

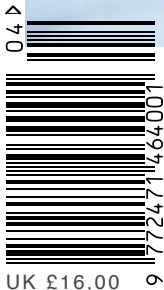
# UBIKWIST

#4

## Harmony

**Ben Harper • Aïssa Maïga • George Nelson Preston  
Chris Obi • Abdul Rahman Katanani  
Jessica Mitrani • Jahnkoy**

ISSN 2471-464X



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## CONTENTS

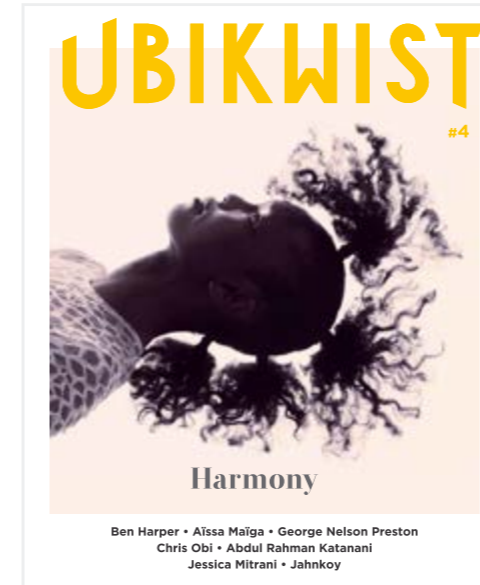
### Features

- 10 **JESSICA MITRANI** by Roger Joseph  
Portrait Sean Waltrous
- 20 **FATY SY SAVANET** by Steven Tate  
Photographs Geoffroy de Boismenu
- 42 **DESMOND CADOGAN** by Gary Robinson  
Portrait Robert Mapplethorpe  
Photographs Christian Kilrain Carter Coleman
- 50 **AÏSSA MAÏGA** by Rokhaya Diallo  
Photographs Thierry Van Biesen
- 68 **BRIAN THOREEN** by Masha Calloway  
Portrait Betina La Plante
- 86 **CHRIS OBI** by Spencer Leigh  
Photographs Jermaine Francis
- 94 **GEORGE NELSON PRESTON** by Kurt Thometz  
Portrait Christian Kilrain Carter Coleman
- 106 **TRAVEL BREAKOUT**  
Photographs Søren Mørk
- 122 **BEN HARPER** by Gary Powell  
Photographs Warwick Saint
- 132 **SADE LYTHCOTT** by Warren Reich  
Photographs Sean Waltrous
- 164 **MARVIN BING** by Belinda Becker  
Photographs Betina La Plante
- 168 **ALEX AMINI** by Monique Long  
Photographs Christian Kilrain Carter Coleman
- 188 **JAHNKOY** by Nana Blankson  
Photographs Delphine Diallo
- 196 **WENDY ROWE** by Nana Blankson  
Photographs Craig Salmon and Camilla Akrans
- 222 **CHRIS AND BETH GIBBS** by JP Plunier  
Photographs Betina La Plante
- 228 **ABDUL RAHMAN KATANANI** by Steven Tate  
Portrait Agathe Champsaur

