

FIGURATIVE

ART

CATALOGUE

2018

BROUGHT TO YOU BY XL CATLIN



# XL CATLIN

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**Greg Hendrick**  
President and Chief Operating Officer of XL Group

I have tremendous admiration for the students whose works are included in this juried art contest and traveling exhibition. For these young artists hoping to establish a career in fine art, their challenges include: discovering their voice; developing and refining their skills; and most importantly, finding an audience for their work. And for students working with figurative art, these challenges are magnified. As finalist Hannah Aaron notes, "In the seemingly abstract-dominated art world, [the XL Catlin Art Prize] was an encouragement to my practice as a figurative artist."

The XL Catlin Art Prize focuses on the reemergence of figurative art in the contemporary art world. At a time when many art students feel compelled to venture beyond conventional boundaries, embracing figurative art can be seen as a risky undertaking. As finalist Helena Vallée Dallaire writes, "[Figurative art] is connected to an abundantly rich tradition. It evolves with the times without ever being far from its roots. A deep understanding of the past is necessary for my work to come alive and be meaningful, while still existing and participating in contemporary reality." Each artist in this exhibition has engaged in his/her own way with the oldest artistic convention there is – harkening back to Paleolithic cave paintings – and interpreted it for the 21st century.

With its emphasis on figurative art, the XL Catlin Art Prize provides a unique platform for emerging artistic talent from across the U.S. XL Catlin is delighted to sponsor this contest and to help the next generation of figurative artists launch their careers. As a leading Fine Art insurer, our mission is to protect and safeguard art. Through the XL Catlin Art Prize, we aim to advance the age-old practice of figurative art. In giving these talented young artists a forum for their works to be shown, critiqued and discussed, we reward their risk-taking and champion their desire to continue this tradition for the benefit of future generations.

[xlcatlinaartprize.com](http://xlcatlinaartprize.com)





# INTRODUCTION

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**Kurt Kauper**  
Artist

Kurt Kauper is a distinguished American artist known for his paintings of famous cultural icons – opera divas, Cary Grant, hockey players, and Barack and Michelle Obama – seen in a variety of unfamiliar ways.

His work is included in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Oakland Museum of Art, the Weatherspoon Museum and the Yale University Art Gallery. He is based in New York City and is currently a professor of art at Queens University, CUNY and a Senior Critic at the New York Academy of Art.

1. Buchloh, Benjamin H. "Figures of Authority, Ciphers of Regression: Notes on the Return of Representation in European Painting." *October*, vol. 16, 1981, p. 54.

2. Bader, Graham. "The Body Politic: 'Glitter and Doom' At The Metropolitan Museum of Art." *Artforum*, vol. 45, no. 5, Jan. 2007, p. 230.

One could make a convincing argument that the most prominent art produced in the past thirty years has been figurative. Artists as influential as Kerry James Marshall, John Currin, Kara Walker, Luc Tuymans, Charles Ray, Katarina Fritsch and many others work with the human figure and have returned it to the epicenter of serious critical discourse.

That wasn't always the case. The figure was long derided as inconsequential at best, dangerous at worst. For example, in "Figures of Authority, Ciphers of Regression," his seminal essay critiquing the return to representational art between the two world wars, Benjamin Buchloh claimed that figurative art was irretrievably regressive no matter what its content may have been, that its very form rendered it obsolete. For Buchloh, "unified pictorial representation... is treacherous, supplying as it does esthetic pleasure as false consciousness."<sup>1</sup> And yet, looking at the work he was targeting – Otto Dix, Christian Schad, Georg Grosz, Max Beckman, and other artists working during the Weimar era in Germany – it's difficult to imagine how that work can be seen as doing anything other than, as Graham Bader countered, "diagram[ing] the very historical particularity and determination of the body itself?"<sup>2</sup> In other words, providing a visual record of the complex relationship of Weimar culture to the human body: the period's fraught concepts of bodily health and hygiene, sexuality, gender, race, physical normativity, and so on.

In spite of various art historical attempts to portray it otherwise, figurative representation – including traditional forms – has persisted unabated throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. And for the reasons that Graham Bader indicated: depictions of the human body provide a necessary reflection on, complication of, and alternative to a culture's complex relationship to biopolitics and the human body.

Figurative representation remains of central importance to young artists now, and for good reason: we're living through a period that is not dissimilar to the Weimar Germany of Buchloh's critique. Human bodies are being contested, controlled, modified, asserted, redefined, and celebrated in ways that we may not have expected 30 years ago. Figurative artists – including the students in this extraordinary XL Catlin Art Prize exhibition – are both participating in and witnessing those changes and, using a variety of approaches and visual languages, addressing those changes head-on.

The generosity of XL Catlin in providing funding for this Art Prize Exhibition expands the opportunities for young artists to contribute to that history.

# ARTISTS

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hannah aaron  
sophia adeyemo-ross  
jonathan aller  
jared andreas  
felipe baeza  
aidan barker-hill  
merritt barnwell  
esther candari  
talía connelly  
brad davis  
bria erby  
jenna gibbon  
harrison halaska  
austin harris  
alea hurst  
monica ikegwu  
esteban jefferson  
jessica lancaster  
krystle lemonias  
eunice liu

sandra liu  
brian madonna  
larry madrigal  
kade marsili  
emile mausner  
luisiana mera  
bonnie morano  
kennedy morgan  
prinston nnanna  
david ntephe  
abelardo quiñones  
elise raborg  
cristobal rodriguez  
jared seff  
georgios taxidis  
dani toral  
jacob troyli  
helena vallée dallaire  
raelis vasquez  
anthony white

# **SELF-PORTRAIT**

oil on canvas



**Hannah Aaron**  
University of North Texas

**Tell us about the work that you have submitted.**

The figure depicted is a self-portrait in an ambiguous space.

**How do you describe your work and practice?**

I consider my work to be an analytical exploration of human perception, experience and spirituality.

**What motivated you to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize?**

In the seemingly abstract-dominated art world, this was an encouragement to my practice as a figurative artist.

**What themes regularly resurface?**

Psychology, phenomenology and spirituality are constant themes in my work. I am fascinated by the make-up of the inner self and by engagement with a spiritual realm.

[artworkbyhannahaaron.com](http://artworkbyhannahaaron.com)



# **ARTIST PAINTS SELF WITH UNDERTONES OF IDENTITY**



**Sophia Adeyemo-Ross**  
Rhode Island School of Design

oil on masonite

**Tell us about the work that you have submitted.**

My work explores the layers of separation and bond between myself and others. I am both segregated and united within communities, as a Black artist participating in the historical narrative and legacy of painting.

