

# Daily Collector

## 20 Painters Who Are Shaping the New Decade

January 20, 2020

As we enter into the new decade, the revitalized spirit of painting is an insurgent force gaining traction online and in critical circles. At once, standard bearers of the art world rise from institutional halls and New York studios even as populist fervor follows a social media firestorm of painters who are gaining popular attention online. Together, much as in society writ large, insurgent forces with grassroots support are challenging the traditional power centers that have long served as gatekeepers. The new decade will be shaped by artists of all these ilks, testing the limits of cooperation and support between art worlds with opposing origins.

### **New Movements**

Painters hailing from outside traditional power centers are better positioned today than in any recent decade. Social media's newly decentralized art audience, especially on Instagram, has no care for geographic location. With a spirit of experimentalism and a bit of a *fuck it* attitude, some artists have built their own ecosystems online with digital tools that let them access and excite likeminded audiences before entering the gallery system. Rising out of the stiff competition of endless artists who engage online everyday, a very small group of these artists are finding social media to be a viable springboard in the art world. Those artists who push painterly ventures without succumbing to the profitable allure of totally standardizing their practices for online branding purposes stand to be relevant forces in the coming decade.

Meanwhile at elite institutions, traditional gatekeepers remain powerful with their high-end connections, large pocketbooks, museum board seats, and media access. However, political pressures are pushing a more diverse range of people with new ideas into the most respected schools. These artists push new values into established art circles. With messages that are much more romantic and soulful than their peers' calculated conceptualism, these painters hold the potential to introduce more honest and broadly relevant conversations within the established art systems. The artists who are achieving these goals are laudable. They, too, will

face the challenge of resisting profitable paths towards poacher galleries who will seek to monetize their work by watering it down.

Between both worlds, a consensus towards a new and radical abstraction is coming into focus. Certainly not exclusive to recent graduates, the movement contains many painters who have been laying in wait for a decade perhaps most notably in Germany. Within this 21st Century movement, geographic flattening and a decentralized audience allows for artists to participate practically worldwide. Just on the limited list below, abstractionists sharing formal qualities are living in Miami, Düsseldorf, Richmond, Los Angeles, Leipzig, Berlin, Denver, London, Frankfurt, and New York.

### **Looking Back on The 2010s**

Whether or not these two painterly movements are able to survive simultaneously in the next decade, the most salient lesson to be learned from the last decade is the importance of supportive patronage. In the next decade, artists of both elite and populist pedigrees will need to find less predatory patrons than their 2010s predecessors did. Most famously, speculative collectors preyed on promising, young artists loaded with student debt after the recession. These collectors turned paintings into stocks and aesthetics into trading cards as they fueled unsustainable prices, standardized artworks, and dead end careers. The makings of what could have been an exciting abstract painting movement were sacrificed by a class of unhinged collectors and the critics who were understandably thirsty for those collectors' blood.

Not to be outdone, a market-friendly figurative painting movement arrived on the scene defined by its post-digital candy crush aesthetics. These painters employ formal gimmicks reminiscent of their zombie abstract predecessors to create physical objects that look digital without actually *being* digital. Common tropes are airbrushed surfaces so flat that they might as well be printed, extreme drop shadows, painted pixels, distorted figures, and knock-off Laura Owens impasto. When you take the faux digital veneer off, these paintings are just physical commodities loaded with the same commercial information you find in tacky pop art galleries and department stores: dollar signs, big red hearts, Adidas or Nike logos, cats and dogs, fast food branding, inspirational quote tattoos, airbrushed AirPods, big tits, and hipster clothes. The works capture a fashionably faux digital experience shared by a small class

of uncommonly well off young people. By sprinkling in just enough cynically commercialized woke signifiers and narrow art historical references, they provide cover for any collector salivating to put a french fry painting or goopy dog portrait in their dining room.

