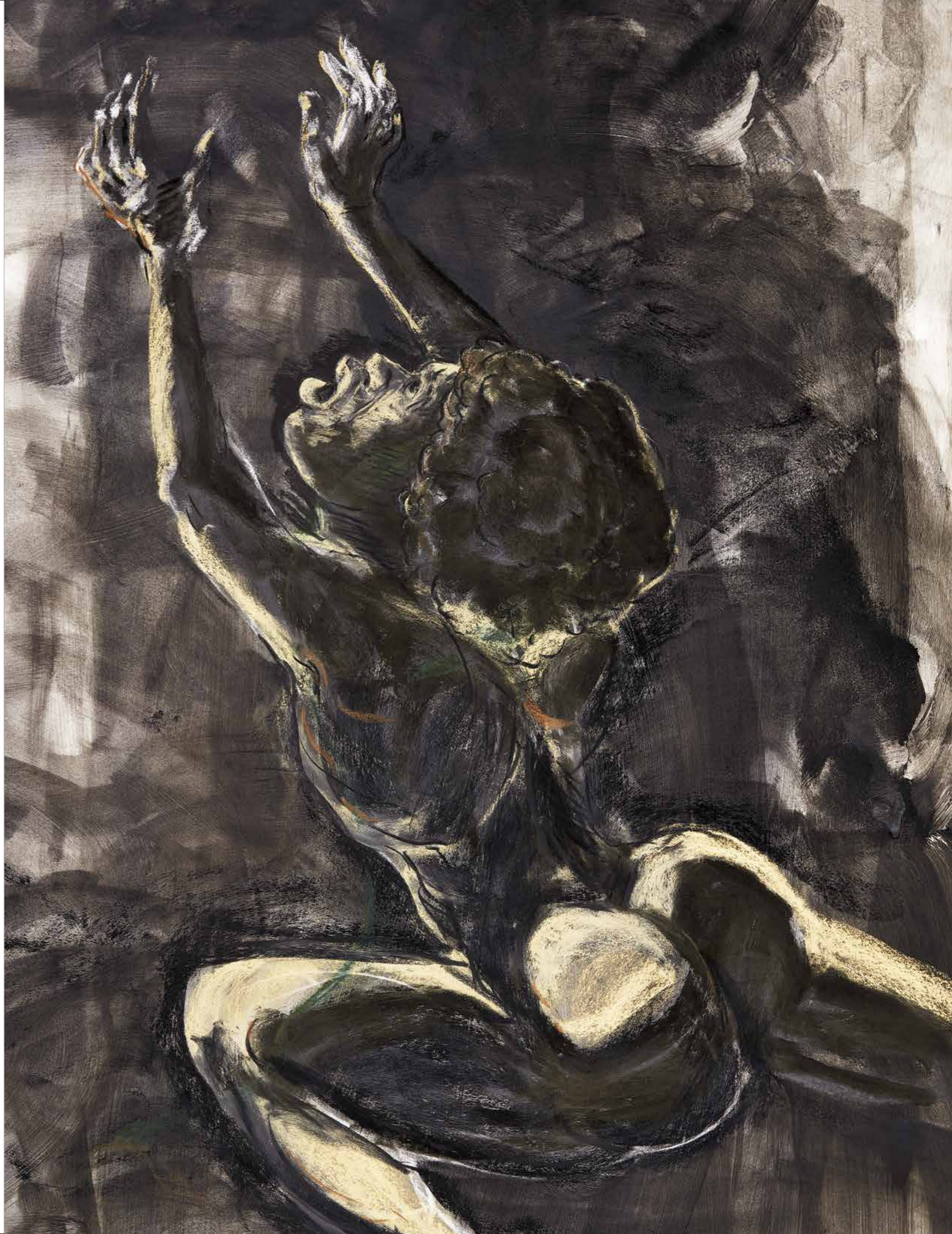
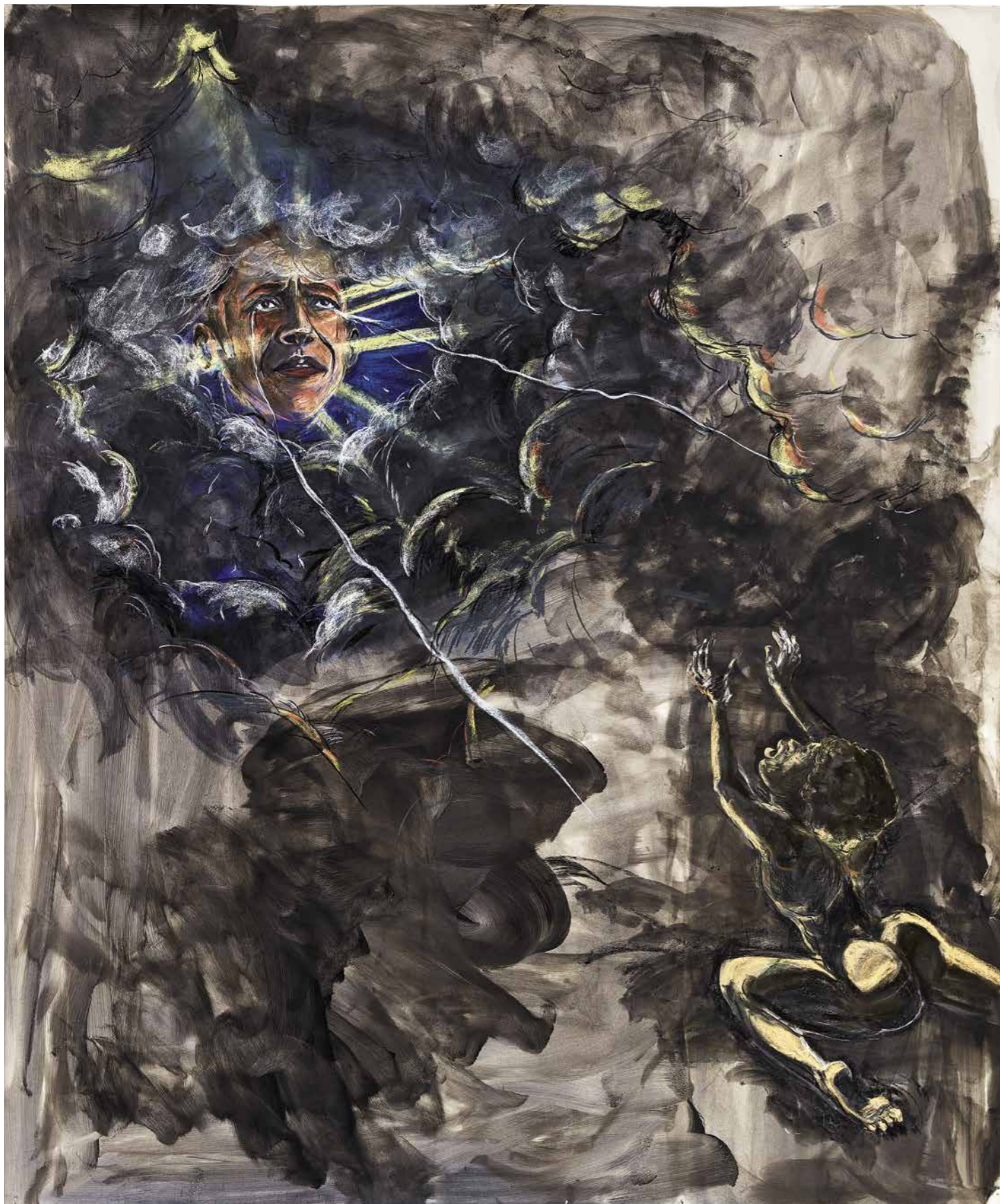
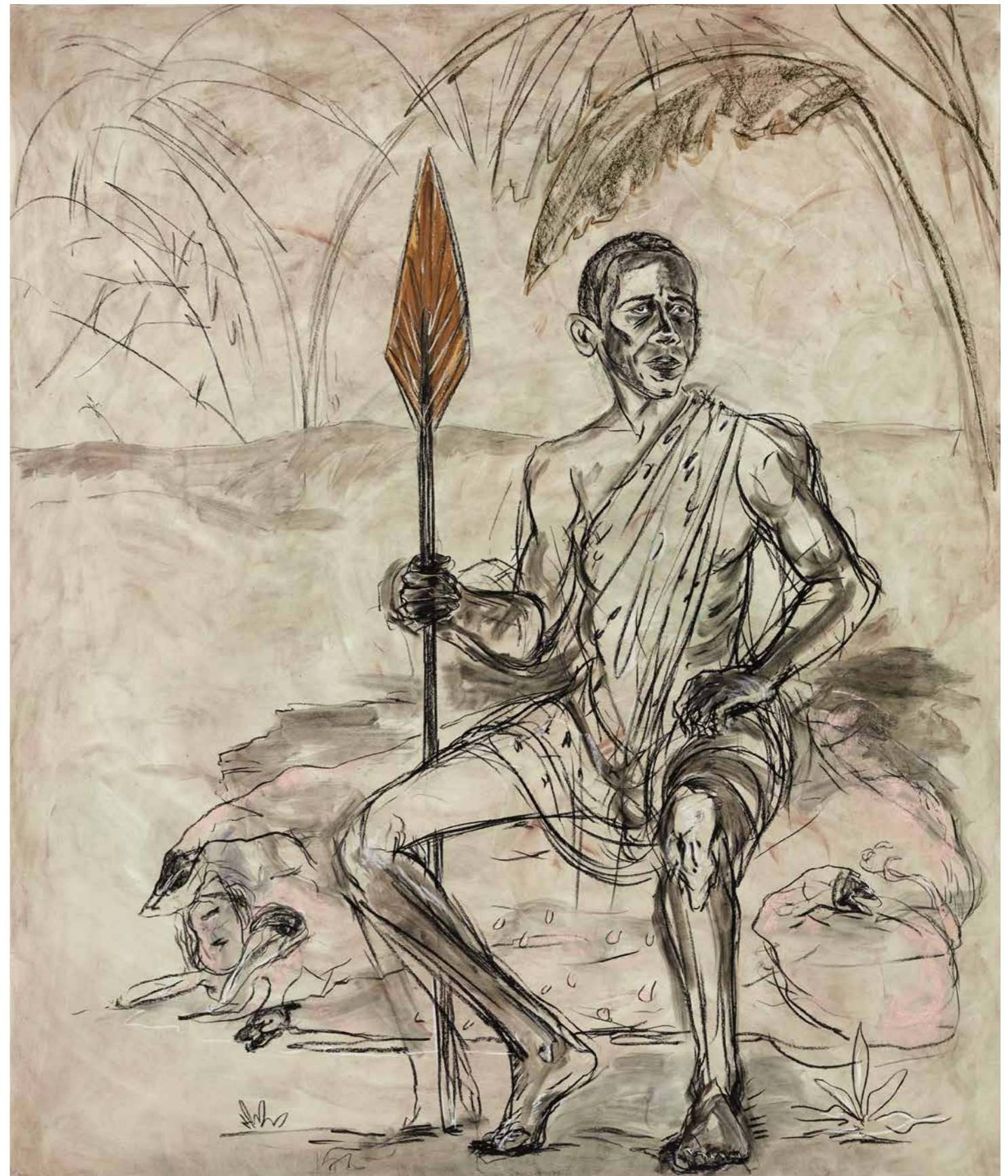


A Black
Hole is
Everything
↳
Star
wants to Be.





Allegory of the Obama Years by Kara E. Walker, 2019



Barack Obama as "An African" With a Fat Pig (by Kara Walker), 2019



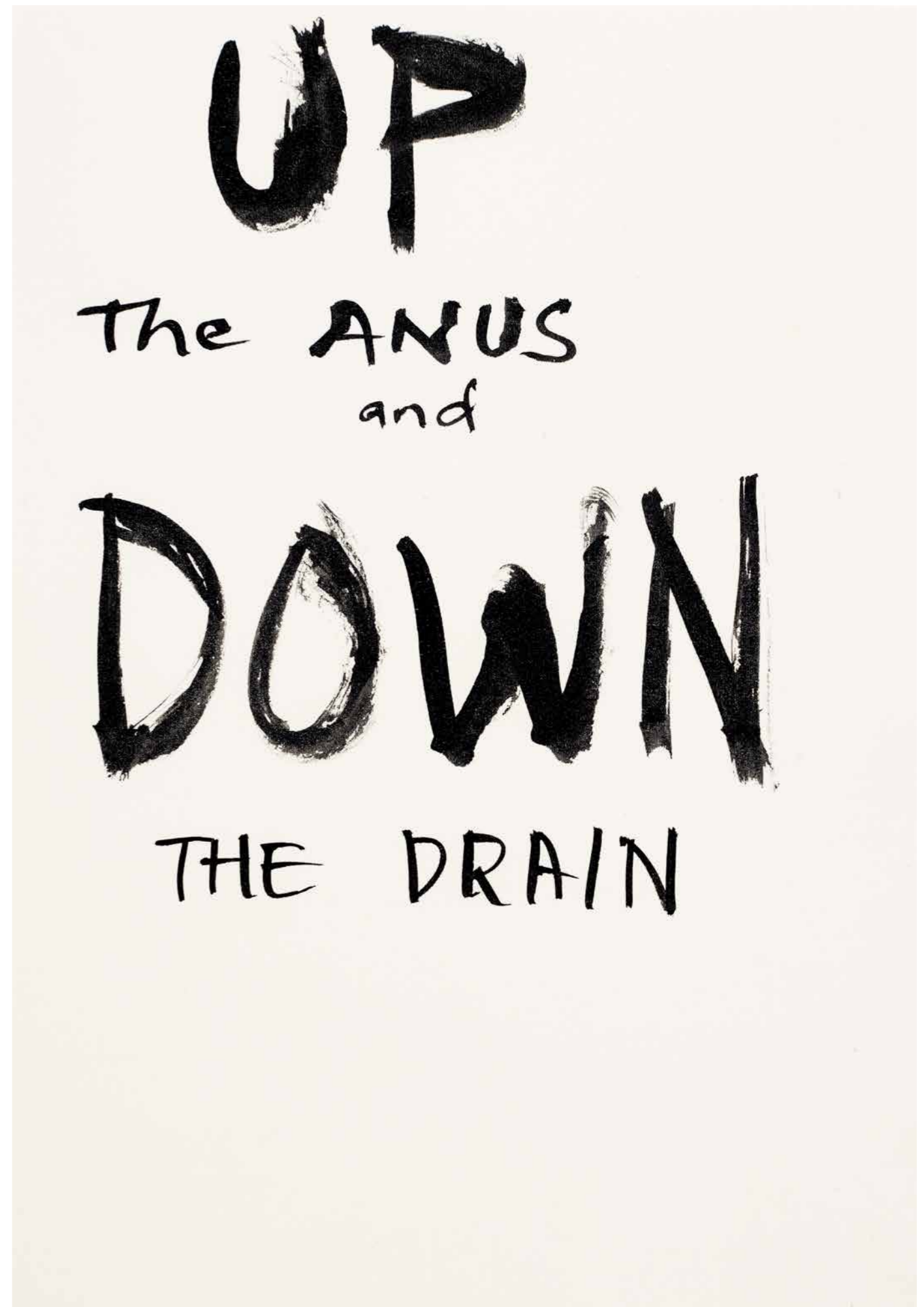












BLACK LIVES STOPPED
MATTERING THE MOM-
ENT

HE LEFT OFFICE. DARKNESS
PREVAILED SWALLOWING US,
WE MERGE.

FRIGHTLESS.
MAKING THE NIGHTLY NEWS
LESS

PERFORMANCE OF RACE
IS
MINSTRELL SHOW JUMP
SPIN DO-JEST-SO

JIM CROW DANDY
FAIR WELL FARE
WELL

EXPERT READ
OF THE
POST-POST RACIAL
TRANSITION
GRACE PERIOD
MINUS POLICE
SHOOTINGS OF
AND ABUSE TOWARD
LITTE BLACK GIRLS
IN
BIKINIS I
SURVIVE I SURVIVE

WHEN ARE YOU
GONNA GET
OVER THAT?
WHEN WHEN WHEN?





IS RACE
LESS FLUID
THAN
GENDER?
LIKE
VISCIOUS
DEHYDRATED
SEMEN?
CAKED UPON YOUR
FACE?

NO PICTURES

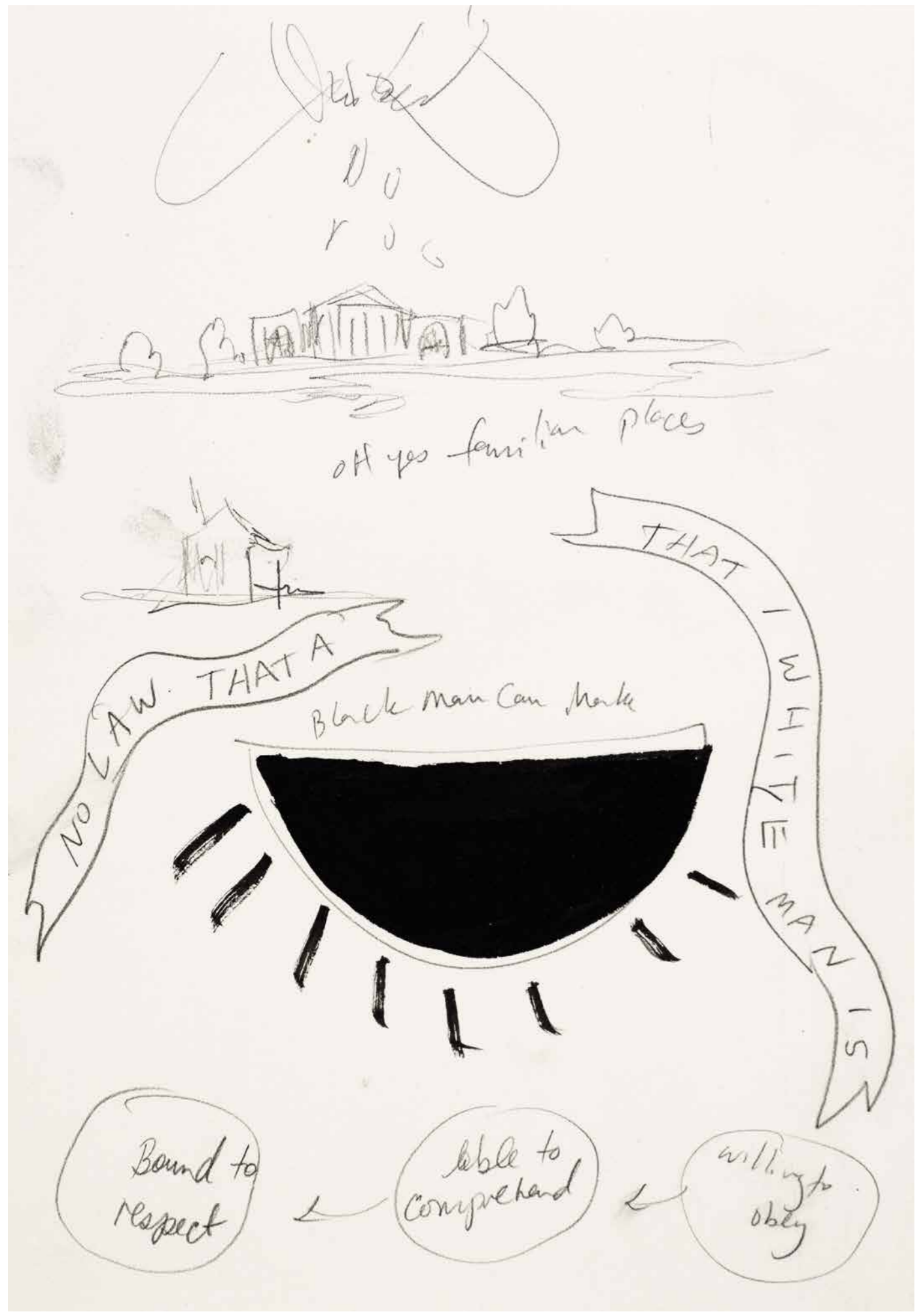
COMPLETE THE LOSS. THE ABSENCE
I FEEL IN MY HEART AT NOT
HAVING YOU MALIGN AND INJURE
ME.

NO BAD SEED LIVES HERE NOW
THE GROUND IS FALLOW. DRY





INFRARED
BEAMS
CONVEY
YOUR
MEANNESS
WORDS FAIL
ME



I WANT you to ENTER
ME INVISIBLY
TOUCH MY FEAR AND HAIR
CALL ME NIGGER
AND WHERE NOT WAVE
YOUR WHITE FLAG
AT ME NOT DEMAND
PEACE AND RECONCILIATION
DO NOT ASSUME THERE
IS NO SPACE FOR
you IN MY
PANTHEON A SEAT
AT
MY TABLE
(you ARE MY THRONE. I REST
my NAKED ASS UPON you)

I MEANT TO TELL YOU I LOVE
YOU BEFORE I LEFT YOU
BUT. HOWEVER, I SAID IT
SO MANY TIMES BEFORE
NO MATTER. TIMES
CHANGED

Alligiances Shift.

NEW Policies Emerge
you were Never Who
I thought you were
But I needed to think it.
to be more of what I could
be. I needed your desire
for me to be bigger, than
your Biggest dream

Sorry for your
Loss



Queen or King Walker?
KARA

Complain less! Make More ART!

Give Away ART Supplies NARROW
your focus. Apply lubricant

Penetrate young boys

Because they are

ASKING FOR IT

HUNG DADDIES SPANK YOUNG SONS
OTK

BECAUSE THEY MADE THEM
AND
THEY CAN

BECAUSE
THEY ARE STRONGER AND

BOYS ARE WEAK BUT CAN'T HAVE BABIES.
OVER IS, PERHAPS AND W.O. EVIDENCE
OF

COERSION OR ABUSE SO THE FEDS MIGHT
LOOK ELSEWHERE, FOR NOW

MEN WANT
WOMEN TO BE
THERE - Somewhere
WITHOUT OUR
CALM AND COMPASSIONATE
VIGILANCE IT ALL goes
to seed. MEN WANT
WOMEN TO BE SILENT
Gullible and WITLESS. SEXUAL
UP TO A POINT AND INNOCENT
UP TO ANOTHER POINT THE
SPECTRUM OF WHAT MEN
WANT IS SHORT WAVELENGTHS
OF VISIBLE LIGHT

LIBERALS!

IF YOU WANT GUN CONTROL you'll have to

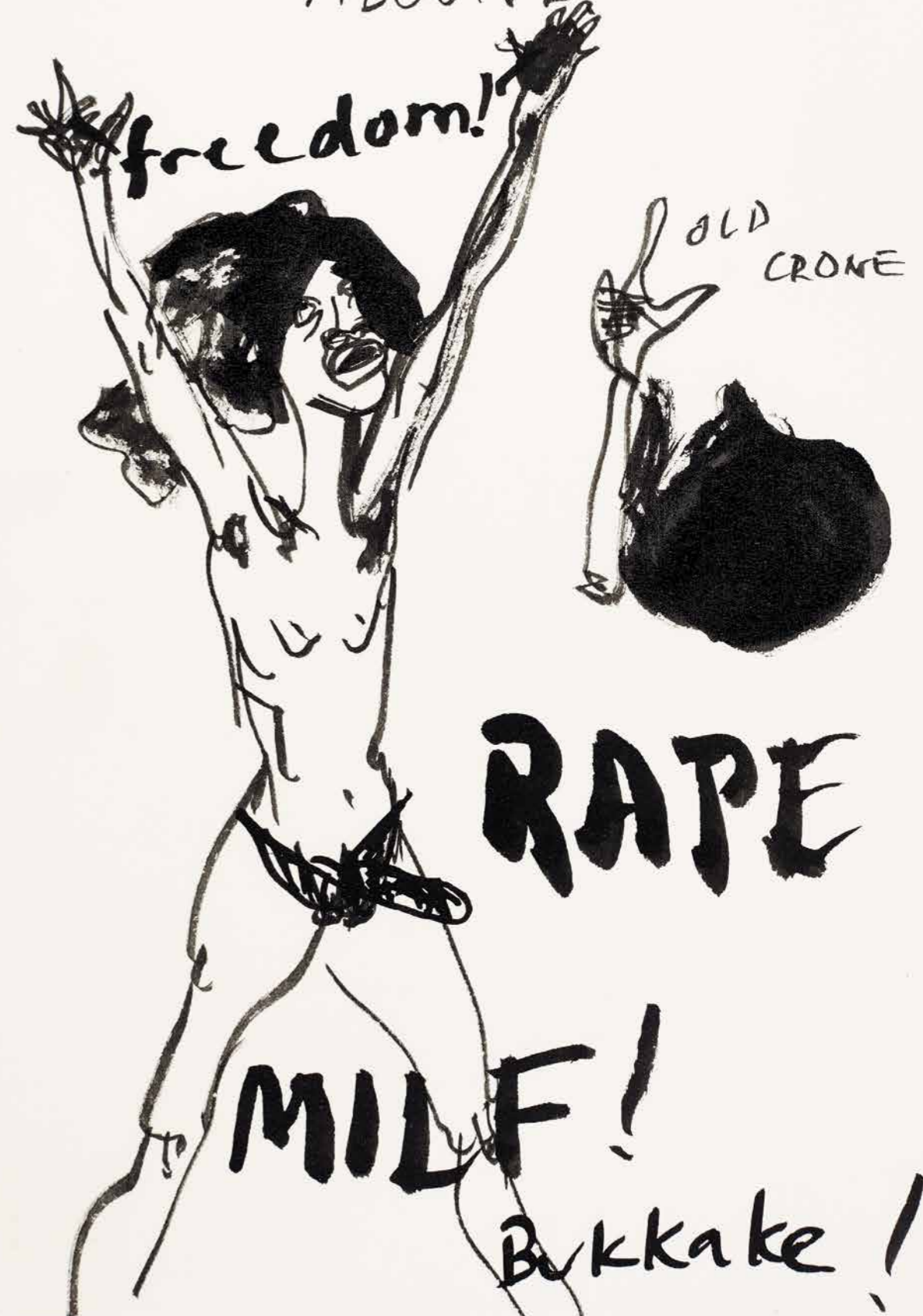
BUY ALL THE GUNS
AND HEARD THEM.

WE MAY NEED THEM SOON ENOUGH.

TAKE AIM AT THE SCOUNDRELS
OF THE
G. O. P.

DROP YOUR IDEALS. SAVE THE USA!

Every Stereotype Explored
Now NEW ARCHETYPES
ABOUND!







THIS WILL KILL PRAYERS IS NOT IT

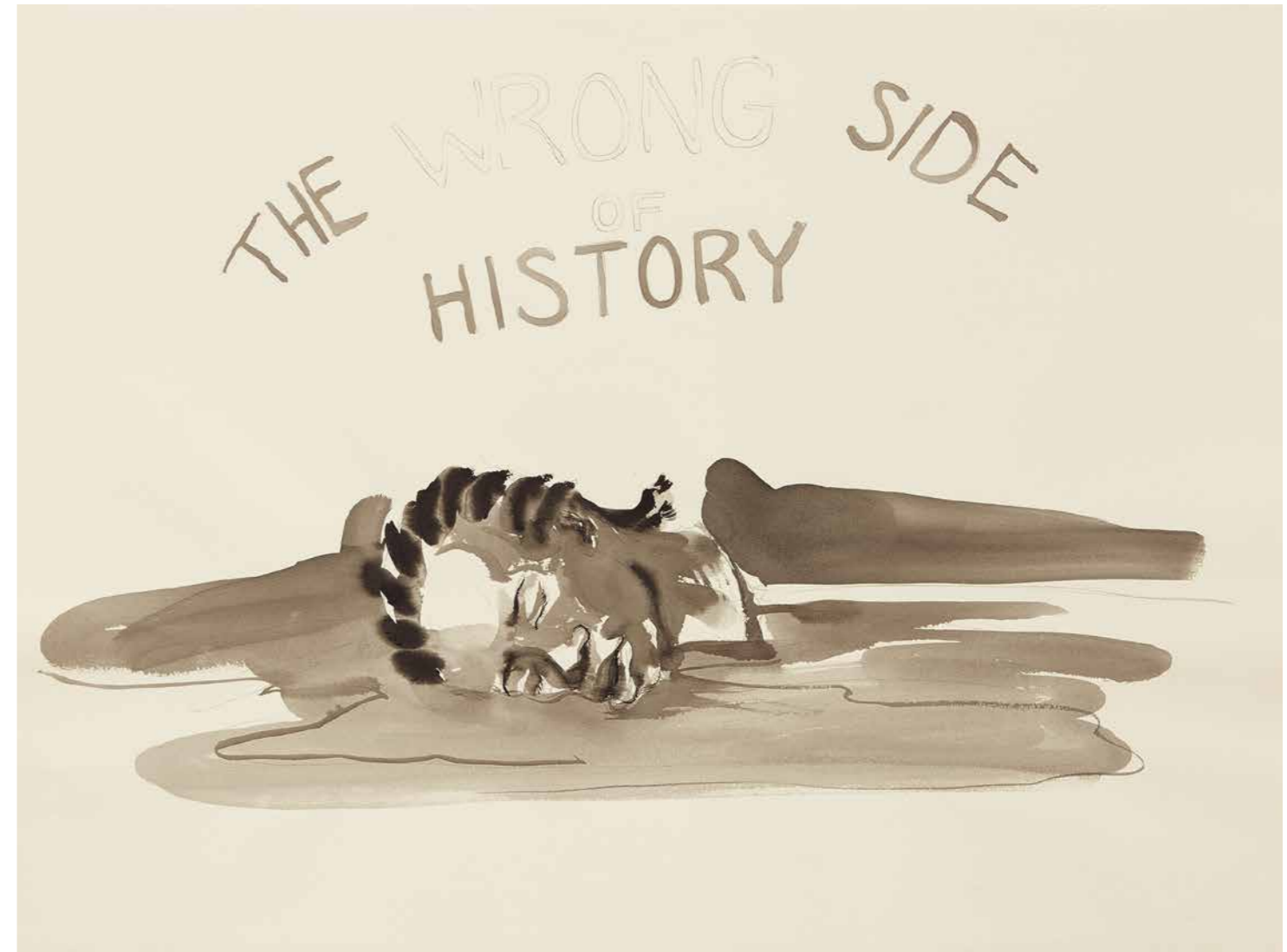
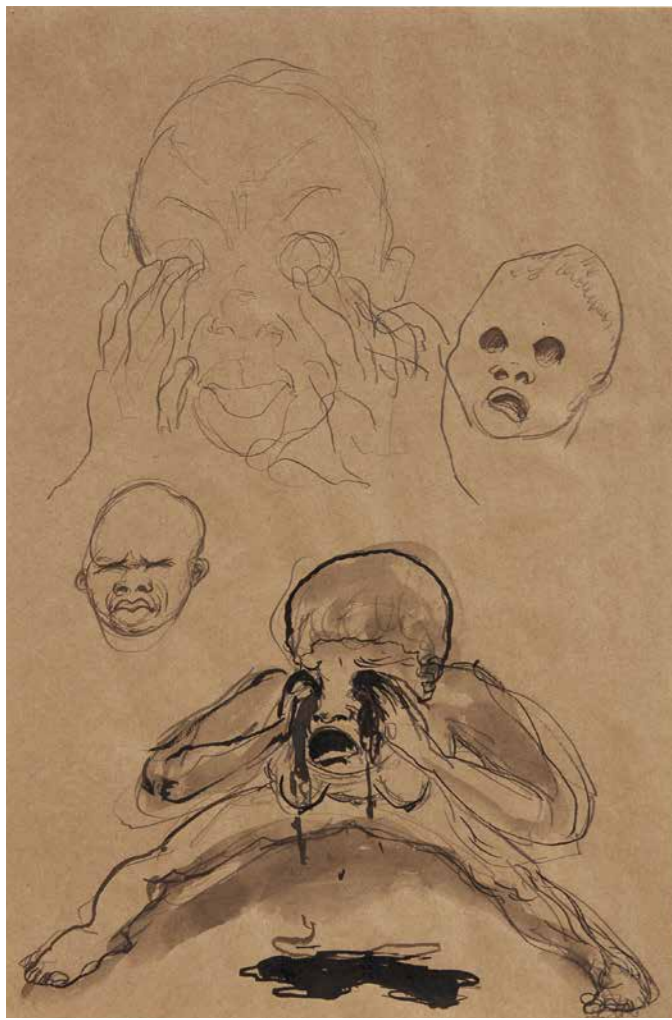
'merica, 2016

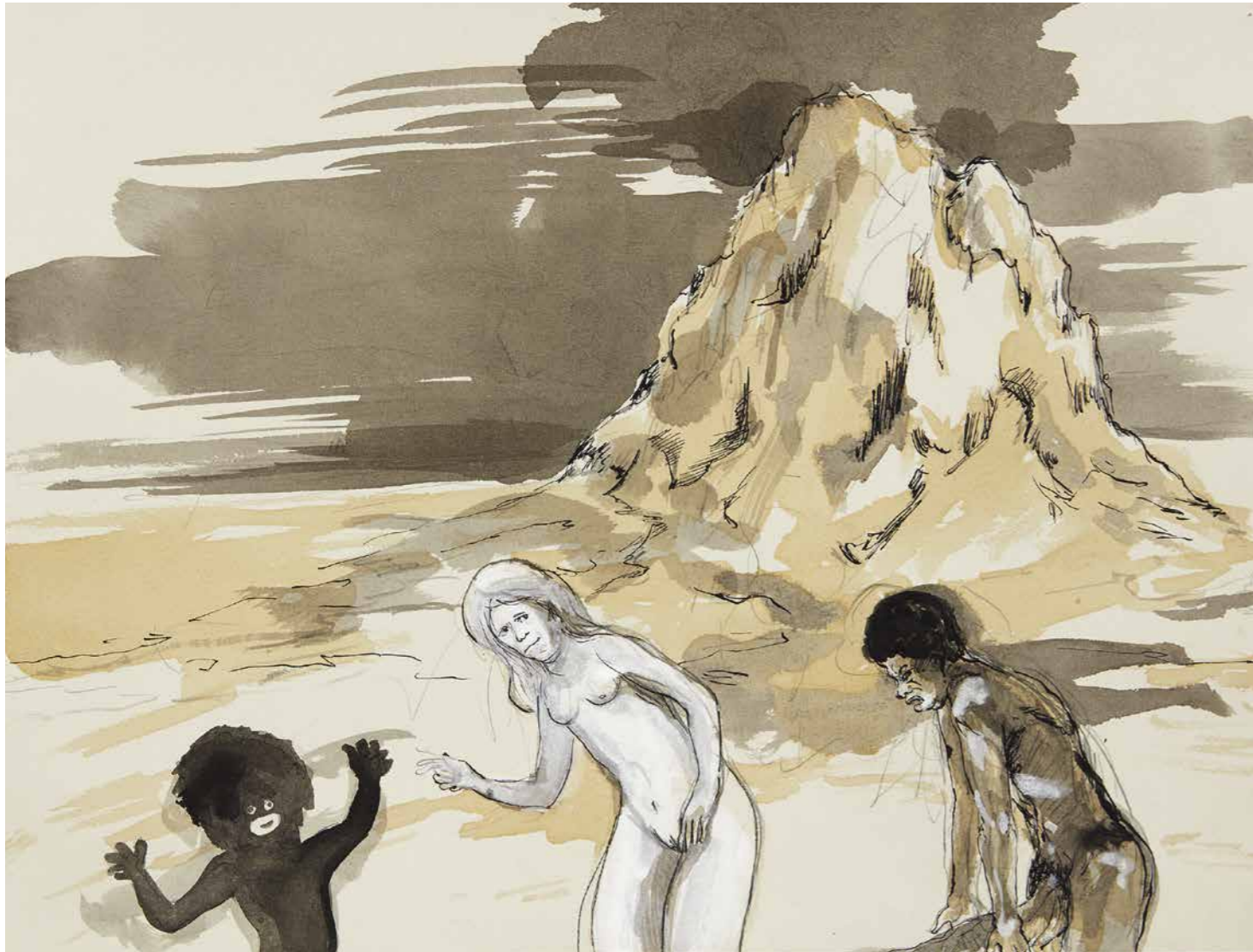


Prize, 2018

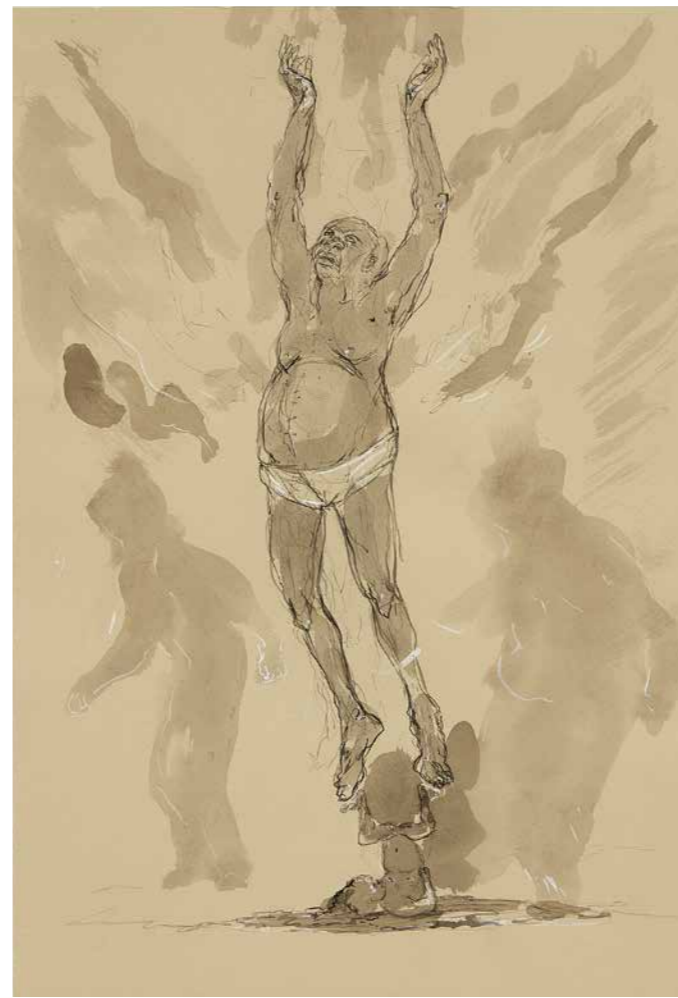


The Patriot Game, 2018





Untitled, 2018



Bolster, 2018
Savage, 2018
Returning Europeans to Europe, 2018

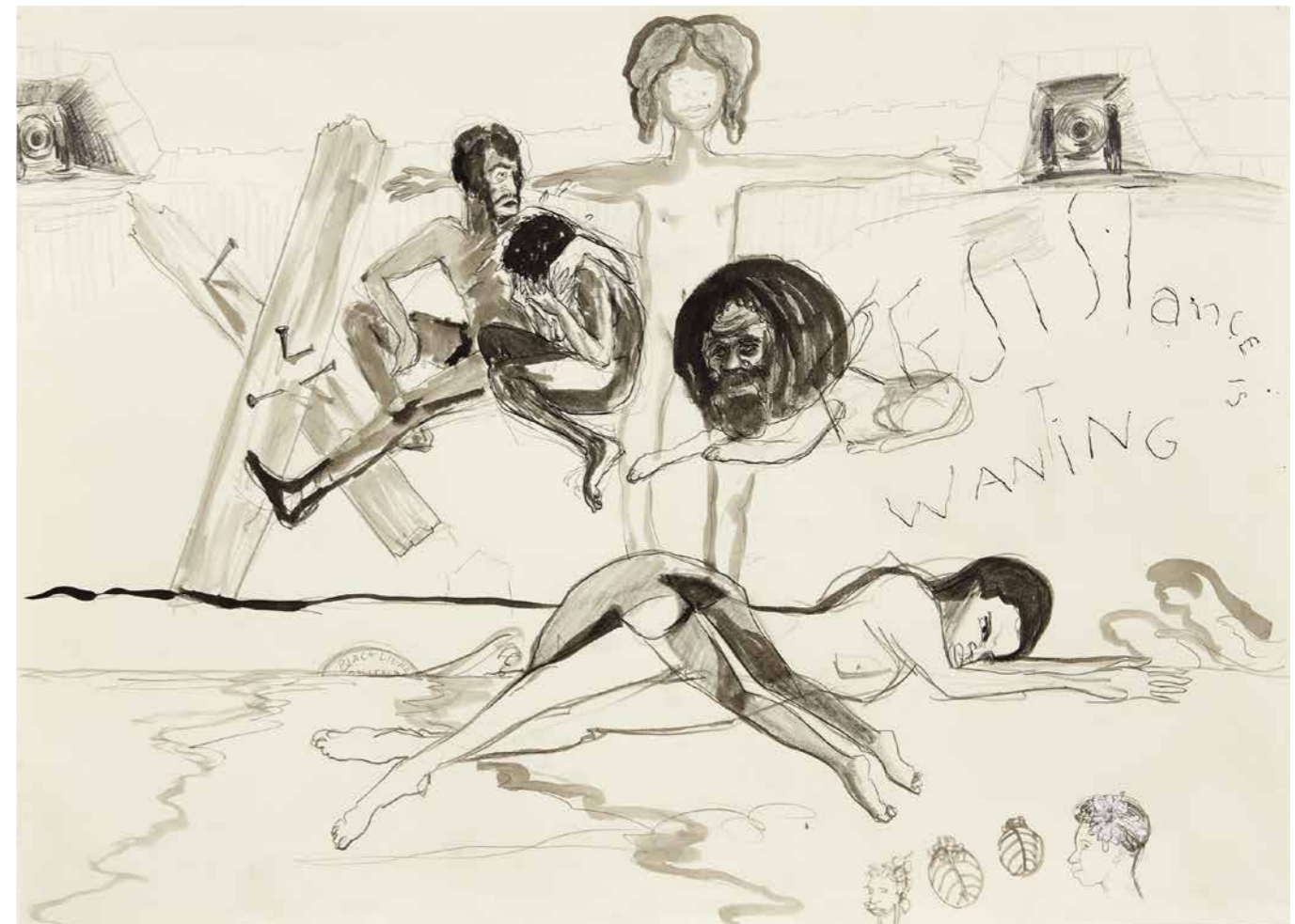


The Sacrifice, 2018
Complex, 2018





Throwaway, 2018
 Sacrifice the blood of the lamb the silence of the rats, 2018



Resistance is Wanting, 2018
 Examination Table, 2018





Untitled, 2018
Untitled, 2018
American Dissection Lab, 2018





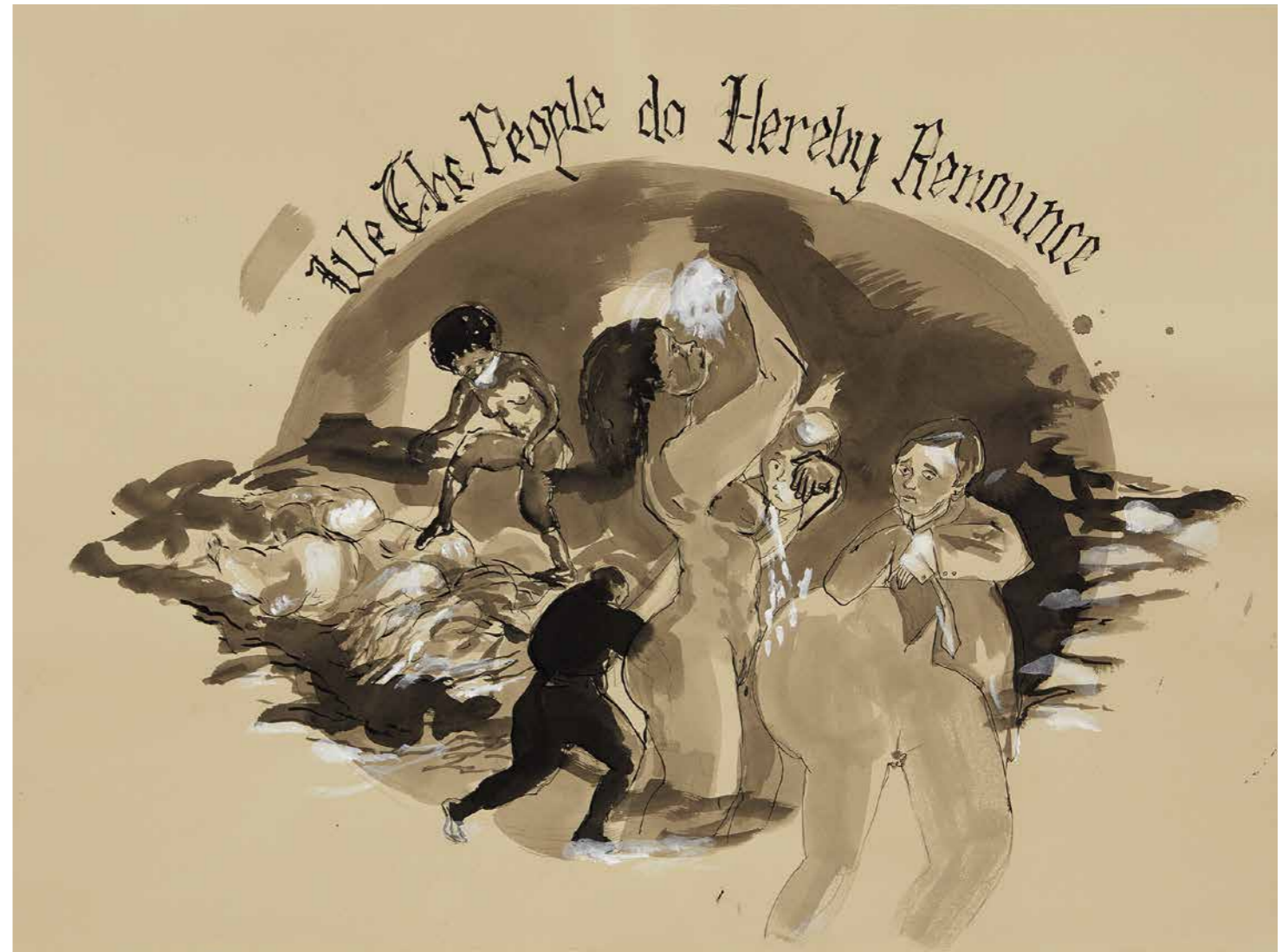
Untitled, 2018

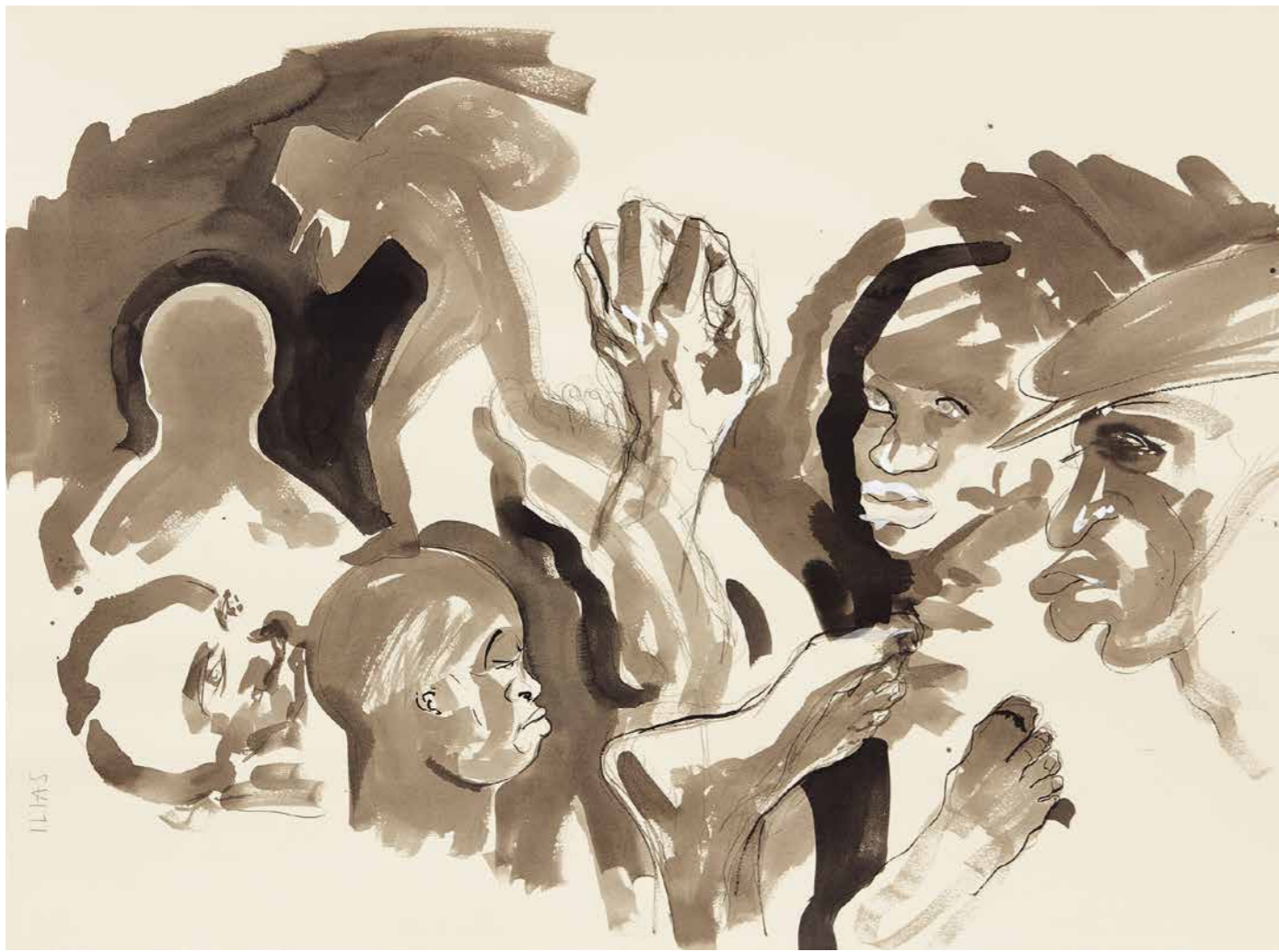


Founder's Document, 2018
Untitled, 2018

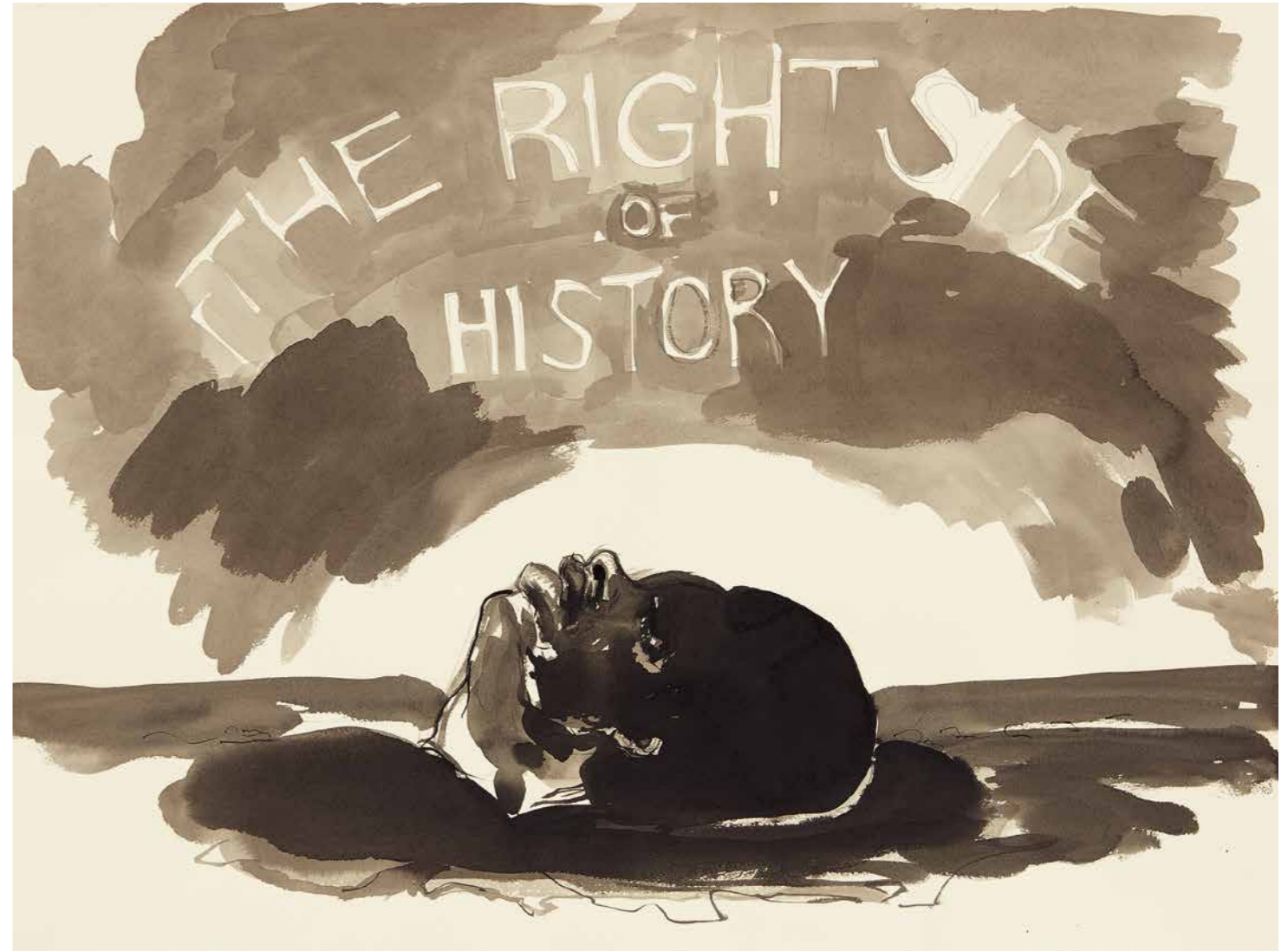


The Red Coats Walk Away And Laugh, 2018
Atl. Sleeper, 2018

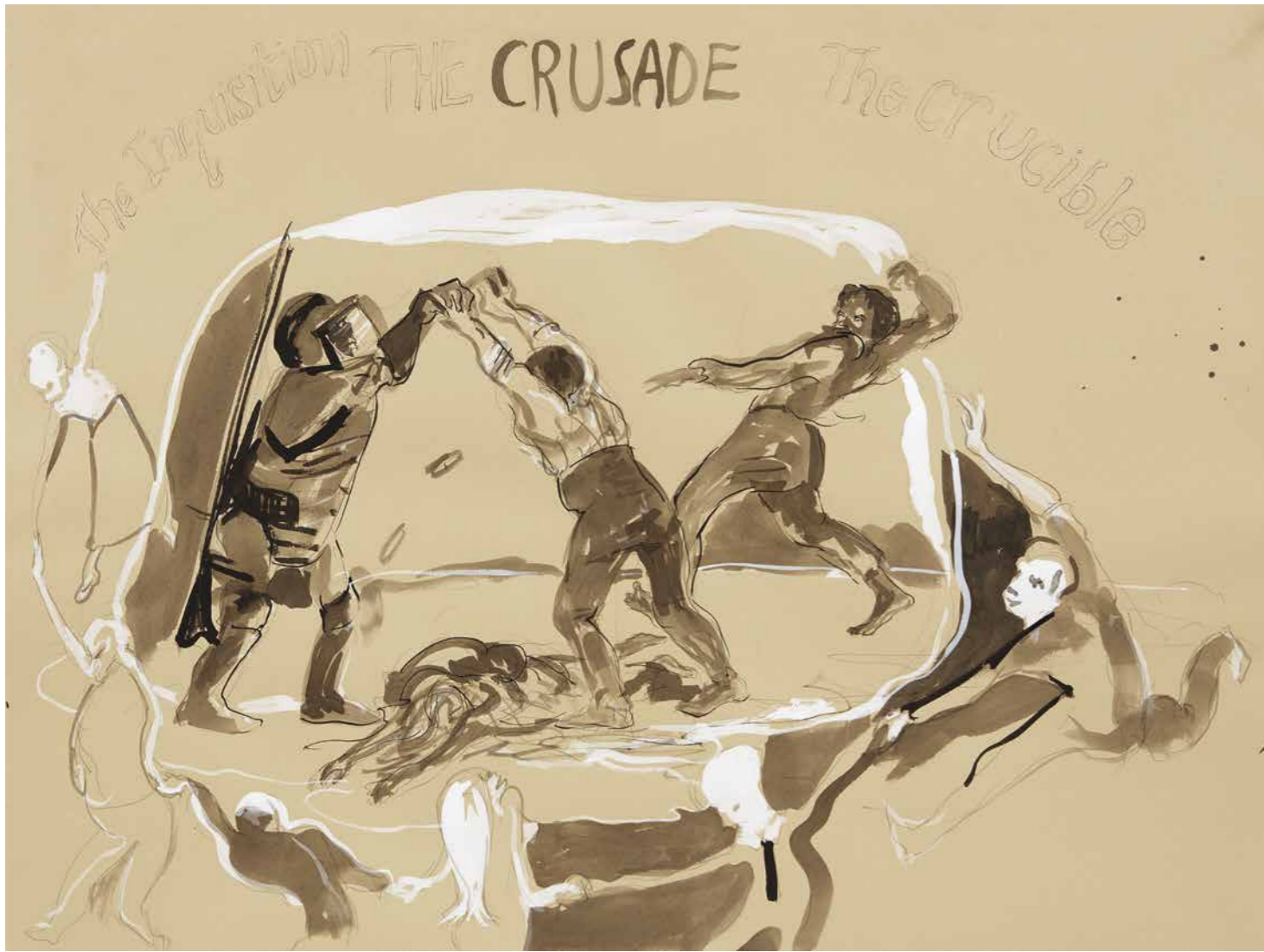




Untitled, 2018
Visions, 2018



The Right Side, 2018



Untitled, 2018



Peg Armed, 2018
Untitled, 2018



The Welcoming Committee, 2018

WELCOMING COMMITTEE



Tempt, 2018



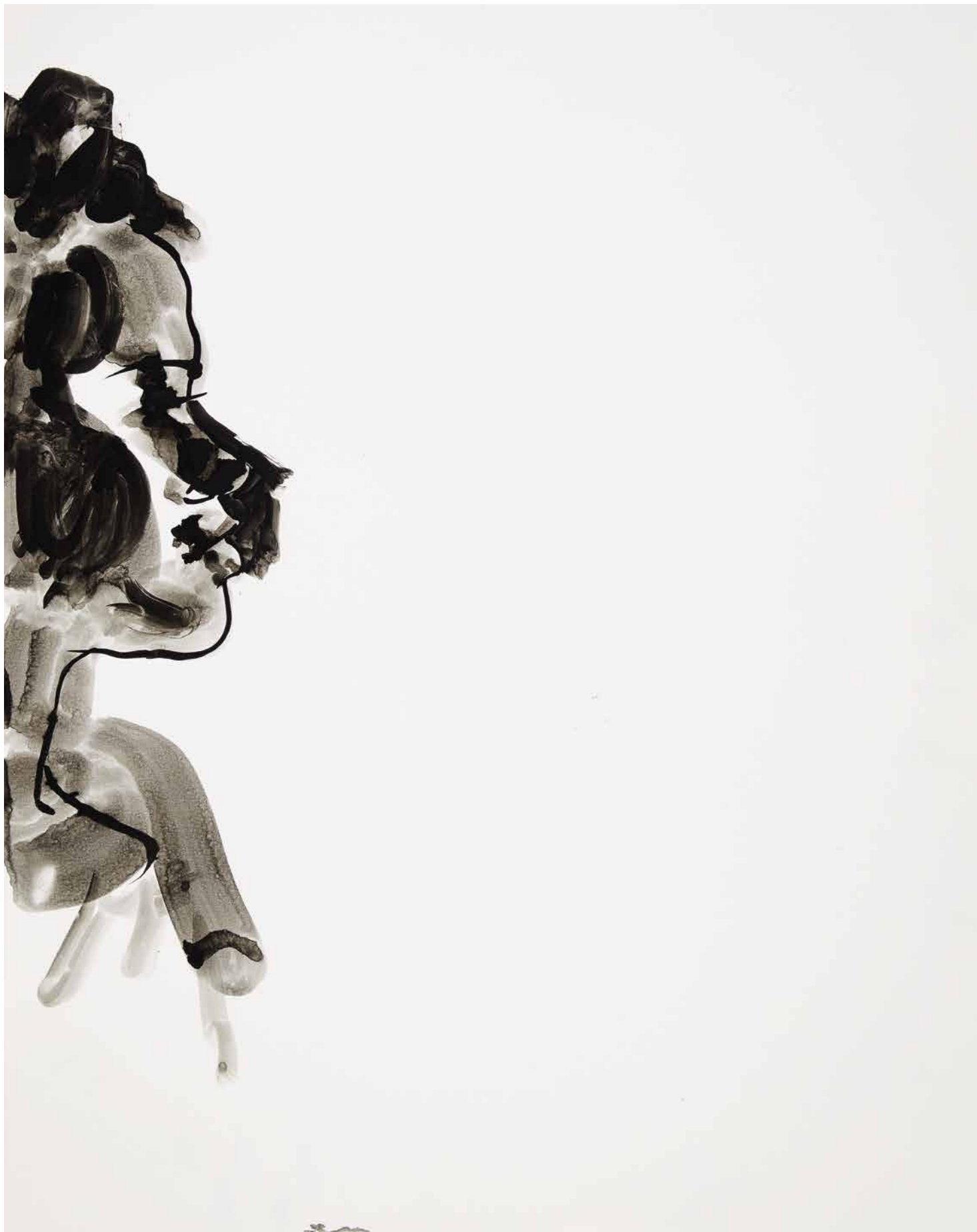
Cotton Rag, 2018
Untitled, 2018













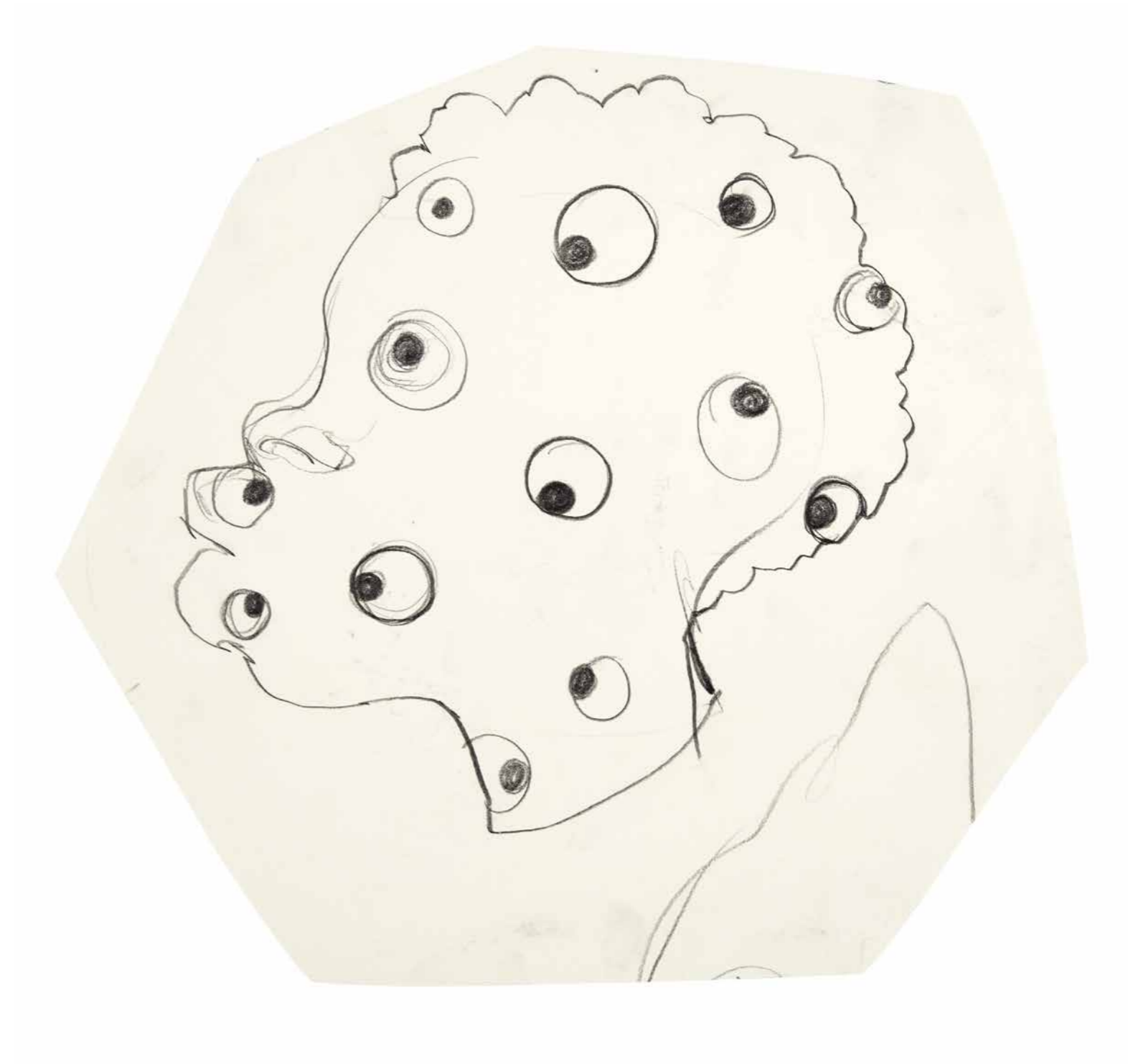












Time to make drawings Time to draw.

love me.

make love to me. sex me up, loverboy.

I was born a man
and became a woman quite by accident. when
I realized I had the biology for it.
this is not i



self port.
as
19th C. Black
Man

10/2/2000

ARTWORK
you will
Love Me
For MAKING
in 50
years.

50 years from Now.

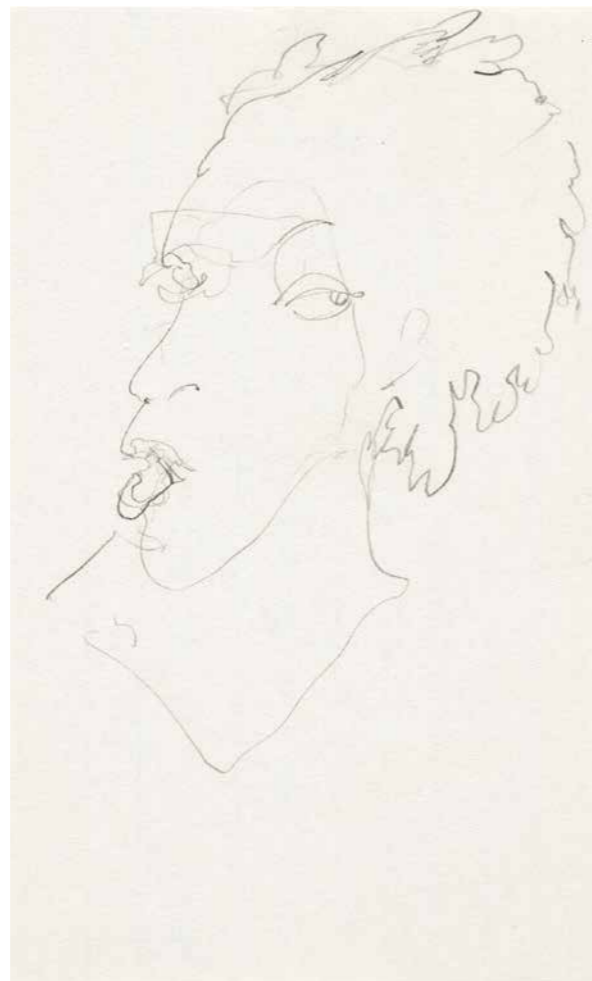


10/2/2000



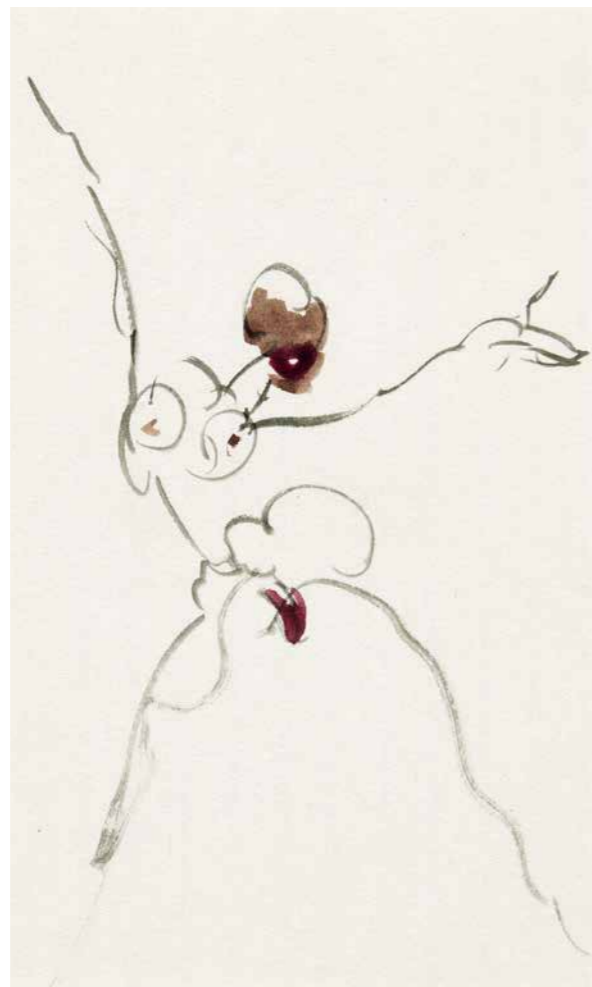
10/2/2000





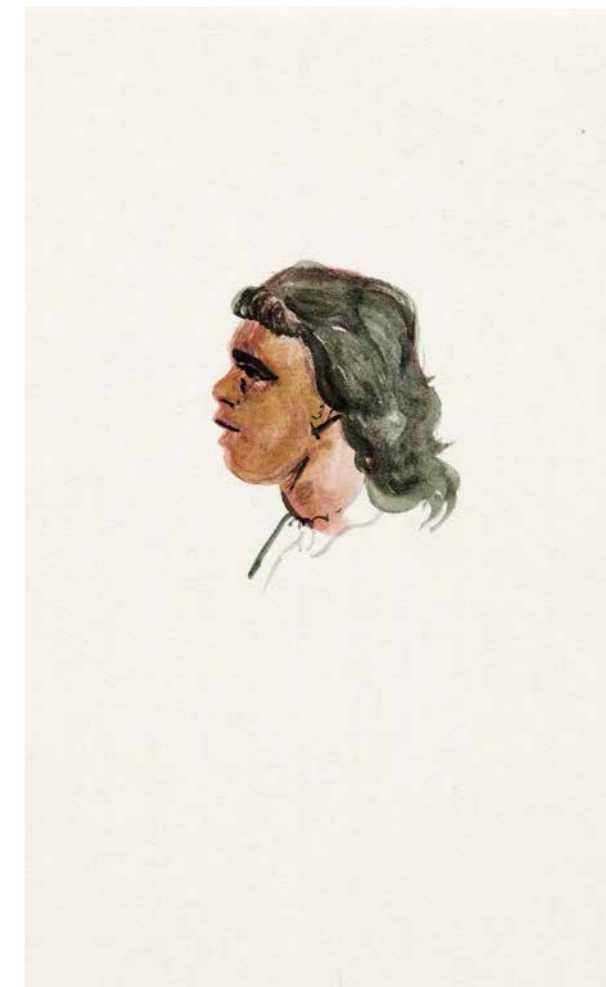
Always Attempting
to
Fill These
Huge Blank
Moments
with AN
External
Form OF
LOVE.

Becomes so
impossible ...



placid on
The outside

Pernicious on
The inside





... less likely,
with every passing
second to
ease myself into
A new project -
A new manner a
New
MODE
Perhaps I relish
melancholy
to
what Avail?

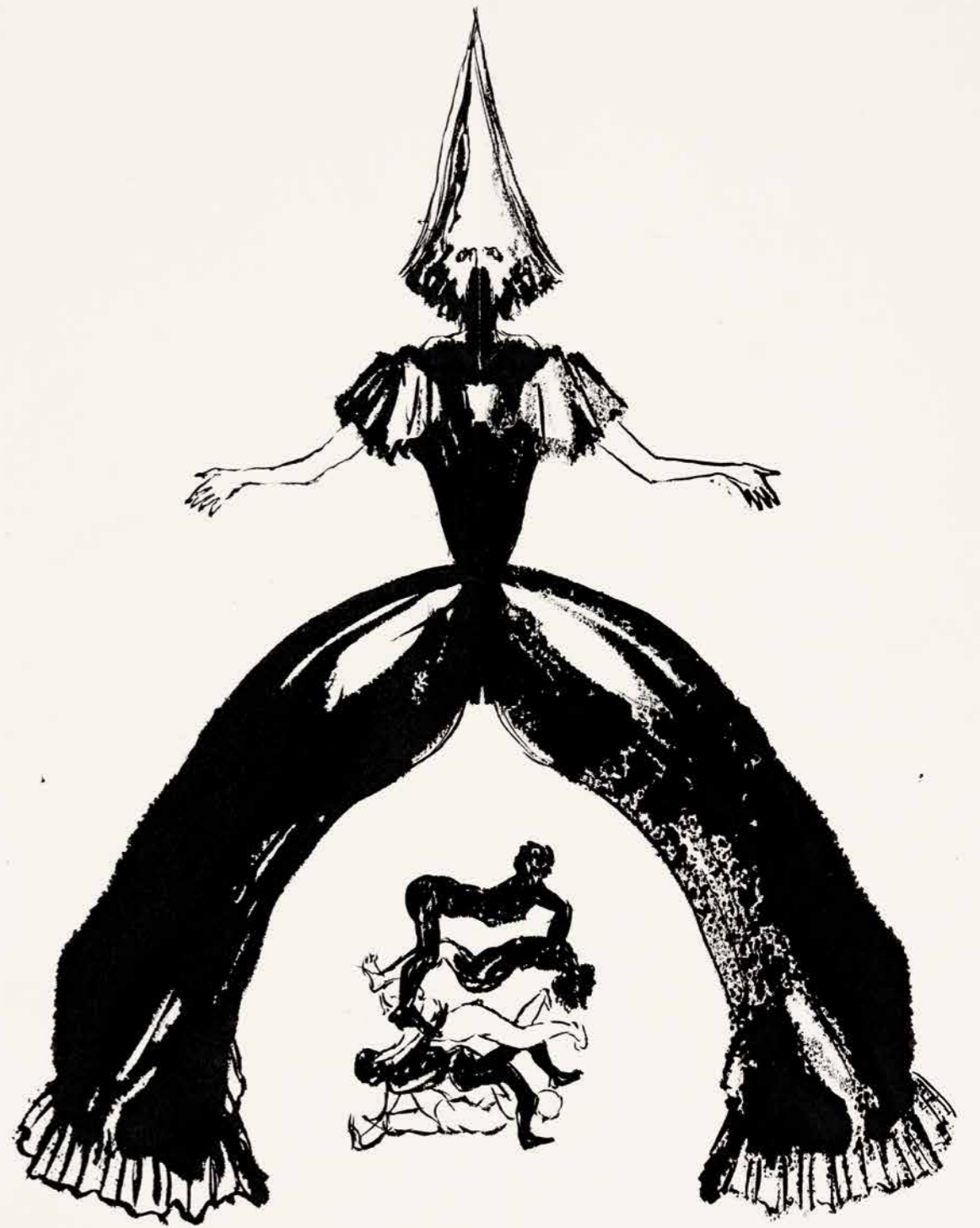
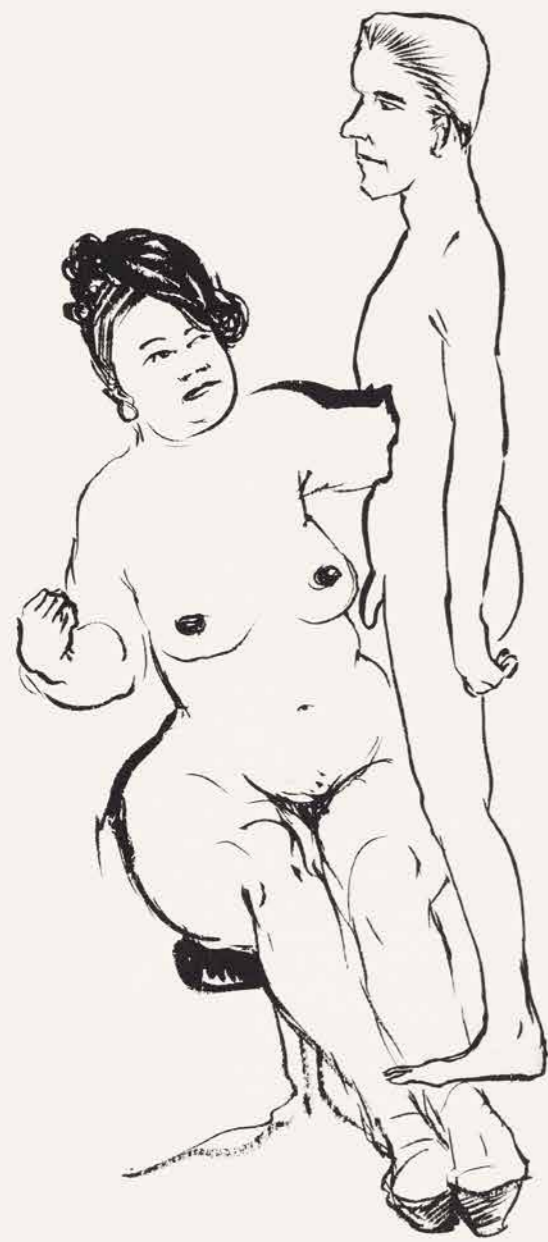


FREEDOMS
I enjoy
AS AN EMANCIPATED
Negress™
product



I BAKE A CAKE FOR THE DEPARTED
MY ANCESTORS REWARD ME EVERY OTHER DAY





Common



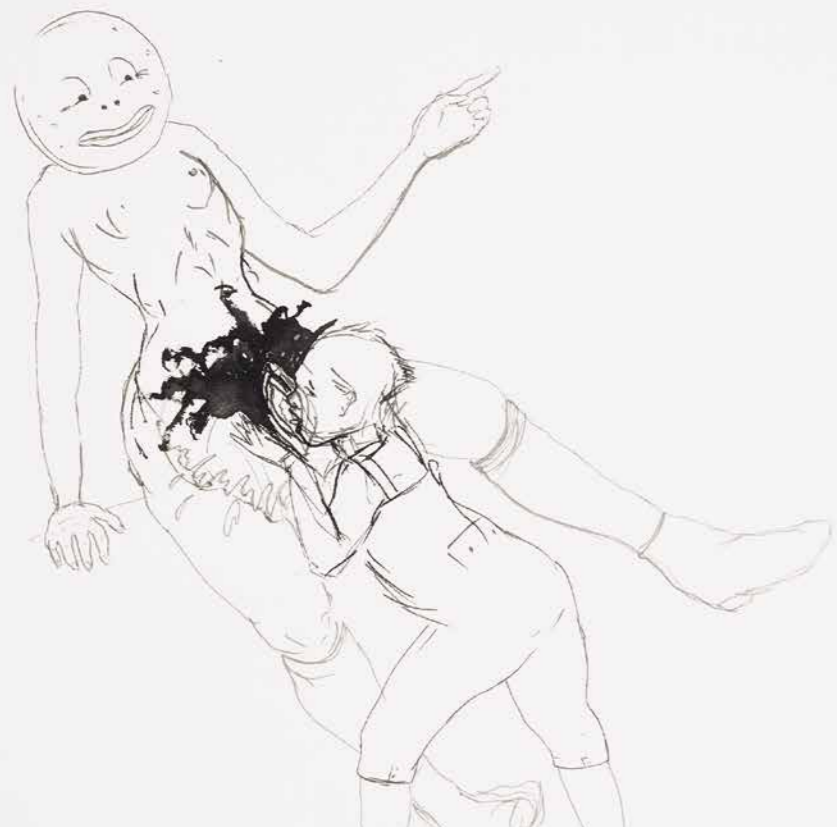
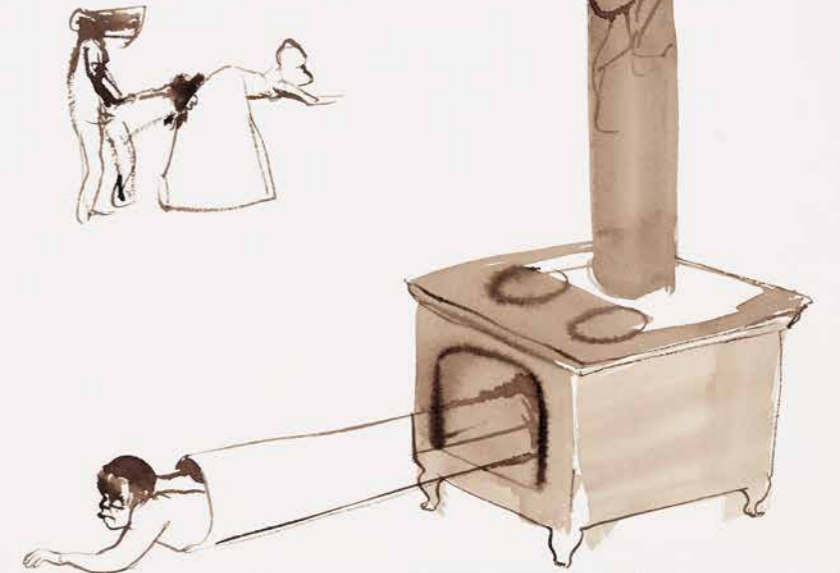


fig 1.

