

Spring Awakening

FIVE ARTISTS WHOSE EYE-OPENING WORK YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS



DERRICK ADAMS Over the course of his career, multidisciplinary artist Derrick Adams has created a dizzying array of works—from vividly hued collages and assemblages to large-scale sculptural installations and performance pieces—that explore the black experience and its intersections with pop culture, consumerism, fashion, and art history. In recent years, he's spent a lot of time thinking



From top: Derrick Adams, pictured in his studio, creates work about the black experience, with allusions to pop culture, art history, and fashion. His 2017 collage *Runway No. 3* incorporates paint, fabric, and clothing patterns.

critically about leisure. “For people like me, struggle has been part of our culture, and within that I’ve been looking at the ways black people keep moving and thriving,” says the Brooklyn artist, whose ongoing series of “Floater” paintings features black figures reclining blissfully in pools. “There’s something to be said about showing that side of reality,” he adds. “It gives people hope.”

Following recent solo outings at the Tilton Gallery in New York, Chicago’s Stony Island Arts Bank, and the California African American Museum in Los Angeles, Adams’s timely work is the subject of an exhibition at New York’s Museum of Arts and Design through August 12. Titled “Derrick Adams: Sanctuary,” the show was inspired by black postal worker Victor Hugo Green’s *The Negro Motorist Green Book*, a little-known annual guide to restaurants, hotels, clubs, service stations, and hair salons where black vacationers in search of refuge and a good time were welcome during America’s Jim Crow era. Running the entire length of the gallery is Adams’s *Keep Your Head Down and Eyes Open*, a monumental wooden sculpture of a mini-highway featuring cars made out of driving caps, referencing the black Americans who took to the road more than half a century ago. *Family Style*, a geometric collage of a building composed of colorful paper, white doilies, and commercial-grade upholstery, is an homage to 20th-century soul-food restaurants whose significance as African-American safe spaces was not always fully appreciated.

“When I’m making work, I always look for inspiration in history that is not necessarily highlighted,” says Adams. “This exhibition is about myself as an artist, wanting to see things that I don’t see. And these places that I’ve created have a very sincere feeling of welcoming and warmth.”

derrickadams.com —ANTWAUN SARGENT

TRENDING TALENT

MATTHEW BRANDT The immediacy of digital photography be damned: Matthew Brandt still insists on taking a hands-on approach to making prints. In fact, he takes the idea of picture as art object to new levels by actually immersing his images *in* their subject matter.

In “New Territory,” a Denver Art Museum summer group show exploring landscape photography beyond its traditional notions, the Los Angeles artist will present a 2015 series of images he made on the Hawaiian island of Oahu and buried directly into the earth they depict. Over time, as a consequence of their contact with the soil, they degraded into alien, yet vaguely familiar, burnt-out landscapes. The show will also feature a triptych of photos Brandt shot of California’s Lake Isabella and then soaked in its waters until their emulsions dissolved and resettled into captivating, swirling pools of color.

The root of Brandt’s idiosyncratic approach was the desire to better comprehend traditional photographic processes. “When I was making conventional darkroom pictures, I realized I had no idea how silver, gelatin, and paper made a black-and-white print, or how color photography worked,” he says. “I felt compelled to understand it further, and the various materials of photography began to infiltrate my ideas.”

The experimentally minded Brandt took off from there. Since then, he has made prints with dust, various silvers, and Heidelberg blankets—the latter two on view in his current show at L.A.’s M+B gallery through March 31. He has also used human bodily fluids for his “Portraits” series, in which the images carry not only memories of friends and family but a little part of them as well. Mostly, Brandt explains, “it’s all a process of trial and error.”

matthewbrandt.com —JANELLE ZARA

MANUEL MATHIEU Just a couple of years removed from graduate school, Haitian-born Montreal painter Manuel Mathieu has already had two solo exhibitions in London. The first took place at the Institute of Contemporary Art in 2015, and the second, last fall, was at Tiwani Contemporary, a London gallery that represents Mathieu and focuses on artists from Africa and its diaspora. The show completely sold out.

