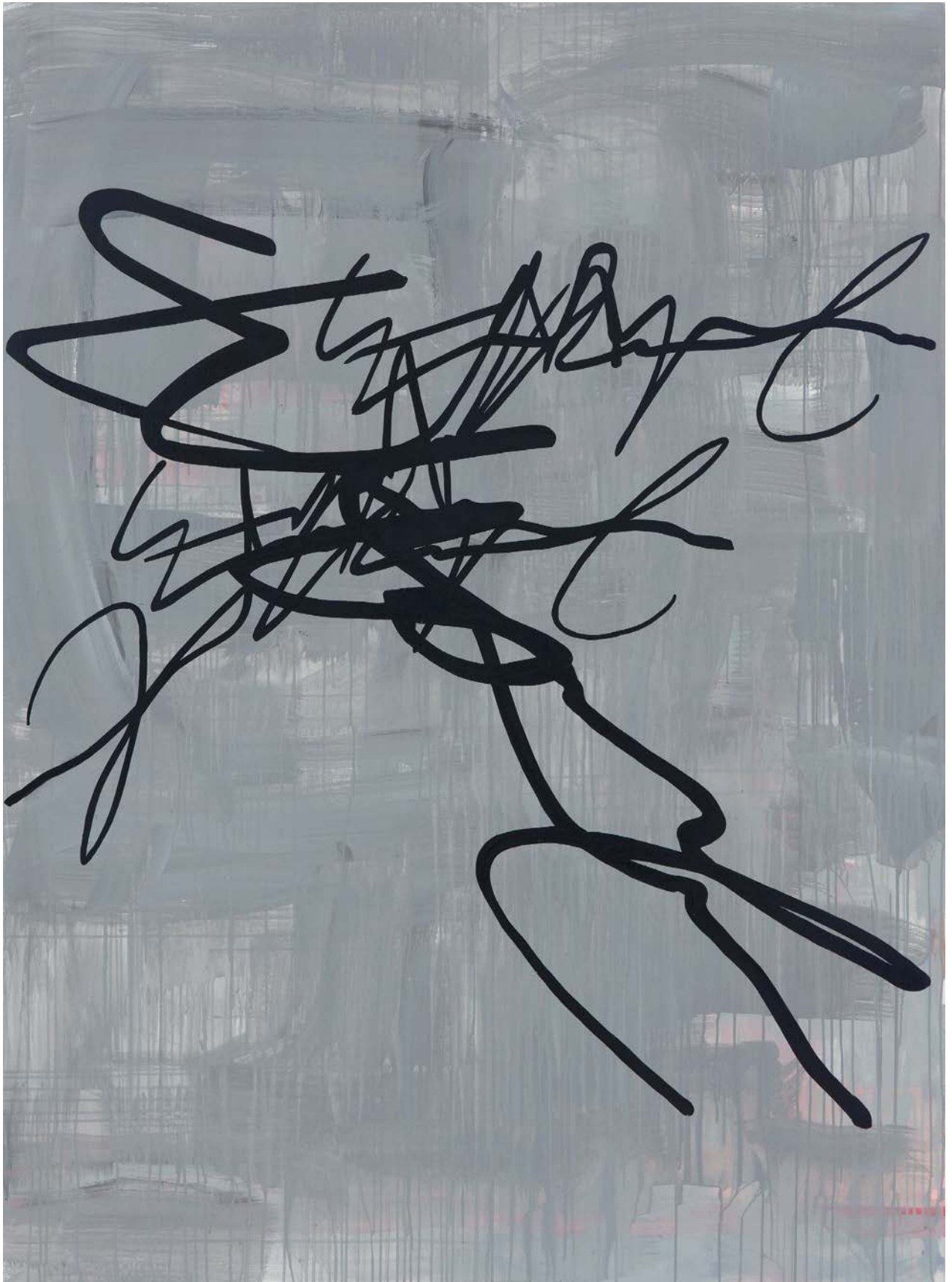


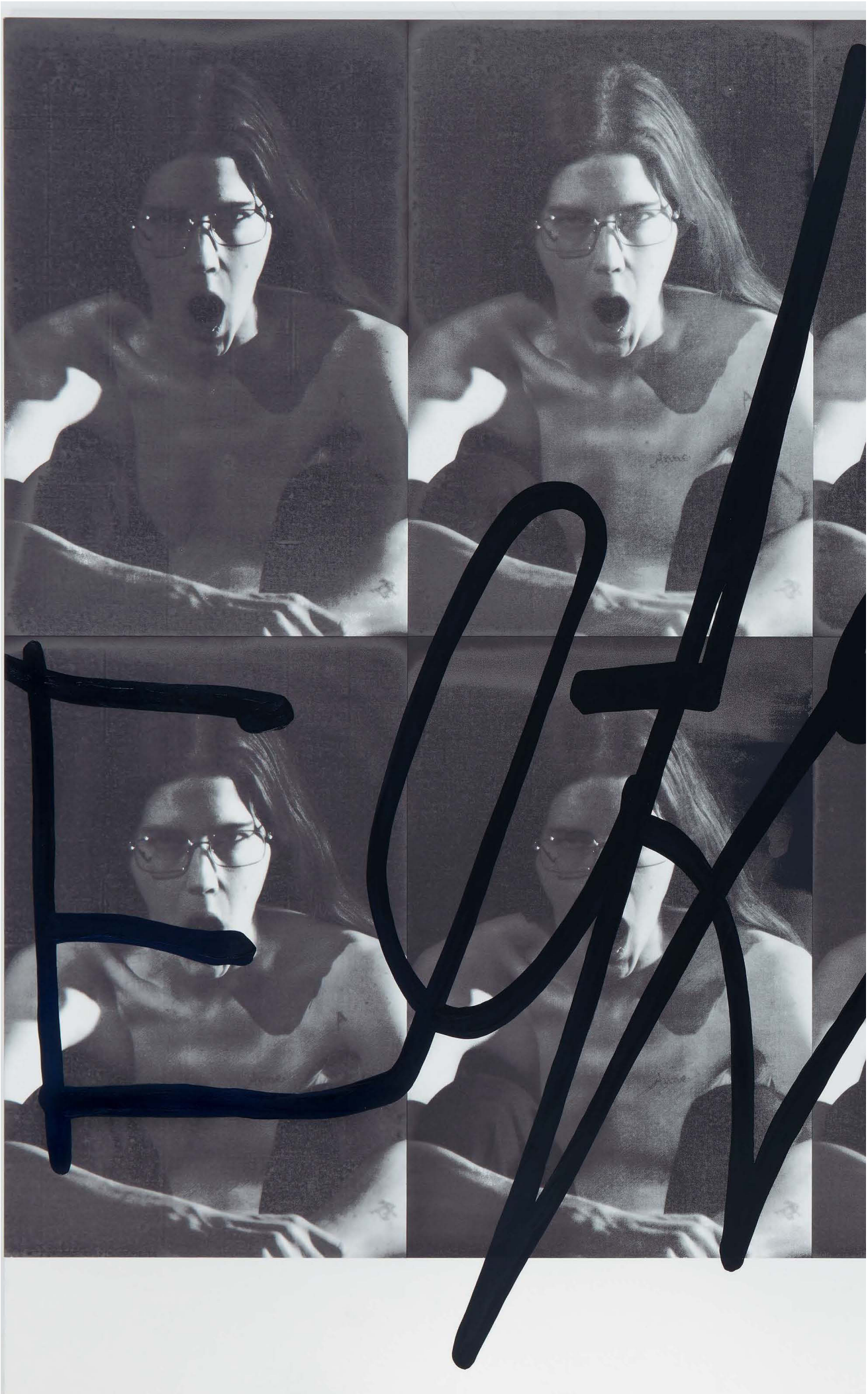
ELIZA DOUGLAS



Eliza Douglas Anne Imhof
A Hundred Thousand Dollars, 2017

ANNE IMHOF







Eliza Douglas Anne Imhof
Signature VII (Eliza), 2017

by Lea Welsch and Julian Stenmanns

Artistic pieces usually center on a singular perspective of an individual artist. From 9 September to 21 October 2017, Galerie Buchholz hosts a joint exhibition by Eliza Douglas and Anne Imhof in New York. As such, this is the first collaboration between Anne and Eliza. For the two artists this form of collaborative work ties their indigenous relationship to a different rationality. A collaboration is an expression of an absence. Since a single individual no longer produces the originality, shaped in the creative process, a question of representation surfaces – at least implicitly. Such an experience of subordinating oneself to collectively created rules, conventions and aims goes in hand with the rejection of the claim to individuality and the expression of an independent artistic genius. By revealing the tensions between individuality and coproduction, Anne and Eliza's collaboration encounters questions of authenticity. At the same time, though, their two artistic perspectives are by no means silenced or made invisible. In the past years, the two artists have both been working on individual projects. Eliza's previous solo works were shown at contemporary art galleries such as Nassauischer Kunstverein Wiesbaden (2017), Museum Folkwang (Essen, 2017) and Air de Paris (2016). A strin-