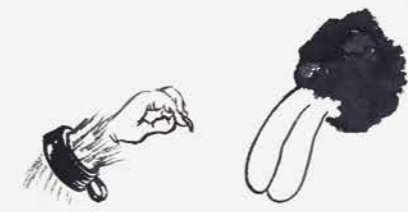




Biological Woman



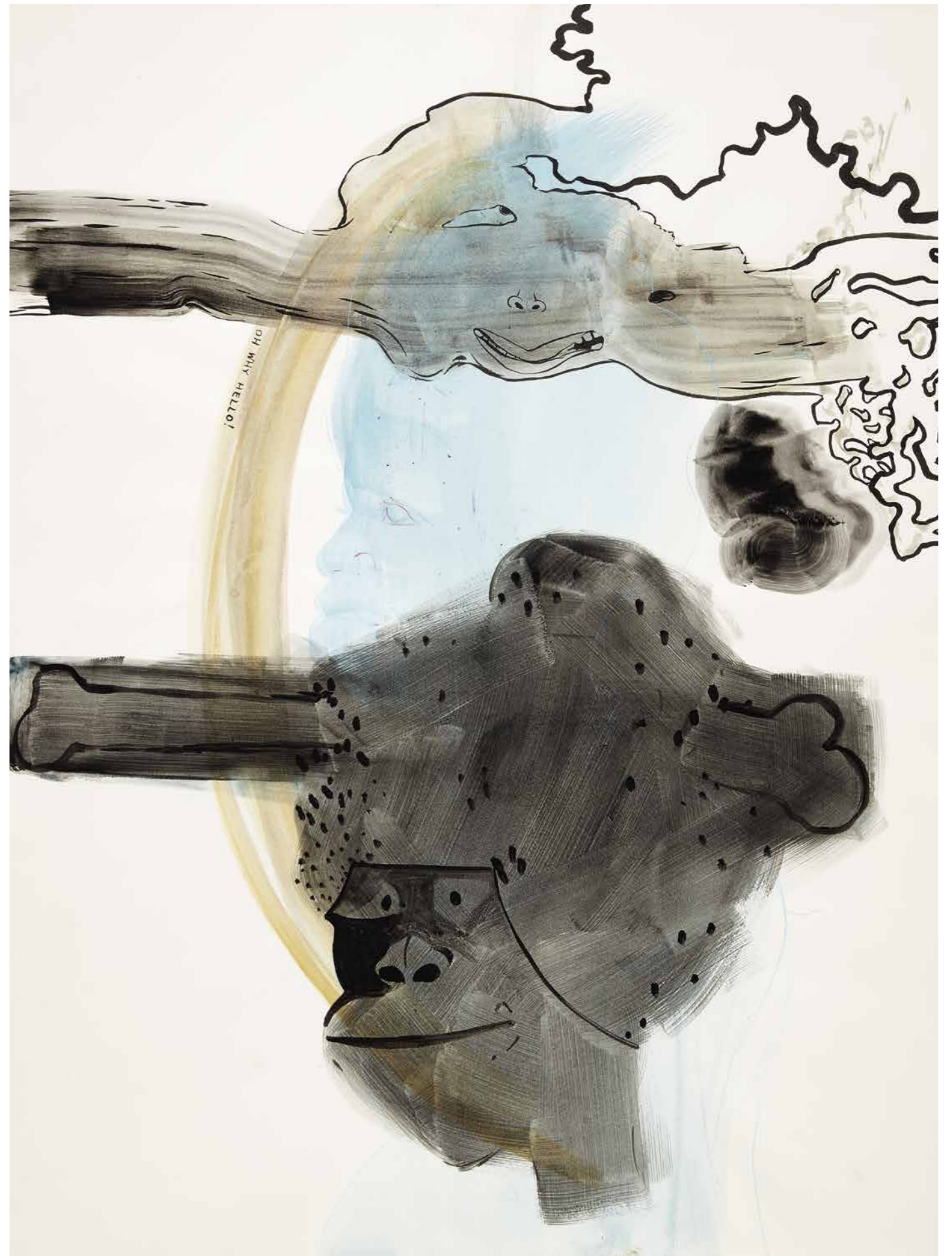
Biological Woman Fig. 2

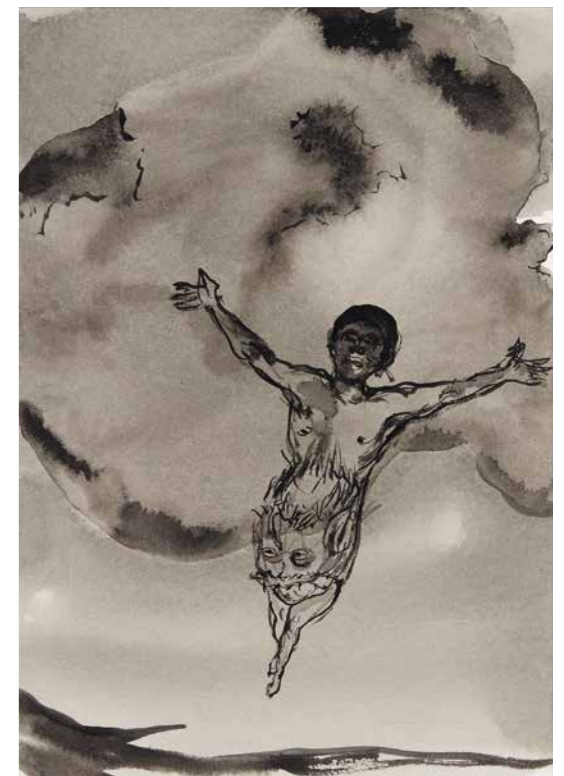
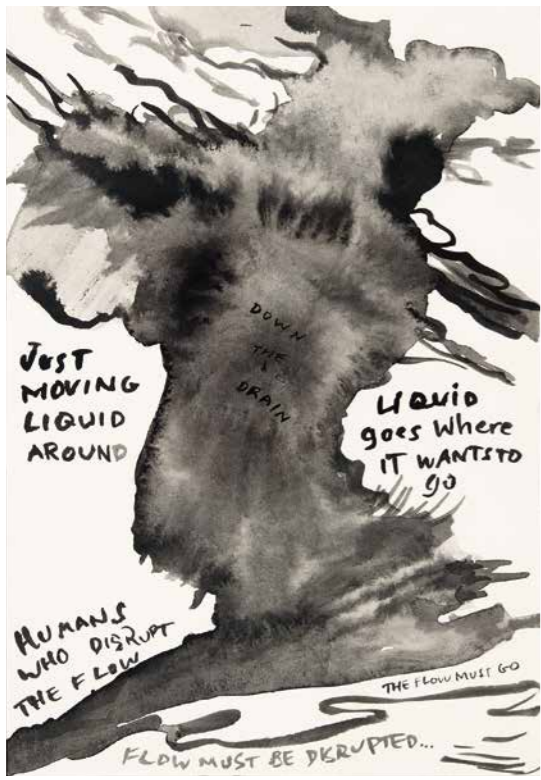


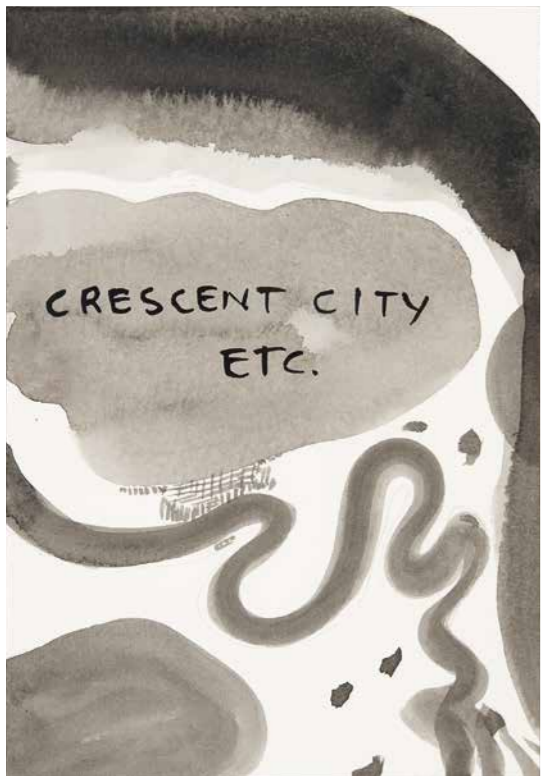
Sadistic Boys on Killing Spree.

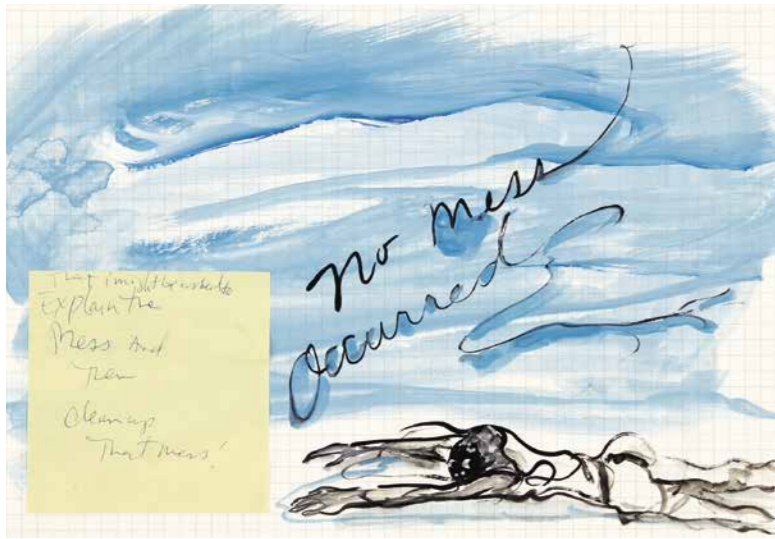
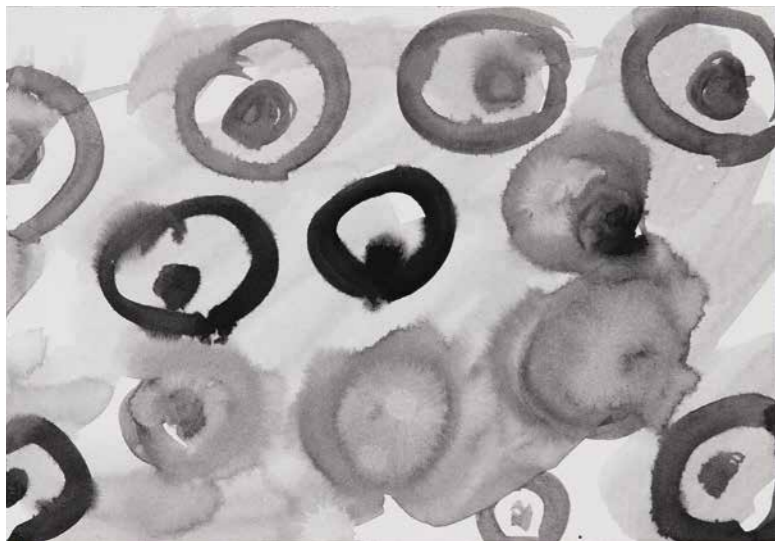






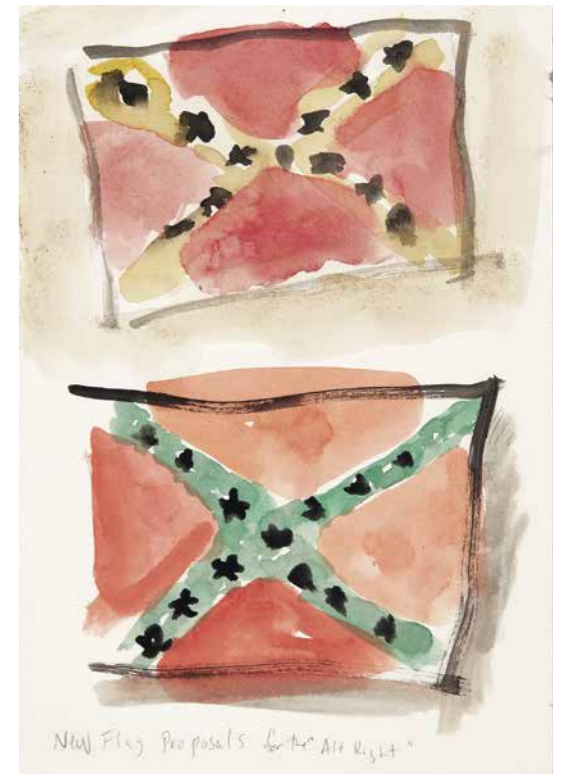
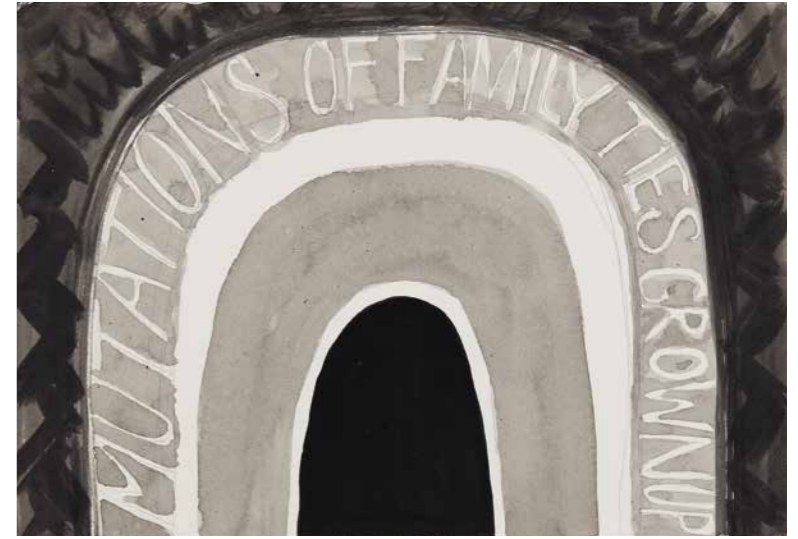














Book

(give the People what they
WANT WITH YOUR SWEET
HONEY CUNT)

Hollow Pathetic
Women who Risk All for
love and parties. Live for
today. The promise of freedom
in an afterlife is Sunday's
news. Reality ^{sits} curdled in
her Mouth on Saturday eve.



of course it's romantic,
courtly love between apparent
equals. his Imperial profile
her regal bearing.
One Nigger + One Jew = some future
Divorce

What is the WORD these
Nappy Headed Ho's have for
you? When you spy in your
rearview mirror their collectively
curled upper lip, flared nostril
does it flood your cunt with
envy or dread?

fat lost black chick
Cunt all exposed stretched
to the maximum. eyes.
Set back puffed in her obese
head. Words slur abrasively
against tongue, slick with drink
Lubricating his rough touch.

Most Black Women
Will force you to Avert
your gaze. meeting
it with a hard stare
which contains generations
of Corporeal abjection.

black women mostly
Waddle their lard-asses into view
Pulling a pushcart loaded with
broken Possessions. if they
are poor it is not your problem.

Mostly Black Women
in this country are painted
Whores with a mean streak
the rest are sainted
Mulattoes

one of those negro wraiths
who haunt the street with no reward
at having lived so long. Woman with
headscarf to at least disguise the
tufted, thinning hair. Sits on a stoop. as if
waiting. renders self iconic.

"Negro woman sits on a stoop, as if waiting"

These white fucks always
hooting and hollering to have me
validate their disgust WITH Black
Popular Culture. I reply: I am only a
liquid pigment on a solid ground. I cannot
obey your command. Hear This!

I often stare at the High round asses
of the young men whose baggy pants
have slipped deliciously down. I stare
at everything

The conjugal bed. Semen and
Sweat stained. braided hair extensions,
loosened by exertion, writhe, like
broken antennae. still alive, but
dying for more

Mostly Black Women Suffer
an ancient curse called Nigger
which plays a major role in uprooting
families and damning souls to perpetuate
hell on earth. Every black woman in
Congo has been violently raped such that
it has become normalized. Many black
children will confuse murder for love.

like there's no tomorrow,
Crack foots the bill.

American Patriots contort
the old excuses.

Always one baby born in a dumpster
somewhere.

Psyche misremembers Eros in his
smoky room, squatting on floor

TO CUT A BODY OUT
OF NOWHERE.

TO CONJURE UP A DEMON
AND WORSHIP HIS FRIVOLITY.

His black air
TO Whip that ass
Show him who's boss

innocence just prior to its
corruption.

The look in her child's eyes
before you stick it to her
untouched pussy

She will always do your bidding until
she finds your flaw

Country women and girls standing
in the equatorial heat. blazing Sun
determines the Skin, Pace and Gaze.
The Patience of Prey a-waiting your
toothy Caress on hind flank.
Waiting for a bus which rarely
arrives

Wish: another good review
Result: Mystified stares from a
Non comprehending public
Desire: a better body of work to follow

Little Black Babies

(will be the only babies left)

But I am Not a Racist!
I am only a Painting about
racist Longing. a desire
for enmity stronger than the
will to survive. Paintings like
me Honor our OWN LAWS
and logic and are freer than
you ever WILL BE.

This Disheveled African-American
Woman, overweight, yes. Well, she was
wearing this loose top, and you could see
her, you know and her, gentleman friend

~~They got on the train and were
pushy and obnoxious they looked weird
wanted all the attention they made us all
shiver and bristle for their lack of
civility and over all stench of backwater
aggression~~

Trying to find
a reason to work
figuratively

exposure. Dying from.
See: mass murder, genocide,
Lynching - tied to a tree

See: Striptease, POLE DANCER

OR: INTERNALLY DISPLACED
PERSONS

Do you perpetuate
Justice by Denying our Right to
Spectacle?

CHOOSING WORDS OVER
BODIES

When it is bodies who want to be
Seen?

Freedom is a quick buck
Nature is a quick buck
God is a quick buck
History is a dead buck

My ATLANTA

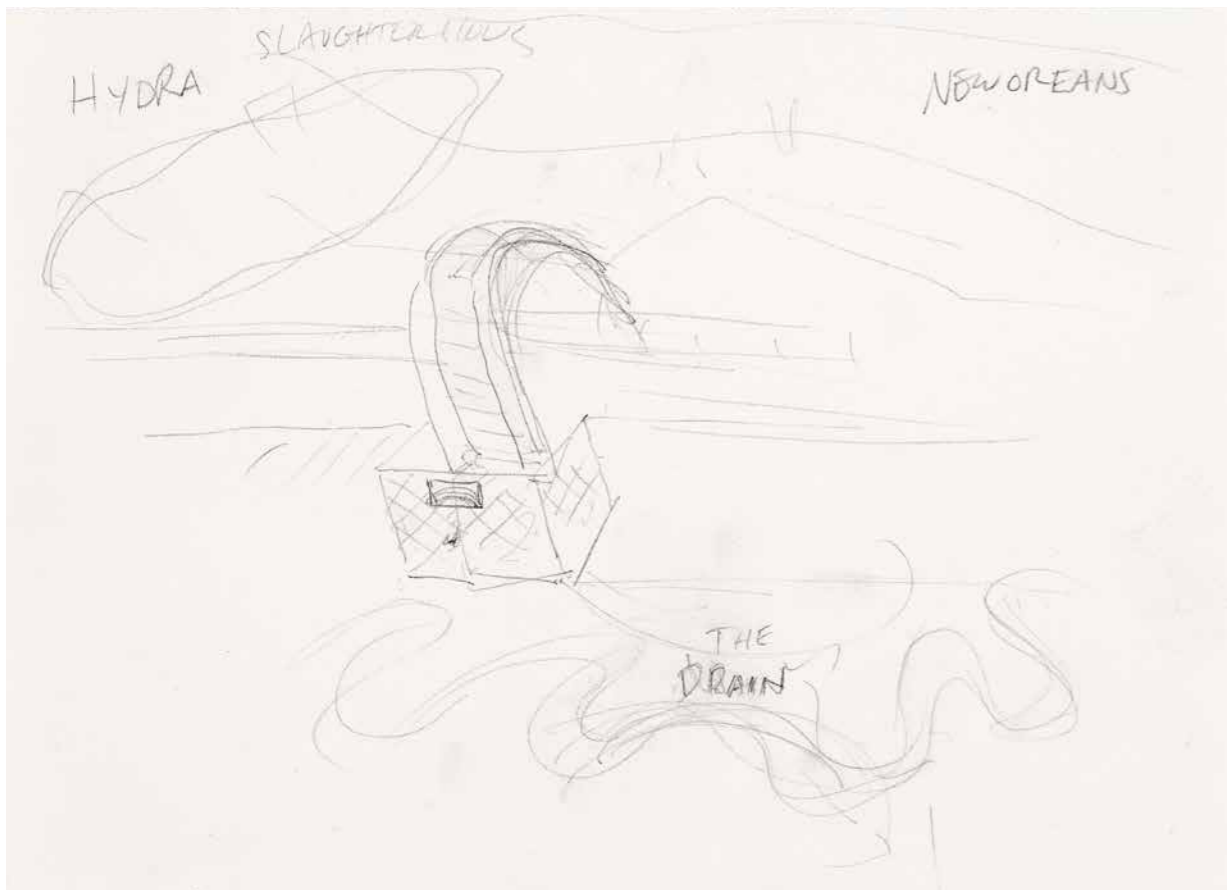
This Painting does not
EXIST AS Real Speech
as lynching does not
EXIST as Real Justice

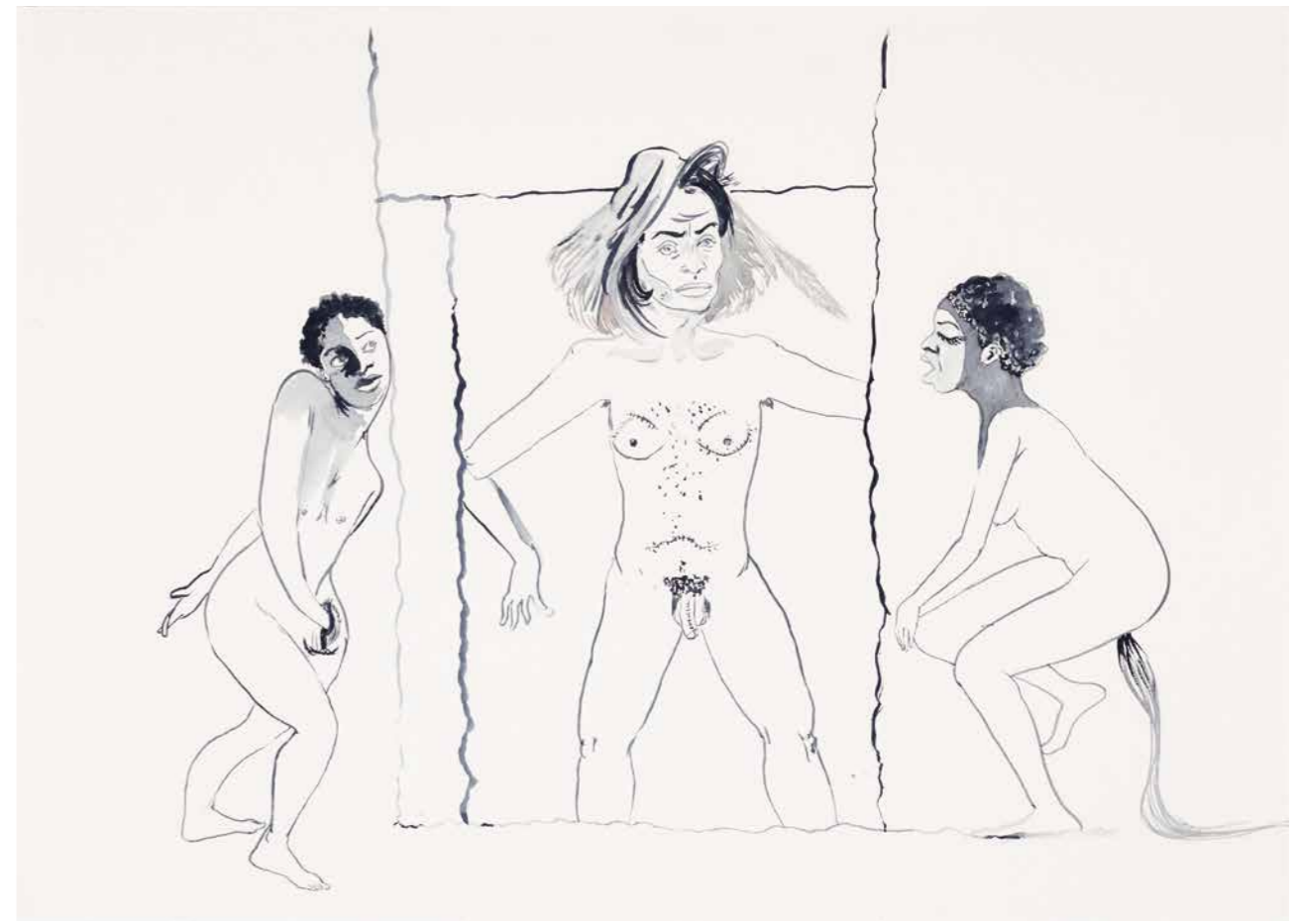
Baby. Hey Daddy.
Sweet little girl
Mama. Sugar Mama
Knows how to rock and roll
Sister.

But by then it will not
matter if she lives or dies











Barack Obama Elected 44th
President of The United
States.





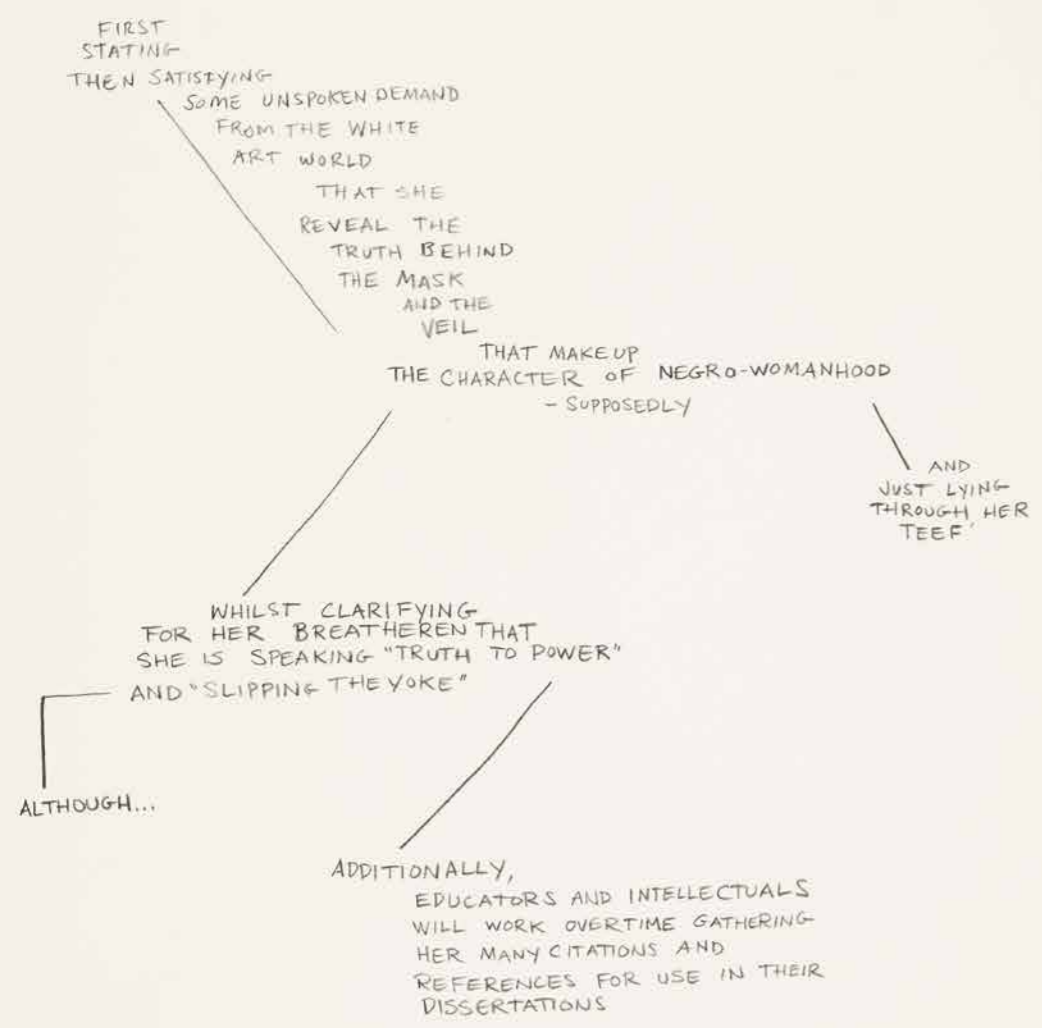


WE DONT DO THOSE THINGS HERE

(Algiers Point, LA: see: Massacre)

THE
BETTER ANGELS OF OUR NATURE
FLEE AT THE RISING FLOODWATERS

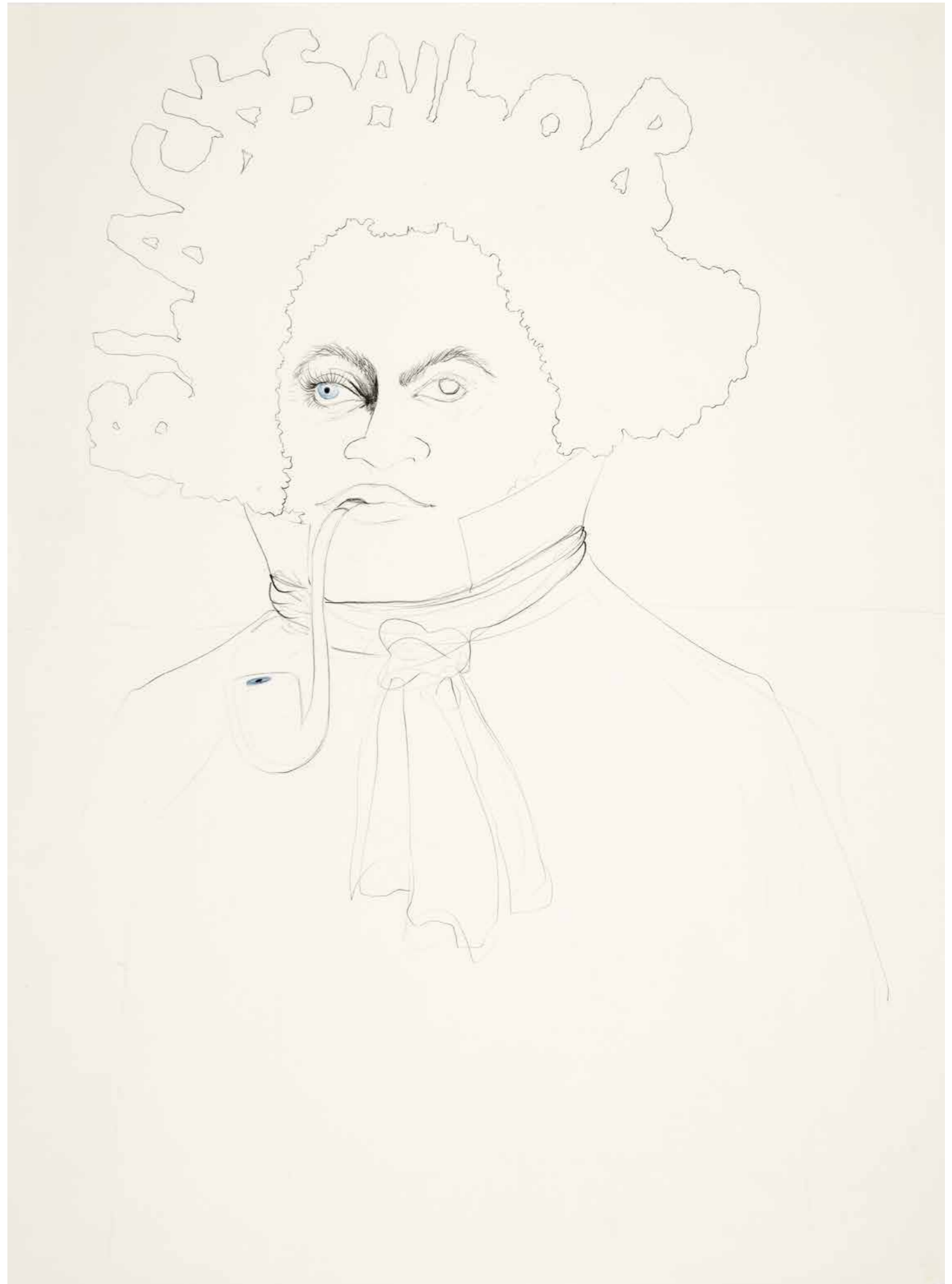




NEXT. THIS PROBLEM OF PRIORITIZING WORDS OVER IMAGES - ESPECIALLY SINCE YOU CAN DRAW FIGURATIVELY - AND LITERALLY!

CUTE. HAHA. CUTE.













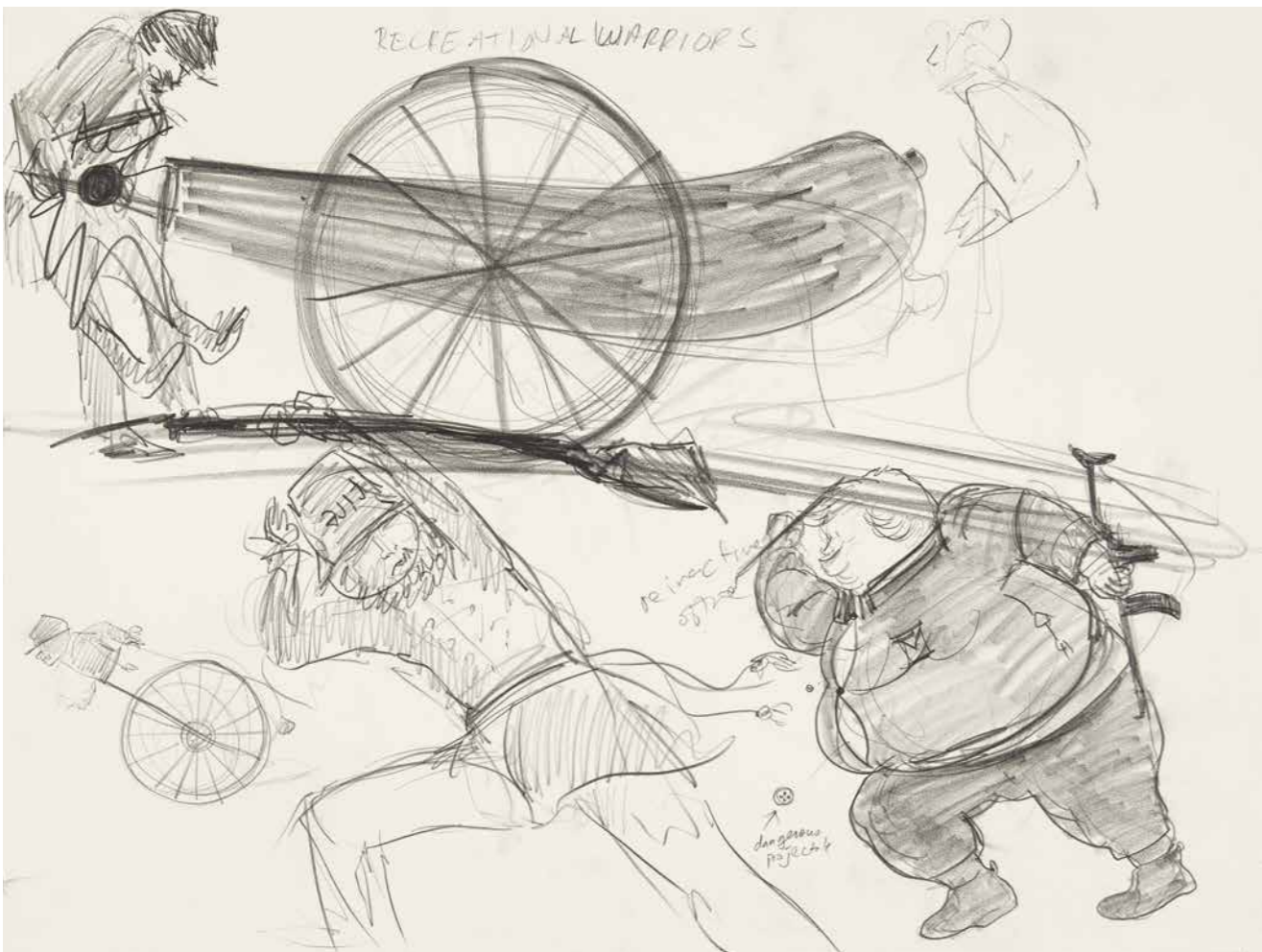








CONSTRAINTORS AND SABOTEURS



RECREATIONAL WARRIORS

re-injection of the
dangerous projects







WAR IS
WOMAN
AND
WAR IS
WOMAN
WAR
AND
WOMAN IS
WAR

**IF YOU ARE
SEEKING
CLUES
TO A CLOSED
AND BLACK
INTERIOR**

LOOK NO FURTHER.



**EVERYTHING
YOU DO
IS A WORK
OF
SINGULAR GENIUS
AND YOU WOULD BUILD
EMPIRES
IF IT WERE
WORTH THE TROUBLE
OF
SUPPRESSING
ALL THE PEOPLE
ALL OF THE TIME**

ALL OF THE TIME

THE PEOPLE

suppress

WORTH THE TROUBLE

IT WOULD BE

EMPIRES

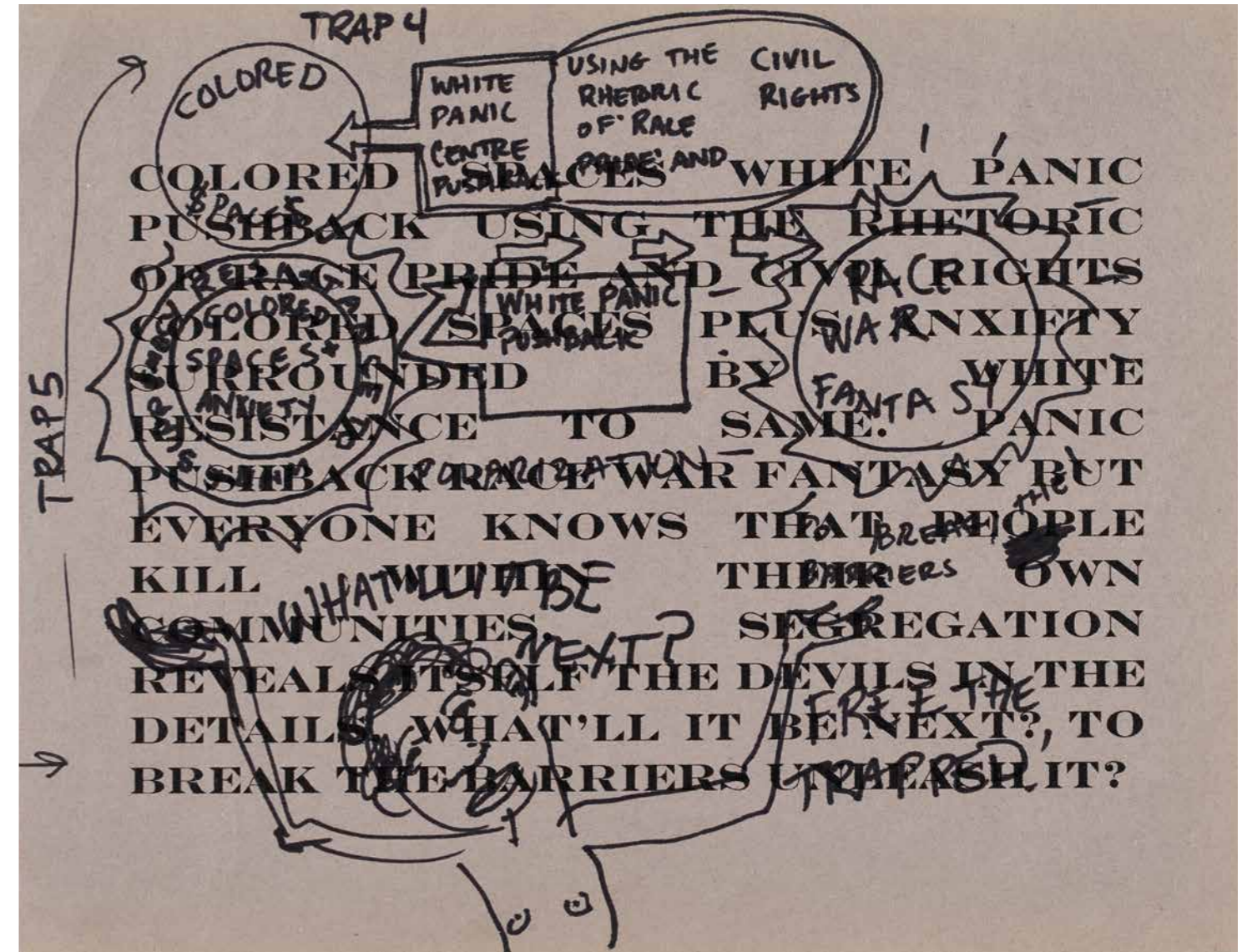
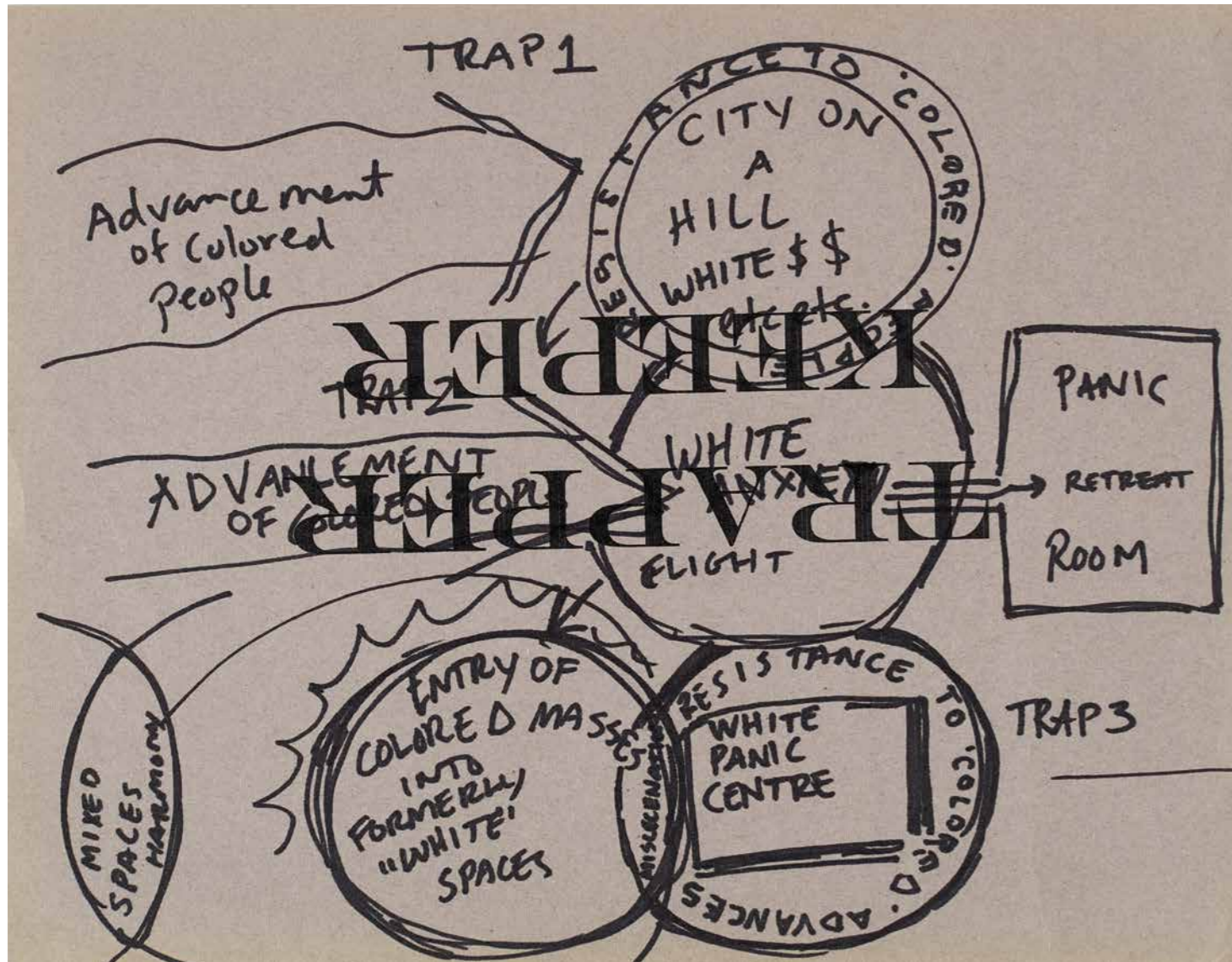
and you would

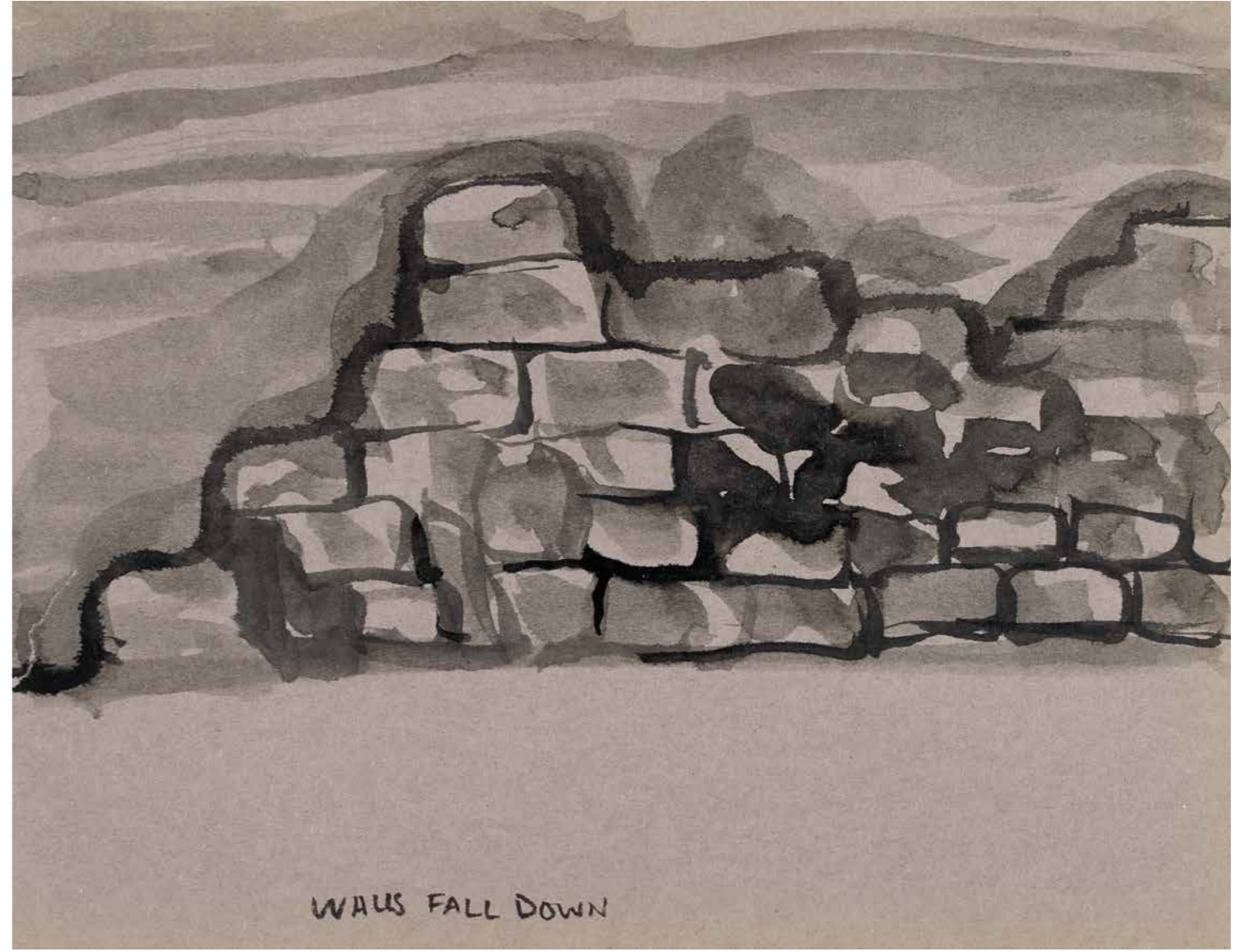
STRAVE & GENIUS

IS A WORK

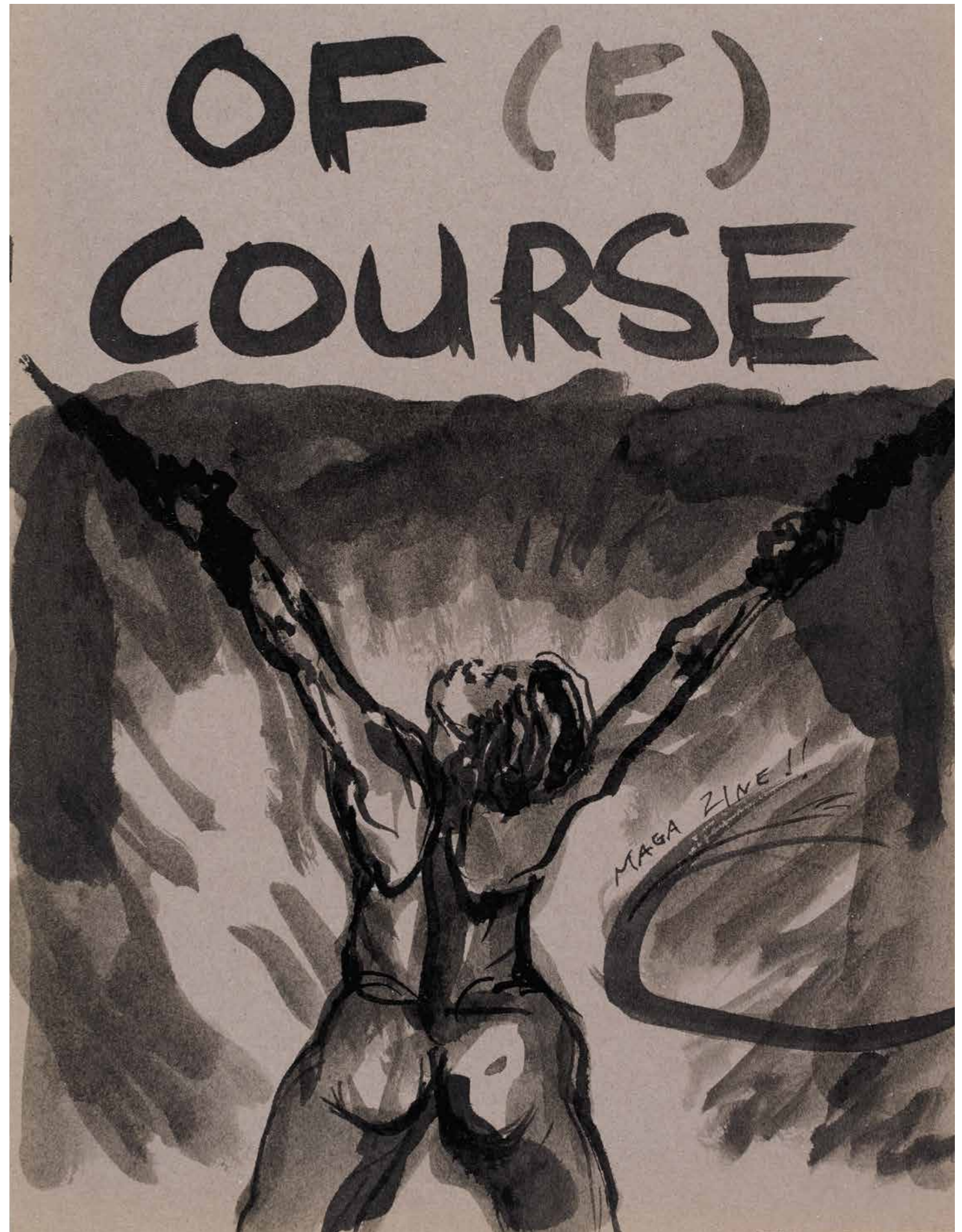
DO

EVERYTHING YOU

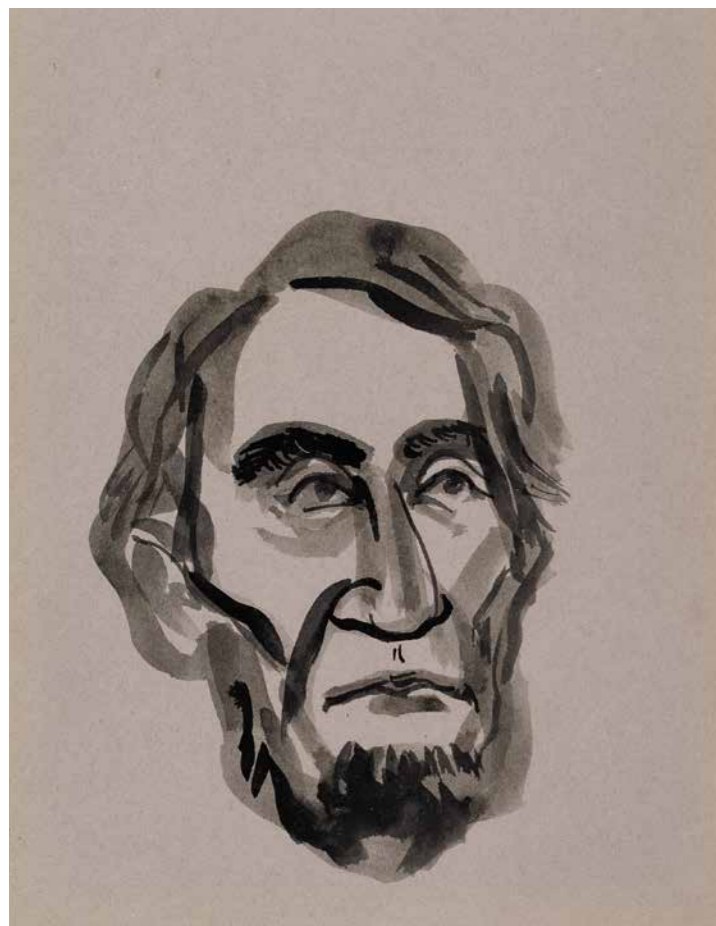
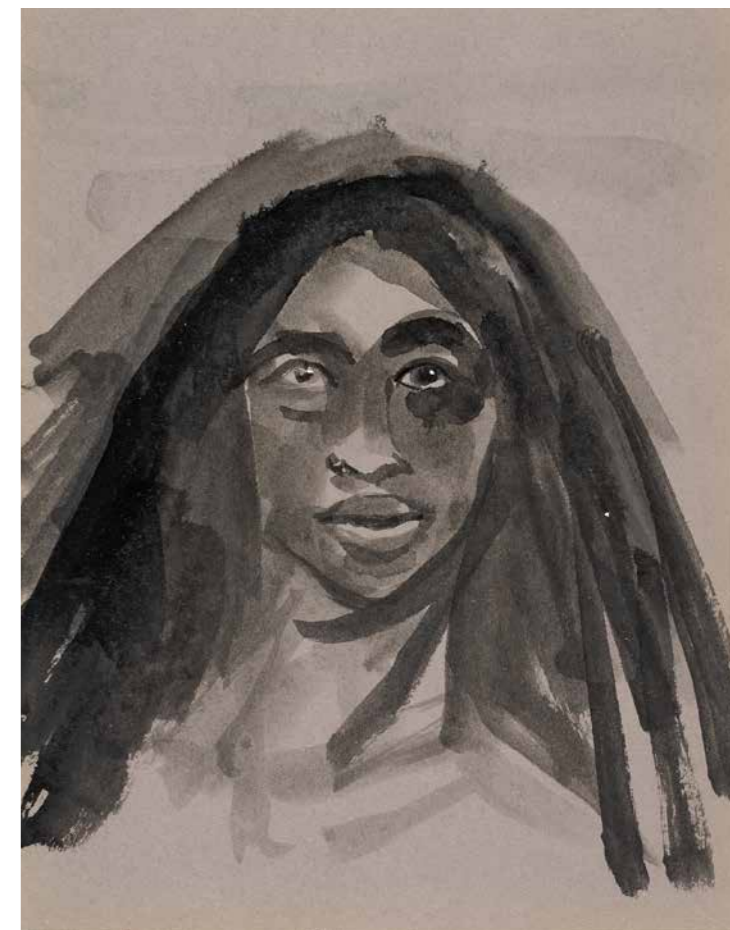
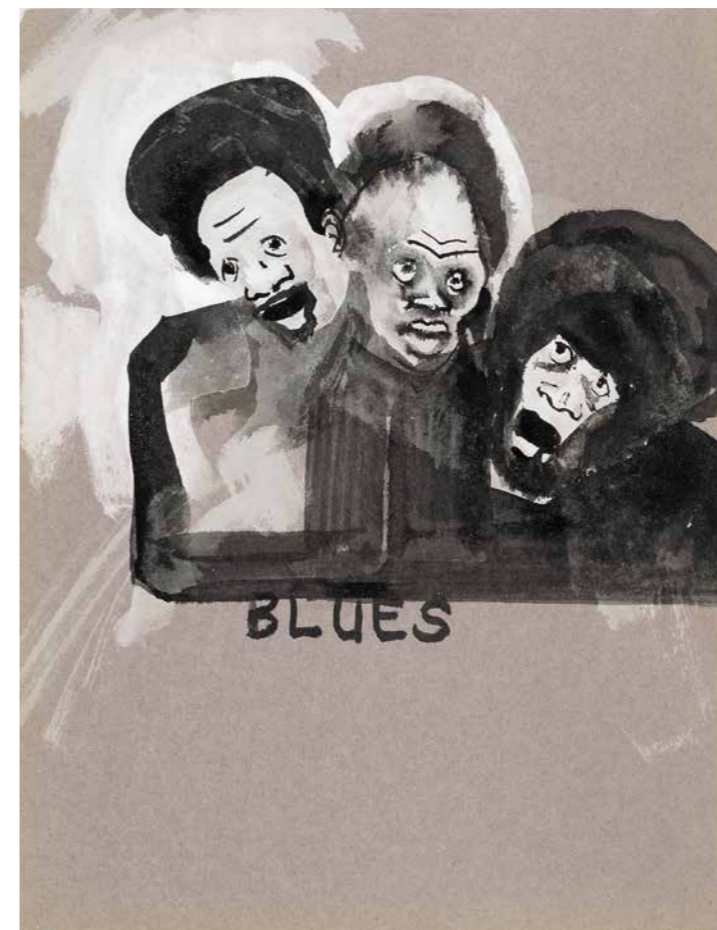
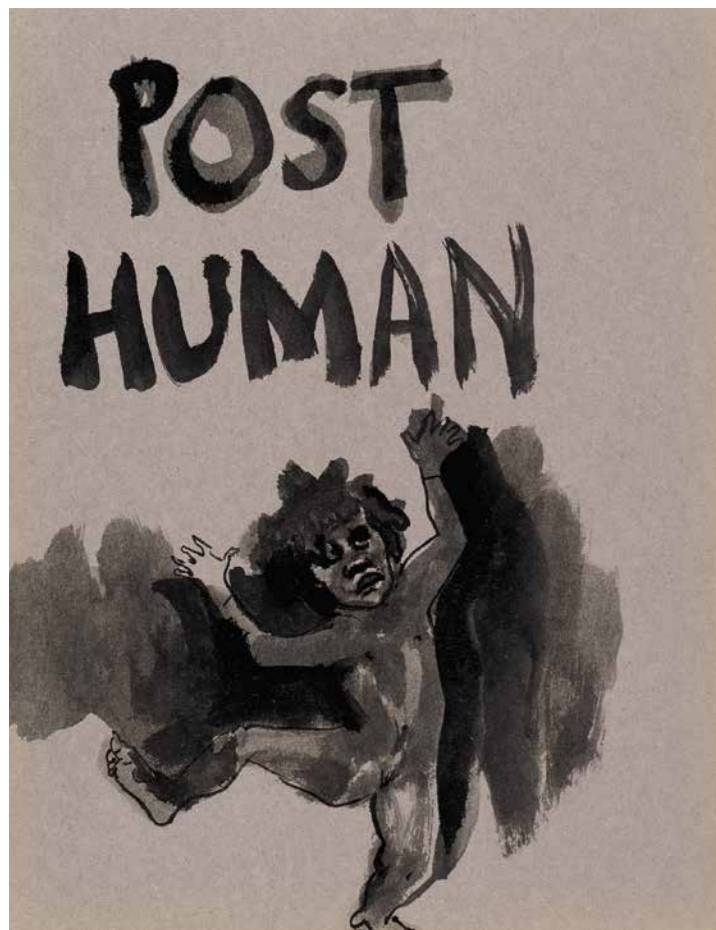


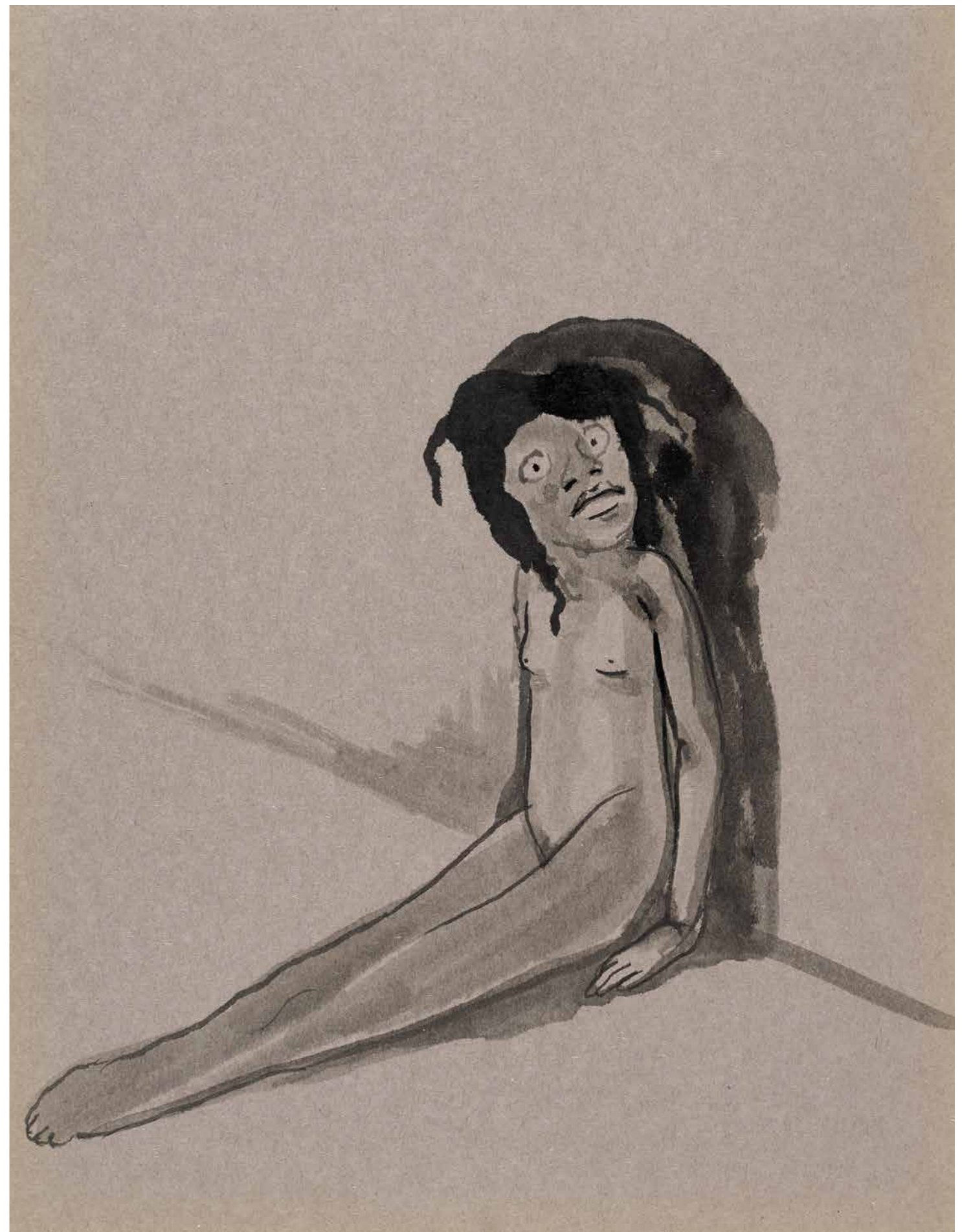
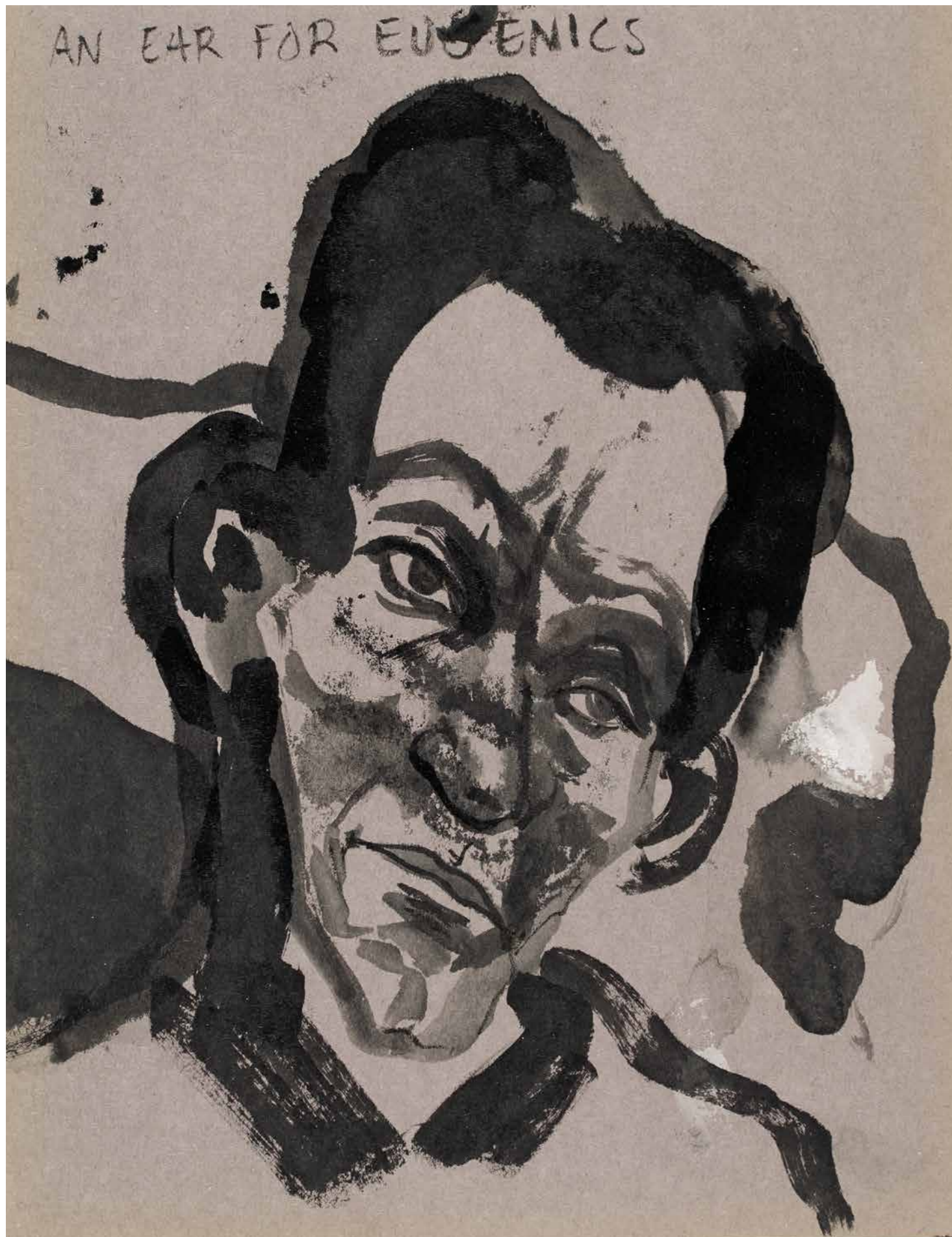


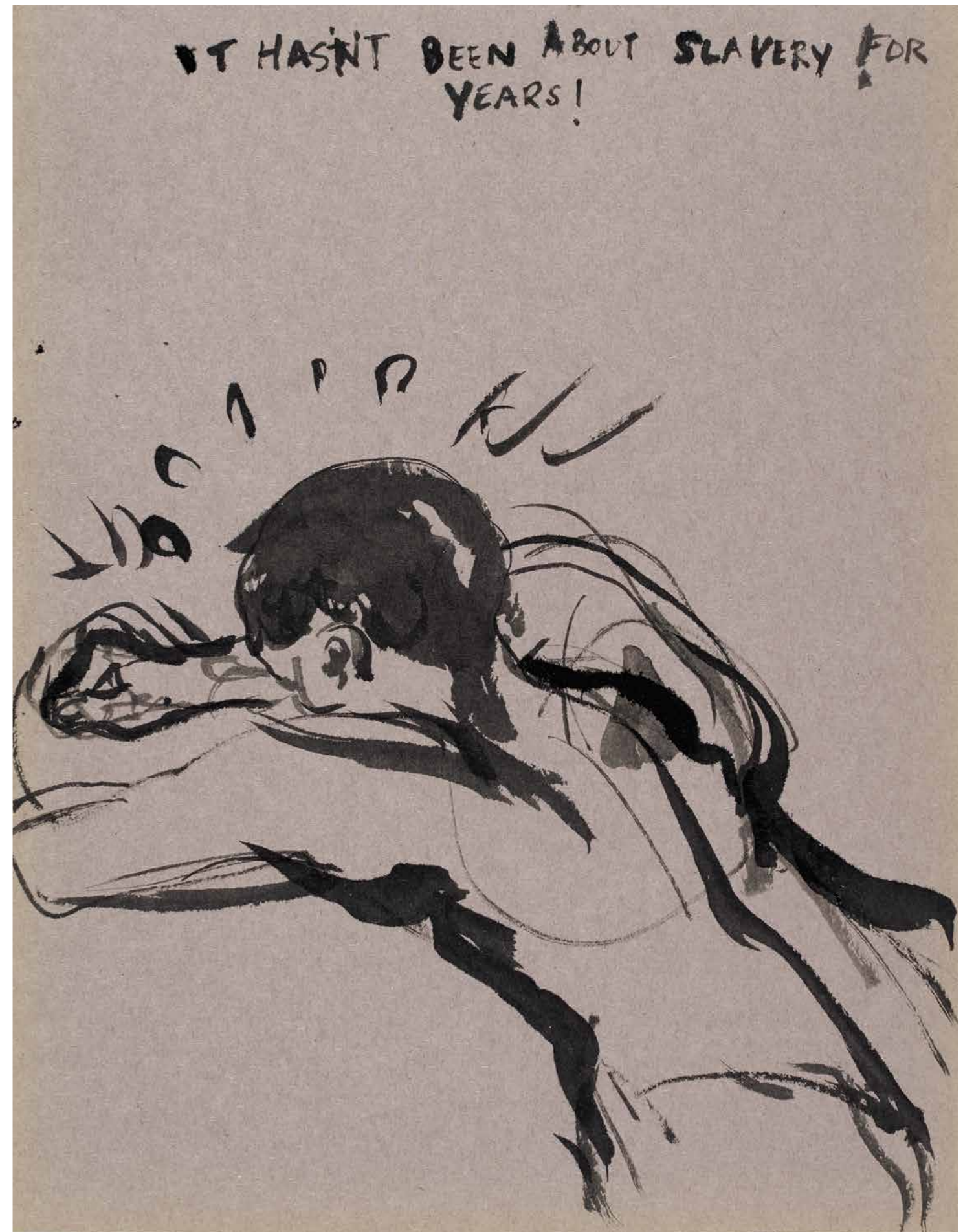


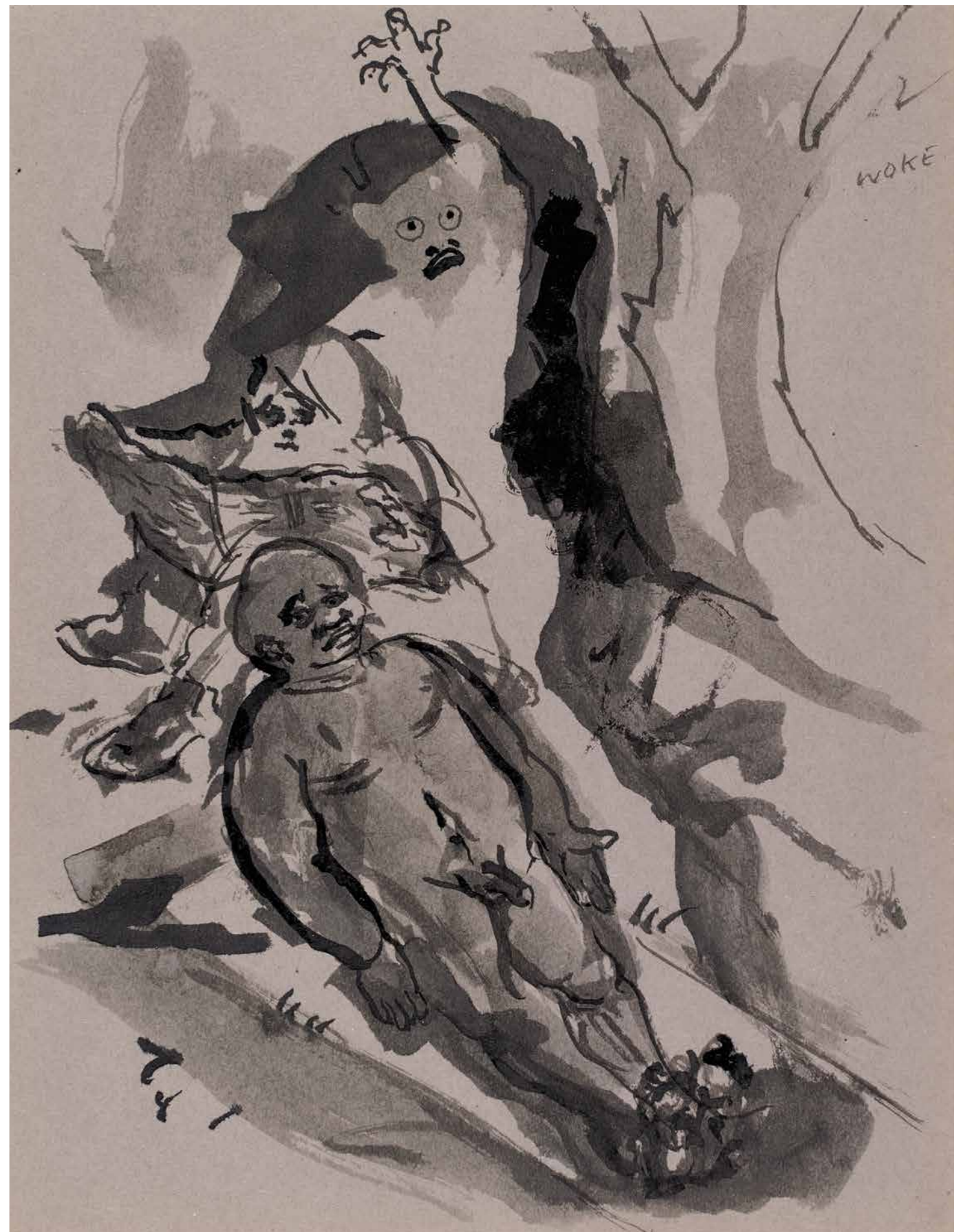


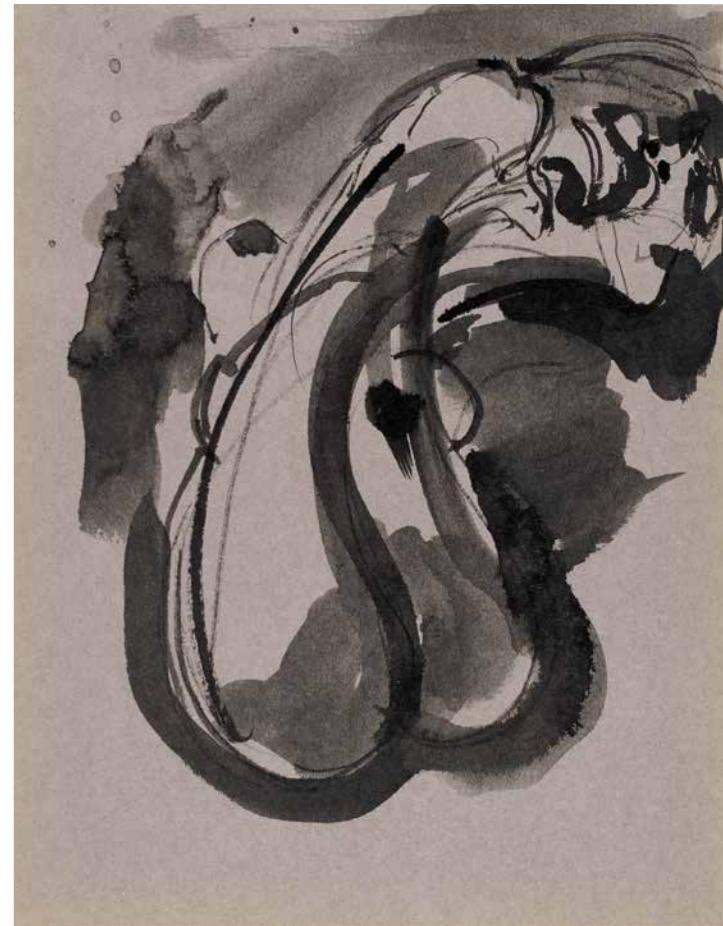












WE KNEW OURSELVES BEFORE THE END OF RACE



SAFE SUIT

IT'S WAR!
MEN AND WOMEN
WHITE VS BLACK

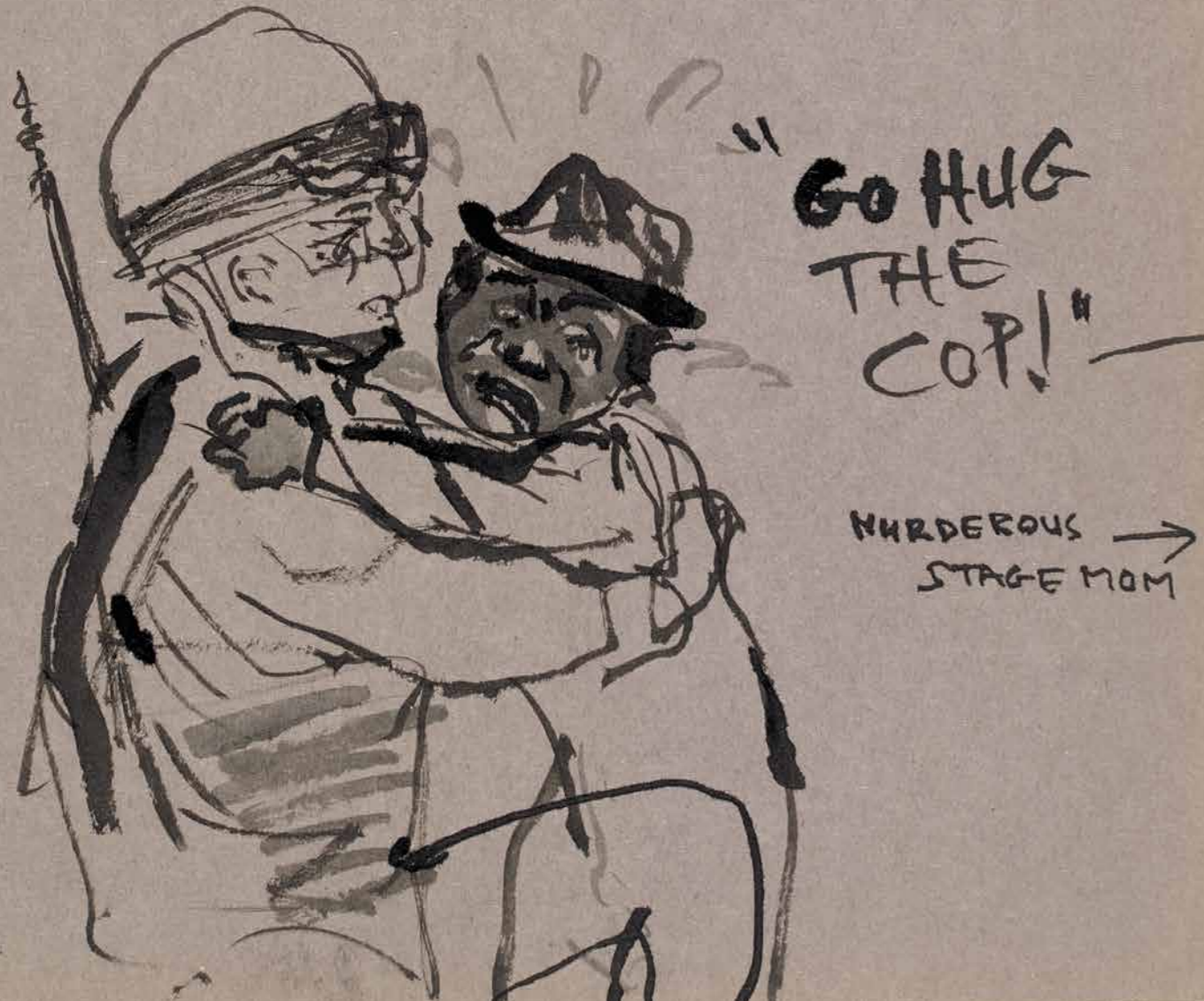


AND THE NON-BINARY COP-OUT





CURRENT EVENTS







NOTHING
NOT EVEN
RESISTANCE
TO
ATROCITIES





SAVE +
PROTECT
ABUSERS

LOVE THEM
MERCIFULLY

GIVE THANKS
THE LIMITS THE
SET

NOTHING IN YOUR
PAST MATTERS

PAINT
WILL
NOT
SAVE YOU
TORTURERS
LOVE TO
PAINT
ITS TRUE!
THE EXQUISITE
PAIN OF IT!



