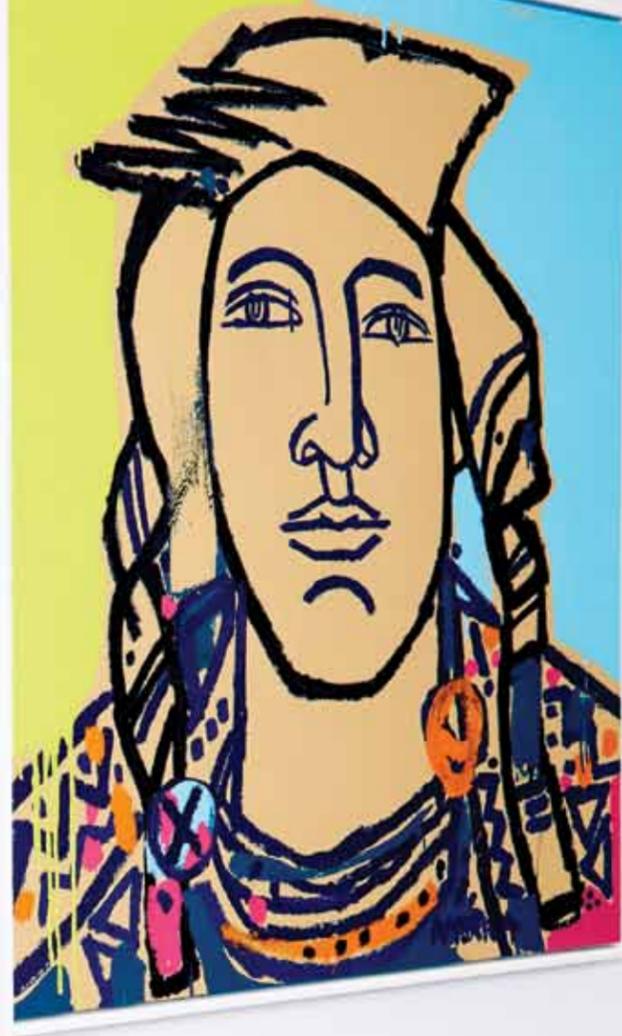


LET'S GET VISUAL

Meet four young artists shaping the artistic landscape of Los Angeles.

BY MARIN PRESKE

PHOTOGRAPHED BY ANDREW STILES



AMERICA MARTIN

On a quiet street in Historic Filipinotown (within LA's Echo Park neighborhood), inside an old drapery-manufacturing warehouse, America Martin's large-scale canvases hang among buckets of paint, colorful African textiles and a well-worn floor that bears semblance to a Jackson Pollock drip painting. Some works depict fleshy feminine forms, others portray noble faces of working men; the unifying factor is bold swaths of deep cobalt or lime green, ochre or copper. "Color sets the tone," says the 33-year-old. "The piece chooses the color. If I'm working from a model, photograph or my mind, there's a color that [presents itself]." Color may be Martin's muse, but people are her fascination. "The human form is my favorite landscape," says the Los Angeles native, who attended the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Martin's exaggerated figures are imposing at first glance due to the magnitude of the canvas size (often several feet across) and her subjects' hyperbolic body parts—enlarged extremities, angular breasts and sharp noses.

While she finds inspiration in the Fauvists and 1950s British artists such as Roger Hilton, it was Vincent van Gogh who made the first impression on her when, at the age of nine, Martin bought an old book of his paintings at a yard sale. "I looked at it and knew it was my language," she says. From then on, she corralled neighbors to sit for her while she sketched them. Though Martin counts several celebrities as fans—Kirsten Dunst and Giovanni Ribisi among them—it was Danny DeVito who was her first patron, thanks to an introduction by family friend and actress Mary Steenburgen. Currently, Martin is putting together a multimedia show about Los Angeles, due out this year. In the meantime, her solo show titled *Yes* opens February 6 at Laguna Beach's JoAnne Artman Gallery. → americamartin.com

ASK THE ARTIST

FAVORITE ARTIST
Thomas Houseago

MAIN SOURCE OF INSPIRATION
The discipline of work

FAVORITE ART PERIOD
The Renaissance

GO-TO MUSEUM
The Barnes Foundation in Philadelphia

MEDIUM OF CHOICE
Pencil and paper

DREAM PLACE TO SEE YOUR ARTWORK DISPLAYED
The Guggenheim



CHERYL HUMPHREYS

Cheryl Humphreys' works are a study in opposites. She starts with the most fundamental of materials—paper and ink—and transforms them into delicately streamlined pieces where natural and manipulated elements intersect. The 27-year-old artist's multistep process begins by dipping traditional printmaking paper in baths of ink. "I start by surrendering control to see what happens," says Humphreys, who recently exhibited at Art Basel Miami. She then responds to the organic shapes that unfold—aqueous coasts of India ink, watercolor or dye that soak into the paper and form the base of each piece. It's in this response that the contrast takes form. "I draw specific shapes that create a tension between organic and defined," she says. "These are informed by geometric templates used for blueprints and plans." (These architectural templates inspire the exacting, repetitive shapes embossed on the ink-free portion of the paper.) Humphreys sketches out a design and sends a scan of the

drawing to a laser cutter, who creates a stencil, which she then uses to emboss the paper. "I have to make sure it's responding to the ink where I want it," she says. "They're all truly one of a kind."

Humphreys approaches paper like a textile, sculpting it and embedding it with tactile shapes. It's a fascination instilled by her mother. "She was an interior designer," says the artist, who moved to LA eight years ago to attend Otis College of Art and Design. "I remember helping her with presentation boards, printing out blueprints and cutting out fabric swatches." Humphreys' works are subdued; her paper is typically white, and her ink various shades of black. But it's their quietness that invites the viewer to an intimate experience. "I would love to have a show called *We Are Not Impressed*, with all-white embossed pieces," she says. "Outside the gallery it doesn't look like there's work on the walls; but inside you look up close and have this moment when you go, 'Ah.'"

