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## Architectures of darkness in Derek Jarman and Mark Bradford

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In July 2017, on a visit to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, I became transfixed by two works, exhibited in counterpoint.<sup>1</sup> The first was Derek Jarman's 1993 film *Blue*, which shows a brilliant cobalt field for 79 minutes, accompanied by Jarman's voice. With a sonorous cadence, Jarman describes something altogether horrible: the debilitating effects of AIDS, which has reduced his weight, destroyed his immune system and made him blind (a result of cytomegalovirus). The film is an urgent conclusion to Jarman's cinematic and painterly oeuvres as well as an inquiry into the last, transitive chapter in his life. He would die within a year of its release.

The second work on view was Mark Bradford's 2015 installation *Spiderman*. In a cavernous gallery, lit with a single red spot, a loudspeaker plays a six-minute standup routine, delivered by a character called Spiderman. Bradford voices the character – a fictional Black, transgender comedian – and wrote the script, which is spelled out in white lettering and projected onto the gallery wall. The cheers and raucous laughter of an adoring crowd accompany Spiderman's bawdy stories, creating an immersive sonic environment that feels like an after-hours comedy club. The work, a parody of Eddie Murphy's controversial homophobic standup special *Delirious*, from 1983, boldly appropriates and reimagines Murphy's style in a fierce, queer idiom. Like Jarman's film, Bradford's installation is referential and reflexive, calling attention to its mediated format and challenging its audience to see and to sense differently.

The two works are formally alike and thematically adjacent. They convey related experiences of loss, injury and erotic longing, hedging what the curators describe as 'personal fears and public phobias'. This description is evocative

– mixing public and private is one of the key leitmotifs of queer politics and culture – but more needs to be said about the space of spectatorship within which these effects take shape. When I visited the museum, it was early in the day and I was the only viewer in the adjoined galleries. Alone, I could luxuriate in silent darkness, concentrating on the works, enjoying the whole duration of Bradford’s six-minute piece without interruption before walking into *Blue* and imbibing the vivid, monochromatic wash that Jarman’s film cast upon the room. Each work filled the surrounding gallery space with a single colour, effectively creating a new, suspended architecture. The rooms’ edges disappeared into shadows – the walls were painted black and Bradford’s room was strung with heavy velvet curtains. I was absorbed by the works’ aura, manifest in the two irradiant colours, but also aware of myself as a body: I recall the air conditioning, I remember moving through the rooms, sitting down in one gallery and walking about the other. As I sat watching *Blue*, a young man in a black T-shirt and studded belt entered the room. We locked eyes for an instant, staging a tableau of recognition in the dissimulating blue light, before I stood up and walked out, leaving the two works behind, my body warming to the daylight that suffused the next gallery.

This brief encounter led me to reflect upon the range of aesthetic experiences, singular and shared, that may occur within a space of spectatorship. I considered how the make-up of an artwork’s audience (differentiated by race, gender identity, sexuality and dis/ability) and the setting in which it is shown (gallery, movie theatre, seminar room) may induce certain kinds of interactions, not just between object and spectator but between the spectators themselves. The galleries were, in Giuliana Bruno’s words, ‘architectures of public intimacy’ in which feeling and imagination are ‘transiently lived in the presence of a community of strangers’ (2019: 136). The effect is especially pronounced when the audience is framed – silhouetted – by the glimmers of cinematic projection. To enter such a space, as film theorist Jean Ma has observed, is to ‘leave behind the lucid sunlit world’, indeed to be ‘cutoff from external reality’ and ‘conditioned to a different disposition of the body and senses’ (2021: 59). Jarman’s and Bradford’s works clearly induce these sorts of dispositional changes. Their uses of monochromatic light and dense, at times disorderly soundtracks create atmospheric sensory environments for queer social and erotic interaction. Both artists have described personal aesthetic investments in cruising grounds and queer bars or clubs. But here the effect is more nebulous. The idea is not simply to imitate or replicate these spaces – it was not a winking allusion to *blue* movie houses and *red* light districts that defined the two works – but rather to instantiate certain moods, to impel attractions and identifications, even to provoke feelings of ambivalence and hesitation. In inviting audience members to share in the creation of an emergent and indeterminate social world, the two works exceed their statuses, per the curator’s statement, as testaments to fear, debility and social death.

