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“The Artsy Vanguard 2019: The Artists to Know Right Now”

By the Artsy Editors



Elle Pérez by Bryson Rand. Courtesy of the artist and 47 Canal, New York.

The landscape of contemporary art is ever-changing. It shifts according to countless factors, from artists’ principles and the political climate to auction records and collectors’ tastes.

Nevertheless, each year, a new crop of ambitious artists stands out. They catapult from obscurity to ubiquity, earn representation from top galleries, garner interest from prominent collectors, and pack their schedules with exhibitions. Most importantly, they make work that expands our understanding of what art can be.

The Artsy Vanguard 2019 features 50 artists, hailing from 27 countries and working in 27 cities around the world. Ranging in age from 28 to 93, they pursue painting, sculpture, photography, filmmaking, and performance, as well as investigative research and virtual reality. They delve into topics from human rights violations to youth culture, and capture the attention of powerhouse collectors and celebrity royalty, like Beyoncé.

Artsy editors developed this list from a pool of 600 artists who were nominated by more than 100 curators, collectors, and art-world

professionals. These artists represent three distinct career stages, which we’ve arranged into the following categories: Emerging, which introduces artists who recently started showing at leading institutions and galleries; Newly Established, which presents the artists making noise at major art events and gaining representation with influential galleries; and Getting Their Due, which recognizes artists who have worked persistently for decades, yet have only recently received the spotlight they deserve. The Artsy Vanguard highlights the artists paving the future of art right now.

Elle Pérez

B. 1989, New York. Lives and works in New York.

In March 2018, Elle Pérez’s first show at 47 Canal, titled “In Bloom,” immediately announced the artist as a new voice in photography, one that could explore the contemporary body with raw intimacy. One of the photos showed a bloody scab- and scar-lined hand resting with popping veins between two legs.

Later that year, their solo show at MoMA PS1 saw the camera's gaze capturing the full identities of Pérez's friends through unflinching images of their bodies. There were more pictures of scars; in one, a red mark stretches across a chest. At the 2019 Whitney Biennial, a suite of the artist's arresting images have been an unforgettable highlight. One shows a thigh that appears to have been carved by a sharp object; the skin was cut to spell the word "DYKE" in blood.

The Public Art Fund (PAF) unveiled Pérez's first public commission this past August, "from sun to sun," in which their photographs are featured on bus shelters around New York City. As PAF assistant curator Katerina Stathopoulou said, "Their portraiture underscores the distinct beauty of each individual and the collaborative relationship Pérez has with their subjects. Pérez has emerged as one of the most interesting and versatile voices of their generation." Pérez is also included in the Brooklyn Museum's current exhibition "Nobody Promised You Tomorrow: Art 50 Years After Stonewall," and will have a solo show at Pittsburgh's Carnegie Museum of Art in 2020.