



View of "Gaylen Gerber," 2018.
CHICAGO

Gaylen Gerber

THE ARTS CLUB OF CHICAGO
201 East Ontario Street
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If you spend enough time scrutinizing the artifacts gathered in Gaylen Gerber's survey exhibition, you will discover a moment of leaching, where a sepia stain seeps through from a twentieth-century wooden protective figure, sullyng the pristine white layer of paint intended to cover it. In this rare uncontrolled moment of the exhibition, the material world leaks through the confines of a conceptual project that probes the constructs of cultural value, originality, and authorship. Gerber's sixty works (all titled *Support*, n.d.) consist of a range of objects (diverse in provenance and purpose) covered in white or warm gray paint and are distributed across and among twenty-eight hulking MDF bases. Six pieces hang on the Arts Club's walls as monochrome paintings. One anomalous work from the series, exhibited on a wall outside of the two main galleries, hosts a large piece of grimy cardboard presumably used to transport a massive sheet cake. Protected by an acrylic shadowbox, this piece is apparently a remnant of another artist's work, as noted on the checklist: "Das Institute and Allison Katz's *Scattered A, Scattered K*, 2012."

The other objects subjected to Gerber's oils include an aluminum beer can, Roman figurines, and a prop of a severed ear from the 1995 movie *Dead Presidents*. While few of the cultural artifacts are attributable to specific artists, two porcelain Lucio Fontana works (both titled *Concetto Spaziale Cratere*, 1968) and a geometric vase designed by Ettore Sottsass represent the iconic forms of twentieth-century artists. Whether the underlying "support" can be trusted to be the authentic cited article does not matter. Gerber's scrupulous painting over nullifies the assigned cultural value of an original. The "Support" works are as slippery as the artist's

undated “Backdrops,” an ongoing series that interjects gray or white monochrome fields behind other artists’ pieces. Both bodies of work perform a duplicitous critique with a sly transformation of orthodox values.

— Michelle Grabner

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