# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>Sketch of a Courtyard</td>
<td>Katherine Adams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Lonely Lars in Summer</td>
<td>Oliver Preston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Bedtime</td>
<td>Tobias Kirchwey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Thomas, Eclipsed (Excerpt)</td>
<td>Maurice Blanchot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Trans. Theo Ellin Ballew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Mowing the Lawn, Murder, Erasure</td>
<td>An Interview with Jacolby Satterwhite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>Desert Poem</td>
<td>Mary Mussman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>For the Harder Days</td>
<td>Jake Orbison</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LUCAS SIN, DIMENSIONS, LOST
Dear readers,

Someone has stolen our identity. Just today our P.O. box was broken into; we opened the small metal flap to discover our credit card and office key missing. Our twitter has been taken over as well: please do not retweet us.

Needless to say, lately we’ve had difficulty communicating. The pieces in this issue speak, but not necessarily to each other. One poem is being poisoned as it speaks. Another piece shatters a swan and sketches the fragments.

*Today it was more difficult to get through*, writes one of our poets. This issue takes the form of a long distance phone call. Reception and transmission are perilous.

To tell the truth, at such a distance it’s been *difficult to make any observations of consequence*. We ourselves are *continually slipping out of sight*.

Our contributing artists have sketched some architectural plans to get us reoriented, but they seem to
have gotten mixed in with the magazine’s design. If a space was being described, we wouldn’t know it.

A big thank you to Richard Deming, this issue’s judge of the Francis Bergen Prize; to Carmen Cusmano of Yale Printing and Publishing Services; and to Cindy Hwang, our wonderful designer.

Well readers, here we are. We hope you can hear us.

Later,
Maya Binyam and Margaret Shultz
SKETCH OF A COURTYARD

Katherine Adams
There were two swans, glass, that I broke throwing headlong. I threw them out of the park, or rather I exploded its limen, grafting the brick of a dance studio next door with a smattering of that iconoclasm’s “taps,” addenda to those of the dance class being held across the divide—really, I broke nothing; it was sonorous necessity summoning up a random, if superfluous, flight.

A man sat down on the bench demarked by the dilapidated wings. It was silent then; he was uncapping a flask of port; he was draining it in the next beat; at the dregs, he suspended his exhalation for a moment as conductors do. The disappearance of the liquid was the score in toto.

His head was similar to the executeds’; just like those birds’ it was mute but participant. The guillotine was (not me!) the wall, of course: the man was startled by this assertion; he rebelled and crooked his neck, which was supposed to sit straight like the swans’; he injected my composition with the flask, shattering it suddenly in clamorous rage. I remained silent, but my staves coiled in his wake to a single

KATHERINE ADAMS
tone—their clefs settled into monotonies. My ears began ringing, and I noticed he had struck a match.

Before I saw his cigarette show smoke, he was walking away with it. Thus I was back again with the knocking of metallic feet; with two women from an overhead window, cackling; with the sun’s light now denuded, clouds a frame. All was being exposed; the dancing taps—a din, the peals—mere echoes touching me, loosening at each ricochet. I settled into the next gust of wind; I shivered, though no hair on my arms would stand.
OLIVER PRESTON

LONELY LARS IN SUMMER
camp chair, suppertime, when everyone’s head inside, sexy dusk fingers cradling the cul-de-sac, who’s left looking from the roof?

who, who to take vigil over the blank course of the street the grass, the sprinklers coming on—shock like a wet tit loosed from its cup?

who but me, lars?

slowly, strangely, the day lights itself a cig, pulls in smoke. already again i find myself stretching awake. *well lars here we are.*

thus with the morning turn endless the years everything same in itsnowness. newness. so?

i’m going out to skate, aloner.
Tobias Kirchwey

BEDTIME
When I was young and watchful
I collected the flecks in my food
to keep as samples.

