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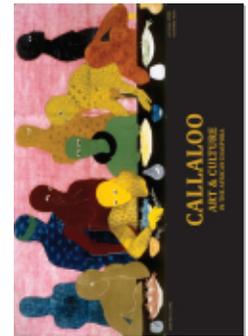
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## Painting After All: A Conversation with Mark Bradford

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## PAINTING AFTER ALL A Conversation with Mark Bradford

by Huey Copeland

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, Mark Bradford has emerged on the global stage as one of the most visible and successful painters of his generation thanks to his trademark canvasses built of multi-layered paper—often sourced from posters and billboards in South Central Los Angeles—that suggest the historical, the cartographic, and the architectural while remaining resolutely abstract. At the same time that he has been credited with a vital reanimation of painting, earning him honors such as a 2009 MacArthur Foundation “Genius” Award, Bradford has continued to work in a range of media including video, installation, and sculpture, all of which reflect his long-standing interest in simultaneously building bridges between and deconstructing notions of the common and the cultured. Recently, he has embarked on an ambitious new project, the Art and Practice Foundation, which aims to forward that same imperative in the social sphere, providing a space where international artists and local youth in foster care might exchange ideas about contemporary culture. On January 14, 2014, I spoke with Bradford at his former studio in Leimert Park, a 10,000 square foot space that will be the hub of the Art and Practice cultural complex. Our conversation explored many aspects of his capacious art, life, and work, though we consistently returned to his investment in painting and the worlds it makes possible.

**COPELAND:** I’ve often been struck by the richness and allusiveness of your titles: *Niagara*, *James Brown Is Dead*, and one of my recent favorites, *With That Ass, They Won’t Look at Your Eyes*.<sup>1</sup> The affective resonance of such names can be poignant and punning, bearing an oblique or a direct relation to the objects themselves. I wonder how you arrive at these titles, as well as how you imagine them relating to the material construction of the works? In other words, how do you think about your objects and their names being read together and the kind of cross references they create, particularly given that the titles often evoke black history and its imbrication with modern art and culture?

**BRADFORD:** When I first started making work, I never thought much about titles, especially being a painter. I did notice how an artist like Agnes Martin would make very minimal paintings with very strong feminist titles, allowing her to redirect the gaze from modernism as such to social relationships. But that kind of move really was only in the back of my head; early on, most of my titles came from popular culture or music,

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Art and Practice Foundation, interior and exterior rendering  
Image courtesy of Mark Bradford



Mark Bradford, *James Brown Is Dead* (2007)  
Image courtesy of Mark Bradford



Mark Bradford, *Los Moscos* (2004)  
Image courtesy of Mark Bradford

particularly hip hop. Eventually, I started rethinking hip hop, especially those strands of it that I felt held very unhealthy attitudes toward the black female body, since I didn't know if I wanted to be part of that discourse. Nowadays, the way that I usually work is that I come up with an idea and then begin to research. For instance, I'm working on a suite of paintings for an upcoming show all based around Gustave Caillebotte's *The Floor Scrapers*, so I went on Amazon and got a lot of art history books and texts on that artist and that period. I find that usually when I'm reading at night and I'm working during the day, there will be texts that jump out at me and I can extrapolate something from the text that then becomes a title. There's also an emotional relationship to the work and to the text that I'm reading, so through the naming and the form of the works—I use paper instead of just old paint—I want the viewer to think more broadly, to think about the social implications of the material, and maybe the social implications of the titles.

**COPELAND:** What a fascinating way to describe the process, since it suggests that the titles—like the materials you use in the work—are found objects, always sourced from elsewhere.

**BRADFORD:** Yes. I always go to history. I'm comfortable there and I've always been a reader. My imagination opens up through reading because you have to create all of these visual images in your brain.

**COPELAND:** That comment definitely helps to bring out the multisensory experience of engaging your works; the paintings are so tactile and so bodily, involving various senses in their address to and conscription of the viewer. One of the things that you noted earlier, which is suggested by the title *James Brown Is Dead*, is that music is a literal and metaphorical touchstone for your practice. In other interviews, you've said that your work has its own particular tone, and, I think, its own particular rhythm: each work—*Los Moscos* comes first to mind—seems to possess a kind of propulsive energy that slows down or speeds up as the eye moves over it.<sup>2</sup> With all of that in mind, could you say more about how music matters to and informs your practice, especially the tone that it establishes in relationship to a viewer?

