





i think of myself as spectacle

Jon Baldwin

Niall Jones, Thinking Partner

Lauren Bakst, Program Advisor

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for the degree of Master of Fine Arts, Dance

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- 9 *questions*
- 10 *no. 38*
- 12 *structure*
- 14 *maybe im writing about myself*
- 16 *no. 0-18*
- 21 *a part of*
- 22 *and then i said to him*
- 25 *so i would like to describe my body*
 with the original script
- 34 *no. 37*
- 36 *my body notices*
- 38 *no. 19-36*
- 40 ()
- 42 *illustrations*
- 43 *bibliography*

baldwin
artist book text

title

i think of myself as spectacle

table of content

list of illustrations / image captions

acknowledgements

precis (in progress)

i think of myself as spectacle is a performance text that was written to cater to encounter. the writer thinks around his relationship to people and objects that he has encountered throughout his life. he places them into the critical beyond where he takes these encounters and bends, twist and turns them to think critically about his experience. i think of myself as spectacle includes questions, text from close friends and family, and poetry.

what / how
open / critical
form

1, spectacle

1 As Spectacle

Myself as Spectacle

Thoughts of Spectacle

Thoughts on Spectacle
(As)?

Spectacle: Thoughts
on I
or Self

Reflexive Layering

My Spectacle

Myself thinking of
Spectacle

I My Self

I, My Spectacle

Spectacle, I think

Where "A
Critical Beyond?"

Is the Beyond
A return to

own objects

CONTENTS

Portfolio

"If you don't like it you can leave"

Interviews

(what makes me feel held?)

by Lina Morone

listening and understanding to me is choreography.

Fiction

the essence and the histories that our bodies carry weigh more than the eye can see.

an overload of imperfect punctuations

ntha Schne

CLARENCE LISPECTOR Clandestine Happine
translated by Rachel Klein

Poetry

EVA HEISLER

DIANA HAMM

BLANKA

what makes me feel held?

what does it mean to be clear?

who is doing the dividing?

what does it mean to constantly have my body rejected?

how can i shape the attention of my audience to know and not know?

what do i want my audience to learn? how can learning help me understand my proximity to the things around me?

how does someone pass through a framework?
now can i make it clear to the reader?

what does it mean to be clear?

what do i want my audience to learn? how can learning help me understand my proximity to the things around me?

how does the act of...

(questions)

how can i frame the content i wish to extend to others?

what makes me feel held?

what are the ways that my body engages through my text?

what do i want from study?

what do i want my audience to learn? how can learning help me understand my proximity to the things around me?

how does the act of... engage with an images?

how do i... what is the relationship between myself and what i'm making?

how does my text perform?

how long do you take before you speak?

does your heart race before you speak?

PHONE: 718-636
Monday to Friday

FAX: send address
details to 718-636

MAIL: send check
made out to BQI

how do you make room for others around you?

how can i frame the content i wish to extend to others?

how can things frame an experience?

how can i shape the attention of my audience?

what do i want my audience to know and not know?

how long do i take before i speak?

how does the act of learning help me understand my proximity to the things around me?

what does it mean to constantly have my body rejected?

what is the relationship between myself and what i'm making?

what makes me feel held?

how can who i'm addressing determine the shape my writing takes?

how can i make it clear to the reader?

what does it mean to be clear?

who is doing the dividing?

how do i engage with an image?

how does my text perform?

how does my body engage through my text?

what is saturation?

how can i saturate?

how can i participate with my experience?

how can i be in relationship to my experience?

how am i in relationship to time?

what already exists?

do you feel safe?

38

not interested in time consumption
take what you need and go

i, as spectacle

myself as spectacle

think, of myself

i think as spectacle

i think of myself

i think of spectacle

i think as myself

as, i

spectacle as thought

thoughts on i

thoughts on self

spectacle-self

i think as, myself

i, my spectacle

as spectacle, i think

i, spectacle

thoughts of spectacle

i think of myself as spectacle (itms) is an encounter that shapeshifts. there are moments when the text will speak to the reader and other moments when the reader will be asked to have an inner conversation with themselves about how they encounter language.

i think of myself as spectacle blurs together multiple writing styles to unfold how it is that the writer understands how to be with language. *itms* implies how the arrangement and repetition of words has the ability to provoke thought and be therapeutic. *i think of myself as spectacle* offers attunement and another way to pay attention to the functionality of language, thought-arranging as a practice, and one's experience.

i think of myself as spectacle challenges the tension between language and the writer's body. it explores how the writer experiences an exchange with language. in relationship to how he situates himself around black knowledge and other black scholars, the writer thinks critically about his participation in those relationships and in the world.

