

2026 NYFA IAP Mentorship Program: Mentee Bios

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Avani R Patel

Born in Mumbai, India in 1976, Avani Patel immigrated with her family to Pennsylvania at the age of eleven. She holds a BA from Pennsylvania State University and an MFA from the Tyler School of Art at Temple University.

Patel's paintings have been exhibited widely across the United States and internationally, including New York, Providence, Philadelphia, New Jersey, Ohio, Virginia, Chicago, Dubai, Panama, Portugal, and Mexico. In 2008 and 2009, Patel contributed to America's Chinatown Voices, a major public art project organized by the Asian American Arts Centre, where 300 painted panels illustrating Asian American stories were installed at Columbus Park in New York City's Chinatown. In 2011, she collaborated on a public art project in Lillestrøm, Norway, and from 2002 to 2008 two of her paintings were exhibited at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Her practice further developed through a residency at Triangle Arts Association in 2006.



Patel's work has received national and international recognition, with features in Artnet, Hyperallergic, The Woven Tale Press, and various other magazines and art publications. Her paintings are held in private and corporate collections in Kuwait, Dubai, and the United States, including Evercore's corporate art collection, which recently acquired her work.

In 2025, Patel was selected one of only three artists from a large applicant pool for the ArtBridge and CAMBA Affordable Housing public art project in Brooklyn, announced through a CAMBA press release. She continues to expand her public art presence, including a mural installation completed in Brooklyn in 2024.

Patel's work reflects her deep engagement with cultural memory, nature, movement, pattern, and the layered textures of personal and collective histories. She currently lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

Céline Mai Seehase

Celine Mai Seehase is a French artist based in Queens, NY. Her work explores hybrid cultural identity, memory, and color by blending figurative and abstract elements in her paintings. She received her Master of Arts from La Sorbonne University, Paris and an MBA from the Institut Francais de la Mode, Paris before moving to New York and studying at the Art Students League.

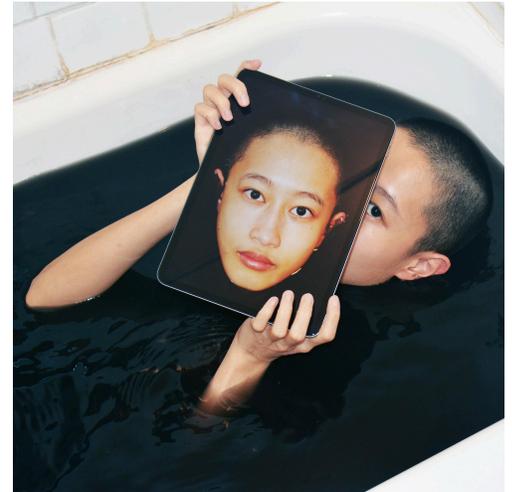


Her work has been featured in various group exhibitions in New York and Miami, and in the Wall Street Journal, comics and surfing magazines.

[Entung Liu](#)

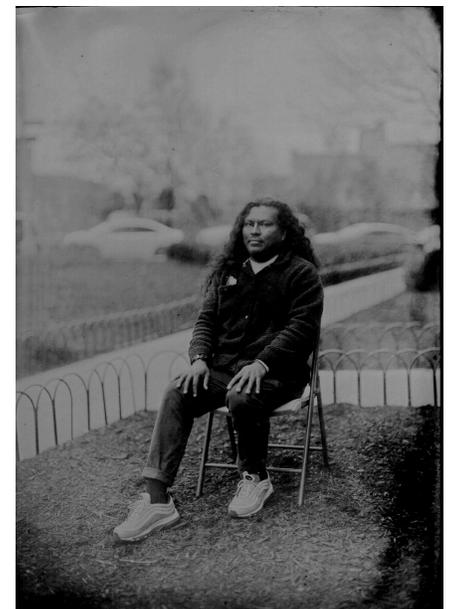
LIU Entung was born in 1995 in Taipei, Taiwan. As an interdisciplinary artist, Entung's works explore the intersection of visual art, performance, and technology through various methods, including performance, photography, videos, installations, paintings, and sound. She received a BFA in Multimedia Art from Taipei National University of the Arts in 2018 and an MPS in Interactive Telecommunications Program from New York University in 2022.

