

Future Archive: Audio Stories
Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum
February 10 - May 8, 2022

A Community Project and Installation in conjunction with *Being Muholi: Portraits as Resistance*

Tyahra Angus, Photographer (she/her)
Transcript of ~7-minute Audio Story

KEY:

AG: Arielle Gray

TA: Tyahra Angus

AG: Angus is in the business of catching time.

TA: Hey, can you get closer into these two-

AG: on this frigid January morning, she's doing just that. She's photographing a friend in her sunlit Jamaica plan apartment, capturing her image through a sheer curtain panel.

TG: Okay, now eyes closed.

AG: Tyahra is an artist who dabbles in many different things, but in Boston she's well known for documenting the Black community, especially the Black queer community. It's where she feels the most comfortable as a Black queer artist.

TA: I feel like, when I have communities of by queer people, I feel seen, heard, felt validated, loved everything.

AG: My name is Arielle Gray. And you are listening to the *Future Archives*, a project and installation at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. As an artist and reporter, I'm constantly thinking about documentation and as a Black queer woman. I know oftentimes those most marginalized have no say in how we're represented in our archives and if we're represented at all.

Future Archives highlights the stories of 5 Black queer and trans people here in Boston, in their own words. After her photoshoot, Tyahra gives me a tour of her many plans. They line her window. Sills leaves curling up towards the sunlight. These plants are her pride and joy.

TA: There's something about nurturing something and seeing it grow and giving something exactly what it needs to survive. You see, you twisted a little bit into the sunlight and then it grows in a different direction. There's just something about that just makes me smile on the inside.

AG: Tyahra is talking about her plants, but in some ways, she's been doing the same for herself, nurturing who she is and turning more and more into the sunlight part of how she does that is through her photography.

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TA: For me, when it started, it was more about catching time. I was smoking a lot of weed so my memory wasn't the best. So, it was easier for me to take photos of things. And that would tie me back to a memory like, oh, I did this last week. And, um, especially with the iPhone. Told me exactly what day things happened.

AG: For Tyahra coming out as queer and her journey into photography started at the same time. It all began right here in Boston when she was a high schooler in the late two thousands.

TA: I came out officially at 15 and 15 was the year for me that I started smoking weed. I got my first tattoo. I was just very experimental out here in the streets. It was also a year that I liked defined myself a little bit more specifically, who do I think I could fall in love with who am I sexually attracted to? Who am I romantically attracted to?

AG: She joined her school's gay straight Alliance club and started taking pictures.

TG: That was like the clear moment where it was like, when you were deciding after school activities, like, are you going to focus on something that is about gayness, about Blackness, about sports, about art, and I chose GSA and, um, the yearbook, so I could take photos and stuff like that. And that's how photography started for me.

AG: Digital photography gave Tyahra the ability to explore, to experiment. And to be free.

TA: I can translate them to, I could print them really huge and make them really small, edit them. However, I want make them Black and white, make them purple, like change people's skin tones and stuff like that. I can, I can alter things.

AG: However, at the same time that she was experimenting with photos, she was also experimenting with her identity. She came out to her friends and they took it. But Tyahra still had to come out to her mother.

TA: I told her about it. I was just like, yeah, I pretty sure I'm bisexual. And she was like, she was like, okay. And I was like, you ain't got nothing else to say. And then she was like, she said something that was really mind like a mind game. She was like, I never thought that you couldn't love a woman. And I was like, I don't know what that means.

AG: While, Tyahra had the support of her parents. Her extended family was a little bit of a different story while dining with family in London, her cousins brought up Tyahra's girlfriend at the time.

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TA: Okay. One of my older cousins was pretty much like a lot. I, we were in the church and I never taught my kids about anything like that. And then my other cousin was like, like asked her. Do you think that you would ever be in charge of who I fall in love with? And mom was like, well, I didn't raise you like that. I didn't raise you to do that kind of sodomite ting. And I was like, oh my god.

AG: But someone stood up for Tyahra.

TA: My dad stood up for me a lot in those exchanges. Like I was really looking at him like, wow, my hero.

AG: Tyahra's father, wasn't just her hero. He was also her role model and he's the one who influenced her to take an interest in photography.

TA: My dad also, um, is, uh, is a videographer and I'm more of like a, uh, engineer person. So. I was around photos. If you go back into his photo albums, he has so many photos of things and it's beautiful to see, um, like him growing up and the people that he spent time around and my mom and different stages of her life. Like I think that's so fascinating. So I wanted to be a part of catching, some type of history in Boston.

AG: Since picking up a camera at the age of 15, Tyahra has used her lens as a form of documentation and connected. It's brought her to amazing places, including Lesley University's Master's Program for Fine Arts, where she explored the intersection of photography, Blackness and queerness.

TA: Yes. It can also show intersections, which is more of my work showing queerness and how queerness brings duality, hybridity, where two identities converge or diverge also shows like the Afrofuturism. It acknowledges ambition

AG: For Tyahra, her Blackness queerness and her practice are all intertwined. The possibilities that come with freedom are what inspire her.

TA: It has so many possibilities in there. It shows like a desire for more, a desire to see more the obscuring of what is to potentially see what's more, um, and to have more. Like, if these are the only images of our community who can argue, that's not how we exist or existed.

AG: "The business of catching time" as Tyahra calls it. Is important, not just for her, but for Black trans and queer people in general.

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TA: Here is the thing, here's this, and here's this moment, this moment, immortalized in time. Um, and for Black queer people, specifically, anybody I meet I'm like pick up your camera. It takes. Take some things, even if you have your phone, take a photo of some things of your life of your everyday.

Credits

AG: Thank you so much for listening to this installment of the future archive project. As always, there's so much that we couldn't fit into this story from Tyagra's obsession, with horror films, to a more in-depth tour of her plant babies, head to the website to hear the full inner.

Lead artists and host is Arielle Gray. Sound is by Palace Shaw. The *Future Archives* project is a community-based exhibition at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum.