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COLLECTOR

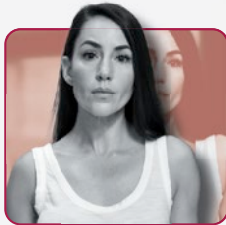


# Contemporary Realists

BY DIDI MENENDEZ

This summer Sotheby's in cooperation with the Art Renewal Center had an auction devoted to contemporary realism for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This was a groundbreaking auction featuring representational art from artists who are being collected and followed on social media. Hopefully this will be a first of many to come.

Contemporary should be synonymous with diversity. With diversity also comes diverse styles and narratives all within the many facets of what is real. These 10 artists are working in a wide range of contemporary realism exploring lifestyles, social and political issues while maintaining the complexity of the figure as the central focus.



**MEGAN ELIZABETH READ**  
@mae.read

Megan (Mae) Elizabeth Read is an American artist living and working in Charlottesville, Virginia. She began as a charcoal and pencil artist but now works almost exclusively in oil with pieces ranging from small still lifes to large-scale figurative paintings often featuring the female form. She says, "Since most of my work centers around conflicting states of being and relationship with the world, I (like so many artists right now) have felt that it is important to document this strange time of pandemic and isolation and the work I have been creating over the last 18 months is my attempt to do that."

She continues, "While isolation is not at all foreign to me, the experience of externally imposed isolation combined with this chaotic and somewhat surreal news cycle is wholly new and my hope is that these paintings can convey this. They are about this odd moment of slowing down, solitude and quiet, juxtaposed with a nonstop barrage of information, in a world changing more quickly than we can digest, in a time and place that asks us to question what role we are playing in our society. For better or worse. My hope is to encapsulate the boredom, drama and pace of this period. Both fast and slow."

Top detail: Megan Elizabeth Read, *Vessel*, oil on linen, 12 x 12"



**SHAWN MICHAEL WARREN**  
@warrenart

Chicago-born artist Shawn Michael Warren's work brings attention and awareness to events and individuals (past and present) that have affected and shaped cultures and civilizations worldwide. His most notable creation, *In a Promised Land...*, received critical acclaim for bringing life to the tragic history of the Greenwood community in early 1920s Tulsa, Oklahoma, home to the wealthiest Black community in America.

"My intent is to create works of art that depict the underrepresented," says the artist. "From unknown parts of history to contemporary topics, my work is used to educate, ignite uncomfortable and thought-provoking conversations about societal issues that plague us as a collective people and evoke empathy, conviction, compassion and beauty."

Warren received his BFA at the American Academy of Art and studied at the Florence Academy of Art in Italy. His skills also stretch into public murals, and it is his intent to continue developing permanent public works of art that inspire, uplift and are easily accessible to the public. He is represented by 33 Contemporary in Chicago.

Bottom detail: Shawn Michael Warren, *The House of Duvall*, oil on canvas, 48 x 36"



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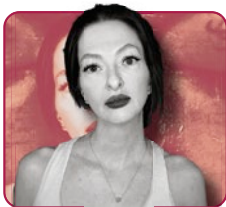
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**LAVELY MILLER**

📍 @lavelymiller

For the past 20 years Lavelly Miller has painted in acrylic using her fingers. “Recently I’ve begun incorporating a sort of adapted Flemish Method by using layers of transparent glazes, sometimes upward of 100 separate applications of color; I’ve been able to heighten the realism and illusion of depth in my final images,” says Miller. “I often paint on paper sealed and glued to a separate surface; as the paper contracts and expands in reaction to being adhered, a noticeable ‘crinkling’ effect can be seen in much of my work. On a more contextual level, my paintings are usually a sort of meditation on great difficulty, loss and salvation. I think of them as thank you letters to God.”

Miller graduated summa cum laude with a BFA in studio art from James Madison University. She holds master’s and bachelor’s degrees in clinical mental health from the University of Virginia, where she completed her residency in the area of serious mental illness. Her artwork is held in public collections such as the New Salem Museum in New Salem, Massachusetts; the University of Virginia; the National Center for Transgender Equality in Washington, D.C.; and the Twenty-First Century Fox and News Corporation Building. She is represented by Arcadia Contemporary in New York City.

