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Black Dada
Adam Pendleton

1. it's a matter of fact

2. it's a matter of fact

a full moon hanging in a low sky irradiates the day with a milky glow

4. it's a matter of fact

going in a taxi from the train station

a full moon hanging in a low sky irradiates the day with a milky glow

i was with nielsen living and painting in a north beach flat

8. it's a matter of fact

a full moon hanging in a low sky irradiates the day with a milky glow

i was with nielsen living and painting in a north beach flat

going in a taxi from the train station

and then somebody kicks off the lid

sigh and then breathe

these buildings don't uncover a single truth, so which truth do you want to tell?

the grant is 800 euros
16.

it's a matter of fact

a full moon hanging in a low sky irradiates the day with a milky glow

the grant is 800 euros

it’s theological; it’s a revelation

going in a taxi from the train station

and then somebody kicks off the lid

need i cite charles van doren

on a stool in a greasy spoon

human beings were born to live in a relationship of interdependence with nature

the performance must be done on location

regular communication by email with a commitment to responding within a reasonable time frame

the performer must not be credited

a revolving door

she was a unit in a bum space; she was a damaged child

so did i love

architecture is bound to situation

32.

it’s a matter of fact

a full moon hanging in a low sky irradiates the day with a milky glow

now i am older and wiser
going in a taxi from the train station
she was a unit in a bum space; she was a damaged child
so did i love
regular communication by email with a commitment to responding within a reasonable time frame
sigh and then breathe
the performer must not be credited
and then somebody kicks off the lid
it’s theological; it’s a revelation
steel bell drops
the grant is 800 euros
on a stool in a greasy spoon
need i cite charles van doren
i want the grey-blue grain of western summer
i want the cardboard box of wool sweaters on top of the bookcase to indicate home
i want a very beautiful woman
a common doubt expressed about the “practice-based” researcher is whether they are equipped for “competent reading”
the performance must be done on location
these buildings don’t uncover a single truth, so which truth do you want to tell
the desire for coffee
the formal beauty of a back porch
remember the wedding?
dada is our intensity

i want a very beautiful man

when a work of architecture successfully fuses a building and situation, a third condition emerges

i think what black arts did was inspire a whole lot of black people to write

monuments are embarrassing to dutch culture

revolving door

song of the garbage collectors beneath the bedroom window

seeds of the fig

64.

it's a matter of fact

a full moon hanging in a low sky irradiates the day with a milky glow

going in a taxi from the train station

now i am older and wiser

she was a unit in a bum space; she was a damaged child

the formal beauty of a back porch

and then somebody kicks off the lid

i need the grey-blue grain of western summer

i need the cardboard box of wool sweaters on top of the bookcase to indicate home

i need a very beautiful woman

steel bell drops

when a work of architecture successfully fuses a building and situation, a third condition emerges
what black arts did was inspire a whole lot of black people to write

Black Dada, black dada

did inspire a whole lot of black people to write

this is dada's balcony, i assure you

from there you can hear all the military marches, and come down cleaving the air like a seraph landing in a public bath(s) to piss and understand the parable

i had a nice dick, average length and all

i wanted ron to look at it, want it

dada is our intensity; it erects inconsequential bayonets and the sumatral head of german babies

i need a very beautiful man

it's theological; it's a revelation

the grant is 800 euros

need i cite charles van doren on a stool in a greasy spoon

how are we to define this poem?

what makes you think that's what this is for?

what do you want for christmas?

does it mean that if the universe is infinite, then in some other world a man sits in a kitchen, possibly in a farmhouse, the sky lightening, and nobody else up and about as he writes down these words?

i want the perfume back in the bottle

i need a prick in my mouth

i need an explanation

what did you think when they converted the funeral home into a savings and loan?

revolving door
dry blood

song of the garbage collectors beneath the bedroom window

seeds of the fig

white dada remains within the framework of european weakness

the essence of architecture is an organic link between concept and form

pieces cannot be subtracted or added without upsetting fundamental properties

we want coherence

she was a unit in a bum space; she was a damaged child, sitting in her rocker by the window

i want western movies

i need monday morning, a prick in my mouth and coffee

a cigarette and coffee for two

primal soup

pineapple slices

Black Dada is a way to talk about the future while talking about the past; it is our present moment

a common doubt expressed about the “practice-based” researcher is whether they are equipped for “competent reading”

yellowing gauze curtains

remember the wedding?

the raised highway through the flood plain

regular communication by email with a commitment to responding within a reasonable time frame

so did i love this
the performer must not be credited
the performance must be done on location
feet, do your stuff
sigh and then breathe
i want a young man with long eyelashes
white wings of a magpie
red shingle roof
i'm unable to find the right straw hat
how will i know when i make a mistake?
presentness
soap
we ate them

128.

