

# YOUNG ARTISTS

## TO PLACE YOUR BETS ON

The works of artmakers below 35 years old offer the possibility of a significant return on investment



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Arts Correspondent

The price of a young artist's work can double overnight.

For Shavonne Wong, it more than doubled after British movie star Idris Elba not only bought three of her digital artworks, but also posted about them on TikTok on Jan 13.

The works were sold as non-fungible tokens (NFTs) on the sales portal OpenSea.

In less than two weeks, the price for Wong's work went from around 0.02 to 0.32 ETH (Ethereum cryptocurrency, around \$820 to \$1,300).

NFTs are unique digital tokens which offer proof of ownership and are recorded on a digital ledger known as the blockchain.

Wong, 31, does concede that prices of Love Is Love, which comprises 500 individual artworks, have since come down.

Still, the thrill of owning art that increases in value dramatically is definitely one reason to invest in a young artist.

Pick the right artist, regardless of whether the medium is digital or even spray paint, and there is also

the appeal of instant street cred.

But it is not easy to find the work of young artists as many galleries prefer to represent more established names.

Artcommune gallery director Ho Sou Ping says: "Due to the lower price points of younger artists, even if we earn 100 per cent of the selling price, it is still lower than the commissions we can receive for established artists in terms of absolute amount."

"From a business perspective, it may not make sense for us to represent young artists."

While artcommune gallery does support some young artists, many are off the radar and some even go underground until a shift in the zeitgeist throws a spotlight on them.

In Britain, for instance, the street artist Banksy was once considered a vandal for his graffiti in the 1990s. Now, he can command seven-figure sums for his art.

In October, a Banksy artwork sold for around US\$25 million (S\$33.7 million) at auction house Sotheby's in London.

Affordability and the possibility of a significant return on investment aside, rebellion and a sense of an emerging counter-culture are interesting aspects of the works of young artists.

Should these works become mainstream a couple of decades down the road, one would regret not picking them up while their creators were still considered the advance guard.

Here are eight artists under the age of 35 you should not miss out on collecting.

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Sculpture in steel, stainless steel mesh, rope and eyebolts (left) titled fingers crossed (waiting-for-that-good-morning-text) (2021) by Joshua Kane Gomes (above, hugging another of his sculptures titled Mood III). Prices for Gomes' works are between \$1,000 and \$6,800 from Richard Koh Fine Art. PHOTOS: RICHARD KOH FINE ART

### Joshua Kane Gomes, 29

Artists make themselves vulnerable just by showing their work in public and exposing it to criticism. It usually does not become part of the work itself, which is why Malaysian artist Joshua Kane Gomes' recent sculptures are an interesting study of the mind of the artist, who had considered giving up art after graduating from the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts in 2017.

He was given his big break by gallerist Richard Koh, who says he likes Gomes' "uncanny ability to combine vulnerability with levity. Gomes had his first solo show at Richard Koh Fine Art in Kuala Lumpur in 2019.

**Price point:** Between \$1,000 and \$6,800 from Richard Koh Fine Art



### Israfil Ridhwan, 23

The art world in Singapore may have just found its enfant terrible in Israfil Ridhwan. His provocative, narrative-driven paintings are characterised by a dramatic use of shadow or chiaroscuro. Subtly menacing, they exude an undercurrent of sexuality.

After graduating from the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts in 2020, he went on to have his first solo show at Cuturi Gallery last

year and his works sold out.

His paintings are done mostly in oils, but have included spray paint and acrylic marker.

**Price point:** Prices for the artworks at his first solo show were between \$1,000 and \$3,000. He is represented by Cuturi Gallery. PHOTOS: CUTURI GALLERY



Digitally manipulated photo art by Howie Kim, titled Selfie 4. Price on request. PHOTO: HOWIE KIM

### Howie Kim, 31

You will either love or hate the narcissism in Howie Kim's pop confections – over 87,000 of his Instagram followers apparently love it.

His sense of the surreal has also made him popular in the advertising world, with commissions for big brands such as HWC Schaffhausen, Universal Music, DBS and Tiger Beer.

"I still consider this my art," he says.

Buyers have contacted him directly via Instagram and he has sold paintings for around \$3,000. While he has also sold NFT art, he has mixed feelings about the NFT art scene, which he describes as art "on steroids". Though you might also describe his work with those same words.

**Price point:** Prices for digital prints on archival paper start at \$250 and NFT art under his online handle Bongliikr759 starts at about 0.1 ETH on OpenSea.



Artist Shavonne Wong (far left) with her artwork, titled Year Of The Tiger. She also produced pieces like The Kiss (left). PHOTOS: SAMUEL ANG, SHAVONNE WONG

### Shavonne Wong, 31

The digital realm has helped to create a space for young artists like Shavonne Wong by democratising an art world that usually exists within the confines of museums and galleries.

