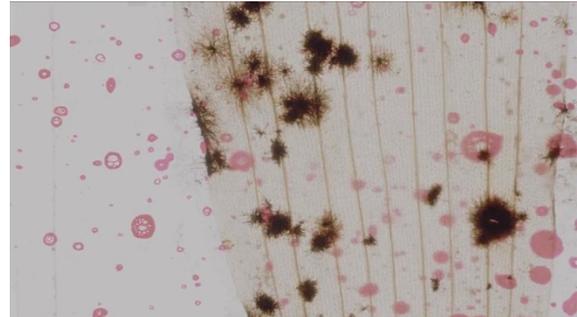


**MEMORIAL ART GALLERY PRESENTS  
THE ROCHESTER PREMIERE OF  
*GIVERNY I (NÉGRESSE IMPÉRIALE)* BY JA'TOVIA GARY**



Shown: Ja'Tovia Gary (American, b. 1984) Still from *Giverny I (NÉGRESSE IMPÉRIALE)*, 2017 © Ja'Tovia Gary. Courtesy Paula Cooper Gallery, New York

Rochester, NY, December 5, 2019— The Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester (MAG) is pleased to present [Ja'Tovia Gary: \*Giverny I \(NÉGRESSE IMPÉRIALE\)\*](#). [Ja'Tovia Gary](#) is an American artist and filmmaker whose work interrogates the ways in which visual and media cultures shape our perceptions around race, gender, and specifically Blackness. Her poignant and distinctive visual language combines documentary elements, direct animation, and archival footage. This single-channel, six-minute video installation will be on view at MAG from December 20–April 5, 2020.

Gary created *Giverny I (NÉGRESSE IMPÉRIALE)* during a 2016 residency at Claude Monet's historic gardens in France as part of the prestigious Terra Summer Fellowship for emerging filmmakers, scholars, and artists. While in this bucolic setting, surrounded by the ponds and water lilies that inspired Monet's celebrated late paintings, Gary learned about the Pulse nightclub shooting in Florida, as well as the deaths of Philando Castile in Minnesota and Alton Sterling in Louisiana by police gunfire. *Giverny I (NÉGRESSE IMPÉRIALE)* reflects on the contrast between these tragic events, the luxury of the garden, and the vulnerability of Gary's own body.

*"I was at a residency in Giverny when the murders of Philando Castile, Alton Sterling and the shooting at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida happened. I'm in this garden in northern France, in the lap of [...] luxury, losing it a little, no shade. I'm the only Black person there. I was feeling my own body's vulnerability. When people ask me what this is about, I say it's about Black women's bodily integrity, or the lack thereof." \**

*Giverny I (NÉGRESSE IMPÉRIALE)* interweaves images of Monet's garden with archival materials and excerpts from Diamond Reynolds' Facebook live recording of the death of her boyfriend, public school worker Philando Castile. By juxtaposing the harrowing experience of Diamond Reynolds and her daughter during the aftermath of Castile's death with the artist's body in the gardens, Gary connects her everyday experience as a Black woman with art history.



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Other archival footage features slain activist and Black Panther Party leader Fred Hampton discussing the concept of “Negro Imperialism,” as well as the function and importance of political education in organizing efforts towards liberation. As Gary explains, her work recontextualizes archival images to show how connections between colonialism, state violence, and media inform visual perception.

*“There’s no need to simply reproduce those [violent] images without a critical engagement of them and their histories. There must be a treatment of the material. Once you show us repeatedly in these positions of anguish and on the receiving end of violence, that’s what we become in people’s minds, which makes way for repeated violence to occur with continued impunity. We’re shaping perception with media, so we’ve got to be very careful.” \**

In addition to the single-channel digital video projection, the exhibition includes sculptural elements—a selection of empty frames—which add relief texture to the wall on which the video is projected. Passages of the film intermittently appear within the white-painted frames. During these moments, the film momentarily becomes a painting, inviting visitors to consider Gary’s work of art in the context of long-standing art historical traditions. MAG visitors will have the opportunity to meet Ja’Tovia Gary and learn about her work at a public conversation with *Hyperallergic’s* Editor of Reviews, Dessane Lopez Cassell on March 15, 2020 at 2 pm.

### About the Artist

Artist Ja’Tovia M. Gary (b. Dallas, TX. 1984) investigates the distorted histories through which Black life is often viewed while fleshing out a complex and nuanced Black interior life and spirituality. Through documentary film and experimental video art, Gary charts the ways structures of power shape our perceptions around representation, race, gender, sexuality, and violence.

Gary received her MFA in Social Documentary Filmmaking from the School of Visual Arts in New York City. Her work is held in the permanent collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, Art, Design & Architecture Museum of UC Santa Barbara, Studio Museum of Harlem, and, now, the Memorial Art Gallery. Her work has been screened at festivals including Frameline LGBTQ Film Festival, Edinburgh International Film Festival, New Orleans Film Festival, Inside Out Toronto, and the Ann Arbor Film Festival. She has received numerous awards and fellowships, such as a Creative Capital Grant, Field of Vision Fellowship, support from the Sundance Documentary Fund, and the 2019 Radcliffe-Harvard Film Study Center fellowship at Harvard University, among others.

Gary is also a founding member of the New Negress Film Society, a collective of black women filmmakers founded in June 2013, which seeks to create a community and raise awareness of Black female voices and stories in the film industry. She is represented by the Paula Cooper Gallery in New York, and by the Galerie Frank Elbaz in Paris.

### About The Memorial Art Gallery

The Memorial Art Gallery showcases visual art from antiquity to the present day, including the outdoor public Centennial Sculpture Park. In addition to its permanent collection, MAG offers a year-round schedule of special exhibitions, lectures, concerts, tours, after-hours social events, and family activities.

Hours: Wednesday–Sunday 11 am to 5 pm, and until 9 pm on Thursdays and select Fridays. Closed Mondays and Tuesdays. Admission: \$15; senior citizens, \$12; college students with ID and children 6–18, \$6. Always free to members, University of Rochester faculty/staff and students, and children 5 and under. Half-price general admission Thursdays from 5–9 pm is made possible in part by Monroe County. For more information, call 585.276.8900 or visit [mag.rochester.edu](http://mag.rochester.edu).

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\* Hernandez, J. “Artist Ja’Tovia Gary and Her Films Are a Force to be Reckoned With.” *Cultured Mag*, February 20, 2019, <https://www.culturedmag.com/jatovia-gary/>. Accessed November 21, 2010.