



Line drawing of: Wardell Milan, *Michael Ross*, 2018. Cut-and-paste printed paper and gelatin silver prints, watercolour, graphite. Overall: 40.6 x 26.4 cm. Purchase, with funds from the Photography Curatorial Committee, 2019. 2019/2250. © Wardell Milan.

NEW WAYS OF SEEING

WARDELL MILAN, *MICHAEL ROSS*

“The act of cutting and dissecting images and materials—to then use these fragments to create a new form or figure—has always been exciting.” —Wardell Milan

This line drawing represents one of the artworks in the AGO Collection by the contemporary artist Wardell Milan. It is called *Michael Ross*. The main visual source Milan uses here is an image of Michael Ross, who often modelled for the well-known photographer Robert Mapplethorpe. Thinking about the visual record Milan has inherited as a gay Black man in the United States, he asks: Are these my ancestors? And, if so, what does that mean? Creatively combining photographic and drawn elements, Milan gives us a new portrait of Ross, gazing directly and steadfastly outward.

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ACTIVITY

Wardell Milan presents a complex and poetic vision of Blackness in his work as he thinks about how African-Americans have been visually represented throughout history.

Who do you see here? What do so many eyes and ears mean to you? The multiple eyes are significant because they encourage you to look at this face from different points of view.

Now consider creating your own self-portrait. There are many colours and drawing or painting techniques you could use to create an image like Wardell Milan's. What features will you emphasize in your composition: an ear, your nose, your teeth? What does that mean about you if there are multiple eyes or ears?

What does your final composition look like? What would you try if you did it again?



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