

# Insights of an Eco Artist

*Art breeding change*





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**Front Cover:** Kenneth Lambert  
Notions of acceleration pertaining to climate change, 2019  
Large-scale 3-channel video installation  
4K resolution, 10-minute loop  
Edition of 5 + AP 1



**Back Cover:** Ken Clarry  
Rukban Series #3 - Sandstorm, 2022.  
Mixed Media: Digital painting, pastel and pencil.

# Editor's Note

An uninformed eye, surveying the global atmosphere, can easily conclude that we are facing an era of outstanding conflicts, food insecurity and political reforms that will leave a permanent mark on future generations. These myriads of havoc clogging dialogue roots and dissolving previous social changes make many consider the future of themselves and subsequent generations. Fortunately, the artistic community brings a parallel dialogue to the table.

Through my multiple features on global social-political atmospheres, I witness the ripple effects the previous issues have on individual and artistic freedom, yet, the last effort to permeate the global dialogue roots with inclusivity and freedom is embodied by artists. Artists from completely different cultures, languages and identities whose creativity leads the conversation forward.

You will see the word art embody multiple meanings and walk numerous avenues, but chief among them is the searing reminder of the unique role of art in society.

In this first issue, you will encounter these same artists. These same artists that refuse to stand still when confronted with conflict and political conundrums. These same artists that through the use of science, technology, ecopsychology and several artistic methods create an avenue of discourse unparalleled, unique and surely creative. These same artists that remind us of the unmatched power of individual character and creativity.

When going through the pages of this issue, I hope you get as impressed and hopeful for the future of both the artistic community and global social-political environments as I was when looking and writing about these artists' creations and lives.

Joana Alarcão, Editor in Chief

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# Human and nature: the naturalistic paintings of Yaroslav Leonets

Written by Joana Alarcão

Deep within the veils of society rests the profound individual desire to be understood and communicate, yet this unconscious phenomenon morphs within the preconceived notions of the industrial being. However, as individual ethic foundations seem to stretch into darkness, a prevailing idea still afflicts most- it's the human connection with the self, others and nature leading us upwards or downhill?

We must acknowledge that change permeates both human and natural environments. We are eager for the different, the unconventional and the controversial, and in this pursuit of righteous and moral heights, most forget the critical little things that apply to human life. If the past months have taught us something, it is that global social and political atmospheres and environments can abruptly change without warning. Fortunately, the art community does not overlook the change that permeates global political and climate atmospheres.

Ukraine artist Yaroslav Leonets embodies this battle for communication and connection by exploring the atmospheres surrounding him while striving to portray the beauty behind nature and human interaction. Using his traditional background in figurative painting, Leonets illustrates his childhood desire for nature and family values by creating artworks with very fluid brushstrokes and earthy tonal ranges.

In one of his painting series entitled Connection with Nature, Leonets explores the interconnection of nature and humans, highlighting the significance of this ancient interaction on individual roots. Every brushstroke is fluid and intensional, depicting the artist's notion of nature and harmony; the choice of oil colours is earthy and expressive, telling us the story of nature's unpredictability and society's negative interpretation of it; Every painting reflects the artist's connections to a natural environment different from the mainstream interpretations.



“I have always been inspired by searching for new forms of communication with the world; therefore, my childhood research has turned into my life’s work. As an artist, I see myself in various art forms like painting, graphics, and sculpture. I experiment a lot, looking for new ways to convey the reality in which I live.”

Leonets’s approach to painting and social and environmental justice doesn’t end here. In several of his painting series, *Social and Family*, we can witness the artist’s evolution as a painter and his unwavering commitment to highlighting humanity’s capacity to endure and adapt. Through these series, we can see the artist’s affinity with family and the individual’s unique culture and background that makeup one’s exceptional character.

Leonets’s philosophy of work and deep connection to his subject matter led him to be part of several exhibitions, such as the 2020 Takeda. *Art / Help. The rule of exclusivity* in Moscow and *Anticipation + Immunity* at the Museum of Contemporary Ukrainian Art Korsakov in Lutsk. Also, the artist has participated in several residencies, one of which is the *Human Rights Art Residence ARTIF* in 2020.

The significance of his series of works reaches many areas, but chief among them is the searing reminder that the connection between humans and nature is symbiotic, therefore, should be protected. Artists like Leonets create an avenue of discourse between the audience and critical societal topics “that teach people and change them at the subconscious level”.

**Top Image Left**  
The Gulf, 2020  
Materials: canvas, oil.

**Top Image Right**  
Family, 2018-2021  
Materials: canvas, oil.  
The series includes more than 20 artworks.









**“Humanity and nature are inextricably linked with each other. One not only lives in the environment of nature, he regularly uses its resources. But, the desire for comfort kills not only the love of nature but also nature itself. Many people simply believe that nature owes everything to man. Using natural resources, you must at least appreciate them and treat mother nature as a human.”**

# The sense of Algerian identity permeated through the art of Leila Bakouche

Written by Joana Alarcão



I found a parallel consideration around the subject in the photographic practice of Leila Bakouche, whose storytelling methods draw a realistic and opinionated conception of Algerian identity and intrinsic human behaviors. As the name suggests, the photographer's collection is inquisitive about the artist's unique perspectives and her unwavering commitment to formulate an answer to what unconsciously disturbs her identity and her surroundings.

Bakouche's collection is not a mere documentation of what political and social atmospheres she encounters as she walks through the walled streets of Algeria but, instead, a factual investigation into a series of questions the artist poses to herself confronted with the surrounding world with which she inevitably interacts.

When I look through an artist's creation, I immediately have the urge to inquire about the endless metamorphosing being that embodies it, hoping to create a sense of understanding and connection. It is a simple inquiry, and certainly a usual one, but when the work illustrates the identities and culture of a nation, the answers seem to escape one's grasp.

Even though I conjured what I call the baseline questions: What are the personal atmospheres of the artists?; How is the social-political atmosphere of their homeland?; How does it correlate with their identity?. Sometimes these questions are never answered and understood due to the diverse and deeply rooted characteristics within the artist's identity that make up the answers. You must be willing to scratch beyond the surface if you wish to create genuine understanding, and here I pose the question.

How can an artist not be affected by the instability of a country or society?

*"As a woman artist, I feel like being an artist gives me the chance to go beyond my ideas and express all that I need to say. At the same time, as women artists, we have fewer opportunities than men. I feel like I should double my efforts to make my project happen."*



**Top left**

*Everywhere, 2021*

*Digital photograph, unmanipulated, color*

*60x40 cm*

**Bottom**

*Flowers, 2021*

*Digital photograph, unmanipulated, color.*

*60x40 cm*





The attraction for photography started in 2011 when Bakouche joined a photography club called Equinoxe. In some ways, the initial appeal and the artist's high sensitivity began to shape each other: the more she depicted her surroundings - which served as both inspiration and subject matter - the more investigative she became. In the work entitled *Raw*, we can witness the physical interpretation of these notions.

One of Bakouche's goals for the project *Raw*, as documentary research, lies in creating a conversation around Algerian youth's contrasting hopes and realities. As we go through the photographic collection, we can pick a restless necessity to assemble a parallel dialogue and reimagine the atmospheres around the subjects of identity and culture. "*Raw* presents the marriage between two unique textures, both refined and raw. The first is urban, and the second is human." She told me about the project. "The photographs illustrate in the background the urban textures of Algeria which are assembled and which are not similar. Facing it is an Algerian youth, a selection of non-aligned characters different by their beliefs and cultures."



A sense of community permeates Bakouche's projects which she transports to other areas of her career. As a photography teacher at Centre Culturel Universitaire "CCU" in Algiers, the artist transfers her knowledge and love of photography to her students, witnessing "the multiple visions from the new generation of youths." from where she gathers inspiration. Furthermore, since 2020, Bakouche has been a member of the Algerian female photography collective 'Tilawin', where she mentors young female photographers by organizing two seasons a month to discuss ideas and projects.

"Modern Algerian society is full of frustrations, taboos and barriers." the artist shares. "Multiple communities of artists in different fields try to make multiple communities. We help each other. Solidarity is more present than ever."

The art of Bakouche emphasizes how someone's identity is deeply connected with their cultural roots. The artist expresses through her artistic practice the interdisciplinary atmospheres of Algeria and the delight of being a women artist expressing her values and identity.



**Top**  
*Dune, 2021*  
Digital photograph, unmanipulated, color  
60x40 cm

**Middle**  
*Fence, 2021*  
Digital photograph, unmanipulated, color  
60x40 cm

**Bottom**  
*Flow, 2021*  
Digital photograph, unmanipulated, color  
60x40 cm



Critically Endangered Black Rhino  
Mixed media on paper  
10 x 8 inches



**In conversation:**

**Katerina  
Pravda**

## 1. How would you describe your artistic practice?

As a contemporary visual artist, I give life to elegant beings through painting, drawing, and mixed media art. There is a natural focus on uniting human and non-human animals as one, to progress harmonious co-existence and to protect endangered species and the environment.

I use several different mediums to bring my visions of these beautiful beings to life. The essence or energy of the piece or series, as well as the technical and other artistic considerations, determines which medium I use - oil on canvas for vibrancy, energy, and infusion of richness; ink on paper for sophistication, boldness, and a sole focus on the subject; and mixed media to blend elements of all of the above into one work. I crave multiplicity in order to continue evolving as both an artist and a human being. Thus, using several different mediums allows me to explore my chosen subject matter in an endless amount of ways, granting me the ability to innovate and bring forward new possibilities of seeing and creating.

An artistic practice does not consist of mere creation, however. It starts with living a rich, authentic life, full of tremendous experiences of all sorts, nurturing our visions, trusting our instincts, and doing things despite the fear. This, for me, includes a heavy dose of unplanned travels and adventures in faraway lands - living for some time to sink into the culture and just "be" - to observe, question, think, and feel deeply and whole-heartedly. Most of my travels are solitary to give room for the deepest level of presence and connection. I also immerse myself into other art forms, from which I draw great inspiration for the art I create. Currently, these are acting, dance, piano, horse riding, literature, philosophy and martial arts. I stay curious, open to change, and allow novel experiences, which trigger new thoughts and ideas I later explore in my art.

This, in essence, is my fine arts practice.

## 2. Can you tell us about your collection entitled The Darlings? What are the materials and concepts behind it? What do you intend the viewer to absorb from the experience?

The original concept behind The Darlings series came to me when I was working in a drawing class while on exchange at the University of Newcastle in Australia. I was 20 years old at the time. I felt free as a bird in my new temporary home, surrounded by other creatives of all sorts - people who were much freer in their spirits and actions than my Canadian peers and communities' more traditional, hyper-academic ways. During my university exchange, I experimented greatly with my artwork, exploring entirely new ways of drawing, painting, printmaking and creating photography. It was then that I created my first surrealist piece titled Don't Strip Me Of My Stripes (elegant zebra woman on a chair). I hadn't realized it at the time, but this would become a pivotal piece in the direction of my artistry for years to come. Many years, gallery exhibits and series later, I rediscovered this particular piece while sorting through my artwork.

Something sparked inside me when I looked into those larger-than-life gravitational eyes - I was hypnotized by her magnetic power! And so, I created several more pieces in this original style and essence to join this beautiful zebra-woman (Don't Strip Me Of My Stripes) on exhibition at several Toronto art galleries. Since then, this piece has become quite iconic, bewitching viewers with her seductive intensity and charm.

The Darling Collection, formerly known simply as Beings, always had and continues to have magnificent responses from gallery-goers, usually striking that "sweet spot" that I always hoped for - a place where dialogues begin after a powerful emotional experience occurs that captivates the viewer with something much deeper than we can describe in words. Visually, the pieces of The Darlings Collection - which has grown tremendously in recent years - are a combination of a human figure with the head of an animal (frequently that of an endangered species). My approach to portraying them as elegant beings, harmonizing elements of both the human and non-human animals in a fluid and natural way, is that which gives the series its unique visual and emotive essence, often striking a particular nerve or deep emotion within both artist and viewer.

In respect to the artistic mediums used to create this series, I first began with ink: drawing with Japanese archival ink pens to create the meticulous fine details, which weave into the works like branches and roots, then painting many washes of India ink to give depth, lyricism, movement, flow and a slight sense of reality. The result is at once classic and modern - transcending time and space. The focus is on unity, harmony, beauty, and our interconnectedness - all that is ever-present in nature, in animals, and in us. I later added watercolour with the inks to fuse elements of the environment into several new pieces. Currently, I am working on expanding this series into oil on canvas works, which adds an entirely new essence to their emotive and physical qualities. I am looking forward to seeing what kinds of experiences these new works hold for their viewers and what new thoughts, emotions, and dialogues they will trigger.

***“Persevering. It’s really the greatest accomplishment for any artist, creative person, or anyone impassioned with their particular vision/contribution/focus. Finding the belief in yourself and standing up against the harsh opposition, staying dedicated and true to your unique voice and vision.”***



**3.** In your bio, you mention that your art is driven by the “intermingling of endangered species, elegant people, and their ever-changing environment”. Can you elaborate on this line of thinking?

