

# ELIZA DOUGLAS

## Lord of the Fucking Wasteland

Exhibition from June 20 to July 30, 2020

43, rue de la Commune de Paris F-93230 Romainville



As well as being the title of Eliza Douglas's upcoming exhibition at Air de Paris, Lord of the Fucking Wasteland is the message you can read on one of the paintings on show. All the pictures in the exhibition are taken from photos of illustrated T-shirts.

Presuming that the Lord in question is to be taken as an alter ego of the artist herself, the «subjects» she rules over are the fictive inhabitants of this derelict territory: the subjects of paintings based on cropped photos of tees printed with zombies, vampires and superheroes. These paintings aren't «hers» in the sense of being pure products of her imagination, but rather in the sense of the garments being her personal property. The resultant paintings are a kind of sampling of her sculpture Pile (2019), recently shown at the Tate to accompany Anne Imhof's performance Sex: an enormous heap of T-shirts on the floor, with motifs including Kiss, kittens, Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders.

In these new paintings the image is conditioned by the format, giving the impression that the shirts have been deliberately crumpled to make them match the frame. The measurements (210 x 160 cm) are very close to the traditional 4:3 photographic ratio – which is also the default setting on the iPhone camera Douglas uses for the pictures that serve as her source. This fit with the world of photography makes these proportions painting's new, secret geometry, with application of the ratio enabling symbolic incorporation into the picture of its current means of circulation and publicity in the form of digital photographs. Today the paintings go public on the social networks before being exhibited; as digital vignettes they are shown and swapped among amateurs and/or professionals before the opportunity arises for any physical encounter with their viewers (as is the case at present)

The style of the paintings is clear and sharp, in contrast with the actual image, which is distorted by the creases. The image gains in volume through the crumpling, but is then flattened (or ironed out) by the paint. The subject is an image on fabric, which is also the case of the painting – an image applied to canvas. In its own way the illustrated T-shirt is a portrait you wear, a way of projecting an intended self-image. This ground rule has been thoroughly integrated by the people in charge of clothes advertising and its habitual promise of an intimate connection between personal identity and product: «This garment is you», the ads endlessly encourage us to believe. Through a kind of metonymy clothing comes to represent the wearer.

Clothes are often spoken of as a seductive illusion, a kind of mask intended to create a good impression. But they can also – as is the case here – conjure up a shield, or a suit of armour. The image conveyed by the visual thematics of these paintings is one of harshness, but also of abnormality, of a monstrosity that functions as a defence, a repellent – the antithesis, for example, of the T-shirt sporting a picture of a kitten more likely to trigger empathy. Another figure in one of the paintings

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is manga heroine Sailor Moon, equally monstrous in her embodiment of a supranatural humanity.

The insignificance of the subjects, the distension of the image via the folds, the total absence of painterly effects – all these factors contribute to an impression of triviality; but what is actually shown is somewhat disturbing in its evocation of a darkly menacing style of music or the deafening blare of a car race (one of the paintings is of a driver from the NASCAR Cup). We note in passing that «The Lord of the Wasteland» is a song by Toxic Holocaust; that one of the pictures is a copy of the cover of Death's album *Scream Bloody Gore*; and another that of Emperor's *In the Nightside Eclipse*. But whether the references are to specific album covers or a more generic imagery, the focus is systematically on the world of Heavy Metal and such subgenres as speed, thrash and death. A résumé, you might say, of NASCAR's stock-in-trade: more speed, plus accidents and – for the less fortunate competitors – extinction.

Back in the old days the painting repertoire was all but immutable, but since the advent of modernism artists have broadened their horizons with new subjects. Paradoxically, what is expected of art now is the unexpected. And what we're getting here is fucking unexpected. That a Death Metal group's T-shirt should find its way into a painting is as improbable now as the Impressionist apparition in the traditional art world of a concert in the Tuileries or a train pulling into a station

- Vincent Pécoil, 2020

Eliza Douglas (Born in USA in 1984, lives and works in Berlin and New York) has had personal exhibitions at the Jewish Museum in New York (2018) and at Schinkel Pavillon in Berlin (2017). She has performed and collaborated with Anne Imhof for *Angst II* presented at the Kunsthalle Basel (2016), and for *Faust* presented at the German Pavillon (laureate of the Golden Lion) at the 57th Venice Biennial in 2017. She co-wrote the soundtrack for *Faust*. Eliza Douglas also collaborated with Imhof for *Sex* presented at the Tate Modern in London (2019).

