



AMARANTE ARANDA

portfolio 2026



*"It then seemed urgent to me to reclaim from the land of utopias
a valley of possibilities
that had been unimaginable until then."*

This excerpt is a free translation of the essay *Nous Sans l'Etat (Us without State)* by Yasnaya Elena Aguilar Gil, published by Ici Bas in 2022

Amarante Aranda is a Franco-Mexican artist who lives and works in Brussels.

She arrived in Belgium in 2015 and completed her master's degree at the Ecole de Recherche Graphique (ERG) in Brussels. In 2019, she moved to Mexico, where she was invited to participate in the Mucha Maleza collective's residency, *Preparar La Tierra*. She returned to Belgium in 2021, where she currently lives.

As a Franco-Mexican, her dual nationality permeates her practice and imagination. Painting is her medium of choice. Her work revolves around a reflection on belief systems such as founding narratives, ideologies, philosophy, and religions. How are these systems created? How do they take shape? How do they shape our relationship with the world? And above all, what are their consequences and impacts on living beings—that is, humans and non-humans?

In her work, references to Western art history intersect with popular, religious, mystical, and magical imagery, as well as archetypal symbols and forms.

Her reflections always begin with social issues. In her painting, she reappropriates the conventions of *history painting* through her compositions and their often monumental scale. Her confident stance is intended as a rebuke to the notion that female painters should be confined to *genre painting* (*still life, landscape, etc.*)

Similarly, she brings to the surface of her canvas subjects that were once confined to the background or used merely as decoration in the history of European art.

From the margins, she brings them to the center.

In this portfolio, you will find a mix of specific projects and pictorial experiments.

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AUTO PORTRAIT OU DYSMORPHIE GENERALISEE, 2025



Autoportrait ou dysmorphie généralisée, 2025

oil on cotton, 120×150 cm

selected for the exhibition *I am here - je suis là - ik ben hier*, Espace Vanderborcht, April–May 2026

" To be born a woman has been to be born, within an allotted and confined space, into the keeping of men. The social presence of women has developed as a result of their ingenuity in living under such tutelage within such a limited space. But this has been at the cost of a woman's self being split into two. A woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself (...).

And so she comes to consider the **surveyor** and the **surveyed** within her as the two constituent yet always distinct elements of her identity as a woman.

She has to survey everything she is and everything she does because how she appears to others, and ultimately how she appears to men, is of crucial importance for what is normally thought of as the success of her life.

(...)

One might simplify this by saying: **men act** and **women appear**. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male; the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object – and most particularly an object of vision: a sight."

Ways of seeing, John Berger, 1972

How can we define our identity as subjects when, from childhood, we have been taught to monitor ourselves? How can we claim a place that is supposedly given to us when, for centuries, we have hidden ourselves away?

In the history of European painting, women were confined to painting only what were termed "genre" paintings—that is, works considered less important than *history paintings* and *portraits*. Only men were permitted to tackle such edifying subjects.

Yet, in many still lifes created by women, one can observe, in the reflection of a glass, the portrait of a female painter. This work follows in the tradition of all those women who, through technical and subtle stratagems, thwarted the roles assigned to them.

This painting also offers a reflection on the *still life*. This pictorial genre emerged alongside the birth of modern capitalism with Columbus's arrival in the Americas and the establishment of the triangular trade. It celebrates the accumulation of wealth that the owners of these paintings could afford.

Here, a variety of species endemic to Mexico are present: avocados, cacao, chili peppers, cotton, tobacco, etc. The combination of still life and portraiture reflects a questioning of identity.

How do we construct our identity when our heritage positions us as both colonized and colonizers?