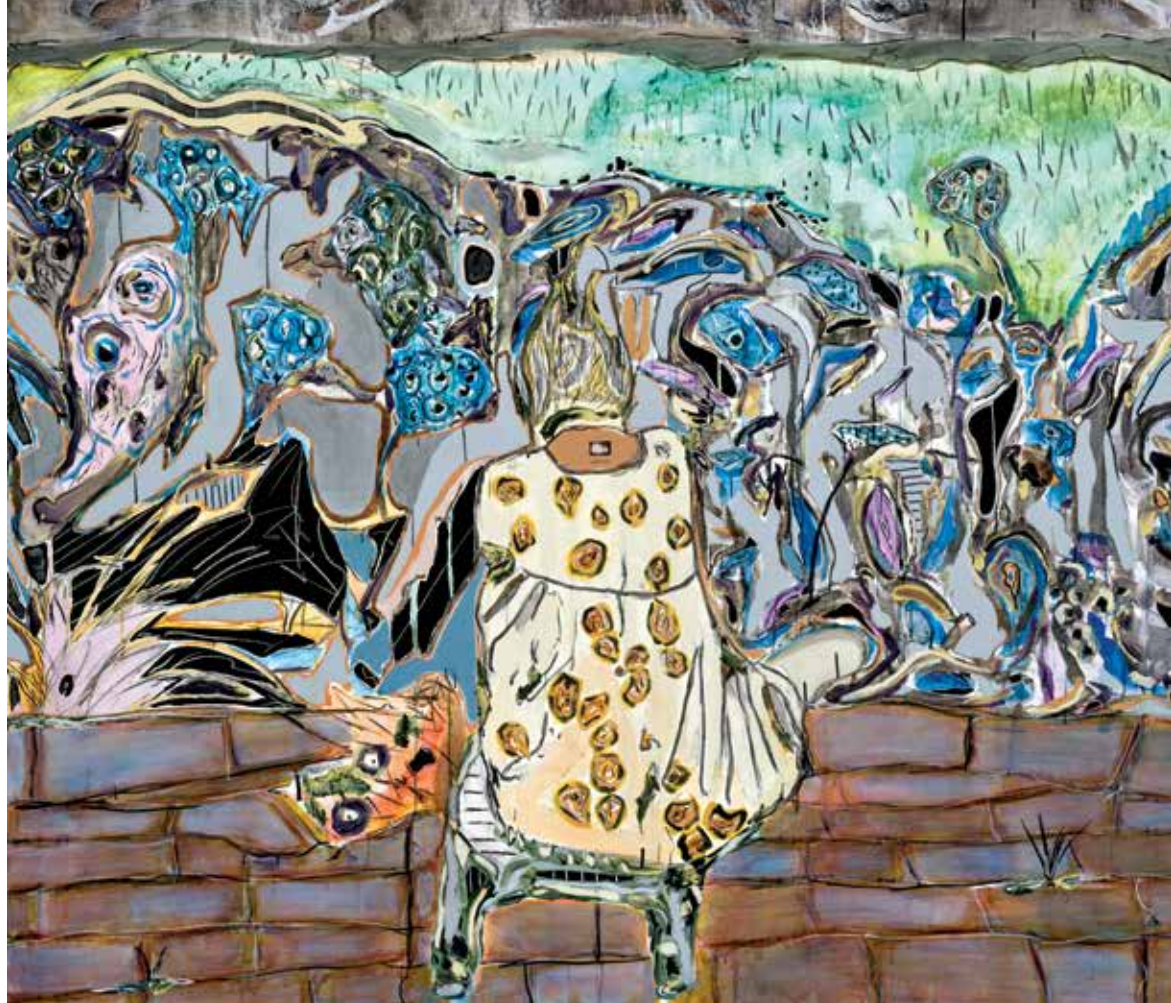
At once soft-spoken and effusive, the artist expresses quiet surprise at his rising success, which was nearly inconceivable just a few years ago. While finishing his MFA degree at Goldsmiths in London in 2016, Mathieu was hit by a car and spent six months recovering, only to improbably be

The psychedelic discolorations in Matthew Brandt’s *Nacimiento Lake CA 5* are the result of the artist submerging the photograph in water from the lake.



hit by another the following year. The experiences triggered a reckoning in his life and his art. “My work got really personal. I was forced to stop and look around,” he says. “Before the first accident I was touching on a lot of things, but I wasn’t looking at myself.” During his recovery, he started thinking about Haitian political history and the way his difficult family narrative—he had relatives on opposing sides of the Duvalier dictatorship—fit within it.

