrait, *Glib* remarked how he 'kind of like it when the classical meets the modern and the painting "*Youth*" is no exception in this. I was using the Old Masters' method and colour palette to portray a very current gender issue.' For the artist art is a reaction to the outside world and as long as there is a reason and social context for a message, painting will continue to re-invent itself. After all, painting is an exquisite language to emphasise the most burning social issues.

# Diana Savostaite

*Diana Savostaite* was born and raised in a small Lithuanian village. She is a graduate of Vilnius Academy of Arts and moved to London in 2006, where she has been actively participating in group and solo exhibitions across the UK.

*Diana* uses oil painting as a primary medium to create colourful and expressive paintings. Her artworks combine several colour tones (from light and airy to dark and gloomy) and a variety of brush strokes. The painting process is especially important to *Diana*. She begins her artwork applying thin transparent colour washes, then applies texture and bold brush strokes, to then finish it by adding any detailed touches. All of this creates a unique and vibrant atmosphere in her paintings.

*Diana* is inspired by her closest surroundings, observation of daily experience, especially nature and her personal connection with it. In fact, the shortlisted *Pine Tree* is a result of the artist's everyday walks in the park during the lockdown period. In such latest work, *Diana* experiments with new shapes and combines them together in a various ways, so paintings interconnect with each other and create a visual story on the canvas. This practice has allowed her artwork to break free from the traditional painting format or rules and encouraged her to search for a new form of expression, discovering an interesting combination between painting and shape.

***Pine Tree***
Oil on canvas
51 x 76 x 4 cm
2020

# Martha Zmpounou

*Martha Zmpounou's* recent work is focused on the concept of portraiture as a space of and for expression and exposure. Using a wide array of models that range from contemporary fashion to early 20th century photography and everyday life, the artist seeks to undermine the glorification of an idealised polished self, usually evident in traditional portraiture, and invoke the fragmentary, emotional and the cryptic.

Based mostly on water-based media and sometimes collage, *Martha's* use of masking and layering techniques are processes used to build figures whose identities appear to emerge out of a play of hide and seek. Furthermore, fashion and architectural elements, which in some works accompany the figures she depicts, are seen as fragments of an untold story. This fragmentary use of architecture thus reinforces this concept of hiding and seeking in the pictures. Heavily influenced by Bergman's film Persona, the balance between hiding and exposing and between the illustrious and the mundane comes through with the cryptic expression of the portrayed figure; a figure often fragmented, masked or half-complete.

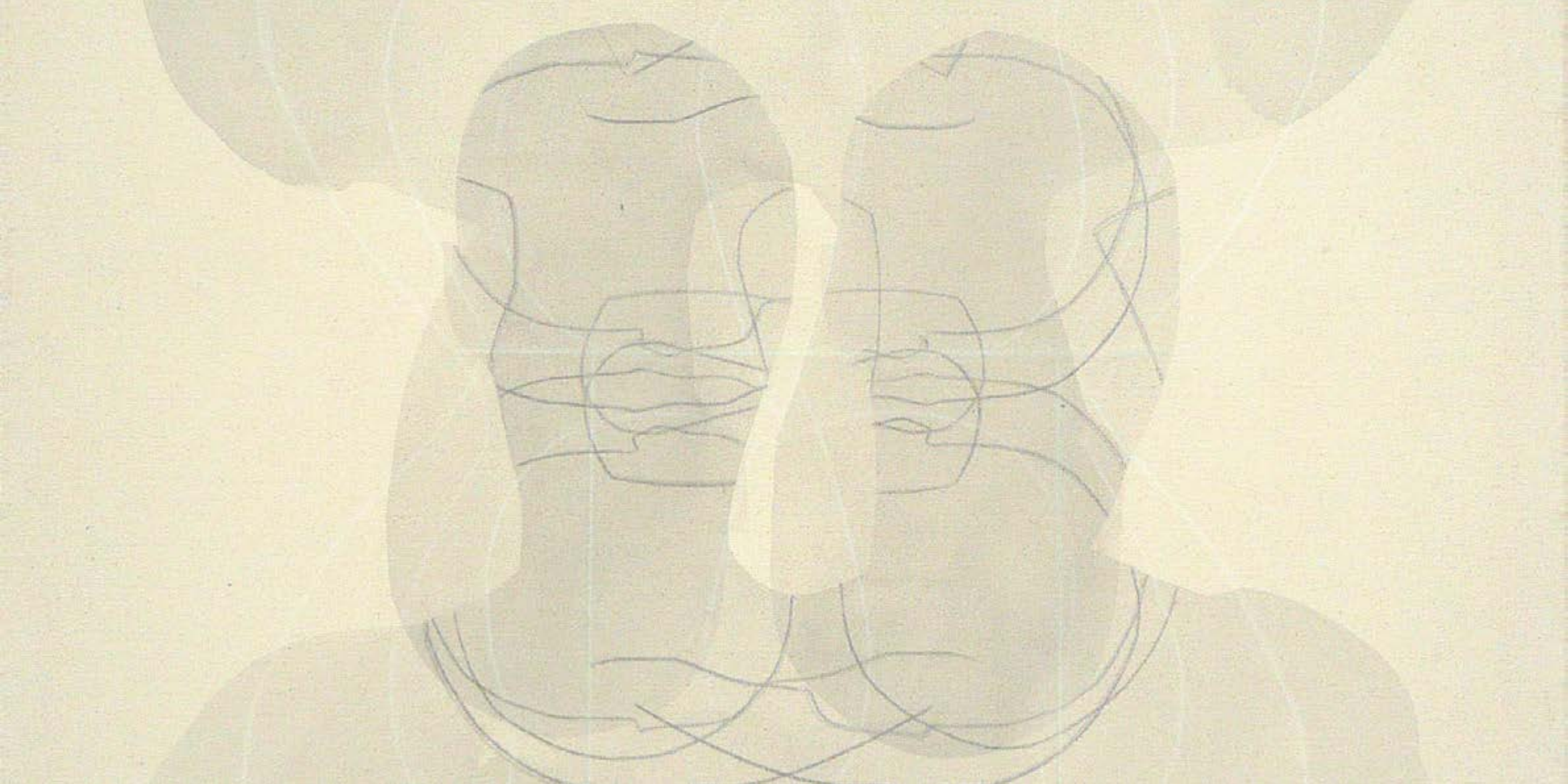
***Portrait Study: Grey (2)***
Ink, acrylic ink, watercolour on paper
30 x 40 cm
2020

