

**Nicole Eisenman** (b. 1965, Verdun, France) lives and works in New York City. Eisenman was recently awarded the Carnegie Prize for her work in the 2013 *Carnegie International*. Recent solo exhibitions include *MATRIX 248*, Berkeley Art Museum (2013); *'Tis but a scratch' 'A scratch?! Your arm's off!' 'No, it isn't.'*, Studio Voltaire, London (2012); *Nicole Eisenman: The Way We Weren't*, The Tang Museum, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY (2009); and *Nicole Eisenman*, Kunsthalle Zurich (2007). Her work has been featured in numerous group exhibitions such as *NYC 1993: Experimental Jet Set, Trash and No Star*, New Museum, New York (2013); the Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2012, 1995); Prospect.2 New Orleans (2011); and *100 Artists See God*, The Jewish Museum, San Francisco (2004); among many others. Eisenman is the recipient of several awards including a John Simon Guggenheim Grant, The Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant, and The Louis Comfort Tiffany Grant. Her work is in the collections of many museums including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; and The Ludwig Museum, Cologne.

The exhibition and catalog are generously supported by the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts; Koenig & Clinton, New York; Karin and Peter Haas; Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects; Ringier AG, Zürich; Richard Gerrig and Timothy Peterson; and Galerie Barbara Weiss, Berlin.

*Dear Nemesis, Nicole Eisenman 1993–2013* is organized for the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis by Kelly Shindler, Associate Curator.

# Related Programs

**Free and open to the public unless otherwise noted. For a complete list of programs, please visit [camstl.org](http://camstl.org).**

**Opening Night**  
Friday, January 24, 7:00–9:00 pm

**Artist Talk: Nicole Eisenman**  
Saturday, January 25, 11:00 am  
Nicole Eisenman discusses her work on view and her practice.

**Friday Evening Tours**  
Fridays, January 31–April 11, 6:00 pm  
Take advantage of CAM's late hours on Friday evenings and stop by for a special 30-minute tour of the exhibitions. Associate Curator Kelly Shindler leads the tour on April 4.

**Breakfast with the Curators**  
Friday, March 21, 8:30 am  
*Complimentary coffee and baked goods.*  
*Register at [camstl.org/breakfast](http://camstl.org/breakfast).*  
CAM members are invited for breakfast and a private tour of the exhibitions.

**Sunday Studio: Monoprint**  
**Sunday, March 30, 1:00 pm**  
*\$5; free for members*  
*Recommended for ages 16 and up.*  
*Register at [camstl.org/sundaystudio](http://camstl.org/sundaystudio).*  
Inspired by Nicole Eisenman's prints, artist Gina Alvarez leads a hands-on workshop on monoprinting.

**Poetry Reading: Mary Jo Bang, Devin Johnston, and Carl Phillips**  
Wednesday, April 2, 7:00 pm  
Using the poetry collection *The Triumph of Poverty: Poetry Inspired by the Work of Nicole Eisenman* as a point of departure, poets Mary Jo Bang, Devin Johnston, and Carl Phillips read from their own work. Poet Jessica Baran hosts the evening and reads excerpts from the book.

**Member Book Club**  
***Feast of the Goat* by Mario Vargas Llosa**  
Thursday, April 10, 6:00 pm  
*Register at [camstl.org/bookclub](http://camstl.org/bookclub).*  
Chosen by exhibiting artist Nicole Eisenman, Mario Vargas Llosa's novel *The Feast of the Goat* has been called "a fierce, edgy and enthralling book" by the *New York Times*.



Nicole Eisenman, *Breakup*, 2011. Oil and mixed media on panel, 56 × 43 inches. Private collection, Los Angeles. Courtesy the artist and Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects. Photo: Robert Wedemeyer

Over the past twenty years, American artist Nicole Eisenman has developed a creative and versatile vision that combines personal experience and subject matter with virtuosic skill. Her work offers incisive sociopolitical critique by operating in the realm of the everyday and the absurd, playfully communicating the multifaceted richness of the human experience.

Depicting themes and settings as varied as bar scenes, motherhood, and the plight of the artist, Eisenman fuses contemporary subject matter with art historical influences ranging from Renaissance chiaroscuro to twentieth century social realist painting. In forging this connection between the present and the past, Eisenman reminds us how art can be a relevant vehicle for progress.

**Gallery Guide**  
Contemporary Art  
Museum St. Louis

January 24–  
April 13, 2014



# Dear Nemesis, Nicole Eisenman 1993–2013

Her narrative depictions and renderings of women's bodies proclaim an ardently feminist world and imbue figurative art with an audaciously queer sensibility. By refusing to limit herself to one particular style and incorporating a dose of both humor and discomfort, she creates work that echoes the frenetic pace and shifting complexion of contemporary life.

This definitive mid-career survey charts the development of Eisenman's practice from the early 1990s to the present across painting, printmaking, drawing, and sculpture. Bringing together more than 120 works of art—from early ink-on-paper drawings to recent explorations in printmaking and sculpture—the exhibition offers a comprehensive presentation that firmly establishes Eisenman at the forefront of artmaking today.



**Contemporary Art  
Museum St. Louis**  
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**Audio Tour**  
Download the CAM app at [camstl.org/app](http://camstl.org/app) or ask for an iPod at the front desk to hear directly from the artist and curator on the audio tour.