USUALLY
WHEN
MURDERERS
PAINT THEY
SETTLE FOR
SIMPLISTIC
EMOTIONAL
THEMES
LIKE:



LIKE ITS
JUST A HALLOWEEN PRANK

PAINTING IS A
SERIOUS
MATTER NOT
FOR THE FOOLHEARTY
COMMON
PSYCHOSIS
RARELY BEGETS
DECENT
ARTISTS

TRUE PAINTERS
KNOW THE
VALUE OF A
LIFE

TRUE PAINTERS
DETERMINE
THE VALUE OF -

KNOW WHAT A
PAINTING IS
WORTH

WEAK
LIKE
FIGURA
NARRA
IDENTI
BIOGR
AND
HISTOR
BASED
FORMS
WILL NOT
MOVE
THE S

ARTS
ATIVE,
TIVE,
TY,
APHY

WEAKNESS
WILL NOT
BE TOLERATED

TRUE PAINTERS
UNDERSTAND
TRADITION
AND HOW TO
UPEND IT
(WHILE NEVER
CHANGING
ANYTHING)

SLUT

your VICTIMIZATION
AT THE HANDS OF
WHITE POWER
GIVES ME
HOPE



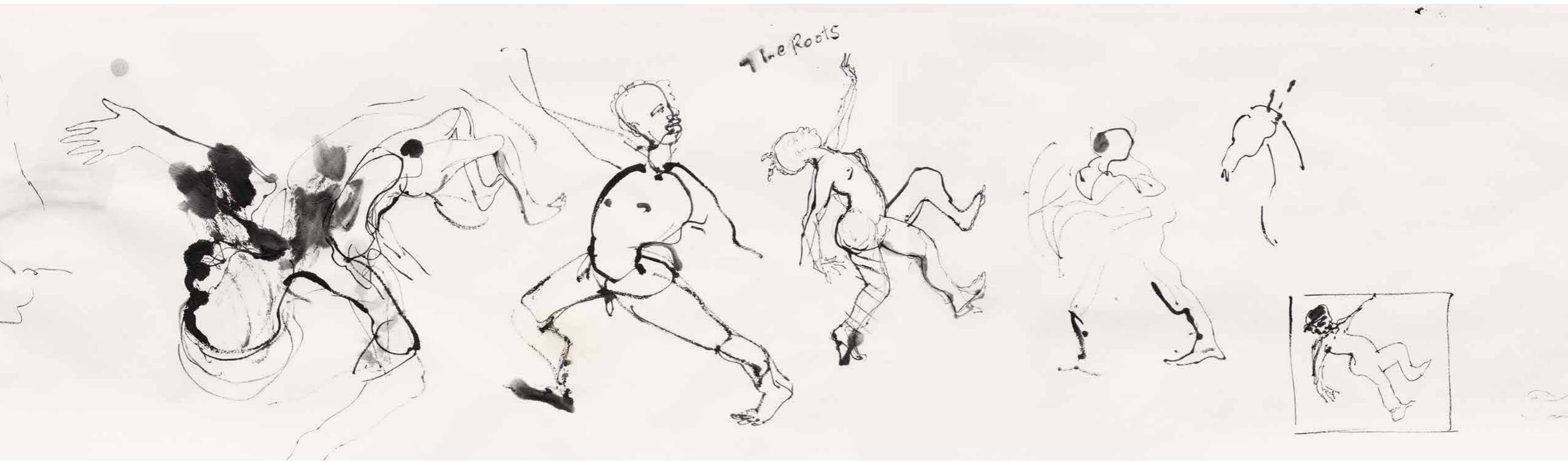
STRONG

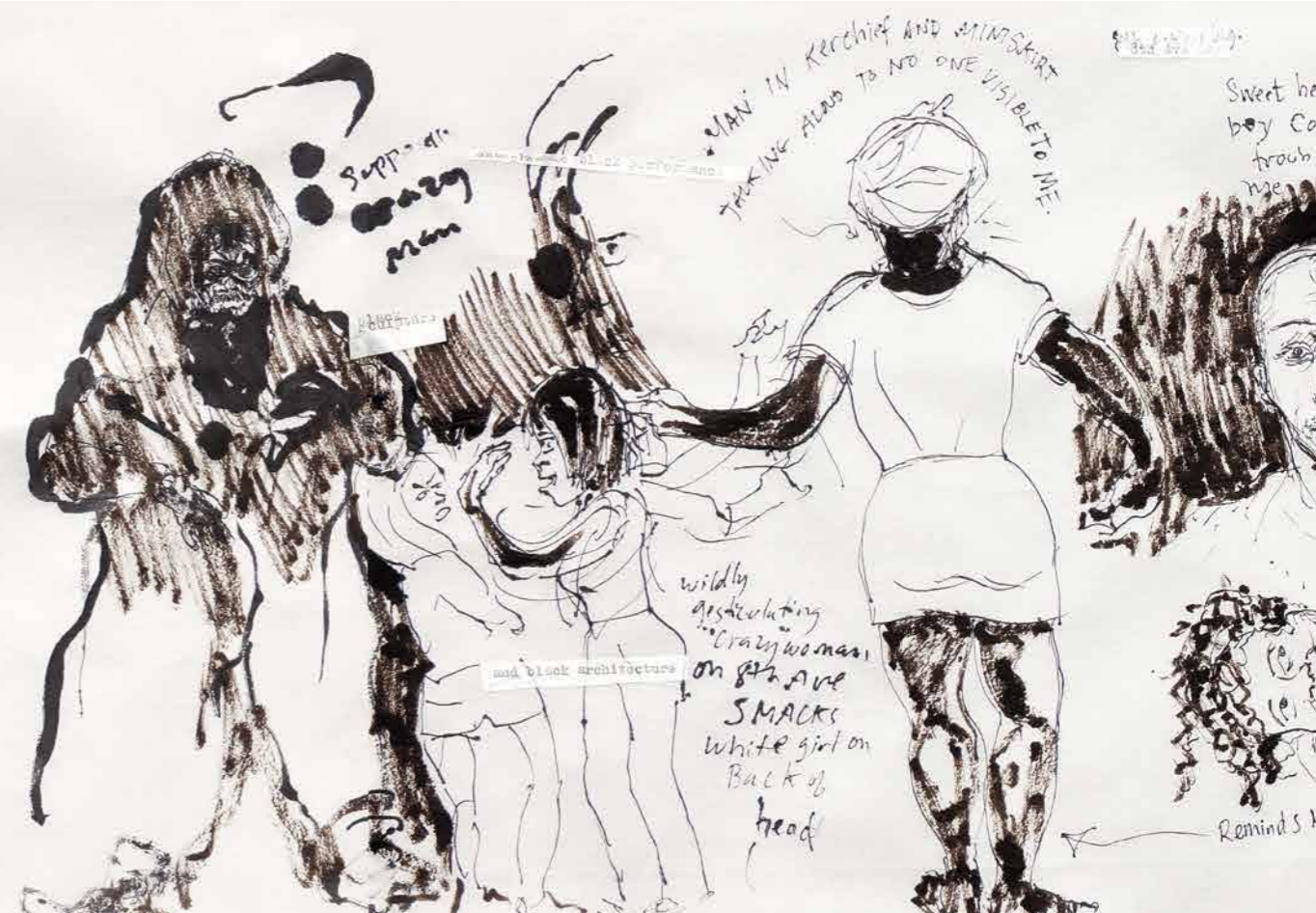
SEX
AND THE
CITY
WITH
BLACK GIRLS
IN STEAD...

LIKE HOW
NOW BLACK
STRUGGLE
LOOKS
EFFORTLESS

DIVA
PROJECT









BLACK ARTISTS I ASPIRE TO BE LESS LIKE :

Foppish. Naïve. Bitter. Angry. Narcissistic.
Vain. Paranoid. Undeserving.
Broke. Forgotten.
Taken Advantage of. Short-lived

CRASSLY COMMERCIAL.

OUT OF TOUCH.

WITH HIGH OVERHEAD COSTS

SO. WHAT IS LEFT?

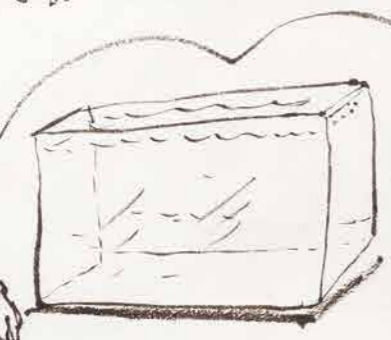


YOU SEXY DEMONESS.



MAYBE :

IS ENOUGH

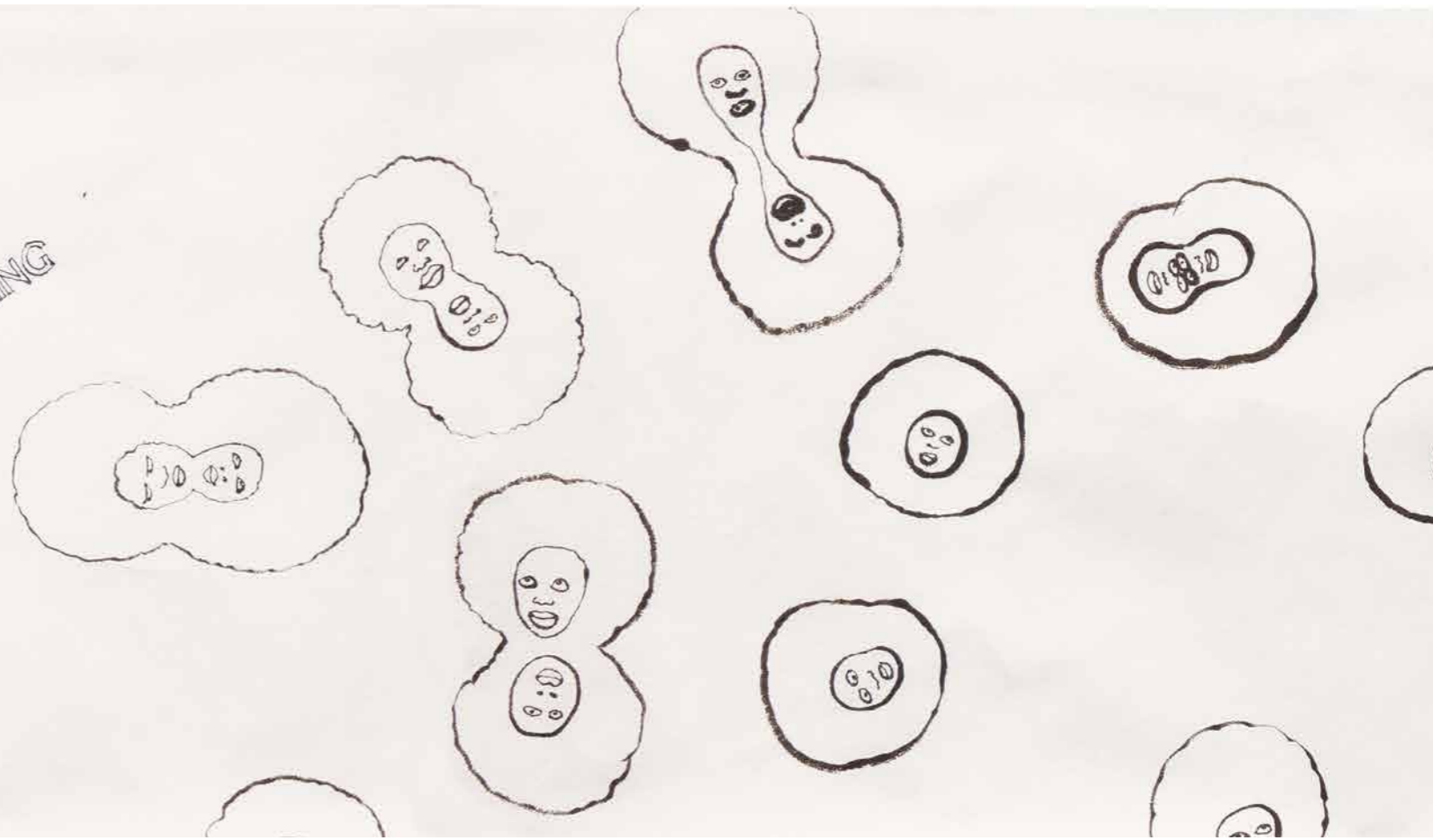


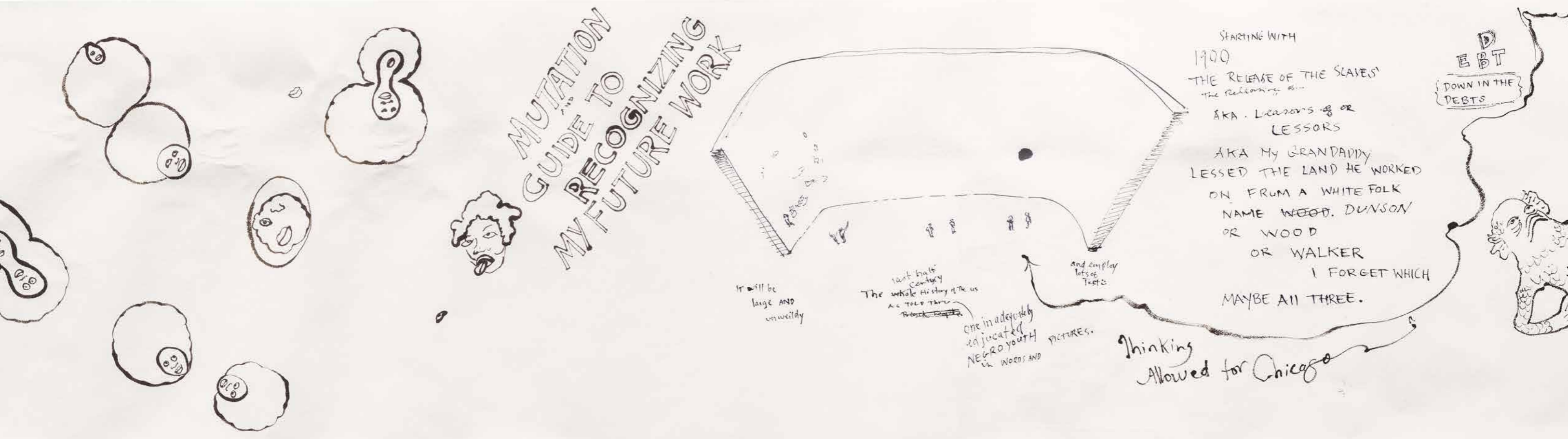
D.I.Y!

COOL LA!

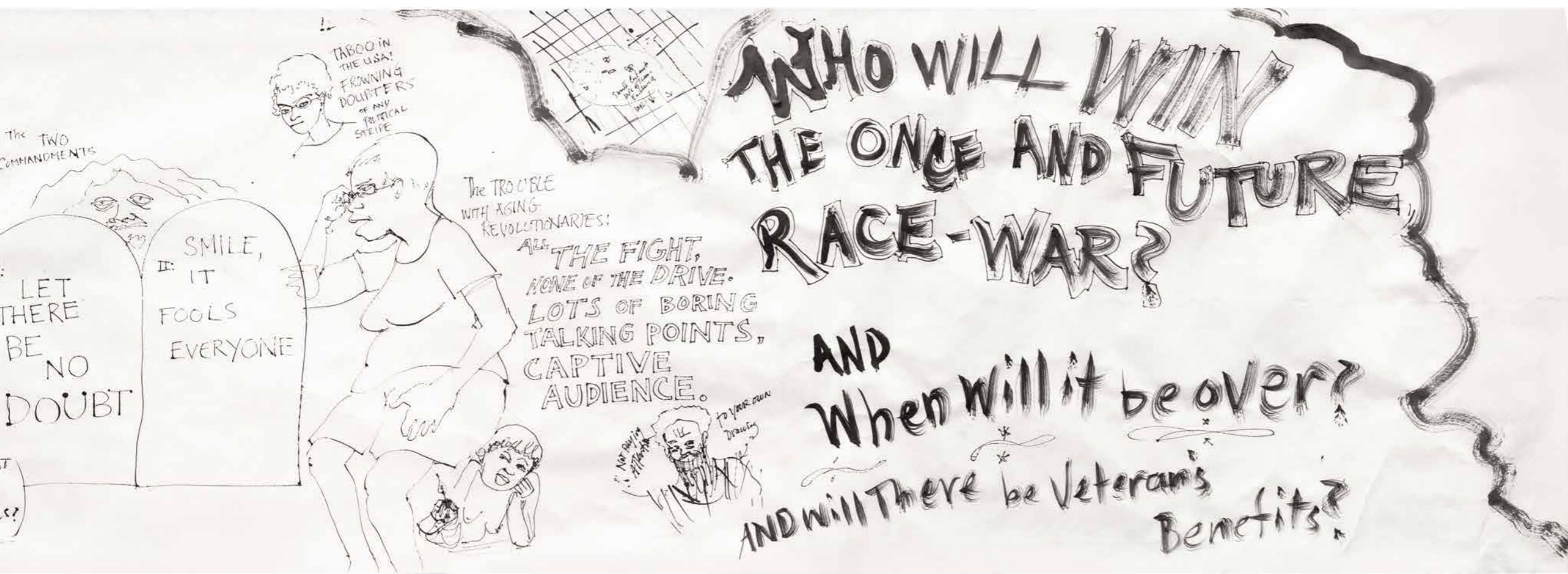
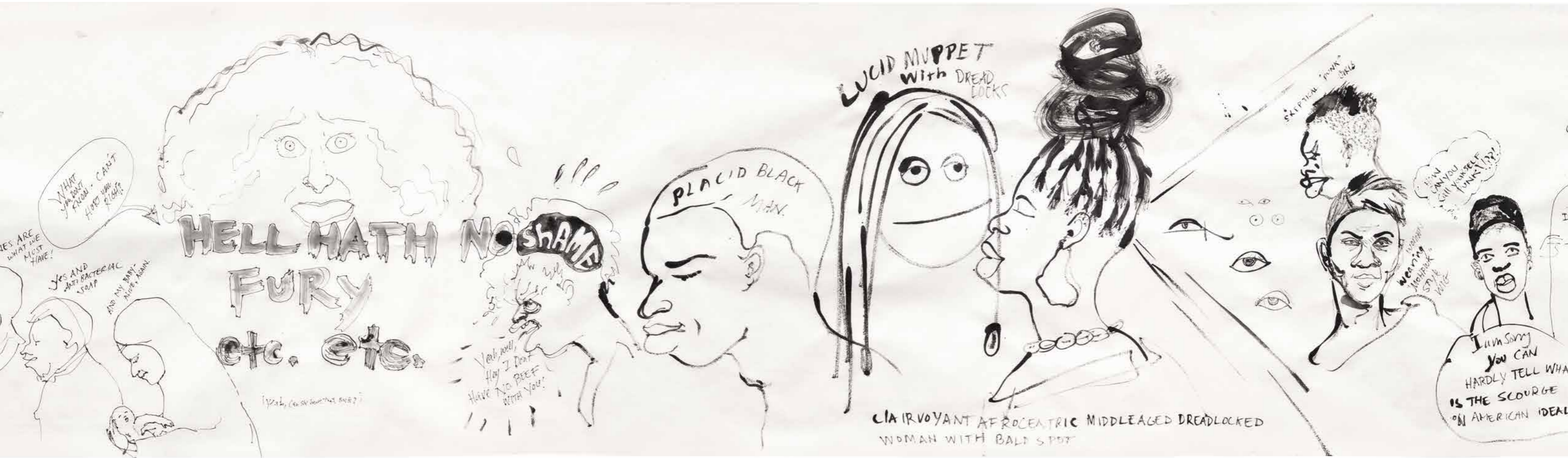


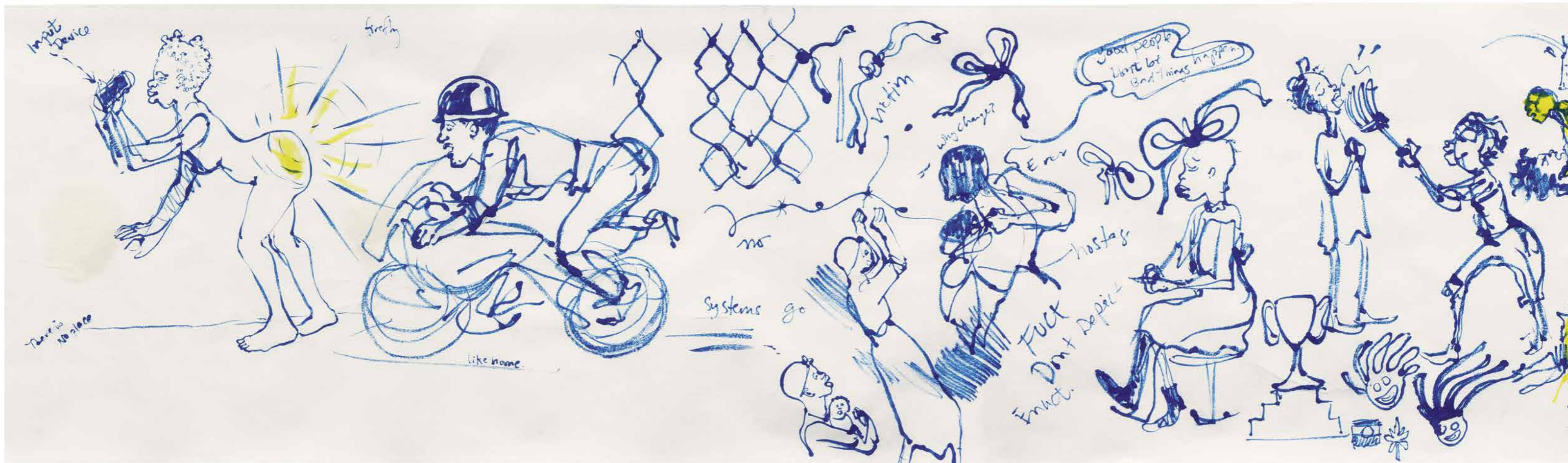
OK, THIS TIME WITH FEELING

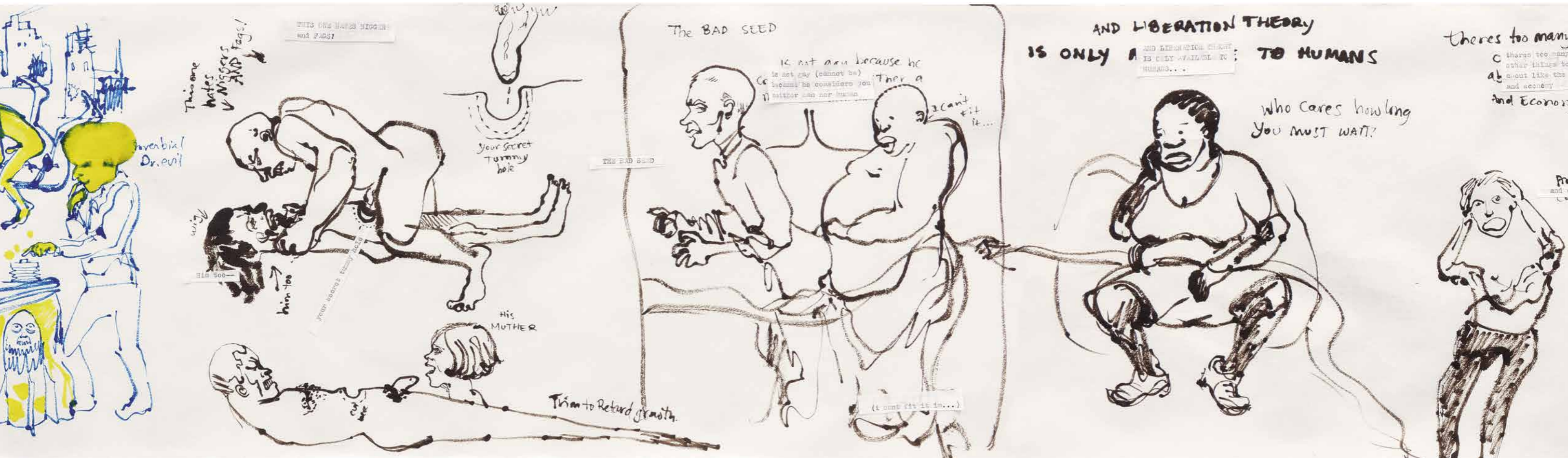














Train The Natives
your Methods of
WARFARE



LAUGH
WHEN
THEY
GET
IT
WRONG...

Feign Surprise when they
use it against you ...

CORRECT.



white guys
HATE Being
Car-torned!

at dont ever
turn your BACK



JUST
CHANGE
THE
TOOLS

WORRY
When
They REPLACE
your Fundamentalism
with
their
OWN



OMG... I'm like
so, coming

WTF?!

YOU BLASPHEME HIS NAME!



Dude, Did you see that
girl on girl?
Be heading?



shit
y'all...

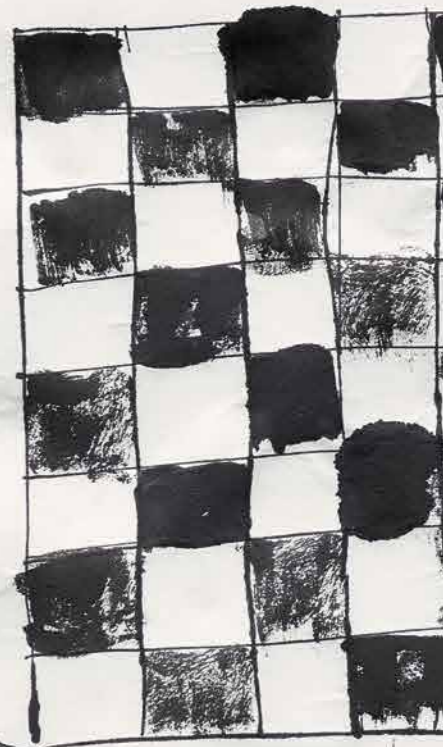
AS for you,
Worry your
Liberated
ASS



Wh
at

They Will
STOP AT NOTHING!
DOES THAT SOUND
PARANOID?
Would you be prepared
To do?

Start
now









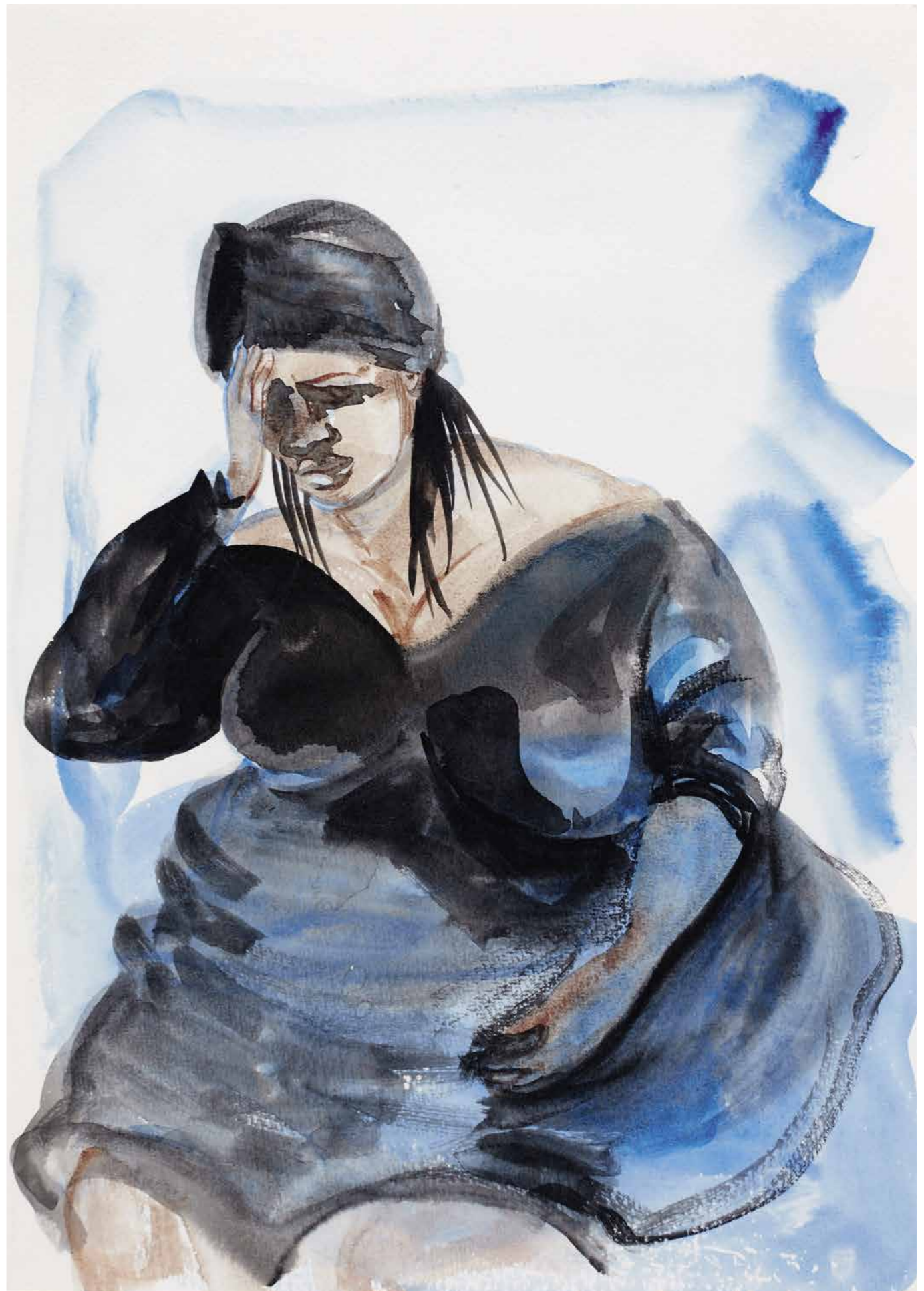
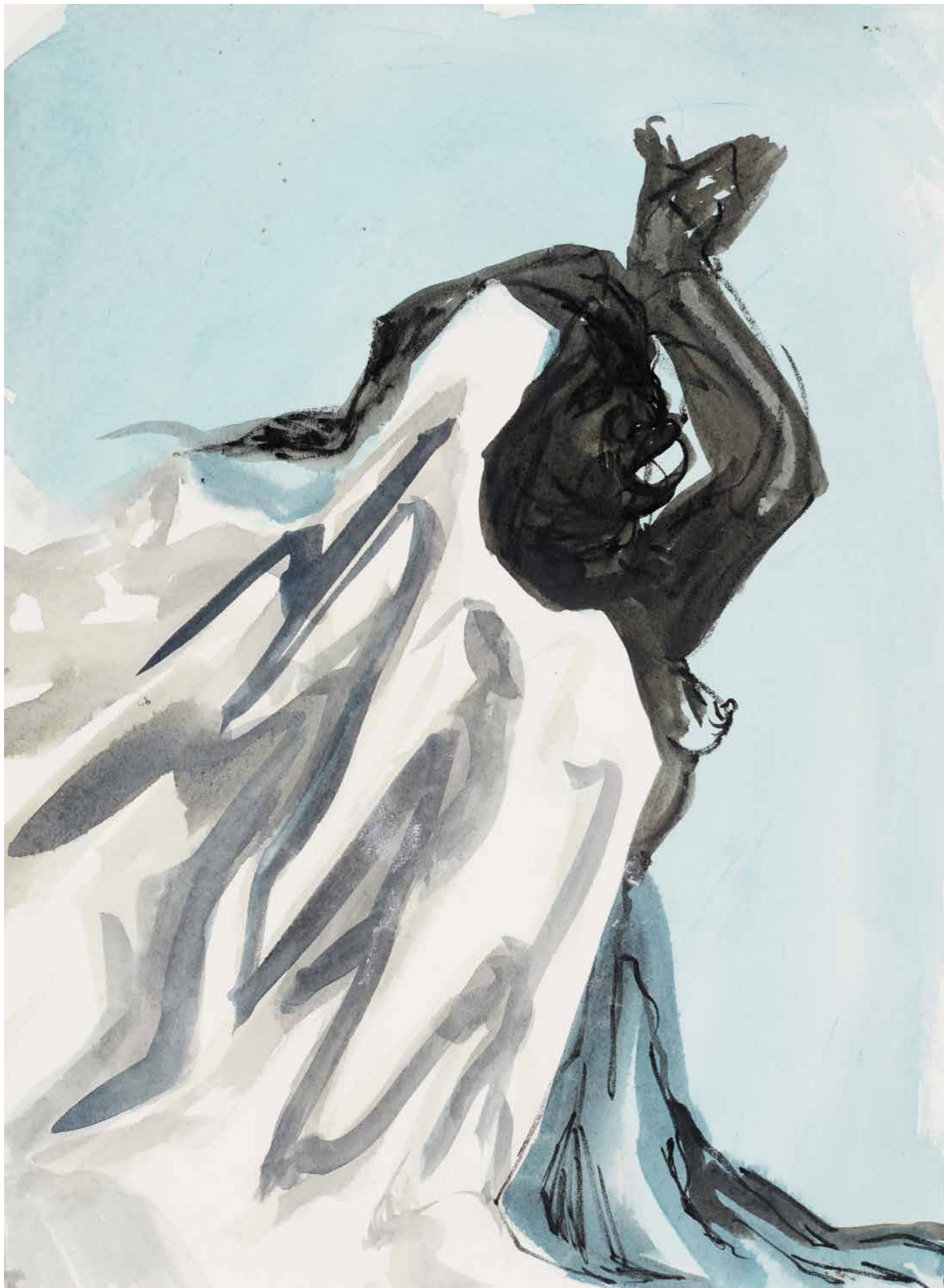








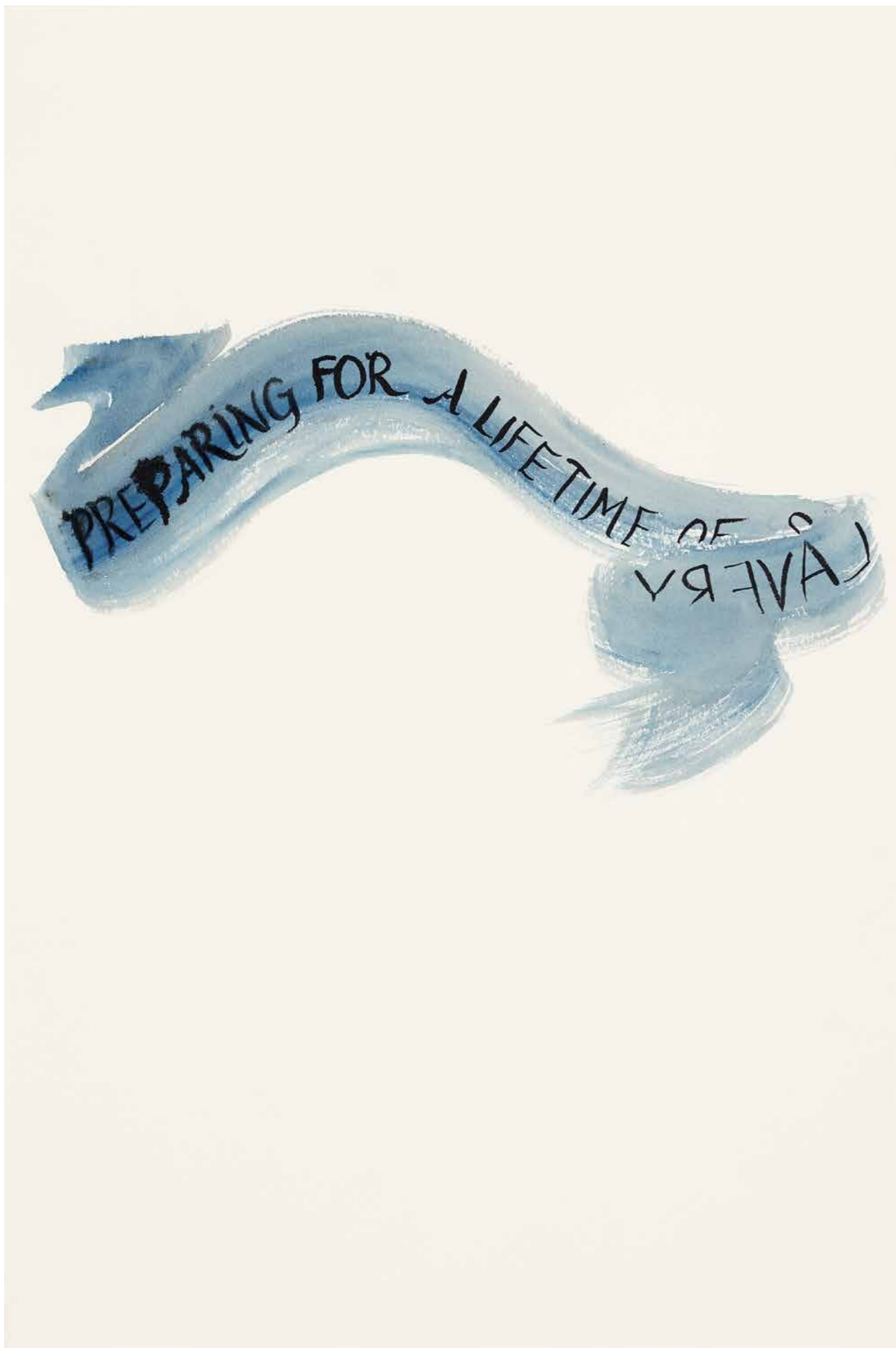








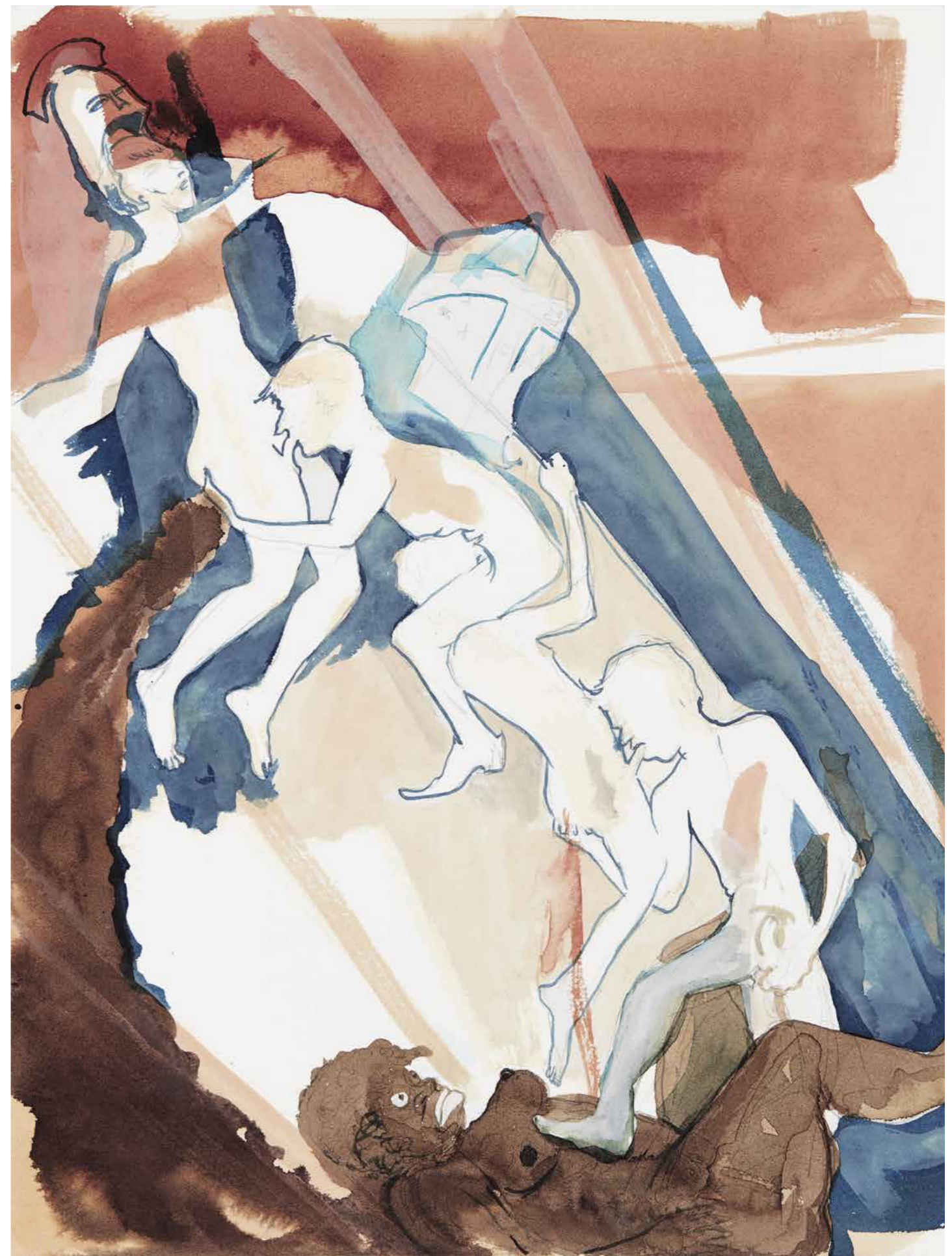
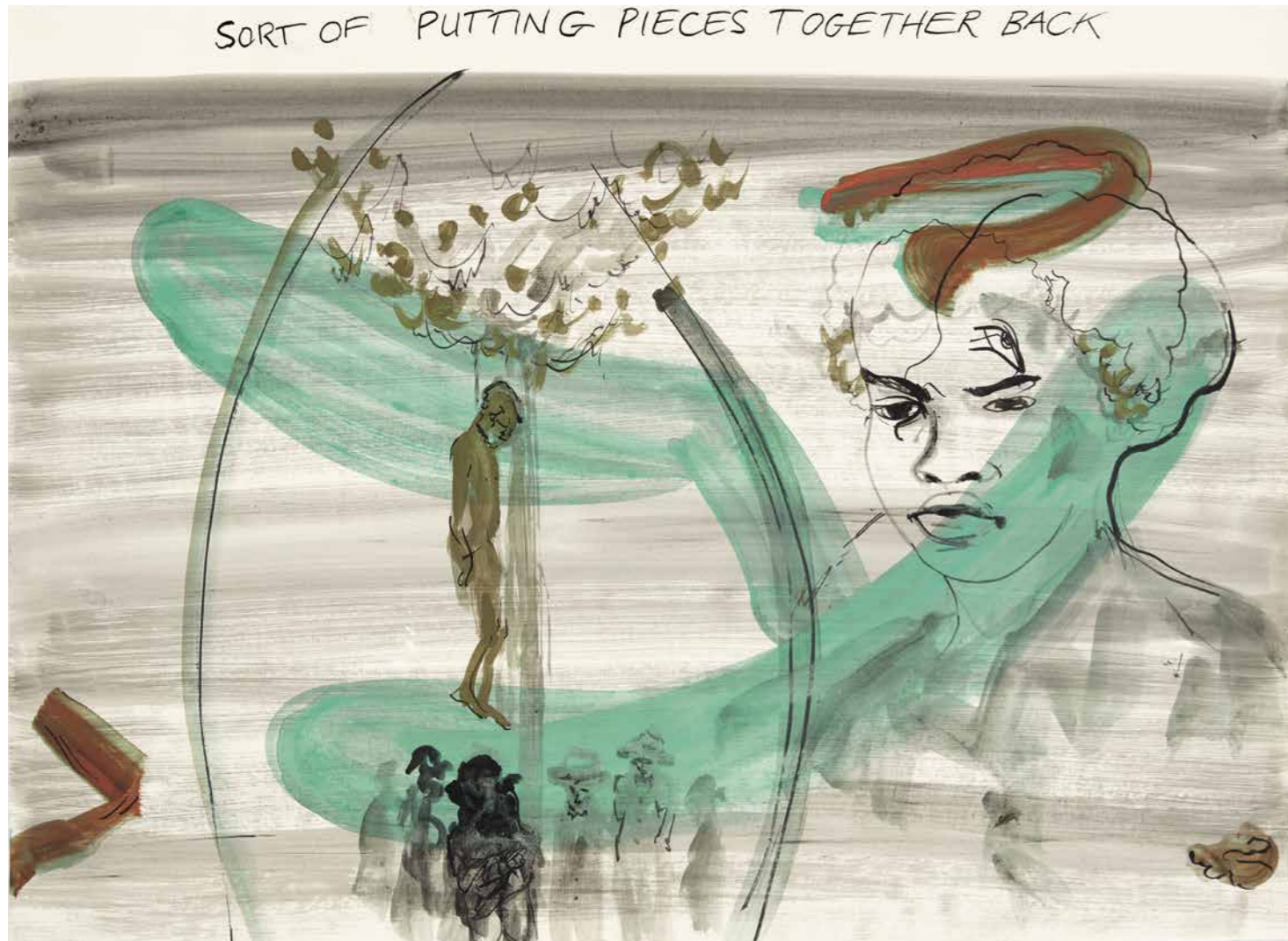


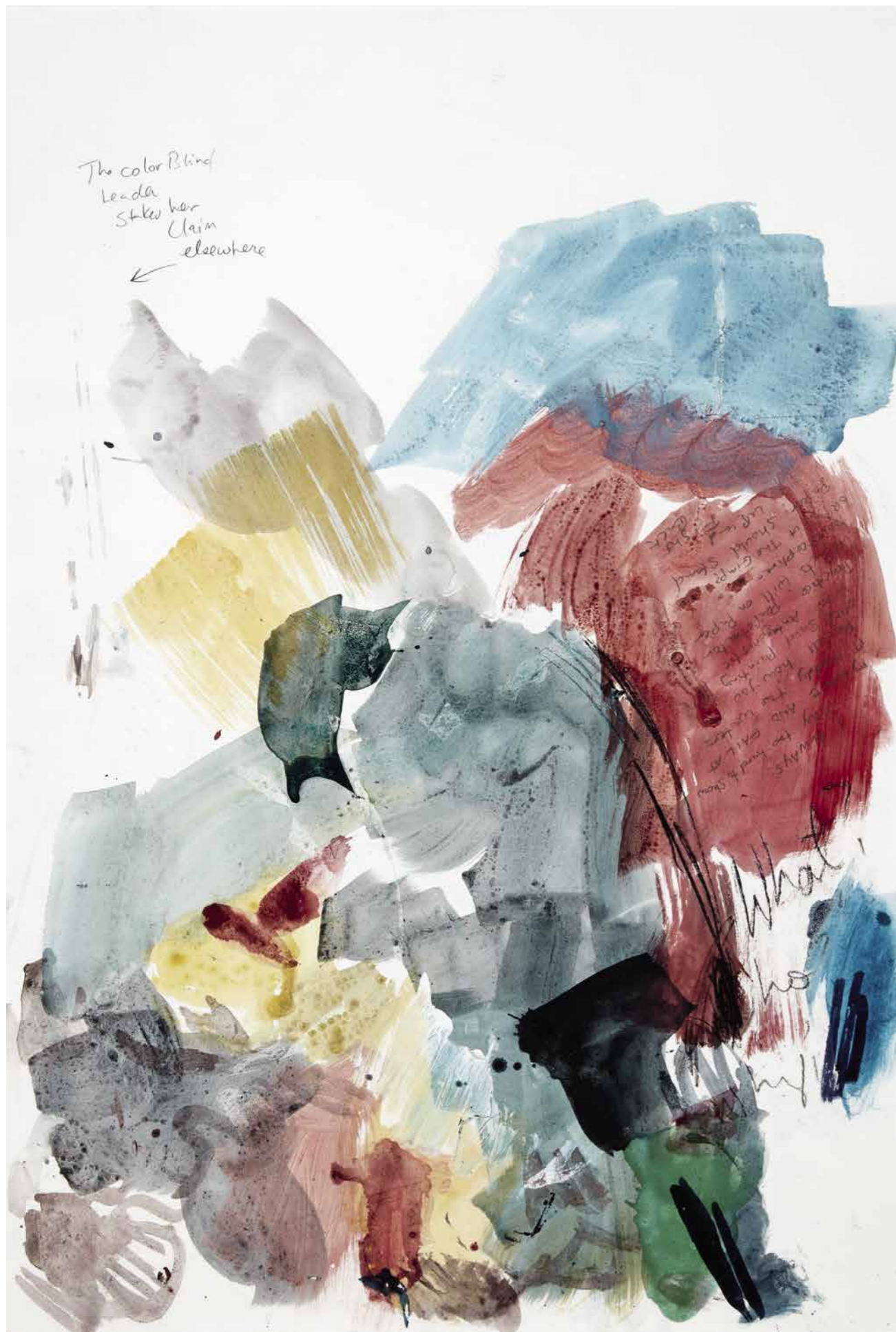




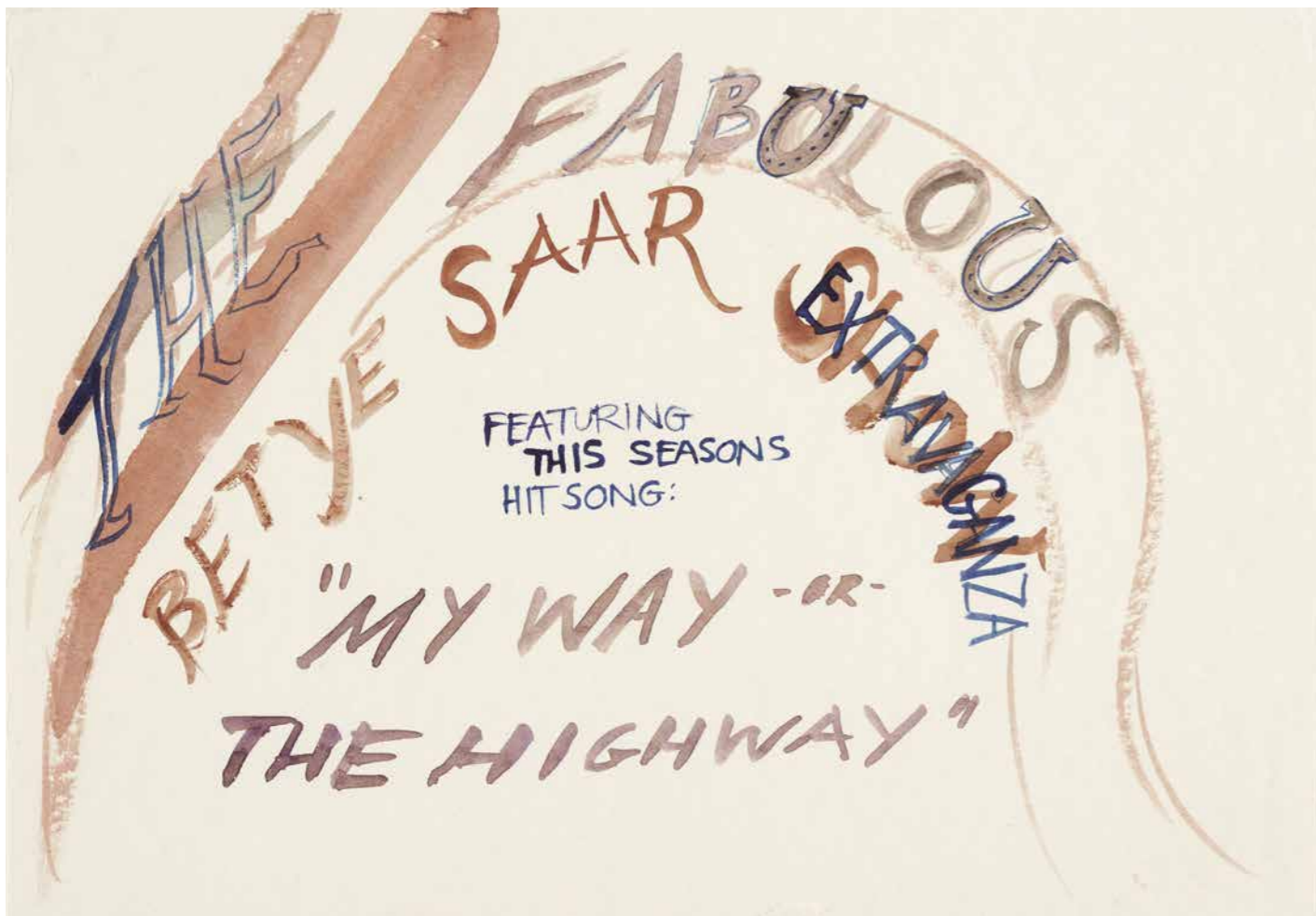


SORT OF PUTTING PIECES TOGETHER BACK





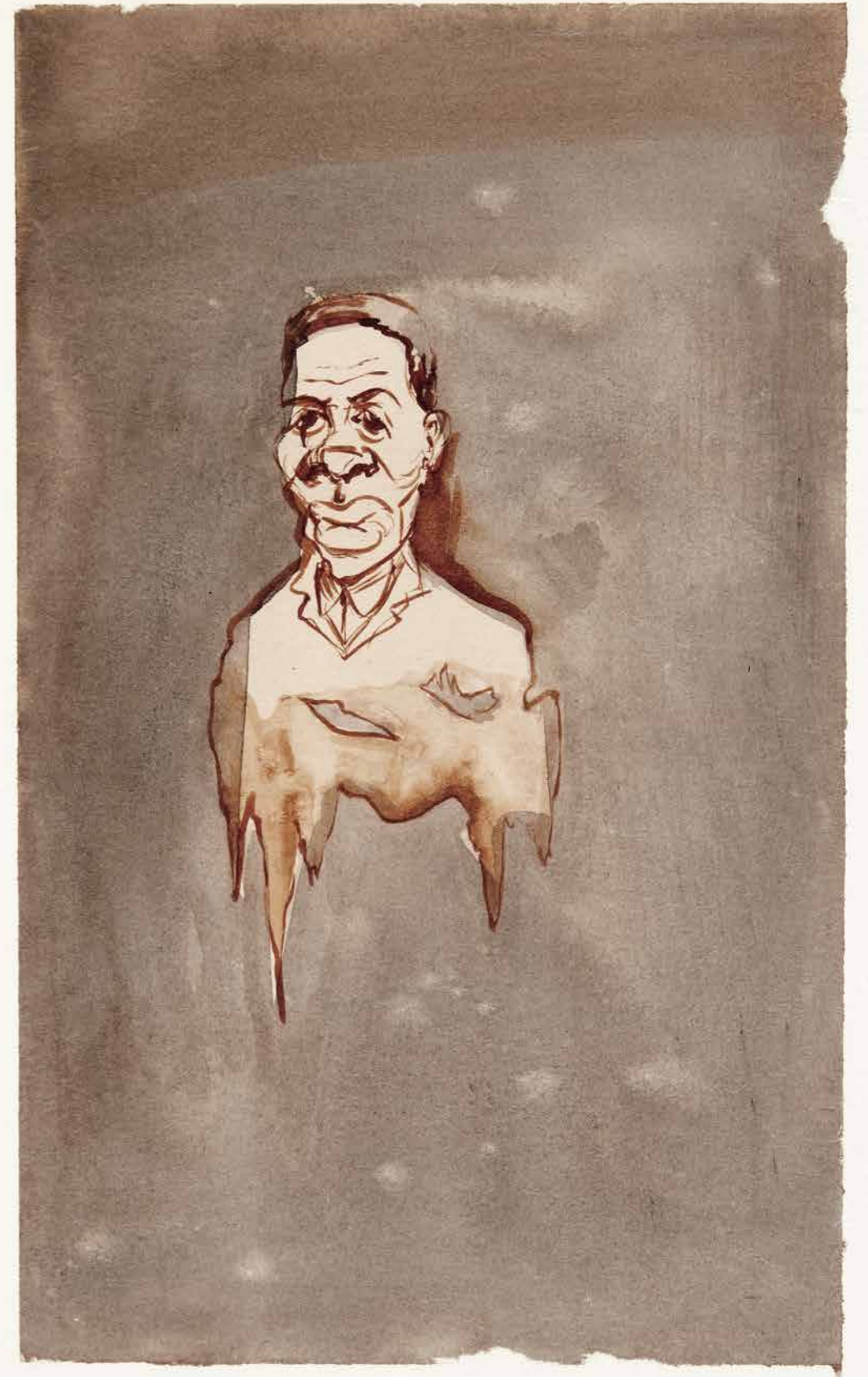


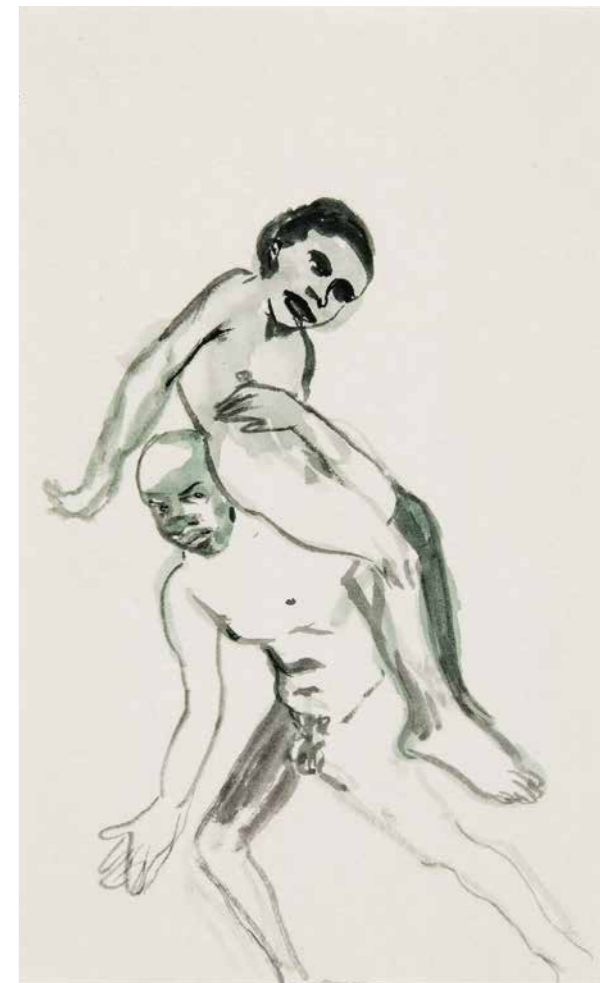


ART WHICH
IS ONLY visible
to **BLACK**
PEOPLE

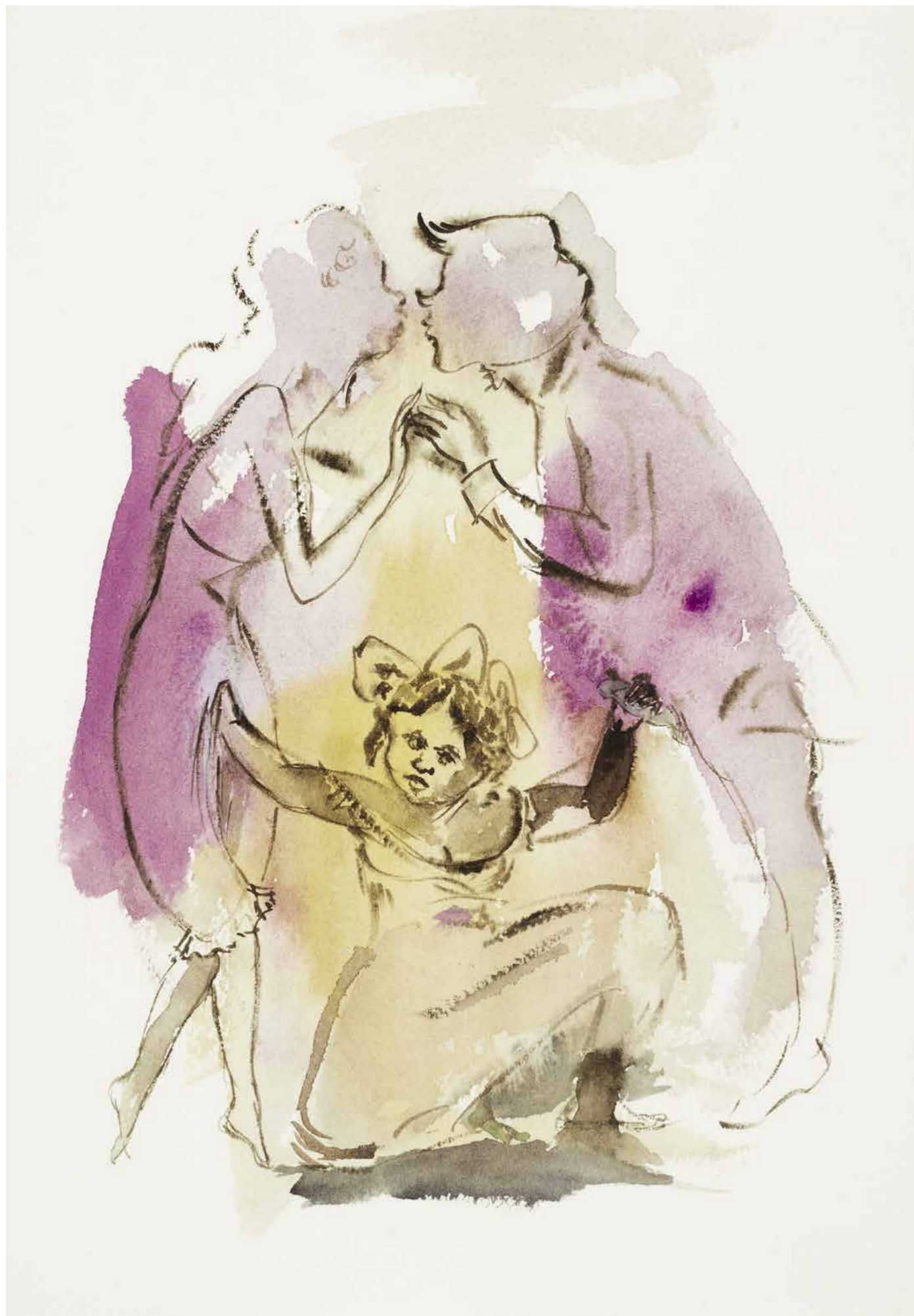




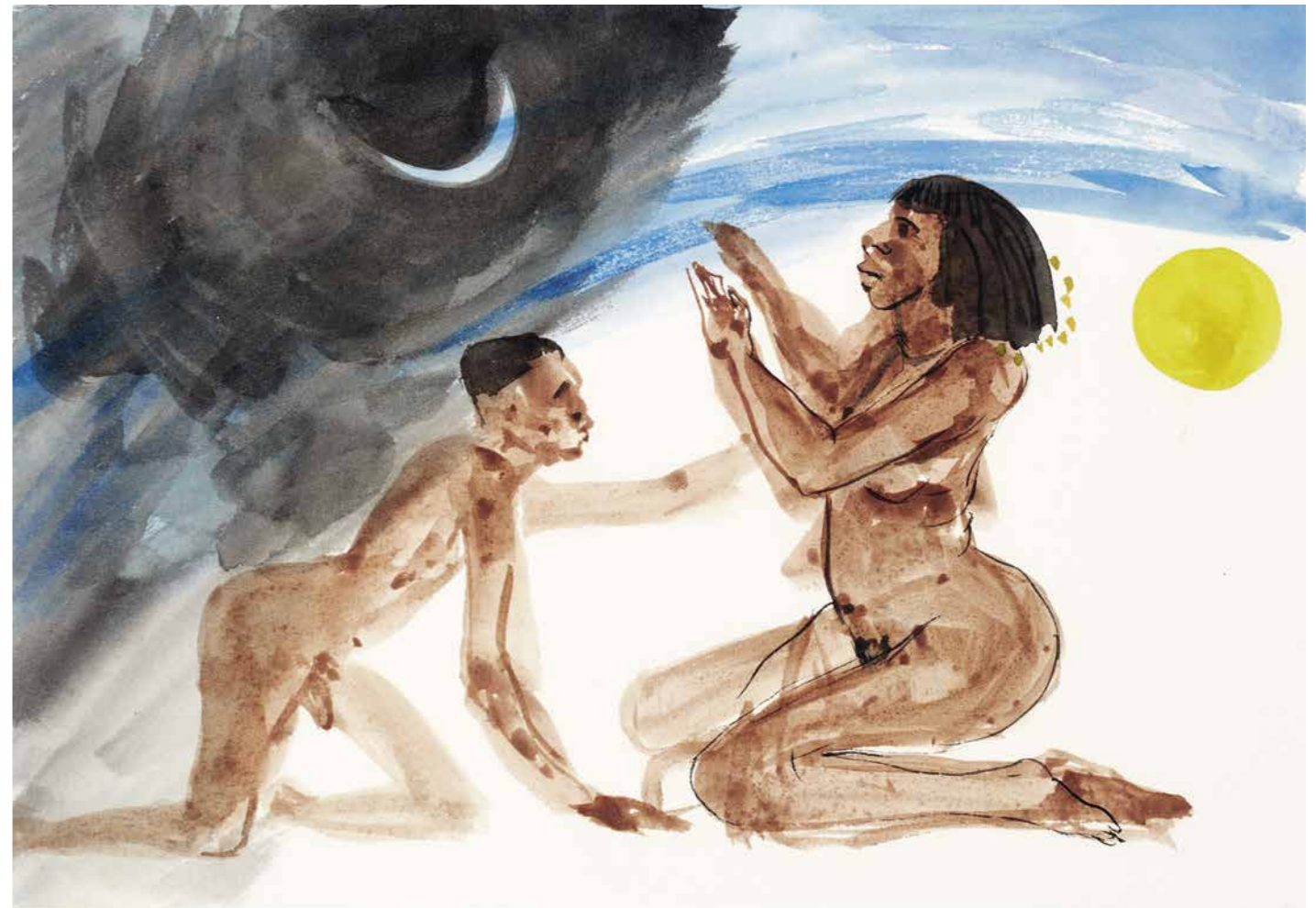












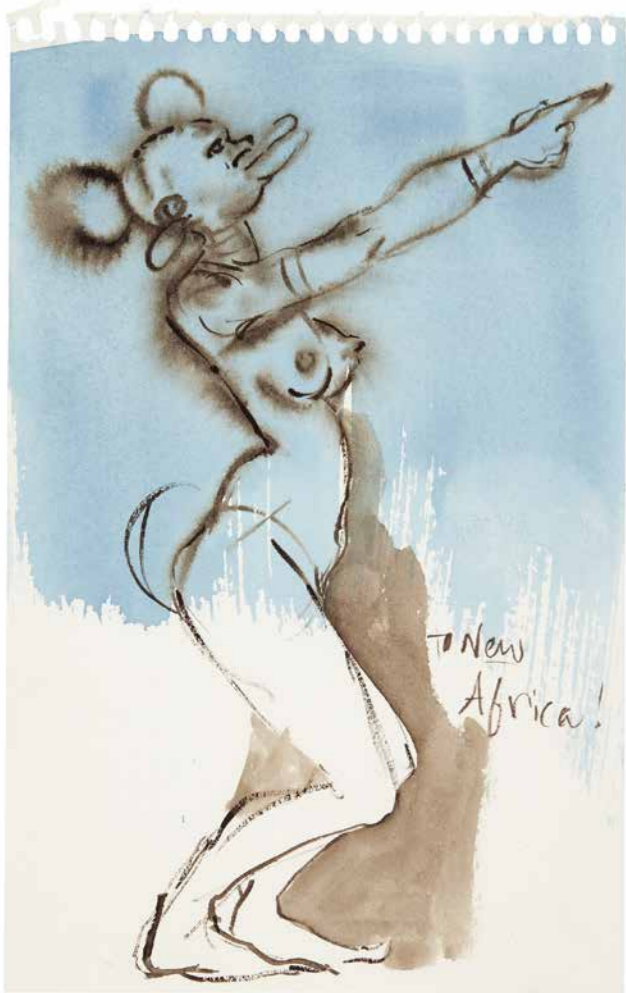


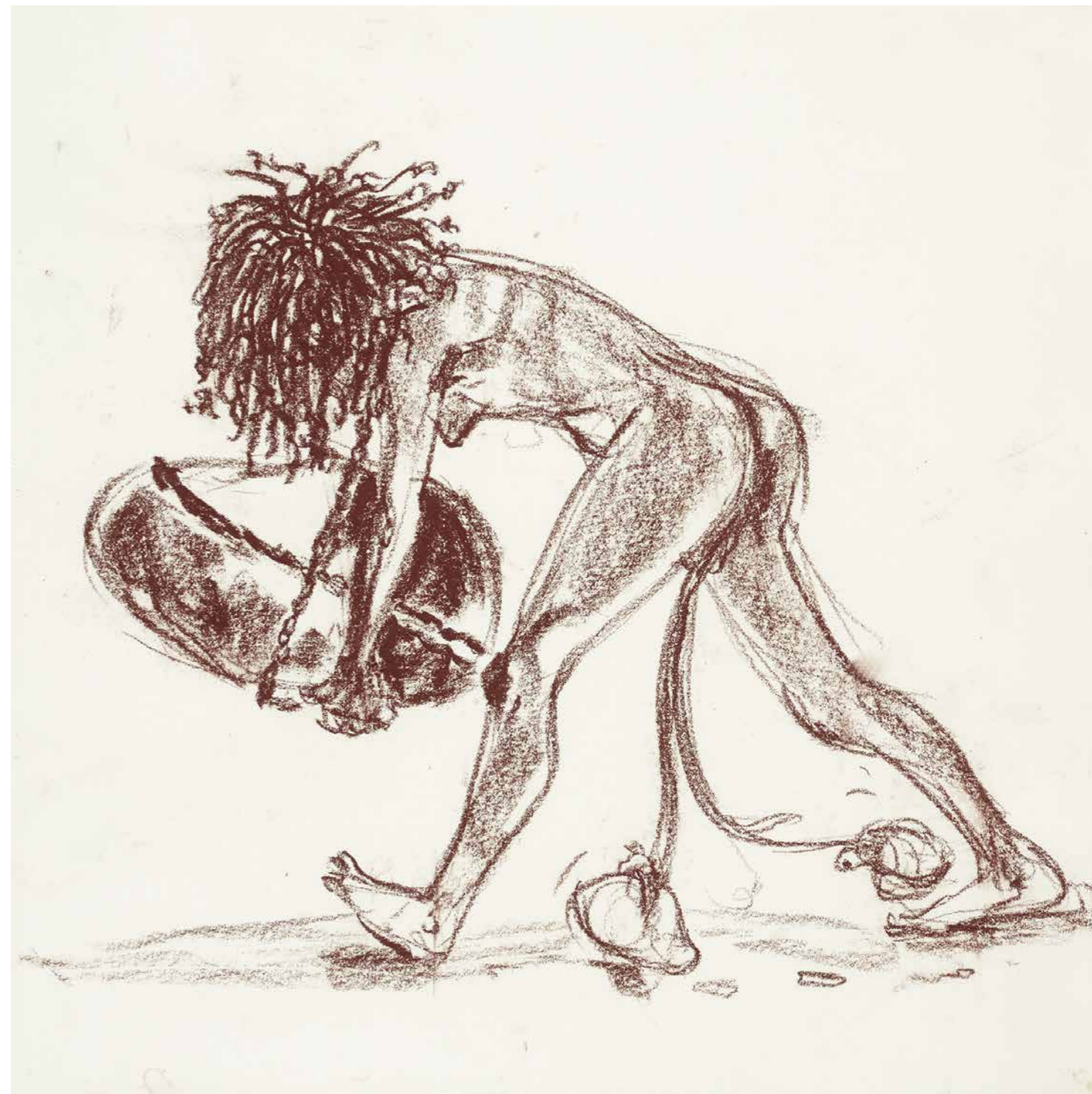


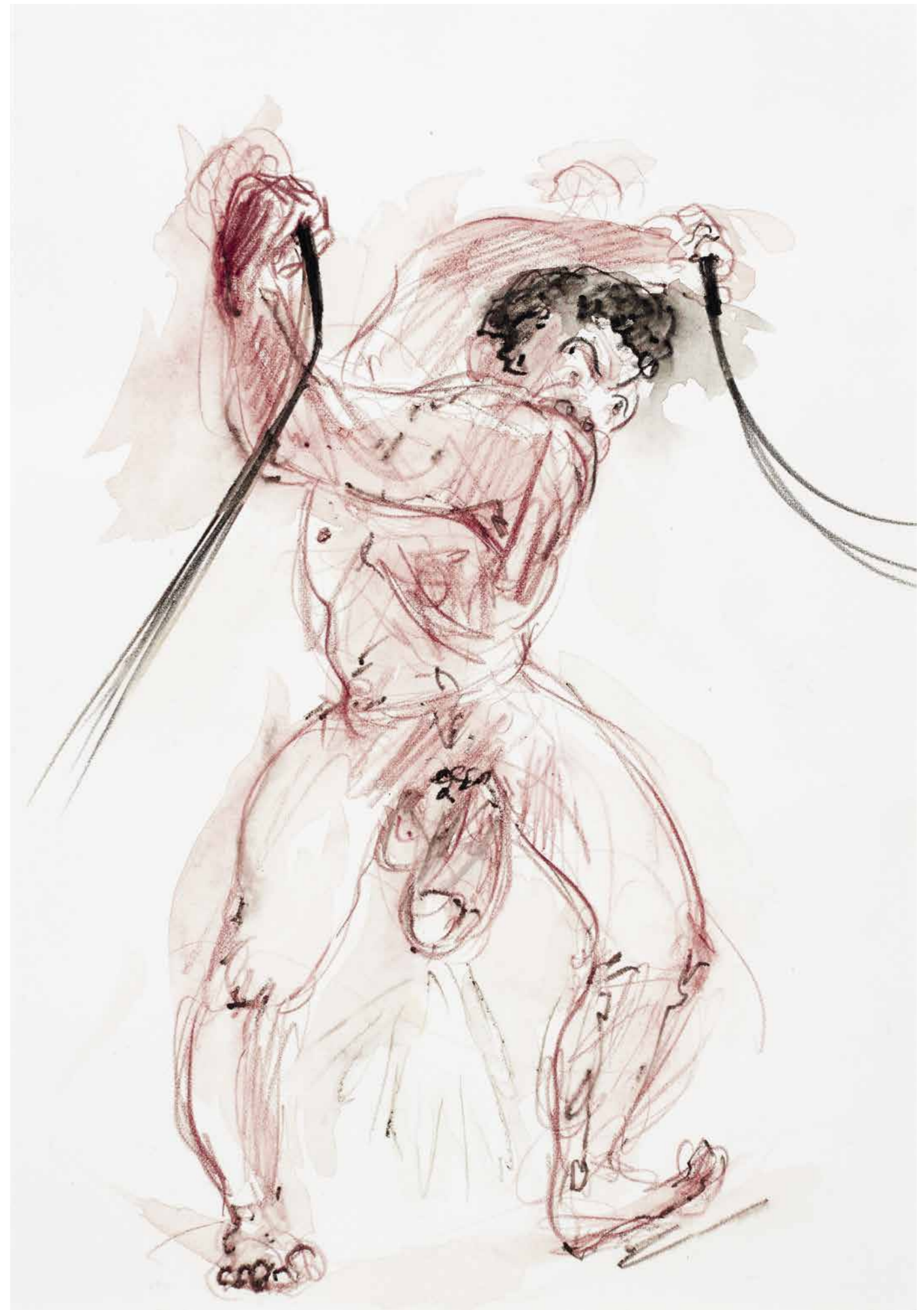








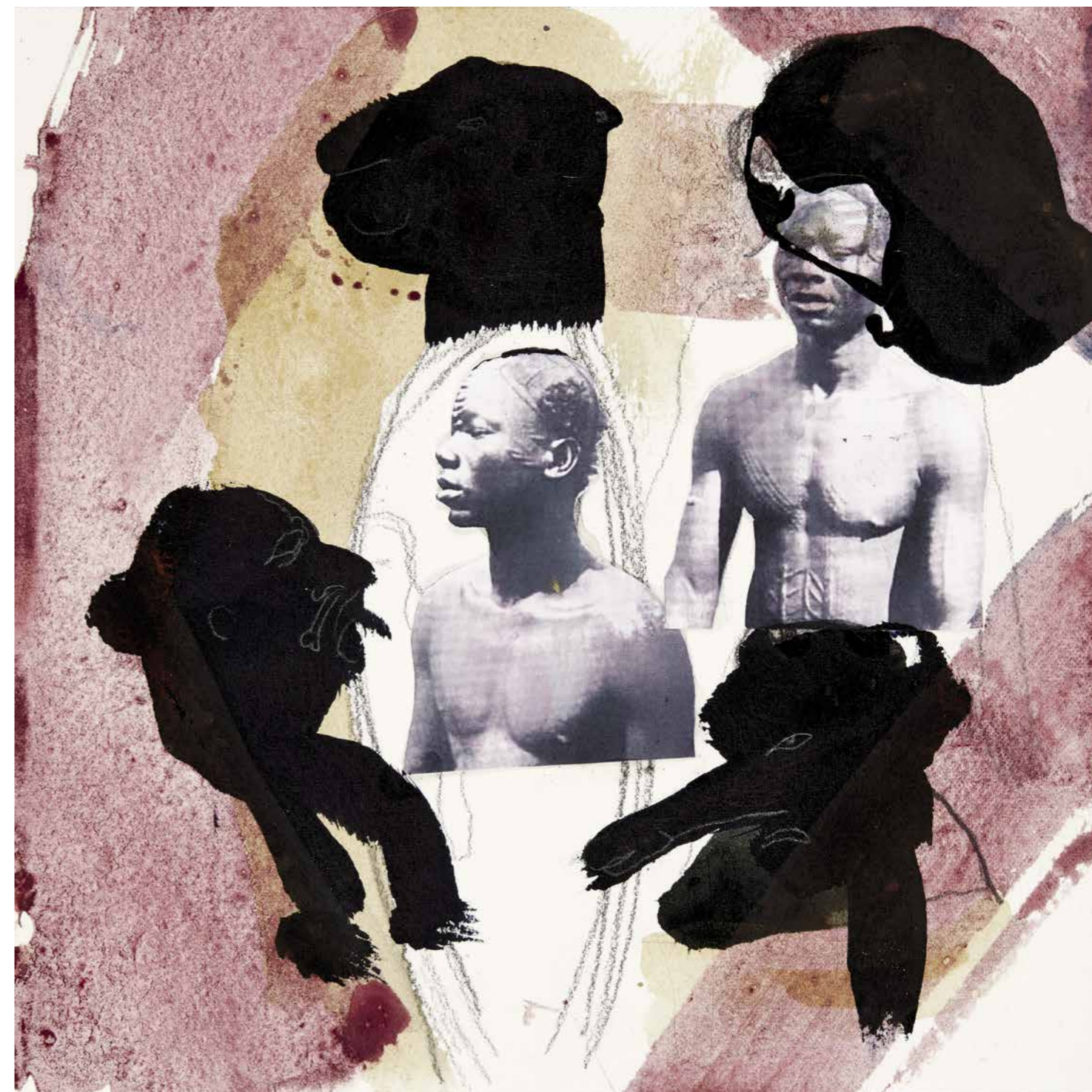
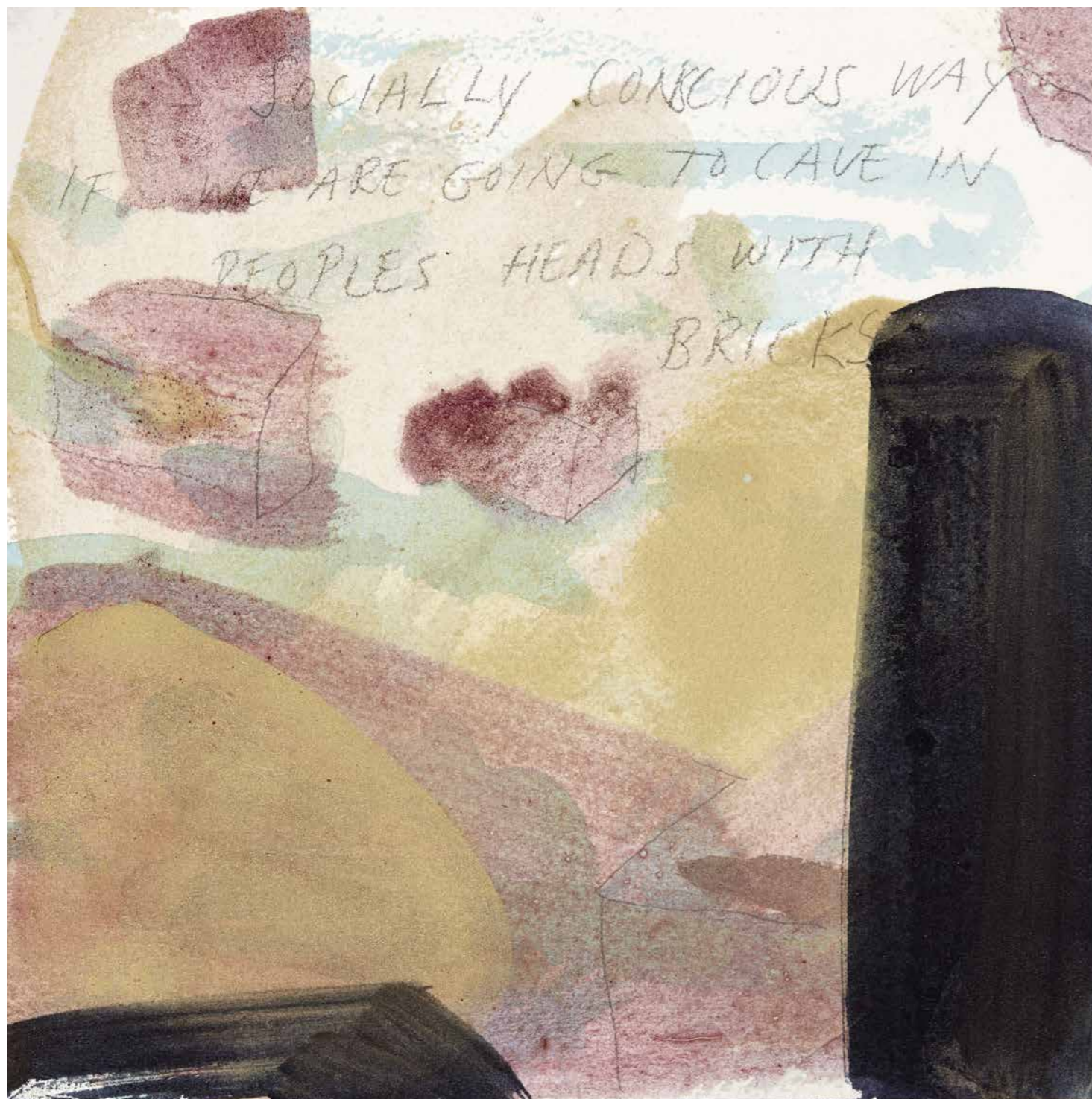


