
Senior Projects Spring 2019

Bard Undergraduate Senior Projects

Spring 2019

Mud Bog: Reconsidering Rural America

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Bard College

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Bard College

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Reconsidering Rural America

**Paintings By
M. Bodnar**

Mud Bog is an examination of the social and economic realities that present-day Americans living in rural communities endure, and how circumstances beyond their control have prodded them toward narcissistic displays – which can often be troubling expressions of darkness and intolerance.

I hasten to add that my artistic goal is not to wag a finger of disapproval at those depicted, or to punch down at them. I strive to treat this material with sensitivity and empathy. My intent is to shed a light on the conditions that have contributed to the current rancorous state of political and cultural division – as well as the forces that exacerbate and intensify that chasm.

The ambition behind *Mud Bog* is to promote a substantive conversation that will be accessible to the very people I am illustrating. I see nothing to be gained by driving the already-deep wedge between social groups even further, or to preach to the converted.

I feel uniquely qualified to take on this subject matter, since I grew up in exactly the kind of rural setting that I examine with this work. As something of an anomaly, I have always felt alien to rural America – even as I was immersed in it. Writer Joseph O’Neill has identified status as an insider/outsider to be a favorable position for an artist; I certainly am that when it comes to the realm I am portraying.

In this project, familiar figures and forms are presented in ways that are realistic, yet also markedly askew from what we are accustomed to. With often unexpected, semantic use of color, *Mud Bog* is composed to make the audience think twice – and keep thinking, long after viewing the paintings.

MUD BOG



Bob Ross
Mud Bog
1972



Bob Ross
Mud Bog
1972



Bob Ross
Mud Bog
1972



NEW YORK
62923-MJ
COMMERCIAL

CONF



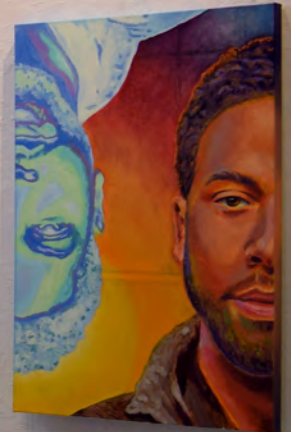
Wood Box
2018



Stack of Chairs
2018



The Company
2018



Arthur
2018