

INFERENCE

TO

THE

VEIL

Blackness inherently infers to, and unveils, the various conditions of abstraction.

Blackness in abstraction, writes Adrienne Edwards, shifts the ground away from the blur of the Black artist as subject, and towards Blackness as material. As method. As mode. As insistence of multiplicity in motion¹.

From this insistence, the field of *Black Waters: Inference to the Veil* emerges, repeating the invited question:

Where does theory live?

This inquiry is posed by Rebecca Bellantoni in the featured film *You Have Any Peace For Me? C.R.Y.* (2022). With meaning that folds back on itself, this question orients an attentive listener towards the details of space. The artist doesn't ask what theory is or how theory becomes itself; the intonement of where is contingent to the very understanding of knowledge, or what it claims to be. Or ideas, opinions, beliefs in all the ways that thought is named – they dwell. Theory resides somewhere, everywhere, implicating the same processes that produce its various sites of temporary inhabitation.

Theory appears in the film as a poetics of fugitive movement. Of intentional pace. As walking. As carrying. As the careful placing of roses against concrete. This gesture lingers, not necessarily in time marked by the film, but open time marked once the lens moves. Roses rest along the surface of the city, touching hardness without becoming stone, merging into it. A temporary dwelling. A soft interval within hard architecture and its hybrids of sameness.

Poesis, the ceremony of bringing something into existence, becomes a way of living out thought, intentions, manifestations. T/here, poetry and theory move together. They circulate through breath, pavement, atmosphere. Each step and gesture composes. Each pause gathers meaning. The city, place, becomes a field of inscription.

Abstraction circulates within this field with its own distortions of mass and variance:

Existing through the routine of violence that systematises value, extent and circulation; mediated by large, insatiable architectures organising lives from the myth of distance. Abstraction also names languages of form, rhythm, density, scale; and Blackness moves within all registers at once, rendered abstract through structures of valuation, while also composing abstraction as parabolic force of a precarious agency.

Abstraction's variance and mass becomes apparent through Blackness:

Blackness carries the imprint of structural abstraction, through the economies that convert life into ledger, whilst generating forms that thicken and alter the language of interpretation, simultaneously remembering abstraction's instances within broader, older, persistent indigenous contexts. These forms move laterally, rhizomatically, slipping across categories wetting them, sticking them together, gathering density where clarity is pretended.

Liquidity bonds this movement. Saidiya Hartman writes:

Water is the matter of our being. Liquidity is another way of registering this and announcing the primacy of water and its passageways; it is a principal conduit of metamorphosis².

Each artist's work gathered within *Inference to The Veil* generate sites of tidal contact, sheltering theory in the poetics of alterable terrains and the requirement for otherwise.

If the veil names a structuring mesh of an internalised register, as W. E. B. Du Bois³ describes, then Black poetics moves along its threads, tracing its weave, revealing how abstraction operates across bodies, cultures and geographies.

Inference to The Veil draws upon the spatial, perceptual and participatory forms that Blackness and abstractions rests upon; registering the sensibilities of fugitive life to inform the navigation of imperial onslaught. Structural abstraction and Black abstraction meet as lived conditions and compositional practice. Blackness therefore embodies this simultaneity, unveiling logics of foreclosure while forming languages that insist on presence through density, relation, and movement.

Text extract from upcoming publication by Black Waters.

1 Adrienne Edwards, "Blackness in Abstraction," in *Blackness in Abstraction*, ed. Adrienne Edwards (New York: Pace Gallery, 2016).
2 Saidiya Hartman, "Crawlspace Manifold," in *Torkwase Dyson: A Liquid Belonging* (New York: Pace Publishing, 2023).
3 W.E.B. Du Bois, *Darkwater: Voices from within the Veil* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1920).

BLACK WATERS

INFERENCE

TO

THE

VEIL

Jerwood Collection:

Barbara Walker MBE, RA,
Lubaina Himid CBE, RA,
Michael Armitage,
Yinka Shonibare CBE, RA.

GSA Archives & Collections:

Kialy Tihngang,
Emmanuel Addo-Osafo,
Hock Aun Teh,
Anna Tewungwa.

Invited:

Grace Browne,
Rebecca Bellantoni,
Zoë Zo, Zoë Tumika & Zoë Guthrie,
Camara Taylor,
Adebusola King Ramsay.