

KIDS OF NEW YORK



THE ART EDITION



MECCA MONAY MALLORY

Founder + Editor-in-Chief + Creative Director

Damn. It's really been 4 years since we dropped an issue. Feels crazy even saying that out loud. A lot has changed since then—KONY, the world, me. But one thing that hasn't? Why we do this. See when we first started KONY, it was about giving space to the voices that weren't being heard—the artists who existed outside the algorithm. Today the mission remains the same, but this time, shit feels different. Sharper. More intentional. A reintroduction to who we are, what we stand for, and where we're going next.

The Art Edition, surprisingly one of my favorites—is all about perspective. Peeling back the layers of creativity, stepping into the minds of artists, and understanding the why behind their work. Because art is more than aesthetics—it's impact, rebellion, storytelling. And for some? Survival. It's the moments of instinct, the risks taken, the emotions felt, and the stories lived that turn unfiltered expression into something tangible.

One thing became clear while working on this issue: the process is just as important as the final piece. The way these artists think, create, and move through the world—that's the story. KONY isn't just here to showcase the work; we're here to document the journey. To capture the in-between moments that shape the full picture. Whether through photography, painting, design, or music, their work isn't just about what they make—it's about what they feel, what they live, what they need to say. KONY has always been about authenticity when sharing new stories, and in this new era, we're doubling down on it.

This issue is proof of that. A reminder that creativity doesn't have to follow trends, that stories deserve to be told on their own terms, and that culture is built by those willing to create—no matter who's watching. I want this movement to continue to be a place where artists don't have to prove their worth—they just exist, fully, freely. Where their voices are amplified, their stories preserved, their work seen for what it truly is. A reflection of the time, a piece of history in the making. And if you're reading this, you're part of it.

This is The Art Edition. Our sixth issue. Enjoy.

With love and light,

Mecca



Peter Smiley

There's something about Peter's work that feels like stepping into a world you recognize—until you don't. His art bends reality, layering bold colors, surreal textures, and dreamlike figures that feel both intimate and infinite. His influences stretch across time and space—pulling from childhood nostalgia, Afro-Surrealist traditions, and an unfiltered emotional core.

His pieces feel like stepping into a warped cartoon, soaked in blues, purples, and burnt oranges—somewhere between a dream and a memory. Inspired by Annie Lee's Blue Monday and the rawness of everyday life, Peter paints what it feels like to be here—Black, queer, and navigating a world that sometimes makes no sense. But in his art, there are no rules. Just feeling.



What sparked your journey into creating art? Was there a particular moment or experience that set you on this path?

When I was younger, I was always a creative, crafty kid—I remember always having coloring books. I was constantly making something—jewelry, sketches, origami, paper quilts full of anime characters—you name it. I started young. After school, I spent a lot of time at the Boys & Girls Club—a place where all the kids went after school—and I loved cartoons religiously. I also remember starting little art competitions for candy and snacks while in the after-school programs because my brother and I usually didn't have money. Of course, I would partake in the competitions as well—it was kind of a funny little hustle. Looking back, I think that definitely sparked something in me.



“LIKE OKAY?!”

(2024)

Art can sometimes be a vulnerable act. When you're creating, do you feel more exposed or empowered? Why?

Yes, I definitely agree. Art should be a highly vulnerable act. When I create, I feel like I'm in my most honest form. I don't hold back as much as I would outside of creating. I've noticed there's very little filter between what I'm feeling and what I want to say. That honesty and boldness, plus the music I enjoy listening to, connect me to a higher power. It's empowering.

Your art embodies Afro-Surrealism in unique ways. How does this influence your work, and in what ways do you mold it to tell your own story?

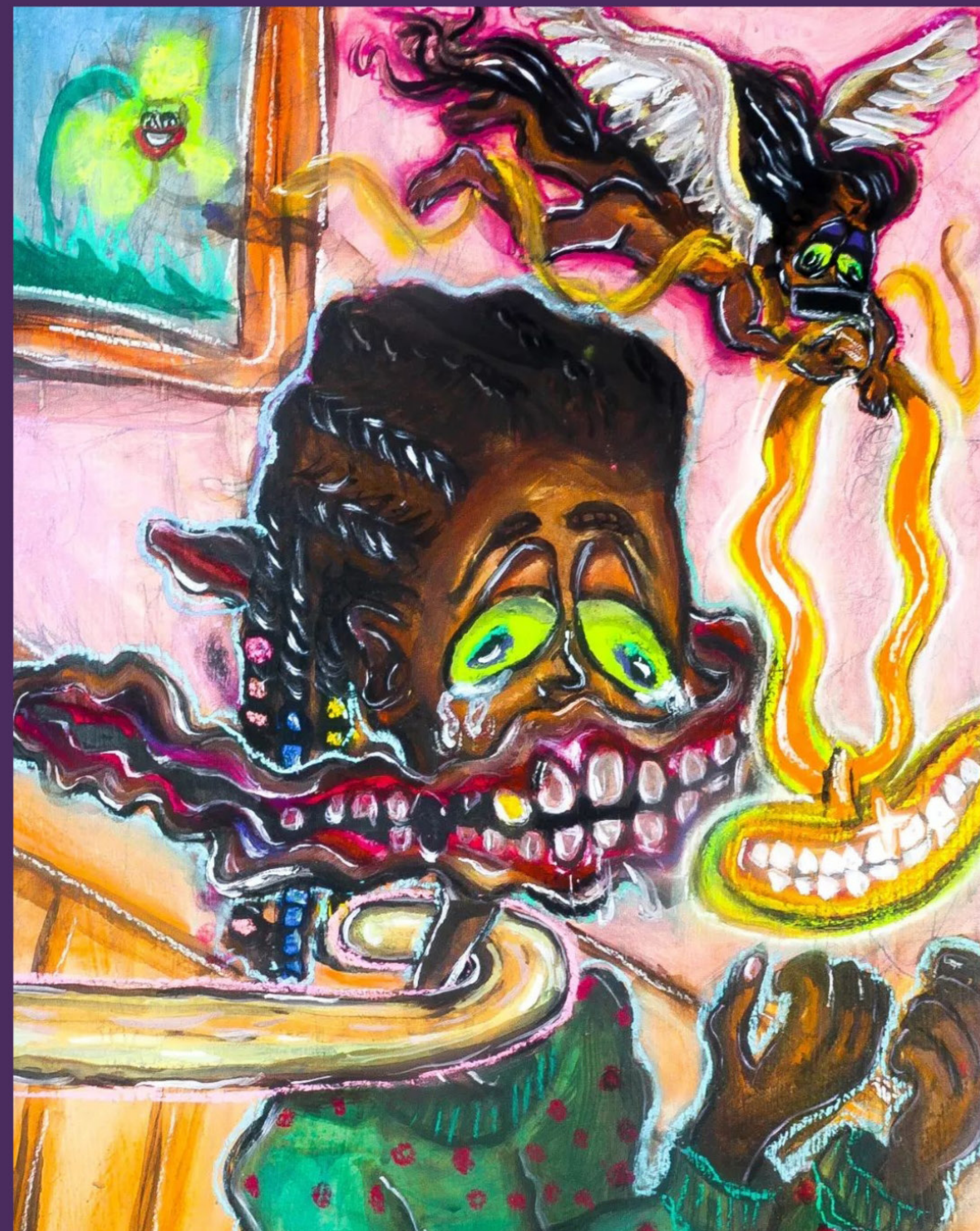
Honesty is key to my art and my story. Honestly? I'm Black—LOL—in every aspect. A couple of years ago, during a time when being Black, queer, and an artist felt strange due to everything happening in the world, I had a near-death experience that shook me and changed me. I had to relearn how to walk, and I had to do what a lot of my ancestors had to do—cope and continue to live.

