

Petzel

Dave McKenzie, "Rodney McMillian by Dave McKenzie" *Bomb*, June 15, 2026.

BOMB

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INTERVIEW

Rodney McMillian by Dave McKenzie

Without sacrificing humor and "the sexy" in his pursuit of rigorous critique, the artist engages particular histories and figures as a means to find empathy and understanding.

JUNE 15, 2026



Rodney McMillian, *Untitled (The Supreme Court Painting)*, 2004–06, poured acrylic on cut canvas, 18 × 18 feet. Photo by Nash Baker. Courtesy of the artist, Vielmetter Los Angeles, and Petzel, New York City.

520 W 25th Street New York NY 10001

Tel 212 680 9467 Fax 212 680 9473 info@petzel.com www.petzels.com

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Different cosmos set up different politics. Sun Ra was from Saturn and Gil Scott-Heron told us all about "Whitey on the Moon." As I write this, Artemis II is preparing to slingshot home and splash down in the Pacific. All the while, I am imagining Rodney McMillian at work here on terra firma. He is, after all, a son of the soil, South Carolina to be specific, and he believes that the land is not simply pastoral but also a space of work, ownership, and oppression.

I met Rodney twenty-six years ago at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, and the first work of his that I saw was a green painting installed in a laundromat in rural Maine. Sixteen years later, I watched him sing original funk songs and channel Clarence Thomas while dressed as a priest at a community center in Philadelphia. But right now, Prince Rogers Nelson keeps coming to mind, and the thought returns, as it so often does when I think of Rodney's work: It is visual, yes, but it is also sonic. *You sexy motherfucker...* I hear myself laughing at a giant column of used mattresses, at a drooping Supreme Court, at a big black shaft filling the stairwell of the Whitney Museum. His work is painting and sculpture and performance, live and on video. It's easy for me to picture Rodney arranging oil and latex paint, or vinyl and thread, or afghan rugs and decoy ducks, or the speeches of Kwame Ture into near-impossible combinations and rigorous configurations.

Thankfully, to encounter Rodney's work is to be presented with any number of extraordinary possibilities. In Rodney's hands, both history with a capital *H*, the kind that we assume we know, and also history, the kind that is so often buried or ignored, irrupt into this experience that we too often call the everyday. Neither abstract nor representational, these possibilities are like time itself: expressions of the past, present, and future.

DM

I keep thinking about how the United States hasn't paused its daily routines to address the current state of affairs. You turn on your TV, and it's programming as usual.

RM

It's the same as it ever was. You know, we never really paused during Covid. With this administration, it's like a fucked-up *Groundhog Day*. Maybe there is no way to pause. We might desire a pause, but we have to keep eating and moving, and the land requires us to perform a certain kind of activity to do so. Maybe I'm rationalizing how twisted the system is because I'm in it and have needed to keep going.

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Detail of Rodney McMillian, *shaft*, 2021–22, latex, acrylic, Flashe, ink, and paper on canvas, six panels, 80 × 4 feet diameter. Photo by Ron Amstutz. Courtesy of the artist, Vielmetter Los Angeles, and Petzel, New York City.

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DM

There was some acknowledgment of a crisis during Covid. But at this specific moment, I don't sense a space for a pause and feel emotionally weakened. That's not a constant feeling. It comes in waves.

RM

I've been fortunate enough in the past few years to be really busy, whether with making my own work or teaching and chairing the Department of Art at UCLA. I haven't had a lot of time to reflect. In some ways, that's been helpful. I spend about an hour in the morning looking at the news, and after that I'm done. I might check back in at the end of the night to see if any other bombs have dropped, literally, but otherwise I'm not scrolling. I've been taking care of myself so I can wake up the next morning and, hopefully, move from a place of love and productivity as best I can.



Rodney McMillian, *White House Painting*, 2018, vinyl and thread, 13 × 42.5 feet. Photo by Colin Doyle. Courtesy of the artist, Vielmetter Los Angeles, and Petzel, New York City.

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DM

I have questions for you regarding formal strategies, performance methodologies—especially in the performances involving public figures—and empathy. But first, I wanted to clarify: Were you telling me that your mother makes oxtail?

