Barbara Bónyai

Interdisciplinary Visual Artist

www.barbarabonyai.art



Email: barbarabonyai@gmail.com

Barbara Bónyai

Born in 1975 in Budapest, Hungary Resides and works in Budakeszi, Hungary

Barbara Bónyai is a Hungarian sculptor and multimedia artist based in Budakeszi, Hungary. She holds a higher education degree in Sculpture from the Hungarian University of Fine Arts, where she studied under the renowned sculptor György Jovánovics. Bónyai's artistic practice spans various mediums, including sculpture, painting, installation, video and performance art, with a particular focus on interdisciplinary approaches. She is best known for her conceptual and interactive installations, blending elements of digital media, sculpture, and performance.

Bónyai's work explores themes of identity, alienation, and social paradoxes, often employing upcycling and material experimentation. Her art focuses on the intersection of traditional and digital media, and she often creates site-specific installations and performances. Among her most significant works are Contemplatio 2001, a conceptual and interactive installation, and Value-enhancing Upcycling (2016), a performance-installation that reflects her interest in sustainability, the transformation of everyday materials, and marginal subcultures. Her series of artworks and performances, such as Tao-ship (1997) and Temple (1996), further showcase her unique approach to blending visual art with performance. Her work often resists categorization, instead inviting viewers into a layered and immersive experience that challenges conventional boundaries.

Barbara Bónyai has participated in numerous solo and group exhibitions both in Hungary and internationally. Her solo exhibitions include PANSEXCEXCOXBOX (2002) at the Kirakat Gallery and Rite (2016) at the Vörösmarty Theatre. She has also participated in numerous group exhibitions, including Circus Flow in Visegrád (2021) and the Gadjos and Chavos at Artus Studio in Budapest (2010). Bónyai's works are featured in various collections, and she has made a significant contribution to the Hungarian contemporary art scene with her innovative approach to art-making and performance.

Education/training:

1995-2001: MA in Sculpture, Hungarian University of Fine Arts, Budapest, Hungary

1994-1995: Studies in Fine Art Graphics, Hungarian University of Fine Arts, Budapest, Hungary

1993-1994: Window Display and Visual Merchandising, Vocational School, Budapest, Hungary

1989-1993: Graphic Design graduation, Secondary School of Arts, Nyíregyháza, Hungary

Selected solo exhibitions:

2025, Calvary, Saint Anthony's Forest Stations of the Cross, Sárvár-Sitke, Haraszti Forest, Hungary

2016, Rite / "Where is the stage: inside or outside?", Vörösmarty Theatre, Székesfehérvár, Hungary

2016, Value-enhancing Upcycling, Schmidt & Kerekes Wine Bar, Budakeszi, Hungary

2002, PANSEXCEXCOXBOX, Institute for Computer Science and Automation, Kirakat Gallery, Budapest, Hungary

2001, Contemplatio, Epreskert, Parthenon Frieze Room, Hungarian University of Fine Arts, Budapest, Hungary

1998, Alpha Analysis, Aula, Hungarian University of Fine Arts, Budapest, Hungary

1997, Tao-ship, Epreskert, Calvary Room, Hungarian University of Fine Arts, Budapest, Hungary

1995, Two Persons, Three Faces, Epreskert, Calvary Room, Hungarian University of Fine Arts, Budapest, Hungary

Selected group exhibitions:

2022, 2nd Budapest Illustration Festival, 7th Szeklerland Graphic Biennale, Szekler Museum, Miercurea Ciuc, Romania

2021, Graphifest - 19th Golden Drawing Pin Exhibition, MOME Ground Gallery, Budapest, Hungary

2021, Graphifest - 2nd Budapest Illustration Festival Exhibition, MOME Ground Gallery, Budapest, Hungary

2021, CIRCUS FLOW, Circus - Art - Creation Exhibition, Collection Exhibition, Visegrád, Hungary

2010, Gadjos and Chavos, Artus Studio, Autumn Salon, Budapest, Hungary

2007, Values of Our Dwelling, Erkel Ferenc Cultural Centre, Budakeszi, Hungary

2006, I Am Not, But My Mind Is Free, Theatre and Performance Tent, Pepsi Sziget Festival, Budapest, Hungary

2006, Budakeszi Drawing, Erkel Ferenc Cultural Centre, Budakeszi, Hungary

2002, Trans Sexual Express, Műcsarnok, Budapest, Hungary

1999, The Last May Day of the Millennium, Millennium Salon, Olof Palme House, Budapest, Hungary

1998, Camera Circulata, Epreskert, Hungarian University of Fine Arts, Budapest, Hungary

1997, The Book of Foreign Waters, Epreskert, Hungarian University of Fine Arts, Budapest, Hungary

1997, 28 Faces of a Woman, Collegium Hungaricum, Vienna, Austria

1996, Temple, Theoréma Theatre, Vörösmarty Cultural Centre, Budapest, Hungary

1995, 2nd National Pastel Biennale, (graphics), Esztergom, Hungary

Selected collections:

Magyar Cirkuszművészeti Múzeum, Budapest, Hungary

Barbara Bónyai is collected by various private collectors in Hungary, United States of America, Netherlands, Austria.

