



**ZÜRCHER HOCHSCHULE DER KÜNSTE
ZURICH UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS
Zentrum Weiterbildung
Center for continuing Education**

Master Thesis as part of the Master of Advanced Studies in Creative Practice

Living Creative Practice
A reflexion of the evolution as an artist

Submitted to the Center for Continuing Education of the ZHdK

From

Ximena Sedano
Matriculation number 01-142-025

On the

October 6, 2023

Mentor: Kathrin Beer

Thanks

My special Thanks goes to my Mentor, Kathrin Beer for her patience and constant advice and immense support, I deeply thank the wisdom she taught me during these years. To Anne Beer for her guidance and incredible support, I appreciate her presence in struggling times.

I thank deeply to my children Antonio and Geronimo Lobsiger for their patience and presence in my life.

Abstract

This thesis centers on the MAS in Creative Practice, with a specific focus on the inherent relationship between nature and the embodied experience of artistic endeavors. Through an introspective journey, starting with the concept of gardening in my CAS Arts and International Cooperation and progressing into painting, gilding, and self-study in the Master's Thesis, the research reveals the transformative power of artistic practice.

As I delve into the depths of the craft, it becomes evident that it's not merely about mastering techniques; it's an avenue to uncover universal truths and tap into the collective unconscious. This deep immersion aligns me harmoniously with the rhythms of creation, evident in both my art and personal life. My profound connection with nature amplifies the essence and potential of this lived artistic experience.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Chapter - 1

1. The beginning of the end

1.2. Finding inspiring encounters

1.3 Gold

1.4. A Nature's Dialogue between Creation and Destruction

Chapter 2

2. The Creative Practice

2.1. Art is an act of faith when we practice it.

2.2. Color

Conclusion

Reference List

Illustration Reference List

Introduction

Art serves as a poignant reflection of both society and the individual, carrying an inherent power to transform. Within the framework of a Master of Advanced Studies in Creative Practice, this research investigates the intricate relationship between my evolving identity as an artist, the multifaceted role of nature, and the profound lived experience of artistry. This journey, tied intrinsically to a sense of belonging and deeper connections, commenced with an exploration of gardening during my CAS in Arts and International Cooperation. This act, though outwardly simple but incredibly elaborated, symbolizes nurturing and growth. The initial inquiry evolved into a broader practical study, including painting, gilding, and a deep self-reflection concerning art and myself. Engaging in such practice transcends mere replication of techniques; it offers a gateway to profound, universal and personal truths. This exploration is not just a recounting of experiences but a quest to discern how intimacy with nature and a committed artistic practice can elevate the essence of creation in art, fortifying hope and reinforcing conviction in one's journey as an art practitioner.

Chapter 1

1. The beginning of the end

Navigating the end of a journey and reflecting upon the myriad of experiences in this creative practice is arguably the most challenging aspect. I often grapple with the feeling that there's always more to be done. Does an end truly exist?

This section is crafted with the purpose of articulating the thoughts and insights I've amassed over the years. My aim is to narrate the story behind these ideas, hoping that, by the end, it encapsulates the essence of my creative journey. Every word is a conduit to memories. I strive for coherence in this narrative, yet any incoherence or gap is likely due to both unconscious and conscious disengagements from the project—necessary to obtain a lucid perspective on what lies ahead.

I embark because I have the privilege of return. Knowing I can return fortifies my authenticity. I return with deep-rooted convictions, seeking to reestablish connections. I return with a heightened awareness, constantly evaluating what I should retain and what I should carry forward. This marks the commencement of my creative endeavor.

Eager to re-immense in my artistic realm, what I now proudly claim as my sanctuary, I step away from the comforting confines of reality and family—a reality that continually drifts from my grasp—to truly engage with the core of my existence: ART, the creative practice, is my very life. I've devoted these three years to discovering the artist within me.

Starting a garden on my balcony became a cherished ritual. The morning routine, encompassing both my own reflection and nature's offerings, served as continual inspiration. My mentor once remarked, "No artist tolerates reality." This prompted me to seek a sense of belonging, or at least a semblance of it. Crafting a singular reality was my initial strategy—a reality that would ground me in the present. Every attempt to depict it is imbued with passion. Yet, shaping this vision into daily life is a journey in itself.

"I will create. The first step is to forge this reality—a reality that instills within me a sense of belonging and anchors me firmly in the present moment."

At the onset, it's all about cultivating a habit. It's about being wholly present, wherever I am, whether I am drawn to my essence in nature or sculpting a new one from the nature I draw close to. It's about nurturing a routine that strengthens my connection to myself and the world I depict or bring to life through images.

For me, a day steeped in the world of art invariably begins with a creative immersion into nature photography. This practice becomes a visual journal, capturing my life's journey. I don't just click pictures; I become one with the image—the ambiance, the space, the very air I breathe, and the ambient sounds. Through this, I feel a profound connection to something vast and ineffable. This routine was my initial effort to tether myself to a sense of belonging, to find a sanctuary where words and images converge into something greater. This daily practice evolved into a project, a pictorial force. It's a medium that resonates with the tangible, stepping away from the overwhelmingly digital world—a realization of my artistic aspirations since the inception of my creative journey.

Gold—a luminous symbol of my heritage is gold. Since completing my visual arts studies, I've been enamored with gold. For many, it is the very embodiment of light and life, while for others, it signifies opulence and divinity. My artistic vision was to make gold the bedrock of my photography and artwork. I delved into its multifaceted influence on humanity.

Gold is found in nanotechnology, mined from the earth's depth, molded into the world's most stable monetary asset, gold is a paradox. It's simultaneously delicate, adorning us in jewelry that confers status, and divine, enhancing sacred objects across various religious and philosophical traditions. Furthermore, it lends an unparalleled warmth and radiance to any artwork, offering its unique brilliance, attributes, and symbolism in service to the artist. For me, gold transcends its material value. It represents grounding, presence, and the ethereal. Gold is not just a metal; it evokes the life-giving sun that shines universally.

My creative endeavors usher me into the embrace of Nature—a realm I resonate with deeply and become one with. This union provides a gateway to the divine, allowing me to witness beauty in its purest form everywhere. Perhaps this is the most cherished aspect of creation, and it's this allure that compels us to create, time and again. We create time and time again, and often, it's not solely about the object being brought into existence. It's about the emotional and mental state we inhabit and evolve into during the creative process.

