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Art

# These 20 Female Artists Are Pushing Sculpture Forward

Tess Thackara Jul 30, 2018 4:52 pm

**S**culpture was once considered the domain of ambitious male artists, a medium as challenging in its physicality as it was limitless in scope. But for several decades, artists from Eva Hesse and Senga Nengudi to Phyllida Barlow and Ursula von Rydingsvard have carved a place for women working in contemporary sculpture. And in 2018, it's arguably female artists

who are creating some of the most interesting, challenging, and ambitious forms—freely taking the body apart, prodding taboos, and embracing the grotesque.

The eclectic group of 20 international sculptors highlighted here ranges from emerging to mid-career talents. What connections can we draw between them? There's the extraordinary influence of Louise Bourgeois, for one—nearly half of these artists cited the late artist as one of their icons. Doris Salcedo looms large, too. Meanwhile, many of these practices underscore the fact that clay has been comfortably absorbed into the artist's toolbox, moving well beyond the realm of vessels to become a commonplace material—as capable as steel, wood, resin, and other materials in pushing boundaries and helping us to see the world anew.

Together, these artists are helping to define, question, and evolve the future of their medium.

## Doreen Garner [⊕ Follow](#)

B. 1986, United States. Lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.





Detail of Doreen Garner, *Rack of Those Ravaged and Unconsenting*, for “White Man On a Pedestal,” at Pioneer Works, 2017. Courtesy of the artist.

Doreen Garner’s visceral, unsettling sculptures suggest mutant body parts, festering wounds, and medical experimentations gone awry—what she described as “re-telling histories through sliced flesh.” In past shows at New York’s Larrie gallery and Brooklyn’s Pioneer Works, and more recently at this year’s Art Basel in Basel, cuts of silicone laced with pins were hung like specimens from meat racks, or trapped in glass jars for observation. The central narrative informing Garner’s practice is the violent exploitation of black bodies by the medical industry—focusing partly on the actions of J. Marion Sims, a 19th-century white gynecologist who carried out experiments on enslaved black women.



**Doreen Garner**

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Garner is interested in the transference that can occur between her objects

and viewers: “I think three-dimensional works allow people to understand the ways their own physical bodies are implicated within the narratives,” she said. “I hope that my work helps people to understand how deep the wounds go, and the necessity of acknowledgement in order to begin healing.” In other projects, themes of skin, wounds, and healing became more literal; earlier this year, she opened a pop-up shop where she personally gave tattoos derived from black power motifs.

## Kris Lemsalu [+](#) Follow

B. 1985, Estonia. Lives and works in Berlin and Tallinn, Estonia.



Kris Lemsalu, *Mysteriously conceived and deeply felt*, 2018. Photo by Robert Glowacki. Courtesy of the artist, Iemnikova & Kasela Gallery, and Koppe Astner Gallery.

Kris Lemsalu famously captured the art world's attention at the 2015 Frieze Art Fair in London, when she lay splayed on a waterbed underneath a giant ceramic turtle shell for eight hours a day for her piece *Whole Alone 2* (2015). Lemsalu, who will represent Estonia at the 2019 Venice Biennale, is known for pushing materials to unexpected and sometimes subversive places, often combining ceramic sculpture with found materials to create wacky tableau that suggest ambiguous narratives or become stages and props for performances.



### Kris Lemsalu

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In *Car2Go* (2016), two ceramic dog heads are the focal point of a winged creature composed of a generic blue sleeping bag and two car doors; anthropomorphized brick figures parade with parasols behind this otherworldly angel, a canine escort into the afterlife. This strange sculpture evokes two threads that run through Lemsalu's work: the leveling of materials high and low, and a fascination with mortality.

## Genesis Belanger [+](#) Follow

B. 1978, United States. Lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.



Genesis Belanger, *Acquiescence (bent hand)*, 2018. Courtesy of the artist.

“I’ve never met a tool or material I didn’t like,” said Genesis Belanger. Indeed, the sheer pleasure that the sculptor takes in her medium was evidenced in her 2017 solo show at Mrs. Gallery in Queens, New York, which she filled with her humorous, surrealistic ceramics that needle affectionately at human foibles and appetites. Burnt matches and muzzled cigarettes composed of stoneware and porcelain lay artfully discarded on the floor; droopy straws emerged from generic cartons of milk; salt-and-pepper shakers resembled breasts with Day-Glo nipples.



