

Kent Monkman – Clip 12

Questioning the ethnographic eye

I think one of the other things that I was concerned about or that I was addressing in the moral landscape had to do with the subjectivity of the original artists and questioning their ethnographic eye on First Nations people. Many of these artists were commissioned by wealthy patrons. So in effect they were sort of fulfilling a commission. So there was this influence of their patrons, wanting these artists to create images that fulfilled their own imagination or their own ideas about what the west was about, what Native people were about. Paul Kane, I believe, was commissioned by the Hudson Bay Company. So here was basically one of the earliest capitalistic ventures in North America who was commissioning these paintings. So I just wanted to draw attention to that influence of the patronage and to question, you know, the subjectivity of these artists and because they were like most artists, you know, they were building careers for themselves and they were pursuing patronage, they were pursuing sales and you know sometimes these things do influence an artists work and you know especially creating work for a market that is eager for a certain kind of imagery and to reference that in some of the paintings I make little references to the Hudson Bay Company by featuring one of their blankets in a scene or so forth so there's an awareness of that early sense of capitalistic venture and

commerce. It wasn't all romantic, it was influenced by money and career opportunities.

