Research Article

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"If You Don't Bring No Grits, Don't Come": Critiquing a Critique of Patrick Kelly, Golliwogs, And Camp as A Technique of Black Queer Expression

Abstract: I have written this article in order to establish Patrick Kelly as a black forbearer of fashion. Kelly complicates our sense of fashion through his use of black memorabilia and camp to not only create something consumable but to comment on the black body as a consumable. Therefore, the role I play in acknowledging this black supernova, as Eric Darnell Pritchard calls him, is by critiquing Lewis and Fraley's critique of Patrick Kelly and questioning why overtly expressing one's queerness through camp has not been seen as a viable form of black expression in the mainstream narrative of black creativity. Lewis and Fraley's complete dismissal of Kelly's use of camp does not happen in a vacuum. Yet, I must remember that there is also the task of establishing a legacy of technique for Patrick Kelly. Who are his forbearers?

Introduction

Prominent in the mid-late 1980s, Patrick Kelly (1954-1990) was a fashion designer known for being the first American to be accepted into the Chambre de Syndicale of Paris. Kelly is still lauded for his fun-loving spirit and the body-conscious style of his ready-to-wear. However, he is most well-known for his camping of black memorabilia—figures and images associated with racist depictions of black people. Notably, many stores had refused to sell his work. These predominately American stores deemed the designs racist and unfit for consumption, even though Kelly himself was a black man. Kelly appropriated tropes and symbols such as the pickaninny (which he made pins of to pass out to fashion show attendees), red bandana fabrics (associated with the mammy/Aunt Jemima figure), watermelon accessories (the fruit stereotypically imagined to be loved by blacks), as well as the subversive iconography of Josephine Baker and her famous banana skirt costume. However, his most iconic and overt appropriation had to be that of the golliwog.

Understanding Golly

Before the golliwog became Patrick Kelly's logo and memento mori, it was a children's book character serialised by Bertha and Florence Kate Upton from 1895 to 1910. In their *Adventures of Two Dutch Dolls and*

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a Golliwog, the two dolls meet a "black gnome," to which one calls him, Golliwog. Lois Kuznets describes the golliwog in the Uptons' series as having "black skin and unruly hair, [but] is clearly a gentleman in both manners and somewhat dandified attire" (106). "He is neither an Uncle Tom nor a sissy" (Kuznets 106) as he defends himself against other toys by throwing snowballs at them when attacked. Yet, Kuznets also claims that the Two Dutch Dolls and Golliwog series "stretches conventional racial roles to that of virtual biracial romance" (105). I believe that this is a generous assumption because of Kuznets's own words. She states that the comic incongruity of the golliwog's gentlemanliness and his minstrel aesthetic degrade his assumption as the token; the exception to the idea of the other as dangerous because he is actually "white inside" (Kuznets 107).

Furthermore, Kuznets touches upon something that survives Patrick Kelly's appropriation of the golliwog, and that is the commentary on black masculinity and the performance of it. The golliwog itself is an appropriation of blackface, specifically the black dandy trope. This connection would make sense seeing that Florence Kate Upton, the illustrator of the two, grew up in the United States, specifically Queens, New York, born to British parents before returning to England to launch a literary career with her mother, Bertha. New York is the birthplace of minstrelsy, with Upton growing up during its heyday, its appropriation by black performers, its demise stateside, and its rise in popularity abroad in Europe. Kuznets even states that Upton based the golliwog on a doll that she once had. Could it have been a souvenir from a minstrel show?

My point here is that Upton knew of the black dandy trope. Monica Miller states that the black dandy character could be considered central to minstrelsy in its response "to white anxieties about transformations in America" (Miller 97) because the emergence of the black dandy into the urban North marked an emergence of black wealth and in response, a fear of the unknown.

The black dandy trope was created and modified throughout minstrelsy's reign as a reaction to the real black dandies that were multiplying throughout the urban north. Seeing that the emergence of the black dandy occurred around the shift from flamboyant dress and conspicuous consumption to sobriety and the ideals of modest wealth, the black dandy created an argument about class restrictions, as well as race restrictions; i.e. social rules that dictated who was allowed or not allowed to wear certain things. However, the black dandy evolved beyond the split between flashy and sober dress, and over time, the black dandy trope became "a cultural critique of perceived white decadence that becomes increasingly difficult to parse from concerns about black 'striving'" (Miller 96). These concerns about the growing visibly of black masculinity manifest themselves in minstrel performance and mirror the adventures of Upton's golliwog.

Yet, Kuznets speaks of the golliwog being neither an Uncle Tom nor a sissy, gentlemanly in appearance and manner, aspiring to whiteness, and engaging in "virtual biracial romance" (106). The black dandy trope in engaged with all of these themes, aesthetics, and performances in a more overt and explicit way. The black dandy trope was a hyper-heterosexualized fop who took his freedom took far in dress and sexual desires. He aspired to whiteness via dandyism adopting a distinctly white, elite garb while having sexual encounters with white women. He also fought violently with other minstrel tropes in performance because he was no Uncle Tom and had no desire to bend to authority or reminisce about the "good life" on the plantation.

