

Nicole Eisenman

13 November 2024 – 25 January 2025
8 Bury Street London SW1Y

Opening: Wednesday 13 November, 6-8pm



The world is depressing, and it shows up in my work, but there's a lightness and a levity, because that is my survival mechanism. – Nicole Eisenman

Following their acclaimed major survey, *What Happened*, at Whitechapel Gallery last year, Nicole Eisenman debuts new works at Sadie Coles HQ, London.

On one wall, Eisenman shows a recent ensemble of mismatched portraits depicting friends and fellow artists. This harnessing of community began in the early 2000s when they hosted late-night studio sessions inviting friends to model for one another, with Eisenman's recognition that the intimacy of this social environment could become a rich subject for their practice. Displayed in a grid, each rag-tag character in this hall of infamy shares a connection with the artist – from Pope.L to Aunt Helen – yet this is the only commonality among them. Eisenman's expressive and irregular application of oil paint results in portraits of diverse style, colour and texture, to produce an empathetic and affectionate assembly that recalls the initial encounter between artist and sitter.

In both their painting and sculpture practices, Eisenman makes astute comments on the human condition in a way that subtly self-deprecates – so not to scare, but to survive its solemn nature. Expressing their approach as 'painting with one eye open', in *Fiddle V. Burns* (2024) a new portrait has the artist working away as the world around them is in turmoil. With a paintbrush in one hand and the other poised on their hip, Eisenman's protagonist exudes an expression of wilful ignorance, looking beyond the confines of their hollowed-out 'studio' bunker while contemplating the task at hand. With their typically balanced use of humour and anxiety, Eisenman's painter mimics the caricature of the master at work, here isolated in a muddy shelter beneath the threat of imposing military machinery.

But Eisenman is not alone: their resolute industry is observed by this gallery of witness, encouraged even by this wall of allies. Drawing attention to the exclusionary nature of art history's canon, Eisenman puts their artist back into the studio, diligently and defiantly, teasingly denying a view of the canvas they are working on.

Nicole Eisenman (b. France, 1965) lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. Eisenman has exhibited internationally since the early 1990s with recent major exhibitions including *Fixed Crane*, Madison Square Park, New York (2024); *What Happened*, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Whitechapel Gallery, London, Museum Brandhorst, Munich (touring, 2023-2024); *Prince*, Print Centre New York (2023); *A Decade of Printing*, Cleveland Museum of Art (2022); *Heads, Kisses, Battles: Nicole Eisenman and the Moderns*, Kunstmuseum Den Haag, Fondation Vincent Van Gogh Arles, Aargauer Kunsthau and Kunsthalle Bielefeld (touring, 2021-2022); *Prince*, University Museum of Contemporary Art, Amherst (2021); *Giant Without a Body*, Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo (2021); *Nicole Eisenman and Keith Boadwee*, FLAG Art Foundation, New York (2020); *Sturm und Drang*, The Contemporary Austin (2020); and *Baden Baden Baden*, Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden (2019). Recent group exhibitions include *Day for Night: New American Realism*, National Gallery of Ancient Art, Rome (2024); *The Anxious Eye: German Expressionism and Its Legacy*, The National Gallery of Art, Washington (2024); *Groove: Artists and Intaglio Prints, 1500 to Now*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2023); *Dreaming of Home*, Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art, New York (2023); and *50 Paintings*, Milwaukee Art Museum (2023). Their work was included in both the 2019 Venice Biennale and the 2019 Whitney Biennial and is held in numerous public collections internationally.