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Image: *Freak in Me* (2016) by E. Jane
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WANDERING/WILDING: BLACKNESS ON THE INTERNET

niv Acosta | Hannah Black | Evan Ifekoya | E. Jane
Devin Kenny | Tabita Rezaire | Fannie Sosa

Curated by Legacy Russell

#WanderingWILDING

A call-and-response to “The Peril of Black Mobility”, a critical essay by Doreen St. Félix, “Wandering / WILDING: Blackness on the Internet” presents the work of seven artists—niv Acosta, Hannah Black, Evan Ifekoya, E. Jane, Devin Kenny, Tabita Rezaire, and Fannie Sosa—whose work mobilizes an exploration of race via the material of the Internet.

Wandering points to the socio-cultural identity of the *flâneur*, mused on by Baudelaire as “a roving soul in search of a body”, later reintroduced into the academy by Walter Benjamin as a mark of modernity distinctly threatened by developments of an impending Industrial Revolution. Alternately, *wilding* is a slang word which came into mainstream use in 1980s New York, a dog-whistle term used to describe the gang assault of strangers that rose out of the controversial Central Park jogger case in 1989 wherein five teenagers of color were accused of and jailed for a crime they did not commit.

In relation to this event “WILDING” was the cover headline of New York’s Daily News on April 22nd, 1989 and became part of the fear-mongering language used to mark the collective socialising of black and brown bodies as inherent public threat and, in turn, justify increased profiling and policing of such bodies throughout New York City. With ongoing media attention turned to #BlackLivesMatter, a global movement that continues to grow online and out in the world in the U.S., U.K., and beyond, the reality of such policing as international phenomena has sparked a much-needed discussion surrounding freedom of movement, as well as race and class tied to the exercising of civil liberties.

Thus “Wandering / WILDING” presents a challenging dichotomy and essential opportunity for discourse, situating a spotlight on the privileged white body that Baudelaire’s “roving soul” has historically inhabited and that American culture has inherited and built into the consciousness of its cultural mythology with the ongoing desire to be “on the road”, the same roads and streets that are not equally carefree nor safe for all bodies that traverse them. What can the Internet do for the black *flâneur*? What freedoms can be found in the “publics” realized via the digital for bodies of color? In what way do artists make new spaces for black lives to matter, online? “Wandering / WILDING: Blackness on the Internet” and the artists therein aim to inspect, and investigate.

Legacy Russell