gency in those works represents the actual physical dimension of her paintings, which often deal with the topos of internal limitations of corporeality. Almost as if the physical form of a body gleams as a relic of the past, it dissolves in her paintings into flows of matter without being definitely absent: corporeal physicality is not against or with nature, rather she portrays it as question of representation. Coarse brush strokes create connecting lines between depictions of hands and feet. It ultimately depends on the perspective of the viewer, whether the body is now absent, replaced, or moved. At the same time, this figuration emphasizes the autonomy of hands and feet. As part of her last series, hands carry consumer goods. Interpreting those depictions of Coca-Cola cans and Aperol bottles held in hands as a consumer criticism or as a reflection on the relationship between people and things, however, is insufficient. The works are not to be understood as abstractions of a critical discourse. Rather they generate their force and potency from the simplicity and clarity of their representations and are a kind of reflection on the very paintings themselves. In a second series, Eliza primarily works with representations of people. Male models are shown in bright environments, which are either very specific or resemble stock photographs from generic furniture catalogues. The



Eliza Douglas
Protected from the Sun, 2017



Eliza Douglas Anne Imhof
Signature XIII (Eliza), 2017

paintings play with and expose the contradictions between character and Charaktermaske (character mask) – a mimesis of the social roles attributed to subjects of late capitalism – that ultimately remain undecidable. Eliza currently studies at Städelschule in Frankfurt, Germany, where Anne graduated in 2012.

Anne's current work reminds of opera pieces, as she narrates great tales by means of details that characterize our present. Her most visible medium are performative pieces, which she and her team realized in various exhibitions. A mixture of classical performative elements, installations and paintings characterize these complex and ambiguous projects. In the course of this year's Venice Biennale, she won the Golden Lion with her production "Faust". This widely acclaimed opus formed the climax of a series of performative pieces. The productions at the Venice Biennale, each lasting up to five hours, work on and embody the individual abilities and characteristics of their performers. At the same time, a number of disruptive elements such as theoretical reflections, quotations of Old Masters and installations in space that make the violence of architecture discernable create fractions. Slowly evolving, ever-breaking images of time emerge, in which the potential of a great narrative of the present seems to lie, and at the same time, the purely subjective and therefore incomprehensible fragility of the individual performers is repeatedly produced and allegorized. The almost obsessive play between proximity and distance is reflected in Anne's drawings and paintings as well. As part of "Faust", large prints of Eliza are on display in the pavilion in Venice. These conspicuous works reflect obsession and intimacy as a desire to be close to the observed object, to extract it formally, to increase it and to keep it forever. At the same moment, the image of Eliza – almost as a quotation of a portrait in the classical sense – dissociates the viewer from the person in the picture.

