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Ghosting the Postcolonial Archive.
Digital Technologies and Diasporic Visualities in
Contemporary Black British Art

Abstract: The essay focuses on the critical articulation of a black diaspora in Europe, through the investigation of two works of contemporary British artists: Keith Piper's digital video *Ghosting the Archive* (2005) and Sonia Boyce's exhibition "Scat" (2013). In his installation Piper intervenes materially in the gaps between the rigid limits of conventional and systematised archives: he opens the boxes of Birmingham Central Library and develops a work that reactivates a concatenation of forgotten experiences of migration. In her exhibition "Scat" Boyce shows three pieces that refer to the unconventional improvisation in jazz and develop a critical dispersal of history: what her works have in common is an interest in the voice, in terms of authority and resistance, and in the reconfiguration of the archive as an aspiration for the future, rather than a mere preservation of the past. Challenging the consecrated reverence of institutionalised archival practices, Piper and Boyce elaborate alternatives devotional collections that are not relegated to a distant and unquestionable past. Enhanced by the digital forms of mediation and technology, their art projects open to the multiple movements of cultural identity and constantly remind us of the actual conditions of mutation, emergence and circulation of diasporic formations.

Keywords: *art, race, digital archive, memory*

Introduction

This paper explores contemporary art practices opening the investigation of questions of racial difference and racialized space, and the critical articulation of a black diaspora in Europe. In particular, the focus is on the works of Keith Piper and Sonia Boyce, two black British artists who interrupt the presumed continuity of conventional and systematised archives and develop the question of the archive in Arjun Appadurai's terms of a material transformation and of a tangible work on the future, rather than a mere preservation of an unquestionable past.[1] Archives can be re-manipulated and re-opened through digital technology or, we could say, brought back to life. For Achille Mbembe, every archive, in its architectural dimension, its organisation and divisions, is always something of a cemetery, of a place where fragments of lives are preserved but also placed in a tomb, in other words concealed and set apart from the visible.

Archives rest on the burying of remains, on a sepulchre where, in Mbembe's work, the historian and the archivist manipulate fragments in "an intimate relationship with a world alive only by virtue of an initial event that is represented by the act of dying".[2] Since no existing archive has the possibility to preserve an entire history, we are always confronted by a selection, an assemblage of pieces that

[1] Arjun Appadurai, "Archive and Aspiration", in Joke Brouwer and Arjen Mulder, eds., *Information Is Alive: Art and Theory on Archiving and Retrieving Data* (Rotterdam: NAI, 2003).

[2] Achille Mbembe, "The Power of the Archive and Its Limits", in Carolyn Hamilton et al., eds., *Refiguring the Archive* (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer, 2002), 25.

are put together in an illusion of coherence.

Piper and Boyce challenge the undisputed authority and the consecrated reverence of the archive, through the creative elaboration of an alternative sense of the sacred, of a devotional collection that is not relegated to a distant and undeniable past. Indeed, art practices can be considered as part of the general cultural and political formation of multicultural societies; they open to the manifold transits of cultural identity and act as a concrete reminder of the conditions of mutation, emergence and circulation of diasporic formations.

Transcultural Visual Imaginaries

This essay draws on Stuart Hall's account that describes black not as a fixed genetic mark, but as a signifier of a historical and dynamic difference, always located and articulated with other elements, always capable of producing its unsettling consequences.[3] Actually, if we observe Europe through a postcolonial lens, it becomes clear that decolonized peoples who have made their home here act as a perpetual reminder of the ways in which the once metropolitan and imperial centres have been shaped by the narrations of their global peripheries. The traces of the historical legacy of colonialism become the basis for a concrete work in the present moment. Migratory movements of bodies and imaginaries have thus contributed to the constitution of a trans-national and diasporic world – characterised by passages, interstices and in-between spaces – and to the displacement of cultural identities. It is precisely for these reasons that the postcolonial horizon critically interrupts the historiographical narration of Western culture. As Mbembe has recently argued, the focus is not on the critique of the West per se, but on the consequences produced by colonial conceptions of reason and humanism.[4]

Furthermore, in choosing the visual arts as a privileged point on these issues, the emphasis is on the idea that art practices can be considered as part of the cultural and political formation of multicultural societies. As Elizabeth Grosz proposes, art is the site of imagination, it addresses problems and provokes, not so much the elaboration of images in which the subject might recognise itself, but real changes and reciprocal exchanges of elements.[5] It is for this reason that art cannot be a frivolous ornamentation: it is a vital form of impact that does not merely concentrate on the observation of an object, but on the resonances, the transitions and the silences. In this sense, "art is intensely political": it elaborates alternative possibilities and provokes a perceptual anticipation of the future (79).

