

CONTEMPORARY

IDENTITIES

International Art Magazine

Antonella Cinelli | Rocco Hettwer | Nima Javan | Maliha Matin | Patricia Millns | Cristiano Tassinari

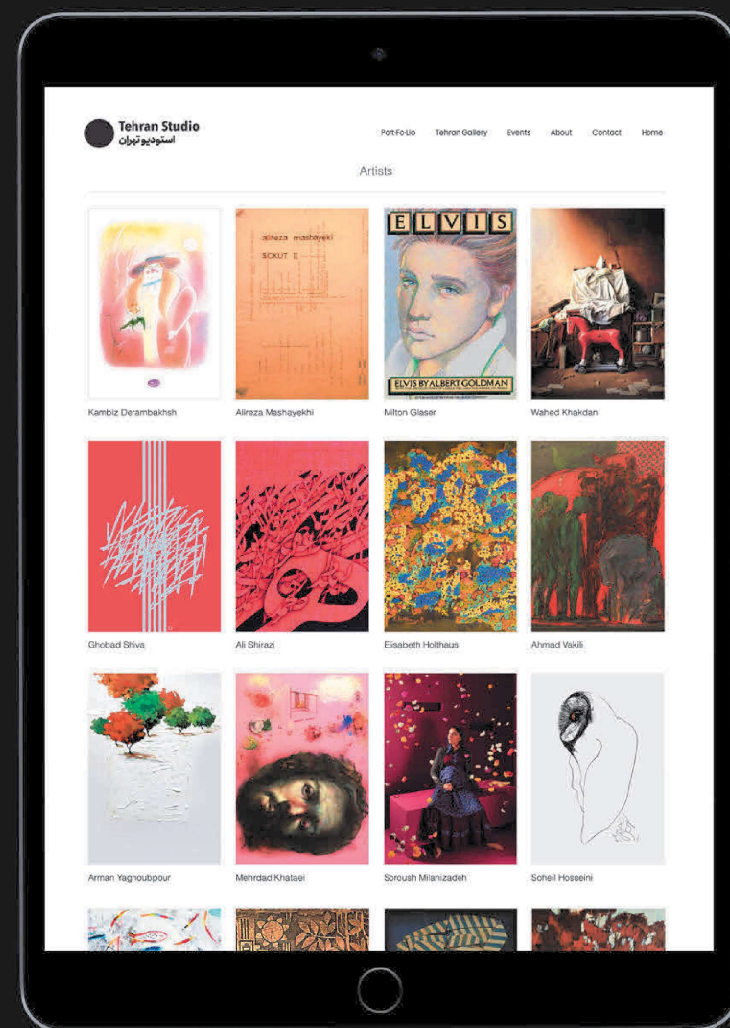
Vladas Urbanavičius | Mahesh Vishwakarma | Pak-Keung Wan | Mária Flóra Zoltán | Andrej Polukord | Luca Storelli



ISSUE #16 Dec. 2022

The aim of art is to represent not the outward appearance of things, but their inward significance.

Aristotle



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Andrej Polukord, Goat, 2022,
Wood, 200x105x135 cm, Courtesy
of (AV17) gallery, Vilnius, Lithuania

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ISSUE #16 December 2022

ARTISTS

6 **Antonella Cinelli**
By: Dorottya Olekszik

8 **Rocco Hettwer**
By: Zoltán Somhegyi

10 **Nima Javan**
By: Cheryl Chelvam

12 **Maliha Matin**
By: Massimo Fotino &
Fedeliano Nacucchi

14 **Patricia Millns**
By: Nina Heydemann

16 **Cristiano Tassinari**
By: Massimo Fotino

18 **Vladas Urbanavičius**
By: Flounder Lee

20 **Mahesh Vishwakarma**
By: Zoltán Somhegyi

22 **Pak-Keung Wan**
By: Flounder Lee

24 **Mária Flóra Zoltán**
By: Dorottya Olekszik

26 Interviewed artist
Andrej Polukord

32 Artificial Intelligence
Fabio Gamberini
Interviewed artist
Luca Storelli

EDITORS' NOTE

The current Issue of ContemporaryIdentities is the last Issue in 2022. This year has made us to face different challenges. To overcome the challenges we need humanity, expression, and the community that the art creates. For almost four years ContemporaryIdentities has brought art to the artists and art lovers to view. We are pleased to note that ContemporaryIdentities has received responses from writers, artists and from the wider public from around the world.

Issue sixteenth features an interview with Andrej Polukord, a Lithuanian artist based in Vilnius and Vienna. Andrej Polukord works in painting, installation, performance, photography, and video art. The themes of everyday life, ecology, and the ethical relationship between man and nature are often revealed by means of humor, adventure, and storytelling in his works. Polukord's work create unpredictable environments and absurd situations that produce double meaning and ambiguity.

We would like to appreciate the participation of our artists and art writers. In addition to our board member Zoltán Somhegyi (Hungary), who writes for the magazine regularly, we also had the pleasure of working with international art critics such as Cheryl Chelliah Thiruchelvam (Malaysia), Massimo Fotino & Fedeliano Nacucchi (Italy), Nina Heydemann (Germany-UAE), Flounder Lee (USA) and Dorottya Olekszik (Hungary).

Finally, we are thankful to Fabio Gamberini our editor in Artificial Intelligence section. He interviewed with Luca Storelli to find out more about his amazing AI art.

Take care everyone and view more art in 2023.
Happy 2023 in Advance!

