

Nastassia Kotava



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Nastassia Kotava Bio

Nastassia Kotava (b. 1990, Minsk, Belarus) is a visual artist living and working in Montmorency, France.

Her practice spans painting, sculpture, drawing and installation, weaving personal narrative, humor and popular culture to explore the contradictions of contemporary life. Kotava examines the tension between tenderness and cruelty, sincerity and artifice, often using symbolic figures and pop-culture motifs as emotional and political mirrors.

She has presented solo and duo exhibitions at Fondation Giacobetti (Paris, FR), Spaysky Fine Art Gallery LLC (Detroit, US), Chez Alberto (Paris, FR), and the Beaux-Arts de Paris (FR). Her work has been featured in group exhibitions at Treize (Paris, FR), Magasins généraux (Pantin, FR), Good Weather (Chicago, US), CAC Brétigny (FR), Mouse Gallery (Detroit, US), La Tour Orion (Montreuil, FR), Palais des Beaux-Arts (Paris, FR), and Bétonsalon (Paris, FR), among others.

Kotava's sculpture *Crevettes de Paris* has been installed on the Quai de Suffren in Paris since 2023 as a public commission by Vedettes de Paris in partnership with the Beaux-Arts de Paris. Her work also appeared in the JCDecaux x Beaux-Arts public art program through the city of Paris. She received the Horizon Artagon grant for emerging artists in 2021.

Her work is held in private collections in France and the United States. She has been written about in *Sculpture Magazine*, as well as publications by the Beaux-Arts de Paris, Magasins généraux, and *emploi fictif*. Kotava also develops curatorial projects, notably Nastassia's iPhone, a year-long exhibition program (2020–2021) that brought together over twenty international artists and a poet.

Kotava holds an MFA from the Beaux-Arts de Paris (2020) and a BFA from École Estienne (2015).

Nastassia Kotava

Artist statement

At the core of my practice lies an interest in structures of power and domination, which I explore through the lens of globalized popular culture and kitsch aesthetics. The question of displacement—how images and meanings shift across contexts—plays a central role. It unfolds through media selected in response to each project, including drawing, painting, sculpture, installation, and editorial forms.

This critical framework intersects with a playful visual universe. My work develops as a childlike or adolescent world populated by animals, bright colors, and whimsical figures. These images function as filters, allowing me to approach violence while maintaining a form of protection. I draw on allegory, metaphor, symbolism, and anthropomorphism to question systems of value and the mechanisms that distinguish between popular culture and so-called legitimate culture. In the painting series *Year of the Horse*, representations of horses are used to bring together the frameworks of astrology, official portraiture, and marketing codes, examining the construction of identity and the values of millennial girlhood. The project reveals how a lack of spirituality in late capitalism finds refuge in such forms, which operate simultaneously as commodities and as spaces for imagination. Through the representation of goldfish, *Aquariophilie* explores hobby culture and human relationships with domesticated animals, revealing the blurred boundaries between affection, domination, consumption, and digitized desire. The installation *Basic Chicken Bitch* occupies the space of a dollhouse (Fondation Giacobetti) and stages an anthropomorphic chicken leg as an allegory of instrumentalization within cultural institutions.

While my work is informed by a critical dimension, it also seeks forms of reconciliation and joy. Imagination and a playful, mischievous spirit become tools of movement across contexts, opening up heterotopic spaces—worlds of hobbyism and marginal sites—where alternative modes of coexistence can be rehearsed. Playful imagery acts as a zone of projection for positive imaginaries, allowing opposites to be held together and offering a sensitive response to contemporary tensions.

Year of the Horse

2026

This series takes the Chinese zodiac's Year of the Horse as its conceptual framework. It engages with the cyclical resurgence of animal-of-the-year imagery, reflecting on how symbolic animals circulate through branding, marketing, and collective fantasy.

For instance, *Blanche* refers to my birth year — the Metal (White) Horse of 1990 — and evokes the visual and emotional landscape of the 1990s. *Cheval de feu* responds to 2026, the Year of the Fire Horse, and gestures toward the charged atmosphere of the 2020s. The conceptual space between these two works remains deliberately open, inviting viewers to imagine the intervening decades as a dialectical unfolding.

The blunt frontal compositions draw from the visual language of official portraiture; in particular, the green coronation portrait of Camilla (2025, Paul Benney) serves as a reference point. Rendered as subtly anthropomorphic presences, these horses become vessels for a meditation on millennial girlhood — its projections, aspirations, and inherited symbols of power.



