

*"I want a dyke for president."*⁹

Queer cinema is about possibility. Audiences will continue to yearn for and need coming-out stories and AIDS narratives (especially as they finally begin to hear the versions told by those who are often forgotten in mainstream ideas of the LGBTQ community), but the queer imagination can surely move beyond what's been done.

These recent films point forward, not to one prescriptive idea of the future but to a plural sense of its possibilities. Yet they are firmly rooted in the radical language that's been running through queer discourse for decades. Rather than applauding toothless studio movies made for suburban American audiences or cheering on straight actors bravely taking on (and away) queer roles in indie darling films, critics should heed the call that today's vibrant queer cinema is amplifying. It's a call to remember that criticism is a form of activism, a form of demanding more from what you consume.

I want stories about love and about shame. About jealousy and about friendship. About monogamy and about open relationships. About aging and about youth. About activism and AIDS and sex and death and marriage and divorce and abuse and tenderness and motherhood and childhood and yearning and loss and fantasy and reality and joy and pain and first dates and last rites and hot sex and cold feet and ancient history and imagined futurity. I want queer stories on film to be as expansive as the lives they seek to represent.

MANIFESTO

Renew the Encounter

RaMell Ross

A lung submits to anxiety and smog, a heart to love and cholesterol. All sense of truth passes through the body. People are the real documents of civilization. And one's eyes are made for the field of events. Things come in as *this* and are processed into *that*; while most melt aimlessly in one's memory, others cling to totems in their sky. In this personal storm of consciousness, the act of looking makes a mirror of meaning. Instinct is infused with culture, a reflex by which nothing can be understood until it is adjusted.

Throw in a camera and the fiction's entombed.

Alas, the big bang of photography and film burst forth in a Eurocentric imaginary. Monies to be made, othering to

Notes

1. Carl Wittman, *The Gay Manifesto* (New York: Red Butterfly, 1970), <http://paganpressbooks.com/jpl/TRB-WITT.PDF>.
2. "Queers Read This: Published Anonymously by Queers" (New York: ACT UP NY, 1990), <http://www.actupny.org/documents/QueersReadThis.pdf>.
3. Combahee River Collective, "The Combahee River Collective Statement," in *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*, ed. Barbara Smith (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 267.
4. Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," in *The Public Nature of Private Violence: The Discovery of Domestic Abuse*, ed. Martha Albertson Fineman and Roxanne Mykitiuk (New York: Routledge, 1994): 93–118.
5. SPIT! (Sodomites, Perverts, Inverts Together!), "The Anti-Assimilationist Manifesto," in *The Spit! Manifesto Reader: A Selection of Historical and Contemporary Queer Manifestos* (New York: Frieze Projects, 2017), 4, https://carlosmotta.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/SPITReader_Final.pdf.
6. Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 31.
7. Jerry Tartaglia, "A Statement of Outrage against American Assimilationists Who Practice Appeasement of Hetero Terror in the Wake of A.I.D.S. Genocide in the United States," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian & Gay Studies* 19, no. 4 (2013): 559–60.
8. *Homotopia*, directed by Chris Vargas and Eric A. Stanley (2007).
9. Zoe Leonard, "I want a president . . ." (1992), <https://iwantapresident.wordpress.com/i-want-a-president-zoe-leonard-1992/>.

behold. Point and shoot and capture. Repeat after me: the God of the camera is a colonizer. Hey, look here. The rest is history. The receiver of this gaze dies a certain death, a peculiar death of the imaginable.¹ In the American matrix, I've been framed black. In your case, maybe something else. These varying degrees of death are often presented as varying degrees of life. Cameras should come with a caution label embossed on the lens cap:

I am not concerned with verisimilitude,

I help you believe.

Believe what?

The chops of American culture have always licked especially for black folks. A people ready-made. A billion limbs. Fluids of field souls and house hands alike, dripping their weather in soups and crop beds across the nation, built up the immunity to my total consumption. Chomp. A photograph of

easy reading. Sip. A film without reflexivity. Gulp. A look over yesteryear's horizon reveals photography and film as the technology of racism.² The material form of racial representation, a visualization of the concept in question, is necessary for its initial engagement. But a cul-de-sac history of exploitation is held in black skin. How do you attend to a problem that is the visualization of itself?

*Read "Non-Cartesian Sums."*³

Reset your relationship to Western knowledge formation.⁴

Resist most logic.

Only your experience has irreducible singularity. Most logic is functional and conditioned. Welcome the dream.

Develop a photographic sensibility.

Make the camera an organ. Take it into your body. Shoot toward a personal poetics.

Consider the visual story of blackness.

Phrenology to Blackface to Kodak to Blaxploitation. Iconicity to noniconicity.⁵

Unsuitcase black images.

Remove them from the luggage of the traveling salesman.

Fail at representing blackness.

The act of representing is the act of reproducing. The less black the more black.

Reading skin is a game, a skin game.

It is the recursive interplay between what is observed, remembered, desired, feared, imagined, misunderstood, reconsidered, recalled, observed, remembered, desired, feared, imagined, misunderstood, reconsidered, recalled, observed. . . .

Blackness is content.

It is a skin game.

Break the social contract with mainstream blackness.

