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"The Keepers: Sadie Barnette and Ja'Tovia Garry in Conversation with Erin Christovale"

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Sadie Barnette, *Home Goods: End Tables* (detail), 2021, *Sadie Barnette: Legacy and Legend* installation view at Pitzer College Art Galleries, Pitzer College, Claremont, CA, 2021. Two-site solo exhibition at Benton Museum of Art at Pomona College and Pitzer College Art Galleries, 2021. Courtesy: the artist and Pitzer College Art Galleries, Claremont, CA. Photo: Fredrik Nilsen Studio

Artists Sadie Barnette and Ja'Tovia Gary share a practice concerned with Black narratives, legacies, histories, and figures, especially from the 1960s and 1970s. Both are obsessed with roots and origin sites, familial histories, and their presentation, and both take deep dives into their respective family archives to act as record and time keepers. In the following conversation, moderated by Erin Christovale, associate curator at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, Barnette and Gary discuss being fated with what they term "a call": to them, witness

**JESSICA
SILVERMAN**

621 Grant Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94108
jessicasilvermangallery.com +1 415 255 9508

and preservation are acts of inheritance and responsibility, as well as a way to operate with integrity against the romanticization and flattening of history. Working at their own pace, they question implied notions of visibility and consent, access and vulnerability, conceiving Black femmehood as inherently queer in that it opens up expansive possibilities outside formulaic, imposed dogmas.

ERIN CHRISTOVALE: In thinking through both of your practices, I found some similarities and crossovers on a more formal level, but also on a contextual one—thinking through certain narratives as well as familial histories, and the 1960s as a decade that stands out. Shall we begin this conversation with personal origins and origin sites—where we're from and how those places inform our practices as artists and as curators?

For the majority of my life I have lived in Southern California; I grew up in Long Beach and now I'm living and working in Los Angeles. Yet one of the things that I don't think through that often—until I'm there, that is—is that I was born in Jacksonville, Florida. Whenever I go to Miami, something happens to my body as soon as it has contact with the Atlantic Ocean. I have these vivid visions of being in the womb again—not necessarily a visual memory, but the feeling of it. This idea that the Atlantic is a womb, and that I was in my mother's womb while she was at the foot of the Atlantic. There's something about it that's so different from the Pacific, from growing up in Southern California. It's something very spiritual I tap into, thinking about certain histories and figures, like Zora Neale Hurston or Mami Wata.

That said, Long Beach provided a cultural exchange between people of color that has happened throughout my life and has deeply informed my curatorial work. I work in a public LA institution, so one of my main goals is to have my exhibitions look and feel like a city where rich cultural exchange happens. It's about centering a Black experience but also looking out and understanding how that experience intersects with all of these other people. Los Angeles is a really interesting site that marks so many different American industries, like Hollywood. It was a landing point of the Great Migration. It is also marked by a few incredibly important uprisings.

SADIE BARNETTE: I can speak to Oakland a little bit. You can definitely talk about Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay Area separately, but also as a Venn diagram in terms of some of the significant ways that we move through space—obviously car culture and that California laid-back vibe. But the Bay Area has its own history, and Oakland is one of those places where, if you grow up there, it's a part of who you are. You're going to tell everybody you meet, "Oh, I'm from Oakland," as you're proud of it. Oakland is a historically Black city, and maybe I'm biased, but considering how small it is, it's generated a disproportionate amount of music, politics, trends. The Black Panthers, Pullman porters, the Port of Oakland. Thinking about migration, West Oakland was formerly this thriving middle-class Black neighborhood that was gutted and ransacked by government policies. This is all a part of the culture for people who grow up in Oakland—both this fierce political and fighting spirit, as well as a kind of joy and drive and lust for style and swagger and enjoying life. I definitely think of Oakland as not necessarily a character in my work, but more of an author or a place to be speaking from.

**JESSICA
SILVERMAN**

621 Grant Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94108
jessicasilvermangallery.com +1 415 255 9508

JA'TOVIA GARY: I'm clearly a Southerner, but I left. I'm one of those people who did their own migration—leaving at eighteen, going to New York and living in Brooklyn for more than sixteen years, and then coming back in 2018 and staying for the duration of this extended pandemic moment of upheaval. In many ways it's been destabilizing but also quite grounding to return to my place of origin, to my roots. A project brought me back: I needed to be in close proximity to my family in order to tell these stories, to access this archive, to be able to touch the knowledge, so to speak. To be able to see and to smell and to taste. Texas is really complicated, because it was the place I was running from in order to fully self-actualize. But when you leave and you're in this process of self-actualizing, the past is always there, the roots are still sprouting, and you find yourself making your way back, even if you're not actually in Texas.

