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Elijah Blue's "Step-and-Repeat" at Kantor Gallery

By **Caroline Ryder**

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LOS ANGELES— For his first fine art exhibit, **Elijah Blue** chose the ubiquitous "step and repeat" wall as his medium — the bland, heavily-branded backdrops that lurk behind celebrities at red-carpet events. Impersonal yet intimate, familiar yet sinister, "Step and Repeat's" underlying irony was so pointed it may have traveled directly over the heads of the dozens of celebrities who attended the opening Wednesday at Los Angeles' Kantor Gallery.

"A lot of people in the room were looking at art that they may or may not have realized was commenting on their very existence," said Blue via phone the next day. "And that was, in retrospect, crucial to driving the point home."

Hand-painted with precisely chosen faux-corporate logos, Blue's seemingly innocuous walls are a scathing commentary on "the contemporary celebrity condition, its arc over the last 50 years, and the cheapening of fame," as the 33-year-old puts it. It's a wry, post-*Jersey Shore* commentary that Blue, whose mother happens to be **Cher** and whose father happens to be **Gregg Allman**, is eminently qualified to make.

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Blue, primarily known as a musician before now, has been working on the pieces for a year, but has been transitioning from music to art for nearly a decade. "Even with music, I had always come from a place of art theory and philosophy — I just wanted to have a rock and roll band be the medium."

He may reside at the epicenter of his own subject matter, but Blue says he tried to take a detached approach to the work. "Here's the thing: I look at myself and everything about myself in a real sterile, anthropologically removed way," he said. "That I am from this world is of course a factor in the work, but I am able to really disassociate." (The goal being, we assume, some kind of well-informed impartiality.)

The show was dominated by three pieces: *Ivory Tower*, *Lucky Jean Club*, and *Johnnie Kum L8 Lee*. *Ivory Tower*, based on the Ivory Soap and Tower Records logos, is perhaps the most powerful, and personal, of the pieces. "Ivory Tower is a term I have paid close attention to my whole life, because it's about people who are isolated, breathing their rarefied air, people who don't have time to deal with the realities of the world — this is obviously a very common outcome of celebrity."

Lucky Jean Club examines the "dynastic nature" of contemporary celebrity, lambasting the stars whose inherited fame is "undeserved and unqualified," while *Johnnie Kum L8 Lee* — featuring the Johnnie Walker and Lee jeans logos—is about the new generation of Insta-Stars, faces from the realm of reality TV perhaps, who rocket to fame despite having very little actual "art" to offer the world, "people who blow in from the hinterlands and overnight are made into these demigods — and it's like, "What the hell is going on?"

That said, he is not in any way immune to the virus he is criticizing. "I watch *Jersey Shore*," he admits. "I love it. I watch it and I am corrupted, and I am the symptom. I am not above any of this — there is no escaping what we have become. I am just commenting on it."

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