Selected awards:

2021, Honorable mention, National Centre for Circus Arts and MANK Hungarian Arts Nonprofit LLC, Budapest, Hungary.

2021, Selected for the 19th Golden Drawing Pin Award for Graphic Design Competition and Exhibition, Budapest, Hungary

2021, Selected for the 2nd Budapest Illustration Festival as part of Graphifest, Budapest, Hungary

2007, Finalist in the "Values of Our Dwelling" competition, Budakeszi Culture Foundation, Budakeszi, Hungary

2001, MAOE Diploma Award, Association of Hungarian Fine and Applied Artists (MAOE), Budapest, Hungary

1999, Selected for the "The Last May Day of the Millennium" exhibition and competition, Szinyei Merse Pal Society 1920/1992 and Le Club Contemporary Gallery, Millennium Salon, Olof Palme House, Budapest, Hungary

Selected press:

Kozma, Ágnes, Radio interview with Barbara Bónyai in Vörösmarty Rádió (published in 2016) available at https://soundcloud.com/b-nyai-barb/bonyai-barbara-riport-201611 consulted on 12 April 2025.

Lavor, ""WHEN I FALL, THEY CATCH ME" – Interview with visual artist Barbó Bónyai on her spiritual caricatures and new exhibition", in RNR666.hu (published in 2016), available at: https://www.rnr666.hu/sixline/20160706/amikor-zuhanok-elkapnak-interju-bonyai-barbo-kepzomuvesszel-spiritualis-karikaturai-es-uj-kiallitasa-kapcsan consulted on 11 April 2025.

Buda Region Television, Unknown Familiar: Barbara Bónyai, in Buda Környéki Televízió (BKTV) (published on 11 August 2016), available at https://youtu.be/SH NHvGclel consulted on 12 April 2025.

"Art in Shop Windows Across Europe", art web page, Kirakat Gallery, 2002.

Featuring Barbara Bónyai's PANSEXCEXCOXBOX (multimedia public street art installation and performance),

Institute for Computer Science and Automation, Budapest, Hungary.

Available at: http://old.sztaki.hu/providers/kirakat/ consulted on 12 April 2025.

Bibliography:

2nd Budapest Illustration Festival Exhibition Catalogue, Budapest, Hungary, 2021.

Graphifest - 19th Golden Drawing Pin Exhibition Catalogue, Budapest, Hungary, 2021.

CIRCUS FLOW, Circus - Art - Creation Exhibition Catalogue, Budapest, Hungary, 2021.

Budakeszi Drawing Exhibition Catalogue, Budakeszi, Hungary, 2006.

Budakeszi Dreams Exhibition Catalogue, Budakeszi, Hungary, 2005

Hemrik, László. "An instructive day at the Epreskert: Sculptors' diploma pieces." Új Művészet – Art Today, vol. 12, no. 9 (September 2001): 15.

Paksi, Endre Lehel. "Bónyai Barbara." In M.A. Catalogue 2001: The Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts, Department of Sculpture, 4–5. Budapest: Rector of the Hungarian University of Fine Arts, 2001.

2nd National Pastel Biennale Exhibition Catalogue, Esztergom, Hungary, 1995.

Professional contributions:

Barbara Bónyai, "The Zen of Art", in: Q comic magazine, Issue #5. Budapest: Q Kiadó, 2023. [illustrator]
Barbara Bónyai, "Deadly Stories + T. Deshimaru, The Practice of the Path", in: Q comic magazine, Issue #4. Budapest: Q Kiadó, 2022. [illustrator]

Barbara Bónyai, "3 Zen Koans Based on Gyomay M. Kubose", In: Q comic magazine, Issue #3. Budapest: Q Kiadó, 2020. [illustrator] Edina Takács, Bortarot (Wine Tarot), ISBN 97896308-88981, Tordas: self-publishing, 2014. [DTP, book and card deck illustrator] available at: http://borszeansz.hu



