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How to spot the next Damien Hirst



By Paul Hobson

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There is no shortcut to spotting new artists on the rise. Curators have specialist knowledge, networks and access which they use to identify talent 'ahead of the curve'.

But if you are not a curator and are relatively new to contemporary art, it is important to develop your eye, your knowledge and your networks. This is especially true if you are interested in buying so called 'emerging artists'.

Developing your eye means seeing as much contemporary art as possible: exhibitions in public institutions like Tate or the Whitechapel Art Gallery, becoming familiar with the leading commercial galleries where art is available for sale, attending contemporary art fairs and if possible, visiting international art events like the Venice Biennale.

Reading the art press – magazines like Frieze or The Art Newspaper – and developing your understanding of the history of art is also an important part of becoming an informed buyer. Developing your networks with galleries, curators, artists and other collectors is a way to access information and art world opinion which is vital in identifying up-and-coming artists attracting interest.

Some artists whose careers I've followed in this way, and who are now securing increasing recognition on an international stage, include Christina Mackie, who recently won the 2011 Contemporary Art Society's Annual Award commission to collect in conjunction with Nottingham Castle Museum and Art Gallery; Also, Laure Provost, who recently won the 2011 Max Mara Art Prize for Women; and Andrea Buettner, who won the same award last year.

It takes time of course, but collecting involves developing your intellect and your taste, and for those genuinely passionate about art, it should be a pleasure and huge amounts of fun! Knowing which are the critically-engaged grass-roots spaces working with recently graduating artists, becoming familiar with those commercial galleries representing young artists, keeping your eye on some of the important prizes and awards for artists early in their career, and knowing how to research artists to see if they are attracting critical interest – all of these things are important.

Paul Hobson, is director of the [Contemporary Art Society](#), which will be exhibiting at



the London Art Fair, 18 – 22 January, Business Design Centre, Islington. The exhibition, comprised of 29 galleries, is a hotbed of emerging art talent.

Here, curator of the London Art Fair, Pryle Behrman picks his 'ones to watch' for 2012:

Roisin Byrne at Alma Enterprises

Byrne is a rising 'arch provocateur' of the art world. Her work appropriates (or perhaps just steals?) existing conceptual works by famous artists such as Santiago Sierra and Simon Starling.

Ryan Gander at Limoncello Editions

Gander's work displays a deadpan humour in challenging the ways that art is collected and displayed. Later in 2012 he will have a major solo exhibition at CCA Wattis Institute in San Francisco.

Katie Sims at Hoxton Art Gallery

The paintings of Katie Sims pay homage to masterpieces by Mantegna and Poussin, but deconstruct their studied, graceful air through the organic fluidity of her brushwork and the incongruous addition of geometric shapes that further undermine the compositional structure of her source images. Sims has a forthcoming solo exhibition at Victoria Art Gallery in Bath in 2013.

Sanford Biggers at Michael Klein Arts

Sanford Biggers uses the study of ethnographic objects, popular icons and the Dadaist tradition to explore syncretism in culture, art history and politics. He currently has a solo exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum and a forthcoming solo show at MASS MoCA in the USA.

Chris Shaw Hughes at Rise Art

Chris Shaw Hughes produces incredibly detailed monochrome drawings derived from photographs of landscapes that bear the scars of historic conflicts.

Brad Phillips at The Residence

Quiet and abandoned spaces, unnerving portraits and still lifes that juxtapose flowers with knives all feature in the eclectic paintings of Canadian artist Brad Phillips. Dark and shadowy with a Gothic palette of colours, his images suggest hidden secrets and psychological angst.

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