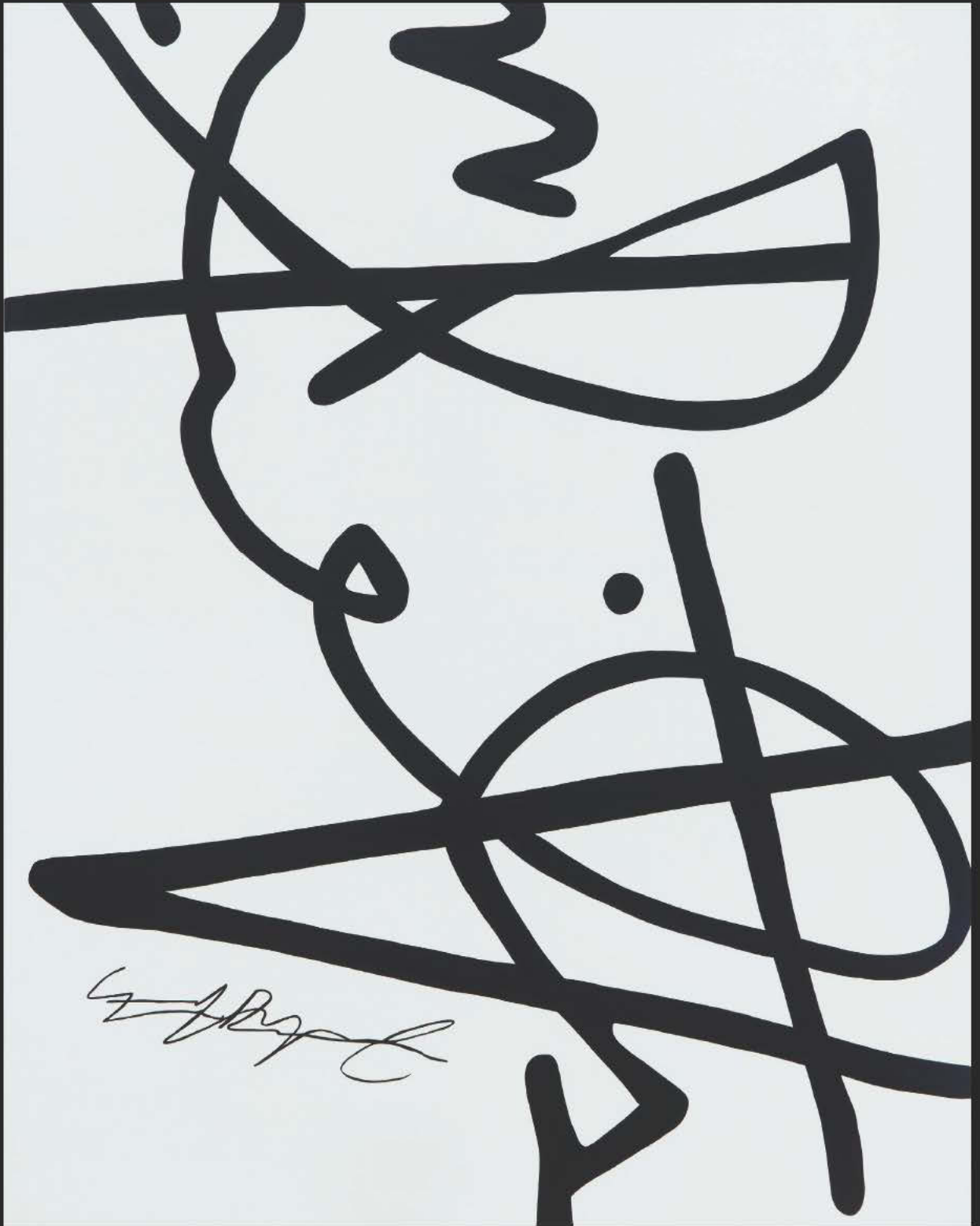
Topics that arise around questions of the common and closely connected inquiries into originary authenticity are reappearing in Anne and Eliza's new cooperative exhibition. At the center of the exhibition at Galerie Buchholz is a series of signatures. This is the most profound way of claiming authorship in times when the authentic nucleus of a work is more precarious than ever. A signature is a promise; a promise that a document reveals its creator; a promise of authenticity for the declaration "I with my name" as an incarnation for the truth of union between author, material and statement. It connects the statement with real intention and meaning. Thus, the signature becomes independent from the statement. This is probably the ideology behind the socio-technical apparatus of signatures.

This promise of authenticity is something undeniable, which is present in art all the time. Authentic objects, which are poised to be meaningless, fill the archives. The only thing an authentic object by itself can provoke is the experience of "coming close" and sharing the exact materiality of what was worked with. Yet – in a time where everything seems to be immediately accessible through media – the fetish towards an object becomes more a sign of identities on various scales.

Anne and Eliza's approach towards authenticity – depicted through a signature that seems to be archaic in the digital age – creates a reflection on the transformation of formal space. In response to a present time in which signatures seem to disappear behind numbers, combinations of letters and algorithms, the freehand written name refers back to human activity. Thus, in addition to the formal aspects, the written name always poses a claim that is intimately linked to a subject.

Looking at the images, the signatures evolve visibly to shifted signs. An unrecognizability points to the fact that authenticity to something, to an object, ultimately only comes from one's own individual imagination. At the same time, they promise to be a form of technical intimacy as a pure gesture – ultimately a gesture of power, which signifies only value in technical correspondence. Although the letters are shown in different contexts, colors and backgrounds, the explanation for what they avouch is missing. The signatures alone prove something on their own. The letters, which compose the signature, are signs of a deliberate intimacy that goes into void, as a proxy in the image that has nothing to say except "I am".