**BRADFORD:** I seem to toggle between arriving at abstraction through structure—pictorial or architectural or topographical or cartographic—and between arriving at abstraction through process. I would say that the process-based abstraction is probably much more aggressive, much more demanding, while the structural abstraction has a different tone to it, almost like Philip Glass. I need both. On the one hand, there's Miles Davis's deconstructed jazz, which slows down and takes apart, very architectural. On the other, there's civil rights music or rap, like early Biggie Smalls and Tupac that has a raw in-your-face insistence. I go between the two tones.

**COPELAND:** I think one can feel that in the work, how that tension gives the paintings their energy and rhythm. I also think it's quite compelling how you describe the relationships between the various modes, since so often when we try to think about abstract visual forms and abstract musical forms together, the conversation tends to lapse into

loose associations. In your practice, however, there seems to be an actual thinking through musicality and gesture as operations.

**BRADFORD:** Yeah, there's definitely a thinking through of musicality and of structure—not of the music itself but of its appearance when written down on a sheet, looked through as text. I think about music a lot, because it is the predominant way in which we, as black people, have been allowed to express ourselves in this country. It's like when people ask me, "Are you religious?" and I say, "Well, I don't have to *be* religious. If you're black, you're born into religion similar to how if you're Hispanic, you're born into Catholicism." It's in the fiber and the tone of your people, so you don't have to be religious to be religious, and you don't have to be musical to be musical; it's an available form that there are lots of access points into, a historical precedent that I like to dip into.

**COPELAND:** Yes! That resonates beautifully with Michelle Wallace's essay "Modernism, Postmodernism and the Problem of the Visual in Afro-American Culture," where she argues that black folks have received recognition for achievement in music, dance, and literature, while the visual remains, in her words, "a negative scene of instruction."<sup>3</sup> The way that your work is able to draw on those other cultural resources thus also becomes a way of reframing the visual as a scene of instruction. This brings me back to my question about the kind of engagement that your paintings solicit, since in their very facture, they offer the possibility of a different kind of seeing, one that might be aligned with black feminist, queer, and anti-racist critiques, despite the fact that the works themselves could never be reduced to any single mode of thinking, especially since they so often refuse to figure the socially marked body. To put it otherwise, your work seems to stage an experience of vision that is at odds not only with the way in which racialized or gendered perception often works, but that is also actively invested in expanding the visual to embrace the tactile and the sonic.<sup>4</sup>

**BRADFORD:** Sure, that all factors in. I've actually always gravitated toward black feminism; I'm sure my mother was a feminist. Also, I was made hyper-aware of my own physicality from an early age as I'm of unusual height. So I'll do a piece, like *Pinocchio Is on Fire*, where I give you a voice, I give you the tactile, but I don't give you the body.<sup>5</sup> In the paintings, it's the same thing: there's a strong physicality, a sense of labor, but no figuration; I leave traces of the body, but the body is not there. That's a conscious political choice. I have done a few works that I put my body in, but it is only to critique the actions of the gaze on that body. I think one of the most political things is to engage what I call "figurative narrative" and then to completely abstract it.<sup>6</sup>

**COPELAND:** Can you say more on that score?

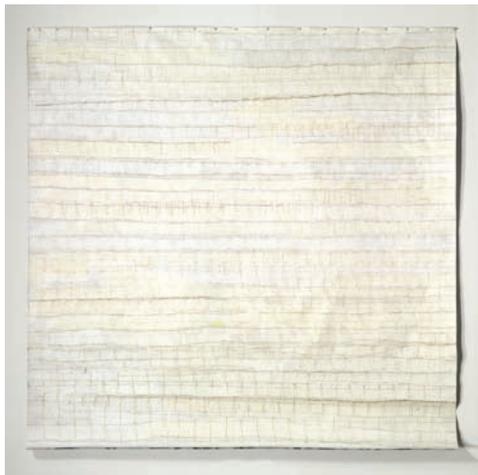
**BRADFORD:** I'm aware that I'm black. I'm aware that I'm 6'8." And I'm aware that I mine the territory of South Central Los Angeles, which means that I gather my material from outside of the studio. Those are all really figurative things that have been sold to the market, and people think they know what each of those terms means. I love to abstract them as a way of pushing back, of demanding freedom and play within a very closed system.