Bougainvillea, a vibrant plant native to warm regions worldwide and a common sight in gardens and homes, is another material central to my art. This plant, which adorned my apartment garden, provided a tangible link to understand how my ancestral land, Colombia spread its essence globally through human history. Through this plant, I assigned significance to every individual that once lived in my dwelling. My appreciation grew for how gardens anchor us, nourish our souls, and invigorate our spirits as we shape them. This realization laid the foundation for my project for CAS arts and international cooperation, a component of this master's program.

A garden symbolizes home—a sanctuary of safety. My ambition was to offer this sanctuary to orphaned children. To provide them with a space where they could find their roots, and in turn, gain a clearer understanding of life's cyclical nature. Through nurturing plants, fruits, and vegetables, they'd witness growth and assume the role of caretakers. Concurrently, they'd become aware of the ecosystems they are fostering—an education I believe leaves a lasting impact as they navigate other life lessons. This vision was underpinned by the philosophy of Permaculture, ensuring the project's sustainability and feasibility.

Nature encapsulates the cyclical nature of existence—life after death, and vice versa. It embodies the mysterious unknowns that humans grapple with, only to later reveal the inherent beauty of life.

During this artistic journey, I faced myriad challenges. Each obstacle, however, merely became a gateway to new modes of expression. I revisited painting, not just as a medium but as a space of exploration. I dabbled with gold as a pigment rather than the gold leaf I had previously used for gilding. I was eager to experiment with how this hue manifested on paper, canvas, and wood. Utilizing acrylics, minerals, watercolors, and oils, I aimed to capture the luminosity that gold exuded and replicate the meditative state and presence I felt when working with gold leaf using the gilding technique.

1.2. Finding inspiring encounters

At this juncture, I immersed myself deeper into the annals of art history, seeking both inspiration and clarity. I was particularly drawn to "Regenbogen" (1916) by Giacometti (Illus.1.Ref. List). Renowned for his association with art movements like cubism and surrealism, Giacometti was also deeply invested in exploring themes related to the human condition and existentialism.

My interest in the painting by Giacometti, in particular, found in the Art Museum of Bern, was mainly because of the emotions he **evoked** through his impressionist and delicate surrealist image, which he created when he was still a teenager and it's also reflective of Giacometti's own exploration and quest to find his voice in the art world.. This reminded me of the way I laid the gold leaves when I was gilding my artwork and, in the search, I was during in the process at that time.

I then discovered Piero Manzoni and his "Achrome", 1962 artworks (illus.3.Ref.List) the concept comes from the term "achrome" translates to "without color." With his Achromes, Manzoni wanted to create artworks that were devoid of any color, narrative, or representational value. The idea was to remove any subjective gesture from the art-making process, reflecting a larger movement in the 1960s towards minimalist and conceptual practices that questioned the nature and purpose of art.. In my opinion, he has a very interesting approach to materials and color. He taps into mythological sources and universal values, which immediately caught my attention. When I viewed his work at Art Basel in 2019, I saw a delicate approach to matter and nature. Had I been aware of his intentions with the materials, I might have interpreted his works differently. At that moment, all I discerned was that nature was a predominant element in his artwork. He initially criticized production and cosmism after WWII, reflecting the societal changes in Italy during his time. Influenced by Ives Klein, whom I deeply admire, his monochromes from 1957 were a response to Ives Klein's series from the same period, using the "Achrome" series. These were crafted with casein and gesso, highlighting their whiteness, although he desired his paintings to be colorless. After experimenting with this technique, he returned to the original materials from the start of his art career. Manzoni's exploration of both materials and philosophy closely mirrors my own.

He sought a universality of values derived from natural resources—nature, the protagonist in my art.

In my work, I often sought the serenity and gentleness exuded by the Bougainville flowers. I was intrigued by their transformation, watching their colors fade and change as they aged under varying light conditions; the older they got, the more colorless they became.

During my artistic exploration, I discovered two Asian artists: Rakuko Naito and Chung Sang-Hwa. Both approach their work with a rigorous process. Chung Sang-Hwa, a Korean artist, was part of an art movement known as "monochromatic painting"(Ilius.5.Ref.List). His creative process is defined by its intensity. I believe he engages with the material in a deeply meditative manner, applying color repeatedly to create a textured surface that reflects his personal journey. His methods of folding, stripping, and repainting are all conducted as a personal ritual. Many times, I've felt as if my photography could serve as my diary. Several images I produce alongside this project capture my deepest thoughts and unconscious mind. Chung, sought a return to basics, to purity, and to a profound depth. His work resonates with Zen principles, emphasizing self-discipline, simplicity, and introspection. My process echoes this philosophy not only in the practice I went through but also in the cognitive development I experienced.

Rakuko Naito is another Asian artist I admire, a Japanese individual residing in New York. She works predominantly with handmade natural paper (Illus.4.Ref.List). Rakuko Naito's art represents a fusion of Eastern and Western sensibilities, a reflection of her personal journey and experiences. Her works invite viewers to pause and reflect, to engage deeply with the materials, and to find beauty in simplicity and subtlety.

I teach my students on crafting paper from recycled materials, adding natural colors to them. For me, it's been an enlightening experience, not only imparting this skill but also raising their awareness about the origins of paper and the potential for its reuse in various school projects. Given its strength when combined, paper can facilitate discussions on diverse topics in school, heightening consciousness in younger generations about its origins.

Returning to Rakuko's artistry, I find myself deeply drawn to her work. To her, paper is a medium, much like paint is to a painter. She revels in the innate beauty of shapes—both natural and geometric. Rakuko wants viewers to concentrate on these shapes over color, hence she often limits the color palette in her art. Her fondness for nature, geometry, and the

repeated patterns therein resonates with me, echoing the tranquility, softness, and subtlety found in nature.