### Genesis Belanger

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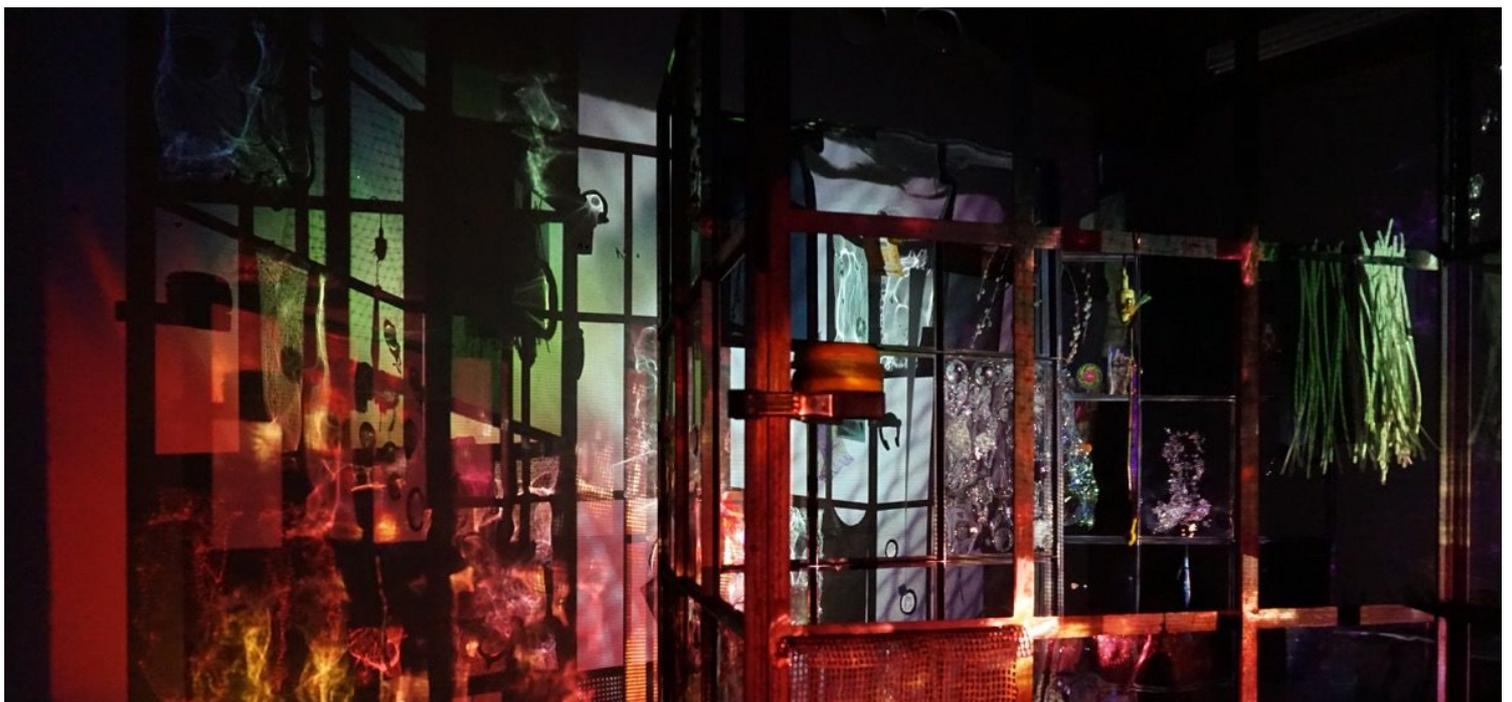


The artist's objects are something like human surrogates, reflecting personalities and flaws—"our desire, gluttony, obsession with power," as Belanger said. "My objects reflect all the base and instinctual parts of our psychology. The parts that make us fantastic, and a bit fucked up."

Belanger, who will show more of her work alongside that of Emily Mae Smith in a forthcoming exhibition at Perrotin in New York, begins her process with sketches, making numerous loose drawings until she arrives at a few that she can't leave alone. These images then become the basis for objects that she carefully hand-builds and glazes, often aiming to capture the alluring tone of human skin—as in her female torsos that double as statuesque lamps.

## Rosha Yaghmai [+](#) Follow

B. 1978, United States. Lives and works in Los Angeles.





Installation view of Rosha Yaghmai for “Made in L.A. 2018,” at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, 2018. Photo by Brian Forrest. Courtesy of the artist and Kayne Griffin Corcoran.

Rosha Yaghmai began her artistic career making photographs. But experiments in the darkroom soon found her eager to switch gears, incorporating other materials to create multidimensional installations. “The flatness of photography prohibited me from exploring the one-to-one relationship a viewer can have with the three-dimensional object,” she said. At the Hammer Museum’s “Made in L.A.” biennial, Yaghmai presents her *Slide Samples (Lures, Myths)* (2018), an otherworldly glass-and-resin screen suffused with diaphanous light and overlaid with projected slides (drawn from photos that her father took after he immigrated to California from Iran).



### Rosha Yaghmai

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The artist, who will have a solo exhibition at San Francisco’s CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts in early 2019, is interested in capturing the possibility of metamorphosis and “feelings of transcendence and otherness.” To achieve this enchanted quality, she employs an aesthetic influenced in part by West Coast psychedelia and junkyard culture—as seen in her *Optometer, Smoke* (2016), a twisting piece of gas pipe that she has decorated with colored eyeglass lenses so that it resembles a horned snake, poised to

LAUNCH ITSELF FORWARD.

## Monika Grabuschnigg [+](#) Follow

B. 1987, Austria. Lives and works in Berlin.



Monika Grabuschnigg, *What Shall I Swear By*, 2017. Photo by Asaf Oren. Courtesy of Carbon 12.

Monika Grabuschnigg's fantastical ceramic works are indexes of emotional states—of intimate desires, longings, connections. Like contemporary fetish objects, they often suggest phalluses, organs, or bodily orifices, sometimes combining clay with metal armatures, resin, and acrylics in vivid or pastel hues. Her current solo exhibition at Carbon 12 gallery in Dubai is a surreal.

tactile study in the way we form relationships with one another in our digital age.



### Monika Grabuschnigg

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For Grabuschnigg—who is nominated for this year’s Berlin Art Prize and will appear in the corresponding exhibition at the Shelf, opening in August—examining the world intuitively through three-dimensional form is a fundamental human pursuit. “As little kids, we build things out of mud, sand, or toy blocks, and with that, [we] start to understand our surroundings,” she said. “Then we enroll in school and everything becomes flat, the mud and dirt are gone, and the horizon of our imagination shrinks. That’s how I felt when I started to work with clay—like I was rediscovering a way of understanding the world.”

## Letha Wilson [+ Follow](#)

B. 1976, United States. Lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.





Letha Wilson, *Headlands Beach Steel Pipe Bend*, 2018.  
Courtesy of the artist.



Letha Wilson, *Bryce Canyon Lava Push*, 2018.  
Courtesy of the artist.