That's when I discovered Afro-Surrealism. It naturally became a way for me to be honest about my experience. So I kept expanding on it, building community around it. I feel like if you can be honest with your Afro-Surrealistic art—or art in general—you can mold it in any way you want.



“Peekaboo”

(2024)



“Dysmorphia”

(2022)

Is there a piece of art that resonates with you on a deep, cultural, or emotional level?

Blue Monday by Annie Lee. Hands down, the best painting ever made! I love everything about it—the texture, the monochrome blues, the focal point of the Black woman in the center of the rectangular composition. The message and weight of the imagery, both inside and outside of the painting, are undeniable. That painting is bound to the culture and felt across many generations.



"Blue Monday"

Annie Lee (1935-2014)

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"don't let the smooth taste fool you"

(2025)



“melanated”

(2025)

Your work pulls from childhood cartoons to create your own vibrant chaos. What was your favorite cartoon growing up, and how would you reinterpret it today?

Cartoons like Courage the Cowardly Dog, The PJs, Powerpuff Girls, Black Dynamite, The Boondocks, and so on really shaped my reality growing up. I watched so much TV. Now that I’ve tapped into my inner child, I see how much those cartoons reflect in my art. And those cartoons have layers—layers I didn’t pay attention to as a kid. Now that I’ve lived more life, I see how wild, bold, and honest they were.

Do you have any creative rituals or routines that prepare you before working on a new or current piece?

Routines? Hmm. Right now, I’m big on crocheting, crocheting, crocheting. Making clothes is such a low-stress, repetitive action that keeps me stimulated while also feeding my love for creative design. Music, journaling, and reading are also things that keep me going in between paintings.

Art has the power to shape conversations. How do you envision your art contributing to the broader conversations around culture and identity?

I'll start first with identity. I feel like my identity—my likes, dislikes, interests—plays into my art, and those things are all influenced by culture.

For me, it's important to center myself, be honest, and then figure out how I want to contribute to a bigger conversation within the culture through my art.

In the future, I want my work to move people in a way that is instinctual, enthralling, and undeniably powerful. I feel like honesty can feel like someone randomly throwing ice water in your face—you can't deny your initial reaction. That's what I want my art to do within the culture.



“on my mama”
(2024)



“INSOMNIACS”

(2022)



“GASLIGHT”

(2022)

If you could live inside one of your own pieces for a day, which one would it be, and what would you do?

I have two pieces—Insomniacs and Gaslight. I feel like the blues, purples, and whites would be so cool to see. It would be like stepping into a dark cartoon/anime for adults, with beautiful hand-drawn animations, like Aeon Flux, Courage the Cowardly Dog, and Afro Samurai. I'd just walk around and watch the main characters interact—from the perspective of a background character.

What's a non-artistic skill or passion you have that people might be surprised to learn about?

Oooo, I'd say I have a passion for music. I was a tubaist growing up. That trained me to really enjoy music in a different way. I love songs with heavy, predominant bass lines that have a repetitiveness to them, and I collect a lot of songs with that motif.

JULIAN ADON

ALEXANDER

a.k.a

“SNAKEBONE”

Julian's world is built on memory—fragmented, familiar, reconstructed, and reimagined. With a style that feels both deeply introspective and effortlessly cool, he creates a space where details matter—where a single stroke of color, a passing glance, or an unspoken thought can carry the weight of a full narrative. Julian filters his emotions through the things that raised him: anime, gaming, movies, and the everyday objects that quietly shape a life.

In a time when everything moves fast, his work lingers. It exists in the in-between—where pop culture meets fine art, where nostalgia isn't just an escape but a way of making sense of the present. There's a rawness to his work, but also a sense of control. His compositions capture fleeting memories, mundane details, and deeply felt emotions with a precision that makes them feel both specific and timeless.



Photography by MiaBella Chavez



Move On, 2024

Graphite and Collage on Toned Paper

Your art kind of feels like a reflection of both the individual and a shared cultural memory. How do you navigate between personal storytelling and universal themes?