Mark Bradford, *Pinocchio is on Fire* (2010)  
Image courtesy of Mark Bradford



Mark Bradford, *Mithra* (2008)  
Image courtesy of Mark Bradford



Mark Bradford, *Enter and Exit the New Negro* (2000)  
Image courtesy of Mark Bradford

**COPELAND:** That's helpful, especially in terms of thinking further about the ethical imperatives that animate your work. For instance, your references to black feminism and to your mother put me in mind of Hortense Spillers's essay "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," where she says that "the black American male embodies the *only* American community of males which has had the specific occasion to learn *who* the female is within itself. . . . It is the heritage of the *mother* that the African-American male must regain as an aspect of his own personhood—the power of 'yes' to the 'female' within."<sup>7</sup> That statement opens onto one place from which the ethics of your painting might be said to emerge, but Spillers also allows us to think about the ways in which your work across a whole range of platforms critically explores the flows between and within discrepant economies, communities, and positions. Throughout your practice, you seem to take pains not to fetishize alterity, but to engage others as equal partners in a mutually beneficial exchange.

**BRADFORD:** Well, I've always thought that the most courage you could have is to simply live a life based on what really turns you on. You know, I've always hated those TV shows where they re-design your house, because they take out all of the furniture and the memories of those people and say "Oh, no. You're doing it wrong." And they might *have* done everything wrong: a cheetah couch might not go with a shag throw. Then the producers come in and formalize the décor, they make it "perfect" so that it all goes together, it all makes sense. But I never like things that are tidy and that make sense. I'm okay with things being a little messy around the edges; neither me nor my career would ever be on a makeover show, because I *like* the cheetah couch with the shag throw and the fur coat and the chandelier. I'm not about forcing equivalences and I don't need linear histories, connections, or practices. With my painting and the ideas I've developed around it, I've always just pushed forward. Abstraction gave me a space to do that, to speak out the side of my neck, to practice a form of indirect speaking. At the same time, I wanted to use humble materials like paper, but to elevate those materials to the same height as painting, since collage is always considered a lesser art in the history of modernism. I just really thought that I could put all of those things together and push them forward as a transparent investigation of myself and of my process, which gave me the freedom to dismantle normative archetypal narratives and hierarchies within both modernism and black culture. Now, it's okay to deconstruct modernism, but when you deconstruct your own folks' assumptions about culture and community, that can be a little difficult. Kara Walker had that problem: people are fine with you wanting to blow up the White House, but they never want you to talk about blowing up the Black House. And I thought, we should blow up the black house, too!

**COPELAND:** It's interesting that you make a connection with Walker in this context, since "talking out the side of your neck" resonates with her notion of "the sidelong glance" as a critical way of reframing art and culture on all sides of the color line.<sup>8</sup>

**BRADFORD:** Yes, it's about having the right to mumble something that you're not quite sure of. I need to have a platform to do that; abstraction allows me to stumble around and say, "Well, I think," "I'm not sure," "I might," or "Maybe," even as the works I'm putting out feel much more sure, more "front door." Personally, I've never felt comfortable going in the front door; I've always liked side doors, windows, back doors, like sneaking into