I thought my parents were trying to poison me.
My parents knew this,
and tried to prove they loved me
by not poisoning me:
Dad held my arms
while Mom brushed my teeth.

I insisted that they were trying to kill me,
and my father, who knew how important it was
to articulate the ineffable,
made me clarify this thought.

He took my hand
and sat with me. I told him,
Every night you come to my bedside to sing,
and every morning I am worse.

TOBIAS KIRCHWEY
Maurice Blanchot
trans. Theo Ellin Ballew
THOMAS,
ECLIPSED
Thomas sat down and he looked at the sea. For a stretch of time he stayed there, motionless, as if he’d come only to watch the other swimmers’ movements, and, while the mist made it impossible to see very far, he stubbornly remained where he was, his eyes fixed on those bodies as they struggled to progress across the water. Then, when reached by an especially large wave, he too went down across the sand and slid into the tumultuous water that quickly overcame him. It was a calm section of the sea where Thomas often swam a long time without tiring. And so he wasn’t worried about losing stamina, even though his goal suddenly appeared very distant, and he experienced a slight disquiet about going somewhere without knowing the way. What normally prevented the fear of tiring was familiarity with his path, which he would recognize and retrieve from within the water, knowing that if he followed it exactly his strength wouldn’t fail him. Today, however, it wasn’t the same. He’d chosen a new route.
and neither discerned anything in the distance to show him the way, nor recognized, hardly, the water in which he was gliding. He still made no effort to go back the way he’d come. The mist hid the shore such that returning there no longer seemed to be an option, and regardless he was making his way toward a more monumental and further removed goal that as of yet he’d only glimpsed. He was wrangling with himself beneath the solitude weighing upon him until suddenly he perceived a swimmer, not very far away, who moved with a rapidity and ease that was astonishing. It was the kind of spectacle he’d have liked to take time to admire. The burden of his own weariness began to seem even heavier. Still, the sight was also a sort of consolation, and he wished he had the strength to cry out and to obtain a cry in response. So his voice made an attempt to rise above the noise the waves produced in their unending turbulence. He expected the sound to be lost in the clamor pressing in upon it, but was surprised by a distinct and vibrant cry that sprang out through the wind’s sighs and seemed to splinter into the silence that it was ripping to shreds. But the swimmer ignored
the call, and his indifference seemed so impossible that he might have been removed from reality. After this, the act of swimming became more and more important to Thomas, though he sensed he was doing it strangely. A cloud had come down onto the sea and the water’s surface was lost in its pallid glimmer that seemed the only thing truly real. Violent waves shook Thomas’s body and pulled his arms and his legs in different directions, but this wasn’t enough to assure him that he was rolling in a familiar element. The water’s volatility made even his effort to swim into an activity that was tragic without being serious and that left him feeling nothing but despondence. Perhaps all he needed to drive out these desolate thoughts was a more complete self-control, but his eyes could settle on nothing and he felt as if by contemplating the emptiness he hoped, absurdly, to find some kind of help. Meanwhile a boat emerged from the fog, first slowly, periodically disappearing into a darkness consisting of only that disappearance, and then suddenly surfacing up so close that Thomas could have read the words shining on its hull if he had wanted to go to the trouble.
Was this because there was no one manning it? He let it move away as indifferently as if its image held for him some illusory promise, and he continued to swim like a man who having completely forgotten all dangers was taking great pleasure in what he did. It became clear how foolish this was when the sea, stirred up by the wind, broke out into a violence so sudden and so extreme that he could barely perceive its effects. One might have thought that the storm so disturbed the water that it dispersed into inaccessible regions and that the gusts of impetuous wind were about to wreak havoc on even the sky but there was also a silence and a calm as though all was already destroyed, and the stretch of sea seemed no different from one of those deserts where the passerby ends by doubting his or her own existence. Thomas tried to advance by disengaging himself from the tasteless tide invading from every direction. A bracing cold, as vibrant as if he’d been plunged suddenly into the middle winter, paralyzed his arms such that they now seemed heavy, and foreign. The turbulent water swirled around him. Could this really be water? Sometimes the
foam fluttered before his eyes like ashen snowflakes and sometimes it was the very absence of water that seized his body and his legs and moved them violently. And so suddenly he had the unfortunate impression of being chained to an illusion that he didn’t understand. He breathed more slowly and for a little while held in his mouth the liquid that the gusts of wind were pushing against his head; and yet this was nothing but a warm sweetness or softness, the peculiar drink of a man deprived of taste. Then he realized that his limbs, either from fatigue, or for another unknown reason, felt as foreign as the water in which they rolled. Every time he reflected on the way his hands disappeared and then reappeared with total indifference to the future and a sort of unreality that he was forbidden to understand, he was fully ready to believe that he would encounter many more unforeseeable difficulties before he was finished. He didn’t lose heart; the sense of danger was completely separate from the disturbance that caused the situation. What was there to be afraid of? And yet this didn’t make him any better off, because though he could continue indefinitely in the water or
