HOME IS WHAT I MAKE IT

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CONTENTS

Table of Figures .............................................................................................................................................. iv

Preface: .............................................................................................................................................................. iv

Chapter 1: You Are So White .................................................................................................................. 1

Chapter 2: bell hooks Can You Hear Me? ........................................................................................................... 5

Chapter 3: “The Cult of the Individual”…But I Still Want To Be Down ......................................................... 10

Chapter 4: House and Home: We Take the Plastic Off the Couch ................................................................. 16

Chapter 5: Gingerly Screaming...And Other Modes of Deafeningly Quiet Expression ................................ 20

Bibliography . ................................................................................................................................................ 34
TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1: *Atlantic Slave Trade*, University of California, San Diego, c 1808............................ 4

Figure 2: *Village of Yo*, Romare Bearden, ca 1964 ................................................................. 13

Figure 3: *Untitled*, Zackary Canepari, 2010 ........................................................................ 18

Figure 4: *Incognegro*, Kamilah K Campbell, 2011 ................................................................. 22

Figure 5: *Cakewalk*, Kamilah K Campbell, 2012 ................................................................. 25

Figure 6: *Cakewalk, Detail*, Kamilah K Campbell, 2012 ...................................................... 26

Figure 7: *Insurrection! (our tools were rudimentary, yet we pressed on)*, Kara Walker, 2000 ................................................................................................................................. 28

Figure 8: *Repurposed*, Kamilah K Campbell, 2012 .............................................................. 29

Figure 9: *High Yella*, Kamilah K Campbell, 2013 ............................................................. 31

Figure 10: *High Yella, Detail*, Kamilah K Campbell, 2013 ................................................... 32
I used to ride public transportation to and from high school everyday. The ride from Southwest to Northeast Philadelphia was a long one, about two hours each way. I would come into contact with hundreds of people, a few with which I would share no more than five words. It was in these long periods of exposed solitude that I could understand difference.

Difference was illustrated in the most mundane of things like clothing, purses, backpacks and shoes. But difference was also found in the most personal aspects of being such as skin tone and hair texture. Travel on public transportation made me aware of the potentially unsettling sameness and overwhelming difference between people, but these opposing forces were visually tempered by civility in the public sphere. A person was not called out if they wore a pair of British Knights sneakers or carried a macramé purse. A Black person was not heckled if she was travelling in a white neighborhood, or if a Christian sat across from members of the Nation of Islam. Difference was mostly overlooked when pursuing the common goal of getting to one’s destination.

I took a great deal of interest in where the riders around me would disembark, and I would use their personal attributes as a tool to aid in constructing a fantastical reality about them. If they wore backpacks and were around the same age as me, or younger, I could ascertain that they were on their way to or from school just like myself. If a woman wore a skirt and stockings with sneakers on her feet, I knew that she
worked in one of the many downtown high rises and likely had her high heels in her bag, or stored in her office desk. On my way home from school, I saw my fellow riders at the end of their day, travelling to their own homes. As I watched people exit the train, I would not necessarily construct realities about them, but instead wonder about the home they would soon open the door to. Would it be big or small, full of people or empty? Would they continue working or simply rest in front of the television, watching Wheel of Fortune and having a glass of wine? Did their house smell like lavender and eucalyptus, or was it full of the smell of fried pork chops and baked beans?

I would spend some time making these assessments, but most of my long commute was spent contemplating who I was and what my “difference” meant amongst this multitude of individuals I spent a significant part of my day with. How did my home differ from their home? I still do not have definitive answers about those differences, but my constructed image of what makes a home has become refined over the years. As a young girl, homes were playgrounds for construction where imagination could be applied to the arrangement of objects that mirrored their full-size counterparts; couches, chairs, tables, and people. Homes were also where the imposition of order was felt, where children understood that the adults established the rules of behavior.

