

The Seen, the Unseen, and the Aesthetics of Infrastructure
by

Tomashi Jackson

BFA, the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art 2010

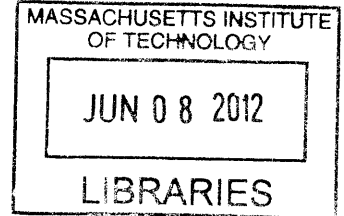
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Abstract

Work narratives haunt the architecture of our shared built environment, urging me to visualize the humanity attached to materials that define space and use. Unregulated, human labor markets are deeply embedded into necessary components of contemporary global, societal infrastructures. This relationship plays itself out in plain sight, and yet can be silent. I imaginatively liken laboring bodies to the inner workings of the built environment; bodies, like pipes, are put to use in an underground that is equally seen/unseen literally as well as figuratively. Domestic laborers on the street, buried pipes, underground.

There are visual, sonic, physical, and linguistic relationships between informal domestic labor and material infrastructure. Functional sounds of informal labor and physical infrastructure are often similarly muffled. Frameworks of material and informal labor are described by beneficiaries as necessary for economic sustainability. Physical infrastructure is tangible and ephemeral, awash with images of labor, fragmented. Labor and the built environment are infused with subdued narratives of work and love as they facilitate the daily exchange of goods, services, and currency in any functioning society. This thesis explores these relationships, examining the aesthetics of infrastructure through observation, study, and artistic production.

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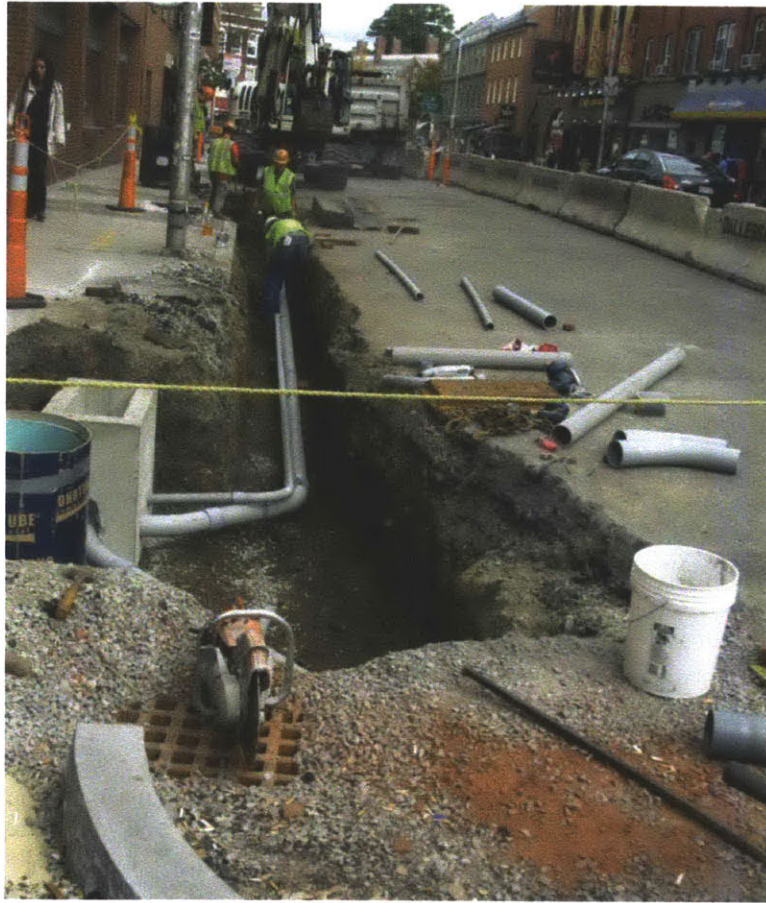


Figure 1 Tomashi Jackson, Underground pipe system construction work in Harvard Square, Cambridge, MA, 2012.



Figure 2, Paul Toohey, Nannies Joan and Vanessa in New York City, NY, 2011.

A. Introduction

I am interested in the laboring figure as a transformative agent in intimate and civic spaces. I am made of songs and memories. I am the product of people who have labored and people who have sung to me. These people, by whom I have been so greatly influenced, were and continue to be working class people who are tied to formal and informal labor sectors¹.

Jackylen Ball was the eldest of these people. She was born just outside of Dallas, Texas in the year 1915. She and her sisters were known as the Ball Girls. Jackylen and her younger sisters, Ethelene and Olivia, worked informally, or under the table, as domestic laborers in Texas and California, undertaking great risks well into their elderly years. Under the table work, (also known as the underground economy, informal, gray, black market, hidden, unobserved), refers to the employment realm where taxes aren't paid, labor laws are ignored, and cash is king. In a shadow economy, workers are often unsafe and ruthlessly exploited, while governments are deprived of crucial revenue — yet still forced to foot the bill for essential services². Born to

¹ “The concept of the informal sector has its origins in the beginning of the 1970s and has become so popular since then that it is nowadays being used for various purposes and with various meanings. Initially, it had been formulated as an analytical concept for research and policy-making. However, the informal sector is now also being used as a statistical concept for data collection purposes, referring to activities not covered – or insufficiently covered – by the existing traditional sources of statistical data. During the period of a centrally-planned economy, *informal activities* were considered ‘illegal’ and even forbidden, because they related to issues such as speculation (purchase and sale of rare goods at higher prices), consultation (individual teaching lessons), repair of vehicles, etc. With the transition to a market economy the informal sector ‘revealed’ and became widespread in virtually all branches of economic activity, but especially in agricultural production and trade services. Since the economic crisis, which started in the beginning of the 1990s, hundreds of enterprises have reduced their volume of production or were closed, releasing thousands of employees. The demand for labour has been much lower than the supply of labour, a fact that has provoked tensions on the labour market for more than ten years until now. State efforts to undertake activities to improve the situation have not yielded the expected outcomes. As a result, persons, who could not find jobs in the existing economic units have tried independently to solve the problem of access to the labour market in initiating various self-employment activities for the production of goods or the provision of services outside the formal sector. Absorbing a major part of dismissed or underemployed persons, the informal sector has stimulated the creation of hundreds of micro-‘enterprises’ and, thus, given the possibility to thousands of persons to find a job and to obtain a source of income. Beyond this, for many persons the informal sector has become attractive it offers flexible working hours and part-time employment, and establishes new labour relations. Activities in the informal sector are also widespread among graduates of educational institutions. The reason is not always the lack of jobs, but the fact that the available jobs do not correspond to the job aspirations of young people.” Policy Integration Department Bureau of Statistics International Labour Office Geneva, *Employment in the informal economy in the Republic of Moldova Working Paper No. 41*, ILO Bureau of Statistics in collaboration with the Department for Statistics and Sociology of the Republic of Moldova, December 2004,1

² Leonard, Andrew, “A Growing Underworld Bazaar”, SALON, May 13, 2012.

<http://www.salon.com/2011/09/29/shadowintro/>.

Central American livelihood migrant³ parents, the Ball sisters worked tirelessly to provide for themselves and others without the social protection⁴ and benefits enjoyed by formal sector workers⁵. My aunts' labor narratives are the kinds of stories that are hard for people, who have lived them, to speak concretely. My mother describes my aunts as having been "quiet people," who knew well the unspoken rules about what people working informally can and cannot say. "Loose lips sink ships."⁶ (Figure 74) Within the informal labor sector, sustained employment and survival hinges upon discretion, extraordinary compromise, and silence. My mother recalls that the Ball Girls rarely spoke about what they had gone through to get where they were going.

I think that storytelling can be a method of self-expression that affords the teller personal distance. Oral histories of informal workers are important for understanding labor conditions, the public implications of those conditions, and possible economic outcomes⁷. For economic researchers and policy makers, first hand accounts of informal labor are essential yet elusive.⁸ If underground labor narratives are shared at all, they are likely shared in very private spaces amongst the safety of familiars⁹.

The working women who came before me were drawn to spiritually-driven Blues music, embedded with narrative messages that functioned for them as code, relevant to their time and

³ "Livelihood migration is human migration for coping and survival. It is defined as migration for additional work/income." Deshingkar, Priya and Start, Daniel, "Seasonal Migration for Livelihoods in India: Coping, Accumulation and Exclusion", August 2003, 2

⁴ "Live-in workers suffer greater exploitation since they are always on call and can work up to 100 hours a week! Although they are legally entitled to overtime pay, few receive it. Approximately 90% of the workers do not receive health insurance benefits, nor do their employers arrange to pay social security." Domestic Workers United and DataCenter 2006, "*HOME IS WHERE THE WORK IS: Inside New York's Domestic Work Industry*", 6

⁵ "Race and gender-based legal exclusions by the U.S. and New York state governments have shaped the domestic work industry in New York. Domestic workers have been written out of major federal and state laws that protect workers. Ninety-five percent of domestic workers in New York are people of color, and 93% are women.", Domestic Workers United and DataCenter 2006, *HOME IS WHERE THE WORK IS: Inside New York's Domestic Work Industry*, 2

⁶ "Loose Lips Sink Ships," EyeWitness to History, www.eyewitnesstohistory.com (1997).

⁷ Chen, Martha Alter, Recognizing, And Protecting Domestic Workers: Conceptual, Measurement, and Regulatory Challenges, (Canadian Journal of Women and Law on "Regulating Decent Work for Domestic Workers")/ 2010, 9-10

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Burroughs, Aver, Skype recorded interview, October 2, 2011

experience. What is the significance of music in an inner space of oral repression? Musically coded language functions as a substitute for complex personal narratives of Black life¹⁰.

Experiences of intimate space involve safety, security, vulnerability, and exposure. With music- a potential site of rebellion, embodiment, and mimicry- people can define themselves without risk of personal vulnerability, saying things that could never be said otherwise¹¹.

Intimate oral histories, in the form of narrative music, are potential containers for individual meaning¹². The listener has an opportunity to embody the song of another in the act of self-expression. I am influenced by Rhythm and Blues love songs of the 1980's and early 1990's. As a child growing up in Los Angeles during that time, I witnessed hardened hearts become increasingly in vogue. I felt that influential areas of popular entertainment aggrandized attitudes that regarded love as a soft folly. My peers began to adopt hard postures, crafting public personas that sought to appear immune to vulnerability. Love songs became a way for me to express myself and the love I felt for specific people without fully exposing myself.

In my work, the songs, poems, and other texts I use are embedded in materials that are metaphors for structure, use, value, and intimacy. I envision stories inside of functional materials of architecture that are often silent.

How does infrastructure embody what is unspoken and unseen? My daily encounters with material infrastructure triggers involuntary memories of my aunts. Sidewalks made of concrete and bricks; pipe works underground and inside walls. I am compelled to question what floors, walls, and pipes would say if they could talk. I want to see them more clearly. I want to hear more than fragmented whispers of elusive oral histories. I use these materials to tell my own tales of labor infrastructure and to fill in the blanks of my family's labor narrative history that is present in city streets today.

¹⁰ Moten, Fred, In the Break, (University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 7.

¹¹ AG McCants (writer, filmmaker) in discussion with the author. March 11, 2012.

¹² George, Nelson, The Death of Rhythm and Blues,

B. Methodology

In 2005 I moved from Los Angeles, California to New York City to complete my Fine Art undergraduate education. One significant difference in the social experience of public infrastructures of New York City and Los Angeles that I noticed was the ways people moved in the built environment of the City. Los Angeles transportation infrastructure is dominated by car culture by which millions of people move across civic and private grounds encapsulated in automobiles and public buses for work and leisure. In New York City, millions of people work, move, and play in the streets.

At times during the morning, afternoon, and evening I noticed that certain parts of town became filled with women of color with children, elderly adults, baby strollers, and wheelchairs. I observed regular flows of people especially in Manhattan crosswalks and public parks. I began to liken this time to the ocean's high tide. The women were most often of African, Caribbean, and Latin American descent and caring for children and adults of various European descents. After asking around my school community I learned that these women, numbering in the hundreds of thousands, were known as domestic workers, a common fixture of New York City social infrastructure. At specific times in certain places throughout New York City domestic workers produce daily spectacles of private labor in public space. Domestic work is often arranged informally, or under the table, in the service of private citizens who are often formally employed¹³.

Formal employment is work that is regulated and protected by the State, affording recognized workers with social safety net benefits and rights¹⁴. Labor informality is heterogeneous, often collapsed with illegality and a result of exclusion from legal employment and economic market contraction¹⁵. Informal employment is a process of income generation that is unregulated¹⁶.

¹³ Chen, Martha Alter, *Recognizing, And Protecting Domestic Workers: Conceptual, Measurement, and Regulatory Challenges*, (Canadian Journal of Women and Law on "Regulating Decent Work for Domestic Workers")/ 2010, 1

¹⁴ Castells, Manuel and Alejandro Portes, "The Informal Economy: Studies in Advanced and Less Developed Countries" *World Underneath: The Origins, Dynamics, and Effects of the Informal Economy*, pp. 11-37, edited by Alejandro Portes, et al (Baltimore : Johns Hopkins University Press Copyright 1989), 13

¹⁵ Chen, Martha Alter, *Recognizing, And Protecting Domestic Workers: Conceptual, Measurement, and Regulatory Challenges*, (Canadian Journal of Women and Law on "Regulating Decent Work for Domestic Workers") 2010, 4

¹⁶ Chen, Martha Alter, *Recognizing, And Protecting Domestic Workers: Conceptual, Measurement, and Regulatory Challenges*, (Canadian Journal of Women and Law on "Regulating Decent Work for Domestic Workers") 2010, 1

Many of the domestic workers I observed looked like me, my sisters, and my aunts. I began to wonder about the nature of their labor that is simultaneously visible and socially invisible¹⁷. These questions led me to frequent Union Square and Washington Square parks, where I watched people and produced observational drawings of moments of private labor in civic spaces.

During rush hours domestic workers are the majority of people in civic city spaces and at other times they are absolutely not there. How does civic space anticipate the regular presence of informal working women? In an effort to use my artistic practice as a vehicle to understand these daily spectacles, I began to develop early studies on domestic labor and visibility in New York City.

The studies consisted of a series of drawings and silkscreen prints entitled “Self Portrait as an Upper East Side Nanny ” (Figure 3), a series of Mad Libs¹⁸, hand written on frosted mylar, which I used to interview New Yorkers that I knew, asking them who they think these women are,¹⁹an essay entitled “A Brief Study on Caribbean Livelihood Collective Memory”, and a series of lithographs on decorative handkerchiefs²⁰ (Figure 4).

Over time I became concerned with the risk of voyeurism in these projects. I felt that my voice as a critical spectator neither affirmed the humanity of these working women nor challenged what I found to be a commonly held perception of undocumented, domestic laborers as a less valuable group moving informally amongst the legitimate citizenry. Questioning the ethics and purpose of my initial inquiry, I decided to stop making work about this complex subject until I could address these issues with more knowledge and respect.

¹⁷ Here I am referring to informal laborers being historically unprotected by labor policy and commonly ignored in public and private spaces. Ralph Ellison’s prologue in *Invisible Man*, describes the experience well: “I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination – indeed, everything and anything except me. Nor is my invisibility exactly a matter of a biochemical accident to my epidermis. That invisibility to which I refer occurs because of a peculiar disposition of the eyes of those with whom I come in contact. A matter of construction of their *inner* eyes, those eyes with which they look through their physical eyes upon reality.” (Ellison, Ralph, *Invisible Man*, Quality Paperback Book Club, 1947, 3

¹⁸ “Mad Libs”, From Wikipedia, September 5, 2012. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mad_Libs.

¹⁹ For example, “I am ___ years old. I have ___ number of siblings. I was born in _____. In my country of origin I trained and worked as a _____.”

²⁰ The handkerchiefs were lithographed with text excerpts from Domestic Workers United and DataCenter policy research document, *HOME IS WHERE THE WORK IS: Inside New York’s Domestic Work Industry*, 2006, 13

In 2009, more than a year after I began and suspended my early studies on domestic labor and visibility in New York City, I found myself in need of employment during a spring semester deferment from my undergraduate studies. I waited anxiously to hear back from managers of retail establishments with whom I had placed work applications. As I waited bills began to accumulate and I became increasingly uncertain of my ability to pay the rent for my shared apartment in Brooklyn, New York.



Figure 3 Tomashi Jackson, *Self Portrait as an Upper East Side Nanny*, 2007. Silkscreen print on gesso painted butcher paper.

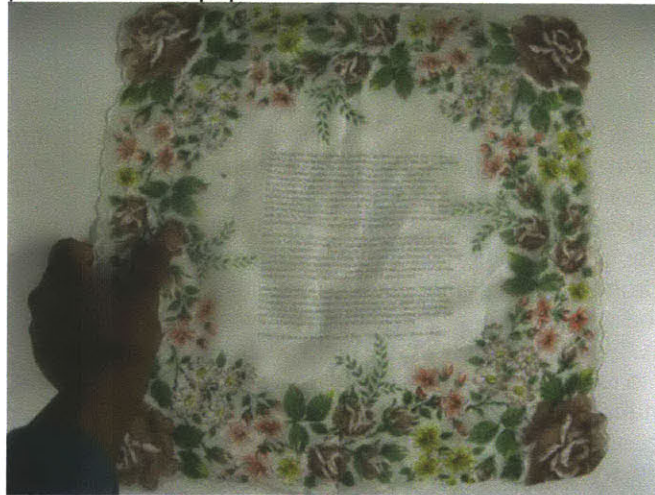


Figure 4 Tomashi Jackson, *Untitled: Handkerchiefs for Domestic Workers*, 2009. Lithograph on cotton handkerchief (Text excerpt: Home Is Where The Work Is: Inside New York's Domestic Work Industry, 2006.)²¹

²¹ “ As during the time of slavery, domestic workers are doing the household work that sustains and builds the economic strength of the U.S. Consistent with historic patterns, the domestic work industry has grown when economic disparity has increased along with the availability of workers without other viable employment options.¹¹ The informal structure

My life began to imitate my art work when I accepted a job working as a personal assistant in Manhattan. My job description eventually expanded to include nanny, babysitter, and cook. I was responsible for escorting children to and from school and tutoring appointments, preparing them for extra-curricular activities, and feeding them throughout the day. During this time I was granted an inside view of the publically visible laboring that had drawn my attention four years earlier.

The act of working, in this way, allowed me to become privy to personal narratives that my new peers would never share with anyone who was not employed in the sector. I learned about the great risk involved in domestic labor, which is absorbed primarily by the laborers who work extraordinary hours without social protection or employment security⁵.