Oftentimes I find myself being a voice or bridge or representative of the Black South for Black people in the North who descend from Southern Black people but don't have contact with them. There's preconceived notions of what happens below the Mason-Dixon Line. I have many friends who say things to me like, "Oh, I could never go down there because it's so dangerous." Meanwhile they live in LA, or they're from Jamaica, or some other place in the diaspora that has a huge Black population, or places where Black people are struggling against forces of white supremacy. I find myself having to be a kind of record and time keeper around the South, specifically now that I'm repositioned back here. Let's be careful what we say about the Black folks who come from down here because they gave birth to it all, right? They gave birth to what we know as modern American culture. Of course we descend from the continent and we give thanks and praises to the ancestors who came over and survived. But let's not forget about the Mississippi Delta. Let's not forget about Florida. Let's not forget about Texas, even though I'm ambivalent about Texas, as when you're here, you feel the heavy boot of fascism on your neck. It's not pretending, it doesn't have a sweet smile on its face, it doesn't wear a shiny suit like up North. It's raw. On the other hand, you go over your mama's house and it's very much "Yes ma'am, no ma'am," very much "Do you want something to eat?" You're cradled, you're nestled, you're rocking in the bosom.

There's this ambivalence with the South which, whether it is a very clear illustration of my relationship to the South or simply a gesture toward the creative production that has come from this region of the country, it's always showing up in the work. Usually it's coming musically, but oftentimes it's archival, be it family archival or the wider Black American archival that I have access to. Oftentimes it's coming through Black church performative and faith traditions. I can't shake it, and I don't want to shake it because those are the roots. We want to make sure the roots are still in place.

ERIN: It's amazing to look at both of your practices and see your origins so prominently "splattered" throughout the work in these very subtle ways—also in some ways that emphasize a Black American vernacular. Speaking of origins, something that you both have brought up already is the family archive: how it shows up in your work, why you choose to bring it in as a point of context. I consider both of you archivists and researchers. What is your discretion around your family archive? How are you deciding what enters the public forum? How are you deciding to unfold certain narratives, and what are your forms of consent with the family members you feature?

**JESSICA
SILVERMAN**

621 Grant Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94108
jessicasilvermangallery.com +1 415 255 9508

SADIE: For me it's about my position in my family. My father was the youngest of eleven children, so I'm the last born of the last born. So I'm very young for the generation that I occupy as far as literal lines on the family tree (my great-great grandmother is as far back as we trace our family's lineage; as the story goes, she was a Cherokee woman who escaped enslavement). I've always felt that I'm an old generation in a young person. When looking at and with my family, I've always been fascinated by the stories and the presentation of the stories—certain little inflections or stylistic things that people add to make things extra engaging and extra legendary. I witness how my family history is told, preserved, and dramatized through these stories that unfold in places like my Aunt Margaret's living room in Compton.



Sadie Barnette, *Sadie Barnette: Legacy and Legend* installation view at Pitzer College Art Galleries, Pitzer College, Claremont, CA, 2021. Two-site solo exhibition at Benton Museum of Art at Pomona College and Pitzer College Art Galleries, 2021. Courtesy: the artist and Pitzer College Art Galleries, Claremont, CA. Photo: Fredrik Nilsen Studio

I should say that while I was born and raised in the Bay, most of my Californian family has been in Compton for generations. My aunt and uncle were the first Black family to move onto the block in 1954 when it was all white. There's actually a family joke that the reason they were able to get that house is because my uncle's last name is White. And so while they were Black, maybe someone thought they were white, because their name was the White, literally. It's kind of a joke, but also very serious.