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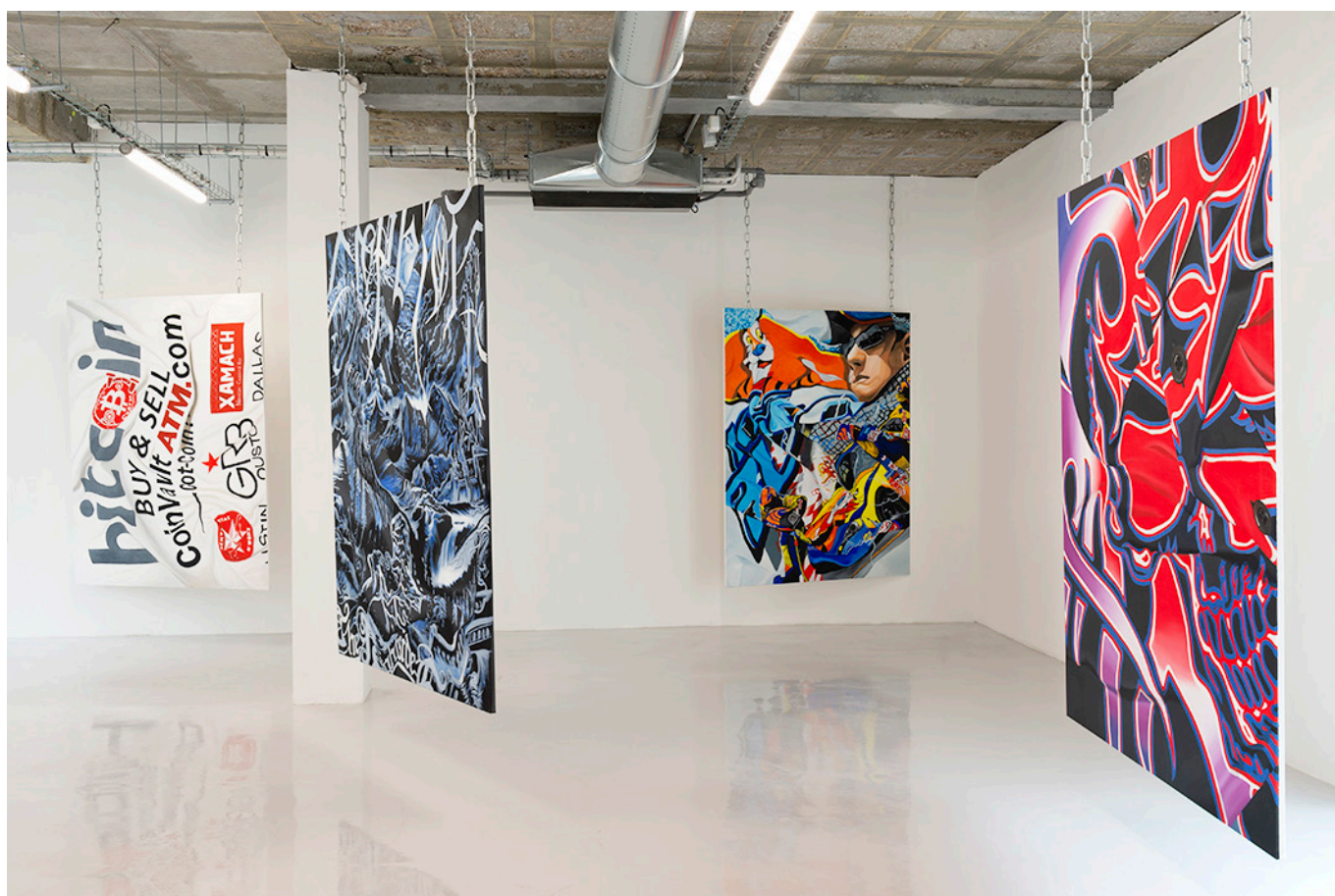
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