RM

I didn't grow up eating oxtail stew, but in her later years, my mother has made it. It's absolutely delicious. My mother is a brilliant cook. She can make everything: barbecue, pig's feet, hog maw, casseroles, any kind of greens imaginable. In the last twenty years, she's also become a great baker. My dad was also a really good cook. I've taught myself to make oxtail stew, and, I will say, some people here dig it. *(laughter)* I make it with black-eyed peas.

DM

For some reason, I have oxtail on my mind.

RM

You miss home or something? *(laughter)*

DM

I know you're from Columbia, South Carolina, and you recently opened a show at the Columbia Museum of Art titled *A Son of the Soil*. In addition to South Carolina, specific historical episodes pop up in your work, like how you used Lyndon B. Johnson's 1964 commencement speech as a basis for *Untitled (The Great Society) I*. I find that I hold on to these places, episodes, and public figures almost like research material for later.

RM

Give me an idea of what you're talking about.

DM

Clarence Thomas is a big one. In the last four years or so, I have thought deeply about Clarence Thomas, and a lot of that has to do with your performance *Hanging with Clarence* in Philadelphia in 2016. How do you think about him? For me, he's incredibly complicated not only in terms of his politics but also in his turn away from being a protestor for the cause of racial justice. He seems to believe now that individual hard work and tough love are the only responses to systemic oppression. It's a version of progress that I can't subscribe to.

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Shauna Howard, Rodney McMillian, and Tekeytha Fullwood in Rodney McMillian, *Hanging with Clarence*, 2022, Park Avenue Armory, New York City. Photo by Da Ping Luo. Courtesy of Park Avenue Armory, New York City.

RM

That confounding quality is precisely what intrigued me. I was curious about how this man from Pin Point, Georgia, which is not far from South Carolina, got to where he's at. He's had immense power for a very long time, and I thought that by studying him and thinking through his positions, I could make sense of how he got to where he is and who he is. Sometimes I get closer to understanding him, and sometimes I can't make sense of him at all. I was also intrigued because, in the '80s, Thomas was the director of the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which was established to make more equal and equitable workplaces. When I was growing up, my mother worked for the EEOC office in Richland County, South Carolina, the second-largest county in the state. I knew about the political needs of that commission. I also knew that it had cultural and social implications and that it was imperative for Black people, people of color, and women to have opportunities because they were—and still are—shut out. We've made strides, but it's a constant uphill effort to make sure that there is equity and opportunity for everybody. And I knew the Reagan administration gave Clarence Thomas that position out of cynicism.

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As I read more about Thomas, I learned he studied in two seminaries, and he promised his grandfather, who raised him, that he would finish. Interestingly, he dropped out due to the racism he experienced and eventually became a lawyer instead. Of course, this is all biography, so there's a fiction there too. But as the story is told, Thomas's grandfather never forgave him for breaking his word. Even though he became a lawyer, he never got validation from his grandfather for that achievement. What's also confusing is that he grew up middle-class, at least by Southern Black standards. His grandfather had a small business delivering ice and fuel oil, among other things, and he went to private Catholic schools. His is not a bootstraps story. He was a Black revolutionary in the '60s, and I think he would still argue that he's pro-Black.

DM

Yes, he would. That's why he's so confounding.

RM

He's pro-Black but seems to want to kill us. He seems to have no sense of our history or the real harms that we face on a daily basis, being murdered by cops or somebody else for walking down the street or spending a lifetime in jail for crimes we have not committed. I suspect that Clarence Thomas has not been able to look at himself or his actions during the hearings with Anita Hill and reconcile with them. I mean, I'm psychoanalyzing now—

DM

Let's do it.

RM

I've never met him, but I don't know how one could move the way he moves if one has done any work to heal. Healing is a process that many of us, though unfortunately not all, are in the midst of, and we have moments when we're in better emotional and psychological health than in others. But he doesn't strike me as someone who's done much of that work. In that regard, the only way I could reconcile the act of researching him and possibly making work about him was to simultaneously listen to a sound to counterbalance his ideas. Throughout that process, for well over a year, I listened to D'Angelo's 2014 Afropunk concert on repeat. In fact, that concert is playing in my earpiece for the first ten minutes or so of the performance, while I'm delivering Thomas's speech. In some ways this makes zero sense, but that's how I needed to process who Thomas is and what he espouses and what I was attempting to do. It was a way of protecting and grounding myself.

