

ART OF RETURN

Emerging art may not only give you aesthetic pleasure, it could turn out to be a lucrative investment. However, the exciting truth is that if you are shrewd, and may be a bit lucky, your purchase could ultimately reap significant returns in the long run.

BY LISA ANDERSON

In recent years, a wider and more ethnically diverse array of contemporary fine art has become more visible than ever before, thanks largely to social media. Galleries, museums and art fairs are showing more artists from African Diaspora, South and East Asian backgrounds, making it easier to find works that resonate with your cultural heritage and aesthetic preferences.

The profile of Black artwork has reached an all time high. Fuelled by the rise in smash hit gallery and museum exhibitions celebrating black artists, the demand and market prices have soared. In 2016, renowned artist and professor, Sonia Boyce, launched a pioneering project looking into the influence and contribution of Black artists to modernism in the UK. The following year, alongside fellow artists from the UK's own Black Arts Movement, she featured in "The Place is Here" at Nottingham Contemporary. The success of the show led to critically acclaimed national solo shows for a number of the artists including Lubaina Himid who became the first black woman to win the Turner Prize at the end of that year.

Meanwhile, shows like *Soul of a Nation*, celebrating African-American artists from the Black Power movement, have gone on to tour internationally, with its third iteration opening last year in San Francisco. In 2017, the same year it opened, Basquiat broke all records at auction by being sold for a staggering \$110.5 million (£83.7m) at Sotheby's in New York.

Popular American shows like *How to Get Away with Murder*, *Power* and *Empire* have further fuelled the wave by showcasing leading African-American Artists. With Kara Walker as the first Black woman artist to headline at the Tate's Turbine Hall last year, the trend is not abating. In April, The Tate Modern will open a solo museum show for South African artist and activist Zanele Muholi with the most successful black British female contemporary artist, Lynette Yiadom Boakye due to open her first solo museum show at Tate Britain.

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Senegalese artist and curator Modou Dieng, whose works are included in the US Department of State's permanent collection, told BBC Culture: "The future of art is black. Today, African, African-American, Afro-European, and Afro-Latin art is trending globally, marked by an opening to African diaspora artists working with discourses beyond the black body and colonialism. Black abstraction, curating and performance are all centre stage."

Purchasing art that means something to you on a personal level, becomes much more than a financial transaction, it is also a cultural and social investment. As a collector of art you become part of an artist's contribution to a wider conversation told through contemporary art. However, it is not just all about the likes of rapper P Diddy buying a Kerry James Marshall painting for a staggering \$21 million (£16.3m). There is a range of affordable routes into your art-collecting journey. "The misconception that art is only for the wealthy is my pet hate," Paul Becker, the

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founder of Art Money states in an article on How To Start Collecting Art in your 20s for Artsy.net. “There is such a rich ecosystem of quality and value beyond the obvious and expensive tiers.”

Consider the acclaimed career of Ndijeka Akunyili-Crosby a Nigerian-born, African-American artist now living in Los Angeles. At her first London show in 2013 her critically acclaimed works were available for approximately £2,500. Five years later, her painting *Bush Babies* sold for nearly \$3.4 million (£2.63m) at Sotheby's New York, a new artist record.

There is no need to start with big value purchases. Begin with smaller pieces, which are less costly, or pieces of work on paper as opposed to canvass. You may want to buy prints of original works at limited edition.

There is no magic formula to guarantee you that every artwork will turn out to be a lucrative investment. Make sure that you truly love the work that you buy. Listen to your gut. Does the work capture your imagination, draw you in, give you goose-bumps? Does it stay with you long after you first saw it? Your instinct will tell you how genuine your affection is and ensure that at worst, you will be able to live with it, especially if your budget is limited. You should never buy a piece of work that you cannot afford.

To invest in artwork is to buy-in to an artists' unique creative fingerprint. So, do your research and ascertain all the relevant facts about who you are about to invest in. What are the values and beliefs that make them distinctive? An artist's statement can often be found online. Does it resonate with you? Many artists now have Instagram accounts that can provide further insights into their inspirations and what makes them tick.