*Untitled from the series Gemini*
Acrylic and crayon on cotton canvas
50 x 50 cm
2020

# Magdalena Libero

*Magdalena's* work starts with thoughts, but the final image is a non-verbal creation, discoverable mainly through intuition. She does not add theory or pre-established meaning to her work, but instead, she provides hints about their themes in the form titles (of a particular painting or of a whole series), and leaves the task of decoding the artworks to the viewers. Moreover, for the artist, intuition is an underestimated way of knowing, often seen as naive and marginal to logical thinking. Otherwise, she judges intuition to be a gateway to deep layers of subconscious knowledge. For *Magdalena*, logical and intuitive thinking complement each other, they are not mutually exclusive.

*Magdalena* also believes that words often stand in the way between the image and the viewer. They are unnecessary, as they do not contribute to adding extra layers of meaning to the work. In fact, she believes words can even hinder the reception, of an artwork. It is for this very reason that *Magdalena* tries to avoid overexplaining work through the overuse of words. The hits in the titles are considered enough as an initiative push as for *Magdalena* the essence of an artwork is more elusive than words can explain and visible only to the mind. As she wrote in her 2011 manifesto: ' A work of art becomes through vision. It is a growth of reality, not a copy having an equivalent in reality. It is an event of truth, the discovery of the essence of being'.



# Pawel Sadaj

A characteristic feature of *Paweł Sadaj's* work is the presence of a perverse anecdote in each of the topics discussed. The visual language of her works, very often is a counter to the issues under consideration, among which humanity dominates on the background of socio-civilising processes. The artist wishes to provoke the viewer to a deeper analysis and discussion. To achieve this, she uses various picture-creating techniques, from traditional photography to the latest computer technologies. In this respect, for *Paweł*, photography is a fulfilment of her passions related to learning about the structure of time. Taking a picture itself makes the artist feel like she is touching time itself, its structure. The choice of parameters of camera exposure is a tool to see what is hidden from our visual perception.

With the photograph of the *60 Cows* series, the artist wished to draw attention to the dignity of animals as living beings in the context of industrialization and mass husbandry. The photograph was inspired by a trip the artist took to a pasture where a farmer was taking care of *60 cows*. When the artist visited the same place the year after her first visit, the herd was gone. She then documented the milking technology taking place there: *60 cows* stood in self-contained boxed unites, in a circle, and the robots fed, milked and cleaned them. There was no contact between the animals, who probably never saw the sky, fresh grass, nor fresh air. After two years, the cows are killed in the slaughterhouse to have their meat processed. The flies in the photo are a herald of danger, taking away dignity and a symbol of forthcoming death, a kind of memento mori.



*60 cows*
Photography, print on the cotton Fine Art paper
64 x 90 cm
2017

# Colin Roberts

*Colin Roberts* is an American sculptor based in Los Angeles, California. The shortlisted artworks are part of the *Glass Pillows* series. In particular, this series reflects the artist's interests in organic structures, architecture and fragility. Completely hollow, the *Pillows* are mosaic structures carefully puzzled together from hundreds of plexiglass tiles. The organic forms are made up of durable material, the plexiglass itself, but, at the same time, give the illusion of fragility. The light reflects off and through the surface of the artworks, creating shifting colours and light as the viewer moves around them.

The artist mostly favours the shape of pillows because it is an everyday object that everyone uses, yet it is most rarely contemplated. In its regular use, pillows are symbolic of comfort, sleep and dreams. They are also objects that can be easily changed to create different structures thanks to their softness. The different colour tiles alongside the changing and reflecting light resemble the shifting visuals of our unconscious, emphasising a dream-like state of mind in the viewer.

***Green Pillow***
Plexiglass, glue
53 x 55 x 33 cm
2019

# Azita Moradkhani

The female body, and its exposure to differing social norms, is central to *Azita Moradkhani's* work. Through drawings and body casts, she examines the experience of finding ourselves insecure in our own bodies. As Wangechi Mutu says, 'females carry the marks, language, and nuances of their culture more than the male. Anything that is desired or despised is always placed on the female body.'

In the artist's drawings, unexpected images incorporated in intimate apparel intend to bring humour, surprise, and a shock of recognition. Layers of shadowy images reveal stories, with the hope of leaving a mark on the audience. Two worlds - *Azita's* birthplace and her current home- live alongside each other in her work, joining intimately at a single point.

