1-1-2006

Mike Cloud: Systems

Daniel A. Siedell

Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, University of Nebraska- Lincoln

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SHELDON
MEMORIAL ART GALLERY
NEBRASKA ART ASSOCIATION

4 APRIL - 25 JUNE, 2006

MIKE CLOUD:

SYSTEMS

ELEPHANT ON HEART MAZE

Mike Cloud was born in 1974. He received a BFA from the University of Illinois-Chicago and studied at Yale University, where he received his MFA in 2003. He has had solo exhibitions at the Max Protetch Gallery in 2003, 2004, and 2006. His work has been featured in *National Projects* at PS1 Contemporary Art Center in Long Island City and in *Frequency* at the Studio Museum in Harlem. He lives and works in Brooklyn.

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"So a lot of painting for me is just trying to find out what is believable and what kinds of painting can be honestly generated."

-01-

→ MAKING ART IS PART OF THE PROCESS OF ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS, "WHO AM I?" AND "HOW DOES THIS 'I' RELATE TO THE WORLD?"

☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆
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"I'm interested in how the compression of an essentially random world (through media-tion) has altered my perception of both images and objects."

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

"The subject of a map is what it maps; the sub-ject of a chart is what it charts. So I feel the chart form...is a good one to put painting into because it has this ability to nail down a subject. Once nailed down, it's easier to figure out what we believe or don't believe about its relationship to other things."

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

→ **12**

→ THIS SLAMMING TOGETHER OF IMAGES MIGHT HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH HOW HIS PAINTINGS RELATE TO HIS COLLAGES.

"Extremes can be seen in the paintings, perhaps extremes of intuition and logic. I think of the extremes as being those of conceptuality and physicality, the physical and the mental, or the physical and the metaphysical. The act of painting, for me, is about constantly proposing and denying that opposition."

-20- SYSTEMS AND ALGORITHMS FUNCTION AS METAPHORS IN HIS PAINTINGS.

"An algorithm is a way of compressing things into a finite set of instructions with a clear beginning and ending."

CROCODILE ON STAR OF DAVID MAZE

-09-

HE TURNS PAINTINGS INSIDE OUT AND REVEALS THE SYSTEMS AND STRUCTURES, LITERALLY AND METAPHORICALLY, WHICH HAVE BROUGHT THEM INTO EXISTENCE AND CONTINUE TO SUSTAIN THEM.

-10-

HE ANALYZES AESTHETICALLY THE CONTENTS OF A PAINTING. HIS WORK ASKS, WHAT MAKES A PAINTING?

FONT - CLARENDON: **MIKE CLOUD**
FONT - ORATOR: DANIEL A. SIEDELL

DON'T WAKE DADDY ON D MAZE

21 HIS PAINTINGS ARE SIMULTANEOUSLY CONCRETE AND CONCEPTUAL.

"BELIEF IS A MAJOR OBSTACLE IN PAINTING."

22 HIS PAINTINGS EXPLORE HOW A PAINTING BECOMES BELIEVABLE AS A PAINTING.

-02-

THE WORK OF ART IS A SPECIFIC EXPERIENCE EMBODIED IN PARTICULAR AESTHETIC FORM THAT IS APPROPRIATE TO THAT PARTICULAR EXPERIENCE.

-03- AUTHENTIC ART OFFERS NEW FORMS THAT EMBODY NEW EXPERIENCES OR NEW REFLECTIONS ON COMMON EXPERIENCES.

-04- AUTHENTIC ART CHALLENGES OUR ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT AESTHETIC FORM AND EXPERIENCE, FORCING THE VIEWER TO EXPAND AND DEEPEN THEIR EXPERIENCE THROUGH THE WORK OF ART.

-05- MIKE CLOUD'S WORK IS AUTHENTIC AND IT IS DIFFICULT.

13 - CLOUD'S NEW PAINTINGS ARE SYSTEMS OF MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE.

14 - HIS PAINTINGS ARE COMPOSED OF ICONS THAT MAKE ETERNALLY PRESENT HIS EXPERIENCE OF HIS PAST AND THE SYSTEMS, STRUCTURES, AND STORIES THAT HAVE NOURISHED HIM.

15 - HIS PAINTING IS SIMULTANEOUSLY A MANIFESTATION OF AND A REFLECTION ON EXPERIENCE.
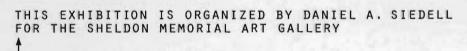
16 - HIS PAINTINGS ARE ABOUT THE CONTINUED VIABILITY OF EASEL PAINTING IN A WORLD SATURATED WITH IMAGES, SYMBOLS, AND SIGNS.

17 - HIS PAINTINGS CHALLENGE EVERY ASSUMPTION I HAVE ABOUT PAINTING.

18 - I DON'T KNOW IF HIS PAINTINGS "MEAN" ANYTHING.

DESIGNED BY JUSTIN KEMERLING

CHICKEN WITH TWO PENTAGRAMS

THIS EXHIBITION IS ORGANIZED BY DANIEL A. SIEDELL
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With all our technologies that seem to assure our existence, we think we can banish belief. But in the practice of painting, belief inevitably returns. It is required of the painter who must convince himself that making marks of paint on a canvas is worth doing. It is also required of the viewer who must convince herself that taking paintings seriously is worth the trouble.

Mike Cloud's paintings are critical, even skeptical, investigations into what makes a painting a painting. Grids, algorithms, art supply catalogs, and other frameworks serve to isolate the parts of a painting so he can scrutinize them separately before he puts them back together. He hides nothing in his paintings; everything is exposed: the canvas is stapled on the front of the frames; unpainted and unprimed canvas remains at the edges; and stretcher bars and tears in the canvas remain starkly, even disconcertingly, visible.

The images he paints (in this exhibition, mazes in the form of signs and symbols that include children's game components) force us to acknowledge the plethora of conventions that make a painting believable as a painting. All painting requires this belief. What but belief can transform canvas stretched over and stapled onto wood frames, smeared with oil paint, and a toy slapped onto it into something of significance, into something worth our attention, our reflection?

These "toy" paintings defy you to disbelieve them, to turn away. But you cannot. Perhaps Cloud is right: his paintings don't mean anything. But that doesn't mean we don't believe in them.

— Daniel A. Siedell

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