LO QUE EL MUNDO LE DEBE

A LA REPUBLICA DEMOCRATICA DEL CONGO, 2025

Partnership with the nonprofit organization Collecoble



Lo que el mundo le debe a la República Democrática del Congo, 2025

Mural on an exterior wall of the nonprofit organization *Amour et Sagesse*, 350x850cm

Diversity, Brussels

WHAT THE WORLD OWES

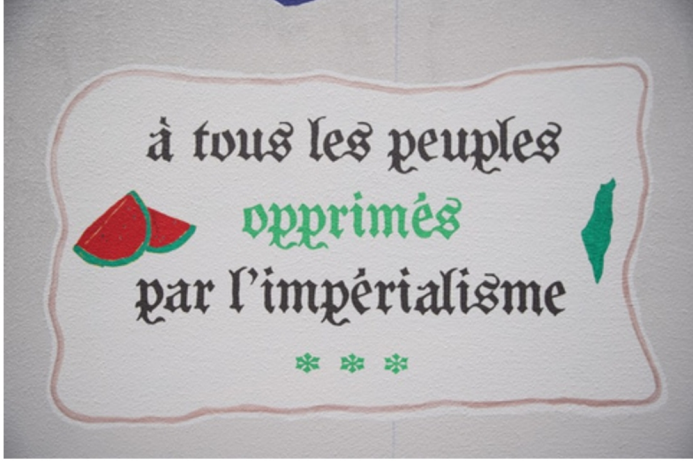
TO THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Following a commission from the Intergenerational Services Department of the municipality of Forest, in collaboration with the association Collecolle, we co-created a decolonial mural. We chose to focus on the history and current situation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to highlight Belgian colonization as well as the ongoing genocide, which is often overlooked.

The mural is both a tribute to the country's independence struggles and a spotlight on the phenomenon of rare-earth metal extraction. Cartography is reimagined here, with a multitude of minerals appearing before our eyes. In fact, the DRC is one of the world's richest countries in rare metals (cobalt, coltan, manganese, copper, tungsten, silver, uranium, tantalum, tin, gold, diamonds, etc.), yet it ranks among the ten poorest countries in the world.

The central phrase, *Lo que el mundo le debe a la República Democrática del Congo* echoes a mural by Diego Rivera located at the Palacio Nacional in Mexico City. There, Diego Rivera listed a collection of endemic species "that the world owes to Mexico."

The fresco establishes a direct link between colonial history, unbridled capitalism, the exploitation of rare metals, and the genocide suffered by a population.



FEUX DE JOIE, FIRE RIGHT NOW, 2024



Feux de joie, Fire right now, 2024

oil on cotton, 253*205 cm

View of the *Komorebi* exhibition, Artemisia Gallery, 2024

“ The idea that the state is the only possible option for organizing society is so pervasive that it has destroyed our ability to imagine even the slightest possibility of a different way of life. When we put forward these ideas, many people think we envision a stateless world in which transnational capital would govern public life, but that is not our point. We know that capitalism needs the state and liberal democracies to survive, since they provide it with a legal and ideological framework that makes it bearable. Capitalism needs the state to protect private property. ”

This excerpt is a free translation of the essay *Nous Sans l'Etat (Us without State)* by Yasnaya Elena Aguilar Gil, published by *Ici Bas* in 2022

How can we talk about nature without addressing the criminalization and violence faced by activists fighting against its destruction and exploitation?

What are the mechanisms the state relies on to carry out this repression, in order to protect public, personal, and/or private interests? The police and the military—in part.

Is it still possible to imagine a world without a state—and therefore without a police force or an army?

This painting is inspired by a photograph taken during the protest against the mega-reservoirs in March 2023 in Saint Soline (France). A protest during which French law enforcement once again demonstrated their bloodthirsty capacity to subdue, torture, flay, maim, repress, and harass without a second thought!

This police repression, with its bloody methods and strategies, was first tested in working-class neighborhoods and in the so-called DOM-TOM departments, only to be subsequently expanded and applied to activist struggles.

Thus, the title *Fire Right Now* refers to James Baldwin's book *Fire Next Time*. In it, the author paints an uncompromising picture of relations between different populations in the United States during segregation. Yet, although this work dates from 1963, its vision is more relevant than ever today in the West. In Europe, and especially in France, fascism is on the rise, and the climate of Islamophobia, anti-Black racism, and widespread racism is becoming more threatening by the day.