*Azita's* drawings on paper and her casts of her body represent a non-Western aesthetics of pleasure and beauty. Growing up in Tehran, the artist was exposed to Persian art and culture, as well as recent Iranian politics. This double exposure increased her sensitivity to the dynamics of vulnerability and violence that she explores in her work and art-making process. Furthermore, working at the intersections of drawing and sculpture, *Azita* locates her work in a feminist response to Edward Said's Orientalism: ideas of womanhood in the post-colonial world and the post-revolution generation in Iran thus intertwine with conflicts at the borders of tradition and (post-)modernity. Meanwhile, the artist pursues beauty and realism in contemporary art by deploying formality, virtuosity, and delicacy, aesthetically connecting her work to the art of the past.

Moreover, *Azita's* coloured pencil drawings of intimate lingerie, negligees, and corsets explore interconnected narratives of pain and pleasure through images based on photojournalism, art photography, and historical symbolism. She uses an aesthetic of pleasure to seduce the viewer, who finds, upon closer inspection, through the layers of coloured pencil, past the details of lace and filigree, disruptive iconography narrating inherited histories of nation and belief.

In sculptural work, through the collaborative process of casting my own nude body, I place myself in a vulnerable situation that challenges beliefs I grew up with. As Peggy Phelan says in Unmarked: The Politics of Performance, « There is no apprehension of the body of the other without a corresponding (re)vision of one's own. » I again mix imagery—tattoos of memory and history—to emphasize both inter- and dis-connections between sexual representation and national identity, between the public and the private.

***Mask***
Colored Pencil
56 x 69 cm
2020

*Revolution (Victorious Secrets)*
Colored Pencil
48 x 61 cm
2019

# Rich Jellyman

*Rich Jellyman* has been making an ongoing series of small paintings that use online Memes as their source material. He is interested in them as what he defines 'poor images' that are endlessly recycled and reposted, they exist as low quality jpegs gradually degrading with reuse. At the same time, he is also fascinated with how seemingly immortal and malleable the images can be despite this issue as they can also be repurposed with fresh text and reshared again.

*Get Well Soon* comes from a Reddit thread of interventions were people would attach balloons to roadkill and post the photo often accompanying a joke or a personal observation. It reminded the artist of the history of the allegorical painted still-life, and how users were essentially creating their own symbolism from the ultimate mass of all imagery available online, while reinventing it as a personal language.

The images *Rich* tends to collect all relate to technology, internet subculture and the way in which these themes influence contemporary image making. As the artist's final artworks are paintings, rather than digital images, he is also exploring the mediation of images through the painting medium, the push and pull of representation and how this rendering is a kind of additive/subtractive process and how 'poor' the painted image is in this respect.

***Get Well Soon***
Oil on Panel
22.8 x 25.6 cm
2020

# Catherine Hyland

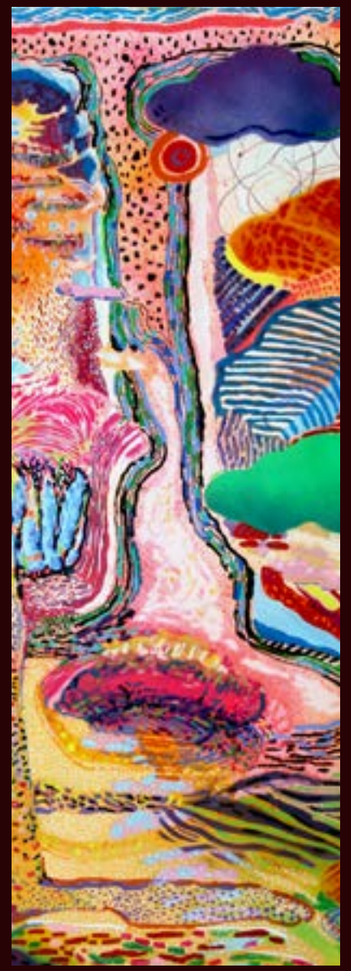
Picturesque, sublime and dangerous: Chinese landscapes are an incredible source of inspiration for photographer *Catherine Hyland*. It is the immensity of Hyland's landscapes that first grab you. Hers are expansive images where the horizon disappears into a haze of barren mountainsides. There is no life here, no vegetation to soften the impression of aridity and heat. It is alien, it is barren and it is dead. It is a wild landscape but at the same time it is a landscape that has been tamed for human consumption.

There on the right of Universal Experience is a fence, a viewing platform. It is thus a landscape made for tourists. Yes, we could be on another planet, but it is a planet that the viewer can visit on a daytrip, a planet one can photograph with their phone. It has a road and that road leads back to civilisation. It is the picturesque and the sublime wrapped in one, a contemporary Instagram planet, or (in China) a WeChat planet. On the one hand this fencing off represents an enclosure, on the other it recognises the danger of the landscape. People are fenced off for their own protection because this is a landscape that does threaten human life. It is a desertified landscape that encroaches and invades and through history has brought death and destruction.

In addition to taming the landscape through enclosure, Hyland also photographs the psychological control of the land. These images show the opposing ways in which we psychologically manage a landscape that we are both part of and alien to. This is particularly relevant in China where fast-track urbanisation has alienated the population both from the countryside and from their own histories. Large scale constructions have changed the face of China's cities so that the past has been eradicated, and the humiliations of repeated invasions and occupations buried under a steel-sheathed mass of statement architecture. The attempts to control and manage the landscape are both a part of this overcoming of the past, and also an attempt to transform nature into a theme park for contemporary consumption. Implicit in this attempt is the idea that the earthquakes, the landslides, the famines, invasions and the floods are a thing of a great and colourful past. They are part of a history that has been transformed into nostalgia.



