## Front Cover

TRAP DOOR

**TRANS CULTURAL PRODUCTION
AND THE POLITICS OF VISIBILITY**

EDITED BY REINA GOSSETT, ERIC A. STANLEY,
AND JOHANNA BURTON

Critical Anthologies in Art and Culture

Spine

TRAP DOOR

GOSSETT, STANLEY, AND BURTON, EDITORS

NEW MUSEUM

Back Cover

dies

necessary for now, a collection of essays unafraid of the messy contradictions of capitalism
erious effects on bodies, movement, and land. This collection anchors us in 'the paradox
ent,' increased transgender visibility alongside proliferating violence and rejection of
people personally, socially, and politically. Transdisciplinary and trans-historical, this text
ws us to think race, gender, sexuality, and the state, simultaneously; it also contends with
, ideological, and epistemological ramifications of visibility. The book is not simply about
seeing, or even feeling; it makes its readers conscious of how it is we have come to know,
. This collection is a model text, a must read that demonstrates the highest potential of
Studies as a field."

EN, Assistant Professor of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, Williams College

in scope, *Trap Door* opens onto new terrain for transgender scholarship and activism. This
itious, intellectually exciting, and an urgent read for anyone interested in the politics of
epresentation."

NORTON, Associate Professor of Black Sexuality Studies, Cornell University

RS INCLUDE: Lexi Adsit, Sara Ahmed, Nicole Archer, Kai Lumumba Barrow, Johanna Burton, micha cárdenas,
race Dunham, Treva Ellison, Sydney Freeland, Che Gossett, Reina Gossett, Stamatina Gregory, Miss Major
Robert Hamblin, Eva Hayward, Juliana Huxtable, Yve Laris Cohen, Abram J. Lewis, Heather Love, Park McArthur,
ld, Toshio Meronek, Fred Moten, Tavia Nyong'o, Morgan M. Page, Roy Pérez, Dean Spade, Eric A. Stanley,
g, Wu Tsang, Jeanne Vaccaro, Chris E. Vargas, Geo Wyeth, Kalaniopua Young, and Constantina Zavitsanos.

TRAP DOOR

TRANS CULTURAL PRODUCTION AND THE POLITICS OF VISIBILITY

EDITED BY REINA GOSSETT, ERIC A. STANLEY, AND JOHANNA BURTON

CONTENTS

DYNAMIC STATIC

Nicole Archer

Once you can accept the universe as being something expanding into an infinite
nothing which is something, wearing stripes with plaid is easy.
—Albert Einstein, quoted in *Patternalia: An Unconventional History of Polka Dots,*
Stripes, Plaid, Camouflage, & Other Graphic Patterns

It is easy to be overwhelmed by Craig Calderwood's drawings (page 294): suspended
in the silent blankness of the page and caked with the messy, material-semiotic
accretions of desire, her noisy and heavily encrusted figures forcefully demand
one's attention. It is an inimitable and distinctly queer pleasure to be caught in
their dense but finely rendered patterns—ensnared somewhere in between sig-
nal and noise; stopped in one's tracks, yet ceaselessly following the phallic loops
and yonic openings that obscure any semblance of a singular (true) body beneath
a mélange of honeycombed sleeves, pansy-printed trousers, fruity masks, and
apotropaic stockings.

One is reminded of critic Craig Owens's powerful analyses of feminist artist
Barbara Kruger's bold imagery. Stylistically speaking, the art of Calderwood and
of Kruger could not be more dissimilar; what unites them is a searing critique of
gender identity and the ways that gendered stereotypes capture the body within
a tight weave of politics and ideology. This critique is advanced by a shared aes-
thetic strategy—what Owens refers to as the "Medusa Effect."[1]

Not to be confused with or reduced to that climactic moment when Medusa's
gaze freezes her own self-image in the form of an immobile, fetishistic totem,
the Medusa Effect is a critical gesture better located when the swipe (or slash)
of Perseus's sword just reaches the Gorgon's perfectly posed neck—a gesture

still pregnant with the possibility of infinite outcomes. Neither before nor after "the image," the Medusa Effect is located somewhere in between what Owens describes as, "in narrative terms, an initial moment of seeing" and "a terminal moment of arrest."[2] It is a transitory but potent act of resistance that lies between identity and difference in an intermediary space-time where the power of the imaginary can prevail over the restraints of reality.[3]

According to Owens, Kruger primarily deploys the Medusa Effect via her strategic use of personal pronouns, which serve to effectively disrupt the place of the viewer in regard to her signature-style artworks:

> Personal pronouns are also known as "shifters," but not, as is widely believed, because they allow speaker and addressee to shift positions; on the contrary, shifters establish a strict rule of noncommutability—"you" must never be "I." Rather, they allow speakers to shift from code to message—from the abstract to the concrete, the collective to the individual or, again, the impersonal to the personal. Hence their frequent appearance in messages of the mass media, which tends, as [Roland] Barthes observed, "to personalize all information, to make every utterance a direct challenge, not directed at the entire mass of readers, but at each reader in particular."[4]

As Owens states, in works like *Untitled (your moments of joy have the precision of military strategy)* (1980) (page 296), "Kruger parodies this tendency in her work, exposing the contradictory construction of the viewing subject by the stereotype."[5] It is uncomfortable to assume the position of *Untitled*'s particular addressee, so "you" disregard your disagreeable duty to receive its message, perhaps forcing yourself into the role of the other (the speaker). This leaves a hole in

Craig Calderwood, *Dissonance*, 2015. Ink on cotton paper, 8 ½ × 11 in (21.6 × 27.9 cm). Courtesy the artist

the image's grammar—a hole that you cannot help stumbling back into, a hole with depths that you can only imagine.

Kruger refigures the personal pronoun's normal, operative function and, subsequently, offers viewers an opportunity to dislodge themselves from the law of the letter. This exposes the language of gendered oppression's limits. It reminds us, as the feminist and queer theorist Teresa de Lauretis details in her landmark essay "The Technology of Gender," that gender is a semiotic apparatus, albeit one with very real social and political functions. She explains, "The term *gender* is, actually, the representation of a relation, that of belonging to a class, a group, a category. ... [G]ender assigns to one entity, say an individual, a position within a class, and therefore also a position vis-à-vis other preconstituted classes."[6] Apropos of recent discussions regarding trans* visibility and the fight for gender self-determination,[7] Kruger's feminist-inflected pronoun play seems particularly consequential. The power of the personal pronoun, and the desire to find a way of articulating one's self beyond its strict logics, are certainly well acknowledged in trans* politics and poignantly felt in trans* experience, yet many artists, like Calderwood, whose work is certainly informed by the dynamics of these discourses, are choosing to take a different tack—focusing less on the linguistics of gender politics and more on its material, or sensual, dimensions.

