

Teju Cole

BLACK PAPER

A Performa 17 Project

November 2, 7pm – 8pm

November 3, 7pm – 8pm

November 3, 9pm – 10pm

November 4, 7pm – 8pm

BKLYN Studios at City Point

445 Albee Square West

Brooklyn, NY 11201

Duration: 45 minutes

**Performa 17
Biennial
November 1-19**

Credits

Curated by Adrienne Edwards

Associate Producer:
Robert Wuss

Technical Design/Set:
Robert Wuss

Video Editing:
Josh Begley

Sound and Lighting provided by:
Prospect Lighting

Video and Projectors provided by:
New City Video

Venue Management:
Company Agenda

Co-presented by BKLYN STUDIOS with
support from the Ford Foundation and the
Performa Commissioning Fund

Co-Produced by the de Young Museum.

BLACK PAPER

There was a disquieting change in my dreams beginning a year ago. This change soon began to manifest itself in my photography as well. Ordinary encounters thickened with omen, there are shadows everywhere: indoors, at social gatherings, out in the open, from the air.

I began to do a lot of nocturnal shooting. In November, I had a conversation with my grandmother about "abiku," the children who are born, and who die, and who are born again. She was in excellent health. It was our last conversation.

Asked by Adrienne E. to present a work at the 2017 Performa Biennial, I developed a soundscape of field recordings and musical performance. I keyed it in with a year's worth of shooting—my rule: no sound or images I didn't make myself, and nothing from before November 2016 (a brief exception for two public figures). Carbon paper transfers meaning between two white sheets—that black paper carries whatever was written, and retains the traces of what it carried. The first two months, shell-shocked, I only photographed trees. At the news of John's death on January 2, I walked straight into the park, into the rain, and began to photograph a grove I knew.

Within the fractures of the dream logic, certain armatures remain in place. In order not to see what one ought not to see during the eclipse, Navajo people stayed in their homes. All the music is organized around the key of A, the tuning key, and built around repetitive structures. But this is an unstable A, sometimes out of tune, and sometimes harassed by untuned bells, and sometimes tuned to 415 Hz (as in the bass viol sleepwalking section), rather than the conventional 440 Hz. Darkness is not empty.

The soundscape unfolds to a pulse of seventy beats per minute, interrupted by elements of arrhythmia. The visual program progresses from light to dark. At the market in Lahore, a granter of wishes had a sack full of crows.

Upon payment, the man reached into the sack, and took out one crow, and let it go. I play the 70 bpm, on a variety of instruments, imprecisely.

It was a time of hurricanes. I somehow ended up in the same hotel room in Zürich that I had stayed in two years before. I set up my video camera, and in one continuous shot, the sun sets over a painted wardrobe. The light went out of the world! I dream in Yoruba and English. But there are languages beyond languages. Aboriginal people call their mortuary rituals—all the work of mourning, consolation, arrangements, and burial—"the sorry business."

TEJU COLE

Brooklyn, November 2017

Teju Cole (b. 1975, Kalamazoo, Michigan, was raised in Lagos, Nigeria) writes the column “On Photography” for the New York Times Magazine. His publications—named books of the year by the New York Times, the Globe and Mail, NPR, the Telegraph, the Guardian, the Financial Times, and Time—have received PEN awards, the New York City Book Award for Fiction, the Rosenthal Award of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and the Internationaler Literaturpreis. Cole exhibits, publishes, and lectures widely, including a solo exhibition at Fondazione Forma per la fotografia in Milan in 2016.

Thanks to Bob Wuss of the use of his ukulele and bell and audio editing software, Elizabeth Weinfield for the use of her bass viol, Markus Hoffman for the use of his piano, Wah-Ming Chang for the use of her keyboard, and Karen Pereira de Andrade for a vocal sample and for being a banister in the dark.

Josh Begley sequenced the images and provided thoughtful counsel throughout, and Angela Chen and Kathy Rong Zhou managed the studio flawlessly, I couldn't have made the work without them.

Thanks to RoseLee Goldberg, Esa Nickle, again Bob Wuss, and everyone at Performa, and the De Young Museum for co-producing, and the crew at City Point for facilities.

Thanks to the Steven Kasher Gallery for encouraging Black Paper in utero.

My family, afraid of nothing.

The many people who helped me in a year of constant travel. The New York City massive, our late nights; and special thanks and deep respect above all to Adrienne Edwards, for dreaming on.

Other Events This Week

Flo Kasearu

Ainult liikmetele (Members Only)
Estonian House New York
Fri, Nov. 3, 5:30pm

Kemang Wa Lebulere

I cut my skin to liberate the splinter
The Connelly Theater
November 3-5, 8:30pm

Jimmy Robert

Imitation of Lives
The Glass House
November 3-5, times vary

Narcissister

The Body is a House
Participant Inc.
Sat, Nov. 4, 7:00pm

VISIT THE PERFORMA 17 HUB
427 Broadway, Soho
New York, NY 10013
Noon - 8PM daily

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