

THREE TO WATCH

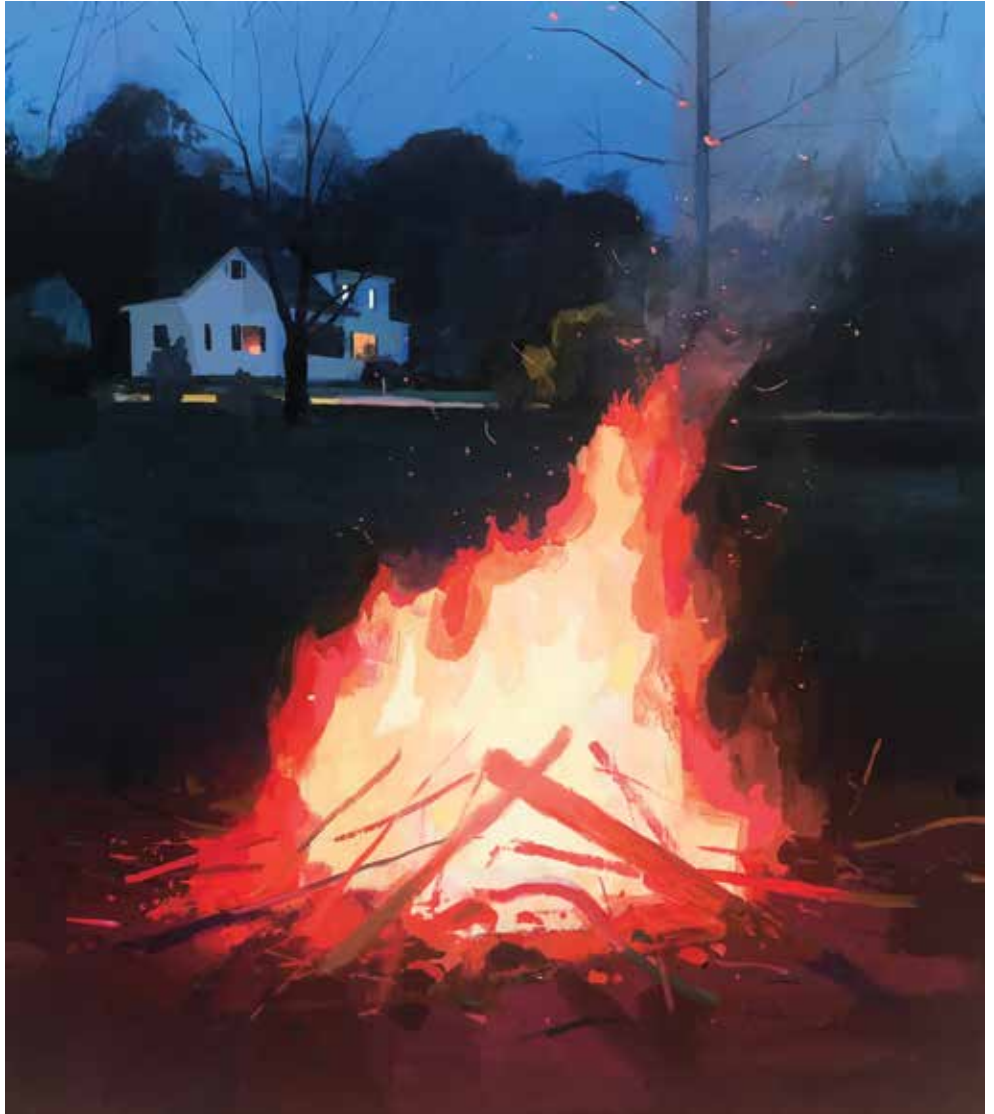
There is a lot of superb art being made these days.
This column shines light on a trio of gifted individuals.

JEREMY MIRANDA (b. 1980) is an environmentalist, but not in the strict textbook sense. As an artist who waxes poetic about his immediate surroundings through paint, he endeavors to make sense of, and bring broader meaning to, the everyday spaces and places we inhabit. In particular, he's interested in closely observing the play of light and intricate color patterns he sees around him in the hope of unearthing some quiet corner or hidden narrative. While environmentalists try to solve such problems as how to eliminate pollution and protect nature, Miranda is helping to solve such visual dilemmas as cursory glances and our tendency to overlook.

A recent painting titled *Home Remedy* is a good example. The brightly blazing fire in the foreground could symbolize numerous things, and often the artist leaves interpretation up to the viewer, but this simple activity took on additional meaning in pandemic times. "Backyard fires have become a kind of lifeline as of late," Miranda shares about this piece completed in 2020. "It is based on the first gathering we had with other people during the first few months of the pandemic, when things felt especially dark and confusing. I felt so thankful for this fire because it allowed us to crawl out of hiding for just a moment, and I wanted to convey not only the physical heat of that night but also the emotional and spiritual warmth."

Like many of Miranda's works, *Home Remedy* is painted in acrylic with strong geometric shapes, sensitively considered color, and effective design. His style has similarities to both the Ashcan School and the Bay Area Artists, in that these painters were deeply attuned to the daily activities and unique characteristics of their specific cities and towns. Miranda also shares stylistic sensibilities with the contemporary group known as Perceptual Painters, who offer their direct and personal response to the visible world with a focus on space, volume, color, and shape.