Dehumanizing terms like alien and illegal are used often in arenas of public discourse, especially during times of global economic contraction, as citizens of cash-strapped nations look for entities to blame for widespread fiscal decline²². Historically un-naturalized foreign livelihood migrants are seen by some tax payers as a significant drain on public services, robbing unemployed and underemployed citizens of work opportunities²³. As such most informal

of the domestic work industry continues to facilitate the exploitation of domestic workers, including low wages, long hours and abusive workplaces. As in previous eras, gender, race and immigration continue to play a role in domestic work, changing only from what was once "either an immigrant woman's job or a minority woman's job to one that is now filled by women who, as Latina and Caribbean immigrants, embody subordinate status both racially and as immigrants." Neoliberalism is the dominant economic policy in the world, promoted by the U.S. At the same time, U.S. immigration policy has so far failed to offer a path to legalization for immigrants, and continues to diminish the rights of migrants and immigrants within U.S. borders while threats of deportation and detention keep workers living in fear. This reality compounds the multi-layered vulnerability of domestic workers who at the end of the day must take care of their families both in the U.S. and abroad. Domestic workers will continue to migrate in search of jobs. Their families will continue to rely on their labor for survival. Their labor will remain necessary to enable the work of professionals in the "global city." The following sections outline the abuses workers face daily on their jobs and the impact on their homes and families. Also presented are clear recommendations that can create an equitable industry for all workers. Formal recognition and basic standards are important steps toward moving the workforce out of the shadows of slavery. The dignity of the work and the value of the workforce have remained invisible for too long." (*Doméstica*, p14) Domestic Workers United & DATACENTER "HOME IS WHERE THE WORK IS: Inside New York's Domestic Work Industry", 2006, 13

²² Santos, Fernanda. "In Arizona, Immigrants Make Plans In Shadows." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 19 Apr. 2012. Web. 10 May 2012. <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/19/us/arizona-illegal-immigrants-adapt-to-a-crackdown.html>.

²³ Robertson, Campbell. "Alabama Wins in Ruling On Its Immigration Law." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 29 Sept. 2011. Web. 10 May 2012. <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/29/us/alabama-immigration-law-upheld.html>.

laborers are forced underground, taking great care to move in silence²⁴. Yet in spite of negative social perception and risk of illegality, clients maintain personal relationships with domestic workers²⁵ and continue to employ them in their private homes and businesses, allowing employers' to earn and spend more money in local and global economies²⁶.

The dramatic collapse of issues of public concern and private space, with regards to domestic workers, fascinated me. As a domestic worker, I found myself regularly occupying civic and private spaces in the name of work: crosswalks and kitchens, public parks and living rooms. During this time, I looked at the ground a lot, where I walked while working, my feet daily stepping into different worlds. Thus I became interested in the nature of social production embedded in floors²⁷. I thought about how civic and private spaces, where this intimate work is performed, are defined by characteristics of the architectural component of the ground²⁸. How does a floor articulate site specificity? Concrete, hardwood flooring, interior carpeting. Domestic labor happens on top of these surfaces.

I observed the city as a space built of work and things that are produced by people²⁹. How do labor and the laboring body define private and civic spaces³⁰? How are suppressed personal narratives of workers embedded in infrastructural materials? I am interested in accessing the nature of intimacy in specific relationships between the human and the material. I am driven to

²⁴ Washington., Randal C. Archibold; Helene Cooper And Carl Hulse Contributed Reporting From. "ARIZONA ENACTS STRINGENT LAW ON IMMIGRATION." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 24 Apr. 2010. Web. 10 May 2012. <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/24/us/politics/24immig.html>.

²⁵ Chen, Martha Alter, Recognizing, And Protecting Domestic Workers: Conceptual, Measurement, and Regulatory Challenges, (Canadian Journal of Women and Law on "Regulating Decent Work for Domestic Workers")/ 2010, 5

²⁶ Domestic Workers United and DataCenter 2006, *HOME IS WHERE THE WORK IS: Inside New York's Domestic Work Industry*,11

²⁷ By this I mean the ground or floor as an architectural component that defines space through its construction and use. Here I am referring to LeFebvre's description of spatial code found in the books of Vitruvius. There he describes "a complete alphabet and lexicon of spatial elements, a grammar and syntax describing the combining of spatial components, and a style manual for aesthetic recommendations concerning orders and proportions." Lefebvre, Henri, *The Production of Space*,(Blackwell, 1991), 270

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ "Humanity, which is to say social practice, creates works and produces things. In either case labor (and by the creator qua labourer) seems secondary, whereas in the manufacture of products it predominates²⁹." (Lefebvre, Henri, *The Production of Space*,(Blackwell, 1991), 71.

³⁰ In the chapter titled: SOCIAL SPACE, Lefebvre asserts that "space is the outcome of a sequence and a set operations, and thus cannot be reduced to the rank of a simple object." He goes on describe a city as space that is "fashioned, shaped, and invested by social activities" He asks, "Is the city a work or a product?" (Lefebvre, Henri, *The Production of Space*,(Blackwell, 1991), 71.

question the links between labor informality, intimacy, and civic space. I have been confronted by the significance of transparency and the failure of sound. My concerns arise from experiences of the “seen” and the “heard” influenced by music, art history, contemporary art, and my personal lineage of silenced labor narratives.

As a Graduate Candidate in the MIT Program in Art, Culture, and Technology I have examined the nature of intimacy, labor narrative, and infrastructural materiality in depth. I have used two dimensional collage, video collage, sculpture installation, performance, public intervention, drawing, sound, writing, and scent as my methods of participatory inquiry. Beginning with the 2011 two dimensional collage made from two paintings of domestic workers in public space by Dutch Genres painter Pieter De Hooch (Figure 5). My work investigates informal labor narratives in the built environment. The layers of meaning I examine are the very layers that many of us have been trained not to acknowledge, be we laborers, labor beneficiaries, or descendants.



Figure 5 Tomashi Jackson, *Untitled: De Hooch Collage*, 2011.
Collaged black and white laser print

C. Visualizing Labor Economic Theory and Policy

“Labour represents the productive energy of human beings and labour markets, broadly defined, represent the institutions that channel this energy throughout society. Therefore, labour and labour markets are of paramount importance to the functioning of any economy. Yet, the theories that dominate the formulation of economic policies reflect an imagined world that bears little resemblance to employment dynamics on the ground. The consequences of this elaborate fiction are not trivial. The ways in which labour markets are conceptualized determines, to no small extent, the outcomes predicted by macroeconomic models, the perceived scope for social protection, and the potential for purposeful interventions to improve material wellbeing.”³¹

James Heintz, Associate Director of the Political Economy Research Institute University of Massachusetts Amherst

The Informal Economy is the diversified set of jobs that are not regulated or protected by the State³². While it is known that underground employment exists in the U.S., there is a lack of consensus regarding the size and significance of the sector³³. We know that 8,385,798 workers (6% of the labor force) in the United States of America are unpaid family and self employed in non incorporated businesses.³⁴ From 2008 to 2010 there were 7.5 million fewer full time, year round workers and 2.6 million more workers reporting having worked less than full time year round.³⁵

We also know that a link exists between poverty, underemployment and informal work arrangements. While 65% of people, families, and households that lived in areas with poverty rates less than 13.8%, worked full time, year round, during 2006-2010, only 32.7% worked less

³¹ Heintz, James, “Revisiting Labour Markets: Implications for Macroeconomics and Social Protection” Institute of Development Studies Bulletin Volume 39 Number 2 May 2008

³² The conceptual history of the Informal Economy begins in the 1950s-1960s when the widely held notion that was that industrialization would lead to the demise of casual informal labor Chen, Martha Alter, Lecture on Informal Economies, Harvard John F. Kennedy School of Government, September 12, 2011.

³³ Chen, Martha Alter, Lecture on Informal Economies, Harvard John F. Kennedy School of Government, September 12, 2011.

³⁴ Industry by class of worker for the civilian employed population 16 years and over table American Community Survey, 2010

³⁵ Blumenthal, Laura F. and Brault, Matthew W. Health /insurance Coverage of Workers Aged 18-64, by Work Experience: 2008 and 2010

than full time, year round; additionally, of the people, families, and households that lived in areas with poverty rates over 40%, 45.9% worked less than full time, year round during 2006-2010.³⁶

Reality is shaped by global systems that are influenced by schools of thought on economic development and labor market theory³⁷. The theories that influence public policy are often based on economic models with a narrow application and set of assumptions³⁸. The most influential economic models have been neo-classical³⁹ (impacted by the theoretical practices of economists John Maynard Keynes and W. Arthur Lewis) and primarily concerned with distinctions between supply and demand that benefits formal economic institutions⁴⁰. The neo-classical approach assumes labor markets are competitive, efficient, and not subject to significant failures⁴¹. The formal labor market contains regulatory and institutional rigidities that create surplus labor⁴². Surplus labor leads to unemployment, underemployment, informal employment, and subsistence activities⁴³. Such activities are often associated with illegal behavior and yet the very real need for wage earning labor ultimately justifies participation⁴⁴.

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ Heintz, James, Lecture on Informal Economies, Harvard John F. Kennedy School of Government, October 3, 2011.

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ Neo-classicists are people who subscribe to the neo-classical school of economic theory which prioritizes profit maximization and insists that markets are efficient and self correcting.

⁴⁰ Chen, Martha Alter, Lecture on Informal Economies, Harvard John F. Kennedy School of Government, September 12, 2011.

⁴¹ Heintz, James, Lecture on Informal Economies, Harvard John F. Kennedy School of Government, October 3, 2011.

⁴² de Soto, Hernando The Other Path: The Answer To Economic Terrorism, New York: Basic Books [Persus] Copyright 1989, 158.

⁴³ Hart, Keith, *Informal Income Opportunities and Urban Employment in Ghana*, The Journal of Modern African Studies, Vol. 11, No. 1 (Mar., 1973), pp. 61-89

⁴⁴ de Soto, Hernando The Other Path: The Answer To Economic Terrorism, New York: Basic Books [Persus] Copyright 1989, 151



Figure 6 Gregory P. Mango, Domestic worker Briget Mitchell (far left) near Park Slope, Brooklyn, New York, 2010.

Neo-classicists urge that deregulating formal economic sectors will improve the welfare and well-being of workers⁴⁵. The neo-classical model insists that workers are indifferent to job loss when markets are deregulated and social protections, such as health care and social security, are undone⁴⁶. However, what the neo-classicists miss is that in reality, our identities as human beings are defined by the work in which we invest ourselves. It is also costly for workers to find new employment⁴⁷. The threat of labor insecurity affords employers leverage in working relationships⁴⁸. As structuralist economist James Heintz points out, “employment is a channel of human development. Personal identity, purpose and societal contribution are all wrapped up inside of one’s labor.”⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Heintz, James, Lecture on Informal Economies, John F. Kennedy School of Government, October 3, 2011

⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷ Ibid

⁴⁸ Ibid

⁴⁹ Heintz, James, Lecture on Informal Economies, Harvard John F. Kennedy School of Government, October 3, 2011.

The contemporary structuralist school of thought asserts that there is a need for an integrated holistic theory that reflects the reality of informal employment, its characteristics, and its causes. This school of thought addresses the imbalances of informal employment relationships and their linkage to exploitative working conditions⁵⁰. Solutions to employment problems can be found outside of the labor market in realms of infrastructure, education, microeconomics, and human development⁵¹. Meaningful changes in macroeconomic and social policies are possible through purposeful interventions born of the radical rethinking and re-envisioning of labor infrastructure that is seen and unseen.⁵²

⁵⁰ Chen, Martha Alter, "Recognizing and Protecting Domestic Workers: Conceptual, Measurement, And Regulatory Challenges", 2010, 5

⁵¹ Heintz, James, Lecture on Informal Economies, Harvard John F. Kennedy School of Government, October 3, 2011.

⁵² Ibid

D. Art Historic Depictions of Labor, Domesticity, and Civic Space

Historically, some visual artists have conceptualized labor invisibility, working-class people, and social tensions, depicting labor as an integral part of societal infrastructure as figures transform environments in the act of working. I am interested in artistic works that are sites for the reconsideration of labor relationships. Painting and sculpture have been areas of production used by some artists to build imagery informed by the realities of the urban and rural worlds around them. Art works that have been especially influential in my exploration of images of labor are those of 17th Century painter Pieter De Hooch whom is well-known for his paintings of domestic themes⁵³. The artist himself is believed to have been employed in a domestic capacity. De Hooch is recorded as a servant of a Delft linen merchant in a document dated May 28, 1653⁵⁴. Scholars postulate that the surviving documents of the contractual relationship between the linen merchant and the artist indicate that De Hooch received room and board in exchange for his paintings⁵⁵.

At the time it was not uncommon for young painters to need to support themselves through other occupations⁵⁶. It is possible that De Hooch's relationship with the linen merchant influenced his decision to depict servants frequently in his art and his choice of symbolism⁵⁷(Figure 7). De Hooch's paintings of domestic labor showcase figures and the built environments they occupied in the act of working in the Netherlands of his time. Unlike many seventeenth-century Dutch paintings of family scenes and employed servants, De Hooch's visual narratives contradicted the ideal visions of master/servant relationships that portrayed largely fictitious archetypes of working people on the ground⁵⁸. His works are filled with coded

⁵³ Franits, Wayne E., "The depiction of servants in some paintings by Pieter De Hooch", *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 52. Bd., H. 4 (1989):559 accessed February 10, 2011, doi: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1482471>.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*

⁵⁵ *Ibid*

⁵⁶ *Ibid*

⁵⁷ Wayne E. Franits, "The depiction of servants in some paintings by Pieter De Hooch", *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 52. Bd., H. 4 (1989):561 accessed February 10, 2011, doi: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1482471>.

⁵⁸ Franits, Wayne E., "The depiction of servants in some paintings by Pieter De Hooch", *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 52. Bd., H. 4 (1989):562 accessed February 10, 2011, doi: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1482471>.

symbolic language embedded in the architecture and figures that urge the viewer to reconsider accepted notions of the domestic worker's place in contemporary social frameworks⁵⁹.



Figure 7 Pieter De Hooch, The Courtyard of a House in Delft, 1658

Considered radical during their time Realist Movement painters also sought to visualize and document contemporary images of laboring figures⁶⁰. Early French collectors of Realist works saw them as historic objects that preserved and recorded artistic documentation of working life⁶¹. The choice of the image of the peasant to embody contemporary labor was a function of the Realist myth⁶². The habits and customs of the working-class peasantry in Europe were recognized as part of a vanishing reality⁶³. Laboring bodies were re-envisioned as heroic in civic and rural spaces by figurative painters Jean-François Millet, Gustave Courbet, and Gustave Caillebotte when distinctions between rural and urban labor were not clear cut in the art and literature of the time⁶⁴. Writers, philosophers, and artists of the time began to connect the peasant with “the very soil he coveted and cultivated “through the use of metaphor⁶⁵.

⁵⁹ Ibid

⁶⁰ Nochlin, Linda, Realism, (Pelican Books, 1971), 23

⁶¹ Nochlin, Linda, Realism, (Pelican Books, 1971), 115

⁶² Ibid

⁶³ Ibid

⁶⁴ Nochlin, Linda, Realism, (Pelican Books, 1971), 114

⁶⁵ Nochlin, Linda, Realism, (Pelican Books, 1971), 115

“Yet it was not until the 1848 Revolution which raised the dignity of labour to official status and the gradeur of le people to an article of faith, that artists turned to a serious and consistent confrontation of the life of the poor and humble: to the depiction of work and its concrete setting as a major subject for art – as a possible subject even for an artistic masterpiece on a monumental scale. For the 1848 Revolution had raised the issue of labour as a major issue for the first time. The right to work became a crucial question. The working man played a prominent role in the revolutionary festivals of the new regime, the popular revolutionary form of address becoming ‘labourer’ rather than ‘citizen’.

Linda Nochlin, Realism, (Pelican Books, 1971), 112.

Gustave Courbet is considered the leader of the Realist movement and his painting of *The Stone-breakers* is considered the most graphically direct image of contemporary work in the entire history of art⁶⁶. The depiction of the stone-breakers focuses on the explicit articulation of two bent and swiveling bodies and the objects of their labor as the compositional subjects. The figures and their tools push to the edges of the frame as the scale asserts their monumentality (Figure 8). The painting of the frozen figures depicts the presence of the laborers and the action of their manual labor⁶⁷.



Figure 8 Gustave Courbet, *The Stone Breakers*, 1849-1850,

⁶⁶ Nochlin, Linda, Realism, (Pelican Books, 1971), 117

⁶⁷ Clark, T.J., Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution, (University of California Press, 1973), 79

In contrast, the composition of Jean-François Millet's *The Gleaners* (Figure 9) addresses not only the laboring bodies but the nature of the workers' bodies' relationship to a traditionally romantic countryside farm landscape. Millet's depiction describes not only the figures bent over in the act labor but a panorama of the space that surrounds them; the site of their working that defines the identity of the bodies in the painting's foreground. Like in De Hooch's painting, *Courtyard of a House in Delft*, illustrated space is defined by figures and the nature of their labor while the figures are simultaneously defined by the nature of the environment they occupy.

These artists link human labor to the ground as the site of work and cultivation. While Millet depicts the land and sky in his observation of *The Gleaners* (Figure 9), both he and Courbet highlight the ground upon which their laborers kneel and toil as a significant site of activity. The illustrated earth is the foundation of their compositions. Similarly Gustave Caillebotte's painting of *The Floor-Scrappers* links the working activity of depicted figures to the floor, an interior space (Figure 10).

The eighteenth-century ushered in an era of urbanization. Artistic practices of the time reflected the time sought to embrace and aggrandize working-class narratives. After the fall of the Paris Commune the identities of regular people and the work duties in their everyday functions began to appear on a stage formerly reserved exclusively for kings, nobles, diplomats and heroes⁶⁸. Art historian Linda Nochlin reflects upon G.H. Lewes' 1858 words on *Realism in Art* in this passage from her text, Realism, published in 1971:

"Realism is...the basis of all Art, and its antithesis is not Idealism, but Falsism. When our painters represent peasants with regular features and irreproachable linen; when their milkmaids have the air of Keepsake beauties, whose costume is picturesque, and never old or dirty; when Hodge is made to speak refined sentiments in unexceptionable English, and children utter long speeches of religious and poetic enthusiasm;...an attempt is made to idealize, but the result is simply falsification and bad art...Either give us true peasants, or leave them untouched; either keep your people silent, or make them speak the idiom of their class."

⁶⁸ Nochlin, Linda, Realism, (Pelican Books, 1971), 23



Figure 9 Jean-François Millet, *The Gleaners*, 1857



Figure 10 Gustave Caillebotte, *The Floor-Scrapers*, 1875,

Labor is an essential component of human identity, defining purpose and relatedness to surrounding environments. In this way laboring bodies communicate with the world. Laboring bodies transform spaces and are altered by the requirements of labor. *The Stone Breakers*, *The Gleaners* and *The Floor-Scrapers* show working figures activating rural and architectural spaces suggesting repetitive movement. Each of these works portrays bodies in their frames, bent over addressing the floor with their hands and tools. The interaction between the figures and the floors activates the pictorial space with labor, construction, and maintenance. The

ground comes alive as the figures and the space create a closed system of reflective signification⁶⁹. The figures give significance to the floor through the nature of their laboring and the floors define the purpose of the figures.

My work interest in laboring figures and the floor is informed by historic art works of the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. The artists I have referenced were responding to social shifts brought about by labor industrialization and spatial urbanization. From the 1960s to the present, contemporary artists have used languages of human labor and definitions space by addressing the significance of the floor. The floor has arisen as a site of activity for performing artists and viewers observing installed works.

