

# HYPERALLERGIC

PHOTO ESSAYS

## Artists Imagine New Monuments and “Otherwise Worlds”

In *Building a Better Monument*, nine artists remind us of the work that anti-racist monuments and movements must do: memorialize the fallen, while stoking the righteous anger needed for transformation.

Thea Quiray Tagle August 4, 2020



Tsedaye Makonnen, “The Astral Sea II” (2020), blue satin/sheer fabric, acrylic mirror, adhesive, 22 ft 6 inches x 4 ft 10 1/2 inches (all images courtesy Art at a Time Like This; photo by Tirop Sambu)

As the US continues to reckon with a renewed movement against anti-Black racism, we urgently need to imagine what scholar-artist Ashon Crawley dubs “[otherwise worlds](#)” — to dream of and work towards a place-time where we all can survive. In Seattle, my home of four years until recently, an imperfect experiment to realize the society we’re fighting for (not just against) manifested in the [Capitol Hill](#)

[Organized Protest \(the CHOP\)](#). Built during the uprisings sparked by the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, and others, the CHOP momentarily transformed this highly-gentrified gayborhood into a place of possibility: one where [organic gardens](#) bloomed on the lawns of Cal Anderson Park, and a collection of musty couches became a Decolonization Cafe. Art was everywhere: picturing resistance, joy, and survival in the midst of state-sanctioned violence and death. While the CHOP is now gone, [violently dismantled](#) by the Seattle Police Department, the collective imaginary of a [world without policing](#)

and anti-Black violence remains.

Jesse Krimes, "North Star" (2019),  
hand-sewn fabric, image transfer, fabric  
paint, 80 x 102 inches

The artworks featured in *Building A Better Monument*, an online exhibition curated by Hyperallergic senior editor Seph Rodney, share in these dreams of otherwise worlds. In his exhibition text, Rodney asks us to “trust artists” to tell us “that it is actually possible to live through these times buoyed by the image of what we might bring into being tomorrow.” He’s right — spending time here feels grounding, especially at a time when so many of us are unmoored from any sense of safety. Tsedaye Makonnen’s Astral Sea interventions deploy the artist’s body as a witness to the long durée of the Black Atlantic and the ongoing refugee crisis in the Mediterranean. Among her works featured, “When Drowning is the Best Option” — a short video excerpt of her pointed exchange with the security guards at the 2019 Venice Biennale — critically probes what deserves to be protected: “art” or Black lives.

Joiri Minaya disrupts monumentality with the bodies of femmes of color in her *Containers* series; with their faces and bodies fully covered by floral bodysuits, the performers playfully startle viewers confronted with impermanence. Yelaine Rodriguez and Didier William draw on Afro-Caribbean and Black diasporic spiritual practices to create new myths for future survival, while Dominique Duroseau and Jesse

Joiri Minaya, "Containers (documentation of performance at Wave Hill)" (2017), variable dimensions, featuring performer Eilen Itzel Mena, text excerpt from script for the audio recording for "Camouflage I bodysuit" (photo by Emil Rivera)

Didier William, "Broken Skies: Tè a mi," from *The Ground is Fertile*, acrylic, wood carving, oil, and collage on panel

Yvette Molina, "I Am Goddess" (2020), egg tempera on paper, 11 x 10 inches

Krimes directly contest policing in cities and rural spaces across the US, weaving maps towards abolition.

Most captivating is "I Am Goddess" (2020) by Yvette Molina, in which the artist transforms a portrait of the late Dominique Rem'mie Fells into the peak of a simmering volcano, as part of her series of "volcano goddesses." Fells is rendered beautifully in repose while her fellow women-volcanoes explode. Together, they are a reminder of the work that anti-racist, queer and feminist monuments *and* movements must do in this forever state of emergency: memorialize the fallen, while stoking the righteous anger needed to transform the way we live together in the world.

Building a Better Monument *continues online through August 7 via Art at a Time Like This. The exhibition was curated by Seph Rodney. On August 6 at 4pm EST, Rodney will join featured artists Joiri Minaya and Didier Williams for "Discussing the Future of Monuments," a conversation with Anne Verhallen and Barbara Pollack of Art at a Time Like This.*

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