*Universal Experience*
Photography
101 x 127 cm
2020



*Road to nowhere, road to everywhere*
Acrylic, acrylic spray paint, oil-sticks on paper
102 x 67cm
2020

# Emanuela Sintamarian

*Road to Nowhere, Road to Everywhere* is part of a series of 100 drawings and paintings which *Emanuela* begun during the COVID-19 as a means to extend her limited spatial surroundings. While some of the works were informed by digital travelling through Google maps to places the artist never planned on visiting this summer, others where either visual responses to her immediate surroundings, or were based on an overlap of imageries: some borrowed from reality, others constructed. This survivalist exercise reminded the artist of growing up in Romania, a then Communist country where one had to mentally reconfigure reality in order to endure it.

*Emanuela* is generally interested in the mechanics of motion, its visual translation and the dichotomies intrinsic to it (transfer vs. change ; action vs. reaction). She also focuses on how memory relates to perception, and the fluidity and tension of contradictions (as with organized chaos and uncontrolled order).

However, while working on this new, ad-hoc series, the artist had no preconceived idea about what art is, nor how it should look like, and left my academic guard down. It was rather a full embracement of immediate visual translation of sudden and un-distilled ideas. Any accident was turned into an event. Moreover, as an artist interested in choices, she focuses on what remains to be seen, what is absent and how decisions are made. Thus her working method is intuitive, and process-based. Emanuela grew more interested in pushing the limits of abstraction and suggesting emotional and physical motion in an immediate manner. She also wants to let the work surprise the viewer. To achieve this, she juxtaposes various contradictory techniques and adulterate the boundaries between representative and abstract art. To push this further, she leverages marks, colours and texture to construct an undefined world, rather than a mirror of reality. During this process, the artist also arrived to a non-narrative, non-descriptive subject of landscape: a landscape which is not exactly about « nature », but rather an impression of it.

*Let them believe, let them have a laugh at their passions*
Acrylic, acrylic spray paint on wood panel
82 x 59 cm
2020

# Gabriele Grones

Through the representation of different subjects in oil on canvas – such as natural scenes, figures or compositions – the artistic research of *Gabriele Grones* explores the concerns behind our current relationship with the environment. Carefully investigated from a very close-up point of view, the details of the depicted natural elements in his painting evoke a sense of a complexity of reality.

The painting *Frammento* (fragment) belongs to a series of artworks that depict details of grass and wild plants. These paintings originate from studies of iconic art historical artworks, such as Albrecht Dürer's paintings (especially The Large Piece of Turf), decorated manuscripts, the herbals from the Middle Ages and the works by contemporary artist Franz Gertsch. The paintings of this series wish to reference the writings of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, who wrote that humankind shall find Godly presence in all things. Despite not wanting to give religious meaning to these paintings, the artist shares Saint Ignatius' thoughts about intense and profound gazes at the world. The plants, leaves and grass blades of the painting get unveiled through a seductive realistic clarity that thoroughly describes the fascinating richness of every single element. Here everything becomes important: shapes, colours and natural features are part of a divine global balance. The artist's aim is to look at reality from different perspectives, trying to investigate the world of little things, giving relevance to and discovering richness in what we usually see as ordinary.

*Frammento*
Oil on canvas
40 x 50 cm
2020

*First Number Two at Your Lover's Place*
Sculpture
20 x 20 x 15 cm
2020

# Tijana Petrovic

*Tijana Petrovic* works with the media of painting and sculpture. Through her practice she questions boundaries, intersections and interference between social and inner worlds as well as inborn traits and conscious decision-making. Our bodies and minds are often uncontrollable and unreliable. On the other hand, society forces us to repress some of our impulses, conform to the established norms and keep up with the expectations which are not always in line with the reality. That contradiction could be the source of insecurities, inhibitions and vulnerabilities. *Tijana* plays with those notions with an aim to cope with the anxieties related to everyday life, turn them into something positive and possibly comedic, and to break the boundaries of the uncomfortable.

The artist combines real-life motifs in uncommon ways to challenge the viewers' perceptions and encourage them to see things differently. Presenting motifs in an altered way, giving them another role or placing them within an unusual scenario shows their potential to provoke different reactions and evoke new feelings. That is where dry humour often comes into play.Through the artwork *First Number Two at Your Lover's Place* Tijana was questioning where certain inhibitions originate. Mundane and everyday needs sometimes represent an issue or an obstacle and as such are often determined by social conventions and biological impulses. She wanted to approach something that is always uncomfortable and everybody can relate to in a humorous way.

The motif of a strawberry, which is reoccurring within her work, has meaning grounded in personal experience. However, its characteristics could be symbolic on a general level. A strawberry's colour is vibrant, its shape is voluptuous, smell strong and alluring, taste appealing, yet it is soft, easily damaged and deteriorates faster than most other fruit – therefore it is delicate and short-lived. Strawberries are exposed – their seeds are visible and their attractiveness is tempting which makes them vulnerable. Tijana relates those qualities with the notions of time-passing, fragility of life, short-lived nature of beauty and youth, and vulnerabilities of minds and bodies.

