

Kathia ST. HILAIRE

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Looking for the Next Big Thing? Here Are 6 Rising-Star Artists to Seek Out at Frieze New York

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Looking for the Next Big Thing? Here Are 6 Rising-Star Artists to Seek Out at Frieze New York 2021

We scoured the aisles at Frieze New York to find the most exciting emerging figures.

Julia Halperin & Katya Kazakina & Eileen Kinsella, May 7, 2021



Blessing Ngobeni, *Decorated Racism (money is like shit)* (2020). Image courtesy the artist and Jenkins Johnson Gallery.

Perhaps the most exciting part of an IRL fair, as opposed to a virtual one, is the rush of encountering something new that ends up sticking with you. Frieze New York, which opened to VIPs on Wednesday and is running through the weekend, boasted the typical roster of blue-chip works by well-known quantities. But it also introduced a handful of less familiar names to the carefully crowd-controlled audience.

Here are our picks of emerging talents work is generating market buzz, curatorial interest, and plain old-fashioned enthusiasm.

Kathia St. Hilaire



Kathia St. Hilaire, *Irma* (2021). Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.

Who: Kathia St. Hilaire (b. 1995) hails from Miami, Florida, and her paintings draw from her Haitian identity, mixing images of Caribbean seascapes and family gatherings with the ephemera of daily life in the diaspora.

Based in: New York and Palm Beach, Florida

Showing at: Perrotin Gallery

Prices: Her painting *Irma*, a response to the Hurricane Irma that hit Miami in 2017, sold quickly at the VIP opening. It was priced at \$10,000.

Why You Should Pay Attention: A recent graduate of Yale’s MFA program, St. Hilaire “is already making groundbreaking work and her career is just beginning,” said collector Bernard Lumpkin. The Lumpkin-Boccuzzi Family Collection of Contemporary Art acquired several of her paintings.

Notable Resume Line: In 2019, she won the Jorge M. Pérez Award.

Up Next: St. Hilaire will unveil a 20-by-30-foot public art installation in downtown Miami on May 20 as part an outdoor exhibition of artists of Caribbean descent commissioned by Fringe Projects. In January, she will make her solo debut at Perrotin in New York.

Wilson Díaz



Installation view of Wilson Díaz at Instituto de Vision in the Frame section of Frieze. Photo: Eileen Kinsella.

Who: The artist (b. 1963) uses humor to critique political corruption in his native Colombia, a nation currently experiencing violent crackdowns on protesters. In *Banana Caída* (2021), he depicts a banana caught in midair after slipping on none other than... a banana peel. Like those who vote the same politicians into office again and again despite repeated disappointment, the slipping banana is a symbol of self-sabotage.

Based in: Cali, Colombia

Showing at: Bogotá-based Instituto de Vision in the “Frame” section

Prices: \$15,000–25,000

Why You Should Pay Attention: The solo presentation of Díaz’s work won Frieze’s Frame stand prize, earning the stamp of approval from top curators on the selection committee. The artist’s work—which spans performance, painting, video, and other media—is also collected by Miami-based retail magnate Jorge Pérez, the [Guggenheim UBS MAP](#) collection, the Nevada Museum of Art, and Museo Rufino Tamayo in Mexico City.

Fun Fact: After many years of teaching art, Diaz just earned his MA from the same university where he is a professor.

Up Next: Diaz is the subject of a retrospective opening this summer at the Museo La Tertulia in his hometown of Cali, Colombia.

Olga Balema



Olga Balema, *Untitled* (2021). Courtesy of the artist, Hannah Hoffman Gallery, and Bridget Donahue.

Who: The artist (b. 1984 in Lviv, Ukraine) uses humble materials—a ballpoint pen, wood, foam—to create sculptures that are seemingly intentionally difficult to describe. Her Frieze booth feels as if you entered some kind of haunted/enchanted minimalist woodshed where raw materials like mylar and foam have come to life, *Beauty and the Beast*-style, with their own will and personality.