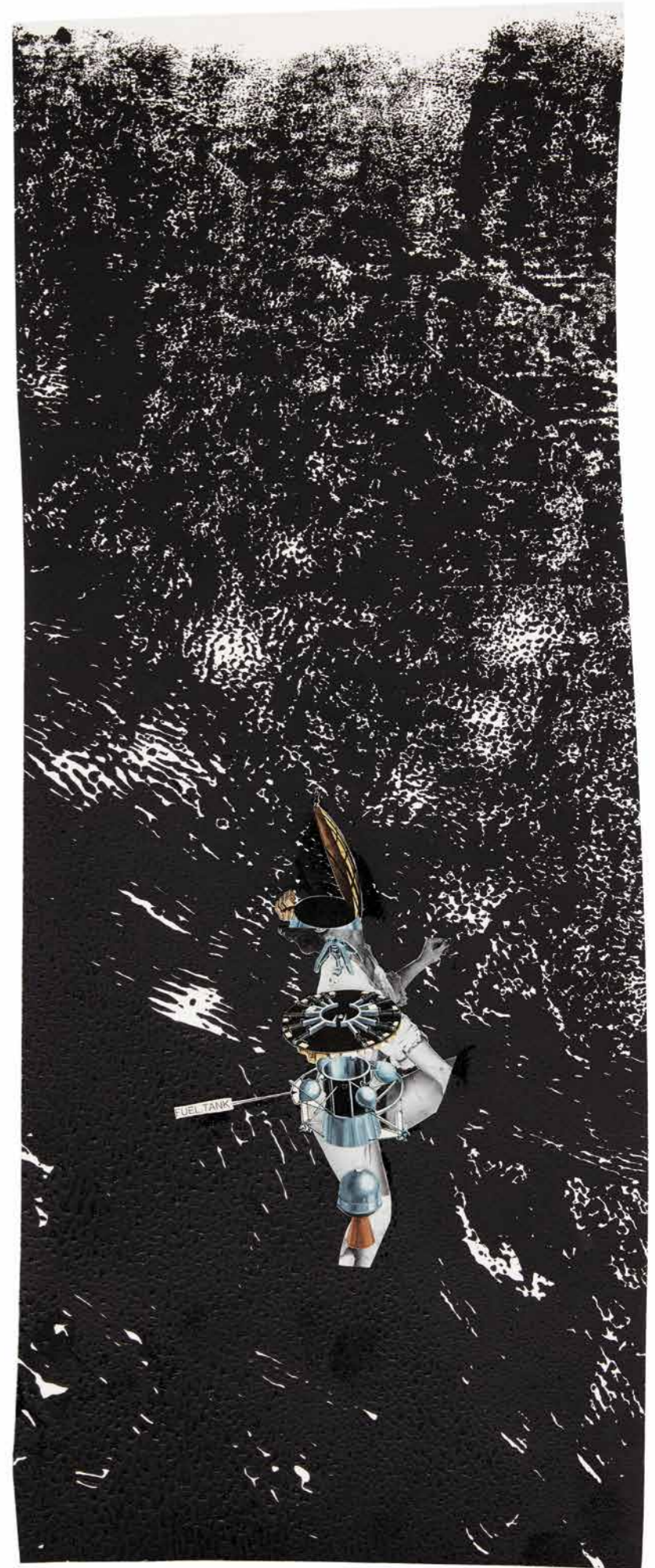


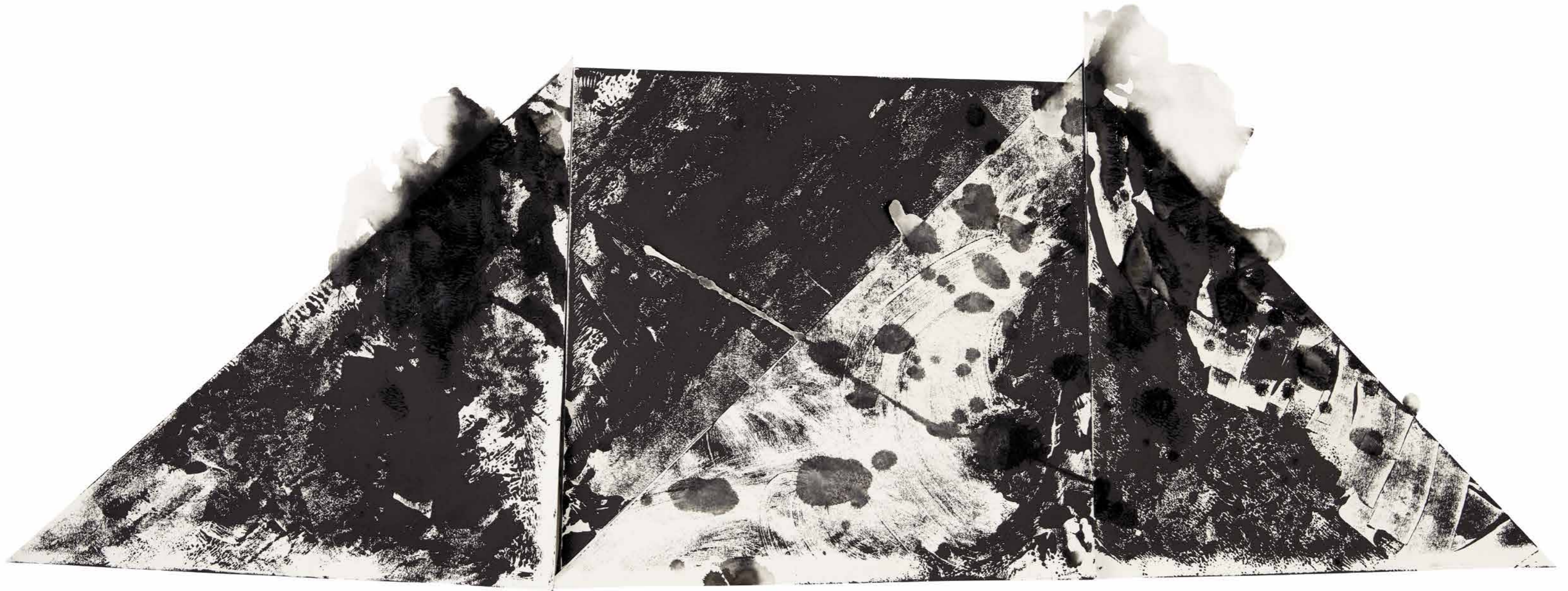


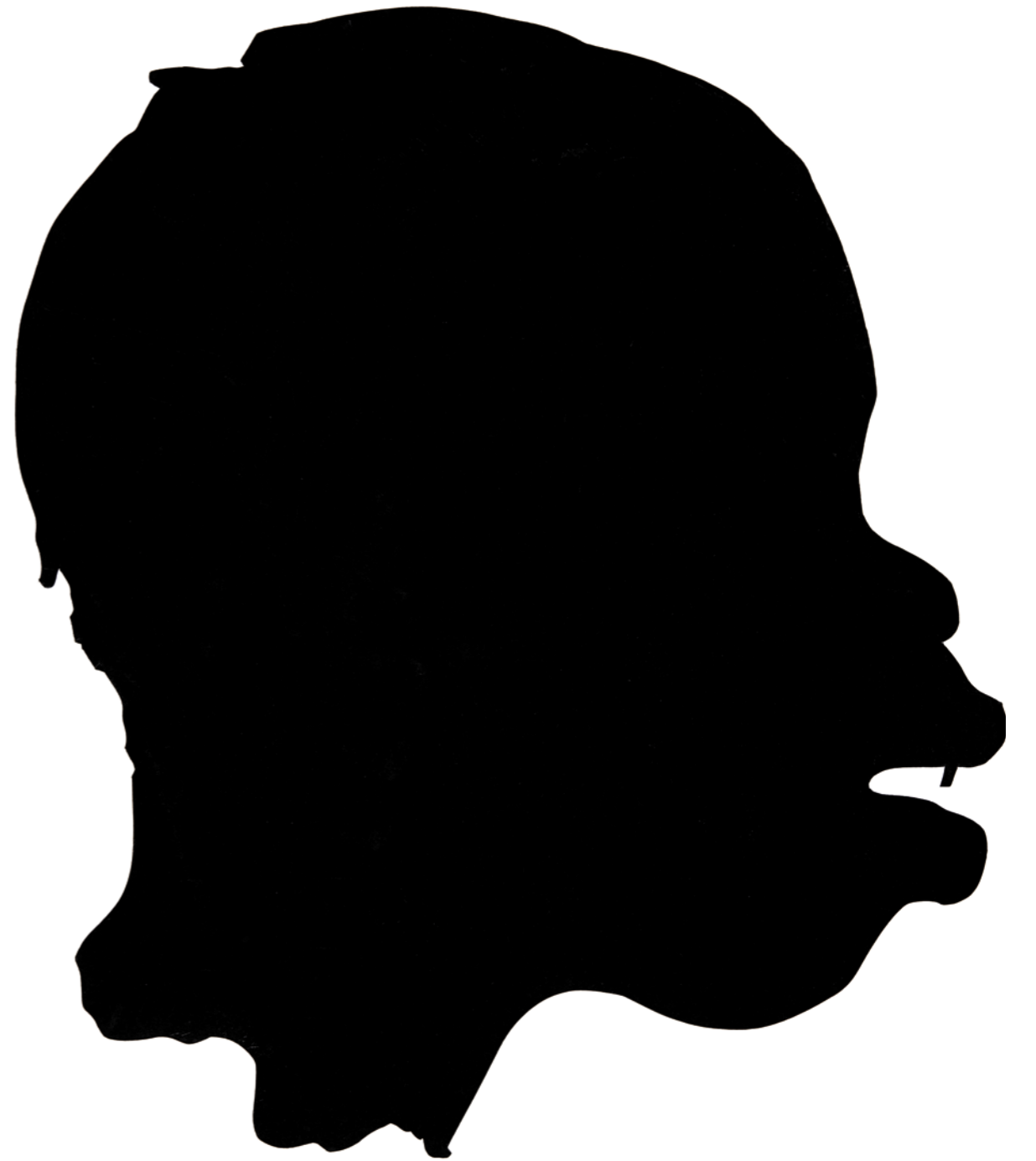


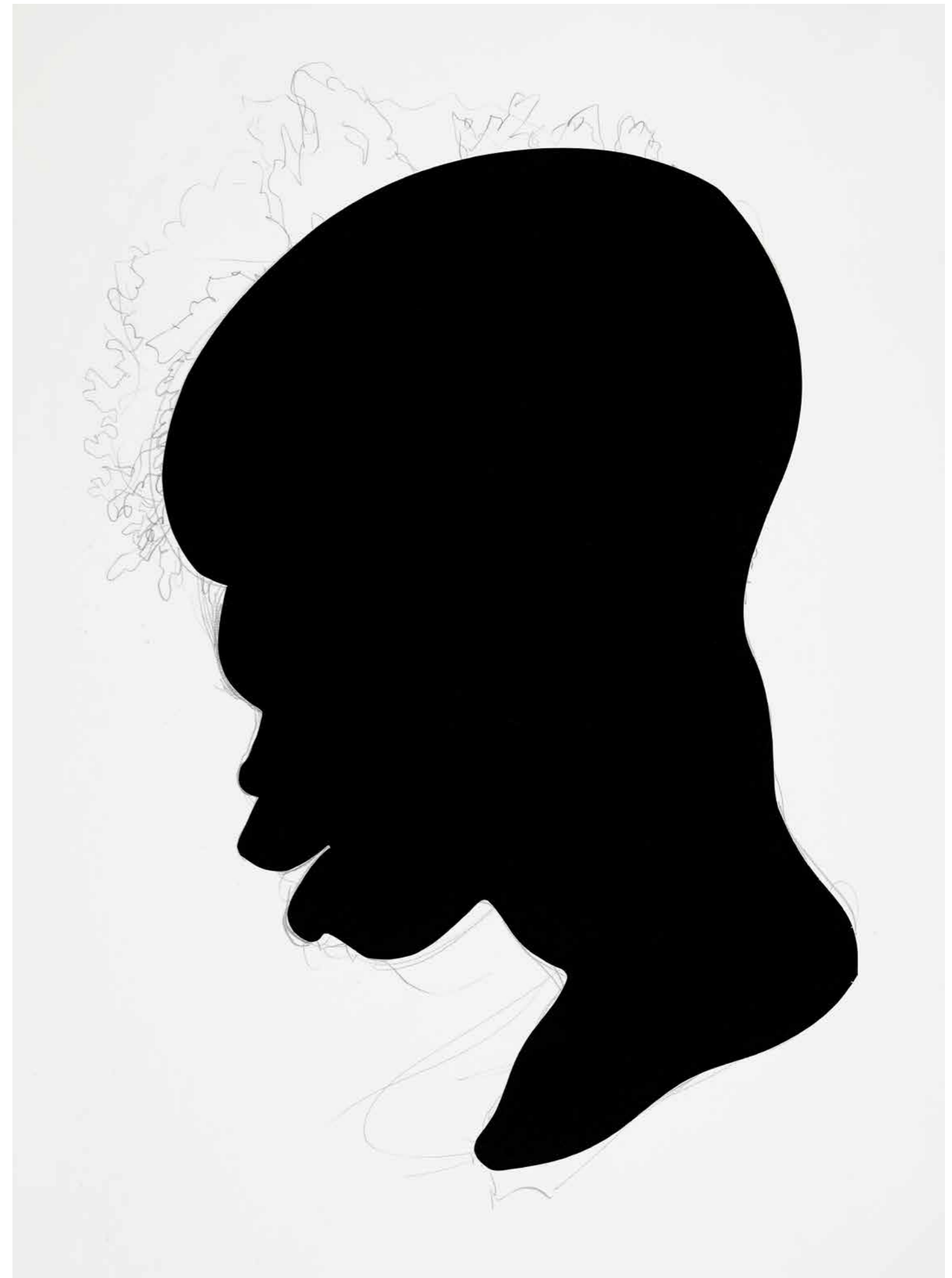
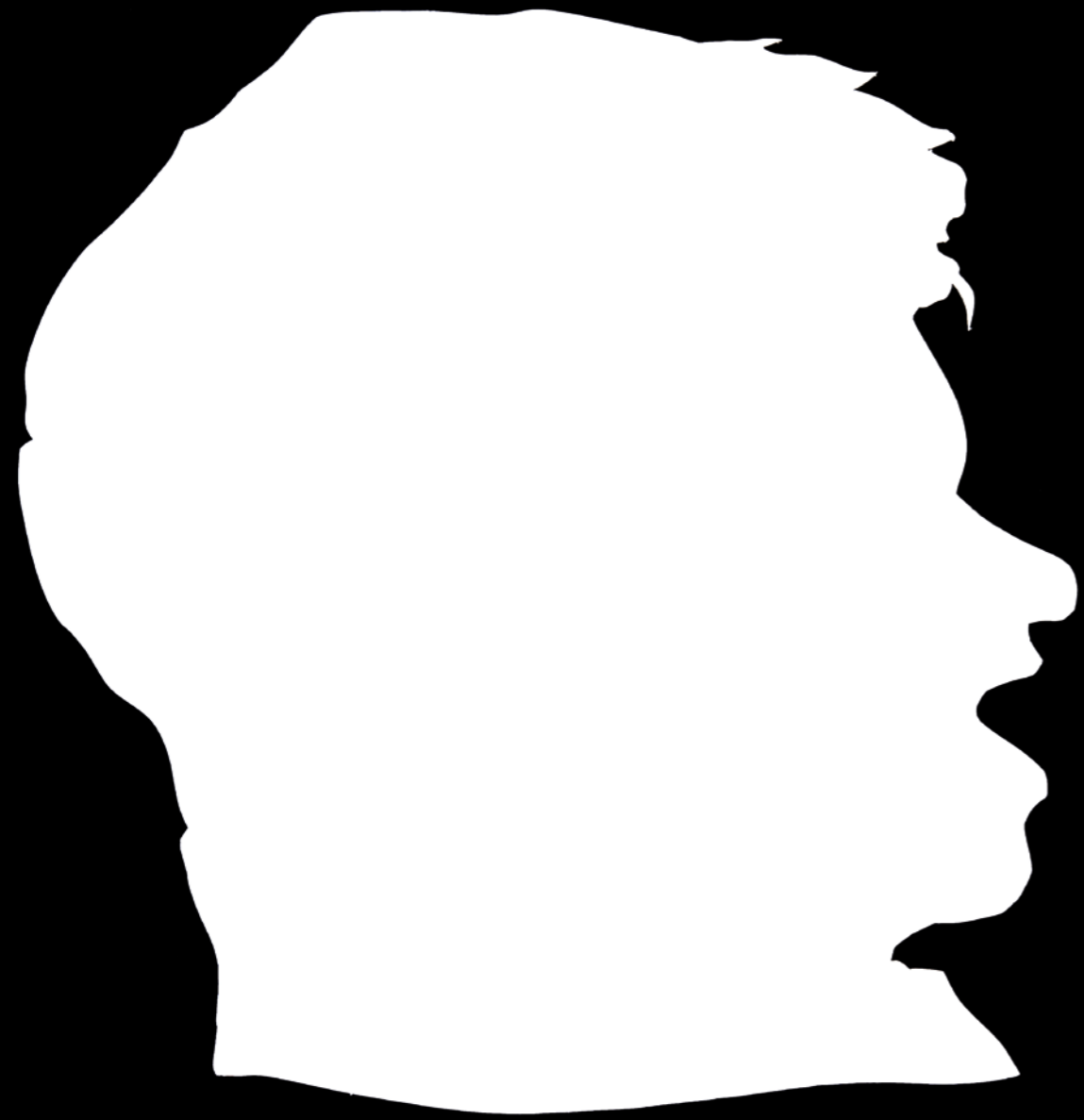


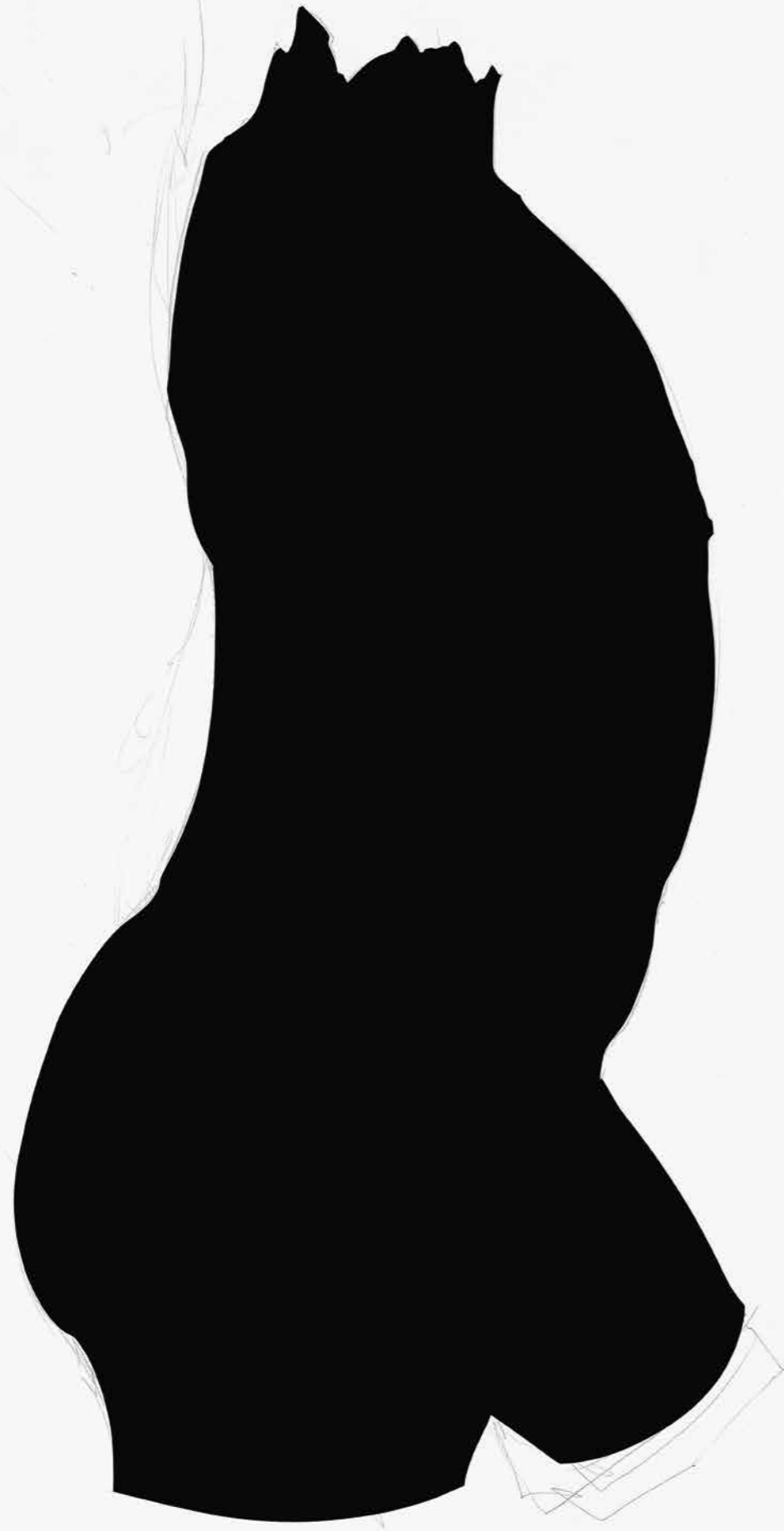












1989
Bart
Karl



news
My
I will
child
Body
This is a takeover of our homeland
This is what revolution feels like
You wanted me to be Emotionally Available
But only to you

Dream

I am -

Someone is doing a FaceTime/Videocall with Haylah
I can't see her / The phone is angled away from me and I hear her say
"is Kara here - Can she hear me?" And I realize she wants to Dish on
Baldmont to me, but I decide I'm not going to leave so the person sitting in a
chair angles the phone around ~~so~~ so I can be seen by her and I am
wearing a sweater and underwear only. I put my arms in the air like
"I am here" and then I realize ~~that~~ Haylah is in a public place where people
might see me in my underwear and I am halfway between - wanting to hide and
staying put, standing my ground.

NEXT SCENE. Me and my self ~~the self~~ ^{myself} making breakfast. One self is
saying "shall we add fruit?" to the cereal. The other self says (or thinks) yes
~~sure~~ and reaches for a pear -
A pair of selves.

Dream (after viewing the film "us") I am in a large space - the TURBINE HALL or
Domino Sugar

← can't remember →

I'm ~~looking~~ looking ~~at~~ at myself from a few years back seeing myself
looking drawn and sad I give my past self a ^{big} hug and tell her
that things are going to be better in the future ~~there~~
and my past self recalls a time of feeling embraced
and realizes it must have been future me doing it.

Oct. 5.

Dream.

1st.

Oldish / midage ^{White} woman - Segregated

by a room - from someone unseen sitting in his chair - She tells me / ^{him} she's going back

to the "ghetto" which I take to mean Germany

Between wars ^{she is Jewish} she has a cat in her place, which looks like a small girl - She is confidently giving up the girl

to a different life in the other ^{room} ^{or she cannot offer all that other room promises} Because they have nothing, no food, no hope.

Handwritten notes:
She is the Mother of Helen Hunt in "As good as it Gets" which I watched last Sun.
A nurturer to a single mom with a chronically sick child - is really a cat in the dream

There was something before this with me driving, talking alot about the week experiences to a group of women older than me - reminds me of talking to Dana last night ^{on phone} + her isolation? her cat / children and the dream jump cut to

5271 Walker road - looking from outside into living room Klaus father is inside he looks very old, ^{Thin} Sad and alot

like Louis Muller He has several dolls (of Octavias) so Phineas Dodo + Dodo climbing all over him - or he is pretending they are and making them

talk + talking to them he is sitting in a chair facing the window Rocking Back + forth He places "Swim do-do" on his right shoulder and she seems animated for a second - he ~~is~~ talking but I cannot hear so I enter the front door and stand in the

foyer And I want to speak to him - (don't recall what I want to say) but I realize that I can't under stand him, whatever he is saying sounds loud but indiscernible German or gibberish?

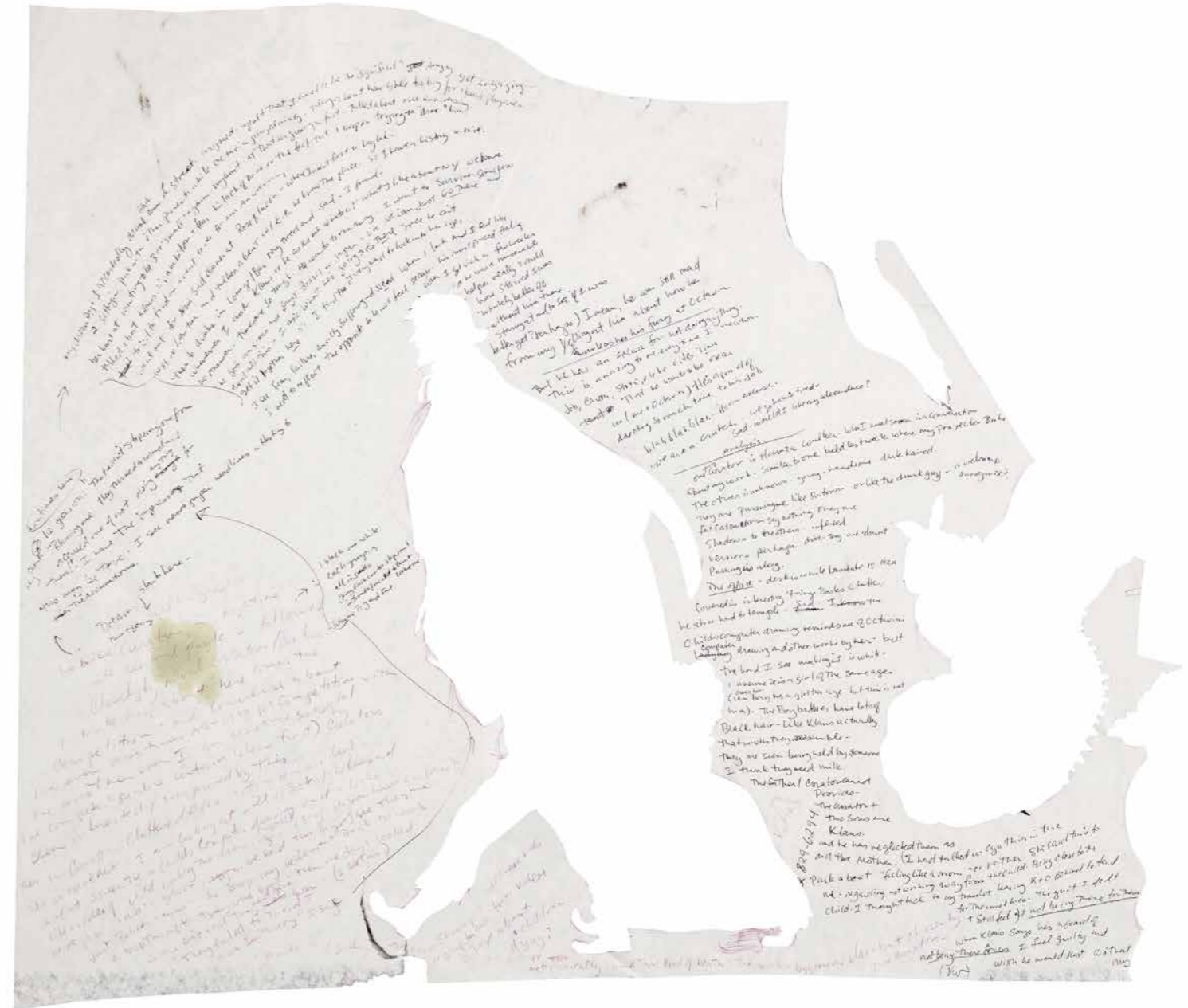
Handwritten notes:
in particular the day I was a "superman" got upon Pan Cakes - did all this and that and got to school & then realized I was Beat Fred and taken nap.

Herman + Louis Muller - one is a substitute father figure who "betrayed" Klaus covered w/ dolls 3 dolls I am outside looking in -

my parent living room Birthday connection ^{my} Dad is Libra, Octavia is Libra Bpa (Hermann) is Libra father and daughters. 2. I don't like Louis + Herman is also up for grabs as a man who damaged Klaus' self-esteem. Dollo are Octavias Comfort / self esteem - Dollo are slightly animated as though they wish to impart Octavias good will - He is rocking back + forth - she isn't behind him. (last week Swiss gave lecture on "Pygmalion" and ^{artist} Animated dolls.)

I had a mini breakdown or through last week in which I Blamed my Mother + Sisters early "abandonment" of me for my relative lack of social + domestic skills. ^{My} failures as a normal human they are not in this dream but my eyes are alone and Klaus did also ~~blame~~ accuse others of ABANDONING HIM - HERS ALONE in my house He ^{was} always been prevented from "returning home" he has 3 sons who he is jealous of

Handwritten initials: KW



DREAMS

110/8-9

image of octavia being crushed by bookshelf-or ~~hax~~bureau- says : "eewwch!!"

i go to her. *yesterday smashed her hand in closet door*

a few days ago

~~xxx~~ I am near the big playground at PS165 (Octavia's school)

watching as a bigger girl hangs upside down from the monkey bars- she falls and kind of telescoped inter herself, crumples in a heap. Her mother- who is blonde- is talking to (me) and not paying attention- she turns- sees her daughter has fallen and runs to her in a horrified panic that her daughter is dead- I feel this panic acutely but do not respond- for fear or not knowing

the mother is cradling the girl- back to me- she's wearing a beige raincoat

i sense that the girl is not dead- maybe a concussion, but still- hurt.

i do not move.

panic about these and every possible accident these days until I can't stand it.
days before that - am late for school- we have crits and Klaus and I are

teaching- class is scheduled for 7:30 am I run in the darkened seminar room

and tell Martin we will be running late ^{10 minutes} I'm also panicky because the time

is also "critical" and my authority is waning now that I have made this mistake *OR needing to tend to my family instead of my profession - embarrassed - a like a dark*
rush home to see if Klaus is ready- He is not. He's standing in the room (closet?)

trying to wipe a big spill from his pants and I notice that the pants leg

that is stained also has a massive tear in it all the way up ~~xxxx~~ almost.

I ask myself "Where is Octavia?" ^{irreal} as she is also late for school and she needs

to be taken care of first- can't leave her alone after all- we are all on

the schoolbus, riding in the early morning darkness, trees pass by our window-

I know we are going to be very late getting back- and I wonder where the school

is- it seems far, it's taking a long time to get there. Klaus is in the very

back seat, right behind me- I ask again "where's Octavia?" and look behind me

where she has fallen asleep with her backpack on, curled up on the seat.

I see the school, it looks like a lowslung compound with colorful brick tiles

the sun must be starting to rise as I can make out the orange of one of the school buildings. I worry about how long it will take to get back how much time has been lost for senior crits.

reflective
The Pant leg. Klaus has just left to tend to his ill father- his timing is "off" as his father has long been sick and long reprimanded him (passively) for not tending to his needs. The night of the dream I spilled juice on the carpet and did a Bad job (at first) of cleaning it up.

Klaus is very vigorously rubbing the Pant leg even though it is only water. and he is in a room full of clothes hanging* which means he could easily change them but he doggedly continues destroying parts.

I don't say anything to this, in fact my reaction is one of almost rolling my eyes at his quest for ~~being~~ neatness - Being unstained - guilt free -

Klaus feels a lot of guilt about his family standing. Klaus is very "used to" being made to feel guilty and worries a lot about being "Blamed". I see him as being misguided in these associations - my eye rolling says - "see - he's at it again and only making things worse" - making us late for our job* - our job is represented by schools.

My career path / desire for Authority represented by my fears talking with Martin. Martin is the only clearly delineated figure in the dark classroom - he is the only skilled painter in the class and represents any success I have at teaching. but he doesn't really listen, he ~~is~~ socks up though

Everything is "DARK" Dark classroom, Dark closet, it's not even light enough to be morning on the bus. Seems like I was aware of myself sleeping unaware of any real time surroundings while I dreamt

sp. impact
I am Blaming him for ruining another chance (PARTS) ^{assume w/} for our profession. I put him in the "Backseat" right behind me and don't seem to see him. But I look for Octavia. She is never there - or is she so close? She is sleeping innocently unaware of this dynamic - it existed before she did, anyway.

* he has many options but can only see the one, unworkable solution

and for leaving, I suppose at the beginning of the semester..

but



makes me embarrassed at having to tend to his needs - which is dressing himself in this case. I don't wish to neglect my ~~the~~ "student my children" like Klaus' mom who was dressing his dad - And she left for a moment and he went to head and put his Pants on and that is how the trouble started this time. He had embarrassing trouble

Putting his pants on (left his shoes on, tripped, fell, Broke his femur) ^{sleeping, against me}

Perhaps in the dream Octavia is ^{my mind} ^{represents} ^{the} student class at school ^{which} I'm very concerned about Octavia (I worry a lot about picking up Octavia on time)

* Also if Octavia represents "ME" School Bus riding Small town presence then maybe "Klaus" is really his Father in the dream, with the pants he has really messed his leg up - and is only making it worse - causing me to react with quiet disbelief at his kind of fruitless activities and causing me to forge ahead into my identity ^{"OCTAVIA"} while Martin represents.

Octavia - a pretty good student. who I leave at a chair at school. as I do every day. who I am anxious about abandoning

maybe all in all, the dream represents the fulfillment of the wish for a freedom from responsibility. seeing Klaus/hermann irresponsibly destroying the leg when trying to take responsibility over their prior actions causes me to regress to a time (dreamtime-in the dark) when other people did the driving- I take the whole family along for the bus ride- NY is a place where one can have things "done" for you- we never see the driver of the bus- it is just a ride. Inside however, I am anxious to get back to the thing I take responsibility for- to maintain the position of authority I enjoy as teacher/mother I know the class is waiting and I worry how long they will trust me (leaving in this way, to take care of "myself", myself, the me before I was also Klaus and Octavia. the me outside of the school- is reminiscent of my leaving for the studio/for work counting out the time until I get back...

(I can't bear to look on the embarrassing heroics of saving the pants.) I replace them for him with a closet full of Black Pants. which he ignores. My mind set about NY. replace ^{his small town} the power struggle with limitless options-

or freedom from complexity or self-defeat or that's it

I am worried almost exclusively about "getting Back" Even though getting Octavia to school takes priority it is almost ^{or without} ^{panic} without question that Octavia needs her routine The only thing I can't figure out is why: "Where's Octavia" always comes up. when does she fit in this drama? when she sleeps (through my dream) she is her own person quite independent of me. and when I ^{turned from} ~~left~~ Klaus to wonder about her (sense of she was somewhere in the apartment (the redirection of Klaus' Closet is actually where the Telephone is in our room so we can infer that he's there not really there but away - in the telephone) ^{maybe she's} doing her thing - playing or whatever.

The Bus ride is nostalgic, reminds me of early busing to school in 3rd grade. I was "independent" then ^{taking the bus} ^{recall coming into my own mind} a bit on the long ride to school. ^(The bus is a vehicle that takes us from home to knowledge)

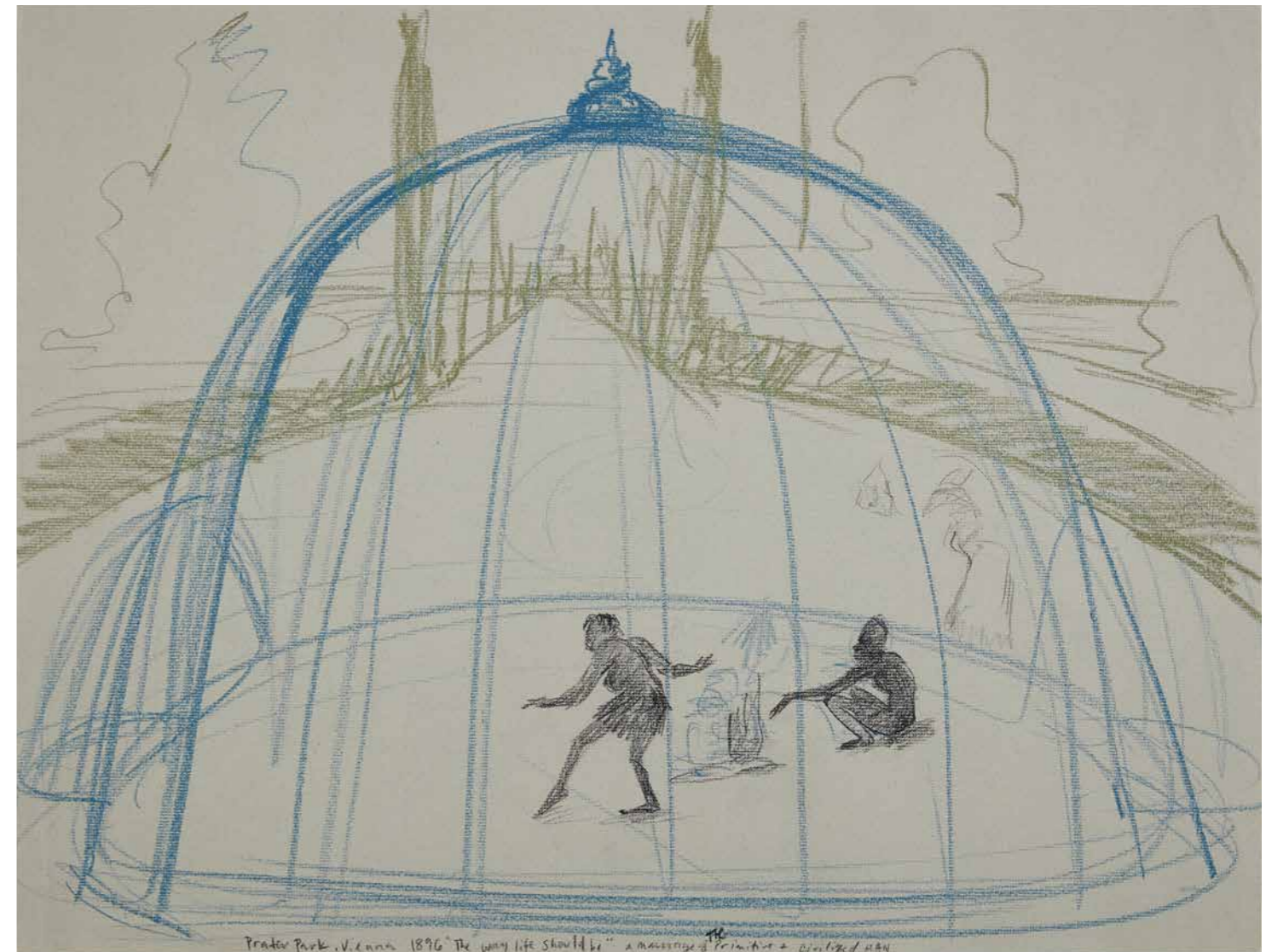
The Bus ride reminds me of a tour bus on Martha's Vineyard before Octavia was born. just that there's a wall of trees on the right side. ^(Martha's Vineyard is a place I would like to exile us to sometimes.) ^{or a place like it - the country. we are not going to a school in}

the city. "Where's Octavia" is a question I have asked myself before ^{event between} when conjuring up memories of ~~the~~ Klaus + I - and then I recall "oh, she was not born then!" ^{but she and I both do, currently} ~~she's~~ curled up like a baby I'm lead to believe this dream is pointing to dynamics that existed between Klaus + I before and now ^{from him} that she is here I can more easily distance myself for meet her needs

(always has this acute sense that she was there even when not. have I linked her identity with mine that much?)

than I can ^{professional?} myself or his - and ~~that~~ I see Klaus as unable to meet my needs because he has a ~~great~~ ^{big} closet full of issues he can't neglect. we are supposed to collaborate on the "class" that also is ~~totally~~ "understood" we are partners in the education of (Martin + others) Martin who is an Octavia substitute talented but unresolved agreeable but questioning (my authority) Cool and attractive as my partner ~~in~~ Klaus' absence

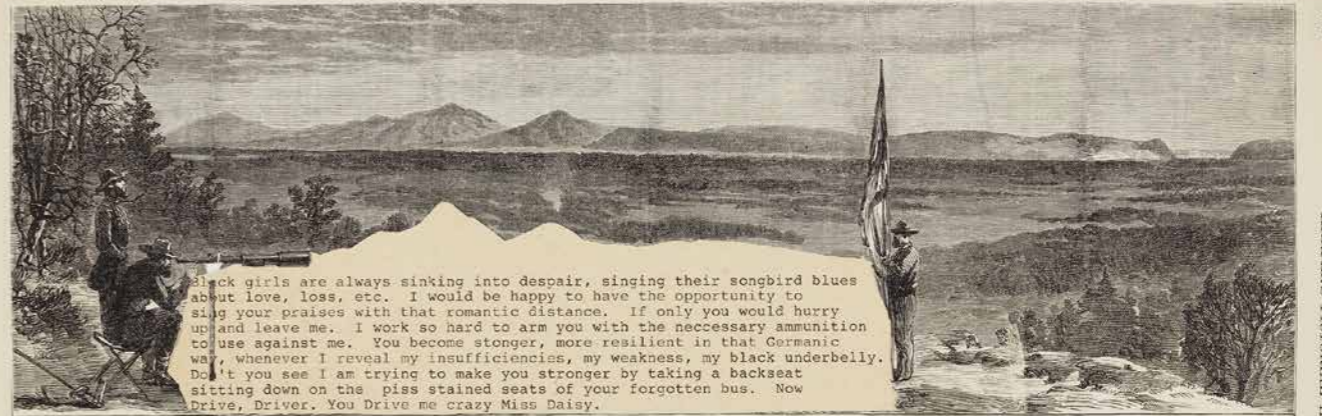
W



Prater Park, Vienna 1896 "The way life should be" a message of primitive + civilized MAN



THE FORT PILLOW MASSACRE.



Black girls are always sinking into despair, singing their songbird blues about love, loss, etc. I would be happy to have the opportunity to sing your praises with that romantic distance. If only you would hurry up and leave me. I work so hard to arm you with the necessary ammunition to use against me. You become stonger, more resilient in that Germanic way, whenever I reveal my insufficiencies, my weakness, my black underbelly. Don't you see I am trying to make you stronger by taking a backseat sitting down on the piss stained seats of your forgotten bus. Now Drive, Driver. You Drive me crazy Miss Daisy.

THE ADVANCE SIGNAL-STATION NEAR RINGGOLD, GEORGIA.

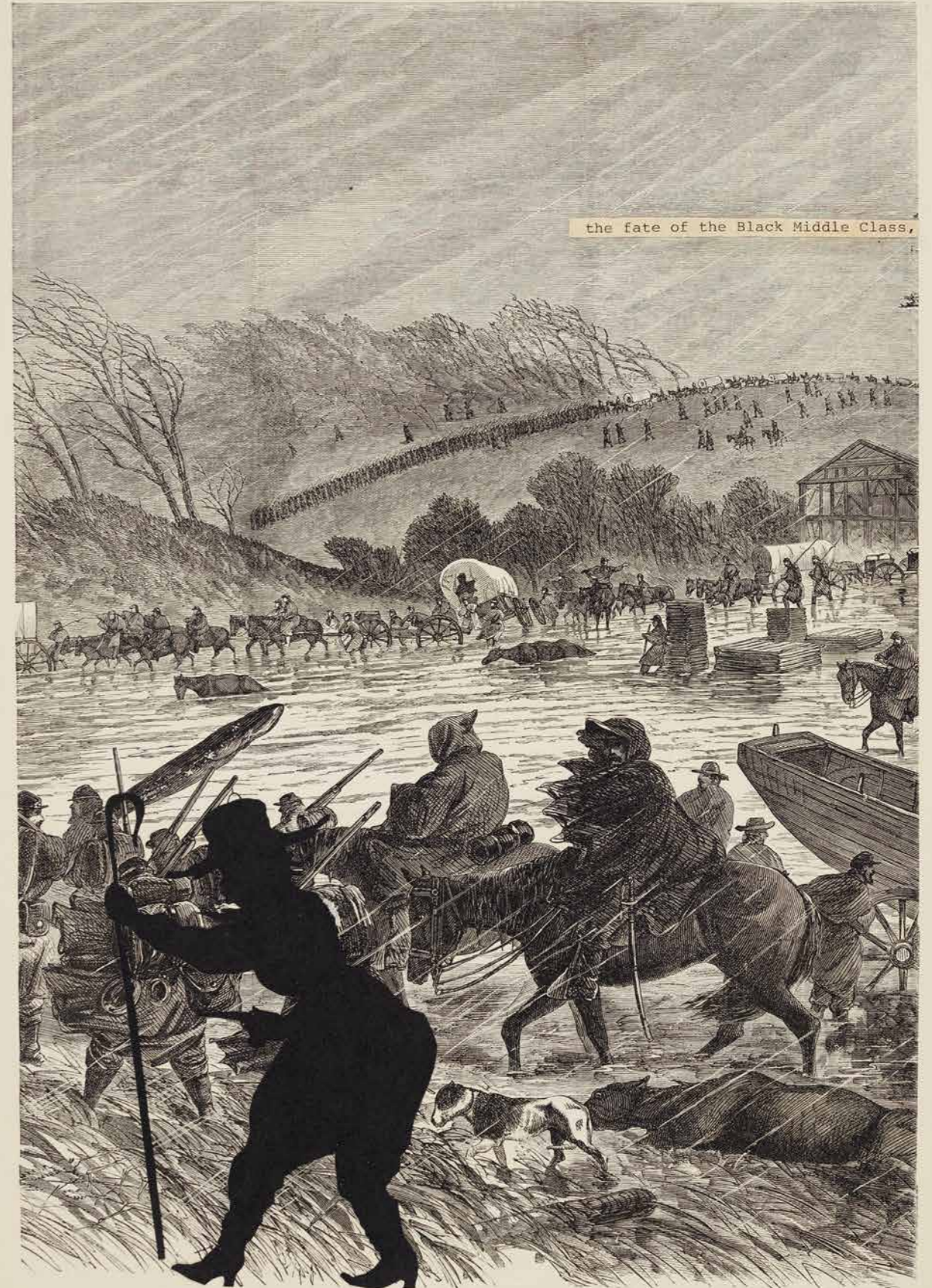


Instead, you force me to take the only recourse left. I will become a master to my perennial slave. My fate into my own hands, and the requisite abuse as well. you more completely than you can yourself. A master to my perennial slave. My fate into my own hands, and the requisite abuse as well. feet don't fail me now.

RINGGOLD, GEORGIA.

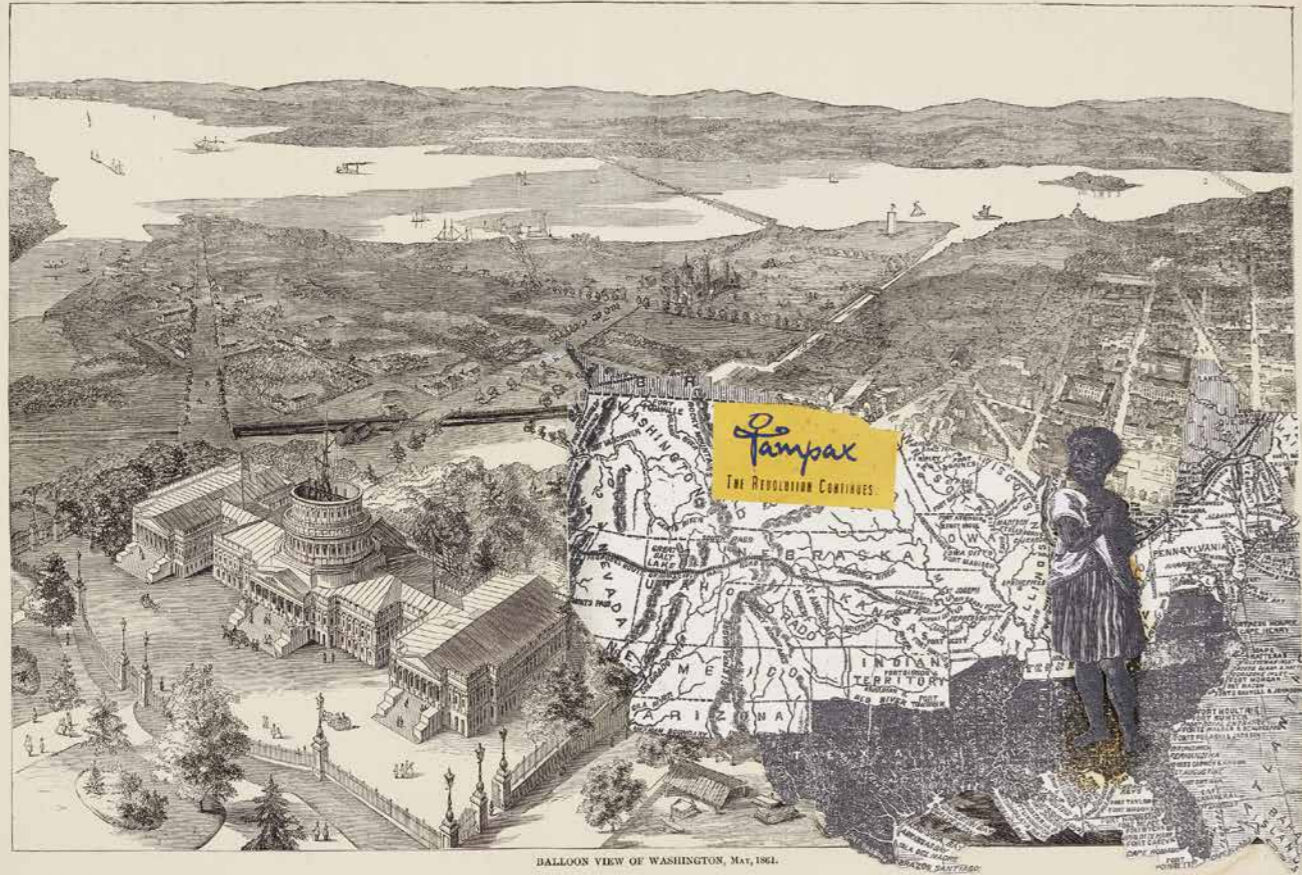


THE ASSAULT ON FORT



the fate of the Black Middle Class,

THE CAMPAIGN



BALLOON VIEW OF WASHINGTON, MAY, 1861.



CREVASSE ON THE LOWER MISSISSIPPI.



Mankind.

When will you ever listen? kind of doesnt matter, never matters.
Im counting on you to forget, even, that we had this conversation
where you told me, point blank, held me to your absolute position
that there was no future, no future between us. that My future was my own
and so, although it took me months (12) to realize what you said was true
as true as wh t your body did to spite your mouth. your words
still bit into teflon black skin is less sensitive than white, thicker.
more able to put up with abuse.
denser even and here, am I, unknowing of myself, even, quietly resisting
your dumbass declaration. believing the parts I want to believe. delusional.
deliriously phantasmagorically in love with the Love you offered me.
pure reflection of myself. You held me up a mirror and
I loved what I seed there.

I seed there an image of my strong lean white masculine muscular
tanned, self, perfection of a male species. I seed there a tenacious
hilarious worker, a strength drawing critter able to pull whole worlds out
of he emptiness of his being. That I loved. The Imaginative boy. Playing the
role of master planner, acting like a MAN. not wholly sure if being a woman
wasnt preferable
never able to decide on a name, or a tattoo. Never able to wholly be in love
withought draconian conditions put upon the othe dont look me in the eyes
sado_Masoch

In there I saw the Black(W)hole. My black (W)hole.
my familiar. witchcraft voodoo practitioner. Dont get on my bad side.
I am the light. the warm soft glow that lures sailors and moths
to paradise or doom however you see it. You who is attuned to darkness
only see darkness, light is hinted at, giving shape to
your black surfaces.

you look at me and see black surface, see historys slavery and darkly
scoff that your people have had it worse.

you look at my black surface and the surface others and surmise
that our joyous anger is more powerful than the oppressed people could
muster. our joyous anger gives worldw...

Im sick of talking about you.
and your goddamned world view.

Please dont get me paranoid. when it comes to babals and groupthink
and corruption and violence I realize that trying to be an island
(No Woman Islnd) isnt any safer, avoiding the systems of power that
seek to destroy you isnt possible, only mass delusion makesit seem so.
consume more media. draw more pictures. Make it all look palatable or
presentable.

so that thought may be glossed over, delusions reinforced.

repetition is the order of the day. repeated assaults. unlearned lessons.

common sense

knock some into your head.

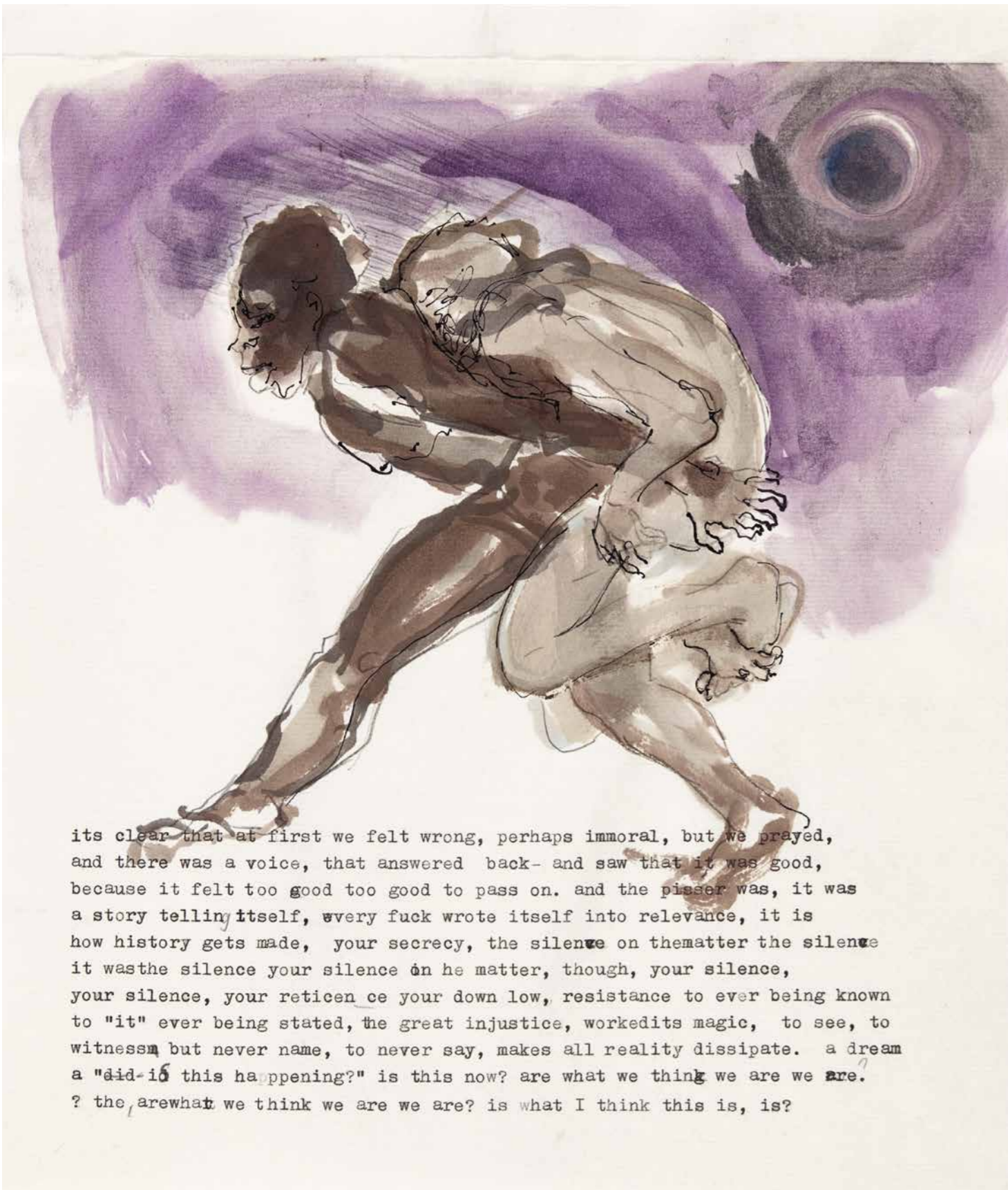
only idiots repeat the mistakes they swore theyd never make again
and only fools relish being called idiots.

but what of the "wise woman" status youve been afforded? what are we to do
with that?

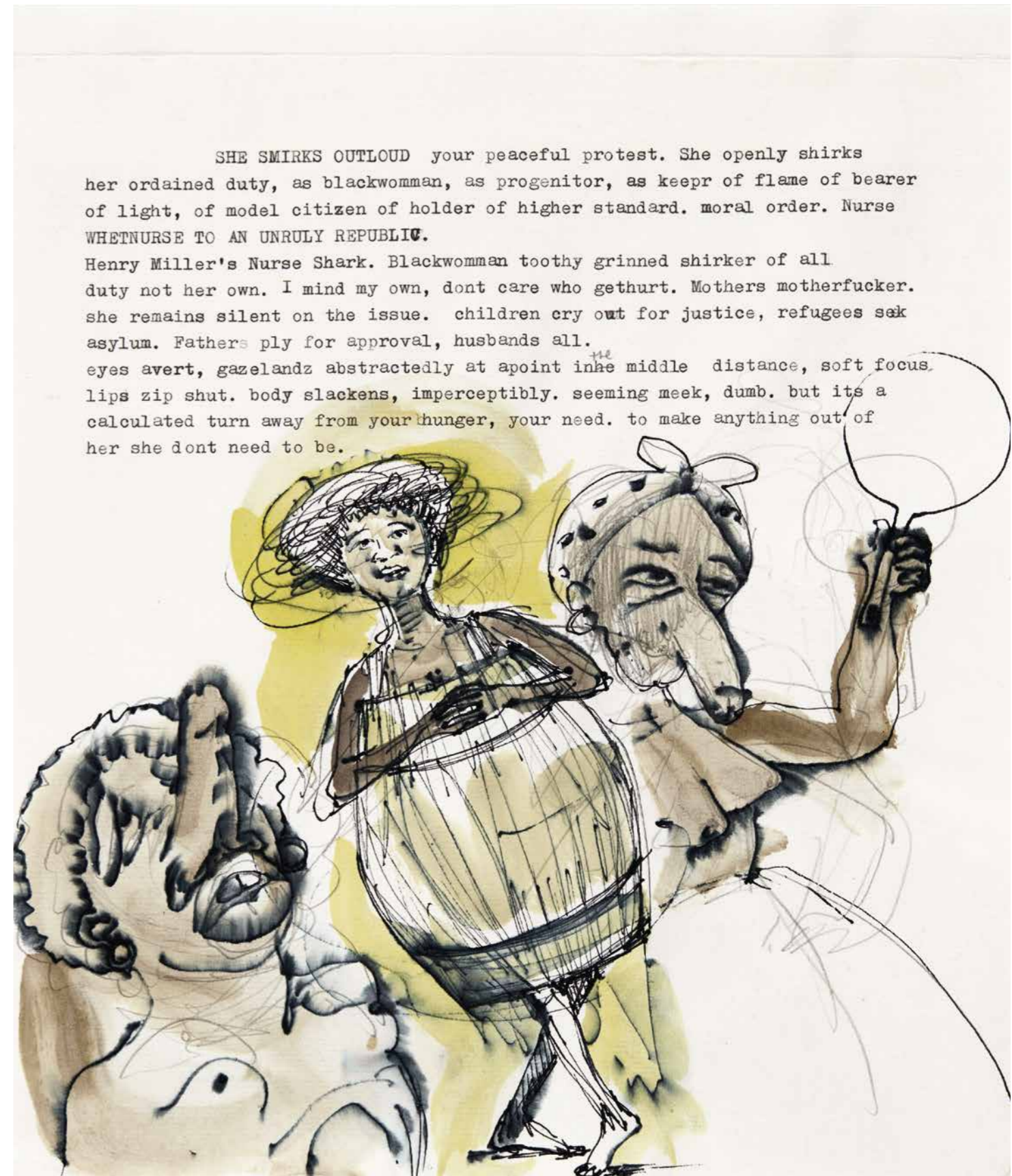
repetition

not a great beauty (of he south or anywhere)

no one ever tells Atlanta she is beautiful, just busy. gettin busy in the
dirty south. How does that leave Atlanta feeling? Loved for her work
ethic and sense of style? never complimented for originality or
grace. neither a lumbering workhorse



its clear that at first we felt wrong, perhaps immoral, but we prayed,
and there was a voice, that answered back- and saw that it was good,
because it felt too good too good to pass on. and the pissar was, it was
a story tellin^g itself, wvery fuck wrote itself into relevance, it is
how history gets made, your secrecy, the silence on thematter the silence
it wasthe silence your silence on he matter, though, your silence,
your silence, your reticen^{ce} ce your down low, resistance to ever being known
to "it" ever being stated, the great injustice, workedits magic, to see, to
witness^m but never name, to never say, makes all reality dissipate. a dream
a "did-^{is} this happening?" is this now? are what we think we are we are?
? the, arewhat we think we are we are? is what I think this is, is?



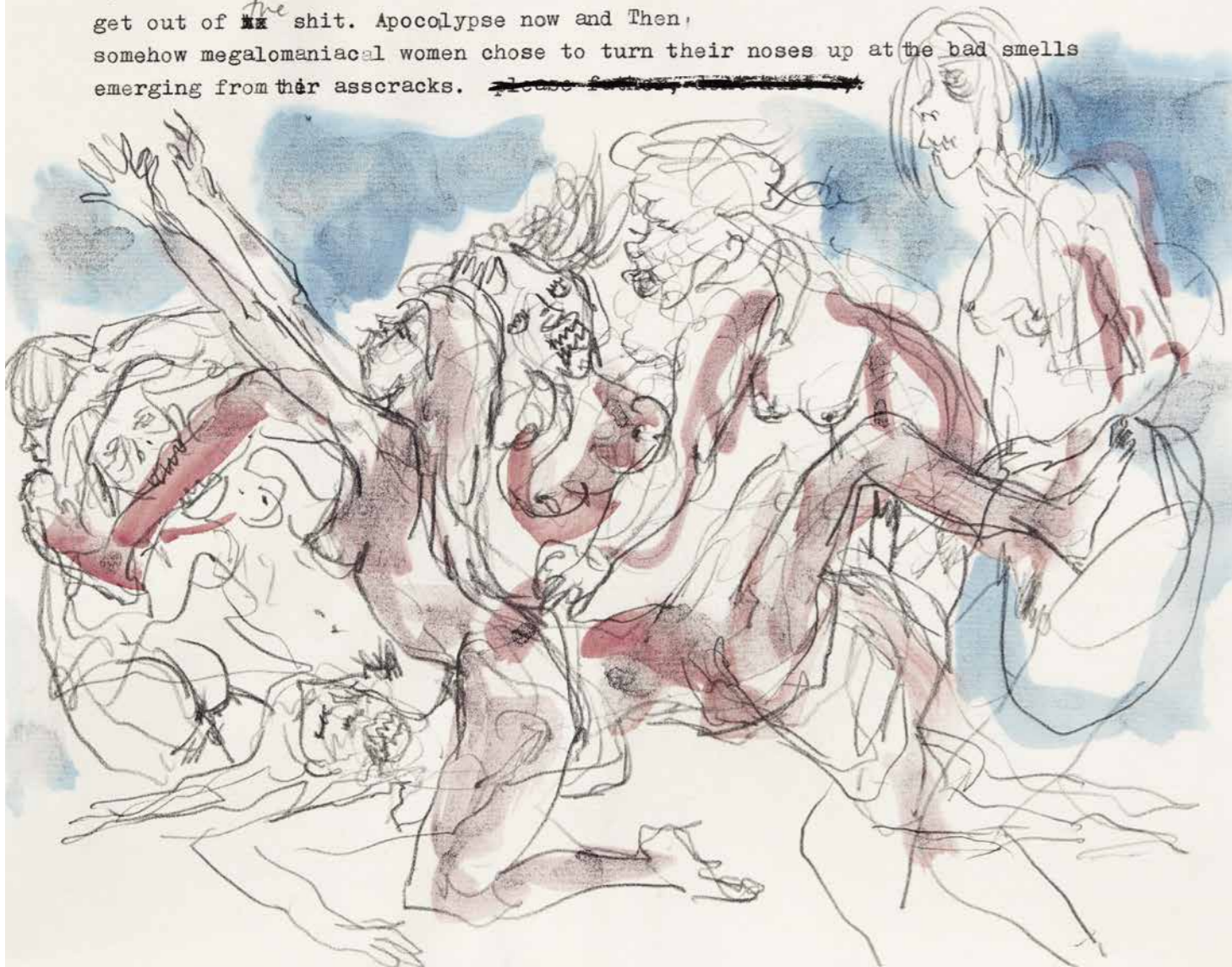
SHE SMIRKS OUTLOUD your peaceful protest. She openly shirks
her ordained duty, as blackwomman, as progenitor, as keep^r of flame of bearer
of light, of model citizen of holder of higher standard. moral order. Nurse
WHETNURSE TO AN UNRULY REPUBLIC.

Henry Miller's Nurse Shark. Blackwomman toothy grinned shirker of all
duty not her own. I mind my own, dont care who gethurt. Mothers motherfucker.
she remains silent on the issue. children cry out for justice, refugees sek
asylum. Fathers ply for approval, husbands all.
eyes avert, gazelandz abstractedly at apoint ^{the} inke middle distance, soft focus.
lips zip shut. body slackens, imperceptibly. seeming meek, dumb. but its a
calculated turn away from your hunger, your need. to make anything out of
her she dont need to be.

I can only imagine now, from the ruins of Tara, what all they must have think they seen. of our "way of life" torpor, lust, filth, red earth, dust, grime gardens ofokra and vines of tomatoes perhaps withered in the sun, perhaps slave quarters where you/me fuck ed asswise, with zero protection, for her/my own good and the health of her/my intestines which were always bad when she/I waswith You/it . Prolife, silene=death its a wonder. really that you/me dont get that shit checkedout. fatalism.

lost causers.

beautiful deaths that we knowbetter than to subject our innocent loved oneswith. get out of ~~the~~ shit. Apocolypse now and Then, somehow megalomaniacal women chose to turn their noses up at the bad smells emerging from their asscracks. ~~please for my sake~~



they the devout good women of the cause. caught up in his mysteries. they keep the fires burning on the home front (dont write him back) they make the fight worth fighting. they BELIVE more than he, who hates his father and becomes him.

they bolster and ADORE the way he destroys whole cities of himself. she is killer thug in modest mother disguise. I am she and a notch bolder no weapons at my disposal. just beliefs a profoundly dangerous absence of doubt. sometimes the presence of another feeling - a blank space where fear or doubt might rest a dark slug in an otherwise pristine white space. that is me. that is it, that was us. Slug LifeMatters. activists, make life too easy.. palatable the unassailable the mixed up and raging. raging bloodthirsty. animal. instinctual.

Ifwe had weapons and a desirefor discomfrt we could take out the monuments, by force, not such wan actions. Removing the Jefferson Davis monument, for instance, to go where? destroy it! take it out of hiding treat it to the bold unafraid treatment of blacks in the South and in America - have it bound and arrested, enmeshed in a network of go to Jail. do not pass go.

United Daughter of the Confederacy.

so polite demure decorum so full of domesticate shi t such a panty-waist such a foul stink assed

"lady"

still dwelling on what scarlett did wrong and how she could make right for noone but herself I believe no one but herself.

HOMME FATALE

STONEY Mountain

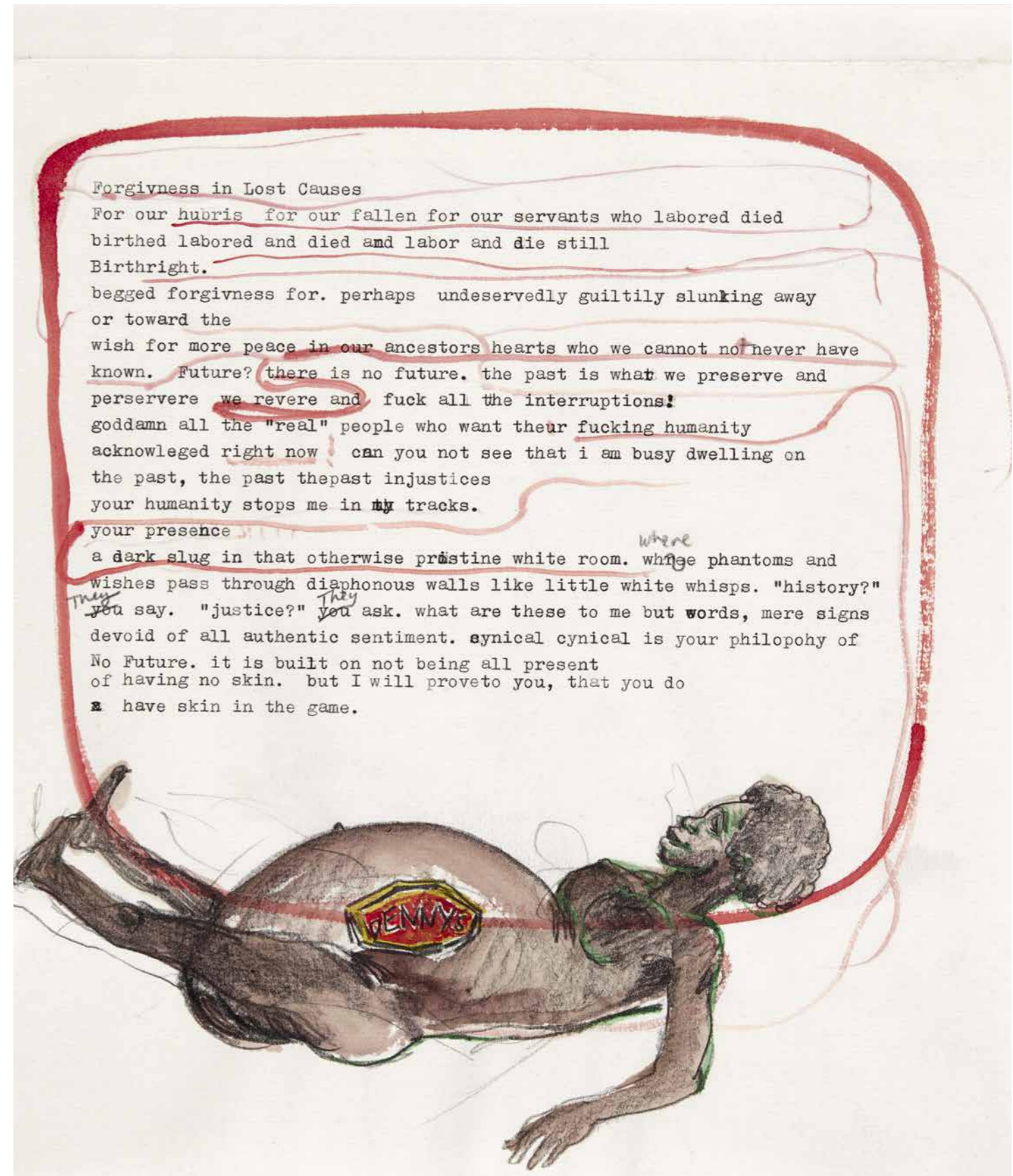
here are we. fallen worshippers of some fallen angel, couldnt even complete the task of creation without revolt. ha, your rebellion is written into the pale skin youre in. Bonnie Blue Eyes. green with envy.

we, in criholine march forth and fall short into a pit of our own devising an avalanche of misplaced emotions blasted out of granite cut with false precision chisled out by jackhammer force. yes, luncheon on the rock. midafternoon staredown. red earth, blazing sun. force of memory. unkind memory.

"WE DID NOTHING WRONG" only whatwe believed in, gettin it for ourselves no society approval needed. disdain secretly wished for.



Bodies piled up under the rubble. How many lives lost? What "Way of Life?" pleading your case, which was, your life was a failure, a flop, a misery a torpid steaming pile of poop and faking it wasn't working. Embracing it, the shitty badly planned, poorly executed nobility you practiced. Only a clear eyed Stinker of a lost cause would do. soldier par excellence come to me, sweep up your ashes with my ready soul/ burn out your demons with the embers of my ambition. lets set this place ablaze, again
ATLANTA DELIGHT



Forgiveness in Lost Causes

For our hubris for our fallen for our servants who labored died birthed labored and died and labor and die still Birthright.

begged forgiveness for. perhaps undeservedly guiltily slunking away or toward the wish for more peace in our ancestors hearts who we cannot no never have known. Future? there is no future. the past is what we preserve and perservere we revere and fuck all the interruptions! goddamn all the "real" people who want their fucking humanity acknowledged right now! can you not see that i am busy dwelling on the past, the past thepast injustices your humanity stops me in my tracks.

your presence

a dark slug in that otherwise pristine white room. ^{where} white phantoms and wishes pass through diaphonous walls like little white whisps. "history?" ^{They} you say. "justice?" ^{They} you ask. what are these to me but words, mere signs devoid of all authentic sentiment. cynical cynical is your philophy of No Future. it is built on not being all present of having no skin. but I will proveto you, that you do have skin in the game.



How it goes.

Lost causes breathe their own life into stagnant, no, clear lungs
heart palpating wildly at the new order of old things. the scenario
I keep calling it that, although I am looking at a play. a tableau before me
possible outcomes. decisions. rushing to a conclusion rather than hanging h
here, mid air. Lost causes state their mindless case. "where are you, how
are you? hello? please I am not well, don't answer, be well, help me. help
me, I can't sleep, I'm drowning in desire, no, not desire for you
just desire to control you, to control your possible outcomes.

You lose.

Friend, it is the other way around. You Lost. Causes. war fought
valiant loser, valiant lover, valiant soldier. valiant save your face
from mine, wave it away from me. I will not

be defeat. don't fail me now.

what theater of war is this? I'm in Peacetime America I don't wish to care
what refugee crisis you've precipitated over there. I don't wish to know
who is a migrant dying in frozen transport truck to a closed border.
I care not to see which lives matter most. Insular. Insular inward looking
navel gazer. black lives only don't matter in America. closed border stuff.
short sighted inner city community workshop stuff. Nothing else matters
when only Black lives are proposed to be mattering.

our last stand. Our lost cause, is the stuff we've made up
it's the skin I and we are in, collective skin covering the ~~me~~ crowd
the blob.

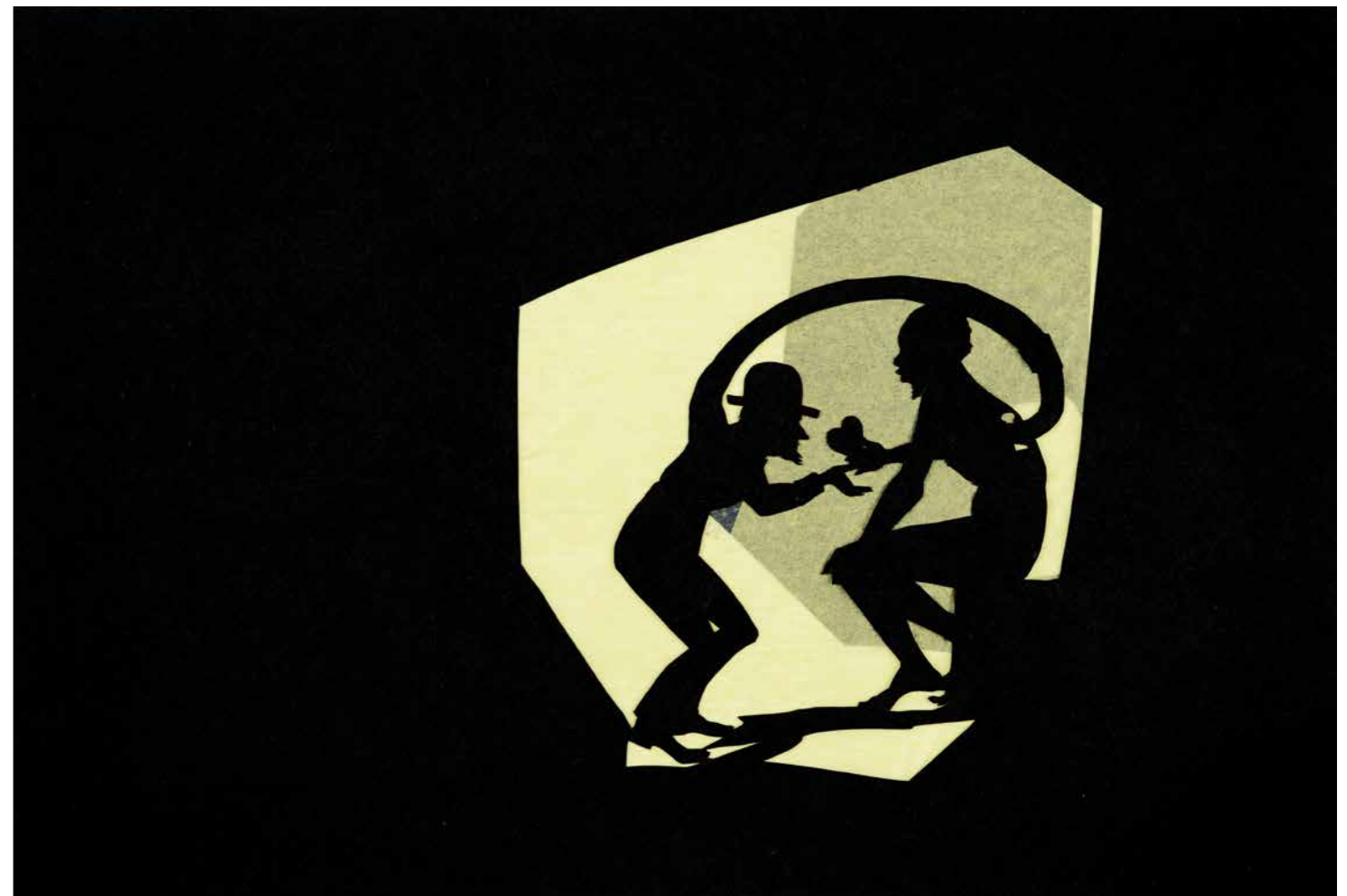
run away in fear girl friend, run away don't hover around or dig yourself
deeper under cover of sadness in the guise of philosophy. low rent, unstudied
existentialism. don't remind me of the violent state building in Syria. we
expect them to implode but they won't, not without taking us and our Black Lives
with them. discrimination and religiously held racism is the food that
makes America lose its soul give up ~~the~~ its ghost to the craziest and richest
bidder. Iran Nuclear deal? Nigger Please.