Long before I knew the term "archive" or "archivist" I've always been that person: enamored of

**JESSICA
SILVERMAN**

621 Grant Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94108
jessicasilvermangallery.com +1 415 255 9508

capturing family stories and witnessing them being shared. After my dad decided to file a Freedom of Information Act request—which took almost five years of back and forth with the FBI—in 2015 we received a five-hundred-page FBI surveillance file amassed on my father during his time with the Black Panthers and Angela Davis. That’s when I felt like, “Okay, this is an actual responsibility. This is my actual job. This is my inheritance. I need to do this work and we need to have these conversations.”



Ja'Tovia Gary, *THE GIVERNY SUITE* (detail), 2019, *flesh that needs to be loved* installation view at Paula Cooper Gallery, New York, 2020. © Ja'Tovia Gary. Courtesy: Paula Cooper Gallery, New York. Photo: Steven Probert

JA'TOVIA: I grew up around a bunch of Southern Black preachers. Everybody's got a story, everybody's got these amazing ways of telling it. "Well, you weren't there, I was there, here's what I saw." All this subjective commentary, everyone has their view and everyone can talk. I remember, when I was young, definitely being the type who was in grown folks' business all the time. I wanted to be with the women in the kitchen talking, I wanted to hear what was going on. My mother is the third youngest of eight kids whose parents passed away when they were children. They were raised by a grandmother, by an older generation, which gave them access to this knowledge, all of this information and tradition. Being around a bunch of older Black women was the impetus for the project, the archive itself. I started interviewing my mother back in 2011 when I realized she had a VHS tape that contained converted Super 8 films from the 1960s. It turned out her Aunt Mae (who's still alive) used to carry around a camera on some Zora Neale Hurston shit in the 1960s. All of this archive from the 1960s landed in my lap. I interviewed Aunt

**JESSICA
SILVERMAN**

621 Grant Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94108
jessicasilvermangallery.com +1 415 255 9508

Mae for my upcoming film in 2018, and she told me stories of my great-grandmother. On my way out, she gave me a leather satchel filled with about seven more reels of Super 8 film.

When you say "inheritance," Sadie, when you say "responsibility," it feels like that. It feels like they are saying, "Here you are. I need you to do right by it." It feels heavy but in a good way, as you feel honored, uplifted, buoyed by both their trust in you and the call. It feels like a call. My therapist says, "Oh, this is a film that's been in the making for sixty years." It's almost like you take one step toward the film, and the film takes two steps toward you. That's what's been happening at a very, very slow pace, but a necessary pace. To hear the therapist say that reminded me that this is not something you should rush. It's something that has all this archival support and is an expansive view of your life and your family's life. How can you rush that?

My consent is directly asking people, "Can I use this?" "Do you want to be in this?" "What do you think about featuring so-and-so who's not alive in this?" "What do you think about answering these questions?" And it's almost always an enthusiastic "Yes."



Sadie Barnette, *Home Goods: Couch II*, 2019, *Inheritance* installation view at Jessica Silverman, San Francisco, 2021–22.
Courtesy: the artist and Jessica Silverman, San Francisco. Photo: John Wilson White

SADIE: I love thinking of it as a call that finds you or you find it, not only because of who you are in your family, but because you're an artist and you have the skills and the vision and the patience to be the person who takes it and translates it to that next phase. I like that longer trajectory.

**JESSICA
SILVERMAN**

621 Grant Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94108
jessicasilvermangallery.com +1 415 255 9508

About consent: working so closely with my father, I think of him as a collaborator. When it comes to the formal and visual elements, conversely, I'm very strict about how it has to be. What I love is when we do interviews together where he gets to be himself and tell the stories in the first person. I'm the "straight man" and he gets all the laughs, adding another texture to the project. With this particular work, the FBI project, my father and I are on a similar page. It's not like I'm dredging up something that the family wants to keep a secret, although for a long time, my dad wasn't too interested in talking about his time in the Panthers, and he never used to talk about his experiences of being drafted and sent to Vietnam because obviously it was such a painful time and he lost so many friends. But once it was coming up on fifty years, by his own subconscious process, I think he just felt it was time to share, to get this burden off of his shoulders. And it happened to be that our generation was very interested in listening.

