

With brush in hand and intuition as her compass, Karin Wamboldt creates watercolors that shimmer with emotional nuance, clarity, and quiet strength. Born near the historic Mathildenhöhe in Darmstadt – a cradle of Art Nouveau – she was surrounded by artistic inspiration from an early age. Today, her distinctive Leo-Art style channels the bold, independent spirit of her zodiac sign, capturing fleeting inner states and unspoken connections through fluid color and form.

A self-taught painter and trained social pedagogue, Wamboldt has woven creativity into every aspect of her life and work. In her practice for integrative learning therapy, she nurtures not only cognitive growth but also emotional expression, often drawing on the transformative power of art. Her paintings reflect this holistic vision: they are places of inner balance, subtle humor, and creative freedom – inviting us to look deeper, feel more, and reconnect with the quiet strength within ourselves.

Karin Wamboldt

Contemporary Art

Germany



"My watercolors emerge in the moment – intuitive, emotional, and guided by a subtle sense for what lies between the things. I call my style Leo-Art – inspired by the lion, my zodiac sign, which stands for strength, independence, and creative freedom. For me, painting is not only an act of expression but also an inner place of power and clarity."

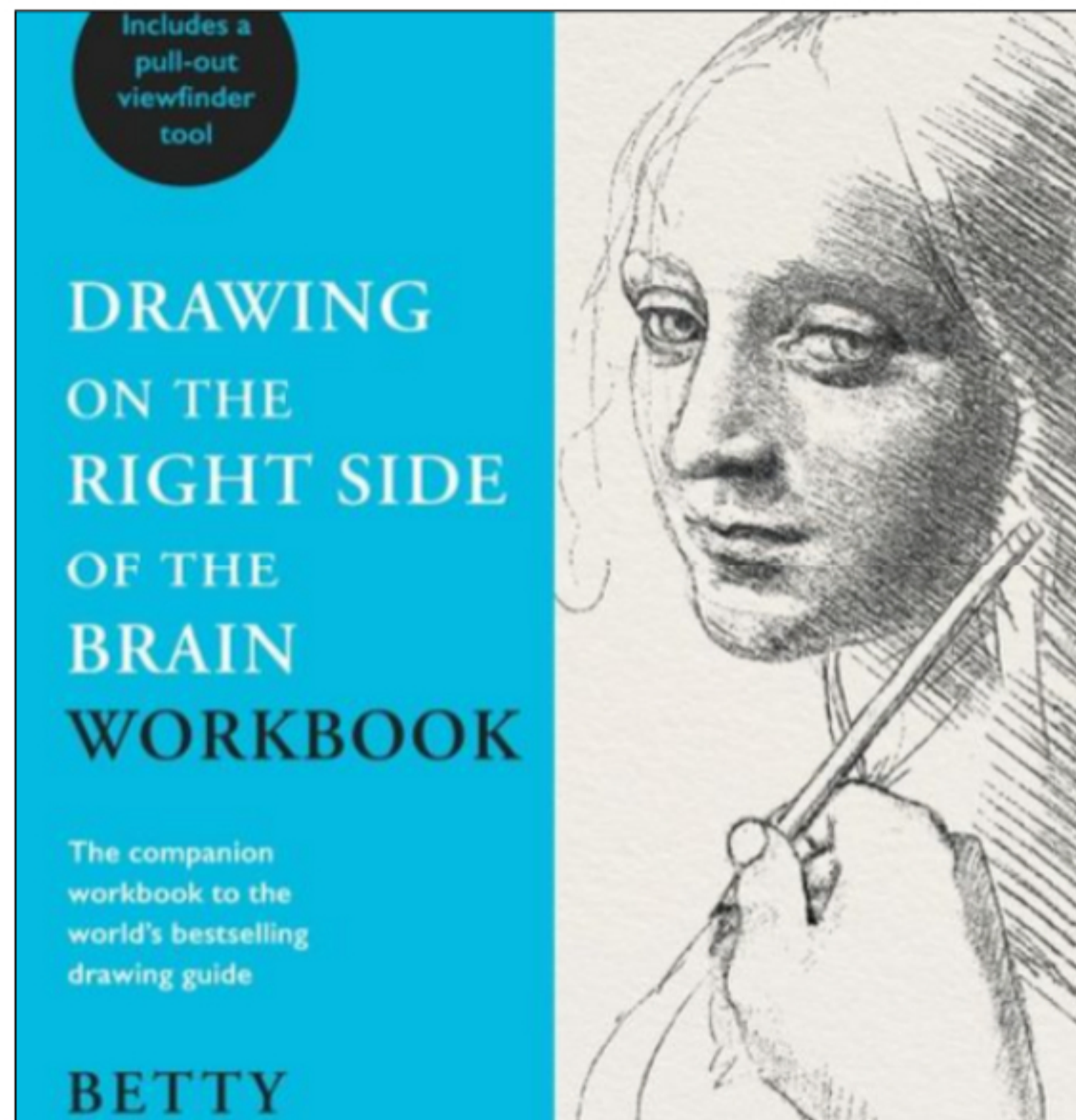
Karin Wamboldt

Interview

Leo-Art and the Courage to Play

Karin, do you remember the moment when you first felt, "Now my own artistic path is truly beginning"? What was happening within you at that time?

"After taking a beginner's watercolor course six years ago, I spent a lot of time improving my technique. I wasn't always so free with painting and used to get frustrated when results weren't great, which sometimes blocked me. But that was an important learning process every beginner goes through. Mistakes make you wiser, and detours deepen your knowledge of the terrain. With practice, I grew more confident. I let go of perfectionism and allowed myself to draw over paintings with fineliners or to splash paint without worrying whether it would ruin the image. I began experimenting more. During a vacation on the Algarve a year ago, I felt like I was really getting the hang of it. Friends and family gave me great feedback. That was when I felt ready to share my art with the world."

