

## FRANK VEGA | *Zero°* | January 22 - March 4, 2023

Devening Projects invites you to the opening of *Zero°*, Chicago artist Frank Vega's first solo exhibition with the gallery. The show opens Sunday, January 22, from 3 - 5pm and continues until March 4, 2023.

For Vega, a feather is a symbol of a liberated and uninhibited spirit. Full of wonder and allusion, and rich in historical and cultural references, feathers are both the evidence of a winged being and the potential for our own metaphysical buoyancy. Feathers are one of nature's most beautiful artifacts. As a species, we've spent eons reflecting on the color, patterns, elegance and fragility of these evocative traces of flighted beings.

The goose feathers Vega collects and incorporates in his most recent paintings are often arranged as mandalas; radiating from the center, they open the picture plane and draw us nearer. In the same way a portal functions as a threshold between inside and outside, the interiority of the paintings frames a zone both mysterious and hypnotic. This invitation to engage with the physicality of the work begins a deeper enquiry into the intent.

We are compelled by the elegant vestigial feathers and the viscous surfaces swirled into and onto the canvases. It is through the enamel paint that things begin to shift from a light gracefulness toward visceral restraint and stillness. The paint-heavy surfaces lock the feathers in place, keeping them from flight while changing their character and potential. The paint feels industrial; it's a manufactured material clearly hostile to the feather's delicacy. But that foreignness has its own quality of subtle allusion. Much like the way tree resin can solidify over time to produce amber, the enamel—formerly liquid—has hardened to forever encase the feathers. The permanence of the embedded feathers stops that moment of flight forever in place. It's a protective coating, in a sense armor, from an environment less gentle than its own.

"Armoring" in Vega's work is also seen in *Unit-Medusa*, his standing sculpture covered with a single endless zipper. The suggestion here is that access to the interior is possible, but likely too complicated and arduous to pursue. What's inside is fully protected and safe from harm. We're content to marvel at the complexity of the skin and celebrate the beauty of the hidden and protected entity within.

Frank Vega (b. 1992, Ecuador) is an interdisciplinary artist working with sculpture, painting and hybrid objects. Different materials, surfaces and shapes help Vega build what he calls "Units," objects with unique attributions that coexist to create larger narratives. The work builds from his personal mythology, memories, current world events, abstraction and other art histories.

Vega lives and works in Chicago. He received his Master of Fine Arts from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He has exhibited at the Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago; MDW Fair at Mana Contemporary, Chicago; The Green Gallery, Milwaukee; Koik Contemporary, Mexico City; and the Krannert Art Museum, Champaign, Illinois. He has been awarded with a Frankenthaler Scholarship from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, the Florence M. House Scholarship and the Helen E. Platt Blake Scholarship, both from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and a Leroy Neiman Fellowship from Ox-Bow School of Art.