

CLASS OF ITS OWN

05



ART & DESIGN

IF ART IS TO NOURISH THE ROOTS OF OUR CULTURE,
SOCIETY MUST SET THE ARTIST FREE
TO FOLLOW HIS VISION WHEREVER IT TAKES HIM.

JOHN F. KENNEDY

NEW PERSPECTIVES

Words: Raimond Radtke

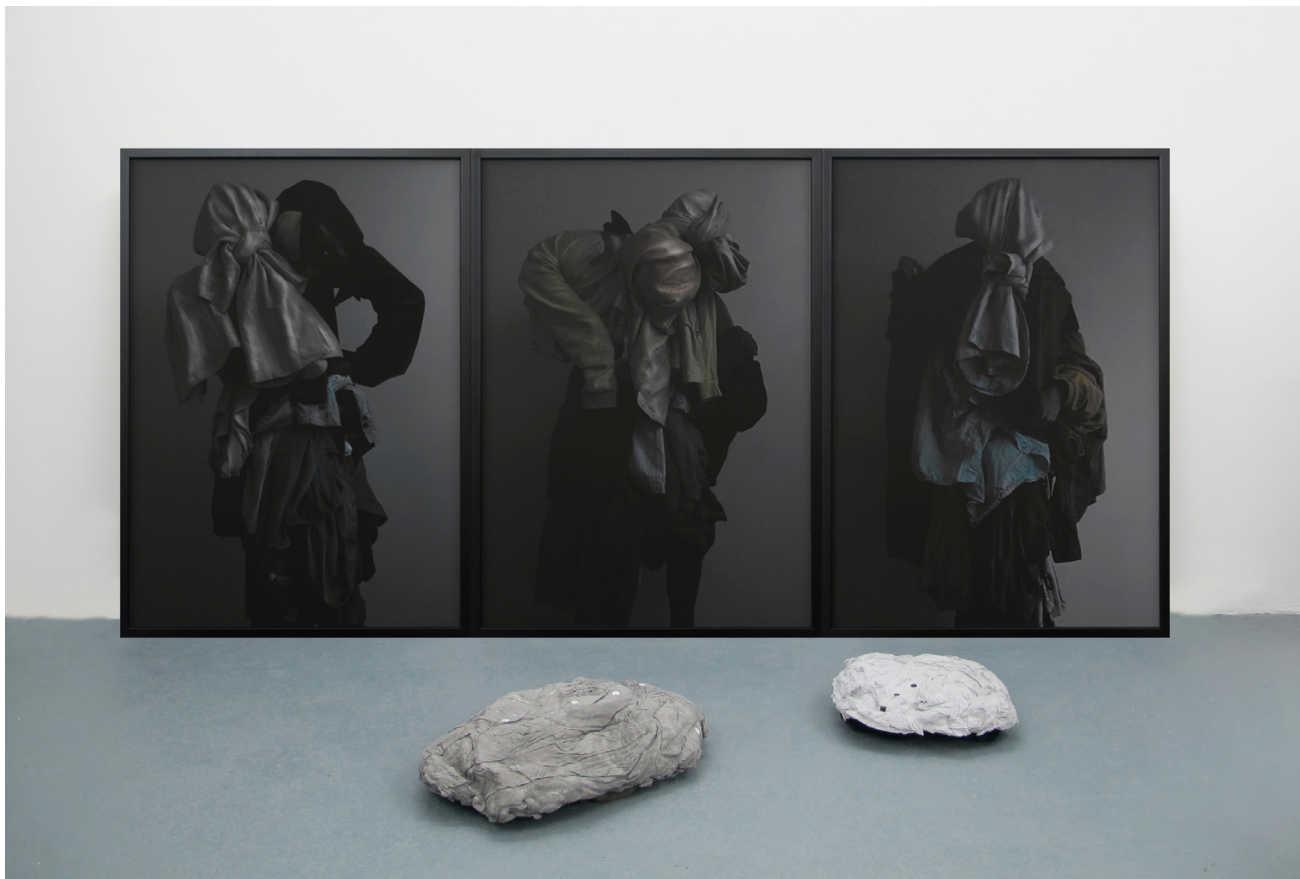
Our round-up of three emerging artists who all share something very key: inspired vision and a commitment to realising ambitious projects. Find out more about Tyler Mallison, Michael Slusakowicz and Sebastian Schmidt.....140

