LOVE

IN

EXCESS

LOVE IN EXCESS

Visual Arts Center
University of Texas at Austin

October 23 –
December 19, 2025

FEATURED ARTISTS
Gwladys Gambie — Lídia Lisboa — Ophelia Marie
Tiona Nekkia McClodden — Tatiana Nascimento — Ode
Madelynn Poulson — Katherine Simóne Reynolds
Ntozake Shange — Cauleen Smith — D'Angelo Lovell Williams

Curated by
Maysa Martins

COVER
Tiona Nekkia McClodden, still from *The Hitter* (detail), 2017. Single-channel video, 4:57 minutes. Courtesy of the artist.

Editing: Maggie Mitts
Design: Hunter Thomas

In the ballad “Love in Excess,” Black Caribbean singer Ophelia Marie declares her longing for a love that is at once sensuous and ineffable, carnal and otherworldly—a love so great that, as the song’s chorus announces, it could only be fulfilled by an angel. Borrowing its title from Marie’s love anthem, *Love in Excess* brings together eleven Black women and Black queer artists whose works echo the singer’s yearning.

The form of love examined in the exhibition has been explored for millennia by philosophers, poets, and artists, and has been described as the lover’s act of reaching for an inherently absent other—a gesture inhabited by both pain and pleasure. While this acute yearning traditionally evokes notions of erotic desire between people, thinkers have also linked it to the longing for alternative social realities, as well as for the divine. This broader understanding reveals longing as an affect that is simultaneously bodily, spiritual, and political.

Anchored in both conceptual inquiry and embodied experience, the artists featured in *Love in Excess* grapple with this affect in the face of the complex intersections of gender, race, and sexuality. From the perspective of Black queerness and Black femininity, they employ various media to mine loneliness, loss, failure, absence, and longing, as well as the pain and pleasure that reflect their felt experience as both subjects and objects of love and desire.

I want to be loved by an angel[1]

By Maysa Martins

Suppose this is a love letter. For if it is only possible to write about love from within love—from being in love—, and the only one who can speak of love is the lover—I—then writing about this exhibition requires such unvarnished vulnerability.[2]

A love letter, like love itself, desires a reply. So I write this essay (as if I were writing a love letter) with the hope that at the end of these pages, the object of my love will offer itself to my desire.

To hope means to cherish a desire with anticipation.[3] This active hope is at the root of the type of love explored in *Love in Excess*: a kind of love that is expectant, eager for realization, but that exists only in the moment of deferment—*Eros*. This exhibition is about the desirous love that lives within the distance between I (the lover) and you (the beloved). It is about the lover's arms that reach without ever touching. It is about an always-present I and always-absent you; about the very gap between you and I, between you and God, between us and the reality we desire: an affect that is simultaneously sensual, spiritual, and political.

So, I embrace anticipation with no expectation of fulfillment. I surrender to the failure of desire, and willingly wait for a reply to my letter, knowing that waiting is all there is.

1 Ophelia Marie, "Love in Excess", Ses Plus Belles Chansons, 2012

2 Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, (Hill and Wang, 1977)

3 Merriam-Webster.com

PREVIOUS
D'Angelo Lovell Williams, *Seeded*, 2016. Archival inkjet print. Courtesy of the artist and Higher Pictures.

Waiting is an experience of time historically relegated to women. From Penelope's weaving and unweaving of the burial shroud during her twenty years of waiting for Odysseus, to Miss Havisham's lifelong vigil wearing the wedding dress in which she was abandoned, the emotional valences of waiting have shaped the affective temporality of countless women in literature, film, and art. While these narratives demonstrate the power of patriarchal forces over the temporal configurations of womanhood, both Penelope's and Miss Havisham's enduring pastimes of weaving and dressing reveal the agency shaping their circumstances. If waiting is the condition of the lover,[4] being in love requires willful submission to this performative act. To wait is an act of vulnerability demanding openness to and acknowledgment of the multiple feelings associated with it—excitement, anticipation, impatience, and dread. It entails a desire for something that is necessarily delayed for the promise of future gratification.

