

**Cameron A. Granger**  
**9999**

05.19.24 – 01.19.25

*Accessible exhibition wall text and labels*

**QUEENS MUSEUM**

## **Cameron A. Granger**

**9999**

In 9999, Cameron A. Granger uses the framework of video games and magic to imagine an alternative method of liberation for Black communities from the compounding effects of racist urban planning. In early role playing video games, due to low computer processing capacity, 9,999 was the numerical damage limit done to a character that could be registered on screen. Yet sometimes, additional damage continued to accrue off-screen – incapacitating, yet unseen. Granger takes this concept of the concealed yet relentless harm, and applies it to the cumulative corrosion of segregative design, environmental racism, and gentrification.

To make sense of the convoluted legacies of systemic injustice, Granger visualizes the wounds left by structural violence through “black holes” that rip the city’s fabric. His films, prints, and sculptures create a video game-like narrative that provides

puzzles, tips, and charms that aid in deciphering these black holes. In diagnosing the root cause of the issue, Granger proposes that the black holes are the result of a spell cast by nefarious, hidden forces. To break the curse, he speculates what might be possible if the black holes could be used as portals to share knowledge.

Seeking answers, Granger turns to stage magicians, root workers, and conjurers. His work references Black magicians such as Henry “Box” Brown (1815 – 1897) whose performances alluded to his 1849 self-emancipation via mail, and Benjamin Rucker aka Black Herman (1892 – 1934) whose magic acts and conjuring remedies built a massive following in the 1920s among Black communities. Granger also draws on the practice of conjuring, invoking remedies for locating harm’s source, protecting, and healing. Additionally, he calls upon the Haitian folklore of zombies, originally mythologized as the spirits of enslaved laborers trapped to haunt plantations in their afterlife.

Granger reconceptualizes their spirits as a unified force reemerging from the grave to aid in liberation.

Sourcing wisdom from Black forebears whose knowledge helped their communities self-emancipate, heal, and thrive, Granger offers a collective vision of empowered futurity. In a dimly lit gallery that mimics the digital landscape of a video game, Granger creates a narrative where memories of and knowledge from Black ancestors provide clues, methods, and tools that once pieced together, may reveal the key to break free.

*Cameron A. Granger: 9999* was organized by Sarah Cho, Assistant Curator.

Audio descriptions narrated by Sarah Cho, Assistant Curator, can be found on the Queens Museum Digital Guide, available for free on the Bloomberg Connects App.

This exhibition was produced in cooperation with the Queens Museum team: Massimo Avanzato, Lindsey Berfond, Hayley Blackstone, Gianina Enriquez, Catherine Grau, Mayisha Hassan, Lauren Haynes, Hitomi Iwasaki, Adrienne Koteen, Lynn Maliszewski, Gabriela Peralta, Aaron Strauss, Heryte T. Tequame, and Tiffany Tong; and Queens Museum fabricators and preparators: Keith O. Anderson, Max Bell, Noemi Bilger, Jackson Denahy, Brittany Hayden, Magnus Gitt Henderson, Natalya Kornblum Laudi, Clare Koury, Martin Kramer, Samantha Lasko, Juyon Lee, and Mallie Sanford.

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## **Cameron A. Granger**

b. Cleveland, OH, 1993

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### *6th movement - Lost Cities, 2024*

Screenprint and marker on paper, walnut shelf,  
glass bottle, bug, rope

Courtesy of the artist

### *7th movement - Invisible Cities, 2024*

Screenprint and marker on paper, walnut shelf, vial  
of salt, pocket knife

Courtesy of the artist

### *8th movement - Cities for the Future, 2024*

Screenprint and marker on paper, walnut shelf, root,  
hair

Courtesy of the artist

Granger crafts a three-act story with poetic clues communicated through crosswords. Across his “movement” series, the artist conceptualizes obfuscation as an intentional act, using dark silvery ink on black paper and guarding words that hold

deep personal meaning. Here, the scribbled out answers are keywords that connect the series.

Paired with each crossword is a charm referencing Black spiritual remedies. The bottle with an insect calls upon a Hoodoo practice of locating the source of harm; the salt vial alludes to the traditional Haitian use of salt to cure zombification; and the root is bound with the artist's hair as a protection spell. Granger offers these charms as necessary items for the toolkit in breaking the curse of systemic injustice.



