

ELEPHANT

"5 Minutes With - Sadie Barnette: 'I Would Kill a Person for That Painting'"

By Emily Steer

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(L-R): Image of Kridttårnet which forms part of von Bartha Copenhagen. Athene Galiciadis Stilleben (Wildlife) 2021.

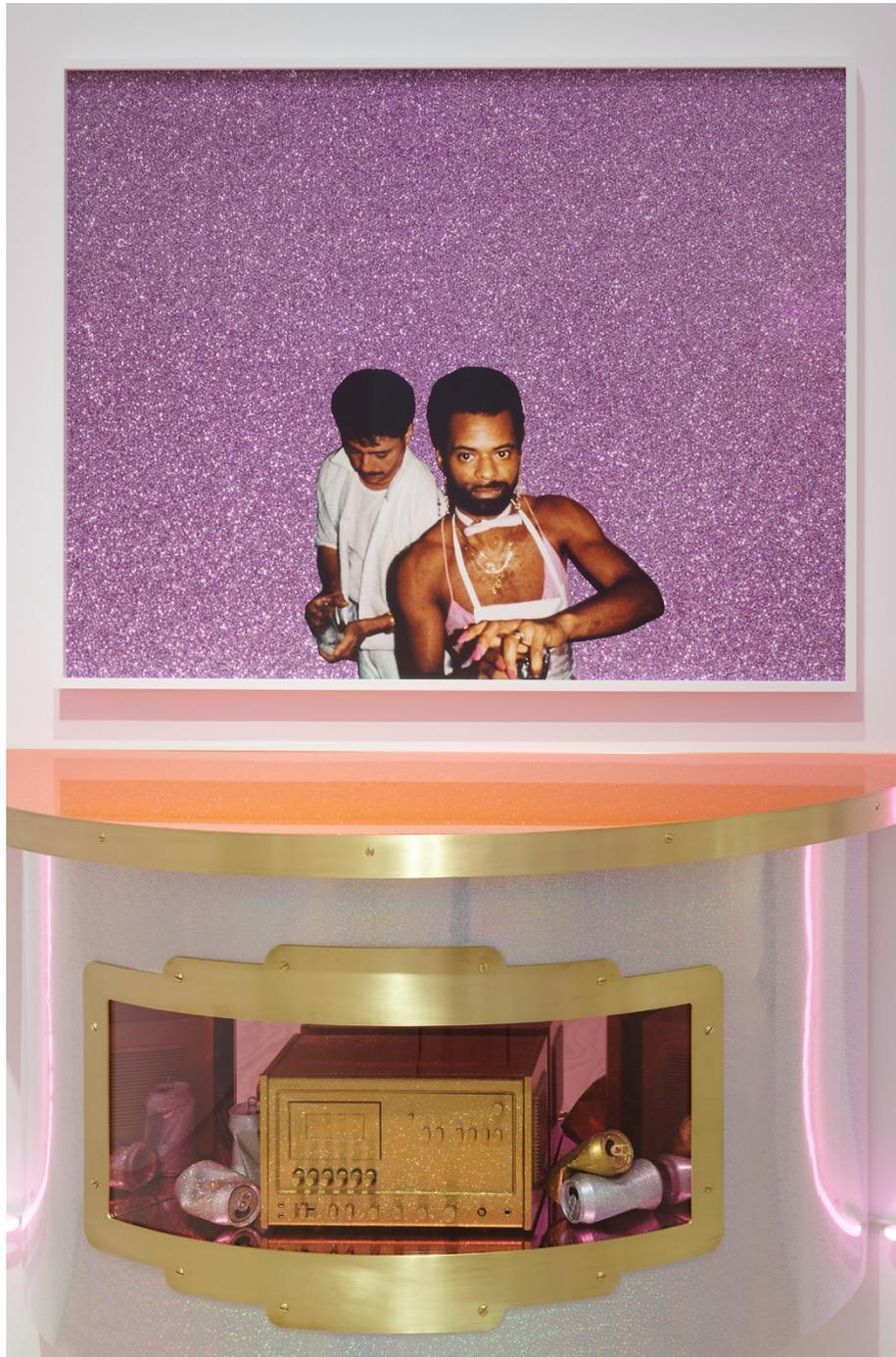
The artist takes five minutes out of her day to answer our eight questions.

Exploring subject matter with intimacy, playfulness and joyful aesthetics, [Sadie Barnette's](#) new show at [Jessica Silverman](#) in San Francisco combines the personal and political in searing fashion. [Inheritance](#) includes an archival 500-page FBI dossier on the American artist's father, compiled during his years in the Black Panther Party. Pages from the dossier are printed in large scale, with white text on black and overlaid with symbols including Hello Kitty and flowers.