Employing a mostly muted palette and expressionist gestures, Mathieu melds abstraction and representation in compositions that can be as haunting as Picasso’s or Francis Bacon’s darker works.



From top: A recent self-portrait by Manuel Mathieu, whose personal, expressionistic work blends abstract elements with figuration. Tanya Goel in her New Delhi studio. Her *Intersection (red, blue, orange) II*, from 2017, features overlapping planes of luminous color, the pigments for which she creates using crushed bits of urban detritus.

Noting that artists like Luc Tuymans and Mona Hatoum have found ways to approach the legacy of the past through a personal lens, Mathieu says, “There has to be a balance between what is personal and what is relatable. It’s the combination that gets you a little bit closer to yourself, closer to life.” With Tiwani Contemporary dedicating an entire booth to his new work during New York’s Armory Show, March 8–11, and a solo show opening at Kavi Gupta Gallery in Chicago on March 23, Mathieu will reveal what kind of balance he has struck. manuelmathieu.com —SARA ROFFINO

TANYA GOEL Dilapidated modernist buildings and architectural ruins are the source material, literally, for Indian artist Tanya Goel’s monumental abstract paintings.

Inspired by the disorientingly rapid modernization of New Delhi, her hometown, the rising star collects bits of limestone, glass, ceramics, and other materials from neglected corners of the city. A self-described “color chemist,” she pulverizes her finds and extracts pigments →



TRENDING TALENT



Lina Iris Viktor seated in her studio in 2015, surrounded by works that call to mind historical references from the Vienna Secession to Afrofuturism.

to use for her luminous gridlike canvases. “I think art is always a reaction to your immediate environment,” she says from her sunny, laboratory-like studio.

After receiving an MFA from Yale in 2010, Goel spent time working with master miniature painters across India and studying the history of pigments. “I became fascinated with the pure properties of color and finding new interpretations of it,” she explains. Her work, best viewed in natural light to appreciate the lustrous tonal variations, calls to mind scientific charts while also evoking abstract painters such as Josef Albers and Agnes Martin. “In so many cultures abstraction is everywhere—on the borders around traditional Moghul paintings, in Islamic architecture and tiles, in silk weavings,” says Goel, whose parents worked in the textile business.

After recent well-received solo shows at Galerie Mirchandani + Steinruecke in Mumbai and Nature Morte in New Delhi, Goel is heading to the Biennale of Sydney (opening March 16), where she’s installing paintings and a site-specific wall drawing. Biennale artistic director Mami Kataoka, who is also chief curator of Tokyo’s Mori Art Museum, says she was “intrigued by Tanya’s minimal aesthetic and her sensitivity to the world around her—how she observes the change and flow of time and the surface of cities.” For her part, Goel says she wants viewers of her work to slow down and really look, “especially with so many screens and moving images around us. Painting has the ability to hold time still.” *galeriemag.com* —LUCY REES

LINA IRIS VIKTOR Since making her debut in 2013, Lina Iris Viktor has been turning out fantastical portraits and intricate

abstractions that plunge viewers into the depths of art history. The artist’s distinctive paintings—sometimes layered with digital prints—are often coated in ultra-saturated shades of Yves Klein blue and embellished with glinting gold in patterns that evoke Gustav Klimt, Afrofuturism, Byzantine decoration, and Dogon sculpture, among other references.

It’s shaping up to be a busy year for Viktor, who splits her time between New York City and London. First up, Seattle’s Mariane Ibrahim Gallery is presenting her latest paintings at New York’s Armory Show in March. Then in the summer, the artist will head to Palermo, where her work has been selected for the latest edition of the itinerant biennial Manifesta, and in the fall, the New Orleans Museum of Art will unveil her first solo museum exhibition.

Significantly, Viktor often appears in her work, gilded and shrouded in blue and oil-black paints like some ahistorical queen or goddess, finding a cosmic resonance in the contrast between the blackness and luminous gold. These portraits can be seen as a kind of nose-thumbing gesture directed at the art-historical canon—where the black female body is largely absent—especially with all that glorious gold.

In part because she was born in London to Liberian parents, Viktor grasps the history and politics of gold. “The African continent was and continues to be pillaged for this precious metal,” the artist says. “We have lauded it, worshiped it, buried our deceased with it. Modernity has devalued gold to a commodity, but previously it was heralded for its spiritual value. That is what I am interested in excavating, exploring, and exposing.” *linaviktor.com* —J.Z.