

Nicole Eisenman and Keith Boadwee

Exhibition Dates: December 12, 2020-March 13, 2021

545 West 25th Street, 9th Floor, New York, NY 10001

Catalogue available Winter 2021

The FLAG Art Foundation presents *Nicole Eisenman and Keith Boadwee*, on view **December 12, 2020-March 13, 2021** on its 9th and 10th floors. The recipient of The Contemporary Austin's 2020 Suzanne Deal Booth / FLAG Art Foundation Prize, Eisenman created thematically-linked solo exhibitions for The Contemporary (*Sturm und Drang*, on view at the museum in Austin, Texas, February 27-November 15, 2020) and FLAG. Eisenman expanded the exhibition at FLAG to include artist Keith Boadwee; their shared use of humor and critical observation questions both real and imagined power structures, upends art history, and lampoons notions of "good taste."

Nicole Eisenman employs a plurality of styles and visual references in her drawings, paintings, and sculptures to give shape to the many forms of the human condition. At FLAG, Eisenman's cast of characters are emblematic of the patriarchy—frat guys, paunchy businessmen, and bald eagles—the foundations of which she gleefully undermines through absurdity, caricature, and gallows humor. A concurrent exhibition of upwards of 250 abject drawings by Keith Boadwee dovetails with Eisenman's presentation. Installed en masse, Boadwee's works depict a near infinite variety of scatological scenes that assert one's agency over their body, its functions, messiness, and pleasures.

What unites Boadwee and Eisenman, in addition to a thirty-year-long friendship, is their mutual exploration of representations and sensations that challenge conservative, heteronormative notions of cleanliness, decency, and identity. Boadwee's relation to such subject matter is career-spanning; in the mid-1990s, he began making paintings by performatively expelling paint from his anus onto canvas; rudimentary floral designs and/or tartan patterns were largely determined by gravity and splatter. As Eisenman wrote in her essay¹ on Boadwee, "[...]The artist is painter/is painting, finally is a tube of paint! Boadwee is subject and object, maker and the made, a self-reflexive circle is complete." The enema paintings operate beyond shock (and relish in it) and challenge the history of painting and the primacy of the heroic gestural mark. Successive bodies of Boadwee's work explore similar thematic territory; in photography, the artist and his genitals regularly play dress-up as popular cartoon characters and/or art historical tropes. Though explicit, Boadwee's imagery created from and/or inspired by his body is never overtly sexualized.

At FLAG, Boadwee's scatological drawings, all created between 2016-20, are presented in grids, vitrines, and wall-sized vinyls and feature a multitude of characters engaged in absurd situations. Ranging from the everyday to the fantastical to the overtly political, Boadwee's scenes overwhelmingly employ slapstick humor to diffuse, confront, and demystify this inescapable and universal bodily function. A litmus test of viewers' personal limits, the cumulative effect of the presentation coupled with the serial exploration of defecation cannot be easily dismissed. While Boadwee hammers the same nail repeatedly, Eisenman's toolkit is a bit broader and examines larger systems that impact an individual's identity and their perceived public and private boundaries. Her work elucidates awkward, impolite moments with a tenderness that allows her subjects to transcend a punchline.

Eisenman's practice blends the influence of Western art history and traditional figuration with elements of music, activism, queer sexuality, and humor. Works on view, from 1993-2020, many never exhibited in New York, include recent paintings of lovers and friends, globby plaster sculptures of men at rest, and a selection of drawings that range in subject matter from schtick (*Charlie the Tuna* and *See Saw Sex*, both 1993) to apocalyptic (*World War Me*, 2001, and *Suicide*, 2004). Eisenman subverts stereotypical gender roles throughout the works at FLAG, from deflating the traditional, heroic bust in a pair of *Sleeping Frat Guy* sculptures, both 2013, to *Cubist Female Innards 1* and *2*, both 2019, paintings which place tangles of disembodied intestines and stomachs on pedestals, elevating them to the status of artwork. Eisenman's full frontal portrait of Boadwee further flips gendered roles by way of the odalisque trope. Here, Eisenman's depiction of her longtime friend is resplendent; in nothing but red socks, Boadwee is in complete command of his body, his sexuality, and its objectification.

"The design intervention on The FLAG Art Foundation logo," says Eisenman, "is an acknowledgment of the reality that when an institution mounts an exhibition by queer artists, that institution takes on the responsibility of the stewardship of the

¹ Nicole Eisenman, "Inside Out, Boy You Turn Me," Keith Boadwee 1989 - 2013 (Zurich: Micronaut and Hacienda Books, 2014): 30.

artist's queer ideals. To show an artist's work is not a passive act, but one that can have meaningful and lasting change if the action is taken to allow for that change. The fallen "L" design represents the ongoing struggle that queer people live with—of making a world that is actively not made for them accessible, livable, and enjoyable. This design is as much about queering the name of the foundation as it is queering an article of hate speech. By turning the word "FLAG" into "FAG," we are taking a word that people have used against us our whole lives to cut and we are using it now with pride."

