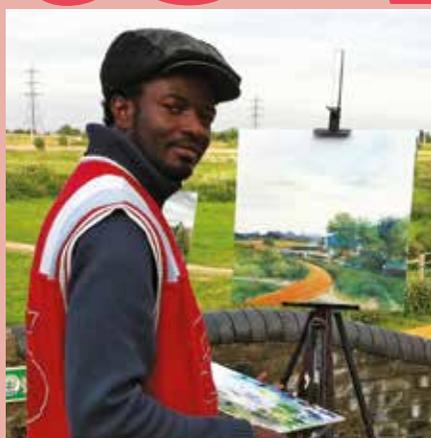


Painters



to watch in



2017

AFTER A GLOOMY 2016, WE SEEK INSPIRATION FROM TEN TALENTED ARTISTS SET TO MAKE AN IMPACT IN THE YEAR AHEAD





1. Emma Copley

The impasto oil works of Emma Copley are so viscous and alive with colour they appear almost unfinished, as if they are constantly in motion. She applies her paint with a thickness rivalling that of Frank Auerbach, and approaches the figure with a skill that has won her comparisons to Alice Neel and even Vincent van Gogh. Her subjects tend to be quiet everyday scenes: a domestic still life from a kitchen window or unremarkable crowds on a beach. With her paintbrush, she explores interior spaces and landscapes in carefully placed daubs of paint, with each mark serving a distinctive purpose in the graduated layers.

Emma's own upbringing was juxtaposed between Dublin and the East Coast of the United States, but she has recently settled in the UK with her family. "The places

ABOVE *Shell Seeker*, oil paint on gessoed wood panel, 18x28cm

Best advice I've ever received as an artist:
"Draw every day and always carry a sketchbook"

I have lived feed into my work in different ways, I'm sure, especially if I am painting a personal, domestic space with intimate objects and details."

Emma studied at the Rhode Island School of Design, and is now a full time student working towards a Masters in Fine Art at Cambridge School of Art, Anglia Ruskin University. Last year, she had two paintings accepted into the ING Discerning Eye exhibition and another into the final judging of The Sunday Times Watercolour Competition.

For 2017, she's keeping up the artistic momentum; in October, Emma will take up her role as Artist in Residence at The Hospital Club, Covent Garden. In the meantime, she's working on a large scale book of gouache paintings and monoprints named *The Book of Love*.

"I try not to work to a specific style or formula," she says, adding, "I recently saw Laura Owens' paintings at Sadie Coles in London and loved the playfulness of the work and how her paintings refuse categorisation, she uses sculptural elements, gesture, digital printing, books and video to explore very painterly issues."

Given the ease with which Emma moves between media, it seems she's every bit as versatile as the artists she admires.

www.emmacopley.com



2. Conrad Armstrong

Artists & Illustrators first encountered Conrad Armstrong at a Whit Chapel Gallery press briefing, where he confidently spoke up from the crowd to ask the head curator how her institution planned to support the East London artists of Hackney Wick, who were under threat of eviction from their studios in Vittoria Wharf. Conrad still lives at those studios on 'Fish Island' in Hackney, and they remain under threat. "I have lived and worked in so many studios in London that have been knocked down and replaced with unaffordable housing it's just part of a nomadic existence, instability has just become part of my practice. We can save the bricks and mortar of Vittoria Wharf but the ideas are the only part of it that ever mattered and the ideas are leaving London, that's the dangerous thing," he tells me.

Raised in an artistic family in Streatham, Conrad had what he describes as "a pretty awful experience," in institutional art education and didn't begin to make steps towards becoming an artist until he was 18, when he became a "pupil" of British painter Maggi Hambling, who has been his mentor ever since. "I spent most of my formative time working 'en plein air' painting Streatham

Common and other cityscapes. The city has always been my biggest influence and London has been my muse."