Top left detail: **Lavelly Miller**, *Lindsay, as I Remember Her*, acrylic on paper on canvas, 40 x 30”



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**RILEY HOLLOWAY**

📍 @hollowayfineart

Riley Holloway, born in Los Angeles, currently lives and works in Dallas. Growing up, he developed an early interest in art, learning from his mother, who is an artist herself. He attended the Art Institute of Dallas and the Florence Academy of Art. Holloway is best known for his dynamic work and fresh look at figurative art.

His images are often accompanied by text and personal references embedded within the work. Holloway uses a traditional oil painting technique and bold lines to create depth within the portraits. There is a wonderful counterbalance of softness and masculinity seen in the works. Holloway’s aesthetics create familiar spaces and the content is rich in drama, history and intimacy.

“My work begins with the individual. I’ve always been an observer of people and run into individuals who inspire me through their fashion, personality or conversation,” says Holloway. “I am for creating pieces that are rich in storytelling, free from constraints, and true to the person I’m painting. This is accomplished by letting the individual’s narrative drive my work. I use traditional drawing and oil painting techniques to communicate the qualities of each individual.”

Top right detail: **Riley Holloway**, *Chuck Berry Vs. Rock and Roll*, oil on canvas, 66 x 46”



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**KATHRIN LONGHURST**

📍 @kathrinlonghurst

Kathrin Longhurst was raised in Communist East Germany and now lives in Australia. Her work draws on socialist realism and Communist art. She threads concepts of freedom of speech and the influence of propaganda through her pieces, campaigning for equality in her strong yet sensitive representations of female figures that seduce and confront the viewer with layers of sexuality and power.

Her current body of work, *Fighting Spirit*, started as an homage to women in her life who she admires and whose courage and passion she aspires toward. It also came to be about the lockdown experience and the quiet and reflective time with loved ones as well as the emotional roller coaster that came with the uncertainty.

Longhurst says, “Someone asked me how I define a strong woman. For me it is not necessarily physical or emotional strength I associate with it, but rather the ability to face difficulties, hardship and adversity with courage and compassion.”

Longhurst is represented by Nanda\Hobbs in Australia.

Bottom left detail: **Kathrin Longhurst**, *Fighting Spirit* oil on linen, 47 x 36”



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**SANTIAGO GALEAS**

📍 @santiagogaleas

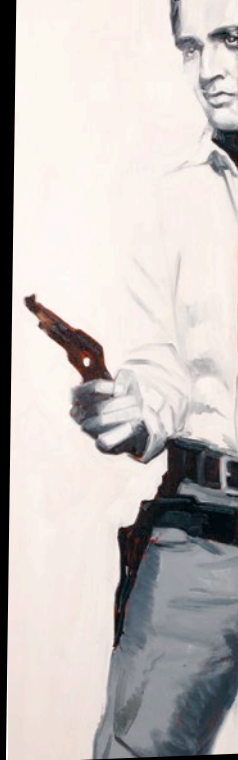
Santiago Galeas’ artwork highlights a connection between the diversity of genders and sexualities in the subjects and the similar complexities one finds in nature. “As a queer, first-generation son of immigrants, my experience has been an anomaly in the atelier world,” says the artist. “I often feel as if I am a bit in many worlds, and not entirely in any of them. My paintings reflect this search for identity and imagine resolutions to such a search.”

He adds, “Landscape and portraiture have historically been used as tools of empire. Portraits were symbols of power, prestige, authority, and imperialism. American landscapes often romanticized manifest destiny and settler colonialism. My work appropriates these tools and uses them to blur the lines between queerness and nature. Nature’s persistence to remain diverse and untamed by humanity’s social constructs and divisions drives my imagery.”

Galeas was born in Silver Spring, Maryland, and is a graduate of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and completed an MFA at New York Academy of Art. He currently lives in Queens, New York.

Bottom right detail: **Santiago Galeas**, *Somos Nuestra Propia Salvación*, oil on canvas, 40 x 40”





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**MICHAEL HLOUSEK-NAGLE**

📍 @michaelhloseknagle

Born in Cambridge in 1971, Michael Hlosek-Nagle grew up in a small farming village in the English countryside near Oxford, and spent most of his childhood exploring the fields and forests. His early interests did not include drawing or painting, instead he wanted to pursue a career as an archaeologist and was drawn especially to ancient Egyptian history. His first foray into art was an attempt to turn his bedroom into an Egyptian temple by decorating it with life-size figures of Osiris, Isis and Anubis.

