

KENTON NELSON

Opening on Sunday, 25 September 2016 at 11.30 a.m.
24 September – 29 October 2016

Californian lifestyle of the 1950s and 1960s experiences a revival in the works of **KENTON NELSON** (*1954, Los Angeles): elegance and sophistication! The scenarios of his paintings appear to have been taken from the film *High Society*, USA 1956: sensual beauties in swimming costumes prepare to take a swim in the sea or the pool, spread out bathing towels and adjust their bathing caps. They have an air of concentrated seriousness that imbues the day-to-day activities with a sense of solemnity. The picture sections have been chosen in such a way that they appear to be snapshots: separate parts of the body have been cut off, remain concealed and thus left to the imagination of the observers. They appear to be chance witnesses of a stolen glance by a couple beneath a sun-umbrella (*Private Beach*), they observe a beach beauty quietly resting on a turquoise towel (*A Portrait*), the glance of a young woman looking wistfully from the sun terrace out to the sea (*Watching*), the concentrated pensiveness of a swimmer before going into the water (*Protection*).

KENTON NELSON worked for 18 years as a graphic designer and illustrator before taking up painting. This is evident in his oeuvre which now comprises over 900 works, created over the last two decades. Edward Hopper's aestheticism is recognizable in his works as is a strong influence of the Mexican muralists: in 1929 Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo got married in the garden of his great uncle, Roberto Montenegro. According to Nelson that is why many of his works are characterized by a strong low angle view. This is most clearly apparent in his work *The Pool*: a young woman wearing a bikini, resting in a deckchair is enjoying the sunshine. Behind her and beneath the deckchair the backyard of a mansion appears on the horizon, very much reduced by the distance. The beach beauty appears to float overly powerful both over the observer as well as the mansion. **KENTON NELSON** chooses this kind of perspective portrayal so as to impart something sublime, majestic into his figures.

KENTON NELSON is a meticulous painter and perfectionist: his working day begins at 7.30 in the morning by sorting through his photo archives in the studio. After choosing the suitable motif he transfers this as a drawing onto the canvas. After applying the oil paint, all brushstrokes are finely smoothed away so as to achieve a smooth surface of utmost perfection: a reference to the New Objectivity. The lighting design in the works is similar to that of Hollywood and advertising films of the past: light and shade, clear definition and soft focus generate exactly contoured outlines that evoke clarity and calm. A longing for the perfect world, inherent in **KENTON NELSON'S** paintings emerges and there is hope of arriving there one day.

Our exhibition continues the iconography of **KENTON NELSON'S** highly regarded solo show *SPLASH* which took place in the early summer of this year in the California Heritage Museum in Santa Monica, Los Angeles.