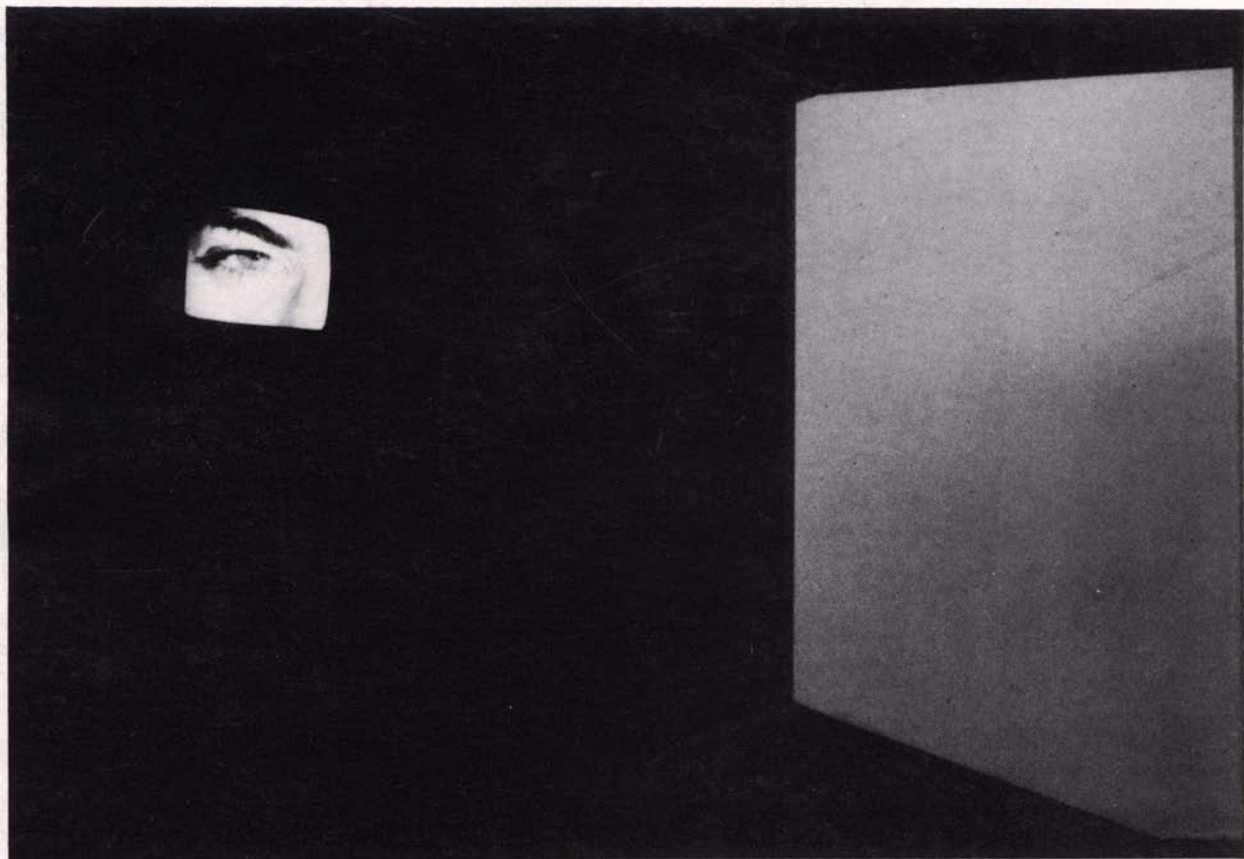


OJO CALIENTE



JOHN JESURUN

OJO CALIENTE

JOHN JESURUN

1988

ESTHER: What do you want from me?

WANDER: Why are you doing this?

ESTHER: Listen to me. I'm telling you something.

WANDER: What are you doing?