Also, it was a surprise for him that his experiences were being recognized as History with a capital H. It made him feel it was worth sharing these stories, investigating this history a little more, revisiting those painful times, knowing that it would be bigger than himself and would include him in this multigenerational community who are interested in getting to know these stories. But there are definitely things that I protect, that I don't put in the work. Some things are just family business and won't ever be shared. Somehow I try to think of holding space for those stories, knowing that most people understand that whatever you're sharing is just the tip of the iceberg and there are all these other things underneath the water that you're not sharing. I hope people can tell that what they're witnessing is what we're allowing them to witness and that there is a certain control as far as what's visible, especially dealing with a surveillance file. Visibility has this vulnerable, less-than-empowering edge to it when thinking about being under state surveillance.

JA'TOVIA: What to withhold, what is the layer of opacity, what to refuse, has been the challenge, the tightrope walk, I am attempting to traverse. The whole point of this exercise, the challenge of this film, is vulnerability and a certain amount of unmasking that I'm requiring of myself. But that doesn't mean that everybody wants all their business on Front Street. There are things about my grandmother or my mother or my father or even myself that I will not share because that is family business and I am interested in protecting them. We don't want to make something salacious and sensationalized just because we've got this "in."

In many ways the care that we are bringing to these sensitive materials is why I have been deliberate in my speed, why my choices have been conscious. We're trying to take a moment; we're trying to take a break here and a pause there. Oftentimes, being someone who rests so heavily on this subjective experience, I need to bring in someone who is objective, and I'll run certain scenes back for them. If I'm angry in a scene where I'm talking about my relationship with my mother, I want to play it for someone who loves my mother too, to see how they feel about it. Am I doing too much? Can some of this be cut? Is some of this just whiny and embittered? Or is this necessary?

It has been demanding to decide what to put on the timeline and what falls to the cutting-room floor. So the deliberate slowness has been necessary. I'm not perfect. I'm a fallible human being.

**JESSICA
SILVERMAN**

621 Grant Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94108
jessicasilvermangallery.com +1 415 255 9508

And I feel some type of way about certain members of my family. So I want to make sure that we are operating with integrity. I have such a strong critique for filmmakers who don't operate with integrity. I want to make sure that we are above reproach, especially in dealing with the people we're accountable to, our blood. It's been quite a challenge, but one I feel very much up for.

ERIN: I often learn from artists, specifically Black artists who are speaking to a family legacy or history, that there is a shared familial collective catharsis when viewing those works, because while we all have very different histories, we share a tendency to redact certain moments and the pain and the trauma around those moments and the desire to not relive them and not pass them on to another generation. Yet there's a notable tension: we are so interested in wanting to know those stories from our elders, while generations before us oftentimes felt like we shouldn't be brought into them out of a sense of concern and care.

I would say both of your practices are invested in revisiting certain historical moments and figures, especially from the 1960s and 1970s. In a lot of ways, the sum of those figures marks what we consider a Black Power movement moment of that time. I'm interested in this because there has been an ongoing issue with the romanticization of these moments. It can be violent and dangerous in terms of watering them down enough to bring them into a larger American history that feels palatable, acceptable, digestible. Both of you, in your own ways, are pushing against those narratives. Can you speak to certain figures, movements, or collectives that you are featuring prominently in your work and this push against conventional narratives?



Ja'Tovia Gary, *Citational Ethics* (Saidiya Hartman, 2017), 2020. © Ja'Tovia Gary. Courtesy: Paula Cooper Gallery, New York.
Photo: Steven Probert

**JESSICA
SILVERMAN**

621 Grant Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94108
jessicasilvermangallery.com +1 415 255 9508

SADIE: That sort of flattening happened with the Black Panthers—their story being so potentially salacious and consumable to the point it becomes just about the leather jackets and the guns. It's very easy to flatten and commodify that moment into a kind of cartoon character, almost—a super-cool one, but still a character, a caricature.

Since I did not want my work to be pushed and pulled in those directions, the first time I showed the project was at the Oakland Museum for the exhibition *All Power to the People: Black Panthers at 50*. It was 2016, the fiftieth anniversary of the Panthers in Oakland, so I knew the work would be contextualized properly because the whole point of the show was to tell a wider and deeper history of the Panthers, to talk about the intersectional and the international politics, the free ambulance services, the free breakfast program, the community offerings. In the last ten years there's been deeper attention paid academically to the Panthers and public opinion has shifted—even though people are still languishing incarcerated. Starting off in that exhibition, it was very important for me to participate. I began questioning what visual and conceptual strategies I could use to control those challenges, and for me it's meant a certain amount of minimalism and restraint.