# Serhii Korabelnikov

Köfe is a medieval Ottoman name for a city in Crimea nowadays known as Feodosia, located on the southeast coast of the Black Sea. Before the Ottomans conquered the coastal areas in Crimea, the Genoese Italians lived there. The wall with the tower depicted in the picture are the remains of a Genoese fortress that was built in the 14th century. In this painting, Serhii Korabelnikov sensitively perceived global changes in the modern world, by looking at architectural and cultural monuments being destroyed in order to make space for modern new ones. Unlike previous regional artists that had the opportunity to get to any picturesque places with the aim of painting the sublime landscape, today, especially in Crimea, artists are faced with large fences built by officials who are only interested in their expanding their land developments. Therefore, the artist tried to capture all the possible remains of a cultural heritage, now slowly being consumed by modernity, through pictorial echoes of a vanishing era.

*« Morning in Gurzuf »*
Oil on canvas
110 x 85 cm
2019

# Mariia Filatova

*Maria Filatova* is a contemporary Russian photographer. Her work uses photography as a method to explore the phenomenon of memory and the instability of objective reality. *Maria* works with powerful personal themes and experiences through the visual aesthetics of landscapes and portraits. Her focus is on deeply hidden processes and their reflection in the real world. The collapse of the Soviet Union, where *Maria* was born, and the period of instability that ensued were traumatic for many Russians ; these are the main events that influence her work and artistic vision.

'When a person sees the world around them crumble, when the future seems uncertain, they feel a tension inside themselves. This is a common experience in the modern world. Things are changing so quickly and these changes are so dramatic that we feel an instability within ourselves, our lives and our perception of reality.' says *Maria*.

*Remembering Reality* is a deeply personal documentary photo project captured in a tiny village in the Smolensk region of Russia, where *Maria* spent a significant amount of time during her childhood. Through the landscape of a dying village at the end of winter, when the feeling of lifelessness is at its peak, *Maria* explores the themes of the death of people and systems, their beauty and despair.

*Memory Road* is one of the photographs in this project. It depicts an old, overgrown road covered with melting snow. The deep psychological symbolism of this work reflects the real processes taking place in our memory: how, over time, we forget the people and places that we leave behind. Eventually, all that remains is a fuzzy outline of past events coloured by our interpretations and nostalgia. We might like to relive these events and walk along this road again, but that is impossible, for the road has begun to blend into the landscape.

*From the Memory*
Photography
20 x 30 cm
2020

*Memory Road*
Photography
30 x 20 cm
2020

***Brambles***
Oil on acid-free paper
60.6x48.2cm
2020

# Elisa Bertaglia

*Elisa Bertaglia* explores the worlds of nature, symbols, brutality, duality and memory, from either an intimate or commonly shared perspective. Furthermore, the artist pursues new layers of experimentation through a miscellaneous approach in paintings, sculptures, wall drawings, installations and site-specific projects, addressing philosophical themes through an oneiric language. While resolutely avoiding the illustration field, the influences of literature and cinema opened up the artist's artworks to several layers of interpretation.

*Bertaglia* investigates the concept of threshold as a metamorphosis, symbol of the short circuit in the complex compendium of rituals and rules that celebrate the natural passage between innocence and consciousness, difficult and necessary to the search and development of the identity. Taking inspiration from Chinese and Japanese artists such as Hao Liang, Cao Yan and Li Binyuan, the artist develops a vision and concept of time and space typical of Eastern cultures. In *Bertaglia's* works, the space presents itself in two-dimensional form, denying the viewer the illusion of perspective. In the same way, the perception time in her representations mixes and confuses past and present as well as the time of real life and the time of the myth. Often quoting Hao Liang and his contemporary landscapes, *Bertaglia* resorts to a cyclic vision of time, with no sequential events, but as a uniform and organic atmosphere. In Assolo. Singing over the Bones, the title refers to the myth of the Loba (see Clarissa Pinkola Estes' mythical work La Loba: Wild Woman, Luminous Wolf), a wild and primitive woman that lives in the norther Mexican desert, wandering in search for animal bones. Once found, she brings the bones in her cave and recomposes the skeleton of the original creature. In a ritualistic performance, the Loba sings a vivid song while the skeleton starts to magically cover itself with muscles, organs and skin until the animal takes its life back again to run free into the wild. The story addresses the main theme of metamorphosis, seen as a symbol of transformation and rebirth profoundly connected with human life and its many unavoidable passages everybody has to face at some point.

The painting surface lives of the tension between the abstract pictorial structures and the narrative graphic elements: a refined drawing evokes long thin plants rising from the bottom to the top of the painting. The leaves present a narrow shape and create a dense net of intertwined branches beyond which it is impossible to see. We are neither allowed to see the roots or the land where the plants stand, giving the viewer the vision of a suspended and imaginary world of transformation waiting for us.

# Ana Schmidt

Born in Bochum, Germany, *Ana Schmidt* encountered frequent relocations. Her family moved to Vietnam and Thailand before her sixth birthday. Her works have been exhibited internationally, including during the Venice Biennale in Italy. Currently she lives and works as an artist and urban planning architect in Bilbao, Spain.

*Ana Schmidt's* paintings are realistic depictions of urban landscapes. She navigate humanmade spaces to discover subjects of intrigue. She then records these detailed reflections of modern life such as showing crumbling pavements, broken walls, and graffiti-tags. In these images, the stuff of daily life counts as the subject, the " something " of the picture. Ordinarily we pass these objects by, we don´t give them credence as visual subjects for art. The landscapes Ana paints are often on the edge of cities, normally quite unattractive. They are places that have outlived their original purpose, to leave only traces of human activity. Furthermore, although *Ana* prefers to work on landscapes in her surroundings, it is not factual information about a specific location she is interested in, but allegories and reflections of modern life seen through these landscapes. The effect is to create a narrative about the human condition in contrast to our urban surroundings. The motorways, bypasses, waste transfer stations, recycling facilities and factories are seen as the social fringe that stands on the periphery of our urban centres and are what ultimately speaks to the artist.

