



*Under the patronage of Claudia Roth MdB,
Minister of State for Culture and the Media of Germany*

BE Visible

Migration, Women and Artistic Identities

An art exhibition about courage, adaptation, and new beginnings

Palazzo Albrizzi-Capello, Cannaregio, Venice

December 21, 2024 – January 22, 2025

4

Statement

Claudia Roth MdB, Minister of State for Culture and the Media of Germany

5

Foreword

// I.S.I. e. V. Initiative Selbständiger Immigrantinnen

// German-Italian Cultural Association of Venice (ACIT)

7

About Us

8

artISla

An Art Project of I.S.I. e.V.

9

The Exhibition

11

The Artists

// Shahla Aghapour

// Andrea Agraz Rodriguez

// Kseniia Antipina

// Ilinca Barbato

// Clare Celeste

// Mila Belino

// Olena Lazutkina

// Daniela Lella

// marera

// Nicole Marra Nunes

// Fernanda Porto

// Renata Salas Rosas

// Laura Soria

Statement

Claudia Roth MdB,
Minister of State for Culture and the Media of Germany



Photo: © J. Konrad-Schmidt

„To me, culture is also characterized by diversity. The artists' exhibition by I.S.I. e.V. Initiative Selbständiger Immigrantinnen impressively demonstrates how coexistence and solidarity can succeed in our vibrant immigrant society.

It is also an exhibition about courageous, innovative women with diverse migration biographies who are starting anew. In doing so, it creates spaces for dialogue and understanding. In this way, culture can make a significant contribution to participation and integration.“

Foreword

I.S.I. e. V. Initiative Selbständiger Immigrantinnen



Isabella Agraz



Lucía Muriel



Shahla Payam

Dear guests and art enthusiasts,

For 35 years, I.S.I. e.V. (Initiative of Self-Employed Immigrant Women) has supported women with migration biographies in achieving economic independence and social participation. Guided by the principle “By Migrant Women for Migrant Women,” we strive to improve labor market integration and increase qualified employment among international women.

Female artists with migration backgrounds often face prejudices based on nationality, religion, and cultural differences. This touring exhibition encourages these artists to overcome barriers and utilize their creativity as art creators. In light of rising xenophobia across Europe, we aim to demonstrate that artistic expression fosters cultural values and social participation.

We are delighted that our traveling exhibition has its second vernissage here in Venice. Our inaugural exhibition, “BE Visible”, showcased artists' work at the Mexican Embassy in Berlin, introduced by Ambassador Francisco José Quiroga Fernández.

We proudly present this exhibition under the patronage of Claudia Roth MdB, Minister of State for Culture and the Media of Germany. Following the theme of this year's Biennale, “Foreigners Everywhere,” we showcase artwork from women artists across ten nations, united by their commitment to emancipation.

We extend our gratitude to the German Minister of State for recognizing the essential role of art in promoting integration and freedom of expression. As we embark on this exciting chapter in Venice, let us celebrate the artistic achievements of these talented women and the shared human experiences that connect us across borders. Together, through art, we can challenge stereotypes, break down barriers, and cultivate a more inclusive world where every voice is heard and valued.

Isabella Agraz / Lucía Muriel / Shahla Payam
Board members I.S.I. e.V., Initiative of
Self-Employed Immigrant Women

Foreword

Nevia Capello President,
German-Italian Cultural Association of Venice (ACIT)



Nevia Capello



Artistic perspectives in migration

Daughter of Italian emigrants, I know the laceration of detachment, the nostalgia of distance, the uncertainty of the future, the humiliation of a narrow-minded welcome in a foreign country. Between the 1880s and the First World War, 5 million Italians emigrated to the United States. My family is part of the group of migrants who left Italy from the Second World War until the end of the sixties. Sweden was a destination, coveted by my father in the name of art, wanting to give continuity to his career as a lyric tenor which began at the Rijeka Opera Theater and was interrupted by the political events that took those lands away from Italy.