Officially, 5,015 tear gas grenades were fired, including 260 GM2L tear gas and stun grenades, 89 GENL crowd-dispersal grenades, 40 ASSR explosive devices, and 81 LBD rounds, according to the authorities.*

<https://desarmons.net/2023/03/30/apres-sainte-soline-il-ny-a-pas-darmes-de-paix/>

SAINT-JEAN BAPTISTE, 2024

on-site project in the municipality of Molenbeek



Saint Jean Baptiste, 2024
gouache on Japanese paper, 450*120 cm
view from the exhibition *Parcours d'Artistes*, Molenbeek Community Center, 2024

Saint John the Baptist is the patron saint of the town of Molenbeek. Accompanied by the Lamb of God, he points his finger toward the sky, symbolizing God's greatness. Known for his aversion to power and the military, as well as his desire for justice, he was murdered at the end of his life, following a period in prison. He baptized Jesus, which earned him the name John the Baptist.

Throughout the centuries of Western art history, saints and religious figures have, for the most part, been depicted as white people. Yet these figures were Palestinian.

In this room, two Saint John the Baptists engage in dialogue: a stained-glass window and a painting.

Opposite the traditional depiction of the saint stands a figure who turns toward the sky to pray for his plundered land and his sacrificed people.



EL AXOLOTL TRAICIONADO, 2023



El Axolotl Traicionado, 2023

Acrylic on cotton, 180 × 255 cm

View from the exhibition *Komorebi*, Artemisia Gallery, 2024, Brussels

Selected for the exhibition *Hosting*, La Centrale, Oct. 2024 - Feb. 2025, Brussels

The axolotl is a species native to Mexico City (Mexico) that is not considered endangered. However, in 2019, only two axolotls remained in their natural habitat, Lake Xochimilco✳.

In fact, one must visit breeding facilities to find other axolotls, which are used for scientific research or domestication.

This small animal is particularly fascinating for its incredible molting and its ability to regenerate its own limbs. As a result, it has been subjected to numerous experiments. Sometimes a limb is removed, or a head is added, to see if it can survive under these conditions. It's easy to imagine that today, such experiments could no longer be conducted on humans.

This painting tells the story of a betrayal: an axolotl promised the world, only to end up torn to shreds, at the mercy of its tormentors—much like the Indigenous peoples whom Hernán Cortés betrayed in order to defeat the Mexicas.

If the arrival of the Spanish in the Americas is a legend, let us create myths about colonization, about the exploitation of bodies and lands colonized by the West!

Built around a two-headed axolotl-vagina, the painting is divided into two scenes. On the left, the Axolotl is tempted by a white devil. On the right, the Axolotl is being grabbed, ready to be placed on the operating table.

The central chimeric form also echoes the bodies of colonized women, often violently used for gynecological experiments and sexual abuse.

✳In 2019, the Xochimilco Ecological Park was in the midst of a land restoration initiative that involved reintroducing certain species. It is therefore possible that there are more axolotls today than there were in 2019.

SANCTUARY, 2018 - ... presentation

Since 2018, my artistic practice has revolved around a central project called **Sanctuary**.

This **immersive installation** has always been conceived as a **fluid entity, a work in progress with no definitive form**. It is structured around the **compass rose**, meaning it is organized according to the **cardinal directions**. These cardinal points are **symbolic representations** that draw upon both the **mystical and geopolitical contexts**. By its very nature, the **Sanctuary** evolves through interpersonal or theoretical encounters and the territories it inhabits.

Initially, the **Sanctuary** focused primarily on the **relationships we establish with the non-human**. Its goal was to **question the beliefs and ideologies** that shape our relationships with plants, minerals, and animals. How are these systems created? How do they take shape? How do they shape our relationship with the world? And above all, what are their consequences and impacts on living beings—that is, humans and non-humans?

In **ecology**, the term "**sanctuary**" refers to an area that is sufficiently **protected** to be **beyond the reach of human impact**. It also refers to **a place of worship, the holiest part of a church, or a secret, hidden location**. To send a call out to the Universe and offer a prayer for a better future, I decided to create an **energetically activated space**—that is, one **geographically oriented according to the cardinal directions**.

Today, this installation is evolving with a more **intersectional approach**. Indeed, how can we fail to connect our contempt and mistreatment of nature to that suffered by women's bodies, colonized territories, and bodies? How can we fail to address the violence of state repressive apparatuses in ecological struggles?

For now, the **Sanctuary** consists of five paintings, a desert rose, and offerings. It is an **interdisciplinary project** at the intersection of visual art, painting, installation, video, literature, and performance.

