

Zach Bruder: *Customary*
September 12–October 25, 2025
Level Two

Magenta Plains is pleased to present *Customary*, Zach Bruder's fourth solo exhibition with the gallery comprised of entirely new paintings. Bruder's paintings are mnemonic still lifes set against semi-surreal backgrounds, where standard bearers—clocks, dishes, dogs—become quiet symbols of persistence and presence. They meditate on how ordinary gestures accumulate into a life, with objects acting as subtle timekeepers and witnesses to the passage of days. Both personal and archetypal, these works guard memory in a world of shifting meaning.

His work prompts reflection on the roles we assign to things. A clock may once have regulated life but now serves as ornament; a dove may signal peace or a pigeon filth. Such ambiguities link the domestic to broader mythologies—from Egyptian tombs to decaying townhouses—where symbols are constantly reinterpreted. Bruder's compositions trace a lineage between past and present, utility and ritual, rooting contemporary life in cultural memory.

Steep recalls the artist's recent visit to Vienna, where he engaged with the Egyptian collection at the Kunsthistorisches Museum and the ornamental designs of the Wiener Werkstätte. The painting fuses these visual souvenirs: the patterned body of a Middle Kingdom hippopotamus, a starry vaulted ceiling, a humble teapot, and a ginkgo-leaf border. Once functional or devotional, such artifacts now rest in vitrines—stripped of origin yet pulsing with displaced reverence. Their journey from tomb to museum shows how objects persist through translation, conquest, and curation, always carrying traces of the lives they once touched.

Scurry stages a theatrical interplay of survival and ritual: three elegant façades stand against a checkerboard field while a tide of rodents rush in opposite directions. Beneath polished architecture lies another truth—a hidden economy in motion, unacknowledged yet persistent. The rats, like relics, ferry fragments across eras, gnawing at illusions of permanence.

In Bruder's world, endurance belongs not to monuments but to the overlooked: the labor of things, their resilience, and the shadows that accompany even the most beautiful façades. Memory travels as much through the unseen bustle as through the celebrated and preserved.

Zach Bruder's (b. 1984, Cleveland, OH) paintings function as mnemonic still lifes set against semi-surreal backdrops, where standard bearers of the everyday are elevated into quiet symbols of persistence and presence. These works harmonize the mundane, meditating on how ordinary gestures accumulate into a life. His long-term interest in image collecting results in inventive compositions in which both pictorial and illusionistic space play a role, while humor and allegory color his painting with conceptual heft.

His canvases revive and repurpose familiar motifs, referencing folklore and drawing from classical and vernacular mythology—all culled from the artist's extensive archive of historic imagery. Addressing mythologies both cultural and personal, Bruder's paintings offer multiple interpretations of religious and social narratives and urgent responses to the societal and political moment in which they were produced. Bruder's work asks us to consider the roles we assign to things and why—his compositions trace a lineage between past and present, utility and ritual, rooting contemporary life in cultural memory.

Zach Bruder received his BFA at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in Madison, WI. Bruder presented his first solo show at Magenta Plains in January 2018 in New York, NY followed by *Gone to Fair* in 2020, *Clear Arrears* in 2023, and *Customary* in 2025. Solo exhibitions have also been held at Harlan Levey, Brussels, BE; galerie l'inlassable, Paris, FR; Gregory Lind Gallery, San Francisco, CA; and LaMaMa Galleria, New York, NY. Bruder has been included in group shows at Peter Freeman, New York, NY; Ratio 3, San Francisco, CA; The Journal Gallery, Brooklyn, NY; Phillip Slein Gallery, St. Louis, MO; and Magenta Plains, New York, NY. The artist lives and works in New York, NY.