the writer acknowledges that he did not do this work alone and that there are other voices and works that are a part of *itms*. *i think of myself as spectacle* comments on what it means to be a spectator in and of your own experience.

i think of myself as spectacle because that is all i've ever been able to do.



but i am writing for myself with you in mind

i'm writing this so that i can get hung up on words

i'm writing this so that you can get hung up on words and possibly disagree with me

this can be rhetorical

this is critical

this is for you to ask why and be critical with me

this is for the *i need to come back to this later* audience

because they exist

(reference no. 38)

as you flip through you may feel suspended,

as if you are trying to understand why things are placed where they are

or why you are reading the same thing over and over

i am asking you to propel yourself towards those thoughts

and to propel yourself towards those moments

i am asking you to trouble your thoughts and listen viscerally to your pulse

my hope is that you are able to be with some of these ideas

beyond how you encounter them here

into your own practices

into your own studies

into the architectures of your lives



0

it is important for my words to have space

0.5

an overload of imperfect punctuations

1

as i move between home and school i
experience an inner dialogue.

that inner dialogue becomes a spatial
complexity that forces me to address who i
am and how it is that i articulate.

1.2

speaking when necessary, asking questions
when necessary.

dividing myself into pieces that allow others
to surround themselves around what they
know as me.

there is discernment, there are things that i
leave out. i experience a divide. this is
something very real for me.

1.3

i expand and retract

2

i would like to think that my audience is also
always being divided, chosen, and
performed for

i am listening to myself as much as others
do. i need to give the audience the impossi-
ble task of being present, absent, engaged
and in some moments suspended with
questions. this is my experience.



i often forget that I feel more comfortable
speaking in fragments.

3.33

this form that has always allowed me to spill out
fills me up and makes me feel whole

5

it is important to have my audience imagine, for
you to place yourself somewhere in the gut of my
thoughts. i insist on sharing movement
(this text is movement) with my audience whether
or not that is something they want to experience
with me. everything is in
relationship, and i move through my life
remembering that.

6

imagination is regurgitation.
forcefully bringing back up the things we digest.

6.8

i am rooted and married to a critical practice that
places me on the outskirts of my
experience. on that outskirt i'm able to see the
things that derive from within.

7

my relationship to architecture is the foundation of
the work I make and how I feel held by this world

8

making work that holds me
demands my attention

9

to me, listening and understanding
are choreography



10

lack of clarity produces improvisational movement that allows me to continue to lean towards others and it allows for others to continue to understand all the possibilities in how they can lean towards me.
I want to be unclear.

11

to be clear, lack of clarity doesn't mean illegible; it means you might have to re-situate where you are standing to be with or understand something.

12

the essences and the histories our bodies carry weigh more than the eye can see.

13

needing to write anything down with urgency has a way of drawing me in.
this helps me move closer to the knowledge that i want to possess.

14

the most beautiful encounters are when you have a flashback of where you were sitting, what you were seeing, the notebook you wrote in, and how it made you feel but the sentence that you wrote is blurry in your mind.

15

the purpose of this is to think around words and to think deeply about the relationship between words and my body.
to clarify, analyze, and speak out about my experience through words and explore other ways to think about words.

16

i am my audience as much as you are

18



we removed two mirrors from the walls of my home; they had been there for more than forty years.

one was located in the master bedroom and the other was in the dining room.
i kept one, and i'll probably keep it with me for the rest of my life.

the work i make speaks to the only way i've ever been able to place myself inside the world.





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David Shields	Donna Faye Burchfield	Charlotte Baldwin	Breyanna Maples
Mark Bradford	nora chipaumire	John Dennis Baldwin	Antonio Wright
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		Amaya Gary	Talyah Hall
		Charles Baldwin	
		Charlene Smith	

text from a voice memo

with jhelan gordon-salaam
and justin (jus't) chase

recorded on: 23 october 2020
Lansdowne, PA

now with regurgitation

i feel like there is a shift in intent

compared to what it is when you are throwing up

when i need to throw up i never have say so

but to be able to sit here and say that i am going to regurgitate information

to me, it means that i have control on how i am going to participate in

that relationship with the information that is going to come back up

forcefully bringing back up the thing we digest

and then i said to him

i never stay in the same moment for too long

which is what i was talking about with being here but not being here

but now being here in a different way

which i am now okay with

i am okay with how i live inside of moments

on the outskirts i am able to see things that derive from within

and we're doing things and we keep doing things

and it's like, instead of just being in that moment of us doing things

it turns into let me know when you're ready to go home

because i'm thinking like maybe she wants to go home or maybe he has

something else he wants to go do

that's where my mind is at before it's even in the car with us

(on the outskirts, creating my experience)

because i'm being critical instead of present, you know what i mean?

