

Leila Currah

Portfolio 2025

This portfolio brings together a selection of work across fine art and handmade craft. Each piece reflects a commitment to precision, thoughtful composition, and the expressive possibilities of both traditional and contemporary craft. With deep respect for historical technique and a modern design sensibility, I aim to create work that is both refined and imaginative, honoring the beauty of materials and the stories they carry.





Leila is a Californian artist and integrative wellness instructor whose work bridges mindfulness, movement, art, and the natural world. She studied Neuroscience at UCLA and pursued research on the brain and human experience at the University of Oxford, while developing a lifelong dedication to the arts. Known for her breadth of natural talent, versatility, and willingness to experiment, she has worked across a wide range of media including graphite, watercolor, oil on canvas, mural painting, illuminated lettering, leatherwork, and acrylic ink cut outs. She also practices ikebana with the Sogetsu school, a modern Japanese tradition celebrated for its creative freedom and expressive approach to floral design.

Her yoga teaching reflects this same integration of science, creativity, and mindfulness, offering practices that support clarity, balance, and renewal. She views yoga and meditation as forms of living art, where movement and breath are expressions of presence.

In addition to teaching yoga, Leila designs and leads fine art and craft workshops that celebrate the beauty of handmade objects. She often incorporates natural materials such as sea glass, driftwood, and botanicals, inspired by the coastal landscape where she lives and teaches. These creations reflect her belief that just as the ocean shapes the shore over time, creativity shapes and transforms the individual.

Leila brings an integrative vision to wellness, offering experiences that connect body, mind, and creative spirit. As a certified Reiki Master, she incorporates a quiet awareness of energetic balance to her work. Whether through mindful movement or crafting with the textures of the sea, she creates spaces where participants can reconnect with themselves and the natural rhythms around them.

IKEBANA

Ikebana is a practice of balance, restraint, and expressive form. This detail of an arrangement, in the Nageire basic slanting style, uses dahlias and heavenly bamboo (*Nandina*) to highlight contrast between strength and delicacy. Rooted in the Sogetsu tradition, my work explores the dialogue between line, empty space, and season, allowing natural materials to express both vitality and stillness.





MORIBANA-STYLE ARRANGEMENT

Calla lilies (*Zantedeschia*), monstera (*Monstera deliciosa*), and calathea (*Calathea orbifolia*), 2025

Created for the Sogetsu School San Diego Branch 35th Anniversary Ikebana Exhibition at Balboa Park, this Moribana-style arrangement explores contrast between structure and flow. The broad monstera leaves frame the calla lilies' upward movement, while the calathea introduces tonal softness and texture.

Sogetsu
San Diego Branch
今朝
Leila Currah

FREE-STYLE ARRANGEMENT

Anthuriums (*Anthurium andraeanum*) and strawberry guava (*Psidium cattleianum*), 2025

This free-style composition emphasizes balance between line and mass, pairing the vivid sheen of anthurium blooms with the sculptural gesture of a single guava branch. The arrangement explores movement through contrast in color and space, embodying the Sogetsu principle of freedom within form.





GRAPHITE

Drawing is a foundational part of my visual practice. This work demonstrates my ability to create high-contrast, evocative drawings that are both realistic and atmospheric. Using graphite powder, blending tools, and traditional pencils, I build tonal depth and texture to convey mood as well as form. These pieces rely on close attention to proportion, subtle shifts in value, and the expressive potential of light and shadow. Whether focused on anatomy, gesture, or emotion, each drawing is rooted in careful observation and a desire to connect realism with feeling.

