

## `Land of Symphony`: The intersection of Art and Education

By Nafiseh Laleh<sup>1</sup>

Featuring: Jésus S. Baptista<sup>2</sup>

On February 24–25, 2026, the Faculty of Fine Arts at Istanbul Aydın University had the honor of hosting a delegation of academics and artists from the Polyarte Academy of Fine Arts. The two-day event, titled *Land of Symphony*, brought a dynamic atmosphere to the faculty and provided students with a valuable opportunity to engage in specialized sessions and panel discussions with these distinguished Italian guests.

A significant highlight of the event was the participation of a French-Portuguese artist Jesus S. Baptista who delivered a presentation to students on the subjects of scenography and video mapping. Given their extensive and noteworthy background in documentary filmmaking, video mapping, and curating digital art festivals, the artist shared profound insights with the audience. Following the session, we conducted a brief interview with the artist, and his responses to our questions are presented below.



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**1. First of all, could you please introduce yourself and tell us a little about your artistic journey and how you became interested in art?**

I am Jésus Baptista, a Franco-Portuguese visual artist living in Paris.

I studied at the Haute École des Arts du Rhin and at Le Fresnoy – Studio national des arts contemporains. Now my studio is in La villa des arts in Paris, it was the workspace of Cezanne, Renoir and all these expressionist painters. But it all began with the strong presence of urban forms of expression in the Parisian suburb where I grew up, which sparked my desire to create, particularly for public space.

**2. Your artworks combine technology, creativity, and visual storytelling in a unique way. How would you describe your artistic style and the main themes you explore in your works?**

I often say that I create images for space, whether through film, video mapping, installation, photography, and other forms.

These images are meant to be experienced spatially, in direct relation with the viewer. From a more conceptual point of view, I always seek to resonate with the sensitive, emotional part of the audience. Concepts are extremely important in my research, writing, and project development, but my first intention is to make the viewer's sensations vibrate through sound, image, and light.



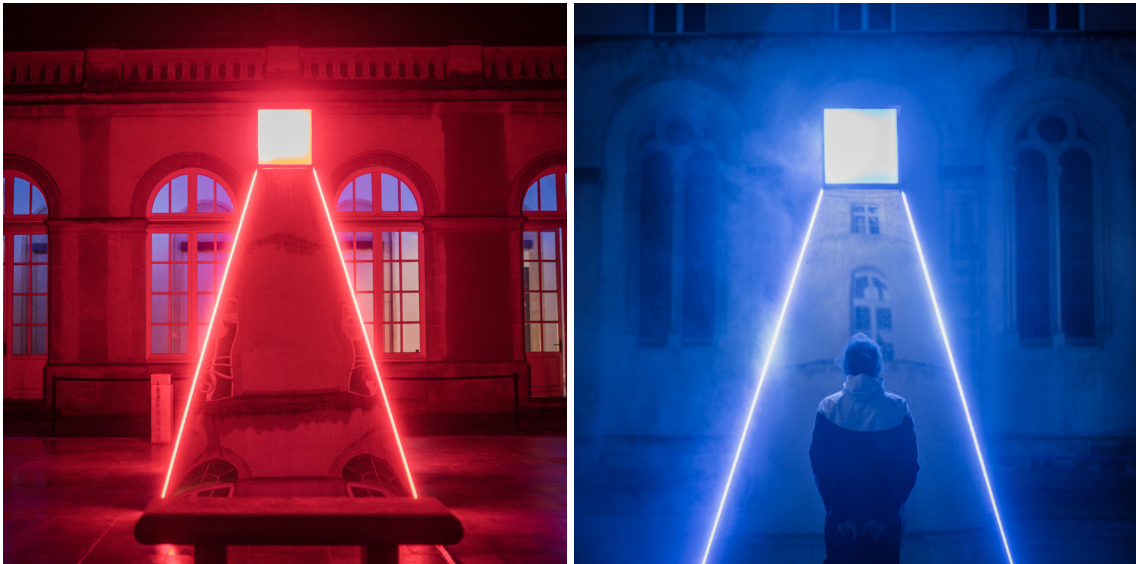
### 3. Which experiences, artists, philosophies, or cultural influences have shaped your artistic vision the most?

Philosophy is a form of writing that has greatly guided my conceptual research, particularly Georges Didi-Huberman's *The Man Who Walked in Color*, as well as Mircea Eliade's writings on the sacred.

