

Modern Painters Presents 25 Artists to Watch in 2014: Part 2 of 2

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“25 Artists to Watch” is published in the December 2013 issue of Modern Painters, and has run online in two parts. For Part 1 of the feature, with an introduction of the selection process and the first 12 artists, [click here](#).

To see images, [click here](#).

Klara Hobza

Born in Pilsen, Czech Republic. Lives in Berlin.

“My work revolves around self-imposed endeavors. For example, in 2010, I decided to scuba dive through Europe,” says Hobza of her most monumental challenge to date?and the latest from her geographically oriented, experimental practice. The dive, which she estimates will last between 25 and 30 years, will take her from Rotterdam to the Romanian city of Constanta on the Black Sea via the European



continent's three major rivers—the Rhine, the Main, and the Danube—all the while documenting “the humor that lies in our attempts and shortcomings.” The resulting works already span home videos of her prep, like *The Famous Banana Scene*, 2011, in which she learns to eat underwater, and still images taken along her route that are included in *Europoort*, 2013, to readymade sculptures such as *Von Köln nach Bonn* (From Cologne to Bonn), 2011, a pyramid of the 19 scuba tanks Hobza thinks she'll need in the battle against the Rhine River's current between the two German cities.

The Czech native honed her practice in New York as a DAAD fellow, beginning in 2002, and later in Columbia's MFA program, from which she graduated in 2005. Moving back to Germany four years later, ahead of a show at the Galerie für Landschaftskunst, in Hamburg (she also shows at Berlin's Soy Capitán), Hobza initiated *Departing America*, another waterlogged project in which she packed the contents of her Brooklyn studio onto a raft that she manned to the Port of New Jersey and then onto the Dublin Express bound for Hamburg. “I meant to show the Germans everything I had been up to during my years of living in New York,” she explains. Upon reaching the European port, “I hoisted my freight back onto the raft and brought it across the wild river Elbe, through Hamburg's peaceful canals, and right up to the foot?of the gallery building.”

Iman Issa

Born in Cairo. Lives in New York.

In Issa's work, architecture becomes language and language becomes architecture. The 34-year-old, who won the 2012 Abraaj Capital Prize, began her career by parsing the visual grammar?of her native Cairo in photographs, video, and built projects. In 2009 she began a series of carefully composed tripartite installations combining photographs and sculptural elements called “Triptychs.” Today, Issa combines images, objects, and text to suggest oblique narratives. The installation *Thirty-three Stories About Reasonable Characters in Familiar Places*, 2011, includes a volume of sparsely detailed stories describing encounters between two individuals in public spaces, accompanied by a sculptural “epilogue” and “index.” “There is a certain austerity to her style—a pared-down old-school elegance—which sets her apart from the exuberance? of youth. Her installations are orderly, her materials relatively plain,” Kaelen Wilson-Goldie wrote in *Bidoun* last year. “With an extreme economy of visual and spatial phrasing, Issa produces a wealth of possible meanings that always seem just out of reach, on the verge of articulation.”

It's no coincidence that Issa has titled her two most recent series “Lexicon” and “Material.” A series of 10 sculptures that question the bombastic vocabulary of monuments, “Material,” 2009–12, was shown at Istanbul's Rodeo Gallery and in the New Museum's 2012 survey of young artists, “The Ungovernables,” in New York. In works like *Material for a sculpture proposed as an alternative to a monument that has become an embarrassment to its people*, 2010, Issa presents two lights on a plain table blinking on and off in syncopation. “Lexicon,” an ongoing series initiated in 2012, and recently included in *Homeworks 6* in Beirut, proposes contemporary remakes of existing sculpture.

Mat Jenner

Born in Chichester, U.K. Lives in London.

