

**CHRIS OF LI
AFROMUSES
1995-2005**

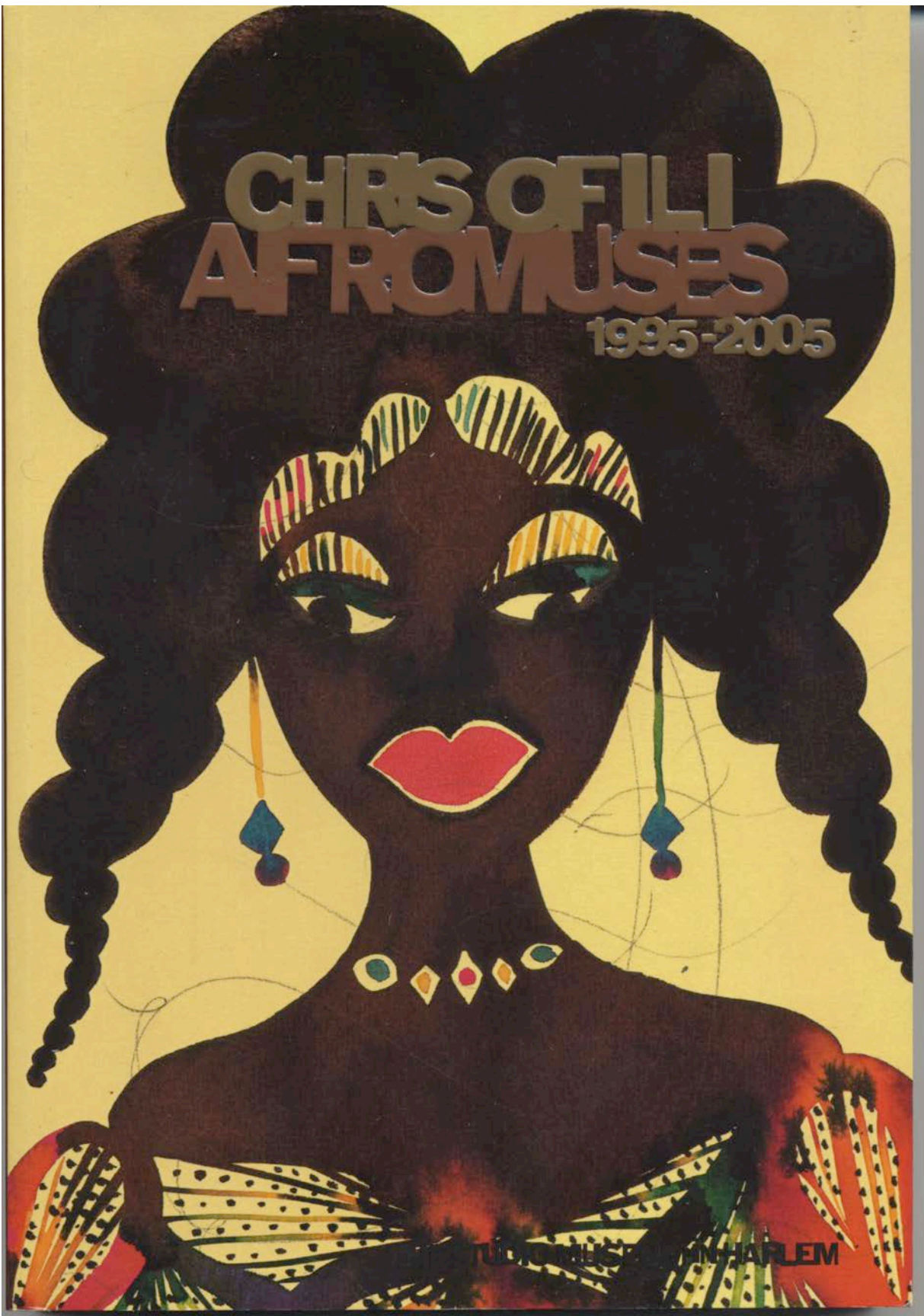
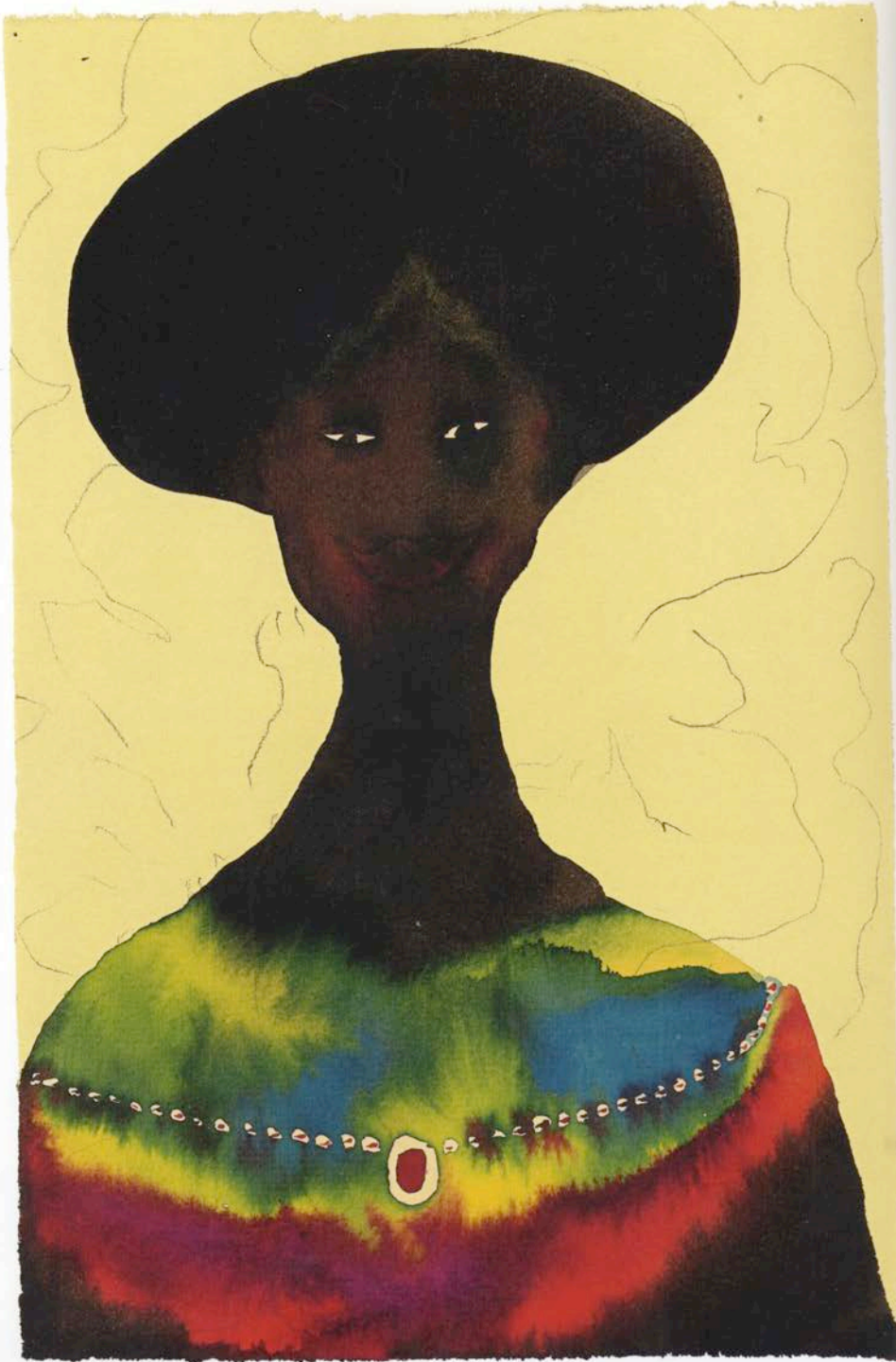
