

It's a pleasure to see Mike Cloud, on his third solo go-round 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 linen 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 previously 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 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. *Tyler Coburn*

## Mike Cloud *Agreement and Subjectivity*

Max Protetch, New York  
4 September – 27 September



*Snow Man Quilt*, 2008,  
oil and clothes on linen,  
132 x 107 x 10 cm. Photo:  
Eli Ping Weinberg. Courtesy  
the artist and Max Protetch  
Gallery, New York