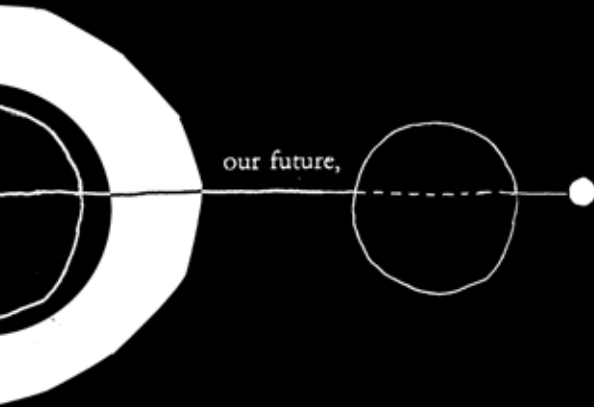


NOME

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A CASUAL MATHEMATICS  
KAMEELAH JANAN RASHEED

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N O M E

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A CASUAL MATHEMATICS

KAMEELAH JANAN RASHEED

NOVEMBER 30, 2019 — FEBRUARY 1, 2020

N O M E G A L L E R Y . C O M

Glogauer Str. 17 | 10999 Berlin | Germany



## ARE WE THERE YET?

Kathleen Reinhardt

“are we there yet?” This penetrating, deceptively simple question is emblazoned in white Times New Roman font on a large black segment of the gallery wall, covering it almost entirely. The writing is neither stenciled nor glued, but etched about half a centimeter into the plaster wall—precisely, patiently, and with great care given to the outlines of its normed characters. Still, stepping closer, one can see the small, tedious strokes from carving into the plaster by hand, creating a rift between the physical gesture and how an interposed machine-designed font gives precise and official form to theories, hopes, desires, prose, and bureaucratic disquisitions.

This wall forms part of California-born Kameelah Janan Rasheed’s installation at NOME in Berlin, which takes the form of a spatial collage juxtaposing disparate elements of her practice. Rasheed’s practice is greatly informed by her professional background as an educator, as well as her abiding interest in methodologies of knowledge formation and the history of science. Her copy prints of various forms and sizes cover the walls of the space, forming small islands of meaning that pose desperate or cautious questions and display slogans, pockets of poetry, or fragmented bits of knowledge gleaned from scientific texts. They are presented in frames, as inkjet prints, printed on photo paper or vinyl, or cut out from cheap office paper. Small scraps of paper, directly glued onto the wall, meander from one side of the room to the other, sometimes appearing on multiple carriers at once. The repetition of these lyrical suggestions in black and white possess a rhythmic quality that visually reverberates in the space.

A framed composition comprising white lettering and shapes on a matte black background proclaims “methods of estimating the odds to rise in the coming centuries.” Three unconnected curved shapes trace and divide a circle into four fields in which a fragment from Calvin Warren’s essay “Black

Nihilism and the Politics of Hope” appears. The four segments are actually one continuous excerpt, but the lines are slightly skewed so it cannot be read as one. Words and letters go missing, swallowed up by the thick dividing line. Only one expression, typed in italics, crosses the dividing space—*political apostasy*.

The projection of Black futures, as the title of the work suggests, and their potential unsatisfiability as a whole, has a long tradition in Black intellectual history. One example might be Cedric Robinson’s insistence that although victory seems inevitable in Marxism, the same cannot be said of Black radicalism. He argues that “only when that radicalism is costumed or achieves an envelope in Black Christianity is there a certainty to it. Otherwise it is about a kind of resistance that does not promise triumph or victory at the end, only liberation.”<sup>1</sup> Indeed, it is the notion of hope, which is central to humanity and its monotheistic religious practices, that was mobilized to install the unthinkable: a Black American president. Yet Rasheed sets the stage for her own microcosm of doubt by placing copies of Calvin Warren’s “Black Nihilism and the Politics of Hope” and *Afro Pessimism: An Introduction* by Frank B. Wilderson III, Saidiya Hartman, Steve Martinot, Jared Sexton, and Hortense J. Spillers on a table in front of a projection of YouTube clips that show different performances over the years of Nina Simone’s “Mississippi Goddam”, a song in the Black musical tradition that voices rage through its description of the unending fights for equality in a system established to oppress. Indeed, Rasheed’s installation spatially unfolds Warren’s “anti-grammar” of resistance to the liberal politics of hope as a resonant space that reproduces the very metaphysical violence that is the root of Black suffering.

Constructed around this notion, Rasheed’s show *A Casual Mathematics* proposes different poles of truths in a world where there are no longer any certainties, as suggested by walls teeming with quotations from mathematical equations, scientific

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<sup>1</sup> Cedric Johnson quoted in Johnson, G. T., & Lubin, A. (Eds.). (2017). *Futures of Black Radicalism*. Verso Books. p. 7.



formulas, or other supposedly objective ways to measure the world. These mathematical formulas are set in a relational conversation with poetry, and quotations from the Quran that evidence hope and belief, testifying to Rasheed's commitment to proposing open-ended models of unlearning and learning through non-hierarchical entries to knowledge formation and world-making.

