WHITFIELD LOVELL

Autour Du Monde

Julie L. McGee

Whitfield Lovell, *After an Afternoon*, 2008. Radios with sound, 59 × 72 × 11 in. Courtesy DC Moore Gallery, New York. © Whitfield Lovell

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I wonder where is all my relations / Friendship to all and every nation.

David Drake

The American artist Whitfield Lovell has been collecting and using vintage accoutrements — the material culture of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century African American life, including photographs — for many years. He is best known for his installations and tableaux, combinations of superb charcoal and Conté crayon drawings on weathered wooden planks or cream paper, and found objects.[1] Lovell's sustained engagement with historical subjects and themes was evident in his 2008 exhibition Kith and Kin, which included several large-scale images of World War I and World War II servicemen whose likenesses first spoke to Lovell through intimate, vintage studio photographs; they form part of an ongoing project that began nearly ten years ago. *Pago Pago* (2008) is an alluring, seductive, and otherworldly image: a debonair figure with an air of nonchalance reclines in a late Victorian cane or bamboo armchair. The title situates our thoughts: Pago Pago, the capital of American Samoa in the South Pacific, is a village located on the island of Tutuila, near Pago Pago Harbor. Long a service port for the U.S. Navy, the harbor was shelled by a Japanese submarine in 1942. To enhance the languorous, horizontal repose of the figure, Lovell executes the Conté crayon drawing across two wide plywood panels rather than the narrow, vertical wooden boards more customary in his tableaux. The seated figure wears the uniform of an Army Air Force Enlisted Technician, Fourth Grade, and arranged before him are fifteen vintage radios that emit a sound track of Billie Holiday singing "I Cover the Waterfront." A soulful song of longing, waiting, and watching the sea for a love's return, Holiday recorded it multiple times between 1941 and 1956, turning it into a jazz standard.[2]

As an artist who draws inspiration from the past and its material culture, Lovell does not set out to teach us history, but the subjects and objects he brings together encourage us to deepen our knowledge of African and American history and culture. *Pago Pago* is one of several depictions of figures in military uniforms in Lovell's oeuvre.[3] Of these, most are developed from World War I– and World War II–era studio photographs, though *Battleground*, part of Lovell's larger installation *Visitation: The Richmond Project* (2001), portrays a Civil War–era Union soldier.[4] *Pago Pago* is among the most recent works of this sort and was exhibited with *At Home and Abroad* (2008) and *Autour Du Monde* (2008) in Lovell's Kith and Kin exhibition at DC Moore Gallery in New York.[5] Embedded in each reworked image are the oppositional histories of the black body in relation to uniform, rank, service, opportunity, self, and nation. Developed individually, the tableaux relate to an expanded installation concept that Lovell envisions, part encomium and part memorial. His interest in blacks in the military is multilayered: his maternal grandfather, Eugene Glover (1904–84), traveled from his home in Winnsboro, South Carolina, to the state's capital, Columbia, to try to enlist. He wanted to see the world, travel to Africa, become "more worldly." For many, the U.S. military did provide a conduit for travel abroad. But Eugene Glover was rejected on the dubious grounds of physical height: he was told he was too short, while a different prospective black enlistee was told he was too tall. Glover's rejection reflects the American armed forces' considerable resistance, at that time, to full racial integration.

The United States entered World War I in 1917, two years after the release of the racist film *Birth of a Nation*, and the same year as one of the worst incidents of racial violence in the history of the armed forces: a series of riots at Fort Logan, near Houston, Texas. The Fort Logan race riots stemmed from interracial conflict and claimed the lives of many, black and white; but ultimately they were blamed on the black soldiers of the Third Battalion, Twenty-fourth Infantry, stationed outside Houston to guard the construction of Fort Logan.[6] White fear kept black enlistment low and battalions small.[7] African Americans have fought for their country in every battle since the Revolutionary War, but even within the armed forces they have been subjected to segregation, prejudice, discrimination, and at times brutality; during the first two world wars, they were assigned to lower-ranking noncombat positions and posted overseas, to places such as France and the Philippines. It was not until 1948 that President Truman issued an executive order to end discrimination in the armed forces, and not until 1950, dur-

Autour Du Monde, 2008. Conté crayon on wood panels with globes, 102 × 189 × 171 in.
Courtesy DC Moore Gallery, New York. © Whitfield Lovell

ing the Korean War, that integrated units were sent into combat for the first time.

