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Art

7 Contemporary Artists' Tips for Surviving the Winter

Osman Can Yerebakan

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aryon
Shinjuku Gyoen in Winter, 2024
Kyoto Art Gallery
US$644

As winter approaches, the days grow shorter, leaves disappear from the trees, and falling temperatures invite us to retreat indoors. With the clocks turned back and darkness arriving earlier, the changing season feels especially pronounced. But while the natural world slows down, the art world moves in the opposite direction.

The exhibition calendar remains busy as the year draws to a close, with galleries, museums, and auction houses bustling with activity. For artists, the colder months can bring intense productivity and mounting deadlines, even as the world outside their studios begins to quieten.

Artist Mark Dion, who works in an upstate New York studio surrounded by forest, notes the contrasting rhythms. "In the rhythm of the natural world, everything is shutting down in the fall: Animals start to hibernate, and trees take all of their energy out of the leaves," he said. "We are, however, back to work."

Yet for many artists, the changing seasons also bring fresh inspiration and opportunities to reconsider their relationship with the studio. "I start by collecting thoughts from my walks and wanderings, observing how the seasons change the landscape, how the way we dress shifts, and what nature is growing and offering," explains New York–based artist Ian Ha.



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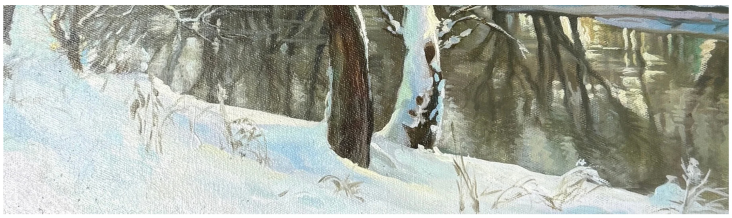

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For London-based painter Bex Massey, cooler temperatures are a welcome relief. “The disgusting levels of heat have abated, and I am keen to get paintings to a point of resolution for the new year,” she said.

The changing atmosphere can also find its way into the work itself. For Rodolpho Parigi, who recently relocated from São Paulo to New York, the cooler, darker months echo the chromatic world of his paintings. “There’s something cooler, more ambiguous, slightly metallic about their atmosphere,” he said.

Others see the season as a reminder to pause. London-based sculptor Magali Reus encourages making the most of the fleeting sunshine before winter sets in, while fellow artist Amba Sayal-Bennett offers a simpler piece of advice: “And the most important tip, I think: rest!”

Artsy asked seven artists how they navigate the changing rhythms of the colder months, from the demands of the exhibition calendar to finding moments to slow down.

Featured in this Article

Rodolpho Parigi
Bex Massey
Magali Reus
Amba Sayal-Bennett
Ian Ha
Sophie Treppendahl
Mark Dion

Rodolpho Parigi

Follow

B. 1977, São Paulo. Lives and works in São Paulo and New York.



Portrait of Roldopho Parigi in his New York Studio. Photo by Charles Roussel. Courtesy of Nara Roesler.

“Now that I’ve been living in New York for the last three months, the connection between my work and my studio has become much more apparent. Unlike São Paulo, New York has very distinct seasons. The shifts in temperature, light, and atmosphere are much

more pronounced, and I find that these changes inevitably become part of my work.

“The temperature of the studio, the quality of the light, and the landscape I encounter on my way to my studio inside the Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts all somehow find their way into the paintings.



Rodolpho Parigi
Black volumen Bestiaire # 32, 2024
Nara Roesler
Inquire about availability

“At the moment, I’m developing a series of blue paintings, and I can already sense a relationship between their atmosphere and the environment in which they’re being made. I am working on a collaborative show between Nara Roesler and Anton Kern galleries for November, so having an exhibition ahead of me makes my priorities very clear.”

Bex Massey

Follow

B. 1985, Newcastle, U.K. Lives and works in London.

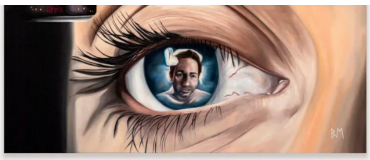


Portrait of Bex Massey. Photo by Mitsi Moulson. Courtesy of Bex Massey.

“I spend the majority of my time in the studio, and my work has heaps of layers, so this works well with drying times. A chicken-and-egg situation, maybe?