From a very young age, I was intrinsically pulled towards animals – they always seemed to me and continue to be breathtaking, majestic, and so tenderly innocent. I love them with all my heart and innately felt a deep need to protect these beautiful souls from the cruelty and brutality of others. In fact, my very first drawings were always those of myself living in harmony with animals – they were quite the joyous and chic scenarios!

While my technical and stylistic portrayals have certainly developed greatly since those early days, my natural-born inclinations to restoring harmony between people and animals have remained unchanged. As I learned more about the remarkably delicate balance of various ecosystems on this stunning planet and the horrific ways in which we were actively destroying them at unprecedented rates, I knew that my focus would need to be on highlighting the various endangered species as we were and are dreadfully close to annihilating them into extinction. Since the 6th mass extinction is the first of its kind – being that it is the first in history to be entirely man-made – I wanted to focus my work on the elements leading to the disastrous losses of critical species and environments. It took many years of working through the various ways of portraying these themes visually and narrowing down to the exact concept I wanted to come through in my work. Many earlier works of mine dealt with the inner duality of human beings – primarily our capacity for both creation and destruction in relation to animals and the environment. With my artistic evolution, you will now see that there is a clear focus on the intermingling of endangered species, elegant (harmonious) people, and their ever-changing environment.

This echoes my deep desire to restore harmony to ourselves so that we can begin to love, respect, and protect the species that are left, which will require the protection of their environments and ecosystems, bringing us back to the ancient wisdom of the interconnectedness of all lifeforms on this planet. And why an ever-changing environment, you may ask? Well, because the only constant in life is change. Every single day, every single hour, every single choice that we make, we have the power to alter the present and, therefore, the future. We can decide to make a better world for all through our cumulative daily actions. Indeed, we are creating and recreating our world all the time! So I hope you'll join me in doing what you can to bring about more harmony in your life, between people, animals, and the environment, to make a beautiful world for all!



**4.** What is for you the most rewarding part of being an artist?

I have come to the conclusion that I do not make art for myself. Though it certainly challenges me and evolves my being, I create work as a catalyst for change.

As such, the most rewarding part of being an artist is seeing that my work has caused someone to change their ways of viewing animals, people, and the environment, which then causes a shift in their actions and creates a more harmonious world. Each person influences so many others, so the seemingly smallest change in thought alters so much more than we perceive.

Talking with people who view my work and fall in love with it, which speaks of the connection to its concept and essence (= a connection to all), brings me the greatest joy. This inspires me to get back into the studio to create more artwork, evolve the concept even further, and exhibit the new works to spark inspiration and paradigm shifts. It's truly a beautiful cycle!

## 5. How has your practice changed over time? Why do you think it changed?

Over the years, I have become more confident in my work, which correlates with feelings of connectedness and inner self-assuredness.

This is due to my decade-long introspective journey to understand why we're here, what the purpose of life is, what compels me to create, and the like. I have come to understand myself, my work, and the interconnectedness of life in a much more profound way in recent years. I have explored the above spiritually, intellectually, and artistically, which has left me with a solid foundation on which I have built my creative life. In truth, the more art I created, the closer I got to exactly what I wanted to express and how. It was a process of elimination through trial: if I wanted to create something, I did; if I wanted to try a new medium, I did; if I wanted to travel and get lost in a country, I did. I allowed myself to be free, and I continue to live this way.

I also waste a lot less time on doubt and do not hesitate. I always think about my artwork, even when I am not in my studio. I work through a lot of it in my mind before I even touch a brush or pen so that when I get into the studio to create, I dive right in, knowing that no matter what happens, I will figure out the details and find my way.

Moreover, I now tend to spend a lot more time connected to nature and find a way to either volunteer or work with animals hands-on. This brings me closer to the harmony that I aim to communicate through my work, strengthening the emotionality and truth that I am able to bring forth in each new piece.

Lastly, I will say that meditation has helped me tremendously in life, and thanks to it I have become ever more connected to the true inner message that needs to be shared with the world through my art.



## 6. As a full-time artist, what does your day look like?

As my artistic practice has grown and as I have evolved as a human being, I have come to honour my intrinsic need for variety, spontaneity, and presence that leads to the flow of my creativity. As such, no one day is the same. Instead of working against the energies of the day, I look for and follow the flow - I paint and create on the highest energetic days (which are evident immediately after I wake up). On days of lower energy, I may do website development, photograph my work, respond to client emails, do various small business tasks, or do other more mundane work (there is surprisingly a lot of this as a full-time artist!). So generally, it is split between full days of creation and full days of art business development.

I tend to work intensely, without interruption, at intervals of 6-12 hours at a time. If I have an upcoming show, this increases, and I will work morning until night for weeks on end, only taking breaks to eat, meditate, go for a walk, and workout. Though these days, I have a better balance.

I prefer adding at least several hours of rest/reading, being around animals, and reconnecting with nature daily. Essentially, I love working hard, focusing purely on work when I am creating, and pushing the limits of my capabilities. Then, fully take the time to relax and enjoy life as well, because being an artist isn't just about making art in the studio; it is a way of living, and everything you think, feel, learn, and experience can be used to innovate new work! So breaks, trips, vacations, and other creative endeavours are vital to evolving and refining my ideas, concepts, art practice, and innovating something even greater with each new piece or series!

**Top Image**  
*A Date With Danger*  
Ink on paper  
11 x 9 inches

**Next Page Image**  
*A Posh Promenade*  
Ink on paper  
11 x 9 inches



**7. Most of your projects focus on endangered species conservation, environmental protection, and the deep need for the ethical treatment of animals. Why did you choose to dedicate your art practice to highlighting these issues? Why does it touch you particularly?**

Apart from my deep love, respect, and connection to animals from a very young age, this focus came about from several shocking life events. The primary being my deep-dive into the gut-wrenching unethical brutality of factory farming, fur farms, and general human insanity when it came to the annihilation of the animal species.

I was 15 years old at the time and researching ancient Greek philosophers on their stance on animal sentience and treatment - this was my chosen topic for a philosophy paper. This led me to a shocking discovery of how the world treats its animals, people, and the environment. It shattered my innocence entirely, and I remember being so utterly heartbroken from the experience that I crawled under a desk and truthfully wanted not to exist anymore. But after balling my eyes out and feeling the full grief and sorrow for all those innocent, precious animal lives, I decided right then and there that I would stand up against their oppressors and be their voice. I automatically quit eating meat, which at the time (2005-ish) was preposterous in Canada - everyone was convinced that I would die if I didn't and prodded me daily, but they didn't see what I saw. They hadn't felt what I'd felt watching those horrific graphic videos and hearing the screams of the tortured animals. I joined organizations, signed and ran petitions, voiced my concerns to anyone who would listen, and even started an environmental organization in my school (which, like veganism, was 10 years ahead of its time), but few would listen or care, especially when it came to policy-makers, large companies/corporations, or the government. I was heartbroken, angry, and saddened, but I never gave in. I couldn't. Those animals and the environment would continue to suffer if I did. So I pressed on and continued learning about the environmental destruction that we were causing and actively working on implementing ways to combat the damages anywhere and everywhere I could.

When it came time to decide on a university and a course of study, I applied and got accepted to both the environmental sciences and the fine arts departments in several phenomenal universities. This was really the moment where it came down to the way in which I would go on to help animals and the environment (for this was always the path) - ultimately, deciding that my contribution through the fine arts would have a much greater impact.

Ever since then, I have continued aligning my beliefs with my life, creating artwork based on this desire to restore harmony between people and animals. I am so proud of others for finally coming to the same realization and of the global efforts and movements toward plant-based diets, cruelty-free products, animal conservation efforts, environmental preservation efforts, and so many wonderful, beautiful paradigm shifts that are now leading us to live in greater harmony with nature and each other.

**8. What do you hope the viewer gets from your artistic practice?**

I hope that when you look into the eyes of the animal/person in my art, you feel a deep connection, experience something profound, and consider your own love or resistance to the work - questioning your perceptions of animals, people, the environment, and life - and that this is also carried into your life, where new thought patterns may cause you to stop and consider a more harmonious or caring way of doing whatever you were doing, bringing about more beauty, elegance (harmony), and connection in life.

Fundamentally, we are all deeply interconnected - people, animals, the environment - and I hope that this is what people come to understand, appreciate, respect, and protect. It is essential for our progress towards thriving ecosystems, connected societies, and a prosperous world for all.







## In conversation: Vincenzo Cohen

*“I have a strong passion for nature and wildlife that pushes me to fight for what I believe in.”*

**1. Can you tell us about your photography series entitled Immortal Fauna – Wildlife Photography Project? What is the concept behind it? What do you intend the viewer to absorb from the experience?**

*Immortal fauna* includes a series of wildlife photographs taken during trips and conservation surveys on wildlife in African countries and aimed at the representation of the uncontaminated nature and the creatures that inhabit it. The project tells about the fantastic sighting of animals into the wild and of the emotion aroused by the wilderness and of its power to evoke in man the sense of the belonging, restoring a deep symbiosis relationship with nature. The images of animals focus on the importance of preserving ecosystems and biodiversity: some species on the brink of extinction are presented within the project. Other images focus attention on the relationship between animals and landscape and on the environmental impact of phenomena such as climate change, global warming and desertification. In my wildlife photography production.

I seek to convey a message environmental protection and wildlife safeguard by stimulating collective perception and awareness of the viewers about the values of biodiversity and of uniqueness of animal species.

**2. How do you balance your art practice and networking? Do you struggle with it?**

My artistic path is mostly focused on the theme of nature and on the environmental issues, since childhood, when after a trip to Kenya, I had a strong African sickness. At the age of eleven, that first contact with African nature aroused emotions that have deeply affected my existential perspective. I live with difficulty the relationship between art and networking.

The vision of uncontaminated and wild spaces constitutes for me an ancestral recall to the state of nature. Nowadays the reticence towards the media contamination of art and the new languages of visual sensationalism, the advancement of a virtual communication that impoverishes sociality and cultural aggregation, motivated me to travel to uncontaminated places, in an attempt to recover the lost contact with nature. From these reflections comes, in my artistic imagination, the need to communicate, through art, a message of environmental protection and conservation.

**3. Can you give us a bit of a background regarding your artistic practice? Can you describe it?**

My artistic background began ever since I was a kid. I have always had a natural predisposition for the visual arts and a particular interest in wildlife. I first graduated at the Fine Arts Academy and successively I graduated in archaeology and ancient history.

I attended courses on African mammals at AIEA (International Association of African Experts) and studied photography. Over the years I have dedicated myself to travel and make reportage of naturalistic photography through which I express my love for nature and living species.

**4. What is for you the most rewarding feeling of capturing wildlife? Do you have any rituals prior to the photography production?**

The greatest gratification is to be able to capture a species in its natural habitat by highlighting its natural predisposition and its behavior into the wild. There are beautiful places on earth, but what makes them unique and special are the wild creatures that inhabit them. We can remember great natural scenarios but what will remain imprinted in our memory will be that particular moment that connects a place and a living being in the magic of a moment immortalized by photography. My ritual during photography process is studying a specific area by investigating the possible presence of a species in a particular area and then waiting for the right moment to observe and photograph it.

**7. Due to your connection with wildlife conservation, you travel through Africa and the Middle East quite often. How do these experiences influence your artistic processes and creation?**

I usually rework what I live and see by collecting data for the documentation on species presence and for the creation of photographic reports or through other media such as painting.

**Photo 1**  
*Klipspringer*

**Photo 2**  
*Epic zebra*

**5. In today's world, do you think the legislation and changes implemented to preserve biodiversity worldwide are actually helping or do you think there is a need for bigger changes at an individual and governmental level?**

I believe that international legislation and worldwide efforts to implement global change are still not enough to have a significant impact on the environment. We should look at the world from a global and community perspective, by eliminating the differences between countries, but working towards common goals. For example, plastic should be permanently removed from the circuits of international trade, hunting at all levels should be abolished, promoting biodiversity as a fundamental biological concept for the evolution and reducing meat consumption by implying eco-sustainable forms of economy.

**6. Most of your projects focus on wildlife safeguard, landscape preservation and species conservation. Why did you choose to dedicate your art practice to highlighting these issues?**

I have a strong passion for nature and wildlife that pushes me to fight for what I believe in. I also believe that there are relevant issues such as global warming, carbon footprint, species extinction that affect us closely as individuals and as a community.



**8. Do you have a network of other artists you rely on? Do you work with a team?**

I usually work alone but I love to share my activities. I collaborate with organizations and foundations committed in the species safeguard and artistically with magazines or channels aimed at raising awareness and at the dissemination of environmental issues.

**9. Where do you see your practice evolve?**

When my work comes to others and when I learn from the comparison with others.

**10. What is for you the biggest challenge of being an artist?**

The greatest challenge for an artist today is to succeed to establish himself in a world that facilitates homologation.