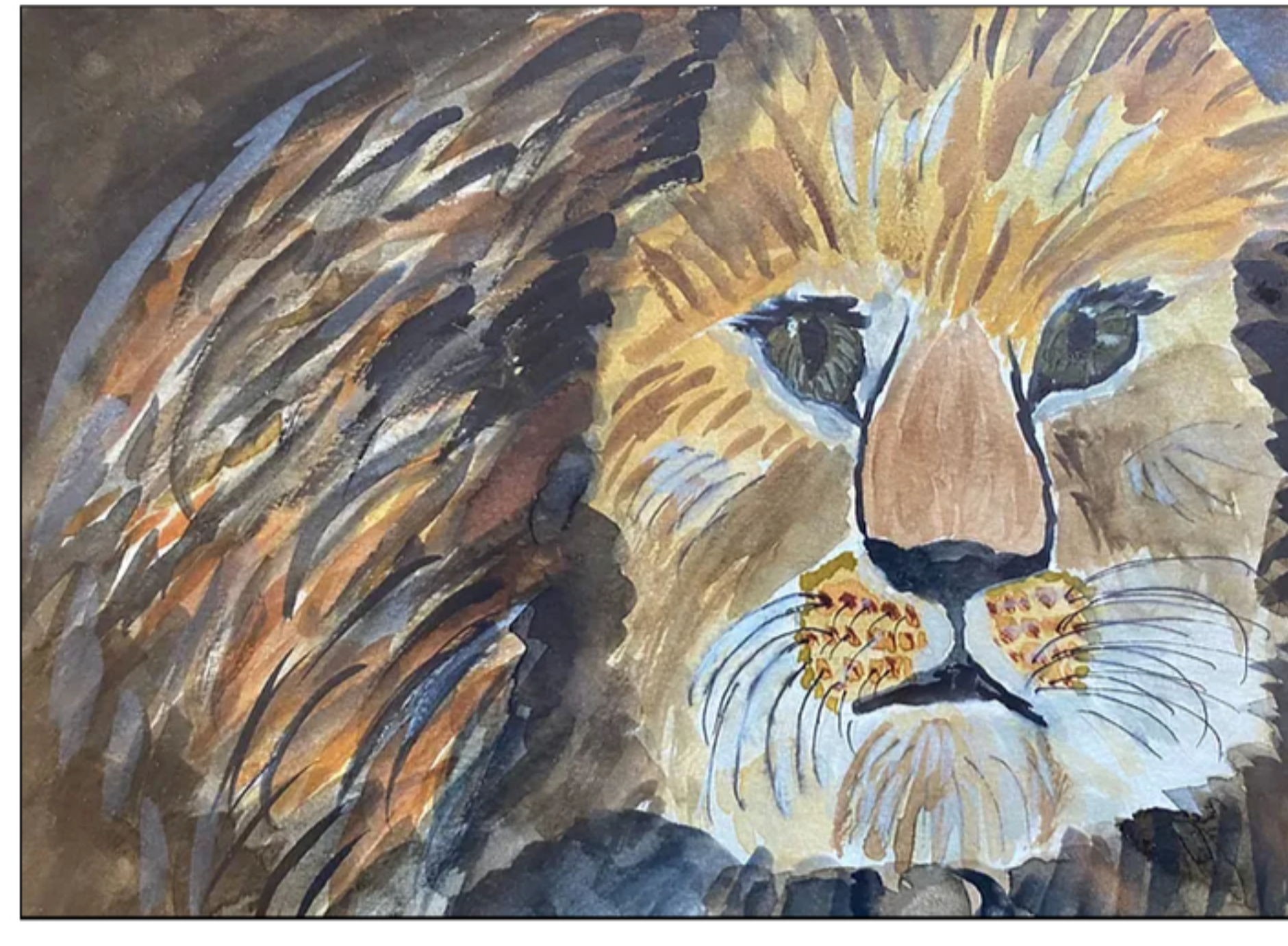


What touched or inspired you so much about Betty Edwards' book "Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain"? How did it change how you see drawing and perception?

"The book fascinated me immediately because I saw a direct link to my work as a learning therapist. In teacher training, I often use visual illusions like the vase-face illustration or ask participants to draw a star by only looking in a mirror. It shows how subjective our visual perception is and how the brain can deceive us. Edwards' method of turning images upside down to activate visual processing also intrigued me. I use Brain Gym exercises to improve brain integration in children with learning difficulties—most of them are strong in right-brain functions like spatial awareness, music, imagination, and creativity. Many artists and creatives, even geniuses, had dyslexia or ADHD. What was exciting for me personally was that, as a beginner in drawing and watercolor, I could apply the same perceptual techniques I teach in therapy to myself. My visual training helped me a lot with learning to draw."

You call your style "Leo-Art"—a bold and striking name! How did you come up with it, and what does it mean to you?

"I thought about what concept fits my character. I'm a Leo, and I've always liked this sign. As a child, I wore a silver lion pendant. To me, the lion symbolizes inner strength, autonomy, values, and the courage to go my own unconventional way. An astrological personality analysis once said that Leos value personal freedom above all. If I feel restricted, an inner rebel awakens. I once saw a lion image on my computer—a wild mane, piercing eyes. I recreated and modified it so that it became a kind of human-animal hybrid. I thought: "That's it! That's Leo-Art!" It felt authentic. I don't copy others—I paint in my own style."



You say your paintings emerge from emotional impulses. How does it feel in the moment when you know: "This needs to be put on paper"?

"Let me describe a moment from my last vacation in Portugal: I woke up early and saw an unreal, intense yellow light outside. I stepped out to a lily pond surrounded by mangroves. The sun was rising, birds were waking, and the atmosphere was so peaceful. I thought, "What a magical moment!" I absolutely had to capture it in a painting. Every time I look at the image now, I can return to that emotion."