My personal experience makes me underline Germany's openness towards the migration problem, to the point of having created institutions in various cities, which represent a model of welcome, protecting the interests of foreigners residing in the communities and advising municipal bodies on all matters that concern them. The I.S.I. e.V. "Initiative Selbständiger Immigrantinnen" of Berlin takes a further step forward, for 35 years taking care

of the initiatives of self-employed women with a history of immigration, to promote their economic independence, social participation and integration. The objective of the I.S.I. is the obligation to encourage female artists to overcome social limits and to use their creativity and talent to shape their existence.

Any frustrating tendency can be overcome, despite growing xenophobia, in the knowledge that artistic development abroad creates cultural values, contributes to social enrichment and enables social participation.

As president of the German-Italian Cultural Association of Venice, I feel honored to be able to welcome the exhibition "BE Visible. Migration, Women and Artistic Identities.", promoted by the I.S.I. e.V. and to offer a platform to explore the different facets and deeper understanding of foreignness, promoting the complexity of migration stories.

About Us

I.S.I. e.V. Initiative Selbständiger Immigrantinnen

I.S.I. e.V. (Initiative for the Self-Employment of Immigrant Women) has been a pioneer in empowering women with migration backgrounds in Germany. Since its foundation in 1990, the organization has operated under the motto "By Migrant Women for Migrant Women" to support migrant women in achieving self-employment by leveraging their unique skills, multilingual abilities, and intercultural expertise. These efforts not only promote societal integration but also address the issue of undervalued employment.

Founded by immigrant women who understood the specific challenges faced by their peers, I.S.I. e.V. is dedicated to helping women transform their talents into sustainable businesses. Migrant women often bring innovative ideas, identify gaps in the market, and contribute valuable social skills to their new communities. Through entrepreneurship, they overcome barriers such as unemployment or underemployment while creating opportunities for themselves and others.

I.S.I. e.V.'s philosophy is reflected in every aspect of its work. Its team, composed of professionals with migration histories, combines

reliability with expertise. Acting as role models, they provide support grounded in personal experience, helping women build confidence and develop their entrepreneurial potential. These shared experiences foster trust and create safe spaces for collaboration and growth.

The organization's training programs are tailored to meet participants at any stage of their entrepreneurial journey. Practical and customized guidance ensures that women are well-equipped to navigate the challenges of starting and running a business.

I.S.I. e.V.'s approach is further supported by international research that underscores the cultural and social contributions immigrants make to their new societies. By fostering environments where women can exchange ideas, build networks, and support one another, the organization empowers them to overcome barriers, achieve their goals, and contribute meaningfully to the economic and social fabric of society.

**„Art connects, opens doors, and tells
stories that help us see the world
from new perspectives.“**

With this guiding principle, we strive to make artistic diversity visible and bring together women from different backgrounds and biographies.

I.S.I. e.V. – Initiative of Self-Employed Immigrant Women is committed to supporting women with migration biographies, helping them achieve their professional and personal goals through tailored support and guidance.

Among our participants are many talented artists who often face challenges in continuing their careers. Frequently, they consider transitioning to other fields, as they see no prospects for their artistic pursuits in Germany.

To address these challenges, we offer courses designed to develop and strengthen the artistic skills of our participants. Consistently positive feedback has inspired us to launch the artISla project. This initiative aims to draw public attention to women artists with migration biographies, make their works visible, and share their stories.

Following the successful exhibitions at the Mexican Embassy and the Bardo Projektraum

in Berlin, we are now taking the project to Venice. This stage not only highlights the artistic quality and significance of the project but also reflects the immense recognition it has garnered from both participants and the public. The exhibition is more than just a platform for art – it is a statement of cultural diversity, empowerment, and the transformative power of artistic exchange.

The success of the artISla project strengthens our resolve and inspires us to plan and implement further stages that continue to empower women artists and foster cultural exchange. We remain committed to creating spaces where stories, experiences, and artistic expressions can thrive, breaking barriers and building bridges between cultures.