Locate and avoid the stock use of blackness.

Disautomate the consumption of blackness.

Embrace the ambiguous, complex, decontextualized, recontextualized, fragmented, black image. Employ recumbency, eye contact, obstruction, concealment, and iterations of time.

Embrace contradiction. Dismiss contradiction.

The seduction of blackness is not the mystery of the engagement, the range of possible new knowledge encountered, but its proximity to its icons. Point otherwise. Be elsewhere.

Find the circadian rhythm of blackness.

Start with the quotidian.



Hale County This Morning, This Evening (RaMell Ross, 2018), 00:55:13.

Produce new icons of blackness.

*Use strategic formalism.*⁶

Question all indexical iterations of race.

Is there a visual vaccine against racism?

Can the fractured, astray black image act as a probiotic to racist pathology?

Aim for a black involution.

Blackness is unstable and evolves alongside our participation in its acknowledgment. Collapse it to expand it.

Create the Black Dictionary (that's me).

Representational death owes human ingenuity a dramatic intervention, as the lens-based portrait can relay humanity and reinforce inferiority to the desire of the viewer. Images have no heart, they are candy for the mind. In film, the tamed, stringy image employment in narrativizing makes even more clear the issue at hand: the reality-textured, reproduced moment carries an encyclopedia of content, the background existing as the foreground for some, the maintenance of much with the alleviation of little.

For the over-relied-upon sake of genre and theme, industrial cinema requires the spaying and neutering of images within the body-film. This is a cannibalistic act. The complexities of a race-based reality have outgrown these traditional structures of story and narrative that gnaw them into palatability.

Their genealogy subtractive.

Their comfort with more death.

Unable to reconcile the necessity for a responsive, formal embodiment of the content with antique structure, story, and character arc demands, this cinema entertainingly dissuades critical thought while producing status quo belief encounters and in turn, belief systems. If form is content and blackness is content then blackness is form. *Blackness must not be separated from its form.* If blackness/form is unstable and evolving

then the ideas of structure and narrative must evolve correspondingly to accommodate. The site of the image in a time-based chain of interpretation must remain fertile.

Shelve the Victorian model of narrative arc and structure.

Or let it respond transformatively to the content.

Consider the indecisive moment.⁷

Free the reproduced event from the essentialization of narratives and story.

Find the epic-banal.

Bring elation to the experience of blackness. Acknowledge the magnificence of the universe's encasement in the social, awaiting other forms.

Lean toward experience creation.

Most logic and blackness are in constant debate. Create the personal-poetic experience of blackness, renew the encounter.

Use music as mentor.

What music does, the universe is. Embody this musicality, its being, forms, its liquid organization, its escape from reason and the need to justify itself. Or be dance.

Incomplete the work.

Default to resignifying. Require joint meaning making. Viewer + work = an instance of finished work.

Reach the mainstream with nonindustrial image production.

Work outside of industrial time and factory processes (and beyond the arthritics of the old avant-garde).

Time becomes the new medium, a clock measuring the long macro drawl of a racial gesture left out, its meaning in respite for a pacemaker's life span or two. Weather and sculpture. Iterations of time in the phenomenon called blackness. In-America suspension. A mountain to its knees. A movement toward the present. An acquired taste for images and films. Of their own volition.

Notes

1. It is the Black Quantum Zeno Effect, following up on Carlo Raveli, *The Order of Time* (London: Allen Lane, 2018).
2. They are today what the steam engine and electricity were to the Industrial Revolution.
3. Charles W. Mills, "Non-Cartesian Sums: Philosophy and the African-American Experience," in Mills, *Blackness Visible: Essays on Philosophy and Race* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 1–20.
4. Can one explore the image/moving image within a decolonialized, polytheistic imaginary?
5. Nicole Fleetwood, *Troubling Vision: Performance, Visuality, and Blackness* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).
6. To rise above black representational space. See Darby English, *How to See a Work of Art in Total Darkness* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007).
7. This is opposed to Henri Cartier-Bresson's Decisive Moment, which referred to capturing an event that is ephemeral and spontaneous, where the image represents the essence of the event itself. See Henri Cartier-Bresson, *The Decisive Moment/Images à la Sauvette* (New York: Simon and Schuster; Paris: Editions Verve, 1952).

MANIFESTO

Watching White Supremacy on Digital Video Platforms: "Screw Your Optics, I'm Going In"

Lisa Nakamura

HIAS likes to bring invaders in who kill our people.
I can't sit by and watch my people get slaughtered.
Screw your optics, I'm going in.
—@onedingo (Robert Bowers)

Here, now, are three exhortations about where film and media studies need to move in order for us to understand how

digital platforms support fatally racist media, how they ought to be regulated, and how this media exploits and remediates earlier forms—all things that film and media scholars already know how to do.¹ It's not enough to say that the world has changed and media studies must change with it. Instead, we must ask ourselves what we're going to do about it. How do our skills matter in this ghastly moment in U.S. history? What are the best practices and methods for understanding right-wing white supremacist media?

The Case for White Digital Media Studies

It is too easy to simply blame the "Internet"—specifically, YouTube, video games, and social media—for the militant far right's renaissance. One of the first tenets of any introduction