Her minimalist work, combined with her unique processes, materials, and inspirations, resonates with me due to the parallels I see in our respective approaches. She doesn't start with a preconceived sketch; rather, she lets nature's image etch itself onto her memory, later recreating it. This reminds me of my journey in this project. While I didn't aim to replicate nature, I wanted to distill the essence of its colors by extracting them directly from the materials. It felt as if I was drawing out their very soul. After various attempts, I found solace in using watercolors, oil painting, and minerals. This approach best captured the hues of nature I sought to depict on my prepared wood canvases. The preparation of these canvases proved challenging. I mistakenly used excessive clay when attempting to replicate medieval techniques for canvas preparation. Ultimately, I turned to gesso, which provided an excellent base for gilding with pure gold. Though this modern method is definitely more straightforward, when it comes to applying color to manifest my envisioned natural world, natural elements harmonize more seamlessly. "A line formed naturally is not the same as a line drawn by hand. I try to experiment and manipulate materials to create my own world." "I always strive for beauty in simplicity, and achieving something intricate that appears simple is my greatest challenge. My primary focus is on art and visual stimulation." (Naito, 2023)

In these two statements, Naito captures the essence of my feelings about the creative process. However, unlike her focus on purely visual stimulation or art, I've discovered that the journey — the process — matters most to me. By experimenting, as she suggests, and immersing myself in a meditative state throughout the creative process, I've recognized the underlying reasons for my artistic drive. It's more than just expression; it's about navigating emotions, conveying ideas that resonate with the viewer, and experiencing a sense of connection to something greater. Engaging in art provides a feeling of unity, a profound joy that's almost ineffable.

My mother tongue, with which I've lost touch, is my first language. Throughout this creative journey, I grappled with the question of which language best served my expression. Am I still in touch with my native tongue? Is Spanish, the language of my mother, akin to the language of Mother Earth? Exploring my relationship with my mother became an essential facet of this journey. While I'd love to delve deeper into this phase, what's crucial to convey here is my

eventual decision to embrace English, a language that might be seen as a universal medium. It wasn't a choice born from a sentimental connection to nature or my mother but from a desire to communicate in a language familiar to many, one that I also grew up with.

1.3 Gold

A symbol of the sun, life, roots, and the essence of being grounded. My exploration of gold, spanning art history, general history, and science, revealed that gold's symbolism predates the awareness of disparate nations of each other and persists today. I believe that gold's presence in contemporary art isn't merely for show or transient adornment. Instead, contemporary art rooted in gold participates in a broader dialogue, transcending temporal boundaries, tapping into the belief that gold embodies what is sacred. Its presence throughout human history as a foundation and emblem of the divine speaks volumes. From Ancient Egypt to Byzantium, from Buddhist China to Vedic India, gold has symbolized the Eternal. It possesses a universal symbolism that simultaneously connects to the otherworldly and divine, as well as to power and material wealth. This significance was understood across cultures and languages.

By attributing a divine meaning to gold, sacred objects were eternalized. In Egypt, for example, gold was perceived as the flesh of the gods. More than its material value, its color was highly revered. Its brilliance and light have continuously inspired civilizations, artists, and artisans.

The Incas believed gold represented the tears of the sun. Similarly, Colombian tribes saw gold as a representation of deities, an earthly embodiment of the Sun God. Gold also marked depictions of kings and queens, symbolizing opulence and power; it signified spiritual splendor. This implied that material wealth and power could pave the way to spiritual transcendence.

In my work, I aim for the immersive quality of gold to give my art objects a glow. When illuminated by sunlight or a bulb, the entire piece is submerged in a unique aura of splendor, radiating a warm and holy essence. This is the sensation I experience when working with it.

It's often said that "Gold transports the viewer to an otherworldly space," making depictions of heavenly realms appear to glow from within (Consultancy, 2022). I aspire to evoke this sensation in viewers through my artwork. Working with this metal, I feel as though I'm igniting

a candle within me, grounding myself, while also immersing in a spiritual creative experience. This sensation arises only when working with the genuine metal; merely using its color or similar mineral properties doesn't evoke the same response.

German artist Janine Lambers explores gold by integrating it into environments (Illus.2.Ref.List). She aims to create an immersive, transcendental, and otherworldly experience. A similar intent existed in the paintings and mosaics found in churches and mosques, where spiritual experiences were amplified by gold's inherent glow. The Hagia Sofia in Istanbul stands as a testament to this.

The power attributed to this magnificent material transcends its physical form. When artists use or mold it, it's as if its brilliance and unique luminosity penetrate their souls. The artist, seemingly possessed by this force, recreates what the material wishes to express.

Light changes throughout the day and year. In my art, light plays a pivotal role, not just in the presence of gold but also in the natural elements incorporated, represented particularly by the Bougainville flowers. As light illuminates the artwork differently and constantly, the flowers are in a state of continual transformation. The slow, progressive changes found in nature are mirrored in my artwork through the metamorphosis of the flowers affected by light. In one way, I feel it's subtly alive due to this continual transformation, and simultaneously, I view it as a representation of a dying transcendence that rests beneath the golden light of the gold, thus becoming more intertwined with the natural cycle of life.

My artwork depicts natural imagery; it's crafted from all-natural materials and, to a certain extent, non-natural materials. I don't aim to create holy images, but rather to portray nature in a sacred manner that can inspire a sense of reverence. The delicate qualities of the flowers combined with the gold leaves invite us to ponder the immense powers of nature, both its fragility and its unparalleled beauty.

Gold holds significant relevance in the decorative arts, as well as in many sacred manuscripts. Due to the reflection of light it facilitates, gold can also introduce movement. In Japan, gold represents the bright rays of light that illuminate our world in many artworks. What resonates with my artwork is the way gold inspires reverence towards nature, encouraging contemplation of the beauty of the natural world.

Lastly, I must mention the contemporary and modern art which critiques the extremes of wealth and dire poverty, especially considering the exploitation involved in obtaining this

exquisite metal. There are artists who use it to symbolize intimacy, lust, or love, as Gustav Klimt did in his evocative pieces.

Throughout this journey, I've discovered that gold has symbolized a myriad of concepts throughout history: immortality, light, the essence of gods, love and intimacy, wealth and power. All these symbols represent entities believed to be mightier than humankind. I explore this multi-faceted symbolism of gold concealed within the nature of my garden artworks, in the employment of gold on the different surfaces I worked on and in the intense introspection and reflexion throughout the project.

1.4. A Nature's Dialogue between Creation and Destruction

As I read the above, I can only come to see what an intense relationship is created in my artwork between Nature and Gold.

Nature provides a profound canvas that mirrors the intricate tapestry of human experience. Flowers, with their transient lifespans and fragile beauty, encapsulate the duality of creation and destruction, embodying a poetic representation of life's most intrinsic contrasts.

From the first budding moment of a flower's existence to its inevitable wilt, there's an intrinsic parallel to the human journey. The birth, life, and eventual decline of these natural wonders mirror our own stages of growth, maturation, and eventual decline. Just as humans grapple with the joys and sorrows, hopes and despairs, flowers too, in their short existence, experience the full spectrum of life, from the nurturing rains to the scorching sun.

Yet, amidst this delicate balance of life and death, flowers have been celebrated across cultures and epochs for their symbolic weight. They are revered not just for their beauty, but for the deeper meanings they carry. In many cultures, blossoms represent purity, love, and beauty, while their inevitable decay is seen as a poignant reminder of mortality and the fleeting nature of existence.

Gold, with its enduring shine and opulence, stands in stark contrast to the ephemeral nature of flowers. It's a material that has historically represented permanence, wealth, and the divine. When juxtaposed against the transient beauty of flowers, gold accentuates the tension between the temporal and the eternal. It highlights the dichotomy between the spiritual realm – timeless and unchanging – and the material world with its inherent impermanence.

This interplay between the ethereal beauty of flowers and the everlasting luster of gold captures the essence of human existence. On one hand, there's the spiritual quest for meaning, for something greater than oneself, represented by the eternal glow of gold. On the other, there's the undeniable reality of our material existence, marked by growth, change, and eventual decay, much like a flower.

In this tension, in this dialogue between the creative and the destructive, lies a profound sense of richness and complexity. It's a reminder of the delicate balance that defines life – a dance between light and shadow, joy and sorrow, life and death. And in this delicate balance, flowers, with their fleeting beauty, become powerful symbols, urging us to cherish every moment, to find beauty in transience, and to seek deeper meanings in the contrasts that define our existence.

Chapter 2

2. The Creative Practice

In delineating the interplay between my reality and my art, it's evident that practice forms the bridge, and meaning acts as the tie connecting these two realms. My perception of reality, channeled through my artistic endeavors, becomes my internal language—a lifeline that fuels my spirit. Though art provides an escape from life's trials, it also offers a foundation, grounding me in reality. As my art comes into being, it evolves within the beholder's gaze, yet remains tethered to me, a distinct manifestation of my very essence.

In revisiting the genesis of this project, my initial foray into the world of creativity was through the garden I cultivated on my balcony. It rekindled my relationship with painting as I pursued my CAS in arts and international cooperation. During this phase, I delved deep into the allure of gold, studying its shimmer and the traces left by brushes first on paper depending on the amount or the depth of the gold hue. The color indigo also piqued my curiosity; I procured the stone and ground it to create a pigment using water and gummi Arabica. This amalgamation of gold and indigo steered me towards other mineral colors (Illus.1 Part 2 Ref. List).

Nearly a year passed before I fully embraced the act of creation. The stark emptiness of a canvas, paper, or wooden surface can be daunting. Interestingly, I hadn't imagined myself returning to medieval gilding techniques or even drawing and painting. My intention was to delve into photography and culminate in a video. Photography had seamlessly woven itself into my daily artistic endeavors. The familiar images and the process of constructing new narratives with them nourished my creative soul. There's an unconscious process that awakens during their creation.

However, painting had remained dormant in my life ever since my first pregnancy. Reconnecting with colors, observing images, and reconciling with both my conscious and unconscious perceptions had been missing for years. I felt an urge to revive that connection. An old canvas beckoned, and I began layering it with gold acrylic paint, not conforming to any specific shape. I was mesmerized by the making of these paintings (Illus 2. Ref. List part 2)

This phase, dominated by the exploration of gold, spanned a semester. Eventually, I dared to introduce green on a rectangular canvas (Illus 3. Ref. List Part 2). This shift led me to innovate with a method of painting on wood, reminiscent of the technique I'd learned for gilding, employing all-natural materials that echoed the Middle Ages. Crafting the grounding mixture required a keen sense of "feeling". With precision, I prepared ten wooden panels, each 20cm x 20cm, using a chalk mixture and rabbit skin glue (Illus 4. Ref. list. Part 2).

Another six months were dedicated to experimenting with a different color on each panel. I chose watercolors, feeling they resonated with the essence of my vision, but I mainly used red-pink, green, blue and gold (illus.5. Ref. List. Part 2). At this juncture, the bougainvillea flowers, symbolizing the warmth of my homeland and representing each member of my family, became central to the project.

The colors, forming the project's backbone, laid the foundation. I yearned to incorporate the plants that held such deep meaning for me. By integrating them, without altering their color, I could visualize fields of golden pink flower trees undergoing transformation under shimmering golden light.

A prototype materialized, but the fusion of gold color with the glued flowers was not in harmony. While aesthetically pleasing, it felt inauthentic to my vision but mainly to the practice of creation, it felt a big effort to make it and was not a pleasant act of creation. I reverted to painting, letting the flowers evolve into abstract color droplets that could thrive on golden fields (Illus. 6. Ref. List. Part 2).

Art for me isn't pre-planned; it's a spontaneous endeavor. I trust the image in my mind and the voice guiding me. I embrace mistakes, considering them a gateway to something unique. I take breaks, stepping back to reflect, and often find that these moments provide clarity.

Returning to the larger wooden panel, after the terracotta clay grounding, I envisioned gold leaf application. However, oil paint's application presented unexpected challenges. Its pronounced brush strokes and overpowering light reflection were unlike what I had envisaged. This led to a shift in strategy, utilizing the oil paint as a border to house the gold leaf.

The semi-dry oil paint then served as an adhesive for the gold leaf, setting the stage for fields of pink and bougainvillea tree silhouettes. The process was immersive; even as I painted or penned down these reflections, I'd find myself defocusing, downloading creative insights. This project, with its myriad hues and forms, evolved as a living testament to my artistic journey.

In this phase of my artistic journey, the panel represents an amalgamation of my early garden creation in my balcony and the project I developed for orphaned children during the CAS. The core proposal of this project was to offer these children not only a physical home but also the nurturing environment of a garden, allowing them to comprehend this nurturing as a representation of a growing home, both within and outside themselves.

Embarking on this MAS, my primary goal was to discover and solidify my identity as an artist. Meanwhile, I yearned to provide this artistic entity, which is a part of my whole self, a home, a foundation. Through the act of painting, gilding, and connecting with nature, I've come to realize that the process of creation affords me a sense of peace and a palpable sense of home. Every interaction with my paintings and the broader spectrum of creative practice presented its own set of challenges. Experimenting with varied pigments, gauging the distinctive quality of different gold leaves — all of it was a journey towards discovering that symbolic 'home', those intrinsic roots.

