

Frieda Toranzo Jaeger
Impersonal Unity Tools
14 Mar–26 Apr 2025
39 Walker

Bortolami Gallery is pleased to present *Impersonal Unity Tools*, Frieda Toranzo Jaeger's first solo exhibition at the gallery.

The ten new paintings in Toranzo Jaeger's exhibition are prompts, beckoning us to seek strategies for our collective liberation. Through tableaux of various sizes and shapes, the artist presents a series of seemingly disparate tools and events, drawing connections between static object and unfolding situation. What will occur if we neglect to pick up the sickle, hammer, or chainsaw as commercial planes fall from the sky and the ultra-rich jet into space, leaving in their wake a charred planet? The animating principle here is beyond an epistemological construction of the self, beyond identity, towards collective action: "risk rather than reflection," as the philosopher Reza Negarestani puts it. Fantasy is as much an instrument as any you find in a toolbox, it is cinder and cement in building material alternatives.

Toranzo Jaeger is celebrated for her lavish modular paintings, often held together by hinges and eyelets. The surfaces of these polyptychs are densely layered with traditional Mexican embroidery and imagery in oil paint, culled from the briefer history of Western fine art. A certain drama unfolds in these scenes, a standoff between tradition and what is stifled under its long shadow. New forms of desire and erotics peek through at every seam in her multipartite works, literally cracking open new potentialities.

Three 'toolbox' paintings pay homage to the Catholic altars of 14th-and 15th-century Italy—ornate, and narrative, they are each portable tools of devotion. None of the Italian artists responsible for the production of the early compact masterpieces of Siena survived the impending plague of 1350. Toranzo Jaeger paints her to-scale toolboxes, cantilevering, sliding, and shuttering open to reveal hammers, screwdrivers, and nails, with the same foreshadowed doom, offering us semiotic implements as we face another era of impending catastrophes. The 1:1 instruments elude our use as mere pictures, paralleling the way in which the fruits of 21st century technological advancement fall just out of reach of those who could use them for collective betterment, or its bargaining.

At the center of the exhibition is a colossal crimson heart, effectively pierced by the gallery's cast-iron column. Arteries and veins are replaced with an impenetrable network of wires and cogs, like an impossible machine rewired one too many times. It is a locus for all our projected desire, a symbol so thick with meaning that it is idled by the weight of its own energetic impulses. This dense apparatus is like our present-day political machine, wherein ideological tenets, from communism to fascism, are treated interchangeably, employed in our accelerated and indiscernible degradation.

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Frieda Toranzo Jaeger (b. 1988, Mexico City) lives and works in Mexico City. Following a BA in Fine Art at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste (HFBK) in Hamburg, Toranzo Jaeger pursued an MFA at the same institution. In 2023, she was the subject of a solo survey exhibition at MoMA PS1, Queens. Solo exhibitions of her work have also been held at the Modern Art Oxford, U.K.; HFBK, Hamburg; Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore; Trautwein Herleth (formerly Galerie Barbara Weiss), Berlin; and Reena Spaulings, New York. Her work has recently been included in exhibitions at Museo Jumex, Mexico City; Den Frie Centre of Contemporary Art, Denmark; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; BALTIC, Gateshead, United Kingdom; Frac Lorraine, Metz, France; KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin; and MoMA Warsaw, Poland. Works by Toranzo Jaeger can be found in the permanent collections of The National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh; Museo Jumex, Mexico City; Inhotim Museum, Brazil; Bronx Museum, New York; Detroit Museum of Art, Detroit; and The Hammer Museum, Los Angeles. Toranzo Jaeger was included in the 2024 La Biennale di Venezia, *Foreigners Everywhere*, the 60th International Art Exhibition, curated by Adriano Pedrosa.