

CONTEMPORARY

IDENTITIES

International Art Magazine

Alessio Barchitta | Melis Buyruk | Mrinal Das | Myriam El Haik | Mohammad Hawajri | Stein Henningsen
Joseph J. Joseph | Sylvia Möller | Samantha Passaniti | Gail Spaen | Jago | Irinashkap



ISSUE #28 DEC 2025

Art is the highest form of hope.

Gerhard Richter



SPOTLIGHT

FOR Galleries, Organizations, Art institutions and Artists

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Our Spotlight Ethos

ContemporaryIdentities Magazine is a leading digital publication dedicated to contemporary art, captivating a diverse global audience of artists, enthusiasts, designers, collectors, and curators. We pride ourselves on being unique, innovative, and accessible. Our magazine embodies individuality and creativity, striving to connect with our readers in an engaging and approachable manner.

Why ContemporaryIdentities Magazine?

ContemporaryIdentities Magazine offers a unique opportunity to connect directly with an engaged and dedicated audience through our online platform. Our leadership includes artists, designers, makers, galleries, suppliers, cultural event promoters, arts colleges, and producers of distinctive goods. After six years, we are more than just a quarterly art magazine; we have evolved into a vibrant community—a voice, a platform, and a tribe! Our readers are passionate about contemporary art and frequently engage with our content between issues. ContemporaryIdentities Magazine serves as a dynamic space where artists, art enthusiasts, and creators come together to connect, inspire, and support one another. This connection extends beyond just showcasing art; it becomes a place where conversations are sparked, creative dialogue flows, and ideas are exchanged—making it an ideal platform for article writing that reaches a thoughtful, engaged audience. Galleries, organizations, art institutions, and artists are encouraged to reach out to us for spotlight opportunities. We provide a platform for showcasing their work, writing articles and promoting their stories to a wider audience. For details on our demographics, distribution, spotlight packages, and rates, please contact us at: info@contemporaryidentities.com to request our Media Pack.

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JAGO, Circulatory system
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EDITORS' NOTE

As we stand on the threshold of a new year, we are proud to present the final issue of ContemporaryIdentities for 2025. This year has been a dynamic tapestry woven with resilience, innovation, and the ever-expanding horizons of artistic expression. In this celebratory edition, we look back at the kaleidoscope of stories, emotions, and transformative moments that art has brought into our lives.

Throughout 2025, our pages have unfolded into a vibrant canvas shaped by diversity. Artists from around the world have contributed to this rich continuum, each stroke, pixel, and composition affirming the unyielding spirit of creativity. Even amidst challenges, art has remained a guiding light a source of reflection, empowerment, and connection.

Issue 28 encapsulates a year of exploration, introspection, and the shared power of artistic voices. As you move through this online magazine, we invite you to question boundaries, immerse yourself in the narratives, and celebrate the multitude of contemporary practices that have been defined this year.

In this issue's spotlight, we are honored to feature an exclusive interview with JAGO, the acclaimed Italian sculptor whose artistic practice bridges traditional techniques with contemporary themes. Born in Frosinone in 1987, JAGO's mastery of marble and his transparent engagement with the public especially through videos and social media have positioned him as one of today's most compelling sculptural voices.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the exceptional artists and art writers who contributed to this issue. Our sincere appreciation goes to board member Zoltán Somhegyi (Hungary), whose insightful reflections continue to enrich the magazine. We are also privileged to have collaborated with distinguished international art critics this year, including Nasim G. Pachi (Iran–Germany), Anna Guillot (Italy), Tima Jam (Iran–UK), Lenka Piper (Czech Republic), and Brajan Vojinović (Serbia), whose perspectives deepen the dialogue within these pages.

A special acknowledgment goes to Fabio Gamberini, our editor for the Artificial Intelligence section, for his continuous dedication to advancing the discourse between art and technology. In this issue, he presents an interview with Irinashkap, a young artist whose work transcends the boundaries of photography, creative direction, fashion styling, and digital composition. Rather than treating the image as a fixed frame, Irinashkap constructs entire worlds fragile, ethereal architecture suspended between decay and baroque echoes, where silence and emptiness become active narrative forces.

As we bid farewell to 2025, we extend our deepest gratitude to the artists who have entrusted us with their visions, to the readers who accompany us in each exploration, and to our global community that finds inspiration and connection within these pages.

May the art presented in this final issue of the year continue to inspire, challenge, and resonate with you as we embark together on a new chapter in the evolving narrative of ContemporaryIdentities.

With warmth,
Elham Shafaei & Sara Berti



Eterotopia, 2024, Site specific installation; Ph. Michele Alberto Sereni, ex Carcere Sant'Agostino, Savona, Italy

Alessio Barchitta is a keen observer of the contemporary world, an artist gifted with remarkable polemical and critical vision, a provocateur. His specific goal is to stimulate reasoning, encourage unexpected hypotheses and perspectives, and spark debate.

Barchitta's artistic work, often centred on sculpture and installation, makes use of different materials, with a particular preference for ceramics. For him, the choice of materials to use is functional from a thematic and perceptive point of view to the design objective, since material and technique are always strategically related to a conceptual intention. The choice of ceramics is probably also influenced by the traditions linked to the artist's Sicilian origins, i.e. connected to some specific ancient crafts of his homeland.

Last year's intervention in the former Sant'Agostino Prison during the second edition of the "Connexion" festival in Savona, Italy, was significant, and has recently been partially adapted in Catania in the On the Contemporary space.



Eterotopia, 2024, Site specific installation; Ph. Michele Alberto Sereni,
ex Carcere Sant'Agostino, Savona, Italy



Fluid like concrete, 2025, Ceramic, installation, variable dimensions; Ph. Studio Mörf,
Courtesy of On the Contemporary, Catania, Italy

In the prison cell, the illusion of an outdoor landscape was created by a stretch of synthetic grass bordered by a large curtain. On top of the carpet, an ordinary-looking object, a football, was made from scraps of ceramic tiles used in construction, which obviously made it unusable.

The only sport allowed in prisons during exercise time is football. Barchitta's work "Eterotopia" conveyed the fleeting sense of freedom that prisoners experience when they enjoy a little leisure time, despite the awareness of their imprisonment. A ball that cannot be kicked refers to reality, to the condition of impossibility, to the sense of powerlessness. This condition metaphorically extends to the reality of our everyday lives, despite the attractions of today's lifestyle presenting us with many things that insist on seducing and deluding us.

This is precisely what is expressed in the adaptation of the installation, consisting of 11 beautiful balls lined up on a chequered floor, in the version created at the On the Contemporary space for the exhibition "Estratto freddo".



The most beautiful, 2025, Porcelain, hand-built stoneware, 64x70x40 cm, Courtesy of Leila Heller Gallery, Dubai, UAE

Turkish artist Melis Buyruk, working between Istanbul and Dubai, creates intricate porcelain environments that blur the line between sculpture and habitat. Born in 1984 in Gölcük and trained at Selçuk University, she transforms classical ceramic technique into contemporary, concept-driven installations.

Buyruk constructs imagined ecosystems from countless hand-formed components—botanical forms, organic structures, and faint echoes of human anatomy. Her choice to work almost exclusively in uncolored porcelain places emphasis on texture, shadow, and interdependence, giving equal weight to every element within the composition. The labor-intensive process, shaped by the material's fragility and unpredictability, introduces a quiet vulnerability into each work. While not overtly narrative, her installations reflect environmental tension, exploring themes of balance, precarity, and the interconnectedness of living systems.

Exhibited internationally and held in major collections such as the Louvre Abu Dhabi, Buyruk's practice invites viewers into contemplative spaces where stillness reveals complexity and delicate worlds unfold.



