

Colin Kubarych United States

Colin Kubarych is a multi-disciplinary visual artist currently living and working in the high desert environs of Northern Arizona. From photography to drawing and painting to sculpture, he uses a variety of mediums in his creative process to explore deeper into his inner world, his imaginative realm. He considers his main artistic influences to be his father, comic strips and cartoons, improvisation and, oddly enough, Organic Chemistry. When not in the studio, Colin can be found tackling his voluminous to-do list, reading Russian History or wandering aimlessly in the forest behind his house.



"I am a self-taught artist using a variety of media to explore and examine the thoughts and emotions of my inner world. I am strongly introverted and my artistic practice is a way for me outwardly express myself in ways that my words or actions cannot. With strong influences from the Dada and Surrealism movements, I create art to open new doors of perception and facilitate personal growth."

Interview

Your artistic journey spans multiple disciplines—from photography to sculpture. How do you decide which medium best expresses a particular idea or emotion?

"The disciplines at the core of my creative process are drawing and photography. These are my center and I practice them daily—regardless of how I feel or where I am. Beyond those, I don't have much of a decision making process for which medium I use. It's often as simple as what is within reach. In my studio, I usually have 4-6 projects ongoing and I'll bounce between them until it's time to finish one or put it away and start anew. With that said, I do notice some trends in how I feel when working with different media. Photography feels concentrated and composed, drawing—intuitive, collage—light-hearted and playful, painting—soothing, sculpture—angry and tense. I use these associations as a guide, but I loosely follow them at best."



