

The Past in Front of Us: Imagining Black Diasporas in the 21st Century

by

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## ABSTRACT

*The Past in Front of Us: Imagining Black Diasporas in the 21st Century* seeks aesthetic connections between Black artists working around the world today. This project prioritizes aesthetic perception and affect in relation to Black Diasporic studies and reimagines the canon of work by Black artists. This project does not relegate aesthetics to surface or formal analyses, but understands aesthetic motifs as intelligent entities which communicate the experience of existence.

This project affirms Black Diaspora as a dynamic imaginary. I extend traditional analyses of Black Diaspora from the continental edges of the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific. I look horizontally and create juxtapositions between artists working in Africa, the Caribbean, Europe, and the Pacific Rim. I use transdisciplinary terms from art history, psychoanalysis, semiotics, philosophy, rhetoric, trauma theory, and critical race studies. Analyses build on multiple discourses because Black Diaspora is a mutable concept that shifts and evolves.

This project is one of the first investigations of twenty-first century artistic production by Black artists globally. Until now, these artists' work has been covered primarily in magazines, exhibition catalogues, and art reviews in the popular press. Chapters, organized by themes rather than regions, focus on emerging artists Dannielle Bowman, Sandra Brewster, Susana Pilar Delahante Matienzo, Kambui Olijimi, and Frida Orupabo. In addition, this thesis contributes a new theoretical frame to existing scholarship on artists Sammy Baloji, Sanford Biggers, Mark Bradford, Glenn Ligon, and Cauleen Smith. As a speculative work, this thesis articulates a vocabulary and uncovers a multitude of aesthetic connections between art practices globally. A significant

component of this work is to foreground Black artists' historically sidelined insights about being in the world.

## DEDICATION

Mom, Steve and James, thank you for everything.

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## PREFACE

When I began this work, I asked myself if Black Diaspora exists, what does it look like. I wanted to explore its motifs, its colors, textures and sounds. I wanted to discover what Black Diaspora could tell me about the world. *The Past in Front of Us: Imagining Black Diasporas in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* seeks aesthetic connections between Black artists working around the world today. This thesis contributes to Black Diasporic discourse through analyses that prioritize aesthetic perception and affect. My use of the term aesthetics does not merely refer to the surface qualities of an artwork's form. The aesthetic decisions an artist makes reveal what it means 'to be' in the world. That is, what it is like to be alive – what it is like to love, what it is like to feel pain, and so forth. This project recognizes aesthetic motifs as intelligent entities which express the experience of existence.

The transatlantic slave trade changed the course of civilization. The number of lives lost over three centuries is hard to imagine. Exchanges between cultures emerged in the wake of devastation. New languages, art forms, and customs sprung from suffering. Black Diasporic studies aims to conceptualize the forced movement of Black peoples, their collective vulnerability to racism, and their struggle against different forms of oppression.<sup>1</sup> Black Diaspora scholars tend to focus their investigation around the continental edges of the Atlantic Ocean. This project extends that analysis to the Pacific. It finds connections between artists working in Africa, the Caribbean, Europe, and the Pacific Rim. The title, *The Past in Front of Us*, reflects a methodology of examining history from the vantage of the present. This project affirms Black Diaspora as a dynamic imaginary that constantly shifts and evolves.

Blackness is as diverse as diaspora itself. In the following chapters, I frame my discussion around the understanding that Black people share in racist oppression no matter where they live. This project prioritizes aesthetic perception and affect in relation to Black Diasporic studies. It reimagines the canon of work by Black artists and emphasizes the importance of scholarship that accounts for the insights communicated by Black artists.

This project affirms the observation by art historian and African American Studies scholar Kobena Mercer that analyses of Black artists' work privilege their biography and social or political circumstances, rather than "aesthetic affect."<sup>2</sup> In a diasporic context, aesthetic interpretations empower Black artists whose voices have been historically sidelined. I advocate for scholarship that seeks to know how Black artists convey what it means 'to be' because it privileges their experience. White supremacy, racism, and imperialism persist because history, and the canon of Western art, marginalizes Black and oppressed peoples' point of view.

Artistic production by Black artists around the world is as active and innovative as ever. Yet, for thousands of years, as scholar Okwui Enwezor points out, "Africa has been interpreted as a marginal, limited sphere of artistic potential and institutional power."<sup>3</sup> Since the civil rights and decolonial period of the 1960s and 1970s, scholars, writers and activists have written revisionist histories and added new narratives to the Western art canon to acknowledge the influence of artists of color. The contemporary art world, understood in the general sense, still widely undervalues work by Black artists and artists of color. A recent report by *Artnews* shows the total combined auction value of work by African American artists is \$460.8 million—just 0.26 percent of the global



auction market.<sup>4</sup> A 2018 study by City University of New York reported that more than 88% of American artists represented by top New York galleries are white.<sup>5</sup> The representation of artists of color in museum collections is just as diminutive. A study by a group of statisticians and art historians at Williams College, together with Williams College Museum of Art, and the University of California, Los Angeles, surveyed eighteen major American museums and determined these collections represent artists who are 85% white and 87% male.<sup>6</sup>

A 2015 national survey by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation reveals an alarming lack of racial diversity among art museum directors, curators, conservators, and educators. In that subset of positions, 84% of those employees are White, 6% are Asian, 4% are Black, 3% are Hispanic, and 3% are two or more races.<sup>7</sup> These proportions do not come close to representing the diversity of the American population. These museum professionals write publications and compile exhibitions that shape social value systems. They are the editors who construct ladders of achievement. More people of color, artists, scholars and art professionals alike, must have a platform to author the texts that shape our social world.

This project is one of the first investigations of twenty-first century artistic production by Black artists globally. Until now, these artists' work has been covered primarily in magazines, exhibition catalogues, and art reviews in the popular press. Chapters, organized by themes rather than regions, focus on emerging artists Dannielle Bowman, Sandra Brewster, Susana Pilar Delahante Matienzo, Kambui Olijimi, and Frida Orupabo. In addition, this thesis contributes a new theoretical frame to existing

scholarship on artists Sammy Baloji, Sanford Biggers, Mark Bradford, Glenn Ligon, and Cauleen Smith.

Methodologically, I do not attempt to be comprehensive. I am not trying to analyze as many artworks as possible. This project is not a historical lineage. Nor is it an exhaustive look at Black diasporic scholarship. This thesis is a speculative project that articulates a vocabulary and uncovers a multitude of aesthetic connections between art practices globally. A significant component of this work is to foreground Black artists' historically sidelined insights.

I work horizontally to create juxtapositions across regions and histories. I use transdisciplinary terms that derive from art history, psychoanalysis, semiotics, philosophy, rhetoric, trauma theory, and critical race studies. My thesis builds on multiple discourses because Black Diaspora is a concept that multiplies on itself, has no center, and has been constructed imaginatively.

An understanding of Black Diaspora requires an interdisciplinary methodology. Black Diaspora is an additive construct. Ideas are quilted together. Thinkers make and remake it. Black artists working centuries after the transatlantic slave trade have few written accounts authored by their ancestors to refer to. Distance is thus an integral component of Black Diaspora. The distance—between where one is, and where one's ancestors came from—invites the imagination to fill it with images, words, and sounds. Creative activity is the fabric of Black Diaspora. Black Diasporic studies sits precisely on the edge of history and poetry.

Black Diaspora is not a place, nor is it an isolated historical event. It is unlike the Silk Road or the Middle Passage. Chattel slavery and the exile of millions of Africans to

the Americas inaugurates Black Diasporic studies, but it has no finite beginning, end, or center.

Since at least the early twentieth century, Black scholars such as Aimé Césaire, Leon Damas, Frantz Fanon and Léopold Sédar Senghor conceived of a shared Black consciousness. They advocated for global networks of solidarity in Pan-Africanist theories like Négritude. Primary texts, such as *Discourse on Colonialism* (1950) by Césaire, emerge alongside European fascism. Césaire proposed that if anyone had the capacity to reimagine society, it would be people who had been colonized.<sup>8</sup> Twentieth-century Martinican poet Édouard Glissant observed in his poem, *The Open Boat*, that the transatlantic slave became “something shared” among Black people, “...the descendants, one people among others.”<sup>9</sup>

Over time, artists revitalized Pan-Africanist theory in the context of the Harlem Renaissance. Langston Hughes’ famous 1921 poem, *The Negro Speaks of Rivers*, exemplified his Pan-Africanist understanding of Black culture. Hughes, speaking first person, animates Black culture across time and place from the Euphrates and the Nile, to the Mississippi. He wrote:

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.  
I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.  
I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.  
I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln  
went down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy  
bosom turn all golden in the sunset...<sup>10</sup>

In the United States, Pan-Africanism created an opportunity for Black Americans to connect with their African heritage. As a political movement, Pan-Africanism represented an awareness between Blacks and people of color that, while their fights

against racism and oppression were different, their collective voices could force change in international politics.<sup>11</sup> Pan-Africanist leaders advocated for and debated different strategies to arrive at justice and equality. Marxism and Black Nationalism were major currents of Pan-African debate.<sup>12</sup> During the independence period in West Africa and the civil rights period in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s, slogans such as “Black is Beautiful” echoed across the Atlantic.