With artISla, we aim to not only celebrate the creativity of women with migration biographies but also to contribute to a broader understanding of the power of art in shaping inclusive and diverse communities. Looking ahead, we are inspired by the impact of this initiative and are eager to expand its reach, offering even more opportunities for artistic growth and connection.

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The Exhibition

BE Visible

Migration, Women and Artistic Identities

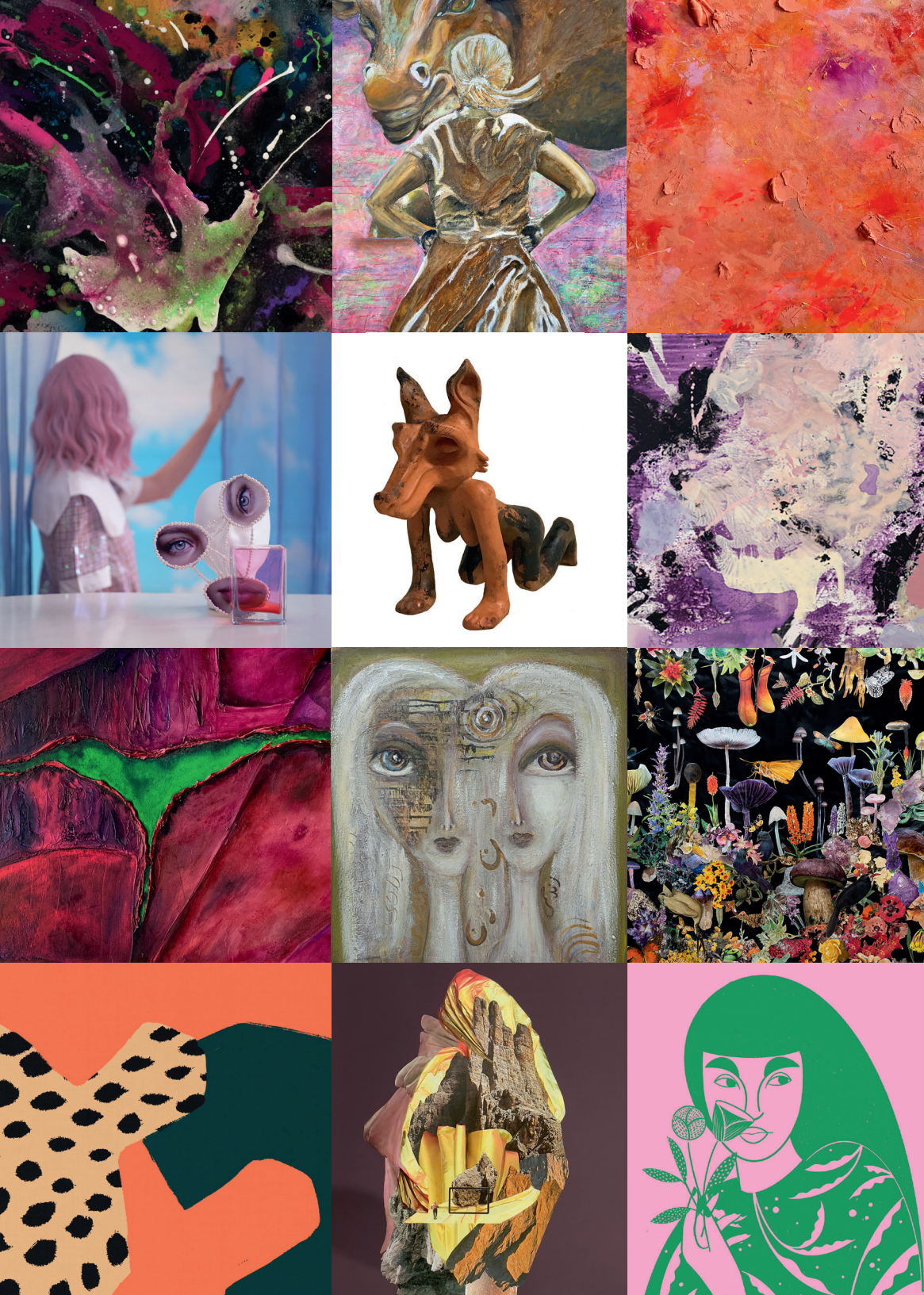
An art exhibition about courage, adaptation, and new beginnings.