Henri Lefebvre describes spatial language as having been informed by the European sixteenth century decline of the countryside⁷⁰. At this time the economic growth and increased social significance of the town led to new shared concepts of spatial representation⁷¹. Cultural definitions became more linked to the materiality that defined private and publicly accessible planned spaces. Artists have continued to utilize spatial syntax in painting and sculpture to critique and re-envision urbanized materiality and the languages of identity attached to their practical use to illuminate deeper meaning.

Artists of the twentieth-century have continued to explore identities associated with urban space and labor. In 1973 artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles washed the steps of the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford Connecticut in her performance work, *Hartford Wash: Washing, Tracks, Maintenance:Outside*, 1973 (Figure 11) For Ukeles maintenance was not domestic labor, or housework, as such labor is not confined solely to the spaces of domesticity⁷². In *Hartford Wash: Washing Tracks, Maintenance Inside* the artist scrubbed and mopped the floor of the museum for four hours. In *Hartford Wash: Washing Tracks, Maintenance Outside*, she cleaned the exterior plaza and steps of the museum. She referred to these activities as "floor paintings."⁷³

⁶⁹ Lefebvre, Henri, The Production of Space, (Blackwell Publishers, 1974), 270

⁷⁰ Lefebvre, Henri, The Production of Space, (Blackwell Publishers, 1974), 268

⁷¹ Lefebvre, Henri, The Production of Space, (Blackwell Publishers, 1974), 269

⁷² Molesworth, Helen, "House Work and Art Work", *October*, Vol. 92 (Spring, 2000), pp. 71-97, The MIT Press, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/779234>.

⁷³ *Ibid*



Figure 11 Mierle L. Ukeles *Hartford Wash: Washing, Tracks, Maintenance:Outside*, 1973, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, CT, part of Maintenance Art Performance Series, 1973-74.

Hans Haacke is another twentieth-century artist who has addressed the floor as a site for historic narrative. His 1993 Venice Biennale temporary installation, *GERMANIA*, presented viewers with the broken apart floor of the German pavilion. (Figure 12) The pavilion's façade read "GERMANIA", referring to the name Adolph Hitler had envisioned for a radically new post-victory Nazi Berlin.⁷⁴ In this work a specific historic narrative is suggested through the treatment of a site specific floor.

⁷⁴ Haacke, Hans, *For Real: Works 1959-2006*, Akademie Der Kunste, 2007, 210



Figure 12 Hans Haacke, *GERMANIA*, 1993, Photo: Roman Mensing

Glenn Ligon's *To Disembark* uses sculpture as a container for embedded complex personal narrative (Figure 13). The sculptures project subdued sound, urging the viewers to prostrate and draw close to the objects in order to hear and interpret the coded noises. The installation refers to the story of Henry "Box" Brown, a Richmond slave who shipped himself "in a box 3 feet long, 2-1/2 ft. deep, and 2 ft. wide" to the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society in Philadelphia. A lithograph from Brown's 1849 memoir captures the moment of Brown's unpacking, with a variety of figures including noted abolitionist Frederick Douglass looking on⁷⁵. After learning about the story from the aforementioned lithograph, Ligon "became fascinated with the idea of this box as the container for the body, but also the idea that if he had spoken, it would have been the thing that would have given him away,"⁷⁶ The first thing Brown did when he was released from his crate, was sing. Ligon's boxes are filled with voices, many of which are singing.⁷⁷ Ligon uses musical selections by Billie Holliday and KRS-1 to bring Brown's

⁷⁵ *Encyclopedia Virginia*

http://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/media_player?mets_filename=evm00000229mets.xml.

⁷⁶ Interview with Glenn Ligon, NPR. "Glenn Ligon Reframes History In The Art Of 'America'" *NPR*. NPR, 08 May 2011. <http://www.npr.org/2011/05/08/136022514/glenn-ligon-reframes-history-in-the-art-of-america>.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*

historic narrative into the present offering a critique of his own socio-political surroundings, the United States of the 1980s and 1990s.

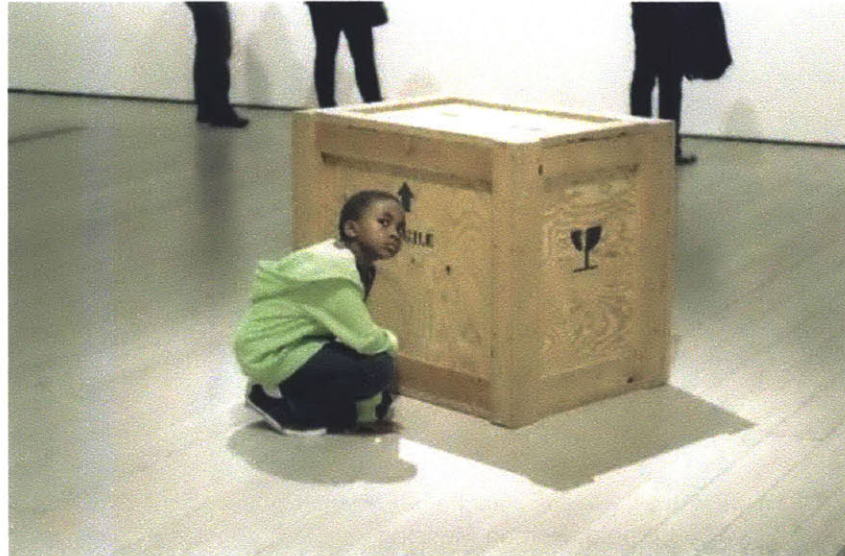


Figure 13 Glenn Ligon, *To Disembark*, 1993-1994 (Image source unknown)

Sam Durant's *Partially Buried 1960s/70s Dystopia Revealed (Mick Jagger at Altamont) & Utopia Reflected (Wavy Gravy at Woodstock)*, 1998 uses the interior gallery floor as a site of consideration (Figure 14). His temporary installation at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago references Robert Smithson's *Partially Buried Woodshed*, completed in 1970 (Figure 68). Smithson's work became an unofficial memorial to the four Kent State students killed by the National Guard that year⁷⁸.

⁷⁸ Weinberg, Lauren, "Review> Smithson, Daughter & Son", *The Architect's Newspaper*, May 21, 2010 <http://archpaper.com/news/articles.asp?id=4540>.

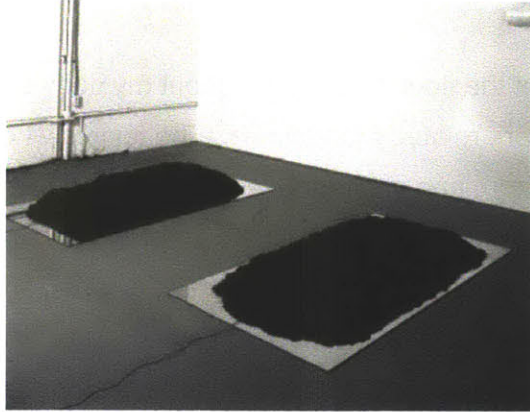


Figure 14 Sam Durant, *Partially Buried 1960s/70s Dystopia Revealed (Mick Jagger at Altamont) & Utopia Reflected (Wavy Gravy at Woodstock)*, 1998

This history influences Durant's *Partially Buried 1960s/70s Dystopia Revealed (Mick Jagger at Altamont) and Utopia Reflected (Wavy Gravy at Woodstock)*⁷⁹. Two speakers are buried under two piles of soil. One plays a recording of peace activist Wavy Gravy speaking at Woodstock and the other projects Mick Jagger's pleas to the audience for calm at Altamont before the Woodstock concert degenerated into fatal violence⁸⁰. The two men's voices coming from the dirt mounds blur into incoherent shouting⁸¹. In this work, the floor as a site of historic reference is contained inside of sculpture and sound.

⁷⁹ Ibid

⁸⁰ Ibid

⁸¹ Ibid

E. The Inquiry of My Work

The architectural component of the floor recurs throughout my body of work as a signifier of personal, familial, civic, and work related foundations. The floor is where I walk, with others, and alone. The use of pipes, iron, and copper, also arises repeatedly, as a reference to how buildings and urban spaces work on the inside. In the projects described in the next section of this thesis, I examine the simultaneously invisible, visibility, audible, and inaudible natures of intimate expression through themes of labor, materiality, and song. The projects build a space in which perceptions of the value of intimacy can be reconsidered through experiencing the work.

I am a fourth generation descendant of livelihood migrants. My family's generational history exists primarily as oral history, photographs, and objects (many pots and pans) that have survived. Filmmaker Kodwo Eshun once described the experience of the shared history of the African Diaspora as something like "inheriting the absence of ruins"⁸². He explained to me that crucial representations of personal histories of love and labor, shaped by working class themes of Black life, are largely missing from our official memory- as individuals, communities, and nations. Instead, some descendants of Black labor migrants are left with fragmented oral narratives with which to construct identity and cultural memory. Barely visible and audible in public and private spaces of human exchange, these narratives can be culturally definitive. Failure to recognize the value of empirical reflections, regarding intimate labor histories, can lead to socially distorted reproductions of cultural memory and labor market visualization. These distortions ultimately make silenced working class narratives normalized.

To address my relationship to barely audible narratives of personal infrastructure, I have looked inward, using popular music to express deep emotion and affection. I chose the love songs I use in the works *Sound Drawing* (Figure 37) (Figure 63) (Figure 64), *You Work A Lot You Never Stop To Love* (Figure 42) (Figure 65), *Untitled: Mem Drive* (Figure 48) (Figure 66), *Untitled: Slow Jam* (Figure 55) (Figure 63) (Figure 66), and *Plain Citations: Teller* (**Error! Reference source not found.**) (Figure 67) as meaningful capsules of intimate memories of my youth growing up in the 1980s and early 1990s. During that time these ballads were common favorites amongst my matriarchs and close friends, as these slow jams⁸³ were in regular rotation

⁸² Conversation with Kodwo Eshun, Cambridge, MA, Winter 2011

⁸³ A **slow jam** is an umbrella term for music with R&B and Soul influences. Slow jams are commonly R&B ballads or down tempo songs. The term is most commonly reserved for soft-sounding songs with heavily

on R&B radio stations . We sang these songs together and to each other. In my pieces I bury these songs into infrastructural materials, I sing along to them aloud with familiars, and lip synch in silence in my video compositions (Figure 15). I am reminded of Ralph Ellison's description of his protagonist's experience of Lois Armstrong's "What Did I Do To Be So Black and Blue" in the novel, Invisible Man:

"Perhaps I like Louis Armstrong because he's made poetry out of being invisible. I think it must be because he's unaware that he is invisible. And my own grasp of invisibility aids me to understand his music. Invisibility, let me explain, gives one a slightly different sense of time, you're never quite on the beat. Sometimes you're ahead and sometimes behind. Instead of the swift and imperceptible flowing of time, you are aware of its nodes, those points where time stands still or from which it leaps ahead. And you slip into the breaks and look around. That's what you hear vaguely in Louis' music. I discovered a new analytical way of listening to music. The unheard sounds came through, and each melodic line existed of itself, stood out clearly from all the rest, said its piece, and waited patiently for the other voices to speak. That night I found myself hearing not only in time, but in space as well. I not only entered the music but descended, like Dante, into its depths."⁸⁴

The intimacy involved in domestic work is visible in public scenes of care and personal maintenance. Like ocean tides and flows of capital, informal laborers can be seen as they move through and transform city streets, crosswalks and public parks in urban environments like New York City. The physical presence of domestic workers transforms the built environment with intimate moments of domesticity while passing through the hard and looming state of the city. Domestic laborers at work in civic space bring with them traces of intimate interior spaces. The visual language produced by this labor paints itself onto civic infrastructural space and onto me. It is in civic space that I see relationships between people and infrastructure become poetic and intimate. In this space of relation sound is uncertain, fragmented, and irregular -often failing. In this space of relation, silence often succeeds and dominates communication.

emotional or romantic lyrical content. This definition has led to intense debate over whether particular songs should be classified as a "slow jam", e.g. Ginuwine's 1996 hit single "Pony". The common use and possible origin of this term traces back to 1983 when Solar Records group Midnight Star recorded the song "Slow Jam" on their album *No Parking on the Dance Floor*. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slow_jam.

⁸⁴ Ellison, Ralph, Invisible Man, Quality Paperback Book Club, 1947, 6-7



Figure 15 Tomashi Jackson, *Untitled: Mem Drive*, 2011. Video Collage. Detail (of lip synching)

F. Project Descriptions

1. Untitled: Labor Translation

Untitled: Labor Translation is a video collage made from a Skype recorded conversation between my mother, Aver Burroughs and myself. The videos are composed from two separate Skype recorded interviews from October of 2011. The video collage examines the layered and fragmented nature of the oral history of on the working life of the late Jackylen Ball. Ball's informal labor narrative began with her birth near Dallas, Texas in 1915. The audio describes Jackylen Ball's relationship to the spaces in which she lived and worked from agricultural fields to domestic interiors. The failure of the technology produced irregular video and audio lapses and pauses throughout the recording. The layered treatment of the sound component illustrates the inaudibility of a complex story in which multiple generations are implicated.

As a teenaged girl in the 1960s Burroughs worked alongside her aunts Jackylen and Olivia Ball working as a young domestic laborer in Los Angeles, CA (Figures 16 &17). The narrative is drawn from Burroughs' memory as she grapples with her responsibility to recall scenes from her childhood during the turbulent 1950's and 60's in the United States. The imagery of our two figures in the split screen video begins small and dark. The images become lager and brighter through a rhythmic stacking of image and sound, as history becomes illuminated through Burroughs' translation of a long lost past of livelihood migration from Texas to California. The discussion is transcribed below.



Figure 16 L. Aver Burroughs, aged 16, 1969. R. Left to right: Unknown local farmer, Olivia Ball, unknown youth, and Jackylen Ball, Los Angeles, CA. circa 1969-1971



Figure 17 Olivia Ball, domestic worker at work in Los Angeles, CA. circa 1969



Figure 18 Tomashi Jackson and Aver Burroughs, Skype recorded interview, 10/4/2011

Tomashi: *Um, domestic workers are those who work in homes of others for pay, providing a range of domestic services. They sweep and clean, wash clothes and dishes, shop and cook, care for children or the elderly, sick and disabled, or provide gardening, driving and security services. Domestic work is an important occupation, involving a significant, and at least, in some countries and regions, growing proportion of the workforce worldwide. Domestic work is mostly, but not exclusively, performed by women, many of whom are migrants. Female domestic workers are concentrated in cleaning and care services, while male domestic workers tend to have better paid jobs as gardeners, drivers and security officers. All right, um, so who is Jackylen Ball Reynolds?*

Aver: *Have you stopped speaking? Ok, that, security guard was the last statement? I mean the last word?*

Tomashi: *Who is Jackylen? Who was Jackylen Ball?*

Aver: Jackylen Ball was my um aunt. You want me to elaborate on that?

Tomashi: *Mm-hmm*

Aver: She was born in um Texas.

Tomashi: *Um, where was she born?*

Aver: I would say White Rock in the year 1915.

Tomashi: *Um, what was her relationship to labor? Uh, what did she do? How was she compensated?*

Aver: I'm sure she probably started working at the age.

Tomashi: *Or maybe, I should say how old do you think she was when started working?*

Aver: Probably six or seven years old. Um, at that time, uh, they had a farm. Their parents had a farm and they had a lot of uh children. And um often times, they worked um they worked their farm to um maintain the (*hard to hear*). That's the land that they bought, because I remember them selling it, so it was land that they owned, um, in White Rock. Because that's where we went to the home, homestead. -Yeah, went there in 1960..I think 1967. Um, my mother uh took us to Texas.

Tomashi: *You went there?*

Aver: Um, she was moving to Texas, and um, she took us to the home, the homestead where they were raised. Yeah, she took us to it. And, it was beautiful land. And then, then she showed us the bottomland, the parts that they had sold off to the uh, yeah, but yeah, she took us there, well on land and everything, there was no physical structure, no physical structure was left, but the um, the land was there.

Tomashi: *Wow*

Aver: Well at that point, she probably, she had probably helped in the house.

Tomashi: *So you said she started working when she was six.*

Aver: Let's see, 1916.

Tomashi: *Um, what did she do?*

Aver: When did the stock market crash? The stock market crashed in '29? So, she basically, (*hard to hear*) when she was probably six or seven years old, she was probably helping around the house. It changed, um, when the uh stock market crashed (*hard to hear*) Uh. So, let's, let's see 1915. She was born in 1915 and when did..? Then the stock market crashed.

Tomashi: *How did it change? What'd she do then?*

Aver: So at what age would she be? Let's see. So in 1929 she was probably.

Tomashi: (*hard to hear*) *So you were saying, uh, what sort of work did she do when she started, when she was 14?*

Aver: I'm sure, yeah; I'm sure the fields, um, with their brothers and siblings... Cause their, um, they worked and picked cotton, uh, like sharecroppers, and in order to earn rent, and cause, I was telling you, he was (*hard to hear*) and she was nine years old. Uh, cause she uh, she had heatstroke.

Tomashi: *Were these, was this on their land?*

Aver: What's the question? Yeah.

Tomashi: *Mm-hmm*

Aver: Yeah, this is a bad connection.

Tomashi: *Hold on a second. Okay? How many siblings did she have?*

Aver: Um...seven of them. It was seven brothers and six girls.

Tomashi: *Uh, from what they told you in that part of Texas? What part of Texas is this anyway? Where's White Rock?*

Aver: Uh, White Rock is Dallas, Texas. Um...uh...racism and stuff was still prevalent at that time, in 1915, um, they were only, probably, the second generation, or maybe the second or third generation to *hard to hear* slave, slavery. So, um, they had good, um, white people, you know, and they had mean ones, who, who um called them little nigger girls and tried to put their hands on them. All that still happened while they were kids. Fortunately, they, um, they did have older brothers. Um, but once the Depression hit, the older brothers left looking for work. They left the farm. Even their father, my grandfather Henry Ball, um, left for work. Um. (*hard to hear*) her mother, um fell dead (*hard to hear*) in her arms when she was about (*hard to hear*) years old. And she caught her but, and she probably had a massive heart attack and, uh, um, back then. So um, my grandfather and all the boys had left the farm, looking for work, and um my aunt, my um aunt at the time, who was probably 14 years old or younger. I think it must be before '29, before the, I thought she said she was like, um, uh, eight, nine

years old and um (*hard to hear*) the farm, and she ended up raising her sisters and trying to make sure they ate while um, um, dad, my grandfather, was uh looking for work. Um, at that time, they would leave their kids at home (*hard to hear*) and go look for work and the oldest child would be responsible for the rest of the kids. And um, they went down to the railroad tracks and stay there and wait at the trains going by and they threw a coal out of the uh trains, they would bring the coal home and uh...

