

Twelve Ten

Trey Rozell

As above, so below

April 12th — May 24th, 2025

Opening: April 12th, 6PM — 9PM

Artist Talk: April 25th, 6PM — 8PM

Gallery Hours: Weds - Sat, 1PM - 6PM

The work is always limited in time as well as in space. By forgetting (purposefully) these essential facts one can pretend that there exists an immortal art, an eternal work ... And one can see how this concept and the mechanism used to produce it—among other things the function of the Museum as we have very rapidly examined it—place the work of art once and for all above all classes and ideologies. The same idealism also points to the eternal and apolitical Man which the prevalent bourgeois ideology would like us to believe in and preserve.

- Daniel Buren, "Function of the Museum", 1970

Twelve Ten Gallery is pleased to present "As above, so below", an installation of new work by Trey Rozell.

Rozell's first solo exhibition with the gallery consists of an installation of fifty-two works on canvas. These works have been constructed in pairs: one half of the pair is a monochrome cerulean blue canvas, while its twin is embellished with the artist's signature pattern. At any one time, twenty-six of these works will be present in a salon-style hanging covering the entirety of the gallery's largest wall, while the other half will be presented as a sculptural assemblage of stacked works on the floor. The exhibition will start with a complete hanging of the monochromatic half of the paired works, and transition throughout the duration of the exhibition into a state where only the patterned works are present on the wall and all of the monochromatic works are on the floor.

Rozell is interested in the medium of painting as a structural category whose terms are exchangeable as within a game. It is no accident that the number of works is indexed to the number of cards within a standard deck. Rozell's installation operationalizes this condition, playing the suites as they shift hands from painting to sculpture to performance. This process of exchange is not just a mere formal play, but a recognition of the material movement of the work of art from its presentational aspect to its inert status as standing reserve -- ready to be deployed as commodity or shuffled into mere inventory.

The question of figure and ground also becomes acute in Rozell's work as the viewer attends to the artist's use of the patterned canvases that slowly proliferate the main wall. If the monochromatic works call attention to the context outside of the frame, the works with Rozell's irregular shapes begin to develop a more traditional pictorial field. Recalling cartoon clouds or flowers, Rozell's use of

these forms troubles not only iconographic ambiguities, but also the cultural lexicon: are these the expressive marks of authorship in the romantic-auratic sense, or imitations of the mechanical processes of reproduction that signal pop art?

The exhibition title, “As above, so below” derives from an eighth-century hermetic alchemical text, and poses a structural correspondence between the microcosm and macrocosm. Marx would later develop an analogous co-determination between the “base” and “superstructure”, or the material composition of labor and its cultural/ideological relations. The Marxist theorist Althusser coined the phrase “in the last instance” to denote the idea that the superstructure of society was determined by the economic base. What image, “in the last instance”, will remain when the last hand is dealt?

Trey Rozell (b. 1996) is an artist from the American South who is currently living and working out of Chicago, IL. His practice is firmly rooted in painting, but extends into sculpture, performance, installation, and animation. His work is made considering the perpetuated structures embedded within the history of painting, Trey utilizes absurdity, repetition, and gamesmanship as a means of inquiry into these age-old subjects with the hope to observe how the rhetoric of painting continues to survive and evolve today. Trey has had work exhibited at Twelve Ten Gallery (Chicago, IL), The Atlanta Contemporary Art Center (Atlanta, GA), The End Project Space (Atlanta, GA), Ruschman (Chicago, IL), The Ionian Center for the Arts and Culture (Kefalonia, GD) and recently received his MFA in painting from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.