whatever unfamiliar element had taken its place, there was something unbearable about swimming with a body that served him in no way but—he now realized—to believe that it was swimming. But that wasn’t all. After a bit of time passed his skin appeared to be wet in an abnormal manner. Large blotches of moistness covered his arms and his chest. Because he couldn’t seriously examine what was happening he could only attribute this to the numbness, and he let his arms float softly on the water’s surface as if the body he’d been using for swimming were as fluid as the liquid it pierced. The sensation was pleasant at first. The only possible explanation seemed to be that he pursued, in swimming, a sort of daydream in which he was becoming mixed into with the sea; the intoxication of leaving himself, of sliding into the emptiness, of being dispersed into the idea of water, made him forget the painful impression he was fighting and that had conquered him like nausea. And even as this imagined sea that he was more and more intimately becoming seemed to merge with the true sea where he was as good as drowned, he was not as upset as he should
have been; more than anything else he felt comforted, as if he had finally discovered the key to the situation and everything were now ready for him to continue with an absence of anatomy in an absence of sea his journey without end. But certain naïve aspects of this outlook were incompatible with reality. He began to roll from one side to the other, like a rudderless boat, in the water that was acting as his swimming body. The sensation of something extremely vague, similar to a pain of an intensity that conceals its cause, passed through his limbs. He told himself he would soon be able to continue searching for a way out and realized how ridiculous it was to fight being carried away by a wave that was his own arm. In the end he was very quickly overcome, and the state of his soul resembled that of a being that would soon drown bitterly in itself. It was surely time to stop: his strength would not take him much farther, and the cold was becoming unbearable. But one hope remained and again he swam as though he’d become a fish in its native sea, as though within his restored inner self he had suddenly discovered the potential to continue swimming. Was this an
advisable thing to do? He was feeling better; he had the agreeable impression of breathing with gills and living off invisible bubbles of air formed in the depths of himself. He felt so completely gratified that rather than stop there he let himself be prey to transformations he might have been able to ward off, if his first triumph had not made him over-confident. He saw that by continually approaching a more elementary existence, he evaded danger and became better situated to go as far as was necessary. He was swimming better, like a monster deprived of fins; under the giant microscope, he made himself into ambitious piles of eyelashes and vibrations tirelessly beating against the water. The endeavor became entirely bizarre when he began trying to swim not in the water around him, but rather in a vague, ideal region, that was here and not there, a kind of sacred place where he could be within the matter that was above matter itself. He secretly thought that this place was so perfect for him that he needed only to be there, to be; it was like an imaginary hollow into which he sank because, before he was there, it had already been imprinted with his own form. And
so he made one last effort to commit himself entirely. This was not at all difficult, he met no obstacle and had the impression that he was uniting with himself and settling into this place where no other could come, where he had finally found a repose that none could dispute. But the illusion didn’t last long. In the end he had to go back, and as the shore was quite close, contrary to what he had previously thought, returning would be a simple task. With ease he made his way to a sort of cliff to which swimmers sometimes made a special trip so they could jump off. His fatigue had disappeared, and when the wind had finished drying the streaming water off his body, there remained no evidence of what had happened. He did however feel a buzzing in his ears and a burning in his eyes, as might be expected after any long stay in saltwater. He became especially aware of this when, turning toward that unending blanket on which the sun reflected, he tried to make out the direction in which he had traveled so far. Then there was truly a fog before his eyes and he was fully prepared to perceive anything in the blurred emptiness he feverishly tried to pierce with his gaze.
Looking out, he discovered a man swimming in the distance, half lost under the horizon and so far away that he could not see his movements. At such a distance it was difficult to make any observations of consequence, and the swimmer was continually slipping out of sight, and reappeared only in the moments when his existence seemed most unlikely. Thomas refused to move from his post. As though his tired eyes were sharper for their fatigue, he continued to follow all the developments of that swimmer who might have already vanished and who, if he were in fact there, could only have passed for an unimportant bit of flotsam. This absence, far from bothering him, revived his curiosity. Not only did he still seem to perceive the swimmer very well, but he also felt himself drawing closer to him and into an intimacy greater than any he’d felt before. He stayed there several moments watching, and waiting. There was in his contemplation something painful, something onerous, that was much like the feeling of too much freedom, the kind of freedom obtained through the rupture of all ties. His features became confused and his face assumed a rare expression.