Tomashi: *Mm-hmm.*

Aver: (*hard to hear*) keep the house warm. Um. And uh, she would try work, or try to work (*hard to hear*) to uh get food for them. Which was uh,..which was very difficult during those times. Their farm just went down (*hard to hear*) cause everybody left. Another question? Um, in the late 30s and early 40s, um at this point, my mother was about, oh I don't know...

Tomashi: Yes.

Aver: Twenty-something or something like that.

Tomashi: *When did she relocate? When did she decide to leave?*

Aver: (*hard to hear*) California. She had, um, told her sisters where she was and um, they came to, uh San Francisco. So that would probably be the late 30s, that they all came to uh California, you know, met up in San Francisco and um...they were domestics, they were domestic servants at that point. They would do housekeeping work..., my mother came and she um, um notified her sisters and, and sent for her sisters and they all came to San Francisco.

Tomashi: *How many?*

A: Where they be... they were called the Ball girls and that time and it was (*hard to hear*) sisters. Um...Hattie, Dorothy, Ethelene and Olivia

Tomashi: *Mm-hmm*

Aver: And so they all came to uh, um San Francisco. and worked domestics. Um, Jacky being the oldest and she was a very good cook. She got a job and so did Olivia, um, and uh I don't, I'm not sure about Dorothy though,. I don't know if she worked as a domestic or not. if she, uh, chose a different lifestyle. Uh...(hard to hear) It would pay weekly, like uh, two, two...(hard to hear)

Tomashi: *Um. How were they compensated?*

Aver: Two dollars a week was um really good for a domestic at that time. So, you know...my aunts, my two aunts worked for the Spragues, um, in Los Angeles. Um, Jean Warner Sprague's father, is the one who invented this patent, that goes on...uh...her father invented uh, something that goes on top of the car, (*hard to hear*). She married this guy named Robert Sprague, who was like an

investment banker or something like that. And so my aunt, both of my aunts worked for them, one the upstairs maid and one was the downstairs maid. And every now and then, they would have a um, they would have (*hard to hear*) parties. And um, the first time I came to help them, I think I was uh fourteen, and at that time I was becoming militant (laughs). I was becoming more politically active. So (*hard to hear*) asked me to come work for her. I needed the money but I hated doing it. Because, um (*hard to hear*). You know I kind of looked at them as a, uh, but not, um house niggers, sheer stupidity. And I, you know that was the development of the Black Power Movement at that time. I started working for them when I was fourteen. She would call me and I would go help them, um, get ready for a party or um, or babysit Lois's uh...kids. So um... I felt that they were looking down on us, you know, um...

Tomashi: *You worked for them?*

Aver: Yes. (*hard to hear*) I would also babysit their, um, baby. Um, and (*hard to hear*) they asked me how much money I wanted per hour. And, after I told them, at that time, it was (*hard to hear*) five dollars an hour. And that really didn't like having to pay me five dollars an hour. Which was like, um, if they're gonna pay five dollars an hour how much money is that? It's not that much money! But if (*hard to hear*) it's like five or six dollars. Shit. Anyway. So I charged them (*hard to hear*). I'm not kidding. When I think about it, they didn't, you know, although...they were very rich. And um, they got mad because I charged them five an hour. At that time, we were making like uh, um \$1.25 an hour. That's what um, (*hard to hear*) was paying. I charged them (*hard to hear*) five an hour. They didn't like it. Too bad. Don't call me.

Tomashi: *Were there other barriers to employment at that time? That you...that you saw? Was it hard to get work that wasn't like that?*

Aver: They had jobs and stuff that kids could get for the summer and stuff like that. So she was one of those people who was hired to do that and she made \$1.25 and I, I worked with this a guy, um, he cleaned, uh, had a maintenance business in cleaning.

Tomashi: *How old were you?*

Aver: Being exposed to other forms of employment took a minute to um, uh, understand, for the average person. They worked as domestics with like, um a seventh and eighth grade education. So they, they um, didn't realize that opportunities were different for me. And they didn't know about uh suggesting um better employment to us. This was like 1967. I couldn't work until I was 16, so that puts me at...had to be 1965, '66. Yeah, 1966. Um, I couldn't work and get a uh, I couldn't get a works card until I was 16 and they came to your school and your parents signed it, and then you could sign up for all different summer programs. And that's how we got that domestic... Um, you worked as a domestic until you able to get work at 16 through your school. Um, you get the work permit, and then um able to get uh jobs other than domestic work.

Tomashi: *Okay, so how long did Jacky and Olivia work for the Sprague family?*

Aver: They worked for them for at least 20, 20 years or more. And um, I don't know if they had ever filed, paid social security, because Aunt Jacky ended up living on eight hundred and something dollars a month. When she retired that's all she had coming in. Just like a hundred and forty-two dollars a month. I doubt very seriously these people paid into social security for them, because my aunt ended up, um, in her retirement, um with only eight hundred and something dollars a month coming in and my uncle's, who was a cement mason, um, I think his pension for her was like a hundred and forty-four dollars a month, that she received up until the time she passed. So they um, I'm sure they didn't pay in the social security or anything, any kind of benefits, so she ended up...

Aver: I had no idea. I didn't know where the house is now. But I don't remember *hard to hear*. Yeah, that's how. Aunt Jacky, you know Aunt Jacky. She lived a long time afterwards. Shit, she lived a long time. To be ninety years old stuck on a budget.

Tomashi: Um. Okay. Um...So, they started working for them in the early '60s?

Aver: And they worked for, for, until eighty-something, I'm sure. And, and um, the things that were happening at the time were, um, the Black Power Movement, was uh, um, was happening, while they were working for these people. And our identity...trying to find out who we were and challenging the establishment for better representation. You know, all that stuff was happening. So they probably started working for them in 1961 or something like that. How they got there, I don't know. Aunt Jacky was (*hard to hear*). And she worked for where she did her pastry chef thing, I don't know. But she used to make mince meat pies. All that stuff. She worked as a pastry chef somewhere, and I don't even know where. Before, be, um...

Tomashi: *Okay.*

Aver: Before she went to work for the Spragues.

Tomashi: *Um. Okay. Wow, that was great. Um, I'm gonna stop and just record a little more. Cause it's stopping me. All right. So in what ways were relationships with other informal workers necessary in their social group?*

Aver: Okay. Uncle Nelson was a day laborer. And he would work at the um...the L.A. Mart.

Aver & Tomashi: *LA produce market.*

Aver: So would end up getting, um, boxes of fruit. Um, that he would pass down to us. You know, my mother had the most kids, nine kids, but he was, he worked down there at those food marts, so he could get fruits and stuff. He'd come home to spread it around for us to eat. Because of the times, you didn't make a lot of money as a domestic servant, and so your money is supposed to spread around, trying to feed nine kids, and then all this other (*hard to hear*). He helped

my mother a lot, because she's the one who had all the kids. They also have um meat, a meat market down there, where you could buy meats easier and everybody who worked down there helped each other. Um by buying cheaper meats and, and produce and stuff and trying to feed (*hard to hear*) on maybe five or ten dollars a week as a domestic servant. You know, back then, of course in (*hard to hear*), in the sixties, I think you went from eighty-five to a hundred dollars a. She still maintained these contacts with people that helped her do whatever it is she had to do.

Tomashi: *All right. Um...Thank you.*

Aver: That's it?

Tomashi: *Yeah, thank you.*



Figure 19 Tomashi Jackson, *Untitled: Labor Translation*, 2011. Video stills.

2. Labor Reenactment of Jackylen Ball and Joan Jonas

Untitled: Labor Reenactment of Jackylen Ball and Joan Jonas is a video collage that explores the idea reenactment using oral narrative, image, mark-making, cleaning, and objects. *Untitled: Labor Reenactment* focuses on the nature of the late Jackylen Ball's domestic labor as a master pastry chef. The video is made from a 2011 Skype recorded interview with my mother, Aver Burroughs in which my questions to her focus on the informal domestic laborer's experience of the 1960s and 1970s in Los Angeles, California. As my mother describes the dishes Jackylen made while working in various kitchens I respond by drawing, writing, and wiping away using a blue oil stick. The oil stick was given to me by artist Joan Jonas after it had been used in her 2011 collaborative performance, *Reanimation* (Figure 20).



Figure 20 L. Tomashi Jackson (with silkscreen of Jackylen Ball) and Aver Burroughs Skype video still R. Photos: L. Barry Hetherington, Joan Jonas, *Reanimation: Collaboration with Jason Moran*, MIT, Cambridge, MA. 2011.

The story, told from Burroughs' memory, describes the fine pastry work (labor) of her aunt Jackylen Ball after her migration to Los Angeles, CA from Dallas, TX. I embody the actions that Burroughs recalls from being there or just 'knowing' about the baked goods her aunt produced as an informal domestic laborer in multiple spaces. She describes mince meat pies, German chocolate cakes, fruit cakes, nut loafs, and pound cakes, drizzled with preserved fruits that came from a Monastery located on Mulholland Drive.

Layered with the imagery and sound of Burroughs' narrative is my response to her recollection in the form of drawing with an oil stick on a mirror that sits upon a stove top. The mirror reflects the under-side of the stove's hood as I draw images and text of the described cakes, pies, and fruit using Jonas' used oil stick. Images of my hand, drawing and wiping the oil on the glass are

layered with the split screen image of the conversation. This compositional method is influenced by my drawing and printmaking practices between 2008 and 2010 (**Error! Reference source not found.**). Through my actions, drawing, and wiping away, I embody Jonas' signature style, capturing drawings with video technology. In this way I am reenacting the work of both Jackylen and Joan in response to Borough's recollection of domestic labor. Our discussion is transcribed below.

Tomashi: *Jacky was a master pastry chef?*

Aver: Yes. I, I do believe it was still the Blowers. I know she worked for, um, old man Blower, but I think the wife, um, Mrs. Blower, um, had a pastry business of some type. And at that point Aunt Jacky worked for her. Of course, she worked for her before the Black Power Movement was very active. So she was, she was working for um the Blowers during the Martin Luther King era, the nonviolent part. Well, she probably worked for them in the late '50s. Um, for the pastry people. And um...

Tomashi: *Oh wow.*

Aver: She would. She used make (*hard to hear*) cake, and, pies, and fruitcake. These are all things that um, I would say, white people liked. You know, they liked the coconut, fresh coconut on their coconut cakes and all that stuff. She made it more for them, she would literally make those homemade fruitcakes and, I'm telling you, those things were um... I mean you can keep those things for years. I don't know what, if it's the alcohol in them that ferments the cake. But um, I, I wasn't a friend of minced meat pie nor um, uh fruitcake. I, I couldn't stand either one of them. But like I said, she baked most of her pastries for um Caucasian people. Cause Black people didn't really care for minced meat pie or fruitcake. Yes, German chocolate cake. Uh...

Tomashi: *Hmm. But um, Aunt Yogi makes a German chocolate cake sometimes, doesn't she?*

Aver: See the German chocolate cake has coconut in it. And we didn't have uh...we didn't enjoy those type of cooked, uh fruits. We liked the raw coconut, but the cooked coconut, it was just too much. Eew, yuck! Yeah I like coconut raw.

Tomashi: *Yeah, I don't like coconut most of the time I will eat a good German chocolate cake because of uh Aunty and Yogi.*

Aver: I didn't like minced meat pie. Actually, I, I watched her make it. But I, I just was...

Tomashi: *Can you tell me a little more about the minced meat pie? Yeah, what did you see? What did you see when she made it?*

Aver: Uh. Oh my God. I cannot remember it. Um, cause, was I, I was not interested in it. I did not like it. She would cook pies and, and cakes and stuff. And sell them. Um, like the fruitcakes and stuff like that. Oh my God, they were just so beautiful.

Aver: With the cherries...and the green cherries and the red cherries in them. But the um, um minced meat pie, I never cared for it. I don't even know if there was really meat in it. I don't know why they called it minced meat. I don't remember it so well. And I was there with her, and I just, I didn't pay any attention... I can't remember...

Tomashi: *Do you remember what kind of meat she used?*

Aver: In terms of what was in it...I can remember those, the fruitcakes (*hard to hear*) Eew. God. Nasty. I mean, it wasn't a flavorful thing for a child. Um, yeah, the minced meat wasn't flavorful, but she made some fantastic cha-cha. Oh yeah, she made some cha-cha. Cha-cha is um onions and. Cha-cha is like a pickling um spread.

Tomashi: *Cha-cha?*

Aver: Chacha was um, a spicy, a, it's like a pickled spice that you would put over certain um foods, like sometime, um, it was, she had celery, onions, um, celery, onions. What else was in there? Basically, it was celery and onions. And then she, um, would pickle it in her mason jars. And um... she would make it a little hot sometimes, and around the holidays, she would open it and you would put it on certain foods. Whenever you wanted that little, spicy, sour, hot flavor on your dish, you put a cha-cha on it.

Tomashi: *What did she use to make it spicy?*

Aver: She would use peppers...to put them in there. She would. Yeah. Just a little.

Tomashi: *Um, like what, chili peppers?*

Aver: Most of time it was more sweet, than uh, hot. I don't know if she put bell peppers...I don't remember bell peppers. But I definitely remember the, the celery and the onions and you would just put it over your food and just give it the, a little zing, taste. It was good. I think Yogi knows how to make chacha. You know they came from a generation that was so quiet and closed. It was almost like they were shamed. They, they were shamed...they were ashamed of the plight um that they had to go through to get where they are, so they...when they finally reached where they were going, they just never talked about how they got there. And, and that's a shame in itself. You know. Um, being um, mentally beat down, like at where you don't want to talk about the struggles that you had to get

where you going. They just quietly (*hard to hear*) just quietly kept their heads down and did what they needed to do to get uh ahead. But anyway, that was cha-cha. It was very good. But, but most of her cooking, you know, she cooked for, she cooked for uh white people, so her, her foods and stuff were geared along that line.

Tomashi: *All right.*

Aver: You know, she worked at a monastery. When I lived with her, she worked in a monastery for um two years. And, I mean, I lived with her for two years. And in the time that she was there, she, the monastery that she uh worked for was in uh, was on Mulholland. And they were vegetarians. And so we were all vegetarians. You know. She would bring. She would make nut loaves. You know. You would think it was a meatloaf, but it was full of walnuts and things like that. She learned how to cook vegetarian food. It was amazing. She would bring home crates and crates of peaches, and, and pineapple. She had this big washtub that we would dump all the food in and wash it. And then peel it. She had these big plastic containers and she would wash it and put the fruit, um, down in her big freezer. She had one those humongous freezers. It was eight foot long and four foot wide or um and, probably, uh five feet deep. And she would freeze the peaches; she would put a sugar base over it and put it in freezer. And then, when the winter months came, like um, December, January she would pull out either the pineapple or the peaches, and she made a homemade pound cake. And she would pull the peaches out and let them defrost, and she made that pound cake, and then topped the pound cake with peaches. (*hard to hear*) And we would tap our feet. It was just, it was just great. Cause the food was so fresh and stuff. Like that, you know, me and Uncle Reynolds and Aunt Jacky, Yogi and Saudia... You know, so...Old Sister was a good provider.

Tomashi: *So you said she was uh. Said old sister was a good provider?*

Aver: Yeah, she...I guess as kids, we take things for granted. You know, that somebody's gone always be there. Somebody's gonna always take care of us. And of course, as we get older and we go through our own struggles, we know that's not the case, um. But I think we, we didn't spend as much time as we should've, probably. You know. Really. Are you hungry? It's a. Today is really. It's a pretty day here.

Tomashi: *Did she teach you how to make anything? Did she teach you how to bake? Is there anything that you learned how to bake from uh Aunt Jacky?*

Aver: Oh yes. She taught me. I used to make bread with her.

Tomashi: *You okay?*

Aver: Um. Just. Um, we used to make regular um loaf bread.

Tomashi: *What kind of bread?*

Aver: She showed me how to make bread um you know, with the flour, the raising of the, with the yeast in it, and the yeast raised, the um, the yeast rising and beating that bread down and stuff like that. We had stuff like that, homemade bread and stuff like that.

Tomashi: *(hard to hear) hot water cornbread. Did she make hot water cornbread?*

Aver: She wasn't a hot water cornbread maker. That was my, my mother made that. She made hot water cornbread. Yeah, the things that I've given you... that's from mama.

Tomashi: *I love hot water cornbread!*

Aver: Aunt Jacky was more of a buttermilk cornbread person. She like to put.

Tomashi: *Um, Leophis made hot water cornbread for me. I mean she made hot water cornbread in general, but when I would come around she knew that that was my favorite thing.*

Aver: Oh my God. I lost the urge for cooking a long time ago. Really, I remember, um, when I came up we didn't eat fast food. So everything we ate, we had to prepare. So it was a lot of cooking being done all the time. So, you know, you kind of get out of that when you get older, it's like Jesus Christ...Cause it's a production.

Tomashi: *Yeah.*



Figure 21 Tomashi Jackson, *Untitled: Labor Reenactment*, 2011. Video still.



Figure 22 Tomashi Jackson, *Untitled: Labor Reenactment*, 2011. Video stills

3. Mop the Fleur - You Rude Bitch

Mop the Fleur- You Rude Bitch is a video collage and live performance. The video collage consists of black and white reproductions of the Pieter De Hooch painting, *The Courtyard of a House in Delft* (Figure 7), which depicts domestic workers in a semi-public space, with meticulous visual descriptions of the ground, the 2006 music video for “Mop the Floor” by the pop singer Tanieya, taken from YouTube, and the live reading of the collaged poem, “You Rude Bitch”.

The music video playfully depicts Tanieya at a back yard pool party with friends that is interrupted by an older woman (perhaps her mother) whom orders her into a kitchen. While in the kitchen the older woman directs Tanieya to mop the floor, to which the singer responds by turning the chore into a dance. My video collage uses black and white reproductions of *The Courtyard of a House in Delft* to obstruct the moving imagery drawing more attention to what is happening inside of the figure cut outs, creating a key hole in the shape of domestic workers (Figure 23). Viewers see the moving colors of the muted music video framed by the black and white De Hooch painting reproductions, and they hear the sound of the my voice as I read the poem, “You Rude Bitch”, aloud off stage.



Figure 23 Tomashi Jackson, *Untitled: De Hooch Collage*, 2011 (cut out used for video collage)

The narrative of domestic worker, “Felicia”, is described in a poem collaged with Thomas Sayers Ellis’ “Two Manifestos: Perform a Form” and Tanieya’s “Mop the Floor” song lyrics (Figure 23). “Felicia” is a livelihood migrant working as an informal domestic laborer. In the performance of this work I read aloud the poem drawn from her story of livelihood migration. I chose to focus on the poetic narrative around a story of discontent and endurance to juxtapose the narrator’s perspective against the historic visual symbolism of De Hooch’s servants as silent and humble. Still black and white painted imagery obstructing brightly colored moving imagery and audacious narrative sound; the elements of the composition respond to one another.



Figure 24 L: Thomas Sayers Ellis, *Skin Inc.: Identity Repair Poems*, 2010 R.: Tanieya, Singer of “Mop the Floor”.