**How do you describe your work and practice?**

Regardless of medium, my work is portraiture (often, self). I explore the portrayal of myself as a queer, multiracial, black, female body, investigating autobiographical interactions/connections from my life.

**What motivated you to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize?**

I was already pursuing opportunities at the New York Academy of Art because of my interest in their aesthetic practices and culture. I made my decision to apply when I saw that Nicole Eisenman was on the Prize Board, as she is a RISD alumna and painter who I deeply respect.

**What themes regularly resurface?**

My work is always directly inspired by my experiences, and they are often muddled with the implications of social hierarchies, histories and stigmas (Black American versus Black African, biracialism, socioeconomics, education, art, etc.).

[sadeyemo.myportfolio.com](http://sadeyemo.myportfolio.com)







# **SIEMPRE EN MOVIMIENTO**

acrylic, oil, latex, colored pencil,  
and marker on canvas



**Jonathan Aller**  
Minneapolis College  
of Art and Design

## **Tell us about the work that you have submitted.**

My self-portrait, *Siempre en Movimiento*, analyzes not only myself but also the objects around me and how they define my identity. The more refined areas to the simplified ones show the hierarchy of story and of identity.

## **How do you describe your work and practice?**

My work is a contemporary take on classical portraiture.

## **What motivated you to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize?**

The XL Catlin Art Prize is a prestigious competition attracting top talent from around the nation. My motivation in applying was to gauge how my work is received among curators and peers.

## **What about figurative work do you find particularly inspiring?**

The history of figure paintings interpreted by various genres is fascinating. Through its complexities of tone, subtle color shifts and composition, the figure continuously lures me to attempt to translate its beauty.

[jonathanaller.com](http://jonathanaller.com)



# RECIPE

## oil on canvas



**Jared Andreas**  
Boise State University

### **Tell us about the work that you have submitted.**

The oil painting I submitted deals with themes of identity, constructed reality and representation. It was made during the fall of 2017 for an independent study course at Boise State University.

### **How do you describe your work and practice?**

I describe my work as figurative/narrative oil paintings. As a storyteller, I want to create visually compelling work that invites the viewer to linger and attempt to sift through all its components.

### **What motivated you to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize?**

The opportunity to exhibit in San Francisco, Chicago and New York was initially the main motivator to apply. Having my work viewed by so many respected art world professionals was simultaneously scary and exciting. The prize and resumé boost were definite factors as well.

### **What themes regularly resurface?**

Identity, constructed reality and representation are recurring themes in my work. As an enrolled member in a federally-recognized tribe, I'm often confronted by ideas of who I am and where I stand in this world.

[jaredandreas.com](http://jaredandreas.com)



# AHUEHUETE DORMIDO



**Felipe Baeza**  
Yale University

ink, watercolor, charcoal, collage, cut paper, egg tempera, hand embroidery and interference powder on paper

**Tell us about the work that you have submitted.**

*Ahuehuete Dormido* deals with regeneration and the persistent effects of global migration. The work challenges us to think about how we honor those who are no longer with us and have disappeared in the process.

**How do you describe your work and practice?**

I use collage in my work to examine how displacement creates a state of hybridity. I am interested in the alchemy of turning cut paper into a surface and a surface into a structural form.

**What motivated you to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize?**

My interest in applying is to insert myself into the conversation about figuration. I hope to challenge the Western canon of history by inserting bodies and histories that are rarely seen into my work.

**What inspires your work?**

I utilize my biography to reflect on my personal experiences and to explore the persistent effects of social institutions and cultural practices on the individual. I aim to create structures and possibilities of self-emancipation.

[felipebaeza.com](http://felipebaeza.com)





# XANTHE IN RED

oil on canvas



**Aidan Barker-Hill**  
New York Academy of Art

## **Tell us about the work that you have submitted.**

This painting of my girlfriend is inspired by Michelangelo's Libyan Sibyl. While Michelangelo's prophetess twists upward triumphantly, my girlfriend twists downward, creating a mood of despondency that my cheerful Quattrocento palette cannot lift.

## **How do you describe your work and practice?**

My art is rooted in observation, tempered by Italian Renaissance-influenced stylization. I'm trying to find a place in our irony-adoring art world to make sincere, beautiful work depicting the things I love. Rebellious, right?

## **What motivated you to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize?**

This seemed like a great opportunity to show my work and see how it fit in with contemporary figurative art from students across the country.

## **What about figurative work do you find particularly inspiring?**

Figurative art is inherently empathetic – there is no other subject matter to which we respond so immediately and instinctually. This gives figurative art the greatest emotional potential; I want my work to move you.

[aidanbarkerhill.com](http://aidanbarkerhill.com)





# REACH

oil on cardboard



**Merritt Barnwell**  
Yale College

**Tell us about the work that you have submitted.**

The painting is essentially a study of the human body and a play with lights and darks. I wanted to create a visually deceptive, continuous composition that goes beyond the edges of the canvas.

**How do you describe your work and practice?**

My work is the study of the human body, and also breaks with the conventional canvas and rules of composition. I am most interested in the space and energy that are created when figures interact.

**What motivated you to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize?**

I received an e-mail from Yale's Art Department with information about the contest, and because it was so relevant to my kind of work and seemed like such an amazing opportunity, I applied.

**What are you currently working on?**

I am working on a series of group portraits. They are large-scale paintings on cardboard. The poses and compositions made by the figures' bodies create shapes and lines that are architectural and geometric.

Instagram | @merritt\_barnwell



## ALL I ASK

oil on printed cotton fabric



**Esther Candari**  
Liberty University

### **Tell us about the work that you have submitted.**

This painting was inspired by a friend who was rescued from child trafficking in Ghana. She went on to become a powerful advocate and founder of an NGO focused on freeing other children in Ghana from human trafficking.

### **How do you describe your work and practice?**

My work focuses primarily on capturing the complexities of personal, cultural and religious experience in ways that succinctly communicate these experiences to a viewer who is unfamiliar with them.

### **What motivated you to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize?**

I was informed about the competition because I am a former New York Academy of Art student and because the competition was specific to my figurative focus as an artist.

### **What about figurative work do you find particularly inspiring?**

The tangible emotion that you can capture in a depiction of the human figure is a form of communication that is not bound to any specific language or culture, and therefore an extremely powerful tool.

[hiilanifinearts.com](http://hiilanifinearts.com)



# **MY BLOOD IS PROOF THEY EXIST: PT. I, THE MIGRATION**



**Talia Connelly**  
Rhode Island  
School of Design

wool, hand-dyed mohair, rayon,  
metallic, and transparent opalescent  
nylon yarn hung by metal rod

## **Tell us about the work that you have submitted.**

This is the first panel in a three-part woven series illustrating political and social narratives surrounding the Chinese-American adoptee diaspora. In this piece, themes of authority, separation and migration emerge in the form of policemen, parents, airplanes and American suburbia.

## **How do you describe your work and practice?**

Working within the boundaries of repetition is a challenge in itself. How can I hold the viewer's interest when the image will be predictably displayed multiple times? It forces you to adhere to certain rules of composition but also challenges you to find inventive ways to subvert these rules.

## **What motivated you to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize?**

The opportunity to share my work with new audiences and to connect with fellow art students around the country.

## **What inspires your work?**

The desire to bring unsung narratives to public attention, paired with unbridled curiosity.

[taliaconnelly.com](http://taliaconnelly.com)





# NIGHT TRAIN

oil on canvas



**Brad Davis**  
Pennsylvania Academy  
of the Fine Arts

**Tell us about the work that you have submitted.**

*Night Train* is about the experience of solitude in a chaotic urban environment. Being a commuter myself, I find that the train serves as a meditative space to both begin and end the day.

**How do you describe your work and practice?**

My painting practice is one which reacts to the environment around me. I believe that through the performative act of capturing an image through paint, one can transpose the most tacit parts of daily life in a way that recontextualizes the banal for everyone else.

**What motivated you to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize?**

I applied for the XL Catlin Art Prize because I wanted to be part of something that is relevant in the contemporary art world. As a painter working in traditional modes of representation, I feel that sometimes my voice is lost in this world even though I strive toward the zeitgeist.

**What inspires your work?**

My work is directly inspired by where I am in the world. Being an artist carries a responsibility to say something relevant about the present. As a resident of Philadelphia, I have found everything I need for my work just by taking a walk.

[braddavisartist.com](http://braddavisartist.com)

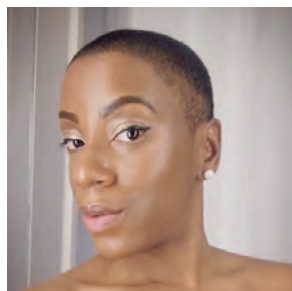






# **BLACK BALD BEAUTIES**

colored pencil on black paper



**Bria Erby**  
Eastern Michigan University

## **Tell us about the work that you have submitted.**

*Black Bald Beauties* embodies six black women who all decided to cut their hair at the same time. This decision sparked a rebirth in confidence and ownership over one's identity, despite colonized beauty standards.

## **How do you describe your work and practice?**

My work emphasizes portraiture and clothing in black culture. The liveliness of culture, fashion and individuality is expressed through mark-making with colored pencils, while black paper is used to emphasize black people as the subject of my work.

## **What motivated you to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize?**

My professor encouraged me to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize. She is familiar with my figurative work and thought my work would be of interest for the exhibition.

## **What are you currently working on?**

I am currently working on portrait studies of black men for an upcoming project. Influenced by *Black Bald Beauties*, this project will focus on black men and the importance of their placement in schools.

Instagram | @briaerbystudio





**Jenna Gribbon**  
Hunter College

# **A YOUNG WOMAN IS SURPRISED TO FIND HERSELF IN A PAINTING OF LEE MILLER**

oil on linen

**Tell us about the work that you have submitted.**

In this painting, I was thinking about how young artists encounter representations of women artists from the past. I was also thinking about the viewer's relationship to the muse, and in this case, about how Lee Miller's artistic identity was subsumed by her role as muse.

**How do you describe your work and practice?**

The implications of looking and of how we represent our subjects and ourselves are central concerns in my paintings, which stylistically shapeshift to telescope through time and space and reframe their questions as alternately personal and historical.

**What motivated you to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize?**

I was excited by the idea of my work being seen by the impressive panel of curators and judges and by audiences across the country.

**What are you currently working on?**

Borrowing from the literary construct of the first person omniscient narration in autofiction, I am currently creating paintings that explore intimacy and access using autobiographical experience as raw material to construct a narrative and render my own "gaze."

[jennagribbon.com](http://jennagribbon.com)





**Harrison Halaska**  
Laguna College  
of Art and Design

# **CHLOE**

oil on linen

**Tell us about the work that you have submitted.**

This painting is of my friend Chloe Allred. It was painted from life.

**How do you describe your work and practice?**

I paint from life. This process helps develop my gratitude for and understanding of life. I hope the weaknesses in my character are also observable.

**What motivated you to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize?**

The jurors looked good; it's always nice to have influential people view your work. The \$10,000 grand prize was enticing. The show travels. The competition was posted on our school's bulletin board.

**What inspires your work?**

Great paintings, running and nature. Also, explaining to someone how beautiful or compelling something is always seems to fall incredibly short. I believe my paintings are by far the most articulate ideas I have.

[harrisonhalaska.com](http://harrisonhalaska.com)





# YOUNG MINDS ARE MOLDABLE, LIKE CLAY



**Austin Harris**

Central Washington University

oil and spray paint on canvas

## **Tell us about the work that you have submitted.**

This piece is an investigation of the male psyche and the influence that society has on an individual's false selfhood; selfhood being one's unique personality and psyche being the man's thoughts and aspirations. Growing up in a rural area, I saw a flawed way of upbringing, both in myself and in my peers. I was constantly fighting and trying to prove myself to be a powerful young alpha male. I never showed emotion or insecurities and I certainly never wore pink. With my work, I investigate what it is that society promotes with these thoughts and actions.

## **How do you describe your work and practice?**

My work as a whole relates directly to my upbringing and the ways that my surroundings have influenced my idea of toxic masculinity and brutality.

## **What motivated you to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize?**

Growing up poor and being a first-generation college student, I have always wanted to amount to something. Applying to the XL Catlin Art Prize is not only an opportunity to promote my voice as an artist but also a pathway to future success.

## **What inspires your work?**

Everything about my childhood inspires my work. I didn't grow up in perfect living conditions and was constantly taught to retaliate against disrespect. This influenced my relationship with masculinity and brutality.

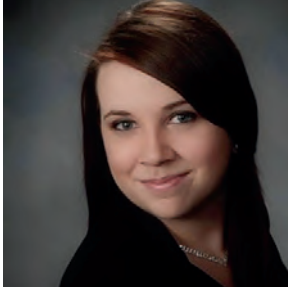
[austinharrisart.com](http://austinharrisart.com)





# ST. SEBASTIAN

pen and ink on paper with gold leaf



**Alea Hurst**  
Savannah College  
of Art and Design

**Tell us about the work that you have submitted.**

*St. Sebastian* is a modern take on the iconography associated with the Catholic saints who are prominent in art history. I created a version, with a twist, of what these saints might look like if they existed today.

**How do you describe your work and practice?**

I explore figurative art through both traditional and experimental techniques to push the boundaries of what is possible and to explore ideas of identity.

**What motivated you to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize?**

As a figurative artist, I thought why not apply and see what happens. I thought it would be a wonderful opportunity if chosen.

**What themes regularly resurface?**

Themes of identity, personality and the bridging of ideas from the past with those from the present recur in both my drawings and paintings.

[aleahurst.com](http://aleahurst.com)



# JADEN

oil on canvas



**Monica Ikegwu**  
Maryland Institute  
College of Art

**Tell us about the work that you have submitted.**

The work is part of a series of five paintings depicting African American men with a red light reflected on their faces. The red light is symbolic of the “danger” quality that these men are labeled within society.

**How do you describe your work and practice?**

My work has a strong focus on portraiture of African Americans and how I see them in relation to my life in Baltimore.

**What motivated you to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize?**

I was highly motivated by the idea of getting my work out there for the public to see. Entering this competition would allow me to share my work with a broad spectrum of people who may have never been exposed to my work before.

**What are you interested in?**

When it comes to my work, I like the idea of placing the three-dimensional within the two-dimensional. Having figures rendered very realistically with a very flat element makes the work much more interesting in my eyes.

[monicaikegwu.wixsite.com/monicaikegwu](http://monicaikegwu.wixsite.com/monicaikegwu)



# UNDERSTOPPED (ASHTON)

oil on canvas



**Esteban Jefferson**  
Columbia University

**Tell us about the work that you have submitted.**

*Understopped (Ashton)* is an ongoing series of portraits of my Black and Latinx friends. The paintings in this series create a relationship between the viewer and the subject through the gazes of both parties.

**How do you describe your work and practice?**

My work combines traditional tools of figurative painting with conceptual ideas about value and mastery. With these, I am able to question and challenge social and political structures in my practice.

**What motivated you to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize?**

I want to show my work in broader contexts and engage in new dialogues. I would like to connect with diverse communities and share the conversations that surround my work with new audiences.

**What is your background?**

I was born and raised in New York to a White American mom and Black Panamanian dad. My work is a reflection of my life in this city and of the tensions that informed my upbringing.

[estebanjefferson.com](http://estebanjefferson.com)





# **BAPTISM**

acrylic and silver on glass



**Jessica Lancaster**  
New York University

**Tell us about the work that you have submitted.**

The piece submitted is about the fabrication of memory and what happens when memories are revisited.

**How do you describe your work and practice?**

My painting practice is tied to photography. It is a way of coping with the disappearance of certain analog technologies.

**What motivated you to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize?**

I was motivated to apply for the XL Catlin Art Prize simply to have my work seen by a larger audience. I very much did not expect to be selected.

**What are you interested in?**

I am interested in how stories are passed down from generation to generation and in how we maintain memory.

[jfglancaster.com](http://jfglancaster.com)





# GURU

woodcut on paper



**Krystle Lemonias**  
New Jersey City University

## **Tell us about the work that you have submitted.**

This piece commemorates the black men who have shaped my identity. This portrait showcases the characteristics they embody that have contributed to my individual growth. It also explores black female identity development that embraces positive masculine influences.

## **How do you describe your work and practice?**

They investigate the idealization of “woman” and perceived gender roles. I portray, symbolically and compositionally, the duality of strength and delicacy, simplicity and complexity, intellectual order and emotional impact. These associative attributes frame my practice.

## **What motivated you to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize?**

My university advisor suggested it and I confidently submitted. Relief printmaking is the medium I am eager to share as I begin my career in the visual arts. This exhibition will expose my societal perspectives on the “female mystique.”

## **What is your background?**

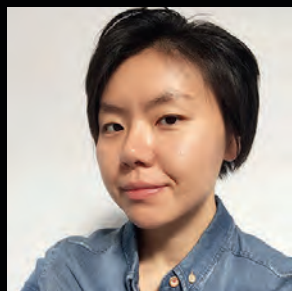
It is essential to my creative growth. I am exposed to professional artists’ work and techniques I otherwise wouldn’t know and am provided with studio space to execute projects. I am grateful to the faculty that prepares me professionally.

[behance.net/empress1989](https://behance.net/empress1989)



# COOK AND HIS WIFE

oil on canvas



**Eunice Liu**  
San Francisco Art Institute

**Tell us about the work that you have submitted.**

This is an oil painting depicting a Chinese chef and his wife who owned a Hunan restaurant in St. Louis. I painted it in my post-bac year at SFAI.

**How do you describe your work and practice?**

In my earlier work, I primarily worked with traditional oil color and techniques. Now I work with mixed media, including digital tablet and video. Each of my pieces shows my different sides and is witness to my shifts and growth.

**What motivated you to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize?**

This piece is one of my favorite figurative works painted in the traditional oil medium. As a student at SFAI, our school frequently sends us opportunities for artists via email. I was motivated to apply when I saw information about the XL Catlin Art Prize in an email from school.

**What is your background?**

I am an international student from mainland China. I studied at Saint Louis University since 2012, and now I am pursuing my MFA at SFAI.

[behance.net/Eunice92](https://behance.net/Eunice92)





# PILLOWTALK (THE BATHERS)

oil on canvas



**Sandra Liu**  
Maryland Institute  
College of Art

## **Tell us about the work that you have submitted.**

This work is about the anxiety of building and maintaining meaningful relationships. I painted this shortly after transferring schools and felt like I was losing intimacy with everyone I used to love.

## **How do you describe your work and practice?**

My paintings use figurative compositions to broach spaces of awkwardness, fear, innocence and intimacy. Oftentimes darkly comedic, my work tackles concepts of great personal horror and humanizes issues of identity, sexuality and social belonging.

## **What motivated you to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize?**

I am excited by the opportunity to have my work seen and questioned, especially by those who value contemporary figuration and its potential for empathy, violence and change.

## **What are you currently working on?**

My current work is about non-reciprocal relationships and the creation of identity through fandom. Using television personas, self-created fan characters and other figurative references to media culture, I explore themes of voyeurism, idolatry and consumption.

[remliu.com](http://remliu.com)





# **SELF-PORTRAIT: SEPTEMBER, 1999**

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oil on canvas



**Brian Madonna**  
School of the Art  
Institute of Chicago

**Tell us about the work that you have submitted.**

In the creation of this self-portrait, I reflected upon the personal and psychological experiences of being raised in a cult in order to describe aspects of the human condition.

**How do you describe your work and practice?**

I study the human condition through highly textured oil paintings. Citing personal and historical narratives, my work unpacks the pitfalls of humanistic intention. By painting these abject circumstances, they transform into beautiful, engaging artworks.

**What motivated you to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize?**

I was drawn to apply by the opportunity for my work to be shown, as I create work in hope of a viewer's engagement.

**How has your school environment nurtured your practice?**

At the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, I learned the importance of material specificity and use in their Studio Lab, where knowledgeable faculty assists with painting and drawing research and experimentation.

[brianmadonnaart.com](http://brianmadonnaart.com)



# FROM ABOVE AND BELOW

oil on canvas



**Larry Madrigal**  
Arizona State University

**Tell us about the work that you have submitted.**

*From Above and Below* is both a portrait and a metaphor. The figures, who act as pillars between sky and ground, stand between serenity and actual disarray with a commitment to redeem, restore and rebuild.

**How do you describe your work and practice?**

I use portraiture and figuration as a starting point to explore larger ideas such as human dignity, community, parenthood and culture, or anything that contemporary life throws at me with all of its crisis and wonder.

**What motivated you to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize?**

I was encouraged to see an opportunity for a new generation of figurative artists to share their artistic journey through this exhibition. The traveling show and high-profile jury motivated me to apply.

**What are you currently working on?**

I am currently working on a large painting about my life as a new parent. It depicts my wife, my baby daughter and me in an excessively cluttered studio/bedroom space.

[larrymadrigal.com](http://larrymadrigal.com)



# **BOY IN FRONT OF A TIGER**

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## **TAPESTRY**

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**Kade Marsili**  
Kent State University

oil on panel

**Tell us about the work that you have submitted.**

This piece was the first to be created for my thesis show this past spring. The show was made up of works discussing the topics of male femininity, queerness and relationships

**How do you describe your work and practice?**

My work is an exploration of identity through figurative gesture and symbols such as color and pattern.

**What motivated you to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize?**

I was motivated to apply because of the amazing jury and the opportunity to have my work shown in places I could never have imagined reaching.

**What inspires your work?**

My work takes inspiration from so much, including the work of other great painters, illustrators and peers, and the themes of my life such as personal relationships and the struggles of growing up as a queer youth.

[kademarsili.com](http://kademarsili.com)





# THE BATHER

acrylic on canvas



**Emile Mausner**  
Yale University

**Tell us about the work that you have submitted.**

Inspired by the peculiar past-less feeling of suburban Florida, I wanted to recast familiar signs within a mythic image of enigmatic ripeness.

**How do you describe your work and practice?**

My work engages with art historical genres and is intended to reward the viewer with an initial sense of familiarity and meaningfulness. Loose ends of nostalgic impulses lead me to uncover that which is unsettling, indefinable, and absurd.

**What motivated you to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize?**

I am deeply spellbound by many traditions of figurative painting, and I am grateful for this opportunity to share my own.

**What inspires your work?**

Antique malls, thrift stores, salvage yards, roadside gift shops – I often find inspiration amid wild accumulation, clutter and aesthetic anarchy.

[emilemausner.com](http://emilemausner.com)



# **ABUELO PEPE ASLEEP**

oil on canvas



**Luisiana Mera**  
New York Academy of Art

**Tell us about the work that you have submitted.**

My Abuelo Pepe liked to walk around shirtless, my father too. To me, this painting is documentation of my worries about a relationship fading with age and distance.

**How do you describe your work and practice?**

My work strives to honor the precariousness of each moment. The act of meticulously representing a moment increases its meaning and attempts to lend individual images the power and significance they ought to have.

**What motivated you to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize?**

I wanted this piece to be seen by many people. I wanted others to connect and contemplate life.

**What inspires your work?**

My family and my constant quest to recover the meaning of images in the digital age, an era when nearly every moment in our lives is documented, and images seem to lose their meaningfulness.

[luisimera.com](http://luisimera.com)







# MAKE ME A MASK

oil on linen



**Bonnie Morano**  
Hunter College

**Tell us about the work that you have submitted.**

We all wear masks, disguising our true selves in favor of a role. Women are camouflaged in clothing, veiled in decoration. Though meant to enchant, the masks are a distraction, ultimately concealing the true self.

**How do you describe your work and practice?**

My approach to painting is to create the feeling of fullness and maximalism through color, pattern and content, almost to the point of decadence. My work questions the role of beauty as both sensory fulfillment and as compensation for emptiness.

**What motivated you to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize?**

My goals as a painter are aligned with those of the New York Academy of Art; specifically, to approach figurative painting with respect for the canon while making art for my 21st-century self.

**What inspires your work?**

I am inspired by bright shiny objects and introspective thought. These two may seem at odds. The tension between the seduction of beauty and the value of intellect is offered for reconciliation in my paintings.

Instagram | @bonniemorano



# UNDER

charcoal and graphite on paper



**Kennedy Morgan**  
San Francisco Art Institute

**Tell us about the work that you have submitted.**

*Under* is a self-portrait with symbols of memento mori/beauty. As a teenager, I am aware of the beauty standards society puts on me and of how to replace the burden of standards with confidence.

**How do you describe your work and practice?**

I like to give myself a calm environment in which to work so that the work that I put out is as fresh and perfect as I picture it in my head.

**What motivated you to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize?**

I see the XL Catlin Art Prize as a really good opportunity for my work to be shown to a diverse audience, not only my schoolmates and teachers.

**How do you approach a new work?**

When starting a new piece, I usually have an image alongside a general meaning. I like to start with what I see in my head so the image won't look artificially placed.

Instagram | @kennkennmorgan





# **"L'ATTENTE" (THE WAIT)**

charcoal on hand toned paper



**Prinston Nnanna**  
New York Academy of Art

## **Tell us about the work that you have submitted.**

It is a conversation in which classical and contemporary art meet; colonization becomes the topic along the way.

## **How do you describe your work and practice?**

My works depict the elegance of the Black figure at the same time as reconstructing the image in which society has painted people of color. Through the eyes of my ancestors, I create what "was and will be."

## **What motivated you to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize?**

I like the fact that it is a traveling exhibition. I saw this as an opportunity for my work to reach people far and beyond.

## **How do you approach a new work?**

First by thought and finding out just what I want to say. Then a few preliminary studies to depict how I want to say it. The coffee washes that I use can be somewhat illusive at times. I allow it to flow and do what it wants, and then when it dries, I have full control to do what I want.

Instagram | @itaddy



# SELF-PORTRAIT

acrylic on wood



**David Ntephe**  
Maryland Institute  
College of Art

**Tell us about the work that you have submitted.**

My piece is an expressionist, pointillistic self-portrait. The pattern is meant to be a documentation of a meditative exercise that served as a self-soothing practice during a depressive episode.

**How do you describe your work and practice?**

My work is inspired by Neo-Expressionism, which has typically taken a formalist approach but has become more political recently.

**What motivated you to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize?**

A professor encouraged me to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize, and I decided it was a unique opportunity to be more proactive in putting my work in public settings and in starting my career as an artist.

**What themes regularly resurface?**

Distortion and/or disruption of the body and body parts, as seen in the right eye of *Self-Portrait*, are recurring visual motifs in my works.

[davidntephe.com](http://davidntephe.com)







# LOS BORRACHOS

oil on canvas



**Abelardo Quiñones**  
Pennsylvania Academy  
of the Fine Arts

**Tell us about the work that you have submitted.**

The work shows the many people of Mexico celebrating each other's unique looks, yet all being Mexican.

**How do you describe your work and practice?**

My work revolves around the themes of labor, Mexico and family. I work in a traditional method, using oil paint and doing many preparatory studies for each painting.

**What motivated you to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize?**

The fact that it encouraged larger work.

**What are you planning next?**

I plan on making a bigger work which will represent and celebrate the many types of human bodies which inspire so much of the art that we appreciate throughout history.

[abelardoart.com](http://abelardoart.com)



# THE WEATHER SUITS MY CLOTHES

oil on canvas



**Elise Raborg**  
University of Arkansas

**Tell us about the work that you have submitted.**

After coming back home from a long trip away, I wanted to explore my relationship with my house and with the environment, colors, dogs, strangers, memories and routines that accompany it.

**How do you describe your work and practice?**

I approach making as a means to project and preserve memories of events and emotions that are attached to the space and objects with which I am most intimate.

**What motivated you to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize?**

I am excited and honored to have the opportunity, through the XL Catlin Art Prize, to be a part of a talented, dedicated and disciplined group of emerging artists.

**How do you approach a new work?**

I often reference mnemonic drawings that are reinterpreted and reconstituted until I get a flavorful concentrate of whatever experience and atmosphere I need. This process yields moments of intimacy, humor and personal narrative.

[eliseraborg.com](http://eliseraborg.com)







# UNTITLED

oil on canvas



**Cristobal Rodriguez**  
University of Texas  
Rio Grande Valley

**Tell us about the work that you have submitted.**

In the Valley (southern cities of Texas) one finds many interesting people waiting for the bus, which is used as their main means of travel to stores or work.

**How do you describe your work and practice?**

I like to depict the environment that people live in as well as the moment that is occurring at the time. I also like to apply colors that I see to make up part of the composition.

**What motivated you to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize?**

I was interested in how my style of art related to other artists around the country.

**What is your background?**

I am currently a double major in Biology and Art, which allows me to analyze and comprehend the different forms of the human body while appreciating and understanding other people.

[cristorod13.wixsite.com/cristobalrodriguez](http://cristorod13.wixsite.com/cristobalrodriguez)



# **BROTHERS**

oil on linen



**Jared Seff**  
Savannah College  
of Art and Design

**Tell us about the work that you have submitted.**

*Brothers* is a re-imagined expression of an old photo. The men depicted are twins. As a triplet myself, I wanted to emphasize the connection between brothers while depicting a moment outside of time.

**How do you describe your work and practice?**

Classically informed, contemporarily inspired.

**What motivated you to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize?**

It is a great opportunity to share my work and connect with artists and institutions around the U.S.

**What inspires your work?**

The noble spirit of everyday movements that elevate our ordinary efforts to extraordinary places.

[jaredseff.com](http://jaredseff.com)





# **REFERENCE TO REMBRANDT**

pencil and charcoal on paper



**Georgios Taxisidis**  
New York Academy of Art

## **Tell us about the work that you have submitted.**

It is a dialogue between the past and present about portraiture. I wanted to go beyond a conventional portrait, emphasizing the sitter's gaze and the highly detailed shirt.

## **How do you describe your work and practice?**

Dedication to a purpose and making the ordinary extraordinary.

## **What motivated you to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize?**

The prestigious jury and the opportunity for my work to be exhibited.

## **What is your background?**

I am a graduate of the Faculty of Fine Arts of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, with previous studies in Moscow and Madrid. I hold several awards and scholarships such as Fulbright, NEON and more.

Instagram | @giorgostaxisidis



# CORAZÓN DE MELÓN

acrylic on canvas



**Dani Toral**  
Maryland Institute  
College of Art

**Tell us about the work that you have submitted.**

“Corazón de melón” is a Spanish rhyming phrase very often used as an expression of love and endearment. The direct Spanish-to-English translation would be “melon of my heart.”

**How do you describe your work and practice?**

I am interested in the feeling of warmth, externally and internally, literal and emotional – a sense of fulfillment, like a bowl of soup or the embrace of a mother. I seek to reconnect with my Mexican heritage while also reconciling the expectations of whiteness that society pushes on me.

**What motivated you to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize?**

The XL Catlin Art Prize is a great opportunity for young emerging artists like myself to connect with other fellow artists who are similarly passionate about their work. Knowing there are opportunities like the XL Catlin Art Prize has allowed me to be less fearful about my future as an artist.

**What inspires your work?**

I seek to balance my appreciation for and desire to reconnect with Mesoamerican history, Mexican folk art and Mexican architecture. I am attracted to my most uncomfortable memories and seek to bring pleasure to that discomfort through subtle humor.

[danitoral.com](http://danitoral.com)





# WINDOW SHOPPING

oil on canvas



**Jacob Troyli**  
University of South Florida

**Tell us about the work that you have submitted.**

This piece is from a series entitled Hangin' with Pops, in which I used myself as an avatar to create a conversation about otherness and the non-white figure in the history of painting.

**How do you describe your work and practice?**

My work is about representation, race, otherness and my place in the history of painting. More specifically, my work confronts the commodification of struggle, outrage and bodies of color.

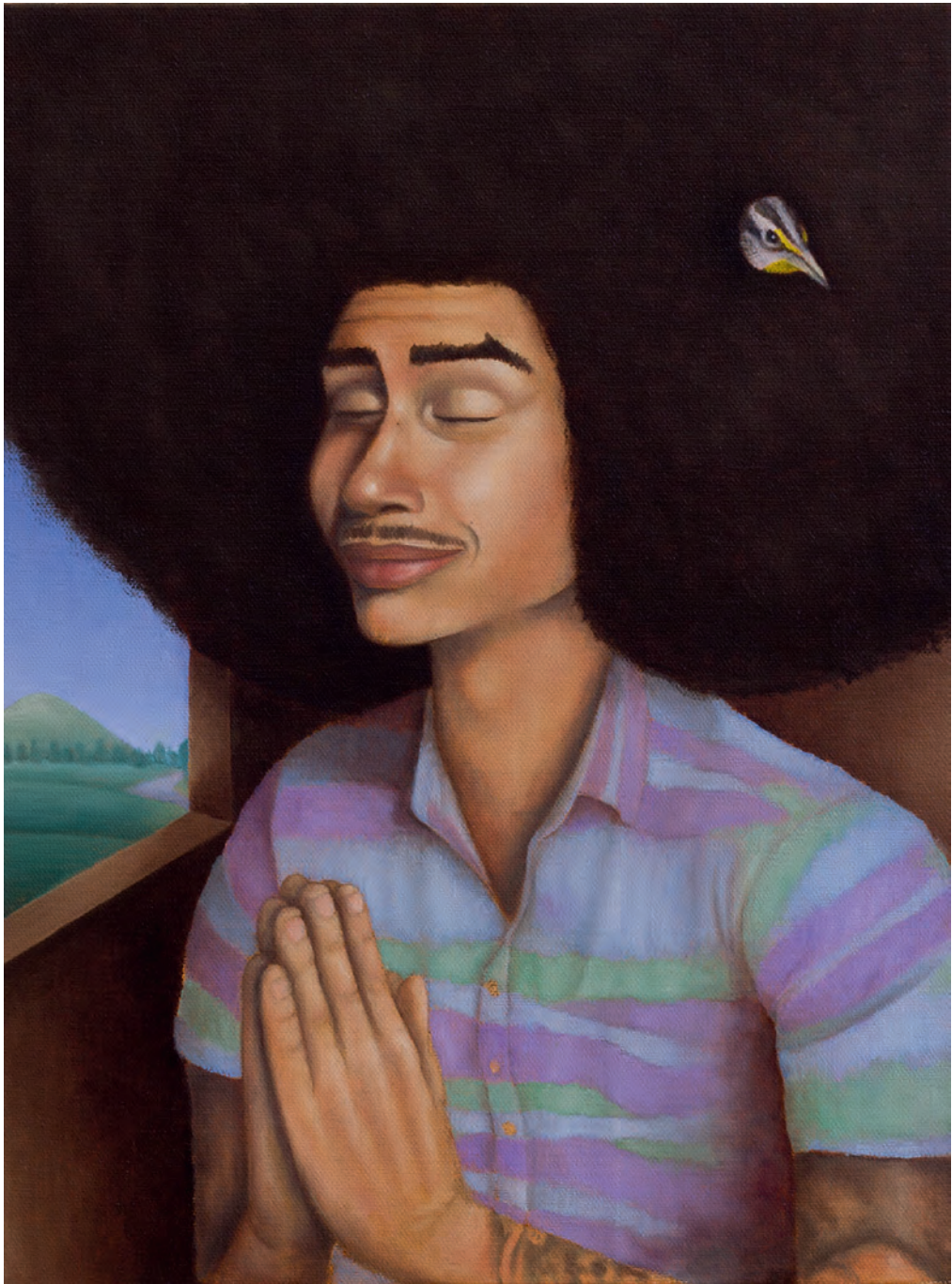
**What motivated you to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize?**

I thought it was important for me to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize since it is for artists working in the figurative tradition and my work deals with representation as technique and metaphor.

**What inspires your work?**

My work is inspired by the struggle of understanding my position as a bi-racial person of color. I am constantly questioning how systems of division function to construct and shape definitions of collective identity.

[jaketroyli.com](http://jaketroyli.com)



# PLAYING WITH DOLLS

oil on linen



**Helena Vallée Dallaire**  
New York Academy of Art

**Tell us about the work that you have submitted.**

A self-portrait, it is a reflection on my own cultural identity and the narrow, occidental origin of most of my knowledge. It is an ode to curiosity and to questioning the parameters through which we look at the world.

**How do you describe your work and practice?**

I paint people and scenes that question our set societal rules. I am fascinated by the push and pull between unity and difference in our human network.

**What motivated you to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize?**

I just graduated from the New York Academy of Art and thought the XL Catlin Art Prize was an extraordinary opportunity.

**What about figurative work do you find particularly inspiring?**

How intrinsically complex it is, and how it is connected to an abundantly rich tradition. It evolves with the times without ever being far from its roots. A deep understanding of the past is necessary for my work to come alive and be meaningful, while still existing in and participating in contemporary reality.

[helenavd.com](http://helenavd.com)





# **THE FUTURE AND ITS CIRCUMSTANCES**



**Raelis Vasquez**  
School of the  
Art Institute of Chicago

oil on canvas

**Tell us about the work that you have submitted.**

These young children are my family members, all first-generation immigrants from the Dominican Republic. I wanted there to be a multi-layered narrative which would ask the viewer to ultimately confront these children in their state of vulnerability.

**How do you describe your work and practice?**

Drawing on historical, political and personal narratives, my paintings act as figurative compositions that conjure the complexity of the Afro-Latinx experience. The figures in my work inhabit a state of vulnerability that encourages the viewer to question their positions on class, race and geography.

**What motivated you to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize?**

Kevin Demery, a graduate student who is very familiar with my work, suggested that I apply.

**What are you interested in?**

In the words of George Gerbner: "Representation in the fictional world signifies social existence; absence means symbolic annihilation." I see representation along these same lines, which indicate that by including a subject it is being given value. The idea of representation is the primary focus of my practice.

[raelisvasquez.com](http://raelisvasquez.com)



# **BOTTOMLESS MIMOSA BRUNCH**

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melted polylactic acid on panel



**Anthony White**  
Cornish College of the Arts

**Tell us about the work that you have submitted.**

After investigating the rapid growth of technology and its effect on contemporary youth romance, taboos and social hierarchies, I then mimicked traditional trade skills with an artificial material to recreate selfies and their proliferation.

**How do you describe your work and practice?**

I translate stories of nervousness, vulnerability, romance, identity, exploitation and the digitally curated self-image using materials that exceed abundance and never fully deteriorate. I draw experiences shared on cellular devices with melted polylactic acid.

