



Patrick Alston, *a few stars, a lot of stripes*, 2021. Photo: Craig Smith

At first glance, color is the most significant aspect of this large-scale assemblage painting by Patrick Alston. Red, very generally, can signify energy, passion, love, or even war. Yet when approaching the work and taking a closer look, the stripes of the American flag protrude from the color field—not unlike an upside-down flag symbolizing distress. Upon closer inspection, still the vibrant textures and patterns can hold one's attention for longer contemplation. The magic of Alston's work is this very mixture of bold color, vibrant textures, and materiality, packed with biting social, political relevance. As part of the "Let There Be Light" series, consisting of similarly colorful works made in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting social unrest from police violence against the Black community throughout, Alston was referring to the metaphysical idea of light but also the physical isolation from light within the density of New York City, where he resides.

A passionate, self-proclaimed advocate for Black abstraction, the artist is following in the footsteps of other artists within the Singer collection such as Mark Bradford and Rashid Johnson. With his use of found objects and fabrics such as tarp and canvas that he paints over, Alston invokes the style of assemblage artist Betye Saar, whose work is also included in the collection. Born and raised in the Bronx, Alston often looks to his immediate environment for inspiration combining found objects, relevant symbolism, bold colors, and gestural marks into these tension-filled works that operate both within and beyond the visual plane.

-Jennifer McCabe, Director and Chief Curator  
Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art