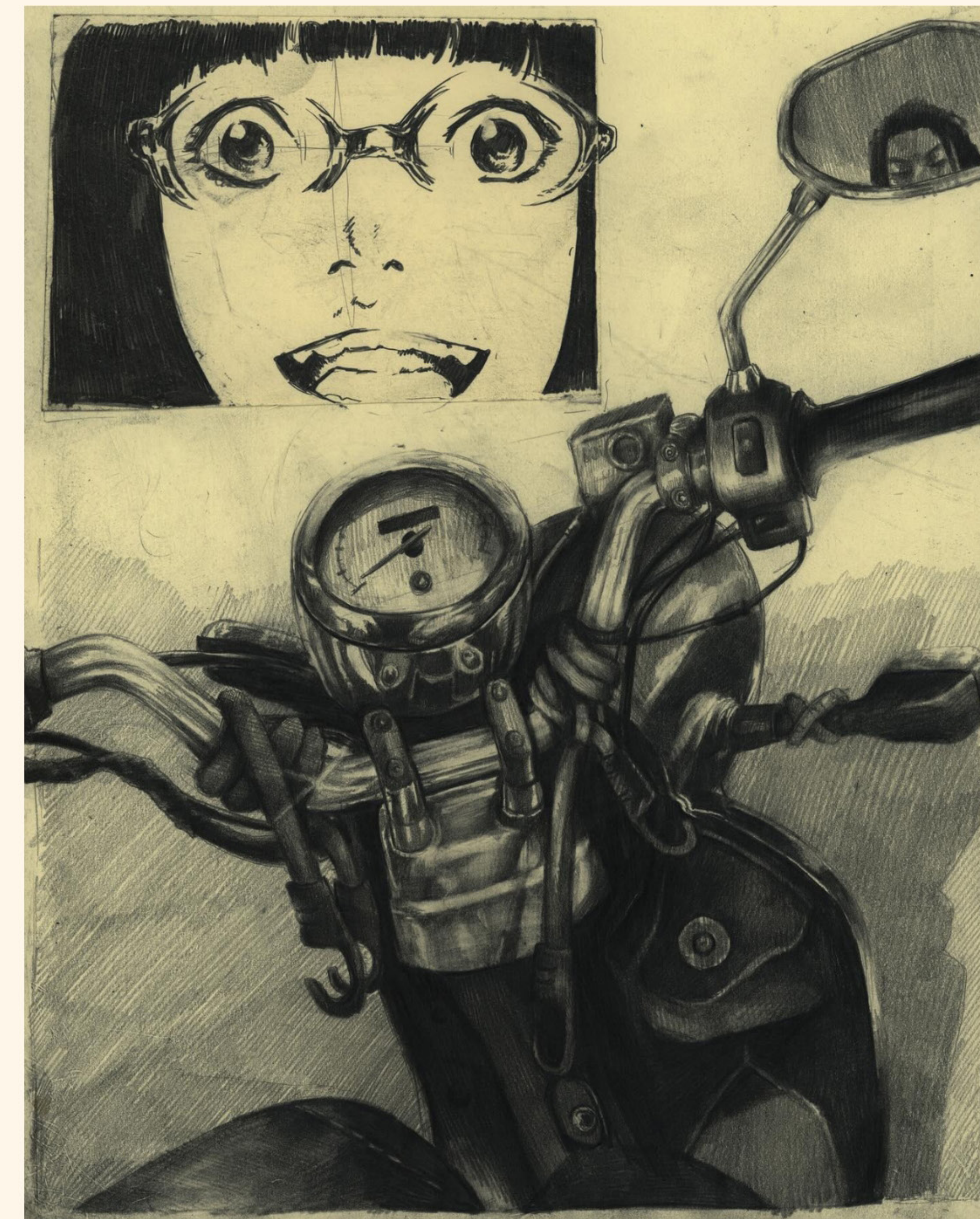
I think that the more personal something is, the more potential it has to actually be universal. All of my drawings are very personal and deal with recurring topics and patterns in my day-to-day life and the lives of the people around me. Sometimes, they're really specific, and I think not being afraid of that specificity is important. Not everyone will understand it, but authenticity is the key component.

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It feels like nostalgia is meshed into much of your work—through media references or familiar everyday objects. How do you decide which memories or references to include, and do they carry personal significance?

I love anime, I love video games, I love movies. These things raised me, and they're kind of the filter I see the world through. As a kid, I would escape to these fictional worlds for many reasons—for inspiration, to avoid painful feelings, to process those same feelings, to relate to these characters, and to help me make sense of things in life. The everyday objects are the same; they're a part of my landscape and around me all the time. It's easy for me to decide on subject matter because it's what's all around me. Anime is a big part of my life, and sometimes the feelings I have are kind of filtered through it in some sense. For example, I've made pieces that include giant anime mech suits and compare them to feeling safe and warm in a big winter coat.

Most of the time, there's a direct narrative tie between the title of the piece and the character's narrative arc. But sometimes, the image of the character is enough in itself. A lot of my characters appear very stoic and aren't usually the most expressive, but an anime character's exaggerated, cartoony expression can be a visual representation of an inner monologue. As for what memories I choose to revisit, I think they usually all boil down to times when I felt safe and times when I didn't. The world generally does not feel like a safe place, but there are moments of ease that I keep coming back to, and I want to make work about that contrast.



“Lo Mein”

Graphite on Toned Paper



“Gunsai”

Graphite on Toned Paper



“Altitude”

Graphite and Colored Pencil on Toned Paper

Manga, anime, and gaming seem to play a significant role in your work. How have these forms of media shaped your artistic voice, and what role do they play in your storytelling?

This is mostly the media that I grew up on. I think the commercial nature of a lot of anime projects hasn't really prevented them from having deep and thought-provoking narratives. A lot of Western animation is thought of as either comedic or just for children. Anime doesn't have that same narrow approach, so it made me appreciate all types of artmaking. I don't have to go to a museum to feel like I'm experiencing something special. I love museums too, though.

How do the cultural or symbolic elements in your work interact with the characters you create? Do they enhance the story you're telling, or do they create a sense of complexity or contrast?

If I'm making a piece with a character in it, nine times out of ten, that character is really important to the narrative. If the person I'm drawing is experiencing some emotion, knowing the character or some more context around the situation will help make sense of the piece. Not knowing the character is cool too, and I don't think that's required to enjoy my work, but they're usually put in with some thought to the greater narrative of the piece. I like talking to people who catch the references—it's really rewarding and has even made me some friends.

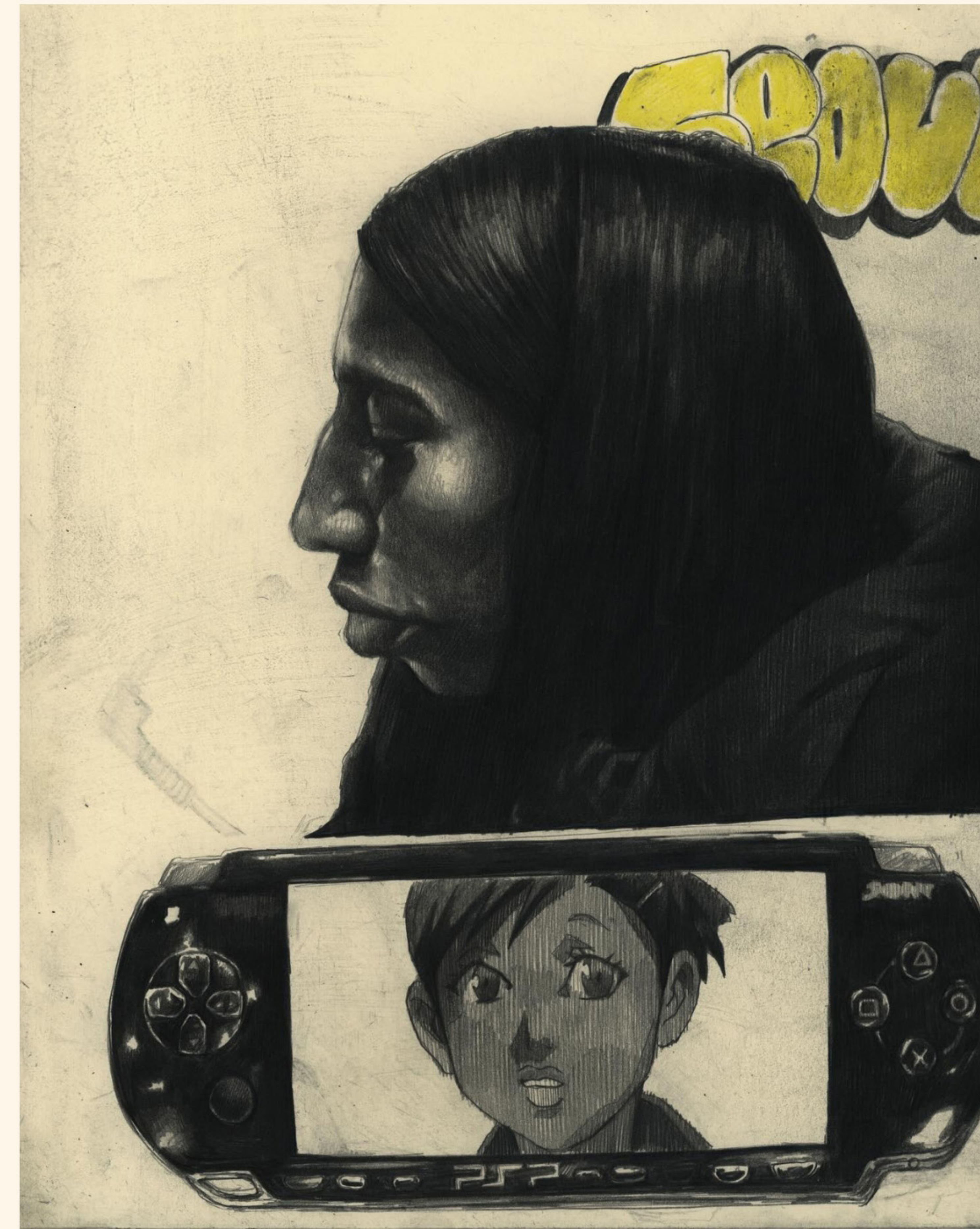
Several of your pieces incorporate subtle touches of color—crayon or marker highlights on a largely monochromatic palette. How do you decide when a piece needs color, and what does it signify in your storytelling?