Also, by focusing very particularly on my father, my hope is that the more specific it gets—the more it's me and my father and our father-daughter conversation—the more other people can see in it their fathers and their grandfathers. And aunties, and so on. Making it more personal can make it more dimensional. To shout out to those who already recognize that history within themselves. And if anyone else wants to be a part of witnessing that conversation that I'm having with other Black families, then that's also wonderful.

JA'TOVIA: To me, whether we're talking about the films or the sculptures, the neons, I'm interested in intervening. We want to make this strong intervention into preconceived, communal narratives that we've concocted around history. Sometimes history is a series of stories we've told ourselves that rub up against the truth, but are not necessarily the historical facts. And oftentimes blatant and out-and-out erasures are occurring. I see these erasures as forms of white supremacist violence. I see the rose-tinted mythologizing and narrativizing around American history as white supremacist violence, as the structure trying to maintain itself.

My efforts tend to intervene in that violence and say, "Wait a minute, now, let's tell the truth and shame that devil." Take Martin Luther King—there's all of this romanticization and declawing, defanging, of him on both sides, right? Even Black folks have kind of deified him, almost Disneyfied him. This is a human being who put his pants on one leg at a time, just like the rest of us. He had failings, he struggled, he had challenges. And in many ways there are multiple ways to read the sculpture *Citational Ethics (Toni Morrison, 1987)* (2021).

Right now, there are multiple things happening and multiple readings, but let's go for the most incendiary one: the most incendiary read is this is an intervention in the lies the country has told itself about its progress. The most incendiary read right now is that this is about white supremacist violence that founded the country and maintains the country to this day. For me, it's about the intervention. It's about the correction, the revision, the edit. History is something I'm

**JESSICA
SILVERMAN**

621 Grant Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94108
jessicasilvermangallery.com +1 415 255 9508

always going to be drawn to and fascinated by simply because of the connections of the present. History is never gone, it's always present with us, its residue lingering. For us to attempt to erase or obscure this is not only dishonest, but willful violence. I'm here as the time keeper to correct those acts of violence wherever possible.

SADIE: I have to stay off social media around Martin Luther King Day every year because I get so enraged at the disservice and the flattening of the memory and the politics. How people erase the anti-imperialism, the anti-war, the anti-capitalism that was so inherent and important, especially toward the end of King's shortened life. It makes me physically sick to hear his name coming out of certain mouths so blatantly in favor of US imperialism and the war machine. To invoke that name without catching karma—exactly what you're saying about violence that is done to a history, and that these movements and politics can be consumed and subsumed and then neutralized before the fight is finished.



Sadie Barnette, *Sadie Barnette: Legacy and Legend* installation view at Pitzer College Art Galleries, Pitzer College, Claremont, CA, 2021. Two-site solo exhibition at Benton Museum of Art at Pomona College and Pitzer College Art Galleries, 2021. Courtesy: the artist and Pitzer College Art Galleries, Claremont, CA. Photo: Fredrik Nilsen Studio

**JESSICA
SILVERMAN**

621 Grant Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94108
jessicasilvermangallery.com +1 415 255 9508

ERIN: Thinking about stylization and aesthetics within the work that both of you do—this desire to source history, to think about it in revisionist ways, but also to bring disparate moments of history into an individual work—there is so much of your individual aesthetics that you bring into that. I think you both produce these—I want to use the term “lovely”—renderings of moments and histories that are very hard. I’m curious to know, what are your strategies around that? Sadie, I think so much about the glitter and the bedazzling, and Ja’Tovia, these hues and colorways that you use—there’s something so beautiful about that that I appreciate. I don’t think those methodologies are necessarily to circumvent the tough context of the work, but rather to place an individual hand around an otherwise known history.

JA’TOVIA: The presence of my hand is especially visible in the films, as they are me, literally from start to finish. I do work with collaborators from time to time, but I am editing all of my films. Oftentimes I’m shooting portions of the works. And then the labor-intensive, time-consuming analog animation technique—the scratching and painting of the film—that’s by hand as well. The presence of my hand is what makes things both personal and evocative on a level that aspires to pierce the defenses of the viewer as an emotional register is invoked. I think my hand goes a long way in stirring that emotion.