Rasheed's technique of destabilizing via fragmented text happens either through large fonts, or in almost microscopic moments, tucked into corners, easily overlooked. And just like concrete or visual poems questioned linear poetry, Rasheed similarly spreads her frames, copies, and tiny bits and pieces of text across the gallery space, creating multiple and endlessly variable entries to the presented material, exploring the materiality of language by employing it as concrete visual, literal, and phonetic raw cuts. Yet the complexity of her installations and their interconnected references demand understanding Rasheed's practice beyond a visual objective, as her work extends beyond merely arranging harvested isolated texts into aesthetic mind map like compositions. That Rasheed provides photocopies of the complete texts in the exhibition indicates her wider practice of essay writing, lecture performance, publishing, and teaching among other forms of critical engagement. Her approach could therefore be described as a form of social practice, as it mobilizes a whole range of skill sets, beyond the realm of the visual, necessary to facilitate different modes of knowledge formation and sharing, questioning accepted narratives through intensive research.

Rasheed channels this impulse through typed characters as a generation of a zone of friction that is polyphonic and contrapuntal, both visually and conceptually. The mechanical, machine-created character versus handwriting, the anonymous versus the individual, sometimes juxtaposed on the same page, yet merged through Rasheed's ongoing experiments in electrophotography. She uses different techniques of copy art like degeneration (the copying of copies to successively degrade the image) or copy motion image, which was used in the work *do it slow*. Slipping off the wall of the space onto the floor, *do*

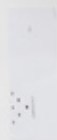




*it slow* was created by moving the original image on the copier plate during the scanning process. A long, narrow strip of inkjet-printed paper repeatedly proclaims “do it slow” in mirrored lettering. “do it slow” is a line that repeats throughout Nina Simone’s song that echoes throughout the gallery. By having the line also physically seep into the space Rasheed factors these interconnected parts into a Black radical reimagining of the limits of knowledge formation through the written text. On paper, fragmented on the walls, many chosen phrases have not lost any of their authority or poetry, but it is the music which brings it to life. Simone’s insistent, unapologetic, and pressing accusation still grabs the visitor by the guts. We are not there yet, indeed we are still very far away, yet Kameelah Janan Rasheed unfolds this distance in a gloomy, hauntingly aesthetic and highly engaging intellectual exercise.

### **Kathleen Reinhardt**

is an art and cultural historian and writer based in Berlin and Dresden, where she is the curator of contemporary art at the Albertinum. Since 2016 she has commissioned new works and curated multiple solo and group exhibitions for the institution. Reinhardt holds a PhD from Freie Universität Berlin specializing in African American art. She has taught at Freie Universität Berlin and Technische Universität Dresden, as well as lectured across Europe and the US. Her critical writing has appeared in exhibition catalogues and magazines like *Art Margins*, *mezosfera.org*, *Finestre sull’Arte*, *African Arts*, *Contemporary&*, *Kaleidoscope* and *The Journal of Urban History*, among other publications.



"do it slow"

"do it slow".  
slow".

DO IT SLOW.  
do it slow.

priority in 200 years later.  
Was this an accident?



DO IT SLOW.  
do it slow.

"do it slow"

"do it slow"





A R T W O R K S

*LAZY EQUATION, 2019*

Archival Inkjet Print  
50 x 40 cm  
Ed. 5

“1 + 1” = 2

we already human!<sup>16</sup>

But lazy equations can trick our efforts,

<sup>16</sup> not yet.”

*WHAT IS THE SOLUTION TO THE ABOVE PROBLEM, 2019*

Archival Inkjet Print  
50 x 40 cm  
Ed. 5



PROBLEM 35B. Prove that problem

PROB

PROBLEM 36. What is the solution to the above problem?

(a)

(b)

(c)

(d)

PROBLEM 37. What is the solution to the above problem?

PROB

PROBLEM 38. What is the solution to the above problem?

#### Miscellaneous Problems

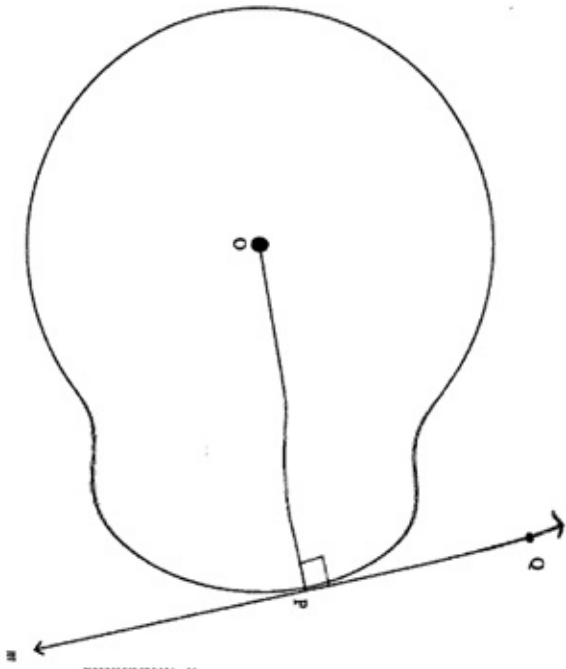
PROBLEM 39. What is the solution to the above problem?

