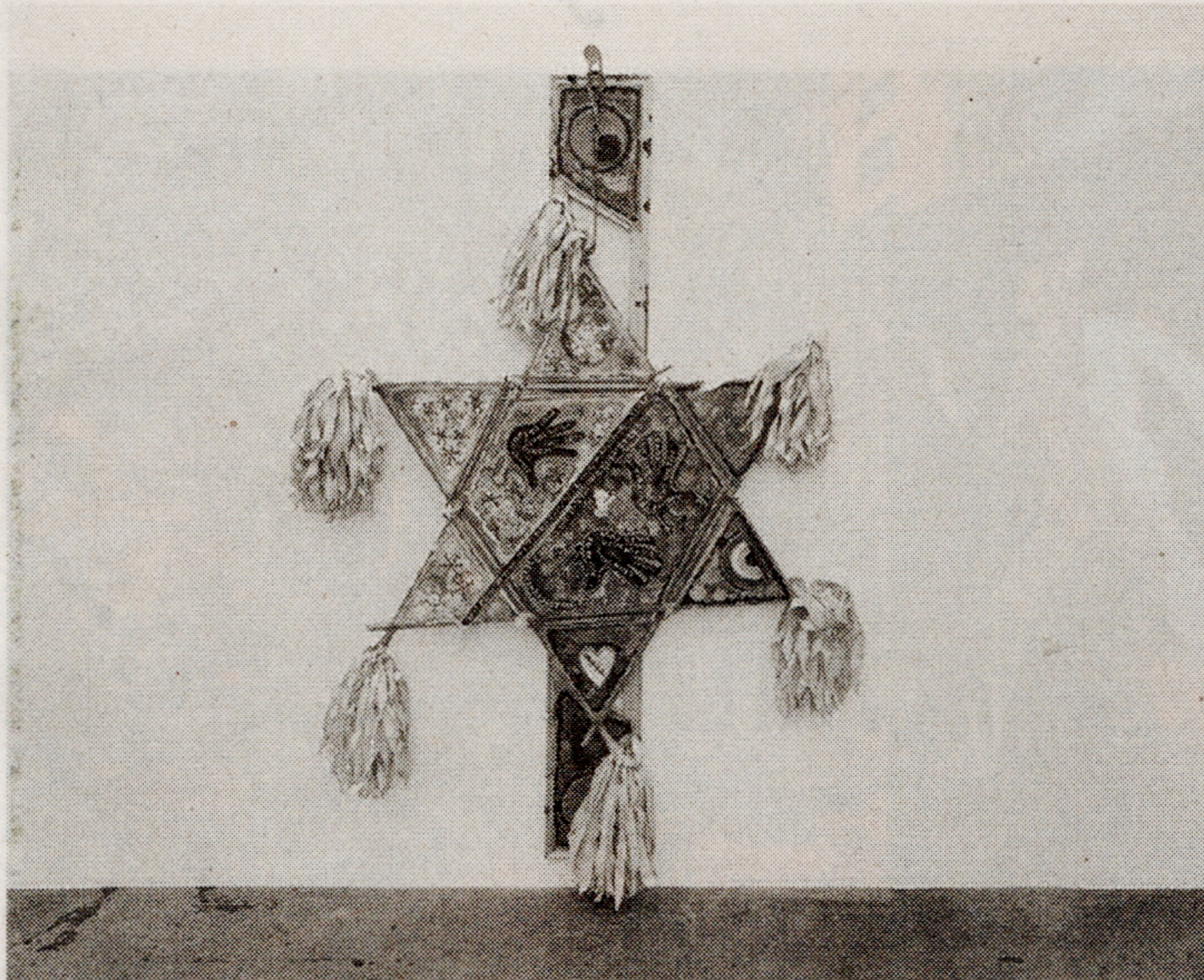


Galleries

WILL HEINRICH



VIA MIKE CLOUD AND THOMAS ERBEN GALLERY, NEW YORK

Mike Cloud's "Erda Yellow Star of David" (2024), at Thomas Erben.

Mike Cloud

Through Oct. 26. Thomas Erben Gallery, 526 West 26th Street, fourth floor, Manhattan; 212-645-8701, thomaserben.com.

Each of the six works in Mike Cloud's spectacular show at Thomas Erben begins with a tall and narrow wooden frame leaning against the wall. Hanging from the top edge of every frame, which is angled to evoke a guillotine, is a large triangle or star roughly constructed from broom handles. Colored pencils, No. 2 pencils or wooden spoons jut out from many of the handles' intersections, and a mop head made from shredded canvas is attached to each corner.

Cloud cuts canvas to fit each of the stars' interior sections and paints them with rainbows, pie charts and snowflake patterns in vivid, oily, impeccably chosen colors. He also glues on canvas hearts adorned with football-like rows of stitches and hamsa-like hands, which he turns to birds by painting on beaks and legs, as in a grade-school Thanksgiving project.

Another strip of canvas runs across the front of each piece, on which Cloud paints a web address from Wirecutter, The Athletic or The New York Times. They lead to such disparate articles as one about the ambassador of Israel's wearing a yellow star to the United Nations and another explaining how to clean a smelly tent.

What's astonishing about these pieces is how distinctly they still read as paintings, despite all these elements of sculpture, mixed-media collage, postmodern deconstruction and Rauschenberg-era expansion of the canvas. Cloud's trick is that he uses those elements to expose the visual interest and untapped power of the sheer, painterly relationship between a flat canvas surface and a set of wooden stretcher bars.
