FIGURE 1. Kevin Jerome Everson, *Mansfield Deluxe* (2021). Rubber tire, 28 inches round × 5 inches thick. Faculty Show, Ruffin Hall Gallery, University of Virginia Art Department. Courtesy of the artist.

"There Is No Form in the Middle"

Kevin Jerome Everson's Massive Abstractions

Introduced and Interviewed by ALESSANDRA RAENGO and LAUREN MCLEOD CRAMER

Across a vast body of work, more than 170 films made in roughly thirty years, Kevin Jerome Everson has pursued sophisticated formal exercises that deploy representational devices with the aim of achieving "massive abstractions."[1] Many of his films are resonant works of human observation but also precisely sculpted forms—an extension of the artist's time working with other materials and media, including crafting wood furniture or casting bronze tools, that, for Everson, feels seamless with filmmaking. "Sculpting" a film means resisting its initial and immediate *imageness* and instead approaching the medium as a temporal accumulation that, when carefully shaped, can achieve formal abstraction. For instance, even in his street photography Everson was drawn to the possible "unreality" of the photographic image, favoring the distorted panoramic effects produced by Widelux cameras that use a swing lens to capture and condense multiple events in the same (time) frame.[2] Photographs and films that are, in a sense, dense with time are examples of a rigorous and voluminous practice in which "abstraction" is not antithetical or even in tension with objecthood.[3] Rather it is an approach that emphasizes the labor of art-making in ways that necessarily reconstitute the cinematic object but also the (black) art object.[4] By forgoing the instantaneous, Everson's highly conceptual body of work challenges a black cinematic discourse that the artist finds woefully "remedial." Skipping the introduction, and thus submitting his films to regular mischaracterizations, Everson readily admits sculpting time may actually be an act of wast-

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ing time. Yet the prolific filmmaker has committed to a process that functions both en masse and in media res: representing and re-representing his subjects in carefully choreographed films that repeat formal and bodily gestures until everything in the frame becomes part of a self-referential exchange. It is an audaciously experimental engagement with minimalism insofar as the process of making is folded into the finished project. Ultimately this work pursues a point of critical density in which time's material effects on a space, a body, or the screen are rendered visible.[5] Thus in this journal issue exploring the ways blackness indexes its own processes, we turn to Everson's films to reflect on the place of blackness within this specific entanglement between form, abstraction, observation, and practice.

THE PROLIFIC FILMMAKER HAS COMMITTED TO A PROCESS THAT FUNCTIONS BOTH EN MASSE AND IN MEDIA RES

As is often the case, the editors of *liquid blackness: journal of aesthetics and black studies* are drawn toward both the objects in Everson's work and the objecthood of his work because both are mindful of, and challenged by, the critical mass of his extraordinary output. In the service of crafting formal interactions, Everson often molds the objects that inhabit his film frames, choosing to produce props like car tires and Westinghouse irons rather than use the real thing.[6] As a result, on-screen performers interacting with nonfunctioning rubber props can also be "molded" to Everson's precise specifications. The process makes it possible to maintain control over the (sculptural) object, its formal properties, and the way both register visually, thus magnifying the anti-representational ambiguity of the work. The filmmaker takes an equally exacting approach to his own tools, describing the camera, tripod, film stock, and lenses as a painter would the easel, paint, and paintbrushes.[7] Together, the rubber props and cinematic apparatus create figurative and literal points of connection between the filmmaker's conception of art, artistry, labor, and aesthetic experience.

Our attention to the "object" is not only a natural expression of what we describe as *liquid blackness*'s "object-oriented" methodology but also an expression of a relationship to the artist and these films that for us is personal. We have been inspired by Everson's work since the earliest days of the journal and research group that founded it and were privileged to involve him in the *liquid blackness* symposium "Passing Through: The Arts and Politics of the Jazz Ensemble" in 2015.[8] Our next encounter was in Berkeley, where he keynoted the Association for the Study of the Arts of the Present's annual conference in a program curated by Michael Boyce Gillespie at the Pacific Film Archive. There we saw and were both taken by *Sound That* (2014), a film that follows employees of

FIGURE 2. Kevin Jerome Everson, *Sound That* (2014). 11:40, color. Frame grab courtesy of the artist.

the Cleveland Water Department hunting for leaks in the infrastructure in Cuyahoga County (fig. 2).

Sound That offers the possibility to listen, so to speak, for some of the main principles in Everson's conceptual practice playing out of the object itself—in this case, aquaphones and tuning devices that Everson made but did not actually work. As the maintenance team rides around listening for the sound of flowing water beneath the street, each worker takes turns with the array of instruments making their own studied adjustments to the listening devices, debating the quality of the sound, and spray-painting the street to record what they heard. These objects are both the tools of the crew's trade and their artistry but also material and formal devices for a performative reenactment taking place for Everson's camera. As a result, the aquaphones are part of the re-representation of the workers as sound artists, thus emphasizing the aesthetic sensitivity and practiced collaboration required to perform their jobs. The *liquid blackness* group includes this crew among the many musical ensembles that inspired our theorization of black sonic traditions and collectivity. Perhaps more than other groups experimenting with sound, the crew in *Sound That* captures a certain pinnacle of in-sync teamwork as they silently communicate instructions to each other—it is a process that is only discernable to the most careful listeners, and it takes

FIGURES 3–5. Kevin Jerome Everson, *Ninety-Three* (2008). 3:00, black and white, silent. Frame grabs courtesy of the artist.

time. Everson's films seek to render this skillful, coordinated work *as art*. *Sound That* "set[s] off" this work by carving the crew's markings out on the sidewalk, where their utility rendered them invisible to the casual passerby, and reframing them as aesthetic marks that belong in spaces of "high art" like the Pacific Film Archive at Berkeley.[9]

Having been utterly fooled by the appearance of the aquaphones, which do not reveal their inability to work, we were left pondering the centripetal *density* of the objects' presence within the film frame and the larger role of density in a body of work seeking "massive" abstractions. Indeed the abstraction produced at the scale of Everson's creative project is massive in at least two ways: first, in the pursuit of layered and self-referential formal experimentation, the artist disregards the myopic focus of respectability politics and the narrow demands they place on representation, and second, in the work's sheer mass (the hours of physical labor and exertion, the props molded from rubber, and the number of films produced each year). Notably the filmmaker requires his subjects to execute oblique reenactments or stunt-like tasks that teeter between mundane exercise, performance of superior craftsmanship, and endurance test. For the duration of Everson's long or multiple takes, those charged to work with rubber props, which are heavier than their real counterparts, are subject to the weighty temporality of labor and a remarkable volume of practice.[10] As part of the films' often overlooked formality, these densities become visible in the posture of the tiring bodies on screen and the formal properties of the image, as well as the work's viewing conditions. For example, in films like *Ninety-Three* (2008) (figs. 3–5), the filmmaker approaches personal, familial, local, regional, and community connections as time-based forms that can be sculpted. In the silent film James Williams (Everson's daughter's great grandfather) blows out the candles on a cake, presumably celebrating the birthday referenced in the film title. The film was made for gallery installation, and at a reduced frame rate, it takes Williams three



FIGURES 6–8. Kevin Jerome Everson, *Westinghouse One* (2019). 3:18, black and white, silent. Frame grabs courtesy of the artist.

minutes to extinguish all of his candles and darken the entire room. Even in silence, the expression of accumulating time as exhaustion and celebration lands on the bodies milling around the gallery, rendering the effort visible and perhaps even audible. As we discuss in the interview, Everson's process is dedicated to amplifying this mass, to ensure the object is "loud enough."

