

Listening to Images (An Exercise in Counter-Intuition)

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*Some photos are not quiet at all.*¹

As the name of the book suggests, I feel that the book does highlight many aspects of which the primary concern beckons of ‘how one chooses to look at an image’ and consequentially ‘going beyond than just seeing images’?

The author defines her way of engaging with the term ‘listening to images’ as “constituted as a practice of looking beyond what we see and attuning our senses to the other effective frequency through which photographs registers”.² The initial response after reading the passage provides an insight into the subjectivity of personhood and trying to reconsider one’s position at not just looking at an image that is rendered mute. Rather one effectively attempts to mediate one’s frequencies when you come in contact with photographs, both contemporary and old. Further, the theme of sonic/sound resonated via pictures is something that further raised my curiosity to understand the meaning of ‘what-we-see’ and ‘how-it-resonates’³?

The engagement one has with the ‘quotidian’ is something that reverberates in all occupations and to align it with the engagement of audio-visual sensory capacity is something that leaves a heavy footprint of, how images are observed and/or understood. The primary impetus seemed to revolve around ‘identification photography’ albeit nascent I wanted to get some perspective on the ambiguity concerning photographs and it’s archiving. Through the process of sharing, interpreting, and retelling these readings have had a profound effect upon understanding the fluidity of identities among individuals, local and regional communities and, additively the *African diaspora*.

Visual archives of the African diaspora, Commonwealth migrants, and 20th-century Convicts in South Africa all narrate an urge to (re)interpret and consider these images as processual something that is always going to be reintroduced and reoriented with multiple contexts and ideas. Each chapter addresses the idea of ‘stasis’ which is shrouded by discourses, conversations and engagement with contemporary themes like migration, diaspora, black and colonial history which albeit indexical seems to strike so many questions which are far-reaching than just visual archives or praxis but seems us to offer social histories of communities that these images were once part of. While talking about haptics and temporality of an image,

¹ Campt M.Tina, “Listening to Images”, *Duke University Press* (2017), 116

² Campt, M. Tina, “Listening to Images”, 9

³ Ibid, 33

one is inadvertently pondering about the plethora of opportunities that images provide considering the contemporary usage of technology, how one engages with it and its (re)orientation in the 'present'.

The trajectory then seem to offers us, readers, to read out of these images rather than read in, to bring out different oeuvres that each chapter brings forth and the photographs that our senses gaze upon. In the concluding chapter on 'black futurity' in contemporary times the author offers us a brief narrative on creating a future, especially in tandem with a 'black feminist praxis' who has to conceive and accept a future that has not occurred yet but simultaneously must bear witness the surmounting disposability of black lives that don't seem to sustain itself?⁴

⁴ Ibid, 107