

# Mike Cloud

**REPRESENTATION**  
Thomas Erben Gallery

**WEBSITE** [www.mikecloudart.com](http://www.mikecloudart.com)

# BIOGRAPHY

Mike Cloud is an American painter living and working in Chicago, Illinois. He earned his M.F.A. from Yale University School of Art and his B.F.A. from the University of Illinois-Chicago. His work has been exhibited nationally and internationally at PS.1, NY; the Studio Museum in Harlem, NY; Danubiana Meulensteen Art Museum, Slovak Republic; Honor Fraser Gallery, CA; Thomas Erben Gallery, NY; Good Children Gallery, LA; Marianne Boesky Gallery, NY; White Columns, NY; Max Protetch, NY; Apexart, NYC. Cloud has been reviewed in the New York Times, Art in America, Art Review and featured in the publication *Painting Abstraction* by Bob Nickas, published by Phaidon Press. His awards include the inaugural Chiaro Award from the Headlands Center for the Arts, an artist Fellowship from the New York Foundation for the Arts, the Barry Schactman Prize in Painting from the Yale University School of Art as well as the Grace Holt Memorial Award in African American Issues from the University of Illinois, Chicago.

His work is held in private and public collections including The Bronx Museum (New York, NY), Lincoln Center (New York, NY) and the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, NY). Cloud has lectured extensively on his work and contemporary theoretical art issues at the Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University, Yale University, Cooper Union, Bard College, Kansas City Art Institute and the University of New Orleans.

# ARTIST STATEMENT

Paintings are always objects within a system of objects. My paintings are firmly anchored in the contemporary life of reproduction, symbolism, and description. My paintings aestheticize their subjects and function on social and political terms that go beyond the stakes of authentic expression. Through my work, I interrogate the politics, contrivances and language of painting in order to locate my complicity in its system of functions.

I employ a wide range of marks, symbols, motifs, palettes and forms in an expressive, wet-on-wet technique that blurs and blends elements together into compositions. This explosion of marks and gestures infuses my painterly surfaces with a playful, spirited abstractness. Painterly gestures and symbols combine with sculptural layers of wood, cloth, paper and other recognizable materials to emphasize the art object's literal and material origin. The painting's construction preserves its commoditized dimension and upends conventional, illusory space, producing a politic that pushes away from the surface and intrudes into our world.

I work with store-bought materials that I assemble into fractured shapes and unconventional pictorial spaces. I use painting's sacred position on the wall to suggest an uncanny relationship to the form of the mirror, the window, the door and the shrine. My practice, which encompasses an expanded field of painting and image making, dissects photographic and painterly form, scrambling text and re-aligning content in a way that produces new breaks in legibility and new understandings. My work combines an analytic approach with my interest in the conditions of history and the broader social sphere.

# Curriculum Vitae

# EDUCATION

## **Yale University – School of Art**

2003 : New Haven, CT

MFA, Concentration in Painting and Printmaking

## **University of Illinois – School of Art**

2001 : Chicago, IL

BFA, Concentration in Secondary Art Education

# TEACHING

## **Associate Professor**

2018 : School Of The Art Institute Chicago, Chicago, IL

## **Alex Katz Chair**

2018 : Cooper Union, School of Art, NYC, NY

## **Core Critic**

2017 : Yale University, School of Art, New Haven, CT

## **Visiting Artist**

2018 : University of Vermont, Department of Art,  
Burlington, VT

## **Visiting Faculty**

2017 : Vermont College of Fine Arts, Montpelier, VT

## **Core Critic**

2017 : Yale University, School of Art, New Haven, CT

## **Visiting Faculty**

2016 : Vermont College of Fine Arts, Montpelier, VT

## **Visiting Professor**

2016 : Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY

## **Visiting Faculty**

2015 : Vermont College of Fine Arts, Montpelier, VT

## **Guest Speaker**

2014 : Vermont College of Fine Arts, Montpelier, VT

## **Assistant Professor**

2012 – 2018 : Brooklyn College, CUNY, Brooklyn, NY

## **Visiting Assistant Professor**

2011 – 2012 : University of Illinois Chicago, Chicago, IL

## **Adjunct Professor**

2010 – 2011 : Kingsborough Community College,  
CUNY, Brooklyn, NY

## **Adjunct Professor**

2009 – 2011 : John Jay College of Criminal Justice,  
CUNY, NYC, NY

## **Core Critic**

2010 : Yale University, School of Art, New Haven, CT

## **Adjunct Professor**

2008 : Yale University, School of Art, New Haven, CT

# SOLO & 2-PERSON EXHIBITIONS

## **Mike Cloud**

2019 : Thomas Erben Gallery, NYC, NY (forthcoming)

## **Asians Smaisions and Other Abstract Racial Slurs**

2019 : Marlborough Contemporary, Viewing Room,  
NYC, NY (with Nyeema Morgan)

## **Mike Cloud: Figure Studies**

2018 : Greater Reston Art Center, Reston, VA

## **Mike Cloud: Small & Unfinished Works**

2018 : Francis Colburn Gallery, University of Vermont,  
Burlington, VT

## **Mike Cloud: Quilt Paintings**

2018 : Thomas Erben Gallery, NYC, NY

## **Mike Cloud: The Myth of Education**

2018 : Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts,  
University of Chicago, Chicago, IL

## **Mike Cloud: Small & Unfinished Works**

2017 : Reserve Ames, Los Angeles, CA

## **Mike Cloud**

2016 : Thomas Erben Gallery, Art Basel, Miami, FL

## **Mike Cloud: Paper Quilts**

2014 : Olsen Gallery, Bethel University,  
St. Paul, MN

## **Mike Cloud: Bad Faith and Universal Technique**

2014 : Thomas Erben Gallery, NYC, NY

## **Mike Cloud: Quiltmaking & Overproduction of Opposites**

2010 : Max Protetch Gallery, NYC, NY

## **Special Project: Mike Cloud**

2010 : Good Children Gallery, New Orleans, LA

## **Mike Cloud: Agreement and Subjectivity**

2008 : Max Protetch Gallery, NYC, NY

## **Mike Cloud: A Eating Phylosophy**

2007 : Center for Visual Communication, Miami, FL

## **Mike Cloud: Celebrating Black History Month**

2007 : The Gallery at Lincoln Center, NYC, NY

## **Mike Cloud: Systems**

2006 : Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, Lincoln, NB

## **Mike Cloud: Story Structure**

2006 : Max Protetch Gallery, NYC, NY

## **Special Project: Mike Cloud**

2005 : MoMA P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, NYC, NY

## **Mike Cloud**

2004 : Max Protetch Gallery, NYC, NY

# SELECT GROUP EXHIBITIONS

**Mike Cloud, Peter Fagundo, Joseriberto Perez, Leonard Suryajaya, Alice Tippit**  
2018 : Shane Campbell Gallery, Chicago, IL

**Materialization**  
2018 : The Landing Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

**Embodied Politic**  
2018 : Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago, IL

**Noon-One**  
2018 : CANADA, NYC, NY  
curated by RJ Messineo

**Inflatable Tear**  
2018 : Ceysson & Bénétière, NYC, NY

**Elements of XXX: Part 2**  
2017 : 47 Canal, NYC, NY

**Triad**  
2017 : Five Myles, Brooklyn, NY  
curated by Kara Rooney

**Vatic Utterance**  
2017 : Trestle Gallery, Brooklyn, NY  
curated by Samuel Jablon

**Knowing**  
2016 : Cindy Rucker Gallery, NYC, NY  
curated by Carlos Sandoval Leon

**So Much, So Little, All at Once**  
2016 : Regina Rex, NYC, NY

**Body Politic**  
2016 : Gallery Ell, Brooklyn, NY  
curated by John Ros

**CYBORG**  
2015 : Gallery Zurcher, NYC, NY  
curated by Will Corwin

**Wind Chimes**  
2015 : Bannerette, Brooklyn, NY  
curated by Shanna Waddell

**Love Child**  
2015 : Ortega y Gasset, Brooklyn, NY  
curated by Eleanna Anagnos

**Looking Back: The 9th White Columns Annual**  
2015 : White Columns, NYC, NY  
curated by Cleopatra's Bridget Donaghue and Bridget Finn

**NADA Art Fair**  
2014 : Thomas Erben Gallery, NYC, NY

**Saying Yes to Everything**  
2014 : Honor Fraser Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

**Prophetic Diagrams**  
2014 : Cheymore Gallery, Tuxedo Park, NY  
curated by Will Corwin

**DOUBLEPLUSGOOD**  
2014 : Tuck Under Projects, Minneapolis, MN  
curated by Caroline Kent

**Come Together: Surviving Sandy, Year 1**  
2013 : Industry City, Brooklyn, NY  
curated by Phong Bui

**Dyeing Merging Multitasking**  
2013 : Ortega y Gasset Projects, Brooklyn NY  
curated by Leeza Meksin

**Things: The Still Life in Contemporary Art**  
2012 : Delaware County Community College Media, PA  
curated by Bertha Gutman

**The Death of Affect**  
2011 : Art Blog Art Blog, NYC, NY  
curated by Fran Holstrom & Jeffrey Scott Mathews

**February Show**  
2011 : Ogilvy & Mather, NYC, NY  
curated by Heather Hart & Jun Lee

**Looking Back**  
2010 : White Columns, NYC, NY  
curated by Bob Nickas

**African Americana**  
2009 : Brennan Gallery, Jersey City, NJ  
curated by Kenya Robinson

**XXL-Recent Large-Scale Paintings**  
2008 : Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art, Peekskill, NY  
curated by Marc Straus

**Charismatic Abstraction**  
2008 : Albertine Monroe-Brown Gallery, Kalamazoo, MI  
curated by Don Desmett

**Unfathom**  
2007 : Max Protetch Gallery, NYC, NY  
curated by Stuart Krimco

**Project Space: Jesse Chapman/Mike Cloud**  
2007 : Marianne Boesky Gallery, NYC, NY  
curated by Amy Greenspon

**Frequency**  
2006 : The Studio Museum in Harlem, NYC, NY  
curated by Thelma Golden

**Toxic**  
2003 : Max Protetch Gallery, NYC, NY  
curated by Josie Browne

**Art After the Age of Mechanical Reproduction**  
2003 : Apexart, NYC, NY  
curated by Eugenie Tsai

# GUEST SPEAKING

## **Alex Katz Lecturer**

2018 : Cooper Union, School of Art, NYC, NY

## **Panelist – “Painter, Hero, Star”**

2018 : Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts, Chicago, IL  
(Oscar Murillo & Mike Cloud)

## **Panelist – “Painting, Offense and Judgement**

2018 : Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts, Chicago, IL  
(Taylor Renee Aldridge, Mike Cloud & Alexander Provan)

## **Visiting Artist**

2018 : Tyler School of Art, Temple University

## **Visiting Artist**

2017 : University of Pennsylvania, Fine Arts Department

## **Guest Artist**

2017 : Cooper Union, School of Art, NYC, NY

## **Lecturer – “Mixing Strategies”**

2017 : New York Studio School, NYC, NY

## **Artists on Artists: Alma Thomas**

2016 : The Studio Museum in Harlem, NYC, NY

## **Visiting Artist**

2016 : Mason Gross School of the Arts, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ

## **Visiting Artist**

2015 : Moore College of Art, Philadelphia, PA

## **Panelist – “The De Niro Sessions”**

2015 : Art in America, NYC, NY  
(Mary Weatherford, Raphael Rubenstein, David Salle, Kathy Butterly & Mike Cloud, moderator: Cathy Leibowitz)

## **Panelist – “Of Color: 2014-2015 SMFA Graduate Colloquium”**

2015 : School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA  
(Ron Rizzi, Byron Kim & Mike Cloud)

## **Visiting Artist**

2015 : Mason Gross School of the Arts, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ

## **Lecturer**

2014 : Bethel College, The Art & Design Department, St. Paul, MN

## **Lecturer – “Thinking Critically”**

2014 : Black Artists Retreat (B.A.R.), Chicago, IL

## **Visiting Artist**

2014 : Cooper Union, School of Art, NYC, NY

## **Visiting Critic**

2014 : Yale University, School of Art, New Haven, CT

## **Panelist – “Whitney Biennial LaTableRonde: Curating and Authorship”**

2014 : Critical Practices Inc., NYC, NY

## **Panelist, “Jomar Statkun: Project 0014”**

2014 : Garis & Hahn, NYC, NY  
(Jomar Statkun, Daniel Bozhkov, Joan Waltemath, Mike Cloud)

## **Lecturer & Moderator, “Mike Cloud: Helen Frankenthaler’s Obituaries**

2014 : This Red Door, Kunsthalle Galapagos, Brooklyn, NY

## **Visiting Artist**

2014 : Hunter College, Kossak Painting Fellowship, NYC, NY

## **Artist Lecturer**

2012 : University of Illinois Chicago, Chicago, IL

## **Panelist – “The Still Life in Contemporary Art”**

2012 : Delaware County Community College, Media, PA

## **Visiting Artist**

2011 : Cooper Union, School of Art, NYC, NY

## **Visiting Artist**

2011 : New York Center for Arts and Media Studies, NYC, NY

## **Visiting Artist**

2011 : Bard College, Studio Arts Program

## **Visiting Artist**

2010 : Kansas City Art Institute, Painting Department, Kansas City, MO

## **Visiting Critic**

2010 : Kansas City Art Institute, Painting Department, Kansas City, MO

## **Visiting Artist**

2009 : University of New Orleans, Department of Fine Arts, New Orleans, LA

## **Visiting Critic**

2008 : Yale University, School of Art, New Haven, CT

## **Visiting Critic**

2007 : University of Chicago, Department of Visual Arts, Chicago, IL

## **Visiting Critic**

2006 : University of Nebraska in Lincoln, Department of Art & Art History, Lincoln, NB

# RESIDENCIES & AWARDS

## **New Work Project Grant**

2018 : Harpo Foundation, Los Angeles, CA

## **Studio Resident**

2015 : Marie Sharpe-Walentas Studio Program,  
Brooklyn, NY

## **Artist Fellowship**

2015 : New York Foundation for the Arts, NYC, NY

## **Chiaro Award Recipient**

2015 : Headlands Center for the Arts, Sausalito, CA

## **Artist-in-Residence**

2015 : Vermont College of Fine Arts, Montpelier, VT

## **Resident Artist**

2009 : Muelensteen Art Centre, Eindhoven, Holland

## **Resident Artist**

2007 : Center for Visual Communication, Miami, FL

## **Barry Schactman Prize in Painting**

2003 : Yale University, School of Art, New Haven, CT

## **Grace Holt Memorial Award in African American Issues, Faculty Award in Art Education**

2001 : University of Illinois, School of Art, Chicago, IL

# PUBLICATIONS

## **Press Release, Grant Wahlquist Gallery (2018)**

Cloud, Mike. "Nyeema Morgan: Horror Horror", Grant  
Wahlquist Gallery, Nov 2.