Inheritance also features a sculptural depiction of San Francisco's first Black-owned gay bar, The New Eagle Creek Saloon, which was founded by Barnette's father in the early 1990s. It contains archival photography from the bar overlaid with rhinestones, and a giant couch covered in holographic fabric sitting in front of a wall plastered repeatedly with the word "sister".

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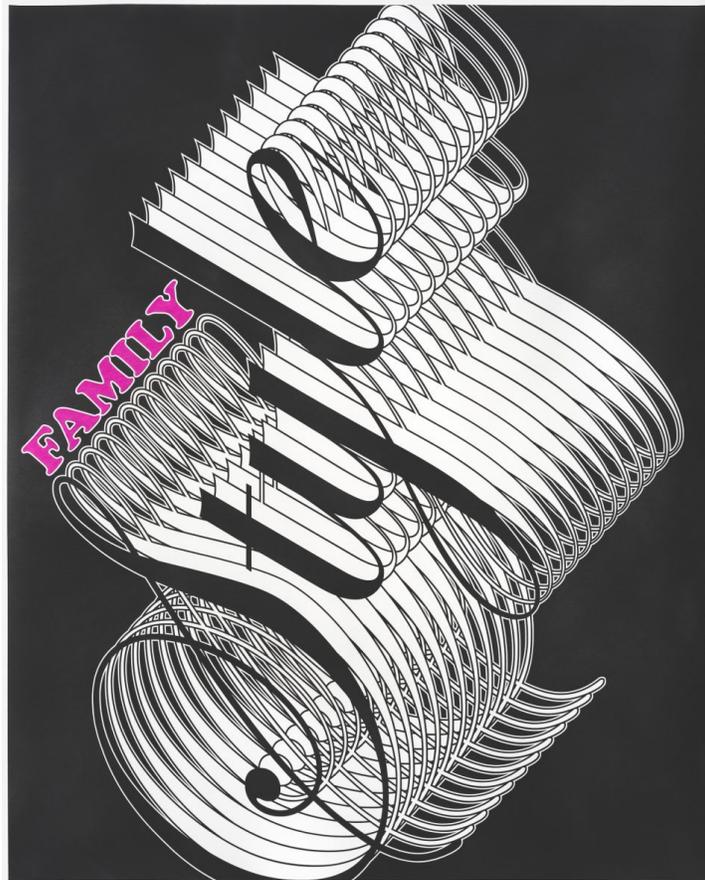


Sadie Barnette, *Eagle Creek Bar*, 2021. Courtesy of the artist and Jessica Silverman, San Francisco

This personal, celebratory show coincides with [Legacy and Legend](#), her solo exhibition at [Benton Museum of Art](#) at Pomona College and [Pitzer College Art Galleries](#). She will also create a work for Los Angeles International Airport in 2024, which will show the phrase "Sister You Are Welcome Here" in bright terrazzo letters.

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If you could save only one item from your studio, what would it be?

The family photos, of course!

What was the last art material you bought to use in your work?

A very tiny vacuum for picking up coloured pencil shavings. It started out with, "I wonder if such a thing exists..." and because of the internet it was then on its way to my studio within minutes. The commercial for the thing is hilarious.



Sadie Barnette, *Family Tree*, 2021. Courtesy of the artist and Jessica Silverman, San Francisco

What is your go-to song when you're working in the studio?

First, I listen to the news: [Democracy Now with Amy Goodman](#) every morning. Some days I listen on repeat to every album by mystery group [SAULT](#). The news is often crushing but empowering. The music is beautiful but also holds pain. Of course, none of this is mutually exclusive but it is our world.

Which single work of art would you choose to live alongside in your home?

I was just at [LACMA](#) for the opening of [Black American Portraits](#) (what a mind-blowing honour to be included, and for photographs of my father to hang in the company of that history) and I pointed at Barkley L Hendricks' 2016 painting [Photo Bloke](#) and said to my husband, "I would kill a person for that painting." What a terrible thing to say! But the reaction is strong. I love that painting.

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Top three art or photography books?

Can I say mine? Published by the Benton Museum at Pomona College, [Legacy & Legend](#) is just set to come out and so much love and care went into the book. Shout out to Content Object (C/O) for the design and Rujeko Hockley for the essay. Also [WEB Du Bois' Data Portraits: Visualizing Black America](#) and [Deana Lawson: An Aperture Monograph](#).

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If money was no object, what would you most like to experiment with in your work?

Time travel.

Tell us a pet peeve of yours when it comes to the art world.

Shaking hands.

What is your favourite gallery or museum space around the world?

The [Studio Museum in Harlem](#). A decade before I was an artist-in-residence there, I stumbled in as a teenager knowing nothing about the museum and felt instantly at home. The Studio Museum is family and I can't wait to celebrate the new building designed by David Adjaye.

Emily Steer is Elephant's editor

All images courtesy the artist and Jessica Silverman, San Francisco

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