



Unexpected Sunlight: Rocío Rodríguez at Sandler
Hudson, Atlanta

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Rocío Rodríguez, *Passing Skies*, 2020; oil on canvas, 57.25 x 90 inches. Image courtesy of the artist and Sandler Hudson Gallery.

Rocío Rodríguez, an established Cuban American painter, is best known for her abstract images of stacks of squares shimmering and vibrating with exquisitely controlled color, rendered with a great variety of energetic and distinctive marks and edges, synergized within each piece. It is a surprise to see the artist plunge into the realm of landscape painting in her current solo show at Sandler Hudson Gallery, *At the Edge of the Day*. Rodríguez's masterful technical skills are evident in this new body of representational work, where she depicts monumental fields of open sky and landscape in black and white monochrome paintings, made with oils on canvas. Her willingness to explore an interest in the landscape with great focus and dedication is a refreshing attitude in a discipline that tends to encourage a branding of one's style. If Gerhard Richter can jump from representation to abstraction, so can Rocío Rodríguez.

The three largest landscapes titled *Passing Skies*, *Big Cloud: El Prado*, and *Sunset Cloud Arroyo Seco* are painted on cinematographic rectangles with the aspect ratio of the big screen in traditional films. The intrinsically American experience of the road trip is evoked in these paintings, with landscapes that appear like prairies or deserts seen as a passing impression instead of a physically inhabited space. The Spanish names appearing in two of the titles seem like small yet significantly sharp reminders that part of this intrinsically American experience includes the taking of land from indigenous people and from the Mexican state.





Rocío Rodríguez, *Double Sunsets*, 2019; oil on canvas, 49.50 x 48 inches.
Image courtesy of the artist and Sandler Hudson Gallery

The paintings *Double Sunset* and *Black Sundown* are both vertically oriented and combine an image of a landscape with a smaller vertical rectangle sitting at the center of the lower edges of each composition. It might make you think of the mediated landscape, as seen through a smart phone being held waist-high. The advent of smartphones, and screens in general, have changed the rectangle and the square with cultural meaning. These shapes have acquired significance beyond painting, photography and geometry in our daily life experience, making the two-dimensional and the virtual more constant than the fully fledged and the three-dimensional.

The black and white palette of the paintings and the title of the show point to that moment at sunset when the sun has disappeared, and all the colors are muted because the light has gone out. As one walks toward the backroom of the gallery, there are smaller paintings in the hallway, abstractions with some hints of landscape, that start to have bits of color in them, mostly blues and yellows. In the backroom one encounters a suite of nine stunning, abstract pastel drawings, the types of compositions that we normally associate with Rocío Rodríguez. All the sunlight missing from the landscape paintings is found in these drawings.

Rocío Rodríguez, una pintora nacida en Cuba y establecida en Atlanta, es muy conocida por sus cuadros y dibujos abstractos, compuestos de rectángulos y cuadrados de colores exquisitos que