LIZA JO EILERS

GRIMM





LIZA JO EILERS

b. 1993, St. Paul, MN (US) Lives and works in Chicago, IL (US)

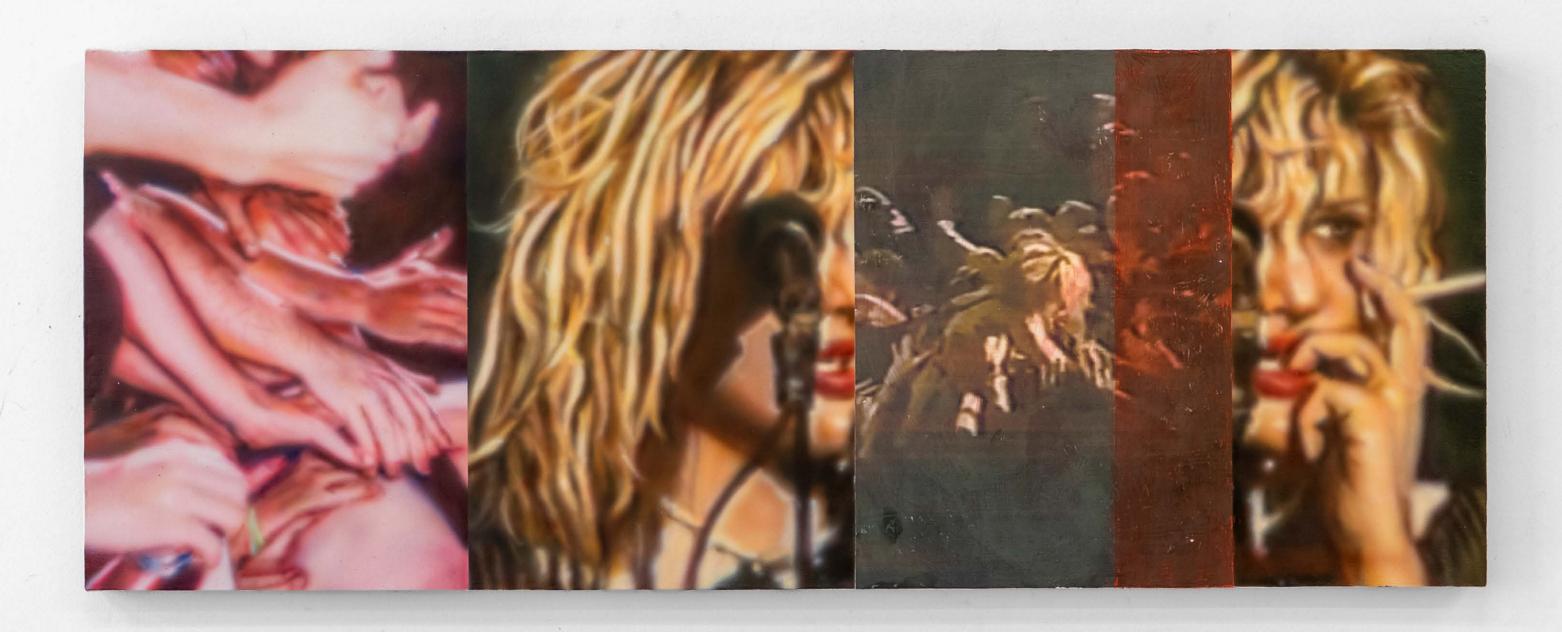
Liza Jo Eilers is a multimedia artist who works through the double bind of popular culture's representation of women and how it can both resist and reinforce the very ideals it claims to challenge. She questions not just what we see, but how habits of seeing have become embedded in American identity and entertainment, shaped by decades of cultural failure and its lingering aftermath. The artist completed an MFA at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, IL (US) in 2020. In 2024 she was the recipient of the Soho House Dreamers in Residence Grant and the Hopper Prize Grant.

Recent exhibitions include *WHO WANTS TO BE PARIS HILTON'S BEST FRIEND?*, Spielzeug Gallery, New York, NY (US), 2025; *MINIOTICS*, Weatherproof x Pop Gun, Chicago, IL (US), 2025; *Curated by Ella Emhoff*, Platform David Zwirner, online, 2025; *Pamphlet Show II*, Patient Info, Chicago, IL (US), 2025; *Survey*, Unda.m. 93, Chicago, IL (US), 2025; *The Great American Songbook*, GROVE, London (UK), 2024; *Scorchers*, with Andrew Ordonez, Roommate, Chicago, IL (US), 2024; and *A Prologue for Chicago*, de boer Gallery, Los Angeles, CA (US), 2024.

Cover: A way a lone a last a loved a long the, 2025 Left: If you weren't coming back here, this won't exist, 2024 In recent paintings, Eilers invites the viewer to interact with the work by wetting the surface and discovering the imagery underneath. The paintings unfold like film, stitched from cropped images, some with interruptions of black paint that act as censors, pauses, veils. Not all obstructions are permanent; in thermally sensitive works, the black temporarily turns transparent, revealing what lies beneath. The series explores how women are held in a constant loop of being seen and seeing themselves, flickering between intimacy and spectacle.



