

When Knowledge Breaks: Jana Nirvana Between History and Art

Artistic trajectories that begin in academia rarely follow a linear logic. They tend to fracture quietly, long before any public declaration of change. When someone trained to analyze power, ideology, and historical trauma turns to painting, the shift is not aesthetic or biographical, it is structural.



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This conversation with Jana Nirvana explores that fracture point: the moment when intellectual distance stops offering protection, and creative practice becomes a different kind of response to reality. Not as escape, but as reconfiguration. The interview sits at the intersection of history, art, and personal positioning. It asks what happens when critical thinking, once rooted in archives and theory, moves into form, gesture, and material. How historical awareness survives outside academia. How strategy, visibility, and negotiation become unavoidable parts of artistic life, even when competition is rejected as a value system. People in Art is interested less in labels and more in process. In how artists locate themselves across borders, disciplines, and expectations. In what they carry forward from previous identities, and what they consciously leave behind. Jana Nirvana's path is examined here not as a reinvention narrative, but as a continuation under different conditions. What follows is not a romantic account of "finding one's calling," nor a critique of institutions for its own sake. It is a measured conversation about agency, coherence, and the cost of staying intellectually honest in a world that often rewards compliance over clarity.



Corina: You studied history before choosing painting. At what point did history stop being an intellectual refuge and start feeling like an excuse not to take a creative risk?

Jana: History was an intellectual refuge for me for years, especially while I spent nearly a decade researching dictatorships such as National Socialism and Communism. It offered distance, analysis, and a sense that society can learn something for the past. The real rupture came during the lockdowns. The restrictions themselves, and especially the behaviour of many intellectuals in the face of them, forced a reckoning. Watching how quickly conformity, moral pressure, and silence took hold, I understood for the first time—not just intellectually, but viscerally—how crimes like the Holocaust were possible. Academia, which I had trusted as a space of critical resistance, felt disturbingly comfortable with obedience. Painting offered me a sense of freedom of expression that was when I started to understand that I had to leave academia behind.

Corina: Many artists talk about "calling" or "destiny." Was painting a true revelation for you or simply the first thing you allowed yourself to take seriously?

Jana: Neither, really. I don't experience painting as a calling or a destiny, and it wasn't a sudden revelation either. For me, art is a path of self-healing, something practical, almost necessary, rather than romantic. It's the place where I can metabolize experience, uncertainty, and damage in a way no intellectual framework ever allowed. If there is a mission in it, it's not about self-expression for its own sake. It's about sharing the knowledge that creativity itself is restorative that engaging the imagination is a way of repairing what gets fractured by fear, control, and abstraction. Painting and writing is simply the language I use for that work.

Corina: You live in Germany, you're Czech by origin, and your art circulates internationally. Do you feel rooted anywhere or is displacement part of your creative brand now?

Jana: *I do feel rooted but not in the way that question usually implies. I feel deeply rooted in Europe, in its layered histories, tensions, and shared cultural memory.*

PEOPLE IN ART

That ground is real for me, even if national borders are not the primary way I experience belonging.

At the same time, my strongest sense of anchoring comes from elsewhere: the universal love in the quantum field which is flowing through us and which responds to us. I enter it consciously each day through meditation. That space is stable, connective, and non-local. It's where I recalibrate, listen, and return to myself. So displacement isn't a brand for me, it's simply that my roots are not only geographic, but also internal, non-local and energetic. At the same time, my strongest sense of anchoring comes from elsewhere: the universal love in the quantum field which is flowing through us and which responds to us. I enter it consciously each day through meditation. That space is stable, connective, and non-local. It's where I recalibrate, listen, and return to myself. So displacement isn't a brand for me, it's simply that my roots are not only geographic, but also internal, non-local and energetic.

Corina: Souls United in Art suggests unity. Yet the art world is highly competitive and fragmented. Is the title aspirational or slightly naïve?

Jana: For me, it's neither aspirational nor naïve—it's factual. Souls United in Art reflects my mission to help deprogram people who are living in deep mass hypnosis, believing they are separate from one another. That belief in separation is at the root of fear, competition, and fragmentation, including in the art world.