Massive abstraction begins with an appreciation for the artistry in tasks that take time. To Everson, artistry is the mastery of craft, honed through practice; thus any craft can generate new forms that are ripe for examination. The artist often locates the careful and intentional manipulation of shape, line, color, and light that his work seeks in the labor of Black factory workers, construction crews, and athletes in his hometown of Mansfield, Ohio. Because repetition is the way "people become good at what they do," Everson places these figures alongside his other artistic influences (in our conversation he cited the influence of Sam Gilliam and Howardena Pindell, but Stanley Whitney, Kerry James Marshall, and even John Cage and Caravaggio are also important points of reference for him, as well as the impeccable craft of Richard Pryor's comedy albums). Like the artists he admires, the filmmaker often returns to the same formal exercise again and again, making slight adjustments to sound and color—as in *Westinghouse One*, *Westinghouse Two*, *Westinghouse Three* (all 2019), and *Westinghouse Four* (2020) (figs. 6–8). On other occasions he re-presents canonical works of film history like *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory* (1895), which is reimagined in *Workers Leaving the Job Site* (2013) and again in *Rams 23 Blue Bears 21* (2017).

Although it is culturally and historically significant that Everson foregrounds black labor and chooses to reference work like the Lumière brothers' film that indelibly links the emergence of film technology and documentary style to factory labor, Everson's reinterpretations express a compelling and unique tension between representation and abstraction when we consider the relationships between figures in

FIGURES 9–11. Kevin Jerome Everson, *Rams 23 Blue Bears 21* (2017). 8:06, color. Frame grabs courtesy of the artist.

the frame. For instance, *Rams 23 Blue Bears 21* offers a static view of Black spectators exiting a football stadium, and over the duration of eight minutes, the people on screen perform in similar ways: they slowly move around a large pole and in and out of the slanted shadow of afternoon sun. As each person approaches the camera, they seem to realize they are being filmed and decide how to react—with a quick smile or a half-hearted attempt to hide (figs 9–11). The repeating movements and gestures are a product of Everson's commitment to the filmic exercise, this unique observational mode, and the fans' own sustained practice—their stiff motions are material traces of hours spent sitting on metal bleachers and expressive of the bodily awareness that activates when we walk through a crowd. Although viewers may be tempted to focus on the significance of recasting the original work and, thus, to look away from the deliberately paced film (which is fleeting in comparison to his two eight-hour projects), everything happening in the frame is completely contained. It is a study of bodies in motion that is immanently cinematic and self-referential.

Adding a new resonance to the phrase "body of work," which implies both a corpus and centers the body as a technology of artful work, the manual labor and movement taking place on screen in Everson's films is a kind of intellectualism that, he says, exceeds his own work behind the camera.[11] Everson is making an archive of black expression that intentionally blurs the distinctions between the technical elements and syntax of filmmaking, the creative process, and the kinds of artful work Black people do every day. Thus these performances are key to the density we identify in Everson's work because of their exhaustive intensity and their rigor. In fact, the potential to misinterpret or overlook the on-screen artistry most clearly articulates the challenge, and necessity, of conceptualizing his body of work as a critical mass while recognizing the precision and specificity of each of these art objects as they accrue their own formal relationships. The artist chooses to work in messy spaces like those

FIGURES 12–14. Kevin Jerome Everson, *140 Over 90* (2008). 2:11, color, black and white. Frame grabs courtesy of the artist.

managed by the Cleveland Water Department and in the rarified galleries of international art museums like MoMA and the Whitney but never in the "respectable" world in between, where the pursuit of broad appeal prescribes an artist's work. The filmmaker definitively states, "There is NO form in the middle."[12] In other words, sculpting the object should not be interpreted as an objectifying or a recuperative gesture; instead it is a way to stage the artistic exchange taking place between the film subject and filmmaker, who is in pursuit of ongoing and increasingly dense forms of "intellectual saturation."

140 Over 90 (figs. 12–14 and video 1), for instance, visualizes Everson's tendency to organize highly formal exercises around rather mundane but precise activities; in this case, cutting coupons obliquely indexes a common ailment in Black communities: high blood pressure. The film's title refers to blood pressure readings and features two expert "cutters," old and young, shot frontally, with diegetic sound. While involved in this important task each cutter is introduced by more specific data—between fades to black a title card reads "systolic 142/diastolic 92" and "systolic 144/diastolic 91." Similar to *Ears, Nose and Throat* (2016) (fig. 15), which leverages the protocols and gestures of a medical screening procedure to reflect on the form of witness testimony in a court of law, in *140 Over 90* the medical "record" offers a pretext for a study in framing: the film's third and last segment—silent, shot in black and white and slightly slowed down—shows a man, wearing a white N-95 mask, waiting outside a convenience store. The shot is composed in such a way that his mask complements a Pepsi sign on the wall behind him (fig. 14). As a result the image is flattened, and the human figure is provisionally rendered visually equivalent to the prop behind it. Through this careful composition—in other words, because of this processing rather than in spite of it—the medical record referenced in the title can be deployed to index qualities of a Black life it cannot express: the crafty use of fine motor skills, the art of thrift, and the ritual quality of repeated ev-

FIGURE 15. Kevin Jerome Everson, *Ears, Nose and Throat* (2016). 10:10, color. Frame grab courtesy of the artist.

eryday gestures, alongside what we now cannot avoid seeing as a reminder of the respiratory diseases that disproportionately affect people of color (and have contributed to their much higher death rates during the current pandemic).

Everson credits his nuanced understanding of form—the sense that casting rubber traffic cones, the act of coupon cutting, and the arduous work of creating celestial films like *Rough and Unequal* (2017), which we have featured on the cover of this issue, are all fundamentally facets of the same abstraction—to his training (or "corruption") in the fine arts.[13] Yet his eclectic observational practice can appear illegible or even invisible in these spaces. For instance, even as the artist achieves global acclaim in the museum circuit and his films are included in all the major international festivals, he finds his work is often limited to programs dedicated to experimental cinema. Simi-

EVERSON'S PROCESS IS DEDICATED TO AMPLIFYING THIS MASS, TO ENSURE THE OBJECT IS "LOUD ENOUGH"

larly, despite the categorical distinctions his films intentionally avoid, most notably the fixed categories of "fiction" and "nonfiction," critics and curators tend to reinscribe these boundaries when programming or writing about Everson's work. As he is a teacher, Everson appreciates the significance of framing the work's quality and art historical references. Yet he embraces a kind of opacity created when his films occupy the space between the emotional appeals of mainstream documentary and an avant-gardist's detachment; a space where, as he describes it, "the highs and lows are the same."[14] The artist calls this "the Lorraine Hansberry mode," referencing the emotionally volatile journey in the playwright's famous work *A Raisin in the Sun* that nevertheless maintains a certain stillness that Everson identifies as distinctly midwestern.[15] Although the filmmaker likens this artistic sensibility to the conditions of working-class life, an experience of not failing and not succeeding, Everson would insist that this is a description of form and not a prescription for representing a black experience. Thus, somewhat predictably, Everson is reticent to discuss his work's relationship to blackness—a least not in traditional terms that would further overdetermine his films.[16] Instead blackness lends itself to the kinds of artistic experimentation Everson is interested in only after it has been processed through countless formal devices, which themselves undergo a constant transformation through a practice of repetition, stripping down, recalibration, and . . . repetition again. More simply, massive abstraction.

