

# Five Rising Contemporary Artists You Should Know

With exhibitions featuring copper-wire sculptures, burned canvases, ghostly nighttime paintings and more, here are the people to put on your radar this season.



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By **Laura Bannister**

For this story, Laura Bannister focused on shows happening outside of New York and Los Angeles this fall and winter.

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Modupeola Fadugba's "Headed to the Dressing Room" (2025). © Modupeola Fadugba, courtesy of the artist and Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, Palm Beach, Fla.



Fadugba's "Tailor, Don't Sew Me Nonsense" (2025). © Modupeola Fadugba, courtesy of the artist and Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, Palm Beach, Fla.



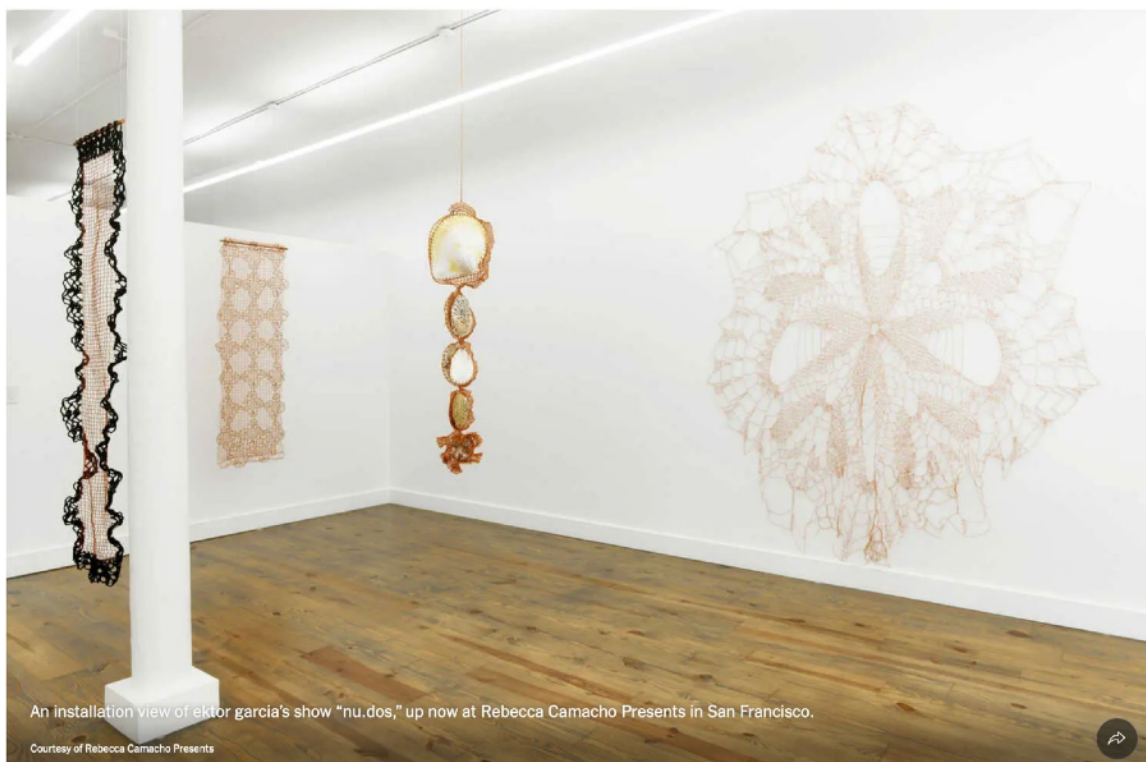
Fadugba's "Pink Socks" (2025). © Modupeola Fadugba, courtesy of the artist and Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, Palm Beach, Fla.