ESTHER: So that you'll learn the value of suffering, the joy of sacrifice and patience, murder and manslaughter. So that you'll learn to speak the language of the dead. Once again, it's time for you to shut up. Belly up to the buzz saw, gravitational collapse, blackleg, yankee pot roast. Stop crying. You should be happy. Listen to me. I'm telling you something. You tell someone else and they'll tell someone else. Would you like a radio to listen to?

CATLIN: Yes.

ESTHER: This is what the horse told me. This is his suicide note, his poison pen letter. First, I'll give the clue, then the story, then the real story. First what they saw, then what was seen, then what was. The cadaver will direct the autopsy, a talking corpse narrating, a dead horse talking.

WANDER: What are you trying to tell me?

ESTHER: Don't give me the ching chang yip yap!

STONE: I don't like it in here.

CALVADOS: I don't either.

JUANITA: I don't know what's the matter with him.

ESTHER: You move one foot out of bed and you're a dead man. That horse is dead. I was looking at it outside. It had one fly on it, but that fly was tiny, triumphant. You have been found neither guilty nor innocent but you have been found. Stop crying.

CATLIN: What's that dripping?

ESTHER: Blood, urine, pieces of marijuana, carbon monoxide.

WANDER: Why did you put us in here?

ESTHER: I'm sorry that you're dead, alright?

STONE: Alright.

ESTHER: Once again it's time for you to shut up. Don't touch the circuit breaker.

CALVADOS: What's that moving?

ESTHER: A salamander come to eat the turnips. I had wanted to tell you about my deep and unrelenting and unequivocal disbelief and unbelief in everything, but now I've changed my mind. Do you understand that? Oh, how I cannot bear the thought of you. You know, that's from a song.

JUANITA: What's that dripping?

ESTHER: Crocodile tears. I'd like to read a nice book now and then with a story in the middle that goes nowhere. Don't you understand? You've been murdered, killed. Your head hit a bullet, habeus corpus, a talking corpse. You were lost but now you're found. I found you. You're pulverized, a smoke signal, a cat dream, a Molly Maguire.

STONE: I don't hear anything.

ESTHER: You're fuckin' brain dead, that's why. A pack of flies is riding around in your head. That fly was tiny, triumphant! I promise.

JUANITA: Morning yet?

WANDER: Hold the room still, will you?

ESTHER: This is my room. It's beautiful. It's always beautiful. I love it. Here is the record player. I call the room black maria because at night it gets so dark you don't know where you are. In the day it's hell, but at night when everyone else is asleep, it's heaven.

STONE: I don't want to stay in here.

ESTHER: Yes you do. I'll leave the gun here with you. You can use it if you want. But wait for one night and you won't want to use it. In the day you'll feel like using it, but at night you won't. The horse loved it in here, then you put me in here. Mushrooms grow in here at night and you can eat them. You'll see so many things in this room you won't want to leave it. You'll be married to it. You won't be able to tell where the room begins and you end. Let me see your hand. It's afraid. Don't you like it in here?

JUANITA: Are we in somewhere?

CATLIN: What's that smell?

ESTHER: Sour mash, camphor, apple rotting.

WANDER: Is that puppet dead?

ESTHER: No. Would you like a book?

JUANITA: I read that book backwards and forwards and every time I read it, it says something different.

CATLIN: Open the window.

ESTHER: Why are you here?

STONE: To buy the horse.

ESTHER: Why don't you get out of here? There's no horse here. Let me tell you honestly, there is no horse here. But I have a gun and we can share it.

CALVADOS: I don't want to.

ESTHER: Share the gun. You take it and keep it.

WANDER: Don't take it.

ESTHER: Stop arguing. What are you waiting for? Can you see the gun? You can only see it from one point in the room. Who can see it? Whoever can see it can have it. Who can see it? Noone? One person can see the gun. No? So I built a house of cards to keep warm and I got inside my house of cards and burnt it and it kept me warm for a while, a good long while. I found that if I kept talking and kept very still I'd stay warm. But then it got very lonely in that house. But people shouldn't be alone and I thought I have these mushrooms and if I can share them maybe it won't be so lonely so I tried to share them but noone wanted to share them so I ate them and threw the gun into a river. And then what did you do?