For Lovell, the haunting history of the Fort Logan incident and his grandfather's disappointment at the enlistment office fuel his historical and personal engagement with the vintage photographs he collects of figures in military uniform. Rooted in historical studio portraiture, infused with his artistic sensibilities and intentions, Lovell's final tableaux oscillate between factual and ethereal histories. Though embedded in the tangible, photographic image — and thus the life of the portrayed — Lovell's figures have an artistic life beyond pictorial narration and outside the history of and within the photograph. In her essay "The Site of Memory," Toni Morrison describes the intrinsic role imagery plays in her fiction writing. "It's a kind of literary archaeology: on the basis of some information and a little bit of guesswork you journey to a site to see what remains were left behind to reconstruct the world that these remains imply. What makes it fiction is the nature of the imaginative act: my reliance on the image — on the remains — in addition to recollection, to yield up a kind of truth."[8]

Morrison works within the realm of human truths, not verifiable facts, and thus draws a critical distinction between fact and truth: "So if I'm looking to find and expose a truth about the interior life of people who didn't write it (which doesn't mean they didn't have it) . . . then the approach that's most productive and most trustworthy for me is the recollection that moves from image to text. Not from the text to the image."[9] Like Morrison, Lovell's creativity is fed by the human truths he locates within the portraits in his collection of vintage photographs. Both artists draw inspiration and creativity through deep truths that come from feeling connected to a larger ancestral history. As implied by the South Carolina potter David Drake, it is an ancestry that stretches back, through, and across epochs and geographies. Finding the right object to set in relation to his drawn images — in what Lovell calls "the place where the formal and artistic elements meet" — is both a formal and intuitive process and one that can, and often does, take years to be resolved.

As with many of Lovell's tableaux, the added element is nearly always an abstraction, formally and narratively placed, and intended to subvert literal readings of the work. The material nature of Lovell's completed tableaux is visually seductive: elegantly rendered images in Conté crayon become one with the surface of the weathered wooden boards, peppered with accents of previous use and surfacing: fabric, wallpaper, nails. In *At Home and Abroad* (2008), three male figures, two standing and one seated, are dressed in World War I–era U.S. Army brown wool double-breasted greatcoats. Two of the figures hold cigars, and, as in *Pago Pago*, there is an air of formality befitting the uniform and the occasion, yet the very concept of "uniform" is belied by each soldier's countenance and bearing. Attached to the chest of the seated figure is a small target, and to either side of him hang fabric scraps pierced by nails. Important yet understated formal elements, they add visual balance and cadence and extend the compositional space beyond the environs of wood boards. The small target is a poignant reminder that all soldiers are targets abroad; so too are African American soldiers at home. During World War I, some forty thousand black troops were deployed abroad, but because officials wanted to avoid integrating American forces, they were deployed with French troops. The 369th Regiment, known as the Harlem Hellfighters, was the first all-black regiment to be on combat duty in World War I.

> The entire unit was given the distinguished Croix de Guerre by the French national government for their service. Yet, despite the sacrifices and courage displayed by African American soldiers during the war, they nevertheless encountered a virulent backlash of white racism upon their return to the United States. A number of newly discharged soldiers — still wearing their uniforms — were lynched by white mobs.[10]

At Home and Abroad, 2008. Conté crayon on wood with target, nails, and fabric scraps, 65 × 45 × 3½ in.
Courtesy DC Moore Gallery, New York. © Whitfield Lovell

In his 1918 essay "Close Ranks," W. E. B. DuBois advocated that African Americans set aside grievances while the war was on and "close ranks shoulder to shoulder with our white fellow-citizens and the Allied Nations that are fighting for democracy."[11] Like many other African Americans, DuBois believed that race relations and opportunities for blacks at home would thereby improve. DuBois clearly saw advantages to demonstrating African American patriotism and military aptitude. In 1900, in a display illustrating for the Paris Exposition Universelle the economic and social progress of African Americans since emancipation, DuBois included several photographs of black soldiers of various ranks, highlighting those who received medals of honor in the U.S. Army and Navy.[12] Through Lovell's tableaux these histories and soldiers from another century resurface in our space and time; earlier periods of time simultaneously recur in the present. This is a theoretically rich spatiotemporal matrix. For Lovell, the coming together of souls or spirits that are chronologically or otherwise disparate in an artistic space is akin to a *sacra conversazione* — an archetypal Christian image popularized by Italian Renaissance painters.[13]