Within the complex cartography of global modernity, the encounter with art proposes an ethical-aesthetical cut, a critical reflection on the intertwining cultural, geographical, historical and economic contexts of the contemporary world. Art practices that emerge from experiences of migration and hybridity are not so much to be interpreted as the objects of a political and social analysis; rather, the

[3] Stuart Hall, "Black Diaspora Artists in Britain: Three 'Moments' in Post-War History", *History Workshop Journal,* 61 (Spring 2006), 1-24.

[4] Achille Mbembe, "What Is Postcolonial Thinking?", *Eurozine*, http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2008-01-09-mbembe-en.html, accessed 20 September 2014.

[5] Elizabeth Grosz, *Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth* (New York: Columbia U. P., 2008). All further references in text.

languages of those works are discussed to question forms and canons, and to explore the relation between identity and difference, geographical locations and dislocations.

Engaging the visual as an interdisciplinary and fluid interpretative frame, it is possible to debate and contest social interactions of racialized identities, gender and class. Within this context, visuality – as a cultural practice – refers to the registers in which both the image and its meanings operate. An essential inspiration for these intuitions is represented by Frantz Fanon, whose work activates psychoanalysis in the investigation of colonialism and the visual construction of racialized subjectivities: actually, it is through the other's gaze that Fanon unveils "the fact of blackness".[6]

[6] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1986 [1952]).

At the end of the Nineties, visual culture came to be defined as a transversal field of inquiry that crosses art, cinema and media studies. The interactions between the viewer-as-subject and the viewed object are turned, in Nicholas Mirzoeff's intuitions, into visual events that provoke the creation and the circulation of images.[7] Visuality is thus developed as a problematic place, where it is possible to re-think the consolidation of power as a visualised model on a global scale and the place of visual subjects within that system, in other words people defined as the agents of sight and as the objects of particular discourses of visuality. Through ambivalences and interstices, the issue of power in the field of visual culture concerns the question of representation.[8] In particular, this interconnection leads to the very specificity of the images that confront the new and emerging conditions of multicultural societies.

[7] Nicholas Mirzoeff, *An Introduction to Visual Culture* (London-New York: Routledge, 1999).

[8] Stuart Hall, ed., *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage and Open University, 1997).

Visuality crucially articulates the complex relationship between cultural identity and national belonging. This is particularly clear if we highlight the importance of photography for migrant communities: on the individual level this is translated into the act of collecting diaries, letters, personal belongings or, more recently, digital repositories; on the social level the urge to preserve public records or historical documents is embodied in the official spaces of museums, city archives and libraries. However, what happens when conserving practices of archiving and collecting come to be unsettled by minor narratives generated within the shared social, cultural and political complexity of the contemporary world?

Image thus plays a crucial role not only in terms of documentation and memory, but also in terms of providing a counter-history – an alternative narration – that challenges stereotypes and negative assumptions.[9] In this sense documentaries, videos, photography, with their languages of/on the border, play a crucial role in the creation of unconventional archives and multiple performances of black European subjects in formation. This perspective critically visualises unconventional appropriations of storage places and collections, and forces us to identify other buildings, other dwellings, where a compelling challenge takes place, the task of 'circulating memory', as the British artist Isaac Julien would suggest.[10]

In his essay "Black Diaspora Artists in Britain: Three 'Moments' in Post-war

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] Isaac Julien, "Creolizing Vision", in Okwui Enwezor et al., eds., *Créolité and Creolization: Documenta 11 Platform 3* (Ostfildern-Ruit, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2003).

History" (2006), Hall identifies different moments in the genealogy of the black diaspora visual arts in post-war Britain. In particular, the focus of this paper is on the generation that Hall describes as the second wave of those black British artists, who were born in the 1960s and started exhibiting their works two decades later. Artists such as Keith Piper, Sonia Boyce, Eddie Chambers and Donald Rodney, among others, emerged in a new political horizon that had 'race' – instead of anti-colonialism – as the determining process for their highly politicised visual imaginaries. In the early 1980s this tendency overlapped with the idea of a Black Arts Movement (BAM), promoted by Chambers, Piper, Marlene Smith and others, that was established on a 'black aesthetic' and the idea of an Afro-centred black identity.[11]

[11] Hall, "Black Diaspora Artists in Britain", 17.