I'm not sure why I started doing that yet. A lot of my process is very controlled and thought out, but the spot color just kind of showed up. I think it's how I mostly experience color. When I remember things, I sometimes remember a few vibrant colors, but not everything in vivid detail.

Your work feels like a perfect blend of quiet observation and bold storytelling. What's the last moment you observed in real life that inspired you to create?

I was walking through Tokyo, looking at graffiti, and just chilling. It's a very different place from New York, but it's also similar in a lot of ways. I'm really inspired by how, across cultures, life is just life and has so many parallels.

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"No Human Idols"

Graphite and Crayon on Toned Paper



"Tell You All About It"

Graphite and Colored Pencil on Toned Paper



"Purikura 2"

Graphite, Colored Pencil, and Collage on Toned Paper



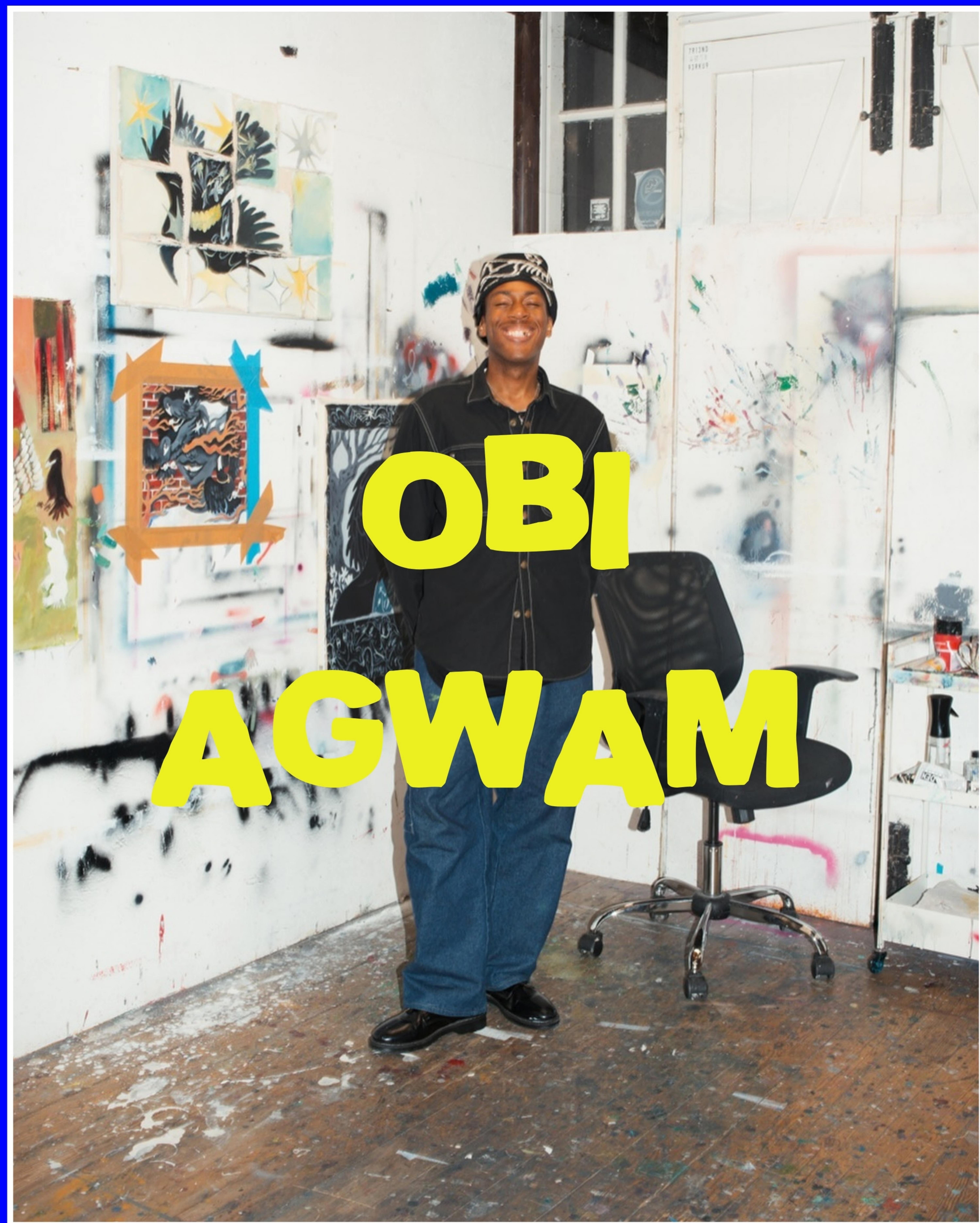
“No Service In The Mountains”
Graphite and Colored Pencil on Toned Paper

Is there a piece of media—whether a movie, book, or music—that you find yourself returning to over and over again when you need a creative spark?

So many. Too many. Recently, it's been JoJo's Bizarre Adventure. I love the way it incorporates music and pays homage to other cultures and art forms. It's also got a lot of different types of expressions and subversions of gender roles, which is something I've come to appreciate in media.

What do you consider the most challenging aspect of being an artist in today's world, and how do you personally navigate those challenges while staying true to your craft?