Installed as a triptych, *Autour Du Monde* (2008) brings together three full-length images of servicemen in World War I uniforms. The title, French for "around the world," recalls the sought-after travel of Lovell's grandfather and the language black troops encountered while stationed abroad during World War I. In addition to the three large tableaux, the installation of *Autour Du Monde* includes an assortment of vintage globes that are either attached to the wood boards, placed immediately before the panels, or set away from the panels at a distance of some ten feet. This arrangement sets up a number of triangular relationships that activate the space: we move out and back and out and across, multiple times. The shadows cast by the globes — on the floor and the panels — reinforce this formal rhythm and distract us from noticing that the artist has, for compositional integrity, manipulated the shadows cast by the standing soldiers. In *Autour Du Monde* the pleasurable prospect of travel, seeing the world in uniform, is tempered by the history and politics of circumnavigation. Signifying through their placement travel and global military alignment, the globes invoke troubled waters: the Middle Passage, the Triangular Slave Trade, and the Black Atlantic. As Peter Erikson notes, "The Black Atlantic is both a literal and metaphorical place. . . . As a cultural arena, it represents the imaginative space over which artistic passages and exchanges have crisscrossed and flourished."[14]

Autour Du Monde and *Pago Pago* were placed adjacent to each other in Lovell's Kith and Kin exhibition. There Billie Holiday's melodic lamentation floated across space and time, across continents and war fronts. The radios and the sound of *Pago Pago* are periodizing elements: they extend the field of imagery and the imagined beyond the rendered image to that of lovers, spouses, siblings, friends, and acquaintances who waited then, and now, for their servicemen and -women to return home. Lovell's use of sound in his installations and tableaux dates back to *Echo*, his 1995 work for Project Row Houses in Houston. Sensory experiences — sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste — are often invoked by Lovell's works, but these additions, especially sound, "must be appropriately moving and as profound as the drawn images."[15] As with the Conté crayon drawings, which permeate and become one with the surfaces from which they emerge, the sound deployed by Lovell infiltrates and infuses the surrounding space.

Pago Pago draws attention to the seminal role of the radio and radio broadcasting in the communication of the news and voices from abroad and the war front to the American home front, and vice versa. Billie Holiday, whose voice issues from the radios of *Pago Pago*, was among the musicians who recorded special Victory Discs for use by military personnel overseas. Her voice helps summon the ambience of a fading day in Lovell's installation *After an Afternoon* (2008), also from his Kith and Kin exhibition. In *After an Afternoon* Lovell deploys antique radios and recorded sound alone to invoke an aural past. Thirty-seven stacked vintage radios are the resonators for three sound tracks: excerpts from the 1945–54 CBS radio program *The Marlin Hurt and Beulah Show* (in 1946 retitled *The Beulah Show*), World War II–era news read by Walter Winchell, and Billie Holiday singing "Yesterdays"

Pago Pago, 2008. Conté crayon on wood with radios and sound, 97 × 66 × 13 in. Courtesy DC Moore Gallery, New York. © Whitfield Lovell

and “Strange Fruit.”[16] Here kith and kin, acquaintances and relatives, are embodied in the patina of the used radios and the sound. Winchell’s radio news and Holiday’s slow and throaty “Yesterdays” reassert the period presence typical of Lovell’s work, while “Strange Fruit” ruptures the idyll of the nostalgia — we cannot dissolve the image of lynching, “black bodies swinging in the Southern breeze.”

A third track is from *The Beulah Show*, featuring Amanda Randolph as Beulah, a black housekeeper for a white family (the Hendersons). *The Beulah Show*, which later moved to television (1950–53), is often called the first mainstream network radio and television sitcom to feature an African American actor. Hattie McDaniel played Beulah from 1947 to 1952, followed by Lillian Randolph from 1952 to 1953 and Amanda Randolph from 1953 to 1954. (Ethel Waters played Beulah in the early TV program, from 1950 to 1952.) The radio show began with a white performer, Marlin Hurt, impersonating a black woman, the Beulah Brown character; indeed, Hurt played multiple roles on the early episodes. Hurt’s performative blackness links directly to early minstrel shows, in which white performers’ mockery of black culture and use of ersatz black dialect were heralded as entertainment. Unlike the blackface of the vaudeville minstrel show, *The Beulah Show* relied on the aural rather than the visual to cue blackness. The veracity and integrity of the performance were outweighed by its value as entertainment.

