

ALTMAN SIEGEL

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Troy Lamarr Chew II
The Roof is on Fire
January 13 – February 19, 2022

Altman Siegel is thrilled to present *The Roof is on Fire*, an exhibition of new paintings enhanced with augmented reality by Troy Lamarr Chew II. This will be the artist's first solo show with the gallery.

In Chew's ongoing *Slanguage* series, coded meanings within wordplay in rap lyrics are teased out visually through the painting of everyday objects that carry specific symbolic innuendo. The paintings featured in *The Roof is on Fire* expand upon this body of work, adding legendary hip-hop dance crazes to the artist's ever-evolving pictorial dictionary. Still carried out with the same tight realist skill, these new works move away from previous paintings' art historical reference to Flemish still-life and further toward the Surrealist landscape and the palette of animation.

Several hip-hop dance moves take on the namesakes of popular animated characters. Chew borrows these protagonists and depicts them in scenes riddled with wit. Bart Simpson pushes a shopping cart of mashed potatoes down a grocery aisle in slight forced perspective, Roger Rabbit hangs out in a lush cabbage patch with a Smurf, Tom chases Jerry with a sprinkler on a lawn by a snake in the grass, Sponge Bob appears to be caught red-handed with a mop and a whip. Adding another layer to the work, the artist filmed friends and family performing each dance move referenced in the painting. Using a downloaded app, viewers can experience them dancing atop their accompanying paintings in augmented reality.

Fad dances are in fashion at the time of their popularity. They come to be associated with a specific time period and can evoke particular forms of nostalgia when revived. One of the more popular social dances created during the 1980s was the Cabbage Patch. The rap group Gucci Crew II created the dance and introduced it in their 1987 song of the same name. In 1994 the 69 Boys pronounced the Butterfly "old," so "let me see you Tootsee Roll." In 2007 Atlanta based rapper Soulja Boy self-released "Crank That (Soulja Boy)" to YouTube with a four-minute instructional video breaking down each step. This surpassed 27 million views by early 2008. The rapper is back with a new fad this year, "Rick & Morty" which has gone viral on TikTok with users performing the dance move created by Bay Area choreographer, Chonkie. Chonkie has been quoted as referencing the eponymous dance from the 1990's cult classic Kid n Play movie "House Party." It is through a celebration of this ongoing lexicon that Chew has devised this most recent body of work.

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Chew's paintings recall the genesis and evolution of hip-hop, a genre that has faced ongoing appropriation and whitewashing. The originators of hip-hop developed and used specific coded language to communicate shared experiences, as slang commonly functions within alternative cultures, and memetic references function for those in the know. Hip-hop, and other forms of Black expression exist as incubation spaces for storytelling and community building. Troy's project of archiving these aesthetics challenges the ongoing erasure and coopting of crucial social histories with skillful iconography that recreates a safe space for language and culture to thrive.

Troy Lamarr Chew II lives and works in Los Angeles, CA. Chew's work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at Parker Gallery, Los Angeles, CA; CULT Aimee Friberg Exhibitions, San Francisco, CA; Cushion Works, San Francisco, CA; and Guerrero Gallery, San Francisco, CA. Recent group exhibitions include Chapter NY, New York, NY; Kristina Kite Gallery, Los Angeles, CA; San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, CA; Good Mother Gallery, Oakland, CA; and the Museum of the African Diaspora, San Francisco, CA. In 2020, Chew was awarded the prestigious Tournesol Residency at Headlands Center for the Arts after becoming a Graduate Fellow at the California College of the Arts, San Francisco in 2018. His painting *Too Many Names* was acquired by the international foundation KADIST in 2021.

For more information please contact Altman Siegel at info@altmansiegel.com or 415-576-9300.