In his abstract paintings, Conrad binds industrial materials of plastic and wire to create a living, pulsating image of London. His fluid use of media is at odds with the rigid geometric shapes so often used to capture urban scenes. Conrad's response to the city is an emotional one, or as he puts it: "I want to make concrete blush."

The tools used to create this capital ruddiness can be anything from a flame thrower, to black rubble sacks, electrical cable or black oil paint.

For 2017, Conrad is immersing himself in a series of 112 paintings created in response to the 15th century satirical book by theologian Sebastian Brandt. "I am writing and painting an updated version called *The Spaceship of Fools* in accordance with Buckminster Fuller's essay *Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth*. In times like these I think satire is more important than ever... The arts need to be a mirror to these absurdities to help people see them for what they are."

www.conrad-armstrong.com

BELOW Conrad in front of his painting *City Tension* at Saatchi Art Gallery



Best advice I've ever received as an artist:
"A subject chooses you, you don't choose a subject"
 - Maggi Hambling



Best advice I've ever received as an artist:
“The advice I initially didn't take: my high school art teacher, Mr Rembetsy, told me to be an artist”



3. Kimberly Klauss

The portraits of Kimberly Klauss are often mistaken for watercolours. With her thin use of oil paint on wood or paper, she renders her figures with careful slicks and splatters of paint that appear to diffuse on the surface, like photos that are slowly being developed.

As a child, Kimberly was raised in the North East of the US, but moved with her family to Tokyo at the age of eight. Much of her adult life was subsequently spent in Germany, and so it's unsurprising that the concept of belonging has significance in her work. “As I got older I began to take art more seriously, but decided against pursuing it full-time. I always returned to it in stints, taking short courses and doing a lot of Sunday painting and day-dreaming about what it would be like to do it full-time. Finally in 2014, when I moved to London, I did,” she says.

Two years on, she's already making waves, and was recently selected as a contestant for *Sky Arts Portrait Artist of the Year 2017*. Kimberly's method differs to that of most classical portrait artists. Rather than layering the pigment, she makes use of the light from whatever support she may be working with to “erase the colour,” by thinning the paint,

or pushing it into lines as though she were drawing. “I think you can see that I have always been more of a drawer than a painter up until now,” she says.

Despite her skill for draughtsmanship, Kimberly's process involves very little preparatory sketching. Instead she works freehand, often creating multiple versions of a painting to reach the desired result. Like her influences Kerry James Marshall and Marlene Dumas, Kimberly's approach to figuration is anything but conventional.

In a recent series, she created detail studies of online ‘selfies’, zooming in on areas of the face or neck, sometimes distorting the subject's identity. There's another collection in progress, but for 2017, she says her main aim is to forge more “art friendships” in the city, “It can be a very solitary experience, painting, and I miss hashing things out with peers who push you in ways you can't push yourself.” We look forward to seeing her career develop.
www.kimberlyklauss.com

ABOVE *Rich*, oil on gesso panel, 46x61cm



4. George Lloyd-Jones

This 24-year-old artist is going places in more ways than one. We first met George Lloyd-Jones back in September when he showed us around his ‘Boonrig Studio’, a renovated truck that George transformed into a live/work art space. After graduating from a BA in Fine Art Painting at Brighton University, George earned a living in manual labour, and acquired the skills he needed to create his mobile studio. Thanks to this house-on-wheels, George and his partner Nettle Grellier are able to avoid extortionate rental prices and travel across Europe, creating art and hosting pop up exhibitions en route.

In 2016, George's work *Round Tables 2* was shortlisted for the John Moores Painting Prize, but this year, his focus is on grassroots collaborations that will help other artists generate affordable work and living situations. Throughout the month of February, he'll be working with Nettle on a

sixth-month residency in Spain to create eight large studio spaces and restore a ceramics workshop in a disused farm building in Provincia de Granada. “The truck gives so much time and lifts so much financial pressure, and I want to share this with other artists,” he says.

