

THREE TO WATCH

There is a lot of superb art being made these days; this column by Allison Malafronte shines light on a trio of gifted individuals.

BRIAN SINDLER (b. 1957) makes plein air paintings that come to life with just a few simple but strategically placed brushstrokes, carrying all the correct information. Some of his paintings are so simplified, in fact, that they border on abstract. That strict focus on design — large planes of color, strong geometric shapes — strips away extraneous visual detail and allows us to focus on the feeling of a certain landscape or vista, particularly what the artist himself felt when viewing it. The 6-x-6-inch plein air sketch *Ephraim's Yacht Club*, for instance, transmits an immediate sense of moodiness and mystery. It's a scene that takes place, one might imagine, on a midsummer night, with mist so gray and smoky that the silhouette of the yacht and slight flicker of amber light become one with the surrounding sea and sky. This simple yet powerful piece hits all the right notes, possessing the multi-layered, lyrical beauty for which both painters' and musicians' nocturnes are known.

Sindler's subdued and more modern take on the landscape derives from his varied training and influences. He did not start painting until his 30s and was at first a figurative and still life artist working in a Picasso-inspired Cubist style. He then trained at Chicago's American Academy of Art, followed by four years of study at the atelier-style School of Representational Art nearby. During that time, Sindler's work moved into more structured realism, with a stronger emphasis on accurate draftsmanship, an understanding of form and light, and three-dimensional believability. Not long after graduating, Sindler discovered plein air painting, and this has been his genre of choice since. After an initial focus on the color and light of impressionism, he moved through a full-spectrum stylistic evolution to arrive where he is today: a minimalist approach that acknowledges and incorporates elements of abstraction, impressionism, realism, and tonalism. Based in Northbrook, Illinois, he now creates both plein air and studio landscapes.



BRIAN SINDLER (b. 1957), *Ephraim Yacht Club*, 2013, acrylic on board, 6 x 6 in., Primitive (Chicago)

Sindler is represented by Primitive Galler (Chicago) and Water Street Gallery (Douglas, MI).

ELSA MUÑOZ (b. 1983) has come out of her shell over the last several years, stepping into the spotlight as an up-and-coming professional artist, exhibiting in group shows and established galleries, and “finally succumbing,” in her words, to social media. A self-proclaimed introvert, Muñoz has learned to embrace this new world and the art of sharing online and in public spaces. “After much thought, I realized that I’ve personally benefited from following and learning about the work of people I admire,” she writes. “So it is with this understanding that I am now making a conscious effort to connect to those with whom my images have resonated.”

Muñoz’s back story is fascinating. Born to working-class Mexican immigrants, she grew up in Chicago surrounded by typical inner-city challenges. Her mother instilled in her an early love of reading, and it was through books that Muñoz realized there was a better life beyond her neighborhood. It was also in those books that she discovered the poetry and beauty that would eventually lead her to fine art. After studying psychology at the University of Chicago for part of a semester, she dropped out: “I was completely unsure of what to do next,” Muñoz recalls. “Finally, one day, a sketchbook and pencil ended up in

my hands. Making just a few clumsy marks, I felt a profound sense of relief.”

Muñoz soon discovered the American Academy of Art (Chicago), and after taking a guided tour, she knew this was where she was meant to be. “My guide ended the tour by showing us an in-progress painting on a drying rack,” she says. “I could hardly believe such alchemy — colors, shapes, and lines coalesced to somehow form an exquisite, almost-breathing face. I was overcome by the same sense of joyful discovery that had first broadened and deepened my world in childhood.” Since then, Muñoz has continued to walk the artistic path, painting and studying, growing stronger with each unexpected challenge. She paints figures, still lifes, landscapes, and interiors, and has also worked on several series with symbolic themes. All of Muñoz’s paintings tell a story — always about her subjects and often about how she, as an artist and writer, observes them.

Muñoz is represented by Abend Gallery (Denver) and will participate in a two-person show at Gold Gallery (Boston) this October.



ELSA MUÑOZ (b. 1983),
The Din, 2016, oil on
panel, 24 x 24 in.,
private collection

PAIGE BRADLEY (b. 1974) makes bronze sculptures of able-bodied figures in dynamic poses that dive deep into the states of being beneath the physical surface. Hope, struggle, surrender, resistance, and any number of other internal stories can be starting points for the artist's ideas, and she then seeks out a model whose physicality epitomizes these emotions, a person who has, in her own words, "truth on their skin."

Every one of Bradley's pieces contains a psychological and humanistic message beyond the solely beautiful. "I want to go into a conversation about what it's like to be," she said in an interview with the London art historian and critic Tom Flynn. "What it feels like inside the skin of someone who might be shy or unsure, or physically trapped by a condition, or yearning to be somewhere or something they're not." Bradley then uses the power of juxtaposition to re-create the dichotomies found in real life: dissonance with harmony, weakness with strength, ugliness with beauty.

This of course does not prevent the sculptures from being aesthetically pleasing, nor does it find them wanting on the high scales of academic standards. Yet Bradley does not want her work labeled "classical" simply because she is using a traditional technique or because the bodies are beautiful. "It's important to me that my work is not portrayed as classical or even an ancient type of work," she explains. "It's very modern because of the mentality, philosophy, and psychology that go into it." Bradley believes a traditional approach can co-exist with more modern impulses, and that the figure has the potential to powerfully satisfy both classical and contemporary criteria. "It's beautiful that this art can be old and new at the same time."

Born in Carmel, California, Bradley studied at Pepperdine University (Malibu), the Florence Academy of Art (Italy), and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (Philadelphia). After living in New York City for three years and London for eight more, she has recently returned to make her home and studio in Stamford, Connecticut.

Bradley is represented by Canyon Fine Art (Santa Fe), Classic Art Gallery (Carmel), Chloe Fine Arts (San Francisco), Cutter & Cutter Fine Art (St. Augustine), DeBruyne Fine Art (Naples, FL), Eisenhower Gallery (Edgartown, Martha's Vineyard), Gallery D'May (Cape May, NJ), Panter & Hall (London), Principle Gallery (Charleston), R. Alexander Fine Art (Peachtree Corners, GA), Sonia & Co. (Laguna Beach), Thornwood Gallery (Houston), and Windsor Fine Art (New Orleans).



PAIGE BRADLEY (b. 1974), *Bow*, from the *Goddess* series, 2017, bronze, 39 x 21 x 12 in., Gallery D'May, Cape May, New Jersey