D'Angelo Lovell Williams' self-portrait *Seeded* (2016) demonstrates just such a willing renouncement of power and expectant apprehension. The agency of the surrenderer is made present through the gaze they return to the camera. The femininity of the gesture is emphasized by the blue silk robe and the surrounding garden of purple blooms waiting to be tended. However, it is primarily embodied by Lovell's acquiescence to waiting: on all fours, with muddy feet that recount their path to that moment, they wait. They wait for what? Or for whom? Unlike Penelope and Miss Havisham, Lovell's performance does not seem aimed at any one absent beloved. Their openness to whatever or whomever returns their gaze from behind the camera holds the kind of insatiability described by Amber Jamilla Musser as *hunger*: "a sensuality or mode of being and relating that prioritizes openness, vulnerability, and willingness to ingest without necessarily choosing what one is taking in."[5]

Lovell's hunger is not an abstract affect, it's connected to an embodied experience, to an experience of the flesh—the place where Eros, the Greek God of erotic love, comes down to earth and faces the realities of gender, sexuality, and race; of power and difference; of the violence of an encounter with the other. Lovell's hunger doesn't stem from the desire of a subject who objectifies and possesses others, but from a desire that dissolves the subject and embraces otherness—it is pure craving.

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The Greek poet Sappho was the first to describe Eros as "bittersweet," inscribing an emphasis on the simultaneity of pain and pleasure in the experience of erotic

4 Barthes, *Lover's Discourse*, 39 — "'Am I in love? —Yes. since I'm waiting.'... The lover's fatal identity is precisely: I am the one who waits."

5 Amber Jamilla Musser, *Sensual Excess: Queer Femininity and Brown Jouissance*, (NYU Press, 2018), 5

love that would echo throughout Western literature for centuries. Sappho and her Greek successors frequently employed physiological terms to describe the psychological effects of being in love. In their poetry, melting, piercing, dissolving, roasting, and stinging bodies served as metaphors for the emotional state caused by the distance between lovers and beloveds.[6]

However, bodies' straining against boundaries between the self and absent others has not always been purely metaphorical. Medieval mystics literally pierced and stung their own bodies in attempts to bridge the gap between themselves and an absent God. At the age of six, Catherine of Siena, the Italian saint who claimed to have been married to Christ, began whipping her bare shoulders with thin branches; by the age of sixteen, she adopted a rigorous routine of fasting, subjecting her body to the pain of literal hunger to consecrate her desire to unite with Him. Catherine's ecstatic experience of marrying Christ, as Caroline Bynum notes, was not purely transcendental, but an embodied communion, described by the saint as sacramentally sealed by a ring of Christ's foreskin.[7]

The eroticism of Catherine's experience lay in her desire to overcome her separation from an absent other. Her pursuit of a mystical union, contrary to orthodox expectations, did not transcend corporeality but instead, sealed by His preputial ring and sought through flagellation, enhanced its fleshiness. In Tiona Nekkia McClodden's 2017 work *The Hitter*, the artist, much like Catherine, pushes her body to its limits in an effort to bridge the gap between her own embodied experience and that of an absent other; in her case, the deceased Black queer poet Brad Johnson.[8]

The Hitter documents the encounter between McClodden and a Black femme BDSM mistress hired

by the artist to strike her with a bouquet of thorny roses. During the beating, McClodden declaims Brad Johnson's homoerotic poem, for which the video is named—a sensual, rhythmic description of the strikes the poet receives from his lover, each felt as both redressing of his longing for the lover and a deepening of his craving.

A series of gestures builds toward the film's climax: the artist adjusts the camera, tests the sound, arranges the space, and negotiates with her mistress about what will happen next. This unfolding of events highlights the subtle line between agency and submission on which the artist balances. A signal of consent from McClodden indicates her surrender to the mistress, who begins striking the artist intentionally, painfully, and repeatedly as McClodden recites the poem, actualizing Johnson's experience, lending her breath to his written words, and transforming them into a living, sensual phenomenon.

