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Radical Pink: The Aesthetics  
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and *Black Sky*

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*This article analyzes two projects by Sadie Barnette, "Dear 1968 . . ." (2017) and Black Sky (2018), that draw from the 500+-page surveillance file the Federal Bureau of Investigation collected on her father Rodney Barnette, who was a member of the Black Panther Party's chapter in Los Angeles. Barnette modifies the surveillance file with glitter paper and pink markings and situates them in immersive installations that include bedazzled family photographs and icons, such as Hello Kitty, that reference her girlhood in the 1980s. I discuss how the feminine semiotics in these projects simultaneously redact information in the FBI file to thwart the spectacularization of Black suffering, while annotating it with her decorative gestures as a form of intimate recognition for her father and Black people, as well as a Black feminist critique of white oppression and hetero-patriarchal ethno-nationalisms. I pay particular attention to how the feminine aesthetics in these works articulate Black girlhood as a site of visionary potential.*

KEYWORDS: Black, power, art, girl, aesthetics

- I. A bag of Hello Kitty balloons is tacked to a wall, adjacent to a plastic sleeve that encases a photograph of a pair of hands making a heart symbol (Figure 1, left). The object is set against a sphere created with pink spray-paint. A photograph of this display was posted by the Oakland-based artist Sadie Barnette on Instagram on July 25, 2018, along with this caption: "I'm still in the woods but my heart is in Oakland, in the streets, with Nia's name, and Nia's sister and Nia's Daddy." Barnette's post was a remembrance for Nia Wilson, an 18-year-old Black young woman who was viciously murdered on July 22, 2018, at a Bay Area Rapid Transit Station in Oakland, California, by a white

- man. Her sister, Lahtifa Wilson, was with her and was also stabbed. Lahtifa survived the attack. Although conclusive evidence that the murder was racially motivated has not yet been found, Wilson's family members and community nevertheless argue that the fact that Nia and Lahtifa were the chosen targets of this violence is evidence enough. These claims express an understanding of what Black studies scholar Christina Sharpe (2016) calls the "total climate of antiblackness" that permeates life in the United States (p. 105).
2. An outstretched hand holds a toy gun that is slathered with pink paint that appears like cake frosting (Figure 1, right). The object is embellished with rhinestones, a gold necklace with dangling charms, and a sequin-embroidered patch of the Mexican Virgen de Guadalupe. The number 412, which one has to make a concerted effort to see, is inscribed upon the gun in pink paint near the trigger. This photo was posted by Chicago-based artist Yvette Mayorga on May 18, 2018, along with this caption: "unpack this- the 412 represents the number of immigrants who died at the border in 2017, (UN Migration)." Mayorga's post appeared on my Instagram feed days after U.S. attorney general Jeff Sessions announced that adults and children crossing the border together will be subject to separation upon entry, stating, "If you don't like that, then don't smuggle children over our border" (Jenkins, 2018). The announcement was met with reports that the government could not account for over 1,500 migrant children it had already taken into custody. As artist and trans studies scholar Micha Cárdenas writes, "fear of the children of Latinx immigrants is increasingly violent, as the unelected Trump administration is detaining youth formerly registered under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, particularly when those youth refuse to remain silent about the injustice of US immigration policy" (2018, p. 27).



Figure 1. Instagram posts by artists Sadie Barnette and Yvette Mayorga.

The visual responses by Barnette and Mayorga are striking in their use of pink, and girlish, feminine aesthetics to address racialized and gendered violence in the contemporary United States. This is a femininity that operates in non-binary terms, as it is not intrinsic to particular bodies or genders. Barnette's and Mayorga's aesthetic gestures echo a more widespread feminine turn in the imaging of radical politics in this historical moment, as performed in the work of visual artists such as Juliana Huxtable, Devyn Galindo, and Tourmaline, in addition to music artists like Janelle Monae and Leikeli<sup>47</sup>. Beyond articulating forms of political critique, these aesthetic approaches can also be understood as affirmations of relationality—of life and love amid a context of state terror and oppression. Through their feminine aesthetics, these artists enchant us into a radical dreaming together, embedded in struggle and truth-telling. This dreaming, however, is never divorced from a reckoning with the nightmares of the present. And thus, their practices are less interested in anticipating futurities than they are in foregrounding the struggles and relations that they find urgent and sustaining in the now. In these works, political critiques are articulated alongside and through commodification, consumerism, leisure, play, beauty, and erotics. This is a voluptuous pink politics.