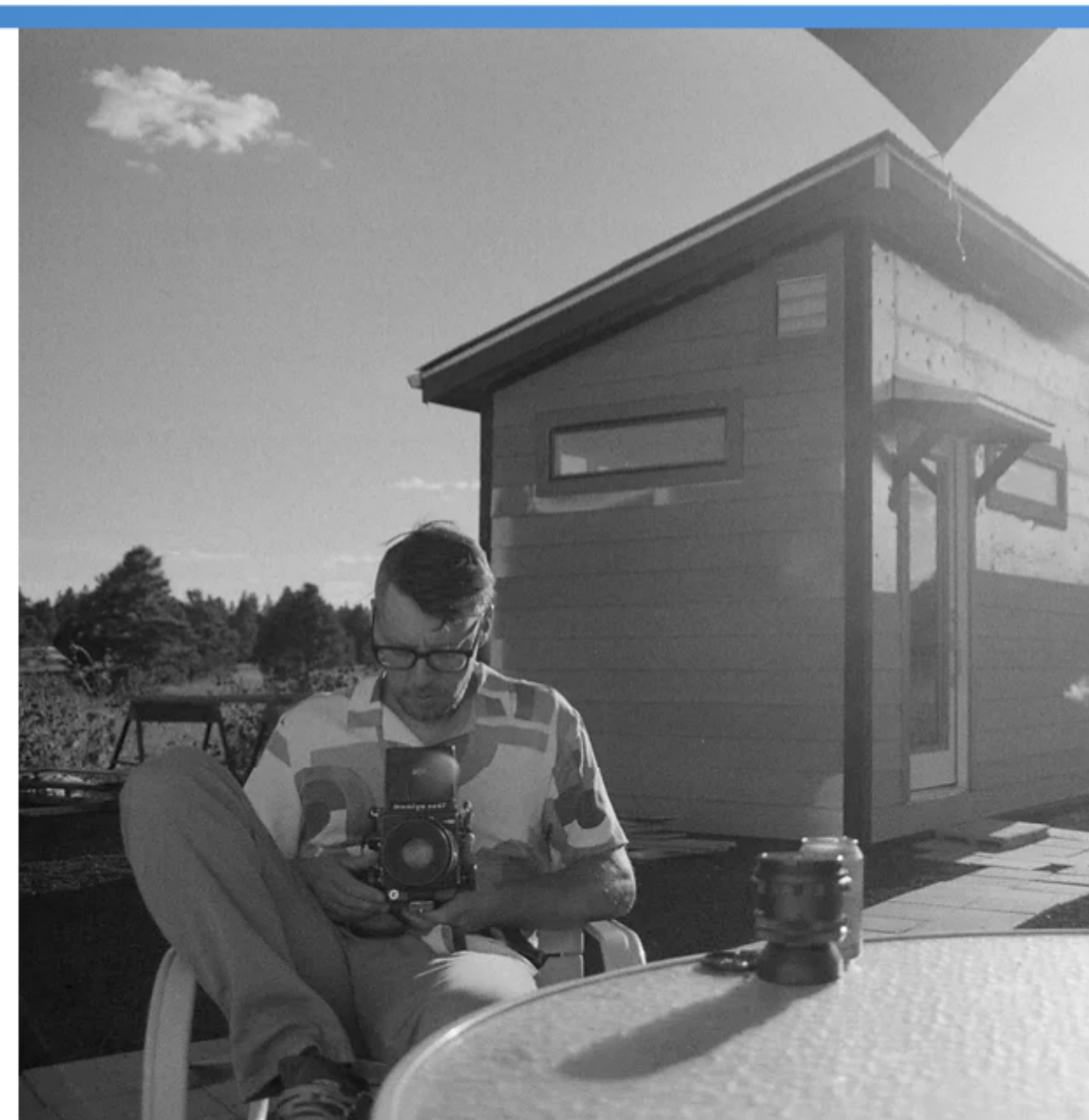
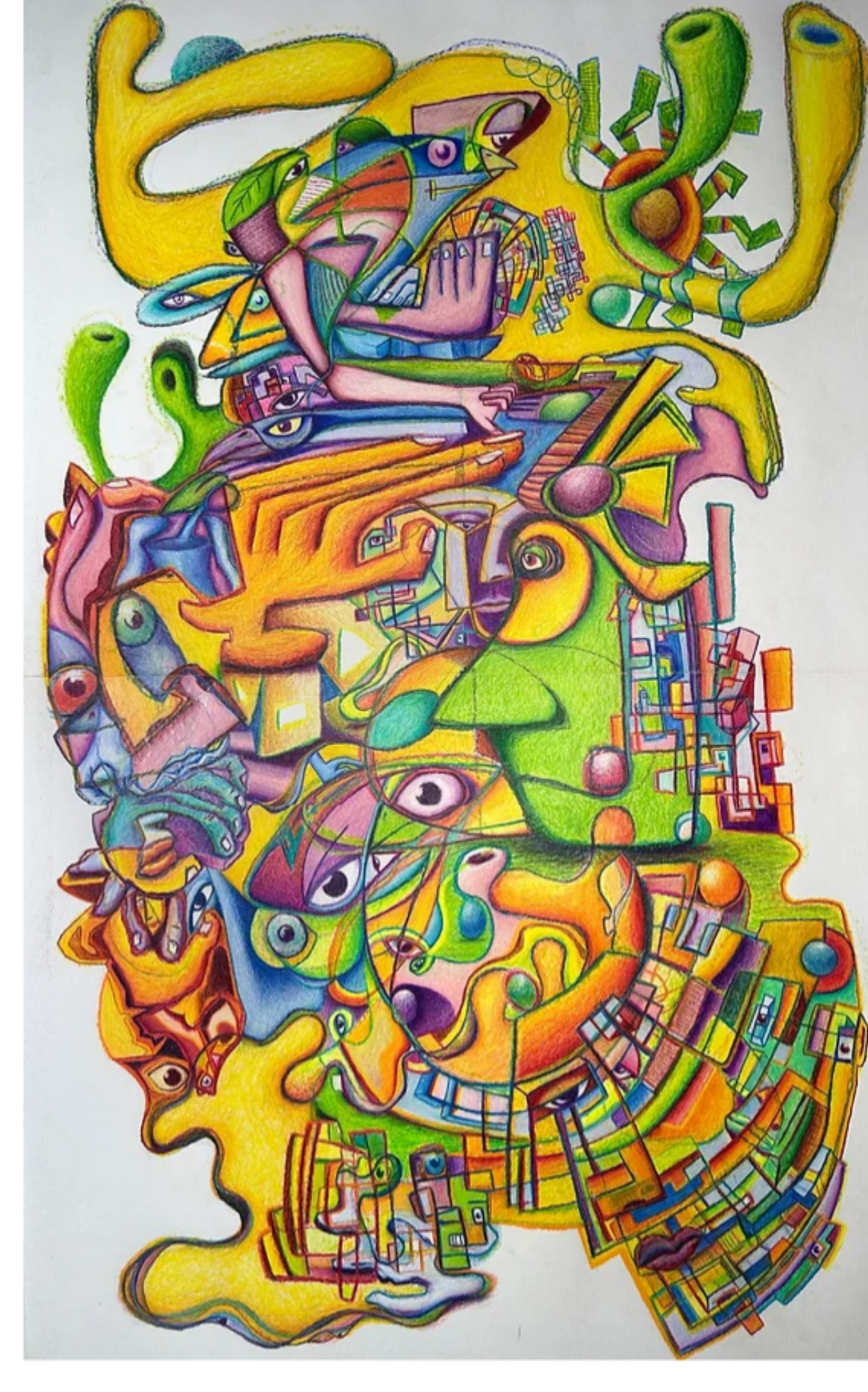
You've cited comic strips, cartoons, and improvisation as key influences on your work. How do these seemingly playful elements manifest in your art, and how do they connect with the more introspective aspects of your creative process?

