



Katie O'Hagan, *Portrait of the Collectors, Steven Alan Bennett and Dr. Elaine Melotti Schmidt*, oil on canvas, 78 x 58"



# The Bennett Prize 2.0

*The 10 finalists of the second Bennett Prize are among the most dynamic and uniquely talented artists working in figurative realism today.*

In 2018 art collectors Steven Alan Bennett and Dr. Elaine Melotti Schmidt announced *The Bennett Prize* for women figurative realist painters. Bennett and Schmidt's collection, which has been growing over the past decade, focuses on this frequently overlooked area of the art world. Troubled by the trends of realism falling in favor to contemporary art and the underrepresentation of women in museums and galleries, *The Bennett Prize*, through the Pittsburgh Foundation's Center for Philanthropy, was created as a way to propel the careers of women artists and give them the acclaim they deserve.

The *Prize* was first awarded in 2019 to Aneka Ingold, who was selected from an esteemed group of 10 finalists for the first \$50,000 prize, which is given as \$25,000 over two years to help them create a body of work for a new museum exhibition. The 10 finalists for *The Bennett Prize 2.0* were announced on November 30 after more than 670 entrants submitted their work for review from a four-member jury made up of artists Alyssa Monks and Katie O'Hagan; Patrick Moore, director of The Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh; and Bennett.

Selected this year were Sophia-Yemisi Adeyemo-Ross, Tanmaya Bingham, Chloe Chiasson, June Glasson, Holly Keogh, Lavelly Miller, Rebecca Orcutt, Ayana Ross, Su Su and Amy Wernitz.

"As a juror for *The Bennett Prize*, I was delighted to see

the diversity of artists who applied and the range of their approaches to figurative realism," says Moore in a press release. "The 10 finalists selected reflect the richness of how female artists choose to depict the most personal of subjects—the body. I also really appreciated that the jurors had a wide range of viewpoints. Viewers will see that this contributed to a rich and varied exhibition."

The artwork in the show represents a range of styles, mediums and subjects that show the varied and individual viewpoints of the artists who create them. They are oftentimes personal accounts, but still allow the viewer to join in the work by completing narratives or relating to the subjects depicted. An underlying theme throughout the artwork is the connectivity to today's worlds. Each artist uses their own perspectives on topics such as race, society, politics, gender and the human condition, and places it within contexts that can be felt through emotional weight or universal experiences.

The 2.0 finalists will exhibit their work at the Muskegon Museum of Art, slated for May 20 to September 12, where the winner of *The Bennett Prize* will be announced. The finalist show will then travel to venues in Florida, Georgia and Tennessee. Alongside that show will be the opening of Ingold's solo exhibition. The winner for the second iteration will have two years to focus on the work for their show, which will open in 2023 when *The Bennett Prize 3.0* winner will be announced.



### SOPHIA-YEMISI ADEYEMO-ROSS

Providence, Rhode Island-based artist Sophia-Yemisi Adeyemo-Ross is a Black, multiracial queer woman of Nigerian and German descent. Her portraits are derived from vintage photographs of people in West Africa at the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century that were often taken by members of missionary societies tied to European economic and industrial colonialism. As someone with mixed ancestry, Adeyemo-Ross explores her connection to both sides of this history. The artwork celebrates the resiliency of the African people and seeks “liberation and agency for people that appear frozen in time.”

[www.sadeyemo.myportfolio.com](http://www.sadeyemo.myportfolio.com) | [@sophia.yemisidadeyemo.ross](https://www.instagram.com/sophia.yemisidadeyemo.ross)

*Say Something at Sunset or Simply Stand Together (Two Boys in Gabon), mixed media collage, 22 x 14"*



### TANMAYA BINGHAM

The mixed media artwork of Portland, Oregon, artist Tanmaya Bingham invites viewers into surrealistic scenes that reflect the contemporary world. The pieces, using mediums such as acrylic paints, colored pencil and even glitter, often have divergent narratives with recognized and imagined elements. They comment on politics, social structures, sexuality and the human condition and are unified through her unique blend of hyperrealistic figures and objects set against flat, graphic backdrops.

[www.tanmayabingham.com](http://www.tanmayabingham.com) | [@tanmayabingham](https://www.instagram.com/tanmayabingham)

*Sexy Snuggles*, acrylic paint, colored pencil, watercolor and glitter on panel, 72 x 48"



### CHLOE CHIASSON

In her sculptural, collaged and mixed media paintings, Chloe Chiasson uses the medium as a metaphor “for the construction and deconstruction of the dominant cultural structures surrounding gender identity, expression and sexuality.” Her artwork is a literal interpretation of this idea by using different mediums to break apart and reassemble figures, leaving some parts incomplete, but as a whole. Through this imagery the Brooklyn, New York, artist “embraces her queerness to explore identities unconstrained by the worlds they inhabit.”

[www.chloechiasson.com](http://www.chloechiasson.com) |  @chloechiasson

*Lady Lie*, oil, acrylic, polyester fiber, wool, resin, steel, neopixels, 82 x 48 x 19"



### LAVELY MILLER

Baltimore, Maryland-based artist Lavelly Miller's portraits are a visual narration of the effects of trauma. The paintings, speaking to themes such as loss, suffering, recovery and salvation, are at once personal journeys and universal experiences. There is stillness and strong emotion attached to the artwork, as the sitters have direct gazes that challenge the viewer. Her layering technique—often more than 100 separate applications of color—creates the physical depth and movement in the artwork.

