

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston

5216 Montrose Boulevard
Houston, Texas 77006
CAMH.ORG | #atCAMH

Press Release

Exhibition

Mariah Garnett: Dreamed This Gateway June 10–August 28, 2022



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

HOUSTON, TX (April 26, 2022)—Contemporary Arts Museum Houston (CAMH) is pleased to announce the upcoming exhibition, *Mariah Garnett: Dreamed This Gateway*, the first U.S. solo museum presentation of the work of Los Angeles-based artist and filmmaker Mariah Garnett (b. 1980, Portland, Maine). On view in CAMH's Nina and Michael Zilkha Gallery from June 10–August 28, 2022, the exhibition features new and recent operatic videos, including a multi-channel installation commissioned by CAMH.

Working in collaboration 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 (b. 1884, Poughkeepsie, New York; d. 1960, Cairo, Egypt). A spiritualist, synesthete, and composer, Deyo moved to Cairo in 1924, where she began to have visions transmitted by spirits. Deyo meticulously transcribed her

#MariahGarnett
#atCAMH
#TrustArtists

Press Contact

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visions and communications, as well as her political, social, and financial anxieties, in a series of diaries, eventually composing an opera, *The Diadem of Stars*, based on the lives of Egyptian pharaohs Akhenaten and Tutankhamen. These documents, 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 artistic production through the artist's queer lens.

Understanding the limits of knowledge afforded by this archive, and archives more generally, Garnett uses the materials as a means of reckoning with her family's complicity in extractive systems of colonial oppression and cultural appropriation, specifically Deyo's fetishization of Ancient Egyptian culture. For Garnett, Deyo's archive is less a definitive historical record than material through which to ask: *Who speaks and who is silenced? What histories or facets of a culture do we privilege and why? How might we work both with and against an archive to offer an alternate historical record, one that honors difference and dissidence, and is always in the process of being both made and unmade?*

To this end, the artist jettisons Deyo's singular and solitary search for affirmation, enlightenment, and success, instead favoring a collaborative and multiplicitous approach to art making. The resulting operatic videos, which feature both highly staged and improvisatory performances, emphasize sonic dissonance alongside lush lyricism to mesmerizing effect. In *Dreamed This Gateway*, 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.

Mariah Garnett: Dreamed This Gateway is organized by Rebecca Matalon, Curator, Contemporary Arts Museum Houston.

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Installation view of *A Heart of Opal Fire* at Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles, 2021. Courtesy the artist and Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles. Photo by Ruben Diaz.

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, in the heart of Houston's Museum District.

Hours

Mon. Closed
Tues. Closed
Wed. 11AM–6PM
Thur. 11AM–9PM
Fri. 11AM–6PM
Sat. 11AM–6PM
Sun. 11AM–6PM

Admission is always free. For more information, visit CAMH.ORG or call 713.284.8250.

About the Artist

Mariah Garnett holds an MFA from California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) in Santa Clarita, California and a BA from Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island. A 2019 Guggenheim Fellow in Film & Video, her work has been exhibited both nationally and internationally at institutions including the Eli Marsh Gallery, Amherst College, Massachusetts; Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery; Metropolitan Arts Centre, Belfast, UK; New Museum, New York, New York; SFMoMA, California; REDCAT, Los Angeles, California; the 2014 Made in LA Hammer Biennial, Los Angeles, California, and the Brooklyn Museum, New York, among many others. Garnett has received numerous awards and honors, including a 2016 Artadia Los Angeles Award. In 2021, her film collaboration with Dynasty Handbag, *Weirdo Night*, was featured in Sundance Film Festival New Frontiers. She currently teaches at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA).

About Contemporary Arts Museum Houston

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston (CAMH) presents extraordinary, thought-provoking arts programming and exhibitions to educate and inspire audiences nationally and internationally. Established in 1948, CAMH is one of the oldest non-collecting contemporary art museums in the country, and is internationally known for presenting pivotal and landmark work by artists recognized as the most important of the 20th and 21st centuries. CAMH's mandate is to be present, to connect artists and audiences through the urgent issues of our time, and to adventurously promote the catalytic possibilities of contemporary art. CAMH's programming, both in and beyond the Museum, is presented free to the public, and advocates for artists' essential role in society.

Support

Contemporary Arts Museum of Houston is funded in part by the City of Houston through the Houston Arts Alliance.