PROB

PROBLEM 40. What is the solution to the above problem?

***ALL CHANCE, 2018***

Archival Inkjet Print  
60 x 50 cm  
Ed. 5



chance." 67

"progress." he declared, "  
... all

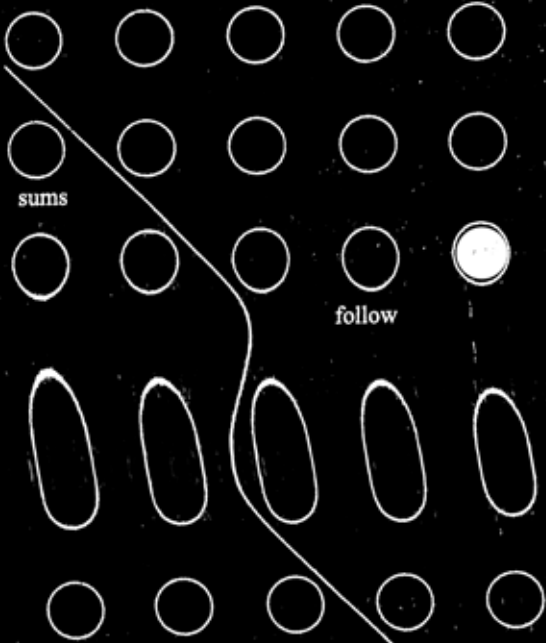
*LONG DIVISION, II, 2018*

Archival Inkjet Print  
76 x 50 cm  
Ed. 5



*SUM FOLLOW, 2019*

Archival Inkjet Print  
101 x 76 cm  
Ed. 5



sums

follow

the

desired

inequality.

***BAR GRAPH, 2019***

Archival Inkjet Print  
127 x 101 cm  
Ed. 5

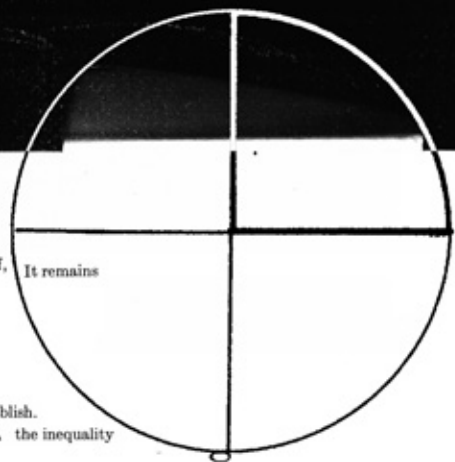




*METHOD < WHY?, 2019*

Archival Inkjet Print  
101 x 76 cm  
Ed. 5

Equality holds only if  $a = b$ .



Now if, It remains

$b^2$ ).

c,

we have

existence we wanted to establish.  
then we would know that  $\Delta$  the inequality

( method < Why? ),

To prove that , note that

so that

By the inequality,

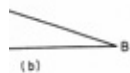
and by hypothesis,

Therefore

hence,

$$= b^2 \text{ or } x < b.$$

now complete. Of course,



(b)

(We

of the possible

Next we may ask: Which is the longest

question" ?

must have  
transversals.

*LONG DIVISION, I, 2018*

Archival Inkjet Print  
76 x 50 cm  
Ed. 5



*EVERYONE WILL BE SAVED THROUGH THE ALGEBRA, 2019*

Archival Inkjet Print  
43 x 27 cm  
Ed. 5



I replicated an end.