### Fashion

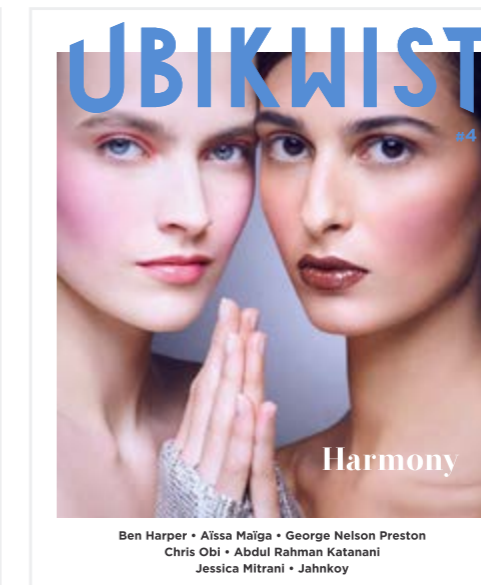
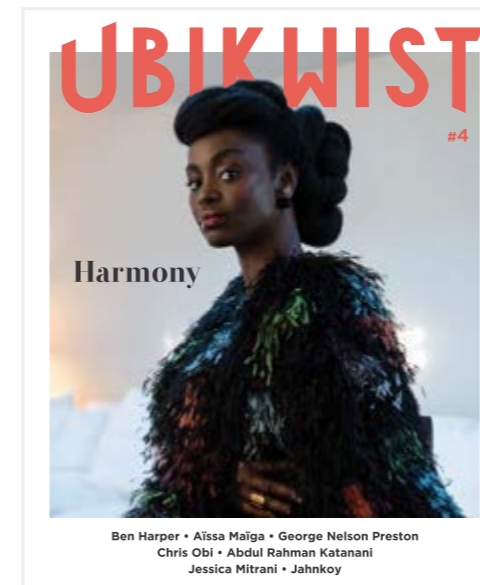
- 28 **V FORMATION**  
Photographs Christian Kilrain Carter Coleman  
Styling Giannie Couji
- 58 **THE OUTSIDERS**  
Photographs Sandrine Dulermo & Michael Labica  
Styling Neil Stuart
- 76 **SKY LIGHTING**  
Photographs Sherif Mokbel  
Styling Giannie Couji
- 114 **JAMAICA WITH LOVE**  
Photographs & Styling Savannah Baker
- 142 **GHOST BIRDS**  
Photographs Paul Westlake  
Styling Jen Smith
- 154 **ROAD TRIP**  
Photographs Minoru Kaburagi  
Styling Hanae Uwajima
- 178 **LONDON CALLING**  
Photographs Steeve Beckouet  
Styling Laurent Dombrowicz
- 214 **VISUAL INTIMACY**  
Photographs G. Prado  
Styling Vinni Pizzigrilli
- 238 **THE UNBEARABLE LIGHTNESS OF BEING**  
Photographs Frederic Arenda  
Fashion Direction Tamer Wilde
- 248 **SHAPED BUT NOT MOLDED**  
Photographs Steen Sundland  
Styling Christian Schleisner
- Beauty**
- 202 **SPLIT SCREEN**  
Photographs Iñaki  
Styling Giannie Couji

## COVERS



PHOTOGRAPH : SANDRINE DULERMO & MICHAEL LABICA  
STYLING : NEIL STUART  
HAIR : ERNESTO MONTENOVO @DAVID ARTISTS  
USING BUMBLE & BUMBLE  
MAKE UP : KENNY CAMPBELL USING CHANEL  
ROSE WEARS JUMPSUIT BY MARINA QURESHI

PHOTOGRAPH : WARWICK SAINT  
STYLING : LISA MOSKO  
GROOMING : TRACY BARRETT @ART DEPARTMENT  
BEN HARPER WEARS TOP BY THE SQUAD  
TROUSERS BY CALVIN KLEIN - HAT & RING BEN'S OWN  
NECKLACE BY BY THIEF  
RIGHT HAND BRACELET BY GILES & BROTHER  
LEFT HAND BRACELET BY LE 7 GRAMMES  
GUITAR WEISSENBORN 1920'S



PHOTOGRAPH : THIERRY VAN BIESEN  
STYLING : GIANNIE COUJI  
HAIR : NADINE MATHEKY  
MAKE UP : TOPOLINO @CALLISTE  
AÏSSA MAÏGA WEARS CAPE BY KOCHÉ  
EARRINGS BY DIANA LAW  
RING BY CAMILLE ENRICO

PHOTOGRAPH : IÑAKI  
STYLING : GIANNIE COUJI  
MAKE UP : TOPOLINO @CALLISTE USING M.A.C COSMETICS  
HAIR : MARTYN FOSS CALDER @AIRPORT AGENCY  
YULIA & SALOME WEAR GLOVES BY ERIK HALLEY

# The Philosophical Painter

Alex Amini  
by Monique Long  
Portrait by Christian Kilrain  
Carter Coleman



Alex Amini is a painter and sculptor, who also works with installation. With respect to abstraction, he draws upon many different influences including critical theory, philosophy, and architecture. Like many non-narrative painters, his use of materials – unconventional ones – have primacy.

Amini has a series of works where he used a cup instead of a brush to paint or rather document the sequence of his emphatic movements; each gesture is a record of his thinking as he paints the canvas. Initially, I was struck by the color in the work – romantic and muted or graphic and bold – which seems to be an important part of his compositions, although he vows that color is inconsequential to his practice at the moment.

And second, his accidental paintings, the *verso*, are extraordinary. The work is inextricable from the primary painting. The saturated canvas, normally invisible to the viewer, is undeniably a complete work and a unique part of his painting practice.