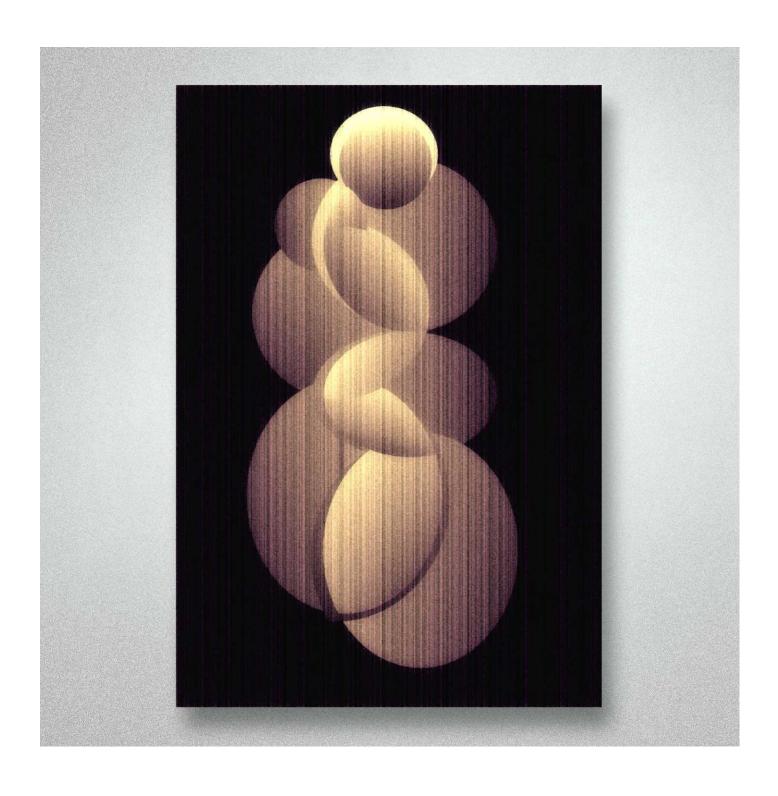
Synthetic Reverb (still frames), 2025

Mixed-media video installation, (oil on canvas, digital graphic and photography, glitch animation, screen-based work) — Painting: 500 x 400 mm; Video: variable duration (1–6 min), HD, 16:9 / 4:3

Synthetic Reverb is an intermedial, process-based video installation that explores the intersection of memory, identity, and digital transience. The work originates from a commissioned oil painting of a deceased father, rendered in a Renaissance-inspired style. Documenting each stage of its creation, Bónyai transforms the painting into an animated sequence that ultimately collapses through glitch aesthetics — symbolising the instability of representation and the disintegration of analogue memory in a digital age.

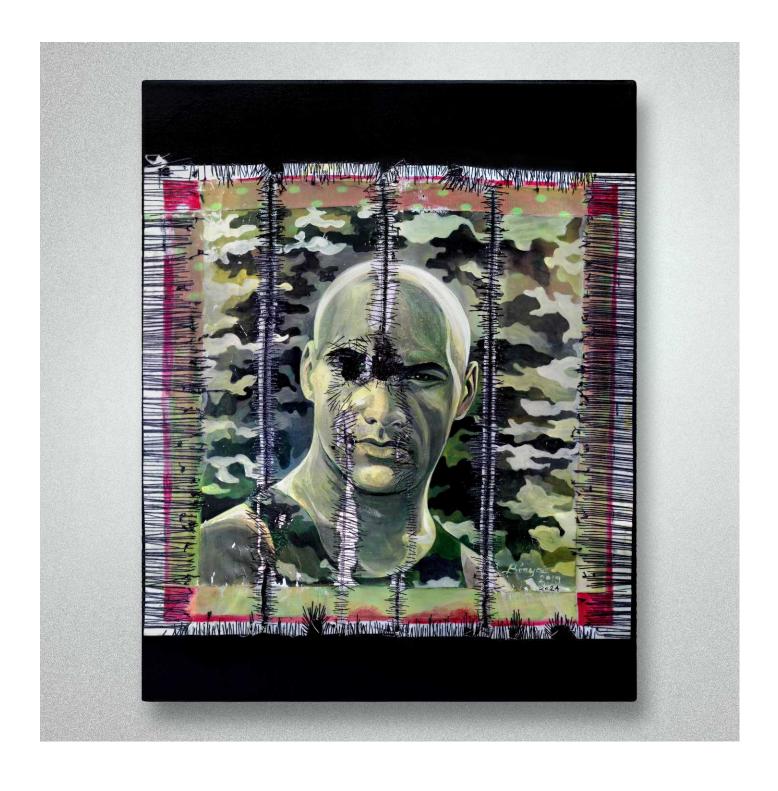
Blending traditional portraiture, documentary photography, and experimental animation, the piece reflects an interdisciplinary approach that bridges private remembrance and broader cultural critique. The subject's modest, late-socialist clothing subtly disrupts the classical setting, generating a temporal tension that deepens the work's emotional and conceptual impact.

