

FIVE^{TO} WATCH

There is a lot of superb art being made these days, so this column shines light on five gifted individuals. All profiles were written by Allison Malafronte except Bradley Hankey's by Nicole Borgenicht.



MATT RYDER (b. 1981), *Ascension*, 2022, oil on linen, 10 x 20 in., private collection

MATT RYDER (b. 1981) is a British painter based in Dubai who is steadily becoming better known in the U.S. His journey in art started early but took a bit of a circuitous path — in his 20s Ryder left art school and abandoned painting for 10 years after a discouraging experience with an instructor — but eventually he returned to his true passion. In 2005, he moved to Dubai to embark on a full-time career as a professional painter and has never looked back.

For many years, large-scale landscapes from the scenic mountains and deserts surrounding Dubai were Ryder's forte and focus. "It's very difficult to explain the feeling of standing at the base of one of these mountains, how grand it is," the artist says in a short film describing his work and motivations. "The way the light filters into these big mountain ranges, it's very reminiscent of America's Southwestern landscape. The paintings I'm doing, they are big, they are bold. I work on a large scale generally when I'm in the studio in order to capture this grandeur."

Ryder then started exploring a subject he has long loved: flowers. A crowded genre to be sure, but Ryder nonetheless found his place in this arena, and today he paints large floral scenes as if they were vast landscapes, even if just a few flowers are center stage. Other times, he'll paint smaller, detailed floral portraits, as in *Ascension*, illustrated here. Designed in a 2:1 format, these garden roses get all the glory and

attention, with the artist taking time to give each pillowy bloom the variegated color and fine detail it deserves.

Regardless of the subject, Ryder's love of light and the way it creates movement, rhythm, and patterns in and around objects is often the theme. "I always seek light patterns and shapes that will form interesting and strong compositions," he explains. "I find that the more I paint, the more I'm drawn to naturally lit subjects, whether it's a still life by the window or a desert landscape."

Ryder plans to be in the U.S. quite a bit in the coming months. In October, filming an instructional video for Streamline Publishing will bring him to Texas, and in February 2023 he'll visit the Scottsdale Artists' School to teach his second workshop there. And there will be plenty of time back home in the studio. "I have a very clear vision of the future," Ryder says. "I know where I want to be, and what I have to do to get there. Now it's just about putting in the work to make sure that happens."

Ryder is represented by Medicine Man Gallery (Tucson).



MARISSA OOSTERLEE (b. 1981), *Hope*, 2022, acrylic on ArtResin, 16 x 16 in. (diameter), available through the artist

MARISSA OOSTERLEE

(b. 1981) is recognized the world over for her hyper-realistic portrayals of women submerged or floating in water, a symbolic representation of the passing of time and life's changing tides. Her preoccupation with water and the ocean is apropos, considering that "Marissa" means "from the sea/mermaid" in Latin and that another of her other passions is raising awareness and funding for environmental causes.

Currently residing in Spain, Oosterlee grew up in the Netherlands and was always an artist at heart. At 20, she found her way back to the studio after sustaining a serious injury on the road to becoming a semi-professional cyclist. Today Oosterlee creates polished, glistening portraits of women in the sea using an airbrush technique with either oil or acrylic paint.

In 2019, the artist began a series of paintings called *Washing Away My Sorrows*, using water as a symbol of purity, clarity, and tranquility. "This series was originally based on my own feelings involving personal issues (health, past relationships, and family matters) and also on my active involvement in environmental issues, particularly ocean life," Oosterlee explains. "It grew from there and became about the empowerment we experience when we remove ourselves from the fires that forge and shape us as women."

In 2020, at the height of the BLM movement, a woman named Saraa Kami contacted Oosterlee to say how much she admired her art, and also to ask why it never featured women of color. "She had just posted a preview of some upcoming releases," Kami recalls. "As a longtime follower of Marissa's work, I felt slighted and reached out.

