

METRO PICTURES

Camille Henrot

Born, Never Asked

May 1 – 25, 2018

Camille Henrot presents more than fifty drawings in “Born, Never Asked,” curated by Kathy Noble for Metro Pictures’s upstairs gallery. The selection of drawings from her series *Tropics of Love* (2010-), *Bad Dad* (2015-2017), *The Narcissist* (2015-2017), and the eponymous *Born, Never Asked* (2017-) underscores her ever-developing exploration of power dynamics on both personal and social levels. The works interweave the external systems that influence the structure of our lives—like politics and religion—with the unconscious internal world of dreams and fantasies. Conventional ideas of dominance and subjugation unravel in Henrot’s depictions of psychically charged or graphically sexual scenes in which, as Noble writes in an essay for the show’s accompanying booklet, “*characters morph in and out of each other—they are never one gender, one sex, or one thing—leaving the interpretation of their identity and their actions to the viewer.*”

The source material that inspires Henrot’s ink and watercolor drawings ranges from the illustrations of Saul Steinberg to Shunga, a traditional Japanese erotic art. She is also drawn to the fluidity of contemporary Manga cartoons, where male and female, animal and human exist in the same body. Notions of transformation, often into what we both desire and fear, are evidenced in Henrot’s *Tropics of Love*. Animal heads and body parts become human forms that tussle together as pairs or threesomes in this series’s masochistic scenarios. In works from her *Born, Never Asked* series a woman reclines backward into space, giving birth to a fully formed miniature woman who is expelled from the larger woman’s vagina into the mouth of a fish. The figures float freely in the picture’s composition like in Grecian frescoes, without shadow, perspective, space, or context to ground them. Henrot’s miniature woman appears, at the moment of her birth, to dive straight into her death, representing a fracturing of selfhood that occurs simultaneously with its inception.

A major exhibition representing the extensive breadth of Henrot’s work opened last fall at the Palais de Tokyo, Paris. There she premiered her 3D film *Saturday*, the follow up to her critically acclaimed film *Grosse Fatigue*, for which she was awarded the Silver Lion at the 2013 Venice Biennale. She has held solo exhibitions in institutions that include the New Museum, New York; Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna; and Schinkel Pavillon, Berlin. In 2014 she opened the first iteration of her renowned exhibition “The Pale Fox” at Chisenhale Gallery in London. It went on to be exhibited at institutions that include Betonsalon, Paris, and Kunsthall Charlottenborg, Copenhagen. Henrot participated in the 2014 Taipei and Gwangju Biennials, the 2015 Lyon Biennial, and the 2016 Berlin and Sydney Biennales. In 2014 she won the Nam June Paik Award, and in 2015 she was the first recipient of the Edvard Munch Award.

Kathy Noble is a curator and writer. In 2016 she organized the inaugural Art Night at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London. She has additionally held positions as curator at Wysing Arts Centre, Cambridge, United Kingdom; head of exhibitions at Nottingham Contemporary, United Kingdom; and curator at Tate Modern, London, where she arranged numerous commissions, exhibitions, and performances. She writes regularly for magazines such as *Artforum* and *Mousse* and has edited a number of publications.

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Study for Born, Never Asked, 2017.
Watercolor on paper, 30 x 22 inches.