

Outline:

T144: Architecture of Things: A Tribute to Ed Roberson

Speaking/Reading order

Douglas Kearney, (In person)

Nathaniel Mackey (remote)

Evie Shockley (in person)

Philip Williams (remote)

Ed Roberson (in person)

Description:

A tribute to Ed Roberson, whose career rose amid the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s and 70s, which inspired him to challenge language and expectations of what a Black poet “should” be. A self-described nature and visual poet, he inspires us to be in conversation with and see our environment anew. A formally educated poet, Roberson is known for creating structures of layered voices that capture complex internal conversations. Four renowned scholars will speak, followed by Roberson reading.

1. Brief introduction by Stephanie Prieto of Wesleyan University Press
2. Douglas Kearney will comment on materiality and abstraction in Roberson's writing. He means to key off from the critical distinction between "Earth" and "the World" as well as Roberson's engagement with sculptor Thaddeus Mosley. How does Roberson configure the natural in tension with the cultural? Object and thought? Kearney's interest draws first from what one might call ekphrastic synthesis, yet he also angles toward his inquiry by way of Roland Barthes' examination of myth and his own questions about the literal and the figurative as *techne* and *agon* in poetics.
3. Nathaniel Mackey selected Roberson's *Atmospheric Conditions* for the National Poetry Series and described Roberson's unique phrasing as “double-jointed syntax.” He will discuss Roberson's work and use of language, in the context of race, history and culture.
4. Evie Shockley will make remarks building on the writing she's done on Roberson's, centering on his characteristic Robersonian engagements with a "green" black aesthetics. She'll likely comment on *Atmosphere Conditions* and *City Eclogue*, with attention to the continuities and divergences between those books and more recent work, particularly in *Asked What Has Changed*.
5. Philip Williams (remote) will discuss his mentor, Ed Roberson, and the affect that Roberson had on his own work, as younger poet.

6. Ed Roberson will read from his book *Asked What Has Changed* and from other work that represents the breadth of his career and experience.