

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 the most current information.

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

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

Open Studio | Journal Making
Saturday, January 4, 2020 | 2–4PM

Workshop | Words & Art
Saturday, January 11, 2020 | 12:30–1:30PM

Performance | *Free Diamonds* developed and choreographed by Donna Crump
Thursday, January 23, 2020 | 6:30–7:00PM

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

Art at Noon | Marian Luntz, Curator of Film and Video at Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
Friday, February 7, 2020 | 12–1PM

Reading | Words & Art
Thursday, February 13, 2020 | 6:30–7:30PM

“In her film-based work, Garrett Bradley emphatically refuses traditional modes of narrating history, creating the conditions wherein we might begin to conceive history as nonlinear, horizontally oriented, and endlessly opening onto itself.”

—Rebecca Matalon, Curator

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston

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Houston, Texas 77006
[@camhouston](https://www.camhouston.org)
[CAMH.ORG](https://www.camhouston.org)
[#atCAMH](https://www.camhouston.org)
[#GarrettBradley](https://www.camhouston.org)

HOURS

Mon.	Closed
Tue.	10AM–7PM
Wed.	10AM–7PM
Thu.	10AM–9PM
Fri.	10AM–7PM
Sat.	10AM–6PM
Sun.	12PM–6PM

IMAGES

Cover: *America* (film still), 2019. Multi-channel video projection; 35mm film transferred to video; black and white, sound, 23:55 minutes. New Orleans Museum of Art: Museum purchase, Carmen Donaldson fund, 2019. 33. Image courtesy the artist.

Inside: *AKA*. (film still), 2019. Video: color, sound, 8:00 minutes. Image and work courtesy the artist.

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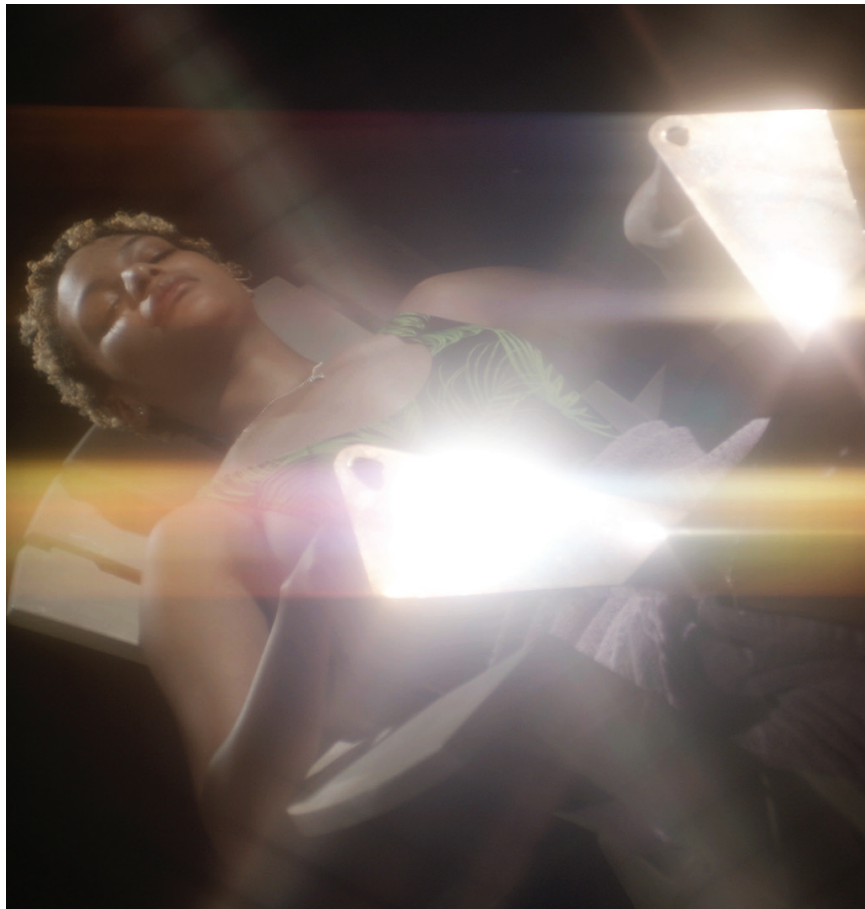
Garrett Bradley American Rhapsody

December 19, 2019–March 22, 2020



Contemporary Arts Museum Houston

Garrett Bradley: American Rhapsody is the first solo museum presentation of the work of New Orleans-based artist Garrett Bradley (b. 1986, New York, New York). A focused and decisive presentation of Bradley's work through the lens of two single-channel videos—*Alone* (2017) and *AKA* (2019)—and a multi-channel video installation, *America* (2019), *American Rhapsody* reveals the artist's commitment to the mediums of film and video as spaces for investigating the power of visual culture to produce, adjudicate, and authorize historical memory.



For the last ten years, Bradley has worked across narrative, documentary, and experimental modes of filmmaking to address themes such as race, class, familial relationships, social justice, and the history of film. 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 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 representing history that resist linear chronologies and, instead, foreground fragmentary and affective experiences of time.

In *America*, Bradley constructs a visual archive of early African American cinema in the form of 12 vignettes. 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* 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, *America* depicts the everyday lives of early-20th century African Americans as it models a history of black visibility 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*. Exploring relationships between mothers and daughters born into interracial 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 toward 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 *Alone*, Bradley provides a glimpse into the life of Aloné Watts as she contemplates a recent proposal of marriage from her incarcerated partner, Desmond Watson. We follow the lead character as she meets with Watson's lawyer, tries on wedding dresses, and tells her family of her plans to wed. In a country where African Americans are incarcerated at more than five times the rate of white people, the film also points towards the enduring legacy of the Thirteenth Amendment, which in 1865 both abolished slavery and opened doors for new laws designed to criminalize black life, also known as Black Codes. In *Alone*, Bradley considers the continued precariousness of black life through an intimate look into the ways in which love and loneliness remain intricately bound for the incarcerated and their families.

The three works included in the exhibition present a rhapsodic portrait of America. They reveal Bradley as an artist intent on creating modes of black visibility that are intimately tied to daily life while remaining equally aware of the enduring power the image continues to hold as a key site in the production of knowledge and, reflexively, a site where this knowledge can be questioned, contested, and countered.

Suggested Resources

Reading

- Copeland, Huey
– “A Seat at the Table: Notes of an Institutional Creature,” *October*, no. 168, Spring 2019
- Gillespie, Michael Boyce
– *Film Blackness: American Cinema and the Idea of Black Film*, 2016
- Hartman, Saidiya
– “Venus in Two Acts,” *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* vol. 12, no. 2, June 2008
- Moten, Fred
– *Black and Blur*, 2017
- Skoller, Jeffrey
– *Shadows, Specters, Shards: Making History in Avant-Garde Film*, 2005
- Wallace, Michele
– *Black Popular Culture* (Edited by Gina Dent), 1992
– *Dark Designs and Visual Culture*, 2004

These resources are recommended for further inquiry into the artwork and themes explored in the exhibition *Garrett Bradley: American Rhapsody*.

Viewing

- 13th*
– Ava DuVernay, 2016
- Imitation of Life*
– Douglas Sirk, 1959
- Lime Kiln Club Field Day*
– T. Hayes Hunter, Edwin Middleton, and Sam Corker Jr., 1913
- Love Is The Message, The Message Is Death*
– Arthur Jafa, 2016

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