**11. As an artist what would you say is your biggest accomplishment?**

I am very ambitious and for this reason I believe that my greatest accomplishment has yet to come. For now having published three art books makes me proud of my work because I believe that publication is the best way to enunciate the artist's thinking and poetics.





# In conversation: Susan Hensel

**1. For the ones who don't know your artistic practice, can you talk a bit about it?**

I make sculptural textile work, transforming personal experience, private and public spaces, with experiences of beauty, through the alchemy of color, scale, lighting, and placement. I combine mixed-media practices with fabric and embroidery across digital and manual platforms.

My goal is to create a compelling viewer experience: one of puzzling beauty, playfulness and sometimes awe. The work invites people to slow down, engage in a place of wonder, enter a more contemplative state, giving themselves time to fall in love with this world and each other again.

**2. Is there something you do today that you wished you had known to do years ago?**

Oh, I wish I had kept more complete records. I am a reasonably good record keeper. I keep my resumé and inventory up to date. However, I did not keep track of venue addresses or the artworks on display. Recreating the history of the work is hard!

I also wish I had thought earlier to convert links, especially to online shows and press pieces, into pdf's. Expired links are the bane of my assistant's existence!

I wish I had had the courage to simply CALL UP curators and/or galleries and make appointments! In the "old days" it was accept able to call.

*Solar Tide  
Digital embroidery and found objects*

*Size: 22 x 26 x 2*





**3. Would you say art can be a tool to raise awareness to social-political and climate issues?**

Absolutely. There are many, many ways to engage. I have subscribed to the idea that artists are “the canary in the mine” about social/environmental issues for many years. We can be conduits for change. As artists we have tremendous skills to bring to the table. We know how to manipulate materials, environments, and experiences. We need to do that in an ethical manner.

For me, as a quiet, somewhat introverted contemplative, creating and exhibiting beauty on the topics of climate change is the way I choose to work. I invite people to slow down, experience the beauty and perhaps awe, and leave their rage or hurry or despair behind for a moment. Those moments can accumulate and begin to create the world as we want to see it. I insinuate a peaceful experience that opens a space for change. That is the radical, subversive potential of beauty.

**4. Most of your practice blends commercial embroidery processes with sculptural concerns. Where did this aesthetic come from? What attracts you to it?**

I am trained in the material sciences of sculpture. That means that almost anything, materially, will captivate me. Tools of all sorts are my friends: saws, drills, fasteners, hammers. I have worked with computers since roughly 1970. The computer is just another tool to me. I love it for what it allows me to do: paint with stitches. And, of course, it is great for email, databases, inventory systems and photo editing.

Some years ago, I discovered a “blue” unlike any blue I had ever seen before. I had never considered myself a colorist or a color hoarder... but I had to possess that blue! That “ultra” ultramarine blue was being stitched out on a computer aided embroidery machine at the Minnesota State Fair. It took several years of grant writing and loans to buy the equipment, get the training, and put in the hours of experiment, discovery, failure, and success to get to where I am today: at play in the fields of color perception!

So now I design images in the computer using specialized software.

It is a form of drawing in stitches that combines aspects of both Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator. I transfer the design to the embroidery machine, assign the colors and stitch. The stitch-out creates a “module.” From the “module(s)” I proceed to create the final piece, using whatever other materials are necessary to complete the idea.

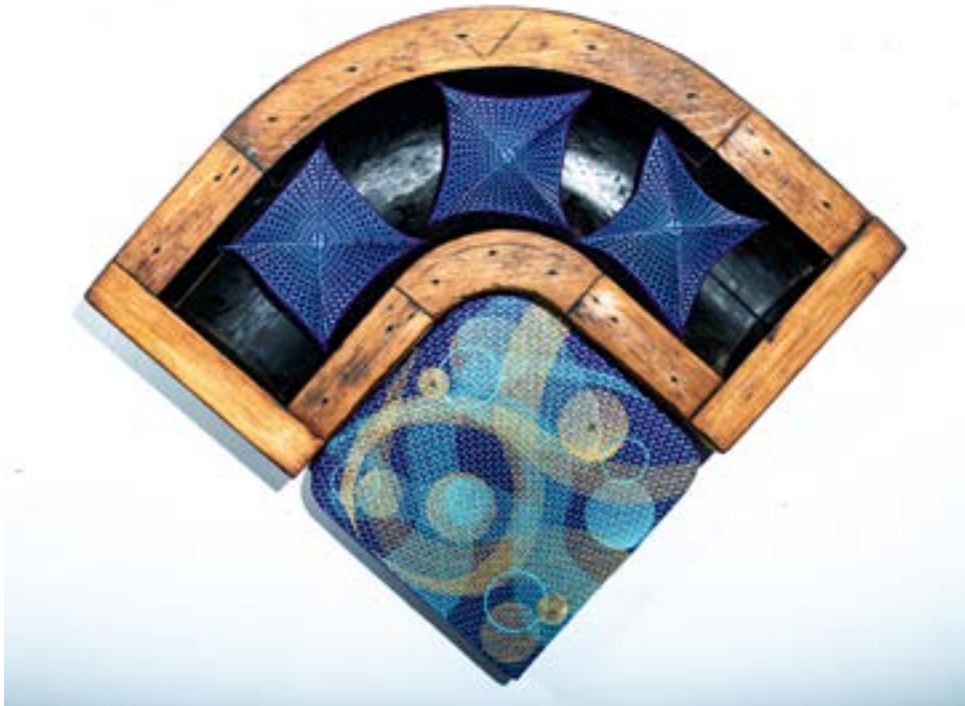
I work in this field because of the revolutionary (mind-blowing) color possibilities. Each thread provides multiple tones of a single color because of the unique triangular structure of the thread. When the thread-color choices are made in relation to other threads and the background color of the fabric, colorwork unlike anything I have ever worked with is available.

Using a minimal number of colors and basic techniques I create sparkling, changeable chromas. I exploit the physics of light as it interacts with the structure of the triangular embroidery thread. The light scatters in multiple directions off the sides of the triangular thread, creating different tones and saturations of the base color.

I also exploit the science of optics, relying, like the French painter Seurat, on our brain’s ability to optically mix spots of color in close physical proximity with one another. Further relying on the principles of color as taught by Joseph Albers and Johannes Itten et al, I exploit the vibratory effects of complementary colors and close saturation split complements. All of this creates a real-time, changeable optical environment activated by the viewer’s movement from side to side as they view the artwork.

However, it was hard to soften the mechanical nature of the machine-made stitches. I called on my deep background which includes painting, collage and assemblage to find multiple ways of combining materials.

*“The work invites people to slow down, engage in a place of wonder, enter a more contemplative state, giving themselves time to fall in love with this world and each other again.”*



*Firmament*  
 Mediums: Digital embroidery and found objects  
 Size: 21 w x 26 h x 4 d

**5. The sculptural piece Infinite Marker has a very unique and distinct visual effect. What is the concept behind it? How do you choose the color combinations?**

Despite my use of “high technology,” I really do work very intuitively. The concept going into any project is very fuzzy and the stitching is only the first step. I have been working for a couple of years with the concept of using beauty to change hearts. We live in a quickly disintegrating world. All my work right now is about providing opportunities for people to fall in love with the earth and each other again. Currently the work tends to focus on aspects of climate change like the tides, storms, navigation, mapping.

Also, there is a lot of waste in digital embroidery. I try to use everything I produce or find an agency that receives donations of materials. Infinite Marker was developed from left over stitching. I had stitched several round compositions in a variety of sizes for another project. This rather large circle remained.

Surprisingly, there are only 2 thread colors of roughly the same saturation in this piece: a light turquoise and a bright ochre. The design was stitched out on deep purple felt, a complement to the ochre. The embroidery design was made very open, allowing the background color to interact. The effect of layering these close saturation colors against a strong complement is magnified by the reflective nature of the triangular cross section of the thread. Light scatters, shifting the chroma. I design the work to enhance this optical shimmer.

***“The current mission of Susan Hensel Gallery is to represent a group of mid-west artists who share an emphasis on materiality in their work.”***

**6. In 2000 you began your curatorial practice and currently have a gallery entitled the Susan Hensel Gallery in Minneapolis. What can you tell us about that experience?**

I have been involved in artist run galleries for a long time. It began with Wyrd Sisters, a teaching and exhibition business I had with two friends in the 1990's. I moved on with two other artists to The Art Apartment in East Lansing, MI where, over a two-year period, we introduced the mid-Michigan area to installation and performance art.

In 2004 I moved to Minneapolis, MN, bought a live/work building and opened Susan Hensel Gallery on the first floor on a major street. From 2004-2013 I curated 5-6 group and solo shows per year, with a loose emphasis on experimental and/or political narratives. I wanted to show work that might not easily find a home but that still needed to be seen. I had learned the art of promotion in my former work with artist run spaces.

The current mission of Susan Hensel Gallery is to represent a group of mid-west artists who share an emphasis on materiality in their work. I am now in my second year as an Artsy based gallery and expect to continue for at least one more year. It is not as taxing as running a bricks and mortar gallery. Don't get me wrong. I loved every moment of running this establishment in real life. It was fun. It was creative. However, it was right in the middle of my studio space! It took time and space away from my own work and, on balance, I missed making my own work more than I enjoyed the day-to-day of an in-person gallery.



## 7. As an artist with more than 300 exhibitions under her belt, what advice would you give an artist starting out?

- Show up. Make a mark. Make another mark. Show up in the studio everyday, even if it is just to write in your journal. Almost all artists have jobs outside of their studios. Don't bemoan it Just show-up anyways.
- Develop a body of related work that looks good together
- Don't worry about whether your art is good enough. Just keep working and it will get there.
- Take good photos of that work
- Share your work with all sorts of people
- Share your work on social media
- Collect data on where you would like to show
- Read the art magazines and blogs. Learn what is happening in the art market and imagine where you fit.
- Apply for shows. Set your budget for what you can afford to pay for jury fees on a monthly basis (Please, no more than \$40 per show and do not pay more if you are accepted. The up-front fees and sales are supposed to cover the expenses.) Increase your odds for acceptance by choosing carefully and applying to more than one show each month.
- Expect rejections: lots of them. If you develop a 10% acceptance rate, you are doing well.

Maybe even read this series of blog posts I wrote a couple of years ago about productivity.

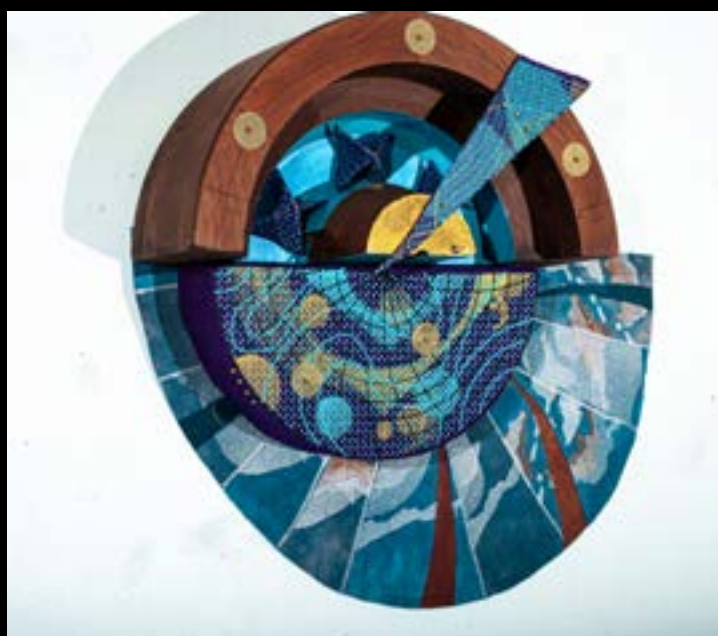


## 8. Where do you feel there is a need for improvement within the artistic community?

For all of us, artist or otherwise, we need to remember that the world does not actually operate well in binaries. I don't find the saying that 'if you are not angry, you are not paying attention, particularly helpful. Anger is useful only if it leads to positive action. It is the first step toward change. It is an indicator of need. Otherwise, it damages you as an individual. As a primitive emotion, it is easy. It is useful. It protects us. But it also is simplistic and can be addictive.

The artworld prides itself on its progressivism, while we still stay in our respective silos. Ageism and misogyny are still rampant as is ableism, racism, colonialism, and toxic capitalism.

The silos surrounding acceptable media and approved educational status still exist as well. We would all do well, IMHO, to accept each other as artists...not Woman artist, not BIPOC artist, not LGBTQ artist...Just as artists.



**Next page-Top**  
*Infinite Marker*  
Digital embroidery and walnut  
Size: 9 x 14 x 1

**Next Page- Bottom**  
*NOAA*  
Digital embroidery, found and mixed media  
Size: 16 h x 20 w x 4 d





# Teapot Trust: Art therapy charity

Written by Emma Thomson





Recently I have been undergoing art therapy.

This article will be about my experience with this.

