Black Frequency

This Zine was created by Wilson Borja and includes a reflection written by Abeyamí Ortega

1. Zine Transcript

COVER

Black silhouette. The afro, golden glasses and hoop earrings stand out.

Vignette 1 and 2

Two black men joined by their long hair. Four white hands with scissors are distributed along the hair ready to cut it out.

PAGE BREAK

Vignette 1

Two black silhouettes seem stepping into unknown territory. Two white hands frame the vignette

Vignette 2

5 black silhouettes up in arms holding machetes. A white hand holds a machete bigger than everyone else.

Vignette 3

Legs of a man in a suit and shoes. Two hands look for gold on a plate. One hand holds a knife.

Vignette 4

Black legs and boots of a football player about to kick the ball. Two hands intertwined.

Vignette 5

Two hands washing in a bucket while two black silhouettes are observing.

Vignette 6

A black man plays the saxophone while a black shadow accompanies playing the piano keys.

Vignette 7

Bare feet in the sand. Between the feet rests a bucket. The hands sink into the bucket.

PAGE BREAK

Vignette 1

Shipwreck. Two black hands peeking out the surface of the sea.

Vignette 2

Black silhouette, observing the shipwreck.

PAGE BREAK

Vignette 1 to 12

Black silhouette

Black silhouette wearing a mask

Black silhouette wearing afro, glasses and hoop earrings

Black silhouette wearing a mask

Black silhouette

Black silhouette wearing two masks, a white woman’s mask stands out

Black silhouette with sculpted afro

Black silhouette wearing multiple masks, the mask of an ape stands out

Black silhouette with asterisks

Black silhouette wearing various masks, highlights the mask of a clown

Black silhouette

Black silhouette wearing indefinite masks

END

BLACK BACK COVER

1. Reflection written by Abeyamí Ortega

**FrecuenciaNegra [*BlackFrequency*]**

Abeyamí Ortega Domínguez, University of Manchester. Writing in Cali, Colombia, March 2023.

*FrecuenciaNegra*, a graphic zine by Colombian Afro-diasporic artist Wilson Borja, begins with a threshold: a black page resisting the blank of the page; a register and horizon of the possible, a vanishing point and plane of access to the universe of what Tina Campt calls the 'frequency of black life' [1, 2]. A frequency where black life is visualised in terms of flow(s) and sequence(s):

Hair, as identity and a metaphor for a root and a bridge between two figures that, like Janus faces, look to the past and the future. The silhouettes drawn by Borja also look at two coasts of the same ocean, the Black Atlantic, as conceptualised by Paul Gilroy [3, 4]. In their duplicity, these figures also evoke the 'double consciousness' proposed by W.E.B. Dubois [5] to reflect on the Afrodiasporic experience. This hair-root-bridge, too, as an archive of breathing memory, a space of collective care, a repository of living knowledge and a practice of political action, as Afro-descendant Colombian artist Liliana Angulo Cortés proposes in the collective creation project *Quieto Pelo* [6]. Despite having been split time and again by colonial violence and its resonances, these roots-bridges persist, resist, and reinvent themselves, reconnecting through fluid, flexible, interwoven wefts. A rhizome, they transcend and overcome the rigid demarcations and multiple violences of the racist, capitalist, cisheterosexist, patriarchal, capitalist system that attempts to disconnect them.

*FrecuenciaNegra* also invokes hands, a metaphor and testimony of black labour as an archive of black life; stories of rebellion that are exercises in life and beauty, as Saidiya Hartman points out [7]. Hands that rebel against what Black-mestiza Mexican sociologist Mónica Moreno Figueroa conceptualises as the 'logics of mestizaje' [8]. These hands reminds us as well of the black labour often invisibilised: literally, the labour that has built the historical and current infrastructures that constitute and maintain in operation a good part of the world that we inhabit today.

Borja also offers a visual reflection on the array of realities creating the frequencies of black lives and invites us to oppose the stereotypes that stigmatise, criminalise, and dehumanise black lives. Borja visualises hands that move, breath, enunciate, and create where stereotypes cannot cast their shadow. Hands that open fissures and inaugurate spaces of possibility from different registers; the broad and heterogeneous spectra of the frequencies of black lives in different locations across the world, as Mara Viveros Vigoya proposes [9]—regions like Améfrica Ladina, a term coined by Lelia González [9a].

Borja’s moves on to unveil the masks referred by Fanon [10], overlapping images in multifaceted experiences in the broad spectrum, the intersections, tensions, contradictions, and the multiple relational dimensions of black life. Images speaking from different places of enunciation, as proposed by Djamila Ribeiro.