Below, Amini talks about his background, the relationship between painting and his training as an architect, and other thinkers who have shaped his practice.

## Talk about your background as it relates to art making.

Having an Iranian father and an Italian mother (who met in Germany) as parents, I think I had to take matters into my own hands. I had to eliminate culture as a reference. The idea that one could deal with architecture as solids, and voids, and planes, and cuts did away with the need to borrow from other examples. I could generate my own vocabulary. Having a mixed background makes a reinvention of self necessary. I think art is taking matters into one's own hands.

## What types of architectural projects have you done?

In school, projects were utopian in spirit. Working in offices was frustrating because you have to think with someone else's mind. The work has to be so compelling as to make building it unavoidable.

## How did you become interested in painting?

In architecture, drawing is used to generate ideas rather than illustrating a product. The drawing is the product. In painting, the self-referentiality of the medium further minimizes the influence of extraneous forces. One can work in a vacuum and deal with things in a primal way without having to address issues other than the work at hand.

## Is the approach, process, or any of the formal aspects of your practice related to your training as an architect?

Land art [mid-twentieth century art movement where avant-garde artists used soil, sand, rocks, and other materials found in nature to make objects] is an architectural influence, more so than any buildings; the earth plane is an influence, similar to the surface of a still body of water, all the way to the universe as it might relate to an infinite flat plane. The taut surface of a painting lying horizontal reactivates the sensations of a flat expanse.

## Can you talk about your cupping technique, the recording series, and the unconventional materials you use to paint?

The idea of painting as “a record of events” informed my choices. When I began, I was looking for materials which would leave traces of their passage. My first attempt at painting was pouring ink on Mylar. I observe how liquids and dyes of different viscosities interact by rippling and capillary action. The drying of the ink on Mylar also produces a deposit of rings, tracing the withdrawal of the moisture. With inkjet paper, I discovered a surface that could record the edges of liquids. Using starches as a medium that could be removed, I got inspired by its cracking. In an overturned cup, pneumatic pressure will contain a liquid in a suspended state over the canvas.

Because it is difficult to materialize architectural impulses, I chose painting to investigate impulses in themselves...



CUPPING 03, 2011



CUPPING 29 (RECTO), 2015

**Your use of color is striking, but you have said that your choices are incidental.**

I have not yet tried to formulate a system for dealing with color. I am dealing with paint as a material. Color escapes me, so I don't try to corner it. I am simply waiting for a higher insight. Through trial and error, like and dislike, hunger or satiation, I maintain an infantile relation to color.

**Who or what has influenced your work intellectually?**

In painting, reading the book by Yve-Alain Bois *Painting as Model* was helpful in clarifying my own inclinations. In architecture, I was fortunate to come into contact with the teachings of Raimund Abraham and to be inspired by his drawings. Also, George Ivanovich Gurdjieff found the methods and a language for a person to be able to work on him or herself as a means of acquiring the necessary force to be able to access their own intensity. And Walter Pichler was a sculptor-architect whose book of projects I remember consuming obsessively. He was a colleague of Raimund in the sixties.

**Your installations with draped fabric suggest an interest in clothing and/or textiles as well.**

The way fabric is structured to meet the body, awakens the sensations of the skin, as the mind tries to wrap itself around the landscape of the body. The body always finds its way into the picture. The upper and lower areas within the field of a painting corresponds to the chest area and belly of a person.

**Do you try to integrate your architectural impulses into your paintings?**

Because it is difficult to materialize architectural impulses, I chose painting to investigate impulses in themselves after I had experimented with spontaneous generation as a painting process. I started working with grids and deformations of straight lines. The idea was to repeat a strategy of movement within a square to overcome ambivalence when faced with a blank canvas. Here, also, the body implies its presence.

**Why are you compelled to paint?**

The act of painting is a materialization of... that which is to be discovered. Painting eliminates all intermediary agents. All interactions leave a physical impression of occurring. This direct arena of exchange between the inner and outer realm is a substitute for not being able to relate to the physical world directly.

