

Santa Monica Museum of Art presents Joyce Pensato: I KILLED KENNY, the artist's first museum survey and her first exhibition in Los Angeles. The exhibition, on view from June 1 to August 17, 2013 in the Museum's Main Gallery, features monumental enamel paintings and large-scale charcoal drawings rendered directly onto SMMoA's gallery walls. These new, site-specific works are contextualized by a selection of charcoal drawings and key paintings made between 1990 and the present. The exhibition's title, I KILLED KENNY, invokes the vernacular of "South Park," framing Pensato's visual vocabulary within the cartoon's sardonic wit and cultural critique.

Appropriating iconic American cartoon characters as her point of departure, Pensato's gestural paintings and drawings flicker in the liminal space between menacing abstraction and comedic representation: Batman is depicted as a hollow, deliquescent mask, Bart Simpson peers through abraded skin, and Felix the Cat is rendered as a decapitated head. Pensato's paintings reinvigorate the legacy of Abstract Expressionism, imbuing her taxonomy of characters—The Simpsons, South Park, Donald and Daisy Duck, Olive Oil, and Mickey Mouse—with an uninhibited and arresting presence. Through her dynamic application of paint and pop cultural references, Pensato's compositions boldly extend the possibilities of action painting. As curator-at-large Jeffrey Uslip recently noted in *Art in America's* January 2013 centenary issue, "Pensato wields black, white, and silver industrial enamel paint with intimidating ferocity; her expressive and psychologically charged paintings materialize the disintegration of America's social fabric."

I KILLED KENNY also debuts a series of paint-splattered collages, in which historic images of Abraham Lincoln are overlaid with portraits of iconic Hollywood celebrities, contemporary artists, and legendary American boxers—Robert DeNiro in *Raging Bull*, Gena Rowlands in *Gloria*, Christopher Wool in his studio, and publicity stills of Muhammad Ali. Pensato's new Lincoln collages provide further aesthetic context: In these works, Pensato's signature splatters of industrial paint exploit the material's visceral physicality, careening America's fraught social and political past into the forefront of our contemporary consciousness.

SMMoA's executive director Elsa Longhauser says of the exhibition, "The Santa Monica Museum of Art prides itself on presenting work by artists who have made a singular contribution to the art historical canon. Joyce Pensato has devoted herself to creating a lifework that is fearlessly executed and radically innovative; she is an important touchstone for artists of all ages."

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