As an adult, I understand that home is one of the primary places where the young are educated. It is in that place that beliefs are nurtured and history is handed down. Oral histories can be textbook, but may also match the interiors that hold them. Over time, I understood those histories as a fundamental part of me. As a child, that
history was accepted as gospel, but as I have matured, I have begun to regard those histories as foundational. They are firm ground to be built upon, serving as a lifelong conduit of identity construction.
CHAPTER 1

YOU ARE SO WHITE

“The history of the black Atlantic...continually crisscrossed by the movements of black people-not only as commodities but engaged in various struggles towards emancipation, autonomy, and citizenship – provides a means to reexamine the problems of nationality, location, identity, and historical memory.”

African-American culture in the 21st century is seeped in multiplicities. Following the Civil Rights and Black Power movements of the 50’s, 60’s and 70’s, the diversity of black experiences found one venue for recognized expression. While stereotypical imaginings of what blackness means can still be paramount in depictions of a supposed reality, African-Americans continue to push back the hardened skin, created by the weight of stereotyping, in order to shed light on the diversity of black expression. Collective representations of black identity are not acceptable illustrations of what has always been a multifarious actuality. It is inappropriate to nurture the belief that those belonging to the same ethnic or racial group are comprised of the same

physical, psychological, and social fabric. It sidelines individual desires for the sake of creating a monolithic collective or community responsibility.

When we think about ourselves, we know that we are variable. We tend to reveal one part of ourselves to our family, another to our friends, and yet another to our co-workers; we have a “private” and “public” self. In this regard “shifting notions of self and difference depend on context.” Identity can be understood as fluid, adapting to what a particular situation requires.

W.E.B. Du Bois’ conception of double-consciousness is one of many tools used to explore the subjectivity of identity. “Double-consciousness defines a psychological sense experienced by African-Americans whereby they possess a national identity, ‘an American’, within a nation that despises their racial identity, a Negro.” From a contemporary perspective, double-consciousness extends its reach to include identity negotiations within African-American culture.

The variety and complexities found in African-American identity is supported and clarified through Du Bois’ *Souls of Black Folk*. He writes “[it] is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity.” The result of this double-consciousness that Du Bois describes is a fractured

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sense of being more than one person, as well as an emphasized willingness to be more than one person.

African-Americans understand themselves as multiplied; the sum of their being divisible by the number of gazes that are negotiated to arrive back at one's self. Du Bois goes on to say “[one] ever feels his two-ness, -an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.” I believe that the two-ness embedded in double consciousness is a blessing, and a curse, allowing for a deeper understanding of American complexities, and has the potential to impede genuine reflection. Two-ness keeps identity held back to an expression of stereotypes and other unfair expectations prescribed to Blacks as a race rather than an identity as a possible development within the larger framework of what Paul Gilroy calls the “black Atlantic” illustrated in Figure 1.

4 Ibid., xiii.

5 See 1. 19. In laying the groundwork for a dialogue as it relates to the black Atlantic, Gilroy writes, “[the] specificity of the modern political and cultural formation I want to call the black Atlantic can be defined, on one level, through this desire to transcend both the structures of the nation state and the constraints of ethnicity and national particularity. These desires are relevant to understanding political organizing and cultural criticism. They have always sat uneasily along the strategic choices forced on black movements and individuals embedded in national political cultures and nation states in America, the Caribbean, and Europe.”
Figure 1 – Atlantic Slave Trade.
“Though black women did not self-consciously articulate in written discourse the theoretical principles of decolonization, this does not detract from the importance of their actions. They understood intellectually and intuitively the meaning of homeplace as site of resistance and liberation struggle.”

In 1990, feminist and social critic bell hooks wrote “Homeplace: a site of resistance.” In this essay, included by Andrea O’Reilly in *Maternal Theory: Essential Readings*, hooks posits that the domestic sphere for the African-American family has a “radical political dimension” where its inhabitants could deal with humanization and resist. For a large portion of African-Americans, work for women tended to revolve around service to others, mostly as domestic workers for white households. Female domestic workers found themselves in a position where their role was to care for a home and children that were not their own. This type of work environment, paired

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7 See 5. 267.
with long hours, had a tendency to truncate the amount of quality time spent caring for their homes and families. In order to ensure the ability to leave that burden of domestic care to others at the door, African-American homes had to be political. The resistance that hooks promotes exists as a necessary action to substantiate a more concrete understanding of self. In this capacity, the home is activated as a participant in the construction of identity.