instead of being present

i'm heavy on the being critical

like what do you need?

what's the next moment after this and how can i tend to that?

before i'm just like enjoying and really just sitting here talking

i've been thinking about imagination for a few years now
at first i thought about imagination as a form of denial
denying the information in front of me to then place myself into another space where anything can exist
and not just anything but more possibilities for my reality
as a child, all i remember doing is trying to get more out of my situation so i denied that my present was all that existed
denying the boundaries that restrict my thoughts from existing
and in that regard, i thought denial was the key to my existence
but then i thought about imagination as a system
one of those systems that only produces something when you put things into it.
my practice: continuing to think of ways to understand how it is that i make
so that more things can be made
regurgitation
thrown up
thrown
information brought back up without permission, but with great urgency because that's what it needs to do
if i understand the way in which my mind regurgitates, i'll also be able to better understand what is that i need



The Centre Pompidou
Place Georges-Pompidou, 75004 Paris, France

Son Et Image Vintage
85 Rue Saint-Denis, 75001 Paris, France

ICI (centre chorégraphique national de Montpellier/Occitanie)
Boulevard Louis Blanc, 34000 Montpellier, France

a man said to me, *"you should be careful dressing like that. the police may think you are a drug dealer!"*

as i was shopping at a vintage thrift store in Paris (near the Pompidou)

things to know:

i had on a black durag, black sunglasses, and a black hoodie that day

and this was my third time visiting this thrift store since 2017

the first thing that came up for me was a thought about what gets considered when describing other people.

he didn't know that i was studying abroad and working on my master's degree.

my clothing combination made him point out that my body reminded him of a drug dealer.

there is also this ongoing theme of me being unable to control my safety as a black person, in general.

in other words, because of how i was dressed and carrying myself, i was in danger, or more vulnerable to being

stopped and questioned and subject to whatever else police like to do. though he probably felt the need to tell me what

i could do to ensure my safety, the fact still remains that there is nothing i can do to ensure my safety.

that moment didn't make much sense to me until i was in a course later that summer with Ric Allsop in Montpellier.

Ric Allsop's course title was "linguaging the contemporary" the class was a week long, and we worked through

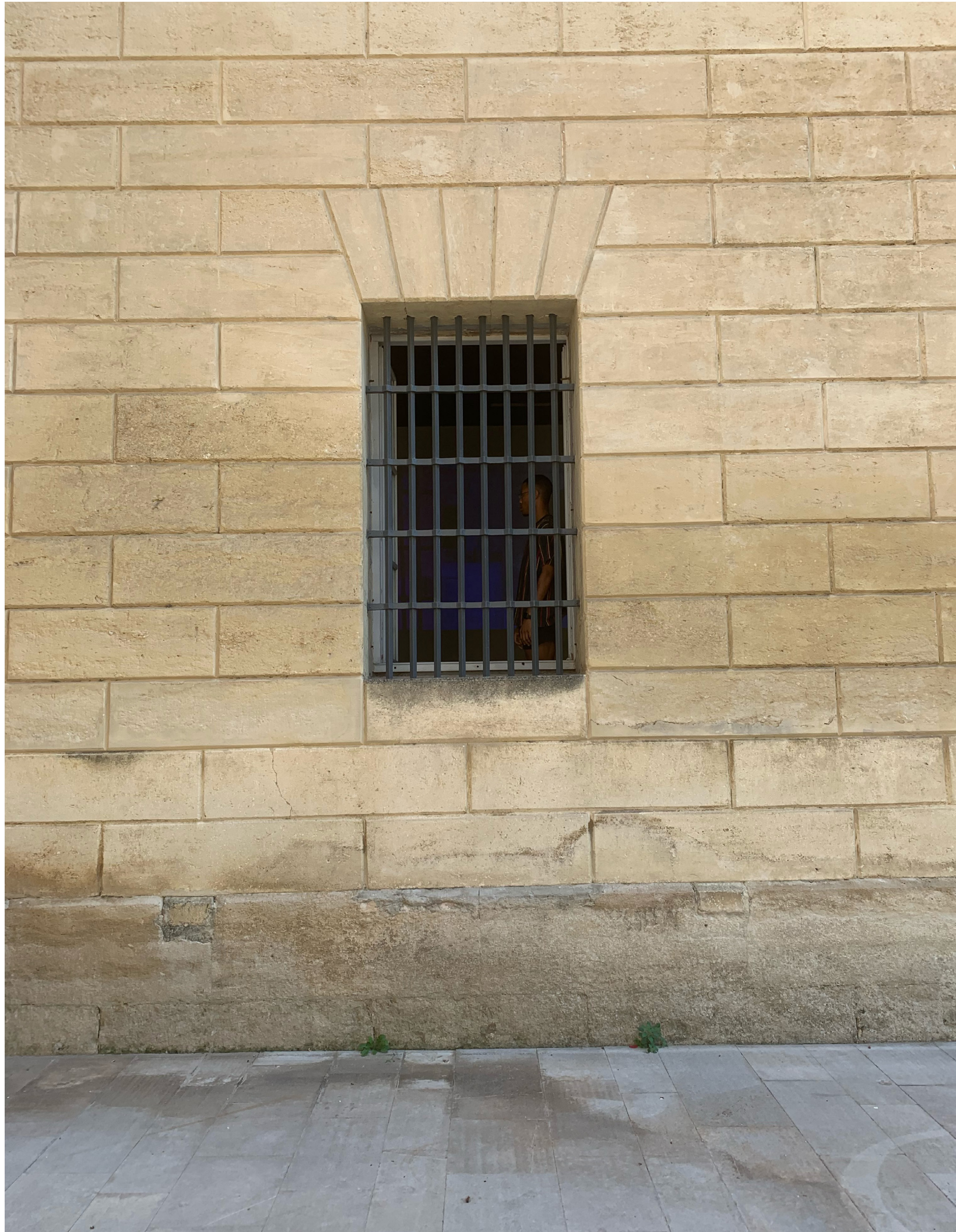
countless examples of how artists deal with words and the relationship they have to the world.

