

MATTHEW BROWN LOS ANGELES

LAM

ART, CULTURE AND THE CITY

LIVING
THROUGH
HISTORY
A VISUAL
TIME
CAPSULE



DISPLAY UNTIL 10/01/2020
\$12.00US



*Close your Eyes the
Dream is Coming*

Presence and Possibility

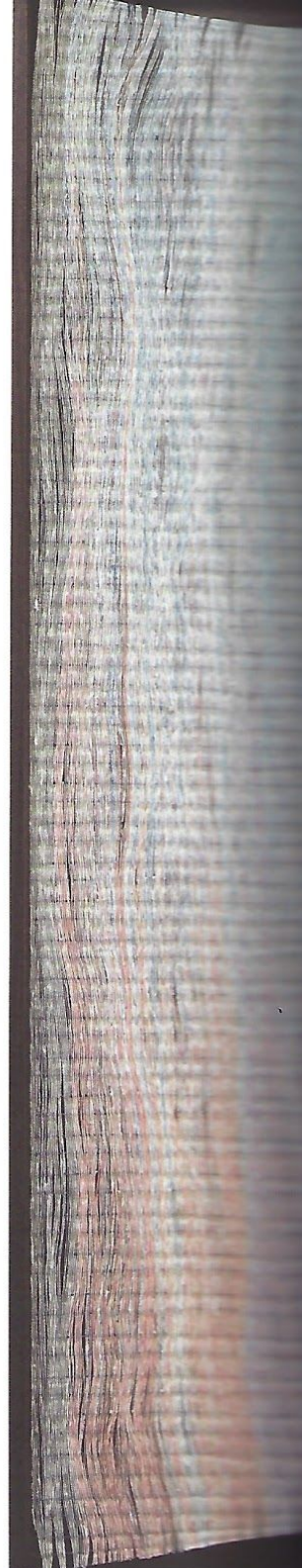
BY KENTURAH DAVIS

I'M USUALLY STILL AWAKE TO HEAR THE BIRDS start their singing before dawn, but by the afternoon, I'm rotating through a plethora of other musical sounds, from Alice Smith and Ari Lennox to Kamasi Washington and Nina Simone. Incense smoke disperses the scent of palo santo and frankincense in my home studio throughout the day. Seven new plants call out for attention from my front window. Their names: Sade, Keisha, Akosua, Ebony, Toni, Moses and Truth. All of them now bear witness to my efforts to metabolize what is happening in the world through my work. No words quite capture the level of whiplash I've felt over the past few months, but these daily pleasures deliver encouragement and clarity about how to do my part in this protracted pursuit of freedom and equality for all.

Although I started this drawing shortly before the quarantine, it seems appropriate to share a work of art that has required my sustained attention and labor, even up to the moment of this publication. The drawing has two parts: the portrait and the weaving. I began the portrait by inscribing a text that cites the work of astrophysicist Dr. Jedidah Isler and theoretical physicist Dr. Ronald Mallett. Both are Black scientists whose experiences with loss and hardship shaped their paths within disciplines defined by discovery and invention. The words form narrow grooves in the paper that remained nearly invisible until I began rubbing the surface with pencil to render the figure. The portrait depicts the movement of my friend Erica Chidi, whose own work around body literacy and womxn's health is affirmed by the liminal and radical ideas recorded in the text. The weaving began with text as well. On thin sheets of handmade paper, I wrote a poetic science fiction about time anomalies, flight and Blackness. I then proceeded to transform the paper into threads and carefully wove them into the customized frame. So far, over 2,000 feet of hand-cut, hand-rolled and hand-spun paper fill the frame with undulating colors that evidence the various inks I used to write the text.

As an artist I find value in alternating between strategies that challenge our understanding of the world as it is on one hand and as it could be on the other. I offer the words of my guiding light, Toni Morrison, as a closing meditation that bridges this duality between presence and possibility: "This is precisely the time when artists go to work. There is no time for despair, no place for self-pity, no need for silence, no room for fear. We speak, we write, we do language. That is how civilizations heal. I know the world is bruised and bleeding, and though it is important not to ignore its pain, it is also critical to refuse to succumb to its malevolence. Like failure, chaos contains information that can lead to knowledge—even wisdom. Like art."

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2020
Artist's solo show, "Everything That
Must Be Known," at the SCAD Museum
is on view through December.

