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Art

## 10 of the best artists working today

Searching for the next Picasso, Pollock or Hockney to invest in? We select the 10 best artists around today.

BY FLORENCE WALKER

24 Sep 2018



According to Picasso, it took him four years to paint like Raphael but a lifetime to learn how to paint like a child. An untrained eye cast over 'Nude, Green Leaves and Bust' might wonder how its simple lines and poster paint colours could command a record breaking price-tag of \$106.5 million, racked up in eight minutes at



auction. And now that Pablo and co. have well and truly freed art from its shackles, the layman might well struggle to discern a true contemporary masterpiece from what a kid could knock out in fourth period after milk and biscuits.

So let our guide help you pick out the best artists making the Unmade Beds (not to be confused with the cleaners leaving coke cans in galleries) - before they get too big for their own easels. The following talents have found their own freedom to create on whatever they deem to be a canvas, be it stretched linen, the floor or a Jaguar E-Type. Grab ‘em while they’re fresh - and affordable.



**Lena Peters**

**Born 1994, Dublin. Lives and works in London, UK**

Fresh out of the stables of Central Saint Martins in 2017, Peters’s next exhibition already has a lengthy waitlist. Combining a fierce imagination with a love of folklore, mythology, history and nature, the exhibition will build on a body of work created in 2017, ‘Secrets of the Hidden North” - an imagined haul of archaeological delights dug up just North of Hadrian’s Wall in Northumberland National Park. The ceramic works dance between reality and the land of bedtime stories. The collection will expand from the North of England to include folk beliefs and household worship from across the world. Expect a strange menagerie of shrine statues.

CREDIT: IMAGE COURTESY OF DAVID GILL GALLERY







## Kris Lemsalu

**Born 1985, Tallin. Works in Tallinn, Estonia and Vienna**

Originally specialising in ceramics at the Estonian Academy of Art, her eclectic art has garnered her an international reputation that is growing at a satisfyingly quick pace. In 2019 she will be representing Estonia at the Venice Biennale. Expect furs, spray paint, seashells, sand, sleeping bags or possibly even a xylophone to make appearances in her sculptures. Don't expect anything less than the artist in a body suit made of tights while blowing up a white balloon to represent birth from her performance art. Her best known work, 'Whole Alone 2' is of a porcelain turtle shell sitting on a water bed. When Lemsalu presented the work at Frieze New York, she lay in the turtle shell for the whole exhibition, explaining that her larger installations need her bodily sacrifice to balance the piece. The exhibition lasted for five days. Don't say these artists don't take their craft seriously.

CREDIT: JULIEN GREMAUD







## Michael Pybus

**Born 1982, Darlington. Lives and works in London, UK.**

Michael Pybus forges a short-cut to our emotions by hijacking well known brands and cartoon characters in his collages and paintings. Look out for his Pikachu x IKEA works such as ‘Pika IKEA toilet (blue)’, (2014) and ‘Not Going Anywhere’, (2014) for a taste of his unusual pairings. For Pybus, cartoon characters have, ‘a real visual sophistication to how they operate on such limited parameters’ but ultimately are shifty characters designed to manipulate us into buying stuff. And what throng of cartoon characters embody this consumerist drive better than the Pokemon franchise with it’s eerily blatant tagline ‘Gotta Catch’em All!’? Pybus’s fascination with this ‘self-perpetuating cycle of endless choice’ and its resulting ‘mini capitalist nightmare or utopia’ produces challenging works which are equally reassuring and uncomfortable.