Based in: New York City and Berlin

Showing at: Hannah Hoffman and Bridget Donahue’s joint “Frame” booth

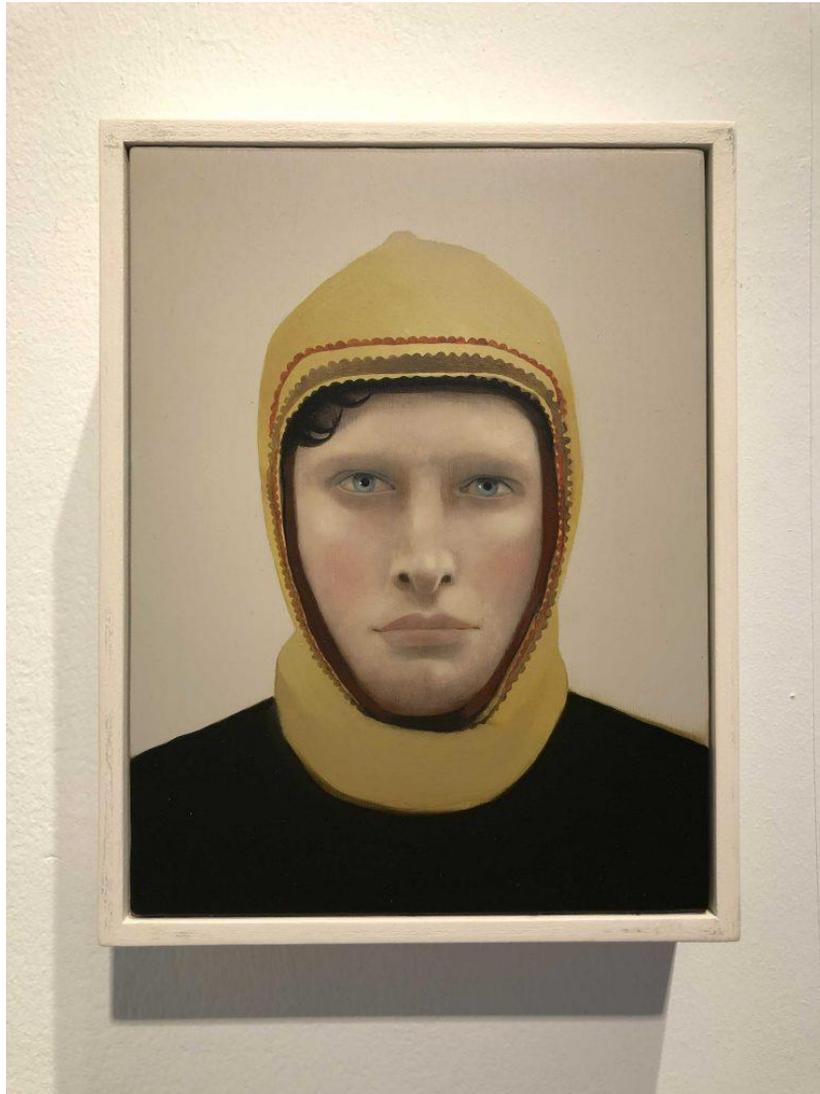
Prices: \$8,000–16,000

Why You Should Pay Attention: Balema is a curatorial darling whose works also happen to be of domestic scale. In 2019, she was included in the Whitney Biennial and was the subject of a buzzed-about solo exhibition at Bridget Donahue. At Frieze, many of her works had sold by the afternoon of the VIP preview.

Fun Fact: Her 2019 Bridget Donahue show comprised reams of garment-grade elastic bands tied together.

Up Next: Her first U.K. institutional solo show opens at Camden Art Centre on May 21.

Sarah Ball



Sarah Ball, *Ollie* (2021). Courtesy of the artist and Stephen Friedman.

Who: Stillness and ambiguity permeate 56-year-old Ball's Frieze presentation, her first major outing in New York. Meticulous and haunting, her portraits examine gender and identity. The subjects, which include her daughter, have luminous skin, delicate features, and a somewhat otherworldly quality. Their gaze sticks with you long after you've left the booth.

Based in: Cornwall, U.K.

