

Twelve Ten

TALI HALPERN

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September 28th - October 26th, 2024

Opening September 28th, 6PM - 9PM

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

Twelve Ten Gallery is pleased to present new fiber works by Tali Halpern. For their debut solo exhibition at the gallery, Halpern has created a new series that employs a wide range of techniques in the fiber arts to explore themes of queer performance and the production of the self in contemporary media.

Halpern works with a digital loom to weave tapestries drawn from their personal collection of texts, images and drag inspired performances. Tronrud Engineering, manufacturer of the TC2, presents its digital loom as “a tool that assists during the ‘Innovative or the Creative’ phase of the making of the textile and is designed primarily for Sampling, Rapid Prototyping or Product Development purposes.”

Nonetheless, a person is required to pilot the machine. Even as the machine constructs a pattern from the designs the artist supplies, the body of the artist must adapt their movement to the measure of the machine, where “every pixel is mapped to a thread in the fabric”. Interpenetrated with the assemblage of this new post-industrial form of rapid prototyping, Halpern performs multiple roles simultaneously: Fordist laborer, content creator and microcelebrity, vamping their own image as the star.

Philosopher and writer Paul B. Precadio characterizes the contemporary economic condition as “pharmacopornographic”, a world in which “the paradigmatic body of this model of production is that of the migrating whore, the transgender sex worker, or the porn actress or actor.” Where the reproductive, sexual and biological aspects of labor were once treated as mere externalities, Precadio argues that the manipulation of affective and biological characteristics at a molecular level are now central to the lubricated operation of the technocracy: you take a little Ozempic or Adderall, or go to the gym and practice mindfulness, because in this world, you have to be the *best you* to succeed.

Halpern incorporates found aphorisms and textual fragments into their work. Appropriated from a variety of sources, including evangelical signage, online message-boards, and self-help pamphlets,

these phrases operate on multiple levels, oscillating between sincere affirmation and ironic self-awareness. Much like how contemporary workers are encouraged to practice an ethic of “self-care” as a palliative for the toxic affective conditions of their labor, Halpern is drawn to expressions that seem to offer spiritual truths or guidance for circumstances whose real conditions they may only symptomize.

It is in a hopeful ambiguity towards this found material that Halpern seeks to reclaim and redirect their content towards a project of community. Lovingly bedazzled in a high camp kitsch style, Halpern does not reject what they find, but insteads draws out what was already queer in it, suggesting, like Precadio that, “I am not going to claim that I am like you [...] My ambition is to convince you that you are like me. Tempted by the same chemical abuse. ”

Tali Halpern (b. 1994, Chicago, IL) lives and works in Chicago. MFA Studio of the Art Institute, BFA Hampshire College. Their works have been exhibited at Co-Prosperity (Chicago) and The Laundry Gallery (San Francisco) among others. Tali’s work explores the complexities of queerness, sexuality, gender and its aesthetics through weaving, painting, drawing, collage, artist sketchbooks, makeup, drag and installation. Their practice is informed by collage and exploring the layers of intersectionality in art, identity, and existence. They are a nonbinary Jewish artist, raised Orthodox in East Lakeview, Chicago’s predominantly gay neighborhood. They have been a part of the queer techno scene in Chicago for eight years, where they perform, document, and display elaborate makeup looks. With this documentation and through the use of self portraiture they explore drag and gender performativity.