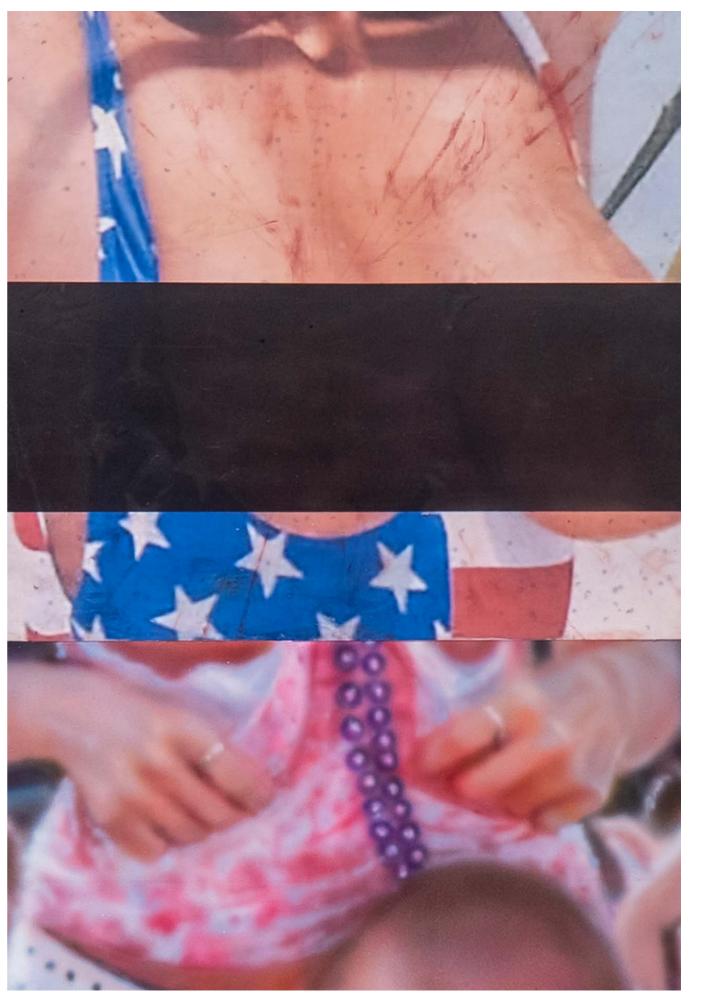
Acrylic, pigment transfer, glitter and hydrochromic ink on linen $99.1 \times 137.2 \text{ cm} \mid 39 \times 54 \text{ in}$ (thermally modified)





True men, like you men, 2025
Acrylic, pigment transfer, thermochromic Ink, gouache, iridescent ink and glitter on linen
152.4 x 45.7 cm | 60 x 18 in





Thermally modified

With the things I want, yeah, I can't talk about, you (bye, bye miss american pie), 2024 Acrylic, pigment transfer, hydrochromic ink, and glitter on linen 112 x 65 cm | 44 1/8 x 25 5/8 in





Thermally modified





Sometimes the blouse is worth more money than the money, 2024

Acrylic, pigment transfer, hydrochromic ink, and glitter on linen 112.1 x 65.1 cm | 44 1/8 x 25 5/8 in



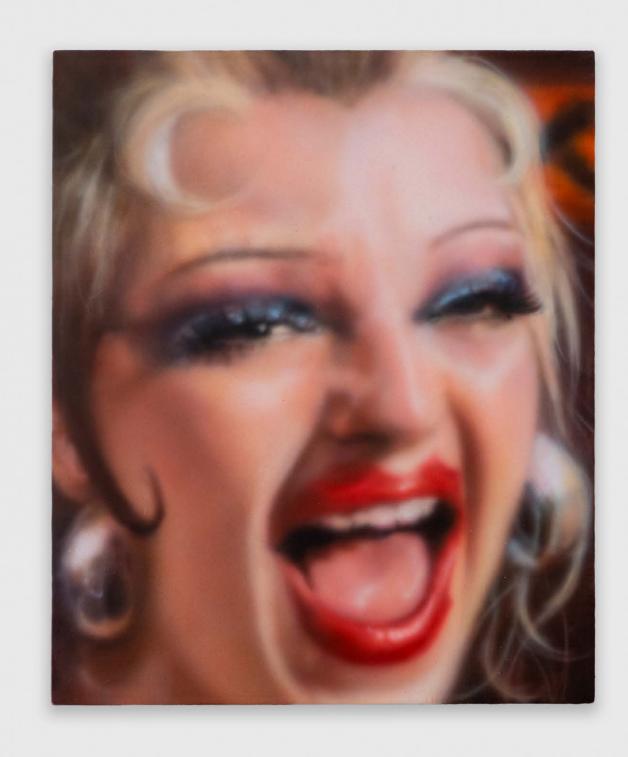


Thermally modified











Flash phenomenon, 2025
Gouache, pigment print, and thermochromic ink on linen
71.1 x 71.1 cm | 28 x 28 in



Annotations on smack that, 2025 Acrylic on linen 45.7 x 61 cm | 18 x 24 in

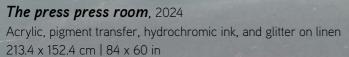


Heyy, it's me, I mean, you know that, 2025 Pigment transfer, thermochromic ink and glitter on linen 119.4 x 45.7 cm | 47 x 18 in













LIZA JO EILERS TALKS TO PHILLIP EDWARD SPRADLEY

By Phillip Edward Spradley • 11 November 2024

Liza Jo Eilers is a multimedia artist who looks toward the comforts of the familiar and the excitement of the intimate to share a sense of entertainment. Drawing on a range of influences from film, contemporary fashion, traditional notions of gender, and human belief systems, Eilers' work involves American and Midwestern popular culture, community, and the recontextualization of imagery and aspects of the body to challenge cultural stereotypes and societal norms surrounding femininity and identity.

Using exaggerated, playful representations, she's critiqued and reinterpreted the idea of the "bimbo," transforming it from a derogatory stereotype into a more nuanced commentary on empowerment, beauty, and societal expectations. With her use of social culture, pop culture icons from Hollywood, popular music, and adult magazines, Eilers's work encompasses painting, sculpture, and installation.

Eilers's use of neon colors and airbrushing in her paintings is striking and intentional, adding a vivid, contemporary flair that captures attention. These bright and vibrant hues often evoke a sense of energy and emotion, enhancing the personality of her subjects. Eilers not only makes her work visually arresting but also challenges traditional notions of portraiture, pushing boundaries around how identity and expression can be represented.

Born in St. Paul, Minnesota, Eilers grew up, lives, and works in Chicago. She received her MFA with an emphasis on Painting and Drawing from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and her BA in Industrial Design from the University of Notre Dame.

Eilers has exhibited at GROVE, London; the Material Room, Richmond; SULK CHICAGO, Chicago; M. LeBlanc, Chicago; Guerrero Gallery, Los Angeles; Espace Maurice, Montreal; Racecar Factory, Indiana; Tchotchke Gallery, Brooklyn; de boer gallery, Los Angeles; Night Club Gallery, Minneapolis; and Anthony Gallery, Tokyo.

Eliers will participate in an exhibition, *A Prologue for Chicago*, at de boer gallery, Los Angeles which opens on November 16, 2024.



As above, so below (Pride and Tradition), (Wet detail), 2023.

Acrylic, pigment transfer, hydrochromic ink, glitter on linen 70.8 x 53.1 in. Courtesy of the artist.

Phillip Edward Spradley: Does having grown up in the Midwest and living there now have a direct connection to the subject matter you find yourself immersed in?