Best wishes,
Sara Berti & Elham Shafaei

Antonella Cinelli

Italy | Dorottya
Olekszik

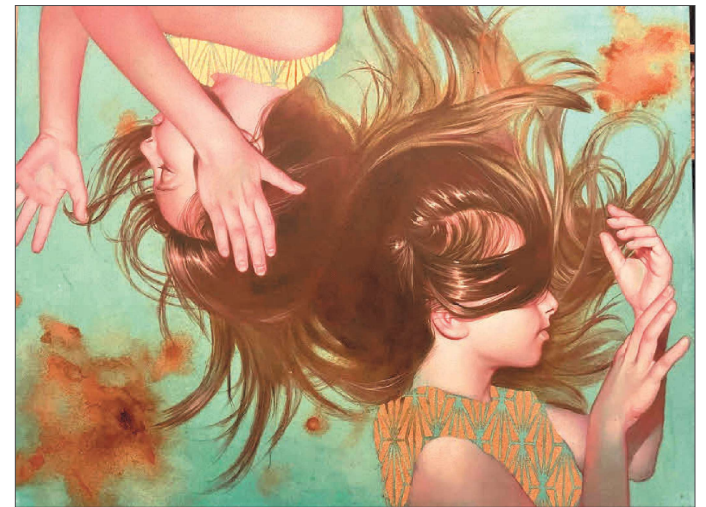


Nereidi #2, 2022, Oil and brass powder on canvas, 50x70 cm

Antonella Cinelli's near photo-realistic oil paintings speak in nowadays forgotten ways about the beauty of the human body, mostly of sensual women's bodies with seductive power. As an in Italy born and living female artist, she is surrounded by the old aesthetic concepts of beauty and the disappearing sense of sensuality, which are expressed in a very intimate way in her works. She depicts female, male and children figures with abundant light, which reinforces even more the communicative content. The corporeality is represented with remarkable realism in her art, but at the same time with a lot of sensibility and certain appreciation. She was one of the invited artists in 2011 to exhibit at the 54th Venice Biennale in the Italian Pavilion.



Fantasmatica #3, 2022, Oil and brass powder on canvas, 50x70 cm



Nereidi #4, 2022, Oil and brass powder on canvas, 50x70 cm

Rocco Hettwer

Germany | Zoltán
Somhegyi



Nothing, 2013, Oil on canvas, 70x50 cm



The infidels, 2018, Oil on canvas, 70x50 cm



Saskia, 2020, Oil on canvas, 120x90 cm

Rocco Hettwer places the observers of his works in a fascinatingly ambiguous situation. On the one hand, the activities depicted in his paintings are extremely simple, and they are happening in a very minimal environment where often there is practically nothing that could help us to identify even the mere physical context. On the other hand, it is precisely this radically restricted narrative that can trigger the viewer to focus more on the particularities of the figures and on their actions. In such a pictorial world, where the defining details are scarce and the stories seem to be missing or not important, any elements may become crucial in the interpretation, and the artist is precisely emphasizing this curious situation through his works.

Nima Javan

Iran-UK Cheryl Chelliah
Thiruchelvam



Colorful life, 2022, Acrylic on canvas, 120×90 cm

In this array of miniature works by Nima Javan, the prevalence of foliage and vegetation is noteworthy as it brings forth the message that is intended by the artist. Taking these varieties of foliage/vegetation as a symbolism of Tree of Life, can it be presumed that Nima intends to bring forth the close relationship of all living beings with nature? Although the illustrations of the foliage/vegetation are visualized in an innovative and almost cartoonish manner, nevertheless, the centrality and persistence of the trees/shrubs/plants etc. in the lives of humans as well as animals is a point to moot. Perhaps, it is a gentle reminder to us all especially in current times where the precariousness of nature and our dependency on it has been ignored and compromised to a certain extent, due to our selfishness and greed. The Tree of Life has remained as an important philosophy across cultures, religions, and periods, and Nima reminds us once again on its concept as an axis mundi in these miniatures.



Modern hunting, 2020, Acrylic on canvas, 80×60 cm



The circus of humans, 2020, Acrylic on canvas, 80×60 cm

Maliha Matin

Pakistan

Massimo Fotino &
Fedeliano Nacucchi



This, and that too, 2019, Oil on Canvas, 63x107 cm

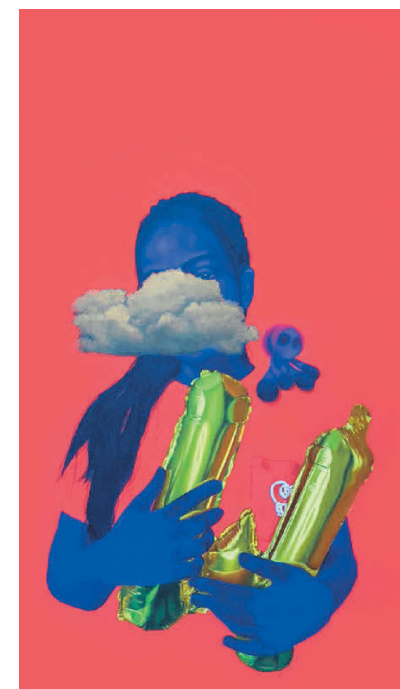
To bring the viewer in a limbo dimension between dream and reality where the colors drive the emotions through the geometries of lines and movement gestures is The Maliha Matin artistic vision.

With the chromatic impact of oneiric soul's landscapes, she paints and try to turn the loneliness feelings into hope ones for a better future, made even more visible by the individual consequences of the post pandemic. Indeed, protagonist of that vision are lonely women and children, playing with their hands on the background of a flat wall.

So Maliha's artworks try to fill the emptiness of uncomfortable positions of human solitude with surreal and imaginary pictures that shuns time and space and make the viewer reflecting on the meaning of everyday life dreaming.