→ cheryllouisehumphreys.tumblr.com

ASK THE ARTIST

FAVORITE ARTIST
Helen Frankenthaler

MAIN SOURCE OF INSPIRATION
The duality of chaos and order

FAVORITE ART PERIOD
Post-painterly abstraction

GO-TO MUSEUM
Minneapolis' Walker Art Center will always have a special place in my heart.

MEDIUM OF CHOICE
Paper and ink

DREAM PLACE TO SEE YOUR ARTWORK DISPLAYED
The cover of *Time* magazine



ASK THE ARTIST

FAVORITE ARTIST

Egon Schiele,
Tim Burton and
Frida Kahlo

MAIN SOURCE OF INSPIRATION

Nature, animals,
fantasies,
dreams and love

FAVORITE ART PERIOD

Modern and
contemporary

GO-TO MUSEUM

La Casa Azul—
Frida Kahlo's house
in Mexico City

MEDIUM OF CHOICE

Pencil, ink,
collage, clay

DREAM PLACE TO SEE YOUR ARTWORK DISPLAYED

Anywhere—the
dream come true is
that I can make it!

DIANA GARCÍA

Growing up in Monterrey, Mexico, Diana García spent hours in her grandmother's painting studio, where realist still lifes and landscapes helped nurture the innate creativity within the budding artist. Together the two put on informal exhibits for family and friends. "I grew up developing that talent," says García, who now lives in Venice Beach, California. Though post-college modeling pursuits led to forays into acting (she had roles in award-winning Spanish-language films *Drama/Mex* and *Sin Nombre*), a familiar passion awakened within García when she picked up a sketch pad after relocating from Mexico City to Los Angeles to be with her musician fiancé, Gregory Rogove. "It came back to me when I moved," she says. While studying with UCLA Extension instructor Joseph Blaustein, the 31-year-old found her artistic voice via meticulous ink drawings that ranged from mythical creatures to abstract nudes.

Within García's detailed creations, it's easy to spot the exactitude that stems from the *bodegon* (Spanish still life) paintings of her youth.

She balances that precision with ethereal and fantastical motifs, often displaying her art in public spaces by blowing up small-scale works to adorn buildings. Though García has created pieces in New York, Austin and Mexico City, many others can be seen on the streets of her Venice neighborhood. A hybrid wolf-unicorn-cheetah and a pair of octopi grace walls outside of Gjelina, a popular restaurant on Abbot Kinney Boulevard; an intricate sunrise—painted along with Incubus singer and artist Brandon Boyd—stretches across a wall farther up the street.

García is not one to stay within boundaries: She covered a statue of the Virgin Mary with tiny Huichol beads for an exhibit at LA's Dilettante gallery. "I used to have a plan in life, but [later] decided not to because then you limit yourself," says the artist, who recently opened a cereal-centric takeaway café with Rogove called Another Kind of Sunrise. It's further evidence of her career plan: "Things have been happening, opportunities presented, and I just go for them."

→ bewhatyoudream.com



ASK THE ARTIST

FAVORITE ARTIST

Niki de Saint
Phalle

MAIN SOURCE OF INSPIRATION

*The New York
Times*

FAVORITE ART PERIOD

Pop Art

GO-TO MUSEUM

The Centre
Pompidou in Paris

MEDIUM OF CHOICE

1 Shot Paint and
collage

DREAM PLACE TO SEE YOUR ARTWORK DISPLAYED

I would love
to paint a church
one day.

ALIA PENNER

In elementary school, Alia Penner wanted to be a cartoonist. "I loved cartoons. I loved Disney," says the illustrator, who lives in the Mount Washington neighborhood of Los Angeles. Twenty years later that whimsy endures. "I never lost my childlike side. I love happy-face stickers and hearts and stars," she says. Penner also adores—in no particular order—African art, '40s-era Technicolor and all things Victorian, and has a particular fondness for rainbows. "I imagine the world to be much more colorful [than it is]," says the alumna of LA's Otis College of Art and Design. "What is life without color?" Considering such leanings, it would be accurate to imagine Penner surrounded by kaleidoscopic hues, cloaked in cosmic prints and yielding a body of work that might be best described as the love child of pop, folk and '70s-era psychedelic art. Perhaps part of that can be attributed to her coming-of-age in Topanga Canyon, SoCal's onetime mecca for creative free spirits.

Penner's prismatic creations run the spectrum, from works on paper to clothing design. Her illustrations often begin with found images she

uncovers in books and magazines; she then uses collage and paint to produce quirky, retro-style pictures awash in flamboyant hues. "I love finding images and transforming them into something else," says the 28-year-old. "I like working with other people's work—collaborating." This is evident in Penner's various endeavors: She has partnered with model Erin Wasson on a project for clothing brand RVCA, designed T-shirts for Shepard Fairey's company Obey and created dresses for trendsetting Parisian boutique Colette. Last September she painted the backdrop for Anna Sui's Spring 2014 fashion show. She also art-directed eyewear brand Warby Parker's first commercial and designed the cover for a music compilation album they produced for The Standard hotels. Her ongoing monthly event, Dress Up, at The Cinefamily movie theater in LA, appropriately merges her love of fashion and film. "The idea is to watch inspiring fashion films and dress up," she says, citing *Wonderwall* and *Ziegfeld Follies* as recent screenings. It's obvious there isn't much Penner hasn't explored—except for the color beige, that is. → aliapenner.com