

# Creative Awakening: Exploring Paints and Intuitive Artistry with Marie Høi-Hansen



It is with great pleasure that I introduce my Danish colleague, the talented self-taught artist, **Marie Høi-Hansen**.

Marie's creative journey began later in life when she decided to explore various forms of art, including textile art, quilting, abstract painting, and collage. I have closely followed her work on Instagram, and each of her new pieces, as well as her older works, has always captured my attention. Marie's creations possess a unique charisma and extraordinary potential. I am confident that her art will continue to evolve in exciting ways.

In December 2024, I had the fortune of meeting Marie in her creative studio in Holte, near Copenhagen. We cozied up among her artworks, sipping coffee and discussing a wide range of topics. The main focus of our conversation was her intuitive painting. Marie shared how she works with paints and how her creations come to life through experimentation and the play with unconventional techniques.

For Marie, art is more than just a craft; it's an ongoing journey of self-expression. It is a process in which she trusts the creative flow, allowing her work to unfold naturally, without coercion or limitations.

Intuitive painting, for her, is about being present in the moment, letting brushstrokes follow the rhythm of emotions rather than a predetermined plan. It's an incredibly freeing way to create, without the pressure of the outcome. It is a dialogue between the artist and the material, filled with surprises and discoveries that happen along the way.

Marie's art is an invitation to rediscover the pure joy of creation—like returning to the carefree days of childhood when art was about play, freedom, and delight. It is an immersion in the process, exploration without boundaries, and the pursuit of happiness within the act of creation itself.

All photographs accompanying this interview were taken by me with Marie's kind permission during our delightful meeting.



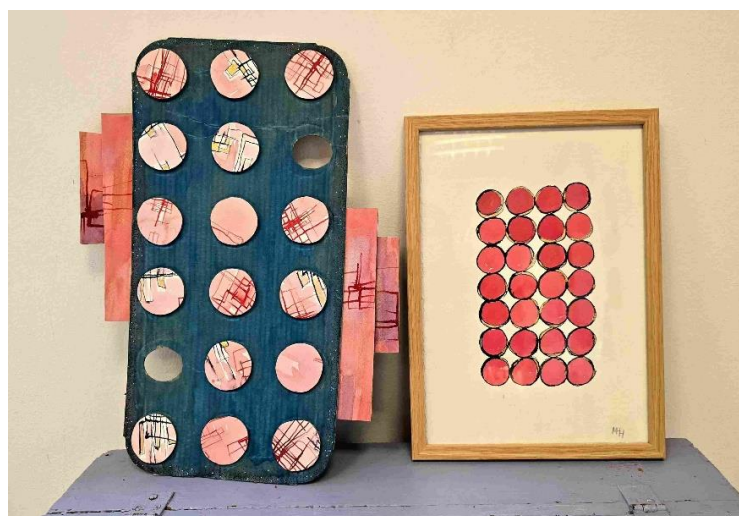
**Dina:** *Marie, please tell us how your creative journey began.*

**Marie:** It all started during the pandemic. I had always been a creative person, but it was during this period of global turmoil that I decided to make a quilt for my home. I had some fabrics and had long admired Indian "kantha" quilts with their simple stitches. However, I knew nothing about quilting. I just began laying out pieces of fabric on an old bedsheet, and it looked quite strange. The fabrics needed to be connected somehow, so I went to a patchwork store to buy needles.

When I showed my work to the store staff, they were very friendly but had a little laugh at what I had done. They found it amusing and began explaining how to sew properly. It didn't upset me, but it made me think: should someone else decide what is "right" and "wrong"? And what does it even mean to be "right" in art? This became an important moment that pushed me to choose my own path.

It was important for me not to sit frustrated over my creations, not to waste time on excessive neatness and perfectionism. I didn't want every work process to be associated with tension and the fear of making mistakes. I wanted my creative process to be cozy and free, to enjoy the moment. I had no clear work plan, but I took pleasure in what was happening in the moment.

Of course, not everything turned out the way I wanted, but I tried not to think too much about it. I didn't tell myself: "Oh, this is terrible!" From the beginning, I set a few simple rules: I would not rip anything apart and redo it. Whenever I wanted to stop and think that something went wrong, I told myself: "No, no, keep going!" It didn't mean I considered my work flawless, but I couldn't allow my inner critic to interfere. Freedom in creativity was crucial for me. My mantra: "It should feel right and fun when I'm doing art! And it should be effortless."