George's painting style is characterised by a dauntless use of colour, with distorted figures placed in playfully described interior spaces. He paints with a confidence that belies his age, unafraid to show the influence of the masters he admires: Matisse, R.B. Kitaj, Miró. He works mainly from life, creating a ‘visual diary’ of drawings, marking out the initial line in the unusual medium of crayon before moving on to a larger scale oil painting. With the constantly changing scenery, inspiration is only ever a few kilometres away.

www.georgelloyd-jones.com

ABOVE George with his work in the Boonrig Studio

Best advice I've ever received as an artist:

“Join the army’ – was the advice from my grandfather. This is one of the many similar bits of advice that made me work harder toward painting”

5. Isabella Watling

When Isabella Watling arrived at the Charles H. Cecil Studios in Florence aged 18, she herself was a blank canvas. At that point, she hadn't been introduced to any method of painting, but Florence opened up a whole new world, one that later saw her paintings exhibited at the BP Portrait Award, London, in both 2012 and 2014.

For a year, she didn't pick up a paintbrush, instead she honed her skills drawing from casts and life models in charcoal. This was an initiation to rigorous training in the sight-size method, a technique harking back to John Singer Sargent and his contemporaries, where image and subject are placed side-by-side at a distance in order to perceive the whole.

Her approach today is both controlled and instinctive; not underestimating the power of observation, she absorbs the character of the subject through numerous sittings. "If you paint from life you are given constant variations on a theme," explains Isabella. "A sitter is always subtly changing, as is the light."

It was the subtle glow of the paintings in the studios of Florence that first fascinated the artist. In her own studio, she manipulates light to create the all-important shadows that give form; the high north-facing window is slanted at a 30-degree angle with the bottom half blacked out to create a small aperture of light that falls on the face of the sitter. The relationship between the subject, window and artist is synchronised so that the light falls on the model at a 45-degree angle; in turn Isabella stands five metres away to survey the scene, to-ing and fro-ing between canvas and viewing spot in a pendulum action.

But, as Isabella explains, "when it is properly understood, [the sight-size method] is not just a measuring technique but a philosophy of seeing." In the same way, Isabella's portraits are not mere imitations of great masters, neither are they direct likenesses, they are a response to her impression of a character in a space, at that moment in time – a result that is immeasurable.

www.isabellawatling.com

>

Best advice I've ever received as an artist:

"Stand back"



LEFT Isabella Watling in her studio, painting: *Flo*, oil on canvas, 80x110cm



6. David Booth

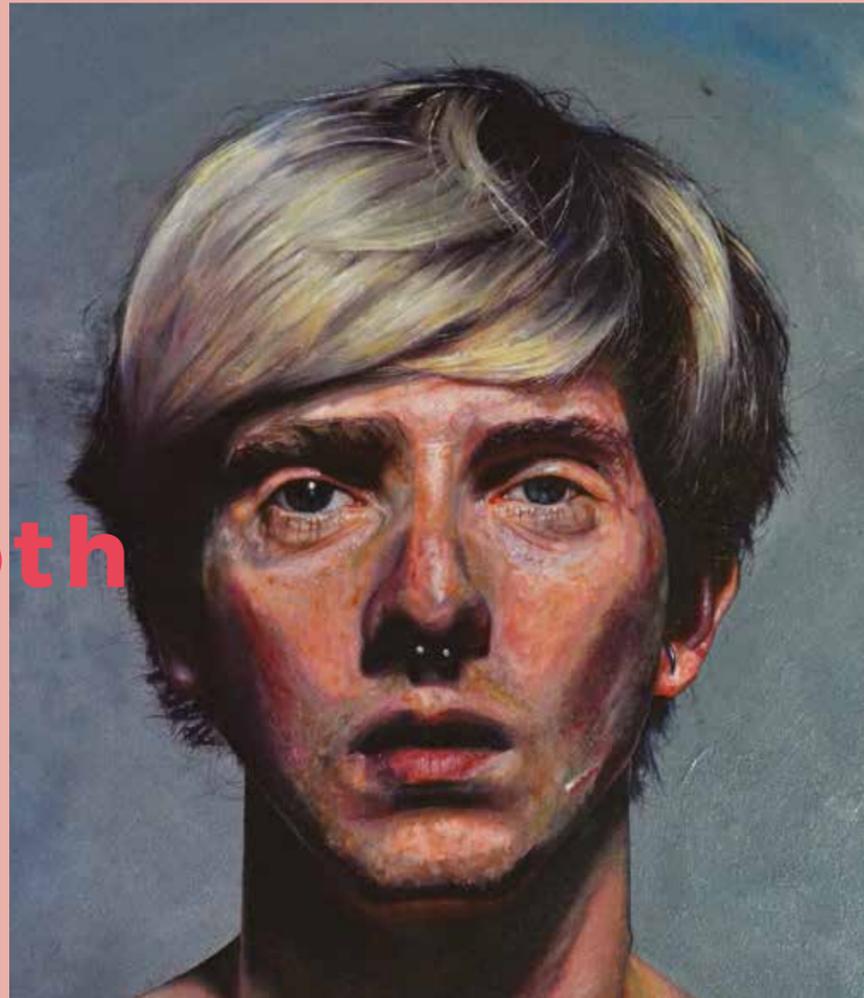
Visit David Booth's Dublin-based studio and you'll find him inches away from the canvas, absorbed by a small portion of his large-scale painting, using a tiny 000 sable brush with intoxicating precision. His eyes dart to and from cropped, close-up reference photographs attached to his surface, creating a sense of immediacy between his eye, the canvas and the brush.