Scholar Paul Gilroy coined the term “Black Atlantic” in the mid-1990s. He understood diaspora as a set of “transnational connections rooted in the cultural and political resources Black people draw upon in their struggles against various forms of oppression.”<sup>13</sup> His contemporary, Harvard University professor of African and African American Studies Tommie Shelby argues that Black political solidarity arises out of shared struggle.<sup>14</sup> Collective self-reliance emerged from the conditions of a “common history of oppression and vulnerability to racism.”<sup>15</sup>

Scholars Okwui Enwezor and Chika Okeke-Agulu point out the complex connotations of the term “African.” The authors clarify what they mean by “African identity” in their publication *Contemporary African Art Since 1980*, the first Pan-African examination of work by contemporary African artists. They assert that “there is no totalizing construct,” defining an African identity.<sup>16</sup> They affirm that an African identity connotes “a relationship to ethnic, national, and linguistic conditions, as well as to ethical, ideological, and political strategies.”<sup>17</sup> Enwezor and Okeke-Agulu argue that “African” should not be understood in ethnic or regional parameters, but rather “a network of positions, affiliations, strategies, and philosophies.”<sup>18</sup> In this way, the authors’ work allows for multiple modes of interpretation. They understand artistic production

within the multiplicity of cultural traditions that exist inside and out of the African continent. In their book, Enwezor and Okeke-Agulu survey artists of African descent. By leaving the definition of an African identity open, they allow new connections to emerge.<sup>19</sup>

Similarly, philosopher and cultural theorist Kwame Anthony Appiah contends that assumptions about culture, commonly defined in relation to region, are unreliable.<sup>20</sup> There is no cohesive, reliable way to characterize African people by region because borders change. People move around the world. War and politics incite people to reject nations.

This project asserts that identity is mutable. Enwezor, Okeke-Agulu, Appiah, Gilroy, Shelby, James Baldwin, Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, bell hooks, Audre Lorde, among others—all establish this fact. As these authors demonstrate, “African” and “Black” refer to vast linguistic, religious, cultural, economic, national, and regional affiliations and circumstances. A common experience of oppression, rather than blood, is how this text engages Blackness. I purposefully employ the term ‘Black’ because it allows for artists, and people in general, to claim it in different ways. By considering Blackness in the face of common oppression, rather than identity, one can better uncover connections around the globe.

Between the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, colonialism and chattel slavery forced the movement of millions of Africans to the Americas. The Berlin Conference of 1884 regulated European colonization and trade in Africa. In 1870, Europe controlled ten percent of Africa. That number increased to nearly ninety percent by 1914.<sup>21</sup> Today, thousands of Africans cross the Mediterranean Sea under a variety of different

circumstances, often seeking refuge. When I began writing this text, I could not have imagined Breonna Taylor and George Floyd's killing. While every Black person's experience is different, their vulnerability to racism remains a fact everywhere.<sup>22</sup>

Few primary texts examine art production by Black artists internationally in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Enwezor and Okeke-Agulu's 2009 survey is the most recent example of such an endeavor. Their project did not draw comparisons among African American artists, as this one does. It is also one of the first to focus on the last two decades of artistic production.

A consideration of artistic innovation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is urgent in a period of increased global travel by artists through residencies, fieldwork, and international events. These exchanges create meaningful diasporic currents ripe for new analyses. Over the last twenty years, artist residencies such as *Black Rock*, *Raw Material*, and *WAAW* residency in Senegal and *The Bag Factory* in Johannesburg, have emerged across the African continent. The residency at the Studio Museum in Harlem and Gordon Parks Foundation Fellowship have provided steady, fertile ground for African and Afro-LatinX descendent artists to pursue their projects in the United States. *I-54*, now an eminent international contemporary African art fair, emerged in 2013. Black Lives Matter, founded by leaders in Los Angeles and New York in 2013, is now a global network foundation.

This project focuses on artworks organized by themes, rather than region. *Speech | Silence, Movement | Transformation and Imagination* creates aesthetic vocabularies to draw connections between art practices.

Chapter one examines how artists use written words as a visual motif. In artworks that portray subjects who died violently or unjustly, the artists prompt readers to contemplate how the dead speak. This chapter proposes that silence is a generative state.

Silence and speech are related subjects. Outrage leads to silence and speech. Artworks by Sanford Biggers, Adel Abdessemed and Glenn Ligon, reveals how silence and speech interact in a diasporic context. Biggers and Abdessemed reanimate the voice of people who were killed by American police and soldiers in the Belgian Congo. Ligon employs citation to speak through others' words.

The second chapter explores how artists, working across oceans, use physical expression to not only transform themselves but also history itself. Slaves, who were largely prohibited from writing in the Americas, created ways to pass down their stories through different artistic traditions. Oral histories, music, and dance continue to be prominent forms of expression across Black cultures. This chapter examines how trauma is metabolized and transformed through action. Movement, which relies on breath, signifies Black survival.

Congolese artist Sammy Baloji works with choreographer Faustin Linyekula to dance in copper mines in Katanga province. His limber movements reclaim a space designed to restrict the body. Los Angeles native Mark Bradford recasts the history of the 1965 Watts uprising through the sound of Motown music. California native artist Dannielle Bowman considers the legacy of the Great Migration and the promise of the American West for Black Americans. Cuban artist Susana Pilar Delahante Matienzo animates the story of her Chinese grandfather's migration in a performance in Venice, Italy. Toronto-based artist Sandra Brewster employs photographic blurring to convey

immigrants' experiences. Brewster and Matienzo's work calls attention to the speed at which people move. Their work shows endurance is integral to Black survival.

The third chapter compares the work of Los Angeles-based artist Cauleen Smith with Frida Orupabo, based in Oslo. This text will show how Orupabo and Smith's engagement with archives exemplifies the work of the imagination. Because few written records by the first enslaved Africans survive, imagination has always been a mode for Black people to take control of their historical narratives. Resisting the form of the archive is a way for Smith and Orupabo to reimagine histories their ancestors did not write. Black Diaspora is imagination— an infinite space that awaits artists to fill it with stories. To overturn power, artists and scholars must do away with rigid paradigms. Disruptive minds behave imaginatively.



## CHAPTER 1

### SPEECH | SILENCE

The madder I get, the quieter I get.

Richard Pryor, *Live on the Sunset Strip*, 1982<sup>23</sup>

When you removed the gag that was keeping those black mouths shut, what were you hoping for? That they would sing your praises? Did you think that when they raised themselves up again, you would find adoration in the eyes of these heads that our fathers had forced to bend down to the very ground?

Jean-Paul Sartre, *Black Orpheus*, 1948<sup>24</sup>

Europe is indefensible.

Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, 1955<sup>25</sup>

Language fails to express the nightmare of racism. What can we say in the face of its crimes? In our outrage, do we turn inward? Are we silent? The power of experience diminishes, the moment we speak of it.

This chapter challenges the popular belief that silence is passive. In the United States silence signals complicity. This chapter does not advocate or condone silence in the face of injustice. Rather, it investigates the rhetoric of silence to understand the power of quiet states. Through an exploration of art practices around the world—from Harlem to Los Angeles to Brussels—readers will encounter different responses to racist crimes. Artworks by contemporary artists Sanford Biggers, Adel Abdessemed, and Glenn Ligon reveal how silence and speech interact. Biggers and Abdessemed reanimate the voices of subjects who were killed violently and unjustly. Ligon challenges the presumption that speaking performs subjectivity.

Around the world, Black people share a common vulnerability to racism.<sup>26</sup> From slavery, to Jim Crow, to the assassinations of Black leaders, to poverty and wage

disparity; to minstrel shows and Emmett Till; to anti-Black police brutality, apartheid, Rwanda, South Sudan, Ferguson, Sandra Bland, and the Mediterranean refugee crisis—racist crimes are multitudinous. While these histories attest to Black peoples’ triumph in the face of incredible obstacles, words are inept at recounting what Black people endure to survive.

Rhetoric scholar Cheryl Glenn observes that “silence is always everywhere, despite its inaudibility.”<sup>27</sup> She clarifies the misconception that once speech ceases, silence begins.<sup>28</sup> Silence is always there. The absence of speech only makes silence more apparent. Silence is not the same thing as absence, because silence is everywhere. Similarly, racism haunts us. Racism is always present. In this chapter, silence and speech are not opposing, but attendant, subjects. Like a pause that builds before a beat, silence anticipates speech.

Adel Abdessemed carved eighty-four hands out of basswood and assembled them into a pile on the floor of Dvir gallery in Brussels in 2018. He fired the basswood to transform each hand into charcoal. In *Le Chagrin des Belges (The Sorrow of Belgium)* (2018), some hands actively point toward the sky, others hands are rendered in a fist, and some grasp the air. Others rest gently on the ground.

The Algerian-born artist made the work during a residency in Belgium as he reflected on the history of the country’s fifty-year occupation in present day Democratic Republic of Congo between 1908 and 1960. King Leopold II of Belgium, who seized the Congo, was known for severing the hands and feet of enslaved men, women, and children to instigate terror and control. Scholars estimate as many as ten million indigenous people

died during Belgium's occupation.<sup>29</sup> Every time I look at an image of Abdessemed's artwork, I hear the sound of fire.

When one confronts an atrocity like the Belgian Congo, they might find themselves speechless. Throughout this chapter, I will pose questions and make observations about the play between speech and silence through a comparison of Adel Abdessemed's *The Sorrow of Belgium* and Sanford Biggers' sculpture series *BAM*. I will also analyze Glenn Ligon's video work *Live*. Abdessemed reflects on the indigenous people who suffered at the hands of King Leopold II. Biggers meditates on the victims of anti-Black police brutality. Ligon employs citation to speak through others' words. While the artists' methodologies are different, they animate the stories of people who can no longer speak for themselves. Their work also brings attention to the stakes of speech for Black people resisting injustice everywhere. In these works, readers realize that speaking entails a referent. So does silence. Silence is not the absence of speech. Silence speaks.

