

ART portfolio.

*Art is a form of expression that transcends boundaries
and speaks to the depths of the human experience.*

by Sara Solomonik



Self Portrait. Pencil on paper

Artist Statement

I grew up in St. Petersburg, Russia, where I began drawing before I even knew how to write. At five years old, I started attending Sunday art classes, and by the age of seven, I was so captivated by art that I asked my parents to enroll me in an art school. Coming from a large family, my parents could only afford to pay for one year of tuition. At the end of that year, however, the school held a competition in which two students from each class were selected to continue their studies tuition-free. I was fortunate to be one of those students, and my parents wholeheartedly encouraged me to continue.

For the next nine years, art became an essential part of my life. I immersed myself in painting, drawing, sculpture, landscape, still life, and decorative arts while experimenting with watercolor, colored pencils, markers, pastels, pen and ink, and other media. I also studied art history, developing not only technical skills but a deep appreciation for the history, meaning, and emotional power of art. I was, in every sense, living and breathing art.

When it was time for college, I moved to the United States and initially pursued graphic design. Although I enjoyed aspects of the field, I quickly realized that it did not provide the same sense of connection and aliveness that I had always experienced through traditional art. I felt lost and disappointed until I discovered that I could fill my undergraduate experience with the art courses that had always inspired me. I studied sculpture, painting, drawing, book illustration, and art history, allowing myself to reconnect with the creative process that had always felt like home.

At the same time, I began sharing my passion for art with others. I taught art classes in schools and gave lessons to friends, and through these experiences, I discovered something even more meaningful: art could be a way to connect with people and support them. I realized that I needed both the creative expression of art and the depth of human experience in order to feel truly fulfilled.

This realization led me to pursue a master's degree in Art Therapy and Counseling. Art therapy became a natural meeting point between two passions that had shaped my life from childhood: art and helping others. Today, I continue to create art not only as a form of self-expression, but also as a way of exploring emotions, experiences, identity, growth, and connection.

The artworks in this portfolio represent different chapters of my artistic journey—from the child who first discovered the joy of drawing to the artist and future art therapist I am today. Together, they reflect my growth, curiosity, resilience, and lifelong relationship with art.

GREEK VASE

Clay

I created this sculpture at the age of 11 while attending art school in St. Petersburg, Russia, as part of my sculpture studies. During this stage of my artistic development, I was especially drawn to working with clay. I loved the physical and tactile experience of shaping the material with my hands and watching something emerge from it.

As I entered adolescence, sculpting became more than an artistic activity for me—it became a way to process and express emotions that I did not always have the words to communicate. Working with clay gave me a quiet, safe space where I could release what I was experiencing without having to talk about it. My hands seemed to express what I could not yet articulate.

The process of creating three-dimensional forms allowed me to become absorbed in the moment and temporarily step away from the social and academic pressures of adolescence. Through the clay, I could release emotions, explore my inner world, and gradually develop a deeper understanding of myself.

Looking back, this piece represents an early experience of what I would later come to understand as the therapeutic potential of art. It showed me that creating can provide a sense of safety, emotional release, and self-discovery—even before we fully understand what we are expressing.





SKULL

pencil on paper

I created this drawing at the age of 14 while studying at art school and developing my understanding of shading, texture, and personal artistic style. For this piece, I chose to create the image entirely through dots, exploring how light, shadow, and depth could emerge from a simple and repetitive mark.

My teenage years felt heavy and emotionally intense, and art became an important way for me to process experiences that I did not always know how to express verbally. I often turned to my pencil as a form of quiet communication—a way to put emotions, confusion, and inner experiences onto paper without needing to explain them in words.

The dark, black-and-white quality of this drawing reflects some of the intensity I was experiencing at the time. Creating the image through countless individual dots required patience and concentration, allowing me to become absorbed in the process while releasing some of what I was carrying internally.

Looking back, I see this piece as an example of how art served as a safe outlet during my adolescence. The pencil became a tool for transforming difficult and confusing emotions into something tangible—something I could see, contain, and ultimately leave on the page.



STILL LIFE

watercolor on paper

I created this still life at the age of 16 as one of my graduation artworks at art school. I worked on this piece throughout an entire year, gradually building it layer by layer while developing my technical skills and discovering my own artistic style.

Because of the time and dedication invested in it, this became the longest painting I had created up to that point. The process taught me patience, discipline, attention to detail, and the importance of allowing a piece to develop slowly over time. Each stage challenged me to grow and pushed me to become more confident in my abilities as a young artist.