"I love cartoons' ability to subvert reality. When I see a comic strip or animated show, I immediately know that I am looking at something that references real life but is not trying to recreate it. The laws of the natural world are suspended on a whim to create an unrealistic, yet believable scene. I want my artwork to do the same. Also, I have a silly, goofy side that I am not so comfortable with exhibiting in public but it's within me and I want to express it. I see using these playful elements—bright colors, distorted proportions, simple line drawings to name a few—as a source of levity, a way to bring my inner space into balance."

Organic Chemistry is an unusual influence for a visual artist. Can you elaborate on how this scientific discipline informs or inspires your creative work?

"Before I started to seriously pursue my artistic practice, I was at university studying and training to be a chemist. I have long since moved away from Chemistry as a career, but the years I spent in classrooms and laboratories left an indelible mark on my current practice. Organic Chemistry has influenced my artistic practice in three distinct ways.

1. A good chemist keeps a good notebook, the more detailed—the better. These chemistry notebooks documenting observations, ideas and data laid the groundwork for my use of sketchbooks. One is usually in my vicinity, and I consider sketching a vital part of my creative process.
2. Part of my research involved using artificial neural networks (ANN), a machine learning algorithm inspired by the human brain, to process experimental data. In the simplest terms, input data is entered, the ANN (or "black box") processes the data and output is produced. I view the creative process in a similar light. I take in daily inputs (via my mental and physical surroundings) and my neural network processes, in ways I vaguely understand, creating an output—an artwork. If I treat my brain as a "black box" rather than something to be grasped and mastered, I feel that I get more out of my artwork.
3. The fundamentals of Organic Chemistry are visual in nature and line drawings are used to simplify the complex chemical structures and their reactions. Learning in class and studying for exams became drawing practice—heavy line work with an emphasis on clarity. This is the first time I experienced a flow state from drawing, yet I did not recognize this at the time. It was only much later in life, when I started to draw consistently, that I realized the great joy I felt during those study sessions wasn't necessarily the science, it was drawing."



Living in the high desert of Northern Arizona, how does your environment shape your artistic perspective or the themes you explore in your work?

"Beautiful places inspire and, to me, Northern Arizona is the most beautiful place in the world. It has everything I want in a natural landscape—big skies, big trees, sunshine and dry air. It is a place where I am routinely stopped in awe by the natural beauty—a feeling of wonder and insignificance that fuels my creative energy. Thematically, bird and flower imagery show up in my work as a homage to my home. I live rurally, so I am often observing the natural world surrounding me. Birds fascinate me with their playful, cartoonish-like qualities and flowers for their delicate intricacies."

You mentioned exploring your "inner world" through art. Can you describe what this inner realm looks like and how it evolves as you continue to create?

"I started to seriously pursue my artistic practice in 2017 during a period of personal turmoil. If I think of my inner world as a studio, at that point in time, it was a mess—a mess of ideas and emotions yet to be sorted, yet to be created. I started my art practice to clean up this inner emotional space. I pulled at the tangled threads, gathered up the good ideas, and let go of the bad. Seven years on and my inner studio is different—it's cleaner, more organized—ready for new creations. Currently, I am in an artistic transition. I have made art, between 2017-2024, from a deeply emotional space that is rife with creativity but erratic in nature and my desire to create from a different place is evolving. I believe in moving forward and now that my inner space is more manageable, my focus and intentions evolve with it."



Your father is one of your main artistic influences. What specific lessons, values, or artistic philosophies did he pass on to you, and how do they appear in your work today?