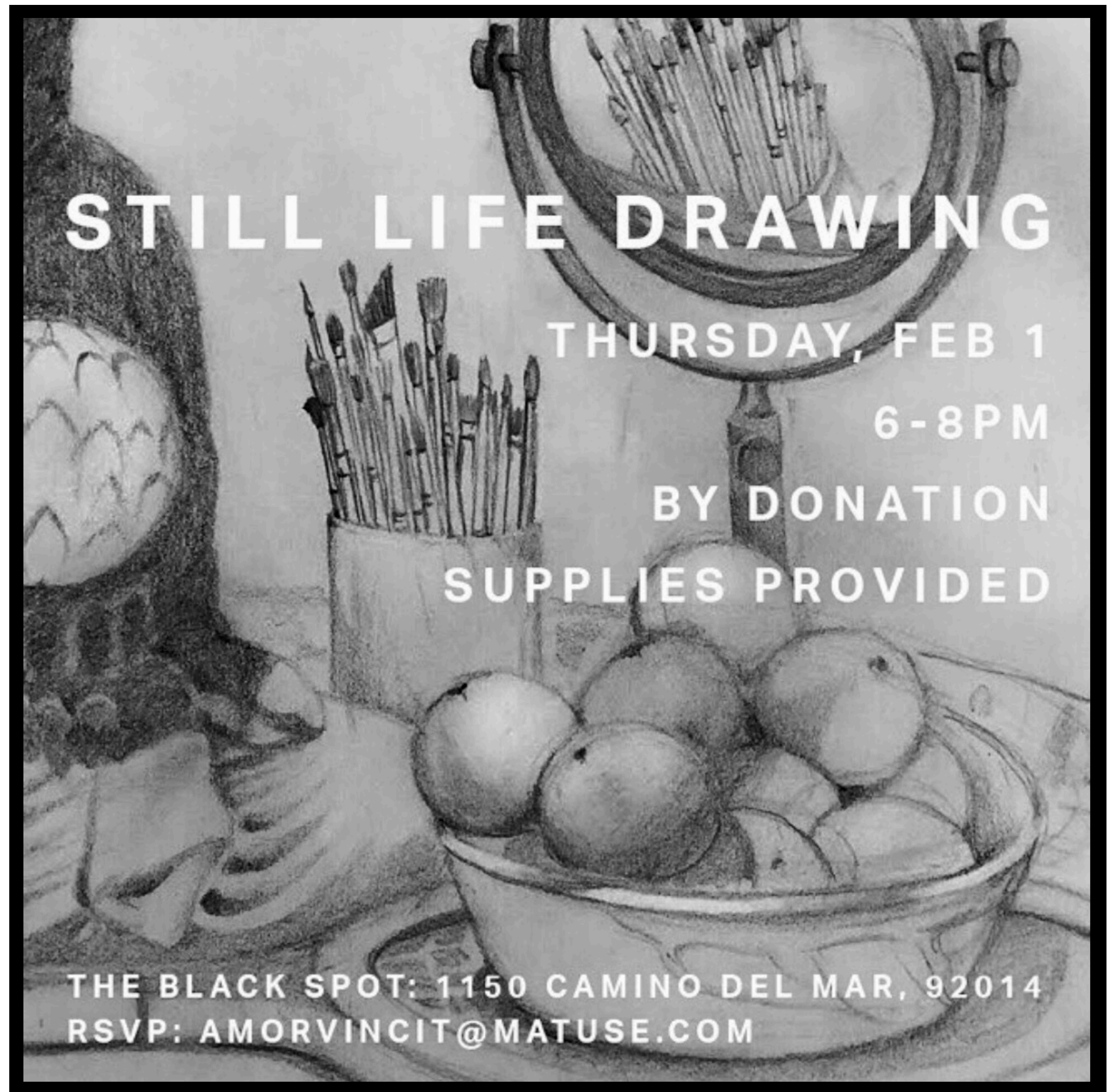




DRAWING & FLYER FOR STILL LIFE DRAWING CLASSES

Graphite, 2018

This is an original drawing and flyer for a Still Life Drawing series that was conducted in 2018 at The Black Spot (Matuse), in Del Mar, California. Each session centered on graphite and pencil technique, offering a space to practice foundational skills like line, shading, and proportion. These donation-based monthly classes were open to all levels, with supplies provided and a fresh arrangement of objects each time to encourage close observation and quiet focus.





