URBAN ASSEMBLAGE: THE CITY AS ARCHITECTURE, MEDIA, AI AND BIG DATA.

• **Paper / Proposal Title:**
Through the Colonial Savage: Reclaiming Embodied Histories of Marginality

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• **Abstract (300 words):**

Foucault sees the document of the historian as a reification of the documentarian’s process. It is the documented memory that is both fungible and exacting in what he chooses to re-articulate through translation, alternating between the past—experienced—to a past experience interpreted. He states: “The document is not the fortunate tool of a history that is primarily and fundamentally memory; history is one way in which a society recognizes and develops a mass of documentation with which it is inextricably linked.” Foucault, 1972. In doing so the post-colonial histories undergo a flattening in the form of the document.

The erasure of lived experiences from those that carry the collected experiences in their bodies, only to be refuted and denied by the constructed historical document. Perhaps a less contentious endeavor of the colonists’ conquest—yet a conquest, nonetheless. I would argue that the motivations and need for this historical flattening only underscores the self-reflexive acknowledgement of the actions conducted by the colonizer. However, history has afforded the benefit of the doubt to those that have “documented” the details of their conquest, and not to those whose bodies, along with their memories have withered with time.

This essay looks at recent western conflicts over the last fifty years meshing together historical and theoretical documents on colonization to examine these motivations. The document questions the rationale for these specific conflicts and the global
consequences of military engagement, the cultural and economic registers of those affected, and finally gives consideration to design speculations on ways new infrastructural technologies can assist in the restoration process. Reinstating memory of loss through modes of digital mediums and architectures. In the advent of remaking cities to meet the needs of newly displaced people, what emergent possibilities does the infrastructural landscape hold for building new knowledges about its inhabitants, the lives they’ve lived, and how can it be instrumental in the cross pollination of those narratives?

Citations:


• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Triton Mobley is a new media artist, educator, and scholar whose interventionist works and guerrilla performances have been exhibited at Art Basel Miami, Art Miami, and staged in Boston, New York, Providence, and across Japan. Triton’s practice culls together samples of seemingly disparate methodologies of critical making in programming, performative installations, speculative design, digital media hacking, and industrial fabrication. Triton holds an MFA in Digital+Media from Rhode Island School of Design and currently is an Annenberg Fellow and PhD candidate in Media Arts + Practice at University of Southern California where his research and practice repositions ontological inquiries—situated between the discontinuities of emergent technologies and communities of marginality, an assembled distillation to engender public reexamination. His most recent artworks, the diptych Coded #000000 and Volumetric Black, uncover the literal en/coding of anti-blackness into digital imaging technologies. A body of work that reimagines narrative structures of working–class resistance within the digital delay—via fabricated digital outputs. This research has been presented at the African American History, Culture & Digital Humanities’ Intentionally Digital, Intentionally Black conference in Maryland, as well as the Art Machines: International Symposium on Computational Media Art at City University of Hong Kong.