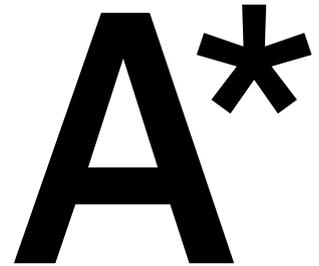


Media Release

Aarau, December 2021



Heads, Kisses, Battles

Nicole Eisenman and the Moderns

29 January – 24 April 2022

Aargauer Kunsthaus, Aarau

Human existence, social conventions and conflicts, as well as issues of identity are themes of Nicole Eisenman's (b. 1965) artistic work. Compositional elements from the Renaissance, history painting and modern art find expression in their art, along with contemporary aspects of pop culture and subculture. The exhibition *Heads, Kisses, Battles* places Eisenman's oeuvre in a dialogue with modern art during the exhibition tour at the Aargauer Kunsthaus, the Kunsthalle Bielefeld, the Fondation Vincent van Gogh Arles and the Kunstmuseum Den Haag.

Over 70 paintings and works on paper from all periods of Nicole Eisenman's career meet up with works from the collection of the Aargauer Kunsthaus and its partner institutions. The exhibition is being organized in close cooperation with Nicole Eisenman, and in collaboration with the Kunsthalle Bielefeld, the Fondation Vincent van Gogh Ales and the Kunstmuseum Den Haag.

Using established art-historical references and forms that are given a contemporary charge, Eisenman succeeds in opening up fresh perspectives on historical artistic positions. In dialogical combination, and in a mutual relationship, works of modern art by internationally renowned artists such as Edvard Munch, Pablo Picasso or Vincent van Gogh as well as nationally established artistic positions like Alice Bailly and Max von Moos from Switzerland, or the Dutch artist Co Westerik, reveal new approaches to Eisenman's oeuvre.

Bringing works by Eisenman together with historical artistic positions gives visual form to the fact that there are parallels in both content and form between individual paintings and thematic groups of works, even if in some cases they were made over 100 years apart. When Eisenman draws on the history of painting, it is never a matter of mere adoption or simple reference. What follows is always an innovative transformation of something

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that already exists, carefully embedding it in the contemporary context. The juxtaposition of artworks from different eras and realities promises exciting contrasts and fertile comparisons.

Described as a 'stylistic chameleon', the artistic work of Nicole Eisenman can barely be summed up under any particular stylistic category apart from the term 'figurative'. Eisenman switches playfully from a representation associated with realism to abstraction, often within a single artwork. They became known to a wider public with large-format wall-paintings; over the past 30 years they have also produced an extensive oeuvre with works in oil on canvas and drawings on paper. In the latter, Eisenman works among other things with ink, graphite and watercolours. More recently the artist has explored different printing methods, such as the monotype or the etching, and also works in the medium of sculpture. Eisenman's stylistic pluralism and the use of different techniques is typical of the attitude of not wanting to be placed in particular categories. The assignment of gender or ethnicity in Eisenman's depictions is often impossible, and instead they are distinguished by changing bodies, fluid states and queerness. By this means Nicole Eisenman is opting in favour of a picture of society that strengthens diversity far from binary attributions. Nicole Eisenman's figurative art is consequently also a condensation of the lived present: heads manifest emotions, kisses are exchanged in intimate poses, and battles fought out on different levels.

Within Eisenman's career, which now extends over three decades, certain themes have formed: couples and their power configurations, women fighting or making love, social spaces such as beer garden scenes or the investigation of their own role in the form of self-portraits. Eisenman has also created a set of figures that repeatedly make their appearance in the artist's works: amazons, comic creatures, figures with bulbous noses, oversized hands or feet. The figures come from a great variety of times and spheres, sometimes recalling American superheroes, and then again saints from Renaissance paintings.

In investigating new forms of interplay between the collection presentation and the temporary exhibition, the show *Heads, Kisses, Battles. Nicole Eisenman and the Moderns* picks up the guiding theme of the exhibition year 2022, which explores a contemporary treatment of the museum's own collection.

