

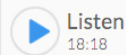
Fahamu Pecou Uses Art To Re-Define Black Masculinity

By ERIN WRIGHT



Fahamu Pecou spoke with Lois Reitzes about his "Do or Die" exhibit at the Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art in Charleston, SC, as well as the short film "Emmett Still" he created for the occasion.

BRYAN MELTZ



Fahamu Pecou is here to re-define black masculinity.

Pecou's paintings are in the Smithsonian's permanent collection and have even been seen on the hit TV series, "Empire." The Atlanta artist and scholar took time from his [new major exhibit opening](#) at the Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art in Charleston, S.C. to talk with Lois Reitzes on "City Lights."

For that exhibit, "Do or Die," Pecou created a short film called "Emmett Still." The title invokes the tragedy of Emmett Till, a 14-year-old who was the victim of a lynching in 1955. Pecou also created an original soundtrack for his short film. One track features Atlanta activist and rapper [Killer Mike](#). Whatever the medium, Pecou's art combats what he calls "the Spectacle of Black Death."

"This spectacle of death, this threat, that 'We will destroy your body' ... it's ongoing and it's pervasive. There's this constant threat that's on your back, that you're living with, that someone can take your body away from you," he said.

But Pecou wants to show that the threat is empty, that "no can actually destroy you." For Pecou, art is not only a space for resistance; it is also a space for defining oneself.

"If you see yourself as powerful, if you see yourself as divine, if you see yourself as greater than that which is against you," he said, "there's no need to push back. You're above it all."

Pecou's body of work is about self-awareness, self-respect and self-expression, which, as he puts it, is "a much more powerful form of resistance."