NEWS | OCT 3, 2018

15 Artists are Finalists in RBC Canadian Painting Competition

A canvas crocheted out of dried grass. A white-cube gallery that morphs into a Tectonic game. An old-fashioned, oil painted portrait of a fashionable millennial.

These are just some of the paintings by finalists in this year's RBC Canadian Painting Competition.

This morning, RBC, in collaboration with the Canadian Art Foundation, announced the 15 finalists in this year's competition.

The winner of the 46th RBC Canadian Painting Competition, to be announced on September 18 at the Power Plant in Toronto, will receive a cash prize of $25,000 (the runner-up finalists each receive $10,000), and the remaining 14 finalists receive $5,000 each.

The top three paintings will also be acquired by RBC's corporate art collection, and the finalists will all receive informal mentorship opportunities with jury members and financial skills development with advisors.

Here, in alphabetical order, are the finalists in this year's RBC Canadian Painting Competition:

Cynthia Kaan, Untitled (Lake Superior), 2018, 152 x 91 cm

Wallis Cheung, Tender as cold, 2018, 120 x 90 cm(d)

WALLIS CHEUNG

While Toronto-based artist Wallis Cheung maintains her own individual painting practice, she is also a member of the artist co-collective VIVOFX, which is known for witty installations and performances. Like the rest of the members of VIVOFX, Cheung's work is rooted in the Toronto DIY art scene and she also completed a degree in textile. Cheung initially thought she would get into social sciences, but as Ben Ireland reported in the Summer 2016 issue of Canadian Art, "her path was diverted by a studio course." In that same article, Cheung said, "Colours and textures are what interest me most. I like making mistakes and working with them." Cheung was also a finalist in the 2016 RBC Canadian Painting Competition.

Alex Fischer, The Clapper and Hopper, 2018, Oil and acrylic on canvas, 76 x 48 in.

ALEX FISCHER

Toronto-based artist Alex Fischer was born in 1990, and he graduated from York University with a BFA in visual arts in 2010. Since then, his work has been exhibited at Angell Gallery and Oliver Contemporary in Toronto and Art Mur in Montreal, among other venues. "As a visual artist, I work out of a history of expanded painting...I'm interested in painting specifically, as an object that bears the weight of its own history and the weight of the history of the medium," he tells Art Mur. "I develop these ideas, I use advanced digital image editing techniques to map out complex compositions. Essentially, I make images that blur the borders between media, challenge expectations, and let me enter into conversations about our culture and nature."

Nika Fontaine, Untitled (Island #1), 2018, Gilded on canvas

NIKA FONTAINE

Born in Montreal in 1991, Nika Fontaine has lived and worked in Berlin since 2009. Fontaine has a diverse background, moving from fashion design and hair styling studios to the early 2010s to painting and drawing courses at Concordia University in Montreal and Kunstlerhaus Bethanien in the late 2010s and early 2020s. Fontaine's work has been exhibited at Galerie Nathalie Obadia in Paris and works and texts as well as paintings—the latter of which are often made with glitter. As reported by Coveteur's Marissa Ho-Sim, Fontaine's "great uncle Jean-Paul Riopelle was one of Canada's first geometric painters and became internationally known in the mid-1950s as a member of the artists' group Les Plastiques. For Fontaine, the glitter so often associated with 'queerness' in today's art establishment is more a formal means. 'At first I worked with acrylic paint, but it wasn't reflective enough, so I started adding glitter to make the paint never strong enough for me. With the glitter, I get this intensity of color and brilliance, and in addition an interactive aspect, because every movement on the part of the viewer changes the coloration and sense of spatial depth.'"

Cameron Forbes, Modern Photo Hunt, Whitehorse, Part 2, 2018, Acrylic on linen, 36 x 36 in.

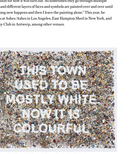
CAMERON FORBES

Cam Forbes, originally from Indian Arm in Lower Lonsdale, BC, is a Montreal-based artist who completed his BFA at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, completed in 2010, and also studied at the Rietveld Academy in Amsterdam and at the School of Art Institute of Chicago. From 2007 to 2010, he divided his time in Winnipeg, developing urban landscape pieces at exploration and community-based art projects, while there, she was the executive director of Art City from 2009 to 2010. "Primarily, I am interested in the landscape as an escape, as individuals and as commodities," Forbes tells on his website. "Canada has a long history of romanticizing the landscape, particularly in the form of oil paintings of natural landscapes as they are with settling it with their stories. The relationship between these modes of being with the country—as passive and active observer—fascinates me. Landscape/place/ideal painting has a strong association with the past, memory and idealized beauty, uncomplicated nostalgia. However, the genre is inserted into and is a chance of exploration, exploitation, settlement and colonization. This tension informs much of my practice."

Stephanie Hier, Dogs Are the worst, 2018, Oil on linen, 48 x 36 in.

STEPHANIE HIER

Born in 1990 in Toronto, Stephanie Hier holds a BFA from OCAD University, from which she graduated in 2010. Hier also holds a certificate from the Academy of Art Canada, which specializes in realist painting. Hier's canvases combine three two-minutes of training—the left technique of realist art with the more conceptual juxtapositions of contemporary art practice. Hier has been exhibited at Adamson Vogt Gallery in New York, as well as at Canadian galleries Art Mur (Montreal) and Carrier Arts (Toronto), among other venues.