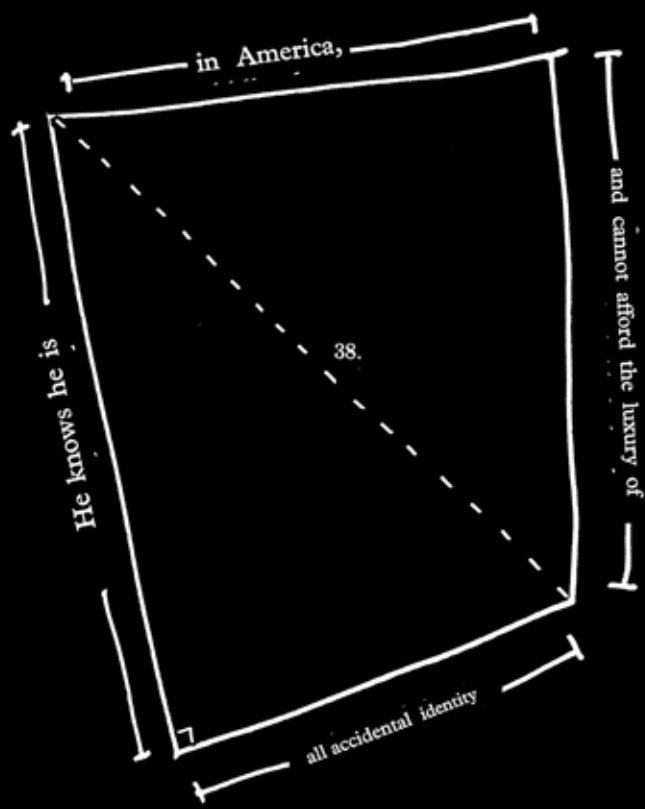
*everyone* will be saved through the algebra

$\frac{35}{x} = \frac{47}{400}$  a convenient estimate of our present

***PERIMETER, 2019***

Archival Inkjet Print  
76 x 50 cm  
AP 1





He knows he is

in America,

and cannot afford the luxury of

all accidental identity

38.

7

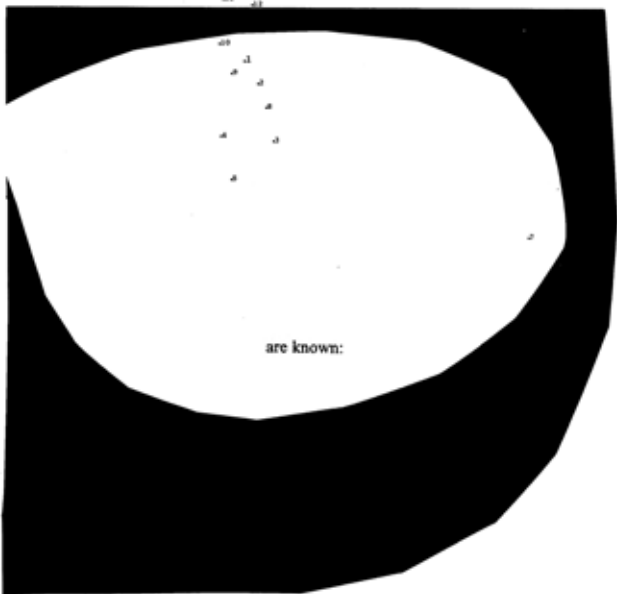
*CONNECT THE DOTS, 2018*

Archival Inkjet Print  
76 x 50 cm  
Ed. 5

28

24 23  
27  
25 26

21 22



29



as a sum, similar

*APPROXIMATIONS, 2019*

Archival Inkjet Print  
60 x 50 cm  
Ed. 5



There is nothing revolutionary about  
approximations.

because they've accumulated too  
much built-in excessive resistance

To counteract this  
tendency, lather against the "equivalent"  
and stay within the acceptable range.

, and use plenty of heat

***FUTURE, 2019***

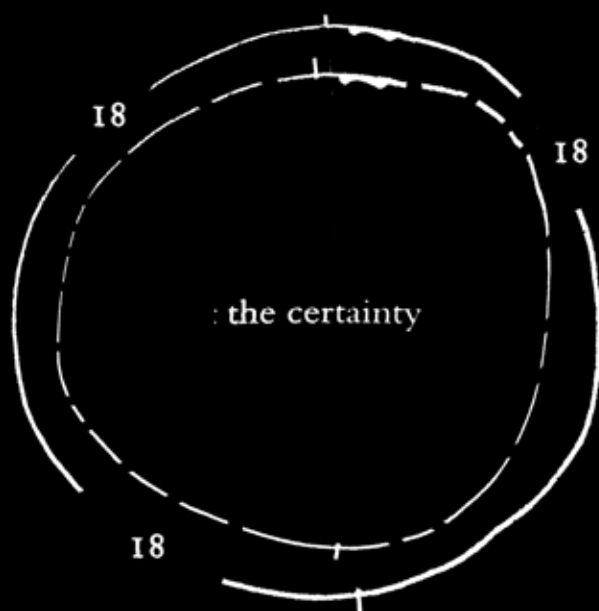
Archival Inkjet Print  
101 x 127 cm  
Ed. 5



*AND, WHO AMONGST US WILL CIRCUMAMBULATE THE  
BELOVED IDOLS OF PERFECT CERTAINTY. ALSO, 18:109.  
AND WE FALL, DIZZY, 2019*

Archival Inkjet Print  
127 x 101 cm  
Ed. 5





*CALVIN WARREN CALLS IT AN 'ONTOLOGICAL  
EQUATION' /OR METHODS OF ESTIMATING THE  
ODDS TO RISE IN THE COMING CENTURIES, 2019*