Letha Wilson's objects exist somewhere between photography and sculpture, image and form. Recently on view in her excellent solo exhibition at New York's GRIMM was *Steel I-Beam Wall Push* (2018), a giant digital photograph of a vividly colored sky that crumples and puckers slightly around a steel beam inserted into the center of the image. As with much of her work, it plays with the materiality of a photograph.



## Letha Wilson

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Wilson is interested in the subtle shifts in one's perception of space, and the "limitless freedom" of sculpture—how it "cannot be defined by material or process," as she says. At her current exhibition at the deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum in Massachusetts, she has installed objects that instill both nature and artifice into the park's outdoor setting so that they quietly reconfigure the surrounding greenery into flattened, intersecting, abstract shapes.

## Juliana Cerqueira Leite Follow

B. 1981, United States. Lives and works in New York and São Paulo.



Installation view of Juliana Cerqueira Leite, *Blind Spot 2* for Lustwarande, at Oude Warande, Tilburg, Netherlands, 2015. Courtesy of the artist.

“Creating new forms is a mission for me,” said Juliana Cerqueira Leite, “a way of not reasserting the world as it is, but of positing a transformation.” Leite’s sculptures testify to one’s ability to transmute the world around them. Her work is often the result of casting her own body parts in clay or

plaster—materials she is drawn to for their timelessness—and sometimes feature striated colors in shades of citrus, or finger marks that recall the work of David Altmejd.



### Juliana Cerqueira Leite

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Leite, who will open a solo show at New York’s Arsenal Contemporary in September, is interested in the parameters of the body and the space that it creates. Her sculpture *Climb* (2012), a gloopy white totem currently installed in a public square near London’s financial district, is made of gypsum, steel, and foam; the artist created it by physically tunnelling through a wooden column filled with wet clay, then casting the negative space left by her body.

## Sarah Peters [+ Follow](#)

B. 1973, United States. Lives and works in Queens, New York.





Sarah Peters, *Woman with Headdress*, 2015. Courtesy of the artist and Van Doren Waxter.

It's easy to see why Sarah Peters feels an affinity for “the oddballs of figurative sculpture”—artists like Robert Arneson, Marisol, William Rush, and Elie Nadelman—as well as the ancient Greeks, Egyptians, and Sumerians. Her bronze heads, with their accentuated locks, towering beards, and sunken eye sockets, feel both idiosyncratic and curiously timeless—suspended somewhere between classical sculpture, Fritz Lang’s 1927 science-fiction epic *Metropolis*, and a dream full of Surrealist monuments.



### Sarah Peters

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“I’m satisfied when the sculpture feels to me like it dropped out of the sky,” Peters said of her clay modeling and lost-wax bronze-casting process. Those pieces that don’t have this ineffable presence end up on the scrap heap. The artist—who recently closed a solo exhibition at her New York gallery Van Doren Waxter, and will show her work at Zurich’s Galerie Eva Presenhuber

in 2019—is interested in the “talismanic properties” of sculpture, she said, as well as its relationship to “symbolic power.” Peters hopes to disrupt the male-dominated history of the medium with her own sculpture: “Merging ancient and contemporary vocabularies is my way of infiltrating the authority of historical tradition,” she explained.

## Sydney Shen [+](#) Follow

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



Sydney Shen, *Sea, Storms, Rain, Steam, Fluid, Mud, Slime, Sludge, Prism, Salt, Time, Pressure, Shadow*, 2017. Courtesy of the artist.

There is something quietly apocalyptic in the work of Sydney Shen, whose sculptures might take the form of a patent leather lace-up boot fixed into a point by a metal harness, a metronome encased within a cage, or straitjackets holding bunches of hay. Scorpions, spiders, and animal remains sometimes surface in her work, too, suggesting an encroaching, menacing environment outside of our control.



### Sydney Shen

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Her eclectic practice has drawn the attention of the Institute for Interspecies Art and Relations (IFIAAR), which will include her in an upcoming group show at New York’s Entrance gallery. “I think my sculptures are anchors in a practice that sometimes feels like an abyss,” said Shen, who characterizes her work as “the abject desire latent in repulsion” and “the fine line between transcendence and annihilation.”

Nothing is off limits to Shen in realizing this diabolical vision: She has incorporated her own blood into installations and augmented past works and exhibitions with video games and heady odors. A recent exhibition at Springsteen gallery in Baltimore included scents conjured from cloves, oil, and vinegar, riffing on medieval narratives of the bubonic plague.

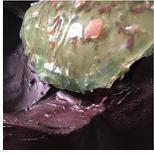
## Jala Wahid

B. 1988, United Kingdom. Lives and works in London.



Jala Wahid, *No Need To Survive Now II*, 2017. Courtesy of the artist.

Jala Wahid’s sculptures are carnal, sensuous, and often border on the grotesque. Made with a peculiar fusion of hard, soft, and perishable materials—aluminum and Jesmonite blended with fat, or plaster and paint mixed with petroleum jelly, rosewater glycerin, and argan oil—they suggest cuts made in fleshy bodies, open wounds, muscle, and orifices. *Sighing Low* (2018), currently on view at New York’s Lyles & King, is a metal lick of tongue that extends out from a cane the color of pale custard. Her video piece *Oh Leander!* (2018) finds the artist’s camera scanning over what looks like glistening, bloody entrails, while an overlay of words and music alludes to her Kurdish heritage; working across media lets the artist give “narrative and voice” to her sculptural objects, she explained.