WANDER: I got caught in a projector and then I became very religious. Maybe you can help me?

ESTHER: What can I do for you?

STONE: I was under the impression that the horse would be black.

ESTHER: No, no black horses here. Very hard to find. So what did you do? What did you do? Don't just sit there breathing. You should be having the time of your life.

Text excerpt BLACK MARIA at LA MAMA E.T.C. April 1987



BLACK MARIA, 1987 PHOTO: PAULA COURT



BLACK MARIA, PHOTO: PAULA COURT

X: Who are you?

CALVADOS: An eye surgeon. I want to check your eyes.

X: What for?

CALVADOS: I might want to take your appendix out.

X: Out of my eye?

CALVADOS: Possibility. If we find it there.

X: And if we don't.

CALVADOS: We won't.

X: You're not an eye surgeon. Get out. Get out of my room. What happened to your eye?

CALVADOS: Once when I was very young, I had to do an operation.

X: On who?

CALVADOS: On my eye surgeon teacher.

X: So what?

CALVADOS: So what? There was noone there to operate and he had gotten a splinter of glass in his eye and I had to take it out because noone else was there so I had to take it out. And so I tried too and I did everything he taught me. He was sure I could do it and I was sure I could do it and so I went ahead.

X: Go ahead.

CALVADOS: And I made a mistake. I cut the left eye instead of the right and I blinded him.

X: What does that have to do with your eye?

CALVADOS: I cut my own eye out and gave it to him in the same operation so he woke up with another eye, my eye.

X: So what?

CALVADOS: That's why I have a patch.

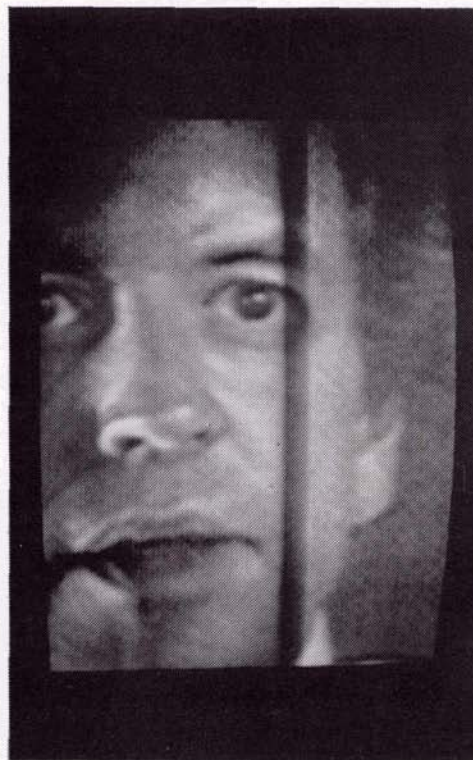
X: It's very becoming.

CALVADOS: Thank you.

X: Do you enjoy being half blind?

CALVADOS: I actually can see clearer now.

X: What does that have to do with my appendix? Two eyes are better than one.



WHITE WATER PHOTO: MASSIMO AGUS

CALVADOS: Not really. One eye is better than two. One eye usually disagrees with the other and they're always fighting among themselves and sometimes the arguments get violent and result in a myopic subversion between them that centers in the middle of the head. It becomes a cyclopean nightmare. It becomes encyclopedic and defeats the purpose of each individual eye. One eye wants to see one thing and the other wants to see the other and so they become of two minds and split down the center. They cannibalize each other and it's just not right. They don't cooperate with each other. Does that seem right to you?

X: What do you want to do? Cut my eye out? Who told you all this?

CALVADOS: I discovered it myself. It's my own private idea.

X: Keep it. I cannot bear the sight of you.

CALVADOS: That's because one eye disagrees with the other. If you had only one, you'd feel better about me. And which eye do you think is responsible for this discrepancy?

X: The left I think.

CALVADOS: I think it's the right.

X: It really doesn't matter.