Miranda learned his technique from a variety of sources, including earning a B.F.A. in painting from the Massachusetts College of Art and Design. Today he makes his home and studio in Kittery, Maine, with his wife, the artist and surface designer Michelle Morin, and their two children.



JEREMY MIRANDA (b. 1980), *Home Remedy*, 2020, acrylic on panel, 54 x 48 in., private collection

MIRANDA is represented by Abend Gallery (Denver), William Baczek Fine Art (Northampton, Massachusetts), Sebastian Foster (Austin), Nahcotta Gallery (Portsmouth, New Hampshire), Room 68 (Provincetown, Massachusetts), and Dianna Witte Gallery (Toronto).



ANNA WYPYCH (b. 1986), *That Obvious Truth ... There Are Many of You*, 2020, oil on canvas, 39 x 24 in., Abend Gallery (Denver).

ANNA WYPYCH (b. 1986) is one of those artists whose paintings become more interesting the more you know about her. A painter based in Gdynia, Poland, Wypych has always marched to the beat of her own drum and has never liked to blend in with the crowd. She reads copious amounts of poetry and philosophy, and concepts and ideas inspired by those readings or her own ruminations often become the starting point of her mesmerizing paintings. As a full-time artist who is also a mother and wife, Wypych typically paints women displaying multifaceted strengths, such as determination, passion, and positivity.

In her painting *That Obvious Truth ... There Are Many of You* – which was part of her *Point of Change ... Thought* solo exhibition at Denver’s Abend Gallery this past December – Wypych turned her attention to nature and the elements, which she describes as offering solace and life-changing realizations during difficult times. After listening to podcasts in which two different artists mentioned the inherent duality in females, she knew she wanted to explore this concept further.

Deep in the forest of her imagination emerged a wandering woman displaying the dualities Wypych wished to express. She went to work bringing this vision to life, and wrote a poem with the same title to accompany the painting. (Its text appears below.) “That sentence sounded like a spell in my head,” the artist explains. “Simultaneously, there are many like you, meaning that you are not alone, and there are many versions of you within you. You are a complex multi-dimensional entity that cannot be easily defined or crossed out.”

**Somewhere in between...
she went for a wander,
to draw a breath
alone in the woods
flame
they are coming, versions of women
go simultaneously
I am many. We are many.**

Wypych describes her painting technique as traditional with elements of hyperrealism, surrealism, and imagination, and she draws an interesting parallel between the places she and her art reside. “I live on the coast of the beautiful Baltic sea,” she says, “and my art traditions are like Poland, located somewhere between traditional eastern Europe and the modern West.” Wypych graduated from the Academy of Arts in Gdansk in 2011 and has since participated in numerous exhibitions and competitions, winning several awards and honors. This March, she will be part of a group exhibition at Principle Gallery in Alexandria, Virginia, as well as an exhibition celebrating International Women’s Day at the Museu Europeu d’Art Modern (MEAM) in Barcelona.

WYPYCH is represented by Abend Gallery (Denver), AnArte Gallery (San Antonio), and Principle Gallery (Alexandria),



MONICA IKEGWU (b. 1998) was born and raised in Baltimore, a place that has played a powerful role in both her life and art. She believes that “Baltimore has a certain energy, and the people here have contagious personalities that make me want to capture them on canvas.” Her earliest paintings often depicted her siblings and other family members, who continue to inspire her as they progress through life.

During middle and high school, Ikegwu experimented with pencils and charcoals, but an “aha” moment came sophomore year when she took a required course in painting. She had originally planned to attend nursing school, but a substantial scholarship to Baltimore’s Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) proved irresistible, and her work evolved significantly during her four years there earning a B.F.A. degree.

Ikegwu has long juxtaposed the seemingly three-dimensional figures of her models against two-dimensional design elements in the background. Initially she experimented with cutting stenciled patterns in plastic and painting them onto her backgrounds. But when Ikegwu discovered that the results were too often compared with the renowned artist Kehinde Wiley (b. 1977), she decided to leave her backgrounds blank. Today she uses paint to evoke textured fabrics visible behind the models, who are now less likely to be family members than other students or even strangers. Ikegwu is open to taking almost anyone on as a model and sees the artist-model relationship as a collaboration: models are free to dress as they like, though she reserves the right

MONICA IKEGWU (b. 1998), *We Gon See You Later*, 2019, oil on canvas, 36 x 48 in., private collection

to take certain liberties, such as altering their garments’ coloring to better complement their skin tones.

Though she began exhibiting in 2018, Ikegwu’s breakthrough came the following year with her first solo show at Los Angeles’s Band of Vices gallery, which she titled *We’ve Always Been Here*. That entire show sold out on opening night, and her senior thesis show at MICA last year was also a success. This past autumn Ikegwu matriculated at the New York Academy of Art, which offers two years of training that culminate with a M.F.A. degree.

Though Ikegwu’s art will surely evolve in New York, it is likely to remain focused on the issues and subtleties she notices within the Black community and in her own life. The resulting images are especially meaningful to a community that has been woefully underrepresented in contemporary painting, and we look forward to seeing where Ikegwu takes them next.

— Charles Moore

IKEGWU is self-represented.