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DM

Sometimes questions about representation and abstraction come up around your work, and thinking through your interest in Clarence Thomas, he is a kind of abstraction. (*laughter*)

RM

A complete and utter fucking abstraction.

DM

Does this binary of abstraction and representation hold weight for you?

RM

No, because I don't see abstraction and representation as a binary. I see abstraction as a form of representation and representation as a form of abstraction. They circulate around ideologies of what we see. There's a context for how we're to understand what "abstraction" is, just as there's a context for how we're to understand what "representation" is.

DM

And is the context about the moment, or is it about other conditions, like what we as subjects bring to the work?

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Rodney McMillian, *Not Yet Titled*, 2023, latex, acrylic, and ink on bedsheet. Photo by Brica Wilcox. Courtesy of the artist, Vielmetter Los Angeles, and Petzel, New York City.

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RM

All of the above. History and subjectivity are always being enacted as we experience what we experience. Experience is always about the moment, and it's always within a context of a personal history, a social history, a global history, and even a geological history. These are always in action.

DM

Still, within that, I like to think about the way you work within some of these particular contexts, like making paintings in the visual language of classical still life. When and how do you decide to take that up? If I understand correctly, you're slowing down in the still lifes more than when you're making the poured pieces.

RM

Still life painting is a slower process because it requires a lot of time and space to evaluate what is seen through the representation formed through paint. Still life is about enacting a different kind of time and a different way of looking. In addition to the process, it's pointing at a history of commerce and of symbols, like fruit or animals that speak to the idea of temporality. The Dutch still lifes I reference were born out of consumerism. That component has a different kind of pace. For me, it's difficult not to see the expanse of time and distance traveled through international trade that the work references. It's a different time span than, say, certain abstract paintings or the pours that I make, which come out of a much more recent history and more directly reference the body, industry, and labor. Still lifes do that, too, of course, and they also contain a class element.

DM

Class comes up for you a lot. There are many things we could say about labor and class—thrifting, the recirculation of goods, the handmade. More simply, you once said to me "From the rooter to the tooter," about making use of all the stuff that's available. I'm thinking about that with the latex-pour paintings where you use so-called oops paint, a material that is considered waste by some but not by you.

RM

For those who don't know, oops paints are the mismatched gallons of paint that people have returned to stores like Home Depot or Lowe's because they're not the right color, which the stores then resell. When I started buying oops paints twenty-five years ago, a gallon was five bucks, and now it's gone up to ten. I use it because it's actually affordable, and you can get a shit ton. That came out of a need. I still buy it, and for a larger piece, I will have colors matched to the oops paint.

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Rodney McMillian, *Two Cups II*, 2024, oil on wood panel, 20 × 19 inches. Courtesy of the artist, Vielmetter Los Angeles, and Petzel, New York City.

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DM

I love the idea of custom-matching the oops paint. It's as if the cheap "landlord special" paint color is now dragged into an arena of aesthetic specificity.

I also love how paintings like *White House Painting*, *White House Painting II*, and *Untitled (The Supreme Court Painting)* so often address the present moment. Today I saw—I knew this was going to happen—that they're going to have a UFC fight at the White House as part of Trump's birthday celebration and the US's 250th anniversary. There was a rendering that showed a UFC ring on the lawn.

RM

Oh, wow.

DM

I always laugh at the way the Supreme Court is made to slump in your painting—a serious institution caught with its pants down. Your work is and has been, for me, a place where there's some humor, or a way of laughing at this moment, even briefly. I don't mean humor in a broad sense, more like "the funny." Like when a family member says, "He's a funny one." How do you understand the funny, or being the funny one?

RM

I don't know if I'm the funny guy, but I love people who hold that space. I'm grateful to them because they provide a release valve. Being funny is a type of truth speaking. In some ways, that valve relieves pressure, but it also applies pressure through speaking the truth.

DM

I see you this way.

RM

From your mouth to Prince's ears, that's a beautiful thing.

DM

We'll get to Prince. This idea of the release valve, the pause, is out in the air. With your work, I so often feel lightened from a certain heaviness, although, of course, the heaviness never leaves me. This irruption happens in many different pieces, like the sculpture *Untitled (refrigerator)*, which has exploded, and the video *Untitled (futon)*, where you stab a cushion over and over. I just love these. I can't even tell you how strange and exciting they are for me.