In this essay, I pay particular attention to how the feminine aesthetics in Sadie Barnette's projects *"Dear 1968 . . ."* (2017) and *Black Sky* (2018) evoke Black girlhood and articulate it as a site of visionary potential. This visionary potential is centered in Black feminist scholar Ruth Nicole Brown's work, which invites us to understand Black girlhood beyond identity. As Brown (2013) theorizes and practices, Black girlhood encompasses creative practices, organizing principles, emancipatory spaces, and ways of knowing that reshape power and insist on freedom. In *"Dear 1968 . . ."* and *Black Sky*, Barnette engages with questions of power and freedom through installations that intertwine her family's history of radical Black activism in the 1960s with imagery from her girlhood in the 1980s, creating a multi-generational conversation that speaks to contemporary movements such as Black Lives Matter and #SayHerName.

### Beyond Pussyhat Pink

The radical aesthetics fashioned by artists like Barnette and Mayorga instantiate a different mode of feminine deployment and pink than what was manifested in the Women's Marches of 2017 and 2018, via the "pussy hat," that were organized in response to the election of Donald Trump in 2016. Although I do not want to minimize the visual impact of women en masse reclaiming and mobilizing the color in their protest, and the women of color who participated in the Marches, I must acknowledge, as have many other women of color, that the protests were

overwhelmingly (re)presenting middle-class white women's struggle as solely, and very biologically, gendered.

In this way, the overall and dominant messaging of the Marches have been trans exclusionary and lacking in complexity, as the urgent struggles of Native, Black, Latinx, Muslim, incarcerated, and trans communities were marginalized and not sufficiently embedded within the larger feminist vision of the Marches. This was compounded by the reverberating impact of exit poll data on white women's widespread support for Trump (Huang, Jacoby, Strickland, & Lai, 2016). Thus, the media circulation of the image of protester Angela Peoples holding a sign at the 2017 Women's March that read "Don't forget: White Women Voted for Trump" while three white women behind her in pussy hats were disengaged in the action and using their smart phones, generated a heated, viral conversation on social media regarding the place of race in contemporary mainstream feminism (Figure 2). The work of the contemporary artists of color I have named here visu-



Figure 2. Photograph of 2017 Women's March by Kevin Bannatte.

alize a markedly divergent protest from that signified by the pussy hat; theirs is an aesthetic that is voluptuous, loves gold, glitter, rhinestones, and indulging in cake and racialized enfleshment. It revels in celebration, sensuality, girlhood, consumption, and excess—and stakes different political claims.

My readings of their work are inspired by the femme of color aesthetics I have observed in direct action contexts. A moving example is the July 2017 protest performed by 15 Chicana and Latina young women dressed in tiaras and *quinceañera* (sweet 15) dresses layered in brightly colored tulle, who demonstrated and danced together at the Texas State House in Austin to protest the passing of the Texas SB4 immigration law, which empowers law enforcement and government officials to inquire about people's citizenship status at will and to request documentation (Figure 3). It punishes those state officials who do not comply. The young women's protest utilized the social media hashtag #15contraSB4, Quinceañeras against SB4.

In watching media videos of the #15contraSB4 Quinceañeras online, I was transfixed by the sight of the protesters entering the offices of Texas state legislators together to make their positions known, crowding the space with their ballooning tulle skirts, the walls agitated by the colorful taffeta (MTV News, 2017). I had never seen an insurrection quite like it—it was something I could only dream of in a world where feminine aesthetics and modes of self-fashioning are viewed as incompatible with or anathema to radical politics. These femme forms



Figure 3. Rebel Quinceañeras at the Texas State House, #15contraSB4.

are particularly insurgent when considering how Black and Brown women have historically been excluded from access to normative modes of femininity that are mediated by whiteness.