The exhibition BE Visible, seeks to highlight the diversity and perspectives of female artists with migration and refugee experiences in the art world. Their works powerfully reflect the life paths and complex identities they embody. At its core, the exhibition emphasizes not only the aesthetic appeal of the pieces but also their ability to challenge prejudices and stereotypes related to migration and identity.

It provides a platform to explore the multifaceted nature of foreignness and promotes a deeper understanding of the complexity of migration stories. Through various forms of artistic expression—such as painting, sculpture, photography, and installations—the artists interpret their migration experiences in diverse and profound ways. Each work tells a unique story, inviting the viewer to delve into the concept of ‘foreignness’ and discover new perspectives. For these artists, leaving a country often means not only fleeing war, poverty, or oppression but also seeking ways to reestablish their identities and careers as creators.

For many women artists, the journey is about finding personal security as well as the opportunity to practice their art and express themselves creatively. Finding a place to settle is often challenging and requires courage, adaptability, and resilience to navigate new environments.

Together, we want to shed light on these stories and encourage cultural exchange through artistic expression.



The Artists



„The Goddess“
Acrylic on canvas
102x71cm
2020



„Fighting Woman“
Acrylic on canvas
102x71cm
2020

Shahla Aghapour

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www.galerie-benakohell.de

Shahla Aghapour grew up in Tehran as the daughter of Iranian Azerbaijanis. In addition to studying art, she trained as a journalist and had to emigrate from Iran because of her critical journalistic work in the regime.

She completed a Master of Art degree at the UdK Berlin and works as a visual artist, art lecturer and director of artistic projects. She has had numerous exhibitions and readings in Germany and other countries. Since 2015 she has been the director of the Art Gallery Benakohell in Berlin.

**“When I paint, at the same
time I am also a poet and
try to translate my poems
into colors and shapes.”**

In my work I will show the people the essence of things, feelings, the being of itself. The faces do not show specific people, but the female face in general, which is meant to express the most diverse moods and feelings: fear, terror, sadness, suffering, despair, but also hope and confidence. Net-like structures and floral shapes are reminiscent of imprisonment and constraints as well as integration into nature and the universe.

Andrea Agraz Rodriguez



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„Femenino & Masculino“
Oil and Spackle
40x70cm (each)
2010

Andrea, born in 1965 in Mexico City, is an artist and educator with a global career. After studying fine arts in Puebla, she moved to Germany in 1989, where she specialized in aquarelle painting, taught adult art classes, and founded an art school. She further enriched her expertise by training as an art therapist.

In 2014, she moved to the United States, working as an art therapist to support individuals with special needs. Throughout her career, Andrea has exhibited extensively in Mexico, Germany, and New York, establishing her reputation as a versatile artist. She has also taught at various institutions. Since returning to Germany in 2019, she has continued to develop her work, drawing inspiration from her experiences and travels, which remain an endless source of creativity and artistic renewal.

**„Art is a unique interpretation,
carrying its essence and
individuality.“**

Through my work, I communicate using forms, colors, and textures, striving to convey emotions, experiences, and perspectives. My aim is to encapsulate these elements within the piece, fostering connections that transcend cultural and linguistic barriers, while inviting a deeply personal and subjective interpretation from each viewer.