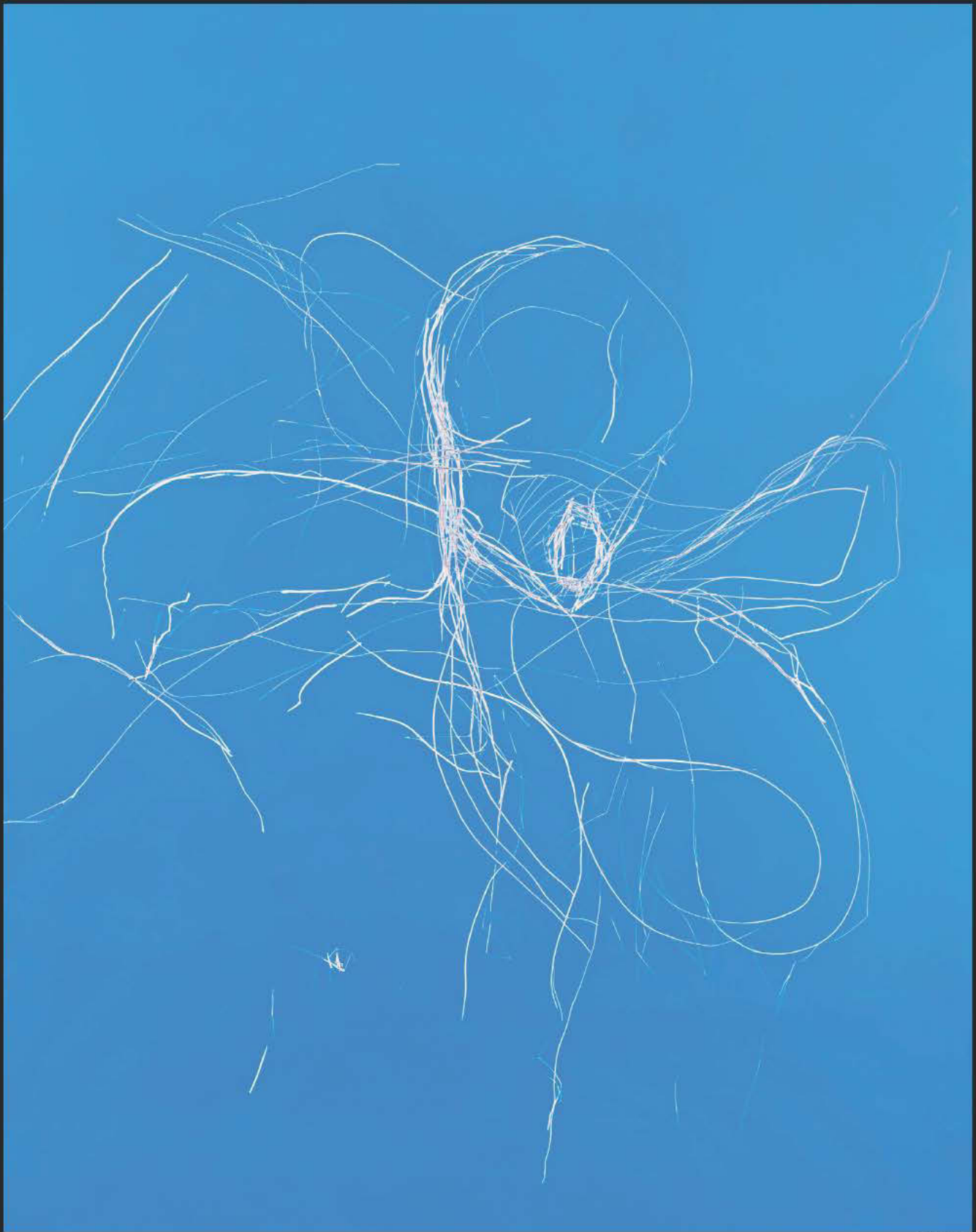
In a certain way Anne and Eliza's exhibition negotiates a digital perspective. Stock photos, presented roughly on large canvases, illustrate already existing ideas and leave behind the question of authorship and property. As a progression of the play between proximity and distance, the aspects of the actual craft of painting are presented alongside images from various online sources. The photorealist references to consumption in the hands, the prints of the portraits of Eliza, and the painted monsters taken from stock photo libraries all refer to the assumed conflict between digital culture and classical painting. Recurrent brush strokes appear like a comment, which limits and puts into perspective the distance between footage and painting. Likewise, this coupling exposes a view on the conditions of production as such. This approach towards art reveals the global division of production and entanglements of sources, authors and materials. At the same time, the claim to produce authentic signatures refers back to an organic monism of identity.