In *Dissonance* (2015), for example, Calderwood optically jams the story of her figure by flooding the visual field with a miscellany of eye-catching patterns that refuse to add up, refuse to lend themselves to the task of figuring things out: Who is this? How did they arrive here? Where are they going with that electric drill, all dressed to the nines with perfectly lacquered fingernails? The inscribed textile attached to the hem of the figure's pants presents viewers with a displaced and scrambled text in medias res. Like a book that appears within a dream, we are unable to fully read the hem's lines, but we nonetheless sense, or feel, that the text's implications are far greater than the sum of its individual words.

In Calderwood's drawings, the act of looking is predicated on the contingency—as opposed to the certainty—of seeing (what lies beneath the garment, the code, the work of art). Her figures make no promises to resolve their identities. Like Kruger, she suspends the act of perceiving oneself from a particular, fixed place in order to open up onto a sense of imagination; unlike Kruger, Calderwood does not do this by offering her viewers an alternative subject position. Instead, she strategically manipulates the intensity of certain optical patterns in order to scramble—or dazzle—those fields of vision that the "apparatus of the pattern" is traditionally tasked with managing.[8] Along the way, she methodically obliterates any bodily features that qualify as cardinal coordinates or anchor points onto which preconceived gender identities could attach themselves. This

NICOLE ARCHER

is because Calderwood's is a discourse of desire, and, as theorist Jean-François Lyotard writes, "Desire does not speak; it does violence to the order of the utterance."[9] Calderwood's figures do not have secret essences, or supplementary identities; they function to generate fantasy, to unfetter the language of the body from certain gendered orders, by offering an opportunity to actively imagine the body as otherwise and adrift. Down the rabbit hole we fall.

Trans* subjectivity is currently gaining remarkably increased attention within American popular culture, and a set of unmistakably clear patterns is being formally developed to mediate the terms through which trans* experiences, aesthetics, desires, bodies, and politics might pass into "proper view."[10] The dissonant and queer strategy of "pattern-jamming" presents both a serious mode of political resistance and a strategic plan for everyday survival during this key historical moment. It aims to ensure that nonbinary gender variance is not simply reduced to the proliferation of tick-boxes on tomorrow's identity papers.

PATTERN RECOGNITION

Patterns can take many forms: repeated surface decorations; standardized shapes; or duplicated arrangements of sounds, images, or movements. Whether they are understood primarily as modes of ornamentation or as systems of organization, all patterns naturalize the appearances of certain recurrences in life along with the meanings that we ascribe to such repetitions. Patterns stabilize our notions of ourselves and our notions of others. They work in both the present and the past tense, while simultaneously serving as an essential forecasting tool. It is through their rhythms that we come to place bets on our futures—as it did yesterday and today, the sun also rises tomorrow.

Patterns *make* sense in important multidimensional and multisensory ways, and, once recognized, they are stubbornly hard to ignore or to break.[11] The capacity to establish or to identify a pattern comes with great authority—it is a right granted to our artists, to our geniuses, and to our bureaucrats.[12] Patterns make for suspiciously strange bedfellows.

In his classic 1927 essay "The Mass Ornament," Frankfurt School scholar Siegfried Kracauer observes that "an analysis of the simple surface manifestations of an epoch can contribute more to determining its place in the historical process than judgments of the epoch about itself."[13] Between their dots, lines, and dashes, their foregrounds and their backgrounds, patterns make latent and manifest admissions about those who claim to perceive them. The most enduring

patterns are, at their hearts, maps of those terrains where belief most directly meets desire, where aesthetics meets significance. To behold a pattern is to lay claim to these terrains and to their particular histories—consciously or not.

Take stripes. At their most basic level, they are equally spaced sets of contrasting colored bars. Whether draped across the shoulders of athletes or sailors, forced onto the backs of prisoners, or ceremoniously hung from flag poles, present-day stripes absolutely vary in style and significance, but, as the medieval historian Michel Pastoureau explains in his 2001 book *The Devil's Cloth: A History of the Stripe*, what all of these disparate types of stripes have in common is the capacity to serve as "a tool for setting things in order."[14] To modern eyes, trained to root out binary patterns, stripes appear as an ideologically neutral or simple means of codifying certain cultural arrangements; they are as plain as those "uncontested" oppositions situated at the heart of everyday life: good versus evil; black versus white; girl versus boy. Yet between the lines, a tangle of uncanny specters lurks.

As Pastoureau details in his masterful survey, the present-day stripe's "unremarkableness" is afforded by a litany of more aberrant associations. During the Middle Ages, for instance, the stripe literally served as a "cause of disorder and transgression" within Western culture.[15] In many regions across medieval Europe, striped cloth was reserved for the garments of "those who practice[d] such trades not to be confused with honest citizens," namely prostitutes, jugglers, clowns, and hangmen.[16] Other societal outcasts and condemned individuals, including lepers, heretics, and non-Christians, were similarly marked by striped clothing. And by contrast, religious officials—such as Carmelite monks—were formally banned from wearing striped habits.[17]

According to Pastoureau, the establishment of these dress codes and sumptuary laws was owed to the stripe's ability not simply to signify but to formalize (or figure) the abnormal within medieval visual and material cultures:

> People in the Middle Ages seemed to feel an aversion for all surface structures which, because they did not clearly distinguish the figure from the background, troubled the spectator's view. ... An image was created by superimposing successive levels, and, to read it well, it was necessary—contrary to our modern habits—to begin with the bottom level and, passing through all the intermediary layers, end with the top one. ... [W]ith stripes, such a reading is no longer possible. There is not a level below and a level above, a background color and a figure color. One and only one bichrome level exists, divided into an even number of stripes of alternating colors. With the stripe ... the structure *is* the figure.[18]

In a culture accustomed to transmitting visual messages along very different frequencies than those used today, stripes made a great deal of noise. They were used as a way to break the visual field open and to force certain bodies into genuine non-places, or fields of actual nonsense.[19] That the modern stripe's clarity is bound both to its capacity to scramble certain forms of visual logic and to discipline certain bodies makes a clear case for just how ideologically saturated, or unnatural, the act of looking is. It also suggests an exciting critical possibility for those whose subjectivities are actively legislated against or criminalized under the signs of abnormality and deviation from the normal patterns of behavior and identification. The genealogy of the stripe makes patent how historical processes work to transform yesterday's noise into today's signal—the degree to which modernity is organized around logics not of sameness and continuity but of difference—or, as Michel Foucault suggests in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, of "discontinuity, rupture, threshold, limit, series and transformation."[20] This is precisely what makes the work of pattern manipulation so strategically necessary: power is formally established and formally critiqued through the adaption or the obliteration of patterns.