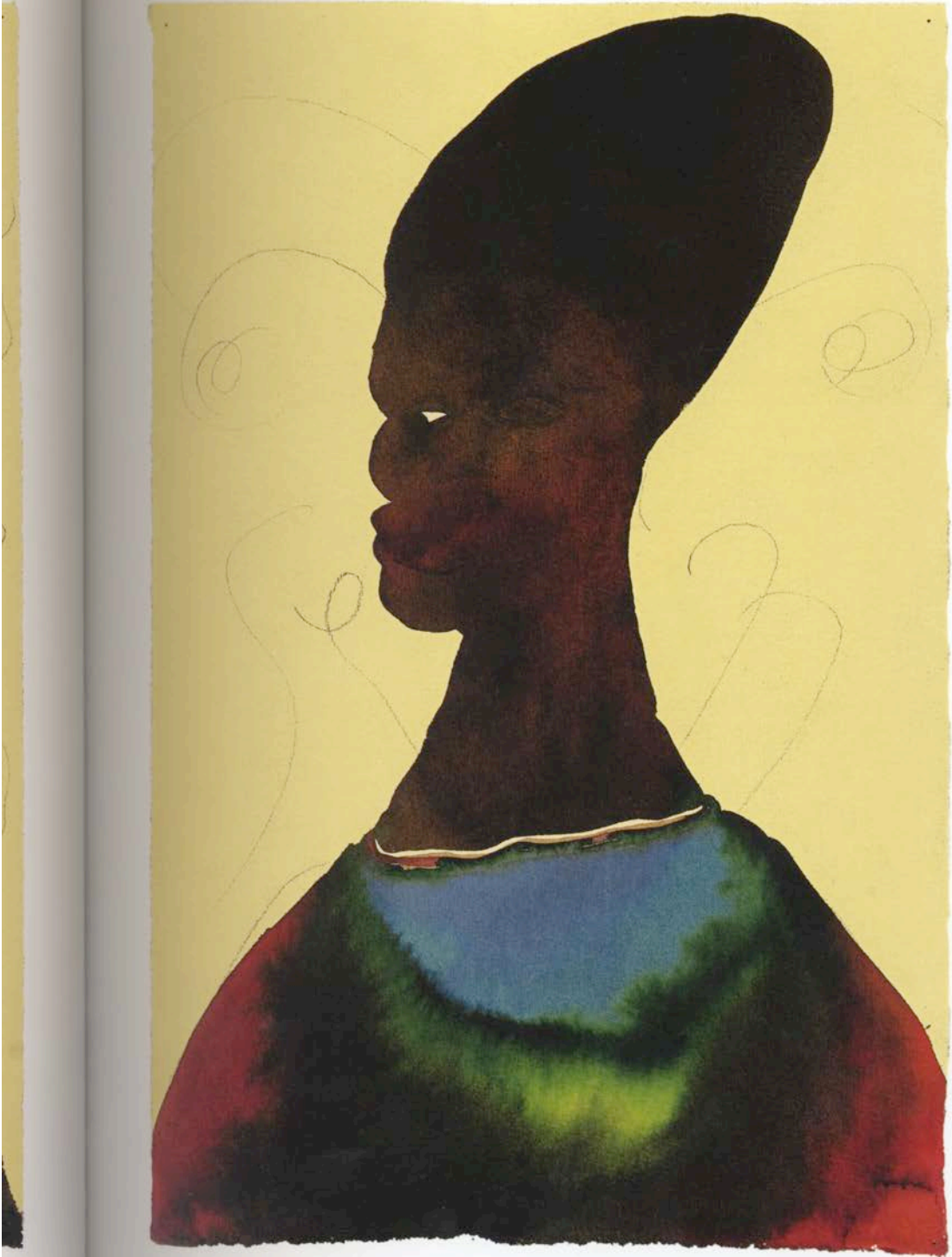


