

## **Black hole as metaphor**

Throughout this exploration I've been both observer and phenomena. When embodying the role of phenomena (black hole), I covered my face with a silk bonnet - an object which serves to protect Afro hair. After some consideration I realised that this symbolic gesture is an act of what I can only describe as "black preservation". The idea of preservation is present in that I become anonymous and can no longer be studied/read/peered into by onlookers. I've essentially taken the internal function of the bonnet, and transmuted that meaning into something metaphorical; something which can protect me from the visual associations that come with bagged heads - associations being abduction, captivity, execution, etc. Covering of the face references my older works which also explore this theme as well as artist influences such as John Baldessari and Larry Achiampong, both of which have worked with ideas of anonymity. The covered or Bonnet-head also lightly references the surreal horror imagery of David Lynch.

*Orbit 4* was shot a few years ago when I was in St. Lucia, so it ties in geographically with the barrel. The scene is loosely representative of a newfound autonomy and explores identity beyond industry and restraints (bars and wires). It moves on to *Orbit 5* which shows the barrel on its side dripping paint, to me, the paint is a visual reference to the black blood spilt throughout the centuries.

The motif of hands reoccurs throughout the video, beginning with *Orbit 2* where my hands take the colour of the white space around me, moving to *Orbit 3* where my hands are black against the black box of my essay. Through to *Orbit 5*, where my hands shake as I film the barrel - a connection between the humanity of/in my hands, and the blood which coats the inside of the barrel. Lastly, there's *Orbit 7*, where I explore how my extremities can be extended through the attachment of objects – something also explored by Rebecca Horn. *Orbit 7*, where my hands twist and clap and feathers sprout from the tips of my fingers -

here, I reference Carnival, a vivid memory of freedom, sunlight, and the smell of ocean. I never knew that blue could be so joyful, but that day...*that day*, cast in lapis and gold where bodies swayed and whirled, where feathers covered the stadium seats, glitter dusted my tiny toddler cheeks, that day was joy.

Hitoshi Steyerl's *How Not to be Seen: A Fucking Didactic Educational .MOV File*, 2013 influenced my use of orbits, which break the video into smaller sections. The orbits appear cyclically, stirring up a sense of swirling, whereby the viewer is looped around each frame - effectively circling the event horizon. The concept of looping is also carried through the number of orbits, 8. Eight is visually a coiled, loopy little number, it also imitates the mathematical symbol for infinity, just vertically - it's a little cliché, but significant, nonetheless.

The video is fairly quiet, using only some minor foley (typing sounds and white noise) to "speak". Initially, I intended for the video to speak through a script and poetry, however, upon completion I realised that the addition of audio would detract from the visuals.

The barrel was one of the earlier editions to the work, and it has proved vital to the project's development, playing both a historical and personal role. It is a physical, visual aid to the metaphor of the black hole, and plays with ideas of displacement and family history. The inside of the barrel is semi-reflective so that the observer can peer into the object and see how they fit into the narrative. I chose for the barrel to be stationed a good distance away from the film so that observers can move about the space and interact with both elements independently. Although barrel is stationary, it is reminiscent of Steve McQueen's *Drumroll* of 1998 which is often read as being representative of movement, disruption and experience within the city.

Both the film and barrel are presented in a white space, this mirrors how black holes are only visible by the light that surrounds them, and this translates directly to the common black

experience. I didn't want the film to be large scale despite knowing that it would look good aesthetically, it just felt too much like a cinematic spectacle and less like a window for contemplation, I couldn't do that to the experience.

I don't think that this project is finished yet, I don't think it ever will be. The matter is so dense, but I will continue to revisit it throughout my life and practice. Maybe I'll adapt the framework to fit new ideas as has been suggested to me by psychotherapist Hyun Lee, who believes that it would be an interesting approach to investigating the unconscious mind. Adapting the framework would take some time given that nothing I've considered fits the metaphor quite as snug as the black experience.