However, because the dandy trope and the golliwog are depicted in the traditional hetero-normative fashion, caricaturing the "sissiness" of black masculinity is virtually non-existent before the twentieth century. It will be over eighty years before Patrick Kelly utilises the golliwog to create an emblematic commentary on masculinity under a dual gaze, othered as black and othered as queer; even though, there is something yet to be uncovered about the racial cross-dressing and the homosocial nature of minstrelsy.

Understanding Kelly

Kelly's designs have, in recent years, been popularised by two retrospective exhibitions: *Patrick Kelly: A Retrospective*, Brooklyn Museum (April-September 2004) and *Patrick Kelly: Runway of Love*, Philadelphia Museum of Art (April-December 2014). Thelma Golden, the guest curator for the Brooklyn Museum respective, stated that:

> After I started work on this exhibition, I stopped thinking about Patrick as a designer and started thinking of him as an artist [...] And whether you call his collection negrophilia or black memorabilia, these are objects that always provoke a conversation, and Patrick understood that sometimes the only way that you can have this dialogue is by taking a route that isn't so clearly understood as good or bad. They are as critical to thinking about his work as his beloved bows and buttons. (qtd. in Silva)

Golden saw Kelly in very much the same way I do, as "a precedent for contemporary black artists like Kara Walker, who plays with racial stereotypes in image making" (qtd. in Silva). Even his partner, Bjorn Amelan, although a white Frenchman, was aware of Kelly's deconstruction of racist stereotypes and image making techniques, stating, "[Kelly], in his typical manner, chose to appropriate [black memorabilia] and enhance it rather than hiding it [...] There's empowerment in an act of ownership—not physical but mental ownership" (qtd. in Givhan). Upon his death in 1990, Kelly had thousands of objects depicting golliwogs amongst other black memorabilia. As he admits, he began collecting black memorabilia when a black woman told him that her daughter would never want a black doll. Kelly, who had been carrying a black doll with him, responded, "If your daughter would throw away a black doll and she's black, there is something wrong" (qtd. in Hyde). Kelly's designs used camp to subvert the images of those dolls, seemingly every day tchotchkes, purposefully oppressing black bodies since emancipation. Yet, he deconstructed the jarring images of the golliwog, pickaninny, and the mammy much like a pop artist. He continuously reimagined those images in an attempt to reclaim and redefine their meanings through highly ornamental garments and ballroom performance-esque runway shows. Kelly's use of camp involved a rebellion of othering by visualising, performing, and claiming ownership of that othering; subverting the connotations of black memorabilia and its form with queer coding. Camp, with Kelly, was a visualisation of racial and sexual oppression.

Richard Powell seeks assistance from Raymond Saunders when he states that artists, post-Civil Rights Movement, sought to rise above racial hang-ups to work through instead of over the transgressions against them (125). With these artists, "color is the means not the end" (Saunders), as appropriation makes images subject to a multiplicity of meanings. Like post-Civil Rights artists, Patrick Kelly's golliwog was essentially "black art being placed within a wider reality of visual perception, racial illusion, and an improvisational space that puts artistic risk-taking and process in the forefront" (Powell 126). Think of Betye Saar and her assemblage of the mammy trope in *Liberation of Aunt Jemima* (1972). Saar provides a great instance of "[seeking] cultural difference as an advantage" (Powell 144) as well as providing an ancestral anchor point for Patrick Kelly and his queer golly. Therefore, one can understand how my interests piqued when Van Dyk Lewis and Keith Fraley stated, in the only peer-reviewed article about Patrick Kelly, that fashion and the use of fashion to subvert particularly racist relics of blackness are a "degradation of meaning and effect" (334).

Lewis, Fraley and "The Great Black Hope"

Lewis and Fraley continue to state that "blacks who operate in this [fashion] system must ensure their place by employing self-sabotage and watering down blackness" (334). To be clear, Lewis and Fraley's article does not acknowledge Kelly's work as camp or speak of camp, let alone queerness at all, but what their critique does provide is evidence of the continuing lack of acknowledgement for blackness and queerness in collaboration through design and performance. Furthermore, there is a sense of identity politics in the article and what is deemed the appropriate means and medium to express blackness, and any techniques that work outside of those *proper demonstrations* of blackness, techniques on the fringes of black expression, are deemed wrong and unacceptable to the community. As aptly summed up by Kwame Anthony Appiah:

> I am never quite sure what people mean when they talk about "identity politics." Usually, though, they bring it up to complain about someone else. One's own political preoccupations are just, well, politics. Identity is what other people do. (15)

Identity politics usually surrounds a distaste for others' social expressions and what one has deemed the idem, which means the sameness or generality of an identity (Appiah 15). In the case of Lewis, Fraley, and the appropriation of racist imagery in Kelly's designs, the idem is black expression. This idea of the

community that has no room for the individual despite these same communities being consisted of said individuals. This aforementioned concept is what Appiah calls ascription (16). Lewis and Fraley, in their article, are essentially dictating who is and who is not black according to their considered idem of black expression, and Kelly does not fit the script.

Lewis and Fraley continue to critique Kelly as keeping with the Hegelian master-slave dialectic because he accepted an "aestheticism based on the master's vision [and his] work becomes one of mitigating evil" (342). Kelly designed ready-to-wear in Paris and sold to an elite and significantly white clientele, with Bette Davis being one of his biggest clients, even though he was known to dress Cicely Tyson, Iman, Naomi Campbell, Grace Jones (who was featured in *Paris Match* wearing his designs as well as his runway shows), and Pat Cleveland (who also featured in his runway shows and bought him his first ticket to Paris). Kelly is assumed by Lewis and Fraley to be complacent in white dominance because of the level at which he designed, ready-to-wear, and where he designed, in Paris. Yet, Kelly cheekily stated that "Goldie Hawn paid cold cash" (qtd. in Hornblower) in reference to making certain white women pay more for his designs.

