

Kent Monkman – Clip 7

The Moral Landscape series

The Moral Landscape series is a series of landscape paintings that I'm currently working on, I've been working on them for two or three years. They are direct appropriations of 19th century North American landscape paintings specifically work by Paul Kane, Albert Bierstadt, Thomas Cole, John Mix Stanley, George Catlin to a certain extent. All these painters either painted Indians, North American native people, inside their landscapes. So it was a genre of painting that was very popular in that early period of contact of European settlers with native people. And I think because it was an art form that really came out of those early years of contact it was really of interest to me, because it was the first time that native people were being observed, portrayed. It's a way of seeing how Aboriginal people were perceived by the dominant culture. So there were a number of different artists doing it in different ways and as I started to look at their work I started to see many different things that were paralleled sort of through the colonial process, through colonization. I could see this strong, sort of Christian ideology in some of the work which was manifested in these sort of sublime landscapes. There was the idea of the romantic savage in the land, you know, sort of how aboriginal people were basically seen as, you know, caretakers of the land, at one with nature. So there were a number of things that

sort of appealed to me, and I felt that I needed to respond to this work somehow. And because my previous body of work had started to touch on how colonization impacted aboriginal sexuality, these tableaux, these scenes became very appropriate sort of images to appropriate and work, on these scenes that deal with sexuality and the images of sexuality that I was interested in were ones that had to do with power. So I was using sexuality, I was creating these scenes to use sexuality, the power dynamics within sexuality, as a metaphor for the hierarchies of power between aboriginal people and European colonizers.

