

Lola Olufemi | Distortions

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LOLA OLUFEMI II
Distortions



this broken piece of yard

this broken piece of yard

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The background features large, organic, abstract shapes in black and white. A large black shape dominates the left and bottom-left areas, while a white shape is visible in the bottom-left corner. The text is centered within the black area.

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**THE FUTURE IN
THREE NOTES**

this broken piece of yard

**A NOTE
ON
THE
FUGITIVE
AND
KNOWLEDGE
PRODUCTION**

Distortions

If the world is always already a distortion, the words *go slow* take on new meaning. *Go slow* means pedagogy is not like capital accumulation or a way to master reality in order to dominate and then convert it. We have seen what a desire for mastery can do. Let us take heed. *Go slow* means planning and strategy. How do we escape the distortion, the skin, the aspiration to legibility? The fugitive turns knowledge into an unfurling. She knows that there is no such thing as origin; the beginning is multiple, it was never intended to be captured. This understanding comes from watching as much as waiting. The fugitive knows that the hours, years, centuries spent in history's annals have produced the perfect moment to strike. The conditions are ripe. She bypasses explanation, the dialectic, the production of knowledge through utmost convention. She strikes through memory. She strikes through memory. She strikes through memory. She speaks to us enmeshed in this world's distortions, lays out a hand in wait; she reminds us to *go slow*, that knowledge is first and foremost a

Distortions

communal rite. We should never forget it is impossible to know anything without each other. The fugitive is a master of disguise. When we go searching in the archive: she animates our discovery of self in the other, she is in the little known work from the little known artist that is rediscovered to critical acclaim, she is in the space between the visual and the feeling the visual evokes. When the fugitive says, *go slow*, she means to warn us that this distorted world is a waiting game. That blackness is not the body or a name or a feeling and that pain can tell us more than we think. The distortion speaks back. Luckily, the fugitive is louder.

a note on the fugitive and knowledge production

**A
NOTE
ON
LOVE**

The film emerges because the filmmaker loves other black people enough to say, *this is what I have to say about remembering. I want to turn remembering into something beautiful.* The film emerges to illuminate the bonds and responsibilities we have to one another and to the land we build our lives on. The film emerges to remind us that history is not a set of sealed off events. An embrace of the potential for revolutionary love requires us to be less embarrassed of relation. It mandates the destruction of the individual artist because it does not believe in singular being. Our approach to love cannot be heuristic, it must be learnt in the friction of our bodies rubbing up against each other. It must be learnt in the promises we make to children. A long neglected theory, love reveals the motivation for action and non-action. The question is, how do we teach it as a serious discipline, unwavering in its commitment to the unimaginable? Love readies us for the future. I do not mean the brittle kind built on the already existing order of things. I mean revolutionary love, the kind emanating in all

directions, the kind that intends to touch everything; this is what the fugitive uses to build her plan of action. It is what reminds her of the need for principled resistance. Love is the reason she remains determined. Love is the reason she believes it possible to speak across generations and borders. The fugitive uses love to make something out of ruin. Maybe we make *because* we love, maybe any dream of a new pedagogical method must learn this hard lesson: every artistic thing must be made in service of others.

**A
NOTE
ON
THE
VISUAL**

When we watch, when connotation moves away from weighted words, knowledge appears not as the decideness of polemic but as an inconsistent drip of alternative possibilities. These fugitives are trying to break open: the canon, anthropology and its history of misreading, time, a name. On the screen they mark themselves through language, through sound, through image, through a meditative reflection of the connection between the three. Maybe knowledge has nothing to do with being rooted. Maybe frequencies, untouchable vibrations, strange reckonings with “truth” and memory’s representation via the screen is how we will let the future know we are here, waiting to be enveloped. Memory is not a conjuring, if it were, remembrance would be theft. I am not naive enough to think we can ever know the past, not when the world is set to clock-time. I do know that the atmosphere moving image creates, something about how it distorts the distortion, the ongoing relationship between image and the optic can make us feel we are in on a well kept secret. At best,

like we can convene with the dead. Let us not be afraid of mystery, of open bodies of water, of the tones and codes we will need to reach each other many decades from now. We have to embrace what we do not yet know. Maybe time is a loop that meets its end even as it begins again. The video we can start and stop reminds us of this. The video, when it lags or glitches, when it tells the story so seamlessly we feel as if we are involved in it, reveals that an anticipatory orientation to the future will only land us back where we started. The work of the artist is chiefly, propagandist, to make the future *now*. The visual is one such window. When they say memory is a material, they mean we can build from it.

*Lola Olufemi is a black feminist
writer, organiser and researcher
from London.*

This commission is part of LUX's 2021 programme *this broken piece of yard* developed by Cairo Clarke.

this broken piece of yard invites a constellation of creative practitioners to contribute to a year of co-intentional slow, ambient programming. Centering learning through practice and embedding Black feminist futurity at its core. Together we honour forms of knowledge production and dissemination that slip between the cracks, are formed on unstable ground, and take on multiple temporalities. Offerings are drawn from strands of theorising taking place in autonomous spaces, inserting the speculative into the present and holding space for the mess. *this broken piece of yard* was born out of exploring the history of LUX (formerly the London Filmmakers Co-op); navigating the lived conditions of Covid-19 and global uprisings in defence of Black life - together culminating in asking “what do we want from arts organisations now?” and “what do we want to bring into being?”

Through writing commissions, audio projects, digital interventions, activities in nature and working groups *this broken piece of yard* is an experiment towards an entangled communal practice. We take exhaustion as a point of solidarity, slow-walking together, leaning on one another, collectively shaping *this broken piece of yard*.

Cairo Clarke is a curator, writer and founder of SITE projects. She is currently LUX Curatorial Fellow 2020/21.

Design & layout by Joshua Woolford.



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