

Aspen Art Museum
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Educator Notes



Installation view: Rodney McMillian, *Landscape Paintings*, 2015. Photos: Tony Prikryl

Rodney McMillian: Landscape Paintings

March 27–June 28, 2015

About the artist

Rodney McMillian was born in Columbia, South Carolina, and currently lives and works in Los Angeles. He earned an MFA from the California Institute of the Arts. His work resists adherence to a single medium—performance, video, installation, sculpture, and painting are all used to tackle issues of class, gender, race, and power within social history and culture.



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About the exhibition

McMillian's Aspen Art Museum exhibition hones in on the artist's painting practice, featuring a selection of paintings that he groups together as "landscape paintings." These works are made on bedding and focus on the artist's interest in addressing the human body, often through its absence, in landscape.

Many of the materials are closely tied to our relationship with the home. For example, the artist uses unwanted latex paint bought from home supply stores, which is usually used to paint interior walls. Also, instead of the traditional

backdrop of canvas, the artist paints upon bedding often purchased at secondhand stores. Beds are highly personal spaces associated with the many intimate moments of our lives, from birth to death.

McMillian's large-scale paintings transform the gallery space into an immersive environment, which is visually engaging with a variety of colors and textures. The large scale of these works recalls the vast scenes of Western landscape paintings, but his use of familiar materials and abstract forms provide us with a more intimate experience.



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Questions for discussion

- | Why do you think the artist uses bedding to create these artworks?
- | How are these works different from other landscape paintings that you have seen? How are they similar?
- | What words can you use to describe the mood and emotion of these paintings? How do you think the artist achieved this?

Suggested activity

Pillowcase Paintings

- | Gather pillowcases either by purchasing some from a thrift store or through donations from students' homes.
- | Purchase either latex or acrylic paint in a range of colors, buying discounted bottles if possible. Transfer the paint into large cups to make it easier for students to maneuver.
- | Next, set up the pillowcases in a dry spot outside on top of a tarp, placing plastic cling wrap below the edges of the pillowcases so that the paint has room to spill over without sticking to the tarp.
- | Invite students to pour layers of paint directly on to the pillowcases. Experiment both with swirling effects while the paint is still wet, as well as waiting for layers to dry before pouring on new colors.
- | Once the final layer has been poured and dries, peel off the plastic cling wrap. Create an exhibition in your classroom using pushpins, noticing how the pillowcases may or may not drape below the paint. If the paint extends far enough past the edge of the pillowcase, explore letting this portion flow onto the floor or another object.

For more information, please contact the Education Department at 970.925.8050 ext. 133 or email education@aspenartmuseum.org.

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