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Brash World View, a Fair Play and Modest Constructs

Nicole Eisenman, Eric Fischl and Alicja Kwade in this week's Fine Art

By **PETER PLAGENS**

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532 W. 20th St., (212) 367-9663

Through June 25

This exhibition of new work by Nicole Eisenman (b. 1965 and winner of a 2015 MacArthur "genius" award) runs concurrently with a survey show at the New Museum. Ms. Eisenman, the daughter of a Freudian psychiatrist who reportedly had trouble with her coming out, graduated from the Rhode Island School of Design. After working a series of grinding jobs, she sold several drawings in a SoHo gallery run by the estimable gay painter Nicola Tyson, which encouraged her to paint full time. Her "Self-Portrait With Exploded Whitney" in that museum's 1995 Biennial timed well with the revival of figuration in the work of such artists as Lisa Yuskavage and John Currin, and set her career on course. Today Ms. Eisenman, who has described herself as "gender fluid," shares custody of a son and daughter with a former partner.

Such biographical details are relevant because Ms. Eisenman's paintings are stuffed with figures, settings and props that tell one or more stories.

Because this content emphatically touches on such issues as gender, sexual orientation, race and the difficult hurly-burly of romantic relationships in contemporary life, it's not surprising that her style is actually a frenetic multiplicity of styles. Take, for example, "Another Green World" (2015), where it's easy to discover traces of James Ensor, Christian Schad, Balthus, Joan Brown, Kerry James Marshall and others.

Ms. Eisenman is a recklessly brave, talented and prolific painter. It would, however, require a genius in the 18th-century understanding of the word to turn this painterly bricolage into anything approaching a synthesis. Then again, that's probably not Ms. Eisenman's purpose. Her work is likely intended for an audience that welcomes a visually harsh, clashing, tell-it-like-it-is view of the world we live in.

