

## BFA Senior Thesis Conversations featuring Rulin Ma

Questions by Daniela Segovia

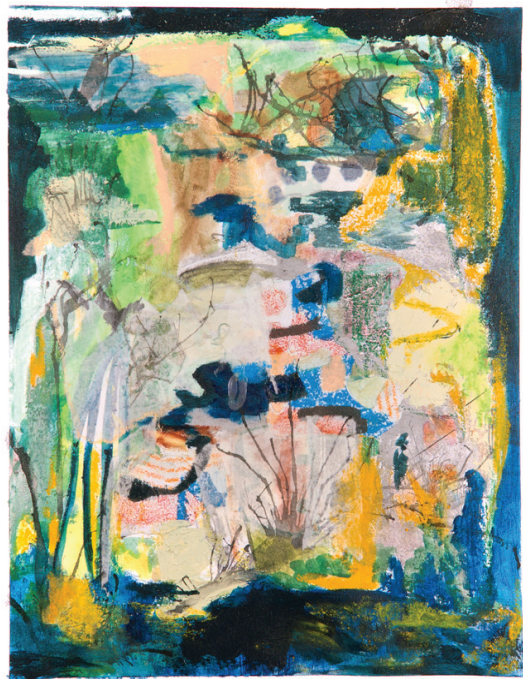


Born in Shanghai, China, **Rulin Ma** is a painter living and working in the Bay Area.

See more of her work on Instagram [@rulin\\_ma](https://www.instagram.com/rulin_ma).

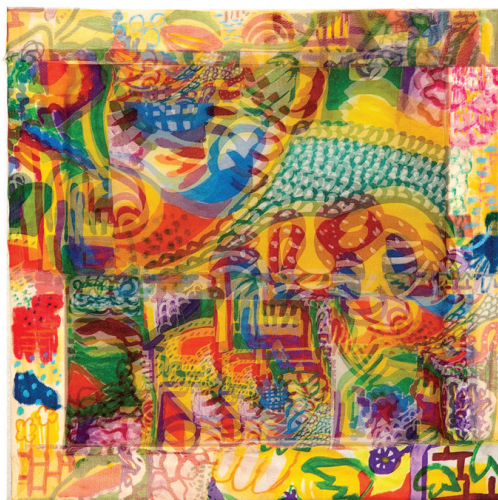
### What is your thesis investigating?

It will be documentation and expression of my personal experiences. I want to introduce drawing, text, textile elements, and collage to my abstract painting to present the tensions, contradictions, confusion, and reflection of rebuilding a life in a new country.



*A Patchwork of Nostalgia, 2020.*

Rice paper collage, acrylic, oil pastel, gouache, ink on canvas pad, 20 in. x 16 in.



*Double Blink, 2019.*

Acrylic marker, digital painting printed fabric mounted to wood panel, 12 in. x 12 in.

### What is your major influence at the moment?

Currently, my work is influenced a lot by various poems I read, which I think helps me further break the boundary of mind. It not only makes me realize that writing, especially writing Chinese characters, is a kind of drawing and that the arrangement of poetic words is also a kind of sculpture on paper.

Also, textile approaches such as weaving, knitting, are currently influencing me, too. It makes me pay more attention to the textures and dynamic surfaces of the painting. The strong, resilient, and flexible connection that the fabric contains is also like a metaphor for the power I am currently craving.

### What is the question you are trying to answer for yourself through your practice?

What kind of person I am is a question that I constantly carry with me in my practice. Through my practice, I have been watching what I have given up, struggled with, feared, kept, and returned to repeatedly. And then, through these observations, I piece them together and know myself a little bit better. So I think that no matter what my artwork's outcome is, the process is critical and precious in my exploration of this question. There doesn't seem to be an ultimate answer to this question because I am continually discovering and revising what I know about myself as I create and practice.



*Indoor Rain: 雨*, 2020.  
Acrylic, pencil on wood panel, 12 in. x 12 in.



*Memory Mining*, 2018, 2020.  
Acrylic, screen print ink, color pencil, oil pastel, on organza and canvas, 24 in. x 18 in.

### What's next for you?

After a particularly unsettling pandemic year, the miscommunication, uncertainty, insecurity of life is no longer just something I feel as a foreigner; it reaches out to everyone. For the next, I wanted to expand my artmaking from my personal experience to the public issues of the moment. To explore more closely from the lens of language, which includes the self-censorship of language, the loss in translation, the obscuring of personal narrative by grand narratives, and so on.