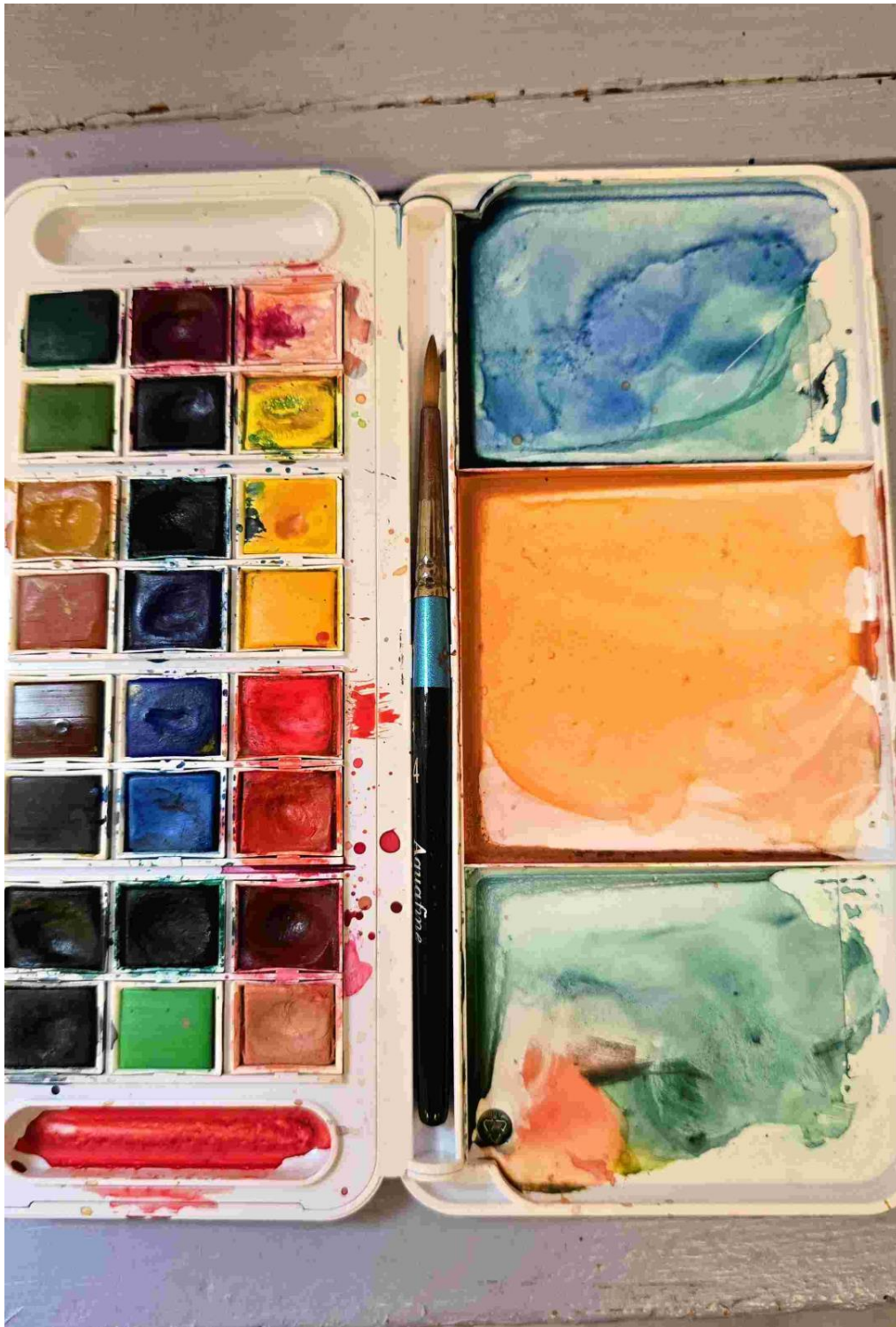
**Dina:** *When did you start painting? How did paints come into the picture?*

**Marie:** One day, I saw an artist working with cardboard, and it deeply inspired me. I thought that the material itself could be interesting—its shapes, holes, unusual contours. This intrigued me, and I decided to try drawing on cardboard. At first, I used a pen, then I moved on to ink. Eventually, I began cutting the cardboard into small pieces, and I saw that these miniatures became independent drawings. They looked very beautiful, and that's how my practice of painting began.



