

# Cream of the Crop

Each year, thousands of artists from around the world submit entries to Art Renewal Center's *International Salon Exhibition*, the largest competition, and one of the most prestigious, for contemporary representational art. Last year nearly 5,500 artists vied to be one of the 100 selected for the exhibition, resulting in top tier works across a wide range of subjects and styles.

In a special partnership between Rehs Contemporary and Art Renewal Center, the gallery curated an exhibition to showcase the works of nine of the organization's most extraordinary member artists. In previous years, Rehs has focused on a specific genre—figurative works, landscapes, birds—to create a cohesive exhibition but this year they are taking a different approach.

"Instead of distinctly selecting artists



that 'hang well together,' we simply focused on the quality of their work," says gallery vice president and director Lance Rehs. "That allows for a more eclectic presentation, which we feel reflects the *Salon* as a whole."

Among the featured artists is Tina Spratt, whose exquisitely rendered *Elysium* will take center stage in the exhibition. The piece depicts a woman atop an intricately embroidered satin kimono, luxuriously running her hands through her auburn brown hair as it cascades off the edge of the bed.

Spratt, who resides in Somerset, England, takes a modern interpretation of her classical influences to explore the intersection of beauty, sensuality and vulnerability. "Through the placement of the female figure in intimate yet ambiguous settings, I often use the fabrics as a metaphor for human emotions," she says. "In my narrative paintings, featuring a single female figure in domestic settings, I delve into the complexities of solitude



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and introspection within everyday life. These works serve as reflections on modern existence, encouraging viewers to contemplate the intricacies of the human condition.” About this piece specifically she says, “*Elysium* is a beautiful place that promises happiness and joy, somewhere that captures our imagination and worries disappear. Her pose embodies a sense of relaxation and tranquility, with a touch of drama...Ultimately, the painting encourages viewers to contemplate the mysterious aspects of the human experience, inviting inner reflection.”

Another highlight of the exhibition is a series of Shana Levenson’s distinctive Mylar balloon paintings which combine the highly synthetic artificial materials with the lush, organic nature of flowers. “By painting these Mylar word balloons hyper-realistically and the

flower backgrounds slightly softer, I play with the juxtaposition of the longevity of Mylar and the fragility of a flower,” says Levenson. “While both objects are given at times of need, whether it’s a celebration or sending condolences, both items are gifted to send a message to someone we care about. And while both, when given, can bring great meaning to a person, words tend to last longer when said in a certain context.” In *So Gucci* she is adding another layer by combining emblems of luxury and pop culture, with the natural opulence of the florals.

Margo Selski drew inspiration from the whimsical world of *Alice in Wonderland* for her show piece *Training Bonsai*, which features two young women in layers of sumptuous fabric and bonnets of flowers, their toes cushioned in a carpet of fresh grass, while the

**1** Margo Selski, *Training Bonsai*, oil on linen, 36 x 47”

**2** Shana Levenson, *So Gucci*, oil on panel, 30”

**3** Tina Spratt, *Elysium*, oil on canvas panel, 30 x 36”





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bonsai artist in rose-colored glasses masters her craft. “I am a figurative, surrealist oil painter interested in an imaginary world that is nuanced, sly, quirky, dark, uncanny and fabular,” says Selki. “I use a theatrical cast of characters—queens, young girls, flora and fauna, predator and prey to play out aspects of my memories, persona and concerns, bringing a sense of stability through various real and mythical scenarios.”

In *Training Bonsai*, “my dainty trio lounge in a lush utopia-like garden of delight, like two young socialites enjoying an English high tea. Their pet wears wing-tipped Oxfords and appears weightless as he nibbles on a bonsai branch, while the bonsai artist, in rose-colored glasses, masters her craft.”

In addition to paintings by Allen Douglas, Greg Hildebrandt, Roland Mikhail, Christine Porter Lofaro, and Mike Wimmer, the exhibition will also feature the fantastical sculptures of Dan Chudzinski.

Chudzinski, who serves as the director of cura-

tion and exhibitions at Ohio’s Mazza Museum at the University of Findlay, will present his larger-than-life-size sculpture *The Great Owl*. “My current exploration of cryptids (animals whose existence has not yet been scientifically verified) is the culmination of lessons, techniques and experiences gained throughout my journey of artistic discovery,” he says. “Like an alchemist, I strive to transform mundane materials into something truly magical...Simply put, it is my job to provoke wonder.”

“We are thrilled to present this exceptional group of artists whose works exemplify the highest standards of artistic excellence,” said gallery co-director Alyssa Rehs. “From traditional techniques to innovative approaches, each artist offers a fresh perspective that is sure to enthrall visitors.” ●

**Rehs Contemporary** 20 W. 55<sup>th</sup> Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor • New York, NY 10019 • (212) 355-5710 • [www.rehs.com](http://www.rehs.com)

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**Michael Wimmer,**  
*Companions*, oil on panel, 20 x 16”

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**Dan Chudzinski,** *The Great Owl*, mixed media silicone sculpture, 61½ x 32 x 30½”

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**Greg Hildebrandt,**  
*21<sup>st</sup> Century*, acrylic on canvas, 52 x 38”