the back of a club—that also gave me some freedom. As time went on, I just started to think more locally about these questions of engagement and autonomy, to push the sort of plurality that my painting demands of modernism within my neighborhood as well. That’s how I developed the Foundation, which is based in contemporary art and—the “and” is what makes the relationship—social service, in this case, working with foster kids. The fit between contemporary art and social service is messy and not linear; I put them together because *I* want them to be together and because they need each other. The art world is quite beautiful: we have lots of money, lots of resources, lots of lots of, and a lot of times we don’t look beyond it, we can become too ivory-towered and too insular. And we do have a lot of pretty buildings and galas and exhibitions; foster kids don’t. They’re located, in a sense, in the most non-beautiful sight of imagination you can imagine. So, I thought, “Oh, nobody is going to tell them they can’t participate in the beautiful! They can have entrée if they choose, they can walk across the bridge that the Foundation provides if they want to.” When Obama said “Yes, We Can,” I took that on many levels, both locally and personally. When someone tells me I can’t do something, I usually think “Oh yeah, I can.” The Foundation is more of a collective expression of that ethos: “Yes, we can do this. There can be a relationship between social service and artistic practice.” I think that the contemporary art world has the best ideas and the most interesting thinkers, so some of the social service side can benefit from our ideas. And I think that the contemporary art world, when it can look outside of itself, can benefit from the social service model. So instead of building MFA programs in socially engaged practice, you could just go work at the Department of Social Services. That’s social practice right there; you can do both. I’ve always had that attitude. When I was living in a boarding house, more traditional voices in the mainstream of black society said, “You know, that’s wrong. You’re not going to make it.” And I said “Oh yeah, I’ll make it.” When I started going to school, getting bullied for being small and creative and a sissy, they said “You’re not going to make it.” And I said “Oh yeah, I’ll make it.” When the 1980s came along—I was seventeen or eighteen—they said, “You know, AIDS is going to kill you.” And I said “Oh no, I think I’ll be all right. I’ll make it.” When I went to art school much too late and they said, “Well, you’re a little older and you *might* be able to teach,” I said, “I’ll be okay.” When my career did what it did, they said, “Well, you know, now you’re a certain type of artist.” And I said, “No, no, I’ll be okay. I can do it.” The Foundation basically reflects that same attitude that I’ve had since I was eleven: I’ve never believed the people who told me what they thought I could or couldn’t do.

**COPELAND:** So one of the imperatives of Art and Practice as space and a platform is not only to revitalize its particular neighborhood, but also to instill a mutually felt and discovered sense of “Yes, We Can” in both foster kids and museum directors?

**BRADFORD:** Yes. I don’t believe that a billionaire collector is inherently evil and I don’t believe that a foster kid is inherently not going to appreciate access to culture. I just don’t believe the contemporary art world belongs to the few. When I was at CalArts, this great school—private, very expensive—I was fascinated by what I was learning and reading. I’d never heard of bell hooks. I’d never heard of Michele Wallace. I’d never heard of Coco Fusco, Homi Bhabha, and so many other writers. And I remember thinking every day about my friend Yasmin at the shop: if Yasmin knew what a black feminist was, she would

know what she is. So much of what I was learning at CalArts really applied to what we were talking about at this women's beauty shop. I would take my course readings, print them up, and give them to the ladies at the salon. We'd have these really great discussions about the texts: "Oh honey, I heard that, that's me!" And I always thought, what if the strong women that I was reading and that I admire so much in the art world could access some of the hair-burning, church-going ladies? What would that be? There are so many strong women that are feminists for one reason or another, but who don't know the word "feminist" or where it comes from, but who have demanded life on their own terms. They just didn't have access to the discourse, and it's the possibility of those conversations once they have access that is exciting to me. The Foundation will sponsor a lecture series to enable just those sorts of contemporary conversations—not dumbed down, just contemporary—which I know will be amazing because I've lived it. I put myself through school working in a beauty shop, but folks there knew where I was going, they knew what I was reading, they were helping me get through my courses, and they understood exactly what it was about. I made it very transparent: I'd put my theory in my bag and head to CalArts; then I'd come back and put the theory under the shelf so we could discuss those texts as easily as we talked about "The Real Housewives."

**COPELAND:** So again, there's an interest in refusing certain kinds of categorical boundaries or distinctions?

**BRADFORD:** Absolutely. I've done it my whole life. I've just never been interested in the word "no." It's too short. It doesn't really have any flair to it. "Yes" sounds much better. Have you ever heard anybody having an orgasm saying "No, no, no"? They say "Yes! Yes! Yes!"