This is not to suggest that modern stripes—or patterns more generally—are simply suffering from a kind of identity crisis that needs to be rectified, or that the aim ought to be the permanent suspension of any and all sense of visual coherence. Rather, this is a call to take advantage of those aesthetic practices that can direct attention away from a pattern's typical symbolic functions (or responsibilities to secure meaning and certain attending forms of power). It is a call to aestheticize the pattern's capacity to function performatively as a kind of critical figure that is always already inserted within the discourse of everyday life for the sake of marking how and "where the negative knowledge about the reliability of linguistic utterance is made available."[21] This, as the theorist Paul de Man explains in his essay "The Resistance to Theory," is because the figural dimension of a text "gives the language considerable freedom from referential restraint, but it [also] makes it epistemologically highly suspect and volatile, since its use can no longer be said to be determined by considerations of truth and falsehood, good and evil, beauty and ugliness, or pleasure and pain."[22]

Manipulating the figure of the pattern provides a way to critically and actively resist ideology, or to critically gesture toward and theorize the possibility of "another way" (another world). For subjects whose minority status is legitimized by the ways in which their very being threatens the order of things, artworks that mobilize this trope can serve as an important call to resist both oppression and assimilation.

This trope is clearly operative in the work of Nicki Green, another Bay Area-based artist and close interlocutor of Craig Calderwood. Green's sculptures borrow shapes and patterns long associated with blue-and-white ceramics in order to support narrative scenes of trans* life and ritual in ways that connect these themes with complex political and cultural histories.[23] Scrambling the typical shape of delftware tulip vases in works such as *It's Almost as if We've Existed (Tres in Una)* (2015) (page 302), Green boldly aestheticizes the genital panic that seems forever lodged within the heart of discourses on sexual or gendered difference. The fragility of the work's phallic attachments formalizes castration anxiety and makes a mockery of the overdetermined and ideologically saturated morphologies and biologies that so many transphobic lawmakers use to ground their political fights against trans* rights. The unglazed edges of Green's pottery resist the usual "shine"—the bounded and limited forms that capital places on the material world, on the body, and on the earth itself. These raw edges remind viewers of unformed clay, rife with potential. Beyond the imagistic depictions of trans* mythologies, this formal decision works to materially activate what art historian David Getsy refers to as sculpture's "transgender capacity," its potential "for making visible, bringing into experience, or knowing genders as mutable, successive, and multiple."[24]

Green's work deftly manages to insert issues of trans* representation into both the long and short histories of global artistic practice, while many of her formal choices align her work with other contemporary artists who have similarly opted to examine the varied ways that pattern is used to put one in one's place. Yayoi Kusama's lifelong exploration of dot patterns, for example, complicates and exposes the limits of phallic power and ancillary notions of "the self"; and Adriana Varejão's sculptural paintings of azulejo tiles viscerally expose the ways in which the indigenous peoples and cultures of South America were rendered into a sort of flesh, or meat, that empire has feasted upon for centuries. Moreover, the way Green uses simple decorative patterns to tell complex and messy stories cannot but evoke Yinka Shonibare's commanding use of distinctly patterned Dutch wax-printed fabric in his sculptural and photographic tableaux vivants, which serve as searing critiques of the ways that imperial Europe has built its wealth through the exploitation and oppression of colonial African subjects.[25]

Nicki Green, *It's Almost as if We've Existed (Tres in Una)*, 2015. Glazed earthenware, 15 ½ × 12 × 3 ½ in (39.4 × 30.5 × 8.9 cm). Courtesy the artist

PATTERN DISRUPTION

Approaching the pattern from a somewhat different angle, Jonas N. T. Becker's multimodal 2014 work *The Pile* (page 304) shifts attention away from patterns of surface decoration and toward the spaces that lie between the patterned behaviors governing so many of our lives and gender identities. Curious about what people "wanted," Becker hosted a series of public forums where he asked over two thousand participants the question, "What one thing would make your life better?" While people responded in ways that were certainly personal, most answers proved to be far less variable than one might expect. Patterns quickly emerged, and Becker set out to give these repetitions a kind of form. He created *The Pile* by translating each response into a two-dimensional image that served as a pattern for a stuffed, red-felted, hand-sewn soft sculpture.[26] Where answers clearly overlapped, the patterns were literally repeated. When displayed—as the title suggests—in a pile, the legibility of each of the individually patterned shapes is overwhelmed by the noise produced through the accrual of their similarities. Heaped upon one another, these wishes appear like a stockpile or a mass casualty of a political economy based, in part, upon a logic of endless accumulation. The result is a clear, albeit melancholic, call for the rearticulation of our desires outside capitalist logics of (re)production: a call to resist the fetishistic reification of desire by drawing viewers' awareness to the odd, unpredictable spaces that open up between the smoothly patterned objects—the spaces where desire's variability is unbounded.

Opaque (2014), produced by the collaborative partnership of Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz—who appear similarly interested in using the trope of the pattern to deconstruct the politics of desire—is a multimedia installation that includes a ten-minute filmed performance featuring Ginger Brooks Takahashi and Werner Hirsch (page 306). Claiming to be representatives of an underground organization, Takahashi and Hirsch appear to viewers in the middle of an abandoned public pool. Initially, they are hard to discern— the contours of Takahashi's silhouette meld with a glorious accumulation of the queerest pink, tiger-striped pattern imaginable, while Hirsch is enveloped in a color-coordinated plume of pink smoke. All that is solid melts into air! The performance is punctuated by the dramatic pulling back and fondling of a series of curtains, each of which represents a distinct visual logic: first opaqueness, followed by camouflage, then dazzling brilliance, and, finally, a display of loose transparency. As the action unfolds, the duo recites a desirous ode for a "proper faultless enemy" that is inspired by the writings of French novelist Jean Genet. The extravagantly queer patterning of the space of appearance functions like the
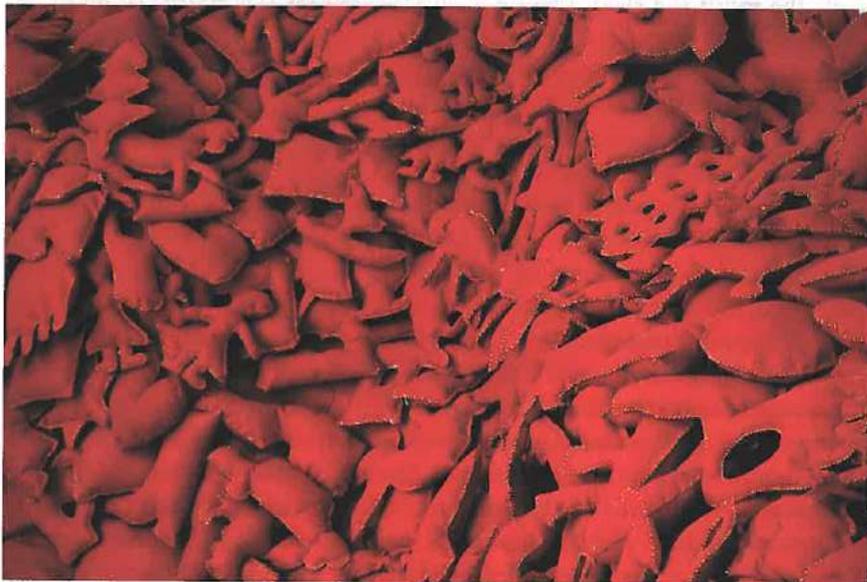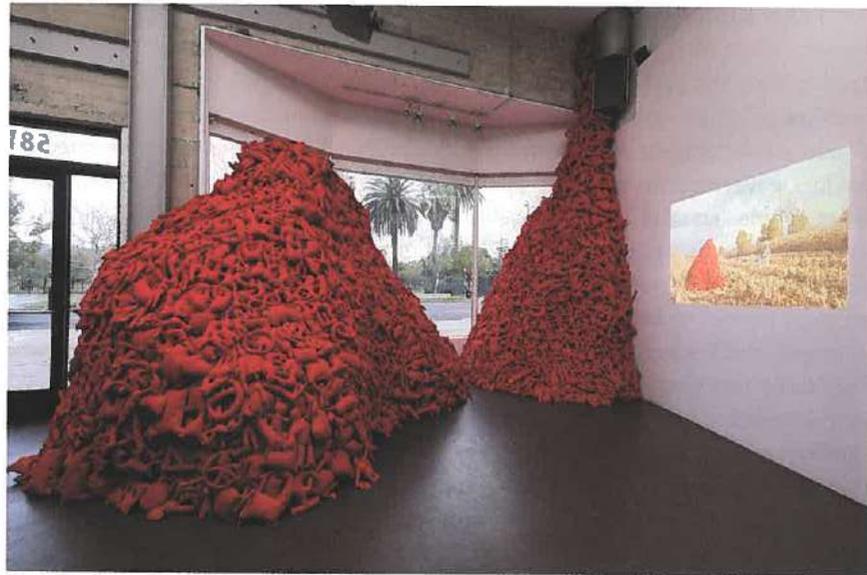
Jonas N. T. Becker, *The Pile*, 2014. Installation view: "Jonas Becker: The Pile," Craft and Folk Art Museum, Los Angeles, 2015. Image: © Jonas N. T. Becker. Photo: Jeff McClane