“My work seems to be an exploration of subjectivity and introversion, in that it often places a solitary figure in an enclosed space or an otherwise empty landscape,” says the artist. “I want my work to connect not only with curators and collectors, but also with people who are not necessarily followers of the art world, and part of the challenge I set for myself is therefore to find a language in each painting that is transparent enough to connect at first glance, but also sufficiently oblique that a greater weight of meaning and of art-historical baggage can be pulled from it if you care to look deeper.”

Hlosek-Nagle’s artwork can be found at 33 Contemporary.



Top left detail: **Michael Hlosek-Nagle**, *The Echo Room*, oil on canvas, 20 x 30”

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**ALESSANDRO TOMASSETTI**

📍 @sosayssandro

In his paintings of contemporary men, Alessandro Tomassetti combines his naturalistic rendering style with a tenebrous palette and dramatic lighting to create work that is as seductive as it is subversive. Rather than presenting his male subjects as mythological heroes or captains of industry, Tomassetti paints to reveal their vulnerability and sensitivity. By eschewing historic expectations—where men were typically the audience for such portraits rather than the subjects—Tomassetti’s oil paintings invite the viewer to acknowledge their preconceptions and explore the state of contemporary masculinity in all its shades, strengths and limitations.

“For my newest series, *The Chemistry Between Us*, I am creating a sequence of paintings that capture my model’s movements over time and in a limited space,” says Tomassetti. “In the past, I would have wanted to move on to a new subject and a new setup between paintings, but I find myself relishing these longer interactions and the privilege of documenting them.”

Tomassetti was born in Toronto, Canada, and resides in Barcelona, Spain. He is represented by 33 Contemporary.



Top right detail: **Alessandro Tomassetti**, *We Are Young*, oil on linen panel, 12 x 9”

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**RAINER ANDRESEN**

📍 @rainerarts

Rainer Andreesen was born in 1963 and raised on a remote island on the northwest coast of Canada. He graduated from a four-year intensive art program at Capilano University and spent six years in advertising. He was scouted to model in Italy, and during his three years in Europe, he continued to sketch and paint. In 1994 he went to New York and since then he has continued a successful career in modeling and has been painting commissions for the likes of Kathy Bates, J.J. Abrams, Martin Short, Alfred Molina and Jennifer Garner.

Six months before the pandemic, Andreesen set out to paint a show called *Headspace* featuring close-cropped portraits of people who changed his life in inspirational ways. “At the same time, I was inspired by the music of Mick Flannery, whose music touched on the same subject and was the playlist for each of these paintings,” he says. “Halfway through the pandemic, I needed to lighten up the mood without straying too far from the origins of my first inception.” The paintings were part of his latest MM Fine Art show called *The Space Between*, which let the viewer create their own narrative that combined with his visions of the human spirit.

Bottom left detail: **Rainer Andreesen**, *Swing (TR)*, oil on linen, 40 x 30”



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**LEEANNA CHIPANA**

📍 @leeannachipana

Visual artist Leeanna Chipana is the daughter of a Peruvian-Quechuan immigrant father and an American mother.

Growing up in Central Islip on Long Island with a Quechuan father meant animism was part of her life. Her father made offerings to Pachamama, Mother Earth, and spoke to the Moon regularly. In her world there were spirits in the wind and in the trees. Her paintings would later be part spiritual practice. To combat the racism she witnessed her father endure for existing as indigenous not only in Peru but among Long Island’s own Latin American community, she began painting portraits of Quechuan family members.

“My father was extremely patriotic. He truly loved America. He worked his whole life as a laborer and faced much discrimination here but always and no matter what he was very proud to be American,” says Chipana. “In *American Woman* you see an indigenous woman proudly and boldly wearing her American colors with a sense of authority and ownership. I wanted to reflect back my father’s patriotism and also disrupt the sense of who we associate those colors with or who has a right to them.”

Bottom right detail: **Leeanna Chipana**, *American Woman*, oil on board, 24 x 18”





#### About the Author

Didi Menendez is a Cuban-born American publisher and curator. She is a pioneer in the online publishing arena since 1998. Her literary journals and magazines have been recognized by the Pushcart Prize, Best American Poetry and other anthologies. She has placed many artists in prominent art collections and has exhibited artists in museums worldwide. You may find her at [www.poetsandartists.com](http://www.poetsandartists.com).