I have been undergoing art therapy in order to help me deal with some of the feelings and symptoms that I experience in relation to the fact that I have a sleep disorder called Narcolepsy with Cataplexy. Narcolepsy is mainly characterised by Excessive Daytime Sleepiness (EDS). Other symptoms include Cataplexy (muscle weakness & loss of muscle tone); a restless nighttime sleep; sleep paralysis; hypnagogic & hypnopompic hallucinations; and vivid & realistic dreams.

The art therapy has been facilitated by the Teapot Trust, an art therapy charity that works with people with long-term and chronic health conditions. The charity's office is based in Musselburgh in England.

Since starting art therapy, I feel that my creativity has increased. I have had many new ideas for artworks, which has upped my desire to create art. It has also increased my motivation to be productive, which I sometimes struggled with before. My tower piece was one of the pieces I made due to my increased creativity. It was inspired by My Chemical Romance's latest single, 'The Foundations of Decay', and I made it after seeing them in concert in Glasgow on May 30th. I cut out photos of flowers I had taken to create the tower and cut up some old black and white drawings for the rubble at the base of the tower. The flowers are supposed to represent new beginnings, the parts of myself that are healing, and the pieces of old drawings in the rubble, the old parts of myself.



### **Tower artwork**

I have also started to develop ways to use the waste from other art projects to create new artworks, as I want to try to make more sustainable pieces to reduce my work's impact.

One of these pieces includes a paper collage I made with the leftover offcuts from the flower photos I cut out for my previous piece. On top of the white paper, I added wrapping, and tissue paper left over from Father's Day. I enjoyed creating this piece because of the freedom I was given by not having to think about what I was making.

### **Paper Collage**

Another way art therapy has helped me is with processing my nightmares, which can often be graphic and disturbing. It has helped me to visualise and articulate them in a way that doesn't mean having to explain them using words, which I often find quite difficult. This has had the effect of making them seem less real. One of the pieces I created in relation to this was a fire artwork after I had a dream about a fire apocalypse just after the war in Ukraine broke out. I think this was probably triggered by the almost constant coverage of the war and my anxiety surrounding it.

### **Fire artwork**

One theme that has been the subject of quite a few of our sessions is resilience. An art work that I created concerning this theme is a woven work. My art therapist used the analogy of how the different woven pieces were similar to how I weave the other parts of my life together, which I really liked. We talked about how I can use the positive aspects of my life and myself to help me overcome the negative parts and the setbacks that I experience as part of my condition.

### **Weaving work**

I have also learned about and come across new artists, which have helped inspire me. My favourite artist I have come across was Jean-Michel Basquiat, which my art therapist recommended because she thought I'd enjoy his book 'Life Doesn't Frighten Me'. I relate to the work in the book a lot because it reminds me of my nightmares.


I have tried counselling before, but the art therapy sessions have been more beneficial because I think sometimes it's easier to explain things visually than to find the words to describe thoughts, feelings and experiences. I have also enjoyed being able to talk to someone about these things whilst also creating art, and I think it has been beneficial and such a positive experience.

To find out more about the Teapot Trust and the work that they do, please visit their website at: [www.teapot-trust.org](http://www.teapot-trust.org)

*Notions of acceleration pertaining to climate change, 2019*  
*Large scale 3 channel video installation*  
*4K resolution, 10 minute loop*

*Edition of 5 + AP 1*





# Intersecting scientific theories and human creativity: the poetic practice of interdisciplinary artist Kenneth Lambert

Written by Joana Alarcão

Every human action leaves its ferocious mark on witnessing land, the onslaught of conflict, the carelessness of resource consumption and the reinstatement of laws that breed in equality and prejudice. Every little unbearable human fingerprint unleashes multiple ripple effects that cannot be erased, and therein lies the unspoken reality.

The long-standing effort of the United Nations and several global NGOs to implement measures to prevent the loss of biodiversity and human life are still incapable of combating the unprecedented rise of inequality and the severe decline of soil fertility. As we face a global food crisis due to climate-related events and human conflict, we are painfully reminded of how biodiversity is essential to human welfare.

Not only do the most vulnerable communities have to face the current conflict's base effects on the economy and food prices, but climate-related events are driving millions of people off their homelands and making hectares of land infertile.

Exploring these changing topographies of natural and human atmospheres, South African-born artist Kenneth Lambert conducts an experimental practice, creating installations, films, expanded painting and digital creations instilled with current social issues and contemporary rising anxieties. By intersecting science and technology, Lambert's process-led practice is a poetic interpretation of human creativity and its surrounding environments.

**Your practice is rooted in the notions of experimentation along the lines of disintegrated matter and the articulations that reflect the human condition. For the ones who are not familiar with your artistic practice, can you describe it?**

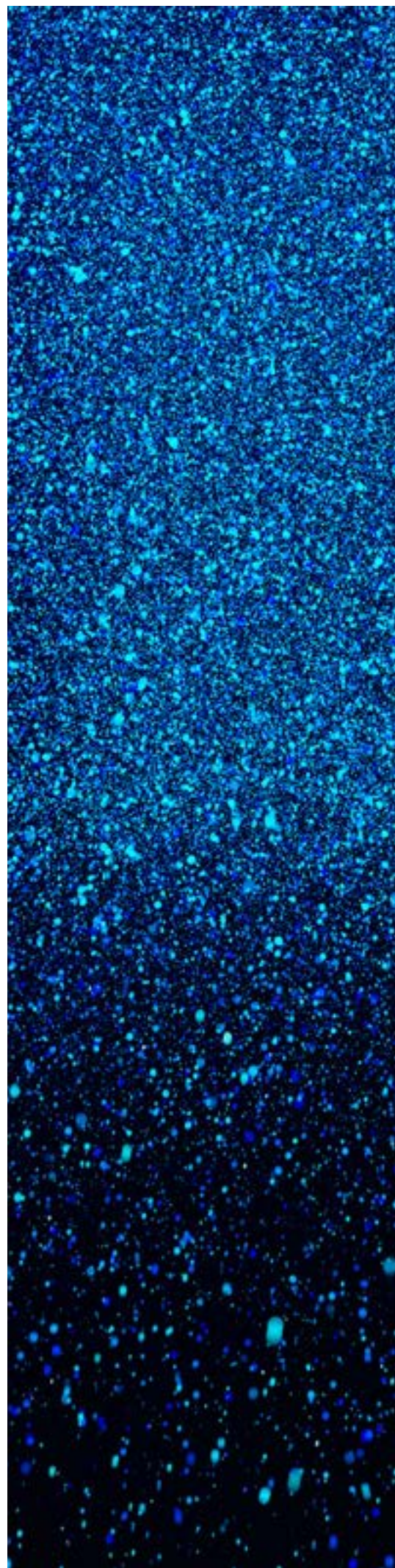
The easiest way to describe it is that I use technology to explore the stuff that affects us daily. Mental health is a crucial theme in my work and the origin of most thought lines. It has led me to convey my anxiety about the climate to my uneasy relationship with technology and privacy. Most recently, my early childhood displacement from my country of birth has led me to investigate the treatment of refugees in first-world countries.

**Most of your work is a merge between conceptual experimentation and science / technology. How did you start merging these two fields? How do you put it into practice?**

It just happened that way; my curiosity collided with my experience in digital design and film production. I got some excellent advice 'use the things around you to make art'. As a creative director, my focus has always been on the concept. However, we explored many innovative ways to create, intersect and build experiences around technology. So for me, it seemed like a natural fit.

**As a cross-disciplinary artist, can you lead us through your artistic process?**

My approach is first to establish a critical engagement. From there, I develop the conceptual framework for the project or body of work and then develop its execution which often involves a process of experimentation. There needs to be both conceptual rigour and an openness to explore, so the outcome may not be completely defined. It is fluid but with clear intent.







In your most recent process-led series of work entitled *Incandescent Bloom*, you highlight the process of acceleration, a change in velocity over time and its relation to climate change. Can you explain this notion of the process of acceleration? How do you implement it within the work?

Climate science derived the notion of acceleration. It began as a theme in my practice in response to the past Australian Government's lack of action in this arena. The idea is that change occurs exponentially and more dramatically than you would expect, as in the notion of acceleration. The build-up of carbon in our atmosphere and the increased temperatures have had innumerable repercussions. Every day there are more examples of endangered species and irreversible changes in ecologies; it just keeps accumulating. In the last two years, we have seen more dramatic events due to climate change than in a relatively short period. Australia's devastating fires and floods have brought it home that climate action isn't something we can defer for another decade.

In one of your art statements, you mention that "Perhaps some creative madness will inspire social change by joining the chorus of voices calling for action". Do you believe that art has the power to provoke societal change?

Art can provoke change; I am completing a residency with Amnesty International Australia this month, where I have developed a seven-tier arts strategy. The art strategy includes quick response and longer-term initiatives which deal specifically with AIA's critical areas of interest. It extends across secondary and tertiary education and has partnerships with art institutions. The seventh strategy uses public art and themes of monumentalism to create protest art. I am most excited about that one as I have dedicated the first work to climate change. So YES! I do believe that art has the power to provoke societal change. Getting it built is another story; watch this space.

Can you tell us about your installation entitled *Forest Meditation*? What is the concept behind it? How did you reach the final visual aesthetic?

Forest mediation began purely out of intuition. I was participating in a residency in Finland, and on daily work, I would discover specific areas of the forest sectioned off with yellow forest tape. I found the same material in a local hardware store and stopped at an enclosed and protected area, like a gallery space within the forest, while walking through the woods. The first tree I wrapped with the help of another artist. Over the next three weeks, I would brave the -30 degree temperatures, find my way into the woods, and wrap a tree. I didn't overthink it and was happy for the process to lead me somewhere. When I completed the work, I understood it was about human intervention into the natural world.

The forest was a tree reserve; the biodiversity in the forest had been eradicated over many generations.

When I returned to Sydney, I constructed the film's narrative from the footage and overlaid it with the accelerated colour fields - it came together rather quickly. After releasing it, the response has been fantastic and has helped me grow an online audience. My intention is always to be purposeful, but I have also learnt to trust my instincts even though I might not immediately know where an idea might be going. I know if I am intrigued, it will probably be instructive; I was merely a creative assistant, and the intuitive side was in control of the project.





In 2021 you completed a 3-month residency program at Woodford Academy. What can you tell us about the experience? How much did it impact your artistic evolution?

Woodford was interesting because it was the first time I had dealt directly with Australia's problematic colonisation in my practice. I dealt with it indirectly - by looking at geomorphic time and light but what I was trying to say was that the house itself was of little importance to me but what was there before was of greater importance. I naturally meant the Dhurag people, the original custodians of the land. After that project, another historic house invited me to respond to their site, and I took a more direct line. See 'How can you sleep?'

***“Perhaps some creative madness will inspire social change by joining the chorus of voices calling for action”***

What is the most fundamental thing to be able to create for you?

Creativity itself is a fundamental tool for human existence. I want in my work to create a space, a moment in time to reflect, wonder, and be. I want people to see the world as naively as I do; I want them to experience their humanity and demonstrate care for someone other than themselves through creativity.

Over the years, you have created various creative companies. How did these projects begin? How do they correlate with your artistic process?

I've been fortunate with my life partner to have built two creative businesses around our collective talents. Creativity and hard work have helped us out of some challenging environments growing up in lower socio-economic backgrounds. These firms and experiences have taught me to be ambitious and inventive in realising concepts. I have always aimed for creative excellence in these businesses and have found this rewarding. Growing up, I was always going to be an artist, but first, I had to become a designer, then a filmmaker, which has given me some beneficial professional skills. I see the previous experience as my training to become an artist with unique skills colliding with an ever-curious mind.