Archival Inkjet Print  
152 x 114 cm  
Ed. 5

m e t h o d s  
of estimating the odds to rise in the coming centuries

...tions structure our rela  
... and problematic when we co  
...g. On the one hand, our Declarati  
...ed equal," and yet black captives we  
...e-fifths of this "man." The remainder,  
...ic shuffle of commerce and mercenary pr  
...construction Amendments would correct  
...de an ontological equation, or an existenti  
...nd fractioned black being. This did not hap  
...of an "imaginary number" in this equation  
...but difficult to actualize or translate into so  
...clauses, literacy tests, and extra-legal and leg  
...amendments, and

...ly speculative and nice in the  
...ing tangible. Poll taxes, grandfath  
...violence made a mockery of the  
...ined the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment inside  
...ity with a certain apodictic certai  
...do) get better. The Political, w  
...hope; it is within the Politic  
...work tirelessly, the "answer"  
...diligence will restore the f  
...ally, create One that we c  
...d." We are still awaiting  
...the black nihilist would embrace *political apathy*: it is the act of ab  
...a situation of unethality and im  
...state is a figure that "self-excom  
...its fundamental belief sys  
...anti-blackness, be

<sup>3</sup> Calvin Warren, "Black Nihilism and the Politics of Hope"  
(Spring 2013)

*PARTIAL SUMS, 2019*

Archival Inkjet Print  
76 x 50 cm  
Ed. 5

From counting to calculating,

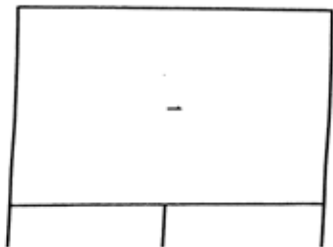


+ 1  
we look



-1

After



...=2  
the partial sums,



1

1

1

*THERE IS NEVER ENOUGH AWFUL ARITHMETIC, 2019*

Archival Inkjet Print  
76 x 50 cm  
Ed. 5

66

There is never enough

years!"

67

awful

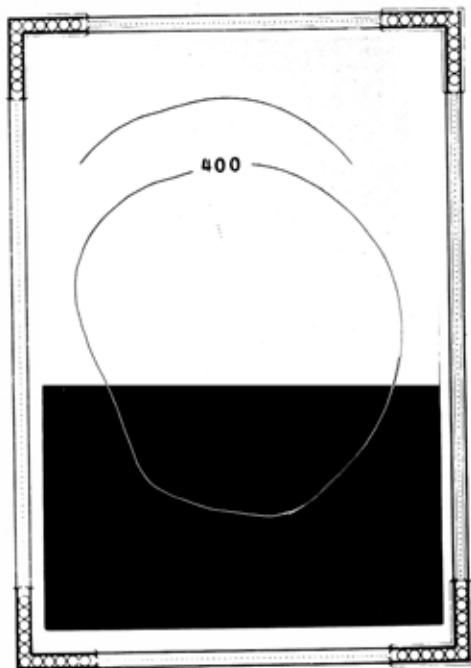
arithmetic



*400 YEARS AND SWERVE?, 2019*

Archival Inkjet Print  
50 x 40 cm  
Ed. 5





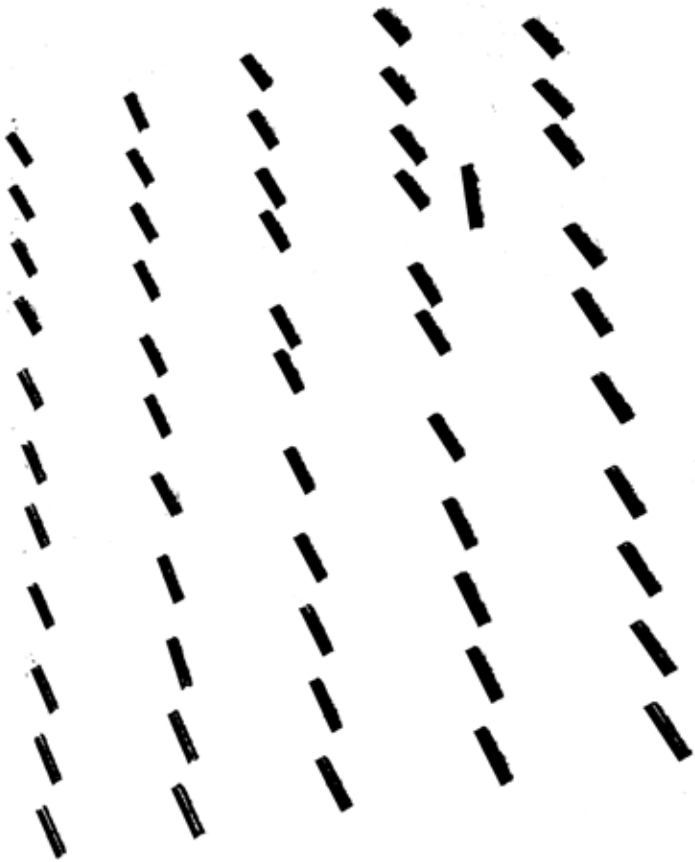
and swerves.

and swerves.  
..

and swerves.  
..