Showing at: Stephen Friedman Gallery

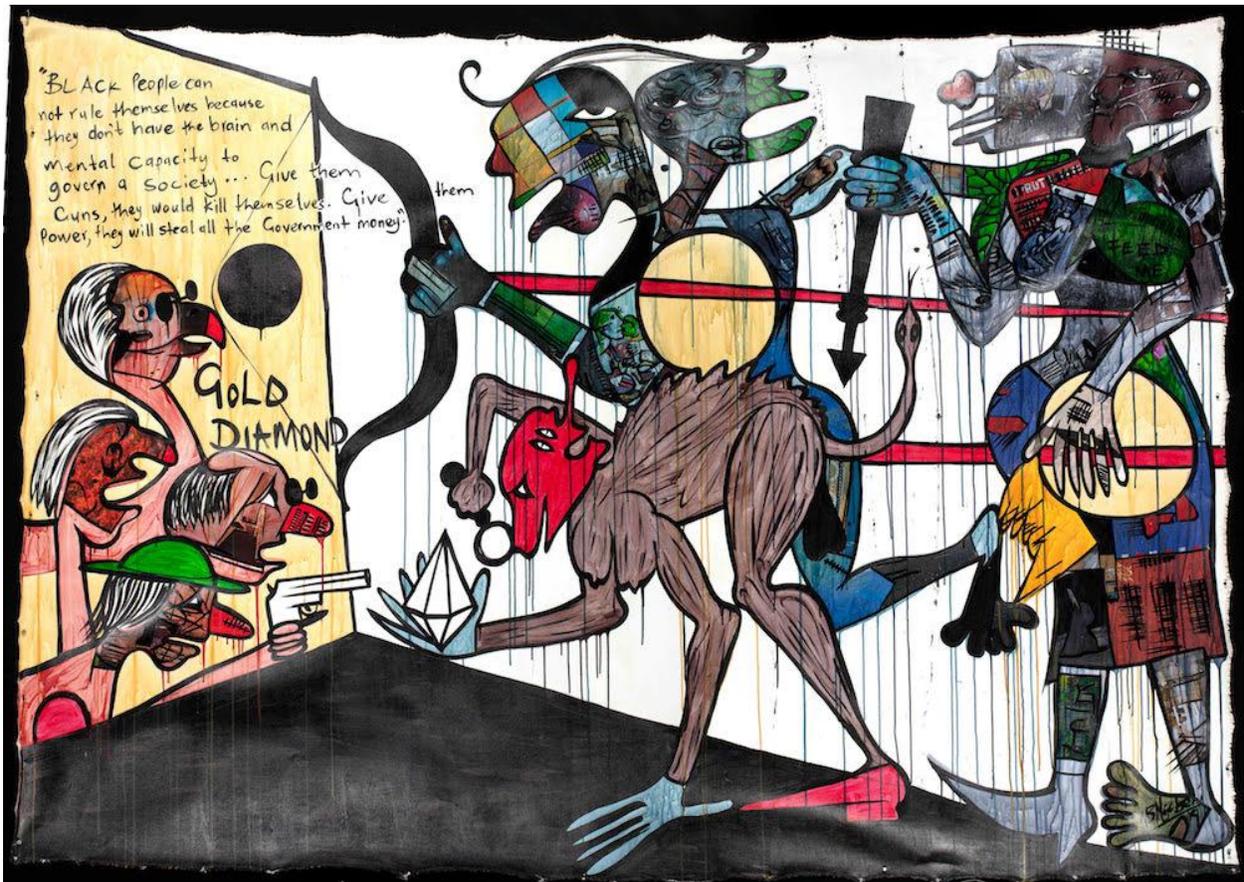
Prices: £15,000–35,000

Why You Should Pay Attention: All the works on view sold out within hours of the VIP opening. Now, there's a wait list. Buyers included a trustee of the Brooklyn Museum and a private foundation in Germany. Ball's paintings are also in the collection of the British Museum and the Rachofsky Collection in Dallas. Her first museum exhibition was at the Grace Museum in Abilene, Texas, in 2019.

Influences: Ball is inspired by artists and musicians who experimented with gender-bending and androgyny in the 1980s, including David Bowie, Chrissie Hynde, and Leigh Bowery, Lucien Freud's model and muse.

Up Next: Ball's first solo show at Stephen Friedman will take place in January 2022.

Blessing Ngobeni



Blessing Ngobeni, *Shopping for Black Skin I* (2019). Image courtesy the artist and Jenkins Johnson Gallery.

Who: Ngobeni (b. 1985) combines imagery from magazines, books, and social media with his own striking figures to create vivid compositions that confront what he considers the greatest failures of South Africa's government. Ngobeni builds up the imagery on unstretched canvases with what gallery director Karyn Behnke describes as a mix of purposefulness and "happy accidents."