In this portfolio, I present two views of the completed **Sanctuary** to illustrate the spatial design, followed by each painting, one by one.

Views of the **Sanctuary**, created in 2018

Transfiguration, 2018

La Mort du cerf sacré : Au plaisir de Kendall Jones, 2017

Amazonia, 2018

SANCTUARY presentation

Whether wild, domesticated, or enslaved, animals may be experiencing one of the darkest and most dangerous periods they have ever faced.

Every year, sixty billion “edible” animals are killed by the agri-food industry while twenty-six thousand wild species go extinct.

This relationship with animals raises just as many questions about the relationships the human species forms with other living species and about the place it claims for itself on Earth.

In light of this reality and faced with the urgent need to provide a space for those who no longer have one, the artist has decided to create a sanctuary—a sacred, protected, and enclosed space.

Let us imagine a fictional place where animals and humans can come together to launch a collective prayer like a message in a bottle.

This installation, aligned with the sun’s path and the seven cardinal points, is a place of contemplation, hope, and mourning, open to all, dedicated to a species that has accompanied us since our earliest days.

SANCTUARY

view 1, Bandits Manchots exhibition, 2018



SANCTUARY

view 2, Bandits Manchots exhibition, 2018



offerings

La Mort du cerf-sacré :
au plaisir de Kendall Jones

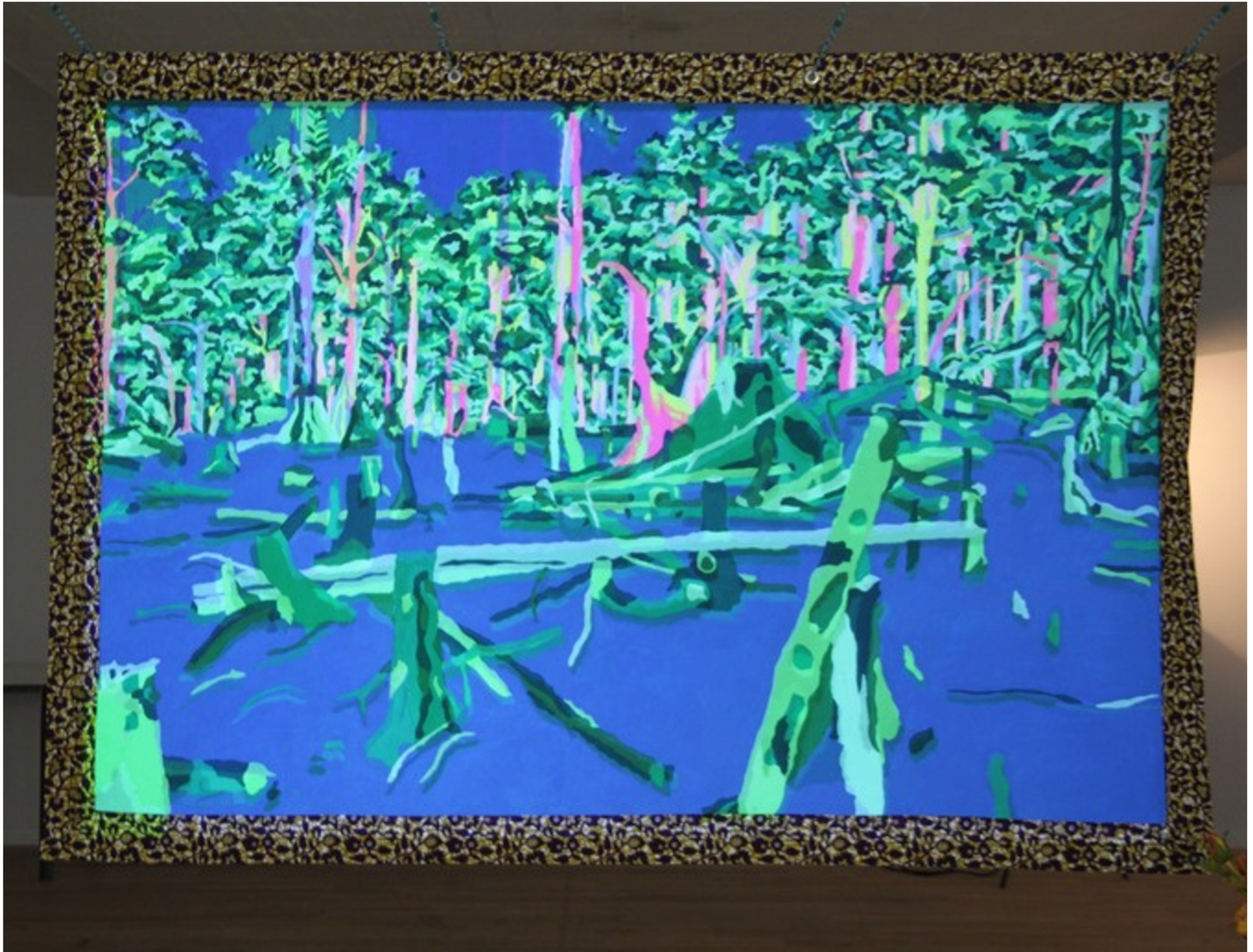
WEST

NORTH

AMAZONIA, 2018

Located in the *southern quadrant*, this painting depicts the deforestation of a section of the Amazon rainforest. An animation simulating its reconstruction is superimposed over it.

Dream (the animation) and reality (the painting) converge for a moment.



Amazonia, 2018
animation, gouache, Paon-lin paint on cotton, 160*210 cm

LA MORT DU CERF SACRE : AU PLAISIR DE KENDALL JONES, 2017



La mort du cerf sacré : Au plaisir de Kendall Jones, 2017
gauche, Paon-lin paint on cotton, 200*210 cm

THE DEATH OF THE SACRED STAG:
TO THE DELIGHT OF KENDALL JONES

« As for the Huichol people of western Mexico, they make an annual pilgrimage to Wirikuta, the land of their ancestors, and it is the shaman's helper deity—a deer—who opens the gateway from the world of humans to that of the ancestors with his antlers. Judging by the rock art of southwestern Texas and northern Mexico, which seems to indicate that the deer has been associated with shamanic journeys for at least 4,000 years, the tradition is an ancient one in the region. »

