Large Print Guide
Nocturnal Creatures: Julianknxx
19 July 2021

Whitechapel Gallery
Gallery 2
This guide includes a large print version of interpretation panels included in the space, as well as a transcript of Julianknxx’s film ‘Black Corporeal (Between This Air)’, 2021.
Julianknxx

‘Black Corporeal (Between This Air)’, 2021

6–11pm continuous film screening
Performance at 9, 9.30 and 10pm (ticket holders only)

The act of breathing is politically and socially charged in 2021 and, for Julianknxx (b.1987, Freetown, Sierra Leone), “The air is different now, we need to think about how we breathe.” Alternating video, spoken word and live music, Black Corporeal (Between This Air) examines the physical and metaphysical aspects of breathing, and calls to deconstruct dominant perspectives on African art, history and culture, in order to allow new black structures and realities to breathe, freely.

With a critical engagement with art history and philosophy, Julianknxx uses his personal history as a prism through which to deconstruct the relationship between materiality and the black psyche. Exploring the idea that our ability to breathe – an act that is
continuously challenged by everything, from air pollution, stress and anxiety, to societal prejudice – is more than our lungs’ ability to take in air, but a reflection of the way we live individually and together. Black Corporeal (Between This Air) engages with both the physical and metaphysical aspects of breathing and explores how we can experience the fullness of our lives through our bodies.
Julian: If I say black bodies and breathing, what comes to mind?

Ellah: That idea of just how important the black body is because this is what we have. You know, people see us and they see a history, they feel they know something or understand something that is not about ourselves as individuals but about what has been done to us.

Julian: leave and let me breath as though I work this land as though the earth is one with my beating heart
we the generation digging deep for a breath
leave and let me breath
walk as though every step is alive
as though I wore this flaming heart filled
with a soulful sonnet
and a blues hot tongue to speak with
leave and let me breath as though I was born
I can speak let my lungs testify to
persuade my soul matters
let me stay visible to live as though a life
is a life is a life
how many lives a Nigger got to give
before you call him a man?
how many depths do you need to dig to know how deep his soul is?
The revelation is in your chest.

[3:35]
Ellah: Finding those spaces that allow you to breathe deeply. And to be conscious of
that growth and of how life-giving it is.

[4:05]
Ellah: *Hold on things or the people that allow you that space to breath and as I get old you need to feel safe in order to properly exhale.

[04:26]
Jason: I’ve always had trouble with the term black bodies. But, I guess, I’m meant to have that problem. As in, you know, we’re not just bodies, we’re not just this thing that we see. You know, spoke in an objectifying way. So, you know, everytime I hear it I’m slightly challenged or confronted by it. But, again, on reflection I think I need to be challenged by it because in a sense I’m almost seeing it from a perspective of the other. Because we are objectified by
others, so maybe where it kind of plays on that term we’re co-opting, you know, we’re kind of disempowering their kind of perspective of us.

[06:12] Ellah: There is something there where he’s saying that, you know, this suppression has been about not allowing us to breathe, not allowing us to be. And so a violence as you say, an erasure, that goes beyond the killing of that particular body, a separation of families. Say ‘Yes, I am still breathing, I am still here.’

[6:42] Julian: leave and let me breath as though I work this land as though the earth is one with my beating heart we the generation digging deep for a breath leave and let me breath
walk as though every step is alive
as though I wore this flaming heart filled with a soulful sonnet
and a blues hot tongue to speak with
leave and let me breath as though I was born
I can speak let my lungs testify to the way my soul mutters
let me stay visible to live as though a life is a life is a life
how many lives a Nigger got to give before you call him a man?
how many depths do you need to dig to know how deep his soul is?
how many?
The revelation is in your chest
Call me a flowering mouth spreading seeds
a party of light
in the dark a cradle cry
we are, we are, we are quintessential to your future
I say leave and let me play the lucky hand
As I walk this land not as a Nigger but as a man
not as a refugee but as one in one earth
I say leave and let me breath
leave and let me breath
I say leave and let me
I say leave and let me
I say leave and let me breath

[8:38]
Jason: Time frames of ourselves, where we can see the future, we’re not afraid of it. Because we’re already there.

[10:13]
Julian: We are what’s left
(one life)
what’s left
(one life)
what’s left
(one life)
what’s left of us
a remembrance of the past
(one life)
this air is a remembrance of the past
because each time is the first
time the air has left
for good

[11:07]
Ellah: There is something there where he’s saying that, you know, this oppression has been about not allowing us to breathe, not allowing us to be.