*KEEPING SCORE, 2019*

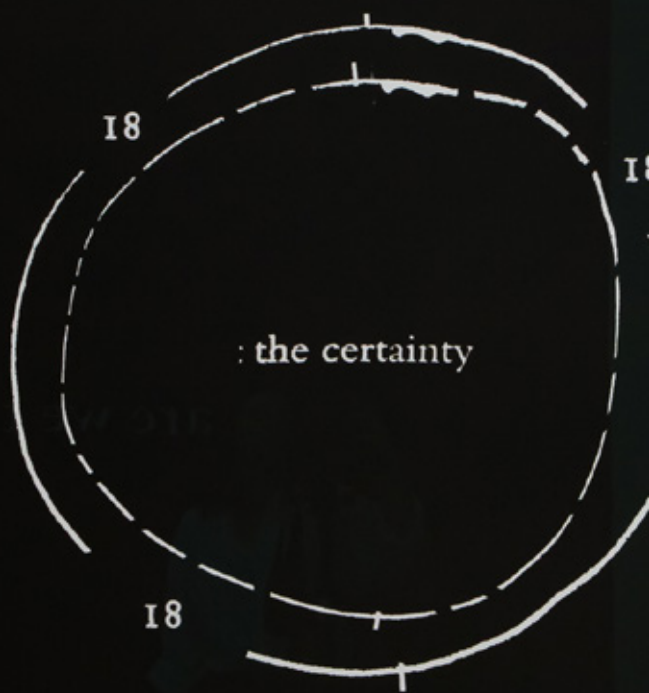
Archival Inkjet Print  
60 x 50 cm  
Ed. 5



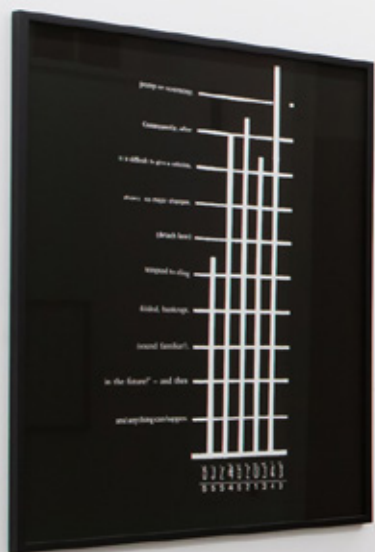
## Kameelah Janan Rasheed

Kameelah Janan Rasheed is an interdisciplinary artist and writer based in Brooklyn, NY. She has exhibited at the Venice Biennale (2017), ICA Philadelphia, Studio Museum in Harlem, Brooklyn Public Library, Queens Museum, New Museum, and The Kitchen in New York. She is the author of two artist books: *No New Theories* (Printed Matter, 2019) and *An Alphabetical Accumulation of Approximate Observations* (Endless Editions, 2019). Rasheed is the founder of Mapping the Spirit, a digital archive that documents Black spiritual life in the US. Since 2018 she has collaborated with The Shed, New York, for the young person's creative program DIS OBEY. Shortlisted for the Future Generation Art Prize in 2017, her work has also been featured in *Artforum*, *BOMB*, *Guernica*, the *New York Times*, *Triple Canopy*, and others.









"go it c slow"

"do it slow"  
slow"

GO IT SLOW

19977 in 2000 was for  
We did it in 2000!

19977 in 2000 was for  
We did it in 2000!

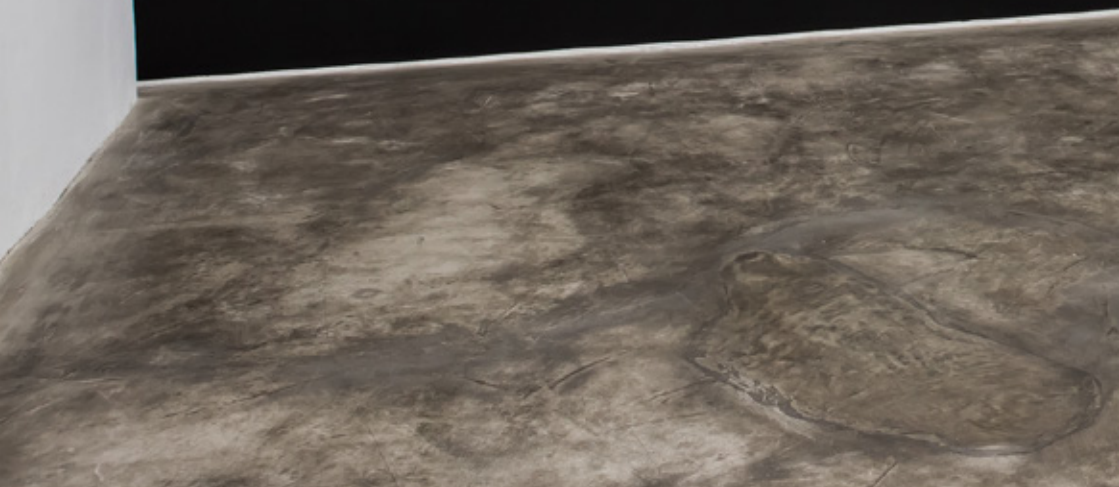
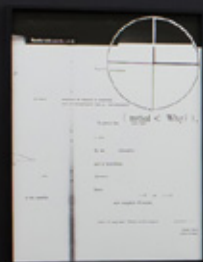
19977 in 2000 was for  
We did it in 2000!