*In Fences and Barriers*, *Ana* employed an almost photorealistic approach. She deliberately searched out seemingly surreal subjects that might otherwise be characterized as banal and unworthy of artistic contemplation. Although human characters do not appear in the co position, the human imprint is more than apparent, because it depicts the nature of humankind's existence as expressed in the forms of urban development, usage and wear. *Fences and Barriers* acutely conveys this contradistinction. While it depicts a common landscape, a railway station muddied by untamed overgrowth and random debris, it also pulsates with a sombre liveliness.

*Fences and Barriers*
Acrylic on canvas
73 x 60 cm
2019

# Marie Lenclos

Marie Lenclos (born in Paris in 1972) returned to painting in 2005 after a long absence of around 17 years. Previously a documentary video maker, she was always aware of her surroundings and conscious of the way she looked at the city around her. Both Coming Home and Tomorrow Maybe ? depict urban landscapes in the immediate vicinity of her home and studio in Loughborough Junction, South London.

*Coming Home* was painted in February 2020, before the lockdown in the UK, whilst Tomorrow Maybe? was painted during lockdown, in June 2020. Both paintings belong to a stream of work she has been developing since 2018. In this series urban landscapes or buildings interiors demonstrate the interplay between the hard lines of architecture and the momentary light, shades and colours happening in a given moment. A collector once remarked that « the absence of figures evokes complex feelings - as if we are aware of something that has just happened, or is just about to happen ». This comment was made in 2019, before any of us could imagine the world would change so dramatically due to COVID-19. Her paintings, which concentrate on the permanence of the built environment as opposed to the people and cars that interact with it on a daily basis, obviously take on a different meaning today: we have now all experienced these empty streetscapes, their eery quality, their silent beauty, their stillness of being.

*Lenclos's* paintings present a unique stillness in urban spaces and architecture. They work like long exposure photographs, allowing both artist and observer to contemplate the relationships between colour, light and form in the physical environments we inhabit. Some viewers report an experience of calmness, of warmth, of serenity, whilst others feel a sense of unrest and anticipation.

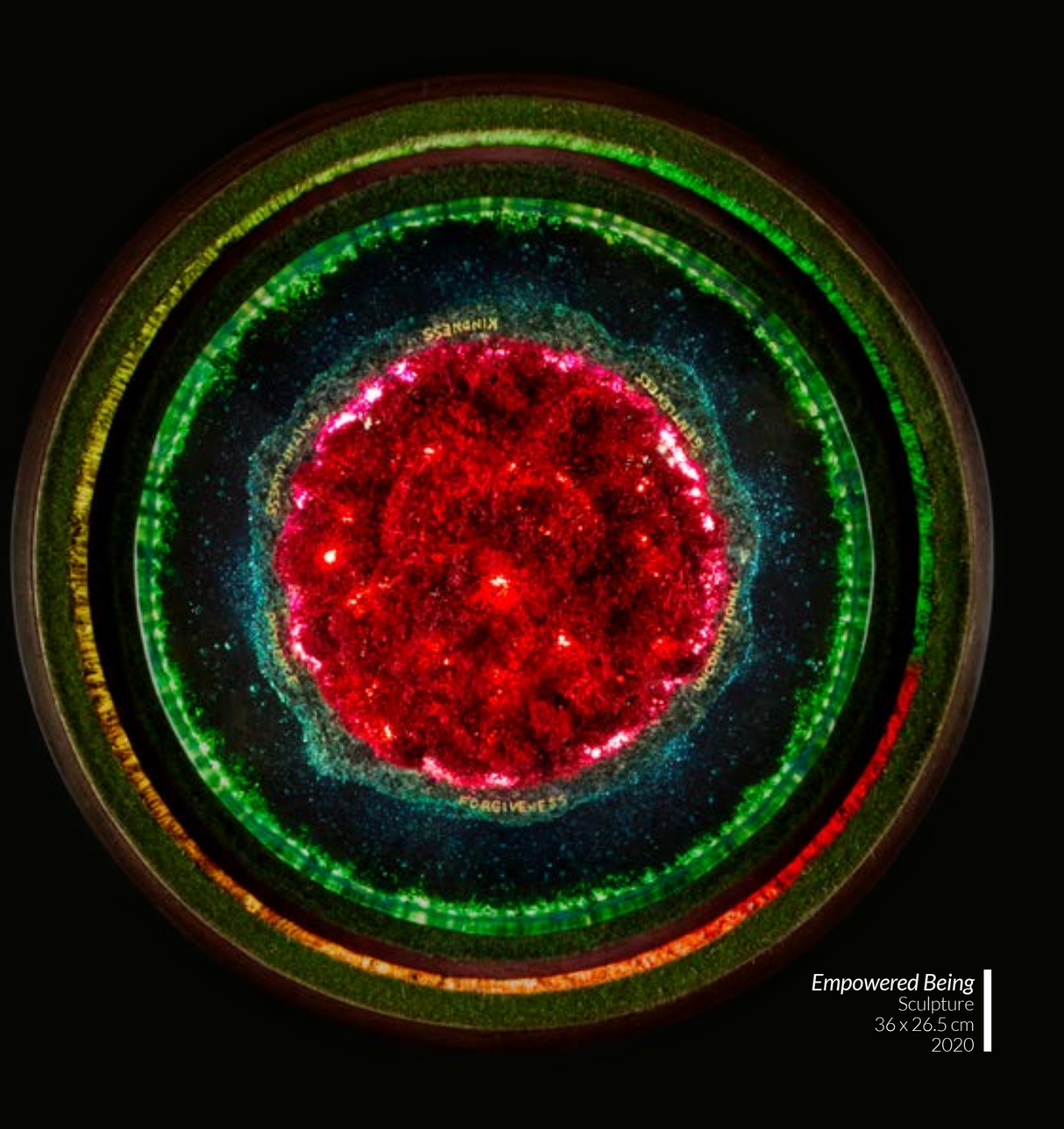
Although they may be seen as such, *Lenclos's* paintings are not meant to be a reflection on the isolation caused by the lockdown. They merely celebrate what is there, at all times, and which we do not always see in our daily activities: light and shadows playing with buildings and bridges, roads curving ahead, the promise of what is coming next.