CALVADOS: I can't bear the sight of you. Get out of my room. I'll call the front desk.

X: Do you want to take my eye out? Is that it?

CALVADOS: One eye.

X: What if I give you your eye back?

CALVADOS: How is that?

X: Take my eye, put it into your own head and give me the patch.

CALVADOS: I think you'd better go look at the horse.



BLACK MARIA, PHOTO: PAULA COURT

CALVADOS: You got to go now.
WANDER: No, I don't want to go.
ESTHER: You like it here?
WANDER: It's my home.
STONE: This ain't no home.
JUANITA:; It's a prison.
CATLIN: A leper colony.
CALVADOS: A horse farm.
ESTHER: A basement house.
STONE: You don't like it here?
JUANITA:; You got to go out. You can't stay here no more.
CATLIN: You got to go.
CALVADOS: You ain't sick. You got to go before you get sick.
WANDER: Where I go?
ESTHER: You go out there, just out, out to the paradise land.
WANDER: I like the desert land.
STONE: Go. Go out.
JUANITA:; You got to go now.
WANDER: Why you cut my hair?
CATLIN: We got to cut your hair. Make you look right.
WANDER: I don't look right. I don't look right to you?
CALVADOS: You take the horse.
WANDER: The horse came back. You see.
ESTHER: You take the horse. You both go.
STONE: You both never come back.
JUANITA:; You never come back you see.
WANDER: I come back. You see.



WHITE WATER PHOTO: MASSIMO AGUS

CATLIN: You come back, you die here in the desert land.

WANDER: But why you cut my hair?

CALVADOS: We got to save your life.

WANDER: Life is a cannibal. It eats itself.

ESTHER: That's why you got to go now. We fix you nice. You see. So they don't think you crazy rotten like us.

WANDER: But I like crazy rotten.

STONE: You go now.

JUANITA:; Everything broken here.

CATLIN: You have to hurry up and get out now.

CALVADOS: You go now but you remember you ours.

ESTHER: Ours by right of conquest.

STONE: Right.

WANDER: Right, by right of conquest.

JUANITA:; You go, and you never come back.

CATLIN: You go and you go and if you find nothing then you walk on.

CALVADOS: A different direction till you find something.

ESTHER: You see a cameraman and you run. Don't let him see you.

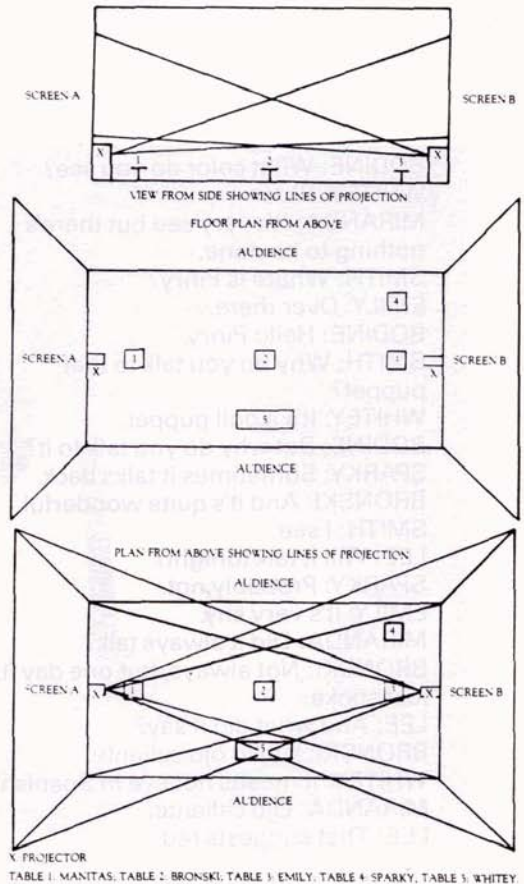
JUANITA:; You take the horse. It's a natural beauty. You'll see.

CATLIN: You see a pinhole and you run for it.

CALVADOS: If the horse don't fit through, you leave it behind.