THOMAS, ECLIPSED
LIAN FUMERTON-LIU, UNTITLED
An interview with
Jacolby Satterwhite
“SUBWAY,” STILL FROM REIFYING DESIRE 6, 2014
Jacolby Satterwhite doesn’t know what influences him anymore. Using live performance and recorded performance, 3D drawing and 3D animation, Satterwhite traces and retraces an archive that is continuously materializing. Remembering home, his mother, Trina, and the video games he played as a kid, Satterwhite remembers private and public mythologies, blasting them through a virtual landscape whose geography is shifting between mediums. The most recent installment in his *Reifying Desire* video series was featured in the 2014 Whitney Biennial; his work has also been shown at the Studio Museum in Harlem, the Sundance Film Festival, the Bronx Museum, and at Artspace, here in New Haven, among other places. In October he gave a talk and taught a workshop at the Yale School of Art. We spoke to him on the phone on an unusually warm day in December. We ate peanuts in Boston; he cleaned his home in Brooklyn. Here is our conversation.

*All images courtesy of Jacolby Satterwhite. Their colors have been modified in this publication with the permission of the artist.*
Most interviewers begin by asking you about your mother—your relationship with her, her influence on your work—and while I don’t mean to make you reiterate what you’ve already said elsewhere, it seems important that a description of her ‘influence,’ or whatever, come from you, and not be schematized neatly by us in an introduction.

Yeah, I know what you mean. It’s funny because I’ve been doing a lot of lectures lately that start out by negating that presumption that she is the overarching theme. She does have a very prominent space in the work. I would say that the thing that influences me most in my work is potential that can be found in observation and language. Not necessarily in the literal sense, the painterly sense of observational drawing or observational painting, but in asking what it means to observe language and observe images and observe archives in the past, and use those materials to synthesize and concretize into a unitized form.

So, the thing about my mom is that...obviously I’m sure everyone’s parents—you can’t help it, you’re

MOWING THE LAWN, MURDER, ERASURE
going to be influenced by them, it’s your genesis of character building. But artistically, she and I were collaborating ever since I was a child. I was influenced by her vigorous output of drawings when I was five, six, and seven years old, and she showed me how to draw and to use the materials that my father would buy for her. She influences me because she has a lot of taste. She also helped me build my queer sensibility, from our habits of watching soap operas, reality television, and fashion shows together. And designing objects together. That very insular Southern upbringing while you’re in a private, introverted domestic sphere you’re going to be...I had very little to bring me up, so naturally she fits into the work. But the thing is, what also raised me in my domestic sphere was video games. I had every console and I played them 90 percent of the time, especially when I reached adolescence. And television. Pop culture raised me. And, eventually, art.