If your curiosity has not been quenched, go deeper, read press interviews, get an understanding of which galleries have represented them, and who else has collected their art. If necessary, reach out for more information in writing. Better still, try to meet the artist or their gallery representative in person. The stronger your connection, the more meaningful your relationship with the work will be.

The priceless quality you are looking for is an artist who shows a voracious curiosity and commitment to their ideas or the materials they work in. This should translate into a strong and consistent exploration of concepts throughout their body of work. Did they attend a well-respected art school, are they self-taught, have they been widely exhibited, have they won awards or participated in residencies to further hone their craft. The artist's CV is a good source for this type of information, and again you should be able to find this online.

ONES TO WATCH IN 2020

Tesfaye Urgessa

Since graduating from Alle School of Fine Art and Design in 2006, Tsefaye has quickly become one of the most prominent contemporary artists from Ethiopia. Urgessa's artistic subject matter focuses on social criticism, race, and the politics of identity. Based in Germany his compelling figurative works, painted from memory, tell a common story of forced mass migration across national borders with nuanced vigour. Addis Fine Art are presenting a solo show of Tesfaye's work at their gallery until February 15th. His works will be available from their new London gallery space at Cromwell place in May. Price range: £3,500 – £18,000 tesfayeurgessa.com



ABOVE: TESFAYE URGESSA, NO COUNTRY FOR YOUNG MEN, 2017, OIL AND GRAPHITE ON PAPER (PAINTED MONOTYPE)

Shiraz Bayjoo

Shiraz is a contemporary multi-disciplinary UK-based artist of Mauritian heritage, who works with film, painting, photography, performance, and installation. His research-based practice focuses on personal and public archives addressing cultural memory and postcolonial nationhood in manner that challenges dominant cultural narrative. Shiraz's work can be seen at the Dhaka Art Summit in Bangladesh until 15 February and then a group show at the McMullen Museum of art in Boston, USA. Price range: £750 – £35,000 shirazbayjoo.com

Adelaide Damoah

Adelaide is a British-born Ghanaian painter and performance artist whose works explore her identity as black woman, living in the west, in the wake of an African colonial legacy. She utilises printing techniques as the starting point for both her studio work and performances. In the studio, she combines body prints with text and found photographs to create pieces which tell personal stories of the past and the present. Adelaide is a self-taught artist whose fifteen year practice has picked up a fast pace in the last two years. Represented by MT Art Agency, her work has extended beyond the traditional gallery space, with a range of international shows and performances. She currently has a solo exhibition at the Royal West of England Academy, Bristol. Price range: £5,000 – £29,000 adelaidedamoahart.com



ABOVE
ADELAIDE DAMOAH, THIS IS ME
THE INCONSISTENCY OF SELF,
2017, OIL, PEN AND ACRYLIC
ON CANVAS

RIGHT
SINTA TANTRA, DO YOU WANNA
FUNK WITH ME?
1 (SYLVERSTER) 2018,
TEMPERA ON LINEN

BELOW
SHIRAZ BAYJOO, EN FAMILLE 2, 2015,
ACRYLIC, RESIN AND PHOTOGRAPHIC
TRANSFER ON WOOD



Sinta Tantra

Sinta is a British-Balinese artist who is well regarded for her site-specific murals and installations in the public realm. These include works for the Southbank Centre, Liverpool Biennial, the Royal British Society of Sculptors, and Transport for London. She has also been the recipient of many awards including the Bridget Riley Drawing Fellow at The British School at Rome (2017); British Council's International Development Award (2014); and Deutsche Bank Award (2006). Her upcoming solo show is at Kristen Hjellegjarde's new London Bridge gallery in March. sintatantra.com



Go visit: There are a wealth of galleries across London that showcase a culturally diverse range of artists. These include: Autograph ABP, INIVA, Tiwani Contemporary, Tafeta, Addis Fine Art London, Kristen Hjellegjarde, 198 Gallery and Hales Gallery. The leading Art fairs in London include London Art Fair, The Other Art Fair, Affordable Art Fair, Photo London, 1:54 and Frieze.