CREDIT: COURTESY OF JELATO LOVE GALLERY



## Barnaby Barford

**Born 1977. Lives and works in London, UK.**

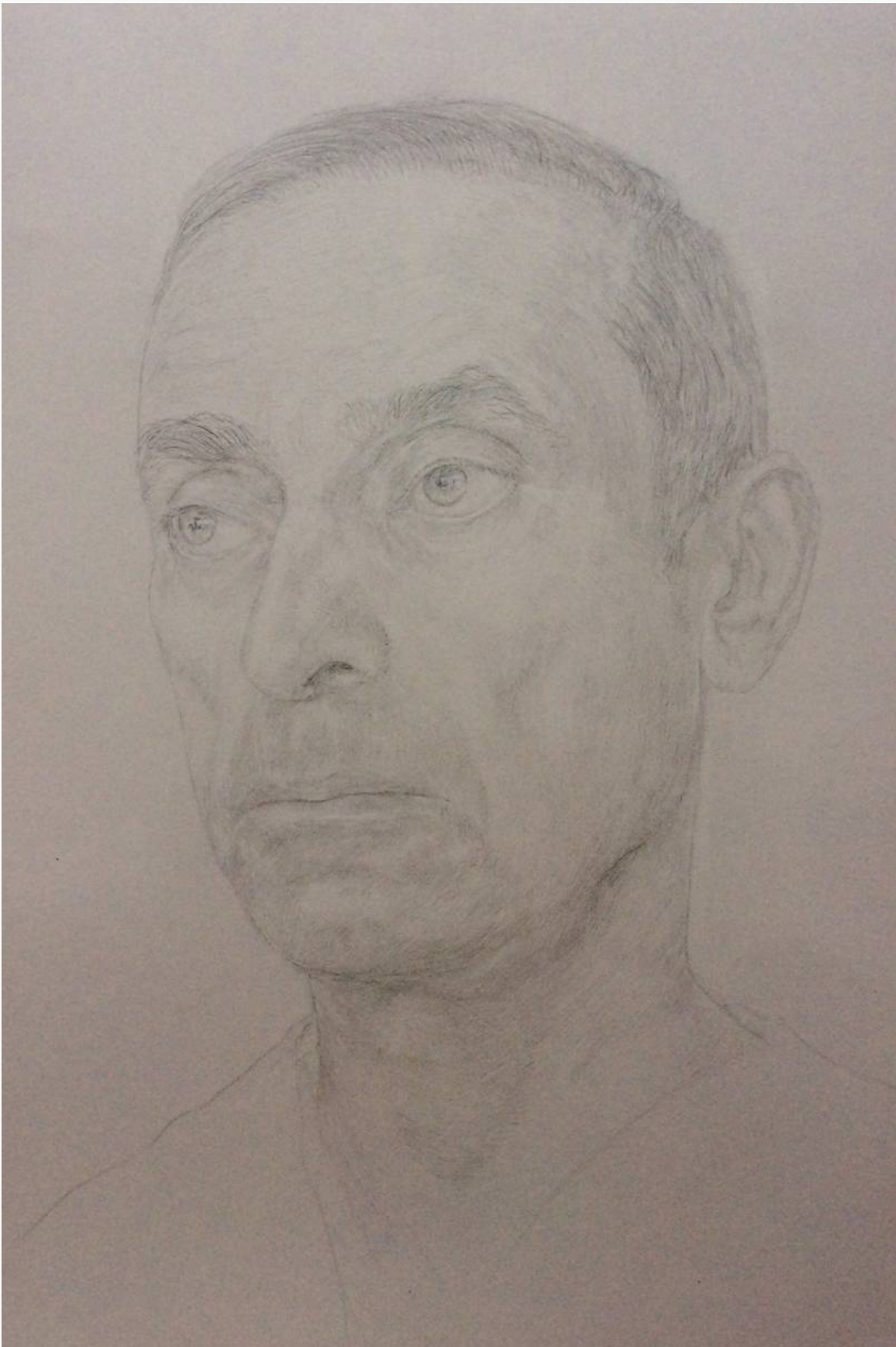
Working primarily in ceramic and works-on-paper, this Royal Academy of Art graduate’s work explores the human condition with irreverent wit and satire. His 2013 solo exhibition “The Seven Deadly Sins” looked at what sin means to the modern mind by making a series of sculptural mirrors in ceramic. His 2016 solo exhibition, “ME WANT NOW” and his 2015 work ‘Tower of Babel’ - a sixty metre tower of 3000 miniature shops made from bone china shown at the V&A - explored our obsession with celebrity, privilege, and consuming. Barford’s love of London is juxtaposed with the uncomfortable truth that a desire for more is precisely what

built the capital. Barford hopes that his piece opened up a conversation about whether our own love of London has left us not as citizens but as mindless consumers.

