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ADELA ANDEA (/) , ANYA TISH GALLERY (/) , VISUAL VERNACULAR (../TAG/VISUAL-VERNACULAR/)

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VISUAL VERNACULAR: ADELA ANDEA

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Adela Andea, "A.57," 2025 (detail)

Twists in technology, variance in visual velocity, lengthening light, and capturing natural conundrums are all intertwined into Adela Andea's work. Transitioning from her work on canvas to elaborate sculptures and installations, Andea has been illuminating spaces and captivating audiences here in Houston and beyond for years. The spark seen in her eye is seen in the glow of her sculptures, otherworldly and effervescent in nature. In her latest exhibition at Anya Tish Gallery, *Glacial Parallax*, the artist grapples with the advancements of technology while the natural world rapidly declines, such as in the glaciers in Alaska and elsewhere.

Anya Tish has hosted Andea's work on multiple occasions, each show luminous in its own right, but this show overwhelmingly brings together multiple concepts and materials to make for a mammoth of visual delight. This sensory experience goes beyond the materials to gracefully pin point important topics racking our society. Andea was gracious enough to elaborate on her current exhibition along with her story on how she came to make such momentous work.

Free Press Houston: What particular part of your childhood unveiled visual art as an interest for you?

Adela Andea: As I was growing up in Romania, I had a close connection with the old orthodox churches. The beautifully painted icons and frescos were the only reason my grandmother was able to drag me to the church on Sundays. I remember staring at all the details of the paintings; some were more than 300 years old. I did not have artists in the family, but I found books that inspired me to draw and paint. Before I was in the first grade, before I could read and write I was already attempting to imitate artworks by Goya. These are the earliest memories I have about art.

FPH: How did you make the shift into artistic studies?

Andea: After spending some time working as a paralegal in California, I realized that my calling was art so I moved to Houston and graduated Valedictorian and Summa Cum Laude from the Painting program at the University of Houston. I continued my higher education in Studio Arts and I received my Master of Fine Arts in New Media, with a minor in Sculpture from University of North Texas, Denton, Texas.

While I was working on my degrees I was introduced to contemporary concepts, trends and theories, which influenced overall my transformation as an artist. It was a difficult experience, as I was constantly trying to better myself, absorb all the information I can possibly can and be the best at what I am doing. It was an opportunity and a luxury I did not have before in my life and I appreciate it every moment.

Adela Andea, “Ice Flare,” 2025.

FPH: What are some experiences that helped shape your artistic concept, drawing from nature and technology?

Andea: My art education has the biggest influence over my artistic life. It was during that period when my affinity to contemporary art currents crystalized and gave shape to my endeavors into installations using light.

Outside academia, there are periodical events that weight heavier in my artistic carrier. Such events can be recreational in nature – my cruise trip to Alaska a few years ago brought new awareness in me on the ecological issues – or professional – my residency in France last year immersed me in a new culture from where I drew inspiration for my art.

FPH: How did one of your first major shows at Lawndale Art Center help shape your visual voice into creating work of technology and light?

Andea: After I finished my BFA in painting at University of Houston I applied for my first solo show at Lawndale, *The Green Cyber Web*. I majored in painting for the love of painting. While I was in the studio program, I realized that paint or color is a perception of the eye, and it can be achieved with different materials, besides colors from a tube.

When I projected the green cathode light on one of my painted objects I was startled by the effect, it was exactly what I was looking for in my art. I knew I made a leap in what I was doing. I was finished with my previous work and I moved on from painting and traditional sculpture into this new medium.

I started to research the new technologies on the market. These latest technological advancements inspired me to create the artworks I wanted. None of my works contain neon lights, it is all LED or CCFL. While I was already thinking about big installation, the show at Lawndale offered me the opportunity to create a full room installation. Environments, according to Allen Kaprow, are an extension of painting when referring to the issue of space. The spaces I am working with are a major consideration for how the installation will work and I took in consideration the architecture of the room as a component of the artwork. My proposal at Lawndale was specifically for the gallery that it was displayed in.

