

Proposal: Auch ein Schwarzes Archiv

Project outline:

For this project, I am interested in creating an archive of sound-based cultural artefacts that document black life in Europe. I am conceiving of *Auch ein Schwarzes Archiv* as a semantic cloud of sound that includes recorded music, fragments of voices, phrases, expressions, chants, utterances etc. In this way, I would like to divest from the visual realm in which racial biases dominate and are likely to continue to proliferate. With an experimental approach to sound-making and the contextualisation of those sonic artefacts, I would like to pose that establishing a culture of listening could help destabilise the modern structures that foreclose our freedom.

I see this project as a *long term* undertaking of collecting, sampling and recontextualising voices and sounds from the diaspora and beyond, which are disseminated through various kinds of sound technologies and always exist as a cultural backdrop/frame of reference for afro-german life. For this project, I set out to engage with technology through strategies of electronic music production (synthesis), and employ compositional techniques such as sound collage and counterpoint to complexly highlight that from the tensions that do exist emerges a potential for something new. The resulting soundscape needs to be accessible (playable on headphones) and will not be tethered to the space of an art institution and to be in dialogue with an array of black (sonic) texts ranging from talks, music, sound art etc.

I am interested in the epistemic dimension of the black sonic. How black sound (especially, but not exclusively in popular culture) produces and disseminates knowledge, and affect while divesting from/deranging central aspects of knowledge production of the European philosophical tradition. Black sonic culture deranges and transcends (visual) representation, claims to universality, objectivity etc. One thinks, for instance, of the extensive use of sampling in hip hop and drum and bass, where multiple temporalities are condensed into one expression. It is helpful here to think of Denise Ferreira da Silva's formulation of the plenum in which all moments coexist with the here and now.

Why does the project need to be undertaken?

With decolonisation being one of the central paradigms of our time, I am feeling increasingly doubtful about whether its current mode of implementation (a new, now popular decolonial façade) is leading to a place we desire. The neoliberal art institution—not to speak of the sphere of commerce—has found the black imago and flat tropes of decolonisation as a lucrative means to remain at the centre of discourse. This coincides with an asymmetrical, colonial, white gaze that has not yet been accounted for. With this project, I intend to contribute to a tradition of using sound to resist the racial/colonial order and to confuse its modes of operation.

What readings and/or independent research has led to the project, and how do these connect to the themes of the project. What other artists, designers, thinkers and/or 'other' are already working in this area and/or have undertaken similar work?

Techno artist and theorist DeForrest Brown, Jr. systematically uses the term *Black Technology* in a way that I find pertinent to this elective and the proposed project. Firstly, Black Technology must be understood as the strategies of liberation and empowerment apparent in black cultural production and most predominantly in black music. Secondly, Black Technology implies the abuse of black people's bodies as technology during chattel slavery and its afterlife.¹ Techno is the cultural force that, perhaps, establishes this double connotation most explicitly.

Denise Ferreira da Silva's call for the entire overthrowing of Thought is also an important leveraging point for this undertaking: "Towards re-imagining sociality, the principle of nonlocality supports a kind of thinking that does not reproduce the methodological and ontological grounds of the modern subject, namely linear temporality and spatial separation."² For me, sonic space is the site in which da Silva's re-imagined sociality is/can be negotiated.

Ingrid Pollard's *Pastoral Interlude* is a reference I draw from in almost anything I do.³ It is fascinating how she addresses the field of tension between the pastoral landscape of countryside England and the Black woman depicted in this series of images. With this as a model, I would like to create work that addresses this tension for the afro-german context in the sonic realm.

Personal motivation for the project. Tell us why this project is important to you.

Auch ein Schwarzes Archiv is important to me as an inquiry and as a process of sourcing the necessary material. This project is conceived from an afro-german, and rural perspective, which is across the diaspora frequently and doubly overlooked. With this work (which is really an ongoing, perhaps lifelong making), I would like to artistically/sonically contribute to the articulation of an afro-german voice, a project that has since the late 1980s, with the intervention of Black German feminist writers like May Ayim gained increasing urgency.

¹ DeForrest Brown, Jr., "Technologie aus den Traumata der Schwarzen Geschichte," *Deutschlandfunk*, September 13, 2020, https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/elektronische-musik-und-politik-technologie-aus-den.3991.de.html?dram:article_id=484049.

² Denise Ferreira da Silva "On Difference without Separability," biennial, accessed March 20, 2022, <https://biennial.com/files/pdfs/7879/d-ferreira-da-silva-on-difference-without-separability.pdf>

³ Ingrid Pollard, "Pastoral Interlude," accessed March 20, 2022, <http://www.ingridpollard.com/pastoral-interlude.html>.



"pastoral interlude"

... it's as if the Black experience is only lived within an urban environment. I thought I liked the Lake District; where I wandered lonely as a Black face in a sea of white. A visit to the countryside is always accompanied by a feeling of unease; dread ...

Fig.1: Image from Ingrid Pollard's *Pastoral Interlude* (1988)

References

Brown, Jr, De Forrest. "Technologie aus den Traumata der Schwarzen Geschichte," *Deutschlandfunk*. September 13, 2020. https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/elektronische-musik-und-politik-technologie-aus-den.3991.de.html?dram:article_id=484049.

Ferreira da Silva, Denise. "On Difference without Separability." *biennial*. Accessed March 20, 2022. <https://biennial.com/files/pdfs/7879/d-ferreira-da-silva-on-difference-without-separability.pdf>.

Illustrations

Fig.1: Image from Ingrid Pollard's *Pastoral Interlude* (1988)