

# THE SELFIE PROJECT

EXCLUSIVE

7 THRILLING ARTISTS ORBITING THE NYC FRIEZE SCENE SHARE THEIR REVEALING SELF-PORTRAITS WITH ALEXA

By MARISA MAZRIA KATZ and RACHEL RIEDERER



## ELMGREEN & DRAGSET

**Claim to fame:** Working together since 1995, Scandinavians Michael Elmgreen and Ingar Dragset are known for playfully subversive sculptures and architectural projects. After creating their 2005 project “Prada Marfa” (above) — a re-creation of a Prada store installed in an isolated stretch of West Texas desert — the duo feared no one would ever see it. But now, Instagram has made “Prada Marfa” one of the art world’s most brag-worthy pilgrimages.

**Twitter cred:** “We are not on Twitter, someone opened an account in our name!” Elmgreen tells Alexa. “But people are tweeting and Instagramming about us, which is wonderful.”

**Latest project:** The Berlin-based pair’s “Van Gogh’s Ear” — a 30-foot-tall sculpture of an empty swimming pool standing upright on its side — is now on display at Rockefeller Center. The pair say the piece, which was commissioned by the Public Art Fund, “gets mediated all by itself, from people taking pictures of it, taking pictures of themselves with it.” The two were also just tapped as curators of the 2017 Istanbul Biennial.

**Frieze frame:** At the 2005 Frieze London, the duo installed a carbon copy of their Berlin dealer’s booth (identical down to the editioned works) next door to the real booth. “People didn’t even notice!” recalls Elmgreen. “That shows a lot about the audience’s attention span when they go to fairs.” — R.R.

“The good news is that selfie culture makes everyone think that they are artists. The bad news is that selfie culture makes them think they are artists.”  
— Michael Elmgreen (left) and Ingar Dragset

