

# VIELMETTER LOS ANGELES

## Press Release

### Rodney McMillian

#### Body Politic

September 26 – December 5, 2020



Rodney McMillian, *Untitled (heart)*, 2017 – 2020

Vielmetter Los Angeles is pleased to announce Los Angeles-based artist Rodney McMillian's sixth solo exhibition with the gallery. In addition to his exhibition at our gallery, McMillian's work will be on view in several museums this fall.

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His 2010 work in black vinyl, titled *Succulent* is now prominently installed in the Agnes Gund Garden Lobby at The Museum of Modern Art, NY for re-opening following the COVID-19 lockdown. A selection of McMillian's video works that address the political histories of the United States is on view in the solo exhibition *Historically Hostile* at the Blaffer Art Museum until September 20. Also in Houston, *Untitled (The Supreme Court Painting)*, 2004 – 2006 and *Untitled (Flag IV)*, 2012 are on view in *States of Mind: Art and American Democracy* at the Moody Center for the Arts at Rice University. Taken together with the new works on view at Vielmetter, these presentations mark McMillian's more than two-decade exposition of histories, ideologies, and structures that have shaped the United States.

In his work, McMillian explores the complex and fraught connections between history and contemporary culture, not only as they are expressed in American politics, but also as they are manifest in American modernist art traditions. Over the course of his career, his work has questioned the connections between the body of a political nature and the politics of a bodily nature. This exploration is at the fore of this new body of work in the exhibition. *Body Politic* will include a new monumental work in vinyl, *The White House Painting, II*, 2018-2020 made from the remnants of *The White House Painting* made for his Booth Prize exhibition in Austin, TX. Several works in the exhibition were begun years ago continuing his investigation of the social and political factors that inform our understanding of the body's symbolic meanings. These are large, monochrome sculptures that loosely represent scaled-up organs of the human body made from chicken wire and black fabric. In one particularly gripping example, a snake-like loop, *Untitled (entrails)*, 2019-2020 hangs from steel butcher's hooks mounted into the gallery's ceiling. The work forms a drawing in space, a line describing disembowelment.

A series of works on paper titled, *An Abbreviated History in Abstraction* combine mixed media and text to narrate a history of the violence against Black bodies in the name of "science" and of the profit gained from slavery through the present. These works draw on such texts as Harriet A. Washington's seminal book *Medical Apartheid* and *Killing the Black Body* by Dorothy Roberts, amongst others. In these drawings, McMillian holds up the blood-stained land and the often-observed histories of structural racial violence as a record of one of the many histories of this nation. These histories and their very real present impacts have been brought into increasingly sharp focus by the uneven effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and by the looming Presidential election, where we are certain to see widespread, racially motivated voter suppression.

Rodney McMillian (b. 1969) lives and works in Los Angeles, CA. He received an MFA from the California Institute of the Arts in 2002. In 2019, his solo exhibition at the Underground Museum in Los Angeles featured several video works originally presented in his 2016 solo exhibition at the ICA Philadelphia as well as the first West coast presentation of McMillian's Opera, *Hanging with Clarence*, which was staged at the Bethlehem Baptist Church. His monumental installation *In this land*, 2019 was on view as part of the New Work series at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art from February 9 – June 9, 2019. He received the Contemporary Austin's first Suzanne Deal Booth Art Prize in 2016, and the resulting solo exhibition *Against a Civic Death* was on view in 2018.

In 2016, McMillian had solo exhibitions at the ICA Philadelphia, the Studio Museum in Harlem, and MoMA PS.1. Each of these exhibitions highlighted a particular set of material and conceptual concerns in McMillian's multivalent practice. The MoMA PS.1 exhibition, *Landscape Paintings* originated at the Aspen Art Museum, CO (2015) and was curated by Heidi Zuckerman. McMillian's work was featured in the 2015 Sharjah Biennial, curated by Eungie Joo. His work has also been included in group exhibitions at The National Portrait Gallery, London, MASS MoCA, North Adams, MA; the CCA Wattis Institute, San Francisco, CA; the Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo, Norway; The Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; The Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia; the Contemporary Art Museum Houston; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; the UCLA Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art among many others.

The gallery is located at 1700 S Santa Fe Avenue, south of the 10 freeway. Parking is available in the north parking lot adjacent to the building. The Gallery is currently open by appointment only, Tuesday – Saturday from 12 – 6PM. [Appointments may be made online here.](#)