

DC

ARTS AND POWER SPECIAL

THE INSIDER PLAYBOOK

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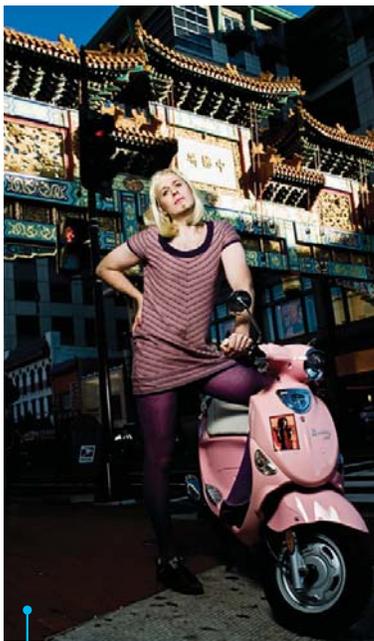
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Ecstatic Chromatic

Get ready for mixed-media mayhem! We pick ten shooting stars from DC's art-world constellation and show how these kaleidoscopic creatives are redefining the city's art scene, one spectacular splash at a time | *By Philippa P. B. Hughes | Photography by Josh Cogan, David Rehor and SOTA Dzine* |



METAMORPHOSIS Jeffrey Cudlin—dressed as Philippa P. B. Hughes, author of this article—has a penchant for satire.



THE COOL KIDS "I feel like I'm changing the world with every brushstroke," says RVLTN of his work with the DC51 collective.



MANN WITH A PLAN Matthew Mann's narrative paintings advance a few colorful story lines.

1. Jeffrey Cudlin

With tongue firmly planted in cheek, this performance and conceptual artist blurs the line between parody and documentary. His savvy, satirical work makes punchy social commentary about DC's art world and the power players that populate it. Critics and the characters he lampooned heaped praise on his film *Ian and Jan: The Washington Body School*. In

the last two years, Cudlin has found new expression as director of exhibitions at the Arlington Arts Center. Look for his newest work at the Flashpoint Gallery next summer. His subject? A collection based on responses to a survey in which he asks DC art scene heavyweights like Tony Podesta and Tyler Green what they think makes an artwork desirable.

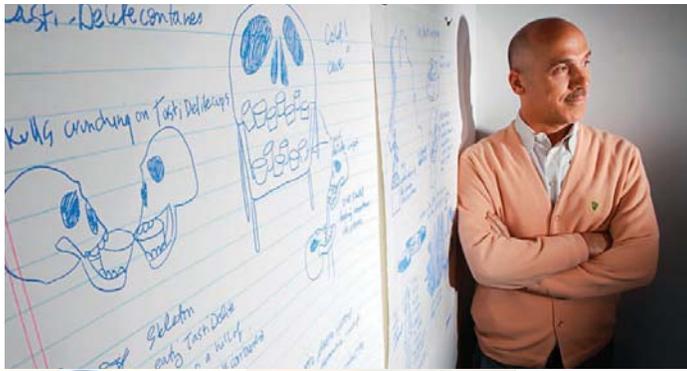
2. DC51 collective

What exactly do street artists DECOY, DIABETIK, OWEL, RVLTN and WHYS do? "We bring paint to the streets, fine art to galleries, gear to the kids, beats to the crowd and politics from the block," says DC's most audacious and talented art collective. Together, the group fuses its energy and creative drive to proclaim socially important