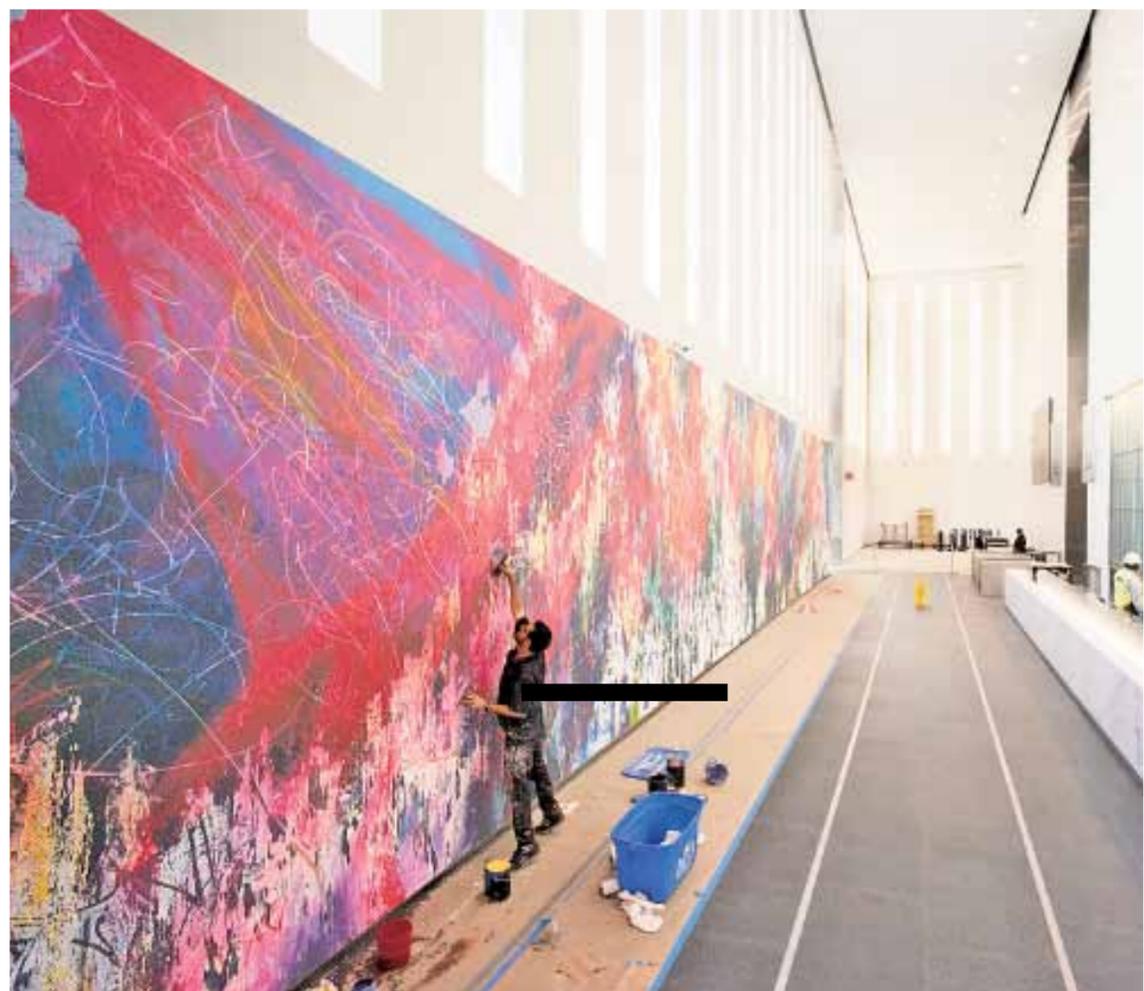
## JOSÉ PARLÁ

**Claim to fame:** The Cuban-American artist, 42, known for his sweeping, calligraphic, polychromatic work, stepped into the spotlight more than a decade ago with a two-person show at the old Chelsea Art Museum. Fashion and music luminaries, including Tom Ford and Eric Clapton, now collect the Miami native’s art. And now one of Parlá’s signature multi-hued murals (see right) sprawls 90 feet across the lobby of the city’s newest iconic tower, One World Trade Center.

**Insta star:** 50.4K followers; @joseparla

**Latest project:** Parlá will team with RxArt, a nonprofit that places art by the likes of Jeff Koons and Ryan McGinley inside hospitals across the country, to mount a 6-by-12-foot diptych at the north entrance of Frieze.

**Frieze frame:** Parlá sees his annual jaunt to Randalls Island as a field trip from the day-to-day: “Being away from the city means visitors are less rushed and more invested in seeing the work, which is always a good thing when it comes to art,” he tells Alexa. — M.K.



“This image was taken with a self-timer when I was in Cuba working on sculptural paintings for the National Museum of Fine Arts in Havana. I incorporated small cut-metal dust and shaved wood into the pigments I was using — all of which tied in well with the space and moment.”  
— José Parlá



"I love social media, and at the same time it makes what I do necessary ... the disembodiment of experience that happens through social media is the exact thing I'm trying to replace — I think about the physicality of the body, and the body in a space." — Nari Ward

## NARI WARD

**Claim to fame:** For his 2008 "Diamond Gym" (above), the artist, now 53, installed an imposing diamond structure made from gym equipment in a church in New Orleans' hurricane-stricken Lower 9th Ward. He wanted to create "a center where people could talk, not so much about the burden of what had happened but about being there now." Decades of such socially engaged projects — employing both space and sound — were recently highlighted in "Sun Splashed," Ward's midcareer retrospective at the Pérez Art Museum Miami.

**Insta star:** 1.2K followers; @nariward

**Latest project:** Ward's newest project, "Smart Tree," will make its debut on the High Line [when? Already out by May 3? (MW: Should be, High Line's page says "April 2016-March 2017)]. The piece transforms a Smart car, covered with tire tread, into a giant planter for a blooming apple tree. As Ward explains, both the project and the park itself are "all about repurposing."

**Frieze frame:** "Art fairs have become just as relevant as art museums and gallery shows — but I'm old enough to remember [that] when you saw an artist at an art fair, you wondered what was wrong with them!" When he does go, he appreciates the chance to glimpse into galleries from around the world. "It's an index of what is going on in even the most obscure places. I look at it as pedagogical research." — R.R.