## **Exhibition Essay, Meulensteen Gallery (2010)**

Cloud, Mike. "Mike Cloud: Quiltmaking & Overproduction  
of Opposites", Meulensteen Gallery

## **Essay (2015)**

Cloud, Mike, "The Form Giver: Picasso Symposium",  
Art in America, pg 93, Jan. 2015



# BIBLIOGRAPHY & PRESS

## **The Washington Post (2018)**

Jenkins, Mark. "Mike Cloud", The Washington Post, Jun 22.

## **Fairfax County Times (2018)**

Rems, Janet. "'Destination GRACE' exhibition features work of Mike Cloud", Fairfax County Times, Jun 22.

## **The Vermont Cynic (2018)**

2018 : Beach, Addie. "Fund Brings Painter To Talk Abstraction", March 27

## **Two Coats of Paint (2018)**

Butler, Sharon. "Mike Cloud: Angst and Hope" March 26

## **ArtForum (2018)**

Foumberg, Jason. "Interviews: Mike Cloud", ArtForum, Jan 23.

## **Painters on Painting (2017)**

Jablon, Samuel. "Samual Jablon on Mike Cloud", Painters on Painting, Mar 9.

## **Time Out NY (2015)**

Halle, Howard. "The 10 artists every art fan should know about", Time Out NY, Dec 18.

## **Art in America (2015)**

Cloud, Mike. "The Form Giver: A Picasso Symposium", Art in America, Sept.

## **Art Market Monitor (2015)**

"Art List's 3 Must See Shows", Art Market Monitor, Jul 15.

## **STARINGATTHEWALL.COM (2015)**

"Love Child", staringatthewall.com, Jul 10.

## **The New York Times (2015)**

Cotter, Holland. "Review: Independent Art Fair Combines Less Is More and Growth", The New York Times, Mar 5.

## **The Observer (2015)**

Freeman, Nate. "Armory Week 2015", The Observer, Mar 5.

## **CuraMagazine (2015)**

"Looking Back- The Ninth White Columns Annual", curamagazine

## **Art Observed (2015)**

Creahan, D., "New York-"Looking Back: The 9th White Columns Annual" at White Columns Through February 21, 2015", Art Observed, Jan 31.

## **The New York Times (2015)**

Smith, Roberta, "Art Exhibitions from Chelsea to the Lower East Side", The New York Times, Jan 29.

## **African American Art (2014)**

McClure, Diana, "Mike Cloud: Bad Faith and Universal Technique", The International Review of African American Art, Oct 17.

## **McKnight Arts (2014)**

Schouweiler, Susannah, "'Paper Quilts' by NYC-based artist Mike Cloud on view at Bethel University", McKnight Arts, Oct 13.

## **The Brooklyn Rail (2014)**

Corwin, William, "Mike Cloud: Bad Faith and Universal Technique", The Brooklyn Rail, Oct 3.

## **Gorky's Granddaughter (2014)**

Keeting, Zachary, "Mike Cloud at Thomas Erben Gallery", Gorky's Granddaughter, Sept 22.

## **Clocktower Radio (2014)**

Corwin, William, "Mike Cloud", The Interview Show. Clocktower Radio, July 28.

## **Exhibition Essay (2014)**

Stackhouse, Christopher. "Mike Cloud- Interloper", Bethel College. (exhibition essay)

## **Temporary Art Review (2013)**

Wozniak, Karla. "Dying Merging Multitasking: An Interview with Mike Cloud", Temporary Art Review (online publication), Sept 4.

## **Pool (2011)**

Leiby, Sofia. "Post-Internet Painting and the Death of Affect", Pool (online publication), Dec 28.

## **Muelenstein Art Center (2010)**

Muelenstein, Edward. "Quiltmaking & Overproduction of Opposites", Muelenstein Art Center, Feb.

## **Phaidon Press (2009)**

Nickas, Bob. "Painting Abstraction", Phaidon Press, Sept.

## **Art Review Magazine (2008)**

Coburn, Tyler. "Agreement and Subjectivity", Art Review Magazine, Dec

## **Western Michigan University Press (2008)**

Siedell, Daniel. "Charismatic Abstraction", Western Michigan University Press, (catalogue) Nov.

## **Video interview (2007)**

Vernissage TV, "Mike Cloud: A Eating Phylosophy, Max Protetch Gallery & the Center for Visual Communication" (video interview), Dec 27.

## **Miami Herald.com (2007)**

Woolridge, Jane. "These Quilts Uncover Imagination," Miami Herald.com, Dec 6.

## **The New York Times (2006)**

Wolgamott, L. Kent. "Variations on the Visual: Mike Cloud" (podcast), Apr. Cotter, Holland., "Mike Cloud," The New York Times, Jan 27.

## **The Studio Museum In Harlem (2005)**

Golden, Thelma & Kim, Christine Y., "Frequency" (exhibition catalogue).

## **The New York Times (2004)**

Glueck, Grace. "Mike Cloud," The New York Times, Sept 24.

# **COLLECTIONS**

**Metropolitan Museum of Art**

**The Bronx Museum**

**Eileen Harris-Norton**

**Danubiana Meulenstein Art**

**Museum, Slovakia**

**Sheldon Memorial Gallery**

**Private collections**

**Portfolio**



**Modern Untitled Tragic Timeline**, 2019, Collage-acrylic paint, cash, grocery bags on paper, acrylic tubes and twine, 47 x 720 inches/ -119 x 1829 cm (image credit: Pierre Le Hors; courtesy of Marlborough Contemporary)



**Modern Untitled Tragic Timeline**, 2019, Collage-acrylic paint, cash, grocery bags on paper, acrylic tubes and twine, 47 x 720 inches/ ~119 x 1829 cm (image credit: Pierre Le Hors; courtesy of Marlborough Contemporary)





The Myth of Education, 2018, Logan Art Center, Chicago, IL



Left: **(Downward Arrow) Pink Rectangle**,  
2017, oil on canvas, 109 x 75 inches/ ~277 x 191 cm

Right: **(Upward Arrow) Red Square**,  
2017, oil on canvas, 96 x 69 inches/ ~244 x 175 cm

Fore: **Untitled Placemat Collages**,  
2017, acrylic on mixed paper



Left: **(Upward Arrow) Yellow Field**, 2017,  
oil on canvas, 109 x 75 inches/ ~277 x 191 cm

Right: **(Downward Arrow) Blue Square**, 2017,  
oil on canvas, 80 x 68 inches/ ~203 x 173 cm





Left: **(Upward Arrow) Red Square**, 2017,  
oil on canvas, 96 x 69 inches/ 244 x 175 cm

Right: **(Star) Pink Rectangle**, 2017,  
oil on canvas, 98 x 86 inches/ 249 x 218 cm



**F of J**, 2016, Oil on linen and stretcher bars with leather belt, 93 x 80 x 5 inches/-236 x 203 x 13 cm





Left: **L of L**, 2016, Oil on linen and stretcher bars with leather belt, 90 x 80 x 4 inches/ ~228 x 203 x 10 cm



Right: **S of B**, 2016, Oil on linen and stretcher bars with leather belt, 100 x 80 x 5 inches/ 254 x 203 x 13 cm





**Cycle and Stable**, 2015, oil on linen with stretcher bars, wood and hardware, 96 x 96 inches/ 244 x 244 cm





Left: **Dialogue of Growth**, 2014, Oil on canvas, 91.5 x 30.5 inches/ ~232 x 77 cm

Right: **Bad Faith and Universal Technique**, 2014, Thomas Erben Gallery, New York, NY.

(Images courtesy of Thomas Erben Gallery)



**Bad Faith and Universal Technique**, 2014, Thomas Erben Gallery, NYC, NY.

(Images courtesy of Thomas Erben Gallery)





**Flattery**, 2014, Oil on paper,  
18 x 24 inches/ ~46 x 61 cm





Untitled (for Christ's Sake), 2014, Oil on paper, 18 x 24 inches/ ~46 x 61 cm



Untitled (Goddamnit), 2014, Oil on paper, 18 x 24 inches/ ~46 x 61 cm





Left: **Travelling Barracade**, 2013, Oil on canvas with stretcher bars, 49 x 34 x 82 inches/  
~124 x 86 x 208 cm

Right: Detail

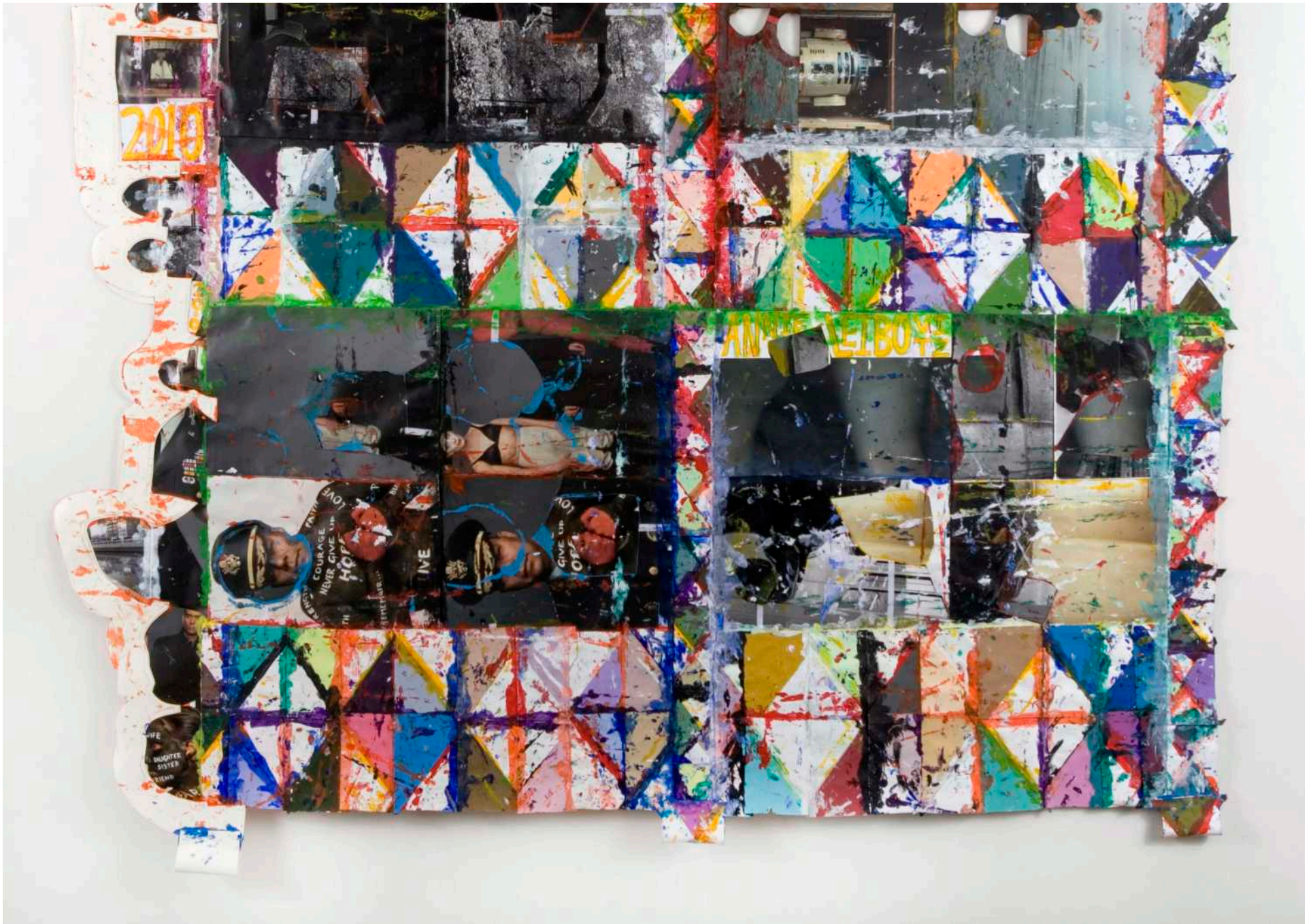


Left: **White Stripes Paper Quilt**, 2010, Altered photography book, Color-Aid paper and acrylic paint, 60 x 67 inches/ ~152 x 170 cm

Below: **Quiltmaking and the Overproduction of Opposites**, 2010, Meulensteen Gallery, NYC, NY.







