

a visionary contemporary artist from Messina, Italy, has built an impressive international career through her extraordinary talent and multidisciplinary approach. Growing up in an artistic family, she developed a passion for drawing early on, which evolved into a lifelong exploration of graphite on cardboard. With a degree and master's from the Academy of Fine Arts in Catania and a diverse portfolio of residencies, exhibitions, and collaborations across the globe, Giuditta's art continues to captivate audiences. From her solo exhibitions in Milan and Mexico City to her participation in the Venice Biennale and the Copenhagen Photo Festival, her work resonates with both emotional depth and intellectual curiosity.

Her commitment to fostering creativity extends beyond her personal practice; she is the director of Villa R, an international artist residency that connects art with nature. Recognized with numerous accolades and featured in prestigious collections, Giuditta R remains a dynamic force in contemporary art, inspiring through her innovation and dedication to cultural exchange.



*„As an artist working primarily with graphite and mixed techniques on paper, my creations delve into the depths of the human unconscious, undertaking a psychosomatic investigation that uncovers myriad stressors, vices, tensions, and impulses. Through a meticulous combination of black and white, utilizing pencil (graphite), inks, pigments, and inks, my works evoke the aesthetic of old photographs, imbuing them with an ancestral quality that renders them iconic relics without a defined historical period. Upon closer examination of my drawings, one discovers subtle hints of contemporary life interwoven amidst the grayscale palette. Glittery, golden, or colorful details emerge, offering a juxtaposition of hope against the backdrop of inner turmoil. These elements convey a positive message, sourced from a higher dimension, suggesting the potential for spiritual transformation and renewal. My artworks serve as a reflection, inviting viewers to ponder their own identities and trajectories. Through themes of joy, shame, sadness, and trauma, viewers are confronted with a "mirror effect" that transports them to the crucible of their own formative experiences. Yet, amidst the introspection, there exists a beacon of optimism, illuminating pathways toward a future characterized by hope and transcendence. Ultimately, my artistic practice seeks to provoke contemplation and introspection, offering new visions for personal growth and societal change. By excavating the depths of the human psyche, I aim to catalyze a journey toward self awareness and spiritual evolution – the essential keys to reshaping our destinies and fostering a brighter tomorrow.“*

Giuditta R

## Interview



Giuditta, growing up in an artistic family, how did your early experiences shape your creative journey?

From an early age, I found it incredibly inspiring to observe creative individuals working on fascinating projects, exploring concepts, and experimenting with colors. Witnessing how people perceive art and how art can influence society sparked a deep interest within me. Growing up in an artistic family further nurtured this passion—having parents who were already immersed in the arts gave me the freedom to express myself and explore my inner creativity. Although their continuous guidance and constructive critique of my artistic creations could be challenging at times, it played a crucial role in shaping my skills. Their feedback helped me refine my techniques, sharpen my understanding of anatomy, and develop a keen sense of harmony in colors and forms. These experiences laid a strong foundation for my artistic growth and continue to influence my practice today.

What drew you to the medium of graphite on cardboard, and how has it evolved in your work over the years?

The use of graphite on cardboard as a medium began for me during an extended trip to Copenhagen, Denmark, while attending a study program following my Academy graduation. What started as a curiosity, revisiting, reinventing, and reproducing old photographs I had taken for inspiration, quickly grew into an enduring creative journey. Over time, the positive feedback I received from people who connected deeply with this series became a significant source of encouragement and inspiration. This choice of medium was also born from practicality. Graphite on cardboard is lightweight, making it ideal for traveling and shipping in a tube, a crucial consideration as I moved between various places around the world. Over the years, this approach has evolved into a defining aspect of my artistic style. Many viewers have shared how my works evoke moments from their memories, encouraging personal reflections, which adds another layer of meaning to my art.



Graphite provides me with the flexibility to infuse my portraits with real, profound expressions, capturing emotions and depth in a way that resonates with people. As my technique has developed, so too has the demand for my work. I'm now frequently commissioned to create personal and family portraits, also in my signature style, a meaningful proof of how this medium has become an integral and estimated part of my artistic identity.



Can you tell us about your time at Villa R and how the residency program reflects your artistic philosophy?

I am the founder and director of Villa R, an artist residency located in my hometown of Messina. This residency was born out of a desire to provide artists with an exclusive, serene environment where they can fully immerse themselves in their creative processes. Surrounded by stunning natural landscapes, Villa R offers a retreat from the distracting energy of urban life, allowing artists to find fresh inspiration, develop new ideas, and gain valuable insights for their future projects and exhibitions. In addition to its quiet setting, the residency offers access to incredible cultural and natural destinations nearby. Artists can explore ancient Greek sites, museums, picturesque mountains, amazing coastlines, and islands, all within easy reach.

How has your international education and residencies, such as in Copenhagen and Mexico, influenced your artistic perspective?

Every travel I've done in my life has been a significant step in my artistic career and a profound source of personal enrichment. Each destination has inspired me with its unique "colors," shapes, and cultural essence. I have been particularly moved by Nordic culture during my time living in Denmark and by the vibrant Latin culture I experienced while participating in several residencies in different parts of Mexico.

My inspiration is often fueled by studying the physiognomy of the people I encounter, as well as by the rich colors, history, and cultural heritage of each place. This includes culinary traditions, intricate decorations, architecture, and even the fashion of the locals. In Mexico, I found extraordinary inspiration in the Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) celebrations, a deeply meaningful tradition. During this time, people transform into vibrant works of art, painting their faces as skulls, often resembling La Catrina, and wearing fluorescent, flower-adorned dresses. It's a visual feast and an emotional experience, a treasure of inspiration for an artist. Mexico's energy is very spiritual. Many people there maintain a close connection to rituals and religious practices that unite the earthly and the afterlife. During Día de los Muertos, homes are filled with objects and offerings, including food, for their deceased loved ones. Mexican culture intertwines the meaning of life and death in powerful ways, with figures like La Llorona and La Catrina serving as potent archetypes. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why I noticed the audience was particularly receptive to my creative language.



