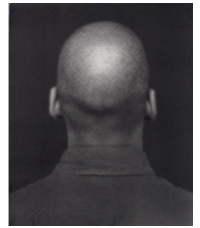




Black Steel in the Hour of Chaos,
Rashid Johnson (2008)



Self-Portrait, Glenn Ligon (1996)

Context

While private / public initiatives like Mayor Bloomberg's New Housing Marketplace Plan, first outlined in 2002 at the New York Housing Conference/National Housing Conference 29th Annual Luncheon Sheraton New York Hotel ("*Housing Plan For New York City's 21st Century Neighborhoods*" by Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg) and the 80 /20 Housing program sought to create new policy models for the development of affordable housing through leveraging public assets in order to maximize private investment; income mixing in order to provide for deconcentrations of poverty; and the creation of new populations in desirable locations throughout the city the results such initiatives have been mixed at best as the disparities between wealthy and poor New Yorkers has significantly increased over the past decade. Furthermore, the design of most of the new housing projects has not much progressed beyond the stigmatized typologies and only apparently so formal solutions to urban morphologies. Yet context is defined not only by urban morphology but also by the politics of space, socio-cultural relationships, and technology. For example, how might the design of a housing proposal in East Harlem engage the full discourse of context?

Subject, Data + Power

As Foucault illustrates in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, each process of modernization entails disturbing effects with regard to the power of the individual and the control of government. Foucault examines the ways that government has claimed control and enforcement of ever more private aspects of our lives. Although recent controversies surrounding the National Security Administration (NSA) data mining and collection attest to this claim, the NYC Police Department policy of *Stop, Question, and Frisk*, (predominantly among men of color and predominantly in Harlem and East Harlem)¹ is another example of the exertion of power by the government over private bodies. Just recently, Mayor Michael Bloomberg suggested that all 620,000 residents of New York City's public housing should be fingerprinted as a way of keeping criminals out of the buildings. However, as mayoral candidate Bill Thompson noted, "Just like stop-and-frisk, this is another direct act of treating minorities like criminals ... Mayor Bloomberg wants to make New Yorkers feel like prisoners in their own homes."

Surveillance

American black men and other men of African descent function in a society that surveils them. African-American slaves were highly regulated through slave codes and slave patrols which were designed to prevent slave rebellions. As early as 1919, the federal government monitored black civil rights leaders such as Marcus Garvey. FBI Chief J. Edgar Hoover fixated on Garvey using black informants and later used similar techniques to monitor Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, the Nation of Islam, the Black Panther Party, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and even the South Christian Leadership Conference. Like the videotape produced of the Rodney King beating which surveilled police brutality, black men are watched while driving on our nation's highways, walking on public streets, shopping in retail stores, and while performing job duties. What are the social, emotional, and psychological consequences of being watched, to grow up and function in a society that distrusts your body (e.g., skin color, hair texture, and size of nostrils)? How do the conditions of surveillance inform the discourse of housing and the body?

Domestic Body / Public Eye

Economic transformations and globalization over the past 30 years have evolved New York City from a city of manufacturing and production to a city of information and media consumption. There are over 1200 public Wi-Fi hotspots and more than 4100 surveillance cameras south of 14th Street in Manhattan and 292 surveillance cameras in Central Harlem as of a 2005 survey by the New York Civil Liberties Union. Walking in the city, the body is not only surveilled but the consuming eye (with smartphone camera) engages an unknowing relationship of seeing and being watched. Yet within the domestic realm, the private body not only gazes toward the city or affronted by the public eye through the window of the computer screen; but also in the extreme, the public eye of government and police crash the physical threshold separating privacy and publicity.

¹ New York Times, "Stop, Question and Frisk in New York Neighborhoods," July 11, 2010.

<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2010/07/11/nyregion/20100711-stop-and-frisk.html?ref=nyregion&r=0>
The Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn contained the other highest concentration of Stop and Frisk stops.