*FrecuenciaNegra* centres, both in its narrative and on the page, the silhouette of a woman as a black space. A space resisting any kind of closure attempted by gender-exclusionist visions. A space radically open for the representation of woman as a political category linking the archives of black non-binary, trans, lesbian, cis, and the full spectrum of black life. Drawing on the powerful genealogy of black feminist thought, Grada Kilomba [12] echoes the key importance to problematise the category of "others" proposed by Simone de Beauvoir– in this sense, black women have been represented as the "other of the other", the double antithesis of whiteness and masculinity. In a similar vein, Ochy Curiel offers a key reminder: "Black women's movement was born articulating ‘race’, gender, class and sexuality as political categories to explain the realities of black women in the face of racism, sexism, classism and heterosexism […] This subjectivity has not only developed individually, but also collectively." [13].

*FrecuenciaNegra* is an invitation to reflect on these possibilities under the effects of the irradiation of blacklight, following the critical-creative methodology proposed by Denise Ferreira Da Silva. Blacklight as an aesthetic practice contesting the colonial, racial and cisheteropatriarchal matrix of the modern enlightened regime:

"Although invisible to the human eye, ultraviolet radiation turns opaque things luminous. In other words, black light does not illuminate: it makes things emanate or shine. For this reason, it is perfect for the task of imagining a reading procedure that, rather than relying on transparency, moves to dissolve it: a compositional practice designed to break down the abstract forms (the concept and the categories) of understanding and reflection that both presuppose and rehearse the occlusion of colonial violence and indifference to racial violence" [14].

In this way, *FrecuenciaNegra* ends by creating an opening. The flows and sequences of black life transcend the limits of the page flowing, once again, towards a threshold: The potency of what-is- to-become, the fissuring of the possible.

[1] Wherever possible, Spanish texts are referred, except where no Spanish version was found. All translations are mine.

[2] Campt, Tina M. "The visual frequency of black life: Love, labor, and the practice of refusal." *Social Text* 37.3 (2019): 25-46.

[3] Gilroy, Paul. Atlántico negro. Modernidad y doble conciencia. Akal editores (2014).

[4] Cohen, Jim, and Jade Lindgaard. "Entrevista a Paul Gilroy: Del atlántico negro a la melancolía postcolonial." *Revista Iberoamericana* 255-2 (2016): 301-312.

[5] Du Bois, William Edward Burghardt. *Las Almas de la Gente Negra*. Zeuk Media, 2020.

[6] Angulo Cortés, Liliana. *Quieto Pelo*. <https://molaa.org/angulocortes> [información en español y video de Liliana Angulo Cortés al término de la página].

[7] Hartman, Saidiya. *Vidas Rebeldes, Belos Experimentos:: Histórias Íntimas De Meninas Negras Desordeiras, Mulheres Encrenqueiras E Queers Radicais*. Fósforo, 2022. Original en inglés Hartman, Saidiya. *Wayward lives, beautiful experiments: Intimate histories of riotous Black girls, troublesome women, and queer radicals*. WW Norton & Company, 2019.]

[8] Figueroa, Mónica Moreno. "¿ De qué sirve el asco?: Racismo antinegro en México." *Revista de la Universidad de México* 8 (2020): 63-68.

[9] Viveros Vigoya, M. (2020). *Los colores del antirracismo (en Améfrica Ladina).*

[9a] Gonzalez, Lélia. 1988a. “A categoria político-cultural de amefricanidade.” Tempo Brasileiro (Rio de Janeiro), no. 92/93 (Jan./ Jun): 69–82.

[10] Fanon, Frantz. *Piel negra, máscaras blancas*. Vol. 55. Ediciones Akal, 2009.

[11] Ribeiro, Djamila. "Breves reflexiones sobre Lugar de Enunciación." *Relaciones Internacionales* (2018).

[12] Kilomba, Grada. *Memórias da plantação: episódios de racismo cotidiano*. Editora Cobogó, 2020.

[13] Curiel, Ochy. "Identidades esencialistas o construcción de identidades políticas: El dilema de las feministas negras." *Otras miradas* 2.2 (2002): 96-113.

[14] Ferreira Da Silva, Denise. “Blacklight”. En: *Otobong Nkanga, Luster and Lucre*, eds. Clare Molloy, Philippe Pirotte, and Fabian Schöneich. Berlin: Sternberg Press (2016)