

# Petzel

**NICOLA TYSON**

*I am a teapot*

January 16 – February 22, 2025

520 W 25th Street

Petzel is pleased to present *I am a teapot*, an exhibition of new paintings by British-born, New York-based artist Nicola Tyson, opening Thursday, January 16, 2025. The show marks Tyson's twelfth solo exhibition with Petzel and will be on view through February 22, 2025, at Petzel, 520 West 25th Street. Tyson's new works fuse painterly rigor with a shrewd, quick-witted sensibility, generating complex, evocative compositions. Painting intuitively, Tyson's negotiation of both gestural expression and formal virtuosity elucidates singular representations of queer subjectivity.

Alluding to the 1939 nursery rhyme and its accompanying dance, "I'm a Little Teapot," the title of the exhibition is both playful and physical, weaving two bodies of her work through the gallery. In one set of paintings, Tyson employs a color wash to prime her canvases, building her characters around their eyes, which are left blank to reveal the raw ground. These pictures demonstrate Tyson pushing at her own boundaries, bridging tensions between freedom and restraint. Such energy is exemplified in "Their dog," in which a gleeful, conjoined couple are pictured with their racing, impasto yellow dog. In "Their jumpers," two characters stand against a yellow brick wall, one with arms clasped in front, the other with arms looped overhead. Are they poised in a gesture of confidence, striking a pose, or caught in a moment of vulnerability? Tyson plays with unsettled narrative associations, inviting the viewer to participate in the argument of the painting itself.

While many of Tyson's canvases use a color wash as a foundation, in a separate set of paintings, she leaves the ground, and her figure's eye 'sockets,' primed in white, further emphasizing a presence of uncanny animation before the viewer. Following her exhibition *90s Paintings* last spring, Tyson decided to further develop this technique, which she began experimenting with decades ago. Here, Tyson brings a more overtly queer drive into play, such as in "Night Interior," which depicts two entwined figures wrestling in an erotic embrace. In "Pillion," a couple sit astride a dog-like creature, as they might on a motorbike, but share the same legs, conjoined as a kind of double.

Tyson adheres to an electric palette, layering visceral strokes of acrylic paint in her signature dry-brush technique, building presence in contour and line. At times, the works illuminate aspects of the artist's biography: for example, the eponymous painting "I Am a Teapot," in which a figure performs the "Teapot Tip," came to Tyson from a camp parody of the song and dance she learned as a teenager in the queer underground of 1970s London. Tyson infuses the subject with humor and theatre, imbuing the canvas with the performative 'limp-wristed' spout and sexual innuendo.

As the artist states, the act of "conjuring an uncanny presence, something that looks back at you, whilst still addressing the Modernist rules of flatness and truth to material," remains among her most salient concerns. Tyson operates outside a patriarchal script of representing gender, the body, and desire, responding to Hans Bellmer, Pablo Picasso, and others by disrupting the fetishistic male gaze. Tyson's androgynous creatures are twinned, twisted, and semi-alive. Some animal, human, or in-between, her figures gaze back through the viewer, rejecting prescriptions of the gendered body.

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## About Nicola Tyson

Nicola Tyson (b. 1960, London, England) attended Chelsea School of Art, St. Martins School of Art, and Central/St. Martins School of Art in London, and currently lives and works in New York, NY. Recent solo exhibitions include *90s Paintings*, Petzel, New York, NY (2024); *Nicola Tyson (a survey of drawings)*, Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles, CA (2024); *Nicola Tyson: A Bit Touched*, Nino Mier Gallery, Belgium, Brussels (2022);  *Holding Pattern*, Sadie Coles HQ, London, UK (2021); and *Sense of Self*, Petzel, New York, NY (2020). In 2017, she was the subject of solo exhibitions at The Drawing Room, London, and the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, St. Louis, Missouri. In 2011 Tyson released the limited-edition book, *Dead Letter Men*, a collection of satirical letters addressing famous male artists. The book was designed by Peter Miles and published by Petzel Gallery, New York, and Sadie Coles HQ, London. Her unique archive of color photos documenting the London club scene of the late 1970s—*Bowie Nights at Billy's Club*—was the subject of shows, both in New York and London, in 2012 and 2013.

Tyson's work is included in major collections such as Museum of Modern Art, New York; Whitney Museum of Art, New York; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; UCLA Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington D.C.; Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; and Tate Modern, London.

Petzel Gallery is located at 520 West 25th Street New York, NY 10001. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 10:00 AM–6:00 PM. For press inquiries, please contact Karolina Chojnowska at [karolina@petzel.com](mailto:karolina@petzel.com), or call (212) 680-9467.