

# OCULA

## The Art and Science of Collecting Emerging Art

By Tolla Sloane | London, 17 August 2020

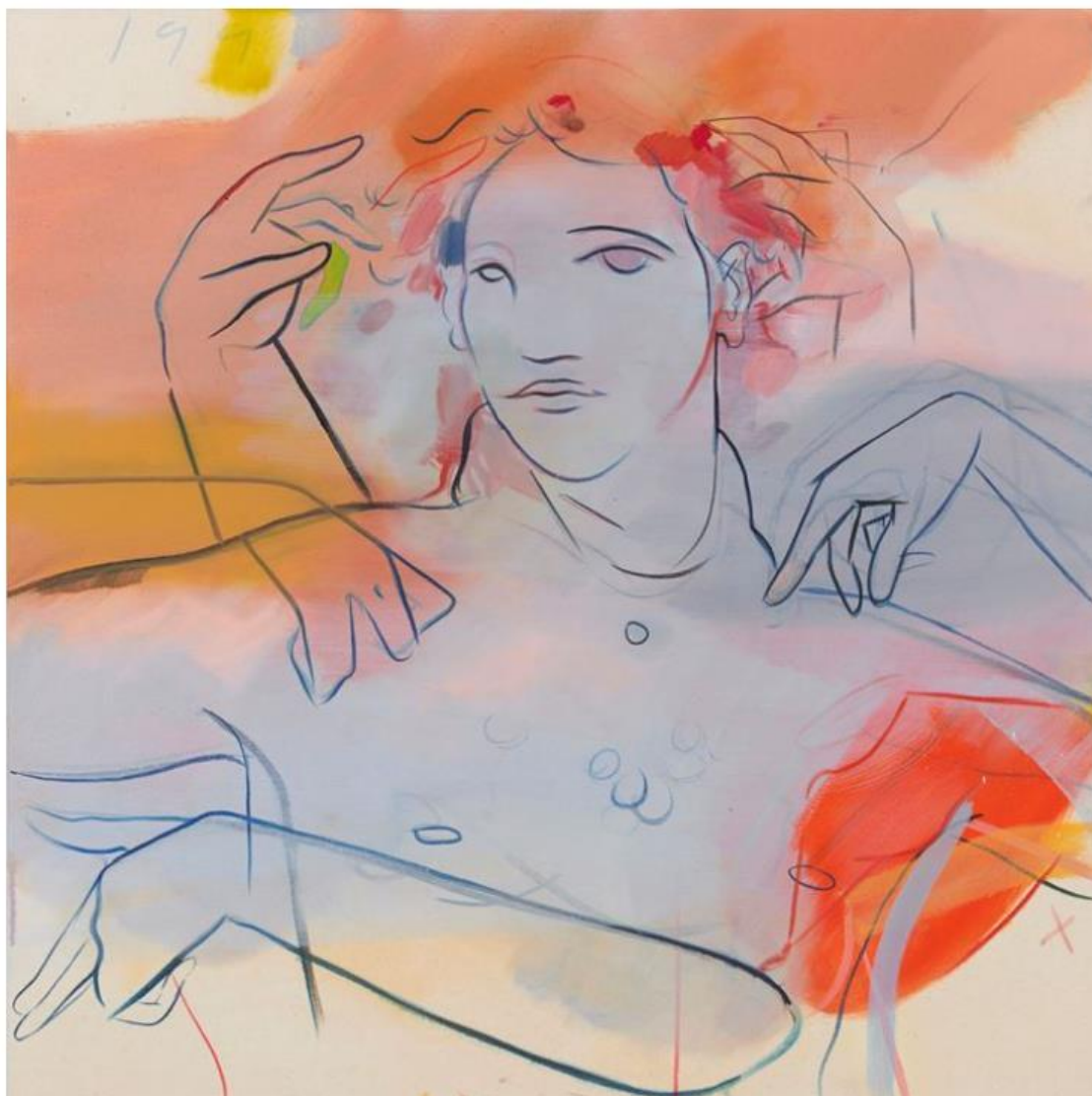


Exhibition view: France-Lise McGurn, *Percussia*, Simon Lee Gallery, London (24 January–22 February 2020). Courtesy the artist and Simon Lee Gallery. Photo: Ben Westoby.

**As a collector, how can you determine an emerging artist's long-term success? Until recently, factors such as critical acclaim, curatorial attention, and exhibitions with blue-chip galleries and institutions were known to be important, but no one could categorically point to why some talented artists could make a life out of their art whilst others do not. It was art-world alchemy.**

In 2018, however, a group of writers and data scientists took a data-driven approach to the question. Co-authors Samuel P. Fraiberger, Roberta Sinatra, Magnus Resch, Christoph Riedl, and Albert-László Barabási published their study 'Quantifying reputation and success in art' with *Science* in November that year.

Looking at a half-million artists' careers between 1980 and 2016, they found that early recognition by prestigious museums, galleries, and curators was an accurate way of predicting long-term success, with artists becoming buoyed within the network. Of the 4,058 artists who started out in the best exhibition venues, almost 60 percent maintained that status throughout their careers.



France-Lise McGurn, *Built for bed* (2019). Oil, acrylic, spray, and marker pen on canvas. 100 x 100 x 4.5 cm. Courtesy Simon Lee

The study's main conclusion is that it is critical for artists to show in the right places early on—the list includes the usual suspects, like The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Tate Modern, London, and the Centre Pompidou, Paris. What this research doesn't capture, however, is artists who do fantastically well commercially without entering the network at all.

That being said, I've been following France-Lise McGurn and Holly Hendry—both young, exciting British artists—and it turns out that they fit neatly into the data-driven theory put forward by Fraiberger et al.



France Lise-McGurn, *Jellies* (2020). Oil, spray, and marker on canvas. 120 x 120 cm. Courtesy the artist and Simon Lee Gallery.



France-Lise McGurn (b. 1983, United Kingdom) works mainly with paint, creating works that drip, spill, and dance from the canvas into the gallery space. She graduated from the Royal College of Art in 2012, and five years later was invited to join the Tate St Ives Artists Programme. Just before, the artist had a solo exhibition with Bosse & Baum in London (*Mondo Throb*, 5 November–18 December 2016), which was followed by solo exhibitions at Alison Jacques Gallery in London (*Archaos*, 4–27 May 2017), and Frutta in Glasgow (*0141*, 22 September–17 November 2018), both well-respected galleries that exhibit at fairs including Frieze London.

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Following her Tate St Ives commission, McGurn created a site-specific installation inspired by sources including the Ibiza club scene and the 1993 rom-com *Sleepless in Seattle* at [Tate Britain](#) in 2019 to critical acclaim (*Sleepless*, 29 June–8 September 2019).

Within seven years of her master's, McGurn showed with the Tate—one of the world's leading museums—twice. Shortly afterwards, [Simon Lee Gallery](#), which represents contemporary art stars such as [Donna Huanca](#) and [George Condo](#), announced it would be representing McGurn. With spaces in London, New York, and [Hong Kong](#), representation with the gallery signals more opportunities, including her first high-profile solo exhibition in London (*Percussia*, 24 January–22 February 2020). Around the same time, the artist filled Tramway in Glasgow with a series of neon mobile sculptures for her solo exhibition *In Emotia* (18 January–22 March 2020).



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