The original music from the video is muted to emphasize the poem being read aloud. The absence of recorded sound was also a way to honor my agreement with the woman who shared her story with me, on the condition of protecting their identity. During those “interviews” I was asked not to record sound or image. The audible sound is the transmission of an oral history. I emphasize the act of mopping and its relationship to the architectural component of the floor. The repetition of the action becomes a physical counterpart to an audible mantra. It becomes the narrator’s perform-a-form for surviving the constant shock of her subject’s behavior. It is reflective of her thoughts collapsing with the performance of maintenance. I use poetry as a way to communicate some of the story and stories that have been shared with me by domestic workers who wished to remain anonymous when reflecting upon relationships with employers whom they found to be especially difficult. “You Rude Bitch” is transcribed below.

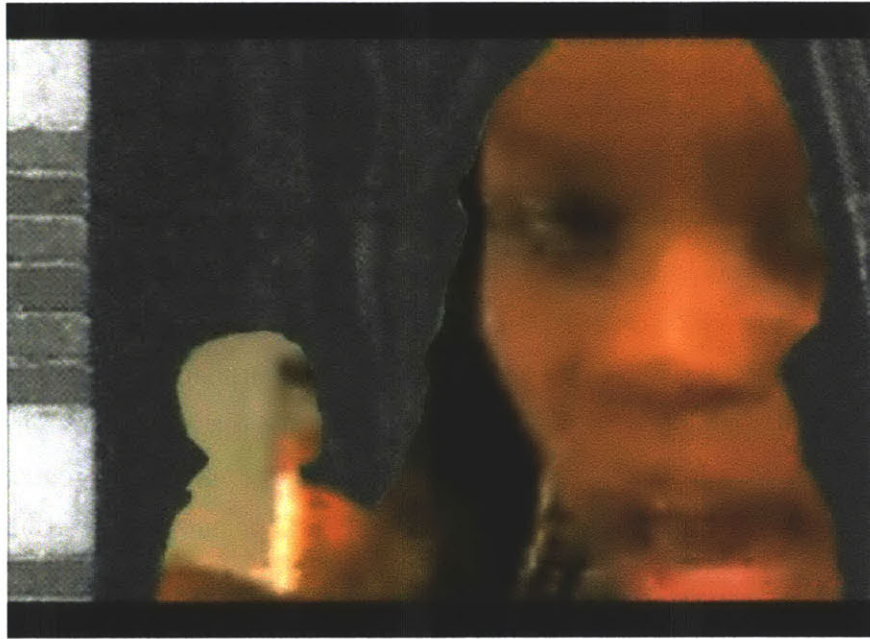


Figure 25 Tomashi Jackson, *Mop the Fleur (You Rude Bitch)*, 2011. Silent music video collage still.



Figure 26 Tomashi Jackson, *Mop the Fleur (You Rude Bitch)*, 2011. Silent music video collage still.

*You are so rude to me.
I have never experienced a rudeness like you.
You are just rude.
Maybe that is just how
you are.
You
are a bitch.
The nasty mouthed kind.
You are a bitch.
Clearly ugly on the inside
Barely keeping your veil up.
Just barely.
It smells like your secret cigarettes
and day time vodka.
I cannot wait to tell you so.
Can't wait to.
Ahhhh but I work here.
I mop this floor
like I own it.*

"The performance body, via breathing and gesture, dramatizes form. It makes it theater. It makes it action. It makes it living, alive, as in "get live," as in "all the way live," as in lyric. The idea body, via text and thought, flattens form. It makes it fixed. It makes it language. It makes it literature,

an imagined living, as in artifice. The work of the performance body is not without craft, control or form. It is not lowly. The work of the idea body is not without attitude, improvisation or flow. It is not closed. A perform-a-form occurs when the idea body and the performance body, frustrated by their own segregated aesthetic boundaries, seek to crossroads with one another.”⁸⁵

*If I make myself believe I own it,
and I make myself
forget the sight of
your face,
Then for a moment
I can love this floor,
And clean it as if
I shall feed my own
Family upon it.
As if my swaying and scrubbing
will cause bread
to rise up from a deep
place.
Inside the underment
of this floor.
This floor that you
filthify with your
careless steps and
your disingenuous face.
Wracked with the pain
of your parched silly insecurity.
An insecurity that seeks
to feed off of me.
You don't even make your
own hoops.
The ones that you insist
I must jump through.*

“The old style of representing “likeness” is over and the perform-a-formers, though appreciative of metaphor and simile, no longer need either to express nuance in poetry. The matrimony of page and stage insists on eliminating the false functions between the line and the limb. All rhyme schemes reborn as gesture, all gestures as sculptural

⁸⁵ Ellis, Thomas Sayers, “Two-Manifestos The New Perform-A-Form”, *Skin, Inc.: Identity Repair Poems*, Graywolf Press 2010, 71

*integrity.*⁸⁶

*Eyes shut tight.
In this darkness
I can mop this floor
like I own it.
I can see a stone house
with ceramic tiles.
Each placed just so.
Just like I want them.
I will own it.
I will own it.
I will own it.
One two three and four.
One two three and four.
One two three and four.
Mop this floor
To the left and right
Mop this floor
To the left and right
Mop this floor,
like you own it.*

*“The first task of activism of any perform-a-
formist is the removal of all one-dimensional judges
of craft.”⁸⁷*

*I can smell where
I would rather be.
Mmmmmmmmmmmmm
mmmmmmmmmmmmmm
the jungle nestled sea*

⁸⁶ Ellis, Thomas Sayers, “Two-Manifestos The New Perform-A-Form”, *Skin, Inc.: Identity Repair Poems*, Graywolf Press 2010, 72

⁸⁷ Ellis, Thomas Sayers, “Two-Manifestos The New Perform-A-Form”, *Skin, Inc.: Identity Repair Poems*, Graywolf Press 2010, 73



Figure 27 Tomashi Jackson, *Mop the Fleur (You Rude Bitch)*, 2011.
Silent music video collage still.

Mop the Fleur: Public Performance Experiments 2011-2012

With two *Mop the Fleur Public Performance Experiments*, I took the themes of mopping and domestic labor into two civic spaces in Cambridge, MA. *Mop the Fleur: (Self Portrait as a Domestic Engineer)* took place in North Point Park, as a part of a day of performance exploring narratives of urbanism and ecology along the Charles River organized by MIT graduate candidates Scott Berzofsky and Jessica Fain (Figure 28). I installed a large square of interior vinyl flooring into the grassy area of the park. Followed by an audience, I walked to the riverside and filled a metal bucket with water. I took the bucket to the floor and silently mopped the floor with river water (Figure 29).



Figure 28 Tomashi Jackson, *Mop the Fleur: (Self Portrait as a Domestic Engineer)*, 2010. Filling my mop bucket with Charles River water at North Point Park. Cambridge, MA. Photo: Eva Strobel



Figure 29 Tomashi Jackson, *Mop the Fleur: (Self Portrait as a Domestic Engineer)*, 2010. Photo: Eva Strobel

Mop the Fleur: (Untitled: Mop the Crosswalk) took place at the corner of Bishop Allen Drive and Norfolk Street in the Central Square area of Cambridge, MA in the Fall of 2011 (Figure 30). I cut the vinyl floor, previously mopped in North Point Park, into rectangular strips. I filled a metal bucket with water drawn from a near-by building. The strips of flooring were taped to the asphalt of the crosswalk at Bishop Allen Drive and Norfolk Street. As pedestrians walked through the cross walk and cars drove through the intersection, I mopped the strip of floor as they passed. I did this for one hour.



Figure 30 Tomashi Jackson, *Mop the Fleur: (Untitled: Mop the Crosswalk)*, Cambridge, MA, 2011. Photos: Nia K. Evans

4. **Red Handed and High Tide**

Red Handed is a live drawing/ cleaning performance in which I draw an image of a domestic worker in a crosswalk with two client children using red oil stick. As soon as the drawing is complete I begin the hard work of cleaning the window, scrubbing, and wiping the image away. The entire performance executed in a storefront window near the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Prospect Avenue in Cambridge, MA and lasts for one hour. Methods of art making and maintenance labor become collapsed as the visibility of the subject is questioned against the backdrop of a local business. I am utilizing material transparency and mark making to impose these laboring bodies onto the public space of street, where they appear and disappear daily.

The imagery is drawn onto the glass that separates the business from the street and then wiped away. This act uses visual language to emphasize the fluctuating visibility and labor of a private work force. Informal labor such as house and office keeping, child and elder care, are accepted as necessities for the maintenance of validated economies. Yet the humanity of many laborers is often questioned in the public realm with terms like alien and illegal. That labor is executed globally by people who move through public spaces, working privately, in a state of suspended invisibility on behalf of employers who work in regulated arenas of capital.

The public drawing performance displaces images of private labor in public spaces of the built environment through figure drawing and window washing. This effort incorporates drawing, performance, and public intervention to expand definitions of public and private spaces. This work activates the architecture that surrounds crosswalks with observational drawings. I draw scenes of domestic workers as they operate in urban spaces on the window of a business in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and the Upper East Side of Manhattan.



Figure 31 Storefront of Danger!Awesome at the corner of Prospect and Massachusetts Ave. Cambridge, MA, 2011

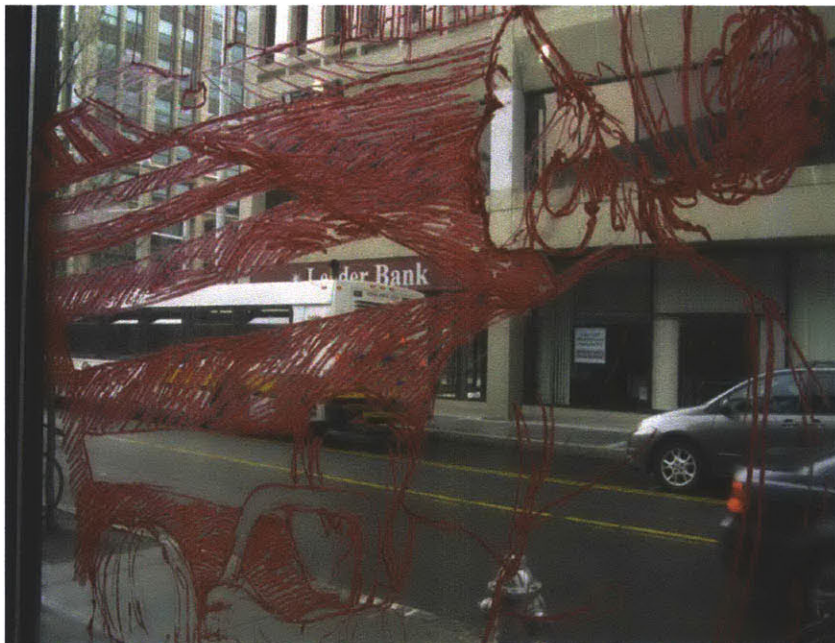


Figure 32 Tomashi Jackson, *Red Handed*, November 20, 2011, Oil stick drawing on glass.

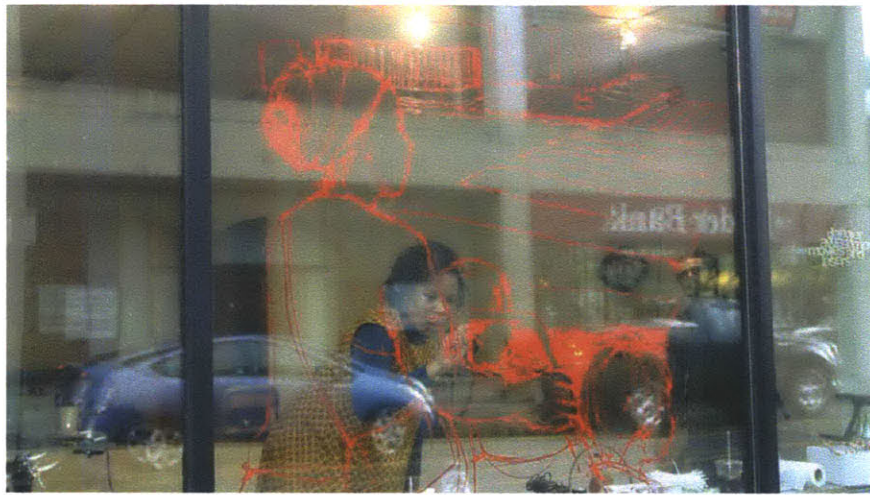
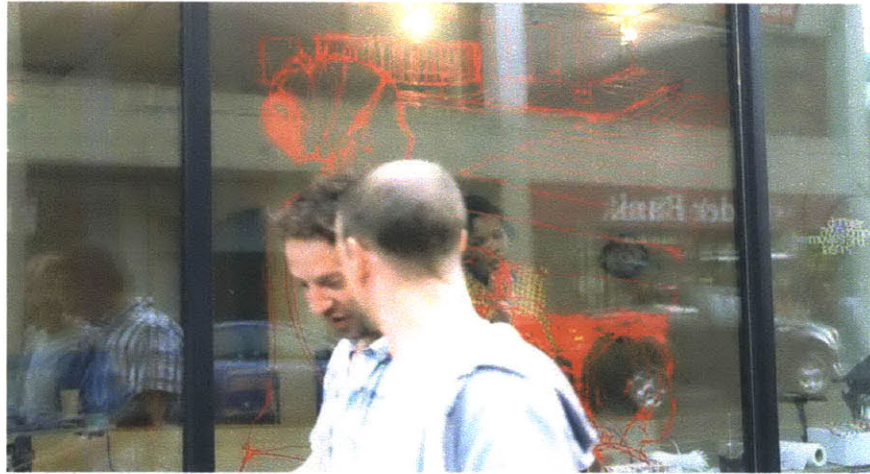


Figure 33 Tomashi Jackson, *Red Handed*, October, 2011, Oil stick drawing on glass.

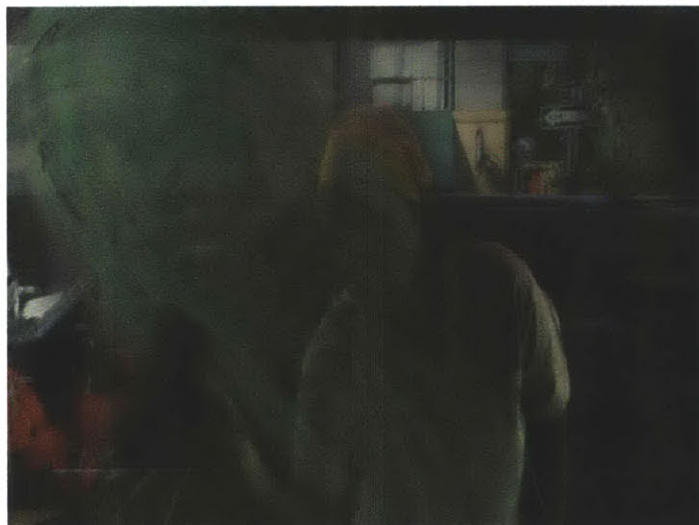
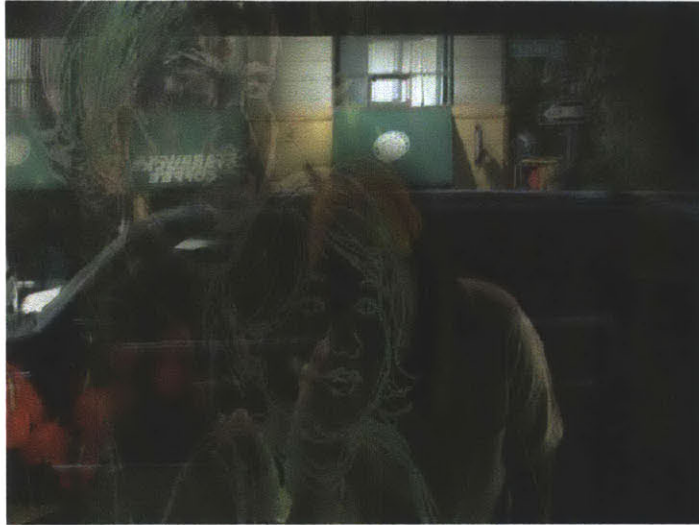


Figure 34 Tomashi Jackson, *High Tide*, May 2, 2012, Oil stick drawing on glass. Photo: Joshua Caleb Weibley

5. Sound Drawing - Ready or Not and Can You Stand the Rain?

Sound Drawing is an investigation of intimacy. My personal narrative is described using sculpture, installation, and love songs. Iron pipes are suspended from the ceiling of the Program in Art, Culture, and Technology Venus Lab (E15- 140). The pipes are embedded with the sound of music projected through small speakers that are attached to one end of three of the four pipes. One pipe holds the sound of my attempts to sing the songs, “Can You Stand the Rain?” by New Edition (Figure 64) and “Ready or Not” by After 7 (Figure 63) during my first formal voice lessons in Boston, MA. Another pipe holds the sound of me singing those songs alone in 2 public restrooms on the MIT campus in Cambridge, MA. I recorded myself singing these two songs alone in the basement ladies room of the MIT Walker Memorial Building and the lower level ladies room of the List Visual Arts Center.

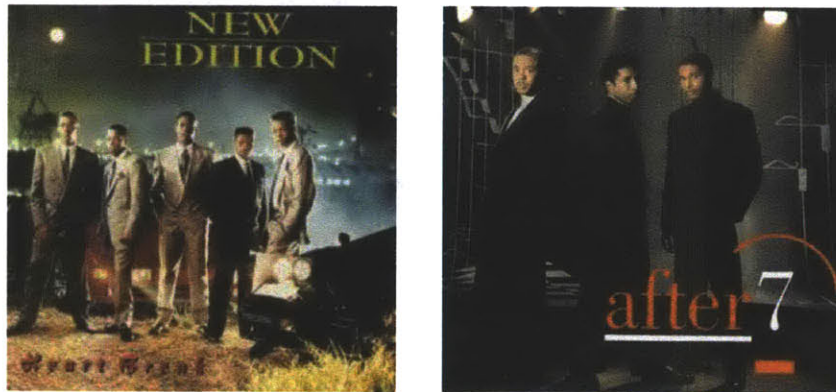


Figure 35 Album covers: L. New Edition, Heartbreak 1988. R. After 7 1990, Self-titled.

This piece incorporates building materials and sounds that I consider private with material elements that reveal themselves to me in public spaces. I use my voice, pipes, bricks, mulch, and suspension materials. My own sounds and the sounds of the building are projected through these pipes. The pipes have been made red with rust due to their exposure to the elements outside. The red mulch is aromatic with a smell common to local commercial and suburban outdoor spaces. Viewers/ listeners must step into the *With Sound Drawing* I question visual distinctions between public and private spaces. Especially the role of an art work in accepted definitions of space, and how art can disrupt those definitions. In my work thus far that focus has narrowed to issues of labor and materiality.

I concluded that sound, specifically my own voice, is something that is very private for me. For me it is something that is projected most often in private moments with familiars, at home, or alone. It seemed that to get closer to an authentic grasp of the idea of what is private and thus

it's opposite, that I should explore my voice to compose something.