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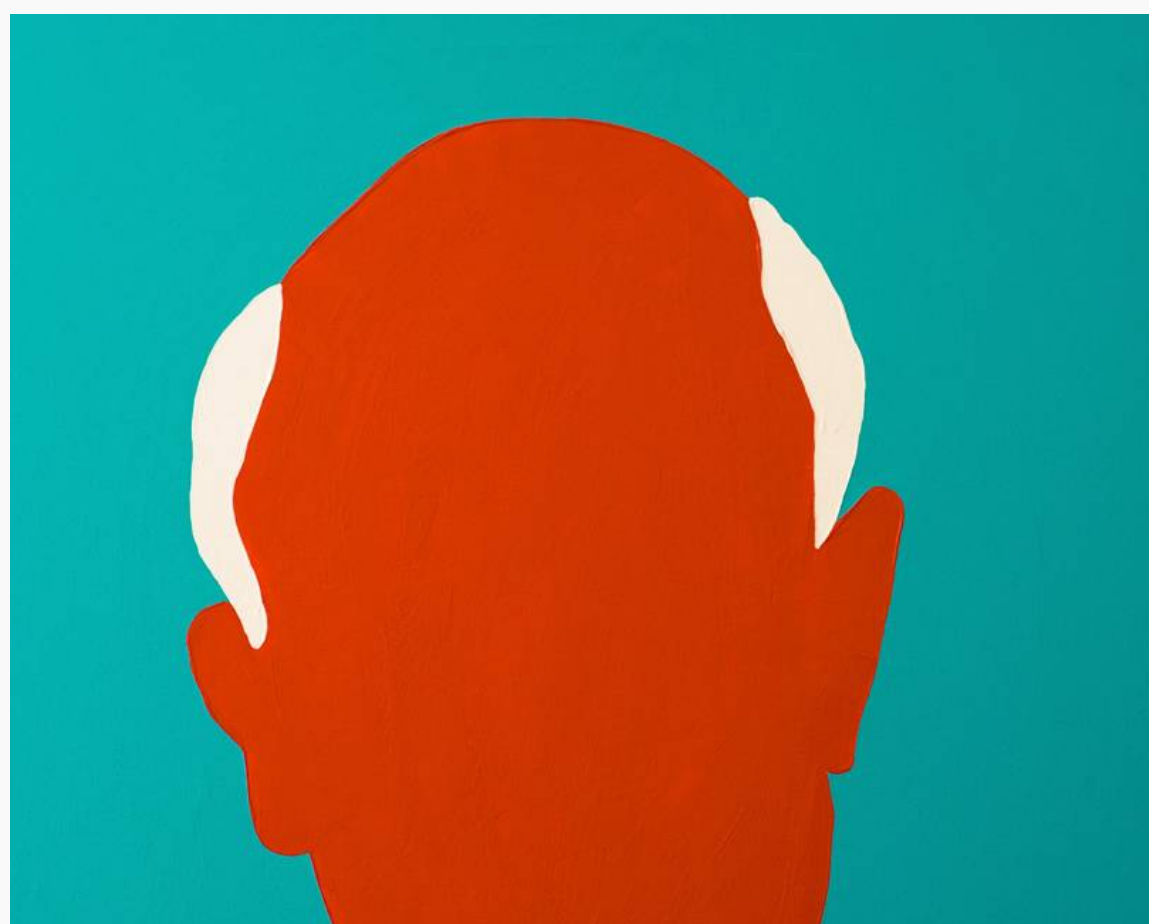




## Clara Drummond

**Born in Edinburgh 1977. Lives and works in London.**

Possibly the most traditional of the artists listed here, Drummond owes her success to the unassuming but mighty pencil. Her drawing is deeply connected with natural forms, as she points out how early man's impulse to draw on cave walls or whittle figurines from bone shows our desire to connect with the natural world via physical creation is intensely special. Having studied modern languages at Cambridge, Drummond was an assistant to portrait artist Jonathan Yeo before taking up a scholarship to complete the Drawing Year at the Royal Drawing School in 2006. Her repeated acceptance into the BP portrait Prize finally landed her with a well earned (and deserved prize) in 2016.