**COPELAND:** Right! And perhaps this sense of the affirmative also speaks to where you're coming from historically? I think, for instance, about earlier artists, say, a Robert Colescott, who was also about the "yes": he could have history painting and caricature at the same moment, he could occupy all of these different poles simultaneously. Greg Tate has argued that the work of Colescott and his cohorts in what he calls the "freaky-deke" generation—practitioners like David Hammons and Toni Morrison—opened up the possibility of the "yes" for so many of us who came after.<sup>9</sup>

**BRADFORD:** All people I respect. I also think of Julie Dash's film *Daughters of the Dust* (1991), her kind of post-modern abstracted social realism, or of the kind of social fantasy you see in Gabriel García Márquez's novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967). Both are works that abstract the narrative and then mix it in a way that's very complex. I'm complex because I've led a very complex life, but I'm not real complicated.

**COPELAND:** But even as your practice embraces the "and," you maintain a distinction between the studio practice and the work of the Foundation, which raises two questions. First, why establish that separation? Second, why do you think at this moment, we see you, Theaster Gates, and Rick Lowe all developing socially-oriented enterprises that are very much invested in some notion of community?

**BRADFORD:** If you look at the multiculturalism of the 1980s, that's when a renewed idea of investing in community really started. But I feel like it was a very static notion of community, in part because it was probably the first time that the larger art world was starting to think outside of itself. In multicultural discourse, community felt very stereotyped, reduced to generalities, painted in very broad brush strokes. The idea of community—black community, Hispanic community, Asian community, what have you—was racialized and essentialized in ways that made it very romantic and that flattened everything out. I think now it's sort of "post-community," like "post-black," which is, you know, still black.<sup>10</sup> There is still community, but we're remapping it and rethinking it by moving past easy equations, by inserting other narratives and other voices into the conversation. Community at this moment feels much more reflective of rhythms and pluralities within and between constituencies. We can think about the same site in a multiplicity of ways, instead of in a linear, flattened down, romantic, or racialized way that always harkens back to somewhere, since I don't even know where we'd harken back to!

**COPELAND:** That way of thinking about community speaks well, I think, to the reality of black lives lived now, which are so often dispersed for any number of reasons. For one, there is no longer necessarily an old home to go back to, if there ever was. And in the United States context, blackness continues to shift because of immigration from Africa and the Caribbean, so we have to have an even more expanded, complex notion of what encompasses blackness given historical and recent trends in diasporic movement. But I think your notion of community also resonates with the polemic of Saidiya Hartman's book *Lose Your Mother*, which refuses the fantasy of a return to some shared root, and instead emphasizes forging community with those like-minded people who are in the same structural situation you find yourself in.

**BRADFORD:** Sure, but it's also about embodying the contemporary: the conversations and the politics of your time, the ethics that you live by, your whole political, social, cultural, and racial situation. Now, I love to read biographies of artists. At the same time, I'll read a political autobiography from the period or I'll research what was happening politically. The artistic, the social, the political, and the personal all make contemporary life. Communities right now should be involved in a conversation about their time and the ideas of their time. People say, "Oh, I don't understand contemporary art." I say, "Well you do! You understand the world you live in—that's all contemporary art is." So for me, I don't think it's that different: I never left this "community," so I was never trying to recover something. I am simply adding another conversation, another idea, another point of view. I don't think you have to get rid of other voices to be heard.

**COPELAND:** Right. So maybe we can turn now to the first part of the question: though there might a similar ambition that animates your Foundation and Lowe's work and Gates's, they are strikingly different models. Gates's social outreach, for instance, is very much integrated into his practice, creating what he calls a "circular ecosystem," while for you they remain separate.<sup>11</sup>

**BRADFORD:** Yeah, I have an old school studio practice that is very much about working and playing in private, which I love. It's my go-to place to wander through my own

learnings and leanings and imaginings. It's a very private space. What I bring out of that space and show to the public is something different. I think there's part of me that's very hermetic, almost reclusive, it's the part of me that's probably shy. What I mean by that is when you're in your studio and you're working out ideas, you're always in a very vulnerable state. I don't really want the public to see that. Every time I finish a work, I always think that's the last work that I'll make and that I'll probably never do it again. I never think the opposite. I always think, "I just can't," until I come the next day and the painting still happens to be there. I can't imagine mixing the vulnerable state of the studio with the work of the foundation, which is so public and so out there, it would just be too much. Separating the two gives me a balance. There's a public structure and then there's a private structure, but I couldn't have built the public structure without the things that I make in the private structure.<sup>12</sup>

**COPELAND:** Which brings us to the private work that you've been doing recently that is designed to be public, like the *Bell Tower*, which will be in the International Terminal at LAX. How do you feel about making that kind of work that is intended for general consumption?