Throughout her essay, hooks shows how displacement has become overwhelmingly synonymous and wholly dependant on the power struggle between interiority and exteriority. Interiority in the domestic sphere is safe and allows for the personal armor to recede due to the home’s status as a protected environment. On the exterior, or outside of the home, hooks writes about the way African-Americans experience constant pushback and judgment from what she calls “white supremacist norms.”

This power of the home to affirm identity is not exclusive to the African-American domestic sphere. Barrie Gunter, a social psychologist from University of Leicester, states, “the home is central to our personal identity. In many senses we can be said to wear our homes as we wear clothes.” Through the descriptions of the power wielded by the interior space, hooks illustrates how that domestic cloth feels on the skin of its inhabitants. The home does more than cover the skin, however, I believe the

8 See 5.

way one feels within the layer of home reflects her character, strengths and weaknesses. These understandings of home exceed the confines of race, but find specificity in my argument for and against the prerequisite of political resistance in the African American home.

But hooks does not refer to this interior space simply as the home, or a house. As reflected in the title of her essay, hooks calls it a “homeplace, [tasked with] making a community of resistance.”10 In this respect, the home has expanded beyond the traditional function of providing basic environmental shelter11, and out into the contemporary function of providing comprehensive political, social and cultural shelter. The inherent matriarchy is compounded by the responsibility to ensure that the homeplace is able to provide care and nurture its inhabitants. The homeplace must also serve as a reflection of the strength of the community in which it resides.

In the Souls of Black Folk introduction, Farah Jasmine Griffin writes “the women come closest to representing the longing for freedom, for intellectual and artistic expression,”12 that is supported by the resistance that hooks calls for in the homeplace. The politicized domestic sphere can serve to reconcile the bodily split, mending it into a unified whole unburdened by the weight of judgment. Hooks writes, “The act of remembrance is a conscious gesture honoring their struggle, their effort to keep

10 See 5. 267.


12 See 3. 21.
something for their own. I want us to respect and understand that this effort has been and continues to be a radically subversive political gesture. For those who dominate and oppress us benefit most when we have nothing to give our own, when they have so taken from us our dignity, our humanness that we have nothing left, no 'homeplace' where we can recover ourselves.”

For all of the strength contained within the walls of the African-American home, I wondered if hooks’ essay had the potential to negate the possible existence of internal conflict. She writes that “black women resisted by making homes where all black people could strive to be subjects, not objects, where we could be affirmed in our minds and hearts despite poverty, hardship, and deprivation, where we could restore to ourselves the dignity denied us on the outside in the public world.”

How is the work that goes into positioning the home as a resistant entity regarded? I argue that the resistance set up, exclusively by women, in the domestic sphere does not adequately deal with individual circumstances of identity construction. In Souls of Black Folk the reader is introduced to a woman named Josie who is described as “the centre of the family [possessing] the shadow of an unconscious moral heroism that would willingly give all of life to make life broader, deeper and fuller for her and hers.”

With Josie’s heroism is a desire to learn and to grow that would never find an outlet in her short life.

13 See 5.

14 See 5. 267.

15 See 3. 50.
“[She] is prevented from realizing her ambitions, not for lack of desire or the willingness to work, but because she is the economic and spiritual backbone of her family.”¹⁶ The family’s acceptance of their ignorance thwarts Josie’s ability to take advantage of the smallest possibility to enhance her own identity apart from her family. “The mass of those to whom slavery was a dim recollection of childhood found the world a puzzling thing: it asked little of them, and they answered with little, and yet it ridiculed their offering.”¹⁷

Propelling forward from 1903 to 1990, the jump from Du Bois to hooks sees a development in the offerings of the home, but offerings that are still crippled by an inability to distinguish group needs from individual needs. The painful residue of slavery is embedded in the oral histories that define a collective identity for African-American families. But through the efforts of The Civil Rights and Black Power movements, Black feminist discourse, and the rise of African-American contemporary artists, I argue that Black America has developed a varied outlook on the oppression by a white majority in America.

¹⁶ Ibid., 21.

