

Press Release

Exhibition

Garrett Bradley: American Rhapsody

December 19, 2019–March 22, 2020



Garrett Bradley, *America* (film still), 2019. Multi-channel video projection; 35mm film transferred to video: black and white, sound, 23:55 minutes. Image and work courtesy the artist.

#GarrettBradley
#atCAMH
@camhouston

Media Contact

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HOUSTON, TEXAS (September 24, 2019)—Contemporary Arts Museum Houston (CAMH) is pleased to present *Garrett Bradley: American Rhapsody*, the first solo museum presentation of the work of New Orleans-based artist and filmmaker Garrett Bradley (b. 1986, New York, New York). On view in CAMH's Brown Foundation Gallery from December 19, 2019–March 22, 2020, the exhibition will feature a selection of new and recent single and multi-channel films and videos by the artist. As always, admission to CAMH is free.

Bradley works across narrative, documentary, and experimental modes of filmmaking to address themes such as race, class, familial relationships, social justice, southern culture, and the history of film in the United States. Her collaborative and research-based approach to filmmaking is often inspired by the real-life stories of her subjects. For Bradley, this research takes multiple forms—deep dives into historical archives, in-depth dialogues prompted by Craigslist want-ads, or an extended engagement with the communities and

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston

5216 Montrose Boulevard
Houston, Texas 77006
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Garrett Bradley
AKA (film still), 2019
Video, color, sound, 8:00 minutes
Image and work courtesy the artist



Installation view of the Whitney Biennial 2019
(Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, New York, May 17–September 22, 2019). Garrett Bradley,
AKA, 2019. Photograph by Ron Amstutz.



Garrett Bradley
America (film still), 2019
Multi-channel video installation; 35mm film
transferred to video: black and white, sound, 23:55
minutes
Image and work courtesy the artist

individuals she seeks to represent—and results in works that combine both scripted and improvisatory scenes. Bradley's films explore the space between fact and fiction, embracing modes of working and of representing history that blur the boundaries between traditional notions of narrative and documentary cinema. Her rigorous explorations of the social, economic, and racial politics of everyday life—its joys, pleasures, and pains—are lyrically and intimately rendered on screen. An attention to daily life and its often slow, unremarkable unfolding runs through Bradley's films, from her earliest works, such as *Dante 9-5* (2014), in which we follow a United States Postal Service delivery man along his designated route, to her most recent films, *America* and *AKA* (both 2019).

In *America*, a multi-channel video installation, Bradley constructs a visual archive of early African American cinema. Inspired by a 2013 survey published by the Library of Congress proposing that 70 percent of silent films made between 1912 and 1929 have been lost, as well as the discovery and restoration of what is believed to be the earliest surviving film to feature a black cast (*Lime Kiln Club Field Day*, 1913), *America* takes shape as a series of vignettes depicting the everyday, at times, quotidian lives of early-20th century African Americans. Shot in black and white, with a score by Trevor Mathison of the Black Audio Film Collective (1983-1998), Bradley's film presupposes the existence of a body of cinema made by and for African Americans and since lost to history. Mixing found footage from *Lime Kiln Club Field Day* and newly shot performances by non-trained actors, *America* poignantly asks what it might mean to model a history of black visibility and representation that privileges depictions of pleasure over spectacles of pain.

Pleasure and joy—and their intersection within nuanced familial relationships—come further into focus in Bradley's recent short-video, *AKA*. The first in a trilogy of films about relationships between women, in this case relationships between mothers and daughters born into inter-racial families or families of varying skin tones, *AKA* developed out of hours-long conversations between Bradley and her female protagonists. In this kaleidoscopic series of portraits, the artist points towards the multiplicity and intersectionality of identity, pushing against the binary of "either/or" and, instead, embracing the expansiveness of identity called forth by the work's titular allusion to "also known as." Equally of note is *AKA*'s summoning of a long history of black sisterhood. The work's title is also an acronym for Alpha Kappa Alpha, the first sorority established by African American college women in the United States.

In addition to *America* and *AKA*, the exhibition will include Bradley's 2017 documentary short *Alone*, which follows the artist's friend, Aloné Watts, as she navigates the intentionally complex United States prison system.

Garrett Bradley: American Rhapsody is organized by Rebecca Matalon, Curator, Contemporary Arts Museum Houston.

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CAMH Mission

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston presents extraordinary, thought-provoking arts programming and exhibitions to educate and inspire audiences nationally and internationally.

General Information

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston is located at 5216 Montrose Boulevard, at the corner of Montrose and Bissonnet, in the heart of Houston's Museum District. Hours are Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday 10AM–7PM, Thursday 10AM–9PM, Saturday 10AM–6PM, and Sunday Noon–6PM. Admission is always free. For more information, visit camh.org or call 713.284.8250.

About the Artist

Garrett Bradley received her MFA from University of California, Los Angeles and BA from Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts. Her short films and feature-length projects have been exhibited internationally at museums and festivals including the New Orleans Museum of Art, Louisiana; *Whitney Biennial 2019*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, New York; The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, California; The Sundance Film Festival, Park City, Utah; The Tribeca Film Festival, New York, New York; Festival du Nouveau Cinema, Montreal, Canada; The Rotterdam Film Festival, The Netherlands; SXSW, Austin, Texas, among many others. Bradley has received numerous awards and honors, including a 2019-20 Rome Prize from the American Academy in Rome, Italy.

Publication

The exhibition is accompanied by a full-color catalogue. The illustrated publication—designed by Houston-based creative team NUU—will feature an essay by Matalon and a newly commissioned conversation between Bradley and art historian Huey Copeland.

Public Programs

These events are free, open to the public, and take place at Contemporary Arts Museum Houston. Seating is limited. Please check camh.org for a complete list of Museum programs relating to this exhibition.

Opening Reception | *Garrett Bradley: American Rhapsody*
Wednesday, December 18, 2019 | 6:30–9PM

In Conversation | Artist Garrett Bradley and Rebecca Matalon
Thursday, December 19, 2019 | 6:30–7:30PM

Talk | Huey Copeland and Rebecca Matalon in Conversation
Thursday, February 6, 2020 | 6:30–7:30PM