Jonas N. T. Becker, *The Pile*, 2014 (detail). Single-channel 16mm HD video, sound, color, digital C-prints, and hand-stitched red felt objects; 12 min, dimensions variable. Image: © Jonas N. T. Becker

stripes of medieval Europe, theatrically blurring "the dividing lines between same and other, between accomplices and enemies."[27] *Opaque* thus forces viewers to acknowledge that "conflict" is, itself, something that is desired—enemies need to be wanted. The work demands that we ask whether queer desires might make something different of conflict, considering that normative patterns of desire have thus far led only to war—endless, all-consuming, preemptive war, which aims to defeat or obliterate difference.

Opaque challenges one to consider the unique forms of pleasure yet to be mined from the depths of the hostilities that seem to mark every level of modern human interaction, but the aesthetics of pattern disruption can also be used to concentrate attention on the disproportionate risk that some bodies are subjected to within existing cultures of violence. In *Black Patois* (2016) (page 308), Zawadi Ungadi, a black Kenyan trans* man, presents viewers with a constellation of images that are emblematic of the violent patterns of behavior that are all too often directed toward his body. The images present Ungadi literally and figuratively painted into a series of corners: as a fictionalized runner, a mythical "purse snatcher," the object of intense sexual desire, and, with his hands up, as a victim of endless suspicion and murderous rage. The brutality of living within such overwhelming patterns of racism is made abundantly clear. A sense of the different amounts of noise that one is subjected to, depending on one's particular identity coordinates, is made manifest. The work isolates a series of bodily gestures that are patterned and arranged to support a culture of antiblackness.
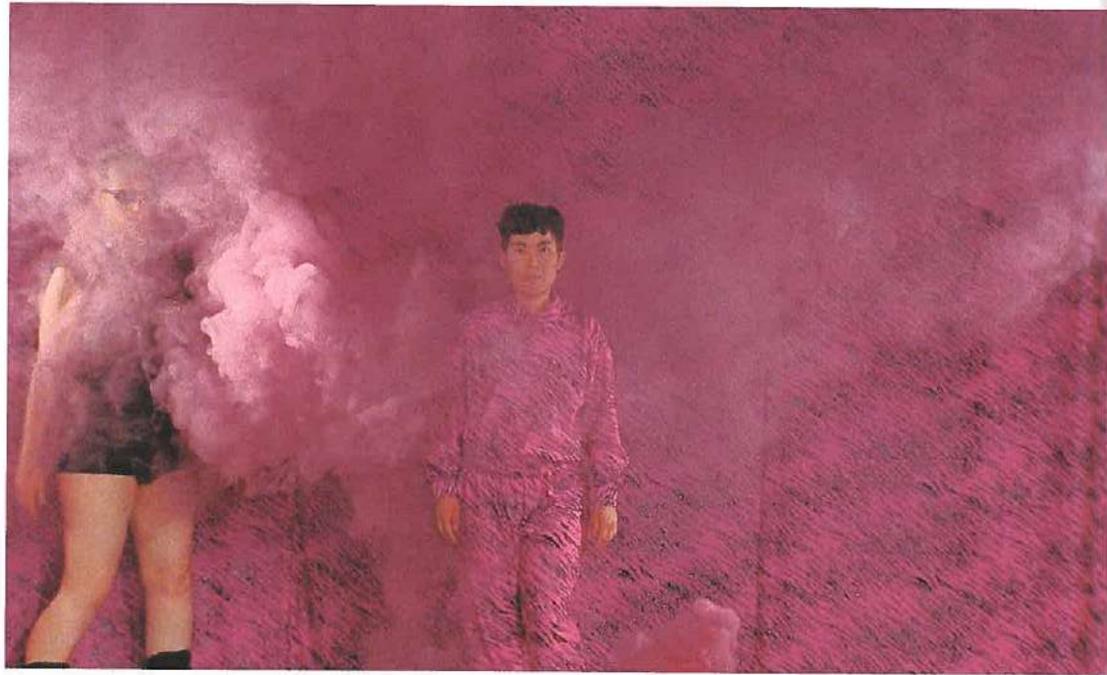
Pauline Boudry / Renate Lorenz, *Opaque*, 2014
(still). Single-channel super-16mm HD video,
sound, color; 10 min. Courtesy Ellen de Bruijne
Projects, Amsterdam, and Marcelle Alix, Paris.
Image: © Boudry / Lorenz

Ungadi challenges people, and particularly white people (given the presence of a second, white figure in many of the images), to imagine modes of relation to his black masculinity that are not pictured and that might emerge out of the unifying blackness that frames his images, a border ripe with creative potentiality.

The work of the artist Kiam Marcelo Junio refigures the pattern along similar lines, in order to stage the opportunity for queer and trans* aesthetics to interrogate the depths of current and historical forms of racialized and gendered state violence. In a series of works collectively titled *Camouflage as a Metaphor for Passing* (2012) (page 309), Junio, a naval veteran, mobilizes the highly charged rhetoric of passing vis-à-vis a variety of visual and aural patterns in order to investigate militarized zones of contact—zones that exist between individual and collective bodies, nation-states, or even one's own competing senses of self.