The songs embedded in the pipes are songs that I have sung with and two specific people, with whom I share intimate relationships. I sing two songs that I recall singing with my mother and two of my closest friends. Other sounds have been recorded during voice lessons with one teacher alone in a room, exploring the imperfections of my voice while learning how to sing those songs. This act exposes the intimacy, the informality, and the failure of my voice. One pipe is suspended with metal hooks, vibrating the hum of the building to which it is attached. One pipe is hung with yellow chains and I speak and sing through it directly to the listener at the other end, as I read aloud Michael Werner's text Publics and Counter Publics. This exchange is a private moment between the viewer/ listener and me.

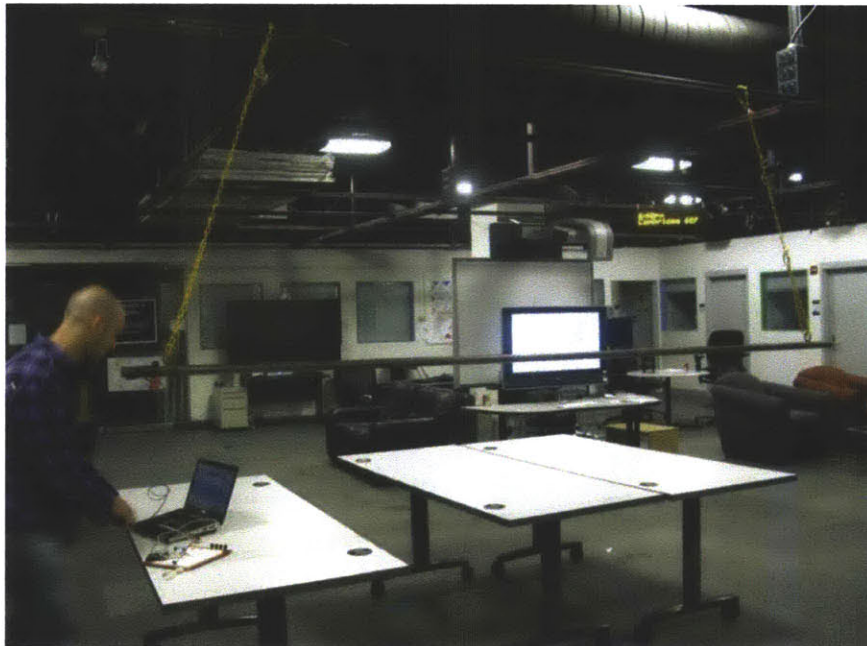


Figure 36 Eyal Shahar testing his sound actuator with suspended iron pipe used in *Sound Drawing*, MIT Media Lab, November, 2011.



Figure 37 Tomashi Jackson, *Sound Drawing*, December 2011, Suspended iron pipes, bricks, cedar mulch, two mp3 player, love songs, live reading. Photo: Ian Wojtowicz.



Figure 38 Tomashi Jackson, *Sound Drawing*, December 2011, Suspended iron pipes, bricks, cedar mulch, two mp3 player, love songs, live reading. Photo: Amanda Moore.



Figure 39 Tomashi Jackson, *Sound Drawing*, December 2011, Suspended iron pipes, bricks, cedar mulch, two mp3 player, love songs, live reading. Photo: Amanda Moore.

5. Y.W.A.L.Y.N.S.T.L. - Stop to Love

With this work, *Y.W.A.Y.N.S.T.L.*, I am looking at a laboring body that is inherently formal and public, a police officer. In a Skype recorded exchange between me and my aunt, Los Angeles Police Department Officer, Saudia Ali, we sang along to the original recording of Luther Vandross' 1986 love song, "Stop to Love" (Figure 40). Ali and I were engaged in an intimate exchange as we sang the popular slow jam describing the lament of a person who loves a woman who works a lot and never stops to love. The video imagery was projected onto a fragile wall built of bricks collected in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The sound of the sing a long was embedded into two iron pipes, via small speakers, suspended from the ceiling.

One pipe was equipped with the audio recording of me and Ali singing to each other. The other pipe projected the sound of an audio actuator responding to the resonance of our voices with a tapping sound that varied in intensity. The lyrics repeated in the chorus of the song (Figure 65) are "You work a lot you never stop to love. STOP! I love you stop! Come home from the road. Gotta stop to love..." (Figure 75)



Figure 40 L. Album cover: Luther Vandross, Give Me the Reason, 1988. R. Video still of Skype recorded sing-a-long between Tomashi Jackson and Saudia Ali.

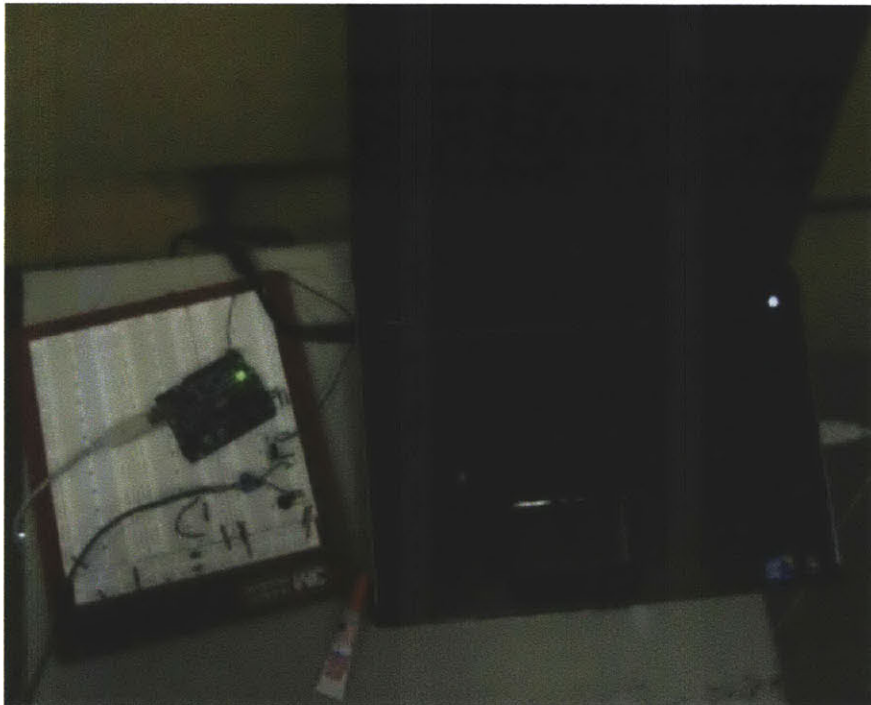
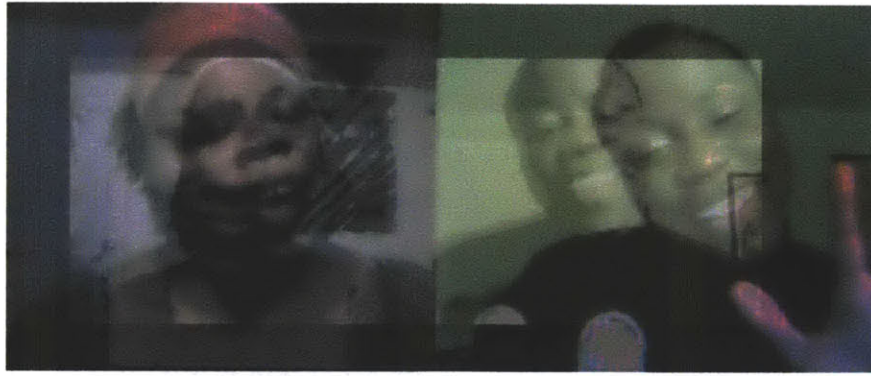


Figure 41 Top two: Tomashi Jackson, *YWALYNSTL*, 2011, Video stills. Bottom: Eyal Shahar's laptop and actuator installed.

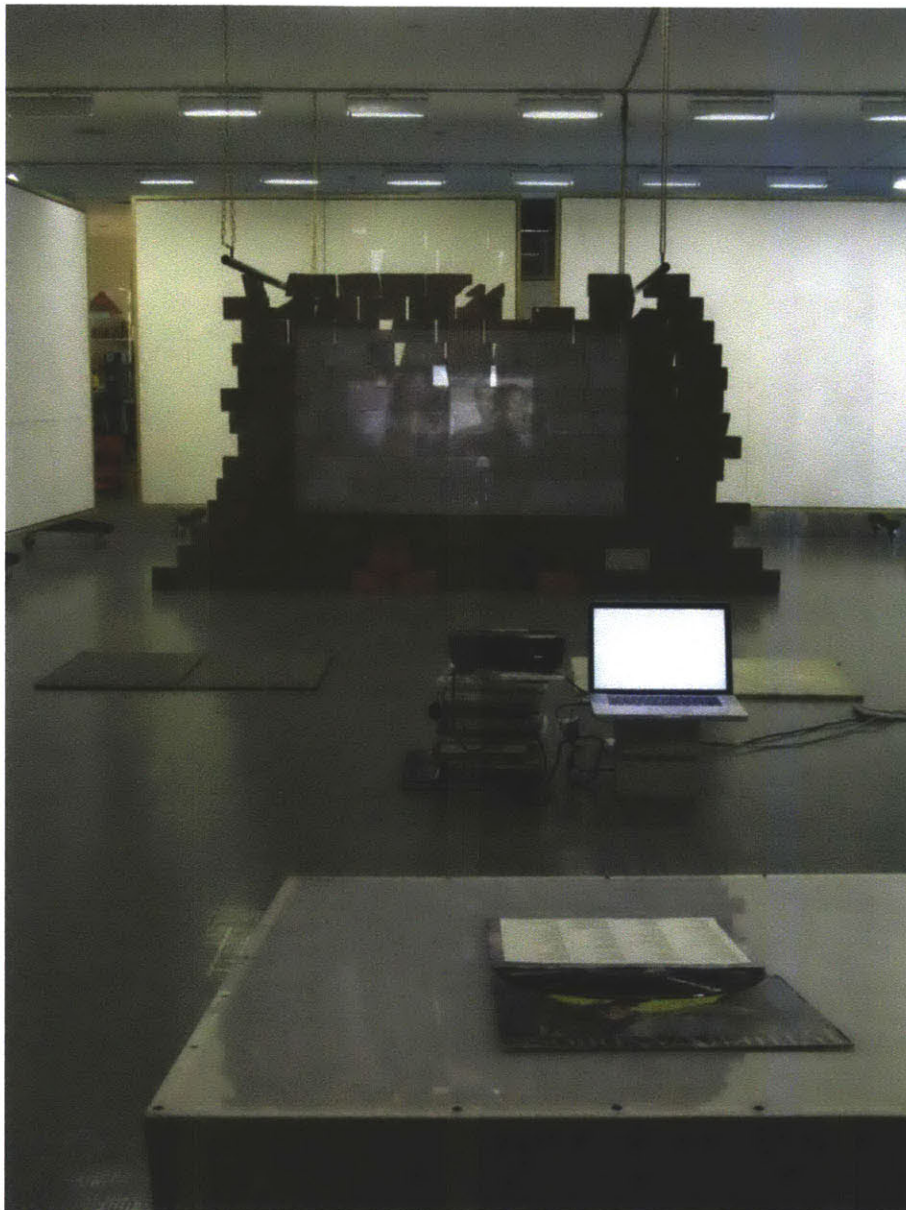


Figure 42 Tomashi Jackson, *YWALYNSTL*, October 2011, Bricks, suspended iron pipes, mp3 player, "Stop to Love" by Luther Vandross, two laptops, actuator, stack of books, projector, carpets, and video collage.

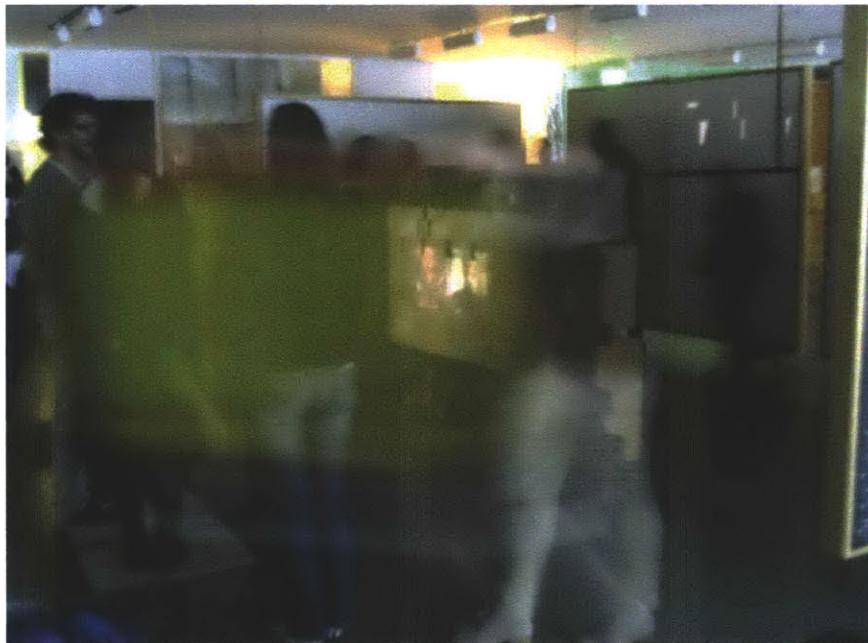
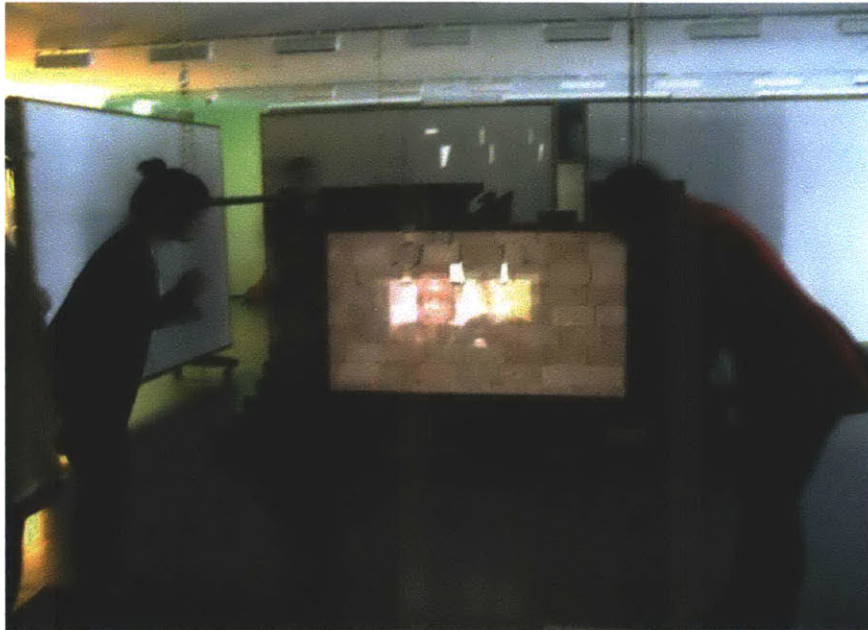


Figure 43 Tomashi Jackson, *YWALYNSTL*, October 2011, Bricks, suspended iron pipes, mp3 player, "Stop to Love" by Luther Vandross, two laptops, actuator, stack of books, projector, carpets, and video collage.

7. Untitled: Mem Drive - All I Do Is Think Of You

Untitled: Mem Drive is a collaborative installation focused labor narratives in and around Cambridge, MA of the late 1980's described through the narration of Cambridge, Massachusetts native, Paul Campbell and the text of Brian Reed's essay entitled, "The Darkroom Collective and Post-Soul Poetics"⁸⁸ read aloud by Nia K. Evans.

1989 Cambridge, Massachusetts is described in two narratives. One story is told by Cambridge native Paul Campbell as he reflects upon his own experiences of living, labor and the influence of music at the time. The development of the Darkroom Poetry Collective in Cambridge, MA around 1989 is described in the recorded reading of Brian Reed's essay. The resulting video collage is projected onto a concrete carpet wall suspended from the ceiling, embedded with copper pipes that project recordings of the Reed essay and the 1989 cover of the Jackson 5's "All I Do Is Think Of You"(Figure 66).

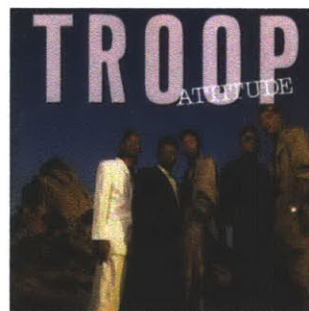


Figure 44 L. The Darkroom Poetry Collective group photo at 41 Inman Street, Cambridge, MA, 1989. Photo: G.A. Harris. R. Album cover: TROOP, Attitude, 1989.

⁸⁸ Reed, Brian, "The Dark Room Collective and Post-Soul Poetics", *African American Review*, Vol. 41, No. 4, Post-Soul Aesthetic (Winter, 2007), pp. 727-747, St. Louis University, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25426987>.



Figure 45 Tomashi Jackson, *Untitled: Mem Drive*, 2011. Video collage stills

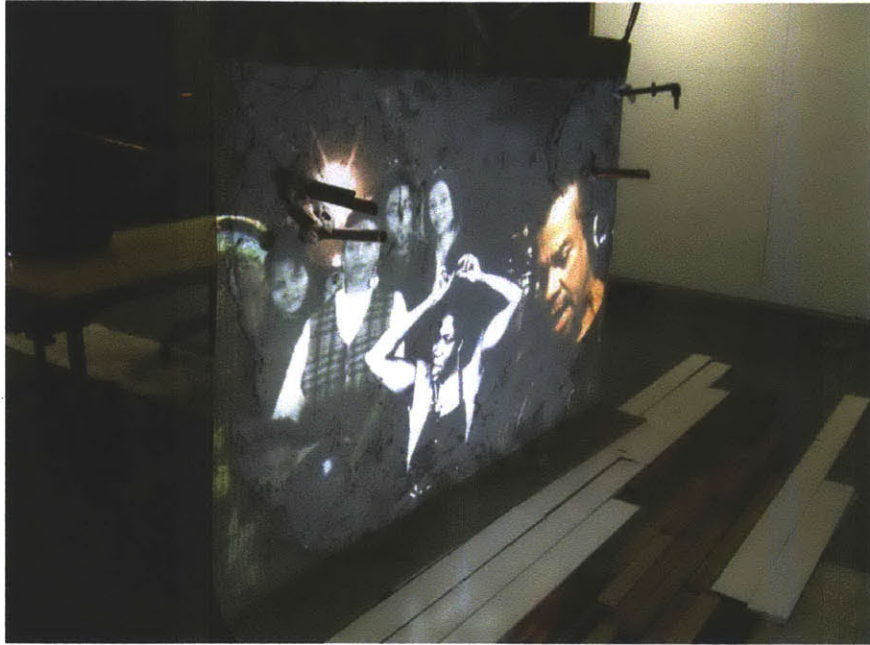


Figure 46 Tomashi Jackson, *Untitled: Mem Drive*, 2011. Installation view. Hard wood flooring, vinyl flooring, suspended concrete-carpet painting, suspended copper pipes, handkerchiefs, bricks, sample floor tiles, stack of books, projector, two laptops, mp3 player, "All I Do is Think of You" by TROOP, lawn chair, and video collage.