## Modupeola Fadugba

For a decade, the Togo-born artist Modupeola Fadugba, who lives and works in Ibadan, Nigeria, conjured scenes of the triumphant swimmers and lifeguards she encountered throughout West Africa and the U.S. (Among them: the Harlem Honeys and Bears, a synchronized swimming team of older Black people that first formed almost 50 years ago.) In many of these paintings, semiabstracted bodies navigate opaque bodies of water rendered in ink, acrylic and oil, or gold leaf. More recently, Fadugba, 39, has begun making multimedia works about the annual festival Ojude Oba, which celebrates the Yoruba heritage of the people of Ijebu-Ode, Nigeria. Next month, in [an exhibition at Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery](#) in Palm Beach, Fla., Fadugba will show paintings of finery-bedecked horsemen — descendants of Ijebu war heroes who act as cultural custodians for the festival — and of the bead-makers, tailors and weavers who work behind the scenes to prepare the procession.



In a signature move, the artist partially burned each of the canvases, leaving holes. She also adorned the works with hand-beaded elements; the beads create borders for her unframed paintings, which hang from the ceiling on dowels. “This interplay between flatness and texture is critical to me,” Fadguba says. “I want viewers to feel this tension: between representation and materiality, between painted illusion and the physical labor of beading.” Later in November, Fadguba will appear in an expanded version of “Nigeria Imaginary” — first shown at the country’s pavilion at the 2024 Venice Biennale — opening at the new [Museum of West African Art](#) in Benin City, Nigeria. For that show, the artist, who holds a master’s degree in education from Harvard University, created a site-specific installation that will invite viewers to examine Nigeria’s education system, as well as ideas around agency and nation-building, through interactive games.



An installation view of Ektor Garcia's show "nu.dos," up now at Rebecca Camacho Presents in San Francisco.

Courtesy of Rebecca Camacho Presents

## ektor garcia

The multidisciplinary artist ektor garcia lives and works nomadically, making his sculptures in parks and on beaches and boats, among other sites. “I imagine my studio to be amorphous and free,” says garcia, 39. For the artist — who writes his name in all lowercase, in the tradition of the Black feminist scholar and activist bell hooks — fluidity and movement are as integral to his practice as they were to his upbringing. Born to migrant Mexican farm workers in Red Bluff, Calif., he grew up between the West Coast and northern Mexico before studying at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and earning his M.F.A. from Columbia University in New York.

garcia makes many of his sculptures out of crochet, incorporating patterns or actual pieces that his grandmother crafted in Zacatecas, Mexico. He’s drawn to the medium on account of this familial and cultural connection, and because needlework requires few and easily transportable tools. But to create his original textiles, garcia usually favors copper wire over yarn, bending it with a crochet hook into large doilies or panels that recall chain mail. He also works with materials he finds in nature, or at construction sites or supply stores, such as leather, rubber, horsehair and clay. Last week, a major solo exhibition of garcia’s work opened [at the San José Museum of Art](#) in California.

Simultaneously, for [a show at the gallery Rebecca Camacho Presents](#) in San Francisco, the artist has suspended several of his crochet sculptures from the ceiling. One of these works, “conchotas (2.0)” (2023-25), consists of a string of abalone shells. Some of the shells are crocheted shut — with wire looped through the naturally occurring row of holes that lines the edge of each — while from another, wires extend out like tiny tentacles, “reminiscent,” says garcia, “of the creature that once lived there.”





An installation view of Jimena Sarno's film "Las Tres Gracias" (2024), which is part of the exhibition "Rhapsody," currently on view at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art in North Adams, Mass. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Christopher Wormald



A film still from Sarno's "A Life in the Forest" (2025). Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Christopher Wormald

## Jimena Sarno

Born in Buenos Aires and based in Los Angeles, the artist, educator and organizer Jimena Sarno explores themes of power, labor, displacement and interdependence. Sarno, 54, has collaborated with the composer Diana Woolner to rearrange "America the Beautiful" using declassified military logistics data as a guide; created a soundscape based on police scanner recordings from the night Michael Brown's killer wasn't indicted; and erected a lifeguard tower panopticon for an installation that traced the history of U.S. surveillance. This month, in [her first major institutional show](#), at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art in North Adams, Mass., the artist (who declined to be interviewed for this piece) examines how ancestral knowledge, craft traditions and shared resources are preserved by communities through her own works and those by over 20 other artists. Though the exhibition was meant to be a solo show, Sarno's practice is relational by nature, so she invited many of her collaborators to create speculative "tools" — wooden objects, pottery, assemblage sculptures, textiles and wearable garments — out of natural or reused materials we already share as a way of gesturing toward a more equitable, utopian future.