it's a matter of fact
she was a unit in a bum space; she was a damaged child
a full moon hanging in a low sky irradiating the day with a milky glow
the formal beauty of a back porch
but now i am older and wiser
Black Dada
The Black Dada must...
The Black Dada must use irrational language.
The Black Dada must exploit the logic of identity.
The Black Dada's manifesto is both form and life.

can you feel it?
does it hurt?
is this too soft?
do you like it?
do you like this?
is this how you like it?
is it alright?
is he here?
is he breathing?
is it him?
is it hard?
is it cold?
does it weigh much?
is it heavy?
do you have to carry it far?
what about dinner?
The Black Dada is neither madness, nor wisdom, nor irony.
song of the garbage collectors beneath the bedroom window
look at me, dear bourgeois
dada is a new tendency in art
art used to be a game of nuts in may, children would go gathering words that had a final ring, then they would exude, shout out the verse, and dress it up in dolls' bootees . . .
one can tell this from the fact that until now nobody knew anything about it, and tomorrow everyone in zurich will be talking about it

Black Dada: we are not naive

Black Dada: we are successive

Black Dada: we are not exclusive

Black Dada: we abhor simpletons and are perfectly capable of an intelligent discussion!

DA DA DA DA DA DA DA TK TK TK TK

thus saith the lord

i need ron to look at it, want it

i need a beautiful woman

i need the cardboard box of wool sweaters on top of the bookcase to indicate home

i need western movies

i need the grey-blue grain of western summer

Sol LeWitt exhibited his Variations of Incomplete Open Cubes in the early 1970s. Which is to say LeWitt's Paragraphs on Conceptual Art (1967) and Sentences on Conceptual Art (1969) had already been written.

In 1969 a young June Jordan dedicated her poem "Who Look at Me" to her son Christopher:

We come from otherwhere

In part we grew by looking back at you

BLACK DADA.

Malcolm X arrived in Harlem in the early 1950s.

In 1952 John Cage composed his famous silent work 4'33".
At the Meredith March in June 1966, a year before LeWitt wrote Paragraphs on Conceptual Art, Stokely Carmichael arguably laid the foundation for the Black Power movement.

In a talk given at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst on the 6th of November 2006, Kathleen Cleaver asked:

The 1960s, is that something that still makes you stand up and notice? Do you still notice the 1960s?

Hugo Ball read his Dada Manifesto at the first public Dada soirée in Zurich’s Waag Hall on July 14th, 1916:

Dada psychology, dada Germany cum indigestion... dada literature, dada bourgeoisie, and yourselves, honored poets, who are always writing with words but never writing the word itself, who are always writing about the actual point. Dada world war without end, dada revolution without beginning, dada your friends and also-poets...

Dadaism in the wake of the First World War.

Public gatherings.

Demonstrations.

Art of protest.

BLACK DADA.

Did our conceptual artists join hands with our freedom fighters?

Did they demonstrate in Birmingham?

Did they cover their faces when the hoses were turned on them?

History is in fact an incomplete cube shirking linearity.

BLACK DADA.

a common doubt expressed about the “practice-based” researcher is whether they are equipped for “competent reading”

feet, do your stuff
sigh and then breathe

i want the perfume back in the bottle

i want a prick in my mouth

i want a young man with long eyelashes

regular communication by email with a commitment to responding within a reasonable time frame

so did i love (this)

the performer must not be credited

the performance must be done on location

props and sets must not be brought in

the sound must never be produced apart from the images or vice versa

any cameras for documentation must be handheld

special lighting is not acceptable

optical tricks and “effects” are forbidden

the performance must not contain superficial action, declarations or jokes

temporal and geographical alienation are forbidden

genre performances are not acceptable

the format must be set: 30 minutes, 20 minutes, 1 hour

white wings of a magpie

red shingle roof

steel bell drops

wave glory

soap
human beings were born to live in a relationship of interdependence with nature

the desire for coffee

how will i know when i make a mistake?

the grant is 800 euros

does it mean that if the universe is infinite, then in some other world a man sits in a kitchen, possibly in a farmhouse, the sky lightening, and nobody else up as he sits and writes down these words?

if the function of writing is to express the world

i need an explanation

i’m unable to find the right straw hat

Black Dada is a way to talk about the future while talking about the past

History is an endless variation, a machine upon which we can project ourselves and our ideas

that is to say it is our present moment

The history of conceptual art as (is) an intimately constructed narrative deserving of an aggressive deconstructive interpretation.