As a *Santeria* priestess, McClodden's choice to be struck by flowers evokes spiritual cleansings—rituals of the Afro-diasporic religion meant to, among other things, open connections between the material and spiritual worlds. The presence of the deceased poet is also invoked through the navy sweatshirt the artist wears during the ritual flagellation, which resembles the one he wore in life. In this queer erotic liturgy that recalls Saint Catherine's in its erotic spiritual longing and ritual fleshiness, McClodden embodies Johnson's physical and emotional yearnings, his desire for love, and his yielding to pain and pleasure to the point of rapture, a dissolution of borders: McClodden laughs, an ecstatic gesture marking a Black queer spiritual and erotic bond that defies complete apprehension.

6 Anne Carson, *Eros the Bittersweet*, (Princeton Classics, 1986)

7 Caroline Bynum, *Holy Feast, Holy Fast*, (University of California Press, 1987)

8 Brad Johnson (1952–2011), was a Black gay poet based in Philadelphia, PA. His poems explored themes such as violence, sex, cruising, and love. His archives are currently housed at The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in Harlem.

Hl. Katharina von Siena, Giambattista Tiepolo, 1746 © KHM-Museumsverband

Tiona Nekkia McClodden, still from *The Hitter* (detail), 2017. Single-channel video, 4:57 minutes. Courtesy of the artist.

The same Afro-diasporic principle that enables such expansion of the (Black) body is present in Ode's 2022 untitled photographs from the series *When Angels Speak of Love* and *A Rose and A Prayer*. In the first photograph, there is an altar on which sits a dark-skinned feminine plaster figurine of *Pomba Gira*, a deity that practitioners of *Umbanda*, a syncretic Afro-Brazilian religion, often summon for assistance with matters of the heart. The figurine is surrounded by candles, a sculpture of the artist's late dog, images of Saint Rita of Cascia, Saint Expedite, and Marcinha do Corinto, an elderly Brazilian *travesti*.[10] The other photograph is a self-portrait of the artist who, just like the figurine, sits holding a heart-shaped ornament made of paper flowers. She is also surrounded by religious symbols; a portrait of Jesus Christ and a *garrafada*, an infusion of plants and herbs used by *Umbanda* practitioners for medicinal purposes.

Pomba Gira, a manifestation of the female energy of *Eshu*, is evoked in both photographs. As an avatar of this *Orisha*[11] who inhabits the crossroads between spiritual and material worlds and possesses great sexual power, this powerful, and sometimes feared deity is an extravagant and liminal entity who thrives on contradiction and ambiguity. Connected to marginalized, yet self-possessed women ancestors—sex workers, "promiscuous" women, women who fall through the cracks of cisheteronormativity—, *Pomba Gira* embraces femininity and revels in the excesses of the flesh. Her ambiguity and connection to marginalized femininity make us wonder which of Ode's photographs originated first. Or yet, is *Pomba Gira* a deity because self-possessed women like Ode exist? Or can Ode become divine due to *Pomba Gira*'s power?

Pomba Gira's immoderate erotic force and ambiguous qualities are ubiquitous in Afro-Brazilian culture. "*Love makes you suffer; heartbreak makes you cry*,"[12] says one of the chants used to summon her in Brazilian *terreiros*[13] and sung in profane samba circles, highlighting the paradox of erotic love's pain and pleasure on which *Pomba Gira* thrives. When faced with the choice between her kind-hearted, living husband and the lustful ghost of her late partner, Dona Flor—the infamous title character from Jorge Amado's novel,[14] who is often associated with *Pomba Gira*[15]—chooses to make room for both in her bed. As an entity of excesses and ambiguities, *Pomba Gira* refuses to surrender to a life of partialities. She wants it all. And, despite knowing not to trust any false promises of fulfillment, she won't curb her appetite.

It's no coincidence that *Pomba Gira* inhabits the threshold between the living and the dead, as love and death are both issues of boundaries and their transgression. To "want to be loved by an angel", as Caribbean singer Ophelia Marie declaims in the song that lends its title to the exhibition, and to become divine, as Ode does in her photographs, are two responses to the same problem: that our finite lives cannot contain our hunger for expansion.

10 The word "travesti" has been reclaimed by trans rights activists in Brazil and other places in Latin America to represent a specific social and political identity of the Global South.

