

ERIN ARMSTRONG

TRIAL BY FIRE

KÖNIG TELEGRAPHENAMT | MONBIJOUSTRASSE
12 JUNE – 20 JULY 2025

KÖNIG TELEGRAPHENAMT is pleased to present TRIAL BY FIRE, Erin Armstrong's first exhibition with the gallery. Erin Armstrong paints a familiar story. The exhibition TRIAL BY FIRE is a reflection on what it feels like to be a woman in today's world – a time that can feel regressive, disorienting, and dangerous. The work speaks to the emotional and physical vulnerability women are experiencing, as rights are stripped away and power imbalances deepen.

Armstrong gestures toward larger forces – social, political, and historical – that often leave women feeling exposed, silenced, and unprotected. It begins with a battle cry: two men raise their instruments in a symbolic gesture of threat or control. From there, only women remain in Armstrong's world.

Women hide in the forest, alert and ready, yet vulnerable. The figures are naked, exposed to both the natural elements that surround them and to unseen forces that may wish them harm. They are painted off-kilter, balancing on spheres in an attempt to stay upright. In heavily cropped portraits, they meet the viewer's gaze directly and unwaveringly. Their bodies appear almost sculptural – like marble drenched in hues of gray, green, blue, and violet. The women Armstrong paints are avatars, connected across centuries, from myth to modernity.

The exhibition unfolds in three parts: day, afternoon, and night. As time passes, the figures shift along with the tone of the exhibition. Hope, resilience, fear, struggle, and unity repeat in rhythm with the day. Symbols reappear – a flower with thorns, the burning sun, dense forests depicted almost like tapestry. There's a sense of time looping, of something inevitable returning.

TRIAL BY FIRE is both deeply rooted in today's political climate and in conversation with the past. It reflects the centuries-old question of how women survive, resist, and endure. The faces of the women in these paintings could belong to figures from ancient myth or to women walking the streets today – it is not their identity, but their emotional state that Armstrong aims to capture. She does this through tense expressions and exaggerated forms, rendered in her expressive, fluid style. Jungle foliage encroaches, with looping leaves and dripping flowers, heightening the sense of isolation and entrapment.

Erin Armstrong (b. 1990 in Toronto, Canada) is a contemporary figurative artist based in Toronto, Canada. Her work looks into the human imagination as it is expressed visually. She is particularly intrigued by how the mind can conjure and create worlds by piecing together memories, experiences, and the mind's ability to render non-reality. She draws on the genre of portraiture as a foundation for these explorations. Still, she chooses to depict not a person or sitter, but an atmosphere or sensation expressed inside the formal qualities of human shapes. Armstrong's work has been collected and exhibited extensively in North America, Europe, and recently in Asia.

KÖNIG TELEGRAPHENAMT

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OPENING TIMES
Thursday – Sunday
11 am – 6 pm
and by appointment

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