Lewis and Fraley mention Kelly posturing to the Parisian fashion world in hopes of being called "urban cool" (335). I have a difficult time seeing the evidence of Patrick Kelly's urban coolness as he has been documented playing up his Mississippi Southerness for any audience that would have him, with his cousin stating that when he came to visit Kelly in Paris, Kelly said, "If you don't bring no grits, don't come"; or when Kelly called out to passersby in a Southern drawl on the Boulevard St. Germaine, "Tres chic! Pas cher!" (Very stylish! Cheap!), while selling his early designs (qtd. in Hornblower), as well as Kelly wearing his signature oversized overalls as a homage to his alleged sharecropping ancestors.

Therefore, my question to Lewis and Fraley is, where then does the problem lie with Patrick Kelly and his designs? It cannot solely be the consumption of blackness via the white dollar, as that happens anytime anyone black creates something consumable, i.e. Beyoncé, Basquiat, Michael Jordan and his sneakers. Then, is the problem the black memorabilia? It would seem so as this problem was the basis of the article. However, black artists, as the Thelma Golden quote shows, have been exploring the connotations of racist imagery since Romare Bearden, if not earlier. Bearden's work is sold to the white elite all the time. Therefore, was Bearden complacent in white dominance when he created *The Train* in 1974?

I argue that the real problem with Patrick Kelly lies in these "dichotomies of opposites" that Lewis and Fraley speak of (334). They state that the fashion democracy frees the body from binaries that society has put upon the individual over time, "radical versus traditional," "unacceptable aesthetics versus acceptable aesthetics," and "self versus myth" (Lewis and Fraley 334). However, in the predominance of fashion democracy and the industry's "colonizing fervour," the marginalised became the tokens of cool (Lewis and Fraley 334). Yet, Lewis and Fraley also acknowledge that "cultures [...] cannot render exactitude or finality to any assemblage, material, systematic or relational human event" (Lewis and Fraley 334), and fashion is indeed a culture. Therefore, if fashion cannot, in fact, reduce marginalisation to a badge of cool despite its best efforts, to paraphrase Lewis and Fraley (334); then, why have Lewis and Fraley subscribed to this same reduction in their critique of Patrick Kelly? Why was Patrick Kelly not considered by Lewis and Fraley under his assemblage as a black, gay male who used black memorabilia to create clothing? Neither the dichotomies of blackness and queerness are acknowledged in Lewis and Fraley's article, nor do they speak of Kelly's designs as creations that challenge the binary, specifically what it means to be black and queer simultaneously; or perhaps, do Lewis and Fraley believe that someone like Patrick Kelly was simply not allowed design at all?

Yet, Lewis and Fraley also speak of fashion and its multiplicities, the connections and flows between them: human, object, image, natural, and plastic (334). However, not once do they make any connections to Kelly's designs within these realms or even acknowledge the intersections between them. Let us consider the intersectionality of these four realms briefly. The human + object + image collaborative could be considered under the post-Civil Rights designer-artist and the melding of abstract and the figurative blackness (Powell 152). The body and the self merge in the critical signifying of difference and transform the object into subject (Mercer 29). Lastly, combining the exploration of the natural and plastic could be utilised in understanding the use of camp artificiality to subvert the assumptions of the real black body. However, once again Lewis and Fraley do not acknowledge Kelly's campness, or they confuse it with kitsch. Furthermore, they overlook

Kelly's queerness and how being a black gay man heavily influenced his designs and the embodiment of them in print and on the runway.

Derek Conrad Murray believes that the idem or generality of black expression, particularly in the west, is toxically patriarchal and hetero-normative (3). Such non-intersectional black expression is something that Lewis and Fraley may subscribe to, as they use Hegelian language to express how Kelly is anti-black because he appropriates racist imagery without even acknowledging his queerness as a factor of that appropriation. Instead, it may have been more constructive for Lewis and Fraley, as Appiah suggests, to deconstruct the "politics of recognition" using Hegel (19) and understand why Kelly, as a black, queer male designer, camps the image of the golliwog and why this queering of racist imagery makes them so uncomfortable in the first place? Yet, Lewis and Fraley, instead, state what it is Kelly "ought and ought not to do" (Appiah 17) from the past, a dialectical "blacks ought not embarrass the race" (Appiah 17).

Recovering Patrick Kelly

Murray defines post-black, as not simply an art movement but an ethos, "a necessity for artists and intellectuals to resist the stifling dictates of racial obligation and its attendant socio-political dogmas. [...] Post-black challenges an existing intolerance that has led to forms of erasure and neglect" (3). Thinking of Kelly as post-black, I have made comparative observations to artists of the ethos, so that I could somehow recover him from Lewis and Fraley's critique and re-establish him as a significant part black fashion history and culture. This brief pseudo-excavation follows Eric Pritchard's notion of ancestorship and mining for the expressions of black queer identities by attempting to uncover legacies of technique (108). In my explorations of Patrick Kelly as a designer-artist, I used Pritchard's questions (1) who are the black queer forbearers of fashion studies? (2) Who are the ones who complicate our sense of fashion, and (3) what role do you play in acknowledging black fashion and its history (109)?