STILL LIFE WITH SYMBOLIC OBJECTS

Graphite to Digital, 2018

Originally drawn by hand and then reinterpreted digitally, this still life blends traditional observation with narrative elements. Each object was chosen for its personal or cultural resonance. The strands in the foreground came from a beaded curtain my mother hung in a door frame during the time she lived in Jamaica while my father served in the Peace Corps. The inclusion of ginger adds a gesture toward healing, memory, and the natural world.

STILL LIFE WITH TOYS

Graphite to Digital, 2018

Created as part of my still life drawing classes for children, this arrangement invited young artists to see familiar objects in a new way. Using toys and instruments, such as Lincoln Logs, wooden blocks, a Merrythought teddy bear, a tambourine, and shakers, the composition blends playfulness with structure. Still life for kids becomes an exploration of form, color, and imagination, where everyday objects take on new character and meaning through close observation.





WATER, FIRE, AND EARTH

Acrylic ink on Arches, 22 x 79 inches, 2017

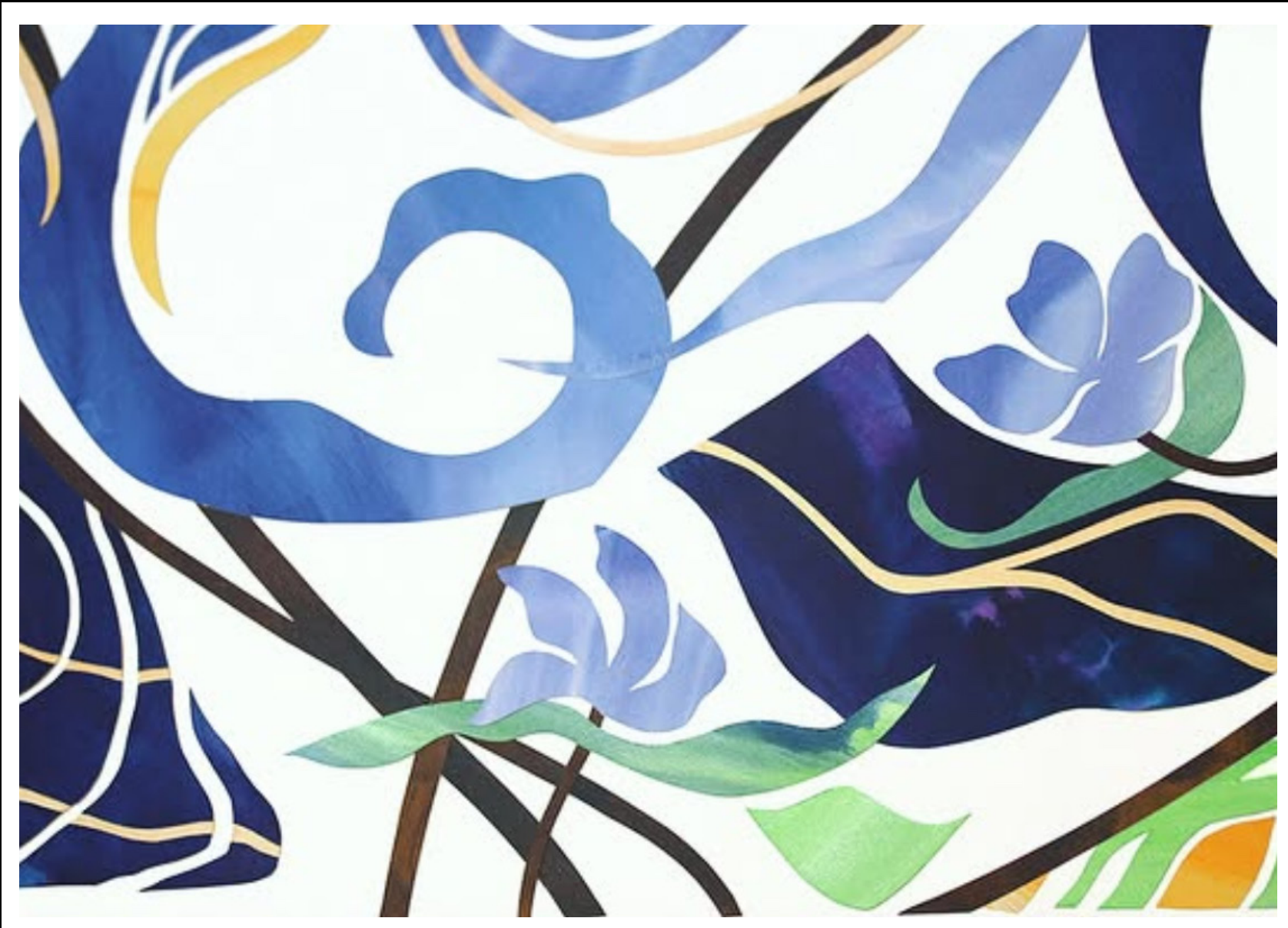
Private Collection (\$8,000 framed with museum glass)

