



# VOGUE

AUSTRALIA

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# Critics' CHOICE

Given the *vast scope* of modern ART, choosing work in which to invest can be *DAUNTING*. We canvass the experts for their pick of emerging *Australian talent*.

WORDS: JANE ALBERT

**L**isa Havilah describes it as a palpable energy that runs through her; Amanda Love says she must be both moved and engaged; Scrap Wall defines it as “beauty that bends the mind”; Nick Tobias falls in love instantly – or doesn’t; while Mark Hughes asks: “Would it hold up in the city that invents (and breaks) the rules, New York?” And for James Roland and Becky Sparks, it’s all about grassroots support.

We’re talking tomorrow’s contemporary artists, so hot that you may not have heard of them. Some of them are starting to feature in Art Basel Switzerland, Miami Beach and Hong Kong, while others are emerging from artist-run initiatives or even graduate shows. They’re the future Shaun Gladwell, Patricia Piccinini or Ricky Swallow.

As the scale of contemporary art and its creators continues to expand, the mind boggles at what’s on offer, with individuals describing themselves as sound artists, painters, videographers and sculptors – and that’s just one artist. The breadth of talent knows no bounds in 2014. Faced with the daunting task of traversing the country’s galleries, exhibitions, fairs, forums and pop-up spaces and trawling the online world’s magazines, sites, blogs and social media, it’s easy to feel bewildered by the scope.

If you don’t have the means to visit the world’s art fairs or simply lack confidence in choosing, help is at hand. *Vogue* selected experts, collectors and curators immersed in the visual art scene who all share a deep and abiding passion for art. They’ve each nominated artists whose work they feel compelled to follow, artists who may not yet be household names, but whose work you will certainly be seeing again.



Adam Lee in front of *The Pregnant World (Locuna)* (2012).



*All The World And All There In* (2013) by Adam Lee.



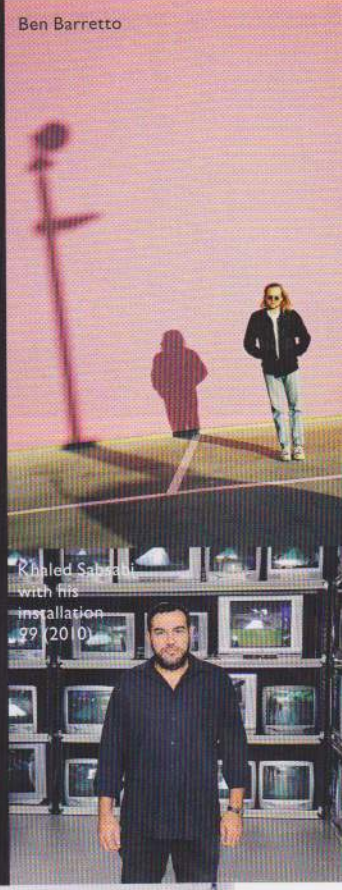


Rebecca Baumann's *Improvised Smoke Device* (2010/11).

Baumann in front of her work, *Automated Colour Field* (2011).



*Volcano* (2013) by Lillian O'Neil.



Ben Barretto

Ruled Sabatini with his installation 99 (2010)

## MARK HUGHES

For Australian art consultant Mark Hughes, recognising an artist has something special is instinctive. Having returned home a few years ago after more than a decade of working in New York galleries, Hughes has found plenty of local artists of interest.

Among those of note is Melbourne painter Moya McKenna, whose debut solo show caught Hughes's eye for the way it drew on various cultural forms, including a production she'd seen of Philip Glass's avant-garde opera *Einstein on the Beach*. "Referencing theatre, daily life and familiar objects in her painting, she creates narratives that are rich in colour and beautifully ambiguous," Hughes says of McKenna, whose paintings are included in the *Melbourne Now* exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria, on until March 23.

