



In the swirling depths of transformation, where art and identity intersect, Elene's journey unfolds like the quiet rise of a phoenix from its own ashes. As the spotlight falls on the rebirth of her craft, we're drawn into the raw, unapologetic evolution of a painter whose every stroke is an act of self-renewal. Her art, rooted in astrology and painted with an intuitive brush, speaks of quiet revolutions and fierce metamorphoses. Through her conversation with Marta, we journey through Elene's personal history—a tapestry woven from doubt, discovery, and daring reinvention. From the bold leap of leaving Tbilisi for Barcelona to the way she reshapes her canvases with both struggle and grace, Elene's work isn't just about creation; it's about becoming. Like the phoenix that rises from its ashes, Elene's story is a testament to the power of growth, the beauty in uncertainty, and the undeniable truth that each canvas is both an end and a new beginning.

A PAINTING IS AN ACT OF SELF-RENEWAL

Interview to Elene Bokeria

Words: MARTA MARSZALEK.
Photography: CARISSA DIAZ ALEMAN.
At GROCPROJECT.



Marta: So, as you know, we're not going to ask the typical questions like "Where are you from?" and "What's your name?" since we know each other. We're doing this interview for the Phoenix issue, which is all about rebirth — coming from the ashes, dying, ending something, and then coming back to life. In your artistic journey, have you ever experienced that sense of **self-renewal**?

Elene: Oh yeah, I've definitely felt that. It's actually something that happens after every painting. It's not just a one-time thing, but a continuous cycle. Each piece I create takes months, so I'm constantly evolving. Every painting is a reflection of where I am in life, what I want to change, or what I want to start doing. **So after every painting, I feel like I'm a new version of myself.**

SO AFTER EVERY PAINTING, I FEEL LIKE I'M A NEW VERSION OF MYSELF.

Marta: That's beautiful. So, with your Z12 series, which delves into astrological symbolism, how does this exploration serve as a metaphor for personal transformation?

Elene: For me, astrology is more of a tool for understanding myself and the world around me. I don't take it too literally - it's less about predictions and more about a sense of belon-

ging. At the end of the day, we all want to feel part of something. When people talk about their star signs, there's this shared language, like we're participating in something collective. It offers a way to reflect, to relate, to locate ourselves within a **bigger picture**. As the Z12 project evolved, I began to realize it wasn't just helping me understand people around me — it was also deepening my awareness of the natural cycles of life. Astrology, beyond its symbolic layers, is ultimately about orientation. It invites us to observe and listen—to the moon, the seasons, the nature — and to slowly come back into rhythm with the world around us. So, Z12 wasn't about astrology in the traditional sense. It became a metaphor for transformation — for tuning in, for realignment, for remembering that change is cyclical.

Marta: Wow, I love how you let natural cycles and energies guide your work. And then, relocating from Georgia to Barcelona was a big transition. How did this move act as a catalyst for your creative rebirth?

Elene: When I first came to Barcelona in 2018, I didn't really know what to expect. But I knew I had to do it. Moving to a new country, especially when no one knows you, is like hitting the reset button. I could reinvent myself, and that was thrilling. In Georgia, I wasn't yet confident enough to fully **embrace being an artist**. But when I moved, it felt like I had permission to be whoever I wanted. That shift gave me the courage to explore my art fully. It also made me rethink my purpose — even during tough moments. I had to ask myself why I chose to stay here when things got difficult. And the answer was always: because it makes me happy. It just makes sense.

Marta: And does that sense of self-renewal or transformation happen when you're creating art as well?

CHALLENGES ARE CRUCIAL

Elene: Absolutely. I think **challenges are crucial** in any creative process. They push you to evolve. I try to take on challenges that are within my reach, but still a bit difficult. That's where growth happens. For example, in Phoenix, I challenged myself to add new elements, like the clouds and textures inspired by Georgia O'Keeffe. It was a new technique for me, and it was a bit uncomfortable, but it pushed me to grow. In the past, I would've stuck rigidly to my initial sketch, but now I'm more open to making changes in the process.

Marta: It's great that you've found the confidence to change things mid-painting. So, how does your background in business and fashion management tie into your artistic journey?

Elene: Well, studying business was my ticket out of Georgia. I knew that in the long run, establishing myself abroad would allow me to give back to my country in a more meaningful way. I didn't know exactly where I wanted to go, but I knew I had to leave. It wasn't just about finding inspiration in Barcelona, though — I wanted to experience more of life. Business was a practical choice at the time, but it was still in a creative field. I met people who really supported my art, and that made a huge difference. The business side gave me a broader perspective, and even though my technique is still evolving, I embrace that. I look at my older works and see how far I've come, and I'm excited to see where I'll be in 10 years.

Marta: It sounds like your business background has grounded you, though. I've always admired

that about you. A lot of artists can be so caught up in their creative world, but you seem to have a strong understanding of both sides.

Elene: Thank you! I think sometimes we need to make sacrifices in order to be able to do what we love for longer. The corporate jobs I've had, for example, have made me appreciate the time I get to spend on my art. It's a balance. I feel lucky to be able to do both, and I don't take it for granted.

Marta: Absolutely. So, in your creative process, how do you balance distraction and creation? Do you ever feel that moment where you need to start over? Does that cycle of doubt and renewal play a role in your work?

Elene: Definitely. I think everyone goes through that. Sometimes I'll look at a painting and feel like it's not working, like I need to start over. It's part of the process. I don't have an academic background, so I just go with my gut. But sometimes that doubt can be overwhelming. I've learned that it's okay to take a step back, rest, and come back to it later. That's when things start to fall into place again.