Your work as a learning therapist sounds very mindful and creative. Are there moments when painting reinforces or inspires your therapeutic work?

"Many of the children and teens I work with suffer greatly from their learning difficulties. They often try to avoid challenges and have low self-esteem. Emotional access is crucial—and creativity plays a key role. Many kids are good at drawing or crafts (right brain). I once worked with a very shy Moroccan girl who lacked confidence. We painted "grid pictures"—transferring animals into a grid. She colored them with neon tones, like a "neon pelican." I started calling her the "Neon Queen," and from then on, she insisted on painting a "neon picture" in every session. I also create posters with them themed "Mistakes are Helpers," turning the word "Fehler" (mistake) into "Helfer" (helper). It's a great way to talk about how making mistakes is part of learning. Some kids even comment on the paintings in my waiting room, and we talk about them. At the end of therapy, many children gift me drawings—which always warms my heart."

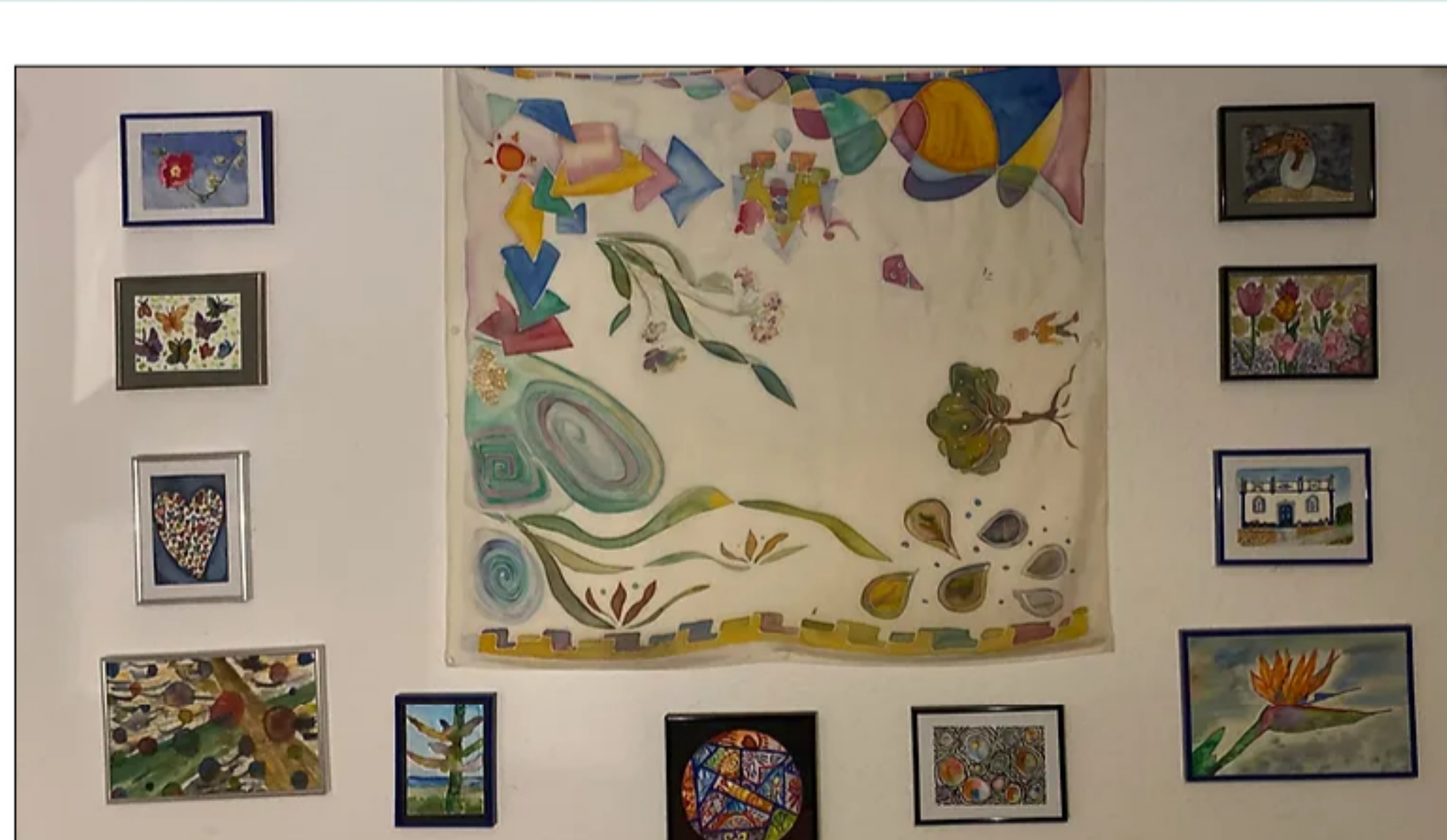


Have there been times of doubt on your artistic path? And if so, what helped you to keep going?

"I never doubted my creativity—I've always had ideas and loved making things. But I was a shy, anxious child from a modest background. We didn't have much money or space at home, and I often felt overshadowed by my older sister. I found freedom outside, in nature. Getting my high school diploma and later going to university wasn't a given—I had to fight for it. Attending a progressive upper school was liberating for me. I was