A scavenger of visual information, Jenner makes mixed-media work that forces strange, unlikely combinations, like a googly-eyed air freshener with an image of a snow-covered mountain cabin. “Media images—stock photos, reportage, fashion, and commercial photography—are distributed and circulated with the aim that they're to be consumed quickly and unquestioningly,” he says. “I want to make these images culpable, open to question, but I also want to provide a space for

viewers to slow down and be aware of their own perceptual processes and their relationship to an artwork. What will often prompt a selection is the potential agency of that image—that is, its potential, imagined or literal, to be an active ‘thing’ in the world. Ultimately, I want it to occupy a different time and space from the one originally intended.” Jenner’s work challenges our received notions and expectations, leaving the viewer pleasantly adrift. With two photographic works, *Stills*, 2011, and *lalala*, 2012, he playfully screws with foreground and background, creating a layering effect that looks digital while being wholly achieved in the real world.

“With those works, I wanted to transpose the visual language and modes of digital space into a physical space,” he says. “I made these immediate and sculptural assemblages in my studio, then added layers of clear Perspex in front; I drew on the Perspex and the assemblage, then photographed it. There’s no postproduction: Everything you see in those images is real, indexical, and present. In essence what I was replicating was digital images and a mode of constructing and thinking about space and time through simple analog means. It’s the same space-time concerns, pictorially and formally speaking, as the Cubists had.” Jenner’s next project, “Foam,” is something else entirely—a multimedia undertaking involving commissioned sound art that will travel to various venues in the U.K. in 2014. The artist has asked 100 other artists to make a record (the results, he says, range from “sculptural soundscapes to experimental electro, field recordings, musical compositions, spoken word, instructional and conceptual pieces”) that can be played by exhibition visitors on a record player installed inside a room hung with Jenner’s sculpture and other pieces.

Mihut Boscu Kafchin

Born in Galati, Romania. Lives in Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

Of being born in 1986, Kafchin reflects, “I had the chance to be part of the first generation of Eastern Europeans that faced the Western cultural tsunami after the fall of communism and got a long-term shock from it. My mixed aesthetic is a sort of despairing attitude toward the short time I have lived.” But make no mistake—Kafchin’s DIY multimedia experiments embody a scientific curiosity and aesthetic imagination that are far from dreary. “He is capable of making anything with his own hands— paintings, sculptures, mannequins, technological devices, videos,” says French artist Dove Allouche. “At the same time, he pairs this unique gift with a very personal imagery, which is filtered from childhood memories, folklore, sci-fi, and comic books.” Kafchin’s sense of humor, amateur-scientist sensibility, and penchant for self-mythologizing call to mind artists like Matthew Day Jackson. In *Personal Hawking*, an installation from 2011, Kafchin transforms himself into a mythical being in homage to physicist Stephen Hawking. Recent objects like *Father Energy*, a multicolored disco ball with a faux gray beard attached, and *Cabinet of Curiosities* (both 2013), a laboratory-like assemblage of clay, a toy race car, a microscope, and a skull with sunglasses, playfully address the same themes. Kafchin’s work is on view until January 12 in “Romanian Scenes,” an exhibition at the Espace Culturel Louis Vuitton in Paris.

Andrea Longacre-White

Born in Radnor, Pennsylvania

Visual artists have long fetishized technology, mobilizing its advances in the creation of everything from cutting-edge video installations to precision laser-cut sculpture. Media excavators like Cory Arcangel have even breathed new life into obsolescent gadgets. Longacre-White, born in 1980—the cusp between Generations X and Y— takes a different tack, exploring, as she says, the gaps in “how we as humans engage with technology. We live in an ever-digitizing culture where any- and everything seems in a constant state of translation between the physical

and the digital.” Her photographs and installations trace “that space of transfer” where “error occurs.”