Hortense Spillers (1987) has articulated how the ungendering of Black women through the transatlantic slave trade has made womanhood and femininity a contested site for Black subjects, and how sumptuary laws, such as Louisiana's Tignon Law of 1786 that prohibited women of color from donning fancy dress, attempted (and failed) to prohibit Black women from gendering themselves feminine (Tinsley, 2010). Black studies scholar Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley's work on Black genders references such colonial histories, citing the 18th-century trial of a Barbadian woman who was accused of stealing from her master to buy fine clothing, which included rose-colored stockings and two pairs of pink satin shoes. Tinsley (2018) notes how the judge "fretted that those satin shoes looked ridiculous on black female 'hoofs' and ordered her to put on her two pairs at trail, one over the other, to prove their absurdity. The pink silk femininity layered on brown legs meant for labor, these men suggest, represented an excessive imitation of European ladyness—in excess of the markers of sexual difference that the black body was able to bear" (p. 48). For Black girls, this history has resulted in the continued hyper-surveillance and policing of their bodies and the dehumanizing disciplinary practices and cultural depictions that work to deny their claim to the power of pink, a hue that evokes pleasure and dreaming (Hyde, 2014). Conventional feminist narratives of pink as infantilizing women and entrenching patriarchal power fail to account for this history, as do critiques of pink as a signifier of commodified girl culture, as these meanings exclusively apply to white middle-class women and girls. Pink, here, describes a Black feminist futurity through the figure of the girl—the Black girl too often disappeared, imperiled, and spectacularized in abjection.

In Sadie Barnette's work, this mode of femme political dreaming could be described as what Black feminist scholar Alexis Pauline Gumbs terms "visionary daughtering." In Gumbs's theorization, daughtering is not positioned as a legal or biological standing, but rather, a form of labor in which "you remember that there is a context you have to be accountable to, not because you feel like it, but because it has already made you possible" (College of Arts & Letters, Michigan State University, 2016). The accountability performed in visionary daughtering works to remember Black radical contexts in order to make freedom possible. Barnette explicitly assumes the positions of both biological and visionary Black daughter in her 2017 multimedia installation "*Dear 1968 . . .*"

### **Black Redactions and Annotations in Pink**

Framed broadly as an address to the Black radical movements of the late 1960s, and specifically to her father, Rodney Barnette, who was a member of the Black

Panther Party's chapter in Los Angeles, Sadie Barnette's 2017 "*Dear 1968 . . .*" is organized around the artist's reworkings of two contrasting archives. One, the 500+-page surveillance file the Federal Bureau of Investigation collected on Rodney Barnette in the late 1960s, and the other, a grouping of familial ephemera such as candid photographs and letters. Barnette modifies these materials throughout the installation through bright magenta markings, punctuated with objects and icons, such as Hello Kitty, that reference her girlhood in the 1980s.

Through the inclusion of family photographs, toys, and pink embellishments, the narrative on Black radical history, U.S. racial violence, gender, and sexuality raised by the project are articulated through the perspective of Sadie Barnette's girlhood. Time-traveling from the 1960s to the 1980s and reverberating into the present day, the feminine aesthetics of the project articulate Black girlhood as a site of curating, researching, archiving, storytelling, playing, resisting, and loving. This approach can be understood as a Black girl feminist method whereby the emphasis on the father informs the life, future, and radical work/vision of the daughter and her community. Challenging notions of hetero-masculine aggression as a privileged form of Black revolutionary work, Black studies scholar Courtney R. Baker notes that "it has frequently been black women who have mobilized their keen understanding of the power of visual regard to improve substantially the circumstances for themselves and their racial kin" (2015, p. 6). Barnette's project furthers the work of radical Black women artists of previous generations such as Elizabeth Catlett and Jae Jarrell, who centered Black women and employed feminine markers in their aesthetic approaches, but the project innovates in bringing girlhood, rather than womanhood, to the center. Images of Black girls in pink appeared in Emory Douglas's artwork for the *Black Panther* newspaper, but they were positioned as revolutionary learners and recipients of care by the Black Panther Party. Conversely, in Barnette's project, the Black girl, through the work of her aesthetics gestures rather than her embodiment, is the instigator of a radical vision and practice to follow.

Upon entering the "*Dear 1968 . . .*" installation, one encounters Barnette's critical juxtapositions. One of the first pieces attracting the viewer's gaze is a series of framed portraits of her father that are set against wallpaper that is patterned with FBI stamps and graphics culled from the surveillance files (Figure 4). In one photograph, taken in 1966, he dons a military uniform, and in the other, captured in 1968, the black beret and leather jacket that signified his membership in the Black Panther Party. The last portrait in the series is a candid photo of Rodney Barnette in his postal worker's uniform along with his partner and infant child at a kitchen table (Figure 5). Barnette was drafted into the Vietnam War, honorably discharged, and later awarded a purple heart. These conferrals of state recognition quickly shifted, however, when he became an active member of the Black Panther Party and began to organize against police terror in Black communities in California.