Liza Jo Eilers: Yeah for better or worse, it shaped how I think and what I'm drawn to. I was raised very much Midwestern Irish Catholic, most of my family is from Minnesota, but I grew up right outside of Chicago's city limits and spent a lot of time in Wisconsin going to my parent's cabin. There's something about Chicago that's unique and hard to pin down, it's a big city but there's a disconnect from the coasts that is hard to explain, kind of like an island, with its own quirky ecosystem.

Bars, taverns and saloons have been always important to Chicago's history since its very inception and at one point in the early 1900s there was most literally a tavern on every corner. That combined with the weather; where the winter's long, the days short, the skies grey and the temperature cold as hell—there's a reason bar culture reigns supreme here. We're kinda hunkered down inside for nine months of the year so a lot of socializing is centered around gathering and drinking. Maybe it's a coping mechanism to romanticize the Stockholm syndrome of winter but there really is something about getting a lot of snow and trekking out to a cozy bar or over to someone's home to hang and drink with friends. Another product of being inside more is getting culture through watching tv and cinema, and has to do with my infatuation with the idea of and modes of 'entertainment' in relation to women in pop culture. A big through line in my practice often revolves around revisiting these three questions —what it means to have a good time, who is a good time and for whom is the good time.

It's probably obvious but, the man cave and bar culture being male havens, has had a big impact on my practice aesthetically and theoretically. Besides Catholics being known as big drinkers...growing up Catholic has also contributed to how I see the bar in relation to the church with parallels in how we use, congregate and adorn both of these male dominated spaces. Hot women subbing in for Jesus and saints, bar signs and billiard lamps replacing stained glass windows, an engraved wooden bar becoming the altar, beer and wine as the body and blood, cigarette smoke as incense, etc.

Since probably high school, I started to notice the interplay between women and what's found hung up, displayed proudly across these walls. It's no coincidence that the decor functions as a visual reflection of how cars, boats, taxidermied animals, and women are treated in the same manner societally, like a trophy or catch, something to be conquered, owned and shown off. Even these objects are often being anthropomorphized with women's names and attributes. So, I guess it all started with what happens when I, a woman, start to do these things, what can I learn? Can I elaborate on it? Does it even do anything or does it only reiterate the same sentiments? I really am working these ideas out in real time by making... sometimes there's no conclusive answer but just a bunch of contradictions that continue to lead me from one question to the next.

There are many artists who have taken underappreciated, almost shunned material and "lowbrow" imagery and have placed them back into a fine arts context. Do you see yourself adding to this conversation of material and context and how do you envision the conversation growing?

Oh god, I hope I'm contributing to the conversation in some sort of way. Content wise, I'm often pulling imagery from Playboy, Hustler, Penthouse and other adult magazines to screenshots of movies, TV shows and music videos to try to make sense of why women perceive ourselves the way we do and how that affects our day to day. Every image is purposefully picked.

The idea of accessibility and universality is important to me though, for the simple reason of the desire to connect with others. And a way to do that is working with the familiar so the entry point tends to be lowbrow. I do believe highbrow and middlebrow are equally essential though. From history and art history to mass media...maybe it's about being utilitarian with content, context and materials. Utilizing whatever I think necessary to create. It's important that my work also manifests materially outside the traditional painting on canvas, like the coasters, a taxidermied fish, or even the act of throwing water on a painting. I also think that's what initially attracted me to airbrush four years ago, it's a visual language the public is already very familiar with as it functions similar to the digital and printed image, composed completely of dots. As long as I have access to Reddit forums, Facebook Groups, YouTube University, Internet Archive, the library, masters in their craft, mentors and friends, I want to keep making this way. At the end of the day, I'm interested in what's around me and why it exists and how it exists in relation to the world and to me and then to you and back again.



I'd Beg to Disagree but Begging Disagrees with Me, 2022. Acrylic and gouache on linen, 15 x 18 in. Courtesy of the artist.

The choice to airbrush paintings of celebrities carries several ironic undertones; one that strikes immediately is that of critiquing society's obsession with perfection and beauty standards. The artwork exposes how much effort goes into creating these idealized images, questioning what authenticity really looks like. How has the use of airbrushing assisted you not only in your physical creation but in conceptualizing your artwork as well?

I like how you touch on the effort, time and care that it takes to make them. The care for the image, especially the heads, are important to me. It's not supposed to be something immediate, we're already barraged with images more than we've ever been before, I'm trying to slow it down. In some ways making them is like putting on makeup, getting glammed up. It's tedious and time consuming and oftentimes about enhancing, blurring and/or distracting from what's beneath.

There's few different reasons for painting without the utilization of hard edges. First, it creates a smoothness that gives a sense of no negativity through semblance. Using the soft airy facade of beauty as a sort of hook and bait and way to initially seduce the viewer, allows me to talk about more nuanced ideas of women and pop culture. I like to use humor for that very same reason. However, I know that some may never get past the surface level and that's part of it too. Second, the absence of edges leaves room for me to literally paint. I get to approach it more like an oil painting with the ability to be fluid with where lines go and planes end. It's also an amazing tool for glazing and layering color. The image can develop, distort and change naturally without the boundaries of tape and stencils. It's not to say I'll never use them or am against them though. I'm not really concerned with trompe l'oeil, right now it's about capturing an aura and feeling.

When painting icons from millennial pop culture, you place emphasis on their faces. Can you elaborate on your decisions to frame these particular features and not others or the entire figure?

Well, it all started with these two paintings that I made for my first solo show, which was at this historic artist punk bar in Chicago called Rainbo Club. One depicted Bridget Jones and the other Elle Woods with the word HEAD hugely scribbled across. That's when I started to think about how 'head's interpretation changes when it is used in the context of a woman's versus a man's and how sexually charged a portrait of a woman might be even with the absence of her body. Which led me to taking the most beloved and known sex icon of them all, Pamela Anderson and seeing what would happen by only depicting her head, face, expression, brain.

The heads are the first series I ever attempted, which was cool for me because it allowed me to play with more formal aspects of painting through color, repetition, and small compositional changes. Something even as simple as using the hair as a frame for the face on canvas. The heads have further branched out into other women like Jennifer Coolidge, Leeloo, Whitney Houston, Nomi, and The Bride. I tend to be attracted to actresses, characters and entertainers that have publicly participated in, played into, subverted, been subjected to and sometimes crushed by the idea of what being a woman means, especially in America. As time has gone on, I've slowly started reintroducing the body again but through censoring her with hydrochromic ink.