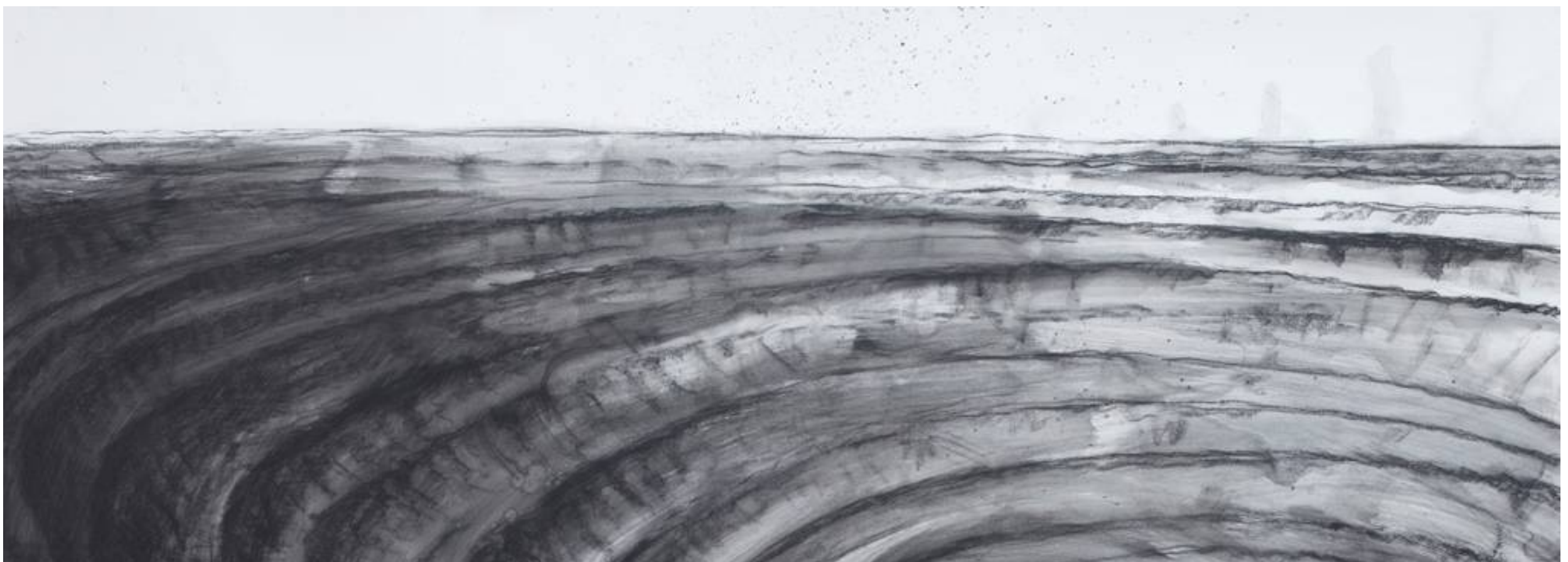




## Coco Davez

**Born 1989, Barcelona - where she now lives and works**

If art should reflect the age it is created in, Coco Davez can be forgiven (or even applauded for) making the most out of her success on Instagram. Davez's filter-friendly palette comes straight out of the sunny streets of Barcelona but she began when she was living in London. Her most recognisable collection, Faceless, removes the facial features of Davez's most loved artist icons that have impacted her work. The portraits are possibly even more recognisable for being shown with just their most recognisable accessories (Picasso is wearing, you guessed it, a stripy Breton top). One can only assume that Warhol would have taken to Instagram quicker than a Kardashian, and considering Davez counts him as an important influence, her notoriety on the platform is fitting. Expect this artist to have quite a bit more than 15 minutes of fame though.







**José Yaque**

**Born 1985, Manzanillo, Cuba. Lives and works in Havana, Cuba.**

Havana is having a bit of a moment for creators and the most exciting name to be coming out of this artistic hub is José Yaque. His abstract canvases had the privilege of being accompanied by words from Anish Kapoor, a fellow artist with a mania for the quality of colour. His figurative landscapes draw the viewer in with their ripping perspectives and his installation work is provoking and awesome. The work ‘Interior con Huracán’ (2015) used chairs, paper, plastic, electric cables along with phonograph tape and celluloids to create an enormous vortex inside a vast interior. When the room was full of people, the tornado of detritus appeared to be sucking up the audience; when empty, the sole viewers were left with a gravity defying force of nature, frozen mid-spin, halted in its path of destruction.

CREDIT: IMAGE COURTESY OF DAVID GILL GALLERY



**SJ Fuerst**



**Born Connecticut, D.O.B. unknown. Lives and works in Malta.**

Fuerst's hyper-real paintings are so uncannily life-like they will make you swear to God they just winked at you. Celebrating the unusual and bombastic, Fuerst's paintings have a touch of fashion photographer Tim Walker's fantastical choice of props about them. Mix in some Harajuku-level facial expressions and cuteness and you've got yourself a hallway knock-out. A graduate of the Academy in Florence and the London Atelier of Representational Art, Fuerst's classical methods of painting jar pleasingly with her contemporary subjects. Fuerst's painstaking works are becoming increasingly prominent in certain art collections - and the price reflects her stature as the real deal.

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**DSC**

**Born in London. Works in London**

If you're a connoisseur petrol-head chasing the next trophy to hang on your wall, look no further. Death Spray



Custom is responsible for all of rally-driver Ken Block’s electrifying liveries. He’s recently been hanging out in a pop up gallery space in East London - H.M Electric. Track down some of the bonnets he adorned with invented liveries (have a good laugh at DISCOUNT FILTH and SIN LUBE). His work is humorous and brilliantly sharp. Rumour has it that the lightweight E-type he recently sprayed belongs to a seriously big fish in the art world - yet you can grab one of his stunning silk-screen prints for less than the cost of a day’s worth of dirt-biking.



## Dickon Drury

**Born 1986, Salisbury.**

If you’re a fan of the *Fauves*, you’re going to love Dickon Drury. A graduate of the Slade School of Fine Art, Drury’s work is remarkable in its uncomplicated prettiness for contemporary art. Maybe it could be described as being a little too easy - but you’ve got to have something to look at on your dining room wall when you eat lunch. His recurrent use of motifs such as birds and domestic interiors and a sympathetic palette make for extremely more-ish paintings which you really want to have in your home. Look out for ‘Private Collection’, ‘The Music Room’ and ‘Double Bill’ to see what I mean. Don’t go thinking these are twee canvases though - their scale will make them a feature where ever they live. And if you’re after something a bit more challenging in terms of subject matter, pyromaniacs might enjoy ‘Sun in a Red Room’.

CREDIT: GEORGE MESSA

Art Culture

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