*Coming Home*
Oil on linen
73 x 54 cm
2020

# Wiktor Kuta

*Wiktor Kuta* believes art can play a significant and impactful role to lead to a better future. Since 2015, as a multimedia artist, his artistic practice was focused on exploring the scientific and philosophical realms, laws and structure of our universe, with planet earth considered as an integrated part of our human existence. Moreover, *Wiktor* works mainly with sculpture and light, exploring how human interactions with underlying laws of the universe create our personal, social reality. His work is thus a reflection on human purposes, qualities and values.

In his work, his message about life is presented through metaphors, symbolisms and lighting effects in artworks that often printed through the lexicon of the natural world. Hearts and trees are the major symbols which represent specific life qualities, values and more holistically human being and their souls. Thus, the native aspect of a thriving natural environment is a metaphor for a flourishing human soul. Overall, *Wiktor's* art looks at our existence with a holistic view. In his work, there is an emphasis on a search for a solution to personal and spiritual growth, leading to higher enlightenment and deeper spiritual fulfilment (what the artist terms Sensation of Paradise).




*Empowered Being*
Sculpture
36 x 26.5 cm
2020

# Zofia Blazko

*Zofia Blazko* has been practising painting for years, being her preferred medium to work with. Her area of interest is mainly focused on the human. In more details, with her art she aims to convey the ephemeral emotions and inner richness of models that sit for her portraits.

*The Blast* is a self-portrait of *Zofia Błażko*. *The blast* refers to the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear accident. Back then, severe design flaws of the nuclear reactor caused a booming fire, while hydrogen and radioactive material escaped in the atmosphere, spreading all around. In her canvas, *Błażko* makes the very first attempt at exploring a topic being so remote yet so close to her, for she was born 34 years ago, just a few days after the tragic incident occurred. In this portrait, *Błażko* portrays herself with a tree in the background with a glowing like texture, as if itself contaminated by radiations. The leaves shown in the foreground are those of a weeping willow, whose very name hints both sadness and pain. The night time in the painting is significant too; both the night and the moon reference the midsummer summer solstice, because not only the author worked on the picture around that time, but the summer solstice night is associated with sleep-deprived and sometimes anxiety, thus referring the kind of emotions triggered by the nuclear reactor incident.

***The Blast***
Oil on canvas
50 x 40 cm
2019

# Zoe Beaudry

*Zoe Beaudry* is a contemporary figurative painter based in Detroit, Michigan. Her practice examines existential questions related to selfhood, divinity, and individuation in the twenty-first century. Her work is informed by her research on contemporary mysticism and philosophy of mind, fourth-wave feminism, and her spiritual practice.

Using the visual languages of photography, screens, browser windows, avatars, and digital effects to imply nested existences and an interconnected universe, *Zoe's* paintings feature carefully-rendered subjects, intentionally chosen to flout flawed social constructs, de stigmatize corporeal existence, and advocate for the rights of all sentient beings.

The shortlisted artwork *Shelley* was created as part of a series of self-portraits exploring *Zoe's* relationship to her body and gender. By depicting a traditional subject (the female nude) without catering to the male gaze or traditional gender roles, the typical roles of artist and subject are subverted. The subjectivity of the female nude is reclaimed from a tradition of objectification. The expression captures a sense of longing, and the tattoo on the left ribcage is brought into focus, becoming a focal point for the viewer's consideration.

***Shelley***
Oil on canvas
101 x 66 cm
2018

# Zena Assi

*Zena Assi's* work draws inspiration from the relations and conflicts between individuals and their spatial environment, society and surroundings. She use various supports and mediums (from installation, drawing and etching to experimental animation, sculpture and painting) to document and explore the cultural and social changes of the moment, and the impact our ideologies and political tendencies have on an individual level. The artist absorbs narratives and imageries from her surroundings and fuses them into her practice, some pieces are highly personal and come from her own personal stories and experiences about expatriation.

As the world was lately put on a hold by COVID-19, time seemed to have paused, and the artist found herself looking at her surroundings with fresh new eyes. During the lockdown, *Assi* started wandering into the complexities of interior and exterior life, constancy and change. *Still Life in Quarantine* is part of a series of paintings. Visual references are spread throughout the artworks, like pages of an endless diary. After completing the painting, the artist used an icy white diluted oil paint and cover the whole image, freezing the moment in time, thus putting the inanimate object in a stand-still. *Assi* took inspiration from her herbarium and painted bouquets of dried flowers. The third dimension is here canceled out and the question of death and preservation is raised against that of the passage of time. The flowers might be dead but drying them out is in fact the only way to preserve them, extending their existence even after the touch of life has left them. When the energy of fragile mortality is explored in a work, a conversation between visibility and invisibility unfolds, giving the painting a psychological, and social urgency.

