

Schwendener, Martha. "Art on the Wall That Echoes Protests From the Streets." *The New York Times* (December 18, 2025) [ill.] [online]

The New York Times

CRITIC'S PICK

# Art on the Wall That Echoes Protests From the Streets

Nicole Eisenman’s latest exhibition builds on a long tradition of artists using their work to speak out against fascism and oppression.



An installation view of Nicole Eisenman's exhibit "STY," via 52 Walker, New York

By Martha Schwendener

Dec. 18, 2025, 5:00 a.m. ET

Nicole Eisenman: STY  NYT Critic's Pick

A recent article in Art in America magazine offered readers a primer on [“Five Essential Books About Anti-Fascist Art History.”](#) Timing is everything, of course, as pundits debate whether our [current era](#) is actually fascist. But if you were to look around the art world today, who would be included, 50 years from now, in such a history?

Maybe Nicole Eisenman, whose powerful and unsettling exhibition [“STY” at 52 Walker](#) in TriBeCa includes sculpture, video, painting and drawings. It follows a [retrospective](#) of her work and a 2024 piece in Madison Square Park in which a [toppled construction crane](#) served as a small rejoinder to the supertall buildings proliferating in Manhattan.

At 52 Walker, Eisenman returns to the subject with which she found fame in the 1990s: human — or humanoid — figures. The first things you see upon entering a specially constructed space in the gallery, lined with rough cellulose fiber on the walls, are three intimidating figures carved from scagliola, a plaster composite that imitates marble. The figures recall aliens and robots in 1950s science fiction films but also the [fascist penchant](#) in the 1920s and 1930s for neo-Classical sculptures with bulging muscles and oversize hands and feet. (The masked ICE agents currently deployed in many cities also could be a touchstone.)



"The Auction" (2025) via 52 Walker, New York

Collectively titled "There I Was" (2025), the three figures also carry monitors running videos made with iPhones, science fiction and horror films, and imagery generated by artificial intelligence. One of the videos depicts a descent into a tunnel — or perhaps a bunker — its walls covered with cartoonish human silhouettes. Prehistoric cave art has become [popular among contemporary artists](#) looking at the origins of image making (or as an escape from the present), but Hitler's bunker, where he holed up in the last days of his reign, also comes to mind.





Excerpt from a video within Nicole Eisenman's "There I Was," 2025. Via 52 Walker, New York; Anna And Thomas Eisenman In Collaboration With Nicole Eisenman

The paintings in the exhibition, populated with figures inspired by art history as much as by hokey Americana, focus on the relationship between the artist and the collector and the role of the artist working under fascism. In "The Auction" (2025), an auctioneer wearing a black judge's robe presides over a showroom. Nearby is a sheet torn out of a book and tacked on the wall, reproducing "For the Life of Me, I Can't See Any Swastikas" (1984), an abstract painting by the German trickster artist Martin Kippenberger.

Kippenberger's painting critiques how so-called radical abstract art often ignored or repressed politics. Meanwhile, across the room is "The Bunker" (2024-25), a painting featuring an angular cartoony figure wearing a beret — a cliché of artists, perhaps implicated under fascism.





"The Bunker," 2025 via 52 Walker, New York

More pointed references to art history appear in the painting "Archangel (The Visitors)" (2024). Here, Eisenman, 60, has reproduced the papier-mâché pig's head stuffed into a German army uniform and called the "Prussian Archangel." That sculpture appeared at [the First International Dada Fair in Berlin in 1920](#).

In Eisenman's painting, the archangel hovers over a gallery filled with visitors looking at abstract modern sculpture, while one reverent art viewer (and possible collector) has his pocket picked. Also in this painting is a detail from a photograph of Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi propaganda minister, viewing the 1937 "[Degenerate Art](#)" exhibition, the notorious show that tried to discredit avant-garde art and its antifascist leanings.

Three folders at the gallery's front desk are filled with preparatory drawings, sketches, cartoons and photographs — gestures that underscore Eisenman's alliance with 20th-century artists who critiqued war, imperialism and fascism and were targeted by figures like Goebbels.



"Archangel (The Visitors)," 2024 Nicole Eisenman via Private Collection

Anyone following art-world politics over the last couple of years will know how this relates to Eisenman personally, as an artist who has vocally protested Israel's military strikes in Gaza. For everyone else: In October 2023, Eisenman, along with dozens of other art world denizens, signed a public letter calling for a cease-fire in Gaza. Published in Artforum, the original letter made no mention of the Hamas-led massacre of Israelis on Oct. 7; the letter was later revised, with some, including Eisenman, removing their signatures.