LIU was one of the winners of the BBA 2022 Photography Prize, 2022 Future Art Award: The Digital Awakening, ND Awards 2022 International Photography, 2022 Budapest International Foto Awards, and the Vision of Future NFT art collection by Saatchi Art. Her works have been exhibited in (2025) at Thomas VanDyke Gallery in New York, United States, (2024) at Palazzo Albrizzi-Capello in Venice, Italy, (2024) at Bastille Design Center in Paris, France, (2024) at Gallery 25 in Perth, Australia, and other international exhibitions in Germany, Paris, Italy, and Taiwan. Currently, she lives and works in New York.



[Heriberto Sanchez](#)

Heriberto Sanchez is a lens-based creative and educator. Born in Puebla, Mexico, and raised in The Bronx, his documentary and community-engaged work explores place, memory, and belonging. Inspired by his mother's use of point-and-shoot and disposable cameras to document their immigrant family life, Heri's practice is a form of visual stewardship. He works to counter erasure by cherishing the narratives of his family, friends, and the Bronx community, creating a lasting and resonant archive.



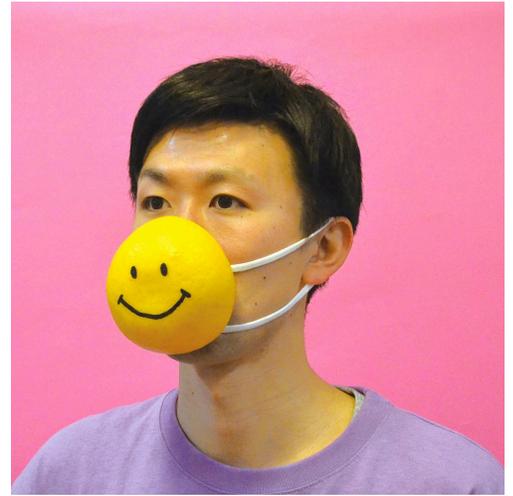
Hiroshi Masuda

Hiroshi Masuda is a Japanese visual artist working in NY.

In 2017, Hiroshi started traveling around the world. This ended unfortunately when he was drugged and robbed of \$10,000 at the beginning of his trip. To fund the remainder of his trip, he began drawing portraits on the street. This was the beginning of his career as a visual artist.

In 2018, he completed his travels to 76 countries by means of drawing and illustrations, and returned to Japan.

His work primarily uses painting to explore the question of what it means to be human.



Jimena Vega

Jimena Vega was born and raised in Ambato, a community in the Andean mountains of Ecuador. After experiencing a childhood full of traditions interwoven with nature, she immigrated to urban New Jersey as a teenager to reunite with her family. In spite of the initial challenges and bewildering metropolitan cultural shock, Jimena persevered and earned a Bachelor's Degree in Architecture from the New Jersey Institute of Technology in 2012.



Her art career began after her graduation. Drawing inspiration from her nature-filled childhood, the trauma of migration, and the cultural and artistic resilience of immigrant communities in the United States, Jimena began to explore diverse mediums such as illustration, sculpture, and art-making with organic materials. She also began participating in and facilitating women's circles centered on plants, healing, oral history, and therapeutic art-making.

In 2022, after years of witnessing the destructive environmental impact of the construction industry, Jimena made a decision to respect her morals and follow her heart: she left her career of ten years in pursuit of a career in art and teaching. Since then, her art and her workshops have been featured in diverse places, such as Guttenberg Arts, the Queens Museum, Rabbit Hole Farms in Newark, Passaic County Arts Center, and St. Peter's University. Currently, Jimena's therapeutic art and workshops are reaching communities in Central Jersey through a grant awarded by Raices Cultural Center in Highland Park.

[Jing \(Ellen\) Xu](#)

Jing (Ellen) Xu is a multidisciplinary artist based in Queens, New York. Her practice centers on modular, process-based installations using humble materials such as popsicle sticks and modeling clay to explore time, labor, memory, and collective participation. Through repetitive hand-building and long-term accumulation, her work examines how small gestures form structures of resilience and shared experience.

