

Values & Values

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Marius Steiger
Philipp Timischl

ZIAN Gallery
17 November, 2025 - 24 January, 2026
20-2 Chekengwu, Yuhang District, Hangzhou, China

The title *Values & Values* offers no clarification, only repetition. A word said twice doesn't reinforce meaning; it doubles the ambiguity. The exhibition brings together Marius Steiger and Philipp Timischl, two artists whose practices engage with questions of value — economic, visual, moral, or material — while also drawing attention to how unstable and context-dependent such values can be. In English, "values" already carries multiple meanings; in Chinese, its translation only further disperses and complicates its significance. The pairing of the same word with itself implies a difference within sameness, a quiet contradiction that runs through the exhibition.

Both artists approach surface as a site where meaning is made, or at least made visible, though never fully trusted. Marius Steiger's work begins with obsessive craft. His shaped canvases mimic the forms they depict: wooden planks, furniture, cars. But it's not just visual realism that's at stake, it's physical embodiment. The canvas doesn't merely show an object; it stretches around it, encapsulating it. In his ongoing *Case* series, bookcase-shaped paintings filled with abstract binders and sterile books are interrupted by small relics of human activity — fruits, cigarettes, fragments of memorabilia. These interruptions break the monotony of bureaucratic order, suggesting a lingering human presence and traces of life within a system defined by repetition and function. Each *Case* holds this tension between order and disruption, between the image of work and the residue of life.

Philipp Timischl's practice turns the question of surface into a looping dialogue between image, material, and narrative. In one body of work, AI-generated raccoons are shown painting and plastering the very canvases they appear on. The plaster is real, applied by the artist, but it appears to be laid down by the raccoons, who are themselves digital fabrications. It's a layered act of role-playing and substitution, where authorship, labor, and image are passed back and forth between the artificial and the handmade. Elsewhere, identical-sized paintings and screens are paired side by side, with videos attempting to recreate the adjacent canvas in motion. The attempt always falls short. The algorithm fails to reproduce the contingent, unrepeatable decisions of the painting, and in that failure, something interesting happens: imitation reveals difference, and effort becomes a visible subject in itself.

Steiger and Timischl share a sustained interest in imitation — not just of objects or styles, but of processes and expectations. Whether it's Steiger's faux wood planks that deny access to a gallery window, or Timis-

chl's use of industrial mouldings that mimic baroque architecture, both artists play with trompe l'oeil not as a trick of the eye, but as a way of showing how all surfaces are constructions. Steiger's works seem to fold themselves into architectural space, while Timischl's often reveal their own support structures (wiring, stretchers, brackets).

Labor, too, becomes a visible thread, sometimes literal, sometimes fictionalised. In Steiger's work, the time and intensity of production are embedded in the shaped, stretched, built-up forms, though never openly stated. In Timischl's, labor is often depicted, simulated, or narrated, but always offset by a sense of skepticism: about what counts as work, who performs it, and how it is valued. Both practices circle around this space between doing and appearing to do, between the thing itself and the image of it.

Values & Values is not about choosing between different definitions of value, but about observing how easily one slips into the other. How a material becomes decorative, how a gesture becomes a performance, how a surface becomes a signal. And how sometimes, simply repeating the same word twice is enough to remind us that nothing is ever only what it seems.

Press

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