Probably managing my mental health. I'm making the art, I'm managing my business, and I'm still living a whole life outside of that. It's really tough most of the time. I think staying true to my craft is the only easy part because I know that I only get to live this life once, and I'm lucky enough to be able to make art that I love. Having that gratitude for the process has helped me deal with all of the bad parts.



Photography by themooseyresidency



Obi's work isn't just about documenting reality; it's about reshaping it. His paintings are portals into imagined worlds, where nostalgia, grief, and joy collide in hyper-saturated color. His characters beam with exaggerated smiles, caught somewhere between memory and mythology, emotion and surrealism.

Every piece starts as a journal entry, a quiet meditation that evolves into something cinematic. He refuses to be boxed into realism or traditional narratives—his work moves freely between fantasy and emotion, carving out new space for Black storytelling. And as much as painting is his foundation, he refuses to be tethered to a single medium. For Obi, art is a constant evolution—fluid, boundless, and always pushing deeper into the emotional depths of human experience.

What were some early experiences with art that made you realize it was your calling?

I would say the validation I received as a child was what encouraged my relationship with the arts. One day, as a child, I drew on a whim as an act of gratitude for my love of one of my favorite video games at the time, Sonic the Hedgehog. When I showed the drawings to my family, I received immediate positive reinforcement—something I hadn't experienced before. At the time, positive affirmation was something I lacked, but through these drawings, I was able to receive it. Naturally, I became addicted to that affirmation. Sooner rather than later, chasing that feeling led me to be known as the "drawer" of the class, a label I still carry with me into adulthood.

I wouldn't consider art a calling; I'm simply someone who conditionally needed to be affirmed. Art is just the medium through which I receive that affirmation.



“Love letter to my favorite liar”
2024, Oil on Canvas



“What’s left of my dogs”

2024, 36x36, Oil on Canvas

Out of all the art you’ve created, which feels the most personal to you, and what stories or emotions are tied to them?

All of my artwork, especially recently, has been deeply personal. What feels the most personal changes over time, but as of now, it’s a painting called *What’s Left of My Dogs*. This artwork deals with feelings of longing and isolation during moments of grief. I grieve often, especially recently, and in those moments of sadness, I tend to self-isolate and retreat. This painting reflects that.

The character in the painting has a hole located at the sacral and root chakras—areas associated with expression and stability in the home, a feeling that is all too familiar to me. Much of my artwork speaks to a specific time or emotion. I never make things too general, nor do I make them overly specific, especially when other people are involved. Reflecting on the past, acknowledging the present, and anticipating the future are the focal points of my meditations. These meditations evolve into journal entries, which eventually transform into artwork.

You mentioned your works start as journal entries that evolve into visual summaries. Can you walk us through your process from journal entry to finished piece?

The beginning of every artwork starts as a meditation, reflecting on a specific time and the emotions tied to it. From that mindset, I journal—sometimes at length, but usually briefly. From these journal entries, I extract phrases and words to use as prompts for the painting. I draw on all my knowledge of visual imagery, color, and art history to express the prompt in the best way I know how. I see my approach to creating characters and compositions as similar to how a director chooses the best shots for a scene.



“You can bet it all on me.”

Oil on canvas. 2025.



"I got hurt, I was too close to you."

2023

In some of your work, you reference and reclaim historical imagery tied to stereotypes of Black people. How did reworking these elements allow you to shape a forward-looking narrative?

It's a dialogue and an internal conflict. I desperately want to talk about negative imagery because I feel like it's important. I want to highlight both the many ways Black people have been misrepresented and the positive imagery that exists.

I'm aware that many Black artists already highlight these narratives, but I chose to contribute regardless. I take advantage of all the ways Black people have been represented to make the best artwork I can—it would feel disingenuous to leave out the negative. Earlier in my artistic journey, I wanted to change the narratives of blackface, golliwogs, and negative imagery into something more digestible for audiences, but at this moment, that is not my goal. It is imperative to acknowledge the negative right now. My goal is to use all methods of Black representation to drive forward a story, highlighting emotions.

Your characters often embody themes of identity and emotional complexity, with exaggerated smiles and vibrant palettes that evoke both nostalgia and depth. How do you use their storytelling and visual design to balance these contrasting emotions in your work?

Choosing what to use has been the most challenging part of my painting journey so far. Sometimes, when I aim to evoke a specific emotion, I complete the painting only to find the finished product far from what I intended.

I take feedback seriously, and often, people don't perceive the emotion that inspired the artwork. Lately, I've been making an effort to simplify and be more deliberate in how I use visual metaphors and imagery. While there should always be room for interpretation in the narrative of an artwork, I don't want to stray so far from my goal that viewers are left confused about what they're seeing. Despite how personal my practice has become, I frequently think about the audience—whether that's a good or bad thing, I can't say.



"Always Mine"

2021 Mixed Media on Canvas 12x12



If you could choose only one of your pieces to represent your entire body of work, which one would it be and why?

"Wishing I was a Star" (2022, Acrylic on Canvas). I chose this artwork because it has all the elements of my artwork in one character. The main subject is the color of the Pan-African flag—the African American experience is an important axis of my artwork. The main subject contains a smile—smiles are recurring imagery in most of my paintings. Within the artwork, stars and water are all around the main figure, which speaks to the emotional aspect of the artwork. I could think of no other painting that includes all the parts of my practice so simply.

"Wishing I was a star."

2022. Acrylic on Canvas

What's the proudest moment of your artistic career so far, and how did it change you?

Being able to confidently say “I love painting” just a year ago—that simple affirmation has been the most substantial in my artistic practice and one of the most important statements I've ever said in my life. For the longest time, I did not have a positive relationship with painting. It had always been just a method for validation, and eventually, a method for money. I had become disillusioned and disconnected from the work I was making.

After a long period of sadness, I was able to change my perspective. I love what I do—the stories I've heard about my artwork, the impact I've made so far, and all the wonderful experiences I've had. Looking back on these experiences has helped me gain a deep appreciation for what I do. Now, I'm able to create artwork from a place of appreciation rather than validation.

Your characters inhabit richly imaginative worlds. Do you see your work expanding into new mediums like animation, etc., to further explore these stories?

Yes, absolutely. Calling myself a painter is a self-limiting belief. I believe that sooner rather than later, I'll be working on projects that explore other mediums. I will always be a painter at heart, but I know my artistic journey is not limited to that.

I don't have any specific mediums in mind just yet—I'm keeping myself open.



JAZZ WILLIAMS

Jazz is an artist who moves fluidly between painting, sculpture, and mixed media, building visual worlds where Afro-surrealism meets everyday glam, where adornment is resistance, and where Black femme existence is as grandiose as it is intimate. Through glitter, dye, and collage, she constructs dreamscapes that challenge traditional portraiture and invite us to imagine Blackness beyond the binaries of pain and resilience. It's all a love letter to Black femme existence—a warped, layered, hyper-lush world where Black identity isn't boxed in by pain, but liberated by fantasy. She paints Black figures as they deserve to be seen—opulent, gentle, larger than life. Inspired by Mickalene Thomas, *Tv-Show Atlanta*, and more, her work plays with spectacle, surrealism, and the power of shadow work as a creative process.