Following the filmmaker's lead, and against our tendency to begin with blackness, we wanted our conversation to work *toward* the question of blackness—specifically to locate its role and position in the artist's filmmaking process as part of the work's temporality, what he calls "the backstory."[17] As Everson has said repeatedly in interviews, he is only interested in "Act 2," the middle of whatever "story" narrative filmmaking might demand.[18] Thus if the people in these films hold time—in their movement, posture, workdays, and birthdays—Everson opts to begin in the middle as both an example of the "Lorraine Hansberry mode" of narrative stillness and as another expression of cinematic sculpting that engages the fraught relationship between the films' blackness as a condition of their making and the people, places, and objects within them. In *Round Seven* (2018) (figs. 16 and 17), for example, Ohio prizefighter Art McKnight recalls his 1978 match against Sugar Ray Leonard in a voiceover that accompanies shots of a young fighter shadowboxing in a partially lit space intercut with shots of the film's boom operator acting as a "ring girl" walking around a basketball court carry-

FIGURES 16–17. Kevin Jerome Everson, *Round Seven* (2018). 19:00, color, black and white. Frame grabs courtesy of the artist.

ing signs that announce each round. Both figures are bobbing, weaving, and circling around a (boxing) ring and a moment in time that is no longer there. Indeed McKnight's recollection is not even entirely there: it is part remembrance and part on-the-spot performance. Following again an object-oriented approach, and the way works such as *Round Seven*, and many others, "circle around" their ostensible concern, we tried to defer the issue of blackness in order to understand how it perhaps acts as the intentional "missing thing" in Everson's art. This gesture is reminiscent of John Akomfrah/Black Audio Film Collective's 1991 film *Who Needs a Heart*, which we read as triggering a formal gathering as a social act of recollection and improvisation.[19]

Then again, Everson has made his emphasis on form clear, so as much as he resists some of the familiar rhetoric about black cinema, his approach to filmmaking is necessarily a part of the black backstories his work abstractly explores. For instance, as he suggested while describing his use of a telephoto lens in *Tonsler Park* (2017) and, perhaps even more spectacularly, the way it was used when filming *Lago Gatún* (2021) in the Panama Canal, blackness seems interwoven with filmmaking technologies. In *Tonsler Park*, Everson films an all-Black voting precinct during the 2016 elections from a static, distant position only capturing subjects as they move in and out of the frame (figs. 18 and 19). The long focal length allows the filmmaker to work without disturbing his subjects or

FIGURES 18–19. Kevin Jerome Everson, *Tonsler Park* (2017). 80:00, black and white. Frame grabs courtesy of the artist.

blackness—both have the space to move. As a result the film stays in "act 2" for the entirety of its eighty-minute duration. The number of people, each sharing a brief moment in their own narratives, forms a critical mass that is distinct but not unrelated to the process of voting. Ultimately the already overdetermined record of black civic and social life is transformed into something Everson finds more formally compelling—in this case, a "flicker film."[20] Everson's double move comes into focus precisely in his insistence on characterizing the film this way: through the formalist language of structural cinema applied to a dense back and future story that both fills and is stripped away from the frame in the same filmmaking gesture.

Clearly the density we identify in Everson's oeuvre also refers to its complexity. Thus, to prepare for this interview, despite his protestations, we watched hours of interview footage to understand the relationship between form and process in his films and the inevitable ways these concepts interact with the act of viewing and studying this art. We also had the distinct privilege of being granted access to Everson's entire catalog, and guided by the theme of this issue of *liquid blackness*—"blackness as process"—we approached this filmography as a meticulously theorized intersection of labor and artistry. Through this work we wanted to understand what Everson describes as the superior intellectualism of his subjects, particularly against the misdirected sense of self-righteous labor some audiences feel upon watching experimental cinema. We also wanted to know how Everson understands the work of form, which he has repeatedly said "gets [him] up in the morning"—the way form *labors* on and over the subjects it frames, contains, and redirects toward abstraction and self-referentiality.

IT IS A STUDY OF BODIES IN MOTION THAT IS IMMANENTLY CINEMATIC AND SELF-REFERENTIAL

Everson met us on Zoom on November 11, 2020, from his office on campus at the University of Virginia. Predictably he was busy getting ready to film a couple of different projects, one about an eclipse and another about corrupt cops making instructional driving videos. He was eager to show us the new props he just made in preparation for the latter film, specifically a reproduction of a FIAT tire modeled after those manufactured in a factory in his hometown in Ohio, Mansfield Tires.

Committed to focusing the conversation on form, we tried and failed to use Zoom to watch Everson's *R-15* (2017) (fig. 20) together with the hope that the filmmaker could talk us through the film. Although weak Wi-Fi signals interrupted our screening and made it hard to reference the film in this edited version of our conversation, our questions about Everson's creative project are clearly articulated in this film, which his catalog describes as "about the material that keeps southern homes warm in the winter months and cool in the summer."[21]

Like so much of Everson's work, *R-15* privileges lighting contrasts, different textures, and manipulations of depth. Shot with a Black Magic camera and a telephoto lens in North Carolina or Philadelphia (Everson could not remember all the details, which make sense because he makes so much work), *R-15* follows a member of the Carr family spraying insulation in a dark attic. In the beginning the camera is placed outside the home and captures Carr disappearing into what feels like a cinematic black hole, a void that is in fact simply the exterior entrance to the attic. Inside the attic a narrow strip of light from a small window and the headlight Carr wears reflects the faint appearance of white insulation material flying through the cramped space. In this moment the film's frame becomes yet another study in abstraction: we see the dynamic of effort and exhaustion paced to the worker's respiratory rhythms behind a white N-95 mask; a logic of accumulation dictated by both respect for the work at hand and care for the homeowner's living conditions; and the material's white particles dancing in the air. Thus, as the image is filled with insulation, it also gets "stripped back" in its representational qualities and becomes more recognizably abstract.

FIGURE 20. Kevin Jerome Everson, *R-15* (2017). 5:10, color. Frame grab courtesy of the artist.

