

Teacher Guide

Troy Montes Michie: Rock Of Eye

On view September 23, 2022— January 29, 2023



Troy Montes Michie *Paisano*, 2018, Paper, photographs, gloves, shoe fragment, acrylic on wood, 36 x 30 x 2 inches.
Courtesy of Antoine Drye and Jacqueline Moline

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#TroyMontesMichie

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Exhibition Overview

- *Troy Montes Michie: Rock of Eye* is an early-career survey of the artist's collages, drawings, and sculptures that draw upon the contours of body and place.
- Troy Montes Michie was born in El Paso, Texas, and his practice reflects his experience growing up along the United States and Mexico border. The border dividing the United States from Mexico stretches across 1,952 miles of varied terrain.
- His early work of assemblages and collages center magazine images of the Black male body and the use of camouflage.



Troy Montes Michie, *Out of Sight, Out of Mind*, 2018, Magazine pages, inkjet prints, clothing patterns, fabric, graphite, acrylic, colored pencil and tape, 62 x 52 inches. Collection of Noel E.D. Kirnon

- His sculptural work in the exhibition traces the social history and form of the zoot suit. A zoot suit is a men's suit with high-waisted, wide-legged, tight-cuffed, pegged trousers, and a long coat with wide lapels and wide padded shoulders. This style of clothing became popular in African American, Mexican American, Filipino American, Italian American, and Japanese American communities during the 1940s. Zoot suits were at the center of the 1943 attacks primarily on Mexican American, African American, and Filipino American youth in Los Angeles known as the Zoot Suit Riots.
- Montes Michie's work *Hung Out to Dry/This Land Was Mexican Once* (2019) maps a large terrain. Nearly five-foot tall and four-foot wide, the collage incorporates found photographs, papier-mâché, a garment bag, towel, rope, cut clothing, pages from erotic magazines, and sewing patterns.
- Montes Michie contrasts references from mestizo (Spanish for mixed race) to African American culture to emphasize the ways in which notions of home, space, and culture are intentionally disrupted by borders, and that the body is the ground upon which these wars continue to be fought.
- The title of the exhibition comes from tailoring a garment by "rock of eye" which is to rely on the drape—on experience over mathematical measurement—in the fitting process. It is a kind of drawing in space: a freehand, an intuition, a trust in materials.
- In the art of Troy Montes Michie, styling is a form of resistance and an act of reconstruction.
- This exhibition is co-organized by Rivers Institute for Contemporary Art & Thought (Rivers) and California African American Museum (CAAM), and curated by Andrea Andersson, Rivers Institute Founding Director & Chief Curator, with Jordan Amirkhani, Curator, Rivers Institute, and Taylor Renee Aldridge, Visual Arts Curator, CAAM. CAMH's presentation is coordinated by Patricia Restrepo, Assistant Curator

Camouflage - the use of materials, coloration, or illumination to disguise, disorient, and, at times, dazzle, in order to make things hard to see.

Key Questions

- What are the differences between portraiture and landscapes? What are the similarities or differences found in Montes Michie's artwork?
- What are physical and imaginary borders in the greater Houston area? Nationally? Globally?
- How does Montes Michie use the history of the Zoot Suit Riots in his artwork? How does self-fashioning empower communities?
- What forms of clothing have come to be associated with certain groups of people or eras of time?
- How does Montes Michie reconstruct the past through his artwork?



Troy Montes Michie, *Tacuche #4*, 2019. Clothing fragments, shoe fragments, hanger with zoot suit jacket, 57 x 23 inches. Courtesy of Artist and Company Gallery, New York

Curriculum Connections

Visual Arts | Self-fashioning, or choosing one's clothing and style as a way to construct one's public image, is an exercise in liberty and individuality. Dress can signify a person's age and origins, as well as the communities they belong to. Design a garment that represents you and your community. How does self-fashioning empower you?

Additional contemporary artists working with themes of fashion—Rabéa Ballin, Cheryl Donegan, César Martínez, and Michael Martínez.

Civic Engagement | Collage mobilizes the cut as a tool for reinvention, and for this reason, has been put to effective use by artists during times of war and political upheaval to disrupt visual continuity and engage social fractures. Create a collage that presents your point of view of civic engagement (individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern).

Additional contemporary artists working with collage as resistance—Tay Butler, Jamal Cyrus, and Calueen Smith.

History and Geography | Inspired by Troy Montes Michie use of history and maps, examine the geography associated with a historic event or social movement and translate your findings into a visual context. How can you organize your findings in a way for another classmate to understand and pull insights from your investigation of the historic event? For example, create a map or graph of the number of protests across the United States who attended protests for the murder of George Floyd.

Additional contemporary artists working with themes of history and geography—Josh Begley, Ayanna Jolivet Mccloud, and Nari Ward