The BAM began with painting and then shifted to an interest in film and video, opening the door to an overflowing of independent exhibitions.[12] This movement, indeed, contributed to a critical perspective that displaced Western models and opened a transcultural approach on cultural practice. This was also the prelude to an extraordinary explosion of work by artists such as Zineb Sedira and Sutapa Biswas, and of creative productions characterised by the challenge to documentary realism and the foregrounding of the black body as the key racial signifier.[13]

[12] David A. Bailey et al., eds., *Shades of Black: Assembling Black Arts in 1980s Britain* (London & Durham: Duke U. P., 2005).

[13] Hall, "Black Diaspora Artists in Britain", 17.

For example, in the films *Territories*, directed by Isaac Julien in 1984, and *Handsworth Songs*, directed by John Akomfrah in 1986, the civil disturbances of those years in London and Birmingham are only a point of departure. The starting point is not so much the event of the Notting Hill Carnival and its riots, rather the fragmentary state of the narration that places the spectator in a position of agency. As Manthia Diawara stresses, Julien and his Collective Sankofa depict "the intersections, the contradictory and the intermediary spaces between blackness and Englishness, Britishness and Caribbeanness, and among race, class, and sexuality".[14] In a similar way to *Territories*, Akomfrah's film was produced during the so-called 'workshop movement', that provided a space for intervening and thinking critically about the means of representation and the images of race and difference. Through the fragmentary collage of archival material, original images, and oneiric scenes, both films dislocate the symbolic system of the mainstream master narrative, interrupt the objective account of the reality and liberate the expressive and material dimension of the image.

[14] Manthia Diawara, "Black British Cinema: Spectatorship and Identity Formation in *Territories*", in Houston A. Baker Jr, Manthia Diawara, and Ruth H. Lindeborg, eds., *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 295.

In this moment, we also find a preoccupation with the body, in particular with the intentional staging of the black body. The film *Looking for Langston*, directed by Julien in 1989, indeed, is an example of a counter-strategy that does not choose to add positive images to the negative depiction of dominant representations. Instead of reiterating the constitution of the meaning by the binaries, this film locates itself within the ambivalences of representation itself, trying to contest it from within. Hence, instead of avoiding the black body, that has been so involved in the complexities of power and subordination, this body – black, male and homosexual – becomes the main site of the struggle. Working within and through the eye of

representation, stereotypes are made to work against themselves to contest the dominant gendered and sexual definitions of racial difference.

The black British artists of the second wave experienced the historical conjuncture of those years, characterised by a violent racialized exclusion and a marginalisation from society's mainstream, burdened with stereotyped discourses about questions of identity and belonging.[15] Identity, in particular, constituted a productive horizon for artists, not as an essential, fixed entity, but rather as the process of producing constantly a new black subject that was inside, and not outside, representation, because culture identities go through constant transformations and are subject to an endless play of different conjunctures.[16] Thus, the concrete strategies proposed by visual arts are extremely critical and interrupt the univocal Western political discourse through an unavoidable exploration of the multiple meanings of migratory dislocations.

The works of these artists operate in the interstices between cultures and in the political, historical, and theoretic conjuncture of the diasporic experience. The emergent space and interpretive frame of the diaspora is rooted not only in earlier imperial settlements and older structures of power, but also in the experience of vulnerable minorities and the conditions of refugee camps, detention centres, and invisible economies of the advanced world. Moreover, as Hall suggests, the idea of the diaspora questions the notions of a cultural origin, of roots, and authenticity. "It unpicks the claims made for the unities of culturally homogeneous, racially purified national cultures and identities".[17] Diaspora is where the politics of gender, class, and race form together a new, powerful and unstable articulation that does not provide easy answers, but raises "new questions, which proliferate across older frames of thought, social engagement and political activity" (ibid.).

Relocating the Fragments of the Archive

Keith Piper is a multi-media British artist, curator, researcher and academic, born in 1960 to Caribbean parents, whose work develops the condition of living in the interstices and calls into question notions of a cultural authenticity and a fixed national identity.[18] The world in which his work emerged was a Britain that, observed through a postcolonial lens, was displaced by the migratory movements of subjects whose parents had come from formerly colonised countries and made their home in the once imperial centres of the metropolis.