**Dina:** *What types of paints do you use in your work?*

**Marie:** I mainly work with inks, watercolors, gouache, acrylic ink, dry pastels, markers, and pens.





**Dina:** *Why these paints specifically? Why not oil or acrylic?*

**Marie:** I did work with acrylic for a bit; here, take a look, I have a painting done in acrylic. But over time, I realized that working with acrylic requires being skilled in techniques. This material demands precision and control. I wanted my works to be light, blurry, and fluid. In this state, the paints can offer unexpected and delightful "gifts"—something might suddenly appear that I hadn't even thought about. But acrylic turned out to be too controllable. It's a material where the process is predictable, and for me, that became a limitation.



**Dina:** *So, you chose watercolors and gouache because they give you more freedom?*

**Marie:** Yes, exactly. These paints offer me more pleasant surprises. They allow more play with the process. When I work with watercolors or gouache, I feel like I'm painting in my own inner world, where I can be spontaneous and free. These materials are much more intimate for me—they have a sense of lightness and fluidity, and that's exactly what I seek in my creativity.



**Dina:** *How does your work process look? How do you prepare your paints?*

**Marie:** I simply open a box of gouache or watercolors and... usually start with color. I don't have a clear plan, there isn't an immediate idea of what and how I'm going to paint. Everything begins with a blot of color. I allow the color to lead me, and then things unfold from there.

I've noticed that I often use the same colors—burgundy, coral, red. I've tried to force myself to use other colors, but I always return to these. I couldn't change myself. My nature is drawn to these colors.

**Dina:** *What techniques do you use to achieve interesting effects?*

**Marie:** I like drawing not with a brush, but with the back end of an old pencil. I have one pencil that's not very good anymore, but it's the one I love. It creates random, unexpected effects, and I like that. Drawing with such a pencil, it's impossible to control the ink—the result is always a surprise. It's like a dialogue with the material: I don't decide what the final result will be.

Once I tried drawing with a feather I found in the forest. It was an amazing experience. I kind of pull the color across the paper, watching what happens. Sometimes I get something clear, almost square, and sometimes something completely wild and spontaneous.

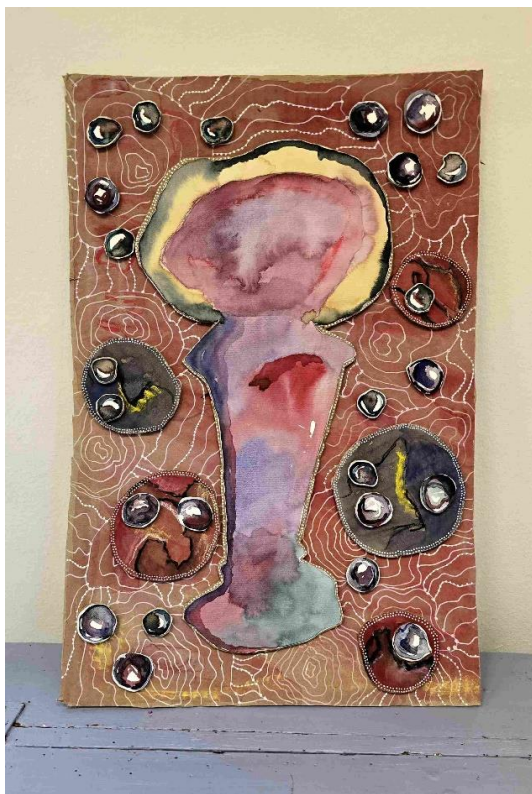
I also enjoy working on handmade Indian paper, which I buy online. It's incredibly tactile, and colors look very different on it compared to regular paper.





**Dina:** *How do you define your style?*

**Marie:** I suppose it's abstraction. Contemporary abstraction.





**Dina:** *What inspires you in your work? When you sit in front of a blank sheet of paper, where does the inspiration come from?*

**Marie:** I don't know. Inspiration doesn't come as a ready-made image; it always starts with the first stroke. When I begin working, just moving the pencil, something happens. And inspiration emerges in the process; it is born within me. These lines, strokes—they inspire me. Do you understand what I mean?

**Dina:** *Yes, very clearly... Some artists listen to music, others read and find inspiration in ideas. So, you draw inspiration directly from your process.*

**Marie:** Yes, exactly. When I wake up in the morning, I already look forward to doing something creative today. It's the first thing I think about when I open my eyes: "Today, I'll create something!"

When I first started during the pandemic, I felt like I was simply obsessed... Obsessed with creativity. It was a true creative awakening for me. While terrible things were happening in the world, inside, a completely different reality unfolded—something beautiful. And I wondered: "Where did this come from?" I was afraid it might disappear. Every day I woke up and checked: "Is it still here? Do I still feel it?" I feared that one day I would wake up and it wouldn't be there anymore. That was my beginning.



