

Specters Specters

by Arto Lindsay

*I am black with love
neither boy nor nightingale
intact as a flower
I yearn without desire.*
P. P. Pasolini

Records were called *frisbees*. They were also dubbed platters.

In the case of Iran's watercolors, it was not the company of a cup of tea, but rather the tranquil surface of a lake that led him to look at records as objects.

From there he was overcome by the power of records to evoke memories and to punctuate powerful moments. And that is how he chose the records he painted.

The labels with the title, the artist's name, the composers, their copyright codes, and dates are not replicated in the watercolors.

The only thing that distinguishes each record is the proportion of the tracks. Even a DJ would have a hard time telling them apart.

These proportions resemble musical intervals. Placing proportions in the foreground takes us back to other attempts at extracting some geometric order from the human body.

Like bodies, watercolors have their desires and unreliable surfaces. They are as elusive as we are.

Records are open caskets, full of feet tapping to mark the tempo, and pulses reproduced by the instruments. Abstractions of moans. Attempts at combining philosophy and grace.

As always, what most delights us are the connections between these elements, the intervals, and the potential use of them—that grace that keeps appearing, despite repetition or because of it.

They say we don't have memories but memories of memories. Records are full of ghosts, the voices of dead singers, the strumming and blowing of dead musicians. The new records already announce the deaths of those captured there.

Black is said to be deep, the color of the seabed. And of its nocturnal surface.

The black in Iran's watercolors is permeated by a glimmer of light. He did not know that a record left out in the sun would warp and stop playing.

Records are made from vinyl, a by-product of oil. The same oil we kill for and that is killing us.

Recently it seems like black holes are the most accessible metaphors. But it is the edges that interest us, the approaches and the consequences.

We stand around in the event horizon while our memories burn a hole in the sky.

The needle hits the vinyl and along come cries and whispers.

Along with the bird's song comes distance.

Author's notes:

Pasolini left an unfinished novel called *Petrolino*. I thought I would find my epigraph there. But it was in a poem, *Narcissus Dancing*, that I found what I needed.

[Translator's note: the English version of the poem is that of Stephen Sartarelli, and can be found in *The Selected Poetry of Pier Paolo Pasolini: A Bilingual Edition*, The University of Chicago Press, 2014]

While I was writing, I was repeatedly listening to *Power Flower* by Stevie Wonder, from the album *The Secret Life of Plants*.

There is a movement against recorded music, in favor of it disappearing after it has happened.