Figure 4. Sadie Barnette, 2016, *Untitled (Dad, 1966 and 1968)* [Two C-prints, Framed. 47 × 41.25 in./each]. Edition of 3.



Figure 5. Sadie Barnette, 2017, *Untitled (Dad in Postal Uniform with family . . .)* [C-print, Paper. 24 × 18 in. Framed: 26.5 × 23 in.]. Edition of 3.

Placing these images side by side not only provides the viewer with a complex view of Rodney Barnette as a subject but also undermines appeals to respectability as a mode of attaining social mobility and justice, as Barnette's decorated military service did not protect him from becoming subject to harassment and harm by the FBI. Ethnic studies scholars Yen Lê Espiritu and Diane Wolf describe critical juxtaposition as a methodology that employs "the deliberate pairing of seemingly different historical events and their memorialization in an effort to reveal what would otherwise remain invisible; in this case, the contours, contents, and limits of the US empire" (2013, p. 189). Rodney Barnette echoed his daughter's visual critical juxtapositions in his remarks at the opening of an exhibition of "*Dear 1968 . . .*" at the San Diego Museum of Contemporary Art, which I attended in April 2018. Barnette described how he came to recognize that the militarized tactics the police were using to suppress Black communities in California in the late 1960s were similar to those used by the U.S. military in Vietnam. Many of these police tactics, he added, would have been considered war crimes in a military context.

In the installation, these portraits face a wall onto which 28 documents that Barnette extracted from her father's voluminous surveillance file are displayed in a series titled *My Father's FBI File, Project III* (2017) (Figure 6). The black-and-white photocopies are mounted upon a neon orange backing that raises them slightly from the wall surface. The composition and display vibrate with color and lean off the wall, pulling viewers in and enticing them to read the text. The documents reveal both the power and limitations of the FBI as a state regime. For example, one grouping of documents tells the story of how Rodney Barnette was fired from his job as a postal service worker due to a breach of "suitability and morality." Through their investigation, the FBI learned that he lived with a woman to whom he was not legally married. This was considered a violation of moral conduct at the time, which would make one unsuitable for federal employment. The FBI reported the relationship to the post office, and he lost his job as a result.

In one of the documents in the installation addressing this incident, the agency cites an interview they had with Barnette where he states:

It is true that I am living with a woman that I am not married to. I don't think that you're going through a legal ritual of marriage determines the quality of relationship between man and wife. We maintain all the principles of any legal marriage. I think this is a personal thing that should be left up to the judgement of the two parties concerned. So in conclusion in my eyes we are man and wife as much as anyone else. We have one child born September 12, 1968, at Cleveland, Ohio. He has my first two names and his mother's maiden name.

Barnette highlights her father's statement on the document with heart-shaped rhinestones, pointing the viewer toward his critiques of state regulation of sexual



Figure 6. Sadie Barnette, 2017, *My Father's FBI File, Project III* [28 laser prints with aerosol paint and rhinestones on plexi. 10.5 × 8.75 × .75 in.]. 28 pages excerpted from 500 pages of FBI files.

relations and his claims of an alternative relational form in which, for example, the child takes on his mother's maiden name. Through foregrounding this particular incident, Barnette demonstrates how laws aimed at criminalizing queer people, such as the federal regulations concerning "moral conduct" and employability have wide-ranging powers that can be used to oppress heterosexuals as well.

Many of the documents also demonstrate failed attempts by the FBI to fully understand Black Panther Party activities or collect desired information. Some pages are populated with a dizzying range of stamps and handwritten markings that highlight the symbolic work of regimes such as the FBI. The stamps and icons take on an almost hieroglyphic character, and the handwritten signatures and "x" markings that accompany them evidence the vast circulation of the documents to various government agencies, displaying the very excess of the information they collected. The sheer volume of the markings attests to the performative nature of the power being displayed in the Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) and other programs the FBI mobilized to oppress Black communities and thwart their political organizing. In other pages, the material power of the FBI is alarmingly evident, such as in *Untitled (Rodney Barnette's name added to the "Adex list: Program for Apprehension and Detention." a list of American citizens that could be detained without due process)* (2017) (Figure 7), where the FBI writes: "BAR-