Longacre-White’s images of photographic prints from 2009 and on investigate the materiality of the medium. But such recent series? as the ongoing “Pad Scan,” illustrate the intersection of the virtual and the tangible. Ink-jet prints document what happens when an iPad interacts with a scanner: The heat generated from the scanner interrupts the tablet’s touch-sensitive mechanism, creating a glitchy, abstract image framed by contrasting white dust and fingerprints. (The aesthetic is enhanced by the dirt on the iPad; it is rumored that Longacre-White never cleans them.) In one untitled installation,?seen at the New York gallery Room East this fall, Longacre-White mourned the short life span of technological devices: Heaped-up prints and plaster casts of iPads turned the useful objects into artifacts. Longacre-White will continue her reverse media archaeology in a solo show at Various Small Fires in Los Angeles in 2014.

Sara Magenheimer

Born in Philadelphia. Lives in Brooklyn.

“I feel the most excited by art that adheres to its own logic, one that I don’t fully understand,” says Magenheimer, who works in sound, video, performance, and sculpture, among other disciplines. “I try to replicate this in my practice—I allow myself the freedom to imagine and experience incongruous relationships.” A colorful, offbeat rhythmic sensibility runs throughout, evident in the chipper experimental pop of Woom, her musical project with Eben Portnoy, or the dancing letters and Disney mice in her short film *Mickrlys*. For Magenheimer, collaboration is key, perhaps a result of the decade-plus she has spent playing in various bands. “My process feels collaborative even when I’m alone,” she says. “I sort of imbue elements with personalities and narratives that talk to one another in a way, sometimes literally with text or a voice.” Her conceptual band with composer Ben Vida and artist Michael Bell-Smith, Bloopers, was featured at Performa in 2013. However, she focuses in particular on collaborations with women, like those with Sadie Laska, Amy Sillman, Becky James, and Christine Sun Kim—ultimately in the service of subverting gendered expectations: “Women are good at being ‘wrong.’ We’re told we’re less than perfect or lacking something from the day we’re born. Why not be wrong on purpose?”

Lee Maida

Born in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Lives in New York.

Maida’s work comes from a?place of material generosity—?she titled a 2012 show at Ed. Varie in New York “Profusive Technologies”—performative interaction with objects, and sensuality. Her early work was premised on technologies?such as weaving: Carefully constructed forms referred to the warp and the weft’s social—?and gendered—history as a highly physical process. The forms of the body assert themselves again and again. In an untitled work from 2010, a tuft? of hair peeks through a crack in a rectangular cast clay form. *Next Level Wedgie*, 2012, reimagines the crude schoolboy gesture of yanking up someone’s underwear as a complicated Möbius strip—like aluminum form. Maida, who recently completed the Bard College MFA program, describes her recent sculptural investigations as “very physical.” Working with ceramic, fabric, and painted forms, she says, “By the end of the day, I need to feel completely exhausted.” The art and theory she absorbs “makes its way into the work in a very frantic and goofy way.” She adds that her approach “is sort of hysterical with a hint of neurosis. I am still working with the form of the relief and making these kinds of interior objects. I want the figure not only to be the subject but also the inhabitant.”

Andrea Romano

Born and lives in Milan, Italy.

“I don’t set limits regarding media or materials,” says Romano, who has previously shown everything from intricate graphite drawings of tigers and dolphins (encased in elegant granite frames) to minimalist sculptural forms hewn from stereolithographed nylon. “Everything I do arises from a natural gesture that takes on more complex levels. My drawings often become part of an object; my sculptures are simple signs that become material.” While his ongoing series of drawings “Claque & Shill” focuses on craft and mark making, he also envisions the works as having a sculptural presence. “The drawings’ frames are carved from single pieces of marble or granite,” he says, “pushing the limits of their physical substance. Drawing and framing both manipulate the reception of the piece. They impede a univocal definition of the artwork.” Romano is working on additional pieces in the series, pairing sketches made using a richly evocative sanguine pencil with complementary frames of red quartzite. He has also been gathering information while working with Alkemia, an Italian producer of high-end auto exterior refinishing materials. Romano’s integrated approach combines such esoteric production methods with old-fashioned draftsmanship, creating an oeuvre that’s in constant dialogue with itself and with the artist’s own experiences: “I’m ‘writing’ a kind of diary of my life through the production of sculptures, always made with the newest and most innovative materials I can find.”