The Goose (Symbol of Greed), 2024, Porcelain, 81x66 cm, Courtesy of Leila Heller Gallery, Dubai, UAE



The Rooster (Symbol of Lust), 2024, Porcelain, 81x66 cm, Courtesy of Leila Heller Gallery, Dubai, UAE

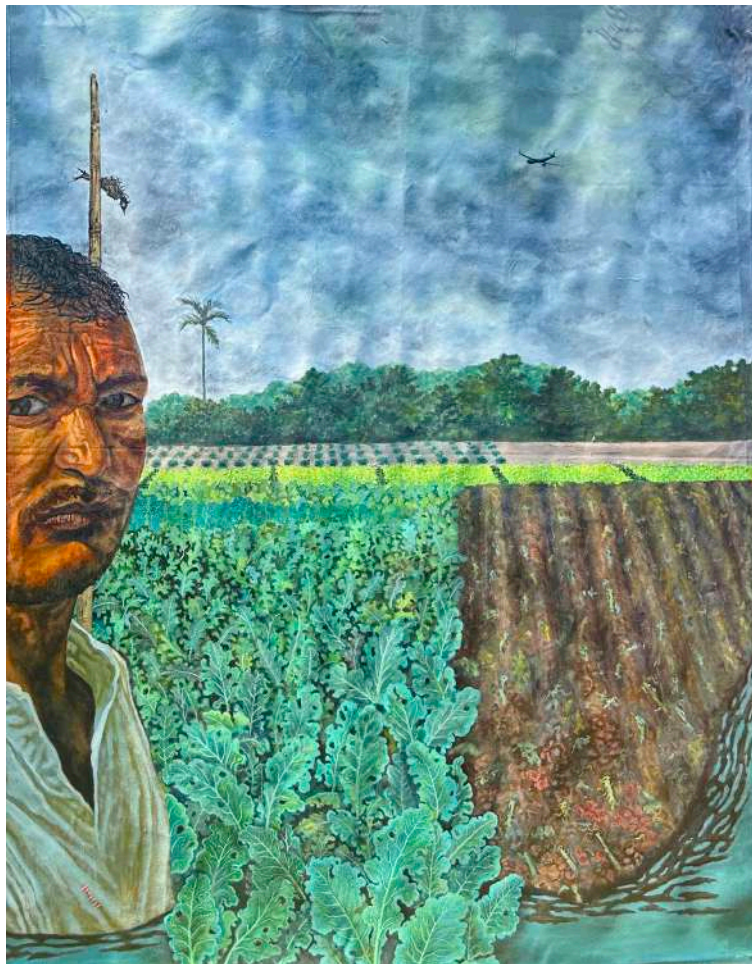


Storage emulated, 2025, Site specific Installation, Mojoli Island, India

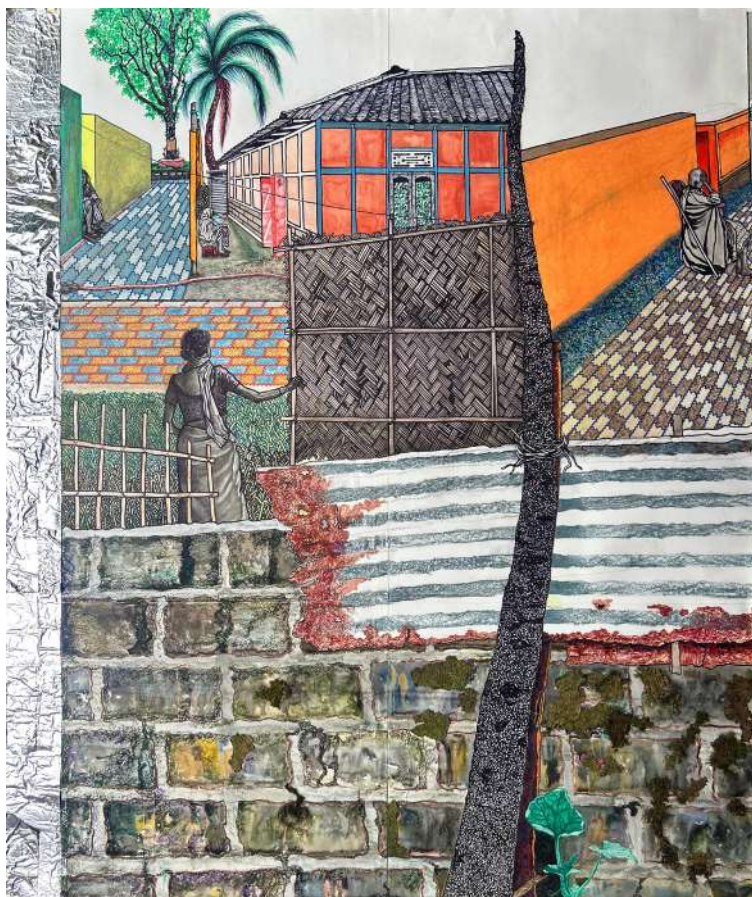
Learning compassion from the river island community in which he grew up in Bhattapara, India, Mrinal Das has developed a visual practice that depicts everyday life enriched with meaning and presence. Painting with bold shapes and intense colors, his work stands on the threshold of intuitive cognition of familiar surroundings. By documenting the people he sees every day and the spaces he knows intimately, Das highlights an acute awareness of lived experience.

A recurring theme across his work is aging—of people, tools, and rituals. He reflects on mortality through the ritual of *asthi*, questioning the "weight of existence" by juxtaposing a weighing machine, bones, and the ashes that remain after cremation. Das's ongoing "Project Mojoli" forms the backbone of his practice: a long-term documentation of the disappearing agricultural history and ecological transformations of Mojoli Island. Through field research, oral histories, sketches, and the use of found materials, he archives traditional farming tools and practices that are becoming obsolete. His series "Farmer's Weapons" preserves these tools in meticulous watercolor studies, treating them as cultural artefacts of a community in transition.

His works act as visual archives that preserve vanishing knowledge while simultaneously questioning societal hierarchies, classifications, and the forces that shape life (and loss) in agrarian landscapes.



Vilomah, 2025, Acrylic on canvas, 153x121 cm



Colorless life-colorful neighborhood, 2025, Mixed media on paper, 169.5x143.5 cm



Wall drawing 4, 2011, Acrylic pen on wall, 180x380 cm

Myriam El Haïk is a French-Moroccan multidisciplinary artist. She lives and works in Berlin, Paris and Rabat. Her dual European and Arab culture is her strength and gives depth to her research as a whole. Her language, centred on simple signs, basic models and/or elementary actions, focuses on the relationships between sound, visual and gestural data. Particularly in her recent works, from drawings to performances to games, the visual notation system of her personal musical compositions comes into play. The structures of his minimalist scores are translated into repeated motifs and actions that follow rules and analogies explored 'between' the media.

Like the sound-visual realm, writing for El Haïk is also a game, a 'game' based on repetition and combination. The polyrhythmic forms visualised are complex but at the same time minimal and coherent. In particular, in his drawings on paper and murals, the artist starts from a personal graphic trace that refers to Arabic writing, developing multiform textures by repeating and superimposing the sign, also through the use of colour.