Ric said to everyone,

"confront your own possibilities, not my expectations."

i was interested in how i could confront myself

all week i sat by a window



since this is where i chose to sit, i was in a position that allowed me to see how people would or wouldn't interact with the Institut Choreographic International (ICI) CCN Montpellier - Occtanie/Pyrenees throughout the week. something i noticed is that there are a lot of things in relationship to the ICI. my learning that week was in relationship to the ICI, as well. there were people walking by; there were trains intersecting on the street; there were a few people coming in and out of the ICI.

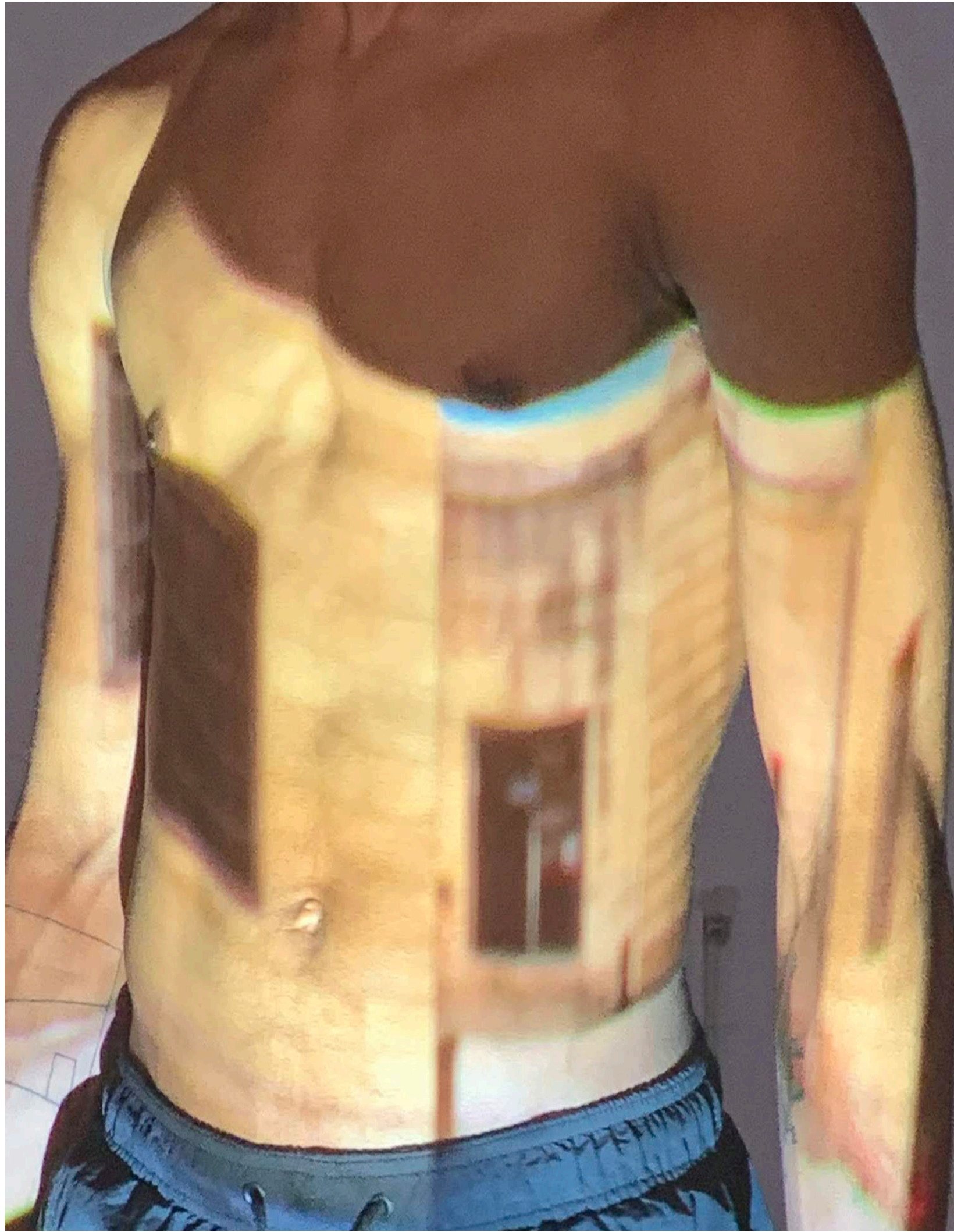
our final assignment for the course was to use 300 of the words that we individually came up with during the course of the week and to make a performance around those words. while working with Kristin during the week, i did an improvisation and only wrote down words that described my shoulders.

