

SPECIAL FOCUS

words MARTIN HERBERT

Twenty-five artists to look out for in 2007

Future

left to right, from top: Thomas Houseago, Thomas Zipp, Bertram Hasenauer, Akino Kondoh, Adel Abdessemed, Ry Rocklen, Rosson Crow, Cheyney Thompson, Robert McNally, Joel Tauber, Paulina Olowka, Håvard Homstvedt, David Noonan, Karen Russo, Kate Atkin, Doug Fishbone, Katy Moran, Alex Pollard, Zilvinas Kempinas, Rezi van Lankveld, Chris Evans, John Russell, Melvin Moti, Michael Simpson, Jaime Pitarch

Greats

PLUS: For a guide to what's new in the New York artworld, check out the first in a series of supplements to ArtReview's digital edition, including a guide to the city's hottest new galleries, Kalup Linzy's audio tour of the emerging-art scene, listings and much more.



Who Began the Streets, 2004
acrylic on board, 48 x 54 cm. Courtesy the artist and
Stuart Shave Modern Art, London

Katy

HERE'S HOW HOLLYWOOD WOULD TELL IT. Artist mounts her MA display, and a leading dealer (Modern Art's Stuart Shave) sees it and offers her a show. This leads to a group exhibition in New York (at 303 Gallery). Artist clicks her heels three times; someone from Gagolian sees that show, offers her a working relationship. A mere year after graduation she's catapulting towards the sort of dizzy heights that require oxygen masks. And that is Katy Moran's story – sort of, if you ignore the earlier training in graphic design, the below-the-radar period selling out of a studio in Manchester and, to hear her describe it, the befuddled entry into the London artworld. Her success, now it's come, is well deserved. Hazily figurative, opulent yet obstinate, Moran's paintings are unlike anything else out there right now.

My first impression of them – sumptuous paint strokes that loosely signal human activities or landscapes, rich palette of blues, greens, pinks and greys – suggested the floury end of eighteenth-century painting (Gainsborough, Watteau, Fragonard, etc.) reduced to some kind of sensuous essence. And indeed Moran is interested in that stuff, but at a distance. No sentimentalist, she's fascinated by "things on the line between awful and wonderful. When I'm making a painting, I get quite excited by how close to awful I can push it, while getting something really quite lovely as well. If anything it's the regurgitations of the eighteenth century I'm interested in, the stuff that ends up on the walls of kebab shops and hairdressers." As such, her work – with its direct address to the viewer's sensibilities – is intensely concerned with the vagaries of taste.

Reflecting that balance between attraction and repulsion is quite a trick, it turns out. "I work upside down," says Moran, using inverted images pulled from the Internet. "They're finished when I can see a figurative element in them... through the paint I'm searching for the thing it reminded me of, or suggested to me, and trying to get close to that thing." The paintings aren't always particularly readable as image, but they're eloquent in mood, inspired among other things by Francis Bacon's idea that unintentional paint marks suggest a more convincing reality. Moran is not on Bacon's level yet, but then she's in pursuit of a different horde of images, pulling in multiple directions, inspiring quiet anxiety alongside visual pleasure. Given her recent rise, is she worried about becoming locked into a market-pleasing way of working? "Not at all," says Moran. "I'm doing exactly what I want, and I feel like I haven't compromised one bit." Spoken like a star.