

Press Release

Nicole Eisenman
The Kiss

September 8 – October 31, 2015
Opening Sunday, September 6, 3–6 pm
Gallery hours, Tue–Sat, 11 am – 6 pm

The work of New York–based artist Nicole Eisenman (born 1965 in Verdun, France) raises questions regarding existing conventions in art and society. It does so via a freeing and often dark humor that makes no exception for Eisenman, herself. In her historically informed art, she fuses the visual vocabularies of caricature, painting, and recent subcultures into a highly individual formal language, which returns time and again to a focus on human individuality.

On display in her third solo exhibition at the gallery are recently completed paintings on paper, most of them large format, that offer up intimate views held and observations made by the artist. At times, the works slip into dreamy scenes whose meanings and painterly opulence only unfold gradually. In *Untitled (for now)* (2015), a naked woman sits gazing up at the firmament and the hardly visible constellation *WUT* (What?), while in *Three Women* (2015) a bear—depressed, bowing its head—is integrated into a melancholic idyll.

Contemplative (self-)reflections such as *Self Portrait at Night* (2015) depict the artist reading psychoanalytic theory or, as in *Day's End* (2015), at night in a room whose window opens onto a skyline with a beaming One World Trade Center. A central motif in the exhibition is “the kiss”, which appears in two variations. An ethereal and quite gentle pencil drawing that plays with surrealist iconography, *Le Kiss* (2015) is contrasted by *Le Kiss Deux* (2015), whose highly physical portrayal renders palpable the transgressive aspect of intimacy. The private realm is left behind in *Tea Party* (2015); that neo-conservative U.S. political movement serves as a metaphor for a corrupted American Dream. The work contains a flagpole, onto which cling not only a chubby businessman and a one-legged pirate, but also the Grim Reaper—tightly, by his bony hand.

Eisenman has paired these works with two important ink drawings, which possess the explicitly political force of *Tea Party* and also highlight another of the exhibition's undercurrents: *Study for the U.S.S. Williamsburg Crashing Off The Shores of Fame* (2002) shows the presidential yacht of Harry S. Truman tilting precariously but is aimed more at the eponymously named part of New York and the ambitions of its inhabitants, while *Nachbarschaft Polizeistaat* (Neighborhood Police State, 1992) appears to depict a civil war.

New York–based author Ariana Reines has written a text, entitled *The Kiss*, to accompany the exhibition.

Nicole Eisenman's mid-career retrospective *Dear Nemesis* was organized by Kelly Shindler at the Contemporary Art Museum in St. Louis, and it then traveled to the ICA in Philadelphia and the Museum of Contemporary Art in San Diego. Eisenman won the Carnegie Prize for her contribution to the Carnegie International 2013. Together with A. L. Steiner, she publishes the magazine *Ridykeulous*.