curious, ambitious, and wanted to do well—and I did. That's the strong-willed Leo again! I later doubted my career path when I quit my job to become self-employed as a therapist. It was a leap into the unknown. But I wanted to work differently—more freely, more deeply. It paid off: I've been working in this field for almost 30 years and love it. I did have doubts when I thought about submitting to Lumen Art Gallery competitions. Are my works good enough? Will anyone even care about what I do as a "hobby artist"? But then I thought: "Just go for it. What's the worst that could happen?" Now I'm curious where this journey will take me."

Your paintings often convey a certain lightness, sometimes even with a wink. Is humor a conscious part of your artistic expression?

"Humor is part of my personality, so naturally it finds its way into my artwork. Let me give you an example: I submitted a piece I found quite humorous for the theme "Demons and Darlings", but it wasn't selected. I'd like to share what went through my mind while painting it: the image shows a baby crocodile struggling to push itself out of its egg. The little croc has a daring look in its eyes, and its tiny mouth with sharp little teeth seems to grin mischievously. You could even add a cartoon-like thought bubble saying, "Just wait until I'm all grown up!" For me, that picture captured the theme "Demons and Darlings" in one go – the fearsome grown crocodile and the adorable baby croc. It made me laugh! Humor turns our usual ways of thinking upside down. It is a lion's strength – and at times, a form of self-protection. Humor holds a mirror up to the absurdities of society."



