

Teacher Guide

Mariah Garnett: Dreamed This Gateway

On view | June 10–August 28, 2022



Mariah Garnett with collaborator, *I Was Just A Boy*, 2022, Audio, 10:45 minutes, Commissioned by Contemporary Arts Museum Houston (CAMH), courtesy the artist and Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles

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Exhibition Overview

- Artist Mariah Garnett mixes documentary, narrative and experimental filmmaking practices to make work for an audience that is beyond her immediate experience.
- *Mariah Garnett: Dreamed This Gateway* is the first U.S. solo museum presentation of her work.



Mariah Garnett, *The Pow'r of Life is Love*, 2021, Multi-channel video installation, 4K video: color, sound, 13:00 minutes, Courtesy the artist and Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles

- The exhibition features new and recent operatic videos, including a site-specific, multi-channel installation commissioned by CAMH.
- Collaboration was an important part of this exhibition. Garnett worked with experimental vocalist Holland Andrews, Cairo-based documentary playwright Raphaël Khouri, and professional opera singers Christopher Paul Craig and Breanna Sinclairé, Garnett has created a new body of work inspired by an archive of materials related to the enigmatic and remarkable life and artistic output of her great-great-aunt, Ruth Lynda Deyo.
- *The Pow'r of Life is Love* features a staging of a scene from Deyo's previously unrealized opera, *The Diadem of Stars* (1925-32). Set in Ancient Egypt during the eighteenth dynasty, Deyo's opera is a fantastical and mystical interpretation of the tumultuous reign of Pharaohs Akhenaten and Tutankhamen.
- The second half of Garnett's video depicts a surreal, hallucinatory scene inspired by Deyo's obsession with an ancient stone bust she acquired in Cairo, Egypt in 1924 and which she believed to be inhabited by spirits. In the video, a glowing stone appears to speak in a chorus of AI-generated voices.
- A series of diary entries from Deyo as well as conversations between Garnett and her Cairo-based collaborators, provide a point of departure for a new body of work exploring unexpected and poignant connections between spirituality, trauma, and art making through the artist's queer lens.
- Garnett and her collaborators weave together a rich and fantastical vision of individual and collective trauma and transcendence within the context of our contemporary political and ideological landscape.

Key Questions

- Who speaks and who is silenced? What are historical examples of marginalized stories?
- How do we acknowledge our history while also rewriting, repairing, and moving beyond our past trauma?
- How can a specific place influence an artwork? What are some examples of works inspired by a city?
- How does the family history of an artist impact their artwork?
- How does the musical element of film change the experience of viewing? How does it make you feel?



Mariah Garnett with Holland Andrews, *Dreamed This Gateway*, 2022
5-channel video installation, 16mm film transferred to 4K video: color, sound,
25:13 minutes, Commissioned by Contemporary Arts Museum Houston (CAMH),
courtesy the artist and Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles

Curriculum Connections

Visual Arts | Garnett's films explore her family's history. The artist uses artifacts like diaries and photographs to create relevant narratives. After researching your family history, create a short film or work of art inspired by Garnett's artwork.

History | In history, who speaks and who is silenced? Using historical events related to your cultural background, research a time when a group of people have been silenced and describe how this group has been impacted or shared their story.

Writing | Garnett explores the personal histories of her family members in her artwork like her great-great-aunt, Ruth Lynda Deyo. What is a relationship or dynamic that interests you in your family? Interview these family members and find out more about their points of view.
