



## Melike Kara

Melike Kara's bold, sumptuous paintings resist easy interpretation. Androgynous figures rendered in hues of blue, green, or purple dance across the canvas. "They are equally everyone and everywhere," the young talent says from her studio in Cologne, Germany. "What they do have is a body, a heart. They feel love, joy, fear, anger. The canvases capture that."

Born and raised in Germany, Kara is also part of a Kurdish Alevi family that was forced to flee Turkey due to persecution—a theme that Kara has only recently started to explore more actively in her art. In a show this past winter at her Cologne gallery, Jan Kaps, she displayed a highly personal video, *Emine* (2018), which depicts her aging grandmother, the only one in her family who still speaks their native Zazaki language. "There's an inner dialogue going on," says Kara. "What does it mean to have Kurdish roots? I don't have an answer yet."



**Clockwise from top:** Recent paintings in oil stick and acrylic by Melike Kara on view at the Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art in Rotterdam. Farah Atassi's 2019 painting *Woman with Brooch*. Atassi in her Paris studio.

Kara starts each day in the studio by lighting candles at a shrine and sometimes reading a poem. She forgoes sketching and begins by directly painting from one end of the canvas. "Because I'm unsure what will happen when I get to the center, I give all that uncertainty and chaos in my mind something to work with," says the painter of her restricted color palette.

It's been a buzzy few years for Kara, who is also represented by Peres Projects in Berlin. She's had acclaimed exhibitions at the Yuz Museum in Shanghai and the Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art in Rotterdam. (The latter show is currently on view.) Upcoming is her first solo exhibition Stateside, at Salon 94 in New York in September. "I first saw her canvases at an art fair, and they immediately caught my attention," says

Salon 94 founder Jeanne Greenberg Rohatyn. "These figures appear engaged in some act of healing yet sit so comfortably on the canvas, as though they'd been there forever. Something extraordinary is taking place." [melikekara.com](http://melikekara.com) —L.R.

## Farah Atassi

Farah Atassi's energetic work mixes colorful motifs and patterns that feel equally drawn from Islamic textiles, modern masters, and Memphis design to jazzy effect. Two years ago, the artist began exploring nudes for a series of paintings that debuted in June at Almine Rech in her first solo show at a New York gallery.

Atassi never paints from live models. "I like to do samplings," she says. "I take a leg here, I take a head there, and then I invent. I don't care about reality." She builds a series by setting up multiple canvases at the same time; each is done by first

**From top:** A 2018 acrylic and oil on canvas titled *Siri Calls for Help* by Robin F. Williams. The artist in her Brooklyn studio.



creating the setting, then adding figures and backgrounds. Next she addresses the paintings one by one and focuses on the details.

Born in Belgium, Atassi attended Paris's *École des Beaux-Arts*, where she studied art history, while in her work, she painted landscapes and portraiture, always tending toward the abstract. Her work has been exhibited at the Boghossian Foundation in Brussels, Palais de Tokyo and Centre Pompidou in Paris, and the Moscow International Biennale of Contemporary Art, and is in many prestigious collections, including the Marciano Art Foundation and Fondation Louis Vuitton. In November, Atassi will have a solo show at Le Consortium in Dijon, which will be her biggest institutional show to date; a show at Ghebaly Gallery in Los Angeles follows in March 2020.

"It's very challenging to be a painter today," she says. "Nothing will be brand-new, so let's play with it." *alminerech.com* —ROZALIA JOVANOVIC

## Robin F. Williams

Social media is drawn to the fun and very female subject matter of Robin F. Williams's paintings—women lounging around or acting playful in poses and scenes that feel sourced from advertisements and pop culture. "Figuration looks great on Instagram," she says.

Although the subject is what draws people in, Williams hopes it's how she builds a painting—employing a variety of techniques that include traditional oil painting, airbrushing, staining raw canvas, and applying very highly textured acrylic—that keeps viewers engaged.

Initially, she studied illustration as an undergraduate at the Rhode Island School of Design and, following graduation, landed a gig in editorial illustration. "Ultimately, I didn't work well with art directors," she says. "My stuff was too weird."

After a string of group shows, Williams nabbed a solo presentation of her work at P.P.O.W. Gallery in 2011. But it was her 2017 exhibition—which was all about female desire—that put her on the map. "Robin can take a common image of female behavior as portrayed in the media," says P.P.O.W. cofounder Wendy Olsoff, "and re-present it, showing the ludicrous subjugation of the female while allowing the audience to also see this for themselves."

This September, Los Angeles gallery Various Small Fires will mount a show of Williams's creations that is two years in the making. Many of the paintings are horizontal to reflect the Columbus, Ohio-born artist's interpretation of a West Coast perspective. "It has come into my work in different stages," she says. "I do think California has a specific place in the American imagination." *robinfwilliams.com* —R.J.