An iconic structure that embraces linearly passive readings of its ideological principals and the moment of its “coming into being.”

the raised highway through the flood plain

pineapple slices

we want coherence

we want a revolving door

song of the garbage collectors beneath the bedroom window

seeds of the fig
white dada remains within the framework of european weakness
i need monday morning and a prick in my mouth
a cigarette and coffee for two
what does it cost?
do you speak english?
do you hear a ringing sound?
are you high yet?
is he the father?
are you a student at the radio school?
what is it that attracts you to bisexual women?
do you know which insect you most resemble?
did you know i have a nice dick, average length?
did you know his cum is the eighth color of the rainbow?
do you know what it tastes like?
but now, look at me, we don't agree with them, for art isn't serious, i assure you, and if we reveal the crime so as to show that we are learned denunciators, it's to please you, dear audience, i assure you, and i adore
but now i was older and wiser
black dada your history of art
we ate them
Abstraction is also flight. It is freedom from the immediate spatiotemporal constraints of the moment; freedom to plan the future, recall the past, comprehend the present from a reflective perspective that incorporates all three; freedom from the immediate boundaries of concrete subjectivity, freedom to imagine the possible and transport oneself into it; freedom to survey the real as a resource for embodying the possible . . .

—Adrian Piper, “Flying” (1987)

A term like “afro-conceptualism” is useful for the way it stages the relationship between abstraction and freedom.

Is there a role for abstraction in the abolition of alienated labor?

This phrase—the abolition of alienated labor—is European in origin but would seem already to better describe the arc of North Atlantic history than that of the Continent. Or—and this is the point—the words abolition, alienated, and labor have a unique and indisputable material record in the history of slavery. Nor should this record surprise us, for if the influence of the Haitian Revolution on Hegel’s conceptual account of the struggle against identity is as it should be, then it is not too much to say that all conceptualism of a certain lineage is afro-conceptualism, whether it knows it or not. The difference between self-conscious afro-conceptualism and the “normal” conceptual conceptualism with which it is contrasted would then be simply that: a difference of self-consciousness. It is not that afro-conceptualism is another instance of conceptualism; instead, it names the material encounter—the record of which is the conceptual project—as such.

Let me try to be more specific. Sometimes we talk about identity politics, usually as a foil. But it is worth remembering that all hitherto-recorded history is the history of identity politics, properly understood. I do not mean in the sense of a primordial clash between distinct, fully formed races, nations, classes, or genders, but, on the contrary, the way in which these very identities are themselves produced after the fact to justify the current regime of accumulation. To say that the struggle of workers in a factory is “more real” than the struggle of black people against institutionalized exploitation, or than queer struggle against heteronormativity, is not only unjust, it is inaccurate. In truth, if we were forced to articulate a chronology for the naturalization of socially antagonistic identity assignments, we would have to say that gender appears first, and then race, and that class, in the historical sense, happens last, and is modeled on the other two. The phrase “identity politics” is like “afro-conceptualism” in that it marks as derivative what is, if anything, original. This does not mean these terms
are without analytic merit, just that they are invitations, notes received in the mail to reserve a place in the future for their unfolding as events, when their power as truths will manifest.

In striving toward this moment, I wish to offer a distinction that I think may be helpful. I begin by asking after the role of abstraction in the process of abolition. One way of answering this question is to distinguish between two experiences, or two modes of abstraction. The first is the experience of abstraction as a force, which happens when the body is subject to violence by virtue of its ostensible coincidence with one of the identity assignments listed above. The belly of the slave ship, sexual violence, and the fourteen-hour day on the assembly line are all examples of this kind of abstraction. Abstraction is a force whenever and wherever the subject is misrecognized as an object. We know this misrecognition has taken place by the refusal, or resistance—to use Fred Moten’s language—of these subjects to their utilization as objects. At first these refusals appear simply as anomalies, but, with time, they demand to be accounted for.

It is in the service of this demand for recognition that the second experience of abstraction arrives: the practice of abstraction, or abstraction as a relationship. This is the experience described by Adrian Piper in her essay “Flying,” from which I take my epigraph. For it is precisely by practicing abstraction—by poetry or painting or whatever—that the subject confirms itself as other-than-object. We call this process of confirmation a revolution—the amalgamated refusal whereby what was previously understood as an object is now recognized as a subject. And so, Amiri Baraka represents the slave ship onstage in all its abstract force, drag places gender at the service of collective performance, and workers insist on control over their expenditure of time and energy. In each case, the object pulls away from itself and becomes a subject practicing abstraction, insisting on the distance between itself and the ground.

It has been said that the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house, but what about the people the master treated as tools? That is, the “tools” that were themselves capable of practicing abstraction, those three-fifths? Before the question about tools can be asked, there must already be an understanding about what a tool is and what it is not. My point is simply that it is the struggle for access to the master’s tools, and the tool of abstraction in particular, that creates this difference in understanding by destroying the misrecognition lurking behind mastery in the first place. One day there are masters and tools, and the next, only people. No forces, just relations. Black Dada is the name I borrow for the immanent historical possibility of this transformation: Black for the open-ended signifier projected onto resisting objects, Dada for yes, yes, the double affirmation of their refusal. Yes, yes to afro-conceptualism, yes, yes to the practice of abstraction, yes to history,
all of it, yes to freedom, all of it, yes, to flight, yes to flying in the future, heart was going like mad yes, I say yes.