

VI, VII
Eliza Douglas
The Whitney
Biennial
10.03–04.23.2022

VI, VII is pleased to present THE WHITNEY BIENNIAL by American artist, Eliza Douglas.

For her solo exhibition at VI, VII, Douglas presents six new paintings set against a vinyl/pvc backdrop picturing the interior of The Whitney Museum in New York.

This ironically titled exhibition is the second occasion in which the artist has used banners to transform a gallery into a larger public institution. For “Notre Mort,”(1) an exhibition at Neue Alte Bruecke in Frankfurt, Douglas draped the gallery in backdrops picturing the interior of Palais de Tokyo with all the works erased. Referencing Anne Imhof’s 2021 Palais de Tokyo exhibition “Natures Mortes,” a large-scale multimedia exhibition in which Douglas was heavily involved as a lead performer, composer and artist, with several of her works included—the backdrop presented Douglas’ works as the only ones on view.

Here at VI, VII she merges two primary experiences: the magical world of Disney, with its mesmerizing cast of characters, and an her first encounters with the larger art scene. Douglas has never participated in The Whitney Biennial, but she has attended them. As one of the largest surveys of American art, it is one of the first larger artworld events that young artists in New York become keenly aware of and it opens up a set of possibilities and a view onto the international scene.

In terms of visual motifs, Douglas’ paintings in the exhibition distort the magic of Disney: a larger-than life cultural giant, that like looking back on first contact with the artworld and its happenings, evokes nostalgia.

Surreal perspective lines and the clash between her paintings and a transplanted interior, bring the show into dialogue with larger conversations about the transient aspect of installation views throughout much of art history. Traditionally, paintings shed their installation, the views being lost to time, quite often less frequently reproduced. Here the reverse happens and they form a confounding viewscape of a show that both is and never was.

THE WHITNEY BIENNIAL is the first solo presentation of Douglas' work in Scandinavia and overlaps with the actual Whitney Biennial which opens in New York on April 6th. Using titles to mislead and cause confusion follows other gestures of appropriation by the artist, most notably when she reproduced an artist's entire oeuvre from web documentation for her 2019 exhibition "Josh Smith,"⁽²⁾ but also extending to her recent use of graphic t-shirts for inspiration.

Since 2019, when she presented the sculpture "Pile" a mountain of cotton t-shirts printed as merch for rock concerts, political campaigns and other causes at Tate Modern, the artist has been working with and drawing inspiration from graphic t-shirts most recently creating hyperreal images in oil on canvas from photographs of T-shirts crumpled on the floor. Agents of commercialized popular culture and underground ephemera, cartoons and band logos are abstracted, amplifying the paintings' existence as a commodities. In continuation of this series, which reanimates the static surface of the t-shirt, Disney's cast of characters swirl forming a center point of enchantment, a hypotonic, added element of seduction.

Born in the United States in 1984, Eliza Douglas lives and works in Berlin and New York. Her paintings stage images drawn from pop, fashion, consumer and underground cultures.

Recent exhibitions include Notre Morte, Neue Alte Brücke, Frankfurt; Lord of the Fucking Wasteland, Air de Paris, Romainville; Sex, The Art Institute, Chicago, and Tate Modern, London (with Anne Imhof); Jewish Museum, New York; Old Tissues Filled with Tears, Schinkel Pavilion, Berlin, and Eliza Douglas Anne Imhof, Galerie Buchholz, New York.

Also a musician and performer she regularly collaborates with German artist Anne Imhof—most recently on Natures Mortes on view at Palais de Tokyo (2021). Douglas composed the score, and was a lead performer in this multimedia production, which extended throughout the entire institution, featuring works by over twenty artists alongside objects by Douglas and Imhof. Douglas also co-created the music for and was a performer in Anne Imhof's Faust, which won the Golden Lion at the 57th Venice Biennale in 2017.

Other musical collaborations have taken place with Devendra Banhart, Antony and the Johnsons, and Matthea Baim in the 2000s.

As a model, she has worked closely with Vetements and Balenciaga working most recently with the latter on their "Identities" campaign, which she both starred in and was the creative director of.

Footnotes:

(1) Eliza Douglas, Notre Mort, Neue Alte Brücke, Frankfurt, November 6 – December 18, 2021

(2) Eliza Douglas, Josh Smith, Overduin & Co, Los Angeles, May 11 – July 22, 2019