So far, I am writing this article in order to establish Patrick Kelly as a black forbearer of fashion.[1] Kelly complicates our sense of fashion through his use of black memorabilia and camp to not only create something consumable but to comment on the black body as a consumable. Therefore, the role I play in acknowledging this black supernova, as Pritchard calls him, is by critiquing Lewis and Fraley's critique of Patrick Kelly and questioning why overtly expressing one's queerness through camp has not been seen as a viable form of black expression in the mainstream narrative of black creativity. Lewis and Fraley's complete dismissal of Kelly's use of camp does not happen in a vacuum. Yet, I must remember that there is also the task of establishing a legacy of technique for Patrick Kelly. Who are his forbearers?

In my effort to recover Patrick Kelly's expressive genealogy, I thought of Glenn Ligon; even though, Ligon could be considered as a post-black contemporary than a forebearer. Yet, I thought of how Ligon's *Untitled (Malcolm X)* deploys the same technique of feminising the hetero-normative black male symbol as Kelly does with his golliwog logo. Where Kelly's golly fashions earrings and lipstick, Ligon's depiction of Malcolm X does the same with the addition of eyeshadow. As Murray states, Malcolm X represents a "fraught and potent symbol for a type of ethnic authenticity that negates sexual difference" (30). By "gussying up" Malcolm X as a signifier for a type of black representational ideal, Ligon "signifies both its malleability and its inability to fully encapsulate the complexity of the African-American experience" (Murray 30). *Untitled (Malcolm X)* is a queer critique of hetero-normative black masculinity (Murray 30). The white gaze is absent, and rightfully so because the piece is about a

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1 It should be noted that this article does not aim to place Patrick Kelly's designs and designer identity in a wider context of post-colonial fashion theory. Admittedly, there is definitely more to be said about Patrick Kelly in that context. I mean particularly the history of black fashion designers who have entered the white dominated space of ready-to-wear fashion (i.e. Stephen Burrows and Willi Smith); the history/patterns of high fashion's appropriation of blackness (specifically streetwear), racial imagery, and African motifs, as well as the widely ignored issue of black queer influence on black style. However, my focus is to introduce Patrick Kelly's methods of black expression, to validate his use of black memorabilia to express his black queer identity and to anchor his design techniques. This is why I decided to step away from a fashion-centric context. Patrick Kelly is referred to as a designer-artist in this article as there were no black designers before Kelly utilising counter-appropriation as a design technique.

black queer male looking upon a totem of black masculinity and finding faults with it. Both Ligon and Kelly "satirically [engage] with race and sexual difference" (Murray 30). However, Kelly's golly logo is a queer critique of both the white gaze upon blackness and possibly the black assumptions of queerness. Ligon's *Untitled (Malcolm X)* is also dated from 2008 which is much too late for forbearing on Patrick Kelly's logo.

Other artists that I considered as Kelly's forbearers were Robert Colescott and Michael Ray Charles. They both employed satirical signifying techniques and engaged in problematizing the essentialized notions of race and sexuality. They both also dealt with mixed reactions to their appropriations of racial imagery. As Robert Colescott, himself, states in reference to his *George Washington Carver Crossing the Delaware* (1975) representing the United States at the 1997 Venice Biennale:

> When I first got the idea for the painting, I thought that everybody would get it. I just thought, this is ridiculous; this is funny. There is a layer about tokenism and another about education, and everybody will get it. It never occurred to me that there would be those who wouldn't get it and who might even take offence at it. I just did it with the assumption that this was going to be my historical painting, my bicentennial statement about American history (qtd in Fitzgerald 14-15).

Colescott's *George Washington Carver Crossing the Delaware*, particularly produces a "counterfactual, historical narrative that produces ironic critiques of American racism" (Todd 13). Colescott's painting is modelled after Emanuel Leutze's *George Washington Crossing the Delaware* (1851), and Eileen Todd states that Colescott "uses the Leutze to reveal the multiple absences and skewed portrayals of African-Americans from history and art history alike" (15). Todd continues to state that Colescott's "use of easily recognizable masterpieces by white male artists highlights the absence of African-American artists from canonical art making" (13) giving Colescott's work an autobiographical tone which parallels Patrick Kelly's golly beyond the appropriation of racist imagery, as Kelly's golly logo could be considered a portrait of Kelly himself.

Michael Ray Charles also voiced his woes of acceptance, stating that "One woman asked me, 'How does it feel to be the Clarence Thomas of the art world?'" (qtd. in Heller). Because Charles did not subscribe to the idem of black expression as the anonymous woman, he was deemed to be a sellout like the infamous Clarence Thomas, who is well-known (undeservedly so) for being the second black supreme court justice and first black conservative to be appointed by George Bush in 1991. This was despite being accused of sexual harassment by lawyer, Anita Hill, during his confirmation hearing.