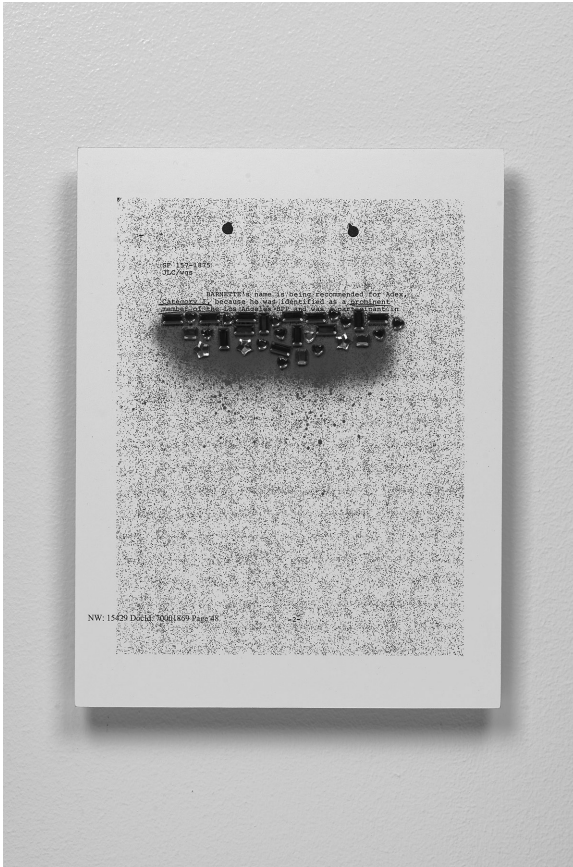


Figure 7. Sadie Barnette, 2017, *Untitled* (Rodney Barnette's name added to the "Adex list: Program for Apprehension and Detention," a list of American citizens that could be detained without due process) [Laser print with aerosol paint and rhinestones on plexi. 10.5 × 8.75 × .75 in.].

NETTE'S name is being recommended for Adex, Category I, because he was identified as a prominent member of the Los Angeles BPP and was a participant in . . ." The paragraph comes to an abrupt break as pink spray paint redacts the remaining text. The painted area is overlaid with pink and silver rhinestones in various shapes.

Barnette's *My Father's FBI File, Project III* is full of competing redactions, those of Barnette and those of the FBI. I read the artist's process of modifying the file as an iteration of the processes of Black redaction and Black annotation that Christina Sharpe (2016) argues constitutes a form of "wake work," "a mode of inhabiting *and* rupturing" chattel slavery's episteme of property "with our known lived and un/imaginable lives" (p. 18; emphasis in original). In discussing artist Steve McQueen's video work *End Credits* (2012), which utilizes the redacted FBI

files of Paul Robeson, Sharpe notes that the piece demonstrates how “so much of Black intramural life and social and political work is redacted, made invisible to the present and future, subtended by plantation logics, detached optics, and brutal architectures” (2016, p. 114). Inspired by artists such as McQueen, Sharpe offers an understanding of Black redaction and annotation as “ways to imagine otherwise” (2016, p. 115). Though Barnette and her father have been denied access to information in the file through the FBI’s erasures, the artist enacts her own redactions to mediate what information she is willing to share about her father with the viewer, and to thwart the spectacularization of Black suffering that such documents can convey. The feminine significations of pink and rhinestones simultaneously redact information and annotate the file with her artistic gestures, conjuring a form of intimate recognition, love (for her father and Black people), as well as a Black feminist critique of the masculinist, hetero-patriarchal state and masculinist, hetero-patriarchal ethno-nationalisms. This approach reflects what Sharpe theorizes as “redaction and annotation toward seeing and reading otherwise” (2016, p. 117). Thus, we can understand the radical femme of color aesthetic mobilized by Barnette in “*Dear 1968 . . .*” as a counterpoint to the brutal architectures of anti-blackness.

