

Petzel

Yin Ho, "Critics" Picks: Nicola Tyson," *Artforum*, April 8, 2016.

ARTFORUM

Nicola Tyson

PETZEL GALLERY | EAST 67TH STREET
35 East 67th Street
March 2–April 23

While the subjects in Nicola Tyson's exhibition closely resemble women, winged creatures, and flowers, her most consistent visual (or for lack of a better term, *thing*) is a weird dancing figure that feels somehow familiar. Tyson's drawings elide pat definitions, and the forms we encounter are polymorphously perverse—daffodils become faces and then turn into freaks, feathers, and sex organs, pictures from and made specifically for the subconscious. A rounded jigsaw puzzle–shaped nub serves as both head and arm for a lean, confidently drawn female humanoid in *Standing Figure #7*, 2016. The artist's graphic economy conveys so much, and the cartographically drawn groin in this piece is, embarrassingly, difficult to ignore.

But, in Tyson's universe, a malformed leg, too big foot, or absent nose contributes to a strangeness that is more than just grotesque—it's tender, otherworldly. In *Untitled (sketch book page) #34*, 2005, dense colored pencil and graphite lines make up an animal-like head (or a lugubrious-looking mask) that possesses a creepy fairytale vibe—it fits in beautifully with the artist's other renderings of witchy superheroes and some children's-book landscapes. In the life-size *Pencil Stub*, 2016, private parts are conspicuously unconcealed: A dominatrix's pupillary nipples stare out of a cutout top, while her pelvis, which looks like a shield or inverted jock strap, appears outside a short skirt. In her hands she brandishes a pencil and a switch. Tyson's show is an immersive Rorschach test, authored by an imagination that doesn't just blur but *melts* the lines between representation and abstraction.

— Yin Ho



Nicola Tyson, *Pencil Stub*, 2016, ink on paper, 72 x 42".

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