This excerpt is a free translation of
Animal et religion, edited by Sylvie Peperstraete, University of Brussels press

Kendall Jones, a symbol of Texas youth who is pro-gun and conservative, enjoys taking selfies with the animals she kills on her exclusive hunts, which cost thousands of dollars. For instance, she killed one of the last white lions on our planet.

She frequently hunts sacred animals in sacred territories.

For the Huichol people of Mexico, the deer establishes the connection between the visible and the invisible, between the living and the dead. It guides the shaman into the other world.

TRANSFIGURATION, 2018

Positioned at the *eastern corner* of the **Sanctuary**, where the sun rises, this painting evokes an animal paradise. The lemurs' postures recall the transfigurations of Christ as well as the transcendence of Buddha.

Every morning, the lemurs bask in the sun to gather enough energy to go hunting. It is also a gentle social activity.



Transfiguration animale, 2018
goauche, Paon-lin paint on cotton, 180*190 cm

« Indeed, they are here, numerous, varied, infinitely varied, on land,
in the waters, in the air, with us and apart from us,
sharing a world
where they have existed for far longer and from which, perhaps, they will disappear,
and soon for some of them (...).

But let us say that they are still here
and that they are or have been our companions,
our rivals, our prey, our victims,
our slaves, our guinea pigs, our fathers,
and also, at times, our children.

However the relationship may have been established
—from the most obscure magic to the coldest economic rationality—
it has been a fundamental part of the human fabric:
humanity is defined by its anxiety or hypocrisy
toward these other living beings
who are here like us and yet different from us on earth
—the history of humanity could be told through the variations of this relationship,
with its major turning points:
the emergence (linked to that of agriculture) of livestock farming,
which put an end to the exclusivity of hunting;
the industrial transformation of livestock farming,
which established a relationship of indifference
in which the animal is negated as never before;
the breakdown of ecosystems,
which endanger the very existence of wild animals. . »

this excerpt is a free translation of
Le versant animal, Jean-Christophe Bailly



AMAPOLA - EL SACRIFICIO DE COPIL, 2021

The legend of Copil tells the story of the founding of Tenochtitlan, the ancient Aztec capital, now known as Mexico City.