ACRYLIC INK CUT OUTS

These pieces are constructed from hand-cut, inked paper using a process that emphasizes precision, layering, and visual balance. The composition begins with a pencil drawing, which is transferred to tracing paper and used as a guide. Large sheets of Arches watercolor paper are prepared with Daler Rowney acrylic inks, then carefully cut and assembled. This technique requires patience, control, and attention to fine detail.

Details from *Water, Fire, and Earth*

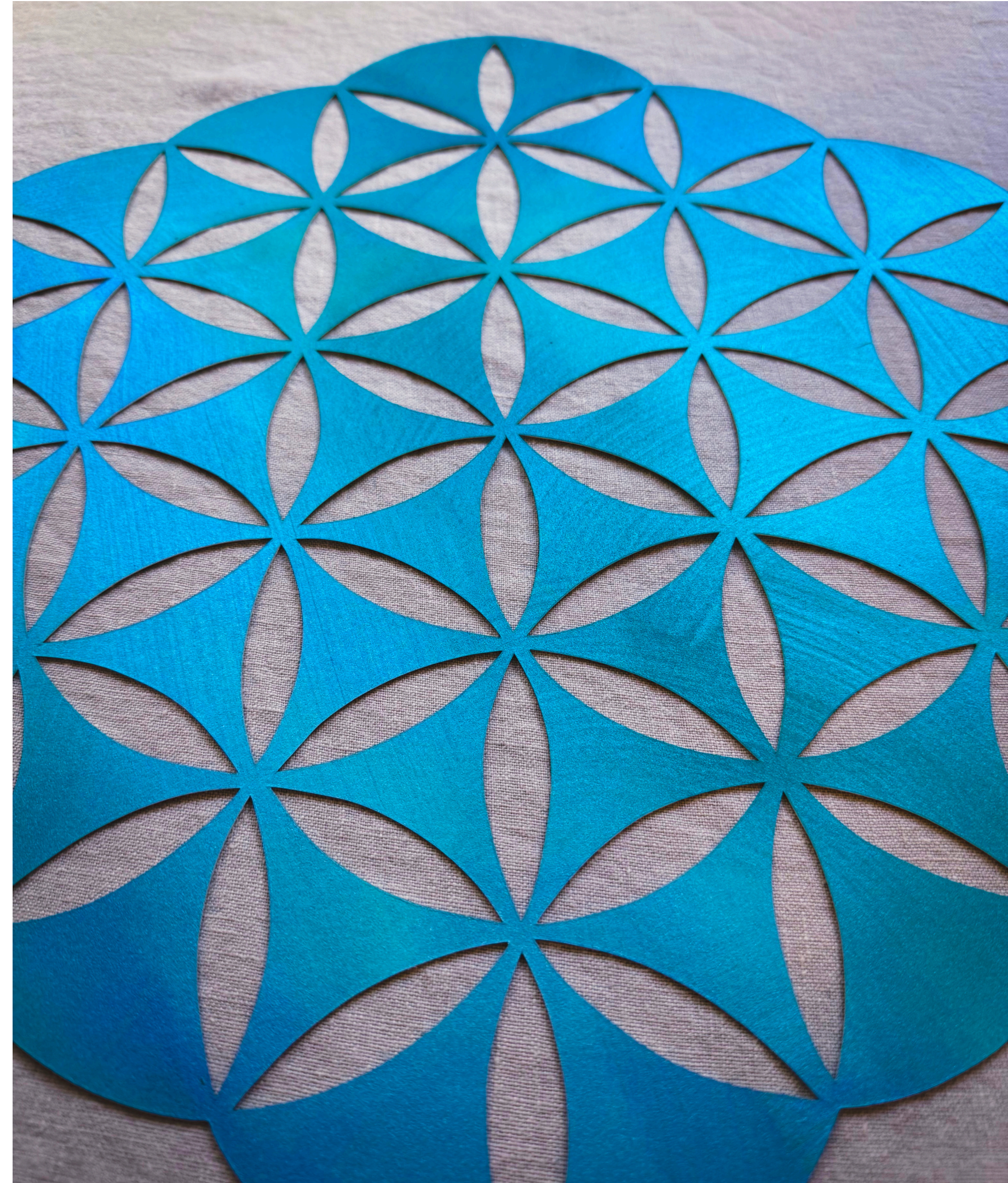
This painting includes a total of 312 individual pieces of painted paper, all cut by hand.



