

In effect, under conditions of captivity, the offspring of the female does not “belong” to the Mother, nor is s/he “related” to the “owner,” though the latter “possesses” it, and in the African-American instance, often fathered it, *and*, as often, without whatever benefit of patrimony.

— Hortense J. Spillers

Does “it” belong in a museum? What is the “it,” that’s being provided a belonging? What does the museum’s spectral vestibules (haunted halls) *got* to do with possession? *Ain’t* there a *différance* between belonging and possession? *Whose possession? Dis’ possession.*

Motivated by these concerns, “*It*” *belongs in a museum*, continues my use of woven cotton tapestries as vehicles to engage with the material and conceptual legacies of colonialism and empire. As with the use of cotton, here the *image of the museum* indexes these roots and sites/sights an archetypical metonym for the institution of White Supremacy. In the image’s shadow, this body of work reflects on institutions such as the museum and athletics, to poetically address the absurdity of White Supremacy’s institutionally (en)titled “right/rite to possession” — assuming as *its* birthright the *ownership* of the Black body (body is meant broadly); *our* body belongs to ‘em. As the modalities of *this/dis’* possession (*dis’possession*) are focused and broad, the museum as a marker of possession, and athletics as a field to observe the consequences of a populist assumption of the “right/rite to ownership,” “*It*” *belongs in a museum* poetically stitches an understanding of the function of the *image of possession* in foreclosing the expansive possibilities for black subjectivities and blackness.

The epigraph of critic and Black Feminist scholar, Hortense J. Spillers, citing French anthropologist, Claude Meillassoux, provisionally roots this exploration into the foundational role *dis’possession* plays in contemporary valuations of the indexes and representations of black subjectivities. Establishing a legacy of contemporary Black selfhood and citizenry in American slavery, Spillers highlights the condition of the enslaved as one of dispossession. Yes, master owned slave, but the *traces* of the right to citizenship buried in this racial economy are constitutionally sutured to the delusion of a biological “right/rite to possess”; a naturalized ritual. In this work I aim to resurrect and play with the specter of Black *dis’possession* — White citizenry. Realized in the form of the white sports fan, “*It*” *belongs in a museum*, observes the racialized witness as a participant in the consumptive economy of Black performance and performativity. In the diptych *In the cave, who’s you’re daddy?*, the viewer is given a pair of images sourced from a Harlem Globetrotter’s coloring book. The left textile in the pair weaves a comic drawing of a member of the internationally recognized athletic comedic group tossing a ball while exclaiming, “Now you see it...” Its right positioned partner shows two smoke clouds where the figure used to be, accompanied by a speech bubble remarking, “Now you don’t.” Using the diptych format to reference the origin of the image — a coloring book — the reader is forced to interpret this foundational representation with and against overlapping hand silhouettes in a range of blues. At closer inspection, these stenciled and dyed hand patterns look as if they are simultaneously woven with, and hovering over, the *image as textile*. This

“hand-work” is meant to mimic the Paleolithic handprints found in painted caves in such places as Spain and southern France. Framing the experience of the racialized witness with the stereotype of inferiority signified by the primitive and marked by Paleolithic art untwines the myth of the civilized witness, the respectable citizen. This move ironically upsets then *reweaves* ideas of racial exceptionalism, suggesting that the *différance* between “fan” and “fanatic” is as tenuous as the thread between “right” and “rite” (“write” relates to *text*-tile; or “human” and “animal” for that matter. This movement discloses the collective ritualized consumption of blackness. The repetitious insistence on the always already availability of the black body (body is meant broadly) is primitive and destructive.

*“It” belongs in a museum*, marks a field in which the *ritually repetitious insistence* as to the always already availability of the black body (body is meant broadly) is “primitive” and destructive. Using weaving, humor, beauty, and a heightened attunement to materiality this exhibition hopes to deploy the *image of a racialized witness* to deconstruct a series of binary distinctions — white/black, superior/inferior, culture/primitive, human/animal, right/rite, fan/fanatic, white sexual desire/Black maternity. In addition, *dis’* image’s shadow is mobilized to conversely destroy the *image of destruction* that is America’s heritage. Said another way: The work is to *right* a *rite* that is always already *wrong*.