Exhibition Catalogue:

A fully illustrated catalogue co-published by Radius Books, Santa Fe, was designed by **Tiffany Malakooti** to be read in two directions, reflecting the separate but related exhibitions at The Contemporary Austin's and The FLAG Art Foundation. Contributors include artists **Nicole Eisenman** and **Keith Boadwee**, writers **Alhena Katsof** and **Litia Perta**, and essays by **Heather Pesanti** (Chief Curator & Director of Curatorial Affairs at The Contemporary Austin), and **Jonathan Rider** (Associate Director) and **Stephanie Roach** (Director) at FLAG.

About:

Nicole Eisenman (b. 1965, Verdun, France) is an artist living and working in Brooklyn, NY. Eisenman's work was included in both the 2019 Venice Biennale, *May You Live In Interesting Times*, curated by Ralph Rugoff, and the 2019 Whitney Biennial, co-curated by Jane Panetta and Rujeko Hockley. Recent solo exhibitions include *Baden Baden Baden*, Staatliche Kunsthalle, Baden-Baden, Germany (2018); *Dark Light*, Vielmetter Los Angeles, CA (2018); *Dark Light*, Secession, Vienna, Austria (2017); *Al-ugh-ories*, New Museum, New York, NY (2016); *Magnificent Delusion*, Anton Kern Gallery, New York, NY; among others. Eisenman received the Carnegie Prize (2013); the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Fellowship (2015); The Suzanne Deal Booth/FLAG Art Foundation Prize (2018); and was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 2018.

Keith Boadwee (b. 1961, Meridian, MS) is an artist living and working in Emeryville, CA. Boadwee earned an MFA from the University of California, Berkeley, CA, in 2000, and a BA from the University of California, Los Angeles, CA, in 1989; there he studied under artists Paul McCarthy and Chris Burden. Recent solo exhibitions include *God's Eye*, The Pit, Los Angeles, CA (2020); *Atelier 34zero* Muzeum; Brussels, Belgium (2017); *Deborah Schamoni Gallerei*, Munich, German (2016); *Shoot the Lobster*, New York, NY (2015); among others. His work has been featured in thematic exhibitions, including *Float in a Dark Tank*, Yautepec, Mexico City, Mexico (2016); *AA Bronson's Garden of Earthly Delights*, Salzburger Kunstverein, Salzburg, Austria (2015); *Prospect 1.5*, New Orleans, LA (2010); *Into Me / Out of Me*, MoMA PS1, Long Island, NY and KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin, Germany (2006); among others. His works have been the subject of reviews and articles in publications including *Artforum*, *Art in America*, *Hyperallergic*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The New York Times*, *The Village Voice*, among others.

The Suzanne Deal Booth / FLAG Art Foundation Prize is a biennial award given to an accomplished living artist selected by an independent advisory committee. Administered by The Contemporary Austin, the prize includes a \$200,000 unrestricted award, a solo exhibition premiering at The Contemporary and traveling to The FLAG Art Foundation, related public programming at each organization, and an accompanying scholarly publication. The award recognizes an artist demonstrating outstanding merit with a strong record of international museum and gallery exhibitions and for whom the advisory committee deems the award to be transformative. The 2020 Advisory Committee was led by **Heather Pesanti**, Chief Curator & Director of Curatorial Affairs at The Contemporary Austin, and comprised **Ian Berry**, Dayton Director, The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery and Professor of Liberal Arts at Skidmore College; **Lauren Haynes**, Curator, Contemporary Art, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art Curator of Visual Arts, The Momentary; **Eungie Joo**, Curator of Contemporary Art, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; **Helen Molesworth**, Curator and writer; and **Lilian Tone**, Assistant Curator, Department of Painting and Sculpture, The Museum of Modern Art, along with institutional advisor **Stephanie Roach**, Director of The FLAG Art Foundation, New York.

In August 2020, the next iteration of The Suzanne Deal Booth / FLAG Art Foundation Prize was awarded to Lebanon-born, Paris-based artist and composer **Tarek Atoui**. The 2022 selection committee was led by **Heather Pesanti** and included **Darby English**, Carl Darling Buck Professor, Department of Art History, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL; **Michael Govan**, CEO and Wallis Annenberg Director, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA; **Ingrid Schaffner**, Curator, The Chinati Foundation, Marfa, TX; and **Catherine Wood**, Senior Curator, International Art (Performance), Tate Modern, London, UK; along with institutional advisor **Stephanie Roach**.

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