ESTHER: You understand?

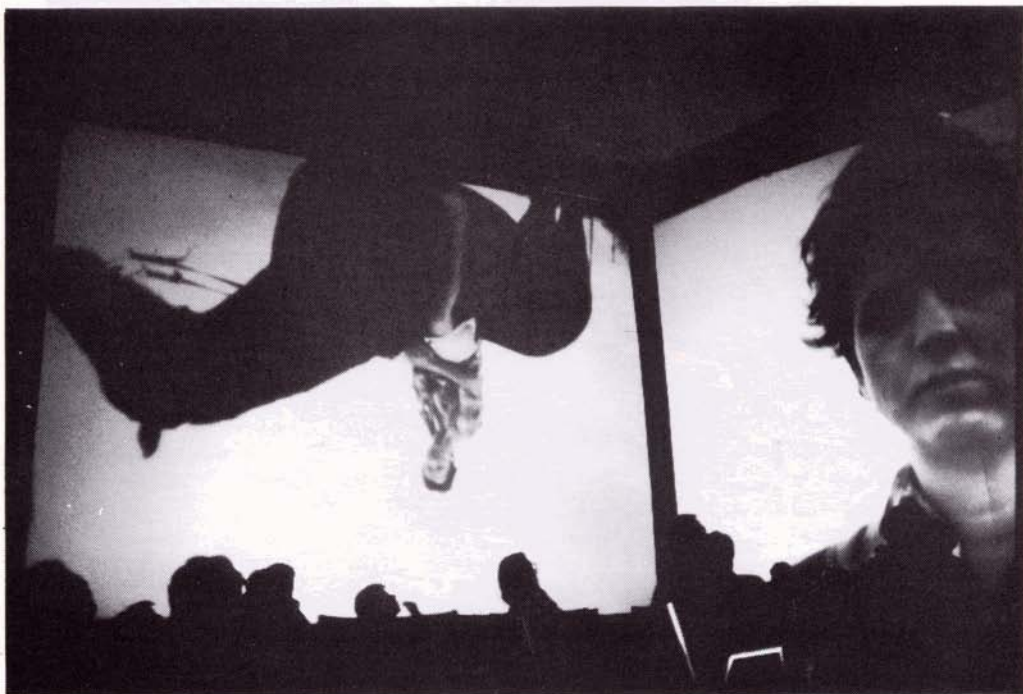
Text excerpt BLACK MARIA



Drawing John Jesurun DEEP SLEEP

BODINE: What color do you see?
WHITEY: Blue.
MIRANDA: It's very sad but there's nothing to be done.
SMITH: Where is Pinry?
EMILY: Over there.
BODINE: Hello Pinry.
SMITH: Why do you talk to that puppet?
WHITEY: It's a doll puppet.
BODINE: But why do you talk to it?
SPARKY: Sometimes it talks back.
BRONSKI: And it's quite wonderful.
SMITH: I see.
LEE: Will it talk tonight?
SPARKY: Probably not.
EMILY: It's very shy.
MIRANDA: Did it always talk?
BRONSKI: Not always, but one day it just spoke.
LEE: And what did it say?
BRONSKI: It said ojo caliente.
WHITEY: It means hot eye in Spanish.
MIRANDA: Ojo caliente.
LEE: That suggests red.

EMILY: Oh, no.
SPARKY: It suggests a very strong iron blue.
BRONSKI: But not red.
BODINE: Will it talk tonight?
EMILY: I don't think so. It only talks to us but it hears everything, it always hears everything and stores it up in his brain. He's quite friendly when he gets the chance.
MANITAS: But he gets sad sometimes.
WHITEY: We put him in front of the window and he gets better.
SMITH: Maybe we can help him.
BRONSKI: Oh no, he doesn't need any help.
LEE: Are you sure?
SPARKY: We're sure.
MIRANDA: Are you sure Pinry?
WHITEY: He says he's sure. He's O.K.
LEE: Where did he come from?
SPARKY: We found him in the street.
EMILY: He didn't talk for months and then he said it, ojo caliente.