The titles that correspond with this series do not seem to have a direct correlation to the images presented. A couple of favored examples are *Where'd all the crows go?*, which features an image of actress Uma Thurman as The Bride in *Kill Bill: Volume 1*, and *Don't Blow on the Soup*, which features an image of actress Milla Jovovich as Leeloo in *The Fifth Element*. How do you go about bridging words with images?

I title my paintings how I imagine people name their babies. You have a lot of ideas of what it could be but when it's all said and done there's only one that fits. I've had a list in my notes app for 6 years and running, of ideas, questions, sayings, lyrics, quotes, poems, whatever really—sometimes I'll even take the title of another artist's piece because it's so good and riff on it. I'm not much of a wordsmith but have always had a real admiration and soft spot for writers and poets. So the titles are a way for me to practice having a go at writing, not be so hard on myself and have fun. I see titles as an opportunity to assist in creating more space for interpretation, clarification or direction.

Some of your recent works have surprise elements that require more direct physical participation other than viewing. There are paintings that have white blocked-out sections of hydrochromic ink that, when activated with water, provide a dramatic reveal of the ink and much more information. How did you envision this engagement, and do you see this hands-on approach of interaction fostering a deeper connection between the participant and the artwork?

I like to call them 'wet t-shirt paintings' for what's probably obvious, that they are inspired by the famous wet t-shirt contests that take place during spring break and at one point broadcasted to all of America on Girls Gone Wild and other platforms. The white hydrochromic ink literally functions as a white-t when it's activated by water it becomes see-through to reveal whatevers below, sometimes what's expected and other times not. Once the water evaporates the ink returns back to opaque white. I've been utilizing the white ink as a censor—in relation to strategies of beauty like concealing, delaying, and veiling as the ink functions to simultaneously reveal and hide. Can the pleasure of "revealing" the image supersede that of seeing the image itself?

So now the engagement part of the paintings has been a real struggle for me and whether it should be actively or passively activated. I was in a two person show with Alessandra Norman at this project space, Yew Nork, in Chicago last year in which we created this pseudo bar GLORY's where the first wet-t painting was shown. I used coasters as a way to introduce the painting by having visually similar compositions of white hydrochromic ink. The coasters were activated by the condensation of the water from the glass and beer cans and in turn using that as a way to cue to the viewer how the painting also functions.

When I had my show in a more formal setting at Grove in London, I didn't quite know how to present the ink and how to relay how the paintings worked. So I decided to keep it casual and let the viewer use a water bottle to soak the painting, just like they would at a wet t-shirt contest. Although it immediately engaged and drew in whoever was interacting, it exposed some problems. The first being in order to activate them either someone present already had to know how they functioned to reveal or someone had to explain to the person what to do. And who likes to get a trick explained before it even happens, the awe is completely lost. Then the second issue being that the painting would perform for someone on demand an infinite amount of times. We already have an abundance of instant gratification in today's day and age and since the paintings already walk a fine line talking about women's bodies and consumption, I'm not trying to cross it either which way. I like investigating the grey area.

So now I'm wondering, should they be interacted with? Or should they be more of a poetic gesture and never revealed? What does it mean giving people free range to get them wet and what does it mean when that's taken away? I'm not sure what the next phase of these will be but my goal is to leave more room for chance and space for feeling. I'm considering other ways of activating them passively like using grocery store produce sprinklers that would be on a random timer or placing them outside so it only reveals when it rains.

There are paintings of yours that are composed of many images that are from separate sources and scenarios, similar to an exquisite corpse, but come together in a compilation that you have organized. An example I can think of is the artwork *Sometimes the blouse is worth more money than the money*. When placing images together to create a painting, what is it you want to symbolize with the relation of the images?

Making work usually comes as a continuation from what came before it, which is how I came to the exquisite corpse. I suppose I got there because I had this long skinny shaped canvas that I was trying to solve compositionally in conjunction with subconsciously being influenced by doing paper drawing exquisite corpses late at night at the bar with my friends.

What's fun is it's been a way to reintroduce the body back into my work by connecting images where technically all that's required is the connection of a literal through line. I'm interested in the undertone of violence it suggests in relation to the body being severed and reconstructed becoming its own Frankenstein. I think because these paintings are so new to me it's too early to describe exactly what I'm trying to say, as there's still so many ways it could go, which is an exciting place to be. I'm working on some bigger ones that aren't just vertical but go in multiple directions.

The figures you highlight are from a certain time and place in popular culture; additionally, you are choosing to highlight them at a particular place in their career. What about these particular time periods in film, music, and vintage porn interests you? Did you grow up with these icons, or did they come to you later in life?

I look at film, TV, music, magazines starting at the beginning of the sexual revolution, so the 60s up to now. The onset of this period lays a lot of the foundation in how the media and in turn society perceives women the way we do. Of course I catch myself getting obsessed with certain periods and people. I think I choose them at all different phases in their careers though, especially the more I make. Sometimes they are at the top of their game, sometimes the bottom, they are learning as they go just like we all do. Some I grew up watching like Bridget Jones, Pamela Anderson, Whitney Houston, Dolly Parton, Lil' Kim, Sex and the City, MTV, Playboy, The Girls Next Door. But also more recently, I became obsessed with John Cassavetes and in turn Gena Rowlands, because I only learned what Criterion was just last year...

I almost exclusively depict women except for the few supporting male actors every once in a while whose faces are either blocked, obscured or absent, like Elvis or ASAP Rocky. They aren't necessarily the villains but it's important men are represented too as they're the driving force behind a lot of these ideals and values. I might be telling it from one point of view but want to include the whole realm of it all. It's funny the more you look back the more you realize culture tends to repeat itself.

What are you currently obsessed with, and what are you currently working on?

Ahh honestly I have so many obsessions, one that's forever is old Italian restaurants. There's the contradictory simple, but gaudy, and slight disarray to the decor with pictures taking up the walls from floor to ceiling. The walls are like reading a history book or entering a time capsule with visual evidence of who has passed through, stars and people they adore, awards they have won. And then right behind the wall decor are the beautiful fresco-esque murals with the windows and curtains blowing in the wind looking out over the beautiful Italian landscape. My all time in Chicago is La Scarola...

