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ART REVIEW

How modern was Grandma Moses?

By Cate McQuaid

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IN THE ABSTRACT

Sarah Braman's "Driving, sleeping, screwing, reading," another kind of homey landscape, is the opening salvo of "In the Abstract," at Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art. Braman constructs a shelter with a truck cap for a roof, sunset-colored translucent walls, and a carpet inside. It put me in mind of a long, gorgeous road trip.

"In the Abstract" is the type of show that comes around every five or 10 years to take painting's pulse. This one hinges on abstraction as it morphs into three dimensions and squirms over screens. It's mostly full of smart surprises.

There was one disappointment. My expectations were high for Rodney McMillian's "A beckoning: We are not who we think we are," an immersive, walk-through painting. Well — it's really just a blue-and-green tunnel. But the rest of the show gratifyingly complicates painting. It's long since a rule of thumb that you don't need paint to make a painting, but something must resonate within the medium's broad outlines of surface, support, color, genre, and gesture.



TOMASHI JACKSON/TILTON GALLERY, NEW YORK

Tomashi Jackson's "Upright, Colored, and Free" is at Mass MoCA.

Braman does it by invoking landscape. Matt Saunders's video installation "Reverdy/ King Hu" combines painting, photography, and more in luscious, jittery videos veering from abstraction to Eadweard Muybridge-style stop motion animation. **Tomashi Jackson** looks at racism through the lens of color theory in startlingly painterly textile works embedded with photos of children in segregated classrooms in the 1940s and desegregated ones in the 1950s. Sixty years ago, painting was just about painting. It still springs from those roots, but my, how its scope widens.

IN THE ABSTRACT

Mass MoCA Way, North Adams, through spring 2018. 413-662-2111,
www.massmoca.org

Read the full article at:

<https://www.bostonglobe.com/arts/art/2017/07/19/how-modern-was-grandma-moses/z9iWRG6gqkNDoIVhoKhz5H/story.html>