Ja’Tovia Gary, *THE GIVERNY SUITE*, 2019, *Tactile Cosmologies* installation view at galerie frank elbaz, Paris, 2019. © Ja’Tovia Gary. Courtesy: the artist and galerie frank elbaz, Paris. Photo: Claire Dorn

**JESSICA
SILVERMAN**

621 Grant Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94108
jessicasilvermangallery.com +1 415 255 9508

Of course, there's the music and the colors and the beauty. The latter is necessary, again, not to circumvent, not to soften the blow, because beauty is not necessarily a luxury to me. Beauty is inherent in every aspect of our lives. Even when one is depressed or in the valley and feeling melancholy, there is still beauty to behold, still beauty to see and to feel, so to leave that out would feel dishonest and disingenuous. For me, even if a film touches on state violence and imperialism and how Black women's bodies have been used as commodified labor since the period of enslavement, it's still going to be beautiful. We're still going to invoke beauty, as it's often how we have gotten through—by clinging to what we find beautiful or making beautiful things.

In fact, the very act of transmuting something traumatic, something disheartening, something demoralizing and dehumanizing, into something beautiful is how Black people, how all human beings, have been able to continue to exist in this realm and to move humanity forward progressively.

SADIE: "Transmuting" is a word I relate to. "Alchemy" is another that I think about, particularly when I'm making something by hand. For the powdered-graphite reproductions of certain FBI pages, I ask myself while I work: Can something happen in this process of me rubbing graphite into this paper, by adding roses or diamonds or Hello Kitty to these FBI files? It's adornment and has a lot to do with beauty and care, but it's also about adding another layer of redaction that comes from my lexicon, my language, my counter-surveillance—through the hand, the labor, the time, and this meditation. It's a process, a journey of repair, or repair as meditation.

It's going to be beautiful because we are beautiful and we aren't waiting for the revolution or a perfect world in order to fully inhabit our perfect selves. That's always something I think about, especially when I think about my family, when I think about these moments in which extremely violent things are happening. People are still falling in love, they're still looking fly, they're still writing poetry, they're still making music. Why, I can't exactly say, but we don't need to attain a political utopia or a perfect world (although we deserve it) to be our fully formed beautiful selves. To me, it's a recognition of the beauty that is existing within these challenges. And it's also the reason why this violence is so disturbing and why what we're talking about is so urgent: because of how amazing and beautiful our lives are. That's literally what's at stake. Painful things are more painful because of the beauty, and the beauty is more vital because it's tenuous and precarious. They're all looping together.

JA'TOVIA: Pain and beauty are definitely bound up together. There's no extricating one from the other. I think that is fundamentally one of the experiences or observations of humanity: that you have both, all the time.

ERIN: The following is a more open-ended thought, about Black femmehood being inherently queer. With this I'm not directly addressing the work, but verbalizing an intuitive feeling I get from both of your practices, and mine as well. How would you respond to that?

**JESSICA
SILVERMAN**

621 Grant Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94108
jessicasilvermangallery.com +1 415 255 9508

JA'TOVIA: I don't know if this is a diversion or an expansion, but I feel like blackness is inherently queer. Black femmehood certainly is. When I speak of "queer," we can talk about the people whom you are attracted to and have sex with, but we can also talk about a nonnormative way of being and existing on the planet that allows for various ways of showing up, that allows for an expansive way of presenting oneself in the world, an expansive way of organizing your life, organizing your family structures, an expansive way of doing life that does not necessarily meet the mold of traditional family, traditional work or gender roles, behaviors, et cetera. When I think about a queerness that is inherent in Black femmehood, Black womanhood, I think of that expansiveness. Not a foreclosure, but an opening. The possibilities of existing outside of the structured, formulaic, imposed rules and boundaries of the mainstream and "civilized" society.

SADIE: I'm definitely thinking about those expansive possibilities and relying less on definitions. Sometimes we do need to define, for instance in moments where our existences in various forms are under attack. But ultimately, what I'm hoping to get to is a place beyond that, where we don't have to define things in relation to something like straightness and heteronormativity. We will have fewer boxes when we can get there.