Radka Salcmanova

Born in Pilsen, Czech Republic. Lives in Brooklyn.

Salcmanova originally trained as a painter at the Academy of Arts, Architecture, and Design in Prague. Since then, however, much of her work has been a response to the primacy of painting, with its limits and constraints. “Blurring the mediums of painting, sculpture, and photography, and confusing the viewer, is intrinsic to my practice,” she says. “I’m making sculptures from paint, and taking photographs that look like paintings. And when I’m actually painting, I’m using the picture as a background for an installation. Every work is a performance, the record of a moment. I look for transformational moments where something is about to happen or has just happened, though it’s often difficult to make sense of what exactly this is. Whatever the narrative, I construct every detail of the work or installation, giving it internal coherence and integrity: its own truth.” Salcmanova, who cites [Matthew Barney](#) and Pierre Huyghe as influences, often makes surrealist work inspired by her dreams. Her family history has also affected her practice: Her grandfather was an actor, and this gave her an appreciation for the power of theater; her grandmother worked as a psychologist, and Salcmanova later studied psychology, too, working with schizophrenic patients who struggled to distinguish between fantasy and reality. And while she does make watercolors and drawings— they’re held in Pierogi Gallery’s flat file, in Brooklyn—Salcmanova isn’t so concerned with static objects meant to hang in the white cube. “Galleries for me can be totally dead, strange places,” she says. “I miss movement, the act, real emotions and feelings.”

Kwan Sheung Chi

Born and lives in Hong Kong.

In the video *Yawn*, 2011, the artist stares uncomfortably at the camera for more than 10 minutes. At times it seems as if he’s trying to suppress the urge to speak or cough or move. Nothing much happens, although toward the very end Kwan does perform the titular action: It’s both a release and an anticlimax, the film itself a close cousin of Bas Jan Ader’s *I’m Too Sad to Tell You* or Warhol’s multihour examinations of sleeping figures and static buildings. Other video performance pieces from the same year, like *Raising My Hand*, *1 km Walk*, or the

hilariously self-explanatory *Drinking a Glass of Hot Chocolate with a Fork*, owe?a debt to the pioneering conceptual work of [Bruce Nauman](#). In a 2013 video, *Two Million*, we see a pair of hands rifling through set of 1,000-yuan notes. A finalist for this year's Hugo Boss Asia Art Prize, Kwan does more than just make videos. He draws and produces installations, performance works, and sculpture. Much of the work arises from an appreciation of simplicity: *Cactus*, 2012, a sculpture of a cactus in a Coca-Cola glass, is meant to be "watered" with the soda weekly; *Fruits*, 2012, is a collection of "42 fruit-shaped products" arranged by shape and color without any effort at verisimilitude. Other projects involve cigarettes, Wite-Out pens, and artificial flowers. *A Dead Mosquito*, 2008, is just that—blood included. The video *Doing It with Mrs. Kwan...Making Pepper Spray*, 2012, apes the style and format of a cooking show, complete with bubbly host eager to talk about homemade Mace. Kwan's work resides somewhere between a pun and a poem, simultaneously enamored of contemporary art's power to effect change, while also aware of its capacity for humor in the way it can tickle the underbelly of the absurd.

Lior Shvil

Born in Tel Aviv. Lives in New York.

All of Shvil's videos, sculptures, installations, and performances revolve around characters and absurdist stories, and, he says, "all my projects are based on and inspired by my own biography but are also always influenced by popular culture, mythology, and history." Each piece, he adds, "has its own unique visual language." For a video project begun in 2011, *Benni—Engage and Control* (inspired by his experience in the Israeli army, as well as by recent political events and Hollywood action movies) Shvil built a set in his studio, an army training unit for the character Benni, an ex-military hero, to climb through, rappel from, break through doors in, and generally act like a soldier on a raid. "The set becomes the world for me and my everyday practice in the studio," says Shvil, who often dresses up to play one of his characters. "This relationship between myself as a character and my body to?the object and the set eventually becomes the work of art." Recently, he's also been experimenting with stop-motion animation to create a video inspired by Goya's etchings, Broadway musicals, and '80s music videos. In it dolls interact with Shvil, who plays a doll himself.