A string with no edge II, 2020, Oil on Canvas, 68x107 cm



Party, 2022, Oil on Canvas, 107x60 cm

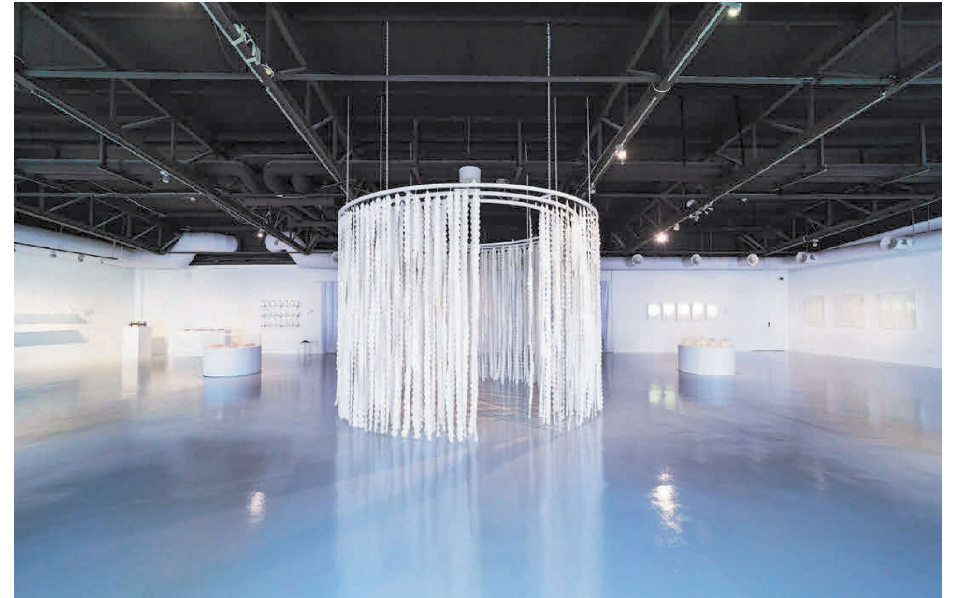
Patricia Millns

UK-UAE | Nina Heydemann



Noor sequence, 2022, Reconstructed Japanese paper tea bags forming 52 paper circles, Site specific installation, Courtesy of Maraya Art Center, Sharjah, UAE

As an artist born in England, but having lived in Kuwait, Oman and presently in the UAE, Patricia Millns has made her mark on the local and international art scene for over 40 years. Patricia Millns' art dwells on the materiality of the everyday and domestic objects: tea bags, coffee filters, paper doilies, things that are easily overlooked in today's consumer society. At the root of her art is the Japanese concept of "Ma" that is deemed to appear in all aspects of life from the deliberate pause at the end of a bow to show respect for the person you are just greeting to the emptiness of Japanese contemplation without any clutter. The Japanese character for "Ma" (間) is highly symbolical. It shows a sign of an open door and the sun, standing for the sunlight that is passing through an opening. Quite literally, it addresses enlightenment through concentration on the meaningful. Often, we don't listen to silence anymore, nor do we appreciate it. This is exactly where Patricia Millns artworks start driving out the noise and focusing on the lessons of simplicity.



Da'era (circle), 2022, Suspended and folded coffee filters, over 13000 units, white metal rings, Largest diameter 4 m, Site specific installation, Courtesy of Maraya Art Center, Sharjah, UAE



Silent conversation 3, 2022, Reconstructed coffee filters under glass domes, Site specific installation, Courtesy of Maraya Art Center, Sharjah, UAE

Cristiano Tassinari

Italy | Massimo
Fotino

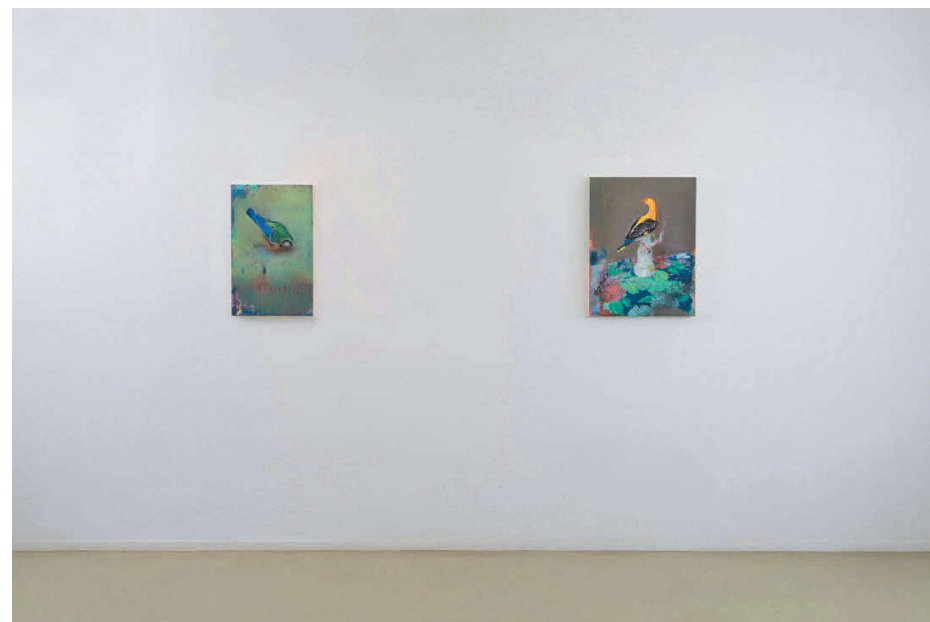


C is for Cherry, 2022, Exhibition view at Galleria Francesca Antonini, Rome, Italy. Photo: Daniele Molajoli

"A traveller without observation is a bird without wings". The Iranian poet Sa' of Shirazi in Gulistan seems to give with this phrase of the perfect quote from Cristiano Tassinari's work. A work that is not only aesthetic but historical, political, sociological.