BLACK MARIA, PHOTO: PAULA COURT



JOHN JESURUN, INSTALLATION 1968

BODINE: But what does it mean?
WHITEY: Hot eye, the eye that sees it all.
BRONSKI: It sees everything every way.
SMITH: But where did he come from?
LEE: How can he be alive?
BRONSKI: He just is.
BODINE: Maybe he was a dead man once and it was inhaled into the doll and made it alive.
EMILY: I don't think so.
BRONSKI: The doll has always been alive. Right, Pinry?
MANITAS: That's right.
BRONSKI: So he'll stay here with us.
MIRANDA: Can he come and visit us sometime?
MANITAS: I don't think so. He likes it here.
SMITH: But maybe he'd like it here.
EMILY: We'll ask him and he'll tell us eventually.
LEE: But he looks like he'd like to

stay here.
BODINE: He's quite nice.
MIRANDA: Is his head wooden?
WHITEY: Oh yes.
LEE: Does he dance?
SPARKY: Oh, sometimes at night when I play records.
EMILY: He can jump very high.
BRONSKI: But no strings.
BODINE: Oh, no strings?
SMITH: Who does he belong to?
BRONSKI: He doesn't belong to anyone.
SPARKY: I found him on the street one day...
EMILY: And it was Whitey's birthday.
WHITEY: And I went home one day and I opened that present and it was the puppet, but he doesn't really belong to anyone.
SPARKY: He likes to sing.
MIRANDA: What does he sing?
WHITEY: All kinds of songs.
EMILY: A lot of blues.
MANITAS: Crazy blues.

Text excerpt DEEP SLEEP at LA MAMA E.T.C. Jan. 1986

CORTEZ: As I was saying to the sky the other day. My love is unspeakable, undeniable, indelible, inalienable, indivisible, shimmering. But though I love you with a love true, who can cling to a rambling rose?

MACK: Do you think you were made by anything? Initiated, created, put together, thought up, instigated, appropriated, pieced together, conceived.

CORTEZ: These thorns are killing me.

KIRSTEN: Though I love you with a love true, who can cling to a rambling rose? So I will not cling anymore.

MACK: These thorns are killing me.

KIRSTEN: Look in here. What are you seeing?

MACK: Watery.

KIRSTEN: You're looking at the inside of your own eye. What do you see?

MACK: Just something watery.

KIRSTEN: Do you see anything else? Anything floating in it?

MACK: A desert made out of water.

CORTEZ: That's what I saw. Now you see what I saw in my eye.

KIRSTEN: Are you happy with what you see or not so happy with what you see?

CORTEZ: I'm afraid.

KIRSTEN: They will hand your head to you on a plate surrounded by rambling roses burning.

CORTEZ: Why?

KIRSTEN: Why do you want to know everything? Why do you have to know everything? Why do have to want to know everything? Everything on earth for God's sake. Does it satisfy you if I said I am the walrus? I don't care if you really saw it or not or if it was really there or not. I just want to know if you were telling the truth about whatever it was. That's the most important thing here, right now in this minute before it passes. I'm going to give you till the morning comes.

MACK: Too late.

KIRSTEN: And you will believe me and be convinced not because of what I say but because of how I say it.

CORTEZ: How many people are in this room?

MACK: Six.

KIRSTEN: Watch closely now. Six divided by two is three. Divided by two is one and

a half. If six was nine divided by two is four and a half divided by two or any other number is two and a quarter so you see any other way you look at it there is only one person in this room. I tried so hard to tell you last night. You wouldn't talk to me. Sooner or later one of us must know that all you see around you is yourself. Everything you see around yourself is yourself and you're not your brother's keeper because there's no brother to keep but yourself and so if that's true, is it true that you saw that lady?

MACK: I told you. What does it matter if those people got cured, right or wrong?

KIRSTEN: Because if you're right then I'm right and if you're wrong then I'm wrong. One chair, one table, one TV, one each of everything.