“The season means cooler temperatures, so reverting to a dreamy studio life. Now that my paintings at Seventeen Gallery’s Frieze London booth are out, I will be in the studio a bit less.





Bex Massey
William, 2022
Unit
Price on request

"To be more productive, I think you just need to ask yourself what kind of work and when works best for you...and try not to get thrown off by what other people are doing."

Magali Reus

Follow

B. 1981, The Hague, Netherlands. Lives and works in London.



Portrait of Magali Reus. Photo by Jules Moskovtchenko.

"I try to find time for tidying and reorganizing my Shoreditch studio at the end of each working day. It is something I don't enjoy doing, but I find it a helpful practice for working in a focused and careful way. It helps avoid damage and gives me more of an overview. That, and it feels great returning to a tidy space early the next day.

"It is all dependent on what's in the calendar. At the moment, it is quite a lot.





Magali Reus
Clementine (Sleepy Soils), 2024
Galerie Greta Meert
Price on request



Magali Reus
Apricots, 2021
Mai 36 Galerie
Price on request

"There's the exhibition 'Swimming by Night' at The Perimeter in London, with a new publication. There was a small book exhibition opening at Tenderbooks, Cecil Street, with all of my printed matter as well as some design objects I've been making. I designed a menu for Toklas, the delicious London restaurant; I showed work at Frieze London with The Approach and at Art Basel Paris with Mai 36 Galerie. And, lastly, I am opening a large-scale solo exhibition, 'Tenant,' at the Kunsthalle Wien in late November, where I will be showing over 80 works, all new or recent.

"This exhibition will also feature a new publication, which we're finessing at the moment. So, in short, a very busy time of year! No complaints, though; it has been, and is, all wonderfully enjoyable and very rewarding!"

Amba Sayal-Bennett

Follow

B. 1991, London. Lives and works in London.



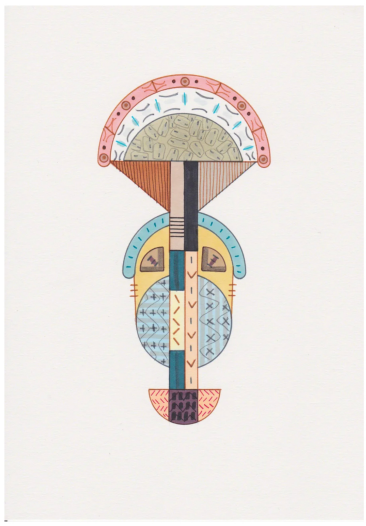
Portrait of Amba Sayal-Bennett. Photo by Ryan O'Toole Collett.

"My relationship with my studio in Deptford is less seasonal and more project-based. Between shows, I spend a long time researching, which means I can work from anywhere. It's towards the end of this process that I'm in the studio more consistently.

"I've been developing a body of work exploring material afterlives within Western allopathic medicine. I've been particularly interested in how waste is governed and recuperated within this context. For example, I've been tracing how redundant National Health Service patient X-rays have been sold to the Royal Mint to be stripped of silver, converted into bullion, and then processed into jewelry. Some of this work was presented at Frieze London with Carbon12, and also as part of my solo show, 'Vark,' at Indigo+Madder in London.



Amba Sayal-Bennett
Webber, 2018
LUNDGREN GALLERY



Amba Sayal-Bennett
Taj, 2018
LUNDGREN GALLERY

€650 €650

“I really enjoy autumn and its change of pace; I tend to feel more focused once it starts to get colder. I teach at University of the Arts London, so autumn marks the new academic year and a busier season. I tend to be more productive the busier I am and find that moving between different work and projects can be really generative.”

Ian Ha Follow

B. 1997, Yong-in, South Korea. Lives and works in New York.



Portrait of Ian Ha. Courtesy of Ian

“There is a sense of anticipation, especially when there’s an exhibition, ‘MacGuffin: Five Korean Artists and Five Writers from Art Omi’ at Space ZeroOne in New York.

“I’m currently in the process of moving, so my studio feels less like a single, defined space and more like a collection of scattered islands, each ‘island’ serving a different purpose in my practice. There’s a certain beauty in working across these different stations; moving between them allows me to make unexpected connections and discover how each environment contributes something of its own to the work.