11 *Orishas* are emanations of *Olodumaré* (God) in Yoruba religions of West Africa and of the Africa Diaspora. Different religions worship a different number of *Orishas*, each representing different spiritual, natural, and human qualities.

12 Original chorus of the song in Portuguese: "*Dói, dói, dói, dói, um amor faz sofrer, desamor faz chorar*". Folk song by unknown author.

13 A Terreiro is a sacred place of worship and community for Afro-Brazilian religions.

14 Jorge Amado, *Dona Flor and Her Two Husbands*, (Alfred A. Knopf, 1969)

15 Roberto Strongman, *Queering Black Atlantic religions: Transcorporeality in Candomblé, Santeria, and Vodou*, (Duke University Press, 2019).

Ode, untitled from the series *When Angels Speak of Love*, 2022. Archival inkjet print. Courtesy of the artist.

Ode, untitled from the series *A Rose and A Prayer*, 2022. Archival inkjet print. Courtesy of the artist.

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In *Black and Blue Over You (After Bas Jan Ader for Ishan)* (2010), Cauleen Smith interrogates two such boundaries beyond which we seek to expand. The boundary of the flesh—that which constitutes our difference and unbridgeable distance from one another—and the boundary of death. The nine-minute-long video pays homage to Bas Jan Ader, an artist whose relentless *search for the miraculous* ultimately led to his own demise.[16]

Smith draws inspiration from Ader's 1971 video *Primary Times*, in which the artist shuffled around red, yellow, and blue carnations in a gesture seen as interrogating Dutch painter Piet Mondrian's spiritual quest for a transcendental order of the universe through abstraction. If Bas Jan Ader challenged Mondrian's pursuit of ideal purity and balance by replacing his primary color lines and squares with the complexity of living, organic forms, Smith took this gesture even further by arranging and rearranging black, white, blue, and purple flowers. The colors of bruising and mourning, the blooms in Smith's video, invoke the body in its most immediate and tangible aspects—its materiality, vulnerability, and finitude. Though not just any body, as it is Smith herself, a dark skin Black woman, who arranges and rearranges the flowers to the continuous sound of a melodic Blues saxophone, invoking the Black body visually and sonically in its specific affects and historicity.

If Mondrian sought a pure spiritual harmony, untainted by worldly existence and historical burdens, Smith, through the banality of arranging the heavy body-flowers and the absurdity of repeating the gesture ad nauseam, reminds us of a trivial, yet wondrous and violent reality: the boundedness and finiteness of our bodies.

Bas Jan Ader died in 1975, at age 33, while trying to cross the Atlantic Ocean from the American coast to England sailing in a thirteen-foot sailboat as part of a performance series entitled "In Search for the Miraculous". His body was never found.

Cauleen Smith, stills from *Black and Blue Over You (After Bas Jan Ader for Isan)*, 2010. Film transferred to video, 9:40 minutes. Courtesy of the artist.

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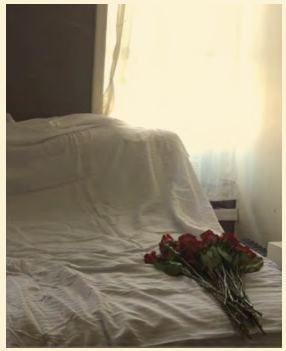
The Victorian language of flowers, known as floriography, emerged as a clandestine mode of communication at a time when proper etiquette discouraged open displays of emotion. Young gentlemen of England's high society adopted the practice of sending bouquets as tokens of their affection, and young ladies wore specific flowers in their hair or tucked into their gowns as coded messages of love and desire. As much as it tried to contain the excesses of erotic desire within the boundaries of Victorian bourgeois respectability, this romantic symbolic language of flowers was inevitably bound up with flowers' long-established functions as offerings to the dead, and, more pragmatically, of masking the odors of decomposing flesh.