Much to my surprise, she responded right away. Shortly after, we chatted on WhatsApp and she heard me out."

Oosterlee told Kami that George Floyd's recent death had struck a deep chord and she was ready to make a shift toward more diversity.

In the next few months, she partnered with Kami to create an additional segment to the *Washing Away My Sorrows* series, of which *Hope* is a part. Kami secured a group of models of color for a shoot, photographed them, and sent the results to Oosterlee to work from. "I'm not a professional photographer, just a woman of color who wanted future generations to see beautiful depictions of women of color hanging on the walls of museums and galleries," Kami says of their collaboration, for which she willingly volunteered her time.

"*Washing Away My Sorrows — BLM* was my attempt to place the beauty of all women on full display," Oosterlee shares. "Although I've always celebrated the beauty of black and brown women as a person, admittedly that wasn't always evident in my work. So being a part of the healing process for brown and black women in 2020 is something I'm extremely proud of. I'm also excited for the other paintings in this series to be introduced throughout 2022, and for the world to behold the beauty of a human being on its face, not by placing an adjective before it. Our ethnic identities are just that, and the only race that exists is the human race. That is what *Washing Away My Sorrows — BLM* is all about: seeing and celebrating beauty."

Oosterlee is self-represented.



If you happen to stumble upon a young man in a Colorado forest wielding his brush with both fierceness and finesse, it may well be the painter **JARED BRADY** (b. 1998). Out in the wilderness, he is not only able to engage in the challenging yet therapeutic act of painting, but also to document his adventures while communing with nature. “Something about the forest has always transfixed me,” Brady explains. “The abstraction, flow, and complexity have always drawn me in. When a subject seems too difficult or out of reach, I gain so much when I push myself to take it on.”

Brady paints in the mountains and valleys near his Colorado home in every season and at every time of day. In the fall, he may arise before sunrise to hike to his favorite spot and paint studies and gather reference photos of the early-morning glow. In winter, a twilight scene after sunset with cool light and shadows dancing may catch his eye, or perhaps it’s the graceful morning light after the previous day’s snowfall, as in *Softly Falls the Light*, illustrated here. “This is a scene from my favorite valley near my house,” Brady notes. “It had snowed the night before and the next day we had sunshine and clear blue skies. It was a perfect day to hike around with my pups to look at all the beauty. I came upon this scene and was instantly hooked. I did a small study on location and then used the study and photo references to paint this larger piece in my studio.”

When not traversing the great outdoors in search of subject matter, Brady can be found in his studio painting still lifes in a

JARED BRADY (b. 1998), *Softly Falls the Light*, 2020, oil on linen panel, 18 x 24 in., private collection

romantic realist style. Particularly evident in this genre is the influence of two of his teachers, Quang Ho and Daniel Keys; he took workshops with both while in his early 20s. Brady’s first introduction to oil painting and representational art, however, happened at 16 through the artist Kenneth Shanika, who taught him the basics of traditional technique. Brady then built upon that foundation through self-study and practice.

Regardless of the subject, Brady has trained his eye to find something paintable in every situation. “There is beauty everywhere I look,” he says. “The same visual concepts that excite me in a grand vista can also be found in a simple still life.”

Brady is represented by Broadmoor Galleries (Colorado Springs), Highlands Art Gallery (Lambertville, New Jersey), Jack Meier Gallery (Houston), and Montana Gallery (Billings).



ERIN ANDERSON (b. 1987), *Twins*, 2017, oil on copper, 12 x 24 in., Beinart Gallery, Brunswick, Victoria, Australia

Over the last several years, **ERIN ANDERSON** (b. 1987) has used her artistic gifts to explore the fundamental ways humans remain connected to one another while retaining their individuality. Several of these series, created prior to the pandemic, became even more relevant to the artist and her viewers during the ensuing period of isolation and disruption.