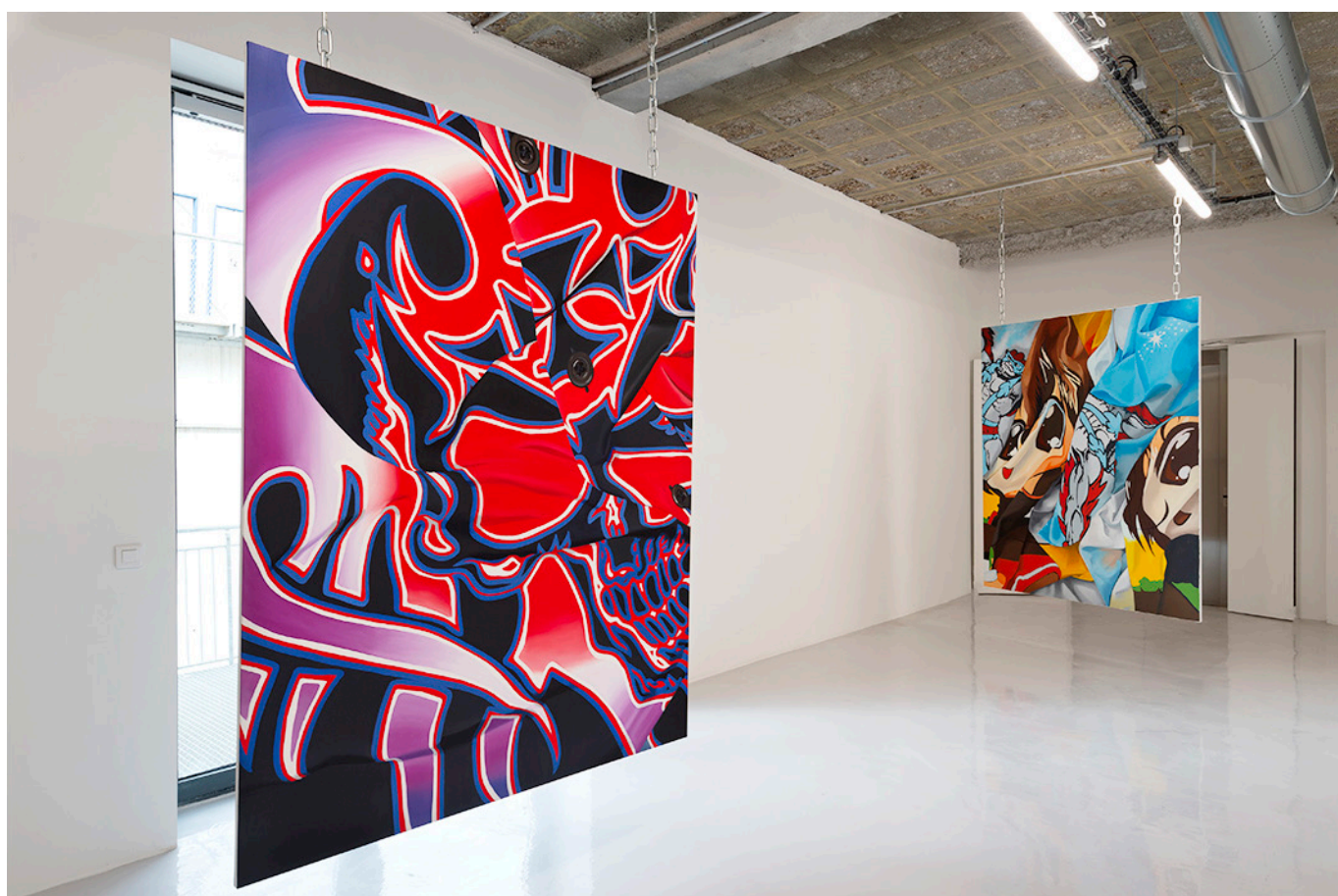
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210 x 160 cm  