Nicole Eisenman was born in 1965 in Verdun, France, grew up in Scarsdale, New York State, USA, and now lives in Brooklyn. Since their participation in the Whitney Biennial in 1995 Eisenman's work has been widely received with solo exhibitions, for example, at the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis/Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, and in 2016 in the New Museum, New York. In Europe Eisenman's reception began early, in 2007, with a solo show at the Kunsthalle Zurich. This was followed by exhibitions in

at the Secession in Vienna in 2017, in the Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden in 2018, and participation in the Venice Biennale and the Whitney Biennial in 2019. Eisenman's sculptural contribution *Sketch for a Fountain* for the Münster Sculpture Projects in 2017 was permanently installed in Münster in 2017. Most recently the artist has had solo exhibitions at the Contemporary in Austin in 2020, and at the Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art, Oslo, in 2021. Eisenman won the Carnegie Prize in 2013, and the renowned MacArthur Fellowship, and was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 2018.

Historical artistic position in the exhibition: Karel Appel (1921-2006), Gerd Arntz (1900-1988), Hans Arp (1886-1966), Alice Bailly (1972-1938), Karl Ballmer (1891-1958), Max Beckmann (1884-1950), Paul Camenisch (1893-1970), James Ensor (1860-1949), Alberto Giacometti (1901-1966), Valery Heussler (1920-2007), Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890), Max Gubler (1898-1973), Alexej von Jawlensky (1864-1941), Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (1880-1938), Herman Kruidyder (1881-1935), Paula Modersohn-Becker (1876-1907), Max von Moos (1903-1979), Otto Morach (1887-1973), Otto Mueller (1874-1930), Edvard Munch (1863-1944), Emil Nolde (1867-1956), Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), Georges Rouault (1871-1958), Hermann Scherer (1893-1927), Oskar Schlemmer (1888-1943), Wilhelm Schmid (1892-1971), Hermann Stenner (1891-1914), Félix Vallotton (1865-1925), Co Westerik (1924-2018), Walter Kurt Wiemken (1907-1941), Gustave van de Woestyne (1881-1947)

Publication

A publication in German, French and English editions is being released to coincide with the exhibition tour. Apart from numerous illustrations of works by Nicole Eisenman and historic artistic positions, the catalogue contains an introduction and a discussion of the exhibition project (with Bice Curiger, Daniel Koep, Kolja Reichert and Beate Söntgen), as well as an essay on Nicole Eisenman's oeuvre by Christina Végh. Moreover, the publication contains a glossary of terms that are important in relation to Eisenman's work, and can also be located within a more general art-historical context. The historical positions are presented in essays on the collections in question, and also in the form of brief commentaries.

Heads, Kisses, Battles. Nicole Eisenman and the Moderns

Ed. Aargauer Kunsthaus Aarau, Fondation Vincent van Gogh Arles, Kunsthalle Bielefeld, Kunstmuseum Den Haag

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*Aargauer Kunsthaus

Curator

Dr. Katharina Ammann

Curatorial assistants

Bettina Mühlebach, Seraina Peer

Preview for the Media

Thursday 27.1., 11 am

Guided exhibition tour with the Curator and Director of the Aargauer Kunsthaus, Dr. Katharina Ammann.

Information and registration: christina.omlin@ag.ch

Exhibition Opening

Friday 28.1., 6 pm

Free admission

Preview Art Association

Friday 28.1., 5 pm

For sponsors and members of the Aargau Art Association

On invitation only

Events

Various events are in planning and are constantly adapted to the current situation. Check details on our website www.aargauerkunsthau.ch before your visit.

Opening Hours Aargauer Kunsthaus

Tuesday - Sunday 10.00 am - 5.00 pm, Thursday 10.00 am - 8.00 pm
Mondays closed

Holiday Opening Hours

Maundy Thursday 14.4. 10.00 am - 5.00 pm
Good Friday 15.4. 10.00 am - 5.00 pm
Easter Sunday 17.4. 10.00 am - 5.00 pm
Easter Monday 18.4. 10.00 am - 5.00 pm

Images

Images are available for download on our website www.aargauerkunsthaus.ch >
media. Kindly respect the photo credits.

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