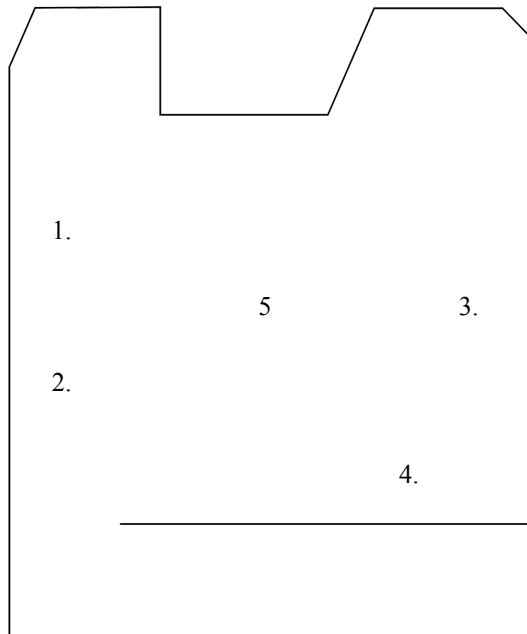


1. Eugenie.....Engraved antique bronze inkwell
(8 x 4.75 x .50 in.)
2. Augustin.....Laboratory-grade storage shelf
(18.25 x 10 x 6 in.)
3. Madame De Saint Ange.....Compact travel lamp
(3.5 x 3.4 x 7 in.)
4. Le Chevalier.....1992 Bird Watcher’s Digest
(5 x 7 in.)
5. Dolmancé.....Automatic Paper Folding Machine
(38 x 19 x 21 in.)
6. The Whisper.....Iron chain and shackle
(Approx. 395 sq. ft.)



Excerpt from “Dialogue the 5th” in *Philosophy in the Bedroom* by Marquis De Sade (1795)

DOLMANCÉ—Mesdames, I am going to ask your permission to spend a few moments in a nearby room with this young man (Augustin).

MADAME DE SAINT-ANGE—But can’t you do here all you wish to do with him?

DOLMANCÉ, *in a low and mysterious tone*—No; there are certain things which strictly require to be veiled.

EUGÉNIE—Ah, by God, tell us what you’d be about!

MADAME DE SAINT-ANGE—I’ll not allow him to leave if he does not.

DOLMANCÉ—You then wish to know?

EUGÉNIE—Absolutely.

DOLMANCÉ, *dragging Augustin*—Very well, Mesdames, I am going . . . but, indeed, it cannot be said.

MADAME DE SAINT-ANGE—Is there, do you think, any conceivable infamy we are not worthy to hear of and execute?

LE CHEVALIER—Wait, sister. I’ll tell you. (He whispers to the two women.)

EUGÉNIE, *with a look of revulsion*—You are right, ‘tis hideous.

MADAME DE SAINT-ANGE—(receives the whisper) Why, I suspected as much.

DOLMANCÉ—You see very well I had to be silent upon this caprice; and you grasp now that one must be alone and in the deepest shadow in order to give oneself over to such turpitudes.

TIMESHARE

3526 N. BROADWAY
LOS ANGELES, CA

THE VIRTUAL ESTATE OF ROY HOFFMAN

FEBRUARY 17—MARCH 16, 2024

BOZ DESEO GARDEN

The Virtual Estate of Roy Hoffman is Boz Deseo Garden's first solo exhibition in Los Angeles. It continues the interrogations of their show at Petrine (Paris, FR), *Cimiteria* (2023), which triangulated the limits of psychoanalysis, philosophies of property, and archival studies through an Afropessimist lens. For Garden, researching the artifacts and afterlives of slavery means contending with their structural effacement and scrutinizing the popular impulse to give Black suffering an intelligible ground. In this sense, Garden frames the archival material or readymade objects of their practice as unresolved indices of racial slavery's subsistence.