Moreover, once the worker "disappears" into the attic, what happens in *this* tunnel is also a view into the distinctly regional labor practices Everson explores throughout his oeuvre.[22] As he explained in a rather exhilarating and yet chaotic section of the interview we have not included here, he was interested in the different insulation materials used in the "South" (which for him is everything south of the Canadian border, as he has said numerous times). Everson compares these materials to those used in colder climates, like his native Ohio, as a way to explore the difference between northern and southern "landscapes."

Beginning from the point of view of "process," as the filmmaker and his films insist, it appears that abstraction is Everson's main goal. Yet it is always a receding horizon that the filmmaker approaches by treating form as a processual device. Thus what Everson describes as a casual relationship with blackness is processual too. As he explains at the end of the interview, blackness is always *moving*, and as such, it demands nimble tools to attend to its constant becoming. We suspect, however, that Everson would make this point in a much less romantic tone; that he would tell us that what it really requires is constant practice. Of course, that was his plan all along; he told us: "I'll keep on with the keepin' on."

Lauren McLeod Cramer: You described your interest in intellectualizing the work of the subjects that are in your films. I am curious about deploying the category of "art," the choice to describe the work they're doing as "art making" and the people as "artists." I ask because you've expressed some disinterest in a narrative of uplift, whereby you are making these films to transform how audiences see Black people. So what does the label of "art" get you? What does that open up?

Keven Jerome Everson: "Art" separates it from other genres, so to speak—like documentary or poetry or prose. I try to put within the time frame (in the length of the film or the physical frame) elements of material procedures that make it look as if it was an art object. That's because I was corrupted, or educated, in the Western art canon. I use formal qualities to separate it. For me, it's all about the thing itself. So what makes this an "art object"? I like that as a kind of scientific investigation: what makes it art?

I like to re-represent objects that we see in everyday life. Right now, I'm casting tires from a factory in my hometown. I have all these tires from old FIAT cars. So I'm casting them in rubber, and it's expensive. I just poured last night, and I had to open up the mold, and I was going to show you guys the shit I was doing, but, in a weird way, it needs the white walls of the gallery to make it happen.

I remember when I was in Cleveland, I would make these sculptural things, which are basically furniture objects [end tables].[23] I'm a community man, but they didn't look good in community centers because they looked like furniture or whatever. So folks were setting their cups on them, and I don't blame them. It made sense because that was their function *in that arena.* So I understand the formal devices that set off these arenas. Here's how I explore those devices: by creating, by understanding all the sophisticated gestures that go into art making. I was trained as an artist: photography, sculpture, painting, stuff like that.

BLACKNESS IS ALWAYS *MOVING*; IT REQUIRES CONSTANT PRACTICE

LMC: That reminds me of something I really appreciated hearing you explain in a prior interview: you describe this troubling attitude in some film audiences who, after sitting down to watch a documentary or experiencing art with some relationship to blackness, feel they can claim, "I've done work because I sat through this."[24] That confusion between a moment of enjoying art and labor seems like a misunderstanding of what art is, which also explains why we need to actually pull these spaces apart.

KE: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I don't know what happened to Americans when people thought that by sitting in a theater they were *helping*, so to speak. And I don't know how that kind of passivity of "liberalists" came to be. Maybe they think their time is money. They think their time is like capital. So if I put in an hour and forty minutes then that's it. I'm done for the year.

When I'm looking at subject matter I think that, through practice and repetition, people become

WHAT MAKES THIS AN "ART OBJECT"? I LIKE THAT AS A KIND OF SCIENTIFIC INVESTIGATION.

good at what they do. And so that's how I see them artistically, and I don't care if they're mechanics, calf ropers, or funeral directors. I don't believe in hierarchy, but I do believe that through repetition and practice somebody can improve at stuff. Then people take pride in their discipline. I mean, my uncles argue about how good they were at work. I like that as form. It also started for me when I began working with the Widelux camera. I was making art and the people in the frame were making art at the same time. So that's where it kinda comes from.

Alessandra Raengo: That's one of the things we were interested in: the fact that you have said that intellectualism is really on the screen.

KE: Yeah, people are smarter.

AR: In one of your lectures there is a moment in which you introduce Richard Pryor and the role that he has had in allowing you to crystallize certain formal devices. You point out: (a) that you were too young to listen to his records but were nevertheless allowed; and (b) that most likely you were allowed to listen to those records because they were considered high art in the home.[25] Here's my question: If these records were considered high art, that must've been because there was already an ongoing concept in the family of what constituted high art.

KE: Yeah, it was about who was or wasn't funny. If the motherfucker wasn't funny . . . It's as simple as that.

AR: So there are two things: one is the formal training in art school, and that's "high" art, by some standards. But if in the house, Richard Pryor is already considered high art . . .

KE: That's because with repetition and practice he became really good at something. And he was better than most. People back home appreciated that. You know, a cat can get better. I'm putting a high art label on it because I come from the discipline, or whatever, of art, but, oh yeah, folks understood. Of course, people had a kind of knowledge of quality. People would talk about, "The cat wasn't funny, he wasn't good," like, "Oh man that first album wasn't good but that second album . . ." That's how art was in the home: through sound. It was either music or the comedy record and repetition of hearing, as opposed to something being on television: everybody had stereos and those big pieces of furniture and shit. And that was like heavy as hell to move. (Because I had to move it. That's what teenage boys are for: to help tote and move shit and push snow, cut the grass. Labor. Labor.)

AR: Just to close on the question of art world value: being able to see your interviews is fairly recent, because there wasn't a lot available before.

KE: They're horrible. I just like babble—oh god.

AR: They're not horrible! The language you use to walk the audience through your process is actually very helpful.

KE: Being a teacher, I guess.

AR: Right. Here is a perverse question—so forgive me—about your increased exposure. I want to ask you about something I've witnessed with other artists, other Black artists: Is there a moment in which the art world begins to conflate the artist with the object, where the artist becomes its own coveted object, in a sense? Have you experienced that? If so, are you worried about that?

KE: Oh, I experienced it about fifty-five minutes ago, because the ruling class treats Black America as remedial. They're either afraid or cowards or not very smart. So they try to bring it down to their level, which is remedial. But *they* are remedial.

Black people who make things are interesting. It's not just "representation" of Black people. Black people represent and re-represent other things, but I think we limit ourselves. It's not only the ruling class who limit us but the subjugated. We limit ourselves.

AR: Let's shift to your focus on form. We want to know to what extent form is connected to process. Is form processual? Do you think about it *as* process?

KE: Oh yeah, all the time. That gets me up in the morning. It's not representation; it's form. I'm trying to achieve this form of abstraction by using re-representation. I'm always thinking about how to make things formal or to explore certain formal devices, like either flatness of space or tonalities, colors, provisional audio, provisional picture. I'm always working on something that is going to bring me closer to very minimal abstraction. So I'm casting these tires, and they're kind of doing it for me.

AR: Can I follow up on abstraction right away, then? This is a two-part question, because it's important, to me, to understand your relationship to both minimalism and abstraction.

KE: Yeah, they're two different things.

