

# ARTFORUM

## CRITICS' PICKS

New York

### Tyler Dobson

47 CANAL

291 Grand Street, 2nd Floor

September 25–October 25

Tyler Dobson's paintings and cotton tapestries smile maddeningly with an uncanny blink—what are they? Each made on portrait-painting.com and personalthrows.com, Dobson—at a safe distance and with the help of invisible labor—has converted digital images into physical objets d'art, pinned like Lepidoptera for the bland contemporary gaze.

These confected pieces curdle into kitsch, and that's part of the point. A huge cloth tapestry (*Big Baby* [all works 2015]) has the word "BABY" inscribed in its center, true to the formal infantilism of its geometry and cloying colors. Folksiness puffs and flakes like pie crust, but Dobson's mastery lies in his utter refusal to tell us what to do when we look at these things. Slack-jawed guffaw or leftist snicker? Surrender to the Americana tchotchke or summon up the ironic erudition we polished at school? *Big Baby* doesn't care, gurgling away with ruddy-cheeked indifference.

Another tapestry, *The Graveyard*, renders its subject with a series of pointed-star designs you might find on a sweater. And hanging in the corner of the gallery, painted on an old headboard, is *Lana Del Rey*, whose persona—smeared, bedraggled camp—dredges up every bit of fated glamour and sloppy lust we are tempted to laugh at but can't quite. Held aloft in her pretty hands is the American flag. She is wearing an expression of beatific simplicity, her eyes and mouth three lovely slits in the milky bauble of her face—a pink-lipped fantasy of aesthetic belonging. A rough picket fence lines the gallery walls, a caricature of suburbia, yes, and a grim token of all that it shuts out—and in.

— Tobi Haslett



Tyler Dobson, *Lana Del Rey*, 2015, oil on canvas, artists frame, 21 1/4 x 25 1/4".