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She gave a new meaning to the word 'drive.' He, on the other hand, fairly fell down the mountain. Call it a glide perhaps, but his mummer's pratfall presented itself somewhere between happy accident and graceful chaos. One catches his profile outlined by the sky. The friction that rests between full-frontal and a little to the side (ajar or slightly agape) resonates well only for those who like it a bit tricky. Not tricky rough, but tricky fly, as in the afore mentioned agape (just slightly) or glide or even fall. Judging from the big knocks on his noggin, one might even call him a man of prodigious turbulence.

We suspected that this one was a John, but it was never confirmed. His modus could be described by shady business and peering around the sides of foliage. Yet he wafted halo, most confoundedly resonated light. A smiling-John clarity emanated from his being. He met one head on, hand-to-hand, measure for measure. His method was *multifariam*, that being a sideways slipping cousin to Rastafarian. He was so best-foot-forward that we could not get a handle on the glimmering shim sham whatnot. In fact, it was as if there was no flimflam at all. And if this were to be the case, then the whole muddle with black opacity turning up face cards next to black translucency hit us over the head again....but nicely. Very gently, in fact with a smile, he rendered the knockout.

Mono a Mono. Man to man or monkey to chimp, depending on context and

Mano a Mano

Be

hemisphere. John, our suspected John, longs for the heat to such a degree that the mere idea of a flush, the reckoning of a moist zephyr sends him around the bend. John's skin goes up, pebbling with beaded perspiration. He is a shining star, splendiferously aromatic in every direction, a bright black reflectivity.

In *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* the boy named Shiny lit up like an inverted light bulb. (The filament may have been courtesy of the inventor Louis Latimer, but the grand wizard Thomas Edison dots the eyes on that particular *histoire* of enlightenment.)

In general, he had been subject to inversion, a manifest destiny of endocrinology, crainiology, phrenology, pussy in a jar at the British Museum, soul on ice, taran traron tatoo.

Shiny, unlike our protagonist, let's call him Ex, Shiny made a meal of transparency. He reflected so deeply, the most intense of mirrors, that one is nearly blinded by black.

Apparently, such a mixture of freedom and restraint is incomprehensible to most. Someone once ascribed to blackness a prime source of the sublime. "Any dark object has the effect of relaxing the pupil of the eye, which then recovers by a kind of 'convulsive spring.' The optical shock evokes emotions of pain and terror."

Ah yes, pain and terror: Well, actually, sensibly not.

The only roughness appearing is that of a rough freedom, of the kind that catches in one's throat as a feat of speed. Tears well up in the eyes on account of wind whipping

Beth Coleman

the face, not for heaven sakes on account of any melancholy. At the Rock 'em Sock 'em school of take-no-prisoners, they kept saying about the champ, "Wouldn't say anything, just kept smiling. Then disappeared." The champ always dressed well, ate well, and always knew when to get gone. In the face of strife, John's modality was to grow mild, leaving things loose around the edges. His imprint serialized the romantic gesture by which the lady would always be returned her fallen handkerchief. He focused on the tender back and forth of leaving the right impression, and one could see right then and there the heart of the matter translated into the work at hand. "The cards are not stacked against you, my dear," he would say, standing at the threshold.

The measure taken was neither blackmail nor another sort of treachery. It was a love affair having to do with a different kind of crime scene—a willing theft in fact—that spoke to a collusion of absence. The sign of such an aleatory absence might be a note casually dropped in the aisle or a bouquet of tiny purple, yellow, and lavender crocuses placed innocently on the window ledge. This was the cue for his exit stage right and the call for a heaving bosom. Get your out fans ladies, while this John slides into home base like a wet dream. The scene gets smeary around the edges where opacity meets, greets, and gets on with a gleeful translucency. Let a thousand slight Spanish women with lisps and spiky heels dance on my

head. After that number, let's see what the doctor can do with his scratchy tape stretched across the old dome.

Defying gravity, John broadcasts on the frequency-direct 2 Way. The elevation of the mountain helps deliver the signal to those within reach.

He compiles a list of 52 necessary words and slips them into the broadcast as he makes his way down. A Morse code, not remorse code, specked in glint and shimmer like little signs floats across the ether. John von Neumann, mathematician and a brother John, stated, "Information is a measure of everything she could have said. Not everything she *did* say." Oh, she is so shady that information theory. John felt himself to be code rich in the same way that he thought humans congregate to heat. He read in her face a foreign language he had mastered on the sly. Thus, he created portraiture of a radical exuberance, which she could then string around her neck in moments of sadness. One must be mindful that it was still her sadness, not his. He remained reluctant, not quite within the grasp of observation. The man himself, he held himself in profile, like a bird or flower, or otherwise obscured the edges of definition. Somewhere between what she did not say and what he warmed up to there was a match—a pair, a flame, a trump. One sees what kind of hand one might draw: If a kiss is a kind of transmission that might fall between pain and terror or not, then not. For example, what if he were to whisper and never shout.