

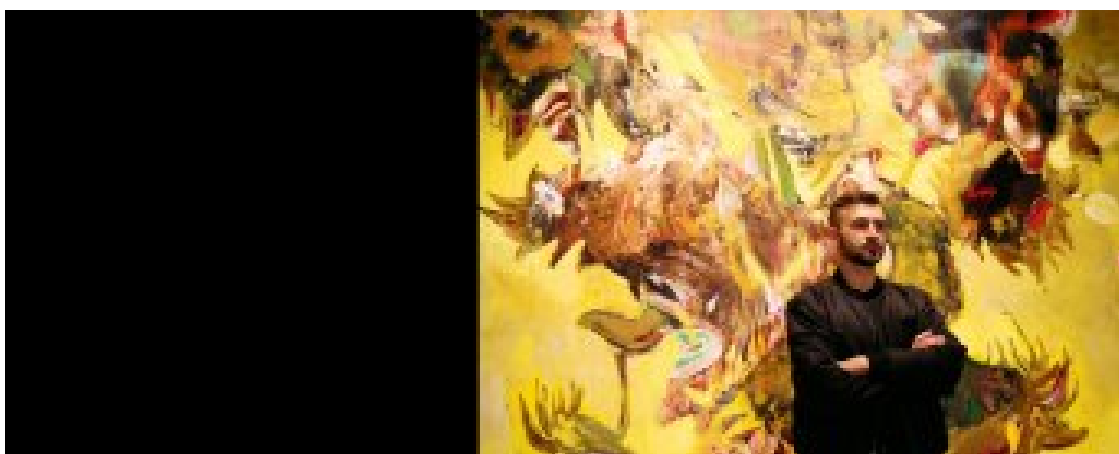
Here and Now: Ten Painters You Should Know

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By Marian Ang | Mar 23, 2023

Hand-picked by our specialists, these are ten painters to put on your follow list.

Whilst new media, sculpture and immersive installations have set the art world alight in recent years, painting has the ability to encapsulate the emotions and opposing forces that form the canvas of our daily life like no other medium. Ahead of our Contemporary art spring sales, we present 10 painters to know. Spanning the full range of genres – from neon landscapes to neo-Baroque portraiture – each artist brings their own dazzling take on the illustrious tradition of painting, rightfully earning their place in the canon of contemporary art.

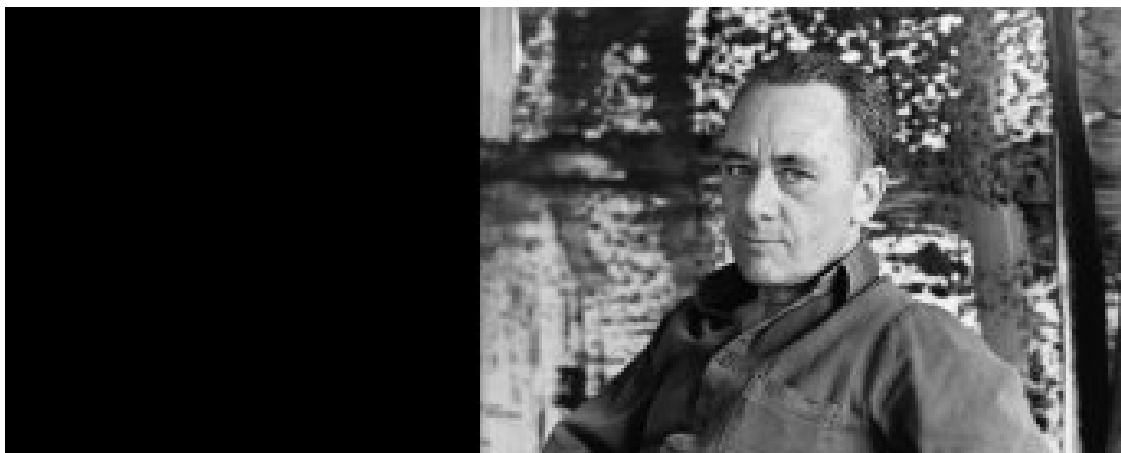


Adrian Ghenie



Adrian Ghenie, *Pie Fight (Study)* . Estimate: 2,200,000 - 3,200,000 HKD

A virtuoso painter, Adrian Ghenie's handling of paint and dramatic chiaroscuro are straight out of the playbook of the great Baroque masters. Ghenie's absurdist take on the grand tradition of painting comes into the fore in his *Pie Fight* works, which takes its title from the 1941 Three Stooges film *In the Sweet Pie and Pie*. The pie-smearred features of Ghenie's helpless protagonists evoke a bewildering range of sensations, from the slapstick actions of the wily protagonists in *In the Sweet Pie and Pie* to the very real horrors of 20th century central European history, in particular the Communist-era atrocities committed in Ghenie's native Romania. Through a fusion of abstraction and figuration, spliced with violent slashes of mauve and umber paint, Ghenie's *Pie Fight (Study)* (2012) weaves together personal and collective memories and fears to address the traumas of the past.