The fallout from the letter was swift. Eisenman, who is Jewish, reported being pressured by collectors to retract support for Palestinians and had the "[feeling of being threatened by people who I had thought of as allies in the art world.](#)"

But the relationship between artists and their patrons is often fraught, whether it's [Michelangelo hiding from the Medici family](#) after supporting a republican resistance in Florence, or the critic Clement Greenberg citing the "paradox" of avant-garde artists who are tied to "ruling class" patrons by "an umbilical cord of gold." This relationship is revealed particularly in moments like the present, rife with military conflict and authoritarian governments.

Ultimately, Eisenman's exhibition serves as a necessary exercise in soul searching. What is the role of the artist in dark times? What is the role of the critic, collector or average art viewer? Should they sit by and watch history unfold, or speak out and put themselves at risk? Eisenman sides with the Dadaists and other artists who have protested war and oppression. What about you, dear viewer?

**STY**

Through Jan. 10 at 52 Walker, 52 Walker Street, Manhattan; 212-727-1961, [52walker.com](http://52walker.com).



Vinler, John. "If Antifa Was a Painter: Critic John Vinler on the Mischievous Genius of Nicole Eisenman." *Cultured Magazine* (November 5, 2025) [ill.] [online]

CULTURED

## If Antifa Was a Painter: Critic John Vinler on the Mischievous Genius of Nicole Eisenman

In "STY" at 52 Walker, Nicole Eisenman presents new paintings and hybrid video-sculptures, spoofing the art-world machine through sharp parody and historical allusion.

WORDS

John Vinler

November 5, 2025



Installation view of Nicole Eisenman's "STY," 2025. Image courtesy of 52 Walker, New York.

