

CREATIVE GROWTH

Creative Growth Artist Bios: NADA Miami 2023

NADA Miami 2023 featured artists include Alice Wong, Dan Miller, Jorge Gomez, Juan Aguilera, Latefa Noorzai, Monica Valentine, Nathaniel Jackson, and Ron Veasey.

ALICE WONG

Born 1980 in Hong Kong
Creative Growth Art Center, 2003-present

Alice Wong was born in Hong Kong in 1980, and came to Creative Growth in 2003 when she moved to California with her family. Wong concentrated on drawing and ceramics until 2013, when she began painting on vintage photographs using enamel and acrylic markers. Wong has since become known for her photographic transformations. Using blocks of color to enhance or obscure her subjects, an approach reminiscent of Baldessari's work, Wong forces the viewer to search for contextual clues and meaning by both orienting the viewer and suggesting abstraction. Vividly saturated, Wong's interpretations of vintage and historical photographs breathe new life into static compositions. With a preference for Victorian and mid-century subject matter, Wong transforms the concept of nostalgia into living documentation. In 2023 TBW partnered with Creative Growth to produce two photobooks of Alice Wong's photographs. A monograph titled, "Painting Photographs" and a flip book titled "Man Unraveling" are an opportunity for new audiences to experience the brilliance of Alice's work.

DAN MILLER

Born 1961 in Castro Valley, California
Creative Growth Art Center, 1992-present

Dan Miller's artwork is composed of obsessive overlays of words and imagery that often build to the point of abstraction. Each work contains a written record of Miller's interests in hardware stores, lightbulbs, electrical sockets and familiar people, however only a few words are identified in its final stage. Largely nonverbal, Miller was taught at an early age to write words and numbers in order to communicate. This became the primary influence on his artistic practice, transforming text into graphic elements, and employing an abstracted visual language as a tool of inquiry and expression.

Miller has had solo exhibitions at White Columns, Andrew Edlin Gallery, and Ricco Maresca Gallery in New York, Galerie Christian Berst in Paris, and Diane Rosenstein Gallery in Los Angeles. His work was selected for the Venice Biennale in 2017, and has been included in exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art; Smithsonian American Art Museum; Berkeley Art Museum; The Museum of Everything, London; Gavin Brown's enterprise, Rachel Uffner Gallery and Partners & Spade, New York; Gallery Paule Anglim, Jules Maeght and 836M, San Francisco; Nina Johnson Gallery, Miami; John Michael Kohler Arts Center, Sheboygan; Galerie

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Christian Berst and ABCD, Paris. Miller's work is included in the permanent collections of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, Centre Pompidou, American Folk Art Museum, Berkeley Art Museum, Mad Musée, and the Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne. Miller's work is also included in the private collections of David Byrne, Cindy Sherman, Maurizio Cattelan, Martin and Rebecca Eisenberg, Thea Westreich and Ethan Wagner, Nicolas Rohatyn and Jeanne Greenberg Rohatyn, Andy and Kate Spade, among many others.

JORGE GOMEZ

Born 1956 in Havana, Cuba

Creative Growth Art Center, 1986-present

Jorge Gomez depicts fantastic worlds inhabited by people and animals who live and interact in vividly articulated suburban settings. He places his surreal cartoon-like figures in forests or fountains, and they often appear to be in a moment of transformation, not entirely human or animal but expressing his "other side." He also creates lush floral paintings reminiscent of his tropical homeland of Cuba, and describes his story of immigrating to the United States. In ceramic, Gomez hand builds incredibly complex and detailed constructions of cars, shoes, and water fountains.