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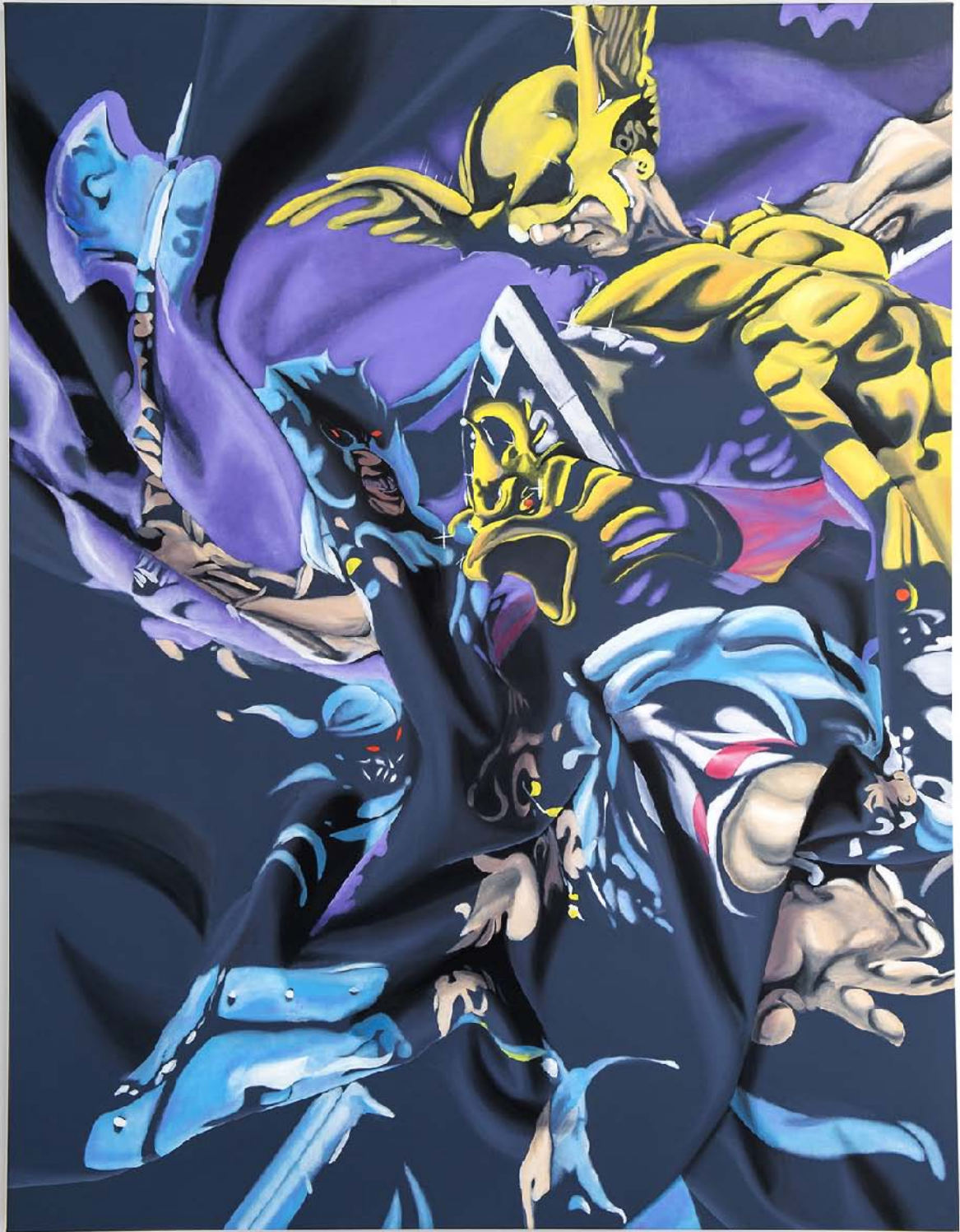
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