

# 18 Artists to Watch: Part I

BY MODERN PAINTERS | DECEMBER 14, 2015



Clockwise from top left: Diamond Stingily, Phoebe Boswell, Abdul Abdullah, Sofia Leiby, Jhafis Quintero, and Adrianna Corral.  
(Angel Harrold and QT Gallery, Phoebe Boswell, Abdul Abdullah, Sofia Leiby, Jhafis Quintero, Adriana Corral)

Rather than look back at the close of each year, we like to look ahead—to those new talents who are defining art as we will know it. To that end, here we present part one of our annual list of the most compelling emerging artists from around the world (check back here Tuesday and Wednesday for parts two and three). Because we believe that artists are the best assessors of their peers, we've asked a select group of established figures to tell us whom among their younger colleagues they are following. We are pleased to share their recommendations with you. And we are grateful to the following for their nominations.

With thanks to: Joe Ahearn, Ramon Maria Beltran, Sue de Beer, Alex da Corte, Moyra Davey, Nir Evron, Teresita Fernández, Latoya Ruby Frazier, Ethan Greenbaum, Glenn Kaino, Bouchra Khalili, Tony Matelli, Wangechi Mutu, JJ Peet, Nancy Shaver, Martine Syms, Diana Thater, Roger White

## **Sofia Leiby**

Lives in New York.

### **Describe your process or approach.**

I treat painting as a form of experiential learning.

**What in your studio (or outside) inspires you?**

I'm not one to really keep objects or talismans in my studio, but I do heavily rely on "trash paintings" that I keep around to collect marks and colors when I have extra energy in my arm.

**What's on your must-see/do/watch/read list?**

Jaakko Pallasvuo's new book of collected writings, *Scorched Earth*.

**What do you have coming up in the next year?**

I have a solo exhibition this month with my gallery, Michael Jon, in Miami, and more New York exhibitions in the works for next year.

**Who are some artists, living or dead, who have most affected or influenced the way you work?**

Elizabeth Murray, Jim Dine, Matta, Paul Klee, Frances Stark, Charline von Heyl, Michelle Grabner, Joanne Greenbaum, R.H. Quaytman.

**Jhafis Quintero**

Born in Panama. Lives in Verona, Italy.

**Describe your process.**

I began my career as an artist during a 10-year prison sentence, with the help of Haru Wells, a woman determined to demonstrate that art is an effective substitute for crime. Through art, I found a natural way to rechannel the appetite for transgression that led me to crime, and to find a way to be myself without harming others.

There is a peculiar perception of the passing of time and its implications for a body immersed in that particular time frame, a question of physical and mental limits, and a constant reflection on death that glides over the lives of inmates. My practice thus stems from my experiences in the world of incarceration: silence, insecurity, but also imagination and creativity directed at finding a means of survival. I create lucidly escapist structures while constantly maintaining an ironic and even humorous outlook, which prevents me from lapsing into misery and self-pity.

**What inspires you?**

I keep objects in my studio from my period in jail, and they often remind me of small stories and experiences, friends and enemies, all of which inspire me for some works. But I must say, my art laboratory is in the street, especially popular neighborhoods: I find everything inspiring in them, from drying clothes to the people.

**What's on your must-see/do/watch/read list for the coming year?**

Two documentary films: *The House I Live In*, by Eugene Jarecki, and *An Unsatisfactory Solution to the Penitentiary Problem*, by Enrique Sanz Delgado. Also, the book *Agonie des Eros* by Byung-Chul Han. I am very curious to visit the new Eli Broad Museum in Los Angeles and the Fondation Louis Vuitton in Paris.

**What do you have coming up?**

My dealer, Sabrina Amrani, will publish a book-object with stories from my prison years, illustrated by me and printed on copper sheets.

**Phoebe Boswell**

Born in Kenya. Lives in London.

**Describe your process.**

At the heart of my practice is a desire to tell stories. I combine traditional draftsmanship with digital technology in the aim of forming visual languages that are robust, multilayered, and open enough to communicate global fragmented narratives like my own, narratives which cannot be easily explained—contained—in a single image of a single-screen film. I was born in Kenya, my mum is Kikuyu, and my dad is fourth-generation British Kenyan. I was brought up as an “expatriate” in the Middle East and I now live and work in London, so my history—my identity—is rooted in transient middle points and passages of migration. My work is thus anchored to a personal exploration of home.

