

## *We Step Inside Artist Alena Vavilina's Dreamlike Dubai Studio*



BY [BEENA PAGARANI](#) / APR 1 2020 / 13:16 PM

A visit to Russian artist Alena Vavilina's exquisitely designed Dubai studio reveals dreamlike creatures that are brought to life through the award-winning artist's ethereal art pieces



Alena in her studio

Upon entering [Alena Vavilina](#)'s studio, which the Russian artist designed herself, one is naturally taken aback by broad rays of natural light streaming in from the floor-to-ceiling, French-style windows, as well as the open and well-aired splendour the space has to offer. The

studio doubles as Alena's home, in which she has put much thought into the design to suit her style.

She started off with a clean slate, with a space that had absolutely nothing – a simple shell-and-core loft apartment in Dubai's fashionably young [Jumeirah Beach Residences](#). She thought of and yearned for a brightly-lit space and that is exactly what she has accomplished. "I love my studio and space, and I love to wake up to it every day," admits the artist.



*Alena Vavilina. Blue Butterflies #2. 102x65cm. Watercolor and gold leaf on paper, Singing Angel. 2017. 100x70cm. Charcoal, pastel and gold leaf on canvas*

Vavilina's love for art flourished from a very young age; her first tutor was her father. He was not an artist himself, but he introduced the use of water colour and still life painting techniques very early on in Vavilina's life. In her adolescent years, she enrolled into an art school in [Moscow](#) and never looked back. Vavilina has also been educated in France, England, Malta, China and Dubai – her travels have left a mark on her art pieces in one way or the other.

Her adoration for [Chinese](#) culture has seen her spend some of her early days studying the language and Chinese diplomacy. So influenced is she by the culture, that she calls herself an "Orientalist," and this is evident in the style of her art on canvas, for instance, as seen in *Cherry Blossom* (2019) and in her *Butterflies* series.



*Library inside Alena Valilina's studio*

Young and bright, the artist wants to be recognised for her own authentic style and she is slowly, but surely, building it. Her works are modern and minimalist, noting inspiration from her many travels and her formal and academic learning.

Vavilina's latest series comprises droplet-shaped sculptures, which are inspired by her previous artwork, *Red Balloon* (2019). The artist was intrigued by the thought of projecting the ethereal creatures she envisioned in her dreams into three-dimensional pieces.

Entitled *Big Ocean Drop* (2019) and *Ocean Drop Little* (2019), these pieces are a continuation of her renowned sculpture *Secret Life of Bunny* (2019). "I am very selective of the colours I choose," she expresses, explaining that she limits her works to three or four colours which share similar tones. Her works are displayed at Art WeMe Contemporary Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Artistery's Gallery Vienna, Austria.





*Alena Vavilina. Ocean Drop Little. 2019. 20x30x15cm. Acrylic and metal on gypsum*

Her latest canvases, such as *Red Balloon* (2019) and *Elephant* (2020), are made from acrylic paint, metallic wires, artificial fur and sheets upon sheets of gold or silver leaves. The artist loves to experiment with different media because it gives her work, as she says, “a unique and unusual texture and feelings to the viewer.”

She spends days carefully concealing the final layers to emulsify with the base layers. Some pieces from her mixed media range include *Elephant* (2020), *Red Balloon* (2019), and *Cherry Blossom* (2019), which depict the philosophies behind her observation of nature.

Water, which is so special to the artist, is emphasised in the form of water droplets and puddles across her pieces. “Water is one of the elements of nature which can be observed forever, while red balloons represent the element of creation, inventing a way of looking at things,” explains the artist.

BAZAAR<sup>Harper's</sup>  
ART

ARTIST  
Acrylic-Primed Cotton  
100% Linen Gallerywrap  
GALLERYWRAP  
Frida



*Alena Vavilina. Untitled. 120x100cm. Oil and gold leaf on canvas*



She has always been fascinated by elements of nature, as seen in *Cherry Blossom* (2019), for example, which depicts a little white fluffy ‘cherry monster’ who pauses to observe a cherry blossom from his window. The grey wall in the painting represents “our everyday grey busy life,” states the artist.

The eyes of her subjects in the canvases and new sculptures, namely the *Big Ocean Drops* (2019) and *Ocean Drops Little* (2019) are, as the artist says, “windows into the souls of the creatures of our ocean.” The works are also a “dedication to the pollution within the big blue sea.” The initial inspiration behind the sad eyes series stemmed from a sustainability perspective, to “attract attention to nature.”



*Alena's art material*



The initial concept of the signature 'big sad eye' feature was brought to life from a dream the artist had on multiple nights. "I keep a diary on my bedside table so that I can write down my dreams as soon as I wake up," smiles Vavilina.

The wings on the sculptures, another signature element of her work, highlight the concept of freedom. "Representing freedom is important to me because it allows me to be myself," she expresses. "Freedom enhances the expressions of creativity and is a warrant of social progress."

Vavilina will be exhibiting at the upcoming edition of [World Art Dubai](#), from 8 until 10 October. The artist will highlight three sculptures, namely *Secret Life of Bear* (2020) – which will be a large portrayal of her renowned sculptures, reaching one metre in height, *Ocean Drops* (2019), and *Owl* (2020).

The initial concept of the signature 'big sad eye' feature was brought to life from a dream the artist had on multiple nights. "I keep a diary on my bedside table so that I can write down my dreams as soon as I wake up," smiles Vavilina.

The wings on the sculptures, another signature element of her work, highlight the concept of freedom. "Representing freedom is important to me because it allows me to be myself," she expresses. "Freedom enhances the expressions of creativity and is a warrant of social progress."

Vavilina will be exhibiting at the upcoming edition of [World Art Dubai](#), from 8 until 10 October. The artist will highlight three sculptures, namely *Secret Life of Bear* (2020) – which will be a large portrayal of her renowned sculptures, reaching one metre in height, *Ocean Drops* (2019), and *Owl* (2020).

*Images courtesy of Alena Vavilina and Aasiya Jagadeesh, ITP Media Group*

---

*From the [Spring 2020](#) issue of Harper's BAZAAR Art*