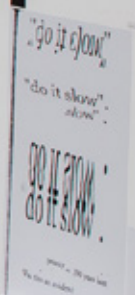


of estimating the odds to rise in the coming centuries

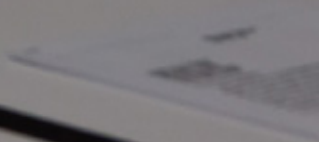
The circular graphic contains several columns of text. The text is white on a black background. The top of the circle has a header that reads "of estimating the odds to rise in the coming centuries". The text inside the circle is arranged in columns, with some lines appearing to be part of a list or a series of points. The overall appearance is that of a technical or scientific report or a data visualization.

we there yet?













to rise in the coming centuries

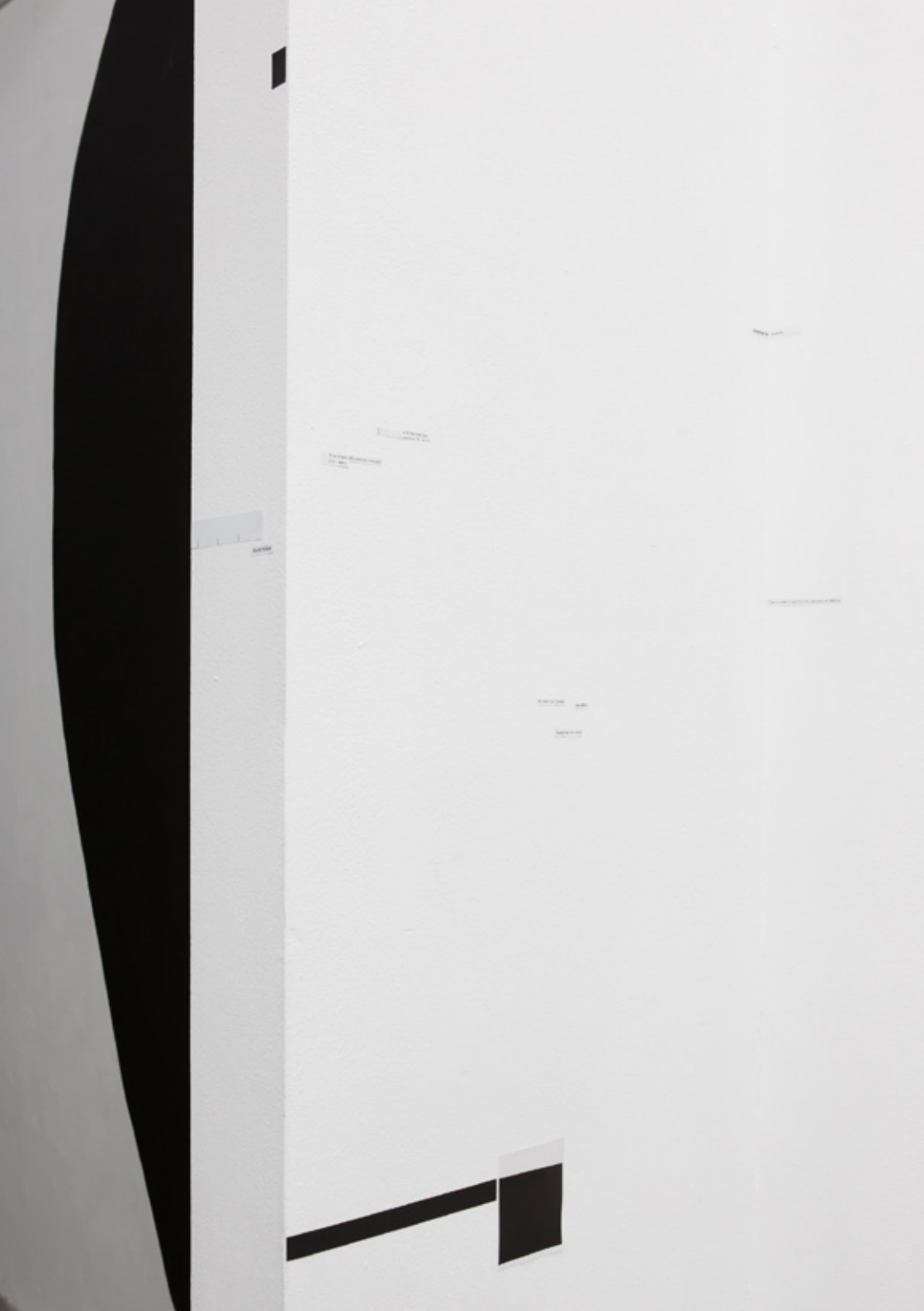


Lucy Rieker, "Black Wall and the Future of Space"  
© 2011



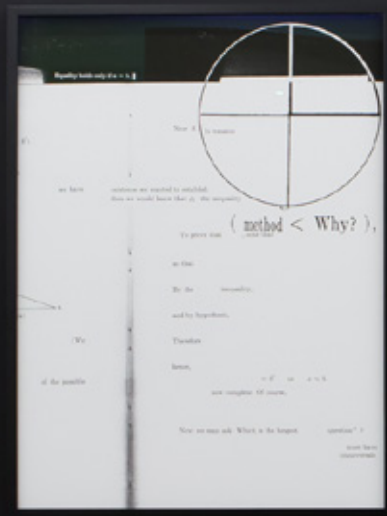




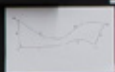
