

Samantha Wall

Intonation: *31 Days*

Essence Harden

Samantha Wall, who hails from Portland by way of Seoul, Korea, is a conveyer of othered knowledge and ways of knowing. Using portraiture, Wall produces these ways of knowing through studies on disembodiment, ritual, and visuality. Beginning each work with a series of photographs of her subjects Wall dutifully abstracts lines, shapes, parts, and forms to create paintings and drawings on and of the body. She works in the realm of interiority and the affective, painting glimpses of the body and its parts as worlds unto themselves. Wall's brushstrokes (less painterly and more as a tool to drop or move ink) are archives in the making, announcing the fissures of in/completeness in the dance between organic and synthetic, black and white, and in the threshold in which epistemology occurs.

In her multi-panel work *31 Days* (2017)—a series in two parts—Wall offers a gestural hymn in the form of a fist. Composed of thirty-one drawings, each completed as a daily act in the first and last months of 2017 (the first year of Trump's presidency is not lost here), *31 Days* is a rumination on nextness. These clenched fingers, a gesture of protest and affirmation, a symbol of presence (we are still here!), and a moment of fight, are a series of suggestive actions. In these fists of many the swirls of black India ink become a somewhat cosmic take on the materiality of dissent and avowal. The black-marbled renderings are otherworldly skin in their camouflaged and mutable containment, offering a vastness and depth akin to the night sky. Nails become portals and fingers shift from tangible objects to non-things, highlighting the precariousness of our known world and emblems. With Wall, we see change times—those edges of revolution and new world order—in our capacity to adjust and bend while holding on to the static grasp of fury.

In *31 Days* Wall also announces the centrality of the sonic in the act of executing each form.¹ Here the aural is figured in the strokes and seeps of ink posed in the shape of a folded hand. These fists are mantras, inductions toward a meditative state and branches of ritualized consciousness. The change is evidenced not merely in the pattern of ink but by the gesture itself, Wall's fist adjusting in posture, in length of nails, as the principal constituent of how a fist of protest alters under the duress and challenge of endurance. It is perhaps this element within

31 Days that annotates loss in the personal, in the sobering realities of grief, and the impulse to find a way to continue. Wall's portraitures radiate the fragility and the chaotic imparted in the daily acts of holding on in spite of the nation, the world, the past, our now. A fist is our rage, sorrow, and hope.

NOTE

1. Wall refers to these as "mantras" in her description of the work. See Wall, Samantha, *31 Days* (2017), <http://www.samanthawall.com/31-days.html>.