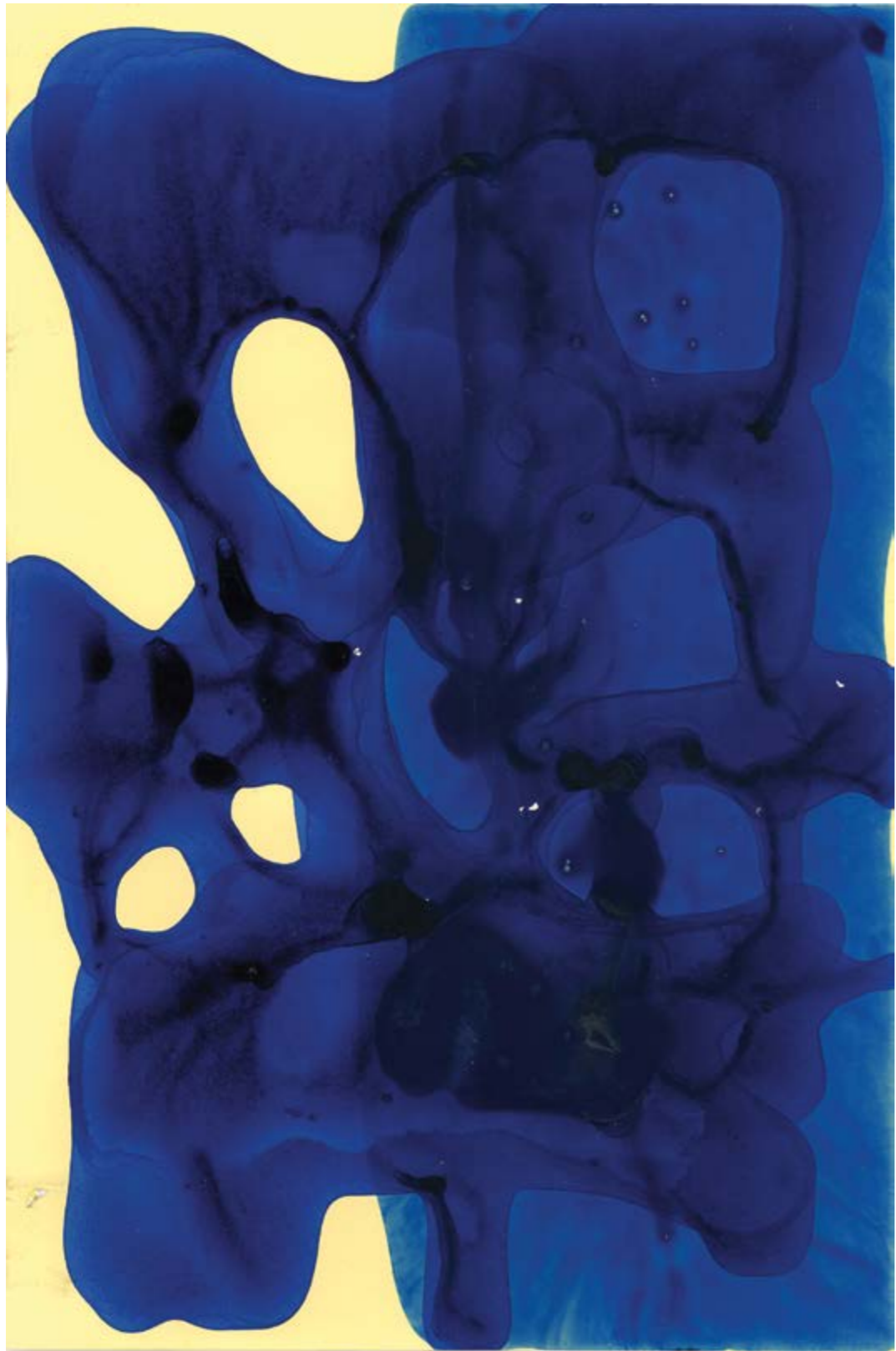
**What is your idea of Harmony?**

The act of joining or fusing elements into one entity is the underlying force in the making of Architecture. In painting, I am also inclined to fusing elements into a singularity. And this tendency to want to join and smooth everything into a whole might produce a sensation called Harmony.

[www.alexamini.com](http://www.alexamini.com)

PORTRAIT BY CHRISTIAN KILRAIN  
CARTER COLEMAN





COLORAID #09, 1998



POURING #365, 1996



CUPPING 31 (VERSO), 2014



CUPPING 31 (VERSO), 2014



CUPPING 39 (RECTO), 2015



BRUSH #351, 1990



COLORAID #14, 1998  
PICTURES : COURTESY OF THE ARTIST