Your recent American debut with "Genetic Secrets" was unique. What inspired the candlelit presentation of your work?

The exhibition project "Genetic Secrets" was originally coined by the talented young American art curator Allan Paulose, now the director of Art de Centrale Gallery in Springdale, Arkansas. This exhibition offers an enchanting, candle-lit art experience, showcasing a curated selection of some of my most profound and psychosomatically investigative works.

The featured series, created using pencil (graphite) and mixed techniques on cardboard, delves into the hidden facets of identity, exploring our internal "genetic secrets," the darker aspects of our psyche, and their impact on our lives.

First inaugurated in the United States in 2023 at the Likewise Community Space in Arkansas, the exhibition was met with great success. It opened with a unique event that immersed visitors in an atmosphere of mystery and reflection. In a nearly dark room, candles were lit by the audience to illuminate and view the artworks. This captivating setup led to a deeply intimate and contemplative connection with the pieces.

The exhibition encouraged visitors to reflect not only on the intricate drawings but also on their own identities, unlocking the secrets within themselves. Our goal was to create an experience that stimulated the minds and hearts of all who attended, bringing to light the secrets that reside within ourselves, revelations that hold the potential to reshape our paths and inspire a brighter future.



What role do collaborations, such as with fashion designers in Tokyo or curators worldwide, play in your creative process?

Sharing ideas and collaborating with professionals from around the world is incredibly important to me. Many of their original interpretations of my work have often led to the creation of inspiring projects. Two of the highlight examples include my collaboration with the young American curator Allan Paulose and the young Japanese fashion designer Keisuke Hirose.

Keisuke Hirose discovered my work online and was deeply impressed by my artistic style. Inspired by my drawings, he designed two fashion collections in Japan that featured reproductions of my art. The resulting garments were showcased both in Japan as well as in Europe and received great responses.

This collaboration didn't end there. I incorporated his designs into a multimedia performance featuring music, presented during my solo exhibition at a historic castle in Germany. The event garnered significant attention and coverage in the local media, enhancing the visibility of our work.



As the youngest artist featured in the documentary "La Messina Bendata," how do you see your work contributing to Messina's rich artistic legacy?

I see my work as a significant contribution to Messina's artistic legacy, as it delves into profound themes that resonate deeply with both the human story and somehow the ancient history of Sicily. These themes are a reflection of our cultural roots, shedding light on truths that are often left unspoken, within family patterns and beyond.

Bringing my art into the international arena is also meaningful for Messina, as it demonstrates that an artist from our city can achieve recognition and resonance far beyond its borders. It's a way of showing that our local talent and perspectives have a place on the global stage.

Through my work, I aim to represent the realities of life—authentic and unfiltered, even when they are painful. I believe that by confronting these truths, I can inspire people to wake up, to reflect, and perhaps to embrace the darker sides of themselves.

My art is a voice that finally speaks, loud and clear. It speaks against violence, injustice, and all the negative forces that plague our world. Through each piece, I strive to amplify the silenced voices. My work becomes an act of resistance, challenging harmful systems and encouraging a deeper understanding of the struggles that many face.

Your art often bridges diverse cultures and disciplines. How do you navigate and merge these influences in your practice?

In my research, I am curious and like to embrace different perspectives. I see my art as a universal portrait that speaks in a language that everyone understands, that is why I aim to create works that resonate across boundaries. I focus on finding values that can evoke a meaningful dialogue with the observer.

I often blend traditional drawing techniques, using simple black-and-white shades, with modern elements like glitter and three-dimensional, colorful objects. This combination breaks with the typical portrait approach, offering a fresh and dynamic interpretation. The subjects I choose span various ages, and I experiment with different clothing styles and poses. This eclectic mix is intentional and designed to evoke curiosity and even confusion in the viewer. I want them to experience a sense of timelessness, unable to place the work in a specific era or context. Ultimately, my goal is to create a space where viewers can reflect on themselves and their trajectories and experiences, offering new visions for self knowledge, personal growth and societal change.



What significance does your recent participation in the Copenhagen Photo Festival and "Diversion" exhibition hold for you as an artist?

Participating in the Copenhagen Photo Festival and the Diversion exhibition has been very significant for me as an artist. These experiences offered a platform to engage with a diverse audience and showcase my work within an international and dynamic artistic context.

The Copenhagen Photo Festival, with its emphasis on exploring contemporary issues through photography, allowed me to connect my practice to a broader audience, that appreciates photography as an art medium. My art was interesting to show my drawings in a context only bringing artist photographers.

The Diversion exhibition was equally meaningful, as it provided a space to experiment and present my work alongside the USA with other talented artists. The exhibition's theme challenged me to think critically about my creative process and how my work contributes to or deviates from traditional artistic conversations.

Both experiences inspired new ideas and reinforced my commitment to creating art that invites thoughtful engagement.

Looking ahead, what are your aspirations for future projects, including your participation in the TransCultural Exchange conference?

Looking ahead, my aspirations are centered on creating projects that continue to bridge cultural narratives and offer meaningful dialogues across communities. I aim to expand my exploration of themes like identity, memory, and spiritual connection, integrating eventually new colors to give new approaches to my storytelling. My goal is still to develop projects that spark curiosity and resonate universally, inspiring self-knowledge, on a global scale.

My upcoming participation in the TransCultural Exchange conference is particularly exciting. It represents an incredible opportunity to connect with a great network of artists, curators, and cultural leaders and to present there my artist's residency in the US.

