

Whitney Claflin - ADD SHOT - Bodega - ****

I don't quite know yet what to make of Whitney and Maggie Lee and, I assume, other artists' turn to playing with Y2K teen girl culture: sleepover crafts, shopping at Claire's, being "hyper," etc. On the one hand I'm staunchly against the fetishistic nostalgia so many artists indulge in these days, on the other what they're doing seems to be less of an aesthetic escapism and more of a mode of working. They're using the mindset as a way of approaching art like a preteen, which is less restrictive than that of an art world adult, so even if I'm not sold on it I won't reject it out of hand either. As the overly literal press release notes, the show is something of a cultural mixtape. It takes her no longer fashionable past identity of being a punk and going to the mall and reappropriates it into something that is currently fashionable, namely the acknowledgement that she once was a punk and went to the mall. I have reservations about that sleight of hand (why can't people just be what they are now?), but the paintings are good and the patterned fabric on canvas non-paintings don't read as cop-outs like most "gluing something to a canvas" pieces do. The breadth of means gives the work as a whole a refreshing incoherence, unlike most nostalgic art that can be easily reduced to a simple set of stylistic signifiers. It's fun, a word that's rarely complimentary in art, but it works here.