



SAMANTHA PERSONS

Amid the rainbows, Hello Kitties, Xmas lights, hot celebrities, twinkly stars, stickers and glitter that form the cute, girly stuff of Samantha Persons' multi-media oeuvre lurks a serious and deeply contemporary anxiety: Am I a commodity? It's a worry particularly relevant to girls today, in a world of American Girl Place, Teen Vogue and tween marketing, where so much money revolves around young females (or old females who think they have to look young, or old males who want young females, etc., etc.). Persons exposes this anxiety by overlaying girlish signs and symbols with a critique of the commodification of the art object and artist. The clearer this critique, as in the diptych "I am not a ~~Painting, Combine,~~ Commodity," the more effective the combination. More ambiguous works risk becoming precisely that which they purport to question, namely desirable goods to purchase and hang over the sofa. Persons, herself an out and proud "Genderqueer," also makes work that challenges the recent fashion for making money off lesbian culture, e.g. Ellen does Amex. It's a trend worth parsing, but Persons does it with less charm and aplomb than the purely girlish stuff. Perhaps because Ellen wears slick pantsuits instead of pink velour Barbie warm-ups. Perhaps because it hits so much closer to home.

—Lori Waxman