Lovell has used vintage radios in his work for many years, but never before in this configuration. *After an Afternoon* drew inspiration from Ousmane Sembene’s 2004 film *Moolaadé*, a fictionalized dramatization of female genital mutilation in an isolated, rural village in West Africa, and the women’s growing sense of their right to protection and self-determination. Battery-operated radios have a prominent place throughout the film, occasionally bringing news but more often than not providing the women with music while they work; village elders, who hold the radios responsible for corrupting women’s attitudes toward village tradition, confiscate them and pile them near the mosque to be burned. The sound recordings for *After an Afternoon* are intended to overlap, like the dissonance emitted by the radio pile in *Moolaadé*. Infiltrating the exhibition space, Lovell’s select recordings convey overlapping narratives and histories, from the intimacy of the home to the turmoil of the war front. As a locus for the sights and sounds of a World War II–era, pre–civil rights America, *After an Afternoon* connects divergent lives, spaces, times, and histories in one melodious yet cacophonic sculpture.

The larger Kith and Kin exhibition brought together twenty works by Lovell, several selected from the ongoing *Kin Series*. Comprising thirty-four works through 2009, the *Kin Series* is a family album of sorts, composed of individual male and female images in Conté crayon on fresh cream paper — Stonehenge Tan — and rendered in the artist’s virtuosic drawing style. Only when the rendered images are successfully conjoined with found objects is the work complete. In each work, the fully executed image ends at the neck; dresses, necklines, shirt collars, and the curve of the back or shoulders are intimated only by delicate and partial contour lines. Lovell used the same technique earlier in the fifty-two drawings of *Card Pieces* (2003–6). Related in many ways to formal and classical portrait traditions, Lovell’s working methods developed from his desire to render the image entirely through delicate shading, without lines.[17] In *Card Pieces* and the ongoing *Round Series* (2006–7, individual likenesses counterpoised with round playing cards), Lovell’s proficiency in rendering the various hairstyles and textures — an admitted obsession and gratifying indulgence — is fully apparent.[18] In these earlier series, Lovell pairs one or more playing cards below his rendered images — depicted variously in frontal, profile, or three-quarter views. Most of the objects placed in relation to the *Kin Series* drawings are not flat, like the playing cards; rather, they cast shadows and occasionally overlap the drawn image. Framed and glazed, the *Kin Series* recalls shadow boxes and votives. Assembled with the other works in the Kith and Kin exhibition, the series advances our understanding of Lovell’s studio praxis and its diasporic relations.

The individual figures differ from the many Lovell has executed based on vintage studio photographs, as the *Kin Series* images are developed from ID photographs (e.g., passport photos, mug shots,

and photo-booth pictures he has collected). These sources offer at once institutionalized perspectives and official documents; for example, the photo-booth images, products of an automatic kiosk with preset camera and lighting, provide a vending-machine quality and a distinctive range of imagery, lighting, and framing that clearly distinguishes them from vintage studio portraits. The *Kin Series* began with a single drawing based on a photo-booth image of a young boy with dark, rich-toned skin: *Kin I (Our Folks).* As Lovell notes, "There was something about that young boy's face that captivated me. His eyes and mouth were so expressive, as if he were about to cry. I felt compelled to try and capture that emotional quality."[19] Though his preliminary blocking may be executed in pencil (graphite), Lovell's preferred medium is compressed charcoal or Conté A Paris 4B crayons, capable of producing a rich black.

> There are times when the outcome of a new approach, or an experiment, is so satisfying and rewarding that you want to revisit it and see where it can lead you. After the first two or three *Kin* drawings, I was so taken in by the realism and honesty in the faces I was drawing that I realized the *Kin Series* had to continue on indefinitely. I began to feel close to the people I was drawing, as if I fully understood them, and so I started thinking of them as family.[20]

