



Eric Mack, *Avonte*, 2015, acrylic on moving blanket and felt blanket, elastic rope, metal grommets, 81 x 72 7". Installation view, Compagny Gallery, New York.



Eric Mack, *2 FANS*, 2015, folding fans, metal floral armature, dried decorative grass, ribbons, newspaper, 74 1/2 x 75 x 55". Installation view, Moran Bondaroff, Los Angeles.

DRAPED OVER ARMATURES or pinned to the wall in drooping swags, Eric Mack's magpie conglomerations of found textiles and various sundry objects stage the morphing and buckling of the painterly support, the messy intrusion of surface into space. They recall the complex artistic history of such interventions while registering as ambiguously yet unmistakably sartorial. This impression stems partly from the thrift-store garments that Mack often incorporates into his (de)constructions, and it's further bolstered by his use of dyeing, bleaching, and hand-stitching. But more fundamentally, the works reflect an unstable relationship to form and presence akin to that of clothing. Hanging in a closet, a dress or a shirt bespeaks the body's absence

while affirming that that body exists—somewhere. A similar quality of immanence pervades Mack's assemblages, a sense of simultaneous summoning and deferral. They are both antediluvian and postapocalyptic.

Mack's *Parade*, 2015–16, is composed of a wall-mounted brass curtain rod supporting a swath of red plaid fabric strung up at its grommets corners. Magazine and tabloid pages alongside miscellaneous bits of printed matter are pasted to the jaggedly cut fabric in a loosely cruciform shape. The image at the center of this arrangement is a 1980 Robert Mapplethorpe photograph of Prince, shot for *Interview*. The performer meets the viewer's gaze with an expression at once bemused and confrontational.

Below and to the page's left is a spread torn from the publication for the 2015 exhibition "Joseph Beuys: Multiples from the Reinhard Schlegel Collection." In somewhat questionable taste, the publication's designer superimposed the title over the well-known 1972 photograph of Beuys deep in high-minded conversation, long-stemmed rose beside him. Undercut by the image's commercial recontextualization as much as by the flower stem that diagonally severs the composition, Beuys's gaze feels tentative and slight against that of the adjacent figure captured eight years later, whose own politics were as subtle as they were revelatory. The pointed juxtaposition charts the triumph of spectacle, but it also suggests the rise of new forms of cultural subversion.



Eric Mack, *Parade*, 2015-16, fabric, suitcase, newspaper, magazine, cardboard, cotton, rope, twine, thread, grommets, brass curtain rod, dye, acrylic paint, 69 x 78 2"

As a whole, the arrangement of photographs and documents echoes the backdrop's tartan pattern and seems to playfully allude both to Robert Rauschenberg's Combines and to the fate of the modernist grid: The pure silence of ground-zero abstraction, so famously described by Rosalind Krauss, gives way to Prince's virtuosic falsetto (on "Kiss," the hit single from the star's 1986 *Parade*). In this piece, as in many others, Mack has pushed paint through the holes of a piece of dollar-store-display pegboard, producing a matrix of dots that sits on top of the fabric, emphasizing the work's materiality.

Mack cites the early "wrapped" sculptures of Christo as influences: lumpen objects covered with cloth or plastic sheets and bound with twine, which the latter artist began to produce two years after his 1956 escape from Communist Bulgaria to Western Europe. Scrawling some notes about the wrapped works, Mack wrote, "The function of these objects is interrupted by Christo at a level of use, not symbol-

ism. . . . Physical and behavioral, rather than erotic, as dada and surrealist objects . . . *packaging* wrapping.” Mack pinned a facsimile of these musings to *Parade*’s plaid fabric, as if to direct the viewer’s attention to the operations he cites. Exploring the political implications of these operations—packaging and wrapping—in Christo’s works, Molly Donovan argues that the sculptures carry “connotations of censorship and concealment . . . and the cultural anxiety, fear, and uncertain identity” of life in the Eastern Bloc. Produced in a radically different but similarly anxiety-provoking context—one of precariousness, surveillance, disparity—Mack’s skin-like forms also hint at concealment and uncertainty, and reveal a similar antagonism between “in” and “out.” This ambivalence is particularly pronounced in *Pain After Heat*, 2014 (on view at MOMA PS1 in last year’s Greater New York), in which a moving blanket, threaded and tethered with rope, serves as support. Whatever delicate object the blanket might once have protected has been removed in order to foreground its dyed and painted surface, to which incised sheets of acrylic-brushed paper, torn-out magazine leaves, and orange peels have been affixed.

The more recent works featured this past September in Mack’s two-person show (with Torey Thornton) at Paris’s Almine Rech Gallery again evoke objects or bodies that are not there: In one new piece, for instance, a pair of pants anchors a ragged, gloriously polychrome fabric collage; in another, a giant umbrella is festooned with diaphanous scarves. Even as Mack’s works continue to point to absence, like melancholy updates of Franz West’s “Adaptives” awaiting the wearer who will use them for concealment, adornment, or whatever function circumstances demand, they register the relentless if not extravagant piling-up of detritus, from the disposability of fast fashion to the consumerist chaff of product packaging—all the materials that are still so very much with us in our immaterial age. □

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Eric Mack, *Tent*, 2015, dye, acrylic, coffee grounds, quilts, grommet, microfiber blankets, metal tent armature. Installation view, Moran Bondaroff, Los Angeles. Photo: Joshua White.