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Artists on Artists to Watch, and Maybe Even Collect

We asked 16 established names to suggest a fellow talent they feel should be better known.

By Noor Brara

The best direction one could give to someone interested in expanding their knowledge of contemporary art is to pay attention to what artists are paying attention to; artists always know before everyone else does. With this in mind, we asked 16 established artists from all over the world about a young or under-appreciated artist whose work resonates with them. They spoke about why these talents deserve more attention than they're getting, and why readers should take time to explore their oeuvres, which inspect, among other things, issues of identity, race, material culture, social justice, climate change and how we live.

For her part, the renowned 96-year-old Syrian-American poet and painter Etel Adnan, whom we interviewed for this story but who wasn't able to select just one artist, chose instead to share a bit of advice for all the artists mentioned — each of whom, she says, is rising in their own way. “The thing I want them to remember,” she says, “is that being an artist means you'll always be a little insecure and a little unsure because you don't know where you're going a lot of the time — every act of creation is new. You may have feedback, and there are moments when people will give you reassurance, but you won't have that always. But that's true of life in general, and people make too big a fuss over the struggles of being an artist, as though an artist's humanity is different from anyone else's, as though we are a different kind of creature. It's not. We are not. Keep going.”



Arnold J. Kemp's "Mr. Kemp: Yellowing, Drying, Scorching" (2020). Courtesy of the artist and Mar Gallery, New York. Photo by Tom Van Eynde

Mary Weatherford: [Arnold J. Kemp](#), 53

Arnold J. Kemp is an incredible artist whose own work has been overlooked because of his incredible career as an educator. The last mention of him in the paper of record was from 2001 by Holland Cotter ... so I see this as pure evidence that what I'm saying is the case, because it's taken two decades for it to happen again. Kemp makes photography, sculpture and painting, and is also a poet and a performance artist. This particular sculpture, which is brand-new — the first thing I thought about when I saw it was [Jorge Luis] Borges, who is one of my favorite writers. Reading Borges is such a pleasure because I understand that there's fiction masquerading as truth, and truth masquerading as fiction. And this particular sculpture comes closer to the mastery of Borges than any artwork I've ever encountered because of this novel that is stuffed in the pillows, which is indeed by an author named Arnold Joseph Kemp. And Arnold has been mistaken for the author Arnold Kemp. When looking at this chair, I'm wondering, because I know it's an artwork: "Is this a real novel? Is Arnold pretending that this novel exists?!"#\$ this novel exist?" Arnold J. Kemp is also a creator of fictions, and his work is so meta and brilliant. There's a kind of cool delight I experience in walking around this sculpture in particular.