As Michel Foucault taught us, behind the apparent repression of that era lay an explosion of discourse about the body and sex.[17] And before him, Georges Bataille, in his desire to scorn bourgeois notions of taste and beauty, exposed the obscenity and abjectness implicit in *The Language of Flowers*: "Even the most beautiful flowers," he says, "are spoiled in their centers by hairy sexual organs… the interior of a rose does not at all correspond to its exterior beauty; if one tears off all the corolla's petals, all that remains is a rather sordid tuft." "In fact," he continues, "after a very short period of glory, the marvelous corolla rots indecently in the sun, thus becoming, for the plant, a garish withering…It is impossible to exaggerate the tragicomic oppositions indicated in the course of this death drama…this nauseating banality: love smells like death."[18]

Flowers' association with the obscene and perishable does not escape the artists in the exhibition. Lovell, McClodden, Ode, and Smith conjure flowers' eroticism, their violence, and their ability to remind us of the fleshy limits of our bodies and our inevitable decay. Throughout the exhibition, flowers are alternately bodies, wounds, weapons that cut through flesh, offerings to lovers and to the gods. We recognize the artists' gesturing with flowers: we have also offered flowers and asked for love in return, seeking to feel briefly consoled, to be forgiven for our failures, to be healed of our (self-inflicted) wounds, our insufferable loneliness, and our broken hearts. Through flowers, we offer ourselves and dream of being whole.



17 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction*, (Pantheon Books, 1978)

18 Georges Bataille, "The Language of Flowers", in Visions of Excess*: Selected Writings, 1927–1939*, (University of Minnesota Press, 1985)

D'Angelo Lovell Williams, *Face Down, Ass Up*, 2016. Archival inkjet print. Courtesy of the artist and Higher Pictures.

Ode, untitled from the series *A Rose and A Prayer*, 2022. Archival inkjet print. Courtesy of the artist.

Tiona Nekkia McClodden, still from *The Hitter* (detail), 2017. Single-channel video, 4:57 minutes. Courtesy of the artist.

Cauleen Smith, still from *Black and Blue Over You (After Bas Jan Ader for Isan)* (detail), 2010. Film transferred to video, 9:40 minutes. Courtesy of the artist.

In *A Lover's Discourse*, Roland Barthes' eponymous lover attempts to picture a mythological state of unity, Aristophanes' hermaphrodite—a powerful being, whole before it was split in half by the gods, each half doomed to search forever for its missing other:

> …globular, with four hands, four legs, four ears, just one head, one neck. Are the halves back-to-back or face-to-face? Belly to belly, no doubt… and the genital organs are behind. I persist, but get nowhere, being a poor draughtsman or an even poorer utopianist. The hermaphrodite, or the androgyne, figure of that 'ancient unity of which the desire and the pursuit constitute what we call love,' is beyond my figuration; or at least all I could achieve is a monstrous, grotesque, improbable body.[19]

The improbable bodies depicted in the works of Lidia Lisboa and Gwladys Gambie, with their multiple breasts, protrusions, and excess limbs, evoke something other than Barthes' fumbling attempt to visualize unity. Lisboa's textile sculpture, a strange body knitted from red ribbons, and Gambie's creature painted in red ink recall instead what Hortense Spillers described as "a particular figuration of the split subject": a figuration of Black diasporic women who, through a process she calls pornotroping, are simultaneously commodified and rendered sexually available. As a result, before even possessing a (half) body, Black women are stripped of subjectivity and reduced to flesh.[20] Lisboa and Gambie materialize Spillers' scenario of violence, suggesting in their depictions of Black women's bodies that insurgency stems from "claiming the monstrosity"[21] of their unique condition.

19 Barthes, *Lover's Discourse*, 227

20 Hortense J. Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book" *Diacritics*, vol. 17, no. 2, 1987, pp. 64–81, 65

21 Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe", 80

By embracing their fleshiness, Lisboa's and Gambie's many-breasted creatures transcend the prescribed erotic and affective labor that has burdened Black women across space and time. Their works welcome something that cannot begin to be conceived—an improbable, illegible, misshapen, desirous monstrosity of their own invention.

Lidia Lisboa, untitled from the series *Breasts that Nursed the World*, 2019. Crochet. Courtesy of the artist and Almeida & Dale.

Gwladys Gambie, *Dancing is Healing Until I Fall* (detail), 2025. Ink on paper. Courtesy of the artist.