It is true that conditions of widespread homophobia and repressive anti-gay and racist law are of grave consequence to the artists. Jarman, who was diagnosed with AIDS in 1987, at age forty-five, became politically active in opposition to Section 28, Margaret Thatcher's law forbidding the 'intentional promotion' of homosexuality. Bradford experienced the moment under different but not unrelated circumstances: he was raised in Los Angeles in the 1980s, when Black men were perishing from AIDS at an alarming rate exacerbated by Reaganite cuts to public healthcare and social services. He describes *Spiderman* as a consideration of 'that moment of hysteria and fear and homophobia in the eighties and the black community's relationship to it' – though the final product does not represent the most traumatic and immediate aspects of the AIDS crisis, does not show death and dying and does not show protests against government inaction. In neither of the works is there a direct commentary on homophobia or political violence. Rather, the works' oblique references and ambient audio/visual components allude to 'atmospheres of violence', to borrow a phrase from geographer and trans theorist Eric Stanley (2021). The works imply a set of diffuse social conditions, lived across communities, that cannot be relayed through figurative representation or individual narrative testimony. In refusing these modes of exposition, the two works implicitly offer themselves as gathering points for new relations, new dynamics, producing what scholars Jill Stoner (2012) and John Paul Ricco (2002) refer to as 'minor architectures' of contingent social interaction.<sup>2</sup> Through abstracted sensory impressions and interactive plays of appearance and withdrawal, the works call attention to circumspect modes of queer world-making, which invariably arise in the wake of devastating losses.

I begin this chapter with a focus on the formal multi-modality of Jarman's *Blue* and Bradford's *Spiderman*, specifically their use of monochromatic light and atmospheric sounds, before speculating on how these dynamics can illuminate transformative social processes. In calling attention to the works' formal attributes, I am following Jack Halberstam's writing on queer and trans artists who 'spatializ[e] identities' through practical engagements with 'the abstract, the symptomatic and the architectural' – engagements that are consistent with shifts in the expression of sexual and especially gender difference from 'from binary to multiple' and 'from definitive to fractal' (2018). I want to show how the fragmented, disorderly and abstracted effects in *Blue* and *Spiderman* challenge the clinical ethos associated with representations of HIV/AIDS, sheltering the phantasmatic forces that give rise to community. Engaging these operations will mean defying the conventions of normative architectural criticism, thinking in and with the themes of darkness and abstraction – rather than definite or positivist understandings of built space – in order to cross the boundaries of genre, medium and disciplinary knowledge. Film, performance, writing, architecture – these forms become richly and inextricably entangled when they appear within the spaces of spectatorship and subjection that

comprise the museum. We must consider their interplay if we are to make sense of minor architectural spaces and their astonishing transformational potentialities.

## Darkness made visible

Jarman's film employs Yves Klein's ultramarine pigment, sometimes called International Klein Blue or IKB, as its principal visual component.<sup>3</sup> The colour fills the screen for the full duration of the film, effacing the logics of visual exposition typical of cinematic work.<sup>4</sup> Though the screen is effectively blank, its illuminated reflection does disclose an image of the work's social and architectural environment. The blue light saturates the gallery (or screening room or living room – the film was televised on BBC4 shortly after Jarman's death), tinting viewers' appearance, veiling their faces and movements. The film in this way seems to fulfill a wish that both Klein and Jarman shared: to create a formal 'ambience' that clouds any singular object of visual focus (Klein 2000: 51). In Jarman's words, 'The key to *Blue* was to do away with the images altogether' (quoted in Wollen 2000: 125). Writing on Jarman's film, John Paul Ricco has described such a negation in the language of space: 'a geography becoming imperceptible through colour, a spatiality that is nothing more or less than a chromatic surface, a superficiality that literally under-mines the facial, as well as landscape, bionarrative and every other figural mode of representation' (lxx). *Blue* calls attention to its own emptiness, 'forc[ing] us to reckon with the incapacity of visual representation to register this aporetography' – a field of non-existence. Unlike discreet art or architectural objects, these forces have no 'positive type', but rather act in and through the spaces where they are shown: they compromise a 'hollowing out of architecture', even a 'forgetting of architecture' (xxxix) – as if the containing walls of the screening room were washed out of sight.