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Rodney McMillian, *Untitled (refrigerator)*, 2009, 64 × 29 × 25 inches. Photo by Charles Meyer. Courtesy of the artist, Vielmetter Los Angeles, and Petzel, New York City.

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RM

I had the same confounded experience when I saw *Edward and Me*, the video of you in *Fight Club* at the supermarket at night. It's fucking nuts. Or *Babel*, where you're signing “I'm talking to you” over and over again with a microphone in your mouth. And *While Supplies Last* with the bobblehead—which I hate you for because I'm like, That's my idea. (*laughter*) These pieces have lived with me since the 2000s. They live with me in terms of me wanting to make approximations of a zany, wackadoodle endeavor that is completely absurd and yet absolutely spot-on. I think your work resonates with me the way it does because I see so much of myself and all of us in it. I see the sheer confoundment in the questions or situations you pose and your attempts at making sense of it. The funny is compounded by how you use your body to ask a question or to propose an “answer.” That's the part that kills because you're sometimes offering a chaos, and it can't be contained or rationalized with. The chaos just is, and I'm offered the opportunity to acknowledge and live with it, in all its messiness and awkwardness, and yet the chaos is born from a serious, laser-focused inquiry that I also can't escape or ignore—whew.

DM

The poster for *Hanging with Clarence* says: “History is a dark, messy, and incomprehensible material that must be remembered and reformed.” With your unearthing, mining, rewriting, rethinking, how do you deal with the present?

RM

One day at a time. (*laughter*) Also through the historical. I see the present, and I see relationships to certain historical tenets, like how LBJ's Great Society speech relates to policies in the late '90s that provided healthcare for people, affordable housing, voting rights, immigrant rights, and criminal justice reform, just to name a few. The past and the present are in action. I won't say the present is no different from the past, but the present is impacted by the past, and we, or they, are enacting the present based on the past. With that understanding, I can look at my heroes, my ancestors, and my family members who are alive and kicking and who did their parts within the means they had to strive for and create wonderful lives for themselves and for me. It helps me to see all the deeds, big and small, as part of this large community of people who have similar desires or ambitions and work step-by-step to get closer to those goals, whether we know each other or not.

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In my purview, I have this vocation, art. In this I can take whatever steps I can. Someone who's a great cook feeds the people who do the work, and that enables them to make their own strides forward. When my best friend Michelle Hurley was growing up, her family had a funeral home, which I believe was one of the first Black-owned businesses in South Carolina. As I understand it, in the '60s, when Malcolm X or other civil rights leaders came through South Carolina to organize, her family provided car service for them using the funeral home's limousines. That's a significant responsibility, since they also provided protection to a degree. So, from the person who's making the pot of beans to the person who's shepherding civil rights leaders around, to the person who's writing the speeches, to the person who's delivering the speeches or enacting policy, they're all fucking necessary. That's the perspective from which I approach and think about and live through and in this present.



Still from Rodney McMillian's *Untitled (futon)*, 2009, single-channel color video with sound, 24 minutes 59 seconds. Courtesy of the artist, Vielmetter Los Angeles, and Petzel, New York City.

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DM

“Official” histories are said to be written by those with their grip on power, but what you describe with the car service may not even be in a text like *A People’s History* of this or that moment. So, taking whatever steps you can in painting, sculpture, and performance to conjure these overlapping histories makes sense to me.

I’d be remiss if I didn’t ask you about performance since you do a lot of it. I’ve seen some older work that’s like mime, and I’ve seen you crawling toward the camera in *Shelter (Crawl)*, from 2015. Whether it’s in live performances or in videos, I’m always struck by the strangeness or funniness of an action like whipping a blank canvas or crawling and shouting the Rolling Stones’ “Gimme Shelter.” How does performance and your ability to really embody these texts and characters play out for you in the larger making of paintings and sculptures?

RM

There are contents that performance allows that other modes of expression do not. Body language enables us to engage with other people in the world. If there’s an idea that I want to communicate and that idea is best communicated through the body and performed, then I choose to perform. I know there are certain contents I want to get at that I can’t articulate through painting or some other kind of art production, so performance helps me get closer. The relationship between performance and painting, for me, is mainly one about content and form—my work, regardless of the medium, is predicated on that.