i realized the joy i felt in describing my own body. so i thought that it could be interesting to respond to the experience i had in Paris earlier in the summer for my final performance.

sometimes i can only make sense of words by performing them

with the intention to create a confrontation based on the window i was occupying all week and what that man said to me. i wanted to respond to his words through the architecture.

it was important that the architecture functioned as it always did. i was interested in the duality of the architecture but not in repurposing the functionality of the space. for me, this meant dealing with the architecture as something that was tangible but also as something that could mean something else simultaneously. i was confronting the architecture critically.



the architecture determined how i was perceived.

the performance took place at the window i had been sitting at all week. the window has double doors, and it opens inwards. in-between the window and me, there was a cream shade with a silver chain on the right-hand side. the shade

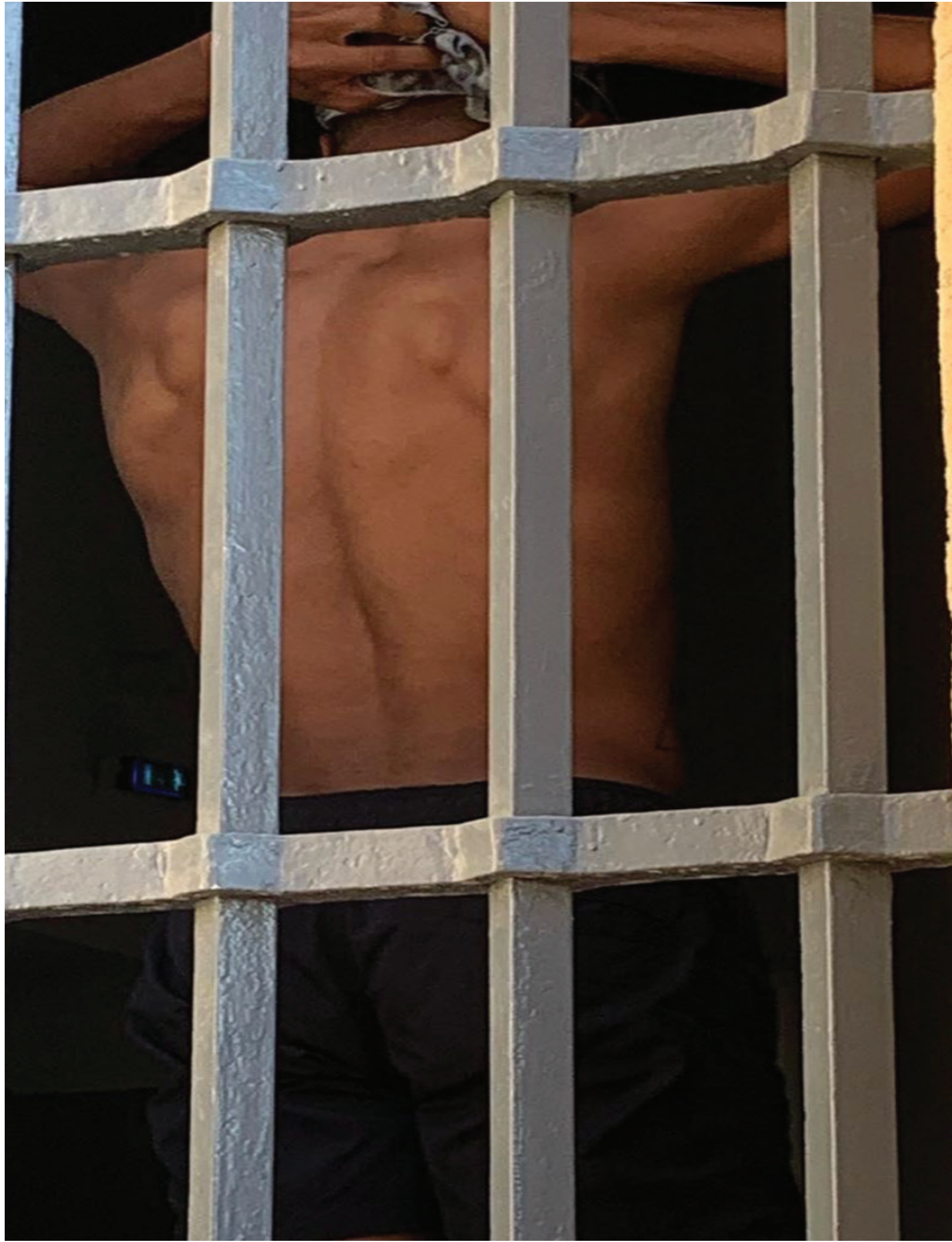
was one of the things i used to create a visual gap between myself and the audience. there was also an iron gate in-between the outer part of the window and the audience; it was rusted and thick in its depth. the image of my body behind the window is something that only the architecture had control over. i could not move the iron bars.