Also during that time, conceptually my work started to take shape and focus meaning of nature, natural vs. artificial concepts, environmental issues and technological advances. By applying the dichotomy of the concept natural vs artificial and it contemplates positively on the necessity of progress and technological advances, blending artistically the romantic notion of nature with the manmade esthetic.

Adela Andea, “A.57,” 2025.

FPH: Recently you participated in a residency in France. What was that experience like for you?

Andea: I had the honor at the end of last year to be invited by Zebra 3 Foundation with funds provided by the city of Bordeaux for a residency and show at the Crystal Palace in the old downtown of Bordeaux. It was a great experience that will stay with me for a long time. The materials were procured by the organization upon my specification upon arriving and I worked with an assistant for almost a month to finish an installation from scratch on the site. While I was working hard to finish the work, I also had the chance to experience the food, the culture and visit historic locations. My assistant there deserves all the credit for being a great liaison.

FPH: Tell me about your evolution of some of your current work on display at Anya Tish Gallery. What are some of the highlights of the show visually and conceptually that you are now expanding upon?

Andea: The new concept I wanted to discuss with this show is the technical notion of “parallax” when it becomes a metaphor of the different points of view on the environmental issues. Just like real life parallax produces different views depending of the line of sight, my arts is addressing the different positions taken in the society that vary based on the position and situation of the observer. The environmental movement

became a political movement, the new religion of the popular culture, mostly supported by the mass media influence. The whole discussion gravitates around the notion that man-made pollution is the cause of environmental decay. Some of the scientific arguments are contaminated by economic and political agendas.

Formally there are three types of work that I developed simultaneously while preparing for the fourth solo show at Anya Tish. While they are all connected conceptually, my continuous concern with the destruction of the environment, formally they differ.

The large sphere, titled “A.57,” is representing an imaginary asteroid or planet where the energies of various materials translate into a plasmatic eruption of colors. The work incorporates various previous materials and experiments wrapped into a sphere that encompasses the essence of my work in the past decade. To paraphrase Otto Piene, “Light is the incarnation of visible energy.” For me this piece has a variety of energies that emulate the existence of a live planet.

The triangular shaped mirror plexiglass pieces, like “Glacial Fracture,” “Glacial Onyx,” and “Ice Flare,” maintain the simplicity of geometric shapes while allowing through multiplicity to create organic shapes for the pieces. This play between organic and geometric insists on the visual transformation of inorganic into organic matter. The aesthetic aspects of this work comment on the antithetic perception of real vs. artificial or organic vs. geometric, deconstructing the structure of nature into geometric forms.

Multiplicity is another formal element that I embrace with my work. Either it is a large installation or a small wall dependent piece. The “Ice Grain” series and “Sun Draft” focus on one type of material that I repeat a million times. They become mini universes, obsessive detailed work that takes months to finalize. However, I enjoy the process as it also allows my mind to develop new ideas.

Adela Andea, “Glacial Fracture,” 2025.

FPH: How has your interaction with the community here in Houston and beyond with large site-specific instillations affected you as an artist?

Andea: I like to interact with artists who are unique and confident on their work. I think Houston attracts these independent type of artists. To be original and different from everybody else seems to characterize what artists have in common in this area. This lack of a cohesive art scene is what I appreciate the most and I consider it an asset to this community. It is a very vibrant and diverse group of people, also very warm and welcoming.

FPH: In a time where technology is put on such a pedestal, how does art/how does your art manage to strike a balance between the digital and the visual?

Andea: My art offers opportunities to investigate the visual significance of the contemporary technologies. It provides a commentary on the individual interaction, theoretical discussion of the post-traditional self and how certain technologies are embedded in our culture. The infusion of my art with the new technologies relies on recent technological advances, which are also well received through consumer perspective.

FPH: Any upcoming projects you would like to mention?

Andea: The upcoming show from May through September at the Total Plaza in downtown Houston is curated by Sally Reynolds and will display a large installation, as well free standing and wall dependent sculptures. Also, I am working on an outdoor sculpture project that I prefer to keep it secret until the details are finalized.

Adela Andea's exhibition "Glacial Parallax" is on view at Anya Tish Gallery (4411 Montrose) through February 4.

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by **Meghan Hendley-Lopez (../author/meghan-hendley-lopez/)**

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