AR: Right. Then what is the relationship that you personally have with the way they have been presented and are still understood within canonical art history—what do you think when you say "abstraction"?

KE: Well, I'm thinking "self-referential," that it can only reference itself, as it happens in those new films with those cars going around in circles [*Kadett C Two* (2021) and *Kadett C Three* (2021) (fig. 21), both about the speed and the specs of an Opel car]. After a while, it just doesn't come off the frame, like you don't think about it in other terms, but within the reference of that other object in the frame. It's kind of like an abstract painting, like a Sam Gillian painting or Howardena Pindell, where the shapes and the colors only exist within that frame and they reference their

FIGURE 21. Kevin Jerome Everson, *Kadett C Three* (2021). 2:35, black and white. Frame grab courtesy of the artist.

frame. I've been trying to do that for a while. And even in these moon films [*Rough and Unequal*], they become lines and shapes and stuff like that. Although there are other things to it, as well, seeing it as a flat, two-dimensional thing is part of it.

AR: What is your relationship to minimalism? Minimalism has a stronger connection to the object, right? To the object as repository of the process.

KE: Yeah, yeah, it's the result of stripping down of all the other kind of forms that were stripped. Traditionally it's supposed to look like it's factory-made, to take the artist's hands out of it. But I want the artist's hands to be in it . . .

AR: If I were to press this point in terms of, again, the canonical narrative . . . let's take the Michael Fried reaction to art and objecthood, in which the scandalous nature of minimalism is its theatricality: these objects are confrontational because they demand that the viewer become aware of their surroundings, aware of themselves, right? They confront viewers with what Fred Moten calls the sociality of the object.[26]

KE: Yeah, that's the first phase of it.

AR: Is the object supposed to carry this sociality? Supposed to conjure it up? Or are you trying to create objects that are abstract in meaning?

KE: Yeah, the meaning is more abstract. I'm thinking of new Richard Serra pieces, the torqued ellipses and stuff; they're more generous than that. They're more inviting than the first, old phase of minimalism. I think they invite the viewer to it, so to speak. The gestures of it become an art gesture now. It becomes language. It's like the paint drip; it's like the brush stroke.

You guys bowl? Because my uncles and my dad were all Pro-Am bowlers. When you create a spare, you do that little triangle. I have paintings based on that triangle. That's when, as a result of fun (really successful fun because you pick up the two pins), you are making this object. I'm looking for the art, the abstraction within the everyday—what we think the language of abstraction is. For me, it becomes more like language and form. I had a whole series of paintings just based on the spare, just taking that from the scoring sheet and making a painting of that. Again, that's the representation, right? I'm looking at the bowling scoring sheet and seeing it as a kind of sculpture that re-represents.

[At this point in the conversation Everson carries his computer out of his office to show us a rubber tire he just molded (video 2).]

KE: Right now, I'm responding to the history of my hometown and these corrupt police officers who made all these drivers' ed films.[27] So I made these films with parallel parking in it. Now I'm making these cones that look like shapes but also look like the traffic cones, although they're solid rubber, so they're not *the thing*. The tires are the same way.

LMC: It's sort of funny: I was thinking about approaching your work with this idea of density, so it's helpful to see that the cones are actually solid. If you went to grab one, the way you would a traffic cone, your arm's gonna . . .

KE: Yeah, you couldn't do that. They're like forty-eight pounds.

LMC: I'd like to hear a little bit more about density. You describe the process of stripping it all down to form, but you're so prolific. You're making all this work, and I think it might seem counterintuitive to make, and make, and make in order to come down to this stripped formal exercise.

KE: Yeah, it's actually about achieving "less." I've got like seventeen films [in one year], but it's really only kind of three. Stripping down just comes from practice, from making things.

LMC: Is there a tipping point when you recognize that it's done? Even in those bowling triangles when you're shading them in, do you know when you have enough spare paintings to identify a core thing?

KE: I wish. [Laughs] Can't have enough, no. I keep on with the keepin' on, yeah. Because it's almost like an intellectual saturation. It tells you what to do next.

You can't just make one thing; you've got to make multiples, because then there's a conversation between the things, and then a conversation between you and the thing.

So expensive, unfortunately. Like, "Fuck! This thing is not speaking loud enough." So you have to make it talk. I think that's probably the difference between somebody making the thing, as opposed to found objects. Sometimes when you're using the found object, you're satisfied, but when you make the thing you're not—because of the physicality and the intellectual physicality with the hand-eye coordination. It's a discipline.

AR: Well, that actually says a lot about process.

KE: Totally. It's all process. It's funny because my friends write scripts, trying to get cash to make narrative films and shit. And I was like, well then, you're asking for permission, you know? To make these things and then we'll never see them again. I just see it as a different kind of rhythm, a different process. Maybe because I'm coming from the visual arts.

AR: In both *Lago Gatún* and *Rough and Unequal* there is a way in which the subjects you're filming (the profilmic elements) become part of, and perform, the syntax of the cinema—they function as wipes, for example, or as curtains closing (fig. 22). You talked about how *Rough and Unequal* basically changes the lighting in the gallery and affects the environment.

KE: *Westinghouse One* and *Lago Gatún* are the same thing actually.[28] They're similar films. *Westinghouse One*, the super black and white one with a young boy who is a cousin of mine (whereas *Westinghouse Three*, in color, features my daughter), is shot with a high-contrast print film from Kodak. In *Westinghouse One* I wanted to render the bodies like a Kerry James Marshall painting. The first scene of *Lago Gatún* would also be a projection installation. For *Lago Gatún* we timed it so that right when the doors of the locking dam close it makes the gallery dark (fig. 22), and then right when the water level rises up it lights the gallery, so to speak (fig. 23). I think that's the only take that really worked that way, but then there's six locks in the Panama Canal. That was the only one where it was backlit, going from the Pacific to the Atlantic Ocean, going north. I also shot *The Island of St. Matthews* (2013), where I was in the locking dams. I always wanted to film down in the Panama Canal because of the engineering of it. Also when the Americans took it over from the French, they instituted Jim Crow down there too. When white people go places, they take home with them . . .