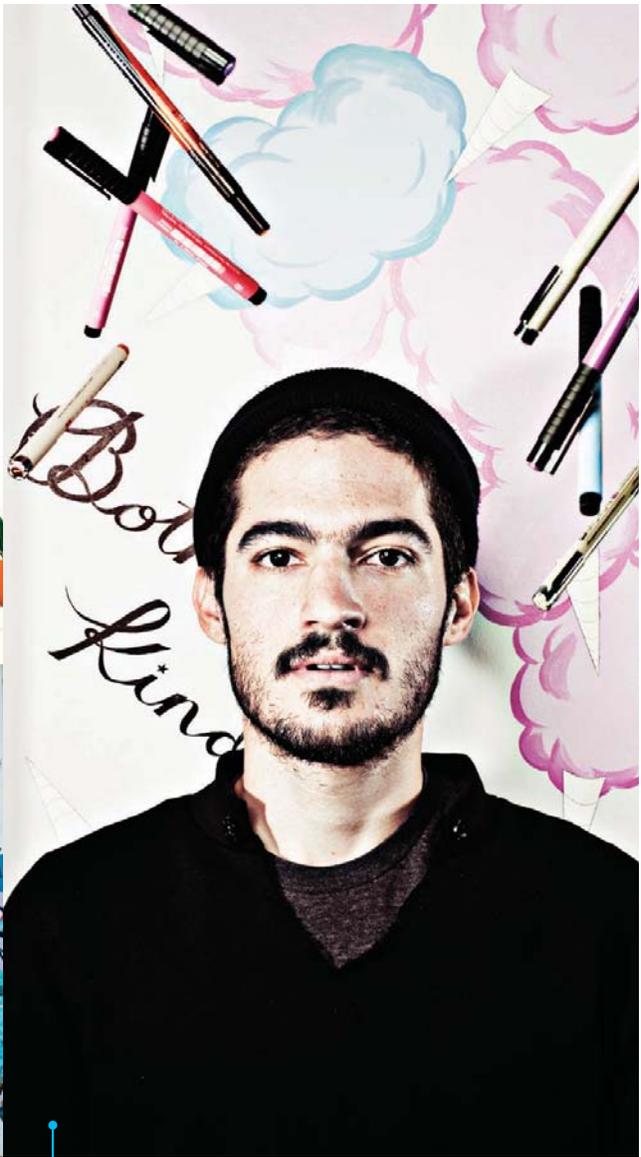
messages, always by their street names and always true to their mission. DECOY's iconic line drawings and positive street messages ("Call Your Mom"), proclaim the the mission of the group, which brings Peep bunnies, candy corn and gingerbread men to construction sites, as well as screen prints, stencils and slogans (on LGBT civil rights, climate change and more) to urban spaces.

3. Matthew Mann

The art of storytelling is at the foundation of this painter's fascinatingly narrative works. Mann mines the conventions of the Old Masters to depict plot-driven pictures that reference our times. The irreverent stories in his paintings are disrupted by playful satire and dark humor that poke fun at our predicaments. CONTINUED...



THE SPACE RACE Installation artist Ryan Hill creates site-specific displays that bring creative allusion to the environment.



STORM FRONT Zach Storm's passion for depicting the invisible—moods, breezes, feelings—are sometimes out-of-sight, but never off-the-wall.

...CONTINUED While wit defines Mann's work, he stands out among his peers for his diligence to craft and curiosity. Next summer, Mann will show his newest body of work at Flashpoint Gallery. The collection will interpret "American-ness" in six large-scale canvases that reference Italian Renaissance paintings and the cowboy gunslinger romanticized by writers and filmmakers.

4. Ryan Hill

The idea that art should relate to its context—whether as counterpoint or complement—is the MO of installation artist Hill, who first considers the architecture of the exhibit, while creating site-specific displays of his drawings. As an artist, Hill is more concerned with engaging the cultural imagination through ideas and emotions

than making references to art history. That said, pop culture, fashion, music and other notions inform his work. Although he's been making and teaching art for years, most recently at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden and George Washington University, he's only recently begun to show, and already, the Civilian Art Projects gallery represents him.

5. Zach Storm

An artist who pairs intellect with whimsy, Storm turns the most basic component of art, the line, into an evocative tool for expression. Constantly pushing boundaries, his exhibitions of drawings on paper and canvas are always accompanied by wall drawings. It's there one gets insight into all that's liberating to Storm.

After all, everything is possible when you know it will eventually be painted over. The artist delights in communicating the invisible—like a gust of wind or the unhappy energy between two people. Storm is represented by Conner Contemporary Art's gogo art projects initiative and will show next at the arts organization Transformer. CONTINUED...



AN AX TO GRIND Patrick McDonough takes a swing at sculptural expression.

IN THE MIX Nekisha Durrett's massive, colorful creations—purple bears at the theater—begin as drawings, but gain new vitality in mixed-media formats.

THE DARK NIGHT William Knipscher is a sharpshooter of shady scenes.