I met with the Sanford Biggers in his studio in Harlem, New York in 2017.<sup>30</sup> Born in Los Angeles in 1970, Biggers went to college at Morehouse in Atlanta and earned his Master of Fine Arts degree from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1999. He teaches studio practice at Columbia University. His multidisciplinary work engages history and the way it shapes the present. He has worked with nineteenth century American quilts to explore their mythic use as signposts along the Underground Railroad; he sews black sequins into monumental silhouettes of civil rights activists; in recent sculpture, he has responded to anti-Black police violence.

Biggers responds to police brutality against African Americans in *BAM*, a series of sculptures he began in 2016. He starts with an African figurine he purchases from a

dealer of African art, or an imitation he finds in a flea market or a trinket shop. He dips the figure in wax. He uses this gesture to remove the work's original identity. He then takes the piece to a shooting range, and with the hand of his assistant, repeatedly shoots at the work with a gun. He films the shooting to testify to the event's happening. The video recalls televised news footage of violence against African Americans.

After the shooting, he creates a mold of the disfigured, wooden object, and casts it in bronze. Biggers titles each work after an African American person who has been murdered by the police, such as Sandra Bland, Terence Crutcher, and Michael Brown. *BAM (for Jordan)* (2017) is a beautiful, black bronze mask Biggers made to honor Jordan Edwards. Police killed Edwards, 15, in Balch Springs, Texas. They shot him in the back of the head while he rode in the front passenger's seat of a vehicle driving away from officers. Edwards was unarmed during his death.

*BAM (for Jordan)* bears the scar of Biggers' firearm — a rupture on the sculpture's forehead. The figure's eyes are closed, and its mouth is shut. Biggers mounts the work on a pedestal and tilts it toward the sky. The mounting recalls the Ghanaian Akan funerary proverb “face looking down shows sorrow, face looking up shows ecstasy and trust in God.”<sup>31</sup> Biggers says he thinks of these sculptures as “power objects.”<sup>32</sup>

*BAM (for Jordan)* honors Edward's memory. In the sculpture's accompanying video work, Biggers plays the violent act that made the object, in reverse. In slow-motion, the viewer watches a bullet splinter the wooden mask into pieces. The blasted particles re-assemble into a whole by the end of the video. The work reclaims Edward's story from media reports. Biggers creates an opportunity for viewers to experience the event again in a new space and under new conditions.

By using the African mask, Biggers bridges centuries between Jordan Edwards and the African slaves who arrived in the Americas in the sixteenth century. For Biggers, the consequences of racism persist. Biggers' gesture recalls Mamie Till's decision to show her son, Emmitt Till's, mutilated body. The rupture in the brow of the mask attests to the violent circumstances of Edward's killing. The bronze mask is a lasting marker and warning. The sculpture confuses the distinction between 'subject' and 'object.' Titling the work after Edwards, Biggers incarnates his existence. The silence of Edwards' death speaks.

Adel Abdessemed was a 21-year-old student living in Constantine, Algeria when the Algerian Civil War began. The war claimed the lives of more than 150,000 of his countrymen. During a military coup in April 1994, Abdessemed witnessed the director of his school and the director's son murdered at the entrance of his university. The incident prompted the artist to move to France, where he enrolled in the *École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts* in Lyon.<sup>33</sup> Abdessemed's entire body of work arose from the historical crisis and the murder he witnessed.<sup>34</sup>

Throughout his career, Abdessemed has been invited to be an artist-in-residence around the world. He currently works at the European Graduate School in Paris. His practice utilizes video, installation, photography, sculpture, and drawing. His projects grapple with war, violence, and exile. Abdessemed remarks European policies fail immigrants. He asserts that immigrants are treated like "un-welcome" guests.<sup>35</sup> He says about his practice:

The violence that I talk about, I experienced it very directly. To this day, the wounds stay open, and the questions remain unanswered: the arson attacks, the mass rapes, the unpunished murders...The only reality that matters is the cry.<sup>36</sup>

The image, like the word, must strike like a butcher—but without anger or hate.<sup>37</sup>

Abdessemed presented the exhibition, *Le Chagrin des Belges (The Sorrow of Belgium)* at Dvir Gallery during his residency. In the show, the artist debuted the exhibition's titular work comprised of eighty-four hands dismembered at the wrist. The hands were assembled in a pile on the gallery's floor. The artist carved each hand to scale out of basswood, and then blackened them through fire. He transformed the wood objects into lightweight pieces of charcoal with rich, dark exteriors. While the artist placed each hand carefully and intentionally on the floor, the overall effect of the mass pile of objects creates a disorderly, casual heap of material. The work resembles a discarded trash heap. The hands are also individuated through their unique features and positions. Their uniform black exteriors render them anonymous. At a distance, the visitor cannot discern what comprises the black forms on the ground. As one approaches the pile, fingers, palms, and fingernails come into view.

*The Sorrow of Belgium* exemplifies the atrocities committed in the Belgian Congo under the reign of King Leopold II. The king governed the "Congo Free State" between 1885 and 1908. Abdessemed reflected on the country's past:

When I am invited to a country, in this case Belgium, I examine what I can possibly create and, while roaming through the nation's history and past, I stumble upon something that haunts me. I came across images of hands being severed as punishment in the Belgian Congo...Being confronted with such images is like opening the door to a nightmare; as I see it, these visions haunt the country, they haunt me and now also collectively haunt us.<sup>38</sup>

Historian Adam Hochschild argues in his critically acclaimed text *King Leopold's Ghost* (1998) the story of the Belgian Congo was "the first major international atrocity scandal in the age of the telegraph and the camera."<sup>39</sup> King Leopold II never once stepped

foot inside the African continent, Hochschild states.<sup>40</sup> He never saw the atrocities imposed and sanctioned by his government. Rubber was a newly-discovered and highly valuable commodity in the nineteenth century for the Anglo-Belgian India Rubber Company. Leopold routinely ordered Belgian soldiers to enslave and force indigenous men and boys to harvest rubber from rubber trees. Soldiers routinely chained and raped enslaved women and girls to prevent their intervention in men's labor. Leopold's regime became known for disfiguring Black women, men, and children, by chopping off their hands to punish or torture.

Author Joseph Conrad described in his novella *The Heart of Darkness* (1899) the colonization of the African continent by Europeans is the "vilest scramble for loot that has ever disfigured the history of human conscience."<sup>41</sup> There is no cohesive, reliable way to characterize artworks made by artists of African descent. Artists like Abdessemed and Biggers, synthesize the present with colonial pasts. Abdessemed animates the atrocities of the Belgian Congo. Biggers re-stages the violence of Jordan Edwards' death to summon his existence. Despite the silence of death and the erasure that silence may inspire, the conditions of silence also generate response.

Sitting in the center of Sanford Biggers' studio in Harlem, surrounded by beautiful, bright quilts, I asked Sanford a sincere, if not naive question. I asked him if he felt obligated to make work about "being Black."<sup>42</sup> I wondered if he felt pressure to speak on behalf of Black subjects, while he realizes his capacity to do so. Biggers assured my anxious question, and responded simply, in this paraphrase, that, "of course," he was making work about the experience of being Black. "That is who I am."<sup>43</sup>

Biggers' clear, confident reply prompted me to recall the phenomenon of "double consciousness," by W.E.B. Du Bois. Du Bois observes the experience of seeing oneself through another's eyes. He said in 1903, "One ever feels his two-ness, an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder."<sup>44</sup> Du Bois reckons with conflicting subjectivities. His observation interrogates who is speaking.

Glenn Ligon grappled with a similar inquiry in a well-known work, *Untitled (I Feel Most Colored When I Am Thrown Against a Sharp White Background)* (1990). In it, he stenciled Zora Neale Hurston's reflection from her 1928 essay "How It Feels to Be Colored Me." Ligon painted the phrase over and over in black paint on a white door until it became illegible. The paint smears and increases in density toward the bottom of the piece, creating a sensation of frenzy.

In his appropriation of Zora Neale Hurston's language, Ligon describes a slippage that occurs in the use of the first person. Does "I" refer to Hurston, to Glenn, or to all Black people?<sup>45</sup>

Hurston's quote and Ligon's painting clarify one of the central obstacles for Black people living with racial difference: the self is routinely unsettled in the encounter with white speakers.<sup>46</sup>

Ligon rose to wide critical acclaim during a period in the early 1990s, when museums and academies prioritized multicultural agendas in response to Rodney King's brutal arrest and beating by the LAPD. In "I Feel Most Colored," Ligon responds to the complexity of being a Black artist thrust into a white field.



Ligon has appropriated quotations in text-based paintings throughout his thirty-year career. He has cited authors such as James Baldwin, Michael Brenson, Richard Dyer, Gertrude Stein, and Malcolm X. He identifies the quotation, creates a stencil, and then paints the quotation on a monochrome field. Among the speakers he has cited, Ligon features Richard Pryor's words most prominently. First, in a painting in 1993, and since then, in more than one hundred artworks.<sup>47</sup>

As a student, Ligon faced an impasse that would change the entire course of his practice. He did not know how to articulate what he wanted to say. The experience of speechlessness, however, proved to be a generative state.

Ligon resolved his dilemma by turning to the words of other thinkers as his own words.<sup>48</sup> Throughout his large body of text-based paintings, Ligon speaks through others. Ligon's work illuminates that a person arrives at an understanding of themselves through their engagement with others. Like Du Bois' "double consciousness," speaking implicates the participation of another subject.