CAN CITY

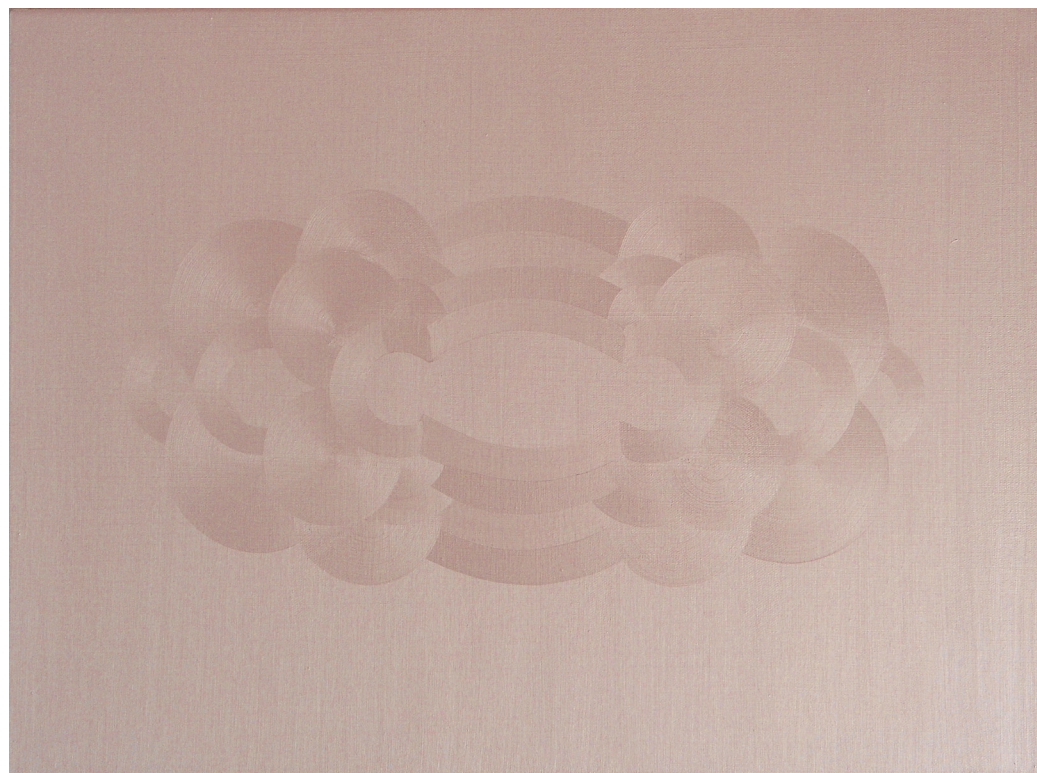
Words: Marc Gysin

Read our report on Studio Swine's 'Can City' – a project based in São Paulo that turns one person's trash into another person's treasure, melting down aluminium cans and other scrap metals found by the local trash pickers, or '*catadores*', to create furniture pieces, which can then be sold to the local community.....148

Opposite page: 'Vague Impressions' (Series, 2013) by Tyler Mallison, ink on archival paper with deckled edges (*unique*), 104 x 84 cm.



'Shadow of My Former Self' (2013) by Tyler Mallison, triptych from series. Photographic pigment print on archival paper, 100 x 210 cm with Cast-Offs/Solemn Alchemy (2013), plaster, pigment, wood and buttons (*former clothing of the artist*), 52 x 34 x 12 cm and 29 x 32 x 8 cm.