Guide to Selected Works in the Exhibition

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***The Triumph of Poverty*, 2009**  
Oil on canvas  
Collection of Dr. Thomas J. Huerter

This work shares its name with an allegorical painting (c. 1533) by Hans Holbein the Younger that depicts a procession of Virtues and Vices who suggest an array of conditions that result in poverty and misfortune. In Eisenman’s contemporary treatment, a group of characters stand at the threshold of a bucolic country setting with a darkly ravaged landscape looming in the background. Various markers of destitution—downtrodden expressions, a man’s empty pockets, a rusty car, rats—are paired with the ridiculous—fantastical complexions of red and burnt ochre, a nude figure with patchwork-like skin, and a male figure in a suit and top hat whose trousers have fallen to reveal his “ass-backwards” disposition—to lend the scene an air of extreme pathos. At the bottom right of the frame, a line of tiny figures in anachronistic dress trails from a string held by the suited man. Modeled after Pieter Breughel the Elder’s painting *The Blind Leading the Blind* (1568), they stumble into one another, lacking not only physical sight but also mental direction. The scene, according to Eisenman, illustrates poverty’s ironic “triumph” after a critical mass of individuals’ poor decisions created the economic crises that led to the Great Recession of 2008 and the attendant fallout of major American industries from automobiles to the housing market.

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***Hamlet*, 2007**  
Oil on canvas  
Collection of Karin and Peter Haas

*Hamlet* combines several recurring leitmotifs in Eisenman’s practice. Chief among them is the alter ego: Eisenman often inserts her own likeness or that of someone she identifies with into various settings and situations. The artist describes 2007 as a “particularly sad year politically” at the end of George W. Bush’s second term as President of the United States, and as an antidote, she began painting figures who could serve as her role models. Here, she depicts the early twentieth-century comedian and actor Buster Keaton—with whom she happens to share a slight resemblance—as a protagonist from another time. In *Hamlet*, Keaton assumes the role of Shakespeare’s famously indecisive Danish prince. He holds a sword in one hand and a skull in the other, his feet nearly immersed in a beam of white light emanating from the black background. Among the portraits installed on this wall, this painting, along with *Deep Sea Diver*, is notable for its unusual full-body pose, which directly confront us as viewers. The composition, coupled with the vibrantly swirling colors of the costumes, reinforces the diver’s and Hamlet’s critical status as metaphors for thoughtfulness and introspection.



***Raging Brook Farm*, 2004**  
Watercolor on prepared paper  
The Museum of Modern Art, New York  
The Judith Rothschild Foundation Contemporary Drawings Collection Gift, 2005

Suggesting a utopian commune, Raging Brook Farm is the name Eisenman and her partner gave to their house in upstate New York upon moving there in 2003. This watercolor, rendered as a vivid monochrome of Delft blue, depicts a bucolic landscape inhabited solely by women. Unlike many of Eisenman’s other female group scenes, which often depict an act of violence or discomfort, here, she creates the ideal, Edenic world. Her subjects fish, hunt, lay bricks, make love, sunbathe, and do yoga, with animals as their only non-human companions. The composition of active figures on the dense picture plane recalls the depiction of paradise in Hieronymous Bosch’s *Garden of Earthly Delights* (1480–1505) as well as the decorative patterns found in chinoiserie wallpaper. While the women here engage in realistic and productive tasks, seemingly rooting the scene in the realm of the real, ultimately Eisenman’s depiction of a radical lesbian fantasy is tinged with a deep irony, inhabitable only in one’s imagination.

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***Sleeping Frat Guy*, 2013**  
Plaster, ceramic, and leather string  
Collection of Cathy and Jonathan Miller

While she has made sculptures since the 1990s, Eisenman resumed the practice in earnest during a month-long residency in 2011 at Studio Voltaire in London, and has been making busts and full-bodied figures ever since. The selection of six busts on view in *Dear Nemesis*—poised both sideways and upright—share the same title. They are rough-hewn and handmade from plaster, with Eisenman’s mark making into and manipulation of the material purposely left evident. Each sculpture is also adorned with handmade ceramic jewelry strung on leather cord. While they participate in the art historical tradition of portraying the sleeping figure, Eisenman’s heads are more informed by the phenomenon of fraternity brothers drawing on each other’s sleeping faces. By turns sadistic, humorous, and touching, the act also points to what is found to be acceptable social behavior between men, “like patting each other’s asses in the locker room,” she says. Eisenman’s frat guys recur in a series of artworks—*Guy Artist* (2011), *Guy Capitalist* (2011), and others—that offer amusing and satirical takes on stereotypes of contemporary masculinity.

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***Untitled*, 2011**  
Mixed media and monotype on paper  
Hall Collection

**Monotypes**  
2011–12

The works on view here are part of a larger body of recent monotypes that Eisenman created in 2011 and 2012, many of which were exhibited in the 2012 Whitney Biennial. Often considered the most painterly of printmaking processes, monotype involves the application of layers of paint or ink to a smooth rather than etched surface in order to retain the ink necessary to create multiple prints. Once the pigment is fully transferred to paper, it results in a unique print that cannot be reproduced. This selection of works was chosen for its formal and conceptual range. Eisenman used various methods, from loose and quick renderings to tightly working and even layering and collaging together each work’s various elements. Subjects depicted here include sexual and familial love, fantasy, the plight of the artist, and portraiture. Together they comprise an extraordinary constellation of sentiments and experiences, demonstrating Eisenman’s singular ability to communicate the richness of the human condition.

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