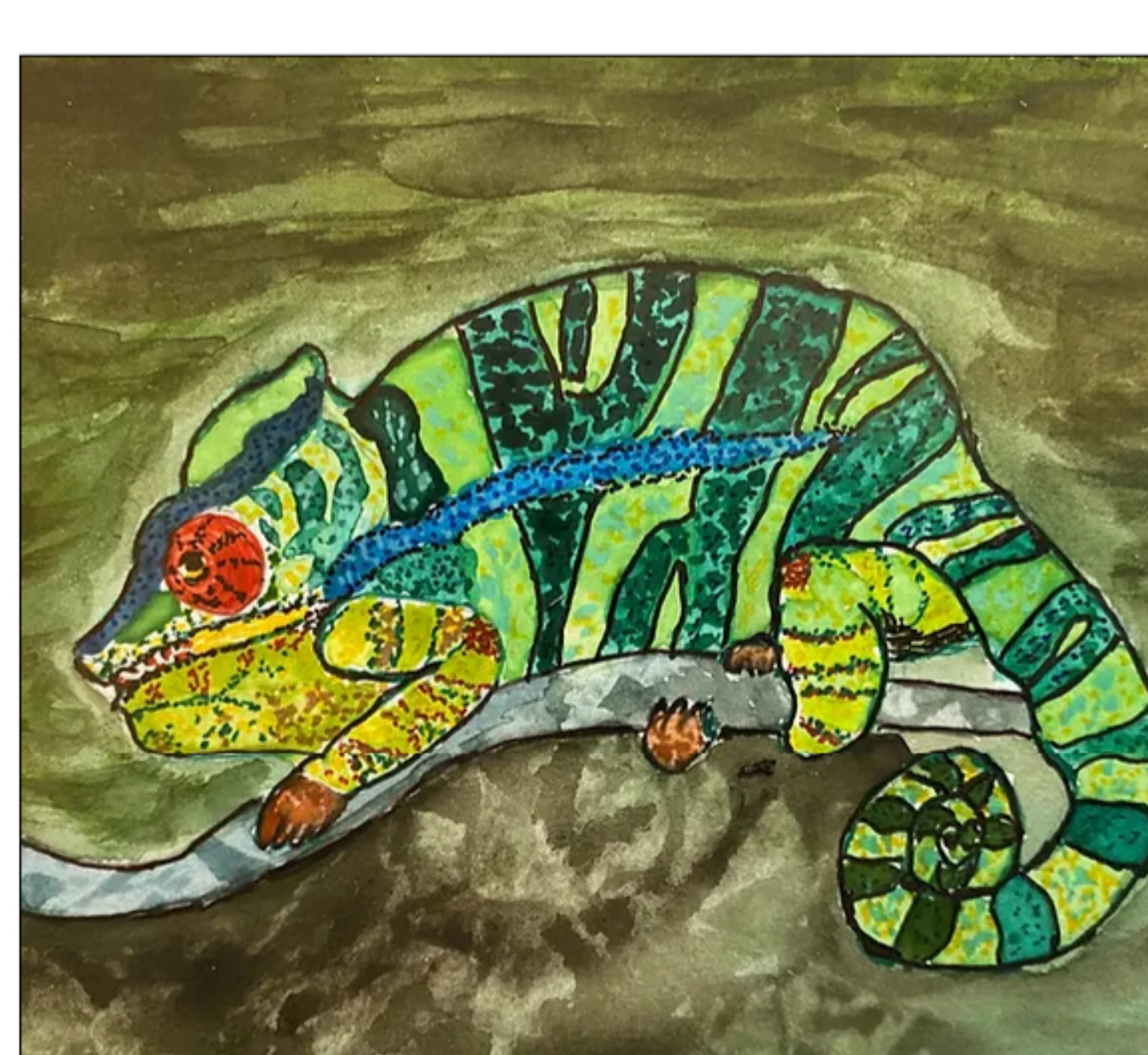
How do you approach the desire to grow artistically, and will you continue working with watercolor?

"I'm planning to get some acrylic paints soon and try out the technique to see if it suits me – that will be a whole new territory for me. I still love working with watercolors, because the way the colors blend and flow often creates beautiful effects that spark the imagination. I'll definitely stay connected to watercolor, as it suits me so well."

What would you like to convey through your art, especially in times that challenge us all?

"We live in challenging times. Sometimes you just want to pull the covers over your head and stop listening to all the negative news. As a kind of counterpoint to the constant images of war and destruction, I painted a piece called "City of Peace". I felt much better afterwards. Art can be a source of mental strength – it helps me focus on something beautiful, shift my thoughts, and gain perspective. Fear paralyzes us, but through creativity, we start acting again. Taking action and offering counter-narratives has become more important than ever for the sake of our democracies. I'd like to end with an African proverb:

–Many small people, in many small places, who do many small things, can change the face of the world.–"



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