**BRADFORD:** Oh, anxious! I mean, I'm going to put it up and run! And every time I walk through the airport I'm going to pretend it's not mine. When I did *Mithra* in New Orleans, I started building it out in the public. Before the form started taking shape, it was probably easier to hide, but once it was built—this one-hundred foot ark—I thought, "Oh, this is going to be a little too public." I wanted to leave it there and go home, because I felt so vulnerable. I guess I like doing the work but I don't like the attention that the work gets. I think that's across the board with me.

**COPELAND:** Because you're not interested in that type of spectacularity?

**BRADFORD:** No! I'm 6'8", for God's sake, I have born-in spectacularity! I could loan people some.

**COPELAND:** That is too funny and again so helpful in thinking about your practice, particularly its tone and address to a public, on the one hand, and the desire you have personally for a certain kind of concealment and opacity, on the other. But I also appreciate the way you talk about the process of working in the studio since it provides a model for us as viewers: just as you're working from piece to piece to work out certain problems, as spectators, we have to try to track or reconstruct that process when viewing the canvasses. It's what the work demands. But one of the things that I find most troubling about much of the discourse around your work—or around that of any number of artists—is that a commonsense starts to settle in about what the work is doing that pretends it can speak to every single work when each painting is a particular effort that comes from those searching moments of uncertainty and failure and vulnerability in the studio. So I wonder, what is your dream for the viewer's engagement from work to work? And how do we hold onto material specificity within artistic discourse more broadly?

**BRADFORD:** Painting dies every three years or so only to be resurrected. But we have not really critiqued the materials that we use to engage it. Ninety-five percent of the people who paint use oils or paints from a tube. They buy it from an art store, they buy canvases from an art store, they buy frames from an art store. But painting now is a deconstructed site of materiality and, thankfully, there are a few new artists who are using non-painting materials to paint. How do you come to that? I've often wondered how and why I came to use paper. I knew that I didn't want to use the traditional materials because I did not want to dislodge a social conversation. Adding a political title wouldn't have worked for who I was in the world that I was living in; that just didn't feel like enough. So, I gravitated to the idea of paper, but I came to it in a very strange way because I never saw paper as paper. I always saw it as frozen pigment. I mean, a stack of blue paper is simply pigment that's been isolated, because it had to be liquid at some point. I thought "Oh, well I just need to release it. I just need to wet this paper so the color is freed." So the first thing that I was very much interested in was actually interrogating the materials that we use, our language of engagement before anything else. In my case, I had to soften the paper so I could use it, so immediately all the paper went into water. And I didn't always use paper from the streets. I used store-bought paper that was big blanks of colors—blues, reds, and yellows. I was always curious why people never saw it that way. They were always looking at the utilitarian value of the material; it was a piece of paper that you write on or that you cut up to make a heart. I always saw the diamond in the rough. So again, it goes back to seeing something in something that's "regular," even with the foster kids, just believing that there's something there besides what people say is there.

**COPELAND:** So, it's a kind of painting that starts from a Duchampian place by approaching the tube of paint as a readymade.<sup>13</sup> But instead of going to the actual tube of paint, you turn to the readymade stack of paper, in which pigment is embedded. The material is very much of the everyday, and not rooted in a specialist idiom. I think what that does is not so much to revivify the corpse of painting yet again, but to propose a counter-factual history of the medium.<sup>14</sup>