JUAN AGUILERA

Born 1966 in Mexico

Creative Growth Art Center, 1998-present

Juan Aguilera emigrated to the United States from Mexico at the age of eight. Often paying homage to his homeland, Aguilera fuses female imagery with flowering plants and other organic content - a gesture that the artist describes as a symbolic nod to the matriarch. He plays out this devotion to female forms and their undergarments in a variety of media - painting, printmaking, ceramic, and wood. His interest in the subject isn't sensational. Rather, the rendered garments become a profound and multifaceted vessel for feminine energy. Something of an alchemist, Aguilera's most recent practice combines his established drawing and painting style with assemblage by pouring thick layers of gel medium onto pages laden with real bras and panties.

LATEFA NOORZAI

Born 1960, Kabul, Afghanistan

Has practiced at Creative Growth since 2012

Latefa Noorzai, a native Farsi speaker and immigrant to the United States, quickly established her studio practice at Creative Growth despite obstacles of communication and cultural

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navigation. Noorzai's tenacity is demonstrated in her bold portrait paintings inspired by a plethora of source material. Her strong and stark outlines, rendered with immediacy, provide loose structure for the heavy and confident brush strokes that permeate her figures with dynamic expression and presence. A master of color, Noorzai paints figures that are, like herself, bright, mercurial, and undaunted by the gaze of others. Noorzai's work is included in Hannah Rieger's permanent Art Brut Collection and was nominated for Outsider Art Fair's Art Absolutement Award in 2019.

MONICA VALENTINE

Born 1965 in San Mateo, California
Creative Growth Art Center, 2012-present

Monica Valentine's primary practice takes the form of optically charged sculptures composed of foam shapes that are densely covered with beads and sequins. Valentine is blind and wears prosthetic eyes, having lost her sight at birth. Working with great dexterity, Valentine threads sequins and beads onto thin pins, then uses her hands to feel along the foam form in order to find their placement. The process is rhythmic and calculated; Valentine's exacting standards of bead size and color, foam shape and material, result in forms that are whole and perfect in their being. Visually rich and luminous, her sculptures are either monochromatic (red is her favorite color), or blooming with multiple hues across the visual plane as Valentine creates layers by juxtaposing the colors of sequins and beads. Color dominates and informs much of Valentine's life, and her ability to feel the color of an object by its temperature (a form of synesthesia) is just one way that she uses color to orient and empower herself in her environment. Introduced by touch to a SAORI loom in 2019, Valentine weaves in monochromatic yarns until the piece outgrows the loom. Working exclusively in red, orange, green, or blue, her long textiles have a distinctive looped fringe on the left side that forms as she extends the shuttle to feel the yarn's tension before starting the next row.

NATHANIEL JACKSON

Born 1998
Creative Growth Art Center, 2014-present

Nathaniel Jackson operates in the realm of Kaiju monster iconography, his ultimate hero being Godzilla. Engrossed with the vibrant palette of pop culture, he role-plays a saga of interspecies monster love stories and battles through drawings and textiles. With a sophisticated hand, Jackson brings fantastical creatures to life with expressive linework. Jackson is a member of the Creative Growth Youth Program.

RON VEASEY

Born 1957 in Las Vegas, Nevada
Creative Growth Art Center, 1981-present

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An early participant in Creative Growth's programming, Ron Veasey's work has evolved in technique and scale in his four decades in the Studio, but his fundamental interest in the human form as a vehicle for color and line remains central to his practice. Whether a sloping neck or a glancing eye, Veasey's carefully considered portraits are completed methodically and with great intention. Veasey slowly and steadily moves through the stages of image selection, outline, color choice, and then painting. His inspiration comes from fashion magazines or books of photography, and he can take hours or days to identify the perfect muse. Veasey begins a new piece in pencil, paring his subject down to essential detail and often omitting the background in favor of charged color fields. Committing his linework to paper in black marker, Veasey's interlocking abstract shapes make up the figure and articulate facial expressions. Veasey uses vivid hues of acrylic paint to flood every plane with unidimensional color, including his signature yellow eyes and teeth. The result is an image that is at once graphic and sculptural - a distillation of color and form that allows the viewer to focus on the gesture of a stare. The gaze of the portrait becomes the fundamental subject of the work, unflinching in its connection with the viewer.