This effect is enhanced by the film's soundtrack. The film's audio is dense with ambient music and street sounds, over which Jarman's monologue dispenses a jumble of fragmented ideas: diaristic reflections, descriptions of physical frailty (talk of itchy skin and fatigue) and dissociative references to Yves Klein. His words skirt on the film's surface, receding into traces with each new phrase. 'Blue Bottle buzzing / Lazy days / The sky blue butterfly / Sways on the cornflower / Lost in the warmth / Of the blue heat haze / Singing the blues Quiet and slowly'. As film critic Peter Wollen (2000: 127) has observed, Jarman's film moves between a desire to vanish into pure blue and a pull into the worldliness and avidity that Jarman so exemplified throughout his career. A tension between these effects mirrors a greater tension between the forms of dispossession that characterize queer life (particularly in the context of an HIV/AIDS moral panic) and the specific forms of mobility and social aptitude that queer people often have to assume

– a mix I have elsewhere (2020) referred to as ‘queer worldliness’ or a queer ethic of place characterized by lateral movement, social class crossing and profane (high/low) aesthetic sensibility.

The film’s disordered soundscape and its reflective blue screen seem at once to absorb and to divert visual attention, provoking audience members’ minds to wander about the ambient space the work creates. You are, as Ricco suggests, set into an aporetographic field where you have to discover, create or imagine for yourself – or in the company of others. In my encounter with a stranger, the experience of Jarman’s work became charged with feelings of identification and affinity, as well as the frisson of physical attraction. But when I was alone, I felt an equally profound sense of communion. I communed with the work itself – disassociating, receiving Jarman’s film as a sensing, feeling body rather than a disinterested spectator. Thus, while the film may strip away certain kinds of worldly, identifying features by offering a trance-like passage into aesthetic absorption, it can also heighten a sense of identification with past and future viewers of the film and even with the artist, who remains present through his voice but absent from the visual field. The play of presence and absence is redoubled since Jarman died soon after the film was released – his voice is a spectral trace.

Yet my experience may not be the same as yours. Any prospect of communion with an artwork is contingent upon who one is and where one is situated – an idea that was highlighted in the display of Bradford’s and Jarman’s works in counterpoint. Just as a museum can enable charged social encounters and sublime dissociative experiences, it may also be a restricted space that enforces certain regimes of visibility and performance among its spectators – often around questions of physical appearance, specifically race and dis/ability. Bradford’s work alludes to these restrictions. In *Spiderman*, the gallery space is in some places a muted crimson (from a single red spotlight) and in others a field of absolute darkness, enabling audience members to recede, as if they were leaning into the shadows of a smoky barroom. *Spiderman* does not create the total chromatic environment of Jarman’s *Blue*, but rather becomes a crumpled field of exposure and invisibility, with sound, smoke, light, shadow, text and audio obscuring any one point of focus. The disorienting effect is intensified by the recording of Bradford’s performance as *Spiderman* and the uproarious laughter that accompanies and accentuates the character’s monologue.

These medial aspects of the work give the space some formal dimension yet also tend to make the gallery feel cluttered and enclosing. *Spiderman* assaults the audience with ironic declarations: ‘Get your beauty license’, ‘Bring back the jeri-curl’, ‘I’m paranoid as a mother fucker of MJ’s ghost’ – a satirical litany meant to vanquish calls for respectability through what Richard Powell has described as ‘ritualistic public exhortations of obscenities and verbal abuses’ (2020: 22). *Spiderman*’s bawdy routine is, further, relayed through a garbling sound system and accompanied by ‘bootleggy’ electronic music. The cluttered and chaotic mix of referents risks

overtaking the performance.<sup>5</sup> It is as if these sensory effects were papering over Bradford himself and, along with him, a host of other figures who are referenced obliquely in the piece. Bradford's works are in this sense akin to 'anti-portraits' that toy with received ideas of visibility and power.<sup>6</sup> He explains his intention:

It's almost like existing in the shadows a little bit. I throw out these fragments and details of things I'm interested in. I notice it's a distancing from some kind of over-determined black body that is so media-driven and politically embattled. Sure, in *Spiderman*, I reference something that happened with a man who couldn't breathe in the subway [Eric Garner, who was killed by NYPD in 2014], but I had to find a way into it where the body wasn't there. When I'm grappling with things, I'm also trying to figure out how I feel about them. I'm always speaking from a subject position. Especially with recent history, I'm never even sure how I feel about what's going on around the African American man and the policing. To want to talk about current topics and find a freedom in them, I had to pull the body out. (quoted in Cohen 2015)

There is a politic to such withdrawals – a refusal to be flattened into the logic of visual commodification that prevails in liberal society, especially for Black men whose exposure, as Bradford attests, is 'media-driven and politically embattled'. (Withdrawal has become a hallmark of minoritarian aesthetic practice in recent years, often with reference to Edouard Glissant's discourse of *opacity*.)<sup>7</sup> Here the withdrawal of *Spiderman*, the work's central figure, is a deliberate move on the part of the artist to conceal a racialized body from the site of museological display. Bradford had planned to perform the work live but eventually chose to make and broadcast an audio recording. This decision also offers some protection to audience members, as the space itself becomes overtaken by the work's medial components: *Spiderman*'s frenzied routine, the laugh track and canned music, become an escape route for the viewer, obstructing the scrutinizing looks of others or perhaps concealing an encounter or exchange with another viewer. As curator Connie Butler observes, Bradford 'likes to provoke his public with the idea of the potential violence of the gaze and the prurience of surveillance' – but here the audience is left to consider 'our own projection about what that body might mean' (2018: 114).

