

**Virtual**   
**LAVENDER**  
 **Labels**

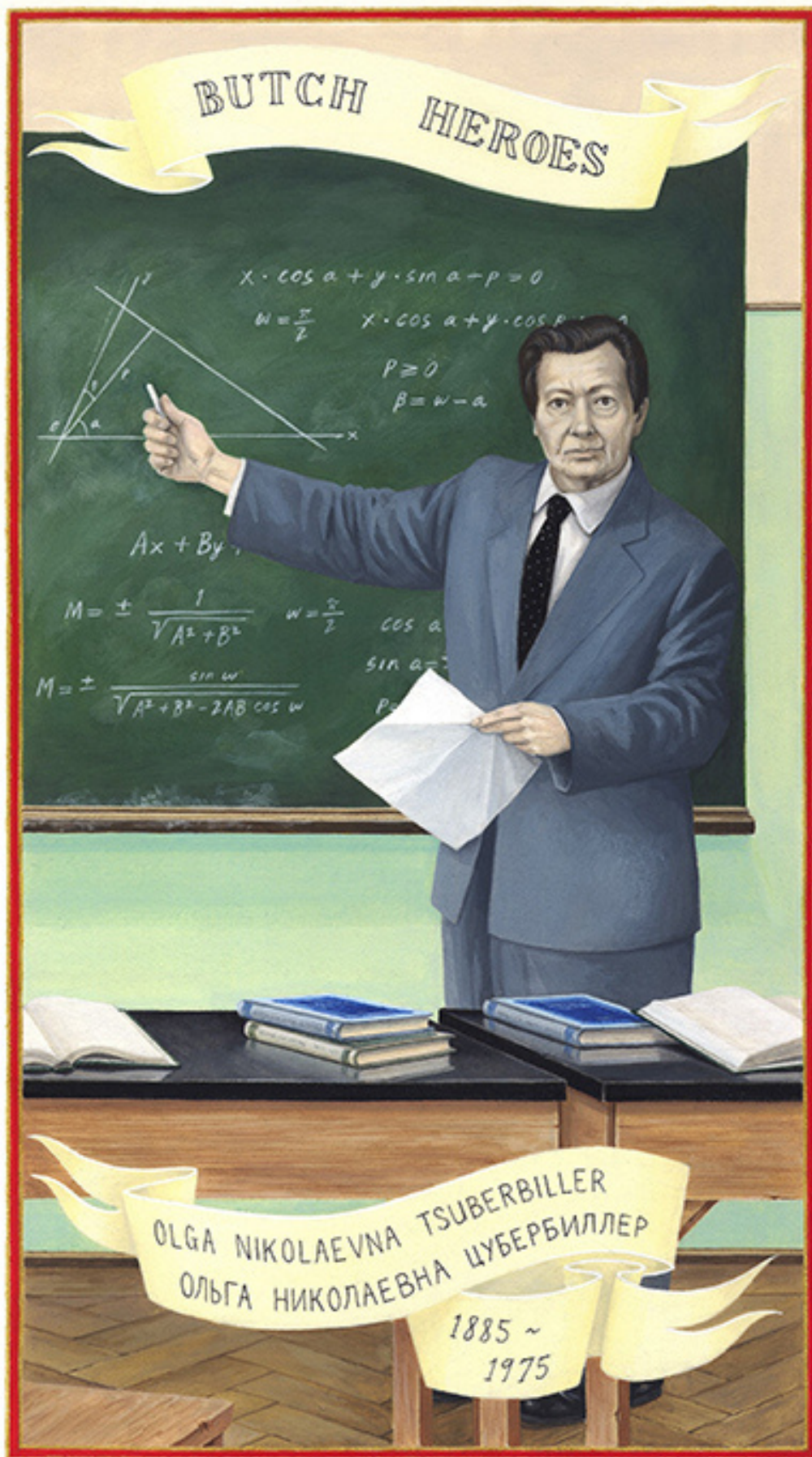
**RIA BRODELL**  
**(American, b. 1977)**

*Butch Heroes: Olga Nikolaevna  
Tsuberbiller 1885-1975 Russia, 2014*

**Gouache on paper | 11 x 7 in**

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Image courtesy of the artist and Gallery Kayafas © Ria Brodell



Based in Boston, Massachusetts, Ria Brodell is a trans non-binary artist who uses they/them pronouns. For their series Butch Heroes, the artist combines intensive research and multilayered symbolism to recover stories and images of gender non-conforming people from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Part of this larger series, *Olga Nikolaevna Tsuberbiller 1885-1975 Russia* connects the tradition of sacred texts with the art of the 1700s illuminated manuscripts. The artist's subjects embody queer identities, selected from diverse ethnic, societal, and geographic backgrounds.

Brodell's inspiration stems from their upbringing in the Catholic faith. These cards are modeled from their late aunt's religious holy cards. They describe their guiding principle for selection as, "people in history with whom I can personally identify—people who were assigned female at birth, had documented relationships with women, and whose gender presentation was more masculine than feminine." Functioning as role models for guidance and peace, these holy cards elevate butches to the same reverence as religious figures.

This card depicts Olga Tsuberbiller (1885-1975), a Russian expert in chemistry, math, geometry, and engineering. Pointing to a geometry problem on a green chalkboard highlights the butch's influence on analytic geometry teaching. Tsuberbiller is credited with creating a standardized method in use since 1927. Banners are used as headers and footers, a convention of the holy card format. By illustrating historical gender non-conforming figures in traditional form, this work emphasizes the ever-present influences of butches across time.