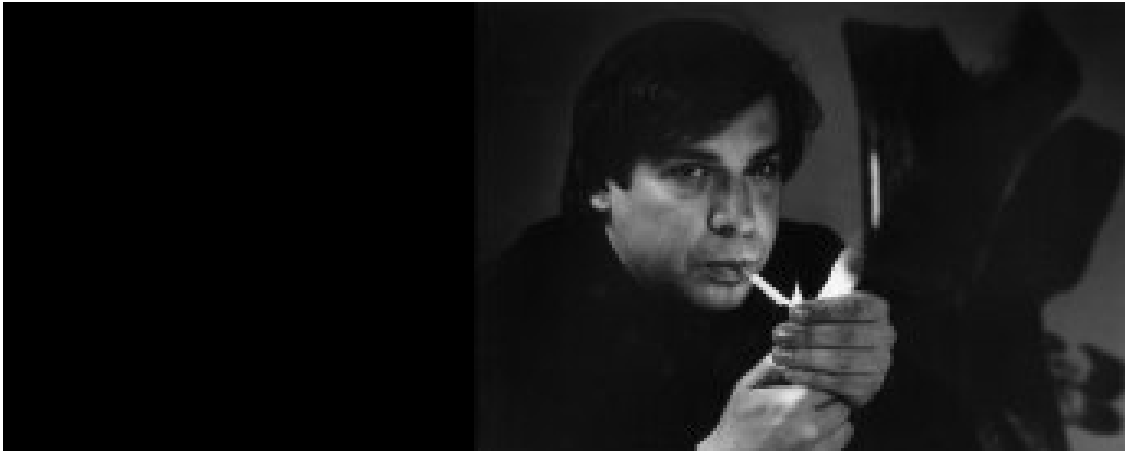


Gerhard Richter



Gerhard Richter, *Untitled No. 48* . estimate: 700,000 - 1,000,000 HKD

Gerhard Richter, who turned 90 in 2022, is considered one of the world's most important living painters and has been dubbed "the Picasso of the 21st century". With a career spanning nearly 70 years, the Dresden-born artist has repeatedly experimented with painting styles, methods and motifs, sometimes using a paintbrush, but also working with spatulas, squeegees or knives to layer paint in his iconic abstract works. A Socialist Realist painter by training in East Germany, Richter's flight to the West saw him develop an ironic anti-style, *Kapitalistischer Realismus* (Capitalist Realism), before eventually abandoning figuration altogether as he sought to find a visual language that erased the memories and scars of the past. *Untitled No. 48*, one of Richter's early abstractions, showcases his formative experimentations with colour and form on his way to becoming the world's greatest living artist.



George Condo



George Condo, *The Spaniard* . Estimate: 1,800,000 - 2,500,000 HKD

One of the truly exceptional artists of his generation, George Condo's invented portraits have drawn inspiration from Old Masters such as Velázquez as well as Neoclassicists such as Ingres. Most famously of all, Condo names his greatest influence as Picasso, whose partial abstractions and distortions to create seductive yet monstrous figures provided Condo with a means of capturing all of someone's emotional potentialities in a single portrait. *The Spaniard* (2008), with its hatched monochrome strokes and dissolving forms, showcases the artist's provocative aesthetic style that emphasises the "psychological cubism" and "artificial realism" of life.

“It’s not just the character in the paintings, it’s also going to be about the people who come to see the paintings and what it does to their mental state, to see all these different reflections of humanity, from all walks of life.”

George Condo



Izumi Kato

The first painter on our list is the inimitable Izumi Kato. Born in a coastal town in western Japan known as “the land of gods and myths”, Kato’s work incorporates Shinto legends and folklore, Buddhist philosophy and the animist beliefs of his childhood. Enigmatic humanoids – such as *Untitled* (2008), which was exhibited at the Osaka National Museum of Art in 2010 – represent the fluid boundaries between the natural, human and spiritual realms in Kato’s world. Kato’s idiosyncratic creative process reflects his same endearing and inscrutable reality, with Kato adopting intuitive (even primitive) modes of production, for example rubbing pigment into canvas with his hands instead of using a brush. Fluid lines and jewel tones of burnt orange, lapis blue and forest green create a tantalising duality between masculine and feminine, as well as visions of an ancient past and a sci-fi driven future.