Ian Ha
We didn’t mean to go to sea, 2023
PLATO Gallery
Price on request



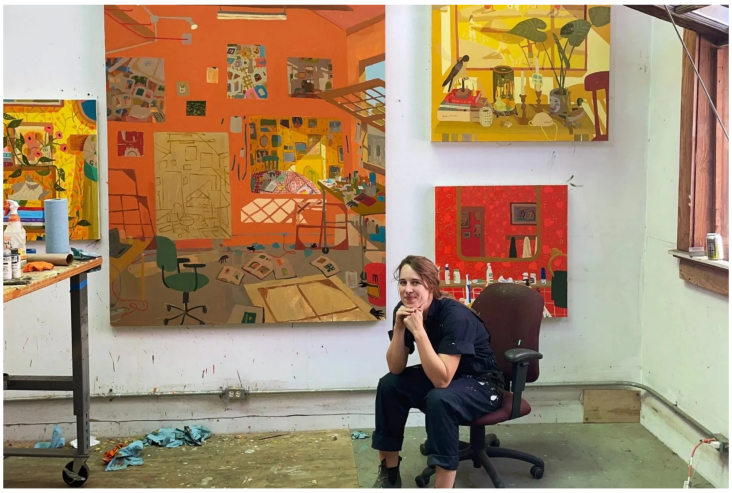
Ian Ha
Lost, 2023
Fragment

“I encountered and read Nadia Owusu’s *Aftershocks*, and it organically unlocked a new layer of meaning in the work I had made earlier this spring. I realized more fully how time and seasonal shifts have a way of reframing the work. Connecting with Nadia grew into a layered exchange, and that collaboration is coming to life with our MacGuffin exhibition.

“My tip to readjust to the new season is to find the right music, and adopt a plant.”

Sophie Treppendahl Follow

B. 1991, Louisiana. Lives and works in New Orleans.



Portrait of Sophie Treppendahl.

“My studio has frequently been a muse in my own paintings. Each year, I typically create one large painting of my studio space to capture the year’s work. The studio paintings include the work I have in progress at the time and the books of artists inspiring my current work, and serve as a time capsule of my state of mind during that period. Some paintings are bright and cheerful, others are quieter and more subdued. For me, these paintings function as a series of self-portraits over the years.

“Right now I am finishing up paintings for a solo exhibition at SOCO Gallery in Charlotte [North Carolina] opening in November, and a few pieces for Art Basel Miami with Philip Martin Gallery. Each New Year after my busy season, I clean the studio thoroughly and repaint the studio floor. It’s a nice way to purge the previous year and have a momentarily clean space.



Increased Interest
Sophie Treppendahl
Living Room, Evening, 2021
Romer Young Gallery
Price on request

“My year-round studio hack is audiobooks. I listen to cheesy thriller audiobooks while I work. There is something about the ‘whodunit’ book that keeps me focused while I paint. I strive for work-life balance even during the busiest times. When I leave the studio, I try to leave my entire work brain behind. I go on long walks with my toddler at the park after my workday and count down to the joy ahead—finishing deadlines and seeing family for the holidays.”

Mark Dion

Follow

B. 1961, Massachusetts. Lives and works in Copake, New York.





Portrait of Mark Dion. Photo by Amanda Dandeneau. Courtesy of Mark Dion,

“I’m a really big birdwatcher, so I try to take advantage of the migration season, which is always a little melancholic, as fall is, because instead of saying hello to birds like you do in the spring, now is the time to say goodbye to them until the springtime. There is undoubtedly a kind of melancholic aspect to this season.

“This is the time when I’m gathering pine cones, acorns, chestnuts, and all of these things which are now mature and dropping from the trees. They come in handy later on at the studio.



Mark Dion
Some Recent Plagues (framed), 2025
Obee Editions
US$1,375

“I live in an upstate town called Copake, surrounded by forest. My studio actually was one of my sculptures, one of my follies from the exhibition I did at Storm King, ‘The Field Station of the Melancholy Marine Biologist.’ This was a freestanding wooden house that you could not enter, but could look through the large windows and see everything inside, which was filled to look like a marine biologist’s laboratory. Fall is, however, a tricky time because the structure is not insulated or heated, so we are in the final weeks that I can use my studio. Then my dining room table becomes my studio until spring.

“My new solo exhibition, ‘Eccentric Collectors Like Us,’ at Concord Museum in Massachusetts, displays objects from almost a thousand repurposed boxes that filled my studio. Each of them contains toys, old wooden tools, game pieces, and ceramic bits. I lined them with felt or antique paper and found the right object to put inside.” ∎

Osman Can Yerebakan