'Tray 2' (2014) by Michael Slusakowicz, oil on canvas, 45 x 61 cm.



NEW PERSPECTIVES

Words: RAIMOND RADTKE

A glimpse into the minds and work of three captivating artists

Throughout the year there are countless international art fairs and high-profile gallery openings that dazzle and captivate an eager global art audience. We at Class of its Own admit we can hardly resist the allure of London Frieze in autumn or the sub-tropical glamour of Art Basel Miami at a time of year when most people are already wrapping up for winter and beginning to hibernate. But these shows have more than their well-heeled attendees in common. They also feature a relatively small stable of well-known artists who benefit from the high visibility that comes with international gallery representation.

In our commitment to venturing further afield to seek out new inspiration, we recently visited a selection of extraordinary exhibitions and discovered a number of promising talents. So in this issue we would like to introduce our readers to three emerging artists whose

work captivated us. They push boundaries with their working methods and are establishing clear ground in the contemporary art space. And we're not alone in this opinion, as their work is peeking the interest of influential curators, gallery owners and savvy collectors alike.

Different in their approach and themes, the artists Tyler Mallison, Michael Slusakowicz and Sebastian Schmidt all share something very key: inspired vision and a commitment to realising ambitious projects. Their work goes beyond a single medium and explores a dynamic mix of disciplines. We caught up with them recently in their studios in London and Berlin to learn more about their approach and points of view. These are the 'ones to watch.'

Above: 'Sione', detail (2012), by Sebastian Schmidt.

TYLER ALEXANDER MALLISON



Above: 'Don't Touch When Wet' (2013-14) from Series. Diptych photographic pigment prints on archival paper, 100 x 140 cm.
On the left: 'Shadow of My Former Self' (2013) from Series. Photographic pigment print on archival paper, 100 x 70 cm.

Tyler Mallison is an American-British artist living and working in London. Originally hailing from the Midwest in the United States, he admits that being a product of contrasting worlds has had a profound impact on his work and distinctive point of view. He completed an MA at the prestigious and notoriously unconventional Central Saint Martins and takes a truly interdisciplinary and critical approach to his art practice that reflects an uncommon path.

Selected as one of the 'Hot-One-Hundred' emerging UK artists just this past year, Mallison's work focuses on multifaceted projects that utilise both traditional and new media, encompassing photography, painting, printmaking, digital drawing, performance, moving

image and installation. According to the artist, "the work explores a number of contemporary and personal themes as well as formal interests, but is fundamentally prompting questions about the status quo – its pace, conventions – in the context of individual identity, aspiration and collective desire."

Reflecting breadth of academic and real-world experience, Mallison draws on diverse visual languages and cultural codes – from contemporary advertising to science to non-secular and eastern philosophy – often incorporating an element of slick exuberance appropriated from the consumer culture he knows intimately from working within the creative industries.



Above and on the right: 'Project Wardrobe™: Exposing the Sequence', installation view and detail, Gleisdreieck Berlin (2006). Pigment prints on archival paper, photographic C-type prints, digital animation on monitor (loop).



Several of the artist's major projects delve into a specific concern around the role clothing plays in identity and image creation, which initially grew out of extensive research into people's relationships to their wardrobes. "The desire to shape the human form and mask its primitive nature goes back to the origin of mankind and is one of the most basic. It's best captured in the proverb 'Clothes make the man', which comes from a pedigree of classic writers reaching back to Homer in around 7 or 8 BC."

Two major projects explore this from different vantage points: Project Wardrobe™ distils ephemeral consumer self-expression into minimalist abstract portraits composed of a modular visual language or 'DNA' (Exposing the Sequence, 2005); while 'Dead to Me' investigates the physicality and manipulation of clothing as subject ('Vague Impressions', 'Cast-Offs', 2013) and medium ('Shadow of My Former Self', 2013). "One of the formal areas I am actively exploring is what can be referred to as the 'expanded field of painting'. I have become very interested specifically in clothing's potential to act as medium – often in conjunction with the body, movement and installation."