It is Birmingham, the city where Piper was brought up, that comes to be re-framed in the motif of the journey, in the incessant movements between departure and return, separation and belonging, that contribute to the constitution of transnational and diasporic global spaces. It is Birmingham Central Library, the place chosen by Piper for a residency, that allows him to develop his interest in institutionalised collections, in particular in the narratives of the archive, its physical architecture and categorising mechanisms. In 2005, he produced the digital

[15] See Kobena Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994);
Lola Young, *Fear of the Dark: 'Race', Gender and Sexuality in the Cinema* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996).

[16] Hall, ed., *Representation*.

[17] Stuart Hall, "Avtar Brah's Cartographies: Moment, Method, Meaning", *Feminist Review*, 100 (2012), 30.

[18] Keith Piper, *Relocating the Remains* (London: Institute of International Visual Arts, 1997).

installation *Ghosting the Archive*, as part of a bigger Arts Council project called *Necessary Journeys*. He physically opened the boxes of Birmingham City Archive and developed a new work practice that reacts to the material he found, reactivating the traces of the stories that lie in the collection. In particular, he unpacked the boxes housed in the so-called Dyche Collection, that consists of more than ten thousand images, mostly unidentified, both proof prints and negatives, from the studios of Ernest Dyche (1887-1973), a commercial portrait photographer who operated in the suburbs of the inner area of Birmingham and became very popular within the communities of migrants arriving from the Indian subcontinent, African countries and Caribbean islands from the 1950s to 1970s.[19] Until its closure, the Dyche Studio provided a significant repository of British history during a complicated phase of the creation of black Britain. In particular, it produced countless portraits of members of those communities that were circulated both in the United Kingdom and in the former colonies: images that Piper found without names or other identifying elements.

As Gen Doy points out, these images took part in what could be called a "reverse immigration": they were indeed sent back to the Caribbean, India or Pakistan, to family members, friends or for marriage arrangements and also "lightened", if necessary, in order to move toward an ideal whiteness.[20] Many of the pictures convey messages about the migrants' success in Britain and show black people as glamorous and good-looking, wearing either elegant outfits or work uniforms, as if the continuous discriminations, registered by the black residents of Birmingham in those years, were absent from the immutable and fixed set of the studio. Furthermore, these photos were personal and at the same time collective memories that counterbalanced the traditional depiction of migrants as a social problem.

The spectral negatives of Dyche Collection do not allow the viewer to look for physical attributes of blackness, original or essential meanings. Rather, they require a reconstruction work and a critical confrontation with the multiple historical experiences of racialization and cultural formation that shaped the migrant communities. The negatives are inscribed in multiple historical contexts and register both the presence and the absence of the black subject, not in terms of an innocent photographic archive, rather as the exploration of alternative histories that contain and exceed the frame. In particular, while they materialise bodies and memories, the negatives obscure race through a reversal of the colour of the skin from dark to light, from black to white.

In *Ghosting the Archive* the negative plates, held by Piper in a white-gloved hand, are reframed one after the other in the contemporary space of Birmingham City Archive by a digital camera. A shutter click presents each time a different negative plate that, bearing a ghostly presence, slowly morphs into something else: family groups, women with newly born children, men seated on the chairs provided at Dyche Studio wearing elegant outfits or work uniforms, new coats or borrowed

[19] Tina M. Campt, *Image Matters: Archive, Photography and the African Diaspora in Europe* (Durham and London: Duke U. P., 2012).

[20] Gen Doy, *Black Visual Culture: Modernity and Postmodernity* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2000), 131.

ones. In other words, the whole digital image of Birmingham Central Library gradually morphs into a negative one, while the negative plate in the centre of the frame progressively changes: the light areas of the image on film become dark, while dark areas give way to the light areas of the photograph. In this way, the original subjects of the picture emerge from obscurity and have the chance to appear again within the contemporary time-space.

What comes into the light of *Ghosting the Archive* is certainly an absence out of which Dyche's clients express a singular and collective presence. Their absence refers to a past that irrupts into the present with the entire burden and consequences of its abolition. This is the scar they leave between the pre-ordained shelves of the archive: preserving in the context of archival classification is closely associated with a process of profound forgetting. These portraits are not the mere reproductions of faces and traits, but they express a force that has been drawn, pulled, or extracted. In Piper's extensive research, indeed, there is no attempt to get inside the subjects of the photos and to understand what they express, because his artistic practice does not intend to grasp or transmit fixed meanings, rather it engages in a critical relation with the materiality of race. Piper's work on the Dyche Collection demonstrates that race is not a substance that can be read transparently by the image. Rather, race matters, as Tina Campt suggests, and materialises socially as a mark of human difference and a powerful performative process that produces meaningful instances and crucial material affects.[21] The negatives that Piper re-frames in the centre of the contemporary digital picture constantly remind us of the materiality of racial and diasporic formations.

