

Mark Bradford (American, b. 1961) – Artist Resources

[Bradford at Hauser & Wirth Gallery, Los Angeles](#)

In 2007, [Art21 followed Bradford](#) as he gathered materials and installed work in his South LA studio..

“My practice is décollage and collage at the same time. Décollage: I take it away; collage: I immediately add it right back. It’s almost like a rhythm. I’m a builder and a demolisher. I put up so I can tear down...In archaeological terms, I excavate and I build at the same time.” Bradford discusses his inspiration and process in a [2011 interview with Art21](#).

Bradford’s discusses recent work and community engagement at his 2009 [artist talk at Walker Art Center](#).

2015 [New Yorker profile](#) conducted at Bradford’s studio and home in South LA, not far from where he grew up. Bradford discusses his attraction to paper, maps, and social history; his time at CalArts and interest in painting; and his foundation with Allan DiCastro, [Art+Practice](#), which creates spaces for artists and community activism.

Bradford talks with Thelma Golden about his relationship with the medium of painting and experiences of being “othered” in a 2015 [video interview](#) in conjunction with his [first show at Hauser & Wirth](#) Gallery, New York. “Abstraction gave me the freedom to play... I want a space where I can play and be vulnerable and not know. In the shadows....my body is removed and stays in the shadows, what you see are the details and the things I’m working out.”



Bradford, 2019. Photo: Sim Canetty-Clarke



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In 2017, Bradford [installed his first solo exhibition in Washington D.C.](#), at the Hirshorn Museum. The star of the show, [Pickett’s Charge](#) (on view through 2021) is Bradford’s most recognized work, measuring 45 feet in length and composed of eight 12-ft tall canvases. Watch Bradford’s [artist talk](#) at the Hirshorn with Director Melissa Chiu.

Bradford [speaks to a packed audience](#) at the [de la Cruz Collection](#), Miami, Florida in 2015. “I’m always looking for a detail in something that has to do with race, or gender or class. But it’s a detail, and I need to abstract it because those are such large words. Big ‘R’ for race, big ‘G’ for gender. How do I as a person navigate in and out of that, and sometimes I use abstraction because it gives me some freedom even though the language still clings to the edges of it.”

W. Tate Dougherty, Senior Director at Hauser & Wirth, [interviewed](#) Bradford as they prepared for “Los Angeles,” a major exhibition at the [Long Museum in Shanghai](#), summer 2014.

The Modern Art Museum in Fort Worth, Texas unveils a new exhibition focused on Bradford’s material-oriented process. [Mark Bradford: End Papers](#) includes early work and new pieces created specifically for the show

Mark Bradford (American, b. 1961)

You Don't Know What Kind of World You Woke Up, 2018

Mixed media on canvas

Private Collection; L2019:134.1

Contemporary African American artist Mark Bradford characterizes himself as an excavator and archivist of culture. His trademark mixed-media compositions recycle discarded materials like movie posters, circulars, and newspapers, which he collects from the streets surrounding his studio in South Los Angeles. While his oeuvre has expanded over the last two decades to include installations and video, abstract collaged canvases remain the core of Bradford's creative practice. Each new work demonstrates his continued dedication to making art that is visually captivating, layered with meaning, and tied to community while engaging with national issues. The enigmatically titled **You Don't Know What Kind of World You Woke Up** represents a 2018 series in which the artist returned to one of his early conceptual interests: maps, civic organization, and the physical marginalization of minority communities. Bradford scrapes and sands his constructed layers of paper to create a highly textured surface that recalls an aerial view of a landscape. Vivid blue paint ruptures the ghostly grid-like composition, suggesting the wave of political and social upheaval hinted by the title.

February 19 – May 24, 2020

Resources for this work

2019 exhibition of new work, including *You Don't Know What Kind of World You Woke Up*, at [Hauser & Wirth, Hong Kong](#)

[Interview](#) with gallerist Iwan Wirth, 2019



Mark Bradford (American, b. 1961)

Untitled, 2019

Acrylic, tissue paper and rope collage on canvas construction

Private Collection; L2019:154.1

Born in Los Angeles, where he still lives and works, Mark Bradford earned his BFA and MFA from the California Institute of the Arts. He is celebrated for large-scale paintings and sculpture—sometimes shown as installations—incorporating materials such as newsprint, billboard paper, and flyers that he salvages from urban communities around his studio in South LA. Bradford engages with these materials like a social historian or an archeologist, investigating the potential of discarded ephemera to elucidate how broader historical and economic conditions disproportionately affect marginalized populations. He refers to his work as “social abstraction...with a social or political context clinging to the edges.” The buoy-shaped **Untitled** returns to a sculptural installation Bradford created in 2014, in which the artist directed his interest in urban cartography toward medieval and Renaissance maps of maritime exploration. The buoy displays his signature process of building and molding layers of materials, including the addition of rope for added texture and linear elements.

On view February 26 – May 31, 2020

Resources for this work

[Review of buoy installation on façade of Bait Obaid Al Shamsi during the Sharjah Biennial, 2014](#)

[Current buoy installation at Mandeville Gallery, Union College, NY, through July 2020](#)