In works like *Crypsis I* and *Crypsis II* (2012), Junio engages the pattern across multiple registers, producing replicas of their US Navy camouflage jacket that mirror the government-issued garment's shape, only to forestall the authority typically vested in such standard uniforms by fashioning the jackets from atypical fabrics. In *Crypsis I*, Junio silkscreens the jackets with the silhouettes of foliage found in their home city of Chicago. This camouflage made for "here" versus "over there" questions where the frontline really is, where the fight festers and is fueled versus where the violence of desire is meted out and cathected. In *Crypsis II*, Junio's use of red Chinese brocade in the reconstruction of their jacket, and its pairing with the historically charged cheongsam—a type of Chinese dress—that is printed with an allover pattern of all-seeing eyes, provokes many conversations, including one regarding the highly gendered and racialized dynamics of the gaze: Why is the uniform, and its implied right to camouflage or concealment, offered to some bodies, while others are offered only the conditions of hyper-visibility?

In *Dazzle I and II (Nangyayari Na Suite)* (2015), a two-channel soundscape produced in collaboration with Najee-Zaid Searcy and sometimes installed with *Camouflage as a Metaphor for Passing*, Junio floods the sonic dimensions of the exhibition space with a layered cacophony of sound that includes traces of radio transmissions about casualties of war, historical accounts of the United States' colonial occupation of the Philippines, and the distinct sounds of sobbing. As Junio states on their website, "Filipino/Tagalog for 'It is already happening,' NANGYAYARI NA is a mantra, a chant, a call to arms."[28] It is an aesthetic refusal to accept that war is something that ever has a true beginning (or cause) or that it ever promises a true end. With each cut-off transmission, an ellipsis manifests itself and a fissure appears in the fabric of the stories that we tell ourselves in
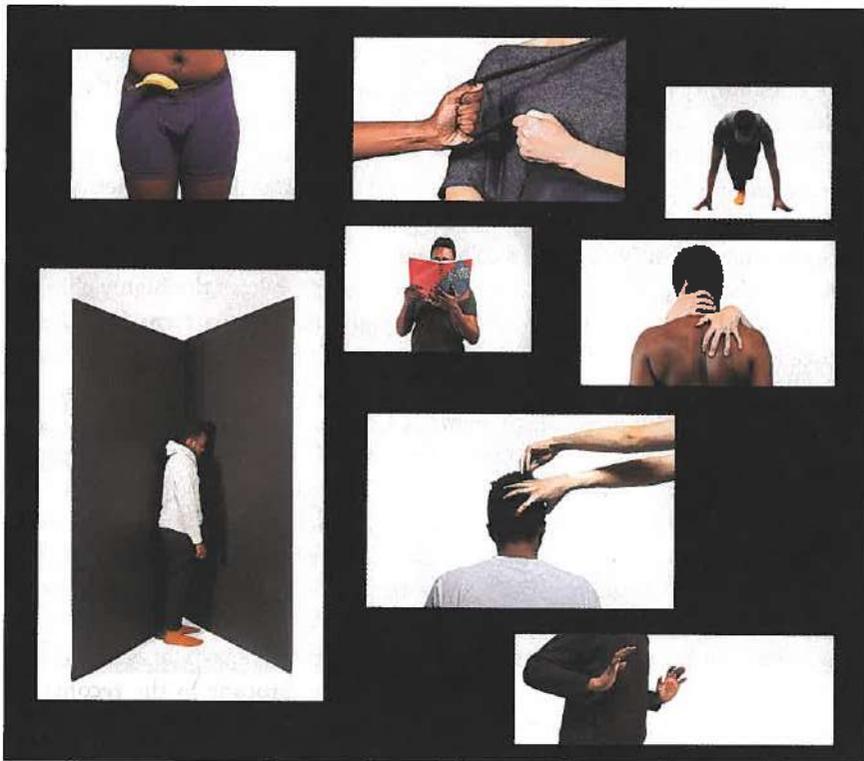
Kiam Marcelo Junio, *Crypsis II*, from the series
Camouflage as a Metaphor for Passing, 2012
(details). Silk brocade; replica of military jacket,
ISO Standard XS. Images: © Kiam Marcelo
Junio, 2013

order to justify the continued legacies of violent oppression that large-scale military forces are built to sustain.

All students of art history are familiar with the juxtaposition of static and dynamic imagery. It is a juxtaposition that lies at the very heart of art history's accounting of Western culture—the contrast forged between the "dynamic" figures of Ancient Greece and the "static" images found in early Dynastic Egypt or the Ancient "Near East." The fissures opened up in Junio's work, through their rendering of dynamic static, force us back into the disturbing circumstances of this foundational comparison. They create a critical rupture within the story of "Art" itself, by laying open a space in which we must consider how the coherence we ascribe to the notion of Art maps onto the coherence we ascribe to gender, to race, to nation, and to civilization.

It is within this fissured space that the Black Salt Collective, a Bay Area–based group consisting of Sarah Biscarra Dilley, Grace Rosario Perkins, Anna Luisa Petrisko, and Adee Roberson, challenged itself to curate "Visions Into Infinite Archives," an exhibition on view from January 14 to February 10, 2016, at SOMArts Cultural Center in San Francisco (page 311). Like Junio's work, "Visions Into Infinite Archives" leveraged the figure of the jammed pattern, or dynamic static, to formally decolonize the space of the gallery. Dedicated to "contemporary non-linear identity in which experience results in atmosphere,"[29] the group installed the work of over two dozen intergenerational artists of color and included a host of supplementary performances and critical dialogues that were intended to support the exhibition's primary goal of activating the non-linearity of ethnic, sexual, gendered, and intergenerational cultures. The tactical use of exuberantly mismatched surface patterns appeared as a key trope across the works of artists who were positioned within a broad scope of gendered identity formations, but who all directly or indirectly worked to activate the pattern's "transgender capacity."