Katherine Simóne Reynolds, *Keloid: 3*, 2023. Glycerin, gelatin, unsulfured blackstrap molasses, costume jewelry. Courtesy of the artist.

In her sculptures *Keloid: 3* and *Keloid: 4*, Katherine Simóne Reynolds evokes another strange, excessive body. Crafted from layered resin and golden jewelry, the two works are modeled after the hypertrophic scars common to dark-skinned bodies—doctors attribute these gnarled protrusions of layered skin to "excess healing." Significantly, the medical literature on these outlandish designs of the Black body is rife with superlatives: "overabundance of collagen," "overactive inflammatory response," and "excessive fibroblast activity."[22] The dry and never neutral language of medicine inadvertently offers a poetic, hyperbolic image of this bodily reaction to worldly clashes.

Despite the underlying pathologization, the adjectives' maximalism seems to contain a deeper truth about the body: whether the clash is a result of our own attempts to reach beyond ourselves or of a violation, such an overabundant, overactive, excessive response is a fitting reminder of the body's limits, its edges, the inexorable fleshy wall that prevents invasions and overflows.

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If we are trapped, contained, confined within our halves; if we must be forever waiting, craving, reaching towards the void; if our longings exceed any possible fulfillment, what is the point? This desperation seems to be the starting point for Ntozake Shange's characters in her choreopoem *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide / When the Rainbow Is Enuf*.[23] If the form of an artwork is any indication of its content, the fact that Shange's play was formed not just by her poems, but also by music and dance, tells us about the ways in which her characters find solace.

22 DA Ladin, WL Garner, DJ Smith Jr. "Excessive scarring as a consequence of healing". National Library of Medicine, 1995

23 Ntozake Shange, *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide / When the Rainbow is Enuf*, (Bantam Books, 1975)

lady in orange

i dont wanna write
in english or spanish
i wanna sing make you dance
like the bata dance scream
twitch hips wit me cuz
i done forgot all abt words
aint got no definitions
i wanna whirl
with you

...

lady in yellow

we gotta dance to keep from cryin

lady in brown

we gotta dance to keep from dyin

lady in red

so come on

...

everyone

we come here to be dancin
To be dancin
To be dancin
To be dancin
baya[24]

...

The dance reaches a
climax and all of the ladies
fall out tired, but full of
life and *togetherness.*[25]

In Shange's choreopoem, seven anonymous Black women, distinguished only by the colors they wear, who are "without rhythm / no tune," and who "can't hear anything, but maddening screams & the soft strings of death" are brought onto the stage and sung into life: "sing her sighs, sing the song of her possibilities, sing a righteous gospel, the making of a melody, let her be born; let her be born; & handled warmly."[26]

Photographs by Martha Swope, 1979 in *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide / When the Rainbow is Enuf*, a choreopoem by Ntozake Shange

24 Shange, *For Colored Girls*, 14

25 Shange, *For Colored Girls*, 52

26 Shange, *For Colored Girls*, 3

Each of the seven women reveals her desires, longings, misfortunes, and heartaches in distinct monologues. Despite their separateness, music and dance manifest a life force that weaves together their political, sensual, and spiritual desires. Fittingly, "A life force" is how Audre Lorde defines the erotic in her 1978 lecture "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power".[27] For Lorde, the erotic is a life-giving power that functions against the grain of a capitalist, patriarchal ethic that reduces life to the travesty of necessities, duty, and oblivion. Barthes also considered erotic longing in economic terms: he called "exuberance" the transgressive overflow of the amorous force, describing it as an expenditure without a goal, a lavish affirmation of life, in opposition to bourgeois abstinence from joy despite an economy of repletion.[28]

Both theorists account for the fact that the greatest human longings exceed any demand for moderation. For them, longing is overflowing, desire demands an insubordination to any imposition of smallness, reaching beyond ourselves requires expansion. In Shange's choreopoem, the seven anonymous women long and suffer, they are vulnerable and unfinished, yet their longings and desires move them, make them dance. Their pain and their pleasure make their bodies twitch and shake, swirl and spin.