Colin Powell Paper Quilt (detail), 2010, Altered photography book, Color-Aid paper and acrylic paint, 60 x 67 inches/ ~152 x 170 cm





**Colin Powell Paper Quilt** (detail), 2010, Altered photography book, Color-Aid paper and acrylic paint, 60 x 67 inches/ ~152 x 170 cm





**Print Plates**, 2009, Dimensions variable.



EZJ Doritos Plate, 2009, Cut chip bag on board, 12.75 x 16.25 inches/ ~32 x 41 cm

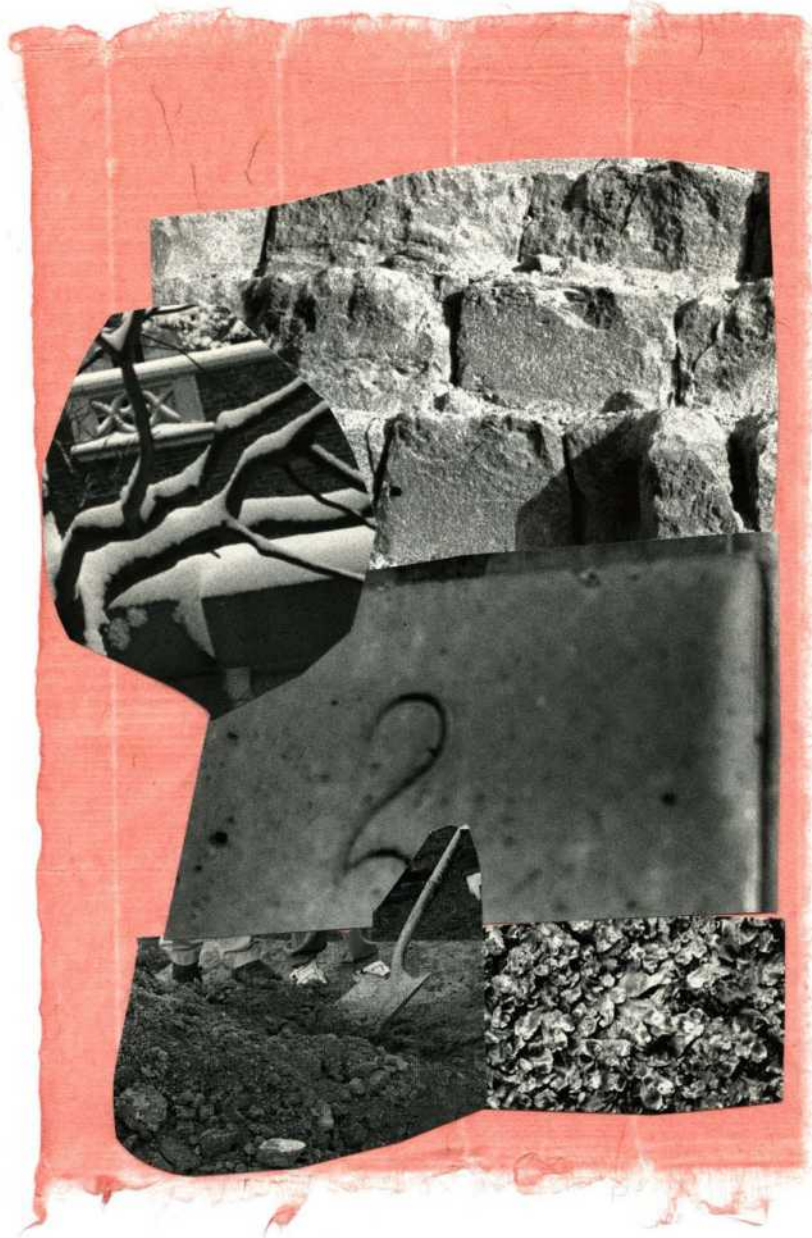




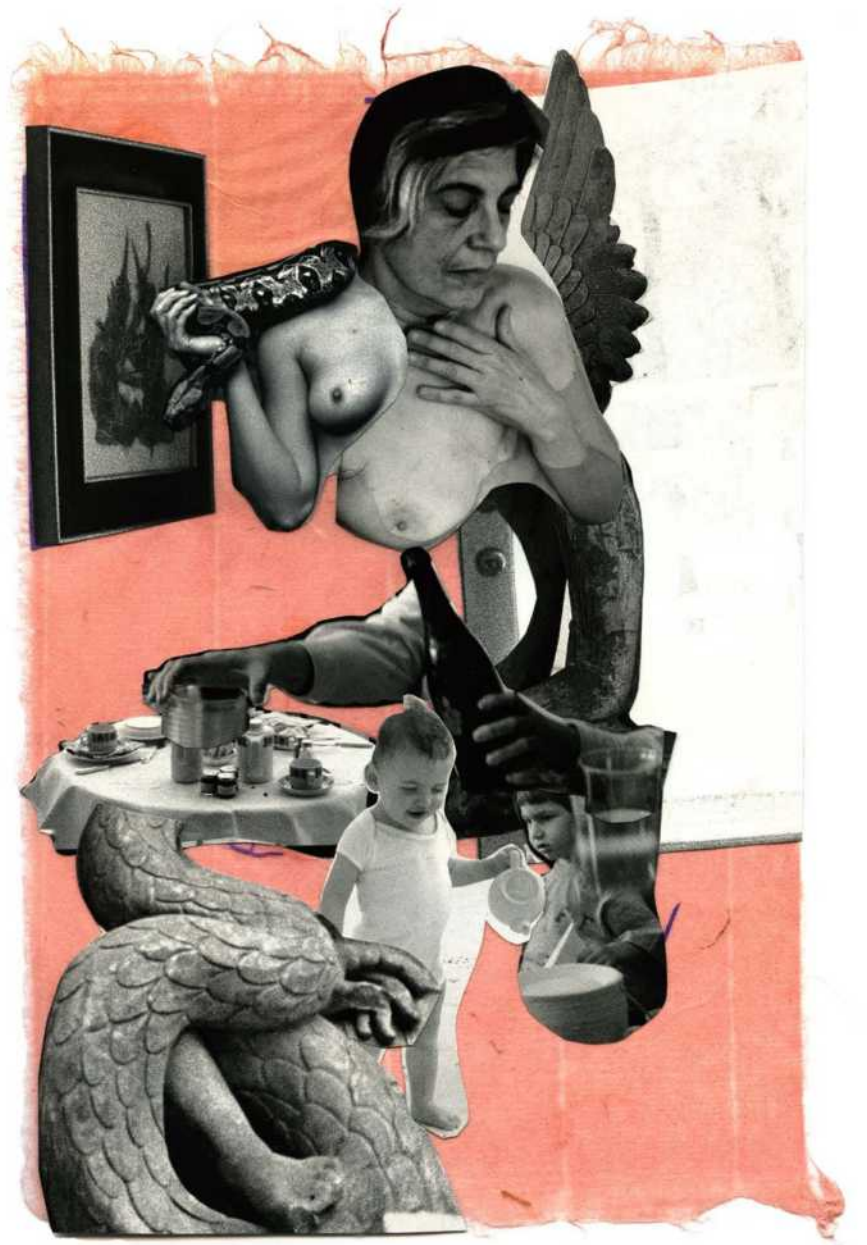
Top Left: **EGF Blue Yellow Print**, 2009, Monoprint: Ink on paper, 11.5 x 16.5 inches/ ~29 x 42 cm  
Bottom Left: **EZJ White Black Print**, 2009, Monoprint: Ink on paper, 11.5 x 16.5 inches/ ~29 x 42 cm

Top Right: **EGF Red Green Print**, 2009, Monoprint: Ink on paper, 11.5 x 16.5 inches/ ~29 x 42 cm  
Bottom right: **ZKL Yellow Red Print**, 2009, Monoprint: Ink on paper, 11.5 x 16.5 inches/ ~29 x 42 cm





Leibovitz Orange #25, 2008, Collage on paper, 6.75 x 10 inches/ 17 x 25.4 cm



Leibovitz Orange #16, 2008, Collage on paper, 6.75 x 10 inches/ 17 x 25.4 cm



Quiltmaking and the Over Production of Opposites, 2010, Meulenstein Gallery, NYC, NY.