[21] Campt, *Image Matters.*

Female *Devotional* Collections

Sonia Boyce is an artist of African Caribbean descent, born in London in 1962. Her early work addresses issues of race, representation and urban spaces through pastel drawings and photographic collages that question dominant media stereotyped narrations.[22] Like Keith Piper, she belongs to the so-called second wave of diaspora visual artists, who started exhibiting their works in the 1980s, in a British post-war society that was going through massive cultural and political changes. Her early production is a highly graphic and iconographic art of lines and montages, images and slogans, cut-outs and collages, in which the black body – often distorted and polemical – becomes a cyclical motif. Very different both from the capitalist logic of accumulation and the multicultural rhetoric of integration, the feminist collage demonstrates that cutting and collecting can stimulate an on-going process of transformation and an active production of cultural memory. In particular, the dividing of the body is very frequent in the works of Boyce in which different body-parts are analysed as the means that have been historically and socially used by the patriarchal construction of identity. Moreover, in foregrounding a body that is often transgressive and unpleasant, Boyce's strategies

[22] Gilane Tawadros, *Sonia Boyce: Speaking in Tongues* (London: Kala Press, 1997).

aim at rewriting the traditional stereotyped representation of black women, inherited from slavery and adopted by colonial discourse.

Recently Boyce's work has shifted to a variety of media that combines photography, prints, text, video, sound, and installation to explore the interweaving of personal and collective histories, and issues around dislocations, migration, and diaspora. In 2013, she occupied the public spaces in Rivington Place, London, with the solo exhibition "Scat", that included the three major pieces *For you, only you* (2007), *The Devotional Wallpaper* (2008-), and *Oh Adelaide* (2010). What these works all have in common is an interest in the voice – in terms of authority and resistance – and in the archive as art practice, as putting different elements together that feed the archive with an aspiration for the future, rather than mere preservation of the past. The exhibition's title "Scat", indeed, refers to the unconventional improvisation in jazz and, here, is intimately related to the question of dispersal and playing with history, because culture identities have always histories and undergo constant transformation. Far from being crystallised in a mere preservation of history, identities demonstrate the different positioning within the narratives of the past.

In *For you, only you,* the first piece of the exhibition, Boyce orchestrates an improbable meeting between the English vocal consort Alamire – specialised in medieval and Renaissance music – and the contemporary London-based Greek sound artist Mikhail Karikis, whose voice constantly breaks the continuity of the chorus. His fractured vocalisations interrupt what the singers normally do: his intervention, impregnated with a Balkan rhythm, that is so familiar to him, is actually very unfamiliar to the singers and, therefore, reconfigures the grammar and the structure of their usual performance. For example, during the silences and the empty spaces, Karikis clears his throat once, twice, again, and again, up to the time that the crowd gets really suspicious.

As in her collages, Boyce combines different items together to highlight the question of nonsense. In *For you, only you* she deliberately orchestrates a nonsense – that is to not make sense – in particular through the voluntary choice of vocalisations that are not words and do not belong to the appropriate language. Therefore, we could say that the decision to break the rules and to express nonsense is inevitably a form of resistance against the power of language.[23] This also leads to the idea of sharing a common space, where difference is suddenly felt and perceived as an unfamiliar presence. So, *For you, only you* is a work on racial difference in many ways, in particular on the multiple shades of difference. Here, difference is not visible, rather it is heard, and it is much more unsettling because the stranger presence in the chorus – Karikis' white skin – subverts any expectations initially set by his similarity with the other singers and the director.