Sadie Barnette, *The New Eagle Creek Saloon* installation view at The Kitchen, New York, 2022. Courtesy: the artist and The Kitchen, New York. Photo: Adam Reich

I think about that in personal ways, as well as in my project of re-creating my father's bar, the first Black-owned gay bar in San Francisco, *The New Eagle Creek Saloon* project (2019). One question

**JESSICA
SILVERMAN**

621 Grant Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94108
jessicasilvermangallery.com +1 415 255 9508

that people always ask me when they see the installation—or the site, sculpture, monument, altar, object that is the stage—is: "Is that what the bar looked like?" It's definitely *not* what the bar looked like; to me it's what the bar *felt* like. I wanted it to shine and have this glitter and radiance and reflectivity that would be on the frequency of what it felt like to be there—to be seen, cute, to be flirting, to be discovering yourself and being witnessed in that discovery and discovering community and creating community together. To me that felt like this shinier, radiating thing, whereas the actual bar featured more wood paneling and blue paint. I approached it with my aesthetic, which is partially rooted in the glitter of "candy paint" Bay Area car culture. Taking something regular and making it super "extra" with a glossy paint job and big rims and a banging sound system. It's also a "high femme" aesthetic that exists beyond a binary notion of gender—a language and a tool that people use to find each other and see each other and talk to each other in a way that is very much about showing out, an extra flex of a high femme play, performance, and embodying.

In relation to the FBI project, splashing the documents with pink or glitter was one of the first times that I felt the power of weaponizing that type of femme aesthetic. I figured the thing that would most defy the ghost of J. Edgar Hoover wouldn't be ripping the documents, or scribbling on them or burning them—it would be splashing them with pink and glitter.



Sadie Barnette, *Inheritance* installation view at Jessica Silverman, San Francisco, 2021–22. Courtesy: the artist and Jessica Silverman, San Francisco. Photo: John Wilson White

**JESSICA
SILVERMAN**

621 Grant Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94108
jessicasilvermangallery.com +1 415 255 9508

Sadie Barnette (b. 1984, Oakland) lives and works in Oakland. She uses installation, sculpture, photography, wallpaper, and large-scale drawing to examine her familial legacy. Employing archival materials compiled by the FBI surveilling her father during his time in the Black Panther Party, Barnette wields the personal nature of generational inheritance to inflect international political struggle with urgency, collapsing temporal distinctions of past and present. She has had recent solo exhibitions at Pomona College and Pitzer College Art Galleries, Claremont, California (2021) and The Kitchen, New York (2022). Upcoming solo projects include a new Bay Area Walls commission at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (2022) and a permanent, site-specific commission at the Los Angeles International Airport (2024). Her work is in the permanent collections of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the Brooklyn Museum; the Pérez Art Museum, Miami; the Guggenheim Museum, New York; the JPMorgan Chase Collection; the Blanton Museum at University of Texas, Austin; the San José Museum of Art; the Oakland Museum of California; the Berkeley Art Museum; the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

Ja'Tovia Gary (b. 1984, Dallas) is a filmmaker and multidisciplinary artist working across documentary and avant-garde video art, sculpture, and installation. Gary is deeply concerned with re-memory and employs a rigorous interrogation and reappropriation of the archive in much of her work. The artist seeks to trouble notions of objectivity and neutrality in nonfiction storytelling by asserting a Black feminist subjectivity, and applies what the scholar and cultural critic bell hooks terms an "oppositional gaze" as both maker and critical spectator of moving-image works. Intimate, often personal and politically charged, her works aim to unmask power and its influence on how we perceive and formulate reality. Gary's films and installations serve as reparative gestures for the distorted histories through which Black life is often viewed. The artist has exhibited at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; MoMa PS1, New York; Anthology Film Archive, New York; the Locarno Film Festival, Switzerland; the Edinburgh International Film Festival; the New Orleans Film Festival; the Ann Arbor Film Festival; the Brooklyn Academy of Music; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Film at Lincoln Center, New York; and Harvard Film Archives, among other spaces. Her work is in the permanent collections of Studio Museum of Harlem; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; and the Brooklyn Museum, among others. Gary was a 2019 Creative Capital Fellow, a 2019 Field of Vision Fellow, and a 2019 Radcliffe Fellow at Harvard University. Upcoming exhibitions include her first curatorial project, *partus/chorus*, opening in May 2022 at galerie frank elbaz, Paris, and a solo show at Paula Cooper Gallery, New York, in 2023.

Erin Christovale is an associate curator at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles and the cofounder of Black Radical Imagination.

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