Leibovitz Orange #05, 2008, Collage on paper, 6.75 x 10 inches/ 17 x 25.4 cm



Leibovitz Orange #28, 2008, Collage on paper, 6.75 x 10 inches/ 17 x 25.4 cm





**Rabbit Plate**, 2008, Oil on plastic, 46 x 46 inches/ -117 x 117 cm

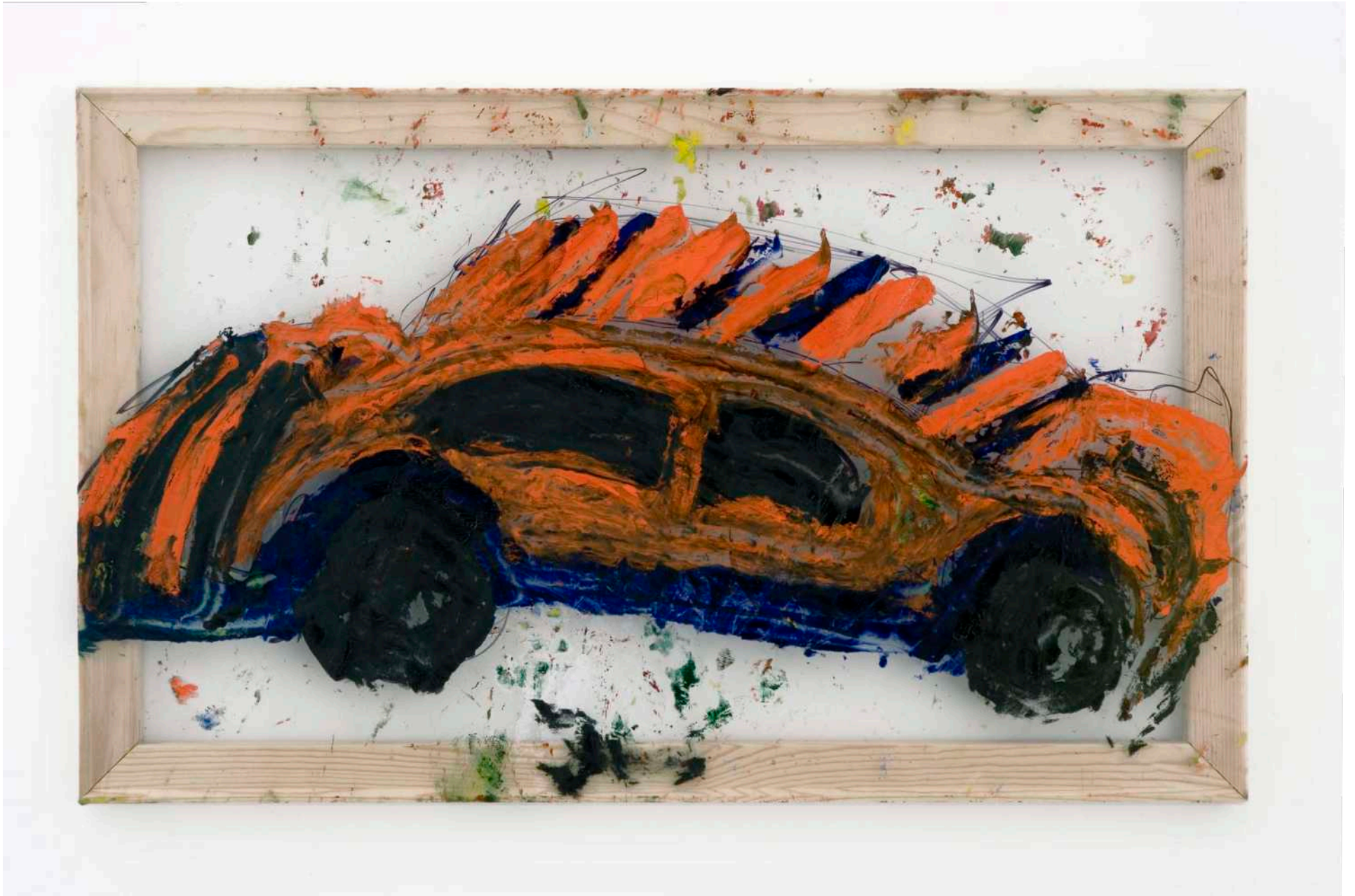


**Rabbit Quilt**, 2008, Oil and clothes on linen, 42 x 32 x 4 inches/ 106 x 81 x 10 cm



**Iron Man Flying Plate and Quilt**, 2008, Dimensions variable, Max Protetch Gallery, NYC, NY.





**Orange Car Plate**, 2008, Oil on plastic, 46 x 28 inches/ -117 x 71 cm



**Snow Man Quilt**, 2008, Oil and clothes on canvas, 52 x 42 x 4 inches/ ~132 x 107 x 10 cm





**Rainbow Rabbit Quilt**, 2008, Oil on clothing with stretcher bars, 70 x 56 inches/ ~178 x 142 cm





**Mouse, Skull, Fairie Quilt**, 2007, Oil paint on clothes with stretcher bars, 62 x 62 inches/ ~157 x 157 cm



**Donkey on Pentagram Maze**, 2007, Oil and toy on canvas, 40 x 40 inches/ ~102 x 102 cm



**Crocodile on Cloud Maze**, 2007, Oil and toy on canvas, 40 x 40 inches/ ~102 x 102 cm



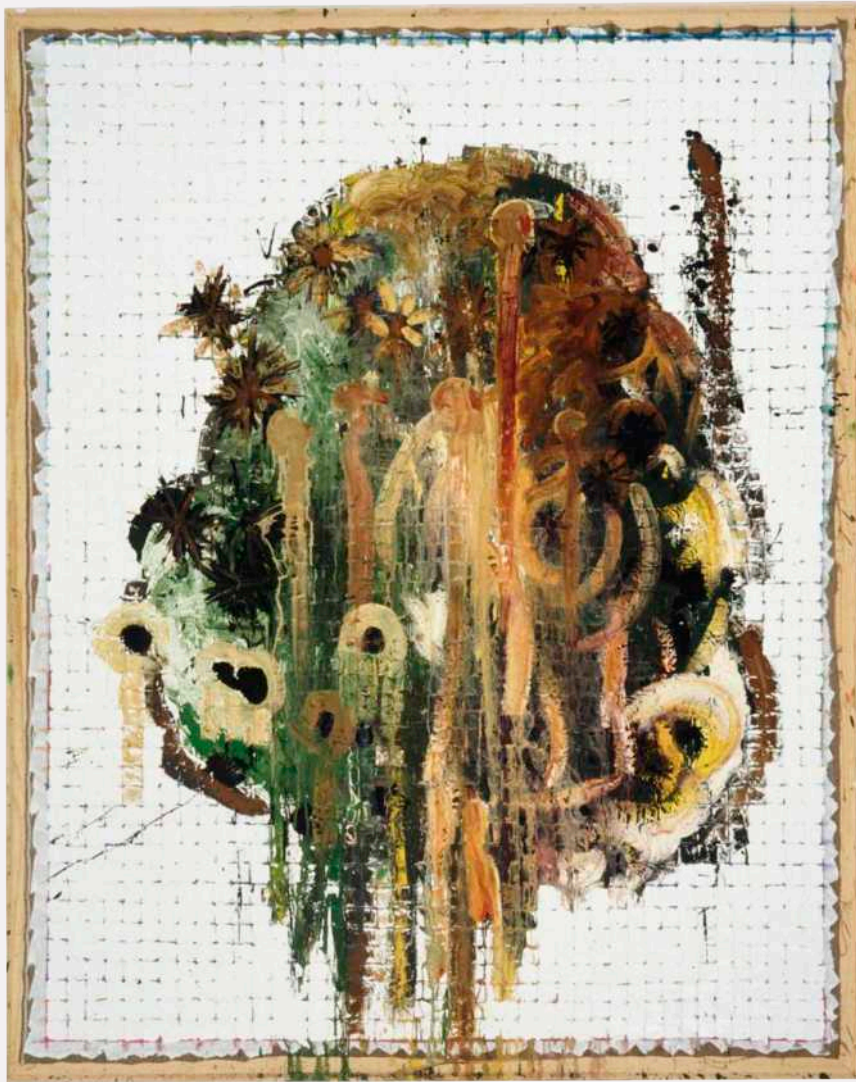


**Landscape on Serpentine**, 2006, Oil and toys  
on linen, 72 x 72 x 11 inches/ -183 x 183 x 28 cm

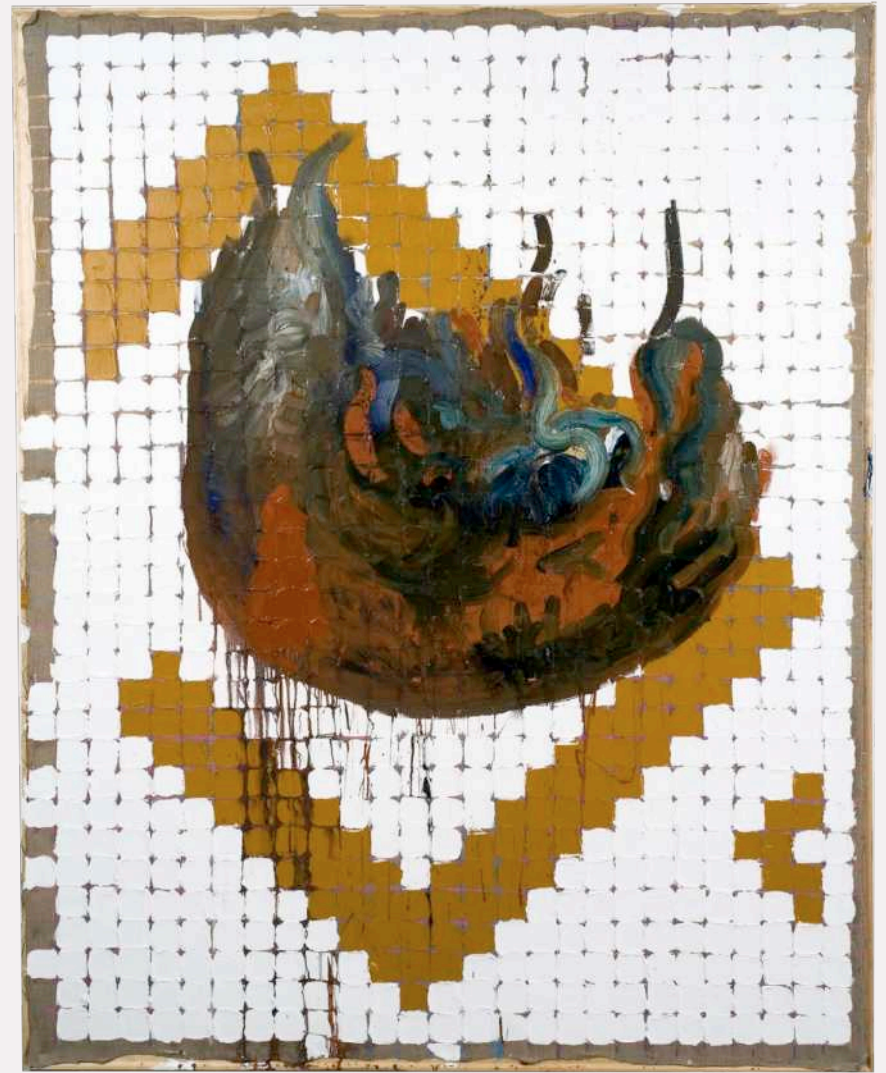




**Chicken on Star of David Maze**, 2006, Oil  
on linen with toy, 40 x 40 x 40 inches/  
~101 x 101 x 101 cm

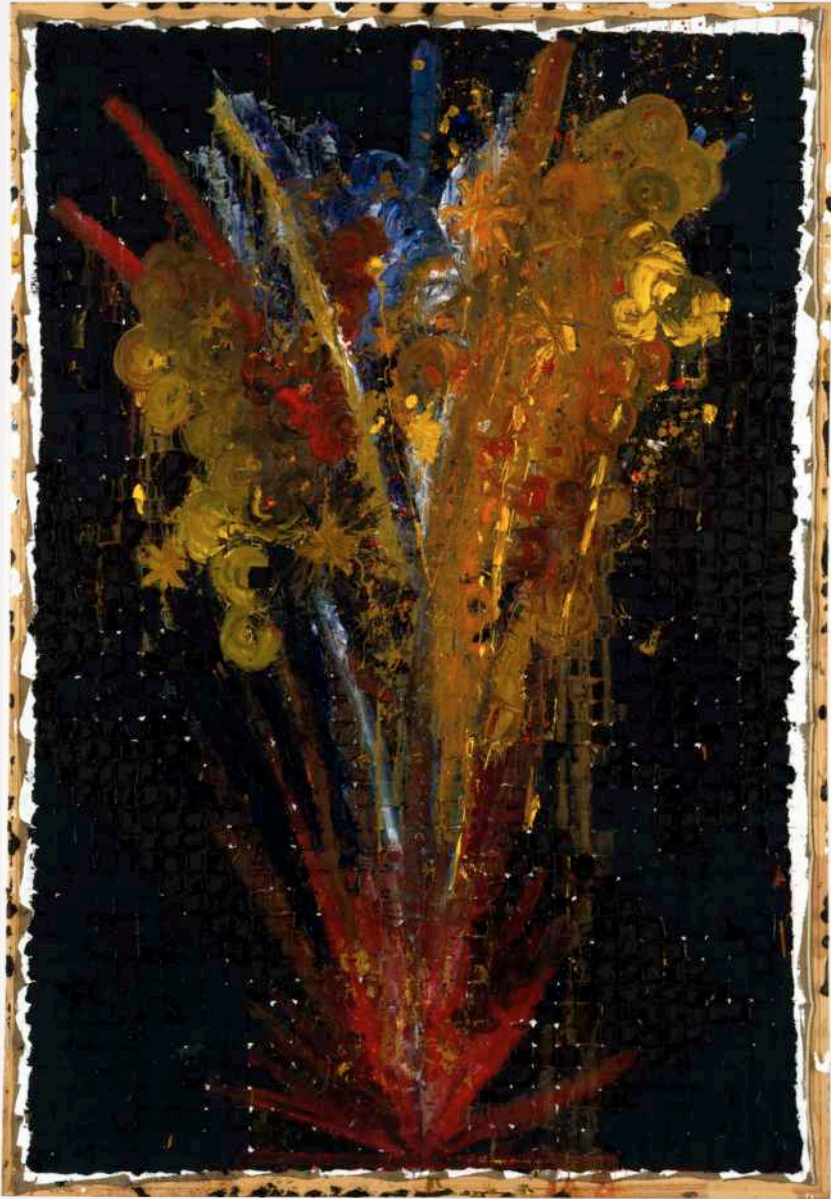


**Caricature Portrait M.P.**, 2005, Oil on linen, 43 x 55 inches/~109 x 138 cm



**Caricature Portrait Y.J.**, 2005, Oil on linen, 70 x 72 inches/~178 x 183 cm





**Caricature Portrait M.C.**, 2005, Oil on canvas, 62 x 72 inches/ ~157 x 183 cm



**Caricature Portrait M.C.**, 2005, oil on canvas, 62 x 72 inches/ ~157 x 183 cm



**Bride Prince**, 2004, Collage on vellum with stretcher bars, 18 x 18 inches/ 26 x 26 cm



**Young Girl Becoming Sexual Being**, 2004, Collage on vellum with stretcher bars, 13 x 13 inches/ ~33 x 33 cm





**Diane Arbus Hardcover: Brooklyn Jewish girl with a Mexican friend**, 2004, Paper collage on vellum with stretcher bars, 12 x 11 inches/ ~30 x 28 cm



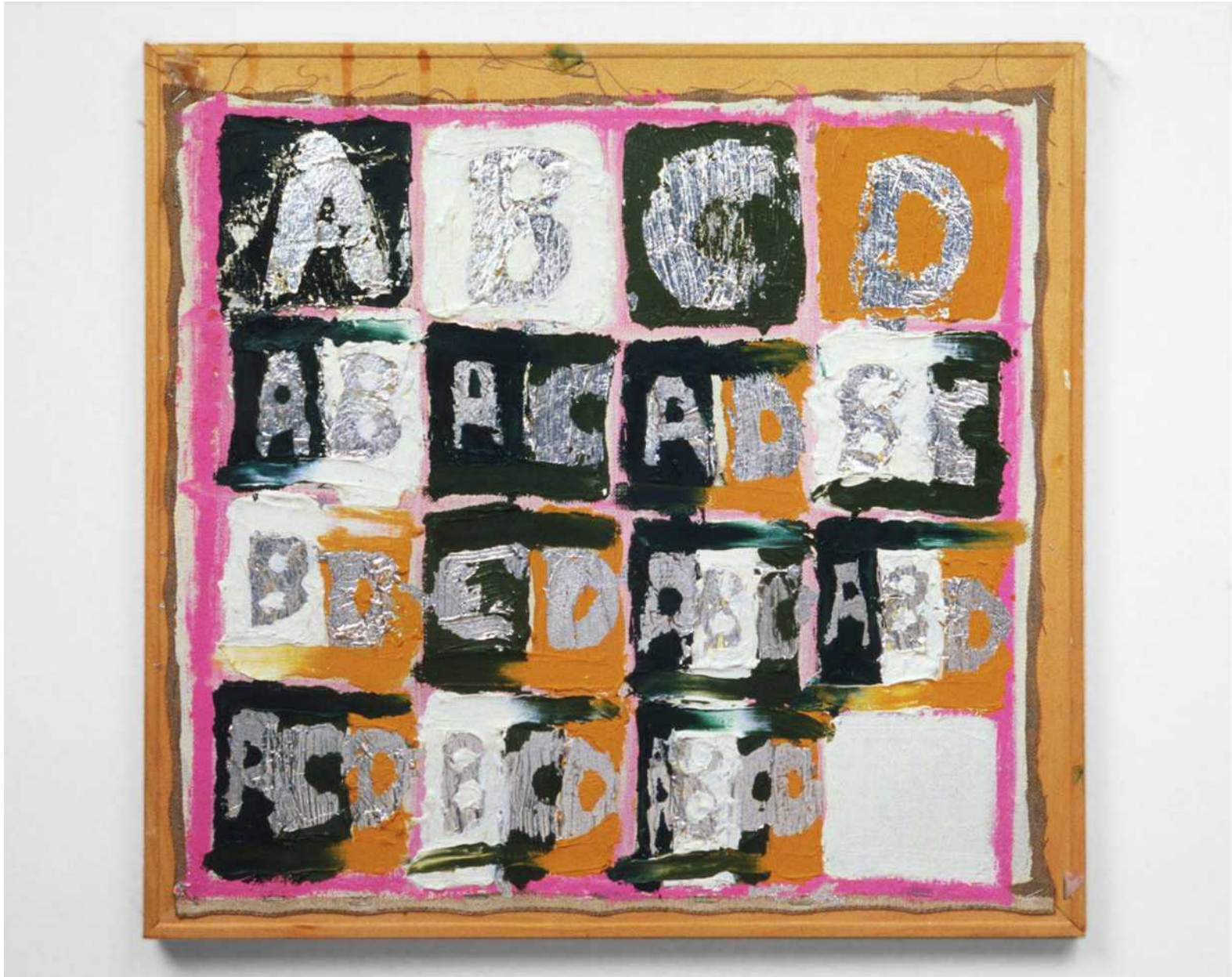
**Diane Arbus Hardcover: Couple dancing at a drag ball with a flag**, 2004, Paper collage on vellum with stretcher bars, 12 x 11 inches/ ~30 x 28 cm





**Diane Arbus Hardcover**, 2004, Positive and negative collages with hardcover book, Dimensions variable





**Flexible Film**, 2004, Oil and aluminum on linen, 15 x 18 inches/ ~38 x 46 cm





Left: **Yellow Horizontal Zig Zag**, 2004, Oil and aluminum on linen, 70 x 55.75 inches/ ~178 x 142 cm

Right: **Vertical Curve**, 2004, Oil and aluminum on linen, 84 x 39.5 inches/ ~213 x 100 cm







**Zig Zag**, 2004, Oil and aluminum on linen, 38 x 67.75 inches/ ~97 x 172 cm



**Horizontal Stripe**, 2004, Oil and aluminum on linen, 38 x 67.75 inches/ ~97 x 172 cm





**Flexible Film**, 2004, Oil and aluminum on linen, 15 x 18 inches/ ~38 x 46 cm



# **Writings & Publications**

# Nyeema Morgan: horror horror

by Mike Cloud

Painter and Associate Professor at the  
School of the Art Institute Chicago

*“Suffering is the corporeal imprint of society and the object upon human consciousness: The need to let suffering speak is a condition of all truth. For suffering is objectivity that weighs upon the subject . . .” (Lambert Zuidervaart, quoting Theodor Adorno, Negative Dialectics, ND 17–18)*

Political violence, the extra-ordinary assertions of common people and the productive/reproductive hand of the artist are the subject matters that concern us in this eclectic group of artworks by multidisciplinary artist Nyeema Morgan. Human suffering is real and it is an epistemological necessity to acknowledge suffering if we are to know truth. The aesthetics of the non-identical are an unscripted interaction between differing aesthetic patterns and classifications, arranged into “constellations” around subject matter. This arranging or rearranging of logically derived forms, expressively malleable gestures and memetic legibility unlocks the historical structures that limit the identity of objectified human beings to the boundaries proscribed by classification.

In Morgan’s exhibition “horror horror” membership within identical sets and near-identical series offer objects—and objectified human beings—an opportunity to express identity in spite of the limitations of objecthood. Identity first occurs to us in our thoughts (“all X are X”); societal exchanges then force us to impose identity onto objects (“any barrel of X is worth any 12 bushels of Y”). We then find identities for ourselves by analogy with objects as deficits, credits and assets to our communities. In all these cases, identity unifies, but it also suppresses the diversities and differences that make beings, thoughts, subjects and objects real.

These prints, drawings and sculptures are parts within identical sets and near identical series. These sets and series are families that individual works simultaneously belong to and vanish beneath. To think is to identify, and the semblance of identity always exists within thought itself, even in its attempt to identify truth. Identity is overcome by testing its heterogeneous object against

the unity of our conception of it. This collision forces thought to surpass itself and forces us to acknowledge our consciousness of our own nonidentity.

Minute, representational rendering in multiple mediums and materials collides with a discursive, meta-critical treatment of subject and relationship in each group of permutations. The difference between pictorial and discursive representation—like the difference between analog and digital representation—is a function of “off” and “on.” Analog representations present continuously variable properties like minutely modulated shading, carefully modeled contours, and subtly shifting hues. Digital representation on the other hand, is discrete; a drawing either is or is not a copy of such and such a book. In Morgan’s work there is no ambiguity about the subject matter of her representations: they are not “more or less” representations of a given object.

These objects are hybrid representations: pre-labeled but not pre-interpreted, symbol-filled arrays, arranged into larger and larger arrays rhizomatically relating back upon identity and non-identity. We are constructed as objects of social use with no possible existence outside of a social existence. We were ultimately “made for each other.” Our objectivity can never be eliminated or replaced entirely by subjectivity, but object-hood is an historical, provisional and relational phenomenon. As such it can and will change. Even in our object-hood we can never be fully known, but we can and should be fully honored in our difference and non-identity.