The last wooden panel, which epitomizes my entire journey, highlighted the significant role of quality materials. High-quality gold leaf and pigments are more than mere mediums for my art; they serve as conduits to my emotions and memories of home.

While awaiting the drying of the gilded panel, my brush once again found its rhythm with my earlier works. This process allowed me to revisit my first forays into gold and reimagine the bougainvillea garden. With deliberate strokes and layers, I sculpted drips of pink, navigating the undulating paths of watercolor, continuously evolving the shape and hue of each droplet until they resonated with my envisioned garden (Illus. 7 Ref. List. Part 2)

2.1 Art is an act of faith when we practice it.

Art has always been a reflection of humanity's innermost thoughts, emotions, and desires. Throughout history, it has chronicled our experiences, both as individuals and as societies. But beyond this external reflection, art represents an intrinsic belief system – a faith in the unseen, the unexpressed. When we create, we're not merely putting colors on a canvas or sculpting clay; we're expressing a belief in something greater.

To start with a blank canvas or any raw material is to face the unknown. Every stroke or chisel mark is a step into uncharted territory. In my journey, in my creative practice I had to have faith that there's an image or a form waiting to be revealed. It's akin to the faith of a seed growing into a tree, inherent yet unseen.

Putting one's art out into the world is an act of vulnerability. It's trusting that viewers will connect with it, interpret it, and find value in it. This trust is a kind of faith - a belief that our expressions will find resonance beyond our own individual experience. It's one of the biggest acts of faith and the fear of rejection which we confront every time. But we need to have faith. Faith in the Creative Process.

Not every artwork turns out as envisioned. Mistakes are made, and sometimes, the final piece is vastly different from the initial idea or the expectations made at the beginning of the project. Yet, I continued to create, having faith in the process of creation itself. It's the belief that even if one piece doesn't achieve its intended vision, it's a step towards something greater.

Many artists describe their creative process as a meditative or spiritual experience. I believe it is true, I experience it every time I give myself into the creative process. It becomes a dialogue with the self, an exploration of one's inner cosmos. In this introspective journey, faith becomes the guiding light, leading me to deeper truths and revelations that appear sometimes only for oneself to be understood and lived I guess, because I experience them as inexplicable moments of bliss.

Throughout history, artists have created in times of societal upheavals, personal tragedies, and immense challenges. I live that creative practice in the most challenging moments and is only then when I have been able to free myself from that unseen, untold and put it on an image that talks best. The act of creating becomes a testament to moments of resilience and hope. It's a declaration of faith that despite the darkness, there's a spark of beauty, hope, and light. The excellence of the creative practice consists in the ability to transcend the self and believe in the unknown trusting the process.

In the process of creation, I experienced that my proper psychological point of reference during the work is in fact the way that it affects me most and the artwork itself, both in the making of the artwork and in the experience of it once it is made. Its power comes precisely from bringing me something new that comes to me as a surprise but impacts me profoundly

because I could go through the darkness of faith and come out with more light as an artist as an art practitioner and in the best case as a human, but that I will only know when I look back in time and see what I created during these years. Now I just live this process of creation.

Art has long been perceived as a mere reflection of an artist's inner world, a canvas of their thoughts, dreams, and fears. However, it is more profound than just personal expression; it's a testament to faith – a faith deeply rooted in oneself, in the potential of humanity, and in the transformative power of creation.

Art as an Act of Faith in Oneself. Before one can paint a stroke or sculpt a form or create any kind of image or even environment, there's an inherent belief in one's own capabilities. This self-belief is the foundation upon which creativity thrives. I could live during this time that art is not merely an activity; it's a journey of self-discovery and affirmation. I embarked on this pilgrimage of introspection and self-expression since I was 18 but looking back in my childhood it started with courses of oil painting when I was 4 years old. At the core of this journey lies an unshakable faith in one's own abilities and potential, that is constantly questioned. I believe that every artist, at some point, faces the debilitating question: "Am I good enough?" While criticism can be constructive, it can also sow seeds of doubt. How do I navigate the complex world of feedback, both positive and negative? This was in my mind constantly. I had periods of deep doubt about my ability to put the images I have in my mind on the canvas or paper and even now looking back at the process the fear appears again, the fact that I was creating for the sake of joy was even for me not enough reason to do it and sometimes a big steppingstone in this journey. The initial act of creating, despite apprehensions, is a testament to the faith an artist has in themselves and with it comes the impulse needed to continue, no matter what obstacles appear on the way. I faced these feelings of frustration, fear and doubt constantly, mainly because the feeling of rejection more than the constant exposure to other artists' work which can impact an individual's faith in their own artistry. I had to have periods of distance towards my practice. Mainly in the beginning, because is there where the unknown is more palpable and faith in our capabilities is the only thing left to be able to continue the process. In the repeated act of creation, experimentation, and learning I could reinforce the belief in myself, in my art.

I believe and I experienced during my practice, better said paralleled to it, that the making of Art wasn't just a reflection of me as an artist, but also a tool for healing. In the creation of it I

could process emotions, traumas, and experiences, reiterating that way my faith in the transformative power of creation.

While personal experiences play a vital role in shaping art, true artistic expression transcends the self. It taps into universal emotions, narratives, and experiences, making it resonate with a wider audience. In my experience, in this creative practice, I stayed mainly in the personal exploration and discovery. It touched the universal narrative or resonated with it as I started to integrate the flowers of the bougainvillea with the intention of letting them continue their natural process of transformation on the wooden canvas. But I believe this idea opens the door to explore that natural transformation in deep in future artworks I make.

Every artwork is a culmination of numerous processes, both internal and external. It's a dance of thoughts, emotions, techniques, and mediums, all harmoniously coming together to depict a vision or message. That act of creating art is transformative. It was transformative to me, I took a leap of faith every time I was creating not only to change a canvas into a piece of art but also to transform me as an artist and hopefully, the observer.

2.2 Color

Color, as inspired by nature, profoundly influences our perception and interpretation of the world. This universal language, rooted in the innate responses of our ancestors and evolving into today's refined interpretations, seamlessly bridges cultural, temporal, and artistic divides. Each artist, whether consciously or subconsciously, taps into this language during the creative process.

