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11 Armory Show Artists You Should Already Be Collecting

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By Elena Soboleva

They say it takes 10,000 hours of practice to gain mastery in any given field. But what's the art world equivalent? How many JPEGs does it take to train one's eye? This is the question I've pondered while combing through some 2,000 images on Artsy in the weeks ahead of The Armory Show.

The Armory is a bastion of the New York art scene. It has the vibe of your favorite bar: a guaranteed good time surrounded by all the people you actually want to hang out with. Pageantry and air-kissing are left by the wayside so that real substance can prevail. You're more likely to run into Chuck Close wheeling through the booths than the Eye photographer from Women's Wear Daily.

For each of the last few years, I have selected a group of outstanding works with an aim to capture the zeitgeist of a fair so large and varied. This year, my selection reflects the hybridity of images and the artists who repurpose meaning and wield objects and ideas that push past their original confines. This is not a theme, but rather something that permeates much of culture today. The warp-speed art market accelerates ever faster in lockstep with a culture in which images are ever more transmutable. Here are the artists whose works are sure to draw attention this year, names wise collectors should not miss at the fair.



Jesse Stecklow
Untitled (Fly tapes: Potential
Derivatives), 2015
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Jesse Stecklow

Jesse was born in 1993, a year of many seminal art happenings. Though he could not have been aware of them at the time, many have seeped directly into his work. He co-founded a design firm "Content is Relative" when he was 18 and was a member of The Jogging collective, alongside Brad Troemel. Jesse will be curating a show at Martos Gallery in Los Angeles this summer and his works are being presented at M+B's Armory booth. The series includes a set of fly tapes, employed as negatives, forming the basis for the images. The works will be hung alongside text elements to evoke a dystopian environment, which I haven't quite fully figured out yet, but can't wait to see in person.

Brad Troemel

At the age of 27, Brad has "Instructor at Pratt Institute," co-founder of art collective The Jogging, and "Etsy master" to his name. Vacuum sealing rainbow-hued objects, building ant-farms for charities, and embedding paintings with crypto-currency are but a few facets of his oeuvre. He probes the theory of thingness with the ease of a tenured philosophy prof and manifests a hyper-awareness of online trends IRL (in real life). Brad's work is replete with bizarre, anachronistic combinations and objects repurposed to serve other, often useless, functions. He currently has a show on view at Zach Feuer and will present an explosion of multi-colored rockwall handholds on which Furbies are intended to be perched and bitcoin paintings at the gallery's booth at the fair.

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Letha Wilson

Letha Wilson makes photo-based sculptures by combining images of nature with weighty materials such as concrete, wood, and paint. Her elaborate installations and wall reliefs unfold unexpected connections between their often disparate materials. Reversing the traditional process of photography, which collapses reality into a two-dimensional space—she takes pictures and gives them physical substance, pushing photography into the realm of sculpture. The hybrid forms that emerge convey the shortcomings of the flat image. Her works will be on view at Amsterdam's GRIMM gallery booth.

Alicja Kwade

Alicja's poetic considerations of time, light, and stillness transform mundane objects and materials into vessels for reflection—in both figurative and more metaphysical ways. Playing with mirrors, clocks, and other everyday objects, Alicja distorts our linear understanding of reality. Her sculptures skew and warp as if a glitch within our day-to-day, and will be on view at i8 Gallery and Johann König at the Armory. (She also recently joined the stable of 303 Gallery so New York can look forward to seeing much more of her work.) In Europe, she has three institutional shows lined up this year and a solo exhibition currently on view at Johann König's Berlin space.



Alicja Kwade
Not yet titled, 2015
Johann König



Ben Thorp Brown, *Untitled (Fists)*, 2014
Bischoff Projects

Ben Thorp Brown

A recent grad of the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program and soon-to-be resident of the Chinati Foundation in Marfa, Ben fuses video and objects to expose the underpinnings of social structures in both. For his solo presentation at the Armory, Bischoff Projects will present his series of “deal toys.” Made on the occasions of major IPOs and M&A transactions, these mini trophies—or “Lucite tombstones,” as they’re also called—capture the dark whimsy of growth-hungry America, where the congratulatory milestones of major transactions are required as markers of success.



Installation view of “Luke Diiorio,” courtesy of Anat Ebgi

Luke Diiorio

Luke first caught my attention last spring, as he was making the move from the UK to NY after graduating with an MA from London's Royal College of Art. Now that he's settled in, he's growing in acclaim on both sides of the pond, with collectors clamoring to get on the waiting list for works. An architectural elegance permeates his practice. He binds the seductively raw materiality of canvas, linen, and wood together with repeating folds and draws on the stillness of Agnes Martin. Luke's obsession with surface and industrial material is synchronous to his contemporaries like Dean Baldwin and Wyatt Kahn. Anat Ebgi will be showing a solo booth of his works in the Armory Presents section of the fair.

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Torey Thornton

Although Brooklyn-based, Torey has been embraced by the L.A. scene. Now, New York collectors are catching on, as well. A Cooper Union Graduate of 2012, he had his first solo show with OHWOW last fall and curated a summer show at Suzanne Geiss. His loose, playful imagery manifests in paintings and sculptures with freshness that tiptoes between child's play and surrealism. You can catch a moment of woodgrain or a familiar form yet the paintings remain in a state of metamorphosis. There is something else about the work, which really draws me to it: a genuine optimism that holds the viewers gaze fills it with an effortless sense of joy.

Camille Henrot

Camille's reign as Venice Biennale Silver Lion winner may be coming to a close, but her work only continues to grow in scope. And she's ready to find recognition far beyond the Lion-winning *Grosse Fatigue* (2013), which was admittedly marvelous. Fusing mythic and scientific elements with playful spirit, Camille's *A clinging type* (2014) at Johann König's booth has classical lines that allude to Brancusi, but its original context was against a backdrop of eBay images as part of an installation at London's Chisenhale Gallery. The works draw off West African Tribal cosmology, exploring exoticism. (It also doubles as a tape dispenser.) A few booths over from König's you can also find Camille's works at Metro Pictures as well—where the artist performs a healing massage on clay slabs and the vestige of her hand's gesture remains in the material.

Sara Greenberger Rafferty

Sara is based in Brooklyn and her constructed, photo-based assemblages were on view at Rachel Uffner's sweeping space just last fall. If your Miami schedule kept you away, this is the opportunity to get acquainted. Repurposing banal imagery, Sarah creates layered works that meld their individual subjects into surprisingly beautiful and ethereal compositions. Wedging inkjet prints and acetates in between irregularly shaped Plexiglas, she will present several new pieces at the fair. Rachel Uffner is a newcomer to The Armory Show. Hers is a booth not to be missed, with Joanne Greenbaum, Sam Moyer, and Bianca Beck also on view.

Joe Reihsen

Joe is a prime example of an artist who works with the digital-cum-analog trend, alongside contemporaries like Michael Manning and Petra Cortright. There are a number of artists now working in this vein, but Joe manages to pursue it with unrivaled thoughtfulness and consistency. The works on view at Praz-Delavallade's booth showcase meticulous layers of painterly accidents, applied to construct an image as one might in Photoshop. The works have a copy-and-paste mindset and reflect a generation whose brains are wired to see a fragmented and infinitely editable reality.

Carlos Reyes

A young collector and owner of a LES bar first brought Carlos's work to my attention. After seeing his pieces at Tomorrow Gallery's NADA booth, I didn't need further convincing. His predominantly idea-based works, which investigate the transmission of information, construct truly clever ways of understanding one thing through the added context of another. Shown by the Parisian TORRI Gallery in the Armory Presents section, this is not one to miss!