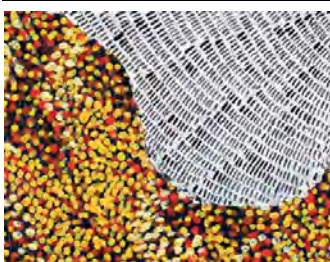
With a diploma from Temasek Polytechnic, a smattering of 3D computer knowledge and a previous career as a photographer, Wong decided she would become an artist in 2020.

Without the validation of

curators, gallerists or sponsors, she put up work on online platforms and they sold.

But that is not what she finds noteworthy. "I get to say what culture is," she says.

**Price point:** Wong recently sold an NFT artwork on the exclusive SuperRare site for 4 ETH (Ethereum cryptocurrency, \$12,400). Her Love Is Love series is still available on OpenSea, with a starting price of around 0.1 ETH.



A detail of a painting in acrylic on canvas by Wayan Novi (below) titled Sunflower. This is available at Art Porters Gallery for \$6,000. PHOTOS: ART PORTERS GALLERY

### Wayan Novi, 33

Yogyakarta-based Balinese artist Wayan Novi was discovered by the founders of Singapore gallery Art Porters, who marvelled at the textures of his work.

Created by way of mark-making on canvas or in his sculptures, the artworks look almost like sketches scratched in sand.

The artist has lived among farmers

since he was young and did not even have a bank account or passport until he came to Singapore for his first solo show in 2018.

With Novi, the primitivism is not an affectation and there is a raw beauty behind his laboured pointillism. **Price point:** From \$3,500 for sculptures and \$2,000 for paintings from Art Porters Gallery



A video artwork titled Resigning Mass Redux (above), by Tristan Lim (below), which is being sold as an NFT for 1.5 ETH at The Columns Gallery. PHOTOS: TRISTAN LIM, SAMUEL ANG

### Tristan Lim, 28

Tristan Lim says he has been creating video art persistently for about five years.

It is a medium that is hard to sell, but as far as he is concerned, "not selling doesn't matter" as he supports himself with freelance jobs.

With the advent of the digital art market, this could change. He was selected to show new work at an NFT showcase by The Columns Gallery at the S.E.A. Focus art fair last month.

Gallery director Dong Jo Chang says Lim was chosen because he is a "fine artist who specialises in both 3D (three-dimensional) and AR (augmented reality)".



If as some tech titans believe, the future exists in the metaverse, then Lim's art might just be what will be hanging on those "metawalls". **Price point:** His NFT art starts at 1.5 ETH from The Columns Gallery.

Flattery (right), a ceramic artwork by Fyon Cheong (far right), \$1,300 from Common Touch Craft Unit.

PHOTOS: MEIXIANG LIM/VISUAL ARTS DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION SINGAPORE

### Dominic Thian, 26

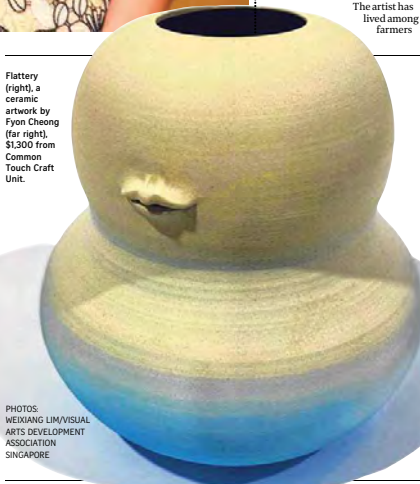
The Modernism movement was followed by Postmodernism – a rejection, broadly, of the machine age of the early 20th century.

With the rise of technology in the information age, could the post-techno art movement be on its way?

In the work of artist Dominic Thian, it is already here. He studied at the Grand Central Atelier in New York, which is known for its classical art education, and his skill and technique in the style of European masters is impressive. **AC43 Gallery manager Wong Pei Lin** says the gallery decided to



represent Thian because he has the potential to become collectible. **Price point:** Between \$900 and \$2,400 from AC43 Gallery



### Fyon Cheong, 28

Working with clay is a process of creation that is sometimes associated with giving life. So it is only natural that Fyon Cheong's sculptures have an unmistakable anthropomorphic quality.

Yet, her work looks not so much human, but like creatures that have emerged from her subconscious. She calls it the "perfect medium for exploring my captivation in the beauty of life's impermanence".

Ms Deborah Lim, curator and junior partner at curatorial, advisory and artist management business Chan + Hori Contemporary, says Cheong's work has a delicateness and tenderness that is not easy to achieve with ceramics. "Her work is evolving in both scale and complexity."

**Price point:** Cheong's work is available through Common Touch Craft Unit. Prices range between \$800 and \$2,500.



Artist Dominic Thian's (left) painting in oil on linen, Ascension (above). It was sold at artcommune gallery for \$2,300. PHOTOS: ARTCOMMUNE GALLERY, DOMINIC THIAN

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