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Art Gallery Shows to See in February

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CHELSEA

Nicole Eisenman

Through May 13. Print Center New York, 535 West 24th Street, Manhattan; printcenternewyork.org.



Nicole Eisenman's *Watermark*, 2012, an etching and aquatint, at Print Center New York. Credit: Nicole Eisenman and Harlan and Weaver, New York

It's rare to see a show as well balanced as *Nicole Eisenman: Prince*, a retrospective of more than a decade of the artist's collaborations with the New York publishers Harlan & Weaver, Jungle Press Editions and 10 Grand Press. Like her drawings and paintings, Eisenman's prints teem with ideas and art-historical allusions. Sometimes her sense of humor gets the upper hand, as in the lithograph *Man Holding His Shadow*, which shows a retired boxer in a windowpane-pattern suit and matching cap mournfully cradling what looks like a deflated inner tube. Sometimes it's her tenderness, as in "Portrait of Evan," a sensitive, impromptu portrait of an assistant at Jungle Press.

Most of the time, though, a Nicole Eisenman print is a riot of competing impulses, so it's especially welcome to see so many of them so judiciously edited and lucidly arranged. The show also amounts to a primer on the extensive possibilities of the medium: There are little copper plate etchings made with matchsticks and string; a jigsaw woodcut monoprint, displayed alongside the printing blocks; cardboard collagraphs; a figure drawn on plywood in wax, cast in aqua resin, and printed from the cast; and seven in-progress proofs of *Watermark*, an etching and aquatint, displayed along with the final version. This last is a primer in itself, because what begins as a mysterious, mostly shadowy scene slowly becomes a highly detailed view of the artist's children and their grandparents, complete with patterned wallpaper, trees out the windows, and tiny book titles on the shelves.