In "Uses of the Erotic," Lorde references a version of Greek mythology in which Eros's birth is attributed to Chaos. To Lorde, the erotic is a chaotic, unruly, creative force. Erotic longing, whether sensual, spiritual, or political, moves us unpredictably. This is what distinguishes excesses of desire from capitalist excess: desire cannot be controlled or calculated; it serves no purpose beyond itself; it can't be turned into profit. In fact, the erotic has the power to disrupt profit because, as Lorde points out, the overpouring of this life force that arises from our desires and longings requires us to reach beyond ourselves; it requires sharing. The seven anonymous Black women in Shange's choreopoem long and hurt separately, but they dance and "fall tired," "full of life and *togetherness*."

27 Audre Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power", in *Feminism and Pornography*, ed. Drucilla Cornell, (Oxford University Press, 2000)

28 Barthes, *Lover's Discourse*, 84

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Like Shange's choreopoem, the video work *Dreams of Love* (2025) by multidisciplinary artist Tatiana Nascimento brings together sensual, spiritual, and political longings in a polyvocal reflection on desire for love and liberation. The two-channel video and sound piece features a song and a poem written and

Madelynn Poulson, *Lady in Green*, 2024. Monologue reenactment of an excerpt of *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide / When the Rainbow is Enuf*, choreopoem by Ntozake Shange. Single-channel video, 4:05 minutes. Courtesy of the artist.

performed by the artist, along with excerpts from Frantz Fanon's thoughts on dreaming and multilingual narratives of love dreams collected over the years from diverse Black men and women. Dreaming, in Nascimento's work, is a two-sided concept. It is a play of desire; a cherishing of the force that moves us towards love and towards liberation, but also the space where the abyss between desire and realization can be overcome.

In this work, as well as in others by Nascimento, the Black experience weaves love and liberation into a single dream. In her 2022 poem "lovership," Nascimento explores the concept of *banzo*, a Portuguese word of Central African origins, which Natália Affonso translates into English as "Afro-diasporic longing." The 18th-century Portuguese lawyer Oliveira Mendes, in his detailed account of the slave trade in Brazil, described *banzo* as a "passion of the soul" to which enslaved people succumbed. *Banzo*, in his words, was "the longing for their own, and for their homeland; the love owed to someone…the deep contemplation about the loss of freedom." [29]

This Afro-diasporic experience of longing, as defined by Mendes and expressed by Nascimento's poem and video work, collapses the distance between the longing for love and the longing for freedom. In *Dreams of Love*, the abyss of *banzo* is symbolized by the sky and a body of water divided into two, each side plummeting down into one another. This chasm of incalculable distance, this space in-between, is visited by the dreamers whose voice we hear in the video. In this abyss, "at the edge of time," [30] the dreamers jump, swim, run, climb, and burst out laughing. In this deep space of interlude, says Fanon in the quote declaimed in the video, "the [colonized] never stops achieving [their] freedom. From nine in the evening until six in the morning." [31] In the abyss inhabited by Eros and *Banzo*, the Afro-diasporic god of longing, dreamers and lovers are reunited with their beloveds, with their ancestors, and with liberation.

29 Luiz Antônio de Oliveira Mendes, *Memória a Respeito dos Escravos e Tráfico da Escravatura entre a Costa d'África e Brasil*, (Escorpião, 1977), 66. Translation from Portuguese by the author

30 Lyrics of the song written and interpreted by Tatiana Nascimento in *Dreams of Love*

31 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, (Groove Press, 2021), 15

lovership
tatiana nascimento

Translated from the Portuguese
by Natália Affonso

planning the end of the world, to me,
is an Afro-diasporic longing for
night becoming day
on the roof of your mouth,
word
apocalypse.

planning the world, in the end,
is this Afro-diasporic longing for
night becoming roof
in the mouth of your day,
word
apocalypse.

planning the end, in the world,
is this Afro-diasporic longing for
a mouth becoming night
on the day of your roof,
word
apocalypse.

planning the bottom of me,
for a second,
is this banzo for a night becoming day
on the roof of your mouth,
word
apocalypse.

PREVIOUS

Tatiana Nascimento, still from *Dreams of Love*, 2025. Two-channel video, sound. 9:41 minutes. Courtesy of the artist.