[www.lavellymillerkershman.com](http://www.lavellymillerkershman.com) |  @lavellymiller

*God Shot Me in the Face and Then I Saw*, acrylic on paper on wood, 40 x 30"





### JUNE GLASSON

Since 2008, Millbrook, New York-based artist June Glasson has painted portraits that challenge societal constructs of women, by asking her models to bring in props and costumes that reflect their identity as well as to engage in “unladylike” behavior. After moving to Laramie, Wyoming, she found that many of the women were bringing in props associated with the American West, which led to a dive into the mountain man culture. These works defy gender notions by exploring the masculine image through camp, parody and drag with portraits featuring sequin pants and boa-like pelts.

[www.juneglasson.com](http://www.juneglasson.com) | [@studio\\_glasson](https://www.instagram.com/studio_glasson)

*Red Taryn*, oil on panel, 24 x 18"



### HOLLY KEOGH

Holly Keogh's paintings explore the relationship between representation and memory by using photographs shared between family in America and England during her youth as her source material. These images show the limitations of the archival practice as what originally occurred cannot be re-created. The paintings often have a hazy or dreamlike atmosphere through Keogh's use of transparent paint and loose edges. There is also ambiguity to the subjects, allowing the viewer to complete the narrative and have an experience of the artwork that is their own.

[www.hollykeogh.com](http://www.hollykeogh.com) | [@hckeogh](https://www.instagram.com/hckeogh)

*More Charming, More Vague*, oil on canvas, 54 x 72"



### REBECCA ORCUTT

In her work, Rebecca Orcutt paints the in-between moments where the figures are waiting for events to unfold. These ambiguous narratives are frequently in quiet spaces devoid of details to focus in on the unsettled, tension-filled relationships that are at play. These relationships can be between the figures themselves, the figure and objects, or just the objects that are in the scene. The viewer is invited into Orcutt's artwork through this vagueness and allowed to draw their own conclusions of the narrative.

[www.beckyorcutt.com](http://www.beckyorcutt.com) |  @beeorcutt

*What Now*, oil on canvas, 24 x 48"

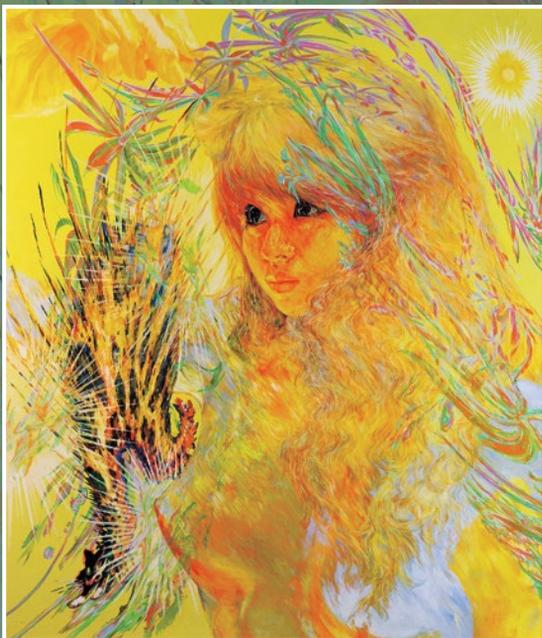


### AYANA ROSS

Georgia-based artist Ayana Ross' artwork is nostalgic in nature, as she draws from her family history and their origins in the American South and paralleling it with the issues of today. The artwork addresses race, identity and value systems, while illuminating "the beauty and strength of the Black community" and highlighting "stories of progression that may have been overlooked." Using bold, graphic fields of pattern and color, there is timelessness to the vintage figures that appear in her artwork.

[www.ayanaross.com](http://www.ayanaross.com) |  @ayanarossart

*SWBAT: Learn*, oil on wood, 48 x 36 x 2"



## SU SU

Figurative realism and surrealism combine in Su Su's paintings that explore culture and self-identity, often reminders of the dangers of conformity and over-commercialization through pop culture and consumerism. The Pittsburgh-based artist primarily focuses on self-portraits, creating "a persona that is naïve and soft but fully in control of her sexual power." The context is stripped away in the artwork, as a mirror to her experiences with American pop culture while living in her native China, and leaves the viewer with colorful imagery of the "nymph-like" figure.

[www.artbysusu.com](http://www.artbysusu.com) | [@paintingbysusu](https://www.instagram.com/paintingbysusu)

*Bed Straw*, oil on canvas, 42 x 36"



## AMY WERTZ

Dallas-based artist Amy Wertz translates black-and-white photographs into paintings that showcase the seemingly insignificant moments of everyday life. As someone who is obsessed with time, Wertz confronts the fear of passing time and not living in the moment through her figures. The people depicted are often isolated in the moment, with their clothing, props and features being the only clues to the narrative. This allows the viewer to fill in the details themselves and, perhaps, see "the importance of every life in a society that is often too fascinated with the lure of youth."

[www.amywertz.com](http://www.amywertz.com) | [@amywertz\\_art](https://www.instagram.com/amywertz_art)

*Blue Scarf II*, oil on Dibond, 16 x 12"