If the act of writing and the way in which it involves, organises and conditions the body and performance are the common thread running through the work, play and the act of playing are also central to El Haïk's investigation. The invention of rules is Myriam El Haïk's first personal creative act, and it is precisely through the conditioning of the rules she establishes that she also invents her game-works: these range from 'solitary puzzles' to 'head-to-head' and 'perceptual stimulation games'. Chance, logic and strategy are



Toy Toy II I, Pièce for 4 toy pianos, by Myriam El Haïk with Myriam El Haïk, Mélanie Collin-Cremonesi, Pierre De Bucy, Haga Ratovo

components that allow players to appreciate these 'aesthetic games', the main purpose of which is to stimulate an alternative approach to the spirit of competition and the 'win-lose' dialectic. Even in performances, such as in "(7 5 3(0", the artist's body is engaged on multiple levels through drawing, voice and gestural movement, and the combinatorial processes characteristic of Myriam El Haïk's work highlight the intertwining of structural links between drawing, music and dance. A performance with multiple games and writings that implements rules and codes whose unity is constituted by time. Differently, but always in a playful form disciplined by precise rules, all this is evident in "COODD" and in installation-performances such as "Contrôle d'identité" and "A Couple of times".



La bess, 2017, Courtesy Le Cube, Rabat, Morocco



McDogazawi, 2010, (Printed in 2024), Giclée print on Hahnemühle Photo Rag Paper, 70x100 cm, Courtesy Fann A Porter Gallery, Dubai, UAE

Mohammed Ahmed Al Hawajri is a contemporary Palestinian artist whose work reflects the deep connection between land, memory, and identity. In his project *Cactus Borders* (2010–2009), he uses the cactus plant as a symbol of endurance and belonging.

For Al Hawajri, the cactus represents more than a plant, it stands as a witness to history. Once used to mark the borders of Palestinian villages and farmlands, it still grows today on the ruins of demolished homes and displaced communities.

The cactus, strong and unyielding, continues to live and bloom despite harsh conditions, much like the Palestinian people who remain rooted in their land.

Al Hawajri was drawn to the cactus for its human-like form and its contradictions. Its sharp thorns protect its soft inner life, while its bright flowers and sweet fruit appear in the heat of summer. Through his art, he explores these contrasts as reflections of human resilience, beauty, and survival.

Cactus Borders invites the viewer to see the cactus not only as a plant but as a symbol of steadfast existence — a living reminder of the land's memory and the hope of return.



Printed Matter installation view at Fann A Porter Gallery, 2025, Courtesy Fann A Porter Gallery, Dubai, UAE

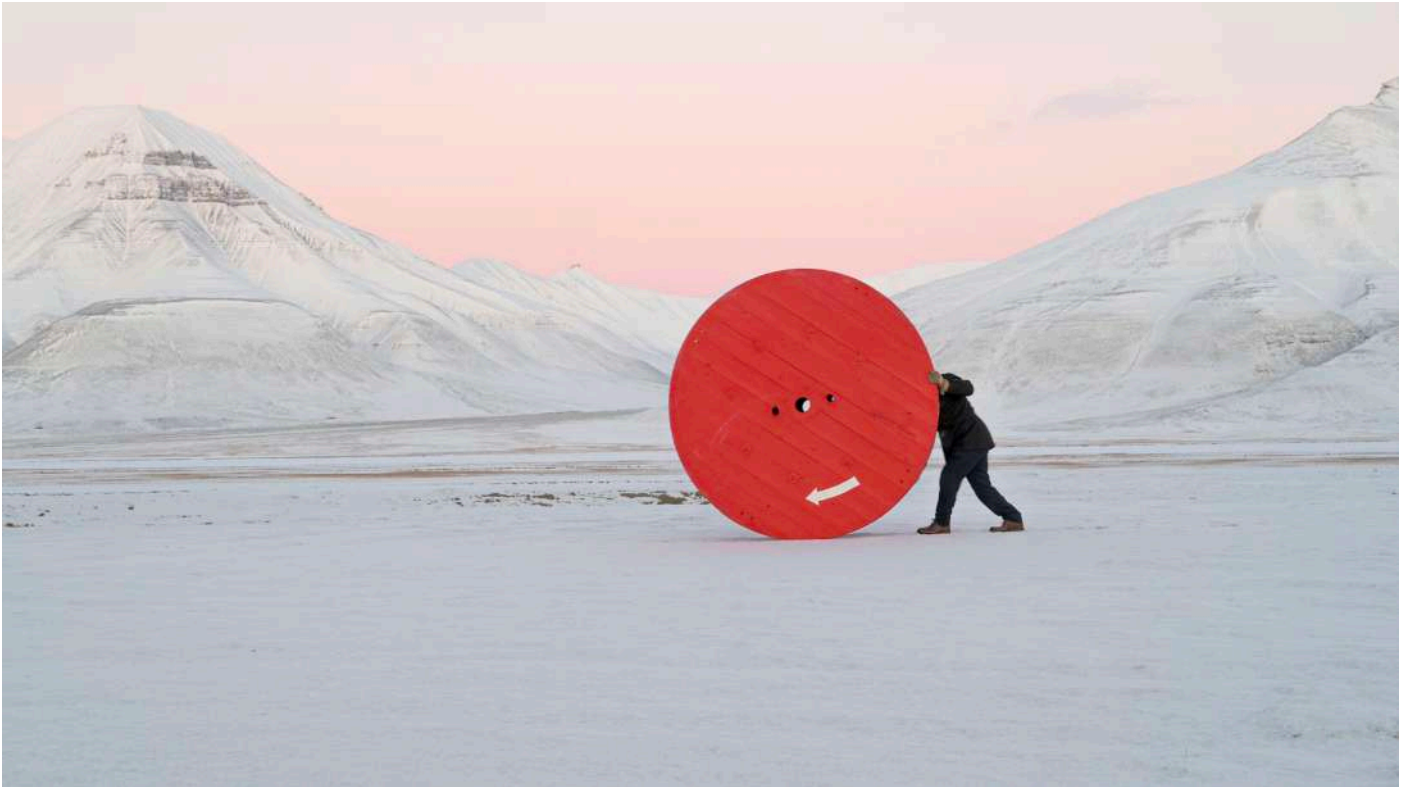


McDogazawi, 2010, (Printed in 2024), Giclée print on Hahnemühle Photo Rag Paper, 70x100 cm, Courtesy Fann A Porter Gallery, Dubai, UAE



My World, 2025, Performance for camera, still image from video, Artist: I am standing on an ice floe, drifting with the wind and the sea current and trying to break the floe I am standing.

Stein Henningsen puts a strong emphasis on intergenerational responsibility in his creative practice: as he claims, the world we have inherited now is shaped by the “result of choices made by our ancestors”, hence we also bear the same duty towards the future. He is interested in how to raise awareness of pressing social, political and especially environmental issues through his artworks. Living in the Arctic Archipelago of Svalbard, Norway, his attention is directed to climate emergency, and his video works – that are based on performances – often thematize the disastrous consequences of our inattention to this looming catastrophe. The images we see are constructed with minimal visual elements, often just the infinite natural scenery and a lonely figure, nevertheless they are very efficient in making the observer start interpreting the many layers of the works, including questions about our position in the world, the reasons and implications of the difference in proportions of man and Nature, the diverse temporal perspectives, the rhythms and cycles of natural and human life, as well as, of course, the urgent need to find solutions to the constant destruction of our planet.



Red Drum 2023, Performance for camera, still image from video

Artist: I am pushing a red drum through the Arctic landscape. The drum is painted alarm red with a white arrow on the side indicating in which direction to roll the drum.



Timeline II, 2022, Performance for camera, still image from video

Artist: On the top of the highest mountain in the area I am holding a wooden beam burning controlled from one side to the other. The short time the fire uses from start to end indicates the insignificant time the modern man has lived on the planet compared to the age of it.