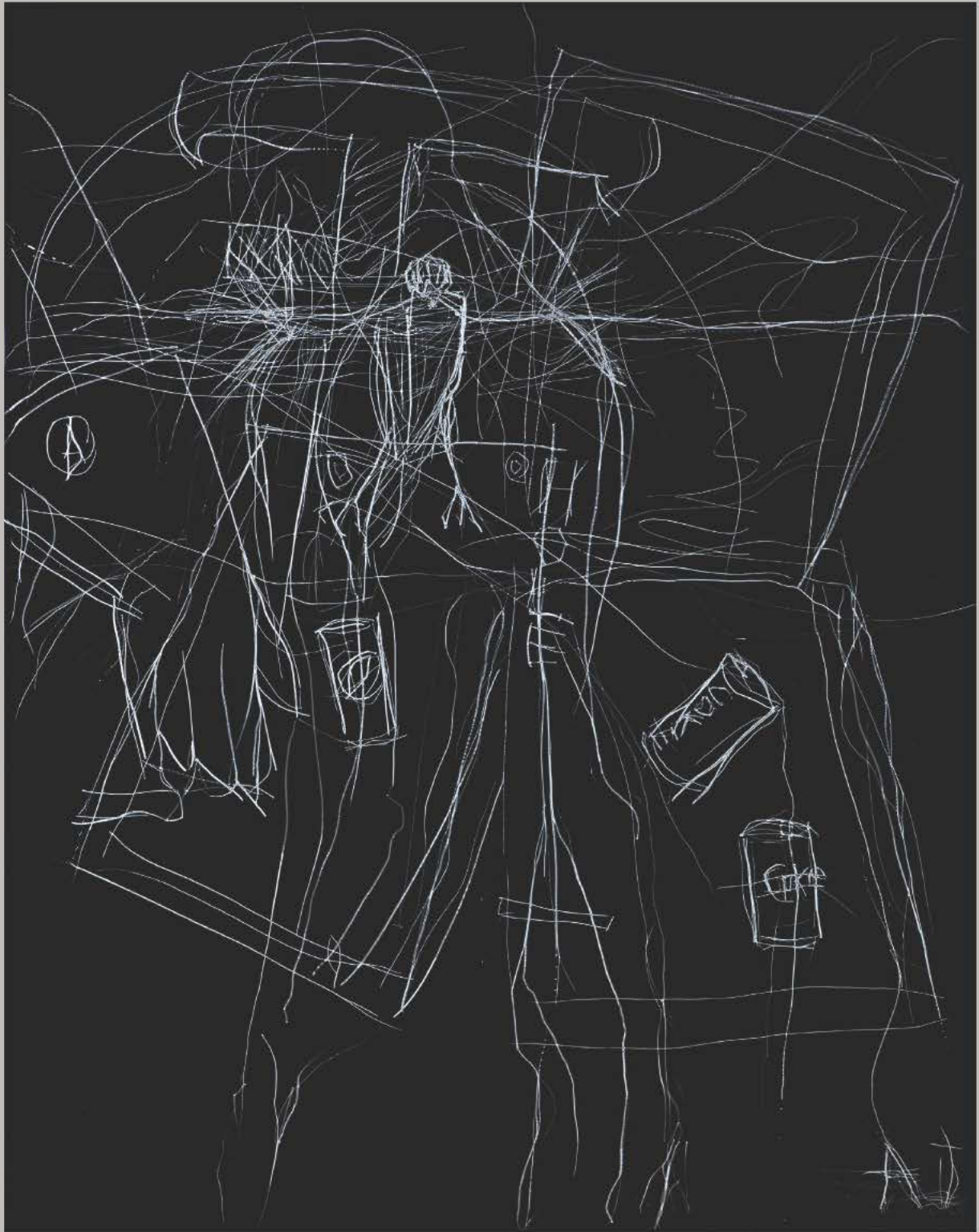
Eliza Douglas Anne Imhof
Signature VIII, 2017



Eliza Douglas
I am the Horse you Should Bet On 2016



Anne Imhof
Untitled, 2017



Anne Imhof
Untitled, 2017



Eliza Douglas
A Piece of Fate, 2017

Images courtesy Galerie Buchholz, New York