Rather than a static image, Synthetic Reverb offers a durational, performative encounter with transformation. The glitch — used not just as a visual effect but as narrative rupture — gestures toward loss, entropy, and the fragility of personal and digital legacies. By merging intimate ritual with formal experimentation, the work reimagines the portrait as a dynamic site of memory and metamorphosis.









Life is no piece of cake, 2024

Conceptual mixed media performance. Acrylic on printed synthetic canvas (mass-produced IKEA-type decorative image), cutting, burning, black thread stitching, varnish — 500 × 400 mm

Barbara Bónyai's Life is No Piece of Cake is a conceptual mixed media performance that traces a poetic arc from personal trauma to symbolic restoration. The work begins with a traditionally painted portrait of the artist's sibling—layered over a mass-produced image of a pink dessert. This ironic surface immediately challenges notions of emotional authenticity and reflects on the commodification of sentiment within visual culture. The subject's violent destruction of the portrait—cutting, burning, and discarding it—triggers a transformation: from image to performance, from rupture to ritual.

Bónyai collects the torn fragments and meticulously stitches them together using black thread, initiating an act of psychic and material reparation. The reassembled image is then sewn onto a new support: a traditional stretcher-mounted canvas, primed with glossy black acrylic paint. This dark, reflective background deepens the emotional resonance of the piece, evoking unconscious depths, mourning, and symbolic rebirth. The stitching becomes a visible scar that binds trauma into form—both a metaphor for psychic rupture and a gesture of inner reconfiguration.

Through painting, destruction, reassembly, and orchestrated lighting, Life is No Piece of Cake occupies the intersection of conceptual painting, performance art, and installation. The dynamic illumination reveals a shifting facial presence—at times grotesque, at times serene—underscoring the layered, unstable nature of identity. The work resonates with urgent contemporary concerns: the violence of representation, the reconstruction of familial trauma, and the reparative capacity of art itself.