“horror horror” is an exhibition defined by antagonisms, identifications, reproductions and technical masteries. Exposing these antagonisms points us towards their resolution and a thoughtful relationship between subject-matter, object-matter and concept.

*Nyeema Morgan earned a B.F.A. from the Cooper Union School of Art, New York and an M.F.A. from the California College of the Arts, San Francisco. Morgan’s solo exhibitions include the Staniar Gallery at Washington & Lee University, Lexington, Virginia; the Rotunda Gallery/BRIC Arts Media Bklyn, Brooklyn; The Bindery Projects, St. Paul, Minnesota; and Art in General, New York. Her work has been shown in group exhibitions at The Drawing Center, New York; the Bowdoin*

*College Museum of Art, Brunswick, Maine; the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York; the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; Grant Wahlquist Gallery and Galerie Jeanroch Dard, Paris. Morgan’s work is in the collections of the Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Maine, and the Menil Collection, Houston (in collaboration with William Cordova and Otabenga Jones and Associates). She has participated in residencies at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture; Shandanken Projects at Storm King Art Center, New Windsor, New York; the Lower East Side Print Shop, New York; The Drawing Center; and the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council’s Workspace Program. She is a recipient of a Painters and Sculptors grant from the Joan Mitchell Foundation and an Art Matters grant.*

*Grant Wahlquist Gallery is pleased to present “horror horror,” an exhibition by Nyeema Morgan. The exhibition will run from November 2, 2018 through January 12, 2019, with an opening reception on Friday, November 2 from 5 – 8 pm.*







## Quiltmaking and the Overproduction of Opposites

by Mike Cloud

Painter and Associate Professor at the School of the Art Institute Chicago

*“Um, I tell you the problem with the scientific power that you’re using here. Uh it didn’t require any discipline to attain it. You know you read what others had done and you took the next step. You didn’t earn the knowledge for yourselves, so yoU don’t take any responsibility for it. You stood on the shoulders of geniuses to accomplish some thing as fast as you could, and before you even knew hat you had, you patented it, packaged it and slapped it on a plastic lunch box. [banging table] And now you’re selling it. You wanna sell it. Well –”*

– Jeff Goldblum as Dr. Ian Malcolm: *Jurassic Park* 1993

Abstraction is a little representational because it involves having a model which is absent and then presented again through an illusion. The “re” in representation means “again” and every subject

has a presence prior to its representation. In photography the subject is something real which vanishes into the actual past, as in a photograph of a young man who grows old. In painting the subject might not exist prior to the painting. In those cases the model is an idea, absent from the world, and invoked imperfectly by the painted illusion. The model emerges from an inner world into the outer world, while in photography; the model emerges from the worlds’ past into its present.

Painting now has a photographic history, so unless my work clearly has a phenomenological model like semaphore flags or fluid dynamics, it is safe to assume that the subject of my painting is the ubiquitous history of painting. All aesthetic gestures in painting are interpreted (and reasonably so) as neo-expressionism, ersatz rococo, classical revival or ironic futurism. Paintings’ models are assumed to emerge from a factual, historical past rather than from an inner life. In this way all painting is experienced as representation.

In reproduction something is always lost. In photography you can lose color relationships, dimensionality, smell and taste. These losses constitute the distance between an actual sunny day in 1972 and its photographic representation. In painting, what is lost in the distance between post-painterly abstraction and neo post-painterly abstraction is the conviction of the author’s motivation. In short one loses authenticity, and the idea of inauthenticity; literally the unauthored or causeless effect is an important term in post-conceptual art.

*“Susan Sontag tells a good story about this pre-eminence of the medium and of images as she is sitting in front of the television watching the moon landing, the people she is watching with tell her they don’t believe it at all But what are you watching, then? she asks, ‘Oh, we’re watching television!’ Fantastic: they*

*do not see the moon: they see only the screen showing the moon...”*

– Jean Baudrillard: *The Intelligence of Evil or the Lucidity Pact* 2005

The thesis of all my work is that can create a strong form of abstraction by eliminating negative gestures. In the story of the moon landing, Susan’s companions eliminate the distance between their television and the moon by seeing only the screen showing the moon” They think of the moon (and all of reality) as being non transcendent; these objects hold their place and do not travel through the medium of the television. The moon on TV is a TV show and like any TV show, comes from a TV studio.

This is actually a very sophisticated strategy. We eliminate distance through Incredulity rather than the primitive strategy of eliminating it through absolute belief. We do not believe, like cave men do, that the TV is a box that has people in it or that the moon is only as far away as the back of the television. The cave men believe what they see; their beliefs are caused by optics and they fall victim to an optical illusion. Contemporary viewers eliminate distance through incredulity. I’m immune to optical illusions (alien autopsy videos and photographs of big-foot) because my beliefs are not optical.

My beliefs are essentially political and are only vulnerable to political illusions. You can show me photographs of UFOs or evidence of the International Jewish Conspiracy or a Xerox of President Obama’s Kenyan birth certificate, and won’t believe you because those things are outside the set of sorts of things that I believe. I don’t believe what I see; I believe what already believe. There is no distance between what already believe

and what I'm capable of believing and this closed circuit is a strong form of abstraction.

*"The feminists' first reaction is to swallow the bat and at tempt to answer the question as it is put to dig up examples of insufficient appreciated women artists through out history: to rehabilitate modest If interesting and productive, careers, to rediscover forgotten flower-painters on David-followers and make a case for them..."*

**- Linda Nochlin: "Why have there been no great women artists?" 1971**

Although women artists often have, as Nochlin describes "interesting and productive careers" few ever enter into the relationship of inheritance and influence that constitute greatness in art. My colleagues rarely describe women artists of the past as being major influences on their work outside of the specific context of historical feminism. I am surprised by this, because many women painters are quite famous outside that context. But fame aside, it still seems easier to trace the artistic lineage of a painter like Georgia O'Keeffe, Sylvia Mangold or Lisa Yuskavage. than it is to trace their legacy. They do not seem to influence the serious artists who come after them so the chain of inheritance stretches into their pasts but not into their futures.

I'm not interested in making a case for their inclusion within that chain of influence and greatness. But I'm fascinated by the existence of very visible artists within the past of painting, who are, nonetheless, often thought of as being historically insignificant, literally not signifying within the language of history. I'm interested in the possibility of using these insignificant celebrities as a way to subvert the historicizing assumption in my own work. I want my paintings to be legible but meaningless within the historical language because this identity-based emptiness is a form of political abstraction that I am interested in.

Part of the assumption of seriousness in painting is an assumption that my work shares a relationship to the great work of the past and that I want that relationship and cultivate it. If I am not clear about the historical precedent of my work then that vacuum of reference is filled with the likeliest suspects from paintings canon; Ad Reinhardt or Peter Halley or whatever significant painter my style most resembles. I want to conspicuously replace those significant figures with insignificant ones. I use women and children and especially women artists as subjects to replace what would otherwise be the default subject of paintings' heroic mythology.



1

Certain motifs recur when Picasso enters a discussion. When I studied art in college I was told many Picasso stories, and their themes were remarkably consistent. He greeted visitors to his studio in his underwear, gave away artworks as gifts and lived in a freezing garret with peeling wallpaper and collapsing furniture. I was often told about the intimacies of his relationships with lovers, collaborators and the objects he created. His actions in the stories were not always admirable, but it was clear that they were always symbolic.

2

The motifs in stories about Picasso tend to be social, political and emotional, rather than formal or aesthetic, which indicates that his role in art discourse is spiritually allegorical rather than technically didactic. Our mentors quote Picasso to teach us not how to make art but how to be artists. The Museum of Modern Art describes his relationship to his sculptures in their upcoming exhibition as resembling that of an untrained artist. Being trained only as a painter, he is said to have been able to approach sculpture with the complete freedom from convention of a self-taught artist. Picasso lived with his sculptures until his death and was passionately fond of them. In short, he actually used his sculptures as art in some genuine sense. The use of an artwork in the life of its maker is considered a virtue when evaluating the authenticity of so-called primitive art, such as the African and Polynesian masks and sculptures we often associate with Picasso's mythology.

3

Our culture creates allegories to express shared insights into the conditions of our existence. Picasso as an allegorical figure in particular expresses an insight into the existence of both art and artists. Collectors of so-called primitive art look down on objects made specifically for foreign consumption, as opposed to "authentic use" (use by the object's author). Those "inauthentic" works have an instrumental existence: the author uses them to gain access to some other type of capital. The sculptural works of Picasso on view at MoMA were cherished personal possessions that the artist rarely sold. This information gives the works existential value because their existence fulfills the intuitively felt need for their existence. That the value of art is created by an existential need is a genuine insight about the nature of being in art. The purpose of an allegory is to express these very sorts of insights and values within a mythological structure.

4

All the heroes of art history have similar allegorical functions and art history itself is a kind of myth cycle. For many people, Picasso is the chief god in an orthodox pantheon of white men, stretching roughly from Michelangelo to Gerhard Richter. True believers in these heroes maintain that their genius is an actual judgment one makes in the presence of their work. But, regardless of the aesthetic merits of his work, Picasso's genius is actually an element of a text I read beforehand. After reading about Picasso's genius, I then reinscribe it (sometimes with great difficulty) into my experience of his work.

5

It is possible to gain critical distance from the myth of Picasso by acknowledging the enlightenment that his myth exists to express. I was raised as a devout Christian and in my particular church we were taught that the Bible, being literally true, had no symbolic meaning. For us the story of Noah's flood, for example, didn't mean anything. It was just an event that occurred one day in the past and might (if we were bad) happen again by other means one day in the future. Our pastor feared that if we ever understood the meaning of Christ's salvation as metaphorical, Christ would never come back for us. Millions of art students will purchase picture books of Picasso's works and examine the lines, colors and shapes in search of his genius. They were taught that one day in the past he arranged those forms in a way that was brilliant, and one day in the future someone else (perhaps you or me) might do the same. Believers ask, "Is Oscar Murillo the new Picasso? Is Dana Schutz the new Picasso? Are they geniuses?" If we understand Picasso as allegory and acknowledge the validity of the insight he represents, no one need ever be the new Picasso again. Picasso need never come back for us.



**Excerpt**  
by Mike Cloud  
in *The Form-Giver:*  
A Picasso Symposium

**Reviews**



# ARTFORUM

## Mike Cloud

by Jason Foumberg  
in ArtForum

*Mike Cloud is a Brooklyn-based painter. His upcoming solo exhibition, "The Myth of Education," offers shaped canvases and collages that blend iconography and abstraction in order to address various myths in the art world—from the dichotomy between representation and abstraction to what he calls the "myth of greatness." Here, Cloud reflects on his teachers and how ideas are passed through generations of artists. The show is on view at the Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts in Chicago from January 26 through March 22, 2018.*

You can break art education down into a series of stories. Your teachers might tell you about how Vincent van Gogh cut off his ear, or how Richard Serra could be killed by his work, or how Bas Jan Ader died in the making of a piece. We have a large swath of stories. I think there's actually a metahistory underneath them: the myth of education—that your professors are actually creating you as a colleague.

I consider my work to be a form of returning. One of my teachers was the abstract painter Peter Halley. My paintings are a critical take on his geometric abstraction. And also on Jessica Stockholder's work, and on Kerry James Marshall's, and all these people that were my professors. My goal as a student was not to adopt what they taught me, but to gain critical distance from it and then come back to them

with what I thought was an addition.

In the past twenty years or so, art has been deeply connected to education. Halley once said that he saw a greater sense of continuity as a teacher than he did as an artist in the art world. When I was in art school you'd have Kehinde Wiley and Mel Bochner and Byron Kim all sitting in the same room, whereas, in the art world, they wouldn't all go to the same café or some place like that.

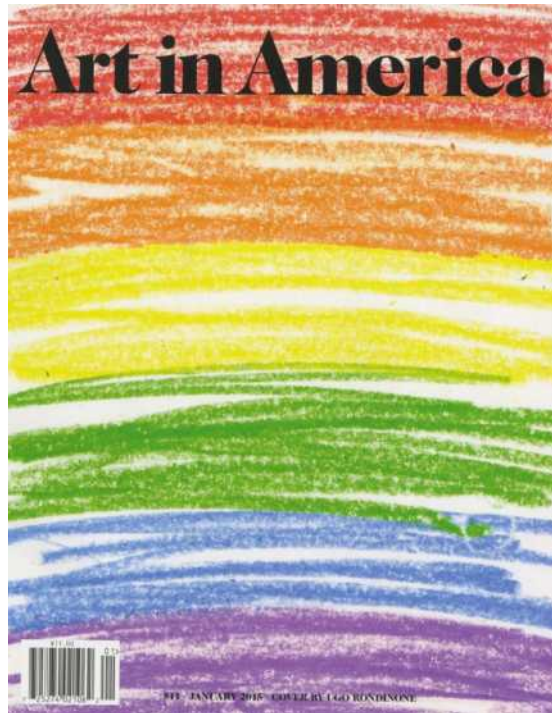
That connection between art and academia moves us away from older ideas about the artist being discovered after death. Instead, my colleagues can actually affect the work I do next. So, the myth that the artist makes a body of work in the studio alone and then we find the art after they die has not been the dominant art myth of late. Although, as a teacher I do think that art's relationship to academia is beginning to wane. Emerging artists are finding other ways to promote their work online. More and more, artists are looking for new modes for community and interaction.

When I'm teaching undergrads, I always notice the moment when they realize that pleasing their parents with their art is not a goal anymore. To be an artist, you have to sacrifice your financial stability, social standing, personal relationships, and all sorts of things to make your work. The goal is not something immediate or material. It's not even something that you know you will experience in your lifetime. That's where the myth of greatness comes to the artist in the studio.



Mike Cloud lays it on thick—in his paint application and in his symbolism. Layers of chunky oil paint covered every inch of canvas in the nine works on view. Jewish stars, blood diamonds, the Confederate flag and at least one Swastika mixed and mingled with coffins, genitals, detached hands and feet and painted statements about impotence. Cloud staples canvas to the inside of stretchers, instead of stretching around them, so all the pieces are “framed.” His conspicuous brushstrokes, often roughly the width of a human finger, emphasize the directness of a body’s forceful, persistent touch.