The irony here is not lost, seeing that, Anita Hill's testimony of her subjection to Thomas' abuse, using his black patriarchal privilege over her, was completely ignored by an audience of men; whereas Charles's works, although still rooted in misogyny, deliberately counter-appropriate the mammy figure from desexualised to hyper-sexualised. Historically, the mammy was a completely desexualised female trope that entered white spaces through domestic work and mothering white families, never exhibiting any desires or dimensions beyond nurturing white bodies. Kelly has also attempted this re-insertion of sexuality to the mammy, as evident in his spring/summer 1988 collection. As if competing for trophies at a ball, the women strut confidently down the runway in flamenco cut skirts made of red bandana printed fabric exaggerated by watermelon hats and bras.

Furthermore, Charles had a similar rise to fame as Kelly, seemingly reaching stardom overnight, and he too collected black memorabilia. Even more so, Kelly faced a similar critique of his work: "One very intelligent woman said she didn't like the Aunt Jemimas because they reminded her of maids, I said, 'My grandmother was a maid, honey.' My memorabilia means a lot to me" (qtd. in Givhan). However, both Michael Ray Charles and Robert Colescott still work within hetero-normative constructs of blackness. Gender roles and expectations are still prevalent despite their impressive deconstructions of blackness, which brings us back to Betye Saar as Kelly's ancestral anchor for seeking cultural difference as an advantage.

In *Liberation of Aunt Jemima*, Betye Saar too uses the same dialectical image of the mammy in assemblage to counter-appropriate white assumptions and expectations of the black female body. Powell states that Saar's appropriation of racial iconography is a "marshalling of symbolic or conceptual strategies in visual communication [...] blackness as absurdist yet penetrating [...] shifting racial paradigms between abstraction and figurative" (152-160). Saar uses "attitude as agency" with expressive awesomeness (Powell

160). Saar is aggressive and unapologetic in her artistic voice (Powell 160). Even though Saar's work predates the post-black ethos, her signifying techniques still resonate, "to signify a desire to question constructions of African-American identity that negate forms of difference, particularly the subjectivities of women and queer people [...] [as] the official forms of African-American resistance have regarded the concerns of gender and queerness as a threat to its aims" (Murray 2-3).

For me, the same could be argued about Kelly and his use of the golliwog as his logo. He employs the same assemblage techniques as Saar to visually communicate his blackness, and just as importantly, his queerness. As a post-black designer-artist, he explores the problems of the black idem that have been dictated by the white gaze. By appropriating the golliwog as his logo and Aunt Jemima as his muse, he foregrounds these particular depictions of blackness as absurdist, but they are still penetrating to the eye because of those same racist fantasies involving the dehumanising and desexualising of black body that the images evoke. Here is attitude as agency. Here is expressive awesomeness. I would not categorise Kelly's designs as aggressive; however, they are very much unapologetic. Hence, I strongly disagree with Lewis and Fraley's claim that they represent 'accommodation rather than resistance' (339).

Lewis and Fraley launch many other attacks against Patrick Kelly in their article. They argue that "he compromised everything—heritage, legacy, and respect" (335); "Kelly as a poor boy poseur" i.e. the token (338); "Kelly's knowledge, love, and respect for his culture might be construed as a love without respect [...] a place where gaps in meaning are perpetuated" (341); and lastly, "[his] use of racialized imagery was seen as a betrayal of the past reality and entry into his dream" (342). I agree that there is some merit to Lewis and Fraley's counterproductive critique as Kelly's designs and his technique of counter-appropriation are a fuzzy, grey area of agency where an agreed upon negative does not always equate to an agreed upon positive. Although Kelly was said to have charged some of those elite white women more for his garments, this upcharge also excluded Bette Davis, an elite white woman he was very close friends with. Golden stated that Kelly "understood that the media gave him a voice" (Givhan), and Kelly himself stated that "a black American in Paris sells" (qtd. in Silva). This statement strongly reminds me of Rotimi Fani-Kayode's claim, commenting on the white consumption of his art—and the fetishisation of black male bodies in the process, that "black ass sells almost as well as black dick" (3). Although Lewis and Fraley state that "indeed any claim that fashion is concerned with surface misses the point" (338), what they do in their article is exactly that. They are concerned with surface and as a result miss the point, specifically the point of an artist translating their experiences with identity into their artwork.

A self-mythologizer of his own identity, Kelly spoke of his experiences with racism often to the media. Kelly stated that the used books shipped from a white elementary school in Vicksburg, Mississippi, where he grew up, would have the faces of "Dick and Sally" coloured in by those white students so that "they'd be black when they got to us" (qtd. in Hornblower). He also talked about being militant at Jackson State University before dropping out, "I remember singing 'burn baby, burn' and knowing what it meant" (qtd. in Hornblower), having said this in response to a college friend hanging himself in jail. Lastly, in response to the Ku Klux Klan sending him hate-mail, Kelly called them the "Cha Cha Cha" and asked a reporter, "Honey, what do they know about fashion except for a white robe?" (qtd. in Silva). These anecdotes are all responses to subjection, which can be explained by Appiah's claim that:

> One form of healing pursued by those who have these [marginalized] identities involves seeing these collective identities not as sources of limitation and insult but as valuable parts of who they are [...] and [to] do the cultural work necessary to resist the stereotypes, to challenge the insults, to lift the restrictions. (20)

Appiah suggests that "since these old restrictions suggested substantially negative norms of identification, constructing a life with dignity entails developing positive norms of identification" (20). Here, he uses the example of gay men post-Stonewall and gay liberation "[taking] the script of the closet, and [working], in a community with others, to assemble a series of positive gay norms of identification. This new conception of gay recodes being a faggot as being gay, which requires among other things, declining to stay in the closet" (Appiah 20). Essentially, some gay men have counter-appropriated the derogatory word "faggot" to identify themselves, but not necessarily in the effort to turn a negative into a positive, which can be very problematic

in transference, but rather counter-appropriate to empower which does not necessarily rely on an absolute positive image to counter the negative ones.