Beyond philosophy, different architectural movements linked to the development of concrete as a material; such as the constructions of Kenzō Tange or the Brutalist movement — have become strong references in my practice, especially in relation to space. This link with these architects exists due to the place where I grew up. In the suburbs of Paris.

But what matters most in my research is this desire for stories, for mythologies, as I like to call them. For me, contemporary scientific research offers perfect mythologies, allowing us to draw human threads between our relationships, emotions, and aspirations.

On a more personal level, the fact that I'm stuck between two cultures shape a lot my art perspective and I would say that my residency experience during a journey within the Arctic Circle laid many of the foundations for my work, particularly in terms of materials and the relationship to the organic.



- K2-18B/LED Installation<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://jesusbaptista.fr/portfolio/k2-18b/>

**4. In your opinion, what makes digital art different from traditional art forms, and what possibilities does it offer to contemporary artists today?**

That is the million-dollar question.

It is a question that was already present with the arrival of electricity, the typewriter, photography, and now AI. Artists were able to free themselves through photography, and digital art is simply a contemporary form of expression that comes to merge with others.

In my own path, technological tools have actually led me to produce a great deal with my hands. I don't think technical boundaries or forms of expression are the real issue. What matters is developing an identity.

**5. After meeting the students and seeing the atmosphere here, what are your thoughts about the Faculty of Fine Arts at İstanbul Aydın University and the importance of art education in universities?**

The atmosphere at the university felt very professional. The questions asked by the students during the discussions were highly relevant, and the resources made available seem to be of high quality. I think all the ingredients are there to develop a broader reflection on art in general.

I believe that integrating art into university education allows students to think outside the box. We live in a society that tends to create formats in every field, and maintaining a conceptual approach; or studying artistic concepts; can make it possible to approach other subjects from a different perspective.

**6. From your perspective, what does studying art really require? Is talent enough, or are discipline, research, and personal experience equally important?**

I come from a poor family, with no university or artistic education, a family that spent its life in manual and agricultural work.

What pushed me to develop a career in this field was desire, first of all, and that desire later became discipline.

I was not the most talented at the beginning. Some of my colleagues had far more economic resources, more talent, and stronger family support. But I think I was hungrier for it than they were, and today I am pursuing a career that many of them never even began.

**7. We are living in the era of artificial intelligence and rapidly changing technologies. What would you recommend to young art students who want to remain creative and original in this new environment?**

To go out, to spend time outside. To meet people, to live experiences, to travel.

And to try to develop an abstract way of thinking, because this is something that, for now, AI is incapable of doing. And that is a good thing.

**8. Many students today are concerned that AI might replace artists. Do you see artificial intelligence as a threat, a tool, or a new artistic collaborator?**

I see AI as a tool that allows me to be more efficient and faster in production, especially for repetitive and labor-intensive tasks.

However, artistically and creatively, I still find it very poor in terms of what it proposes. At the same time, it tends to smooth out creation and erase the different identities of each artist.

**9. There seems to be a philosophical dimension in your works. Could you tell us a little about the philosophy behind your art and what ideas or emotions you hope audiences experience through your creations?**

More than a philosophical quest, I would say there is a search for the sacred.

Not in the religious sense, but in the metaphysical sense of the word: a desire to direct our gaze toward what we do not see, to shift thought toward places that everyday life does not usually allow us to reach.

It is also a family inheritance. My family was focused on daily tasks, on concerns and responsibilities that did not allow them to take that step aside. I give myself that freedom.

**10. Finally, are you currently working on any new projects that you would like to share with us? And after this experience, would you like to visit and meet Istanbul again in the future?**

At the moment, I am developing several projects simultaneously. This allows me to always maintain the desire to continue working on them.

One is an installation about landscapes of quantum physics, developed in partnership with the French Atomic Energy Commission. Another is an installation using micro-cameras and miniature screens in order to transpose the gaze to a different scale.

I am also working on a monumental installation, measuring 20 x 20 x 3 meters, for a festival taking place at the Château de Vincennes, near Paris, for which I am also the artistic director. In this installation, the audience will stand beneath mirrors that vibrate and disturb their reflections. Through this, I seek to destabilize their sense of identity.

I have also begun producing a series of sculptures entitled *Concretions, Grids & Hierophanies*. This series offers a smaller-scale approach to the different artistic principles that I apply across my various projects. Alongside all of this, I continue to produce video mappings. My two most recent ones, in Tokyo and Kazan, explored the relationship between the creative process and the final result.