DM

Location in some video performances is also highly important as a kind of stage or set or site-specific material. When you decide on a work’s form, is it by any means necessary?

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Still from Rodney McMillian, *Shelter (Crawl)*, 2015, single-channel color video with sound, 4 minutes 18 seconds. Courtesy of the artist, Vielmetter Los Angeles, and Petzel, New York City.

RM

It's definitely by any means necessary, and the location is important. I just shot a piece at the Middleton Place plantation in Charleston, South Carolina, which is near where the Stono Rebellion, a slave revolt, happened. I'm going back there to do additional shooting for a second piece I was working on that came out of the first piece. It's fucking weird to shoot on a plantation. A type of time travel happens whenever I'm at one of those sites. The past and the present are happening simultaneously, and at times it can be deeply disturbing. The first plantation I shot on was Dockery Farms in Mississippi, and a lot of those videos were about the reckoning or aftermath of slavery. It's also a site where the blues was allegedly formed.

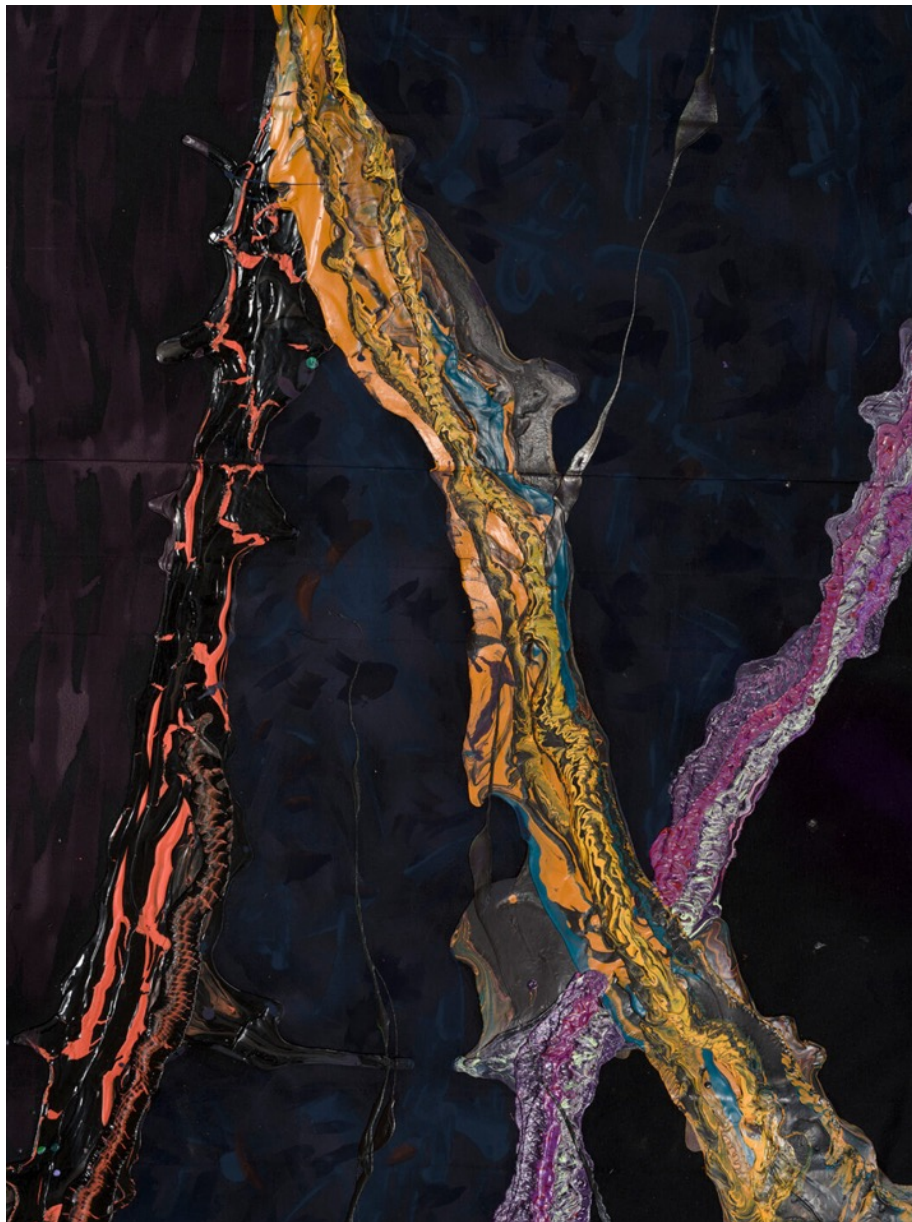
In some ways, a kind of communing happened at Middleton Place. That might sound woo-woo, and I'm not quite that dude, but there is something about my body in South Carolina. I'm so connected to that history and to the soil and the blood and my people there. South Carolina formed me, and it sticks with me wherever I go. Making performance-based work in that context is quite remarkable, in terms of what I allow to come through or what comes through on its own. A space is created for what's always already there to come up. There have definitely been times when I have felt the ancients walking steadily alongside me.

