

A Spectrum of Blackness

Abstract

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A Spectrum of Blackness is an acknowledgment of the broad possibilities of origin, and therefore of cultural influence, present in this distinctively Black city. This project aims to mine oral histories of Miami's most prominent Black ethnicities and, through the use of multi-dimensional digital and analog collage processes, (de-) and reconstruct their suppressed narratives.

Blackness constructed Miami's physical and cultural landscapes. Its multitudes shape and configure the fabric of the city in contrasting measures. While Miami had not yet been incorporated as a city during the Reconstruction era, from the town's earliest days Blackness—whether self-identified or designated by others—determined whether spaces in the area would be subject to restrictions or be potentially liberating. Given the migration of diverse peoples and cultural legacies to the region, Miami's built environment has long been an embodiment of ethnic sediments. The varieties of Blackness found in Miami have often collided, creating murky layers that at once signify a malleability and an indeterminacy that render Blackness blurry.

A Spectrum of Blackness necessitates the understanding that Blackness is not singular. Blackness is sensorial. It is the tactility of our bodies, the optical revelation of our skin, and the auditory complexity of our languages assembled with accents and pronunciations foreign to non-Blacks. *In this manner, Miami is both map and metaphor, a city through which the Black experience is revealed by the subtle yet distinctive spectrum of Blackness that defines us at multiple scales.*