Joseph J. Joseph

India

Brajan
Vojinović



Market series, 2025, Oil Painting on Canvas

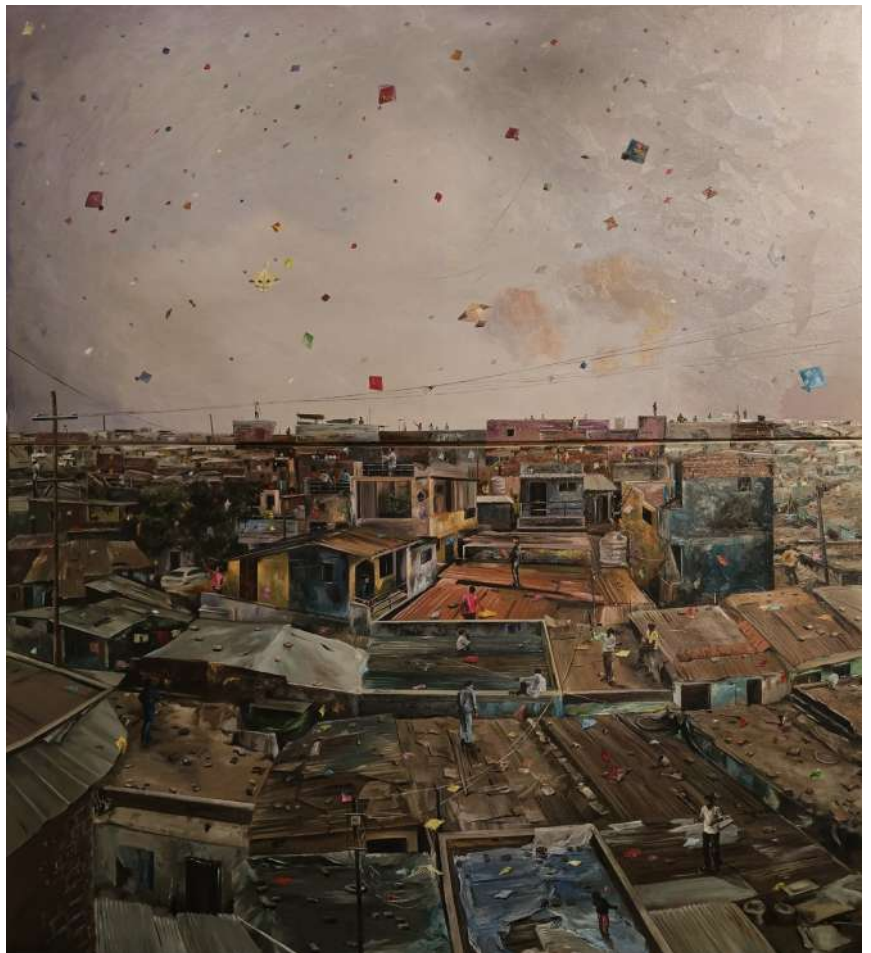
Appreciating the cultural heritage of Mattan chery and Fort Kochi (Kerala, India), Joseph has transposed his impressions of the shared spaces of more than 39 vibrant communities. By documenting these impressions in large-scale paintings, he brings forward a sense of intimacy and closeness that is often overlooked in liminal spaces. Joseph portrays architecture as inhabited—symbiotic with the life and people around it—and full of life's simple splendor. In Market Series, he depicts a busy morning market, viewing it as a microcosm of social activity, the rhythm of the everyday, commerce, and sharing. Experimenting with perspective, he both fractures and unites the sense of continuum, revealing memory and movement coexisting in constant dialogue. Expanding his practice through the installation Hope, he illustrates the beautiful Uttarayan—the kite-flying festival of Gujarat that signifies the end of winter and the arrival of longer, sunlit days: an archetypal metaphor for the passage from darkness into light, and despair into hope. Such a bright and attentive outlook is a testament to the reality available to anyone who chooses to see it.



Hope, 2025, Oil Painting on Canvas, 168x152.5 cm



Beyond the gates, 2025, Oil Painting on Canvas, 122x122 cm



Hope, 2025, Oil Painting on Canvas, 168x152.5 cm



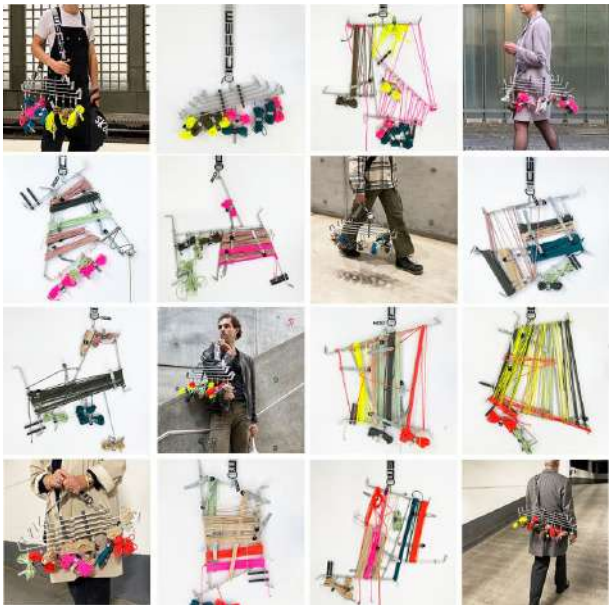
Interchangeable - #icstsm, 2018, 35 lime green PVC elements, lime green rope (50 m long), 15 art PVC-wall brackets, Variable dimensions

The idea of interchangeability defines the recent work of German conceptual artist Sylvia Möllner. In her exhibitions, Möllner provides materials such as PVC elements, ropes, aluminum stands, and frames, inviting gallery visitors and staff to take part in the creation of her artworks. These pieces emerge as collaborative constructions between the artist and non-artists and exist in a constantly shifting, temporary state. Each outcome can be documented through a photograph and shared on social media with a designated hashtag. Although this approach introduces a sense of freedom, playfulness, and open-ended creativity, it also inherently involves destruction: every new work requires dismantling the previous one to make space for the next transformation. Through this cyclical process of building and unbuilding, Möllner highlights the temporality and limitless



Interchangeable sculpture - #icscm, 2019, 3 casings in silver and three trend colors of 2019; Innocent blue, Pistachio, and fruit tea rose made of different PVC materials/textiles and filled with corn flakes, 2 grey frames made from wood and aluminum, Adjustable in height and width

possibilities of artistic form. At the same time, her practice challenge traditional assumptions about what defines an artist, an artwork, and originality. By decentralizing authorship and inviting continuous reinterpretation, she rethinks the boundaries of creation and emphasizes the dynamic, collective, and ever-evolving nature of contemporary art.



Interchangeable surface 2D - #icsfm 2D, since 2023 (ongoing project), 6 aluminum frames (consisting of 5 aluminum profiles) with carrying strap, each with 9 colored ropes (each 10 m long), Variable dimensions



Il tempio del cerchio, 2021, (The Temple of the Circle 2021), Site-specific environmental installation in Capalbio (GR) created with natural and recycled materials 15 meters in diameter, 47.7 meters in circumference

Samantha Passaniti is exploring novel artistic ways for the investigation of our relationship with the different environments we inhabit. She is interested in experimenting with developing new forms of surveying our surroundings through art. However, this does not consist of only observation and meditation of her connection to a specific environment. Besides these initial steps, her focus is on how to go beyond her own attention and contemplation practices.



Cieli su cieli, 2020, (Skies upon Skies 2020) Site-specific installation, Sierra de Aracena Natural Park (Andalusia, Spain), Handcrafted paper and natural materials, Variable dimensions



Resilience, 2020, Recycled metal element, rust, white pigment, and succulent plant, 70x26x13 cm

Therefore, she encourages the viewers of her pieces to find their own approach of how to reflect on their connection to places and spaces. This explains the variety of materials used in her works, the multiple modes of their elaboration, the diverse forms of expression and different techniques she employs, as well as the participatory practices involving her public in the projects.