Cheval de Feu · 2026
oil on canvas · 65 x 80 cm



Blanche · 2026
oil on canvas · 65 x 80 cm



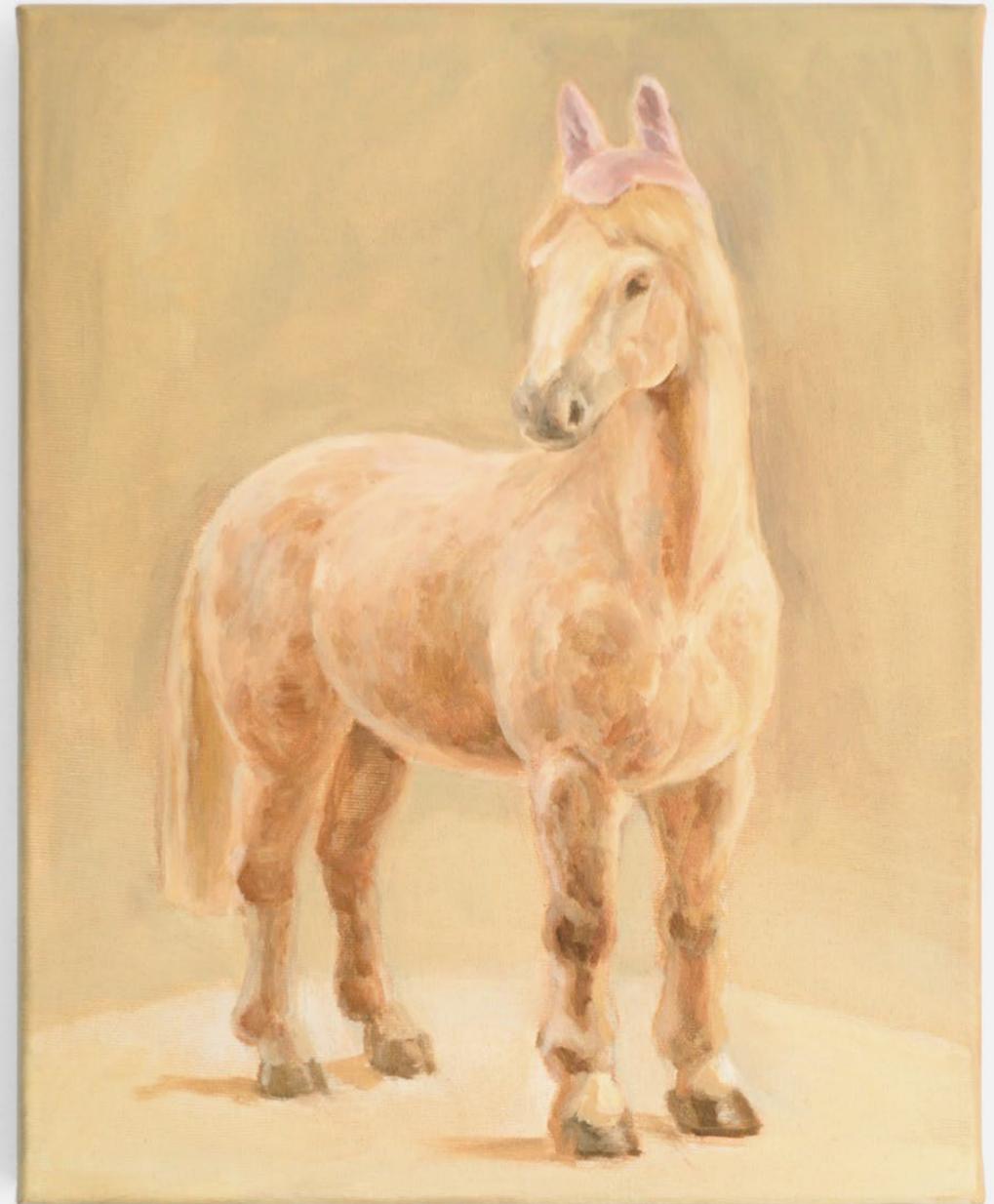
Victoria · 2026
oil on canvas · 34 x 41 cm



Astro · 2026
oil on canvas · 34 x 41 cm



Shygirl · 2026
oil on canvas · 34 × 41 cm



Velvet · 2026
oil on canvas · 34 × 41 cm



Apricot · 2026
oil on canvas · 22 x 27 cm



Marmelade · 2026
oil on canvas · 22 x 27 cm



Lucky · 2026
oil on canvas · 50 x 70 cm



Jennie · 2026
oil on canvas · 30 x 20 cm



Rosé · 2026
oil on canvas · 30 x 20 cm



Lisa · 2026
oil on canvas · 50 x 70 cm



Losers

2025–2026

Losers is a sub-series within *Year of the Horse*, composed of twenty tiny-format handmade canvases. The paintings depict foals and ponies, occasionally winged, rendered with softness and pastel tones.