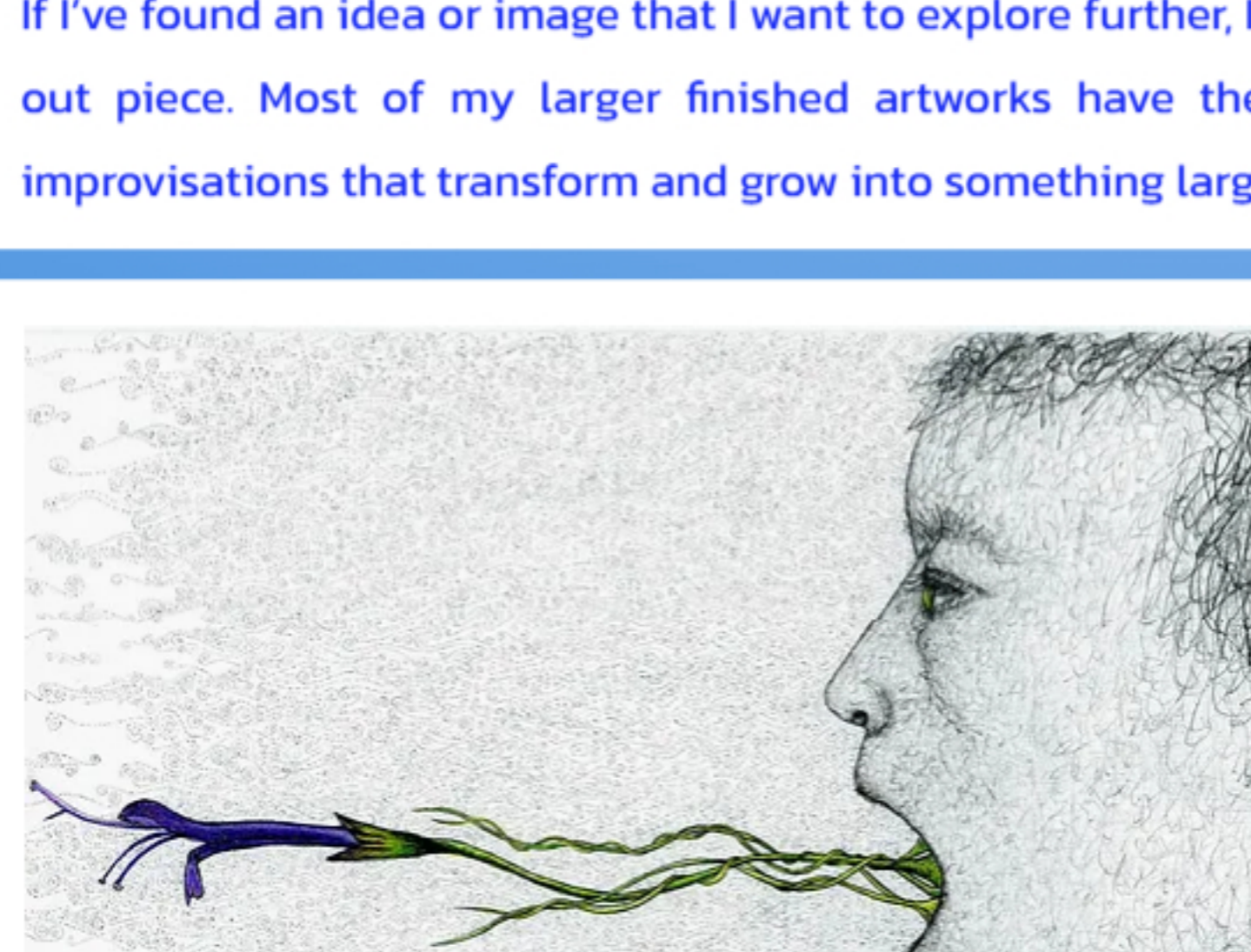
My dad is a jack-of-all-trades, and the apple does not fall far from the tree. Growing up, my day in and day out was seeing him working on his various projects around the house from stained glass to woodworking to scale models. My first camera was my dad's old Minolta. I've looked through his negative archives and it's spooky to see how similar we view the world. His influence on my practice was not pedagogical, but more experiential in nature. He helped provide the space and opportunity and the rest was up to me. There might be a beginning lesson or two but any refinement in technique or process was discovered through my own iterations of work— independent of his own thoughts and ideas."

Improvisation plays a role in your creative process. How do you balance spontaneity with structure when developing a piece?

"This is a common refrain, but the anxiety and tension of the empty page, especially early in my artistic development was too much. What to draw? What to paint? What to do? To reject those feelings and break that tension, I started to put something, anything on the page and go from there. An empty page felt daunting but even the slightest line or shade of color would flip a switch. It's like a call and response, the media calls and I respond. We go back and forth and back and forth until I've lost or found it.