Richard Pryor is a distinct voice among the speakers Ligon quotes. He is the only live performer. He entertained audiences in clubs, albums, videos, television shows, and movies. Pryor is a legendary comic known for his sardonic commentary about racism.

Born in 1940, Pryor grew up in Peoria, Illinois in a brothel managed by his grandmother. His dad was a boxer and his mom was a sex worker. He joined the army in 1958, and began performing comedy routines during his enlistment. He moved to New York City in 1963 and gradually earned a reputation as a comic. Pryor was at the height of his career in the early 1980s while Ligon studied at the Rhode Island School of Design and in the Whitney Museum of American Art's independent study program.

In June of 1980, Richard Pryor attempted suicide. In a drug-induced state, he doused himself in alcohol, and set himself on fire. Pryor nearly died, but survived the blaze with third-degree burns. After a year of rehabilitation, he performed *Live at the Sunset Strip*. Pryor returned to his medium on stage dressed in a carmine suit, shirt and tie, and gold boots. His vibrant outfit, and the act's title, "Live," celebrated and affirmed Pryor's survival. In bits filmed over several days, Pryor spoke about his addiction and recovery; he spoke about a trip to Africa, his encounters with the mafia in his early adulthood, on marriage, love, and prison. The performances were edited and compiled into the 1982 concert film "Richard Pryor: Live on the Sunset Strip."

Forty years later, Ligon reanimates Pryor's act, but removes his speech. He takes away Pryor's glorious, booming voice, his exultations and laughter. He erases his spit into the mic, and the sound and weight of his body on the wooden stage. He also edits-out the sound of the audience. Ligon only presents the visual image of the performance. On seven monumental screens, Ligon edits the film to focus on a specific part of Pryor's body: his hands, head, mouth, groin, and shadow. One screen features Pryor's entire body. Installed together in a single gallery, the screens flicker like fireflies in the dark.

As Ligon takes away Pryor's voice, a confusion emerges. Language performs subjectivity because breath signifies life. Ligon creates an environment that forces viewers to immerse in silence. In "Live," it is not Pryor's words that convey the work's meaning. Viewers who observe the work generate it.

Speech inherently entails a referent—someone to speak to.<sup>49</sup> Words embody meaning not simply through their utterance. Words require a reader or a listener to bring

them to life. Speech entails going beyond oneself to communicate with someone else. In “Live,” Ligon shows that silence—a form of speech—also entails a referent.

The viewer who encounters Abdessemed and Biggers’ works must confront the terror of the past brought back to life. Jordan Edwards can no longer speak. The men, women, and children, who died in the Belgian Congo are quiet.

Black people, everywhere, are vulnerable to racism. Speech is relational. The experience of being in the Belgian Congo or in the presence of police, requires Black people to negotiate when to speak. Richard Pryor said, “The madder I get, the quieter I get...”<sup>50</sup> Outrage inspires silence and speech. Abdessemed, Biggers and Ligon seize the conditions of silence to provoke their viewers to respond.

## CHAPTER 2

### MOVEMENT | TRANSFORMATION

Artist Kambui Olujimi adopts the form of Depression-era dance marathons in his performance *Finding and Forgetting* (2012). He dances for twelve hours on a wooden ramp in his studio. During the 1920s, these dance contests began as light-hearted games for entertainment. A decade later, the promise of cash prizes and a way to pass time appealed to swarms of unemployed Americans. Amateurs and professionals alike competed around-the-clock, sometimes for weeks at a time.

Olujimi follows the same rules as the contests—ninety minutes of perpetual motion followed by fifteen-minute breaks. The constant motion challenges participants' capacity.<sup>51</sup> Olujimi realizes this test also reflects his experiences as a Black man. He observes that being Black entails living in a fugitive state.<sup>52</sup> "You're constantly ready to get through some shit, lacing up," he said. "There are always these rule changes and things you can't anticipate...Being Black is an endurance performance."<sup>53</sup>

Movement is an integral feature of Black Diaspora. The first African slave who stepped in the Americas catalyzed a series of movements. That person may have imagined their homeland, but exile required them to survive. They had to act and adapt to their new world.

This chapter focuses its inquiry on artists who use movement as an aesthetic device to animate migration histories. Artist Dannielle Bowman depicts scenes in the Los Angeles neighborhoods of Inglewood and Baldwin Hills, where she was raised. As she portrays community residents and their homes, she examines how her own family moved west from Texas searching for safety. Bowman's contemporary, Susana Pilar Delahante

Matienzo, imagines the migration of her Chinese ancestors who came to Cuba in a performance in Italy. She attempts to drag a boat across a piazza to visualize the psychic weight of heritage. Toronto-based Sandra Brewster examines her family's move to Canada from Guyana. She blurs her monumental portraits to convey movement and the intangible aspects of identity.

Other artists working across oceans, such as Mark Bradford and Sammy Baloji, use movement to assert the presence of Black people's humanity in contexts where they have been denied it. With dance and music, each artist honors the suffering of those who survive persecution.

This chapter reckons with the visibility of Black people's bodies and the history of Black performance art in the Americas. Theorists Thomas DeFrantz and Anita Gonzalez observe that Black performance— from colonial performances by African slaves, to nineteenth century minstrel shows, to the poets of the Harlem Renaissance— was born out of the spectacle of slavery.<sup>54</sup> Olujimi contends that a person throwing themselves into sound or over distance dematerializes their body.<sup>55</sup> Olujimi and Bradford use abstraction in their artworks to resist oppressive forces upon Black people. People are not trapped if they are moving.

Human creation begins in the body. Creative expression often manifests itself physically. Trauma leaves scars and shapes minds. The human body is a relic of history. Chattel slavery, segregation, the ghetto, or the copper mine, impose on the body's ability to move. Movement presents a way to be free.

Photography, by definition, is antithetical to movement. In her 2019 series, *What Had Happened*, Dannielle Bowman probes the legacy of the exodus of Black people from

the southern United States known as the Great Migration. Throughout the twentieth century, millions of African Americans left the Jim Crow South for northern and western states. Bowman depicts Inglewood and Baldwin Hills, historically Black neighborhoods in Los Angeles, where she was raised. Her black-and-white photographs of residents and their homes collapse the distance between the Great Migration and Inglewood today. In *Vision (Bump N' Curl)*, a woman looks into the distance from her yard in a sundress with newly pressed hair. In *Inglewood I*, a deflated basketball bears the mark of a kick on its side. In *Faces*, she features family portraits on a mantel. In *Carpeted Stairs*, Bowman creates an image of spotless carpet from the vantage of a child.

In *What Had Happened*, Bowman investigates how she came to be in Los Angeles. Her grandfather moved to Los Angeles from Denton, Texas in the 1950s when he was about ten years old. Reflecting on Emmett Till, Bowman says it was clear why her grandfather left.<sup>56</sup> Bowman moved to New York in 2008 to attend Cooper Union. She earned her Master of Fine Arts degree from Yale University in 2018. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, she traveled to California to visit family and to make photographs.

Bowman did not grow up in the homes she portrays, nor does she know her subjects. At first glance, her pictures are straightforward documents of domestic dwellings and belongings. Something familiar and strange pulls the viewer in.

The objects in Bowman's photographs conjure memories of one's own home. Specificity triggers memory. What attracted Bowman to the woman in *Vision (Bump N' Curl)* was her hairstyle. The curling iron dent at the bottom of the subject's hair is not just a motif, it is a cultural symbol. The image may prompt a viewer to recall the weight of a curling iron, the smell of smoke, or the clinking of tongs. Bowman says the picture

operates as a “memory of all of my aunties.”<sup>57</sup> Similarly, the title of the project, *What Had Happened*, is a Black colloquialism. When she was young, Bowman’s family began stories by saying “what had happened was...”<sup>58</sup> Comedian Richard Pryor popularized the phrase during his standup *Live on the Sunset Strip*.

Photographs register a single moment on film. That moment ostensibly stays unchanged. Yet, photography, the medium that closely resembles the experience of seeing, also elicits the past in the present. Theorist Roland Barthes observes in *Rhetorique de l'image*, photographs create an “illogical conjunction,” between the present and the past.<sup>59</sup> By some “magic,” photographs bring memories to life.<sup>60</sup>

Black-and-white photography typically signifies the past because it was invented before color film. Bowman points out it can also obscure time. She says that, “Black and white can look like an image is being thrown into no time, no place, or every place...I’m really into that slipperiness.”<sup>61</sup> Color is easily placed in time, because most people see in color.

In Bowman’s photographs, bands of light and shadow cascade across blinds and floors. Bowman restrains the information she offers to viewers. While the deflated basketball belongs to a family, she does not indicate which. The woman in *Vision (Bump N’ Curl)* could be anyone. Bowman explains the reason she does not show faces, or focus on one family, or one person, is because she is interested in how people can see themselves in others, or in places they have never been.<sup>62</sup> She says it is that “...diasporic connection...I get really excited when I recognize myself, or things from my own personal history, in other Black folks who I don’t know.”<sup>63</sup>

For Bowman, diaspora represents connections between Black people. She likened

a diasporic connection to saying “hi” to another Black person on the street.<sup>64</sup> She said, it’s that, “I see you, and I know that you see me, and I’m here if you need me (kind of thing). It makes me feel like I’m not alone in the world.”<sup>65</sup>

*What Had Happened* compresses the time between the Great Migration and Inglewood today. The Black residents of Inglewood and Baldwin Hills may descend from people who crossed thousands of miles from the west coast of Africa to the edge of the Pacific over centuries. The carpeted staircase and the grassy lawns signify the possibility that Bowman’s grandfather, and millions of other African Americans, saw in Los Angeles. *What Had Happened* prompts viewers to consider the weight of that promise for Black residents in the twenty-first century.

