

Harper's Bazaar
Talking Points: Creative Forces and Full of Feeling
Charlotte Brook
9 September 2021

BAZAAR

Creative Forces



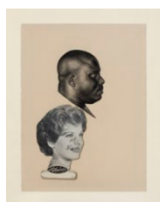
Yinka Shonibare at the Royal Academy in 2017. Right: Mali Morris 'Colour Go Round (7)'



ART

CREATIVE FORCES

How the Royal Academy's Summer Exhibition is opening its doors to underrepresented talent



Yinka Shonibare is reshaping the cultural canon yet again, only this time as the co-ordinator of the Royal Academy's Summer Exhibition, curating the display from 14,000 works of art by the public and Royal Academicians. In April, he shared his vision to 'reclaim magic' in an open call, a deliberate statement of inclusivity. 'Anything that was seen as "ethnic" was considered kind of magical or to do with ritual,' he says. 'The premise of this exhibition is to celebrate world cultures and reclaim magic. Wonderful pieces of art cannot

just be judged on Western art history. That is a very narrow way of looking at it. If we are going by Western academic criteria, we are narrowing access to the wonders of the world.'

Under his aegis, we'll be seeing the inclusion of more women, and racially diverse and disabled artists. The first works visitors will be met with are by Bill Traylor, a self-taught artist who was born into slavery in 1854. 'Given the history of slavery in relation to Britain, opening the show with Bill Traylor makes a very strong point,' he says. 'If he had been alive, he would not believe that he could be the opening artist for the Summer Exhibition.'

Art that challenges ideas of authenticity has long been key to Shonibare's sculptures and installations. When he was at college, making work about politics in Russia, one of his tutors said: 'You are of African origin, so why are you not producing authentic African art?' 'I wondered what he meant by that,' says Shonibare, who grew up in Nigeria. 'Could I not get involved in global issues? Could that not influence my work as an artist?' The brightly coloured batik he is known to use was a result of finding those textiles at Brixton market in search of that authenticity. 'I was told that the fabrics are Indonesian-influenced, produced by the Dutch then sold in West Africa. Then, I realised that culture is actually something organic and constantly evolving, depending on the era you're in.' HELENA LEE 'Summer Exhibition 2021' (www.royalacademy.org.uk) runs from 22 September until 2 January 2022.

Above: Whitfield Lovell's 'Kin XLVII (Rimshot)'. Right: the 2020 Royal Academy Summer Exhibition



YINKA SHONIBARE'S EXHIBITION PICKS



Bill Traylor

'Traylor didn't start his art until he was 85 years old. He grew up a sharecropper on a slave plantation, before moving to Montgomery, Alabama, and depicted figures and monuments from around the city.'



Nnena Kalu

'I'm going to have quite a few artists with learning difficulties and with disabilities. The work of Nnena, a London-based sculptor who has autism, is extraordinary.'



Marie-Rose Lortet

'This 76-year-old French woman uses thread and unconventional materials. She breaks the mould in the way that she works.'

PHOTOGRAPH © DAVID PARRY; MALI MORRIS/COURTESY THE ARTIST; WHITFIELD LOVELL/COURTESY THE ARTIST; BILL TRAYLOR: MAN WITH BARKING DOG (BLUE AND RED CONSTRUCTION), ABOUT 1939-42, PHOTO BY ERIC V. BAUMGARTNER, COURTESY OF HIRSCHL & ADLER; MODERN MARIE-ROSE LORTET: LE MARIN, COURTESY MARIE-ROSE LORTET; Nnena Kalu: STUDIO VOLTAIRE ELSEWHERE, 2020, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND STUDIO VOLTAIRE; CREDIT FRANÇOIS WARE, COPYRIGHT MARINA ADAMS, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND STEPHEN FRIEDMAN GALLERY; LONDON MARINA ADAMS, PHOTO BY GRACE ROSELLI; PANDORA'S BOX PROJECT, COURTESY MARINA ADAMS AND STEPHEN FRIEDMAN GALLERY, LONDON © DANIELLE TAIT, GETTY IMAGES

Stephen Friedman Gallery

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Full of Feeling

TALKING POINTS

EXHIBITIONS

FULL OF FEELING

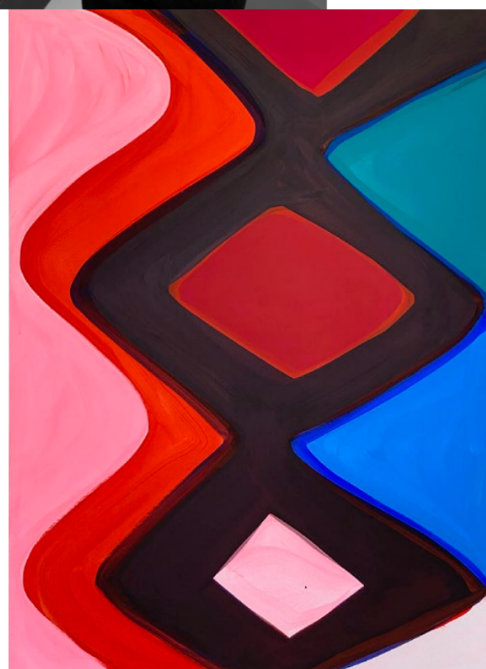
Marina Adams infuses her colourful paintings with intense emotion



Clockwise from above:
Marina Adams'
'Native Sun' (2020).
The artist. 'See-Line
Woman' (2020)

'The labelling of any particular colour with an emotion is rather a cliché – but that is because colours do have immense power to bring out certain feelings,' says the American artist Marina Adams. Her large-scale paintings, known for their vibrant hues, do just that, eliciting a wide spectrum of responses in the viewer that range from invigoration to being profoundly moved. The dynamic abstract compositions in her new body of work, *Wild Is Its Own Way*, are peerless examples of the bold style that has earned her innumerable accolades over her long career. Inspired by everything from nature to the passing of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, they brim with the energy and spontaneity with which they were created. 'As an artist, all that you live through enters you and comes out in the work,' she says. 'I try to go to different places with colour – indeed, with everything.' MARIE-CLAIRE CHAPPEL

'Marina Adams: Wild Is Its Own Way' is at Stephen Friedman Gallery (www.stephenfriedman.com) from 17 September to 23 October.



BOOKS

FOUND OBJECTS

Ruth Ozeki gives voice to household items in her magical new novel



www.harperbazaar.com/uk



If objects could talk, what would they want to tell us? This is the question Ruth Ozeki found herself enthralled by 10 years ago, prompting her to begin writing her latest novel *The Book of Form & Emptiness*. Here, she introduces us to 13-year-old Benny Oh, who starts to hear voices emanating from objects in his home: a broken Christmas-tree ornament, a shoe, a wilting lettuce leaf. 'Once you start thinking like that,' Ozeki says, 'the world turns inside out and everything becomes a little bit scary and a little bit magical.' As Benny's mother develops a hoarding problem, the noise becomes increasingly cacophonous, but he finds refuge in a

library, where things 'knew they had to be quiet' – and where he is encouraged to find his own voice.

The Booker-shortlisted author of *A Tale for the Time Being*, who is a practising Zen priest, explains that this concept came from a Buddhist riddle that asks: 'Do insentient beings speak the dharma?' But it also resonates with the sensory way in which we navigate the world as children. 'I remember being little and feeling that everything was animate,' says Ozeki. 'Everything has volition, everything has desires and needs. I wanted to capture that.' In doing so, Ozeki makes her book itself come alive. BT

'The Book of Form & Emptiness' by Ruth Ozeki (£18.99, Canongate Books) is published on 23 September.



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