Those who, like the writer here, are sociologists know that reality exists but that it is never objective or subjective. Reality is, Weberianly, the representation we give of it. And Tassinari, from the side of his production, that is the artistic creation, depicts that chaos that stands both as ambiguity and as maneuvering space, at once chaos and salvation. A binomial, a sometimes limiting, constraining and contradictory framework that, however, constitutes the only material we have for the construction of identity and self-identification.

From this point of view, the message the artist brings us is related like a sort of social and human infinity but not in a romantic sense but rather in a spatial and temporal sense. The space because the objects chosen and treated, are often ambiguous even in their solarity; the time understood as memories, recollections and stories that start from autobiography and become biography of the world. Federico Fellini wrote, "all art is autobiographical; the pearl is the autobiography of the oyster". In Cristiano Tassinari's canvases, installations, lights, and object transformations there is the whole imaginary of men, their drama of illusion and their fate to rebuild themselves.



Oriole, 2022, Oil on paper applied on wood, 70.5x54 cm, Bird and Apple, 2022, Oil on wood, 67x42 cm
Exhibition view at Galleria Francesca Antonini, Rome, Photo: Daniele Molajoli



C is for Cherry, 2022, Exhibition view at Galleria Francesca Antonini, Rome, Italy. Photo: Daniele Molajoli

Vladas Urbanavičius

Lithuania | Flounder
Lee



Hanging Stones, 2006, Photo Arūnas Baltėnas



Hanging Stones, 2006, Photo Arūnas Baltėnas



Steel Compounds, 2022, Site specific installation, Courtesy of (AV17) gallery, Vilnius, Lithuania

Many of the Lithuanian sculptor Vladas Urbanavičius's works are site-responsive. They listen to the space where they are placed, responding in various ways, but also feel like they could be lifted out and respond slightly differently to a new area, new surroundings. In 2006's *Hanging Stones*, the work sits amid an industrial landscape and feels right at home, but it would also work well on a pastoral hillside. This is a seemingly incongruous nature of the work, yet it means the art can have a wider audience.

Mahesh Vishwakarma

India | Zoltán
Somhegyi



Identity, 2021, Coal, 48x30x10 cm



Landscape of open coal mines, Charcoal, dry pastel on digital print

Mahesh Vishwakarma has developed an artistic world and a broad body of work around coal. In the artist's reading the mere material can refer to numerous further aspects that are well beyond the primary value of coal. Questions of social problems, economic tensions, the influence that the mining of and commerce with this resource plays in the construction of identity are all traceable in these works of art that are created in different techniques, like carving, drawing, and painting. The pieces thus shed light on the high price that carbon mining and burning has on the workers and on the larger, global environment.



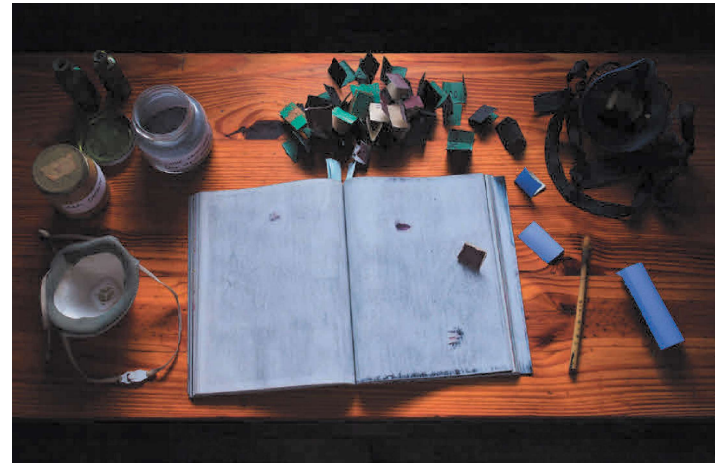
Drawing on Found Object, 2021, Cement concrete block, Size variable

Pak-Keung Wan

Hong Kong-UK | Flounder
Lee



Sea of fertility, 2016, Seeding



Sea of fertility, 2016, Work in progress 2



Sea of fertility, 2016, Vogue 3

The line between the performative act and the final physical artwork is blurry across much of Pak-Keung Wan's body of work. Some lean more toward drawings and some more toward performances. In some ways, *Adrift on the Sea of Fertility* is the opposite of a drawing but is definitely a performance. Pak-Keung sands the ink off the pages of *Vogue* magazine, creating an installation of ink dust, thus removing words and images from the page, and returning them to a different state.

Mária Flóra Zoltán

Hungary | Dorottya Olekszik



Clown picture, 2022, Acrylic, oil, airbrush on cardboard, 75x105 cm

Mária Flóra Zoltán has a typical Central European Jewish intellectual destiny filled with sorrow, loss, indignity, and loneliness which are presented in her expressive works. Her artistic life is marked by several resumptions to rebuild her identity again and again and find the way to achieve liberation from all the troubles she went through. This lifetime process of searching for inner peace is placed on the canvas in a refined, sensible, and very communicative form. She invites visitors to enter to the depth of emotions with her ultimately extremely vivid colors and nonfigurative visuality. She is a regular member of the Hungarian Academy of Literature and Arts.