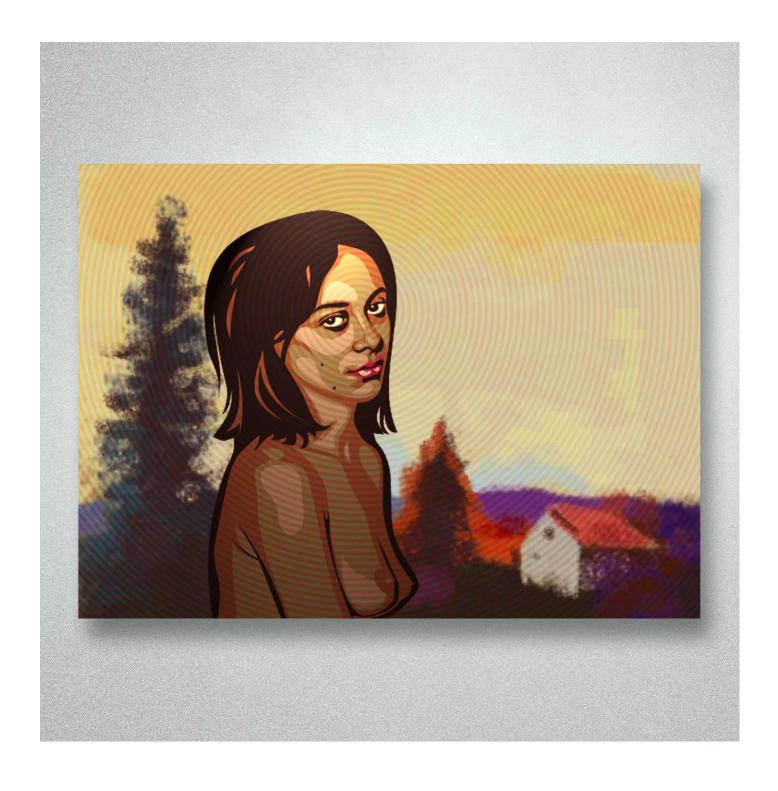










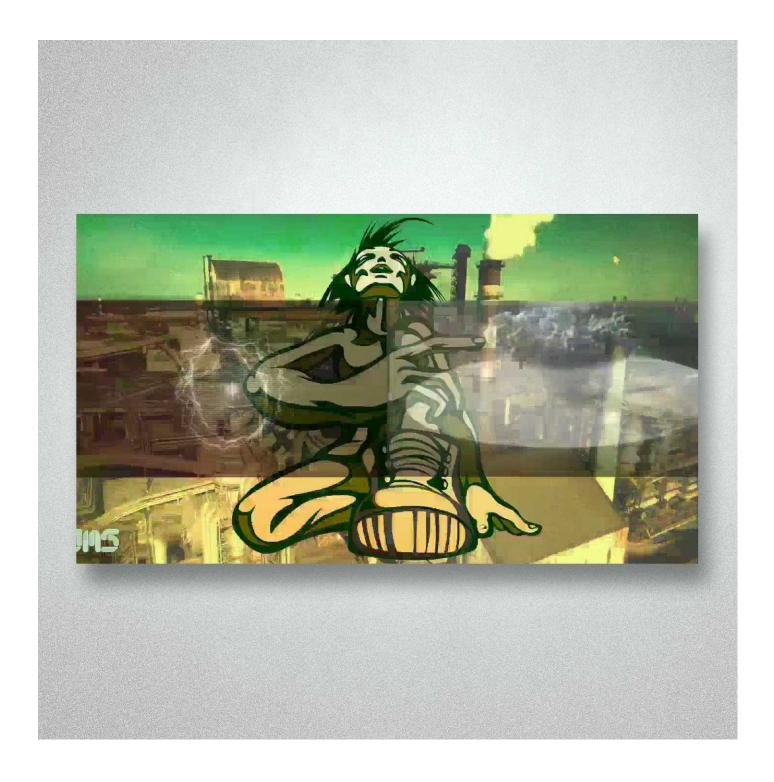


The muse of the muse's muse No. 3, 2022

Digital gestural painting and digital collage, enlarged canvas prints — 600 x 821 mm

The Muse of the Muse's Muse (2022) is an interdisciplinary visual exploration situated at the intersection of digital gesture, spatial memory, and the aesthetics of technical constraint. The works consist of miniature digital landscapes—approximately 3×3 cm in size—created using fingertip movements on a smartphone screen, with the Instagram brush tool. The use of a non-professional digital device emphasizes immediacy and physicality, compressing painterly gestures into intimate micro-movements. Once enlarged and printed on canvas, these tactile digital images undergo a shift in scale and context, resulting in a visual paradox: ephemeral gestures transformed into monumental presences that retain the abstraction and flatness characteristic of the digital surface.

In the compositions, vector-based portraits—two self-referential and one of a close acquaintance—are integrated into the landscapes, each centered with a radial engraving-like texture. The layering of portrait and terrain produces a hybrid spatial field where identity and environment converge. Rather than aiming for illustrative polish, the images foreground conceptual tension through the fusion of gestural mark-making, vectorial structure, and textural manipulation. The series functions as a visual journal, mapping subjective presence through reduced digital means and offering an inquiry into the expressive capacities of post-analog image-making.



Falling Into Atoms (still frame), 2024

HD digital video with self-composed sound, vector graphics, animation, glitch techniques — 1280 × 720 px, duration: 3'38"

Falling into Atoms is a densely layered audiovisual composition that explores the alienating effects of digital culture and the sense of social dislocation through the raw language of glitch art and noise techno. At its core is a cyberpunk character design — a seated figure drawn from a distorted low-angle perspective — that repeatedly dissolves into pixels, pulses, inverts, or disintegrates into a matrix of visual noise, while industrial landscapes, nuclear reactors, toroidal forms, and erupting atomic clouds throb and flicker in its surroundings.

The chaotic rhythm of the visual structure resonates with the sound composition, which is built on a fast-paced glitch noise techno foundation. Severely manipulated vocal fragments — including the repeated phrase "realize that" — are rendered nearly incomprehensible, while reverberant, aria-like vocal improvisations evoke a haunting tension between reason and emotion, the mechanical and the human, the sacred and the profane. The work thus unfolds in an intermedial space where scientific symbolism (nuclear fission, reactors) intersects with the fragmented experience of digital identity.

Falling into Atoms engages not only with the aesthetic vocabularies of glitch art and cyberpunk, but also with philosophical questions concerning the body, identity, and the future of society in a technology-dominated, fractured reality. The pixelated dissolution of the central figure becomes a metaphor for the breakdown of self within digital space, while the recurring imagery of industrial and nuclear landscapes reflects the self-perpetuating destructive mechanisms of civilization.

This work aligns organically with the artist's broader practice, continuing an ongoing investigation into technological media and the dissolution of boundaries between sonic and visual disciplines. Following the trajectory of earlier performative and installative works, Falling into Atoms marks a further step toward a dystopian vision, a critique of the digital world, and an abstract visualization of inner psychic states.