For *The Virtual Estate*, Garden purchased the only five objects available for sale from the Facebook Marketplace catalog of Roy Hoffman (alias), a resident of Calabasas and an investor in Africa's growing cannabis farming industry. The objects from Hoffman's virtual collection included: a Duplo DF-520N Automatic Paper Folding Machine, an antique inkwell, a travel-sized lamp, an industrial shelf for laboratory freezers, an 1992 issue of Bird Watcher's Digest, and a slave chain. The chain's value was listed at \$20,000 and specified as intended for 'museum acquisition only'. Hoffman's ancestors, slaves who survived the Haitian Revolution, kept this artifact in their family for generations. Hoffman proposed a loan contract for the chain, lending it to Garden for the duration of the exhibition. Garden declined this proposal, leaving the chain omitted from or perhaps dissimulated by the exhibition. Each of the objects are titled after the six characters (or figures) 'present' in an excerpt from Marquis De Sade's *Philosophy in the Bedroom* (*La philosophie dans le boudoir*) printed for take-away.

For Karl Marx, commodities are (famously) social relations or the "crystals of social substance," which necessarily indicate a series of

"suprasensual" and "socially necessary" phases of production hidden within each commodity. However, Garden's fetishism of the found object is not reducible to an analysis of dissimulated labor processes, nor how these processes are structural heirs of plantation slavery's 'economics'. Instead, the exhibition's engagement with the readymade is an elaboration of Marx's 'suprasensual' analytic insofar as it is a concern with what is both beyond the immediately sensible and what is, at the same time, that which *constitutes* sensibility: the racial Slave qua antiblackness. With *The Virtual Estate*, Garden proposes that Marx's exposure of the commodity fetish, whose mere appearance delivers the whole of its socially determined value, bares a perpendicular symmetry to Sade's reduction (or dilation) of the 'act', in the excerpt from *La philosophie*, to its signifier (in the whisper), which is, in itself, the marker of an absence or a *dissimulated chain* (of signifiers). At the zero degree of these axes lies the racial Slave, the found object par excellence, that is, at the same time, nowhere to be found. The libidinal economy of racial slavery becomes, to borrow from Pamela M. Lee, the "open secret," the Marxian 'phantom', the Sadean whisper, that is embedded within every commodity. It is, then, within every subject who inevitably puts these commodities to their 'ear' (or whichever orifice/organ they choose) to hear the whisper of the value form's *Atlantic* precondition.

In turn, Garden's 'omission' of the slave chain engages Saidiya Hartman's indispensable critique of aesthetic proximity in *Scenes of Subjection*. In her reading of John Rankin's 'empathetic literature' on the 'evils of slavery', she indicts the liberal desire to "bring slavery close" through the melodrama of representation allegedly for the benefit of abolitionist campaigns. In some sense, Rankin's histrionic and certainly erotic attempt to grasp the horrors of slavery is no different than Eugenie and Madame De Saint Ange's desperation to capture the particulars of Augustin's torment.

For Hartman, the dramaturgy of liberal empathy only further places the Slave in the Hold of the sensational or ethical injunction to 'apprehend' the "brute materiality" of the Slave's suffering. Although, this materiality "regularly eludes (re)cognition by virtue of the [Slave's] body being replaced by other signs of value". David Marriott makes a similar point; for him blackness elaborates a *n'est pas* (is not) whereby the Black is "the expression of a perpetual effacement"; it is a negated negativity that can only be known virtually, "drown[ed...]in abstraction", to the extent that it is "incomprehensible to both reason and ontology". The slave chain, as a metonym for the Slave, is, therefore, not omitted as much as it is "replaced by other signs of value" or 'drowned in abstraction' precisely because this is the only way racial slavery appears within discourse: as a non-appearance (*à la* Sara-Maria Sorentino).

Where Sade leaves the content of the whisper a question, Garden provides, precisely by paradoxically 'demonstrating' its effacement, the devastating answer. For Garden, there is no need to bring the open secret of slavery "close" to prove its extancy—its already here, everywhere, in every subject, commodity, object-choice of the libido, and discourse, precisely in its *unresolved* absence.