

ARTFORUM

Antonia Wright

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Antonia Wright, *Be*, 2013, color video, 2 minutes 49 seconds.

This survey of Miami-based Antonia Wright's recent work includes a dozen videos; however, the body is the true medium she explores and pushes to the limit. For instance, Wright forces her own eye to register the sensation of touch in creating *Lick of the Eye*, 2012. The single-channel video is a close-up of her naked eye subjected first to blue eyedrops and then a brush applying wet yellow paint until her eye's tissues turn green. As the title of another single-channel video *Wet Tongue on the Dusty Floor*, 2012, also underscores, the visual is deeply connected to the other senses—in that work's case, taste.

Both these works uncannily recall Janine Antoni's photograph of herself licking her husband's eye, *Mortar and Pestle*, 1999. To be sure, there are compelling parallels between the two artists' work, but Wright's is preoccupied with sensation rather than gender per se. The latter is evident in the single-channel video *Be*, 2013, which invokes the titular word and its homonym. It depicts her practicing the graceful offensive and defensive positions of tai chi while covered by thousands of honeybees. Wright invokes a state somewhere between calmness and fear, passivity and aggression, and stillness and movement.

The two-channel video *Are You Okay?*, 2009, best exemplifies what might be the core concern of Wright's works: empathy. The work shows her standing and weeping on the corner of busy urban intersections; most passersby ignore her but a few do stop to speak with her. Indeed, each of her works evokes strong bodily reactions—from pain and disgust to fear and even fearlessness—but in varying degrees what ties them together is that they all elicit in the viewer a concern for the other.

— *Alpesh Kantilal Patel*