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# Artist Rob Pruitt Has Painted More Than 2,300 Portraits Of Obama (And He's Not Done Yet)

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At first glance, it's hard to pick out the details of the two-tone paintings covering the walls of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Detroit in an unbroken grid.

Step closer, and you see President Barack Obama looking back from hundreds of canvases.



*Installation detail from "The Obama Paintings." Courtesy of the artist, Gavin Brown's enterprise, and MOCAD.*

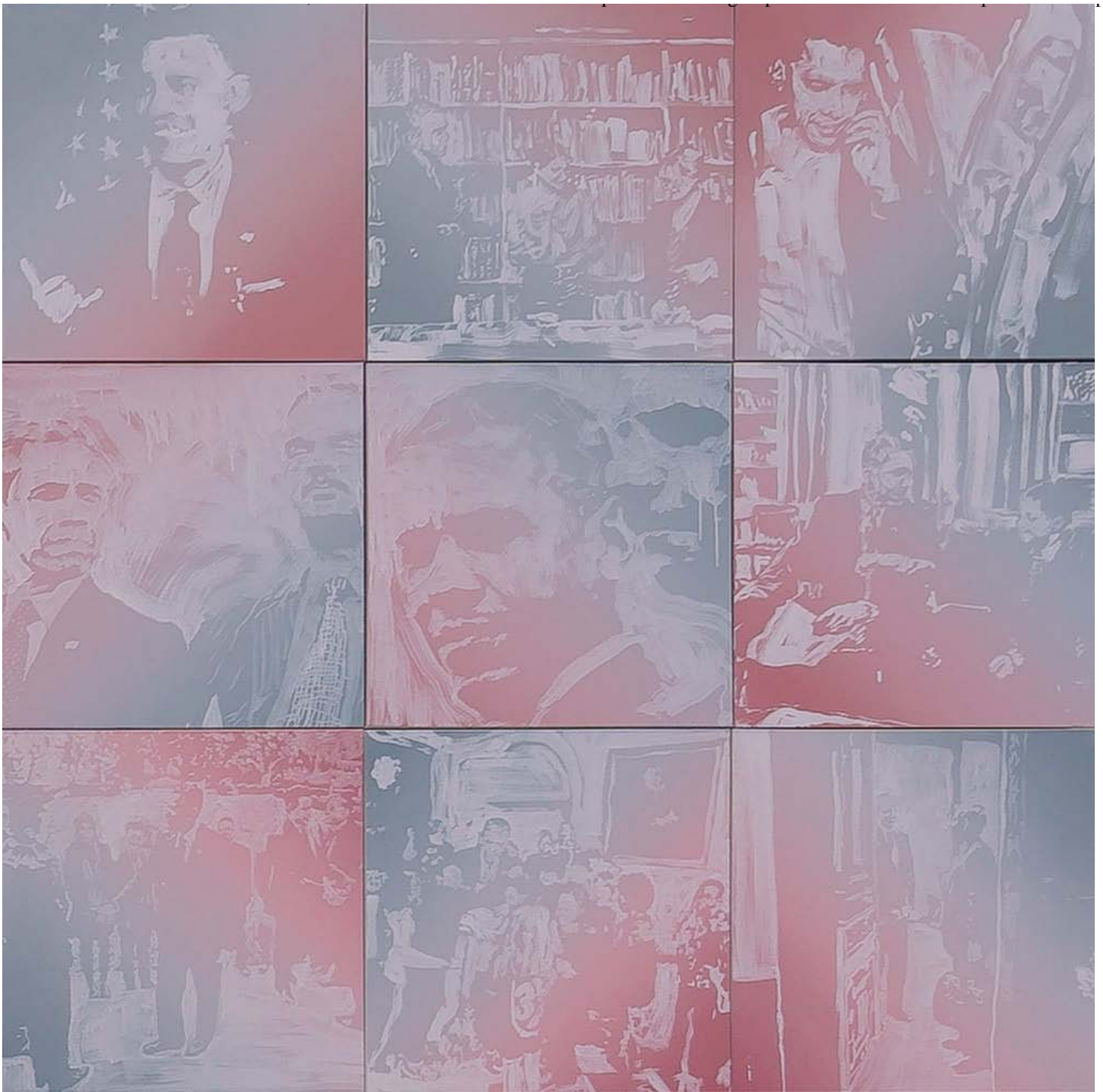
"The Obama Paintings" exhibition, which opened at MOCAD last month, shows a staggering 2,300 of New York artist Rob Pruitt's pieces. For the last six years, Pruitt has painted a portrait of Obama for each day he's been in office to create a record of his presidency.

"I committed myself to tracking the presidency with one painting per day from an unbiased perspective," Pruitt told The Huffington Post in an email. "An image of the President deep in thought walking through the Rose Garden is painted with the same attention to detail and mid-range palette as the signing of the [Affordable Care Act]."

While some debate the impact and legacy of Obama's presidency, Pruitt busies himself with his day-by-day chronicle. He chooses the portrait he will paint each day by using Google's image search, and is aiming to continue adding to his presidential portfolio until Obama leaves the White House. By the time that happens, Pruitt will have produced 2,922 paintings.

"I recognize that feelings for the President have fluctuated and that is interesting, but this is a story which hasn't been written entirely," Pruitt said. "There's still over a year and a half to go. Everyone is always in such a rush to determine a president's legacy."

Pruitt has painted scenes ranging from the Obama family's private moments to the president's public speeches.



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Pruitt paints each portrait with a red and blue gradient as its background, he then paints the image onto the canvas in white. Pruitt said he purposely used muted versions of the colors on the American flag, “hopefully bringing to mind that weathered, time-worn quality that we commonly associate with stone monuments.” The whole piece is meant to function as a monument to Obama “with an approach that eschews an overarching, singular quality -- something that views the presidency in its entirety.”

The paintings catch viewers' eyes at random before receding into the sea of soft red and blue. They're not ordered sequentially, which makes it difficult to trace the historical narrative in the images or see how Pruitt's style has changed throughout his project.

Many of the paintings aren't displayed on the walls -- 1,000 of the exhibition pieces are stored in a custom shelving unit in the gallery because there are so many of them.





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Pruitt said Detroit was the “ideal city” to debut his Obama paintings.

“The story of 21st century Detroit is an important part of Obama’s legacy, and I think the city’s struggles are indicative of the broader issues our country is facing,” he said.

Pruitt has streamlined his painting process, “so it becomes more like a task or a part of [his] daily routine, like exercising.” Still, he spends an hour on each portrait, adding up to more than 95 full days spent working on Obama portraits over six years, more time than most people have spent looking closely at the president.

“I don’t think I’ve actually witnessed anything that others haven’t noticed before me,” he said. “That being said, he seems older! Wiser, maybe? He still smiles and laughs a lot, which is nice to see.”