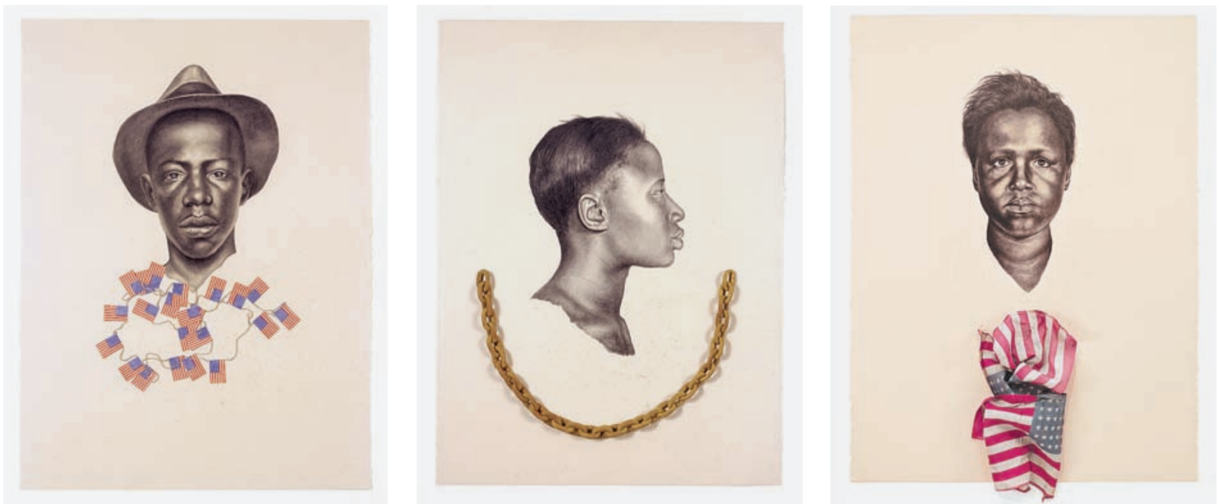
Kin II (Oh Damballa) is a profile drawing of a young woman. Here and in all the *Kin Series* works, Lovell's masterful drawing technique, in which shading is used instead of line, endows the subjects with the humanity and spirit that is conspicuously absent from most ID pictures. With considered regret, Lovell notes that many of the profile images he has drawn over the years have been developed from mug-shot photos, for one simple reason: scarcity. Vintage photographs of individuals in profile are rare and are more readily found among those intended for institutional scrutiny, measurement, or recording, such as ethnographic, criminal, or otherwise official documentation. Lovell is an assiduous collector of vintage photographs, and in the artist's lexicon, mug shots represent a type of institutional photograph: a picture of someone's face made for an official purpose and without external retouching. Though we have come to associate them with police records, the photographic history of mug shots and mug books is more complex; mug books include albums in which business or professional people use attractive photos to publicize themselves, and colloquially, a mug refers to an exaggerated, unattractive, or funny face — the sort of face many have made in a photo booth. As Lovell notes:

> The earlier mug shots that I used were different in that they were older, and so the fainter sepia tones made the men's and women's skin tones look more even. I never found it necessary to mention they were from mug shots. They were just people. And I do love profiles. The *Kin Series* mug shots were all from the 1940s and very harshly lit. The detail is sharper, and it is therefore more lifelike and less idealized.[21]

These distinctions within the photographs, the residual pictorial effects contingent on mechanical process and context, are the very ones that call out to the artist in his selection process. Yet Lovell's culling of imagery and sources is fluid and intuitive, not calculated: that is, the ID photographs enter into his work as they speak to him and are needed. Lovell has used them most extensively in his *Kin Series*.

> Once the *Kin Series* got going, I noticed a major difference in the drawings. The difference was the people were more harshly lit, not made up, and the photos were untouched and there was often a reluctance in their expressions. I saw those qualities as more honest and raw (if I may), whereas in the studio portrait photos that I have worked from, the sitters appear very elegant and posed. Those people were very invested in how they presented themselves. They chose the day, the clothes, the photographer, etc.
>
> I have not lost interest in the studio portraits; in fact, this all just illuminates what I always loved about them.[22]

The "warts and all" nature of these images, which embodies Lovell's understanding of extended family, is key to his and our connection with the individual works in the series. This is particularly poignant in *Kin X (My Pretty)*; the young woman we see appears to feel anything but pretty, yet beauty is fixed to her soul by way of six enamel, floral brooches. Though each completed artwork draws its likeness and



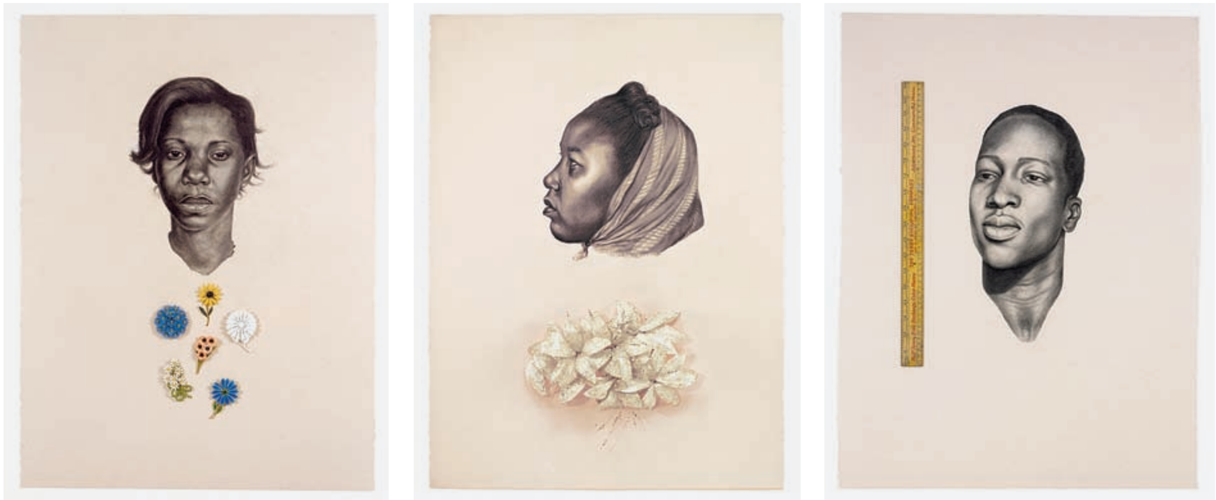
Left: *Kin I (Our Folks)*, 2008. Conté crayon on paper with flags, 30 × 22½ in. Middle: *Kin VI (Nobody)*, 2008. Conté crayon on paper with wooden chain, 30 × 22½ × ⅞ in. Right: *Kin VIII (1619)*, 2008. Conté crayon on paper with flags, 30 × 22½ × ⅞ in. All courtesy DC Moore Gallery, New York. © Whitfield Lovell