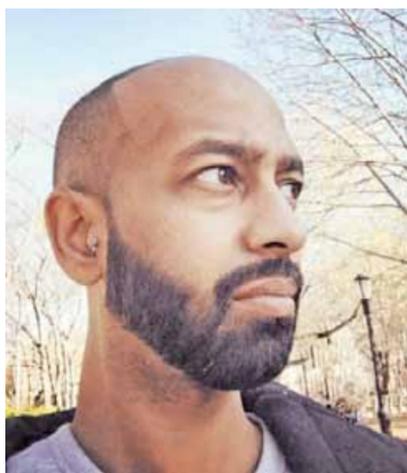
## HEATHER PHILLIPSON

**Claim to fame:** The installations and videos from this 37-year-old artist are known for their emotional expressiveness and lyrical quality — no surprise, as Phillipson is also an award-winning poet. Her breakthrough moment was a 2013 solo show at the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, "Yes, surprising is existence in the post-vegetal cosmorama," for which she combined videos with splashy, almost psychedelic environments.

**Twitter cred:** 1.5K followers; @h\_phillipson

**Latest Project:** For this year's Frieze New York, Phillipson has created "100% OTHER FIBRES" (bottom), a multimedia structural project that will snake through the tent, like a spinal column. "I started thinking about this long, S-shaped tent," she tells Alexa, "and about how bodies come together in a confined space, and how that can be quite intense." She'll also soon present a show at London's Whitechapel Gallery.

**Frieze fact:** Phillipson is a regular at Frieze London, but this marks her debut at the NYC sister fair. "In London it's held in a park, so it's part of a bigger community, and there are other people around," she says, adding that she's excited for the more concentrated feel in NYC, with "the energy very focused inside the tent." — R.R.



"I took this self-portrait last year around the time of Frieze. I look at it as an awakening, but also in terms of my approach to my work, there is a sense of newness and springing toward a beginning where I can build something new."



## BRENDAN FERNANDES

**Claim to fame:** "Culturally I'm a hybrid," explains the 36-year-old artist of Indian descent, who was born in Kenya and raised in Canada. That distinctive mosaic of an upbringing was highlighted in his video "Foe," which landed him a prime spot in a 2011 Guggenheim show. The four-and-a-half-minute piece also piqued interest up north, with the National Gallery of Canada acquiring the video for its permanent collection.

**Insta star:** 2.5K followers; @bfernandes79

**Latest project:** New York-based Fernandes is displaying several pieces that draw on his Kenyan roots as part of the Brooklyn Museum's just-opened "Disguise" exhibition (through Sept. 18). On May 8 he'll join a cadre of artists debuting work at the bucolic Socrates Sculpture Park's 30th anniversary show, LANDMARK.

**Frieze frame:** "The act of getting to Frieze is a pilgrimage I look forward to every year," he says, likening the moment when the white tent fills with VIPs to "the kind of parade you would have found in Louis XIV's court." — M.K.



"This is me [above] and my bitmoji'd self [top], wearing a dog t-shirt and looking stunned by an incoming message. In this case, the message is a glowing void. My Frieze Project — "100% OTHER FIBRES" — exists in precisely this rebounding conflict of virtual, actual and mammalian selves — of morphing images, data-bombardment and transpositions: the option of being more avatar than person." — Heather Phillipson



## ALEX DA CORTE

**Claim to fame:** The artist, now 35, made his first big splash with an intoxicating video piece he created in 2010 in response to Leonard Cohen's seminal record "New Skin for the Old Ceremony." The three-minute work — which includes scenes of Rainier cherries being painted with red nail polish and a banana being adorned with a gold-hoop earring — made it into New York's Museum of Modern Art, Los Angeles' Hammer Museum and Montreal's Musée des beaux-arts.

**Insta star:** 14.1k followers; @alexdacorte

**Latest project:** Da Corte has taken over 20,000 square feet of MASS MoCA with large-scale installations for his show "Free Roses" (above), on view through January 2017. Closer to home, he was commissioned by Frieze to create a giant float (a replica of a prop used in Tim Burton's "Batman") that will hover above the fair's tent and "turn New York City," explains the artist, "into Gotham City."

**Frieze frame:** Da Corte sees the fair as a "gathering of old friends, and images and sculptures you have only read or heard about — one can anonymously engage without the pressure of a museum or gallery." — M.K.



"I think selfies are completely funny — you can capture a bit of time. It can be an alternate reality that we live in. And sometimes we need an alternative." — Alex Da Corte