Chief among these artists was one of the Black Salt Collective's members, Adee Roberson. Roberson's multipaneled painting *Say Her Name into the Ocean* (2015), a "memoriam to Black women and girls who have lost their lives in result of systematic oppression, and the violence that is the white supremacist patriarchy,"[30] explores how bold patterns of line and color might complement, or serve as politically potent counterweights to, the hyper-visibility of certain stereotyped images of black gendered subjectivity. The work demands that viewers acknowledge the violent erasure, or dismissal, of images of black gendered life, pain, pleasure, and mourning that break from the patterns of representation that are prioritized by the mass media and other disciplinary regimes of vision.[31]

Black Salt Collective, in collaboration with Diyan Bukobomba, Kenneth Brown Jr., Jade Ariana Fair, José Luis Íñiguez, Inés Ixierda, Titania Kumeh, Amy Martinez, Jeffrey Martinez, Olen Perkins, and Iraya Robles, *Infinite Archive*, 2016. Installation view: "Visions Into Infinite Archives," SOMArts Cultural Center, San Francisco. Courtesy Black Salt Collective. © SOMArts Cultural Center. Photo: Dan Fenstermacher

Critically queer pattern-jamming also served as a kind of curatorial paradigm for "Visions Into Infinite Archives." Throughout the exhibition space, Black Salt caused viewers to encounter artworks outside normal patterns of reception by arranging them in ways that frustrated normal viewing habits: Works were presented at heights and distances that belied typical display practices. The binary of the wall versus the floor was sacrificed throughout the exhibition in order to produce a clamorous network of colors, textures, and histories that engaged all the works included in the exhibition and the bodies of those visitors who navigated the show's queer coordinates. This had the effect of powerfully muddling another "immutable" binary within art discourse—namely, that of art object versus art viewer—transforming an art exhibition into the kind of space "where there are alternative futures and alternative pasts, where oracles become realities, where histories are honored and transmuted, where deep healing can take place."[32] Rather than simply allowing themselves to uncritically rely upon the pattern's tendency to regulate the body and regimes of sight into predicable, uniform arrangements, in "Visions Into Infinite Archives," the members of Black Salt Collective drew upon the pattern's prodigious capacity to figure the abnormal.

STATIC CLINGING

Pattern-jamming necessarily obfuscates the neat ways that gender and other modes of identification are rendered into discrete bands within the patterns of everyday living. It revels in the genealogical and aesthetic attachments that connect the fight for gender self-determination with other liberatory practices and histories, particularly those pitted against colonialism and antiblackness. As the queer theorist, activist, and filmmaker Eric A. Stanley explains in their keyword entry on "Gender Self-Determination" for the inaugural issue of *Transgender Studies Quarterly*:

> [G]ender self-determination is affectively connected to the practices and theories of self-determination embodied by various and ongoing anticolonial, Black Power, and antiprison movements. For Frantz Fanon and many others, the violence of colonialism and antiblackness are so totalizing that ontology itself collapses; thus the claiming of a self fractures the everydayness of colonial domination. ... To center radical black, anticolonial, and prison abolitionist traditions is to already be inside trans politics. ... Gender self-determination opens up space

for multiple embodiments and their expressions by collectivizing the struggle against both interpersonal and state violence.[33]

In the second chapter of philosopher, psychoanalyst, and revolutionary Frantz Fanon's 1959 text *A Dying Colonialism*, Fanon tells a story about the slow adoption of the radio by the Algerian people and how this "instrument of colonial society and its values"[34] was transformed during the Algerian War of Independence into a key revolutionary technology. As Fanon explains, Algerians were very hesitant to adopt the radio into their homes, for Radio-Alger was recognized as simply "a re-edition or an echo of the French National Broadcasting System operating from Paris."[35] Its transmissions were part of the occupier's culture.

As the fight for independence gained momentum and an increasing number of people outside the densely populated metropolitan centers started to concern themselves with the revolution, it became essential to quickly spread news regarding the movement's progress to remote parts of the country. French officials were quick to label the reading of certain publications as punishable acts of Algerian nationalism, and the public purchase of certain newspapers became a considerably dangerous proposition. Enter the Voice of Fighting Algeria.

The Voice was a pirate radio station built to broadcast news of the ongoing fights in Arabic, Kabyle, and French from the perspective of the Algerian combatants. Colonial authorities quickly came to recognize the threat that the Voice posed, and as Fanon explains, "The highly trained French services, rich with experience acquired in modern wars, past masters in the practice of 'sound-wave warfare,' were quick to detect the wave lengths [sic] of the broadcasting stations. The programs were then systematically jammed, and the *Voice of Fighting Algeria* soon became inaudible."[36] This signal-jamming proved to be crucial—but not for the French government. Rather than help to quash the uprising, this tactical maneuver activated the bodies and the imaginations of those who depended on the Voice for news. It threw listeners into a constant state of alert. Beyond white noise, beyond the anticipation of information, the static became a point of intense concentration. This transformed the radio into a fulcrum for the revolution by producing a radically contingent "pattern of listening habits."[37] Groups of people huddled around a community's radio operator, searching the airwaves for a signal amid the noise. At best, only snippets of news could be heard, but in the midst of the static and jammed signals, a space opened where people were forced to collectively imagine what was going on ... out there ... beyond what they already knew.

By clinging to static, one can argue, the power of fantasy is activated; people's desires are aroused, their unconscious, unpatterned energies are pricked, and

they become libidinally invested in the fight. Fantastic conditions and alternative arrangements of being start to take uninhibited shape. If the fight is, indeed, for gender self-determination and to decolonize the spaces of trans* visibility, then radical trans* aesthetics must work to flood the transmission of heteronormative gender-binary patterns. The fantastic production of visual noise (exuberant, hyperextended, mismatched, and deconstructed patterns of dress, drawing, painting, living, and loving) is a key strategy within the struggle for trans* liberation. Liberatory politics demand imagination.

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"Dynamic Static" by scholar Nicole Archer was written in 2016 for this volume.
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NOTES
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1. Craig Owens, "The Medusa Effect, or The Specular Ruse," in *Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power, and Culture*, ed. Scott Bryson, Barbara Kruger, Lynne Tillman, and Jane Weinstock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 191–200.

2. Ibid., 197.

3. "The Medusa Effect" is highly inflected by Lacanian psychoanalysis. As Owens states, it requires an appreciation of "the duality, the specularity, the symmetry and immediacy that characterize Lacan's Imaginary Order" (197); it is also, as Owens directly acknowledges, a kind of "critical renaming" of Lacan's concept of "the suture"—a renaming that demands a more feminist account of the "'pseudo-identification' of an initial moment of seeing and a terminal moment of arrest" (198). Owens chooses the name of the Medusa in order to summon the thinking of feminists such as Hélène Cixous, whose influential 1975 essay "The Laugh of the Medusa" sought to reclaim this classical femme fatale (or fetishistic figure of sexual difference) vis-à-vis the sexist treatments that she'd received, not only throughout the long history of Western art but also within the modern psychoanalytic archive. See Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, *Signs* 1, no. 4 (Summer 1976): 875–93.

4. Owens, "The Medusa Effect," 193.

5. Ibid.

6. Teresa de Lauretis, "The Technology of Gender," in *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 4.

7. For more on this topic, see Eric A. Stanley, "Gender Self-Determination," in "Postposttranssexual: Key Concepts for a Twenty-First-Century Transgender Studies," special issue, *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 1, no. 1–2 (May 2014): 89–91.

8. This is not to suggest that no other artists have previously addressed pattern as a way of critiquing gender relations. For instance, within the generation of feminist artists that claims Kruger, one might recall the Pattern and Decoration movement, a group of artists that included Valerie Jaudon, Joyce Kozloff, and Miriam Schapiro, among others, who collectively claimed that their politically conscious explorations of surface ornamentation were grounded in an effort to dispel "the prejudice against the decorative," which had "a long history and [was] based on hierarchies [that they also hoped to dismantle, namely]: fine art above decorative art, Western art above non-Western art, men's art above women's art" (Valerie Jaudon and Joyce Kozloff, "Art Hysterical Notions of Progress and Culture," in *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artists' Writings*, ed. Kristine Stiles and Peter Selz [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996], 154).