So *Rough and Unequal* is kind of the same thing. The museum at the University of Virginia wanted me to put on a show, and I think they wanted Black people on the wall, and I wasn't going to give it to them. I think they wanted me to talk about some Jeffersonian bullshit. They see a Black artist and think, "Alright, he's gotta do this," and I was like, "No, fuck that." I wanted to use the university as a device to make art. My old student Jack Doerner rigged this four by five camera up to the observatory telescope to photograph the moon. I thought, somehow, if we could get

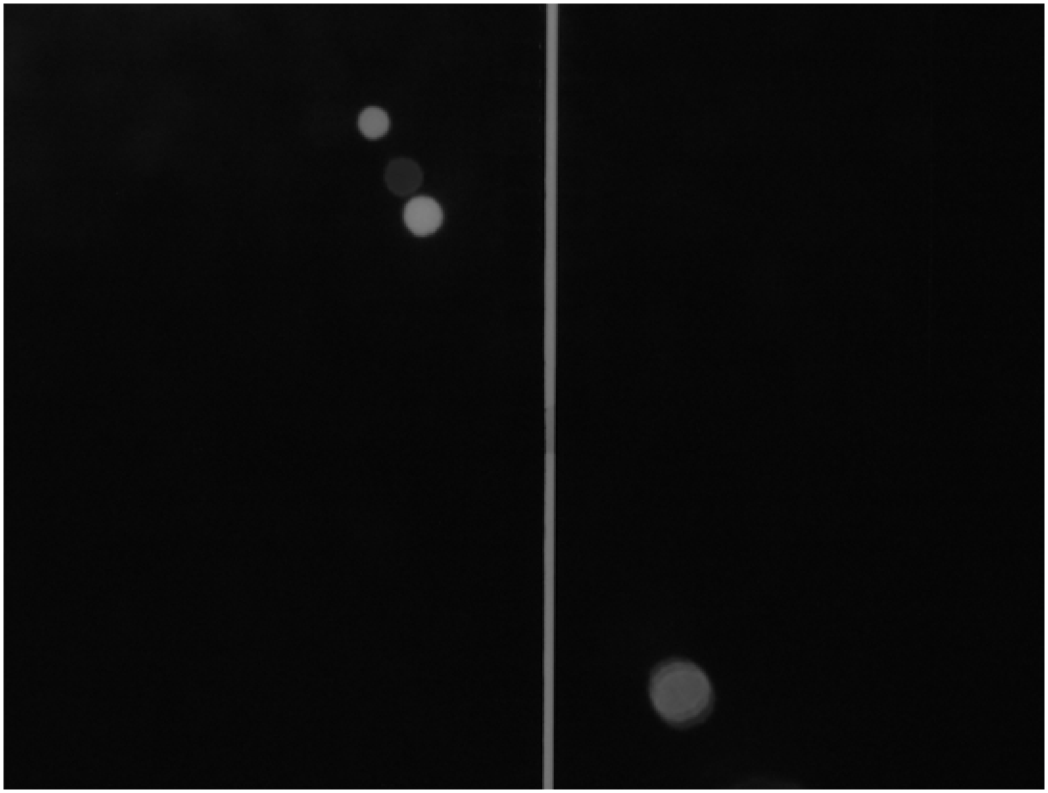

FIGURE 22. Kevin Jerome Everson, *Lago Gatún* (2021). 60:00, black and white. Frame grab courtesy of the artist.

the planet Earth to *move* we could have a ten-minute take, which is the length of a full magazine, going to dark—from space to moon and from moon to space. That was the strategy. It took about eight/nine months to do it because of weather, atmosphere, that kind of shit . . . and the *moon* . . . and the Earth, shadowing the moon. Get the fuck out of the way . . . It's best to do quarter moon and half moon, because of the contrast. You can't do it full moon because it's too bright. You need the light to hit it from the side. Full moons are a nightmare to film.

AR: If we're thinking about these two films, these two projections . . .

KE: Or three films, *Westinghouse One* too. It has a cast iron that was made out of a factory right where I used to work at. But that's rubber. I think that was the first time I made props that didn't function, because you can't iron with rubber, so that's why he's faking it. The tire and the iron, they all come from the same material. That's when I first started casting rubber. The reason these things are black or dark grey—I think

FIGURE 23. Kevin Jerome Everson, *Lago Gatún* (2021). 60:00, black and white. Frame grab courtesy of the artist.

I can get them blacker—is because they silhouette with the high-contrast film.

AR: Yeah, it took me a minute to figure out that it was not ironing . . . But, if we're thinking about these two projections, the work of abstraction that is happening in a film that is taking place in the Panama Canal [*Lago Gatún*] and a film that is looking at the moon [*Rough and Unequal*] is not the same.

KE: Well, depends on who you talk to. If you talk to me, they're similar. Oh, also *Tonsler Park*! They're all formally the same to me. For me, they're all functioning the same way, in a weird way.

AR: Sure, they are functioning in the same way, but the stakes of the work of abstraction are different.

KE: Well, for me, all four of those films are *self-referential-ish*. I mean, the voting thing has a lot to it, but for me, it's all happening within the frame, so it's self-referential—that language being part of the forms of abstract painting.

AR: Right. The choice is about where you make abstraction happen.

KE: Within the frame. Within time and the forms of things in the frame, but mostly time. Those four films: the Westinghouse films, *Lago Gatún*, *Tonsler Park*, and the moon thing . . . There's some other films in there as well.

AR: How do you feel about *Condor* (fig. 24)?[29]

KE: Oh! And that one too. Yeah, I forgot. There is a lunar eclipse happening in a couple weeks, and I'm crewing up now. I'm a moon whore. George Clinton's got that great quote about the moon, and he's one of my favorite artists. He says, "We was already up here, but we was waiting on y'all."[30] So you know, we're way ahead of the game. And it's funny, because when people see the moon films, they just want to stare at me for a half an hour, because a Black person shouldn't be doing it. I think I told somebody—and I'm always getting recorded cussing—"Can't a nigga look up?" They got quiet.

You can't look up, right? The reason I really like the George Clinton quote is because white people think they own the moon. They think, formally, they can make art about all this stuff, but *you* can't make art about it. *You* have to educate the ruling class about what they already think they know, but I don't got time for that shit. But formally, those films are all functioning in the same way for me.

LMC: In one of your lectures you offered Olayami Dabls's public art as an example of film editing—specifically a photograph of paint cannisters placed beside tree stumps in which the objects resemble each other.[31] Can you say more about the expanded way you're conceiving of that point of exchange, or the temporal gesture of a film edit beyond the cut?

KE: Well, that's what separates film from the other arts, right? The cut is like a thing in itself. Once you edit, you're telling someone what to think. When I started making films, I wasn't just framing up the one thing; I had to frame up the shot before the shot. It was exciting to be working on understanding those sophisticated relationships that go in between the two. What's making [the cut] comfortable? Or even better, what's making it uncomfortable? Understanding the sophisticated relationships between the two took me awhile. I have another film that I just can't watch. What the fuck is that thing called? *The Island* [*of Saint Matthews*]? No. *The Golden Age of Fish* (2008), I really fucked that up. But that film got me thinking to shooting long-form takes, because it was all these edits from found footage, to stuff I shot, to found footage. That was the kind of brush stroke to make it an "experimental film." And then I was like, "Man, this sucks." It got me to think, "No, it wasn't the cut; it was the *time in between* the cuts." So here's why I started doing these ten-minute takes.

Once you start going past a certain time, me and the subject matter (but also maybe the viewer) start to lose track. Then you abruptly put the paint cans in for the stumps [a reference to the photograph of

FIGURE 24. Kevin Jerome Everson, *Condor* (2020). 7:40, black and white. Frame grab courtesy of the artist.

Dabls's installation]. Then it becomes this conceptual transition between one to the other. Or not. For me it was like the involvement, the investment of time. I don't know how long I'm going to do it, but it seems to be working. Or not working, I don't know, shit! But I'm digging it. I'm going to make a four-hour-long film here in a couple of weeks.