## Jala Wahid

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Wahid has received growing recognition in Europe, with a recent solo exhibition at London's Seventeen gallery, and showcases of her multimedia work at DUVE Berlin and the Serpentine Gallery. She looks to evoke different psychological states simultaneously in her work. It's a quality that she finds in two of the sculptors that she most admires, Louise Bourgeois and Alina Szapocznikow, whose forms she sees as variously embodying "toxicity, antagonism, humor, and joy."

## Julia Phillips [⊕ Follow](#)

B. 1985, Germany. Lives and works in Chicago and Berlin.





Julia Phillips, *Exoticizer, Worn Out (Josephine Baker's Belt)*, 2017. Courtesy of the artist.

Julia Phillips's sculptural installations—arrangements of ceramic muzzles, masks, or casts of body parts; metal armatures; and tiled floors—suggest devices for medical operations, corporal constraint, or sexual domination. They hint at traumatic events. With their slick, meticulous construction, they appear both alluring and dangerous, sharing something with the sculptures of Nairy Baghramian.



### Julia Phillips

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Over the past year, Phillips has been included in the New Museum Triennial and the Berlin Biennale, and she is currently the subject of a solo exhibition at MoMA PS1. There she has installed, among other works, *Extruder (#1)* (2017), a concrete platform supporting a structure of metal piping that intersects with masks and a giant screw. Its cool detachment and evocation of the body point to some of the artist's influences: Minimalism, Bauhaus design, and centuries-old armor. Her *Operator I (with Blinder, Muter, Penetrator, Aborter)* (2017), shown at the Berlin Biennale, is a trolley holding what appear to be surgical tools. Its handles bear the cast imprints of two pairs of hands, evoking two absent bodies that are nonetheless

connected by the ambiguous, fraught tools that lie between them.

## Natalie Ball [+](#) Follow

B. 1980, United States. Lives and works in Chiloquin, Oregon.



Natalie Ball, *Soldier Boys* (series), 2017. Courtesy of the artist.

Natalie Ball conceives of her sculptures—or “power objects,” as she calls them—as a way to “occupy, challenge, and disrupt.” Composed of materials like animal remains, toys, old clothes, and synthetic hair, they offer sometimes humorous alternatives to received narratives and dominant

American identities.



**Natalie Ball**

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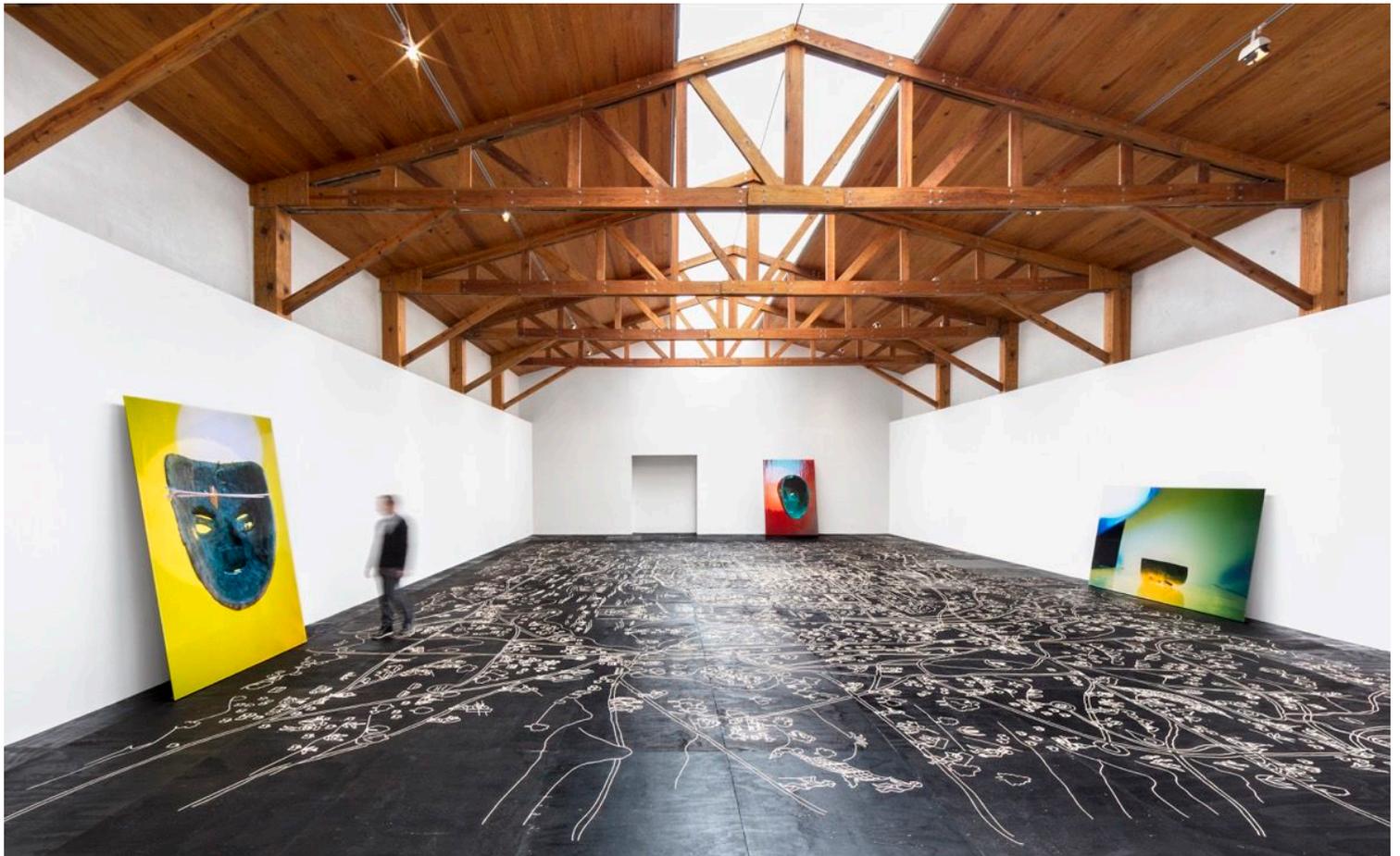