Xu received her MFA from the University of Washington and a BA from Xiamen University in China. She has participated in residencies including Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture, Wassaic Project, and Vermont Studio Center. Her work has been supported by the New York Foundation for the Arts, BRIC Media Arts Fellowship, Hamiltonian Gallery Artist Fellowship, and the Foundation for Contemporary Art. In addition to her studio practice, she has led community-based art projects and workshops across New York City.



[Kilia Llano](#)

Kilia Llano is a multidisciplinary artist from the Dominican Republic whose practice bridges public art, studio painting, education, and anticolonial thought. Her work explores the Caribbean's relationship with nature and with the African and Indigenous roots that shape its identity, confronting the denial of Blackness and the colonial legacies that still define Dominican society.

She graduated with honors from Altos de Chavón and Parsons School of Design, and holds an MFA in Painting from the New York Academy of Art, where she received the Bonnie De-Witt Fund Award.

As a muralist, she has participated in more than thirty public art projects across the Dominican Republic, the United States, Colombia, and Italy. Her most notable projects include Muralizar la Frontera (Ministry of Culture, DR), Connections (Urban Field Station, USDA Forest Service), and Miches 001 (Dominican Public Art Commission).



Alongside her artistic practice, Llano has dedicated over twenty years to art education, working with children and youth from diverse social backgrounds and focusing on creativity, exploration, and free expression as tools for transformation.

In 2024 she received a full scholarship to attend the Global Activism Conference in South Africa, and in September 2025 she was an invited speaker at Public Art as a Catalyst for Urban Climate Action, organized by Yale University.

[Luisa Mantelli](#)

Luísa Mantelli is a Brazilian textile artist based in New York City since 2023. She earned an MFA in Textiles from Parsons School of Design in 2025, following earlier studies in architecture and urban planning.

She combines studio practice with education as a part-time faculty member at Parsons School of Design, a resident artist with ProjectArt teaching arts to first graders, and a resident in the NYFA Immigrant Artist Mentoring Program.

Mantelli's practice explores the relationships between people and their environments, translating themes of migration, influence and transformation into sculptural textile forms. Textiles, like people, adapt to the place they are in, carrying memory while responding to change. Through crochet, weaving, embroidery, and natural dyeing with repurposed materials, she merges Brazilian and family traditions with those from New York, exploring how environments shape behavior and how communities reinvent home.



[Malte Sanger](#)

Found objects are the crystallization points of Malte Sanger's photography-based works. The human and geological timescales entangled within them are made visible through extensive research, travel, and self-built camera systems. The self-made artist books resulting from these projects have received several awards.

Malte Sanger holds a Master's degree from the Offenbach University of Art and Design in Germany, is a fellow of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), and an awardee of gute aussichten – new german photography. He received his MFA in Photo & Media and Integrated Media from CalArts in 2022.



[Mona Karami](#)

Mona Karami is a Multidisciplinary visual artist from Iran, renowned for her diverse artistic expressions that bridge painting, sculpture, poetry, and sound. She holds an MFA in Painting from the Academy of Fine Art Bologna, Italy, and a B.Sc. in Computer Software Engineering from the University of Science and Art, Iran.

Mona's art is a dialogue between simplicity and complexity, weaving cultural motifs with the nuances of science and technology. This unique approach informs her conceptual research and experimentation, allowing her to create multidimensional artworks that resonate across different mediums.

Her professional journey has seen her exhibit her works extensively in Iran, Italy, and Germany. Notably, Mona was awarded the Talent Prize from the Zucchelli Foundation, Italy in 2020, and in 2021, she received the Erasmus+ scholarship in sculpture during her tenure in Munich.



[Patrícia Colmenero](#)

Patrícia Colmenero is a Brazilian multidisciplinary storyteller based in New York who works across cinema, literature, and visual art. Drawn to thresholds between countries, languages, and disciplines, she creates poetic, research based works that braid archival hauntings with lived experience. Her practice approaches history as a material, something to be handled, metabolized, and reimagined into form.



Sachigusa Yasuda

Sachigusa Yasuda is a New York–based visual artist originally from Japan. She earned an MFA from Tokyo University of the Arts and an MFA in Social Practice from Queens College (2023). Working across installation, painting, textiles, sculpture, and photography, her practice examines personal values and societal norms related to women, with an emphasis on fostering empathy in public spaces.