**What inspires you?**

My pencils inspire me—just knowing how quickly a mark made on a page can turn into a story. And my big old wooden animation desk, which was gifted to me by Uli Meyer when traditional hand-drawn animation gave way to the digital. Rumor has it Jessica Rabbit was conceived on my desk, and even though the type of animation I do is quite far removed from her, seeing years of scribbles etched into the wizened wood reminds me of a long history of people just as excited as I am to see drawings come to life. My projectors; the freedom of being able to project onto anything, and the unexpected information this feeds the work whilst playing with them in the studio. Mostly though, it's people. I mine my interactions with people, whether by watching strangers from a distance or through the intimacy of conversation. Everything I do is informed, or inspired, by observing others.

**What's on your must-see/do/watch/read list?**

Ai Weiwei at the Royal Academy. I'm currently meandering through Jalada's new online anthology “The Language Issue,” and I am looking forward to getting my hands on a copy of the new literary journal Freeman's, which features so many writers I want to read. I'm always trying to fill the gaps I have in my reading of important African literature, so next on my list is Okot p'Bitek's “Song of Lawino,” which will celebrate its golden jubilee next year. As for my to-do list, I have a burning temptation to go check out Berlin and Lisbon for possible studios, even though I probably love London too much to ever actually leave. And I must finally learn Swahili. Though that's on my list every year.

**What do you have coming up in the next year?**

I'll be making new work for the Biennale of Moving Images 2016 at the Centre d'Art Contemporain in Geneva next November, curated by Elvira Dyangani Ose (whom I had the pleasure of working with this year for the Gothenburg International Biennial for Contemporary Art), and will have a solo show at Kristin Hjellegjerde gallery in London earlier in the year. I'm collaborating with writer Binyavanga Wainaina on a “live” book which is due to be released in 2016, and I am working to try to get my *Matter of Memory* installation to Nairobi somehow, so fingers tightly crossed that the planets align for that!

**Adriana Corral**

Lives in San Antonio.

**Describe your approach.**

My work goes through a layered process, beginning with a conceptual framework that is dictated by the research I conduct. With a minimal aesthetic yet oftentimes loaded subject matter, I create installations, performances, and sculptures that are solicitous composites of research, politics, and universal themes of loss, injustice, concealment, and memory.

**What inspires you?**

Walking. I love walking and visiting specific sights that I am researching.

**What's on your must-see/do/watch/read list for the coming year?**

To read: *I Swear I Saw This*, by Michael Taussig.

**How would you characterize the art scene in Texas?**

Two great things about the art scene are the Menil Collection in Houston and Artpace in San Antonio.

**What do you have coming up in the next year?**

I have a new publication coming out, *Counter- Archives to the Narco-City*, and I will be attending the Artpace residency in January.

**Diamond Stingily**

Lives in New York.

**Describe your approach.**

I sit and think about what I'm capable of making with the budget I have, then I make it.

**What inspires you?**

As corny as it sounds, nostalgia inspires me.

**What's on your must-see/do/ watch/read list?**

I want to take more advantage of the museums in New York City. I've never been to an opera, so I would also like to do that.

**Abdul Abdullah**

Lives in Sydney.

**Describe your approach.**

I am very interested in monstrous depictions of the Other, and how they are used to justify societal attitudes that are oppositional to minority groups. In the past few years, I have been interested in the experience of young Muslims in the contemporary multicultural Australian context, but recently I have become more engaged with global postcolonial conditions.

**What in your studio (or outside) inspires you?**

I have a television in my studio that only plays the news on a 24-hour cycle. It's mostly on mute, but the visuals provide interesting source material. I have a lot of books, and I also collect Australian nationalist memorabilia.

**What's on your must-see/do/watch/read list?**

The Pierre Huyghe show at the TarraWarra Museum of Art. I also really want to visit David Walsh's Museum of Old and New Art in Tasmania.

**What do you have coming up in the next year?**

Until April I will have a series of photos exhibited at the Gallery of Modern Art in Brisbane for the 8th Asia Pacific Triennial, and in May I will show in the Basil Sellers Art Prize at the Ian Potter Centre, in Melbourne, where I will also take part in the 2016 Next Wave Festival, and have a solo exhibition at Fehily Contemporary in the last quarter of the year.

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