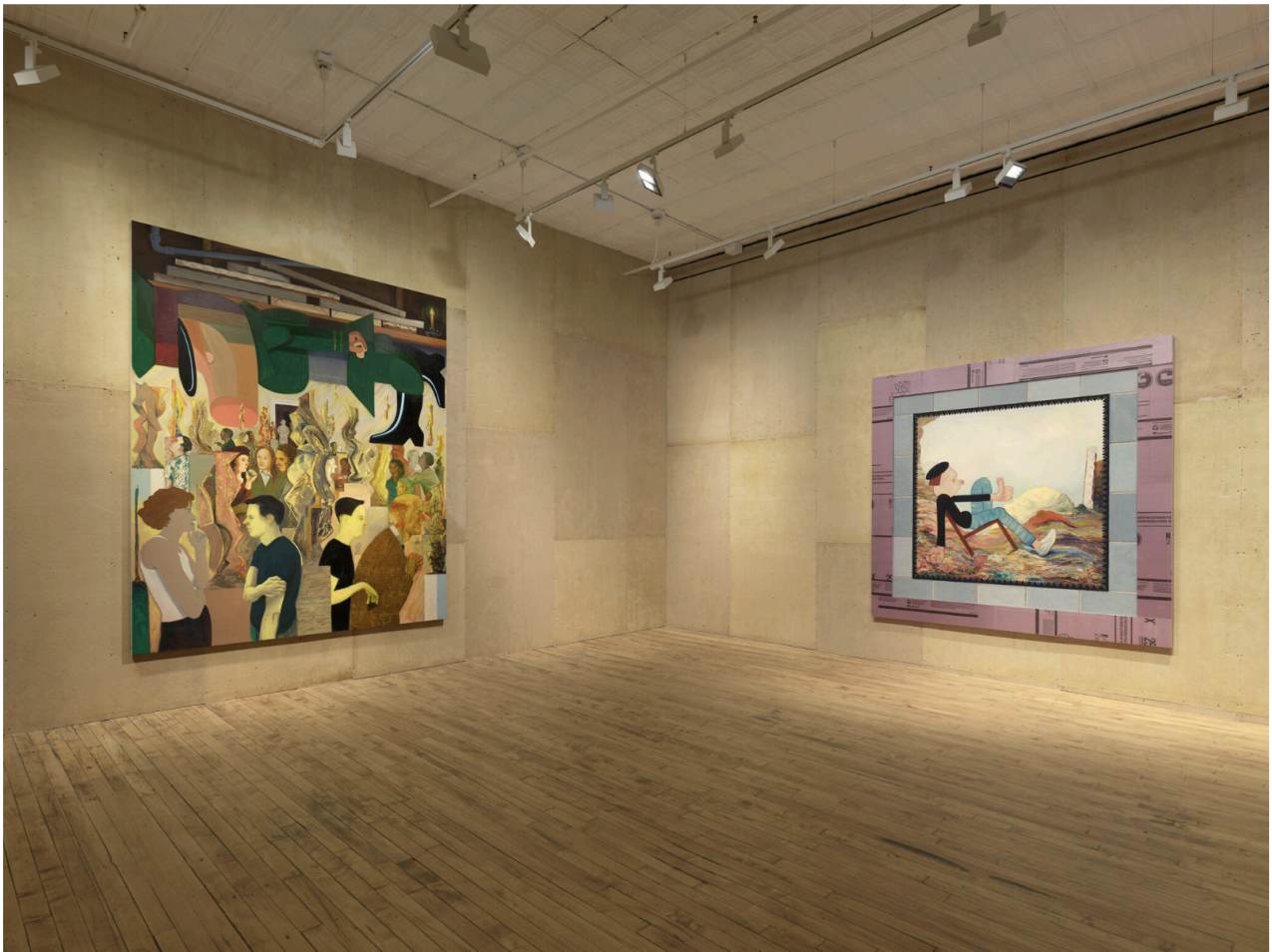
**Nicole Eisenman**

52 Walker | 52 Walker Street

Through January 10, 2026

A man in a brown shirt, in the center of Nicole Eisenman's painting *The Auction*, 2025, raises his hand to place a bid. Or maybe he is Sieg Heiling. Under scrutiny, the picture dissolves into multiple or layered scenarios. The auctioneer seems to be wearing the robe of a judge, the electronic chart above him displays currency exchange rates, and where the ceiling should be is a moody moonlit night sky instead. The painting on offer in the middle of the scene is a milky white expanse pocked with impasto blobs in earth tones, arranged in clusters like Hannah Wilke's bite-sized gum sculptures. (A similar, smaller painting waits in the wings at left.) The assembled characters in the surrounding crowd are rendered in a variety of styles, from the realism of the possible-Nazi to the post-Cubist, post-Guston caricature in the foreground on the right who's also attempting to win the lot. *The Auction* could be the composite, collaborative work of half a dozen different painters, but in its ambition and tightly managed balance of coherence and ambiguity, it can only be the work of Nicole Eisenman.

As I considered this picture, I moved to examine a scrap of paper pinned to the wall 10 feet or so to the right, where I found—as if anticipating my train of thought—a color printout of Martin Kippenberger's 1984 geometric abstraction *For the Life of Me, I Can't See Any Swastikas*. In the German artist's composition of layered rectangles, Eisenman—whose family fled Nazi persecution in the 1930s—seems to find precedent for her own reflection on modernism's fascist haunting as well as the aesthetics of its contemporary resurgence.



Installation view of Nicole Eisenman's "STY," 2025. Image courtesy of 52 Walker.



“STY” is the New York-based artist’s first hometown solo exhibition following her three-decade spanning institutional survey that originated in Munich, before traveling to the Whitechapel Gallery in London and concluding at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago in 2024. For this show, 52 Walker has been transformed into a single room, divided off from the entryway and front desks, and lined with Homasote board, which is commonly used in art studios to facilitate the ease of installation and deinstallation of artworks. Curator Ebony L. Haynes gets the scale potentially right here, providing both a concentrated show, as well as a hint of insight into the artist’s working process by creating an atmosphere that seems to welcome the viewer into the private space of the artist, an effect emphasized by the inclusion of reference ephemera (such as the Kippenberger) sourced from Eisenman’s Brooklyn studio.

Despite its title, “STY” conjures a tidy intimacy. But there is a pig present. In a second crowd-scene painting, *Archangel (The Visitors)*, 2024, a swine-headed cartoon soldier floats above a lively group gathered for an art opening. They converse among modernist, abstract sculptures on plinths. In an attic space above, stacks of canvas are stored, their surfaces otherwise out of view. In the foreground at right, a self-portrait of the artist appears to pick the pocket of a balding man in a tweed suit who is distractedly engrossed in sculptural details. The compositional setting collapses historical moments, mashing together the present with the First International Dada Fair, held in Berlin in 1920, where a pig-faced papier-mâché effigy of a German soldier was hung from the ceiling causing a scandal.