In an e-mail exchange I had with the artist concerning her use of feminine materials in the project, she wrote: “I see glitter in my work as a liberated space that exists beyond the gaze of state surveillance, beyond police brutality. And I don’t always know exactly what that world would look like, the world the Panthers were fighting for, but I’m using glitter and holograms as a placeholder to imagine and dream up other worlds—other ways of organizing society that aren’t organized around capitalism and imperialism” (S. Barnette, personal communication, September 13, 2018). These other worlds are anticipated in the photocollage *Untitled (Father and daughter)* (2018) (Figure 8), in which a cropped photograph of the artist as a young girl with her father is framed against magenta glitter paper. She is carried by her dad and rests her head on his shoulder, an arm and leg dangle from her party dress. Attired for celebration (he wears a suit), they are turned away from the viewer, looking toward an ambiguous place left unsignified. A spray of pink paint frames their bodies and appears to anticipate the new worlds that Barnette imagines. She and her father approach it together.

Through decorative gestures, Sadie Barnette’s “*Dear 1968 . . .*” goes beyond enacting political critique to performing the work of visionary daughterhood as suggested by Gumbs when she states that “the world in which we are free is the world in which we love each other more than we are allowed to. The world in which we destroy everything that would keep us apart, towards visionary daughterhood, love is life force and there is nothing else” (College of Arts & Letters,



Figure 8. Sadie Barnette, 2018, *Untitled (Father and daughter)* [Collage and aerosol paint on glitter paper: 11 × 8.5 in.].

Michigan State University, 2016). Radical femme of color aesthetics generate access points to this life force. They entail more than iconographies; they are gestures, symbolic and physical expressions of care for those one loves, and an affirmation of their lives.

Like Barnette, contemporary Chicana artist Artemisa Clark makes such gestures in her glitter-caked collages that redact photographs of Latinx being detained by ICE. She describes her method of obscuring the Latinx bodies that appear in media photographs of large-scale raids by outlining and filling them in with gold glitter as an attempt to protect them (Figure 9). Barnette's and Clark's approaches demonstrate how the artistic processes through which radical femme of color aesthetics becomes visible—meticulously applying paint with a pastry piping bag, gluing rhinestones, pouring glitter—are just as significant as what they come to represent. They are the practices that make these radical femme figurations aesthetic magic, a form of *brujería* for the well-being of ourselves and the memory of our ancestors. It is the Black girlhood Sadie Barnette claims. Hello Kitty seated on a rattan chair holding court and power (Figures 10 and 11).



Figure 9. Artemisa Clark, 2018, Mrs. Aurora Vargas, struggling fiercely, is carried from house by deputies as hold-outs are cleared from Chavez Ravine. Fourteen deputies made eviction which turned into a melee. (*Los Angeles Times*, 1959).



Figure 10. Sadie Barnette, 2017, Installation detail from "Dear 1968...".



Figure 11. Huey Newton, Black Panther Minister of Defense, Black Panther Party, American, 1966–1982, photograph by Blair Stapp [Lithographic ink on paper, linen]. Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

### Hello Kitty and Black Interior(ity)

In Barnette's work, Hello Kitty can be read as a baby Black Panther whose mode of radical praxis is interior and quiet, but not silent. Black studies scholar Kevin Quashie calls for an understanding of the power of quiet, writing that, beyond silence, it can be understood as “a metaphor for the full range of one's inner life—one's desire, ambitions, hungers, vulnerabilities, fears. The inner life is not apolitical or without social value, but neither is it determined entirely by publicness” (2012, p. 6). The iconic kawaii Sanrio figure also appears in *Black Sky* (2018), a project where Barnette extends the exploration of her father's FBI file. The project consists of family photographs, sculptures, collages, found objects, and enlarged and modified copies of the FBI documentation. In one part of the installation, the artist positions a photo of herself as a young girl posing with sunglasses on while holding a teddy bear in a corner of a room across from an ornate mirror that reflects the image back and doubles it (Figure 12). The photo is flanked by Hello Kitty stationery, a note card marked with pink spray-paint rather than text. As in *Untitled (father and daughter)*, the spray of pink stands in for a space and affect that cannot be signified or represented with language. The pink is an invocation of a feeling of affection and possibility, while also serving as a screen, mediating the public and private. Barnette activates the archival materials she engages in



“*Dear 1968 . . .*” and *Black Sky* by utilizing abstraction and color to mediate between public and private. Such an approach can be understood as a performance of power when considering the tremendous scrutiny to which Black families are subjected. In this context, the hyper-consumerist image of Hello Kitty is in fact quite fitting to include in her Black radical tableau. Anthropologist Christine R. Yano has noted how the figure has been employed as a bridge that allows for women to continue to engage in girlhood, and that the mouthless feline serves as an empathetic companion to those who consume her. Hello Kitty moves between the girlhood worlds of interior (emotional) and public (consumerist) life (Yano, 2013, pp. 161–162).