His life-long fascination for detailed studies has manifested itself in large, high definition portraits and figure studies in oil that reveal a preoccupation with texture. In a work in progress titled *Rivers and Lakes*, he defines the minutia of wrinkles on the female subject's face, the title acting as a metaphor for maintaining fluidity between colours across the canvas.

David's ability to painstakingly craft areas of detail, in the process of building the whole, is entrenched in the foundations of his practice. In an eloquent attempt to offer some context to his approach, he says, "I have an uncle, an Irish farmer, whom I only knew as a blue overalled, jet black-haired, teal-skinned man who was at one with the land... He held such a private significant vibrance within the quiet desolate Irish landscape... I believe this stemmed an inspiration to focus on the singular, the portrait, in order to describe a mass."

Having studied Fine Art at IT Carlow, Wexford School of Art and Design, David went on to receive the Evans Art

Best advice I've ever received as an artist:
"Make time your master, do not believe you are the master of time"



Painting Award at the Royal Hibernian Academy's Annual Show in 2016. He was first inspired to paint by key figures such as Francis Bacon, but more apparent is the influence of contemporary artist Jenny Saville, revealed in the tonal qualities and his treatment of skin, which he has described as having the appearance of "wrapping paper" and "a mould that sits upon the surface".

Next, David is planning a collaboration with fellow Irish painter James Kirwan. Their paintings will be shown both side-by-side, and on the same canvas, allowing two styles to coexist in one artwork. Watch this space.

www.davidbooth.ie

TOP David Booth in his Dublin studio, work in progress
ABOVE *Brendan* (detail), oil on canvas, 243x121cm

7. Titus Agbara

In an art market as complex and challenging as the one we have here in the UK, it's important for a painter to be as persistent as they are ambitious, and Titus has both traits in equal measure. Since moving to the UK from Nigeria in 2007, he appeared on *Sky Arts Portrait Artist of the Year 2014* and then *Landscape Artist of the Year* two series in a row. Titus reached the semifinals of *Landscape Artists of the Year 2016*, narrowly missing out on the final heat.

As a student, he attended the Auchinart Art School, a Federal Polytechnic in Edo State before progressing into a full-time studio artist in Nigeria. Hoping to bring his work to a wider audience, Titus began reading online art journals and magazines to gain an understanding of "what makes a British landscape". He eventually moved to Edmonton, London with his wife and two-year-old daughter, but found it difficult to keep up a continuous practice, and so he took a job in the city, painting in every spare moment he could.