Adam Lee, also from Melbourne, works mainly with paint and watercolour. "He takes us on a gentle journey through bleeding landscapes of fantasy inhabited by masked figures and bearded sorcerers (or ageing hipsters), who return the viewer's gaze with a luscious intensity," says Hughes.

Lillian O'Neil has grown up in the digital age yet chooses to work in age-old collage. She uses imagery from old publications to explore notions of love, resulting in a balanced, romantic Tintoretto-esque finish. Last year she presented her solo show *Total Romance* at Sydney's Commercial Gallery.



Moya McKenna in her studio.

Then there's multimedia artist Ben Barretto, whose works range from abstract wool hangings to paintings in diptych form, the second painting formed after being pressed against the heavily layered paint of the first, "almost like a wall sculpture made from paint", says Barretto, whose work featured in 2012 at the pop-up Gallery A.S. in Sydney, and was included in Art Basel in Miami last December.

"To me, an exciting artistic voice is one that's relevant to what's going on now, not necessarily politically, but representing the times we're in," says Hughes.

## LISA HAVILAH

"Cross-disciplinary work is the most interesting work I'm seeing today ... artists

are making videos, doing performances ... their practices cross every known area," says the director of Sydney's Carriageworks Lisa Havilah. And the best place to find them? Artist-run initiatives, or ARIs, from West Space in Melbourne to Boxcopy in Brisbane. In her current role, Havilah curates events such as *24 Frames Per Second*, where 24 artists will create new works responding to the collaborative nature of the visual arts, choreography and film. "It's when you see something that doesn't necessarily say something new but says something in a new way," says Havilah of the artists whose work excites her.

Sculpture, installation and performance artist Rebecca Baumann is one such artist whose collaboration with label Romance ▶





Daniel Boyd in front of his work *Untitled* (2013).

Was Born has energised all three creatives: the label will incorporate Baumann's signature smoke design in its new collection, while Baumann will create an installation for their exhibition at Carriageworks held during Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week Australia in April.

Havilah also finds the "completely obsessive unreality" of artist Justene Williams's way-out performance installations – invariably involving her family and referencing her background – exciting. "It's important that there's a diversity of voice in contemporary visual art practice in Australia," says Havilah.

Audio, video, installation and performance artist Khaled Sabsabi is another such artist from western Sydney whose work explores his Lebanese-Muslim background and local communities. Part of the 2012 Sydney Biennale, his large-scale immersive video work has also been exhibited overseas.

## NICK TOBIAS

"Art has always been central to my life," states architect Nick Tobias, principal of Tobias Partners. Introduced to the arts at a young age by his artist and musician grandmother, Tobias was hooked from the get-go and made his first serious purchase in his early 20s after his friend Sue Cato introduced him to sculptor Neal Smith.

Since then Tobias and his wife, author Miranda Darling, have been collecting voraciously with one very clear dictate: they must feel something for the work. "[Buying for investment] is not part of the agenda, it's about having a life of things that talk to you, that can make your day-to-day experience so much richer," says Tobias.

Tobias is particularly enthused about a Tomislav Nikolic painting he recently purchased for Darling, entranced by the rich, luxurious, tactile, Rothko-esque feel the Melbourne artist achieves with paint, marble dust and gold and silver leaf. Then there's the Lego wall sculptures documenting the Challenger Space Shuttle explosion by husband-and-wife artists Sean Cordeiro and Claire Healy. "You



*Insanity Magnet* (2009) by Hiromi Tango.

begin to see the strength of the work not only because of the tragedy but because of the space race, that desire to go higher and further," says Tobias.

Cross-disciplinary Japanese-born, Australian-based artist Hiromi Tango represents yet another direction. A photographic self-portrait she shot in Brisbane following the severe dust storms in 2009 joins the couple's collection. "It's full of all sorts of flowers and tags and pearls; totally over-the-top," says Tobias. These emerging artists sit alongside more established artists in their collection, but, as Tobias explains of the artists they've collected, "there's the overarching intuitive connection to the work".