¹⁷ Ibid., 74.
CHAPTER 3

THE CULT OF THE INDIVIDUAL...BUT I STILL WANT TO BE DOWN

“I knew there was a minefield ahead of me and no way to avoid the bombs, and even if you didn’t actually step on the bombs, you were already transformed by constantly looking out for them.”

To this day, authenticity in Blackness has been a consistent concern in regards to defining Black culture. “There is no dogmatically narrow, authentic Blackness because the possibilities for Black identity are infinite. To say something or someone is not Black – or is inauthentically Black – is to sell Blackness short. To limit the potential of Blackness.” These judgments regarding authenticity do not only come from outside the African-American community, but also from within. The cultural, social, political predisposition to packaging Blackness stifles the potential expansion of Black experiences to safe, consumable signifiers.


19 Ibid., 5.
Identity should never find itself quarantined, but it may at times be difficult to fully and freely express oneself because of the burden of collective identity. Dr. Michael Eric Dyson, a Professor of Sociology at Georgetown University states “at birth, you were given a Black card that made you part of a group and you had to give to the group and be a good productive member. You had to sacrifice for the group and do everything in ultimate allegiance to that group.”20 This allegiance is what drives the work which is put into creating homes with political power. It provides fuel for hooks’ belief in the ability of the home to affirm and strengthen the hearts and minds of the souls within its walls. But that allegiance also creates a blind eye toward what Dyson refers to as a “multiplicity of multiplicities”21 for the possibilities of Black identity.

The Civil Rights and Black Power Movements were built around an organized front against the inequities of upward mobility and varied experiences for African-Americans. The Spiral Group, formed in 1963, with Romare Bearden as one of its founding members, aimed to address concerns related to aesthetics, society and culture for Black artists, and lend support through meetings that extended the parameters of home. “The story of Spiral has been told as one of a search for a utopia when an ideal of artistic praxis would merge with, but not e conflated with, their lived experiences as

20 Ibid., 8.

21 Ibid., 5.
black people.” Bearden’s *Village of Yo* (Figure 2) reflects the concerns of his African heritage through the use of collage and cubist-inspired techniques that meld European and African histories. Bearden’s work during this time “embarked on a revelation of collage as a mixture of the abstract and the representational.” Bearden’s compositions serve to illustrate the cultural realities of the Civil Rights era, as well as the power of Black artists’ endeavors to communicate earnestly about the complexities surrounding Black and American identity construction.

hooks continues to promote the fight against inequity, stating that the “domestic space has been a crucial site for organizing, for forming political solidarity.” While family communication and earnestness regarding feelings and life experiences are important to strengthening the bonds of these intimate relationships, it is equally important to recognize the differences in generational circumstances.


23 See 22. 91.

24 See 5. 271.
I do not intend to suggest that the Black liberation struggle was not successful.

“In the post-Civil Rights generation the largest Black middle class in history has developed thanks to greater educational opportunities and increased access to professional, technical, and managerial professions.”^{25} As a young woman born in the late 1970’s, I was spared the feeling of constantly being at war with regards to my basic civil rights. The war I fought was much quieter, and more internalized. My war is to

^{25} See 17. 20.
constantly fight against the deconstruction of my identity, which has always been fluid and constantly fine-tuned.

Touré writes “the fight for equality is not over but that shift from living amid segregation and civil war to integration and affirmative action and multiculturalism – and also glass ceilings, racial profiling, stereotype threat, micro-aggression, redlining, predatory lending, and other forms of modern racism – has lead many to a very different perspective on Blackness than the previous generation had.” The political power set up inside the home now becomes about the most effective way to affirm multiplicity and to counter overt and underhanded racist aggressions.

Touré best capitalizes on the opportunity to challenge these aggressions by illustrating multiple ways of being Black. In the first chapter of his book Who’s Afraid of Post-Blackness, Touré recollects his first time skydiving. In addition to the negotiation of fear and constant questioning of whether or not he could follow through on the dive, Touré had to negotiate digesting the comment from three local Black men that “brother, Black people don’t do that.”