i imagined myself in a jail. had i run into a police officer that day in Paris, this image had the potential to be my reality. i took the experience i had in Paris earlier in the summer and brought my audience as close as possible to my experience by placing myself behind those bars and them on the other side. *this confrontation (performance) acknowledges that mislabeling leads to the incarceration of African American people.* so i stood behind the metal bars intentionally. i wanted to perform from my *potential incarcerated black body* to have the experience viewed by the audience in the way that i felt.

i think of myself as spectacle.

i wanted to feel like i was standing outside the window with the audience, viewing the image of a black man behind iron bars sharing the experience he had and confronting himself in front of his peers. i chose to project images and short videos onto the wall that was behind me and used it as the background of my confrontation.

these images and short videos were of the view that the audience would get to see. i pre-recorded the space they would stand in prior to the moment they would be there. i wanted to feel like i was seeing what the audience was seeing while they were watching me. often i feel like i don't have the ability to see myself as others do, and i wanted to approach this idea of duality. i wanted to be the subject in my experience and also witness myself.



the audience viewed the work from outside of the window on a platform that required them to look up to see me. i thought about sound as i approached the confrontation. i created a script to read to my audience. this was one of the main components of the confrontation. there was also a song called "*Let It Shine*" by Vince Staples. i wanted the audience to make a decision to get closer to the window, and hear me. the audience was outside with the noise from trains crossing on the street, people walking by talking, and yelling. some still stood towards the back and allowed the sounds around them to occupy that time we spent together. this was okay; this was all a part of my experience by the window, and what i had been paying attention to all week. my relationship to the audience felt like a paradox. i am not ever really sure how much i want the audience to know or not know when it comes to performance, so i left that up to them.

in my duet with kristin
which consisted of writing and movement

i keep thinking about what Ric Allsopp said about confrontation:
"confront your own possibilities, not my expectations"

and that was said in relation to the material he had prepared
for the course and the performances we would soon make by the end of the process

allowing someone to describe my body is a confrontation
so i would like to describe my body

about a month ago in a small thrift shop in Paris
not too far from the Pompidou

i was told that i was dressed like a drug dealer and to be careful

though i was comfortable with what i had on
and this is me confronting that moment