LMC: How would you describe the sense of duration in your work? Is it saving time? Recovering time? Now I'm actually wondering if it's losing time. This idea that, once we've settled into a mode, then you bring in the paint cans. Is that what it is?

KE: I mean, it's more for me than for the viewer. Maybe it's "wasted time." I wasted eight hours on this mother. Depends on who you are, I guess. But I mean, it's about dirty time, so it's not about saving or marking time. I think it may be about the *weight* of it. You know, like it is *volume*, more than anything else.

AR: Right. It's another form of density.

KE: Oh, yeah, yeah. See, look at what you guys got figured out. I don't know why you're talking to me. Shit, I don't know what I'm doing.

AR: You're creating what we are responding to. I want to say it again: it's been such a privilege to see all the work, which has taken you years to make. We're on the receiving end of it, watching it in a short amount of time and seeing the critical mass and all of the ways in which the works built on one another, and we think, "This is awesome!" You're the one that was taking all the steps, and so, of course, for us certain things jump out. But it's the critical mass of your archive, of your process, that is really incredible, and I want to be clear about that.

KE: Well, it's changing, yeah; it keeps changing all the time.

LMC: We wanted to direct this conversation toward blackness because, after talking about form, process, and objecthood, blackness feels like that last piece to us. We're wondering what you feel that blackness affords you, especially in relation to this word *backstory* that you often use to describe a thing that seeps into your films. It seems like it's a resource; it's material in very much the same way.

KE: Oh, it's material, yeah.

LMC: Blackness allows you to perform these formal exercises? How does it work for you?

KE: Well, yeah, it works. Well, I don't know how because I don't think about it, because I don't craft blackness. Everybody's feeling fucking guilty because they don't hire Black people. I guess you got to burn down their Walmart to make motherfuckers want to

IT WASN'T THE CUT; IT WAS THE *TIME IN BETWEEN* THE CUTS

do something right. But for me it's more casual than that. When I look through the viewfinder, I'm looking at a certain set of histories. I'm looking at a set of presences, and hopefully, the forward story would be a certain set of futures or an ending that would be different. When you look at the viewfinder, people have different histories and stuff.

It's funny—I go home to Ohio for holidays, and when my son was still alive, I'd just hang out with him. My friends got in all kinds of trouble, so I didn't want to be around them. But when my son passed away, I was hanging out with my friends, but mostly my son's mom and his folks. I remember they would always say, "Hey dude, you know Black?" I'd say, "I don't know nobody named Black." They're like, "You know Black, it's so-and-so's cousin." But I'm like, "I don't!" They would go, "Well anyway, he did this or that," and I'm still lost.

But formally, I do that. I skip the setup. My friends try to give me the setup ("you know Black?"), but I skip act 1 because I think when I look through the viewfinder, I see act 1. I see it, but the viewer doesn't have to. They can add it in themselves. So for me it's the present tense, and it's histories, and then it's future. Here's how I do research: I just go to a city, or

WHEN I LOOK THROUGH THE VIEWFINDER, I'M LOOKING AT A CERTAIN SET OF HISTORIES, PRESENCES, AND HOPEFULLY, THE FORWARD STORY WOULD BE A CERTAIN SET OF FUTURES

even my hometown, and I'm just going to try to find folks. People don't think I'm a gangster, so they don't think I'm trying to bring harm to people. I'm just trying to find information. So I go by the funeral home first, because they know where everyone's buried; I got to the barber shop, because they know the present; and then when you go to the future, you go to the hair salon because they can predict what's going on. So, I usually make those three trips in the same day. For me everything is an act 2. If you do any kind of script writing, they say, "The situation is: the cat is sleeping on the blanket." I like that, because I like blankets and I like cats. And then the story is "The cat is sleeping on the dog's blanket," which introduces the potential for conflict. But I just like "The cat's sleeping on the blanket," just that central thing. Yeah, I think that's it. Is that what you asked? Hold on . . . oh, so blackness.

AR: Hey, that answered it.

LMC: Yeah, I think that's helpful.

KE: Folks sitting on the blanket, chilling and stuff. That's what, basically, blackness is like. Don't bother me! Just try not to bother people. That's why I try not to get in people's way, because blackness is constantly moving, you know? I want to move with it. I don't want it to stop for me. That's why I use certain cameras and lenses. I wanted to keep moving forward and stuff. For me it's understanding the set of histories that create that backstory. You know, like, they're trying to hire people to teach blackness. Break down the hierarchies and shit. Just get some Black folk up in here, I don't care. But then be careful what you asked for.

LMC: We also have a question about the Midwest. I'm from Indiana, and I was just in conversation with another Black Studies scholar, and we were joking about the possibility that, because we know "Midwestern Niceness," we have a leg up on doing critical race theory.

KE: You know, maybe. I've never seen "Midwestern Niceness" because my town is as southern as you can get. It's like, everybody's from the South.

LMC: Well, I've heard you explain the South is everything below the Canadian border. I am in Toronto now, so who knows? What I want to ask you about, since we've been talking about self-effacing processes, is the relationship between what might be a "midwestern" sensibility and form or abstraction.

KE: Oh yeah, totally. I'm always comparing the Midwest to the South because I'm always trying to figure out why my folks moved up here. For me it's more about the rural/urban landscape. Here [Virginia] we don't get the low sun, because we're in the hills. In Cleveland there's more auto wrecks from sun glare—probably in Indiana too. You drive west to home, and cars are piled up all over the road because you can't see. It's the physicality of the big sky and the landscape. That affects everything.

I come from the working class, so I think my thing is time. I am not thinking about the working class all over the Midwest; I'm talking about the north side of Mansfield, Ohio. King Street area. That's the only thing I can account for. There a motherfucker is never late. My friends didn't realize this until they came to Mansfield with me and time was on everybody's mind because nobody's late for work. I remember when I first started going to New York, and I was like, "Man, where these motherfuckers at?" It was violence! I think that's the reason I didn't like New York. People show up when they want to and stuff, which should be liberating, but I'm uptight. I can't speak for folks in South Bend or East Lansing or Gary or Peoria. I can only speak for the north side of Mansfield. I can't even speak for Canton, Ohio, and that's like an hour east. For me it's very specific.

Have you seen *Company Line* (2009) (fig. 25)?

LMC and AR: Yeah.

KE: That was a revelation for me. A friend of mine was helping with it; she's an anthropologist and noticed the pattern, something I didn't notice: when I asked these cats when they got to Mansfield, they knew what time. "About 12:15, 12:20," or something like that. It was like thirty years ago! And I do the same, I literally do the same thing! It's not just what day it was, but "I think it was about 1:20." And then you can argue with you friend about it: "Man, I think it was 1:15." "Naw, because I remember . . ." That's the craziness: you never forget time. So that may be just a Mansfield thing. Everybody in that film says what time they got to Mansfield. Not what year or what day, what time. And what they did that day!

FIGURE 25. Kevin Jerome Everson. *Company Line* (2009). 30:00, black and white, color. Frame grab courtesy of the artist.