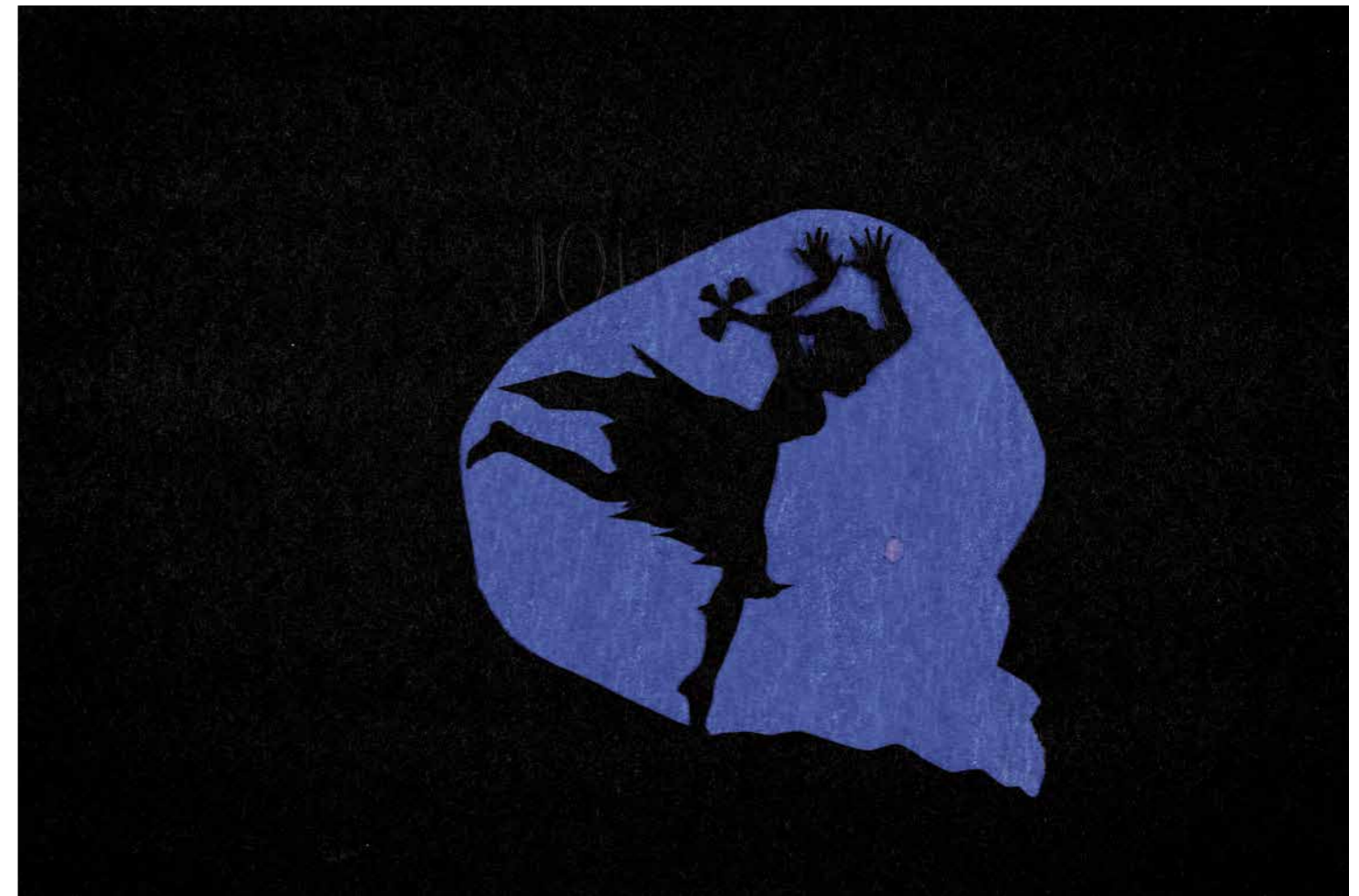
some people got to put food on the table I ain't got time for ISIS or ISIL
or whatever the hell they calling themselves today. blowing up shit it's the
girls who go who are most dangerous anyway. It's the girls who submit themselves
before an unjust god and a trigger happy boy.. oh boy. been there, done that.



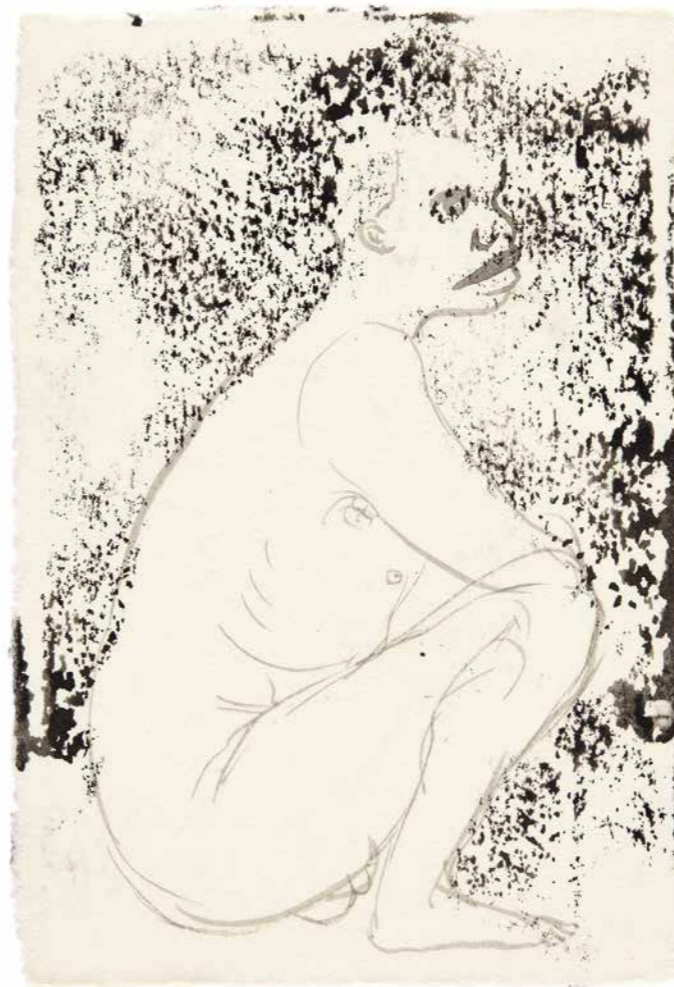
convulsions. Confederate peripatetic. demise, slow, unearthly disintegration
SEPERATISM. seams ripping skin tearing from bone. screams of little children
~~xxx~~ mingled with giggles, toe tickles, FATALISM. PATHOS. ALAM BELLS.
NOMORETEARS.

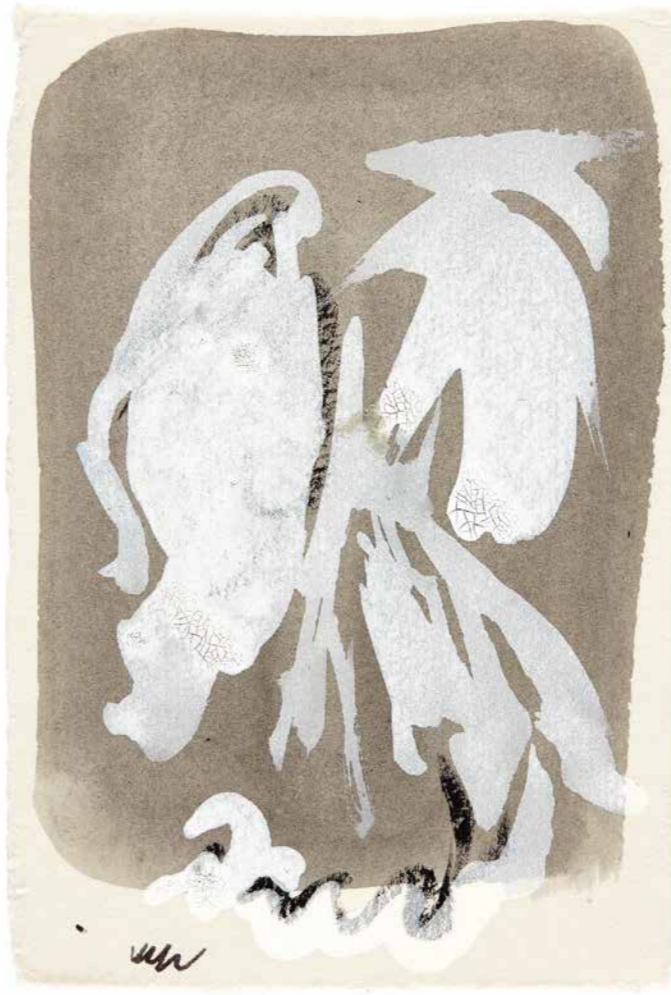
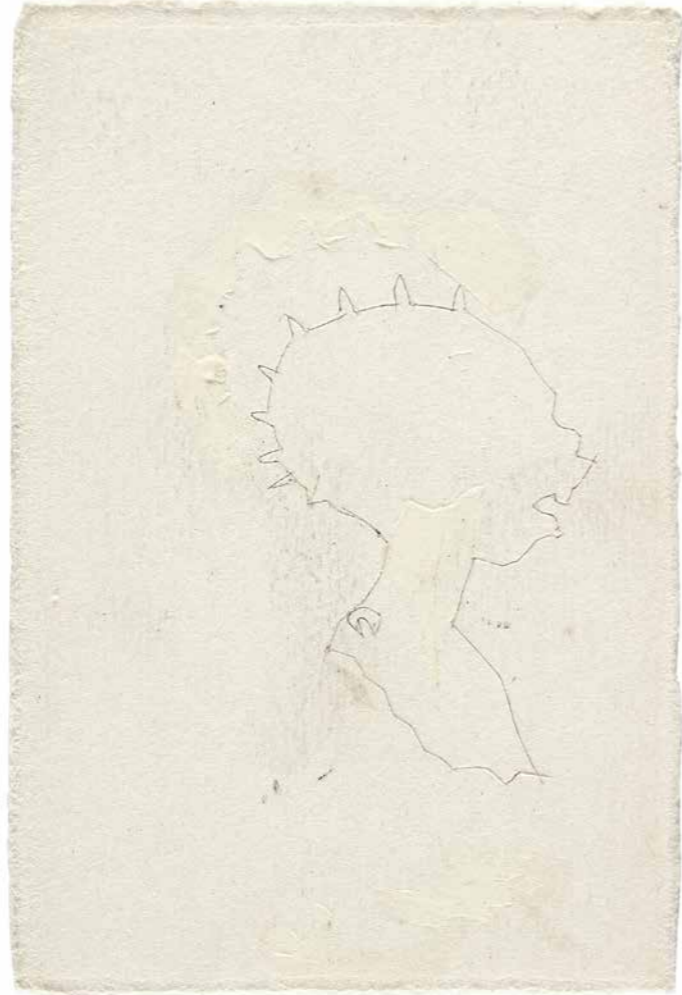
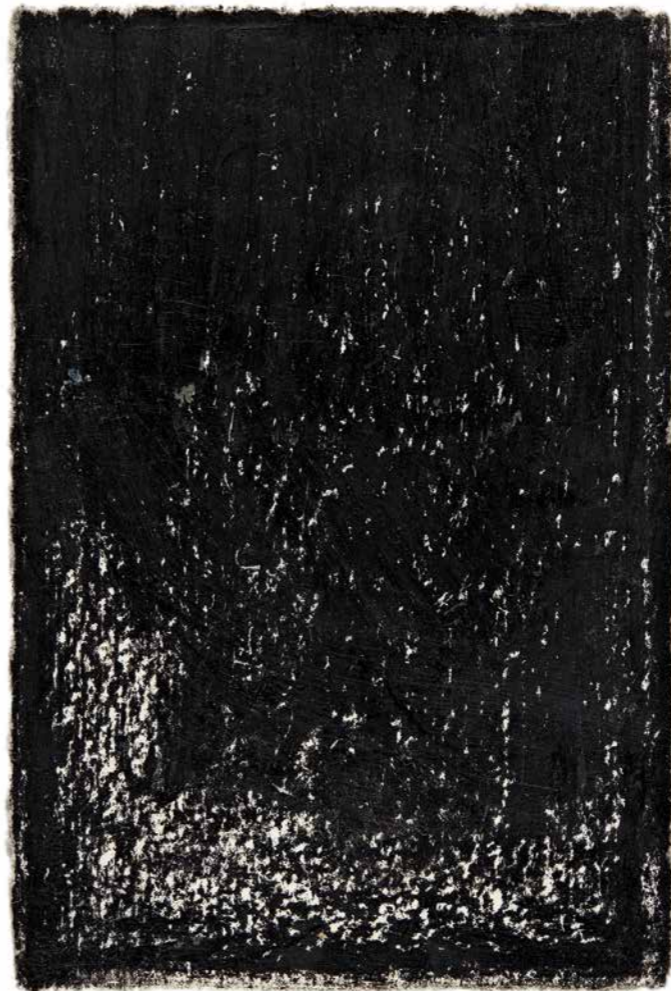
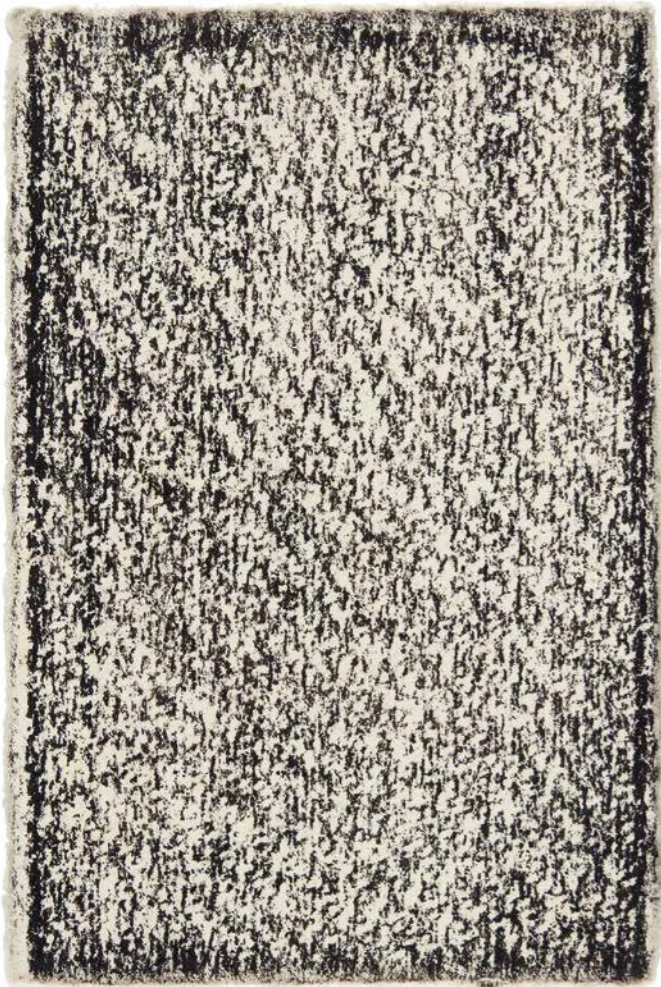
shots fired, peacetime protest. riot police. tear gas, stampede justice.
pining for the golden days, the eden passed over, her past innocence. her, not
never not knowing. her mother's silence on the issue. her silence, her eyes
turned away, her non speaking on the matters of life or death on hand that
very moment.

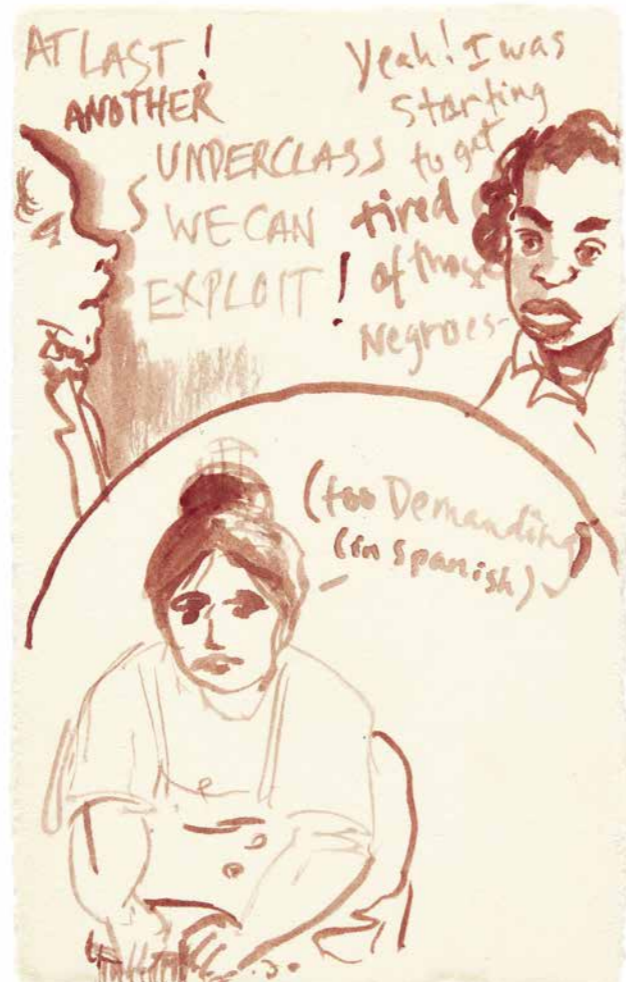




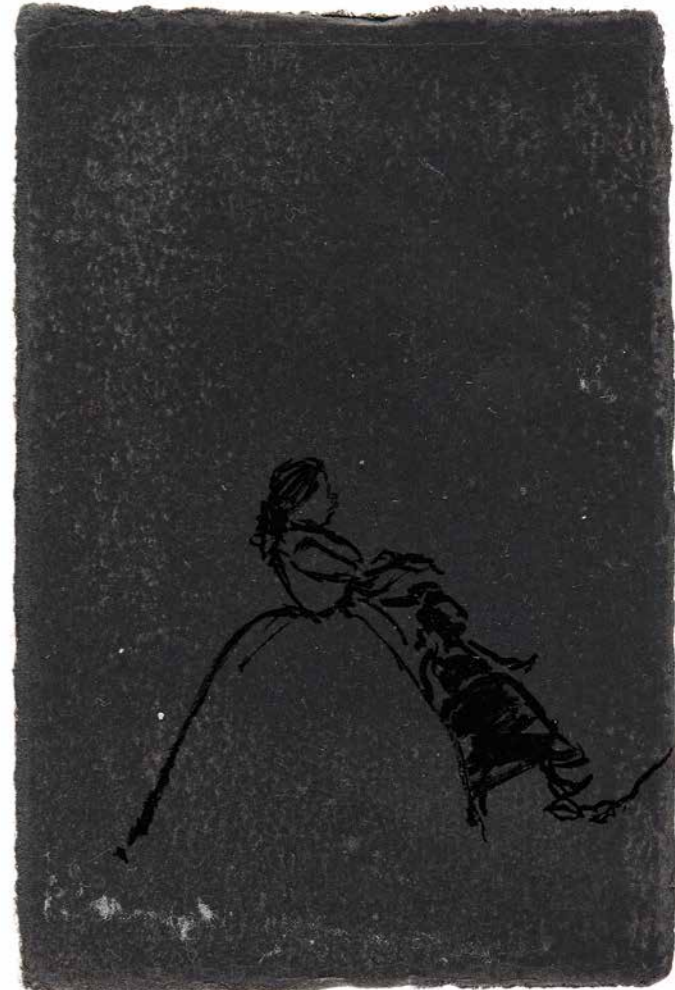
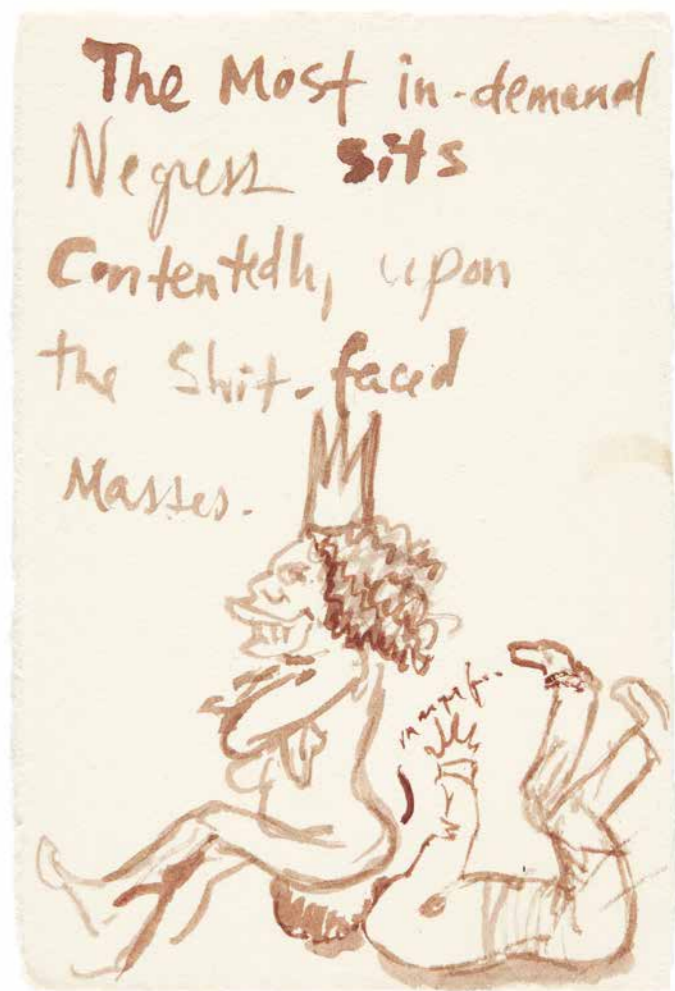








Visibility of the forementioned
= awareness of the Past +
fear of the future =
selective memory +





This is the art for the
 Black girl sporting
 hair styles previously reserved
 for Pickaninny caricatures
 a Flannel dress
 Reminiscent of a burlesque
 sally old.
 African jewelry
 a mind
 people with
 ideal
 locations
 ideal
 Histories &
 uncertain
 future

FIELD
MAGAZINE



2024
 MODERN







We ate
my
sister

Mama cried

I still remember
her face

Fine Find
Me Leaning
on ur dirt
Path. returned
After a RUN
to the Jungle

face hacked
off
machete

Stage
reading

reenactment

Description
ATROCITY
Retelling
Yawn
WARNING
WARNING
REPEAT

SLAVE REBELLION
A Negress- Kara
Has Stolen the show
and my heart

five drunk white boys are looking for revenge.

Why just one month for black history?

In the mid-1920s, a black man by the name of Carter G. Woodson designated one week in February as Black History Week. By 1976, the whole month was named Black History Month.

We still celebrate Black History Month with school assemblies, documentaries and programs on television. Teachers during last month focused on black writers, artists, politicians and musicians with the hope of informing their students about their great accomplishments.

My question about Black History Month is this: What about after February? If February is Black History Month, then are the other 11 months White History Months? Why do all the lessons and assemblies stop after February? Even though I am only 14 years old, I have seen this happen almost every year I have been in school.

The teachers stop the lessons and take the posters down from the classroom and the hallways, and they don't come out again until the next year. Why do we, not blacks or whites but people as a whole, cram all of this history into one month and never hear about it again for another year?

This isn't just black history, but American history.

I don't think that we should learn about black history just to please someone or some group of people. I think we should learn about black politicians or musicians when there's an election or a music festival. We as a city and a country should learn about these great people and their accomplishments when it fits in with what is being taught in a classroom or with what is going on in our community, our country and our world.

By confining it to one month, we deprive people of something educational and important to them and to this country.

ASHLEY M. STOKES

Assaulted by crows





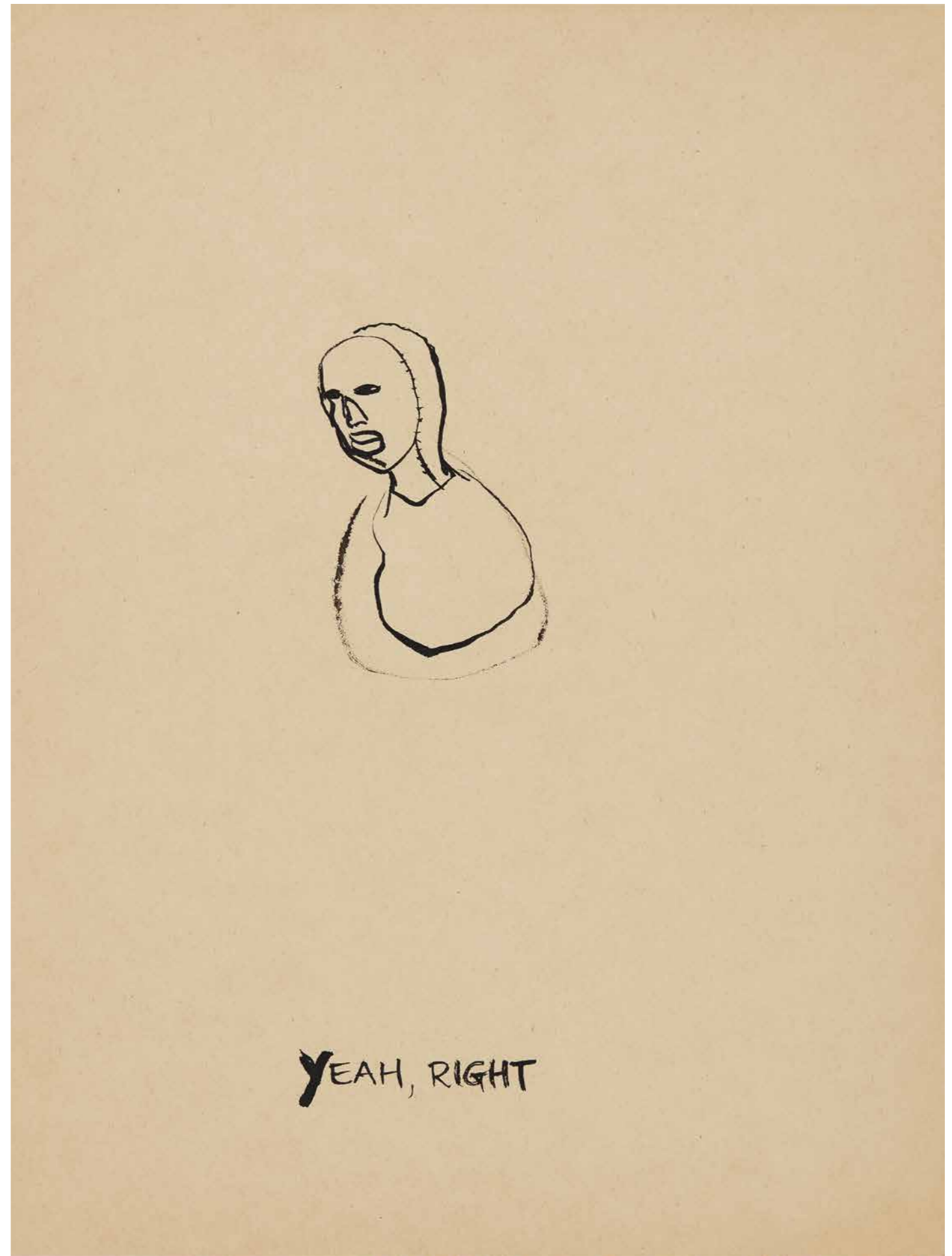


you,
UNTALENTED
UNDERQUALIFIED
NIGGER

I AM ON THE RISE AGAIN

AND I, HIS
COUNTERPART
I CONTROL YOU
WITH
SYMPATHY





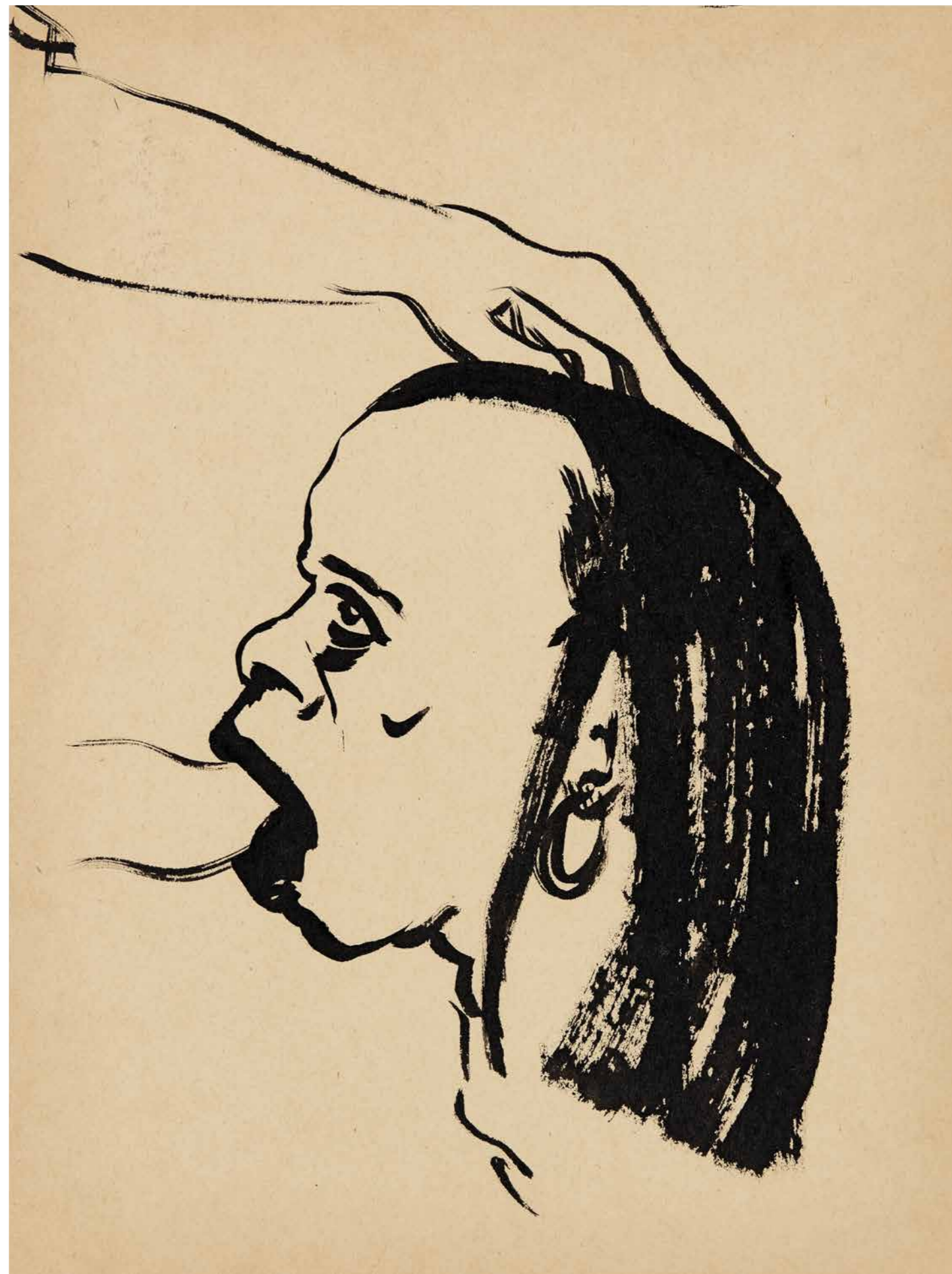
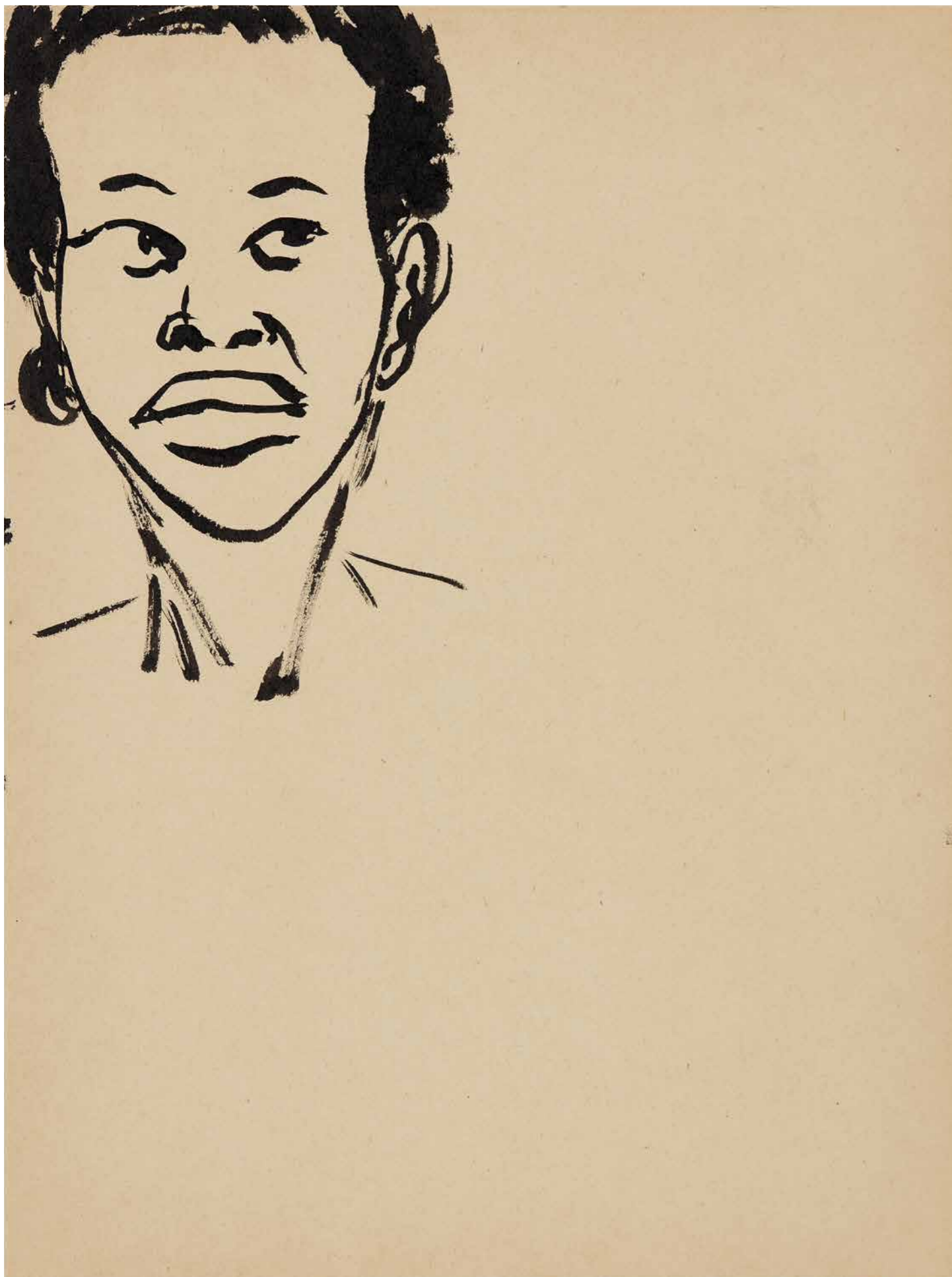




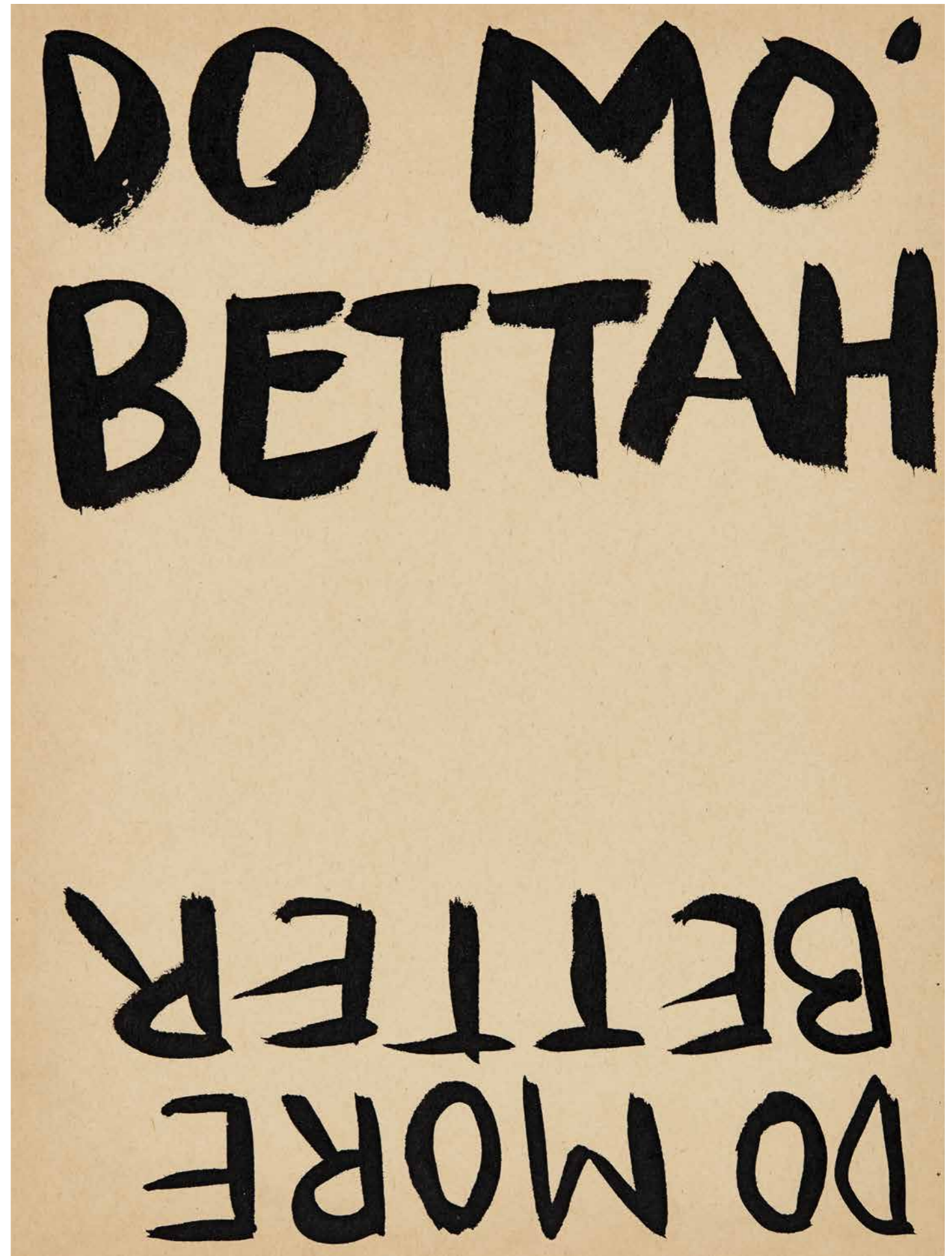




I CANNOT
BE BOUGHT
T I CAN IT
BE HAD



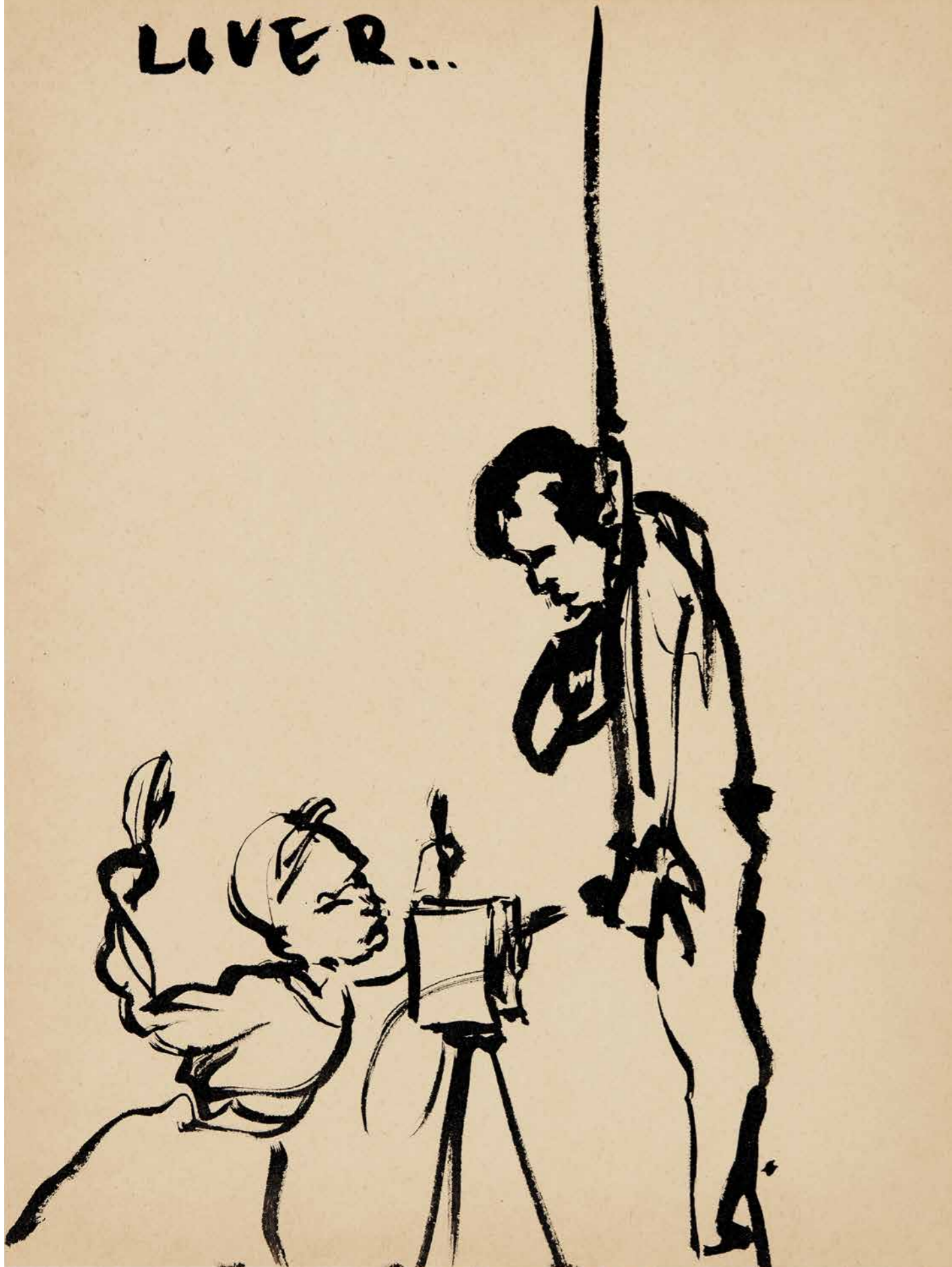




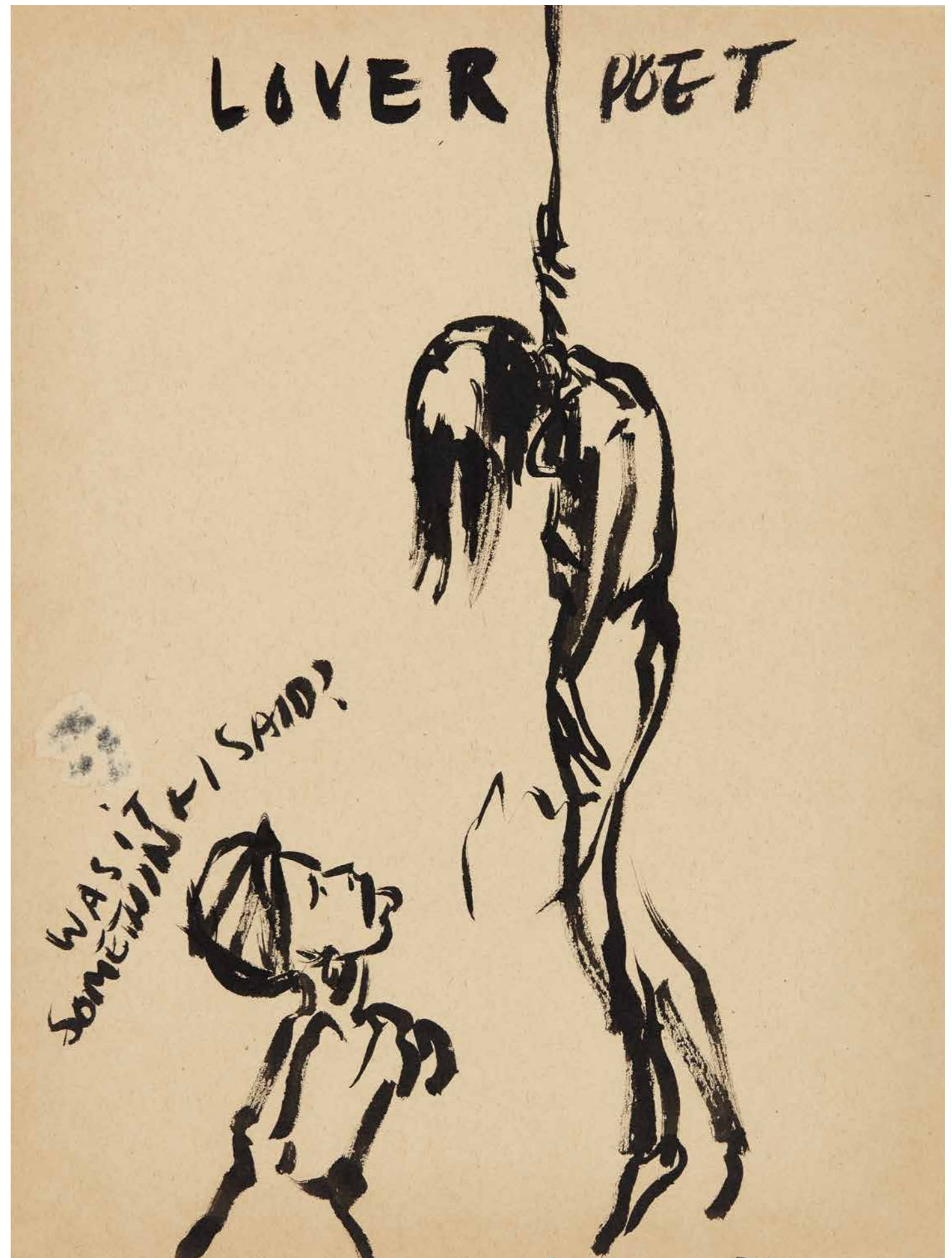
LOVER



LIVER...



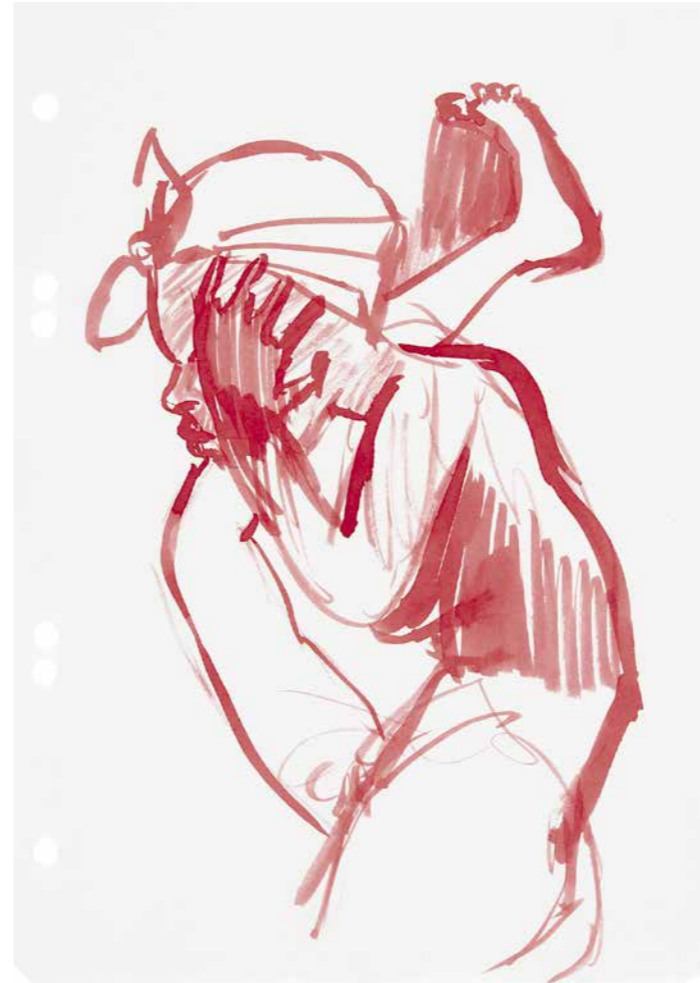
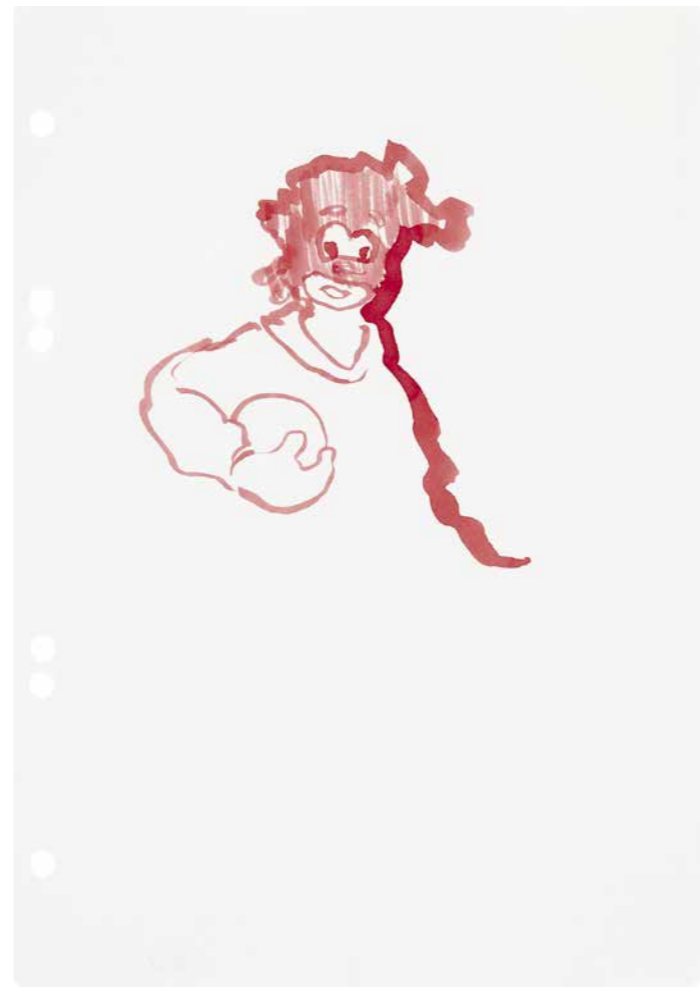
LOVER POET

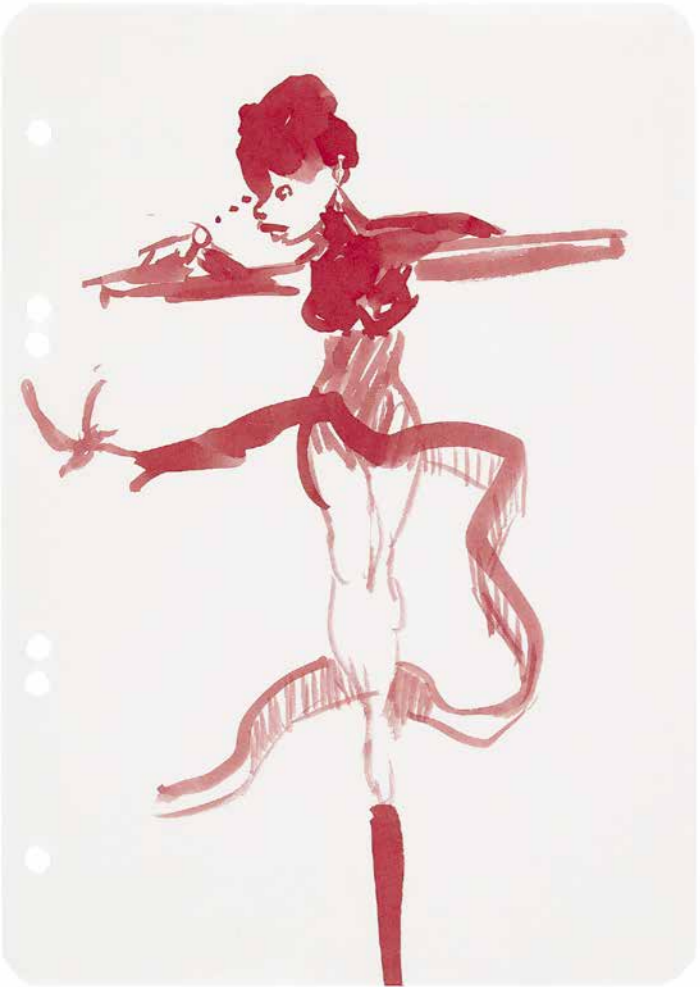


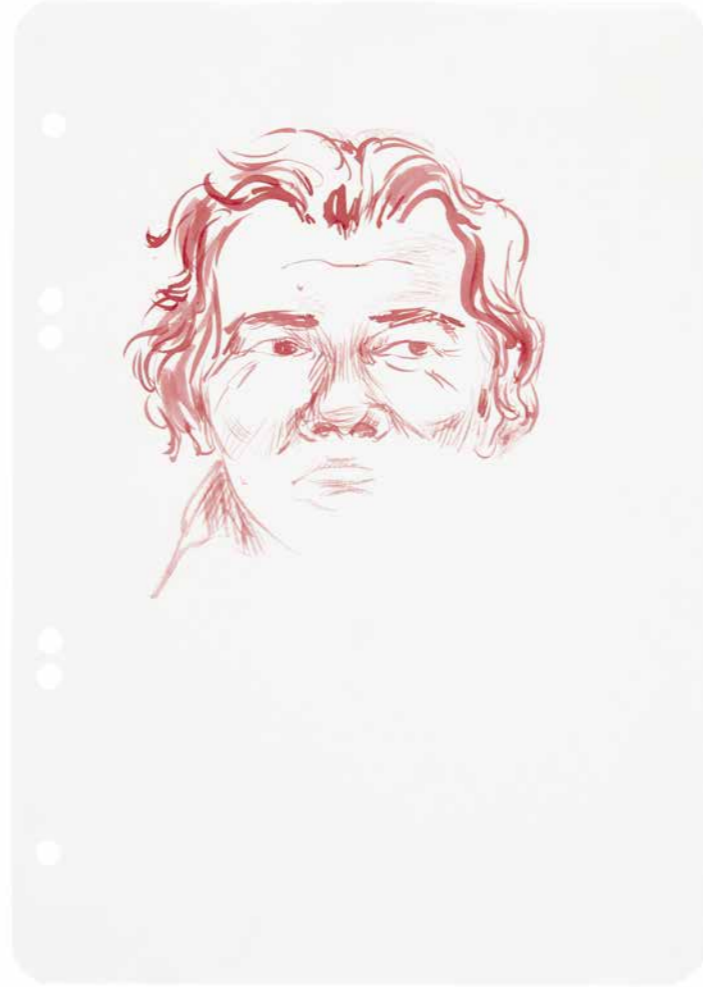
WAS IT I SAID?













servants and the coachmen had their own feast of hoe-cake and greens, that dish of hog entrails and negro heads in season, watermelons enough to satiate.

As the smell of crisp fresh pork came to her, she wrinkled her nose appreciatively, hoping that by the time it was cooked she would feel some appetite. As it was, she was so full of food and so tightly laced that she feared every moment she was going to belch. That would be fatal as only old men and very old ladies could belch without fear of social disapproval.

They topped the rise of the wide house reveals perfect symmetry before her, tall of columns, wide of verandas, flat of roof. A beautiful woman is beautiful who is so sure of her charm that she can be generous and gracious to all. Scarlett loved Twelve Oaks even more than Tara, for it had a stately beauty, a mellowed dignity that Gerald's house did not possess.

The wide curving driveway was full of saddle horses and carriages and guests alighting and calling greetings to friends. Grinning negroes, excited as always at a party, were leading the animals to the barnyard to be unharnessed and unsaddled for the day. Swarms of children, black and white, ran yelling about the newly green lawn, playing hopscotch and tag and boasting how much they were going to eat. The wide hall which ran from front to back of the house was swarming with people, and as the O'Hara carriage drew up at the front steps, Scarlett saw girls in crinolines, bright as butterflies, going up and coming down the stairs from the second floor, arms about each other's waists, stopping to lean over the delicate hand-rail of the banisters, laughing and calling to young men in the hall below them.

Through the open French windows, she caught glimpses of the older women seated in the drawing room, sedate in dark silks as they sat fanning themselves and talking of babies and sicknesses and who had married whom and why. The Wilkes butler, Tom, was hurrying through the halls, a silver tray in his hands, bowing and grinning, as he offered tall glasses to young men in fawn and gray trousers and fine ruffled linen shirts.

The sunny front veranda was thronged with guests. Yes, the whole County was here, thought Scarlett. The four Tarleton boys and their father leaned against the tall columns, the twins, Stuart and Brent, side by side insepa-

tell me things and feel important while they're doing it.

... I can't eat another bite."

"Try a hot cake," said Mammy.

"Why is it a girl has to be so silly and stupid and?"

An' says it's kase dem dey don't know what dey

wants. Dey jes' knows what dey want. An'

givin' dem whut dey thinks dey want. Sides, dey

an' bein' a ole maid. An' dey thinks dey wants a lil

gals' bird's tastes an' no sense. Dey thinks dey

gempmam feel lak mahyin' a lady. He suspicious she got

no sense dan he be.

"Don't you suppose men get surprised after they're mar-

ried to find that their wives do have sense?"

"Well, it's too late dey. Dey's already married. Sides,

gempmam specs dey wives ter have sense."

"Some day I'm going to go and say eve' thing I want

to do and say, and if people don't like it, I don't care."

"No, you ain'," said Mammy grimly. "While Ah got

breaf. You eat dem cakes. Sop dem in de gravy, honey."

"I don't think Yankee gals have to act like such fools.

When we were at Saratoga last year, I noticed plenty of

them acting like they had right good sense and in front of

men, too."

Mammy snorted.

"Yankee gals! Yas'm. Dey speaks dey minds

awright, but Ah ain't no sense. Many of dem gittin' proposed

ter at Saratoga."

"But Yankees must get married," argued Scarlett. "They

don't just grow. They must get married and have children.

There's too many of them."

"Men mahys dem ter dey money," said Mammy firmly.

Scarlett scooped the wheat cake in the (gravy) and (put it

in her mouth). Perhaps there was something to what

Mammy said. There must be something in it, for Ellen

said the same things, in different and more delicate words.

In fact, the mothers of all her (girl) friends impressed on

their daughters the necessity of being (helpless, clinging,

doe-eyed creatures. Really, it took a lot of sense to culti-

vate and hold such a pose. Perhaps she had been too

brash. Occasionally she had argued with Ashley and

frankly aired her opinions. Perhaps this and her healthy

enjoyment of walking and riding had turned him from her

to the frail Melanie. Perhaps if she changed her tactics—

But she felt that Ashley succumbed to premeditated

feminine tricks, she could never respect him as she now



No, these nights were not real! They were a nightmare and the men were part of that nightmare, men without bodies or faces, only tired voices speaking to her from the warm dark. Draw water, serve food, lay pillows on the front porch, bind wounds, hold the dirty heads of the dying. No, this could not be happening to her!

Once, late in July, it was Uncle Henry Hamilton who came tapping in the night. Uncle Henry was minus his umbrella and carpetbag now, and his fat stomach as well. The skin of his neck had hung down in loose folds like the dewlap of an ox, and his long white hair was indescribably matted. He was barefoot, crawling with lice, and he was so irascible his spirit was unimpaired.

Despite his remarks about foolish war when old fools like me are ordering it, the girls received the impression that Uncle Henry was enjoying himself. He was needed, like the young men, and he was doing a young man's work. Moreover, he could keep up with the young men, which was more than Grandpa Merriwether could do, he told them gleefully. Grandpa's lumbago was troubling him lately and the Captain wanted to discharge him. But the Captain wouldn't go home. He said frankly that he preferred the Captain's swearing and bullying to his daughter-in-law's coddling, and her incessant demands that he give up chewing tobacco and launder his beard every day.

Uncle Henry's visit was brief, for he had only a four-hour furlough and he needed half of it for the long walk in from the breastworks and back.

"Girls, I'm not going to see you all for a while," he announced as he sat in Melanie's bedroom, luxuriously wriggling his blistered feet in the tub of cold water. Scarlett had set before him. "Our company is going out in the morning."

"Where?" questioned Melanie frightened, clutching his arm.

"Don't put your hand on me," said Uncle Henry irriably. "I'm crawling with lice. War would be a picnic if it wasn't for lice and dysentery. Where'm I going? Well, I haven't been told but I've got a good idea. We're marching south, toward Jonesboro, in the morning, unless I'm greatly in error."

"Oh, why toward Jonesboro?"

"Because there's going to be big fighting there, Missy."

Slicing slices (clutching your hands)

Erotische Faszination: Das Geheimnis Schoko-Haut

Von GERD HERTLE

Sabrina und die Gnade der Gene.

Ihr Vater, ein indischer Banker, vererbte ihr diesen wundervollen Goldton der Haut. Eine so exotisch aussehende Frau – automatisch auch eine erotische Frau?

Nicht von ungefähr sind beide Fremdworte im Klang ähnlich wie Schwestern...

Spurensuche nach einem Faszinosum, das sich aus der Antike bis zu uns zieht:

Sklavenmarkt im alten Rom. Schwarze Schönheiten vom Oberlauf des Nils werden als „dunkle Perlen“ angepriesen. Sie seien mit ihrer „Haut aus Samt und Seide“ wie geschaffen für die Liebe.

1925, Paris. Die junge Josephine Baker (die mit dem Bananenröckchen) – Europas Männerwelt liegt ihr zu Füßen. 40 000 Liebesbriefe, 2000 Heiratsanträge.

Der dunkelhäutigen Moderatorin Arabella Kiesbauer bietet ein Ö1-Millionär im Sommer '97 eine Million Mark für eine hautnahe Nacht.

Straßen-Umfrage von BILD gestern bei Männern zwischen 17 und 70. Was sie mit dem Begriff „exotische Frauen“ verbinden.

Die Spontan-Antworten: gazellenhaft, warmherzig, sexy, elegant, aufregend. Nur Chemiestudent Werner Kohn (26) antwortete mit einer Gegenfrage: „Fühlt sich dunkle Haut anders an?“

Der Düsseldorfer Schönheits-Chirurg Dr. Ziya Saylan (52): „Das ist tatsächlich so. Das Bindegewebe schwarzer Frauen ist wegen der stärkeren Pigmentierung fester, die Haut dicker. Sehen Sie, deshalb bekommen sie nur selten Cel-

lulitis, dieser Schönheitsmangel trifft eigentlich nur weiße Frauen.“

Der Spannungsbogen weißer Mann/schwarze Frau – gibt es auch eine wissenschaftliche Deutung?

Der Sexualforscher Prof. Dr. Werner Habermehl: „Normalerweise bevorzugen Europäer Partnerinnen mit gleicher Hautfarbe. Dieses Verhalten weicht aber auf, wenn der Mann auf eine Frau trifft, die zwar dunkelhäutig ist, aber sonst europäisch aussieht. Eben nur ein bisschen anders – was auch den besonderen Reiz ausmacht.“

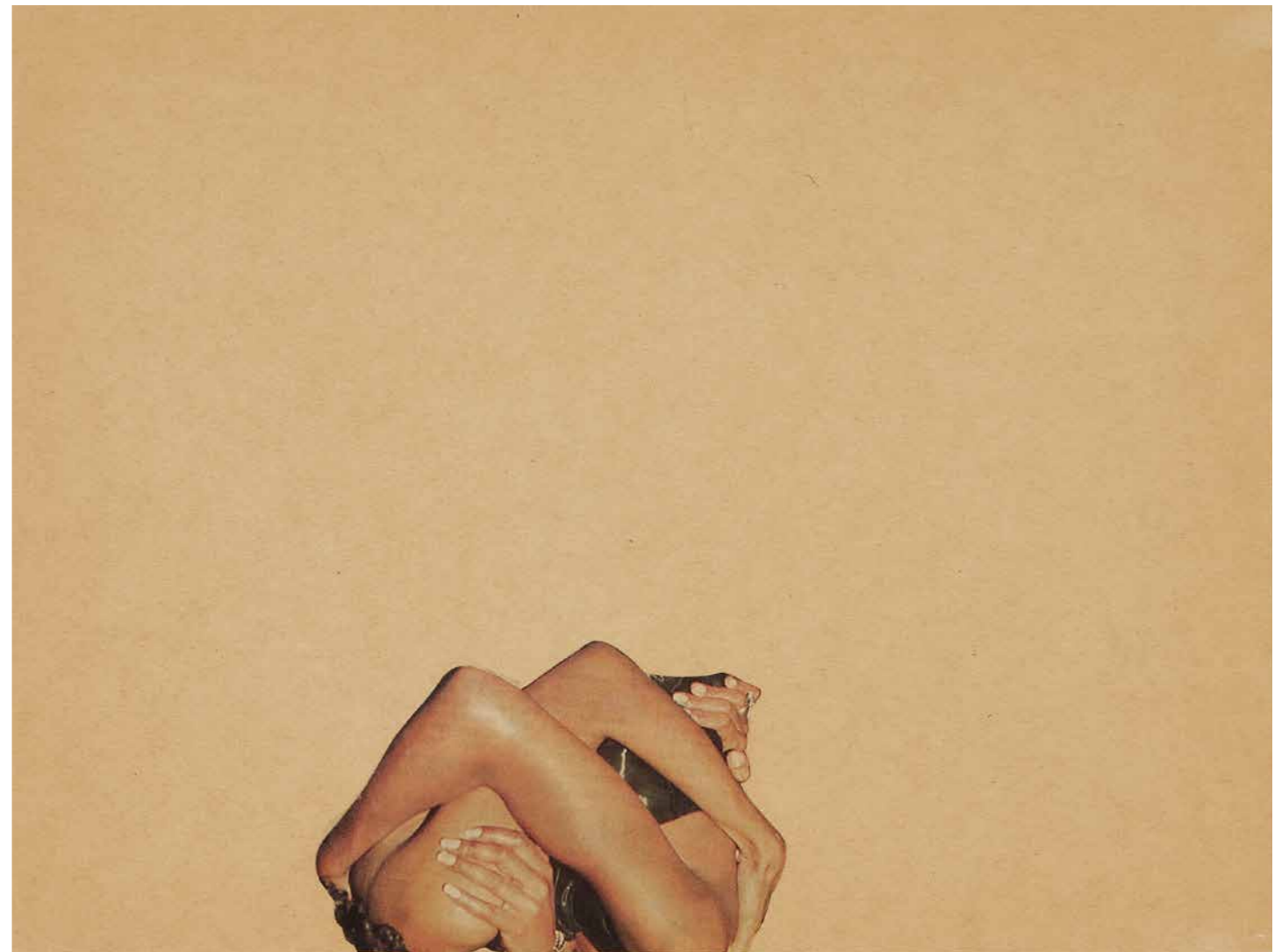
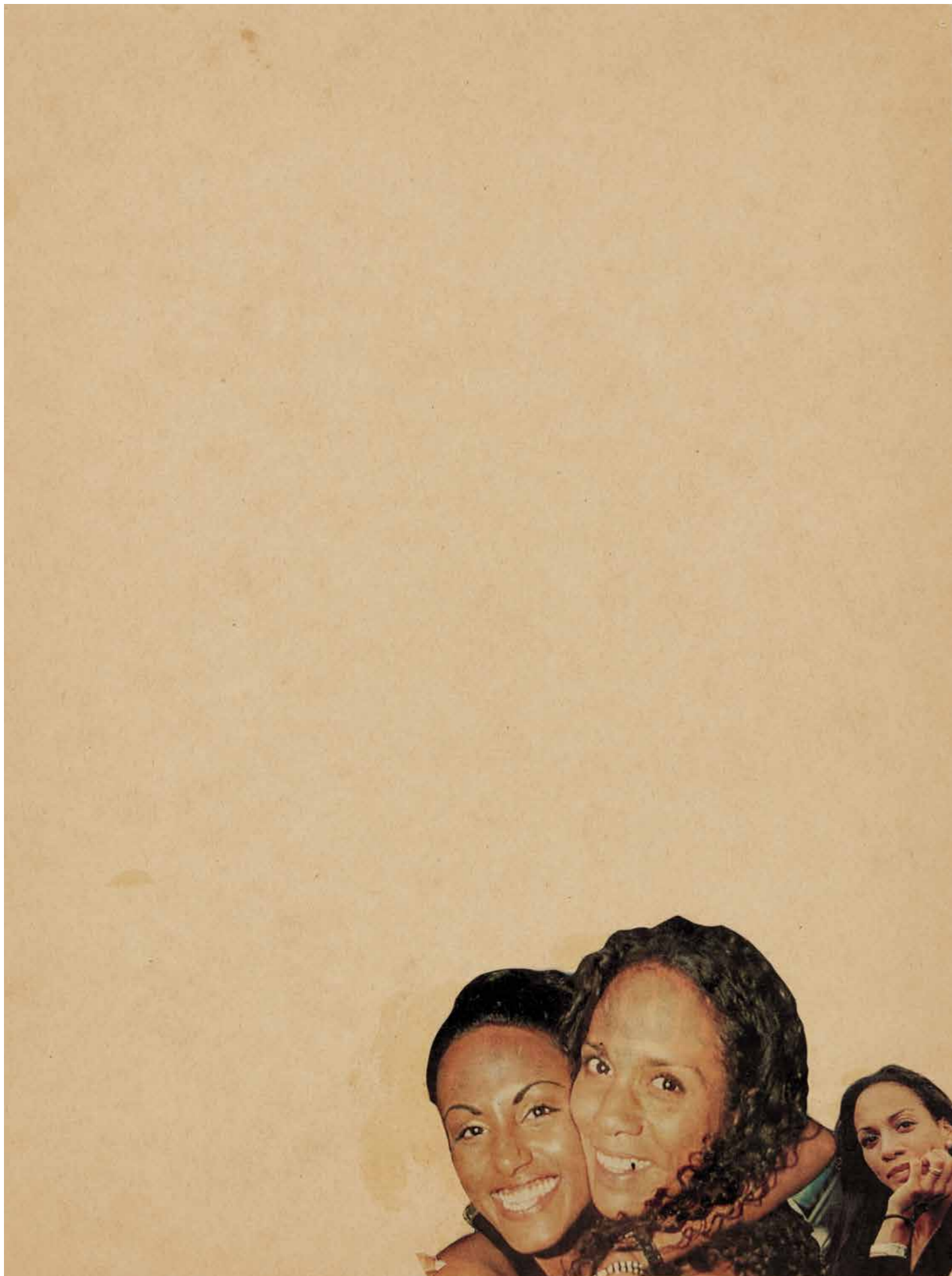
Carola Niemann (38), Foto- und Modechefin vom „Playboy“: „Wir haben durchaus registriert, dass die Männer sich zunehmend für farbige Schönheiten begeistern. Als wir z. B. Naomi Campbell als Titelbild hatten – das Heft hat sich gut verkauft.“

In dieser Hochglanz-Branche gibt es auch den Spruch: „Once you have a Black, you never go back.“ Wenn du einmal eine dunkelhäutige Frau geliebt hast, bleibst du dabei – vielleicht gilt das auch für Boris...

Sehr stolz, sehr erotisch, ein Bild von einer Frau. Das dunkelhäutige Mannequin Alek Wek, fotografiert für den Pirelli-Kalender

Foto: PIRELLI KALENDER, HERB RITTS







21.00 Ins wilde Herz...

...Afrikast! Hier ist der Bär los! Die Fahrt den Niger abwärts ist eine Reise durch Legenden. Eine verwirrende Mischung aus Rassen, Sprachen und Kulturen. Foto: Maskentanz der Dogon in Mali.

20.15 CASH - (65 09 24)
Das Eine-Million-Mark-Quiz
21.00 Ins wilde Herz (2 99 43)
Afrikas Der Niger



<p>GAU >>> Spiel mit mir! 0190 829 382 FETISCH CLUB 0190 829 383 Gnadenlose Strafe! Lausche: 0190-829 384</p>	<p>DOLLY BUSTER LOSS, KOMM! DU HAST MICH SOFORT DRAN!!! LIVE 0190 - 85 85 12</p>	<p>Ich mach's in 30 Sek 0190 808509 Fertig in 1 Minute 0190 808507</p>
<p>LIVE & DIREKT Reife Frauen zuhause warten auf Deinen Anruf. Sofortkontakt in 15 Sek! 0190 900.777</p>	<p>Land-Mädel rund, weich und... 0190 - 85 86 05</p>	<p>Hör mich stöhnen! 0190 80 85 04</p>
<p>Pur & ohne Vorspiel! Heimlich live lauschen! 0190 75.15.75 NEU! Privat zu Hause ohne Tabus, sofort live 0190 70 70 80</p>	<p>Schöne junge Frauen (20+) verwöhnen Dich am Telefon 0190 811 1806 Komm mit Tina!</p>	<p>ALL-INKLUSIVE-PREIS 49 Pfennig pro Minuten die heißesten Frauen 0190 SOFORT LIVE 06 95 40</p>
<p>Love Line 273737</p>	<p>Sexy Frau will immer mehr... 0190 811 1807</p>	<p>DU BRAUCHST NUR ZUHÖREN! Keine Wartezeit. 0190 70 79 09</p>
<p>Liebe ist... ...wenn er durchdreht, nur weil sie so dasteht.</p>	<p>Befriedigung am Telefon - nur 30 sek! 0190-804-058 MEIN DAMPF-HEIBES STÖHNEN 0190-858-351</p>	<p>LIVE Lausche meinem Stöhnen 0190 70 79 11 Ich bin immer da! verlange alles von mir... 70.79.13</p>
<p>© LATSI/Distr. Bulla 2001</p>	<p>U-LIVE-NEU-LIVE 0190 82 98 59 NON STOP</p>	<p>LIVE ICH BIN IMMER DA! verlange alles von mir... 70.79.13</p>

I was actually astonished to learn that in Berlin, a town plagued by racist attacks, hate crimes and neo-nazi activity- Blacks are not the easy targets. "Foreigners" Albanians, Turks, People from the East, looking for valuable jobs. Blacks, I am told represent a specific privilege. Rich enough to study, travel, provide a profession beyond skilled labor... are primarily left alone. Somehow I feel cheated out of my birthright.









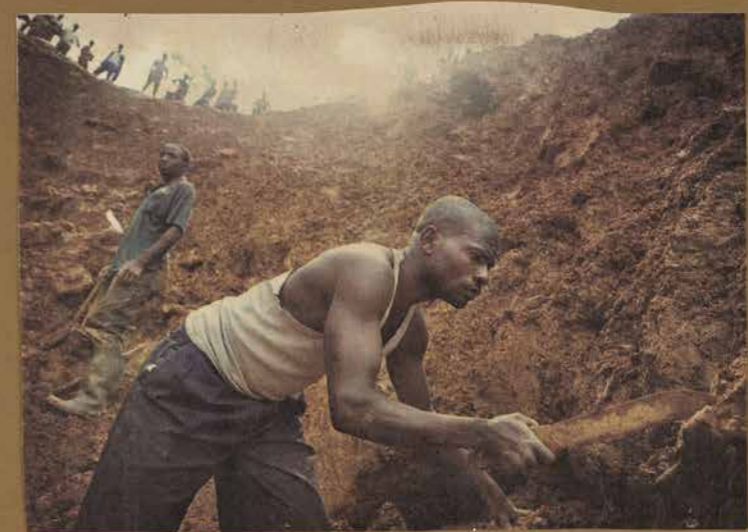


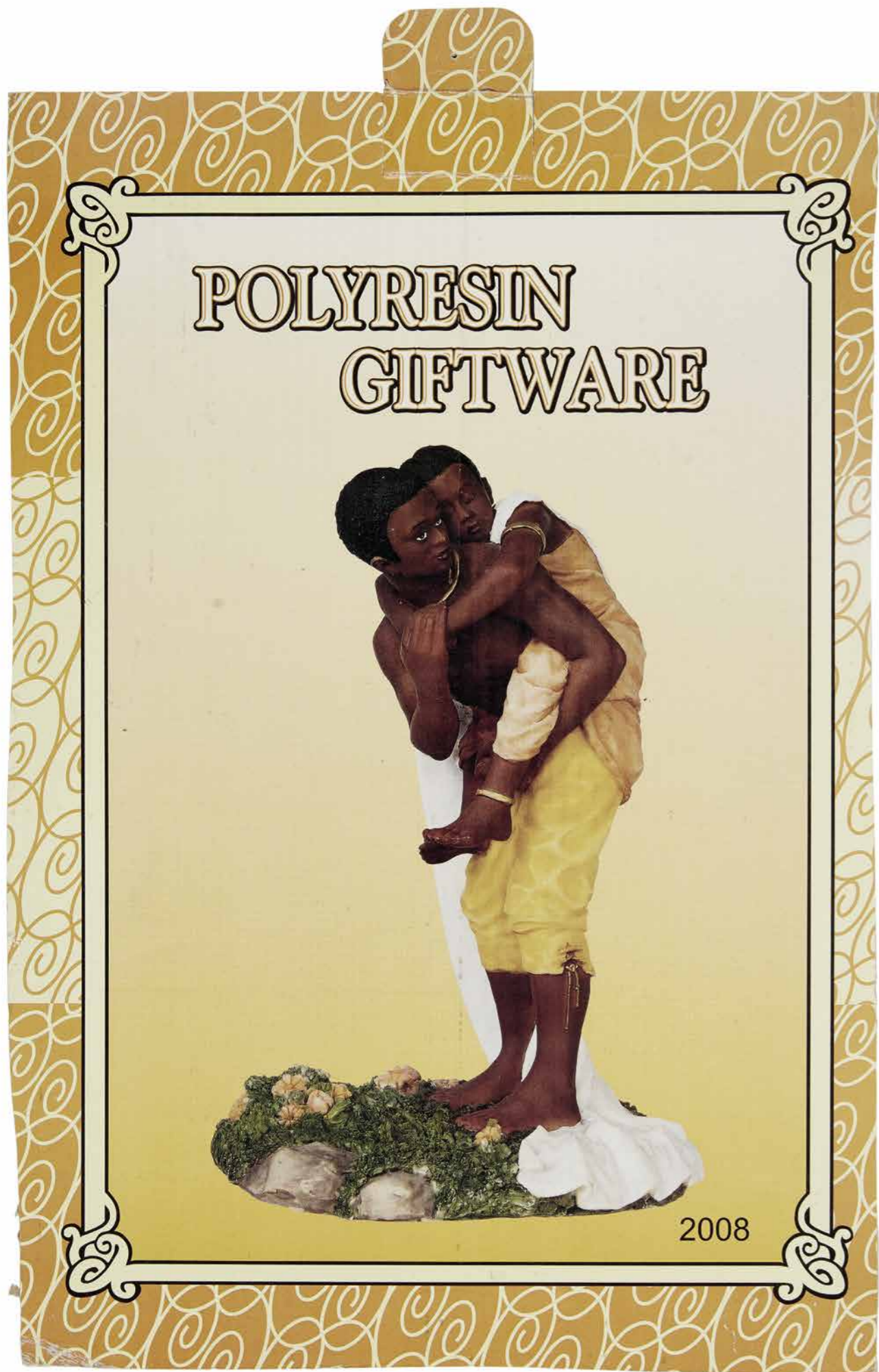


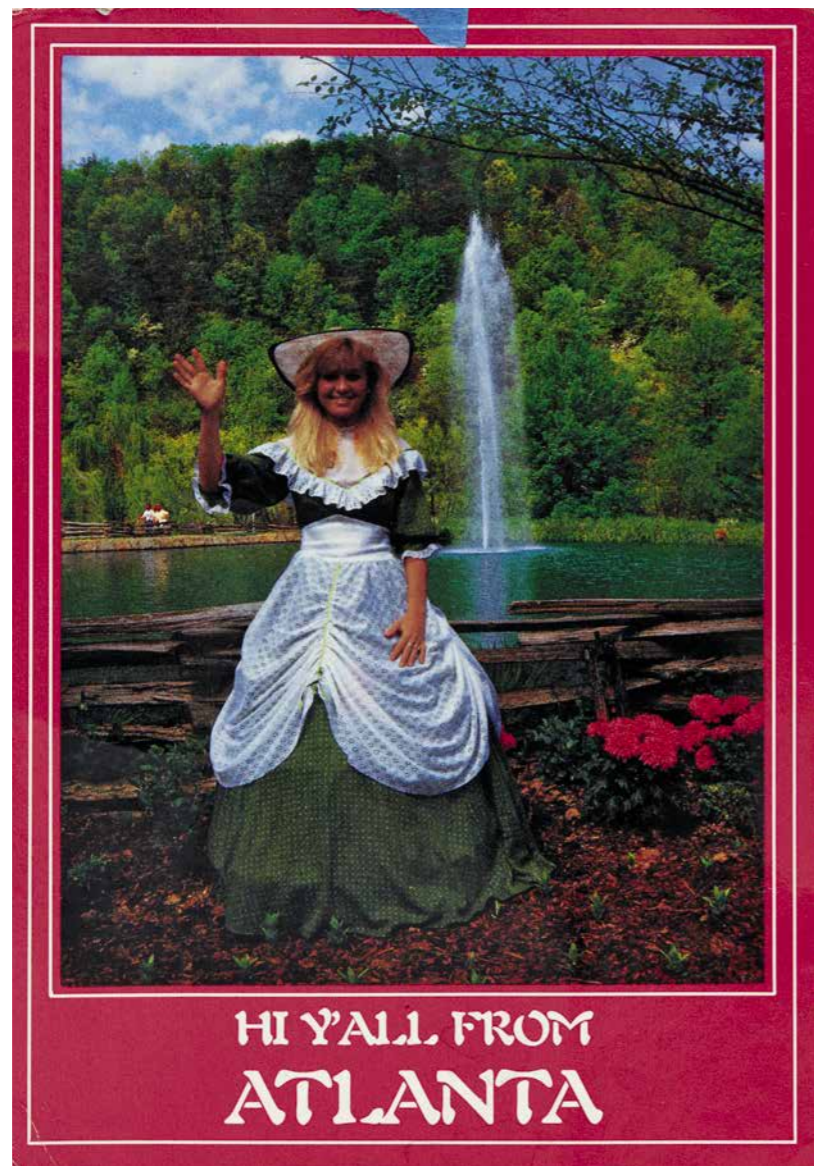


The Negro National Anthem









Sent 4
 Southern Beauty and Hospitality is an integral part of the Deep South.
 Y'all come back now, hear!
 Photo by Catherine Joseph

THE SOUTH!
 HERE'S A BEAUTY, A GENUINE BELL,
 SO YOU STARTED A BOOK STORE JOB. I HOPE YOU CAN MAKE SOME DOLLARS! I'M BEING A STUPID GROWN AND GOING TO SEE UZ IN COLUMBIA, SC AND BIRMINGHAM ALA. I HAVE SECOND ROW FOR SC. AND 1975 FOR ALA. METS. CRAZY. I FEEL LIKE I'M IN THE 10th GRADE AGAIN... ONLY THIS TIME I'M REALLY COOL... SEETH. RIGHT. I'VE GOT MANY PAINTING IDEAS BUT THAT DON'T DO ME NO GOOD JUST TO HAVE IT IN MY HEAD. GOTTA GET IT OUT. ON PANEL (MASONRY THESE POOL PAYS...)

