

TEXAS GALLERY



Presidio: in the Sand Hills Looking East with ATV Tracks & Water Tower
2012, Oil on canvas, 16 1/2 x 65 1/4" (detail)

PRESS RELEASE

July 13, 2021

RACKSTRAW DOWNES **WEST TEXAS**

*Paintings & Studies from 1999-2016 of Marfa
and Presidio, TX*

JULY 17 - AUGUST 28, 2021

Texas Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of works by **Rackstraw Downes** painted in and around Marfa and Presidio, TX. Encompassing the artist's annual winter sojourns in Marfa and Presidio from 1999 to 2016, this exhibition presents works that have not been previously seen in Texas. Spending up to six months yearly in residence in West Texas, first, with a studio in Marfa at the Chinati Foundation and then, a studio in Presidio, Downes worked every day on site, choosing particular views of the vast landscape or localized defined public spaces of a smaller scale. At times, paintings took more than one year to complete with additional finishing in his New York studio.

The largest panoramas imply the border between Texas and Mexico, but only by incidental references such as the border patrol's substation or the hills that are on the other side of the Rio Grande. In fact, Downes has said humorously these are his "mountain" paintings as he is able to make them less grand, being the backdrop rather than the focus of the paintings. His method of working, first with drawings, and then with studies, allows him to adjust the proportions of the works to his viewpoint and creates a cinematic approach to perspective that he has referred to in essays and lectures as "turning my head." The smaller paintings are of spaces that relate to the specific locale - a public dance floor or his own abode next to agricultural fields.

Rackstraw Downes lives and works in New York City. He was born in England in 1939 and studied literature at Cambridge and received both a BFA and an MFA from Yale University. In 1999, he was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters and received a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship in 2009. He is the author of several books of critical essays and is an authority on the work of Fairfield Porter. *Rackstraw Downes*, a monograph, was published by Princeton University in 2005. In conjunction with an exhibition in 2010, the Parrish Museum, Southampton, NY published *Rackstraw Downes: Onsite Paintings, 1972-2008*.

Texas Gallery's first exhibition of work by Rackstraw Downes was in 1987, consisting of drawings made while wintering in Galveston. In 1998, Fredericka Hunter suggested he might consider working in Marfa after he had made an initial visit there. He was a resident artist at Chinati for two winters. In 2002, Downes returned to West Texas where he established a studio in Presidio, TX, to which he returned annually for fourteen years.

Paintings and drawings by Rackstraw Downes are in numerous museum collections including Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Menil Collection, Houston; Dallas Museum of Art; Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth; Museum of Modern Art, NY; National Gallery, Washington D.C.; Whitney Museum of American Art, NY; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY and Colby College, Waterville, ME, among others.

My paintings are executed from start to finish on site in the landscape and take months. When you work outdoors, you surrender a lot of control over your subject and that is what I like about it, the interactive, experiential character of it. It is the opposite of starting with a clear-cut idea and projecting that into the work. You learn about the site as you proceed; no matter what thoughts or opinions I may have about what is there when I begin, what comes to concern me as I work are the things themselves, not any sense I make of them.

--**Rackstraw Downes** from 'The Tenses of Landscape.' *In Relation to the Whole - Three Essays from Three Decades - 1973, 1981, 1996. 2000, Edgewise Press, New York, NY.*

For further information or images, please contact Nancy Douthey at info@texgal.com or (713) 524-1593. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday 10-5 and by appointment.

TEXAS GALLERY
2012 PEDEN STREET
HOUSTON, TX 77019
713.524.1593
info@texgal.com
www.texgal.com