



ILY2 is proud to announce "Instantly & Effortlessly," an exhibition of new work by Morgan Buck. This is Buck's second solo exhibition with the gallery and will be on view at ILY2 New York from November 14 through December 20, 2025, with an opening reception on Thursday, November 13 from 6 - 8PM.

The relationship between effort and reward is fundamental to behavioral theory, from ecology to economics. In animals, this reconciliation occurs via the mesolimbic circuit, a phylogenetically ancient pathway within the brain's reward system that influences motivation, reward, and pleasure through the release of dopamine. When functioning properly, this process promotes an enhanced willingness to engage in effortful actions to obtain future rewards. When dysregulated, the animal's willingness to pursue an award - both in terms of time and effort - diminishes.

Today, humans do not need to work so hard for their dopamine. It is widely accessible through a variety of instantaneous and effortless sources. The ease of consumption has fostered an aversion to effort which, under the constraints of capitalism, is frowned upon. The \$38 billion dollar self-help industry is flooded with content on how to increase productivity and re-sensitize dopamine receptors - effort once again reduced to spectacle; attention a commodity bought and sold at the speed of a scroll.

In his practice, Buck culls from this wellspring of cheap gratification, where meaning becomes warped amid overwhelming surface volume. Images are collected from digital glut (social media, message boards, AI visual generation and amateur video) and aggregated into strange new compositions. Seemingly unrelated text captions complicate the viewer's ability to situate each scene within a plausible narrative realm - the philosophical musings of a common field mouse; the memorializing of a capitalist mascot; the re-branding of Balzac's "The Unknown Masterpiece" via Nike swoosh. Executed in airbrushed acrylic paint, his works emphasize the physicality of process - a reminder of materiality amid the relentless ephemerality of image saturation. The resulting paintings pillage the canon and pedestrianize its grandeur, while lending depth to the mundane. Each layered composition reflects a reverence for the humor, depravity and speed of quick-scroll culture, as well as an investment in the technical possibilities of painting that resist commodified immediacy. Through these processes, Buck exposes the spectral reverberations of the digital age and our collective tendency to romanticize the past, suffer the present, and fear the future.

Morgan Buck (b. 1985, Portland, Oregon) holds an MFA from Oregon College of Art and Craft and a BFA from Pacific Northwest College of Art. He was awarded a 2023 Golden Spot Residency by Portland Institute of Contemporary Art and the Pilotenkueche Residency in Leipzig, Germany in 2017. Buck has held solo exhibitions at Upfor Gallery (Portland), Kunstraum Ping Pong (Leipzig) among others, and has been included in group exhibitions at ILY2 (Portland), Museum of Museums (Seattle), Hoffman Gallery (Portland), Pilotenkueche (Leipzig), Salon Similde (Leipzig). He will debut his first New York solo-exhibition in late 2025. Buck lives and works in Portland, OR.