In February Shvil will have work in a group show curated by Kara Walker at ICA Philadelphia, soon thereafter he'll have a solo show at Givon Gallery in Tel Aviv, and he's conceiving an installation and performance piece for Andrea Zittel's High Desert Test Sites for later in the year.

John Wiese

Born in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Lives in Los Angeles.

"Luigi Russolo's 1913 manifesto *The Art of Noises*? Yes, that's still alive and? well," says Kaz Oshiro of sound artist and composer Wiese, whose expansive and frequently blistering back catalogue ranges from solo electro-acoustic experiments to the maximalist violence of his grindcore ensemble, Sissy Spacek. Wiese's pedigree in the often insular world of noise is well established—he's collaborated with and performed alongside distinguished acts like Wolf Eyes, C. Spencer Yeh, Merzbow, Prurient, and Sunn O))), and has released albums on labels including Berlin's?PAN and Belgium's Ultra Eczema—but his broad-ranging practice has also caught the eyes and ears of those outside the scene. His installations "100 Seven Inch Records by John Wiese"?and "Battery Instruments" have shown in L.A., Portland, and Berlin, and he performed with Nico Vascellari at the 52nd Venice Biennale. Books like his self-published, image-driven *Circle Snare*, 2009, further illustrate the jagged minimalism that runs throughout his work, and the onetime graphic-design student also creates his album artwork. "From [John Cage](#) to Sonic

Youth, avant-garde musicians always have played an important role in American art history,” Oshiro says. “Wiese is one of the notable experimental musicians to emerge in this decade and will be a legitimate link in this tradition.”

Zhao Zhao

Born in Zingjiang, China. Lives in Beijing.

“I don’t think of myself as a political artist at all,” says Zhao. “However, I have a natural tendency to question authority, and sometimes my lack of respect leads me to question the powers of the authorities, at times specifically, at times more subtly.” This tendency has previously landed the artist in trouble with the Chinese government, though not to the same degree as Ai Weiwei, for whom Zhao worked as a studio assistant for seven years. (What Zhao says he took from his controversy-courting elder: “An attitude. Never to accept things at face value and to always ask why things have to be this way and not another.”) At first glance, it’s a bit difficult to square the diverse sides of Zhao’s practice: He’s made paintings of Ping-Pong paddles resting on bright-green tables, but also sculptures like *Officer*, 2011, depicting an enormous Chinese cop broken into pieces arrayed on the gallery floor. For his exhibition this fall at Chambers Fine Art in New York, Zhao presented two bodies of work: “Constellations,” a series of bulletproof glass panels shot by a gun, the resulting holes and cracks forming a chance-based composition; and an untitled series of large-scale, more traditional abstract paintings of the sky. But his motivations aren’t always on the surface: “The Ping-Pong paintings are not about the sport but, rather, about achieving international success through obeying the rules,” Zhao says. “And the ‘Sky’ paintings are not about the changing colors of the sky, since I’m not particularly interested in nature, and when I paint a blue sky, I have to use my imagination, since I rarely see it in Beijing.” Zhao is juggling several different projects, including “Fragments,” a series of steel sculptures he says are inspired by the aftermath of a 2007 car accident. “I work in the medium that is most appropriate to the idea I’m exploring: photography for some, sculpture and three-dimensional objects for others, and painting,” he says. “The day that I start working in one style or medium, I’ll know that my career is over.”

Click [HERE](#) to see our video interview with Zhao Zhao ahead of Art Basel in Hong Kong.

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