Now that it's almost the end of the year, I need to order the 2025 Carponizer calendar which is this niche erotic calendar of nude women posing with dead carp fish, which is a big ugly fish that's known for being the ultimate bottom feeder. Deep down I wish I could collaborate or commission Raphaël Faraggi, the German photographer, who's behind the calendar. At the same time though, maybe don't meet your heroes.

I'm trying to figure out how to execute a sculpture project and currently working on some big exquisite corpses that I'm stoked on.

Oh, I also love games, any board game, card game, sport, whatever, I'll play.

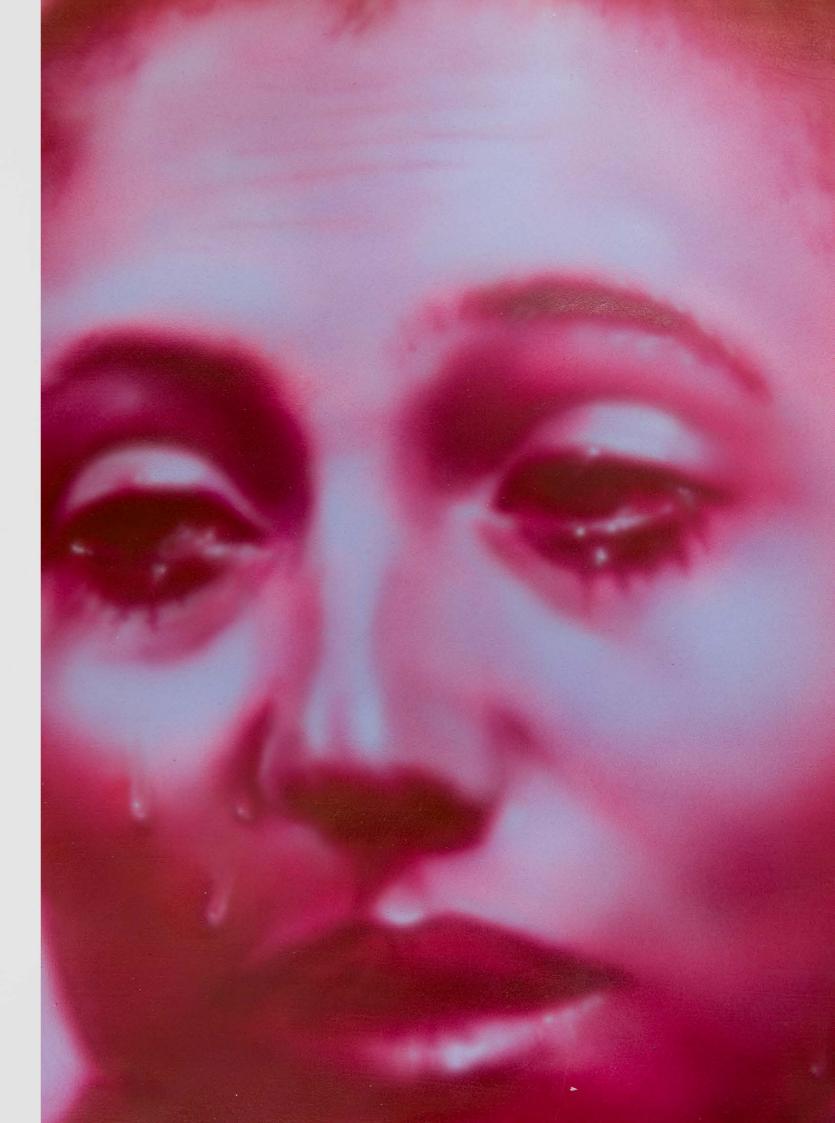


Installation shot, The Great American Songbook, Grove, London. Left: Transmogrification at the dead of winter, 2024. Acrylic on linen 18 x 15 in. Right: Cuddling frozen bees, 2024. Acrylic on linen 18 x 15 in. Courtesy of the artist.

