

THEODORA ALLEN SOLITAIRE

APRIL 13–MAY 12, 2023

Opening Reception:
Thursday, April 13th, 8–11 PM

Musical Performance by
Bill MacKay & Michael Zerang

Refreshments provided by
Land & Sea Dept. & Illuminated Brew Works



The Quarry (Drill), 2023.
Oil and watercolor on linen
78 x 36 x 1 1/4 in.
(198.1 x 91.4 x 3.2 cm)

*You'll go to the king's court
And you'll ask him for armor and weapons.
No one will tell him not to:
He'll give you what you need, I know
He will. But when it comes
To using what you've gotten, what then?
How will you know what to do,
When you've never done it before,
And never seen it done?*

Chrétien de Troyes,
Perceval: The Story of the Grail,
translated by Burton Raffel

Soccer Club Club is pleased to present **Solitaire**, an exhibition of new work by Los Angeles-based artist, **Theodora Allen**. This exhibition follows **Allen's** first museum show in the United States, presented in April of 2022 at Driehaus Museum, Chicago.

Solitaire, from Middle French, is derived from the Latin 'solitarius': alone, isolated. In the early 18th century the word that meant 'recluse' evolved to describe a jewelry setting with a single stone, the origin of which can be traced to ancient Rome when a roughhewn diamond was first set to a band. Across the latter half of the 18th century, solitaire took on additional association, as it became the given name of a popular card game for one. The objective of Solitaire is to play your hand through the formation of particular arrangements, known as foundations; an exercise that is part chance, and part skill. One theory has Solitaire's beginnings in military training—a drill to develop strategic thinking before battle. Another links the game's origins to the practice of divination, where the four suits have historically stood as analogues of the human condition, the earthly elements, the class ranks of medieval society, and predictions for an unknown future. The game of Solitaire is alternately known as Patience.

In the collection of six works on view, Allen presents a series of meticulous compositions, where realist and graphic imagery harmonize to form an uncanny landscape—a confluence between the natural world and a metaphysical one. At once sensuous and ascetic, with lapidary-like precision, the paintings in Solitaire continue an exploration of cycles and regeneration. Through a visual language rooted in emblematic, esoteric, and personal sources, Allen creates ciphers for narratives both eternal and intimate.

The Shield series depicts playing card pips emblazoned across heraldic crests. Precise lines of lifted pigment connect and delineate the spaces between the spade, diamond, heart, and club symbols, all framed by the curve of the armor's edge. *Shield (Treble Heart)*, 2023 and *Shield (Diamond Rising)*, 2023 place the two symbols in flux as they draw together and drift apart; the mirrored emblems alternate in luminosity like lights of a switchboard. Dually operating as emotional index and amulet, the information diagrammed within the escutcheon propose an enigmatic origin story.

The Quarry (Drill), 2023 shares scenes of a precipitous terrain, where fragments of figural sculpture have returned to a marble mine. The violence of a monumental drill bit excises natural resources from a heart-shaped form. This stark landscape, rendered in a cool palate of gray and blue, contrasts the lush and tangled landscapes of Allen's previous work, such as *The Cosmic Garden* (2016) and *Monument* (2018) series. The spill of watercolor adds an organic force behind the painted image, where rings of dried water and pigment simulate the effect of fractured stone. From stains to stones, *The Quarry (Drill)* and *(Infinity)* (both 2023) depict desolate places, where stones break down to dust.

By weaving together ornament and icon, Allen's distilled imagery nudges the realm of sacred text, with allusions to illuminated manuscripts of the Renaissance, and Medieval apocalyptic tapestries. The rigorous painting process pushes the evocative imagery further toward the ethereal: many thin layers of oil paint are applied and removed until the fabric itself becomes weathered. In this action, an interior light source is alternately dimmed or revealed. Through push and pull, the artist's process is a mediation between defining and dissolving the picture plane.

Theodora Allen (b. 1985, Los Angeles, CA) lives and works in Los Angeles, California. Allen holds an MFA from the University of California, Los Angeles, and a BFA from the Art Center College of Design, Pasadena. Her work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at the Huset for Kunst and Design, Holstebro, Denmark (2023) the Driehaus Museum, Chicago, IL (2022) and Kunsthal Aarhus, Aarhus, Denmark (2021). A monograph of her work was published by Motto Books, Geneva, in 2021. Allen was chosen for the Corsicana Artist and Writer Residency (2021), and the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture Residency (2011). She is represented by Blum & Poe (Los Angeles/New York/Tokyo), Kasmin (New York), and 12.26 (Dallas).