Drawing on the domestic motif of the horse as a symbol of luck, the series engages with the aesthetics of cuteness and kitsch while invoking the animal's parallel association with racing, competition, and performance. Both narratives instrumentalize the horse, as both symbol and living being, oscillating between affection and projection.

Positioned as a counterpoint to these frameworks, as well as to broader cultural valorizations of conflict and victory, *Losers* proposes a reversal of dominant value structures. The ironic naming of these newborn, vulnerable figures frames “losing” as a condition of persistence rather than failure. Echoing philosophical traditions that valorize uselessness and non-participation, the series suggests reframing weakness as a site of resistance and attempts to loosen the cultural fixation on winning.



Emmanuel · 2025
oil on canvas · 10 x 10 cm



Ferdinand · 2025
oil on canvas · 9 x 8 cm



Thomas · 2026
oil on canvas · 12 x 10 cm



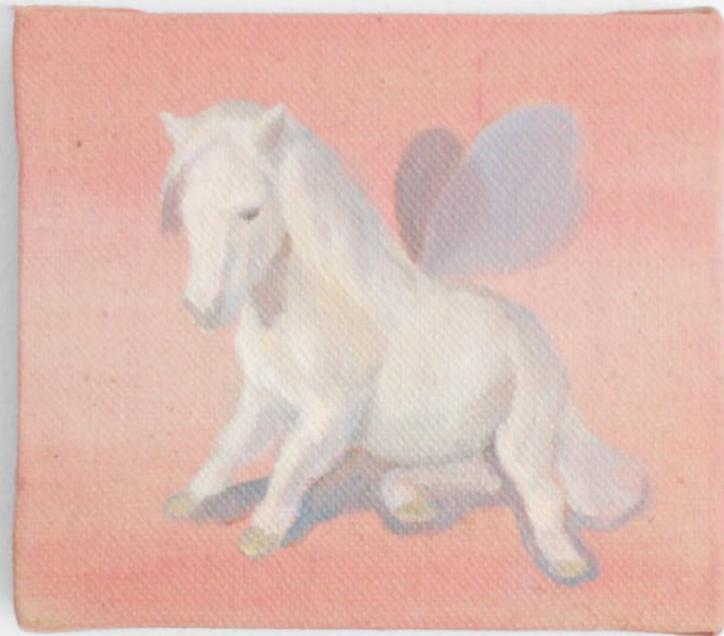
Pauline · 2025
oil on canvas · 10 x 15 cm



Claude · 2025
oil on canvas · 9,5 x 9,5 cm



Balthazar · 2025
oil on canvas · 7 x 8 cm



Andrée · 2025
oil on canvas · 12 x 10 cm



Bambi · 2025
oil on canvas · 7 x 9 cm



Lou · 2026
oil on canvas · 6 × 8 cm



Daria · 2025
oil on canvas · 6,5 × 9 cm



Aquariophilie

2024–2025

Aquariophilie is a series of paintings exploring human–animal relationships through domestication and the commodification of affect. Centered on the goldfish—one of the earliest domesticated animals, selectively bred for aesthetic traits such as color, body shape, and most recently, the cuteness of the facial expression—the series focuses on varieties such as ranchu and oranda, widely circulated in online visual culture.

The series draws on the kitsch visual language of AI-generated imagery, which produces a subtle shared unease. The compositions adopt the logic of display and selection, resembling the grid of social media feeds or e-commerce platforms, positioning the viewer within a system of continuous choice and projection.

The paintings take on different marketing tropes: the merging of cute animal imagery with food in *Strawberry Milkshake*; the visual codes of both children’s and LGBTQIA+ marketing in *Rainbow Bubbles*, and symbolic forms of a spiral and a heart in *Eternity* and *Love*.