Much of Titus' work is a reflection on these two contrasting circumstances: his memories of Nigeria, and his life in London. He describes his approach as "impressionist with a tendency towards realism" and has a technique that's defined by a precise use of the painting knife, contrasting carefully detailed landscapes and



portraits with areas of free, dripping paint on the canvas. "I hardly do sketches on paper as I approach my painting making my sketch directly on the surface," he says, adding, "I use a palette knife from the beginning of the painting to the end, sketching only the initial outline drawings with a brush." While mitigating circumstances mean he cannot paint full-time, Titus is far from a hobbyist artist, "I don't just paint because I want to paint. It begins with an emotional relationship between me and my subject. It goes through stages from my emotion, meditation, concept, composition to process of execution," he says.

With dedication like his, we wouldn't be surprised to see Titus on our screens again in 2017.
www.titusagbara.wixsite.com

Best advice I've ever received as an artist:
"Abiodun Olaku, a selfless motivator and mentor advised me on the time spent in making a painting. He said, 'It's not just the number of works done but the visual mastery and dedication on a single piece of art that would have more impact'"





Sue's best advice to artists, as told by her daughter Jane Bodie: **"To look out the window, to really look, and keep looking, until you have noticed all of the colours in the falling snow"**



RIGHT Kim Whitby
BELOW Wellington Square, Chelsea, ink on paper, 55x150cm



9. Kim Whitby

Best advice I've ever received as an artist: **"John Harvey at Aberystwyth School of Art used to say: 'Just stay in the same place!'. I'm quickly distracted by the wealth of options of what, and how, to paint... So I just painted fish, and more fish, (but it could have been anything) and in the end he said 'now you are a painter'"**

You may recognise Kim Whitby from the recent television series *Sky Arts Landscape Artist of the Year 2016*, where she entered as a 'wildcard' and made it to the final. It's been a busy year for this artist, who took home first prize from Pintar Rapido 2016 – the against-the-clock plein air painting competition based in Chelsea, London – where she captured the beautiful terraces and private gardens of the opulent Wellington Square in ink on paper.

A teacher by trade, this artist juggles school timetables, family life, and her art. Hot on the heels of her TV success, she'll be offering classes for adults on watercolour and ink at The Art Academy, London, as well as teaching privately in Hampshire and continuing her commitments as an associate member of Aspex Gallery, Portsmouth, which offers support for new and emerging artists.

Through her part-time Fine Art MA at Aberystwyth University, completed in 2014, she gained the confidence to disregard certain details in a landscape and instead focus on the colour and shape of her subject. Her tools range from Chinese ink brushes and delicate dipping pens to large house painting brushes and hard pencils plunged into a pint-size bottle of thick black ink, but her tiny half pan watercolour set is always by her side.

Half way through her degree, due to her husband's work in the military, they relocated from Wales to Hampshire, a change she used to her advantage. Works in her first MA exhibition were inspired by Hampshire's decommissioned airfield HMS Daedalus, and she drew on board HMS Victory in Portsmouth's Historic Dockyard, with pieces from this period shortlisted for The Sunday Times Watercolour Competition and the Kyffin Williams Drawing Prize in 2015.

A proactive approach has always fuelled her art; from selling paintings harbourside in Aberaeron as a young student, right up to her next project in collaboration with the Hampshire Cultural Trust, to mark 200 years since the Jane Austen's death. It's a combination of education, determination and a concerted effort to throw herself into the community that has allowed Kim to make the leap from amateur to a self-described "semi-professional artist".

www.kimwhitby.com

8. Sue Dunkley

In the 1960s, Sue Dunkley was a painter on the rise, and was set to join artist Pauline Boty as one of the few female pop artists in the public eye. Her work was collected by celebrities such as Salman Rushdie and Harold Pinter. But there is a fine, intangible line between the artists who find lasting fame, and those who are lost in the shadows of their peers. Despite her undeniable painting ability and two successful exhibitions in the 1980s and 1990s, by 2000 Sue's work had all but faded from public view. Around seven years ago, she was diagnosed with dementia, and in 2016, it became clear she would need full-time support.