This exemplifies a dialectical tension present in Mallison's work that is exciting: a desire to merge the cognitive and systematic with the primitive and spontaneous. Invented visual structures, symbols and imposed rules serving as a counterpoint to the expressive material properties inherent in physical objects.

"I'm fascinated by the change of perspective that arises through different means of engaging with familiar objects or constructs – heightening self-awareness or simply prompting an intuitive, emotional response. The performative series 'Shadow of My Former Self' featuring 'all the clothing I have removed from my present state of being', for example, surprised and engaged viewers. It blurs the lines between what defines painting, performance and even sculpture and prompts questions that go beyond aesthetic or conceptual considerations."

Mallison is currently developing new work and planning a solo exhibition. He will be also be resident this summer in Berlin with Autocenter Contemporary Art Space, which plays host to well-known international artists, curators and writers.

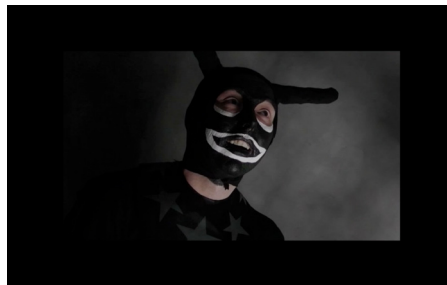
MICHAEL SLUSAKOWICZ



Above, left: 'Betty' (2012), oil on canvas, 40.5 x 30 cm.

Michael Slusakowicz is a Polish artist living and working in London. He completed his BA at Camberwell College of Art and manages an impressive act of artistic production that spans painting, drawing, video and performance, often using different mediums to express his subject matter. His work is often characterised by a broody, provocative tone and message that contrasts his real-life soft-spoken and shy demeanour.

According to Michael, the visual language of his work tends to prod and question the structure of social relations. Work penetrates the veiled sides of our society in search of the core of humanity with both its dark and bright side; the unpleasant atmosphere in many of his paintings forces the viewer to assume the position of voyeur, triggering our imaginations.



Above: 'The Drummer' for Ulf Haines Store, Berlin (2012), movie stills.

On the left: 'Salmon' (2014), oil on canvas, 152.5 x 91 cm.

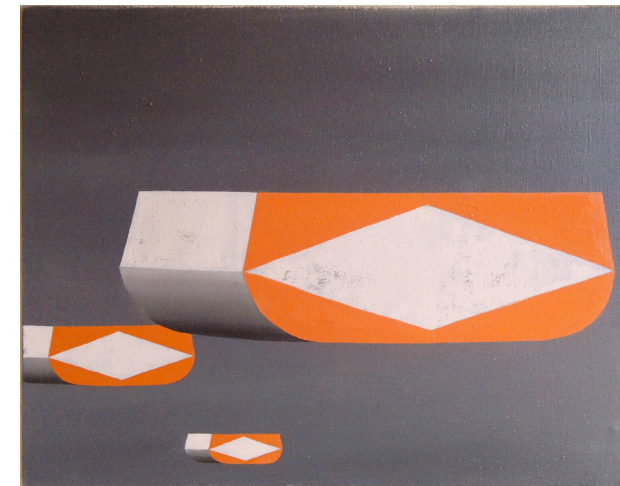
In one body of work, he took an essay by Sigmund Freud, 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle' (1920) as a starting point. 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle' (2011) looks at the relation between two opposing instincts and drives, human sexuality and self-destruction. Slusakowicz's ambition was to create an installation that transforms the gallery space, engaging the viewer through interaction of light and painting. This marked a new interest in expanding his practice towards something more abstract.