inspiration from the original photograph, including its institutional framework, viewers are not likely to know the precise source. Indeed, notes Lovell, most would be surprised to learn which image came from which kind of photograph: photo-booth or passport shot, or police mug shot.[23] For some time Lovell was reluctant to discuss which images developed from police mug shots, knowing that it could too easily sensationalize and thus distort his artistic and professional engagement with them.

> In the case of the *Kin Series*, I realize that I feel nothing but compassion for the people whose faces I am drawing. . . . It is their humanity that attracts and compels me and draws me in, not curiosity over guilt or innocence. And I suppose I assume they are all innocent, or at the very most victims of their own circumstances. That is the very issue that leads me to conclude that I should go ahead and state what the source is. . . . the source is an integral part of what the work is, and to leave that out almost belies the gravitas they possess.[24]

The final developed image — what we see — embodies Lovell's artistry and dexterity. A subtle but fundamental aspect of the artist's praxis is his free interpretation of the photographic image: he does not disturb its authenticity unnecessarily, but he is no mechanical copyist, hidebound to his photographic source. The qualitative differences within Lovell's photographic sources engender shifts in the artist's own creative enterprise and converse poignantly with the formal and contextual material he adds to his rendering of the image.

Both *Kin I (Our Folks)* and *Kin II (Oh Damballa)* are embellished with a string of small paper flags (American), attached with acrylic polymer. Loosely bunched under the face of the young man in *Kin I (Our Folks)* and draped over that in *Kin II (Oh Damballa)*, the garland of flags lies like a broken rosary; it is not a patriotic gesture, and the reference to nation and loyalty is oblique if not ironic. In *Kin II (Oh Damballa)* the string of flags is placed atop the drawn image and returns in a cascading serpentine line that loosely outlines the profile of her face. The American flag, an object always already burdened symbolically, is used sparingly in the *Kin Series*, in only a handful of the works. For Linda Kim, the inclusion of American flags in the series sets up contested notions of belonging: "Nationalism and kinship are concepts that are difficult to disentangle in America, where phrases like 'fatherland' and 'mother country' naturalize what is effectively a nineteenth-century geographic invention, but for African Americans, the question of belonging, both



Left: *Kin X (My Pretty)*, 2008. Conté crayon on paper with enamel brooches, 30 × 22½ × ¾ in. Middle: *Kin XII (Fakarouni)*, 2008. Conté crayon on paper with fabric bouquet, 30 × 22½ × 4½ in. Right: *Kin XXI (De-Dah)*, 2008. Conté crayon on paper with wooden ruler, 30 × 22½ × 12½ in. All courtesy DC Moore Gallery, New York. © Whitfield Lovell

national and familial, has been a profoundly complicated and urgent one."[25] Yet Lovell's *Kin Series* is arguably more about reconstructing the ties that connect and bind a family that is black and diasporic and thus not bound by national boundaries, that is, *our folks*, our kin, rather than a family confined to one nation.

Indeed, each work from the *Kin Series* offers myriad associations and interpretations. In *Kin VIII (1619)*, two small American flags are attached below the rendered image of a young woman whose steadfast yet weary countenance recalls that of Ella Watson in Gordon Parks's photograph *American Gothic* (1942). The first record of African slaves arriving in colonial America dates from 1619, when some twenty Africans were traded by the captain of a Dutch warship for provisions in Jamestown. In *Kin VI (Nobody)* a young woman with high cheekbones and short, cropped hair is given a large wooden chain that curves upward like lace trim on her scoop-neck dress. The inclusion of the chain connects *Kin VI (Nobody)* visually, psychically, and historically to the abolitionist imagery of kneeling figures inscribed variously with "Am I not a woman/man and a sister/brother?"