Photography by @amaruvisions

Are there any particular artists, cultural moments, etc., that inspire the recurring themes in your work? If so, how do you mesh these influences into your own visual language?

I've always been a big fan of Mickalene Thomas' work. I love the way she expresses beauty, sexuality, and femininity in her figures and portraits. I was super inspired the first time I saw a piece of hers in person, A Little Taste Outside of Love. I love the materiality of her pieces—it made me think about taking my painting further by experimenting with different mediums, which is basically where I am today. If I ever need inspiration, I think I will always go back to it.

I'm a big fan of pieces that glitter, to be honest. I like for paintings to become spectacles within themselves. From that point on, I started using all types of mediums to catch a viewer's attention from afar—something that pulls you in. I love using rhinestones, glitter, beads, and reflective foils collaged into my works because I feel like it speaks to Black girls coming of age. It's a labor of love, an uplifting method of adornment, similar to how we dress ourselves every day.



“bathe me in light and surround me in softness.”

oil, acrylic, holographic plastic wrap, glitter, clear gel medium, cloth scraps, colored pencil, and gel pen on 28x46” dyed canvas.



“little lady luck”

oil, acrylic, colored pencil, paint pen, and fabric scraps on 37x32” indigo and cochineal tie-dyed unstretched canvas.

Afro-surrealism plays a central role in your art. How do you see this style helping you challenge traditional narratives or offer new perspectives on identity?

I think journeying into the Afro-surreal really makes you question what’s real and what’s not in your own life. I got a lot of my ideas for Afro-surrealism from television, actually. Some of my favorite pieces of media are Atlanta, Swarm, and Candyman (2021). It’s interesting that those perspectives span genres like comedy, horror, and romance, which I feel is representative of how I navigate my own life. I think they speak to a warped sense of reality that all Black people must acknowledge and live with in America. Black painting—and Black art in general—needs more complexity to truly speak to the Black experience.

Shadow work is a key part of your creative process, where you explore and transcend past traumas. How does this concept influence the emotional tone or direction of your pieces?

Everyone has trauma—it’s no different for any race. But I started to get more spiritual in my work when I realized overcoming and bettering yourself mentally was the key to making more positive artworks. I’ve had to unpack a lot within myself to recognize my worth as a woman and come to terms with the fact that I am not my trauma. Similar to what I said before, I didn’t want other Black femmes to see my work and correlate it to what’s “wrong” with Black womanhood. Instead, I wanted to make visual representations of lessons I’ve learned and features of our lives that should be celebrated—getting closer to feeling free, having fun, and just overall feeling better about yourself than before.

You've mentioned finding gratification in painting Black figures in grandiose, gentle, and natural lights, rather than through narratives of the negative or suffering. How has this perspective shaped your approach to fine art portraiture?

I started really looking at things that make me feel pretty and how I could incorporate that into my work. I started teaching myself how to do my own nails and hair from a young age because, in my eyes, that was always the path to opulence and maturity when I was growing up. That led me to incorporate more three-dimensional elements like glitter, holographic prints, and gold foils into portraiture as a way to adorn my figures. I wanted my works to feel more like fairy tales—telling a story in bits and fragments of being an otherworldly woman communing with nature, fulfilling a fantasy, and looking and feeling amazing while doing it.

With your sculptures, surrealism meets everyday objects in striking ways. What draws you to this combination, and how does it enhance the stories you tell?

I've always liked to play around with sculpture in the same way I play around with painting. It's cool to make metaphors transform from spoken word into physical existence. Most of my sculpture work plays off our concepts of Black beauty standards. In a sense, a lot of other cultures and races like to consume us and our culture in a predatory manner—to become us and claim those standards as their own. So, I started making sculpture work that represents pieces of our livelihood being reclaimed. The sculpted pendants I make are wearable, using only Black and brown skin tones and facial features within the pendant, making them essentially inaccessible for non-Black people.

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“on the sunny side”

polygel, oil, acrylic, model magic, glitter, glass paint, and clear gloss medium on an old skillet .



“with eyes to feel and hands to see”

oil, polygel, glitter, rhinestones, colored pencil, tissue paper, eyelashes and clear gel on 6x8” plexiglass panel .



"swamp siren song"

oil, acrylic, airbrush, collage, coarse pumice gel, and colored pencil on 42x28" dyed unstretched canvas .



"big cat (not a cougar)"

oil, acrylic, colored pencil and rhinestones on hand dyed and 60x31.5" screenprinted unstretched canvas .



"rot and refuge (river run-off)"

oil, airbrush, fabric scraps, newsprint, glitter, tissue paper, colored pencil, and wood chips on 36x36" cardstock .

Mixed media plays a major role in your work. How does experimentation with materials push you to approach your themes in new or unexpected ways?

Although I love using any material I can get my hands on, I have to be extremely mindful of what I'm using. As stated before, I love a piece that glitters, but sometimes it's not warranted. Sometimes less is more, as I've learned.

My pieces [Swamp Siren Song](#) and [Rot and Refuge \(River Run-Off\)](#) both encompass ideas of escapism and Afro-fantasy, so it felt natural to throw a lot of different collage materials at them to keep the viewer's gaze moving around the piece. Those are times where I don't want the artworks to feel so figure-centered.

But, on the other hand, I have pieces like [To All the Dogs I've Loved Before](#) and [Big Cat \(Not a Cougar\)](#)—those pieces are heavier on the dyed-canvas and printmaking side. The entire canvas is taken up by one figure and one animal—that's all they needed. Using a ton of materials would've felt sacrilegious because sometimes you have to let the mediums (and the portraits) speak for themselves.

Is there a specific piece in your portfolio that you feel reflects you the most as an individual? What about that work feels so personal?

My most recent work, *In Search Of*, is probably the most representative of how I see myself. It's a very hopeful piece where the figure is looking toward a sunrise/sunset—however the viewer wants to interpret it.

I think it represents looking forward to the future, whatever that may be, as it's not visible within the confines of the canvas. The colors feel warm and welcoming, and the woman pictured is about to voyage into a grand unknown. I love the wistful nature of her expression and how it seems like whatever she's looking forward to is bright and warm.

I feel like I've been more optimistic recently about what my life holds for me—trusting the path. Although it's unforeseen, I'm more than willing to flock toward it, like the sandhill cranes pictured with the figure.



"In Search Of"

oil, acrylic, airbrush, paint pen, collage, and colored pencil on 60x45"
natural dyed (cochineal, hibiscus, and marigold) unstretched canvas.