Her projects include Mothers' Daily Schedule (New York, ongoing since 2021), Upcycle Uplift—One Pocket at a Time (New York, 2021–2022), and Memories of Life, a collaborative project with the Fukushima Museum of Art (Japan, 2013–2018). Her work has been exhibited at the California Museum of Photography, the Harold B. Lemmerman Gallery, The Blanc, the Liu Shiming Art Foundation, the National Art Center, Tokyo, 21_21 Design Sight, among others, have been featured in Hyperallergic, Frieze, The Brooklyn Rail, Art in America, Art in Asia, The Guardian, The Huffington Post, and the Los Angeles Times.

Shaheen Salehi

Shay Salehi is an artist currently living and working in New York City. Anchored by a passion against animal exploitation, her interdisciplinary practice explores the complexities of human–nonhuman relationships. In each body of work, she examines a different space where humans interact with non human animals—factory farms, roadsides, and sanctuaries— and dissects these environments to reframe our understanding of how humans negotiate power across species. Her research investigates the frameworks that enforce human superiority and the ownership and capitalization of nonhuman bodies. By tracing histories of dominance, domestication, and control, her practice opens space for alternative futures grounded in attention and respect toward interspecies solidarity.



Born in Canada to Polish and Iranian parents, Salehi's upbringing across diverse cultural traditions has deeply shaped her perspective on human and nonhuman life. This layered background has heightened her awareness of how colonial ideologies structure systems of control and exploitation, reinforcing the connections between social, political, and environmental hierarchies. This exposure to diverse cultural values has reinforced her understanding of nonhuman ecologies as sites of care, resistance and sources of knowledge in their own right.

Sixing Xu

Sixing Xu is an (1) artist, (2) translator, and (3) writer. These identities, and the order they are listed out, form the knotty core of her practice.

Informed by a crisscrossing movement between linguistic borders, Xu makes sculpture–text installations that mine other(ed) meanings and storylines out of the insignificant, the accidental, and the peripheral. Her works have been exhibited at the Godwin-Ternbach Museum, Queens; 601Artspace, New York; Accent Sisters, New York; NARS Foundation, Brooklyn; Power Station of Art, Shanghai; Current Plans, Hong Kong; Shanghai Himalayas Museum; Chengdu Times Art Museum; gallery no one, Chicago, among others. Her writings and projects have appeared in print and on the digital platforms of Spike Art Magazine, The Art Newspaper China, Sine Theta Magazine, Xiao Museum of Contemporary Art, and Macalline Art Center. Her translations can be found in Artforum, LEAP, Heichi Magazine, ArtReview China, SSENSE, among others.

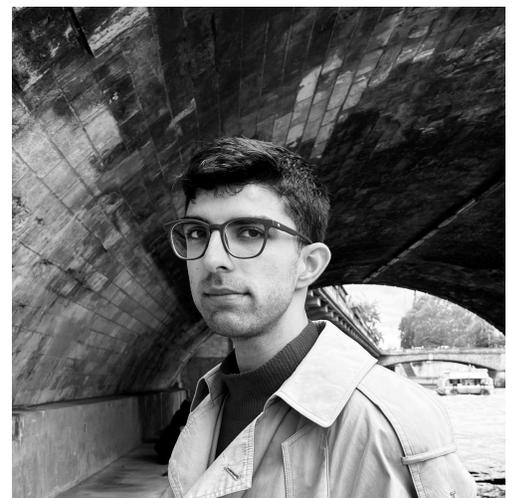


In 2025, Xu was awarded an Archives Research Residency at the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation. She was also a participant in Triple Canopy’s Publication Intensive (2024) and Asia Art Archive in America’s Leadership Camp (2024–2025). With Jie Shao and Snow Xuecan Ye, she co-founded Pararailing—once an artist-run space in Shanghai, now a nomadic collective.

Sixing Xu was born in 1996 in Beijing and currently lives in Brooklyn, NY. She holds a B.A. in Media Studies from Vassar College.