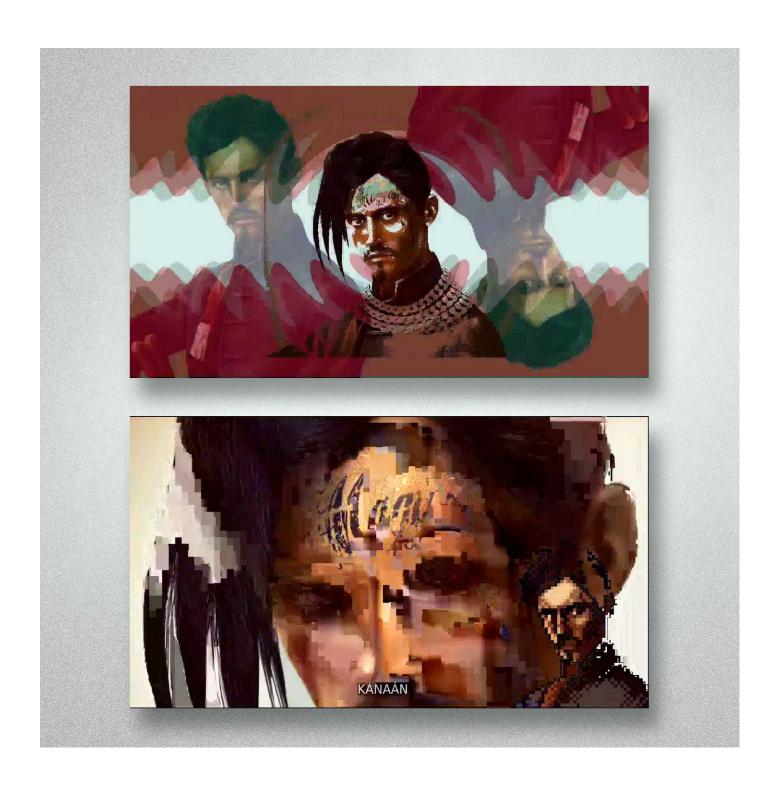
Worknoise (still frame), 2024

HD digital video with self-composed sound, performance, glitch techniques — 1280×720 px, duration: 2'34''

Worknoise is a conceptually driven video work that explores the intersection of physical labor, digital abstraction, and performative gesture. Composed as a nine-channel visual matrix, the piece fragments and reassembles footage of the artist's own manual processes—sawing, carving, painting, constructing—into a glitch-inflected digital collage. A recurring image of a sickle and hammer, derived from the artist's personal archive, functions not as an ideological emblem but as an archetypal symbol of the bond between body and tool. Through rhythmic editing, distortion effects, and matrixed layering, the video establishes a visual logic that resists linear narration, instead evoking the cyclicality and embodied temporality of work. The accompanying soundscape—a self-composed noise-techno composition built from the raw sonic residue of labor—transforms industrial noise into structured rhythm, allowing sound to become an equal agent in the abstraction of effort.

At the core of Worknoise lies a critical and poetic investigation into the symbolic, cultural, and spiritual dimensions of labor. The video repositions everyday physical actions as meditative and almost ritualistic, drawing upon a Zen-like awareness of rhythm, presence, and repetition. The glitch effects and fractured images evoke systems under strain, while the work's layered aesthetic suggests a convergence of craftsmanship and digital fragmentation. The sickle and hammer motif activates layers of cultural memory, reframing labor as a site of political, aesthetic, and transcendental inquiry. Positioned within the fields of digital art, experimental sound, and performative documentation, Worknoise offers not only a formal innovation but also a reflection on the entangled relationship between technology, creation, and the socio-spiritual resonance of work itself.

Watch online: https://youtu.be/fCviela9QnA



Petőfi's Canaan (still frames), 2022

HD digital video with self-composed sound, digital graphics, pixel art, glitch techniques — 1280×720 px, duration: 3'22''

Petőfi's Canaan is an audiovisual work that reinterprets one of the most iconic programmatic poems of 19th-century Hungarian literature — The Poets of the Nineteenth Century — through the lens of contemporary visual and sonic languages. At once homage and deconstruction, the piece synthesizes the political-poetic ethos of Sándor Petőfi with the urban visuality of the 21st century, drawing on hip-hop culture and the expressive affordances of digital technology. Created by Barbara Bónyai (Barbo Inject Q), the work engages in a canon-shifting intervention where Petőfi is not merely evoked as a historical figure, but reimagined as a living, transformed meme — a dark rapper, a glitch-entity, a post-iconographic construct.

At the core of the video lies a digitally reconstituted portrait of Petőfi, developed from the well-known daguerreotype, 19th-century paintings, and period descriptions. This image is visually and symbolically overwritten: through the aesthetic language of hip-hop – including chains, tattoos, teardrops – the figure of the national poet is recontextualized as a voice of the people and a moral leader. The video's visual strata are layered with pixel art animation, noise-based glitch effects, and low-resolution textures, evoking a sense of medial dystopia and referencing the deferred arrival of a collective Canaan. In the sound composition, Petőfi's poem is transformed structurally and thematically into rap form, with the fifth stanza recurring as a refrain – asserting the enduring urgency of the struggle for social justice.