Based in: Johannesburg, South Africa

Showing at: Jenkins Johnson Gallery

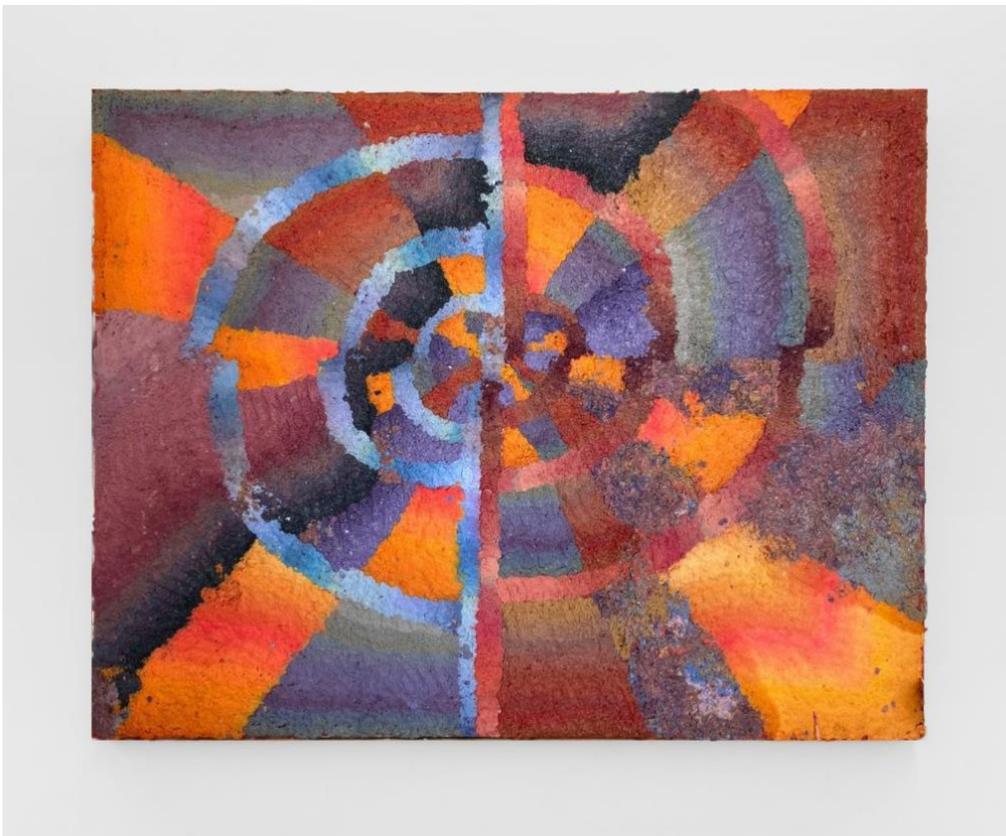
Prices: \$16,000–45,000

Why You Should Pay Attention: Ngobeni's work falls somewhere between painting, collage, figuration, and abstraction and looks like nothing else at Frieze. In 2020, he received South Africa's prestigious Standard Bank Young Artist Award for the Visual Arts. (Past awardees include William Kentridge and Mohau Modisakeng.)

For More: Additional work by Ngobeni—who has described art as his salvation after enduring a tumultuous childhood, running away at the age of six, and having been incarcerated as a teen—is on view at Jenkins Johnson Projects in Brooklyn now; he'll also be included in a summer show there.

Up Next: Ngobeni will have a solo exhibition at the gallery in 2022.

Emma Soucek



Emma Soucek, *As long as I know, I have love, I can make it* (2021).

Who: The California-born artist (b. 1996), who graduated from the Rhode Island School of Design in 2018, builds paintings from pulp made from construction paper and commercial stationery. Her tactile, lushly hued works look as if Anni Albers and Ken Price had a lovechild who was living in Williamsburg (with Howardena Pindell as an aunt).

Based in: Brooklyn, New York

Showing at: Franklin Parrasch Gallery

Prices: The painting at Frieze is priced at \$8,500.

Why You Should Pay Attention: Soucek's work has already made its way into prominent collections, including that of tastemaker Beth Rudin deWoody and the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego. Her most recent show at Parrasch Heijnen in Los Angeles, which closed late last month, sold out, and there's currently a lengthy waiting list for her work.

Fun Fact: Soucek, her twin sister, and her younger sister were homeschooled by their mother on Mount Desert Island, Maine, through middle school.