Marta: That's such a valuable perspective. It's so easy to get **caught up in the fear of making mistakes**. So, how do you know when it's time to take a break and come back to it?

Elene: It varies. Sometimes it's a day, sometimes it's three days. It's about giving yourself space to breathe and let go of the pressure. I had that moment with Phoenix, too — I was stuck, and





I thought I ruined it. So, I started a new painting, a dragon, to take my mind off it. Eventually, the dragon and Phoenix came together in a way I didn't expect. It was all about giving myself permission to step away and let the process happen naturally.

Marta: That's amazing. **The Phoenix** and the dragon weren't meant to be together, but they ended up becoming a perfect match. That's such a beautiful example of how creativity works when you give yourself space to explore.

Elene: Exactly! It's all about trusting the process. Sometimes things just fall into place when you least expect it.

Marta: So, the question was, how do people feel about art? Why do you do what you do? Why do you create art? How does it help you express yourself? Some people don't need that—why do you do it?

THE PHOENIX

Elene: Well, the thing is, I can't imagine myself not doing it. It's crazy how many people I've encountered at the beginning of my career who challenged me. Individuals who questioned my academic background or the concepts I chose to explore. But it just feels so right to me that I can't imagine doing anything else. And going back to my background in management—studying that gave me stability and the freedom not to depend on art financially for a while. So I was able to do it simply because it felt right. I didn't care if it sold or if people liked it. It just felt good to create.

Marta: That's moving... that's really moving.

Elene: Yes, it is. And when it comes to people discovering themselves through my work, it's more about observation. I remember at my first exhibition, when I presented the 12 zodiac signs, I chose not to label the artworks with the names. It was so interesting to see people looking for their own sign. Many would tell me they felt

really connected to the sign in the painting, because of the colors and shapes. And indeed, it's not just freestyle; there's research involved. For instance, I tried to incorporate the lucky colors and stones of each zodiac sign into the artwork. For example, for Taurus, it's jade and green, so that might be why they resonated with it. But in general, I'm still observing how people connect with the art. For me, the beauty is in interacting with my audience. I may not have a huge following yet, but I feel very connected to my audience. Social media can have its disadvantages, but it's also a great tool. I post my art as it evolves, and my audience gets involved in the process. It's beautiful when they follow the journey and have personal conversations about it. For example, people often tell me, "Do you remember that summer when you were working on Leo?" It's not just about the final result; it's about the experience.

Marta: That's amazing. It's so personal.

Elene: Yes, exactly! And that's why I feel like people need to know me a bit better to fully understand the paintings.

Marta: If you had to categorize your art, where would you place yourself? Realism, surrealism?

Elene: Lately, I've been describing my work as cubism. Cubism deconstructs an object and reimagines it in pieces, but I do it using bubbles instead of cubes. So I've started calling it "bubblism."

Marta: When did you realize you wanted to be an artist? Was it something that happened when you were a kid, or did it come later?

Elene: It's interesting because, like I mentioned earlier, sometimes you do things out of impulse when you're younger, and you don't fully understand why. I didn't have a defining moment where I said, "I want to be an artist." I was just doing it and keeping consistent, like, "Here's another sign, another sign." But then, I had an opportunity for an exhibition, and that's when I realized, "Okay, this could be serious." It wasn't one specific moment—it was more of a process.

Marta: Do you remember when you first started to take your art seriously?

Elene: Yes, I remember when I moved to Finland for my international economics studies. One night, I was at a party, and my friend Chalina introduced me to someone, saying, "This is my friend Elene, she's a painter." It was the first time I was called a painter, I would never dare to do so.

People started asking about my technique and what I feel when I paint. They were curious about the artworks and the story behind them. I could not even put my ideas into words at that time, however I did somehow. That particular moment definitely made me embrace the part of my personality that I was keeping in the closet.

Marta: I love that! It's like you went from being

Marta: I love it! You've created your own genre! It's beautiful how you can break down the process. So, when you start a painting, do you begin with a realistic sketch?

Elene: Yes, for example, with the Sagittarius painting, is designed to depict the Centaur—it started as a realistic sketch, but then I deconstructed it. I'll sketch the horse first, and then break it down into a more abstract form. It makes more sense visually in the end, even though it's abstract.

shy about it to owning it.

Elene: Exactly! Before, I would say, "Well, I paint sometimes..." but now, I can say, "I'm an artist." It's funny how things shift when you start to own your identity.

Marta: So, what's next for you? What's in store for the future?



Elene: Honestly, I don't know exactly. There are some paintings I want to create, related to symbolism and chakras. I want to continue my series about horses, but it will depend where I'm at in life. But one thing I'd love to do is to work with the spaces. I've always liked the idea of creating collections of interconnected artworks. Imagine a hotel with 8 or 12 rooms, each with its own artwork that tells you an independent story, but collectively unfolding a greater narrative. This kind of project feels like the perfect blend of interiors and storytelling—separate rooms, distinct voices, but also interconnected. It's a dream, but I'm working towards it.

Marta: That's such an amazing idea! I can totally

see it working.

Elene: Yes, it would be a dream project for me. I'm excited about it, but I'm also focused on the current projects and seeing where the journey takes me.

Marta: Elene, thank you so much for sharing your story. I'm really excited to see where your art goes next!

Elene: Thank you for having me, Marta. It's been a pleasure!