

ARTFORUM

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Artists on AbEx

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Scaling up and unmitigated personal expression were emblems of the mancentric world of midcentury AbEx. However, as we know, women weren't invited to that party. This is pretty ironic given that the very ideas central to AbEx—antirational ones, driven by emotion and passion—have long been considered stereotypically female. But we made up for it big-time in the 1990s and 2000s, resurrecting the AbEx project and bringing it to the next level—the work of Keltie Ferris, Amy Sillman, and Wendy White comes to mind here. I'm a big advocate of the politics of self-expression and the existentialist individualism that AbEx helped to open up, my own work being decidedly queer.

De Kooning and Pollock showed us all over again that abstraction and figuration are not mutually exclusive. Through painting I can find the point at which representation dissolves into abstraction and at which abstraction begins to represent. But the event horizon for that moment is slippery and inexact, dependent on the context of a given brush mark, the viewer's physical proximity to the painting, and his or her willingness to associate meaning with form. In my paintings there are often islands of abstraction—figures made from one big rough brushstroke or a series of marks meant to represent a feeling that floats in the air. Yet I contain all of this within a representational framework. I like the way our world looks too much to not show it to some degree.

Nicole Eisenman is an artist who lives and works in New York.



Nicole Eisenman, *The Breakup*, 2011, oil and mixed media on canvas, 56 x 43.