When Mark Bradford was growing up in south Los Angeles, he made super-8 films and projected them onto clouds to entertain friends.<sup>66</sup> Forty years later, he makes *Dancing in the Street* (2019) a video and performance piece. In it, he projects footage of Martha and the Vandellas performing their 1964 Motown anthem onto the Watts neighborhood in Los Angeles. The band released their hit track a year before the Watts uprising. Bradford’s work reinterprets the history of the event.

Bradford’s contemporary, artist Sammy Baloji, based between Belgium and the Democratic Republic of Congo, created *Mémoire* (2006-2014). He films choreographer Faustin Linyekula dancing in a copper mine in Congo’s Katanga province. Throughout the video, Baloji plays political speeches in the background of the piece. He juxtaposes the leaders’ promises against the image of the mines. Like Bradford, Baloji’s work with music and choreography imbues Katanga’s mines with new life.

*Dancing in the Street* is part of a larger series, *Cerberus*, which Bradford debuted



at Hauser & Wirth, Los Angeles in 2019. The series' titular piece is a 42-foot-long work on paper composed of the debris of Watts. Bradford titled the series after the mythic Greek dog who guards the gates of the underworld to prevent the dead from escaping. In an interview produced by his gallery Bradford asks, "which side of hell are we on?"<sup>67</sup>

On August 11, 1965, police officer Lee Minikus arrested Marquette Frye, an African American man, for drunk driving near his hometown of Watts. Frye failed sobriety tests. As police interrogated him, a crowd of about a thousand onlookers assembled.<sup>68</sup> Frye's stepbrother Ronald Frye and mother, Rena Frye, arrived to collect Frye's car and tensions escalated. According to state reports, Marquette Frye resisted officers' arrest.<sup>69</sup> His mother jumped onto an officer's back. Another officer swung his baton at Frye's shoulder and struck him in the head. Frye bled.

Police took the Frye family away in handcuffs. After they were detained, police arrested a woman for allegedly inciting violence. Officers scuffled with her. The crowd, who believed she was pregnant, swelled. Pathé News reported the "long pent-up resentment in the Negro quarter" erupted into "uncontrolled savagery."<sup>70</sup> Black-and-white media footage shows fire and plumes of smoke. Horns and trombones play in the background of news reports to add theatricality to journalists' reporting. Video shows firefighters blasted water at burning buildings. Police detained Black men, women, and children in handcuffs.

The conflict between officers and the Frye family triggered six days of riots and thirty-four deaths; more than a thousand people were injured.<sup>71</sup> Buildings were destroyed. Martin Luther King Jr. visited Watts in the aftermath of the uprising. He spoke about its residents' discontent with inadequate housing and economic opportunity.<sup>72</sup> He said

feelings of despair were the “ready seeds” of violence common in Black neighborhoods across the country.<sup>73</sup>

Between 1940 and 1965 the Black population in Los Angeles County increased from 75,000 to 650,000 because of the Great Migration.<sup>74</sup> White homeowners responded to the mass movement of Blacks with discriminatory covenants to keep them out of their neighborhoods. Such agreements pervaded suburbs throughout the United States. In Los Angeles, most Black people settled in the southern part of the city in neighborhoods such as Watts.

California voters had just repealed the Rumford Fair Housing Act at the time of Frye’s arrest. The act was designed to help end racial discrimination by property owners who refused to rent or sell their property to people of color. William Byron Rumford, the first African American to serve in the California legislature, drafted the act. It passed in 1963, but voters, led by a California Real Estate Association campaign, repealed it. The California and United States Supreme Courts found the act unconstitutional two years later.

Bradford turns his car key. His engine starts. The ghost-like image of Martha and the Vandellas appears. Their arms sway in synchronized movements on Watts’ sidewalks. As Bradford drives, the Vandellas’ image dances on walls, fences, windows, and alleys.

Tokyo, South America, Australia, France, Germany, UK, Africa  
Calling out around the world  
Are you ready for a brand new beat?  
Summer's here and the time is right  
For dancing in the street

All we need is music, sweet music (sweet sweet music)

There'll be music everywhere (everywhere)  
They'll be swinging, swaying, records playing  
Dancing in the street, oh

Everywhere, around the world  
Way down in L.A., everyday  
Dancing in the street (dancing in the street)  
Crossin' China, too, me and you  
Dancing in the street (dancing in the street)

performed by Martha and the Vandellas, 1964  
written by Marvin Gaye, William "Mickey" Stevenson and Ivy Jo Hunter

Governor Edmund G. Brown ordered a report, titled “McCone,” after the former head of the Central Intelligence Agency, to analyze the data from the uprising. The report attempted to quantify the damage. Bradford says he was interested in the way the commission delineated data— “hotspots”—with different colored dots over a city plan of the neighborhood. Blue dots marked looting. Red marked death.<sup>75</sup>

A monumental copy of the McCone report is the first layer of Bradford’s forty-two-foot-long work, *Cerberus*. He paints the hot spots according to the report’s color system. He then layers media images of the uprising on the plan’s surface. He twists rope on the map to emphasize its grid lines. Recalling the firemen, he blasts the layers of paper with water to abstract it.

Maps organize the landscape. They also obscure it. To imagine diaspora as regions or places on a map is misleading. Maps arrest movement. The hotspots in the McCone report flatten the deaths. They do not report Watts’ residents’ feelings and experiences. The story of slavery and the Black Diaspora is commonly illustrated by a map of the Atlantic Ocean with arrows between Africa and the Americas. Such illustrations perpetuate the image of land and ocean but leave out people.

*Dancing in the Street* represents a departure for Bradford, who rarely shows the human form in his work. He explained in an interview with historian Huey Copeland that he typically only leaves traces of the body in his work. Bradford makes this a conscious political choice.<sup>76</sup> From the video of George Floyd’s killing in the summer of 2020 to the nineteenth century auction block, Black people in the Americas have endured the sight of violence upon the bodies of their countrymen. Rather than portray the human figure, Bradford uses urban debris—posters applied to light posts and paper discarded in gutters—as metaphors for human touch.

Bradford does not veer from abstraction in *Dancing in the Street*. The digital dust of the Vandellas’ image is intangible. Their bodies are not bound to a canvas or screen. They move through the city. Martha and the Vandellas’ image, sometimes subsumed by the night sky, falls-in-and-out of view. The dust-like particles which comprise the projection, lift the dirt of the place. The work conjures the vision of the 1965 riots and the movement of Watts residents on sidewalks today. Bradford was three years old in 1965. He says his recollection of the uprising is mythic.<sup>77</sup> The transparent image of *Dancing in the Street* reflects the artist’s fragmented memory.

In contrast to the McCone report’s reduction of death to data, *Dancing in the Street* animates the people of Watts. The Vandellas’ image is the ghost of bodies past and the suggestion of bodies present. In *Dancing in the Street*, movement is a sign of life.

Bradford is tall and thin. When he speaks, he uses his hands. He moves quickly around his studio. His practice is laborious—he collects paper, soaks, and layers it into new, glorious surfaces. He has been known to say, “I just keep moving.”<sup>78</sup>

Sammy Baloji was born in 1978 in Lubumbashi, in the mineral-rich Katanga province of the Democratic Republic of Congo. He works primarily in photography and performance. His work explores how the human body bears the scars of trauma and history. He uses collage to assemble images from different periods of time to connect discrepant moments together. For him, past and present are intertwined.

Belgium established the mining economy in the Katanga province during its fifty-two-year occupation of the Congo between 1908 and 1960. Today, the country's economy is still based almost entirely on extracting minerals. The region sits on an estimated \$24 trillion worth of resources including gold, copper, silver, cobalt, zinc, manganese, coal, cadmium, germanium, palladium, uranium, and platinum.<sup>79</sup>

According to United Nations reports, multinational corporations from all over the world have been involved in the exploitation of natural resources from the Congo.<sup>80</sup> These companies originate in Belgium, the British Virgin Islands, Burundi, Canada, China, the Congo, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Hong Kong, Israel, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Netherlands, Rwanda, South Africa, Switzerland, Thailand, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Zimbabwe.<sup>81</sup>

Companies such as Nintendo, Samsung, HTC, Nikon, LG, Sharp, Toshiba, IBM, Canon, Lenovo, among others, source minerals from the region for consumer electronics. Apple, Google, Tesla and Microsoft are among firms named in a 2019 lawsuit from families seeking damages over deaths and injuries of child miners in the Democratic Republic of Congo.<sup>82</sup>

Between 1998 and 2003, nine African countries and around twenty-five rebel groups became involved in the Second Congo War, the deadliest international conflict

since World War II.<sup>83</sup> The interplay of international commercial interests and broken agreements between Congo and Rwanda caused Congo's wars between 1996-1997 and 1998-2003. Following the Rwandan genocide in 1994, Hutu militias fled Tutsi-dominated militias in Rwanda to Congo. Rebel groups vied for control of the country's natural resources. These groups, often weaponized by foreign entities, took-over mining communities, particularly in the eastern part of the country. These militias knew the territory and murdered residents with impunity.<sup>84</sup>

The Second Congo War and its aftermath caused 5.4 million deaths by 2008. 45,000 people died every month.<sup>85</sup> Another two million people were displaced from their homes.<sup>86</sup> The death toll far exceeds contemporaneous crises, including those in Bosnia, Rwanda, Kosovo, and Sudan.<sup>87</sup> World War III has already happened.