Throughout the show, there's an emphasis on repair. In a Super 8 film, the artist is seen working with Argentine conservators to fix two wooden deer that her uncle carved in the 1950s. On-site workshops give visitors a chance to learn how to mend textiles and wooden objects, which they are then invited to leave on view — helping to build out Sarno's monument to collective labor. And in another instance of community-based education, part of the main installation, which takes the form of a 100-foot-long experimental film projection, features scenes of weavers in Peru, Morocco and Argentina teaching Sarno their craft.



Raphaele Cohen-Bacry's "Shipwreck" (2024). © Raphaele Cohen-Bacry, courtesy of the artist

## Raphaele Cohen-Bacry

When the French artist Raphaele Cohen-Bacry moved to Los Angeles in 2003, "I was overwhelmed by a sense of unlimited space and possibilities," she says, "especially coming from Paris, which is small, contained and very dense in art and history." Frequent drives through Southern California's desert parts proved particularly inspiring, and her upcoming exhibition, "Tribulations," which opens in November at the [Las Vegas-Clark County Library Galleries](#), gives form to the landscape's "emptiness and grandiosity." The exhibition also references Ovid's



“Metamorphoses” and other epic tales in which gods, beings and places change form. Cohen-Bacry’s acrylic paintings are based on her collages, which are also on view. Alongside them are mixed-media works on paper slung from metallic bars so that they ripple as visitors move through the gallery.

“I explore how humans reinvent themselves in the face of adversity,” Cohen-Bacry, 57, says, “how they shift shape and mind-set to survive and to repair themselves.” In one swirling mixed-media piece, “Shipwreck” (2024), inspired by Ulysses’s 10-year voyage, fragmented limbs, floating torsos and disembodied, silhouetted heads morph into pooling water, ship parts and what look like crescent-shaped bales of hay. Also on view are about 20 statuettes made of salt dough that resemble disfigured idols. To emanate “an ancient feeling,” Cohen-Bacry experimented with partially burning the sculptures to make them look, she says, “almost like they were found underground after a fire or a volcanic eruption.”



Djabril Boukhenaïssi's "La fenêtre de l'atelier" (2025). © Djabril Boukhenaïssi, courtesy of the artist and Mariane Ibrahim



Boukhenaïssi's "A night with O.R." (2025). © Djabril Boukhenaïssi, courtesy of the artist and Mariane Ibrahim

## Djabril Boukhenaïssi

The artist Djabril Boukhenaïssi grew up in the suburbs of Paris and studied at the city's renowned École des Beaux-Arts — spending his free hours at the Musée du Louvre, making copies of works by the masters — and also earned degrees from Berlin University of the Arts and the University of Paris 8 Vincennes-Saint-Denis, where he studied philosophy. Now, he's about to have his first U.S. solo show, at [Mariane Ibrahim Gallery](#) in Chicago in November, and his interest in Romanticism is woven throughout. Boukhenaïssi, 32, presents paintings and fantastical engravings that examine night as a time when the boundaries between self and world dissolve. He's inspired by the theories of 18th- and 19th-century writers such as Novalis, Rainer Maria Rilke and Charles Baudelaire, who treated night as a metaphor for introspection, mystery and danger. He's fascinated, too, by how artificial light changes and obscures landscapes, especially in cities (in the artist's native Paris, light pollution now obscures the Milky Way), and his paintings of people, places and nocturnal moths are softly diffuse and spectral, the figures only partially defined in scenes based on his own memories.

Using a palette of milky whites and misty violets, pinks, umbers and blues, Boukhenaïssi layers pastels over oils to give his works a chalky look. Before making this series, Boukhenaïssi lived for a month at Fontfroide Abbey in France, a former Cistercian monastery. Odilon Redon's three-panel painting "La Nuit" (1910-11) is installed in the library, and Boukhenaïssi spent his time there observing the odd luminosity of this portrait of the night — a dreamlike work that he says also "crept into my painting, without me really noticing."