

By bringing together distinct paintings and drawings by Nicole Eisenman, Friedrich Kuhn, Yuji Nagai and Trevor Shimizu we would like to create a scene of ambiguous encounters. All four artists apply narrative as a painterly strategy, creating a *mise en scène* comparable to a theatrical stage setting. Fictional story-telling reappears in their work as a given vocabulary. It develops from narratives whose parts pass through the individual series of works and connects the separate works, by putting them in a dialogue within each artist's oeuvre. This methodology, which sets the four artists in relation to each other, reflects a general tendency that we can discover in today's painting discourse: the interest in the shift between the figurative and the abstract, the formal and the narrative, between naive and sophisticated conceptualism. We would like to discuss these painterly strategies by contrasting and finding similarities in the works of Eisenman, Kuhn, Nagai and Shimizu, which all come from very different «schools» and generations.

Friedrich Kuhn (1926-72) is a pioneer of Swiss Pop Art. After a long period in Zurich dominated by the abstract artists like those of the late modernist movement *Konkrete Kunst*, Kuhn aspired to liberate the medium of the painting by reintroducing narration into his work. In a unique way he perverted rural craft ornaments into expressive paintings that shift between the naive figurative and the abstract conceptual. Nicole Eisenman's oeuvre spans a period from the early 90's to today. She is a most influential painter for a younger generation. She works with sources and iconography from both classical myths and pop culture. Her unique strategy, which vacillates between epic subjects of allegorical paintings, the baroque, social realism, and Guston-like figures, serves as a painterly role-model. Yuji Nagai presents grey paintings from his new series on musicians and on trees. As clown-like figures the musicians seem to conduct not only their music but their surroundings; and the paintings themselves, just like the trees, seem to merge with the world that encloses them. Trevor Shimizu's work often originates out of a program which, as a method, creates its own narration. In his work Shimizu doesn't just question the authenticity of the stories told by his paintings but even his own authorship by changing his style of painting. By doing so he creates new stories that exceed the pictured motifs and define his working method as narrative.

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