Gail Spaien

USA | Lenka
Piper



Red Tulips, 2024. Acrylic on linen 132x122 cm, Courtesy of the artist and Taymour Grahne Projects, Dubai, UAE

Gail Spaien, an American visual artist, creates paintings that gently invite viewers to step into the worlds she depicts. These spaces feel harmonious, safe, and beautiful – qualities shaped by her careful choices of color, pattern, and theme. Spaien frequently depicts both interior and exterior settings, or their combinations: a kitchen with an open window, a living room with comfortable



Arranging Flowers, 2025, Acrylic on linen, 102x97 cm, Courtesy of the artist and Taymour Grahne Projects, Dubai, UAE



Waypoints, 2025, Acrylic on linen, 122x122 cm, Courtesy of the artist and Taymour Grahne Projects, Dubai, UAE

armchairs, a view into a garden or out toward the open sea. Each of these scenes holds the power to pause the viewer and draw attention to the present moment. For Spaien, painting is a way to understand herself and the world she moves through. She relies more on imagination than direct observation, allowing her process to unfold intuitively and giving each painting room to find its own final form. The atmosphere of her work, shaped by decorative patterns, soothing colors, and a gently skewed perspective, radiates a sense of calm and refuge. Her paintings offer spaces where the body and mind may rest, inviting contemplation, balance, and quiet restoration.



Piety, 2021, Statuary marble, 140x80x150 cm

CI: Please introduce yourself.

JAGO: I've always found introductions to be slightly awkward and somewhat trivial, because we end up listing what we do instead of trying to say who we are, which is infinitely more complex. And by doing so, we lose the opportunity to make room for silence. So, I'll keep it simple: my name is Jago.

CI: Tell us about your early influences. How did you become an artist? Is there a particular experience that drove you to this choice?

JAGO: I'm not sure one becomes an artist. For me, art is connected to "doing," and therefore there is art in everything, even when we're unaware of it. That said, I was always a curious and enthusiastic child, and through my work I've tried to preserve that quality. It allows me to capture images that I then feel compelled to translate into tangible, three-dimensional forms

As for influences, I've always allowed myself to be inspired by everything around me, with a particular reverence for the great masters whose gestures and ideas have survived the test of time. I chose marble because I am fascinated by the idea that behind those monumental works there was, simply, a human being, someone like me.

CI: Your sculptures merge classical mastery with a distinctly contemporary sensibility. How do you reconcile tradition and innovation within your creative process?

JAGO: To me, every new gesture dedicated to creation is already a step toward innovation. That alone is significant.

I don't know to what extent my sculptures contain "classical mastery," but I recognize myself in a language that doesn't feel dead or outdated, a language still capable of relating to the world we live in.

I experience this daily by sharing my work, both online and through what we do at the Jago Museum in Naples. I don't think in terms of "tradition versus innovation"; I think in terms of communication. And communication isn't concerned with rhetoric, it's concerned with reaching the other person, using whatever tools are necessary. Sculpture, though ancient, can still communicate powerfully today, especially when accompanied by the tools our era provides, tools that allow it to reach those naturally inclined toward this language.

CI: Marble is often seen as timeless and immovable, yet your work feels alive and emotionally charged. What strategies do you use to make such rigid material express human vulnerability?

JAGO: Marble has always been associated with statues which, by definition, do not move. Yet great artists have managed to convey movements even more lifelike than life itself, movements capable of transcending time. After all, as I mentioned earlier, marble is a material that has passed the test of time.

I don't know if my work appears alive or emotionally charged. What I do know is that I feel alive while making them. I pour emotion into them and, throughout the long period required to complete a sculpture, I enter a state of equanimity, witnessing an array of thoughts and sensations, sometimes conflicting. I place myself at the service of the material. Marble cannot be forced; it must be understood and gently approached. It has its own timeframe, much longer than mine, and its own inner reality.

If one wishes to create something meaningful, there must be a collaboration between the tools I use and the nature of the stone itself.

If you don't listen to the material, even the best tools become useless.

CI: You've cultivated a direct relationship with your audience through digital platforms. How has this transparency reshaped the role of the artist in today's cultural landscape?

JAGO: Social platforms allowed a young man whose language didn't fit within the established art system to learn how to communicate and develop an entrepreneurial mindset. They were an enormous advantage. This kind of communication generates a direct response from those who choose to engage with your content, creat-

ing a meaningful and fruitful relationship because you receive immediate feedback.

Today we talk about "influencers" as if creators had the power to shape the audience, but the opposite is often true: the creator is deeply shaped by the multitude that participates in their content.

So if your work is to function, you must acknowledge the presence of those you choose to invite behind the scenes of your creation.

This was my choice: to share the process so that a multitude of eyes, opinions, values, and perspectives could participate in the genesis of my work. It has been an advantage for me — and I hope, in some way, also for those who have followed me over the years.

CI: Much of your work explores the fragility of existence, from infancy to decay. What draws you repeatedly to themes of birth, transformation, and mortality?

JAGO: The image of infancy, a child, a fetus, the image of a future possibility, is extraordinary because it concerns all of us. It represents purity and absolute truth, containing within itself every possible perspective.

A child is like a sponge, capable of absorbing and reflecting the surrounding world. A block of marble behaves similarly: it contains all possible forms, and the artist takes responsibility for choosing which one to reveal.

I respect this image profoundly. I've used it before and will continue to use it, because it conveys an abundance of meaning with absolute immediacy.

And, as I said earlier, I work with the constant intention of staying in touch with my inner child, the free part of me that still lives inside. Without that part, I wouldn't have the creative impulse, sometimes even the madness necessary to create.

Children are not yet bound by reason; they don't impose rigid definitions on things. They live in the multiplicity of meaning, in the truth of things.

Adults, out of necessity, reduce, define, and classify. Children don't. And that's why they are free. The truth of things lies in their multiplicity, and that's what the artist must deal with: revealing what others, guided by reason, might overlook.

The artist doesn't close meanings; he reveals them in their full variety.

CI: In an era dominated by speed and consumption, sculpture demands slowness and contemplation. How do you see the relevance of sculptural practice in our accelerated world?