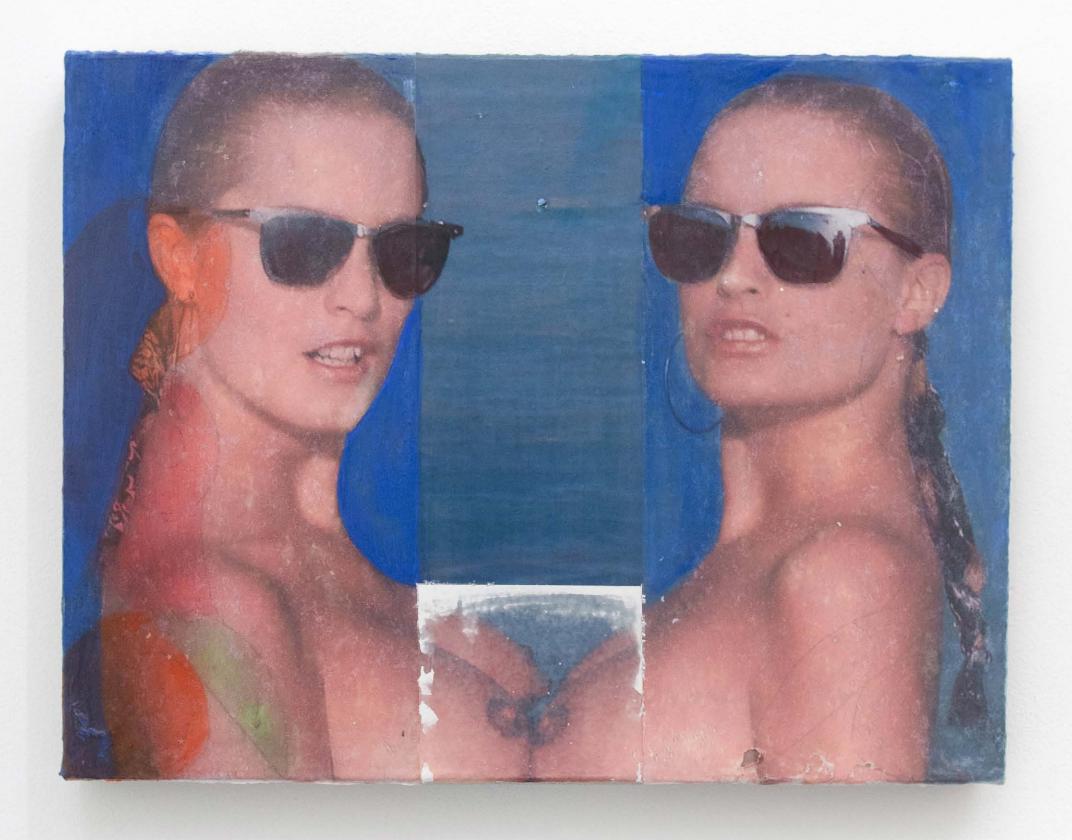


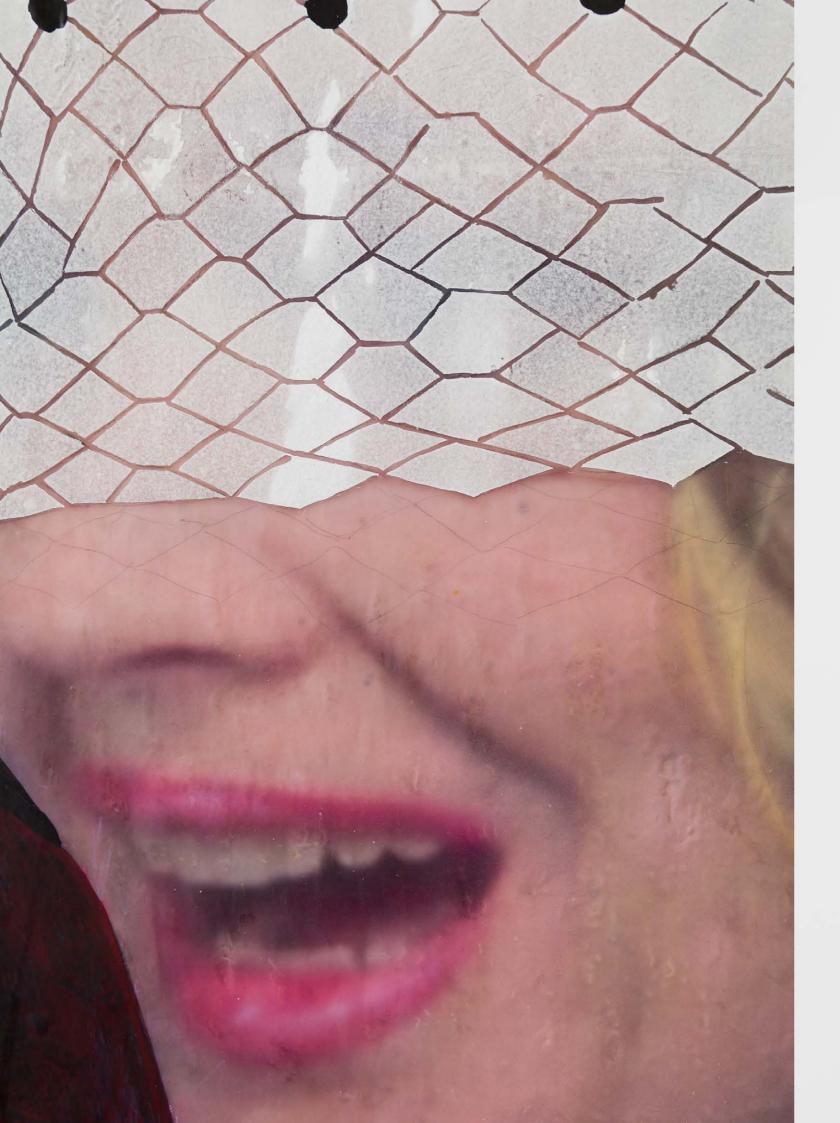


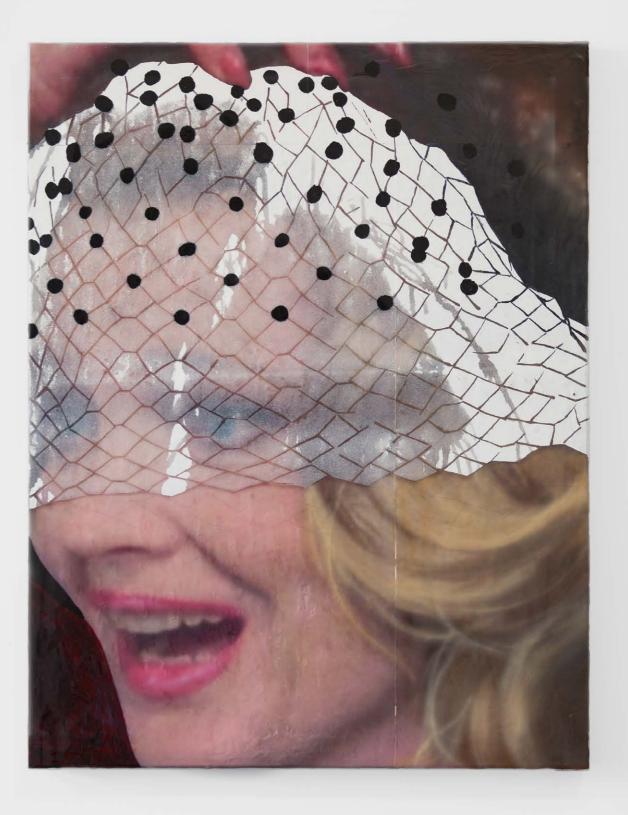
Again out getting ribs, 2024 Acrylic on linen 45.7 x 38.1 cm | 18 x 15 in



The first time ever I saw your face, 2024 Acrylic, gouache, pigment transfer, hydrochromic ink, glitter on linen 33 x 42.9 cm | 13 x 16 7/8 in

