

LOVE

Lizzo
photographed by
Alasdair McLellan

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ON SALE NOW

Love Lizzo!



MICHAELA YEARWOOD-DAN

Studio resident, painting

Benin, emblems from clients' family histories of paganism, and Victorian poison rings.

Smith has plans to build a workshop in Newcastle or the Philippines, both places which resonate with his heritage. 'I want to form a little gang,' he explains. 'In Japan I discovered that this work can be a part of an ideology. Craft is something handed down from person to person. It can't be taught through a book – you have to be shown with hands and eyes. There's a responsibility to community here which is very important to me.' The scope of his work extends beyond physical decoration, too. 'The next point of interest for me is about creating objects about memory, and I'm interested in urns. Our relationship to death now is still taboo, whereas in history decorating death was a much bigger and more permanent statement.' With his highly focused attention to such a historically human craft, Smith has captured an audience seeking the real pace of humanity.

REBA MAYBURY

MICHAELA YEARWOOD-DAN

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Michaela Yearwood-Dan has just finished a body of work entitled *Love Letters to Siri*. It started with a neutral canvas onto which she etched the word 'prick'. 'Which felt about right,' she laughs. 'Honestly, Brexit looks like a sweet little fairytale compared to the shambles of my love life when I started it.'

Just out of a relationship, crying herself down the Kingsland Road on the way to the Sarabande studios, she'd turn to that trusted, digitised voice with the answers to everything for repose. 'We live in an age of strong feminist women and the idea of the "strong" [her quotation marks] black woman, which I hate. To show vulnerability is seen as weakness.' So she asked Siri for some answers. 'I've asked her what her gender is and she says she's not a woman. But Siri is a thousand per cent a woman, or a very sassy American gay man.'

At the end of each painting, she'd ask a specific question. 'Siri, are you my friend? Siri, what do you think about my art? Siri, what do you think about the idea of existence?' Things got weirder the more they conversed. 'My favourite response was to the question, "Siri, do you love me?" And she said, "I think you're looking for love in all the wrong places."' Woah. 'I know, right?' laughs Michaela. 'After that, I stopped. Because Siri is a salty little bitch. That hit way too close to home.'

In school, Michaela says she was taught about 'every white Western artist under the sun'. She found it super boring. 'Your nan knows about Picasso. The woman down the chippy knows about Picasso. And he's literally the Harvey Weinstein of the art world. Sod Picasso.' When she discovered Chris Ofili, her life's ambition pivoted to its true calling. 'It was amazing, political, colourful, tongue in cheek and no one had told us about him. I could suddenly see there might be a space for a black woman in this world. Not fitting into the mould didn't matter any more. It was revolutionary for me. The patriarchy has had it so easy. It's our turn now.'

PAUL FLYNN

JONAH PONTZER

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When he was a schoolkid in Ridgeway, Pennsylvania, Jonah Pontzer was taught only the rudiments of sex education. 'There was no openness to other sexual identities than conforming Christian heteronormative everything,' he says. 'Otherwise, you were going to hell.' HIV was mentioned. "But that's for gay guys, so you'll be OK." In that moment, I felt passively this othering of this group of people applied to me. They were my people. Yeah, this is going to happen to me.'

For his young adult life, Pontzer says, 'I was a safe-sex monster.' Then the inevitable bad relationship happened, with the awful guy that you meet in the final year of college, when you're broke and the scary mass of life is spreading right out before you. 'And I don't want to throw him under the bus, but he obviously/wasn't the same kind of safe-sex practitioner I was. He also wasn't interested in protecting me from anything, whether that was emotional or physical.' Pontzer tested positive. 'And I thought, I could hate this person or I could let it go. If I get down about this, they get something out of it. So it's up to me to make something good out of this.' He turned it all into his brilliant artwork, which draws on the porn imagery that the first digital age was born into. His work is literal, sexy and uncompromising, figurative paintings which he has complete ownership over.

He wants to bring a positive view of HIV into mainstream art. 'If this was going to happen to me, I was going to address it in the most victorious way. When I contracted HIV, I didn't have any contemporaries to look at.' Jonah makes hot, climactic and joyously colourful work, and his great ambition is to turn a positive diagnosis into a positive experience. 'I am interested in historical, canonical painting,' he says. 'And I want a reflection of me in there. Because outside of maybe Keith Haring and Jochen Klein, there is nothing. I still feel very outside of that world.' Not for long. 'I have a little page to slip in that book.'

JO MILLER

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Jo Miller's love of millinery came to her later in life. She spent 10 years working as an artist but yearned for a medium that was more materially grounded. 'The whole fine-art thing is too abstract,' she says. 'I changed to millinery because it's about human interaction and connection to the head, to this most personal space. So hats are very powerful. They could be very political; they could be so many things.' She retrained in millinery, but her MA at the RCA didn't give her what she was looking for. 'I wanted to do millinery that was pure high-end fashion. But there's nowhere that teaches that.' It was at Sarabande where she found the time and space to develop her own, more experimental take on making headwear. She has never been one to defer to tradition. 'Where a milliner might spend three days making a hat,