‘Reifying’—taking something abstract and making it concrete, ‘real,’ or material—seems to be at
the heart of what you’re doing in rendering your mother’s drawings...

Sorry...I’m, like, cleaning up the house at the same time.

But it also seems that there’s something paradoxical about reifying through the creation of a virtual, animated world.

Yeah, because it just becomes more abstract, there’s no concrete. That’s what made me leave the reification, the Reifying Desire series, and move toward En Plein Air. The more I realized that it was a paradox, and the more things got abstract, I moved towards this series called En Plein Air. En Plein Air is me moving away from Reifying Desire and moving toward realizing that nothing will become concrete. I’m paying respect to the idea of observing landscapes: live-action performance, landscapes of Google, landscapes of personal archives. The landscape of collaboration is what I realized I’m more interested in than actually trying to build a fence; who am I to build a fence out of something?
For maternity and for after maternity:

Dresses + Pants

W/ Tights

Pants; spandex tights.
“ALPHA” TRIPTYCH (DETAIL), 2014
Your mother’s drawings, it seems, enact a familial archive that can be drawn from and re-materialized. In animating the domestic—making it fantastical or otherworldly—you create a mythology of the ‘home’ that is infinitely renewed. How does this new mythology disrupt the staticism of the archive, or dislocate a trauma that is supposedly elsewhere in time and space?

Are you asking how this new archive dislocates trauma or disrupts the normal, original structure of what I remember?

Yeah.

Are you asking me how I revisit these past archives and repurpose them from an initial adversarial structure?

Yeah. How does that new mythology rework the archive itself?

I don’t know if it’s reworking it. I mean it’s completely
“ALPHA” TRIPTYCH (DETAIL), 2014
reworking it. It’s not even reworking it, it’s just using it as the material, the platform to build something new. Nothing has been reworked; something has been created. There’s a cliché tendency to put my practice under the Afrofuturist umbrella because most of my things that I build come from places that are a little more personal and a little more difficult, from the more politically sensitive. I am compositing those ideas into a much more digestible or open-ended spectrum.

**Do you feel like Afrofuturism—as a term, as a genre—is too closed?**

Well, Afrofuturism is closed as a genre because it’s Afro. Which is already saying it’s black. Human beings can do this. It’s not just a black thing. Human beings experience things that are a little difficult and a little bit weighted, a little bit hard to digest. Human beings can use these materials. I think it’s more of a human practice than an African American or African diaspora practice. But it makes sense because African American history is a really complicated prism full
of prejudice and segregation. It’s harder to exist and assimilate into a society where you need to prove yourself or work twice as hard. It makes sense that we create safe spaces for ourselves. And maybe I have created a safe space for myself as an artist because of my position. I was born an artist and my desire to create has no didactic agenda. I’m not trying to express a political thing about queerness or about race. I was born wanting to make a mark, a line, and I think maybe I was creating a safe space for myself as an artist through my infrastructure and my practice. It allows me to have freedom to be creative, and doesn’t weigh in on the much more racially, politically loaded thing. My work is politically loaded and very queer, and does have these policies in it. That’s going to come naturally through me because I’m black and because I’m gay. But I think at the end of the day I really want to be a creative type who has the freedom to make conceptual decisions that are more poetic, more meaningful, more personal, rather than message-based. So yeah, I guess that’s what I’m saying. I take from places that are really weighted and
neutralize them into deformalist objects that help me construct new things.