From my perspective, everything is one—one energetic field expressing itself in different forms. Unity isn't a slogan or an ideal to strive for; it's the underlying truth. The work simply points back to that reality, even when the structures around us are built to deny it.

Corina: When did you first realize that art alone was not enough, that you also had to become a strategist, a curator of yourself, and a negotiator?

Jana: I realized it the moment I understood that being an artist also means selling your work and that the art market is highly competitive by design. That awareness made it clear that creation alone doesn't carry the work into the world; you also have to navigate structures, expectations, and negotiations.

That said, I don't enter the competitive field in the usual sense. I don't strategize against others or try to outperform them. I follow my inner guidance and grow into what is presented to me. Any role I take on beyond making art—strategist, curator, negotiator emerges organically, as part of staying aligned rather than chasing position. And that is a work on its own, that's for sure.

Corina: History teaches structure, context, and power dynamics. Do you consciously use that knowledge to position your art or do you try to forget it when you paint?

Jana: I don't try to forget it. History trained me to think methodically, to recognize structure, context, and power dynamics, and that way of seeing never really disappears. I use that experience very consciously, especially when I'm writing, framing ideas, or curating the work of other artists.

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When I paint, the process itself is more intuitive, but it's supported by that underlying discipline. The historical training gives me clarity and precision where it's needed, while painting allows me to move beyond analysis. The two aren't in conflict they operate in different registers of the same practice.

Corina: What was harder: admitting to others that you wanted to be an artist or admitting it to yourself after years of another academic identity?

Jana: Nothing about it was hard. It felt like pure liberation. There was no dramatic inner conflict or fear around naming myself as an artist, only relief, as if something finally clicked into place.

The academic identity hasn't vanished overnight, though. I still have a responsibility to finish some scientific books with my former colleagues. I see that not as a contradiction, but as a completion, closing one chapter with integrity while fully inhabiting the next.



Corina: If Souls United in Art fails commercially but succeeds emotionally, would you still consider it a success?

Jana: I would consider it an absolute success no matter what. Commercial outcomes count of course but are secondary to me. What truly matters is that the energy, intention, and emotion behind Souls United in Art have been released into the world. Once that energy is out there felt, shared, and experienced, it has already done its work. That, to me, is the most important measure of success.



Corina: Brutally honest: are you more afraid of being misunderstood or of being perfectly understood and still ignored?

“ Jana: *I've known both, and I'm not afraid of either. Being misunderstood and being fully understood yet ignored are both part of the journey. I trust that, in the end, everything finds its meaning. Even when it doesn't make sense in the moment, I believe it will somehow, so I choose trust over fear and I have endurance.*



What emerges from this interview is not an “artistic journey” in the conventional sense, but a deeper recalibration of how reality is inhabited. In Jana Nirvana’s case, art does not replace thinking; it responds to its limits. This is not a dramatic rupture with an intellectual past, but a continuation shifted into a different register, less descriptive, more immediate, and inevitably more exposed.

This shift speaks to a broader movement within contemporary European culture. Increasingly, creators with backgrounds in rigorous analytical fields, history, philosophy, the social sciences, are turning toward forms that allow for processing rather than explanation alone. In a climate shaped by pressure, conformity, and competition, the decision to create without immediately instrumentalising the outcome becomes, paradoxically, a strategic act.

Jana Nirvana does not propose an aesthetic of retreat, nor a frontal critique of the systems she knows intimately. Instead, she offers another mode of presence, one in which knowledge is not discarded but translated. That translation, from concept to material, from analysis to experience, may be one of the most honest ambitions of contemporary art.

People in Art looks beyond artistic output to examine the standpoint from which creation takes shape. In this sense, the conversation with Jana Nirvana matters precisely because it avoids the convenient myths of vocation or rapid success. It is a dialogue about choice, discipline, and the quiet courage required to follow a path that promises coherence rather than comfort.

In a world that increasingly rewards visibility over meaning, this interview stands as a rare documentation of an inner process that does not seek validation, but alignment. And at times, that may be the most subversive artistic gesture of all.