For a long time, the Mexica god Huitzilopochtli undertook a pilgrimage in search of the lake where the eagle would alight. Indeed, wherever he saw this famous omen, the Mexica people could settle there. Along the way, he abandoned his sister, Malinalxochitl. She had a son named Copil. He grew up vowing to find Huitzilopochtli and avenge his mother.

Copil learned of his uncle's presence near Chapultepec Hill. Once he arrived there, he realized that he could not defeat the god Huitzilopochtli alone. He then returned home to organize a deadly expedition.

His uncle got wind of his intentions. He got there before Copil and ordered his priests to capture him and bring back his heart. Copil's heart was presented to Huitzilopochtli. The god wanted it thrown into the middle of a lagoon, where no one could find it.

It is said that the nopal cactus sprang up in that spot.
An eagle was seen landing there.
And so, Tenochtitlan was founded there.

**As a French-Mexican, Mexico has always fueled my imagination
and influenced my artistic practice... but that's not all.**

**During my many trips to visit my family,
I quickly realized the different socioeconomic contexts
in which these two countries were evolving.**

**Over time, the mirage of these so-called *exotic* landscapes began to fade
under the violence of the filters imposed upon me.**

**The vision of this country I had so fantasized about was set ablaze,
sweeping away with it the universalist and democratic ideals
in which I was raised.**

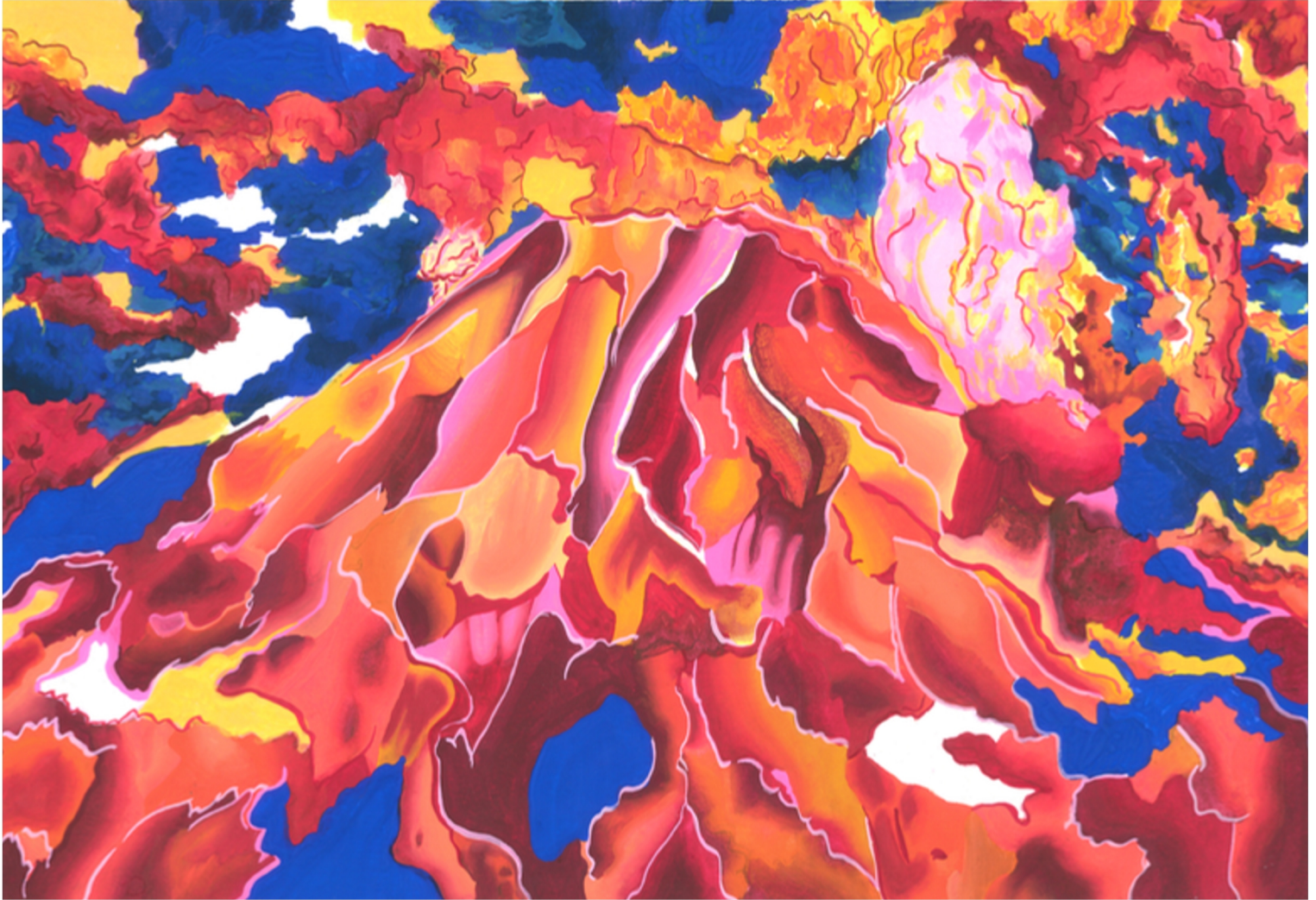
Mexico is a sacrificed land.