Eisenman’s entire show is like an interactive stage set for contemplating the possibilities and limitations of art’s ability to address the crisis of the present. It dares to juxtapose our contemporary moment with prior historical eras, when authoritarianism, censorship, and fascism were on the rise. It implicates the whole art-world apparatus: the exchange of great sums of money in the auction house, as well as the gallery system of which 52 Walker is part. Eisenman parodies herself, not as a singular genius within that system, but instead—echoing Jean Genet—as a petty thief. (This isn’t entirely new for the artist: For her first appearance in the Whitney Biennial, in 1995, she painted a mural of the museum, depicting it after an explosion, with herself at the center of the ruins.) The theater of it all—and her work *is* an entertaining performance—distracts from the fact that the artist has taken real risks with her political stances, particularly for calling for a ceasefire in Gaza, which prompted backlash from collectors.



Image by Nicole Eisenman, 2025. Image courtesy of the artist and 52 Walker.



The most significant artists are often ones that make audiences and fellow artists say some version of “I didn’t know you could do that?” And, with the best artists, this reaction often corresponds to both technical proficiency and their approach to subject-matter and composition. Eisenman accompanies the five oil paintings and two works on paper (in addition to the reference images culled from the studio) with a set of three statues made from scagliola, a plaster material dating back to ancient Rome, which was revived in 16th-century Italy, especially in the decorative flourishes favored by the Medici family. The sculptures—collectively titled *There I Was, 2025*—are mounted on rock bases. Each holds a large flatscreen monitor that plays a video work: a virtuosic mashup of ancient technique and bleeding-edge tech. They form a lyrical send-up of the contemporary notion of *screen time*.

The promotional image for the show appears to graft a black-and-white picture of one of Eisenman’s sculptures onto an edited and pared-down archival photo of Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels entering the Degenerate Art Exhibition, staged in Munich in 1937. While noting Eisenman’s healthy willingness to parody the role of the artist, in sum, the force of “STY” sides with artistic freedom in the face of state repression, and is animated by a nuanced yet forceful antifascism.

But Eisenman herself might remind us that many trace the origin of the Roman salute (later adopted by the German Nazi Party) not to ancient Rome, but to the painter Jacques Louis David. His 1784 scene of young men taking up arms in *The Oath of the Horatii* was completed a decade before he would be jailed for participating in the French Revolution—and two decades before he would paint the *Coronation of Napoleon and Josephine*, 1804, on his way to become the Emperor’s great propagandist. It’s as if Eisenman cautions: Consider the enduring, ever-mutating symbolic content of art, as well as the stakes of the present moment—sure. But never fully trust a painter.

Malget, Morgan. "A Full Season of Art to See at Museums and Galleries Across the U.S.." *The New York Times* (October 14, 2025) [ill.] [print]

## The New York Times

# A Full Season of Art to See at Museums and Galleries Across the U.S.

The fall schedule includes a number of exhibitions that look at works from Italy and France and the cultural events that shaped them.



"Barbeque" (1982) by Eric Fischl is part of the exhibition "Eric Fischl: Stories Told" at the Phoenix Art Museum. Eric Fischl

**By Morgan Malget**

Oct. 14, 2025

This article is part of the [Fine Arts & Exhibits](#) special section on how creativity can inspire in challenging times.

Every fall, an abundance of museum exhibitions and gallery shows opens across the United States — and this season is no exception.

A number of those shows will transport audiences to France and Italy. In Seattle, visitors can dig into the ways in which Impressionists portrayed culinary culture in France in the late 19th century, and in Kansas City, Mo., a museum explores the hardships Parisians faced during World War I. A New York City show examines the rise of Italian Fascism through the lens of Futurism, and in Houston, an exhibition travels back to the first century to delve into Emperor Trajan's cultural impact on Rome.

For a connection closer to home, how about a gallery in Pittsburgh showcasing Frank Lloyd Wright's unrealized projects for the area, or an exhibition in Billings, Mont., that features local women who offer diverse perspectives through textile works? With a wide range of subjects and mediums, hopefully all museum lovers can explore their personal [Roman Empires](#) this fall. Here is a selection.

## New York

### NEW YORK CITY

#### [“Nicole Eisenman: STY”](#)

The New York artist Nicole Eisenman is known for her expressive paintings and sculptures that capture everyday life with humor and flair. Presented here are three new sculptures with video elements and a selection of her paintings, including new pieces and loans from public collections. These works aim to piece together a narrative and offer a glimpse into Eisenman's state of mind. Oct. 30 through Jan. 10; David Zwirner Gallery, 52 Walker, [davidzwirner.com](http://davidzwirner.com)