Strawberry Milk · 2024
oil on canvas · 150 x 150 cm



Eternity · 2025
oil on canvas · 100 x 100 cm



Love · 2025
oil on canvas · 100 x 100 cm



Rainbow Bubbles · 2025
oil on canvas · 150 x 150 cm

Minnie&Minnie *at the Dog Cemetery*

2022–2024

A series of drawings in which the Minnie and Minnie characters find themselves at the Cimetière des Chiens (Asnières-sur-Seine, France). The work reflects on interspecies connections and on a form of popular culture that emerges as a response to emotional and spiritual needs—modes of attachment that persist beyond utility.

Built gradually over more than a century through individual acts of care, the cemetery exists at the margins of the city and its dominant concerns. It unfolds as a fantastical setting for love and sorrow: Belle Époque tombs shaped like small castles stand alongside bowls, toys, and recent offerings, mapping a wide spectrum of human emotion.

Rendered in large-scale graphite powder drawings, the series develops a soft, immersive, and ghostly atmosphere. Within this setting, the Minnie and Minnie characters introduce a rupture through banal or irreverent actions. They embody the viewer as an outsider, entering a heterotopic space whose intimacy resists full exposure.



Kenzo&Goldy · 2022–2023
pencil on paper · 126 x 123 cm

Exhibition view :
Dog Cat Mouse, 2025 · February 1–25
Mouse Gallery, Detroit (US)



White Castle · 2023
pencil on gift paper · 70 x 90 cm



Second White Castle · 2023
pencil on gift paper · 70 x 90 cm



3D's · 2022–2024
pencil and watercolor on paper · 240 x 150 cm

Petite Clôture · 2023
pencil on paper · 70 x 90 cm

Exhibition view:
Bonne Chance · 2025 June 13–July 13
Treize, Paris (FR)



Jussi · 2023
pencil on gift paper · 90 x 70 cm



Fountain · 2023
pencil on paper · 70 x 95 cm



Fripon
2010 - 2022

Miss
1996 - 2010

Elvis
1991 - 2010

Fripon
Avec tout
mon amour

Miss
Avec toute
mon tendresse

Elvis
le 10 mai 2010

Elvis

Fripon, Miss, Elvis · 2024
pencil and graphite powder on paper · 240 x 150 cm

CREVETTES DE PARIS

2023—ongoing

Unveiled one year before the 2024 Olympic Games near the Pont du Trocadéro in Paris, this sculpture takes the form of two gilded shrimps forming a heart. It began as a declaration of affection for Amano shrimps—animals I keep in an aquarium rather than consume.

Installed opposite the Olympic countdown along the tourist-heavy Seine, it responds to the removal of love locks from the Pont des Arts and their replacement with barriers preventing their return. Commissioned in relation to a tourist shuttle company, the work proposes a new site for their accumulation, implicitly reactivating the informal economies once tied to them.

Echoing vernacular decorative forms, the sculpture blends into Paris's ornamental landscape while engaging ecological contradictions. As a detritivore, the shrimp symbolizes recycling and ecological thinking; yet its mass production as food emerges alongside the rise of mass tourism since the 1970s—both driving ecological degradation. Oscillating between sincerity and irony, the work stages a failure, exposing the limits of individual action within larger systems.



Crevettes de Paris · 2023
Recycled metal, paint, electrical installation
320 × 246 × 162 cm
Collaborators (metalworkers & electricians):
Nicolas Martenot, Bertrand Edeline



Views of the sculpture, *Crevettes de Paris*



CREVETTES DE PARIS

Une sculpture surchaude faisant usage de symboles universels. Elle représente deux crevettes dorées de taille humaine perchées sur une hélice de bateau et formant un cœur.

Cette œuvre est un hommage aux bouillottes parisiennes, un message d'amour et de paix. Elle offre la possibilité de recevoir des histoires au mieux éblouies, légères, un peu ou du tout, étonnantes, ou simplement de prendre des nouvelles de ses proches.

Installée initialement par Christian Klotz, rénovée par Nicolas Huet, Bernard Dubois.

Dans le cadre de l'opération et partenariat avec le Service de Paris et les Bouillottes de Paris.

A surreal sculpture using universal symbols. It depicts two human sized golden shrimp perched on a boat propeller, forming a heart.

This work is a tribute to Parisian bouillottes, a message of love and peace. It offers the opportunity to tell your-made stories ranging

Sculpture by Christian Klotz, rénovée par Nicolas Huet, Bernard Dubois.

As part of the operation and partnership between Bouillottes de Paris and Service de Paris.