**BRADFORD:** Right. I just got the turquoise from a different place. I squeezed it out of a piece of paper, and you went to the art store. I thought, "where does the pigment belong in a piece of paper?" Does it belong to the art or to the common? It's both, whereas there's nothing common about a tube of paint: it belongs only to the cultured, it only walks down the runway. But I saw the color of paper everywhere and I was always aware that it was pigment or dye. The first paper I used was white tissue paper that I burned on the edges because I needed a visual marker. After that, I went right to colored paper. If you wet it long enough, the fibers will become very loose and the paper becomes more translucent so it's able to have the bleeds that oil paint has and the luminosities and everything else. This process was very organic, it wasn't a strategy, and it really wasn't an art. It just came about by that day-to-day process of wondering, "How am I going to make a painting?" Now I always use wet paper; it's never dry. It's usually left overnight to soak, two days, three days. If I forget about it, all the paper will just sink to the bottom and all the pigments will rise to the top. Sometimes I just scoop up all the pigment and make work out of that, or I shake the paper in the water until all of the color separates. And then I'm holding pigment. I'm holding color in my hand that belongs to a very different history than the paper. You

know, I can remember as a kid loving to tie-dye. I would take the white T-shirts and dunk 'em in dye, which I used to love to do. Later at the shop, I would take color that comes in a bottle and put it on women's hair—I was a really good colorist—but there's nothing high culture about it, it doesn't belong to the art world, whereas when you go to an art store, history just meets you at the door. That history is so cultured, so cultivated, and I found a bridge to the common. When I struggle too much, sometimes the painting falls too much on the side of the everyday, and I can't lift the color out enough. Other times I lift too much of the color up and the painting goes too much towards art. I need that tension between art and the everyday so that the paintings hold: not too street, not too processed.

**COPELAND:** You are always searching for the "and."

**BRADFORD:** Yeah, but I push it every time. I would rather have a spectacular failure than a mediocre success.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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#### NOTES

1. Bradford's deployment of the title *Niagara* is particularly telling in its layering of affects and references. To make the video—whose title recalls a 1953 film featuring a sashaying Marilyn Monroe—the artist filmed a black man with a fierce swish as he walked down the streets of South Central, suggesting a queer sensibility that energizes urban space with both sexuality and danger. A clip of *Niagara* can be found online at <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rI6dIbI6iH0>>, starting at the 0:37 second mark. A video documenting the installation of *With That Ass, They Won't Look at Your Eyes* can be found online at <<http://vimeo.com/53892337>>.
2. I refer to Bradford's comments about tone made to MoCATV in the context of discussing his collaboration with the dancer Benjamin Millepied. My subsequent language references the work of art historian Steven Nelson (8) as well as my essay, "A Range of Convergences."
3. See Wallace 41.
4. My thinking here on the sonic and the haptic as alternative modes of black subjectivation is indebted to the groundbreaking work of Fred Moten and Alex Weheliye.
5. In this installation at the ICA Boston, Bradford lined a passageway with blacked out paper and filled it with the sounds of a recording by jazz legend Nancy Wilson.
6. In its refusal of the body, Bradford's work can be seen to extend the writing of critics such as Coco Fusco and of artists like Renée Green, which I have aimed to track as a critical strategy in *Bound to Appear*.
7. See Spillers 80.
8. Walker describes "the side-long glance" as her "answer to the male gaze. It's the little look and it's full of suspicion, potential ill-will, or desire" (qtd. in Saltz 82. For an extended meditation on this concept and its significance for African diasporic cultural practice more broadly, see Thompson).
9. See Tate as well as Copeland, "Truth to Power."
10. For the key formulation of post-black, which refers to the sensibility of a generation of "artists who were adamant about not being labeled as 'black' artists, though their work was steeped, in fact deeply interested, in redefining complex notions of blackness," see Golden 14.

11. For a critical discussion of Gates's "circular ecosystem," see Copeland, "Dark Mirrors" 226–27.
12. Bradford's comments here resonate well with Wagner's discussion of the studio as both a site of engagement and a place of safety for post-World War II American artists.
13. Here I reference artist's Marcel Duchamp's emphasis on the always already constructed character of artistic materials. For one analysis, see de Duve.
14. For a useful discussion of the rhetorics of death and revivification that have surrounded painting, particularly since the 1980s, see Ward.

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