2022, Oil, airbrush on canvas, 240x300 cm



Artist Studio

Andrej Polukord

Interview

CI: Please introduce yourself.

AP: My name is Andrej Polukord. I am an artist and gallery "Galerie Uberall" owner. In this business, I work together with my companion Mario Strk. I was born in Vilnius, studied in Vienna and work all over the world right now.

CI: Can you tell us about your art practice?

AP: So far, my interests are closely related with the surroundings I am usually based in – nature, forests, and countryside. One of the most interesting topics for me is what good can we obtain from something that is written off as "bad". That is why I'm working with tree roots – the unneeded leftovers of deforested woods. During lockdown, I have been a resident in NAC (Nida Art Colony), Forest architecture program, and created "Villager Antivirus" – a protective mask knitted from mountain pine tree roots. This mask pretended to be more organic than disposable masks, which were used during pandemic and later were seen flying around in all possible corners. The mask is naturally scented by itself – resin and etheric oils, which are usually inside the roots and help in disinfecting all possible bacteria and viruses. In comparison to disposable masks – this one is 100 percent recyclable and at the same time water resistant, so it can be washed and reused repeatedly. During artist's residency at the NAC, there was an issue with the tap water and the water supply was shut off for a while. One option was going to a grocery store 1 km away, to help with that I have reinvented a rather primitive tool for carrying drinking water from the local supermarket to my apartment in NAC – a water yoke. For this, I used a curvy birch tree formed by Curonian sands, winds, and dunes. Thus, in AV17 gallery we started using "Water Yoke Contemporary" to carry two 5-liter plastic bottles of water from the shop and stored it near the fireplace, to extinguish fire asap in case of a fire accident. To extinguish fire with supermarket water would be more expensive, than using tap water. Someone made a joke of "Capitalist water" and in fact – it's true. This method of problem solving – thanks to "coming back to primitive roots technologies" – questions: what can influence the contemporary world of consumerism and marketing? What goals can bring traditions instead buy-sell policy? What problems to accentuate? As a gallery owner, I have been always curious about collecting. Instead of collecting art, I have strong passion to collect yellow chanterelles – the mushrooms. This is probably my main artistic practice, during mushroom gathering season. After I collect them, I usually sell to Munir or private customers. Munir is Vegetable and Fruits trader. When he buys from me – he never knows he buys the Collection, he thinks he buys mushrooms only, but I never tell him this fact. As I do not want him to know who I am. And I like this fact, that my art can be "recycled" by humans, while simply just frying Collection on pan and eating with sandwiches. The goal for me, I don't need to take care of storage for this type of my artworks. And if someone would ask me for Collection – I would go to the forest and pick again. In Spring 2022 I have spent 3 months in Viborg Kunsthalle, where I have also been a resident. I thought I need to prepare for the coming mushroom season properly, that Sometimes I create situations, or just repeat them, after I find them. Photography and video – both mediums I use for documentation of short actions. They are like souvenirs for me, which I also collect. My sculptural works are usually made so, that they can be used, or they



Threshold, 2022, Wood, axes, found objects, 197 x 121 64 cm, Goat exhibition view, Courtesy of (AV17) gallery, Vilnius, Lithuania

have certain, often practical purpose. Street art I like to combine, again – in the forest. is why I started to knit a backpack, the same way as I did protective mask in NAC. I titled it as "Villagers Backpack". I made this work to carry chanterelles from highlands, or longer distances with little bit more comfort. A nice surprise for me was, when I weighted the backpack – it was at least 500 grams lighter than a standard backpack, although it was made from fallen spruce roots, so described as "waste material". Consequently, "Villagers Backpack" saves me some energy, while carrying less weight, in comparison if I would carry the standard one. Therefore, in this backpack my collection stays much safer than if it would be carried in a touristic backpack. I am also interested in mystical elements and symbolical meanings in traditions. Sayings and folklore knowledge have always inspired me to create situations out of them. That is why we see Threshold in AV17 exhibition. In Lithuanian folklore tradition, threshold of a house has a special meaning. It is a barrier between own and foreign, life and death, safety, and dangers. It was also a place where home rituals were performed. The threshold witch I found were later formed into even more ritualistic form – a shape of a table. I used original traditional house threshold, which contains at least 100 years old history and who knows, how many times it been used for a ritual before...we can just guess while we see all those scars on the wood affected by years.

CI: What art do you most identify with?

AP: I do not identify myself with any form of art. It depends on what I want to say. The medium I choose to express the idea depends on situation. In Av17 Gallery we sacrificed the goat by cutting its head off, slicing it on Table for Victims (Threshold)... In ancient rites there is a saying, that when you sacrifice the goat on house threshold – it makes all bad things – the sins disappear. In this case, I chose the Goat to be a tree trunk holder, as in both Lithuanian and Russian languages "Ožys" / "Козел" has double meaning: „The Goat“ and „tree trunk holder“ – traditional tool,



Water Yoke Contemporary, 2020, Wood, water bottles, 150x36x16 cm, Courtesy of (AV17) gallery, Vilnius, Lithuania

made of tree trunks, helping to cut trees comfortably by two people, using a two-hand saw. The head of the goat we burned in gallery's fireplace – the altar. This we did to atone for sins. Together with visitors we chopped a piece of wooden-goat and fired it with the intention to see Forests being cut less than they're being cut right now...

Sometimes I create situations, or just repeat them, after I find them. Photography and video – both mediums I use for documentation of short actions. They are like souvenirs for me, which I also collect. My sculptural works are usually made so, that they can be used, or they have certain, often practical purpose. Street art I like to combine, again – in the forest.

CI: Tell us about your early influences.