9. Jean-François Lyotard, "The Dream-Work Does Not Think," in *The Lyotard Reader*, ed. Andrew Benjamin (London: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 19.

10. At the time of writing this essay, numerous examples of such disciplinary tactics abound. They take a variety of cultural and legislative forms, but all tend to rest on an insistence on the gender binary—or a cultural and political will to "resolve" trans* issues by demanding that all trans* subjects "stabilize" their gender identity and "resolve their gender dysphoria" by transitioning to "the other, pre-patterned" gender identity. This is, perhaps most acutely demonstrated in the US Pentagon's June 2016 policy changes regarding the service of transgender military troops and the formation of a Department of Defense working group to "study the policy and readiness implications of welcoming transgender persons to serve openly in the military" ("Working Group to Study Implications of Transgender Service," *U.S. Department of Defense*, July 13, 2015, http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article /612640).

According to the Pentagon, the new policy is primarily intended to allow transgender service members to serve openly and to ensure that "Any discrimination against a Service member based on their gender identity is sex discrimination and may be addressed through the Department's equal opportunity channels" ("Transgender Service Member Policy Implementation Fact Sheet," *U.S. Department of Defense*, accessed July 26, 2016, http://www .defense.gov/Portals/1/features/2016/0616_policy/Transgender-Implementation-Fact -Sheet.pdf).

Military-funded medical services are also set to be made available to transgender service members who seek "in-service transitions." For those individuals who transitioned prior to seeking military employment, the "initial accession policy will require an individual to have completed any medical treatment that their doctor has determined is necessary in connection with their gender transition, and to have been stable in their preferred gender for 18 months, as certified by their doctor, before they can enter the military" (ibid.).

Presented as a boon for the trans* community, and as a fix for what former Secretary of Defense Ash Carter openly referred to as an "outdated" approach, the new policy actually offers little that is new (see Marina Koren, "The U.S. Military's Welcome for Transgender Troops," *Atlantic*, June 30, 2016, http://www.theatlantic.com/news/archive/2016/06/ transgender-military/489584/). From the outset, the question of whether someone transitions prior to or during military service has appeared as a central concern within military memos. Within military news outlets and discussion groups, "transitioning" similarly serves as an issue of primary importance (see, for example, Andrew Tilghman, "Here Are the New Rules for Transgender Troops," *Military Times*, June 30, 2016, http://www.navso.org/news/here-are -new-rules-transgender-troops). This, no doubt, is owed to many factors. First, the previous policy was to deem any individual who had transitioned or who desired to transition as

being "medically unfit to serve." Second, all military branches require personnel to adhere to very strict codes of comportment and physical health that are delineated in starkly gendered terms (e.g., women and men literally have different uniform-wear rules and physical fitness standards as a part of their service requirements).

The focus on transitioning implies that one does not need to be cisgender to serve in the US military, but one does need to stabilize one's identity along the gender binary to serve (and in a way that meets certain military-mandated requirements). Ergo, this new policy does not seem likely to allow for gender self-determination in the widest sense of the term. Instead, it is likely that the final policy will simply serve to establish a clear pattern for "how" to be a transgender subject under the deeply gendered terms of the US military, a pattern that will only further stabilize the preestablished gender binary. This, of course, is only if the schematics of the 2016 policy remain uncontested by the notoriously conservative Donald J. Trump administration.

Given the Trump White House's populist platform, there is real fear that the lifting of the ban on transgender service members might be in peril. In support of this opinion, many cite Trump's response to a question asked by Army Col. Don Bartholomew on the campaign trail regarding the status of transgender service members—a response that affirmed Bartholomew's own assessment of the new policy as being "politically correct," and neither "combat-effective or readiness-driven" (see Jenna Johnson, "Here's how Trump responded to a question about women and transgender individuals in the military," *Washington Post*, October 3, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2016/10/03 /heres-how-trump-responded-to-a-question-about-women-and-transgender-individuals -in-the-military/?utm_term=.a412af6cc474).

11. Here, in recognition of the pattern's disciplinary and performative functions, i.e., a pattern's capacity not just to signify a sense of order but to enact an order of things, it is worth recognizing queer theorist Judith Butler's watershed text *Gender Trouble* and her critical investigations of how a certain, gendered "construction of coherence" is erected via performative, corporealized patterns of behavior that work to conceal (non)binary gender variance and to regulate the body's cultural significances and capacities. See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1999), esp. 172.

12. To this end, I have always found it fascinating that popular films often choose to signify genius, or the quality of being exceptionally (or, dare one say, singularly or abnormally) intelligent, through a character's capacity to see patterns, or sameness, where others see nothing but disparity. In film after film, audiences are invited to peer through a protagonist's eyes as duplicate numbers or forms are magically illuminated, and streamlined constellations of meaning dramatically emerge from clouds of chaos. All the excessive information or noise dims, the code is forever broken, and the soundtrack inevitably swells to a crescendo.

While I have little interest—or belief—in genius, I am nonetheless drawn to this cinematic trope and what it reveals about the ways certain contemporary cultures understand and evaluate the relationship between "the one and the multitude," "the singular and the plural," or "the queer and the norm." How else might the cinema, a quintessentially modern art form, handle the challenge of representing the aberrant than by making it the servant of normality via the pattern?

13. Siegfried Kracauer, "The Mass Ornament," in *Critical Theory and Society: A Reader*, ed. Stephen Eric Bronner and Douglas MacKay Kellner (New York: Routledge, 1989), 145.

14. Michel Pastoureau, *The Devil's Cloth: A History of Stripes*, trans. Jody Gladding (New York: Washington Square Press, 2001), 4.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid., 13–14.

17. Ibid., 7–16.

18. Ibid., 3.

19. This is not to suggest that this tendency has been completely disavowed within all modern, institutional applications of the stripe. One obvious example is the striped prison uniform, which makes clear claims on both the stripe's symbolic security and its optical volatility. Another example is the British and US development of "dazzle patterns," which served as a form of camouflage intended to protect Allied naval vessels from German submarine attacks during World War I. Unlike "ground camouflage," which works to dissipate a form's visibility via a logic of maximum mimesis, dazzle painting requires camoufleurs to cover whole naval vessels in bold, zigzag stripes that break apart the formal integrity of the ship by jamming the logic of the visual field itself. As art historian and camouflage expert Roy R. Behrens explains, "In ground camouflage, the object to be camouflaged is often stationary, and one is more or less assured of a fixed and predictable background. In naval camouflage, however, the object to be camouflaged is nearly always moving, and its background is frequently shifting as well. ... Since invisibility was impossible in naval camouflage, it would be more effective to paint erratic patterns on the ship's surface, making it even more visible, and thereby confuse or 'dazzle' the submarine gunner so that he could not be sure about the target's course, size, speed or distance" (Roy R. Behrens, *False Colors: Art, Design and Modern Camouflage* [Dysart, IA: Bobolink Books, 2002], 86).

