

When I made *Untitled (black vinyl)* (2008), I was interested in the absurd; the absurdity of how we project onto bodies, how those projections inform cultural structures and fears and sometimes personal narratives. It was important that it was all hand-sewn because many of these structures and narratives are constructed stitch-by-stitch. The work needed to be larger than the viewer, a monumentality to compete with the volume that can exist inside of a mind. It was made specifically for the Whitney Museum, an institution like most mainstream museums that often normalize a White cultural identity.

As for the material, vinyl is a synthetic material produced from oil products—it's a domestic and commercial material that can also be sexy depending upon how it's used or contextualized. I intended the work to provide a bit of humor, kink, and to be a reflection upon effort. It takes quite a lot of effort, whether consciously or unconsciously, to form and maintain entrenched structures and narratives that shape our identity—even when those structures appear to be seamless.

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I use historical tropes to challenge indoctrinated narratives and myths, and to acknowledge the gaps in history: the many nameless and faceless individuals who are active participants in society but who are not often recorded or recognized. In my practice I have been concerned with the individuals who seem to hover outside the mythology of the American Dream. I have often felt invisible, and I do not believe I am alone in this understanding.

The post-consumer objects (the carpet paintings and chairs, etc.) are examples of work that tackle those notions. The objects are low-grade home furnishings, stained and tattered from use. They bear the traces of their owners, which suggests that the objects were used beyond the condition that a more financially secure individual would choose to endure. These objects point to disparages in class. They embody the residue of personal histories, which also speak to absences: the absent bodies that serve as metaphors for the owners whose living conditions and work are not usually represented in historical documents and texts.

Rodney McMillian

*Untitled*, 2007, vinyl, thread wood, metal and Styrofoam, 162 x 264 x 96 in. (411.5 x 670.6 x 243.8 cm), acquired in 2008

*Untitled*, 2005, carpet, 139 x 178 x 114 in. (353 x 452 x 289.6 cm), acquired in 2008