Gestures of withdrawal and opacity are avowed interests in Bradford's work, though they are often paired with bold, at times ironic displays of queer visibility. The most striking example in his oeuvre may be his performance in the 2005 video *Niagara*, featuring a neighbor, Melvin, swishing down the streets of Black Los Angeles in an act of embodied defiance; the work alluded to practices of everyday queer performance that open up minor architectures of seduction in the real space of city life (the gesture is adopted from a 1953 Marilyn Monroe film of the same name). The video is slowed so that we move with Melvin's sashaying hips. Yet his back is turned to us

– we never see his face. Bradford presents an act of emplaced performance distinctly related to his recreation of a club environment in *Spiderman*: both works acknowledge certain kinds of minor social arenas where transgressive acts of appearance (and withdrawal) can and do occur. But standup comedy venues, like dance halls and night clubs, are especially potent spaces of ‘every-night’ worlds, to paraphrase José Muñoz’s writing on spaces of queer nightlife and performance culture (1999): they become stages on which queers not only exist beside social antagonists such as homophobic comics and closet cases but confront them and transform them. For Bradford, a repressed comedian’s homophobic delirium offers an opening to spaces nominally defined by deviance and self-negation, where shadows darken all manner of creative invention.

### Abstraction as an architecture of change

I have tried to show how Bradford’s and Jarman’s uses of ambient visuality and dense, atmospheric sound, as well as the themes of negation and withdrawal, can mark out grounds where the phenomenology of queer relation can take shape. I see the works’ abstracted and abstracting features as providing the conditions of ‘capacity and openness’ that, in David Gettsy’s words, ‘make queer life possible’ (2019: 72). Abstraction, the works suggest, masks movement and kinesthesia – it literally means *withdrawal*. Abstraction can conceal affinities, dramatize chance encounters and organize spectators’ interrelated movements, shaping their visions of the work and engendering a certain awareness of individual and mutual embodiment (Doyle and Gettsy 2013: 65). The open form of an abstract work allows for lateral movements, aimless lingering and unfocussed, associative ways of engaging what appears on a video screen – dispensing with any sense of completion or destination (Ricco 2002: 7). The space of exhibition, under such conditions, does not train its audience’s comportment and behaviour, but offers itself as a blank slate for emergent and indeterminate spatial orientations, putting into question spectators’ relation to materiality and environment in general.

A queer architectural point of view might observe that an art object and the social environment it engenders cannot be separable in any meaningful way. Hence a mode of analysis that, as Halberstam advises, will ‘reimagine the (re)constructed body as it intersects the coordinates of gender, the social constructions of identity and the familiar contours of the built environment’ (2018). Thinking with Halberstam, we might conclude that Bradford’s *Spiderman* is a work that is coded as both transgender and transformational. The character’s moniker is an allusion to the way that bodies, subjects and environments form and reform, sometimes in the shadow of contemporary cultural references and sites of collective, even popular (as in ‘pop’) valuation: the name *Spiderman*, taken from the mutant comic book superhero, hints at a logic of pop appropriation and corporeal transformation. Bradford’s

practice is, in this sense, somewhat allegorical, as his recuperation of the outwardly awful and offensive Murphy serves as an example of work to be done across multiple spaces and mediated formats. Here it is instructive to engage the artist's larger oeuvre of abstract paper collages: he gathers material for these works by walking about the spaces of Los Angeles, tearing paper fragments from wheat paste posters, gleaned end papers from his mother's hair salon and even collecting littered cigarette butts. Importantly, however, this itinerant creative practice does not bely its situated origins – Bradford's background is never banished from the finished work but is richly present in fragments, scraps and traces (not only did he grow up in South Central Los Angeles, he worked in his mother's hair salon for many years). His description of this process as extraverted, transformational, difficult and in some ways private recalls Getsy's enthusiasm for abstraction's potential as a tool for recovery and renewal:

Abstraction for me, I get it – you go internal, you turn off the world, you're hermetic, you channel something. No. I'm not interested in that type of abstraction. I'm interested in the type of abstraction where you look out at the world, see the horror – sometimes it is horror – and you drag that horror kicking and screaming into your studio and you wrestle with it and you find something beautiful in it.<sup>8</sup> (Bradford and Hill 2018: 18)

In Bradford's view, abstraction is a method of continual material and conceptual transformation. 'I'm a builder and a demolisher', he has said. 'I put up so I can tear down. I'm a speculator and a developer. In archaeological terms, I excavate and I build at the same time'. Bradford's use of abstraction does not end at a point of opacity or refusal, in other words; rather he utilizes the visual form of abstraction to scaffold and conceal a more daunting, at times messy and contradictory practice of mixing, disassembly and change. This same mode of clandestine invention and reconstruction, attuned to the conditions of ruined and neglected spaces and bodies, also clearly animates the conceit of *Spiderman*. The starting point is after all a scene of queer injury: a performance by a laughing, taunting comedian who targets gay men ('no faggots allowed', Murphy announced at the start of *Delirious*). In confronting this scene, Bradford could again be said to 'wrestle with' widespread feelings of disgrace and horror – specifically the feeling of generalized embarrassment he felt and witnessed when he saw Murphy perform – and to 'find something beautiful' via the reconstructive actions of queer appropriation and art-making. The work is not just a critique of Eddie Murphy's notoriously homophobic standup persona, in other words, but a confrontation with all that lies beneath: namely, in the words of Connie Butler, a 'masculinity so constricted by its own repression that it emerges from the other end of the intimate soliloquy, transformed' (2018: 105).

Why does this largely thematic gesture demand a spatial and material analysis? Indeed, it shows that radical performance practices, in the

words of Fred Moten, can serve as a ‘disruption of architecture’ by way of disrupting the normative ordering of gender, sexuality, race and ability through disciplinary norms and modes of valuation (2017: 187).<sup>9</sup> Performances like those of Jarman and Bradford can be seen as contesting suppositions not just about who experiences a given space but how space itself can be experienced. I have suggested that Jarman’s facility with art and institutional culture makes his oeuvre less of a challenge to aesthetic conventions than Bradford’s – but Jarman’s work too proposes such disruptions, perhaps not in regard to the problem of access to cultural capital, but in response to the Platonic character of museum display strategies. Of all Jarman’s films, it is only *Blue* that eschews representation for what the filmmaker called the ‘alchemy’ and ‘liberation’ of abstraction. Why? Although Jarman was eager to produce a film about Yves Klein (he had made biographies of Caravaggio and Wittgenstein), it was his loss of sight that prompted him to pursue this particular project. The artist’s visual impairment provides the most immediate explanation for many formal choices and perhaps for the film’s apparent inaccessibility and difficulty. I do not mean that the work’s unchanging blue field is a metaphor for Jarman’s lost vision, but that the film acknowledges and explores the ways that differently abled bodies move through and experience the world. It calls attention to the way that perceptual capacities are ‘culturally organized’ through visual strategies that presume an ‘unproblematic, collectively shared relationship to material space’ (Boys 2018: 60). The work demands a modality of spatial perception keyed into these differences and their aesthetic possibilities – hence his reference to ‘a blue-eyed boy in a system of unreality’. Certainly Jarman’s visual impairment disorders his life (‘your clothes are on back to front and inside out’, a waitress has told him in an anecdote he reports at the start of the film), but does not mean the loss of his aesthetic faculties. Far from it. He suggests that decentering the visual as the modus operandi of cinema, painting and (as installed at the MFA) museological display will open other channels of sensory life, including those of touch, listening, proxemics and shifts in the registers of spatial and temporal apprehension (Jones 2021: 13). The grey zones of abstraction – the space of abstraction’s differential effects on bodies, subjects and the minor architectures of relation – becomes a loose framework for moving with and in these possibilities, away from the supposition of occupancy and shared perception and towards something else which is not yet named.<sup>10</sup>

## Conclusion

The purpose of these remarks has been to frame the minor architectural operations that *Blue* and *Spiderman* enable their audience to perform via formal strategies such as abstraction, withdrawal, refusal and opacity – strategies that operate under the protection of darkness rather than the

scrutinizing light of day. These works create spaces in which to confront the injuries that arise from living in a homophobic, transphobic, racist and ableist social world and to remake these conditions in the grammar of irrepressible social difference and plurality. I hope to have shown the ways that minor architectures can exploit porous and sometimes dependent relationship with larger spaces, at times accounting for and correcting failures in normative disciplinary form – Jarman examining the logics of death and debility and Bradford transforming the waste of American culture into an expression of transformation and empowerment.

