

AÏSHI FOUNDATION

The exhibition *Dark Light: Realism in the Age of Post-Truths*, curated by Massimiliano Gioni, assembles the work of over one hundred artists and more than two hundred pieces from the Tony and Elham Salamé Collection. Taking its title from a 2017 painting by the American artist Nicole Eisenman held in the collection, the exhibition brings together recent acquisitions that question the meanings and functions of figuration in contemporary art. As the very definitions of truth have dramatically eroded in the past few years, many contemporary artists—especially those working in the United States—have proceeded to analyze, interrogate, and deconstruct the notion of realism, particularly in the field of painting. This exhibition brings together work from an emerging group of artists who are investigating these new approaches to figurative imagery along with contributions by important predecessors who have anticipated current discussions around representation and verism. The recent acquisitions featured in *Dark Light* include works by established painters such as Etel Adnan, George Condo, Karen Kilimnik, Maria Lassnig, Richard Prince, Ed Ruscha, Peter Saul, and Joan Semmel presented in dialogue with contributions by an intergenerational group of artists including Cecily Brown, Lucy McKenzie, Laura Owens, Dana Schutz, and Henry Taylor, who all share an interest in a critical approach to figuration. Works by Janiva Ellis, Sanya Kantarovsky, Salman Toor, and Lynette Yiadom-Boakye combine literary references with fantastical imagery and autobiography to create a kind of painterly auto-fiction. Cy Gavin, Shara Hughes, and the late Matthew Wong revisit and transform the tradition of landscape painting, while Louis Fratino, Roberto Gil de Montes, Jill Mulleady, and Jeanette Mundt practice a form of contemporary magical realism.

In other works on view, bodies are transformed into grotesque configurations that subvert conventional notions of beauty, taste, and propriety, depicting a new humanity that is simultaneously monstrous and angelical, carnal and ethereal. Painters Nina Chanel Abney, Derrick Adams, Celeste Dupuy-Spencer, and Jonathan Lyndon Chase use figuration to engage with and upend stereotypes surrounding the construction of identity and race. Works by Louise Bonnet, Jana Euler, Christina Quarles, and Tschabalala Self imagine fantastical anatomies for a new liberation of desires, while Henni Alftan, Sascha Braunig, and Jamian Juliano-Villani celebrate a peculiar sex appeal of the inorganic attuned to the combination of technology and illusionism that defines the contemporary digital condition. The exhibition also features the Middle Eastern premiere of Ragnar Kjartansson's celebrated 2020 video installation *Bliss*, a melodramatic spectacle of pompous excess and all too human fragility in which opera singers and musicians perform three minutes of the last aria of Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* for twelve consecutive hours.

Dark Light is the latest exhibition in a series of presentations of the Tony and Elham Salamé Collection at the Aïshti Foundation in Beirut, designed by the British architect David Adjaye in 2015 and now recognized as one of the most formidable institutions in the Middle East and beyond. *Dark Light* follows major solo exhibitions at the Aïshti Foundation by Urs Fischer (2019) and Albert Oehlen (2018) and a trilogy of group exhibitions featuring works from the collection: *The Trick Brain* (2017), *Good Dreams, Bad Dreams – American Mythologies* (2016), and the Aïshti Foundation's inaugural exhibition, *New Skin* (2015).

ARTIST LIST:

Nina Chanel Abney
Rebecca Ackroyd
Derrick Adams
Tunji Adeniyi-Jones
Etel Adnan
Henni Alftan
Ziad Antar
Korakrit Arunanondchai
John Baldessari
Julie Beaufils
Gina Beavers
Amoako Bofo
Louise Bonnet
Sascha Braunig
Cecily Brown
Brian Calvin
Merlin Carpenter
Jordan Casteel
Mathew Cerletty
Jonathan Lyndon Chase
Xinyi Cheng
Leidy Churchman
George Condo
Caleb Considine
Ann Craven
Roberto Cuoghi
Julie Curtiss
Alex Da Corte
Cynthia Daignault
Jesse Darling
Verne Dawson
Celeste Dupuy-Spencer
Jimmie Durham

Nicole Eisenman
Judith Eisler
Janiva Ellis
rafa esparza
Jana Euler
Simone Fattal
Peter Fischli
Derek Fordjour
Denzil Forrester
Louis Fratino
Cy Gavin
Roberto Gil de Montes
Hana Yilma Godine
Sayre Gomez
Jenna Gribbon
Chase Hall
Sally J. Han
Mona Hatoum
Eberhard Havekost
Reggie Burrows Hodges
Shara Hughes
Leonhard Hurzlmeier
Arthur Jafa
Jamian Juliano-Villani
Sanya Kantarovsky
Ragnar Kjartansson
Josh Kline
Becky Kolsrud
Ella Kruglyanskaya
Maria Lassnig
Nate Lowman
Matthew Lutz-Kinoy
Alastair Mackinven
Emily Mae Smith
Lucy McKenzie
Sam McKinniss
Jill Mulleady
Jeanette Mundt
Arcmanoro Niles
Aliza Nisenbaum
Ludovic Nkoth
Laura Owens
Joyce Pensato
Walter Price
Richard Prince
Christina Quarles

Nathaniel Mary Quinn
Calida Rawles
Faith Ringgold
Walter Robinson
Ed Ruscha
Maja Ruznic
Wilhelm Sasnal
Peter Saul
Dana Schutz
Katja Seib
Tschabalala Self
Joan Semmel
Steven Shearer
Cindy Sherman
Josh Smith
Sable Elyse Smith
Sturtevant
Henry Taylor
Salman Toor
Kaari Upton
Fulton Leroy Washington
Ambera Wellmann
Anna Weyant
Kehinde Wiley
Matthew Wong
Lynette Yiadom-Boakye
Jakub Julian Zilkowski
Portia Zvavahera