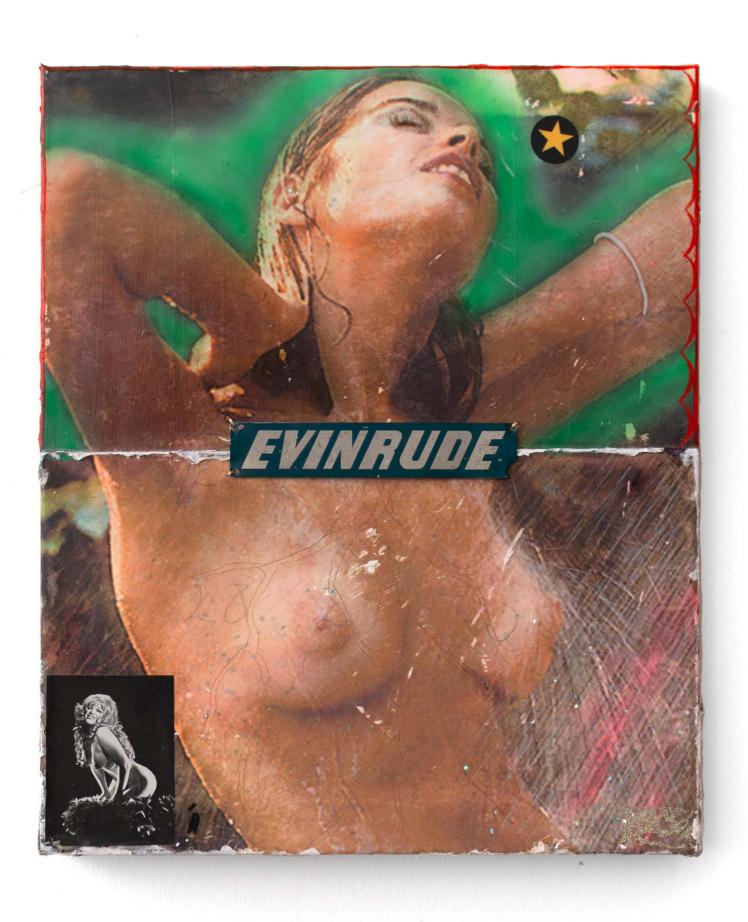






Phantasmagoric at February, 2024
Acrylic, gouache, glitter, graphite, colored pencil, pigment transfer and hydrochromic ink on canvas

90.2 x 55.9 cm | 35 1/2 x 22 in



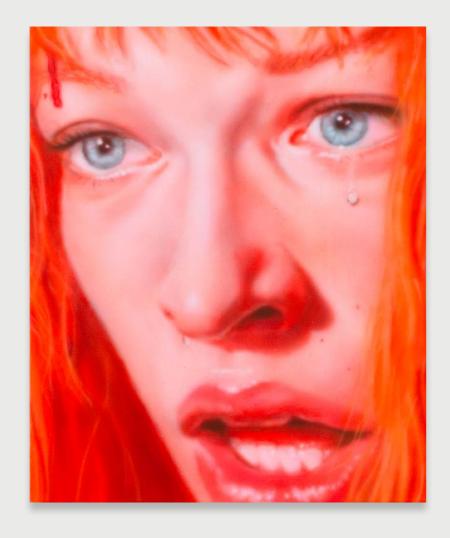
Antimacassar, 2023

Acrylic, guoache, collage, ink transfer and football helmet decal on linen $45.7 \times 38.1 \text{ cm} \mid 18 \times 15 \text{ in}$

As above, so below (Pride and Tradition), 2023 Acrylic, pigment transfer, hydrochromic ink, glitter on linen 135 x 180 cm | 53 1/8 x 70 7/8 in