In the first three years of performing you wore a mask, a costume that allowed you to play with anonymity. As a performer, you’ve said, you “come from planet Jacolby,” but as a studio artist you “come from planet Earth” and “live under the consequences of the past 400 years of black American history.”¹ Your work seems to provide a line of escape, but it seems also to toy with the space between—being Jacolby, becoming ‘anonymous,’ moving from the real-world to a virtual-reality. How easy is the transition? Are these two roles mutually exclusive?

I’m obviously more confident in the studio and as a result much more sophisticated than how I exist in the real world. In the real world there’s a lot more transparent space and I’m not very sure of variables that are in front of me. So I’m constantly trying to grow with it. I find myself increasingly interested in being in the

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real world. It’s not my comfort zone, definitely, and I definitely feel insecure in the real world, even if I have visibility as an artist. I feel like it’s harder to digest. Is there a difference [between these roles]? Well, when I’m performing I’m definitely in character but not a pretentious character. I just feel like because I’m living under the prism, or umbrella, of ‘this is art,’ it’s like a shield. I’m creating form, I’m making a mark, doing a gesture, and it’s under the shield of art-making. So therefore I feel like my point of departure as a human being is different when I’m performing than when I’m my sincere self in the world that’s removed from the studio, and has nothing to do with making a mark but just has to do with assimilating to the natural world. That’s much more difficult. It makes me wish I could find a way to completely become my art. But I don’t know if that’s possible.

Your work has been exhibited in museums and gallery spaces, performed on the Brooklyn Bridge, the subway, the financial district. How do shifting institutional rules or representations disrupt,
or rework, the terms of your ongoing projects?

I’m figuring that out as I go. Those are experiments. I’m figuring out what it means to do a sculpture kind of presentation versus a theater, versus a gallery monitor that is positioned like a painting. I think they all have a specific energy to them, and I do have a hierarchy of preference for how I want my works to be shown. But that also comes with my agency as an artist, and people giving me real estate to properly present these ideas. But I felt like there was an urgent message in them so I got them out however they needed to be. And the more I get older and the more the work grows, the more I’m specific and narrow about the way they are presented. But I feel like there’s so much nuance in these videos. I really want them to be in theaters, arenas, or black box spaces, places where the audience feels compelled to stay and experience them from beginning to end. That matters to me.

I’ve also been thinking about nightlife space, even though that can take it all the way to the lowbrow.
Note: Real Housewives (T.V. Show) showed this gate,
relatives, I relate.
“REAL HOUSEWIVES” TRIPTYCH (DETAIL), 2014
I’m screening a video at Verboten, which is a club in Williamsburg that Susanne Bartsch puts together. I’m going to do a little performance as well. They have a surround screen and the space is so spiritually large in regards to how the music is, and the crowd. I’m curious as to what happens when this fine art piece sits itself in there. And that’s been done before by many different artists, but I’m just curious. I’m still experimenting with how an ambient thing can be focused on. I do prefer to be specific about how these things are set up in the public because there’s so much labor and painstaking detail to build these pieces. I feel like they need full-on attention. They need to be large scale. My decisions before were just about experimentation. A lot of compromise and sacrifice comes with rushing. Or not rushing but being given opportunities last minute, or getting too many opportunities at the same time, or being given opportunities that have little real estate for me. And even though I’ve had the wonderful opportunity to have my projects be visible in amazing contexts, I don’t think there’s ever been a specific context that I felt really worked.
So I’m looking forward to being really specific about curatorial decisions.

To what extent do these geographical shifts—remembering the American South, putting it in relation to Manhattan subways and Italian paintings, exhibiting the results in Harlem or Provincetown—reterritorialize the terms of your work?

When I was doing work in Mallorca, in Spain, that really influenced me. There’s something about the classical nature and the umber palette of the space. Geography influences my aesthetic decisions. But I also like going out into nature, experiencing the landscape, and experiencing the city. Not the actual institutional spaces of geographies—they don’t really influence me at all. I don’t even know what influences me anymore. I get a feeling and then I just go with it.