Her *Pussy Hat* (2018), rather than the omnipresent pink accessory that emerged with the Women's March in 2017, is a patchwork hybrid made from leather boxing gloves, abalone shells, human hair, balaclavas, and Hudson's Bay Co. Trade Blanket toilet paper rolls. A product of materials that carry particular significance for Native American peoples, Ball's hat proposes a complex, layered, and challenging counterpart to a garment that comes loaded with the trappings of white female identity in America. (Ball hails from the Modoc and Klamath tribe of Oregon.) Her 2017 *Thriller* jacket is a vintage red garment recalling Michael Jackson's iconic look that she has adapted to resemble something closer to an indigenous textile, barbed with porcupine quills.

Ball, who also works in performance, currently has an exhibition at the Museum of Northwest Art in Washington, with additional shows at the Institute of Modern Art in Brisbane, Australia, and Seattle's Method gallery on the horizon.

**Mariana Castillo Deball** [⊕ Follow](#)

B. 1975, Mexico. Lives and works in Berlin.



Mariana Castillo Deball, *Vista de Ojos*, 2014. Photo by Estudio Michel Zabé. Courtesy of the artist and kurimanzutto, Mexico City.

Mariana Castillo Deball's objects and installations are the result of research into ethnography, archeology, literature, and museology, among other disciplines. Her work often revolves around the power structures locked into the culture of how we display artworks, and the problems and challenges of communicating historical narratives through artifacts. Past works have included totems, created as part of a collaboration with a workshop in Oaxaca, which combined archeological references with everyday motifs (ears of corn, dogs), and grappled with the question of how to represent a community's past and present.



### Mariana Castillo Deball

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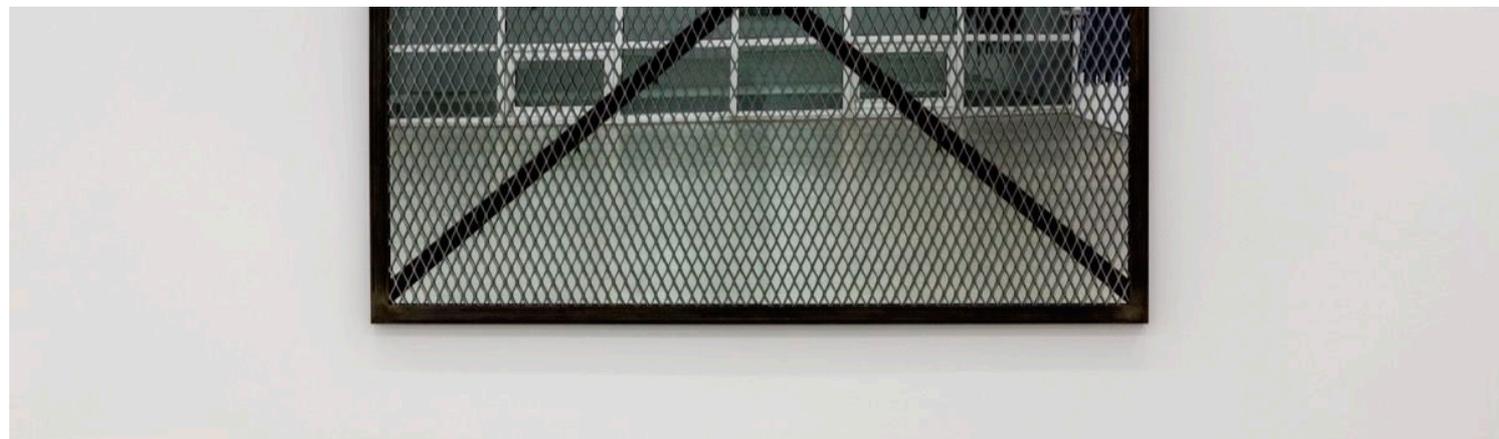


In her current exhibition at the SCAD Museum of Art in Savannah, Georgia, Castillo Deball is showcasing the latest in her ongoing project “To-Day.” For this series, she creates objects that represent her research into the history of a locale—in this case, Savannah—and its juncture with a particular important date. Here, this takes the form of a staircase with images that refer to February 20th in Savannah’s history. (The date has no broader significance other than it being when the show was slated to open.) Visitors can climb up the staircase and sit on the sculpture while reflecting on the city’s past and present narratives. The artist will take her inquisitive practice to Puebla, Mexico, for a September solo at Museo Amparo, and then to the Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts in Chicago for an additional exhibition in October.

## Davina Semo [⊕ Follow](#)

B. 1981, United States. Lives and works in San Francisco.





Davina Semo, *"THEY'VE BECOME COMFORTABLE WITH THEIR MONEY," SHE SAID, "THEY GENUINELY BELIEVE THEY'RE ENTITLED TO IT,"* 2016. Courtesy of the artist and Marlborough Contemporary, New York and London.

“My work considers the beauty of roughness, power, tension, restraint,” said Davina Semo. Her objects seem to absorb their surroundings; they awaken one’s senses to the texture, substance, color, and line that form the world around us. “I want the interaction with my work to be as strong as the experience of walking down the street,” she added, “to be affected by the weight, strength, visual layering, power, and associations of the environments we are born into, and make our lives in.”