A rupture with the conventions is also very evident in *The Devotional Collection* that is an archive of CDs, cassettes, and vinyl records related to black British female singers that Boyce has been developing since 1999. In Rivington Place elements of

[23] Sonia Boyce, *Scat – Sonia Boyce: Sound and Collaboration*, exhibition guide, Institute of International Visual Arts, London, 5 June-27 July 2013.

this unconventional archive are presented in the context of her *Devotional Wallpaper*, a work in which Boyce creates, with an overt request of supplementary contributions to the audience, a large-scale printed list with the names of two hundreds women who have been great, but often marginal, sources of inspiration: on the wall the names of these singers resonate with each other through an infinite and vibrant grid that multiplies lines around typed letters. Her aim is neither to represent those performers nor to speak for them; rather, she intends to reopen the archive and to dismantle the divisions between an inside and an outside. Boyce avoids the trap of speaking about – of giving voice to – those underprivileged female performers of the music industry and insists on what Trinh T. Minh-ha has articulated in her film *Reassemblage* (1982) as speaking 'with' the other or 'nearby'. Boyce's research maintains a productive openness that always depends on the creative force of multiple experiences. This is also a precarious ground, where established positions and materials are unsettled by the 'now' and allow the artist to enter the 'yet-to-be-named' in the very instance of encounter.

As part of *The Devotional Collection*, we finally have the work *Oh Adelaide*, a collaboration by Boyce and sound artist Ain Bailey. This video reworks the archive footage of the American-born jazz singer and entertainer Adelaide Hall (1901-1993), who lived in London from the 1930s until her death. Here, Hall's voice – a brilliant example of the wordless jazz technique known as 'scat' – is made unrecognisable, because it is mixed with other recordings and songs from Boyce's devotional archive: photographic motionless images fix the moment and surround the disappearing face of the entertainer with circles of an extremely bright light, so as to blind the spectators' eyes. This luminescent white mass obscures and at the same time reveals details of the jazz singer: parts of her body are shown and suddenly are covered to critically engage with the coding representation of the female body and the male voyeuristic desire to isolate and possess distinct portions of this body.[24] In addition to this, the soundtrack is unfamiliar and violent: the historical archive expressed by the sibilant whispers of vinyl records is dismantled and challenged by the juxtaposition with noise, scraping, fiction and ghostly indistinct sounds. The archive as an innocent accumulation of documents is thus revealed in fragments that push us to think about the dynamics through which all traces are produced.

[24] Sophie Orlando, 'Sonia Boyce: Sound, Tension and the Sacred', in Sonia Boyce, *Scat*, exhibition guide, 7-14.

Final Remarks

The art projects explored in this essay articulate and dismantle the relation between colours, in particular between whiteness and blackness in the context of cultural identities. This is palpable in the interchange of dark and light in the negatives, foregrounded by Piper in Birmingham City Archive, and in the shining white mass that alternately hides and reveals the black body of the singer Adelaide Hall, encountered in Boyce's personal devotional archive. In the video *Ghosting the Archive*

and in the exhibition "Scat", indeed, the deliberate alternation of black and white becomes a strategy of open resistance that deviates from the norm and renders the viewed objects unrecognisable and, therefore, unclassifiable. This act distorts the realistic shape of the black body within the frame and denies the viewer the power of the gaze. Or, to put it differently, the white colour critically prevents the looking subject to possess the object and to grasp its meaning.

Amplified by the digital forms of mediation and technology, the art projects explored in this paper envision the possibility for the archives to become material sites of transformation. In Piper's work the harsh sound of the camera shutter solicits the ear and marks a new phase in which a photo turns out to be another one, where an ending becomes a new beginning. In *Ghosting the Archive* photos, like Dyche's clients, appear, disappear and re-appear with no apparent continuity, except for the uninterrupted movement of the images themselves and for the persistency of the sound of the shutter click. As Trinh T. Minh-ha argues, the digital video image is an image constantly in formation, in a process of appearing and disappearing that highlights transformations and transitions.[25] The video renders tangible the passing of time in the comings and goings of the photos, their infinite repetition and continual morphing, their vanishing into darkness and their return anew on the screen. Here, digital technology demonstrates that in every movement there are so many passages to be registered, and every obsession for preservation inevitably brings a process of forgetting with it.

The negatives of *Ghosting the Archive* resonate with the affective sensorium of the *Devotional* series, with a footage that is stretched through digital technology and rendered open to the many movements of cultural identity. The works explored here constantly remind us of the materiality of racial and diasporic formations that inhabit the real and produce affective and actual conditions of mutation, emergence and circulation. Art practices are wholly effective for challenging the persistence of race and differential racisms that emerge from the transformations of global capitalism and from the proliferation of multi-scalar borders that play a crucial role in the restructuring of working lives. Hence, the archives reconfigured by Piper and Boyce embody in a tangible way the affective relations of migration and materialise black European subjectivities in formation.

[25] Trinh T. Minh–ha, *D-Passage: The Digital Way* (Durham and London: Duke U. P., 2013).