AP: : I am always happy to see early Roman's Signer's works. I find the Language of brevity and simplicity to be the right language in century of "Information Overload".

For some time, I have been curious of street art possibilities, it's freedom. In my practice, street art has been transformed into art in the forest, or on the way to it. On old advertising banners, I paint an object, then I cut it out and, using ropes, I string it between two trees in the forest, mostly over a road. I call this installation cycle "Woodobject". Such a "Woodobjects" should surprise the viewer, as if the forest itself had joked and the object would come out of the forest. I like to see human body as a tool or an object in street art. Because when we have alive object, it can affect and provoke much more powerfully than using just paint, or just "dead" object. Clear body language and the fact of objective "scenario happening" communicates of itself.



Brush, 2022, Denim, mopping cloth, 112x84x16 cm, Courtesy of (AV17) gallery, Vilnius, Lithuania

CI: Tell us about your current practice.

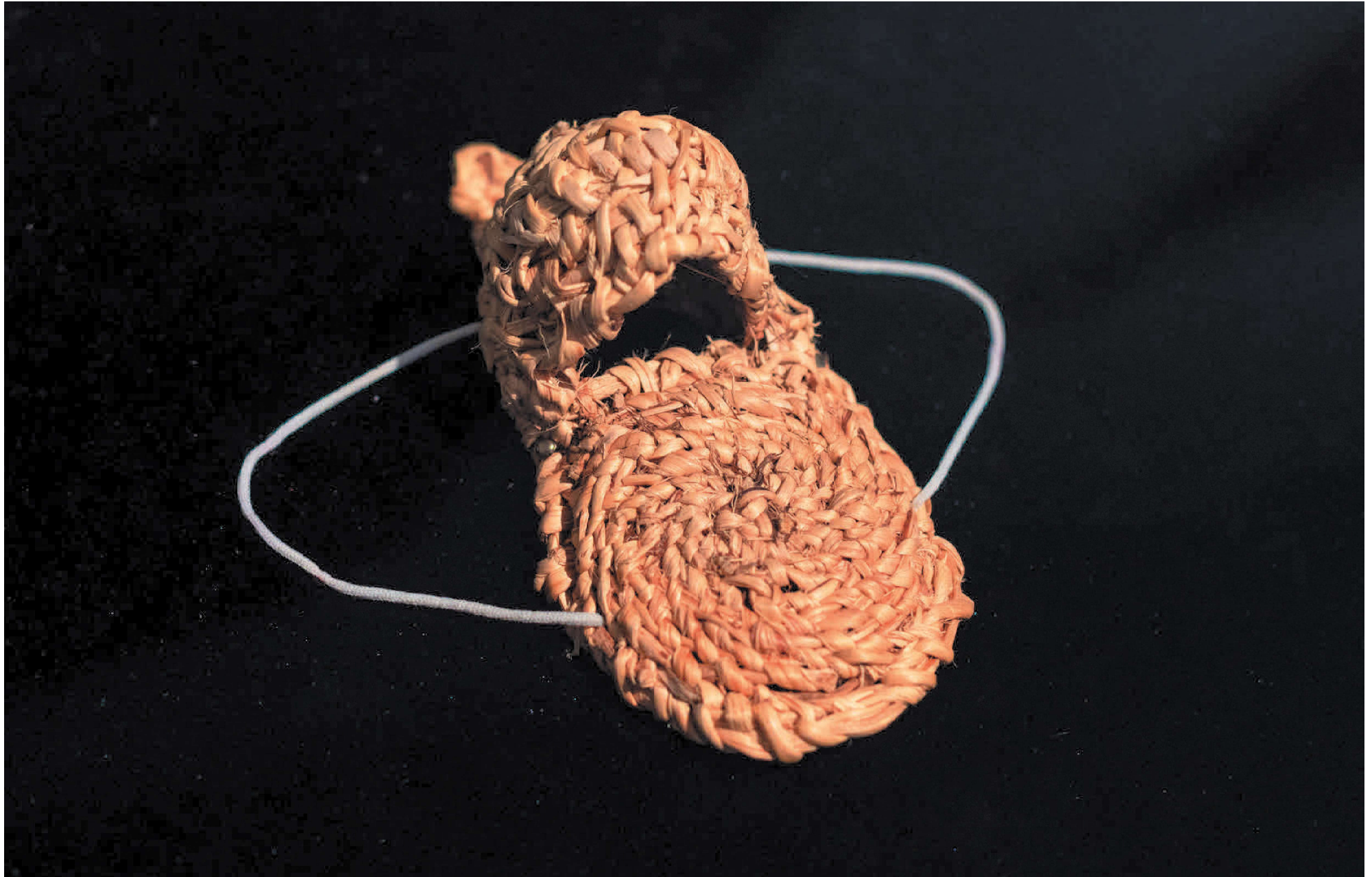
AP: I am working on a photo series "Woodstatues". This ongoing photography/ performance project explores and documents the tree trunks left behind by loggers in landscapes once covered by old-growth forest. To me, these stumps evoke pedestals for the monuments often placed in empty city squares. Here in the woods, however, they form a monument to anti-ecology. They appear as hermetic witnesses to a policy of quick money-making through deforestation of thousands of acres by the logging industry. Putting a human body—my own—on top of such "pedestals," the artist reminds us of who initiated this situation. Nowadays we see forest like benefits of capital. We see dollars, euros, or yuan's behind, instead seeing it in deeper, sustainable, regenerative, and recreational way. Right now, I am reading the book about forest's underground life "Entangled Life" by Merlin Sheldrake. I am wondering how little we know about life in the forest and if we even ever will if we destroy some species. As after they gone – many species of mycelium can just disappear. This influences chain reaction to other lives in the woods at the same time ours.