THE KKK IS HOLDING ITS 60th ANNIVERSARY IN LOVING, VIRGINIA. I MIGHT HAVE TO PASS UP THE NEWS... THEY ACCORDING TO THE PLANNING OF IT ON THE TAKE CARE - LOVE FOR NEWS...

Pub. by Aerial Photography Services, Inc. 2911 South Tryon St. Charlotte, NC 28203 Made in Italy by [X]

Post Card
 MISS KARA WALKER
 185 BENEFIT ST.
 C-104
 PROVIDENCE, RI.
 02903

I'M AWAITING THE MOMENT TO SEE YOUR PAINTINGS AT THE FESTIVAL - KARA IN THE LIME LIGHT... can't wait to see Jerry Callum @ News Party... uh, heh

29 USA





Miss Elizabeth City State University is Waquita Nicole Lane. She is a biology major who wants to be a physical therapist.



Miss Grambling State University is Kelley Elena Butler, a physical education major who plans to work in sports marketing.



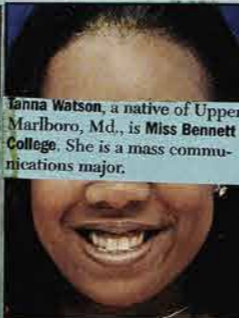
Miss Meharry Medical College, Cristi Lynnette Fletcher, is from Los Angeles and a third-year dentistry student.



Ena Sigoo is Miss LeMoyn-Owen College. She is a senior business administration major from Beaumont, Texas.



Miss Miles College, Rolandria D. Whatley, is a senior and an environmental science/biology major and dance team captain.



Tanna Watson, a native of Upper Marlboro, Md., is Miss Bennett College. She is a mass communications major.



Miss Morgan State University, Angel Lynne Lennon, is a senior civil engineering major. She enjoys modeling and dancing.



Angela Yvette Beasley of Stone Mountain, Ga., is Miss Johnson C. Smith University. She is a senior elementary education major.



Miss Fayetteville State University, a Boston native, is Dionne C. Gilmore, a math education major who enjoys dancing.



Miss Florida A&M University, is a psychology major who volunteers with Habitat for Humanity.



Kanika F. Bazzell, Miss Texas Southern University, is a senior health education major who is active in community service.



April D. Shaw, Miss Huston-Tillotson College, is an English major who plans to work in educational administration.



Robin Monique Briggs is Miss Lane College. She is a junior mathematics major from Stone Mountain, Ga.



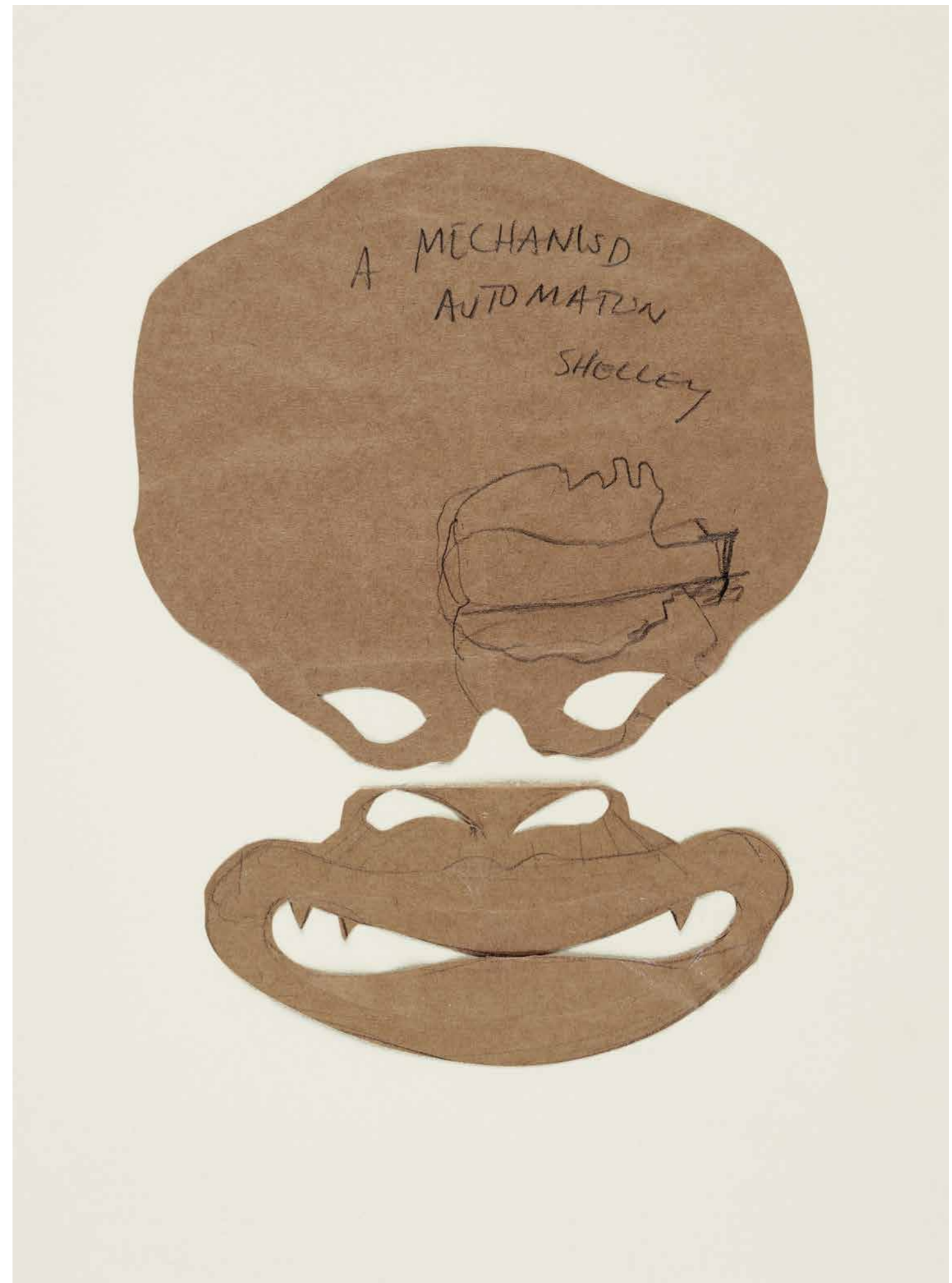
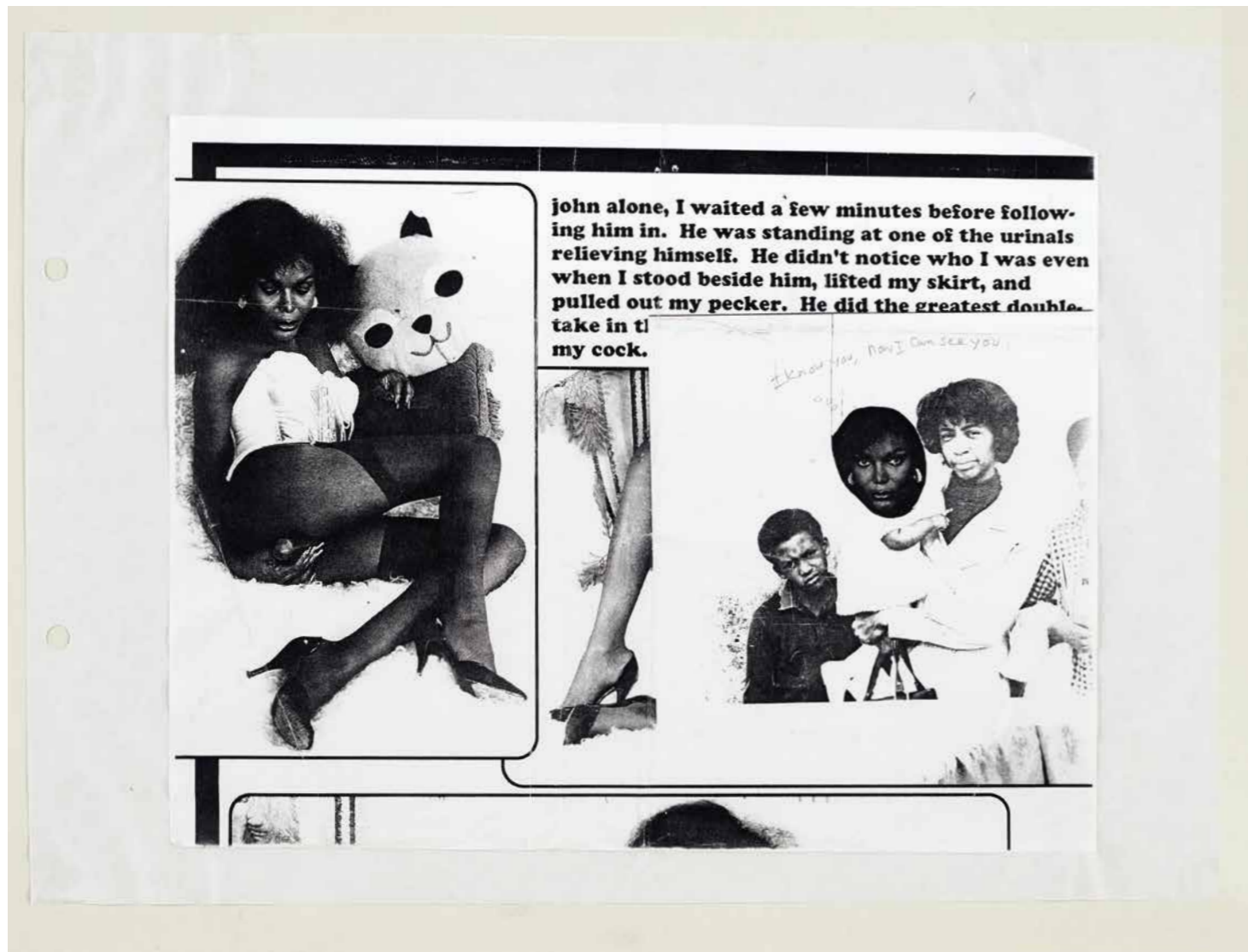
Crystal A. Bost, a Detroit native, is Miss Alabama A&M University. The psychology major wants to go into private practice.



Miss Morris Brown College, Tracy Nicole Brinson, is a senior and mass media arts major from Milwaukee.

Rara Waker





THE HISTORY THEY NEVER TOLD YOU

The First President of the United States Was a "Black" Man, A Moor

The Nuwaubian Moors Newsletter (ED. 1, Vol. 16, October 19, 1997) shocked the world with this incredible revelation: George Washington was not the first President of the United States. He was the 9th. The real first president of the United States was John Hanson. He understood the importance of the war and was concerned."

"He served as president from 1781-1782 A.D. In fact, he sent 800 pounds of sterling silver by his brother Samuel Hanson to George Washington to provide the troops with shoes.

John Hanson was the assemblyman for Charles County in Maryland and was chairman of the Frederick County on two committees: The Committee of Observation and The Committee of Correspondence.

John Hanson was described as a man of action with great organizational abilities. He organized two rifleman groups that were the first to join General George Washington during the revolutionary war. He also appointed George Washington as general.

They tried so hard to cover the true Moorish identity of John Hanson because of his great accomplishments as a leader. Since Euro-Americans have their roots in England, it must be very hard to accept the fact that the true "father" and founder of the United States of America was a Moor...

Upon his death, the Maryland Gazette eulogized him on November 21, 1783 A. D. and I quote:

"Thus was ended the career of America's greatest statesman. While hitherto practically unknown to our people, and this is true as to nearly all generations that have lived since his day, this great handiwork, the nation, which he helped to establish,

Abraham Lincoln, the supposed 16th president, said John Hanson should be honored equally with George Washington.

The article maintained that: "They try to hide the true identity of John Hanson. They will show you a mulatto looking person who is Europeanized or Euro-American while the real John Hanson, the original picture is buried: but if you refer to the Internet, to the Library of Congress website (leweb2.loc.gov), located in "American Memories" under Daguerreotype pictures, which is an early photographic process with an image made of a light sensitive silver metallic plate, you will see that John Hanson is unmistakably a Moor.

False Faces of John Hanson



Mulatto John Hanson



John Hanson



John Hanson Statue



They boldly proclaimed that:

John Hanson designed the Great Seal of the United States.



Seen also on the back of the (SI) one-dollar bill

*Note: The seal called the Great Seal used first by John Hanson is the same seal used by the president of the United States.

This seal along with the signature of the President is necessary to conclude the law by a Supreme Court decision... He [George Washington] also recognized that without the official seal he was not technically president and called an emergency session of Congress and only after George Washington accepted all conditions, laws, rules, and authority under the first President John Hanson was he given the seal. This was under resolution drawn up by Thomas Jefferson.

So, in actuality George Washington was the 9th president of the United States and the 1st president under the Constitution.

Proof of this can be seen on a bronze medallion that on one side shows Washington reviewing his troops, and on the other side shows John Hanson's caption:

"First President Under the Articles of Confederation"

Congress made the medallion on the 200th anniversary of the Surrender of Cornwallis.

The 1st President They even have a bronze statue of John Hanson at Statuary Hall in the White House. It looks just like the original picture. Only the greatest "Americans" are placed in this hall.



Renew - revise edit - expand.

African't

I been having a image of a womman which speak in pidgin or pigeon English, and she got one interesting perspective on history and the necessity of repeating it. She say: "once you get a clear grasp on the fundamentals of history, whose writing it, what emotions are involved in reshaping it, what kinda people were subjected to it... well, like being the guinea pig on the flange of the European enlightenment... them's that are most doomed to repeat it are those who believe in it, taking history like a faith, a new religion of time and events and more time and more events... so in a way the follower's actions are in keeping with his (oh, or her) creed. Me? me I say consciously and conscientiously repeat actual events out of someone's history text book! Like the boys in blue and gray, on nearly every day last year a recreation of a battle in the American Civil War occurred. And nearly every day the memory of this war's actuality gets buried under absurdity. Conscientious repetition is the surest way to kill memory and in effect History.

Ha. Ha.

We propose an example from our not so distant past to illustrate... Boys will be boys, but boys who've not been with a black (or white, depending) woman before take histories past judgment-calls to heart when they offer their little love platitudes... so, (black woman) so black, woman! etc. etc. And you, ignorant of life's (and history's) ways respond unwittingly and accordingly, for every action there is an equal and opposite-- And I don't profess to know much about white girls and the supposed higher power which resides in stereotype and folklore, but I do know the feeling of dirty, slutty triumph having wrecked your homelife and, presumably your faith in my race. I, too know something of the fascination with ladies who just happen to be blonde. Although it is undocumented, uncertain and wholly unappreciated. I really don't know what it is, just so very clean, you really sparkle, I mean it.

Tdigress.

But if one is capable of subjecting oneself to a kind of hyper-romantic slavery, a self-imposed schizophrenia-- a split personality syndrome between self and self as it might have been, a Don Quixote like windmill fight with the giants and demons of my foggy past and my father's foggy past and his mothers foggy past... well is one capable of jettisoning beyond the foggy but navigable straits of American history, Black History Month and colonialism all the way into the life that poster and those tee-shirts seem to glorify, the queenkingprince of Afrocentric African pride hair pomade, the more grotesque than anything sardine-can style vacuum packed cargo ships full of Negroes for sale beyond recorded time into the heart of that peaceable continent where women get their cunts cut out and boys are better lovers to old grandmothers. Can you reach back so far?

rather thing

Freedom through Bondage

In an effort to regain ones' (my, Black peoples') history- in the face of discouraging realities- politics, policies, romance, the loser reflects on the lost...

The loser puts on the attire of, and assumes the mannerisms of the lost cause. The loser in this case is the dejected black teen in 1990- born after the heroism of the civil rights movement-- spoon fed "New Histories" and black pride- divorced from meaning and devoid of it-- anger without direction

like a civil war battlefield reenactment
She puts on the the disguise of the slave
taking bits and pieces of 19th century pop culture and applying them in the manner of the harlequin romance novelist- to her everyday life. Hence every situation two years later tends to resemble some warlike conflict from the past... nothing is as it seems.

History is carried like a pathology- a cyclical melodrama immersed in its artifice and incapable of functioning without it.

The Historical romance itself creates a will for abuse and victim hood- exacerbated by contemporary ideologies which revere victim hood- Everyone wants to play the Nigger now. There is more power in the role of the underdog pop culture tells us. Be scary and disenfranchised and you will make great art. The American idiom is that of the freedom fighter- All of our great lost causes are fought and fought against- like fighting impulses in the body

The body of America is divided by the Mason Dixon line-----between intellect and industry in the north and the South's tactile agri- culture, fertile soil, etc. etc. and we'd like to keep it thataway, thank you.

The civil war that happens to be mine is one where the whims of the body- hot blooded and passionate as they may be- are in strict opposition - rebellion, if you will, to the desires of the intellect-

"No, no, don't do that" it seems to say "Yee-haw! Jes' you try n' stop me!" is the reb's reply

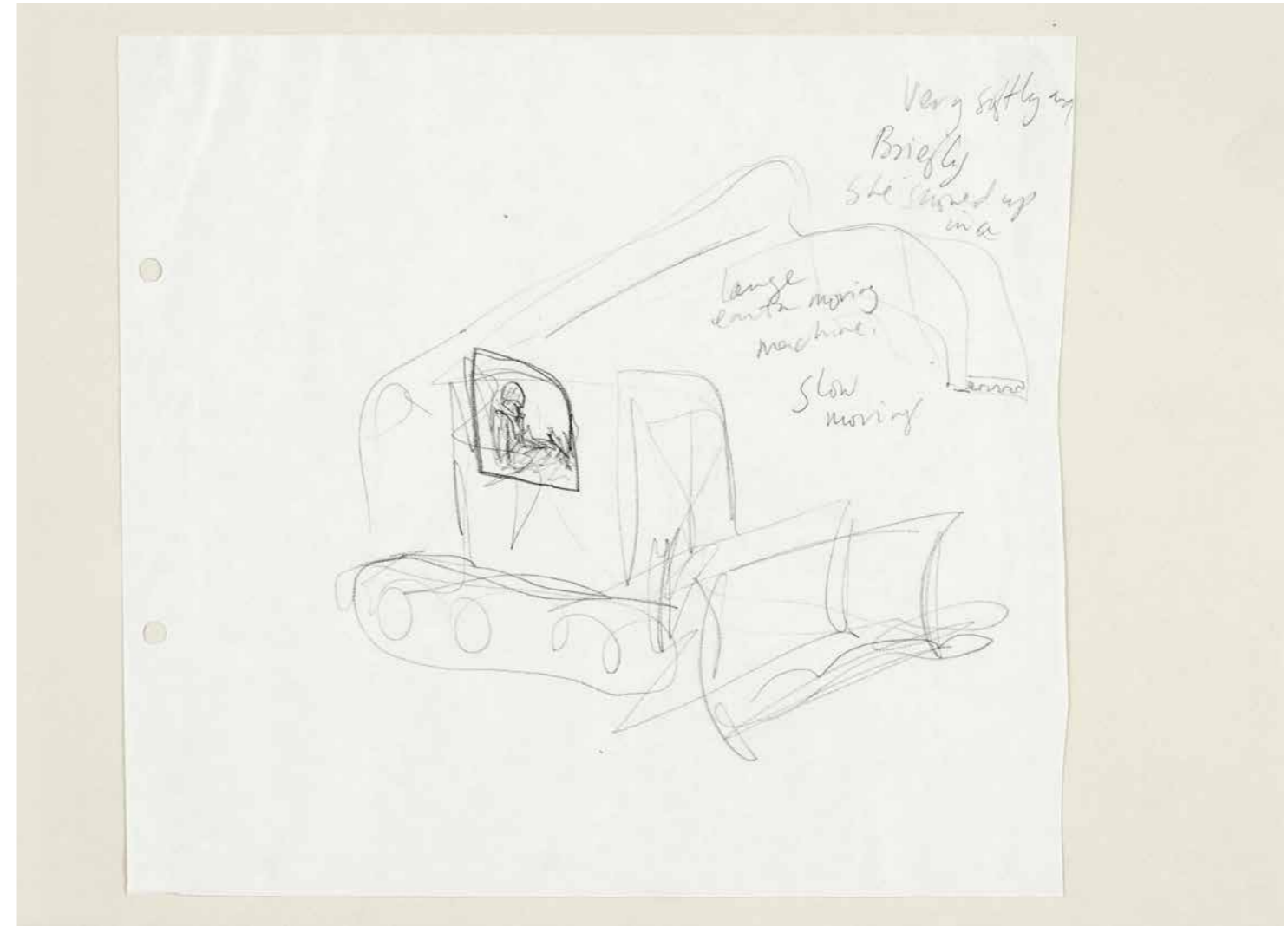
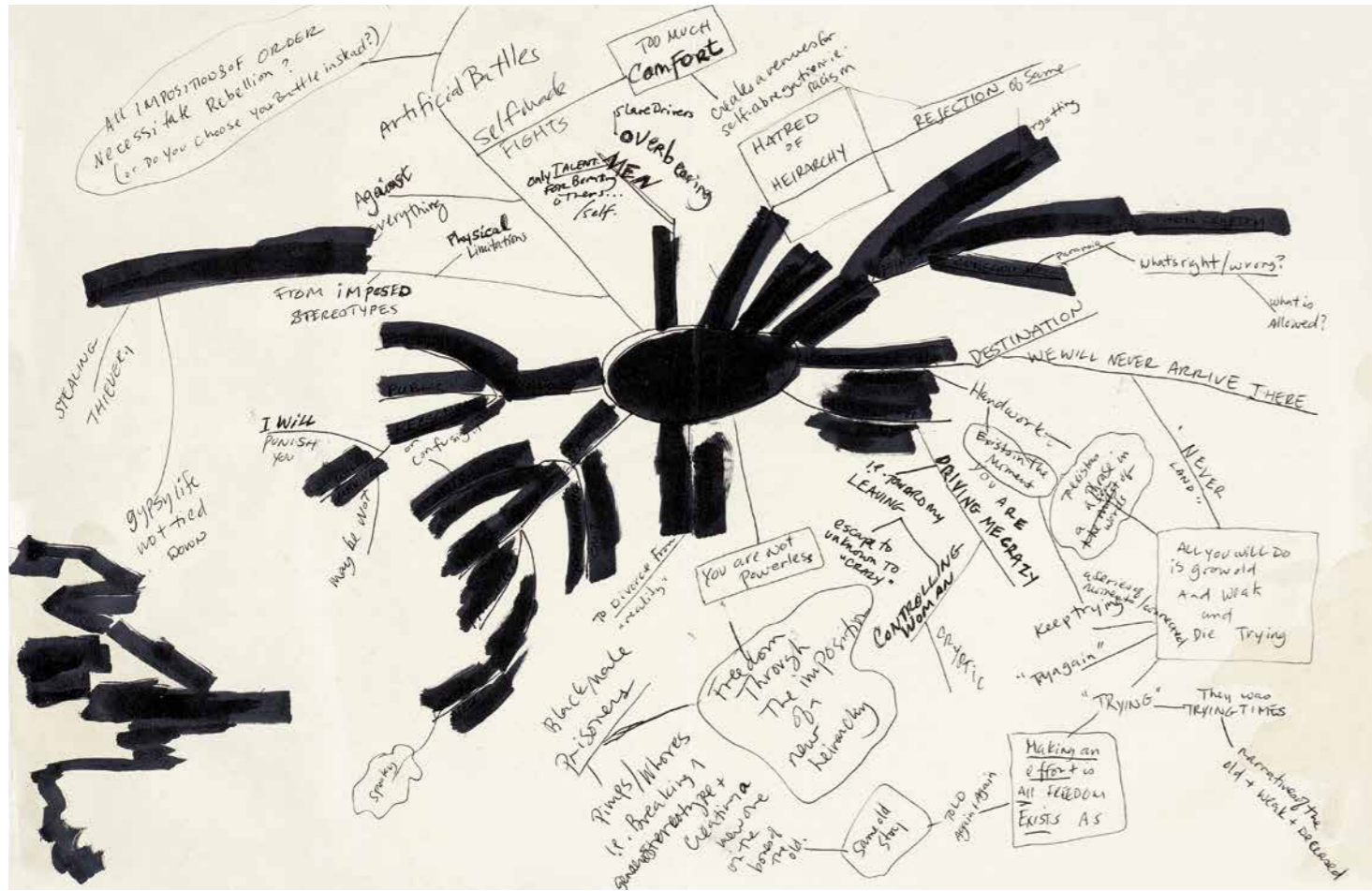
"How", you might be inclined to ask, " do you get from self-made slave mistress to yankee/ reb?" Simple, they're all in me or their shadows have been in me at some point or another- stroking me up and stabbing me in the head.

PUNCH, OR THE LONDON CHARIVARI.—JANUARY 19, 1861.



DIVORCE À VINCULO.

Mrs. Carolina Asserts her Right to "Larrup" her Nigger.



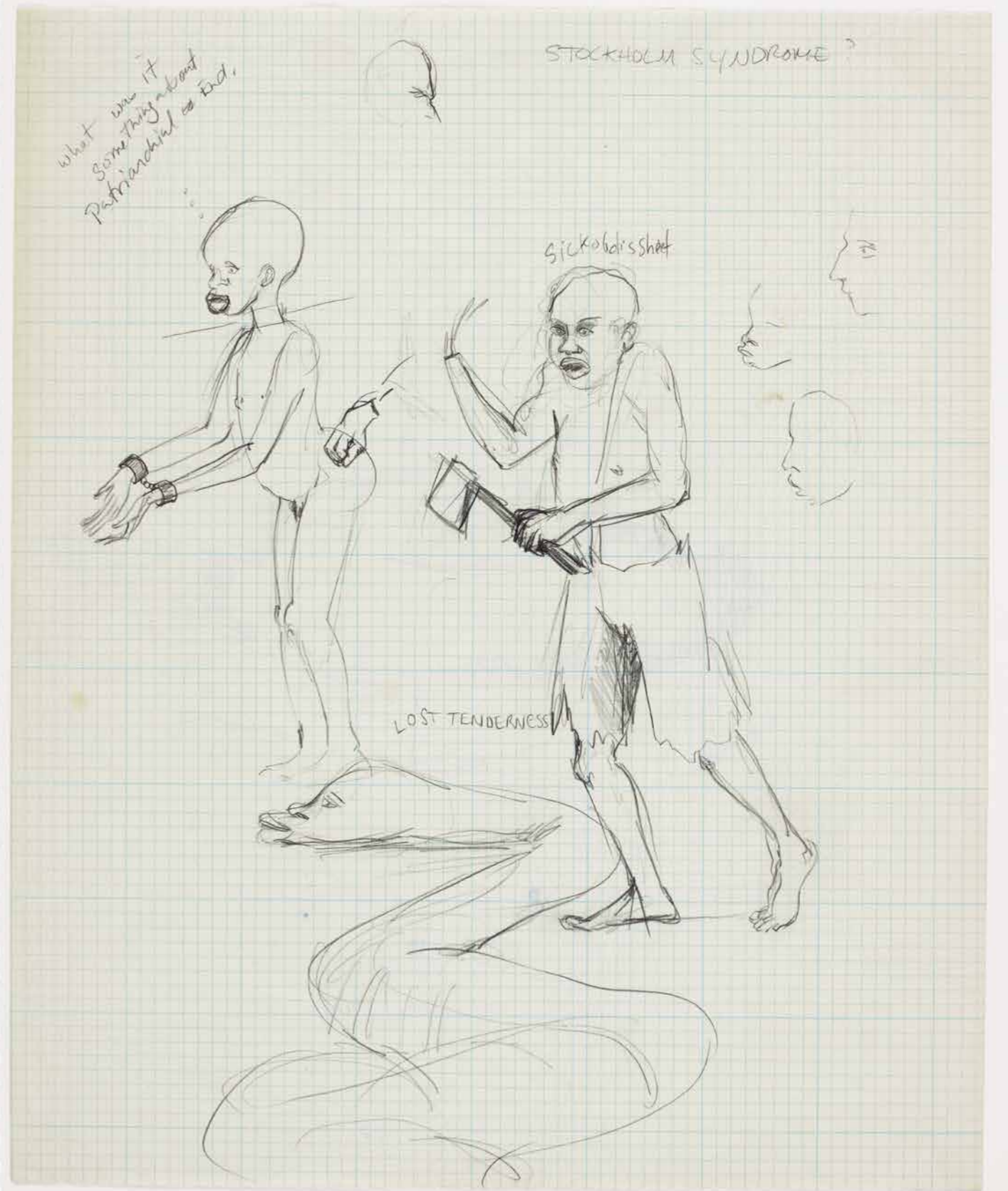
Making up for lost Time
1999 - 2019

LISTEN TO MYSELF

LISTEN TO MYSELF BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE!!!

Left-Handed Lovelies





in that she is unable to activate the
jumble of letters she possesses. she must be
acted upon first. handled. conscripted, bound,
forced wide open .

so. my thesis, a black girl is made by
"white" society to be its

Antithesis

or let's say, A black girl recognises her
own willfulness, her power in reversing the
terms, she is possessed of this abject
sense of entitlement

she is "seductive" exotic, mysterious, illicit
and capable of tantalizing on that front.
she uses her mask like a dildo, inserting and
retracting. her new counterpart, her choosing

the triumverate (never to be named again)

Thesis, antithesis, synthesis
hit return.

I propose the following:

Thesis- a black girl is made, not born
and she is made best, better, stronger by
a clearly defined White male who kind of
dabbles on the dark side
and she is strong enough not to fall victim to
the very thing she has fallen victim to.

A black girl is a made thing, like a machine,
like a typewriter- a useful tool. voiceless

never to be Named.

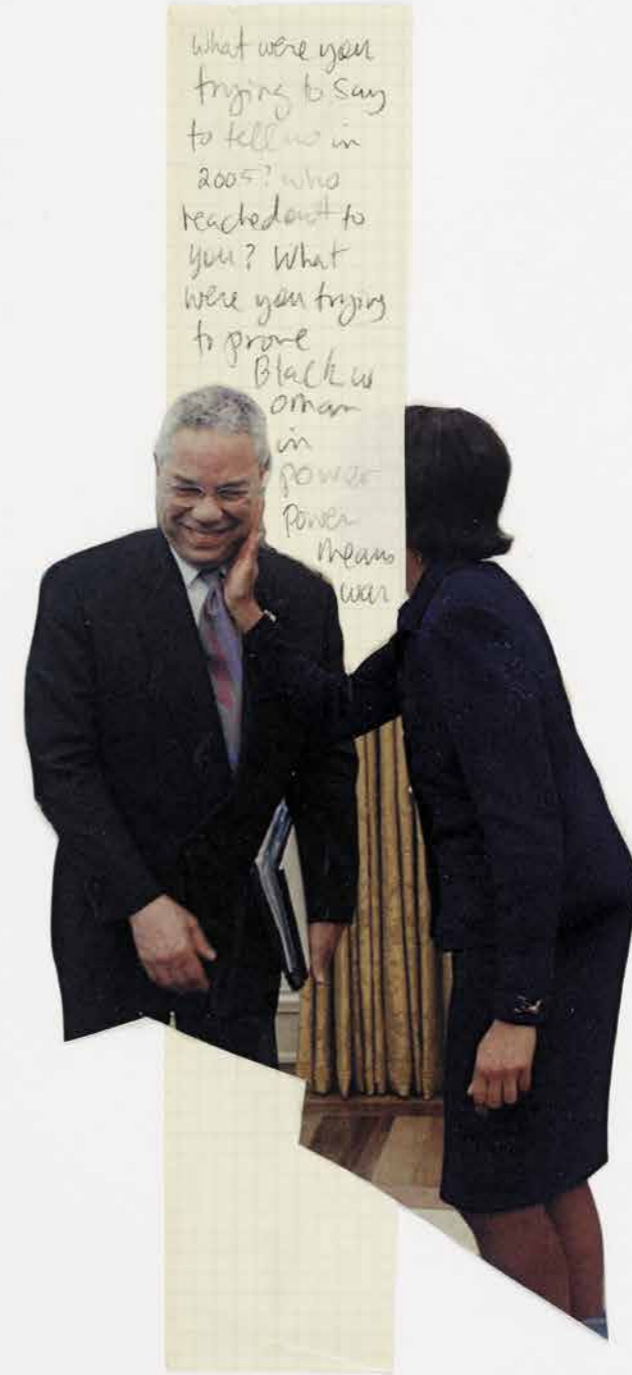
bi-racial, bi-sexual boy and or girl friend
who embodies the fusion a black girl so
desperately wants to lay claim to, renegotiating
the terms of her construct.
finding that the world may all be a black thing
depending on what you choose to do, how you name
yourself and where you align your interests.
If she cannot have them, these mocha frappucino
blends, then she will seek to become them.
emulate, appropriate, remake/

FUSION

sees her as damaged goods
and she, allows herself to be rescued
Practiced (as she is) in the art of being
taken. being had.
by white patriarchy (as if that's all there is)
she unmakes the mold, musses the mask, reversals
and reprisals abound
and resentment over what's ones Natural place.
and all.
leads to a reconsideration of the terms
which is to say, not exactly Synthesis, because
one Black girl may just throw out the whole
interracial construct and find a

a Natural Place

why talk of revolutions when casualties
are inevitabilities?
I made
terrorist
look like
good lu ck
fucking lazy pervert.






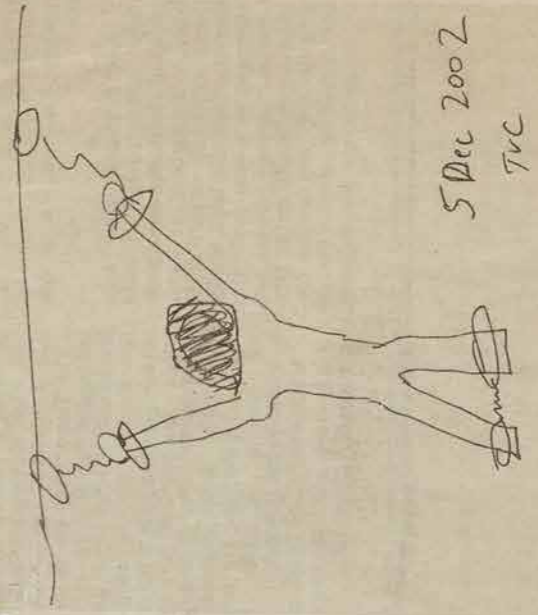
"Just Do it."



It is easier to run away from it

you
Always run away from it...

Dilawar, at left, was an Afghan farmer and taxi driver who died while in custody of American troops. Below, a sketch by Thomas V. Curtis, a former Reserve M.P. sergeant, showing how Dilawar was chained to the ceiling of his cell.

5 Dec 2002
TVC
1930

When it all fails, big plans domination-pure
kurtz and Brando and Ahab
and david Koresh and famous leaders of old.
"KILL ALL THE NIGGERS" and that's a quote.
Wherever NIGGERS might be found. (White Niggers, we've heard of,
Arab Niggers too. Where does a nigger begin and what exactly are you?)

dare to say something and risk annihilation.
dare to move uncer him and
raise suspicion of alterior motive
America was gang raped by the Bush admin.
tell 'em that.

Tate liverpool is pleased to announce "10 ways to annoy a

negress

submission.

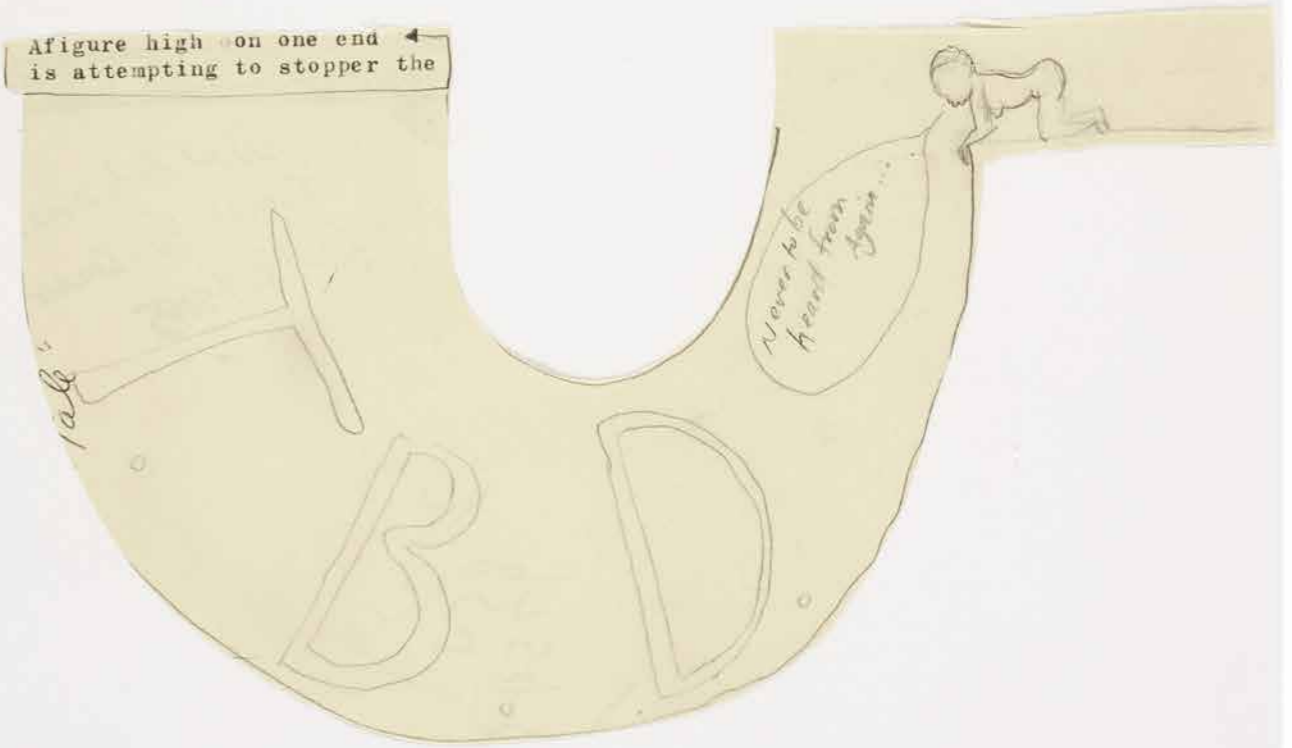
dont move under him, he will not notice you might be dead or passed out
but not trouble. Not a "woman" who knows what she ~~wants~~"

The path of least resistance, or
the Triumph of the Will. Great demagogues know
they secrets. the Populace mimicks his every move,
stoops, appears mild, doltish, but human, like
the everyman- like a farmer (or something)
Raucher from Texas. Never my favorite film characte
r always there with a trick up his sleeve, like
putting his hidden agenda in the foreground
where everyone will miss it- fail to see the
megalomania in your fathers eyes- world domination
was ever our goal- without never saying it
its what makes us so supremely confident, so
well dressed and over-fed
Only evil empires want world domination
we know, we eulogize the demise of Berlin
walls, but ~~our~~ our wall- watchout- we never
seen it clealike enough, now we spend our off hours
building it perfecting its ^{invisible} image- it looks like
"wallishness" the epitome of a wall
dull, blunt, hit your head against it
The wall, its architecture perfect its surface
invisible. *in penetrable*



The Deluge, towards its Close.

A figure high on one end ←
is attempting to stopper the



Love Does Not Carry a PRICE

The Dream

Book on
Dream Research

Face flowed into
her eyes
Come along
nigger moon

COLUMBIA UNIV.



Why are we doing this exercise?

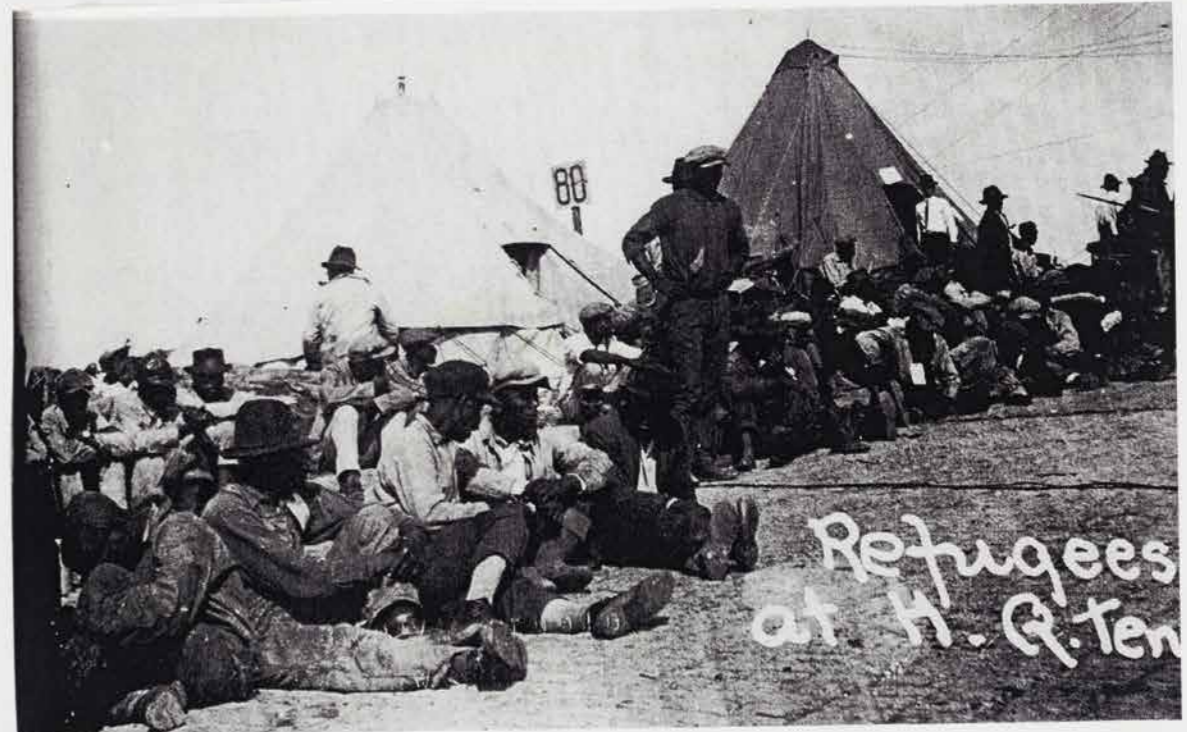


Gen. Sherman's Resignation.
ING—RETREAT OF DRESSER'S BATTERY, CAPT. TIMONY, CENTRE OF NATIONAL POSITION, SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 6—FIVE MEN AND 48 HORSES KILLED.—SKETCH

You MUST keep going → Settlement.
Back up
YOU WILL SURVIVE THIS



maybe you will
get strung up
like a puppet



Refugees
at H. Q. Ten

A group of men here await work assignments on the Greenville levee. Tags attached to their collars kept track of inoculations, work assignments, and what plantation they came from. The levee became a work camp, where food and supplies for 50,000 people and thousands of heads of livestock were unloaded for distribution throughout the Delta. Black men were not allowed to leave, and they were forced to work without pay.

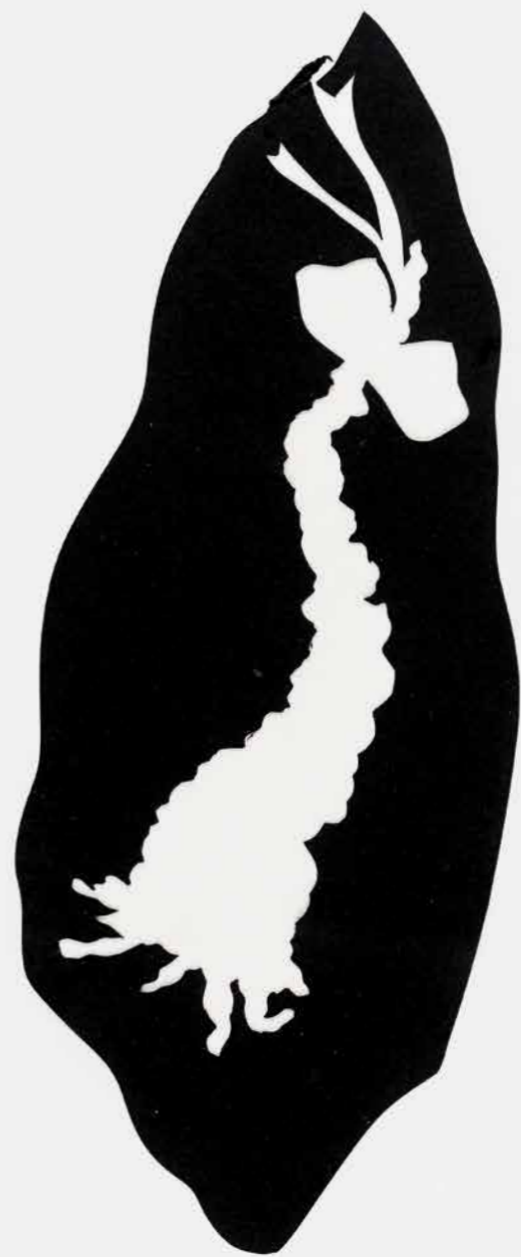
Artificial collar of gold undug
in or near or around African America
Probably for use as fetish object
or to attract willing female
perhaps to barter for sex.
Artisan unknown, but likely European.

Quite possibly worn by a Slave
Amulet, fetish object.

NIGGERY

NIGGEREST



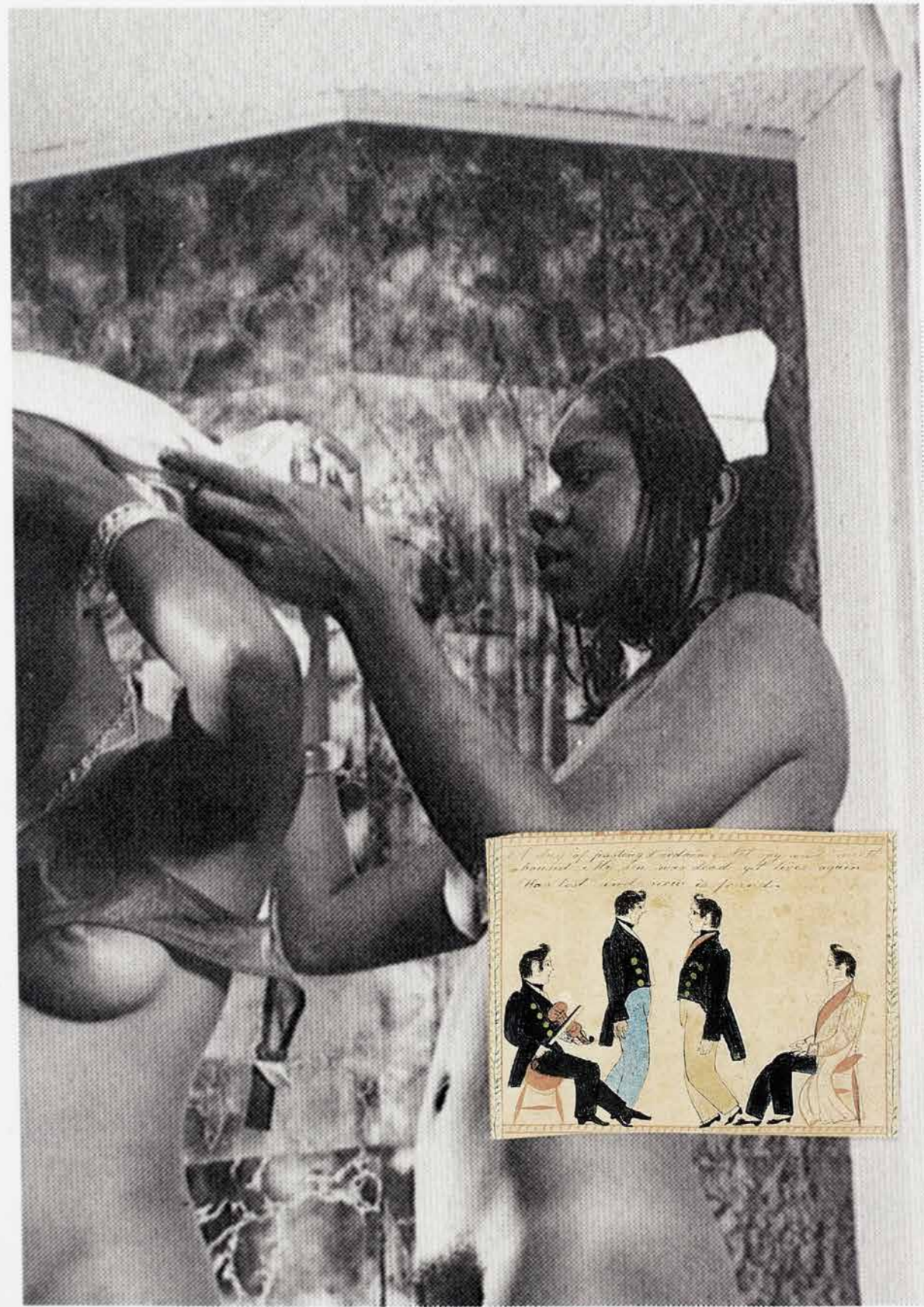


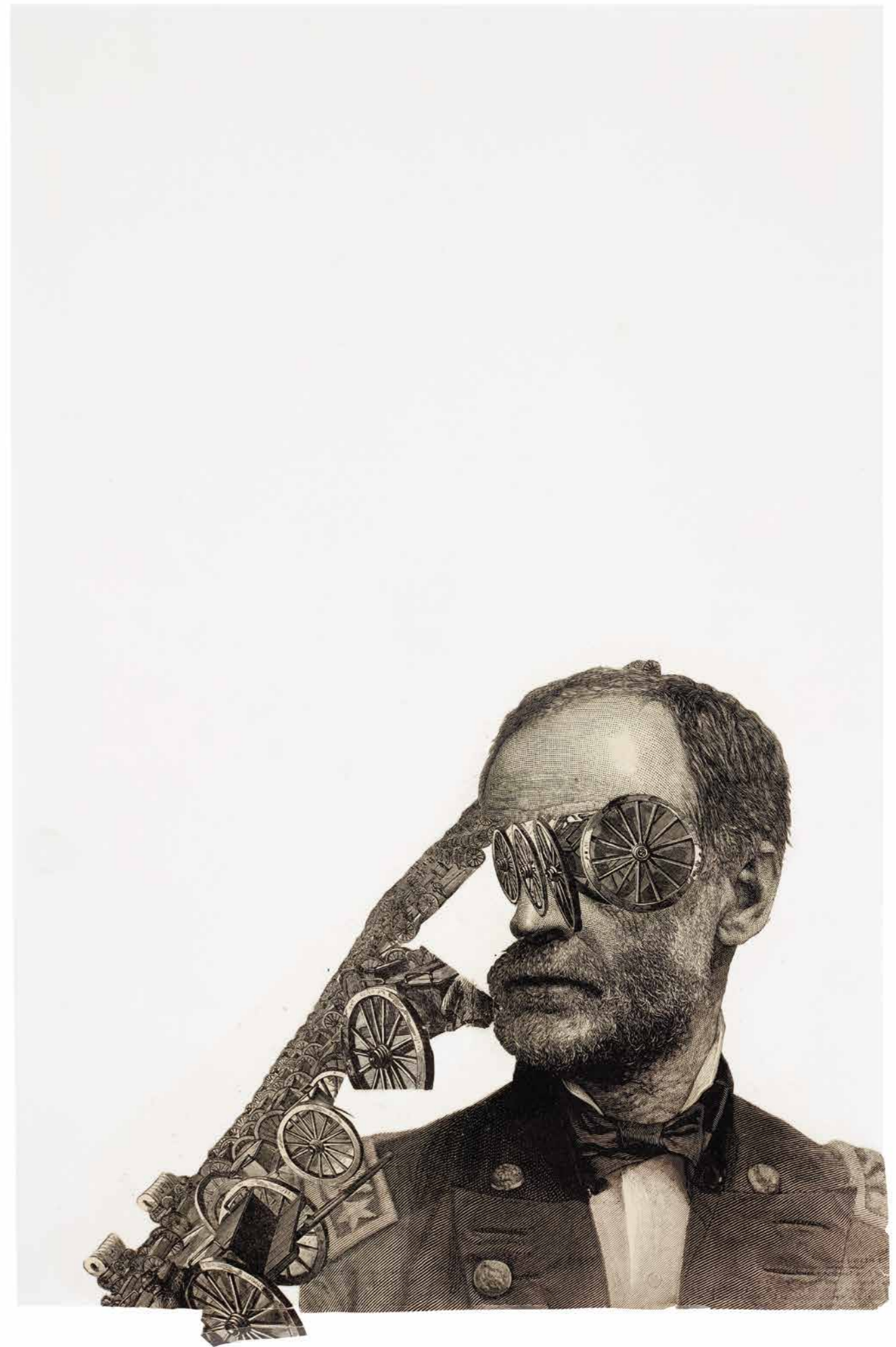


BREAKING GROUND FOR MLK MEMORIAL

Civil rights leader Rep. John Lewis, D-Ga., right, fights back tears as he and Yolanda King, daughter of Martin Luther King Jr., left, take part in the ground-breaking at the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial on the National Mall yesterday in Washington.

* TOMMY HILFGER



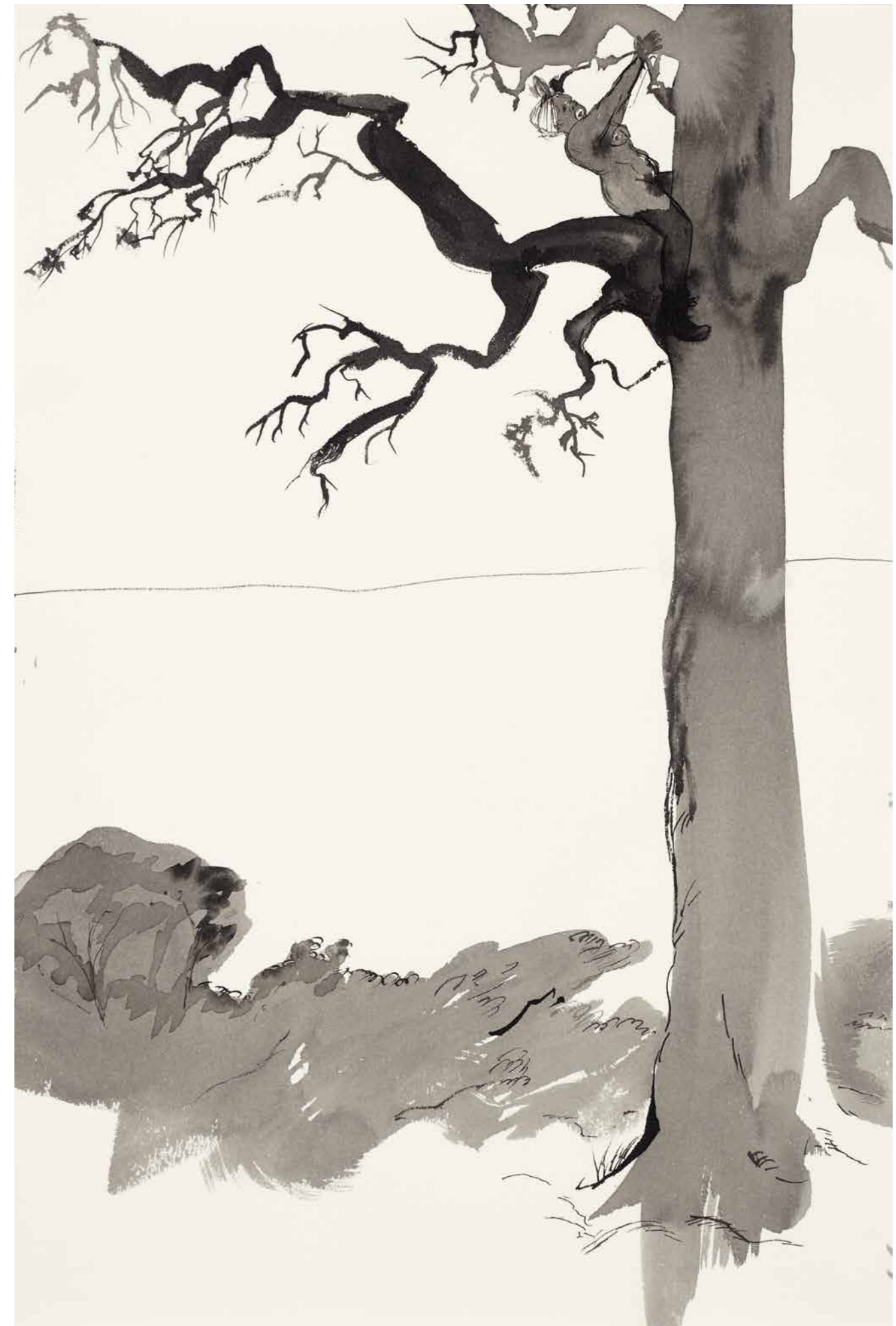


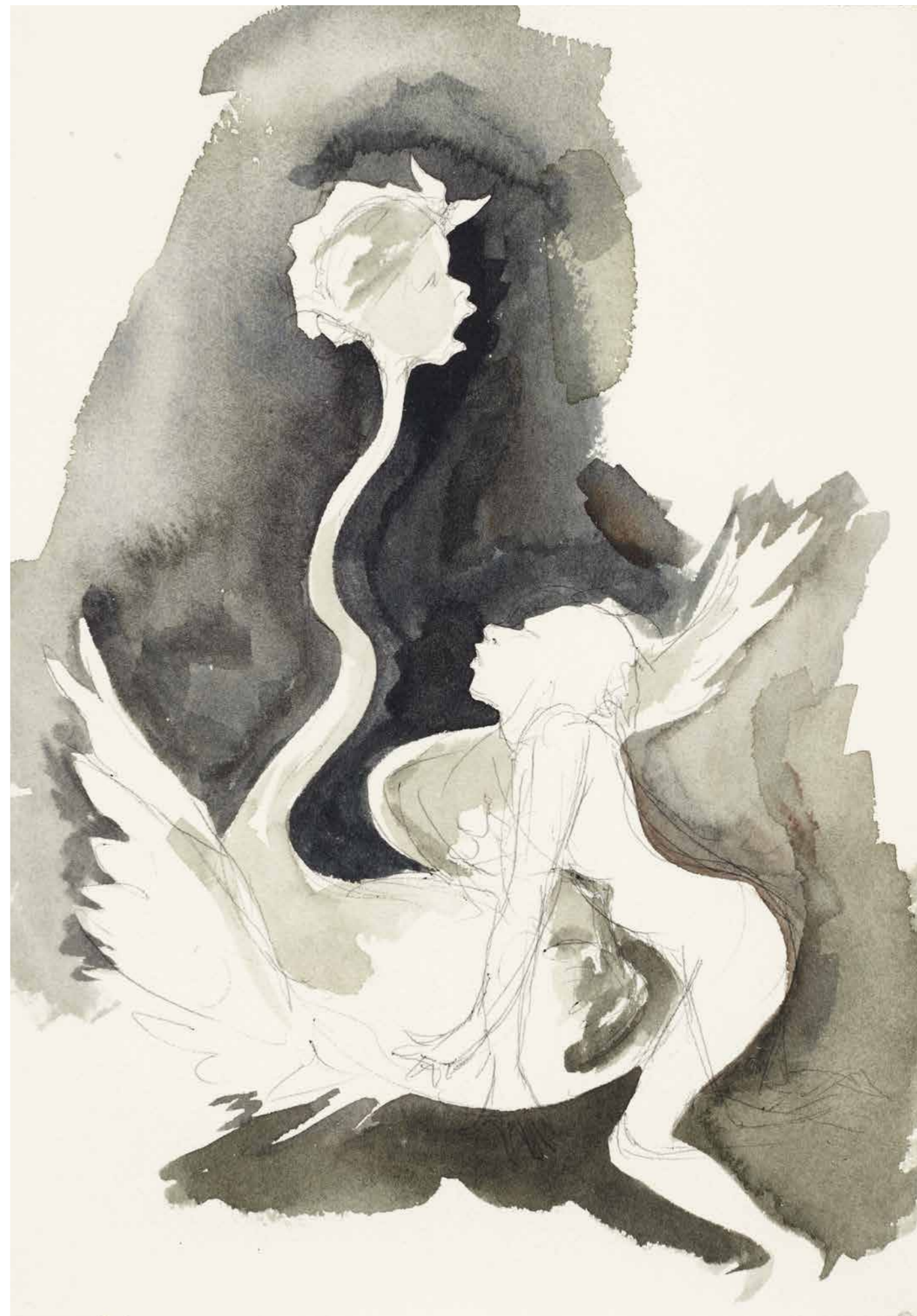
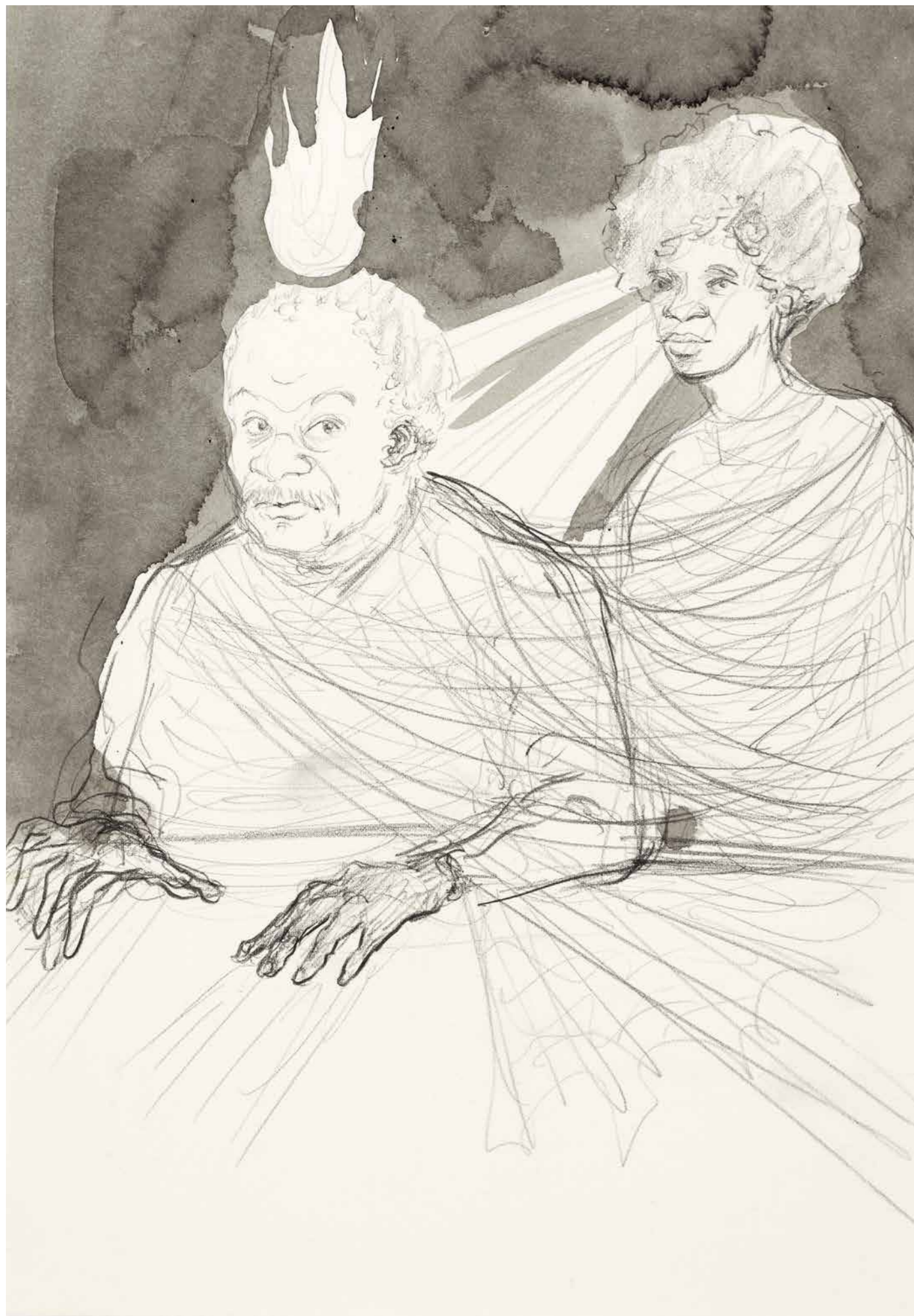
TIMES LIKE THESE

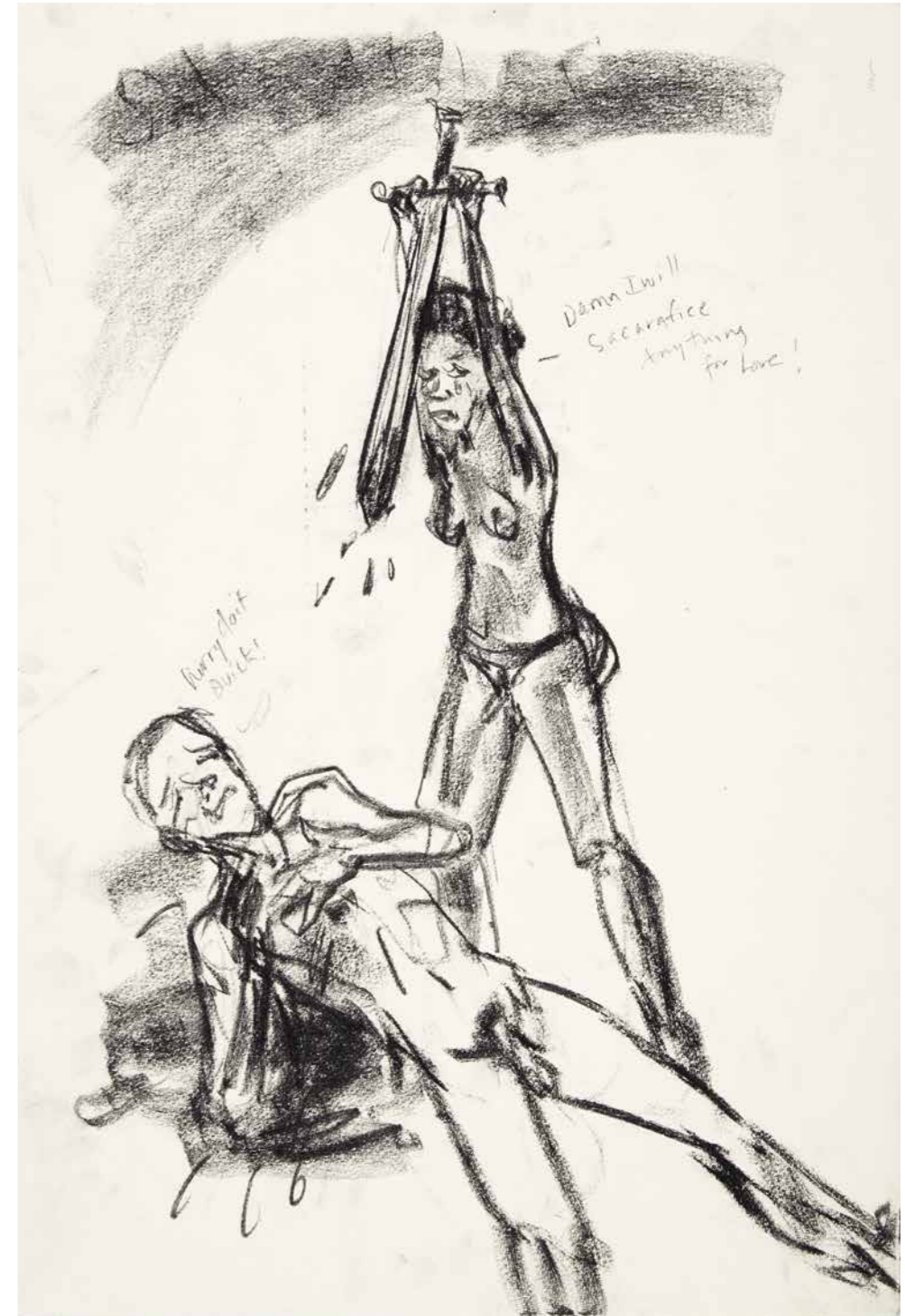


BOUDOIR of
REFUGEES
THREE MEN
AND
RECKLESS
ABANDON

IT WAS FUN LIVE FOR FUN
NO PAIN NO GAIN ! PERCODAN
SUICIDE ! TEQUILA VOMIT
SURPRISE ! IS THAT BLOOD ? NEVERMIND,
JESUS SAVES ATTIMES LIKE
THESE. WHAT JESUS MISSES
OPRAH NARRATES. THERE IS NO
TRAGEDY TOO LARGE TO
ANESTHETIZE









•

Palmetto
Sketch

opening
ceremony
sequentiennial
opera

American
Sketches for opera
American
libretto in
dialect...

3 sketches
+ 3 scenes from the
American Wing

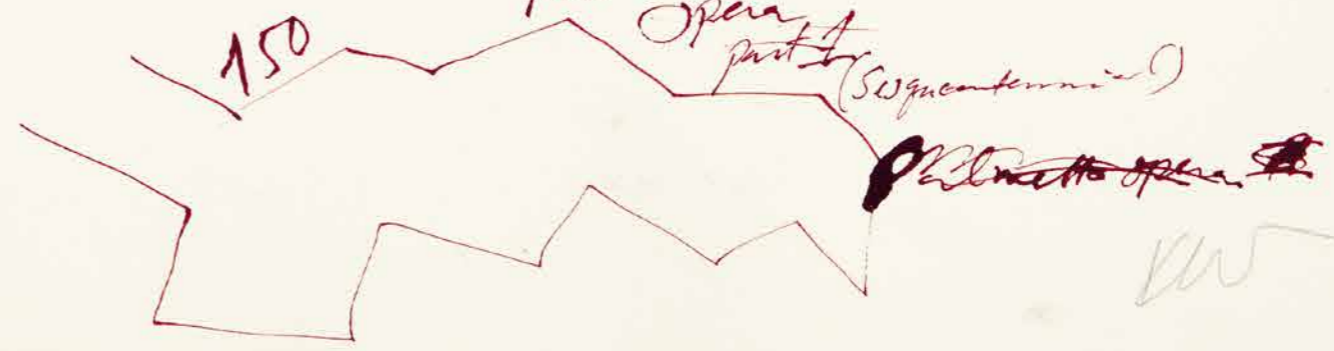
3 sketches for the

The
Palmetto
libretto

Titles aren't
fitting here

from ~~the~~ American
Sketchbook gallery
(Singer
- Dialect)

American Sketchbook
Palmetto Libretto.
ARIA (Eleanora ARIA)
The
MUCK



The

opera in ~~the~~ American
Dialect Songbook!
Sketches for a grand opera
opening salvo
palmetto state
sequentiennial.

Charleston Bay → ~~the~~
Washington →

American Songbook → libretto in dialect
Harlem Riots
of the 20th century.