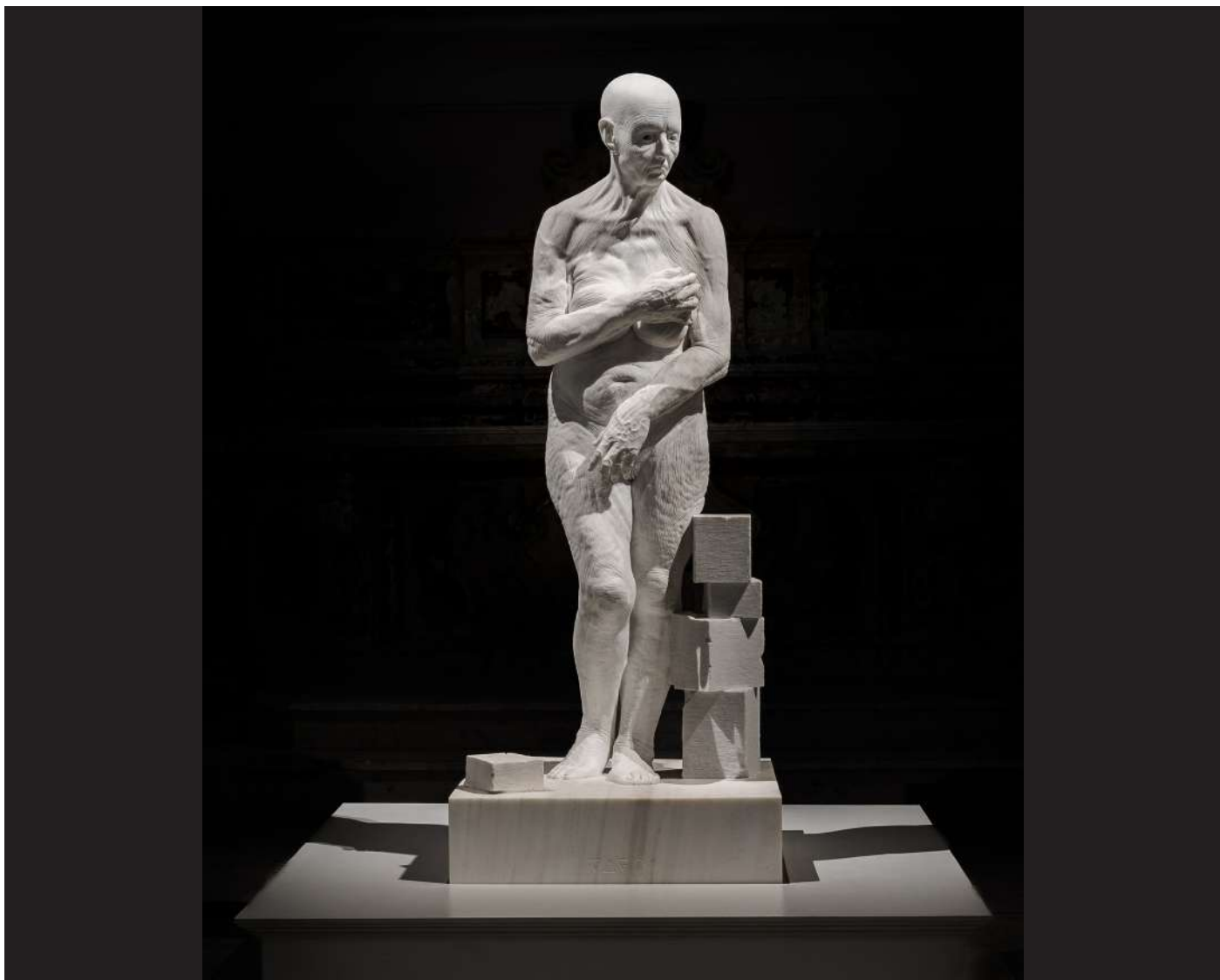
JAGO: Thank you for this question, because it gives me the chance to remind myself how essential it is to take the time necessary to do things properly. You don't need grand theories to understand this: an apple tree needs its time to bear ripe fruit, and so does anything good that must grow.

Today, however, everything must be ready "yesterday": an artwork, a project, an article. We live in a constant state of delay. Even exhibitions, which should be moments of contemplation, have become timed events: the faster, the better.

The same happens in architecture. Imagining a construction project that could take a hundred years, like a new St. Peter's, is inconceivable today. We build quickly, with the expectation that everything will eventually be torn down to make room for something else.

The result is that we inhabit ugly places, without vision. Instead of investing time and resources in something meant to last, we invest the bare minimum in something we know we will later sell, not live in.

Italy is full of empty homes, yet housing is unavailable. Young people struggle to find a place to live; the few options available are extremely expensive and offer very little in return.



Venus, 2017-2018, Lasa Covelano marble, 70x70x195 cm

Recovering the value of time is crucial. I'm working on it. I'm not free from this logic yet, but I'm trying to reach a point where I'm no longer forced to deliver something according to an imposed deadline.

This system devours our creative freedom by confining it within forced intervals.

I'll get there eventually, but even talking about it is valuable. It reminds me that I'm standing in front of a sculpture, and that is a tremendous privilege.

So I tell myself: Jago, learn to enjoy every single moment of creation, because that moment will never return.

CI: Many of your pieces evoke both pain and serenity, as if suspended between suffering and transcendence. What emotional or philosophical ground do you stand on when creating such tensions?

JAGO: I can't truly answer this question, because my works don't evoke in me what they evoke in others: I've already lived through them during the making.

Once completed, I observe them with distance and a kind of paternal love, the love of someone who generated them and hopes for their best possible future.

What I can say concerns the moment of creation. During that time, countless things happen

in my mind, I build an imaginary museum and traverse deep inner landscapes, because I work in solitude.

It's a necessary solitude, because what happens in that silence, the intuitions that arise, sometimes surprisingly, reveal that many of the answers I was seeking outside were already inside me.

They may appear confused or incomplete, but they come precisely because of that solitude. And in those moments, you feel connected to everything. If those answers emerge without external intervention, it means everything is truly interconnected.

There is, inevitably, a meditative dimension to sculpture.

CI: Collaboration and dialogue seem central to your approach, whether with history, institutions, or audiences. What kind of dialogue do you hope your works will initiate across cultures and generations?

JAGO: Yes, collaboration and dialogue are essential. I've chosen to use my works to build a system that originates from me, yet survives only through sharing, not only online, but also offline.

People can participate in the process, understand the journey of each piece, and experience it in person.

The Jago Museum, for instance, is run by the cooperative La Sorte: a group of very young individuals who are growing incredibly fast. I've entrusted them with what I consider my values, and I'm deeply proud of them. It's a school for me as well, because I realize daily that no matter how good you are, if you don't surround yourself with people who are better than you, your path remains limited.

If you truly want to grow and bring your ideas to life, you need a group, you need collaboration. You need to recognize that others can be a resource for you, and that you can be a resource for them.

It is in this mutual exchange that a shared, beautiful journey emerges.

When I receive feedback, positive or negative, I welcome it with the same enthusiasm. I don't know what kind of dialogue my work will spark, but I make myself available: I stay silent, observe, take notes, and then go home to reflect.

CI: Finally, if you were to define "contemporaneity" in art, not as a period, but as a state of being, what would it mean to you?

JAGO: For me, the word "contemporary" has nothing to do with a specific historical period; in a sense, it belongs to all historical periods.

Anything that continues to exist and remains in relation with us — now — is contemporary.

In this sense, there is an art that belongs to a time which still lives and endures today, an art that hasn't exhausted its themes and continues to converse beautifully with the present.

All art, at least the art that exists, is contemporary. Sometimes even what no longer exists remains contemporary, because what we carry in memory continues to influence our thoughts and perceptions.

I live in the present, the only time I have. And if I had to define contemporaneity as a state of being, I would say it is a vast opportunity for transformation.

Everything happens so quickly that I may still be trying to understand it, and perhaps I don't yet have the words to define it properly.

So, let's put it this way: I will keep working, and my work, one day, who knows when, will come back to you with the answer you're looking for.



Narciso, 2023, Statuary marble, 88x50xh160 cm

Interviewed with Irinashkap

By: Fabio Gamberini



Hidden oppression, 2024, Fine art photography, Digital and AI-assisted reprocessing



Hidden oppression, 2024, Fine art photography, Digital and AI-assisted reprocessing

At this year's Arte Fiera Padova, one of the most magnetic presences was that of Irinashkap, a young artist whose work defies the boundaries between photography, creative direction, fashion styling and digital composition. Rather than approaching the image as a fixed frame, Irinashkap constructs entire worlds — fragile, ethereal architecture suspended between decay and baroque hints, where silence and emptiness become active, narrative elements. Her visual language is unmistakable: a language where what is soft can become unsettling, dreamlike instants become meticulously composed narratives. It is an aesthetic that feels born from an interior mythology, shaped by memory, intuition, and a sense of cinematic atmosphere that seems to breathe beneath the surface of every figure and object she stages.

