

Petzel

Paul Laster, "Upcycling: 5 Artists Inventively Using Reclaimed Materials," *Art & Object*, April 6, 2020.



GALLERY | APRIL 6, 2020 | PAUL LASTER



Upcycling: 5 Artists Inventively Using Reclaimed Materials



PHOTO BY MELISSA GOODWIN. COURTESY PACE GALLERY.

Installation view of *Julian Schnabel: The Patch of Blue the Prisoner Calls the Sky* at Pace Gallery.

Artists have been working with found objects since the beginnings of modernism, but the meaning implied by the objects that they use and the way that they employ them is always changing. Change, in fact, is one of the main reasons for working with reclaimed materials. Art can change the world—at least from what it was to what it can become.

Rodney McMillian, whose solo at Petzel is one of the exhibitions highlighted in this round-up of New York shows dealing with the transformation of found objects, calls these type of goods “post-consumer,” because after they’ve served their use and become discarded, they enter another system, where artists give them new lives.

In current times, we’re in need of change. The five exhibitions highlighted here offer formulas for renewal in surprisingly inventive ways.

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COURTESY THE ARTIST AND PETZEL.

Rodney McMillian: *Recirculating Goods*

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Rodney McMillian's initial show with Petzel and the gallery's first exhibition at its new Upper East Side space, *Recirculating Goods* offers a series of abstract landscapes painted on found blankets, which were sourced from charitable thrift stores and secondhand shops. Purposely pouring and layering latex house paint, purchased from a Home Depot, onto hand-woven bedding, which sometimes still bears a price tag revealing the origin of the economic system where it was circulating, the artist hits on issues of class, race, and gender.

Rodney McMillian, *Untitled (setting sun)*, 2019.

In previous, related landscape works, McMillian has envisioned his environments inhabited by [Bill Traylor](#)'s hand-drawn figures of sharecroppers and animals, while also referring to the pouring and splattering of the paint like "the spillage of blood." Granted blankets, too, can allude to the body—and even the pleasures of the bed—but there's also the implication of an absent human presence in the discarded object and the deserted, painted terrain. Imbued with new lives, these knitted canvases are destined to find a new place in our lives.



COURTESY THE ARTIST AND PETZEL.

Installation view of *Rodney McMillian: Recirculating Goods* at Petzel.

<https://www.artandobject.com/blog/upcycling-5-artists-inventively-using-reclaimed-materials>