

ELIZA DOUGLAS PAINTS HER EXISTENTIAL ISSUES

By [Matt Mullen](#)

Photography Bjarne X Takata

Published December 8, 2017



As a child growing up in New York's Greenwich Village, Eliza Douglas spent a lot of time thinking about girls and death. "From a where she now lives. "I was also preoccupied with existential issues —especially death-related ones." Douglas's unease became, in a way, the catalyst for her large-scale oil paintings, which include depictions of disembodied hands and feet, monsters, and haunted young men. "I like the idea of making something that cannot easily be classified as abstract or figurative, gestural or procedural," she says. "I want my work to be open and porous." To wit: the hands in many works are rendered with startling realism, while the accompanying arms dissolve into bleary lines.

Douglas studied photography and film as an undergrad at Bard, but enrolled at the Städelschule school in Frankfurt two years ago to pursue painting, a practice she now considers "the focus of my life." She graduated just last spring, but has already mounted four solo shows this year and is currently working on her 2018 exhibition at New York's Jewish Museum. Painting, however, isn't Douglas's only creative outlet: she also records music; occasionally models for brands such as Balenciaga and Vetements; and collaborates with her partner, Anne Imhof, who recently staged the bleak, physically intense performance, *Faust*, at the 2017 Venice Biennale's German Pavilion. "There is a lot of physical improvisation involved, which is something I've felt uncomfortable with in the past," Douglas says of her participation in the piece, which won the Golden Lion prize and involved crawling under glass floors and climbing up walls. "It has been really cool pushing through the discomfort and learning a new way to think."