### Davina Semo

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Often working with industrial construction materials, Semo—who will open a solo exhibition at Jessica Silverman Gallery in March of 2019—treads a line between two and three dimensions. She might embed a chainmail glove within pigmented concrete that she has puckered into the form of a concertina, or compose a minimal, balanced composition from broken shards of glass or lengths of chain. There is a quiet politics in her work, too—of applying a loving order to materials that can be heavy and destructive, and creating a harmonious symbiosis between natural and

manmade materials.

## Nnenna Okore ⊕ Follow

B. 1975, Australia. Lives and works in Chicago.



Nnenna Okore, *Here and Now*, 2017. Courtesy of the artist.

For Nnenna Okore, working in three dimensions is liberating, allowing her to immerse herself “in the well of sensory experiences,” she said. Okore

engages in a slow, arduous process of weaving, dyeing, winding, and teasing materials like burlap, wire, and paper—sometimes sourced from West Africa—to create dramatic textile installations that resemble the undulating fabric forms of artist El Anatsui, who was once Okore's teacher. Her sculptures often reflect on the wildlife and craft culture she encountered in Nigeria, where she grew up observing the natural world and watching people engaged in repetitive manual labor, like making brooms by hand.



## Nnenna Okore

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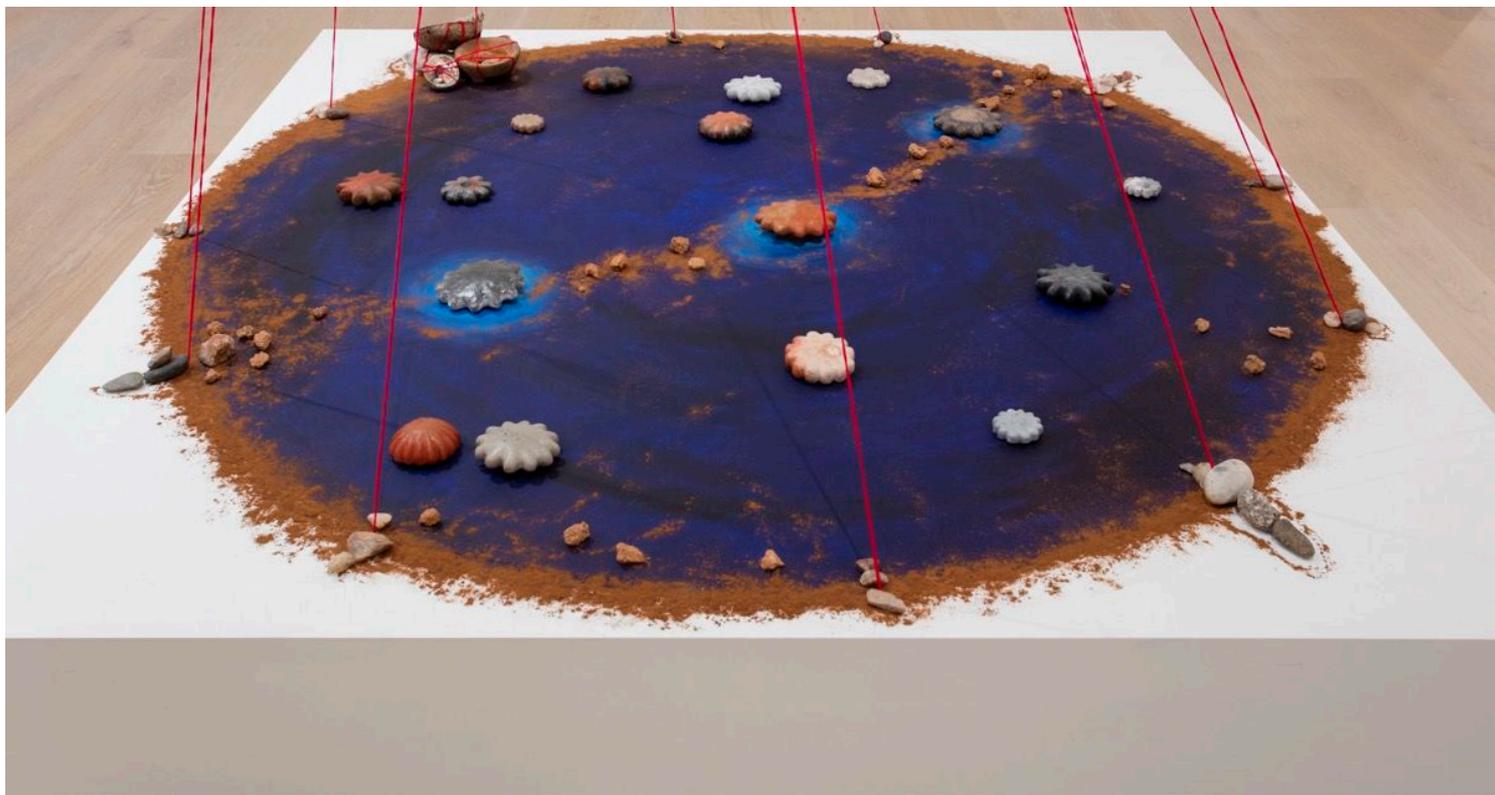


*Down to Earth* (2017) suggests a vivid red whirlpool giving way to a waterfall, or even the breakdown of (human) organic matter, while *Fringes and Fragments* (2017) evokes a school of ominous black jellyfish. Okore, who will show her work in a solo exhibition with Chicago's Threewalls gallery and in a group show with Jenkins Johnson Gallery at this year's EXPO Chicago, has, in the past, combined her sculptures with audio and video elements to create multimedia explorations of her childhood memories.