Vasudev Vashisht

Vasudev Vashisht is an artist-ethnographer and researcher of Indian origin based in New York. His work transforms photography into a living collaborative medium through darkroom experimentation, ecological interventions, participatory workshops, and community-centered fieldwork. Vashisht’s practice foregrounds how human activity shapes the lives of nonhuman beings and environments. He explores this entanglement through collaborative image-making shaped by direct interactions with soil, plants, and other living systems, revealing how these materials hold histories of extraction and the pressures of a changing climate. When not covered in soil or darkroom chemistry, he is trying to convince airport security that the soil-filled bags in his luggage are ‘art supplies.’



[Veronica Mijelshon](#)

Veronica Mijelshon is a Brooklyn-based glass jewelry and homewares designer, originally from Buenos Aires, Argentina, and founder of verita mijelshon. She holds a master's degree in architecture from the University of Buenos Aires, where she specialized in spatial design and material exploration, foundations that guide her sculptural, frameworked glass practice.

With over eighteen years designing interiors for a New York-based restaurant group and more than three decades of architectural practice, Mijelshon brings a strong structural sensibility to her wearable works. In parallel with her design career, she has maintained a long-standing engagement with curatorial work. She served as Gallery Director at NurtureART (Brooklyn) from 2004–2007 and later founded 0.00156 acres, an independent project space (2008–2014) dedicated to socially engaged art around themes of migration, urbanism, and the environment.



An alumna of The Bead Project at UrbanGlass, Mijelshon was awarded a full scholarship for a residency at the Corning Museum of Glass in 2023. In 2025, she was selected as a mentor in The Bead Project Mentorship Program at UrbanGlass and participated in NYFA's Artist as Entrepreneur Program, hosted in partnership with Powerhouse Arts. Her jewelry has been exhibited internationally, including PRESENCE /// ABSENCE (2025), a Synergy co-curated project by Galleria Carlo Lucidi (Rome), Tincal Lab (Porto), and Uni.Versus Art Room (Athens).

Rooted in her architectural background and Argentine heritage, Mijelshon's glass practice continues to evolve at the intersection of material experimentation, storytelling, and design.

[Voyo Woo](#)

I am a Chinese American artist who has practiced traditional Chinese paper cutting for over twenty-five years. I have expanded this ancient art form through installation, video, light, sound, performance, and, most recently, EEG brainwave technology, projection mapping, and meditation. A self-taught artist with a master's degree in Curatorial Studies in Contemporary Art from Sotheby's Institute of Art, I bridge cultural heritage and contemporary innovation through an interdisciplinary practice.



My work has been featured at the White House Visitor Center, the Montclair Art Museum, and the Fengxian Museum in Shanghai, China, as well as in public media. My background as a camerawoman, live television producer, cultural exchange professional for the U.S. government, and energy-balancing facilitator informs my practice with a deep sensitivity to language, movement, and spirituality.

Recent projects include *The Seventh Dimension – A Zen Garden Experience*, first prototyped at NYU's Interactive Telecommunications Program (ITP) Camp and later supported by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, and *The Eighth Dimension – Where the Mind Meets the Ocean*. Both works integrate EEG brainwave technology, guided meditation, and projection mapping to foster calm and mindfulness while addressing humanity's growing disconnection from the natural world. Another project, *Gratitude Dinner*, transforms shared acts of gratitude into water cymatics and telekinetic interaction, inviting participants to slow down, reflect, and reconnect in an increasingly fragmented, AI-driven age.

Across all my work, I merge the tangible and intangible—paper, light, breath, and thought—to encourage kindness, inner balance, and collective healing. Through my art, I aim to carry the tradition of Chinese paper cutting into the digital era, demonstrating how tradition and technology together can nurture empathy, kindness, collective healing and connections.

[Yoojung Hong](#)

Yoojung Hong is an artist and educator based in New York and Seoul, working across stop-motion animation, painting, and drawing. Her work explores moments that hover between overwhelm and stillness: images, gestures, or spaces that feel too much, too quiet, or too strange to fully grasp. Through analog and digital processes, she reassembles these sensations into slightly off-balanced, fragmented worlds. She received her BFA in Experimental Animation from the California Institute of the Arts and her MA in Art and Art Education from Teachers College, Columbia University.