Drawing on the
Sketches
from the
American
Songbook

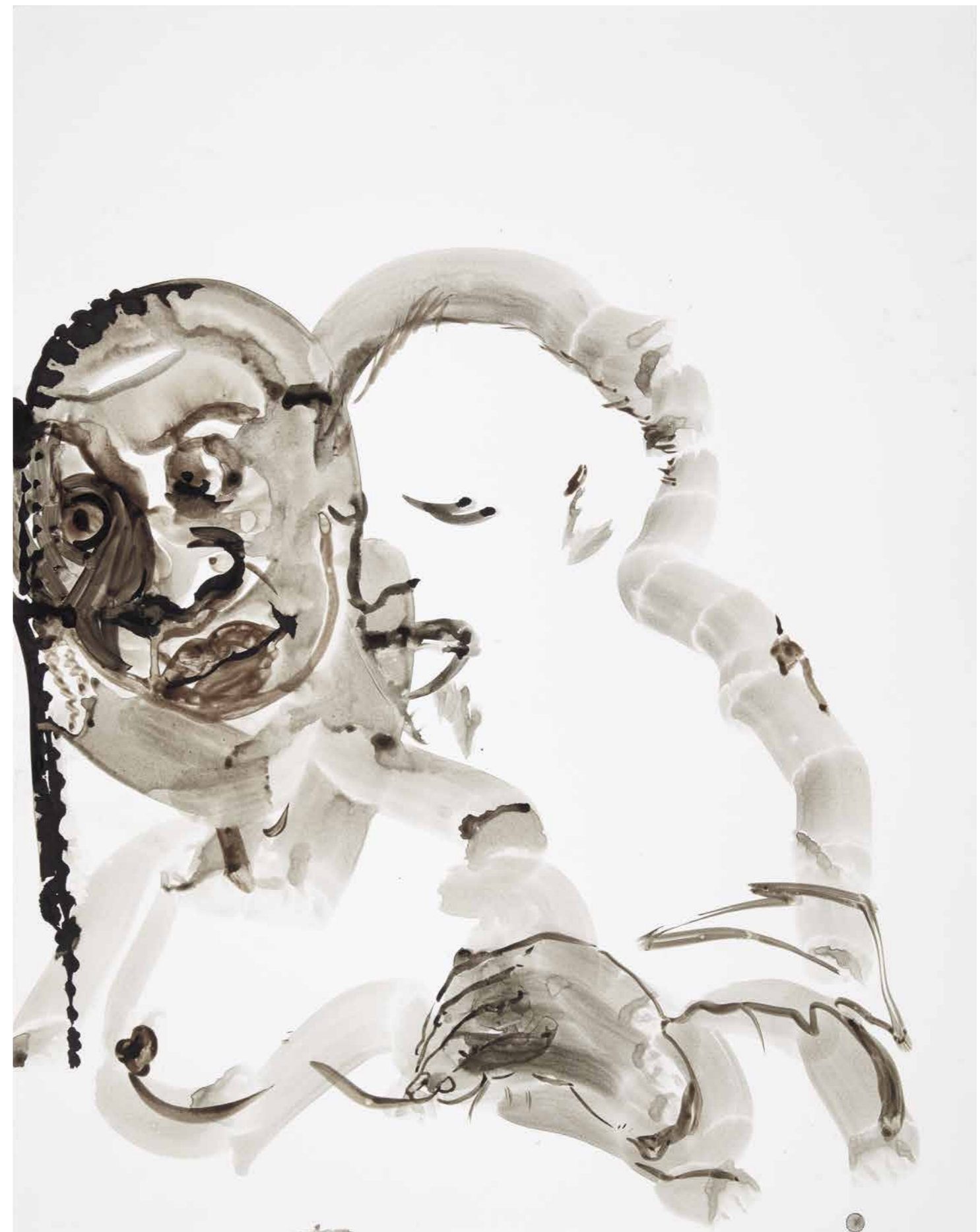
sequentiennial
opera

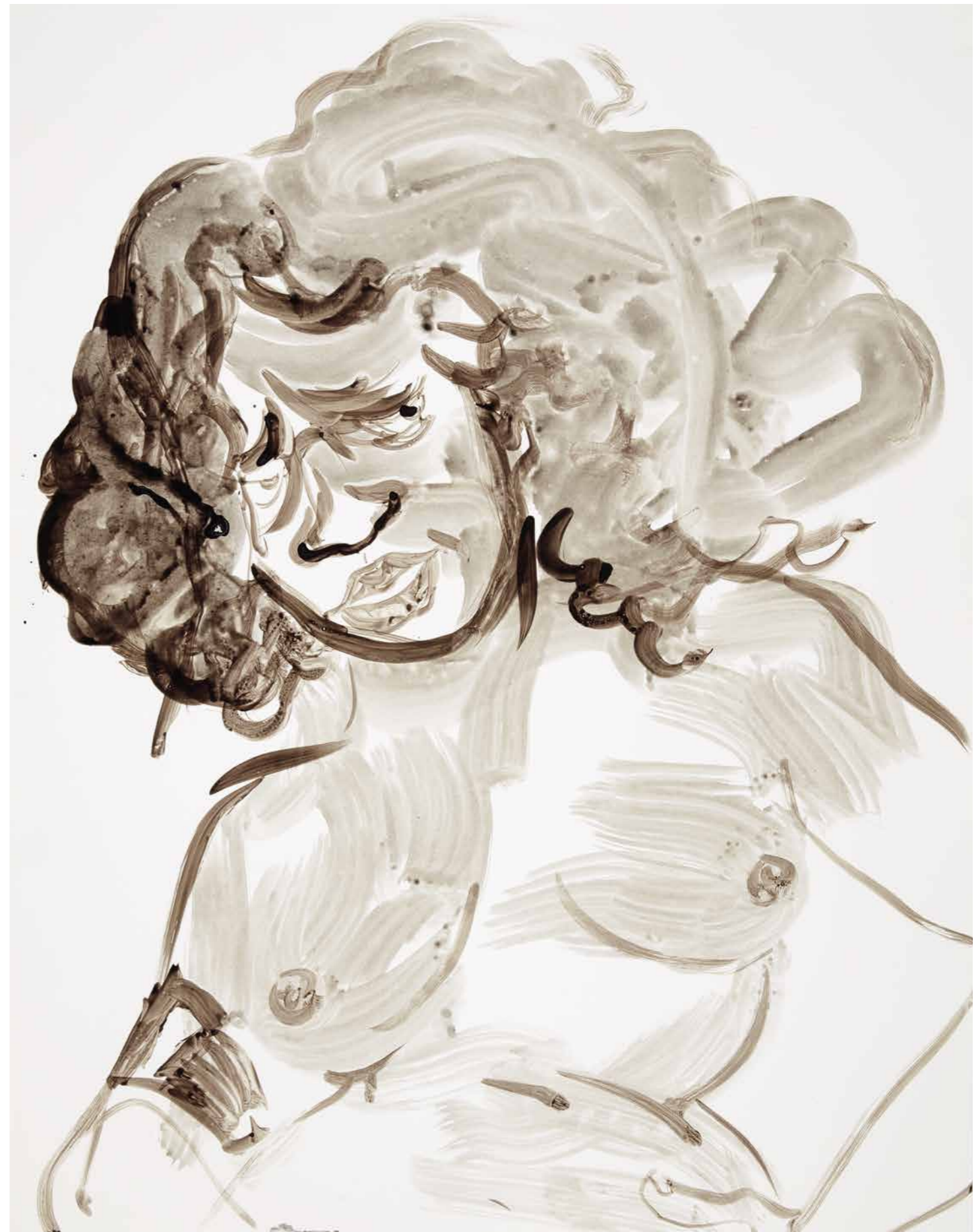
The Palmetto
opera

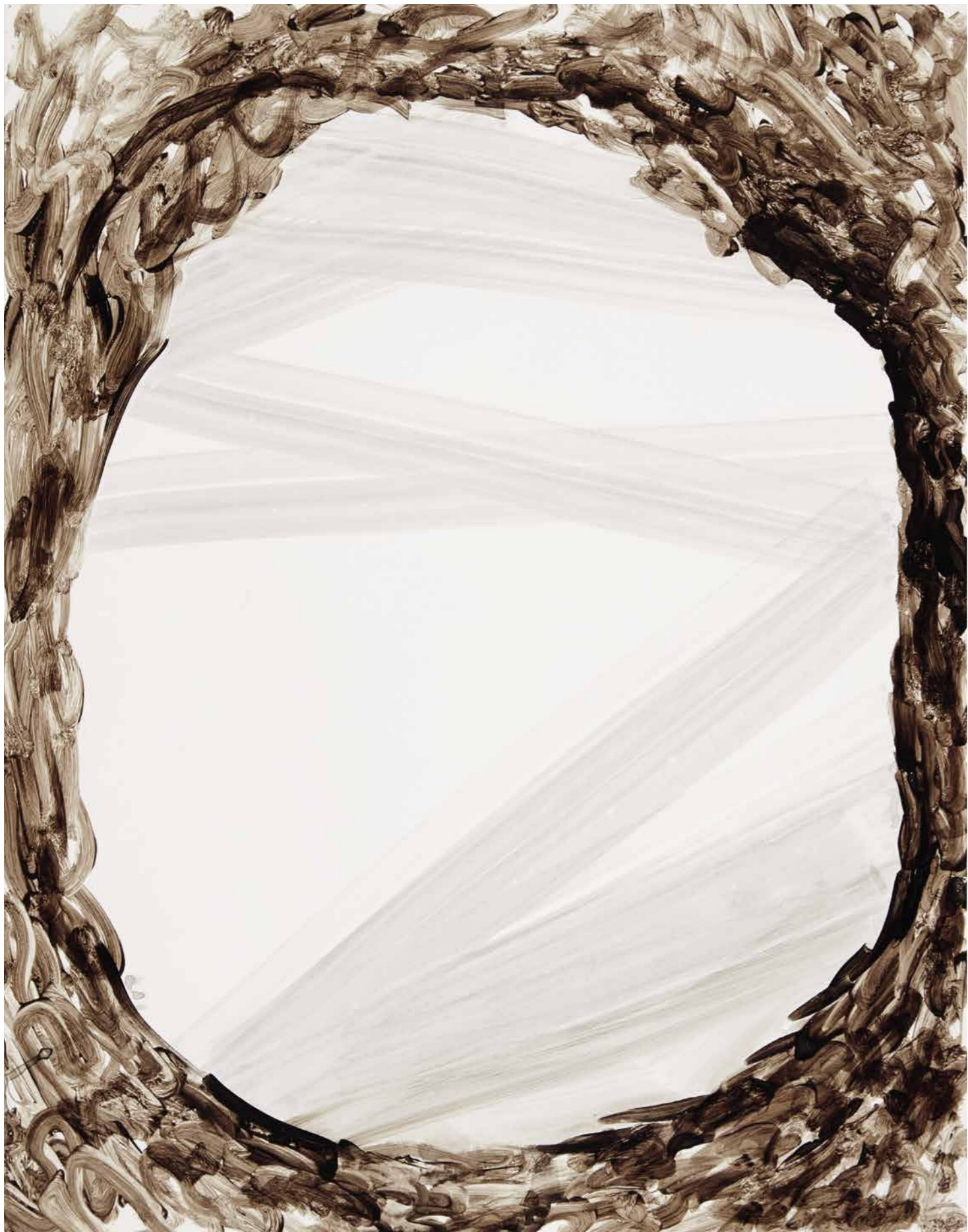
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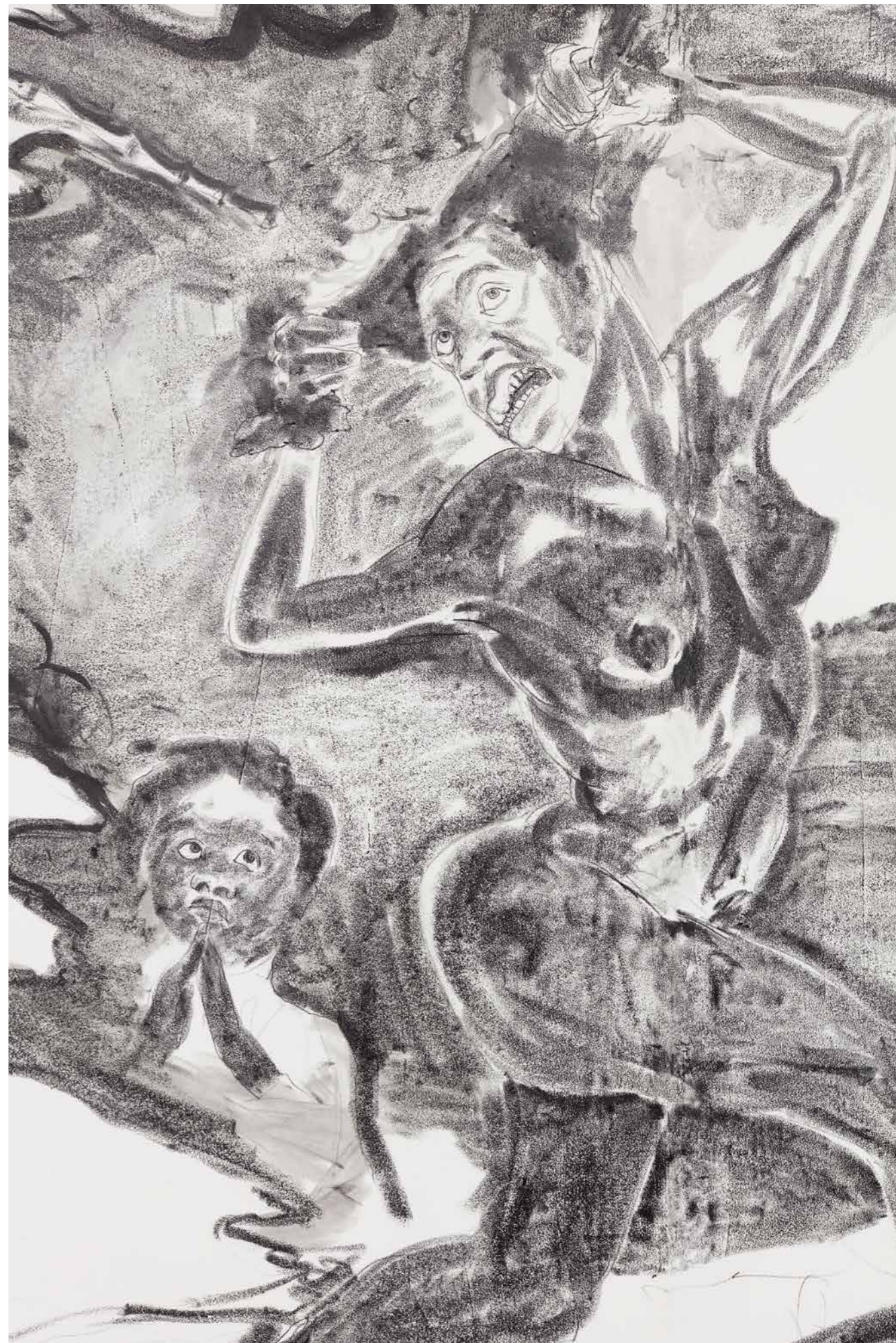
PALMETTO OPERA
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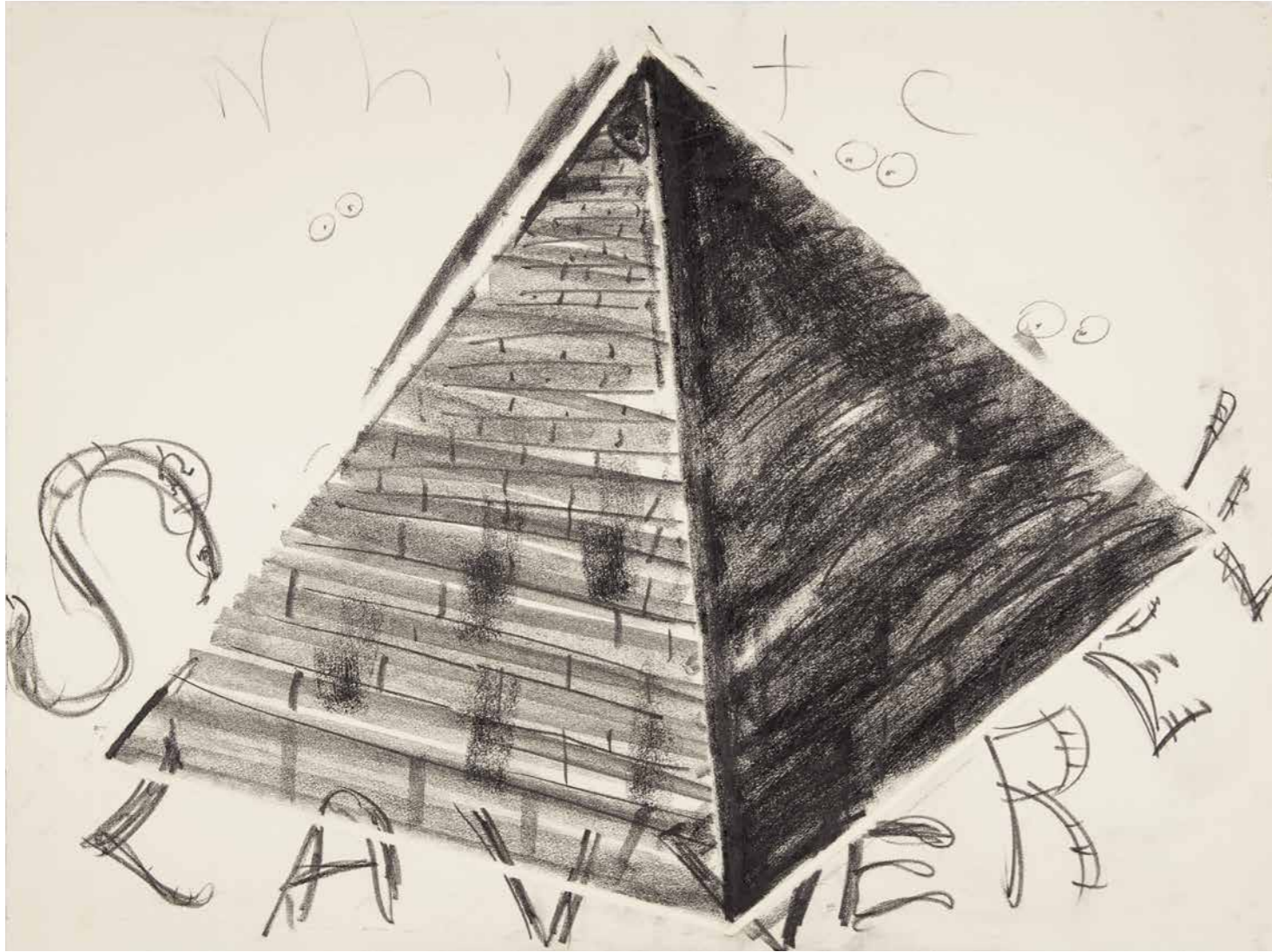






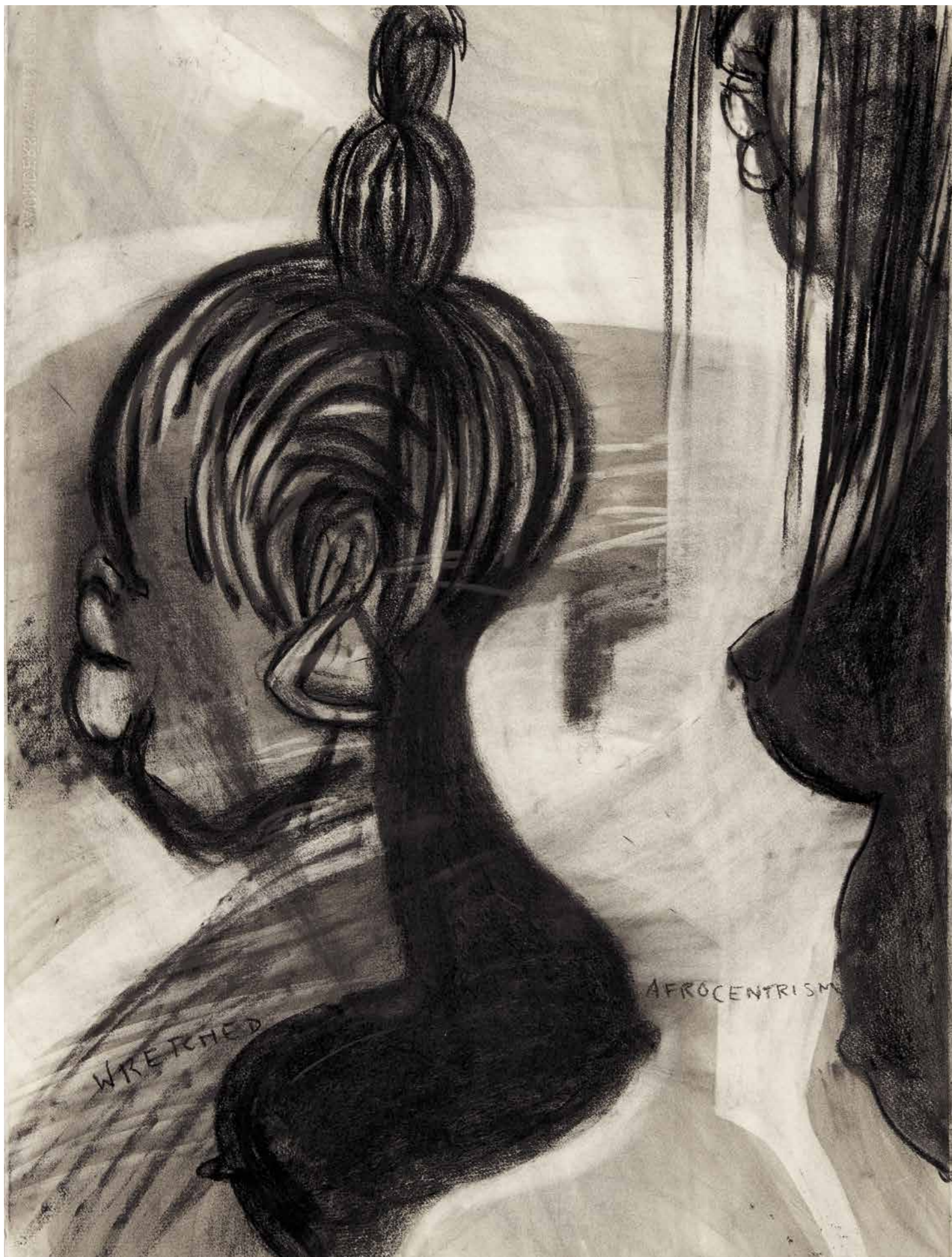


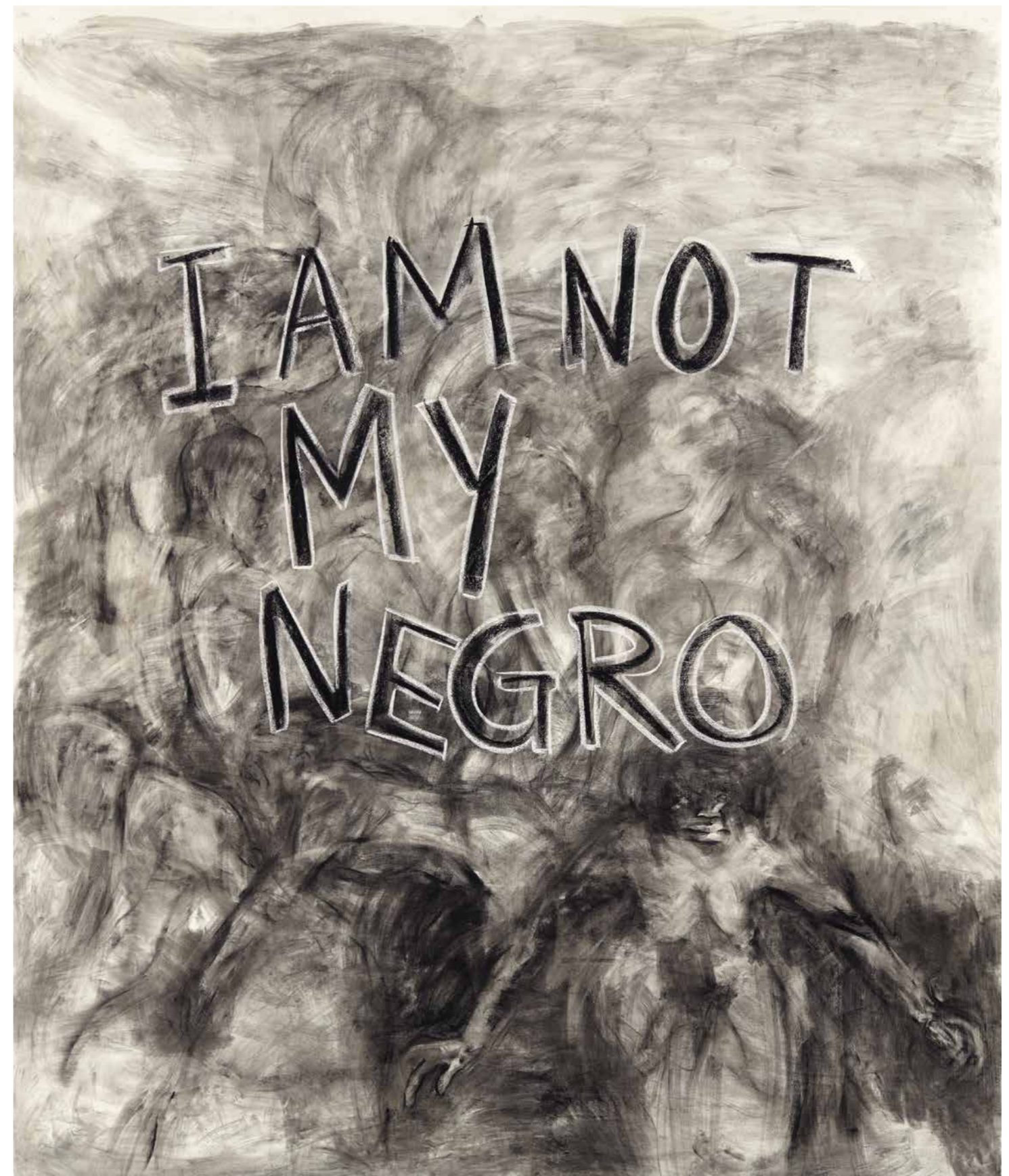


















Kara Walker
A Black Hole Is Everything
a Star Longs to Be
Drawings 1992–2020

Anita Haldemann (ed.)

Kunstmuseum Basel
Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt
De Pont Museum, Tilburg

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Foreword

Kara Walker is one of the most prolific artists of our time. In her technically sophisticated and simultaneously provocative depictions, which are grounded in established pictorial traditions, she puts racism, gender roles, sexuality, and violence in the spotlight. She shakes up historical images and myths, and unflinchingly makes visible the deep conflicts and grievances that persist in society to this day. Her works never involve explicit moralization about good and evil, but leave room for highly personal, ambiguous interpretation. It is no coincidence that Walker characterizes herself as an “unreliable narrator.”

Since the mid-1990s, the artist has been known for her wall-sized silhouette cutouts and films. In 2019 she made headlines with her monumental sculpture *Fons Americanus* at Tate Modern in London. But the foundation of Kara Walker’s artistic production is drawing on paper. For our exhibition, the artist has opened up her private archive for the very first time. A spectacular and staggering abundance of material from the last 28 years provides an unprecedented insight into her working methods. Small sketches, studies, collages, and carefully elaborated large-format works can be seen next to diary-like notes, thoughts typed on index cards, and records of dreams. The intimacy of the individual drawing stands in productive tension with the sheer quantity of what is on display: thus, the paper support becomes the venue for the processes of graphic thinking. The beholder can experience the adaptation, invention, and transformation of figures and narratives as if in the process of their creation.

The most recent works, some of which were produced only in 2020, again make clear the timeliness of Walker’s perspective on the present. In particular, her portraits of Barack Obama in various roles that shed new light on his presidency and his legacy as the first African-American president are especially pertinent in the context of current political events in the United States.

We are fortunate to have the opportunity to mount this extraordinary exhibition together with Kara Walker. The relentless urgency with which her work focuses on the ubiquitous daily manifestations of ongoing discrimination is extremely timely. First and foremost, therefore, we would like to express our deep gratitude to the artist, who has courageously and persistently shared her work with the public without regard to personal cost. We greatly value her trust, as well as the generous engagement with which she has collaborated with us to make the exhibition and catalogue a reality.

The project began with an invitation to Kara Walker from Anita Haldemann, Head of the Basel Kupferstichkabinett (Department of Prints and Drawings), to mount an exhibition dedicated to the artist’s drawings. Walker’s generous and appealing proposition to open up her archive for the exhibition was a greater stroke of luck than we ever expected. That the exhibition gains a wider audience by traveling to Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt and De Pont Museum in Tilburg in the Netherlands is a further fortunate and more than welcome development. Kara Walker is moreover no stranger to Frankfurt, where her work had already been represented by a large-format cutout in the exhibition *The Memory of Art* at the Schirn Kunsthalle in 2000. Thanks are due to Anita Haldemann and her team, above all Marion Heisterberg, Assistant Curator of the Kupferstichkabinett, for the thorough planning and coordination of the touring exhibition.

We also thank the curators Katharina Dohm and Maria Schnyder for organizing the adaptations of the exhibition in Frankfurt and Tilburg.

In addition, we would like to thank Clément Dirié of JRP|Editions, and Gilles Gavillet with Vincent Devaud of Gavillet & Cie in Geneva for their expertise and engagement with the production of this, in many respects unique, publication. The Sikkema Jenkins & Co. gallery in New York was instrumental in the successful realization of both the exhibition and the catalogue. We are grateful to Brent Sikkema, Meg

Malloy, and Scott Briscoe for their unstinting support, and last, but certainly not least, to Kara Walker’s studio, namely Allison Calhoun and Barbara Smith.

In addition to the artist and Sikkema Jenkins & Co., we would also like to thank our private lenders for their support of this exhibition. All three venues of the exhibition are also dependent on the financial support of foundations and sponsors, who are all due our deep appreciation. Those who had already confirmed their commitment before this catalogue went to print are named individually in the imprint.

During the editing of this catalogue, Maurice Berger, author of the insightful essay “The Site of Memory: Kara Walker Drawing,” died of complications induced by the Coronavirus. This catalogue is dedicated to this passionate and sharp-minded critic who relentlessly advocated against racism in the art world.

Josef Helfenstein

Director, Kunstmuseum Basel

Philipp Demandt

Director, Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt

Martijn van Nieuwenhuyzen

Director & Chief Curator, De Pont Museum, Tilburg

The Black (W)hole, and What It Means to Me

Kara Walker

At the outset there was no logic to this show. Born on an impulse to retrieve some part of my own history, I let instinct override intellect—now I am being asked to answer for it. “Just let the work speak for itself!” a voice inside snaps with indignation. With some 650-odd pieces—scraps, notes, drawings, sketches, fragments, and writings—there is a hell of a lot of speaking, screaming, and whispering going on. Oh, but let me *overshare*, I’ll say more.

I feel a certain wonder not only at this profusion of material, but also at the impulse I had to keep it, in file folders marked “Image Sources” or in archival boxes containing work from the early 1990s through the 2010s. I viewed some of the text-based work as unfit for human consumption after its creation. Yet I secreted it away, betraying some urge to talk about it later, an urge toward radical openness that any proper and studied artist would prefer to keep in check. There are a multitude of voices in here, and as I picked through groups of watercolors and little collages, I was struck by all the background histories embedded within. I will just talk about the most pertinent one.

It is hubristic to believe that a saved handwritten memo reading: “A Black Hole Is Everything a Star Longs to Be” taped to my wall should be regarded by me as a monument. I scrawled it in the hope its meaning would become clear to me later. The phrase was initially cartooned onto a long scroll of images and notes from 2012 [p. 222–227], the entire phrase beginning “The Sweet Sweet Smell of Success and the Stench of Ingratitude . . . A Black Hole Is Everything a Star Longs to Be.” The image that accompanies this is that of a Black¹ woman, naked, crouched—vomiting on the shoe of an empowered (clothed, pointing, scowling) white man, whose foot is perched on a shoeshine stand. The implication is that this drawing, in its smallness, is a rejection of blind subservience to patriarchal demands that art and artists cater to the market, to *the man*, to art history, to scale, or to anything not of her own making. I revel in the contradictory pose of the subservient miss, giving “not what he asked

for,” but giving nonetheless. The private drawing satisfies the public urge—a purgative. This phrase is also about the Anti-Art Star who finds more promise in the dark gravitational forces of the Black Hole.

Astronomically a black hole tears apart the known universe; it shakes the foundations of what science can know (and is thus ironically relegated to being “black”) and it is the potential fate of every star in the known heavens. I rediscovered the scroll with this comment fast on the heels of the news about the making of the first recorded image of a black hole—an out of focus capture, but an ultimately fascinating image taken by the Hubble telescope of the distant anomaly. Suddenly the poetic little phrase felt timely, and I rewrote it hastily and taped it to the wall as a reminder that it was ready to come into its own, to do its dark magic, as a title, and as an action.

The action: the haunts from my archive should come out and comingle with new drawings, and perhaps *supernova* in a Pandora’s box-like profusion that might tear at my own known universe. That universe includes Art and Identity Politics, my Narrative Impulse, Figuration, Abstraction, Vernacular vs. Fine Art, History Painting, political art movements like the Black Arts Movement or Third-Wave Feminism, ideas about the Personal vs. the Collective, debates about Drawing vs. Painting (vs. choosing to do neither) and many more cosmologies. For me every scrap of paper is the event horizon—the boundary between the ordered world and chaos. The drawing sketch or writing navigates this edge and its permutations.

I will say no more.

I do want to thank everyone involved: Anita Haldemann for organizing and keeping a level head in the presence of so much inventory, and for sharing some amazing historical works in the Kupferstichkabinett of the Basel Kunstmuseum. As ever I thank Brent Sikkema, Scott Briscoe, Meg Malloy, Sascha Feldman, Jim Barber, and

registrar Matthew Droege at Sikkema Jenkins & Co. in New York, and Monika Sprüth and Philomene Magers in Berlin. Many thanks extended to Allison Calhoun and Barb Smith in my studio for helping to organize the chaos, and assistant-at-large Mike Koller for designing the modular display cases. Also, Gilles Gavillet for the excellent book design.

Thanks to Ari Marcopoulos for being my friend and sounding board and partner in crime.

¹ In this volume, the word “black” is capitalized whenever it is used to refer to the socio-cultural construction of racial identity rather than to the color.

Kara Walker's Drawings: “A Dance of Skepticism and Faith”

Anita Haldemann

Kara Walker has opened up her personal archive for the first time, revealing a spectacular and staggering abundance of over 600 works on paper from the last 28 years, which are on display in their entirety in a comprehensive solo exhibition at the Basel Kunstmuseum. Sketches, studies, collages, silhouettes, rolls of paper several meters long and elaborated larger-format works, diary-like notes, thoughts typed on index cards with a typewriter, and records of dreams are all a part of the archive, together with collected newspaper clippings and advertising materials. In addition, there are 50 works from the last two years—some in very large format—that were produced in conjunction with this exhibition. Faced with such a superabundant quantity and variety of material, the viewer may alternate between fascination and overload.

Walking through the exhibition one could think that one is wandering through Walker's studio, and at the same time through her personal history. The diversity of the exhibited production, which is not organized according to any hierarchy, provides an insight into her way of working. The drawings give rise to the feeling of observing the artist in the very act of making. Many of the sheets are like pages taken from a diary or sketchbook. Every stroke and every word has a poignant immediacy and power. Humor and rage, joy and frustration, love and hate, the entire gamut of emotions comes to the fore. Unavoidably, one is forced to become a voyeur of rape and murder, but also an observer of the processes of graphic art, of thinking with a pencil and brush.

This proliferation of several hundred sheets constitutes the beginning of an exorcising stock-taking—an “excavation,” as Walker calls the psychological, emotional, and physical process of rediscovery that is so central to her work.¹ It is not a matter of culling selectively based on a hierarchization of the work, but rather of offering a complete spectrum of artistic activity. Some works were made for earlier exhibitions in which they were never shown—leftover, so to speak. Others were for Walker, until now,

too personal to present to the public or to engage with anew herself. Many of these works were produced with no thought of ever displaying them. The process of making an inventory is at the same time a basis for Walker's self-analysis as a graphic artist. The concept of the archive is fitting because the sheets of drawing and writing are not regarded as final works of art, but rather as a sediment of her artistic activity. At the same time, they are part of an ongoing process of engagement with her own drawing.

In the early 1990s, Walker made two programmatic decisions as an MFA student at the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence. She wanted to take on the perspective of a Black person and a woman actively: “Everything is a black woman. That was the proposition.”² She turned the acceptance of her own origins, along with the—subjective—limitations that accompany this, into her strength. This stance opened up to her a perspective on the history of colonialism, on the idea of America, and naturally on slavery—not only in terms of its history and its images, but above all its paradoxes and contradictory mechanisms of power structures, and the consequences they have had to this day.

The acceptance of the self, of one's own subjectivity, and with it the questions surrounding one's identity, had consequences for Walker's artistic practice, and led to her third foundational decision—namely, to give up painting. She associated painting on canvas with a patriarchal and white tradition to which she neither wanted nor could belong.³ What remained to her was drawing, working on paper, and looking for a pointedly “weak” medium, which she found in the silhouette.⁴ The silhouette cutout has a bourgeois and feminine tradition, and was also practiced in the United States in the 19th century by African-Americans.⁵ It was considered a handicraft, a humble art form.⁶ Walker combines silhouette cutouts into wall-spanning panoramas

All websites mentioned were last accessed in September 2020.

1 Silke Boerma, “Interview with Kara Walker,” in *Kara Walker*, Stephan Berg (ed.), exh. cat., Kunstverein Hannover, Modo Verlag, Freiburg im Breisgau 2002, p. 165–173, here p. 165.

2 Kara Walker in Kara Walker and Larry Walker, “Kara Walker Talks with her Father, Artist Larry Walker for BOMB's Oral History Project,” in *BOMB—Artists in Conversation*, May 8, 2014, <https://bombmagazine.org/articles/kara-walker-larry-walker/>.

3 Ibid.

4 Alexander Alberro, “An Interview with Kara Walker,” in *Kara Walker: Upon My Many Masters—An Outline*, exh. pamphlet, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, February 14–May 13, 1997, https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/sfmoma-media/media/uploads/files/assets/documents/new_work/sfmoma_new_work_walker_1997_print.pdf.

5 Gwendolyn DuBois Shaw, *Seeing the Unspeakeable. The Art of Kara Walker*, Duke University Press, Durham, North Carolina 2004, p. 20–25.

6 Darby English, “This Is Not About the Past. Silhouettes in the Work of Kara Walker,” in *Kara Walker: Narratives of a Negress*, Ian Berry et al. (eds.), exh. cat., Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, New York, and Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2003, p. 140–167.

or even an entire cyclorama—a type of panoramic picture in the round that was also invented in the 19th century as a form of mass entertainment.⁷ Turning to silhouettes was thus not a capitulation or a retreat, but rather a kind of liberation: a self-empowering gesture of demarcation against the tradition of European painting and the rhetoric of 20th-century American painting.⁸

The silhouettes and drawings were intended as a way to localize racism and Blackness in an anachronistic non-space—“a place that would allow the work to exist as a fully realized second-class citizen poking at the margins of mechanical modern art practices.”⁹ The complexity of Walker’s reconfiguration of this anachronistic artform has been thoroughly and convincingly analyzed by the art historian Darby English. Walker does not hide behind a historiographical program, but rather makes use of the silhouettes and scenes of slavery from the antebellum era in order to reveal their historical subjectivity—at once drastic and virtuoso, painful and sensual.¹⁰ The drifting apart of form and content here is essential: “I searched for a form that had a historical effect and found the Victorian romance with all its detachment and cleanliness, a form which—flat as it is—also appears as if it were impossible to speak of anything essential. But the form is also a kind of snare: people take a peek simply because it looks nice and pleasurable. And then, suddenly, they may start seeing a few things that aren’t quite so nice.”¹¹

Since the early Renaissance, drawing has been considered the basis of all the arts. It has held on to this foundational role to this day throughout all the transformations of artistic form. It continues to be the central artistic practice for generating the concepts and processes of art, whether in the form of sketches, studies, or more elaborated drawings. Within the visual arts, drawing has its own discourse on techniques and

typologies, its own specific history, and its own specialized audience of collectors and experts. The central quality that appeals to many artists is, however, a universal feature: with its simple means and unconstrained technique, drawing enables the most immediate formulation of ideas and fantasies.

Claims about the autonomy of drawing have always existed, but the emancipation of drawing as an independent medium, the bounds of which even dissolve toward painting and sculpture, is ultimately a relatively recent phenomenon. In the context of the dissolution of media boundaries and the increasing significance of the conceptual aspects of art, drawing has become particularly independent in the last 50 years.¹² Especially in the decade before and after the turn of the millennium, drawing was celebrated as a medium with untapped potential. Formats became larger, or the drawing was made directly on the wall or extended out in space.¹³ The argument was repeatedly made that drawing offered a place outside the heroic narrative of modern painting—an almost unfettered space of productivity. Since the 1990s, it has been notable that drawing has been used particularly intensively by artists who are concerned with questions of identity and power relations (e.g. Kiki Smith, Nancy Spero, Robert Gober, Mike Kelley, Glenn Ligon, Raymond Pettibon, Gary Simmons, Ellen Gallagher). Furthermore drawing as a privileged medium of direct and individual expression is an ideal partner for the feminist position that the political is personal and the personal political.¹⁴ Walker’s art is known for its provocative crossing, or better dissolution, of the boundary between the private and public spheres—for instance by putting intimate bodily processes such as birth, masturbation, or defecation on display; or by publishing records of dreams or other diary-like notes.

From markedly painterly to strictly linear, from sketchy to minutely elaborated, from intimately small formats to wall-filling works, drawing today offers an enormously wide gamut of possibilities. Walker practices a form of drawing

that calls attention to the process of its own execution. She prefers to work with a brush and liquid drawing media in a very dynamic and expressive manner, yet the sheets are always recognizable as drawings. The execution does not simulate a form of painting. Even the works that appear painterly at first glance are dominated upon closer examination by a graphic hand [p. 3–4]. The lines and strokes remain recognizable in the large-format works as well, and the paper ground is usually visible or even left bare over large stretches of surface. The charcoal and crayon drawings, too, display a sovereign, downright virtuosic execution [p. 422–423, 533–535]. The swiftness of the rapidly drawn lines here has nothing to do with traditional nature study, but rather with capturing the images and inventions in the artist’s mind and setting them down immediately on paper.

The economy of the sketch consists in drawing only as much as is necessary to set a story in motion—as for instance in the series of red ink drawings that show one or two figures on a white ground [p. 424–430]. These are presented in part fragmentarily, such as heads without bodies or a half a face with long hair. In most of them, there is a lack of detailed modeling of the body. A few lines or a hint of shadow suffice to allow figures to appear three-dimensional. Color is generally used sparingly and not descriptively. The red, for instance, conveys a certain urgency, and at the same time a degree of abstraction, which emphasizes the fictive character of what is represented. The spontaneity of the execution suggests a moment of something that cannot be postponed—an unrestrained need to express oneself and communicate. In an interview on the occasion of an exhibition at the Metropolitan Arts Centre in Belfast in 2014, Walker described this impulse as a “huge need to continue to draw, that’s where I get my desire to be an artist.”¹⁵

The *non finito* and the aesthetic of the sketch are also aspects that can be understood in connection with Walker’s identity as an African-American artist. Her drawing practice implies the unfinished, the sketched, the not-yet-completed:

an interim state that she also applies to herself as an artist and a person. Walker has repeatedly stated that she considers herself to belong to the margins of art and society, that unambiguous identification is not possible for her, that she is neither activist enough for African-American artists nor truly subsumed into the patriarchal structures of the white establishment, and is thus just as “unfinished” as her drawings. Zadie Smith has perfectly expressed the heart of the matter: “A white thing is, by definition, whatever a white person does. Whereas blackness is nothing but test.”¹⁶ Many things can threaten the Blackness of a Black woman: the wrong kind of art, the wrong kind of husband, the wrong kind of curiosity, and so on.

For an artist such as Walker, who is not seeking to cement her identity, but rather to understand and investigate its genesis and transformation, drawing—with its “suspended potentiality,” as she calls it—is a medium that offers the ideal space. Walker has spoken of the “flawed” character of drawing and its role as preparation:

Drawing is a process, a dance of skepticism and faith. Perhaps the drawing is preparation for a more solid objective or event. Drawing sets the stage for the future. Perhaps it’s a meditation on its own flawed being, existing as a series of spontaneous decisions, strung together and then selectively erased out. Perhaps the drawing remains in a state of suspended potentiality, never to be a “real” painting, but striving to be all the same, pencil mark by pencil mark.¹⁷

She even posits a parallel between her freedom as a political subject and as a drawing artist: “Like our lives as political subjects, the drawing represents freedom, an infinite set of possibilities. But unlike life, each choice in the activity is within the artist’s control.”¹⁸ For Walker, the drawing in its potential openness and limited authority is the ideal medium in which to rethink the collective past and potential future of African-Americans, but also to investigate and redefine

7 See the two cycloramas in Atlanta: *The Battle of Atlanta* (1886) and *The Battle of Gettysburg* (1885).

8 Walker: “So I would think that this [the silhouette] would appeal to an early America seeking to define itself against a flashy and complicated Europe [...]” in Alexander Alberro, “An Interview with Kara Walker.”

9 “The point of the silhouettes was to locate racism, blackness, and, in particular, my draftsmanship in an anachronistic non-space: a place that would allow the work to exist as a fully realized second-class citizen poking at the margins of mechanical modern art practices.” Walker in Allese Thomson, “Kara Walker discusses ‘Rise Up Ye Mighty Race!’” in *Artforum*, March 27, 2013, <https://www.artforum.com/interviews/kara-walker-discusses-rise-up-ye-mighty-race-39955>.

10 Darby English, “This Is Not About the Past. Silhouettes in the Work of Kara Walker,” p. 142–143.

11 Cited in Samuel Herzog, “Ich werde immer politisch sein. Ein Interview mit Kara Walker,” in *Kunstbulletin*, no. 5, 2000, www.artlog.net/de/kunstbulletin-5-2000/ich-werde-immer-politisch-sein (translation Anita Haldemann).

12 An important milestone for the perception of contemporary drawing as an autonomous medium was the exhibition *Drawing Now: 1955–1975*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, January 23–March 9, 1976. It was shown at the Kunsthau Zürich (1976) and other European museums under the title *Zeichnung heute*.

13 See, for example, *Compass in Hand. Selections from the Judith Rothschild Foundation Contemporary Drawings Selections*, Christian Rattemeyer (ed.), exh. cat., The Museum of Modern Art, New York 2009; as well as two recent exhibition catalogues: *Drawing Now: 2015*, Klaus Albrecht Schröder and Elsy Lahner (eds.), exh. cat., Albertina, Wien, and Hirmer, Munich 2015; *Drawing: The Bottom Line*, Philippe Van Cauteren and Martin Germann (eds.), exh. cat., S.M.A.K., Museum for Contemporary Art, Ghent, and Mercatorfonds, Brussels 2015.

14 See for instance, Ulla Wischermann, “Feministische Theorien zur Trennung von privat und öffentlich – Ein Blick zurück nach vorn,” in *Feministische Studien*, 2003, vol. 21, no. 1, p. 23–34.

16 Zadie Smith, “Kara Walker: What Do We Want History To Do To Us?” in *Hyundai Commission: Kara Walker: Fons Americanus*, Clara Kim (ed.), exh. cat., Tate Modern, London 2019, p. 32–53, here p. 50.

17 Kara Walker, “Assassination by Proxy,” in *The Ecstasy of St. Kara*, exh. cat., Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio, and Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut 2016, p. 24–27, here p. 27.

18 Ibid.

15 Kara Walker, Interview at the Metropolitan Arts Centre Belfast on the occasion of her exhibition, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3QbXdPv-Oig>.

her own identity as a Black woman—e.g. artist and mother—being at the crossroads of female social norms. Drawing offers an unusual variety of practical, material, and theoretical possibilities to explore gender, race, nationality, and religion, and how they shape our identities or those of nations and historical periods.

With the clean, powerfully expressive black-and-white aesthetic, and the elegant contours of the black silhouettes, Walker leads the viewer on a false path. The sovereign silhouettes, which demonstrate a great degree of skill, are extremely differentiated in detail, but executed with a simple economy of means. Only upon closer inspection does one recognize the disturbing stereotypical depictions of people, and an abundance of obscenely sexual and violent actions [p. 576, FIG. 2]. Walker has elucidated this relationship between execution and effect: “It’s crafty, which I think is important. In fact the craftiness of the work kind of lends itself to the subject matter in a way that I find rather interesting.”¹⁹ The drawings provide a contrast: “First of all, I draw like a madwoman. I doubt an assistant could find a line to follow.”²⁰

Walker shows herself to be an artist who draws quickly and impulsively. The individual lines and traces of the brush reveal her processes of production. Entire bundles of lines can often be seen searching for the optimal trajectory, which demonstrates a firmer and more decisive stroke [p. 47, 519]. Even flatter areas are not systematically hatched or worked up into homogenous surfaces, but rather always leave the traces of charcoal, crayon, or brush visible [p. 3–4, 533–535, 547–548]. In this way, the draftsmanship and the powerful hand movement of the artist is always prominent, in stark contrast to the black surfaces of the silhouettes. This presence of the performative in the large format works underscores their production in the here and now: “Making sweeping graphite gestures is all about being in the moment, but I hope to retain that question of *what moment are we?* Or, what moment is this? Is it all moments?”²¹

While the black silhouettes are anachronistic, Walker plows through art history more deeply in her drawings, although the reference to the present is even stronger: “My work has always been a time machine catapulting me backward across decades and centuries to arrive at some understanding of my ‘place’ in the contemporary moment.”²² This journey through time refers to the techniques of drawing as much as to the styles and motifs, and leads not only into the past but also into the future. In her large drawing *Yesterdayness in America Today* (2020) [p. 533–535], the title pointedly lends expression to the anachronism of the Trump era and to Walker’s question, “What moment is this?” The round and flowing forms and the tendency toward caricature transport us back to the time of the murals of Thomas Hart Benton (1889–1975) and to the American Regionalism of the 1930s.

As a figurative painter, Hart Benton has long been seen as old-fashioned, and it is only in recent years that he has again become appreciated. Walker’s title refers to the ambitious ten-part mural *America Today*, which he created in 1930–1931 for the New School for Social Research, a center for progressive thought and education in New York’s Greenwich Village (the work has been at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York since 2012).²³ At the time, the image conveyed the enormous relevance of contemporary social and economic developments.²⁴ Some of Hart Benton’s images have often been the targets of calls for censorship—for instance, there have been repeated demands to remove a picture from the cycle *A Social History of Indiana* (1933) from the Indiana University campus, because it depicts members of the Ku Klux Klan burning a cross in the background.²⁵ Hart Benton had always spoken out staunchly against racism and the commission for these pictures was given to him in response to the dominance of KKK members in Indiana politics in the 1920s.²⁶

This “homage” to Hart Benton can probably also be understood as a plea against censorship, and for the visualization of the ugly aspects of history and the present. Thus, for instance,

Walker argued for keeping the controversial painting *Open Casket* (2016) by Dana Schulz in the 2017 Whitney Biennial: “Painting—and a lot of art—often lasts longer than the controversies that greet it. I say this as a shout to every artist and artwork that gives rise to vocal outrage. Perhaps it too gives rise to deeper inquiries and better art. It can only do this when it is seen.”²⁷

In *Yesterdayness in America Today* [p. 533–535], the center is dominated by a Black woman who pulls at her hair and strides through the picture with ragged boots. She is reminiscent of the rebellious figures with clenched fists of the Black Power Movement, such as those in a drawing called *A Shocking Declaration of Independence* (2018) [p. 39], or of the fighter who has just struck out with her clenched fist in an earlier drawing [p. 95]. The figures are always depicted naked. Their nakedness emphasizes their sexuality, but also makes use of the cliché of the uncontrollable wildness and dangerousness of the Black woman. The protagonist tears at her hair, her face distorted by pain. She is like the Furies—the goddesses of vengeance who personify a bad conscience and pursue the guilty in rage. It seems self-evident to see the enraged artist in this figure as well.

Yesterdayness in American Today is a broad, panoramic drawing; it is a complex work, so only a few aspects can be highlighted here. While the child looks up at the woman, the muscular Black man who kneels on the ground with his hands behind his head remains in the pose of the accused or a prisoner. The scene in the vignette in the background seems to come from another time. A small family flees from the blaring noise of the aging rock star who sings, spitting with his tongue sticking out, in the direction of the setting sun. Perhaps escape is the best option? The singer with the guitar is reminiscent of another of Hart Benton’s figures, from the mural *The Sources of Country Music* (1975), in which a Black banjo player in the middle ground is depicted as a smaller “replica” of the country musician: an allusion to the influence of Black music on Country music.²⁸

Walker’s figure is an amalgam of Elvis Presley, acknowledged as the immortal King of Rock ’n’ Roll, and Donald Trump, the President of the USA, who in 2018 posthumously awarded Elvis the Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honor in America.²⁹ In selecting Elvis, who died in 1977, Trump reached back unusually far, and then proceeded to compare himself to the legendary sex symbol at the ceremony on November 18, 2018. This strategy of celebrating yesteryear also entails the complete negation of the attainments that led to the election of the first Black president. There is a theory that the destruction of the legacy of Barack Obama was a central foundation for Trump’s election.³⁰

Yesterdayness in America Today is an enigmatic image that expresses the frustration of being trapped in today’s backward-looking era, where the Black Lives Matter movement, founded in 2013, is still necessary. The central protagonist of the picture may be taking a big step, but she is also trapped in the moment. Only the old woman sitting on the ground with her eyes closed seems to be relaxed and letting the music wash over her. The ephemeral figure at the left edge, who gestures in accusation or admonishment with a bamboo cane, seems to come from a different time—the past or the future?

Sunset as a symbol for the continual discrimination against African-American people is also thematized by Walker in the drawing *Resistance is Wanting* [p. 51]. Walker only inserted the “t” in “wanting” afterward, so at first the drawing was called “Resistance is Waning.” On the horizon, the setting sun is visible with the words “BLACK LIVES MATTERED” written across it—an expression of capitulation. The resistance is organized, with canons that are mounted in a fortress wall in the background, but the two makeshift nailed-together wooden planks offer only a weak attempt at resistance. Two victims already lie in the foreground. In the middle, however, a girl stands undaunted with arms outstretched like Christ. Would it be too farfetched to see in her the artist in her role as an admonisher, a kind of Black Joan of Arc? Next to her sits a paternal lion, full of worries with a wrinkled brow.

²³ See Randall R. Griffey, Elizabeth Mankin Kornhauser, and Stephanie L. Herdrich, “Thomas Hart Benton’s *America Today*,” in *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 72, no. 3 (Winter 2015).

²⁴ Paul Theroux, “The Story Behind Thomas Hart Benton’s Incredible Masterwork,” in *Smithsonian Magazine*, December 2014, www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/story-behind-thomas-hart-bentons-incredible-masterwork-1-180953405.

²⁵ Melissa Young, “Petition to Remove University Mural Depicting KKK Rally Sparks Controversy,” in *Hyperallergic*, November 8, 2017, <https://hyperallergic.com/410319/petition-to-remove-university-mural-depicting-kkk-rally-sparks-controversy/>.

²⁶ A third of white men were members, and thus more than half of the Indiana legislature. See *ibid.*

¹⁹ Alexander Alberro, “An Interview with Kara Walker,” p. 6.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Walker, cited in Allese Thomson, “Kara Walker discusses ‘Rise Up Ye Mighty Race!’”

²² Kara Walker, “Fons Americanus,” in *Hyundai Commission: Kara Walker: Fons Americanus*, p. 54–58, here p. 55.

²⁷ Cited in Roberta Smith, “Should Art That Infuriates Be Removed?” in *New York Times*, March 27, 2017, www.nytimes.com/2017/03/27/arts/design/emmett-till-whitney-biennial-schutz.html.

²⁸ See Bill C. Malone and Jocelyn R. Neal, *Country Music, U.S.A.*, University of Texas Press, revised edition 2010; Andrew R. Chow, “Black Artists Built Country Music—And Then It Left Them Behind,” *Time*, September 11, 2019, <https://time.com/5673476/ken-burns-country-music-black-artists/>.

²⁹ Author’s conversation with Kara Walker, January 2020.

³⁰ Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The First White President,” in *The Atlantic*, October 2017, www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/10/the-first-white-president-ta-nehisi-coates/537909/.

The appearance and quality of Walker's drawings are repeatedly compared with Old Master drawings.³¹ In 1997, the art historian Gary Garrels positioned her mastery of line and shadow in large-format compositions in relation to the Western tradition of Old Master drawings and particularly to Renaissance "cartoons"—the templates produced in their final, large dimensions for transfer to fresco paintings [FIG. 1].³² The comparison with cartoons is significant because these are preparatory drawings that serve the execution of the "actual" work, and thus provide a composition and its figures in their entirety, with all their gestures and facial expressions. Walker's large-format drawings thus take up the typical format traditionally used for monumental painting, without the existence of the final work. She presents "only" the cartoons, as if she were not finished. This allows her work to persist in a state of flawed preparation, since its "crowning" and final codification through the transfer to a painting never happens. This is different for the silhouette cutouts, in which the "flaw" is not the further step of completion, but rather the lack of the template, for neither the figures nor their shadows that she purports to represent exist.

To exhibit Walker's drawings at the Kunstmuseum Basel also entails seeing them in the context of the Kupferstichkabinett (Department of Prints and Drawings) and the history of drawing that it documents. The collection contains not only a rich inventory of the 20th century—such as American artists from Barnett Newman to Andy Warhol, as well as the drawings of European artists from Max Beckmann to Josef Beuys and Rosemarie Trockel—but in particular also the graphic art of Old Masters such as Urs Graf and Hans Holbein the Younger [FIG. 2].³³ Walker's visit to the exhibition of Michelangelo's drawings at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in the winter of 2017/2018, and the prospect of showing her work in the Basel Kupferstichkabinett, inspired her to explore Old Master techniques, which comes particularly to the fore in the 38-part series of drawings, *The Gross Clinician Presents: Pater Gravidam*, which is now in the collection in Basel [p. 39–65 AND FIG. 3].³⁴

For Walker, the consequence of negotiating her own identity within the framework of art historical traditions was not only that she gave up painting. The process continues in the decision to choose certain drawing techniques and materials that in turn suggest motifs and themes. The references to tradition, to particular artists or epochs, as well to the theme of mastery and inspiration have clearly become more prominent in the last two years, and have opened up new perspectives for the artist in making history and art history visible.

As with the silhouettes, the first impression is similarly deceptive in the drawings, which appear at first glance as "old-masterly" in their execution and motifs, but upon closer inspection are anchored strongly in the present. *The Gross Clinician Presents: Pater Gravidam* is executed on high-quality paper in various tones of brown. The figures are mainly sketched with a couple of pencil lines and defined with more or less precision with lines of ink. A background is often only summarily hinted at. The 38 sheets can be arranged roughly into various categories of traditional sketches and studies. There are, for instance, sheets with an accumulation of not necessarily connected individual studies, studies of one or two figures, and complex depictions that fill an entire sheet on which narratives unfold.

All these drawings may be characterized as sketches in which individual elements or entire depictions of scenes are captured with rapidly executed lines and summary brushstrokes. They suggest initial thoughts (*primi pensieri*)—contours and volumes are only tentatively sought, details are mostly omitted, the background is only hinted at. The impression is one of ideas in flux. Walker makes use of the aesthetic of the sketch to position her works in the traditional dialectic between initial ideas and highly finished drawings.³⁵ Yet further elaboration into a final work is not part of the plan—rather, the plan leads to further thinking, which in turn



FIG. 1



FIG. 2



FIG. 3

FIG. 1
Kara Walker, *Philadelphia*, 1996
Gouache on paper, 204.5 × 130.8 cm
Courtesy The Dakis Joannou Collection, Athens

FIG. 2
Urs Graf, *Two Harlots Attacking a Monk*, 1521
Pen and black-brown ink over preliminary drawing
in black pencil, 28.2 × 20.8 cm
Kunstmuseum Basel, Kupferstichkabinett,
Amerbach-Kabinett, U.X.92

FIG. 3
Kara Walker, *The Gross Clinician Presents:
Pater Gravidam*, 2018
38 drawings, graphite, sumi ink, gofun,
and gouache on paper, dimensions variable
Installation view, Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York, 2018
Kunstmuseum Basel, Kupferstichkabinett,
Inv. nos. 2019.187.1–38; acquisition 2019

31 For example, Robert Storr, "Spooked," in *Kara Walker: My Complement, My Enemy, My Oppressor, My Love*, exh. cat., Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, 2007, p. 62–73, here p. 69 and p. 71.

32 Gary Garrels in the introduction to *Kara Walker: Upon My Many Masters—An Outline*, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (1997).

33 See *From Dürer to Goya: 101 Master Drawings from the Kupferstichkabinett of the Kunstmuseum Basel*, Christian Müller (ed.), Hirmer Verlag, Munich 2009.

34 The drawings were acquired in 2019 by the Kupferstichkabinett at the Kunstmuseum Basel (Inv. nos. 2019.187.1–38). For the Metropolitan exhibition, see *Michelangelo: Divine Draftsman and Designer*, Carmen C. Bambach (ed.), exh. cat., Metropolitan Museum, New York, and Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut 2017.

35 Deanna Petherbridge, *The Primacy of Drawing. Histories and Theories of Practice*, Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut 2010, here the chapter "The Persistent Cult of the Sketch," p. 26–49.

leads to new drawings. The viewer, too, is invited to think further. The incompleteness and openness of a sketch offers the onlooker the opportunity to participate. They have no choice but to use their imagination. The sketch defines itself per se as free and unconstrained, although in art history this has not always met with approval. Philosopher and art critic Denis Diderot (1713–1784) warned against the excessive cult of the sketch, and the aristocratic French collector Comte de Caylus (1692–1765) criticized the libertinage of artists who preferred sketching to painting. According to him, they allowed themselves to be carried away by the pleasure of drawing, succumbing to the temptation of hurling their ideas onto paper. Although he acknowledged that these artists sketched skillfully, he faulted them for indulging in an artistic lack of restraint in the form of the sketch.³⁶

Contemporary drawing is dominated by highly personal styles that mostly cultivate sketchiness and individual expression, disregarding traditional skills and clarity of content. The artist and drawing expert Deanna Petherbridge has coined the term “regressive alliance,” by which she means “those seductive borrowings constellated around notions of authenticity and primitivism that valorize the innocence, spontaneity, and irrationality of a free practice untrammelled by rules and marked by a rhetorical declaration of newness and/or return to primal values.”³⁷ Walker’s eclectic drawing praxis, on the other hand, has the most varied pictorial worlds at its disposal, whether caricatures or comics (from William Hogarth to Charles M. Schulz), or in particular the various styles of art history, such as those represented by Jacques Callot and Francisco de Goya, or the Expressionists George Grosz and Otto Dix. The variation of drawing styles is in itself already an expression of the greatest skill, while the combination of high and low pictorial worlds is simultaneously a rejection of hierarchical order and the established canon.

The Gross Clinician Presents: Pater Gravidam is based on an intense condensation of personal

experience, historical figures and themes: the founding fathers of America, slavery and sexual abuse, the exploitation of African-American corpses in medical schools, contemporary police violence against young African-American men, and street violence. For Walker, making the personal, as well as the history of a nation truly visible means taking on the challenge of really showing everything. In the words of the author Zadie Smith: “The unholy mix, the conscious knowledge and the subconscious reaction, the traumatic history and the trauma it has created, the unprocessed and the unprocessable.”³⁸ This explosive mixture is interwoven in a net of art historical references. The mimicry of Old Master techniques and tributes to artists such as Rembrandt, François Boucher, John Singleton Copley, Francisco de Goya, Théodore Géricault, Eugène Delacroix, Thomas Eakins, Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, and many more, lend the appearance of historicity and constructedness.

The term *Pater Gravidam* (laden father, pregnant father) in the title of the series alludes first of all to her own father, Larry Walker, who is himself an artist and thus plays an important role for Kara Walker, especially in terms of drawing, which she had already begun to practice as a child.³⁹ However, while fathers are there to be role models and mentors, at the same time daughters and sons need to become independent, and often react against this strong influence. In the drawing *Bolster* (2018), the father is shown as an old man in underwear with a scar stretching vertically over his bulging belly. He appears to be ascending into the sky with the help of the baby on the ground below him [p. 47]. He is idealized as a saint, but at the same time appears human, vulnerable, and somehow stuck in mid-air. Walker’s enigmatic iconography is based on the curious reversal of a bronze sculpture that celebrates the African-American struggle for liberation and self-determination: Patrick Morelli’s *Behold* (1990) depicts an extremely muscular man, naked except for a loin cloth, lifting his baby son up to heaven, above all people and nations: “Behold, the only thing greater than

yourself!” Morelli was inspired by the figure of the Gambian slave Kunta Kinte in Alex Haley’s book *Roots. The Saga of an American Family* (1976). The sculpture is dedicated to Martin Luther King Jr. and is located in Atlanta, Georgia.⁴⁰ In Walker’s drawing, the father does not hold the child up to heaven, but rather attempts to attain higher spheres himself. However, he is not the divine father, but rather the pregnant, maternal father. In 1997, in the context of the series *Negress Notes*, Walker had drawn a caricature of Uncle Tom, the slave from Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, which depicts him as a nurturing man with breasts [p. 312]. In the wall installation, *The End of Uncle Tom and the Grand Allegorical Tableau of Eva in Heaven* (1995), she depicts Uncle Tom with his pants half down, with an infant still connected by a cord to his anus [FIG. 2, p. 576]. Rebecca Peabody sees this image as confronting the viewer with the idea that, considering his evidently shackled hands, it is likely he was raped and impregnated.⁴¹ The ambivalence of female and male identity is a recurrent theme in Walker’s work [p. 25, 90]. In the shadow puppet film *8 Possible Beginnings or: The Creation of African-America, a Moving Picture by Kara E. Walker* (2005) a male slave is impregnated by the white master and later gives birth to a monstrous baby cotton plant, which he nurtures. Walker also draws herself as a man from the 19th century [p. 90], and has explicitly expressed the difficulty of uniting different aspects of her identity as an artist, a mother and a daughter in interviews and in a published conversation with her father.⁴²

The stereotypical and fetishized image of the Black man as muscular and virile is thematized in various drawings in the *Pater Gravidam* series. *Prize* [p. 42 AND FIG. 4] depicts the myth of Hercules and the lion. Hercules defeated the lion heroically after a long battle, and thereafter always wore the lion’s hide as a mantle, with its head as a helmet. In the drawing, however, the figure portrayed is probably a different Hercules (1755–1795), the slave and head cook of the founding father and first President of the United States, George Washington (1732–1797)—who

is seen on the left peeking out from behind Hercules. At the top right of the sheet Walker has drawn another variant. Here, the man is likewise naked and caricatured with an oversized penis, being ridden by a lion that appears more like a stuffed animal. The representations are far removed from the heroic battle between Hercules and the Nemean lion. The drawing technique transports us to the 18th century, when rococo artists like François Boucher (1703–1770) drew for aristocratic art lovers with white and black pastel chalk on colored paper, but the tradition ultimately goes back to the chiaroscuro drawings of the 15th and 16th centuries [FIG. 5]. Walker, however, draws with an unorthodox freedom, at times with the point of the white chalk, at times with a broader edge for modeling the body or Washington’s white wig, and avoids traditional hatching and contours.

An untitled sheet [p. 54] from the same group could be a variation after Boucher’s painting *Hercules and Omphale* (c. 1732–1734), which depicts the couple from Greek mythology embracing, accompanied by two putti. Omphale, who had purchased Hercules as a slave and later married him when she freed him, has milk-white skin, which contrasts with the darker tones of Hercules.⁴³ While Boucher provided 18th-century aristocratic art-lovers all over Europe with erotic images, Walker’s brush drawing points to the privileges of whiteness and racist patterns of thought without precise historical classification. The voluptuous white woman fancies she is floating in the clouds carried only by a few balloons, whereas actually she is held up by a Black woman while being sexually served by a muscular, virile man. Heedlessly, she sets her left foot on his face to support herself. In light of the scene the upside-down inscription at the bottom center can only be read as cynical: “Humanity and Tenderness.” The white and Black women are connected to each other in that the fleshy prone woman needs the thin one as a support, but the Black woman would also fall were she not leaning against the prone figure. Thus their fates are bound up with one another, shoulder to

³⁸ Zadie Smith, “Kara Walker: What Do We Want History To Do To Us?” p. 44.

³⁹ See Kara Walker and Larry Walker, “Kara Walker Talks with her Father, Artist Larry Walker for BOMB’s Oral History Project.”

³⁶ Comte de Caylus quoted in Deanna Petherbridge, *The Primacy of Drawing*, p. 48 and note 122.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 414 ff.

⁴⁰ See www.skidmore.edu/mdocs/news/2017/102417-localdoc-pmorelli.php.

⁴¹ For the full argument, see Rebecca Peabody, *Consuming Stories. Kara Walker and the Imagining of American Race*, University of California Press, Oakland, California 2016, p. 32.

⁴² In Kara Walker and Larry Walker, “Kara Walker Talks with her Father, Artist Larry Walker for BOMB’s Oral History Project,” p. 42.

⁴³ The painting is in the collection of the Pushkin Museum in Moscow. Another work that could also be referred to here is Boucher’s *Vulcan Presenting Venus with Arms for Aeneas* (1757), in which all the action is played out in the cloud-filled space of mythology (Musée du Louvre, Paris).



FIG. 4



FIG. 5

FIG. 4
Kara Walker, *Prize*, 2018
from the series *The Gross Clinician Presents: Pater Gravidam*, 2018
Graphite, sumi ink, gofun and gouache on paper,
76 × 57 cm, Kunstmuseum Basel, Kupferstichkabinett,
Inv. no. 2019.187.12; acquisition 2019

FIG. 5
Hans Baldung Grien, *Death with Lowered Flag*, c. 1505
Quill and brown ink, white highlights, on light brown
primed paper, 29.8 × 18.5 cm
Kunstmuseum Basel, Kupferstichkabinett, inv. no. 1947.21

FIG. 6
Kara Walker, *The (Private) Memorial Garden of Grandison Harris*, 2017
Oil stick and sumi ink on paper collaged on linen,
228.6 × 365.8 cm
Private Collection

FIG. 7
Anonymous photographer, *Chris Baker (left) with anatomy students at Medical College of Virginia*, 1899–1900
Tompkins-McCaw Library, Special Collections and Archives,
Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia

FIG. 8
Martin Schongauer, *Saint Anthony Tormented by Demons*,
c. 1470–1475
Copperplate engraving, 31.3 × 22.9 cm
Kunstmuseum Basel, Kupferstichkabinett, Aus K.750



FIG. 6



FIG. 7



FIG. 8

shoulder.⁴⁴ A related watercolor drawing depicts three servants caricatured as African women, taking care of a likewise caricatured white woman to enable her to have the illusion of lightness [p. 113]. On the 2018 sheet, two rococo putti are witnesses: one looks on with a shocked expression, while the other falls from the sky. What at first glance seems like an airy representation filled with billowing clouds is, however, much more strongly marked by chiaroscuro contrast than Boucher's work. Walker leads her brush freely across the paper to evoke the scene rather summarily.

Pater Gravidam not only references her own father, who she draws as grown together with herself [p. 48], but also the artistic alliances that were expected from the most varied quarters—especially from the Black Arts Movement. The first part of the title, *The Gross Clinician*, refers to the grand tradition of painting, as it recalls Thomas Eakins' *The Gross Clinic* (1876), an iconic image of 19th-century American painting that itself looks back to Rembrandt's *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp* (1632). In *The Welcoming Committee*, Walker does not distinguish one figure as a hero, the way Eakins made a god-like figure out of the physician Samuel D. Gross (1805–1884), but rather gathers together various historical actors [p. 62–63]. Walker has, however, made the “Gross Clinic” the medical institution itself, into a person: the “Gross Clinician,” that is to say, the brutal doctor.

There is, however, no patient on the operating or autopsy table in Walker's drawing. Instead, there is a skeleton, which writhes as if in pain. The staging, reminiscent of absurdist theater, is appropriate for Rembrandt's autopsy or Eakins' operation, which are placed in an anatomical theater in front of an audience. Walker's drawing refers to an inglorious chapter in the history of medicine in the 19th century, which took place out of public view and lasted in part far into the 20th century: confronted with the growing demand for dead bodies to educate its students, medical schools contracted out the exhumation of corpses from African-American cemeteries [FIG. 6].⁴⁵ The small man at the head

of the table resembles the grave-robbler Chris Baker, who had been a slave and later became a paid accomplice of the doctors at the Medical College of Virginia [FIG. 7].⁴⁶ Around the table stand only white men in medical smocks, but the witnesses and victims of racist exploitation and violence from various epochs join them, such as the lamenting “Mammy” from the antebellum era and the contemporary figure in the hoodie with his back turned to the viewer.

The two title sheets from *The Gross Clinician Presents: Pater Gravidam* demonstrate through their combination of text and image that the history of Black people is above all about their exploitation, even after their death: “THE WRONG SIDE OF HISTORY” and “THE RIGHT SIDE OF HISTORY” [p. 45, 59]. Below these words, the severed head of a Black man lies in a pool of blood. One cannot help but think of Géricault's images of the severed heads from executions that were still popular public spectacles in the early 19th century.⁴⁷ Walker's title sheets call to mind the countless Black victims of violence in the USA, such as the Black student Trayvon Martin (1995–2012) who could be the figure in the hooded in Walker's autopsy table drawing. Martin was fatally shot to death by a self-proclaimed neighborhood watchman because he looked “suspicious”; his shooting led to nationwide protests against racial discrimination and the arbitrariness of policing, and ultimately, to the movement Black Lives Matter.

On which side of history do we stand? Whose history is being told and who is included? Looking at a drawing by Walker, Zadie Smith articulated the central question: “What do we want history to do to us?”⁴⁸ Is there right and left, right and wrong? Black on white or white on black? Walker implies this positive-negative dualism in the two slogans, in which the “right” side of history is written in negative blank space omitted from a dark sky, and therefore appears white. The “wrong” side is written in brown against a white sky, but the word “WRONG” is only sketched with pencil and not really elaborated like the other words. These are the artful differentiations

44 For an explicit constellation of a Black and a white woman who are literally bound together see Zadie Smith, “Kara Walker: What Do We Want History To Do To Us?” p. 34 and fig. p. 35.

45 Robert Blakely and Judith M. Harrington, *Corpses in the Basement: Postmortem Racism in Nineteenth-Century Medical Training*, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, District Columbia, 1997.

46 Vince Brooks, “Chris Baker: ‘Cheerful Among Corpses,’” in *Out of the Box. Notes from the Archive of the Library of Virginia*, October 27, 2019, www.virginiamemory.com/blogs/out_of_the_box/2019/10/27/chris-baker-cheerful-among-corpses/.

47 See Géricault: *Bilder auf Leben und Tod*, Gregor Wedekind (ed.), exh. cat., Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt and Museum voor Schone Kunsten Gent, Hirmer, Munich 2013.

48 Zadie Smith, “Kara Walker: What Do We Want History To Do To Us?”

that make Walker's drawings so unique and nuanced. History narrates the founding fathers of the great nation, but who will write the history of Trayvon Martin? What role can art play in this? What effect can drawing have? Is it possible to lose ourselves in the connoisseurship of the drawing's lines and washes, or can we not avoid telling history in a new way?

Walker also sheds new light on a personality that is more than well-known and appears repeatedly in her drawings. In 2019, she devoted four portraits to Barack Obama, in which he played different roles [p. 3–17]. After the election of Donald Trump, Walker wrote on a sheet: "BLACK LIVES STOPPED MATTERING THE MOMENT HE LEFT OFFICE. DARKNESS PREVAILED SWALLOWING US" [p. 20]. In contrast to the official commissioned portrait of Obama painted by Kehinde Wiley for the National Portrait Gallery in Washington DC, Walker's four portraits thematize the racially-charged hostility that confronted Obama during his presidency. Walker drew in the same strikingly large format in which Wiley painted, but widened the perspective. She shows Obama as a beacon of hope, or presents him as the avenger of his successor Trump.

A drawing executed in pastel and conté-crayon on prepared paper depicts Obama as Saint Anthony, patiently enduring the torments of the "Birther" conspiracy theory, of which Trump was a prominent supporter. The former claimed that Obama had falsified his birth certificate and was not a US citizen and therefore ineligible to be elected president. This infamous disavowal shows how deeply the racist conceptions of African-Americans are rooted in the public perception. Someone like Obama must still justify his claim to political office even today, as if he were not a "real" American.

Walker lends a hagiographic aspect to the representation of Obama as Saint Anthony through the iconography, but also, once again, follows in the tradition of the Old Masters of the Renaissance [p. 7–11]. The composition is based not only on Martin Schongauer's (c. 1440–1493/94)

famous engraving, which was the first to portray the torments of the saint in such detail and so dramatically [FIG. 8], but also on Michelangelo's copy of the engraving, made around 1487, which even sought to improve and enhance it in the spirit of the *paragone* with additional features and an added landscape.⁴⁹ Like Michelangelo, Walker does not adopt Schongauer's graphic style, which was distinguished by systematic and varied hatching for modeling the bodies and characterizing the various materials. Walker draws fiercely and generously with her crayon, and her characterization of Obama resembles Christ more than Anthony. Wearing only a loin cloth, he is set upon by a monster with Trump's hairstyle, who thrusts his right claw into a wound in Obama's breast, which recalls the wound in Christ's side made by the Roman centurion Longinus to check if he was dead. Walker articulated her views of Obama and his presidency in a powerful text titled "Assassination by Proxy." She thanks him for taking on the role of the Black President, but continues that she feels "the same anxious fear I felt on election day: that he would not be long for this world. Because despite the leader's apparent humanity, the sight of his brown skin has unleashed too many ancient racist anxieties."⁵⁰ With regard to Obama as Saint Anthony, the first sentence with which she prefaces the text is fitting: "Saviors don't arrive without martyrdom at their heels."⁵¹

Another equally large-format portrait, *Barack Obama as "An African" With a Fat Pig (by Kara Walker)* shows Obama as an African tribal leader, with ceremonial staff and fur mantle, seated like a large game hunter atop his victim-trophy, which in fact creates a ridiculous effect given it is a pink pig [p. 5]. The drawing makes clear how absurd it is to want to deny Obama his American belonging. But it also lays bare the idea, which is still deeply rooted in the white unconscious, that Black people came from Africa and are therefore automatically uncivilized and have no claim to power.⁵²

In 2016, Walker asked: "What power might I wield as an image maker to mitigate, intervene, query, and shatter stagnating racist 'traditions?' What power do I have to examine the depth of longing people of color have for a sense of place and purpose in reimagining our collective past and potential future?"⁵³ This is what she does when she complements the image of the president as it is celebrated at the National Portrait Gallery with other perspectives. In so doing she participates in the struggle for significance, but not because she seeks to establish Obama's place in history. Rather, she is interested in the process of how the emergence of history is negotiated. It is clear that, especially in these role portraits, Walker draws on European art history, and particularly on the Old Masters and Michelangelo, who was celebrated at the Metropolitan Museum of Art as the "divine draftsman."⁵⁴ The term "Master Drawing" is quite loaded in the context of America, since the term "master" recalls the terminology of master/slave and with it also the history of slavery in the United States. Walker therefore takes it on not only along with the tradition of the Old Masters, but also along with a semantically colored discourse in which she reclaims territory for herself and for the gaze of a Black artist.

Even as a student in Atlanta, Walker was already reflecting on her role as an artist and on the necessity of conquering her own terrain: "I was thinking of my role as an artist as being akin to, or being equated with, a kind of colonialist impulse. As an artist you are assumed to be the master of your domain, the master of the canvas, or screen, or whatever [...] I think that is where I started approaching the master-slave dialectic from my own agency. The problem was to accept my own agency."⁵⁵ To claim mastery and to exercise it through the medium of drawing means to claim agency, to dance the "dance of skepticism and faith" and to have an infinite number of possibilities.⁵⁶

49 Michelangelo, *The Torment of Saint Anthony* (1487), Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth; see *Michelangelo: Divine Draftsman and Designer* (note 34), cat. 2, fig. on p. 34, and notes on the image, p. 32–33.

50 Kara Walker, "Assassination by Proxy," p. 24.

51 Ibid.

52 In an interview in 2002, Walker said that as a Black woman who wants to claim power, she must first prove that she is not immoral, animalistic, and wild. See Silke Boerma, "Interview with Kara Walker," p. 182.

53 Ibid., p. 27.

54 See *Michelangelo: Divine Draftsman and Designer* (as note 34).

55 Kara Walker in Alexander Alberro, "An Interview with Kara Walker," p. 58.

56 See the quote earlier in this text from p. 27 of Kara Walker, "Assassination by Proxy."

The Site of Memory: Kara Walker Drawing

My job becomes how to rip that veil drawn over “proceedings too terrible to relate.”
—Toni Morrison, “The Site of Memory” (1995)¹

The work is difficult because the history is hard. But don’t you want to see it?
—Kara Walker (2017)²

In memory of Toni Morrison

Maurice Berger

In the spring of 2014, the artist Kara Walker transformed the soon to be redeveloped Domino Sugar Refinery in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, into an exhibition space. At its center loomed a gigantic mammy sphinx. The sculpture, which measured approximately 70 feet long and 35 feet high, was composed of polystyrene foam coated in white sugar. Part of a larger installation—*A Subtlety, or the Marvelous Sugar Baby* [FIG. 1]—the sphinx, wearing only a kerchief tied around her head, her massive breasts, buttocks, and genitalia exposed, was surrounded by 13 *blackamoors*, each made of molasses-covered resin, some carrying a basket for harvesting sugar cane. A cloying, treacherous odor infused the air, underscoring the work’s homage to the unpaid and overworked Black women and men who toiled in the fields and kitchens to satisfy white America’s insatiable “desire for all things sweet, sickening though they might be.”³

Walker’s voluptuous and hypersexualized mammy played on historic stereotypes of Black women, venal imagery born in the era of slavery and handed down through the ages. Some critics saw, in the installation’s location and content, a critique of the ways racial stereotypes abetted injustice or rationalized the gentrification decimating Brooklyn neighborhoods and displacing their residents of color.⁴ But it was the insensitive, inappropriate, or overtly racist responses of some spectators—the licentious touching, crude jokes and gestures, and lurid selfies—that arguably drew the most intense scrutiny. The poet and journalist Nicholas Powers, for example, contended that the mostly white visitors he encountered taking pictures of the sexualized sphinx were recreating “the very racism that this art is supposed to critique.”⁵ His criticism followed on a longstanding debate about whether Walker’s images “exorcise or exercise racist imaginations.”⁶ But *A Subtlety* also highlighted and challenged the enduring American legacy of compromised and demeaned Black bodies as national spectacles.⁷ While response to the work was at times unfitting or cruel, these reactions, which Walker sees as part of the work, affirmed the persistence of this legacy.

A Subtlety raises an important question about the nature of its presentation: to what extent did its carnivalesque public display contribute to, encourage, or magnify the exhibitionist acting out of some visitors? Ultimately, Walker’s large-scale works—from vast panoramas and cycloramas composed of silhouettes to a pioneer wagon housing a steam-powered calliope, all replete with portrayals of white violence and Black defilement [FIGS. 2, 3]—demand much from the viewer: titillating, discomforting, horrifying, or humoring, or revivifying racial trauma, they insist that we engage with them, exposed and vulnerable, in the crowded presence of others. Alyssa Rosenberg, writing in the *Washington Post*, for example, wondered if the multitude of selfies taken in *A Subtlety* were symptomatic of this uneasiness, an attempt to “restore a human scale” to an overwhelming experience.⁸ “The sphinx, if taller than any person, can at least be reckoned with in human scale,” wrote Rosenberg.⁹

This observation is important to the reevaluation of another vital, but less examined, aspect of Walker’s oeuvre: the thousands of drawings she has created, both standalone and as studies for large-scale projects. While her monumental imagery dwarfs the spectator, the drawings keep these disquieting pictures to human proportions. Ranging in dimension from small sketches to mural-size, they require attentive and sustained viewing. Rather than the iconic and abstract figures of the monumental work, the drawings are atmospheric and expressive. Even in their largest formats, they are frequently composed of

All websites mentioned were last accessed in September 2020.

¹ Toni Morrison, “The Site of Memory,” William Zinsser (ed.), *Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft of Memoir*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, and New York 1995, p. 91.

² Kara Walker as quoted in Antwaun Sargent, “Kara Walker Showed Me the Horror of American Life,” *Vice*, (November 12, 2017), www.vice.com/en_us/article/59ywgz/kara-walker-showed-me-the-horror-of-american-life.

³ Kristin Iversen, “White People Problems: On Kara Walker and the Way White People Interact with Black Art,” *Brooklyn Magazine* (June 9, 2014), www.bkmg.com/2014/06/09/white-people-problems-on-kara-walker-and-the-way-white-people-interact-with-black-art. The full title of the work positions it as an homage of sorts: *A Subtlety, or the Marvelous Sugar Baby, an Homage to the unpaid and overworked Artisans who have refined our Sweet tastes from the cane fields to the Kitchens of the New World on the occasion of the demolition of the Domino Sugar Refining Plant*.

⁴ See, for example, Anna Ioanes, “Sugar, Subjection, and Selfies: The Online Afterlife of *A Subtlety*,” *Dilettante Army*, www.dilettantearmy.com/articles/sugar-subjection-selfies.

⁵ Nicholas Powers, “Why I Yelled at the Kara Walker Exhibit,” *The Independent* (June 30, 2014), <https://independent.org/2014/06/30/why-i-yelled-kara-walker-exhibit>.

⁶ Rebecca Peabody, *Consuming Stories: Kara Walker and the Imaging of American Race*, University of California Press, Oakland, California 2016, p. 9. For more on this debate, see Antwaun Sargent, “Kara Walker Showed Me the Horror of American Life.”

⁷ For more on this issue, see Elizabeth Alexander, “Can You Be BLACK and Look at This? Reading the Rodney King Videos,” *Public Culture*, 7 (1994), p. 78. For a discussion of the complexity of viewer responses to *A Subtlety*, see Anna Ioanes, “Sugar, Subjection, and Selfies.”

⁸ Alyssa Rosenberg, “Selfie Culture and Kara Walker’s ‘A Subtlety,’” *Washington Post* (June 30, 2014), www.washingtonpost.com/news/act-four/wp/2014/06/30/selfie-culture-and-kara-walkers-a-subtlety/.