Peng Wei



Peng Wei, *Beautiful Brocade* . Estimate: 600,000 - 900,000 HKD

The Beijing-based contemporary ink artist Peng Wei plays with traditional Chinese ink painting conventions to create poignant and unexpected works of art. *Beautiful Brocade* (2004) belongs to the artist's series of paintings of classical Chinese embroidered robes, meticulously reimagined on paper and silk. By subverting what initially appear to be strictly traditional works, Peng addresses wider issues of collective history and nostalgia. Her works on clothing and shoes delve particularly into themes of femininity and identity, whilst their uneven, watery lines and ragged edges evoke a sense of fragility and the fleeting passage of time that is a hallmark of Peng's work. This collision of contemporary art and traditional ink allows Peng's work to embrace and represent both the past and the future.



Anna Weyant

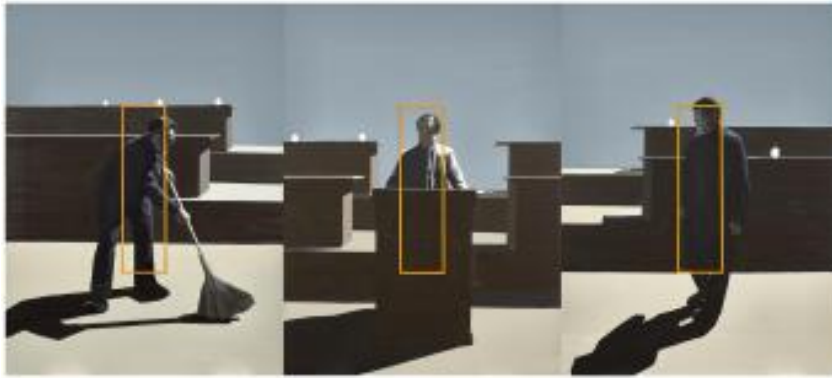


Anna Weyant, *Charlotte* . Estimate: 600,000 - 950,000 HKD

Canadian New York-based painter Anna Weyant is the youngest artist to be internationally represented by the mega-gallery Gagosian. Weyant enjoyed a meteoric rise to success for her tragi-comedic figurative tableaux executed with luminous classical oil painting techniques. *Charlotte* (2019) evokes the softly rendered edges and muted warm tones of the Dutch Masters, with half her face hidden by dramatic chiaroscuro. Weyant's young female protagonists offer a wry message about the collision of prevailing values and new ideals, punctuated by moments of uncertainty or embarrassment that threaten to derail their poised elegance. Her work *Falling Woman* (a humorous take on the "fallen woman" trope) achieved US\$1.6 million at Sotheby's in 2022 – a record for the artist at auction – and Weyant reportedly has a waiting list of over 200 names as of 2022.

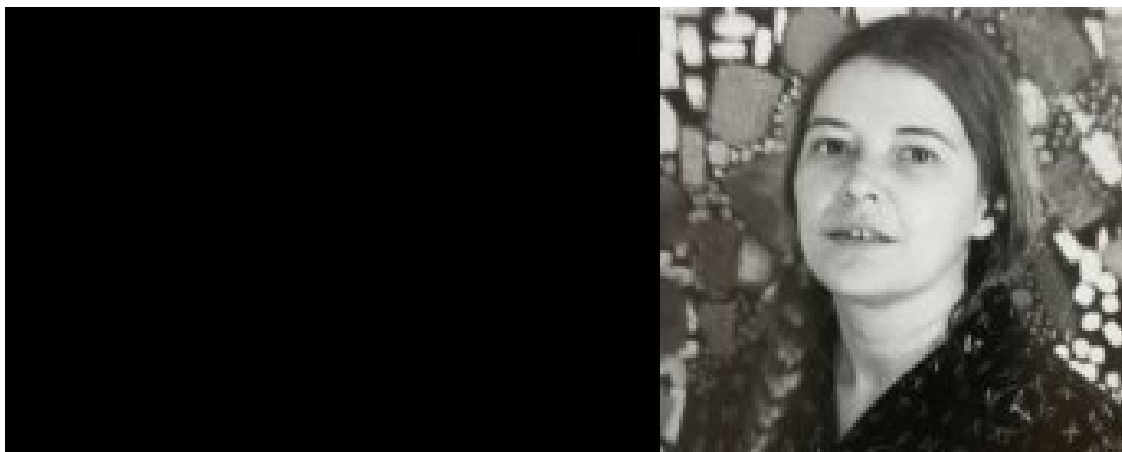


Wang Jianwei



Wang Jianwei, "...the event matured, accomplished in sight of all non-existent human outcomes." No. 28 . Estimate: 600,000 - 900,000 HKD

