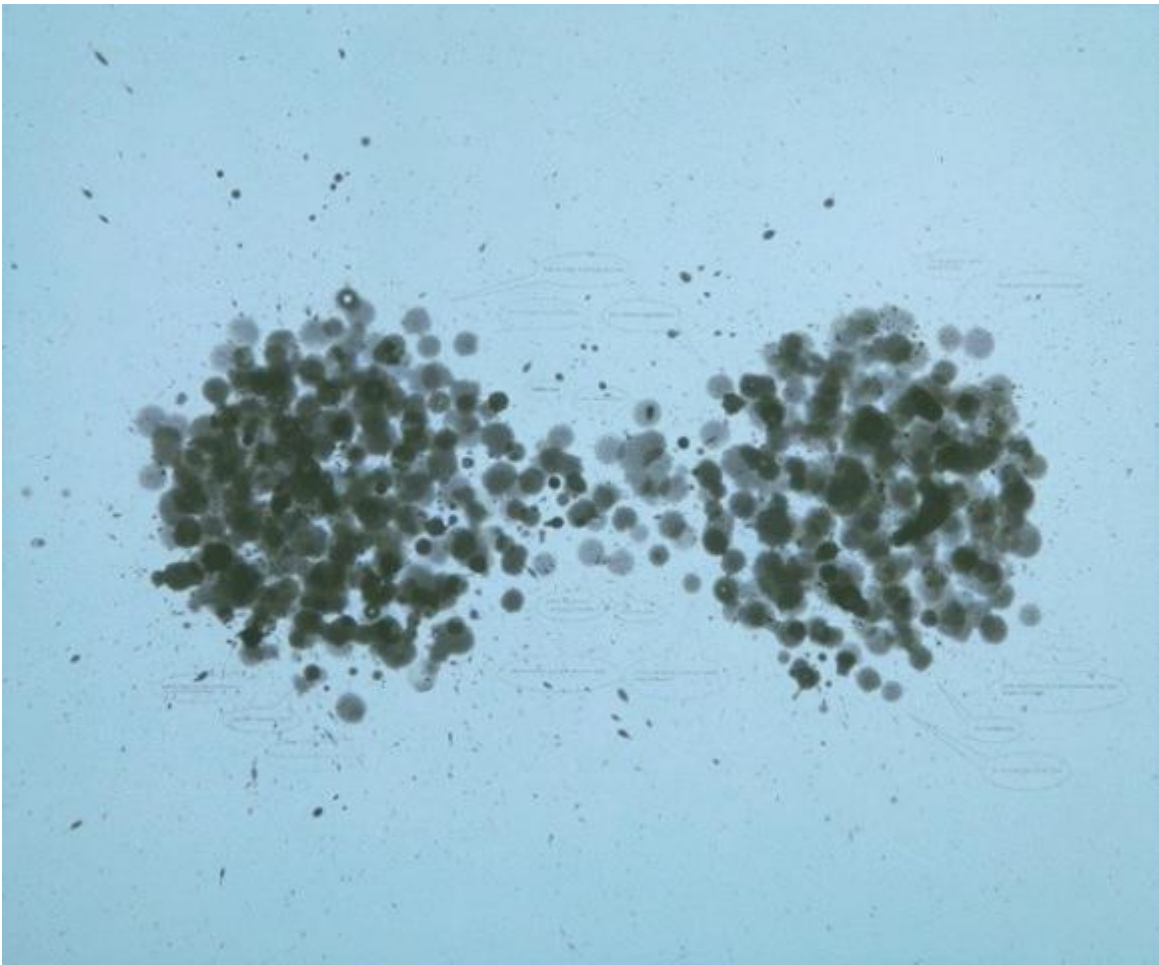


FRED WILSON



The conversation bubbles in *Exchange* feature phrases spoken by black characters in works of literature as varied as Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, William Shakespeare's *Othello*, and Norman Mailer's *An American Dream*. However different the language and their corresponding characters, the words are all the invention of white writers. These literary representations of blacks occupy the voices of the many spots and splashes in *Exchange*. The spots, symbolic of black people, speak to one another, revealing different personalities, desires, problems, and ideas. By selecting phrases that represent a notion of blackness according to the white writers, artist Fred Wilson comments on the misleading nature of our collective understanding of Africans and African-Americans.

Spitbite aquatint, the printmaking technique Wilson used in *Exchange*, creates physical and conceptual depth, giving the spots a three-dimensional quality. The layers of spots suggest the layers of African and African-American history, often misunderstood and misrepresented. Since the conversation bubbles give voice to only a few of the spots, *Exchange* also alludes to the countless others, today and in the past, who remain unheard.

Phrases inside the conversation bubbles include:

- Take me home, Devil! Take me home! (Arthur Miller. *The Crucible*)
- No, no, master will never do that... (Herman Melville. *Benito Cereno*)
- Yeah, freedom, baby! Freedom! (Mart Crowley. *The Boys in the Band*)
- I adore you. (Shelagh Delaney. *A Taste of Honey, Boy*)