Much of the painted text, in particular, looks like it was carved with a finger into cake frosting. The words “Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité” are painted along the three sides of a small triangular canvas in *Traveling Barricade* (2014), a freestanding object with one canvas perched like a sail on top of others laid flat. Here, the French national motto has a hand-painted protest sign’s awkward combination of vehemence and provisionality—necessary, but only for the moment, as though it might easily be smoothed over, blended in or otherwise reabsorbed into the opaque surface. This feels appropriate for a phrase with a history that reads like the ultimate semiotic soap opera: political-philosophical interests wrangle over the evolving meanings and implications of three words. It’s the initial instance of fickle symbolism that this Chicago-born, Brooklyn-based artist took up in “Bad Faith and Universal Technique,” his first solo exhibition at the gallery and his seventh in New York. The paintings came in a range of sizes and shapes. Triangles, trapezoids and hexagons became increasingly complex through repetition and distortion; two trapezoids resemble the lid of a coffin in *Dialog of Growth* (2013), for instance. Elsewhere, triangular canvases multiply into stars and diamonds, creating works that reverberate between the shaped



## Mike Cloud

Thomas Erben  
by Becky Brown

canvas and the painted content. Everything converged in the 10-by-20-foot *Removed Individual* (2013), multiple canvases arranged to form a double Star of David. The perfect center is the diamond-shaped negative space between the stars, where Cloud has a canvas painted with the jagged facets of a gemstone. In rich sky blue over a ground of reds, yellows, pinks and oranges, the diamond shows off its “fire.” The stars themselves—one red, pink and white, the other yellow, brown and black—are inscribed with a grocery list of foods distinguished by color: “red vs. green cabbage,” “brown vs. white rice,” “oranges,” “milk.” Cloud’s awareness of the trouble with such tight identification (between hue and object) is manifested through his insistence on using color in an ever-fluid spectrum. From his

inclusion of actual color scales (tones of blue in the lower left; a rainbow panel on the lower right) to the blending that occurs when wet paint of different hues meets (emphasized by globs wiped on his stretcher bars), one color is always becoming another.

Not unlike the star, the diamond, for Cloud, is a prime example of a shape that also refers to organic matter, a symbol and a commodity, the last of which is explored in *Lesser Evil* (2013). The painting is an irregular hexagon, suggesting a cut stone. Written where the edges of the facets would be are compound words referring to the mining and selling of the gems to finance war (“blooddiamond,” “diamondgate”).



With this exhibition, Cloud revealed the range of significations that can be connected to a single shape as well as the way diverse symbols are constructed from the same geometric material, which may be why they are so infinitely malleable.



# Bad Faith and Universal Technique

Mike Cloud at Thomas Erben Gallery, NYC  
by Diana McClure  
The International Review of African  
American Art

Mike Cloud has not been seduced by conceptual art. That is not to say there is not a conceptual framework to his aesthetic. It appears that he has taken a most challenging approach to his creative instinct, engaging the intersection of concept and emotion to animate ideas in his work.

The first idea one encounters at the entrance to Mike Cloud's exhibition *Bad Faith and Universal Technique* is *Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite*, the rallying cry of the French Revolution. These words, part of the sculpture *Traveling Barricade*, are painted in white, blue and red and are encased in a small triangle on the floor that could easily be overlooked. Above it a torn piece of natural canvas with a slash of white paint across it hangs like a flag of surrender. Perhaps a comment on what it takes to convince another of an idea?

The clashing or the integration of ideas is encountered once again in the painting *Paper Elysium*, which houses a left leaning Confederate flag, pyramids, and trees. Triangles, in the form of shapes, pyramids and stars, are a leitmotif throughout the exhibition. The triangle may speak to concepts of the trine, the harmonious flow of energy that is a potential aspect of all human relations, as in the successful sharing and integration of an idea.

Cloud's material exposure of stretched canvas and stretching bars, his intentionally unpolished presentation and the feeling of organized chaos generated by his paintings, suggest a controlled experiment. What happens when disparate ideas come together within a framework, literally? His work has an aspect reminiscent of the

unpolished flamboyance of William Pope.L's artwork (see Pope.L reference image below). But close viewing of Cloud's art reveals an extremely conscious engagement with imperfection and structure. This is not work of a rebellious nature. It appears to be a sincere investigation of the static nature of ideas in relation to the rich inner lives of individuals.

Color scales and color theory are at work throughout the exhibition in cool palettes, arrangements that flow, and ones that clash. The weight or force of Cloud's curiosity reveals itself through thick paint applied in arduous layers suggesting the unresolved nature of multiple trains of thought laid out on canvas and paper. Color in this context, as seen in the painting *Untitled (Goddammit Cloud)*, seems to suggest it is in use as a tool to mark variations in thought as opposed to beauty or mood.

The body, alive and as a corpse, reverberates through form and shape throughout Cloud's work. Handprints, footprints, heart prints, and male anatomy are featured in the triangles that form a red-pink and a yellow-brown six-pointed star in the piece *Removed Individual*. This nod to touch, feeling and desire, is accompanied by a rainbow colored flag that hangs from the bottom right of the piece. As a whole this work seems to reference ideas of femininity through its use of yellow and pink, Jewish culture through its use of six-pointed stars, and LGBT politics through its reference to a rainbow flag.

The wood frames that enclose unusually shaped canvases throughout the exhibition seem to encourage viewers to think outside the box in new shapes, new frameworks, and new concepts.

The painting *Dialogue of Growth* resembles the shape of a coffin, stands on the floor and leans on the wall. Handprints in blue and green cover the canvas, images of diamonds are repeated and the word "organ" is painted twice in yellow where the head and the heart would lie in a coffin. The word "organ" placed at the heart center of the coffin is part of a gold link chain. This work of all the works in the exhibition seems the most succinct. It appears to coolly scream at both the suffocating idea and reality of what it means to be a black man in 2014.

A fellow spectator at Mike Cloud's recent exhibition described the largest painting in the show, "Removed Individual," (2013) as the "Buckminster Fuller one." Initially this seemed superficial, based merely on the construction of the piece as a network of visible intersecting stretchers. However, it became increasingly meaningful as the extent and variety of the show sank in. There are many intertwining gestures in Cloud's work and at times the paintings can be overwhelming. There is a high volume of historical detail and specific symbolism being corralled into these works. Despite the seemingly spontaneous expressionism of the execution, there is a layering of subtlety that compliments the comparison to Fuller. "Removed Individual" is the most Fulleresque, combining the symbolism of the six-pointed star with Fuller's Dymaxion map, but all the works exhibit an aesthetic and intellectual resourcefulness. The eccentric form of the canvas and the wordplay and the rebus-like use of imagery on its surface reinforce each other in the same way that the famed inventors' physical creations complimented his zany and altruistic worldview.

Cloud's paintings are entities of tension. The canvas is stapled from the inside surfaces of the stretcher bars, like a skin drying on a frame. The taught fabric becomes a structural force as the self-sustaining perpendiculars of the typical painting are exchanged for unstable acute and obtuse angles that require an outside vector of force to keep them in place. As a result, "Paper Elysium" (2014) an irregular trapezoidal shape, and "Lesser Evil" (2013), an irregular hexagon, both exude a troubling feeling of tensegrity (tensional integrity) that makes their construction very prominent. Indeed, it is this reliance on the very practical applications of stretcher bars that give Cloud's work a resonance with the ever-practical yet ever-fanciful Buckminster Fuller. The stretcher becomes a unit that underlies the growth and expansion of the picture plane.

In the painting contained on "Paper Elysium," thick rich brushstrokes happily lend themselves to reinforcing the notional tension of the form. The trapezoidal painting is covered corner to corner with a confederate flag, visually pushing the corners outwards. By contrast, "Lesser Evil" is supported by six lines of text that become lines of force emanating from a center point. By their rejection of the right angle, Cloud's stretcher bar networks naturally fall into 2-D crystalline forms; embracing this, diamonds are frequent signifiers in his work. In "Lesser Evil," the words function simultaneously as visual supports of the crystalline aspirations of the work, and as text they cycle through the associative meanings of phrases in proximity

to the word diamond. "Blood Diamond," "Pseudo Diamond," and "Diamond Gate" are played off the visual pun of a paint, wood, and canvas diamond constructed by the artist himself—text metaphors vs. visual ones.

Beyond its construction, "Removed Individual" is a meditation on the symbolism of oppression, and an attempt towards the mitigation of the destructive underpinnings of those symbols. Two Judenstern stand next to each other, point-to-point: they are different colors, but some of the colors are familiar as National Socialist categories—purple meant homosexual and yellow meant Jew. Hands, feet, and male and female genitals are painted onto the stars, anthropomorphosing them, and from the right star a small rainbow banner hangs like a shop sign. There is a humor that is both sharp and pained in its openness, (Are these stars self-portraits? Star-crossed lovers?) The two symbols have been bestowed with a personality the way that a corporate mascot can be generated by putting a pair of eyes or legs on any inanimate object or making a mouse or cat stand on two feet.

This playful addition to a very familiar and sinister shape has jarring and effective consequences: it is a taboo crossing of signals. The visual blow is lessened by thickly and painterly rendered text on the hexagonal body of the star. Two shopping lists are placed side by side, and a John-sian (as in Jasper) visual pun comes into effect. The contents of the list are written out in their respective colors: white rice/brown rice, green tea/black tea, etc. The artist muses on the very personal and rational judgments that go unnoticed when we choose food based on its color. Then, via the stark cruelty of the form of the Star of David armbands switches gears to the practice of color coding people or their religious or sexual associations, and even their skin color.

"Removed Individual" serves as an introduction to Cloud's at times perplexing free-association of signs and symbols. His openness with some of our most powerful and feared signifiers is liberating. The shaped canvasses and stretched formations lend themselves seamlessly to a penetrating visual contemplation of meaning and shape. At times there is a surfeit of visual information, which can muddy the beautiful mystery that is generated from forms that have tangential but not obvious or overt relationships.



## Bad Faith and Universal Technique

Mike Cloud at Thomas Erben Gallery, NYC  
by William Corwin



## Forward

During his residency at the Meulensteen Art Centre and its print studio 'Daglicht', Mike Cloud showed that in printmaking, as in painting, he excels at engaging multiple layers of meaning. While potato-chip bags are a universal artifact, Cloud re-contextualizes them. The common object becomes the medium and at the same time betrays a particular Dutch setting.

Over the course of his career, Cloud has consistently investigated and questioned the constituent elements of painting. He has often used mathematical formulas and self-imposed compositional limits in order to foreground not only his chosen materials, but the way those materials have been employed throughout the art historical tradition, concentrating on aspects of their makeup that often go unnoticed. In earlier work, for example, Cloud organized compositions based on the chemical properties of paint; the toxicity, plasticity, and drying time of various pigments were mapped in paintings of target-like charts.

However, Cloud juxtaposes the systemic nature of his compositional method against the sheer physical and emotional force of his paint handling and mark-making, which seem indebted to abstract expressionist forbears rather than the conceptually-oriented artists who came after them. In this regard, Cloud's work calls to mind a surprising lineage of figures, like Alfred Jensen, who have used organizational structures as the foundations for a personal visual language. Cloud complicates this relationship, though by introducing images and materials drawn directly from the world at large. He has produced an ongoing series of collages derived from monographs by female photographers, for instance, and has made paintings whose supports are fashioned from pieces of clothing that he has quilted together. Each of these techniques allows Cloud to incorporate imagery in his work without relying on his subjective experience as a source. Subjectivity, it seems, is something that he reserves for the physical application of the paint, or the intuitive way in which he constructs his stretchers, which become sculptural objects in themselves.

Cloud's transition into the use of printmaking techniques has been a gradual and natural one. Creating 'mirrored'



## Mike Cloud Quiltmaking & Overproduction of Opposites

Meulensteen Gallery, NY  
by Edwin Meulensteen

images in paint by folding canvas or fabric onto itself became a way for him to reproduce marks he had already made. In these works, existing compositions were employed as external sources from which imagery could be drawn, as if a painting's evolution depended on its becoming a material thing apart from the artist's conception. Subsequently, he began to paint images from children's garments onto sheets of plastic; these 'screens' were then used to print images onto quilts made from those very articles of clothing. In these paintings -cum- tapestries-cum-monoprints, Cloud developed a strange form of mirroring: an image from a commercial product is reflected through his understanding of painting as an activity that can compress dense material layers of cultural history. The image is part support, part brush, part composition. For Cloud, printmaking-like painting-becomes yet another form of objective organization, a system that reveals how images are made and perceived by the subjective power of individuals, as well as by the culture at large.

# Interloper

by Chris Stackhouse

Mike Cloud: Paper Quilts

Olsen Gallery/ Bethel University, St. Paul, MN

September 11 - December 19, 2014

In the very specific conversation in art about painting, Mike Cloud has radically self-assigned his position as an interloper. He is conversant and influential in the historical, formal, associative properties of the genre form, and is able to use it to posit aesthetic arguments that have social significance. Questions about viewing habits and behavior, as well as how visual vocabulary and language take shape are what underpin Cloud's work. Painting is foundational to that enterprise for several reasons beyond his apparent affection for it, namely, its commercial priority and its privileged rank among classes of fine art. It is an old art that continues to be attended to in all manners of education, and, in a variety of contemporary practice ranging from Conceptual Art to conventional portraiture. When looking at this painter's sizable and increasing output overall, the complexity of it, it is important to consider the fertile circumstances of pluralist and interdisciplinary ethos encouraged by the current global proliferation of art and related discourse; all distributable by internet service in tandem with mobile exhibition facilities of ubiquitous art fairs. That said, the Paper Quilts each assert an intervening object identity, and, an artist's objection to any status quo within a "system of basic experiences" possibly had by various kinds of audiences receptive to near infinite images and/or representations that can and do propose to be art.