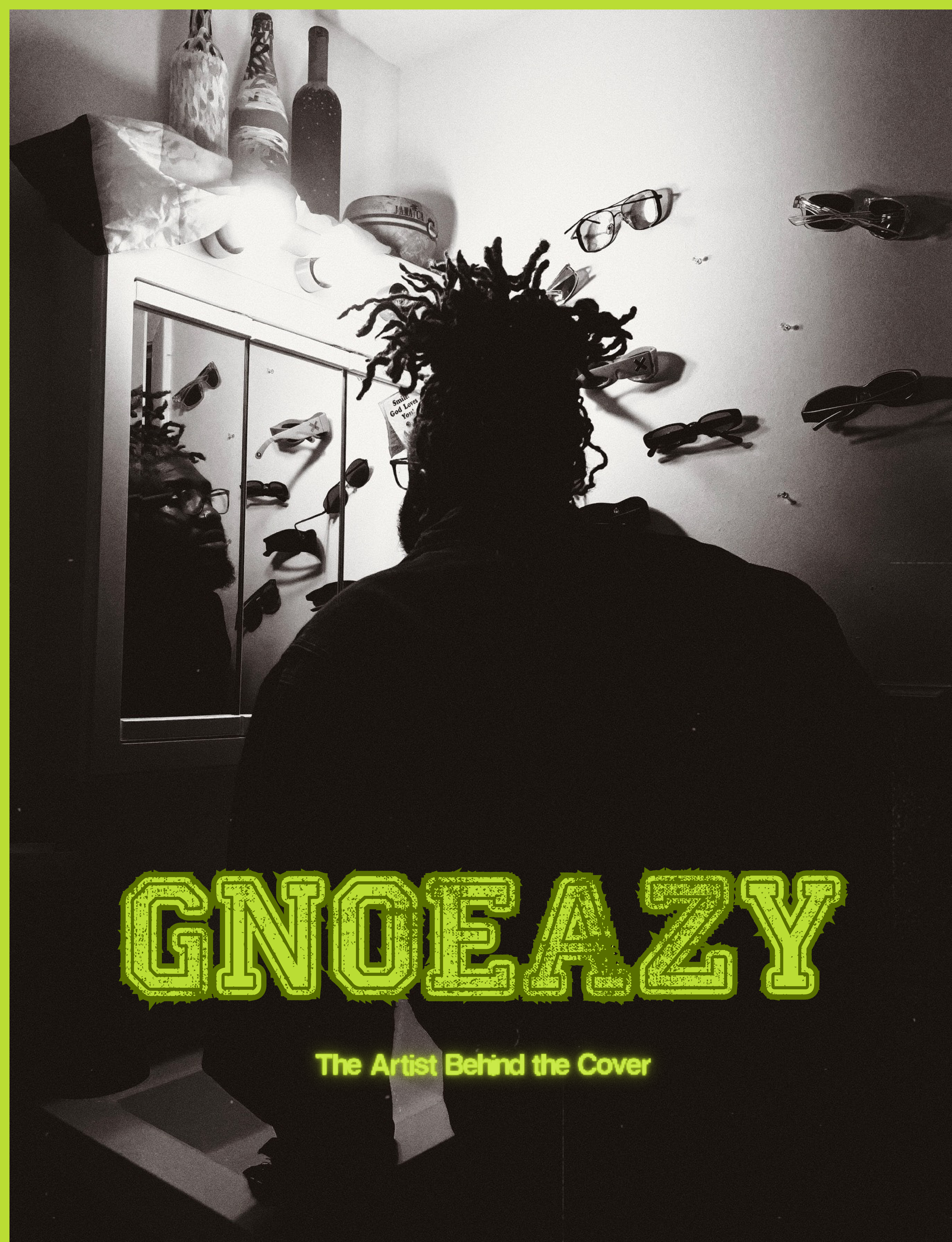
"something in the waters (the deep end)"

oil, acrylic, gel pen and colored pencil on 23x16" tinted cardstock .

If you could display your work in any space, real or imaginary, where would it be, and what might that exhibition look like?

I would love to hang my works in a DIY-style gallery. I've curated my own shows in the past, and although the pieces stand super well on their own, I'd love to compose a space decorated with plants similar to the ones you see within the works.

Most galleries prefer pieces on the wall, flat. But I think it would be interesting to hang them like flags, closer to the ground, so the viewers can walk around them and see the dye works within the canvas. Many people don't realize that the canvases are all hand-dyed using different materials, so I would like to hang them in a way that allows viewers to walk around and fully take in the setting of the paintings.



GNOEAZY

The Artist Behind the Cover

What Drives You to Create?

I think my main source of energy to create is to escape reality. It's my way of expressing myself—whether that's painting, making music, or even event planning. Honestly, anything can drive me to create, but at its core, it's about taking a break from everyday life. We live in such a rigorous world, and sometimes you just need a little vacation from your mind, from reality. Creating gives me that escape—it's my own little world.

What Does Art Mean to You?

