

KENTON NELSON

„Independents“

Opening: Saturday, 28 January 2023 at 5 p.m. in the presence of the artist
27 January – 24 March 2023

KENTON NELSON (*1954, Los Angeles) is a graduate of Long Beach State University and of the renowned Otis Parsons Art Institute, both in Los Angeles. He remembers particularly well a lecture about perspective in architectural portrayal during his studies, and until now it has been essential in the creation of his works (*Country Visit, Doors*). The artist has lived and worked for 35 years in Pasadena, California. Besides paintings, drawings and watercolours he creates monumental wall mosaics in his studio.

For his new exhibition Kenton Nelson has returned to his roots: he is fascinated by the clarity and succinctness of marketing messages and early poster designs from the 1920s and 1930s. In preparation for the exhibition he was intensively preoccupied with the Austrian graphic designer Joseph Binder, who emigrated in 1938 from Vienna to New York and was there able to follow on from his successes in Austria: he conveyed the style of constructive reduction emulating the Wiener Werkstätte. In a unique manner he succeeded in showing marketing messages in poster art in an optically simple and easily comprehensible way. Like **KENTON NELSON**, after his career as a graphic designer he devoted himself to 'free art'. His influence is particularly clear in the two skiing paintings (*Summit, A Signature*): clothing and equipment indicate the 1930s. Julius Klinger (student of Koloman Moser), Tom Purvis from England and the US American Edward McKnight Kauffer are **KENTON NELSON's** early 'masters of design', whose works he has admired for a long time.

In his works **KENTON NELSON** has a magnificent way of telling stories, which are reduced to a gesture. The renowned magazine *The New Yorker* has already shown works by the artist seven times on its cover page. The manner of portrayal is similar to snapshot photography: individual motifs are cut off and only partially visible, and yet in sharp clarity convey the subject of the picture (*Dowsed, Sky Chair*). This is the great art of **KENTON NELSON's** representational painting: relating stories succinctly on the basis of a two-dimensional medium in a momentary snapshot and allowing the observer space for making his or her own interpretation. *Doors, Divestment, Evening Drive* and *Late* open up a time spectrum where 'before' and 'afterwards' resonate in thoughts. In some of the small-scale works (*Mount, Silence, The Escape*) the surface appears to be strangely blurred, as if the diffuse – because far distant – background is moved to the foreground. Here too the observer's imagination is stimulated.

With a twinkle in his eye **KENTON NELSON** gives his oil painting *Rules* the inscription "Art over a sofa or bed should span roughly two-thirds the width of the furniture piece", thus providing an excellent as well as sarcastic instruction for how to hang his work.

"It's a great day to have a great day", can be read in the first line of the artist's email signature. Looking at his new works impressively confirms this motivating life motto.

Salzburg, January 2023

Katja Mittendorfer