VEGETTES DE PARIS





Maquette and full-scale sculpture, *Crevettes de Paris*

Vegan Chicken Membership

2022

Presented at the Giacobetti Foundation (founded by Lila Torquéo), this exhibition unfolds as a phantasmagorical installation staged within a dollhouse, accompanied by video works by Darya Danilovich and curated by Lila Torquéo. The project imagines a fictional Parisian contemporary art foundation embodied by a central figure: a decayed roasted chicken leg claiming to be vegan, deceased in a fire.

Across the miniature architecture, fragments of its “life” are displayed—shoe sculptures stamped “Basic Chicken Bitch,” stained-glass slogans inspired by social media, painted membership cards from a rival institution, and a coffin resembling an egg carton awaiting transport. Danilovich’s videos punctuate the space through multiple improvised projections, extending the narrative into moving image.

Blending satire and empathy, the work reflects on the contradictions of contemporary art institutions—their role in addressing social and political issues while simultaneously absorbing and neutralizing them. It stages a heterotopic space that is both critical and non-confrontational, exposing a system caught between awareness and structural limitation.

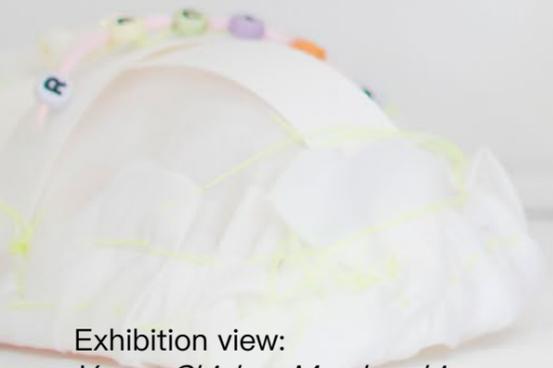


Exhibition view:
Vegan Chicken Membership



GIACOBINI

Exhibition view:
Vegan Chicken Membership
Floor 2



Exhibition view:
Vegan Chicken Membership
Floor 1



Exhibition view:
Vegan Chicken Membership
Floor 0

The Head *(Yakub Kolas for Detroit)*

2021

Presented as a solo exhibition at Spaysky Fine Art Gallery LLC, this project centers on a sculptural work accompanied by a series of drawings. The Head (Yakub Kolas for Detroit) recreates at full scale the monumental head of Yakub Kolas, long celebrated as “The People’s Poet of Belarus,” drawing from the monument by Zair Azgur in Minsk.

While preserving the imposing form of the original, the sculpture replaces bronze with fragile layers of torn and stapled magazine pages, producing a structure that appears permanently on the verge of collapse. Positioned between mail art and monumental sculpture, the work stages a displaced symbol circulating across contexts.

Echoing a distorted version of the Statue of Liberty’s transatlantic journey, the work arrives in Detroit as an unstable icon, questioning the messages carried by cultural symbols in transit. It foregrounds a gap in cultural recognition, reflecting on how political narratives circulate globally while the figures they invoke often remain unknown.



The Head · 2021
magazine pages, staples, spray paint
164 × 110 × 120 cm



The Head · 2021
Inside view



The Head · 2021
Detail



The Head · 2021
Exhibition view with the transportation box

Wedding

2020

Presented at the Beaux-Arts de Paris, this installation brings together a series of watercolor rose studies arranged within a tall, narrow white room. Ten A4 works line one wall, three A3 face them, and a single A4 anchors the far end, establishing a restrained, almost clinical display. Near the entrance, a charging phone plays on loop a Facebook video of a flower seller being beaten as he exits a police station, situating the work within the context of Belarus in 2020.

The drawings originate in a pragmatic gesture—producing roses for image banks as a form of income—yet fail to operate as emotional release. Their repetition accumulates as a suspended activity, disconnected from both affect and purpose.

The video reactivates this suspended state. It introduces a point of identification that reconnects the act of drawing to a broader political reality. The installation stages a tension between economic conditions, artistic production, and the limits of engagement.



Roses 5 · 2020
watercolor on paper · 21 × 29,7 cm



Exhibition view: *Wedding*



Roses 7 · 2020
watercolor on paper · 21 x 29.7 cm



Roses 8 · 2020
watercolor on paper · 21 x 29.7 cm



Roses 3 · 2020
watercolor on paper · 21 x 29.7 cm



Phone showing a screen recording of a video post by Sasha Filipenko (Facebook, October 13, 2020), depicting a flower vendor beaten by police after offering flowers to women during protests following the falsified 2020 presidential election in Minsk, Belarus.



Exhibition view: *Wedding*

