

Tau Lewis and Patty Kelly

I heard a heartbeat down in the black hole

July 25 – September 28, 2019

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I heard a heartbeat down in the black hole

*I've been hovering above the giant quicksand fields of darkness
sittin on this little light beam of mine*

*I've been looking down
past the doorsteps of the ghost of space and time,
and the gravitational gateway of goneness*

Staring into the heaviest mightiest black!

When I listen hard, I can hear a pulsational sound

Something like a heartbeat

*Did you keep on keeping on friend?
In that blind, cast away place?
some place we thought living couldn't be?
and seeing couldn't see?*

Some place so blind, and black and beyond there'd be no saving we?

That old flag still down on my flagpole...

*But I could almost swear I feel some mechanism of some rhythm
coming from way down in that black hole*

*My heart's in the bright place
So I'm uncurling my rope of hope*

*I'll hope long and hard
to stretch this rope past time
so I can climb down to you*

I've never been very scared of ghosts and such

*If we don't come out
I hope you'll love me enough
to teach me to see in blindness*

and I'll still love you if you've changed

sometimes we need to transform to understand life better

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To date Lewis' practice has largely been anchored in the process of healing personal, historical and collective traumas through labor. Her works—in sculpture, textile and otherwise—are borne of deeply embodied processes such as scavenging, sewing, collecting and carving. These are practices that are at once physically hard-won and rooted in a concern with a material and spiritual resourcefulness that has long been significant to black cultural production. Lewis' work in the studio is motivated by asking how and why it is that peoples in the diaspora wander, seek and gather. What does the tendency toward collecting, archiving and stitching together represent in us as a people? What are the ways in which these impulses—to imagine, to assemble, to tell stories—has been and continues to be generative, transforming spaces of trauma and erasure into spaces of healing, creativity and exchange?

Tau Lewis' and Patty Kelly's collaboration at Cordova locates itself in the cosmos, reflecting on the possibilities of outer space as a locus of both past and future, and considering the space beyond earth as holding imaginary territories where ancestors live. A large quilt work anchors the space, depicting a sequence of pathways and patterns along with remnants of earthly objects and beings, 'the black hole'. Constructed out of recycled garments and scavenged metal bits, it ponders the affective histories of the materials, and what life exists inside 'the black hole'. On the gallery floor, Kelly draws an appropriately galactic environment, in which the celestial object is activated.

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