FLOWER OF LIFE

Hand-cut inked paper (Daler Rowney acrylic ink on Arches watercolor paper), 2025

This piece explores the repetition and harmony of circles through the geometric Flower of Life pattern. The design was cut from a single sheet of inked paper, prepared in advance with layered brushstrokes to create gentle shifts in hue within a unified palette. Every cut was made by hand with attention to spacing, edge quality, and the clarity of negative space. The removed pieces were later used in an inverted companion artwork, underscoring the dual possibilities of form and void. The precision required in measuring, cutting, and alignment reflects my interest in geometry as both a technical and expressive practice.



HANDMADE JOURNALS

These journals are constructed from soft-milled natural leather that wraps fully around each book, forming both the cover and structure. Inside, the pages are hand-torn from heavyweight, mixed media paper and bound with waxed thread using a simple hand-stitching method.



Each journal is individually designed and finished with painted or tooled motifs, hand-dyed surfaces, and details that reflect the recipient or creative intent. I use Angelus paints, Eco-Flo dyes, and traditional leather tools to shape pieces that are both functional and personal. The result is a journal meant to be used, gifted, and carried as a companion over time.

CUSTOM JOURNAL COVER

Tooled and painted leather (Angelus leather paint, Eco-Flo dye), 2022

This journal features the recipient's initials arranged in a custom stacked monogram. The design includes hand-tooled framing, stylized lettering, and Celtic knot motifs. After tooling and painting, the leather was sealed and buffed by hand to enhance depth and protect the surface.





GARDEN HANGING WITH DRIFTWOOD AND BEADS

Mixed Media, 2025

This hanging combines hand-selected beads and driftwood into a decorative piece designed for the garden. It rests here on a bed of sea glass that I gathered along the Jurassic Coast in southern England, a UNESCO World Heritage Site known for its rugged cliffs, fossils, and shifting shoreline. The glass, tumbled and softened by centuries of tide and stone, waits to be used in future work. Together, the hanging and the sea glass reflect a dialogue between found natural materials and crafted design, carrying the quiet rhythms of the sea into a handmade object.

STILL LIFE WITH CANDLE

Mixed Media, 2025

This composition centers on a hand-poured candle that I made from organic soy and coconut wax, blended with peppermint and eucalyptus essential oils. The arrangement also includes a driftwood garden hanging, a glass jar of sea glass collected along the Jurassic Coast, and fresh flowers. The focus is on simple materials and clear form, highlighting how crafted and found objects can be combined.





HOME PORTRAIT

Acrylic on black canvas

20 x 24 inches, 2020

Private Collection

This commissioned painting depicts a private courtyard, a space enclosed by walls yet open to the sky above. The composition was painted on a black gessoed canvas, using negative space to create crisp outlines and give definition to the forms. Architectural details, a brick porch, and lush plantings are carefully rendered, while personal touches, including driftwood garden hangings and seashells, anchor the scene with individuality and character. The contrast of vibrant color against the black ground gives the work a distinctive clarity, balancing architectural precision with the warmth of a lived space.