Many of the *Kin Series* works are linked by their titles to music, revealing Lovell's consummate knowledge of music and film. "Nobody" was one of performance artist Bert Williams's (1874–1922) best-known solo acts.[26] *Kin XXI (De-Dah)* is named after "De-Dah," a jazz standard played by Clifford Brown. Here Lovell gives us a tonally soft, almost dreamy image of a young man. His head pivots slightly upward and off the central axis. Though his eyes gaze toward the wooden ruler just to the left of his face, the ruler is not of his space; it is in effect an abstraction. The ruler, vertically straight and playfully off-center, advertises the Terry Engraving Company — "Half Tones, Zinc Etchings, Color Plates, Advertizing Art, Commercial Photos." Lovell titled *Kin II (Oh Damballa)* after "Dambala," a song written by the Bahamian musician Tony McKay (aka Exuma) and recorded by Nina Simone on her album *It Is Finished* (1974).[27] McKay's Afro-Caribbean song is named for the vodun deity Damballa, father of all the loa (intermediary spirits or deities) and associated with snakes, forests, springs, and fertility. Damballa is also evoked in Lovell's *Kin II (Oh Damballa)*, though serendipitously and unintentionally, by the serpentine path of the garland of flags.[28]

Like his sound tracks, Lovell's musical references periodize and provide shades of associative meanings — some amusing, some oblique, and

many quite profound. Like the objects conjoined with the rendered images, they are quintessential Lovell gestures, destabilizing the literalism of verisimilitude — his exquisitely rendered images — and simultaneously enlarging our reading of the work. The musical allusions within the *Kin Series*, including references to jazz, blues, and world music, facilitate the diasporic connections implicit in the kith-and-kin concept. *Kin XII (Fakarouni)* is named after an Arabic song, whose title means "they reminded me," that was written by the Egyptian singer and composer Mohamed Abdel Wahab and popularized by the Egyptian vocalist Umm Kulthum (1904–75).[29] It was in Egypt that Lovell first learned of Kulthum's music. Indeed, many of Lovell's works have emotional, conceptual, and tangible ties to the many places — continents and islands — he has visited and the memories and materials he retains from them. Lucy R. Lippard suggests that "as he travels he accumulates the power of other cultures."[30] Paired with a fabric bouquet, the image Lovell renders for *Kin XII (Fakarouni)* exudes a grace, beauty, and reserve befitting Kulthum, "unquestionably the most famous singer in the twentieth-century Arab world . . . the cultural symbol of a nation."[31] Her voice and spirit, given presence in Lovell's work, are simultaneously ethereal and worldly.

An endeavor that has not yet reached its conclusion, Lovell's *Kin Series* takes us *autour du monde*. Grounded in the source materials of his immediate and personal ancestry, including the American South, the Caribbean, and the Bronx, and drawing on the relational currents of the Black Atlantic, Lovell's work is both rooted and expansive. Perhaps no other exhibition of Lovell's recent work has linked "home" and "away" so clearly as Kith and Kin.

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Notes

The verse in the epigraph is inscribed on a storage jar, August 16, 1857, by David Drake (1800–1863), a potter and poet who lived in Edgefield District, South Carolina. See *I Made This Jar —: The Life and Works of the Enslaved African-American Potter, Dave*, ed. Jill Beute Koverman (Columbia: McKissick Museum, University of South Carolina, 1998), p. 97.