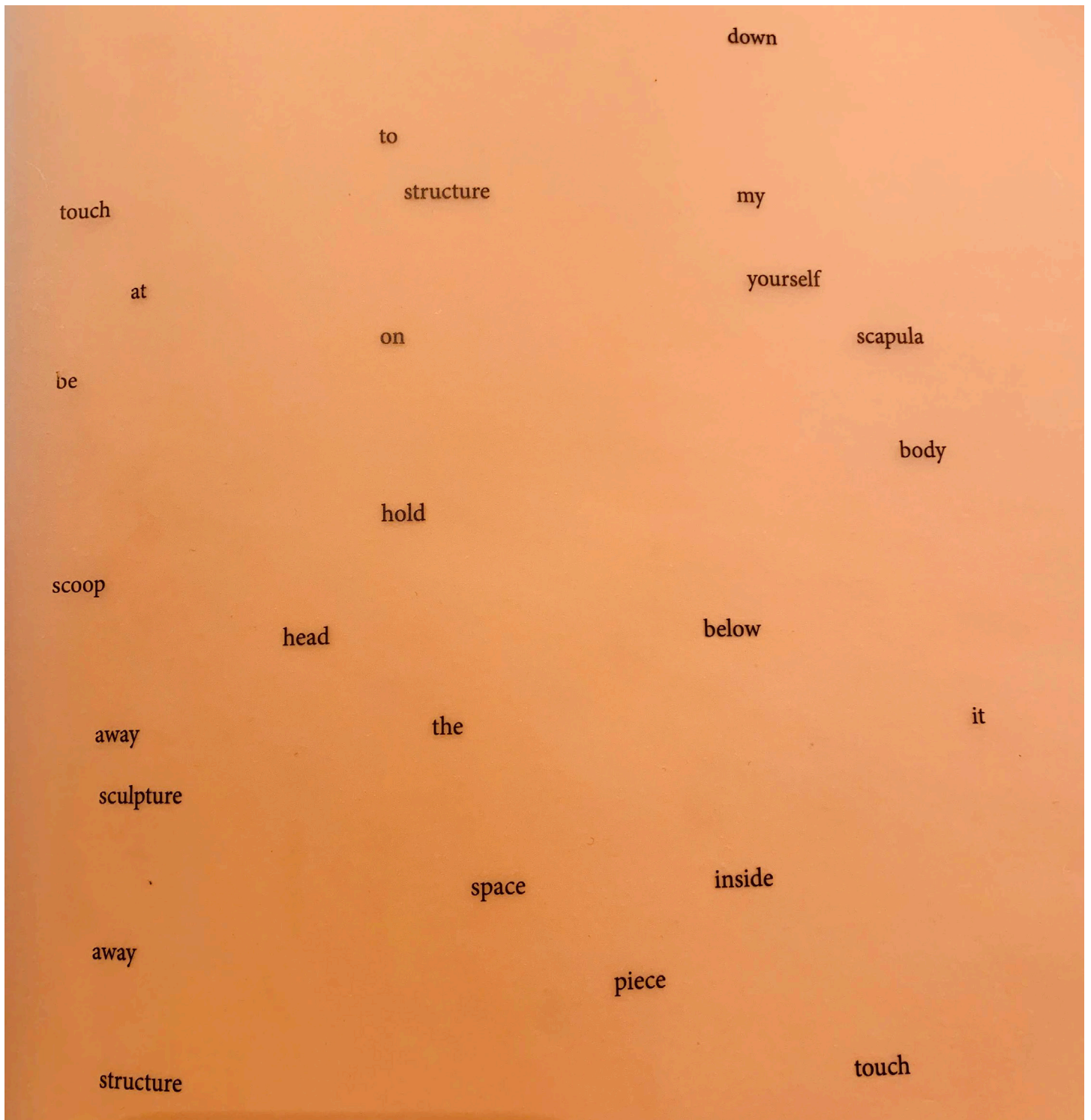
i chose this image very specifically
a black man behind bars
this is a confrontation

language doesn't have to land where it began
language doesn't land where it began
language doesn't land
language doesn't

you can only touch language

it remains in ways that multiply beyond itself
all i want to do is allow language to fall onto and away from me

and that in itself is a confrontation.



37

these are the facts

i remember being very fascinated by keepsakes and knick-knacks as a child and teenager

i remember organizing those objects often

sometimes they belonged to me, but most times they belonged to my family

not seeing my reflection in the things that surrounded me

*i think creating that relationship with the objects around me as a child helped me feel closer to the people that
the
keepsakes and knick-knacks belonged to*

*until a certain age, i wasn't allowed to know how things really worked in the house and i wasn't always allowed
to ask why because it was seen as disrespectful*

there wasn't much around me telling me that i existed at that time

it's difficult having to put yourself into relation with your surroundings

*i started to obsess over objects because objects were the only way (for a long time) that i was able to learn
in a way, life was a keepsake*



*the mirrors were perfect squares
both sat between two closets on two different floors of my home*