Minerals have been integral to the world's geophysical politics since before the digital age. Jussi Parikka's research in *Geology of Media* finds that Congo-mined coltan is among the most vital metals to the United States' defense program.<sup>88</sup> According to a statement in 1952 by the United States Bureau of Mining, coltan's preciousness is due to its usefulness for high-strength steel alloys.<sup>89</sup> Baloji reflected on his countrymen:

It's still the same reality from the colonial period until now... We had our colonial period. The decolonial period. But mining still exists, and people still live it. The economy is still around mining. People are still living and working, but we are not looking at them as humans at all. We are thinking they are just objects.<sup>90</sup>

Baloji had friends whose parents worked for mining companies. He likened it to the slave trade. He said that some people were taken by force, sometimes as prisoners.<sup>91</sup> He pursued the history of his countrymen, and went into the mining companies' photographic archives. From these archives, he developed several creative series

including *Memoire*, a video and photographic work.

Baloji collaborated with Congolese choreographer Faustin Linyekula to create *Memoire*. He filmed Linyekula dancing in Katanga's mines. Linyekula's body is thin and sinuous. He moves amidst rusty pipes, towering shafts, cages and debris. In one scene, he arches his back to mimic the curve of an enormous pipe. His long limbs and wrists twist and turn. His body flows in spaces designed to oppress it. The title, *Memoire*, reckons with the political speeches that play in the background of the piece. Leaders Patrice Lumumba, Joseph Kasa-Vubu, Mobutu Sese Sèthako and Laurent-Désiré Kabila promise political and economic renewal.

Mining is redundant, backbreaking labor. It disregards brains, lungs, hearts, feet, arms, and hands. It involves repetitive, exhausting movements. In Congolese mines, as in labor forces around the world, human bodies are commodities. *Memoire* reminds viewers that the human body bears marks of time and trauma. The human body is history.

Laborers continue to mine the Congo's rust soil miles deep into the earth. In Western mythology, the underground is the place of hell. Mining pits are scars in the earth. Soil absorbs human sweat. It breaks down flesh. Which side of hell are we on?

American high modernist dancer Merce Cunningham explained the ecstasy in dance derives from the potential for freedom.<sup>92</sup> Cunningham aspired to divorce his dance practice from the rigid constraints of forms like ballet. He and his partner, composer John Cage, imagined that music and dance could operate independently within a performance. This would enable both the dancer and the musician to move freely.

Cunningham and Cage taught at Black Mountain College in Black Mountain, North Carolina in the 1930s. The school, co-founded by artist Josef Albers in 1933,

represents one of the most important points of contact between Americans and Europeans fleeing Nazi persecution. The school's pedagogy stressed the importance of experimentation that could transform students' habits of seeing. Cunningham used spontaneity as a creative tool. He was known for rolling dice or tossing coins to guide his movements. Cunningham tested randomness to free his body from its own clichés.<sup>93</sup>

Most attention within the discourse of trauma theory has been devoted to historical events that took place in Europe or the United States, most prominently the Holocaust. After World War II, philosopher Aimé Césaire argued that if anyone had the capacity to re-imagine fascist societies, it would be colonized peoples.<sup>94</sup>

While Linyekula's limber movements in the Katanga's mines show a body free from oppressive forces, Linyekula has said of his dance practice that movement is not a choice.<sup>95</sup> "You just don't have a choice," he explained to an audience at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis in 2011. "The only way to survive—even if it's only to remain capable of standing in front of a mirror and facing your own self—is to take a stand."<sup>96</sup> Linyekula clarifies the distinction between surviving and being free.

For Bradford and Baloji, movement is not just a sign of survival. The image of the Vandellas and their booming anthem signifies human life itself. Linyekula's movements call attention to miners' humanity. Both Bradford and Baloji staged their projects in vacant landscapes. By juxtaposing movement against empty backdrops, the artists call attention to life. Reports like McCone and illustrations of the Middle Passage divert readers' attention from people. The labor that occurs in Katanga's mines also dismisses human life. People must move to survive. Movement enacts life.

Artist Susana Pilar Delahante Matienzo offers another way to understand



movement within a diasporic context. Matienzo's work offers the ontology of slowness. She drags a boat across a piazza in Italy in her 2017 performance *Dibujo Inter-Continental* in a piazza in Venice, Italy. She wears a flesh-toned leotard and rope around her waist to a wooden boat several yards behind her. The rope is the line—the drawing—which connects Matienzo to her Chinese and African ancestors. Some 125,000 Chinese migrants, mostly men, arrived in Cuba between 1847 and 1874 to work in sugar fields,<sup>97</sup> fifty years before Spain abolished slavery. Working alongside Africans, many Chinese laborers were chained, beaten, and died on the job.

Matienzo was born in 1984 and raised in Cuba. She pursued post-graduate studies at the Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design in Germany (2011-2013). Over the last decade, she has traveled and participated in residencies and exhibitions in Senegal, Italy, Hungary, France, and Aruba. Working in photography, performance, and installation, Matienzo's work considers intersectional identity and the obstacles immigrants face.

While they were told they were going to work for wages, when Chinese migrants arrived in Cuba, most of them were forced to work without pay. Legally considered white, they signed contracts (as opposed to African slaves) that ensured their freedom at the end of their eight-year term. When their contracts expired, however, landlords pressured them with force to renew. Many Chinese-Cubans fought in Cuban independence battles. During the 1950s, many left to settle in the southern United States. Over 100,000 Cubans of mixed Chinese descent, such as Matienzo, live in Cuba today.<sup>98</sup>

*Dibujo* builds upon Matienzo's 2015 installation, *Un chino llega a Matanzas....* Matienzo suspends long, narrow strips of silk, emulating Chinese calligraphic scrolls, in a darkened gallery space. She writes a poem on the scrolls about her great-great-

grandfather Arcadio Stang. Without a written record to refer to, Matienzo imagines his experience moving to Matanzas from China.

Preparing for this project, Matienzo pored through records housed at the state archive in Matanzas. She hoped to find her grandfather's name. Instead, she found most migrants were represented by numbers.<sup>99</sup> When she found a name, it was associated with something negative—if someone had committed suicide or committed a crime.<sup>100</sup>

Matienzo performed *Dibujo Intercontinental* in Venice during the international biennale in 2017. The Italian setting conjures European colonial histories. Genoa-born Christopher Columbus landed in Cuba in 1492. While the piece is about Matienzo's personal exploration of her family's past, she affirms the work is about all migrants. She said, "In the performance, I am not one body but many bodies: the body of Africa, of China, of Cuba. The body of the Migrant."<sup>101</sup> Matienzo echoes the diasporic sensibility of her contemporary Dannielle Bowman. Both find broader terms inside singular motifs. Matienzo's body, like the woman's hair in *Vision (Bump n' Curl)*, stands for larger human experiences and cultural practices.

In contrast to Linyekula's limber movements in the Katanga mine, Matienzo's body moves slowly. For hours she attempts to tow the weight of the heavy boat across the piazza. Matienzo says she could barely move it.<sup>102</sup> Her work articulates the experience of perpetually exerting force against a past that is greater than you. Trying to understand oneself as a descendent of slaves is a psychic weight. Being Black is an endurance performance. Matienzo's body moves slowly.

Toronto-based Sandra Brewster's work also considers slowness as a feature of diasporic experience. In her series, *Blur* (2017-2020), she keeps the aperture of her

camera open for extended periods to create a blurring effect in images of Black people. Working with sitters in her studio, she slows down the movement of their bodies as they turn their heads from side to side. Her backdrops, all stark white, offer no information about setting. She prints the works small and formulates them as grids. She also uses a gel medium to transfer them onto gallery walls at monumental scale. As Brewster presses the sensitized paper onto the wall and lifts it, folds and creases emerge where the ink did not adhere. Her portraits, sometimes occupying tens of feet, appear as if they had just been unfolded from a wallet. They embody the materiality of a photographic keepsake with the presence of towering sculpture.

Brewster's parents moved to Toronto from Guyana in the 1960s. Guyana gained its independence from Dutch and British control in 1966. Brewster's parents were part of a large migration of Guyanese to Canada and the United States during the 1960s and 1970s. When Brewster was nine, her family settled in the immigrant-dense community of Pickering from Toronto. Brewster earned her Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of Toronto in 2017. Throughout her life, she has observed the challenges immigrants in her community face.

The human eye cannot perceive movement at high speeds. Rather it resolves details into streaks of information. Objects in motion are neither *here* nor *there*. Brewster's work presents the possibility for a person to feel between two places simultaneously. Brewster shared in a 2019 interview that growing up with older generations of Guyanese she visualized places she had never been.<sup>103</sup> She did not visit Guyana until she was an adult. The brain generates images of, and forms attachments to, places it has not perceived.

Brewster's work destabilizes the relationship between identity and region. The blur offers a different kind of space—a non-space, or an in-between space. Blur is a space that cannot be defined. The blur resists perception, and thereby definition. Brewster offers that the experience of being an immigrant is somewhere is inside the blur—the possibility for multiple heritages to coexist. Her photographs materialize this experience visually.

When the body is in motion, it becomes difficult to see. This is an important state for Black people who resist racist oppression around the world. When one is moving, it makes it harder to define who they are. Movement resists essentializing terms.

Kambui Olujimi inferred that when you are Black you must be ready. You must tie-up your laces; you do not know what is coming next. Like a ball player on the court, you must anticipate the next move. Perpetual motion resists the possibility of getting caught.