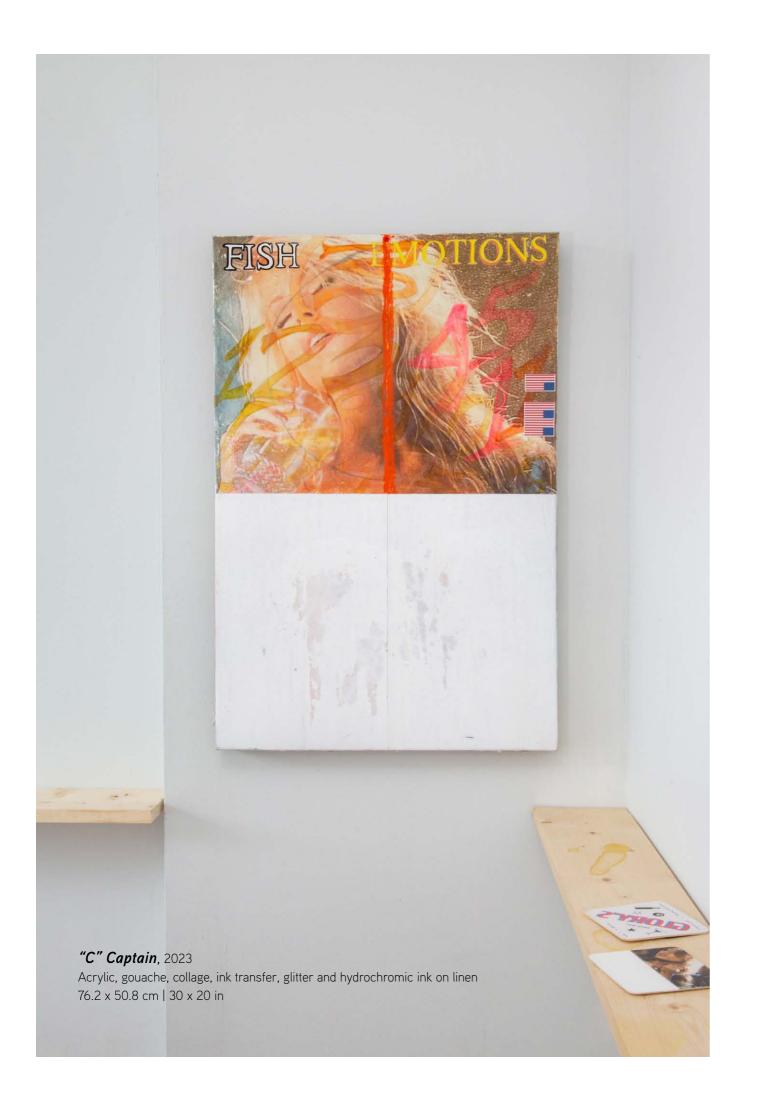


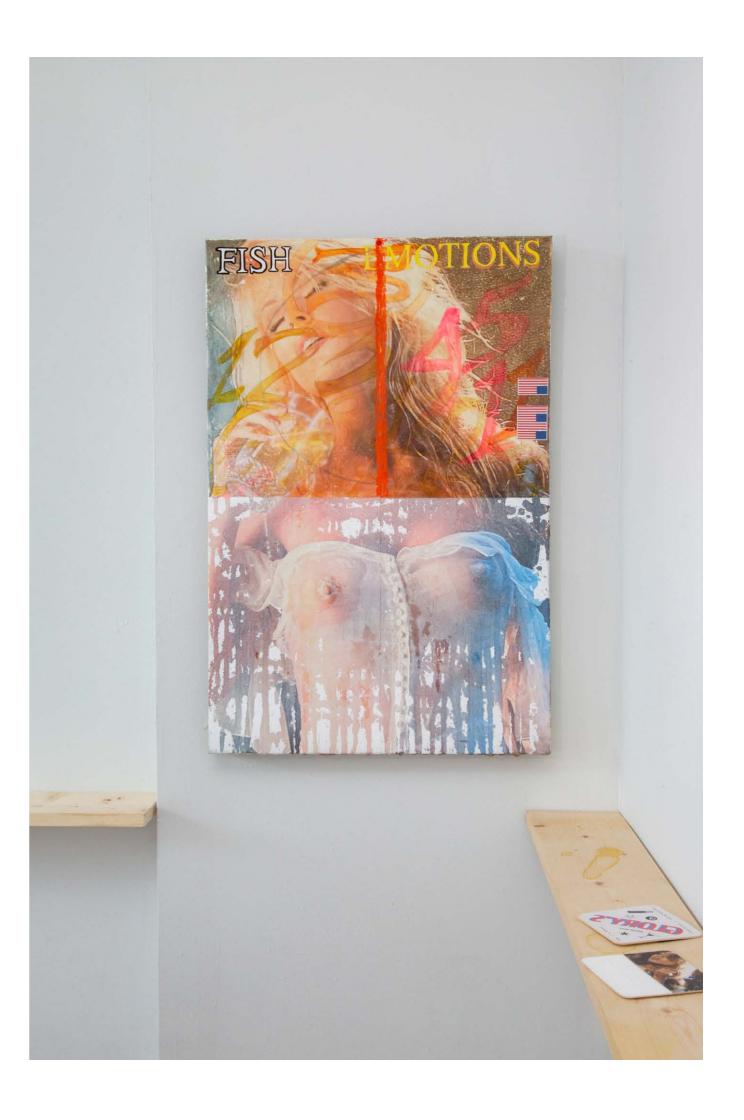


Two Point Turn, in collaboration with Rachael Bos, 2023 Acrylic and oil on linen 101.6 x 88.9 cm | 40 x 35 in



Cystal ball, acrylic, paper and Swarovski crystal on taxidermy large mouth bass Variable dimensions









Liza Jo Eilers

b. 1993 in St. Paul, MN (US) Lives and works in Chicago, IL (US)

EDUCATION

2020 MFA Painting and Drawing, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, IL (US)

Post-Baccalaureate Certificate, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, IL (US)

BA Industrial Design, University of Notre Dame, 2015 South Bend, IN (US)

AWARDS

Soho House Dreamers in Residence Grant 2024 Recipient

Hopper Prize Grant Recipient

SOLO AND TWO-PERSON EXHIBITIONS

Starland silver sash, GRIMM, New York, NY (US)

The Great American Songbook, GROVE, London (UK)

> Scorchers, with Andrew Ordonez, Roommate. Chicago, IL (US)

Don't blow on the soup., Material Room, Richmond, VA (US)

> GLORY'S, with Alessandra Norman, Yew Nork, Chicago, IL (US)

2022 The Care and Keeping of You, SULK CHICAGO, Chicago, IL (US)

2021 SLUDGE, Rainbo Club presented by M. LeBlanc,

> Good Friday, Bubblez Gallery, curated by Tyson Reeder & Lauren Sullivan, Chicago, IL (US)

Cheese Dust to Dust, curated by Breanne Trammell, (South) Eastern Pole, Fayetteville, AK (US)

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2025 twothousandandtwo, Anthony Gallery, Seoul (KR) WHO WANTS TO BE PARIS HILTON'S BEST FRIEND?, Spielzeug Gallery, New York, NY (US) MINIOTICS, Weatherproof x Pop Gun, Chicago, IL (US)

> Curated by Ella Emhoff, Platform David Zwirner, online

> Pamphlet Show II, Patient Info, Chicago, IL (US) Survey, Unda.m. 93, Chicago, IL (US)

A Prologue for Chicago, de boer Gallery, Los Angeles, CA (US)

Time of Our Lives, Anthony Gallery x The Mass, Tokyo (JP)

Up & Up, curated by Noël Morical and Christina Sadovnikov, Chicago, IL (US)

Adult Contemporary, Guerrero Gallery, Los Angeles, CA (US)

Pothole2, Good Weather x M. LeBlanc, Rainbo Club, Chicago, IL (US)

The Weatherproof Anniversarial, Weatherproof, Chicago, IL (US)

Hypnos, Espace Maurice, Montreal, Québec (CA)

Loving Forms, Julius Ceasar, Chicago, IL (US) Oracle, de boer Gallery, Los Angeles, CA (US) Never Change, Night Club Gallery, Saint Paul, MN

> High Maintenance, Tchotchke Gallery, Brooklyn, NY (US)

David Heo, Liza Jo Eilers, Orkideh Torabi, Ingress Gallery, Soho House, Chicago, IL (US) Don't Get Cute With Me, Latent Space, Chicago, IL

2022 Sagittarius, Night Club Gallery, Minneapolis, MN (US)

> Wow, Nice, Racecar Factory, Indianapolis, IN (US) So You Thought This Would Be Easy, Weatherproof x Kiki and Bouba Gallery, Chicago, IL (US)

2021 Nice Work, SULK CHICAGO, Chicago, IL (US)

2020 Oaths, Patient Info, Chicago, IL (US) Long Hello, Green Gallery, curated by Carter Foster, Milwaukee, WI (US) Launch, SAIC Galleries, Chicago, IL (US)

Homesick Remedy, JAW Gallery curated by Skye Taniai, Yamaguchi (JP) With A Capital P: Selection by Six Painters, curated by José Lerma, Elmhurst Museum, Chicago, IL (US)

DIY Biennial, Z1 Gallery, Chicago IL (US)

PUBLICATIONS

2025 like a field, Winter 2024, Sloane Scott and Em Davenport, online journal

2022 SLUDGE Artist Book with essay by Graham Feyl: A Prayer(agraph) to Dolly Parton and a Stuffed Muskie, self published

> HEADS Magazine: The Revival Edition by U.D.L.I Editions in collaboration with NADA Miami and Miracle Seltzer

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

AkzoNobel Art Foundation, Amsterdam (NL)