**Image: Top**

*Exponential, 2021*

*Material: Concrete painted surfaced timber and steel armature.*

*Installation View: Rooftop building Bund River, Shanghai-China*

*Dimensions: 3.6m x 3.6m x 3.6m*

**Image: Bottom**

*Forest Meditation, 2019*

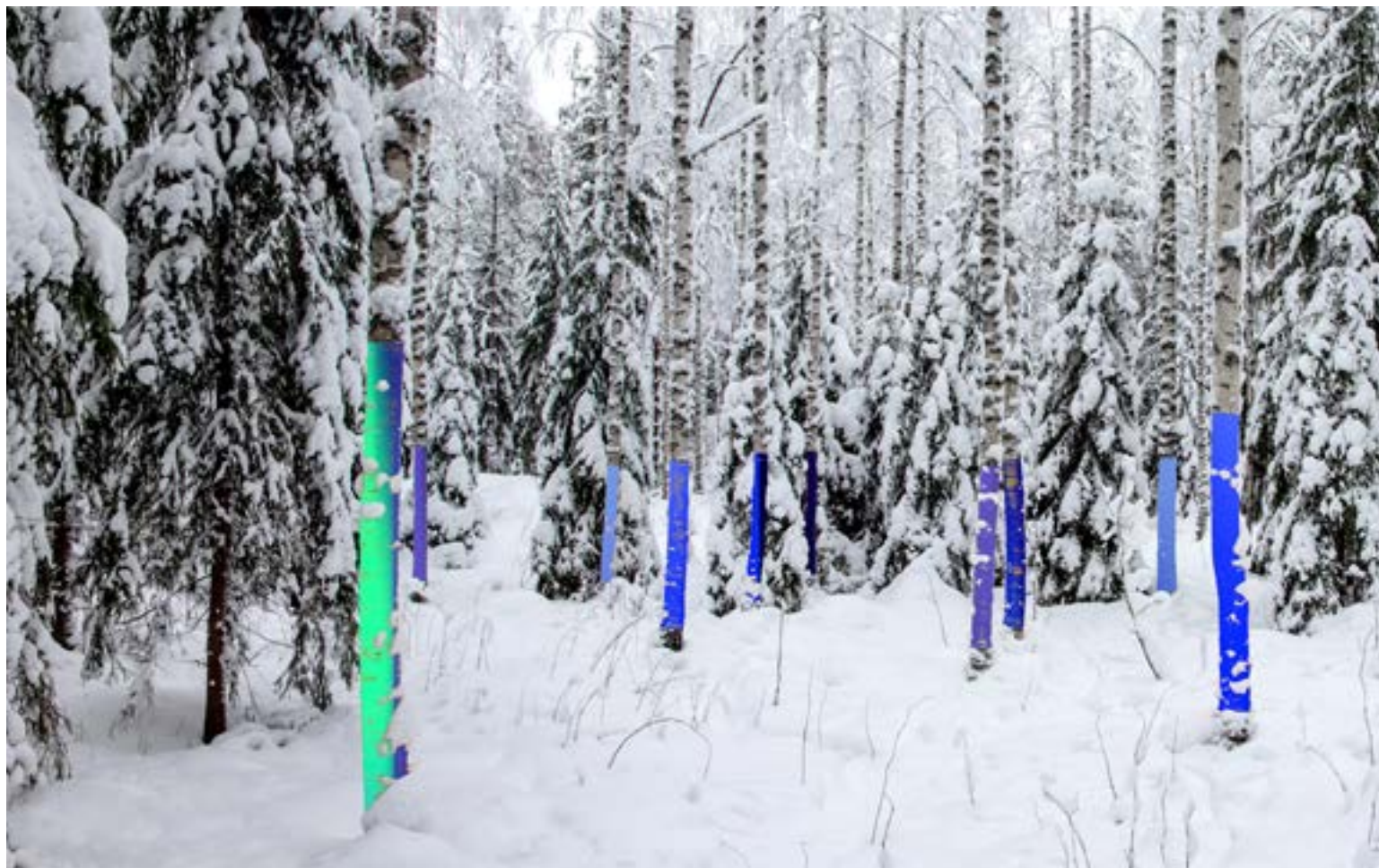
*Edition: 1 of 3 + AP*

*Duration: 10 min with stereo audio mix*

*Work filmed during Artist Residency, January 2019, Arteles Creative Center, Haukijärvi Finland*







**Since 2016 you regularly exhibit in solo and group shows. What advice would you give an artist starting out?**

Just begin and dare to be ambitious for yourself. Any experience you can learn from is a good experience. Find like-minded people to share experiences, and help each other. Art is the act of doing, thinking, and feeling, so get going!

**What is the biggest challenge of being an artist?**

Time, resources and family. My art practice always takes more time than I anticipated. Always. You tend to be in your head a lot more, so it's hard to separate your practice from the everyday world of spending time with family and friends. Luckily I have a very supportive partner who snaps me back into normality, which is very important.

**What have you achieved in your artistic practice that has given you the most joy?**

A recent installation, 'How can you sleep?', is located in Australia's oldest surviving public building and a site of much trauma for the first nations people. Through a critical response, we placed an ingenious voice into the building as a vital aspect of the installation. The response has been excellent, and it felt good to contribute to that debate supporting the rightful recognition of Australia's first national people. Whilst it's not my most significant accomplishment in scale, it has opened me up to a new world and enriched me through cultural experiences working with the Aboriginal community. It encouraged me to seek out my origin story, being born in 'Where the storm clouds gather' (Cape Town, South Africa).





**Image: Top**  
*Forest Meditation*, 2019  
 Edition: 1 of 3 + AP  
 Duration: 10 min with stereo audio mix  
 Work filmed during Artist Residency,  
 January 2019, Arteles Creative Center, Haukijärvi Finland

**Image: Bottom**  
*Data Blue*  
 Notions of anonymity in the information age.  
 Galerie Pompom, April, 2019  
 Grand Prize Winner of One Self - See.me  
 Scope 2019



## Searching for authenticity artist Antonis Tsrouchas reflects individual and societal pressures.

Written by Joana Alarcão



Some say true power lies in one's ability to fit within societal rules while maintaining genuine authenticity. But is it possible to be confined to a set of preconceived notions that don't consider unique individual identities without creating unrelatable personas? The pursuit of true untouched individuality remains only a rare attempted journey. Although some make a mockery of the sense of identity and inclusivity, artists such as Antonis Tsrouchas remind us of the unmatched beauty of one's experience and character.

The forthcoming practice of Greek artist Antonis Tsrouchas whose openness around the subject of personal journey and struggles ruthlessly pursues true identity behind its subject matter, is a clear indicator of the notions above. Indeed, the almost diaristic quality, with hazy compositions and the neutral and contrasting colors of his artistic collection, embodies the realities of an individual searching for a sense of uniqueness and authenticity, questioning our core ability to connect and be truly understood.

The camera's gaze expands to encompass a symbiosis of intimate realities and unspoken identities, an experience beyond the documentation of an individual reality or portrait - it inhabits a shared consciousness that reflects the societal pressures individuals face to create an acceptable persona in order to connect.

Speaking with Tsrouchas, it is clear that his visual aesthetics and identity are intimately related. Deep diving into the concepts behind his projects, Tsrouchas explains his premises and leads us through the challenging journey of an artist and individual making sense of his surroundings and experiences.





### Can you talk about your artistic practice to those who don't know your artistic practice?

Well, I use photography as a basis to create something but am I a photographer? No. I consider myself an Artist - I create a fragment of life. I found it mostly on people. I shoot portraits not for their pretty faces, even if they are indeed pretty, but because they are people and people have an unseen identity. Their memories, their dreams, their experiences. I take that, and I filter it through my eyes - what I see, what I think, what I feel. That's why I always tend to move around the human element in my projects. So, if the question is what is my artistic practice, it's hard to choose one. I just enjoy using every single artistic field in order to communicate what I feel to people.

### What is your relationship with galleries so far? What can you tell us about your experience?

They are good partners. Most of them - at least the galleries that I co-operated with - are galleries with love for the artist and their art. They believe in something. They provide a shelter for your art, a higher place, and a chance for you to speak to your possible audience. And I hope in the future, I will meet more galleries with the same mentality, without political agendas, no money-driven galleries: just pure lust and love for creativity.

### Since your work is deeply connected with your personal atmosphere, how do you approach your creative process? Is it an intuitive moment, or do you already have a composition in mind?

If I learned something in this life, it is that nothing is going according to plan. It doesn't make me sad. I embrace it. I mean, no one planned to be born, no one planned to fall in love. It just happens, in the right place, at the right time, in the location that you are with the mentality that you have at that exact time. So, you can't fail at any plan if you don't have one. The only plan that I personally follow is to be real and spontaneous. That's how I start a project. I gather the elements that surround my life, and I try to get them out with what I feel is genuine and cool. I'm sure if I feel that way, at least a million people will feel the same way.

That's why my art sometimes feels chaotic because there is no composition, no logical order. It just happens, like life.

### What have you been doing recently in the studio? Can you speak a bit about it?

Right now, I give life, emotions and movement to my current portraits through the Deepfake lab. I revisit my photos, and I turn them into videos with music, like a Harry Potter newspaper.

I shoot mostly film now. I find it interesting that something so analogue can be turned into something so futuristic.

**Image top**  
Dropout Bear  
Digital Photography

**Page 34 Image**  
Masks, 2013  
Portrait and photomanipulation.  
Society's "gift" to women.

**Page 35 Image Top Right**  
Theraflu, 2014  
Nikon D3200, 35mm

**Image Bottom Right**  
Complex, 2014  
Digital Photography



**Your photography has a very hazy composition, with neutral and contrasting colors. Where did this aesthetic come from? What attracts you to it?**

Before that question, I really did not notice it, but you are right. It is hazy, and I feel what attracts me to it is the mysticism, in a sense that I don't want my art to be easily understood. When I create, I always think of dreams. They are hazy, and the colors are diverse. I ask- why do some people dream this way and others do not?

It attracts me a lot because I just found it elegant and cool. I don't like reality, so in my world, when I create, I build my own scenes. But I always believed that if something attracts you and you don't know why then it is only right to follow that path.

**In a conversation with The Holy Art, you mentioned, "my biggest hope is that people can understand that I am hiding behind my artwork and ultimately can see me as I truly am." Can you elaborate on that?**

When I was a kid, a teenager, I was a nobody - no girls without money, born in a below middle-class family in a destroyed economic nation. I wasn't the prettiest guy but thanked God I was damaged enough that I changed every year without noticing it. So, I created an idea for myself, a persona in order to protect me, to believe in something. I couldn't find something to live for, but I found something to die for. The chances are that this idea, the persona, replaced me, and it became me. So, in my photos, I hide my fears, I hide my love, my lust, my fetishes. I hide them, but I express them.

**I was pretty taken by the visual impact of your photographic series Gaia. What is the concept behind it, and what attracted you to it?**

The Women. You see, I'm always like them, even if I'm not one. I am always the outsider, the overlooked, the dismissed. I get inspired by women - the way that they move, the way they are. Everything seems so dull and empty without them, and I wanted to create an Ode for them. Like Gaia, the start of everything, the element of all elements, I wanted to give credit and love to the gender that I deeply appreciate - for my mother, my sister, and my girlfriend. The unseen heroes, the birthplace of all births, the life itself.

**You moved from Greece to Germany with your parents to pursue your artistic career. What can you tell us about that experience?**

It was the most damaging experience but also the most important one. I got humbled there. I felt like I didn't matter. I felt that I was what I was before starting making art. The life of an immigrant hides something unusually beautiful. You are at the bottom. It's you against the world. Nobody is expecting something from you. You are free. I did several dead-end jobs there. Mostly, I hung out with other immigrants. I had friends from Somalia, Afghanistan, Vietnam, and Syria. Places that I heard about only in some movies or on the news, and I was so so so similar to them, and they were so similar to me. Cause we were at the same place, low down below. Overall, a good experience taught me a lot of things. I met friends, I met artists, I dreamed, and I was alive.



**Art can reach and influence various societal dimensions. What do you think is the role of the artist in society?**

There are few artists today. An artist MUST have an ideology. An artist must have passion. An artist creates for people and Gods, not for money or fame or recognition. Unfortunately, the political system forces society to promote artists they use for their propaganda. Like Andy Warhol said, "Art in the future will be used only for propaganda", and we are living it today. There is no place for an artist in today's world. If you chose to be an artist, you chose a lonely path. If you are lucky enough to make it and you stay true, then you have a chance to change the norm. Until then, an artist is nothing. Even his death counts more than his life.

**How do you manage your time between your art practice and networking? What do your days look like?**

"The days are bright, filled with pain, enclose me into your gentle rain"

My days look like every day of an ordinary person, and I tend to follow this path more and more because I represent the unrepresented, the unseen, the everyday woman and man. That's how I feel my vibe to be calm around those people. I wake up, I go to my everyday work, I speak and interact with everyday people, we speak about everyday problems, I laugh a bit, I get upset a bit, and at night, my ideas come to life. When everything is settled, when everything is expressed, I can go to sleep to start over again.

**Where do you see your practice evolve?**

My craft is already where I wanted it to be. My idea, my dream is to create audiovisual interactions with the audience's theatrical events. Like a ceremony, something mystical and holy out of this world. Where you and the audience can be free without chains and boundaries, maybe a mask will free us all. That's where I am for. That is where I see my art further evolving.