Petőfi's Canaan does not aim to illustrate the poem, but rather to rewrite it. The work resists aesthetic servitude and instead seeks a conceptual extension of the original text. This transmedial gesture not only contemporizes Petőfi's artistic radicalism but also offers a reflection on the role of the artist within the postmedia, late-capitalist public sphere. The piece emerges simultaneously as historical reconstruction, identity-political statement, and visual manifesto.

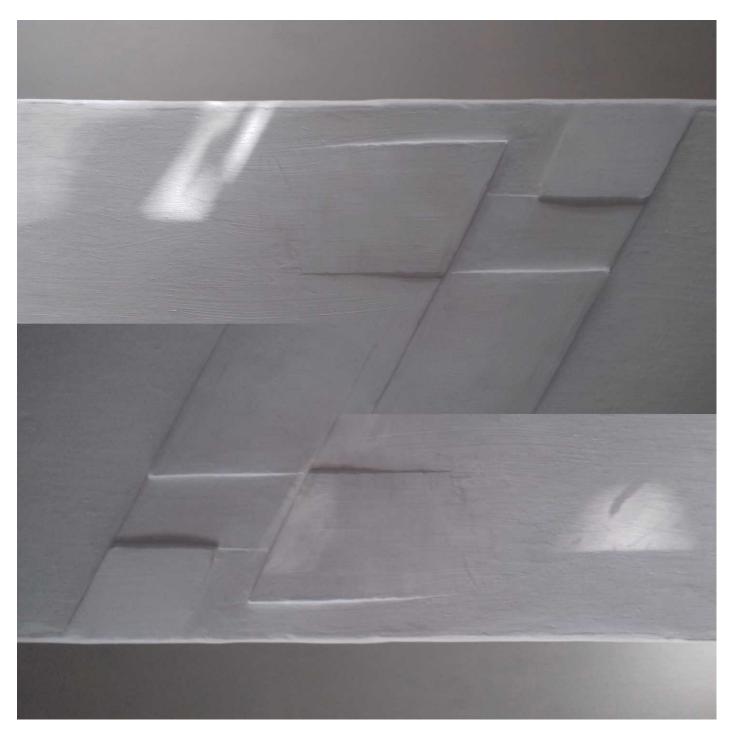


Greetings from 3021 (still frames), 2021

HD digital video, digital graphics, animation — 1280 × 720 px, duration: 0'59"

Greetings from 3021 is a one-minute video that interlaces the visual imagination of the present with that of a distant future through animated digital landscapes and a layered soundscape. At its center is a liminal space where nature, architecture, and human presence form a coherent, ecologically balanced whole—an idealized environment that resists dystopian narratives. The imagery is rooted in the rural outskirts of Budajenő, the Hungarian village where the artist grew up. These familiar hills, vineyards, and modest buildings are reimagined in 3021 as self-sustaining, energy-generating colonies inspired by both vernacular mud architecture and Gaudí's organic forms. The designs themselves were not derived from conventional architectural planning, but from a performative process of chance: while living unhoused in Barcelona in the 1990s, the artist used playing cards to generate nodal coordinates, allowing randomness to shape speculative structures—a fusion of intuitive authorship and surrendered control.

The work is presented as a series of digital postcards, extending greetings across centuries. It proposes a future not of technological dominance, but of restrained innovation and mutual respect between humanity and nature. Field recordings of native animal voices blur the boundary between the real and the imagined, while geometric Spidron-forms—derived from Hungarian designer Dániel Erdély's spatial invention—populate the sky, symbolizing interdisciplinary creativity as a force for resilience. Greetings from 3021 is both poetic and conceptually rigorous: a vision of the future as a fragile yet hopeful construct—one that demands not only invention and intelligence, but also care, humility, and ecological responsibility.



The Distance of Years, 2001-2024

Site-specific mural relief, mixed media, conceptual installation, time-based documentation, digital collage — 400 x 400 x 15 mm

