

Nicola Tyson



Nicola Tyson, *Self-Portrait with Friend*, 2011. Oil on canvas, 72 x 95 inches.
Courtesy the artist; Susanne Vrielmetter Los Angeles Projects; Petzel Gallery,
New York; and Sadie Coles HQ, London.

Nicola Tyson comprises an extensive overview of work made from 2005 through 2016, including major paintings, small and large-scale drawings, and selections from her *Portrait Heads* series. Tyson's first solo museum exhibition in the United States offers a deserved reappraisal of a significant artist working prolifically at mid-career.

Tyson is recognized for her feminist reimagining of the female body. She has referred to this as “psycho-figuration”—an expression of the inner psyche by describing the body as experienced, rather than merely observed. Her figures often appear turned inside out by the drama of their own self-exposure, the intensity heightened by Tyson's distinctive chromatic palette. A loose gestural quality to her brushwork belies a subtle mastery, as she erases the distinction between representation and abstraction. Whereas some images are identified as self-portraits, others undermine specificity, with bodies morphing into creatures or unidentified selves.

Tyson's graphite and ink drawings, in contrast to her paintings, are made swiftly, staying ahead of “the linear mind and rational decision-making,” the artist has said. In her *Portrait Heads* series Tyson turns her figurative inquiry to the human face, collapsing and transforming the classic bust.

In the process of reconstructing the figure, Tyson's unlikely creations nevertheless contain a welcome humor. They reveal vulnerabilities, and the capacity to laugh at those vulnerabilities in the shared human comedy.



Audio Tour

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Related Programs

Drink in Art: The Mixer

Thursday, February 16, 6:00 pm

Conversation with the Curator

Thursday, March 9, 6:00 pm

RE: Psycho-Figuration

Saturday, March 25, 1:00 pm

Performance: Nicola Tyson

Thursday, April 6, 6:30 pm

“Let’s narrow things down again here, right down to the self, to self-portraits, ’cos you did a lot and I’ve done a fair amount myself. What’s wrong with us? Is it simple-minded narcissism? Are we so fascinating to our very selves? I think so.”—Nicola Tyson, from letter to Max Beckmann in *Dead Letter Men*



Nicola Tyson, *Graphite Drawing #6*, 2014. Graphite on paper, 24 1/4 × 19 1/4 inches. Collection of Susanne and Jost Vielmetter, Altadena, CA.

Nicola Tyson (b. 1960, London; lives and works in upstate New York) has exhibited internationally and is included in major collections such as Museum of Modern Art, New York; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Whitney Museum of Art, New York; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C; and Tate Modern, London. Recent exhibitions include *Works on Paper* at the Petzel Gallery, New York (2016), *Living Dangerously*, a two-person show with Angela Dufresne, Cleveland Institute of Art, Cleveland, OH, (2016), “*Goodbye/Hello*,” Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris, (2015), *Trouble in Happiness*, Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects, Culver City, CA(2014), and *Nicola Tyson: Bowie Nights at Billy’s Club*, London, 1978, Sadie Coles HQ, London, (2013). Tyson attended Chelsea School of Art, St. Martins School of Art, and Central/St. Martins School of Art in London. Tyson also works with photography, film, performance, and the written word.

This exhibition is generously supported by Petzel Gallery, New York, Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects, and Sadie Coles HQ, London.

Nicola Tyson is organized for the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis by Lisa Melandri, Executive Director.



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