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THE ROOT

10 Female Artists of Color on the Rise

Jessica Stafford Davis

March 22, 2016

When we think about history, we find that there are defining moments we can embrace in every era. Art happens to be one endeavor that consistently informs us about the history and culture of past societies. Whether it is a performance, literary or visual, art is significant. For this very reason, it is the mission of the Agora Culture, which I founded in 2013, to make people more aware of art's importance.

Vanessa German is a performance and visual artist who lives and works in Pittsburgh. She creates mixed-media assemblage—collages with three-dimensional found objects—to create “contemporary power figures,” in her words, inspired by Congolese power figures. Through these creations, most of which depict huge black women that some would consider intimidating, she symbolically lifts women who are often seen negatively. German’s work has been included in several public collections, including those at the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, Ark., and the David C. Driskell Center in College Park, Md.

After having this experience and spending time learning from seasoned collectors and art professionals, I believed that there was an opportunity to expose and educate others like myself. My goal is to add more diversity to the art conversation and to make people more aware that art is one of the few investments you can enjoy while it holds its value through generations and appreciates. Art builds a legacy.

One way that the Agora Culture cultivates this understanding and helps to make art more accessible is through our Art Basics classes. These online classes are a quick and easy guide through the art world for new art appreciators. We teach the important things you need to know before starting a collection, how to navigate an art museum, and which contemporary art fairs to attend, such as Art Basel and Frieze.

More importantly, we provide access to emerging artists whose work has a high probability of increasing in value over time. For example, we offer Art Salons that give new collectors opportunities to meet up-and-coming artists. These salons allow collectors to learn more about the artist’s work and practice in a comfortable environment, as well as network with other collectors. Finally, we combine these two components in a large event called Art on the Vine at Martha’s Vineyard. This year it will be held Aug. 16 in Edgartown, Mass. This one-day event will provide collectors and art appreciators with access to 25 contemporary artists who are on the rise, before their work soars out of reach.

In the spirit of Women’s History Month and the Agora Culture’s commitment to art education, we have selected 10 female artists of color you should keep your eye on. These women have exceptional

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pedigrees and have exhibited their work both nationally and internationally. Some have advanced degrees from noted art schools or have participated in top art residencies such as the Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture and the Studio Museum in Harlem's Artist-in-Residence program.

Beyond these artists' education and experience, what the Agora Culture is most excited about is how they are approaching form and the figure. Some of the artists are placing the black body in positions that continue to challenge stereotypes, dispel myths and celebrate diversity.

Vanessa German

