

Mobile Arts Curriculum



Black History Navigational Toolkit



Everett King Culture Cooper (left) and Garth Roots (right) at King Culture Record Co. at 2502 Eglinton Avenue West, 1983. Photo by Beth Lesser.

SUGGESTED AGE/GRADE:

K-12, Families, Intergenerational

CURRICULUM LINKS:

The Arts, Social Studies, History and Geography, Canadian and World Studies, Afro-diasporic Studies, Social Sciences and Humanities, English.

KEYWORDS:

Ancestor, activism, archive, Black Canadian art histories, Black histories, Blackhurst, Black life, hidden narratives, journey, navigate, non-linear, personal, spatial, temporal, trans-atlantic slavery, tool, Toronto.

ABOUT THE TOOL

This is a deck of playing cards like no other. There are twenty cards in total – choose a card, and let it guide you through Toronto's Black histories, and the personal narratives of artist Camille Turner and writer Yaniya Lee. This is a Black History Navigational Toolkit — use it as such, navigating your way through Little Jamaica, Scarborough, and Blackhurst, stories of Black history and resilience in Toronto and beyond.

This [excerpted] conversation, held on November 17, 2021, was moderated by Mark Soo. It is included in full in the TBA publication [Water, Kinship, Belief](#), co-published by the Toronto Biennial of Art and Art Metropole, and available for purchase at Art Metropole

Camille Turner: Our project for the 2022 Toronto Biennial is called the *Black History Navigational Toolkit*. Yaniya, what you and I were asked to do was to create a Black history context brief. This would be something that would give Biennial artists and visitors a context for Black histories in Toronto, and more broadly, the ways in which Black people exist in this city. It's a vast history. How do we represent it? What we decided on is a deck of twenty large playing cards.

Yaniya Lee: Camille, when we first talked about the proposition of this project, we knew right away that we didn't want this history to be something easily digestible, like an A, B, C—a linear timeline of what had happened, nor a polished answer to what Blackness is in Toronto. We didn't want to recreate a "history" that already exists in archival documents, literature, art, and oral history. Our stories exist and are out there, remembered in a variety of ways within our communities, but they are often overlooked or unacknowledged in Canadian history. We wanted to figure out a way to make the parts of those histories we chose to present more engaged. We left openings for people to fill in some of the gaps and make their own connections.

I feel like this project really melds what both of us do: we drew from some of your practice and then from some of the things that I've done. For example, there is my archival research and interest in certain Black Canadian art histories, specifically in Toronto. Then there are the live projects that you've done, Camille, such as audio walks that tell these stories in different ways.

The Mobile Arts Curriculum (MAC) Black History Navigational Toolkit is available in physical card form at select TBA Exhibition sites, and in digital form on our website at torontobiennial.org/mobile-arts-curriculum.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

[Camille Turner](#) (born in 1960, Kingston, Jamaica; lives in Los Angeles, USA) is an explorer of race, space, home and belonging. Her work combines Afrofuturism and historical research. Most recently, she has been unsilencing the entanglement of what is now Canada in transatlantic slavery. Her interventions, installations and public engagements have been presented throughout Canada and internationally. Camille graduated from the Ontario College of Art and Design and York University's Master in Environmental Studies program, both Toronto, where she is currently a Ph.D. candidate.

[Yaniya Lee's](#) (born in Montreal) writing, research and collaboration focus on the ethics of aesthetics. In the fall of 2020, Lee and curator Denise Ryner guest-edited *Chroma*, a special issue of *Canadian Art* magazine dedicated to black artists and black art histories. Lee has participated in residencies at Banff (2017), the Blackwood Gallery (2018), Gallery 44 (2018), Vtape (2019-2020) and she is currently a research fellow at Artexite. Lee was a member of the editorial team at *Canadian Art* magazine from 2017-2021, and she joined Archive Books' editorial team this past spring.



ASSOCIATED WORKS

Camille Turner, *Nave*, three-channel video installation, 2021-2022. Commissioned by the Toronto Biennial of Art. Located at the Small Arms Inspection Building.

CONTEXT

Camille Turner's commissioned piece [Nave](#) is an immersive multimedia installation that explores the impact of Canada's colonial past and linkages in the transatlantic slave trade of enslaved Africans.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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