**Dina:** *And how is it now? For several years you've been creating art every day. What has changed?*

**Marie:** Now I have found inner peace. It is a completely new experience for me and very valuable. Moreover, I've noticed that creativity helps me navigate difficult moments in life. It is a way to care for myself, a way to express compassion for myself. When I paint or create something, I am doing something good for myself, something that supports me.

When I was a child, I often sat in my room, cutting pictures out of magazines, painting with watercolors, or just listening to music. It brought me immense happiness. And now, when I work with fabric, cardboard, or paints, I return to that state I remember from childhood, when I felt truly happy. I no longer worry about what will happen if this state ever disappears. It is here. It exists.







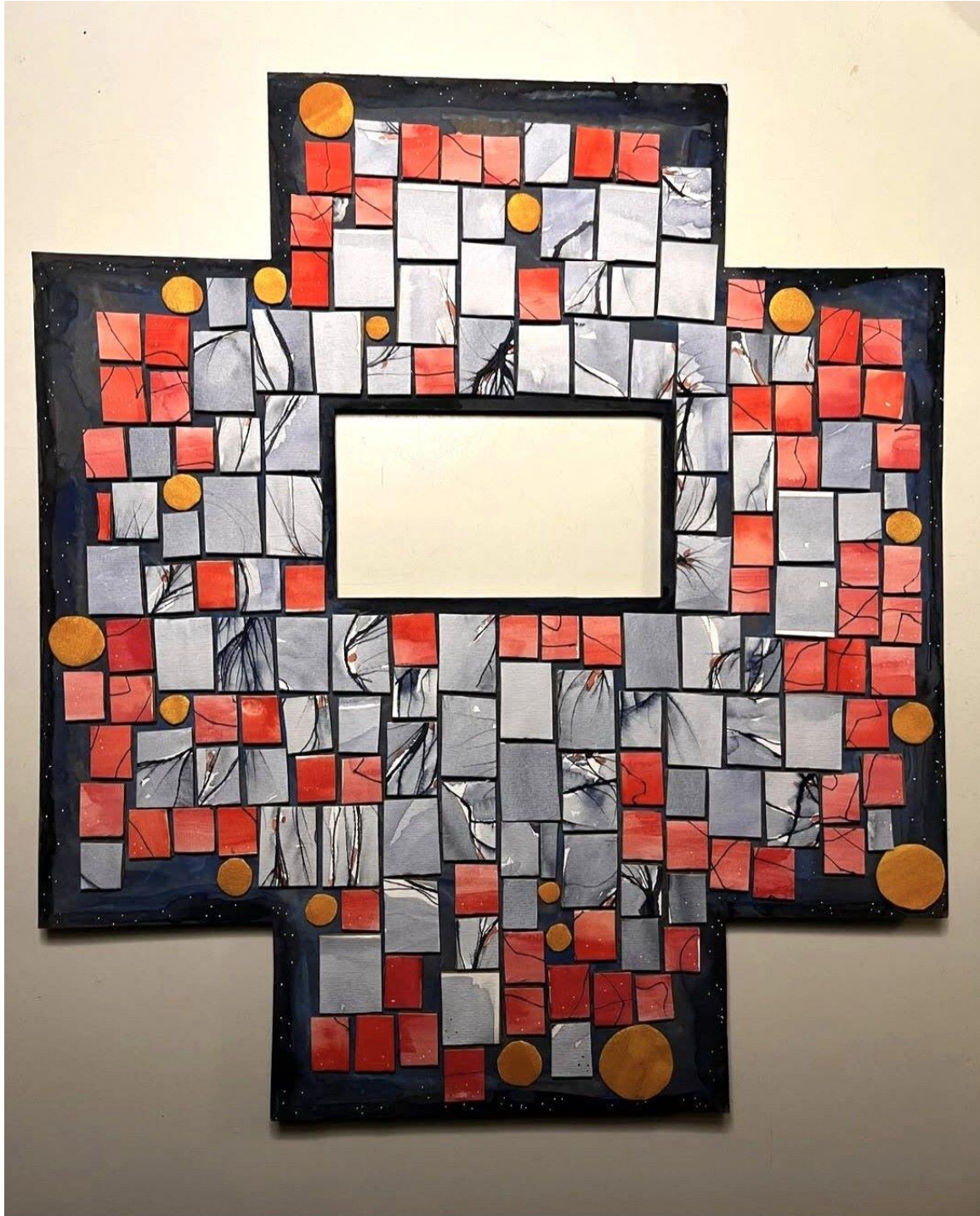
**Marie Høi-Hansen's** artistic journey is a testament to the power of creativity and the limitless potential of materials. From the humble beginnings of crafting quilts during a tumultuous time to discovering the boundless possibilities of paints, Marie has shown that art is an ever-evolving exploration. Her intuitive approach to painting, embracing the unpredictability of inks, watercolors, and gouache, has allowed her to create works that are fluid, spontaneous, and deeply personal.