Touré understands that Blackness is a stew, and to succumb to thinking any other way is to sell Blackness short. He continued to reframe the cultural limitations of what Black people “don’t do” by doing. In his television show I’ll Try Anything Once, which aired the skydiving challenge, Touré not only jumped out of a plane, but he also

26 See 17. 21.

27 Ibid., 1.
took on the task of being a rodeo clown, a demolition derby driver in rural Indiana, a wildlife remover in Florida, a lumberjack in Wisconsin, and a cowboy. In this capacity, Touré is able to identify his personal interests and desires apart from a collective identity, challenging stereotypes of what Black people do, and expanding his own sense of identity.
CHAPTER 4

HOUSE AND HOME: WE TAKE THE PLASTIC OFF THE COUCH

“In the beginning, there is creation. In the end, there is property. In the middle, there are thing-stories: thing-stories that throw light on the often-fantastic ways in which we people our environments with objects, especially the domestic environment.”

The home functions in a variety of ways, ideally, it provides for the inhabitants physical and social well-being. The home also has a variety of ways of being referenced; it is a house, a dwelling, an abode, a habitat and a domicile. But regardless of the words chosen to name this place that shelters human beings, its purpose or usage will always be multi-faceted.

Its most basic function is to minimize exposure to the elements of nature. They serve as fixed settlements, aiding the growth of families, they provide safety from predators, and they give a sense of actual privacy. Springing from primitive homes that had a single room, came the architectural development of constructing interior as well as exterior walls, and so rooms inside a larger space were established. These rooms

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supported a variety of functions for the interior space and further supported the
division of public and private rooms within the home.

These aspects of the development of the home are significant because they pave the way for the notions of comfort.

The home can provide sustenance for a number of vital human needs. It provides a safe and familiar environment for ourselves and our families that will meet certain basic needs such as having somewhere to eat, sleep, wash, dress and relax. We know who else will be there (most of the time). We can choose what we do there and we know where to find things. The familiarity of the home is a source of comfort to us in a world that is characterized by so much uncertainty. The home therefore provides a sense of order in our lives.29

Comfort became a byproduct of control over the environment, providing an interior landscape within which its inhabitants form a bond to place. “A dwelling place becomes a home because of what it represents in terms of family experiences, relationships enjoyed with other people within it, and perhaps, most importantly, what it says about us as individuals.”30 The church (Figure 3) constitutes a dwelling that has been activated as an extension of home through the act of ritual and worship. In the African-American community, historically Black church organizations such as The National Baptist Convention and The African Methodist Episcopal Church serve as a spiritual extended family. The home, and its varied iterations, gained psychological significance in the lives of the people who reside within its walls, shaping and impacting identity.

29 See 8. 4.

30 ibid.
Figure 3. © Zackary Canepari, Joppa, Texas, 2010.
The interior of the home can project a particular image of the way we want to be seen to the world, but it can also reveal who we actually are. That actuality can include all that is good about its inhabitants, their goals, their past success, their current prosperity; but it can also include what we wish to be forgotten. The home, like its inhabitants, has a history made up of many layers, good and bad. That mixture creates a chemistry specific to the individuals psychologically bonded to that environment. The home becomes a place saturated with the memories, power and vulnerabilities of its inhabitants.
CHAPTER 5

GINGERLY SCREAMING...AND OTHER MODES OF DEAFENINGLY QUIET EXPRESSION

“She said, ‘How did you get here?’ I paused and said, ‘By plane.’ I didn’t have to prove my worth to her even if she was a Harvard professor. Just because she had a master's didn’t make her my master.”\(^{31}\)

“We’d rather quarantine Blackness but the beauty of Blackness is that it’s a rash that breaks out everywhere.”\(^{32}\)

My work is meant as an iteration of the African-American home where the beautiful and grotesque nature of its interior is represented in a physically and psychologically engulfing space. The display of mended and unresolved surfaces serves to underscore the weight of political resistance as it registers on the inhabitants and the homes susceptibility to continual conflict and potential instability. The motivation for

\(^{31}\) See 17. 82.

\(^{32}\) Ibid, 5.
this work grew out of Diaspora\textsuperscript{33} adaptations to displacements from home, Du Bois’ double-consciousness, the agency of the black Atlantic,\textsuperscript{34} and bell hook’s positioning of the African-American home in a political and resistant realm.

