Embodied and Situated

Kerry James Marshall’s Formulations of Blackness in the Garden Project Series

BY

MARISSA HOWARD BAKER
B.A., Wheaton College, 2001
M.A., School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 2006

THESIS

Submitted as partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Masters of Art in Art History
in the Graduate College of the
University of Illinois at Chicago, 2011

Chicago, Illinois

Defense Committee:

Peter Bacon Hales, Chair and Advisor
Robert Bruegmann
Lisa Yun Lee
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor, Peter Bacon Hales, for his endless patience and support throughout this project. I would like to also thank the members of my committee, Robert Bruegmann and Lisa Yun Lee, for their encouragement and feedback on multiple drafts. And to my husband, John Perryman, for believing in me and my work, I am eternally grateful.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER 1. KERRY JAMES MARSHALL IN CONTEXT 5

CHAPTER 2. URBUS EN HORTO: AN URBAN PASTORAL 21

CHAPTER 3. AN EMBODIED AND SITUATED BLACKNESS 40

CONCLUSION 65

BIBLIOGRAPHY 69

VITA 74
LIST OF FIGURES


8. Giorgione, *Fête Champêtre*, ca. 1509-10 31

9. Diagram with *Many Mansions* 32

10. Diagram with *Many Mansions* 33

11. Nickerson Gardens Housing Project, 1979 37


17. Paolo Mantegazza, *Morphological Tree of Human Origins* 50


SUMMARY

Kerry James Marshall’s *Garden Project* paintings (1994-95) refer to the ways dual mechanisms of racialized subject production and racialized spatialization compound and work to define blackness as an invisible other within the urban landscape. Marshall engages multiple historical modes of painting to disrupt the visual field and refuse an easy legibility of public housing as a racialized space. Marshall investigates the intense ambiguity to the legacy of public housing projects in the history of black America.

Marshall’s life experiences and artistic development in relation to black cultural and political history in America have informed the production of his artwork. The paintings emerged in the 1990s amidst the debates regarding the emergence of identity politics in the art world and the critical response to the controversial 1993 Whitney Biennial. The five *Garden Project* paintings are analyzed of them in relation to the historical traditions of painting. They are significant for their evocations of an embodied and situated blackness in the visualization of black figuration, and in relation to the historical circumstances of public housing in Chicago, its role in the history of black class mobility, and the ways that many representations of public housing have presented it as a charged symbol of societal regression despite the complexity of its history.