The push and pull between public and private, emotional and institutional life, is a major thrust of the story told in *Black Sky*. For example, the installation on the first floor of the Charlie James Gallery in Los Angeles, where it was exhibited in 2018, was staged with bright magenta lighting that permeated through the windows to the street outside, inviting the public to enter (Figure 13). In *Black Sky*, the use of pink is heightened to the point of generating a sensorium, a vibration inducing a love state and sparking a desire for touch, a world/state evoked through an aesthetics of Black girlhood.

In contrast to the first-floor installation that was hung in a conventional gallery style; the downstairs part of the show was arranged as a living room with couches, remote controls on coffee tables, vinyl records, and family photographs tacked to the wall (Figure 14). Bags of Hello Kitty brand snacks were stacked in

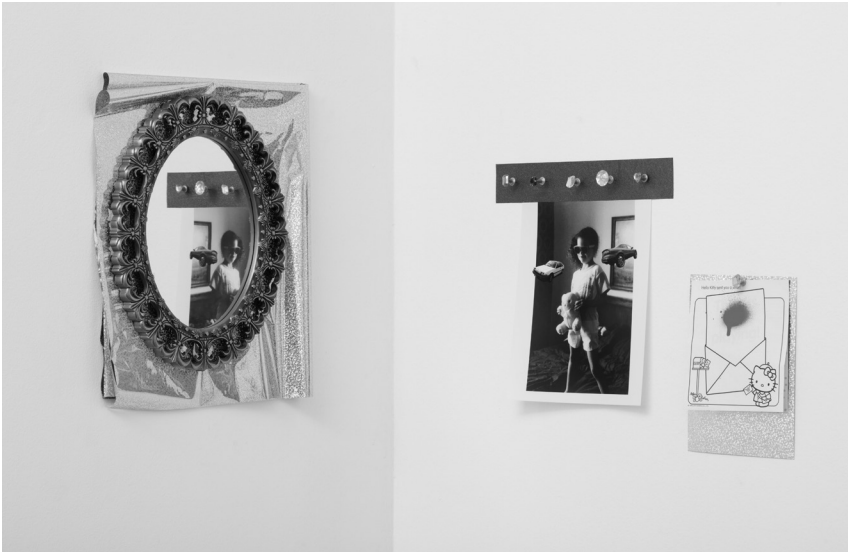


Figure 12. Sadie Barnette, 2018, Installation detail from *Black Sky*.



Figure 13. Street view of *Black Sky* exhibition at Charlie James Gallery in Los Angeles.

piles on the floor (Figure 15). The appearance of Hello Kitty in *Black Sky* can be read as signifying the life of pleasurable girlhood consumption that Barnette's father and radical activists like the Black Panthers made possible for her. Through the evocation of domestic spaces of Black leisure and consumption, *Black Sky* emphasizes interiority and intramural relationships, thus framing "the black quotidian as a signature idiom of diasporic culture and black futurity" (Camp, 2017, p. 9). Barnette invites the viewer to appreciate this quotidian world through the radical femme aesthetics of a relational Black girlhood signified with love. This visual and visionary aesthetic sensibility is a manifestation of the kinds of hybrid and improvisatory strategies BIPOC have created for surviving racism, sexism, and imperialism, and undermining these formations at every turn. We know how to locate the power *with* each other.

As Barnette writes, "to me, our family has always been an act of resistance in itself. The immense challenges and oppressions that Black American families face are met with expansive amounts of love and care for each other, beauty and celebration" (S. Barnette, personal communication, September 13, 2018). Rodney Barnette had longed to know the birthdates of his siblings and finally found them in data collected in his FBI file. He is continuing to request remaining materials from the agency, which will open possibilities for other unanticipated moments of celebration, and for further permutations as consciousness-raising material in the radical femme of color art of his daughter.



Figure 14. Sadie Barnette, 2018, Partial installation view of *Black Sky* exhibition.



Figure 15. Sadie Barnette, 2018, Installation detail from *Black Sky*.

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