FG: Your work has a very distinctive aesthetic — ethereal, slightly decadent, at times almost baroque, yet able to breathe through emptiness. How did this visual universe originate? What aesthetic or narrative references shaped it?

ISH: My visual universe was born from a very personal paradox: the need to protect what is fragile, and at the same time the urge to expose it to the light. I've always perceived the world through emotional, aesthetic and inner layers, and this naturally translates into images that seem suspended between delicacy and unease.

The ethereal atmospheres and the echoes of decay come from what I've lived through, from controlling environments, heavy silences, spaces where beauty existed but was in constant tension with something darker. That subtle baroque that keeps returning is not just decoration or an aesthetic influence, it is also a way of giving form to emotional excess, to the parts of me that overflowed even when I tried to contain them. My inspirations do not come only from what I see, but from what I feel while I'm living. Before aesthetics come the stories, the tensions, the silences. Cinema has always spoken to me more than photography, not because of the images, but because of its ability to suggest instead of showing, to leave something suspended in the air.

And then there are the places that shaped me without me realizing it. Rooms that were too quiet yet constricting, filled with everything that wasn't mine or necessary. Light that sometimes felt colder than people. The right kind of noise, the one I needed, that never arrived. Even the fog, not metaphorically, which was part of my everyday life, wrapping everything and hiding more than it revealed, has become a kind of permanent memory inside me. These are places I did not choose, but that built me.

Ultimately, my imagery comes from an inner mythology formed early on: empty spaces that become refuges, fragility that turns into aesthetics, and a certain sense of emotional theatricality that returns to every piece of work. My images breathe on the edge between what is soft and what can wound, because I grew up on that same edge.

FG: Your approach seems closer to art direction than to traditional photography: you build worlds rather than simply capturing images. How does your creative process unfold, from the first intuition to the final composition?

ISH: My creative process never begins with an image. It always starts with a feeling. Usually, it is something very small and almost irrational: an emotion that returns, a sentence that stays in my head, a color that puts me on edge or that I am drawn to, a detail I notice somewhere that attaches itself to me. Everything begins there, like a seed. The part that feels most like mine is building the world around that feeling. I don't think "I need to take a picture", I think "I need to create the space where this thing can really exist". This is why my work feels closer



Hidden oppression, 2024, Fine art photography, Digital and AI-assisted reprocessing

to art direction. I choose materials, textures, lights, poses, the distance between bodies and objects, as if they were elements of an emotional scenography. The final image is only the last layer. Before that there is an entire invisible phase, from color selection to wardrobe research, from mentally composing the spaces to physically or digitally constructing the environment. It is a slow process, made of attempts and adjustments. In the end, every composition is the synthesis of a very personal path, a world I build from nothing to let a part of myself emerge, one that I would not know how to express with words.

FG: In some of your pieces you integrate elements generated with artificial intelligence. How does AI enter your workflow? Is it a tool for refinement, an extension of your imagination, or something else entirely?

ISH: Artificial intelligence enters my workflow the same way an invisible material would. It does not replace anything. It expands what already exists. For me it is never the starting point, and it never becomes the author. It is a tool I use to complete an atmosphere, add a detail, or give shape to something I can feel but that is sometimes difficult to recreate physically. My imagery always begins with an emotion or with a world that I build myself. AI comes in afterwards, as an extension of my imagination. I use it to generate elements that I then recombine, to reinforce textures, to amplify a sensation, or to make more precise something that in real life would be too complex or too heavy to construct. I do not experience it as a threat, because I never give it the creative part. I give it the technical part, the part that helps my vision align more precisely with the scene. In this sense AI is a means, not an end. It is a thin layer of post-production, a tool that translates what I have already imagined and built. My signature remains in everything, in the choices, in the colors, in the silences of the image, in the suspended atmospheres. AI decides nothing for me. It enters only where I want it to enter. And when I use it, it is only to make my world even closer to the one I carry inside.

FG: Many artists perceive AI as a threat to their visual identity. You, instead, seem to use it to reinforce your signature style. How do you define the boundary between “directing” and “delegating” when it comes to working with AI?

ISH: For me the line between directing and delegating is very clear. I am the origin of the image, and AI is only a tool that intervenes where I decide. The direction is always mine, because the core of the work, the intention, the emotional tension, the construction of the world, all come before any technology. I do not ask it to create. I ask it to follow me. AI does not generate my aesthetic. It refines it. It does not replace my gaze. It extends it. It is like an extra hand I use when I want to accentuate a detail, soften a shape, or make an element more precise when in real life it would be too rigid or too expensive to build. Delegating would mean letting it make choices. And that never happens. Everything that enters the image is filtered through my control, my taste, and my narrative logic. The creative part, the part that gives meaning to the image, is not something an algorithm can replicate, because it comes from lived experience, from an emotional intuition, from a way of looking at the world that is mine alone. Technology helps me expand my language, not replace it. This is why it does not scare me. AI can imitate a style, but it cannot imitate a personal story. And my work comes from that story.

FG: Your worlds often carry a suspended, almost cinematic atmosphere — like dreams that are not entirely benevolent. What emotional responses do you hope to evoke in the viewer?

ISH: I never try to evoke a single or reassuring emotion. I am drawn to that intermediate zone, the place where something is beautiful yet restless, soft yet sharp, familiar yet impossible to grasp. It is the emotional space where I have always moved, and it inevitably reflects itself in my worlds. I want the viewer to feel a small internal friction. Not fear, not pure discomfort, but that sensation that makes you hold your breath for a moment, the sense that something lies beneath the surface, something unspoken yet clearly perceived. I am interested in evoking empathy and distance at the same time. Like when, in a dream, you recognize a place you have never actually seen. That emotional ambiguity, that sense of suspension, is what makes the images feel alive. I do not want the viewer to understand everything. I want them to feel something. To recognize themselves in a fragment



Searching (wrong way), 2023, Fine art photography, Digital and AI-assisted reprocessing

or in a silence, even without knowing why. If an image leaves a question open, for me it has already done its work. Because the answer, often, is already inside the person who is looking at it.

FG: Looking ahead, where do you imagine your practice evolving? Toward more narrative world-building, toward fashion/editorial work, or perhaps into installations and immersive environments?

ISH: I feel that my work is already moving toward worlds that are more complex and immersive. The more I grow, the more I realize that a single image is not enough for me. I need to build emotional environments, spaces that wrap around the viewer, narratives that move between photography, set design, video and digital composition. Fashion and editorial work will remain important because they allow me to work with bodies, garments and identity. But they are not an endpoint. They are one of the languages through which I tell stories. The direction I feel myself moving toward is wider, almost theatrical. I am interested in creating experiences. Environments where the audience enters and finds itself immersed in the same suspension present in my images. Installations, constructed spaces, silent performances, emotional architecture. It is like bringing my worlds out of the screen and making them inhabitable, real. At the same time, I want to develop the narrative dimension even more: coherent series, universes that speak to one another, projects that hold not only an aesthetic but also a thought. It is a natural evolution. More than documenting, I want to let an atmosphere be lived.

In the future I imagine my practice as an ecosystem rather than a medium. A place where image, fashion, installation, technology and intimacy can coexist. And where everything is driven by the same urgency: giving form to the worlds I carry inside.

FG: From your perspective, how will artificial intelligence evolve within the creative process in the coming years? Do you think it will become a natural extension of the artist's imagination, or will it reshape our very notion of authorship and artistic identity?