My own engagement with this chromatic dialogue unveiled a realm filled with intrigue and depth. My initial incursion into this world began during my CAS studies, where my exploration was predominantly focused on the color gold applied to paper. It's worth noting that this initial experiment is depicted on the introductory page of this thesis.

Throughout my creative journey, color had a dominance in my practice. My connection with it transcended mere emotional associations traditionally attributed to hues. Rather than attempting to paint a figure that encapsulated the essence of hues like bougainvillea or gold, I sought to merge these representations. The very act of applying color brought me closer to

my personal sense of home. I found solace and unity in becoming one with the color as it flowed onto my chosen medium, be it wooden canvas or paper.

As time progressed, my connection with colors evolved beyond their mere visual appeal. The golden embrace of warm sunlight and divinity, the melancholic depth of indigo in a wild sea, and the mysticism of a sunset transformed into emotions — deeply felt and vividly expressed through hues. When I first engaged with color, I wasn't attempting to recreate a specific image. Reflecting on my journey during the act of painting, I believe my intent was to forge a closer bond with nature creating a sense of belonging to a place or home.

While certain colors carry universal interpretations, such as red symbolizing passion, yellow radiating joy, and violet whispering mysteries, my personal experience resonated deeper. Through my artistic process, nature's chromatic language manifested as both a mirror and a window, becoming a reflection of my inner self, illustrating how painting transformed into a sanctuary, a semblance of home, while also hinting at the potential of discovering or creating a future place like home.

The specific shades I gravitated towards — red, gold, blue, and green — began to bridge individual and collective sentiments. Just as verdant greens universally evoke life and profound blues signify depth and introspection, my paintbrush was potentially becoming an instrument of shared human experience.

Through the language of color has remained a testament to part of my relationship with nature. From a profound abstraction, my art has mirrored the way I perceive, interpret, and I am inspired by the natural world's chromatic world.

As much as the statement "all great art is the imitation of nature" underscores the idea that nature, in all its complexity and wonder, stands as a primary muse for artists, my personal journey revealed a nuanced perspective. My artistic connection with nature wasn't about direct imitation. Instead, it was deeply influenced by the bond I cultivated with nature's essence. I drew inspiration from its spirit, guiding me towards an abstraction of it. This essence, I found, was most palpably represented in the colors I selected from nature's vast palette.

Inherently, we humans share a profound bond with nature. Our evolution, myths, narratives, and very existence are intricately woven with the tapestry of the natural world. In my journey as an art practitioner during this project, I sought inspiration from nature, not merely to depict

its landscapes or hues. Over these three years, as I delved deeper, I discovered narratives that resonated with my core. My quest revealed fundamental truths about my existence, leading me on diverse paths in the creative practice. Ultimately, this exploration allowed me to perceive an alternative method of emulating nature, one deeply intertwined with my personal history and a connection to its color and color itself.

The notion that "color is a language of Mother Nature" resonates deeply with my exploration of nature in this project and my quest for a sense of belonging within it. While color is just one of nature's many languages, its spectrum—from the muted grays of tempestuous seas to the vibrant hues of spring wildflowers—has profoundly influenced my journey as an art practitioner. My engagement with color, accentuated by the gilding of gold—a natural element in its own right, became the foundation for subsequent artistic inquiries.

My journey began with the garden I cultivated on my balcony. This personal place evolved into fields of color on canvas and tiny forests of floral designs laid on gold leaf. These creations, vibrant and alive, will endure until their hues shift, perhaps with the red fading to a delicate transparent white. Whether as free-standing blossoms or integrated into my artwork, their chromatic life continues (Illus. 7,8. Ref. List. Part 2).

Conclusion

Art, in its multifaceted expressions, is not just a mirror to our inner selves but also a beacon that illuminates hope, faith, and transformative potential. Being deeply immersed in both art and nature with this project and in life, my engagements want to extend beyond the individual stories they tell. Instead, they invite me into vast realms of possibility, fostering deeper comprehension and catalyzing change. I could experience art's transcendent capability to resonate beyond individual narratives and connect with the collective tapestry of human experiences at many stages of this creative practice.

Throughout the 3 years of studies, I've recounted my intimate journey with Nature, a path that led me through diverse artistic techniques and deep introspection, all in a quest for both identity and sanctuary within the creative process. This creation is not confined solely to the art I produce but extends to nature's own masterpieces. My exploration has revealed that this isn't the culmination of my search. Rather, it has thrown open myriad doors, beckoning me towards further artistic ventures. These experiences continue to shape, define, and strengthen my foundations, both as an artist and as a sentient being bound to this Earth.

As I reflect upon this journey, I recognize that this thesis doesn't signify an endpoint but rather a gateway. The experiences and insights I gained have sparked a desire to delve deeper into previously little known territories. I am now inspired to venture into new mediums, including the intriguing interplay of photography and gold in my artworks, blending the precision of captured moments with the ethereal beauty of gilded or gold painted surfaces.

But beyond the canvas and the studio, I'm also drawn to the vastness and majesty of the outdoors. I envision creating gardens, not just as aesthetic spaces but as transformative ecosystems - a symbiosis of art and environment for orphan children. This not only represents a new frontier in my artistic journey but also embodies a deeper yearning: to contribute to environmental metamorphosis and to craft spaces that resonate with the collective consciousness. In essence, this journey has been a catalyst, propelling me toward further exploration and anchoring my identity, not just as an artist but as a human, continually seeking harmonious coexistence with nature on earth.

Reference list

- Artelier (2022). Artelier Interview: Janine Lambers on the Ancient Craft of Gilding & her Artistic Journey. [online] Artelier. Available at: <https://www.artelier.com/post/janine-lambers-on-the-ancient-craft-of-gilding-her-artistic-journey> [Accessed 25 Sep. 2023].

- Artsy (n.d.). Rakuko Naito | RN11801/2-3-1/2'18 Soft Rolls (2018) | Available for Sale | Artsy. [online] www.artsy.net. Available at: <https://www.artsy.net/artwork/rakuko-naito-rn11801-slash-2-3-1-slash-2-18-soft-rolls> [Accessed 25 Sep. 2023].

- Bern 7, M. of F.A.B., Hodlerstrasse 8-12, CH-3000 (2014). Color and I, Augusto Giacometti. [online] Museum of Fine Arts Bern. Available at: <https://www.kunstmuseumbern.ch> [Accessed 25 Sep. 2023]. Exhibition.

