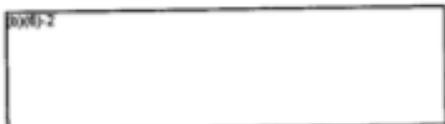


I've been asked to speak about my project DYKDB?, a selection of drawings from which are on view in the AJ exhibition. I've put up an image that is unrelated to the talk I'm giving today. Maybe to confuse or complicate, I've put up an image from a group of works that are going to be shown in India this fall as part of a solo exhibition in Mumbai.

Before I begin, I'd like to make a note of something that no one has mentioned yet- and maybe I am saying what is already obvious- the fact that we are holding this seminar in the shadow of the World Trade Center site. I mention this because the events of Sept. 11, have deeply shaped my practice in the past 10 years having first moved to New York to begin the Whitney program on September 11, 2001. I mention this b/c though I've always worked with historical images and texts, it wasn't until after Sept. 11 that the way I approached these images fundamentally changed.

When Niels asked me to speak about DYKDB? My response to this invitation to speak is to try to exceed the usual artist talk about intentions behind a given work. I would like to try something else. I would like to enact in the talk, the structure of my work. What I mean by this is that my work interrupts the original pedagogical functions of texts and images to reveal a subtext which is often violent. The interruption partially blocks the frequency through which the original material speaks. For the talk I will interrupt my own voice with the official record moving between official and unofficial, the clinical and the intimate, the secular and the religious, the past and the present and between the living and the dead. This is to try to embody the nature of the ideas that drive my work and thinking, so as to attempt to transcend the level of representation into the level of somatic experience.

VIII. OPINION: Based on these autopsy findings and the investigative and historical information available to me, the cause of death of this Pashtun male, [b)(7)(D)] is pulmonary embolism (blood clot that traveled to the heart and blocked the flow of blood to the lungs). The patterned abrasion on the back of the left calf is consistent with the tread of a boot. The severe injury to the underlying calf muscle and soft tissue is most likely a contributing factor. The deceased was not under the pharmacologic effects of drugs or alcohol at the time of death. Therefore, the manner of death, in my opinion is homicide.



LTC (P), MC, USA
Armed Forces Regional Medical Examiner

I am an American artist. I live in Berlin, Germany. Landstuhl, Germany is the home of the largest US medical center outside of the US. It's a military base that is the first destination out of Iraq and Afghanistan for American wounded and dead. This is where the dead American bodies are put back together and beautified before being sent home to their families. Landstuhl, Germany and Rockville, Maryland are twin sites where

autopsy notations, for Iraqi and Afghani detainees who have died in US custody, are compiled into standardized U.S. Military Autopsy Reports. In 2004 I found a series of these partially redacted reports on the ACLU's website. I've been thinking about the men that the reports identify by the weight of an organ, or the distribution of hair on their scalp or chest. In 2009 I began a project called DYKTDB?

B. EXTERNAL EXAMINATION: The remains are those of a well developed, well nourished Southwest Asian male of muscular build that appears compatible with the listed age of 27-28 years. Length is 5 feet, 4 inches. The body is well preserved and has not been embalmed. Multiple injuries are described below in the Evidence of Injury Section.

For me, the reports create a cocktail effect of nausea, sadness and rage. I did not know these men. I do not share their nationality. I do not even share their religion, nor for that matter their gender. But somehow it remains that we are joined. I am them and they are me. This isn't a mystical slight of hand. This is a fact. I am in those reports. We are all in those reports. Those men exist inside of us. The fact of their murders, whether the COD is Homicide or Natural Casues, The fact of their murders is a fact that cripples us progressively until we ourselves face death.

SKIN: Unremarkable except for evidence of injury that is described below in the Evidence of Injury Section. An apparent small pox vaccination scar is on the right upper arm. Well healed scars are noted below the right front knee and the left back knee. Two parallel lines of gray-black adhesive substance encircle the back of the head extending from ear to ear. The adhesive is consistent with that which is seen in tape products.

