
Ryan Muthiora

Installation Art
Fall 2017

Glenn Ligon

4th September 2017

EARLY LIFE

Ligon was born and raised in New York City, his divorced parents worked very hard to send Glenn and his brother to a prestigious private school on the Upper West side of Manhattan. He continued his elite education at Wesleyan University, and began working part time at a law firm while working on abstract expressionist painting in his free time.

To Disembark

- This installation is only able to reach its full potential if it is installed in a specific space. The room must have clean, white walls to reinforce the Zora Neale Hurston quotes that are surrounding the boxes
- The room must be completely open, so the viewer can move between the 9 boxes and experience the sounds without distraction
- The viewer must spend a specific amount of time at each box to hear the full audio recording, the same goes for the wall pieces, which contain small amounts of text, but require careful reading
- Ligon attempts to contextualize his experience as a black man in America, and the battle of obtaining freedom. Runaway slave posters with images of himself, and human sized shipping crates are used to portray the artist as a contemporary slave.
- The viewer experience is one of being drawn in more closely to the life of a black person in America. The more privileged demographics are the ones who would get the most out of experiencing this installation; it puts their privilege into perspective by showing the struggle of their disenfranchised compatriots.
- At first glance, this installation might seem visually bland: The shipping crates are not elaborately decorated, and the wall pieces are intentionally simple. The seemingly haphazard arrangement of the crates draws the visitor in close to listen to what is being said, making the experience exceedingly intimate.
- Ligon uses black-cultural sounds from multiple generations to make the point of unchanging conditions for African Americans: The same box, no matter the era. The evolving sounds help to sustain the visitor's attention, there is something new and different at every stop, from slave era dialogue to contemporary hip hop.
- The element of surprise in To Disembark is variable based on the viewer. An African American visitor may not be as surprised as an affluent white visitor, for example.
- Ligon resolves this piece by objectifying himself, and other black people, while also making himself more human.