Wang Jianwei has been described by the art critic Karen Smith as “more of a sociologist than an artist” who “sees visual art primarily as a powerful conduit for social analysis”. Wang developed a highly distinctive realist aesthetic at Hangzhou’s prestigious Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts, before experimenting with a range of media to give shape to his explorations of time and metamorphosis. "...the event matured, accomplished in sight of all non-existent human outcomes." No. 28 (2013) presents Chinese history as a piece of theatre in three acts. It recalls the artist’s landmark painting *Time Temple* (2014), now part of the permanent collection of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, which captures history as something at once static and in motion, continuous and interrupted. One theme Wang continually revisits is the idea of backstage and onstage, and the viewer’s eye is drawn to the shadowy, anonymous figures caught unwillingly in the orange focus lines of an all-seeing camera.



Lynne Drexler

The only non-living artist on our list, American painter Lynne Drexler is part of a generation of overlooked female artists being written back into the canon as an important figure in the Abstract Expressionist movement. Studying under Robert Motherwell, Drexler became known for her vibrant abstract paintings of flowers and lush foliage. Unafraid, bold and inventive, Drexler was willing to venture outside of the confines of Abstract Expressionism and continued to explore the impact of colour and gesture when her contemporaries had fallen under the spell of Pop and Minimalism. The delicate pink petals of the Judas Tree are captured in *Judas Blossom* (1960), produced the year before her first solo show at the prestigious Tanager Gallery, a co-op whose illustrious members included Willem de Kooning and Alex Katz. The exuberant colours of *Summer Hill* (1980), painted after Drexler’s move to Monhegan Island, a

remote spot off the coast of Maine, capture her newfound joy in this period of her life. Drexler's work is now housed in the permanent collections of prominent institutions including the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Art Institute of Chicago, and the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C..



Lynne Drexler 琳恩·德雷克斯勒 | Judas Blossom 綻放的猶大樹



Lynne Drexler 琳恩·德雷克斯勒 | Summer Hill 夏日小丘



Huang Yuxing



Huang Yuxing, *River Bubbles (Two Works)* . Estimate: 2,000,000 - 3,000,000 HKD

Painter of fantastical, neon-coloured realities, the contemporary Chinese artist Huang Yuxing enchants the viewer with his ethereal, sensory experience of space and time. Huang's formative River and Bubbles series, combined to magnificent effect in *River Bubbles (Two Works)* (2014), engages with the "rivers" of time and life. Deviating from the usual sociopolitical imagery of his Chinese contemporaries, Huang instead translates the dizzying topography of relentless urbanisation and social change into hypnotic, rushing rivers and a flurry of foaming, fluorescent bubbles carried along in its wake. Each bubble is meticulously painted, nodding to traditional Chinese *gongbi* techniques, whilst the arresting neon palette appears almost supernaturally bright. Frenetic, fleeting and packed with electrifying energy, Huang's paintings speak to the fast-paced realities of our generation like no other.



Natee Utarit



Natee Utarit, *Still Life with Grocery Food and Opus One* . Estimate: 1,200,000 - 2,200,000 HKD

One of the most gifted contemporary artists in Southeast Asia, Natee Utarit is the master of the modern-day *vanitas* painting. With meticulous strokes, Utarit brings his brand of subversive humour to bear on the genre that was all the rage amongst the Dutch Golden Age painters. Whereas skulls, wilted flowers and upturned vases were the seventeenth-century symbols of choice to indicate the futility of life and ambition, Utarit populates *Still Life with Grocery Food and Opus One* (2013) with cup noodles, frozen sweetcorn, bottled Perrier and a solitary crucifix. This painting appeared at Utarit's first ever solo show in Korea in 2013. Unlike his Thai contemporaries, who predominantly restrict their creative vocabulary to

Thai-centric religious and sociological subjects, Utarit brings together the pictorial language and traditions of Western still life painting to take aim at the issues closest to his heart, including rigid social hierarchies and the over-commercialisation of the art world.

About the Author

Marian Ang is a Hong Kong-based art writer and researcher, and a regular Sotheby's contributor.