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DM

I'm curious about how your work creates space. Landscape comes up a lot for you, and regardless of whether it looks like a landscape or not, these performances and paintings and sculptures have a space-making function, which then recalls the body. What's going on when a piece like *shaft*, which you made for the 2022 Whitney Biennial, becomes super phallic?



Detail of Rodney McMillian, *shaft*, 2021–22, latex, acrylic, Flashe, ink, and paper on canvas, six panels, 80 × 4 feet diameter. Photo by Ron Amstutz. Courtesy of the artist, Vielmetter Los Angeles, and Petzel, New York City.

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RM

Goodness, that was a lot of fun to work on. I was responding to the main stairwell in the museum and thinking about how people move through that space. That piece cracks me up to this day, no lie. I grin every time I think about it. I absolutely, positively love the idea of folks walking up and down and around a Black dick.

DM

I feel like there's a libidinal quality or a sexiness. Do you want to say anything about the sexiness of the work? Do you think people are afraid of the sexy in an art context?

RM

I've always enjoyed the sexy and strive for it in all that I do. *(laughter)* When I think about Black people and that Southern landscape, there's so much fucking ingenuity, innovation, and joie de vivre in spite of all the horrors but also just for the hell of it, for the funny, for the oxtails. You can't beat a smart-ass motherfucker. That quick-witted brilliance is, to me, sexy, funny-sexy. *(laughter)* It is interesting that people haven't followed up so much on the sexy, because I definitely talk about it. Some of those vinyl pieces are sexy as hell. Certain other things I've done, I think they're quite hot. I think sexiness relates to my direct relationship with the heroes that I keep, to paraphrase Maya Angelou. If you study who you're reading, looking at, listening to, you'll get a good insight into yourself. Other artists' works are sexy too. Your piece where you're sitting on the bench? I'm like, Oh, that's a sexy motherfucker.

DM

This is exactly where my mind was going. *(laughter)* "Sexy motherfucker" always leads me to Prince, and Prince always leads me to you. He once said, "You are either here to enlighten or discourage." We don't have to think in binaries, but how does that land for you?

RM

Wow. That's quite profound. I don't think it's either-or. There are certain things that I would love to discourage for some people. *(laughter)* I would like to discourage bigots and misogynists and homophobes from being who they are and from enacting those fears onto other people. But I guess you could also do that by inviting them to think differently, so enlightening could be a way of discouraging. I'm so grateful to Prince. I mean, goodness fucking grief. God bless his soul. He was such a force in the work. It's mind-boggling.

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DM

You’ve told me that sometimes when you’re sewing large works by hand, like *White House Painting*, you’re also watching movies or listening to music and concert films. Are you watching or listening to anything noteworthy at the moment?

RM

I’ve been watching a lot of voice teachers on YouTube analyze singers. I’m also rewatching Prince live in Stockholm, from the 1986 *Parade* Tour. It’s on rotation. It’s fucking amazing. The intro is remarkable. It starts with the curtains closed, and then halfway through the first song, it opens to the band in full swing. It’s a great show. And I’m watching a whole lot of police procedurals.

DM

What?! (*laughter*) Okay. Hold on.

RM

I watch them from all over, from Scandinavian countries to Armenia and South Africa, which has some really good ones. During Covid, I would just put in different locations and see whatever TV was going on. That’s how I traveled. I still travel the world through television.