I seek to question and test what elements constitute resistance in the architecture that we inhabit, and also what makes a place a home. hooks’ conception of homeplace not only attempts to wield a powerful support system for identity construction inside of the home, but it also positions itself to affect the landscape of the community, extending a protective shield to the borders of racial divide.

My work exposes the limitations in the strength of homeplace to protect through the use of materials that signify the traditional interior, manipulated in non-traditional ways. The materials I use are themselves common parts of the interior space; they are extracted from the space and reanimated in a way that is meant to be symbolic. Chitterlings, fabric, pattern, stencil, paint, charcoal, drywall, thread, wax and embroidery hoops are not simply products, but come together to tell a thing-story about the lives with which they interact. These materials are manipulated to reflect the strength and stress that is often carried by moving bodies. In \textit{Incognegro} (Figure 4), the use of vinyl tablecloth and chitterlings elevates materials of the everyday into a commentary about the environments from which they are derived.

\textsuperscript{33} Diaspora is any group that has been dispersed outside its traditional homeland, especially involuntarily, as Africans during the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

\textsuperscript{34} In \textit{The Black Atlantic as a Counterculture of Modernity} Paul Gilroy posits that “English and African-American versions of cultural studies...share a nationalistic focus that is antithetical to the rhizomorphic, fractal structure of the transcultural, international formation...the black Atlantic.” See 1. 4.
In her book titled *Geography of Home*, Akiko Busch writes “the objects of our greatest affections bring a sense of history with them.” Creating a stasis in these objects alludes to the overwhelming weight of burden, pride and individuality. The quality of suspending time in my work intervenes on the materials normal context, diverting progression to another place, and providing a moment in which to contemplate the actualities of historical weight that is contained in a space.

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The seemingly innocuous presence of layers of decorative treatment reveals a history of moments that hold the key to the importance of place as a reflection of its inhabitants. Through the recognition of the elements of home within the work the viewer is able to contemplate on their own understanding of home as well as their own interpretation of the power of that home.

My work tests the agency of home and whether the interior space can mend the wounds of racism while registering those very aggressions. I argue for a continual evaluation of whether the home can be considered a resistant entity. Could it simply be regarded as politically neutral, or maybe just convoluted? My work serves as a testament to the potential of identity to be contentious, and the ideas surrounding the function of homeplace as antiquated, especially in regards to African-American generations born after the Civil Rights movement. That is not to say that history is unimportant. On the contrary, it is embedded in such a way that it can either be recontextualized to adapt to current racial circumstances, or become a weight that is continually carried as a crippling reminder of the struggles of our elders. Derek Conrad Murray, a professor at UC Santa Cruz said that he experienced “a dogmatic transference of trauma.” It is the trauma of slavery, the history of slavery, and the long-term familial effects of slavery that Murray recognizes in that transference. It is this burden that affects us most, and that same burden finds a visual presence in my work. In *Cakewalk* (Figure 5), the surface of the drywall wears that trauma through the depiction

36 See 17. 22.
of two figures (Figure 6) that dance “the cakewalk” through the guise of damask pattern.\(^{37}\)

\(^{37}\) Urbandictionary.com defines cakewalk as a traditional African American form of music and dance which originated among slaves in the US South. A cake, or slices of cake, were offered as prizes for the best dancers – a rare treat during slavery – giving the dance its name.
Figure 5. Kamilah K. Campbell, *Cakewalk*, 2012.
I have not taken up the battle of visual constructions of identity alone. Many phenomenal artists, visual and otherwise, have come before me creating a path from which I derive inspiration. hooks’ notion of homeplace has broken outside of the architectural frame to find resonance in contemporary artists’ work, namely: Kara Walker, Carrie Mae Weems, Mark Bradford, Louise Bourgeois, Isaac Julien, and Touré. When Weems talks about the limitations in her own life she states “[to] the extent that I
am confined, I'm confined only in my own head. So my responsibility to myself is to figure out ways to break through to new territory.” Artists can take chances in expressing the multiplicities that are opened up by not allowing African-American histories to stifle the growth of individual responsibilities to self. Histories become useful information, fostering knowledge, transforming artistic practice. For Kara Walker (Figure 7), history is a tool for the appropriation of images that “[externalize] what can’t be expressed verbally.”

