



Rabbit Quilt, 2008. Oil and clothes on linen, 42 x 32 x 4 in.

Mike Cloud

Quilt painting

February 22 – March 31, 2018

Thomas Erben Gallery is excited to bring together Mike Cloud's formative painted-clothing series from 2007 and 2008, a period in which the artist incisively foregrounded printmaking and collage strategies—incorporating children's clothing, mark making by transference, and unusually arranged stretchers. The show marks the first time that these works will be exhibited side-by-side (they were previously shown at Miami's Center for Visual Communication during Art Basel and Max Protetch Gallery in New York), uniting a playful, deliberate and exposed, multivalent body of work.

Running concurrent with *The Myth of Education*, an exhibition of new and recent work by Cloud at the Logan Center Gallery (University of Chicago), *Quilt painting* looks back to an antecedent of his later, celebrated shaped-canvas paintings.

Viewed together, Cloud's painted-clothing series displays a number of common features: store-bought, unused children's clothing, as evidenced by their still-attached price tags; a printmaking approach to applying paint; sly, sophisticated replications (and occasionally redactions) of text and images; bright, child-like renderings of dragons, fairies, dinosaurs, rabbits, and rainbows (applied onto the

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surfaces as monoprints). Broadly, though, the pieces are divisible into two discrete groups—those with skeletal-like, partially exposed stretchers and those with distended, puffy surfaces, the result of Cloud stuffing their canvases with foam.

With their exposed stretchers splaying out beyond the edges and the stuffed canvas bulging outwards, the works pursue an embodied approach to abstraction, an interest that Cloud continues to explore. Rendering his images in a child's messy, unencumbered hand, Cloud establishes a relationship between the clothing's commercially oriented imagery and the expressiveness of a child's actual imagination. While the clothing stirs a sense of childhood innocence, Cloud's depersonalized mark making and relationship to the material (these are not his children's clothing) thrusts the works into an objective, yet conflicted space of social relevance.

Simultaneously organized and messy, naïve and calculated, embodied and seemingly at a distance, Cloud's paintings evoke a variety of approaches and reactions, from joy to dismay, intimacy to impersonality. Introducing the body into a committed practice of abstraction, Cloud made works of strange ambiguity, where childhood sentiments mingle with commercial realities, conceptual calculation, and disturbed beauty.

Mike Cloud is a New York based painter whose work examines the conditions of painting in its contemporary life among countless reproductions, symbols and descriptions. After studying at the University of Illinois at Chicago, Cloud earned his MFA from Yale in 2003. His work has been extensively shown, at venues such as MoMA P.S.1, Marianne Boesky Gallery, White Columns, Max Protetch, Apexart, and was included in *Frequency* at The Studio Museum in Harlem in 2006. In addition to numerous reviews, his work was part of *Painting Abstraction* by Bob Nickas, Phaidon Press (2009). He has been awarded the inaugural Chiaro Award from the Headlands Center for the Arts, CA; a New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship and residencies at the Meulensteen Art Centre in the Netherlands as well as the Sharpe-Walentas Studio Program in New York. Cloud is currently an assistant professor at Brooklyn College/CUNY in New York. This is the artist's third exhibition with the gallery, including a solo presentation of his work at Art Basel Miami Beach, 2016.

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