I feel especially proud of this work because it represents not only the finished painting, but also the year of growth, effort, and learning behind it. Looking back, I see this piece as an important milestone in my artistic journey and one of the works that helped shape me into the artist I was becoming.



GOAT

watercolor, gouache

I created this drawing during a family road trip through Russia, when we stopped in a small village and encountered a goat that immediately caught my attention. I felt an urge to capture the moment, but simply taking a photograph did not feel personal or permanent enough. I wanted to preserve not only what the goat looked like, but also the feeling of being there and experiencing that moment with my family.

Drawing allowed me to slow down, observe, and connect with the experience in a much deeper way. Instead of simply taking a picture, I captured the memory through my own eyes, hands, and imagination. Every line became part of the memory, creating a lasting imprint of that family vacation.

For me, this piece represents the way art can transform an ordinary moment into something deeply personal and lasting. The drawing became more than an image of a goat—it became a tangible memory of a place, a moment, and time spent with my family that I can carry with me forever.

Cas



SUMMER FLOWERS

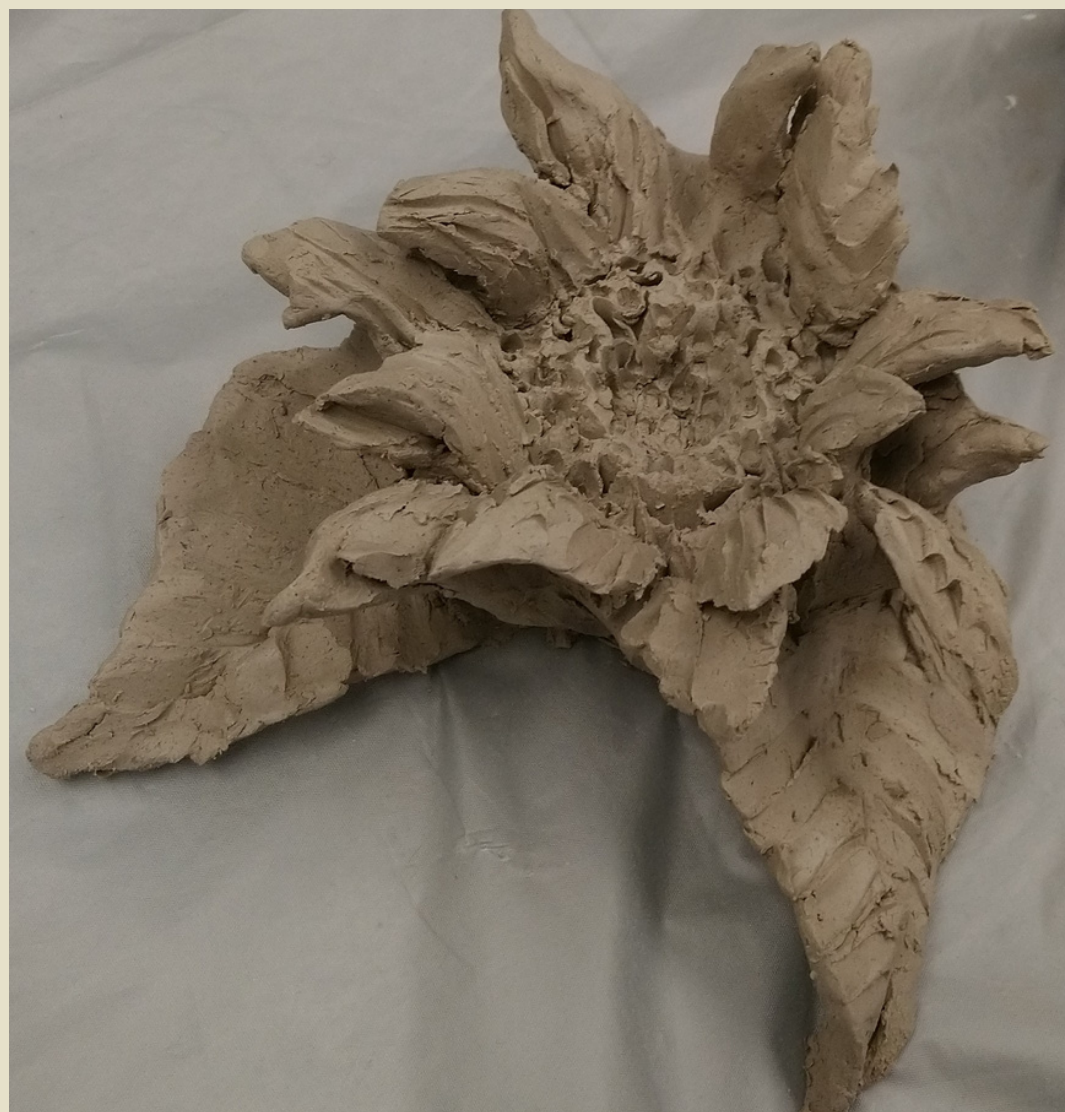
Acrylic on paper

I painted these flowers during the summer of 2017. I wanted to hold onto the feeling of freedom, liveliness, and joy that comes with summer vacation. I was drawn to the bright, vibrant colors because they reflected the energy and lightness I was experiencing during that time.

Color has always been an important part of how I express myself as an artist. I love using vivid colors to communicate emotions that can sometimes be difficult to put into words and to capture the world around me in a way that feels joyful, alive, and full of energy.

Through this piece, I wanted to preserve not only the beauty of the flowers, but also the feeling of freedom and renewal that I associated with that summer. The bright colors became a way of carrying that feeling with me beyond the season itself.

SUNFLOWER clay, paint



I created this flower sculpture during a sculpture class in my undergraduate studies. I first shaped the piece from clay, enjoying the process of transforming a simple material into a three-dimensional representation of flowers.



Once the sculpture was complete, however, I felt that the natural clay felt too muted and somewhat lifeless. I wanted the piece to reflect the energy and vibrancy that I associate with flowers, so I added bright colors to bring the sculpture to life.

The contrast between the earthy clay and the vivid colors reflects my desire to infuse my artwork with emotion, warmth, and liveliness. This piece reminded me that color can completely transform not only the appearance of an artwork, but also the feeling it evokes.



WINDOW

Wall Mural

Acrylic paint

