

IN THE IN-BETWEEN

journal of new and new media photography

[About](#) [Features](#) ∨ [Project Submissions](#) ∨ [Writer Submissions](#) [Artist Support Program](#)

[Book Reviews](#)

An Artist's Duty: 202-456-III by Jason Lazarus

January 18, 2019





202-456-1111 by Jason Lazarus, Visual Studies Workshop Press, 2018

Essay by Martha Rosler



Softcover, 8 x 10 inches, 48 pages

Open Edition

Roula Seikaly

In the 1970 Emmy-award winning documentary, *To Be Free*, Nina Simone declares, "I am going to reflect the times." Simone spoke at a moment when matters including racial inequality were central to American cultural life, the reverberations of which we feel and strive to address through the arts and political activism—Simone's impassioned statement is expressed as a performance of her song "To Be Free."
202-456-1111.

Lazarus lives with arthrogryposis, a muscular and joint disability that limits one's mobility. It is a condition with which reporter Serge F. Kovaleski lives, and for which [he was mocked by Trump](#) during a 2015 campaign rally in South Carolina. The artist fairly interpreted Trump's cruel interpretation of the condition. In response, he marshaled his creative process in protest of Trump's presidency. Repeating 202-456-1111 (the White House main phone number) Lazarus created an act of defiance, a call to action, a reminder that access to the nation's highest office was denied during the government shutdown, the longest in this nation's history, this line was repeated.

In an email exchange, Lazarus described the creative process as a "production line" in an unoccupied darkroom at the University of South Florida. Lazarus draws the numbers on sheets of paper with chemicals. Lazarus and his assistant then expose each sheet to different light sources. The numbers on the sheets - which predictably produce different results. The digits are clearly recognizable when those exposed to less light or produced as the degraded chemical bath reaches its peak. As the numbers slip into abstraction. Lazarus also notes, with measured enthusiasm, that the efforts to separate the stop bath and developing chemicals are abandoned and the process continues. It is, as the artist notes, "fast, dirty, regular and rhythmic—much like good activism." *202-456-1111* is an experiment.





202-456-1111 is the culmination of these fast and rhythmic experiments: the inai numbers crowded into the front plane, no depth or perspective permitted. By cc pitch black, the numbers obscured. Even in reproduction, the photograms suggest



in their production. Lazarus' mark-making is generous, almost sloppy, and intentional, offering a meditative state that repetitive tasks offer.

It's a fool's errand to assign artistic intent or meaning, but speculation is fair given that studio work, or the gestural repetition captured in the photograms, offers a context that lacks. One could also analogize that these objects (the originals are done for fundraising purposes) represent the darkness through which we are collectively "dreaming of something better," as artist/activist Martha Rosler writes in her poem. We could interpret it as our duty to call, to collaborate, to protest with all available











[More information about 202-456-1111 may be found here](#)

Stay connected with In the In-Between

[Subscribe to our newsletter](#)

[Follow on Facebook](#)

Submit your work

[Portfolios](#)

[Photobooks](#)



previous post

Absence Made Present: Keisha Scarville's Alma at Light Work

YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE:

The Second Drawer: Odette England's Keeper of the...

Performing Myth: Mexico, Mask



Newsletter

Sign up for our quarterly newsletter and receive occasional announcements for artist opportunities.

Email





SUBSCRIBE

@ In the In-Between: Journal of New and New Media Photography,

Like

