

REVIEW by Christine Wong Yap

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lauren woods' *Inkblot Projective Test #3 (Birthing)* (2006, 3 minutes, dimensions variable) is a concise, exquisitely-executed exploration of race and the psyche.

Upon entering Swarm's Project Space, we are faced with two mirrored video projections on adjacent walls. The shot consists of a line of casually dressed white and Latino men gazing in our direction. In slow motion, black butterfly-like abstractions enter the screen and morph into an African American figure. With a bare chest, black pants and a doo-rag, the dancer rises in and out of the picture. The video ends with an elucidating sped-up playback of the entire shot: Men. Legs, body, a flip. The busker walking off to the right of the camera.

The video's soundtrack is an instrumental arrangement played backwards. It's uncanny—the histrionic strings and sentimental horn sound like a familiar score for a classic film. This quotation signals woods' desire to tap into our cultural memory and collective unconscious.

Through the title, (*Birthing*), woods suggests self-definition. What is borne, though, is the dancer through an inkblot, but more significantly, woods' cinematic image upon our psyche. The artist highlights the spectator's centrality by implicating the viewer as one of many onlookers—we watch and are being watched; we view projections and project our own unconscious thoughts.

woods, "approaching the documentary as subjective," seems to be working in the vein of cinema as dream-theater after filmmaker Theresa Cha and theorists like Jean-Louis Baudry. If, as Baudry proposes, the cinematic and psychic apparatuses are analogous, what does our collective unconscious project upon woods' inkblot? In *Inkblot Projective Test #3 (Birthing)*, woods herself seems to be doing a dance, negotiating multiple terrains (racial and psychic), but like many Freudian hypotheses, (*Birthing*) presents only associative possibilities.