His most recent development in painting reflects interests in the medium of oils, and further investigation into colour and texture. *"I follow my intuition and on this occasion I felt like I needed to liberate myself from the formal structure of my previous paintings, which were often based on a secondary resources such as found photos. Also, I felt like I had reached a certain level of technical skill, and couldn't develop it any further."*



Above: 'Medium Gold 2' (2014), oil on canvas, 152.5 x 91 cm.

On the right: 'Drift' (2013), oil on canvas, 61 x 76 cm.



Following initial research, Slusakowicz decided he wanted to detach himself from everything that makes a painting a painting. Gold was initially chosen as the most neutral and effective colour possible, which effectively allows light itself to create a painting. In a dark environment his latest paintings don't seem to exist, in fact. They become monochrome, but emerge as playful and alive with light.

"With these new paintings I was learning to paint from the beginning. It's all about the brush strokes. You start by covering the large canvas with a few layers of golden paint to achieve the flattest surface possible. Once dry, you then apply one more coat and when wet you use different brush sizes to create mechanical strokes that create the entire shape. It sounds simple, but there's a

catch. One mistake or imperfection in the brush stroke and you need to start the whole process again."

Beyond painting, however, the artist admits *"...films have always been my biggest passion and the transition I've made from painting to moving images came naturally."* The moving image allows him to extend his painting practice and open the door to further investigations into the themes and characters created in many of his figurative paintings.

Slusakowicz is currently working on new projects with his independent film production company and exhibiting work in Madrid.

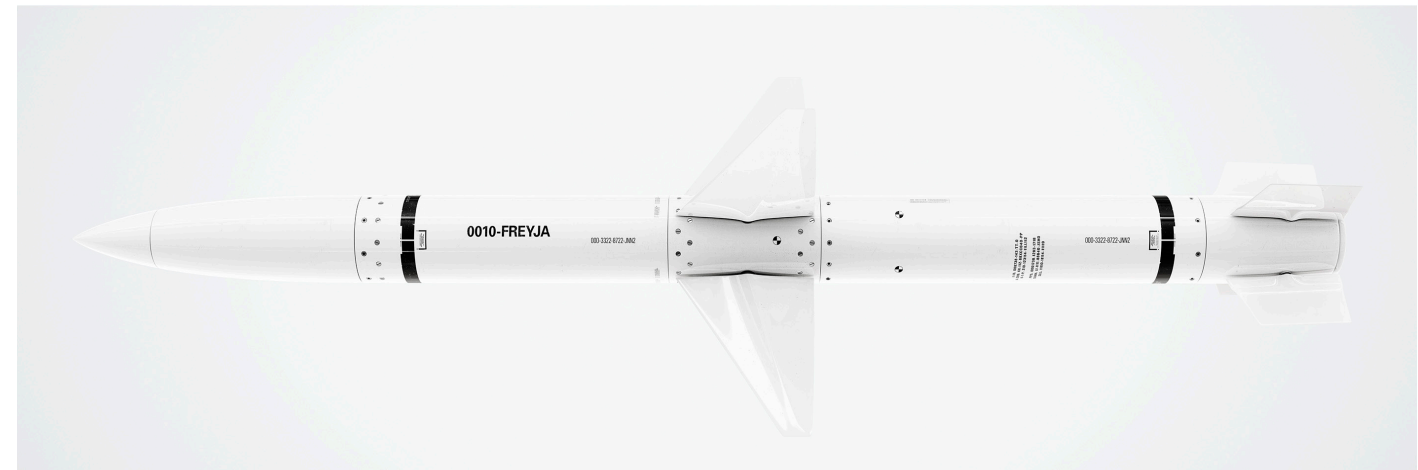


Above: 'Geoff' (2013), oil on canvas, 40.5 x 30 cm.

SEBASTIAN SCHMIDT

Sebastian Schmidt is a German artist who lives and works in Berlin. He initially studied communication design and worked as an art director for several years developing numerous international campaigns at major advertising agencies. He now runs a small design agency in addition to working on the development of artistic projects.