Amapola - El Sacrificio de Copil, 2021
gouache on paper, 80,1*59,4 cm



Pleasure, 2024
gouache on paper, 59,4*80,1 cm

VOLCAN, 2025
Collaboration with Sophie Senecaut



Volcan, 2025
gouache on paper, 29.7*42 cm



Untitled, 2020
gouache on paper, 80,1*59,4 cm



Untitled, 2020
gouache on paper, 80,1*59,4 cm

RESUME

34 years old
lives and works in Brussels



SOLO SHOW

December 2016, Brussels, Belgium
Ornare, Maison de l'Amérique Latine

GROUP SHOWS

April-May 2026, Brussels, Belgium
I am here - je suis là - ik ben hier, Espace Vanderborght, curated by ULB Culture, notably Alexia Lievin

November-December 2025, Nantes, France
Horizons partagés, L'Atelier de la Ville de Nantes, curated by Galerie RDV and Pierre Fournier Le Ray

October 2024-February 2025, Bruxelles, Belgium
Hosting, La Centrale

April-June 2024, Bruxelles, Belgium
Komorebi, Galerie Artemisia, curated by Marie Pipart

April 2024, Molenbeek, Belgium
Parcours d'artistes Molenbeek, Maison Communale de Molenbeek

May 2023, Molenbeek, Belgium
Melting Fluids, Vol. 1, Atelier Kunstbeek

June 2022, Bruxelles, Belgium
Royal Playground, Les Fondations 312, curated by Cyclone collective

April 2019, Mexico city, Mexico
Preparar la Tierra, La Quiñonera, curated by Maleza collective

December 2018, Anderlecht, Belgium
Oasis 2043 - Cassandra Connor, Rue Abbé Cuyllits 44, La Communa

June 2018, Bruxelles, Belgium
Bandits Manchots, 251 av. Louise

RESIDENCIES

February-April 2019, Mexico City, Mexico

Invitation to participate in the third phase of Maleza, a residency organized by the Mucha Maleza collective, with the aim of preparing an open house and exhibition for April, La Quiñonera, Mexico City

April 2017, Pantin, France

Participation in the residency organized by the Epopure association on the theme of "Mythologies", Le Sureau, Pantin, France

MURALS

August-October 2025, Forest, Belgium

Co-creation of a mural with Lucille Streicher and the ColleColle collective on an exterior wall of Divercity, commissioned by Amour et Sagesse

May-June 2024, Schaerbeek, Belgium

Co-creation of a mural with Lucille Streicher and the ColleColle collective, on an exterior wall of the Théâtre des Halles in Schaerbeek

EDUCATION

2021-2022, Brussels, Belgium

Teaching Certification in Visual Arts, École de Recherches Graphiques (ERG) and Saint Luc

2016-2018, Brussels, Belgium

Master's in "Artistic Practices and Scientific Complexity,"

École de Recherches Graphiques (ERG),

in collaboration with the Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB)

2012-2015, Nantes, France

National Higher Diploma in Visual Arts (DNSAP), Nantes School of Fine Arts (ESBAN)

CONTACT

artist@amarantaaranda.com

[@amarantearanda](https://www.instagram.com/amarantearanda)

amarantaaranda.com