ISH: For me AI may become extremely advanced, but it will always remain distant from one essential thing: emotionality. The worlds I build come from inner states, from tensions I have lived in my own skin, from a sensitivity that is not logical and not programmable. This is something no algorithm will ever generate, because it does not come from data but from experience. I think that in the future AI will be a natural, almost everyday tool that helps translate what we imagine more quickly. But the real part, the part that gives meaning to an image, will remain human. It comes from fragility, ambiguity, the way we perceive silence, emptiness, beauty and contradictions. Authorship, in my view, will not be undermined. It will become even clearer who has a strong emotional universe and who does not. AI can imitate a style, but it cannot imitate the reason why that style exists. It cannot replicate the story you carry inside. In this sense, technology will not redefine who we are as artists. It will simply highlight how much of our identity comes from something that cannot be generated artificially.

FG: If you feel comfortable sharing: is there a part of your personal story — an experience, a place, a recurring image — that has shaped the way you perceive the world and build your visual universes?

There is a part of my story that has defined my way of creating in a radical way. Until I was eighteen, I had no freedom and no sense of self. Every choice was made for me, every movement was watched, every word was filtered or held back. The feeling was that I had no private space, neither outside nor inside. I could not speak, I could not decide, I could not exist on my own. I lived in a constant state of uncertainty, surrounded by contradictions that erased any chance of experiencing those eighteen years of life. No steady relationships, no real friends, no interactions, no possibility to choose or even to make mistakes. All of it led to a complete cancellation of myself. At eighteen I was empty of experiences and without self-esteem. On paper I was eighteen, but in reality, I was one year old. In that total lack of voice, my aesthetic was born. Aesthetic became the only escape. My secret language.

While everything around me was being controlled, the image was the only place where no one could limit me. I began building inner worlds because the external ones were not mine. I learned to communicate through textures, colors, distances, atmospheres, because I could not do it with words. This is why my images seem suspended, fragile, unsettling. They come from that feeling of being constantly watched, constantly regulated, constantly on the verge of disappearing. Every composition I make today is a choice I could not make back then. Every world I create

is a place where my voice can finally exist without fear. What I do now is not simply art direction or photography. It is my way of reconstructing the freedom I did not have when I was young. It is the most authentic form through which I can say who I am, after years in which I could not say it at all.

FG: Padua was one of your first experiences exhibiting and selling your work at an art fair. What was it like to enter the art market for the first time? And how do you see art fairs and the art market responding to the growing presence of AI in artistic production?

ISH: Padua was my first real immersion into the art market. Entering it for the first time felt strange and beautiful at the same time: seeing people stop in front of my works, ask questions, listen, react... it was like witnessing a new kind of dialogue, where the image was no longer just an extension of myself, but something that began to live outside of me. It was intense, because for years I had no voice or space, and finding myself in a place where my gaze was welcomed, purchased, taken home by someone, carried a huge emotional weight. It felt as if the part of me that hadn't been allowed to speak for so long was finally being heard. As for the growing presence of AI, I think fairs and the market will respond in two parallel ways: on one side, curiosity; on the other, selection. AI is everywhere now, but I believe that those who buy art are increasingly looking for something AI can't replicate: personal history, human fragility, the emotional truth that comes from a real lived experience. And paradoxically, the more AI expands, the more valuable what it cannot imitate will become.

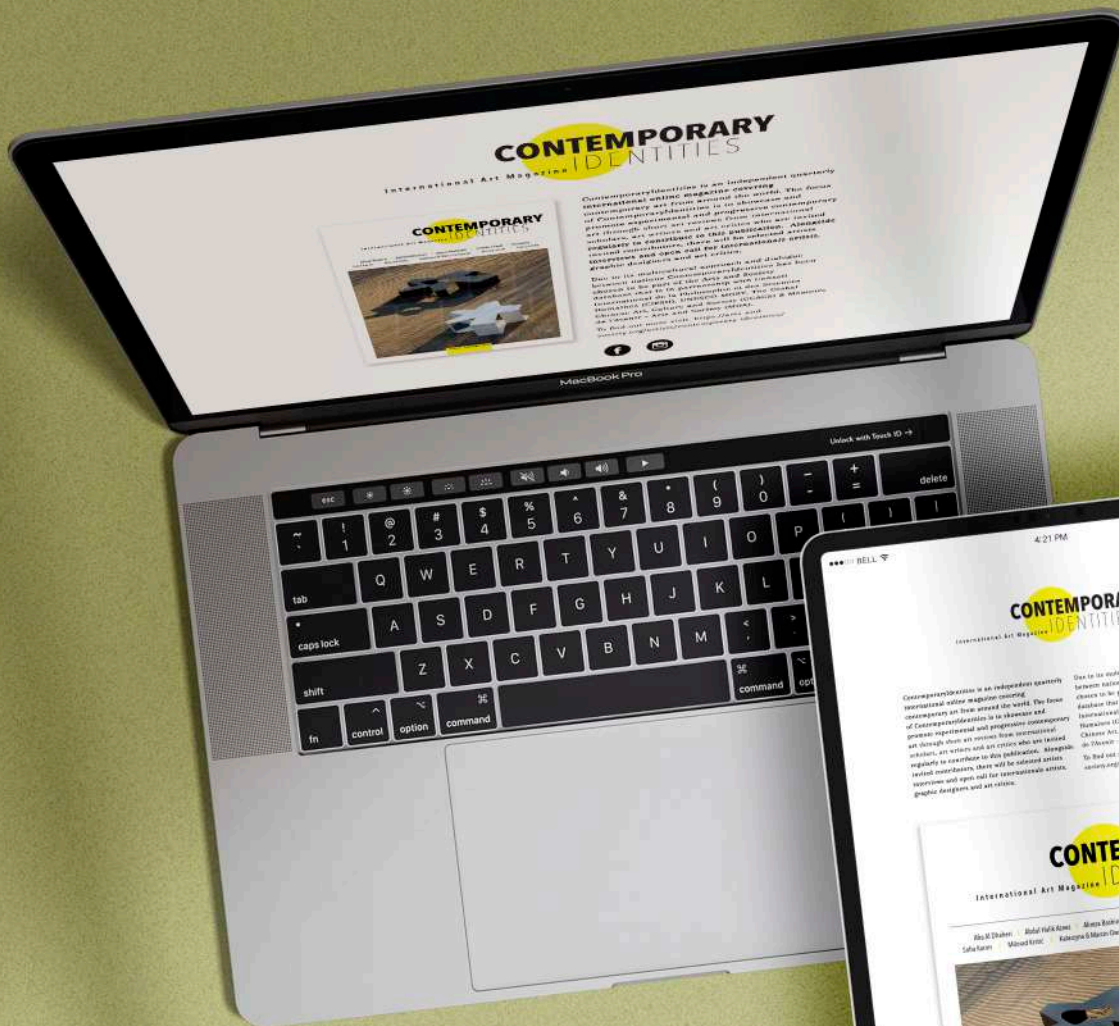
FG: What makes her practice especially relevant within the contemporary landscape is the way she integrates artificial intelligence. Not as a shortcut nor as an autonomous author, but as a subtle extension of her vision — a tool for enhancing textures, refining atmospheres, or introducing details that complete the emotional architecture of a scene. In her hands, AI becomes a delicate layer of post-production, a way to amplify, not dilute, the identity of the image.

For Contemporary Identities, I sat down with Irinashkap to explore her creative process, her personal journey, and her first encounter with the art market as an emerging artist. Our conversation moves between imagination and technology, between the intimacy of her background and the broader questions shaping the future of visual creation.



Nuances, 2024, Fine art photography, Digital and AI-assisted reprocessing





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