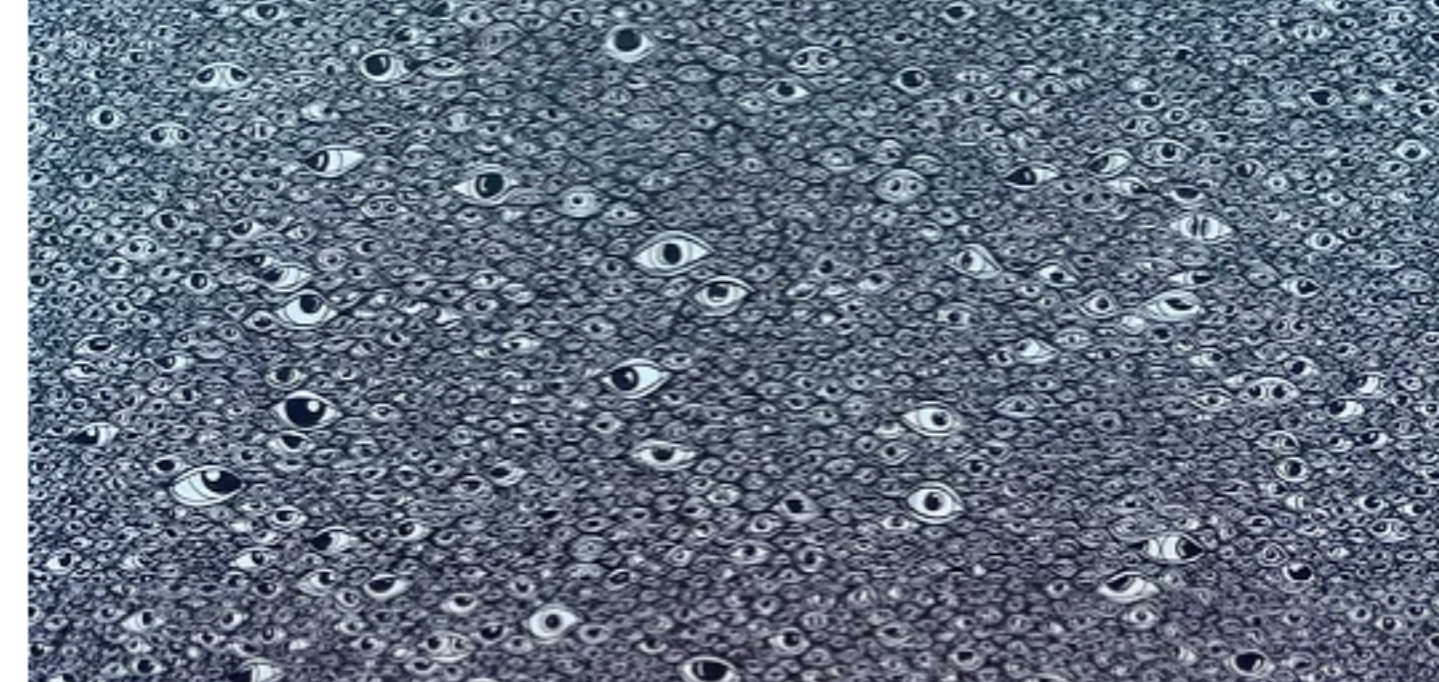
If I've found an idea or image that I want to explore further, I'll work it through with more sketching and then ultimately into a fully fleshed out piece. Most of my larger finished artworks have their roots in one of my sketchbooks as a doodle amongst doodles, small improvisations that transform and grow into something larger."



Your interests outside the studio include reading Russian history and wandering in the forest. Do these activities influence your work, and if so, in what ways?

"My interest in Russian History began with an interest in Dada and Surrealism. Both movements fascinate me with their imagery, which left me wanting to know more about the history of the movements and their artists. What inputs were they entering into their neural networks to produce outputs— such weird, bizarre, nonsensical outputs? The answer lies in the utter terror of World War I, so I started to dig into the Great War. This led me to the Russian Revolution. After reading a couple of books on the subject, I was hooked on it's complexity and chaos. Much like how I feel about creating, the amount to learn from History is endless and with each book read I find new characters, ideas and topics to explore.