Similarly to linguistic counter-appropriation, both Saar's *Liberation of Aunt Jemima* and Kelly's golliwog logo demonstrate that the counter-appropriation of an image can also be an effective tool for empowerment. Yet to reiterate, not everyone who is of the same ilk will view counter-appropriation as a positive, as counter-appropriation is an internal deconstruction that is manifested through external expression. The complexity of counter-appropriation alone shows that for Lewis and Fraley to solely contextualize Patrick Kelly in the Hegelian framework of master-slave complacency, which only examines the surface of Kelly's designs and the assumed motivations of Kelly's design process in a white-centric, patriarchal, hetero-normative, and frankly, capitalist lens is purposefully lacking context regarding not only the designer identity but also the actual process of designing. Furthermore, Lewis and Fraley's argument also lacks in the queer influence of Kelly's designs, i.e. camp, and the use of dress to visualise racial and sexual transgression.

Camp (With a Bit on Kitsch) and the Semiotics of Patrick Kelly

Lewis and Fraley state that Kelly "seemingly unknowingly turned racial politics inside out [as he] embraced racist imagery" (334). I definitely agree that Kelly turned racial politics inside out with his designs, and like Betye Saar, he had to embrace racist imagery to do so. However, I do not think this was done "seemingly unknowingly." Perhaps his interest stemmed from his two years as a black history and art history double major at Jackson State University. Therefore, he was most likely educated on the Black Arts Movement and subsequently the assemblage style of Betye Saar, and then later introduced to the golliwog in Paris.

For Kelly's golly, the means through which Kelly expressed his blackness was camping the image of the golliwog using fashion as his medium. Susan Sontag problematically defines camp as a "sensibility" (277) that is "disengaged and depoliticized" (277) "emphasizing texture and style at the expense of content" (278). Yet, Moe Meyer defines camp as offering "[...] a transgressive vehicle [for queer social visibility] yet, on the other, simultaneously invokes the specter of dominant ideology within its practice, appearing in many instances to actually reinforce the dominant order" (11). Although I agree with Sontag on her descriptions of forms in which camp can manifest, I also agree with Meyer's observation of Sontag's disregard of camp's queer origins. Camp has been associated with white queer men since the turn of the 20th century. However, I also disagree with Meyer's definition of camp as parody. I believe that camp is a more complex critique or twist of the real that reaches into mimicry and deconstructing representation, especially when a black, queer designer such as Patrick Kelly is seeking empowerment through creating camp ready-to-wear.

To me, camp is inherent in black style. We have a cultural symbiosis with the highly stylized. There is a hard to name and even harder to describe seemingly innate emphasis on the adorned body to exercise one's blackness. To quote Carol Tulloch, ''this obsession with dressing well is almost part of the DNA in the black community'' (qtd. in Lewis). However, Sontag states that camp "converts the serious into the frivolous" (276), which is also quite problematic because the statement assumes that camp cannot be taken seriously, or worse, demeans subjects that are seen as serious. Yet, if I reinterpret Sontag's statement with oppression (the serious) in mind, blacks, in the west, have been using dress (the frivolous) as means for social and ethnic empowerment since emancipation. Being fashionable is an internalised code of blackness that is highly visible, and dress conveys the Bhabhaian technique of mimicry. Through mimicry, whiteness can be subverted and ultimately rendered meaningless through the adoption of whiteness, and dress is a potent tool to use in this technique of survival. Although Kelly is not mimicking whiteness, he is attempting to dismantle whiteness in the layered and complex method of counter-appropriation. His golliwog logo takes something that is considered as much as a representation of whiteness than blackness, as the golliwog is a totem of white dominance and perceptions of the other. Kelly takes that transgression and makes it his own. Yet, as with mimicry, appropriation cannot be done with equality as the goal because this is not possible in our current society. However, what is possible, especially when examining the designs of Patrick Kelly, is that camping the golliwog allows Kelly to obtain some empowerment through the conscious representation of himself as other.

Furthermore, there may have been kitsch present in Kelly's designs, but I believe that they were much more coded than simple appeals to the historical French fetishisation of blackness. Kitsch is defined as "something that appeals to popular or lowbrow taste and is often of poor quality" ("Kitsch"), i.e. the ironic display of bad taste because things that are kitsch are consumed for the reason of them being considered bad taste. Racist iconography, in recent years, has been considered by the public majority to be in bad taste, which makes the designs of Kelly examples of bad taste and lowbrow fashion, and hence also kitsch.