Anyone interested in dazzle patterns, both historically and critically speaking, is encouraged to explore not only the work of Behrens, but also that of the artist Stephanie Syjuco, in particular her *Neutral Calibration Studies* from her ongoing *Ornament + Crime* project ("Ornament and Crime from Stephanie Syjuco," *Stephanie Syjuco*, accessed July 31, 2016, http:// www.stephaniesyjuco.com/p_ornamentandcrime.html). The work of Hito Steyerl, in particular *How Not to be Seen: A Fucking Didactic Educational .MOV File* (2013), is similarly engaging (Hito Steyerl, "*How Not to be Seen: A Fucking Didactic Educational .MOV File*, 2013," *Artforum* Videos, accessed July 31, 2016, https://www.artforum.com/video/id=51651&mode=large&page_id=2). Steyerl has also written on patterns, misrecognition, and big data; see, for example, Hito Steyerl, "A Sea of Data: Apophenia and Pattern (Mis-)Recognition," *e-flux journal* 72 (April 2016), http://www.e-flux.com/journal/a-sea-of-data-apophenia-and-pattern-mis-recognition/.

20. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge & The Discourse on Language*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 21. As the art historian and cultural critic Kobena Mercer is always quick to remind his readers, such a mention of Foucault should not be made without then invoking the work of cultural theorist Stuart Hall, for fear that we will "lose track of the politics of identity in favor of the ecstasy of endless mutability" (Kobena Mercer, *Travel & See: Black Diaspora Art Practices Since the 1980s* [Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016], 46). Here I offer a passage from Hall's keynote address "Museums of Modern Art and the End of History," delivered at a conference at Tate Modern, in which he reminds us that "modernity was precisely a fundamental rupture with 'the past' in that sense [the sense that the past is what determines the present or future]. It was a break into contingency and, by contingency, I do not mean complete absence of pattern, but a break from the established continuities and connections which made artistic practice intelligible

in a historical review. It focused as much on the blankness of the spaces between things as on the things itself [sic] and on the excessive refusal of continuities. It was always caught between the attempt, on the one hand, to turn the sign back to a kind of direct engagement with material reality and, on the other, to set the sign free of history in a proliferating utopia of pure forms" (Stuart Hall, "Museums of Modern Art and the End of History," in *Annotations 6: Stuart Hall and Sarat Maharaj: Modernity and Difference*, ed. Sarah Campbell and Gilane Tawadros [London: Institute of International Visual Arts, 2001], 12).

21. Paul de Man, *The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 10.

22. Ibid. The quotation continues: "Whenever this autonomous potential of language can be revealed by analysis, we are dealing with literariness and, in fact, with literature as the place where this negative knowledge about the reliability of linguistic utterance is made available."

23. In thinking of other artists who similarly manipulate the figure of patterns and have been covered elsewhere, one might recall the Op art–inspired work of Linda Besemer, whose flexible, sculptural paintings of stripes were featured in J. Jack Halberstam's book *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005); or the uncanny, striped sculptures of artist Math Bass. David Getsy—the author of *Abstract Bodies: Sixties Sculpture in the Expanded Field of Gender* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015)—has analyzed Bass's work on numerous occasions, most notably, perhaps, in his critical conversation with fellow art historian and critic Jennifer Doyle (Jennifer Doyle and David Getsy, "Queer Formalisms: Jennifer Doyle and David Getsy in Conversation," *Art Journal* 72, no. 4 [2013]: 58–71).

24. David Getsy, "Capacity," in "Postposttranssexual: Key Concepts for a Twenty-First-Century Transgender Studies," special issue, *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 1, no. 1–2 (May 2014): 47. For more on this topic, see Getsy, *Abstract Bodies: Sixties Sculpture in the Expanded Field of Gender*, a key text located within the overlapping fields of art history and transgender theory.

25. It is worth noting here that the aesthetic strategy of pattern-jamming has also emerged as a key trope across the practices of a wide range of prominent black diasporic artists. Directly or indirectly speaking, it can be argued that Sanford Biggers, Nick Cave, Renée Green, Hew Locke, Xaviera Simmons, Mickalene Thomas, and Kehinde Wiley (just to name a few) have all developed bodies of work that investigate the politics and aesthetics of the pattern in the name of liberation. As I will detail in the conclusion to this essay, this speaks volumes to the genealogical links that co-constitute trans* and diasporic black aesthetics and politics.

26. The artist Eli Burke is similarly interested in patterns as kinds of duplicable and standardized (or industrialized) shapes. Burke's video *Dress Pattern* (2014) commences with an image of the artist's head hooded under the thin paper of a commercial dress pattern. Over the course of 3:19 min, Burke draws the pattern into his mouth using only the force of his tongue and lips, slowly masticating the pattern into a crumbled wad of paper that he then spits out at the performance's conclusion. Between the droning sounds of the crinkling paper and Burke's determined yet almost affectless chewing, a clear and clever sense of boredom and dissatisfaction with the standardization of the body is made evident.

27. Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz, "Opaque," *Pauline Boudry/Renate Lorenz*, accessed May 27, 2016, https://www.boudry-lorenz.de/opaque/.

28. Kiam Marcelo Junio, "Nangyayari Na: A Multidimensional Mixtape," *Kiam Marcel Junio: visual and performance artist*, accessed May 28, 2016, http://www.kiam-marcelo-junio.com /nangyayari-na/.

29. Sarah Biscarra Dilley, Grace Rosario Perkins, Anna Luisa Petrisko, and Adee Roberson, "Black Salt Collective," *Black Salt Collective*, accessed May 27, 2016, blacksaltcollective.tumblr.com.

30. Sarah Biscarra Dilley, Grace Rosario Perkins, Anna Luisa Petrisko, and Adee Roberson, "Curatorial Statement," in *Visions Into Infinite Archives Information Packet* (San Francisco: SOMArts Cultural Center, 2016), 17.

31. Another artist featured in "Visions Into Infinite Archives" whose work clearly engages the liberatory and transgender capacities of the pattern is Indira Allegra. And while not shown in this exhibit, Allegra's large-scale video text/ile installation *Blackout* (2015) is also worth mentioning, as it provides further avenues of investigation into the political valence of pattern-jamming. For more information, see "Work > Documentia," *Indira Allegra*, accessed July 31, 2016, http://indiraallegra.com/artwork/3830490-Blackout.html.

32. Biscarra et al., "Curatorial Statement," 2.

33. Stanley, "Gender Self-Determination," 90.

34. Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, trans. Haakon Chevalier (New York: Grove Press, 1965), 69.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid., 85.

37. Ibid., 96.