„To keep a straight face“

Giclée Print on Hahnemuehle FineArt Baryta

40x60cm

2024



„A Fishy Encounter“

Giclée Print on Hahnemuehle FineArt Baryta

40x60cm

2024

Kseniia Antipina



GERMENEVTIKA

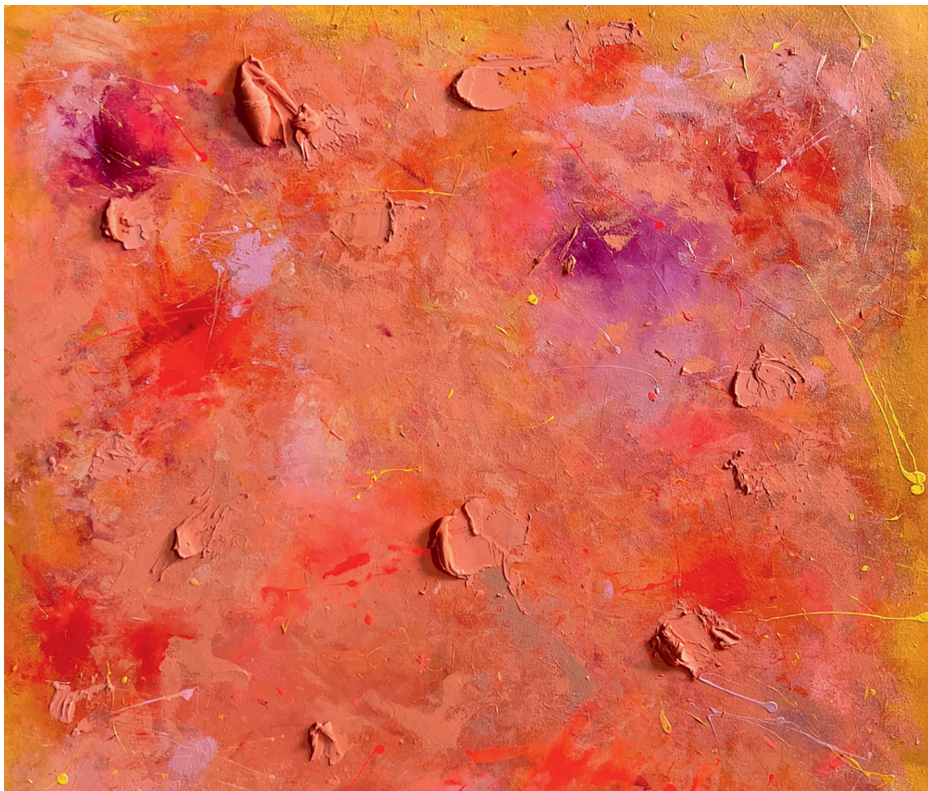
www.germenevtika-art.com

Kseniia Antipina (*1992, Bashkortostan Rep., Russia) grew up in a small, remote town and had no exposure to art but was interested in using a camera to capture moments in life. In 2017, she moved to Berlin and made staged photography her career.

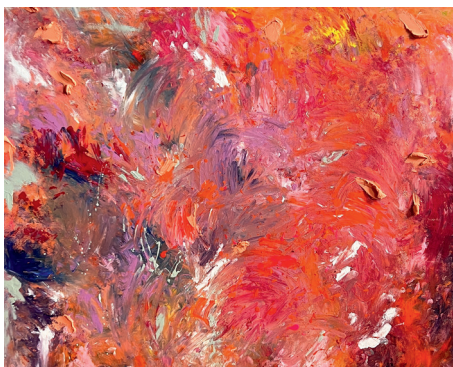
In 2023, Kseniia won first place with the Julia Margaret Cameron Award together with the special Book Award, funded by Foto Nostrum. In 2024, she received the Gold Award in the Contemporary cat. at the World Masters of Photography competition in Vienna.

**„I create surreal images
using a photo camera.“**

For each photograph, I develop a personal scenario and manually create dreamlike or uncomfortable settings: I might sculpt, embroider, paint, or apply body makeup. Then I add a person who ends up in search of the place he or she belongs. It is myself, close family or friend. In my work I currently use a large format digital camera, without applying artificial intelligence or computer graphics. However, I abundantly perform color corrections.



