

ARMEN ELOYAN

COUPLES

10 May - 5 July 2025

Tim Van Laere Gallery Rome is pleased to present *Couples*, the new solo exhibition by internationally acclaimed artist Armen Eloyan. This is Eloyan's fifth solo show since joining Tim Van Laere Gallery in 2012 and his first show in our Roman space. In this exhibition, Eloyan will present a new series of paintings, wooden sculptures, and ceramics.

Armen Eloyan is known for his raw, expressive style that blends elements of cartoon imagery, abstraction, and personal narrative. His works are potent reflections on contemporary society, filled with wit, irony, and a profound understanding of human nature. Born in Armenia, Eloyan has infused his work with features inspired by American and Western European culture, evincing a particular fascination for cartoons and George Herriman's *Daily Comic Strips*, whose playful spirit he has adopted. Other influences are Philip Guston, Willem de Kooning, and Paul McCarthy. In Eloyan's universe, the absurdity of human behavior appears both tragic and slapstick. His figures—often twisted, cartoon-like entities—seem to parody not just individuals, but the structures of society itself. They criticize the absurdity of modern life, consumerism, and the alienation that comes with it, offering a reflection on how culture and identity are constantly being reshaped and redefined. Whether grotesque or pitiable, they reflect our contradictions with brutal clarity. Language, identity, and narrative all break down in Eloyan's work. Symbols lose their stability; what once seemed legible turns opaque. There's a deliberate tension between what looks familiar and what feels unreadable—a reflection, perhaps, of a world where truth is slippery, coherence is elusive, and images deceive as much as they reveal.

For his new series of paintings, Armen Eloyan delves into the psychology and symbolism of powerful couples. Moving beyond his characteristic grotesque figures and absurdist narratives, Eloyan has turned his attention to iconic duos that occupy a shared space in the cultural subconscious. Among them, Popeye and Olive Oyl—figures rooted in slapstick and caricature—emerge as unexpected but potent avatars of emotional entanglement and resilience. Through this lens, Eloyan reimagines the couple not merely as cartoon relics, but as archetypes of tension, co-dependence, and enduring myth. The painter's brightly colored palette and expressive distortion lend a raw intensity to their interactions. Olive Oyl, often rendered elongated and fragile, appears both fragile and indispensable; Popeye, muscled and manic, is at once protector and antagonist. These dynamics—oscillating between care and conflict—mirror broader societal themes of power, gender, and emotional survival. This shift in his work suggests a deepening interest in relational psychology—how people bind themselves to one another, often in comically tragic ways. Eloyan also explores this subject with his cat sculptures, constructed from rough, painted wooden scraps. Here, the cat becomes a proxy for human eccentricity, rendered with a kind of frantic elegance. Despite the crude materials and apparent improvisation, the sculpture exhibits a tightly composed energy, drawing attention to the awkward beauty found in distortion and fragmentation. Their entwinement is not neat or harmonious, but vital and irreducibly real, echoing Eloyan's fascination with figures that embody contradiction and vulnerability beneath a surface of absurdity. Through the absurd familiarity of these feline figures, Popeye and Olive, Eloyan opens up a space to explore the complexities of connection, desire, and the absurdity of enduring love.

Alongside the paintings, Eloyan also presents a wooden table bearing ceramics at the center of the exhibition. These ceramics contain familiar forms including teacups, hands, walls, and the head of Pluto. These sculptures have been broken by the artist and reassembled. Once repaired, these objects recall the Japanese practice of *kintsugi*, yet intentionally omit the use of gold lacquer. Instead, Eloyan embraces imperfection as a narrative force — celebrating repair, transformation, and resilience.

Armen Eloyan (°1966 Yerevan, Armenia) lives and works in Zurich. His work has been exhibited internationally with solo shows at Frac des Pays de la Loire, Carquefou (FR); Kunstparterre, Munich (DE); Passerelle Centre d'art contemporain, Brest (FR); Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen, St Gallen (CH); Centre Culturel Suisse, Paris (FR); and Parasol Unit Foundation for Contemporary Art, London (UK). His work is part of public collections such as Frac des Pays de la Loire, Carquefou (FR); M HKA, Antwerp (BE); AMC Collection, Amsterdam (NL); The Zhiguan Museum, Beijing (CN); Kunstmuseum, The Hague (NL); Deutsche Bank Collection, London (UK); The Aurora Museum, Shanghai (CN); Centro per l'Arte Contemporanea Luigi

Pecci, Prato (IT); Collection University of Maine (US); Kunstparterre, Munich (DE); Olbricht Collection, Berlin (DE); By Art Matters, Hangzhou (CN), among others.