DYKTDB? Is a line borrowed from a Harold Pinter Poem: Death, which he recited for his Nobel Prize Speech in 2005 and which was a speech about the importance of speaking truth to the face of power.

Where was the dead body found?
Who found the dead body?
Was the dead body dead when found?
How was the dead body found?

Who was the dead body?

Who was the father or daughter or brother
Or uncle or sister or mother or son
Of the dead and abandoned body?

Was the body dead when abandoned?

Was the body abandoned?
By whom had it been abandoned?

Was the dead body naked or dressed for a journey?

What made you declare the dead body dead?
Did you declare the dead body dead?
How well did you know the dead body?
How did you know the dead body was dead?

Did you wash the dead body
Did you close both its eyes
Did you bury the body
Did you leave it abandoned
Did you kiss the dead body

-Harold Pinter, *Death*

To work and think about death means entering into a field of dissolution where once comfortable boundaries of self and other can no longer apply. Where the ground beneath you shifts constantly, and you have to merge with the emotional weight and history that carries you. Empathy is understood as the ability to feel or enter into the emotions of another. The science fiction writer Octavia Butler, in her dystopic novels *Parable of the Sower* and *Parable of the Talent*, created a main character suffering from an affliction called hyper-empathy syndrome- the inability to observe someone in pain without feeling pain to debilitating effects. This character directly experiences the pain and pleasure of another and is frequently incapacitated by the violence unfolding around her. With her abilities or affliction of hyper-empathy, she gains insight into others through a process that threatens the limits of her self.

I. CIRCUMSTANCES OF DEATH: The decedent is a 27-28 year old Pashtun male, who was found unresponsive, restrained in his cell, Bagram Collection Point (BCP), 0015, 4 December 2002. He was dead on arrival at the 339th CSH, Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan.

II. AUTHORIZATION: ~~Amend Form M-1015~~

I want to raise the dead.

There is a deep contradiction in the reports. The reports are an illusion of rationality and order. Obscuring everything they attempt to clarify, the documentary nature of the reports promotes the loss of memory and establishes a parallel truth fixated upon interrupted parts. Through the report, we forget that this dead body used to be human. The report turns the dead body into a corpse. It represents a second stage of death.

Circumstances of Death: This approximately 45 year-old civilian Iraq male detainee died in U.S. custody approximately 12 hours after a reported escape attempt by the decedent. Physical force was required to subdue the detainee, and during the restraining process, his forehead hit the ground.

I want to make these men material again. I want to remember what the autopsy reports ask us to forget. Those were human beings who died. In recalling the human being that the dead body used to be, in making this dead body a living human being again, I might know what killed him, and I might learn my own role in his death.

The report is an archive, a secular mechanism. But my thoughts turn to Catholic saints, the relics, bones, fingers, pieces of hair, imbued with centuries of faith, and remembrance of an individual life lived that brings collective meaning and hope. I am trying to raise the living dead.

II. GROSS AUTOPSY FINDINGS:

A. CLOTHING AND PERSONAL EFFECTS: The remains are presented for autopsy clothed in a disposable diaper. No additional clothing or personal effects accompany the body.

Osama bin Laden's body was not beautified. It was not beautified because nobody was supposed to see it. A soldier read a verse of the Coran in English, and a translator repeated it in Arabic. We threw him in the sea. We killed him and then we buried him. We threw him in the sea so he would never come back. We are not supposed to remember him. Osama is supposed to do have nothing to do with us. Osama was our monster and we killed him. Osama was not supposed to be a human being. "Justice has been done" shouted his doppelgänger.

Nobody ever dies. The dead stay with us. I want to celebrate the presence of our fantoms.

Enclosure (A) pertains. The Certificate of Death listed the cause of death as gunshot wounds to the back and the onset of death from seconds to minutes. Enclosure (B) pertains. Dr. Scott A. IJZI.

Did we kiss Osama's body? Did we suffer when Osama was murdered? Can we embrace and love his dead body?