## Mercedes Dorame

B. 1980, United States. Lives and works in Los Angeles.





Detail of Mercedes Dorame, *Orion's Belt - Paahe'Sheshiiyot - A Map for Moving Between Worlds*, "Made in L.A. 2018" at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, 2018. Photo by Brian Forrest. Courtesy of the artist.

As a cultural resource consultant for her Native American tribe, the Gabrielino Tongva, which is based in and around Los Angeles, Mercedes Dorame is charged with reviewing cultural artifacts at excavation sites to determine how they should be treated or preserved. Dorame has long used photography to examine her Tongva heritage—and the experience of belonging to a tribe that remains unrecognized by the federal government, and whose history has been erased.



### Mercedes Dorame

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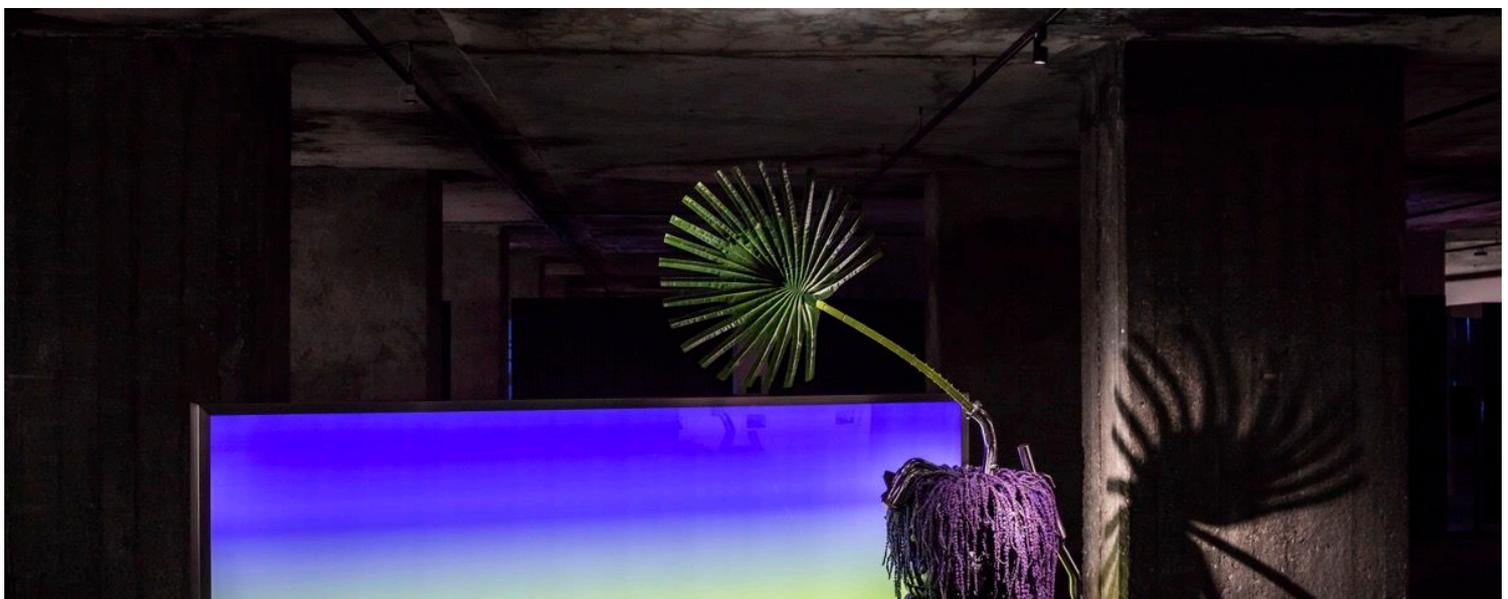
More recently, she has begun to cast concrete interpretations of stone artifacts and incorporate them into her installations. At the Hammer Museum's "Made in L.A.," Dorame has on view a series of photographs

showing her ephemeral, sculptural interventions in the landscape of her Tongva community, alongside an arrangement of cast replicas of mysterious artifacts that are thought to be unique to the Tongva—star-shaped objects that Dorame imagines may have been used to map the galaxy. She has organized them on a blue pigmented surface in the shape of the constellation Orion, which is clearly visible in the night sky of L.A., and connected some of them with red yarn used to wrap bundles of sage and cleanse the excavation sites.

Indeed, Dorame—who has upcoming shows planned for California’s Triton Museum and El Segundo Museum—effectively engages in a tactile exploration of cultural memory in an effort to preserve the legacy of an oppressed people.

## Guan Xiao [⊕ Follow](#)

B. 1983, China. Lives and works in Beijing.





Installation view of Guan Xiao, *Sunrise*, 2015, at the 9th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, The Feuerle Collection, Berlin, 2016. Photo by Timo Ohler. Courtesy of the artist, Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler, Berlin, and Antenna Space, Shanghai

Guan Xiao’s cryptic sculptural arrangements look like surrealistic objects and tableau imagined in *Second Life*, but realized IRL. They can feel flat despite their three-dimensional form. Artificial plants that emerge from car tires are set against screensaver backdrops; a totemic head colored in a glossy pastel blue hue is mounted atop a camera tripod; car wheels become components of faceless, futuristic creatures.



**Guan Xiao**

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Xiao—who has been featured in past iterations of the New Museum Triennial and the Berlin Biennale, and has upcoming shows at Kunsthalle Winterthur and the Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis—likes to bring together references that are seemingly opposed: old with modern, digital with analog, natural with artificial. In *Callimico* (2017), a reflective metal hub cap is decorated with pieces of faux wood, artificial cattail plants (which could double as American corn dogs), and an iPhone stand. Her puzzling arrangements sometimes suggest a critique of our society’s technological love affair, for what appear to be historical artifacts become subsumed by an

insidious and pervasive internet aesthetic.