- Doerner, M. (2010). Malmaterial Und Seine Verwendung Im Bilde. KG, Freiburg: 2009Christophorus Verlag GmbH & Co., p.pg 167, 280-284,287-296.

- Ernst Hans Gombrich (1994). Historia Del Arte. Barcelona Ediciones Garriga, p.pg, 15-38, 133-142,207-223,341-360.

- Gallery, L.G. (n.d.). Chung Sang-Hwa - Lévy Gorvy. [online] www.levygorvy.com. Available at: <https://www.levygorvy.com/artist/chung-sang-hwa/>.

- Gallery, S.W. (n.d.). Rakuko Naito. [online] Shoshana Wayne Gallery. Available at: <http://shoshanawayne.com/rakuko-naito> [Accessed 25 Sep. 2023].

- Hyundai, G. (n.d.). Chung Sang-Hwa - GALLERY HYUNDAI. [online] www.galleryhyundai.com. Available at: <https://www.galleryhyundai.com/artist/view/20000000112> [Accessed 25 Sep. 2023].

- Klinger, J. and Thomas, R. (1989). DIE KUNST ZU VERGOLDEN. Callway, p.pg 32-35, 45-47.

-Kolkena, L. (2018). Achrome (1960) by Piero Manzoni, An Unpainted Monochrome canvas: Research and Treatment. [online] Laura Kolkena Files. Available at: <https://laurakolkena.files.wordpress.com> [Accessed 25 Sep. 2023].

-Tentler, G. (2016). Best Most Sensational Balloons: Piero Manzoni's *Corpo d'aria/Fiato d'artista*. *California Italian Studies*, 6(2). doi: <https://doi.org/10.5070/c362027522>.

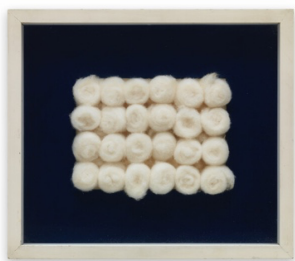
Illustration Reference List Part 1



1. Giacometti, A. (1916). *Regenbogen*. [Oil on Canvas] Available at: <https://artinwords.de/augusto-giacometti/> [Accessed 27 Oct. 2023]. Geschenk dreier Kunstfreunde © Erbgemeinschaft Nachlass Augusto Giacometti.



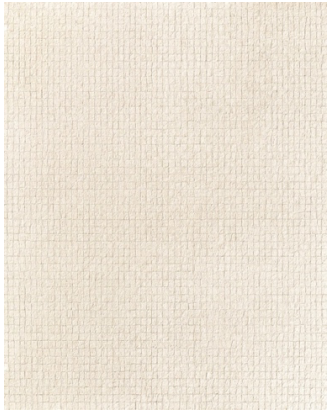
2. Lambers, J. (n.d.). *AW-JL/SMPL-01*. [Gold Leaf on Canvas] Available at: https://www.artelier.com/_files/ugd/0ced3f_654b6d647f464a7686a3b9428568d37b.pdf [Accessed 27 Oct. 2023]. Published Date is unknown.



3. Manzoni, P. (1961). *Achrome*. [Cotton Balls, 15 x 20 / 5 7/8 x 7 7/8] Available at: <https://www.hauserwirth.com/artists/2862-piero-manzoni/> [Accessed 27 Oct. 2023].



4. Naito, R. (2018). *Untitled (soft Tall Rings)*. [Japanese Paper, 30 x 30 x 3 1/2 Cm] Available at: <http://shoshanawayne.com/new-gallery-2/5h17e2kl6gsk1426316zqymsp0824b> [Accessed 27 Oct. 2023].



5. Sang-Hwa, C. (1984). *Untitled, 84-3-1*. [Oil on Canvas, 39 x 31 7/10/99x80.5 CM] Available at: <https://www.galleryhyundai.com/artist/view/20000000112> [Accessed 27 Oct. 2023].

Illustration Reference list part 2



1. Sedano, X. (2020). *Untitled* . [Acryl and Indigo Mineral on A4 Drawing Paper,].



2. Sedano, X. (2022). *Untitled*. [Acryl on Canvas, 100 X 65 Cm].



3. Sedano, X. (2022b). *Untitled* . [Acryl on Canvas, 50 X 20 Cm, 20 X 20 Cm].



4. Sedano, X. (2023). *Untitled*. [Chalk, rabbit-skin glue, Wood Canvas 20X20 Cm].



5. Sedano, X. (2022b). *Untitled* . [Acryl on Canvas, 50 X 20 Cm, 20 X 20 Cm].



6. Sedano, X. (2023c). *Untitled*. [Buganville Flowers Drawing on A4 Paper, Gold Mineral Color onWood Canvas, 20X20 Cm].



7. Sedano, X. (2023d). *Untitled*. [Gold leaf, Oil on Wood Canvas 50 X 70 Cm].



7. 8. Sedano, X. (2023f). *Untitled*. [Acryl, Oil and Watercolours on Canvas, 30 X 40 and 50 X 50 Cm].

Zürcher Hochschule der Künste
Zurich university of the Arts

Project Documentation

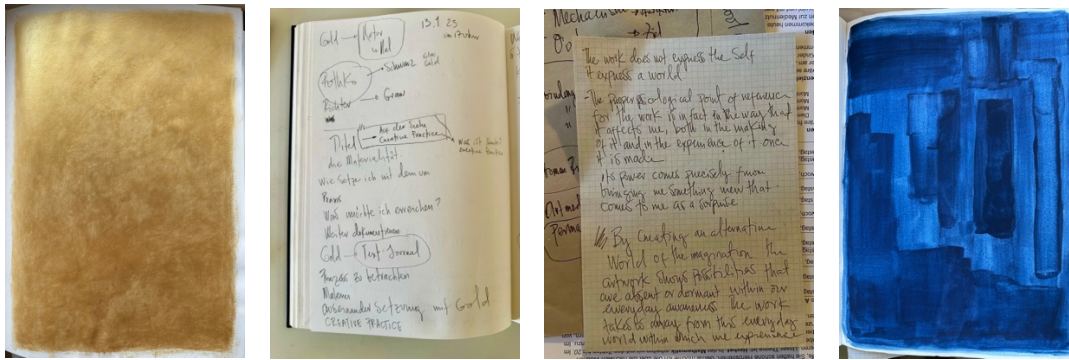
A short illustrative testimonial to the
MAS Living in practice.