Through her dialogue with materials—whether it's the back end of an old pencil, a feather found in the forest, or the tactile beauty of handmade Indian paper—Marie has carved out a unique space in contemporary abstraction. Her story is an invitation to experience the joy of creation, to let go of perfectionism, and to trust in the process.

In Marie's world, paints are not just a medium but a partner in the artistic journey. They guide her, surprise her, and ultimately help her express the emotions and stories that words cannot capture. As we look at her vibrant creations, we are reminded of the pure joy that comes from embracing creativity without boundaries. Marie's work inspires us to see the beauty in the unexpected and to find solace in the art of self-expression.

With each stroke and every color, Marie continues to remind us that art is not about the result but the journey itself—an endless, beautiful exploration of the human spirit through the enchanting world of paints.

**Abstract Harmony:**  
**The Dance of Paints in Mixed Media Art**





This piece immediately caught my attention with its vibrant colors, intriguing shapes, and innovative use of materials and technique.

The artist employs ink and watercolor on a cardboard collage, embracing a mixed media approach that combines the fluidity and transparency of watercolor with the precision and contrast of ink. This combination creates a rich, multi-layered visual experience that is both captivating and unique.

I appreciate how the artwork resembles a mosaic composed of small squares and rectangles arranged in a cross-like shape with a rectangular cutout at the center. The carefully selected shades of red, gray, and white, along with golden-yellow circular elements, convey a specific visual message and enhance the overall composition.

The interplay of straight and curved lines adds visual interest and balance. The strong edges of the rectangular and square pieces introduce structure, while the gentle curves of the circular elements offer softness. This contrast enriches the piece and maintains the viewer's engagement.

Primary shapes such as squares, rectangles, and circles guide the eye toward the focal point created by the cross-like arrangement and central cutout. This design effectively draws attention and invites deeper exploration of the artwork.

The dominant colors—red, gray, and white, accented by golden-yellow—evoke varied emotions. Red suggests passion and intensity, gray and white provide a neutral backdrop that highlights the vibrant red, and the golden-yellow circles add warmth and brightness, possibly symbolizing light or hope.

Variations in texture enhance the visual and tactile depth of the piece. The rough, tactile quality of the cardboard contrasts with the smooth, fluid textures of the ink and watercolor, creating a compelling sensory experience.

The balanced and symmetrical composition establishes harmony, with the cross-like shape and central cutout creating a sense of order. The placement of circular elements adds movement, guiding the eye around the artwork and preventing it from feeling static.

Symbolism may be present in the cross-like shape and golden-yellow circles. The cross could represent themes of intersection, balance, or spirituality, while the circles might symbolize completeness, unity, or eternity. These elements add layers of meaning to the piece.

The style blends abstract and geometric elements. Abstract patterns introduce complexity, while geometric shapes provide structure, challenging the viewer to look beyond the surface and consider deeper interpretations.

The technique involves layering different media—cardboard, ink, and watercolor. The careful arrangement and interplay of textures and colors demonstrate the artist's skill and creativity, showcasing an innovative approach to materials.

Using cardboard as a base material is particularly striking, as it introduces a common, everyday object into the realm of fine art. This choice challenges conventional boundaries and invites viewers to find beauty in unexpected places.

Overall, this mixed media artwork is a thoughtful and well-executed piece that combines various elements to create a visually and emotionally engaging experience. The interplay of colors, shapes, textures, and materials invites exploration on multiple levels, uncovering deeper meanings and allowing appreciation of the artist's innovative approach.







## About the Author

**Dina Shiva Yafasova** is a Denmark-based artist with a rich multicultural background.

Dina holds a master's degree in journalism and has worked as a journalist and writer for over 30 years. Her books have been published internationally in Denmark, the UK, Germany, and Brazil, earning her prestigious awards and nominations.

In 2018, a life-altering event reshaped her creative journey—she was struck by lightning during a thunderstorm. This extraordinary experience awakened a rare gift: multiple synesthesia. Embracing this newfound perception, Dina transitioned into visual arts, with a deep focus on textile and quilt artistry, where she continues to explore the intersection of storytelling and tactile expression.