You mention elsewhere that voguing is a set of “animistic practices” that “borrow postures from Renaissance painting and Egyptian hieroglyphs.”²
Recently—since the release of *Paris is Burning*, maybe earlier—it seems that voguing is increasingly commoditized as a form or discursive set of physical movements. Does voguing enter your virtual worlds as part of a new mythology? How does it break with, or reify, a decontextualized idea of what’s ‘cool’?

Well, I’m not really interested in voguing anymore.

Really?

I was in the beginning. But I was only really interested in voguing peripherally, and that’s because of growing up in that scene, my friends being in it. *Paris is Burning* is amazing, I love that film.

Yeah, it’s so good.

I really respect the craft. I have default movements that reference voguing, but to me voguing is just compositionally interesting. The angles and lines,
and specific kind of way the body forms itself when performing this way, that lends itself to a much more harmonious composition whenever I am animating or building. For me it’s a formal movement that relates to drawing and relates to miming, but it’s also a modern dance. I’m interested in modern dance tropes as well. I’m just trying to figure out how to use variational, limited movement forms to keep a harmonious image going in my work. I’m thinking about objects, I’m thinking about sawing, I’m thinking about levers and pulleys, I’m thinking about mowing the lawn, I’m thinking about murder, I’m thinking about erasure, I’m thinking about sexual gesture. And even when I had the porn star guy in my work and I was having sex on camera, that was kind of a dance performance as well. And I thought that yielded interesting Kama Sutra poses that lent themselves to composition. Politically, I’m not interested in voguing. I’m trying to abstract the movement of it more, to get that language outside of my practice to stop people from talking about it. My movement style has defaults that reference voguing, but it references a lot of things.
It feels similar, definitely related, to what you were saying about Afrofuturism. If people are looking at your work and saying “He’s a black artist, he’s voguing, he’s an Afrofururist,” I would imagine that those categories—combined—could feel especially limiting, or like they’re presupposing something.

They do. Oh my god, I get so angry. When I was going to go teach that workshop at Yale I told an artist, “I’m going to go do this for a week.” And [he said], “What are you going to teach—voguing?” I was very offended.

Woah, that’s crazy.

Like, what did you snort yesterday?

That’s messed up.

It is. Anyway.

Anyway, yeah, I was wondering...maybe this is kind of an annoying question, but on your website,
you describe your work as queer several times: your pieces are “queering meaning in a performative animated narrative”; you’re influenced by “queer phenomenology.” How does queerness structure or imbue your work?

Queerness—I say this over and over—isn’t about the homosexual queerness or the gay queerness, you know, it’s more about the disorienting terms of queerness. When an object is repurposed or when ideas flip themselves upside down. Basically redefining space, redefining function, redefining relationships between an object and another object, or a body and another object. That’s the kind of queerness I’m interested in.

It seems like your engagement with the archive enacts a kind of queerness.

Totally. I mean, that stuff is still figuring itself out. Also working with Trina lately—I chose her because she’s a very loaded pop image, and a pop image is branded, which means it’s hard to remove the image
from its brand. And I just wanted to figure out how I could completely rebrand her, queer the meaning of her body and her lyrics. Recontextualize her a bit, use her as a material of my own. Which is a strange kind of authorship-imperialism. But that fits into the category of queerness for me—how do you take a brand, a popular culture brand, and composite it into a new space of meaning? Reconfiguring is what I’m interested in doing.

**I was going to ask you about Trina—how you two got connected, why you wanted to feature her, or her brand, in your work.**

Well, she’s a gay icon in the south, and so when I was a teenager I wanted to be like her. I would listen to her music and make transgressive decisions because of her, which is really funny. I think that she has this feminist thing going on. Really abrasive large-scale violence. Sexually abrasive, materialistically abrasive, capitalist abrasive ideas in her music. It’s a similar kind of lexicon that existed in my mother’s drawings, regarding the obsession with diamonds and money
and opulence and sexuality and hybridity. I wasn’t interested in her because of hip-hop. I was interested in her because I wanted to use the language from her public mythology to build a new structure for a piece. That’s all. It was very loose.