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**Cameron A. Granger**

b. Cleveland, OH, 1993

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*Hollow Folk #1 - The Resurrection of Henry "Box"  
Brown, 2024*

Wooden crate, cast silicone hands, charcoal,  
stainless steel swords, 4x cotton hoodie from Grae  
& Owen, snake skin, dried flowers, twine, shop rags,  
laser printer toner on paper with wheatpaste, sound,  
light

Courtesy of the artist

Magician Henry “Box” Brown (1815 – 1897) famously self-emancipated by mailing himself in a 3 x 2.5 x 2 foot box from Virginia to Philadelphia, a brave act that Brown later used as material during his magic performances and abolitionist lectures. Granger alters Brown’s crate with swords, referencing a popular magic trick, the sword box. From within, a hooded figure emerges, having triumphantly survived. In his hand, he holds a snake skin, alluding to the Hoodoo tradition of conjurers healing patients by pulling out pests from their body. Lining the box are charcoal-dusted, cast silicone hands of Haitian zombies that seemingly lift the sculpture. These hands and the hooded figure are part of a Black ancestral collective that passes on knowledge about survivance.



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## **Cameron A. Granger**

b. Cleveland, OH, 1993

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*Hollowfolk #2 - Black Herman Covers The World,*  
2024

Screenprint and inkjet prints

Courtesy of the artist

Granger elegizes Black Herman aka Benjamin Rucker (1892 – 1934) who was integral to the social fabric of Black spiritual communities. He performed magic for dedicated audiences across the eastern United States and sold ailment cures and explanations for the inexplicable. A Harlem-based magician and conjurer, Black Herman traveled to Egypt, India, and China to learn magical and spiritual practices. The images here of Black Herman are sourced from his catalogs of magic tricks and potions; these books established his authority in the field, illustrated the magic tricks that made him legendary, and taught others the “secret of the occult.” Here, Granger considers the

afterimage of Black Herman's legacy, juxtaposing him on a distorted skull pattern from the 1994 video game *Doom II*.



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## **Cameron A. Granger**

b. Cleveland, OH, 1993

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*Here & there along the echo, 2024*

Film, found wood, monitor, keyboard, cast silicone hands, charcoal, books, cassettes

Film: 27 min

Excerpt on monitor: 3 min 30 sec

Excerpt in Panorama: 6 min

Starring: Hakim Callwood, Akillah Clark, Dom Deshawn, Alonee Gray, Joe Iwuala, Coach Neal, Shala Miller, Simi Olagundoya, Chad Pendergrass, and Reg Zehner

Production Assistants: Jeffery Grant and Jules Tong  
Courtesy of the artist

*Black Hole Report, 2024*

Risograph

Courtesy of the artist

Granger weaves together speculative fiction, documentary, and eyewitness accounts to explore

his concept of “black holes” as wounds left by segregative urban design. Here & there along the echo follows a filmmaker and his friends as they make sense of the black holes that have become a ubiquitous part of Bad City. In their journey, they realize they are not the first to try to solve why the holes keep appearing and what messages seem to be emerging from them. Through this film, Granger imagines alternative pathways to ending the generational curse, suggesting the black holes as portals for knowledge-sharing.

The filmmaker’s desk features clips from *What We Know: Black Holes in Bad City*, an investigative report by their predecessor, Dr. Shala E. Wells. Also on the desk are risographs that feature a cipher to decode the messages emerging from the black holes. Please take a copy.



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706, 707, 708

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## **Cameron A. Granger**

b. Cleveland, OH, 1993

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*Here & there along the echo, 2024*

Film, found wood, monitor, keyboard, cast silicone hands, charcoal, books, cassettes

Film: 27 min

Excerpt on monitor: 3 min 30 sec

Excerpt in Panorama: 6 min

Courtesy of the artist

Although the *Panorama of the City of New York* is awe-inspiring, it also presents the sanitized result of “urban renewal” by Robert Moses, the CEO of the 1964 – 1965 World’s Fair and New York City’s urban planner. Moses bulldozed through and displaced existing Black and brown neighborhoods to build highways, cultural centers, and public spaces. An unelected public official, Moses neither held community hearings for his projects nor made good on the promise of fiscal aid for uprooted families.

This excerpt of *Here & there along the echo* shows fictional accounts of “black holes” appearing across an imaginary metropolis called Bad City. In Granger’s work, and in the full film shown in the adjacent Rubin Gallery, black holes signify rips in both the urban fabric and time, symptomatic of systemic racism. Shot in both New York City and Columbus, Ohio, Granger’s black hole footage compilation activates questions around the legacy of urban planners like Robert Moses and examines the hidden structures of power in segregative design.



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