

Core Topography

By

Safiya Carter-Thompson

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Chairperson Mary Anne Jordan

David Brackett

Norman Ackers

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The Thesis Committee for Safiya Carter-Thompson
certifies that this is the approved version of the following thesis:

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Chairperson Mary Anne Jordan

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Abstract

My vivid memory of landscape strongly influences the patterns that I use in my creative work. I employ various dots and layering of line and color to create my own personal, abstracted maps of California's landscape and its complex terrain. Using a combination of embroidery and paint on unprimed canvas, I work to represent the idea of "home." I create unique symbols to tell my story of California. Initially, the process of making my work is also important. Color, dot size and pathways are chosen and added. Each piece is dyed using primary colors that are over-dyed to create secondary colors.

Core Topography

The principle sentiment driving my work originates from fond memories of growing up in the wonderland of California's dichotomous landscape. The resulting work is a meditation on the countless times I found myself lost in the topography of the scenery. On my way to school each day, I watched as I cruised past mountains and bay waters. The drive up the coast to visit my aunt was filled with endless hours of hills and valleys. I remember walking to the top of the hill by my childhood home and looking over all of Oakland, able to see the blue of the bay recede and connect with the sky.

My vivid memory of landscape strongly influences the patterns that I use in my creative work. I employ various dots and layering of line and color to create my own personal, abstracted maps of California's landscape and its complex terrain. Using a combination of embroidery and paint on unprimed canvas, I work to represent the idea of "home." The compositional elements form imagery representing terrain, roads, maps, and floor plans to create a central focal point from which the whole piece originates. I incorporate my 'self' into the work by using silhouettes or outlines of my physical body to determine the shapes in the compositions. The canvas ground is dyed accordingly and serves as the base of the work. The dot patterning is superimposed over the broad body forms, and all together, the compositions take on the qualities of a landscape. Shapes, symbols and lines combine to create stunning, visual landscapes and references to 'place'. My intention is to create visually stimulating areas of exploration, and enigmatic maps that trace back to memories of home.

My patterning techniques were inspired by the dots used in Australian Aboriginal art. I am drawn to the colors and intrigued by how simple dots can be used to create a complex story. Sacred symbols are used in dot paintings to tell dream stories. These symbols act as map markers to take the reader through each story and impart wisdom. I create unique symbols to tell my story of California. Like Aboriginal work, my pieces can be appreciated, without the viewer being able to decode the symbols.

Creating this body of work is the catalyst in telling the story of my connection to California. Even though I have been living in the Midwest for seven years, the Bay Area is my home. As the years pass I find that I increasingly long for my family and the physical landmarks of home. Many of the memories I draw upon come from recollections of vistas through the window while traveling in the family car as a child. My work is a reflection of the security that I feel within the California landscape, the warmth of my family, and my own independence as a human being. I use the idea of home as a representation of safety and security; a place from which one can venture and return for comfort, and solace

I use representations of maps as an additional way to represent a sense of home in my work. I enjoy knowing which lines are representations of reality and which are my own creation. I choose to include images that indicate specific driving routes and the locations of childhood homes. This adds a hint of the familiar, while remaining mysterious to the viewer. Though we walk and drive on the same streets everyday, most people would not immediately recognize an aerial map of their home. Initially, my own family did not recognize the maps in my work. For me, the maps are imprinted within me. I recognize them instantly in any context.

The process of making my work is also important. I begin with a sketch, but I complete the work through a long process of action and observation; an internal conversation with the work. Color, dot size and pathways are chosen and added. The work is hung and I consider it as a whole to decide the next layer or addition. The first step of the process is to dye the canvas of each piece by using paper resists of my bodylines. These resists become the central landscapes. To obtain the 'bodylines,' I recline on a piece of butcher paper while an assistant outlines my body. I want to integrate my own body into the overall landscape, using the curve of a hip or angle of a shoulder to mimic the hills of home. More than creating a background, these areas are their own constrained unit; no matter what pattern lies inside, my curves remain prominent. On occasion, certain parts of the dyed areas dictate the application of the dots. The dyed areas are not restricted by the dots, but rather, are highlighted and abstracted by what is layered on top.

The colors of the backgrounds are the only part of process in which I gave myself rules. Each piece is dyed using primary colors that are over-dyed to create secondary colors. The canvas is sprayed with dye and then walked on to push the color into the weave and fully saturate the cloth. By physically stepping on the fabric I incorporate my physical body into the work, leaving a visible imprint of my foot on the back of the pieces, thus creating a deeper personal connection to the work.

It is important that I have an intimate relationship with the work while creating. The hand dyeing process, intensive stamping of each individual dot, and the hand embroidery is another way for my body to interact with the work.

With the application of the dots, each piece claims its own identity. The color of the dots is chosen by intuition and the specific goals for each piece. The last step in my process is to add embroidered embellishment. Much like the dots, the embellishment is intuitive, yet strives to represent pathways, maps, and stories. The placement of dots, lines, and embroidery are all a part of a meditative layering process that is influenced by visual balance. Each addition to the work dictates the next layer until the composition is complete.

My life experience in California and with my family provides the foundation of who I am as an individual. My family supports me. It is their love that has made me strong, independent, and confident. I see myself in their image. I am sarcastic like my father, dramatic like my mother, sassy like my sister, and creative like my brother. The diverse and full landscape of California has hypnotized my mind into always calling it home; I am a reflection of California. Like California, I am wild but controlled, energetic yet calm, and always full of color and life. It is my heartfelt connection to the California landscape and strong family ties that shape my personal topography and form the essence of my core.



Hwy 580
Canvas, Fabric Pigment, Embroidery Thread and Glass Beads
2011



Hwy 580 to Hwy 101
Canvas, Fabric Pigment, Embroidery Thread, Glass Beads
Acrylic Paint
2011



155 Haas Ave
Canvas, Fabric Pigment, Embroidery Thread and Glass Beads
2011



9508 Alcala Avenue
Canvas, Fabric Pigment, Embroidery Thread and Glass Beads
2011



9292 Lakewood Drive
Canvas, Fabric Pigment, Embroidery Thread and Glass Beads
2011



2nd Avenue
Canvas, Fabric Pigment, Embroidery Thread and Glass Beads
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