PORTRAITS

My portrait work spans oil and acrylic, exploring the nuances of light, emotion, and facial expression across mediums. Each piece reflects a deep respect for individuality and presence—capturing not just likeness, but the quiet essence of being.



BUNK JOHNSON

Acrylic on canvas
16 x 20 inches, 2010
Private Collection

MILES DAVIS

Acrylic on canvas
16 x 20 inches, 2010
Private Collection



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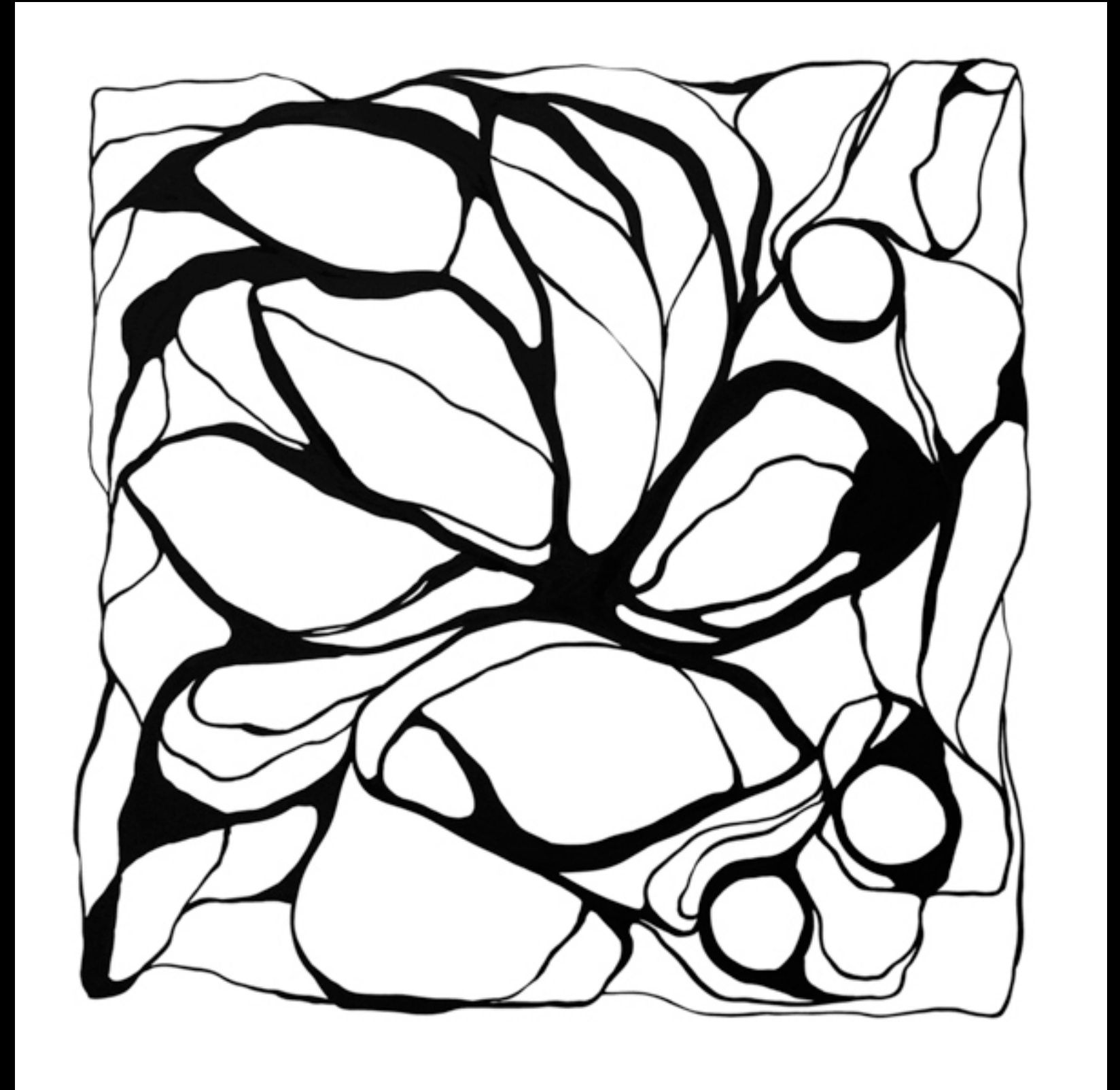


BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN
Oil on canvas, 30 x 40 inches, 2011
Private Collection



Sumi-e is a Japanese art form of ink wash painting. Instead of an ink wash, this work was executed using a thick, opaque ink for dramatic contrast.

Three paintings, 38 × 38 inches each — two sold, one available (\$1,500)



SUMI-E INSPIRED SERIES — Breathing Conglomerate Life

This three-painting series explores the tension between form and flow through gesture. Painted freehand with a single round brush, each piece was created in one continuous session using sumi-e technique, balancing control and fluidity. The black ink forms organic structures that suggest petals, leaves, rocks, and currents—the rhythms of life intertwined.

Shown here in a private dining room installation, the works reveal how minimal line and open space interplay to create movement within still form.



BREATHING CONGLOMERATE LIFE

Daler Rowney black ink on illustration board, sumi-e brush technique
38 x 38 inches, 2016
Two works sold, one available (\$1,500)



THE WAVE

Acrylic on canvas
36 × 72 inches, 2009
Private collection

Inspired by *The Great Wave off Kanagawa* by Hokusai, this large-scale painting reinterprets the iconic composition through a modern lens. The work captures both the force and stillness of water, the dynamic curve of the crest balanced against a quiet, moonlit gradient.

Shown here hanging at The Black Spot (Matuse) in Del Mar, California, the piece merges traditional influence with contemporary surf culture. It reflects a dialogue between reverence and reinvention, paying homage to the Japanese master while exploring the ocean as a living, rhythmic presence.

YAK YETI YAK, MIND YOUR HEAD

Acrylic on black canvas, 2010

Private collection, Yak Yeti Yak Restaurant, Bath, England

Created after a visit to Bath, this painting captures the distinctive interior of Yak Yeti Yak, an underground Nepalese restaurant filled with Himalayan artifacts. Over dinner, inspired by the atmosphere, I made sketches that I later developed into this painting. The work reflects the warmth and character of the space with prayer flags, staircases, and intimate tables arranged in playful perspective.

The painting was acquired by the restaurant owners and now hangs in the main entrance across from the bar, becoming part of the restaurant's visual story and cultural identity.





SUNFLOWERS IN WONDERLAND

Acrylic on canvas, 48 × 60 inches, 2011
Museum of Oxford, Permanent Collection

Created for the exhibition *Curiouser and Curiouser* at the Museum of Oxford, this painting reimagines the Radcliffe Camera through the whimsical lens of Alice in Wonderland. The white rabbit and oversized sunflowers play with scale and perspective, transforming Oxford's architectural icon into a childlike dreamscape.

Featured in the July edition of the Oxford Times' Limited Edition magazine, the work was celebrated for its imaginative reinterpretation of Oxford's literary heritage and continues to resonate with visitors of all ages.

"I wanted to create Oxford on a different scale — a scale that children could relate to. The white rabbit and the flowers are life-size, and I think kids especially find this fun."

— Artist's statement, Museum of Oxford exhibition placard



WATERCOLOR

Watercolor has long been one of my most intuitive mediums. I'm drawn to its luminous transparency, fluid gradients, and capacity for softness and precision. My background includes both botanical and illustrative work, with a focus on layering, edge control, and light. Watercolor requires patience and control, especially when working wet on wet.

ANAPAMU PLUMERIAS

Watercolor on Arches cold press paper

22 x 30 inches, 1998

Private Collection

This piece features plumeria blossoms rendered in delicate washes and vibrant greens. Each layer was built slowly to preserve the paper's glow and define form without overworking the surface. The composition highlights movement and balance, with a background that softens into a dreamy atmosphere.