⁹ *Ibid.*



FIG. 1

FIG. 1
Kara Walker, *A Subtlety, or the Marvelous Sugar Baby, an Homage to the unpaid and overworked Artisans who have refined our Sweet tastes from the cane fields to the Kitchens of the New World on the Occasion of the demolition of the Domino Sugar Refining Plant*, 2014
Polystyrene foam, sugar, c. 11 × 8 × 23 m
Installation view, Domino Sugar Refinery, a project of Creative Time, Brooklyn, 2014 (artwork destroyed)



FIG. 2

FIG. 2
Kara Walker, *The End of Uncle Tom and the Grand Allegorical Tableau of Eva in Heaven*, 1995
Cut paper on wall, c. 3.96 × 10.66 m
Installation view, *Kara Walker: My Complement, My Enemy, My Oppressor, My Love*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, 2008
Private Collection



FIG. 3

FIG. 3
Kara Walker, *The Katastrophé Karavan*, 2017
Steel frame mounted to lumber running gear, aluminum, red oak and muslin wall panels, propane fired boiler, water tank, gas generator, brass and steel 38-note steam calliope, calliope controller panel with MIDI interface, iPad controller with QRS PNO software, 3.86 × 54.9 × 2.54 m
Installation view, *Prospect.4: The Lotus in Spite of the Swamp*, Prospect New Orleans, New Orleans, 2018
Collection of the artist

smaller, interrelated vignettes, inviting close scrutiny. If Walker's drawings give "presence to an idea, making visible the invisible, the thought, the idea, and inscribing it into the world," as Sarah Casey has written about the virtues of the medium, they do so in ways that allow for more contemplative and private reflection.¹⁰

Over the past three decades, drawing on paper has been central to Walker's practice, serving as her primary medium and material. Having rejected painting when she was in college—"I felt like painting was bound up with an idea of patriarchy that did not have me in its best interests, as a viewer, appreciator, colleague," she has said—the medium provides her most expressive and spontaneous method of expression.¹¹ It was also an important part of family tradition. As a child, drawing was Walker's introduction to art-making. And it remains crucial to her father, the painter Larry Walker, who, in his concluding words in a lengthy dialogue with his daughter published by the *BOMB* magazine Oral History Project, proclaims, "I used to call myself Hokusai, but today I sign myself 'The Old Man Mad About Drawing'"¹²

The subject matter and themes of Walker's drawings, coextensive with her large-scale work, are rendered in a broad range of techniques, including sumi ink, graphite, watercolor, gouache, colored pencil, conté crayon, pastel, gofun, script, type, and collage [FIG. 5–7].¹³ Peering into their intricate compositions, our physical relationship to and engagement with them is altered: rather than beholding them, we focus within their restricted borders. In their intimacy, they question the grandiose narratives and myths of American history, which typically erase the personal details and conflicts of ordinary lives in favor of sweeping and epochal stories. If Walker rewrites "history, draws it, paints it, films it from the people's point of view," as curator Philippe Vergne argues, comparing her approach to Howard Zinn's groundbreaking book, *A People's History of the United States* (1980), her drawings reimagine the past on an even more personal scale.¹⁴

Across a range of disciplines, Walker's reliably confrontational aesthetic elicits emotional and intellectual responses that reveal much about the present-day social relations of race. Accordingly, her work places considerable emphasis and importance on the viewer. She foregrounds the spectator, for example, in a project related to *A Subtlety*: a 30-minute video, *An Audience*, in which a crew of six camera operators recorded visitors as they reacted to the installation during the last hour of its final day. The video documents responses to the work, focusing principally on Black viewers who typically react with appreciation, reverence, and wonderment. Many take selfies or are photographed in front of the sphinx. A man hugs the monument reluctantly, and then declares, "I feel safe." "One could observe many meanings taking shape in individual viewers," Walker notes.¹⁵ The diversity of visitors—well beyond the typical contemporary art crowd, as the video demonstrates—was also significant to her: "Full families with small children, elderly churchgoers, artists, grandstanders, and a general public of all shapes came out each weekend in large numbers to bear witness," she notes about the audience to *A Subtlety*.¹⁶

Walker's assertive engagement with the viewer is commensurate with other contemporary American artists who motivate spectators to look inward to examine their personal racial history and attitudes. Echoing the strategies of this earlier and groundbreaking work—exemplified by Adrian Piper's *Cornered* (1988) [FIG. 4] or Fred Wilson's *Mining the Museum* (1992)—the artist "dares to expose what hurts and terrifies a culture that shies away from both its fears and desires."¹⁷ Not surprisingly, Walker speaks of her first encounter with Piper's work, some of it overtly challenging white liberal racial complacency, as a "turning point" in her artistic development.¹⁸ Taking on the issue of race without reserve, Walker's art "incites," as the critic Antwaun Sargent writes.¹⁹ It implores us through a melding of fact and fantasy to "consider the full force of its consistent and constant brutalizations and humiliations. She accounts for what it

10 Sarah Casey, "A Delicate Presence: The Queer Intimacy of Drawing," *Tracy: Drawing and Visualization Research*, 11, no. 1 (July 2016), p. 4.

11 Kara Walker in Kara Walker and Larry Walker, "Kara Walker Talks with her Father, Artist Larry Walker for BOMB's Oral History Project," in *BOMB—Artists in Conversation*, May 8, 2014, <https://bombmagazine.org/articles/kara-walker-larry-walker/>.

12 Ibid.

13 Gofun, a white pigment made from ground sea shells, has been used traditionally in Japanese painting.

14 Philippe Vergne, "The Black Saint is the Sinner Lady," in Philippe Vergne (ed.), *Kara Walker: My Complement, My Enemy, My Oppressor, My Love*, exh. cat., Walker Art Center, Minneapolis 2007, p. 8.

15 Kara Walker, as quoted in Carolina A. Miranda, "Video: Kara Walker's Sphinx Draws Less-Charged Reactions in Person," *Los Angeles Times* (November 26, 2014), www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/miranda/la-et-cam-kara-walker-sugar-sculpture-video-reaction-20141125-column.html.

16 Ibid.

17 Philippe Vergne, "The Black Saint is the Sinner Lady," p. 24. For a discussion of Walker's work in relation to other contemporary American artists engaging the issue of race, see Gwendolyn DuBois Shaw, *Seeing the Unspeakeable: The Art of Kara Walker*, Duke University Press, Durham, North Carolina 2004.

18 See Kara Walker and Larry Walker, "Kara Walker Talks with her Father, Artist Larry Walker for BOMB's Oral History Project."

19 Antwaun Sargent, "Kara Walker Showed Me the Horror of American Life."

must have meant to be a slave and a slave owner—and, more important, what it means for us to be their descendants.”²⁰

Gleaning from numerous sources—as diverse as 19th-century slave narratives, political cartoons, pornography, and the artworks of James Ensor, Eugène Delacroix, Honoré Daumier, and Francisco de Goya—Walker transforms them into restless fantasies of “a South that never existed, yet will never die.”²¹ Her phantasmal imagery speaks to white patriarchal power, its potential for evil, and the historic vulnerability and endangerment of the Black bodies within its grasp. The reconfigured world it depicts, like the story of slavery itself, is sordid, confounding, and heart wrenching: a slave woman, overwhelmed by her oppression, tossing her child into the air, another lying dead on the ground [FIG. 7]; the nation’s first Black president, Barack Obama, giving his “A More Perfect Union” speech, as apparitions of Reconstruction-era physical and sexual brutality float around him [FIG. 6]; Black slaves exacting revenge against their white master while others are simultaneously abused by them; a slave owner holding vigil with a rifle as a grave digger disinters a Black woman’s corpse; slave girls pulling the entrails from a white man pinned to the ground; a handwritten drawing that counterpoises the language of Black advancement with that of white panic and resentment [p. 184]; and, in a satirical turn, Black children swirl around the heads of the plump white denizens of a contemporary yacht club during “Caribbean night” [p. 112].

The relationship of object to spectator in Walker’s art, no matter its subject matter, is dependent on scale. If the drawings assume a close viewing, the monumental work insists that we absorb its more immediately recognizable imagery from a distance. The disposition of the latter, and its relationship to the viewer, correspond to the performative and carnivalesque aesthetic of the spectacle, placing it within a historical lineage that includes religious pageants and processions, 19th-century

cycloramas, and wide-screen Technicolor movies. But rather than the soothing and seductive illusion of reality proffered by these examples, we stand before Walker’s incendiary displays overwhelmed, implicated, titillated, guilty, ashamed, confused, or shattered—emotions that underscore French philosopher Guy Debord’s understanding of the spectacle not as “a collection of images, but a social relation among people, mediated by images.”²² The drawings, on the other hand, focus this social relationship inward and largely outside of public view. They literally draw us close, and into their disquieting and haunting imagery, motivating contemplative viewing that can better facilitate personal insight.

The emotional and intellectual density of Walker’s drawings promotes this kind of deliberative looking. Her work in general tends to be dialogic, a “weighing down of viewership” that places us in conversation with it.²³ In the silhouettes of the cycloramas or panoramas, for example, “whole worlds are compressed into inches of paper,” as the curator Ashley James writes, their burdened figures bringing “you right down with them, enacting a near gravitational pull on the viewer’s attention.”²⁴ But the drawings—rich with shadows, expressiveness, tonal nuance, atmosphere, and occasionally color—depart from this bold and unmodulated world. Their emotional and intellectual impact is more subtle than the spectacle, but perhaps even more effective. “Through graphite, Walker depicts an imaginary shadow world lacking an equivalent in a medium that renders all figures monochromatic and flat,” James continues. “The boundaries of the real and the imagined, black and white, desire and repulsion, are not defined by scissors but by pencil sketches. Perhaps the drawings can pierce more deeply into a viewer’s consciousness, because they are stealthier than her silhouettes, more of a whisper than an exclamation.”²⁵

As they penetrate our consciousness, the drawings, more than any other aspect of Walker’s art, insinuate her dark fantasies in ways that implore us to take stock of our own unspooling, richly ambiguous imagery that functions as “a



FIG. 4

FIG. 4
Adrian Piper, *Cormed*, 1988
Video (color, sound) with table, chairs, monitor, two framed birth certificates for Adrian Piper’s father Daniel R. Piper, lighting, dimensions variable
Installation view (2011), Collection Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Chicago



FIG. 5

FIG. 5
Kara Walker, *The Pool Party of Sandanapalus (after Delacroix, Kienholz)*, 2017
Sumi ink and collage on paper, 318.8 × 355.6 cm
The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles
Purchase with funds provided by the Acquisition and Collection Committee and Ari Emanuel



FIG. 6

FIG. 6
Kara Walker, *The moral arc of history ideally bends toward justice but just as soon as not curves back around toward barbarism, sadism, and unrestrained chaos*, 2010
Graphite and pastel on paper, 182.9 × 289.6 cm
Private Collection



FIG. 7

FIG. 7
Kara Walker, *Untitled*, 2002
Cut paper on wall, 264.2 × 640.1 cm
Newark Museum of Art, Newark
Purchase with funds provided by the Helen MacMahon Brady Cutting Fund

²² Guy Debord, *The Society of Spectacle*, Black and Red, Detroit 1983, n. p.

²³ Ashley James, “Silhouettes, Relieved: On Kara Walker’s New Drawings,” *Studio Magazine*, <https://studiomuseum.org/article/silhouettes-relieved-kara-walkers-new-drawings>.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Kevin Young, “Triangular Trade: Coloring, Remarking, and Narrative in the Writings of Kara Walker,” in Philippe Vergne (ed.), *Kara Walker: My Complement, My Enemy, My Oppressor, My Love*, p. 45.

sort of Rorschach test for each viewer.”²⁶ This effect, akin to the psychological resonance of unplanned gestures and accidents in Surrealism, incites our unconscious, wresting frightening images from “our private dreams and displaying them for all to see [. . .] for all to recognize how much we share in them,” as cultural historian Sander Gilman writes about the general effect of Walker’s art.²⁷ Such imagery arouses collective and personal racial memories, the stereotypes and whims that drive them, and the contemporary concerns and prejudices that shape and perpetuate them. “Evoking these images triggers our gut reaction, which repels, rejects, or is repulsed,” writes Gilman of the spectator’s interaction with these fantasies of abjection and violation. “[They confront] viewers with a clear representation of what we must abhor but always imagine that we are capable of being or indeed might already be.”²⁸

The value of owning our capacity for bigotry and cruelty—of what we are capable of being or might already be—underscores an important requirement of racial insight: an identification with the oppressor, an honest appraisal of one’s racial anxieties and prejudices. It is not just Walker or the Black spectator who are implicated in the painful legacy of slavery, “but also the white viewers who white themselves out of the scenes, out of any relationship to a common past.”²⁹ Walker intends her work to confront and implicate, recognizing that its difficult racial imagery is invariably provocative or shame-inducing. “Shame is, I think, the most interesting state because it’s so transgressive, so pervasive,” she observes. “It can occupy all your other, more familiar states: happiness, anger, rage, fear It’s interesting to put that out on the table, to elicit feelings of shame from others—‘Come and join me in my shame!’”³⁰

The difficult feelings educed by Walker’s art, and the acting out and inappropriate behavior driven by the compulsion to repress these emotions, suggest that many would reject her invitation. The artist is cognizant of the discomfort, evasion, and angst she unleashes. In the 200-word title for her 2017 exhibition of drawings at Sikkema Jenkins & Co. in New York, Walker, in the style of the carnival barker, satirized the fraught response to her work, and the enduring debate about its controversial imagery:

Sikkema Jenkins & Co. is *Compelled* to present The most *Astounding and Important Painting show of the fall Art Show viewing season!* [. . .] Scholars will study and debate the *Historical Value* and *Intellectual Merits* of Miss Walker’s *Diversionary Tactics*. Art Historians will wonder whether the work represents a *Departure* or a *Continuum*. Students of Color will eye her work suspiciously and exercise their free right to Culturally Annihilate her on social media. Parents will cover the eyes of innocent children. School Teachers will reexamine their art history curricula. Prestigious Academic Societies will withdraw their support, former husbands and former lovers will recoil in abject terror. Critics will shake their heads in bemused silence. Gallery Directors will wring their hands at the sight of throngs of the gallery-curious flooding the pavement outside. The Final President of the United States will visibly wince. Empires will fall, although which ones, only time will tell.³¹

In the context of an exhibition that largely abandoned the artist’s trademark silhouettes, this title was no doubt ironic. The show it described, rather than intimidating and carnivalesque, brought a reimagined past down to earth, even portraying present-day people, events, and concerns. The show’s imagery was alternately exuberant and dystopian: 19th-century abolitionist hero Frederick Douglass encountering a

present-day church lady in a stylish hat; a platter containing the severed head of Trayvon Martin, whose murder by a vigilante in Coral Gables, Florida, in 2012, lead to the Black Lives Matter movement; and the phrase “you must hate black people as much as you hate yourself” emerging out of inky darkness. The exhibition’s atomized imagery—some of it configured in huge, multifocal compositions and executed in sumi ink, charcoal, watercolor wash, and collage [FIG. 8]—engaged the spectator with details drawn in the more manageable scale of their visual and written sources, depictions not generally consumed in public: slave narratives, abolitionist broadsides, “bad romance novels,” or “pornographic stories which borrow from the slave narrative and embellish the illicitness of interracial desire.”³² To navigate the exhibition was to be continually pulled into its intricate and layered imagery.

The intimate scrutiny demanded by Walker’s drawings contributes to what cultural critic Courtney R. Baker calls “humane insight”—a transformative awareness of the complexity and subjectivity of others that helps us to identify with their flesh and blood humanity. “Humane insight seeks knowledge about the humanity of that person,” writes Baker. “It is an ethics-based look that imagines the body that is seen to merit the protections of all human bodies. Humane insight describes a decision to identify the body being looked at as a human body, a gesture that is integral to the formation of our social interactions.”³³ For Baker, this insightful looking differs from the “gaze,” in which viewing pain and death from a safe distance grants the spectator power over a defenseless victim, the kind of oblique observing and physical remove that is enabled by the spectacle. “The term *gaze* has come to name the dangerous look that targets and immobilizes its human objects in a web of racism, sexism, and other debilitating beliefs,” writes Baker. “But not all looks are gazes. *Looking* is a more variegated process and even bears the potential for positive change.”³⁴ Arguing for the

efficacy of learning through looking, she documents the power of graphic imagery to alter public opinion and spur activism—from the abolitionist promulgation of pictures of brutalized slaves in the 19th-century [FIG. 9] to the decision made by the mother of Emmett Till to circulate in the media photographs of the mutilated body of her 14-year-old son murdered by white supremacists, imagery that motivated a generation of young African Americans to join the modern civil rights movement.³⁵

During the period of slavery, for example, abolitionists relied on a “sentimental appeal for black liberation” made through the representation of Black bodies in pain.³⁶ “Black men recruited the image of their bodies’ wounding under slavery both to illustrate slavery’s injustice and to advocate for restoration of virtue—what we might well construe here as ‘humanity’—to an enslaved black American populace,” writes Baker. “Viewed in this way, pain becomes the currency of black liberation from injustice and state-sanctioned violence. One sees here the logic that motivated the writing of several sentimental slave narratives: if only my pain is recognized by my oppressors, then I will be free.”³⁷ While the dissemination of this imagery helped advance the abolitionist cause, Baker acknowledges that its use has not been universally effective and unproblematic. Historically, this approach had its limitations, from the obstinate resistance of many white people to the idea of Black humanity to the limits of empathy itself.³⁸

The contemporary recycling of historic images of Black pain, suffering, and death is no less limited in its effect. If such imagery makes “pain legible,” it relegates this pain to the distant past, allowing us to downplay or deny racial oppression in the present.³⁹ It also can transform the humanity of historical subjects into static symbols of suffering, endless representations of imperiled Black Americans that overshadow their fortitude, achievements, and human complexity. In this more stereotypical engagement with the past, Black subjects “disappear while their bodies are constantly renewed as memorials

26 Barbara O’Brien, “Shadows and Stories: Kara Walker’s History,” *Art New England*, 25, no. 1 (December 2003–January 2004), p. 17.

27 Sander Gilman, “Confessions of an Academic Pornographer,” in Philippe Vergne (ed.), *Kara Walker: My Compliment, My Enemy, My Oppressor, My Love*, p. 31. The art historian Rebecca Peabody further alludes to this surrealist quality: “Walker’s history is not chronological, and it does not start with events. Rather, it starts with the level of emotion that objects or events evoke; it is through passion that the truth of history can be recognized. The experiences and events that teach us about history filter through the conscious mind and settle somewhere deeper [. . .] The process is reminiscent of Sigmund Freud’s ‘Mystic Writing-Pad’: traces made by external stimuli are inscribed and seemingly erased, but in fact they settle into the wax tablet and merge with each other, free of original context.” See Rebecca Peabody, *Consuming Stories*, p. 14.

28 Sander Gilman, “Confessions of an Academic Pornographer,” p. 32.

29 Christina Sharpe, “Kara Walker’s Monstrous Intimacies,” in *Monumental Intimacies: Making Post-Slavery Subjects*, Duke University Press, Durham, North Carolina 2010, p. 185.

30 Kara Walker in “Kara Walker by Matthea Harvey,” *BOMB* (July 1, 2007), <https://bombmagazine.org/articles/kara-walker>.

31 Press release, Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York 2017, www.sikkemajenkinsco.com/kara-walker-2017. For more on the exhibition, see Aruna D’Souza, “Kara Walker,” *4 Columns* (September 15, 2017), www.4columns.org/d-souza-aruna/kara-walker; and Roberta Smith, “Kara Walker Traces Slavery’s Bitter Legacy with New Ways of Drawing,” *New York Times* (September 7, 2017), www.nytimes.com/2017/09/07/arts/kara-walker-sikkema-jenkins.html.

32 Kara Walker as quoted in Hans-Ulrich Obrist, “All Cut from Black Paper by the Able Hand of Kara Walker . . .” *Art Orbit*, no. 4 (not dated), www.artnode.se/artorbit/issue4/i_walker/i_walker.html.

33 Courtney R. Baker, *Humane Insight: Looking at Images of African American Suffering and Death*, University of Chicago Press, Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield 2015, p. 5.

34 Ibid., p. 1–2.

35 For a brilliant and groundbreaking analysis of how looking at and recognition of the photographs of Emmett Till in life and death advanced the struggle for civil rights—and the extraordinary role played by Till’s mother, Mamie Till-Mobley, in positioning and disseminating these images—see Courtney R. Baker, “Emmett Till, Justice, and the Task of Recognition,” *Journal of American Culture* 29, no. 2 (2006), p. 111–124; reprinted in Courtney R. Baker, *Humane Insight*, p. 69–93.

36 Courtney R. Baker, *Humane Insight*, p. 4.

37 Ibid.

38 For more on the limitations of empathy concerning photographic images of Black disenfranchisement and suffering, see Maurice Berger, “With a Small Camera in My Pocket,” in *Gordon Parks: Segregation Story*, Steidl, Göttingen, and The High Museum of Art, Atlanta 2014, p. 16–17.

39 Courtney R. Baker, *Humane Insight*, p. 7.



FIG. 8

FIG. 8
Kara Walker, *Christ's Entry into Journalism*, 2017
Sumi ink and collage on paper, 356.9 × 497.8 cm
Collection The Museum of Modern Art, New York;
acquired through the generosity of Agnes Gund, the
Contemporary Arts Council of The Museum of Modern
Art, Carol and Morton Rapp, Marnie Pillsbury, the
Contemporary Drawing and Print Associates, and the
Committee on Drawings and Prints Fund

FIG. 9
William D. McPherson & Mr. Oliver, *Gordon Under
Medical Inspection*, 1863
Visiting card, albumen and silver on
photographic paper, 10.2 × 6 cm
Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of
African American History and Culture, Washington DC

FIG. 10
Prentiss Taylor, *Christ in Alabama*, 1932
Lithograph, 24.5 × 17.5 cm
Collection The University of Arizona Museum of Art,
Tucson; gift of Prentiss Taylor

FIG. 11
Unknown/Associated Press Images
Photograph of the Selma civil rights march, 1965

FIG. 12
Kara Walker's illustration in Toni Morrison, *Five Poems*,
Rainmaker Editions, Las Vegas 2002
Letterpress silhouette, page: 32 × 21 cm



FIG. 11



FIG. 9



FIG. 10

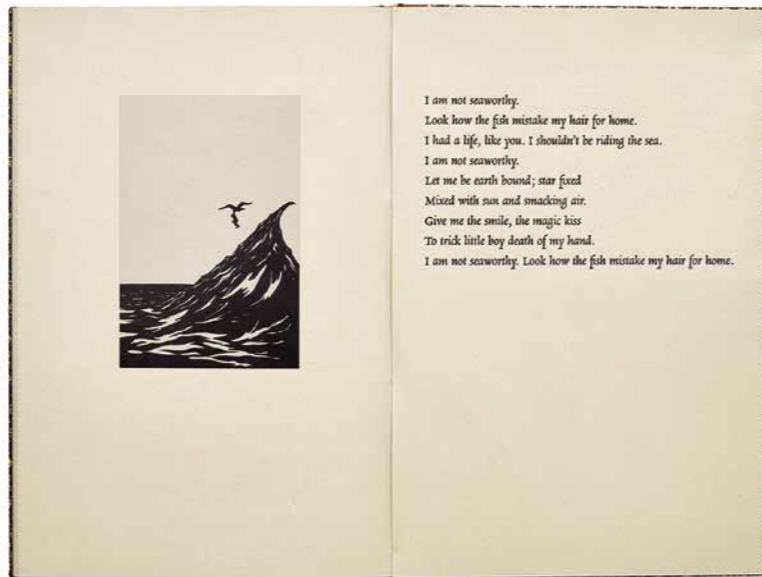


FIG. 12

I am not seaworthy.
Look how the fish mistake my hair for home.
I had a life, like you. I shouldn't be riding the sea.
I am not seaworthy.
Let me be earth bound; star fixed
Mixed with sun and smacking air.
Give me the smile, the magic kiss
To rick little boy death of my hand.
I am not seaworthy. Look how the fish mistake my hair for home.

to suffering.”⁴⁰ But in their graphic power and appeal to our shared humanity, portrayals of Black anguish have also been transformative, altering the way Americans see each other and themselves. In this context, “pain provides the common language of humanity,” as Saidiya Hartman writes.⁴¹ Looking at these depictions is not just persuasive, by offering confirmation of a reality that many would rather not see. It can also inspire “a crucial education about the self and what it means to be human.”⁴²

If Walker’s drawings motivate this identification through depictions of the historic (and fictional historic) Black body in distress, they make pain legible not by relegating it to a comfortable past, but by making it palpable in the present. In contrast to her huge spectacles, her drawings proffer a more complex route to witnessing this pain, one that circumvents the gaze for more variegated and nuanced looking. Significantly, the drawings largely revert to the modest scale of the most politically transformative depictions of Black suffering and death in the United States over the past two centuries, images that have been the prime motivator of the humane insight that Baker describes: accounts of subjection in the slave narratives of the 19th century; graphic 20th-century broadsides decrying lynching [FIG. 10]; stark photographs of beaten and bloodied civil rights demonstrators published in magazines and newspapers [FIG. 11]; startling television news footage of rabid police dogs attacking Black teenagers protesting segregation in the South in the 1960s; and, in recent years, widely disseminated cell phone photographs of the deadly aftermath of unwarranted police force against innocent Black Americans.⁴³

The drawings are also fundamentally personal and humanistic, their handmade quality in contrast to the exacting fabrication of the silhouettes and monuments. They beckon the past not through the cut of the scissor or the incision of the die-cutter, but through the trace of the hand, no less the hand of an African-American woman whose own intergenerational history can be traced back to the trauma of slavery. “One

of the themes in my work is the idea that a black subject in the present tense is a container for specific pathologies from the past and is continually growing and feeding off those maladies,” Walker has said.⁴⁴ As the artist’s fingers work their way across the page, they summon a desolate history as well as a visceral present through marks, smudges, washes, and erasures. The nuanced surfaces of her drawings resonate with unconscious, but also relatable, quirks, fears, and desires. The spontaneity, intensity, and magnitude of Walker’s process—she completes as many as 100 drawings at a time—enhances the ability of the drawings to reveal these unconscious impulses.⁴⁵

This psychological intensity owes much to the medium itself. “A kinesthetic process of traction—attraction, extraction, protraction—drawing is born from an outward gesture linking inner impulses and thoughts to the other through the touching of a surface with repeated graphic marks and lines,” writes the curator Catherine de Zegher.⁴⁶ Unlike the meticulously finished panorama or monument, the drawing manifests a spontaneous record of its creation, “an open-ended activity [. . .] characterized by a line that is always unfolding, always becoming.”⁴⁷ With their accidents, impulsiveness, and emotional resonance, these pictures live in the interstice between presence, absence, and longing. Art historians have long associated the drawing process—in which sensual acts of touching, proximity, and contact render it “an artist’s most intimate act”—with the idea of desire.⁴⁸ “The much-cited myth of the origins of drawing is rooted in a romantic tale of a lost lover—the drawing is born through an attempt to preserve the presence of an object of desire,” writes artist Sarah Casey. “In drawing one is mitigating loss, grasping for something that feels beyond, in an attempt to preserve the ephemeral.”⁴⁹ Similarly, the art historian Michael Newman observes that “drawing, with each stroke, reenacts desire and

40 Debra Walker King, *African Americans and the Culture of Pain*, University of Virginia Press, Charlottesville 2008, p. 9.

41 Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*, Oxford University Press, New York 1997, p. 18.

42 Courtney R. Baker, *Humane Insight*, p. 7.

43 For examples of these images, see “Photographs of the Waco Horror,” *The Crisis*, 12, no. 3 (July 1916), supplement, p. 1–8; “Nation Horrified by Murder of Kidnapped Chicago Youth,” *Jet*, 18, no. 19 (September 15, 1955), p. 6–9; “The Spectacle of Racial Turbulence in Birmingham: They Fight a Fire that Won’t Go Out,” *Life*, 54, no. 20 (May 17, 1963), p. 26–36; and Maurice Berger, “In Ferguson, Photographs as Powerful Agents,” *Lens Blog*, *New York Times* (August 20, 2014), <https://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/08/20/in-ferguson-photographs-as-powerful-agents>.

44 Kara Walker, unpublished introductory text for the artist-curated exhibition, *Kara Walker at the Met: After the Deluge*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, March 21–August 6, 2006.

45 Julie L. Belcove writes: “Maintaining a practice that began as a school assignment, [Walker] does 100 drawings in a sitting. ‘But sometimes the first 75 are the dumbest, most idiotic, nondrawing, moronic stuff,’ she explains. ‘You have to find a rhythm.’” See Julie L. Belcove, “History Girl,” *W Magazine* (March 1, 2007), www.wmagazine.com/story/kara-walker.

46 Catherine de Zegher, “A Century under the Sign of Line: Drawing and its Extension (1910–2010),” in Cornelia H. Butler and Catherine de Zegher, *On Line: Drawing Through the Twentieth Century*, exh. cat., Museum of Modern Art, New York 2010, p. 23.

47 Ibid.

48 Suzanne Cotter, *Out of Line: Drawings from the Arts Council Collection*, Hayward Gallery Publishing, London 2001, p. 7.

49 Sarah Casey, “A Delicate Presence,” p. 4.

loss. Its peculiar mode of being lies between the withdrawal of the trace in the mark and the presence of the idea it prefigures.”⁵⁰

As Walker’s drawings conjure an elusive history, their visceral interplay of marks, smudges, and erasures enact the tension between presence and absence, realization and loss, fascination and disgust: voluptuous bodies collide, morph, and disintegrate, both in illusionistic space and as abstract shapes on the page; erasures and fingerprints evaporate into dust or clouds; and objects reflect in water, their mirror images transient wisps of ink or graphite. Moody, sensual, and gritty, these apparitions flirt with transgression, “dirtying the paper delicately,” as the critic John Ruskin characterized the drawing process.⁵¹ They exemplify the medium’s anxious and emotive nature, as they “hover on the edges of consciousness like pale ghosts floating away if approached too deliberately.”⁵² This quality of becoming charges the drawing with psychological meaning and insight, suggesting “the possibility of other states of being which in turn may offer fresh lenses through which to see the world.”⁵³

Ultimately, the psychological density of Walker’s drawings provides a fresh lens onto an important dimension of racial self-realization: memory. As Toni Morrison observes in her groundbreaking essay, “The Site of Memory,” the recollection of the past is often tempered by propriety. Even the courageous writers of the slave narratives—bent on persuading the reader of the evils of slavery through powerful texts that “gave fuel to the fire that abolitionists were setting everywhere”—were discouraged by popular taste from portraying the more repugnant or shocking details of their oppression.⁵⁴ “In shaping the experience to make it palatable to those who were in a position to alleviate it, they were silent about many things, and they ‘forgot’ many other things,” writes Morrison. “There was a careful selection of the instances that they would record and a careful rendering of those they chose to describe.”⁵⁵ Moreover, as slavery’s most caustic transgressions remained concealed, their devastating impact on the interior lives of their

victims were similarly not discussed. Morrison believed that it was her role as a Black and female writer of conscience—in light of the continued oppression of Black Americans, well after the modern civil rights movement had ended—to disinter these buried memories of atrocity and pain, to “rip that veil drawn over” a reality that was, in its time, too terrible to relate.⁵⁶ Morrison continues:

Moving that veil aside requires, therefore, certain things. First of all, I must trust my recollections. I must also depend on the recollections of others. Thus memory weighs heavily in what I write, in how I begin and in what I find to be significant. Zora Neale Hurston said, “Like the dead-seeming cold rocks, I have memories within that came out of the material that went to make me.” These “memories within” are the subsoil of my work.⁵⁷

Walker’s drawings are likewise invigorated by this harvesting of the “memories within,” journeying to a distant site “to see what remains were left behind and to reconstruct the world that these remains imply.”⁵⁸ Morrison proposes this journey not only as a corrective to history, but also as a conduit to truth.⁵⁹ While Walker’s spectacles reveal their own insights and truths, they are less an invitation into the dark and recessive realm of memory and more a provocation to react, an awe-inspiring assembly of robust images that stimulate, defy, and incite. Her psychologically dense drawings, on the other hand, subtly fill in “the blanks that the slave narratives left—to part the veil that was so frequently drawn.”⁶⁰ They stoke the deepest layers of our imagination, resonating with intimate details that break our hearts and unsettle our minds—from the harrowing glimpse of a slave child tugging at the shoe of the white master raping his mother to the brooding, inky portrayal of President Barack Obama as Othello, the severed head of his successor in his lap [p. 13, 17]. As the latter suggests, the drawings implore us to take

stock of a painful past and its implications in the present, triggering feelings of “disgust, horror, and fascination” that return us to “an archaic psychic space where boundaries between subject and object are blurred.”⁶¹

Morrison has written of this effect in relation to her fictional recreation of slavery, the ways her imagery makes the past relevant today, implicating the reader as much as her imaginary characters. “What I really want is that intimacy in which the reader is under the impression that he isn’t really reading this; that he is participating in it as he goes along,” Morrison writes.⁶² For the author, this intimacy is an indispensable component of racial insight, aware as it is of a fundamental truth: that honest racial self-inquiry—and our willingness to see ourselves as participants in the story of race—is far more likely to occur in the shadowy recesses of our minds. This aesthetic intimacy is central to Morrison’s epochal novel *Beloved* (1987), one of Walker’s greatest influences. Its protagonist, Sethe, born into slavery, remains suspended between subjugation and freedom 18 years after she escaped to Ohio. Her new home—which she believes is haunted by the ghost of the 2-year-old daughter she murdered years earlier to spare the child a life of brutal servitude—resonates with the weight of history and of its occupant’s perilous social standing. In her powerful imagery, “Morrison gives voice to the interior life of a slave woman,” providing soaring insights into “the psychological damage inflicted by white masters’ sexual exploitation.”⁶³

The vivid storytelling of *Beloved*, at once redolent of history and ever-present, challenges the reader. We are engulfed by its imagery, unable to escape its bitter poetry and wrenching details. Like Walker’s demanding drawings, the novel provides no easy introduction, no expedient or safe way to enter its troubled world. As Morrison observes about the principal setting of the novel, the home inhabited by Sethe: “There would be no lobby into this house, and there would be no ‘introduction’ to it or into the novel. I wanted the reader to be kidnapped, thrown

ruthlessly into an alien environment as the first step into a shared experience with the book’s population—just as the characters were snatched from one place to another, from any place to any other, without preparation or defense.”⁶⁴

Kidnapping the viewer, just as assuredly as *Beloved* abducts the reader, Walker’s drawings beckon us into their phantasmal depths, ensnaring us in their heady and toxic atmosphere. We bear witness to the murder of children and the violation of their mothers. We regard the psychic and physical violence of slavery and the defiance of its captors. We see mirrored in this imagery the contours of present-day white supremacy. This kidnapping inspires. It implicates. And it unlocks the ulterior realm of the imagination, and the traumas, desires, and prejudices buried within.⁶⁵ In the end, Walker beseeches us to account for our own place in the stories articulated by her drawings.

Nowhere is this transformative power more affecting than in the sole collaboration between Walker and Morrison, the Nobel laureate she calls her “muse, teacher, mother, clairvoyant, and judge.”⁶⁶ The work, *Five Poems*, unfolds on the luxurious, rag-paper leaves of a modest chapbook.⁶⁷ In it, the writer’s haunting verses are counterpoised with the artist’s illustrations. “I had a life, like you. I shouldn’t be riding the sea,” reads one heartbreaking line, as a seagull in silhouette, a baby perilously in its grip, flies over a churning sea [FIG. 12].⁶⁸ In this wrenching and private moment, we are asked to identify with the imagery before us. But only we, in the solitude of our thoughts, can answer the question of how we see ourselves in relation to Walker’s powerful image—as the imperiled child, the liberating bird, or the endangering ocean below.

50 Michael Newman, “The Marks, Traces, and Gestures of Drawing,” in Catherine de Zegher (ed.), *The Stage of Drawing: Gesture and Act*, Tate Publishing, London, and The Drawing Center, New York 2003, p. 95.

51 John Ruskin, as quoted in Stephen Farthing, *Dirtying the Paper Delicately*, University of the Arts, London 2005, n. p.

52 Deanna Petherbridge, *The Primacy of Drawing*, Yale University Press, New Haven, and London 2010, p. 49.

53 Sarah Casey, “A Delicate Presence,” p. 1.

54 Toni Morrison, “The Site of Memory,” p. 87.

55 Ibid., p. 91.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid., p. 91–92.

58 Ibid., p. 92.

59 For more on this, see *ibid.*, p. 92.

60 Ibid., p. 93–94.

64 Toni Morrison, “Foreword,” in *Beloved*, Vintage Books, New York 2004, p. XVIII.

65 Ibid. For more on the issue of intimate self-inquiry and its role in building racial insight, see Maurice Berger, *White Lies: Race and the Myths of Whiteness*, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, New York 1999.

66 Kara Walker, as quoted in Françoise Mouly, “Kara Walker’s Toni Morrison,” *The New Yorker* (August 8, 2019), www.newyorker.com/culture/cover-story/cover-story-2019-08-19?verso=true.

67 Toni Morrison, *Five Poems*, Rainmaker Editions, Las Vegas 2002.

68 Ibid.

61 Keiko Miyamoto paraphrasing Julia Kristeva’s definition of abject imagery in Miyamoto, “Toni Morrison and Kara Walker: The Interaction of their Imaginations,” *The Japanese Journal of American Studies*, no. 23 (2012), p. 241.

62 Toni Morrison, “The Site of Memory,” p. 100.

63 Keiko Miyamoto, “Toni Morrison and Kara Walker,” p. 233. For more on Morrison’s strategies in *Beloved*, see Brit Bennett, “Ripping the Veil,” *The New Republic* (August 2, 2016), <https://newrepublic.com/article/135708/colson-whiteheads-fantastic-voyage>.

A Near-Ideal Black Body! On the Metaphysics and Materialist Aesthetics of One Kara E. Walker's Black Universe

Aria Dean

In its astrophysical manifestation, a black hole is a region of space from which nothing can escape. “Anything that passes beyond [its] event horizon is doomed to be crushed.”¹ This process is a functional mystery to many outside the scientific community, only recently possible to capture photographically, and only vaguely possible to visualize otherwise—still inaccurate when we try. A black hole condenses or compresses any object that enters it into its zero-point or “singularity,” which can be further defined as “a point of infinite density where the laws of physics as we know them break down.”² Aside from this total annihilation, even those objects that simply pass close to a black hole will be spat back out in some other form.

With the invocation of the black hole (*A Black Hole Is Everything a Star Longs to Be*), we find ourselves in the realm of matter. A black hole recognizes anything that strays into its field as such—sheer matter to be converted into pure energy, the existence of which is inseparable from the black hole itself. At this point, at the singularity, the rules of time and space bend around an immeasurable instant and reality ceases. In black hole cosmology, it is in this instant that the black hole can, itself, birth a new universe. But more importantly, long before this—or perhaps just an instant before—when we first stray beyond the event horizon (point of no return), we lose sight of everything. Things, people, images, artists, art, history, and truth fall away. We find ourselves below or beyond “the world of bodies and objects that constitute the domain of representation,”³ and enter the domain of energy, matter, elements, affects, and perception. What do we find here?

There are many names for and doorways through which to enter this place, and each will offer you a different gift, probably laced with poison. A whole tradition of -ologies spanning millennia swirl in the shadows, all dedicated to ascertaining exactly where and what everything is, *really*. Certainly there is room for a phenomenology of Kara Walker (experience!), an ontology of Kara Walker (truth!), an epistemology of

Kara Walker (culture, sort of!)—what I would give to write the book on each!—but here I would like to mark the particular, highly intentional and incisive decades-spanning pursuit of one Kara E. Walker as a metaphysical proposition before all else. Walker’s proposition—and I would argue that there is *one* major, meta-proposition that the whole of her oeuvre must sit within in order to be understood—works against the metaphysical dualism that runs through nearly all of Western art history, its satellite projects, and the philosophies that steer them, instead presenting a materialist aesthetic that antagonizes art’s continued dualistic relationship between representation and the real, the symbolic and material, reality and fiction, subject and object, and mobilizes an aesthetic program rife with representation and narrative in order to undermine and incapacitate these very principles with crushing force.

[Blank Space]

In “The Black Saint Is the Sinner Lady” Philippe Vergne writes that Walker’s work might be a “negative space of representation, of all representations—an anti-image, a black hole. The negative space may well swallow the dismissive and trivializing way that black subjects have been represented.”⁴ Vergne’s essay comes closer to approaching Walker’s materialist aesthetic than most (“a negative space of all representations,” a “black hole,” an “anti-image”) but he loses the plot—no, he loses the beat, and finds the plot instead, returning to the *way* that Black subjects are *represented*, rather than remaining at the level of his first assertion, which questions the system of representation as a whole.

Talking about Black artists at the level of appearances—suspending them in “the world as representation” to borrow a phrase from Schopenhauer—never goes out of style. Things, people, images; and even more popular: culture, identity, history. These are of course, valid and at times necessary concepts, ones that we drag after us wherever we go. But it would seem that

All websites mentioned were last accessed in September 2020.

1 <https://chandra.harvard.edu/blackhole/>.

2 Ibid.

3 Christoph Cox, *Sonic Flux: Sound, Art, and Metaphysics*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2018, p. 15.

4 Philippe Vergne, “The Black Saint Is the Sinner Lady,” in *Kara Walker: My Complement, My Enemy, My Oppressor, My Love*, exh. cat., Walker Art Center, Minneapolis 2007, p. 7–25, here p. 14.

there is some darkly comic, violent force at play in the background wherever we appear, ourselves, or have been unfortunate enough to perform the strange magic of making an image. Without fail, the critical discourse around art made by Black people is shackled to “*the way* that black subjects have been represented.” It’s a feint that shrinks inquiries down to the scale of mere life, corrodes well-built scaffolding for structures of monumental scale, and more than anything, terminally bores many of us.

It is especially important to consider this when it comes to the work of Kara Walker, an artist whose sheer prolificacy (So many drawings! So many panoramic scenes!), paired with her dedication to apparently representational and narrative strategies and mediums largely suspends the surrounding discourse to that domain we call “representation.” Love her or hate her, you’re talking about what she’s drawn, the sweep of the petticoat on that one *Negress*, the evocative pool of blood (never mind that it is pitch black), the prickly title of the work’s vaudevillian announcer’s tone. There seems to be some confusion around this work, the process of making it, and what it means—or rather what it’s doing. It is often corralled into being sort of a critique of representation and “received histories,” or a whimsical but grim retelling of the US-American nation’s rise and fall from a “black female perspective,” or an aimlessly edgy send-up of the libidinal economy. We could also say that this is a problem of understanding scale or elevation. At what level is Kara Walker trying to access the world? On what plane is she trying to access us, if at all?

I’d like to be so bold as to say that Kara Walker makes images where the image doesn’t matter. If Kara Walker is trying to access or reach us at all, it is not in order to show us something through her pictures. The silhouettes—so often lauded for taking on violent, racist histories and all of their pain and pleasure—actually offer very little in terms of showing, narrating, or critiquing. At the risk of trite and theoretically self-defeating

observation—momentarily bowing to the distinction between abstraction and representation—I’d say that her cutouts are fairly abstract when it comes down to it. I can’t say that I’ve personally looked at a Walker silhouette and left with a sense of narrative clarity, or even a memory of what it was that actually “happened.” Through this failure to stick, are they the perfect example of the impossibility of narrative for the slave *vis-à-vis* Frank Wilderson, who argues throughout his work that, having no “temporal progression,” the slave cannot be emplotted in narrative?⁵ Are they the embodiment of an ontology of mere flesh à la Hortense Spillers,⁶ every Black figure in the tableau incapacitated by its own color, unable to muster up the coherence to become a real body?

Even more, Walker’s drawings, so often incomplete and more like storyboards, comic book panels without frames, or sketches toward some larger body rather than fixed representations themselves, are further evidence that, again, we are no longer dealing in the realm of proper signification. These images, if you can call them that—maybe gestures or compositions would be more apt—are more like Gilles Deleuze’s notion of a movement-image than anything else I can think of. They are dashed off, whipped-up slices of life, or maybe not life but little pieces of a world. Scenes, honestly; Walker’s drawings recognize the metacinematic capacity of images to actualize a universe of “image/matter/movement.”⁷

This universe of Kara E. Walker is a reality that does not propose to be more real than history or than the reality of anyone else who has endeavored to produce one of their own, but is a reality and a universe nonetheless. However, still, the work of this one Kara E. Walker, with all its rushing strokes, variant pressures of the pen (sometimes angry, sometimes laughing, never shy), its buoyant curves and flat black fields, finds itself suspended in this territory, falling prey to the trap of figuration and the broader representational thinking that viewers reach it through. Here lies the endless conundrum.

[Star!]

Already, there is a sense in contemporary Black studies that visual analysis alone doesn’t provide an intricate enough critical tool kit for approaching Black art. This frustration, now productively sublimated into forging an entire sub-field of academic work, is twofold. One, anxiety—we need more tools! Sight keeps fucking us over! Images seem to harm more than they help (Why are we asking them for assistance?). Two, precedent—there’s something to excavate, some ongoing resonance between sight and sound when we have both at our disposal, but what? In the last two decades, a number of Black artists and theorists such as Tina Campt, Alexander Weheliye, Katherine McKittrick, Arthur Jafa, Kodwo Eshun, Fred Moten, and others have pressed on the relationship between the aural and the visual at a conceptual and historical level. At the conceptual level, the argument often circles the idea that the principles of sound and of Black music’s engagement with sound can be commuted to the terrain of the visual, modified, and employed as tools for both analysis and production. More than anything, this line of questioning is an ongoing reminder of the failure of representational thinking at large, and the need for another frame through which to encounter images.

Tina Campt’s book *Listening to Images* probably documents this problem most fully and makes the most direct attempt to intervene practically when it comes to methods of visual analysis. In the book’s introduction, Campt writes that *Listening to Images* “designates a method of recalibrating vernacular photographs as quiet, quotidian practices that give us access to the affective registers through which these images enunciate alternate accounts of their subjects.”⁸ She goes on: “I theorize sound as an inherently embodied process that registers at multiple levels of the human sensorium.”⁹ Campt’s intervention is a useful and poetic one, but her methods enact the much larger tendency in academic and cultural writing about sound—despite its non-participation in any observable visuality— to

favor analysis “mediated by the symbolic field.”¹⁰ This mediation is the fault of no one in particular, just a result of the methods of analysis that pervade the entirety of the world. Rarely does anyone stop to think: “What is listening?” A question whose material basis is, “What is sound?”

In order to usefully theorize visuality through sound, and specifically when it comes to Black visuality, it is necessary to begin from a more solid foundation, a theory of sound that is “attentive to [its] ontology,”¹¹ which can only be accessed from the world of percepts and affects, as a set of material forces and phenomena. From here, we can map out a functional and philosophically robust model for the necessary pursuit of “listening to images” and approaching practices that formally appear to operate representationally, but conceptually do anything but—a materialist aesthetic. We may find our best case studies in the work of a number of Black artists from multiple generations, Walker included. Within this frame, Walker’s work can be viewed as an “a-signifying material flux,”¹² of “blocs of sensations and configurations of affects, energies, that impinge upon the body of the viewer, reader, and auditor.”¹³

[Black Hole]

Over the years, when I have looked at images of Walker silhouettes, I’ve often thought of a particular chapter in Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus*—“Year Zero: Faciality”—in which the philosophers obsess over the dynamic between what they call the “white wall of signification” and the “black hole of subjectification.” For them, “the white wall/black hole system is constructed [as an] abstract machine [...] that must allow and ensure the almightiness of the signifier as well as the subject.”¹⁴ At one point in my life, I was quite interested in this arrangement, being myself obsessed with escaping the trappings of subjectivity and identity, both on the specific level of my own middle-class Black womanhood and on a broader philosophical basis, having theorized myself into a holistic and

5 Aria Dean & Frank B. Wilderson III, “Frank B. Wilderson III in conversation with Aria Dean,” *November Magazine* No. 2, November 2020, <https://novembermag.com/contents/2>.

6 [Editor’s note] Hortense Spillers (b. 1942) is an American literary critic, Black Feminist scholar, and author of books such as *Black, White, and In Color: Essays on American Literature and Culture*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2003.

7 Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze on Cinema*, Routledge, New York 2003, p. 33.

10 Christoph Cox, *Sonic Flux: Sound, Art, and Metaphysics*, p. 14.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid., p. 41.

13 Ibid.

14 Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, “Year Zero: Faciality,” in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 2nd Edition, University of Minnesota Press, Minnesota 1987, p. 181.

8 Tina M. Campt, *Listening to Images*, Duke University Press, Durham 2017, p. 5.

9 Ibid., p. 6.

exhausting skepticism of Western philosophy's account of the subject.

I especially enjoy thinking about this alongside *Event Horizon*, a large cut out work produced in 2005 for the grand staircase at the New School's Arnhold Hall in New York City, which is a great formal case study of how a Walker work does its thing, but also is specifically useful under the terms of this argument.¹⁵ Having never been to Arnhold Hall myself, I spent a lot of time trying to find an image online that could make me understand how *Event Horizon* related to the architecture of the stairwell over which it looms. There appeared to be two different versions of it, but I couldn't tell if they were next to each other, back to back, or what—one version with a probably white figure standing at the top of the crevasse, and the other with a little Black girl at its mouth, legs dangling over the edge.

After a long time scrolling, the composition started to remind me of something, a meme, popular in summer 2020, featuring an illustration of Plato's Allegory of the Cave.¹⁶ The connection was purely formal—the interior spaces were so similarly contoured—but impossible to ignore.

Plato's Cave is the *Event Horizon*—*Event Horizon* is Plato's Cave; together they form the representational event. Plato's Cave, but make it chaotic and self-reflexive. In Walker's scene everyone and their mama is tossed into a pit. In one panel, a little Black girl looks to be controlling things; in the other a white man rages at the top of the heap. In both, bodies tumble down into the abyss. An ontological approach (asking, "What exists?") might lead us to imagine that if this is Plato's Cave, we're facing its wall, watching the shadows dance, ignorant, as were Plato's prisoners, of the fire behind us. From here we could discuss the violence wrought by representation (these shadows, how they lie!), and the telling of history. But at the level of Walker's metaphysics (what *is* it), and taking the scene in as a whole, synthesizing these two compositions that one cannot physically see together from a single vantage, the shadow and flame are part and parcel; *Event Horizon* is an elevation of

a scene, much like the popular illustration of Plato's allegory. However, Walker's silhouetted, non-pictorial picture of representation-in-action itself sheds all consideration of the real. The same can be said for the larger body of these works. They are flat; they are what they are. They make specific reference to nowhere, to no one, and to nothing. For *Event Horizon*, this flat impenetrability and two-dimensionality becomes the subject of the work. Each panel "narrates" another version of Plato's allegory, a Bergsonian parody if you will, where the world both above and below is nothing but image.

If Plato's Cave is the *Event Horizon* and *Event Horizon* is Plato's Cave, then what exactly are we careening toward as we pass this point of no return?

For Deleuze and Guattari, the black hole is a subjectifying force; the pressure it exerts is enough to fix and maintain a subject, as a single point, let's say. At the same time, their discussion of the black hole displays an anxiety around the cosmic entity, which runs through most actual and metaphorical invocations of it: a fear of annihilation. These functions seem in some way contradictory, but are actually equally imbricated in the dangerous game of desubjectivation and "becoming-multiple." The black hole at once threatens a total succumbing to the bounds of subjectivity, and offers a possible line of flight onto a plane of becoming. Deleuze, it would seem, to return to astrophysics, fears getting caught in the instance of singularity, where one becomes only a crushing, totalizing nothingness. Deleuze fears both the fixity and the annihilatory force that the black hole contradictorily works on him.

As a star-cum-black hole, Walker too is endowed with the power to subjectify, annihilate, and through the bent logic of her singularity, to be annihilated, herself. This annihilatory power rhymes with the desubjectifying force of Blackness discussed by Frank Wilderson, Patrice Douglass, and others, where the "fragmenting process the black psyche undergoes is beyond

'the event horizon.'"¹⁷ As in Deleuze and Guattari's system of white walls/black holes, "you will be pinned to the wall and stuffed in the black hole" in/of Kara Walker's universe.¹⁸

[Universe]

If we accept the theory of black hole cosmology that a black hole can itself birth its own universe, then traversing Walker's event horizon and tunneling underneath her cave, we come upon some other subterranean space, perhaps non-directional, with more or fewer dimensions than our world, where time and space mean something different, a place without "temporal or spatial coordinates," the universe of Kara Walker. Here, "signs do not represent or refer to an already constituted dominant reality. Rather, they simulate and pre-produce a reality that is not yet there."¹⁹ From the white viewer who strays past the event horizon to the Black viewer who goes looking for it, no one walks away unscathed. Many will leave further fixed in their subjectivities, but the lucky ones can hope for the eternal peace of annihilation, which is to say, to become a black hole oneself, another ideal body in Walker's universe.

Viewed from this realm—underneath, below, beyond, after representation—*Event Horizon* is nothing other than what it announces itself as—a limit point that gives way to a portal. Some say that slavery was a black hole for humanity, and if that's the case, Blackness is the matter that comprises our New World. And from this new world, others must be birthed. Is this the world that *Event Horizon* opens onto? A world after the afterlife of slavery, a world where everyone is already dead (socially, speaking) and relieved from the burdens of life affirming signification, a world without humans, a world made from a universe whose raw material is the at once yawning and hyper-compressed time-space of Blackness, without coordinates or time stamps. I could go on and on, but most importantly, a world that knows and accepts its own being as such.

If *Event Horizon* and the rest of Walker's silhouettes are black holes, then these drawings, scrawls, notes, and doodles, pulled in large swaths from her studio after stacking up over the years, are the matter that make up the Walker universe. There's no real distinction to be made between the large ones and small ones; a flippant watercolor on a 20.3 × 27.9 cm sheet can hold the same weight as a massive drawing of Barack Obama. Everywhere, a mess of lines, dabs of color; a pencil note next to a woman's face, advancing dialogue, narrative, more often, a clarifying note; crossed out figures, second tries right next to them; on one sheet of paper a body, sprawled; a few sheets of paper over, another body mirrors this one. All of this tells us—in that it tells us so little—that we're in the midst of a process. The next question would be "Toward what?" The answer can only be, "Toward becoming."

In an old exhibition catalogue, I find a reproduction of a little note card with Walker's signature typewriter font, addressed to "black girls." She writes: "we embody the will to power." It's a reference to Nietzsche's ontology that lasts only a single beat, his famously under-explained phrase that is often used reductively to refer to irrational human desires often for power and self-transcendence. However, another reading of Nietzsche tells us that the will to power is nothing other than "becoming," anticipating mid- to late-20th-century thinking from queer theory, poststructuralism, and Black studies. The will to power is the flux of the universe, the "ceaseless becoming and overcoming that temporarily congeals into forms and beings."²⁰

This Nietzsche/Walker crossover moment seems like the key to all of this somehow, and I'm fixated on ending the text with this. I send my draft of the essay in with a few loose ends hanging, the final paragraph being one. "Nietzsche quote?" sits in brackets amid a mess of notes. "The doer is only a fiction added to the deed [...]"²¹ It seems impossible to draw together. I wake up the following day, knowing that in the next 24 hours I'll have to wrangle this into

¹⁵ Images and description can be found at <https://the-newschoolartcollection.org/works/kara-walker>.

¹⁶ See <https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/platos-allegory-of-the-cave>.

¹⁷ Patrice Douglass and Frank Wilderson, "The Violence of Presence: The Metaphysics of a Blackened World," *The Black Scholar*, no. 43 (4–2013), p. 117–123, here: p. 121.

¹⁸ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, p. 181.

¹⁹ Deborah Hauptmann and Andrej Radman, "Asignifying Semiotics: Or How to Paint Pink on Pink," *Footprint. Delft Architecture Theory Journal*, no. 8 (4–2014), see <https://doi.org/10.7480/footprint.8.1>.

²⁰ Christoph Cox, *Sonic Flux: Sound, Art, and Metaphysics*,

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

something concise and coherent. In my inbox is an email from Walker titled “Serendipity.” Attached is another of her lined note cards—which she happened to unearth in her studio that same morning—this one with notes on *Event Horizon*. The card reads:

the middle passage of a sort, migration
diverticulitis
pockets of air passage of time softening
stool, persona non grata
performing goose, , broad minded
candidates, you’ve got got it bad girl,
writing from
no point of view, lost in a freefall.
time capsule style.
event horizon.
into the black hole.

Event Horizon
slip slip sloping rabbit hole through
the looking glass and down down
we are We? Community of underground
travellers
or time traversers. beginning in a time
before time and ending in a time
before me.
an everything exists. holding pattern
style. Hovering uncertainly between
past and present. in a dark interior
space life happens, invisibly, bowels move,
without limit. Limitless
Except for pockets of imperfection,
where life gets stuck, holds
Onto tradition, prospers in cramped
new quarters.
Makes a new life “I’ll make me a world.”

I leave you with the original draft of my final lines: If we reread Walker with Nietzsche in mind, and we reread Nietzsche for Walker, we find that if “black girls embody the will to power,” the only logical conclusion is that Black girls are the ur-artist-of-the-world, the Über-mensch, desubjectifying and dissolved into nature itself, a singularity, embodying the very condition of possibility for the production of infinite new and better worlds.

161 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, undated</div> <div>Graphite and colored pencil on paper, 76.5 × 56.5 cm</div> </div>	236–247 <div> <div><i>Instruction Manual</i>, 2012</div> <div>Chromogenic print, 27.9 × 944.9 cm</div> </div>	275 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2013</div> <div>Watercolor and graphite on paper, 31.8 × 23.8 cm</div> </div>
162 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2002/undated</div> <div>From a suite of 5 works; graphite, colored pencil, pastel, and collage on paper, 3 works: 27.9 × 21.6 cm, 1 work: 27.3 × 20.3 cm, 1 work: 25.1 × 32.4 cm</div> <div>See also pages 149 ↑, 167, 179, 456</div> </div>	248–251 <div> <div><i>Border Journey</i>, 2012</div> <div>Ink on paper, 30.5 × 375.9 cm</div> </div>	276 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2004</div> <div>Watercolor and graphite on paper, 77.8 × 52.4 cm</div> </div>
163 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, before 2007</div> <div>Graphite on paper, 76.2 × 57.2 cm</div> </div>	252–253 <div> <div><i>Look a Negro</i>, 2012</div> <div>Ink on paper, 30.5 × 199.7 cm</div> </div>	277 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, before 2007</div> <div>Watercolor and ink on paper, 76.5 × 57.2 cm</div> </div>
164 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2012</div> <div>From a suite of 8 works; graphite on paper, 75.9 × 57.2 cm or 57.2 × 75.9 cm each</div> <div>Recto and verso</div> <div>See also pages 173–176</div> </div>	255 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2002–2004</div> <div>From a suite of 24 works; watercolor, ink, graphite, collage, and cut paper on paper, 20 works: 4.6 × 30.8 cm or 30.8 × 4.6 cm, 3 works: 45.7 × 30.5 cm or 30.5 × 45.7 cm, 1 work: 45.1 × 30.5 cm</div> <div>See also pages 83–85, 97–103, 106, 108–109, 145, 156, 267–269, 446–447, 513, 517</div> </div>	278 ↑ <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 1997–1999</div> <div>From a suite of 13 works; watercolor, ink, gouache, and pastel on paper, 26 × 18.1 cm or 18.1 × 26 cm each</div> <div>Collection of Charlotte and Herbert S. Wagner III, Cambridge, Massachusetts</div> <div>See also pages 113, 257, 279–281, 294–295, 319, 519</div> </div>
165–166 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2016</div> <div>From a suite of 57 works; ink, watercolor, graphite, gouache, pastel, and Post-It on paper, 18.1 × 26 cm or 26 × 18.1 cm each</div> <div>See also pages 116–129, 148 ↓, 157, 172, 177 ↓</div> </div>	256 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2016</div> <div>From a suite of 4 works; watercolor, ink, and gouache on paper, 31.1 × 22.9 cm or 22.9 × 31.1 cm</div> <div>See also pages 259–260, 278 ↓</div> </div>	278 ↓ <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2016</div> <div>Suite of 4 works; watercolor, ink, and gouache on paper, 31.1 × 22.9 cm or 22.9 × 31.1. cm</div> <div>See also pages 256, 259–260</div> </div>
167 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2002/undated</div> <div>From a suite of 5 works; graphite, colored pencil, pastel, and collage on paper, 3 works: 27.9 × 21.6 cm, 1 work: 27.3 × 20.3 cm, 1 work: 25.1 × 32.4 cm</div> <div>See also pages 149 ↑, 162, 179, 456</div> </div>	257 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 1997–1999</div> <div>From a suite of 13 works; watercolor, ink, gouache, and pastel on paper, 26 × 18.1 cm or 18.1 × 26 cm each</div> <div>Collection of Charlotte and Herbert S. Wagner III, Cambridge, Massachusetts</div> <div>See also pages 113, 278 ↑, 279–281, 294–295, 319, 519</div> </div>	279–281 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 1997–1999</div> <div>From a suite of 13 works; watercolor, ink, gouache, and pastel on paper, 26 × 18.1 cm or 18.1 × 26 cm each</div> <div>Collection of Charlotte and Herbert S. Wagner III, Cambridge, Massachusetts</div> <div>See also pages 113, 257, 278 ↑, 294–295, 319, 519</div> </div>
168–171 <div> <div><i>Only I Can Solve This (The 2016 Election)</i>, 2016</div> <div>From a suite of 31 works; ink, watercolor, and graphite on paper, 26 × 18.1 cm or 18.1 × 26 cm each</div> <div>See also pages 19–37, 177 ↑, 296, 314–315, 518</div> </div>	258 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2013</div> <div>Watercolor and graphite on paper, 32.1 × 23.8 cm</div> </div>	283 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2002–2003</div> <div>From a suite of 13 works; collage, ink, and gouache on paper, 8 works: 29.2 × 21 cm, 3 works: 30.5 × 22.9 cm, 1 work: 24.4 × 16.5 cm, 1 work: 21.6 × 23.5 cm</div> <div>See also pages 435–445, 512, 515</div> </div>
172 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2016</div> <div>From a suite of 57 works; ink, watercolor, graphite, gouache, pastel, and Post-It on paper, 18.1 × 26 cm or 26 × 18.1 cm each</div> <div>See also pages 116–129, 148 ↓, 157, 165–166, 177 ↓</div> </div>	259–260 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2016</div> <div>From a suite of 4 works; watercolor, ink, and gouache on paper, 31.1 × 22.9 cm or 22.9 × 31.1. cm</div> <div>See also pages 256, 278 ↓</div> </div>	284 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 1997</div> <div>From a suite of 4 works; ink, watercolor, and collage on paper, 2 works: 25.1 × 16.8 cm, 2 works: 24.4 × 16.8 cm</div> <div>See also pages 105, 292–293</div> </div>
173–176 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2012</div> <div>From a suite of 8 works; graphite on paper, 75.9 × 57.2 cm or 57.2 × 75.9 cm each</div> <div>Page 173: recto and verso of one work</div> <div>See also page 164</div> </div>	261–262 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2015–2016</div> <div>From a suite of 8 works; watercolor, ink, and graphite on paper, 4 works: 26 × 18.1 cm or 18.1 × 26 cm each, 4 works: 29.8 × 21 cm or 21 × 29.8 cm</div> <div>See also pages 297–300</div> </div>	285–289 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 1997</div> <div>Suite of 4 works; watercolor and ink on paper, 22.9 × 15.2 cm each</div> <div>Pages 286–287: recto and verso of one work</div> </div>
177 <div> <div><i>Only I Can Solve This (The 2016 Election)</i>, 2016</div> <div>From a suite of 31 works; ink, watercolor, and graphite on paper, 26 × 18.1 cm or 18.1 × 26 cm each</div> <div>See also pages 19–37, 168–171, 296, 314–315, 518</div> </div>	263 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2013</div> <div>Watercolor and graphite on paper, 23.8 × 31.8 cm</div> </div>	290–291 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, late 1990s</div> <div>Suite of 8 works; watercolor and ink on paper, 12.7 × 7.6 cm each</div> </div>
177 ↓ <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2016</div> <div>From a suite of 57 works; ink, watercolor, graphite, gouache, pastel, and Post-It on paper, 18.1 × 26 cm or 26 × 18.1 cm each</div> <div>See also pages 116–129, 148 ↓, 157, 165–166, 172</div> </div>	264–266 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, c. 2000</div> <div>Suite of 3 works, watercolor on paper, 35.9 × 50.8 cm, 30.5 × 30.5 cm, and 35.9 × 26 cm</div> </div>	292–293 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 1997</div> <div>From a suite of 4 works; ink, watercolor, and collage on paper, 2 works: 25.1 × 16.8 cm, 2 works: 24.4 × 16.8 cm</div> <div>See also pages 105, 284</div> </div>
179 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2002/undated</div> <div>From a suite of 5 works; graphite, colored pencil, pastel, and collage on paper, 3 works: 27.9 × 21.6 cm, 1 work: 27.3 × 20.3 cm, 1 work: 25.1 × 32.4 cm</div> <div>See also pages 149 ↑, 162, 167, 456</div> </div>	267–269 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2002–2004</div> <div>From a suite of 24 works; watercolor, ink, graphite, collage, and cut paper on paper, 20 works: 4.6 × 30.8 cm or 30.8 × 4.6 cm, 3 works: 45.7 × 30.5 cm or 30.5 × 45.7 cm, 1 work: 45.1 × 30.5 cm</div> <div>See also pages 83–85, 97–103, 106, 108–109, 145, 156, 255, 446–447, 513, 517</div> </div>	294–295 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 1997–1999</div> <div>From a suite of 13 works; watercolor, ink, gouache, and pastel on paper, 26 × 18.1 cm or 18.1 × 26 cm each</div> <div>Collection of Charlotte and Herbert S. Wagner III, Cambridge, Massachusetts</div> <div>See also pages 113, 257, 278 ↑, 279–281, 319, 519</div> </div>
180–210 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2019</div> <div>Suite of 44 works; ink, watercolor, gouache, and collage on paper, 27.9 × 21.6 cm or 21.6 × 27.9 cm each</div> </div>	270 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 1997</div> <div>Watercolor and collage on paper, 60.3 × 31.1 cm</div> </div>	296 <div> <div><i>Only I Can Solve This (The 2016 Election)</i>, 2016</div> <div>From a suite of 31 works; ink, watercolor, and graphite on paper, 26 × 18.1 cm or 18.1 × 26 cm each</div> <div>See also pages 19–37, 168–171, 177 ↑, 314–315, 518</div> </div>
212–221 <div> <div><i>2008 Scroll</i>, 2008</div> <div>Ink on paper, 27.9 × 856 cm</div> </div>	271 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, before 2007</div> <div>Watercolor, gouache, ink, and graphite on paper, 45.7 × 61 cm</div> </div>	301 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2014</div> <div>Ink and gouache on paper, 18.1 × 26 cm</div> <div>Collection of Melissa Bean, Rochester, New York</div> </div>
222–227 <div> <div><i>Success and the Stench of Ingratitude</i>, 2012</div> <div>Ink on paper, 27.9 × 576.6 cm</div> </div>	272 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, before 2007</div> <div>Watercolor, ink, and graphite on paper, 57.2 × 76.8 cm</div> </div>	302–303 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2014</div> <div>Suite of 4 works; ink and gouache on paper, 38.1 × 56.5 cm each</div> </div>
229–235 <div> <div><i>Who Will Win the Future Race War?</i>, 2012</div> <div>Ink on paper, 45.7 × 754.4 cm</div> </div>	273 <div> <div><i>Passive Storm</i>, 2005</div> <div>Watercolor, gouache, ink, and graphite on paper, 57.2 × 76.8 cm</div> </div>	304–309 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2001</div> <div>Suite of 12 works; watercolor and ink on paper, 27.9 × 35.2 cm each</div> </div>
	274 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2008</div> <div>Ink and watercolor on paper, 55.9 × 71.1 cm</div> </div>	310–311 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 1996–1997</div> <div>Suite of 7 works; watercolor on paper, 20.3 × 12.7 cm each</div> </div>
	275 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2008</div> <div>Ink on paper, 55.9 × 71.1 cm</div> </div>	312 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 1997</div> <div>Suite of 4 works; watercolor on paper, 17.8 × 12.7 cm each</div> </div>
	276 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2014</div> <div>Pastel on paper, 31.1 × 30.8 cm</div> </div>	313 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, undated</div> <div>Pastel on paper, 31.1 × 30.8 cm</div> </div>
	277 <div> <div><i>Only I Can Solve This (The 2016 Election)</i>, 2016</div> <div>From a suite of 31 works; ink, watercolor, and graphite on paper, 26 × 18.1 cm or 18.1 × 26 cm each</div> <div>See also pages 19–37, 168–171, 177 ↑, 296, 518</div> </div>	314–315 <div> <div><i>Only I Can Solve This (The 2016 Election)</i>, 2016</div> <div>From a suite of 31 works; ink, watercolor, and graphite on paper, 26 × 18.1 cm or 18.1 × 26 cm each</div> <div>See also pages 19–37, 168–171, 177 ↑, 296, 518</div> </div>
	278 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2008</div> <div>Ink on paper, 55.9 × 71.1 cm</div> </div>	317 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2014</div> <div>Ink and gouache on paper, 56.5 × 38.1 cm</div> </div>
	279 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2008</div> <div>Ink on paper, 55.9 × 71.1 cm</div> </div>	318 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2008</div> <div>Ink on paper, 55.9 × 71.1 cm</div> </div>
	280 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2008</div> <div>Ink on cut paper, 48.3 × 62.2 cm</div> </div>	319 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 1997–1999</div> <div>From a suite of 13 works; watercolor, ink, gouache, and pastel on paper, 26 × 18.1 cm or 18.1 × 26 cm each</div> <div>Collection of Charlotte and Herbert S. Wagner III, Cambridge, Massachusetts</div> <div>See also pages 113, 257, 278 ↑, 279–281, 294–295, 519</div> </div>
	281 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, undated</div> <div>Ink on cut paper, 48.3 × 62.2 cm</div> </div>	320 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, undated</div> <div>Ink on cut paper, 48.3 × 62.2 cm</div> </div>
	282 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2014</div> <div>Suite of 3 works; gouache, watercolor, ink, graphite, and collage on paper, 20 × 20 cm each</div> </div>	321–323 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2014</div> <div>Suite of 3 works; gouache, watercolor, ink, graphite, and collage on paper, 20 × 20 cm each</div> </div>
	283 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, undated</div> <div>Ink on cut paper, 48.3 × 62.2 cm</div> </div>	324 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, undated</div> <div>Ink on cut paper, 48.3 × 62.2 cm</div> </div>
	284 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2014</div> <div>Suite of 3 works; gouache, watercolor, ink, graphite, and collage on paper, 20 × 20 cm each</div> </div>	325 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2014</div> <div>Ink and collage on paper, 48.9 × 19.7 cm</div> </div>
	285 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2014</div> <div>Suite of 3 works; gouache, watercolor, ink, graphite, and collage on paper, 20 × 20 cm each</div> </div>	326–327 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2014</div> <div>Ink on paper, 46.4 × 128 cm</div> </div>
	286 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2008</div> <div>Cut paper, 17.78 × 15.24 cm and 15.24 × 12.7 cm</div> </div>	328 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, undated</div> <div>Ink on paper, 46.4 × 128 cm</div> </div>
	287 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, undated</div> <div>Cut paper, 60.3 × 48.3 cm</div> </div>	329–330 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2008</div> <div>Cut paper, 17.78 × 15.24 cm and 15.24 × 12.7 cm</div> </div>
	288 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, undated</div> <div>Cut paper, 65.4 × 48.3 cm</div> </div>	331 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, undated</div> <div>Cut paper, 60.3 × 48.3 cm</div> </div>
	289 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, undated</div> <div>Cut paper, 65.4 × 48.3 cm</div> </div>	332 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, undated</div> <div>Cut paper, 65.4 × 48.3 cm</div> </div>
	290 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, undated</div> <div>Cut paper, 65.4 × 48.3 cm</div> </div>	333 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, undated</div> <div>Cut paper, 65.4 × 48.3 cm</div> </div>
	291 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2008</div> <div>Collage, graphite, and cut paper on paper, 76.2 × 55.9 cm</div> <div>Private Collection</div> </div>	334 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2008</div> <div>Collage, graphite, and cut paper on paper, 76.2 × 55.9 cm</div> <div>Private Collection</div> </div>
	292 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2004</div> <div>Graphite on cut paper, 77.8 × 52.1 cm</div> </div>	335 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2004</div> <div>Graphite on cut paper, 77.8 × 52.1 cm</div> </div>
	293 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2016</div> <div>Suite of 6 works; recto and verso of each work; ink, watercolor, graphite, gouache, pastel, and collage, 4 works: 27.9 × 21.6 cm, 1 work: 21.6 × 35.6 cm, 1 work: 49.2 × 56.2 cm</div> </div>	337–347 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2016</div> <div>Suite of 6 works; recto and verso of each work; ink, watercolor, graphite, gouache, pastel, and collage, 4 works: 27.9 × 21.6 cm, 1 work: 21.6 × 35.6 cm, 1 work: 49.2 × 56.2 cm</div> </div>
	294 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, before 2007</div> <div>Pastel and graphite on paper, 48.3 × 63.8 cm</div> </div>	349 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, before 2007</div> <div>Pastel and graphite on paper, 48.3 × 63.8 cm</div> </div>

350–355 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2001</div> <div>Suite of 6 works; collage and ink on paper, 28.6 × 40.3 cm or 40.3 × 28.6 cm each</div> <div>Collection of Charlotte and Herbert S. Wagner III, Cambridge, Massachusetts</div> </div>	446–447 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2002–2004</div> <div>From a suite of 24 works; watercolor, ink, graphite, collage, and cut paper on paper, 20 works: 4.6 × 30.8 cm or 30.8 × 4.6 cm, 3 works: 45.7 × 30.5 cm or 30.5 × 45.7 cm, 1 work: 45.1 × 30.5 cm</div> <div>See also pages 83–85, 97–103, 106, 108–109, 145, 156, 255, 267–269, 513, 517</div> </div>
357–367 <div> <div><i>2015 Book</i>, 2015</div> <div>Suite of 11 works; watercolor and ink on paper, 26.7 × 24.1 cm each</div> </div>	449 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, undated</div> <div>Ink and collage, 22.9 × 18.1 × 7.6 cm</div> </div>
369 ↑ <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2000</div> <div>Cut paper collage, 30.5 × 45.7 cm</div> </div>	450 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2008</div> <div>Cut paper and ink on paper, 55.9 × 76.2 cm</div> </div>
369 ↓ <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2000</div> <div>Cut paper collage, 30.5 × 45.7 cm</div> </div>	451 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, before 2007</div> <div>Cut paper collage, 49.5 × 64.8 cm</div> <div>Private Collection</div> </div>
370 ↑ <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2000</div> <div>Cut paper collage, 30.5 × 45.7 cm</div> <div>Collection of Charlotte and Herbert S. Wagner III, Cambridge, Massachusetts</div> </div>	452 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2008</div> <div>Collage, graphite, and cut paper on paper, 76.2 × 55.9 cm</div> </div>
370 ↓ <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2000</div> <div>Cut paper collage, 30.5 × 45.7 cm</div> <div>Collection of Charlotte and Herbert S. Wagner III, Cambridge, Massachusetts</div> </div>	453 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, undated</div> <div>Collage on paper, 61 × 48.3 cm</div> </div>
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371 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2000</div> <div>Cut paper collage, 30.5 × 45.7 cm</div> </div>	455 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, undated</div> <div>Collage on paper, 38.1 × 2.9 cm</div> </div>
372 ↑ <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2000</div> <div>Cut paper collage, 30.5 × 45.7 cm</div> </div>	456 <div> <div>Unrtitled, 2002/undated</div> <div>From a suite of 5 works; graphite, colored pencil, pastel, and collage on paper, 3 works: 27.9 × 21.6 cm, 1 work: 27.3 × 20.3 cm, 1 work: 25.1 × 32.4 cm</div> <div>See also pages 149 ↑, 162, 167, 179</div> </div>
372 ↓ <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, undated</div> <div>Collage on paper, 48.6 × 63.8 cm</div> </div>	457 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, undated</div> <div>Collage on paper, 33 × 24.1 cm</div> </div>
373 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2006–2007</div> <div>Cut paper, graphite, and marker on paper, 14.6 × 24.8 cm</div> </div>	458 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, undated</div> <div>Collage on paper, 21 × 29.8 cm</div> </div>
374–383 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 1999</div> <div>Suite of 31 works; watercolor, ink, graphite, pastel, acrylic, gouache, and tape on paper, 30 works: 9.5 × 6.4 cm or 6.4 × 9.5 cm each, 1 work: 9.5 × 31.8 cm</div> <div>Pages 382–383: recto and verso of one work</div> </div>	459 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2008–2009</div> <div>Photo collage on paper, 25.1 × 35.6 cm</div> </div>
384–387 <div> <div><i>Salvador Brazil</i>, 1999</div> <div>Suite of 12 works; watercolor and ink on paper, 14.6 × 10.5 cm or 10.5 × 14.6 cm each</div> </div>	460 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, undated</div> <div>Found object and offset lithograph on cardboard, 35.9 × 22.9 cm</div> </div>
388–391 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2008</div> <div>Suite of 4 works; graphite and collage on paper, 2 works: 27.9 × 21.6 cm, 1 work: 28.3 × 26.7 cm, 1 work: 28.9 × 17.8 cm</div> </div>	461 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, undated</div> <div>Found object and offset lithograph on cardboard, 28.3 × 41.6 cm</div> </div>
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422–423 <div> <div><i>Faalty as Feint (A Drawing Exercise)</i>, 2019</div> <div>Triptych; conté crayon on tinted gessoed paper, overall dimensions: 243.8 × 545.5 cm</div> <div>Fredriksen Family Collection</div> </div>	463 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, undated</div> <div>Cut paper and collage on paper, 12.7 × 20.3 cm</div> </div>
424–430 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 1997–1998</div> <div>Suite of 25 works; watercolor and ink on paper, 21 × 14.6 cm each</div> </div>	464–465 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, undated</div> <div>Collage and adhesive on paper, 31.8 × 47.9 cm</div> </div>
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435–445 <div> <div><i>Untitled</i>, 2002–2003</div> <div>From a suite of 13 works; collage, ink, and gouache on paper, 8 works: 29.2 × 21 cm, 3 works: 30.5 × 22.9 cm, 1 work: 24.4 × 16.5 cm, 1 work: 21.6 × 23.5 cm</div> <div>See also pages 283, 512, 515</div> </div>	476–511 <div> <div><i>Notebooks 2019</i>, 2019</div> <div>Suite of 36 works; collage, ink, marker, photocopy, tape, stickers, gouache, watercolor, graphite, and colored pencil on paper, 27.6 × 22.5 cm or 22.5 × 27.6 cm each</div> </div>

512
Untitled, 2002–2003
From a suite of 13 works; collage, ink, and gouache on paper, 8 works: 29.2 × 21 cm, 3 works: 30.5 × 22.9 cm, 1 work: 24.4 × 16.5 cm, 1 work: 21.6 × 23.5 cm
See also pages 283, 435–445, 515

513
Untitled, 2002–2004
From a suite of 24 works; watercolor, ink, graphite, collage, and cut paper on paper, 20 works: 46 × 30.8 cm or 30.8 × 46 cm, 3 works: 45.7 × 30.5 cm or 30.5 × 45.7 cm, 1 work: 45.1 × 30.5 cm
See also pages 83–85, 97–103, 106, 108–109, 145, 156, 255, 267–269, 446–447, 517

515
Untitled, 2002–2003
From a suite of 13 works; collage, ink, and gouache on paper: 8 works: 29.2 × 21 cm, 3 works: 30.5 × 22.9 cm, 1 work, 24.4 × 16.5 cm, 1 work: 21.6 × 23.5 cm
See also pages 283, 435–445, 512

516 ↑
Untitled, 2008
Ink on paper, 55.9 × 76.2 cm

516 ↓
Untitled, 2008
Ink on paper, 55.9 × 71.1 cm

517
Untitled, 2002–2004
From a suite of 24 works; watercolor, ink, graphite, collage, and cut paper on paper, 20 works: 46 × 30.8 cm or 30.8 × 46 cm, 3 works: 45.7 × 30.5 cm or 30.5 × 45.7 cm, 1 work: 45.1 × 30.5 cm
See also pages 83–85, 97–103, 106, 108–109, 145, 156, 255, 267–269, 446–447, 513

518
Only I Can Solve This (The 2016 Election), 2016
From a suite of 31 works; ink, watercolor, and graphite on paper, 26 × 18.1 cm or 18.1 × 26 cm each
See also pages 19–37, 168–171, 177 ↑, 296, 314–315

519
Untitled, 1997–1999
From a suite of 13 works; watercolor, ink, gouache, and pastel on paper, 26 × 18.1 cm or 18.1 × 26 cm each
Collection of Charlotte and Herbert S. Wagner III, Cambridge, Massachusetts
See also pages 113, 257, 278 ↑, 279–281, 294–295, 319

520–525
Palmetto Libretto, 2012
Suite of 5 works; ink, watercolor, graphite, gouache, pastel, and collage, 38.7 × 57.5 cm or 57.5 × 38.7 cm each
Pages 520–521: recto and verso of one work
Pages 522 ↑ and 524–525: recto and verso of one work

526
Untitled, before 2007
Ink, pastel, and graphite on paper, 69.9 × 49.8 cm

527
Untitled, 2008
Ink on paper, 71.1 × 55.9 cm

528
Untitled, 2008
Ink on paper, 71.1 × 55.9 cm

529
Untitled, 2008
Ink on paper, 71.1 × 55.9 cm
Collection of Malcom Bean, Rochester, New York

530
Untitled, 2008
Ink on paper, 71.1 × 55.9 cm

531
Untitled, 2008
Ink on paper, 71.1 × 55.9 cm

533–535
Yesterdayness in America Today, 2020
Graphite and watercolor on paper, 221.9 × 365.8 cm

536–537
Untitled, 2012
Suite of 2 works, charcoal on paper, 24.8 × 34.6 cm and 53.7 × 28.3 cm
Page 537: recto and verso of one work
Collection of Jesse Williams

538
Untitled, 2011
Charcoal on paper, 57.2 × 76.2 cm

539–545
Untitled, 2011
Suite of 7 works, charcoal on paper, 57.2 × 76.2 cm or 76.2 × 57.2 cm

547–548
I Am Not My Negro, 2020
Charcoal and pastel on paper, 221.5 × 182.9 cm

550–552
Imposter Syndrome, 2020
Charcoal on paper, 210.2 × 182.9 cm

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