

# ARTFORUM

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Cameron Rowland's Depreciation, 2022

The Art We Love

By Precious Okoyomon

“One acre a total dream. The possibility of impossible reparation.”

—Precious Okoyomon

Earth returns to earth, dirt to dirt, soil to soil; life slowly untwines, begins living again. Forty miles outside of Charleston, South Carolina, a one-acre parcel of land belongs only to itself, is only itself. Just months before the end of the American Civil War, General William Tecumseh Sherman, who, returning north from Georgia with an army trailed by thousands of ex-slaves, feared a bloody revolution, issued a field order confiscating the territories along the Atlantic coast where the Maxcy Place plantation and thousands of others like it were located, reserving the land for the resettlement of newly freed families, each of which would be entitled to no more than forty acres of tillable ground. The acre at 8060 Maxie Road was one of those acres, and for the brief period that Sherman's edict was in effect, a group of free people lived and worked the land there. Within a year, President Andrew Johnson had reversed Sherman's order. The earth there returned to plantation owners; freed slaves became sharecroppers on the same land they had been given or were evicted, facing arrest for vagrancy. In 2018, 8060 Maxie Road, Inc., a nonprofit entity formed by Cameron Rowland, purchased this plot and placed a restrictive covenant on its use, preventing any future development of the ground there in perpetuity. Afterward, the property was reappraised, its new value recorded as \$0: hooray! The world, by which I mean capitalism, is a living monument to the atrocities of chattel slavery, to the enclosure of life and nature by economy. The historical forces, the legal frameworks that turned people into transactable commodities are entangled with those that made land into property. Industrial operations deaden birdsong. Ours is a hollowed life. Suffering moves us into a terrible momentum shift in this era of endless exploitation. But here, there is a single remove. One acre a total dream. The possibility of impossible reparation. Everything bursts like an overripe pomegranate; the abolition of value spills out in splendor. Inner core to inner core. We dispossess ourselves of ourselves. Wind leaps. Soil memory. Wind leaps. Soil memory. Oh I will be waiting in blackened faith for the end of everything.