Sue's daughter, successful theatre and TV writer Jane Bodie, flew home from Australia and with Jim, Sue's brother, also an artist, they began organising a retrospective of her mother's work to help fund her care.

The show was held at Sue's house on Liverpool Road in Islington, a setting filled with the artist's possessions – family photos, poetry books by Seamus Heaney and piles of sketchbooks. Everyone Jane invited turned up, including art duo Gilbert & George. "The whole night was very

moving, a celebration of mum, her life and work, it just felt very odd and sad that she couldn't be there in person to bask in the glow of it all," she says. The volume of work on show was overwhelming. Sue moved from electric pop paintings of Marilyn Monroe and the Kennedys, to disquieting domestic scenes in charcoal and pastel dealing with themes of motherhood, sexuality and betrayal.

In the final stage of her career, the figures were replaced by "deeply dramatic landscapes" in ink and oils. The retrospective reawakened the art world to Sue Dunkley's talent. As a result, she was offered representation and a solo show with Mayfair gallery Alison Jacques. "I am hoping to get her out for the exhibition if she's well enough, it feels crucial to me that she feels the immense effect and power that the work is having on people," says Jane, "after all, she believed that art was the thing that would save us from everything wrong in the world."

A solo exhibition of Sue Dunkley's work will run at Alison Jacques Gallery, London from 13 July to 19 August 2017, www.alisonjacquesgallery.com

ABOVE LEFT *Woman in Mirror*, 1970, oil on canvas, 183x152cm
ABOVE RIGHT Sue Dunkley at her home in Islington, 1974

COPYRIGHT THE ARTIST. COURTESY ALISON JACQUES GALLERY, LONDON



10. Zsofia Schweger



FRANZISKA TUNYIK

Zsofia Schweger's minimalist representational paintings of domestic spaces break down the familiar into simple geometric shapes. By pre-mixing acrylic into alluring colours applied in a single flat layer, Zsofia draws the viewer into a narrative devoid of clutter and human interaction. Drawing influence from American modernist Charles Sheeler's precision technique, as well as the concept of place, space and time explored by contemporary artist Julie Mehretu, the works play on the idea of home.

The Hungarian-born artist admits that she no longer feels tied to her home country. Just track her education and it's not hard to see why: she gained a scholarship to a school in New York aged 16, finished high school in Budapest, returned to the US for her BA in Studio Art and Comparative Literature at Wellesley College, Massachusetts, and concluded with a two year MA at Slade School of Fine Art. Since then, Zsofia has won numerous prizes that have helped fund her practice, namely the Griffin Art Prize, which provided a six-month studio residency and a solo exhibition.

At first glance, emptiness resonates in the paintings, as the shapes illustrate an everyday setting without the associated noise. It's unsurprising, as the paintings are modelled on her childhood home which her family still own, but since relocating to the UK it stands frozen in time.

Under closer inspection, you'll find carefully placed objects that define a sense of belonging: soap dispensers, cushions, plants, clocks and sometimes an open doorway. "I quite like light switches and rarely edit them out of my compositions," shares Zsofia. "When you know a room well, you know where all the light switches are so you can navigate it easily. I like that."

Inevitably, working with this theme in a contemporary Hungarian context can bring a political take on emigration into focus. But this is a sideline to a more personal story, where Zsofia allows ideas of alienation and intimacy; absence and presence to sit side by side, and in doing so creates a new space to breathe.

www.zsofienschweger.com

ABOVE Zsofia Schweger in her studio

RIGHT Sandorfalva, Hungary #22, acrylic on canvas, 25x30cm



Best advice I've ever received as an artist:
"One of my Wellesley professors Bunny Harvey told me to 'stay calm and paint like a madwoman'. It's a simple line, but I think of it when I feel like I need to push through doubts or anxieties to focus and keep painting"