The Pérez Art Museum in Miami and the Borscht Corporation helped me get in contact with her, and they funded the green screen facility for me to shoot her. So they contributed to this project, and I’m going to present it at the Pérez Art Museum. Previously, before Trina, I worked with the porn star Antonio Biaggi, and I became interested in how public mythologies can inform narratives the same way that I was using outsourced language from my mom’s drawings and objects. I was just like, take people who are muses and just use their discography, their lyrics, their poetry, their brand, and all the symbols that they come with, and circulate them through my sexual Carina. For me it was also reinforcing the notion of the archive. I wasn’t interested in the hip-hop part or the music part. Ashland Mines is helping me make the soundtrack and he’s going to completely dishevel...
her lyrics, and music, and....I don’t know. It’s going to be interesting.

The video you showed during your talk at Yale of you teaching Trina the dancing in front of the green screen—that was hilarious.

Oh yeah, that was hilarious. She’s really great. She’s really humble and nice. I respect her. She’s been around for like fifteen years.

Yeah, it’s wild.

Or maybe longer. I mean, I can’t wait to finish the project because it’s a lot of work, and I’m trying to move onto the next thing. I’ve been super interested in working with poets. Particularly in a William-Blake style. I don’t know if that’s going to happen. I’m having a hard time brainstorming the next move because I have so many moves I want to make. But I’m definitely becoming much more about isolating specific bodies of work that influence me and using them to build.
DESSERT POEM

Mary Mussman
I smell the wet clay you are spinning into vases—
you are waiting for someone to bring
bright cactus flowers to put in them, you look up,
you are blowing on the end of my cigarette.

This happens every so often,
and I don’t mind it so much:
a story about a man who pressed his thumbs
into the skin on your chest.

Leaving red clay marks.

You are still laughing.
The kiln is hot.

You rinse the clay from your hands,
push them into
a rag hanging from one of the hooks.
My cigarette has gone out, tossed into the desert.

You, you who take coffee
with slices of lime.
FOR THE HARDER DAYS

Jake Orbison

WINNER OF THE FRANCIS BERGEN PRIZE
I called California. It’s raining. Today it was more difficult to get through. The connection is always a bit strained, with you up in the hills and me by the ocean on the other side of the country. A student, I heard you say, called me a bitch today. I asked him to apologize. He said “Sorry, bitch,” then he ran away. I said I am really sorry. It’s alright, I’m ok. Then we talked about me for a while, and you said, Young poets who mention great poets by name feel cheap. Mostly, though, I could hear how hard you’re working—the soft defensive exhaust in your voice, the voice in which I hear my own name. I can never make that voice sound real. Things come too clear, trying so hard to be brave. No one would believe something so decisive could come from me. They are not wrong. Mine
must sound a little shallow and still, distant, underwater, maybe—rain?
(We have not yet developed a code for listlessness, as we have for pain.)
Here is my plan for the day today: maybe make some eggs and coffee, then try to rewrite lines by Milosz.

_A man when he talks should not use words that are dear to him_,
_or split open a seed to find out what is inside._

But those are great lines. It’s easy for them to say what words to use.
And you’re right—it is easy to say, _Milosz would say_, and have it be said and done with. When words are all he has, though, a man when he talks can’t help but use words so dear to him—words for practice, words for you, hollow in any other circumstance. He is less real to himself now, too. Also he is thinner, which you don’t like because it reminds you that we are two bodies, inevitably;

**FOR THE HARDER DAYS**
and proud and weary, we feel things more simply these days, but we are not willing to go back. We used these words separately once. Now together, they straddle the country, and more than ever we need them. They are not prayers. We run out of them. And when we do, we run outside, and it is still raining, but at least it rains here as it rains there, in California.