For example, his use of mismatched buttons to create golliwog embellishments on a dress represents a melding of the real self and the designer self as well as the semiotic collaboration of word and image. The golliwog dress embellished with mismatched buttons shows how his poor taste is rooted in experiencing oppression and examining the ambiguity of "poor" taste. Patrick Kelly grew up working class in Mississippi, and Kelly's grandmother would replace the missing buttons on his clothes with mismatched ones. Kelly stated, "I was forever ripping buttons off my shirt, and she was always replacing them. One day I said I can't go to school with every button different. So, to distract from the different buttons, she started putting buttons everywhere" (qtd. in Hyde). Kelly adopted his grandmother's technique and appropriated it for high fashion by hand sewing mismatched buttons into the shape of a gollywog's face onto the hindquarters of a dress. The buttons in this example become a literal translation of Kelly's bad (the golliwog) and poor (working class) taste.

Yet, camp is serious in its non-seriousness (Sontag 276), and a main component of camp performance is the performance of the adorned body, i.e. movement or activation of an exaggerated aesthetic. Fashion is also how we attempt to confirm our assumptions of others based on what the dominant culture has dictated to us. Seeing a particular exaggerated fashion in a camp design/performance will either comically confirm such assumptions or in the same way, upend them. However, Pamela Robertson states that camp is also defined through racial difference by assuming the adjective of white (394) meaning to camp is a white privilege. When one thinks of camp, one thinks of Divine or Lady Bunny, not Joan Jett Blakk, the black drag queen who camped politics and ran for multiple offices in the 1990s, most famously for the mayor of Chicago in 1991 and for president in 1992 with the slogan "Lick Bush in '92," both under the Queer Nationalist Party ticket. Nor do scholars think of RuPaul, who has built a queer media empire off of her artifice extravaganza "glamazon" persona. Kelly, himself, was obsessed with Josephine Baker and her campy carnivalesques of the Jezebel and Hottentot tropes in her infamous banana dance. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, he frequented New York City disco clubs such as Studio 54 and designed costumes for his friends at Paradise Garage, before moving to Paris and subsequently working as a costume designer for Le Palace (Blum). He was also a longtime collaborator with Grace Jones, who herself utilises camp by coding as masculine to express black femininity and sexuality. However, there are very few writings that attempt to explore these camp connections.

Therefore, Lewis and Fraley may not have connected the dots between camp and black expression because there is already a significant disconnection in the study of black queerness, particularly on the subject of camp. Robertson uses the most apt quotes from Andrew Ross and George Melly stating that camp is comparable to blackface (Ross 143), and camp is the "Stepin Fetchit of the leather bars and the Auntie Tom of the denim discos" (Core 5), respectively. Robertson points out how thin these analogies are and how the "flexibility of sexuality and gender roles promised by theories of camp performativity does not yet extend to race" (394). Because camp is defined through racial/gender difference, people of colour who perform/ utilise camp are assumed to be using camp to gain access to whiteness. Blacks are only meant to look and reaffirm the white performer's realness and respond pleasantly to the artificial representation of our identities and cultures (Robertson 406); hence, the comparison of camp to blackface. However, camp is not solely a white privilege as it has been suggested in the past. Most crucially, Robertson argues for the significance and existence of black camp. She introduces using camp to deconstruct representations of blackness, particularly those representations that have been indoctrinated through the white gaze, and subsequently counter-appropriating these representations through comedic performance. She introduces what I interpret as a carnivalesque of a carnivalesque or parodying the parody. This technique allows for the performer to pass through subjection, instead of *getting over it*, taking on difference as an advantage to one's own representation of themselves.

Robertson operationalises black camp into categories that are reliant on internal/in-group knowledge: double performance of identification and irony, recognition and misrecognition, as well as affirmation and critique (407). Kelly and his use of the golliwog encompass the identification and irony category, complementary facets of black camp. He utilises the image of the golliwog for what it is, an image of a thing that evokes the emotions of subjection, but at the same time, he adopts the image as a satirical representation of himself, of his brand. Therefore, I do concur with Lewis and Fraley when they call Kelly a "symbol maker" (340), a semiotic tactician. The semiotic tactician of fashion produces a fashion image as an emblem for visual communication, spectacle, and consumption where the "fashioned garment [is] a rework of signs and relations" (Evans 96). Also important, the fashion emblem is still a commodity, but a "commodity as a sign without disavowing the real" (Evans 96) acknowledging that the fashion image is an inherently fetishised image of a real thing. With Kelly's gollywog, not only are you dealing with an appropriation of a fetishised image, you are dealing with an appropriation of a fetishised image of a fetishised image of a fetishised image. A black person. A white man in blackface. A children's book character. A doll. A fashion emblem.

Murray states that semiotic vulnerability is "a liquidity or porousness in the semiotic function of blackness that transcends its historical and ideological opacity" (26). Kobena Mercer states that Saar and her *Liberation of Aunt Jemima* use "counter-appropriation to acknowledge the psychic reality of what could be called 'the stereotypical sublime' so low, you can't get under it and so high, you can't get over it" (29), showing how "alternative meanings can be made by passing through it repeating the stereotype with a signifying critical difference" (29). This counter-appropriation is essentially another form of changing meaning in an attempt to fix something that is broken, using the unwieldiness of an image that can never be fixed to manifest empowerment in the brokenness of that image. With the *Liberation of Aunt Jemima*, it is the fact that the namesake trope is holding a gun. In the case of Patrick Kelly, his golliwog logo wears hoop earrings and lipstick.