...CONTINUED

6. Patrick McDonough

Selected by Anne Collins Goodyear, a curator at the National Portrait Gallery for the Washington Project for the Arts biennial *OPTIONS* show, McDonough is an art star in the making. As a sculptor, he works to fabricate concrete objects that convey his ethereal ideas. In examining what it means to be masculine,

for instance, he explores the traditionally feminine by sewing decorative tapestries or swinging an ax that has been lodged in a pretty pink tree stump. Games, decorations and the construction of personal identity inspire him. McDonough's work features in *Bilateral Engagement* through Jan. 15 at the Art Museum of the Americas, near the National Mall.

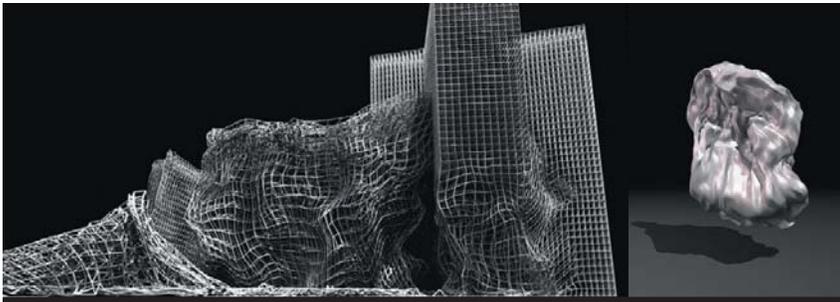
7. Nekisha Durrett

Bold colors, compound shapes and large-scale representations are a few physical qualities of Durrett's mixed-media work. But creative qualities are what makes Durrett's work hard to frame, both literally and figuratively. Inspired by the illustrated children's books she loves, her works fill large rooms with whimsical characters

that tell a pictorial story for adults. Durrett's bright, colorful graphic drawings are created digitally and then transferred to unusual materials like the adhesive vinyl she recently stuck to the walls at the Hillyer Art Space. Collectors such as Peggy Cooper Cafritz are drawn to the energy of Durrett, a specialist of exhibits at the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery.

8. William Knipscher

A love of filmmaking and suggestive lighting informs Knipscher's photographs of eerie night scenes. Using long exposures, he turns settings that are mundane by day, into dreamy and provocative stages lit by night's glow. Knipscher's work stood out in a recent group photography show curated by Corcoran **CONTINUED...**



POST STRUCTURALIST Digital media star Brandon Morse builds and then creatively destroys intricate computer-generated worlds.

ARMED AND DANGEROUS Lily deSaussure's work is a little trad and a little mad.

...CONTINUED professor Jared Ragland at Vivid Solutions, an emerging art space in Anacostia. A recent Corcoran graduate, Knipscher has drawn on a range of experience in his work. His stunning photographs reveal an intellectual depth uncommon in photography. "You have to live a little to have something to show the world," says Knipscher.

9. Brandon Morse
If you feel that order is forever teetering on the brink of total chaos, Morse is the artist for you. A digital media creative who straddles the world of technology and fine art, Morse uses open-source software to create organized systems that, with the introduction of virtual objects, eventually collapse into chaos. This mesmerizing, computer-

generated video art is a shattering spectacle that's both grandiose and specific. Conner Contemporary showed his work in a highly-acclaimed solo show last January. Blue-chip art collector Mera Rubell, owner of the Capitol Skyline Hotel, pronounced Morse's works "brilliant!" The artist showed in TORINOver 09 in Italy and the Nanjing Museum in China last year.

10. Lily deSaussure
In an age when many artists are moving toward digital media, deSaussure still makes art with her hands: images stitched onto paper, painstakingly recreated from photographs. The iconic shapes are drawn from snapshots of familiar scenes—groups of friends with their arms around each other's shoulders or a daughter cuddled in her

mother's arms. The layered works suggest the fuzziness of memory. Autumn found deSaussure in a residency at Margaret Boozer's Red Dirt Studio in Mt. Rainier, Md., which culminated in an installation that runs from Dec. 12–Jan. 16. Armed with a M.F.A. from American University, deSaussure represents a contemporary approach to creating art with an edge. ■