Dannielle Bowman's subjects are still. Her photographs obscure a sense of time. Black-and-white can indicate the past, present or future. Her pictures narrate the beginning or ending of a migration story. Matienzo moves slowly. Linyekula dances freely. Martha and the Vandellas dance in the street. Brewster visualizes motion to convey the state of being between places. Brewster's contemporary, poet Dionne Brand, echoes the motif of the blur in her piece, *Forgetting*.

There is the sense in the mind of not being here or there...  
Caught between the two we live in the Diaspora, in the sea in between.

Our inheritance in the Diaspora is to live in this inexplicable space.  
That space is the measure of our ancestors' step through the door toward the ship.  
One is caught in the few feet in between.  
The frame of the doorway is the only space of true existence.<sup>104</sup>

The first slave who arrived in the Americas had to keep moving. Their will to survive caused a ripple of movements.

CHAPTER 3  
IMAGINATION

We cry our cry of poetry.  
— Édouard Glissant, *The Open Boat*

Black Diasporic studies has always been a poetic discourse. Few written accounts by African slaves exist. The first Black people in the Americas passed down their culture through stories, poetry, music, and dance. Black diaspora is a dynamic imaginary, not a rigid discourse. This chapter investigates the way Black visual artists utilize imagination to counter historical narratives their ancestors did not write. Black Diaspora is imagination. It is the infinite, indeterminate space which awaits artists to fill it with images.

Poet Édouard Glissant imagined the experience of his enslaved ancestors in his seminal poem *The Open Boat* from his *Poetics of Relation* (1990).<sup>105</sup> In it, he imagined the infinite space beyond the bow of slave ships. He imagined a person crammed between bodies. He described the sight of death and scent of confined bodies. A person might have wondered if they were dead. They may have asked if they were being transported to another world. What would that world be like? The sensation of the unknown must have been overwhelming— “petrifying,” Glissant wrote.<sup>106</sup> As the boat moved away from the captives’ homes, they may have pictured their families and native skies.

Feeling a language vanish, the word of the gods vanish and the sealed image  
of even the most everyday object, of even the most familiar animal, vanish.  
The evanescent taste of what you ate.  
The hounded scent of ochre earth and savanna.<sup>107</sup>

The scale of the transatlantic slave trade is difficult to visualize. Some thirty million people were exiled from their homes over two centuries.<sup>108</sup> That does not include the millions who died at sea. The magnitude of numbers pose obstacles for the mind to envision. It follows images of the slave trade would be ubiquitous. History books illustrate the Middle Passage with a picture of the Atlantic Ocean. Slaves are tiny bodies illustrated in the cargo of boats. Diaspora is vast. The mind has limits.

This chapter investigates the work of Cauleen Smith and Frida Orupabo, two artists working contemporaneously on the edge of the Pacific and the Atlantic. Smith, based in Los Angeles, is best known for her film and video. She has made some forty short films since earning her Master of Fine Arts degree at the University of California, Los Angeles in 1998. Her recent work *Epistrophe* (2018) will be the topic of this essay's inquiry.

*Epistrophe* features prominently in Smith's exhibition *Give It or Leave It* organized by the Institute of Contemporary Art Philadelphia in 2019. The exhibition traveled to the Frye Art Museum in Seattle and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 2020 and 2021. The exhibition's accompanying catalogue is the first scholarly interpretation of *Epistrophe*. Anthony Elms, Institute of Contemporary Art Philadelphia curator, contextualizes the work with assemblage artists David Hammons, Bettye Saar, and Noah Purifoy in his catalogue essay.<sup>109</sup> In addition to Elms' text, the catalogue features an interview between Smith and artist Rodney McMillian, and between Smith and Rhea Anasta, University of California, Irvine professor.<sup>110</sup>

Orupabo lives and works in Oslo, Norway. She creates paper collages, sculpture and video. She has come to recent prominence, but her work has yet to be discussed in

academic scholarship. The Venice Biennale's 2019 catalogue introduced Orupabo as an artist who responds to the mass circulation of images in social media and popular culture.<sup>111</sup> *Bomb* magazine published an extensive interview last year. Journalist Jareh Das focuses on Orupabo's examinations of race, gender, identity, sexuality, the gaze, and colonial violence.<sup>112</sup>

Smith and Orupabo mine images from digital and print archives. They draw from African and colonial iconography, art historical references, pop culture and their own vernacular. In so doing, the artist's resist the traditional archive's rigid categories.

The singular authority of a museum collection or an academic archive is a utopian dream. Historical records are not neutral. The traditional archive creates categories. It orders subjects according to region, place, and time. The archive establishes hierarchies. An early form of the archive, the *Kunstkammer*, came into fashion in seventeenth century Europe during the age of exploration. The collector's cabinet, as it was known, was popular among elite classes across Europe. These "art-rooms" typically contained a variety of both man-made and natural wonders. Constructed as mini-vignettes from around the world, they were intended to impress visitors with the owner's knowledge of nature and art. The collections, often composed of looted objects from foreign places, served as social devices to establish and uphold rank in society. The *Kunstkammer* established the structure of most museums.

Smith and Orupabo reimagine the archive as a dynamic system that embraces complexity. Orupabo and Smith's use of archives mimics the disruptive activity of imagination. Imagination has always been a way for Black artists to take control of their historical narratives. Imagination resists the archive's traditional reductionisms.



Cauleen Smith's *Epistrophe* is vibrant and strange. The work is composed of four CCTV cameras, four monitors, video projections, and an array of objects Smith arranged into otherworldly tableaux. Smith designed the installation so closed-circuit cameras and objects in the middle of a gallery project images onto surrounding walls. African sculptures, plastic toys, a saber tooth tiger head, and a taxidermy raven are fixed on a table. Their silhouettes foreground images that flash behind them on the wall.

Video footage alternates between different skies, times of day, regions of the world, and weather conditions. Smith compiled views of a snowy peak, agricultural fields, crows flying, magenta plumes, birthday balloons, grasslands, and lava lamp sludge. Images of television white noise, the earth spinning, waves breaking, pine trees, bus riders in Kenya, and a Black woman alternate.

At the center of the projections is a wooden table on which Smith arranges objects into a series of vignettes. The table is about six feet in diameter. It comes up to the average height of an adult's waist, so one views the work from above. Smith places the objects on top of artificial green moss to suggest ground. In one tableau, she ties an *akua* figure (indigenous to the Akan peoples of Ghana and the Ivory Coast) between a bundle of white ceramic blocks she carved to emulate Ivory soap. In another, she arranges two African sculptures and a plastic mammy doll by descending height in front of a mirror—apparently 'looking' at their reflections. Smith places a two-dollar bill beneath two shiny mineral stones on a silver platter. Around the corner, a bronze girl stands on top of a stack of used books, which includes Thomas More's *Utopia*.

The projections create a dizzying visual effect. *Epistrophe* calls attention to the speed images and information circulate around the world. Although Smith conveys the

cacophony of twenty-first century communication in the work, her statement does not critique it. Clunky monitors and dangling wires embrace chaos. The artist describes her work as an “archive” of “associations, travels, affections, desires, and longings” in the exhibition’s text.<sup>113</sup> Smith reconfigures the archive to resemble human imagination. Black Diaspora is also an archive.

Philosophers David Hume and Jean-Paul Sartre posit imagination as an “image-making faculty.”<sup>114</sup> Cognition functions through the mind’s ability to assemble images. Hume contends that ideas are images.<sup>115</sup> The act of imagining reproduces impressions in the mind so that people can think about things in the absence of their physical presence.<sup>116</sup> Sartre argues that images are “connected to each other through a process of contiguity and resemblance.”<sup>117</sup> He affirms that they “cluster according to attractions of a half-mechanical, half-magical nature.”<sup>118</sup>

Memories are images, sounds, scents, and textures in the mind. The mind may distort images and their sequence but, as Sartre contends, the mind recalls events by perceiving them. He observes that “the formation of memory is never posterior to that of perception, it is contemporaneous with it.”<sup>119</sup> Unlike memory, imagination “brings ideas together in any way that it pleases.”<sup>120</sup>

Memory and imagination are thus discrete subjects, but a slippage occurs. If memory relies on perception, it follows the mind cannot visualize things it has not seen. Similarly, a person cannot imagine circumstances they have not experienced. Yet, the imagination creates new symbols.<sup>121</sup> Jungian psychologist Marie-Louise Von Franz observes that, on the brink of the unknown, people project images.<sup>122</sup>

Glissant was not a slave. His poem *The Open Boat* is not a historical account. Being able to identify with experiences of oppression as a Black man, he accesses the experience of his ancestors imaginatively. His descriptions of slaves' confinement and terror bears experience with racial oppression.

Glissant was born in 1928 in Martinique. His father managed a plantation. From an early age, Glissant was exposed to racism and the realities of colonial life. As a Black person living in a European colony, at least two centuries after Africans arrived in the Caribbean, Glissant's imagining of the Middle Passage draws from his own experiences. He imagines symbols, sounds, and tastes of Africa to create a world his memory could not inhabit. Glissant effectively links himself to the first Africans who arrived in the Americas. In *The Open Boat*, he observes how the exile of Africans became, "something shared" that "made us, the descendants, one people among others."<sup>123</sup>

Diaspora and imagination are inextricably linked. Imagination implies a distanced point of view, but it stands beside, rather than opposite, memory.<sup>124</sup> What memory does not recall, imagination supplies with images. The transatlantic slave trade and its impact are too big for the mind to grasp. Imagination steps in to fill the void. So do poets.