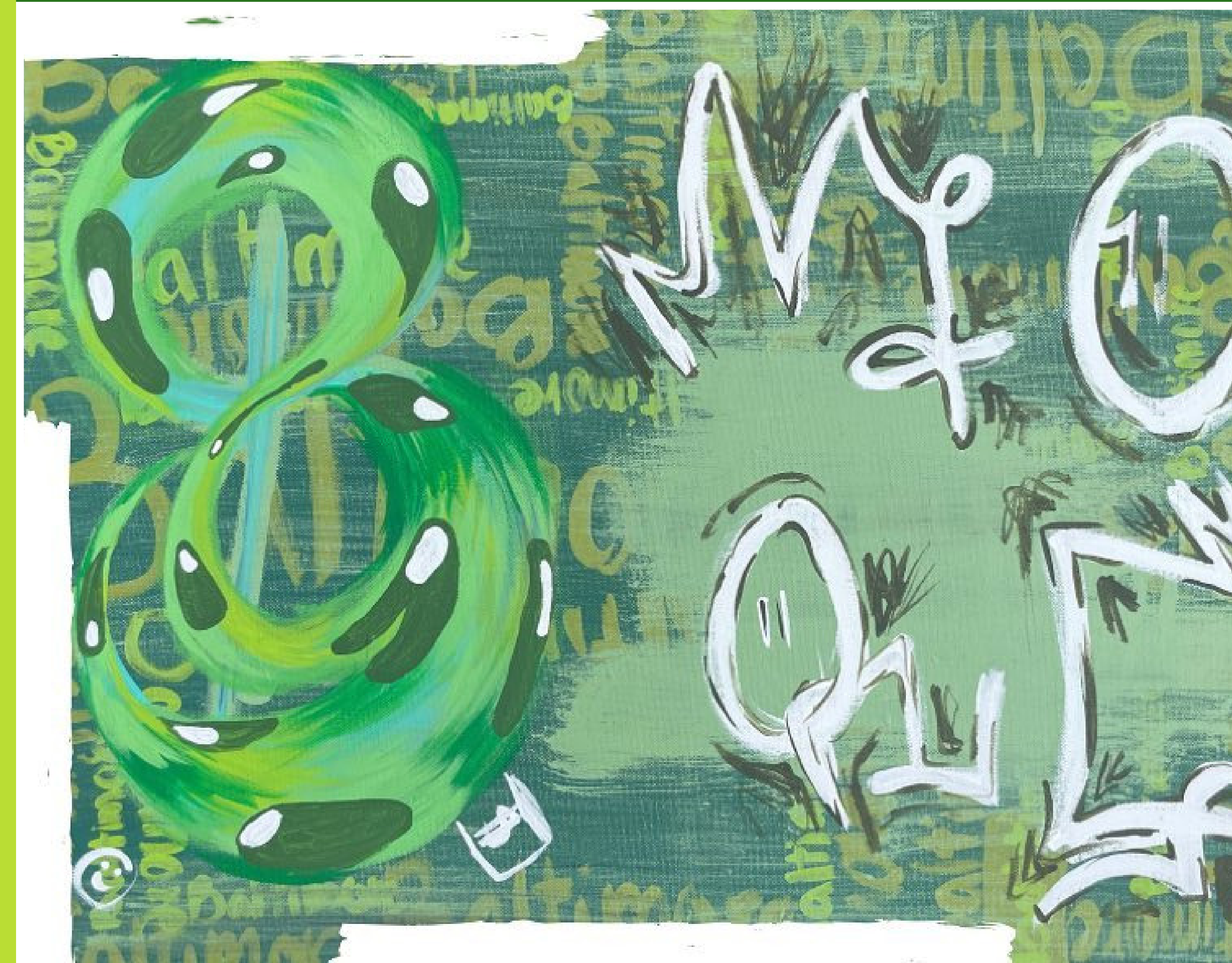
Art is simply... to be. If that makes sense. Some people breathe art without even realizing it. For me, it's like another organ in my body—I don't think I could be myself without it. It would be abnormal for me to not create. Art is one of the purest forms of expression, but I think a lot of people dim its light because they don't understand it. Some artistic minds are just too strong for the average person to grasp. But art is everything.

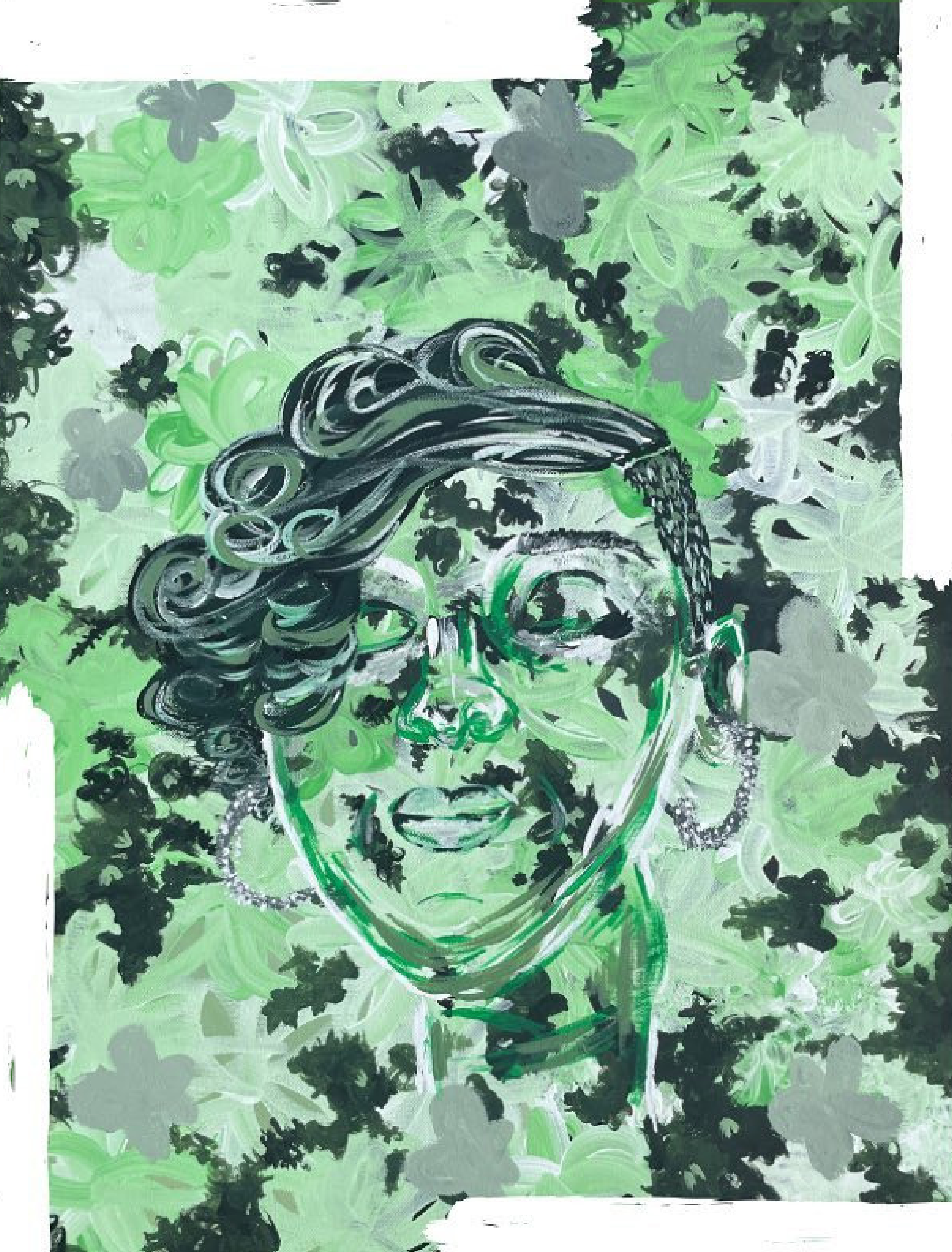
Growing Up in Baltimore, How Do Your Surroundings Shape Your Art?

I get a lot of inspiration from the heart of the city—the people, the culture, what drives them every day. Even the history here is rich. So many great people have come from Baltimore, so many have passed through. I think about their stories, their passions, what they love, what they hate. And in a way, I try to mimic that—mimic my home, my people, my everyday experiences.

What's One Thing People Would Be Surprised to Learn About You as an Artist?

I've always been into physical art, but I didn't really take it seriously until later in life—probably towards the end of high school. Before that, music was my main creative outlet. I always loved painting, drawing, and graphic design, but music was what I prioritized. Then, at some point, I made a big shift. Music is still my heart and soul, but there's something about picking up a paintbrush... about facing a fresh canvas with a blank mind and a full heart. The expression is unreal. I've never been great with words, but with paint, I can show you anything—I can tell you anything. My first love was music, but my true love now is painting, multimedia... really, anything visual.





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