

ARTFORUM

CRITICS' PICKS

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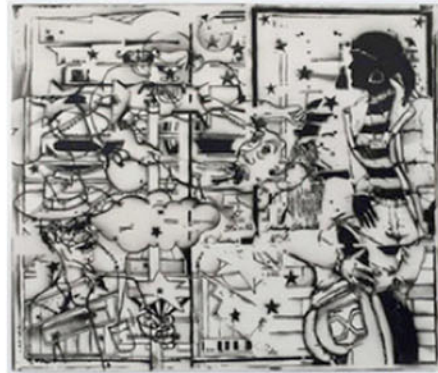
David Ratcliff

TEAM GALLERY
47 Wooster Street
May 5–June 18

Given David Ratcliff's predilection for monochromatic, stenciled paintings—museum-ready pieces augmented by the facture of punk graphics—comparing this California-based painter to an inveterate New York artist like Christopher Wool seems like a clean fit. When one settles for such an easy comparison, though, where does that leave Ratcliff's hometown of Los Angeles—a city whose visual culture, thanks to its global entertainment industry, also stands in for America's?

His unlikely marriage of two of the city's earlier practices—the highbrow pastiches of Lari Pittman and the subcultural scraps of Raymond Pettibon—hits closer to home. Yet Ratcliff's creative union of these divergent approaches—one tailored for a home perched high in Hollywood's hills, the other for the crusty decor of a Venice Beach head shop—is realized with a severing technique. Cutting found JPEGs into stencils through which he then spray paints, Ratcliff divorces his content from its original immaterial form as freely circulating data, like the grafting of skin from one area of the body to a site of injury, he transplants it onto the canvas's surface. For this exhibition, Ratcliff covers his paintings with stenciled renderings of paranoid doodles, political caricatures, and street advertisements that arrive on the canvas in discordant scraps, reframing the awry political ideas housed in this sourced content as catastrophically unreconciled, riven with interruption and noise.

As allegorically promising as the artisanal crystallization of these culturally enriched digital flows may be, more compelling is the way that Ratcliff's scalpel defaces the technological image with his meticulous craft in order to render it as art. This work offers the viewer an example of splicing accomplished not as science but as culture. It is a visual experience that attentively captures technological culture's immersive haze with the vaporous fixity of a spray-painted surface.



David Ratcliff, *No Sneakers*, 2011, acrylic and spray paint on canvas, 88 x 102".

— Sam Pulitzer