



The 6 Rising Artists to Watch in 2019

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Elle Pérez



As a teenager, the Bronx-born Elle Pérez began taking pictures of punk nightclubs. After seeing the images online, a high-school classmate, Eleanor Condo (daughter of the artist [George Condo](#)), told Pérez, who prefers the pronouns “they” and “them,” “You should definitely photograph my sweet 16.” The \$500 from that job, Pérez recalls, allowed them to take a lighting class, and the ensuing support offered by the city agency Educational Alliance helped land the artist at the Maryland Institute College of Art. Pérez, who went on to earn an M.F.A. at Yale, has been on a swift ascent ever since. This year, their work will be exhibited at the Brooklyn Museum. Their breakout show was

at 47 Canal, in March 2018, where Pérez presented a suite of breathtakingly intimate portraits and still lifes focused on private moments. Seeing those pictures, then MoMA PS1 director [Klaus Biesenbach](#) offered Pérez a show, which took place there a few months later. “I wanted to photograph immediate things in my life,” says Pérez, 29, whose subject matter often relates to the queer and trans body, “but make them work on a formal level too, for people who don’t necessarily see those moments in their own lives.” In *Binder*, for example, a chest-flattening device dangles from a hanger on a shower rod, its worn-out form suggesting prolonged use. “You would see that garment in that state only if you were using it or had a relationship to someone who did,” Pérez says. A portrait of their partner, Ian, shows a figure fresh out of the shower, looking directly at the viewer, his body saturated in red light. “I’m interested in showing how-familiar you get with someone’s body when they’re someone you love, whom you sleep next to, whom you see.” —[Diane Solway](#)