



Blueblack Time I, Bahia (Castelo de Garcia d'Ávila, Forte de Garcia d'Ávila), 2025
 Blueblack Time II, Bahia (Castelo de Garcia d'Ávila, Forte de Garcia d'Ávila), 2025
 Color aquatint, spitbite and flatbite etchings with chine collé and graphite
 Image size: 36" x 32.5"
 Paper size: 44.5" x 40.5"
 Edition of 12

Paulson Fontaine Press is pleased to release two new editions by Torkwase Dyson. *Blueblack Time I and II*, were created after a trip Dyson made to Brazil and the Castelo de Garcia d'Ávila, Forte de Garcia d'Ávila in Praia do Forte. The Castelo is an example of 17th century colonial architecture designed as a fort and used to control prisoners. With these works Dyson examines the relationship between vision and architectural sites built in the making of colonial Brazil and used to control human beings in their efforts toward freedom.

Dyson stated, "I'm interested in the power of seeing distance, scale, and light, and imagining autonomy even while inside an architecture of dispossession. The architecture and infrastructure of early modern colonial occupation was meant to confine sensory experiences and dwarf feelings of spaciousness over time. Here I'm thinking about the refusal of what I'm calling 'ocular brutality' meant to close off the spatial power of vision and perception."

Each etching is printed with monochromatic layers of black, indigo, and graphite, making the layers, shapes and edges hard to discern. The works bring to mind James Turrell's Ganzfeld installations that are physically demanding, engulfing the viewer's sense of perception and their power of sight. And where Ad Reinhardt's black paintings aimed to be self-referential and free from narrative or emotional expression, Dyson's works do the opposite. They narrate a story of enslavement, survival and liberation. Dyson's "wake work," as conceptualized by the academic Christina Sharpe, traces and refuses the violence of the past.

What does the refusal of ocular brutality look like? Dyson has developed an interdisciplinary framework called "Black Compositional Thought" that explores the relationship between Black bodies, environmental infrastructure and spatial liberation. Using geometric abstraction as a tool, she has created her own lexicon of shape. Dyson's rectangle references the box that Henry "Box" Brown, an enslaved man, shipped himself in to abolitionists. He went from Virginia to Philadelphia seeking his freedom. Dyson's triangle references the narrow garret in which Harriet Jacobs, author of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, hid for seven years to avoid capture. Dyson's curved line evokes a ship's hull during the Middle Passage as well as the boat that Anthony Burns, an enslaved man in Virginia, stowed away in en route to Boston in 1854.

In the two years since our last release and in continuation of her liberatory practice, Dyson created *Liquid Shadows, Solid Dreams (A Monastic Playground)*, a sculpture presented on the rooftop terrace at the 2024 Whitney Biennial. Last year, Public Art Fund presented Dyson's first major public installation and soundscape, *Akua*, at Brooklyn Bridge Park. Dyson also created the conceptual design for *Superfine: Tailoring Black Style* at The Met, NY. Dyson will participate in the 61st International Art Exhibition La Biennale di Venezia, *In Minor Keys*, upon invitation by Koyo Kouoh.

-Rhea Fontaine



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Torkwase Dyson in the Paulson Fontaine Press studio.
Photo: Smeeta Mahanti