For Cloud, beauty too easily seduces, lulls, and pacifies while insisting on passive participation. What is beauty? What is tradition? Can any conception of either remain stable; and if so, why, and for how long? The quilts and other collages in this exhibition, those from the series Leibovitz Orange, challenge expectation. Paint is used as adhesive, fastening the patchwork of images in the quilts, yet still presents color quality as an integral, residually formal, element. Painting, art historically speaking, is also usefully analogized with this gestural use of it as glue. Cloud takes for granted the academic import of color, however quick his

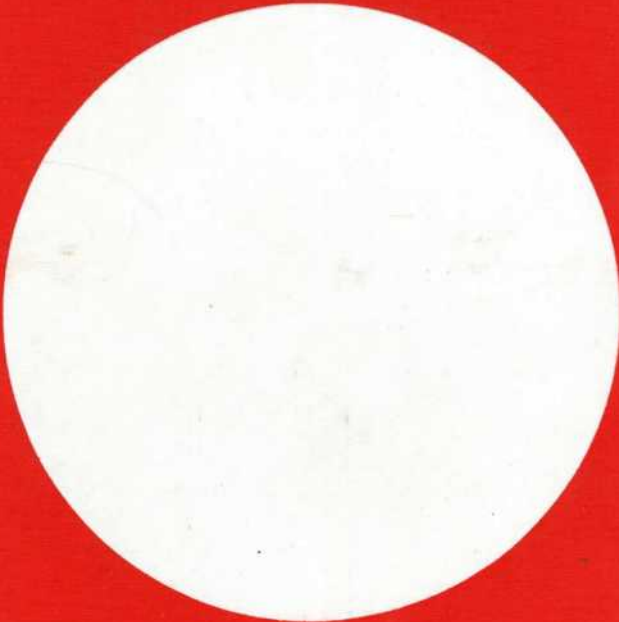
ostensible disinterested use of it appears to be. Any interpretation of use the color may have in the art is left to those who have "experience" with color. The same is true for the triangular patterning of cut color swatches (from the Color-Aid brand) that border and delineate the photographic images cut out of the pages of photographer Annie Leibovitz's monograph *A Photographers Life 1990 -2005*. The collages Leibovitz Orange are made on a substrate that is as pink as orange. The strange color brings pink and orange in proximity in the mind's eye. The figurative image content (mostly in black & white) in both series greatly range from freshly newborn baby girl with her umbilical cord still attached to a general's racks of ribbons and metals. In Dick Cheney's Paper Quilt (2010) pasted cut-up photos of Dick Cheney, Colin Powell, and George W. Bush, next to a section where there is a profile photo of singer/musician Dan Zanes (known for children's music and music for families) with his daughter Anna whose head is cut out of the picture. Though the imagery in these collages is hyper and disjunctive, rattlingly Dadaist at first glance, what becomes apparent is the language one must use to describe what is on view.

Entering into meaning through naming and classifying images is a habit and necessity in art that Cloud's work actively challenges. The material fact that any one of the collage-quilts presents is an effective decoy baiting us into an extensive debate about representation. Mike Cloud is an African-American male conceptualist painter; Annie Leibovitz is a third generation Jewish American lesbian woman, one of America's premiere portrait photographers. Leibovitz, as a professional camera for hire, is presumably disinterested in the contents of her photos. Cloud's appropriation and reconfiguration of Leibovitz's image production essentially mirrors that presumed technical aloofness that 'professionalism' generally requires. Also, Leibovitz's photos arguably straddle a line between the applied and fine arts; an ambiguity that Cloud's critique casually exploits.

As a distancing act, Cloud's performance within the works on hand is innovative in that the subject of the work manages to elude the content in them. Each work is filled traces of possibility. We are cajoled into joining Cloud in his meditation on how the physical quality of objects and their description give cues to our subjective responses. This maneuver casts responsibility on viewers of art, citizens of the art world, and more broadly participants in Western civilization, to evaluate how imagery and attendant verbal language influences their perception of society.



Painting Abstraction:  
New Elements in Abstract Painting  
by Bob Nickas



PHAIDON

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“Layering is always present in the work of Mike Cloud, something that both obscures and, paradoxically, reveals by obscuring what is underneath - and at times if only he makes us reconcile visual and textual information: what we see and what we read. He is an artist that doesn't believe that the physical and the conceptual are in opposition, who trusts as much in logic as in intuition, and who makes no real distinction between the object and the subject. While most of his paintings have a rough, messy facture, and he lays bare their materials and supports, the underlying structures are squares and grids, and Cloud often relies on mathematical equations, on algorithms and Venn diagrams, to calculate his initial procedure. “The appeal of systematic painting,” he says, “is that it nails down the subject.” And what is his subject, or, since his work has taken on various appearances over the years, what are his subjects? One of his earliest groups of paintings is based on reproductions of old master still lifes. Each work has the same dimensions as the original but has been divided into a grid of 256 equal rectangles, for which he created a palette of 256 colors. In his abstraction *Paul Gauguin: Still Life with Sunflowers* (2002), as one might expect, there are no flowers and no signs of anything remotely recognizable; Cloud has transformed the original into a geometric still life. With his “color chart” and “film quality” paintings, Cloud considers the toxicity of his lead paints - from mild to moderate to severe - and their drying speeds in relation to colors and paint film quality. In the “Color-aid” paintings, strips of Color-aid paper have been affixed to, and some partly peeled away from, a silvery aluminum surface that reflects them, while the painted ground is visible behind the paper and the aluminum. Because Color-aid comes in fixed increments, he says of these works, “The phenomenological experience of color is also algorithmic.” In 2005, Cloud began a series of portraits that would not at first glance seem to belong to the genre, although we identify them as such because of the artist's designation. He refers to the paintings as “caricatures”, opening up some leeway in terms of representation - allowing for exaggeration and distortion. Even so, they are, in visual terms, wholly abstract. All the painting have either a white or dark grid composed of squares that have been painted freehand and a vertical or square orientation, as a portrait would have. On top of the grid he adds another layer, an expressionist outburst of forms that is a kind of spontaneous combustion. He paints quickly and directly, with no pretense to virtuosity, and again the support appears vulnerable (like a person, in fact). These abstract portraits may not offer the viewer a recognizable human subject, but each represents an individual. For Cloud, there



## Painting Abstraction: New Elements in Abstract Painting

by Bob Nickas  
Phaidon Press

is the presence of each person - and perhaps their energy - and even if we don't see them, he painted them, and he does. Cloud's overriding subject is painting itself.

At the same time that Cloud was making these portraits he began to incorporate toys and parts of children's board games in his paintings, experimenting with abstract/pop combines that didn't look like anything he had done before. Once again, he would take a visual path that seemed unrelated to those previously explored, and yet he did not significantly diverge from his basic concerns of from a consistent way of working. Nothing is precious; all the layers are visible, as is the first works, the title

identifies the painted image as a maze: *Mule on Cloud Maze, Duck on Lightning Maze, Elephant on Heart Maze* (all 2005). The animals are plastic toys that have been attached to the canvas with painted-over support. The plasticity of the toys combined with the intentional crudeness of the paint application creates a hybrid object that is easily read but uneasily received. This is exactly the juncture as which Cloud wants to place not only the viewer but also himself. “I'm interested,” he has noted, “in how the compression of an essentially random world, through the mediation of art [and] popular culture, has altered my perception of both images and objects.” In 2007-08 Cloud upped the ante with new combine paintings that he calls “quilts”. For these works, he built shaped stretchers with the bars extended beyond the canvas like multiple spokes and sewed infants' and children's clothing onto them to create a dissonant surface on which to paint. The clothing as imagery, mostly of animals - cute tigers and bears and dogs - as well as language, all of which is legible, albeit obscured by paint that could have been applied by the children who might have worn these shirts and jeans and socks. They could be mud-stained or chocolate-spattered, the evidence of an unruly, unsupervised playtime/ paint-time. The works can be humorous and they can be disturbing. But are they the product of a rational or an irrational mind? Or both?”





MIKE CLOUD

MOIRA DRYER

CHRIS MARTIN

JOHN L. MOORE

DONA NELSON

DON DESMETT, CURATOR

# CHARISMATIC ABSTRACTION

OCTOBER 30 – NOVEMBER 25, 2008

JAMES W. and LOIS I. RICHMOND CENTER for VISUAL ARTS

ALBERTINE MONROE-BROWN GALLERY

GWEN FROSTIC SCHOOL OF ART

COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY



# CLOUD

MIKE



Plate 6, Mike Cloud, *Tiger, Bear and Dog Quilt*, oil and clothes on linen with stretcher bars, 67 x 69 inches, 2007. Image and painting courtesy of the artist and Max Protetch Gallery, New York.

In a world that is saturated with images and symbols crashing into one another on the Internet, TV, and in busy urban centers, Mike Cloud paints with the question hanging over him as to the viability of painting as a means of communication. Cloud uses mathematical principles, grids, and color studies, while executing the surfaces with expressionistic brushwork and semi controlled chaos. He literally turns the paintings inside out, revealing the structure of the paintings both physically as well as symbolically. Cloud challenges us, whether it is by seeing the methods of construction exposed in the work, or questioning the materials (like children's clothing as painting surface) and their relationship to content in the works of art.

Cloud seems interested in how the viewer may be altered by an encounter with the works. "A lot of painting for me is just trying to find out what is believable and what kinds of painting can be honestly generated."<sup>12</sup> *Tiger Bear and Dog Quilt*, 2007 (Plate 6) is an eerie example of the historical implications of materials, and the content they bring with them. In this case, infant's clothing is forcefully stretched on exposed wooden stretchers, giving the material an uneasy feeling of being pulled-or torn apart. This becomes disturbing because of what the viewer brings to the information of the painting. In the end, it's just cotton cloth, combined to form a surface that has been applied with the action brushstrokes of expressionist history. Mixed signals? Cloud says of his works; "I'm interested in how the compression of an essentially random world (through the mediation of art, popular culture) has altered my perception of both images and objects."<sup>13</sup>

Cloud's paintings seem to be a reflection as well as an end result of his personal experiences. A straight linear narrative is drained from the painting's meaning, and the viewer enters the work as a direct participant, but from seemingly varied directions. Uncomfortable as it may be, the viewer also finds historical influences, from minimal to conceptual (Duchamp conceptual that is) and even Pop cultural references. In Cloud's words the paintings are what they are, an object of paint, cloth, wood, and just maybe they are not transformative. But if *Tiger Bear and Dog Quilt* does not consider the state of popular culture, it is hard to be sure that anything does. In the end, Cloud says "Authentic art challenges our assumptions about aesthetic form and experience, forcing the viewer to expand and deepen their experience through the work of art."<sup>14</sup> He has released these objects on to the world, and the dust may never settle.



Plate 7, Mike Cloud, *Untitled*, oil on linen, 96 x 72 inches, 2006. Image and painting courtesy of the artist and Max Protetch Gallery, New York.



Plate 8, Mike Cloud, *Untitled*, oil on linen, 96 x 72 inches, 2006. Image and painting courtesy of the artist and Max Protetch Gallery, New York.





Plate 9. Mike Cloud, *Rabbit, Rainbow and Sun Quilt*, oil and clothes on linen with stretcher bars, 73 x 93 1/2 inches, 2007. Image and painting courtesy of the artist and Max Protech Gallery, New York.



It's a pleasure to see Mike Cloud, on his third solo ground at Max Protetch, lose none of the remarkably assured, nausea-inducing aesthetics that superficially, at least, make him the odd duck in the gallery flock. For Agreement and Subjectivity, it seems the artist has scoured department store racks, locker rooms and bargain basements for the kids' clothing comprising his new series of quilts. SpongeBob pyjama pants, pink Cinderella hoodies, Cheshire Cat socks and other lil' bits aggregate into lumpy surfaces, sewn onto linne and propped by stretchers. Cloud also exhibits a series of oil paintings on plastic - of a monkey, snowman and Iron Man, among others - which he has preciously pressed, like monoprinting plates, onto the quilts. Surveying the spread, it's hard not to think of the clothing's absent owners, in those first throes of consumerism, when a cartoon character suffices for self-identity, and gender roles go the way of the pink and the blue. They broke into teacher's paints drawer, and now look what an awful mess they've made!

Cloud, it turns out, is a systems-based painter, making his crude artworks far less indulgent than they first appear. The Quilt paintings, for example, represent efforts to achieve proximity between subject and image, partly through the consonance of clothing print and painted character. So Cloud prints a fiery-hued fairy atop a Tinkerbell T-shirt and tanktop, in Fairie Quilt (all works 2008), and a striped, orange car onto a T-shirt featuring Lightning McQueen, a talking race car from Disney's Cars (2006), in Orange Car Quilt. This banal subject matter ably bolsters the artist's demotion of oils to a printmaking medium, and of linen to a fabric interstice - parameters, in short, that call attention to what they pointedly are not: author-glorifying painting. The air has been let out of the painter myth, and however masterfully or garishly a monkey may thenceforth be wrought is an entirely secondary concern.

The reapportionment of the imagery and objects of childhood produces yet another grain along which to read the exhibition's titular terms. Agreement clearly designates the subject-image coherence Cloud strives for, as well as an accord between interpretation and authorial intent, achieved through his emphasis on transparent, depersonalised technique. In this sense, the agreement

Max Protetch 511 W. 22nd Street New York, NY 10011-1109

www.usa

**Art Review:**

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**Mike Cloud**  
Agreement and Subjectivity

Max Protetch, New York  
8 September - 27 September



t: 212 633 6999 e: info@maxprotetch.com f: 212 691 4342

## Mike Cloud Agreement and Subjectivity

by Tyler Coburn  
Max Protetch

that stabilises the artwork exemplifies that of any social order built upon commonly accepted codes. And while 'subjectivity' may demarcate the personal sphere, and thus offer a counterpoint to such a community, it can also form the precondition for membership. Subjectivisation, after all, defines the process by which one becomes a subject within a society and requisitely habituates its norms. The consumer staples of an American child's formative years are here shown to be its powerfully inductive tools; and the subject, Cloud demonstrates, is always caught within the cogs of societal production.



# Mike Cloud

by Holland Cotter  
Max Protetch, NYC

Mike Cloud is a young artist of the moment, with a project exhibition at P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center, photo-collages in “Frequency” at the Studio Museum in Harlem and new paintings in a solo show here. His work, and this show in particular, is a tough nut to crack. But rude, funny and meaty, it’s well worth the attempt.

Mr. Cloud has recently played with systematic approaches to painting. In one case, he used mathematical formulas to turn old master still lifes into geometric abstractions. In another, he arranged paint strokes according to color wheel hues or physical properties (toxicity, speed of drying). The idea was to dodge the whole “painterly” gambit, with its associations of virtuosity and subjectivity, not to mention transcendence. “Belief is a major obstacle in painting,” Mr. Cloud has written. In the faith versus works debate, he goes with action: don’t polish the car and pray it runs; tinker with the engine, then step on the gas.

There’s a good deal of productive tinkering here. Two series of paintings are based on linear grids, a classic visual signature of systematic abstraction. But in one series, the grids serve as support for plumelike explosions of color intended as abstract portraits. In the other, a grid cut from sheets of aluminum actually covers up an underlying oil painting, and is itself half-covered with pastered-on and half-peeled-back Color Aid strips, the kind used to teach theory in art classes. The reflection of the color from the peeling strips on the aluminum surface ends up being the “painting.”