*Image*

*Rukban Series #3 - Sandstorm, 2022.*

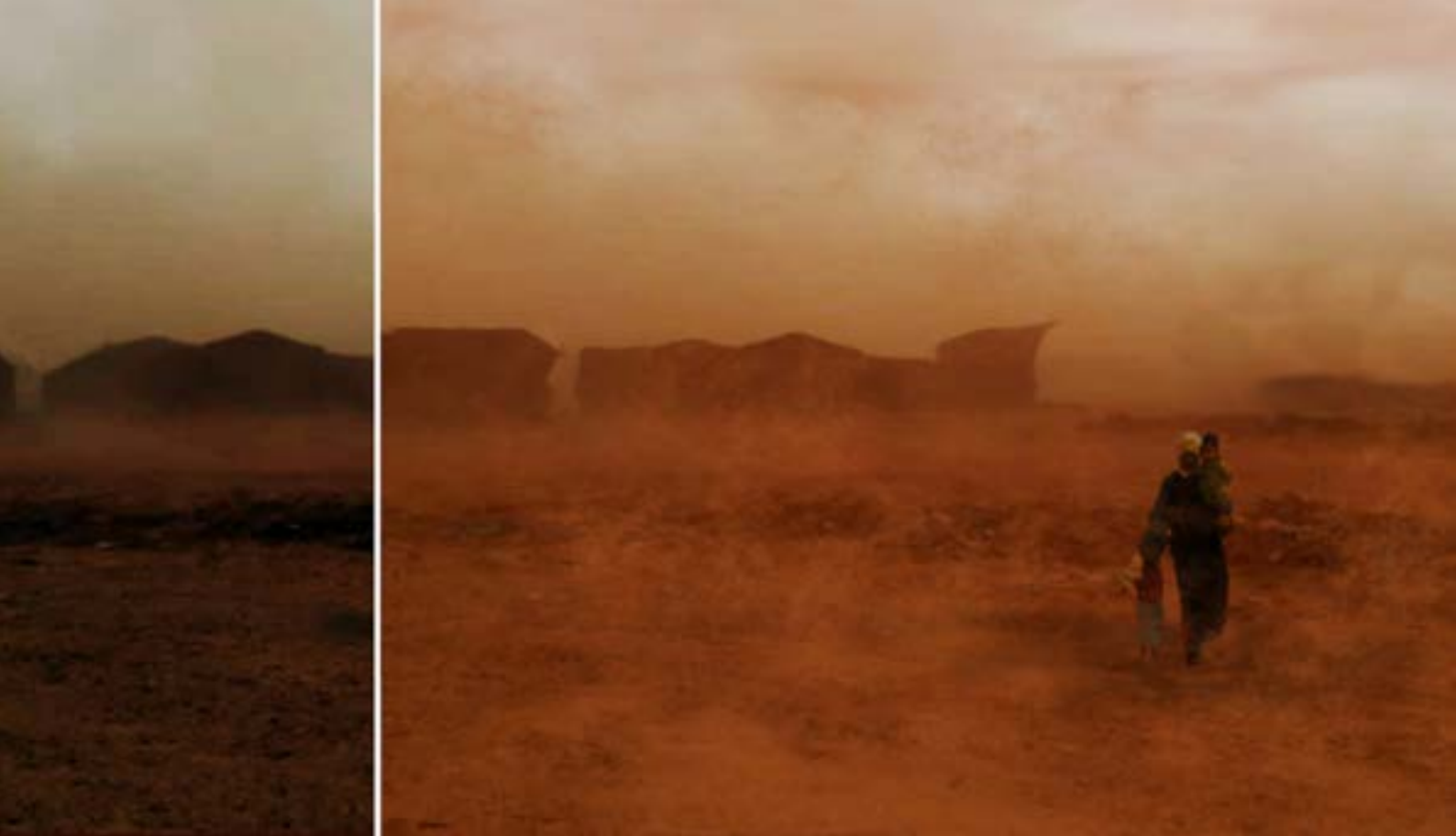
*Mixed Media: Digital painting, pastel and pencil.*





# Questioning current global atmospheres: artist Ken Clarry develops societal and non-violent political art interventions

Written by Joana Alarcão



Since the beginning of this year, armed conflicts repetitively yield destruction and havoc; climate instability inflicts food insecurity and poverty on civilian populations across the globe, and inequality permeates dialogue roots exposing the government's incapacity to promote and allocate overall welfare.

A global social, economic and political crisis leaves their indelible mark and the grim feeling of uncertainty for the future of international societies ripples across many individuals' minds. As the war in Ukraine uncovers our intercommunity, millions risk plunging into food insecurity and poverty due to all three dimensions of finance, food, and energy emergencies.

According to the UN Global Crisis and Response Group, inequalities between and within countries are skyrocketing as higher energy and food prices, growing inflation, export restrictions, and tightening financial conditions afflict most countries. These issues risk undermining all progress in climate action, implementation of SDGs and COVID-19 recoveries. In the face of these abundant and intersecting challenges, global social-political atmospheres are at their worst, leading me to a fundamental question. Can an individual claim untainted voluntary choice and freedom when in equality and discrimination have a seat at the table? How will people withstand another crisis when we live in a world of staggering inequality, one about as great as it was in the early 20th century?

Artist Ken Clarry asks similar questions, examining the political and global cooperative atmospheres with a cross-disciplinary practice that makes us wary of concrete moral ideologies. Believing in the strength of artistic intervention to change the current narratives due to its image-based principles, Clarry investigates the premises of ethical conundrums and authenticity - challenging the role of the artist and individual to change the global atmosphere.

## For the ones who are not familiar with your artistic practice, can you describe it?

It is societal and non-violent political art intervention. I trained at university in the traditional fine art practices of painting, print-making and sculpture and completed a two-year course on professional photography at UCL, now the University of Westminster. Around this time, I was also working as a food and still-life photographer and doing landscape photography on weekends using large format cameras.

My current work makes use of all of these disciplines and has expanded into new technologies. I think of this work as neo-generative or post-digital art. Like anything neo- or post-, it just means a thing that comes after something else, to which the practitioner refers back as a reference point. So, although I usually say my work is lens-based, it's also mixed media - not any one particular medium or any one particular method. This could be a pinhole cardboard box camera, a digital camera, a mobile phone camera, a computer camera or scanner. I don't mind what I use as long as I can make an image that I can use as a foundation for my final images. I also draw and paint with a brush in the traditional way or paint digitally using computer software. Sometimes, I manipulate or montage digitally and over-paint or over-draw with pencils, pens or pastels once the computer image is printed.

For me, the important thing is the image, not the medium or the image-maker; they are really the facilitators, purely helping the image to emerge as an autonomous thing. There is some thoughtful writing around this subject, if your readers are interested - I suggest they begin by reading W.J.T. Mitchell's book *Image Theory* and David Hockney's *Secret Knowledge*.

### Top Image

*Rukban Series #1 - Sandstorm, 2021.*

*Mixed Media: Digital painting, pastel and pencil.*





*“Art thinks,  
struggles with  
some of the most  
important ideas and  
issues of its time  
and is often difficult  
to understand.”*

## Most of your work focuses on contemporary life's societal, political and environmental issues. Can you tell us what motivated you to focus on these issues?

I think it was Peter Kennard who, when asked why he produced art that focused on politics and societal dysfunction, replied, "why wouldn't I? That's the society in which we live". Like Kennard, I also believe that, as part of a community/society, artists have a responsibility to respond to and question with art intervention what we see and feel as injustice, oppression and corruption, or even just plain mad and absurd.

As a global society we have to act with unity and not as isolationists or with tribal xenophobia. We have to ask questions of our politicians and leaders relevant to the time in which we live, and they govern, and require them to answer honestly without waffle or hidden agenda. Sadly, this is not easy to achieve. If politicians get it wrong either through incompetence or self-centred political interest, those who make the decisions must be challenged and properly held to account.

The question that often comes up is: Can art really do anything to help change societal malfunction and political corruption? I think it can. Politicians and world leaders are image-conscious, and art, perhaps, might be able to challenge popular perceptions and encourage people to question what the politicians want us to see and believe. Ours is an image society, we are bombarded by millions of images every day. Most people are moved by imagery, and sometimes they are spurred into action after seeing it. An example of this is the 1970s image taken by the war photographer Nik Ut of the young Vietnamese girl running down a road naked and screaming with pain after her village was bombed by the US-backed South Vietnamese Air Force and her clothes and body were burned by Napalm. This image, along with a photograph of the bodies of Vietnamese villagers said to have been massacred by US soldiers at Mỹ-Lai, are believed to have been a catalyst for turning popular US support against military involvement in Indochina.

Another example is the 2020 image of the five-year-old Syrian boy, Alan Kurdi, whose lifeless body was photographed washed up on a Turkish beach. After fleeing the violence in Syria and trying to reach the 'safety' of Europe, the boy, his brother and mother were all drowned after the rubber dinghy the family were in capsized shortly after leaving the coast of Turkey. The image was quickly picked-up by the media outlets. It caused a massive worldwide outpouring of remorse and arguments about the limits of representation and Europe's asylum seekers policy.

After the public outrage began to peter out, the Chinese artist Ai Weiwei set the cat amongst the pigeons by being photographed lying prostrate on a beach in a similar position to Alan. This time criticism arose about art exploiting suffering, and Ai Weiwei was criticised for aestheticising the boy's image. Ai Weiwei claimed his image was a political comment about the migrant crisis that caused the death of the boy, and his intervention was in sympathy and support for the family and all migrants. The jury is out on this subject; but artists have a difficult job deciding where the moral and ethical limits lie. We have to challenge our own moral standards and the reasons for making art. But, I think cultural theorists like Adorno can help us build up a reason we can be comfortable with, even if it's not complete.

This might be a bit over the top or wishful thinking, but some philosophers credit art and aesthetics with powers beyond what most people would think of as 'normal' or credible. Kant, Hegel and other early thinkers, and later, Adorno, Deleuze, Foucault, Lyotard, etc., all proposed notions that art moves people and society in strange ways. And that some artists can sense the mood and express the pain, uncertainty and underlying disquiet of the society within which they live. They also maintain that certain artists, such as Joseph Beuys, Anselm Kiefer and Francis Bacon, for example, were kind of shamans, societal prophets reflecting and prophesising the future.

This is a tall order and heavy burden for the chosen few, and is difficult to comprehend. I'm still working through this idea, but I think the notions are interesting and worth exploring.

## How important is the conceptual and research part of the artistic process to your work?

Good question.

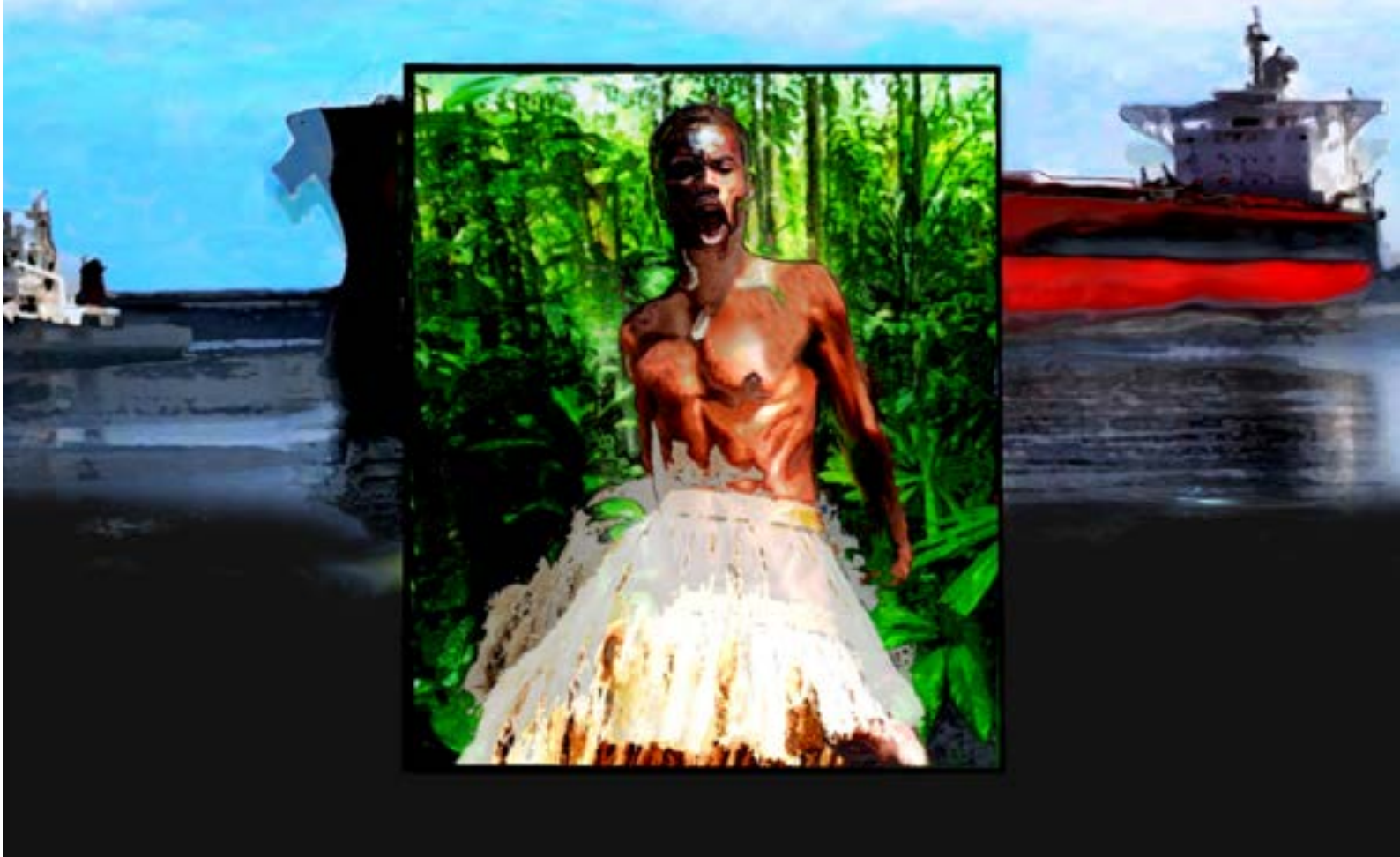
As we discuss these topics, I think it's becoming obvious that I think the conceptual, the intangible and the opaque are intrinsically linked to the research needed to support or understand the problems being studied. For me, the research, the working through and thinking about the subject that underpins the art/image practice are very important. Not only do I get pleasure from reading and the discovery of facts and philosophical ideas supporting them, they seem to give meaning to the images I make. In *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, there is an interesting discussion between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze about the importance of theory and practice and their intrinsic linkage. Foucault and Deleuze agreed that theory and practice need each other. They bounce off each other's dynamic. Like a thrown stone skipping across water, theory instigates practice and vice-versa.

