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# Eliza Douglas

## My Gleaming Soul / I am a Fireball

May 20th to July 2nd, 2017

Opening: May 19th, 2017, from 6 pm

**From May 20th to July 2nd the Nassauische Kunstverein Wiesbaden shows two exhibitions by Eliza Douglas, *My Gleaming Soul* and *I am a Fireball*.**

While the works on view share an interest in the genres of painterly practice, most notably portraiture, they do not find inspiration in any particular artist of the past. Nor does Douglas locate her paintings in ideas of the contemporary by drawing upon visual tropes such as digital technology. Her achievement here is to make works that look fresh without needing to be trendy; that is, she develops a vocabulary which allows history to appear without collapsing painting into a historical problem.

This balancing act is more difficult to achieve than one might imagine. With *My Gleaming Soul* you'll find a series of headless figures. Or really, these are not figures so much as the total inversion of what we expect from a painted body: no sturdiness or dimension, with only the appendages – hands, and sometimes feet – earning a detailed render. In these works Douglas is not searching for any formal coherence. The paintings are no more figurative than abstract; they are no more gestural than they are procedural. In fact, she is careful to cancel out the compositional elements such that no clear identity resolves for the viewer. For example, the figurative components – the hands and feet – enact a kind of subtraction on the formal level in the sense that they disrupt any straight abstract readings and force the lines to oscillate between figurative and decorative interpretations.

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With *I am a Fireball* this technique continues in the shown portraits. Her subjects, all young men posing shirtless, look out at the viewer with blank demeanors, and are situated in rooms that lack personal details but have been decorated too tastefully to be considered bureaucratic. What is unique to this portrait series is that Douglas paints people without any interest in their individuality. Indeed, in a few of the works the traditional grammar of portraiture is reversed: a potted fern occupies the foreground of a room, while the portrait of a young man appears as a mural – flattened even within the imaginary space of the painting – on one of the background walls. You might say that, by rendering these various figures, she outlines the conditions of a more impersonal event, the kind of pre-transitive space in which subjectivity develops as just one item among others.

The stoics talked about *ataraxia*, a kind of poise and tranquility that is found by eschewing all that is not necessary. This concept gets as close as possible to capturing the feel of her technique. She paints without didacticism or conceptual arrogance, instead communicating through the modesty of a small set of formal elements. Indeed, her work is almost celebratory in the way that it lets go of painting's historical burdens, humorously, and with buoyancy.

Nathaniel Cunningham

About the artist /

Eliza Douglas (\*1984, New York) lives and works as an artist in Frankfurt am Main, where she studies at the Städelschule in the classes of Monika Baer, Willem de Rooij, and Amy Sillman. She had solo shows at Air de Paris (Paris), Museum Folkwang (Essen) and currently at Overduin & Co. (Los Angeles). In autumn at Galerie Buchholz in New York, a joint painting exhibition will be held with Anne Imhof.

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The Nassauischer Kunstverein Wiesbaden is institutionally promoted by the culture office of the city of Wiesbaden.



The exhibition and the publication are generously promoted by the Hessische Kulturstiftung.

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stiftung**

We appreciate your interest.

For further **information** and **press pictures** we are at your disposal via e-mail and telephone.

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## **Exhibition Program /**

### **NKV Guided Tours**

Every Sunday, 3 pm and upon request

### **NKV Espresso**

Short guided tour with espresso

Every Tuesday, 12:45 am to 1:15 pm

### **Kids Inside**

Saturday, June 10th, 11 am to 1 pm

For all / with the 'Kunst-Koffer'

### **Wilhelm`s Wanne**

An interactive Bath in Arts from 8-88

Saturday, May 27th and June 17th, 2017, 3 to 5 pm

### **Finissage**

Sunday, July 2nd, 2017, 3 to 6 pm