## Gabriela Salazar [⊕ Follow](#)

B. 1981, United States. Lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.



Gabriela Salazar, *Matters in Shelter (and Place, Puerto Rico)*, 2018. Photo by Jerry L. Thompson for Storm King Art Center. Courtesy of the artist.

Working with everything from mass-produced bricks to coffee grounds, plastic tubing, and discarded wood, Gabriela Salazar is a master of minimalist gestures. At Storm King Art Center this summer, visitors may confuse one of her installations for a makeshift building site. Salazar's *Matters in Shelter (and Place, Puerto Rico)* (2018) is a giant, blue, tent-like

structure housing piles of concrete. Set against the lush green surroundings of the outdoor sculpture park, it evokes our endless interventions into the natural environment with new concrete structures and ever-evolving skylines.



### Gabriela Salazar

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The piece, Salazar said, is a response to Hurricane Maria and the way that the materials we use to create shelter and safety in the face of climate change actually contribute to the problem: A greater need for the production of concrete could end up contributing to stronger storms. “It’s concerned with the cyclical problem we find ourselves in,” she said, “and the difficulty of solving that problem in the face of a disaster or emergency, when human life is vulnerable.”

In more diminutive works, Salazar—who will be featured in the Queens Museum Biennial this fall—continues to examine the human ambitions and social structures embedded within each I-beam, joint, or piece of metal rebar. Her very contemporary vision nods to the influence of everyone from Gordon Matta-Clark to Rachel Whiteread and Phyllida Barlow.

## Marie Hermann [⊕ Follow](#)

B. 1979, Denmark. Lives and works in Detroit, Michigan.



Marie Herwald Hermann, *And dusk turned dawn*, 2017. Photo by Tim Thayer. Courtesy of the artist.

Marie Hermann’s quiet arrangements of tactile, orderly objects seem, at first, to speak in a language familiar to a *Kinfolk* generation that has turned Donald Judd’s brand of minimalism into a shared common denominator. Her sleek pots sit humbly on white shelves, while porcelain lamp shades in curvilinear forms show off their gentle shades of lemon.



**Marie Herwald Hermann**

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But through Hermann’s hand, these seemingly generic forms are slightly

skewed and abstracted—divorced from any utility so that they become a series of poetic notes suggesting our deep affinity with domestic objects. In *Miles of silent, but not now*. (2018), a strip of pale raspberry silicone running down a wall is punctuated with porcelain and glazed ceramic shapes. In *The Solid space, as you unloose*. (2018), the geometry created by three ceramic pieces is offset by a sensuous drape of silicone that hangs from the shelf's edge.

Hermann is interested in turning the familiar into something a little “alien and strange,” she said, and is influenced by the way objects interact with different times of day, particularly when natural light dims and they become less defined to the human eye. “These are timespans,” she said, “in which clarity fades into ambiguity, and our perception of individual objects gradually becomes absorbed into the gathering shadows. It is a moment when precision and exactitude succumb to the symbolic and the imaginative.”

## Yasue Maetake [⊕ Follow](#)

B. 1973, Japan. Lives and works in Queens, New York.





Yasue Maetake, *A Series of Three-Legged Idol*, 2013-17. Courtesy of the artist.

Yasue Maetake's abstract sculptures include large-scale, sci-fi-inflected forms made of industrial steel, resin, and wood; elegant paper constructions that extend like wind-flexed sails, defying gravity; and diminutive, anthropomorphic objects. Maetake, who initially trained in glass engraving, approaches her practice as a deep study in materials, pushing them to the limits by welding, burning, creating chemical reactions to experiment with the color produced from oxidation, or submitting them to the forces of gravity.



### Yasue Maetake

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Maetake wants to achieve sculptures that are “solid and enduring, but that appear temporary and fragile,” she said. In works created from handmade paper, she will often expose the material to corroded copper and steel rust in order to create vivid turquoise and reddish brown residues, using the altered

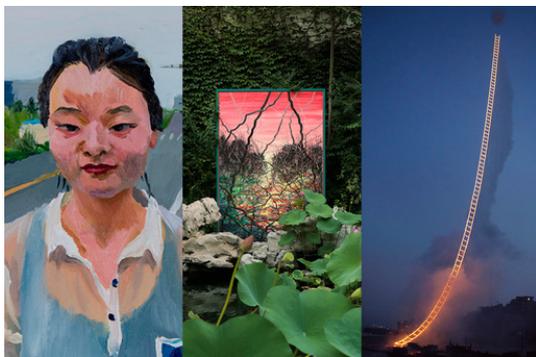
paper to craft bright, dancing forms or textured wall pieces. “It is this struggle with immutable natural forces that is the motivating force behind my creative urge,” she said.

**Tess Thackara is Artsy’s Writer-at-Large.**

*Header image: Portrait of Sydney Shen by Heather Sten for Artsy.*

*Correction: A previous version of this article contained an error incorrectly stating that Davina Semo’s solo exhibition at Jessica Silverman Gallery opens this summer. Her solo exhibition opens next March; this summer she is part of a group show at the gallery. In addition, Mariana Castillo Deball’s show at the University of Chicago will take place at the Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts, not the Smart Museum. This article has been edited to reflect these changes.*

## Further Reading in Art



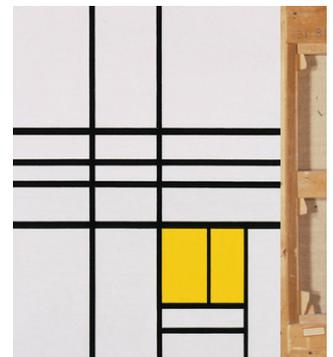
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