I created this mural on the wall of my college dorm room, which did not have any windows and received very little natural sunlight. I began to notice how the dark environment affected my mood, so I decided to create my own window—a colorful view into a peaceful and vibrant natural world.

I painted a landscape filled with bright colors and relaxing elements of nature, using large, expressive brushstrokes and an impressionistic approach. I experimented with color, texture, and movement to create a sense of light and openness within the room.

The process became more than simply decorating my space. It was a way of intentionally transforming my environment and, in turn, influencing my emotional state. By creating a bright and uplifting scene where there was once only a blank wall, I gave myself a visual reminder of sunlight, nature, and positivity.

This mural reflects my belief that art can transform the spaces we inhabit and can be used intentionally to create a more comforting, joyful, and emotionally supportive environment.



SET ME FREE

Acrylic, canvas

I created this emotionally intense self-portrait during the COVID-19 pandemic, a period when I felt trapped and disconnected from the world around me. Social interaction had almost completely disappeared, I was unable to work, and the usual opportunities to feel productive, purposeful, and accomplished were suddenly taken away. The isolation began to feel confining, almost like being trapped in a jail cell.

I needed a way to release everything I was feeling, and art became my voice. This image is intentionally intense and almost overwhelming. To me, it carries a powerful message of “Set me free. I can’t do this anymore.” Rather than trying to make the image beautiful or controlled, I allowed the emotions themselves to guide the process.

Creating this piece gave me a way to externalize feelings that had become too heavy to hold internally. The artwork became a visual expression of confinement, frustration, desperation, and the longing for freedom and human connection.

Looking back, this piece reminds me of the power of art to give form to experiences that can be difficult to express through words. It allowed me to take something internal and overwhelming and place it outside of myself, where I could see it, confront it, and begin to process it.

LANDSCAPES

Acrylic, canvas

I created these landscapes during my internship, at a time when I often felt emotionally heavy and needed a way to unwind, slow down, and reconnect with myself. Painting became a quiet space where I could step away from the demands of daily life and allow myself to simply create. Working with paint and color has always helped me enter what feels like a safe inner space. As I painted these landscapes, I became absorbed in the colors, shapes, and natural surroundings, allowing the process to calm me and express emotions that were difficult to put into words. For me, these paintings represent the restorative and grounding power of art. They became a way to release emotional weight, reconnect with my inner world, and give my thoughts and feelings a place to breathe.





THANK YOU

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