

Press contact: Eddie Silva  
314.535.0770 x311  
[esilva@camstl.org](mailto:esilva@camstl.org)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Paintings and Drawings by Nicola Tyson  
On view January 27–April 16, 2017



Contemporary Art  
Museum St. Louis

3750 Washington Blvd  
St. Louis, MO 63108  
314.535.4660 [camstl.org](http://camstl.org)



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

**November 21, 2016 (St. Louis, MO)** – The Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis (CAM) presents an extensive selection of major paintings and works on paper by Nicola Tyson, the first major solo exhibition of the artist’s work in a museum in the United States. All the works selected for CAM were completed over an eleven-year period, from 2005 to 2016, and will be on view January 27 through April 16, 2017. A British-native currently living in upstate New York, Tyson is engaged in the reimagining of the figure, or more precisely reimagining the gaze upon the female body. She is noted for her “psycho-figuration,” a practice that erases the distinctions between representation and abstraction and expresses the inner psyche of its subjects. Her portraiture undermines specificity, bodies morphing into creatures or unidentified selves turned inside out. Although often comic in nature, these representations of fractured personae also possess a quiet poignancy.

A number of Tyson’s dynamic large-scale paintings will be on view. Whether working in oil or acrylic, her paintings contain a loose gestural quality even as they convey a subtle mastery, distinguishing Tyson as a colorist with a distinctive chromatic palette and painterly inclinations. She brings to figurative painting a necessary revitalization, combined with her delight in what has been described as her work’s “inexhaustible weirdness.” Also part of the exhibition will be new works from her ongoing *Portrait*

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10–5 Wed  
10–8 Thu & Fri  
10–5 Sat & Sun

CAM is free. Visit often!

*Heads* series. In the early 2000s Tyson began her investigations into portraiture through a monoprint process, quickly achieving her image by painting acrylic on glass, then pressing the glass onto paper. These headshots gaze unnervingly at the viewer, ghoulish, as if protective layers of self have been stripped like bark from a tree, yet with personality and humanity retained.



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Both small, graphite-on-paper and large-scale ink drawings will be on view. In contrast to the thoughtful time and care brought to the paintings, the artist chooses to create drawings swiftly so as not to impede the imaginative process, "...to stay just ahead of the cage of language," she has said, "the linear mind and rational decision-making." Despite Tyson's rapid facility, the individual works reveal extraordinary draftsmanship.

Tyson is frequently associated with such artists as Maria Lassnig and Tyson contemporary Nicole Eisenman—both have exhibited at CAM—and their feminist redefinition of the female figure in relationship to identity and the social gaze. Tyson is also aware of her male forbearers and their expressions of the female body, artists that include Édouard Manet, Egon Schiele, Pablo Picasso, Max Beckmann, and Francis Bacon. Her epistolary monologues to these artists have been collected into a book, *Dead Letter Men*, and Tyson performs readings of the letters, often as part of her exhibitions. The letters are funny, satirical, pointed, personal, self-reflective, and pose underlying questions of "Who draws the figure?" and "Whose figure is it?" She will read from *Dead Letter Men* at CAM, Thursday, April 6, 6:30 pm.

In the process of reconstructing or breaking down the figure, Tyson's surreal depictions of morphed humanity contain a gentle humor. Her gaze reveals the physicality of the body and its vulnerabilities, and the capacity to laugh at those vulnerabilities—the shared human comedy.

**Nicola Tyson** (b. 1960, London; lives and works in upstate New York) has been 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.; The Hirshhorn Museum; 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, and Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects.

## Related Events

### Press & Patron Preview

Friday, January 27, 10:00 am  
Join CAM curators for an exclusive introduction to the exhibitions. RSVP to Eddie Silva at 314-535-0770 x311 or [esilva@camstl.org](mailto:esilva@camstl.org)

### Opening Night

Friday January 27  
Member Preview 6:00 pm  
Public Reception 7:00-9:00 pm

### RE: Psycho-Figuration

Sat, Mar 25, 1:00 pm

### Performance:

**Nicola Tyson reads from**  
***Dead Letter Men***  
Thu, April 6, 6:30 pm

### Also on View in Spring

*Deana Lawson*

*Katherine Bernhardt*

*Louis Cameron*

*ArtReach: I Am*



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## About the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis

The Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis (CAM) presents, supports, and celebrates the art of our time. It is the premier museum in St. Louis dedicated to contemporary art. Focused on a dynamic array of changing exhibitions, CAM provides a thought-provoking program that reflects and contributes to the global cultural landscape. Through the diverse perspectives offered in its exhibitions, public programs, and educational initiatives, CAM actively engages a range of audiences to challenge their perceptions. It is a site for discovery, a gathering place in which to experience and enjoy contemporary visual culture. CAM is located in Grand Center, a world-class arts and entertainment district in the heart of St. Louis.

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