„Soft Creator“
Acrylic, Spackle on canvas
80x80cm
2024



„The Comfortable Uncomfortable“
Acrylic on canvas
100x100cm
2024



„Soft Lover“
Acrylic on canvas
100x80cm
2024

Ilinca Barbato



@ilincabarbato

Ilinca Barbato, originally from Bucharest, moved to Berlin three years ago, which marked the start of her artistic journey. Perhaps driven by homesickness, creativity became a way to cope and connect.

Her art has since become a search for peace and a sense of belonging, offering her a “home” while she is far from her own. Through her work, Ilinca explores her identity and the complexities of migration and self-discovery, while painting with her fingers as a brush.

**„I will never not listen
to my H‘ART again.“**

I’m Ilinca, a 28-year-old artist living in Berlin. I do art because I follow a natural instinct which we all have: to create, to express, to feel. For me, painting is like a mirror that always reflects the truth. My truth. It reveals my vulnerable self and allows me to delve into my deepest thoughts and emotions. Without art, my life feels incomplete. I need it as much as I need air. There’s something profoundly special about losing myself in colors and textures. My mind empties, time fades away, and I find myself in another dimension. Through my work, I can express happiness and pain, connect with others, and share my story.

My art reflects my journey as an immigrant artist, shaped by the challenges and self-discoveries of living far from home. Each piece invites viewers to look beyond simplistic labels, encouraging understanding and empathy. But most importantly, to feel. Through this exploration, I hope to contribute to a richer, more inclusive perspective on identity and belonging.



„The Forest Dark“
Collage on canvas, Acrylic Paint
150x200cm
2019

I am an American artist and environmentalist based in Berlin. My hand-cut collages of flora and fauna range from works on paper to immersive installations, evoking Earth's vanishing biodiversity. Inspired by a global upbringing and Brazil's vibrant yet threatened ecosystems, I use art to reawaken connections to nature and inspire preservation.

**„My new series celebrates
the nocturnal, depicting
vanishing biodiversity to
inspire reverence for nature.“**

This work is a radiant interplay of light and dark, its imagery glowing against an inky black background. Reflecting on the nocturnal, I pair each piece with poetry to honor what words alone cannot express. As Henry Beston wrote, “Learn to reverence night and to put away the vulgar fear of it.”



„Duality 1“
Photography on fine art paper
70x100cm
2023



„Duality 2“
Photography on fine art paper
70x100cm
2023



„Duality 3“
Photography on fine art paper
70x100cm
2023

Mila is a multidisciplinary artist and sculptor with a background in architecture. She grew up in Poland, where a strong connection to her homeland, family structures, and traditions played a major role. She experienced a deeply Catholic environment. Taboos surrounding the body and sexuality were strongly emphasized, while rationality was prioritized, significantly constraining the sensual world. Since 2009, she has been living and working in Berlin.

**“Contemporary culture at
large drifts towards
distancing, a kind of chilling
de-sensualisation and
de-eroticisation of the
human relation to reality.”**

**(Juhani Pallasmaa “The Eye of the Skin,
Architecture and the Senses”, 2005)**

I reshape functional and automated reality into one that is re-sensualized, re-eroticized, and harmonized with the needs of the human body. My work emerges as a counterpoint to the neglect of the body and the senses in a predominantly logically and digitally structured world. It opposes the aggression of efficient forms and calculated human behaviors. My sculptures and photographs explore intimacy, vulnerability, and sensuality as values that deserve to be reawakened.

Olena Lazutkina

Linktree (Contact):
<https://linktr.ee/Lazutkina>



„Price of Freedom“
Photopaper
2022



„Price of Freedom“
Photopaper
2022



„Price of Freedom“
Photopaper
2022

Olena is a Ukrainian artist currently based in Berlin. Before Olena decided on a career as an artist, she worked as a book producer for 15 years, dedicating her life to this profession. Recently, her passion for photography, particularly Polaroids, has gained prominence, though she also experiments with lithography and oil painting.