From
Ximena Sedano
Mentor: Kathrin Beer

In this project documentation, I aim to highlight key phases of my creative journey throughout the MAS. My documentation method largely revolves around photographs, videos, and a diary combined with various loose papers. I often find myself wishing for a way to capture every fleeting thought and sudden inspiration, as if I had a camera embedded within my mind to chronicle every nuance of this transformative journey – including the moments I took to pause and reflect. I believe these rest periods offer crucial insights into my evolving identity within this immersive practice.

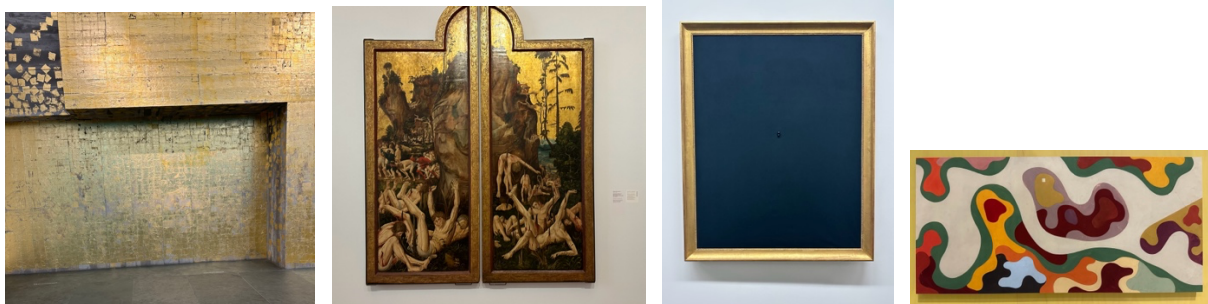
Each illustration in this documentation is accompanied by an explanatory note, shedding light on the specific stage of my process at that time. My intention is to provide a more comprehensive view of this journey during the thesis presentation, where attendees will have the chance to view some of the artworks I've produced and pose questions that might emerge from these theoretical reflections and the artworks itself.



These four images showcase the initial stages of my journey. They capture the phase of research, the compilation of ideas, and the documentation of insights in a diary. Furthermore, they highlight my preliminary experimentation with gold and natural colors, which formed the crux of my initial intentions.



My journey into painting evolved gradually. Initially, I predominantly worked with gold acrylic, remaining captivated by its hue before eventually venturing into the realm of green, as depicted in the Illustrations Part 2 of this thesis. The uncertainty of the outcome held me back, and this trepidation also made me hesitant to experiment with other colors at that juncture.



During numerous visits to various museums, I garnered inspiration and clarity about the direction of my project. It became evident, as I reflected on these experiences, that color played a pivotal role in my journey. (Illus 1,2 3,4. Ref. List)



After thoughtful introspection and guidance from my mentor, I began revisiting the gilding techniques I had learned earlier. I experimented with chalk, rabbit's glue, and synthetic ground coatings to discern the variations each surface introduced. Additionally, I explored gilding on bare wood canvases, absent the grounding coat, which offered new insights into the diverse effects achievable when combining gold with different techniques.



Throughout this journey, I encountered numerous challenges and faced frustrating outcomes. These obstacles required me to adapt and reconsider my approach, especially when working with the wooden canvases at hand. Despite the setbacks, I persisted, experimenting with different techniques of painting with minerals, acrylic and gilding.



In this phase, I limited my exploration to four colors: green, indigo, blue minerals, and watercolors. Drawing inspiration directly from nature, I became particularly captivated by the flowers of my

Bougainvillea plants. This fascination led to the idea of extracting the hues of the flowers themselves. Although I attempted to emulate these colors with watercolors, it spurred me on to further my painting endeavors.



My efforts evolved through numerous attempts to pinpoint the precise imagery, the apt expression or the form that I envisioned. I sought to encapsulate, wordlessly, the journey and experiences of these past three years.



In my pursuit of capturing the essence of a flower on canvas, I conceived a specific vision for my artwork. With clarity in intent, I affixed dried flowers onto the wooden canvas, subsequently opting for a minimalist gilding approach on a separate canvas itself . This experience equipped and inspired me to undertake similar meticulous work on a larger scale.



The initial image captures the preliminary stages of my major artwork featuring flowers. Simultaneously, I felt compelled to revisit painting, allowing myself to work on multiple pieces at different intervals but also in tandem. Collectively, these creations represent the culmination of this project.



In these images, you see the artworks as they approach their final stages. The absolute culmination of this process will be unveiled during the forthcoming project presentation in a few weeks. This preview offers but a snapshot of the many intricate phases this project traversed. Documenting this entire journey stands as a significant milestone in itself, rivaling in complexity the creation of the artworks. Indeed, this written reflection is an artwork in its own

Reference Illustration List

1. Federal, helmut (2006). *Ohne Titel*. [Betonrelief].
2. Manuel, N. (n.d.). *Die Zehntausend Märtyrer Am Berg Ararat*. [Mischtechnik Auf Fichtenholz (1484-1530)].
3. Lee Byars, J. (1987). *Documenta 8*. [Knöpfe Auf Schwarzem Filz in Goldrahmen].
4. Burle Marx, R. (1938). *Vom Gemälde Zum Garten*. [Gouache].

Selbstständigkeitserklärung

Titel der Arbeit:

Living Creative Practce

Titel des Moduls/Zertifikatsabschlusses, in dessen Rahmen die Arbeit verfasst wurde:

MAS-Thesis MAS in Creative Practice

Name der Betreuerin / des Betreuers:

Kathrin Beer

Hiermit erkläre ich ausdrücklich, dass es sich bei der vorliegenden schriftlichen Arbeit um eine von mir selbstständig und ohne Mithilfe anderer Personen sowie in eigenen Worten verfasste Originalarbeit handelt. Ich bestätige zudem, dass ich keine anderen als die angegebenen Hilfsmittel verwendet, sowie alle wörtlich oder dem Sinn nach aus der Literatur zitierten Stellen entsprechend klar und korrekt gekennzeichnet habe.

Ich bestätige mit meiner Unterschrift die Richtigkeit dieser Angaben.

Vorname: Ximena

Nachname: Sedano

Matrikelnummer: 01-142-025

Datum: October 6, 2023

Unterschrift:

