

Stephen Friedman Gallery

Forbes

Black, Brown, Non-Binary, Gay, Female: Meet The Forbes 30 Under 30 2021 Art & Style Honorees

Alexandra Sternlicht and Kristin Tablang

1 December 2020

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From a gender nonconforming comics publisher with a \$5 million Kickstarter to a Michelle Obama-loved Black jewelry designer, the next generation of art and style leaders are as powerful as they are diverse.

Matthew Cicanese photographed vipers in Sri Lanka for National Geographic, taught lighting tricks as a Canon USA instructor and started his own consultancy—all as a deaf and blind individual. Hafsah Faizal is the New York Times Bestselling sci-fi author of *We Hunt The Flame* and *We Free The Stars*—she's a traditional Niqab-wearing Muslim woman. And Alton Mason is the first Black male model to walk for Chanel.

These honorees, and the 27 others who made the 2021 Forbes 30 Under 30 Art & Style list, are the new wave of leadership in creativity. They were chosen by fashion designer Tory Burch, supermodel Ashley Graham and artists Kehinde Wiley and Ashley Longshore. “Now more than ever, we need to celebrate creativity and diversity in this country,” says Longshore. “These young, talented powerhouses have blasted the creative scene with authenticity, ambition and brilliance.”

The Forbes 30 Under 30 2021 Art & Style honorees exemplify perseverance and hard choices. Jameel Mohammed, whose jewelry line Khiry is a favorite of Michelle Obama, Serena Williams and Halle Berry, got his start manning the phone at Gepetto's Pizza in Oak Park, Illinois. Joseph Stillwell, who is non-binary, dropped out of Austin Community College because they found it “incredibly boring” to start creator-owned graphic novel publishing house Hivework Comics. Today, the company has raised over \$5 million on Kickstarter and works with over 300 artists.



For many of the fashion founders on the list, smart uses of social media have elevated their brands. Take Boys Lie, named for cofounder Leah O'Malley and Tori Robinson's relationship woes, which has become a multimillion-dollar brand through influencer marketing; the two send t-shirts and hoodies with sassy phrases to people like Ariana Grande, Kylie Jenner, Dua Lipa, who have all been photographed in the brand. Or '90s nostalgia streetwear label By Samii Ryan, which is on track to make \$4 million this year through partnerships with Nordstrom, Zumiez, Care Bears and others. Founder Samantha Franz

started as an Etsy brand, hot-gluing headbands and ear clips. To spread the word, the then-aspiring dental hygienist became a vendor at the Vans Warped Tour, Bamboozle and Bonnaroo. When Nordstrom emailed her to carry her wares in 40 U.S. stores, she dropped out of college to build her brand.

The Forbes 30 Under 30 Art & Style honorees are capturing the resilience, beauty and matter of Black lives in their work. Painter Chase Hall neither attended college nor art school; instead, he became an artist by rendering the Black people he encountered on New York City streets, according to SSense. Today, his paintings of Black resilience belong in the permanent collections at the Institute of Contemporary Art and Rubell Museum, both in

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Miami, Florida, and the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York. Then there's 23-year-old photographer Faith Couch who intends to access the folklore of Black memory through gesture and fragmented portraits. Her work has been shown at International Center of Photography in New York City, the Nasher Museum in Durham, North Carolina, and the African American Museum in Philadelphia, among others. "In the exploration of the autonomy of the Black body," she says, "I aim to create meditative space that lies in suspension between the past and reality, grappling with ideas of vulnerability, independence, and history."

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- Ashley Longshore