## AMANDA LOVE

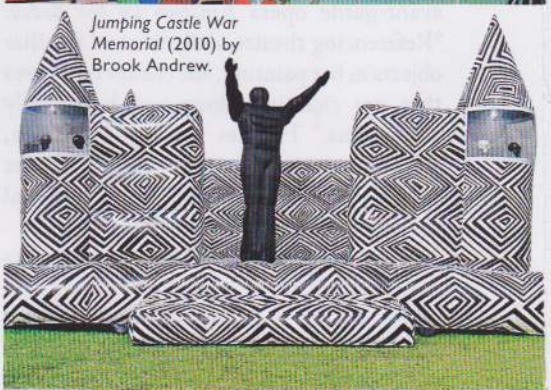
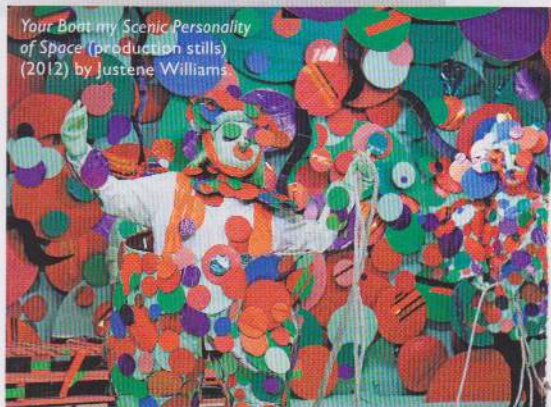
When it comes to visual arts, art consultant Amanda Love knows what works. "An artist needs technical talent plus the imagination and insight to synthesise history in an original way that's relevant now," she says. But her golden rule? "Choose art that moves you, provided it's from what's objectively worthwhile."

Love has been following urban Aboriginal artists who deal with issues linking local and international history with current concerns. They include: Archie Moore, "who produces cross-disciplinary works embedded in Aboriginal politics that also engage with broader concerns"; Brook Andrew, "whose multimedia practice stimulates new ways of thinking around the potency of memory"; and Daniel Boyd, "whose paintings address inheritance".

Also noteworthy is sculptor, painter and performance artist Agatha Gothe-Snape, an artist included in *Melbourne Now*.

"My job," says Love, "is to wade through everything and weed out what's irrelevant or ordinary." ▶

*General Sanders Vs Colonel Saunders* (2013) by Archie Moore.



Brook Andrew

DIMINA SNAPE ADAM TAYLOR





Artist  
Justine Varga.



Agatha Gothe-Snape  
stands in front of  
street art in Berlin.

### SCRAP WALL

“What excites me is the transfer of a thought process to a tangible result. Transcending boundaries excites me, the space between cultures and Jonathan Zawada’s work to me is the most fascinating,” says Scrap Wall, the new artistic director of Art Month 2014. Like Havilah, Wall is excited by the collaborations of culture and parallels between different codes of practice.

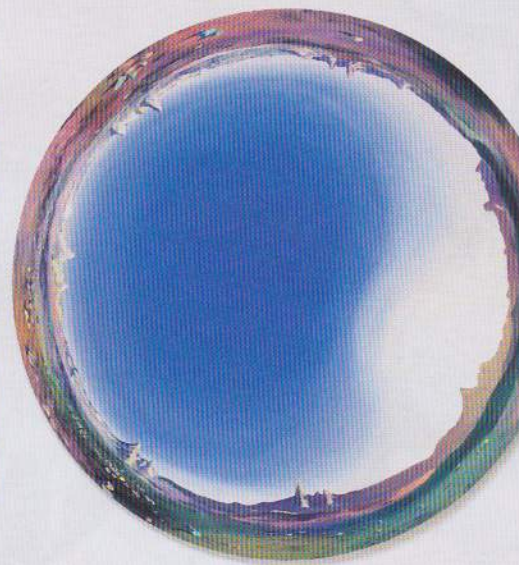
Zawada is an established graphic and fashion designer whose talents range from designing the Presets album artwork to Colab sunglasses to *New York Times* illustrations. But he’s recently decided to work exclusively as an artist. “What I find so exciting is that his design aesthetic and extracurricular activities are [so diverse] – there are many different elements to his art,” enthuses Wall.

