



Coupland's coup

Douglas Coupland looks to the future

By David Jager

Douglas Coupland at Monte Clarke Gallery (55 Mill, building 2), through September 11. 416-703-1700. Rating: NNNN

NOW RATING:

NNNN

Douglas Coupland, prophet of the cut-and-paste generation, taps directly into the twitchy, ambivalent vein of our accelerated culture, its hyperreal surfaces and mass-produced quandaries. His fictional protagonists express rebellion through a new kind of minimalism, a lo-fi modesty and snarky eclecticism that is now the parlance of art students, indie bands and blogs everywhere.

Now fans of his novels can see how he addresses things in three dimensions. Like his writing, his visual aesthetic remains as inscrutable as the surface of a microchip.

I Like The Future And The Future Likes Me is a series of artifacts addressing futurology. Star Wars imagery, bell jars containing meteorites atop ramen noodles cast in iron, and a pregnant couture-trimmed NASA spacesuit are part of his vision of a future rooted in anxious late-20th-century childhood. Coupland also throws in a few sly references to Asia and our rapidly changing demographics.

Lost And Gained In Translation features work done through Coupland's translation art project (featured in the DIY art book Do It), which updates the Burroughsian cut-up method for the digital age. Using Google to translate texts out of and back into English, then photocopying the results on every available colour of Kinko's paper, he winds up with large mosaic text paintings, coolly seductive and visually pleasing textual hacks. Coupland extends the idea of translation with his collection of wasp's nests, each constructed from "hand-chewed" copies of his first novel, Generation X.

Coupland says he is optimistic about the future, but what does optimism mean to a novelist who portrays the world as a drearily whimsical tabloid soap opera? Like the work in this show, his optimism's founded on the sheer unpredictability of what we will become.