In her works, she most enjoys showcasing the beauty of feminism, combining contemporary art with books and literature. Olena's works consistently appeal to both aesthetics and intellect. Since the Lazutkina publishing house specializes in Ukrainian authors and authors writing in Russian, Olena, who was specialized in literature, decided to close this business after the second Russian invasion.

For the first 50 days of the war, Olena spent her time in Kyiv, helping both people and animals. She founded the organization “People and Tails,” which, in the initial months, helped over ten thousand people and animals. Now in Berlin, Olena is developing a European art portfolio with various projects. Currently learning German, she is working on projects in collaboration with different institutions and art groups.

**„The beauty of feminism is
represented through its
aesthetics and intellect.“**



„grudge“
Acrylic on canvas
80x80cm
2024



„sandarasm“
Acrylic on canvas
100x50cm
2023

Daniela Lella



DANIELA_LELLA_

Born in Puglia in the early eighties, her artistic journey as a self-taught artist began when she moved to Berlin in 2016. It was the need to sink new roots that prompted her to embark on this journey and that made her discover the passion for art. She expresses herself intuitively through abstract painting in order to positively reject externally determined norms, conformity and formality. In the microcosm of diversity which Berlin represents she not only can experiment with new styles and techniques but also constantly reflect on personal and social issues related to identity, belonging and diversity.

**“And those who were seen
dancing were thought to be
insane by those who could
not hear the music.”**

Painting is my sanctuary of freedom, self-discovery and self-determination. My artwork is a glimpse into my personal exploration of identity and autonomy and a mirror which encourages observers to connect with their inner selves, find their own freedom and embrace their unfiltered truth. That's also why I'd rather not provide keys to interpreting my artwork in order to allow it to be enjoyed as personally, intuitively and introspectively as possible.

marera



www.marerastudio.com

LinkedIn/Instagram:
Masha Semikina
@marera_studio

Marera began her artistic journey in 2020 with drawing and painting courses in Berlin, later studying graphic design. In 2023, time in Belgium and Spain helped her develop a vibrant abstract-figurative style. Now based in Berlin, she explores complex human relationships and diverse artistic mediums in her work.

**“Pushing through the thorny
thicket of social roles in
search of my true self.”**

In my art, I bring human emotions to life through a variety of techniques, including painting, sculpture, and ready-made objects. I strive to create interactive art pieces that offer the public a multidimensional experience, fully immersing them in each theme. Inspired by both personal experiences and universal themes affecting women worldwide, I explore womanhood, expressions of female sexuality, gender dynamics, and the essence of beauty and strength. My work delves into the thoughts and feelings of women navigating various roles in today's society. Through this exploration, I aim to inspire a deeper reflection on what lies beneath the surface of seemingly happy, fulfilled individuals, encouraging viewers to consider the silent struggles and layered complexities that often shape these identities.



„I need time “
Acrylic on canvas
100x100cm
2024



„It's your turn tonight “
Acrylic on canvas
130x130 (60x60 each)
2024



„Lina“

Digital illustration on fine art paper
80 x 60 cm
2023



„April“

Digital illustration on fine art paper
80 x 60 cm
2023



„Jana“

Digital illustration on fine art paper
80 x 60 cm
2023

Nicole Marra Nunes



@nicolemarra_

Nicole Marra is a Brazilian illustrator who has lived in Berlin since 2017. Her work, marked by bold colors and clean, simple lines, explores themes of feminism, daily life, and nature. She creates vivid portrayals of women navigating inner and outer worlds, celebrating identity and self-discovery. Nicole's experience as a migrant artist significantly shapes her art, bringing depth to her exploration of cultural heritage and individual resilience within new surroundings.