That's the thing I do too: I just clock it in. Time is kind of precious, I guess. That's why these films are time-based. I don't know, you can add that in there. Or make it up.

AR: Speaking of time, we don't want to . . .

KE: Oh, yeah. I've got to unleash this mold because I have another tire I poured last night. So I want to see what it looks like.

LMC: Thank you so much for showing us those.

AR: Yeah, thank you.

KE: Well, it's new and it's on the mind. I think my gallery [Andrew Kreps Gallery] moved up my show from like September to February, so I've got to crank the shit. I mean, I was going to make this stuff anyway, but now I think I need to shoot a couple more films, though. But I don't think I can. I might run out of time, yeah.

Artist/filmmaker **KEVIN JEROME EVERSON** has made more than 170 films, including *Tonsler Park*, *The Island of Saint Matthews*, *Erie*, *Ears, Nose and Throat*, *Sound That*, *Sugarcoated Arsenic* (with Claudrena Harold), and *Park*

Lanes. He also has three DVD box sets of his films: *How You Live Your Story: Selected Works by Kevin Jerome Everson*, *Broad Daylight and Other Times*, and *I Really Hear Something: Quality Control and Other Films*. Everson's films and artwork have been widely shown at venues including the Sundance Film Festival, Berlin Film Festival, International Film Festival Rotterdam, Oberhausen Film Festival, Venice International Film Festival, Toronto International Film Festival, New York Film Festival, Ann Arbor Film Festival, the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Museum of African American History, the Tate Modern in London, the Andrew Kreps Gallery in New York, and the Centre Pompidou in Paris. The films have streamed on multiple platform sites including Criterion Channel and MUBI. The work has also been recognized through numerous awards and fellowships such as a Guggenheim Fellowship, an Alpert Award, a Heinz Award, a Creative Capital Fellowship, an American Academy in Rome Prize, and an American Academy in Berlin Prize. Everson is represented by Picture Palace Pictures, New York, and Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York.

ALESSANDRA RAENGO is professor of Moving Image Studies at Georgia State University, the founding editor in chief of *liquid blackness: journal of aesthetics and black studies*, and the founder of the research group on blackness and aesthetics that initiated the journal in 2013. She is the author of *On the Sleeve of the Visual: Race as Face Value* (Dartmouth College Press, 2013) and of *Critical Race Theory and* Bamboozled (Bloomsbury Press, 2016).

LAUREN MCLEOD CRAMER is an assistant professor in the Cinema Studies Institute at the University of Toronto. Her work focuses on the spatial aesthetics of blackness and popular culture. Lauren is a founding member of *liquid blackness* and is the coeditor in chief of *liquid blackness: journal of aesthetics and black studies*. Her writing has appeared in the *Journal of Cinema and Media Studies*, *Black Scholar*, *Black Camera*, *Film Criticism*, the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, the *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, and the edited collection *Writing for Screen Media* (Routledge, 2019).

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Notes

This article includes audiovisual content that may be accessed at doi.org/10/1215/26923874-9272822.

1 Everson, "Screening and Conversation."

2 Everson, "New Work."

3 Everson, "New Work."

4 "I like to shoot films the way I used to shoot street photography. I tried to find moments but now I also like to *make* moments." Gillespie, "B.A.D.," 161 (emphasis added).

5 Everson has often talked about being interested in "putting forth" the way the body is affected by a set of conditions: "Those conditions could be weather, economics, crime, recreation, . . . overall I am considering a process, the way conditions affect people." Gillespie, "B.A.D.," 158. In "New Work" he highlights the way his parents looked different on Fridays after a week of work "on" their body.

6 Later on view at *Kevin Jerome Everson: Mansfield Deluxe*, Andrew Kreps Gallery, February 26–March 27, 2021.

7 Everson, "New Work."

8 A conversation between Michael Boyce Gillespie and Everson appeared in the second issue of the *liquid blackness* journal in 2014. To access the archive that documents the 2015 *liquid blackness* symposium, "Passing Through: The Arts and Politics of the Jazz Ensemble," see liquidblackness.com/passing-through-the-arts-and-politics-of-the-jazz-ensemble.

9 Keynote screening, curated by Michael Boyce Gillespie at the Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, October 25, 2017. The event, "Films by Kevin Jerome Everson," was part of "Afterimage: Filmmakers and Critics in Conversation."

10 Inspired by the changing appearance of the worker's body from the beginning to the end of the workweek, Everson has made several films about factory labor, including *Company Line* (2009), about the residents of a Mansfield, Ohio, neighborhood just north of a steel mill, which is narrated by city employees, and *Park Lanes* (2015), an eight-hour film—approximately the length of a workday—about a factory that makes bowling alley supplies.

11 We would like to thank Aggie Ebrahimi Bazaz for her thoughtful feedback on this essay and, specifically, for asking us to more fully engage the relationship between the work of the body and the "body of work."

12 Everson, "Screening and Conversation."

13 See, in particular, his insistence on considering *Rough and Unequal*, *Lago Gatún*, the *Westinghouse* films, and *Tonsler Park* as all equally abstract films in the interview below.

14 Everson, "New Work."

15 Everson, "New Work."

16 In his introduction to his second published conversation with the filmmaker, Gillespie acknowledges that "blackness, *formal practice* and *abstraction* tacitly operated as our keywords." Gillespie, "B.A.D.," 156.

17 Everson, "Screening and Conversation."

18 Everson, "New Work."

19 See Raengo, "Jurisgenerativity of a Liquid Praxis."

20 Everson, "New Work."

21 This synopsis of the film appears in a filmography provided by Everson, emailed to the authors, October 16, 2020.

22 The reference here is to Edwin Porter's 1903 *What Happened in the Tunnel*, which has generated a lot of scholarship in film, visual culture studies, and critical race theory. See, for example, Best, *Fugitive's Properties*; Stewart, *Migrating to the Movies*; Courtney, *Hollywood's Fantasies of Miscegenation*.

23 The end tables mentioned here were eventually exhibited at "Black Male: Representation of Masculinity in Contemporary American Art," an exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art curated by Thelma Golden, 1994–95.

24 Everson, "School Is Not in Session."

25 Everson, "New Work."

26 Fried, "Art and Objecthood"; Moten, "Case of Blackness."

27 Everson has previously made films about police and their own filmmaking practices. *Richland Blue* (2019) is about stag films made by the corrupt Richland County police produced in the 1960s and 1970s.

28 *Westinghouse One* and *Two* and *Four* are in black and white, while the third installment is in color.

29 *Condor* (2020), which records a lunar eclipse in summer 2019, is described as "about one-hundred percent totality in Chile" (7:40, b&w).

30 This quote inspired a recent exhibition of Everson's work at Brevard College titled ". . . We Was Waiting for Them."

31 During a talk at the American Academy in Berlin, Everson cited Dabls's MBad African Bead Museum, a public art installation that covered almost an entire city block in Detroit in materials (iron, rocks, wood, mirrors) that express the entanglement of African and European history and culture.

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