*the mirrors came down
one in pieces
one whole*

it's important for me to know what histories i am living with

recently i found out that my maternal grandfather is from North Carolina, and i feel different

i wonder what that history is, what those stories are, what family i have down there, and what memories live inside of me from them

recently, we dismantled two mirrors from the walls of my home

they have been there for more than forty years, to my knowledge

i'm sure it has been longer than that; seeing what was underneath was refreshing in a really distant way

being able to see the old layers of wallpaper, the drips of paint that slipped beneath the mirror over the years

seeing the shapes that were left from the mirrors

understanding that objects have the ability to be multifaceted in their meaning

thinking back to North Carolina

i felt so disconnected from my past as if i was responsible for not knowing

it made me consider how close information can be and how i can still be unaware

to move closer to things i don't know about my family, i started looking at the images my mom keeps in a small

purple suitcase. they are important to my process, even if i don't know what these pictures are or where they come

from or how they even make sense on my family's timeline

thinking back to the mirrors

i kept one of the mirrors, and i'll probably keep it for the rest of my life

those mirrors represent one of the first relationships i intentionally made with dance

for a long time they were the only way i could see myself

now, walking by those blank walls feel different

my body notices

the mirrors could always see me



19

a critical practice that allows me to think more
deeply about the meanings and
relationships between people and objects

20

when i was younger, i learned that i had the
responsibility of shaping my experience and my
relationship to the world.

there was nothing else around me
reminding me that i existed.

21

on the outskirts of my own experience. what
comes next?

22

it's partial. it leaves room for interpretation. it
leaves room for my words to be surrounded with
questions. or perhaps a response.

23

i felt compelled to capture the walls beneath the
mirrors before they were repainted

24

i thought forcing myself into the photos would
do something

33

i must keep moving to understand my body

34

i like to allow those images to remind me that
there are other versions of me that exist.
language and images do that for me; they allow
me to keep seeing myself in ways that only my
body can feel



bm muse

aw i'd compare it to watching a plant grow
some days you don't really know what the plant needs

ch in order for this to happen, one is to understand how each and every part of how we ()
work differently but function as one

bm i tend to question how do i relate, how i fit and do i need to relate or fit

bm meeting () at a door is meeting () at a new point of entry, this is how () gets you to
involve yourself

aw it's a really quiet place until () decides () wants to share

bm () could either answer with clarity or answer to make you search for a door or a window.

ch () finds solutions by rearranging.

bm nothing is final until

aw because of how particular and specific the process is
i'd compare it to watching a plant grow

ch for this to happen, one is to understand how each and every part,
() moves the actual into the theoretical world, causing one to question the meaning or
intent behind what was generated.

bm i feel like i know too much and i need to keep writing to make it make sense

aw i'd compare it to watching a plant grow

bm meeting () at a window, is meeting () at what could be.
studying goes either unseen or is insistent or repetitive

aw you don't really know what the plant needs



ch more time
a multitude of formats

bm empathy

ch intense understanding of how material functions

bm an avid witness

aw a reference

ch more time

bm a window

ch more time

aw a good place to situate

ch more time

ch multiple conversations

bm i feel like i know too much and i need to keep writing to make it make sense

aw some days you don't really know what the plant needs, but then it exposes a really beautiful
layer of something we didn't know existed

cover	McShay, James C. <i>momma jumping rope at 24</i> , 1982-83, New York.
2-3	McShay, James C. <i>momma jumping rope at 24</i> , 1982-83, New York.
4	unknown, <i>uncle in low light</i> , 1993, New York.
6-10	Baldwin, Jon <i>Bomb #123 edited by Niall Jones and Jon Baldwin</i> , 2020.
13	unknown, <i>creased entry</i> , 1982, Philadelphia.
15	unknown, <i>monica's balloon</i> , 1996-97, Philadelphia.
16-19	unknown, <i>the bronx</i> , 1983, New York.
20	unknown, <i>great grand and the first</i> , 1983-84, Philadelphia.
24	Baldwin, Alyssa <i>brothers</i> , 2000-2002, Philadelphia.
26	vawter, <i>sav outside of the ICI</i> , 2019, Montpellier, France.
28	wilmore, <i>AJ ICI on black skin</i> , 2019, Montpellier, France.
30	Becker, Douglas <i>from "I've been asked to confront myself" (2019)</i> , 2019, Montpellier, France.
33	Baldwin, Jon, <i>300 Words on Touch</i> , 2019, Montpellier, France.
35	unknown, <i>dad's stuff</i> , 1983, Philadelphia.
37	Baldwin, Jon, <i>mirror i kept</i> , 2020, Philadelphia. Baldwin, Jon, <i>mirror that left</i> , 2020, Philadelphia.
39	unknown, <i>Aunt Dee's Kitchen</i> , 1987, Philadelphia.
41	unknown, <i>at three</i> , 1999, Abyssinian Church, New York.
42	

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