### **Institutional Support and New Patronage**

Across the pond, some European institutions have taken notice of the influence of abstraction and emerging online art movements while maintaining an institutional scope and high curatorial vetting standards. To that end, *Jetzt! Junge Malerei in Deutschland (Now! Painting in Germany Today)*, is a survey of Germany's contemporary painters presented in institutions including Kunstmuseum Bonn, Museum Wiesbaden, Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz, and Deichtorhallen Hamburg. Using a website-as-catalogue, the institutional survey has an online nexus. Curated by Prof. Dr. Stephan Berg, Dr. Frédéric Bußmann, Dr. Jörg Daur, Dr. Alexander Klar, Anja Richter, Lea Schäfer, and Dr. Christoph Schreier, the exhibitions include artists with large social media presences and those without. The show is an ambitious and fair, albeit not entirely exhaustive, view of German paintings being broadcast on and off the internet. To quote the **exhibition concept text**, "the goal is to present a valid cross section of the painting produced in Germany by young artists, while giving consideration to all the forms in which it appears." Through curatorial efforts like this one, a synthesis can exist between the more populist and elite strands of painterly movements today. Institutions that are willing to even the playing field and give consideration to diverse career paths are vital to creating an ecosystem that does not shun grassroots support in the new decade.

At the same time, a model for a more supportive and knowledgeable patron is coming into focus with successful curators and artists taking major steps to support emerging artists. Some of these bellwethers are noticeable in the biographies of multiple artists throughout the forthcoming list. Curator Bill Arning, Swizz Beatz, and residencies like The Macedonia Institute or Long Road Projects come to mind. Players like this arrive in the new decade with enough influence, resources, and passion to be the tastemakers of a new decade. No one is more effective in achieving this coalescence of influence and taste than artist Kehinde Wiley, who opened his revolutionary Dakar artist residency at Black Rock Senegal last year. Black Rock redefines the nature of patronage at the intersection of place and creative support by "promoting conversations and collaborations that are multigenerational, cross-cultural,

international, and cross-disciplinary. Black Rock takes its physical location as a point of departure to incite change in the global discourse around Africa in the context of creative evolution.” The residency, well outside the art world’s power centers, is a form of patronage positioned to spark a creative renaissance of a type no speculative collector would ever dream to implement.

### **Artists for A New Decade**

Below, find a list of artists who will shape this decade.

### **Alteronce Gumby**



*Black Star*, Alteronce Gumby, oil paint on panel, 54 x 70 inches, 2019, image courtesy of the artist and photography by Grace E. Bowen @\_grace.e.bowen\_

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*The Saga Continues: Child of the Sun*, Alteronce Gumby, oil paint on panel, 54 x 70 inches, 2019, image courtesy of the artist and photography by Grace E. Bowen @\_grace.e.bowen\_



Alteronce Gumby's solo presentation at Sunday Art Fair with False Flag Projects, New York, 2019, image courtesy of the artist

In Alteronce Gumby's *Black Star*, the hint of a reference to the recognizable world comes into focus, but the artist's real prowess is translating the everyday into a macro experience of cosmic abstraction. Indeed, Gumby's gestures are emancipatory actions that shape paint in uniquely experimental ways.

Full of painterly wit, Gumby renders a conversation about the African American experience in compositions of thick impasto shaped like puzzle pieces that construct his own world of material essence and playful abstraction. The puzzle-shaped works recall Jack Whitten's historical precedent perhaps filtered through Matisse's cutouts all converging into a celestial symphony of light and pigment.

Alteronce Gumby received his MFA from Yale School of Art in 2016 and BFA from Hunter College in 2013. Solo exhibitions include Fondation des Etats Unis, Paris; Long Gallery, New

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York; 6B.ASE, Bronx, NY; and Mildred I Washington Gallery, Poughkeepsie, NY. Group exhibitions include Color People curated by Rashid Johnson at Rental Gallery, East Hampton, NY and other galleries such as Hammond Harkins Galleries, Columbus; 6B.ASE, Bronx, NY; Camden Arts Center, London; and Infinity Room Gallery, Los Angeles.