

THE

ART

Innovators. Disruptors.
Out-of-the-box thinkers.
It's the energy on which
this city was built, and
these eight creatives have
risen to the top—catch
them while you can!

BY ABIGAIL STONE

OF LIVING

L.A.-based dancer and choreographer Jacob Jonas is taking the city by storm.

THE shape-shifter



JACOB JONAS

The dance ace is bringing L.A. to its feet.

Though Jacob Jonas (jacobjonas.com) didn't start dancing until he was 13—joining The Calypso Tumblers, a group of Venice Beach street performers, he rapidly made up for his late start. Winning both a RAW artist award in 2012 and the Capezio A.C.E. award in 2013 didn't hurt, and pairing him with Spectrum Dance Theater's Donald Byrd—who not only sharpened the young artist's choreographic talents, but gave him a crash course in running a nonprofit—enabled the launch of Jacob Jonas The Company. Five years later, their blend of contemporary ballet, acrobatics and break dance is garnering much-deserved attention. But the 26-year-old Jonas has aspirations toward a larger audience, filming one new project a month in collaboration with the city's local architects for his Instagram-based initiative, @camerasanddancers. "It's an opportunity to introduce younger people to the work that you're doing, rather than just seeing the work onstage," he explains. He's also leading the company's fifth season at the Wallis, where they'll premier all new works, and there's the third iteration of the spring dance festival they produce on the Santa Monica Pier. It's just another example of Jonas dancing up a storm.

THE
masters of reinvention



Jesse Vargas (left)
and Shane Scheel
onstage at the Wallis

THE risk taker

Josué Thomas at *Instant Gratification*, his debut exhibition at there-there gallery in East Hollywood



JESSE VARGAS & SHANE SCHEEL

The duo transforms films into spectacular live shows.

The impetus to entertain has long lured dreamers to Los Angeles. Those who succeed are the ones who, rather than waiting for their big break, put together their own projects. “I moved here as a performer and quickly realized that the other side of the table was much more interesting to me,” says Shane Scheel, who saw an empty bar as an opportunity. “We created this forum for actors out here for pilot season to stop by and sing,” he says of the performances, which he develops with Jesse Vargas, the musical supervisor and arranger. This being Hollywood, show tunes were scrapped in favor of movie soundtracks. And, thus, *For The Record* (fortherecordlive.com) was born. Not quite cabaret, not quite musical, the performances tap the oeuvres of filmmakers—they’ve tacked Quentin Tarantino and Baz Luhrmann, among others—and attracted stars to join them both onstage (Rumer Willis and Evan Rachel Wood have participated) and off (audiences included Tarantino and Barbra Streisand). Now a fixture at the Wallis, their latest offering, *Love, Actually Live*, is a multimedia experience that combines the projected film with live singing and dancing, “reimagining how the storyline is put together using the music to drive a new pastiche,” Scheel explains. Now that’s how to make it in show business.

JOSUÉ THOMAS

This multihyphenate is open to all possibilities.

It’s been a wild few years for Josué Thomas. Johnny Depp’s stylist pounced on the native Angeleno and first-generation Trinidadian’s handcrafted ponchos; a trunk show at Chateau Marmont sold out; he opened his store Gallery Department (gallerydept.com) on Beverly Boulevard; and he showed his collection in Paris for the first time this fall. And Depp’s not the only celebrity who’s worn Thomas’ creations. Kourtney Kardashian, Virgil Abloh and Anderson Paak have also been spotted in his customized vintage one-of-a-kind denim and graphic T-shirts. But don’t pigeonhole Thomas as a fashion designer. He also paints (Hollywood gallery there-there hung a late summer show), creates furniture (a Gallery Department ad sports his overstuffed furniture), photographs (the brand’s imagery is courtesy of Thomas’ lens), and is working on a music project (his band is called *Art That Kills*). The multimedia artist credits his debonair father for launching his interest in style. “I created a platform for all my creative endeavors, but the outlet is fashion,” he quips. “I just want to be a vessel and collect all of it and then shoot out my interpretation to show the world.” Fire away!

