

A Black Spatial Imaginary

A Black spatial imaginary is an imagining of otherwise. It is imagining geography, topography, and cultural landscape that is divorced from the classism of European ideology and heteronormative limitations. It is the imagining of space where Blackness, and darkness, is not only permissible but culturally transformative. It is a generative mode of re-producing color within the violent, colorless void from which it was expelled.

A Black spatial imaginary traces the physical and cultural movements of Black bodies from the locales they indigenously inhabit to those which they have chosen or wherein which they have been politically and economically placed. The Imaginary subverts these historical notions of ownership and belonging to engineer a new history—a revisionist claim—to the spaces Black bodies occupy for and of themselves. The Imaginary does the work of centralizing what the immersion of Blackness in deregulated space can produce—free of the notion that Black and Brown skin should only be engaged in limited doses. Futurist visions of Black gathering and provocation situate our labor within a reflection of not only what could be, but what could have been. BSI is a global, cultural amendment. It is a consideration of the innumerable spaces lost and stolen in an unknowing appreciation for what Blackness has built.

Through economic disenfranchisement, cultural antagonism, and spatial misconduct, Blackness has been pushed and pulled into the state of our contemporary diaspora. The forced and ever constant shuffling, re-situating, and re-building of African American, Afro-European, and Afro-Latinx being is a strategy for dispossession. Roots are born from spatial stillness—and deep, healthy roots are difficult to separate from the ground. BSI is a rhizomatic gesture of reinstating roots where they once grew freely—embedded underground where evidence of their presence is now hard to see in the absence of method for looking. Sharita Towne's BSI is the lens for how to look, and where to look, for the spaces some of us still see in dreams. Those dreams—bodily, color-filled, transformational, and progressively imaginary—occupy this borrowed space as a temporary reminder that they've been here before.

—Ashley Stull Meyer
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