## In your most recent work entitled Pūpūkāhi I Holomua - Unite and move forward as one, you highlight the Pacific Islanders' long tradition of living in harmony with the natural world. How did you come across this subject, and how does it relate to you?

This project came about from a response to an art exhibition call by the World Health Organisation to highlight the environmental impact of global warming and sea level rise in the Western Pacific. I was fortunate to have images included. The call caught my attention because of my interest in environmental and ecological issues, especially those brought about by conflict and war. It seems hard to imagine now, but in the Cold War period and up to the 1990s, the Pacific region was used as a massive and insecure testing ground for nuclear weapons by the US, Britain and France. This subject is too vast to go into here, but the real and future impact on the lives of the Pacific peoples, and the rest of us, is frightening.

As we know now, if you release thousands of tons of uncontrolled nuclear energy into the atmosphere, there are going to be some serious problems and repercussions. Added to that is the fact that, in an attempt to clean up, the US buried tons of nuclear waste on Runit Island and covered the waste with a concrete dome that is still there today.





***“Politicians and world leaders are image-conscious, and art, perhaps, might be able to challenge popular perceptions and encourage people to question what the politicians want us to see and believe.”***

There are reports that this dome, called locally, the Coffin, is now becoming unstable with cracks developing, raising fears of further pollution.

It’s depressing. The mess that we find ourselves in today is almost beyond comprehension. How did this happen? How can world leaders dismiss so readily the disaster heading towards us at an alarming rate? The environmentalist David Attenborough, whom we all admire and trust, said it’s not too late but warned that world leaders must act now. The trouble is, will they take any notice?

The one positive in this story is the Pacific Island groups of environmental activists who are trying to bring about a change in the world’s dependence of fossil fuel that harms the planet and its ecosystems. By staging a series of non-violent protests, the Islanders hope to bring world attention to what is happening to their Island homes as they struggle under the challenges of global warming and climate change. Their effort is truly admirable, and their message to live in harmony with nature and not abuse or pollute the planet just makes sense. We all know this is true, when we look at the dark clouds of smoke and steam containing thousands of tons of CO2 and other toxic waste from coal-fired power stations. Also, look at the waste plastic that ends up in the sea which, consumed whole or as micro-plastic by sea creatures, threatens their life and potentially enters the food chain.

We all need to remember that the Pacific Islands are at the forefront of sea level rise and the effects of climate change. What is happening there is a barometer for the world, and it should be sounding alarm bells. The Islanders’ voices need to be heard; if we ignore what they are saying ... well, you work it out.

**And, what about Pūpūkāhi I Holomua? What does it mean, and what prompted you to adopt it as a title for your project?**

Pūpūkāhi I Holomua is a Hawaiian phrase that in English means, Unite and move forward as one. The inspirational Barack Obama used it in a speech he gave at COP26 encouraging world leaders to work together to combat climate change. He said, “When you want to paddle a canoe, it’s better that everyone paddles in the same direction at the same time. This is the only way to move forward”.

**You have had your work exhibited in several galleries across the globe. What advice would you give an artist starting out?**

Don’t expect it to be easy; try not to get disillusioned if your application is rejected, and don’t take it personally. In between the rejections there will be acceptances. But remember, as the world becomes more internationally connected, galleries are flooded with applications.

Some exhibition calls I applied to had several thousand applications to fill 20 to 30 opportunities. Having run my own gallery, I know how difficult it can be to remain objective when deciding on whom and what to include in exhibitions. I also know you don’t get much time to get your message across, so try to get to the point quickly.

**Top Image**

*Pūpūkāhi I Holomua, Unite and move forward as one’,*

2022

*Mixed media: Digital painting, acrylic, pencil and*

**Can you tell us about your series entitled “the Rukban project”? What is the concept behind it?**

It is a project to help bring focus to a human tragedy, sadly a tragedy repeated in many parts of the world as migration increases. Rukban is a refugee camp in a demilitarised zone situated in a remote arid triangle of desert close to the shared borders of Jordan, Syria and Iraq. The camp is officially unregulated, a so-called ‘City of Clay’ no-man’s land run by a council of local chiefs. Estimates vary, but at its height, the camp was thought to contain around 80,000 people, mainly Syrian families fleeing the violence of their homeland. The camp has few amenities; those that do exist, shops, medical facilities, etc., were mostly set-up and run by the people themselves. The refugees live in tents or makeshift dwellings constructed with whatever building materials can be found locally, including mud to make bricks dried by the sun, i.e., ‘City of Clay’.

As is well known, the whole area is politically volatile and unstable, and due to security concerns, the border crossings surrounding the camp on all three sides have been closed and secured by armed guards. Blockaded on each side, what and who goes in or out of the camp are tightly controlled. Vital provisions of food and medicines are sparse and politically regulated. This made the dangers of smuggling medicines and food across militarised borders often the only option. The conditions and life in the camp are said to be desperate. To make things worse, weather conditions, such as sandstorms and rainstorms, are common occurrences, and the high temperatures in the summer and bitterly cold winters take their toll on the health of the inhabitants, especially the young and old. With no open border crossing into Jordan or Iraq, and thought to face death and repression if they returned to Syria, the people remaining in the camp feel caught in a void. They say they are abandoned and forgotten, left to exist however they can. Critics claim that unless Rukban gets substantial international help, the people living in the camp will slowly starve to death. A sobering thought for us all.

**Your bio mentions that your work “is a combination of disciplines that uses aesthetic notions of making art alongside the research and analysis of key texts”. Can you explain the thinking behind this line of thought?**

This is another of those subjects we could spend the whole of this interview discussing, and even then, there will likely be more questions to answer. I have already described my art practice as mixed-media, but it is also interdisciplinary, inter-philosophical with a small p. Adorno and other philosophers claimed that art is philosophical in that it is inseparable from and similar to philosophy.

Art thinks, struggles with some of the most important ideas and issues of its time and is often difficult to understand.

The issues that concern me and that I challenge through my art practice throw up a multitude of questions about truth, ethics and morality. This is not just in the subject matter I research, but issues also surface about aesthetics in the making of art and how we understand it. Questions arise about what art is, what art does, does some art aestheticise or exploit its subject matter, as Ai Weiwei was accused of doing. We have to challenge our motives, ask ourselves if the ‘reward’ is self-centred or altruistic. The reward, of course, doesn’t need to be financial; it can also be egocentric or malicious. These are difficult questions to answer honestly, and the only recourse for me is to read what philosophers, writers and thinkers have to say. Then to read more interpretations and critiques, book and exhibition reviews, and slowly build-up a personal interpretation of what things, theories and concepts could mean. I say, could mean because no one person is right. Seamus Heaney had the right idea: on his eightieth birthday, he was asked what single piece of advice he would give his students. “Believe everything your tutors tell you”, he said, “but always be sceptical”.



**Recently you participated in the 2022 Culturally Arts Collective – Mutagens, Printed Book in Washington DC. What can you tell us about the experience? How did this partnership begin?**

The book is an anthology of artists’ work exploring the term Mutagens, the sale of which will be used to fundraise for a Ukrainian charity appeal. I have to admit Mutagen was a new term for me. It seems Government and State institutions use it to describe dissenters and insurgents – basically anyone who disagrees with what their leaders are doing. When I researched the term, I discovered that it has a much broader application and use. It is more generally used to describe chemical or physical changes caused by secondary toxic substances entering living organisms that are able to change or mutate DNA. So, a Mutagen might be drug-related, such as in smoking tobacco and ingesting chemicals or radiation, and theoretically, as used in the book, as a political concept.

Turned on its head, the term seemed to fit a project I have been working on for a while about political untruth, that is, lying to hide or avoid accountability. Mutagens, then, become the leaders and politicians who are trying to mislead people and influence or unbalance world order while hiding behind a mask of deception. Politicians love media imagery and attention, but what you see is not always what you get; often hidden is a sinister agenda and a Mutagen that needs to be exposed. So, like most opportunities, it began from two ideas coming along together at the same time.





**What is, for you, the most fundamental thing to be able to create?**

I guess that would be a connection, or inaudible dialogue with the audience or viewer of the work. Sometimes this comes easily and instinctively, at other times, it's a slow burn, and at others it just flickers out. The problem is always that, in order to achieve a connection, an interaction, there needs to be something in the work that sparks an interest in the viewer to look beyond the image. Something beyond the aesthetic, what some philosophers called the sublime. Walter Benjamin called this 'Aura' – a phenomenon that transports us to another world or time. Earlier I mentioned Foucault and Deleuze's theory about practice and theory bouncing off each other's dynamic or energy. That's what I am trying to describe here, some kind of energy that sparks from the image to the viewer and sets off a chain reaction.

Barthes called this spark Punctum, that he wrote, shoots out 'like an arrow from the image to my heart'. We can all recognise the experience Barthes writes about, when we look at an image and become engrossed in the memory it evokes. At such times it's almost as if we are transported into a different time zone while physically remaining where we are in the real world. So, for me, the most fundamental thing to be able to create in art is energy. However, this is probably the most difficult thing to achieve and something we fail to do much of the time.

**Currently, you are a visiting Fellow at the University of Brighton. How is it going? What have you gained from the experience so far?**

I was delighted to have been granted a Visiting Research Fellowship at Brighton; at last, I had the freedom to explore my subjects in my own way. I studied for my MA and PhD at the University of Brighton, so I knew it had a fantastic library and a good network of doctoral students and tutors, all producing interesting research. Sadly, COVID arrived, the university more or less closed its doors, and everyone retreated to working from home. Although I still progressed my fellowship project, *The environmental and ecological impact of conflict and war*, it was a bit of a restricted experience. I am used to working alone and being self-motivated. However, I was hoping to make more use of the facilities, especially the library, and to be able to exchange ideas with colleagues and friends at the university. As an alternative, I turned my attention to the Internet to disseminate some of the research outcomes, and online exhibitions and magazines have been a lifeline for the project.

**What is the biggest challenge of being an artist?**

Getting your work shown and your message across.

**As an artist, what would you say is your biggest accomplishment?**

I guess this is, being awarded a PhD by the University of Brighton. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise; completing a PhD is a challenge. Universities don't hand them out willy-nilly; and most supervisors are vigorous and thorough. It can take several years, in my case six, of hard work, with one's practice and ideas under constant scrutiny and strongly challenged. There are times when you doubt yourself and your ability to see it through. But then one day it's there, the finished work. It was a great experience, not all the time, of course, but ultimately fulfilling and rewarding.

*Top Image*

*Rukban Series #2 - Sandstorm, 2022.*

*Mixed Media: Digital painting, pastel and pencil.*

# Embodying an Ecopsychological perspective, artist Itit Cheung builds a conversation around the notions of diversity, connection and Human rights.

Written by Joana Alarcão

Most of the moral conundrums of today's society are rooted in the premises of individual rights and connection within diversity. Despite the tremendous effort of several activist groups, organizations and governments to balance the global scale, topics of human rights and inclusivity still engulf much of the conversation - and the art world is not immune to its touch.

In Hong Kong, a reform of mentalities and policies regarding racial equality has been the talk of the town. As with every significant reform, their precursors have unprecedented roots in several societal pillars, making it an uphill task to sprout meaningful change. Hong Kong's problem with racial discrimination is no different, as its grounds rest within systemic racial barriers more than at an individual level.

Although Hong Kong has a long history of diversity, its social blueprint has always been divided into groups and communities with highly distinct cultures and languages. Most reports show that one does not interact beyond their community, which creates biases and wariness or plain avoidance of those who are dissimilar. We can debate the importance of integration and equality, although the discourse prevails in acknowledging and preserving different cultures, languages, appearances, family customs and languages that makeup one's core identity.

Indeed these are the challenges that Hong Kong policies encounter, as they must take into consideration several factors such as equal representation, language barriers and ditching the majority mentality as every individual has its unique cultural print.

A combination of arguments must be laid out regarding individual rights and identities, stretching the premise that diversity enriches and strengthens a nation. Although a concept best summarizes the issues, there is a need for connection when building a healthy nation - the connection with our individuality, others and the world surrounding us.

This alluring notion doesn't go unnoticed by Thai-Chinese artist Weera It ITTITEERARAK, whose cross-disciplinary practice focuses on climate issues and the post-pandemic era to bring awareness to ecophysiology and the importance of the environment's connection with humans. These explorations build a conversation around the societal problems of diversity, identity and human rights.