Sartre summons the term "magic" to describe the process by which the mind compiles information from the senses. Connecting fragmented images, sounds, colors, and textures like a dream, the imagination is the magical state of consciousness. Similarly, poetry as an aesthetic form, uses metaphor to create connections between unlikely subjects.

Cauleen Smith titled *Epistrophe* after another work of poetry. Thelonious Monk named his well-known composition *Epistrophy*, after the poetic device pronounced the

same way. Epistrophe creates emphasis through the repetition of the same word or words at the end of successive clauses or phrases.<sup>125</sup> In Monk's composition, two synchronized notes, played staccato, punctuate the end of each verse. Monk trains his listener to expect the notes, but mid-song he takes them away to build anticipation for their return. By the end of the composition, he repeats them again.

Like Monk, Smith involves viewers as active participants. *Epistrophe*, exhibited in a darkened gallery, mirrors the experience one has when they close their eyes and see flashes of light and color. Fragmented images cohere magically in the installation. Star fishes Smith gathered into a glass jar recall the Middle Passage, Venice Beach, and Glissant: "*the entire ocean, the entire sea gently collapsing into the pleasures of sand...*"<sup>126</sup> Smith straps the *akuaba* figure, traditionally worn by expecting mothers in Ghana, between two blocks of white soap. By creating juxtapositions, Smith creates room for complex analyses. Together, the African figure and the white soap reckon with feminism, colonialism, consumerism, and whiteness. A golden Japanese fortune cat summons Los Angeles's Little Tokyo (Smith has also spoken publicly about being a proud cat mom).<sup>127</sup> Sweeping African grasslands and images of the universe call attention to the way mass media constructs images of distant places. Smith arranges images and objects from her home, the society she lives in, and ancient symbols. Diaspora is an additive archive and indeterminate treasure chest that artists like Smith augment and upturn. *Epistrophe* reflects the 'stuff' of the world mediated by Smith's imagination. Diaspora is also full of 'stuff'— the images and objects of past and present.

Smith's contemporary, Frida Orupabo, also mines archives to share her vision of the world. She searches platforms like Google, Instagram and Pinterest for images which

speak to her—magically. She prints them out on paper and creates three-dimensional collages out of them. She started making collages with adhesive, but then began pinning forms together to create depth. She primarily focuses on Black subjects—hinging her figures at their joints. They behave like puppets. She frames nearly all of them in white backgrounds. When one closes their eyes to imagine, they see black space and bits of light and color. The white backgrounds in Orupabo’s work also activate the imagination. The white canvas, the white page and the white wall anticipate the artist. Orupabo describes her process of mining the archive:

It’s not like I’m conscious when I’m working with these subjects...  
When you are working with art, that is the point of it. You don’t have the language for it. Why do you pick that? The only thing I can say is that it is very linked to me and my identity and how I see myself and life.

I know what I want, and I know what works, but sometimes I don’t know it until I start to work on it digitally to put things together.<sup>128</sup>

Orupabo was born in 1986 in Norway to a Norwegian mother and a Nigerian father. Her father returned to Nigeria when she was three years old. Her mother and grandmother raised her. She said that her childhood was nice but she always felt “the experience of being brown.”<sup>129</sup> Orupabo focuses on Black women in her compositions to reflect on her experiences. She says she wants to challenge what it means to be a Black woman and how Black women are portrayed.<sup>130</sup>

She searches terms and phrases such as “colonial archive.” The subjects Orupabo unearths often bear marks of violence on their bodies or anguish on their faces. She points out some of the images she accesses online, particularly colonial ones, are owned.<sup>131</sup> She finds images of enslaved people now have corporate watermarks on them.

She would have to pay the website to download high-resolution copies. The traditional archive enacts imperial power dynamics.

Her compositions reveal colonialism's disturbing crimes— but not only through images of physical violence. Orupabo's scissors leave sharp edges on each layer of paper. The disjointed parts of her collages are otherworldly and grotesque. Arms and legs bend in irregular directions. Orupabo layers different skin tones and types of flesh on top of each other. Subjects defy the logic of space and scale. Orupabo's practice mimics the way the mind forms images in a dream.

In *Untitled* from 2018, a feminine figure grasps onto a stone. She wears a white gown and white gloves. Orupabo pinned an image of fabric to the figure's body to make it look like she is flying. The stone evokes primordial time, celestial space and the Holocene. The photographic image of the Black woman, which Orupabo removed from her original context, must derive from the nineteenth century. She could have been a mother, sister, or a wife. She could have been a slave, teacher, student or a queen. Orupabo features her holding onto the giant stone as if she and it were gliding through space. She could be escaping, arriving, or going nowhere.

In a November 2017 work, Orupabo combines a Black woman's face with a white woman's neck, and a torso which bears the mark of indigenous African scarring. The nude figure hides her genitals with one hand and smokes a cigarette in another. In a collage from June 2018, Orupabo pins the image of a Black man's face onto a nude torso without genitals, creating a disjointed androgynous form. Orupabo obscures the figure's mouth. She crosses its legs.

Orupabo's primary concern is challenging historical representations of Black people. She sets-up dichotomies to show the limits of simple comparisons. In a collage from July 2018 referencing Édouard Manet's *Olympia*, she pasted a Black woman's face on top of a white woman's pregnant body. The figure reclines on a fluffy white bed. Orupabo frames the image with black and white drapes embroidered with palm trees. Taking control of representation is a way to resist singular points of view. The act of collage—compiling multiple fragments—adds complexity. Orupabo does not feed her viewers clear messages or solutions. She demands they grapple with the images themselves.

Orupabo works in the archive intuitively. Recalling Sartre, the images “cluster” in her mind. Black Diaspora is, and must be, an imaginative act. If not, the alternative would be a linear history, or the study of nations. Cultural theorist Kwame Anthony Appiah observes that our notions of culture, traditionally linked to regions, are slippery.<sup>132</sup> Identity is porous. National borders change. The way identity is linked to culture and region is fraught by history itself. People move around the world.

Imagination disrupts the archive. The fragmentation of imagination is set against it. Diaspora, encompassing epochs, is also fragmented. Glissant wrote his poem nearly four hundred years after Africans arrived in the Americas. Smith and Orupabo work thirty years after Glissant.

Diaspora is vast and crowded, full of artistic expressions and human exchange. Like memory, it is fragmented. There are huge gaps of information that Glissant, Smith, and Orupabo do not know. But this fragmentation is generative. Fragmentation sets the stage for imagination to fill in.

Smith and Orupabo adopt the form of collage because it enables them to embrace diaspora's disjointed parts. Smith arranges indigenous African objects next to plastic ones. She stacks used books and images from *National Geographic* next to seashells. Orupabo creates dreamlike compositions composed of varied parts. The artists draw lines between past and present, the personal and the global, Ghana and Los Angeles, outer space and *Utopia*. The table in Smith's installation is round and flat. She arranges her motifs horizontally on the same field. She dismantles the archive's hierarchies that privilege author and place. Smith equalizes them.

The traditional archive misses the nuanced connections a poet makes because of the way it organizes subjects. Black Diaspora is not a discourse that should be subjected to typologies, or reduced to general terms. Racist stereotypes are a form of overgeneralization. Imagination is the disruptive force that operates through diaspora. Imagination is the infinite space of creativity. Diaspora has always been a poetic discourse. Few written records by the first enslaved Africans survive. Resisting the form of the archive is a way for Smith and Orupabo to take control of the records their ancestors did not write.

Orupabo says when people look at her work, she wants them to see the subject—she also wants them to realize the subject is looking back.<sup>133</sup> Through her collages she strives to “take control of already defined histories.”<sup>134</sup> Orupabo does not rewrite history. Better yet, she embraces its complexity. The layers of her paper collages are the infinite layers of diaspora. Diaspora speaks to life. “It speaks to everything,” she said.<sup>135</sup>



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- <sup>117</sup> Jean Paul Sartre, Kenneth Williford, David Rudrauf, *The Imagination*, (Abingdon; Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2012), 15, orig. published Sartre, *The Imaginary: A Phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination*, (Paris: Éditions Gallimard), 1940.
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- <sup>119</sup> Ibid., 45.
- <sup>120</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>121</sup> Mary Warnock, *Imagination*, 69; According to Hume, “Both the artist and the scientist discover design in nature. But the artist does more. He himself becomes, like nature itself, a creator of objects which manifest design.”
- <sup>122</sup> Marie-Louise Von Franz, *Creation Myths*, (Boston: Shambhala), 1995.
- <sup>123</sup> Glissant, *The Open Boat*, 8.
- <sup>124</sup> Sartre, 45.
- <sup>125</sup> Aisha Sabatini Sloan, *The Fluency of Light: Coming of Age in a Theater of Black and White*, (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2013), 5, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/asulib-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1112236>.
- <sup>126</sup> Glissant, *The Open Boat*, 7.
- <sup>127</sup> Cauleen Smith, Todd Gray, Ken Gonzales-Day, “Photography as Revolutionary Aesthetic: An LA Artist Conversation,” Getty Museum, February 25, 2021, [https://www.getty.edu/visit/cal/events/ev\\_3262.html](https://www.getty.edu/visit/cal/events/ev_3262.html).
- <sup>128</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>129</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>130</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>131</sup> Conversation with the author, March 8, 2021.
- <sup>132</sup> Kwame Anthony Appiah, “Whose Culture Is It Anyway?” in *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (London: Penguin, 2015).
- <sup>133</sup> Conversation with the author, March 8, 2021.
- <sup>134</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>135</sup> Ibid.