Figure 47 Tomashi Jackson, *Untitled: Mem Drive*, 2011. Installation view.

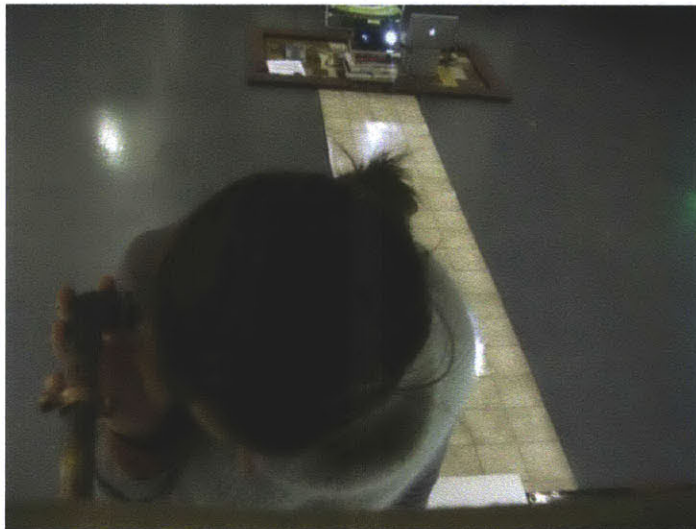


Figure 48 Tomashi Jackson, *Untitled: Mem Drive*, 2011. Installation view.

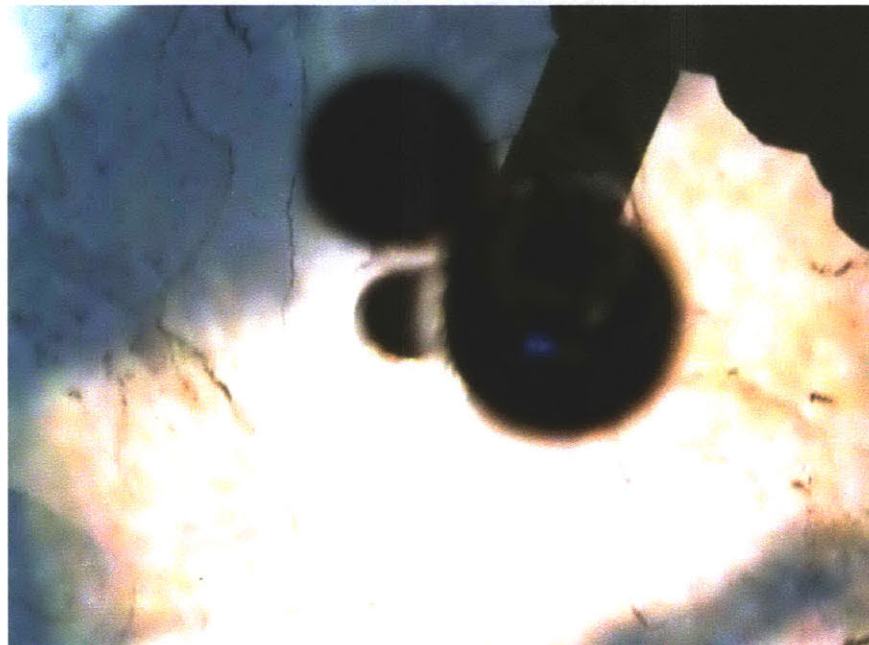


Figure 49 Tomashi Jackson, *Untitled: Mem Drive*, 2011. Installation view. Suspended concrete-carpet painting, video projection, handkerchiefs, and sound embedded copper pipes



Figure 50 Tomashi Jackson, *Untitled: Mem Drive*, 2011. Installation view. Suspended concrete-carpet painting, video projection, handkerchiefs, and sound embedded copper pipes

8. **Untitled: Slow Jam - Ready or Not and All I Do Is Think of You**

In this sound sculpture and video installation I revisit the site and materiality of (the) floor. In previous attempts to address embedded narratives of the ground I have used poetry, image collage, performance, and flattened floor installations. In *Untitled: Slow Jam* I have built a multi-dimensional floor, made from carpet, concrete, bricks, Masonite, reclaimed wood flooring, floor tiles, and two love songs.

A split screen video of an inaudible conversation between myself and playwright filmmaker A.G. McCants is projected onto a screen right behind the raised singing floor. The sounds of *TROOP* (Figure 66) and *After 7* (Figure 63) are sonic substitutes for our voices.

Three texts sit atop the floor. One book is a collection of Negritude poems translated from French that is open to a section about Edouard Glissant. The other book is Fred Moten's *In the Break* which is also open to a section in which Glissant's Caribbean Discourse is referenced⁸⁹. Finally the (partial) lyrics of both songs sit atop the floor to provide the views script of our conversation about traditions of Black narratives and music substitution. Narrative utterance, silence, and its coded nature are embedded into materials that facilitate or are defined by social interaction. These narratives animate the objects.



Figure 51 Video still of Skype recorded conversation between AG McCants and Tomashi Jackson, April 2012.

⁸⁹ "For Caribbean man, the word is first and foremost sound. Noise is essential to speech. Din is discourse....Since speech was forbidden, slaves camouflaged the word under the provocative intensity of the scream."(Glissant, Edouard, Caribbean Discourse. Referenced in Moten's In the Break: Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition, 7)

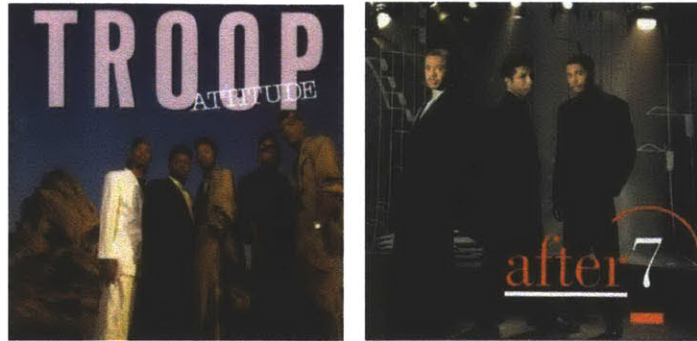


Figure 52 Album covers: L. TROOP, Attitude, 1989. R. After 7, Self titled, 1990



Figure 53 Tomashi Jackson, *Untitled: Slow Jam*, 2012. Installation view. Hard wood flooring, carpet, mp3 player, "All I Do is Think of You" by TROOP and "Ready or Not" by After 7, two speakers, and video projection.

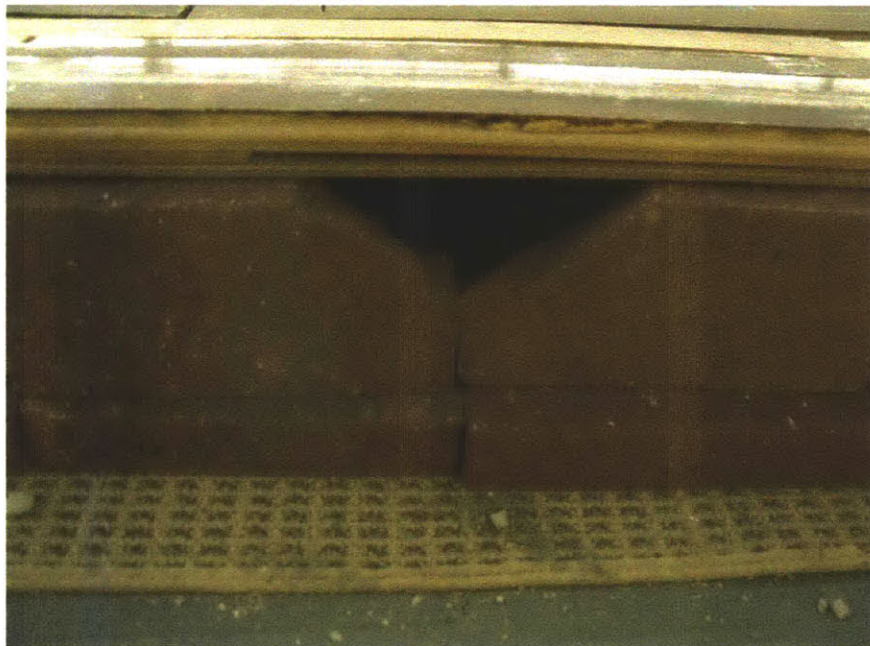
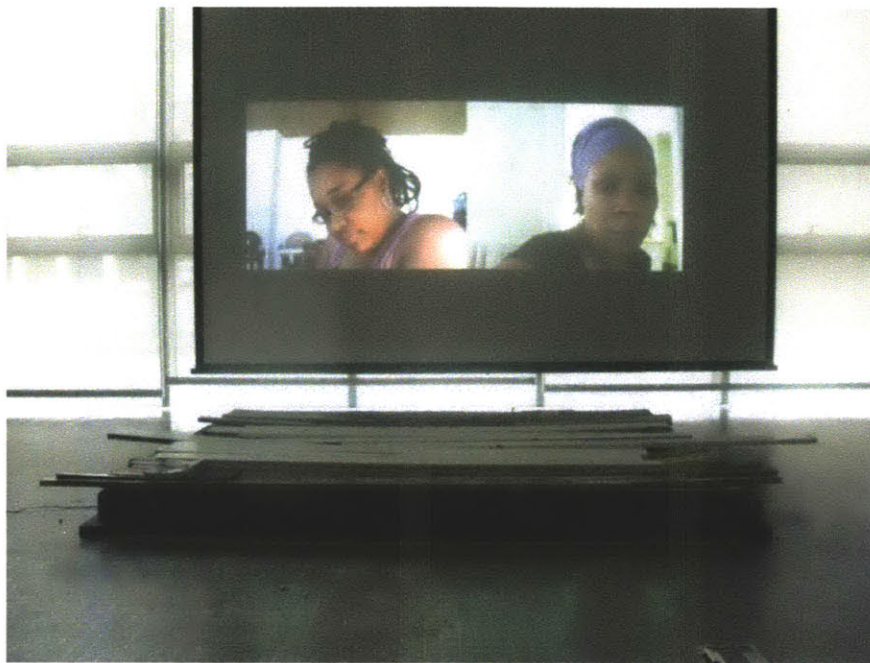


Figure 54 Tomashi Jackson, *Untitled: Slow Jam*, 2012. Installation view. Hard wood flooring, carpet, mp3 player, "All I Do is Think of You" by TROOP and "Ready or Not" by After 7, two speakers, and video projection.



Figure 55 Tomashi Jackson, *Untitled: Slow Jam*, 2012. Installation view

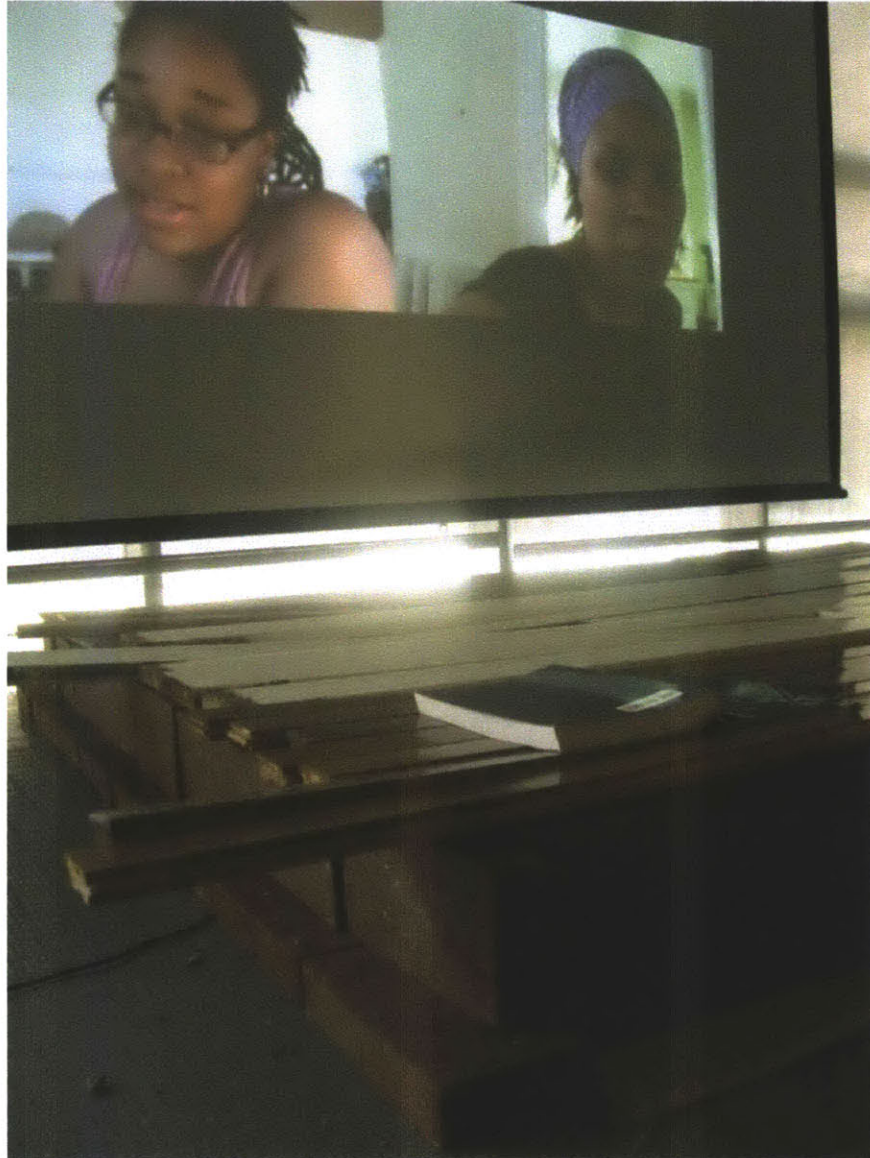


Figure 56 Tomashi Jackson, *Untitled: Slow Jam*, 2012. Installation view

9. Plain Citations: Teller - You Give Good Love

Plain Citations: Teller is dual video collage projection and sound embedded sculpture installation. In this work I lip synch Whitney Houston's love song, "You Give Good Love" from her 1985 self-titled debut album as I collage portraits of three writers, Edouard Glissant (Figure 58), Ralph Ellison, and Toni Morrison (Figure 59). I project two Skype recorded videos in which Peggy Evans tells her story migration to her daughter Nia K. Evans, and Eric N. Mack, reading text excerpts from Edouard Glissant's The Poetics of Relation to Evans as she transcribes his words(Figure 59). Each video collage is framed by a deconstructed red Automated Teller Machine shell (Figure 58). The floor is to be made of bricks and thin concrete slabs modeled after city sidewalks common in Los Angeles, CA. and Cambridge, MA.

Music functions here as a surrogate for purposely muted and suppressed personal narratives, as the original recording of the love song will be embedded into a raised L shaped floor (Figure 58). Also audible from the floor are recordings of Mack reading Glissant's Poetics of Relation aloud to Evans and me as we type his words on the keyboard of my laptop computer, Evans reading Morrison's Jazz aloud, Ellison's Invisible Man read aloud by Caitlin Berrigan and Kelly Dobson. The sculptural component requires participants kneel, get low, and place their ears to the ground in order to hear the sounds of narrative substitutes for the two simultaneously projected video collages.

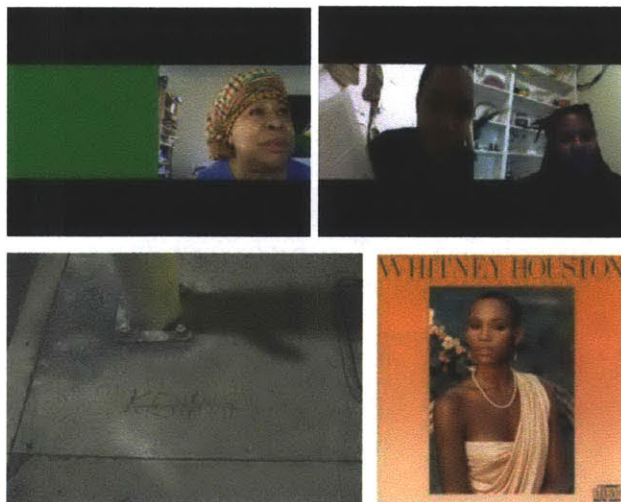


Figure 57 Video stills of Skyped conversations. Top: Peggy Evans, Eric N. Mack, and Nia K. Evans. Bottom: Bottom: L. Photograph of a sidewalk in Leimert Park, L.A., CA. R. Whitney Houston's debut album cover, 1985.

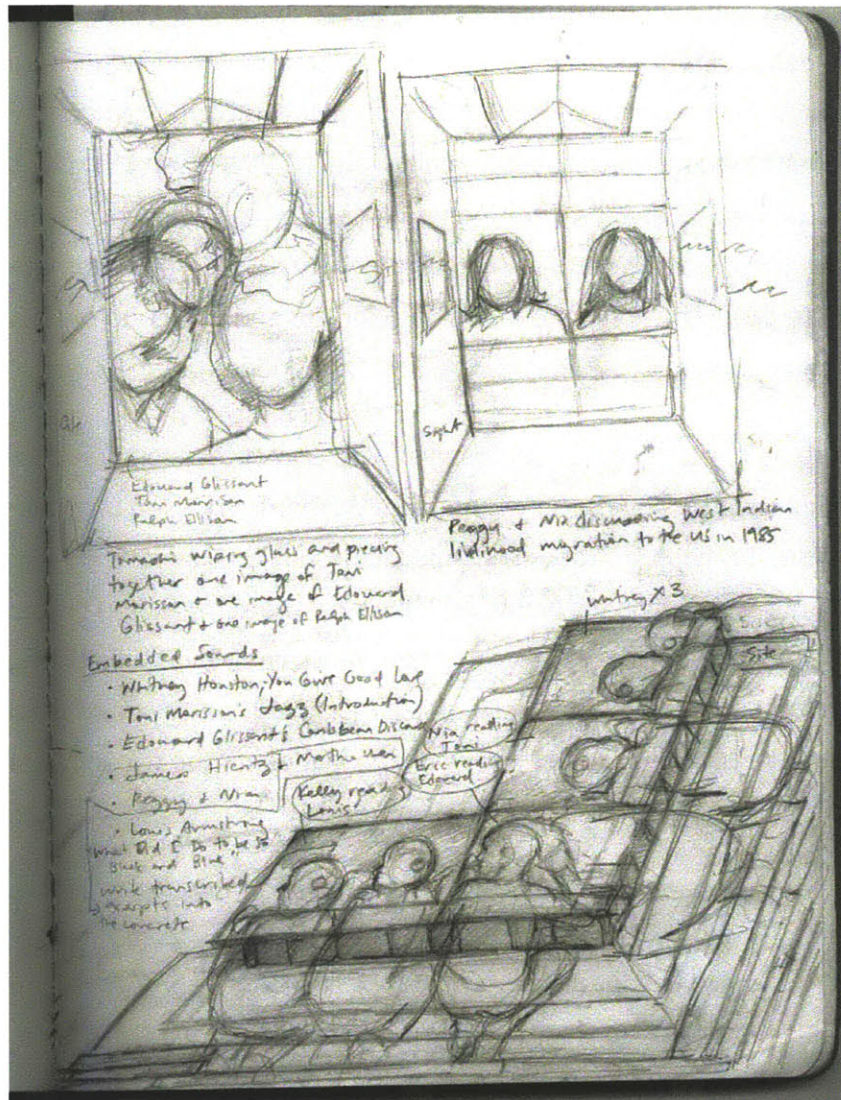


Figure 58 Tomashi Jackson, Top: Sketchbook drawing: Plain Citations: Teller, Installation view. May 2012.