1. Lovell is the 2007 recipient of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Fellowship Award. Drawing directly onto used wooden boards and working from vintage photographs are integral facets of Lovell's work. Early examples include his installation for Project Row House in Houston, Texas (1995), and *Whispers from the Walls* (1999). See Lucy R. Lippard, *The Art of Whitfield Lovell: Whispers from the Walls*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Pomegranate, 2003); Hilarie M. Sheets, "Past and Present," *Art News* 107, no. 5 (2008): pp. 132–37; Nancy Princenthal, "A World in One Room," *Art in America* 89, no. 5 (2001): pp. 150–53; and Jennifer Way, "Reterritorialization and *Whispers from the Walls*," *Journal of Material Culture* 9 (2004): pp. 219–36.
2. "I Cover the Waterfront" was composed in 1933, with lyrics by Edward Heyman and music by Johnny Green. An instrumental-only recording was used as a sound track in James Cruze's 1933 film *I Cover the Waterfront*. See Mike Lubbers, "Billie Holiday Discography," www.billieholiday.be (accessed September 19, 2009).
3. Among the early tableaux to focus on servicemen are the World War I–era *Epoch* (2001), charcoal on wood, found objects, 77½ × 55 × 17½ in, collection of the Flint Institute of Arts, Michigan; and the World War II–era *Honor Bound* (2006), charcoal on wood, chain, 36¾ × 26 in, private collection.
4. See Leslie King-Hammond, "Whitfield Lovell in Conversation," in Lippard, *Art of Whitfield Lovell*, p. 64.
5. Kith and Kin, DC Moore Gallery, New York, October 2–November 8, 2008.
6. The riots were fomented by the violence toward the black soldiers and the enforced Jim Crow practices. Nineteen black soldiers were hanged, fifty-one were given life imprisonment, and another forty served time. See Gerald Astor, *The Right to Fight: A History of African Americans in the Military* (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1998); and Bernard C. Nalty, *Strength for the Fight: A History of Black Americans in the Military* (New York: Free Press, 1986).
7. "There is probably no irony in American history more pointed than the American black soldier fighting and dying for the basic American freedoms while being denied most of those same freedoms at home." Gary A. Donaldson, *Double V: The History of African-Americans in the Military* (Malabar, FL: Krieger, 1991), p. v. See also Astor, *Right to Fight*; Nalty, *Strength for the Fight*.
8. Toni Morrison, "The Site of Memory," in *Out There: Marginalization and the Contemporary Cultures*, ed. Russell Ferguson et al. (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art; Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), p. 302.
9. Morrison, "Site of Memory," p. 303.
10. "The End of World War One," Amistad Digital Resource, www.amistadresource.org/plantation_to_ghetto/the_end_of_world_war_one.html (accessed September 18, 2009). The Amistad Digital Resource concept site, directed by Manning Marable and Kate Wittenberg, was developed by the Columbia University Digital Knowledge Ventures.
11. W. E. B. DuBois, "Close Ranks," *Crisis*, July 1918, p. iii.
12. "African American Photographs Assembled for the 1900 Paris Exposition," lcweb2.loc.gov/pp/anedubquery.html (accessed September 19, 2009).

13. Whitfield Lovell, interview with the author, September 3, 2009. Lovell notes that some have seen a relationship between his work and M. M. Bakhtin's theory of the chronotope.
14. Peter Erikson, "The Black Atlantic in the Twenty-first Century: Artistic Passages, Circulations and Revisions," *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art*, no. 24 (2008): p. 58.
15. Lovell, interview with the author.
16. Lovell's work used *Billie Holiday: The Complete Commodore Recordings*. Holiday recorded both songs for the first time in 1939. Walter Winchell's recording is from May 18, 1941. Lovell, e-mail communication with the author, June 2009.
17. Lovell, e-mail communication with the author, September 2009.
18. "The card drawings were made from any face that I saw from any source that appealed to me — well, any vintage source. Newspapers, magazines, photo booth, studio portraits, vernacular snapshots, you name it." Ibid.
19. Lovell, interview with the author.
20. Ibid.
21. Lovell, e-mail communication with the author, September 2009.
22. Ibid.
23. Lovell, interview with the author.
24. Lovell, e-mail communication with the author, September 2009.
25. Linda Kim, "Distant Relations: Identity and Estrangement in Whitfield Lovell's *Kin Series*," in *Whitfield Lovell: Distant Relations* (exhibition catalog, Berrie Center for Performing and Visual Arts, Ramapo College of New Jersey, March 26–April 24, 2009), p. 8.
26. The lyrics were written by Alex Rogers and the music by Bert Williams. It was recorded and released in 1905–6.
27. In 1970 McKay released two albums, *Exuma I* and *Exuma II*, both deeply influenced by his Afro-Caribbean rhythms and folklore, as was the song "Dambala," a track from the first album.
28. Lovell, e-mail communication with the author, September 2009. For his 1981 collection of interconnected epistolary stories, *Damballah*, John Edgar Wideman invoked the same divine spirit to bind together stories that follow individual lives within a family tree from slavery to the 1960s. Wideman, *Damballah* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981), p. 7.
29. Virginia Danielson, *The Voice of Egypt: Umm Kulthum, Arabic Song, and Egyptian Society in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), p. 176.
30. Lucy R. Lippard, "Unforgettable: Whitfield Lovell as Historian of Memory," in Lippard, *Art of Whitfield Lovell*, p. 11.
31. Danielson, *Voice of Egypt*, pp. 1–2.

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