For these scenes, Anderson often begins by conducting scientific-like research or observation, unearthing the interconnectedness among primal elements in nature and applying it to innate correlations in her figures. “In one series, I used imagery from patterns in nature for my compositional inspiration, spending hours looking closely at such things as topographical maps, wind maps, and water currents to see what kinds of patterns and forms they created,” the artist shares. “I like to think the connection we have to one another is similar to the way elements in nature are connected.”

In another series, Anderson chose root systems and tree trunks as her starting point, etching them throughout paintings that speak to women’s separate yet shared experiences. In the diptych *Twins*, illustrated here, she again turned her attention toward female connectivity,

this time focusing on subjects she knows personally. “These figures are two of my best childhood friends, who happen to be twins,” she explains. “I wanted to allude to the idea of a shared history.”

Twins is also the first work where Anderson experimented with the technique of copper sheet “canvases.” “I like to push myself to find different ways to use copper,” she says. “Previously I used paint or natural patina to create dark values in the background. For *Twins*, I used a torch on the copper panel to bring out a brilliant rainbow of colors. The results are so fun and interesting to work with!”

An Ohio native, Anderson developed her drawing skills and oil-painting technique from a young age, copying the Old Masters at the Toledo Museum of Art. In 2009, she earned a B.A. in psychology and entrepreneurship from Ohio’s Miami University. Soon after, she enrolled in an independent art program at Pennsylvania’s Waichulis Studio, and she now lives in Ohio again.

Inquiries about **Anderson’s** work can be made through Dacia Gallery (New York City).

Originally from Oregon, the painter **BRADLEY HANKEY** (b. 1979) attended Boston's Massachusetts College of Art and Design and has been based in Los Angeles since 2009. In 2020, the artist took many reference photographs during a memorable helicopter ride that inspired a series of major paintings of Southern California's distinctive convergence of city and sea. Works resulting from yet another helicopter flight taken this February will appear in a show to be mounted by the other passenger on that aerial adventure, dealer Lia Skidmore.

Fortunately, we need not wait for a glimpse of what's in store. Available now from Hankey's other representative, Sue Greenwood Fine Art, is the scene illustrated here, *Always You*, which constitutes a kind of bridge between 2020's nocturnal scenes and the dusky ones he will show next. *Always You* draws its title from Hankey's first date with his now-partner, almost a decade ago — an evening that launched a relationship he says was “meant to be.”

Hankey thinks the phrase “emotional realism” describes his art best: “The scene depicted in *Always You* made an emotional impact on me, which is why I took a photo of it. And that moment of emotional impact is what I sought to convey in the painting.” *Always You* certainly is realistic, yet it also reflects Hankey's engagement with abstraction: “I love using solid blocks of color wherever I can, and

especially in urban landscapes, where a structure is often reduced to a simple shape with a single color.”

In his nocturnal series, Hankey used a rich, dark palette, but *Always You* incorporates pastel hues, a shift that makes sense when we consider how much more light the dusk encompasses. The artist notes, “The sky and water are built up with glazes, transparent layers of paint that blend optically to form a richer color. The cityscape is also built up in layers, but opaque ones. Single brushstrokes represent entire buildings, and dots represent a range of light sources.”

It is a pleasure to view Hankey's work in person, first up close to admire his “simple” strokes of paint, then backing away to watch them coalesce. The resulting sense of discovery, even surprise, relies upon the tension between rhythm and painterliness. Here the Santa Monica Pier's shimmering lights — flashes of energy — contrast with the dark, expansive planes of sky and ocean that convey nature's power, and its comparative calm. Finding that balance is not easy, but Hankey has mastered it, and we look forward to seeing more dusk scenes.

Hankey is represented by Skidmore Contemporary Art (Santa Monica) and Sue Greenwood Fine Art (Laguna Beach).



BRADLEY HANKEY (b. 1979), *Always You*, 2022,
oil on wood panel, 48 x 60 in., Sue Greenwood
Fine Art (Laguna Beach)