**“I seek to portray the
resilience and introspection
within each woman’s
journey, capturing moments
of personal growth and inner
strength.”**

My art reflects the intersections of identity, personal growth, and the natural world. As a Brazilian artist in Berlin, I use illustration to express my journey of adaptation and introspection, drawing on the strength and solitude that come with navigating new spaces. Through simplified shapes and solid colors, I create characters who, much like myself, explore quiet moments of transformation. Each piece invites viewers to connect with these moments, bridging our individual experiences with a shared sense of resilience.

Fernanda Porto

Instagram:
@fernandaportoart

www.fernandaportoart.com



„Connected J.P.“
Fine art paper on Board
90 x 64cm
2023



„WAVES 2“
Ink transferred into polyoxy resin fragile
97 x 75cm
2024

As a multidisciplinary visual artist, Fernanda Porto works in painting, resins, and collage. The Brazilian artist resides in Berlin, where she co-founded the Berlin Collage Platform. She has participated in residencies in Spain and Germany, exhibiting her work in solo and collective shows across Brazil and Europe. Her art appears in notable publications such as Collage to Change the World and is part of private collections, including the Kanyer Collection.

**“We are all little worlds,
orbiting with our own
emotions, and shaped
by the places where we live.”**

“I recently discovered I’m synesthetic, intuitively associating people with colors and forms, so creating a unique world for each person feels natural to me. This is why cosmopolitan, multicultural cities inspire me deeply. In 2013, I moved to Germany, where the experience of migration brought vulnerability, but also resilience and self-discovery, reshaping my artistic identity.”

Renata Salas Rosas



„Fox Woman“
Pit-Fired Handmade Ceramic Sculpture
L:20cm, W:17.5cm, H:26cm
2024

Renata, a ceramic artist from Mexico City who moved to Berlin in 2015, finds inspiration in every part of the ceramic process—from gathering clay to experimenting with firing techniques. Recently drawn to antique sculpting methods, her work channels the spirit of Aztec heritage, exploring themes of femininity, intuition, and spiritual power. Her migration experience deepened her desire to understand her roots, leading her to shape a contemporary narrative of identity and cultural memory in her sculptures, blending the ancient with the modern.

“Make your heart a home.”

My journey in ceramics mirrors the complexities of life itself. Each piece is a long process, where earth, water, wind, and fire each play a vital role in its creation. Just as in life, the transformation of clay is unpredictable; I never know exactly how a piece will emerge from the kiln. Embracing ancient firing techniques adds an element of surprise, reflecting life's unexpected twists. Ultimately, my work is about the journey—the inherent and the present—capturing the essence of learning, growth, and the beauty found in each unique outcome. The pieces I present are inspired by the depths of the soul and the emotions that guide us. Each sculpture reflects the journey of learning to manage, understand, and listen to these feelings, I invite you to explore your own and find your path in this shared human experience. Though we speak in different languages, what we feel is universal. These symbols connect us to the heart and soul without the need for translation.

Laura Soria (Ánima)



@laura.human.ai

www.laurasoria.de



„Traces Across Time A“
Acrylic on canvas
122x81.5cm
2024



„Traces Across Time B“
Acrylic on canvas
122x81.5cm
2024

Laura Soria, a Mexican multidisciplinary artist rooted in Berlin since 2013, weaves poetic threads between the microcosmic and macro-cosmic realms of existence.

Through photography, video, painting, sculpture, and AI, she crafts visual narratives that intertwine memory, identity, and transformation. Her work, a reflection on the self and society, has graced spaces like Willy-Brandt-Haus and the Mexican Embassy in Berlin.

“Tracing connections across dimensions of existence.”

I explore the intersection of dimensions, from the micro to the cosmic, using diverse media to create narratives about our existence. My work delves into memory, identity, and transformation, unraveling the connections that shape us. I aim to reflect on our place in the universe, exploring the personal and universal in one continuous dialogue.

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and the Media of Germany**

BE Visible

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artISla is a project by I.S.I e. V.
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