DM

You opened up something for me. I don’t know if it’s a difference of laws and cultures, but when I’ve watched procedurals from other countries, I don’t feel like those systems are as broken. It’s hard to watch a US-based procedural where cops are centered, but when I’ve watched shows from Sweden or the Netherlands, I’m like, Wait a minute—the police elsewhere have to fucking turn the tape recorder on when they talk to you. Do you also feel out these differences?

RM

Absolutely. That’s why they’re so intriguing. You see how different cultures are structured and how other entertainment industries perceive the need to educate their audiences about the procedures being shown. You see what kind of propaganda is being propagated. Then, looking at ours, I see what they’re pointing to. The ones that are cop-centric, I’m like, Whoa, they’re really pushing hard. I watched *Blue Bloods* years ago and was like, Jesus Christ, this is such a redemptive show for the murderousness of some of these cops. This is not Mayberry.

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DM

No, it's nuts. I have a question around empathy. Arthur Jafa said in a conversation with Tina Campt that audiences of color have great powers of empathy because, having not seen figures who look like them, they must essentially project themselves into the screen space. That's one reason why I don't like US cop dramas, because there is a moment when I'm like, Yeah, fuck him up, Stabler! Like, Fuck, what am I doing?

RM

(laughter) Yeah, I hear you.

DM

You make all different kinds of work, and sometimes you center a recovered history or work through a particular figure. In working through these histories and figures, are you attempting to empathize?



Rodney McMillian, *White House II*, 2018–20, vinyl and thread, 13 × 44 × 3 feet. Photo by Jeff McLane. Courtesy of the artist, Vielmetter Los Angeles, Petzel, New York City.

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RM

The work is within the act of trying to empathize or understand. Perhaps if we look at a work like *White House Painting*, empathy plays out in how it was made. It was hand-stitched using black thread. I wanted folks to think about all the labor, all the hands that went into making the actual building. I wanted them to think about the fact that Black folks built that structure and about what they endured in the process. In studying Clarence Thomas, I was trying to understand him, which could get me closer to empathy. I don't know if I empathize with him, but I do empathize with some aspects of his history, like his being a Southern Black man. I wasn't around in the time he grew up in, but through my family I have a very good understanding of how challenging that was back in the day.

DM

Clarence Thomas is, to my mind, flat as an individual, and so your work didn't exactly make me empathize with him, but I did start to hold a little space, not for him specifically, but for others who have lost something in the struggles for equality. I'm thinking of the amazing Black educators and administrators who were abandoned or demoted as a result of integration.

RM

I think the way you describe it is spot-on. In some ways, Clarence Thomas is like a quieter Uncle Ruckus from *The Boondocks* but no less damaging, and perhaps even damaged. Who isn't damaged from this culture? But how do we choose to heal from it or, at least, acknowledge and live alongside it and not let that damage lead us through?

DM

I like the living alongside it. To me, it doesn't seem like there are many other options because we still do have to live alongside one another. What's being in LA like for you?

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RM

I'm glad you asked. LA is a place I never thought I'd live because I thought dumb people lived here. In my college days, I thought it was behind the Black progressive politics of the East Coast, where there's a longer history of Black politicians and Black intellectualism. But there are many wonderful thinkers, artists, creatives, politicians, and scholars here, and for me, it's been great to get to know some of those people and to get a sense of what's possible. The climate and the expansiveness of the LA landscape work for me, and I've realized over the years just how much I love sunshine and heat. I used to criticize Los Angeles as being unmoored from history compared to New York City or the South. It's not unmoored from history, but I have appreciated not being wedded to history in terms of what my body is like in the land. That doesn't mean that histories aren't impacting me, but there are other histories here, and those have provided me some space.

DM

Is this why you keep going back to South Carolina to make work? I don't want to say LA is a safe space, but maybe it is some sort of pause.

RM

The pause in this case is distance. It's hard going back to South Carolina at times and making the work that I make in those landscapes because it is such a deeply personal experience. Those histories of abuse and exploitation are literally my family histories. The space from here to there gives me some psychological and emotional distance to talk about some of those histories in a way that is, hopefully, effective and complex.

Dave McKenzie is an artist and educator based in New York City. His work deals with the complications that arise from the social rules and obligations with which we navigate personal relationships. He is represented by Galerie Barbara Wien in Berlin. McKenzie's work is held in private and public collections, including the Studio Museum in Harlem, Whitney Museum of American Art, and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, among others.

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