Comparatively, Saar uses the double appropriation of the mammy and the racial/gender assumption of black female rage, whereas Kelly uses the double appropriation of the golliwog (historically illustrated as male) and what Marlon Riggs calls "negro faggotry" (253), or the feminized caricaturization of black male queerness by hetero-normative black male performers. Negro faggotry is a critique of the black gay male as a form of black male emasculation (Murray 16). Murray states that "black queer swishiness," to be black, camp, effete, or "swishing," is seen as a disempowerment to hetero-normative, patriarchal black male expression (16). Negro faggotry is signified as black self-hatred, as the black gay male is but a feminised version of a white man (Johnson 48).

Furthermore, I garnered a similar sense of queerness as pro-whiteness in my reading of Lewis and Fraley's article. Therefore, I can understand how they would see Kelly's double coding of the golliwog and being "sissified" as complacency in white dominance, especially if queerness is seen as a privilege of whiteness. As it seems, for those who are anti-swishiness, the problem lies in disregarding the expectations of the community by camping in public. To camp in public, especially in front of an audience of whites, is unacceptable on two levels. This is not only because the black body has fixed itself to mimic a transgression, but also because that black body is explicitly and unapologetically queer.

Conclusion

Stuart Hall states that "meanings begin to slip and slide [...], drift, [...] be wrenched, or inflicted into new directions" (270) when one attempts to take control of their own representation from the scene of subjection. There is a strong suggestion that Kelly's golly is actually a representation of Patrick Kelly himself. Kelly was a gay, black man who wore gender fluid fashions often, especially in editorial photography. This is despite the fact that he was more known for wearing overalls and sneakers on the runway as his uniform (as mentioned before, to honour his ancestors who were allegedly sharecroppers). Kelly's own subversion of the intersection between his race and sexuality is upended by his adoption of feminine aesthetics and dress which parallels the gender fluidity of his golliwog.

Hall acknowledges that there are many ways in which one who is marginalised and stereotyped at the hands of white dominance (and male dominance) can deconstruct the meanings of representation. However, he only mentions three: reversing the stereotype, to which he uses Blaxploitation film as an example; substituting the negative image for the positive image, i.e. the Black is Beautiful Movement of the 1970s, and lastly abet more apropos to Kelly, changing meaning through the eye of representation, which "contests the dominant gendered and sexual definitions of racial difference by working on black sexuality" (Hall 274) via deploying tropes of fetishism. Hall uses the works of Isaac Julien and Rotimi Fani-Kayode as examples of this third form of transcoding from within the scene of subjection. He does not mention any designers, only artists (visual and performing), even though designers navigate identity and meaning through creative expression as well. Yet, what is clear is that black designers have predated and worked alongside the début of Hall's concept, and they are capable of adopting the aforementioned techniques of resistance.

Furthermore, the overt connections are compelling between Betye Saar and Patrick Kelly in their use of black memorabilia to create narratives about black representation. The Saar-Kelly connection is significant evidence for fashion as art. However, connections like this are being overlooked or simply ignored because as Pritchard states that the absence of black queer figureheads is a result of historical and cultural erasure (108).

Where was Lewis and Fraley's recovery of Patrick Kelly? There was no recovery to be seen. There was the continuation of putting Kelly into a context that has been the constant weapon of his erasure. Lewis and Fraley state that "[Kelly] was seeking to make the horror and evil of his culture beautiful" (342), and furthermore that "[Kelly's] brand of blackness is not sacred" (344). Although I appreciate the acknowledgement of black memorabilia as a part of black culture despite its messiness, Saidiya Hartman states that the black body can never be fixed because of the break that occurred in the Middle Passage, that loss of one's roots as black (72). Therefore, is any image of blackness really sacred? Or is Lewis and Fraley's critique of Patrick Kelly what Riggs describes as, "the black queer as a pawn in someone else's cultural war game and thus expendable" (103)?

Pritchard expertly contextualises Toni Morrison's *rootedness* when he explores a solution to this problem, "turning to ancestors as a critical intellectual resource to identify historical erasure, challenge, and survive its negative effects and establish visible connections to cultural and political genealogies" (108). As an ancestor and intellectual resource, Kelly not only decentralises the elitist complex of fashion (Lewis and Fraley 335) but he also decentralises the black experience (Murray 26). Kelly is an exceptional representative of the African-American ritual and lived experience in camp, especially when it comes to style. Black style has always been inherently camp, and as Pritchard states, black queerness has always manifested in black sartoriality (108). We have always taken whiteness and the gaze and either appropriated "white" styles or counter-appropriated white assumptions by exaggerating and disrupting their definitions of what it means to be white and what they think it means to be black, particularly through dandyism.

Therefore, to conclude with a fitting fashion image, Kelly's golliwog was exceptionally immortalised in a golliwog printed dress which has the gender-queer golliwog motif printed on the white jersey fabric of both the dress and accompanying gloves. This fabric was designed by Kelly but made by Bianchini-Ferier, a high-end French textile maker. The model would be holding the same golliwog emblem on a stick like it could be a mask or fan or just something decorative to hold, as this was common in Kelly's shows. However, there is currently no accessible footage of this particular look going down the runway. Yet, it could be suggested that the emblem on a stick is actually a figurative lollipop. If that is the case, the golly lolly opens further doors which could examine the visual commentary Kelly evokes about the mainstream consumption of blackness and black culture as fashionable, while simultaneously having the same white dominance devour the black body through fetishisation, the reality of oppression eating us alive.

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