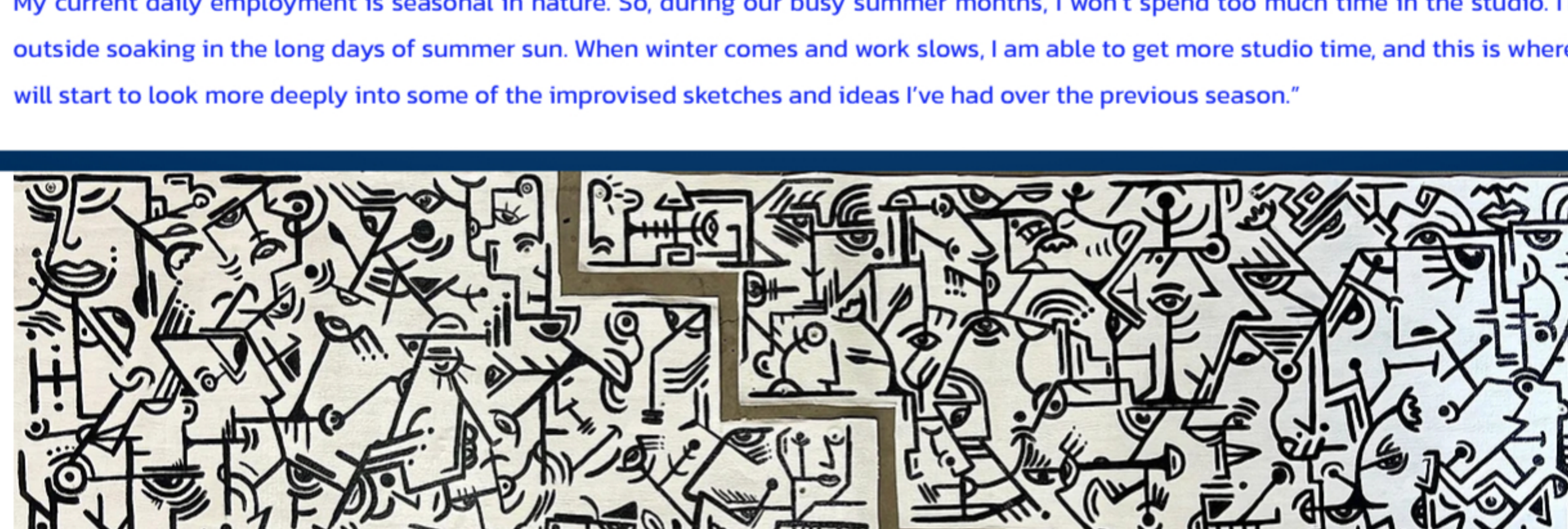
Each time I aimlessly wander the forest I am reminded of the value of patience, quiet and solitude. Sometimes on these walks I'll take photos, draw or write and others I walk empty handed. The forest is infinite and reminds me that my energy for creating is infinite too— set out the materials, clear my expectations and wander into the vast spaces of the forest in my mind."



As an artist with a voluminous to-do list, how do you prioritize projects and maintain a sense of creative flow amidst daily responsibilities?

"I have been fortunate enough to find employment over the last seven years that compliments my creative lifestyle. I also remind myself that art is everywhere, and I can make it anywhere, even if it's only in my head. In my ideal state, I stay in the creative flow no matter what task I am working on.

My current daily employment is seasonal in nature. So, during our busy summer months, I won't spend too much time in the studio. I'm outside soaking in the long days of summer sun. When winter comes and work slows, I am able to get more studio time, and this is where I will start to look more deeply into some of the improvised sketches and ideas I've had over the previous season."



What do you hope viewers take away from your art? Is there a particular message, feeling, or thought you aim to convey through your multi-disciplinary approach?

"First off, I would like to use this space to thank everyone at Lumen Gallery for the selection of my artwork and the opportunity to be interviewed about my work. Emerging is an apt description as I am only beginning to find my artistic voice and having a space to share thoughts and ideas I've had for years is cathartic and liberating. I'd also like to thank all the friends and family who have helped, inspired and encouraged me to keep being myself and creating from that place. My creative process is a conversation with myself and I try not to think too much about what a viewer might take away from it. I'm self-conscious by nature and the more I think about what a viewer's experience might be, the more self-doubt I incur. It's best for me to create visuals that I find interesting and appealing and leave myself out of the interpretations of the viewer. To provide some sense of narrative though, I use the titles of my work to give some perspective on where my mind was during that piece's creation."

Colin Kubarych (United States)
colin.kubarych@gmail.com
www.lonebuffalocreative.com
Instagram: @colin_kubarych
Facebook: Colin Kubarych