an installation by
Carletta Carrington Wilson
August 28 - September 29, 2018

Kittredge Gallery
University of Puget Sound
2018 Race & Pedagogy Conference

letter to a laundress is an immersive installation. Viewers enter the work, traveling back in time while simultaneously, following the lines of the title poem, stanzas of which appear on photographs of laundresses and washerwomen.

Carletta Carrington Wilson, photo, Jack Delano and Al Doggett Studio

The Invisible Nation

Victor Cartagena
August 31 - September 29, 2018

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Salvadoran artist, Victor Cartagena’s The Invisible Nation features a series of photographs, video, sculpture, and other media. Cartagena’s projects call upon the great distance between the quintessential human dimension of economic displacement and the dehumanized and “faceless” accounts of the immigration debate that pervade the media.

I am a descendant of women who “took in wash.” Until I discovered photographs, taken from the end of the 19th to mid-20th century in the Library of Congresses Print and Photographs collection, I had no image and little-to-no-knowledge of the world of work these women inhabited.

letter to a laundress

you taught her well they say she had the touch took wrinkled, soiled shirts made them like new especially collars and cuffs

her hands mirror yours lifting picking piece by piece apart ink, sweat, blood, mud, grass, vomit

what to do with dirty looks, foul language, rank stench shadowy stains that remain after all that scrubbing deftly rubbing, rubbing, rubbing and no way out

wringer, iron holder, washwoman leaning in line with lines untenable lines whose far-reaching consequences found you standing in the path of a past on its way to the future

my line of inquiry like the lines of this letter crosses lines never meant to be crossed only crossed out, bleached, faded away in the way blood’s unlettered lines meet its dead-line

drawn into silence the line of her lips like you she was maid of all work made to serve made of service made to serve the sailed

washing stick line peg lye soap bluing sort the sordid haul that heaviness never done the work of daughters who keep company with cloth

a dryness fitted to fingers that soak, boil scrub, rub, pour rinse wring, tightly wring wrung out dampness riveted to iron fold over/over keep pressing, pressing on

hoist baskets tote tubs lug those loads every bundle extends a line a line awaiting a line awaiting its hangings

lines stretch their length across a yard beyond which lie the waters well water lake water spring water creek water in falling rain sorrow-soaks riversides in creek bed grief who’s there drenched by despair

oh mothers mother’s of blue, blue waters who hung from those knotted lines

Carletta Carrington Wilson is a literary and visual artist. Through collage, artist books and installations, Wilson constructs works described as “decorative with a message.” She states that, “the form and formation of language is an integral part of my artistic and literary practice.” Since 2006, Wilson has constructed pieces that explore the “text of textiles.” This work continues to evolve along a path in which language is a form that un/forms a human being, yet in/forms modes of production, reproduction and one’s place in society.

Through the study of history and genealogy, Wilson explores cloth and its constellations. She says, “A mapmaker charts the world, I chart cloth’s language and lineage as it relates to the transatlantic trade in slaves and societal transformation.”

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