A photograph of Simon Haas, one of the Haas Brothers, sitting on a large, shaggy, light-brown furry chair. He is wearing a black sleeveless shirt and dark pants. Behind him is a large, mushroom-shaped lamp with a green felt top decorated with colorful fabric flowers and a metallic stem. The background is a brick wall. The text is overlaid on the lower left portion of the image.

SIMON & NIKOLAI HAAS

The Haas Brothers seamlessly merge materials and disciplines.

There's a fine line between art and design. "If you call our work design, it's as far away from Le Corbusier as you can imagine. And if you say it's art, then it's on the functional side," says Nikolai Haas who, alongside his twin brother, Simon, has electrified both worlds. The younger siblings to actor Lukas Haas (proof that creativity runs in families) create zoomorphic pieces—furry chairs with metallic horns and feet, long-necked ceramic vases with feathered bodies, plump beaded sculptures with legs—collaborating with everyone from Lady Gaga to Versace to Commune Design. This month, the 34-year-olds, who've only been in business (thehaasbrothers.com) for seven years, are the focus of a retrospective at The Bass Museum during Art Basel/Miami. Despite the accolades, their favorite partnerships are the ones that give back. "What's cooler?" says Simon. "To say that you made a big body of work by yourself or that you created a community? We think a community is a much cooler brag." The women they've employed would agree. A group in South Africa has even dubbed themselves "The Haas Sisters." There's no sibling rivalry here; it's more like a case of brotherly love.

THE
mavericks



PHOTO COURTESY OF DE KRAMPHUIS & COMPANY

The Haas Brothers sit among their works at R & Company gallery, which includes "Animal Planet" (a wool and silk rug), and other whimsical sculptural pieces.

THE discipline defier

L.A. artist Harold Mendez at the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Rauschenberg Residency



HAROLD MENDEZ

Blurring the lines comes naturally to this Angeleno.

The experience of navigating multiple languages and customs bestows a unique agility on the work of first-generation artists. Certainly it's there in the work of Harold Mendez (haroldmendez.com), from his ability to expertly slip from photography to sculpture to assemblage to the dexterity with which he manipulates these mediums, impelling the spectator to experience new ways of seeing. "My sense of belonging is in multiple places" says the half-Mexican, half-Columbian Mendez, who grew up in Chicago and now lives in Los Angeles, "and so my perspective and my work reflects that." Take "Sin Nombre," a photograph of a boy on a horse he discovered while doing research for an upcoming show in Cuba, exhibited at MoMA this past summer. In Mendez's clever hands, the viewer becomes as much participant in the appropriated and enlarged image as the observer. Or the sterling silver bowls he created for Tiffany & Co. after being selected for last year's Whitney Biennial. Seen up-close, they're revealed to be modeled on Columbian death masks. Mendez originally planned on studying architecture, but, because of the school's location, he changed his major to art. It's clear he knows how to turn distance to his advantage.

JOEY LICO

Lico pulls back the curtain on the L.A. art scene.

Early in her career, Joey Lico took a message, "Is that Koons with a C or a K?," she asked the artist. It's a glimpse into the unique perspective that the meticulous and inquisitive Lico brings to her work as the global curator and senior director, West Coast + Latin America for The Cultivist (thecultivist.com), the worldwide arts club that recently opened its doors in L.A. "Art used to be an intellectual pursuit, and, somewhere along the way, it became a social pursuit," she explains. "I want to claim the education back." The group's \$2,500 membership fee offers perks far beyond staid invitations to private dinners: Front-of-the-line entry to museums, VIP entrance to arts fairs and studio visits are some of its benefits. The Brazilian-born Lico is fervent about educating collectors and supporting diverse and emerging artists, especially those from Latin America, "The art world, the media, the museums, they're taking care of the marquee names," says Lico, who cites Annelise Johnson and Rodrigo Valenzuela as two artists on her radar right now. "But what about the next great talent?" Thanks to Lico, we'll find out.

THE
gatekeeper



Joey Lico at L.A.-based
artist Liza Lou's show
at Lehmann Maupin
gallery in New York