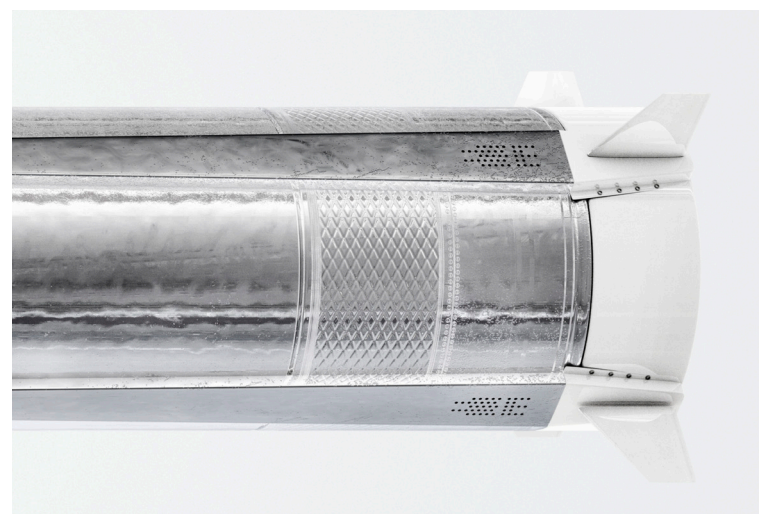
What's unusual about Sebastian Schmidt is his rather uncommon fascination with missiles. We're talking huge killing machines that are bright, shiny and staged in a way commonly used for cars or mobile phones. And although they appear motionless and floating on air, one can almost feel the explosive danger and the power hidden behind the white steel bodies.



Above: 'Sione' (2012).
C-print on Hahnemühle fine art paper, 266 x 66 cm.

The idea for his large-scale 'Missiles' project came while working at one of the large advertising agencies. "My main task was to use Photoshop to place all sorts of consumer goods – from washing detergent to cars – in front of a white background and to make them very shiny. Hence, I turned any ordinary object into something desirable. Soon I started asking myself whether this could equally work with a clearly evil object, such as a cruise missile."

The missile is a pure symbol of power, speed, energy and strength that makes the viewer feel stronger and more powerful. Schmidt jokes that it reflects some kind of inner archaic, primal brutality. This is a sentiment shared by others through a mixture of fascination and horror. "Basically I lure them into a trap: the



Above: 'Milda', detail (2012).
Opposite page, on top: 'Freyja' (2012).
C-print on Hahnemühle fine art paper, 266 x 66 cm.

picture of a beautiful weapon as a mirror of one's own raw nature. But this enthusiasm does worry me. We guys carry a disturbing fascination for violence, which is in the best case controlled by societal values, but far from extinct."

However, politics don't have anything to do with it – missiles are exempt from national symbols. Instead, they bear the names of ancient goddesses, who often stand for both: war and love. A combination that is absolutely contradictory today, but for Sebastian Schmidt has one common core: the drive. "That's why I like the phallic association, which many see in my pictures." The artist further explains, "because of their size and complexity, missiles are more expensive than let's say a handgun. Those are important factors in a status symbol, which you're more likely to look at. On top of that this highly complex and multi-million dollar technology has the sole purpose to destroy others through

its auto destruction. They can be used only once – considered cynically it's amazingly decadent."

The viewer can be fooled, mistaking these pieces for photography. In reality all 'missiles' are extensively recreated and staged on the computer up to the last detail. "I probably wouldn't be allowed to take pictures of these weapons, or solely under the greatest safety precautions. In any case, even the best camera wouldn't achieve this quality and sharpness. This result can only be achieved with professional 3D computer programmes." Consequently tiny details, such as screw threads or hinges, often need to be designed by the artist himself with the intention of creating an overall coherent and photo-realistic image.

Several pieces have already been sold to London, Stockholm and Berlin and a first solo exhibition is planned.