**What motivated you to apply to the XL Catlin Art Prize?**

I wanted to share my work with a network that isn't at my fingertips or in my backyard in hope of critique and to be introduced to makers and art community members who are beyond my reach.

**What will future work look like?**

The future looks like striving for efforts to create opportunities for young artists to showcase original works, have critiques and freely create and express their ideas and thoughts about the contemporary world without restrictions.

[boywithplastic.com](http://boywithplastic.com)





# JURIES

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## **Regional Jury**

Joseph Santore	Bard College
Thomas Lawson	California Institute of the Arts
Gregory Amenoff	Columbia University School of the Arts
Robert Campbell	Cornish College of the Arts
Mira Gerard	East Tennessee State University
Matthew Gaynor	Kansas State University
Jonathan Burke	Laguna College of Art and Design
Diane Edison	Lamar Dodd School of Art University of Georgia
Tony Shore	Maryland Institute College of Art
Jay Coogan	Minneapolis College of Art and Design
Peter Drake	New York Academy of Art
Anne Gaines	Parsons School of Design
Clint Jukkala	Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts
Joseph Smith	Pratt Institute
Fritz Drury	Rhode Island School of Design
Brett Reichman	San Francisco Art Institute
Arnold Kemp	School of the Art Institute of Chicago
Robin Hill	University of California, Davis
Robert Dunning	University of North Carolina Asheville
Christian Fagerlund	University of North Texas
Charles Browning	University of the Arts
Nancy Mladenoff	University of Wisconsin - Madison
Mark Thomas Gibson	Yale School of Art

## **Exhibition Jury**

Ian Alteveer	The Metropolitan Museum of Art
Jennie Goldstein	Whitney Museum
Laura Hoptman	Museum of Modern Art
Kara Vander Weg	Gagosian Gallery

## **Prize Jury**

Nicole Eisenman  
Eric Fischl  
Jennifer Schipf  
Amy Sherald

## **Exhibitions**

San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco  
Linda Warren Projects, Chicago  
New York Academy of Art, New York

XL Catlin would like to thank the artists, schools, judges, exhibition venues and in particular the New York Academy of Art for their support.

# **NICOLE EISENMAN**

## prize jury

Nicole Eisenman is an artist living and working in Brooklyn, New York. A solo exhibition of her work will open at the Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden in Fall 2018. Her work was included in the decennial "Skulptur Project Münster" in Münster, Germany (2017). Recent exhibitions include, "Dark Light," Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects, "Dark Light," Secession, Vienna, Austria, "Al-ugh-ories," New Museum, New York, and "Magnificent Delusion," Anton Kern Gallery, New York and a traveling survey exhibition, "Dear Nemesis, Nicole Eisenman 1993–2013" at The Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego (2015), The Institute of Contemporary Art, (Philadelphia, 2014), and the Contemporary Art Museum of St. Louis (2014).

She is a MacArthur Foundation fellow and was nominated into the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 2018. In 2013 Eisenman was awarded the Carnegie Prize. Her work is featured in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Kunsthalle Zürich, Switzerland; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; SF MOMA, San Francisco; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, among others.

# ERIC FISCHL

## prize jury

Eric Fischl is an internationally acclaimed American painter and sculptor. His artwork is represented in many distinguished museums throughout the world as well as prestigious private and corporate collections, including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Whitney Museum of American Art, The Museum of Modern Art in New York City, The Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, St. Louis Art Museum, Louisiana Museum of Art in Denmark, Musée Beaubourg in Paris, The Paine Weber Collection, and many others. Fischl has collaborated with other artists and authors, including E.L. Doctorow, Allen Ginsberg, Jamaica Kincaid, Jerry Saltz and Frederic Tuten. His extraordinary achievements throughout his career have made him one of the most influential figurative painters of the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

Eric Fischl is a Fellow at both the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the American Academy of Arts and Science, and a Senior Critic and Board Member at the New York Academy of Art. He lives and works in Sag Harbor, NY with his wife, the painter April Gornik.

# **JENNIFER SCHIPF**

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## prize jury

Jennifer leads XL Catlin's Fine Art and Specie business and Broker Client Management for Global Lines. She oversees fine art, jewelers block and general specie insurance. She's been dedicated to the highly specialized niche market of fine art underwriting for fifteen years. She also leads broker and client business development efforts for Global Lines insurance products. Prior to joining XL Catlin in 2008, she led the US Fine Art underwriting practice at QBE and held various roles in claims, settling losses and performing loss control assessments for insurance and loss adjusting firms.

Before entering the insurance industry, Jennifer held positions with the Tandem Press in Madison, Wisconsin and the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC.

Jennifer holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in art history and economics from Georgetown University and a Bachelor of Science degree in Interior Architecture from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. She is actively engaged in various arts organizations, teaches fine art underwriting courses and regularly participates in industry educational conferences. She has served as the co-chair for the Arts and Records Committee of the Inland Marine Underwriters' Association since 2010.



# AMY SHERALD

## prize jury

Amy Sherald (American b. Columbus, GA 1973, lives Baltimore) received her MFA in Painting from the Maryland Institute College of Art (2004), BA in Painting from Clark-Atlanta University (1997), and was a Spelman College International Artist-in-Residence in Portobelo, Panama (1997). She is a recipient of the Joan Mitchell Foundation Painting and Sculpture Grant (2014), a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant (2013), and was most recently awarded a grant in painting from Anonymous Was a Woman (2017). In 2016, Sherald was the first woman to win the Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition grand prize, for which her work will be added to the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery Collection. In the fall of 2017, Amy was commissioned to paint the official portrait of Michele Obama for the NPG; the portrait was unveiled in February of 2018.

Sherald's work has been included in notable group exhibitions at the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York (2017), the California African American Museum, Los Angeles (2017), the Speed Museum of Art, Louisville, KY (2017), and Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, Durham, NC (2016); and moniquemeloche, Chicago (2015). A solo exhibition of new and recent works first opened at the Contemporary Art Museum, St Louis, MO in May 2018 and will travel to Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AK and Spelman College Museum of Fine Art, Atlanta, GA. Sherald's artist residencies include Tong Xion Art Center, Beijing, China (2008), Odd Nerdrum Private Study, Larvik, Norway (2005), Creative Art Alliance, Baltimore (2016), and most recently, the Joan Mitchell Residency, New Orleans (2017). Sherald's work is in notable public collections, including the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C.; the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture, Washington, D.C.; Nasher Museum of Art, Durham, N.C.; Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO; Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, GA; the United States Embassy Dakar, Senegal; and the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C. Sherald is represented by Hauser & Wirth.