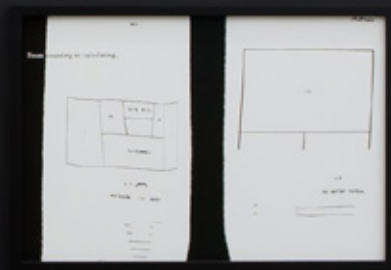


are we th

ere yet?



M	T	W	T	F	S



## A CASUAL MATHEMATICS

**Kameelah Janan Rasheed**

*are we there yet?* by **Kathleen Reinhardt**

Creative Direction: **515 Creative Shop**

Design: **Matteo Barbeni**

Text edit: **Jesi Khadivi**

Photography: **Billie Clarken**

This publication was produced on the occasion of Kameelah Janan Rasheed's solo show *A Casual Mathematics* presented at NOME, Berlin, November 30, 2019 — February 1, 2020.

## NOME

Director: **Luca Barbeni**

Gallery Manager: **Olga Boiocchi**

Sales Associate: **Jesi Khadivi**

Special thanks to: **Nino Caltabiano, Marie Couelle, Emanuela Laudati, Helene Romakin.**



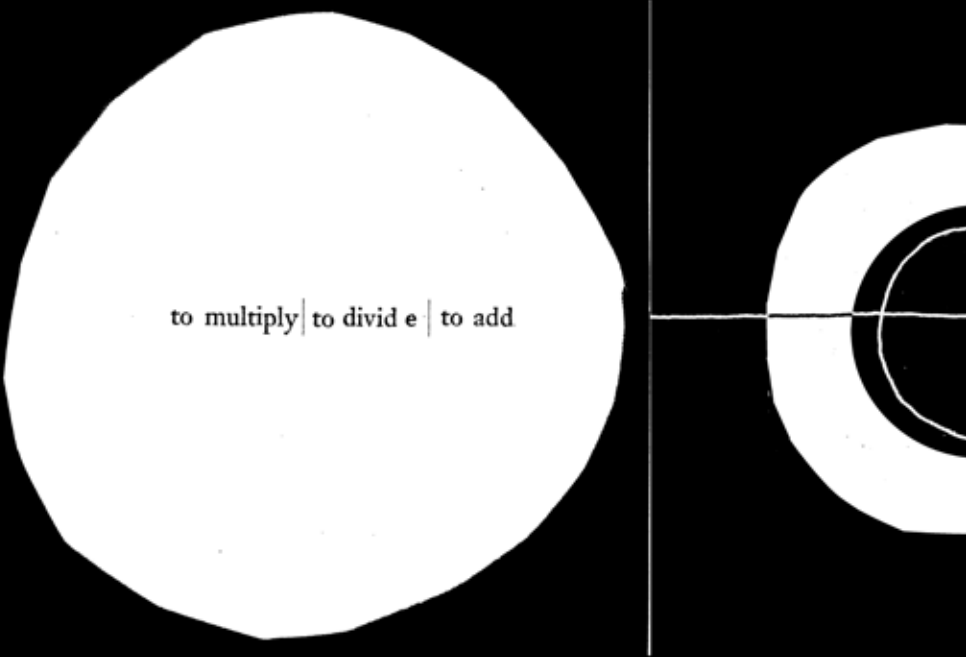
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to multiply | to divide | to add