Brian Hunter, Two empty tapes (inverted sentiment), 2018, Oil on wood, 30 x 48 in.

BRIAN HUNTER

Born in Winnipeg in 1980, Brian Hunter works in projects, sculpture and videos as well as in painting. He trained at Concordia University, where he earned a BFA in 2010. He has project Support and Complex Art gallery/artist-run multicentre, which he does left on the street, according to RW Magazine. His his projects have been exhibited at Galerie Nicolas Vallois in Paris, Galerie Nathalie Obadia in Paris, Galerie Nathalie Obadia in Paris, Galerie Nathalie Obadia

Keita Morimoto, *Aya in Tokyo*, 2015, Oil on canvas, 72 x 48 in.

KEITA MORIMOTO

Born in 1960 Osaka, Japan, Keita Morimoto currently lives and works in Toronto, where he earned at BFA from OCAD University in 2002. Described as a "new Romantic" painter by *Toronto Star* critic Murray Whyte, Morimoto creates paintings that blend the look of Old Masters with Millennial subject matter—including, as Whyte notes in the Star, a *Self Portrait After Bacchus* that riffs on a work by Caravaggio. Exhibitions include Nicholas Metivier Gallery in Toronto, Thinkspace in Los Angeles and Galerie Youn in Montreal.

Justine Skahan, *Home*, 2016, Oil on canvas stretched over wood, 52 x 48 in.

JUSTINE SKAHAN

Phenomena from pop culture to urban planning inform the paintings of Montreal-born artist Justine Skahan. Some of her recent works, she told the *Fulcrum*, are based in places where "natural elements and architecture co-exist, mostly in suburban landscapes." Other recent imagery, however, focuses on the Olsen twins, Ingrid Bergman's hair, and Miami palm trees. Skahan obtained her BFA in studio arts from Concordia University in 2001, and she is currently an MFA candidate at the University of Ottawa. Her work has been exhibited at Lonsdale Gallery in Toronto, and Karsh-Masson Gallery in Ottawa, while her master's thesis exhibition will take place at Central Art Garage in Ottawa in August 2016.

M.E. Sparks, *Afternoage*, 2016, Oil on canvas, 66 x 54.

M.E. SPARKS

M.E. Sparks, born in Kenora, graduated this year with a master of applied arts from Emily Carr University of Art and Design. She also holds a BFA (2003) from NSCAD University. Intersections between the representation and the abstract form the basis for some of her works. Sparks' paintings have been exhibited at the Charles H. Scott Gallery in Vancouver and Point Gallery on Salt Spring Island, while this summer will see her included in the group exhibition "Fresh Paint: New Construction" at Art Mur in Montreal. Sparks has been an artist in residence at the New Glasgow Studio Residency, and in 2017 will attend the Artelco Creative Residency program in Himeenkyro, Finland and Institut für Alles Mögliche in Berlin, Germany.

Angela Teng, *Jump Shot*, 2016, Crocheted acrylic paint on aumium panel, 24 x 18 in.

ANGELA TENG

Angela Teng has gained attention in the Canadian art realm—and should garner yet more—for her unique approach to the materials and practices of painting. Most notably, Teng crochets "canvases" out of strings of dried paint, inverting expectations around fine art and fine craft. Based in Vancouver, Teng was born in Victoria in 1979 and studied art at Camosun College and Emily Carr University, graduating from the latter in 2011. She is due to have a solo show at Vancouver's Equinox Gallery later this year, and she has also exhibited at Mossé Groves in New York and Wil Aballe Art Projects in Vancouver, among other venues.

geetha thurairajah, *Hotlines*, 2016, Acrylic and oil on canvas, 55 x 45 in.

GEETHA THURAIRAJAH

geetha thurairajah is an artist based in Sackville, New Brunswick. She graduated from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and Rhode Island School of Design in 2014. In 2015, thurairajah participated in a painting residency at the Banff Centre and the New York Arts Practicum. She is an ArtsNB grant recipient, and was recently commissioned to create digital paintings as a featured artist for multimedia publishing platform NewHive. thurairajah has exhibited at 8-11 in Toronto and Workaround International in Mexico City, among other venues.

Ambera Wellmann, *Wanda*, 2015, Oil on wood, 23 x 25 in.

AMBERA WELLMANN

Born in Lunenburg, Ambera Wellmann is currently and MFA candidate at the University of Guelph. She also holds a BFA from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and studied at the Cooper Union School of Art in New York. Earlier this year, Wellmann won the Joseph Plaskett Award for graduate-level painters. Her recent works integrate traditions of the still life and the uncanny. Wellmann has exhibited at Page and Strange Gallery in Halifax and Katzman Contemporary in Toronto, among other venues, and she has a show forthcoming at Dupont Projects in Toronto.

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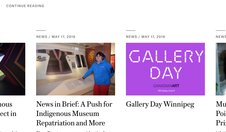

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by Leah Sandals

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