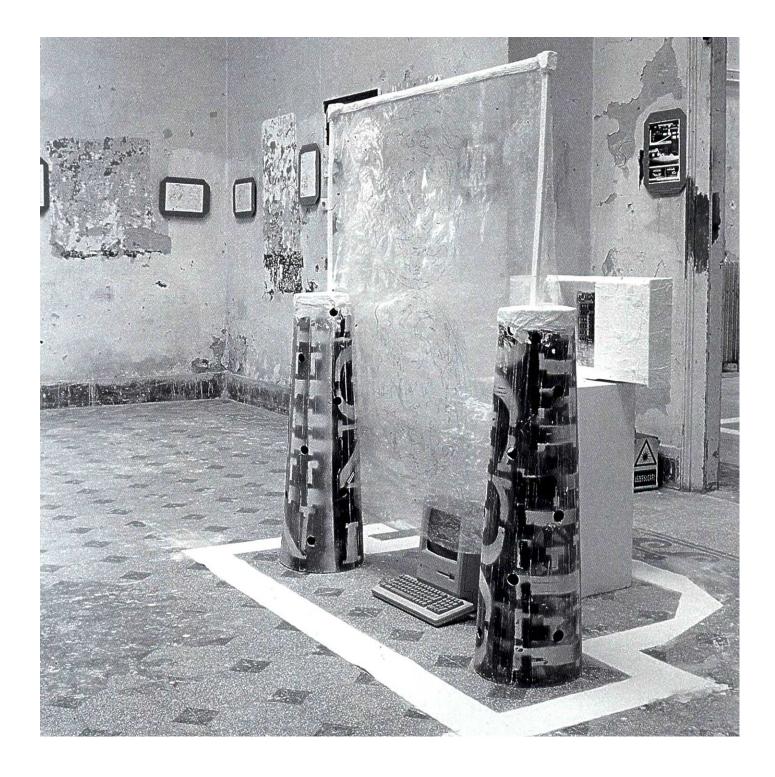
Barbara Bónyai's The Distance of Years is a conceptual sculptural installation spanning a temporal arc of twenty-three years. The work is embedded—both literally and metaphorically—into the wall of a private living space. On September 18 and 24, 2001, precisely at 4:30 p.m., the artist documented the projection of sunlight and the shadow of the window frame as they fell across the wall of her small room. This ephemeral wall drawing, a kind of time-stamp in light and shadow, not only endured but later transformed.

In September 2024, on the exact same dates and at the same hour, Bónyai photographed the light's trajectory anew—this time on a modified, sculpturally articulated surface that had been reshaped into a planar relief. The result is a spatial structure with a distinctly constructivist sensibility. Yet the new composition does not merely re-enact a moment from the past: it responds to the subtle shifts of planetary mechanics. Due to the Earth's axial precession, the projected light now strikes the wall approximately five centimeters off from where it did in 2001. The work thereby renders cosmic-scale temporal drift visible within the confines of an intimate, domestic interior.

The final gesture—the artist painting over the relief in white lime—performs a dual function: it conceals and preserves, erases and archives. As such, the work becomes a palimpsest of time, memory, and light.

Though permanently situated in a private home and thus inaccessible to the public, The Distance of Years lives on through its documentation—photographs, digital collages, and textual narrative—becoming, paradoxically, more widely shareable through its physical inaccessibility. This tension between visibility and concealment is itself part of the work's conceptual and poetic register. What emerges is a mural conceptual piece that speaks of time, remembrance, and the shifting scales of human and cosmic experience, using radically minimal means.

More than site-specific, The Distance of Years is also time-specific and light-specific. Its materiality is composed of sunlight, orientation, temporal passage, and recollection. Through its documentation, the ephemeral becomes archival, the private becomes universal, and the concealed becomes communicable.



Contemplatio, 2001

Mixed installation project — 2000 x 9000 x 9000 mm

This large-scale, meditative installation transposes the visual and spiritual legacy of the digital and post-industrial eras into a space imbued with sacral function. At its conceptual core lies the question of how obsolete technological remnants, industrial debris, and digital peripherals can be recontextualized to generate new layers of meaning within a spiritually charged spatial composition. The materials—plaster, wax, metal, circuit boards, cardboard, plexiglass—are layered and often patinated or partially excavated, functioning as imprints of time, while the spatial structure echoes typologies of the altar, the sanctuary, and the ritual path.

The choreography of the space intertwines the contemplative tradition of Zen Buddhism with strategies of subcultural performativity. The pathways and zones that guide the visitor's movement reflect an inner journey, where the interaction between body and consciousness becomes a sculptural medium in itself. Hand-drawn symbols, diagrams, archaic constellations, and the aesthetics of low-tech digital devices generate a sacred aura around the objects—proposing a new mythology of peripheral existence within the context of forgotten tools and alternative spiritual systems.

The conceptual proposition of the project lies in its departure from a materially bound notion of sculpture toward a spatial-temporal, motion- and consciousness-oriented process. The installation does not merely present a collection of objects; rather, it articulates a complex visual language that fuses autonomous artistic existence with the collapse of techno-utopias and the deconstruction of religious and social frameworks. Within this intermedial system, the sacred and the discarded, contemplation and noise, the archaic and the digital residue are rendered ontologically equivalent.