CI: What does your work aim to say?

AP: Some of my works can say several things at the same time. Depending on person who investigates them, one can see one, another will see completely different thing. Some of my works have clear straight message. Some of them describes current situations in the world. I have noticed the older I am, the more my works transform into sort of replica of the things going on in this world.



Goat exhibition view, 2022, Courtesy of (AV17) gallery, Vilnius, Lithuania



Villager Antivirus, 2020, Mountain pine roots, PVC, metal, 131.5x52.8x45 cm, Courtesy of (AV17) gallery, Vilnius, Lithuania

Fabio Gamberini

Interviewed with

Luca Storelli



FG: Hi Luca! Welcome to ContemporaryIdentities, I have picked you among many artists for two reasons, the main one is because I love your works both pre and post AI revolution, you are an extremely talented artist who never fail to deliver beautiful projects both commercial or personal; I truly think you are one of the few artists out there who managed to master a very simple yet not easy concept to adopt: AI is not a competitor, it's just another (amazing) tool to work with. The other reason is way more personal, and I'd like to exploit this space to thank you since you have been the first one to introduce me to AI Art in a time where only a few thousand people in the world had a chance to give a go to it. Now let's get to it and tell us something about your most recent project involving AI art.

LS: Well... it was last night!

A Japanese magazine I'm collaborating with decided to dedicate an issue to samurai and warriors, since we have been working closely for a while now, they contacted me asking if I had anything that might suite the issue, so I have spent the whole night working on Midjourney to deliver some pieces for the magazine. Just got an email few hours ago and they are willing to publish it so now I'm frantically waiting for the physical copy to see and touch my published work.

FG: You have been regularly published throughout your career, and it seems like "switching tools" does not affect your ability to express yourself with amazing imagery. What do you think is helping you to flawlessly translate your skills from traditional Photography to AI art?

LS: Well, in fairness I haven't. At the beginning of my career, I have struggled a lot like anyone else, I think the best decision I have made in this respect was to stop throwing out imagery hoping to be noticed or published. I took a step back and started all over studying how my masters were approaching photography beside the mere technique. I understood that to stay relevant you must keep on studying, it's a never-ending process where the artist must keep challenging himself. That helped me a lot to develop a "photographer's mind" and this mind is helping me a lot working with AI tools, it doesn't matter if I'm behind a camera or in front of a screen writing prompts. Being a photographer helps you to work with AI in an editorial fashion, I don't want to create something that is utterly unreal or otherworldly, although the possibilities are endless, I like to produce realistic works that help me to get close to the work of the artists that I admire.

FG: We are in front of an incredible revolution that is going to change art forever, where do you think "art" lies in AI art?

LS: Art lies in experimentation and research if someone is experimenting it is an artist. When tools like this get to the masses, the risk is to flatten creativity due to the sheer number of pieces produced, but they are empty eye candies if they don't "spring" out of a personal path made of research and experimentation. For example, at the beginning of Dall-e AI everybody was doing portraits, I have started to do the same but experimenting on color gels, then I have started to work with parameters such low exposure, these are just examples, the key here is to stay curious and not to sit over the latest "trend" and be content to be able to do what everyone else is doing. As an artist you always must be a step forward, and this can be done only with experimentation and curiosity.

FG: How do you think we can "tame" the AI beast to get an advancement in our expression capabilities and not to blindly follow an invisible line traced by algorithms made by companies, CEOs, and developers?

LS: The eternal dilemma between Man and technology, artists need common sense when they approach this matter. I think that an artist that approaches AI gets in 2 stages.



Stage 1 is the “stormy weather”, you are taken by this great excitement, you have no possibility to manage anything you are totally “kidnapped” by the amazing never-ending imaginary that you are creating with just one click. Your emotions and creativity are overwhelmed, and you keep on producing whatever comes to your mind. The second Phase, the one where I think I am, is the one where you start building your consciousness, you start to understand the horizon that surrounds you and you learn how to manage it. You discover new limits and possibilities of the technology, and you start a responsible use of this tool. It’s pretty much like with socials and mobile phone, they are useful instruments, but you can’t spend there your whole life, as much as an artist you cannot rely on AI only to produce what you want/need. The passage to this second phase is essential, once you know the beast then you can take it.

FG: Beside AI capabilities, the new advancements on 3d scanning are incredible, within a decade regular users will be capable to completely scan their selves down to every single pore, generate high definition Photorealistic 3d models and pose them in 3d ambientes. What do you think a Professional photo studio will look like in 10 years or so?

LS: It’s totally up to the artist, and to what stage of sickness he gets. I use the term sickness because to be an artist, an innovator you must be sick, history has been made by Crazy people, not ordinary individuals, you must be crazy to keep going on exploring and innovating.

FG: How to stay relevant in the next 30 years?

LS: Stay constant, forget the media and the tools, up to a certain extent technique is unimportant too, focus on the message and the idea, you cannot play like amateurs, don’t forget to have a fil rouge that link your series, don’t think in terms of single images, your work has to be organic, of course you can change style and subject but your fingerprint must be always recognizable.

FG: How do you use AI in your workflow?