38 See 17. 23.

Figure 7. Kara Walker, *Insurrection! (our tools were rudimentary, yet we pressed on)*, 2000.

I express myself through sculptural installations, transforming the perception of space, taking into account a larger experience that is often sensory in nature, portraying more direct parallels between internal domestic conflict, support and identity. I have come to understand that installation is the most effective way to question the complexities of identity in relation to the home, providing a visual weight to a psychological construct. *Repurposed* (Figure 8) targeted the psychological construct through a gendered, dirty, delicate, large and passive construction that directly questions the political nature of the interior space discussed in hooks’ essay.
Figure 8. Kamilah K. Campbell, *Repurposed*, 2012.
Claire Bishop’s book *Installation Art* introduces us to the idea of viewer experience as a primary tool. She writes that installation has a “desire to heighten the viewer’s awareness of how objects are positioned in a space, and of our bodily response to [it].”

According to Bishop, “…installation art does not enjoy a straightforward historical development.” As previously described, the home may have a more straightforward historical development that can be documented, but psychological depictions of the African-American home need a different type of viewing experience, one that installation is particularly well-suited for. What installation art can do for my work is offer the viewer an experience of difference, and provide room for the work to be psychological, phenomenological, disillusioned or political.

In my work, I seek to draw out the multitudinous nature of the interior space, questioning the contemporary function of home not only as a physical space, but also as a psychological, cerebral and rhizomatic space. The spaces in my work are not meant to reflect oppositional statements as either strong or failed interiors, but instead float as spaces undergoing changes that reflect a new and hybridized inflection of identity.

*High Yella* (Figure 9), is in conversation with the African American home as a politicized environment that has the complex role of providing shelter and supporting identity construction. These responsibilities are problematized by a long history of


41 Ibid., 8.
collective identities and an environment that charges its inhabitants with reinforcing humanness in relation to inequities experienced outside of the home. The work serves as an excision into a larger framework that gives a physical presence to a psychological construct.

![Image](image.png)

**Figure 9. Kamilah K. Campbell, *High Yella*, 2013.**

The African-American home attempts to combat the destructive legacies of discrimination through an internalized struggle to maintain Black self-determination and empowerment. Conflict comes into play through the navigation of micro-aggressions more prevalent today, versus the overt racism that forced the creation of a Black community out of necessity, regardless of class differences.

History does matter, but an investigation into how that history is enacted becomes crucial to uncovering the diversity in generational experiences. *High Yella* is one moment in a multitude of moments or ways of identifying with the world. I think of the work as a cultural evocation that exposes the limitations in the strength of “homeplace”. The landscape is at once romanticized but laden with moments of distress (Figure 10).
Figure 10. Kamilah K. Campbell, *High Yella, Detail* 2013.
My longstanding use of Chitterlings, or pig intestines, are symbolically foundational to my particular iterations of home. As a major part of African-American food culture, with roots in slavery as the discarded and abject, they illustrate a movement through time that is overt, persistent, and prominent. The materials I use are themselves common parts of the interior space; they are extracted and reanimated in a way that is meant to be symbolic, manipulated to reflect the strength and stress that is often carried by moving bodies.

Contemporary Black artists are seeped in a popular culture that has been more accepting of hybridization as a part of societal progressions. Technological advances have allowed for a more free flow of information and histories. But with access comes responsibility. With access, to histories in particular, comes a responsibility to remember. My materials are a part of that remembrance, but more importantly, they are a hybridized inflection of respect for collective African-American history and contemporary identity construction.

The role of African-American artists, as carriers of ethnic tradition or illustrators of collective identities, will likely remain contested for some time. The same is true for the home’s ability to always maintain a stronghold against micro aggressions. As an African-American, and an artist, I charge myself with maintaining an open door to a hybrid way of thinking and making. The home will continue to function, for me, and many other African-Americans, as a space of potential renewal and constant change. In the end, the home will hopefully answer the call to identify the changing needs of its inhabitants by understanding the necessity to provide for a multiplicity of multiplicities.
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