AESTHETICS

aurèce vettier

off-duty seraphim

diffusion models pietra dura crafts

off-duty seraphim is a suite of twelve hardstone panels by aurèce vettier, each measuring 28 × 35 cm. The series imagines what luminous beings — those traditionally tasked with guiding souls — might do during a moment of pause. The premise is speculative and concrete: as the wealthiest among us approach a form of biological immortality, fewer souls will return, and seraphim may find themselves with less to do. What do they contemplate? What landscapes do they traverse?

The panels depict post-human worlds. No human figures appear, only their traces: cathedrals, satellites, abandoned rockets, a solitary Porsche, Notre-Dame in flames. Recurring motifs from the artist's universe return throughout — a black cat, a white borzoi, swarms of yellow butterflies, René Daumal's Mount Analogue, skies crossed by comets and supernovas. Two moons signal a world in resonance; four moons signal an even deeper one.

Some panels stay close to our immediate reality, marked by fire and satellite trains. Others picture parallel planes where seraphim circulate between worlds. Certain compositions carry suggestions of Jewish and Christian traditions — the Book of Isaiah, the celestial hierarchies of Pseudo-Dionysius — though these references remain latent.

The series questions a relationship to the sacred at a moment when technology promises to dissolve mortality itself. The seraphim become mediators of a world in which humanity is no longer central, only latent.

seraphim at the heart of an unlikely combination of spectacular atmospheric phenomena and synchronicities as the world enters into resonance, Hard stone marquetry (agate, amethyst, malachite, quartz, etc.) on black marble base. Mounted in custom-made steel frame. AV-2026-U-779 35 cm x 28 cm

off-duty seraphim belongs to aurèce vettier's sur-reality axis of work, which since 2021 has used custom AI models trained on personal archives to give form to dreams and waking visions. The seraphim themselves are not new figures in this universe. They first appeared a few years ago in paintings, then returned in the large Aubusson tapestries shown at the Museum of Contemporary Art of Lyon in 2025. With this series, they enter a new arc, one the artist will continue to develop over the coming years.

Installation view of the Spaceless Gallery booth at Art Paris, April 2026

The production process unfolds across three stages, each held in continuous dialogue with the artist.

The first stage is dream. aurèce vettier collects waking recollections, dreams, biographical fragments, and recurring motifs from his universe — castles, comets, a white borzoi, yellow butterflies, two moons, Notre-Dame in flames. These accumulate over time into a private iconography, the raw material from which each composition begins.

The second stage is representation through AI. The artist works with a custom diffusion model he has developed and fine-tuned over several years. The model is trained on two principal corpora: aurèce vettier's personal archive of childhood photographs, family records, and contemporary images; and a rare corpus of Renaissance hardstone works inherited from Florentine workshops once supported by the Medici.

A ComfyUI post-processing workflow gives each composition its final visual form. What emerges is the dream's algorithmic refraction: familiar forms and atmospheres recombined into something at once intimate and strange.

The third stage is translation into stone. The work is executed by a workshop in Rajasthan, India, perpetuating centuries-old traditions of stone inlay. aurèce vettier spent two years searching for this workshop before finding the right partners. The collaboration is now tight and continuous, conducted almost daily through WhatsApp. The artisans themselves choose not to be named publicly.

seraphim on one of the moons as the world enters into even greater resonance, Hard stone marquetry (agate, amethyst, malachite, quartz, etc.) on black marble base. Mounted in custom-made steel frame. AV-2026-U-781 35 cm x 28 cm

Each panel requires approximately ten weeks of work and involves fifteen artisans, organized in three teams of five, all in permanent dialogue with the artist. The first five source and select the stones — agate, amethyst, lapis lazuli, malachite, tourmaline, jasper — chosen for color, veining, translucency, and how they will read against a black marble ground. The second team of five cuts the stones, following precise patterns derived from the digital composition. The third team of five assembles and inlays the cut pieces onto the marble support, then polishes the surface until light moves across the panel like water.

Throughout the ten weeks, stone selections are reviewed and approved at distance. Cuts are adjusted. Sections are sometimes rebuilt when a color or grain does not carry the intended atmosphere.

Each finished panel is set into a custom aluminum frame designed by the studio. All twelve works share the same vertical format of 28 × 35 cm. Each is unique.

The two panels presented here premiered at Art Paris in April 2026.

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About The Artist

aurèce vettier is an art project founded in 2019 by Paul Mouginot (b. 1990). The name itself was generated by an algorithm, an early signal of the practice that would follow: a sustained, collaborative dialogue between human intent and machine-generated possibility.

The work moves between two intertwined territories the artist calls *sur-nature* and *sur-reality*. The sur-nature emerges from algorithmic explorations of organic forms — most visibly in the *Potential Herbariums* series, in which AI trained on millions of botanical specimens generates impossible plants. These spectral flora travel into oil painting, bronze, tapestry, and hardstone, where they question contemporary impulses to digitize and ultimately erase the natural world. Despite vast training datasets, the model fails to replicate the adaptive logic of living organisms. What emerges is a fragile, self-destructive ecosystem, an anti-Darwinian nature that recalls the dreamlike landscapes of *Mount Analogue*, René Daumal's unfinished philosophical novel.

The sur-reality opens onto the subconscious. Since 2021, aurèce vettier has developed custom AI models trained on personal archives — childhood photographs, family records, biographical fragments — to give visual form to dreams and waking recollections. This is the territory of *le travail des rêves*, a body of work that materializes through painting, sculpture, bas-relief, Aubusson tapestry, and pietra dura. The *off-duty seraphim* series belongs here.

aurèce vettier approaches AI as a collaborator. The machine introduces *rupture*, anomaly, and poetic accident into the work. The studio's practice is deliberately slow and anchored in craft: Aubusson weavers, bronze foundries, decorative painters, and pietra dura artisans participate in long iterative dialogues that translate algorithmic visions into matter. Poetry runs through everything, from the 2019 AI-assisted book *Elegia Machina* to the inscriptions and titles of later works.

Recent solo exhibitions include *as the world enters into resonance* (Darmo, Paris, 2025), *forêt, tentative* (Darmo, Antibes, 2024), *le travail des rêves* (Bigaignon, Paris, 2024), and *Circular Ruins* (Darmo & Gismondi, Paris, 2022). Group exhibitions and institutional presentations include *Echoes of the Past, Promises of the Future* at the Museum of Contemporary Art of Lyon (macLYON, 2025), *The World Through AI* at Jeu de Paume (Paris, 2025), and a project at the Musée des Archives Nationales (Paris, 2022) in collaboration with Gilles & Boissier.

aurèce vettier was a finalist for the Lumen Prize in 2024 (Still Image Award) and again in 2025 (Still Image and Hybrid Awards). Works are held in the Gucci Collection and the Anne + Michael Spalter digital art collection, among others. The 2023 collaboration with generative art pioneer Vera Molnár — *AO.VM.AV.IA*, curated by Vincent Baby — marked the first time Molnár worked with AI.

The studio is based at La Fabrique, Ivry-sur-Seine.

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