**For the ones who are not familiar with your artistic practice, can you describe it?**

Most of the time, I work with lens-based media, which can be in pre-production and also post-production processes. To try my best to "play" with the medium itself, the play at titude is an essential part of my progression, a workflow to keep going back and forth and explore the possibilities that a lens-based media could bring me more than its functions.

I hope this makes sense, as I do not think the media is a tool only designed for a particular purpose. We have the freedom to use it in many different ways. Like a pencil, we can draw, sketch, write, or even use it as a pointer, spin, roll, and throw it. A lens-based media is likewise a bridge to connect me and the surroundings and make sense of how I perceive the world. In recent years, I have merged the approach of artistic practice with installation, drawings, computer programming and performances.

*"The feeling is essential, as the artist is always the first audience enjoying the artwork, turning the material into something creative, and art becomes a language for communication."*

*"Art is like something between me and the world, and the way of seeing this world is artistic to everyone in my sense."*





The Amount of Plastic Bottle and Styrofoam in a Beach Cleanup at Tong Long Island, 2020

Digital Poster with hand-drawn

3285 PX × 5857PX & 10800 PX × 2400PX





Currently, you are focusing on ecopsychology, the relation between wild, domestic & technological. Can you tell us how you incorporate this concept within your work?

To be honest, I have not thought of how I incorporate the concept within my work, but more about how the environment affects me. In other words, I am trying to reflect on myself and analyze my psyche to understand the feelings or emotions I have while living in a situation where everybody lives.

And sometimes, it is all about intuition. I see nature and technology as a spectrum, not a dualism, in this digital age. Especially in Hong Kong, where I am based right now, the city is surrounded by mountains and seas; within about an hour in any direction, we can visit the wild nature by public transport.

At the same time, facing the restrictions of the pandemic limited our activities. Seeing the news on social media from around the world without being there is a kind of telepresence. The concept is living within us now. An Anthropocene is often heard as how we affect the environment, but also as the world affects us as ecopsychology, the interaction of us and the ecosystem.

One of your recent works, entitled *When I can see you through the fence only*, it's a work where the concepts of inquiry and quiet obsession seem to be interlinked. What can you tell us about it?

I love the phrase quiet obsession you use to describe it. I researched the local abandoned place with its history and how we connect with the site across time. A question on the crisis of consciousness leads to sustainability thoughts of experience, ecology and evolution, and emotions to bond with the environment.

Fences are commonly seen on different bridges these days in Hong Kong after the past social movement, which is a comparison to the fences used to protect, block or separate something. I tried to connect myself with places, showing the viewers how to make sense of themselves with the past by revisiting the site continuously for eight weeks.

How important is the process behind an artistic creation?

From an ecopsychological perspective, I can see how human-to-human interaction has an intimate relationship with nature and human interaction. An analog camera with a fixed setting is used as a bridge to embody the wild, domestic and technology together. Although we accept the notion of evolution, nature is a resource, and we depend upon it physically and psychologically for well-being.

Beyond a series of photographs, it is an action or a performative event, including a process of embodiment. And expanding senses through the media or medium can extend our capability and free us from limitations. So for me, the process is a really important part, sometimes, it is even more than the outcome, and I keep being patient in the process. Only take your time. Take it slow. We can become more sensitive to the environment and would not miss what we actually need, both physically and psychologically.

**Image-Bottom**  
*Dabble in Water, 2020*  
*Underwater Analog Photography*

*A series of 10*



**Can you tell us about your ongoing project, Symbiosis with Weeds? What is the concept behind it? How do you approach the creative process?**

The project started in 2020 (the pandemic). I moved to stay in a bungalow with my wife and a dog. I was in my daily routine, walking my dog around the neighbourhood, and a huge plant caught my eye.

Then I started to notice more different weeds that grew around the community and how they intertwined with the architecture and the relationship with the environment. I was more like an observer. Observing my dog sniffing everywhere and leading me to engage more. I am still obsessed with walking around different areas and seeing those tiny hints told by the weeds of how the community lives. Where I understand more about the urban structure, at the same time, to make sense of being a person living as a part of the environment...or make sense of the relationship between myself and the surrounding elements.

Perhaps everybody has their own way of perceiving this world. I see weeds as similar to us; we are living in between something, obviously not only about the location, yet, like living in the changes of development and the adaptation. Sometimes, they helped me recall memories when it comes to the creative approach.

Several artworks have developed since 2020, including Trigger the lost past pass (2020-2022), Still in Hong Kong (2021, by Scarlet Yu & Xavier Le Roy), When I can see you through the fence only (2021), and The flower is red, is sweet and is dead: (apologies)(2022).

**In 2020, you were an assistant for the artist Chi Wo Leung. How important was it for your creative development? Can you describe the experience?**

To have a chance to work with a professional and established artist was an incredible experience. Warren Leung (Chi Wo Leung) is an experienced visual artist who works with a diverse medium that combines with exploring historical events, especially related to the site's specifications. I could see one artist's sensitivity to the art-making process with my own eyes, from the development process to the outcome. I have learned much from the workflow. And the experience somehow influenced and encouraged me to explore one topic with different perspectives and methodologies.

**Do you have a specific creative process? How do you start a project?**

I usually start a project with a lot of research or collecting lots of material (like an archival action). And usually, it is a mess at first. I spend a lot of time in the decision process, choosing the material that might be useful and studying them again. But as an artist, doing research is not the same as a scientist; artists do put themselves into the investigation. The feeling is essential, as the artist is always the first audience enjoying the artwork, turning the material into something creative, and art becomes a language for communication.







**As a young artist with multiple works in publications, solo and group exhibitions and private collections, how do you approach the professional aspect of an artist's life?**

This is hard to say; I am still on my way. Doing what you love does not mean you always need to be happy. However, I am pretty much enjoying the process of exploration of myself and am curious about my surroundings. Always keep learning new skills and read books that are usually not art related.

**Where do you see artistic creation within societal boundaries?**

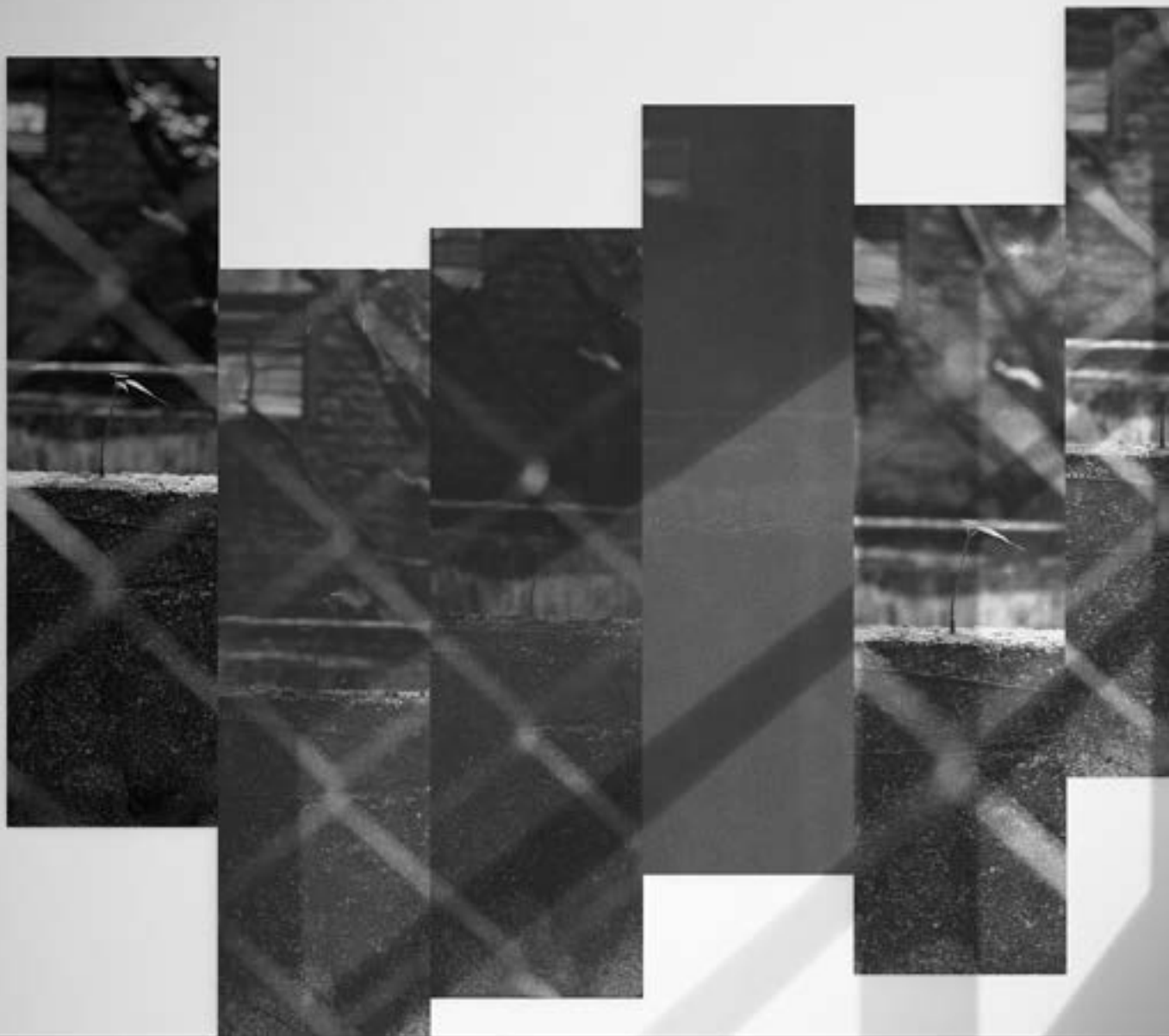
Adapting to the situations within the boundaries is already included in creativity. But occasionally, I am instead not using the word "creative" as I am not trying to "create" something new, and for myself, I am trying to step backwards of what is the position of art in my life. Art is like something between me and the world, and the way of seeing this world is artistic to everyone in my sense.

**As part of the Dial-in Dinner Collective, can you give us the story behind the collective and its motivations? How important is collaborating with other artists for you?**

Dial-in Dinner Collective (DDC) is an art collective that was co-founded remotely by Me, Weera-it Ittiteerarak (Thailand, Hong Kong), Florence Lam (Canada, Hong Kong), Alberta Leung (United Kingdom, Hong Kong), and Eugene Park (South Korea) in June 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. We first met at the cooking workshop co-led by Martha Rosler and Rirkrit Tiravanija from the Tai Kwun Summer Institute. Despite the cooking process becoming more complex since all the members are amateur cooks, it is a group of people who are generally working together towards the same goal (making a dish) that makes the process 'easier'. Although each region has different cooking cultures, the highly intense labour in food preparation evokes a sense of companionship. It is through the participation of the work of cooking that performs an egalitarian dynamic.

Due to the pandemic, we reunited and questioned whether it is possible for an individual to feel a sense of belonging through cooking, especially during this challenging period. Undoubtedly, the food/cuisine culture has generally changed in the modern age when the fast-food culture proves evidence of the global-capitalized world. The practice of cooking/eating alone more often happens in a metropolitan city where the odd working hours and long commuting in a person's daily life. The unaware physical isolation of oneself having a meal enhances the usage of social media/online platforms; this phenomenon reaches its peak during the pandemic. DDC aims to use cooking as the artform to investigate togetherness by using digital technology in our global-capitalized world.

**Image**  
Beaches outbreak, 2022  
Photography with the negative film



### **What do you struggle with the most about being an artist?**

The dissension-making constantly is quite challenging. As an interdisciplinary artist with diverse mediums, I always want to say a lot of stuff in one work or see a lot of layers that might need to be simplified as if I need to transmit the message to the other person except for me. Limited resources can do limited production; hopefully, the outcome can still achieve a certain level.



**Can you lead us through your day-to-day? How do you manage networking, studio time and studying?**

Recently, I am waking up around 5 am - 7 am and started with caffeine, spending time on yesterday's emails. And I have two dogs right now, which need to walk several times a day, a break for me to leave my computer and spend time with the living thing. Every week, I spend one day searching for different open calls and sending proposals and portfolios. Networking gives me a headache, as I am too introverted, so luckily, technology helps. Social media platforms do all the networking jobs.

Although the university has a shared space for us for studio purposes, I primarily work at home in a small room with my computer. Due to the limited space in Hong Kong and the high rent of places, I do not own a studio or share one with others. Because of this, my practice is drifting around the city. And when I need to make an installation or something, I also need to consider the assembly and shipping methods, where I need to transport and carry it by myself. As pursuing an MFA study at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, different from the taught postgraduate programme, I am mainly focusing on my research, preparing for my thesis and developing my artistic practice.

And as the coming year will be my last year in the programme, I will need to round up some thing at this stage. This will be challenging and, at the same time, fun.

**Image**  
*When I can see you through the fence only, 2021*  
Inkjet print  
Dimensions variable





