

Features
#24
Eliza
Douglas
October
2023

Eliza, your current exhibition, “Parole” at Air de Paris, features four new paintings that convey familiar rhythms and emotions. I believe my favorite one is the explosive BANG! What are they about?

I think an artist doesn't necessarily determine the meaning of their work, and if you can easily sum up what a work of art is about, it probably isn't very good art, but I am happy to describe what they are. These paintings center around onomatopoeia words, which I began collecting and designing. I turned them into patterns and then made them into fabric, which I then scrunched up and folded in various ways, and photographed until I got a composition I felt was strong. Then, that image is made into a 210x160 cm painting.

I'd love to delve deeper into your creative journey. What sparked your passion for painting in the first place?

One reason I make paintings is how they function as a material. There are some images that, in my opinion, become the most potent when depicted with paint. For instance, the series of paintings in “Parole” originate as photographs, but I think they don't become powerful entities until they are painted. Secondly, I find painting's historical position compelling. There is no other medium in the history of art that has more often been declared dead and, in the same breath, revived. The constant crisis of painting is also its path to its never-ending relevancy. Like capitalism itself, painting has the ability to revitalize through its crises.

A few weeks ago, you presented “EVERYTHING DIES,” your first large-scale performance at the Kunstpalast in Düsseldorf, which drew conceptually upon horror tropes. What is your idea of spirituality within your work and life?

I wonder what about my performance sparks a question about spirituality. Maybe because the theme of death was so integral to it, and death is so fundamental to the concept of a spirit world. For me, the degree of spiritual connection I have (or lack thereof) usually determines my comfort level in this world. Drugs were my first form of spiritual seeking, but 15 years ago, I got sober and, since then, have been

seeking connection through a variety of other ways.

You have worked extensively with Demna Gvasalia since his debut Balenciaga runway show. Can you share how your relationship has evolved over the years?

I guess we simply have just gotten to know each other better. When I walked in his first show, we knew almost nothing about each other. He must have had a good feeling about me if he wanted me to be associated with his work, but I assume that neither of us knew it would be such an enduring relationship. In retrospect, our connection seems almost fated since it turned out we have a lot of overlap in our taste and interests. Being close to him and around his work has continually inspired me... In my opinion, he is one of the greatest creative minds of our time.

I couldn't agree more; Demna's talent is undeniable as he continuously redefines the boundaries of fashion design. But, let's return to you... I've heard that you are a great dancer. What kind of music do you like moving to?

I wouldn't say I unequivocally love dancing. I have never felt particularly comfortable in my body. I like performing, which sometimes involves moving my body but is pretty specific. I'm not a very good dancer, but when I can escape self-consciousness and let go and just dance, that, of course, feels great. Right now, I am listening to the latest record made by my friends Amnesia Scanner.

Experimental! I haven't checked it yet, but I really liked their previous album, "Tearless." To conclude, I wonder, if you weren't an artist, what do you think you would be?

About a decade ago, I was in social work school and planning to be a social worker or a therapist. So, I guess that is what I would be.

Exhibition view:
Parole
Eliza Douglas | Lily van der Stokker
2023
Air de Paris, Romainville
Photo: Marc Domage



Exhibition view:
Parole
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Air de Paris, Romainville
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Everything Dies

2023

Performance by Eliza Douglas

Kunstpalaſt, Düsseldorf

Curated by Westrey Page

Photo: Jacob Müller-Meernach



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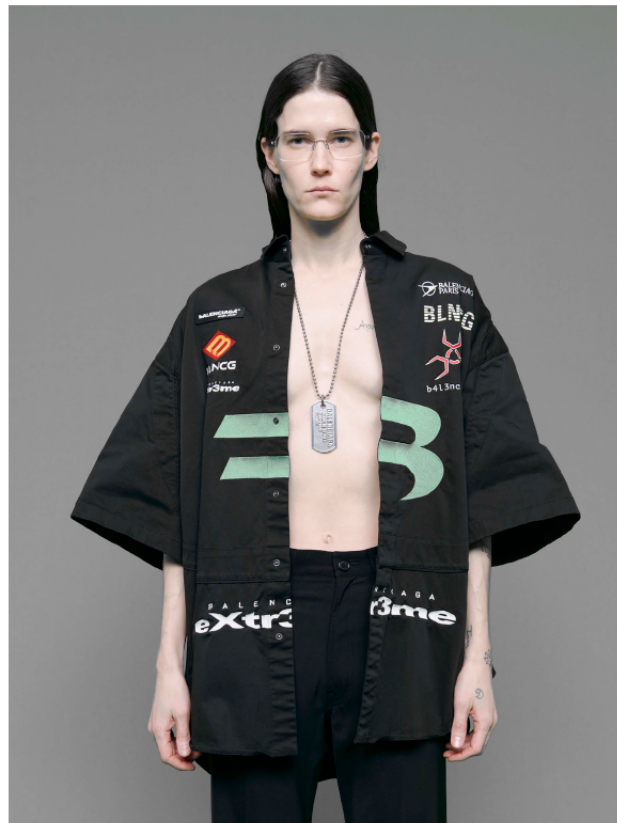


Eliza Douglas

It's the material limits of painting, its incapacity to hide the elements that compose it, and its potential to become an image, that prompted Eliza Douglas to work with this medium in the first instance.

If Douglas' pictorial vocabulary calls to mind aspects of Pop Art, Abstract Expressionism, or Hyperrealism, her paintings are more interested in inquiring about the status of the image, its construction, its circulation and fluidity, producing an ensemble of new yet recognizable images, sensual yet cold, laced with cool humour, sometimes tainted with gothic romanticism, and immediately photogenic and consumable.

Eliza Douglas creates meta-paintings fully conscious of their status and their history, often presenting mises en abyme of images extracted from publicity, the art world, pieces of fashion, or other consumption goods, reminding us that painting is, as well, consumed.



Self Portrait by Eliza Douglas

Features is an interview series that explores inspiring artistic and research stories in contemporary culture. Invited artists and practitioners from all over the world — acting within a multitude of initiatives, spaces and contexts — share their creative processes with curator Nicolas Vamvouklis.

The opinions expressed in the interviews are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Foundation.

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