***Bouquet 2***
Oil and acrylic on canvas
105 x 160 cm
2020

# Beichen Zhang

*11,565 Km* Project tracks the path of an artifact from the Shandong province (China) to the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (USA). This artwork by *Beichen Zhang* highlights issues related to the circulation of Chinese artifacts, the complexity of Chinese colonial histories. It also portrays the long migration of this Chinese coffin, its historical colonial background, and the power dynamics within institutional museum collections.

In 2019, *Beichen Zhang* began conducting research on a Chinese artifact at UPenn's museum, A Coffin Fragment (object#: 40-35-4), located in their Asian Art pavilion. *Zhang's* research combines photography and field investigation, and did this work in multiple countries, travelling from China to the United States, taking a total of 17 months to complete the entire project. This is because *Zhang's* project focused on field investigations, reproduction of the cultural relic, historical text research, and production of museum institutional criticism. Through this project, he tried to excavate the unknown story of an artefact and rebuild it as a visual journey. *Zhang* regarded the exploration of hidden historical images as a process of shaping his personal view of history and reflected on the dynamic changes behind the general historical landscape.

*11,565 Kilometres Project #1-1*
Photography Archival pigment
100 x 69 cm
2019

# Gavin Watson

*Gavin's* paintings explore the emotional and spiritual relationships forged between humans and animals, and the internal and external worlds they share. The narratives within his work are multi-layered and playfully reference a diverse range of sources, from literature and art history, to popular culture and contemporary issues. The artist's work is also strongly informed by Northumberland's rich and ancient culture and its links to the natural world and his own working class upbringing in a declining, post-industrial town. All of these elements are constantly at play, resulting in mildly surreal paintings which hint at larger narrative beyond the dreamlike scenes they represent.

In early 2019 *Gavin* spent six weeks on a field trip based in Morelia, Mexico. His aim was to observe the vast migration of butterflies, birds and humans. Upon his return his studio in Northumberland, he started a series of paintings under the working title *Flight Club*. *Protect and Survive* is one of the paintings in this series. The title references a booklet printed by the UK government in the1970's, intended to inform citizens on how to protect themselves during a nuclear attack. The painting brings together a number of themes. For example, the flamingo is a reference from the artist's childhood trips to Flamingo Park, a nature park and zoo in North Yorkshire. Even as a child, *Gavin* found these exotic birds extraordinarily displaced in the somewhat grey 1960's Northern English landscape. The human figure in the portrait started as a self-portrait of the artist himself as a child, to then developed into a representation of a fairy-like Greta Thunberg, protecting the flamingo as the sea rises and the waves approach.

***Protect and Survive***
Oil on Canvas
71.5 x 50.5 cm
2020

# Kong Ho

*Kong Ho* utilises his bicultural background as a teaching artist trained in both Chinese and Western visual arts. He earned a M.F.A. in painting and drawing at Texas Tech University in 1994. Since then, he taught as art professor at various universities (2001-2018).

*Ho* has focused on his Luminosity Series painting since 2017. This series is sumptuously painted in a technique consisting of free flowing wave-like patterns held in check by subtly controlled washes of glaze and exacting trompe l'oeil floras and shells. In this respect, his flora-spiral painting Botanical Blush with Tentacles exemplifies the theme and style indicative of his ongoing series. In this painting, Ho has created an asymmetrical composition by off-setting the circular shapes of the primary spiral of the nautilus shell and the orchid image, against the angular edges of the squared off canvas. Further interest is added to the composition through the articulation of the nautilus shell's segments and the structure of orchid. His composition is supported by a dense spatial field of interpreted interactions of forms and patterns found in nature. These patterns include repetitive clusters of meandering lines and portioned colour-filled areas that suggest ambiguous space. Furthermore, rhythmic movement is created from a simultaneous growth and dissolution of both shell and orchid with the background. Thus, a sense of fundamental transformation for which no beginning and end can be discovered evolves from this painting.

*Melt*
Moving Image, Mp4 file
2020

# Sofia Mangini

*Sofia Mangini* is a young Venetian photographer. In February 2019 she participated at the Paratissima Bologna and in Milan where she won the prestigious N.I.C.E. prize. Her work was also exhibited at the Museum of Contemporary Photography in Milan, where she currently lives and resides.

*Sofia's* photographic technique speaks of minimalist architecture. In particular, her photographic work focuses on her current city of residence, Milan. The artist tries to capture details of buildings and their structures while portraying them with a specific vision that enhances their peculiarities. In fact, they almost always have highly captivating and very bright colours, characterised by the petroleum-like skies. Furthermore, this vision seems to embrace and unify a style reminiscent of 20th century Russian Constructivism with a highly fauvist approach to colour.

*« The Art of Connection »*
Photography
120 x 82 cm
2019

# SUNNY ART PRIZE

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**First Published by Sunny Art Centre Publishing 2020**
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SUNNY ART CENTRE
Chancery Lane
London, UK
WC1X 8HR
www.sunnyartcentre.co.uk

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**UK £35.00** **USA $44.49** **CAN $58.52**

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