

Annette Lawrence, *December day/year*, Graphite on Paper 18" x 24", 2018

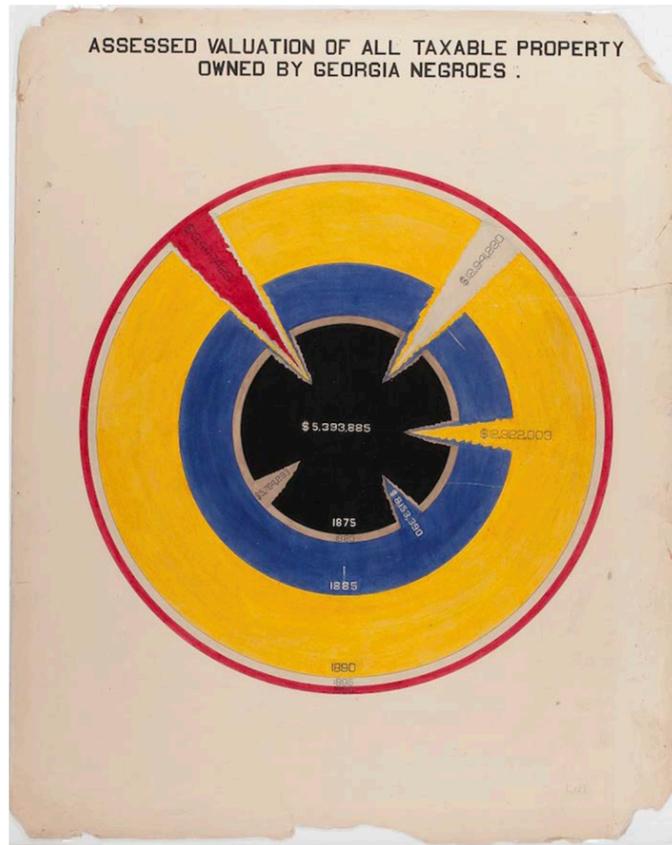
A Recounting: Data, Disinformation & Black Experience

Annette Lawrence, Amy Elkins, Ariel Rene Jackson, Jibade-Khalil Huffman, Mimi Onuoha, Paul Anthony Smith and Sadie Barnette

Curated by Elisa Durette

In 1900, W.E.B. Du Bois exhibited a series of data visualizations, depicting a range of information largely centered around Georgia and its recently emancipated Black population. Du Bois' illustrations were packed with potent information, from the breakdown of Georgia's urban and rural African Americans, to the types of occupations held by the state's Black and white populations, and even such oddly peripheral yet telling information as the "Assessed Value of Household and Kitchen Furniture Owned by Georgia Negroes". And while the information being portrayed provided a vital and intimate study of a deeply marginalized population, what's perhaps most striking is the coupling of hard data with a wildly abstract yet free-flowing aesthetic through which these studies are presented. With over a decade having passed since Du Bois' data visualizations were first exhibited, one has to wonder how the data and aesthetics of Du Bois' studies have shifted into the present day—a space of inquiry that *A Recounting* seeks to excavate.

Drawing inspiration from sources as varied as W.E.B. Du Bois' data visualizations to economic and sociological studies like the infamous *Moynihan Report* and *The Bell Curve* that purported to tell the "truth" about Black folk, *A Recounting* seeks to offer viewers a new perspective on what we know (or think we know) about the Black experience as told by data, statistics and kitchen table wisdom. Each of the artists within the exhibition creates work that vividly illustrates the ways in which "official" and "unofficial" sources of information can be drawn upon both consciously and subconsciously to create new narratives about Black lives.



W.E.B. DuBois, excerpt from *The Exhibit of American Negroes*, 1900

The artists within *A Recounting* utilize a variety of techniques through which information is archived, obscured, reoriented and displayed. From Amy Elkins' *Not the Man I Once Was* which uses a ratio of image loss determined by a subject's time spent behind bars to years alive; or Paul Anthony Smith's excoriated photographs in which the artist picks at and creates patterning and an underlying order within otherwise familiar moments; to Annette Lawrence's graphite circular grids which are informed by the artist's decision to reveal or withhold entries from a journal keeping practice going back 25 years—the impulse to obscure information becomes a constant throughout *A Recounting* with each artist's practice yielding deeply divergent results. Others such as Jibade-Khalil Huffman and Mimi Onouha use the layering of imagery, symbols and information to speak to the ways in which language, semiotics and people are abstracted, represented and classified. And finally both Sadie Barnette and Ariel Rene Jackson focus on the function of memory as mediated through material: for Ariel this is represented through the raw earth and the ways this substrate has woven throughout her family's history, and in Sadie's case this is displayed through reproductions of a 1968 FBI file on the artist's father.

Whether through concealment, sampling, or the use of material as marker and metaphor, the artists within *A Recounting*, employ data in ways that (re)count the lived experiences of Black people in America and lay the groundwork for the new mathematics for the future.