Botanical motifs are a common request in personalization work, and this piece shows my ability to interpret organic forms with sensitivity and fine detail. It reflects a refined approach to watercolor through layered washes, tonal variation, and a balance of control and softness.





MURALING

This large-scale tropical mural showcases my ability to adapt botanical subject matter across very different media. While the previous watercolor painting focused on fine detail, this mural explores similar themes through bold, expansive forms. Plumeria, palm, banana, and papaya trees create a lush and playful outdoor scene.

Painting on stucco presents technical challenges. The rough, porous surface resists clean lines and requires custom brushwork, thicker paint application, and a strong sense of overall composition. Completed entirely by hand, this mural highlights my versatility and ability to scale up my work while maintaining sensitivity to color, movement, and natural form.



Details from Tropical Mural

Painting on stucco requires adaptation. The textured surface resists fine detail, yet these close-ups highlight the care taken with layering, color, and brush control. Hummingbirds, butterflies, and blossoms bring the mural to life and show my ability to create lively, expressive detail at scale.





KITTEN NAPPING IN AN AFRICAN TULIP TREE

Commissioned mural, 8 x 14 feet, 2012

YOGA DEL MAR MURALS

Over the years, I've completed several murals for a local business, Yoga Del Mar. This mural features the studio's signature nautilus logo, painted entirely by hand using professional-grade acrylics. I carefully built smooth gradients to evoke movement and depth, and the gold elements were also hand-painted to mimic the look of metallic leaf, without using stencils or foil.



To ensure precision and fidelity to the studio's brand, I used a projector to transfer the design outline to the wall. From there, every detail was painted freehand, reflecting my commitment to craftsmanship and my ability to translate digital designs into large-scale works. This project highlights both technical accuracy and a sense of flow, enhancing the welcoming atmosphere of the studio.

YOGA DEL MAR MURAL

Large-scale mandala mural designed for the yoga studio space, creating a focal point for meditation, movement, and restorative practice.

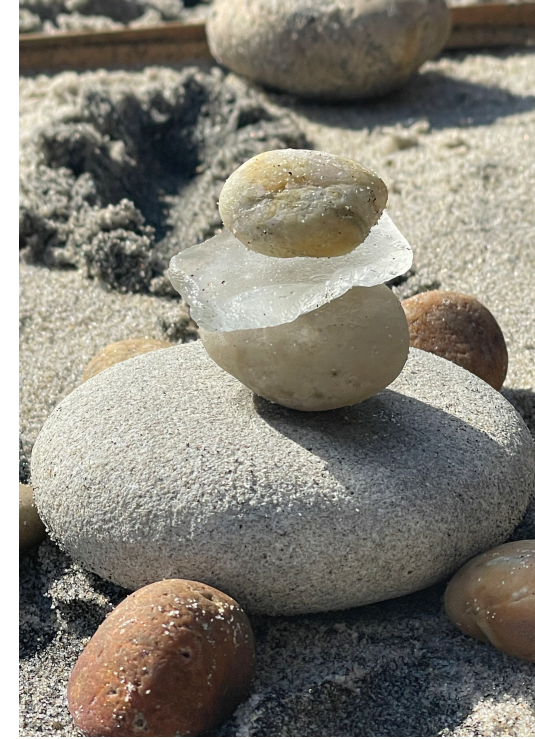


SWAMI'S BEACH SAND ART

Flyer created to invite community members to a collaborative art gathering at Swami's Beach.

After the gathering, photographs of participants' creations were printed and made into a series of handmade cards. Each card was trimmed and folded from quality art paper, with a different image documenting the ephemeral works shaped on the shoreline. The cards served as a record of the day and a gift for those who took part, carrying the spirit of a temporary art experience into a lasting form.







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Thank you for taking the time to view my portfolio.
For commissions, collaborations, workshops, or further
information, please feel free to reach out.

Background design by Leila Currah created on iPad using Procreate