## Notes

- 1 My enormous gratitude to Mark Bradford for granting me access to the video from his installation *Spiderman* and to Stewart Campbell at Hauser & Wirth for facilitating my request. Thank you also to the NEH, which purchased entry to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston for fellows in its 2017 Summer Institute ‘Space, Place, & the Humanities’ (led by Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, Tim Cresswell and Sarah Kanouse).
- 2 Both authors define minor architecture as energies and movements rather than built structures. Stoner describes ‘active verbs operating on concrete nouns’ (2012: 4) while Ricco describes ‘less a force than a form’ (2002: xxxv). Although talk of the minor is strongly associated with Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s discourse of ‘minor literature’ (1986) it has strong geographic and thus epistemological variants; Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih for example describe the minor as a ‘uncontainable, invisible symbolic geography of relations that become the creative terrain on which minority subjects act and interact in fruitful, lateral ways’ (2005: 2). For a recent summary of the minor across humanistic inquiry, see Maya Boutaghou and Emmanuel Bruno Jean-Francois, ‘The Minor in Question’ (2020).
- 3 The colour is the product of a chemical polymer called Rhodopas, that suspends particles of blue pigment to catch and reflect a light source. In Klein’s words: ‘I disliked colours ground in oil. They seemed dead to me; what pleased me above all were pure pigments, in powder, such as I saw them in the windows of retail paint-sellers. They had brightness and extraordinary, autonomous lives of their own. This was essential colour. Living tangible colourmatter. It was depressing to see such glowing powder, once mixed in a distemper or whatever medium intended as a fixative, lose its value, tarnish, become dull. One might obtain effects of paste but after drying it wasn’t the same; the effective colour magic had vanished’ (quoted in Wollen 2000: 124).
- 4 Tim Lawrence has emphasized the anti-representational character of Jarman’s *Blue*: ‘If reformists stress the normality of the person with AIDS and if queer theorists emphasize the same person’s disruptive and defiant outlook, then Jarman incorporates both possibilities, with the metaphorical thrust of *Blue* militating against the existence of a ‘single universal truth’ about the epidemic, the meanings of which cannot be contained’ (Lawrence 1997: 260).

- 5 Literature on the sensory and experimental dimensions of architecture can help us to place these operations in a disciplinary lexicon: for example, Barry Blesser and Linda Ruth-Salter describe the ways that sound can enclose or define a space, inducing ‘feelings as exhilaration, contemplative tranquillity, heightened arousal or a harmonious and mystical connection to the cosmos’ as well as components that might ‘discourage social cohesion’ (2009: 5).
- 6 ‘Anti-Portrait’ is a word coined by artist Lorna Simpson to describe her works’ ways of conveying resistance to objectifying portraiture.
- 7 Glissant’s (1996) revocation of ‘opacity’ in the poetics of relation builds on Deleuzian theories of rhizomatic networks to describe experiences of cross-cultural engagement. Opacity appears in contrast to the transparency and even empathy demanded by liberal cultural politics. Following Glissant, many Black critical theorists and Black artists have criticized the hypervisibility of Black bodies and Black culture, whether because they are commodified or subject to regulation. For a recent engagement with the question of relation vis-à-vis opacity, see Kara Keeling’s *Queer Times, Black Futures* (2019).
- 8 ‘As a child in the hair salon, I never turned away from horror. I saw it all. There was so much strength and so much beauty too. The laughter in between the crying. I believe in that. For me, I was going to drag it all into the studio and then I was going to drag it out to the gallery. Yes, in a way it is social abstraction. The thing about Abstract Expressionism that fascinated me was the fact that so many African-American men and women have been left out. It was also really fun when they told me, ‘Oh Bradford, you can’t. Don’t do that’ (2018: 18).
- 9 Moten borrows from Masao Miyoshi’s recognition that architecture discards its vital components once it becomes operative as a commodity or state planning project and thus calls for a radically open and imaginative modality of architecture which proceeds in light of fugitive social performance.
- 10 Moten refers to this prospect as ‘an architecture set up to receive aninstrumental, anarchitectural doing, thinging, thinking’ of and about the ‘communal, anarchic, textural environment that is ecological, social and personal’ (2017: 196).

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