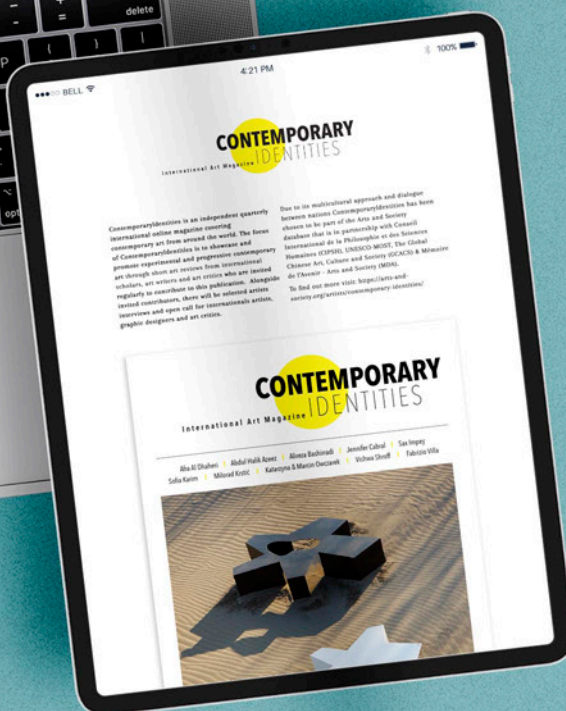
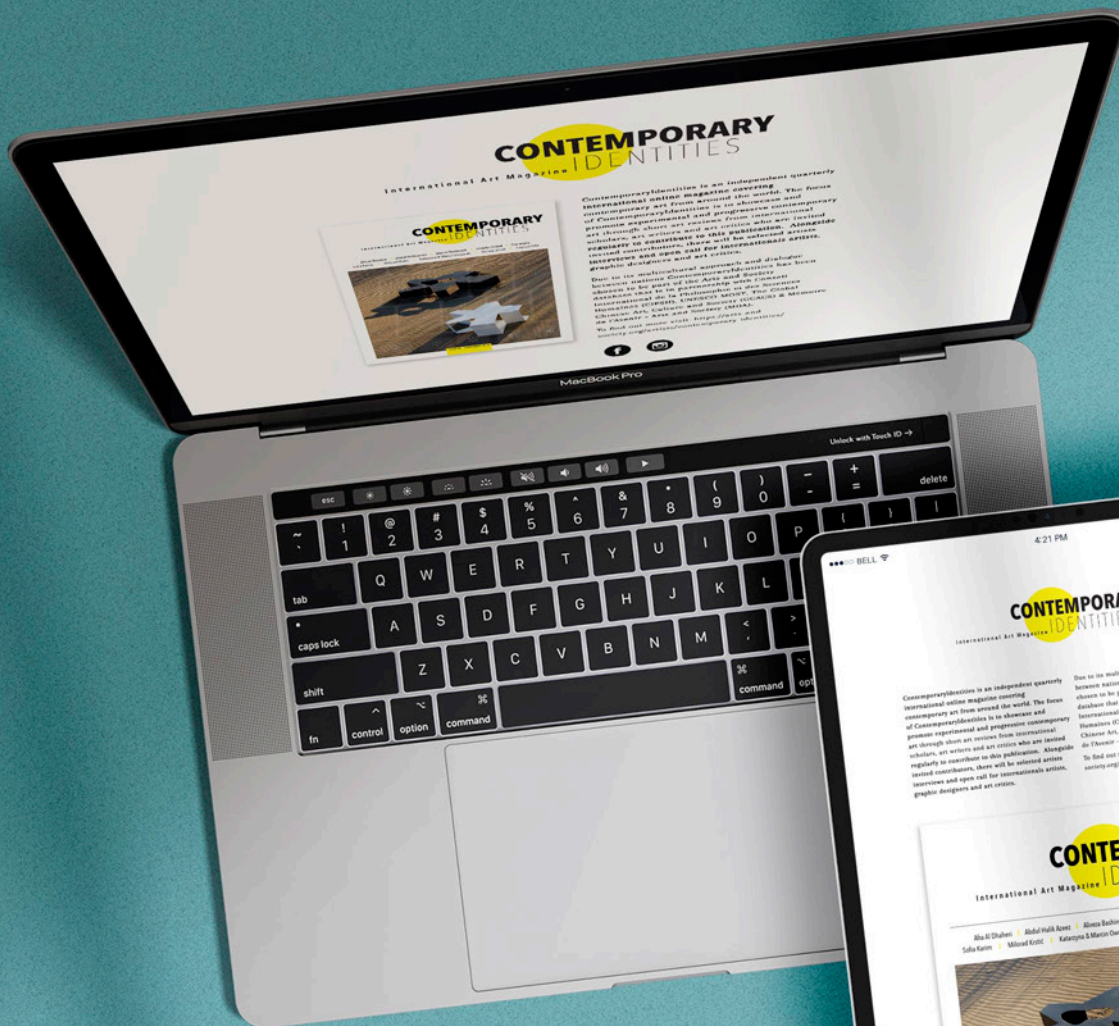
LS: I think AI is great when it comes to overcome the typical problems of Fine Art Photographers, Location, models, props. Thanks to AI I can easily pose and experiment on subjects of various ethnicity for example or I can use it to create digital backdrops that can be blended with classical photography. It’s a mighty tool indeed.

FG: What do you love as an artist? Who gives you inspiration and thrive to exceed your own limits time after time?

LS: Oh well, I have so many names and artists I love and follow, I truly think that surrounding yourself of beautiful imagery created by the great masters is the best way to improve ourselves. Among them I’d like to point out some of my masters, the people I have studied, and I keep on study to stay relevant in this world: Joel Grimes, Chris Knight, Lindsay Adler, Miss Aniela, Scott Kelby, Amanda Diaz, Pratik Naik, Bella Kotak, Kate Woodman, Eric Almas, Peter Coulson, Renee' Robin.







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