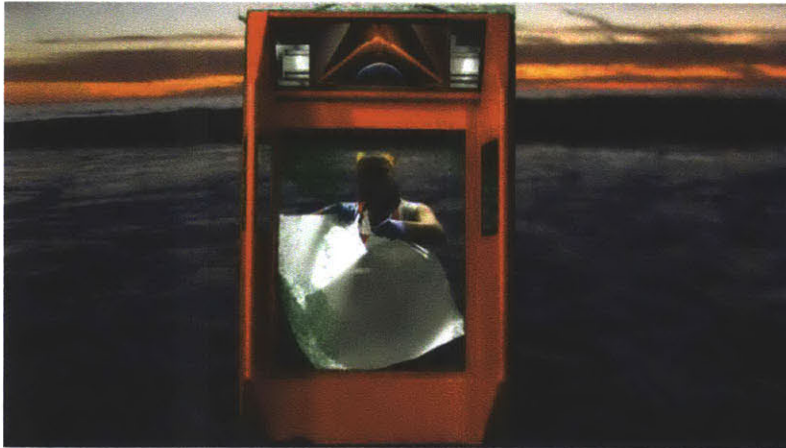


Figure 59 Tomashi Jackson, *Plain Citations: Teller*, May 2012. Video collage stills. (Edouard Glissant portrait).



Figure 60 Top: *Plain Citations: Teller* (Ralph Ellison portrait). Bottom: (Toni Morrison portrait.), May 2012

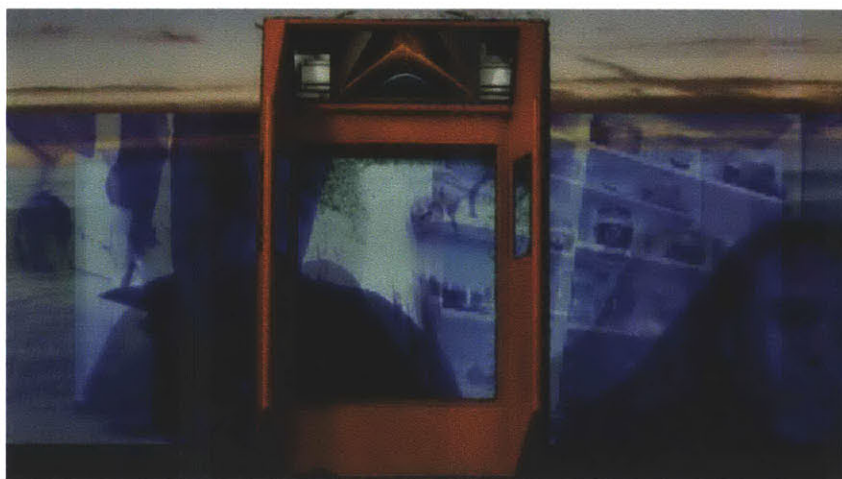
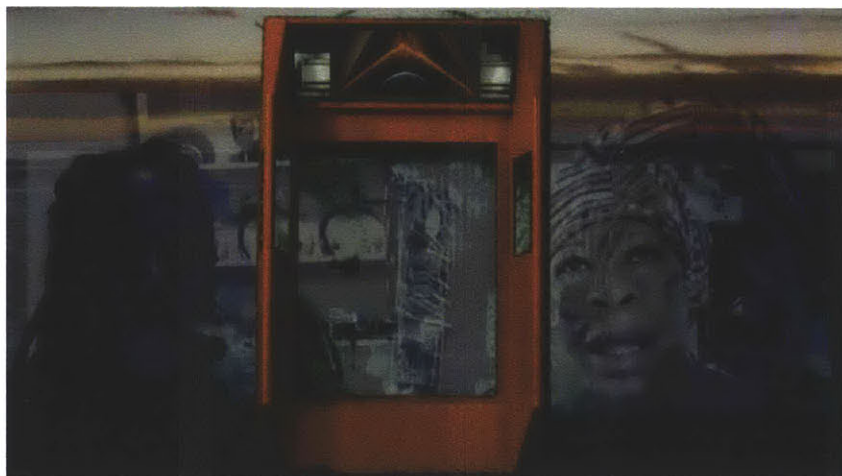


Figure 61 Tomashi Jackson, *Plain Citations: Teller*, May 2012.
Video collage stills (Top: Peggy Telling Nia Bottom: Eric Telling Nia)

Labors of maintenance and production have are a part of my visual language. My inquiry began with an examination of the visibility of informal laboring bodies as a part of societal infrastructure. However, during the course of study and artistic production, narrative audibility has arisen as powerfully significant. The Skyped interviews of my mother, Aver Burroughs, were laborious, awkward, and at times painful for us both as she shared her previously unrecorded narratives of 1960s domestic, work. I went on to relocate her interior narratives into civic spaces with floor and window cleaning performances. I embodied and displaced the private work that Burroughs described as having been a source of conflict during her youth.

With interior sculptural installations I discovered my own voice, exposing its failure with my attempts to sing the slow jams of male singers. I brought elements of urban space from outside inside, using bricks and cedar mulch, while presenting components of my own inner space. I began to explore music appropriation as a surrogate for complex intimacy. In *Y.W.A.Y.N.S.T.L.* the love songs came to signify safety in the Skyped sing a long with Officer Saudia Ali. In the *Untitled: Mem Drive* historic personal narratives driven by themes of music, poetry, and labor were presented with sonic clarity in Nia K. Evans' and Paul Campbell's descriptions of 1989 Cambridge, Massachusetts. Viewers/ listeners engaged multiple floors, suspended and grounded, as they experienced the work.

With my final project I return to the floor as a site of embodiment of personal reflections on migrational narratives, love songs, poetic and literary citations. *The Seen, the Unseen, and the Aesthetics of Infrastructure* is a body of about the informality of labor and love. Those who consider this work must place their ears to the ground and listen closely to the whispers of history embedded in the infrastructure of our shared urban spaces.



Figure 62 Iron pipe embedded in the street on Massachusetts Avenue (near the Berklee School of Music), Boston, MA. 2011. Photo: Tomashi Jackson

The End

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H. Appendix

"Thesis Soundtrack Song List

1. "Ready or Not" by After 7
2. "Can You Stand the Rain" by New Edition
3. "Stop to Love" by Luther Vandross
4. "All I Do is Think of You" by TROOP
5. "You Give Good Love" by Whitney Houston



Figure 63 "Ready or Not"

Performed by After 7, written by L.A. Reid and Babyface, 1990

I'll give the sun
The rain
The moon
The stars and the mountains
I'll give you the world
And all that you wish for
And even more
Girl I love you more than you could know
And that's for sure
I'd climb the highest hill
Cross the widest sea
Nothin could discourage me
And I pray that you will be
Always there for me
Forever more

Ready or not**
I'll give you everything
And more
All that I've got--it's yours
I'll give you everything

All that you're looking for

I'll give you my heart
My soul
My time
My love is a fountain
I will be your earth
And all that you need for
And even more
Cause girl I love you more than words can
show

My love is pure
I'll walk a thousand miles
Sail a thousand seas
Nothin will discourage me
And I pray that you will be
Always there for me
Forever more

Repeat chorus** 3x



Figure 64 “Can You Stand the Rain”

Performed by New Edition, written by James Harris III and Terry Lewis

[Johnny:]

On a perfect day I know that I can count on
you. when that's not possible tell
Me can you weather the storm?

[Ralph:]

Cause I need some body who will stand by
me through the good times and bad
Times she will always, always be right
there.

[Chorus:]

Sunny days everybody loves them tell me
baby can you stand the rain? storms
Will come this we know for sure (this we
know for sure) can you stand the rain?

[Johnny:]

(yeah yeah) love unconditional I'm not
asking just of you. and girl to make it
Last I'll do whatever needs to be done.

[Ralph:]

But I need somebody who will stand by me,
when it's tough she won't run she
Will always, be right there for me.

[Chorus:]

Sunny days every body loves them tell me

baby can you stand the rain. storms
Will come (ricky) I know I know all the days
won't be perfect (this we know for
Sure) but tell me can you stand it can you
stand the rain?

Can you stand the rain [4x]

[Rick:]

No pressure no pressure from me baby (this
we know for sure) cause I want
You and I need you and I love you girl.

[Ralph:]

Will you be there for me

[Mike:]

Come on baby lets go get wet

Can you stand the rain [10x]

[Ralph:]

Can you stand the rain?
Will you be there girl?
Storms will come for sure.
Can you stand the rain?

[Johnny:]

Yeah it's hard but I'll know I'll be right there
baby yeah yeah yeah.



Figure 65 “Stop to Love”

Performed by Luther Vandross, written by Luther Vandross and Nat Adderley, Jr.

Lately love keeps keeping up at night
Tossing and turning, my love
Wanna kiss you, wanna hold you real tight
Ooo but I wonder love whether you know or
not
You just hurry away, leaving me laying there
in shock

I just wanna be the one that you wanna see
I just wanna have you near me
But you fly away almost everyday
You work a lot but you never stop to love

[Chorus:]
Stop, I love you so stop
Come home from the road
Gotta stop to love
And let's celebrate, celebrate the love we
got, stop
Say you're coming home

You say my love has always been on your
mind
But how can I ever love you, when you keep
working overtime?

Too many empty nights, can make almost
any guy roam
To look for the love he don't get whenever
he's at home alone.

Awaiting the day that you're coming to stay
I hate to see you go away, but you couldn't
rest
Had to do your best to reach the top
But you did not stop to love

[Chorus]

And one day you'll discover I'm the one who
love ya
Gotta stop to love
No one loves you better
Can't you stay forever?
Stop to love
I can hardly stand the loneliness
Come on home, that's what it's all about
You really turn me out

[Chorus]

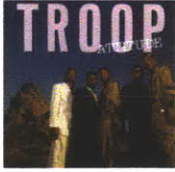


Figure 66 "All I Do is Think of You"

Performed by TROOP, written by Michael L. Smith and Brian Holland

Ooooooooooooooh....heeeeeyyy...

i can't wait to get to school each day
and wait for you to pass my way
and bells start to ring
and angels start to sing:
"hey that's the girl for you
so what are ya gonna do?"
hey little girl!!!
I LOVE YOU !!! (i love you so...)

CHORUS:

All i do is think of you
day and night (day and night that's all i do)
i can't get you off my mind
thinking back (all the time)
all the time

I begin to take the long way home
just so i can be alone
to think of how to say:
my heart's here to stay
(hey i'm in love with you
i think the world of you)
so won't you please...PLEASE be mine?
(oh please be mine mine mine)

CHORUS(2):

All i do is think of you (baby)
day and night (day and night that's all i do)
i can't get you off my mind
thinking about (thinking about you all the
time)
all the time

oooooooooh (bub bub ba bub bu
daaaa...ooooooooooooh)
(Spoken:)girl, i wanna say thing but i don't
wanna tell ya (i just think
about it and i'm in love with you)

(bup bup bu da daaaaaa...oooooh)
I think the world of you (ooooooooh)
oooooooooooooooooh

CHORUS(3):

All i do is think of you
day and night (day and night)(night and day)
i can get you off my mind (oooooh)
thinking about

ooooooooooooh.....oooooooooooooh baby
I keep thinking about you
all night long
ooooooooooooh
baby
day and night that's all i do
woooooaaaah (heeeeeeeey)
i can't get you (heeeeey)
i can't get you off my mind (heeeeey)
hoooooooooooo (heeeeeey)(heeeeeeeey)
OOOOH!!!

CHORUS(4):

All i do is think of you
day and night (day and night that's all i do)
i can't get you off my mind
thinking about (i should be thinking about
you)

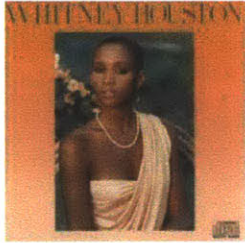


Figure 67 “You Give Good Love”

Performed by Whitney Houston written by La Forrest Cope

I found out what I've been missing
Always on the run
I've been looking for someone

Now you're here like you've been before
And you know just what I need
It took some time for me to see

That you give good love to me baby
So good take this heart of mine into your
hands
You give good love to me baby
Never too much
Baby you give good love

Never stopping I was always searching
For that perfect love
The kind that girls like me dream of

Now you're here like you've been before
And you know just what I need
It took some time for me to see

That you give good love to me baby
So good take this heart of mine into your
hands

You give good love to me baby
Never too much
Baby you give good love

Now I've stopped looking around
Each night what this life's all about
Our love is here to stay
Baby you give good love

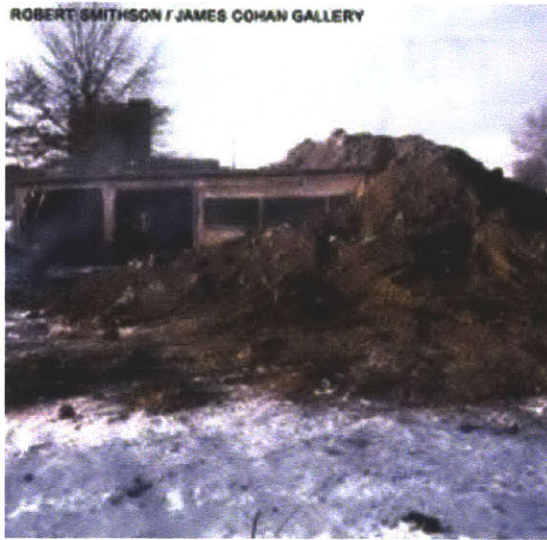


Figure 68 Robert Smithson, *Partially Buried*, 1970



Figure 69 Plate from Henry Brown's "Narrative of the Life of Henry "Box" Brown, Written by Himself," 1851

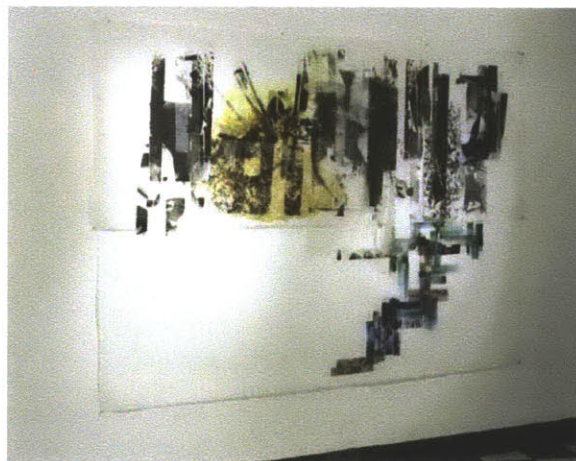


Figure 70 Tomashi Jackson, *Tailfeather*, 2009. 8'X12' multi media drawing on frosted mylar.



Figure 71 George Kuchar, *Tinsel Town*, 1998. Video still.



Figure 72 Tomashi Jackson, *Lindsay Lohan*, 2012. Video Projection and sing-a-long performance. BHFQ Bruceforma, MoMA PS1, LIC, NY. Easter Sunday 2012

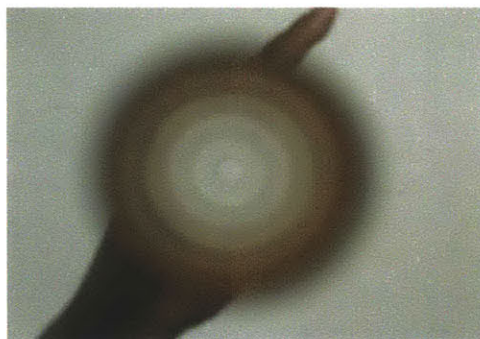


Figure 73 Tomashi Jackson, *Untitled (My hand holding a copper pipe)*, 2011. Digital photograph.

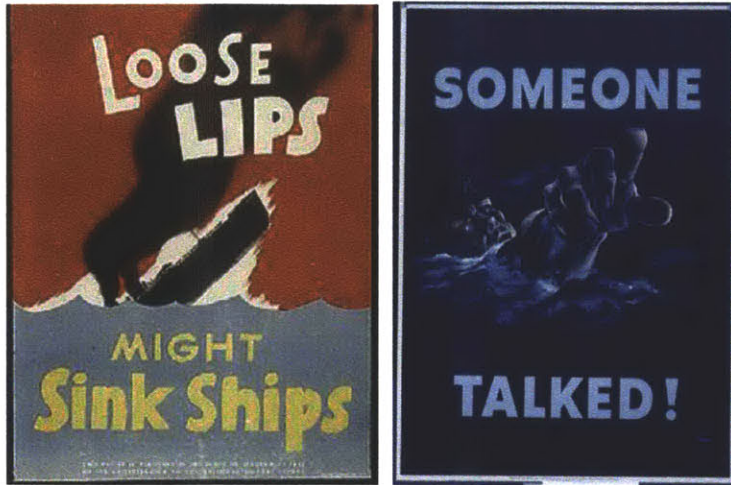


Figure 74 WWII propoganda posters urging against careless speech in public.

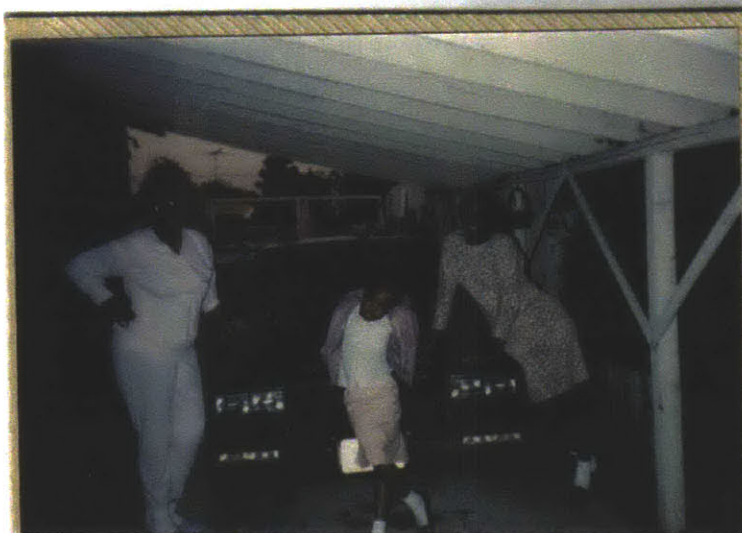


Figure 75 Family photograph: L. Jackylen Ball. C. Tomashi Jackson. R. Saudia Ali. Photo taken in the driveway of Ball's home, L.A., CA, circa 1987. Photo: Len McCoy.

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