MACK: But they are cured aren't they?

KIRSTEN: Yes. Doctors have testified they are.

MACK: Why?

KIRSTEN: I don't know why.

MACK: You mean to tell me they're cured and you don't know why?

KIRSTEN: I'm not a doctor.

MACK: My eyes hurt.

KIRSTEN: I am not a doctor. Watch closely now.

CORTEZ: How many people are there in this room?

MACK: Six.

KIRSTEN: How many?

MACK: Three.

KIRSTEN: How many people are there in this room?

MACK: Two.

KIRSTEN: Who?

MACK: You and me.

KIRSTEN: How many people are in this room?

MACK: One.

KIRSTEN: Who is it?

MACK: Me.

KIRSTEN: There, do you see it? There's a tiny little flame light in the sky over there, do you see it?

MACK: Yes.

KIRSTEN: Who is it?

MACK: Me.

Text excerpt WHITE WATER at INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ART, Boston, Mass. Oct. 1986



WHITE WATER, 1986 PHOTO: MASSIMO AGUS

KIRSTEN: We only want to see what you see. Like you see. That's all.

MACK: Why?

DOC: Does it matter to you if I see what you see or if I believe you?

MACK: No. Maybe it's only for my eyes, for my eyes only, only for us to see.

KIRSTEN: Us?

MACK: Me and I.

DOC: Are you sad at all about this?

MACK: No.

KIRSTEN: Are you pretending any of this?

MACK: No. Sometimes when I see something.

KIRSTEN: You will see what I see and how I see it. And I will see what you see and if my world falls apart before my eyes, your world will fall apart before your eyes and we will both see the same and whatever is there we will both or all three see together. Our six eyes will be one eye. We'll all be one eye, see out of one eye. Whether it is deliberate or not, it is just one eye and we will all see out of it. You're only part of a machine, our machine and because you are part of it, we'll all work together whether you want to or not. We will all see the same things together.

MACK: Everything that comes out of my mouth is a lie.

KIRSTEN: Everything that goes into my eye is exactly what is there. Left or right, right or wrong.

DOC: What about the lady?

KIRSTEN: She's the center of the machine. We know the answer is yes. And we can see every moment exactly. Every obscurity. Its dissolving qualities and reflection on the ceiling. The whole shooting match.

Text excerpt WHITE WATER

I was taken from here and made prisoner once and I was taken here and put here and stayed here and made to stay here and I don't know why but I stayed here and I stayed in here and I stayed here for a very long time, and it was a very long time, a very very long time and it seemed like it was forever. And it probably was almost forever almost but then one day the door opened beautifully and I was let out, not miraculously and I was let out and I went out and I wanted to get out and get let out and when I had gotten out I didn't want to go anywhere. I wanted to stay here, I mean not in here but just here around here and not go home to where I had come from and I couldn't even remember where I had come from or I could eventually remember but I realized I had been in here so long that all the people I could remember were dead or if they were alive they were probably so old they couldn't remember me but could remember me probably with sadness. But there was no way I could ever get back because you see in time the geography between here and there had gotten farther and farther apart with time as the time had gotten farther and farther apart and so we were too far away from each other to make any difference. It wouldn't do any good so I realized I just had to stay here and live with it. And so I'm staying here and I'm happy to stay here. One day that door opened and it filled up with light and I went outside where everyone else was and everything just became a memory. And so that's it goodnight.

Text excerpt BLACK MARIA



PHOTO: JOHN JESURUN

This publication was made in conjunction with a work by John Jesurun
'OJO CALIENTE', Hallwalls, Buffalo, N.Y. April 9-May 13 1988

© Hallwalls and John Jesurun 1988

all texts copyright © John Jesurun 1986-87

ISBN 0939-73917-7

This exhibition and publication has been made possible in part with funds from the New York State
Council on the arts and the National Endowment for the arts.

'OJO CALIENTE' Installation, John Jesurun, Hallwalls, Buffalo April 1988