Several more recent pictures unite painted forms and objects in what could be Minimalist “combines.” Each painting depicts a single linear maze made in a distinctive

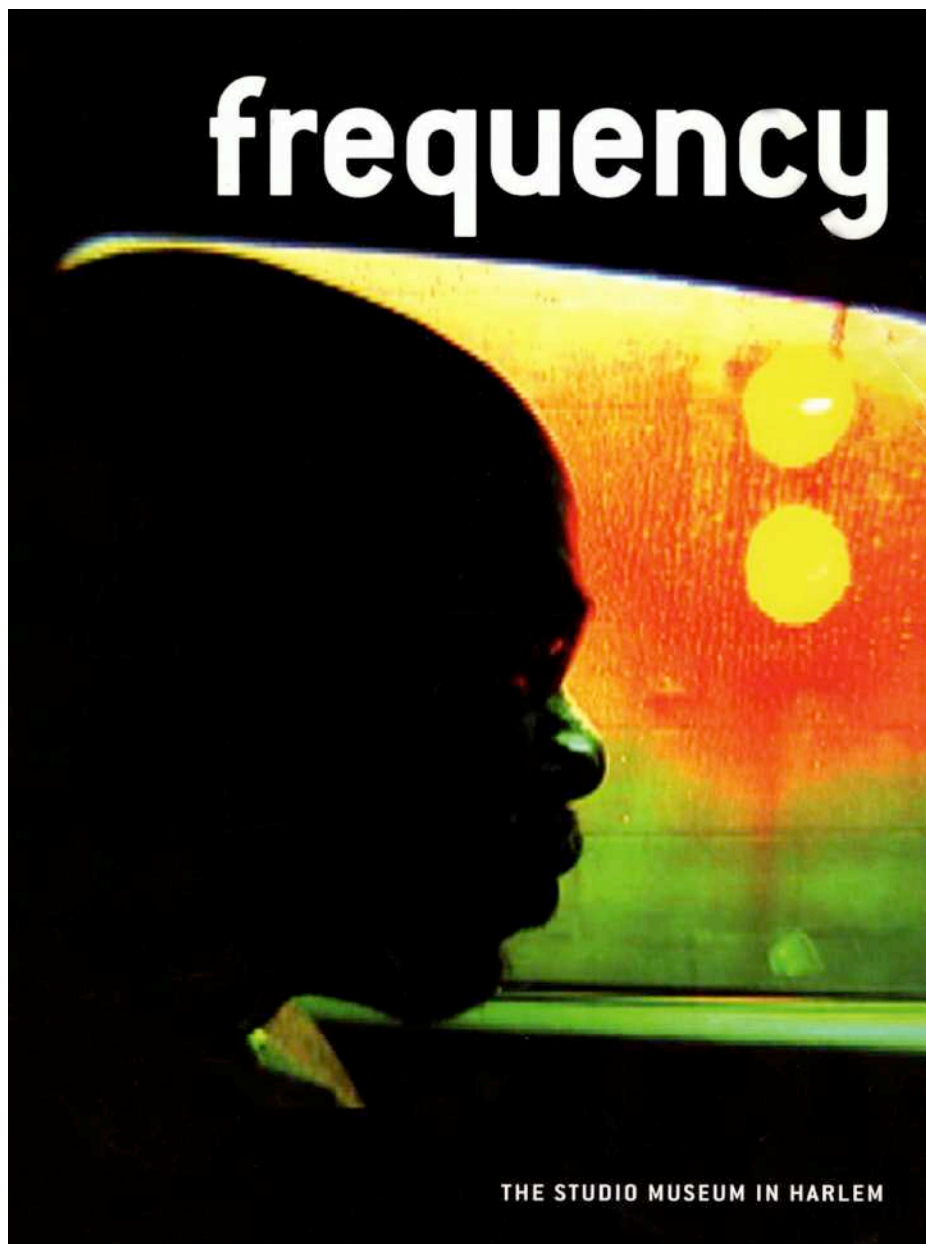
shape: a heart, a cloud, a pentagram, a lightning bolt. To each painting, Mr. Cloud has affixed children’s toys or boardgame pieces.

A few painting have been turned into sculptures. In one case, a pair of Star of David maze paintings stand upright, facing each other; at once separated and stabilized by the figure of a cartoonish plastic bird with outstretched legs.

Toys and mazes, hearts and lightning. Could there be a system of symbols, even a story, in play here? Mr. Cloud — who, when he wants to, can shoot straight from the hip critically, as he does in his freakish collages of exoticized photographs of Africa at the Studio Museum — is not saying. And while I can claim no clear idea of what he’s driving at, I really like the way he drives, fast but in control making lots of turns, and constantly leaving the highway for less-traveled roads.



# frequency



THE STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM

# frequency

Thelma Golden  
Christine Y. Kim

Michael Paul Britto  
Nyame O. Brown  
Jonathan Calm  
Nick Cave  
Zoë Charlton  
Mike Cloud  
Isaac Diggs  
Kianga Ford  
Rashawn Griffin  
Leslie Hewitt  
Wayne Hodge  
Sedrick E. Huckaby  
Kalup Linzy  
Nzuji De Magalhães  
Rodney McMillian  
Lester Julian Merriweather  
Wardell Milan II  
Demetrius Oliver  
Xiomara De Oliver  
Karyn Olivier  
Adam Pendleton  
Jefferson Pinder  
Robert A. Pruitt  
Michael Queenland  
Marc André Robinson  
Xaviera Simmons  
Kwabena Slaughter  
Shinique Amie Smith  
Jeff Sonhouse  
Hank Willis Thomas  
Mickalene Thomas  
Jina Valentine  
William Villalongo  
Roberto Visani  
Paula Wilson

THE STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM



## Mike Cloud

### Cut and Paste: Editing and Assemblage in Mike Cloud's Works on Paper

Mike Cloud is consumed with the female perspective. Intent on gaining insight into the historically fraught notion of the "female gaze," he pays serious attention to the ways in which white women photographers capture and put forth images of others, primarily through the genre of portraiture. Taking photography books (the typically large-format, glossy type found on countless coffee tables across America) containing widely distributed images by such photographers as Diane Arbus, Annie Leibowitz and Mary Ellen Mark, Cloud cuts out and reassembles figures into hybrid creatures. Creating near-Frankensteinian amalgamations of bodies, Cloud's gestures can be read paradoxically as both nurturing and respectful, and destructive and violent, while his methods of de- and re-assembly both reveal and disrupt ideas of holistic subjectivity or intact representation. Interested in photography's historic capacity to establish type, Cloud's act of collaging together the parts of distinct people is intended to reduce the burden on any single individual to function as the archetype for any given group—"the midget," "the skinhead" or "the African," for instance. Through his complicated



combinatory material gestures, Cloud invokes and questions notions of uniqueness. These now-collective bodies seek to mutilate the potential for generalization found within photography's facile reproduction and circulation, and to spread the burden of representation from individual to group.

In the body of work presented here, *African Ceremonies*, (2005) Cloud uses the two-volume book of the same name as his source. With photographs by Carol Beckwith and Angela Fisher, this anthropological endeavor compiles a large number of color photographs depicting traditional African rituals and ceremonies. In this series, Cloud's interest in photography's propensity toward the fetishization of the image and, in the case of portraiture, the body, is paramount. Like Sherrie Levine's appropriation of the works of male artists who came before her, Cloud's adoption of women artists' images is both homage and critique. Yet Levine keeps her original sources intact, while Cloud isolates elements and re-focuses emphasis. The formal articulation of transforming now-eviscerated source material into new bodies might be considered a morally suspicious act of fetishistic attention to isolated aspects of the human body. In Cloud's hands, each body part becomes deliberately exaggerated, the focus of undue attention, and triggers the familiar voyeuristic unease that often accompanies the viewing of a portrait. Cloud has described the editing process inherent to photography as "audacious" for its bold subjectivity often shrouded in a perceived "truthfulness" or "objectivity." By presenting both the two-dimensional collaged figures and the original books with the negative, cut-out spaces apparent (like topographical maps through which momentary views of the past are

*African Ceremonies: Volumes I and II, 2005 (details)*

visible), Cloud's editing process is a counterintuitive mode of additive production. He rejects the notion of exclusionary selection designed to locate a singular or quintessential image in favor of careful arrangements that highlight a continuous overlapping, blending and shifting of body, and by extension, identity.

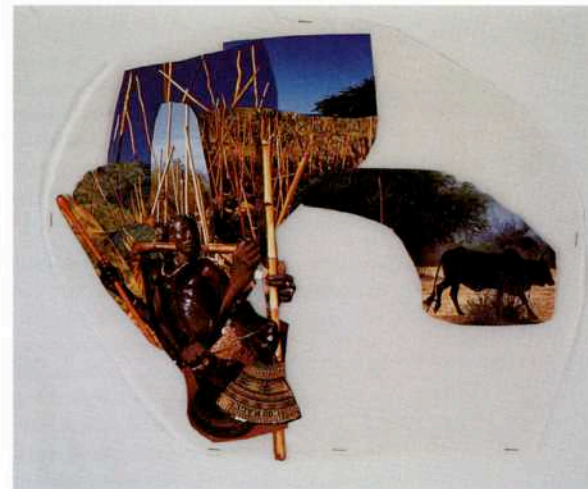
Roland Barthes describes the relationship between the photographer and his subject as invoking a near existential crisis. In front of the camera, one struggles to exert an authentic subjectivity and yet the snap of the lens is akin to a small death in which the subject becomes a specter at the hands of his photographer, who "... himself fears this death in which his gesture will embalm me."<sup>1</sup> Barthes' discomfort perfectly articulates the moral dilemma inherent in portraiture and the profound power dynamic that exists between photographer and sitter. Cloud's work acknowledges the startling capacity of the photographic image to create meaning and influence opinion, which reached near-hysterical debate with such exhibitions as the Museum of Modern Art's 1955 *Family of Man* and the (ultimately censored) Robert Mapplethorpe retrospective of 1989. This power struggle is made visible, and even magnified, in Cloud's work, in which he appropriates not only an image, but also its fundamental questions of control and authority, further complicating the subject/object dilemma and the question of authorship.

By literally adopting the gaze of the white woman, rearticulating it and claiming it as his own, Cloud's artistic process plays out some of the dynamics of race and gender that mark American history and continue to saturate contemporary life around the globe.

As a black man, Cloud investigates a shared marginalization with white women, yet he also recognizes the intense ambiguity stemming from the cultural biases and ever-present stereotypes that have played such a large role in keeping the relationship between these two groups contested territory. This is, after all, a country in which the memory of Emmett Till, a 14-year-old black boy who was beaten and murdered in Mississippi in 1955 after he whistled at a white woman, still looms large. "The parallel position," as Cloud describes it, shared by the artist and those he appropriates, is constantly thrown into complicated relief by the social history that provides a highly charged context for the work, and by the unique position of his referents as photographers whose images are embraced within both the artistic and commercial realms and enjoy such wide circulation as to be immediately recognizable to many viewers. To view Cloud's collaged figures is to become aware of his position as both subject and object of the work and then to feel implicated in the process ... to recognize, as Barthes says, "I am the reference of every photograph."<sup>2</sup> These subtleties of continual renegotiation and their inherent politics resound acutely in Cloud's collages and for me personally—a white woman invited to comment on Cloud's powerful, provocative and troubling imagery.

#### ANNE ELLEGOOD

1. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1981) 14; originally published in French as *La chambre claire: Note sur la photographie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1980).
2. Barthes, 66.





# The New York Times

## Mike Cloud

by Grace Glueck  
The New York Times

Max Protetch, NYC

Mike Cloud's abstract paintings come in two series. In one group, he lays down expressive, gestural abstractions in orthodox New York School manner, then covers them over with silver foil so that only bits of the imagery show through. In some, small shapes cut from colored paper are fixed on top of the foil, so that flickering tones play on the silvery surface. There's added vitality in the restless squiggles of pigment that can be read underneath the covering.

The most arresting is "Vertical Zig Zag," in which a painting in brick red, blue, black and chocolate hues can be tantalizingly glimpsed behind broad, bent silver stripes that march rhythmically across the canvas.

In the other, more rationally based group, Mr. Cloud uses an algorithmic or programmed approach to characterize the physical qualities of his paint medium, like toxicity, drying speed and paint film quality. Expressed in thickly impastoed, concentric circle charts partly filled with graded colors, they bear titles like "Mild and Moderately Toxic," "Mildly, Moderately and Severely Toxic," etc. Their echoes of unorthodox "system" painters like Al Jensen are apparent. In contrast to Mr. Cloud's other paintings, these rank as mildly to moderately but not severely interesting.

More compelling are his collaged, odd and amusing juxtapositions of figures and faces cut from books of photographs by Diane Arbus, Annie Leibovitz and others. In one, titled "Brooklyn Jewish Girl with a Mexican Friend," the porkpie-hatted head and shirtfront of a powerful-looking black man related to an unattached hand that rests on the décolleté chest of a wistfully defiant-looking woman; in "Heidi Fleiss," a tribute to the self-declared madam, a decorous woman's head rests atop a lush nude body (with multiple breasts) that overflows the chair she sits in.

Buzzing with ideas, Mr. Cloud is a talent to watch.

### Mike Cloud

Max Protech Gallery  
511 West 22nd Street, Chelsea  
Through Oct. 2

Mike Cloud's abstract paintings come in two series. In one group, he lays down expressive, gestural abstractions in orthodox New York School manner, then covers them over with silver foil so that only bits of the imagery show through. In some, small shapes cut from colored paper are fixed on top of the foil, so that flickering tones play on the silvery surface. There's added vitality in the restless squiggles of pigment that can be read underneath the covering.

The most arresting is "Vertical Zig Zag," in which a painting in brick red, blue, black and chocolate hues can be tantalizingly glimpsed behind broad, bent silver stripes that march rhythmically across the canvas.

In the other, more rationally based group, Mr. Cloud uses an algorithmic or programmed approach to characterize the physical qualities of his paint medium, like toxicity, drying speed and paint film quality. Expressed in thickly impastoed, concentric circle charts partly filled with graded colors, they bear titles like "Mild and Moderately Toxic," "Mildly, Moderately and Severely Toxic," etc. Their echoes of unorthodox "system" painters like Al Jensen are apparent. In contrast to Mr. Cloud's other paintings, these rank as mildly to moderately but not severely interesting.

More compelling are his collages, odd and amusing juxtapositions of figures and faces cut from books of photographs by Diane Arbus, Annie Leibovitz and others. In one, titled "Brooklyn Jewish Girl With a Mexican Friend," the porkpie-hatted head and shirtfront of a powerful-looking black man relates to an unattached hand that rests on the décolleté chest of a wistfully defiant-looking woman; in "Heidi Fleiss," a tribute to the self-declared madam, a decorous woman's head rests atop a lush nude body (with multiple breasts) that overflows the chair she sits in.

Buzzing with ideas, Mr. Cloud is a talent to watch.