Wall is drawn to works that appear familiar but have a slightly foreign edge, works like those of traditional photographer Justine Varga. A *Primavera* 2012 artist whose art is also held in the AGNSW collection, she creates what Wall refers to as “bizarre and beautiful” photographs that could almost be mistaken for drawings.

Painter Camille Hannah also impresses Wall. “It’s bright colours and movement and a magnification of the mark, which I usually step right away from, but in this case the event of creation composed in colour is like a meditation in paint – captured movement without a show of the hand. Reverse painting!” Trapped as it is behind a reflective surface, Hannah’s work subverts the emotive value.

### JAMES ROLAND AND BECKY SPARKS

When they wed, James Roland and Becky Sparks vowed to buy an artwork from an emerging artist to celebrate each wedding anniversary. Somehow that dictate got lost. Married nearly nine years, they’ve amassed hundreds of artworks, so many they can’t display them all and regularly lend them to friends and galleries. Nevertheless, they



*Draft* (2011) by  
Jonathan Zawada.

are resolute in their support for young and emerging Australian artists.

“It’s a bit like an addiction, we’ve spent more than we set out to, but I think it’s the best money we spend,” says Roland, a committee member of Firstdraft and the AGNSW’s Contemporary Collection Benefactors committee. “In our view arts and philanthropy are undervalued in this country, and we think it’s important that we contribute in some way. We feel the best use of our money is by supporting artists themselves – they get more confidence, we get something in return, and it keeps life interesting.”

Their collection thus far would indicate they’re astute collectors – Shaun Gladwell, Adam Cullen and Alan Jones are among the earliest purchased works – and more recently works by multidisciplinary artist Marco Fusinato, whose work interrogates themes of revolution. Often working as a sound artist, Fusinato collects clippings and pamphlets concerning international riots, highlighting their common narrative. His work is also included in *Melbourne Now*.

Some of the artists they have been early to collect include works by multimedia artist, writer and curator Baden Pailthorpe, who is now the inaugural artist-in-residence at the Australian War Memorial; Lillian O’Neil, Marley Dawson and Agatha Gothe-Snape. Other acquisitions include works by Gail Hastings, Newell Harry and Todd McMillan.

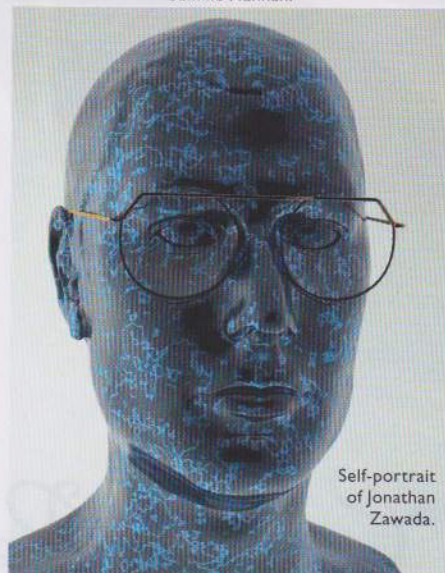
“We like to collect artists of our generation. In doing so, we look at the work, the artists and where they’ve trained, what institutions are collecting their work, and what galleries are showing their work,” says Roland. “We hope that one day our collection will provide a relatively interesting snapshot of our generation of artists.” ■



*Aetheric Plexus* (2009)  
by Marco Fusinato.



*Austramythicus-paternus* (2012)  
by Camille Hannah.



Self-portrait  
of Jonathan  
Zawada.